Everyday Communication in Antiquity: Frames and Framings

edited by
Klaas Bentein

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

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Abstract

This volume examines the everyday written communication practices of Greco-Roman and Late Antique Egypt, focusing on Greek papyri alongside related Coptic and Arabic sources. Structured into four thematic parts, it explores how linguistic choices, material features, and visual layout shaped the ways writers structured interactions, expressed their stance, defined social roles, and navigated genre conventions. The first part investigates the material and visual framing of ancient documents, highlighting how physical features contributed to their recognizability and functionality for ancient audiences. It introduces a tripartite framework for understanding materiality – encompassing material, processual, and relational dimensions – which is applied to a substantial corpus of administrative texts. The second part focuses on discursive framings, examining how wishes reflect epistemic and social intersubjectivity, how speech acts are framed both visually and linguistically, and how postscripts – particularly in women's letters – extend beyond simple afterthoughts, broadening the communicative scope of the text. The third section focuses on socio-cultural framings, exploring topics such as Atticism as a marker of elite identity, the distribution of bilingual and biscriptal practices across registers and text types, and the contrasts between Greek and Arabic bureaucratic letters in their strategies for requests, mitigation, and rhetorical structure. The final part examines covert intratextual framings, exploring how continuative clauses depict wrongdoers in petitions and how authorial corrections and textual revisions to complement clauses reveal shifting grammatical norms and contribute to shaping interactional contexts. Together, the chapters offer a fresh, interdisciplinary perspective on ancient writing practices, revealing how communicative choices shaped and were shaped by the social and cultural worlds of their time.

Keywords Papyri. Framing. Communication. Multimodality. Social meaning. Materiality. Layout. Language.

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SECTION 4. INTRATEXTUAL FRAMINGS

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Exploring Frame-Based Approaches to Everyday Communication in Antiquity

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Abstract   This chapter introduces and develops a frame-based approach to under-standing communicative practices in antiquity, outlining its definition, significance, and application across the contributions in this volume. It begins by exploring the core concept of 'social meaning making', drawing on key theoretical advancements from sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and social semiotics. Additionally, the chapter addresses the formulation of a 'semiotic grammar' as a central research objective, highlighting the analytical challenges inherent in this endeavour.

Keywords   Everyday communication. Social meaning. Papyri. Framing. Semiotic grammar.

Summary   1 Introduction. – 2 The Dynamics of Social Meaning Making. – 2.1 The Foundations: Michael Halliday. – 2.2 Developing a 'Third-wave' (Historical) Sociolinguistic Approach. – 2.3 Beyond Language: Multimodality. – 3 Pragmatic Paradigms and Indexical Fields: Engaging In Semiotic Grammar. – 4 Developing a Frame-based Approach. – 5 Overview of the Volume.

1 Introduction

The present volume showcases some of the research that was conducted in the context of the European-funded project *Everyday Writing in Graeco-Roman and Late Antique Egypt. A Socio-Semiotic Study of Communicative Variation* (2018-24),[1] featuring contributions from scholars directly involved in the project as well as those associated with it more broadly.[2] The primary objective of this project has been to analyse the communicative choices made by writers in their papyrus documents and to explore how these choices relate to the wider context of communication, facilitated by the development of innovative digital tools.

While our team has had the pleasure of organising a multitude of project-related events,[3] two such events stand out for the way they chronologically and thematically 'frame' our project: the 2019 conference *Novel Perspectives on Communication Practices in Antiquity. Towards a Historical Social-Semiotic Approach*,[4] where we first made a case for a more holistic, interdisciplinary approach towards social meaning making practices,[5] and the smaller-scale 2023 workshop *Everyday Communication in Antiquity: Frames and Framings*,[6] in which we explored one specific approach to the interpretation of social meaning making practices, conceptualised as a 'frame-based' approach. The contributions in this volume originate from that workshop, each significantly elaborated upon.

In this introductory chapter, I will explore in greater detail the concept of a frame-based approach, elaborating on its definition and significance (§ 4), and its application across the contributions in this volume (§ 5). Before doing so, however, I will introduce the essential concept of 'social meaning making' and review some important theoretical developments in related fields such as sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and social semiotics (§ 2). Following this, I will examine the formulation of a 'semiotic grammar' as a key research objective and discuss the analytical challenges associated with this task (§ 3).

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[1] See further www.evwrit.ugent.be.

[2] Work for this chapter was undertaken in the context of the ERC Starting Grant project EVWRIT (*Everyday Writing in Graeco-Roman and Late Antique Egypt. A Socio-Semiotic Study of Communicative Variation*), a project which has received funding from the European Research Council under the Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant Agreement No. 756487).

[3] See https://www.evwrit.ugent.be/events/ for an overview.

[4] Ghent, October 3-5, 2019.

[5] For which, see further Bentein, Amory 2023b.

[6] Ghent, June 12-13, 2023.

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2   The Dynamics of Social Meaning Making

2.1   The Foundations: Michael Halliday

At the outset of the Everyday Writing project, there were some reservations about integrating the traditional field of papyrology with the contemporary theoretical framework of social semiotics, which focuses on modern communication practices. Despite these early concerns, social semiotics and the closely related concept of multimodality, which I will introduce shortly, are increasingly being recognised and accepted in the fields of papyrology and epigraphy.[7]

The concept of 'social semiotics' was introduced at an early stage in the field of linguistics by M.A.K. Halliday, who emphasised the social dimension of language and meaning making already in a 1978 book of his, entitled *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*.[8] Although it might appear rather straightforward, emphasising the social dimension of language was quite revolutionary in the 1970s: as one scholar has observed,

> context was a notion remarkable by its absence from the discourse of dominant linguistics: to express concern with context was to banish oneself to the outer periphery of the legitimate boundaries of that discipline.[9]

While previous approaches – in particular Noam Chomsky's Generative Grammar – took an *intra-organism* perspective towards language, focusing heavily on cognitive aspects – Michael Halliday and other pioneers started to develop an *inter-organism* perspective instead, investigating how individuals interact with each other through language, which ultimately led to the development of sociolinguistics as a discipline.[10] Michael Halliday's exploration specifically resulted in a *systemic* theory of the functionalities of language, which recognises three main functions ('representational', 'textual', and crucially also 'interpersonal'), to which not only linguistic systems but also contextual parameters are systematically related.[11]

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[7] At the last *International Colloquium of Ancient Greek Linguistics* (Madrid, June 16-18, 2022), for example, there was a presentation by Mariarosaria Zinzi, "A Social-semiotic Analysis of Greek Defixiones from South Italy".

[8] Halliday 1978.

[9] Hasan 2001, 2.

[10] Bentein 2019, 145-6.

[11] What the interactants are communicating about (the 'field' of the text) is related to the 'representational' function, how interactants come into contact (the 'mode' of

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Because of its emphasis on language as a functional system with realisational relationships between the strata of *context*, *content* and *expression*, Halliday's theory of language leaves little room for the study of linguistic features which express aspects of social meaning in a more indirect way, such as the features which we traditionally associate with dialects (different types of pronunciation, alternative lexical forms, etc.).[12] Hence Halliday's theory is also known as *functional sociolinguistics*,[13] and can be contrasted with the approach developed by pioneers such as William Labov, which is known as *variationist sociolinguistics*; the latter type of approach is less interested in capturing the intracacies of language as a system, but more so in quantitatively investigating the interrelationship between specific linguistic features and macro-sociological, demographic variables such as *age*, *gender*, *socio-economic status*, and, from a diachronic point of view, how linguistic change spreads through social space.[14]

2.2 Developing a 'Third-wave' (Historical) Sociolinguistic Approach

One point of criticism which has affected functional and variationist sociolinguists alike is the relatively unidimensional and inflexible way in which they approach the concept of social-meaning making. Penelope Eckert, for example, notes that in the field of variationist sociolinguistics, "common practice views variables as directly indexing social categories",[15] with social categories acting as 'constraints' on variation and little to no social agency attributed to speakers and writers;[16] she considers such an approach to be based on a static, non-dialectal, view of language.[17]

Whereas in mainstream sociolinguistics, social considerations have been subordinated to linguistic theory, they have been more central to linguistic anthropology. Of particular importance in this regard has been the elaboration of the notion 'linguistic indexicality'

the text) is related to the 'textual' function, and what the social relationship between the interacts looks like (the 'tenor' of the text) is related to the 'interpersonal' function.

12 Halliday 1968 justifies leaving aside such features by distinguishing between 'uses' and 'users' of language, his main interest being in the former.

13 On which see further Martin and Williams 2008.

14 Labov 1994; 2001; 2010.

15 Eckert 2003, 47.

16 Eckert 2012, 89.

17 Eckert 2008, 464. Van Dijk 2009, 4 similarly refers to a 'determinist fallacy' in sociolinguistics.

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by Michael Silverstein,[18] a concept that goes back to the distinction made by the philosopher Charles Peirce between three types of signs – *symbols*, *icons* and *indexes* – to be distinguished on the basis of the relationship between signifier and signified.[19] In the realm of language, one can think of indexes as features that point to aspects of the social context, such as the personal pronoun 'I' pointing to the speaker, or the temporal adverb 'now' pointing to the current time of speaking, both belonging to the broader category of 'deictic' elements.

Whereas older – structural and formalist approaches – heavily emphasised the denotational function of language by viewing it as an autonomous, purely symbolic system, Michael Silverstein put indexicality back at the centre of the study of language.[20] Indexicality is, indeed, a key concept in the study of language from what I referred to earlier as an 'inter-organism' perspective: given their function as social 'pointers', linguistic indexes are central to how social meaning is conveyed in interaction – they are part of the 'indexical pragmatics' of a text. An important distinction that can be made in this regard is that between *referential* and *non-referential* indexes:[21] referential indexes are linguistic forms that are inherently indexical, principally deictic forms such as 'I' and 'now'; non-referential indexes, on the other hand, index social meaning in a more subtle, indirect way:[22] one can think, for example, of copula omission as a marker of *African American Vernacular English*, or more broadly of the use of a dialect or linguistic register indexing elements of the speaker's/writer's social background.[23]

Apart from different types of indexicality, one can also recognise different 'orders' of indexicality, a so-called 'layering' of indexicalities.[24] Whereas first-order indexicality consists in the simple association by social actors of some linguistic structure with some meaningful

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18 For a collection of Michael Silverstein's writings, see now Silverstein 2023.

19 Arbitrary vs. motivated (resembling in the case of icons, contiguous in the case of indices).

20 Nakassis 2018, 285-6.

21 To these two types of indexical signs correspond larger types of indexicality: Ochs 1992; 1996 opposes 'direct' to 'indirect' indexicality; Silverstein 2023 refers to 'denotational' vs. 'social' indexicality.

22 Lyons 1977, 108 proposes a further subclassification of indexical signs – non-referential ones in particular – into 'individual-identifying' and 'group-identifying', subdividing the latter group into 'region-identifying', 'status-identifying', 'occupation-identifying', etc.

23 Nakassis 2018 discusses this 'ambivalent ground' of indexicality, that is, the tension between immediacy and mediation. He also points to some important differences between types of indexicals in terms of (i) *presupposition* vs. *entailment* of aspects of the context and (ii) *localizability* vs. *globality* of the indexical act (293-4).

24 Silverstein 2003.

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social category such as *age*, *class*, *gender*, etc., second-order indexicality "is a metapragmatic concept, describing the noticing, discussion, and rationalisation of first-order indexicality".[25] For example, a second-person plural pronoun (referentially) indexes a plural addressee, but may in specific interactive contexts also index honorification of a singular addressee. Through a further process of conventionalisation ('enregisterment'), use of this same pronoun may come to function to index qualities of the speaker – as being polite, old-fashioned, etc.[26] – and in time, higher-order levels of indexicality may transform or even completely replace lower-order levels of indexicality.[27] Central to any *n + 1st order-indexicality*[28] is ideology: as Penelope Eckert notes, reconstruals of existing indexical values "take place within a fluid and ever-changing ideological field".[29]

Sociolinguists have started to embed Silverstein's insights within a new, so-called 'third wave' of sociolinguistic study,[30] which views the relationship between social meaning and variation as dialectical, with variation not only *reflecting* but also *constructing* social meaning, and therefore acting as a force in social change. Penelope Eckert refers to this new wave of variation study in terms of a *stylistic* approach,[31] whereby linguistic variation is considered an essential feature of language, constituting as it does "a social semiotic system capable of expressing the full range of a community's social concerns".[32] Given that such social concerns continually change, the social meaning of variables cannot be fixed, but must be, rather, mutable. This mutability is achieved, Eckert argues, through stylistic practice, with speakers making social-semiotic moves by "reinterpreting variables and combining and recombing them in a continual process of verbal bricolage".[33] Fundamental to indexical mutability, and the reinterpretation of indexical values, is Silverstein's concept of indexical order,[34] as outlined in the following hypothetical case:

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25   Milroy 2004, 167. One can compare Silverstein's orders of indexicality to the distinction made by Labov and others between *indicators*, *markers*, and *stereotypes*, though the latter distinction is more static in nature (Eckert 2008, 463-4).

26   I borrow the example from Nakassis 2018, 296-7.

27   Nakassis 2018, 298.

28   That is, second-order, third-order, etc. indexicality.

29   Eckert 2008, 464.

30   For an outline of three waves of analytic practice in sociolinguistic study, see Eckert 2012. For an application in the field of historical sociolinguistics, see Conde-Silvestre 2016.

31   The two earlier approaches that are identified are referred to as 'macro-sociological' and 'ethnographic' respectively (Eckert 2012).

32   Eckert 2012, 94.

33   Eckert 2012, 94.

34   As Eckert 2008, 463 notes, "[indexical order] gives a foothold on the relation between the macrosociological facts and linguistic practice by providing a theoretical

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> At some initial stage, a population may become salient, and a dis-
> tinguishing feature of that population's speech may attract atten-
> tion. Once recognized, that feature can be extracted from its lin-
> guistic surroundings and come, on its own, to index membership
> in that population. It can then be called up in ideological moves
> with respect to the population, invoking ways of belonging to, or
> characteristics or stances associated with, that population. Such
> an index can be used by outsiders to call up stereotypes associ-
> ated with the population [...] repeated indexical acts of this sort
> conventionalize the new sign, at which point it becomes available
> for further indexical moves. (Eckert 2012, 94)

Eckert argues that the situation described above is not accidental,
but rather a continuous process in which linguistic features of all
sorts are continually involved. She conceives of indexical order not
as a linear process, but as something that can progress simultane-
ously and over time in multiple directions, creating a set of related
meanings. This set of related meanings is described in terms of an
'indexical field'[35] – "a constellation of ideologically linked meanings,
any region of which can be invoked in context".[36]

In the case of Greek, one can think of the use of archaic ('atticis-
tic') linguistic features by the social elite to signal education, but al-
so distinction from the masses, Hellenicity, etc.[37] In specific contexts,
the use of archaic features in communicative contexts may be used
stylistically: John Lee, for example, has shown that in the New Testa-
ment linguistic structures which are associated with formality, such
as vocative ὦ, the particle οὖν, the future tense, etc. are found specif-
ically in the words of Jesus.[38] The social qualities the gospel writers
were expressing (indexing) through this usage may have been vari-
ous, such as Jesus' importance, his leadership, moral qualities, etc.[39]
One can compare this to the research done by Christian Gastgeber on
a corpus from a much later date, the fourteenth-century documents

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account of the role of construal in context in the process of indexical change".

35 See further Eckert 2008.

36 Eckert 2012, 94. This resembles an earlier – less speaker-focused – proposal by
Elinor Ochs, who suggested that we think of situational dimensions as linked to oth-
er situational dimensions, through "socially and culturally constructed valences", of
which members in all societies have knowledge. Ochs argues that such a system of lin-
guistic forms conveying multiple social meanings has multiple advantages: (a) it is high-
ly efficient from the perspective of linguistic processing and acquisition, and (b) it al-
lows speakers to exploit structural ambiguities in social meaning for strategic ends
(Ochs 1996).

37 E.g. Kim 2010.

38 Lee 1985.

39 As suggested by Bentein 2019a, 157.

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from the chancellery of the patriarch of Constantinople:[40] this scholar argues that the presence of lower-level (non-archaising) linguistic features in some of the letters should not be interpreted in terms of scribal incompetence or a declining cultural level, but rather in terms of 'audience design' from the part of the scribes: a lower register is reserved for documents addressed to non-Greeks, 'barbarians', in order to improve understandability, but also to index that the addressee does not reach a certain cultural level.[41]

Based on sociolinguistic research, Penelope Eckert provides a – speculative – illustration of an indexical field for the English variable */t/ release*,[42] which includes three types of social categories – *social types* (indicated in boxes), *permanent qualities* (indicated in black) and *stances* (indicated in gray) – one or more of which may be activated in specific communicative contexts.
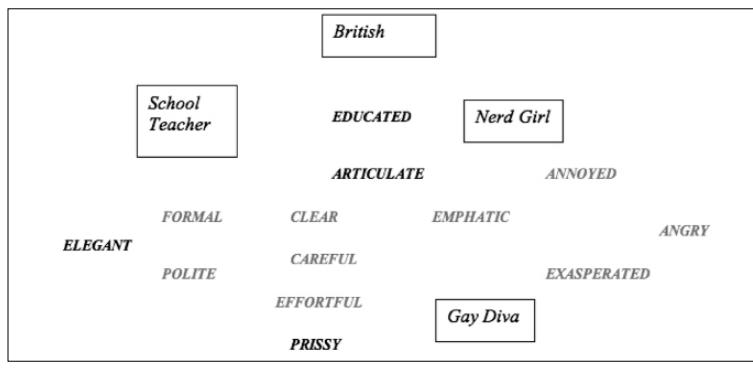
Figure 1 Indexical field of /t/ release (from Eckert 2008, 469)

As Eckert notes, moving from the first to the third wave of analysis in sociolinguistic study, the relationship between language and society has been reversed, language no longer passively reflecting social categories, but rather constituting them: "the emphasis on stylistic practice in the third wave places speakers not as passive and stable carriers of dialect, but as stylistic agents, tailoring linguistic styles in ongoing and lifelong projects of self-construction and differentiation".[43]

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40 Gastgeber 2017.

41 Gastgeber 2017, 352.

42 The full articulation (hyperarticulation) of a /t/ where one would not normally expect it.

43 Eckert 2012, 97-8.

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2.3   Beyond Language: Multimodality[44]

While focusing on language, Michael Halliday – who I mentioned as one of the founding fathers of (functional) sociolinguistics – at an early stage recognised that the creation of social meaning is not limited to language; indeed, he noted that "language may be, in some rather vague, undefined sense, the most important, the most comprehensive, the most all-embracing; it is hard to say exactly how. But there are many other modes of meaning, in any culture, which are outside the realm of language [...] these are all bearers of meaning in the culture. Indeed, we can define a culture as a set of semiotic systems, a set of systems of meaning, all of which interrelate".[45] The insight that other semiotic 'modes' can be used to create meaning together with – or even independently from – language has come to be known under the heading of 'multimodality'.[46]

The birth of multimodality research is usually situated in the 1990s,[47] with Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's groundbreaking *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*,[48] a book that intended to set out a 'grammar' of the meaning-making possibilities available in visual-based communicative artefacts. Kress and van Leeuwen do so by extending the three main functions of language[49] identified by Michael Halliday to other modes as well, discussing the systems of choice available for expressing each of these (meta)functions.[50] Subsequent scholarship in the area of multimodality has built upon the foundations laid by Kress and van Leeuwen's social-semiotic approach, scholars working in the Systemic Functional framework in particular.[51] Kress and van Leeuwen's pioneering approach did not go

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44   This section draws from Bentein, Amory 2023a, 2-4 and Bentein, Kootstra 2024.

45   Halliday, Hasan 1989, 4.

46   Halliday, Hasan 1989, 4 mention as other semiotic modes both art forms (painting, sculpture, music, dance, etc.) and modes of cultural behaviour that do not constitute forms of art (modes of exchange, dress, etc.). Bateman, Wildfeuer, Hiippala 2017 provide an updated discussion which incorporates five 'use case areas' (temporal and unscripted; temporal and scripted; spatial and static; spatial and dynamic; spatiotemporal and interactive).

47   One should keep in mind though that considerations of the semiotic potential of different media can already be found at a much earlier date: Kaltenbacher 2004 refers to Lessing's famous 1766 essay *Laokoon: oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* as "one of the first multimodal studies in the European humanities" (192), and in fact ideas about the interrelationship between text and image can already be found in antiquity.

48   Kress, Van Leeuwen 1996.

49   Representational, textual and interpersonal, see fn. 11.

50   So, for example, Kress and van Leeuwen distinguish between the systems of 'information value', 'salience', and 'framing' for the textual metafunction.

51   Leading to the development of a new subdiscipline, Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SFMDA), on which see e.g. O'Halloran 2008.

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uncriticised, though: criticism was voiced, among others, about the difficulty of empirically verifying some of the claims that were made, the extension of a conceptual framework that was designed for language to other areas of communication, and the fluidity of fundamental concepts such as mode, defined rather abstractly as "a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning".[52]

More recent scholarship has therefore elaborated a new approach that is oriented towards building a descriptive model[53] that can be used for the corpus-based study of multimodal artefacts, the so-called 'Genre and Multimodality' (GeM)-model.[54] An essential characteristic of the Genre and Multimodality-model is that it starts from a *layered* annotation structure: Bateman and his associates view page-based documents as 'multi-layered semiotic artefacts' and describe such artefacts in terms of four layers, known as the *base layer* (the basic elements that are physically present on a page), the *layout layer* (the lay-out properties and structure of the multimodal artefact), the *rhetorical layer* (the rhetorical relationship between content elements on the page), and the *navigation layer* (the navigation units that help the reader to navigate the page).

The multi-user database that we have created in the context of the *Everyday Writing* project to study processes of meaning making in non-literary sources from an inter-disciplinary (multi-modal) point of view, takes inspiration from the GeM model – for example when it comes to the base layer – though at the same time it elaborates certain aspects, such as socio-pragmatic and text-structural annotation. Before providing a brief outline of the project database,[55] I should specify its contents: the focus corpus[56] consists of some five thousand documents from the Roman and Late Antique period (I-VIII AD), belonging to three main text types (*letters*, *petitions*, and *contracts*). Most of these documents are written in Greek, but the database also contains a fair amount of multilingual documents, as well as documents written in another language (Latin/Coptic/Arabic). Structurally speaking, the Everyday Writing database consists of five main areas:

- *Metadata* is the only area that is shared by all team members, and is used for annotating documents socio-pragmatically, with regard to the place and time of writing, the text type, the

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52   Kress 2010, 79.

53   Simultaneously attempting to offer a more precise definition of core concepts like 'mode'. Bateman 2011, for example, argues that semiotic modes consist out of three strata, called 'material substrate', 'semiotic resources', and 'discourse semantics'.

54   Bateman 2008; Hiippala 2016.

55   For a much more extensive outline, see now Bentein 2024.

56   Some individual team members have defined their own corpora, which partially overlap with the focus corpus. I will not go further into this here.

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characteristics of the people that are involved in the communicative act (such as their occupation, social status, age, gender, family relations, etc.), as well as their communicative goals, interpersonal relationship, etc.

- *Materiality* is similar to metadata in the sense that it involves information at the level of the entire document, such as its dimensions (height and width), margins, number of lines, writing direction, etc.
- *Text structure*, on the other hand, goes below the level of the document in its entirety, and looks at how the text is internally organised, in terms of *generic structure* (e.g. is there an opening, body, and closing?), *lay-out structure* (e.g. is the opening visually set apart?), *handwriting* (e.g. are there multiple hands at work?), and *levels* (e.g. is one text embedded in another?).
- *Base annotations* are made at the lowest level, usually words or combinations of words. These annotations can be linguistic or typographic[57] in nature, concerning for example the use of subordinating or coordinating conjunctions, or that of insertions, corrections, abbreviations, etc.
- The database also has a *languages* section, which is relevant to both the macro-level of the text and lower levels. Whereas many texts are written in a single language/script, often one can find switches in one and the same text between languages and/ or scripts, ranging from individual letters to larger passages.

Within each of the annotation areas, we have significantly advanced the state of the art by adopting novel digital approaches – some of which have become tools in their own right, like the *Measurement Tool* developed in the context of Serena Causo's PhD research, as well as the *Character Recognition Tool* developed in the context of Antonia Apostolakou's PhD research – as well as by significantly extending and defining annotation domains within each of the areas. Thanks to a new website that is in the making,[58] it will become possible to connect each of the annotation domains to each other: so, for example, a user will be able to search for all instances of a given subordinating conjunction encountered in professional handwritings, further specifying for text type, place of writing, etc. The same is true for different types of text structure: a user can search for all hand shifts that occur in a single lay-out block. This, we hope, will allow users to conceive of and answer research questions that were hitherto not on the table.

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[57] Whereas the term 'typography' is sometimes associated with printed text, it is now increasingly being used "to refer to the visual organisation of written language however it is produced" (Walker 2001, 2).

[58] Now accessible at dev.evwrit.ugent.be (though still password-protected).

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3 Pragmatic Paradigms and Indexical Fields: Engaging In Semiotic Grammar

Although each of us has been focused on their individual research projects, we have collectively made significant progress in developing our digital environment over the past few years – or, more precisely, set of interrelated digital environments – and the annotation and exploration of the focus corpus consisting of nearly five thousand documents. This should allow us to start looking at non-literary sources in a more holistic fashion, and to compile a 'semiotic grammar',[59] that is, a descriptive inventory of indexical features in non-literary sources.

Essential to that broader goal – and to the Everyday Writing project's methodology – are the concepts of 'pragmatic paradigm' (on the formal side) and 'indexical field' (on the social meaning-making side). As I have already discussed the concept of indexical field as a set of ideologically linked social meanings in § 2, I will focus here on the concept of pragmatic paradigm, which was introduced by Michael Silverstein with reference to the fact that during communication speakers can often choose one of a set of variant forms ('formal alternants'), each of which carries specific social indexicalities, being linked to a social situation of a particular kind.[60] For example, the terms of address one opts for will differ radically depending on whether we are writing to a student, a colleague, a friend, or a superior – though in our own times such social practices are changing rapidly, too.[61] In sociolinguistic research, such pragmatic paradigms have traditionally been studied under the heading of a 'linguistic variable' consisting of a set of 'variants' that are semantically/functionally equivalent but socially distinct – though scholarship has questioned the extent to which *complete* semantic equivalence is a reality.[62] I do not want to engage with that debate here: rather, the important point to stress is that in other semiotic domains, such variables (or, as I prefer, pragmatic paradigms) exist, too: in the field of materiality, for example, one can think of the different writing materials, writing directions, formats, forms, etc. that our sources testify to as forming a pragmatic paradigm of their own. From this point of view, the annotation fields in our project database can be conceived of as making up pragmatic paradigms within different 'modes' of

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59   I borrow the term 'semiotic grammar' from McGregor 1997, who works in the paradigm of *Systemic Functional Linguistics*.

60   E.g. Silverstein 2023, 72. Silverstein alternatively speaks of an 'indexical' paradigm.

61   The classic reference is Brown, Ford 1961, now outdated. For address in Ancient Greek, see in particular the work of Eleanor Dickey (e.g. Dickey 1996; 2004).

62   E.g. Lavandera 1978, 181, who proposes to relax the condition of semantic *equivalence*, and suggests to replace it with a condition of functional *comparability* instead.

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meaning-making (*linguistic*, *visual*, *material*, etc.). That we can inventory such variation does not mean that each and every ancient writer had internalised the range of communicative options, to the contrary: surely not every ancient writer had the knowledge or means to stylise his communicative act to achieve a maximal rhetorical effect.

Recent papyrological scholarship has not failed to notice the variability that is inherent in our ancient sources, and to explore its social properties: an important point of reference is the approach towards the visual and material characteristics of non-literary sources spearheaded by Jean-Luc Fournet under the heading of "paléographie signifiante".[63] In observing that "l'analyse matérielle d'un document peut être porteuse de sens",[64] not only when it comes to text type, but also with regard to the socio-cultural context of writing and the provenance of the document, Fournet has argued that palaeography[65] should go beyond the purely descriptive analysis of documents, and should pay much more attention to the interrelationship between material features and context. Fournet himself has particularly explored this approach with regard to document format: distinguishing between two types of format – horizontal and vertical – Fournet argues that a connection exists with text types, which may have made this feature socially meaningful:

> c'est peut-être pour le rédacteur d'une pétition une façon de distinguer la pétition des autres genres documentaires, de faire sentir la différence entre un texte destiné directement à l'autorité et des documents contractuels passés entre partis par la médiation d'un notaire.[66]

Linguistically-oriented scholarship, even more so, has analysed the relationship between linguistic features – both generic elements and more specific linguistic features – and social parameters. Felicia Logozzo, for example, has mapped variation in opening greetings, request formulae and closing formulae in the letters from the Zenon archive on the basis of two parameters,[67] the communicative relationship between the sender and addressee ('higher to lower', 'inter pares', 'lower to higher') and what she calls the 'contents' of the document ("orders/matters of 'business as usual'" vs. "favours,

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63 See most recently Fournet 2023.

64 Fournet 2007, 353.

65 Fournet takes 'paleography' in a broad sense, including the study of scripts, writing supports, formats and layouts.

66 Fournet 2004, 73.

67 Logozzo 2015.

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recommendation and entreaties").[68] Whereas Logozzo's is a relatively limited dataset (confined as it is to the Zenon archive), others scholars have taken into account much larger amounts of data: Joanne Stolk, for example, has related non-standard orthography in a dataset of some 35,000 Greek papyri to three situational variables – *setting* ('private' vs. 'official'), *participants* ('private people', 'officials', 'private to official', etc.) and *genre*[69] –arguing that especially the participants involved and the genre of the document act as 'predictors' for orthographic variation.[70]

In his PhD thesis on complement structures in the papyrological corpus,[71] Alek Keersmaekers similarly takes into account large part of the papyri, though excluding what he calls 'highly, formulaic, administrative texts' such as *contracts*, *lists*, *receipts*, *accounts*, etc.[72] In order to explain the 'extra-linguistic factors driving language variation', Keersmaekers turns to a large number of social parameters deriving from the Trismegistos project, including *writing material*, *language*, *genre*, *period*, *region*, *place*, *place type*, *archive*, *writer's gender*, and *writer's ethnicity*. Using the exploratory statistical technique of correspondence analysis, Keersmaekers is able to situate both social and linguistic values on a two-dimensional plot, arguing that two dimensions (*register* ('formal' vs. 'informal') and *diachrony*) capture most of the variation in the dataset, which is in line with previous, smaller-scale studies. I reproduce a visualisation of Keersmaeker's findings here in figure 2 – which plots the twenty-five most contributing social factors to complementiser choice – as it bears some resemblance to Eckert's notion of an indexical field (our figure 1), though being based on a more static, macro-sociological perspective [fig. 2].

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68   For an overview of the results, see Logozzo 2015, 241.

69   Stolk 2020.

70   For an overview of the results, see Stolk 2020, 311.

71   Keersmaekers 2020.

72   I could not find an indication of the precise number of texts taken into account; Keersmaekers does specify that his subcorpus contains 1.4 million tokens.

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Clearly scholarship is growing more attentive to issues of social indexicality, and major advances are being made thanks to newly developed (and developing) digital technologies. At the same time, there seems to be room for improvement and follow-up studies. I want to focus here on four aspects where current research can contribute to advancing the state of the art:[73]

1. Scholarship has so far concentrated either on gathering detailed social information for smaller corpora, or using/inferring already existing social information for larger corpora. In trying to specify the indexical fields that are related to specific features, aspects of both 'absolute' and 'relative' social identity[74] – pertaining to the identity of the participants and their participant roles and relations in specific communicative acts – deserve to be further explored, such as *ethnicity*, *gender*, *social class*, *emotional state*, *occupation*, etc. Ideally, this is done at a textual/ pragmatic level that is as fine-grained as possible: a distinction needs to be made between main texts and their attachments, but it would be worth going further and relating formal features to specific generic parts (opening/body/closing) and even speech acts. There is also a need to better understand how certain metadata values are interconnected, and which ideological factors underlie these connections (see point 4 below on ideology).

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[73]   There certainly is much more that deserves scholarly attention: see e.g. the list of 'ten challenges for future research' outlined by Bentein, Amory 2023a, 7-11.

[74]   See Levinson 1983, 90 for this distinction.

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2. Most scholarship so far has focused on very specific linguistic or paralinguistic[75] features.[76] Scholarship has argued, however, that in the case of non-referential indices such as signs of deference, social entailments are "less the effect of the particular 'salient' or 'overt' sign in question (e.g., a pronoun) than the total effect of a textual configuration of indexical signs (e.g., the pronoun, previous/subsequent address practices, bodily hexis, etc.)",[77] that is, the indexical act is a *global*, rather than a *local* phenomenon, taking shape through the *co-occurrence* of indexical signs (unlike referential indices such as deictics). As such, there is a need to better understand the inter-semiotic complementarity[78] of pragmatic paradigmatic material – both linguistic and paralinguistic – and to uncover to what extent it makes up what one could call a 'multi-modal' register. It stands to reason that within each register certain features will be more salient, acting as 'contextual anchors' or so-called 'register shibboleths',[79] whereas others may be less salient; similarly, the indexical nuances that a feature can take on – the types of social meaning that it generates, its indexical fluidity – may depend on its longevity (how long it has been around),[80] as well as its precise nature (linguistic or paralinguistic), but this needs to be further looked into.

3. There is a need to complement[81] a macro-sociological perspective with a micro-level, discourse-analytical perspective,[82] so as to better understand how expressive possibilities that are available more globally are locally appropriated.[83] Penelope Eckert refers to such local appropriation in terms of 'stylistic practice', with writers acting as 'stylistic agents' manipulating the indexical potential of features, breaking fixed conventions, tropically using existing elements from another

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75 I use paralinguistic here as a cover term for the material and visual features that give shape to written language (compare the use of 'typography' or 'paleography' in a broad sense).

76 But see now the *Grammateus* project led by Paul Schubert, which brings together a broader set of features related to text typology (https://grammateus.unige.ch/).

77 Nakassis 2018, 294.

78 Royce 2007.

79 See Silverstein 2023. It would be worth relating cognitive salience to what Bateman 2011 calls the 'discourse semantics' of modes: language is processed linearly, unlike for example layout.

80 As suggested by Eckert 2008, 471.

81 The need to combine these two types of approaches is also stressed by Stolk 2020.

82 What one could call, after Silverstein 2023, "semiotic discourse analysis".

83 Eckert 2008, 458.

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register (like genre markers), etc.[84] Some papyrological scholarship has engaged with this question from the perspective of 'idiolect',[85] but it would be worth looking at this from a less static perspective,[86] too, analysing how coherently/systematically individuals select formal alternants from a pragmatic paradigm within and across texts;[87] how writers segment, chunk, or – to borrow Michael Silverstein's term – 'metricalise' the social moves that they make in their written interactions;[88] how communicative practices spread within and across social networks;[89] and, from a diachronic point of view, how changes in the semiotic landscape (in terms of the inscription of new categories and social meanings) come about. It stands to reason that certain text types will be more prone to stylistic creativity than others,[90] with private letters occupying a privileged position in this regard – though one should not underestimate the extent to which particular communicative choices were made unconsciously,[91] through lack of understanding of one or more pragmatic paradigms.

4. We need to better understand the ideological factors that drive specific communicative choices, and, from a diachronic point of view, semiotic change. The impact that the transition to Late Antiquity had on non-literary stylistic practices – typically framed in terms of a 'literarisation' and 'rhetoricisation' – has been studied in the work of Henrik Zilliacus,[92] but as Jean-Luc Fournet has more recently shown, the impact of this transition also extended to the domain of macro-generic conventions (such as the loss of the epistolary frame) and, in close relation to it, the visual/material presentation of texts.[93]

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84 See Bentein 2023a for innovations in the epistolary frame.

85 E.g. Evans 2010; Vierros 2020. Compare Eckert 2008, 456-7 for the notion of 'persona style'.

86 Compare e.g. Koroli 2020 for a good example of close reading of a small set of ecclesiastical texts.

87 Analysing, in other words, which linguistic and paralinguistic features carry particular semiotic significance for individual writers.

88 E.g. Silverstein 2023, 33-4.

89 See e.g. Sarri 2016, 814-18, who discusses the custom of undersigning private letters, and notes that in the early second century AD this custom is particularly attested in the archive of the strategos Apollonius.

90 See e.g. Bhatia 1993, 14 on 'genre manipulation' and different generic constraints in this regard.

91 E.g. Bruno 2022, 48-9, who relates 'unconventional' requests to "imperfect language mastery of a non-native Greek speaker".

92 E.g. Zilliacus 1967.

93 E.g. Fournet 2009.

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It would be worth trying to pinpoint the impact of ideological change in a more fine-grained fashion, going beyond the transition from one era to the other.[94] Given the multi-cultural environment that Egypt represented, it would also be worth extending the study of ideology to cultural interactions, for example when it comes to language policies,[95] or more subtle cases of cultural borrowing and interaction.[96] In studying ideological positions in ancient societies, it is worth taking into account a broad range of sources, such as scribal corrections, metaphrastic practices, grammatical and literary texts, visual representations,[97] etc., which vary in the degree to which they are explicitly metalinguistic or metagraphic.[98]

In trying to provide an answer to these and other questions, we have created, besides the Everyday Writing database and website, a new digital application, called the "Everyday writing data exploration tool",[99] which allows to draw up visualisations (bar charts and heatmaps in particular) of all of the data contained in the project database. The new app consists of two main areas: a 'corpus overview' which allows to generate visualisations of metadata information, and a 'feature overview' which allows to generate visualisations of specific linguistic, visual, material, etc. features. For each of these, one can engage either in univariate analysis (involving a single variable) or bivariate analysis (relating two variables to each other). In a more distant future, we intend to develop a 'reports functionality', which will allow the user to bring together visualisations by 'pinning' them, and thus to create a larger overview of the typical communicative characteristics of categories such as genres, writers, periods, archives, etc., or conversely of specific features such as a subordinating construction, a type of code switch, the use of word splits, etc.

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94 E.g. Connolly 2010 on a grammarian's sensitivity to changes in imperial titulature.

95 See e.g. Sijpesteijn 2022 for the question of political, linguistic and socio-cultural continuity accompanying the transition from Byzantine to Arab rule in Egypt.

96 E.g. Crellin 2020 for identity building through (lack of) morphological adaptation of personal names.

97 E.g. Kruschwitz, Campbell 2009 for representations of document types in Pompeian drawings and paintings.

98 For a comparison of different types of sources, see e.g. Bentein 2020.

99 Further described in Bentein 2024.

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4   Developing a Frame-based Approach

Michael Silverstein identifies two processes that are central to on-going communication, namely *entextualisation* ("the process of coming to textual formedness")[100] and *contextualisation* ("the process of how discourse points to (indexes) the context which seems to frame it"),[101] which correspond to two types of organisation in discursive events, namely *denotational text(uality)* (referring to the emergent coherence of what has been and what will be said)[102] and *interactional text(uality)* (the emergent coherence of what has been and will be done in terms of social action). These two kinds of meaningfulness are intimately related to each other, standing as they do in a dialectical relationship:

> *how* you say what-you-say about whatever or whomever you're communicating about, comes to count interactionally as what-you-do in the way of creating the social organisation of an ongoing interaction with a communicating other.[103]

Silverstein himself thinks of contextualisation as a cumulative process whereby interactants gradually and indirectly[104] construct a social landscape during communication, positioning themselves and others in culturally comprehensible social and attitudinal dimensions through indexical forms.[105] Silverstein refers to this process as 'dynamic figuration', making an analogy between full-blown public ritual and 'interactional ritual':[106] similarly to ritual forms figurating a certain cultural framework (bread and wine for example figurating Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist), linguistic (and other) forms create a projected cultural framework in the interactional here-and-now, with communicative participants figuratively

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[100]   Silverstein 2019, 56. Some researchers prefer textualisation to entextualisation, reserving the latter term for the re-use of existing text in another text. I will not go further into this here.

[101]   Silverstein 2019, 56.

[102]   Denotational textuality should not be equated with the 'literal' meaning of words and phrases in sentences. Rather, Silverstein considers it as a meta-structure that emerges from the interplay of grammar and the lexicon in the narrow sense on the one hand, and deictic projection, social indexicality, and poetic organisation ('metricalisation') on the other (Silverstein 2014, 488-91).

[103]   Silverstein 2014, 499 (italics in the original).

[104]   One can refer to this self-positioning as 'tropic', in the sense that it is done indirectly through non-referential indexical signs.

[105]   Compare Goffman's conceptualisation of social space as the 'interaction order' (Goffman 1983).

[106]   For the notion of interaction ritual, see Goffman 1967.

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performing identity-moves in social space.[107] An influential way in which sociolinguistic scholarship has tried to capture the intricacies of emergent interactional textuality – how we construct a cumulatively coherent story about our communicative participants – is through the concept of '(interactional) frame',[108] which is what I will be focusing on in the remainder of this section.

References to 'frames' can be found in studies dating back to the early twentieth and even nineteenth century, but work on frames developed in the cognitive sciences especially in the 1970s, together with that of related concepts like 'schema', 'idealised cognitive model', and 'script', all of which referring to "the many organised packages of knowledge, beliefs, and patterns of practice that shape and allow humans to make sense of their experiences".[109] Widely cited for his work on framing ('frame theory') is the sociologist Ervin Goffman, who viewed frames as a situational and social phenomenon that is indispensable to understand the workings of everyday activities.[110] People experience a real-time murder differently from a theatrically performed murder, for example, because the frame is different: in the second case, a so-called 'primary framework' is transformed or 'laminated'. Goffman's insights have received particular attention in sociolinguistic disciplines such as *Interactional Sociolinguistics* and *Conversation Analysis*, where they have been further elaborated.[111]

A concept that was developed in later work by Goffman, and that has been central to these studies, is *footing*:[112] for Goffman, as participants create particular frames, they also construct footings, that is, "alignments between participants as well as between participants and topics of talk".[113] Goffman argued against a purely dyadic view of communication, and decomposed the traditional labels of 'speaker' and 'hearer' by means of an innovative set of interactional roles, making a distinction between production roles (the 'production format') and reception roles (the 'participant framework'). As Cynthia Gordon notes, one way to think of the relationship between framing and footing is to view the latter as "the way in which framing is

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107 Silverstein 2014, 513.

108 Silverstein himself makes reference to frames in his discussion, for example when defining contextualisation as "coming to intepretative clarity as the state of context that frames or makes indexical sense of the text" (Silverstein 2023, 29).

109 Fillmore, Baker 2010, 314.

110 Goffman 1974.

111 See Gordon 2015 for an overview. As Gordon notes, the work of John Gumperz on so-called 'contextualisation cues' has been particularly foundational in these disciplines.

112 Goffman 1981.

113 Goffman 1981, 12.

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accomplished in verbal interaction".[114] As interlocutors create alignments vis-à-vis each other (e.g. 'playful', 'combative'), they define the nature of social situations or frames (e.g. 'this is play', 'this is combat'). Scholarship has also come to recognise that footings exist on a number of different levels simultaneously, with speakers balancing multiple roles, including interpersonal roles (e.g. 'friend', 'family', etc.), institutional roles (e.g. 'CEO', 'doctor', etc.), and socio-cultural ones (e.g. 'male native-American').[115]

Recent studies have shifted the terms of the debate from conversational analysis to textual artefacts and their genres,[116] which is of course of major importance to corpus languages such as Ancient Greek. Whereas frames and footings are constructed moment-by-moment in interaction through a variety of verbal resources, literary scholarship has drawn particular attention to textual openings and closings (and what precedes these openings and closings), which are referred to as 'framing borders'.[117] Apart from extending frame theory to textual artefacts, literary scholarship has also made a significant contribution to bringing about terminological clarification concerning the application of frame theory. For example, a clear distinction has been made between 'frames' on the one hand, defined as abstract cognitive metaconcepts that guide and enable the interpretation, and 'framings' on the other, defined as the concrete codings of those abstract cognitive frames.[118]

To close this section, let me point out some of the advantages of approaching the process of contextualisation – and by extension entextualisation – through frame theory. First, the notion of a 'frame' captures the complex nature of social meaning making in an intuitive and flexible way, arguably providing a more concrete handle on 'social indexicality'; through the associated notion of footing, frames bring together both social activities, those who participate in them, and their social and affective characteristics. Second, frame theory provides a set of concepts, such as *frame lamination*, *frame embedding*, *frame blending*, etc., [119] which are able to capture the multiple and complex ways in which frames can be combined with each other. Third, the distinction between frame and framing allows to clearly distinguish between formal and conceptual aspects of meaning making; while the notion of 'frame' suggests that meaning-making

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114 Gordon 2009, 12.

115 Kiesling, Schilling-Estes 1998.

116 E.g. MacLachlan and Reid 1994; Bernhart and Wolf 2006.

117 Wolf 2006, 21-32. Framing borders bear an obvious resemblance to so-called 'paratexts' (Genette 1997).

118 Wolf 2006, 6-7.

119 See e.g. Goffman 1974; Gordon 2009.

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is done by co-occurring signs, it does not give preference to one semiotic mode over the other to create this meaning-making. Fourth, while scholarship on corpus languages may want to focus on particular types of framings that are central to the establishment of frames, such as openings and closings, frames are entirely compatible with an interactional, 'line-by-line' perspective, leaving open, for example, the possibility of *reframing*[120] or *frame breaking*[121] (along with the other frame interactions mentioned above). Fifth and finally, scholarship beyond interactional sociolinguistics and conversation analysis has started to engage with frame theory: reference to frames is now becoming more and more common in disciplines such as politeness theory and historical sociolinguistics, which leaves open the possibility for interdisciplinary dialogue and enrichment.

5 Overview of the Volume

In her book *Making Meanings, Creating Family: Intertextuality and Framing in Family Interaction*,[122] Cynthia Gordon provides an excellent illustration and discussion of the types of frames that one encounters in everyday (family) communication: these include *child-centred frames*, *knowledge display frames*, *narrative frames*, *parental frames*, *play frames*, *religious frames*, *story world frames*, etc. While, due to the dynamic nature of meaning making, it may not be possible to create a fixed typology of frames beyond some very general level,[123] scholarship has made an attempt to categorise framings. Werner Wolf,[124] for example, has proposed a typology of framings based on seven 'criteria of differentiation':

- *Framing agency*: one can distinguish between several potential framing agencies, which include (i) the sender (author, painter, composer), (ii) the recipient (reader/viewer/listener), (iii) the message (the work/communication in question), and (iv) the cultural context. Whereas sender- and recipient-based framings are interpretive *activities* (*cognitive processes*), text- and context-based framings are 'givens', that is, they constitute

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120   E.g. Gordon 2008.

121   E.g. Goffman 1974, 345-77.

122   Gordon 2009.

123   Tannen, Wallat 1987 argue that a broad distinction can be made between two types of 'frames', that is as an anthropological and sociological category on the one hand (also 'frames of interpretation'), and as a psychological/cognitive category on the other hand (also '(knowledge) schemas'). I will not go further into this here.

124   See Wolf 2006, 15.

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interpretive signals (*physical results*).[125] Wolf argues that "(con-)textual framings are the legitimate core of research dealing with medial framings";[126] indeed, most if not all of the criteria listed below are narrowly related to (con)textual framings.

- *Extension of framing*: one can distinguish between framings that are relevant to an entire work ('total framings') and those that are relevant only to a part of a work ('partial framings').[127]
- *Framing medium in relation to framed*: framings can employ one or more media ('modes' in our terminology); in the former case they are 'homomedial', in the latter they are 'heteromedial' (or, as we would say, 'multi-modal').
- *Authorisation of framing*: one can distinguish between framings that were originally intended, and are therefore authorised ('intracompositional'), and those that were added independently of the original design, in which case they are unauthorised ('extracompositional').
- *Saliency of framing*: one can distinguish between framings that are non-salient ('covert', 'implicit') and those that are more salient ('overt', 'explicit'). Wolf defines the former type of framing as "a discrete physical unit marking a frame in an easily identifiable way inside or outside the framed (part of a) work";[128] covert framings, on the other hand, are less easily discernible.
- *Location of framing with reference to actual message/text*: a distinction can be made between framings that are inside the main text (and are therefore 'intratextual') and those that are outside of it (and are therefore 'paratextual'). As an example of paratextual framings, Wolf mentions elements that are presented in printed literature such as titles, epigraphs, footnotes, postscripts, etc.
- *Location in process of reception*: a final distinction can be made with regard to the location of framings in the reception process, with a distinction between 'initial', 'internal', and 'terminal' framings. This, to some extent, overlaps with the previous criterion, though not entirely. Literary end framings, for example, can be either intratextual (a standard closing formula) or paratextual (an afterword).

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125 Contextual framings occur in the cultural space outside the work in question: for example, an author's comment on his writings.

126 Wolf 2006, 17.

127 In a recent publication, I propose a three-fold typology of textual framings (both linguistic and typographic) in non-literary sources, distinguishing between *micro-*, *meso-*, and *macro*-framings (Bentein 2023b, 92-3).

128 Wolf 2006, 19.

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The present volume consists of four parts which, to some extent at least, can be distinguished on the basis of the above criteria of differentiation.

The volume starts with the overt, total, material and visual framings of ancient documents, making those documents easily recognizable to their ancient audiences. Serena Causo (ch. 2) discusses how the physical aspects of documents, like the materials and formats used, affect their creation and function within historical and cultural contexts. She proposes a tripartite analytical framework for understanding the materiality of ancient documents, that recognises, besides 'material' frames, also 'processual' and 'relational' frames. She further explores each frame through specific examples and case studies, discussing how different aspects of materiality (like document height, margin sizes, and the physical layout) affected document design and use in administrative contexts, focusing on a corpus of 2,500 administrative documents.

The second part of the volume engages with partial, rather than total framings, paying particular attention to the ways in which discursive acts within texts are framed. Ezra la Roi (ch. 3) examines the ways in which wishes as a type of 'speech act' reveal aspects of epistemic and social intersubjectivity. Paying attention to both wish optatives and performative wishes, he demonstrates the importance of wishes in historical social interactions and polite communication, also paying attention to the evolution of these expressions. Speech acts are also central to the contribution by Klaas Bentein and Marta Capano (ch. 4), which outlines a conceptual and digital framework that these scholars have designed to systematically annotate the ways in which speech acts are framed in a test corpus of private letters. These scholars adopt a multi-modal (heteromedial) perspective, paying attention to the ways in which linguistic framings are complemented through a variety of visual cues. Klaas Bentein and Marianna Thoma (ch. 5) engage with paratextual, rather than intratextual framings: they explore the communicative functions of postscripts, arguing that these extended beyond the mere expression of afterthoughts. They focus in particular on the corpus of women's letters, where postscripts occur noticeably frequently.

The third part of the volume broadens the discussion, investigating how aspects of the socio-cultural context are reflected in and through the texts that we study through intratextual and paratextual framings. Chiara Monaco (ch. 6) explores the impact of Atticism on non-literary texts such as private communications, where we would not necessarily expect to find high purist features. She describes how this purist movement was not just confined to literature but extended to everyday communication, serving as a marker of education and elite status. Through a case study, she highlights the use of Atticising elements as deliberate stylistic choices that helped define social

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identities. Antonia Apostolakou (ch. 7) explores variation in language and script choice, viewing such variation through the lens of framing theory to elucidate meaning-making on two levels, namely the framing of specific communicative acts and registers, as well as wider socio-cultural frames. While bilingual and biscriptal phenomena have been explored as framing strategies to some extent for administrative and legal texts, Apostolakou argues that it is worth extending framing theory to include (private) letters. She develops an innovative comparative approach, which takes into account the effect of text type and register (formality) on the occurrence of bilingual and biscriptal phenomena. Her analysis explicitly compares intratextual to paratextual framings, and takes into account the complementarity of linguistic with visual framings. Fokelien Kootstra and Klaas Bentein (ch. 8) delve further into the issue of multiculturalism by contrastively comparing Arabic and Greek bureaucratic letters from the early eight-century Qurrah dossier. They explore how requests are linguistically and pragmatically constructed in each language, highlighting the influence of cultural interactions between Greek and Arabic traditions. The analysis focuses on the rhetorical structures of the letters and the use of supportive acts like mitigations and aggravations, in an attempt to shed light on the cross-cultural pragmatics of requests in a historical context.

The fourth part of the volume discusses how writers could strategically employ linguistic variants to socially position themselves towards their addressees and other involved parties, such variants serving as relatively covert intratextual framings of the concrete interaction. Focusing on Greek petitions from the Roman and Late Antique period, Eleonora Cattafi (ch. 9) explores how wrongdoers and their actions are described through the use of continuative relative clauses, which are syntactically and semantically situated within the broader group of appositive clauses. The study highlights how the use of continuative relatives in petitions served not only to describe but also to characterise the actions and personalities of the alleged wrongdoers in a negative light, enhancing the rhetorical effectiveness of the petitions, while at the same time increasing the formality of the document. Carla Bruno (ch. 10) investigates variations in the phrasing of complement clauses within private papyri from Ptolemaic Egypt, focusing on how authorial corrections and textual revisions provide insights into shifts in linguistic norms, particularly in grammar and syntax. The chapter explores the ways in which these textual modifications not only reflect changes in the language but also influence the interactional frames, or the communicative contexts, that authors create through their linguistic choices, going beyond the generic framing that is largely achieved through formulaic phraseology.

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Section 1
Material and Visual Framings

Medium, Procedures and Conventions
A Framework for Analysing the Materiality of Documents on Papyrus

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Abstract   This essay aims to expand the understanding of the materiality of ancient documents on papyrus by analysing the impact that medium, procedures, and conventions had on the production of written artifacts. Building upon Bateman's production constraints – canvas, production technology, and consumption milieu – this study offers a dynamic investigation of the material and visual aspects of administrative documents from the Roman period. Relying on systematic data collection, this analysis will show how seemingly insignificant material and layout features can reveal crucial aspects of the dynamics of production and use of ancient documents, enriching our understanding of past societies and their writing technology.

Keywords   Materiality. Administrative papyri. Documentary roll. Writing technology. Height.

Summary   1 Introduction. – 2 The Frames. – 3 The Corpus. – 4 Material Frame. – 4.1 Analysis. – 5 Processual Frame. – 5.1 Writing the Document: Pre-Cut Sheet or Continuous Piece of Roll? – 5.2 Laying Out the Writing Area. – 5.3 Cutting Out the Document. – 6 Relational Frame. – 6.1 The Materiality of Archival Practices: *Tomoi Synkollesimoi*. – 7 Conclusions.

1   Introduction

Most readers of this article will be acquainted with Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, the quintessential literary work of the American Beat Generation movement. Less known, yet quite paradigmatic of the general spirit of Kerouac's work, is the story of the composition of this novel. The author wrote *On the Road* on his typewriter, in a relentless writing streak of no less than twenty days, from April 6th through April 26th in 1951. By then, typewriters were already a common writing tool, both for business and personal use, and Kerouac was especially famous for being a remarkably adept and very fast typist, and could type 100 words per minute.

While writing *On the Road*, however, the necessity to constantly insert clean sheets into the typing machine became too disruptive for his level of creative energy and writing pace. He soon realised that the material he was using came short of his requirements. Instead of using single sheets, he decided that writing on a continuous roll of paper would not only better suit his needs, but also create a format more attuned to his 'beat-generational' stream of consciousness and to the very content of his work. Using several rolls of paper of 3.5 meters each, he taped them together – trimming them on the sides where necessary – and created a custom-made 36.5-meters long roll, which both fit his typewriter and his own particular desire to write without interruptions.

> From Apr. 2 to Apr. 22 I wrote 125,000 [word] full-length novel averaging 6 thous. a day, 12 thous. first day, 15,000. [...] Went fast because road is fast... wrote whole thing on a strip of paper 120-foot-long (tracing paper that belonged to Cannastra) – just rolled it through typewriter and in fact no paragraphs... rolled it out on the floor and it looks like a road.[1]

The scroll was never submitted in this form to any publishers, but Kerouac sent over manuscripts based on the first version of the text as featured on the scroll. The material features of the roll, in fact, were not in the least practical for a publisher to read, edit or format, let alone suitable for publication. When *On the Road* was eventually published in 1957, it had naturally acquired the standard form of a

1   Kerouac in a letter to his friend Neal Cassady. For an overarching discussion of the production of Kerouac's scroll, see Hunt 2014.

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bounded book, as required by the market and reading culture, leaving no trace of its unique original physical form. Not only was the original roll form altered, but also the language of certain passages – which at times was excessively explicit or graphic – was modified to align with the social values of the time.

The original scroll was acquired in 2001 by a private collector for the amount of 2.43 million dollars. The staggering price is matched by the uniqueness of this written artifact, not only because it is a *unicum* within modern literary production but also because it provides a rare insight into the production process of a major literary work, showing how the creative vision of the writer was influenced and shaped by the materials and methods used.

In this sense, it is paradigmatic of the strong interconnection between textuality and materiality: on the one hand, it embodies the struggle between the will and vision of the writer and the technology of the period; on the other hand, it exposes the dichotomy that exists between the spontaneous act of creation of a written artifact and the standards imposed by the social and cultural environment. Overall, it shows how personal, material, technological, and social factors intervene to shape the final form of a written text.

These factors – material, technology, and social environment – are systematically explored by Bateman in his work on the semiotics of multimodal documents. Bateman identifies these elements as "constraints" of production that influence and guide the creation of a document.[2] According to his framework, understanding these constraints is essential to uncovering the interplay of forces that determine the form and function of a written artifact. Bateman categorises these constraints into three distinct yet interconnected types:

1. **Canvas constraint** refers to the physical properties of the medium, such as the size or the properties of the material, which inherently shape what can and cannot be done with it.
2. **Production constraint** pertains to the limitations imposed by the technology and tools available at the time of creation, such as writing implements, machinery, or software.
3. **Consumption constraint** relates to the broader socio-cultural and temporal context in which the document is produced and consumed.

Building on Bateman's concept of constraints, this article introduces a tripartite framework tailored to the study of the materiality of documents on papyrus: material, procedural, and relational. Each of these frames offers a unique lens for exploring the materiality of papyrus documents and the forces that shaped their creation and use.

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2   Bateman 2008, 15-19, esp. 17-18.

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2   The Frames

The materiality of a document is shaped by three main agents: the writing support, the agency of the writer, and the influence of social and cultural conventions. These three elements operate interdependently.

- **Material frame** investigates the physical properties of the papyrus itself, including its dimensions, quality, and preparation methods. This frame is based on the notion that the features of the medium strongly affect the writer's freedom of conceptualising and producing a written object, hence shaping its materiality. By addressing the question 'What are the characteristics of the writing medium?' this frame aims to examine the properties of the writing support used in order to comprehensively understand the materiality of the written object. In the case of papyri, the material characteristics of the rolls can play a crucial role in shaping the materiality of the documents.
- **Procedural frame** is related to the process of production of a document and the agency of the writer. It answers the question 'How was the document made?'. According to his level of competence, the writer holds the expertise for producing a written document: this involves both the composition of the text and the definition of its physical form. The choices made during the production process – ranging from the selection of materials to stylistic decisions such as format or layout – significantly impact the outcome. This frame relies on the idea that the writer's technical skills, intent, and knowledge directly influence the document's material and textual features, therefore representing a 'subjective' frame.
- **Relational frame** considers the broader social, cultural, and economic context in which the document was created, circulated, and used. It concerns the influence that social and cultural conventions (or writing conventions) exert on the composition of a document, answering the questions 'How does it relate to similar documents?' or, more simply, 'Why was it made in this way?' This frame focuses on the interconnection between the document and the environment in which it is produced and circulated. It explores how specific material features interact to produce meaning in a context, contributing to the overall functioning of the system. The foundation of this frame lies in the notion that interactions among individuals – or between individuals and social institutions – are ruled by conventions and standardisation of practices. This represents the 'intersubjective' frame, wherein the individual writer – producing the document through their expertise – applies socially acquired knowledge, thus creating meaning that is socially constructed.

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Table 1 Overview of the frames

Frame	Agency	Type	Question
Material	Writing medium	Objective	What are the characteristics of the writing medium?
Processual	Writer	Subjective	How was the document made?
Relational	Writing conventions	Intersubjective	How does the document relate to other documents?

An overview of these frames is presented above **[tab. 1]**. Together, they provide a comprehensive methodology for addressing a fundamental question: *why does a document present a specific materiality?* By integrating the material, procedural, and relational aspects of papyrus documents, this approach sheds light on the dynamic interplay of factors shaping their creation and final form.

3 The Corpus

The original corpus includes 2.500 administrative and legal documents from Roman and Byzantine Oxyrhynchos – declarations, applications, petitions, receipts, summons, contracts, reports of proceedings, lists, and accounts. Extensive information on the materiality of these documents was collected in the EVWRIT Database.[3] This includes (i) the preservation status of the document (complete or broken) and (ii) the position of breaks; (iii) the size of the document; (iv) the size of the margins; (v) the use of the *recto/verso*; (vi) the writing direction; (vii) the format; (viii) the form (i.e. roll, sheet, *rotulus* or codex); (ix) the number of columns; (x) the number of lines; (xi) the position of the *kolleseis*; (xii) the width of the *kollemata*; (xiii) the height of the line and (xiv) the height of the interlinear space. The cross-analysis of this information allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the materiality of these documents, contributing new valuable insights into the technology of writing and administrative practices on papyrus.

Administrative and legal documents serve as an ideal foundation for evaluating the potential of these frames. Their abundance in the papyrological record provides ample data for quantitative analysis,[4]

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[3]   For an overview of the Database, see Bentein 2024.
[4]   See Palme 2009, 375, 377.

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while their textual diversity offers a wide range of content to study. At the same time, their standardised nature and tendency to follow consistent patterns make it easier to observe relationships between documents of the same type and to analyse interactions across different types of documents.

This contribution only includes a small selection of examples exerted from my doctoral research on the materiality of administrative documents from Oxyrhynchos. Given the limited scope of this article, I have omitted the lists of documents used for the quantitative analyses discussed herein. It is my aspiration that these materials will be made available in future publications and become accessible for further research.

4 Material Frame

Papyrus is the most attested writing material for the Graeco-Roman and Byzantine periods.[5] Papyrus paper was sold in the form of rolls.[6] A roll could be used in its entirety for literary works, accounts, or other types of registers; however, it was more often cut to produce individual documents of various sizes.

With a history of uninterrupted use spanning over several centuries this writing support certainly underwent a certain degree of changes: the analysis conducted by Krutzsch on material features of the papyrus paper, such as its colour and fibral structure, has shown that the general quality of manufacture gradually changed from the Pharaonic until the Arabic period, and generally declined, becoming thicker and shabbier.[7] Next to different qualities of the paper, papyrus roll must have been available to writers in many formats. It is important to consider that the materiality of the roll directly impacted the materiality of individual documents. Therefore, an investigation of the evolution of the roll is paramount for understanding the materiality of documents. Were rolls produced in different sizes? Did available formats evolve over the centuries? I will consider here one single aspect of the materiality of the roll, namely its height.

To complement Johnson's reconstruction of the literary roll,[8] I will focus on the height of the documentary roll. To begin with, I collected documents that appear to preserve the original height of the roll on which they were written.

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5 Bülow-Jacobsen 2009, 3.

6 Plin. *nat.* 13.23.

7 Krutzsch 2020; 2012, 101-8.

8 Johnson 2004.
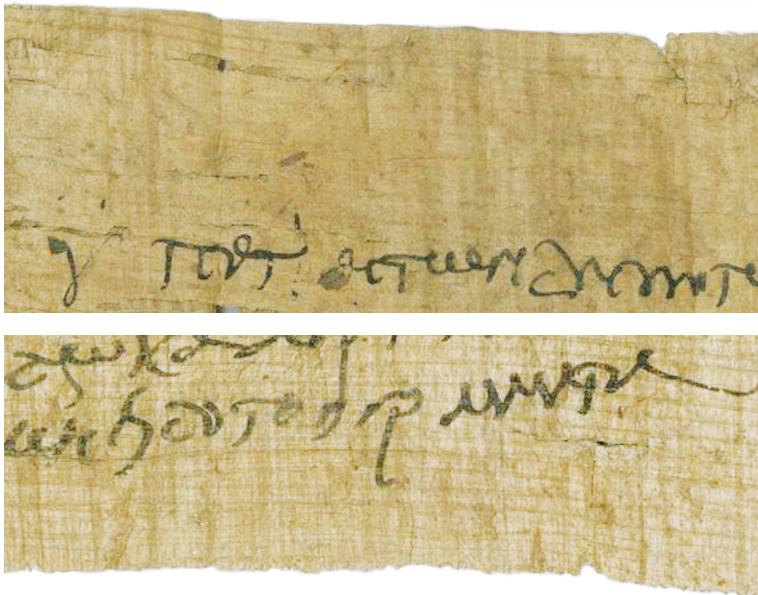
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Out of 2,500 annotated documents, 985 preserve a text that is complete in height, from top to bottom.[9] However, not all of these documents can be used to reconstruct the original roll height, as sheets of papyrus could be cut to match the length of the text. For instance, *P.Oxy.* XII 1425 (318 CE), a nomination of a liturgical worker at Pelusium, with a height of 13.8 cm, presents a complete text, but its height is conceivably shorter than the original height of the roll. The appearance of the edges confirms this possibility: the top edge appears smooth [fig. 1], likely the result of a cut performed by the craftsman

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9   Documents are considered 'complete on their height' when the text was complete and both the top and bottom margins were preserved, regardless of damages or fringes of the edges and of the state of preservation of the document's width. The state of preservation of margins is a thorny issue when trying to estimate the original height of a roll. Johnson 2004, 130 and 200, Table 3.3, discusses this problem in connection with literary rolls, describing his criteria to identify a complete original margin: 1) extent of a more or less continuous edge; 2) recurrence of a given depth over more than one column; 3) clean and seemingly original, edge, with the topmost or lowest horizontal fibre unbroken. These criteria hardly apply to documentary papyri, as they are often written in one column and on relatively narrow sheets cut out from the roll, only a small percentage of which shows a clean edge.

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during manufacturing when the stripes were still wet and soft; the bottom edge [fig. 2], on the other hand, has a deckled look that suggests a dry cut, performed perhaps with a sharp tool in a later stage – not that dissimilar to the effect caused to paper by a paper knife.[10] Additionally, the height of the document at 13.8 cm corresponds to approximately half of the average roll height during the fourth century.[11]

Nearly all documents featuring a height between 4 and 16 cm are very short texts, orders for delivery or payment, summons,[12] receipts for taxes or receipts for the transfer or measurement of grain. For instance, *P.Oxy.* XLIII 3115 (271 CE), a six-line long order to supply barley, is written on a piece of papyrus 4 cm tall. These types of documents are characterised by texts of limited length, produced by cutting the writing surface according to the needs. As such, they do not contribute usable data to the analysis of the height of documentary rolls and, therefore, they were not used to reconstruct the evolution of the roll height.

The first significant benchmark in the dataset occurs at around 16-18 cm of height, where complete contracts, petitions, and declarations begin to sporadically appear.[13] If this height indeed corresponds to the full height of a roll, it would suggest the existence of a distinctively short roll format. To validate this idea, a broader investigation into roll dimensions across different periods and document genres is needed.

For the Pharaonic period, Černý's analysis of roll sizes revealed that short-format rolls were used – and even preferred – for literary production during the Middle Kingdom.[14] Within the same study, Černý identified a set of administrative documents from the New Kingdom averaging 18 cm in height, but suggested that they must be the result of the halving of rolls of standard height of 36 cm.[15] For the Roman and Ptolemaic period, Johnson's examination of the materiality of literary rolls from Oxyrhynchos showed that rolls under 20 cm in height

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10 See also fn. 17.

11 See chart 1, and the discussion on the height of rolls during the fourth century, below.

12 Alternatively – and erroneously – known as 'orders to arrest'. This definition has been employed for a long time in papyrological editions, and it is occasionally still adopted despite having been defined as inaccurate already in Traianos, Sijpesteijn 1996, 77-97. Cf. also *P.Oxy.* LXXIV 5001-12, introd.: "the common term 'order to/for arrest' nowadays appears hardly appropriate, and 'summons' seems to be the one recommended"; Schubert 2018, 253-74.

13 *P.Oxy.* XLII 3053 (registration of sale, 252 CE): H 16.3 cm; *P.Oxy.* III 484 (petition, 138 CE): H 17 cm; *P.Oxy.* XIV 1707 (204 CE): H 18 cm.

14 Černy 1985, 15.

15 Černy 1985, 14-17.

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were seldom used for literary texts, with only three cases attested.[16]

Building on this evidence, it seems unlikely that rolls below 20 cm were manufactured specifically for administrative or legal writing. First, the need of writing surface in these contexts was ever-increasing, making small-sized rolls unlikely to meet such requirements. Second, a height of 16 to 18 cm could easily have been achieved by halving or cutting larger rolls measuring approximately 32 to 38 cm.[17] Such tall rolls were commonly used in administrative and legal contexts – particularly during the first two centuries of Roman rule.[18] Interestingly, the decline of rolls above 30 cm during the fourth century corresponds to the disappearance of administrative and legal documents under 20 cm in this period, pointing to a correlation between the two phenomena.[19]

In light of the considerations presented thus far, I have excluded all complete documents measuring less than 20 cm in height from the analysis. The resulting dataset includes 676 documents between the first and the seventh century CE: this group of documents is more likely to be representative of the original height of the roll on which they were written.[20]

The collected data has been organised by century and is presented in a scatter plot graph [chart 1].

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16 Johnson 2004, 141. He records two cases below 16 cm for the Ptolemaic period, *P.Hib.* I 26 (third century BCE) at 12.8 cm, and *P.Tebt.* III 696 (second century BCE) at 14.2-16.5 cm, and only one example at 17.9 cm during the Roman period, *P.Oxy.* XXII 2335 (MP3 381, late second century); see Table 3.6, pp. 213-15.

17 It is not possible to determine with absolute certainty whether a roll was halved. In some cases, however, physical features such as the edges may help with the identification. See e.g. *UPZ* II 181 (Thebes, 105 BCE), H 16 × W 66 cm, a contract of sale where the top edge is visibly smoother than the bottom edge, which seems the result of an uneven cut. Cf. above [figs 1-2].

18 See chart 1.

19 See chart 1 and discussion on fourth century, below.

20 This corresponds to 27% of the total documents in the dataset. The documents are chronologically distributed as follows: 88 for the first century; 112 for the second century; 153 for the third century; 162 for the fourth century; 55 for the fifth century; 76 for the sixth century; 30 for the seventh century. This distribution reflects the general pattern of document survival in the Oxyrhynchite nome.

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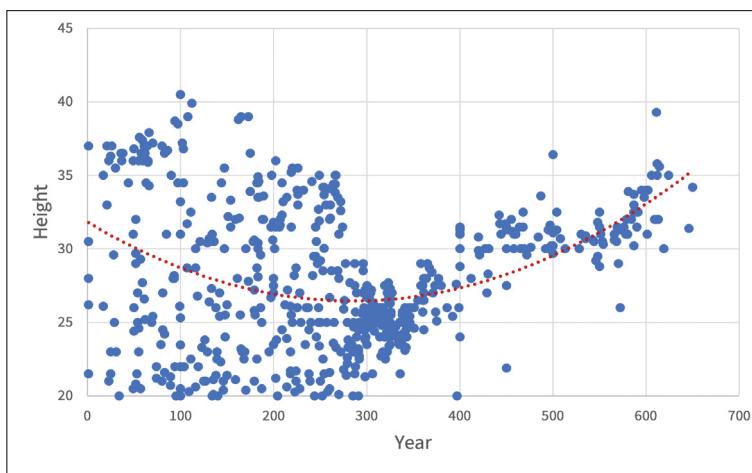
Chart 1 Distribution of Height of Rolls in Oxyrhynchite nome

The chart indicates a chronological evolution, where three distinct phases can be traced:

1. the first phase, from the first until the end of the third century CE, is characterised by a wide distribution of heights, ranging from 20 to 40 cm, with a persistence of documents between 20 and 35 cm throughout the period. A specific cluster of documents between 35 and 40 cm is distinctive of the first and the second century.[21] These tall documents, which disappeared almost completely from the third century onward, [22] seem to bear witness to a type of tall rolls that might have gone progressively out of production. Around the end of the third century, the red trendline indicates a gradual decline in average height, signaling a shift in the standard roll size.

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[21] The heights of documentary rolls from Oxyrhynchos during the first three centuries can be compared with the height of literary rolls during the same period, thanks to the data collected in Johnson 2004, 141 and 213-15 (Table 3.6). In his investigation, Johnson established that the normative height for literary rolls ranged between 25 and 33 cm, with a few cases below or above this range. Tall-sized rolls above 35 cm, attested with some frequency for legal and administrative documents – especially during the first century – are exceptional among literary texts. Out of 47 examples listed in Johnson, only one case shows a height ranging between 36.2 and 39.2 cm, *P.Oxy.* LVI 3879 (75-150 CE).

[22] In the initial phases of the investigation, *P.Oxy.* XLII 3047 (245 CE) appeared as the single case of a 40 cm document from the third century, according to the height reported in the edition. However, further research showed that the reported height was incorrect and the actual height is 31.5 cm. Arguably, rolls of excessive height may not have been favoured for literature.

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2. The signs of a general decline in height emerging during the last decades of the third century become clearly evident by the fourth century, marked by a sharp decline in document heights within a narrow range of 23 to 29 cm. The main cluster settles around 25 to 26 cm. The wide variation in document heights recorded in earlier centuries, which suggests the availability of various roll heights, gives way to standardisation. Significantly, documents exceeding 29 cm disappear entirely from the dataset!

3. The same pattern of limited variability in height persists from the fifth through the seventh century, although rolls become progressively taller. During the fifth and sixth centuries, the height ranges between 28 and 32.5 cm. In the seventh century, it further increases, with a distinct cluster between 31 and 36.5 cm. The data suggests that the production of rolls became increasingly standardised in height and that rolls below 30-28 cm were not used after the first half of the fifth century, at least in the Oxyrhynchite nome.[23]

4.1 Analysis

The disappearance of taller rolls around the end of the third century, followed by the standardisation of roll heights between 23 and 29 cm in the fourth century, represents a pivotal shift in roll manufacture and writing practices in the Oxyrhynchite nome. Such changes to the writing support can lead to gradual transformations in the materiality of the documents, influencing their physical aspects over time – including layout, text distribution, and overall format. What specific impact did the standardisation of the roll have on the materiality of individual documents?

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23 The majority of documents below this threshold are receipts. Fifth century: *SB* XXIV 16278 (end V CE, *entagion*), H 21.9 cm; *P.Oxy.* VIII 1138 (V-VI CE, tax receipt), H 24 cm; *P.Oxy.* LXIII 4399 (475-525 CE, receipt of delivery), 19.5 cm; sixth century: *PSI* I 81 (595 CE, receipt of payment), H 15 cm; *P.Oxy.* LI 3640 (533 CE, receipt for ropes), written *transversa charta*, it measures 15.5 cm in width, which likely corresponds to half the height of the roll when turned ninety degrees, i.e. ca. 31 cm, a common height in the sixth century. Seventh century: *PSI* I 68 (VII-VIII CE, tax receipt), H 4.6 cm; *PSI* 1.67 (VII-VIII CE, tax receipt), H 6.8 cm; *P.Lond.* V 1749 (642 CE, tax receipt), H 7.9 cm; *PSI* I 69 (VII-VIII CE, tax receipt), H 8.6 cm; *P.Lond.* V 1744 (642 CE, tax receipt), H 14.9 cm; see also *P.Mich.* XV 748 (651 CE, receipt of payment): written *transversa charta*, it measures 17.7 cm in width, which likely corresponds to half the height of the roll when turned ninety degrees, i.e. ca. 35.5 cm, a common height in the seventh century; see *infra*.

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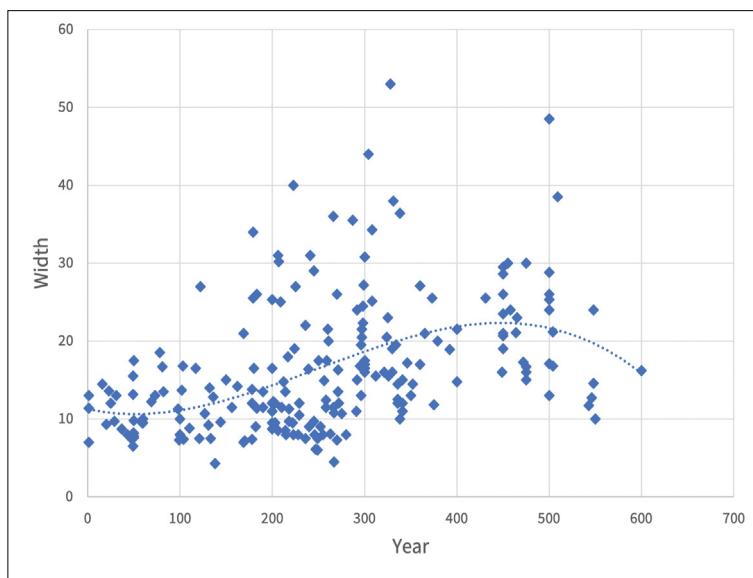
Distribution of the width of Oxyrhynchite petitions

First, as the height of rolls decreased, the resulting documents became inevitably shorter in height as well. Second, as the vertical space was reduced, the distribution of the text in a column had to be adapted, resulting in longer lines. Case in point: the width of Oxyrhynchite petitions shows a notable increase, from a cluster of 7-20 cm in the Roman period[24] to 12-25 cm in the following centuries, as illustrated in chart 2 [chart 2]. The slim demotic format, quite common for Oxyrhynchite petitions during the Roman period due to the use of tall rolls and the organisation of the text in narrow columns, gives way to the *pagina* format in the Byzantine period.[25] The shortening

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[24] Chart 2 shows several documents exceeding 20 cm in width during the second and third centuries. These are multi-level petitions, i.e. petitions with one or more attachments embedded within the main text of the request. The attachment significantly increased the document's length and thus required more writing space. See e.g. *SB* XII 10781*r* (122-3 CE), W [21.5] cm; *P.Oxy.* XXIV 2411 (173-4 CE) W [32] cm; *P.Oxy.* VI 899 (200 CE), W 25.3 cm; *P.Oxy.* LXVII 4593 (206-11 CE), W [25] cm; *P.Oxy.* XLVII 3364 (209 CE), W [24] cm; *SB* XVI 12994 (241 CE), W [23.8] cm; *P.Oxy.* VIII 1119 (253 CE), W [39.6] cm; *Chr.Mitt.* 75 (266 CE), W [27] cm; *SB* XVIII 13932 (287 CE), W [31] cm; *P.Oxy.* IX 1204 (299 CE), W 27.2 cm. Square brackets indicate that the width is incomplete, suggesting that the original width was even greater.

[25] On the demotic format vs pagina format see Sarri 2017, 91-107; Schubert 2022, § 13. Roman petitions from Oxyrhynchos that show a markedly demotic format are: *P.Fouad* 27 (43 CE), H × W: 36 × 8 cm = 0.22; *P.Oxy.* XLI 2997 (214 CE), H × W:

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Figure 3 *P.Oxy.* XIX 2235. Courtesy of The Egypt Exploration Society and the Faculty of Classics, University of Oxford

of the roll can be accounted as one of the main factors leading to this shift, as it compelled writers to lengthen the lines to accommodate the content within the space of one column. Occasionally, documents from the fourth century also show the writer's struggle to manage the available vertical space. This is evident, for instance, in *P.Oxy.* XIX 2235 (345 CE) **[fig. 3]**, a petition addressed to the *riparius*, where the writer ran out of space and was forced to reduce both handwriting size and line spacing toward the end of the document to fit the content within the space of a column.[26]

However, the shortening of the rolls is not the only factor contributing to the widening of the documents. The evolution of the Greek script towards the so-called Byzantine cursive[27] affected the shape of individual letters, with over-elongated ascenders and descenders that tend to occupy considerable space between the lines. This extension of letters led to a fundamental transformation in the structure of the script, from being predominantly bilinear to quadrilinear.[28] This transformation affected the overall dimensions of the writing system. The height of letters increased from an average of 0.35-0.40 cm during the Roman period, to 0.40-0.50 cm in the fourth century, reaching 0.70 cm during the fifth.[29] More noticeable is the expansion of the interlinear space, which moves from a height of 0.40 cm during the Roman period, to reaching between 0.70 and 1.2 cm in the following centuries.[30] The general increase of the script is a significant factor in the widening of petitions – and other types of documents alike – from the fourth century onwards.

33.5 × 8.5 cm = 0.25; *P.Oxy.* XXXIV 2709 (206 CE), H × W: 31.5 × 8.5 cm = 0.26; *P.Fouad* 30 (121 CE), H × W: 26.5 × 7.5 cm = 0.28; *P.Oxy.* III 475 (182 CE), H × W: 28.7 × 9 cm = 0.3; *P.Oxy.* XLIX 3468 (I CE), H × W: 37 × 13 cm = 0.35; *P.Oxy.* XXVII 2473 (229 CE) *P.Oxy.* III 484 (138 CE), H × W: 34 × 12 cm = 0.35; *P.Oxy.* I 38 (49-50 CE), H × W: 36 × 13 cm = 0.36; *P.Oxy.* VII 1032 (162 CE), H × W: 38.8 × 14.2 cm = 0.36; *P.Oxy.* XXII 2342 (102), H × W: 37.2 × 13.7 cm = 0.36. For early Byzantine petitions with a pagina format, see e.g. *P.Oxy.* XLVI 3302 (300-301 CE), H × W 27 × 17 cm = 0.6; *P.Oxy.* VI 900 (321 CE), H × W 24.3 × 16 cm = 0.65; *P.Oxy.* XIX 2235 (346 CE), H × W 25.4 × 17.2 cm = 0.67; *P.Oxy.* VII 1033 (392 CE), H × W 28.3 × 18.9 = 0.66; *SB* IV 7449 (450-499 CE), H × W 27.5 × 20.7 = 0.75. For a discussion on the format of Byzantine petitions, see notably Fournet 2004 and 2019.

26   See also *P.Oxy.* XLIX 3480 (360-390 CE) and *P.Oxy.* XXXIII 2673 **[fig. 8]**.

27   The social and political context shaping the emergence of this phenomenon known as the "Graeco-Latin graphic koine" are thoroughly discussed in Cavallo 1970. See also Cavallo 2008, 121-30; Messeri, Pintaudi 2000.

28   Cavallo 2008, 135-6.

29   Causo 2024, 276-8.

30   Causo 2024, 276-80.

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5 Processual Frame

As mentioned above, the processual frame refers to the process of production of a document and the agency of the writer. By examining the process in which the document was crafted, we gain greater insight into the writer's logic in approaching a blank slate.

The production process of administrative documents is intricately intertwined with administrative procedures. One important, yet underestimated, aspect common to all requests submitted by individuals to the authorities, is the fact that they had to be submitted in multiple copies. I will henceforth refer to multiple copies as duplicates. The submission of duplicates was necessary to support a very capillary system of administration, in which information travelled from the smallest hamlet to provincial offices to be reviewed and archived. Duplicates were required because (i) several copies were submitted to one single official, who would use them to send them up in the administrative chain or simply to file them in the registers, and (ii) in some cases, the same document had to be sent to various officials. As a result, a considerable part of administrative and legal documents which survived as single copies was originally written in duplicates, often more than two.[31] Despite the practice of writing duplicates was a bearing column of the administrative writing practice, the literature on the topic is scarce. Besides the list of duplicates collected by Nielsen,[32] the only other relevant analysis on the topic is an article by Yuen-Collingridge and Choat,[33] which focuses on the work of the copyist and the orthographic and graphic aspects of texts copied in multiple copies. Yet, this practice has important consequences on the materiality of the documents and deserves further investigation. What are the consequences of this practice on the process of production of the single documents?

5.1 Writing the Document: Pre-Cut Sheet or Continuous Piece of Roll?

From a material point of view, one fundamental question arises: how were the duplicates produced? Did scribes draft each document on individual sheets of papyrus that had been previously cut out of a roll, or did they copy the same texts in successive columns on a continuous piece of roll, just to cut them later into separate documents?

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[31] See e.g. *P.Oxy.* XIV 1624 (222 CE), l. 1: ἀντίγραφον] τρισσ[ῆ]ς ἐγγράφης ἀσφαλ[ε]ίας 'copy of a deed of security written in triplicate'; *P.Oxy.* LXI 4124 (318), where the duplicates are still uncut. For a list of duplicates, see Nielsen 2000.

[32] A list of duplicates was collated by Nielsen 2000, 187-214.

[33] Yuen-Collingridge, Choat 2012, 827-34.

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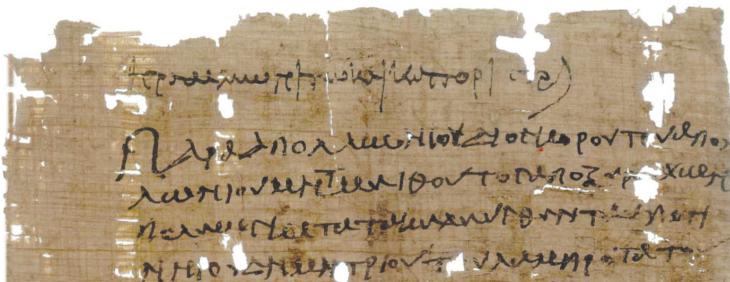
Figure 4 *P.Oxy.* XXXVI 2762 (detail). Courtesy of The Egypt Exploration Society and the Faculty of Classics, University of Oxford

Several examples of documents have survived where duplicates are written on successive columns of a continuous piece of roll, remaining uncut.[34] One example is *P.Oxy.* LXI 4124 (318 CE) **[fig. 7]**, a loan of money preserved in two uncut duplicates. Even centuries later, this practice is still attested. For instance, during the sixth century, *P.Petra* V 55 (Petra, 573 CE?) shows a *donatio mortis causa* preserved in eight uncut duplicates.

If this is not enough proof, the distribution of the text on the page offers additional confirmation. Occasionally, in fact, it is possible to notice that the final letters on the right edge of the sheet are truncated or partly cut off, as shown in line 2 of *P.Oxy.* XXXVI 2762 **[fig. 4]**. One might attribute this to a fast or careless writer who did not pay particular attention to the available space and let the pen slip beyond the end of the sheet. However, if a writer did use a pre-cut sheet of papyrus, one would rather expect the final letters to be squeezed as much as possible when approaching the end of the space. The fact that final letters are truncated suggests that copies of the same texts were indeed written on successive columns and later cut out into single documents.[35]

This hypothesis is also supported by a group of six house-by-house *apographai* from Soknopaiou Nesos dated to 159-160 CE, all duplicates of the same declaration found on individual sheets. The documents have the same height and approximately the same width and are written by the same hand, differing from each other only by the addressee on the first line and some minor variations within the text:

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34 Nielsen 2000 lists 47 cases of uncut duplicates. Two cases – *P.Oxy.* XXIV 2410 (120 CE) and *P.Sakaon* 45/45a (Theadelphia, 334 CE) – are erroneously reported as uncut, as they are glued together in the form of a *tomos synkollesimos*.

35 This hypothesis that duplicates were first written and then cut is already advanced briefly by Whitehorne 1990, 139.

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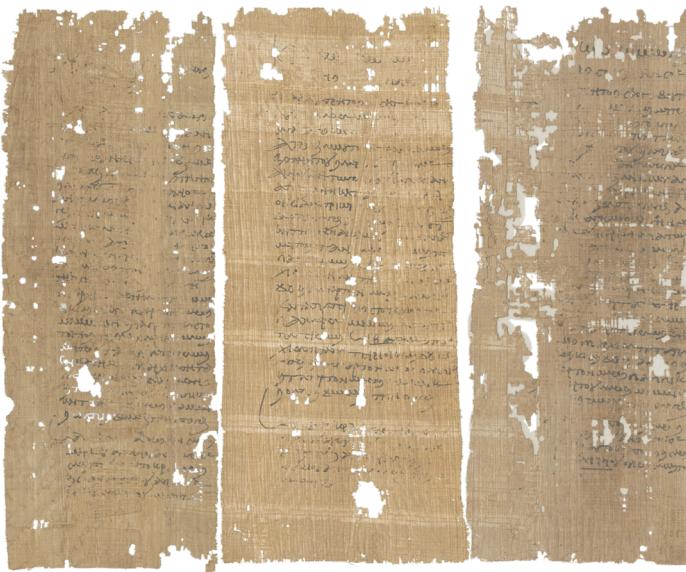
Figure 5 From left to right – BGU I 224, BGU I 90, BGU II 537. Courtesy of the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berliner Papyrusdatenbank, inv. P. 7291, P. 7024, P. 7158

- *BGU* II 224 and *BGU* II 410 are addressed to the *strategos*;
- *BGU* I 90 and *BGU* II 537 are addressed to the *komogrammateus*;
- *BGU* I 225 is addressed to the *laographoi*;
- *P.Grenf.* II 55 is addressed to the *basilikogrammateus*.

In this group of duplicates, the sequence of production of the documents is marked in the grain of the paper: [36] seven peculiar horizontal bands of discoloured fibres are visible on the entire surface of *BGU* I 90. The same bands can be recognised on the right side of *BGU* I 224 and the left side of *BGU* II 537 **[fig. 5]**. The colour and disposition of the papyrus filaments reveal the order of composition of the documents but also offer a clue that the text was written on a portion of the roll before cutting them. However, they do not offer definitive proof, as one might still argue that blank strips of papyrus could be pre-cut from a continuous section of a roll to be written afterward.

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36 Calderini 1922, 341-5 offers an analysis of the writing sequence of these duplicates, based on the analysis of textual variations and by comparing the distribution of the text in the lines between the different exemplars.

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A conclusive example is *SB* XX 14666-14668 (161 CE), a set of four duplicates of a house-by-house *apographè* from Alabanthis in the Arsinoite nome, all written by the same hand. *SB* XX 14666 preserves one nearly complete duplicate and remnants of another column on the left containing the final ten lines of a second duplicate of the same declaration.[37] Notably, these two duplicates remain uncut. *SB* XX 14667 preserves a third, self-standing duplicate, intact in width but breaking off at the bottom after the final date. The fourth duplicate, *SB* XX 14668, is a fragment, preserving only the endings of its first nineteen lines.[38]

A closer examination of *SB* XX 14667 reveals a few small horizontal ink traces along the document's left edge. Though seemingly minor at first glance, these traces may be a sign that a column originally preceded the text. Since this is one of the rare instances where more than two duplicates of the same text survive, one is almost compelled to consider whether one of these duplicates was, in fact, the preceding column. This possibility is confirmed when *SB* XX 14667 is placed to the right of its duplicate, *SB* XX 14668 **[fig. 6]**. The elongated strokes of sigma in line 3 and the abbreviation mark of κατ' οἰκ(ίαν) in line 4 of *SB* XX 14668 align precisely with the ink traces on the edge of *SB* XX 14667 **[fig. 6a]**. A similar correspondence is visible between the abbreviation mark of Κίνν(ας) in line 8 of *SB* XX 14668 and the traces on *SB* XX 14667 **[fig. 6b]**. These traces show how those letters that extended slightly beyond the right justification of a column were inadvertently severed during the cutting process, leaving residual traces on the left edge of the following column.

The uncut duplicates in *SB* XX 14666, along with the reconstructed sequence of *SB* XX 14668 and *SB* XX 14667, provide strong evidence that these duplicates were originally formatted into multiple columns and on a continuous portion of the roll, and only later cut apart into individual documents.

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[37] Whitehorne 1990, 139-40.

[38] While *SB* XX 14666 and 14667 are housed in the papyrus collection of the University of Michigan, 14668 is part of the Oslo collection; see Whitehorne 1990, 139.

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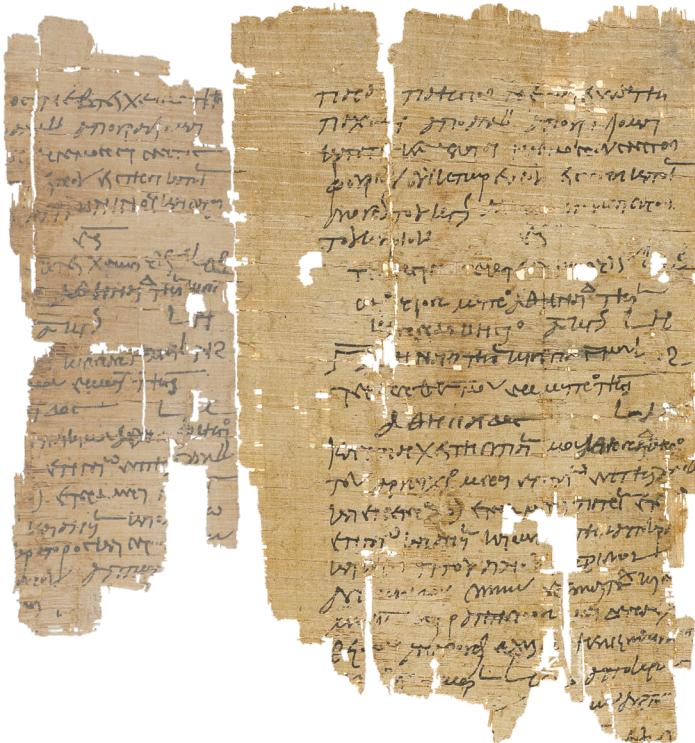
Figure 6
On the left, *SB* XX 14668 (Courtesy
of the University of Oslo Library Papyrus
Collection); on the right *SB* XX 14667
(University of Michigan Library Digital
Collections)

Figure 6a
On the left *SB* XX 14668 (detail);
on the right *SB* XX 14667 (detail)

Figure 6b
On the left *SB* XX 14668 (detail);
on the right *SB* XX 14667 (detail)

5.2   Laying Out the Writing Area

The fact that the writer did not have a predefined space – such as a pre-cut sheet – means that he had to be quite skilled at organising the content in the writing area, managing the width of the lines and the height of the roll without facing the risk of running out of space. The fact that administrative documents of the same type consistently show similar sizes and formats is proof of the great expertise of the writers.

One would wonder how an ancient writer would define the writing space to achieve a neat layout, especially on the right side of the writing column, where the line came to an end. Very recent research conducted by a team of researchers with the use of Macro X-Ray Fluorescence Imaging Spectroscopy has provided evidence of the use of lead-drawn ruling lines to lay out the writing area in literary papyri from Herculaneum.[39]

A similar system for laying out the writing space has not been yet observed on Graeco-Egyptian papyri.[40] Can we infer that the writers used some sort of procedure that aided them in defining the writing area? I believe such a procedure can be still observed in administrative documents, specifically when duplicates of the same texts are preserved still uncut on a continuous piece of roll.

When starting a text, the writer sets the length of one of the first line. This line limited the width of the writing area[41] and constituted a proper 'guideline' for the length of the following ones. This was usually the first or the second line in a document.[42] The length of such guideline was roughly maintained throughout the entire document thanks to another interesting writing device: the line-fillers or, more often, the elongated last stroke of the final letters reaching further to the edge. These extended final traits are often interpreted as methods employed by the writer to close off extra space to prevent any later addition to the text. A closer look of uncut duplicates clearly shows that line fillers and elongated tails tend to always reach for the length set by the guideline **[fig. 7]**, to achieve some justification on the right end. In this way, the writer was defining his writing space while writing and creating a regular column.

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39 Romano et al. 2023, 6582.

40 Romano et al. 2023, 6582.

41 Fournet 2022, 21.

42 The guideline does not always coincide with the first line simply because the first line of administrative documents often contained the addressee, which could be too short for the purpose or, in certain cases, was added afterwards. On the posthumous addition of the addressee, see Whitehorne 1990, 139; Bagnall 1994, 115. See e.g. *P.Fam. Tebt.* 38 (Tebtynis, 168 CE).
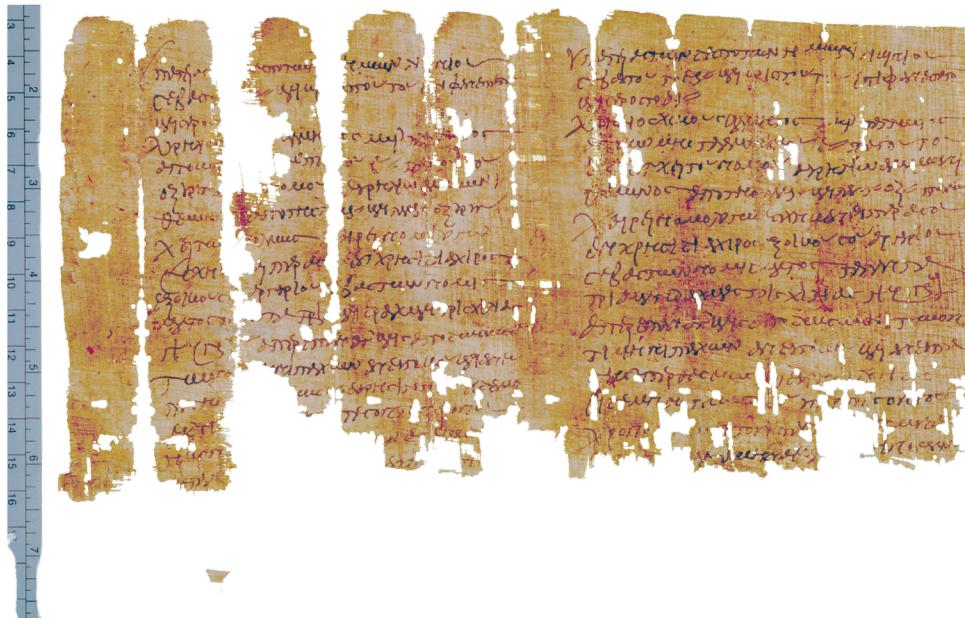
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This guideline-based system also explains the compression of the last letters of a line, which is sometimes observed in correspondence to the right edge and has been often interpreted as a proof that the sheet was cut prior writing.[43] However, the observation of uncut duplicates shows that a compression of the letters frequently occurred when the scribe was critically approaching the maximum length set by the guideline – even if writing on a continuous piece of roll.

An example of this practice is offered by *P.Oxy.* LXI 4124 (318) **[fig. 7]**. Here, the first line, which contains part of the dating formula, functions as a guideline. In line 2 and line 12, it is possible to observe how the letters are purposefully compressed to fit the length dictated by the guideline, and how in lines 4, 5, 7 and 10, the elongated strokes almost exactly meet the guiding length.

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43   Cf. Mirizio 2021, 353-4, esp. ft. 710. See also *P.Tor.Choach.* 5b, introd.: "A destra scrive sino all'orlo oppure allunga l'ultima lettera per riempire la riga; qualche volta traccia persino l'ultima hasta sull'orlo stesso del papiro [questo dimostra che lo scriba aveva tagliato il foglio dal rotolo prima di scriverlo]". In my opinion, and after the observation of the image of the papyrus, these elements prove the exact opposite.

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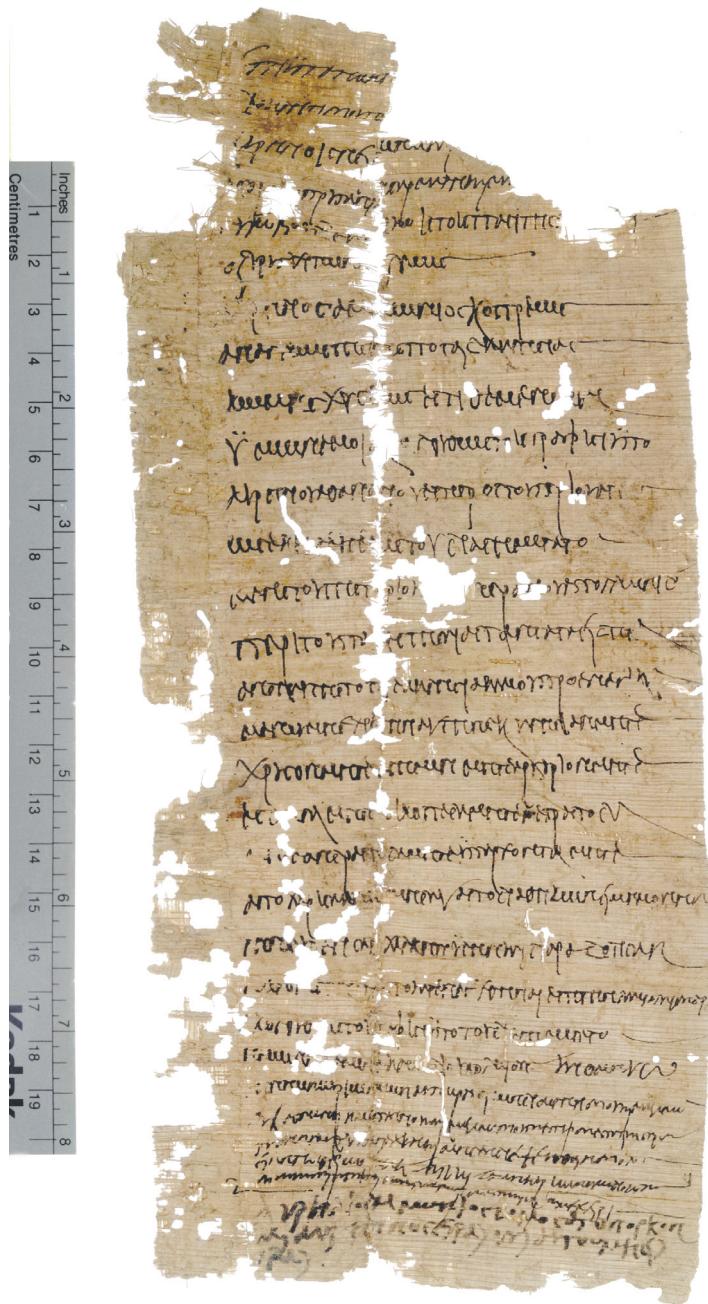
Figure 8 *P.Oxy* XXXIII 2673 (b). Courtesy of The Egypt Exploration Society and the Faculty of Classics, University of Oxford

5.3   Cutting Out the Document

I argue that the use of line-fillers and elongated strokes served a dual purpose: it enabled the writer to craft a regular column, but it also established an imaginary cutting line for separating the documents. Let us think about how, particularly in administrative documents from the Roman period, it is very common to observe the presence of an inconsequential right margin – if any. Most likely, this was a result of the application of the cut in correspondence with the end of the lines. As already discussed, this could accidentally cause cutting off part of the final letters or the elongated strokes.

In certain cases, the effort to align the cut with the cutting line created by the final extended strokes is especially evident because it resulted in an irregular cut of the sheet. Such is the case of *P.Oxy.* XXXIII 2673(b) (302 CE), where the right edge was cut following the length of the lines between line 19 and 20 **[fig. 8]**.**44**

The process reconstructed so far specifically refers to the administrative context of writing duplicates during the Roman period, when the standardisation of practices was key. It is possible that the same *modus operandi* was not used during other periods or for the production of private documents, such as letter writing.**45** In the context of this analysis, it is important to reflect as to whether the idea of pre-cut sheets might be rather anachronistic, as it applies a contemporary concept onto ancient practices. In our current perception the sheet is *the* writing unit. However, the same cannot be said for the Graeco-Roman period, when the roll-form was the norm. In addition, from a practical standpoint, composing documents before cutting them could have been the most efficient method, allowing for greater flexibility in organising space rather than being confined to a predetermined size.

6   Relational Frame

The Relational Frame aims to emphasise the relational nature of writing phenomena, focusing on the pivotal role played by materiality in creating or reinforcing shared meaning within a communicative context.

This frame relies on the idea that the meaning of a given text does not arise in isolation, but by its interaction with other texts. Whenever

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44   See also *P.Oxy.* LXXIV 4992 (223-224 CE), a declaration of death, where the cut appears to have been adjusted between lines 7 and 9 to follow the delineation created by these final strokes.

45   Depauw 2006, 71-2 on Demotic letters and Depauw 2012, § 5 on Demotic contracts, supports the idea that these documents were written on sheets pre-cut from a roll.

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a connection is drawn between two or more originally independent documents, the meaning of each of them is enhanced, expanded or elucidated. The inexhaustible array of relations that can be established between texts – not only between two texts but also within a body of texts – is what contributes to creating shared meaning. The relational character of documents emerges more prominently from the analysis of the administrative documents.

In official communication, in fact, a standardised system of communication is key for the functioning of the administrative machine. The use of formulas and repetitive structures help define and reproduce the genre or the type of documents. This phenomenon is well known and thoroughly studied from a textual point of view.[46] However, material and paratextual features were equally used to establish and reinforce the association between documents. Not only, the material features contribute to visually define the genre or the type of document,[47] but they also serve a much more practical purpose:

- they allow the writer to draw from well-known schemes and to develop specific techniques to expedite the process of production;
- they allow the receiver to easily classify the type of information and quickly retrieve the essential information;
- they allow the clerks to carry out routine procedures more swiftly, such as passing the documents on in the communicative chain or archiving similar documents together.

In essence, the relational character of material and visual features in administrative documents serves two primary functions: 1) it helps define a communicative genre by establishing material and visual patterns, and 2) it facilitates the smooth functioning of the administrative system by streamlining procedures, from production to archiving.

In this section, I will focus on the second type of relational interaction of the official document, where materiality is used as an instrument to support and expedite administrative procedure. In order to do that, I will explore the link between the materiality of administrative documents and their inherent potential to become archiving material.

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[46] See e.g. Mascellari 2021, on the language of petitions; Avogadro 1935, 166-84 on the formulaic language of ἀπογραφαί.

[47] See the recent contribution by Fournet 2022, 17-28.

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6.1 The Materiality of Archival Practices: *Tomoi Synkollesimoi*

Material and layout features of a document are designed to facilitate the organisation and retrieval of information. By reinforcing specific material features of similar documents, it is possible to establish routine administrative procedures, such as filing documents together. A fascinating example comes from the fifteenth-century bureaucratic office of the Crown of Aragon in Sicily. The clerks produced the so-called *libri* for record-keeping, and relied on a new page layout to improve the organisation of information: each page was provided with a hole, used to pile the pages onto a peg to keep them together.[48] From the observation of the layout of the text, it is clear that the content was carefully written around the holes, and that the pages were punctured beforehand. The holes are crucial technique for organising and archiving information.

If we consider the archival practice on papyrus, there are no material aspects as conspicuous as the holes in the *libri* that point to a specific filing purpose. However, there might be a layout feature – less conspicuous and often overlooked – whose systematic observation can prove to be significant and may play the exact same role as the holes seen in the Aragonese *libri*: the left margin of administrative documents.

During the Roman period, the width of the left margin appears to be especially remarkable in documents such as declarations, applications, and petitions but also quite prominent in official letters, notifications, or contracts. A certain consistency can be observed in the width of the space left blank on the left side of the text, which ranges approximately between 1.5 and 2.5 cm – often depending on the overall width of the document. Especially in declarations, which usually are very narrow, such a large margin occupies on average between 15% and 35% of the entire width. A relevant example is *P.Oxy.* LXXIV 4991 (216-217).[49] Despite the very limited width of the document, which measures a mere 4.6 cm, the writer has reserved 1.26 cm for the left margin, corresponding to almost one third of the whole width **[fig. 9]**.

It is conceivable that the remarkable size of the left margin was functional to the filing process, which these documents had to undergo after being submitted to the authorities. In fact, the large amount of paperwork produced during the Roman period required

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48 Gialdini, Silvestri 2019; the use of pegs for archival purposes is also attested in Mamlūk Egypt. See Livingston 2018, 144-5.

49 The document has a similar handwriting as *P.Oxy.* L 3565, where a similar proportion between the written column (5.6 cm) and the left margin (1.4 cm) is also maintained.

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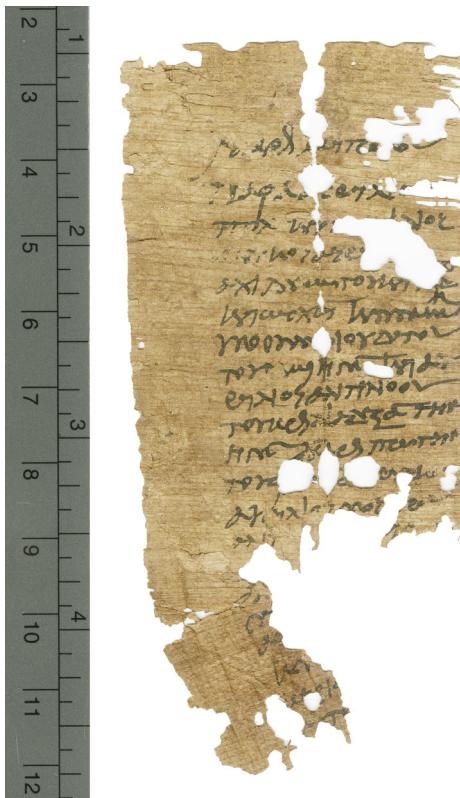
Figure 9
P.Oxy LXXIV 4991. Courtesy of The Egypt
Exploration Society and the Faculty
of Classics, University of Oxford

an efficient record-keeping system. This was achieved by introducing a powerful instrument that allowed the organisation, archiving, and consultation of copies of all public documents: the *tomos synkollesimos*.[50] Each document entering a *tomos* was glued to other files of the same – or related – type, and it was assigned a number corresponding to the position of the sheet within the *tomos*. When two documents were pasted together to make a *tomos*, the right edge of the first document was always glued over the left margin of the second one [fig. 10]. Clearly, a sufficient left margin was deemed necessary for the writing not to be covered by the preceding document. From a small analysed sample of various types of documents pasted into *tomoi synkollesimoi*, the width of the overlap seems to range

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[50] See *P.Mich*. 2, p. 2; Clarysse 2003, 346-7. See also Cockle 1984, 106-22; Burkhalter 1990, 191-216.

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from approximately 0.5 to 2 cm.[51] These proportions are matched by the average width of the left margins of the *apographai*, applications and petitions alike.

As investigated by Ferretti, the practice of leaving a prominent left margin was already common during the first century BCE,[52] hence predating the introduction of the *tomos synkollesimos* by the Romans. However, the repurposing, or even the reinforcement, of an existing layout element to create a relationship between documents highlights the dynamic interplay between layout, materiality, and function of a document. The systematic collection of data and the contextual study of these features allows us to deepen our understanding of how ancient writing practices have developed and evolved according to the needs of the users.

7 Conclusions

This overview goes to the roots of the materiality of a document. The main scope is to expand the analysis to the technological, procedural, and conventional practices that shaped the materiality and layout of the documents. The three main constraints identified by Bateman as determining factors in the form of an artifact – canvas, production technology, and consumption *milieu* – are the foundation for the three frames I propose for a more dynamic investigation of the materiality of the ancient document, which focuses on the writing medium, the writing procedures, and the writing conventions.

As Bateman fittingly remarked "constraints can make themselves felt in the smallest details of a document". In this analysis, I have demonstrated how several aspects of a written artifact – from one as conspicuous as the evolution in the size of a document type to others apparently more neglectable, such as the use of final elongated strokes or the adoption of a just-too-wide left margin – are better explained when viewed through the lens of the production and use of a document within a specific context. While this contribution only presents a small selection of examples exerted from my doctoral research on the materiality of administrative documents from Oxyrhynchos, its overarching aim is to establish a comprehensive framework applicable to the analysis of all document types.

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51 Here follows a small list of documents with their respective overlaps: *P.Oxy.* IV 794 (85 CE) = ca. 2 cm; *P.Oxy.* XLVI 3276 (148-149 CE) = 0.7 cm; *P.Oxy.* XLVI 3278 (148-149 CE) = 1.2 cm; *P.Oxy.* XLVI 3282 (148-149 CE) = 1.5 cm; *P.Oxy.* XLVI 3279 (148-149 CE) = 1.5 cm; *P.Oxy.* I 87 (342 CE), two overlaps = 2 and 1.7 cm.

52 Ferretti 2024, 240.

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Overall, understanding the materiality of ancient documents presents a great challenge, due to the diverse contexts, scopes, and use of the written object, requiring insights into different procedures, and social environments. The present research shows that a fundamental step towards advancing our understanding of the practice of writing on papyrus is the systematic collection of quantitative data concerning both the material and visual characteristics of documents. Such effort opens up boundless possibilities for future research on the writing culture on papyrus. For instance, a comparative analysis of the materiality of rolls used for different types of documents can help shed new light on the classification of genres and typology for ancient writers. Similarly, comparing the size of the rolls used in various parts of the province holds the potential to enhance our limited understanding of manufacturing practices.

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Figure 10   *P.Brux.* 1-18. ImageStudio. © Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels.⊜MRAH/KMKG

By understanding the writing support, analysing the process of production, and understanding writing conventions, we can deepen our understanding of how these documents were created, how they shaped communication and how they conveyed shared meanings. This approach offers valuable insights into the historical, cultural, and social significance of administrative documents, enriching our understanding of past societies and their writing technology.

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Section 2
Discursive Framings

Connecting Intersubjectivity, Politeness and Stance with Wishes in the Post-Classical Greek Papyri

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Abstract   The language of the papyri is rife with intersubjectively marked phraseology, i.e. phrases aimed at the epistemic or social self of the addressee(s). Yet, there are few linguistic investigations of intersubjective expressions in Greek papyri. In this contribution, I pave the way for the *historical pragmatic* analysis of intersubjectivity in the papyri by assessing the types of intersubjectivity that are encoded by wishes in different periods of the Post-Classical Greek papyri (III BCE-VI CE). Focusing on wishes expressed by wish optatives and by performatives, I demonstrate that wishes are one of the key linguistic means to perform so-called 'stance taking' in the papyri (i.e. positioning the self and others with respect to objects of communication) and may but need not encode intersubjective attention towards the addressee as part of polite and politic strategies.

Keywords   Intersubjectivity. Stance. Politeness. Wishes. Performatives.

Summary   1 A Historical Pragmatic Approach to Connect Intersubjectivity, Stance and Politeness in the Post-classical Greek Papyri. – 2 Connecting Wishes, Intersubjectivity and Politeness in Post-Classical Greek Papyri. – 2.1 The Intersubjective Dimensions of Wishes. – 2.2 Wish Optatives. – 2.3 Performative Wishes: The Case of εὔχομαι. – 3 Concluding Remarks.

1 A Historical Pragmatic Approach to Connect Intersubjectivity, Stance and Politeness in the Post-classical Greek Papyri

For papyrologists working on Post-Classical Greek papyri, encounters with phrases such as 'I wish that you are well' or 'I pray for your health' are so common that such expressions generally do not become the object of investigation themselves (a notable exception is Nachtergaele[1] who investigates these wishes in a corpus of private letters); instead, papyrologists have generally focused their attention on two aspects of these expressions, their formulaic or cliché status and their connection to specific parts of private letters.[2] A dimension of these wishes that in my view has been explored to a lesser extent is their *intersubjective dimension*. These expressions generally provide a relatively direct encoding of a positive relationship between the speaker and the hearer. Compare how in example 1 Ptolemaios closes his petition with a wish that good may come to Sarapion, the person that he is petitioning. Note how Sarapion is explicitly marked as recipient of good things in return (*viz.* σοὶ δὲ {σοι} γίνοιτο ἀνθ᾽ ὧν πρὸς τὸ θεῖον). This is obviously part of a rhetorical tactic, a type of *do-ut-des* formulation to amplify his petition.

1. σοὶ δὲ {σοι} γίνοιτο ἀνθ᾽ ὧν πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ὁσίως διάκεισαι καὶ τον (= τῶν) ἱεροδούλων καὶ τῶν ἐν τῷ ἱερῶι (= corr. ex σερωι) πάντων ἀντιλαμβάνηι (= corr. ex ανταλαμβανηι) ἐπαφροδισία χάρις μορφὴ εὐημερίαι (= εὐημερία) ⟦ ⟧ καὶ <ἐν> τοῖς ἄλλοις ε̣ τυχίαι (= εὐτυχία) εὐτυύχει (= εὐτύχει) (*Upz.* I 34, 12-14, 161 BCE, petition)

   May you receive in return, for your pious disposition towards the divine, grace in matters of love, assistance from all the temple servants and those in the temple, and a blessed form and prosperity. And may you be fortunate in other matters as well.[3]

In the field of linguistics, more attention has been paid to the intersubjective dimensions of language, partly because much of the language that we use every day serves a host of interpersonal goals. To illustrate, Tantucci[4] has recently suggested that examples like 2 are

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1 Nachtergaele 2023.
2 Cf. Exler 1976; Steen 1938; Sarri 2018; Nachtergaele 2023.
3 The translations used in this paper are my own unless mentioned otherwise.
4 Tantucci 2021, 3-4.

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much less likely to take place in everyday communication than examples like 3.

2. a: Where is the town centre?
    b: There.

3. a: Hi, excuse me, uhm, would you mind telling me what is the way to the town centre?
    b: Hi, sure. Well, you just need to walk down this way for, say a hundred metres. That over there, right after uhm that white building, is Market Square, can you see it? That is the town centre.

After all, we make use of formulae that are socially required (e.g. 'excuse me', 'hi, sure') and commonly anticipate what the hearer may want or not want, cf. 'would you mind telling me'. In other words, as Tantucci notes, the more common version, version 2, is "intersubjectively marked", meaning that it has elements which go beyond reference to parts of our reality (e.g. that, there, town centre), with elements encoding special linguistic attention, as it were, from us as speakers to our addressees.

In the subfield of pragmatics (i.e. the study of language use in its situational context), intersubjectivity is commonly conceptualised as having two dimensions, an epistemic one and a social one.[5] The epistemic dimension of intersubjectivity refers to what the speaker assumes that the addressee knows, whereas the social one refers to the attention to the social 'face' of the addressee. As such, linguistic intersubjectivity can be defined as the semantic coding of attention to the social and/or epistemic self of the addressee. Classic examples of the encoding of epistemic intersubjectivity are the pragmatic markers *you know* and *of course* in English, which encode that the addressee knows something that is relevant to ongoing discourse.[6] By contrast, encoding intersubjective attention to the *social* self of the hearer typically relates to forms of politeness, such as the use of specific pronouns to signal politeness distinctions (also called T/V distinctions), forms of address or other politeness expressions that address the face needs of the addressee.[7]

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5   Traugott, Trousdale 2010, 32; Ghesquière, Brems, Van de Velde 2012, 130-2; Traugott 2003, 129-30. Alternatively, there are broader definitions of intersubjectivity, for example as the intersubjective coordination between the speaker and hearer (Verhagen 2005, 1). However, such a definition would have a more significant overlap with pragmatics, since much of the pragmatics of language can be put under the umbrella of intersubjective coordination efforts of the speaker and hearer.

6   See la Roi 2022 for the parallel functions which Ancient Greek ἀμέλει 'of course' develops over time from its original command function 'do not worry'.

7   See Berger, Unceta Gómez 2022 for a state-of-the-art on politeness research for Ancient Greek and Latin; and Bruno 2022 for politeness research on Greek papyri.

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If we reconsider the wish formulae in the papyri and example 1 in particular, we can now deduce that wishes in the papyri may have a profoundly intersubjective orientation. Moreover, the intersubjective dimension of wishes covers not only their role in politeness, *viz.* that they project a positive relationship with the addressee (cf. example 1 above), but also that speakers explicitly put their *stance* on the interpersonal stage with such wishes (see § 2.1. for a detailed overview of the role of wishes in the "stance triangle").[8] At the same time, given the notable frequency of certain wish strategies in the Post-Classical Greek papyri, we should consider the possibility that some wish strategies perhaps do not function as reflections of *polite* but rather as *politic* behaviour.[9] Instead of encoding deference, consideration or courtesy (i.e. politeness), politic means that they encode to be expected communicative behaviour, much like a greeting with *Hi* to open a communicative exchange. Also, an additional reason for focusing on wishes is that scholars have generally paid more attention to other speech acts in Ancient Greek such as directives.[10]

Another dimension that has remained underexplored is the *diachronic* one, in particular the impact of diachrony on the use and distribution of specific speech acts. One motivation for this is that the majority of the research on politeness in Ancient Greek has taken a *synchronic* approach, focusing on which relationships with (im)politeness exist between specific linguistic elements and the contexts in which they are used.[11] The most important reason why we need to take into account this diachronic dimension is that forms of politic and polite behaviour do not stay the same across time and space; instead, the forms used for these purposes inevitably change in use and distribution. I suggest that we can investigate this diachronic dimension when we adopt a methodology inspired by the field of *historical pragmatics*.

In the field of historical pragmatics, we seek to

> understand the patterns of intentional human interaction (as determined by the conditions of society) of earlier periods, the historical developments of these patterns, and the general principles underlying such developments. It is based on an empirical study of historical data in all the diversity in which it has survived. Written texts are seen as communicative acts in their own right.[12]

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8   The term comes from Du Bois 2007, 163.

9   Watts 2003, 163.

10   E.g. Denizot 2011; Leiwo 2010; Bruno 2020.

11   Cf. e.g. the studies contained in Berger and Unceta Gómez 2022.

12   Jucker 2008, 894.

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Thus, a historical pragmatic approach helps us verify the diachronic developments which specific strategies of wishing undergo in Post-Classical Greek (III BCE-VI CE)[13] and the *pragmatic principles* that lie behind them, such as intersubjectivity, stance taking and politeness. In this way, wishes can be seen as one important functional domain for which there are different forms of expression that are in functional competition.

Therefore, this paper seeks to answer the following three interrelated questions for wishes in the papyri from the Post-Classical Greek period:

- What is the role of wishes in stance taking? (§ 2.1)
- What are the different uses, morphosyntactic changes and intersubjective orientations of wishes in the wish optative? (§ 2.2)
- What are the different uses, morphosyntactic changes and intersubjective orientations of wishes with performative εὔχομαι? (§ 2.3)

In § 2.1, I discuss the role of wishes in stance taking (§ 2.1) and exemplify how the intersubjective relationships between the speaker and its addressee(s) are encoded linguistically or not in the use of wishes. Next, I provide a detailed examination of two morphosyntactic types of wish strategies in Post-Classical Greek (III BCE-VI CE), the use of wish optatives (§ 2.2) and the use of performative verbs of wishing, focusing on εὔχομαι in the first person singular or plural (§ 2.3). In each analysis, I first briefly discuss the role of wishes in stance taking, in encoding politic and/or polite behaviour, and the role of wishes in interpersonal pragmatics. I also pay explicit attention to differences in the intersubjective orientations of the wishes that we find across the periods of Post-Classical Greek.

The corpus evidence for this analysis was collected by means of morphological searches in *Trismegistos Words*.[14] One drawback of this tool is that it is a subscription-only service, comparable to how the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* works for everyone that uses it when working on literary texts. Yet, Trismegistos words not only has the benefit that one can export and annotate the results (which the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae does not), but crucially also that other researchers can easily replicate the same results. In the research on Post-Classical Greek, it is unfortunately still quite common to adopt philological methods that are out of sync with contemporary requirements of quantitative linguistic research. In a recent review article of an edited volume on Post-Classical Greek, I have pinpointed several

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principles for progress in the research on Post-Classical Greek,[15] such as using (i) replicable results, (ii) clearly-periodised data, and (iii) corpus-representative data (e.g. not generalising from one author/text to a whole period, as frequently done for the New Testament for the whole of Post-Classical Greek).

2 Connecting Wishes, Intersubjectivity and Politeness in Post-Classical Greek Papyri

2.1 The Intersubjective Dimensions of Wishes

One of the likely reasons why wishes have often been neglected in (historical) pragmatic research is that, as a speech act, they defy easy mapping onto relatively accepted speech act labels such as directives or expressives. As a result, scholars have adopted different approaches in dealing with wish speech acts: (i) they classified wishes as directives even though not all wishes serve to get the addressee to do something,[16] (ii) they classified wishes as transitory type between expressives and directives,[17] or, instead, (iii) they delimitated a more abstract function of wishes (*viz.* expressing the speaker's psychological commitment to the occurrence of the state of affairs) which subsequently may serve different interactive purposes in context.[18]

Another reason for the lack of agreement on how to interpret wish speech acts, I argue, is that wishes display a large degree of variation across different domains: semantically, wishes differ in their realizability, with realizable wishes typically being expressed by moods with a non-past temporal reference in Post-Classical Greek and counterfactual ones using the past tense;[19] syntactically, wishes occur in a large set of different constructions in Post-Classical Greek, such as the independent optative, performative wish constructions (see below) or so-called insubordinate constructions that use a syntactic expression with its origins in subordination;[20] finally, wish expressions are used by speakers for a large variety of interpersonal reasons, e.g. to make an oath, say goodbye, persuade someone to do something, which is the focus of the current investigation.

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15 la Roi 2020b.
16 See Willmott 2007, 134 for discussion and references.
17 E.g. Risselada 1993, 41.
18 Cf. la Roi 2020a, 224-9 on realizable wishes with the optative in Classical Greek.
19 la Roi 2024.
20 la Roi 2021.

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I propose that we can tease apart these pragmatic differences by mapping the intersubjective relationships between speaker and addressee(s) that wishes explicitly encode. To do so, I suggest that we can make use of insights from interactional linguistics, in particular research on *stance taking*.[21] Following Du Bois,[22] stance can be defined as "a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the socio-cultural field". According to Du Bois, this complex set of interrelationships between a speaker, addressee(s) and objects of evaluation can be conceptualised as a triangle, as shown in figure 1 below:
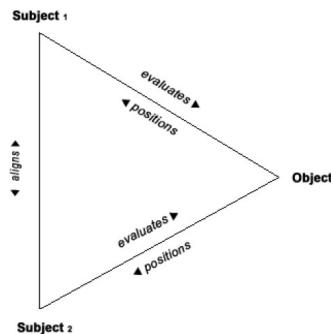
Figure 1
The stance triangle

When speakers take a stance, they may provide information on three subdimensions of stance:
1. they evaluate an object,
2. they position a subject (usually the self), and
3. they align with other subjects (e.g. the addressee(s))

These subdimensions may be illustrated with an example discussed by Du Bois (with the example in his punctuation).[23]

4. (Hey Cutie-Pie *SB*C028:49.985-53.355)
    1. JEFF; Are you guys having fun?
    2. JILL; Y:es:.
    3. (0.6)
    4. JEFF; (TSK) I'm so glad.

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21 Du Bois 2007.
22 Du Bois 2007, 163.
23 Du Bois 2007, 154.

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Jeff is the stance taker. He takes a stance about the fact that Jill and the others are having fun (*viz.* he is "glad"), a stance which he formulated in direct response to Jill's "yes" to his question. The intersubjective strategy can be summarised in a tabular structure as shown below where I document the stance taking of Jeff's "I'm so glad"-statement from example 4. Note that some elements are not put forward explicitly by Jeff, but are present in the immediate linguistic common ground.[24] Therefore I put that information in square brackets. I use a dash to indicate absence of explicit linguistic elements, as for example for the aligning of the stance taker with other subjects since only the full context can be said to serve this purpose.

Table 1 An intersubjective alignment grid for stance taking

Dimension	Stance taking procedures	Linguistic elements
I. Stance taker evaluates Object	Jeff positively evaluates that they are having fun	*I'm so glad* [that you are having fun]
II. Stance taker positions a subject (usually the self)	Jeff positions himself	I'm
III. Stance taker aligns with other Subjects	Jeff aligns positive stance with Jill and others	-

Let us also consider some other interactional settings in which the stance triangle may help us interpret the coordinative behaviour of speaker(s) and addressee(s). Speaker and hearer may choose to align their subjective stances consecutively, as in example 5:

5. (This Retirement Bit SBC011: 444.12-446.30)
    1. SAM; I don't like those.
    2. (0.2)
    3. ANGELA; I don't either.

Note that there are further linguistic cues for alignment here: Angela reproduces a similar structure as Sam's statement (*viz.* "I don't" with "those" being left implicit), using the pragmatic marker *either* to anchor her reaction to the immediate linguistic common ground. Indeed, speakers may choose to put their stance on the communicative stage by using pragmatic cues that signal an explicit awareness of what both speaker and addressee know, i.e. their common ground.[25]

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24 Common ground may be defined as "the sum of [interlocutors'] mutual, common or joint knowledge beliefs, and suppositions"(Clark 1996, 96).

25 For Ancient Greek, recent research has pointed out the use of certain particles to mark information available in the common ground, such as τοι and δή (Allan 2021) or

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Alternatively, speakers may simply choose to explicitly put forward their attention to what the addressee(s) knows for specific pragmatic purposes. Imagine the following fictional exchange between a wife and a husband, where the husband makes his assertion intersubjectively marked in order to explicitly deny the awkward possibility that he does not know his wife.

6. Wife   I am not sure that you know me very well…
   Husband Of course I know you. I am your husband.

An important difference between example 5 and 6 is that 6 is explicitly intersubjectively marked, since the husband uses "Of course" to mark attention to what his wife (the addressee) knows, whereas Angela leaves that implicit in example 5, marking common ground information only. Thus, though both sentences serve interpersonal purposes, only example 6 seems to be intersubjectively marked in the strict sense. In the remainder of this paper, I apply this pragmatic perspective to the wish expressions under study in order to map the intersubjective dimensions which these wish expressions have in the papyri.

2.2 Wish Optatives

Taking a bird-eye perspective, it should first be observed that the wish optative has its own distinctive distribution, diachronic stability and change in the Post-Classical Greek papyri. In table 2 below, we can observe that wishes were expressed by means of a wish optative across the different periods, with a notable increase in the Late Post-Classical Greek period. NRO stands for Normed Rate of Occurrence, i.e. the occurrence of the construction every 1000 words. The total number of words for the different periods used are respectively: 886,198; 2,396,693 and 1,005,421 words. The data for optatives was collected by means of a morphological search for all optatives in *Trismegistos words* after which the optatives were coded functionally (e.g. wish optative versus potential optative).

Table 2 The wish optative in the Post-Classical Greek papyri

Period	Frequency of the wish optative
Early Post-Classical Greek (III-I BCE)	102 (NRO 0.115)
Middle Post-Classical Greek (I-III AD)	336 (NRO 0.139)
Late Post-Classical Greek (IV-VI AD)	278 (NRO 0.276)

ἀμέλει (la Roi 2022), or to contrast novel ideas to those available in the common ground (see Thijs 2017 on μήν).

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Despite the distributional frequencies, we should note the impact of *formulaicity* on the usages of the wish optative to express wishes in Post-Classical Greek. Formulaicity comprises at least two dimensions, *formal* restrictions and *distributional* restrictions. The former refers to formulae that "are not amenable to lexical and structural re-formulations",[26] whereas restricted distribution means that "formulae tend to occur in particular styles of language tied to particular communicative situations".[27]

We can notice the impact of formal restrictions in the high proportion of the lemma εἰμί 'to be' in wish optatives: it is responsible for 508 of the 716 occurrences of the wish optative, comprising 71% of the occurrences. In fact, out of the total number of 716 recorded lemmas only a surprising 90 are unique, which covers about 13% of the total occurrences. As for distributional restrictions, we see that wish optatives recur in groups of formulaic contexts across the different periods, such as a health formula group or an oath formula group (i.e. 'groups' because the groups serve similar goals but their individual patterns are subject to minute variations such as person and argument structure). At the same time, they also occur in a group allowing free usage across the different periods (e.g. May X happen for Y, as in ex. 1 above and ex. 9 below). In what follows, I assess to what degree wishes are intersubjectively marked (in Tantucci's terminology) in the different periods in these groups.

In Early Post-Classical Greek, we may distinguish three groups, each of which distinguishes itself in how and to which degree it is explicitly marked intersubjectively: health wishes (35%), oath wishes (41%) and free wishes (24%). The health wishes expressed by the wish optative in this period are of a particular kind, as they typically occur in contractual settings, especially in testaments, as in example 7 below.

7. εἴη μέμ (= μέν) μοι ὑγιαίνοντι αὐτὸν τ[ὰ] [ἐμα]υτοῦ διοικεῖν. ἐὰν δέ τι ἀνθρώπινον πάσχω (*P.Petr.* II 11, 11-12, testament, 238-237 BCE)

May it be that I manage my own affairs myself in good health. If I suffer some mortal fate,

As illustrated by the example, these wishes are not intersubjectively marked, since the stance taker is positioning himself at himself, as it were, positively evaluating being in good health to manage his own affairs. In other words, there is no intersubjective alignment with other subjects (dimension iii in the grid above), either explicit or even

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26 Corrigan et al. 2009, xiii-xiv.
27 Corrigan et al. 2009, xiv.

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implicit. Similarly for oaths we find that oaths are wishes oriented at the stance taking subject self, as in example 8 where the wish for good for the one who swears truly is clearly oriented at the speaker.

8. ὅρκον ὃν ὤμοσον καὶ ἐπεχειρογράφησεν (= ὑπεχειρογρά|φησεν) Γοιρήνιος Πετεσούχου ἐκ τοῦ Μεμφίτου Θοτεῖ Ἀρυώτου τοῦ παρὰ Ζήνωνος ποήσειν (= ποιή|σειν) ἡμέ(ρας) λ ἀλοῶντα ἐμ (= ἐν) Φιλαδελφείαι τοῦ Ἀρσι[νοίτου] νομοῦ ὑπὲρ Σεμθοῦς Τεῶτος ἔξω ἱ\ε/ροῦ βωμοῦ σκέπης πάσης. εὐορκοῦντι μέν μοι εὖ εἴη, ἐφιορκοῦντι δὲ ἔνοχός εἰμι τῆι ἀσεβείαι. (*Psi.* V 515, 8-18, testament, 251 BCE)

    The oath which Goirenios, son of Petesouchos, from the Memphite district, swore and signed (underwrote) for Thotes, son of Ariotes, who is with Zeno, to carry out for 30 days the threshing in Philadelphia of the Arsinoite nome, outside the sacred altar's shelter, on behalf of Semthes, son of Teos, from the Thoeris region of Arsinoe. If I keep my oath, may it go well with me; but if I break my oath, I am guilty of impiety.

As a result, there is no explicit intersubjective alignment with another subject, but only *indirect* alignment, in that the speaker is bound by the oath to carry out the activity to which he swore the oath. A similar situation is found in those infrequent cases from Early Post-Classical Greek of writers expressing that they are to be held liable in case certain conditions are not met (e.g. ἐάν τι πάθῃ, ἔνοχος εἴη τῶι φόνωι *P.Tebt.* 3.2.960, 9-10, petition, II BCE).

Lastly, we should consider those wishes which seem to belong to a free group, since they are not equally restricted formally or distributionally. The wishes in this group are intersubjectively marked,[28] since they typically express that the speaker wishes positive things for the addressee, as in examples 9 and 10:

9. σοὶ δὲ γίνοιτο ἀνθ' ὧν πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ὁσίως διάκ[ει]σαι (*Upz.* I 36, 21-2, petition, 161 BCE)

    May it happen to you according to what is divine to perform piously

In example 9, the speaker not only puts his positive evaluation forward (*viz.* I wish that you may undergo divine things), but also explicitly aligns with the other subject of the addressee (see σοὶ). In example 10, we find a similarly intersubjectively marked structure. In fact, in example 10, the 'free wish' is part of a larger set of intersubjectively

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28 An exception seems to be *Upz.* I 77, 31 which is oriented at the speaker himself.

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marked strategies: the addressee marking (τῶι κυρίωι) and the wish for good health, fortune and success (the εὔχομαι-wish).

10. τῶι κυρίωι παρὰ τῆς παρὰ σοῦ σώμφεως. εὔχομαι πᾶσι τοῖς θεοῖς ὑγείήάν (= ὑγίειαν) [σο]ι δõναι (= δοῦναι) καὶ εὐημερείαν (= εὐημερίαν) καὶ εὐπραξίαν ἀεὶ μίζονα (= μείζονα) παρὰ τοῖς βασιλεῦσι. δοίησάν σοι χάριν μορφὴν εὐπραξίαν καὶ ἡ Βούβαστις δοίη ὑγίηαν (= ὑγίειαν) (*SB*. XXII 15324, 1-7, private letter, II-I BCE)

To my lord, from your(?) dancer. I pray to all gods that they may give you health and good fortune and ever greater success with the kings, may they give you favour and standing and success; and may the goddess Boubastis give you health - - - (APIS translation)

In Middle Post-Classical Greek, we witness an increased distributional formulaicity for wish optatives, since 300 of the 336 wishes belong to five groups: (i) health formulae, (ii) oath formulae, (iii) interjectional formulae ('if, which I wish not to happen, X, then Y'), (iv) greeting formulae (χαίροις) and (v) free wishes. In comparison with the previous period, we therefore witness certain distributional innovations, such as the interjectional and greeting wishes. As for health formulae, we typically find the same lacking intersubjective orientation, as those wishes are pointed at the stance taking subject in contractual settings. An exception is example 11, where the health wish is used to align with Chaeremon and his kin (mentioned in the preceding lines), wishing that they remain in health.

11. συνφερομένων δ᾽ αὐτῶν εἴη μὲν ὑγεία (*P.Oxy*. III 497, marriage contract, 100-125 CE)

If they benefit from this, let there be health for them

These oath formulae are often found with wish optatives in the first person, expressing that the speaker wishes to be held liable if breaking the oath (see example 12). As such, it lacks an explicit intersubjective alignment with another subject even though the oath functions as a promise to another party.

12. μηδὲν διεψεῦσθαι ἢ ἔνοχος εἴην τῷ ὅρκωι (*P.Wisc*. II 80, 195-6, account, 114 CE)

to deceive in no way or may I be found guilty of (breaking) the oath

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In fact, as shown in example 13, the addressee of such an oath may also be kept intentionally vague.

13. εὐορκοῦσι μὲν ἡμῖν εὖ εἴη, ἐφιορκοῦσι δὲ τὰ ἐναντία (*P.Fouad.* 18, 16-17, contract, 54 CE)

They who swear honestly towards us, let it be well for us; but they who swear falsely, let the opposite befall them

An innovative usage that turns up especially in contractual settings is the use of wishes in parenthetical syntactic contexts. These wishes serve as a means for the speaker to explicitly put their stance forward about a possible negative outcome in a contract, drought in the case of example 14.

14. ἐὰν δέ τις, <u>ὃ μὴ εἴη</u>, τῷ ἑξῆς ἔτ[ει] ἄβροχος γένηται ἐπαντλ[ήσει <u>ὁ] μεμισθωμέν[ο]ς</u> ἐπάναγκ[ες] [ἰδίαις] ἑαυτοῦ δαπάναις καὶ τελέσει (= N. Gonis (from photo) (via PN): τέλεσι prev. ed.) δίμοιρον μέρος τῶν ἐπὶ νειλοβρόχου (= νιλοβρό|χου) ἐκφορίων καὶ φόρων. (*P.Wisc.* I 7, 23-8, lease, III CE)

If, <u>which God forbid</u>, in the following period of time the land is not reached by the flooding of the Nile, <u>the lease-holder</u> must irrigate at his own cost and expense two-thirds of the land which he would have had to cultivate in case of inundation by the flooding of the Nile (APIS translation)[29]

Note, however, that the person affected by the negative outcome is either not explicitly addressed (cf. "the lease holder" in 14) or is the speaker self (e.g. καὶ ἐάν, ὅ μὴ εἴη, ἀπαλλαγὴ γένηται, ἀποδώσω "and if – which heaven forbid – separation take place, I will restore" in a marriage contract, *P.Oxy.* X 1273, 52-3, contract, 260 CE).

By contrast, the remaining wish groups are more typically intersubjectively marked, even though not exclusively. An innovation particular to papyri from the Middle Post-Classical Greek period is the use of χαίροις "the very best of greetings" to express a polite greeting. There are several indications that this wish structure had a politeness dimension: (i) the wish is an explicit alternative to the more standard χαίρειν greeting which uses the infinitive independently,[30] (ii) the greeting was originally used only in high register contexts in Early Post-Classical Greek poetry (sc. Her. 4.1-11 addressing gods or

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29   I corrected the error 'must needs' in the APIS translation.

30   The independent use of this infinitive falls under the header of insubordination, for which see la Roi 2021.

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Theoc. 18.49-53 addressing a bride) from which it was *repurposed* in letter writing in the papyri, and (iii) the greeting clusters with other intersubjectively marked strategies of politeness.[31]

To illustrate the last point, we can consider example 15, where the wish greeting occurs with a plethora of intersubjectively marked strategies (marked in bold), all of which contribute to a combined effort to get the speaker what he wants from the strategos Apollonius:

15. χαίροις, κύριέ μου Ἀπολλώνιε. περὶ οὗ σε παρεκάλεσα κατ᾽ ὄψιν, τειμιώτατε (= τιμιώτατε), καὶ ἐκ τύχης Ἁρπ[ο-]κρατίωνος ἐλθόντος πρὸς Δεῖον, συνέβαλλον/ (= corr. ex) \αὐ/[τῷ] καὶ ὑπερεθέμεθα εἰς τ[ὴν] σὴν διάγνωσιν, ἵνα (= ϊνα papyrus), ὃ ἐπιδικαιώσῃς, τοῦτο γένηται. τὸ μὲν φανέν σοι, κύριε, δηλώσεις [μο]ι. (hand 2) ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι, Ἀπολλώνιε τιμιώτατε. (*P.Brem.* XIX 1-12, 113-120 CE, private letter)

The very best of greetings, my lord Apollonius. Regarding what I requested of you in person, most honoured one, and with the arrival of Harpokration by chance before Deion, I have discussed with him and we have agreed to present it to your judgement, so that, if you deem it worthy, it may come to pass. The visible matter, my lord, you will reveal to me. (hand 2) I pray for your good health, Apollonius, most honoured one.
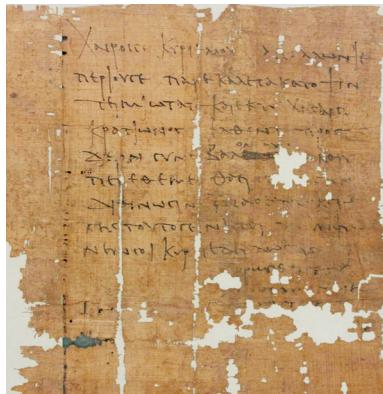
Figure 1
P.Brem. 19. Link to image in public domain: https://brema. suub.uni-bremen.de/papyri content/titleinfo/770780

The speaker marks the asymmetric relationship with Apollonius on various occasions with flattering forms of address, hedges the outcome (*viz.* ὃ ἐπιδικαιώσῃς), and closes the letter with a similarly polite wish that explicitly aligns the speaker's positive view with the addressee (*viz.* ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι, Ἀπολλώνιε τιμιώτατε "I pray

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31 See la Roi forthcoming for a discussion of this history of this pattern.

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for your good health, Apollonius, most honoured one"). Though the use of greetings would essentially be politic behaviour, the context of the creation of this alternative greeting and its use with other politeness strategies strongly suggest that this wish strategy was a way to make a politic function explicitly polite.[32]

In the group of free wishes, we find both intersubjectively marked wish strategies (as in examples 16 and 17) and those that lack it (e.g. in a school exercise such as *SB*. XXII 15809, addressing the arm to write).

16. ἐν τῷ τοῦ Ἀπολλωνιανοῦ, καθὼς ἐπέστειλέν σοι ἡ ἀγαθὴ Ἡρωδίαινα, εἴ τι ἔχεις ἢ οἶδας ἢ συμβουλεῦσαι δύνασαι, ταῦτα προθύμως καὶ εἰς ἐμὴν τιμὴν ποιήσεις. καὶ γὰρ ὁ ἀνὴρ ἄξιος...[.] τῆς σῆς ἀγαθῆς προαιρέσεως καὶ τῆς πρὸς πάντας σπουδῆς. οὐδὲν [οὖν] ἀλλότριον πράξειας. ἡ μήτηρ μου καὶ ὁ ἀδελφὸς πολλά σε προσαγορεύουσιν, ὃν καὶ ποθοῦσιν ἰδεῖν. (*Psi*. XII 1261, 13-21)

In the matter of Apollonianus, as the noble Herodian has written to you, if you have anything or know anything, or can advise, you will willingly and to my honour do these things. For the man is worthy of your good disposition and of your eagerness toward all. <u>Hence, I wish that you would not do anything unfitting</u>. My mother and brother greatly address you, whom they also desire to see.

Note also how the intersubjective strategy in 17 is in a second hand, at the end of the letter.

17. (hand 2) θεοί σε σώσειαν διὰ παντὸς πανοικησίᾳ (*P.Oxy*. LV 3812, 13-14, private letter, III AD)

May the gods protect you through every prosperity

In Late Post-Classical Greek, the total of 278 wishes with the wish optative (see table 2 above) get limited to mainly three groups: (i) interjectional wishes (58 instances), oath wishes (119 instances) and free ones (101 instances). The increase in formulaicity thereby becomes especially clear here; the wish optatives of two groups occur in the same formal variant, that is, third person forms of γίγνομαι or εἰμί in interjectional wishes first person singular or plural forms of only εἰμί in oath formulae. While we see little innovation in these two groups,

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32 An additional point of evidence for the politeness of this structure is semiotic in nature: χαίροις is written much bigger than the rest of the line and the writing is relatively neat (see the image above).

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there is considerable innovation in the relatively large group of free wishes, testifying to the continued importance of the wish optative across all periods of Post-Classical Greek. We find novel circumlocutions for health, such as example 18 or, luck (e.g. εὐδαιμονοῖς, *SB*. XIV 11666, 14, IV CE).

18. ἐρρωμένος ε|gap=1|θυμ|gap=1| διατελοίης τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον, δέσποτα (*P.Stras*. IV 286, 14-18, private letter, middle IV CE)

    May you continue to be well for all time, master

Also, there is a considerable group of new protective wishes that depend on Christian ideas of protection by god (e.g. ὁ Θεὸς or ὁ κύριος) or abstract forms of morality, for which compare examples 19 and 20 below.

19. ἐρρωμένην σε ὁ κύριος διαφυλάττοι μακροῖς καὶ εἰρηνικοῖς χρόνοις (*P.Bour*. 25,16-17, private letter, IV-V CE)

    May the lord keep you well in long and peaceful times

20. ὁ π[α]ντοκ[ράτωρ] θεὸς καὶ ὁ Χρι[στὸς] αὐτοῦ δοίη τὴν σὴν θεοσέβειαν π[α]ραμένιν (= παραμένειν) ἡ[μῖν] πολὺν [χ]ρό[νον] καὶ μεμνῆσ̣[θ]αι ἡμῶν ἐν ταῖς σαῖς προσε̣[υχαῖς]· (*P.lond*. VI 1929, 3-5, private letter, middle IV CE)

    May the Almighty God and his Christ grant that your piety endure for us for a long time, and that they remember us in your prayers

Thus, most of these free wishes have a marked intersubjective orientation, as they are used by speakers to wish for a positive future for the addressee, explicitly aligning their stance with the addressee.

To summarise, we have detailed the different intersubjective dimensions that are contained in the use of wishes in the papyri from Early to Late Post-Classical Greek and how these change over time. A picture has emerged of both increased formulaicity (both formally and distributionally) as well as continued innovation, e.g. polite greetings in Middle and Christian protection wishes in Late Post-Classical Greek. Most crucially, it has been shown that only a subset of wishes have a fully intersubjective and hence politeness function, since only some explicitly align stance with another subject (e.g. polite greetings and wishes for benefits to the addressee). In other words, there is a direct link between the type of intersubjective alignment in the stance taking expressed by wishes, on the one hand, and politeness, on the other hand.

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2.3 Performative Wishes: The Case of εὔχομαι

The most frequent performative verb used to express wishes in the Post-Classical Greek papyri seems to have been εὔχομαι (in the first person singular or plural): 34 in Early Post-Classical Greek (NRO 0,038), 1,451 in Middle Post-Classical Greek (NRO 0,605) and 645 in Late Post-Classical Greek (NRO 0,642). The data for εὔχομαι (in the first person singular or plural) was again collected using Trismegistos Words, using a lemmatised search and selecting for the first person. Diachronically, there is a significant increase in the usage of εὔχομαι to express wishes from Middle Post-Classical Greek onwards, which is something that requires further consideration below. Generally speaking, though, there is also a remarkable consistency in the use of εὔχομαι to express wishes, especially because they occur only in three pragmatic contexts, some of which are even notably absent in specific periods: (i) comparative clauses (i.e. 'X is as I wish'), (ii) health formulae ('I wish that you are well/healthy'), and (iii) a very minor group of free wishes, with only 8 attestations in total. Based only on the distributional frequencies we thus can already observe that this performative strategy was particularly subject to formulaicity. Let us next consider the different periods consecutively.

In Early Post-Classical Greek, we find 26 comparative clause wishes (example 21), 7 health wishes (example 22) and 1 free wish (example 23).

21. Ἀπολλώνιος Πετεύρει χαίρειν. εἰ τῶι τε σώματι ὑγιαίνεις καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις κατὰ λόγον ἀπαλλάσσεις εἴη ἂν ὡς εὔχομαι. ὑγίαινον δὲ καὶ αὐτός. (*P.Köln* VI 266, 1-4, business letter, 221-205 BCE)

Apollonius greets Peteuris. If you are healthy in body and in other things you are faring reasonably, it would be as I wish. I am well myself as well.

22. ἐγὼ δὲ εὔχομαι πᾶσι τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ τῶι δαίμονι τοῦ βασιλέως σε ὑγιαίνειν καὶ ἐλθεῖν τὸ τάχος πρὸς ἡμᾶς ὅπως αὐτὸς ἰδῆις ὅτι ἀνέγκλητός εἰμι. ἔρρωσο. (*P.Col.* II 66, 22-5, private letter, 256-255 BCE)

I pray to all the gods and to the guardian divinity of the King that you remain well and come to us soon so that you may yourself see that I am blameless. Farewell[33] (APIS translation)

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[33] The farewell greeting was left untranslated in the APIS translation, which is why I inserted it here.

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23. Ζήνωνι χαίρειν οἱ ἱερεῖς Ἀστάρτ[ης τῆς τῶν ἐν Μέ]μφει Φοινικαιγυπτίων. εὐχόμεθά σοι παρὰ τῆι Ἀστάρτηι δοῦναι σοι ἐπ[αφροδισίαν πρὸ]ς τὸν βασιλέα. (*Psi.* V 531, 1-2, private letter, middle III BCE)

To Zenon, greetings from the priests of Astarte of those in Memphis, Phoenicians of Egypt. We wish to Astarte to grant you a pleasant meeting with the king.

What differentiates these wishes are their intersubjective dimensions: whereas the health wish and the free wish explicitly align the positive attitude of the speaker with the addressee, the comparative wish clause only does so implicitly in the whole sentence, *viz.* the addressee oriented conditional clause preceding the matrix clause to which the comparative clause is appended. In other words, in the comparative wish clauses, the speaker only puts forth the evaluation of the object and positions himself without providing explicit alignment with the addressee. Finally, it should be noted that already in Early Post-Classical Greek, health wishes become formally connected to specific structural parts of the letter, as shown by the use of the health wish in example 22 at the closing of the letter. In later periods, the link with specific structural parts of documents becomes even stronger, as detailed below.

In Middle Post-Classical Greek, the wishes expressed with εὔχομαι almost predominantly concern health wishes, since there are 1,443 health wishes, but there is only 1 comparative clause wish (*BGU* 1 332, 6) and 7 free wishes. As illustrated by example 24, those free wishes are not necessarily intersubjectively aligning.

24. Θερμουθᾶς (= BL 1.34: Θερμοῦθισ prev. ed) Ἀπολιναρίῳ τῷ ἀδελφῷ πλεῖστα χαίρειν. γεινώσκειν (= γιγνώσκειν) σε θέλω ἐγὼ καὶ Οὐαλερία, ἐὰν Ἡροὶς (= Ἡρωὶς) τέκῃ, εὐχόμεθα ἐλθεῖν πρὸς σέ. (*BGU* I 261, 1-6, private letter, 105 CE)

Thermouthas to Apolinarios her brother, many greetings. I want you to know, I and Valeria, if Herois gives birth, we are praying to come to you;[34]

By contrast, the health wishes all answer to the three dimensions of stance taking, as they explicitly mark the addressee to which the stance taking subject is aligning positive stance, as in example 25.

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[34] The translation is by Bagnall and Cribiore 2006, 189.

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25. Παρᾶις Διονυ[σί]ῳ τῷ φ[ι]λτάτῳ χαίρειν. πρὸ μὲν πάντων [ε]ὔχομαί σε ὑγιαίνειν μετὰ τῶν σῶν πάντ[ω]ν (*P.Merton* I 23, 1-3, business letter, late II CE)

Greetings to my best Paris Dionysius. Above all, I wish you to be well along with all your loved ones

Nevertheless, these health wishes are subject to some diachronic variations. First and foremost, it had been variously proposed that such health wishes from the Middle Post-Classical Greek period may have been the result of contact with Latin (esp. *opto te bene valere*), but the wish had already been there before in Greek.[35] We do start to find dative for accusative interchange in the marking of the addressee (see e.g. *P.Oxy.* VII 1068, 28).[36] Furthermore, the Middle Post-Classical Greek period seems to be the period in which these health wishes start to undergo a process of functional specialisation towards specific parts of the textual structure, in particular the closing of texts. Though the health wish is by no means absent from letter openings,[37] we increasingly start to find these wishes in letter closings, even on an ostracon as in example 26.

26. ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι. διευτύχει. (*O.Claud.* II 279, 20-2, private letter, II CE)

I wish that you are well. Prosper.

Finally, we should consider the question whether these health wishes may always have been considered polite behaviour. Sarri[38] had suggested that the choice to use such health wishes in farewells depended on the relationship between the correspondents, where the use only from higher officials to subordinates would be considered normal, but between "minor officials or in private letters" it "would be regarded as too impolite", prompting personalised and eloquent farewells instead. While it could be true that any deviation from expected behaviour may trigger an impoliteness reading,[39] I would argue that the distributional evidence seems to suggest that this health wish still had a politeness function, one which it derived from its

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35 See Nachtergaele 2023, 152-3 for an overview of the literature; *pace* e.g. Sarri 2018, 48-9.

36 See also Nachtergaele 2023, 248-9.

37 Cf. Bentein 2023, 441 whose corpus study shows the health wish to be almost thrice as frequent in openings.

38 Sarri 2018, 191.

39 See Bruno 2022, 47 for this point with reference to Ptolemaic papyri.

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intersubjective orientation. After all, in Middle Post-Classical Greek, such health wishes were by no means obligatory in farewells nor were they the only place where writers could choose to insert these health wishes (see above). In other words, at least for Middle Post-Classical Greek, it would be hard to make the case quantitatively that these health wishes already constituted politic behaviour.

In Late Post-Classical Greek, the process of specialisation has completed itself, since εὔχομαι is used exclusively in health wishes (644 times). An innovation particular to this period is that, due to contact with Latin,[40] we find novel syntactic variations in the health wish, as in example 27 with πολλοῖς χρόνοις.[41]

27. ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι, κ[ύ]ριέ μου, πολλοῖς χρόνοις. (*P.Kellis* I 81, 13-16, private letter, VI CE)

I wish that you are well, my lord, for many years

Moreover, there is a huge shift towards letter closings in this period, as these health wishes now seem to occur only in roughly 10% of the openings. This demonstrates the strong functional specialisation that these health wishes have received in the Late Post-Classical Greek period, as these distributions are significantly different from Middle Post-Classical Greek (discussed above). Another important piece of evidence for the functional specialisation of the health wish to letter closings is the use of other hands to write just this health wish.[42] This might also explain why we find direct repetitions of this health wish in closings, to underline the intersubjective alignment rather than the actual request, as in example 28. Rhetorically, this strategy is of course an effective tactic: the speaker makes the willingness of the addressee to complete the request dependent upon the reciprocity of wishing each other the best instead.

28. ἀξιῶ σε μαθεῖν πόσου ἡμῖν συναλλάσσει κριθὴν ⟦ἡμῖν⟧ ὁ τρόφιμος τοῦ Διονύσιος(*) ὁ (= τοῦ) ἐπισφραγιστὴς (= σφραγιστοῦ) τῆς Ταμπέμου, ἵνα προνοήσωμαι ἀργυρίου. ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι, ἄδελφε.

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40   Adams 2003, 507; Nachtergaele 2023, 259.

41   In fact, the innovation of πολλοῖς χρόνοις has been considered a 'Latinism', cf. Nachtergaele 2023, 254.

42   See e.g. *P.Mich.* XI 622, 15 and Sarri 2018, 365. In fact, this procedure is not limited to Late Post-Classical Greek, but occurs already in the previous period, for which see *P.Brem.* 21, 12, private letter, 113-120 CE (discussed in Sarri 2018, 118-19).

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(hand 2) ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι, ἄδελφε. (*P.Oxy.* XII 1491, private letter, early IV CE)

I beg you to find out at what price the foster-son of Dionysius, the sealer of Taampemou, is contracting to get barley for me, in order that I may provide for the money. <u>I pray for your health, brother.</u> (Signed) <u>I pray for your health, brother.</u>

Thus, the abundant use of these health wishes in letter closings seems to suggest that this structure has lost its polite value which it has exchanged for a politic value, as this became one of the expected procedures to close a letter.

Finally, it should be noted that there also seems to be some metalinguistic evidence from this period for the formulaic status of this health wish: the following exercise text suggests that the health wish was practiced by different hands in the same formulaic structure.

29. (hand 1) [-ca.?-] σε εὔχομ[α]ι ἡγεμὼν [κύριε -ca.?-]
(hand 2) [-ca.?-] [-ca.?- εὔ]χομαι ἡγεμὼν κύ[ριε -ca.?-]
(hand 3) [-ca.?- σ]ε εὔχομαι ἡγεμὼν [κύριε -ca.?-]
(hand 4) [-ca.?-]ζ ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι ἡγεμ[ὼν κύριε -ca.?-]
(hand 5) [-ca.?-] ιζ εTraces
(hand 6) [-ca.?-] . . . [-ca.?- ἡ]γεμὼν κύριε
(hand 7) [-ca.?-] ιζ [ἐρ]ρῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι ἡγεμὼν κ[ύ]ριε
(hand 8) [-ca.?-] ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι ἡγεμὼν κύριε
(hand 9) [-ca.?-]ιζ ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι ἡγεμὼν κύριε
10(hand 10) [-ca.?-] . . . ἐρρῶσθέ (= ἐρρῶσθαί) σε εὔχομε (= εὔχομαι) ἡγεμὼν κύριε
(hand 11) [-ca.?-]ζ ἐρρῶσθέ (= ἐρρῶσθαί) σεε (= σε) εὔ[χ]ομε (= εὔχομαι) ἡγεμὼν κύριε
(hand 12) [-ca.?-] . [.] . υχομαι ἡγεμὼν κύ[ρ]ιε
(hand 13) [-ca.?-] ἐρρῶσθέ (= ἐρρῶσθαί) σαι (= σε) εὔχομαι ἡγεμὼν κ[ύρ]ιε
(hand 14) [-ca.?- ἐρρῶσ]θαί σε εὔχομαι ἡγεμὼν κύριε
(hand 15) [-ca.?- ἐ]ρρῶσθ[αί] σε εὔχομαι ἡγεμὼν κύριε
(hand 16) [-ca.?- ἐρρ]ῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι ἡγεμὼν κύριε
(hand 17) [-ca.?- ἐρρῶ]σθαί σε αιὔχομε (= εὔχομαι) ἡγεμὼν κύριε (*BGU* 13.2212, exercise, III CE)
'I pray that you are healthy, lord'
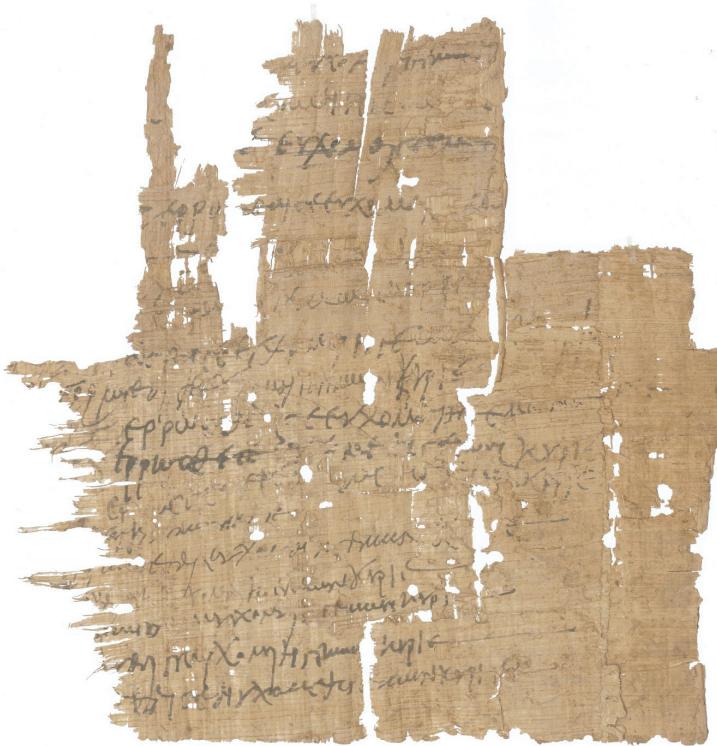
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To sum up, the wishes introduced by εὔχομαι in the Post-Classical Greek papyri undergo several important changes which have been detailed above. While there were wishes without an explicitly intersubjective orientation in Early Post-Classical Greek (e.g. in comparative clauses), the vast majority was then and, even more so from Middle Post-Classical Greek onwards, used to express intersubjectively marked health wishes, as a form of politeness. Though these health wishes were strongly subject to formal formulaicity (despite minor morphosyntactic and orthographic variation of course), it was shown that their distributional formulaicity is a much more complex matter. Whereas these health wishes occurred predominantly as politeness strategy in openings in the Middle Post-Classical Greek period, we can witness a major shift away from this in Late Post-Classical Greek, because these health wishes became strongly specialised for letter closings (as also supported by palaeographical and metalinguistic evidence). This long process has different historical pragmatic

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motivations, such as the development of politic behaviour out of polite behaviour as well as changes in letter writing conventions.

3   Concluding Remarks

At the start of this paper, I set out to investigate the underexplored role of wishes in stance taking, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the connections of specific wish strategies in the Post-Classical Greek papyri with intersubjectivity and polite and politic behaviour. By adopting a historical pragmatic analysis, I have shown that these connections are subject to a variety of changes in the different periods of Post-Classical Greek (III BCE-VI CE).

First, I demonstrated that we can use a tripartite stance grid inspired by work in interactional linguistics to distinguish intersubjectively marked wishes from those that lack this orientation (e.g. speaker-centred oaths or hopes in contractual settings): we should only speak of intersubjectively marked wishes if wishes explicitly encode an alignment of the positive attitude of the speaker toward another subject (i.e. the addressee). In fact, these intersubjectively marked wishes often concern intersubjectivity of the social kind, since they express attention from the speaker towards the face needs of the hearer, i.e. a form of politeness (cf. the frequent 'I wish that you are well' health wishes). Thus, there is a common pragmatic link between addressee-oriented alignment and politeness.

Next, I highlighted that wish strategies do not have the same form and function across different periods, including their relationship with polite and politic behaviour. The diachronic analysis of the two wish strategies in question in the Post-Classical Greek papyri revealed a remarkable range of changes:

a.   *increases in formal formulaicity* (e.g. the limitation of wish optatives to the lemma εἰμί 'to be' or of health wishes with εὔχομαι to the same morphosyntactic structure of complement and infinitive);

b.   *different kinds of distributional formulaicity*, as shown by the increasing limitation of the wish optative to a select group of uses;

c.   the *creation of polite strategies*, such as the χαίροις greeting as polite alternative to other, more standard politic greetings);

d.   *loss of explicit politeness*, as shown by the previously polite εὔχομαι health wish formula that became a form of politic behaviour, since it is so commonly used only in closings in Post-Classical Greek that it is unlikely that it was still perceived as explicitly polite behaviour.

In other words, only when we consider the pragmatic dimensions of wish strategies historically from multiple perspectives (e.g.

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morphosyntactic form, intersubjective orientation, and politeness) do we stand to gain a more complete picture of what Post-Classical Greek speakers wished to accomplish with their wishes in the papyri.

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Spacing Out Speech Acts
Textual Units and Their Visual Organisation in Greek Letters on Papyrus

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Abstract   This study explores the textual and visual organisation of Greek letters on papyrus. While previous scholarship has focused on cataloguing formulaic elements in epistolary texts, it has often overlooked how these elements, along with other linguistic features such as discourse particles, tense-aspect marking, and pronouns, provide cues for discourse segmentation. This contribution discusses the preliminary results of an annotation framework designed to capture these aspects more effectively and examines the correspondences between generic structure and pragmatic concepts such as 'speech act'. In the second part of the study, we identify various layout elements that contribute to the visual organisation of the texts. We preliminarily assess how sensitive writers were to the type of speech act being expressed and the ways in which visual cues were used to emphasise certain thematic blocks within the letters. This integrated analysis offers new insights into the complex interactional form of communication presented by ancient letters.

Keywords   Greek letters. Text segmentation. Speech acts. Layout. Discourse analysis.

Summary   1 Introduction. – 2 Annotating the Generic Structure of Greek Letters. – 2.1 Textual Segmentation. – 2.1.1 Units and Subunits. – 2.1.2 The Role of Coherence and Cohesion within (Sub)Units. – 2.1.3 Elements and Modifiers. – 2.2 Speech Acts and Textual Segmentation. – 2.2.1 The Speech Act Request. – 2.2.2 The Speech Acts Health Wish and Leave-take. – 2.3 Bringing Textual and Pragmatic Analysis Together. Declarations and the Speech Acts Statement and Assertion. – 3 Connecting Generic to Layout Structure. – 3.1 Visual Cueing. – 3.2 Linguistic factors impacting visual presentation. – 4 Conclusion.

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1   Introduction

In the early stages of the European-funded research project[1] 'Everyday Writing in Graeco-Roman and Late Antique Egypt. A Socio-semiotic Study of Communicative Variation',[2] we maintained a predominantly binary perspective towards the study of documentary texts. Within our project database,[3] we distinguished between the global level of the entire text, annotating aspects such as *writing material*, *writing direction*, and *handwriting*, besides the more general socio-pragmatic characteristics of each text,[4] and the local level of concrete linguistic and typographic features. As the project advanced, it became evident that to properly comprehend the operational dynamics of documentary texts, and to discern the ongoing processes of interpersonal positioning encapsulated within them, we needed to move beyond such a 'flat' conceptual structure, and take into account the larger building blocks or 'discourse constituents'[5] out of which texts – and by extension entire textual genres – consist, both from a linguistic and a visual perspective. The study of these meso-level aspects can be referred to in terms of discourse 'segmentation',[6] or, to borrow from the late Michael Silverstein, the 'metricalisation' of the text.[7] By integrating these various levels of analysis (from local to global), a much more comprehensive understanding of the communicative processes underlying ancient texts – both in terms of conceptual frames and

[1]   See further www.evwrit.ugent.be.

[2]   The project has received funding from the European Research Council under the Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant Agreement No. 756487). Additionally, Marta Capano's research has been supported by a PRIN grant *Testi metalinguistici come fonte di dati privilegiata per la conoscenza delle lingue antiche*, funded by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR).

[3]   For a more extensive description, see Bentein 2024.

[4]   In terms of its communicative participants and their communicative goals.

[5]   See Bentein 2023a, 433-6 for a model of discourse grammar which is based on earlier work by Koenraad Kuiper. Compare the 'text syntax' provided at https://grammateus.unige.ch/introduction/concepts#structure.

[6]   Or alternatively 'chunking', 'partitioning'.

[7]   E.g. Silverstein 2023, 33-4. Silverstein's term has a more writer-/speaker-oriented perspective than 'segmentation', which is oriented towards the modern analyst.

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their more specific linguistic and visual framings – can be achieved.[8]

Previous scholarship has, of course, engaged significantly with what we call here the metricalisation of ancient texts, in particular from a linguistic point of view. Several studies have documented the formulaic phraseology[9] inherent in our texts, with private letters receiving the majority of the attention. Especially in recent years, contracts have also attracted substantial scholarly interest in this regard.[10] Besides, scholarship has made an effort to describe the larger discourse constituents that are cued by these formulae: one can mention the work of John White from the 1970s in this context; this scholar made an attempt to outline both the overall structure of letters and petitions, as well as the formulae that can be found within this structure. More recent publications have added substantially to our knowledge of the generic structure of other genres, such as the 2014 handbook *Law and Legal Practice in Egypt from Alexander to the Arab Conquest*,[11] which contains useful summaries of the structure of contractual subgenres in different times and cultures. Digital technology is playing an ever more important role in cataloguing and indexing the research outcomes, thereby enhancing both their availability and searchability: digital portals such as *Trismegistos*[12] and *Synallagma*[13] provide searchable inventories of formulae in letters, petitions and contracts on the basis of exhaustively annotated corpora of texts; the recently appeared *Grammateus* portal[14] provides a description of the generic and layout structure of a broad range of textual genres, though being somewhat more limited when it comes to the analysis of individual texts.

In an important 2007 article dedicated to Pompeian wall inscriptions, Peter Kruschwitz and Hilla Halla-aho noted that Classical scholarship had been, regrettably, only very slowly shifting towards the major branch of linguistics dealing with 'non-literary' or 'technical' text types, their structure and their (technical) language, defining such a text type as

> a non-literary group of texts which forms a unit due to a cluster of shared features, resulting in what might be called a certain isomorphy of each text type. One may rightfully say that it is the non-literary

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8 See Bentein 2023, 93 for a textualisation model that takes into account framing features at the micro-, meso-, and macro-level, both linguistically and visually.

9 See most recently Nachtergaele 2023.

10 See now Yiftach-Firanko forthcoming.

11 Keenan, Manning, Yiftach-Firanko 2014.

12 https://www.trismegistos.org/formulae/.

13 https://synallagma.tau.ac.il/.

14 https://grammateus.unige.ch/.

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equivalent to a literary genre. The shared features may typically be structural, formal, contextual, visual, or language-related.[15]

While, as far as Greek papyrology is concerned, it would be unfair to say that "virtually everything remains to be done in the field of technical text types and technical language",[16] one could posit – at the peril of oversimplification – that the scholarly endeavours that have been made so far share certain prevailing characteristics:

1. they mostly focus on the (heavily) formulaic openings and closings, and do not engage much with the body of the texts;
2. they tend to be linguistically, rather than visually oriented;
3. they are based on smaller annotated corpora and/or generalise across entire (sub)genres;
4. they mostly catalogue formulae, rather than smaller or larger discourse constituents.

Besides, there is a need to engage to a greater extent with findings in disciplines that have profoundly altered our view of human communication, such as *discourse analysis* (in particular research on technical or 'rhetorical' genres, as they are sometimes called), various branches of *pragmatics*,[17] *social semiotics*, and *sociolinguistics*, to name but some, in which key concepts such as 'frame' and 'framing', but also 'formulaic genre', 'speech act', 'discourse particle', 'pragmatic marker', and 'multimodality', among others, have been developed and substantially elaborated over the years. That these and other scholarly gaps should exist is understandable, given that fully addressing them would require a substantial infrastructural and conceptual investment, which few funding bodies are willing to make, and which goes beyond the interest of most current papyrological scholarship.[18]

It goes without saying that the full-scale development of such a new, integrated analysis of the structure (linguistic and visual!) of documentary sources, and its actual annotation, goes beyond the boundaries and resources of the Everyday Writing project, too. To address some of these shortcomings, and to start developing a new perspective, we decided to set up a smaller-scale pilot project, which had the twofold aim of on the one hand elaborating a workable framework for text-structural annotation, with attention to different types of discourse constituents, and how they are linguistically and visually cued, and on the other hand applying this framework to a subset of the

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15 Kruschwitz, Halla-aho 2007, 43.

16 Kruschwitz, Halla-aho 2007, 47.

17 In particular *socio*pragmatics, *interpersonal* pragmatics, *variational* pragmatics, and *cross-cultural* pragmatics.

18 For some pioneering studies, see e.g. Koroli 2016; 2020; Mackay 2016; Bruno 2022.

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texts in the corpus, namely Roman-period private letters. We decided to focus on private letters at first instance, because their structure tends to be freer than that of other text types such as petitions and contracts, which revolve around a very specific communicative goal, and therefore also present a more standardised document structure.

In what follows, we will first discuss the linguistic side of the annotation process, which played a primary role in our pilot project (§ 2); as we now have started working on the visual annotation of documentary sources, too, we want to explore in the second part of our contribution how elements of generic structure connect to the layout structure (§ 3). Some concluding remarks are then made (§ 4).

2 Annotating the Generic Structure of Greek Letters

In the following section, we will illustrate some results of the linguistic annotation of the 'generic' structure made on Greek private letters from the Roman period of the Everyday Writing corpus. With 'generic structure' we refer to the generic building blocks that together constitute a document. However, our analysis is not limited to the generic structure, but encompasses other levels of linguistic analysis, particularly pragmatic structure, specifically the analysis of the pragmatic grounds behind the generic structure. Even though, as we shall show, the discourse (generic) and speech act (pragmatic) dimensions frequently display some overlap, the discussion of them will be organised in two blocks, addressing first the generic structure (§ 2.1), and then the more specifically pragmatic issues (§ 2.2). Finally, by using concrete examples, we will address how our approach, which considers both dimensions, can more effectively describe and interpret the variation in the rhetoric and pragmatic components of Greek private letters (§ 2.3).

2.1 Textual Segmentation

Starting from the early 1970s, an increasing number of works have been published on the topic of textual segmentation, that is to say the recognition of subdivision within the generic structure of a text.[19] Because of its relevance in almost any kind of textual analysis, textual segmentation has been the subject of a large set of more recent studies, and scholars have developed alternative methodologies and models,[20] almost invariably through the employment of digital tools.

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[19] E.g. Halliday, Hasan 1976; Giora 1983; Givón 1983.

[20] E.g. Moens, De Busser 2001; Schnur, Csomay 2019; Cocco et al. 2011. Pons Bordería 2014 contains a useful overview of models of discourse segmentation in Romance languages.

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Within the wider discipline of discourse analysis, the development of robust studies on textual segmentation, originally conceived for modern documents, [21] led to the application of this type of analysis to ancient documents, especially in the area of biblical studies[22] but also to Classical Greek texts.[23] Scholars have produced research on textual segmentation employing a variety of approaches, with significant theoretical differences, ranging from works that employ a purely syntactic approach,[24] to those focusing on prosody,[25] and finally to a solely textual approach to discourse analysis.[26] Due to the nature of our evidence – Greek epistolary papyri – and because of our interest in pragmatic analysis, we especially considered contributions centred on the pragmatic structure, but we have adopted a 'theory-neutral' approach. In doing so, we have positioned ourselves within a tradition for the study of textual segmentation, as the very origin of this branch of study derives, naturally, from the empirical observation that there must be a higher level of analysis than the phrase. However, several different interpretations have been offered on the nature and the identification of this level, depending on the theoretical framework of their authors. Among the more fruitful proposals, we can mention here *Development Units*,[27] *Discourse Units* (DU),[28] *Elementary Discourse Units* (EDU),[29] *cola*,[30] and *discourse topics*.[31] As we shall see in the next section, already at the stage of the annotation process we were aware of the connection between discourse and pragmatic analysis on the one hand, and layout segmentation on the other. We recognised the necessity of clearly separating linguistic analysis from visual analysis, ensuring that each is addressed independently. Nevertheless, we also deemed it beneficial to employ a consistent set of labels across both domains. Instead, we chose a series of labels based on the textual level, recognising the textual Unit (see below, § 2.1.1) as the primary level of analysis.

Given these premises, we have adopted a rather neutral terminology and within our text we have identified Units and Subunits, on

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21 One significant exception is already in Givón's *magnum opus* (Givón 1983), where he dedicates a chapter to topic continuity in Biblical Hebrew.

22 E.g. den Exter Blokland 1995; Porter 2005; 2008; Korpel, Sanders 2017; Kim 2019.

23 E.g. Buijs 2005; Scheppers 2011.

24 E.g. den Exter Blokland 1995.

25 E.g. Freiberg 2017.

26 E.g. Porter 2005; 2008. On this topic we will return in § 2.2.

27 E.g. Levinsohn 2000.

28 E.g. Degand, Simon 2009.

29 E.g. Stede 2012.

30 E.g. Scheppers 2011.

31 E.g. Chafe 2001.

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the basis of both contextual and linguistic criteria (see further § 2.1.1 and 2.1.2). Furthermore, we have used a more detailed framework for analysing the main components of (Sub)Units, namely Elements and Modifiers (see § 2.1.2).

2.1.1 Units and Subunits

As evident from the chosen terminology, we consider Units as a larger and more independent segment of the text, while a Subunit is a smaller segment that should not be considered in isolation, as it is included in a larger section. Before describing the parameters behind our choices for rhetorical analysis and segmentation, it will be helpful to see in practice a few examples of textual segmentation. A very typical case of a division in Units and Subunits can be identified in *P.Oxy.* XX 2274 (III AD) = TM 30488, the body of which reads as follows:

> ‖ γεινωσειν (l. γιγνώσκειν) ὑμᾶς θαίλω (l. θέλω),
> ὅτει (l. ὅτι) αἰκλάπη (l. ἐκλάπη) τὰ μοσχεύ-
> ματα τὰ ἐν τῷ κτήμα-   5
> τι τοῦ Σαιρήνου.[32] | καικμή-
> καμεν (l. κεκμήκαμεν) ζητοῦντες τοὺς τό-
> πους, οὓς ἐποπτάζομεν,
> σὺν τοῖς δημοσίοις καὶ
> οὐδαιμίαν ἔνφασιν εὕραμεν. ‖   10
> μαιτηγγαικα (l. μετήγγικα) τὸν οἶνον, ὡς
> εἴρηκας, πέμψον οὖν αι (l. τοὺς)
> ναυται (l. ναύτας), μὴ παρατράμη (l. παραδράμη). ‖

I want you to know that the offsets in the estate of Serenus have been stolen. I have worn myself out searching together with the officials the area under my surveillance, but we found no trace. I have barreled the wine as you have said. So, send the boatmen that it may not spoil. (transl. Wegener)

Besides the opening and closing of the letter, which are not recorded here, two Units, marked with double vertical bars, can be recognised in the body of the text.[33] The first Unit deals with a theft and its consequences (ll. 3-10), the second is concerned with parcelling wine

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32 Σαιρήνου (Σερήνου) can be interpreted either as a toponym or rather as a personal name (see Pruneti 1981, 171).

33 This layout has been used for the present article, but on the database a colour-coded convention is adopted. Additionally, in this article speech acts are indicated by a capital letter (e.g. Request), while Units and Subunits are *italicised* (e.g. *opening greetings*).

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(ll. 11-13). The first Unit contains two Subunits (ll. 3-6 and ll. 6-10), marked with a single vertical bar.

Sometimes, the skilfulness and cunning of a writer complicate the task of recognising where a first Unit ends and a second one begins. For instance, in *P.Oxy.* LIX 4004 (V AD) = TM 35213, a letter of condolence, we can distinguish five Units. Ignoring the opening (ll. 1-2) and closing, which do not concern us here (ll. 16-20, followed by a postscript at ll. 21-3 of the letter), we observe that the body of the text contains a few lines with the typical themes of consolatory prose (ll. 3-7), where Theodoros, the writer, expresses his condolences to the widower Kanopos, followed (rather craftily) by a request of getting better and of an appointment (ll. 7-12). The following four lines show a rather shifty passage to a completely different request, a meeting, which possibly constitutes the true purpose of this message to an inconsolable widower. Between ll. 12-15, Theodoros asks Kanopos to bring clothes to their meeting and even presents a list of items that should be brought to him on that occasion.

κυρίῳ μου ἀλη[θ]ῶς [τ]ιμιωτάτῳ ἀδελφῷ Κανώπῳ,   1
(vac.) Θ[εόδ]ωρος. ‖
πάνυ ἐλυπήθημεν [ἀ]κο[ύ]σ[α]ντές τι π[αθεῖν Μ]ακαρίαν
τὴν σὴν ἐλευθέραν, \κα[ὶ οὐκ]/ ἀλ[όγ]ως τοσοῦτον ὁ υἱός σου
Γρατιανὸς ἐπόθησεν αὐτήν, καὶ ἔτι δὲ οἱ   5
ἄλλοι αὐτῆς υἱοί. πλὴν τί δυνάμε[θα] ποιῆσαι
πρὸς τὸ ἀνθρώπινον; | καταξίωσον οὖν σαυτὸν
παραμυθήσασθαι καὶ σκυλμὸν ὑπ[ο]με[ῖ]ν[αι] καὶ
ἐλθεῖν πρὸς μὲ μετὰ τοῦ κυρίου μου Οὐαλεντίνου
ἐν τῇ Νήσων. χρείαν γὰρ ἔχω τῆς εὐγενίας <σου> καὶ πάλιν   10
ποιῶ σαι διὰ σκάφους προπεμβῆναι (l. προπεμφθῆναι). μὴ [ο]ὖν
ὀκνήσῃς, ὅτι ἀνάβασίς ἐστιν. | ἐρχόμενος δὲ καταξίωσον
ἐνέγκε ⟦.⟧ (l. ἐνέγκαι) ὅσα ⟦ς⟧ ἔχει\ς/ γνάψιμα. εἰσὶν δέ· στιχάριον
Ναθαναῆλ, ῥάχνη λευκή, στιχάριον Συγκλητικῆς,
μαφόριον τῆς Κύρας, στιχάριον Κύρας. ‖   15
προσαγορεύω Δίδυμον καὶ Φιλόξενον
καὶ πάντας τοὺς σούς. ‖
(hand 2) ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι
χρόνοις πολλοῖς, κύριε
τιμιώτατε ἄδελφε. ‖   20
περὶ τοῦ σίτου μὴ ἀμφίβαλλε. ἐγὼ οὐκ
ἔπεμψα αὐτὸν ἵνα σοὶ ἐλθόντι π[α]ρα-
μετρηθῇ. ‖
ν
(hand 1?) κυρίῳ μου ἀληθῶς (vac.) τιμιωτάτῳ ἀδελφῷ Κανώπῳ
Θεόδωρος.   25

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We were much grieved (to hear the fate) of Macaria your wife, that your son Gratianus mourned her so much, (and also) her other sons. But what can we do against mortality? So please comfort yourself and make the effort and come to me with my lord Valentinus at Neson. For I have need of your kind self, and again (?) I shall have you brought by boat. Do not hesitate, for the river has risen. When you come, please bring all the cleaned clothes that you have. Here is the list: Nathanel's tunic, a white blanket (?), Syncletice's tunic, Cyra's cape, Cyra's tunic. I greet Didymus and Philoxenus and all your people. (2nd hand) I pray for your health for many years, most honoured lord brother. As for the wheat, don't worry. I didn't send it myself so that it could be measured out to you when you come. Address: (1st hand?) To my truly most honoured lord brother Canopus, Theodorus. (transl. Ioannidou)

Normally, in a text arranged with less talent in connecting different requests, the body of this letter would be clearly segmented in two different Units. In this case, however, the letter writer's ability ties together the first part of the letter, containing the condolences, to the second, with the request. As a consequence, we are dealing with one Unit (above, between double vertical bars), subdivided in three Subunits (whose starting points are marked by a single vertical bar). Far from suggesting that textual segmentation is not reliable, this example demonstrates how the analysis of generic and pragmatic structure can unveil important information on style and communicative goals.

Among the types of (Sub)Units we recognise are *background*, *declaration*, *health wish*, *list*, *request* and *threat*. These labels, which have been chosen in virtue of their descriptiveness, designate the content of a segment of text, according to our theory-neutral approach while dealing with textual segmentation. Because of space constraints, rather than offering here a description of each of the (Sub)Unit types that we have recognised and annotated in our corpus, we will show some examples of the types of (Sub)Units, specifically *opening greetings*, *background*, and *request*. For this purpose, we propose here the analysis of a text from our corpus, *P.Oxy.* LVIII 3919 (188 AD) = TM 17903, a private letter from a father to his son.

Σαραπίων Σαραπίω-
νι τῷ υἱῷ χαίρειν.
‖ διεπεμψάμην σοι διὰ
τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου (δραχμὰς) ις΄, ὅ-
πως ἀπαρτίσῃς μοι
τὴν ις΄. | ἐὰν οἷον ἦν   5
καὶ τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου
λάμ[β]αν[ε] παρὰ τῆς μη-

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τρός σου τὰς ἴσας (δραχμὰς) ις΄,
καὶ διαπέμψομαι   10
αὐτῇ. ἐὰν ᾖς λαβὼν
τὰς (δραχμὰς) ρ΄, δὸς αὐτῇ.
ἐὰν δὲ μή, πέμψον
μοι, ὅπως ἀναβὰς αἰ-
τήσω ἐγώ. ‖ ἔρρωσο.   15

Sarapion to Sarapion his son, greetings. I sent you by way of your brother 16 drachmae so that you may settle the 16 (drachmae?) for me. If it is possible, get the same 16 drachmae from your mother for your brother too, and I shall send (the same amount) to her. If you have obtained the 100 drachmae, give [them] to her. If not, send me (word), so that I may come up and ask myself. Farewell. (transl. Rea)

On a generic structure level, we can identify three units in this letter. The first one, as customary, contains the *opening greetings*, which are selected between a variety of formulae that show a considerable amount of variation.[34] In this case, the greetings simply consist of Σαραπίων Σαραπίωνι τῷ υἱῷ χαίρειν. The second unit, which corresponds to the whole body of the letter, begins in the third line of the document and continues until the last. The third Unit, with *closing greetings*, corresponds to the short health wish ἔρρωσο lit. 'be well' (cf. § 2.2.2. on the speech act Leave-take).[35] From this example, it is clear how a unit may comprise a single word, fulfil a single communicative goal and, as we shall see in the next section, may correspond to one single speech act. However, and especially in the body of a letter, units tend to be longer and more complex and be subdivided in two separate Subunits, as in the case of this papyrus. While the main goal of this letter is of course a request, it is possible to recognise a first part of the text, ll. 3-7, the first Subunit, which sets the premises for the request, which constitutes the second Subunit (ll. 7-15).

This first textual Subunit of *P.Oxy.* LVIII 3919 is a good example of what we have termed *background*, which corresponds to 'Grounder' in the work of Juliane House and Daniel Kádár. This kind of textual Subunit has a clear pragmatic goal, which is to prepare the recipient of the letter and to increase politeness.[36] In House, Kádár 2021, segmentations of this kind have been interpreted as Supportive Move of

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34 See for instance Head 2019; Bentein 2023a.

35 This *health wish* would be considered as closing greetings in the papyrological scholarship, and Leave-take in House, Kádár 2021.

36 Cf. Koroli 2020 on the use of the 'framing' as a way to impose psychological pressure on the recipient of the letter.

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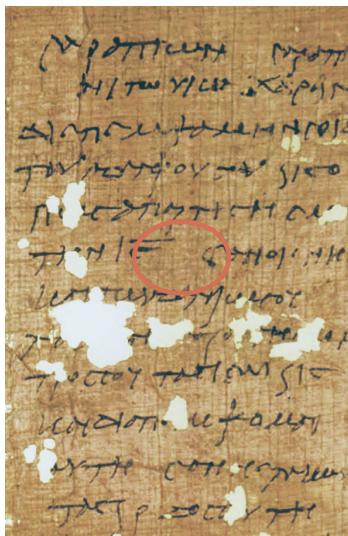
Figure 1
Letter from Sarapion to his son Sarapion.
P.Oxy. LVIII 3919, ll. 1-12 [188 AD] = TM 17903.
Courtesy of The Egypt Exploration Society
and the Faculty of Classics, University
of Oxford

the Head Act, the essential part of the speech act without which the intended action cannot be fully accomplished.[37] According to their explanation, a Supportive Move can either be aggravating or mitigating, depending on the impact it has on the speech act. From the point of view of the generic structure, a *background* tends to be a Subunit, as it is intrinsically connected to the subsequent segment, either by positing the premises and contexts that might justify a situation, in narrative contexts (e.g. to excuse a delay), or by containing the justification for a request, which in the background is framed by the appropriate politeness.[38]

As typical, after the *background*, *P.Oxy.* LVIII 3919 **[fig. 1]** shows a *request*. The text is organised around three conditional sentences, all exhibiting the structure 'If x… then do y', with the apodosis in the imperative mode. Moreover, this papyrus offers a remarkable example of the connection between layout and generic structure, in that we have a graphic representation of a small separation between the two Subunits, after the numeral in l. 6. This second segment, i.e. this Subunit, constitutes a *request* and corresponds perfectly to the speech act category of the Request (cf. § 2.2.1).

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37 House, Kádár 2021, 115. See further § 2.2.

38 There seems to be a direct proportion between the length of the background before a request and the level of social distance between the initiator and the receiver of the letter, but this needs to be further researched.

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2.1.2 The Role of Coherence and Cohesion within (Sub)Units

Among the fundamental parameters for determining the textual boundaries of a (Sub)Unit, the concepts of coherence and cohesion, along with their linguistic markers, play a key role. Considering once again Sarapion's letter, *P.Oxy.* LVIII 3919, we notice that, despite the presence of a segmentation – pertaining both to the generic structure and the layout – between the first Subunit (the *background*) and the second Subunit (the *request*) in the body of the letter, the text shows an overall level of coherence and cohesion within the Unit.[39]

By 'cohesion'[40] we describe the property of a text to be linguistically connected within itself, through the use of grammatical and lexical tools. Cohesion is reached through a series of lexical and grammatical devices, such as *repetition*, *anaphora*, *ellipsis*, and *coordination*, e.g. with connective particles. These elements explicitly connect all the parts of a text and indicate the hierarchies among them, increasing also the perceived coherence.[41]

With 'coherence', which is a notoriously vaguer term,[42] we refer to the way in which a text logically coheres with itself and with the external situation to which the text is related. It has been observed[43] that while cohesion is text-internal, coherence has a relation with the context and has a more marked pragmatic value.[44] Factors that increase coherence are the occurrence of cataphoric elements (e.g. demonstrative pronouns), correlative constructions, and connective particles.[45] Since on a situational level coherence is increased by the presence of the same time-space coordinates, we can use temporal or causal conjunctions (e.g. ἐπεί, ἐπειδή, ὡς, genitive absolute) to determine a change in Subunit.[46]

While cohesion can only be expressed formally, through language, coherence is achieved also through reference to the context. In other

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[39] Cf. Giora 1985; Givón 1995.

[40] See Basset 2009.

[41] See Bonifazi 2009.

[42] For a discussion on the validity of the term in Ancient Greek, see Bakker, Wakker 2009; for a structure-based approach to coherence in Ancient Greek, see Scheppers 2011.

[43] See Sanders 1997; Blakemore 2006.

[44] Van Erp Taalman Kip 2009.

[45] Wakker 2009.

[46] Another example of the difference between coherence and cohesion can be found in *P.Oxy.* XX 2274, analysed in 2.1.1 above. After having asked Kanopos to meet, to console him for the loss of his wife, Theodoros utilises their meeting for getting favours. Despite lacking cohesion, because the two situational settings are very different, the text has a certain degree of coherence, as shown by the usage of the conjunct participle ἐρχόμενος, and the particle δέ, which at this stage indicated minor discontinuity while also linking distinct events.

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words, extralinguistic factors may contribute to an increase in co-herence. To give an example, in the aforementioned *P.Oxy.* LVIII 3919 there is a reference to τὰς (δραχμὰς) ρ´, *the* one-hundred drachmae: while we modern readers are in the dark about what Serapion is re-ferring to, it is very likely that for his son this amount of money would have had a significance. This reference does not increase cohesion (which might be limited to the fact that the lexical element of drach-mae is repeated also in this segment of the Subunit), but it does in-crease coherence. Because of its extralinguistic and contextual com-ponent, while determining the level of coherence of a text we should always consider the pragmatic dimension. Coherence and cohesion represent another example of the interconnectedness between tex-tual segmentation and pragmatic analysis, as a change of speech act is a clear indication of a textual boundary. In other words, the con-sistency of a certain speech act is a key factor for textual coherence, and therefore the presence of a new speech act can be used an indi-cator of the fact that we are in the presence of new Unit.

Together, the linguistic and extralinguistic realisation of cohesion and coherence allow us to untangle the organisation of the discourse through Unit and Subunits. In *P.Oxy.* LVIII 3919, lexical cohesion is shown by the repeated occurrence of lexical material such as forms of the verb πέμπω, the reference to the role ἀδελφός and to the spe-cific amount of sixteen drachmae, across the entire Unit.[47] This lexi-cal cohesion is of course a result of the fact that, despite the multiple requests, these concern a single theme, that is to say the exchange of money within a family. However, a higher level of cohesion is rec-ognizable within the same Subunit where we find repetition of struc-tures (e.g. the set of conditional phrases).

While all coherence-increasing devices are used to connect the text and make it more effective and to associate elements that might otherwise be detached (e.g. τὰς (δραχμὰς) ρ´ at the end of *P.Oxy.* LVIII 3919), Units and Subunits are also organised around elements that signal a certain degree of discontinuity, such as a change in the set-ting, topic entertained, or participants.[48] While the presence of space and time indicators is always crucial in marking discontinuity, and therefore the beginning of a new Subunit (if the discontinuity is mi-nor), or an entirely new Unit (in the case of a major break) dealing with the usage of particles is not straightforward. As is well known in the scholarship, the usage of Ancient Greek particles for boundary

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47 In anticipation of a concept that we will explore in depth in § 2.1.3, one can already notice that the imperative forms of the verb διαπέμπω make up one of the key compo-nents of the Unit (Elements in our terminology), as they constitute the request verbs.

48 See Buijs 2005.

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marking varies diachronically,[49] and even within our corpus there might be significant differences. This discontinuity might be achieved introducing a new temporal or spatial setting, which would entail a major break, but it can also be represented through the presence of deictic elements (e.g. ἐνταῦθα, οὗτος and οὕτως), which form an element of minor discontinuity. These deictics connect a portion of the text with the previous, actualising it, but also creating the condition for new information. This level of discontinuity determines the segmentation of a Unit in two Subunits. A typical situation within our corpus consists of a unit segmented in two segments, a Head Act and a Supportive Act:[50] After a first Subunit where a situation or an event is laid out (e.g. a description or a background), a second Subunit offers a focus on a specific aspect of the issue (e.g. the consequences of a situation, for instance a declaration, or the expression of a request).

Although a certain degree of subjectivity is inevitable when segmenting a text, recognising units and Subunits is generally straightforward. To offer a different example of how to segment textual structure, one can consider the segmentation in Units and Subunits of the body of *P.Brem.* 63 (116 AD) = TM 19648, a private letter from Eudaimonis to her daughter Aline.

```
εὔχομαί σε πρὸ πάντων εὐ-
καίρως ἀποθέσθαι τὸ βάρος
καὶ λαβεῖν φάσιν ἐπὶ ἄρρε-
ν[ο]ς.‖ τῆι κθ ἀνέπλ[ε]υσας καὶ         5
τ[ῆι] ἑξῆς κατέσπακα. μόγις
ἔλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ βαφέος τ[ῆι]
ι τοῦ Ἐπείφ. | συνεργάζομαι
δὲ ταῖς παιδίσκαις σου κατὰ
τὸ δυνατόν. οὐχ εὑρίσκω                   10
τὰς δυναμένας συνεργάζεσ-
θαι ἡμῖν, ἅπ[α(?)]σ[α(?)]ι γὰρ ταῖς ἰδί-
αις κυρίαις ἐργάζονται. | περι-
ώδευσαν γὰρ οἱ ἡμῶν ὅλην                 15
τὴν πόλιν [π]ροσπεύδοντες
πλέον μισθόν. ‖ ἡ ἀδελφή σου
Σουεροῦς ἀπέθετο τὸ βάρος. ‖
ἔγραψέ μοι Τεεῦς εὐχαριστ[οῦ-]
σα ὑμῖν, ὥστε, κυρία, ἔγνων            20
ὅτι αἱ ἐντολαί μου μενοῦσι.
πάντας γὰρ τοὺς αὐτῆς κατα-
λείψασα συνεξώρμησέ σοι. ‖
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49   See e.g. Bakker 1993; Thijs 2021; Bentein 2021.

50   Cf. House, Kádár 2021.

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ἀσπάζεταί σε ἡ μεικρὰ (l. μικρὰ) καὶ προσ-
καρτεῖ (l. προσ |καρτ<ερ>εῖ) τοῖς μαθήμασι. ‖ ἴσθι δὲ   25
ὅτι οὐ μέλλω θεῶι σχολάζειν,
εἰ μὴ πρότερον ἀπαρτίσω τὸν
υἱόν μου. ‖ εἰς τί μοι ἔπεμψ[ας]
τὰς κ (δραχμὰς), ὅτε οὐκ εὐκαιρῶ; ἤδη
πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν ἔχω, ὅτι γυμνὴ   30
μενῶ τὸν χειμῶνα. ‖

Above all, I pray that you may give birth in good time, and that I shall receive news of a baby boy. You sailed away on the 29th and on the next day I finished drawing down (the wool?). I at last got the material from the dyer on the 10th of Epeiph. I am working with your slave girls as far as possible. I cannot find girls who can work with me, for they are all working for their own mistresses. Our workers marched through all the city eager for more money. Your sister Souerous gave birth. Teeus wrote me a letter thanking you so that I know, my lady, that my instructions will be valid, for she has left all her family to come with you. The little one sends you her greetings and is persevering with her studies. Rest assured that I shall not pay studious attention to God until I get my son back safe. Why did you send me 20 drachmae in my difficult situation? I already have the vision of being naked when winter starts. (transl. Bagnall, Cribiore)

In this letter, we can distinguish seven units,[51] each consisting of a small portion of text marked above with a vertical double line (ll. 3-6; 6-17; 17-18; 19-23; 24-5; 25-8; 28-31). Only the third unit can be further divided into Subunits (ll. 6-9; 9-14; 14-17). This division is based on changes in tense (from aorist to present, then back to aorist) and, in one instance, a change of subjects (from the initiator of the letter to the workers, referred to as οἱ ἡμῶν). The connective particle γάρ, used repeatedly within the unit, serves as an element of minor discontinuity since it introduces the logical consequences of the previous discussion. In the following sections (§ 2.2 and § 2.3), we will revisit the types and proposed labels for these Units and Subunits.

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51   The first lines (εὔχομαί σε πρὸ πάντων εὐκαίρως ἀποθέσθαι τὸ βάρος καὶ λαβεῖν φάσιν ἐπὶ ἄρρεν[ο]ς can be analysed as a reformulated health wish (see Bentein 2023a, 447-51) and therefore would not be part of the body of the text, pertaining instead to the opening section.

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2.1.3   Elements and Modifiers

Key components of textual segmentation are the categories of Elements and Modifiers, which lie at the intersection of generic and pragmatic structure. By Elements, we refer to the main participants (initiator, receiver, etc.) and main verbs (disclosure verbs, wish verbs, health verbs, warning verbs, etc.) of the (Sub)units. Therefore, Elements represent both the key actors of the events of a text and the verbs that describe those events.

Modifiers, on the other hand, are a larger category of items, whose core is represented by adverbs and other grammatical categories that can modify another item. Largely drawing from the work of Juliane House and Daniel Kádár, we recognise 'upgraders' and 'downgraders', which operate on speech acts (see below, § 2.2) and may change the pragmatic force of the speech act, either increasing or decreasing it. Such 'internal' modifiers may be syntactic, including, e.g. rhetorical questions (e.g. οὐκ ἀφήκατέ μοι μετ' αὐτάς 'didn't you abandon me after these [troubles]?'; and οὐκ ἐδεσθηται ὑμῖς 'aren't you ashamed?' in *P.Oxy.* XLVIII 3417 [330-385 AD] = TM 33723) and conditional clauses (e.g. ἡ οὖν δοκῖ τῷ ὑμετέρῳ μεγέθι πέμψε τινὰ τῶν πέδων ταῦτα ἀποστέλλετε 'So if it pleases your Highness to send one of the slaves, these goods shall be sent off' in *P.Oxy.* XXXIV 2732 [IV AD] = TM 24890). External Modifiers, on the other hand, are lexical and phrasal, including titles (e.g. master, father), endearment terms (e.g. dearest), but also so-called 'attention-getters', forms used to capture the attention of the receiver (e.g. ἰδού 'look').

2.2   Speech Acts and Textual Segmentation

Within studies on pragmatics, various attempts have been made to analyse the pragmatic structure, with particular emphasis and success for spoken corpora of modern languages. The pragmatic analysis of living languages has the obvious advantage of allowing a highly refined level of prosodic analysis, which simply cannot be reached for corpus languages such as Ancient Greek. It is sometimes difficult to establish a clear-cut distinction between rhetorical and pragmatic analysis, especially because many studies, including some that we mentioned in § 2.1, combine the two. While some researchers adopt a prosodic or syntax-based approach,[52] many of the most convincing studies benefit from a combined approach, integrating elements such as semantics and pragmatics,[53] or prosody and syntax.[54]

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[52]   Van Dijk 1977.

[53]   Ferrari 2014.

[54]   Degand, Simon 2009. See Scheppers 2011 on Ancient Greek.

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Of course, research on discourse segmentation – hence, the analysis of the pragmatic structure – has also adopted a chiefly pragmatic approach, recognising the speech act as the core of the communicative unit. Ranging from the work of John Sinclair and Malcolm Coulthard,[55] to the seminal contributions of Caroline Kroon and Mike Hannay,[56] discourse studies have identified at least two levels of discourse segmentation: Acts and Moves. Discourse Acts (DAs) are 'the smallest identifiable units of communicative behavior',[57] while Moves are larger blocks constructed from at least one smaller Discourse Act. Versions of this theory have been successfully applied to Ancient Greek.[58]

Though recognising some validity in these proposals, we have limited ourselves to acknowledge the centrality of speech acts within the organisation of discourse, based on the assumption that in every discourse there will be a prevalent speech act, around which the discourse is structured. Since we needed a paradigm with a clear set of speech acts, applicable to a variety of cultural contexts – such as our letters, which span multiple languages and a wide chronological range – we have adopted the cross-cultural approach to pragmatics recently proposed by Juliane House and Daniel Kádár.[59] The advantages are multiple: based on a set of classificatory principles (e.g. temporal properties, affective stance, and the roles and impacts of speakers and listeners), House and Kádár have reduced the existing elusiveness surrounding the notion of 'speech act'. Crucially, this approach situates speech act theory within a richer and more complex social and interactional model, that can explain diverse situational contexts, with their social norms and conventions, but also the role of participants, and their stance. At its core, their framework details how elements of generic structure, such as moves and exchanges, manifest as illocutionary acts. Additionally, it includes conversational strategies like head-internal and head-external modifying expressions, 'gambits' and other types of linking expressions that 'lubricate' the interaction (also known as 'discourse' or 'pragmatic' markers).

Following House, Kádár 2021, we have analysed the main speech acts (Head Acts in their terminology) found in the texts of our corpus. A single Head Act might be composed of more speech acts, but

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55   Sinclair, Coulthard 1975.

56   Kroon 1995; Hannay, Kroon 2005.

57   Hannay, Kroon 2005, 92.

58   E.g. Crepaldi 2018; Freiberg 2020, and De Kreij's work in Bonifazi, Drummen, de Kreij 2021. Other useful studies that integrate speech act theory in discourse segmentation on Ancient Greek are Young 1989; Du Plessis 1991; Franklin 1992.

59   See House, Kádár 2021. This approach also appears in the two scholars' later re-edition of Edmondson's Interactional Grammar of English (Edmondson, House, Kádár 2023).

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in this case they all tend to converge to a single communicative goal,[60] and this happens especially in opening health wishes. It should be kept in mind, as will be shown later in this contribution, that there is no complete overlapping between 'speech acts', which are central to pragmatic annotation, and textual (Sub)Units, though they might cover the same portions of text. Following House and Kádár's model, with slight modifications, we have identified the following speech acts: Assertion, Complaint, Description, Greeting, Request, Resolve, Suggest, Statement, Thanksgiving, Willing, and Wish Well, based on the fact that they manifest cross-culturally and, indeed, seem applicable to Ancient Greek.[61]

Because of space constraints, rather than describing how each specific speech act is characterised and how we have proceeded in our annotation process, in this contribution we will show examples of three of them, namely Request, Health Wish and Leave-take.

2.2.1 The Speech Act Request

Since making requests is one of the core elements of communication, the recognition of a speech act for requests is an early notion in pragmatics, as indicated through the presence of 'directives' in the list of illocutionary acts already in the very first speech act typology of Austin and of Searle. The research on the pragmatic nature of requests has immensely profited from the developments of politeness studies, a concept that refers to the usage of language for acknowledging and respecting the interlocutor's role in a linguistic exchange.[62] Moreover, requests are the most common communicative reason and pragmatic goal behind a private or public letter on papyrus,[63] so it is of little surprise that the study of requests in documentary papyri has a rich and extensive bibliography.[64]

In our analysis, we have defined the speech act Request as an utterance with the primary pragmatic function of asking for something that benefits the person who made the request, and we have consequently annotated as Requests the portions of texts that exhibit this communicative function as their main goal.[65] In the literature, there

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60   Extended Speech Act, cf. House, Kádár 2021.

61   See also Edmondson, House, and Kádár 2023, 36-7 for further description of the rationale behind their cross-cultural typology of speech acts.

62   E.g. House 1989; Van Mulken 1996; Leech 2014.

63   See Koroli 2020, 75.

64   To quote a few examples, see Papathomas 2009; Dickey 2010; Leiwo 2010; Koroli 2016; 2020; Bruno 2020; 2022.

65   Cf. Head Act in House, Kádár 2021.

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have been several attempts to structure a typology of requests, for instance dividing between direct and indirect request letters.[66] We have chosen not to describe subtypes of requests, limiting ourselves to noticing that they occur both in Units and Subunits, in the generic structure. However, we have considered the critical function of Supportive Moves in Request speech acts, as they contribute to the acceptability of a request in terms of politeness. To give an example, most requests can be identified by the presence of certain Elements, such as the request verb (e.g. παρακαλῶ 'I require', καταξιόω 'I command', θέλω 'I want', ἐρωτῶ 'I ask'), as well as certain Modifiers,[67] both upgraders (e.g. intensifiers such as πρὸ πάντων 'above all', or τάχιστα 'very fast') and downgraders (e.g. ἐάν δοκεῖ, ἐὰν θέλεις 'if you like/want'). The request verb might be an imperative (both present, e.g. πέμπε 'send!', or aorist, e.g. δός 'give!'), when there is a higher social distance, or in the infinitive or participle depending on set phrases such as, e.g. καλῶς ποιήσεις lit. 'you will do well to', πᾶν ποίησον lit. 'make every effort to'.

2.2.2 The Speech Acts Health Wish and Leave-take

As a universal and ritual convention across the world, sending health wishes is a very common way to begin or end a conversation, and this is of course exceedingly present in our corpus of documentary letters. Research on this kind of expression in papyri has recently been produced both on the linguistic[68] and papyrological side.[69] Additionally, two other related speech acts can be identified: Leave-take, which serves to conclude an encounter (in this case, a letter), and Greet, which is used to initiate encounters. The primary distinction between Greet and Leave-take lies in the fact that Leave-taking is more specifically associated with expressions of well-being.

Crosslinguistically, health wishes tend to occur at the beginning and, especially, at the end of a conversation and they unsurprisingly appear in the opening and closing parts of our sources. It should be noted that some letters might show two references to health and good fortune, at the beginning and at the end.[70] The presence of references to health in the opening of letters is particularly common in private letters, where the writer acknowledges (e.g. [ὅ]τι δὲ αὐτός τε ἔρρωσαι καὶ τ[ο]ῖς ἔργοις ἔγκεισαι καὶ ἐμοὶ σωθέντι συνήδη, καλῶς ποιεῖς, '[As

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66 E.g. Koroli 2020.

67 Cf. Soler, Flor, Jordà 2005; House, Kádár 2021.

68 E.g. la Roi 2021.

69 E.g. Nachtergaele 2016; Head 2019.

70 Nachtergaele 2023 recognises a difference between initial and final health wishes.

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concerns the fact that] you are doing well in your works and you re-joice at my recovery' in *P.Oxy.* XXXI 2559 [II AD] = TM 26931) or enquires about the health status of the receiver, or even expresses thanks to the gods for the present good health (εὐχαριστοῦμεν πᾶ[σι τοῖς θεοῖς περὶ τῆς ὑγίας] σου 'I thank all the gods for your health' in *P.Giss.Apoll.* 11 [113-120 AD] = TM 19422).[71]

While these instances do not present the wishing component, the speech act Health Wish is in fact quite frequent in openings,[72] as in προηγουμένους (l. προηγουμένως) εὔχομαι τῇ θίᾳ προνοίᾳ οἱ[γ]ενοντά σαι καὶ ὁλοκληρουν 'First of all, I pray to the Divine Providence that you are healthy and thriving and cheerful when my letter is delivered to you' (*P.Oxy.* XLVIII 3396 [330-385 AD] = TM 33708). In openings, the speech act Health Wish is frequently combined with a salutation, as in πρὸ τῶν ὅλων ἀσπάζομαί σε, δέσποτα, καὶ εὔχομαι πάντοτε περὶ τῆς ὑγιείας σου 'First of all I salute you, master, and I pray always for your health' (*P.Giss.Apoll.* 13 [113-120 AD] = TM 19419).

Leave-take speech acts appear at the end of letters, especially private ones, presenting a high degree of variation, from the very simple ἔρρωσο 'be well' (e.g. *P.Oxy.* LXIII 4362 [III-IV AD] = TM 31825), to a standard ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι 'I pray that you are well' (sometimes more or less abbreviated, e.g. *P.Giss.Apoll.* 32 [113-120 AD] = TM 19417), to rather complex formulae, such as ἐρρῶσθαί σε, κύριέ μου, διὰ παντὸς τῷ τῶν ὅλων δεσπότῃ εὔχομαι 'I pray to the Lord of all, my master, for your continued health' (*P.Oxy.* VI 939 [IV AD] = TM 33344).[73] It is possible to track the variation in complexity on the basis of two parameters: chronology, as formulae tend to become increasingly more elaborate with Late Antiquity, and social distance, because a higher distance between initiatior and receiver of a letter corresponds to the selection of a more intricate set of formulae for Leave-take. This level of elaboration involves both the lexicon, which belongs to a high register, and the syntactic complexity, as formulae become increasingly complex.

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71 At the opening of letters, we sometimes find the verb 'to be healthy' (ὑγιαίνειν) in the infinitive form, attached to greeting phrases, e.g. Δημήτριος καὶ Παυσανίας Παυσαν[ί]ᾳ τῶι πατρὶ πλεῖστα χαίρειν καὶ ὑγι(αίνειν) 'Demetrius and Pausanias to their father Pausanias very many greetings and wishes for good health', in *P.Oxy.* XIV 1672 (37-40 AD) = TM 21965.

72 See Bentein 2023a, 441 for a quantitative overview of types of segments in the opening and closing.

73 This health wish is commonly found at the end of letters, cf. ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι πολλοῖς χρόνοις (*SB* XVI 12947 [300-325 AD] = TM 32603). Appropriately, House and Kádár distinguish between Wish-well (= Health Wish) and Leave-take (= Closing Greeting). This twofold distinction has a correspondence in the papyrological studies: e.g. Nachtergaele 2023, 243 makes a distinction between health wishes with the order matrix verb – complement and farewell greetings with the reverse order.

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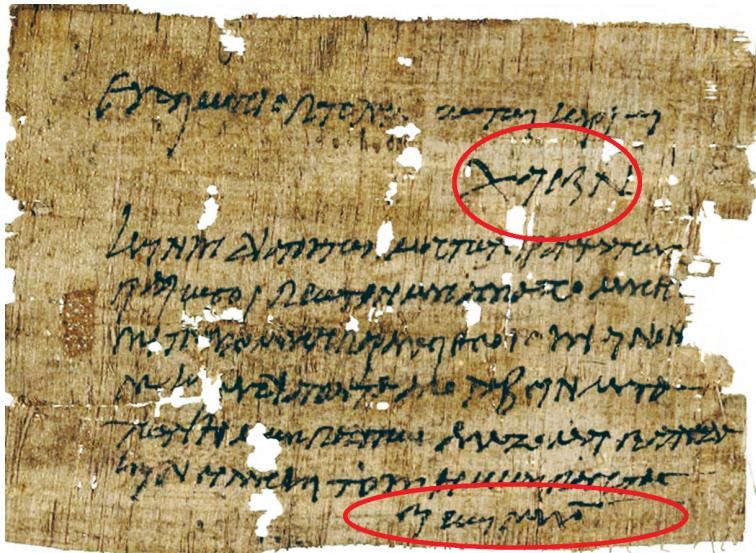
Figure 2 Letter of Eudaimonis to Ptolemaios. *P.Oxy.* IX 1217 [III AD] = TM 31648.
Courtesy of The Egypt Exploration Society and the Faculty of Classics, University of Oxford

Leave-take speech acts constitute an excellent and clear example of a tendency that will be systematically assessed in § 3 and has been already pointed out in § 2.1.1, that is to say the correspondence between layout and generic structure in our epistolary texts. Because Leave-take speech acts have a different pragmatic function from the body of the letter, just like Wish-well, Greetings and Salutations, they are oftentimes visually set apart in the letter. In *P.Oxy.* IX 1217 (III AD) = TM 31648 **[fig. 2]**, for instance, ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔχομ(αι) is clearly separated from the rest of the text by a different type of spacing and text offsetting (see § 3), mirroring what happens at the beginning of the letter, where the salutation χαίρειν is also offset and more spaced than the rest of the characters.

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2.3   Bringing Textual and Pragmatic Analysis Together. Declarations and the Speech Acts Statement and Assertion

The novelty of our approach to the annotation of a text's generic structure lies in the combination of the results of textual segmentation with pragmatic analysis. We have observed how Units and Subunits may be organised around one speech act, though this does not necessarily have to happen in each text. More interesting is observing the interaction between the textual and the pragmatic analysis.

Having provided annotations and descriptions for both the discourse and pragmatic levels (Units and speech acts) has proven quite helpful in cases where there is a textual (Sub)Unit, such as *Declaration*, that might correspond to several speech acts, as, e.g. Statement and Assertion.[74] The first, Statement, applies when there is the statement about something that is factually true (e.g. ἡ ἀδελφή σου Σουεροῦς ἀπέθετο τὸ βάρος 'your sister gave birth' in *P.Brem.* 63 [116 CE] = TM 19648), while the second one, Assertion, regards something that the speaker believes to be true. It is often in the 1st p. sing. (e.g. οὐδὲ γὰρ πλέον δύναμαι κρατῆσαι ἀργυροπράτην ὡ<ς> οἶδεν κύριος 'For I cannot longer endure the noble money-dealer, as the Lord knows, troubling me' (transl. adapted from Grenfell, Hunt, Bell)[75] in *P.Oxy.* XVI 1844, ll. 4-5 [550-650 CE] = TM 37850), but not necessarily, and there is more force in the utterance.[76]

The most distinctive characteristic of the textual unit declaration, both with the speech act Statement and the speech act Assertion, is the presence of a disclosure verb, such as a form of λέγω, or an imperative of a verb of knowledge (e.g. ἴσθι and γίνωσκε 'know!', and in some cases ἰδού 'look!'). The presence of the verb, though not obligatory, is quite common, and can be replaced by increasingly complicated disclosure formulae, always governed by a verb that expresses will, such as θέλω or βούλομαι. The most frequent case for this is the disclosure formula γινώσκειν σε θέλω, but there are variants such as εἰδέναι σε θέλω (e.g. *PSI* XII 1259 [120-225 CE] = TM 27174), γιγνώσκειν σε βούλομαι (e.g. *P.Dubl.* 15 [100-275 AD] = TM 28940) and more elaborate ones. What is interesting about these formulae is that, though introducing a declaration, they share some traits

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74   Although we have adopted in most parts House and Kádár's terminology, our choice for Statement and Assertion diverges from theirs. These two speech acts loosely correspond to Tell and Opine (House, Kádár 2021) with certain significant differences: while Statement aligns with Tell, the speech act Assertion has a higher illocutive force and unlike Opine (House, Kádár 2021, 112), is not negotiable.

75   Here we accept the integration ὡ<ς> οἶδεν Κύριος (Putelli 2020, 171), rather than ὡ (l. ὃ) οἶδεν κύριος as in the *editio princeps*.

76   Cf. Murray, Starr 2021.

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associated with the speech act Request, such as the use of impera-
tive forms, or marks of politeness (such as the frequent recourse to
forms of address, both simple, e.g. κύριε, and more complex, e.g. ἡ
ὑμετέρα ἐξουσία ('your lordship') in *P.Oxy.* XVI 1829 [577-583 AD] =
TM 22007, or τὴν ὑμετέραν ἀγαθὴ<ν> δεσποτεία<ν> ('your good au-
thority') in *P.Oxy.* XVI 1866 [VI-VII AD] = TM 37869).

The complex set of relations between the pragmatic and generic
structures are sometimes difficult to describe with a unitary mod-
el, but the combined analysis of the annotation of speech acts on
the one hand, and the segmentation of generic structure on the oth-
er hand can shed new light on the internal structure of the text and
the discourse organisation. Furthermore, the tension between dis-
course and generic structure of a text becomes visible in the occa-
sional parting from formulae and conventional forms of politeness,
and in the re-organisation of more regular textual subdivisions (e.g.
making a request followed by an explanation of the context and rea-
sons behind it, rather than the more common opposite alternative).
In this sense, a combined pragmatic and textual approach seems to
be the most suitable for analysing a multidimensional and complex
interactional form of communication such as a letter.

3   Connecting Generic to Layout Structure

As we mentioned in the introduction to this contribution, the main fo-
cus of our pilot project has been linguistic, but our interest is broad-
er: within the Everyday Writing project, we are interested not just
in documents' generic structure, but also their layout (visual) struc-
ture, for which we have developed a complementary annotation envi-
ronment.[77] The idea behind this 'double' annotation structure is that
generic and layout structure can and should be related to each oth-
er, but need to be viewed independently. Scholars often do not distin-
guish between these two types of structure, or explicitly assume that
they correlate, but this is not necessarily the case: according to one
view, for example, the body of Greek documentary letters starts with
a health wish and *proskynema* formula, whereas the prescript con-
sists of the name of the initiator and addressee in combination with
a greeting formula.[78] This view does not explicitly distinguish bet-
ween layout and generic structure: visually speaking it may be true
that the name of the initiator and addressee together with a greeting
verb is set apart, but that does not mean that rhetorically the health
wish and *proskynema* formula do not belong to the opening.

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[77]   The discussion that follows is partly based on Bentein, Kootstra 2024.

[78]   Luiselli 2008, 692, 700.

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In the Everyday Writing database, layout structure is approached from a similar 'hierarchical' perspective as generic structure. This perspective establishes distinctions among varying components, ranging from larger to smaller dimensions. These include 'parts' (the most overarching visual blocks), 'Units' (the visual blocks nested within the aforementioned parts), 'Elements', and 'Modifiers' (the smallest discernable visual segments). In thinking about layout structure, it does not seem unwarranted to apply a similar model of segmentation as the one that we just discussed. In fact, this has been done by scholars such as Paul Thibault, who proposes a 'visual-graphological rank scale', which consists of eight different levels, ranging from the page to the grapheme.[79] Along the same lines, Charles Kostelnick and Michael Hassett have proposed to recognise a 'spectrum of visual conventions', ranging from small-scale to large-scale.[80]

While there may not be an exact correspondence between these four types of segments from a generic and visual point of view,[81] working with the same set of terms opens the door to explicit comparison of different types of document structure, an approach that has not been explicitly pursued yet. One obvious difference between layout and generic segments is the way in which they are cued (framed): it is well-known that generic segments are cued by formulae and discourse particles, but it is much less clear how – and whether – visual segments are cued in documentary sources. In fact, the dominant view is that these sources were written in *scriptio continua*,[82] a style of writing where words are written without spaces or other forms of punctuation between them. In this format, the identification and separation of words, sentences, and ideas are entirely left to the reader's comprehension, which can, perhaps, be connected to the oral context in which documents were produced and received.[83] On the basis of a review of documentary sources and relevant secondary literature, we have come to distinguish between eight visual cueing systems, which we list here:

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[79]   Thibault 2007, 124.

[80]   Kostelnick, Hassett 2003, 16.

[81]   One divergence we had to introduce between generic and lay-out structure concerns the introduction of subtypes of Units (called 'Subunits') and of Modifiers (called 'complex Modifiers'). That generic structure should have a more complex hierarchical organisation is in itself not a great surprise, given the complexity of language as a semiotic system.

[82]   Turner 1987, 7.

[83]   Scholars of non-literary sources have observed an increasing tendency to adopt diacritical signs (accents, breathings, punctuation marks) in documentary texts starting from the fourth century AD (e.g. Fournet 2009; 2013).

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a. *Spacing* refers to the increase or decrease of letter size and the space existing between the letters.

b. *Alignment* pertains to the orientation of text, which can be left-justified, right-justified, centrally aligned, or fully justified.

c. *Text offsetting* encompasses the adjustment of text positioning, either inward from (*indentation*) or outward to (*outdentation*) the standard margin, distinguishing specific lines from the remainder of the text.

d. *Separation* refers to the presence of space, either vertically or horizontally, separating (parts of) lines (more traditionally known as [vertical/horizontal] *vacat*).

e. *Orientation* of the text could be either horizontally or vertically arranged.

f. *Lineation* is the system where information is placed on a new line or continuous on the same line.

g. *Pagination* represents information placement such as on the reverse side of the document or in the margins.

h. *Lectional signs* entail the use of any special symbols or marks within the text.

These eight visual systems – which may seem somewhat heterogeneous – are based on three different principles:[84] systems one to three (as outlined above) are *textual*, in the sense that they operate on the shape of the actual written text; systems four to seven are *spatial*, in the sense that they are based on the spatial organisation of the text; and system eight is *paratextual*, in the sense that it concerns the use of a separate set of symbols, lines, etc. While the visual analysis that we are suggesting here may come across as anachronistic in nature, it is good to keep in mind that much of it is based on universal, cognitive principles of visual-spatial organisation and segmentation – the so-called *Gestalt* principles – which are likely to have been operative in antiquity as well.[85]

While the generic structure of private letters has received in-depth attention through the pilot project that we described above, the layout structure of private letters and other text types has been studied only marginally in the Everyday Writing project, through a couple of case studies, addressing women's letters and the eighth-century

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[84] Compare Kostelnick, Hassett 2003, 16.

[85] Two such cognitive principles that we consider particular relevant are the *principle of nearness* (elements that are placed near to each other are perceived as forming a unity) and the *principle of similarity* (elements that are perceived as similar create a unified pattern).

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Qurrah archive.[86] In the context of the present contribution, rather than zooming in on such a subcorpus, we want to address a specific, twofold research question, namely (i) to what extent writers adapted their visual marking to differences in terms of pragmatic structure; that is, whether certain types of speech acts were visually marked more frequently/heavily than others (requests, for example, compared to statements); and (ii) whether higher-order, thematically distinct generic segments (our *Units*) were visually marked more heavily/frequently than lower-order, thematically connected generic segments (our *Subunits*).

Before moving on to the actual analysis, it is worth specifying why we believe that there might be some validity to these hypotheses. Our belief that writers might be sensitive to the type of speech act that is being expressed is grounded in work in the field of interpersonal pragmatics, in particular the distinction that is made between 'head acts', which represent the core of the speech act sequence, and constitute its only obligatory part, and 'supportive moves', which follow or precede the Head Act, and serve to mitigate or aggravate the force of the Head Act, a distinction that we also mentioned under § 2.1.23.[87] Given that requests are, in Greek and cross-culturally, one of the most important speech acts,[88] and typically function as a text's Head Act, it seems at least plausible that writers would visually mark requests more heavily/frequently than other types of speech acts. When it comes to our belief that writers might be sensitive to the generic status (higher-order vs. lower-order) of the segment that is being visually marked, it is worth referring to work that is done in the functional-linguistic tradition, in particular the key concept of 'iconicity', which refers to the fact that the relationship between form and meaning is motivated, rather than arbitrary.[89] Several types of iconicity have been discovered in linguistic analysis, relevant domains including *sequence*, *contiguity*, *repetition*, *quantity*, *complexity* and *cohesion*. One type of iconicity which we consider particularly relevant for our hypothesis here is *iconicity of quantity*: this refers to the fact that more linguistic coding tends to be used when more conceptual information is conveyed. In linguistics, this is true not just at the level of the individual word, but also at the level of discourse: in his work on subordinating strategies in ancient Greek, Michel Buijs, for example, has shown that more coding tends to be used at major breaks in discourse.[90] Applying these principles to visual structure,

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86   Bentein 2023b; Bentein, Kootstra 2024.

87   E.g. Leech 2014, 174-6; House, Kádár 2021, 113-15.

88   For Greek, see e.g. Koroli 2020.

89   See e.g. Haiman 1980; Givón 1985, 1991.

90   Buijs 2005.

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we would expect not only heavier coding options within a single visual system for more significant thematic breaks, but also the combination of visual cues from different systems for such significant thematic breaks. Of course, this does not mean that heavy visual marking cannot be used for lower-level segments, but rather that when higher-level segments occur, even heavier marking would be expected, at least from the point of view of iconicity.

To address our twofold research question, we proceeded in two steps:

1. in a first step, we systematically went through all informal (non-official) letters from the Everyday Writing-corpus with an image in our database, and marked all texts with indications of visual segmentation beyond the separation of the initial and final parts (most typically the prescript and farewell greeting/date), which was rather standard practice; this resulted in a corpus of little over two hundred letters, with 121 texts for the Roman period (I-III AD), and 84 for the Late Antique period (IV-VIII AD);

2. in a second step, we focused on the larger set of Roman-period letters, and systematically analysed the usage of visual cues in these documents. In what follows, we first discuss the different types of visual cueing that are attested in Roman-period private letters from the Everyday Writing corpus (§ 3.1), and then go on to discuss the relationship between linguistic structure and visual presentation (§ 3.2).

As this is an exploratory study on the basis of a relatively small dataset, which needs to be extended and refined in conjunction with our ongoing annotation work, we refrain from providing statistical data, and limit ourselves to providing a qualitative discussion of our findings.

3.1   Visual Cueing

Time does not permit us to go through all texts with indications of visual marking individually, so we will restrict ourselves to discussing and illustrating some major tendencies in our corpus. Let us start by noting that the fact that we have found up to two hundred informal letters with signs of visual segmentation in their main visual part (that is, going beyond the initial and final part with the prescript and closing greetings) is a surprise in itself, especially when we consider that there are still texts in our corpus for which we do not have an image, and that quite a few texts are too fragmentary to take into consideration. What is more, as we noted above, standard doctrine about the visual presentation of non-literary texts holds that these texts were written in *scriptio continua*, without modern word,

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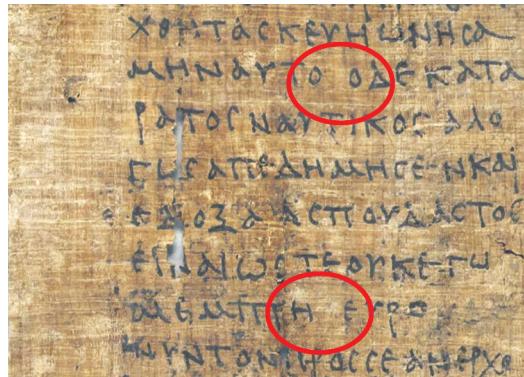
Figure 3
Letter from Demetria to Apia. *P.Hamb.* II
192, ll. 8-15 [III AD] = TM 30461.
© Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek
Hamburg (Gr. 404)

clause, and sentence division, so that the line, rather than the sentence, served as the main unit of visual perception.

This being said, it must be admitted that there is relatively little diversity in terms of the different visual systems that are at play: the visual cues that are attested are predominantly spatial in nature, and relate in particular to what we have referred to as *separation* above, that is, the presence of blank space, either vertical or horizontal, separating (parts of) lines.[91] In the large majority of our letters, writers employ very subtle horizontal blank spaces – known as *vacat*[92] – to visually structure the text. By way of illustration, we can turn to *P.Hamb.* II 192 (III AD) = TM 30461 **[fig. 3]**,[93] a private letter from Demetria to Apia about buying and sending goods with a very noticeable opening part, in which each of the words is visually set apart. Care has been taken to linguistically and visually structure the body of the text, too: the letter consists of five sentences, each of which, besides the first sentence, is introduced through the discourse particle δέ. Before the start of each sentence, we find a subtle horizontal blank space supporting the linguistic structure.

Blank spaces such as the ones that we find in this document can be considered 'small', by which we mean that they are the equivalent of (only) one or two letters. Exceptionally, however, writers insert much larger blank spaces, which are the equivalent of three or more letters. A striking example can be found in *P.Oxy.* XLII 3057 (I-II AD) = TM

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91   Compare Fournet 2013, 153-4, who discusses the use of structuring blank spaces ('des vacat structurants') as part of the *literarisation* of Late Antique documents. Our corpus shows that this practice was in use at a much earlier time.

92   See further Martin 2020.

93   For this letter, also see Bentein 2023b, 95.
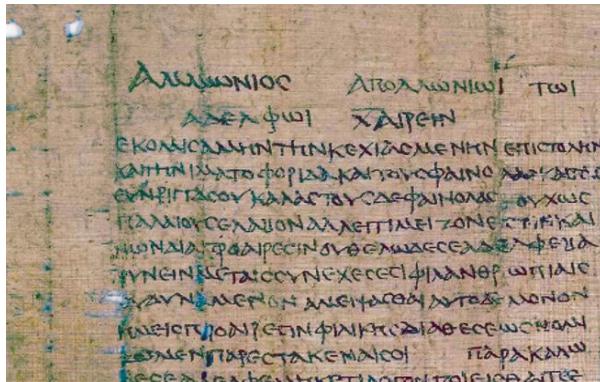
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25080 **[fig. 4]**, a private letter from Ammonios to his 'brother' Apollonios about various topics, including the receipt of goods. Similarly to *P.Hamb.* II 192, this letter has a very noticeable opening part in which each of the words is visually set apart. In this letter, too, discourse particles, in particular δέ and γάρ, are consistently used, though the overall thematic structuring is much more chaotic. The writer has made a conscious effort, however, to visually highlight the request that he is making at l. 11, which is also strengthened linguistically through the use of the performative verb παρακαλῶ as well as the repeated vocative ἄδελφε.

One can note that the horizontal blank space that is used here is much larger compared to our previous letter, being the equivalent of ca. six letters, which parallels the space that is left in the opening between the names of the initiator and the receiver. Such large spaces can sometimes be found before the closing greeting, in case it does not form a visual block of its own.[94] In our letter, more subtle horizontal blank spaces are employed in between clauses or even inside clauses (ll. 5, 17, 28), which are more difficult to interpret from a pragmatic point of view. We return to this practice in § 3.2.

Besides the use of small and large horizontal blank spaces, there is some evidence for the use of other visual cues, though this was certainly done much less systematically – at least inside the body of the text. The use of vertical separation, for example, is quite limited: a potential example can be found in *P.Oxy.* LIX 3988 (II AD) = TM 27844 **[fig. 5]**, a relatively short private letter in which Besarion greets his brother Hierakion, expressing his well wishes and informing him of recent events in Alexandria. The overall visual impression

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94 E.g. *SB* XX 15180, l. 11 (II AD) = TM 23907.
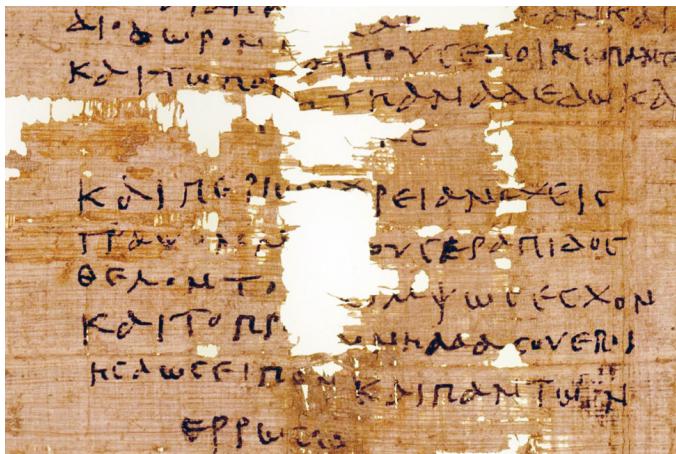
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of this letter is much less professional than that of our previous two examples, as indicated among others by the less experienced style of handwriting as well as the fact that the prescript is not visually set apart. Interestingly, however, the writer does visually set apart the short closing greeting (ἔρρωσο, l. 20) and also employs a separate visual block for the postscript that follows the salutations (ll. 15-19). Both the closing greeting and the postscript are visually set apart through a small vertical blank space, which is used in conjunction with other visual features, such as the use of a new line (*lineation*), and a change in alignment (the last line of the first visual block being centrally aligned, as is the closing greeting).

In our previous example, we already mentioned the use of lineation – the conscious placing of information on a new line – as a visual cueing system. As writers typically write until the end of the right margin, it is not always straightforward to detect the relevance of this visual system, so that the interpretation often must rely on the presence of other visual markings; in *P.Oxy.* LIX 3988, this involved vertical separation as well as a change of alignment. The same can be seen in our next example, *P.Oxy.* LXXV 5049 (59 AD) = TM 128890 [fig. 6], a fragmentarily preserved letter to Apion from an unknown initiator. Only the last part of this letter remains, consisting of the salutation, date, postscript, and external address. What is interesting about this letter, however, is that the extensive, seven-line postscript seems to be visually structured in three segments through the use of horizontal blank spaces at the end of ll. 9, 12, 14, as well as the use of a new line. In this postscript, Apion is requested to take

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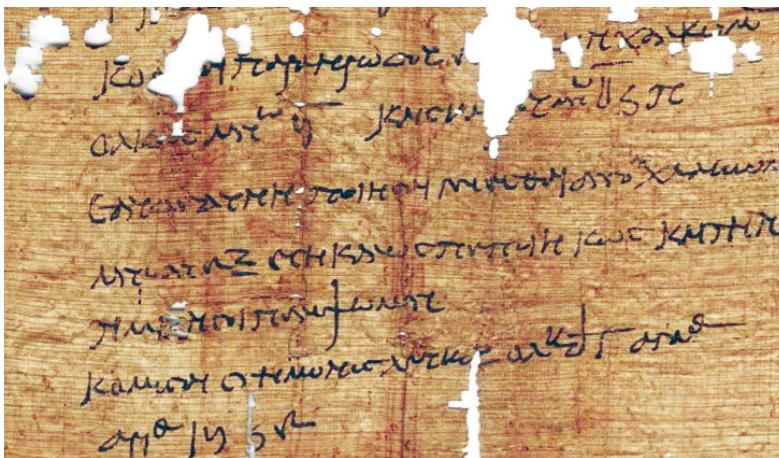
Figure 6 Letter to Apion. *P.Oxy.* LXXV 5049, ll. 8-14 [59 AD] = TM 128890.
Courtesy of The Egypt Exploration Society and the Faculty of Classics, University of Oxford

delivery of various objects (bronze dishes and a bowl in the first visual segment, white warp balls in the third visual segment), and asked to find another bronze dish (second visual segment). As in some of our previous examples, one can note the presence of the particle δέ in the second visual segment.

An interesting textual lay-out system that has received relatively little scholarly attention[95] so far is what we call *spacing*, which involves the extension or enlargement of single letters (word-initial or -final, or, more rarely, word-medial), and which, especially in the case of extended letters, is typically found in conjunction with horizontal separation, in the sense that the use of a lengthened letter normally involves an empty space which is occupied by the letter. This practice has particular relevance for the visual appearance of the individual line, in the sense that enlarged word-initial letters can be used to mark the beginning of a new line,[96] whereas writers can extend the final letter of a word as a way of reducing the space between the right margin and the final word, thus ending the line in a more 'harmonious' way.[97] Extended letters can also be found line-internally,

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95 For some remarks based on the corpus of women's letters, see Bentein 2023b, 94, who notes that extensions of the final stroke of the last letter happen in particular with some letters, such as *alpha*, *sigma*, *tau*, and *upsilon*.

96 Some examples are mentioned in Bentein 2023b, 94. On the enlargement of individual letters, compare Sarri 2018, 118-20.

97 Compare Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 343.

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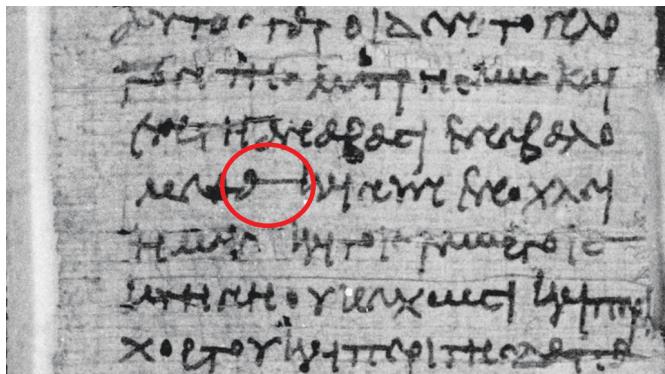
Figure 7 Letter from Dionysios to Zoilos. *P.Oxy.* XIV 1671, ll. 8-12 [244-299 AD] = TM 31782. Courtesy of The Egypt Exploration Society and the Faculty of Classics, University of Oxford

where they may give shape to the internal visual structure of the document, a practice which is seemingly less frequent. An example can be found in *P.Oxy.* XIV 1671, l. 10 (244-299 AD) = TM 31782 **[fig. 7]**, a letter from Dionysios to Zoilos, in which Zoilos is requested twice to send a certain Dionysios for help, and is also asked for information. Some attention has been paid to the visual appearance of the text, as is indicated, among others, by the repeated use of *diaeresis*, as well as the extension of *alpha*, *sigma* and *epsilon* at the end of the line. Noticeably, in l. 10, at the end of the first Subunit (the first time Zoilos is requested to send Dionysios for help), the final letter of ἐνεβαλό-μεθα has been lengthened, which creates a space between this Subunit and the next one.[98]

To conclude this brief discussion of visual cueing in our corpus, we can mention the use of lectional signs, such as punctuation marks, which are of course omnipresent in modern-day texts but rather limited in our corpus. Only in Late Antiquity are lectional signs, as well as diacritical signs,[99] more consistently used in documentary texts,[100] as part of a larger trend of what Jean-Luch Fournet has called the 'literarisation' of documentary practice.[101] When it comes to our

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[98] For another example, see *P.Oxy.* XXXVI 2789, l. 14 (242-299 AD) = TM 30388. In this case the final letter of τούτου has been lengthened, which creates a visual break before the admonition.

[99] We distinguish here between lectional signs and diacritical signs on the basis of the fact that the former aid in the interpretation of the text, whereas the latter aid in the disambiguation and interpretation of individual words. In actual practice, the distinction is not always easy to make; diaeresis, for example, can be used for both purposes.

[100] For diacritical signs, see Fournet 2020.

[101] Fournet 2003, 149-53; 2009, 36-7. Compare Ast 2017; Sarri 2018, 118.

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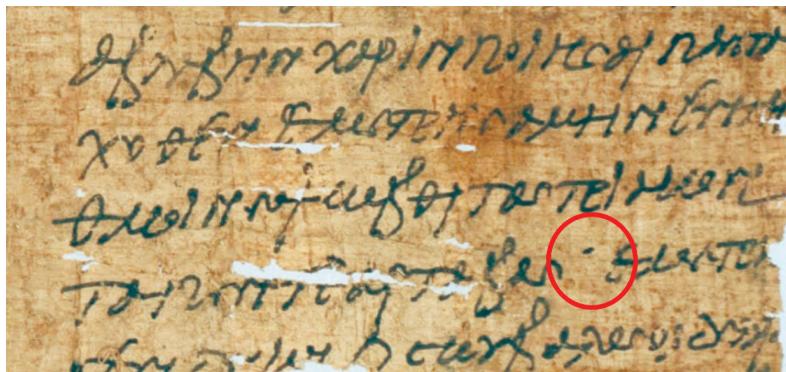
Roman-period corpus, a small number of letters attests to the use of the high dot for text segmentation. One such example is *P.Oslo.* II 61 (III AD) = TM 31634 **[fig. 8]**, a short, third-century letter from Lampadios to Apollonios in which the former indicates that some payments have been made.[102] The right-leaning handwriting carries an elegant appearance, an impression which is strengthened by the fact that the scribe seems to make an attempt to leave small spaces between words and word groups, for example at l. 4 (the first line of our image). More important for our present purposes is the fact that the writer has also inserted a horizontal blank space as well as a high dot at l. 7, in between the two Units that make up the body of the text. As in some of our other examples, one can note the presence of the discourse particle δέ linguistically segmenting the body.

Another lectional sign that we find in one of the letters from our archive, *P.Oxy.* LXVII 4624 (I AD) = TM 78663, is the *paragraphos*.[103] We will return to this specific letter in § 3.2. Suffice it for now to say that the use of the *paragraphos* inside the main visual part of private letters is quite unique.[104] The few examples that we have are mostly used to visually segment the final part,[105] to visually separate the

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[102] Other texts with interpunction include *P.Oxy.* XII 1588, l. 8 (III AD) = TM 31770; *P.Oxy.* VI 933, l. 23 (III AD) = TM 31322. A fascinating Latin letter where punctuation is consistently used is *C.Ep.Lat.* 10 (25 BC-25 AD) = TM 78573.

[103] For brief discussion, see Barbis Lupi 1994.

[104] For another potential example, see *PSI* I 93 (III AD) = TM 31260, where a *paragraphos* is found in between lines 22 and 23.

[105] E.g. *P.Oxy.* X 1291 (30 AD) = TM 21763, where a *paragraphos* is used to separate the two constituent parts of the date (ll. 13/14). See Bentein 2023b, 96.

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initial/final part from the main visual part,[106] or to indicate the end of the letter.[107] Its usage is more frequent in formal texts, however.

3.2 Linguistic Factors Impacting Visual Presentation

Having explored the significance of the diverse visual systems within our corpus, with the exception of text offsetting and pagination, which are not typically used for text segmentation inside the main visual part of private letters, we can now pivot back to our principal research inquiry: that is, whether and to what extent generic and pragmatic structure impacted the visual presentation of the text.

The exploratory analysis that we have performed on Roman-period letters shows visual cueing in the body to occur most frequently with two types of speech act (whether at the level of Units or Subunits), namely Request and Statement. Other speech acts which are visually underlined, though much less frequently, include Assertion, Description, Resolve, and Suggest. That requests and statements should be most frequently visually marked does not come as a surprise, since these two speech acts are also very frequently attested in our corpus, so that one would need to engage in exhaustive generic structure annotation to better understand the relative frequency with which these speech acts are visually cued. That writers had an overall pragmatic (illocutionary) sensitivity that went beyond the marking of regular generic structure, especially for requests, is indicated by texts such as *P.Oxy.* XLII 3057 (I-II AD) = TM 25080 **[fig. 4]**, which is a thematically complex and chaotic letter, where the writer has nevertheless very consciously put a heavy visual break right before the performative request verb παρακαλῶ. More research needs to be done on thematically complex texts such as this, to see whether there are more examples where writers heavily mark one specific thematic block, and whether this consistently happens with one speech act rather than the other, or whether it is a matter of individual choice and emphasis.

An interesting example of a letter that displays visual sensitivity to both requests and statements is *P.Oxy.* I 116 (II AD) = TM 28408, a relatively long business letter from Eirene to Taonnophris and Philon **[fig. 9]**. Contentwise, this letter consists of three thematic blocks (ll. 2-10, ll. 10-16, ll. 17-20), which are similar in structure and

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106   In *PSI* XIV 1418 (III AD) = TM 30468, one finds the use of the *paragraphos* after the opening frame (including the greeting, health wish and the *proskynema*). See Bentein 2023b, 97.

107   As in *P.Oxy.* XLIX 3501 (III AD) = TM 30177. In *P.Oxy.* LXII 4340 (250-275 AD) = TM 31664, the *paragraphos* separates the two private letters that are jointly found on a single papyrus sheet.

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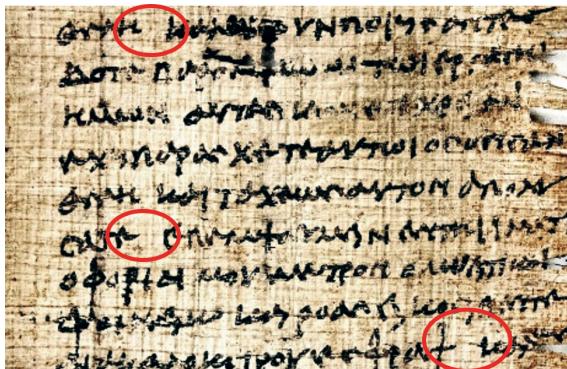
Figure 9
Letter from Eirene to Taonnophris
and Philon. *P.Oxy.* I 116, ll. 5-13
[II AD] = TM 28408. © Clifton College
Archives

phraseology: in each of them Eirene makes a statement about an act that she has undertaken (δέδωκα 'I have given', l. 2; ἔπεμψα 'I have sent', l. 10; ἔπεμψα, l. 17), which in the first two cases is followed by a request introduced by the formulaic phrase καλῶς ποιέω (καλῶς οὖν ποιήσαντες | δότε 'please give', ll. 5-6; καλῶς | ποιήσαντες πέμψατέ 'please send', ll. 13-14). In the first two, thematically more complex, blocks, statements are separated from ensuing requests through the use of a blank space. The third block, on the other hand, is not visually separated; as it starts on a new line (our lineation), the scribe may have felt that visually speaking this was sufficient.

In letters which contain multiple visual cues, such as *P.Oxy.* I 116, it may be difficult to tell whether these cues are primarily triggered because of the pragmatic structure, or rather because of the overall generic structure: did the writer leave blank spaces because of his/her wish to underscore the requests and statements that are being made, or rather to make clearer the generic structure of the letter? Given the presence of multiple such spaces, one might be inclined to attribute greater likelihood to the second scenario, though if that were true, one would expect heavier blank spaces between higher-order generic blocks than between the Subunits within each generic block. This is not the case though: both higher- and lower-order segments are marked identically.

More surprising still is the fact that sometimes writers highlight lower-level segments, but not higher-level ones, which goes against our earlier-mentioned principle of iconicity and suggests – to the modern eye at least – a lack of systematicity with which visual cueing was done. One such example is *P.Oxy.* II 293 (27 AD) = TM 20564 **[fig. 10]**, a letter from Dionysios to his sister Didyme about some clothes, which is unfortunately only fragmentarily preserved. Oddly, the writer does not bother to distinguish the opening section of his letter – which includes a greeting and health wish – from the rest of the letter body
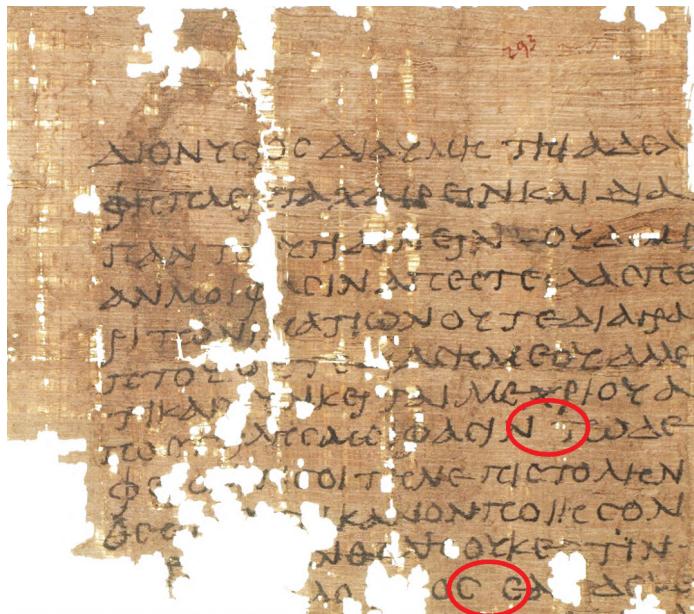
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(l. 3), but then does insert a small but noticeable *vacat* at l. 8 between the body's two main Units, which is also supported linguistically through the use of δέ. There seems to be another space at l. 12, but unfortunately we do not have enough textual context to interpret the meaningfulness of this second space.

To further illustrate this lack of systematicity, if we may call it so, we can turn again to *P.Oxy.* LXVII 4624 (I AD) = TM 78663 **[fig. 11]**, a business letter from the gymnasiarch Dios to his agent Sarapion about three clearly distinguishable topics, namely (i) the selling of grain and lentils (ll. 1-7), (ii) the collection of various sums of money (ll. 7-11), and (ii) the woodwork of an outhouse (ἐξέδρα) (ll. 12-19), each of which can be subdivided into two Subunits. The letter is exceptional in the sense that its writer makes use of several of our visual systems,[108] including separation (small and large *vacat*), lectional signs (*paragraphos*), and lineation (with many short lines that include blank spaces at their right side) – which, the editors suggest, also had a social-semiotic function, namely to emphasise the document's function as a *memorandum*.[109]

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[108] For a diplomatic rendering of the text, see Harrauer 2010, 284-5.

[109] Coles et al. 2001, 257.

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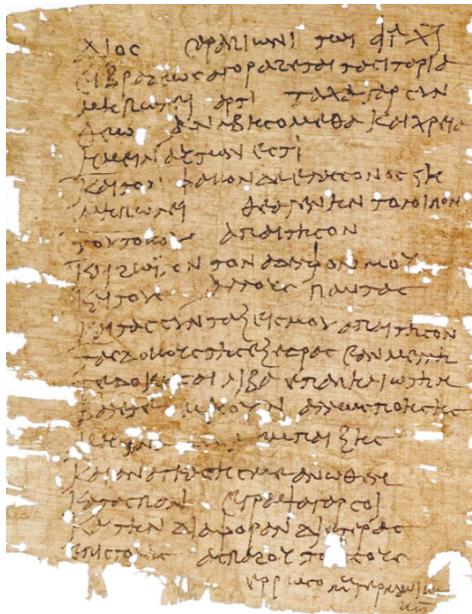
Figure 11
Letter from Dius to Sarapion.
P.Oxy. LXVII 4624 [I AD] = TM
78663. Courtesy of The Egypt
Exploration Society and the
Faculty of Classics, University
of Oxford

Puzzlingly, all three of these visual systems are used not only to divide the three central Units, but also Subunits, and even syntactic units, going to the level of individual words, resulting in an utterly unclear visual segmentation of the document.[110] So, for example, we find a *paragraphos* between Units two and three, but also in between the Subunits of Units one and three, and even between the syntactic components of Unit 2 (Θεαγένην τὸ λοιπὸν [*paragraphos*] τοῦ τόκου ἀπαίτησον [*paragraphos*] καὶ Ζωίλον τὸν ἀδελφόν μου).[111] The same can be said about the use of *vacat* (small and large): it distinguishes Units one from two (large *vacat* in the middle of line 7), but is also used between the Subunits of Unit one, as well as between syntactic components (μὴ πώλει [*vac*] ἄρτι; τὸ λοιπὸν τοῦ τόκου [*vac*] ἀπαίτησον), and even between an article and its noun (τοὺς [*vac*] ἄλλους). The same is true for lineation: after line 5, the choice for a

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111   In the last part of the letter, in the admonition, we find a *paragraphos* between two subordinate clauses: μὴ οὖν ἄλλως ποήσῃς, μὴ ἵνα μοι ἐμπαίξῃς [*paragraphos*] καὶ ἀναγκάσῃς με ἄνωθεν κατασπᾶν 'So don't do it any other way, lest you play a trick on me and force me to pull it down again'.

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new line is related, perhaps, to a Subunit within the first Unit, but after line 8 it seems more difficult to motivate.

P.Oxy. LXVII 4624 is in several regards an exceptional case, but the attention to what one can call lower-level visual marking is not: in other documents, too, spaces are frequently inserted in between words, word groups and/or clauses, thus marking syntactic, rather than generic or pragmatic Units. In several texts, both types of Units – syntactic and discourse-pragmatic – are marked, without much distinction between the type of visual marking that is used. An example is *P.Oxy.* VIII 1157 (III AD) = TM 31723 **[fig. 12]**, a letter from Patermouthis to his sister Dionysia about a registration for the census (ll. 3-13) and a payment of the poll-tax (ll. 14-21), both of which he wants his sister to do for him. The writer has inserted a noticeable horizontal blank space at l. 19 **[fig. 12A]**, which seems to mark a Subunit within a larger request Unit about paying the poll-tax, which is marked, again by the particle δέ (ἐὰν δὲ διαγράψῃς | τὸ ἐπικεφάλαιον, δέξαι | τὴν ἀποχήν [ll. 19-21] 'and if you pay the poll-tax, get the receipt'). A second noticeable horizontal blank space, of about the same size or even slightly larger, can be found earlier on in the letter, at l. 6 **[fig. 12B]**. Surprisingly, this second space has a different function, namely the marking of sentence structure, which in this case is somewhat complex, with two causal clauses preceding the main clause, one introduced by καθώς and the other by ἐπειδή (καθὼς ἔπεμψάς μοι φάσιν | ὡς ἐνένεκεν τῆς ἀπογρα-|φῆς περὶ τοῦ ὑμᾶς ἀπογρά-|ψε, [*vac*] ἐπιδὴ (l. ἐπειδὴ) οὖν οὐ δύνα-|μαι ἀναβῆναι ἴδε ἡ (l. εἰ) δύνῃ | ἡμᾶς ἀπογράψε [ll. 3-8] 'As you sent me word on account of the registration about registering yourselves, since I cannot come, see whether you can register us').[112]

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[112] Compare *PSI* XIII 1334, ll. 8 and 11 (III AD) = TM 30570.

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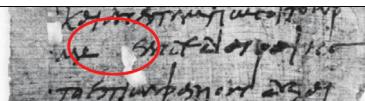
A. ll. 17-21	B. ll. 3-7
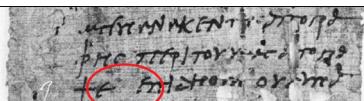
Figure 12 Letter from Pathermouthis to Dionysia (*P.Oxy.* VIII 1157 [III AD] = TM 31723. Courtesy of The Egypt Exploration Society and the Faculty of Classics, University of Oxford)

In other texts, the use of (especially) small *vacat* is much more frequent:[113] an interesting case is *PSI* VIII 970 (III AD) = TM 30713 **[fig. 13]**, a business letter from Diogenes to Harpokration in which Diogenes instructs the latter to go to Pasion and deal with some important matters which he himself cannot attend to as he unable to travel. In this elegantly written letter, syntactic units of different magnitudes are subtly marked through horizontal spaces: one finds, for example, a significant space at l. 4, separating the participial clause from the main (request) verb πορεύου, which itself is followed by a more subtle space preceding a prepositional phrase (εὐθέως κομισάμενος τὸ ἐπισ-|τόλιον [*vac*] πορεύου [*vac*] πρὸς Πασίων[α] [ll. 3-4] 'as soon as you have received the letter go to Pasion'). Space prevents us from discussing the multitude of blank spaces that are present in this letter, but it is worth drawing attention to line eight, where no less than three segments seem to be marked (οὐ γὰρ ὀλίγα ἐστὶν τὰ ἐνθά-|δε [*vac*] ζητούμενα, [*vac*] αὐτὸς τὲ [*vac*] ἐγὼ [ll. 7-8] 'for the matters that are sought here are not few, and I myself …'): a first, subtle space is placed after ἐνθά-|δε, perhaps marking its status as a word split; the next space comes after the following word, ζητούμενα, the last letter of which is lengthened, seemingly indicating the boundary of the first coordinated clause; and then comes the most significant space, which is placed after αὐτὸς τέ, despite its close connection with ἐγώ.

In *PSI* VIII 970, visual segmentation through blank spaces, while ample, is relatively subtle, but there are other examples where the same practice is much more pronounced.[114] This raises a number of questions which we hope to address more thoroughly in future work, to the extent that our sources allow us to do so. In terms of reading strategies, modern scholarship has emphasised the fact that reading is not a purely linear phenomenon: Anthony Baldry and Paul Thibault, for example, recognise that readers may engage in so-called 'cluster hopping', that is, jumping from visually salient clusters of information

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113   Compare Bentein 2023b, 95 for the use of word spaces in the corpus of women's letters.

114   See e.g. *P.Oxy.* LV 3806 (15 AD) = TM 22528; *P.Oxy.* XLII 3062 (I AD) = TM 25082; *PSI* IX 1080 (III AD) = TM 30667.

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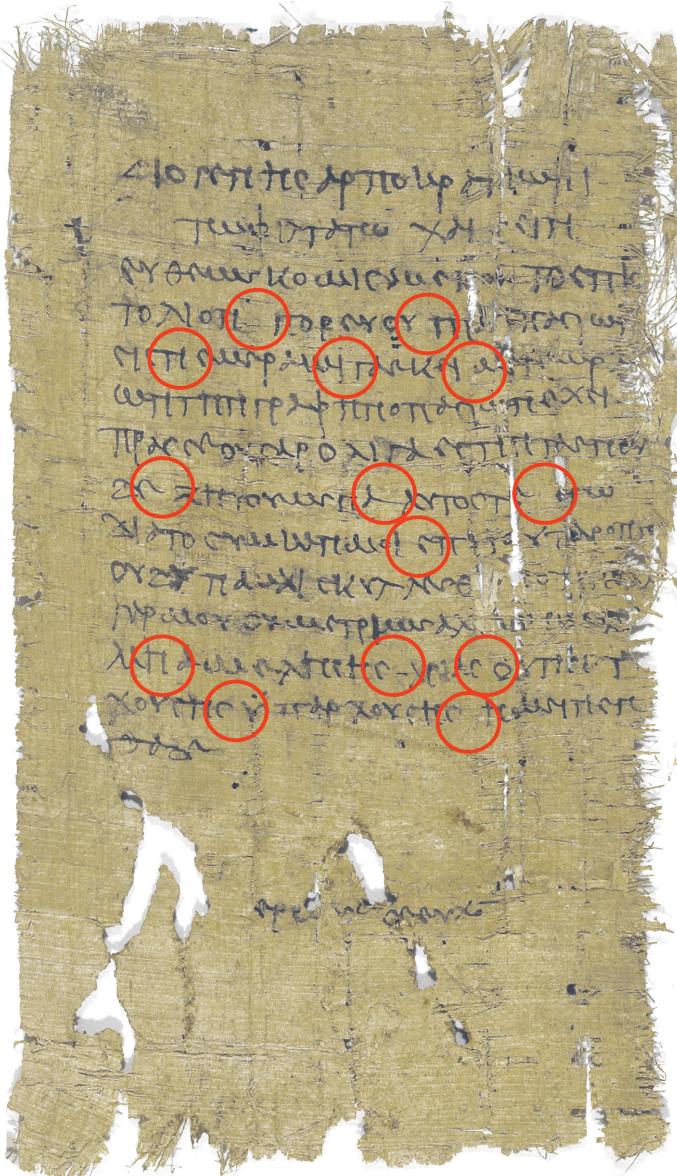
Figure 13   Letter from Diogenes to Harpokration. *PSI* VIII 970, ll. 3-14 [III AD] = TM 30713.
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on the page.[115] While it seems clear that the setting aside of the pre-script with the name of the initiator and receiver was of relevance to non-linear reading, one wonders whether readers would have 'cluster hopped' inside the body of the text, too.[116] In terms of writer motivation, investigating how consciously visual cues such as *vacat* were inserted becomes essential, as well as exploring whether a distinction in terms of the visual salience of the eight proposed visual systems (along with the three larger categories within which they can be grouped) should be made. Engaging more deeply with the relevant literature in the field of cognitive psychology, especially *Gestalt* psychology, could shed light on the cognitive saliency of various types of visual cues and human visual attention mechanisms more broadly, although navigating this highly specialised literature is a challenging task. From the data annotation perspective, reflecting more elaborately on the desirability and possibility of more accurately distinguishing between syntactically and discourse-pragmatically motivated visual cues is crucial. This includes considering a further distinction between visual cues highlighting generic versus pragmatic structure, a topic that we have only briefly addressed here.

An important factor to keep in mind for this discussion is that the composition and reception of written documents was very different in antiquity from nowadays, orality playing a much more significant role – that is, letters were often dictated to a scribe,[117] and read aloud when received, potentially to a broader social group.[118] This could entail that our lower-level visual cues – spaces in particular – are better conceived of as marking units of spoken language (whether in terms of production or reception) than of written language, or perhaps a

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115 Baldry, Thibault 2006, 26. Compare with the five different types of reading recognised by Pugh 1975, called 'receptive reading', 'responsive reading', 'skimming', 'searching', and 'scanning'. Alternatively, Doermann, Rivlin, Rosenfeld 1998, 800 distinguish between 'reading', 'browsing' and 'searching'. More recently, Bateman 2011 has argued for the existence of three distinct semiotic modes on the written page, 'text-flow', 'image-flow', and the (composite) mode of 'page-flow'.

116 It is worth mentioning here the work of Schubert 2018, who, focusing on administrative documents, argues that ancient scribes used various layout strategies to facilitate reader comprehension, especially in societies like Greco-Roman Egypt, where literacy levels varied widely among the population. These layout strategies served both to increase legibility and to guide the reader through the document, enhancing understanding and ensuring that administrative processes were followed correctly. They included the use of purposeful blank spaces known as 'windows'; a structured layout with clear segmentation between the opening, body and closing, and a clear setting apart of the names of the initiator and receiver; standardised formats with consistent use of formulas; and visual cues such as symbols and abbreviations.

117 For the different degrees of agency that scribes could take on, compare e.g. Richards 2004, 56-67, who distinguishes between ancient secretaries' roles of *transcriber*, *contributor* and *composer*.

118 See further Verhoogt 2009.

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combination of both. An interesting distinction that one can refer to in this regard is that made by the cognitive linguist Wallace Chafe between 'intonation units' and 'punctuation units':[119] the former, typically two to seven words long, are short segments of speech marked by distinct intonation patterns, reflecting the speaker's immediate focus; the latter, on the other hand, segment text, indicating syntactic and rhetorical boundaries; while they often align with spoken intonation units, they allow for more explicit structuring and linkage of ideas. Another property of oral composition, is that it entails much less discourse planning than written composition, which could explain the lack of systematicity that we find in many of our examples.[120]

4   Conclusion

This contribution is the product of the combination of multiple fields and approaches. In the first part of the article, we have shown how the textualisation of discourse is organised around segments of text that can be better understood considering the pragmatic structure behind them. Putting the communicative functions at the centre of our analysis, the approach that we have employed has the advantage of considering letters on papyri as a series of communicative acts, which can in turn disclose more the social and cognitive aspects of letter-writing. In the second part of this contribution, our exploration into the textual and visual organisation of Greek letters on papyrus from the Roman period has illuminated the intricate interplay between linguistic expressions and visual cues, with particular attention to the marking of both generic and pragmatic structure.

It is worth highlighting what we consider to be some of the most important features of our annotation framework, focusing here on three key elements. First, our framework offers concrete tools for studying textualisation, emphasising the interplay between linguistic and visual structures. Second, it also facilitates detailed analysis of textual culture by identifying patterns within and across genres, both synchronically and diachronically. Third, the culture-independent nature of our framework supports the annotation of non-literary texts in various languages and enables cross-cultural comparisons, as evidenced by previous work on the multilingual Qurrah archive. Furthermore, text-structural annotations not only have intrinsic value but also enhance our understanding of word-or phrase-level linguistic and typographic features. Team members have uncovered potential correlations between the use of iota adscript and performative

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119   E.g. Chafe 1988.

120   For discourse planning applied to papyri, see Bentein 2023b.

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request verbs, abbreviations in specific (Sub)Units of petitions, and multiscriptal phenomena in the closing Units of formal texts such as contracts. These findings illustrate the importance of fully annotating our corpus for generic and layout structures, allowing for detailed exploration of such correlations.

Looking ahead, the vast potential for further research in this domain remains untapped. Future studies could explore comparative analyses with other text types and periods, investigate the role of orality in shaping document design, and leverage advanced digital tools to uncover patterns and practices not readily visible through traditional analysis. The development of a digital viewer for future students of papyrological texts, automatically mapping generic and/or layout structure to the edited text, would allow for a much more fine-grained reading of the text.[121] While the database environment that we use for our annotations[122] already allows us to manipulate the display of the edited text to reflect these different types of structure, at least to some extent, we should ensure that the annotations are maximally machine-actionable and that they are made in a maximally consistent manner across contributors. Additionally, it will be important that we can share the results of our annotation work with other projects and scholars to foster collaboration and further research, for example by developing a TEI-conversion tool.

It goes without saying that much still needs to be done to refine the methodology and extend the analysis. However, the groundwork laid by this research offers a promising direction for future inquiries into the processes through which ancient societies produced and received textual messages.

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[121] For examples of such digital viewers applied to papyri, see e.g. the Arabic Papyrology Database (`https://www.apd.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/apd/project.jsp`) and the Grammateus project (`https://grammateus.unige.ch/`).

[122] For further technical details, see Bentein 2024.

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Frames, Framings and Beyond
Afterthoughts and Other Discoursal 'Add-Ons' in Greek Private Letter Writing

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Abstract   In this chapter, we review the function of 'postscripts' in Roman-period private letter writing. We argue that postscripts did not merely serve to complete information omitted from the main message (so-called 'afterthoughts'), but also fulfilled other roles, such as managing shared knowledge between initiator and recipient or addressing individuals mentioned in the letter's salutations. The various types of postscripts we identify are differentiated based on their integration within the letter's overall discourse structure, their relationship to the writer's (lack of) discourse planning, and their typical linguistic characteristics. In the final part of the chapter, we examine the use of postscripts in the corpus of women's letters, where postscripts appear conspicuously frequently.

Keywords   Epistolography. Postscript. Women. Afterthought. Discoursal 'add-on'. Apollonios strategos archive.

Summary   1 Introduction: The Epistolary Frame. – 2 Identifying and Defining Postscripts. – 2.1 Position Vis-à-vis the Closing Greeting. – 2.2 Postscripts and Formulaic Phrases. – 2.3 Postscript and Letter Body. – 2.4 The Visual Appearance of Postscripts. – 3 The Functions of Postscripts. – 4 Postscripts in Context: The Corpus of Women's Letters. – 4.1 Business Affairs. – 4.2 Private Affairs. – 4.3 The Archive of Apollonios *strategos*. – 5 Concluding Remarks.

1   Introduction: The Epistolary Frame

In a study exploring Dutch letters from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Gijsbert Rutten and Marijke van der Wal,[1] drawing on earlier research by Alison Wray,[2] propose that epistolary formulae have three main functions in their corpus: some have a *text-constitutive* function, in the sense that they help to establish the text type or the inside structure of the text. Others have an *intersubjective* function, being concerned as they are with elements such as health, greetings, wishes for contact, Christian ritual, etc.; and yet others have a *processing* function, in the sense that prefabricated language helps to reduce the writing effort for less experienced letter writers.

These three functions also seem relevant for other epistolary corpora, such as Ancient Greek letters, which form the topic of this contribution. We intend to focus in particular on the so-called 'epistolary frame', that is, letter openings and closings, which are predominantly formulaic, infused as they are with intersubjective formulae such as the greeting, the salutation, the health wish, and the *proskynema*.[3] Why such intersubjective formulae should cluster together at the opening and closing of letters can be understood when we make reference to *frame theory* – the concept of 'frame' referring to the context in which a communication takes place – and the way in which participants are positioned vis-à-vis each other. While processes of contextualisation take place moment-by-moment in interaction, openings and closings constitute a privileged place for such processes to occur, arguably even more so with written communication: Erving Goffman speaks about 'boundary markers' or 'brackets' that occur before and after the activity in question;[4] more recent scholarship that focuses on textual artefacts has proposed the term 'framing borders' instead.[5]

It is self-evident that not every letter features equally intricate framing borders: why framing should be less elaborate in one letter

1   Rutten and van der Wal 2012.

2   E.g. Wray 2002.

3   See Bentein 2023, 427 for quantitative data.

4   Goffman 1974, 251-2.

5   E.g. Wolf 2006. Another relevant concept is Gérard Genette's notion of 'paratext' (1997), which we will not go further into here.

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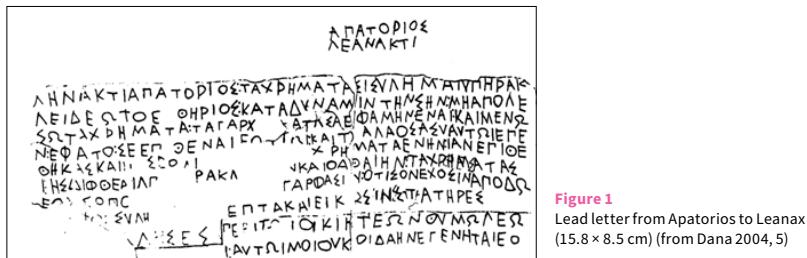
than the other can only be understood by making reference to the situational context in which the interaction takes place, including the initiator's communicative goals, the shared background of the initiator and receiver, etc.[6] Another aspect that is worth highlighting concerns the fact that openings and especially closings are not always *fully* formulaic: especially in the case of closings, writers seem to have had the freedom (or to have taken the liberty) to include non-formulaic material, too. In modern-day written communication,[7] where the same can be observed, such non-formulaic material is commonly referred to with the notion of 'postscript', a concept that is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as 'a paragraph or passage written at the end of a letter, after the signature, containing an afterthought or additional matter'.

When it comes to Ancient Greek epistolary writing, even at a very early time, when the formulaic frame had not entirely formed,[8] we have evidence for the inclusion of material that is off-topic in the form of a postscript; one can refer, for example, to SEG XLVIII 1012 (ca. 500 BC, Olbia) [fig. 1], a lead letter in which Apatorios asks Leanax for help with goods that have been stolen, but which also includes two lines with off-topic material (about some house-slaves) that have been visually separated through a boundary line that was scratched in the lead substrate. Madalina Dana notes that postscripts in fact occur quite frequently in early letters, and relates their occurrence to the cognitive process of writing: "des *postscripta* apparaissent souvent dans les lettres, phénomène qui met en évidence les aléas de la mémoire et la trace écrite du processus cognitif".[9] In the lead letter that is displayed here, for example, Dana suggests that Apatorios might

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[6]   See Bentein 2023a, 438-9 for discussion of some concrete examples.

[7]   In modern-day spoken conversation, too, conversations may be re-opened, even after a 'final' goodbye (Schegloff, Sacks 1973, 324). Schegloff, Sacks 1973, 322 describe closing sections as 'porous' – the same seems to apply to antiquity.

[8]   For a brief discussion of the formation of the epistolary frame, see Sarri 2018, 40-2.

[9]   Dana 2016, 123.

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have scratched a line into the lead intending to use it as a guide for cutting. However, upon recalling a separate subject that he needed to address, he then wrote about it below the intended cut line.[10]

Publications on ancient papyri and inscriptions also make frequent reference to the notion of 'postscript', but seldomly problematise the application of this term. The present contribution, which focuses on postscripts in Greek letters from the Roman period (I-III AD), has three main goals: first of all, we would like to discuss/problematise the definition of ancient postscripts, which is of some importance to projects with a database annotation component such as the Everyday Writing project (§ 2); second, we want to explore the communicative functions of postscripts, taking as a point of reference the suggestions made by Jeffrey Weima in his discussion of the closing conventions of ancient Hellenistic letters (§ 3).[11] In the third and final part of our contribution, we turn to the communicative context in which postscripts occur, and discuss which role these communicative functions play in women's letters, a corpus which is smaller in size than men's letters but in which postscripts nevertheless appear noticeably frequently. We discuss, among others, some of the female letters in the second-century archive of Apollonios the *strategos* (§ 4).

2 Identifying and Defining Postscripts

Let us start with the identification and definition of postscripts. Raffaele Luiselli, in his discussion of Greek letter writing, observes the following:

> The writer might also wish to add extra messages after appending the farewell formula. In papyrus sheets such postscripts may run down the left-hand margin, and may be carried further on the back if necessary. In either case, they may close with another farewell formula. The postscript may also be entered in the blank space below the closing formula; and if the writer had more to say, then he could add the extra message in the left margin, along the greater dimension.[12]

A similar observation, though with less focus on the visual dimension, is made by Jeffrey Weima, who observes that "although Greco-Roman letters normally end with a farewell wish and date (if one was given), there occasionally appears also a 'postscript' following these closing conventions".[13]

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10 Dana 2004, 13.
11 Weima 1994, 52-5.
12 Luiselli 2008, 708-9.
13 Weima 1994, 52.
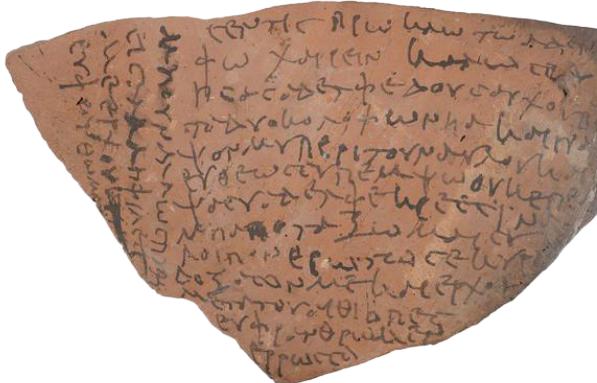
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Synthesising the foregoing, it seems that postscripts constitute non-formulaic material that occurs after the farewell greeting (and by extension the date), and that are (often) visually distinct in the sense that they occur in the margin, the verso, or are separated by a blank space from the farewell. An illustration from our corpus is *P.Brem.* 63 (116 AD) = TM 19648,[14] a letter from Eudaimonis to Aline about various matters, which closes with the short farewell greeting (ἔρρωσο) and the date (Ἐπεὶφ κβ); in the left margin, a message has been added that is otherwise unrelated to the body of the text: ἡ γυνὴ Εὐδήμου ἀκείνητός (l. ἀκίνητός) μου ἐστὶν καὶ χάριν ἔχω αὐτῇι (l. 32) "the wife of Eudemos has stuck by me and I am grateful to her for that" (transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). The same practice can be observed in *O.Florida* 17 (175-199 AD) = TM 74511 **[fig. 2]**, a much shorter letter on ostracon from Sentis to Proklos, again about various matters, including a request to come, which closes with a farewell greeting (εὐφρανθρῶμεν. ἔρρωσσο [ll. 12-13] 'Let us rejoice. Farewell'); in the left margin, we find an admonition not to neglect the request to come: μὴ οὖν ἄλλως πυή|σις (l. ποιήσεις) ἀλλὰ ἡ (l. εἰ) φιλεῖς | με ἔρχου ⟦....⟧ (ll. 14-16) "do not do otherwise, then, but if you love me come" (transl. Bagnall), followed by a repetition of the unusual εὐφρανθρῶμεν "let us rejoice".

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Exhaustive corpus research of all Roman-period private[15] letters shows, however, that not all letters correspond to this prototype, and that some additional considerations need to be made:

2.1   Position Vis-à-vis the Closing Greeting

Non-formulaic material in the closing section also occurs before the farewell greeting. For example, in *P.Flor.* III 365 (III AD) = TM 31148, a letter from Dioskourides to Patermouthios, the initiator starts his closing with a salutation, then makes a request to send a goat (l. 17, otherwise unrelated to the main body of the text), and only then concludes by the long farewell greeting, probably in Dioskourides' own hand.[16] Sometimes, letters contain two postscripts, one positioned before the farewell greeting, and a second one following it.

When letter writers include a postscript after the farewell greeting, they may feel the need to 're-frame', by including a second farewell greeting.[17] For example, in *SB* XII 11021 (I-II AD) = TM 25066, a letter from Stephanos to Theon about the sending and receiving of goods, the relatively short body is followed by a first farewell greeting, the truncated ἐρρῶσθαί σε. We then find in the left margin a postscript, which is followed by a second, truncated farewell greeting, this time ἐρρῶ(σθαι).

In some cases, the addition of such a second farewell greeting seems to have occasioned the addition of yet another postscript: this is the case in *P.Mich.* VIII 496 (ca. 100-147 AD) = TM 27106, a letter from Apollonios to Apollinarios about certain goods that were sent and (not) received. Apollonios closes the letter, presumably in his own hand, in l. 14, with a long farewell greeting, adding a postscript of five lines. The scribe then closes with another farewell and the date in l. 20, after which Apollonios adds a second postscript, again in his own hand.[18]

2.2   Postscripts and Formulaic Phrases

Whereas standardly the farewell greeting is followed only by the date and the address on the verso, in some cases, typical formulaic

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[15]   We intend 'private letters' here in a broad sense, also including subtypes such as business letters, recommendation letters, invitation letters, etc.

[16]   Compare *BGU* VII 1680 (III AD) = TM 30955.

[17]   For further discussion of this practice, see Luiselli 2008, 708; Bentein 2023c, 187-90.

[18]   Compare *P.Mich.* VIII 496 (II AD) = TM 27106.

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phrases are displaced, so that e.g. the health wish or the salutation occurs *after* the farewell.[19] For example, in *P.Oxy.* XLIX 3504 (I-II AD) = TM 24966, a letter which is unfortunately only partially preserved, the closing section starts with the short farewell greeting ἔρρωσο, and is then followed by the salutation, a politeness phrase, yet another salutation, and the date. In theory one could consider the formulaic phrases that come after the farewell greeting as 'postscripts',[20] particularly in cases where a formulaic component is repeated: in *P.Oxy.* III 530 (II AD) = TM 28370, for example, the closing section starts with a (long) salutation (l. 23), followed by the short farewell greeting and the date. We then find in the margin a request to send word about what has been sent, and a second salutation.[21]

ἀσπάζεταί σε | Θεωνᾶς. ἀσπάζου τὰ παιδία Ἀπίωνα κ̣[αὶ] | ἀδελφὸν Ἑρματόιν, Διονυτᾶν, τοὺς περ̣[ὶ] Ν̣[ί]|κην καὶ Θαισοῦν τὴν μικρὰν, τ[ο]ὺς περὶ [....] | τα πάντας, Ἡρᾶν καὶ τοὺς αὐτοῦ, Λεοντᾶν τὸν | ὑπερήφανον καὶ τοὺς αὐτοῦ, τοὺς περὶ Τααμόιν, | [Θερ]μουθάριον. ἔρρω(σο). μη(νὸς) Καισαρείου κ´.
r,ms

περὶ τούτων οὖν μοι εὐθέως μετὰ τὴν ἑορτὴν πέμψεις φάσιν εἰ τὸν χαλ|κὸν | ἐκομίσω καὶ εἰ ἀπέλαβες τὰ ἱμάτια. ἄσπασαι Διονυτᾶν καὶ Θέωνα.
(*P.Oxy.* III 530, ll. 23-31 [II AD] = TM 28370)

Theonas salutes you. Salute the boys Apion and his brother Hermatois, Dionutas, those with Nice and the little Thaisous, all those with…, Heras and his household, Leontas the proud and his household, those with Taamois, and Thermoutharion. Good-bye. The 20th of the month Caesareus. (P.S.) Send me word about this immediately after the festival, whether you received the money and whether you recovered my clothes. Salute Dionutas and Theon. (transl. Grenfell, Hunt)

Particularly when postscripts follow salutations, there seems to be an intimate connection between formulaic and non-formulaic material. As we will further explore in the next section on the function of postscripts (§ 3), postscripts often seem to be triggered by elements that are included in the closing section: for example, in *P.Mich.* III 203 (114-116 AD) =

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19   See Bentein 2023a, 451-4 on these and other 'displacements'.

20   As Weima 1994, 53 in fact seems to do: "in terms of content, postscriptive remarks are typically brief *and often consist of one of the formal conventions belonging to the letter closing, such as a greeting or a health wish*" (emphasis added).

21   Compare *P.Heid.* II 214 (III AD) = TM 31107.

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TM 21342, a letter from the soldier Satornilus to his mother Aphrodous, the initiator commences the extensive salutations on l. 29, and then adds on l. 32 (presumably about his 'sister' Tabenka) καὶ εἰ τέκνον ἔσχηκεν γράψον μοι "and write to me if she has had a child" (transl. Winter).

2.3 Postscript and Letter Body

At times, letter writers insert closing formulas relatively early in their letters, only to follow them with considerable additional content. This results in the paradoxical situation that the postscript can, in fact, be longer than the body of the text preceding the closing: an example is *P.Oxy.* LIX 3992 (142-199 AD) = TM 27848, a letter from Aelius Theon to his future father-in-law Herminos, which is mainly concerned with maintaining interpersonal contact (Aelius Theon excuses himself for not having sent special delicacies, τραγημάτια, to Herminos' daughter Dionysia). Interestingly enough, after the *proskynema*, farewell greeting and date, we find twelve (!) more lines concerning business matters. These twelve lines are divided into two blocks, with a large horizontal space on l. 28, which seems to indicate that we are not dealing with one, thematically coherent, postscript, but rather with two unrelated postscripts.

2.4 The Visual Appearance of Postscripts

There are several examples of letters where writers make use of the upper margin to write a postscript, which means that, at least from a visual (rather than logical/chronological) point of view, postscripts can also occur at the beginning of a text. For example, *O.Claud.* II 226 (125-175 AD) = TM 29649 **[fig. 3]**, a business letter from Dioskoros to multiple addressees about the sending and receiving of goods, starts with the request phrase γράψον μοι τὴν τιμὴ[ν τοῦ ?] σοῦ ὀξειδίου ('write to me the price of your vinegar'), which is written in smaller letters above the opening of the letter.

As Margit Homann has discussed in an article on marginal writing (*versiculi transversi*), postscripts are often written in the (left) margin; there is, however, no one-to-one correspondence between the two phenomena.[22] In some cases, we find information in the margin that is thematically distinct from the rest of the letter, but that still precedes the farewell greeting: should one speak of postscripts in such cases? For example, in *P.Oxy.* LXVI 4544 (III AD) = TM 78613, a letter from Eudaimon to Hegoumenos about, among others, jars

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22 See Homann 2012, 74-80 for an overview list.

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of olives, the writer includes in the margin a meta-textual comment not to pay anything to the person bringing the olives. That message precedes, rather than follows, the closing greeting, however. In other cases, there may be visual segmentation, but without an explicit farewell greeting being present.[23]

As suggested by Madalina Dana, whose work we referenced in the introduction to this contribution, attempts to comprehend these – to the contemporary perspective – unconventional writing practices, must take into account cognitive aspects of writing in pre-modern society, in which orality played a much greater role than is nowadays the case. An important notion in this regard is 'discourse flow', a concept developed by the cognitive linguist Wallace Chafe that refers to how thoughts are expressed in discourse.[24] Chafe outlines a number of concepts that are central to the analysis of discourse flow, such as intonation structure/information structure at the level of the clause, but is also attentive to larger thematic patterns in discourse,

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23 Bentein 2023b, 100-1 discusses the omission of closing greetings in women's letters that have a low degree of what he calls 'discourse planning'. For formulaic omissions more generally, see Bentein 2023a, 455-8.

24 See e.g. Chafe 2005 for a useful overview, and for more detail Chafe 1994; 2018.

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which he analyses in terms of 'discourse topics'. A discourse topic[25] can be defined as "a coherent aggregate of thoughts introduced by some participant in a conversation, developed either by that participant or another or by several participants jointly, and then either explicitly closed or allowed to peter out".[26]

Chafe connects information structure and discourse structure to the medium of communication by noting that oral texts are characterised by a lack of 'integration', due to a lesser amount of discourse planning.[27] Afterthoughts – both at a local (clausal) and more global (discoursal) level – can then be related to a lack of integration and discourse planning,[28] constituting as they do additions that follow a temporary closure of a topic or an idea, providing further information or clarification. For Greek and other languages, such afterthoughts have mostly been studied at the local level, for example in Herodotus' prose, aspects of whose 'oral' style have been elucidated by Simon Slings and Rutger Allan among others. These scholars have noted the presence of information-structural 'tails'[29] in the *Histories*, defined as "a standalone constituent that follows the clause, and that provides additional information about the preceding clause".[30] For example, in a sentence such as οὔτε γὰρ Περσικὰ ἦν οὔτε Λύδια τὰ ποιεύμενα ἐκ τῆς γυναικός (Hdt. 5.12.3), one could interpret τὰ ποιεύμενα ἐκ τῆς γυναικός as the subject of ἦν, interpreting the sentence as 'for the things done by the woman were neither Persian nor Lydian'. Alternatively, and perhaps preferably, one could interpret this constituent as an explanatory addition to a non-expressed subject with τὰ ποιεύμενα ἐκ τῆς γυναικός functioning as a tail specifying the subject of ἦν to the listener or reader; this makes the sentence read as "for they were neither Persian nor Lydian, the things that were done by the woman".[31]

Such afterthoughts illustrate the dynamic nature of thought flow in conversation, where the completion of one idea can lead to the addition of new, related ideas that the speaker initially might not have planned to articulate. It is important to stress, nevertheless, that

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25   Chafe 2005, 674 distinguishes regular, or 'basic-level' topics from 'subtopics' and 'supertopics'.

26   Chafe 2005, 674. Interestingly, Chafe notes that sensitivity to topic structure varies from one individual to the other, people being constrained to varying degrees to develop a topic fully before the conversation moves to another topic.

27   Besides fragmentation/integration, Chafe recognises a second major dimension that sets apart spoken language from written language, namely involvement/detachment. See e.g. Chafe 1985.

28   For discourse planning in female letters, see Bentein 2023b.

29   Other terms that are used in the literature include 'repair' and 'right-dislocation'.

30   Allan 2006, 25, originally in Dutch.

31   Allan 2006, 29.

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afterthoughts are not necessarily purely unplanned: Chafe underlines the fact that in oral language information units should not be too complex for them to be understood by the listener, a principle that he formulates as the 'One New Idea Constraint'.[32] By splitting up information, the speaker/writer can therefore achieve better understandability, as well as put maximum focus on the different components of his/her message. In our epistolary corpus, too, not all postscripts appear equally unmotivated: as we will show in the ensuing discussion, there are quite a few instances where the employment of a postscript seems to represent a conscious choice. In such cases, instead of an afterthought one could speak of a 'discoursal add-on',[33] for lack of a better term.

3 The Functions of Postscripts

In its definition of the modern-day postscript as "a paragraph or passage written at the end of a letter, after the signature, containing an afterthought or additional matter", the Oxford English Dictionary places the concept of 'afterthought' quite central, as does Madalina Dana in her discussion of Archaic postscripts. Whether the function of postscripts in our corpus can be considered from the same perspective, remains to be seen. In fact, discussing postscripts in Greco-Roman letters, Jeffrey Weima distinguishes between as many as four different functions:[34]

1. giving new information that has come to light immediately following the writing of the letter;
2. giving a final comment or command that has apparently come to the mind of the writer after the letter was finished;
3. reinforcing a command previously given in a letter (echoing and reinforcing an appeal given earlier in the letter body); and
4. giving a summary of the main details contained in the body of the letter (recapitulating the letter).

Weima considers the last of the proposed functions particularly important for his argument about the function of the Pauline letter closings,[35] but unfortunately there does not seem to be much ground for this function: Weima cites *P.Oxy.* II 264 (54 AD) = TM 20535 as an example of a 'business letter' with such a function, but we are in fact dealing with a contract of sale, in which a short recapitulation

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[32] Chafe 1994, 108-19. See also Bentein 2023c, 198-200.

[33] Compare Biber, Johansson, Leech 1999, 1078-9 for the concept of 'add-on strategy'.

[34] Weima 1994, 52-5.

[35] Weima 1994, 54-5.

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in the initiator's own hand was indeed not uncommon (the so-called *hypographê*).[36]

For Weima's other three functions, on the other hand, ample evidence can be found in our corpus of Roman-period letters. The first function, giving information that has come to light after the writing of the letter, is arguably the least common of the three:[37] an example also cited by Weima is *P.Mich.* VIII 490 (II AD) = TM 27100, a letter from Apollinarios to his mother Thaesion, where after the salutation and the combined farewell greeting/ health wish, we find a first postscript stating that Apollinarios has arrived in Portus on Pachon 25, presumably after the main text was written. In a second postscript, perhaps in his own hand,[38] Apollinarios discloses that he has been assigned to Misenum, also adding the phrase ὕστερον γὰρ ἐπέγνων 'for I learned it later', seemingly a justification why this information was not placed in the main text.[39]

Some of the letters from the archive of the estate manager Heroninos[40] also contain postscripts relating to events that happened after the main text was written: for example, in *P.Flor.* II 193 (258 AD) = TM 11060, Eirenaios acknowledges receipt of eight *monochora* of wine on Tybi 18, but then after the farewell and date adds that he has received four more *monochora* on Tybi 19. In another letter from the same archive, *P.Flor.* II 141 (264 AD) = TM 10998, Alypios gives Heroninos the order to give twelve *dichora* of wine to Palas, and to get a note of receipt from Palas; below Alypios' signature, we find a note in a third hand, perhaps Palas' own hand, that he has, indeed, received the *dichora*.[41]

Weima's second function, disclosing something that came to mind only after the letter was finished, comes closest to what we have called an 'afterthought' above, that is, an addition made due to a lack of discourse planning. In numerous letters, the postscript gives the impression of being a continuation of the body, as is signaled by

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36 Weima makes reference to Bahr 1968, 27-9 for his argument, who properly distinguishes between 'letters' and 'records'.

37 For this function, compare Terry 2014, 40 on eighteenth-century English letters; Terry relates the inclusion of postscripts to the unpredictability of letter deliveries necessitating revision or updating of the letter that was being written.

38 See also Arzt-Grabner 2023, 50.

39 Other examples include *P.Oxy.* XVIII 2192 (175-199 AD) = TM 29029; *P.Oxy.* LV 3807 (ca. 26-28 AD) = TM 22529. Compare *P.Mich.* VIII 477, ll. 32-3 (100-125 AD) = TM 27090 for an information added after the main part of the letter was written but not included in a postscript.

40 For more information about this archive, see the Trismegistos portal at https://www.trismegistos.org/arch/detail.php?arch_id=103.

41 Compare *P.Flor.* II 254, ll. 20-1 (259 AD) = TM 11140; *P.Flor.* II 234, ll. 13-14 (264 AD) = TM 11114.

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certain linguistic cues: in *P.Haun.* II 17 (II AD) = TM 26599, for example, Horion asks an unknown addressee to buy the materials necessary for a person's mummification (καλῶς ποιήσεις ἀ[γ]οράσας … ἀγόρασον 'you will do well to buy … buy'); the letter ends with a salutation and farewell greeting (ll. 24-6), after which the topic of buying things is taken up again in a verb-less clause which is visually separated from the closing through a horizontal space (καὶ ἡμιμνοῦν σπερμάτ(ων) κνήκου εἰς βάψαι λίνα [ll. 28-9] "and a half pound of safflower seeds for dyeing the linen" [transl. Rowlandson]), which explicitly suggests continuity with the body.[42]

In another letter, *P.Oslo* II 47 (1 AD) = TM 21524, Dionysios informs his friend Theon of the purchase of fish and beans, also noting that he gave someone a basket (καὶ σφυρίδαν αὐτῷ δέδωκα [ll. 7-8] 'I also gave him a basket'). The same basket appears in the postscript, after a health wish, salutation, farewell greeting and date, where Dionysius asks Theon to return the basket through Androus (καὶ τὴν σφυρίδαν ἀπόστειλόν μη (l. μοι) διὰ Ἀνδρ[ο]ῦν [ll. 18-19] 'and the basket, send it to me with Androus'), the link with the body being explicitly signaled through the discourse particle καί 'and'.[43]

In other cases, the postscript continues along the same lines of the body, though developing a new discourse topic.[44] For example, in *P.Ryl.* II 236 (256 AD) = TM 12980, the administrator Syros asks Heroninos to send some donkeys, outlining the tasks of the donkeys (ll. 3-18). After the long farewell greeting and the date, Syros gives another command to Heroninos, which is unrelated to the donkeys: two beams are to be cut for oil-presses (ll. 22-8). In this letter, the discourse particle δέ is used to introduce the new discourse topic, as well as each of the subtopics in the body of the letter (ll. 10, 13).[45]

Weima's third function, reinforcing a command given in the body of the text,[46] is another important and frequently attested function of postscripts in our corpus.[47] Writers had a number of standard

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42   Compare *P.Flor.* II 212, l. 21 (250-261 AD) = TM 11083, where in the margin a subordinate clause is added that supports the request made in the body, before the farewell.

43   See also Koroli 2016, 223. Compare *P.Flor.* II 244, ll. 13-16 (252 AD) = TM 11126: καὶ δέξαι παρ' αὐ|τοῦ γρά(μματα) τῆς παρα| λήμψεως | ὧν λόγο(ν) δώσι (l. -σει) 'and receive from him a letter of receipt, for which account will be given'.

44   Because of the continuity in terms of speech act and larger referential context, one could speak of a 'supertopic' along the lines of Chafe (see fn. 25).

45   For another such example, see *P.Oxy.* XLI 2985 (II-III AD) = TM 26865.

46   In their contribution to the present volume, Fokelien Kootstra and Klaas Bentein refer to such reinforcements in terms of 'admonitions'.

47   For a classification of postscripts in private papyrus letters with regard to the requests included, see also Koroli 2016, 219-25 who suggests the division of postscripts in three categories: postscripts a) with directive content; b) with non-directive content; c) containing both directive and non-directive content. As regards to directives contained in postscripts, Koroli distinguishes the following sub-categories: a. postscript

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phrases at their disposal to remind the receiver of the importance of the request in the body of the text, such as μὴ οὖν ἄλλως ποιήσῃς 'so do not act otherwise', ὅρα μὴ ἄλλως ποιήσῃς 'see to it that you do not act otherwise', ὅρα μὴ ἀμελήσῃς 'see to it that you do not neglect', etc.[48] Such phrases could be placed either at the end of the body,[49] or after the closing, in the form of a postscript,[50] sometimes visually separated and/or with a change of hand to further underline the importance of the request. In *SB* VI 9025 (II AD) = TM 27270, we even find two such admonition phrases: the body of the text is concerned with the sending and receiving of goods, with the marginal postscript continuing along the same lines: on l. 33 we then read μὴ ἀμελῇς περὶ πάντων, followed by another request on ll. 33-4 (κόμισαι), and yet another admonition on l. 34 ὅρα οὖν μὴ ἀμελῇς αὐτοῦ, which appears to concern the basket or the letter sent through Phatres.[51]

Writers could also personalise this admonition, or adopt a non-formulaic strategy: for example, in *O.Florida* 17 (175-199 AD) = TM 74511, a text which we already mentioned in § 2, Sentis asks Proklos to come, and highlights the importance of the request in the left margin through an admonition phrase combined with a repetition of the request, further intensified through a conditional phrase:[52] μὴ οὖν ἄλλως πυη|σις (l. ποιήσεις) ἀλλὰ ἡ (l. εἰ) φιλεῖς | με ἔρχου (ll. 14-16) 'do not do otherwise, then, but if you love me come'.

The use of repetition can also be seen in other letters,[53] such as *SB* XX 14278 (75-99 AD) = TM 25942, where Longus asks his father to write about some obscure 'thirty items', starting his letter with μὴ ἀμελήσῃς δι' οὗ ἂν εὕρῃς γρά|ψαι τί σοι δοκεῖ περὶ τῶν τριάκον|τα (ll. 3-5) 'please do not neglect to write me, through anyone

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directives increasing the perlocutionary effect of one or more directives submitted in the main part of the letter through several forms of repetition (*verbatim* or rephrasing repetition with or without the addition of an intensifier, or repetition through stereotypical requests, such as ὅρα μὴ ἀμελήσῃς); b. postscript directives the preparation of which is contained in the main part of the letter; c. directives that are thematically irrelevant to the main part of the letter and are contained in the postscript along with their framing.

48 See Koroli 2016, 109-10, 221-2.

49 As in *P.Ross.Georg.* III 3, ll. 19-20 (III AD) = TM 30783; *P.Oxy.* IX 1223, ll. 33-5 (ca. 370 AD) = TM 21597.

50 See e.g. *P.Fay.* 110, l. 34 (94 AD) = TM 10775; *P.Flor.* II 150, ll. 13-14 (266 AD) = TM 11007.

51 In some cases, writers try to be more specific than μὴ οὖν ἄλλως ποιήσῃς and specify through περί with the genitive what the addressee needs to be careful about. See e.g. *O.Claud.* II 279, ll. 17-20 (II AD) = TM 29696; *P.Berl.Zill.* 11, ll. 21-2 (III AD) = TM 30580. Compare *BGU* II 417, ll. 31-2 (I AD) = TM 28136 for a non-formulaic strategy.

52 A point of interest is that Sentis also puts emotional pressure on the receiver through the postscript since his arrival will be a proof of his love.

53 On repetitions in the epistolary frame, see further Bentein 2023c.

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you may find, what you decide about the thirty items', a request which is almost identically repeated in the postscript, which is placed between the salutation and the farewell greeting (καὶ [με]λέτω μοι πε[ρ]ὶ | τῶν τριάκοντά μοι γράφ[ει]ν, ll. 23-4 'and please be sure to write me about the thirty items').[54] Repetitions also play an important role in the earlier-mentioned Heroninos archive, where there are many instances, particularly in Alypios' letters, where the body contains a request that is followed by a signature in Alypios' own hand, with afterwards a repetition of the request (presumably a form of authentication). For example, in *P.Flor.* II 136 (262 AD) = TM 10990, Alypios orders Heroninos to hand over to Horion one hundred *monochora* of wine (παράδος Ὡρειωι (l. Ὡρείωνι) | φρ(οντιστῇ) Εὐημερείας | εἰς τὰ παρ' αὐτῷ ἀναλ(ώματα) | ὧν λόγον δώσει οἴνου | μονόχω(ρα) ἑκατὸν [ll. 2-6] 'hand over to Horion, the steward of Euhemeria, for the expenses he has incurred, for which he will give an account, one hundred *monochora* of wine'), an order which is almost identically repeated after the signature in Alypios' own hand (σεση(μείωμαι) καὶ παράδος | τὰ τοῦ οἴνου μονόχω(ρα) | ἑκατὸν ὡς πρόκειται [ll. 11-13]).[55]

There is some evidence that Weima's third function is not necessarily limited to requests, and that postscripts more generally could serve as a reflective commentary on the contents of a document:[56] an illuminating example is *P.Oxy.* XLVI 3313 (II AD) = TM 26646, a letter in which Apollonios and Sarapias write to Dionysia, presumably the mother or mother-in-law of a soon-to-be-wedded man, saying that they were only able to collect one thousand roses for the wedding, and not the actual number of roses that was requested. In the postscript, it is then stated that Sarapas, who brought them the roses, will testify that they, or at least one of them, really did everything possible to find the roses (μαρτυρήσει σοι Σαραπᾶς πε|ρὶ τῶν ῥόδων ὅτι πάντα πεποίηκα εἰς τὸ | ὅσα ἤθελες πέμψαι σοι, ἀλλὰ οὐχ εὕρομεν [ll. 25-7] 'Sarapas will testify concerning the roses that I have done everything to send to you what you wanted, but we did not find them'). Similarly, in *P.Oxy.* LXXIII 4959 (II AD) = TM 118649, Ammonios writes to his father and mother, saying that his brother Theon is no longer ill, and swearing to the gods that this is true (ll. 10-12). The

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54 Compare *P.Oxy.* LXXVI 5100, ll. 17-18 (136 AD) = TM 140172; *P.Oxy.* XII 1481, l. 12 (100-125 AD) = TM 28993. See also Koroli 2016, 220.

55 For similar examples, see *P.Fuad.I.Univ.AppI-25* (262 AD) = TM 11210; *P.Flor.* II 135 (262 AD) = TM 10989; *P.Flor.* II 137 (263 AD) = TM 10991; *P.Flor.* II 139 (264 AD) = TM 10994; *P.Flor.* II 141 (264 AD) = TM 10998; *P.Flor.* II 143 (264 AD) = 11000; *P.Flor.* II 144 (264 AD) = TM 11001; *P.Flor.* II 146 (264 AD) = TM 11003; *P.Flor.* II 147 (265 AD) = TM 11004; *P.Flor.* II 168 (249-268 AD) = TM 11022; *P.Flor.* II 202 (264 AD) = TM 11071; *P.Flor.* II 234 (264 AD) = TM 11114; *P.Flor.* II 235 (265 AD) = TM 11115.

56 Compare Terry 2014, 51, who refers to the 'meta-textual' role of postscripts.

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same oath is repeated in the postscript, written in his own hand,[57] which follows the salutation and farewell (ἐπόμνυμαι ὅτι καλῶς πάνυ ἔχει <ὁ> ἀδελφὸς Θέων καὶ τὰ συνήθη πράσσει [ll. 22-4] 'I swear that my bother Theon is very well and doing his usual activities').

Moving forward, our intention is to present a case arguing that postscripts served purposes extending beyond those proposed by Weima. One such function relates to what we call 'common ground management',[58] concerning as it does matters that constitute shared information for the initiator and receiver, but that are not explicitly part of the letter's main content as expressed in the body of the text: for example, in *PSI* XII 1247v (200-265 AD) = TM 30631, Ammonous writes to Apollonianos and Spartiates that 'the soldier' is again bothering her, without mentioning anything about a soldier in the body of her letter (πάλαι ὁ στρατιώτης ἡμῖν ἐνοχλῖ (l. ἐνοχλεῖ) ὡς | χάριν..γο...ου αὐτῷ ἐνετίλω (l. ἐνετείλω) [ll. 16-17] "the soldier bothered us earlier because of… you instructed him" [transl. Bagnall, Cribiore]).[59] Similarly, in *SB* III 6262 (III AD) = TM 31055, Thonis includes a postscript asking the addressee to remember his pigeons (μνημονεύσατε τῶν περιστε|ριδίων ἡμῶν [ll. 27-8] 'please remember our young pigeons'). Nothing of this sort has been previously mentioned in the letter body, but it may have been the topic of a previous communication, making this easily retrievable information for the receiver.

In the examples that we have just discussed, one can detect some overlap with what we have referred to as 'afterthoughts' earlier, though afterthoughts tend to adhere more closely to the main topic.[60] Perhaps clearer are those cases where what we call 'common ground management' is related to the writing process itself, and where the postscript includes expected, 'meta-communicative' information:[61] so, for example, writers use the postscript to (i) mention that they are coming or going to a place,[62] or ask the receiver to write where s/he is located;[63] (ii) comment on the lack of communication between the

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57 On Ammonios' hand and his corrections to the initial letter dictated see the comments of the editor and Arzt-Grabner 2023, 47.

58 For common ground as information shared between two people, see e.g. Clark 2020. For the use of particles in Ancient Greek dialogue to engage in common ground management, see e.g. Allan 2021.

59 One can note the presence of the definite article pointing to mutual knowledge.

60 Or at least supertopic, on which see fn. 25.

61 Compare Terry 2014, 51 on eighteenth-century English letters: "it is assumed that the postscript provides the most fitting place for issues to do with the general management of correspondences".

62 E.g. *O.Did.* 369 (88-92 AD) = TM 144930; *P.Lips.* I 106 (99 AD) = TM 11617; *BGU* III 884 (76 AD) = TM 9397; *P.Mich.* III 213 (III AD) = TM 31546; *P.Oxy.* III 529 (II AD) = TM 28369.

63 E.g. *O.Did.* 319 (77-92 AD) = TM 144882; *PSI* IX 843 (II AD) = TM 27224.

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initiator and receiver;[64] (ii) make reference to the person delivering the letter;[65] (iv) note that they have not been able to send something along with the letter;[66] (v) ask not to share the letter with others, or even to destroy the letter once it has been received;[67] (vi) explain why they have not been able to write;[68] (vii) authenticate their message by giving a sign that they are who they claim to be;[69] (viii) observe that they have written in haste;[70] etc. Arguably, this type of postscript comes closest to Goffman's notion of 'out-of-frame activity',[71] referring to activities that do not fit within the current frame being applied, potentially encompassing behaviours, communications, or events that are irrelevant, disruptive, or (in our case) tangential to the main activity or focus.

Another important function that is not mentioned by Weima relates to what Goffman calls the 'participation framework', that is, the different production and reception roles involved in the communication.[72] The initiator and receiver are of course central participants to epistolary communication, but particularly in the case of private letters, the initiator's and receiver's social networks, as attested through the salutations integrated in the opening and closing, play a vital role, too.[73] Very often, the salutation of or by a person triggers an additional comment that specifically relates to this person: for example, in *O.Claud.* II 271 (125-175 AD) = TM 29688, the initiator, Patrempabathes, includes salutations for the receiver, Apollinarios, from a certain Didymos, together with a request to send him (Didymos) 'the pig' (ἀσπάζεταί | σε Δίδυμος. σπούδασον | πέμσαι (l. πέμψαι) ἐκίνο (l. ἐκείνῳ) τὼ (l. τὸ) χοιρίδι`ν´ [ll. 11-13] 'Didymos greets you. Make haste to send him the pig').[74]

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64 E.g. *P.Cair.Isid.* 332 (267-299 AD) = TM 30621.

65 E.g. *P.Laur.* I 20 (200-250 AD) = TM 31506.

66 E.g. *P.Oxy.* XXXVI 2788 (III AD) = TM 30387.

67 E.g. *SB* VI 9610 (II AD) = TM 27823; *P.Oxy.* VII 1063 (II-III AD) = TM 28332.

68 E.g. *P.Oxy.Hels.* 46 (I-II AD) = TM 24976.

69 E.g. *P.Prag.Varcl.NS.* 38 (249-268 AD) = TM 14194.

70 E.g. *P.Ryl.* II 231 (40 AD) = TM 12979.

71 See Goffman 1974, 466: "it seems generally true that much social activity is episoded by brackets, and that there will be a kind of backstage period before the activity begins and after it is over. Individuals are not merely out of role at these times, but they are unguarded in ways they won't be as soon as the activity proper begins".

72 See Goffman 1981. For the participant structure of ancient Greek letter writing, compare Bentein 2023c, 197-8.

73 See Bentein 2023c, 197-8, referring to earlier research by Verhoogt 2009.

74 This sort of information may not have been deemed important enough to be included in the actual letter body. Compare Terry 2014, 42 on eighteenth-century English letters: "the use of postscripts in everyday correspondence was not merely unexceptional in itself, but also allowed for the inclusion of material, such as expressing compliments

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In our last example, the request still comes from Apollinarios, but in some cases requests can come directly from one of the people sending along their salutations: in *O.Did.* 402 (ca. 100-115 AD) = TM 144963, for example, Demetria sends her salutations in the closing of Veturius' letter, after which we read, ἐρωτᾶ σε ἐλθῖν (l. ἐλθεῖν) ὅτε (l. ὧδε) | καὶ μὴ σὺ διὰ Κα‹ι›νῆς | ἀναβῇς (ll. 18-20) 'she asks you to come here and do not go through Kaine', with a shift of perspective, from a third-person request to a direct request in the imperative mood.[75] Another such example is *P.Oxy.* VII 1067 (III AD) = TM 31314, where one of the saluters, the receiver's father, sends salutations in the first person,[76] and makes a request in the imperative: κἀγὼ (l. καὶ ἐγὼ) Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ π[α]|τὴρ ὑμῶν ἀσπάζομαι | ὑμᾶς πολλά. ἀγόρασόν | μοι ὀψαρίδιον ἐκ τῆς | θαλάσσης κτλ. (ll. 25-9) 'I also, your father Alexander, send you many salutations. Buy me a little fish from the sea etc.'.

Similarly, the initiator can use the postscript to directly address one of the salutees, as in *P.Oxy.* XIV 1679 (200-299 AD) = TM 31787, where Apia salutes here 'brother' Loukammon, asking him to write: Λουκάμ|μωνα τὸν ἀδελφὸν πολλὰ ἀσ|πάζομαι, οὗ δέομαι γράψαι | ἡμεῖν (l. ἡμῖν) ἠ (l. εἰ) ἐκομίσατο τὸν χιτῶ|να αὐτοῦ παρὰ τοῦ Λεύκου, ἐπεὶ | Βηρύλλος ἐπελάθετο αὐτὸν ἆραι (ll. 21-6) "I send many salutations to my brother Lucammon, whom I beg to write to us whether he received his tunic from Leucus, since Beryllus forgot to take it'" (transl. Grenfell, Hunt). Although salutations are frequently accompanied by this type of postscript, the use of postscripts certainly extends beyond this specific context: for example, in *P.Oxy.* XLII 3061 (I AD) = TM 25081, a letter from Heraklas to his son Archelaos, there are no salutations, but a third party has used the margin to add a message for the addressee (ll. 19-20): ἔγραψε Ἀπολλώνιος Πτολ(εμαίου) περὶ τοῦ ἐγλογιστοῦ (l. ἐκλογιστοῦ) ἐὰν τι | ἦν (l. ᾖ) δήλωσόν [μ]οι "Apollonius son of Ptolemaeus has written 'About the accountant, let me know if anything turns up'". (transl. Parsons).[77] This is indicative of the everyday difficulties in communication through letters which made people take advantage of every opportunity to write their requests and comments even as a postscript in others' letters.[78]

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to a third party or acknowledging a gift, often considered too banal or formulaic for inclusion in the main body of the letter".

[75] For deictic shifting in another corpus, Greek contractual writing, see Bentein 2020.

[76] Nachtergaele 2015, 95-7 discusses instances of salutations from third persons in the first person perspective.

[77] Compare *P.Oxy.* XLII 3062 (I AD) = TM 25082 and *P.Oxy.* LVIII 3917 (100-125 AD) = TM 27301, in which another person takes over (ll. 9-12), but does so before the farewell.

[78] See Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 37.

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Furthermore, we would like to suggest that postscripts might have been employed to communicate information that did not necessarily build upon the main text, but rather was somewhat detached from its central theme. Writers might have opted to utilise postscripts for such information to maintain the primary content's thematic cohesion and clarity.

There is some potential here for overlap with what we called above 'afterthoughts' and 'common ground management', as will also become apparent from our discussion of postscripts in women's letters in § 3. Information about the writing process, too, can be considered thematically detached from the letter's central theme, for example. Our main motivation for making this distinction here is that what is disclosed in the postscript constitutes new information, which is not shared with the receiver because it has just been mentioned in the letter, as with afterthoughts, or because it is an expected or immediately retrievable ('hot') topic, as with our common ground management. This is reflected in the fact that there is observable effort on the part of the initiator to present a new topic within the postscript, as we will see in the next two examples.

In *SB* V 7600 (16 AD) = TM 17990, the body of the text is mostly concerned with a request to take good care of a horse, and, if possible, to send it to the initiator. After the salutation at the end of the letter, the initiator uses the disclosure formula (θέλο [l. θέλω] σε | [γινώσκειν], ll. 25-6 'I want you to know'), which is normally found at the beginning of the body, to introduce an otherwise unrelated piece of information, namely that he has become *curator turmae*. Another such example is *P.Mich.* III 212 (II-III AD) = TM 28801, a philophronetic letter with an elaborate opening and closing frame, the body of which contains a request from Dorion to his son Serenus to write about his health, and to write what he needs besides the things that have already been sent. In the postscript (ll. 17-19), an entirely different topic is addressed through the use of περί with the genitive (περὶ τοῦ παλαιοῦ πύργου 'in regard to the old farm-building'), about which a short statement is then given.[79]

A question that one could ask is to what extent the use of this type of postscript might have been rhetorically, rather than textually driven, that is, whether writers might have deferred information to the closing to make strategic use of its position outside of the main body of the text. This suggestion was already made by the sixteenth/early seventeenth-century philosopher and writer Francis Bacon, who observed in his essay "Of Cunning" that "I knew one that, when he wrote a letter, he would put that, which was most material, in the

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[79] Other potential examples include *P.Oxy.* VII 1069 (III AD) = TM 31316; *P.Mich.* VIII 496 (100-147 AD) = TM 27106.

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postscript, as if it had been a by-matter".[80] The dramatic effect of the use of postscripts in English literature has been further explored by Richard Terry in an important 2014 article.[81] When it comes to our corpus, such strategic motivations are somewhat more difficult to uncover, though under § 4.2, we will discuss an example from a later letter, BGU III 948 (IV-V AD) = TM 33251, where a request seems to be strategically placed in the postscript so as to come across as more modest, while in fact being of central importance to the initiator.

Finally, we briefly want to note the use of postscript to share information in the form of a list,[82] a usage which is also found in official documents such as petitions.[83] The relations between such lists and the body of the text are various: in a few cases, the list is explicitly anticipated in the body of the text: in *P.Mil.Vogl.* I 11 (100-150 AD) = TM 78532, for example, Theon, the initiator, stresses the importance of reading books, and notes that he is sending books through a certain Achillas, which are listed below the salutation, farewell and date in the form of a postscript.[84] The only subject of the letter is the value of reading books. Thus, the postscript is part of the letter's discourse topic. In *P.Oxy.* XLII 3058 (II AD) = TM 26810, on the other hand, reference is also made to the appending of a list, but this is only done in the postscript itself, after the farewell greeting. Moreover, the list does not seem immediately connected to the body of the text since the writer is interested in various business matters.[85] Lists were not necessarily limited to the postscript: one text, *P.Mil.Vogl.* II 61 (108-176 AD) = TM 28833, includes two lists, one before the closing frame (ll. 22-8), and another after (ll. 31-5).

We conclude our discussion with an overview that summarises our findings. Table 1 lists the different types of postscripts that we distinguish,[86] elucidating how these types are integrated in the letter's overall discourse structure, how they relate to the writer's (lack of) discourse planning and their communicative motivations, and what some of their typical linguistic characteristics are.

80　The quote is taken from the online edition at `https://www.authorama.com/essays-of-francis-bacon-23.html`.

81　Terry 2014.

82　For lists in antiquity, see among others Clarysse 2020; Ghignoli 2022.

83　See e.g. *P.Cair.Isid.* 64, ll. 18-22 (298 AD) = TM 10394; *P.Oxy.* XVIII 2182, ll. 38-57 (165 AD) = TM 12608.

84　Compare *P.Lond.* II 190 (II AD) = TM 28020.

85　Compare *P.Oxf.* 18 (II-III AD) = TM 27140.

86　Many of the functions that we list here also seem to be relevant to postscripts in other historical corpora. Compare the functions listed by Terry 2014, 38 for eighteenth-century English letters.

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Table 1   Summary of functions of postscripts in Roman-period private letters

Type	Discourse structure[i]	Discourse planning	Linguistic characteristics
Disclosing new information	Establishing a new discourse topic	Unplanned, informational	(Justifying elements)
Afterthought	Elaborating a (semi-) active discourse topic/ supertopic (Elaborating a retrievable discourse topic)	Unplanned, clarifying (informational)	Use of καί, ellipsis (suggestive of continuation)
Reinforcing information	Repeating a semi-active discourse topic	Planned, interpersonal	Use of verbal intensifiers ('do not neglect to' etc.)
Common ground management	Elaborating a retrievable discourse topic	Planned, interpersonal	Use of the definite article, absence of explicit topic introducers
Participation framework	Embedded in a new discourse topic	Planned, organisational	Use of καί
Disjointed content	Establishing a new discourse topic	Planned, organisational	Use of explicit topic introducers such as prepositions and disclosure formulae
List	Elaborating a semi-active discourse topic	Planned, clarifying	Nominal appearance

i   We make a distinction here between 'semi-active' and 'retrievable' discourse topics. Semi-active discourse topics are discourse topics that form part of the letter body and which occur before the closing; retrievable discourse topics, on the other hand, are not mentioned in the letter body, but can easily be inferred by the receiver.

Table 1 illustrates a point that we made earlier, namely that while it is crucial to consider the cognitive operations involved in the writing process within a culture where orality held much greater prominence than it does in modern-day society (both in terms of the production and reception of written documents), far from all postscripts are due to the initiator 'forgetting' to include information in his/her letter body **[tab. 1]**.

The table also nicely illustrates some of the affinities and overlaps between the different types of postscripts, which we turn to in the next section, discussing the corpus of women's letters.

A question that one could ask is what – if anything – brings together these different functions, and what gave the postscript its

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distinctive tone with respect to the letter body (if any). Tentatively, we argue that the postscript's positioning inside or following the interpersonally oriented closing frame, its greater temporal immediacy with respect to the body of the text (being written last by the initiator, and therefore containing the most recent information), and its disruption of the more regular discourse flow (that is, *opening frame – body – closing frame*), all contributed to an increased sense of interpersonal 'involvement',[87] which, somewhat paradoxically, could be appropriated both for more mundane, often meta-textual information that is considered to fall outside of the body's main communicative content, as well as for more emotionally loaded information.[88]

4 Postscripts in Context: The Corpus of Women's Letters

Now that we have provided an outline of the different functions that postscripts could have, we turn to their actual use in discourse, by focusing on women's letters, an epistolary sub-corpus that has received a significant amount of attention for the rich information it provides about women's everyday experiences, emotions and social attitudes.[89] These letters represent an interesting corpus for our present purposes, too, since they are more limited in number than men's letters,[90] though being thematically diverse: Bagnall and Cribiore guide their reader through the corpus of women's letters on the basis of diverse themes such as 'family matters and health', business matters', 'legal matters', 'work', 'journeys', 'religion', etc.[91] Thoma categorises the women's letters according to their correspondents (men/women, family/friends/colleagues etc.) and their communicative goals (requests, complaints, keeping contact, expression of emotions etc.).[92]

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[87] See Bentein 2023c for more elaborate discussion of the concept of involvement and its application to Greek papyri.

[88] One can compare Terry 2014, 51, who discusses eighteenth-century English letters, on this point: "the postscript here allows such narrowly logistical details to be kept separate from the more general exchange of sentiments, but it also reflects the common understanding of postscripts as a textual space in which to stow the more secretive elements of a correspondence, even where the letter and postscript will inevitably be received and read together".

[89] See among others Bagnall, Cribiore 2006; 2008; Thoma 2020; Bentein 2023b.

[90] Most women's letters date to the Roman period, a period for which Bentein 2023b, 90 mentions "about 170 letters". On the basis of the overview list provided by Bagnall, Cribiore 2006 and the 2008 online edition of this book, one can estimate the total number of women's letters at little over 220. Thoma 2020 contains an updated list of 250 women's letters written in Greek, 189 of which are dated between the first and the third centuries AD.

[91] Bagnall, Cribiore 2006.

[92] Thoma 2020.

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We start by looking at women's letters dealing with business matters (§ 4.1) and personal affairs (§ 4.2),[93] which gives us the opportunity to further explore the connection between letters' contents/communicative goal and the inclusion of postscripts, as well to discuss some of the difficulties that one experiences in categorising postscripts. We conclude this section by turning to one specific archive that has become quite famous for its female writers (and their use of postscripts), the archive of Apollonios the *strategos* (§ 4.3).

The corpus of women's letters is also interesting in its own right, as it has been hypothesised by Roger Bagnall and Raffaele Cribiore, on the basis of the quasi-exclusive use of postscripts in female (rather than male) letters from the archive of Apollonios the *strategos* that postscripts 'were a typical feature of letters dictated[94] by women',[95] though the same authors are quick to add that only an accurate survey of men's letters could confirm the validity of their hypothesis. Bagnall and Cribiore's claim is difficult to evaluate, as we do not have any quantitative data of the specific number of dictated letters (male or female) – a number that would be difficult to establish anyway; however, we can (very roughly) calculate for Roman-period private letters that approximately 27% (n = 45/166) of all female letters, whether or not autographs, has a postscript, whereas only 12.8% (n = 274/2,143) of all male[96] letters has a postscript.[97] Though we need to take into account the fact that men participated in a much larger set of informal epistolary subgenres than women, this difference seems significant, though perhaps not so significant as to suggest that the postscript indexed a uniquely 'female' frame of writing.

For reasons of space, we cannot fully engage with this last topic here, though we briefly want to explore it by making a comparison between the male and female letters in the archive of Apollonios the *strategos*, to see whether these postscripts had a similar, or rather different function (§ 4.3).

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93 A distinction that is not entirely straightforward, given that some letters deal with both private and business affairs.

94 Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) seem to put particular focus on the fact that women frequently made use of dictation to produce their letters, and that, as a result, they more often included afterthoughts.

95 Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 63.

96 Or rather, non-female letters; 2,143 is the total number of informal letters that cannot be securely attributed to a female initiator.

97 These rough counts are based on the data provided by Bentein 2023b.

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4.1 Business Affairs

Women in Roman Egypt had a prominent role in the economy of the country as they owned a large amount of the private land and practised various professions, mainly in the field of services and crafts and trades.[98] First, we will discuss how women employed postscripts in their business correspondence. At this point, we would like to clarify that women's business correspondence should be considered in a rather broad sense including letters focusing both on matters related to their running of a business (i.e. agriculture works, weaving activities etc.) and very small-scale business such as the exchange of various goods.

In *P.Mil.Vogl.* II 76 (138-147 AD) = TM 15188, the landowner Diogenis writes to her manager (*phrontistes*) Kronion about various business matters.[99] The two hands recognised on the papyrus indicate that Diogenis probably dictated the body of the letter, adding the salutation with her own hand. Then, she dictated a postscript including an order to Kronion about an economic issue, which is followed by the date of the letter (ἐὰν Διδυμᾶς ἀντιλέγηι τῇ | ἀποδόσει Λουρίωι, προένεγ|κον τὴν κίστην μου καὶ σφρα|γίσας αὐτοῦ τὰ γραμματεῖα πέμψ[ον]. | Ἐπεὶφ κ [ll. 16-20] 'If Didymas opposes the payment to Lourios, produce my box, and send his documents under seal. Epeiph 20', transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). After the date, another instruction is then introduced concerning the payment of the tax *artabia* (ἐὰν δὲ καὶ χρείαν αὐτοῦ ἔχῃς | εἰς ἀρταβίαν ἢ ἄλ[λ]ο τι, | πορεύου πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ | πάντα ποίησον [ll. 21-4] "but if you also have need of him for the artabia or something else, go to him and he will do everything", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). Both postscripts should be considered as Diogenis' afterthoughts and reveal that she was in a hurry and stressed about the management of her property. As a result, the final commands have apparently come to her mind after the letter was finished. In *P.Mil.Vogl.* II 77 (138-147 AD) = TM 28842, Diogenis communicates again with Kronion about various matters and gives him some orders in a more threatening tone.[100] The final greetings and the date are followed by an afterthought about some matters that should be settled by Kronion upon Diogenis' arrival at his place and with which he appears to be acquainted ("… but the keys… I arrive; it will be your concern that I arrive", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). In this case, the postscript should be understood as common ground management which also puts pressure on the receiver.

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98 See, for example, Thoma 2018; 2025 with further bibliography.

99 Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 184; Thoma 2020, 92-3.

100 Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 184; Thoma 2020, 93, 191.

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In addition, *P.Oxy.* VI 932 (175-199 AD) = TM 28343 preserves a business letter sent by Thais to Tigrios.[101] The abbreviations and omissions attested in the body of the letter indicate the writer's hurry. Embedded between the salutation and the closing greeting, Thais adds a command about some pigs (τὰ | χοιρίδια χωρὶς μοῦ μὴ πώλι (l. πώλει) [ll. 9-10] "don't sell the piglets without me", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). It is likely that Thais puts her last command in a postscript to emphasise it. The brief reference to the pigs should be considered as shared information between the correspondents, and thus common ground management.

An afterthought is met in *P.Oxy.* XXXI 2593 (II AD) = TM 26937, a business letter addressed by Apollonia to her business partners Philetos and Herakleides about woolen materials.[102] After the final wishes and greetings, the writer adds as a postscript an information about the warp, which has probably come to her mind after finishing the letter but which fits thematically with the rest of the letter (ὁ δὲ στήμων παρ' ἐμοὶ βέβρεκται [l. 26] "the warp has been soaked here at my place", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore).

Business matters often play a prominent place in letters exchanged between family members. *BGU* III 822 (105 AD) = TM 28093 is a private letter written by Thermouthas to her brother Apollinarios on a variety of business matters related to grain taxes, rents etc.[103] After the final greetings and health wishes, the writer adds an afterthought on the verso of the sheet, requesting to send papyrus so that she can write a letter; some information is also included that may be characterised as common ground for the initiator and receiver (ll. 28-30: Καὶ [ἐὰ]ν σοι φανῇ, πέμψον μοι ἄγραφον χάρτην, ἵνα | εὑρο[με]ν (l. εὕρωμεν) ἐπιστολ[ὴν] | γράψαι. ἐνέγκι (l. ἐνέγκει) σοι Ἑρμίας τη[. . . . .] ν περὶ Κάστορος | περὶ τῶν ἑ[τέρων(?)] | καὶ [.]τοῦ "And if you think it proper, send me blank papyrus, so that we may be able to write a letter. Hermias is bringing you the... about Kastor, about the..." [transl. Bagnall, Cribiore]). After completing the letter, Thermouthas may have noticed that the papyrus as writing material had just finished, leading her to request some sheets. She is also mentioning Hermias who will bring something to the receiver concerning a certain Kastor. Both men are not mentioned before by the writer, but the way Thermouthas refers to them in the postscript indicates that they were familiar to her receiver.

Another illustrative example is *SB* XXII 15453 (BIFAO 94 (1994) 32-3, no. II [*O.Max.inv.* 279 + 467]) (II AD) = TM 79035, in which Sarapias writes to a man whom she addresses as 'father', although he

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101 Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 297-8; Thoma 2020, 98-9.

102 Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 353-4; Thoma 2020, 98.

103 Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 191; Thoma 2020, 28.

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appears not to be her actual father.[104] In the main body of the letter, Sarapias mentions various items sent and received, and in her post-script she adds a request, which appears to be already known to the recipient: to send a scalpel (*msup* πέμψον μοι τὸ ξυραφιν μὴ ἀμελῆς. *minf* κόμισαι | κεράμιν α [ll. 14-15] 'Don't forget to send me the scalpel. Receive 1 jar'). A point of interest is that the postscript is written in the upper margin of the ostracon, while a second postscript concerning the sending of a jar with the request to receive a reply from her correspondent appears at the end of the letter in the left margin. The request for a scalpel is considered as common ground management since it may have been mentioned in a previous letter, but the recipient had not yet sent it to Sarapias. She highlights the importance of her request by intensifying it through the phrase: μὴ ἀμελῆς.[105] One could also suppose that Sarapias put the first post-script at the upper margin of the papyrus intentionally to keep her receiver's attention on this and guide the interpretation of the letter to the point she desired (the receiving of goods).

In *P.Tebt.* II 414 (II AD) = TM 28427, Thenpetsokis writes to her sister Thenapynchis about the exchange of goods, also giving her various instructions.[106] She appears to be interested in the sending of dried figs to her addressee, since she explains in the body of the letter that she would have sent them before if she were not sick. In a postscript placed at the upper side of the papyrus, reminiscent of Sarapias' postscript mentioned above, she repeats this information to remind her sister to take the figs by a certain Tephersais (κόμισαι παρὰ Τεφερσάιτος ἰσχάδ|ες ν [ll. 1-2] "receive 50 dried figs from Tephersais", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore).[107] It is noteworthy that at the last part of the letter the greetings are interrupted twice by two differ-ent postscripts adding new thoughts and requests involving various persons who are not mentioned before. Both postscripts are after-thoughts given by the writer for informational purposes which may have come to the writer's mind just before ending the letter.

In *P.Oxy.* XXXIII 2680 (II-III AD) = TM 26930, Arsinoe writes to her sister Sarapias on various matters focusing on the collection of some rents belonging to Sarapias.[108] After the final greetings, she encourag-es her sister to ask her for anything she may need and explains that she has not sent her a jar of pickle because it had sunk (τὸ κεράμιον | τῶν ταρειχίων (l. ταριχίων) διὰ τὸ συμπεπτωκέναι | ἐπέπλησα. τὰ δὲ ὑποκάτω κρειττό|να ἐστὶν τῶν ἐπάνω [ll. 22-5] "I topped up the jar

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104 Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 165; Thoma 2020, 74.

105 Thoma 2020, 191. Cf. Koroli 2016, 109, 221.

106 Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 337-8; Thoma 2020, 126.

107 On the postscript, see Thoma 2020, 191.

108 Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 300; Thoma 2020, 136.

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of pickle because it had sunk. The bottom layers are better than the top ones", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). This information may have been placed there because it does not fit in thematically with the body of the letter,[109] though perhaps it is more likely that Arsinoe just remembered the jar after she had finished the letter.

In addition, in *P.Köln* I 56 (I AD) = TM 24929, Diodora writes to her husband Valerius Maximus about her arrival in a nome capital to deal with some business matters.[110] After the greetings to various persons and before the date and the closing greeting to her addressee, Diodora asks her husband to write about a matter and informs him that she will return immediately after taking care of her business (καὶ γ{α}ράψις (l. γράψεις) μοι | [ ] τε̣[ ]ωκαν· καὶ ἠὰν (l. ἐάν) πε|[ραιώσ]ω̣ τὸ μετήορον (l. μετέωρον) καὶ ὁμαι (l. ὦμαι) | [ἀπρόσ]κοπος, ταχὺ καταπλεύσω [ll. 12-16] "And please write to me… and if I (complete) what is incumbent and I am free from harm I will sail down quickly", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). The postscript functions as a continuation of the body of the letter since both parts focus on Diodora's trip and return to home.[111] The writer may have added this information as common ground management to reassure her husband that if she would finish the business he knew, she would come back home.

In *P.Oxy.* LIX 3991 (II-III AD) = TM 27847, Sarapias writes to her husband Ischyrion about his visit to their family and the sending of various goods.[112] After the greetings, she highlights her anxiety about his long silence in a postscript which functions as an afterthought to the whole letter also expressing her inner feelings (ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ ᾽γεγό|νειμεν οὐ μεικρᾷ (l. μικρᾷ), | πολλῷ χρόνῳ | μὴ κομισθέν|των σου γραμμά|των [ll. 24-9] "we had been in no small anxiety because no letter of yours had been received for a long time", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore).

In *P.Oxy.* XII 1581 (II AD) = TM 29006, Apia addresses her brother Zoilos about the sending of some items also asking him to take care of her son.[113] In the final greetings, she mentions a certain Modestas also reminding Zoilos to give him some of the bread sent ([παρ]αδώσεις | δὲ καὶ τῷ Μοδεστᾷ [ἀφ'] ὧν ἐὰν | κ[ο]μισθῇ σοι [ll. 11-12] "you will hand some over also to Modestas from whatever you receive", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). The postscript should be interpreted in the context of participation framework since the salutation of Modestas triggers an additional comment related to him. Before continuing with the greetings, Apia also repeats her request

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109 Cf., for example, *O.Claud.* II 278 (mid-II AD) = TM 29695.
110 Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 368-9; Thoma 2020, 107.
111 See Bentein 2023b, 99.
112 Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 355; Thoma 2020, 105-6.
113 Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 362; Thoma 2020, 36-7.

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that Zoilos takes care of her son in order to put more emphasis on this (διὰ π[αντ]ὸς ἔχε | τ[ὸ]ν Σαραπίωνα ἐπ[ιμ]ε̣λῶς [ll. 13-14] "Always keep an eye on Sarapion", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). This last thought could also be considered as reinforcing the information provided in the letter and summarising its communicative goal.

In addition, in *P.Oxy.* 2599 (III-IV AD) = TM 30439, Tauris sends two letters to her father and her brother about getting and sending various goods, mainly things connected with the making of fabric, clothing, and footwear.[114] A point of interest is that postscripts are included in both letters. After the greetings of the first letter, Tauris addresses Kyra, to whom she sends some towels, also requesting some others to be sent to her in return (ll. 23-6: καθὼς εἴρηκες (l. εἴρηκας) οὖν, | Κύρα, ὅτι πέμπω συ (l. σοι) σαβα|κάτεια (l. σαβακάθια), πέμψον, καὶ πέμ(πω) | συ τὰ τῶν ἐγυπθείων (l. Αἰγυπτίων) "As you said, lady, 'I'm sending you some towels', send (them), and I'm sending you the Egyptian ones", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). The postscript belongs to the category of participation framework. At the end of her second letter, Tauris sends various greetings and then adds her request to her brother to come back home soon (l. 36: ταχὺ ἔρχῃ εἵνα (l. ἵνα) εἴδομεν (l. ἴδωμεν) συ (l. σε) "Come quickly so we may see you", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). Although the main part of the letter concerns the exchange of goods, Tauris expresses her desire to see her brother in a postscript which functions as common ground management.

In *P.Oxy.* XIV 1765 (200-275 AD) = TM 31807, Kousenna complains to the *tarsikarios* (weaver of fabrics from Tarsos) Apammon for not having answered to her letters about the shipment of some items.[115] The greetings to various persons, including a certain Silvanos, trigger the request to have Silvanos sent to her (participation framework). What is more, in the verso of the papyrus Kousenna adds a second postscript with additional information: she has sent fava beans and papyrus sheets for Apammon and a priestess who has been already mentioned in the greetings (κόμεισον (l. κόμισον) | μετὰ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς κυ|άμους ἑξήκοντα καὶ χαρτάρια | εἰς Κεφαλὴν καὶ ἐπιμερίζεσθαι | σὺ καὶ ἡ ἱέρεια [ll. 25-8] "receive with the letter sixty fava beans and 4 pieces of papyrus probably for anointing the head, and you and the priestess apportion (them)", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore).[116]

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114   Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 400-1; Thoma 2020, 23.

115   Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 298-9; Thoma 2020, 20-1.

116   Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 299.

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4.2 Private Affairs

Summarising the set of business-related female letters that we outlined under § 4.1, we can say that afterthoughts and common ground management seem to play a particularly important role, also revealing the writers' intention to deal with everyday matters as best as they could. Letters that are centred more around private affairs, on the other hand, more often include postscripts that relate to what we called the participation framework, mainly including requests from other parties (relatives or friends). Such letters demonstrate women's care for matters concerning the whole household. In addition, it seems that postscripts in private letters are very often used intentionally to reinforce information (and requests); they are not written in such a hurry as business letters, which sometimes sound very urgent.

In *P.Mich.* VIII 514 (III AD) = TM 30514, Isidora writes to her daughter Sarapias about various everyday and family matters.[117] Among her various problems, she also mentions a dispute between Sarapias and her husband about a matter related to Sarapias' father. The final salutations are interrupted by a postscript addressed to a certain Onnophris, probably Sarapias' husband, since he is the one to whom the letter will be delivered (cf. l. 39). In her postscript, the writer comes back to the quarrel between the couple by trying to manipulate Onnophris putting the blame on him about Sarapias' dissatisfaction (μὴ ἀναγκάσῃς μέ σε μέμψα[σ|θαί σαι (l. σε) Ὀννῶφρειν (l. Ὀννῶφριν) ἐπὶ ̣ ̣ ἀηδίᾳ | αὐτῆς [ll. 35-7] "Do not force me to reproach you, Onnophris, for her unpleasantness", transl. Winter, Youtie). It appears that the salutation of the family members and specifically Onnophris has triggered this additional comment of the writer which is related to him, but also to the main topic of the letter. So, Isidora decided to address him through the postscript. Her words to Onnophris are placed as a postscript for emphatic purposes to reinforce her argument that he is the one to be blamed for the family disharmony.

In *PSI* IX 1080 (III AD) = TM 30667, Diogenis writes to her brother Alexandros about various everyday matters with focus on the family's movement to a new house.[118] She sends greetings to a little boy named Theon and then adds as a postscript that some toys bought by a woman are sent to him along with the letter. Diogenis' postscript should be interpreted in the context of participation framework since the comment is triggered by the reference to Theon, while it is also common ground management because both initiator and receiver know who the woman mentioned is (ἠνέχθη δὲ αὐτῷ ὑπὸ | [τῆς] γυναικός, ἧς μοι ἐδήλωσας ἀσπάσασθαι, | [παί]γνια ὀκτὼ καὶ ταῦτα

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117 Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 269-70; Thoma 2020, 134-5.

118 Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 301; Thoma 2020, 73.

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σοι διεπεμψάμην [ll. 12-14] "eight toys have been brought for him by the woman whom you told me to greet, and I have forwarded these to you…", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore).

In *PSI* XII 1247 (200-265 AD) = TM 30631, which we already mentioned under § 3, Ammonous sends her greetings and wishes to her father and brother. Since the letter's communicative goal is keeping contact with her family, it does not include any other information.[119] However, the writer mentions a more serious matter (probably of economic or legal character) as a postscript written by her own hand: a certain soldier is bothering her and Diogenes will explain to the receiver the situation (πάλαι ὁ στρατιώτης ἡμῖν ἐνοχλ<ε>ῖ (l. ἐνοχλεῖ) ὡς | χάριν..γο...ου αὐτῷ ἐνετίλω (l. ἐνετείλω). ἐρῖ (l. ἐρεῖ) | οὖν σοι τὸ πρᾶγμα Διογένης [ll. 16-18]).[120] Ammonous' postscript should be understood in the context of common ground management since both the initiator and the receiver know about the soldier and Diogenes, although there is no mention of these people in the body of the letter. This addition made by her own hand indicates the severity of the matter and Ammonous' wish to keep some privacy.

In *P.Hamb.* II 192 (III AD) = TM 30461, Demetria writes to her sister Apia that despite some initial setbacks she has managed to send her expensive oil, also promising to send her the upper garment for the festival.[121] After some greetings and before the closing wish, the writer establishes a new discourse topic in her postscript by requesting the purple fabric (καὶ σὺ δὲ μνήσθητι τοῦ | πορφυρίου [ll. 29-30] "and you remember the purple", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). It appears that Demetria's request is consciously motivated since it is based on the mutual care between the two correspondents: the writer sent oil and now awaits something in return. A point of interest is that she prefers to mention the goods sent to her sister in the main body of the letter and her personal request in the postscript. Probably one could consider the writer's choice as part of her rhetorical strategy depicting also her modesty and politeness.

Another letter that offers an illustrative example of how a postscript could be part of a woman's rhetorical strategy is BGU III 948 (IV-V AD) = TM 33251, a text that falls outside the chronological scope of this contribution strictly speaking, but which is nevertheless worth mentioning here.[122] Kophaena writes a letter full of complaints and requests to her son Theodoulos who appears to have

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119 Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 393; Thoma 2020, 55-6.

120 Sarri 2018, 360; Thoma 2020, 192.

121 Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 330; Thoma 2020, 124-5.

122 On rhetorical strategies and patterns of expression in women's letters, see Thoma 2020, 186-203.

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neglected her.[123] In the main body of the letter, among other things, she requests wool to prepare Theodoulos' clothes. The final greetings are followed by a postscript in which Kophaena reinforces her request of wool, but this time in order to make a cloak for herself (ll. 18-20: θέλησον [ο]ὖν υἱέ μου Θεόδουλε ἀγοράσιν (l. ἀγοράσειν) | μοι ς λί(τρας) ἐριδίου μέλα[νο]ς, ἤνα (l. ἵνα) ποιήσω ματῆ (l. ἐμαυτῆ) μαφό|ριον καὶ ἀποστελῶ [σο]ι τὸ κέρμα ὅσου αὐτὰ ἀγορᾶ [ll. 18-20] "Please then, my son Theodoulos, buy for me 6 pounds of black wool, so that I may make a hooded cloak for myself, and I will send you the money for the money you spend on it", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). As Bagnall and Cribiore remark,[124] the writer takes advantage of the guilts she has provoked to Theodoulos for his indifference towards his mother so that her requests be accomplished. It is characteristic that she makes a differentiation between the request of wool for making clothes for Theodoulos and for herself. By adding her personal request as a postscript, she tries to implicitly reinforce it and highlight her modesty and real interest first for Theodoulos' well-being and then for her own. She even suggests to pay the money that Theodoulos would spend on the wool in order to make him feel more guilty and respond immediately to her requests.

4.3 The Archive of Apollonios *strategos*

To conclude our discussion, we would like to turn to the well-known archive of the *strategos* Apollonios of the second century AD, which includes twenty-five letters written by women who were somehow related to Apollonios. These letters, which mix business and private affairs, come from an upper-class context revealing the literacy and social status of their female writers. Although the male writers of the archive mostly do not include postscripts in their letters – with the exception of three letters, to which we return at the end of this section[125] – women's correspondence offers us valuable evidence of the different functions of postscripts.

Eudaimonis, Apollonios' mother, had a dominant role in the family and the household, as indicated by the eleven letters of hers that have been preserved.[126] In *P.Flor.* III 332 (113-120 AD) = TM 19372, Eudaimonis writes to Apollonios about experiencing family troubles with her brother Diskas who has threatened both Eudaimonis and

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[123] Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 224-5; Thoma 2020, 61, 173.

[124] Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 225.

[125] *P.Giss.Apoll.* 18 (117 AD) = TM 19472; *P.Giss.Apoll.* 28 (117-120 AD) = TM 19465; *P.Brem.* 50 (117-120 AD) = TM 19634.

[126] On Eudaimonis' letters, see Cribiore 2002, 151-5; Hübner 2018, 172-4.

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Apollonios with a lawsuit, probably due to a property dispute.[127] Her frustration because of Diskas' misbehavior is the main theme of the letter which closes with the typical greetings and date probably written by Eudaimonis' hand.[128] Then, Eudaimonis adds five more lines as a postscript in which she brings up Diskas once again, but for a different reason: she reminds Apollonios of his moral duty to send a gift to Diskas for his son's wedding because his family had also offered one hundred drachmas to Apollonios when he got married (τοῖς γάμοις σου ἡ γυνὴ Δισκᾶτος τοῦ ἀδελ|φου μου ἤνεγκέ μοι (δραχμὰς) ρ· ἐπεὶ δὲ νῦν Νῖλος ὁ υἱὸς αὐτῆς γαμεῖν μέλλει, δίκαι|όν ἐστι καὶ ἡμᾶς ἀνταποδοῦναι, καὶ | εἰ ζ[η]τ̣ημάτιά ἐστι πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἐν μέσωι [ll. 22-6] "At your wedding the wife of my brother Diskas brought me 100 drachmas. Since now her son Nilos is going to get married, it is right that we make a return gift, even if little disputes are between us", transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). In her postscript, Eudaimonis appears to mitigate the seriousness of the dispute with her brother and highlight the family's sense of decorum. One could recognise more than one of the functions outlined above in Eudaimonis' postscript.[129] Her comment about the wedding gift is placed in the postscript because it does not fit in thematically with the body of the letter which is full of complaints against Diskas. In the main body of the text, Eudaimonis sounds annoyed with her brother's behaviour, while in the postscript she remembers that, despite the disputes, Diskas and his son Neilos are her close relatives. In addition, the information about Neilos' marriage could be considered as common ground management since it appears to be something already known to both the initiator and receiver. The letter depicts how Eudaimonis' mental and emotional state gradually change in the process of writing and emphasises her dynamic personality which is also reflected in all her letters.

In *P.Giss.Apoll.* 5 (*P.Giss.* I 23) (113-120 AD) = TM 19425, Eudaimonis writes, probably with her own hand,[130] to her daughter-in-law Aline. The body of the letter refers to Eudaimonis' prayers to the gods for Apollonios' and Aline's well-being.[131] A postscript, placed at the last line and part of the left margin, mentions the sending of certain items, also for her granddaughter Heraidous who appears at the final greetings of the letter (ἀποστείλασά μοι αὐτὰς [- - -] | θεσιν Ἡραιδοῦτι [ll. 31-2], cf. ll. 27-9: ἀσπ[άζον]|[ταί σε] Σουερᾶς [καὶ] [Ἡραιδο]ῦς. The function of Eudaimonis' postscript is related to the participation framework, with the involvement of different actors

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127   Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 147; Thoma 2020, 32-3.

128   Cribiore 2002, 154.

129   Thoma 2020, 191.

130   Cribiore 2002, 153.

131   Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 156-7; Thoma 2020, 146.

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in the communication: after mentioning Heraidous in the salutation, Eudaimonis adds a postscript with a matter concerning the girl. The postscript indicates the writer's care for all the people of the family as a head of the household during Apollonios' absence.

P.Brem. 63 (*SB* I 4515 = CPJ II 442) (116 AD) = TM 19648, already mentioned under § 2, preserves an additional letter sent by Eudaimonis to her daughter-in-law Aline about various matters including some difficulties in the family's weaving enterprise.[132] In her postscript, which is added in the left margin of the papyrus, Eudaimonis mentions that the wife of a certain Eudemos has stayed close to her to offer her assistance. One could suppose that this last comment of Eudaimonis came to her mind after the letter was finished and it was related to the general situation at the household during Aline's absence. After describing to Aline the various difficulties with which she dealt running the household, she may have thought to reassure her that she is not completely alone. It appears that Aline has left the house to give birth to her baby, probably close to her mother. Thus, the postscript could be considered as a continuation of the letter and may demonstrate Eudaimonis' intention to give Aline a more optimistic picture of the family life despite the difficulties described. In addition, the reference to Eudemos' wife constitutes shared information for the correspondents and belongs to common ground management. Eudemos and his wife are not mentioned in the body of the letter but they are already known to the correspondents.

Besides Eudaimonis, there are a few other women in Apollonios' archive who use postscripts in their correspondence. In *P.Giss. Apoll.* 11 (= *P.Giss.* I 20) (113-120 AD) = TM 19422, Aline writes to her husband Apollonios about the building of a shrine and other house works.[133] After the final greetings and wishes, Aline asks Apollonios to send something for (his uncle) Diskas: πάντα ἃ] | ἔχεις Δισκᾶτος πέμψον [- - -] (ll. 26-7) 'Send what you have of Diskas…' (transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). The writer establishes a new discourse topic in her postscript functioning as a disjointed content to the rest of the letter in order to remind Apollonios of his obligation to send something to Diskas. However, the fragmentary state of the final part of the letter does not reveal the exact function of Aline's postscript.

In addition, the writer of *P.Brem.* 61 (113-120 AD) = TM 19646, probably a sister of Apollonios, describes her trouble with a thief and then focuses on Apollonios' health problems, expressing her worries about him.[134] A postscript follows which concerns a matter involving a person pestering her – probably her husband – while

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132 Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 143-4; Thoma 2020, 130.

133 Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 152-3; Thoma 2020, 103.

134 Bagnall, Cribiore 2006, 142-3; Thoma 2020, 78.

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she also refers to two other people: (m. 1) οὐκ ἀγνοεῖς, πῶς πάλιν ὁ μωρὸς | διενοχλεῖ μοι χάριν τῆς μητρὸς | αὐτοῦ μωραίνων καὶ οὐκ ἔχων σε | τὸν ἐκτινάξοντα αὐτοῦ τὴν μωρίαν. | μελησάτω σοι δέ, πῶς ἐὰν πέμψω σοι | τὰ παιδία Παυσᾶν καὶ Κοττέρωτα | περὶ ἐκείνου τοῦ πράγματος νουθε|τήσῃς καὶ ἐπὶ πέρας ἄξῃς (ll. 35-2) "You are not un-aware that the fool is bothering me again and is such a fool because of his mother and because you are not here to shake out his foolish-ness. Take care, when I send you the children, Pausas and Kotter-os, to advise them regarding that matter and to bring it to an end" (transl. Bagnall, Cribiore). The function of the postscript in this let-ter is related to common ground management, since the fact that a man is annoying the writer is shared information for both the ini-tiator and receiver, but it is not explicitly mentioned in the body of the letter. At the same time, the vocabulary used in the postscript (μωραίνων, μωρίαν) reveals the emotional state of the female writer, who appears to be angry with the aforementioned man.[135] In addi-tion, in the second part of the postscript the woman adds a request to Apollonios: she asks him to take care of two young people, Pausas and Kotteros, and give them advice for a matter which is not men-tioned but could also be common ground management. The matter appears to be something familiar to both the correspondents. Thus, it is placed in the postscript since it functions as disjointed content and establishes a new topic, which the writer prefers to discuss sep-arately without offering many details. The continuous change of dis-course topics in the above letter may also be related to the writer's emotional and mental state.

To conclude, we would like to briefly discuss the function of post-scripts in the three male letters of the archive of Apollonios men-tioned above. In *P.Giss.Apoll.* 18 (117 AD) = TM 19472, Hermaios sends his brother Apollonios greetings and wishes also mentioning the greetings of some other people such as the young Heraidous. In the postscript added after the greetings and before the closing wish, the writer requests Apollonios' mediation so that he receives a school book for Heraidous by the steward, π[αρα]καλῶ δέ σε [. . . .]ειν τ̣[ῷ] | ἐπιτρόπῳ. ἵνα μοι παρα[δί]ξῃ τὰ ἐπι|τήδια τῇ σχολῇ{ς}, οἷον βυβλίον [ε]ἰ̣ς ἀν[α]|γεινώσκειν Ἡραιδοῦτι (ll. 12-15 with BL III 68) "I beg you to ... the administrator, so that he may furnish me things suit-able for school, such as a book for Heraidous to read" (transl. Row-landson). The writer's postscript relates to the participation frame-work since his final request is triggered by the reference to Heraidous' greetings to Apollonios. The young girl was probably with Hermaios at the moment of the composition of the letter. In addition, in *P.Giss. Apoll.* 28 (117-120 AD) = TM 19465 a certain Lysimachos (?) writes to

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135   Thoma 2020, 189-90.

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Apollonios about the sending of some garments. After the greetings, he repeats something about the aforementioned clothes (ἱματίων σου κα[ὶ, l. 9) but unfortunately the papyrus is broken at this point. The writer's postscript seems to be written for emphatic purposes. Finally, in *P.Brem.* 50 (117-120 AD) = TM 19634) Aelius Phanias sends a brief letter to Aelius Apollonios concerning two other letters sent to him. After the greetings of a young girl (probably the writer's daughter), Phanias explains that he is about to travel to Alexandria, and then he adds his final health wishes: ταῦτα δέ σοι [γρ]άφω αὐτῇ ἡμέρᾳ μέλλων κα|ταπλεῖν εἰς Ἀλεξάνδρειαν (ll. 7-8) 'I am writing you these, as I am about to go down to Alexandria the same day'. Phanias' postscript should be considered as meta-communicative information, since he describes the circumstances under which he wrote the letter.

Although the evidence of the male postscripts in Apollonios' archive is very scarce, there do not appear to be significant functional differences with female postscripts. The correspondence of female letter-writers from the Apollonios archive depicts their sincere interest to run the household and settle all the family matters, while in their letters and postscripts their socio-economic status, emotions and attitudes are well represented.

5   Concluding Remarks

To conclude, this study on the function and use of postscripts in ancient letters has revealed that these epistolary elements served multiple communicative and discursive functions beyond mere afterthoughts.[136] They range from providing new information that emerged post-writing, reinforcing previous commands or messages, to managing common ground between correspondents. Our analysis has underscored the complexity and strategic use of postscripts in enhancing communication, emphasising their role in the cognitive process of writing, and highlighting the interpersonal dynamics of ancient epistolary practices.

Despite the different levels of discourse planning that are involved, postscripts seem to be connected with informal, familiar writing.[137] Though noting the significant frequency with which postscripts appear in the corpus of women's letters, we have not been able to

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136 Postscripts are also recorded in ancient Greek literary letters. See, for example, the discussion in Rosenmeyer 2001, 20, 56, 70, 83.

137 Compare Terry 2014, 38-9 for the informal overtone that postscripts carried in English eighteenth-century epistolary culture, which was also commented upon in epistolary manuals.

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engage in a full-blown comparative investigation of male and female postscripts. In the future, it would be worth analysing in greater depth whether some of the functions that we have listed predominantly occur in female letters. Going even further, it would be beneficial to further explore the link between women's propensity for postscripts, the types of epistolary communications they are involved in, and their socio-cultural roles. Women's postscripts, mainly in their private correspondence, are often driven by their emotions, the need to emphasise a request, or to share additional personal information. In some of women's letters, these personal points often find their place in afterthoughts or postscripts unlike what is shared in the body of the letter, where the focus generally remains on issues related to the family and household. This hints at a level of self-awareness in women about their societal roles, depicting a strong sense of care towards their family members, all while downplaying their personal matters. Furthermore, these postscripts – serving as personal afterthoughts – are often sparked by the final greetings to friends and relatives. This revealingly maps out the women's familial and social networks in their everyday life, showcases their crucial role within the household, and offers invaluable glimpses into their world.

While the foregoing is in need of further study, the fact that in other epistolary cultures and corpora, too, connections have been made between female letter writing and postscripts, is suggestive.[138] Women's social roles and disabilities in ancient and modern societies are also revealed in the way they express themselves. In instances where a male scribe is also involved, postscripts written by women can serve as a conduit for the revelation of their personal thoughts and feelings.

Future studies would also benefit from a deeper exploration of the linguistic and visual characteristics of postscripts. By 'visual', we mean not only the postscript's positioning on the papyrus but also its layout and the distinctive qualities of the handwriting. The positioning of the postscript, for example, may reveal the extent to which the postscript was planned by the writer: if the postscript is written at the bottom of the papyrus or on the verso, it may originate from a conscious intention of the writer to add an afterthought or a comment after the main body of the letter. On the other hand, if the postscript is written in the left margin of the papyrus or even in the top margin, it could be related to a communicative goal and thought created after the composition of the letter. In addition, if the postscript is

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138 See Terry 2014, 45 for postscripts as a "female epistolary device" in eighteenth-century English culture. Interestingly, the same author makes a connection with dictation, similarly to what we noted for Bagnall, Cribiore (Terry 2014, 44). Compare Daybell 2006.

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written by a different hand, it could mean that the writer of the letter or even a third person needed to add a more personal message which should not be dictated. However, most of the examples discussed, and particularly those of women's letters, demonstrate that postscripts were not written by a second hand. From a linguistic point of view, it would be worth analysing the textual integration of postscripts to a greater extent, for example, by looking more closely at the types of discourse particles that are used in postscripts, and what they signal about the extent to which the postscript was considered an integral part of the body of the text (contrasting, for example, the use of καί vs. δέ vs. asyndeton).

Throughout this contribution, we have made some suggestions as to the overall connotation that the inclusion of a postscript might have carried (or, to put it differently, the framing effect that a postscript had). To better understand this complex matter, it would be worth making a more explicit linguistic comparison between the postscript and the letter body, on several levels. In terms of overall discourse structure, for example, we have noted that some of the functions that we listed are not exclusive to the postscript: the act of reminding the receiver about the significance of the main request can be performed just before the closing section, too, which raises questions in terms of writer motivation. When it comes to interpersonal involvement, a feature which we consider to underly most of our proposed functions, it would be worth analysing whether there are any linguistic reflexes of this, the postscript being stylistically marked in terms of 'involved' language compared to the letter body.[139] Finally, when it comes to information structuring, it would be worth relating more explicitly the occurrence of afterthoughts at a local (clausal or sentential) level, and a more global, textual level. It seems conceivable that inadequate discourse planning could lead to an upsurge in both types of afterthoughts, but this remains to be seen.[140]

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[139] Compare Terry 2014, 49 on the linguistic characteristics of the English postscript: "it is not just written after the main letter but written in a different style, one consciously drawing attention to its own urgency as well as its higher level of immediacy".

[140] We owe this suggestion to Mark Janse.

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Section 3
Socio-Cultural Framings

The Influence of Atticism on Non-Literary Papyri: The Case of θᾶττον

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Abstract   In this paper, I will discuss the formation of an Atticist register and explore its impact on language use. In particular, I will examine how Atticist practices were consistently recognised as a way of expressing one's level of education and class membership, and how they were reused and appropriated by individuals, even outside literary contexts, for stylistic purposes. The analysis will focus on the use of the Atticist form θᾶττον in place of the more common form τάχιον in documentary papyri.

Keywords   Atticism. Norms and usage. Register shibboleths. Indexical order. High-register Greek.

1 Introduction

In the second century CE, the Atticism movement emerged as a prominent expression of the purist trend that had shaped the Greco-Roman world since at least the first century BCE. Advocating for the use of Classical Greek over Koine Greek, Atticism emphasized adherence to Attic morphological, lexical, and syntactic features. The creation of Atticist lexica highlighted an evolving tendency to use language as a means of constructing social identities. Educated speakers

distinguished themselves by adopting linguistic features that set them apart from the general population, making education and elitism the defining characteristics of their identity. In this chapter, I will focus on the main features of this Atticising register and see what kind of impact it had on language use. Among a number of variants describing the internal variation of the Greek language, the selection of Atticising features was almost always a conscious phenomenon expressing an attempt "to tailor linguistic styles in projects of self-construction and differentiation".[1] In this respect, Atticism affected not only literary and rhetorical production, which are the most studied contexts of Atticist influence, but it also had a broader and more pervasive impact on communicative situations, such as private correspondence, in which we would not expect to find high purist features. This is primarily due to the ideological background of Atticism, which played a crucial role in shaping the identity of the imperial Greek elite and their sense of Hellenicity. Atticist practices were consistently recognised as a way of expressing one's level of education and class membership and were thus reused and appropriated by individuals, even outside literary contexts, for stylistic purposes. This shows the profound impact of purist practices on language.

Several studies have already examined the impact of Atticism on non-literary sources, trying to understand how Atticism is related to register distribution and stylisation. However, the most comprehensive contributions dealing with lexicon,[2] morphology and orthography[3] are unpublished. R. Luiselli, particularly, offers a comprehensive understanding of high register Greek in non-literary papyri in close connection with the theory of style and stylisation in the early Byzantine age. This thesis provides the basis for a consistent part of the analysis conducted in this article. Other studies focus on specific features, such as the analysis of W. Clarysse on the alternation of θέλω and ἐθέλω in papyri and inscriptions,[4] K. Bentein's study on complementation patterns[5] and on the alternation of finite vs. non-finite complementation in postclassical and early Byzantine Greek,[6] and P. James' thesis on the use of complementary participles and

1 Eckert 2012, 97-8.
2 Roumanis 2017.
3 Connolly 1983 and Luiselli 1999.
4 Clarysse 2008.
5 Bentein 2015.
6 Bentein 2017.

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infinitives with verbs of perception and declaration in Roman and Byzantine documentary papyri.[7]

The interesting aspect of these studies is that they discuss the question of register, which is particularly crucial when dealing with Atticism. The creation of Atticist Greek as a register recognised, accepted, and performed by different members of society is an important stepping stone in understanding the impact of purist practices on language. The enregisterment of Atticist features was supported by an ideological construction based on the idealisation of the classical past (see § 2.2), and their diffusion was clearly established in the instruments (lexica, grammars) used in schools.[8] The appearance of metalinguistic sources from Upper Egypt, which express archaistic tendencies and partly reproduce the glosses of the Atticist lexica, indicate that Atticist tools were used in schools at various levels of education (see the second-century *P.Lond.Lit.* 183, containing remnants of an Atticist lexicon possibly ordered alphabetically, *P.Oxy.* VII 1012, a third-century papyrus which contains entries from another purist lexicon and a treatise on literary composition datable to the first or second century CE, and *P.Oxy.* XV 1803 with twelve entries of an Atticist lexicon beginning with σ).[9]

Moreover, we have other indirect evidence for the use of Atticising features in non-literary sources. For example, Philostratus (*Discourse* 1 and *Lives of the Sophists* 2.33) advises imperial secretaries to use a moderate degree of Atticism when writing imperial correspondence. Similarly, Phrynichus, the author of one of the strictest second-century Atticist lexica, *Eclogue of Attic Nouns*, praises Cornelianus, the addressee of this lexicon and the newly elected imperial secretary (secretary *ab epistulis Graecis*), for "making the imperial tribunal Greek and Attic(istic) and acting as a teacher not only of the actual words to be used, but also of appearance, facial expression, voice, and posture" (see *Ecl.* 357). At the same time, Phrynichus criticised other secretaries *ab epistulis Graecis*, such as Alexander of Seleucia, for their linguistic ineptitude and their lack of necessary skills (see *Ecl.* 234 and 324).[10] These testimonies suggest that evidence of Atticising tendencies can usually, but not necessarily, be found in official documents, especially when these documents require a certain level of formality and sophistication, as in the case of imperial correspondence. However, several elements need to be taken into account when evaluating linguistic features in non-literary documents, especially in cases where the

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7 James 2007.

8 For a general introduction to the Atticist lexica, see Matthaios 2015, 290-6.

9 See Favi 2022; Dundua 2024, 68-102; and Luiselli 1999, 85-113.

10 For an analysis of the relationship between Phrynichus and Alexander of Seleucia, see Favi 2021.

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context does not determine the use of a specific register. Thus, while one would expect to find Atticising elements in chancery documents, a question that remains unanswered is to what extent the pervasiveness of Atticism goes beyond the context-based register and becomes an element of stylisation in private letters as well, and what are the factors that may determine the use of Atticist features in these cases. In this paper, I will show that acts of purist intervention are found not only in official texts but also in private contexts and that high-profile purist words were not necessarily associated with an overall effort to use a highly sophisticated language. Atticising forms are often used as markers for register upgrading, and in this respect, they can also be used by speakers who are not very familiar with the Greek language but still have stylistic ambitions.

Since this study is very limited to a single feature, it does not aim to reach final conclusions. Its primary intent is mostly to arise a few points which should be considered in the analysis of the phenomenon of Atticism. The analysis of purist features in non-literary language is functional to better understand Atticism as a cultural phenomenon and the impact it had on shaping social perceptions of language variation. It can also tell us something about the actual impact of changes from above, as top-down changes coming from a prestige group and prescribed in grammar, but also in the sense of above the level of awareness, where language users consciously recognise and adopt variants. Moreover, this study aims to stimulate a reflection on problematic concepts, such as the relationship between register and the distribution of linguistic features, and the role of speakers/writers in the process of stylisation.

Thus, before proceeding to the analysis of Atticist items, the next section will be devoted to an examination of the question of register and the problematic assumptions related to the interplay between situational context and linguistic features (section 2). In this context, I will explore the creation of an Atticising register, and I will try to use the modern concept of register shibboleths[11] to describe the activity of the Atticist lexica in the process of register construction. I will then examine the influence of Atticism on non-literary language, focusing on the alternation between τάχιον and θᾶττον (section 3). Finally, some conclusions will be drawn, with reflections on what questions this line of research can open up (section 4). While the approaches taken from modern sociolinguistic studies serve to provide a theoretical framework for the question of enregisterment and stylisation, the evaluation of the impact of purism can only be analysed through a careful investigation of metalinguistic sources (lexica and grammar) and the actual reflection of their prescriptions on language use. The single case

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11 Silverstein 2003.

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study proposed by this analysis does not imply any generalisation but only aims to offer some methodological perspectives.

2 Register and Stylisation

This first section is devoted to the creation of an Atticising register and the way it is reflected in non-literary practices. Here, I take register as a linguistic repertoire that is culturally associated "with particular social practices and with persons who engage in such practices".[12] This definition is discussed in the next section (§ 2.1), along with all the problems related to using the concept of register to analyse non-literary sources. The following section (§ 2.2) will instead focus on the formation of an Atticist register, since, as A. Agha claims, "The social existence of a register requires some clarity not only about the metapragmatic models that typify its forms and values but an understanding also of the social processes through which such models are institutionally disseminated across social populations".[13] This will give us an idea of the broader perspective and define the framework for the analysis of the case study, which will translate the macro-sociological level into the analysis of the micro level. Indeed the second part of this chapter will focus on how different expressive possibilities (e.g. Atticising features as promoted in the lexica) are individually appropriated or, "developed in 'stylistic practices', with writers acting as 'stylistic agents', and manipulating the indexical potential of features, breaking fixed conventions, using existing elements from another register, etc."[14] to produce their own styles. As Eckert argues, style is a crucial element in the study of sociolinguistic variation because it represents the place of individual expression of broader social distributions of variation,[15] and as such it is an important link between the individual and the community. While the two concepts of register and style are problematic and of difficult definition,[16] in this case, register will be taken as the more stable variety (literary register, Atticising register) recognised by a community of practice, and style will define the way items of one or

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12 Agha 2004, 24.

13 Agha 2004, 43.

14 See Bentein in the introduction to this volume.

15 Eckert, Rickford 2001.

16 See Biber, Conrad 2009, 17-23 for a discussion of the difference between register, genre and styles and an overview of how these concepts have been used in previous studies.

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more registers are reused in individuals' practices.[17] The question of literary production, with its own implications in terms of genre, register and style,[18] will not be considered in order to focus only on non-literary texts.

2.1 Register: Definition and Problems

The treatment of register in this chapter combines a sociolinguistic perspective, as proposed by A. Agha's definition of register as a linguistic repertoire that is culturally associated with a particular social practice,[19] with a more static perspective proposed by D. Biber and S. Conrad, mostly based on taxonomic and descriptive schemes.[20] The first approach is functional for understanding the ideological context that underpins the formation of the Atticising register and the selection of Atticising features, while the second is functional for problematising the relationship between context-based and language-based approaches to register.

As J. Stolk argues,[21] documentary papyri show variation not only across different types of documents but also at various levels of the language (syntax, lexicon, morphology). As such, they cannot be analysed as a homogenous corpus. However, the concept of register has been used to analyse the distribution of variation, which can be observed not only in the same corpus but also, for instance, in the same archive: papyri belonging to the same archive can show different registers or different degrees of the same register.[22] In this respect, register variation has been understood as a continuum,[23] with different varieties (high register – literary, Atticising –, middle register, low register) not being taken as fixed categories but rather as representing points on this continuum. However, while this idea of register continuum overcomes the problem of the strict separation between different registers, one of the problems that still remains is the assumption that there is a strict relationship between high-register

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17 With regard to style, Biber, Conrad 2009, 18 claim that "the most common application of this concept is to describe systematic variation within the register/genre of fiction".

18 For which see Willi 2010.

19 Agha 2004.

20 Biber, Conrad 2009.

21 Stolk 2021.

22 However, as Stolk 2021 claims orthographic and morphological variation is governed by external factors different from those governing the spread of syntactic and pragmatic features.

23 Bentein 2020, 385.

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texts (official texts) and a low number of non-standard features, and low-register texts (personal texts) and a high number of non-standard features, as the following table would suggest:[24]

Continuum	High	Middle	Low
Context-based	Official texts	Business texts	Personal texts
Language-based	Low number of non-standard features	Average number of non-standard features	High number of non-standard features

As J. Stolk claims, "One would assume that the results of the context-based approach largely overlap with the language-based approach, but this expectation is not always born out in the case of papyrus documents".[25] This idea has already been formulated by C. Brixhe & R. Hodot through the concept of 'non-étanchéité des registres', which implies the appearance of a feature conventionally attributed to one register in a text that is assumed to belong to a different register.[26] This means that, although one might assume that a letter – due to its unofficial nature – would reflect a specific linguistic variety (e.g. a low or colloquial variety), the various elements of orthography, morphology, and syntax do not necessarily adhere to a single register or variety. Instead, they often display a high degree of internal variation, which may result from conscious or unconscious choices made by the author (see the cases of the private letters analysed below). Conversely, this also applies to official or business texts, which may occasionally exhibit features of a lower register. This phenomenon is not new, as such variation is also evident in literary texts, and even more so in Atticising writers where significant shifts in the register are noticeable.[27]

Various studies have demonstrated this by analysing the presence of innovative forms in high social contexts. Indeed, as shown by P. James, there are cases of official documents that can display 'low' or 'late' orthographic and morphosyntactic features.[28] J. Stolk investigated the same phenomenon with a special focus on orthographic varieties.[29] Similarly, K. Bentein, focusing on the distribution of complementation patterns, showed that while there is a tendency to use patterns that already existed in the classical period in formal

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24 This table is taken from Stolk 2021, 302.
25 Stolk 2021, 302.
26 Brixhe, Hodot 1993, 9.
27 See Cassio 1999, 1005-7 and Kim 2010.
28 James 2007.
29 Stolk 2021.

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contexts, "some innovative formations (e.g. ὡς ὅτι with the indicative, ὡς with the infinitive and the participle, ὅπως with the infinitive) also appear in higher social contexts".[30]

On this line, in what follows, I will reuse the concept of 'non-étanchéité des registres' to analyse whether morphological features conventionally associated with the high register also appear in non-official documents. In doing so, I will explore the relationship between linguistic behavior and sociolinguistic contexts in different types of sources, showing that even private letters display a great variety of styles/registers, sometimes with clear stylistic ambitions, which may be due to different factors (such as the author's status, the addressee, the circumstances, etc.).

2.2   Atticist Lexica and Register Markers

As A. Agha claims, a register comes to exist through sociohistorical processes of enregisterment, "processes by which the forms and values of a register become distinguishable from the rest of the language (i.e., recognizable as distinct, associated with typifiable social personae or practices)" for a given community of practice.[31] Ideological factors support the creation of an Atticising register and the use of this register as a form of identity definition, providing alternatives between various forms which are functionally equivalent but socially and stylistically marked. The use of οἴομαι in place of νομίζω or ξυν- in place of συν- (see Moeris's Atticist lexicon ο 28 and ξ 2, 3 and 4 respectively) became a mark of education and class membership, expressed in the following format: "We/the educated community use X which is Attic and acceptable, they (those who are ignorant, the masses) use Y which is not appropriate". Atticist lexica, therefore, propose a repertoire of characteristics (linguistic signs connected with the register's use), associate these features with a range of pragmatic values (positive/negative values linked with the register, e.g. correct, pure, acceptable), and provide a definition of a social domain (categories of persons that can use and recognise the register's forms), linking linguistic features (alleged Attic forms) to social categories (well-educated speakers belonging to the Greek elite).[32]

This process can be defined in terms of indexical order.[33] Linguistic features are drawn from their linguistic context and serve as

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30   Bentein 2015, 140.

31   Agha 2004, 37.

32   These are the features Agha 2004, 37 describes as essential for register organisation and change.

33   See introduction to this volume.

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markers (indexes) of membership and identity.[34] The creation of an Atticising register is an aspect of the dialectical process of indexical order,[35] which entails the association of specific values (linguistic appropriateness, purity, education, etc.) to certain linguistic features. Atticising lexica, in particular those which show a more prominent purist profile (e.g. Phrynichus' *Eclogue*), present variants in the form of a binary opposition between Attic and non-Attic features, where Attic is what is recommended and usually corresponds to linguistic features less common in the contemporary language, and non-Attic is the objected option, often represented by morphological, syntactic, and lexical phenomena which characterise Postclassical Greek – although in many cases these can also be features already existing in classical Greek.[36] This binary structure proposed an opposition between linguistic features intended for use by the community of educated speakers and, as such, consciously used and recognised as markers of education, and those used by common people.

The features which are described as typical of Atticist Greek could represent what in modern sociolinguistic studies has been described with the concept of 'register shibboleths', namely "salient pillars" which provide anchors to certain registers reflecting a tendency to organise linguistic variability by presuming "the existence of distinct, indexically contrastive ways of saying what counts as the same thing".[37] These register shibboleths are the most marked and evident features among less evident features belonging to the same register, and as such, they become emblems of identity. Speakers style themselves "as identifiable social types through the control of a repertoire of registers, and especially of their emblematic shibboleths".[38]

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[34] See Eckert 2012, 94.

[35] See Silverstein 2003, 212-3.

[36] For an introduction to the Atticist lexica and their social role in the context of the Imperial age, see chapters 1 and 2 in Swain 1996; Schmitz 1997; and Kim 2010.

[37] Silverstein 2003, 145.

[38] Silverstein 2003, 146.

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3 The Influence of Atticism on Non-literary Language: Methodology

In order to assess the impact of Atticism on non-literary sources, I will start with Atticist prescriptions and select those features that are more relevant for analysing the impact of Atticism on language users.[39] The selection of features relies on the differentiation of three typologies of purist intervention, based on the types of features proposed. As suggested by Luiselli, three different cases should be considered:[40] out-of-fashion features that experienced very limited reintegration into the linguistic system of the Roman period – these forms can easily serve as register shibboleths, acting as markers of the Atticising register; out-of-fashion features that had a more extensive reintegration; and features that never went out of fashion but coexist with Koine variants. However, we should be cautious when determining whether a linguistic form was truly common or uncommon, especially if we are basing this judgment solely on the absolute number of instances. Thus, this approach does not provide a full picture of how common a form really was, particularly in the case of the middle category – those forms that underwent more extensive reintegration –, but it could be useful to identify certain trends. Here, I will focus only on the first typology, as these cases best reveal the purist approach of the lexica and the possibility of unconscious use of Atticist features is less likely.

Regarding the analysis of the sources in terms of register, I will reuse D. Biber and S. Conrad's approach,[41] and for each analysed text, I will try to investigate the three main components covered by the description of the register: the situational context (a), the linguistic features (b), and the functional relationships between the first two components (c). Specifically, D. Biber and S. Conrad suggest describing the situational context on the basis of the following parameters:[42] participants, including the types of relationships between the different participants; mode of communication; production and comprehension; circumstances; setting, including time and place; and communicative purpose.[43] However, when it comes to papyrological sources, some information cannot be retrieved. For example, the social background of the sender of a document and his personal relationship with the addressee cannot always be described in detail, nor can the educational background and social status of the

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39 In this context I will not focus on a single archive but I will rather analyse the distribution of a single feature (θᾶττον in this case) in the papyri.

40 Luiselli 1999, 117.

41 Biber, Conrad 2009, 6.

42 Biber, Conrad 2009, 39-47.

43 See Stolk 2021 for a careful evaluation of all these elements.

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addressee or other people involved. In addition, this type of texts requires special attention to other elements, such as distinguishing the author or sender of the document from the scribe, since some of the linguistic features of the text could be due to one or the other. Furthermore, as J. Stolk argues, although the circumstances of production are not always taken into account in register studies, they are of particular importance for the papyrological corpus: "Whether the language of a particular papyrus has been produced freely at the spot, noted down from dictation, revised during a drafting process or copied from a written draft or model can make a significant difference to the type and number of non-standard forms attested in a document".[44] While J. Stolk discusses these issues with particular reference to orthography, they are equally applicable to other aspects of linguistic variation.

Another crucial element to take into account is the fact that the relations between the participants are defined in terms of two main domains: private and official. A private setting does not include texts produced by the government, but it may include documents from a professional, legal or commercial context. The official category comprises documents related to public administration, judiciary, and military.[45] This dichotomy is often associated with a degree of formality, in which private documents are considered to have a low level of formality, as opposed to official documents which are considered to be more formal. The difference in the level of formality between these various types of documents is likely to influence linguistic choices.[46] As mentioned above, this distinction requires special care. While official documents, especially those from the imperial chancery, are expected to use a certain kind of language, for private documents, the context would not automatically require the performance of high register features. However, other factors may come into play as much as the level of the individual's stylistic ambition.

A final methodological note pertains to the evaluation of style in private papyrus documents. While style is generally defined as "a set of co-occurring variables associated with the speaker's own persona",[47] which can vary according to context, people involved, etc., the evaluation of the style of the author of a papyrus letter is more complicated, since we often have only a single document for a single author (as in one of the letters analysed below). This does not allow us to assess whether the style used in a particular context is specific to the author or mainly due to the circumstances.

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44   Stolk 2021, 306.
45   See Stolk 2021, 307.
46   Bentein 2015, 108.
47   Eckert, Rickford 2001, 5.

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3.1 The Case of θᾶττον[48]

This article will only deal with the adverbial neuter: θᾶττον. The form θᾶττον belongs to the first typology of purist tendencies – out-of-fashion features that saw a very limited reintegration into the linguistic system of the Roman period – and as such it is particularly useful for studying purist attitudes. Moreover, it is a feature that is extensively discussed in various lexica. It also shows a kind of variation between three forms θᾶττον/θᾶσσον/τάχιον, which is functional for an analysis of register distribution, all the more so because it has a clear Attic flavour with the presence of -ττ-. Numerous are the Atticist prescriptions on θᾶττον as the following examples show:

[Hdn.] Philet. 18: θᾶττον ἐρεῖς, οὐχὶ τάχιον· καὶ βραδύτερον, οὐχὶ βράδιον· καὶ αἴσχιον, οὐχὶ αἰσχρότερον· καὶ κάκιον ὁμοίως. (Dain ed.)

Phrynich. *Ecl.* 52 τάχιον Ἕλληνες οὐ λέγουσιν, θᾶττον δέ. (Fischer ed.)

Moeris 7 τάχιον οὐ λέγεται παρ' Ἀττικοῖς ἀλλὰ θᾶττον. (Hansen ed.)

Moeris 18 θᾶττον <Ἀττικοί>· τάχιον <Ἕλληνες>. (Hansen ed.)

The Atticists' preference for θᾶττον is in line with other prescriptions about comparatives or the replacement of -σσ- with -ττ-.[49] However, Atticist prescriptions about other comparatives, such as ἥττω in place of ἥσσονα (see Moeris η 10 ἥττω Ἀττικοί· ἥσσονα κοινόν)[50] seem to have a slightly different impact. While ἥττω still finds attestations in different contexts, in Ptolemaic papyri, as much as in Septuagint, and the NT, showing that it never completely disappeared from non-literary or non-classicising language, the case of θᾶττον is more relevant since the form was almost totally replaced by τάχιον in the Koine.[51]

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48   On the alternation of the two forms and the way lexicographical sources deal with this alternation, see Benuzzi 2024.

49   For the replacement of -σσ- with -ττ- see Connolly 1983.

50   For which see Pellettieri 2022.

51   Other cases of comparatives are discussed in the lexica i.e., βραδύτερον vs βράδιον, ἔγγιον vs ἐγγύτερον.

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3.1.1   On the Alternation θᾶττον/τάχιον

The adjectives in -ύς, -εῖα, -ύ usually form their comparatives with the suffix -ῑον/-(y)ον- and their superlatives with -ιστος.[52] However, some of them also have alternative forms with the suffixes -τερος and -τατος. The alternation between forms like θᾶττον[53] and τάχιον shows the realisation of the two variants in -ῑον and -(y)ον.[54] H. Seiler suggests that the form with -ῑον is more recent and ταχίων replaces θάττων/θάσσων to achieve better morphological clarity (τάχιον is closer to ταχύς and it is a more evident comparative based on ταχύς).[55] Alongside these comparative forms, there exists a secondary comparative in -τερος, which is directly derived from the positive form.

3.1.2   Distribution in Literature

In the classical period, θᾶττον and θᾶσσον are the forms used, with θᾶττον being the one attested in all classical authors except Thucydides and the tragedians (Sophocles and Euripides), who have θᾶσσον.[56] The first attestation of τάχιον is found in Menander (fr. 333 K-A), although some of the editors are skeptical about the authenticity of this form,[57] while ταχύτερον is used by Herodotus and Hippocrates, but they also have θᾶσσον. Θᾶττον is still the most common form in Aristotle (with over 200 attestations), who also has τάχιον (3 cases) and ταχύτερον (3 cases). In Hellenistic writers, θᾶττον is still the only form used in Polybius, while Diodorus Siculus has two attestations of θᾶττον (both in *Bib. His.* 34) and five attestations of τάχιον. In the NT τάχιον is the only form attested.[58] In the Septuagint the common form is τάχιον, which is always used with the only exception of θᾶττον in *Macc.2.*, a book showing different Atticising features[59] – however, alteration of manuscript tradition should be taken into consideration in those cases.[60] The use of τάχιον is still consist-

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[52]   See Seiler 1950, 35-7; Kühner, Blass 1890-92, 1: 556; Jannaris 1897, § 519b; Schwyzer 1939, 1: 538 and 539 fn. 4.

[53]   With regard to the length and the accent of the vowel α, see Seiler 1950, 39-40, Barber 2015, 9 (with a discussion of the different forms in Herodian) and Vessella 2007.

[54]   These two allomorphs seem to follow Sievers' law for which see Barber 2013, 159 and 162-4.

[55]   Seiler 1950, 36-7 and Barber 2013, 159.

[56]   For this kind of alternation in Attic, see Lupaş 1972, 114-15.

[57]   See app. Kassel-Austin.

[58]   See Moulton, Howard, Turner 1906-76, 164.

[59]   Thackeray 1909, 184 and Cerroni 2024.

[60]   See Kilpatrick 1963.

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ent before the full development of Atticism in authors like Plutarch, who shows 18 attestations of τάχιον compared to 18 of θᾶττον and 10 of θᾶσσον, Flavius Josephus with 51 attestations of θᾶττον, 20 of τάχιον and 4 of θᾶσσον, and Dio Chrysostom with 12 attestation of θᾶττον, 3 of τάχιον and 3 ταχύτερον.[61] In imperial times, θᾶττον is the most common form in Atticist authors, such as Aelius Aristides, Lucian, Philostratus, with no attestations of τάχιον in Aelius Aristides and in Philostratus and only one in Lucian in *Soleocist* 7.16, where it is mentioned as the model for the mistaken form βράδιον. Θᾶσσον found attestations in Galen (together with τάχιον and ταχύτερον), although it is still the less common option compared to θᾶττον. Cassius Dio shows a rather different picture with 24 attestations of θᾶσσον and 10 of θᾶττον. With regard to the Atticising Christian authors, they also show a more increasing presence of θᾶττον: for instance, Basilius of Caesarea has many attestations of θᾶττον and a very few cases of τάχιον (3) and ταχύτερον (4). Likewise, in Clemens Alexandrinus θᾶττον is found 16 times while τάχιον only 5.

Although each author should be closely examined to see whether the different forms are used in different communicative contexts, a general oscillation is observed, with a predominance of θᾶττον in Atticising authors.

3.1.3   Θᾶττον in the Papyri[62]

Between the third and the first century BCE, the only instance of the comparative is θᾶσσον and it is found in a papyrus belonging to Zenon's archive, *P.Ryl.Gr.* IV 565 (TM 2421), a letter from Deinon to Zenon dated to 250 BCE, which shows signs of a sophisticated style.[63] It is significant that the form used here is θᾶσσον and not θᾶττον, which is instead the form used in the papyri of the third century CE, after the full manifestation of Atticising tendencies. Τάχιον has its first attestation in *P.Amst.* I 89 10 (first century CE) and started becoming common from the first century CE onwards. Between the first and the fourth century CE τάχιον and ταχύτερον are the most attested forms. The form θᾶσσον is attested in two official documents written on ostraka dated to the second century CE (*O.Krok.* I 41 44 and *O.Krok.* I 42 13).[64] After the fourth century CE, there is no attestation of these forms, but only the positive form (or the adverb ταχέως) is attested.

61   See Schmid 1887-97, 1: 86.

62   See Gignac 1976-81, 1: 146; 2: 152 and 154.

63   On linguistic variation in the Zenon's archive, see Logozzo 2015 and Evans 2010.

64   See Cuvigny 2006.

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In all the attestations we have on papyrus, θᾶττον appears only four times in documentary papyri. All cases are attested not before the end of the second or the beginning of the third century CE. There are also eleven cases of θᾶττον in literary papyri reporting pieces of texts of Philodemus (*P.herc.* 207, 229, 807, 1050, 1008, 1251, 1471), Plato (*BKT* 2 p. 52-3 and *BKT* 2, p. 3-51) Xenophon (*P.Oxy.* LXXV 5046), Aristophanes (*P.Ant.* II 75), Basilius of Caesarea's letters (*BKT* 6 p. 23), and rhetorical compositions such as the *Encomium of the fig* (*P.Oxy.* XVII 2084) and an invocation of Imouthes – Asklepios (*P.Oxy.* XI 1381). Among these sources, we possibly list a festal easter letter (*BKT 6* p. 55-109) dated to the seventh century CE. Attestations of θᾶττον are found also in two fourth-century magical papyri, *PGM* II 87 and *PGM* IV 199, 1467. Since this volume is on documentary papyri in this context I will focus only on the four cases mentioned above.[65] The four testimonies of θᾶττον appear in three different types of texts: 1) a document issued by the imperial constitution, 2) a petition, and 3) two private letters. While the first two types of texts belong to kinds of documents that would conventionally be placed towards the right end (high register) of the register continuum, since as official documents they would be expected to show high register features, the last two cases are more interesting, since they have a private setting, but nevertheless show a purist feature (θᾶττον). In what follows, I will not provide a full commentary on the first two papyri, which have already been analysed by Luiselli,[66] but I will reuse some information from Luiselli's analysis and contextualise it in a register-based approach. I will then focus on the two private letters.

1) Imperial constitution: *P.Oxy.* XVII 2104 (TM 61407)

This is a letter from Severus Alexander to the *Koinon* of Bithynia, preserved in three different copies: W Dig. 49.1.25 (from Paul's Responsa); *P.Oxy.* XVII 2104 (= Oliver 1989, 541); and *P.Oxy.* XLIII 3106 (=

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65 However, considering that the corpus of the magical papyri is not homogenous but exhibits a high degree of internal variation, this would be an interesting area to explore. D. Kölligan gave a presentation titled *Greek Magical Texts and their Contribution to the Lexicography of Atticism* at the workshop *Ἀττικοί and Ἕλληνες: Atticism and Koine Between Linguistic Practice and Grammatical Theory*, organised by the ERC project *Purism in Antiquity: Theories of Language in Greek Atticist Lexica and their Legacy*, held in Venice in January 2024. In his presentation, which included the two cases mentioned above and listed by Kölligan among the doubtful examples, he explored whether the usage in the magical papyri confirms the prescriptions of the Atticist lexicographers. He concluded that while many judgments of the Atticists are confirmed, each individual case requires closer scrutiny.

66 Luiselli 1999.

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Oliver 1989, 542) which should be the official copy.[67] The form θᾶττον is attested in the first two papyri, while in *P.Oxy.* XLIII 3106 the passage containing this line has been lost. The textual discrepancies shown by *P.Oxy.* XVII 2104 suggest that the language of the letter was probably changed in the course of its transmission. However, as Luiselli argues, θᾶττον was undoubtedly present in the original text of the letter, "as is shown by the agreement between a source removed more than one step from the original and the independent line of transmission represented by Paul's lost Responsa and the manuscript tradition of the Digest".[68] As mentioned above, the text will be analysed according to D. Biber and S. Conrad's criteria (see section 3):

a. Situational context
Genre: Imperial constitution; Content: Letter of Alexander Severus to the *Koinon* of Bithynia on the right of appeal. Complaints had been received of attempts on the part of the local authorities to limit this right;[69] Participants: Imperial Chancery, official administration; Setting: public; Date and place: 222 CE, Egypt, Oxyrhynchus.

b. Linguistic features
In the surviving text, there is no obvious presence of 'non-standard' features, and besides the use of θᾶττον, no other purist features seem to appear.

c. Functional relationship between a) and b)
Language choices reflect the official context of the document. This occurrence of θᾶττον in a document produced in the third-century imperial chancery does not come alone. Another example of the same kind is a letter (inscription) from Antoninus Pius (138-161 CE) to the Ephesians,[70] which presents two attestations of θᾶττον. No example of τάχιον seems to occur in Roman and late Roman imperial Constitutions. Imperial constitution is a genre which shows a rather extensive presence of purist items. Indirect sources seem to refer to a purist practice in the Imperial secretary. Philostratus, as mentioned above, advises imperial secretaries to employ a moderate degree of purism in writing imperial correspondences, inviting them to mix Atticist features with elements belonging to the current usage (*Discourse* 1). This seems to suggest that Atticising practices were employed in the context of the official correspondence. Moreover, Imperial letters were issued by the department of *ab epistulis*, and many sophists

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67 See Luiselli 1999, 120

68 Luiselli 1999, 130.

69 See Oliver 1989, 541-2.

70 See Oliver 1989, 329-32.

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seem to have been appointed to this position.[71] Philostratus himself, in other passages, comments on the style of two sophists Aelius Antipater and Aspasius employed as secretary *ab epistulis* (*Lives of the Sophists* 2.24 and 2.33). Similarly, Cornelianus, the addressee of Phrynichus' Atticist lexicon, was appointed secretary *ab epistulis*, probably under Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. This may suggest that Cornelianus, as well as other sophists, may have played a role in the composition of these letters or at least in spreading the use of Atticism in the chancellery, and this is what Phrynichus tells us in the passage quoted in the introduction to this chapter (*Ecl.* 357). However, many details related to the role of the secretary are unknown, so it is not possible to evaluate the actual impact of purism on the basis of these indirect sources. On the other hand, more significant is the presence of other Atticist features in imperial constitutions, as analysed by Luiselli.[72] The selection of purist items attested in these sources is quite significant since they are mostly features which show an unmistakable Attic flavor (-ττ-, διδόασι, ἴστε, τήμερον, μέχρι, οἴομαι with infinitive and accusative construction) and as such can be defined as sorts of register shibboleths. These words were often used in texts which did not present an overall refined language, but they still stand out as marks of purist refinements.

2) Petition: *P.Vind.Tand.* 2 (TM 15456)[73]

a. Situational context
Genre: Petition;[74] Content: The papyrus contains a complaint from the former exegetes of Heracleopolis to the prefect of Egypt. The exegetes report that he was abused by a group of people, including a certain Theodosius mentioned in the papyrus. Other individuals are also mentioned, though their relationship to the author of the petition is unclear. The papyrus is a draft; [75] Participants: interaction between officials; Setting: public; Date and place: 238-244 CE, Egypt, Antinoopolis.

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71 See Bowersock 1969, 50-8.

72 Luiselli 1999, 166-78.

73 For an analysis of this papyrus see Sijpesteijn, Worp 1976, 5-12.

74 See Mascellari 2021, 1107 fn. 5 discussing whether this document should be classified as a petition.

75 See Luiselli 1999, 126 fn. 1. With regard to the phenomenon of self-correction and textual-revision in Greek documentary papyri as evidence for awareness of style among

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b. Language
The language of the papyrus displays elements of rhetorical style. For instance, it features the sequence πέπονθά τε καὶ παρ' ἕκα[σ]τα πάσχω (l. 9), the use of the term ἱκετηρία (l. 4) in place of the more common βιβλίδιον, which is used at l. 8, and signs of lexical variation, with alternating terms like ἱκετηρία, βιβλίδιον, and βιβλίον (l. 15). Additionally, it includes words not commonly attested in papyri, such as ἑταιρία ('association') and συγγενεία ('kinship') at l. 10, and μελλησμός ('procrastination') at l. 22. Moreover, it is noteworthy that θᾶττον appears in a sequence (lines 5-6: τὴν σὴν ἀγχίνοιαν θᾶττον κατανοήματος) which presents two unusual words: ἀγχίνοια ('sagacity'), very rare in documentary papyri, followed by κατανόημα ('contrivance'), which does not find any other attestation in documentary papyri. Finally, the stylistic ambition of the text is reflected in textual alterations,[76] such as corrections of misspellings or stylistic modifications, showing concern for language and style.[77] The use of purist items aligns well with this overall concern for stylistic precision.

c. Functional relationship between a) and b)
Language choices reflect the official context of the text. The use of a purist term is associated with distinct stylistic ambitions and with the pompous, reverential language likely employed by the author to present himself as a respectable figure before the prefect, in contrast to those he is accusing.

While the two papyri (*P.Oxy.* XVII 2104 and *P.Vind.Tand.* 2) analysed above show the use of purist items correlated with a more formal setting expressed either by the genre (imperial letter) or by a clear stylistic ambition (petition), the following two papyri represent more interesting cases since they are private letters.

3) Private letters

Private letters occupy a privileged position in the context of stylisation because they show more stylistic creativity than other types of texts, although, as K. Bentein reminds us in the introduction to this volume, "one should not underestimate the extent to which particular

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the educated elite in Egypt, see Luiselli 2010, and specifically pp. 76 and 89 with regard to this petition. See also Mascellari 2021, 32-4, more generally on draft copies.

76   More general on this see Luiselli 2010.

77   See Luiselli 1999, 126 with a list of corrections.

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communicative choices were made unconsciously, through lack of understanding of one or more pragmatic paradigms". However, such a mark of Atticising style as θᾶττον was rare outside of literary usage. In this respect, it is likely a conscious choice, indicating the author's deliberate engagement with linguistic features for the purpose of stylisation. The other attestations in private letters feature τάχιον (30 cases). These letters, dated between the first and the fourth century CE, show a great variety of registers.[78] Some of them present stylistic ambition, for instance, the second/third-century private letter *P.Haun.* II 16, 13 (TM 26598), which shows a careful use of words and classicising forms such as ῆττον and μέχρι. Nevertheless, the form used here is τάχιον. The very restricted presence of θᾶττον in letters confirms that it saw very limited reintegration into the living language and suggests that its use reflects a conscious selection of Atticising material. In the first case presented below, the letter is written by a gymnasiarch to his family members. The second is a letter written by an official, whose first language is Latin, to another official.

3.1) Private letter: *P.Tebt.* II 451 (TM 31370)[79]

Ἥρων Λιβελαρίωι τῶι [τιμ(ιωτάτωι) καὶ Ἡρακλείαι]
τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς πλεῖστα [χαίρειν.   ]
προαιρέσεως ἡμὴν παρεμ[φερούσης   ]
ἄχρι οὗ ὁ ἀγαθὸς Λουκρῆτις παραγέν[ηται καὶ ἐνέγκῃ?]
ἐκ τῶν ἐπισταλέντων μοι ἀπο[χῶν τὰ ἀντίγραφα?]   5
κεχρονισμένα εἰς Μεσορὴ δ. καὶ [μὴ ἄλλως ποιή-]
σῃς ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ μήτε δι[+/-2]ε[   ]
ὑπολαβεῖν τὸν Λουκρήτιν αναγ[   ]
πάντος τρόπου ἀπόπεμ[ψο]ν τὸν τ[ε λόγον τῶν ἐπι-]
μηνίων θᾶττον ἵνα αὐ[τὸν διαπέμψῃ τὰ]   10
γράμματα ἄμα Πρωτάρχῳ κ[αὶ? εἰς Ἀλεξάν-]
δρειαν. ἤδη γὰρ προθύρω[μα   ]
πρὸ τῆς σῆς ἐξόδου ἀκο[λούθως   δια-]
πέμψασθ(ε) πρὸ ́ς ́ ἐμὲ Σαραπί[ωνα   ]
ἵνα ἔλθωσι ἐντὸς τοῦ Φα[   ]   15
α. διεπεμψάμην σοι τε[   ]
θα φέρων Γέτα τῷ καὶ Εὐδαί[μονι.   μὴ]
λοιπίσθω δὲ ἡ γ[λυ]κυτάτη σ[ύμβιός μου   ]
νέχθαι ὅσον δε[   ]

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78 Luiselli 1999, 123-4.

79 The text is taken from Quenouille 2015. For an analysis of this papyrus, see Quenouille 2015, 127-40.

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εἰσὶν σχεδὸν ἐ[   ]   20
λίνους, σουδάριν [σου-]
δάριν Εὐδημω[   ]
Ἡρωνείνῳ [κο-]
λοβίων ζεῦγ[ος   εἰς δα-]
πάνην (δραχμὰς) ρ̄, ἐγὼ [   ]   25
τα καὶ τῶν εσ[κηρια-]
πτάρια σου εὐ[   ]
Μυρισμὸς. ἀσπ[άζου   ]
ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ τὸν[τὴς γλυκυ-]
τάτης θυγατ[ρὸς μου.   ἀσπά-]   30
ζομαι καὶ [κατ’ ὄ-]
ν[ο]μα καὶ [   ]
μου Θιντι[θιῶτα   ]
καὶ Πρωτα[ρχ   ]
Διογένην [   ]   35
καὶ Μῶρον [   ]
κατ’ ὄνομα [   ]
[ ] [ ] [   ]
ἐρρῶσθαι σε | ὑμᾶς εὔχομαι.   39+x

Heron to Liberalius, the [most revered, and Heraclea,]
many [greetings] to the brothers and sisters.
Through the goodwill shown to us, [
until the good Lucretis arrives [and gives me
and brings me the copies of the [receipts sent to me,]
dated the 4th of Mesore. And [do nothing else?]
in Alexandria, nor[
to suppose that Lucretis [
In any case, send the [statement?]
of the month's money as soon as possible, that he may send [up the]
Letters together with Protarchus and [and? to]
Alexandria. For the porch was already [
before your departure according to [
Send to me Sarapion [
so that they may come by the xxth Pha[- month name
To you I have sent [
bringing Geta, who is also called Eudai[mon
But it shall (not?) grieve (my) sweetest [wife?...
carried so much but [
they are almost [
linen [ ], a sweat cloth [
a sweatcloth (to?) Eudemon[
the Heroneinos [
x pair of underjackets [as]

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issue 100 drachmas. I [
And from the [
Your wax container [the
Myrismos. Greetings (?) [
from me to the [family name
[of [my] sweetest daughter?
I also greet [
by name and [
my (kinship name?) Thinti[thius
and Protarchus [
Diogenes [
and Moros [
by name [
... [
I wish you that you stay healthy.[80]

This letter is written by Heron, a gymnasiarch, to his brother Liberalius and his sister Heraclea. The text is fragmentary and incomplete with the ends of lines being lost.

a. Situational context
Genre: Private letter. Content: The letter was written by Heron to his siblings, providing them, especially his brother Liberalius, with instructions on how to perform certain tasks. Since the right half of the lines is missing, these instructions are obscure and incomplete. However, they reference some receipts that a certain Lucretis is to bring to Heron, as well as to whom the report for the month's money should be sent. Liberalius is then instructed to send a message to a certain Serapion. The letter also mentions an object sent by Heron to his brother, followed by a list of clothes and other items. It remains unclear whether these items are for personal or commercial use, or perhaps connected to the author's role as a gymnasiarch.[81] There are other letters written by the same author (*P.Tebt.Quen.* 22 and 23, and *P.Tebt.* II 419, which also report instructions that Heron sends to a number of people to perform various tasks).[82] Setting: private; Date and place: Tebtynis, end of second/beginning of third century CE.

b. Language
The language of the papyrus is quite varied, without any indication of 'non-standard' features. Instead, it retains the use of

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80 This translation was made on the basis of the translation provided by Quenouille 2015.

81 See Quenouille 2015, 138-9.

82 For an analysis of these papyri see Quenouille 2012, 156-66.

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the second aorist ὑπολαβεῖν. The expression ἄχρι οὗ also appears in *P.Tebt.Quen.* 22, 4 and *P.Tebt.* II 419, 13-15. This expression seems to be quite common in the Roman and Byzantine periods. However, the absence of the final sigma might indicate a level of sophistication, as the form ἄχρις became more common in Postclassical Greek, while ἄχρι was considered more 'correct' (see Phrynichus' *Eclogae* 6 Μέχρις καὶ ἄχρις σὺν τῷ σ ἀδόκιμα· μέχρι δὲ καὶ ἄχρι λέγε). The letter also contains some uncommon forms in papyri, such as the aorist imperative ἀπόπεμ[ψο]ν, which is rare in documentary papyri and is found only in *P.Mil.Vogl.* IV 219, 4. Additionally, there is a series of objects mentioned that are very rare or unattested elsewhere in papyri, including κηριαπτάρια (ll. 26-27), which appears here for the first time, σουδάριν, a Latin loanword also rarely attested in papyri, and προθύρωμα, which has only one other known occurrence.[83]

c. Functional relationship between a) and b)

Unlike the letter analysed below, for which we have no further evidence, Heron is the author of other letters (*P.Tebt. Quen.* 22 and 23, and *P.Tebt.* II 419). These letters provide insight into the author's style and help us determine whether the presence of a purist trait is incidental or reflective of Heron's overall linguistic style. The language of these other letters is also varied. As mentioned, two of them include the expression ἄχρι οὗ. Additionally, they feature forms common in Postclassical Greek. For instance, in *P.Tebt.Quen.* 22, we find a -μι verb conjugated according to -όω verbs at l. 4 παραδοῖς (for παραδῷς).[84] Similarly to our papyrus, *P.Tebt. Quen.* 23 contains forms that are uncommon in documentary papyri, such as πάντα ποίησον, which appears in only one other documentary papyrus, instead of the more typical πᾶν ποίησον or πᾶν οὖν ποίησον. It also includes the uncommon construction ἀναπέμψῃς διά. However, in other cases, as in *P.Tebt.Quen.* 22, the author uses much more common expressions, such as ὡς ἐνετιλάμην σοι (l. 11) and μὴ ἀμελήσῃς (ll. 12-13).[85] The form θᾶττον is the only purist feature used in all the letters. This author seems to have a distinctive style, at times following the conventions of letter writing, while at other times introducing innovations. His use of a purist feature in a context that does not adhere to traditional rules of

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83 For an analysis of these words, see Quenouille 2015, 136-9.

84 See Quenouille 2012, 156.

85 On the widespread use of these expressions for orders in private letters, see Tibiletti 1979, 70-3.

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sophistication – despite the presence of some features from the high register – and the use of this feature in a private setting where formal language is not expected, may be a hallmark of his style, particularly because such a purist trait was an explicit archaising element possibly functioning as a kind of register shibboleth. Additionally, his position as a gymnasiarch may explain his more creative approach, one that is less bound by conventional norms. In this context, the use of a purist element could serve as a form of stylisation likely reflecting his social status. The content of the letters, which consistently involve tasks or orders he gives to others, may have been another reason to use the language as a way to reinforce his status.

The following letter presents a completely different situation.

3.2) Private Letter: *P.Oxy.* I 122 (TM 31348 = *P.Lond.* III 768 descr.)[86]

While in the previous case, the private letter was addressed to family members, here, the letter is sent from an official to the prefect of a legion.[87]

[. . . . . .]ς Γαιανός· χρησ[τ]έ μου
[ἀδελφ]ὲ Ἀγήνωρ, χαῖρε.
[τὰ πα]ρὰ σοῦ κομισθέντα μοι
[περὶ τὴ]ν τῶν Κρονίων ἡμέραν
 [εὐθ]έως ἔλαβον· πεπόμφειν   5
δ’ ἂν αὐτὸς θᾶττον πρὸς σὲ εἰ παρ-
ῆσάν μ[οι] πλείονες στρατιῶτοι,
ἀλλ’ Ἐπ[. . .]. ς ὑπέστρεφεν, ἡ-
μεῖ[ς] δὲ ἀγρεύειν τῶν θηρίων
δυνά[με]θα οὐδὲ ἕν. ἐπέμψαμεν   10
δέ σοι κ[. . . . . .]ωγ[.]ου ἀπὸ αειλων
ᾧ χρή[σ. . . .]ω[. ἐρ]ρῶσθαί σε,
                κύριέ μου ἀδελφέ,
                πολλοῖς χρόνοις
                καὶ προκόπτειν εὔχομαι.   15

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86 I reproduced the text as reported in Grenfell, Hunt 1898. There are a few divergences with the text reported on papyri.info: e.g. ll. 2 and 13 ἄδελφε vs ἀδελφὲ and ll. 5 and 12 ἡδέως × 2, in place of εὐθέως in Grenfell and Hunt (l. 5) who do not integrate in the second case (l. 12).

87 Although the concept of 'private' applied to a letter written by an official to another official might not be exact, I follow the categorisation proposed by Stolk 2021, 307 and mentioned above at § 2.1. See also Grenfell, Hunt 1898 mentioning the "familiar tone" of the letter, and Sarri 2018, 176-81, with examples of private letters between officials.

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On the *verso*
[.........]ιω Ἀγήνορι ἐπάρχῳ

From […] Gaianus. Greeting, my good brother Agenor! I received at once about the day of the Saturnalia what you dispatched to me. I should have sent to you myself more quickly if I had had more soldiers with me; but […] went back and we cannot catch a single animal. I send for your use […] I pray, my dear brother, for your lasting health and prosperity.[88]
[…] To the prefect Agenor

Gaianus, a high-ranking official, writes this letter to Agenor, a prefect of a legion. According to Luiselli, an examination of the script shows that the body of the letter was written by a scribe and Gaianus added the farewell.[89] The problem, in this case, is to determine to what extent Gaianus was responsible for the style and linguistic features of the letter.

a.   Situational context
      Genre: Private letter; Content: A private letter from Gaianus to the prefect Agenor, in which he confirms the receipt of what the addressee had sent and apologises for not being able to catch the wild animals he had requested due to the small number of soldiers with him; People: interaction between officials. As B.P. Grenfell and A.S. Hunt suggest,[90] Gaianus' high rank is indicated by the placement of his name before that of Agenor, by the familiar tone of his remarks, and by the mention of the soldiers under his command; Setting: private; Date and place: 238-244 CE, Egypt, Oxyrhynchus.

b.   Language
      In terms of language, Luiselli identified a mixture of high- and low-register features which are classified as follows:[91]
      High-register features: breathings used three times; retention of ἄν in an unreal apodosis in the indicative (5-6) – although the absence of ἄν was also quite common in classical as much as in Atticising authors;[92] the word Κρόνια to render Latin Saturnalia; the use of ἔλαβον in place of ἔλαβα. However, as Luiselli mentioned, these elements can be interpreted in two ways. It is possible that here Gaianus is making an effort to avoid low

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88   Transl. Grenfell, Hunt 1898.

89   Luiselli 1999, 228. More generally on this phenomenon, see Sarri 2018, 126-9.

90   Grenfell, Hunt 1898.

91   Luiselli 1999, 228-9.

92   See la Roi 2022b discussing the conditions for the modal particle to appear and not appear in apodoses of counterfactual conditions.

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register features (e.g. ἔλαβα), to conform to classicising style (with the retention of ἄν in an unreal apodosis in the indicative, which was probably felt as a sign of sofistication), and to refine his lexicon (with the use of Κρόνια in place of Σατορνάλια, the latter attested in Arr. *Epict.* 1.25.8 and in the second-century papyrus *P.Fay.* 119.28). Alternatively, he may have just followed his normal usage as ἔλαβον was still common in an unmarked register,[93] and Κρόνια, found in Latin-Greek bilingual glossaries, could have been an "automatised linguistic act".[94] However, it seems to me that these elements, along with the presence of θᾶττον, could indicate an attempt to elevate the register.

Low-register features: the morphological mistake στρατιῶτοι (l. 7) in place of στρατιῶται; the omission of the augment in the pluperf. πεπόμφειν – however, the augment is present in other secondary tenses, see ll. 5, 8 and 10;[95] the presence of an unreal apodosis with the pluperfect (which is explained as a possible Latinism πεπόμφειν ἂν = *misissem*);[96] the possible interference between Greek and Latin syntax in the position of οὐδὲ ἕν, which far from the partitive genitive does not appear in his natural position in Greek (ll. 8-10).[97] Regarding the morphological mistake, it could be a scribe's slip, as it would be difficult to reconcile such a basic error with the care the author of the papyrus demonstrated in other aspects. Concerning the other features, the absence of the augment in the pluperfect was a widespread and acceptable postclassical feature, while the syntactic Latinisms could have been unconscious 'mistakes' committed by Gaianus. As the editors have pointed out, both Gaianus and the scribe are native speakers of Latin, which would explain the influence of Latin, also revealed by the shapes of the letters.[98] In this context, the use of a stylistically marked element such as θᾶττον stands out as an explicit mark of classicising style. The fact that this is the only purist marker – given that the author could have opted for the more archaic ending -η instead of -ειν for the pluperfect –[99]

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93   The form ἔλαβον is still widely attested in papyri between the second and the third century CE.

94   See Luiselli 1999, 229.

95   Luiselli 1999, 229 takes δυνάμεθα as an unaugmented imperfect. Here I follow Grenfell and Hunt and take it as a historical present.

96   See Blass, Debrunner, Rehkopf 1976, § 360. However, see la Roi 2022a discussing the use of the pluperfect indicative in Ancient Greek.

97   For a discussion of this see Luiselli 1999, 230 ff.

98   Grenfell, Hunt 1898, 189.

99   Moeris' Atticist lexicon η 3 ᾔδη Ἀττικοί· ᾔδειν Ἕλληνες.

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seems to suggest that the choice of θᾶττον over the more common τάχιον (which was still perfectly acceptable and the more obvious choice) was a deliberate attempt to signal sophistication, functioning as a register shibboleth. A speaker less confident in Greek might have chosen this feature as a clear mark of refinement, compensating for other elements that reveal an imperfect command of Greek (see the items listed above as low-register features). The use of this element aligns well with the other high-register features identified above, which, however, do not carry the same immediate significance as θᾶττον, which is the most marked and evident feature among less evident features belonging to the same register. In his attempt to elevate the style of the letter, the author of the papyrus may have intentionally used this obvious purist element to demonstrate erudition and perhaps to please his addressee.

In this respect, this papyrus shows that the use of highly purist words in antiquity was not necessarily associated with official contexts or with a univocal sophisticated language, but could have been used in more variegated context. Forms with a very obvious purist profile, such as θᾶττον, were probably also used by speakers who did not have a perfect command of the Greek language as safe markers to upgrade the register.

c.   Functional relationship between a) and b)

The use of θᾶττον appears in different types of texts that show more or less adherence to purist features and generally to high register conventions. This suggests that purist features became register markers, probably used as a form of stylisation. However, the effects of purist intervention on epistolary communication were variable and may have depended on various factors: the sender, the addressee, the context, etc. Yet, the fact that most of the time we do not have multiple letters written by the same person, as in this case, makes it difficult to determine whether the purist intervention is influenced by an external factor (such as the addressee) or simply reflects the author's typical linguistic behavior, as seen in the previous case. The text of this private letter shows evidence of linguistic sophistication in the use of θᾶττον. In this case, the roles of Gaianus and the addressee may have influenced the choice of certain register features. By using more sophisticated language, Gaianus may have intended to signal his high-ranking official status, as already indicated by the placement of his name before that of Agenor. Moreover, we cannot exclude that the choice of a highly purist form might have been due to the fact that Gaianus is a Latin speaker. The author of the letter does not seem to have a perfect command of Greek and the different registers and he probably

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used what he learned in school for his everyday communication. This, for instance, would also explain the very didactic use of spirits, which is quite unusual in documentary papyri. This raises another question, which will not be discussed in this context, concerning the role of foreigners in the reproduction of Atticising Greek. In a context in which acceptance in the community of educated speakers was based on the ability to reproduce a high register Greek, the adoption of purist features in the language of non-native speakers may have been an attempt to stylise their language in accordance with the demands of the Greek elite, and in this respect, purist elements such as θᾶττον may have served as 'salient pillars' providing anchors to an Atticising register.

4   Conclusion

Far from being an exhaustive study, this paper, with the analysis of a single case study, aimed to problematise the study of Atticism exclusively as a literary phenomenon and to examine the actual impact of purist tendencies on language use. In this respect, the analysis of cases of stylisation in different types of sources, and especially in the case of private letters, where the private setting would not give rise to expectations of purist intervention, gives us a basis on which to build further research and a more systematic investigation of Atticist features in the private epistolary production – with particular care for non-Greek native speakers. Thus, this paper was meant to raise a few points: First, the choice of Atticising features does not depend exclusively on the context of production but may be due to other factors – e.g. the role of the author, the addressee, etc. – and may reveal an attempt at stylistic ambition. Second, purist elements may be accompanied by features of common Greek, and, in this case, they function as a kind of register shibboleth, anchoring to a particular register. In this respect, they may be useful for those who do not have a perfect command of the Greek language because they are not native speakers. This approach gives us a different perspective from which to look at the prescriptions found in the Atticist lexica and to see what effect they had on language usage, becoming conscious signs of education that can be used for stylistic purposes. Moreover, this approach is functional for looking at Atticism from a broader perspective, not only as a phenomenon that affected high literary production but also as a phenomenon that had a real influence on the kind of changes from above – intended as conscious choices – that were used as instruments of stylisation at different points of the register continuum.

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Seeing the (Smaller and) Bigger Frame: Framing Late Antique Egyptian Writers and Documents Through Bilingual and Biscriptal Choices

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Abstract   The paper uses framing theory to explore the role of register in the occurrence of bilingual and biscriptal phenomena in different parts of late antique and early Islamic documentary papyri (fourth-eighth c. AD) with Greek, Latin, Coptic, and Arabic. Framing proves relevant on both the (con)textual and sociohistorical levels, especially at the edges of texts across registers, while 'body' variation is limited to more formal texts. Formulaicity is crucial, as changes pertain to fixed phrases that mark the structure of the document, often supported by (palaeo)graphic changes. Variation also serves culturally shaped symbolic functions (group membership, prestige, legal validity), building a multilayered message.

Keywords   Bilingualism. Register. Framing. Papyrology. Late antiquity.

Summary   1 Introduction. – 2 Bilingual and Biscriptal Phenomena in Letters. – 2.1 Greek-Latin. – 2.2 Greek-Coptic. – 2.3 Coptic/Latin-Arabic. – 3 Comparison Between Biscriptal and Bilingual Phenomena in Letters and Other Documents. – 4 Conclusions and Further Research.

1   Introduction

During late antiquity, the amount of surviving Latin papyri from Egypt decreases, while the language (or even only the script) occupies a marginal, stereotyped role restricted to legal practices.[1] While Greek, the main language of documentation for centuries, remains popular, Coptic first makes its appearance in private, less official documents, and mainly in monastic milieus. It becomes more widely used and permeates a greater number of registers, including higher ones, from the sixth century onwards.[2] Documentary Coptic endures the Arabic conquest of 642 AD, as the language and writing of the conquerors takes hold no sooner than the eighth to ninth century. Despite the long-standing tradition of prioritising the study of documents purely written in a single language, primarily the Greek one, it is now understood that bilingualism, digraphia, and resulting linguistic and writing occurrences were present in the vibrant written culture of late antique Egypt.

In this linguistic melting pot, occurrences pointing to languages and writing systems in contact, such as code-switching, transliterating or script-mixing, could, contrary to modern standards, even penetrate the writing of formal and legal texts penned by trained professionals. In many documents, scribes employ bilingual and biscriptal strategies (e.g. the routine repetition of amounts in Greek and Coptic), proving that a certain degree of instrumentalisation of bilingual speech and bilingual writing existed at the time.[3] These phenomena are significant, because they shed light on the social dynamics of different languages and their graphic representation in the multilingual environment of late antique and early Islamic Egypt. For instance, a well-disseminated scribal tradition making use of two scripts and languages is the case of Greek notarial signatures in Latin script, from the fifth to the seventh century: *di emu…* (δι᾽ ἐμοῦ…) 'through/by me…'.[4] Another example, where a change of writing style (*script-switching*) is now accompanied by a change of language (*language-* or *code-switching*), is found in Coptic contracts from the Theban area in the seventh and eighth centuries AD. From the 720s, many of the scribes drawing up these

1 Fournet 2019, 89-90; Iovine 2019.
2 Fournet 2020, 76-118; Papaconstantinou 2008, 84-6.
3 Richter 2014, 143-4.
4 Apostolakou 2020; Diethart, Worp 1986.

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documents tend to use Greek formulaic language and writing in their opening invocation formulae, as well as their closing signatures;[5] these changes may become even more pronounced by complementary palaeographic deviations (e.g. increased spacing or indentation). As far as inter-writer variation within the same text goes, one may also include official subscriptions in a different language and script, such as the Latin additions *legi* 'I read', *recognoui* 'I acknowledged' or *signaui* 'I signed' at the end of otherwise Greek documents, under this category. Another clearly visible frame is created by Greek-Arabic protocols prewritten on the upper part of the document (e.g. in the Qurra archive); these are independent from the main text,[6] but operate the symbolic function of signalling Arabic authority.

There are a few points that these documents and the bilingual and/or biscriptal phenomena they host have in common. To begin with, they appear in highly formulaic documents, yet formulaicity does not seem to hinder their occurrence. On the contrary, in some cases (e.g. the official Latin subscriptions or the transliterated *tabellio* signatures), we could go as far as saying that their different language or writing is part of the formula. In general, it could be said that especially contracts seem to give space to 'non-standard' language and script choices, reminiscing Stolk's observation on the high frequency of 'non-standard' orthographic choices in contracts, especially in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods.[7] More importantly, they all appear either in the opening or closing parts of the text (which are themselves typically formulaic), thus serving a framing function to the document, which is often aided by changes in layout. This means that non-standard language and script combinations delineate and signal the beginning and ending of the text, while they also mark its official character by following conventions and requirements such as the inclusion of the invocation formula or the signature of the scribe. A framing approach helps to unlock not only immediately textual and practical considerations (*textual framings*), but also gain access to sociolinguistic interpretations (*contextual framings*),[8] as it brings to light different functional values attached to each linguistic or graphic variety (e.g. the use of Latin as the language and writing of the Roman law).

Frames are 'definitions of a situation' that interlocutors establish in interaction,[9] characterised by flexibility and intertextuality, as they are shaped dynamically and on the basis of prior interactions.

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5 Cromwell 2017, 172; 2018, 262-8; 2020, 136-8.

6 In framing theory terms, these protocols act as "material that forms a 'threshold' of the main text", and may be listed under what Wolf 2006, 19-20 calls *paratextual framings*.

7 Stolk 2020, 311-12.

8 On different types of framings in literature and other media, see Wolf 2006, 12-21.

9 Goffman 1974, 10.

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As framing theory was introduced to explain everyday communication and its multilayered messages,[10] it would be interesting to explore its possibilities by extending it to everyday documents including those in lower registers, and specifically to private letters. Furthermore, researchers such as Gumperz, have acknowledged the relevance of code-switching to the framing of the message; according to the latter, it can be a 'contextualisation cue', i.e. a "verbal sign which, when processed in co-occurrence with symbolic grammatical and lexical signs, serves to construct the contextual ground for situated interpretation and thereby affects how constituent messages are understood".[11] By extending such observations to writing, the next step is to examine the contribution of such alternations in language and writing to the shaping of meaning in private letters. Viewing variation in language and script choice through the lens of framing theory has the potential to further elucidate meaning-making on two levels: first, these choices, often appearing, as it seems, in the opening and closing parts of documents, can frame and indicate specific communicative acts and registers; moreover, this approach provides insights into the wider, sociohistorical/cultural frame in which this variation and its association to certain communicative types are formed, such as the social status of different languages and scripts, and the evoked identities of the (writing) subject.[12]

While several studies[13] have examined bilingual and biscriptal at-

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10 Gordon 2015, 330.

11 Gumperz 2015, 315-16.

12 This may or may not coincide with the 'initiator' (for example, the sender of a letter or the initiating contracting party) of the document, even (though somewhat less likely) in private letters, due to the wide use of scribes or literate individuals writing on behalf of initiators in Egypt (for different types of writing agents, see Ast 2015; on the impact of scribal intervention on the language of private letters, see Halla-aho 2017).

13 It is true that there are a few works on bilingual and biscriptal phenomena which focus on letters. To mention a few, Choat 2010 looks into early Coptic epistolography, and the influence of Greek and Demotic on its formulaic language, as well as bilingual late antique monastic letters (Choat 2017). A recent contribution by Fendel 2022 deals with Coptic syntactic interference in Greek letters, while Halla-aho 2013 examines Greek influence on the syntax, lexis, and phraseology of Latin letters in Roman Egypt. There are works concentrating on bilingual archives containing letters, such as those of Adams 2003, 593-7 and Nachtergaele 2015 on code alternation in the Claudius Tiberianus archive. Oréal 2017 explores "the pragmatics of code-switching" through the use of Greek particles in Coptic letters from Kellis. When it comes to ancient epistolographic code-switching and Greek-Latin contact beyond Egyptian sources, it is worth referring to studies on Cicero's bilingual correspondence, such as those of Elder, Mullen 2019 or Swain 2002. In the first work, we also find a section on script-switching, and the implications of its relationship to code-switching (Elder, Mullen 2019, 120-5). A closer example to the purposes of the present study is the one of Pezzella 2022, who performs a sociolinguistic and palaeographic analysis to explore the functions and social meaning of code-switching in the 'letters of Theon' and their contemporary epistles from Oxyrhynchus. She mentions the symbolic use of Latin in 'stereotyped and structural sections', such as the address, as

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titudes in both less and more formal papyri, comparing the influence of register on their occurrence and position remains underexplored. Do certain registers allow for more or fewer such phenomena or affect their type? Or do we find the same patterns across registers? To help bridge this gap and respond to similar questions, after summarising the sociolinguistic reality of fourth- to eighth-century Egypt, as well as basic concepts of framing theory (§ 1), this paper is divided into two main parts: The first and main one (§ 2) explores the framing and other functions of language- and script-switches in letters, taking their more or less official character into account. The combinations of languages and scripts/writing styles examined are Greek-Latin (§ 2.1), Greek-Coptic (§ 2.2), and Coptic/Latin-Arabic (§ 2.3), in an attempt to bring together different late antique documents that are traditionally examined separately. The second section (§ 3) seeks to better understand this framing role of opening and closing switches by comparing them in terms of functions and motivations to changes taking place in other documents (primarily, but not only, contracts), including their body.[14] Ultimately, this study attempts to tackle the question of whether structural organisation in relation to text type, register, and communicative goal plays a role in the type, frequency or meaning of the bilingual and biscriptal phenomena we meet in papyrological sources. Both parts use examples of late antique and early Islamic documentary papyri using more than one language or writing styles, with assigned dating from the fourth to the eighth century AD. The limited sample is chosen with the criterion and objective of discussing different functions of framing in language- and script-switches, and is organised roughly chronologically. Corrections of such occurrences are added when relevant, as they reflect metalinguistic considerations of the writing subject, and present the inclusion or exclusion of such changes as a conscious choice. This approach is meant to cover overall contribution to sense-making on the two levels described above: a) the immediate, textual and contextual frame of the document (including register, communicative goals, linguistic and graphic variation), and b) the wider sociohistorical frame coding and decoding these meanings. The paper is completed by concluding remarks and suggestions for future research (§ 4).

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well as the addition of literary quotes in openings and closings, alluding to the fact that the position of switches can be relevant to their interpretation.

14 As 'body' I define the text following the opening and preceding the closing section of the document, which typically preserves the core message.

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2 Bilingual and Biscriptal Phenomena in Letters

Although, for the objectives of this paper, private epistolography is used in opposition to documents that are associated with higher registers, it should be emphasised that, just as other text types, not all letters fall under one and the same register category. As Bentein[15] shows, even texts that would *a priori* be considered as belonging to the same register may vary significantly on different linguistic levels; he hence proposes to rather talk about a 'register continuum'. Zooming in, Halla-aho[16] observes that variation can be found within the same letter or even within the same level of language organisation. From the viewpoint of orthographic errors, Stolk[17] also argues against obscuring register variation in letters by holistically assigning them a 'low' register. It therefore seems imperative to be cautious with generalisations and take multiple factors into account while analysing letters, such as linguistic and graphic characteristics, communicative goal, and the relationship of participants. Framing is a good method for preventing generalisations and resisting stereotyped ideas on register, as one of its central ideas is that it constitutes a dynamic process.

Below I discuss examples of late antique letters where different functions of code- and script-switching are evident. For a very rough estimate, a quick search on Trismegistos[18] shows that, from a total of 9952 letters dating to the period from the fourth to the eighth centuries AD, 278 (2.8%) are bilingual. The majority (206 or 2.1% of all letters) are Coptic/Greek, followed by Arabic/Greek (43/0.4%), and, finally, Greek/Latin (29/0.3%). Awaiting an extensive quantitative study on late antique and early Islamic bilingual (and/or biscriptal) letters, the aim of the present paper is to qualitatively examine a limited number of representative case studies of primarily Greek-Latin and Coptic-Greek texts, with the addition of some involving Arabic, which are traditionally examined separately, while briefly summarising previous discussions. Their switches are viewed keeping framing theory in mind, with simultaneous comments on relevant graphic aspects.

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15 Bentein 2015.

16 Halla-aho 2010, 172.

17 Stolk 2020, 313.

18 The database can be accessed at `https://www.trismegistos.org/`.

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2.1 Greek-Latin

In the fourth and fifth century, we still find interchanges between Greek and Latin, as happened previously during the Roman period. As perhaps expected in bilingual epistolography, some of the changes pertain to greetings and salutations. Adams[19] discusses code-switching in subscriptions of letters and calls it a 'special case'. After mentioning the fact that it is conceivable that the sender uses the subscription to add a personal touch, he lists a number of possible explanations for the switch: the fact that the sender may have been illiterate in one language or might have taken the addressee's competence into account; another possibility would have to do with limitations posed by the scribe's linguistic knowledge and literacy. Adams delves deeper with the aid of three fourth-century letters, which prove that these interpretations are inadequate: *P.Abinn.* 16 (Philadelphia?, 346-351), *P.Oxy.* LV 3793 (Oxyrhynchus, 340), *P.Mert.* III 115 (uncertain provenance, early fourth century). Concerning the Latin greeting in one of these cases (*P.Abinn.* 16), which seems to be written by the same hand as the Greek text, the sender and addressee seem to be familiar with both Greek and Latin, as is additionally supported by our knowledge from the Abinnaeus archive. The same holds for *P.Mert.* III 115, where we find the addition of a Latin final greeting. This is an unexpected language choice by the writer (perhaps the sender), who does not seem to know Latin very well. Judging by the presence and quality of the Greek language in the rest of the letter, we would expect Greek to be the most convenient option for both sender and addressee. In *P.Oxy.* LV 3793, the editor's 'easy' interpretation that the correspondents were soldiers and should therefore communicate in Latin does not explain why, contrary to the Latin subscription, the rest of the letter is in Greek. Adams concludes that the reasons for switching to Latin in subscriptions should be sought in two more plausible scenarios; first, the acknowledgment of the shared bilingual identity and consequent group membership of the correspondents (which could also apply to military settings); second, code-switching may be used as "an act of divergence, that is a deliberate and symbolic departure from the preferred language of the addressee", as an expression of identity or display of power.[20] We could summarise the motivations proposed by saying that code-switching is employed as a way of framing individuals as partakers of the social connotations attached to the language and writing they use. This code-switch, due to its final position and contrast with the preceding text, becomes a marked choice[21] with symbolic value.

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[19] Adams 2003, 396-9.

[20] Adams 2003, 399.

[21] For code-switching as a marked choice (social indexical code-switching), see Myers-Scotton 1993; 1998.

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Epistolary greetings and salutations are indeed a 'special case', as the discussion of their functions can go even further. Blumell[22] re-dates three Oxyrhynchite letters (*P.Oxy.* XVIII 2193; 2194; *P.Köln* IV 200) that belong to the so-called dossier of Theon to the late fourth or early fifth century. Pezzella[23] conducts a sociolinguistic study on the same corpus, adding a number of coeval letters from the area, while also paying attention to palaeography. The letters come from a Christian environment, and are possibly written by the same scribe, who seems to be biliterate, trained in Greek and Latin. They all have the same type of address in Latin on the back, with the structure *red-de serbo dei tempore*[24] followed by the name of the addressee in the dative. The letter *P.Köln* IV 200 is additionally completed by a Latin salutation, which also establishes a Christian context (10: *vale apud deum* 'be well with God'). As the upper part of the papyrus is lost, we cannot be certain if there was any Latin phrase in the opening of the text. The other two letters, however, begin with Christian literary quotes[25] in poorly formed Latin, which Blumell[26] identified as parts from a Latin translation of the *Acta Apollonii* (25). Theon and his addressees must have belonged to a Christian circle with some knowledge of Latin, which at the same time gave them a Romanised identity. The effect of adding Latin excerpts becomes more significant considering the fact that the communicative goal of the sender is a request, which is reinforced by invoking the Christian identity of the sender, as well as reminding him of his mortality and subjectivity to divine judgement.[27] As Pezzella notices, the scribe clearly separates these quotations from the central message, and adds three oblique strokes marking their end.[28] By borrowing this literary[29] graphic device, further highlighting the position of the quote

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22 Blumell 2008.

23 Pezzella 2022.

24 The word-for-word translation would be 'deliver to the servant of God in time', but Sijpesteijn 1994 suggests that *tempore* may refer to *serbo dei*, expressing a temporal restriction. According to this assumption, the translation would be 'in this life on earth/ for the time being servant of God', creating hope for a better position in the afterlife.

25 *P.Oxy.* XVIII 2193, 1-3: *Una mortis condidit | deus lues autem com* (l. cum) | *m*[o]*rtis fieri* 'God ordained one death, in the moment of death they dissolve'. *P.Oxy.* XVIII 2194, 1-5: [±12]. [...]. [±22 | ±15]*os et probatos et inperato|rum* (l. imperatorum) *eṭ ṣenatorum et maximo disserto et pau|peros una mortis condidit deus, lues autem | com mortis fieri* "[... for all men(?), good] and bad, emperors and senators, the mighty, the eloquent, the poor, God ordained one death, in the moment of death they dissolve" (transl. Blumell, Wayment 2015, 587, 591).

26 Blumell 2012.

27 Blumell 2012, 73-4.

28 Pezzella 2022, 141.

29 The 'literalisation' and rhetorical character of late antique letter-writing, which was prominent during these centuries (especially the fourth), is also relevant. The

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at the beginning of the document, the digraph scribe turns it into a multilayered frame for the letters, as it makes their request more compelling by enhancing it with divine authority, while also building a shared religious and cultural identity for the correspondents. This framing is complete once Latin is added at the end and back side of the letters, fully surrounding the Greek message.[30] It could be said that both the change in language and its graphic representation contribute to raising the register of this private letter, giving it a more official and scholarly tone.

As salutations are an integral structural part of letters, the role of formulaicity should not be overlooked. Formulaic language is closely connected to register and can signal certain text types. The language of letters is considered one of the least formulaic in documentary practice, but the opening and closing sections are exceptions to this. The structural parts hosting farewell formulae can be more easily identified visually not only by different language and script choices, but also by other palaeographic variations or changes in layout that may accompany this variation. In *P.Oxy.* LXXXV 5529 (Oxyrhynchus, fourth century), a recent addition to the corpus of Greek-Latin Oxyrhynchite letters, the main text of the letter is Greek, but the author prefers Latin for the salutation of the final lines, possibly with some relevance to his official position and the military context: *opto te bene | ualere* 'I wish for your good health' (11-12). Apart from

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Latin quote could be considered as a type of an introductory *prooimion* to the letter (see Fournet 2009, 46-52).

30 These switches are reminiscent of Wenskus' *emblematic code-switching*, which, although vague (Adams 2003, 346) mainly refers to the addition of literary quotes at initial and final positions of non-literary texts (Wenskus 1998, 19). Its main function is to mark the bilingual identity of correspondents (5-6).
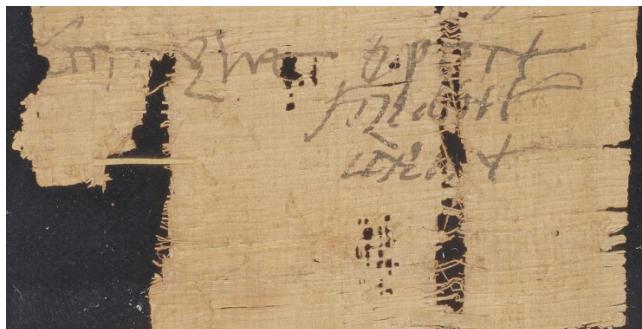
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shifting from Greek to Latin writing, in the case of line 11, within the same line, especially the final word of the farewell formula (*ualere*) graphically stands out against the Greek text preceding it, with a very cursive writing marking the end of the document [fig. 1]. It resembles other formal signatures and subscriptions found in official documents, which makes sense considering the fact that this correspondence concerns a request of one official to another.

Similarly, in the Greek *P.Mert.* III 115 (uncertain provenance, early fourth century), where the sender gives 'fatherly' advice to the addressee, the final salutation is written in Latin: *opto te | fili bene | ualeṛe* 'I wish that you are in good health, son' (28-30). The Latin writing stands out as it is more sloping compared to the Greek one [fig. 2].

It is organised in three short lines that form a square-like shape on the bottom right side of the papyrus. According to Sarri,[31] placing the final greeting right after the end of the body of the letter, often squeezed close to it, was the standard positioning of farewell formulae added by a different hand[32] in Roman times, a practice that was later adopted by senders of letters signing in their own hand [fig. 1]. In this way, valedictions functioned as signatures that, especially in official but also in private letters, authenticated the letter and prevented any later additions. A change to a language and writing that, especially in the late antique period, fewer people were familiar with, could have further supported this function, aside from

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31   Sarri 2018, 188-9.

32   Previous editors have speculated that the Latin subscription of *P.Mert.* III 115 [fig. 2] was added by a second hand, the one of the sender: *P.Mert.* III (ed. Thomas), p. 52: "presumably it was added by the sender in his own hand"; *CEL* III 224bis (ed. Cugusi), p. 278: "il mittente […] appone, probabilmente in proprio pugno, la soscrizione in latino". Due to the lack of supporting palaeographic indications, it is still possible that the same hand employed a different style for the writing of the final salutation.

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(but also relating to) the symbolic and group-membership functions of code-switching already discussed by Adams.

2.2 Greek-Coptic

Before other non-literary genres, Coptic makes its appearance in private and business letters, especially within monastic settings.[33] One of the first Coptic-Greek (sub)archives is that of Nepheros (360-370) at the Melitian monastery of Hathor (Kynopolite/Herakleopolite nome). The vast majority of its letters are Greek, but even there the Coptic background and digraph skills of the writer still come through in some cases. In one of the few Coptic ones, *P.Neph.* 15 = *SB Kopt.* II 899 (uncertain provenance, fourth century), addressed from a certain Papnoute to Nepheros, the writer makes an interesting correction of both language and writing style in his final greetings. At the bottom of the front side, he starts writing the greeting in Greek: ἀσπάζομε τοὺς... 'I greet the...' (5). These few words, where we already find an orthographic deviation (ἀσπάζομε instead of ἀσπάζομαι), indicate that his Greek language skills are imperfect. At the same time, he has now changed his Coptic hand into a cursive Greek one. He then crosses it out and continues with Coptic greetings (6) on the back side, flexibly shifting back to the main language and writing style of the letter. This is an impressive witness to the familiarity of the writing subject with both Coptic and Greek greeting formulae, as well as the fact that he eventually made the conscious choice of writing in Coptic and not in Greek. The Christian environment could be responsible for the shift, creating a spirit of 'brotherhood' between Papnoute and the religious figures he greets, who could, besides, also be better acquainted with this 'community language', as Choat calls it.[34] In this sense, the writer may have opted for Coptic because he considered it helpful in respect to the request he makes. Structure, layout,[35] and materiality seem to play a role once again, as the change to Greek appears at the end of the main message and simultaneously at the end of the front side of the papyrus sheet. This is reinforced by the fact that the writer makes a second change from Coptic to Greek on the back side, this time to write the address, possibly accommodating the preferences of the letter carrier. It seems tempting to go as far as saying that the writer had the tendency of or was used to making

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[33] Fournet 2020, 9-14, 18.

[34] Choat 2017, 21.

[35] See also Bentein 2024, who analyses the social significance of variation on multiple semiotic domains (language choice, layout, document format) in this and other texts from the Nepheros archive.

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these changes at the end or edge of the sheet. Writing Greek initial and final greetings in early Coptic letters is fairly common too, as, for example in the fourth-century ostraka *O.Douch* V 508, 547, 524, 606, 636,[36] which have a Coptic body, but open or close with Greek formulae with χαίρειν 'to greet' and ἐρρῶσθαι 'to be healthy'. These ostraka express the message of senders (most of whom appear to be relatives of recipients) in what should have been their everyday language of communication while following Greek epistolographic conventions in the prescript and farewell sections. The same pattern is found in primarily Coptic letters from the Dakhla Oasis dating to the second half of the fourth century (ca. 355-380). In particular, if we go through the second volume of the edition of Coptic documentary texts from Kellis, *P.Kellis* VII, out of a total of nearly seventy letters, more than half (forty-three)[37] preserve a Greek address on the back side, while about a third (twenty-five)[38] have a Greek initial and/or final greeting. "In formulaic epistolary elements, then, there is fairly ready movement from one language to the other", Bagnall[39] concludes, linking formulaicity and text type to language- and script-switching.

The same correction as the one by Nepheros, from Greek to Coptic, albeit this time only graphic, is found two centuries later, in a sixth-century Coptic letter, *P.Ghent.* inv. 48 (Aphrodite?, sixth century), regarding various fiscal matters. Although the names of correspondents have been lost, the editors[40] find certain internal cues which could possibly point to a monastic background. Palaeographically speaking, the scribe adopts a mixed style with a combination of majuscule/bilinear and minuscule/quadrilinear letter forms, characteristic of this transitional period. Despite this fact, he chooses to correct the 'Greek' writing of the letter *eta* to its more 'Coptic' equivalent in the closing formula at the end of the letter, by adding a vertical stroke to the 'Latinate' form (<h>), turning it into a majuscule one (<H>) **[fig. 3]**.

The closing formula includes the trinity phrase borrowed from Greek (ἡ ἁγία τριάς 'the Holy Trinity') (14), and this is where the Greek grapheme (not appearing elsewhere in the Coptic text) occurs. This implies that the scribe was digraph and his writing was likely momentarily affected by this Greek element, as remarked by the

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36   These are briefly mentioned by Luiselli 2008, 717.

37   *P.Kellis* VII 60-2; 64-8; 70-82; 84-90; 92-3; 97; 99; 102-3; 105-6; 109-11; 113; 115-16; 120; 123. We can also note the possibility of Greek-Coptic script-mixing in the spelling of the name Τεδσογις, appearing in the Greek address of *P.Kellis* VII 109.

38   *P.Kellis* VII 59; 65; 72; 75; 77-8; 82; 84; 86-7; 91-2; 94-5; 102-3; 105-8; 112-13; 116; 118; 123.

39   Bagnall 2011, 88.

40   Amory, Stolk 2024.

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editors. Script-mixing thus seems to appear unintentionally in this case, but the correction shows a conscious choice and extra caution to avoid script-mixing at the closing section, and preserve the Coptic look and character of the text. This means that the 'Coptic' frame here lacks the textual dimension (unless we think of it as not created by a change but in terms of coherence), and is focused on (re)presenting the 'brotherhood' (3-4, 13) between the correspondents.

While the Greek language and/or writing lose ground in more informal and monastic contexts, they seem to maintain a certain prestige in epistolography for the centuries to come. However, their use seems all the more marginal and symbolic as Coptic becomes more established. If we move forward to the eighth century, for example, we can read a heavily abbreviated Greek prescript on the first line of *SB* I 5951 = *P.Ryl.Copt.* 278 (Hermopolite, seventh/early eight century),[41] a letter addressed from the pagarch to village headmen and priests: Φλ(άουιος) Μερ[κοῦρε σὺν θ(εῷ)] πάγαρχ(ος) δι' ἐμοῦ Σευήρου 'Flavius Mercurius, pagarch [with god], through me, Severus' (1). Considering the official character of the letter, featuring a request for supplying workmen, the sender and/or his scribe may have intended to present himself as an authoritative figure. The main message is in Coptic, which must have been the clearest and preferred option of the village elders and priests. In fact, Berkes managed to track some contemporary Hermopolite parallels (*BKU* III 420, *P.LouvreBawit* 50), sent from pagarchs to village officials, where we find a Greek introduction of the same format, followed by the message in Coptic, pointing to a special administrative genre in the area in early Arabic times.[42] The presence of the Greek language (followed by a switch to Coptic), its placement at the first line of the letter (perhaps also aided by cursive, abbreviated writing and crosses) must have given a distinct appearance to these texts,

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41   Berkes 2017, 234-5.

42   Berkes 2017, 237.

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creating the necessary frame of formality and distance between pagarchs and important village figures. In brief, this is another example of the symbolic functions of code-switching being used for administrative purposes, which is highlighted by its position at the opening section of the document.

Communicative goals such as making a request and politeness strategies employed toward the achievement of senders' purposes seem to play an important role in the choice and change of language and writing at the end of letters. In *P.Aphrod.Let.Copt.* 20 (Aphrodite, sixth century?; Dioskoros archive), a Coptic letter concerning the case of a woman named Madjesdjé, the sender, Kyros, addresses a higher-ranking person to make a request. As the editor remarks, while it seems that he was, to a certain extent, bilingual and digraph, and thus able to add his greetings in Coptic in accordance with the rest of the letter, he chose Greek for his final salutation (16-19): ☩ ἐγὼ δὲ Κῦρος ἐλάχιστος πολλὰ προσκυνῶ καὶ. ε […] ἐπὶ τοὺς. μ.. [± 3] | μετὰ τῶν συνόν˙των˙αὐτῆς καταξιώσατε παρακληθῆ κελεῦσαι μαθεῖν τ[± 3] | τὸν δοῦλον αὐτῆς Φοιβάμμωνα ὅτι μετὰ τὸν Θεὸν οὐκ ἔχει καταφυγὴν εἰ μὴ τῇ[ς σῆς] | *vacat* προστασίας, δέσποτα [± 3] "Moi, l'humble Kuros, je salue profondément et vers des… | parmi les personnes qui habitent avec elle, qu'elle daigne bien vouloir ordonner d'apprendre (?) [à ?] Phoibammôn, son (= fem.) serviteur, qu'après Dieu, il n'a pas d'autre refuge que celui de | [son] patronage".[43] This choice is, at least at first glance, curious, as external motivations such as those concerning technical terms do not apply.[44] The practiced hand he uses shows that he was well-acquainted with writing Greek (likely more than writing Coptic). Vanderheyden comments that the choice of Greek, apart from a matter of acquired writing skills, could have to do with the fact that Kyros addresses someone with a higher position, and, in that case, not only the Greek language, perhaps traditionally associated with respectful greeting formulae, but even its elegant writing may have seemed more appropriate, enhancing the polite character of the request.[45] Strategic politeness choices are evident in the language too (e.g. ἐλάχιστος, πολλὰ προσκυνῶ, final religious invocation, δέσποτα, plural vocative of politeness), where a respectful and humbled tone is adopted. The above social and textual (graphic and linguistic) conventions create a double frame for the letter, its message, its sender and receiver, and their relationship.

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43 Translation by Vanderheyden 2015, 2: 196. I hereby wish to thank Loreleï Vanderheyden for giving me access to her PhD dissertation, in anticipation of her resulting monograph, which is currently under press.

44 Vanderheyden 2015, 1: 26, 46.

45 Vanderheyden 2015, 1: 47. Letters of request were among the most common types of late antique letters with a high frequency of politeness features (see Papathomas 2007, 498, where most of the polite expressions mentioned here are separately discussed).

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A comparable example from the early Islamic period is *CPR* XXXI 11 (Hermopolite?, eight century), a Coptic business letter whose receiver may have been an official, ending with a fragmentary Greek line where δέσπο(τα) 'lord' (6) is also legible. The address on the back is also in Greek, with many abbreviations. As Colomo, the editor, observes, the scribe is proficient in both Greek and Coptic; the writing of the whole text combines both majuscule and minuscule letter forms and exhibits a clear influence from Greek cursive, 'producing a rather homogeneous graphic impression' (*CPR* XXXI, 24). Nevertheless, δέσπο(τα) still stands out in terms of its 'Greek' *pi* form (ϖ), ligatures, and typical Greek abbreviation, and by being positioned at the bottom-centre of the letter.[46] In addition, the beginning and end of the text are demarcated by crosses, the final one following δέσπο(τα). These symbols also shape the address on the back side (written in the same Greek style and in a thicker pen), dividing the names of addressee and sender: [☩ θε]οτηρ(ή)τ(ῳ) δεσπ(ό)τ(η) μ(ε)τ(ὰ) Θεὸ(ν) προστ(ά)τ(η) τῷ εὐκλε(εστάτῳ) Κύρῳ ☩ Σενούθης ἀναγ(ν)ώ(στης) αὐτ(οῦ) δοῦλ(ος) ☩ 'To the God-protected lord and protector with God, the most honourable Kyros, Shenouthes, lector, his servant' (7). Apart from their simple deictic function, which was very common in later documents, Christian symbols could be added to the address on the back side of letters, and, especially in Coptic letters of the Arab period, could even indicate a potential association of the writer with the church.[47] The preserved Coptic text, albeit incomplete and unclear, supports such an assumption, as it abounds in religious references. Regarding the Greek language used in the address, it should be noted that it reflects the same deferential tone as the subscription δέσπο(τα) on the front side, acknowledging the higher position of the addressee, while framing the sender as his and God's 'servant'.[48] As noticed by Amory, the address of a letter, as the first written part visible to recipients of a papyrus, significantly impacted their perception of politeness devices employed by the sender.[49] It follows that the selection and formatting of the language in the address, particularly when making a request, must have been a meticulous process for the sender. To sum up, in these and other similar examples, language choice(s), politeness strategies, palaeography, and layout are skilfully adapted to the needs of the letter, in order to create a relationship of trust and respect between correspondents.

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46 On the graphic differentiation of the final δέσποτα and its relation to politeness in Greek letters see Amory 2022, 58-9.

47 Amory 2023, 63-4, 67.

48 The polite connotations of this form of address have been diachronically studied by Dickey 2001.

49 Amory 2022, 59-60.

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Although a shift to a different language and writing style could be meaningfully used as demonstrated, it should be mentioned that it is also common to find Coptic letters with lexical items borrowed from Greek that typically appear in openings and closings but could not qualify as code-switching at this point. One such instance is the phrase σὺν θ(εῷ) 'with God' found at the beginning of many Coptic letters (e.g. *CPR* II 236 [Arsinoite, eight century]).[50] The Greek prepositional phrase can be traced in the opening line of letters much later, as in *CPR* XXXI 13 (Hermopolis?, tenth/eleventh century), when documentary Greek in Egypt was virtually obsolete, further proving that it was not really used because of its lexical content, but merely as a way to mark the opening of the letter.[51] Such examples, in combination with the increasing amount of letters exclusively written in Coptic, reveal that, in later centuries, Coptic depended on the Greek language less and less, as Greek was left with a visual, symbolic value comparable to that of Latin in the former period.

2.3 Coptic/Latin-Arabic[52]

Examining eighth-century letters, it would be negligence to fully exclude Arabic from the discussion.[53] The Coptic-Arabic letter *CPR* II 228 = *P.Gascou* 24 (Middle Egypt-Fayum?, eight century?), reedited

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[50] "On lexical grounds, σὺν θεῷ is not indicative of language selection", Cromwell 2013, 284 remarks. She also provides a list with the different types of documents it appears in, including letters (284-5 fn. 16).

[51] The phrase has its widest spread in later Coptic texts beyond documents; it is thus not just an epistolographic convention, but rather functions as a more general marker of the beginning of texts (see Vincent Walter's forthcoming PhD dissertation).

[52] I have deliberately excluded Greek-Arabic letters from the discussion with the intention of briefly discussing less popular or studied combinations, although framing plays an important role in Greek-Arabic epistolography too (see, for example, Richter 2010, 201-2 on eighth-century Arabic-Greek *entagia*, 'demand note' business letters from the governor to taxpayers, from the Qurra dossier). On Coptic-Greek *entagia* see Cromwell 2022, and most relevantly comments such as the following on p. 355: "These Coptic texts belong to a larger body of *entagia*, which appear from as early as 687/88 until the early Abbasid period [...]. The Coptic texts are quite standardised and, while Coptic is used for the main body of the texts, they are framed by Greek formulae that are linguistically and visually demarcated from the Coptic components".

[53] For a discussion of Arabic letters see Grob 2010, esp. 193-7, where she demonstrates the graphic differentiation (through cursiveness, ligation, indentation, etc.) of initial and final blessings. Arabic letters offer a nice example of how changes in style could be used to separate and highlight the beginning and end of letters without being accompanied by a language switch, especially since handshifts in Arabic epistolography were much rarer (87). This reference is not meant to imply that this was a special characteristic of Arabic letters, as the same practice was adopted in other monolingual letters, for example the Greek ones, on which see, for instance, Luiselli 2008, 689: "Specific devices, such as indention and blank spaces, are used to lay out the constituent elements of the prescript, and to separate the final clause from the preceding

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by Boud'hors,[54] no longer gives the impression of a Christian environment. The communication must have been between two individuals, most likely business associates, who had converted to Islam, as Krall, the first editor, had already hypothesised (*CPR* II, 180). The main text is written in Coptic, in cursive writing, and it is likely that the scribe had been trained in Greek. As Boud'hors points out, converted wine dealers such as the initiator of this letter could continue communicating in Coptic for business purposes, especially with monastic communities.[55] The address on the bottom of the back side, following a large space separating it from the body of the letter, is written upside down first in Coptic and subsequently in Arabic. The Coptic address is significantly longer, with a *vacat* between the two correspondents, whereas the Arabic one is very concise, essentially preserving only the name of the addressee, as was common in Arabic epistolography of the time.[56] On top of practical considerations such as taking the letter carrier into account, this double address immediately frames the correspondents as having a double identity, and emphasises their Arabisation.[57]

Another intriguing case is a recently edited private letter, *P.Lond.* inv. 3124 (Palestinian-Egyptian area, end of seventh-ninth century), which seems to pertain to personal updates and business matters. Presumably a dictation product, the core text is 'allographic', as Internullo[58] calls it,[59] meaning that Arabic is transliterated in Latin letters. Apart from its unique significance for Arabic phonology, as it records vowels in Arabic at an early stage, it is further interesting to see a scribe who is educated in the Latin language and writing after the Arab conquest. The letter starts with an invocation[60] and extensive greetings in Latin (1-6), and then continues in Arabic in Latin characters. This means that, through transliteration, the Latin script is preserved, whereas on the level of language choice, there is a switch to Arabic after the Latin opening. According to the editors, the sender dictated starting "in Latin, possibly as a courtesy

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section. By contrast, thematic articulation within the main body of the letter is as a rule not marked visually".

54   Boud'hors 2016.

55   Boud'hors 2016, 78.

56   See the comment by Vanthieghem in Boud'hors 2016, 88, note on line 36.

57   For more on the contact between Arabic and Coptic in documents of later centuries (including a discussion of a Coptic letter with evidence of linguistic borrowing from Arabic), see Richter 2008.

58   Internullo, D'Ottone Rambach 2018.

59   On the same text and its discovery, see also Internullo 2016.

60   The presence of an invocation in the prescript, in this case in Latin, is an influence from Arabic epistolographic conventions (Grob 2010, 82) also present in Greek letters of the Arabic period (Luiselli 2008, 697-9).

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towards his correspondent Iohannes, using probably all the Latin formulae that he knew – as the repetitions suggest a limited repertoire in Latin" (66). Both the sender and the receiver seem to be familiar with (oral) Arabic, as well as at least basic formulaic Latin, possibly belonging to the same circle. This brings us back to the central role of formulaicity when it comes to switches taking place at the edge of the letter – and the minimum linguistic competence (and, in other cases, literacy) it requires.

To conclude, there seems to be a close relationship between the emergence of bilingual and biscriptal phenomena in late antique and early Islamic letters, highlighted by changes in layout and other visual cues, on the one hand, and formulaic language, register, and communicative goal, on the other.

3 Comparison Between Biscriptal and Bilingual Phenomena in Letters and Other Documents

After getting an idea of the types and functions of switches at the beginning and end of letters, a comparison should be made, not only to changes positioned in the body of letters, but also to the ones taking place at the edges of other text types. Starting from the first, it is easy to notice that changes in the body of letters are more difficult to find. While framing on the textual level is inherently harder to achieve in this position compared to openings and closings, writers do not seem to prefer the body of letters for framing themselves and their message in certain cultural or symbolic ways either. A factor that should nevertheless not be overlooked is the fact that many letters were dictated. Consequently, it is to be expected that changes of language and/or writing take place especially in the final greetings, where senders may wish to sign personally, and where, for this reason, changes of hand are frequently met. In such cases, it could be said that framing is of a different type, as it depends on external circumstances; yet, this does not mean that the visual result and linguistic choices could not be carefully selected or do not frame the letter and its correspondents in the ways already explained. On the contrary, the effort and style of personal subscriptions were likely valued and interpreted by recipients. As Fournet observes, after changes in the materiality and format of letters, which became most noticeable in the fourth century, the starting point of our investigation, the graphic quality of letters increased. This tendency is, as he notes, characteristically evident in visually and linguistically intricate salutations.[61] Conversely, changes in the body of other, offi-

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61 Fournet 2009, 30, 32.

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cial documents, appear to be a more common phenomenon, and, for some, even constitute the established practice. Such is the case of court proceedings, where the main speeches are rendered in Greek, while their introduction, some speeches of[62] or between officials, and the description of the hearing process are usually in Latin. The code-switching (also resulting in script-switching) in the report most likely reflects real circumstances of the hearing, with the exception of the writing convention to introduce speeches in Latin.[63] Greek is used because it is comprehensible by most, whereas the use of Latin portrays officials as powerful figures with Roman authority and brings them together in a group.[64]

One occurrence not limited to openings and closings that appears rather regularly starting from the fourth century is Greek-Coptic script-mixing in Egyptian names of people and places (e.g. the commonly found Πιαϩ 'field' used in the composition of toponyms) in a variety of Greek documents, including letters, like *P.Amh.* II 154 (Hermopolite, ca. 630-650; *CPR* XXV, 190), *P.Apoll.* 63 (Apollonopolite, second half of seventh century, cf. *BL* VIII 10), and *P.Neph.* 12 (Omboi?, fourth century, after 352, cf. *BL* IX 173). Nevertheless, this interesting writing phenomenon does not seem to be an intentional choice but mostly emerges as a result of an *ad hoc* phoneme-to-grapheme conversion process, due to the simultaneous knowledge of both Greek and Coptic(-only) graphemes. In more official documents, half of which are contracts, place names written like so are visually emphasised by the use of superlinear strokes, showing some degree of awareness concerning the script-mixing.[65] One of them is *ChLA* XLI 1194 =*P.Cair.Masp.* III 67329 (Aphrodite, May-June 524, cf. *BL* XIII 57), a bilingual document of legal proceedings where a single trigraph, as it seems, scribe, on top of writing in Latin and Greek according to the usual pattern described above, shows evidence of Coptic literacy with his Greek-Coptic spelling of an estate (Πιαϩ Ϣε), which he also overlines.[66] Initial evidence suggests that letter writers may not have felt such a pressing need to highlight this blending of scripts in the body of their text, a practice which makes more sense in the context of more official texts, where certain details need to be easily retrievable, although superlinear strokes in letters and above

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62 The verdicts of magistrates needed to be in Latin until 397, when an imperial constitution allowed the judges to issue them in Greek (Pedone 2022, 180).

63 The equivalent in letter-writing would be code-switching as the outcome of dictation.

64 Adams 2003, 384.

65 Apostolakou 2023, 293.

66 On the writing styles and skills of the chancery clerk and the contact of Greek, Latin, and Coptic as evidenced in this document, see Pedone 2022.

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Egyptian toponyms specifically are generally found. The bilingual and/or digraph background of writers can trigger unintended language- and script-mixing in more official documents too. In the contract of *SB* I 4505 (This, 11/10/606 or 608), a priest began writing his witness signature in Greek, then, due to the knowledge of both languages and likely his better familiarity with Coptic, started writing the Coptic formula, but deleted and corrected it back to Greek once he realised, matching the rest of the text and signatures.[67] The difference between less or more formal registers, then, is the attention given to preventing or stressing these phenomena and their functional implications, often rooted in diglossic or 'digraphic' considerations.

A visible change in writing transpires in the recording of practical details such as Greek dates in Coptic texts, which needed to be easily detectable.[68] This is a common practice in official documents such as contracts or accounts, but can also be spotted in some letters. The dating formula is located close to the beginning or end of the text, especially in letters. A quick preliminary search indicates that these letters pertain to official correspondence. These phrases are (semi-)formulaic and abbreviated in specific ways, requiring a certain level of scribal training. An instance of a Coptic letter with a Greek date is *P.Lond.* IV 1635, 8 (Aphrodito, early eight century) addressed to the pagarch Basilios. In terms of framing, a fascinating earlier example of a Greek official letter with Latin date(s) is *P.Oxy.* L 3577 (Herakleopolis, 28/1/342), which has captured the attention of many researchers.[69] This is sent by the *praeses prouinciae Augustamnicae* to two propoliteuomenoi. Two different dating formulae in Latin, a consular one and a shorter one, appear in two different 'edges' of the text, namely the lower margin, following the main text, and the upper left margin, going beyond the writing frame. These are, according to Rea, added by the same hand.[70] I will not go into details about their language, parallels, and origins, as they have been sufficiently discussed. It suffices to stress their symbolic significance as elements marking and ensuring validity in an environment where documentary Latin literacy is progressively rarer. This function is stressed by the fact that the later insertion of a second date is 'inorganic', as Iovine[71] calls it, and does not provide any additional information. In general, it makes sense that legal and other formal

67 Schneider 2019, 255.

68 For a survey on relevant 'tags' and their functions (many of which can extend to later periods) in Ptolemaic financial accounts written by digraph scribes, see Mairs 2012.

69 To name a few: Adams 2003, 391-3; Conti 2022; Iovine 2019, esp. 163-7; Sarri 2018, 174-5 fn. 613.

70 *P.Oxy.* L 195.

71 Iovine 2019, 162-3.

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documents have a higher number of formulaic elements throughout the text, whereas the core message of letters is supposed to be more personal(ised). Consequently, the writing depends not only on the sort of text but also on the specific contents, register, and communicative goal, as well as the training of the scribe, while its position in the text remains important. It could perhaps be claimed that there is a difference in terms of length, meaning that switches taking place in the body of documents, like script-mixing and short phrases conveying practical information, are of a more limited extent, whereas changes in openings and closings may extend to several lines (cf. literary quotes, extensive greetings or invocations). Overall, even if language or writing choices of scribes in official documents vary more often in the body of the text, openings and especially closings are still a more fertile ground for these contact-induced/shaped changes, and carry not only practical but also symbolically significant meanings, just as in letters.

There are undoubtedly other practical factors affecting language and writing choices that need to be taken into account. A few have already been mentioned, such as accommodating the preferences of the receiver or the letter carrier. It should also be kept in mind that, in many letters, there is a handshift for greetings and salutations, where senders take on the writing. Their choices may differ from the ones used in the remaining part, and may actually be the only or one of the few options they have. Short, fixed phrases like greetings can be more easily learned and practiced, whereas the main message of letters is virtually different every time. The same holds for signatures in contracts, where, apart from the principal scribe, multiple writers may sign at the end, such as the contracting parties, witnesses or people signing on their behalf. Their limited literacy is often evident by their clumsy handwriting or orthographic and other errors, indicating that they may have learned and memorised how to write their signature – a fixed phrase, just like greeting formulae – and not much beyond that. Other language- or script-switching such as invocation formulae and details about when and where the contract was drawn up at the start of the text signal its beginning, just like opening greetings in letters. Signatures mark the end of contracts in the same way final salutations do, additionally enhancing the validity of the document. In addition to the narrower textual frame, the selection of a specific language and/or script or writing style is culturally shaped, as it relates to the social status and connotations associated with them, creating a social frame (be it religious, literary, cultural, legally reliable, etc.) for the letter or contract, their contents, and people immediately involved.

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4 Conclusions and Further Research

This paper set to explore bilingual and biscriptal phenomena in late antique documentary papyri from the fourth to the eighth centuries AD in a multifaceted analysis grounded on framing theory. The framing of texts, initiators, and messages was examined on two levels; first, their immediate (con)textual level (including linguistic and graphic variation, layout, the specific communicative goal, etc.), and, second, their sociohistorical environment, according to which specific languages and scripts or writing styles had acquired certain functional and symbolic values. Sources included representative examples from epistolography, wide-ranging in terms of formality, involving Greek, Latin, Coptic, and Arabic. Observations based on this sample were then compared to typically formal or legal documents, and primarily contracts. Variation in language and script choice in opening and closing sections was contrasted to the one appearing in the body of texts for both groups of documents.

Findings suggest that most variation is concentrated in openings and especially closings in the case of both letters and contracts, at times emphasised by other visual cues (e.g. large spacing dividing it from the main text), thus contributing to the clear structural division of the document. Formulaicity seems to be a key factor, as variation usually concerns fixed phrases: in letters, mostly greetings and salutations; in the rest, opening formulae and official subscriptions or signatures. In legal and official documents, an additional validation and authenticity function is relevant, and external regulations and scribal training come into play. Reasons that are specific to each letter, its communicative goal (e.g. making a request), and the relationship between correspondents (or at least the one they try to evoke) must be considered, but variation often has a symbolic function that is culturally shaped, just as in official documents. Despite some exceptions, mostly in more official documents, fewer instances of switches between languages and scripts can be found in the body of texts, which is less formulaic (especially in letters), proving that the beginning and end favour the emergence of these occurrences. There, changes are clearly visible and immediately accessible, and thus more easily interpretable. Keeping advances in the materiality and format of late antique letters in mind, the presence of code- and script-switching in openings and closings of letters could be considered as another factor enhancing the graphic differentiation of these parts. It is worth mentioning that a chronological presentation of examples mirrors sociohistorical developments whereby the position, status, and connotations of different languages and their writing shift over time.

The bottom line is that, even if differences in small points exist, bilingual and biscriptal phenomena can appear across different text

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types and registers, as all variation is moulded within the same multilingual and multiscriptal environment. This could not have left an intensely writing-oriented society such as Egypt unaffected, as is reflected not only in intentional and symbolic, but also in accidental contact-induced occurrences. This study shows that Egyptian writers made creative use of multilingual and multigraphic devices, characterised by both flexibility and regulation, to present a multilayered message. It appears that framing theory is particularly useful in terms of highlighting variation in ancient written everyday documents, as it can provide insights into both the narrower and bigger picture of their message. It unlocks meanings beyond one single mode of communication, for example merely language, by evaluating all information available. This is especially crucial in ancient everyday texts, where materiality, layout, and graphic representation were crucial for the message. Therefore, all meaning-making resources should be taken into account to restore the context and other information that may be lacking today, and to put the message 'back in its frame', so to speak.

To do so, it would be useful to integrate different levels of analysis, such as materiality, and understand how they interact with linguistic and (paleo)graphic choices and how they contribute to meaning under the scope of framing. To this end, a comprehensive and perhaps diachronic quantitative study on bilingual and biscriptal documents would be useful in order to gain a more concrete idea about the dissemination and evolution of the phenomena in question. Apart from zooming out, the opposite is also possible, for example by comparing switches of a single bilingual and/or digraph writer across registers, and observing any differences or patterns. Finally, further research on corrections of biscriptal and bilingual phenomena is encouraged, as it was shown to shed light on writers' intentionality and the social evaluation of different languages and writing styles at the time.

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Requests in the Qurra Dossier
A Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Approach

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Abstract   Linguistic contact in Late Antique Egypt has received much scholarly interest, with several studies dedicated to multilingual communicative practice. Such investigations of papyrus documents have primarily focused on formulation and language choice. The current contribution will focus on the pragmatics of Request in Greek and Arabic from a cross-cultural perspective, based on the letters in the Qurra dossier. This is a collection of official letters from the governor of Egypt between 709 and 715 AD, to the pagarch of Aphrodito. This will shed light on the historical pragmatics of both linguacultures and investigate the effects of contact.

Keywords   Cross-cultural pragmatics. Arabic. Greek. Multilingualism. Documentary papyri.

Summary   1 Introduction. – 1.1 The Corpus. – 1.2 Rhetorical Structure of the Greek and Arabic Letters. – 1.2.1 Rhetorical Structure of the Greek Letters. – 1.2.2 Rhetorical Structure of the Arabic Letters. –1.3 Speech Acts and Historical Sociopragmatics. – 2 The Greek Letters. – 2.1 Requests. – 2.2 Threats and Admonitions. – 3 The Arabic Letters. – 3.1 Requests. – 3.2 Threats and Admonitions. – 4 Comparative Discussion and Conclusions.

1 Introduction

Arabic was catapulted onto the world stage by the Arab-Islamic conquests of the seventh century CE. Within a few centuries, it became an international medium of science, communication, and bureaucracy.

This did not happen in a vacuum, and through its expansion Arabic came into contact with other written cultures, an important one of which was Greek. Especially in Egypt, there is robust documentary evidence of contact between Greek and Arabic written culture, which has inspired several studies focusing on formulation and language choice.[1]

Within the context of the emerging Arabic bureaucratic writing culture in contact with the long-established Greek one, we will perform a cross-cultural pragmatic analysis of the speech act Request[2] within Arabic and Greek letters in the bureaucratic correspondence of the Qurra dossier (709-715 AD). This corpus contains Greek and Arabic letters written to Basil, the pagarch of *kōmē Aphroditēs* (*ṣāḥib Ishqawh* in Arabic), on behalf of Qurra son of Sharīk, who was the governor of Egypt at the time. The comparatively rich social and historical context that is known for this corpus make it uniquely suitable for a comparative study.

In our analysis of the Greek and Arabic letters (§§ 3 and 4), we will focus on requests both from a more formal, linguistic perspective (i.e., what linguistic forms are used to perform requests, how are they internally modified), as well as from a broader, pragmatic perspective, taking into account which sorts of supportive acts are used in the letters, whether mitigating or aggravating. By highlighting the similarities and differences in realisation of this speech act, we want to come to a better understanding of the cultural specificity of the way in which Greek and Arabic requests were framed – both linguistically and pragmatically – in the Qurra dossier. In doing so, we hope to take a first step towards understanding how these two linguacultures[3] in contact negotiated potentially differing cultural expectations and how they may have influenced each other.

Before doing so, we briefly discuss the Qurra dossier as a corpus for cross-cultural pragmatic study (§ 1.1), the rhetorical structure[4] of

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[1]   E.g. Richter 2010; Luiselli 2008.

[2]   The term Speech Act was coined by Austin 1962; Searle 1969; 1976; here we are following the definition by House, Kádár 2021, 108. Under Searle's definition Request would fall under the illocutionary act of 'directives'.

[3]   For the term linguaculture see House, Kádár 2021, 5.

[4]   We use the term 'rhetorical' here not with reference to classical rhetoric, but to describe the discursive and functional structure of ancient sources. This encompasses

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the Greek and Arabic letters respectively (§ 1.2), as well as the notion of 'speech act' as it has been developed in historical sociopragmatic research (§ 1.3). We conclude our contribution by making some comparative observations, as well as suggestions for further research (§ 4).

1.1 The Corpus

The Qurra dossier is a collection of documents that were likely part of the archive of the *pagarch* of the *kōmē Aphroditēs* (or *ṣāḥib Ishqawh* in Arabic), situated some 50 km south of Asyut on the western bank of the Nile. A large share of the documents are official letters written to Basil, the *pagarch* of Aphrodito at the time, on behalf of Qurra son of Sharīk, who was the governor of Egypt between 90 AH/709 AD and 96 AH/715 AD. It is the largest published multilingual group of associated texts from the late first/early eighth century and has featured prominently in many works on the administration and taxation of early Umayyad Egypt.[5]

In terms of quantity, the main publications of the Qurra documents are Becker's editions of the Arabic documents from the Heidelberg and London collections, Abbott's publication of the Arabic documents of the Oriental Institute at Chicago, and Bell and Crum's publication of the Greek and Coptic documents at the British Museum.[6] The name 'Qurra dossier' or 'Qurra papyri', as is commonly used to refer to the entire archive of Basil, is somewhat of a misnomer, as the archive also contains Greek and Coptic documents that were not written during the time Qurra was governor of Egypt.[7] The letters under discussion in the present article, however, are all part of the correspondence between Qurra son of Sharīk and Basil.[8]

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both the generic conventions that shape these texts and the pragmatic work they perform within those conventions.

5 E.g. Bell 1928; Tillier 2017; Sijpesteijn 2013.

6 Becker 1906; 1911; Bell 1928; Abbott 1938. Richter 2010 gives an overview of the published documents, divided by language. Since then, some new material has been published, notably by Sijpesteijn 2011. Several fragments of letters were identified by Donner 2016.

7 For a complete discussion of the distribution of the documents in the archive of Basil see Richter 2010, 196. One could make the distinction between 'the archive of Basileios', to refer to all documents, and 'the Qurra dossier', to refer to the portion of the archive that is the correspondence between Basil and Qurra more narrowly. Therefore, we will refer to the documents here as the Qurra dossier, or the Qurra corpus.

8 The Trismegistos database gives metadata for the entire archive of Basilios pagarches of Aphrodito. See https://www.trismegistos.org/archive/124. The full-text of the Arabic texts is available on the website of the Arabic Papyrology Database (APD), a project under the patronage of the International Society for Arabic Papyrology (ISAP), at https://www.apd.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/apd/project.jsp.

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As administrative correspondence, the corpus mainly includes letters containing orders and instructions. An important sub-genre of documents, and the only truly bilingual ones, are the tax demand notes (or *entagia*) of which 23 are preserved. As routine notices, these documents are very short and extremely formulaic. Therefore, for this article, we decided to leave them out of our analysis and focus instead on the administrative correspondence structured as individual letters. These letters deal with a range of topics, from requests to deal with fugitives, to delays in tax collection, but invariably centre around a request or order (see the discussion of each language corpus, below, for the exact make-up of each). Because we know the power relation between the two interlocutors and have access to several letters that make similar requests in each language,[9] we can contextualise some of the social dimensions of the interactions, and it offers several points of close comparison, which makes this corpus ideal for a comparative study between the two linguacultures involved.

1.2   Rhetorical Structure of the Greek and Arabic Letters

Before proceeding with our discussion of Requests, it is important to outline how they are embedded in the larger rhetorical (formulaic) structure of the letters. As part of their rhetorical structure, Greek and Arabic letters written on papyrus, similar to other pre-modern epistolary genres, commonly follow a tri-partite division into an opening section, the body, and a closing. As the opening and closing sections of the letters are typically highly formulaic, the new information conveyed in the letters, in this case the request, typically occurs in the body of a letter, besides more formulaic elements. However, the formulaic opening and closing of the letters likely formed important reading aids to the recipient of a letter, in terms of signaling the type and genre of the letter,[10] by guiding the reader through the structure of the letter,[11] and by giving cues to the interactional frame of the letter.[12] In the following, we will briefly discuss some of the relevant elements of the rhetorical structure of the Greek and Arabic letters from the Qurra dossier.

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[9] Given the strong overlap in the content of some of the Arabic and Greek letters, it is generally assumed that the letters were written as pairs, with a Greek and an Arabic version. However, so far no documents can be identified that seem to be direct translations of one another. On language choice in the Qurra dossier see Richter 2010, and more broadly on choices and development in language choice in administration in the early Muslim period, see Garosi 2022.

[10] For a typology of Arabic documents based on their formulaic content see Kaplony 2018.

[11] Grob 2010, 29 and 136-55.

[12] Grob 2010, 123.

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1.2.1 Rhetorical Structure of the Greek Letters

The structure of Greek private letters on papyrus, and the diachronic changes that structure underwent, has been studied *in extenso*.[13] However, this is less the case for their official counterparts, especially those from the early Byzantine period.

Unlike contemporary letters written by Christians, which lack the opening (*prescript*) altogether, Greek letters emanating from Muslim chanceries may contain a prescript which seems to mimic Arabic epistolary formulae (on which, see further below).[14] Letters are sometimes preceded by a summary, which is written either in Greek or in Greek and Arabic. The actual opening typically starts with the invocation ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ θεοῦ 'in the name of God' (corresponding to the Arabic *basmala*), followed by the internal address, typically consisting of the name of the initiator, his patronymic and function, and the name of the addressee and his function, as for example Κόρρα υἱὸς Σζερὶχ σύμβουλος Βασιλείῳ διοικητῇ Ἀφροδιτώ 'Qurra son of Sharīk governor to Basil administrator of Aphrodito'. Two elements that are not obligatory, but that are found in little less than a quarter of our letters are the doxology, εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ 'we give thanks to God', and a transitional phrase of the type μετὰ ταῦτα lit. 'thereafter'. Since this transitional formula is typically coordinated with the doxology through the use of καί, it is considered part of the opening here.[15]

Central to the letters is the request, which is almost always announced through the use of the participial phrase δεχόμενος οὖν τὰ παρόντα γράμματα 'on receipt of the present letter', which is also visually highlighted, for example through the introduction of a large *vacat*.[16] The body of each letter typically starts with information that provides background to the request, such as the fact that a certain administrative decision has been taken, or that a certain type of information is needed. Background may also relate more directly to Basil, as when a complaint is voiced that the latter has acted against the orders that had been previously communicated. Moralising remarks about the 'proper' conduct of officials may also be included.[17] The background can be introduced by ἐγνώσθη ἡμῖν 'it was brought to our attention', or simply start in medias res with past tense forms.

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[13] See Nachtergaele 2023 for an in-depth discussion of the formulaic structure of the openings and closings of Greek private letters.

[14] This new type of Greek prescript in turn seems to have occasionally influenced the opening section of private correspondence, as noted by Luiselli 2008, 697.

[15] Following Luiselli 2008, 697, who notes the use of ἔπειτα as an alternative transitional formula in Greek letters from Arab Palestine.

[16] See Bentein, Kootstra 2024.

[17] As in *P.Lond*. IV 1356 ll. 4-11 (710 AD) = TM 19814.

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The request is then typically followed by one or more supportive moves, not all of which are present in every letter. Later on in this contribution, we will discuss threats and admonitions as supportive moves. Other discourse elements that can be found include a reference to a messenger who will be keeping an eye on things (perhaps to be understood as an implicit threat) and a moralising statement about the duties of officials towards the state, which one can compare to the moralising remarks found in the pre-request.

The closing section of the letters is less complex than the opening: it consists only of the date, which is typically introduced by the verb ἐγράφη 'it was written' followed by the day and month of the Egyptian calendar and the indictional year. After the date, various letters have a list that specifies information already mentioned in the body of the letter, for example a list of items or men that are requisitioned. On the verso side of the letters, we find the address (X to Y), and the docket with the date (again month and indiction), the name of the courier (ἠνήχθη διά 'it was brought through'), and a summary of the contents.

1.2.2   Rhetorical Structure of the Arabic Letters

Looking at the structure of the Arabic letters, it becomes clear that one of the stylistic features shared by both the Greek and Arabic letters in this corpus is their generic organisation and, particularly, their use of several formulaic elements.

The letters typically start with an opening section with the phrase *bi-ism Allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm* 'in the name of Allah the merciful the compassionate' for which we find the Greek parallel ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ θεοῦ 'in the name of God'. This is followed by an internal address mentioning the sender and the addressee, and a doxology, praising Allah. Even though the doxology is not used consistently in the Greek letters, it is in the Arabic ones. The first part of the body of the text opens with the phrase *’ammā ba‘d*, which may be translated as 'now then' or 'on to the matter at hand'.[18] Even though this finds its parallel in the Greek μετὰ ταῦτα 'thereafter', in Arabic epistolary convention *’ammā ba‘d* is considered part of the body of the text.[19] In most

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[18]   There is an interesting example from a private letter in which this formula, which typically occurs just once to indicate the transition from the purely formulaic opening to the body of the letter, occurs three times (*P.JoySorrow* 16 published in Younes 2013, 149). Each time, it indicates a shift in topic of the letter. More common than to repeat the opening formula exactly is the use of *wa-ba‘d* 'and then' to structure letters, see Grob 2010, 40 fn. 44.

[19]   In early Arabic official correspondence the body of the letter can be visually separated from the opening. In such cases *’ammā ba‘d* is consistently grouped with the body of the text, see Garosi 2022, 185.

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letters this is followed by a recapitulation of previous correspondence or a brief outline of the matter at hand which is sometimes combined with an initial request. This section largely functions to give background information, or as a pre-request, similar to the structure of the Greek letters.

Some examples of this are quite to the point, and only give the background to the request (e.g. *P.BeckerNPAF* 2 ll. 1-5). In other letters, this section can be quite elaborate containing, besides the reprimand that Basil is late and a pre-request to come and see Qurra about this, a threat, and an insult as in *P.Qurra* 4 (ll. 1-12), which even contains an oath *ʿalā ʿamr-ī* 'on my life (I swear)' to underline the threat. The next part of the letter, which contains the main request, is then introduced with a formula that is very similar to the one found in the Greek letters: *fa-ʾiḏā jāʾa-ka kitāb-ī hāḏā* 'so when this letter of mine reaches you'. As in the Greek letters, this phrase seems to signal the transition from the pre-request to the actual request in the letter.[20] Unlike in the Greek letters, however, there is no evidence for a relationship between the level of politeness of the letter and whether this formula was used to introduce the main content of the letter (on which, see further § 2.1).[21]

Many of the letters that are missing the phrase are incomplete, suggesting that the original may have contained it. Both in *P.BeckerNPAF* 2 and *P.Qurra* 4, mentioned above, the pre-request part of the letter is followed by this phrase, showing that both fairly neutral and quite threatening and insulting letters did contain it. *P.BeckerNPAF* 12, on the other hand, is an example of a letter of which the complete body survives, which does not contain the formula, but which also does not seem particularly harsh or rude. It is short and to the point and ends with two admonitions, but it does not contain any threats or overt reprimands (*P.BeckerNPAF* 12 ll. 1-11).

The closing section of the Arabic letters typically starts with the verb *kataba* 'he wrote (it)', with the name of the scribe as its subject, followed by the Islamic month and year according to the *hijrī*

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[20] In some letters, the structural function of this formula is visually underlined by placing it on a new line, creating a new paragraph. See, for example *P.RagibQurra* 1 (Inv.Sorb. 2344) in which both the formula *ʾammā baʿd* and *fa-ʾiḏā jāʾa-ka* are placed on a new line. Image available online as part of the online collection of the Sorbonne http://www.papyrologie.paris-sorbonne.fr/photos/PArabe/2012344.jpg. The visual structure of the Qurra papyri is discussed in Bentein, Kootstra 2024.

[21] In a more general sense, however, adherence to formulaic epistolary norms can be seen as a form of polite behaviour or conventional politeness, conforming to the reader's expectations of the genre and aiding the comprehension and parsing of the letter. For a discussion of the role of formulae in the information structure and reading comprehension of Arabic letters see Grob 2010, 136-55. And for the use of formulae as conventional politeness see Grob 2010, 123. For the concept of politic behaviour see e.g. Watts 2003, 19.

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calendar. A few of the letters also mention who copied (*nasaḫa*) the letter (e.g. *P.Qurra* 3; *P.BeckerNPAF* 8; 9).

1.3   Speech Acts and Historical Sociopragmatics

In the field of historical sociopragmatics and speech act theory, the recognition that the full communicative context, speaker/writer intentions, and hearer/reader 'uptake' (that is, their understanding of what is being communicated), are generally not directly recoverable from the data has led to an extensive body of scholarship on data and methodology.[22] Since then, several approaches have developed to tackle this.[23]

We will depart from a form-based approach,[24] collecting the various ways of expressing the speech act Request, based on a close reading of the letters in our corpus. As we only have letters initiated by Qurra, and none of Basil's responses, a full discourse approach as undertaken by Magdalena Leitner and Andreas Jucker on a sixteenth-century letter exchange between members of a Scottish Highland clan is not available to us.[25] However, these individual speech acts can be contextualised within the genre and communicative framework of Qurra sending orders and instructions to a subordinate. Within the letters we can take the discursive context of the individual speech acts into account, and how the letters are structured rhetorically. Moreover, with access to correspondence concerning similar events, some of the documents can offer insights into how escalating matters are addressed, providing further insight into how the communicative framework impacts communicative strategies. In this way, by collecting the formal expressions of the Speech Act Request, we can observe that some are combined with mitigating expressions, and others with aggravating ones.[26] Mitigating moves are meant to soften the tone or

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22   See, for example, Culpeper, Kytö 2000, in general, and Bertucelli Papi 2000, more specifically on the diachronic study of speech acts.

23   Approaches range from an ethnographic approach focusing on metalinguistic discourse around specific speech acts by Taavitsainen, Jucker 2007, to more form-based approaches such as Kohnen 2007, and discursive approaches such as demonstrated in Leitner, Jucker 2021.

24   Comparable to that of Kohnen 2007.

25   Leitner, Jucker 2021, 695-702.

26   For an extensive discussion of whether an expression can be 'inherently' (im)polite, that is, (im)polite outside of context, see Culpeper 2011, 113-45. He argues for a dual approach on the basis that both a form-based and a context-based approach are different ways of looking at politeness that reinforce our understanding of the phenomenon.

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imposition of a request,[27] while aggravating expressions are meant to add to the pragmatic force of the request.[28]

We base our classification of different speech acts on a slightly modified version of the typology developed by Juliane House and Dániel Kádár in their recent work on cross-cultural pragmatics, which was elaborated in the context of the European-funded project 'Everyday writing in Graeco-Roman and Late Antique Egypt. A socio-semiotic study of communicative variation' (http://www.evwrit.ugent.be, 2018-24),[29] and which is also discussed in the contribution by Marta Capano and Klaas Bentein to this volume.[30] House and Kádár define the speech act Request as "a speech act in which the requester asks the requestee to do something which is in the interest of the requester".[31] Their typology builds on that first developed by Willis Edmondson and Juliane House, which took a strong interactional approach.[32] House and Kádár then further adjusted it to rely on categories with a high degree of generality to ensure its applicability to a wide variety of linguacultures.[33] Following the typology proposed by House and Kádár, we do not make a distinction between requests and commands. The difference between them is often not linguistically encoded and only recoverable from the social distance and hierarchical relationship between initiator and addressee, which is not always recoverable in the historical epistolary record. Especially the focus on wide cultural applicability, partially by relying on 'deep' categories that "reflect basic human needs",[34] makes this model interesting for our present article, as our data comes from two linguacultures that are both different from each other, but also quite far removed from modern Western languages and linguistic behaviour.

As mentioned before, for the pragmatic contextualisation of the requests, we will take into account the wider context and rhetorical and discursive build-up of the letters that can be used to emphasise or soften the force of the Request. When this is done 'head-internally' we will refer to such strategies as upgrading or downgrading modifiers.

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27 Comparable to what Brown and Levinson call 'redressive action'. See Brown, Levinson 1987, 69-70.

28 House, Kádár 2021, 249 with examples on 127.

29 The project-internal documentation is currently not yet publicly available, but we are greatly indebted to Marta Capano for her work on developing the documentation on speech act annotation and document structure for the project's database.

30 The differences are based on the specific descriptive needs of the historical epistolary genre. Most important is the decision to distinguish between 'assertion', 'statement' and 'description' instead of between 'opine' and 'tell' as House, Kádár do, 2021, 107-13.

31 House, Kádár 2021, 108.

32 Edmondson, House 1981.

33 House, Kádár 2021, 105-6.

34 House, Kádár 2021, 106.

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'Head-external' modifications of the Request are referred to as supportive moves. Such moves include mitigating moves such as Appeasement, or aggravating moves such as Threats or Moralising statements, following the coding scheme proposed by Juliane House and Dániel Kádár.[35]

Two supportive moves that are so prominent in the data that they warrant separate mention are threats and admonitions. These are not listed in House and Kádár's already extensive list of speech acts.[36] This is because they can be considered generic 'moves' that can be realised by several speech acts,[37] as we intend to show in the discussion below. We define[38] admonition as 'a comment that follows instructions and requests and has the function of stressing what was previously asked', constituting a more generic order (as in 'do not forget') or harsh recommendation (as in 'do the job properly'). A threat, on the other hand, we define as a statement 'that implies negative consequences for the receiver, and/or someone else, generally as a punishment for an action or for not having done something'.[39] Threats occur elsewhere in the papyrological corpus, too,[40] but their explicitness and harshness are one of the most striking features of the letters in the Qurra dossier. They range from financial to corporeal[41] and even life-threatening.

2 The Greek Letters

The Qurra dossier contains around one hundred and eight Greek letters, next to the earlier-mentioned *entagia*. For thirty-one of these letters, the body of the text has been more or less completely preserved (sometimes with minor gaps); in other texts, it has been

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35 House, Kádár 2021, 125-7. However, as we will see in the discussion of the data, the moralising strategies in the Qurra papyri do not only seem to be there to chastise the addressee but can also hold a promise of (divine) reward.

36 House, Kádár 2021, 107. Note that they recognise threats and moralising as supportive moves (House, Kádár 2021, 127).

37 For the concept of "generic move" see Bhatia 1993.

38 The following definitions have been developed by Marta Capano in the context of her work on the *Everyday Writing* project.

39 Implicit/indirect threats are not annotated as threats; for examples of such indirect threats in the Greek letters, see e.g. *P.Lond.* IV 1338 ll. 12-17 (709 AD) = TM 19796; *P.Lond.* IV 1339 ll. 17-18 (709 AD) = TM 19797; *P.Lond.* IV 1363 ll. 10-12 (710 AD) = TM 19821; *P.Ross.Georg.* IV 6 (710 AD) ll. 25-9 = TM 20491.

40 See e.g. *P.Oxy.* I 119 (II-III AD) = TM 28410. For the use of threats as a rhetorical strategy in Greek letters sent by women, see Thoma, Papathomas 2021.

41 So e.g. in *P.Lond.* IV 1370 ll. 13-17 (710 AD) = TM 20496, 'And you will be aware that if, when you come down to us, there is found even one single *artaba* of the said wheat in arrears in your district we shall seize you and bind you until you collect and hand over this by God's command'.

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partially preserved, or only very fragmentarily. For twenty-six texts, no text-structural annotations could be made in the body due to the state of preservation of the letter. The range of the completely preserved texts varies: many of the letters contain less than fifteen lines (including the letter opening, body and closing), such as *P.Lond.* IV 1341 (709 AD) = TM 19799 [ten lines], a letter which informs Basil that demand notes (*entagia*) have been sent, and that the requested money should therefore be collected, or *P.Lond.* IV 1336 (709 AD) = TM 19794 [13 lines], a letter in which a single carpenter is requisitioned for a period of four months. Other letters contain thirty lines or more: an example is *P.Lond.* IV 1356 (710 AD) = TM 19814 [39 lines], in which Basil is instructed to give just judgment to the people in his district, and to ensure that tax assessments are administered fairly. The longest letter in our dossier, which is only partially preserved, is *SB* III 7241 (710 AD) = TM 18868 [60 lines]; it deals with the collection of men and supplies for the annual raiding expedition (the *cursus*).

Most of the letters deal with various types of public requisitions that are made by the governor, concerning fees and taxes in money and kind; the enlistment of workmen, supplies for workmen and building materials; and the conscription of sailors and their supplies for naval raids. Other types of requisitions are also made, such as for the governor's household or the upkeep and service of post-horses. Another, relatively large group of letters, deals with fugitives.[42] In the letter that we mentioned above, *P.Lond.* IV 1356, a matter of private law, to give just judgment, is touched upon, which is quite unique. Given that in all of these letters Qurrah is handing out orders to Basil, it does not come as a surprise that requests constitute the dominant type of speech act. Nevertheless, other speech acts, too, frequently appear, functioning as supportive moves to the request (whether in the pre- or post-request),[43] such as *assertion*, *complaint*, *description*, *resolve*, and *statement*. One can try to connect the inclusion of one or more of these supportive moves to socio-pragmatic factors. For the Arabic letters, it was suggested already by Nadia Abbott that a connection can be made between the employment of linguistic and pragmatic strategies and the nature of the request that is being made:

> it seems that when a letter dealt with a routine mater, brevity and directness were employed; but in documents referring to gross neglect of duty or to its dire results on entire districts or perhaps

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42 See the overview presented by Richter 2010, 197-8.

43 Compare Koroli 2020a, 120, who refers to *preparation for the direction – formulation of the directive – supplement of the directive* as a typical rhetorical pattern found in request letters.

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the whole country, threats and repetitions and detailed instructions lengthened and complicated the letter.[44]

We will discuss the Arabic letters in more detail below (§ 3). For now, it is worth noting that similar observations can be made for the Greek letters. A request letter such as *P.Lond.* IV 1336 (709 AD) = TM 19794, for example, in which Qurra requisitions a single carpenter for a period of four months is structurally quite simple (mimicking, to some extent, the simpler *entagia*), with the pre-request (background) consisting of a simple statement (ἐτάξαμεν 'we requisitioned'), followed by a short request using simple imperatives (πέμψον 'send', παράδος 'hand over'), and no post-request.[45] One can contrast this with a request letter such as *P.Lond.* IV 1353 (710 AD) = TM 19811, a letter in which sailors, skilled workmen and supplies for the raiding fleet are requisitioned; this letter, too, has a relatively simple pre-request, but a very elaborate request and post-request, with a repeated request, an admonition, threat, etc., with much emphasis on the need for swiftness of execution. Besides the weight of the imposition that is made on the addressee,[46] and the urgency of the matter at hand, it seems that reiteration of the request due to negligence or transgression also triggers increased pragmatic complexity: when the flow of revenues is endangered by payment arrears or fugitives, we typically get longer, much more complex letters: a letter such as *P.Lond.* IV 1380 (710 AD) = TM 19835, in which Qurra complains about arrears in the payment of public gold taxes, is structurally much more complex, and contains not only repeated requests, but also a moralising assertion,[47] a threat, an admonition, etc.[48]

A striking element of Qurra's letters, both the ones written in Greek and in Arabic, is their harsh rhetoric, in particular the reference to severe punishments including fines, corporal punishment and even death, giving the impression of a ruthless, authoritarian governor.[49]

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44 Abbott 1938, 40.

45 For similar examples, see e.g. *P.Lond.* IV 1352 (710 AD) = TM 19810; *P.Lond.* IV 1369 (710 AD) = TM 19819; *P.Lond.* IV 1374 (710 AD) = TM 19830; *P.Lond.* IV 1378 (710 AD) = TM 19833 etc.

46 For degree of imposition as a sociological variable, compare Brown, Levinson 1987, 74-83.

47 With this term, we mean an assertion that pressures the addressee to act in accordance with what was considered just and moral leadership. See fns 88 and 120 for the link between both Christian and Islamic concepts of justice and the content of the letters. While the link between im/politeness, in/civility, and im/morality is explored within the field of (historical) pragmatics, this is beyond the scope of the current article. See Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, Kádár 2021.

48 A similar example is *P.Lond.* IV 1338 (709 AD) = TM 19796. For letters on fugitives, see e.g. *P.Lond.* IV 1384 (708-710 AD) = TM 19838; *P.Ross.Georg.* IV 1 (710 AD) = TM 20487.

49 See Bell 1910, xxxv, noting that "this person [Qurra] has become almost a proverb for cruelty and oppression".

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Such rhetoric must be situated in its socio-historical context, however: as Papaconstantinou has observed,[50] Basil's behaviour – ranging from passive obstruction, deliberate delays, and possibly protecting fugitives, to financial mismanagement and corruption, whether for personal gain or to protect local interests – illustrates the complex challenges faced by the early Islamic administration in consolidating control and enforcing reforms in regions like Egypt. Threats of punishment and the replacement of local officials such as Basil, are best considered as a rhetorical strategy to assert control over local administrations, used besides other strategies such as central control through inspectors and local informants. Qurra's threats never seem to materialise, as both Bell and Papaconstantinou have noted,[51] and do not seem to have been very effective: "the impressive rhetoric of power deployed in [the] letters seems to have been as ineffective as Basileios' tax collection".[52]

2.1   Requests

Requests are, as we said, the core speech act found in our corpus. In her discussion of Late Antique request letters in Greek, Koroli highlights the large number of options writers had to express requests, which she places on a continuum ranging from very polite to what she calls the more urgent, 'imperative' tone.[53] This can be contrasted to earlier periods of Greek, when the use of the direct imperative formed a neutral option in terms of politeness.[54] In our dossier, second-person requests are nevertheless predominantly formulated in the imperative – the most direct option – typically in the aorist tense;[55] for hortatory third-person requests and especially prohibitive requests, which occur less frequently, the subjunctive (with or without the negation μή) forms the standard option.[56]

The initial request is recognizable not only through the standard phrase δεχόμενος τὰ παρόντα γράμματα 'on receipt of this letter', but also through the use of the causal discourse particle οὖν 'so', which is

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50   Papaconstantinou 2015b.

51   Bell 1910, xxxv; Papaconstantinou 2015a, 45.

52   Papaconstantinou 2015b.

53   Koroli 2020b, 82-4.

54   Dickey 2010, 337. Dickey 2016 discusses the change from the use of the bare imperative in the Classical period to that of polite request formulae in later periods in terms of egalitarianism.

55   For some exceptional present-tense imperatives, see *P.Lond.* IV 1380 l. 16 (710 AD) = TM 19835 (βλέπε); *P.Lond.* IV 1404 l. 12 (709-714 AD) = TM 19852 (ἀπαιτεῖ).

56   E.g. *SB* 10 10458 l. 10 (710 AD) = TM 16765 (ἀναλάβωσιν, hortatory).

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used not so much to indicate intra- or inter-sentential causality (as it most often is), but rather to indicate a major break in discourse.[57] The same discourse particle, other causal particles (such as high-register τοίνυν), or more typically additive δέ, are then used for follow-up requests. Another characteristic feature of requests in our dossier is that they are very frequently 'upgraded' by modifiers which increase the pragmatic force of the speech act, in particular manner and time adverbs/adverbial phrases such as ἀμελλητί 'zealously', ἀνεμποδίστως 'unhindered', ἐνδρανῶς 'with vigor', εὐθέως 'immediately', κατ' αὐτὴν τὴν ὥραν 'this very moment', παραχρῆμα 'immediately', etc.[58]

An important qualification that needs to be made when it comes to the expression of requests, is that in many of the letters requests are expressed by conjunct participles syntactically agreeing with a preceding or following verb in the imperative mood. The excessive use of the participle in the dossier has also been noted by other scholars;[59] as this non-finite form was in decline at this period of time, its frequent appearance could, perhaps, be seen as an archaising feature, though more research should be done on the function of the Greek participle in Late Antique and Early Byzantine papyri.[60] A striking example of the use of the participle can be found in *P.Ross. Georg.* IV 6 (710 AD) = TM 20491 (example 1), a letter in which Qurra requests the organisation and training of youths in carpentry and caulking, emphasising the importance of these skills for maintaining ships and other state services, while also instructing oversight of tree planting and diligent execution of specified tasks.[61] In this letter, the entire request consists of participial clauses, with the exception of a single aorist imperative, which is placed immediately after the introductory phrase δεχόμενος οὖν τὰ παρόντα γράμματα 'on receipt of the present letter', and which could perhaps be considered the main request in this passage.

(1)   δεχόμενος οὖν τὰ παρόντα γρ[άμμα]τα διάστειλ[ον] | διὰ τῆς πόλεως καὶ συστατικῶν χωρίων καὶ ἐμφανῶν | τῆς διοικήσεώς σου [προσώπων πα]ιδία εἰ[ς] διδάχη[ν] τε[χν]ῶν | τούτους ἐκδιδων (l. ἐκδιδοὺς) τεχνίταις ἐμπείροις καὶ δοκίμοις ἐπισταμένοις | δεόντως τὴν τέχνην καὶ ἐπισκεπτόμενος καὶ ἀδνουμεύων | καθ' ἕκαστον μῆνα, ἐπιθεωρῶν τε καὶ τὸ ἔργον αὐτῶν | πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀμεληθῆναι ἢ καταφρονηθῆναι, γράφων ἡμῖν | τὸ κατ'

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ὄνομα καὶ πατρωνο[ι]μίαν (l. πατρωνυμίαν) κατὰ χωρίον τε καὶ κατὰ τ[έ]χ[νην] | ἑκάστου αὐτῶν, <u>παρασκευάζων</u> τὸ ἥμισυ μέρος αὐτῶν | βληθῆναι εἰς τὸ ναυπηγ[ι]κὸν καὶ καλαφατικὸν ἔργον, | <u>γράφων</u> ἡμῖν ὡσαύτως καὶ \ τοὺς/ ἐκδοθέντας παῖδας τῆς διοική(σεώς) σ\ου/ | κατὰ τὸν περυσιανὸν (l. περυσινὸν) χρόνον τῷ αὐτῷ σκαρίφῳ, <u>ἐπιτρέπω[ν]</u> δὲ | τοῖς τῆς διοικήσεώς σο\υ/ φυτεῦσαι πλῆθος δένδρων | ἔν τε ἀμπέλῳ καὶ ἀκανθεων (l. ἀκάνθων) καὶ λοιπῶν δένδρων, | <u>μὴ ἀμελῶν</u> ἔν τιν[ι] τ[ῶν] ἐ[π]ιτ[ρα]πέντων σοι ἐν τῇ παρο[ύ]σῃ | ἐπιστολῇ ἀλλ (l. ἀλλ<ὰ>) διὰ σεαυτοῦ <u>περιερχόμενος</u> καὶ <u>ἐπισκεπτ[ό]μενο]ς</u> | ὡς εἴρηται χάριν τούτων ἀπάντων καὶ <u>γράφων</u> ἡμῖ[ν] τ[ὸ πῶς] | διεγένου. (*P.Ross.Georg.* IV 6 ll. 8-25 [710 AD] = TM 20491)

Thus, once you receive the present letter, order throughout the city and villages connected to it, and among the leading people of your district, youths to train in the crafts. Entrust them to skilled and notable craftsmen who know suitably their craft, and observing and monitoring them each month, watch over their work that there is no carelessness and negligence, and write to us the name, patronymic, village and craft of each. Preparing half of them to be cast for work in ship-building and half in caulking, send to us in the same way the names of the youths placed last year in the same kind of list. Order those of your district to plant a multitude of trees, vines, acacias and other trees and do not neglect any of the orders included in the present letter, but go around and observe on your own all of these things, as has been said, and write to us how you have done. (transl. Bell)

While especially in earlier times the Greeks were known for their fondness of the participle, it is used in this and other letters rather excessively; one can note that Bell in his translation has rendered many of these participles as English imperatives. What makes this passage particularly striking is the triple repetition of γράφων 'write' (lit. writing), as well as the fact that even the admonition (ll. 22-5), which is usually introduced with a subjunctive of the type μὴ ἀμελήσῃς 'do not neglect to' but is here expressed through the participle μὴ ἀμελῶν, is incorporated into a single, seventeen-line sentence.

While it is debatable whether the choice for the (conjunct) participle instead of the imperative in this and other passages was motivated primarily by the desire to write in a higher register, or rather to soften the succession of requests, one can note the use of θέλησον 'please' (lit. 'want') in the Greek letters as a pragmatic softener.[62] The use of this phrase is admittedly very limited in our corpus, as it can be found in only two letters, *P.Lond.* IV 1339 (709 AD) = TM 19797, a letter which unfortunately misses the opening and the first part of the body, and *P.Lond.* IV 1351 (710 AD) = TM 19809, a relatively short but fully preserved letter. What motivated the choice for this more polite option in these two letters is difficult to say: in the first letter, Qurra asks Basil to come down with some men and a register; in the second, Basil is requested to provide a messenger with a boat. Both of these letters contain a request that is somewhat more

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62 For the use of θέλησον as a politeness strategy, compare Koroli 2020b, 83.

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personal than the typical requests in the dossier, which could, perhaps, explain the occurrence of such a polite form. Somewhat strikingly, both letters also contain a threat, underlining the importance of the matter at hand.

Another element that is worth considering here from a socio-pragmatic point of view, is the participial clause δεχόμενος οὖν τὰ παρόντα γράμματα 'so receiving the present letter' which standardly introduces the request in the letters in our dossier, and can therefore be seen as a generic cue, together with the use of discourse particles such as οὖν and λοιπόν, which are not exclusive to the introduction of the request. There are some indications that would suggest that this phrase was more than a simple generic cue, that is, that it functioned as a type of pragmatic softener: first of all, the formula appears with some variations in our letters, which would suggest that the phrase was not completely standardised in its discourse-structuring function. In some of the letters, either the mood of the phrase is changed from participle to infinitive (πάραυτα οὖν τοῦ δέξασθαί σε τὰ παρόντα γρ[άμμα]τ[α] 'immediately upon the receiving of the present letter', *P.Ross.Georg.* IV 4 l. 1 (710 AD) = TM 20490), or the phrase is completely nominalised (μετὰ τὴ]ν ἀνάγνωσιν [τῶν παρόντων γραμμάτων] 'after the reading of the present letters', *P.Ross.Georg.* IV 27 C (I) l. 1 (709-710 AD) = TM 20502, unfortunately mostly reconstructed).[63]

A second and perhaps more important indicator of the fact that inclusion of the phrase δεχόμενος οὖν τὰ παρόντα γράμματα was more than a standardised generic element relates to the fact that this participial clause is not found in all of the request letters. This is mostly the case in shorter letters such as *P.Lond.* IV 1336 (709 AD) = TM 19794, *P.Lond.* IV 1342 (709 AD) = TM 19800, and *P.Lond.* IV 1368 (710 AD) = TM 19825, in which the background consists of the verb ἐτάξαμεν 'we have apportioned', and the request of a verb in the imperative asking to act accordingly (without a post-request). In these texts, the brevity of the expression might have motivated omission of the participial clause.[64] *P.Lond.* IV 1380 (710 AD) = TM 19835, however, is a long letter in which Qurra complains about Basil being in arrears with the payment of public gold taxes: similarly to the other letters in our dossier, this letter contains a clear background

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63 In one letter, *P.Ross.Georg.* IV 16 (TM 20500), one finds a double request phrase (ll. 5-7), a standard phrase announcing the start of the request, and another, alternative phrase integrated in the background: διὰ τοῦτο] κελεύομεν μετὰ τὴν ἀπόλυσιν | [τῶν παρόντων ἡμῶν γραμ]μάτων μὴ λεπταρισθῆναί τινα. | [δεχόμενος οὖν τὰ παρόντ]α γράμματα παράγγειλον 'this is why we order that after the deliverance of our present letters no one should be tortured (?). So, after the receipt of our present letter, order etc'.

64 One can compare, though, with other shorter letters such as *P.Lond.* IV 1401 (709-714 AD) = TM 19849, which do include the participial clause.

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section, in which Qurra complains about Basil's 'unsatisfactory and worthless' work, and his 'evil conduct' in the matter of tax payments (ll. 3-16); in this letter, however, the background is directly followed by a request in the imperative, without any introductory statement (ll. 16-18: βλέπε οὖν τὸ λοιπασθὲν | διὰ τῆς διοικήσεώς σο(υ) ἐκ τοῦ διμοιρομέρους τῶν χρυ(σικῶν) | δημοσίων αὐτῆς 'look then to the arrears in your district of the two-thirds part of its public gold taxes'). One could, perhaps, consider the omission of this participial clause as a conscious form of impoliteness.[65]

2.2 Threats and Admonitions

As we mentioned in the introduction, what we call 'threats' and 'admonitions' are not included in House and Kádár's list of speech acts. Nevertheless, they occur so frequently in our epistolary corpus that it is worth considering them as generic moves that can be variously realised. The threats in our corpus typically occur after the request, stating what will happen if Basil does not comply, but in some of the letters threats – whether or not implicit – occur in the background to the request, when Qurra refers to Basil's 'dangerous' attitude in past events.[66] The threats (whether in the pre- or post-request) mostly concern Basil, but local inhabitants are occasionally threatened too, as in *P.Lond.* IV 1343 (TM 19801), a letter in which Qurra instructs Basil and by extension the locals to make known fugitives; this letter contains multiple threats, the heaviest of which is saved for the very end of the letter.[67]

Two dominant ways of realisation for Greek threats are either as a *resolve*, with the initiator stating an act that he intends to do,[68] or as an *assertion*, in which the initiator expresses a strong opinion about something which s/he considers to be true. Both are typically expressed with a futural verbal expression.[69] In the following two

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65 For a frame-based approach to impoliteness in Greek, see Bruno 2022. For omissions in a formulaic context, see Bentein 2023a, 455-8.

66 See e.g. *P.Lond.* IV 1404 ll. 4-7 (709-714 AD) = TM 19852; *P.Berl.Frisk.* 6 ll. 6-7 (710 AD) = TM 17682.

67 Ll. 41-4: μέλλει γὰρ οὗτος μακαρίσαι τοὺς τεθνεῶτας | ἐν τῷ μὴ ὑποφέρειν αὐτον (l. αὐτοὺς) τὰ ἐπερχόμενα αὐτῷ δεινὰ | ἄνθ᾽ ὧν παρήκουσεν κελεύσεως ἡμῶν καὶ ἀπετόλμη[σ]εν | κατὰ τῆς ἰδίας ψυχῆς 'for such a man will count the dead happy in that they do not bear the calamities which will come upon him for his disobedience to our command and his reckless disregard of his own life'.

68 See House, Kádár 2021, 109.

69 There are few instances of the synthetic future in the dossier. An analytic expression that is used is the future of εἰμί with the present participle, though only for the expression ἔσῃ ἐπιστάμενος/γινώσκων 'you will be aware'.

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examples (2 and 3) the auxiliary verb μέλλω 'I will', followed by the aorist infinitive, is used to express a threat.[70]

(2) ἔσῃ γὰρ ἐπιστάμενος ὡς ἐὰν καταγνωσθῇ τις | ἐκ τῶν πεμπομένων παρὰ σο\ῦ/ ἐσχηκὼς παρ᾽ οίουδήποτε ἀνθρώπο\υ/ | σπόρτουλον εἰς σὲ ὁρᾷ ὁ κίδυνος καὶ μέλλεις σὺν <τῷ> καταγινωσκ(ομέν)ῳ | εἰς τοῦτο ἀπολαβεῖν (*P.Lond.* IV 1332 ll. 12-15 [708 AD] = TM 19791)

> for you will be aware that if anyone of the persons you send is convicted of having received a gratuity from anyone whatsoever, the danger is yours and you will receive punishment along with the guilty person. (transl. Bell)

(3) μὴ εὑρεθῇς παραλείψας τί ποτε ἐν τῇ ἐπιτροπῇ | ἡμῶν εἰς τοῦτο μήτε μὴν διδων (l. διδοὺς) καθ᾽ εαυτο\ῦ/ (l. σεαυτοῦ) | τὴν οἵαν οὖν πρόφασιν ἢ σκάνδαλον. μέλλομεν γὰρ | κελεύσει Θεοῦ καλοποιῆσαι τῷ καλῶς διαπραττωμένῳ (l. διαπραττομένῳ), | ἐξαλεῖψαι δὲ τὸν χαώτην ῥᾳδιουργόν τε καὶ ἄδικον (*P.Lond.* IV 1338 ll. 24-9 [709 AD] = TM 19796)

> and in fact may you not be found to have omitted anything at all in our commands regarding this matter, nor give any ground of complaint or cause of displeasure whatsoever against yourself; for we intend by God's command to recompense the man whose conduct is good and to wipe out the unjust and unscrupulous wastrel. (transl. Bell, slightly modified)

The verb μέλλω originally expressed a strong nuance of intention, meaning 'I intend to do something' with wilful animate subjects, and 'something is about to/will happen' with inanimate subjects.[71] While this original meaning of μέλλω is generally taken to have bleached over time, some of it may have been retained at the time of our dossier (especially with the first person), making the verb particularly suited for resolves and assertions.

Alternative formulations of resolves and assertions can be found, too: instead of μέλλω with an aorist infinitive, we sometimes find the use of a simple present indicative with the value of a future tense – the so-called *praesens pro futuro* – as in the first threat, where we read εἰς σὲ ὁρᾷ ὁ κίδυνος, with a futural meaning of [if you do not comply] 'the danger *will be* yours'.[72] Another construction that appears in several of the letters is οὐ μή with the subjunctive or future indicative,

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70 Markopoulos 2009, 90-1, notes a remarkable difference in the infinitival complementation of μέλλω in literary vs. non-literary sources in the Early Byzantine period: papyri almost exclusively use the aorist infinitive, whereas literary sources only contain occasional attestations of this type of infinitive. Markopoulos concludes that μέλλω with the aorist infinitive must have formed a 'low-register pattern', to which he sees the Qurrah dossier giving testimony.

71 Markopoulos 2009, 21.

72 E.g. *SB* III 7241 l. 28 (710 AD) = TM 18868; *P.Lond.* IV 1343 l. 18 (709 AD) = TM 19801; *P.Lond.* IV 1351 l. 12 (710 AD) = TM 19809; *P.Lond.*4.1370 l. 13 (710 AD) = TM 20496.

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which, according to standard grammars of the Classical period, expresses "an emphatic denial, a strong belief that something will not be the case".[73] As John Lee has noted, this construction became less frequently used in the Post-classical period, though the construction is still well-attested in the Septuagint.[74] Lee observes that the construction can be found in the New Testament, too, though noting that it is almost entirely limited to the sayings of Jesus, from which he concludes that the construction "conveyed not only emphasis but more importantly a solemn, biblical tone, especially suited to prophetic utterances and the speech of Jesus".[75] In our dossier, the construction may be taken to indicate solemnity and perhaps also a Biblical tone, which would be in line with Bell's observation that 'some Biblical uses occur'[76] in the Greek papyri from our dossier. The construction can be found in main clauses, or embedded in a complement clause, as in example 4:[77]

(4) κατάλαβε τὰ πρὸς ἡμᾶς μ[ε]τ[ὰ] τ[ῆ]ς συμπληρώσεως | ὡς εἴρηται τῶν χρυσικῶν δημοσίων καὶ ἐκστραορδίνω(ν) | καὶ λοιπῶν στίχων ἐπιζητουμένων διὰ τῆς διοική(σεως) | μὴ ὑστερῶν ἐξ αὐτῶν τι τὸ σύνολον, γινώσκει γὰρ | ὁ Θεός, ὡς οὐ μὴ ἀποκεινηθῇς (l. ἀποκινηθῇς) ἐξ ἡμῶν καὶ ἔστι | διὰ σο(ῦ) ἐν λοιπάδει (l. λοιπάδι) ἕως ἑνὸς μιλιαρισίο(υ) καὶ | μόνο(υ) καὶ πιστοφορέθητι εἰς τοῦτο. (*P.Lond.* IV 1338 ll. 4-10 [709 AD] = TM 19796)

come down to us with the complement, as aforesaid, of the public gold taxes and extraordinary taxes and the remaining imposts required from your administrative district, not delaying anything at all of them. For God knows that you shall never depart again from us if there is even one single penny in arrear from you – be sure of that!

Besides the use of a futural expression, whether in the first or the second/third person, the use of the backward causal particle γάρ 'for' can be considered a characteristic trait of threats, which is indicative of the high degree of integration of threats and preceding requests, often in the form of admonitions. In our previous examples 3 and 4, threats immediately follow an admonition not to act against the orders that have been given. Even more striking are the

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73 van Emde Boas et al. 2019, 440.

74 Lee 1985, 18-23.

75 Lee 1985, 19.

76 Bell 1910, xliii. Lee 1985, 19, lists some more examples from the papyri.

77 For other instances of the οὐ μή construction, see *P.Lond.* IV 1337 l. 16 (709 AD) = TM 19795 (οὐ μὴ συγχωρήσωμεν); *P.Lond.* IV 1339 ll. 17-18 (709 AD) = TM 19797 (οὐ μὴ δεξόμεθα); *P.Lond.* IV 1343 l. 33 (709 AD) = TM 19801 (οὐ μὴ παρεάσωμεν); *P.Lond.* IV 1349 l. 23 (710 AD) = TM 19807 (οὐ μὴ διαλάθῃ ἡμᾶς τί πότε); *P.Lond.* IV 1362 l. 15 (710 AD) = TM 19820 (οὐ μὴ τοῦτο δέξονται).

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modifying expressions accompanying threats, in particular second- and third-person comment clauses of the type ἔσῃ γινώσκων/ἔσῃ ἐπιστάμενος 'you will be aware', γινώσκει ὁ Θεός/ἐπίσταται ὁ Θεός 'the Lord knows', and πιστοφορέθητι 'be sure'. The pragmatic effect of these comment clauses is not entirely straightforward: in our previous example 4, it seems clear that γινώσκει γὰρ ὁ Θεός 'for the Lord knows', preceding the threat, and πιστοφορέθητι εἰς τοῦτο 'be sure of that', following the threat, are used to strengthen (upgrade) the assertion made by the initiator, as is also indicated by the use of the οὐ μή construction (οὐ μὴ ἀποκεινηθῇς *surely, you will not depart*).[78] The frequent insertion of ἔσῃ ἐπιστάμενος 'you will be aware' before threats, on the other hand, might be taken to decrease what House and Kádár refer to as 'the level of directness' of the speech act, that is, 'the degree to which the speaker's illocutionary intent is apparent from the locution'.[79] Given the overall emphasis that is put on the threats, however, it is perhaps more likely that this type of expression had a discourse-structuring role (drawing attention to an important element in the discourse), rather than that it functioned as an upgrader or downgrader, similar to the role of what we term 'discourse imperatives' in the Arabic letters (see § 3.2).

Besides comment clauses, another type of modifier that frequently appears in the context of threats are invocations of the type κελεύσει θεοῦ 'by God's command', genitive absolutes of the type τοῦ Θεοῦ συνεργοῦντος 'with God's help', lit. 'God helping' sometimes being used as an alternative.[80] Here again, the pragmatic effect is not entirely clear: while one would be inclined to consider an expression such as κελεύσει θεοῦ as an upgrader, given that it typically appears after the verb μέλλω that expresses Qurra's strong resolve to undertake a certain course of (corrective) action, it is striking that the same expression can also be found, though less frequently, in other types of speech acts, such as requests and even statements, along with expressions of the type εἰς τὸν Θεόν 'by God' and ἐπ' ὀνόματος τοῦ Θεο(ῦ) 'in God's name'. Example 5 shows κελεύσει θεοῦ in a background statement to the actual request, where the expression can hardly be said to 'upgrade' the statement:

(5)   ἡμῶν ἤδη ἐπιτρεψάντων τῷ ἐπικειμένῳ | τῆς ἐργασίας τῶν αὐτῶν καράβων ἄρξασθαι εἰς κτίσιν | καὶ φιλοκαλείαν αὐτῶν διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν τεχνίτων | [......] ε[...]ϲδαν, διαστείλομεν (l. διεστείλαμεν) κελεύσει θεοῦ | τ[ὴν ὑπο]τ[ε]

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τ[αγμένην δι]αστολὴν τῶν αὐτῶν τεχνίτων. (P.Laur. IV 192 ll. 8-12 [709 AD] = TM 21277)

as we have already ordered to the person in charge of the manufacture of the same ships to begin with the construction and beautification through the same artisans… we have sent written orders, by the command of God, for the below-attached list of the same artisans.

Let us now turn to admonitions, which, like threats, are typically found after the request, constituting, as we noted above, a sort of generalised request – a request to take the entirety of the letter seriously. Admonitions show less variation than threats in the way they are realised: they generally occur as requests, either in the form of an imperative repeating the main request, or, more frequently, as a prohibitive subjunctive stating that the recipient should not act against the request that has been made.[81] Example 6 illustrates not only the different expressive possibilities for admonitions, but also their complex interaction with threats:

(6) μὴ ἀμελῇς τὲ (l. δὲ) εἰς τὸ ἀποστεῖλαι διὰ πάσης συντομία[ς], εἴ τι | διεστείλαμεν διὰ τῆς διοικήσεώς σου λόγῳ τοῦ αὐτοῦ κούρσου | ἀπό τε ναυτῶν καὶ τεχνιτῶν καὶ δαπανῶν· ἐπετρέψαμεν γὰρ τῷ | παρόντι ἀποστόλῳ ἡμῶν μὴ ἀποστῆναι ἐκ σοῦ καί ἐστι διὰ σοῦ | τί ποτε τὸ καθόλου ἐν λοιπάδι (l. λοιπάδι). λοιπὸν μὴ γένηται ἀμελιας (l. ἀμέλεια) | καὶ ὑστερεθῇ (l. ὑστερηεθῇ) τι· ἔςῃ γὰρ ἐπιστάμενος, ὡς, εἰ ἀπομείνῃ τι ἐν | λοιπάδει (l. λοιπάδι), μέλλομεν κελεύσει θεοῦ ἀπαιτῆσαί σε αὐτὸ ἐν διπλῇ | ποσότητι ὑπὲρ παρακοῆς καὶ καταφρονήσεως. γινώσκων (l. γιγνώσκων) τοίνυν, | ὡς ἐπισπούδαστόν ἐστι τὸ πρᾶγμα τοῦ τοιούτου κούρσου, [ἀ]μελλητὶ | ἐκτέλεσον, μὴ διδων (l. δίδους) κατὰ σοῦ τὴν οἵαν οὖν ἀφορμήν. (*SB* III 7241 ll. 45-54 [710 AD] = TM 18868)

Do not be negligent in dispatching with all speed the whole amount assessed on your administrative district for the said raid, both in sailors and artisans and in supplies; for we have instructed the present messenger not to depart from you if you are in arrears with even anything at all. Therefore, let there be no negligence and no deficiency; for you will know that if anything be in arrears, we shall by God's command exact it from you in double measure for your neglect and contumacy. Knowing therefore that the matter of the said raid is one of urgency perform it without delay, not affording us any cause of complaint whatever against you. (transl. Bell)

SB III 7241 is, as we noted in § 2, the longest request letter in our dossier, dealing with the sending of skilled people and supplies. This

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81 Koroli 2020b, 85, also observes the occurrence of repeated requests in Late Antique request letters, which she refers to in terms of 'subsidiary requests'. She notes that 'the formulation of subsidiary requests, repeating emphatically (either identically reproducing or paraphrasing) one or more basic requests is a recurrent linguistic strategy to convey an imperative tone to the request letter'. For the force of repetitions more generally, see Bentein 2023b.

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ten-line closing of the body stresses the importance of Basil's complying with the request that is made. It consists of:

- a first admonition introduced by the verbal intensifier μὴ ἀμελῇς 'do not neglect' followed by a prepositional infinitive (ll. 45-7);
- a supportive statement – one that could be viewed as an implicit threat – making reference to a messenger who will keep a close eye on everything (ll. 47-9);
- a second admonition, a variation of the first, again highlighting the importance of not neglecting the order (μὴ γένηται ἀμέλεια 'may there not occur any neglect') (ll. 49-50);
- another supportive statement containing an explicit threat (arrears will be exacted double) (ll. 50-2);
- a third admonition, this time highlighting the urgency of the request, which also stresses that Basil should not give cause for complaint (perhaps another implicit threat) (ll. 52-4).

The passage not only nicely illustrates the verbal means to express admonitions (mostly μή with the subjunctive, alternated with the imperative, or the occasional imperatival participle), as well as the typical modifiers (which are similar to those for the main request), but also the use of discourse particles that characterise admonitions. The most important and recognizable of these is λοιπόν 'so', lit. 'for the rest', which tends to be used after the first request and draws attention to an important point in the discourse, typically in a summarising, recapitulating way.[82] As such, it is also, though less frequently, found with repeated threats.[83] Another particle that is frequently found with admonitions and that equally signals a break in the discourse is ἀλλὰ 'but', which is particularly often found in combination with μὴ ἀμελήσῃς.

As with requests and threats, admonitions tend to be upgraded by a set of modifying expressions, in particular manner and time adverbs/adverbial phrases expressing the need to do an action swiftly and zealously (compare § 2.1), comment clauses emphasising the fact that a request has already been made, such as ὡς εἴρηται/ὡς λέλεκται 'as has been said', καθὼς πολλαχῶς εἴρηται 'as has often been said'; and second- and third person verbal intensifiers such as μὴ ἀμελήσῃς 'do not neglect to', μὴ ὑστερήσῃς 'do not be late to', πᾶσαν σπουδὴν ποίησον 'make every effort to'. Another type of (clausal) expression that we often find with admonitions are conditional clauses of the

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82 Note, however, that occasionally λοιπόν is used to signal the first request, together with δεχόμενος τὰ παρόντα γράμματα, instead of the more usual discourse particle οὖν. See *P.Lond.* IV 1350 l. 7 (710 AD) = TM 19808; *P.Lond.* IV 1365 l. 1 = TM 19822; *P.Ross.Georg.* IV 2 l. 6 (710 AD) = TM 20488.

83 *P.Lond.* IV 1344 l. 13 (710 AD) = TM 19802; *P.Lond.* IV 1359 l. 20 (710 AD) = TM 19817.

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type as ἐὰν οὖν ἐστι ἐν σοὶ ἀγαθὸν 'if there is any good in you', εἰ μέντοι ἐρρωμένῳ λογισμῷ ὑπάρχεις 'if you dispose of sane reasoning', ἐὰν ἀγαπᾷς τὴν ψυχήν σο(υ) 'if you love your soul', which could, perhaps be interpreted as a type of implicit threat. Given the degree of syntactic integration as well as the relative implicitness of the threat, we prefer to view these phrases as syntactic 'upgraders', rather than real threats.

To conclude our discussion of admonitions, it is worth noting the importance that perception verbs have in the expression of admonitions, either in first- or third-person active constructions of the type μὴ εὕρωμεν 'may we not find out', or second-or third-person passive constructions of the type μὴ εὑρεθῇς 'may you not be found (to have V-ed)', μὴ γνωσθῇ 'may it not be brought to our attention (that)', the complement of which does not express the preferred course of action, as with μὴ ἀμελήσῃς 'do not neglect (to)', but rather the action that should be avoided. Besides offering a different perspective to the admonition, such complement-taking expressions could be taken to decrease what we called above the 'level of directness', especially when they are used in the passive voice. The same is true for the type of nominal periphrasis that occurred in our last example, μὴ γένηται ἀμέλεια lit. 'may there not occur any negligence', which is more indirect than μὴ ἀμελήσῃς. A similar construction is used in Arabic, which mostly occurs with the verb 'do not let me find out' *lā 'a'rifa-nna* (e.g. *P.BeckerNPAF* 1 l. 11, see § 3.3). However, in Arabic this introductory phrase to the admonition is consistently morphologically marked with a verbal mood that communicates assertion (the energic, see § 3.2), and does not occur in the passive form. Therefore, in the Arabic letters, it is very clear that this is not meant as a downgrader, but more likely functioned as an upgrader to intensify the admonition.

3 The Arabic Letters

The dossier presents 86 letters containing Arabic, which includes 23 bilingual Arabic-Greek tax demand notes (*entagia*), such as *P.Heid. Arab.* I a-i, and letters written in Greek with only an Arabic address and summary line (some 13 examples, e.g. *P.Lond.* 1346). The analysis below is based on 23 Arabic letters that were certainly, or likely, sent from the chancery of Qurra son of Sharīk to Basil. These 23 letters represent the published documents that are currently available on the Arabic Papyrology Database (APD),[84] and that are complete enough to understand the general content and structure of the

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84 Available at: https://www.apd.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/apd/project.jsp.

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text. In order to have a dataset of comparable material as that preserved in the surviving Greek documents from the same dossier, judicial rescripts were excluded, as we do not have such documents written in Greek.[85] As mentioned in the introduction, *entagia* were also excluded.[86]

Texts that are 30-40 lines long are not uncommon (e.g. *P.BeckerNPAF* 1, 2; *P.Qurra* 4), although many now lack the beginning of the text, making it impossible to know the exact number of original lines. Some are shorter instructions, such as *P.Qurra* 1, which is complete, and only consists of 17 lines, instructing Basil to make sure a bishop in his district, who is late with his taxes, will pay what he is due. The longest surviving Arabic text is *P.Heid.Arab.* I 3, which is about 90 lines long. This letter admonishes Basil to make sure people pay their taxes in grain, which he had received a letter about before. The letter then goes into detail on how to organise the tax collection, what measures to use, and how to punish those who defy these orders. An important reason for the urgency behind the letter seems to be the rising grain prices, because of which merchants are holding back grain to speculate with instead of bringing it to the state granary. Another long letter, *P.Heid.Arab.* I 2 (about 40 lines), concerns the same topic of rising grain prices and the required government response to that. Most of the other, longer letters seem to concern overdue tax payments (e.g. *P.BeckerNPAF* 1, 2; *P.SijpesteijnQurra*).

These letters were written to instruct or order Basil to do things. Therefore, it is not surprising that almost all letters contain examples of the speech act Request. In fact, only one of the annotated letters lacks any examples of a direct request, even though the main aim of the letter was to tell Basil that he is in arrears with his taxes and should pay them as soon as he can (*P.BeckerNPAF* 3). Since the beginning and ending of the letter are missing, more direct requests may have been made in the missing portions, but compared to the other (partially) preserved letters it is still striking that the preserved 27 lines only contain an example of a Statement, recalling the order that was given in a previous letter, and an Assertion. From this, one can infer the request being made. However, the use of

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85 Judicial rescripts document a step in the judiciary system, in which the governor advised the pagarch what to do based on cases that had been brought before the pagarch and which had been sent on to the governor. These letters are characterised by several common formulae. For an in-depth discussion of the formulae that are used in the Arabic judicial rescripts in the Qurra papyri see Tillier 2017.

86 The following Arabic letters were included in the analysis: *P.BeckerNPAF* 1, *P.BeckerNPAF* 12, *P.BeckerNPAF* 2, *P.BeckerNPAF* 3, *P.BeckerNPAF* 4, *P.BeckerNPAF* 5, *P.BeckerNPAF* 6, *P.BeckerPAF* 12, *P.BeckerPAF* 3, *P.BeckerPAF* 4, *P.BeckerPAF* 5, *P.GrohmannQorra-Brief*, *P.Heid.Arab.* I 1, *P.Heid.Arab.* I 2, *P.Heid.Arab.* I 3, *P.Heid.Arab.* I 4, *P.Qurra* 1, *P.Qurra* 2, *P.Qurra* 4, *P.Qurra* 5, *P.RagibQurra* 1, *P.RagibQurra* 2, *P.SijpesteijnQurra*.

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Assertions to express an indirect request tends to be used as an Admonition in the rest of the Arabic corpus (see § 3.2). All in all, these 23 Arabic texts contain 92 phrases that could formally be annotated as a speech act Request (expressed with imperative forms). Other types of speech acts occur too, such as Descriptions ($n = 26$), Statements ($n = 1$), and Assertions ($n = 20$).

In Arabic historical literature, Qurra son of Sharīk has been depicted as a harsh administrator,[87] which is partially taken up in the scholarly discussions of the Qurra papyri.[88] Given the high number of occurrences of emphatic expressions and threats, this first impression is not surprising. However, Becker already observed that even though his tone may be harsh in some of the letters, a returning concern in them was that the people living in the district should be treated justly.[89] This somewhat justifies his harsh tone in addressing his administrator. Looking more closely at which letters contain most threats and admonitions, we can nuance this somewhat further, as it becomes clear that it is especially in the letters dealing with a transgression that most of the harsher and more expansive language appears.[90] Moreover, it seems that especially ignoring requests to rectify a situation results in more elaborate and harsher letters.

Looking at the letters that contain explicit threats, we find that these occur most commonly in letters that deal with overdue tax payments (*P.BeckerNPAF* 2; *P.BeckerPAF* 4, 5; *P.SijpesteijnQurra*). Another example of a long and explicitly threatening letter is *P.Heid.Arab.* I 3. In this letter, Qurra is very explicit about the corporeal, financial, and humiliating punishment he expects Basil to inflict on any administrators that over-tax the inhabitants of his district.[91] This long letter with detailed instructions, and many moralising admonitions on good government, states explicitly that this is not the first letter Qurra has sent about this, which seems to have inspired the harsher language and more complex structure of the letter. Another element that likely contributed to the harsh language was the urgency

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[87] See the discussion of the Arabic sources in Becker 1906, 17-19.

[88] Becker emphasises Qurra's focus on executing tax payments in a way that is just towards the local inhabitants and casts the harshness of the letters in the context of the vision of harsh but just rule in Islamic theological manuals of the time, linking specific vocabulary used in the letters to Quranic usage. See Becker 1906, 33-5. Abbott, similarly to Becker, stresses the religious and moralising aspect of the letters, but also underlines the severity of the language with expressions that are 'well-nigh abuse'. See Abbott 1938, 40. Papaconstantinou 2022 makes a similar link between some of the moralising language in the Greek Qurra papyri and patristic literature.

[89] Becker 1906, 33-5.

[90] As Abbott 1938, 40 already observed.

[91] "Punish him with a hundred lashes, shave his beard and his head, and fine him with thirty dinar on top of the amount he over-charged" (*P.Heid.Arab.* I 3 ll. 52-4).

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to make sure that the state granaries were filled due to rising grain prices. The sense of urgency is understandable, as the letter indicates that the prices are already rising, and swift action is needed to ensure that this staple food remained available and affordable for the general population. The importance of agricultural production for the profitable collection of taxes, and to feed the population and the troops, likely also explains why the letter pressing Basil to ensure his district's agricultural lands are productive (*P.Qurra* 2) contains a threat (of blame when he does not satisfy the request), even though no transgression has taken place.

There are other examples that show that it is not a transgression per se that warrants a harsh reaction, at least not when it is first addressed. *P.BeckerNPAF* 6, for example, deals with such a transgression. Basil has fined some villagers because of their tax payments, probably because they were in arrears. Qurra informs him in a very short and straightforward manner that he has become aware of this and asks Basil to leave the villagers alone until the two of them have had an opportunity to discuss this matter. The request is followed by a downgrader *'in šā'a Allāh*[92] 'God willing' before the closing formulae. So, while the just treatment of subjects seems generally important to Qurra, in this first notice he is still short, to the point, and rather polite about it. These examples clearly show how the communicative purpose and framework of each letter shaped the expression of the requests made within them.

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92 Note that in transcriptions of Arabic text, Arabic letter *šīn* (ش) is transcribed as *š*, in order to maintain a one-to-one relationship between the letters in Arabic and their equivalent in transcription. In English text, however, the equivalent of *šīn* is given as sh, for example in the name of the governor Qurra son of Sharīk.

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3.1 Requests

As in the Greek letters, the Arabic letters from Qurra all contain requests. In Arabic, requests are commonly expressed with direct imperatives. The directness of this expression can then be softened by adding extensive blessings for the addressee in the opening section of the letter and slide-in blessings for the addressee when they are mentioned in the body of the text.[93] Such insertions can be called 'downgraders'. Another common softening supportive move to requests, in the Arabic papyri more generally, is the insertion of phrase *ʾin šāʾa Allāh* 'Allah willing', which is even attested in some of the more curtly phrased official letters.[94]

The Qurra papyri famously contain only minimal blessings in the opening and closing sections, and no slide-in blessings for the addressee, which can likely be taken as a result of the very direct top-down communication they contain.[95] The downgrader 'Allah willing' is attested in several texts, following a request (*P.BeckerNPAF* 2 ll. 19-24; *P.BeckerNPAF* 6 ll. 12-15; *P.BeckerPAF* 5 ll. 7-10; *P.RagibQurra* 1 ll. 18-22). It can follow the request directly, as in example 7, or with a statement about the reason why this is important in between, as in example 8.[96]

(7)   *P.BeckerNPAF* 6 ll. 12-15

    fa-lā taʿtariḍanna ʾaḥadan min-hum bi-šāyʾ ḥattā ʾuḥaddiṯu ʾilay-ka fī-him ʾin šāʾa Allāh

    do not bother anyone of them with anything until I have talked to you about them, **Allah willing**

(8)   *P.BeckerPAF* 5 ll. 7-10

    fa-lā] *tuʾaḫḫiranna min-hā* [*šayʾ fa-ʾinnī*] *ʾurīdu ʾan* [*ʾursila bi-hā*] *ʾilā ʾamīr* [*al-muʾminīn ʾi*]*n šāʾa Allāh*

    do not delay [any] of them, *for I want to* [*send them*] *to the leader* [*of the believers*], **Allah willing**

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93 See Grob 2010, 118-20 for a discussion of the pragmatic use of religious elements in Arabic business and private correspondence. For example, in a private petition from the second half of the ninth century: *P.Marchands* II 18 ll. 3-4 "I ask God for help in my affair […] my brother, may God preserve you, my father and his harshness towards us".

94 Sijpesteijn 2022, 191, gives an example from a curt, official letter from the ninth century, published by Diem 1997, no. 26.

95 Sijpesteijn 2022, 191.

96 Examples for which the linguistic structure is relevant to the argument will be glossed, in other cases only the Arabic and translation will be given.

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Somewhat entertainingly, in example 9, the request is first followed by an admonition, a supportive move which functions to intensify the force of the request (highlighted in italics), and only then the downgrader follows (highlighted in bold):

(9)   *P.RagibQurra* 1 ll. 18-22

fa-ibʿaṯ ʿalā ṣanʿa(ti-hu) hāḏā al-ḫubz man yataʿahhadu-hu wa-yuḥsinu ṣanʿata-hu fa-ʾinnī ġayr muraḫḫiṣ la-ka fī-hi ʾin šāʾa Allāh

So, appoint for the production of this bread someone who will take care (in its production) and who is good at producing it. *I will not make any concession to you on this matter*, **Allah willing**

As invocations one may compare the use of *Allah willing* in these and other requests to the use of the earlier-mentioned Greek phrase κελεύσει θεοῦ 'by God's command', and even more so the genitive absolute construction τοῦ Θεοῦ συνεργοῦντος 'with God helping'; however, as we noted, these phrases mostly accompany threats, and are inserted directly after the verb μέλλω, expressing Qurra's intention. Even though 'I will not make any concession to you on this matter' may have had a threatening undertone, as an expression of intent it is very different from the many explicit threats in the corpus, that threaten fines or physical harm. Moreover, the other examples of *ʾin šāʾa Allāh* in the Arabic corpus, seem explicitly unthreatening. In example 8 (and in *P.BeckerNPAF* 2 ll. 19-24), the request is followed by an explanation of the reason why this request is important (background information) before the insertion of the invocation. Giving reasons, to ground a request, is generally considered to be a downgrading or mitigating strategy.[97] Therefore, based on the available examples in this corpus, and its usage in historical and contemporary Arabic more generally, the invocations seem to have had a different function in Greek and Arabic. The invocation *wa-Allāhi* 'by Allah' forms a closer parallel to the invocations of God that occur in the Greek texts as modifiers that frequently appear in the context of threats (see § 3.2, example 24, for some of the Greek examples see § 2.2).

Even though imperatives are the most common way to express requests in the Arabic Qurra letters, we can make a distinction between direct imperatives that express the actual action that is requested, and discourse imperatives that only function to introduce the actual request.[98] Such discourse imperatives seem to function to

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97   House, Kádár 2021, 126; Brown, Levinson 1987, 128.

98   We would like to thank Marina Terkourafi for highlighting the importance of this distinction during the *How to Ask?* workshop organised by Gijsbert Rutten and Petra Sijpesteijn at Leiden University, 26-26 May, 2023.

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give the reader a cue to structure the text and prepare them for the upcoming request, as a discourse marker, similar to what House and Kádár call an 'alerter'.[99] The actual request can then be expressed nominally with a prepositional phrase (example 10) or with a relative clause (examples 11; 12). The following verbs are used as discourse imperatives: *ḫuḏ*[100] 'take, get to'; *istawṣi*[101] 'concern yourself (with)'; *taʿahhad*[102] 'pay attention to, make sure'; *unẓur*[103] 'see to it'.[104]

(10) *P.BeckerNPAF* 2 ll. 7-8

<div dir="rtl">فخذ في جمع المال</div>

fa-ḫuḏ	*fī*	*jamʿ*
CONJ-take.IMPER.2SING.MASC	PREP.in	gathering.MASC.SING.GEN.CST
al-māl		
DEF-money.MASC.SING		

get to the collection of the (tax) money

(11) *P.Heid.Arab.* I 1 ll. 11-12

<div dir="rtl">فخذ فيما على أرضك من الجزية</div>

fa-ḫuḏ	*fī-mā*	*ʿalā*	*ʾarḍ-ka*
CONJ-take.2SING.MASC.IMPER	PREP.in-REL	PREP.on	land.CST-2MASC.SING.POSS
min	*al-jizya*		
PREP.from	DEF-tax		

get to what is due from your district of the jizya tax

---

99 House, Kádár 2021, 118. They define an 'alerter' as: "an element whose function it is to alert the recipient's attention to the ensuing speech act", which mainly modifies the speech act externally. In the case of the discourse imperatives, however, the imperative is still the main verb, as can be seen in the examples.

100 Two attestations: *P.BeckerNPAF* 2 l. 7; *P.Heid.Arab.* I 1 l. 11.

101 One attestation: *P.GrohmannQorra-Brief* l. 5.

102 One attestation: *P.BeckerPAF* 5 l. 14.

103 Six attestations: *P.Qurra* 1 l. 6; *P.Heid.Arab.* I 2 l. 12 l. 29; *P.BeckerNPAF* 12 l. 1; *P.BeckerPAF* 5 l. 4; *P.SijpesteijnQurra* l. 5.

104 A verb that functions on the edge between the a direct request for action and an introduction to a request is *mur* 'order'. Given Basil's position and responsibilities, these requests represent direct imperatives in the sense that Qurra indeed expects him to order the people of his district to do something, but the main request, and the envisioned outcome of the letter, is of course not Basil giving an order, but his people executing the requested order that then follows.

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(12) *P.Qurra* 1 ll. 6-9

<div dir="rtl">

فانظر الَّذي كان بقي على أسقف كورتّك ممّا فرض عليه عبد اللّه بن عبد الملك
</div>

fa-unẓur		*allaḏī*	*kāna*	*baqiya*
CONJ-see.IMPER.SING.MASC		REL.MASC.SING	be.3SING.MASC.PERF	leave.3SING.MASC.PERF
ʿalā	*ʾusquf*	*kūr-ati-ka*		*mim-mā*
PREP.on	bishop.MASC.SING	district-FEM.SING.CST-2MASC.SING.POSS		PREP.from-REL
faraḍa		*ʿalay-hi*		*ʿAbd Allāh*
impose.3SING.MASC.PERF		PREP.on-3MASC.SING		ʿAbd Allāh
bin		*ʿAbd al-Malik*		
son.MASC.SING.CST		ʿAbd al-Malik		

see to what remains of the dues of the bishop of your district of what was imposed on him by
ʿAbd Allah son of ʿAbd al-Malik

Structurally, these constructions display parallels with some of the up-graders that characterise admonitions in the Greek letters (§ 2.2), in the sense that the (negative) imperative that is used does not signify the main request, but merely the request to act. However, they strong-ly differ in distribution and pragmatic force and function in both corpora. While in the Greek data these constructions are used to strengthen the request (typically in the form of an admonition), the distribution of the Arabic discourse imperatives clearly shows that their function was to provide structure to the letter and aid the reader in this way, without modifying the strength or urgency of the request.

Of the 64 examples that pragmatically function as Request in the Arabic Qurra papyri, 50 are expressed using a direct imperative, and ten with a discourse imperative. The ten examples with discourse imperatives occur in eight different letters.[105] In all but one of those letters, the Request introduced by a discourse imperative is the first one in the letter, in most cases either directly following the opening formula *ʾammā baʿd* 'now then',[106] which separates the introductory blessing formulae from the body of the letter, or following the formu-la *fa-ʾidā jāʾa-ka kitāb-ī hāḏā* 'when this letter of mine reaches you',[107] which generally separates the descriptive portion of the body from the actual request in this corpus. This suggests that these discourse imperatives were used to signal, or emphasise, the beginning of the request part of the letter, which mostly contained a series of requests, functionally not unlike the Greek discourse particle οὖν 'so' (see § 3.2 for a brief discussion of the Arabic discourse particle *fa-* which forms

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105 *P.BeckerNPAF* 2; *P.Qurra* 1; *P.GrohmannQorra-Brief*; *P.Heid.Arab.* I 1; *P.Heid.Ar-ab.* I 2; *P.BeckerNPAF* 12; *P.BeckerPAF* 5; *P.SijpesteijnQurra*.

106 *P.Qurra* 1; *P.GrohmannQorra-Brief*; *P.BeckerNPAF* 12; *P.BeckerPAF* 5.

107 *P.BeckerNPAF* 2; *P.Heid.Arab.* I 1.

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a more direct parallel to οὖν as discourse particle).[108] Another imperative that seems to be used as an alerter is *iʿlam*[109] 'know that'. However, as it does not urge to act, but to be aware of something, this is used to introduce threats (comparable to Greek phrases such as ἔσῃ ἐπιστάμενος 'you will be aware' see §§ 2.2 and 3.2).

The only exception to this is the occurrence in *P.SijpesteijnQurra* 2, where the Request that is introduced with the discourse imperative is the second Request in the letter, following direct Request to 'hurry to send to me what you owe of the jizya' (*P.SijpesteijnQurra* 2 ll. 4-5). Even though the beginning of the letter is damaged, it seems to mention an order that Basil did not follow (l. 2), which suggests that the initial Request is a repetition of information that is presumed to already be known to the recipient. The next order, to see to 'the collection of the taxes and its' surplus' (ll. 5-6) might then be interpreted as the first new Request.

However, even though in most cases these discourse imperatives signal the beginning of the request part of the letter, in *P.Heid.Arab.* I 2 the verb *unẓur* 'see that' is used twice, once at the very beginning of the letter, seemingly for the first Request (*P.Heid.Arab.* I 2 ll. 12-14),[110] and once towards the end of the letter where it introduces a summary of a series of things Basil needs to ensure the traders in his district do, which were outlined in the preceding lines of the letter in more detail (example 13).

(13) *P.Heid.Arab.* I 2 ll. 29-33

<div dir="rtl">وانظر النصف الباقي فليبيعوه في أهل الأرض فإن لم ينفق في الأرض فليحمله إلى الفسطاط</div>

wa-unẓur		*al-niṣf*	*al-bāqiya*	
CONJ-see. IMPER.SING.MASC		DEF-half	DEF-remainder	
fa-l-yabʿiyū-hu			*fī*	*ʾahl*	*al-ʾarḍ*
CONJ-ASSEV-sell.3PL.MASC.APOC-3MASC.SING.POSS			PREP.in	people.CST	DEF-land
fa-ʾin	*lam*	*yanfuq*		*fī*	*al-ʾarḍ*
CONJ-CONJ	NEG	sell.3SING.MASC.IMPERF.PASS		PREP.in	DEF-land
fa-l-yaḥmil-hu			*ʾilā*	*al-Fusṭāṭ*
CONJ-ASSEV-carry.3SING.MASC.APOC-3MASC.SING			PREP.to	DEF-Fusṭāṭ

see to the remaining half and (make sure) they will sell it among the people of the countryside and if it is not sold in the countryside that he will bring it to Fusṭāṭ

---

108   Note that since the formula 'when this letter of mine reaches you' seems to fulfill a similar function in this corpus, this would make the letters in which this formula is followed by a discourse imperative doubly marked in this respect.

109   Three attestations: *P.Heid.Arab.* I 3 l. 56; *P.BeckerPAF* 5 l. 11; *P.SijpesteijnQurra* l. 11. Note that *iʿlam* 'know that' specifically occurs as an introduction to threats (see § 3.2).

110   The beginning of *P.Heid.Arab.* I 2 is damaged, but based on what is legible it seems like the lines preceding the first request contain a description of the issue and an admonition: "I do not want to hear of any man that he held back his grain to sell" (ll. 9-11).

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Here, the verb seems to be used for both its discursive and semantic function. On the one hand, it signals the start of a summarising sequence, while at the same time it stresses Basil's role as overseer and monitor of the situation, rather than the one who needs to take direct action himself.

There is one Request that is expressed as an Assertion, using a second person masculine singular imperfective verb, which can be translated with a future tense (example 14).

(14) *P.Heid.Arab.* I 3 ll. 54-6

<div dir="rtl">بعد أن تغرمه ما ازداد على الذي أمرتك به</div>

ba'd		*'an*	*tuġarrima-hu*		*mā*
PREP.after		CONJ	fine.2SING.MASC.IMPERF-3MASC.SING.POSS		REL
izdāda	*'alā*	*allaḏī*		*'amartu-ka*	
increase.3SING.MASC.PERF	PREP.on	REL.MASC.SING		order.1SING.PERF-2MASC.SING	
bi-hi					
PREP.by-3MASC.SING					

after that, you will fine him for how much he exceeded what I ordered you (to take) from it

In the most toned-down letter available in the corpus, a direct request is lacking altogether.[111] What seems to be the main request appears just before the formula 'when this letter of mine reaches you'. Structurally, this suggests that this was meant as the pre-request. However, what follows the formula is an admonition to not handle the tax payments corruptly, which typically follows the main request. This suggests that despite its unusual placement, this letter expresses its main request as an Assertion that Qurra thinks the addressee will have already sent the taxes he collected by the time the letter reaches him (example 15).

(15) *P.BeckerNPAF* 3 ll. 15-19

> *fa-lā 'aẓunnu kitāb-ī hāḏā qādim-an 'alay-ka 'in kāna fī-ka ḫayr 'illā wa-qad ba'aṭta bi-allaḏī qad jama'ta min jizya kūrati-ka*

> I do not think, with this letter of mine before you – if there is any good within you – that you will not have already sent that which you have gathered of the taxes of your district

---

111 Possibly because it was expressed in one of the lost portions of the letter, although the transition formula 'when this letter of mine reaches you' that usually introduces the main request is preserved, together with quite a number of lines preceding and following it.

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As shown in the example, the letter contains a moralising inser-
tion ('if there is any good within you'). In addition to this, the letter
contains the same type of threats and admonitions as other letters.
Therefore, it does not seem to be a particularly gentle or polite let-
ter in terms of its contents. However, both using this statement to
express the request, and the initial threats, that seem to be direct-
ed at any man who does something wrong (example 16), seem to be
careful to not address the intended recipient directly.

(16) *P.BeckerNPAF* 3 ll. 1-3

　　*ʾuʾāqibu-**hu** ʾašadd al-ʿuqūba wa-ʾuġrimu-**hu** ʾaṯqal al-ġarāma*

　　I will punish **him** with the harshest punishment and I will fine **him** with the heaviest fine

Finally, there are four examples in which a Request is expressed as a
prohibition. It is interesting to note that in the Arabic letters all ex-
amples of prohibitive Requests are formed using a verb in the ener-
gic mood (see examples 17, 18 and also in *P.Heid.Arab.* I 3 ll. 12-13;
P.BeckerNPAF 12 ll. 8-9).

(17) *P.BeckerNPAF* 6 ll. 12-14

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　فلا تعترضنّ أحدا منهم بشاي حتّى أحدّث إليك فيهم

fa-lā	*taʿtariḍ-anna*	*ʾaḥad-an*	*min-hum*
CONJ-NEG	hinder.2SING.MASC-ENER	one-INDEF.ACC	PREP.from-3MASC.PL
bi-šāyʾ	*ḥattā*	*ʾuḥaddiṯu*	*ʾilay-ka*
PREP.by-thing	PREP.until	talk.1SING.IMPERF	PREP.to-2MASC.SING
fī-him			
PREP.in-3MASC.PL			

do not bother any one of them with anything until I talk to you about them

(18) *P.BeckerPAF* 12 ll. 13-16

　　　　　　　　　　فلا تقدمنّ قرية من كورتك إلّا سألت أهلها عمّا في قريتهم من تلك الكتبة ولمن هي

fa-lā	*tuqdam-anna*	*qariya*	*min*
CONJ-NEG	come.2SING.MASC-ENER	village	PREP.from
kūrati-ka	*ʾillā*	*saʾal-ta*	*ʾahla-hā*
district-2MASC.SING.POSS	CONJ.NEG	ask. 2SING.MASC.PERF	people-3FEM.SING.POSS
ʿam-ma	*fī*	*qariyati-him*	*min*
CONJ-REL	PREP.in	village-3MASC.PL.POSS	PREP.from
tilka	*al-kitba*	*wa-li-man*	*hiya*
DEM.FEM.SING	DEF-register	CONJ-PREP.to-INDEF.INTER	PRON.3FEM.SING

do not come to any village of your district without asking its people what there is in their
village of such a register and to who it belongs

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The energic is formed by adding a suffix -*anna* (less commonly -*an*) to the short form of the imperfective (jussive) and is most commonly used to express a future event.[112] It can be used to form both positive and negative statements. The Qurra papyri are often mentioned for their relatively frequent use of the energic mood, which is otherwise rare in the Arabic papyri.[113] Fischer states that "the energic is used to introduce an action that is certain to occur (e.g. in an oath)".[114] However, the energic mood is often used to express negative wishes, which makes interpreting it as an emphatic or assertive more appropriate, as in example 19.

(19) *P.BeckerPAF* 3 ll. 20-1

<div dir="rtl">

ولا أعرفنّ ما أخّرت منها قليلا ولا كثيرا

</div>

wa-lā	**ʾaʿrif-anna**		mā	ʾaḫḫarta
CONJ-NEG	know.1SING-ENER		REL	delay.2SING.MASC.PERF
min-hā		qalīl-an	wa-lā	kaṯīr-an
PREP.from-3FEM.SING.PRON		little-INDEF.ACC	CONJ-NEG	much-INDEF.ACC

I do not **wish to find out** (lit. I will not find out) that you have held (anything) back from it, a little or a lot

Given the assertive or emphatic meaning of the energic mood, we can consider it a morphologically marked pragmatic upgrader. The above-mentioned examples of negative Requests containing an energic verb should therefore, probably, be considered very forceful and possibly closer to an admonition. They were annotated as Request, rather than admonition, because the Request contains enough new information that it may be considered a separate Request and not a repetition of the original Request or a reminder to do it well. In other words, we erred on the side of caution in their annotation to avoid circularity. However, even with these four exceptions, the distribution of the use of the energic supports its function as a morphological upgrader. The negative second person

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[112] Jones 2005, 255.

[113] E.g. Becker 1906, 30; Hopkins 1984, 70-1. Note that the energic is not completely absent from the Arabic papyri. In the period from the earliest papyri until the mid-tenth century AD, we found seventeen attestations of the energic mood in fifteen different texts (with at least one uncertain reading of the form that has been interpreted as the energic: e.g. *P.Ryl.Arab.* I XV 59 l. 5): *P.Cair.Arab.* 169 l. 9; *P.Clackson* 45 l. 10; *P.Clackson* 45 l. 8; *P.DiemAmtlicheSchreiben* 2 l. 7. Compare this to the 39 attestations of the energic spread across 25 different documents in the Qurra papyri, written in a period of just a few years, and it is clear that the energic had a very different status in the linguistic repertoire of the Qurra scribes than in other documents written on papyrus.

[114] Fischer 2001, 110.

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singular energic is most commonly used to express admonitions (*n* = 13), and twice it even functions as a threat (*P.BeckerPAF* 4 ll. 12-13; *P.SijpesteijnQurra* ll. 8-9), both generic moves that are used to repeat, and emphasise a request.

Outside of the Qurra papyri, the energic mood is more commonly associated with literary genres. Zewi gives several examples from the Quran, *sīra* (accounts of the life of the Prophet Muḥammad), *ḥadīṯ* (accounts of the statements and actions of the Prophet Muḥammad), poetry, and literary prose. The only other text that regularly employs the energic, however, is the Quran.[115] It is unclear whether the frequent use of the energic in the Qurra papyri was a stylistic choice, referencing the linguistic style of the Quran and literary genres to bolster the official character of the documents, or if it hints at a shared linguistic background with the Quranic Consonantal Text. The stylistic implications of the use of this form, which was likely perceived as quite elevated and potentially even archaic, might be compared to the archaic usage of the conjunct participle in the Greek letters. Another *comparandum* from Greek is the οὐ μή construction, which is equally archaic and strong in tone. In the Greek letters, it typically expresses a strong (negative) assertion, and is used with threats, similar to the use of the energic in *P.BeckerPAF* 4 ll. 12-13; *P.SijpesteijnQurra* ll. 8-9 (example 27). Given the emphatic meaning of the energic and its' preferred usage in admonitions, it is clear that it was used as a morphological upgrader, to increase the force of the request and to underline the urgency of the matter.

Besides the use of the energic mood and modifying phrases like 'Allah willing', adverbs and adverbial phrases are also used to modify Requests. Even though we noted examples of Greek requests that are modified by manner and time adverbs (such as ἀμελλητί 'zealously', and εὐθέως 'immediately', in § 2.1) the Arabic letters only contain examples of manner adverbs to pragmatically modify Requests. In some cases the use of such manner adverbs may be interpreted as a specification rather than an upgrader or downgrader, as in examples 20 and 21.

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115 Zewi 1999, 34-6.

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(20) *P.Qurra* 5 ll. 24-6[116]

[واكتب] ذلك كتابا بينا مث[بتا بق]ايا [الفضول

[*wa-uktub*]		*ḏālika*	*kitāb-an*
CONJ-write.IMPER		MASC.SING.DEM	writing-INDEF.ACC
bayyin-an	*muṯ*[*bit-an*]		[*baq*]*āyā*
Clear-INDEF.ACC	affirming.ACT.PARTIC-INDEF.ACC		remain.PL.ACC.CST
al-fuḍūl			
DEF-extraordinary.taxes			

Write that, **writing clearly**, showing what was left of the extraordinary taxes

(21) *P.Heid.Arab.* I 1 ll. 12-13

وعجل بالأول فالأول مما جمعت

wa-ʿajjil		*bi-l-ʾawwal*	*fa-l-ʾawwal*
CONJ-hurry.to.send.IMPER.SING.MASC		PREP-DEF-one	CONJ-DEF-one
mim-mā		*jamaʿta*	
PREP.from-REL.what		gather.2SING.MASC.PERF	

hurry to send[i] what you gathered, **piece by piece**

i   Note that the verb *ʿajjila* 'hurry, hurry to send' is one of the most common ways to ask someone to send something in the Arabic papyri. Therefore, it was likely felt to be much less emphatic and urgent than its translation into English suggests to the modern reader.

In other cases, it is more obvious that it was meant as an upgrader. Especially the use of the cognate adverbial construction, in which the adverb in the indefinite accusative case contains the same root as the main verb, leaves no room for another interpretation than an emphatic, admonishing one (see example 22). This is a construction which is common to Semitic languages, and for which there is no direct Greek parallel in our corpus.

(22) *P.Qurra* 2 ll. 6-7

وحثّهم حثًا عليه

wa-ḥuṭṭi-him		*ḥaṭṭ-an*	*ʿalay-hi*
CONJ-urge.IMPER-3MASC.PL		urging-INDEF.ACC	PREP-3MASC.SING

strongly urge them to do this

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116   Following the reading suggested by Diem 1984, 260-1.

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Finally, while relative clauses commonly modify Requests syntactically, they are generally used to specify a request (i.e. 'send what you have gathered'). So, even though such specifying relative clauses syntactically modify the request, they cannot be seen as pragmatic upgraders or downgraders. This suggests that most of the upgrading and downgrading of requests is accomplished through generic moves, such as admonitions, threats, oaths, and invocations, rather than through head-internal modification, with the notable exception of the use of the energic in this corpus.

3.2 Threats and Admonitions

The previous paragraph already touched upon the usage of the energic in threats and admonitions in the Arabic papyri as a morphological upgrader. Especially admonitions are common in the Arabic texts (*n* = 35, of which 13 contain an energic verb), although explicit threats are not uncommon (*n* = 9, of which 2 contain an energic verb). All examples of threats follow a request or admonition and serve as a warning of what will happen if the request is not carried out, or not carried out properly.

As in the Greek letters, most of the threats are directed at Basil. *P.Heid.Arab.* I 3 contains a general threat that is not specifically directed at Basil, but against whoever performed their administrative duties poorly, which of course did include Basil (see also example 16).[117] Even though the more general phrasing probably functioned to downgrade the threat, the addition of the initial invocation *la-ʿamr-ī* 'by my life', functioned as a modifier to underline the seriousness of the statement, thereby upgrading the force of the threat (example 23). Even though the Greek letters also use invocations as upgraders, such invocations call on God instead of the initiator's life.

(23) *P.Heid.Arab.* I 3 ll. 20-2

> ***wa-la-ʿamr-ī*** *li-man kāna ʿājiz-an muḍīʿ-an la-qad istaḥalla min-nī mā yakrahu*
>
> **by my life**, whoever was ineffective or neglected their duties he can expect things from me that he will dislike

---

117 In the discussion of the content and tone of the letters, we mentioned a threat against the representatives of Basil's district, in case they did not collect the taxes fairly from their people (*P.Heid.Arab.* I 3 ll. 52-4). Even though this implies a threat to those people, it is phrased as a request to Basil to make sure that he executes the specified punishments in case they act corruptly.

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P.BeckerPAF 5 ll. 11-13 (example 24) is another example of a threat, in this case directed at Basil, that is combined with different downgraders and upgraders. Syntactically, it uses the form *iʿlam* 'know that' (comparable to the Greek use of ἔσῃ ἐπιστάμενος 'you will be aware', see § 2.2) as a discourse imperative, which seems to function as an alerter[118] here, instead of an actual request. It is used to introduce a conditional clause with an impersonal third person singular verb in the energic mood, which functions as a morphological upgrader, in the apodosis. On the other hand, the threat is preceded by an explanation of why it is important that Basil promptly performs the main request in the letter, and the downgrading modifier *ʾin šāʾa Allāh* 'Allah willing' (example 8), which both seem intended to soften the preceding request and following threat.

(24)   *P.BeckerPAF* 5 ll. 11-13

<div dir="rtl">

واعلم أنّي لئن أخّرت منها شيئا ليصيبنّك مني ما يضرّ ك في نفسك

</div>

iʿlam	*ʾan-nī*	*la-ʾin*	*ʾaḫḫarta*
know.IMPER.SING.MASC	PART-1SING.PRON	ASSER.PART-PART	delay.2SING.MASC.PERF

min-hā	*šayʾ-an*	*la-yuṣīb-anna-ka*
PREP-3FEM.SING	thing-INDEF.ACC	ASSER.PART-befall.3SING.MASC-ENER-2MASC.SING

min-nī	*mā*	*yaḍurru-ka*	*fī*
PREP-1SING	REL	harm.2SING.MASC.IMPERF	PREP

nafsi-ka
self-2MASC.SING

And know that if you are late on any of it, then (what you did) will befall you yourself

Another way to modify a statement to upgrade it to a threat, is the use of adverbs. In *P.SijpesteijnQurra* ll. 24-5 the scribe uses an adverbial construction which modifies the verb with an adverb of the same root and an intensifying adverb, which is common in Arabic and other Semitic languages. The phrase is initiated with the discourse imperative 'know that...' and upgraded with the modifying invocation 'by Allah', which can idiomatically be translated as 'I swear' (example 25). Invocations and introductory statements like 'be aware that' are also commonly found with admonitions and threats in the Greek letters (§ 2.3).

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118   See the discussion of the discourse imperatives above, where we saw that imperatives like *ḫuḏ* 'take, get to' and *unẓur* 'see that' are mostly used to introduce the first mention of the main request in the letters (§ 3.1). Here, we follow the definition of the term 'alerter' as set out in House, Kádár 2021, 118-19.

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(25) *P.SijpesteijnQurra* ll. 24-5

واعلم والله إنّي آخذك بالمال أخذا شديدا

wa-iʿlam	*wa-Allāh-i*	*ʾin-nī*
CONJ-know.IMPER.SING.MASC	CONJ-Allāh-GEN	PART-1SING

ʾāḫuḏu-ka	*bi-al-māl*	*ʾaḫḏ-an*
take.1SING.IMPERF-2MASC.SING	PREP-DEF-taxes	taking-INDEF.ACC

šadīd-an
strong-INDEF.ACC

know, by Allah, that I will take the taxes from you violently

In the previous section on requests, we already saw some examples of the use of the negative energic. As was mentioned there, we find the same constructions more commonly used to express threats and admonitions. Negated first person singular forms are used to express negative wishes (example 26), while in the second person singular the negated forms function more straightforwardly as prohibitive commands (example 27).

(26) *P.Qurra* 2 ll. 12-13

ولا ألومنّك فيه

wa-lā	*ʾalūm-anna-ka*	*fī-hi*
CONJ-NEG	blame.1SING-ENER-2MASC.SING	PREP-3MASC.SING

I do not wish to blame you for the matter

(27) *P.SijpesteijnQurra* ll. 8-9

فلا تخلينّ الىّ أن أبعث اليك من يؤذيك

fa-lā	*tuḫalliy-anna*	*ʾilay-ya*	*ʾan*
CONJ-NEG	leave.2SING.MASC-ENER	PREP-1SING	PART

ʾabʿaṯa	*ʾilay-ka*	*man*	*yuʾḏi-ka*
send.1SING.IMPERF	PREP-2MASC.SING	REL	harm.2SING.MASC.IMPERF-2MASC.SING

do not leave me to send someone to you to harm you

Most of the expressions that can be recognised as the subtype 'admonition', because they function to stress what was previously asked (see § 1.3), are expressed as direct requests with an (negative) imperative (24 of 36). The rest are expressed as assertions, using energic forms (*n* = 9), as a wish using a passive participle (*n* = 1), or as statements (*n* = 1). The assertions are most commonly formed using the phrase *lā ʾaʿrifanna*… 'I do not wish to find out…' (*n* = 6), with as a variant *lā ʾunbaʾanna*… 'I do not wish to hear…' (*P.Heid.Arab.* I 2 l. 9). The other form, which recurs three times (*P.Qurra* 4 ll. 27-9;

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P.Heid.Arab. I 1; 20-2; *P.SijpesteijnQurra* l. 25-26), uses an impersonal third person singular form of the verb 'to be' in the energic mood (example 28).

(28) *P.Qurra* 4 ll. 27-9

   *wa-lā **yakūnanna** li-mā qibala-ka ḥabs wa-ʾiyyā-ka wa-al-ʿilal*

   let there be no withholding of what you owe, and no excuses

One can make a comparison here with the use of perception verbs in the Greek admonitions, in particular expressions of the type μὴ εὕρωμεν 'may we not find out', μὴ εὑρεθῇς 'may you not be found', μὴ γνωσθῇ 'may it not be brought to our attention ', which, however, in Greek are much less frequent than verbal intensifiers of the type μὴ ἀμελήσῃς 'may you not neglect to'. Greek μὴ γένηται ἀμέλεια lit. 'let there not occur a negligence' is another parallel for the use of the impersonal third person singular form of the verb 'to be' in Arabic.

A very similar construction to that in example 28 is used in an admonition in *P.SijpesteijnQurra* ll. 25-6 (example 29), which immediately follows the threat in example 25, above. In example 29, the energic seems to be used with a meaning that is more in line with how Fischer[119] described it, to express certainty. However, as it still expresses the initiator's belief and point of view, it is used as an Assertion here, rather than a Statement.

(29) *P.SijpesteijnQurra* ll. 25-6:

   *fa-lā **takūnanna** la-ka ġirra wa-lā ʿilla*

   for **you cannot claim** ignorance and there are no excuses

The following assertion in example 30 expresses a wish, but functions to reiterate the main request in general terms, casting it in moralising language. Therefore, it can probably still be considered an admonition. Connecting the will of Allah to the 'right' (*ḥaqq*) of the Amīr of the believers to be paid his taxes taps into the religious ideal of divine and just rule that both the Greek and Arabic letters of the Qurra corpus appeal to.[120]

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119 Fischer 2001, 110.

120 Papaconstantinou 2022 discusses the religious aspects of the rhetoric of governance in the Greek letters of the Qurra corpus, while Becker 1906, 33-5 already discussed this aspect of the Arabic letters. The relation between literary works on just governance and other Arabic administrative letters is further discussed by Sijpesteijn 2022.

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(30) *P.Heid.Arab.* I 1 ll. 18-20

ṯumma ʾinna Allāh muʿīnu-hum ʿalā mā kāna ʿalay-him min ḥaqq ʾamīr al-muʾminīn

so may Allah help them with what they owe in terms of the right of the Amīr of the believers

The one admonition that is expressed as a Statement is less forceful, but still clearly functions to reiterate the request and press for its proper completion. Example 31 uses a statement about the content of a previous letter to reiterate the request that was made in it.

(31) *P.BeckerNPAF* 3 ll. 6-10

la-ʿamrī ḥāl al-ʿajal munḏu ʾakṯar min šahrayn wa-qad katabtu ʾilay-ka qabl kitābī hāḏā ʾāmuru-ka ʾan tuʿajjila ʾilay-nā bi-mā qad jamaʿta min jizya kūrati-ka

On my life, the term passed by more than two months since I wrote to you before this letter of mine (in which) I ordered you to hurry to send to us what you had gathered of the jizya of your district

4 Comparative Discussion and Conclusions

While previous work on the Qurra dossier has included discussion of the language, style,[121] and aspects of rhetoric of the letters,[122] this contribution has focused on the pragmatics of Request. With the socio-pragmatic approach that we have developed in this contribution, we hope to have shed at least some light on the way requests were framed, and to have elucidated some of the pragmatic motivations behind the structure of the letters, moving from a sentence-level to a discourse-level approach.

It may be clear that the Greek and Arabic letters of the Qurra corpus have several features in common with each other, especially in terms of style, structure, and content. The letters seem to stand out for their rather archaic,[123] or literary-inspired linguistic usage. Request letters in both languages follow a rhetorical structure that is very similar, consisting of an opening, pre-request, request, post-request, and closing. In both languages, the transition from the

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[121] Bell 1926, 276-7.

[122] E.g. Abbott 1938, 40; Papaconstantinou 2022.

[123] Note, however, that the Arabic letters, even though they are praised in some of the modern publications of the letters for their 'nearly perfect' Standard Arabic, do also contain features of what is commonly called 'middle Arabic'. The masculine plural suffix, for example, is used almost exclusively in its oblique form *-īna*, in both nominative and oblique syntactic position as is common in the language of the Arabic papyri (see e.g. Hopkins 1984, 106).

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pre-request to the request is crucially signalled through a version of the phrase 'when this letter of mine reaches you'. In the way that such structuring formulae were to some degree expected and were meant to aid the comprehension of the reader, they may be considered conventionally polite elements in the letters.

In terms of how the Greek and Arabic letters express Requests, however, each corpus seems to employ quite different strategies. Particularly in terms of morpho-syntax, each language has its own preferences, even when comparable constructions exist. For example, the Arabic letters seem more comfortable than the Greek ones to use plain direct imperatives to make requests. This use of direct imperatives is not unique for the Qurra papyri, and seems to have been the most common, and polite way to make requests in Arabic in this period. In the Greek letters, the participle plays an important role in the expression of requests, which, we have argued, may have played a downgrading role. Arabic requests, on the other hand, are more commonly downgraded by adding external modifiers such as *ʾin šāʾa Allāh* 'Allah willing', although Qurra's position of power over Basil means that such downgraders are not very common in the corpus. Constructions such as discourse imperatives and the energic are specific to Arabic; verbal intensifiers and the οὐ μή construction can be considered an indirect formal/functional parallel in Greek, but with a different pragmatic distribution. The same can be noted with regard to the use and distribution of modifying elements: some of these are specific to either Arabic or Greek (e.g. the Arabic use of cognate accusative constructions as upgrader), and when there are parallels the pragmatic distribution is often, though not always, different. At a higher-order level, it does seem that the use of threats and admonitions as supportive moves is similar in the two languages. However, more research would be needed to uncover the specificities of their usage, and the socio-pragmatic factors that determined their inclusion or omission (such as degree of imposition, urgency of the matter at hand, transgression of previous requests etc.).

So, it seems that even though the general style, structure, and rhetorical strategies used in the Greek and Arabic letters are quite similar, the morphological and syntactic expression of requests and associated upgraders and downgraders remained lingua-culture specific. As socio-pragmatic studies of contemporary Arabic and Greek documentary material are still largely lacking, further research in this direction is needed in order to understand how unique the framing of requests in these dossiers was, both at a linguistic and discourse-structural level, as well as to understand the pragmatic effect of linguistic and rhetorical choices.

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Section 4
Intratextual Framings

Framing the Bad Guys: Continuative Clauses in the Depiction of the Wrongdoer in Papyrus Petitions

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Abstract   While the analysis of papyrus petitions has often been motivated by historical interests, less attention has been drawn to their linguistic features. In this paper, I investigate the use of continuative clauses in Greek petitions from Egypt (I-VIII AD): in particular, I focus on a specific textual unit of the text, illustrating how the wrongdoers and their acts in the concrete case of the document are characterised by means of relativisation. Moreover, I discuss the identification criteria of appositive clauses, as well as the functions that continuative clauses perform in the texts in the light of their syntactic, stylistic and sociolinguistic features.

Keywords   Ancient Greek. Documentary papyri. Petitions. Relativisation. Continuative clauses.

Summary   1 The Genre: Papyrus Petitions. – 2 Appositive Clauses in Ancient Greek. – 3 Continuative Clauses in Papyrus Petitions. – 3.1 From Appositive to Continuative. – 3.2 Continuative Clauses in the Context of the Petition. – 3.3 Applying Loock's Model to Papyrus Petitions. – 4 Stylistic and Sociolinguistic Aspects of Continuative Clauses. – 4.1 Sociolinguistic Status of Continuative Clauses. – 5 Conclusions.

1 The Genre: Papyrus Petitions

Petitions constitute one of the most characteristic types of texts among documentary papyri from Graeco-Roman and Late Antique Egypt. Papyrus petitions involve a request, typically made by a social inferior to a social superior, in order to redress a crime through punishment or financial compensation, or to give assistance to a victim of injustice.[1] Although petitions deal with practical matters, representing an example of "everyday writing", they are characterised by a higher degree of elaboration and rhetoricisation with respect to other text types, e.g. private letters, since their aim is to convince an addressee in a position of authority to intervene in a given situation.

Previous studies about Greek petitions have examined their formal structure[2] well as specific subtypes of the genre such as petitions involving a case of violence[3] and petitions sent by women.[4] Moreover, the analysis of this text type has often been motivated by a historical interest, since petitions represent a key element for understanding the legal and social context of ancient Egypt.[5] Although less attention has been drawn so far to the linguistic features of Greek petitions, some work has been carried out on the rhetorical and stylistic mechanisms of the genre,[6] inferential expressions preceding the request verb,[7] and formulaic language.[8] In this paper, I attempt to tackle a linguistic aspect of petitions so far unexplored, namely relativisation, by analysing some specific units within the text, which exhibits relevant aspects for interpreting the petition as a rhetorical and social instrument.

According to Mullins,[9] the necessary constituent parts of a petition as a "form" are three: the background, the petition verb and the desired action. While the background expresses the evidence that the writer presents to convince the addressee to act in their favour, the desired action corresponds to the actual request made to

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1 Palme 2009, 377-8; Mascellari 2021, 15-21.
2 Mullins 1962; White 1972.
3 Bryen 2008.
4 Bagnall 2004; Scheerlinck 2012.
5 Morris 1981; Ménard 2015; Kelly 2011.
6 Fournet 2004; 2019; Papathomas 2007a; 2007b; 2009.
7 Bentein 2006.
8 Mascellari 2021.
9 Mullins 1962.

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the authority. Building on this basic structure, two elaborations frequently appear in the petition: the address, which identifies the person to whom the petition is directed, and the courtesy phrase, usually occurring immediately before or after the petition verb and consisting in a form of ἐάν σοι δόξῃ. In a later study about official petitions, i.e. petitions addressed to public officials, from the Early Ptolemaic period to the fifth century AD, White[10] indicates four constituent parts of the form of the petition: the opening, the background, the request and the closing.

Applying the latter template to a text from the archive of Abinnaeus,[11] we can identify the four parts of the petition:

Φλαουίῳ Ἀβιν[ν]έῳ ἐξἀποπροτηκτώρων ἐπάρχῳ εἴλης κάστρων Διονυσιάδος. παρὰ Αὐρηλίου Ἥρωνο[ς] διάκω[ν]ος ἀπὸ κώμης Βερνικείδος τοῦ αὐτοῦ νομοῦ χαίρειν. [*opening*]

εἰ μὴ ὑπῆρχεν ἡμεῖν ἡ τῶν νόμων ἀλήθεια πάλαι δ' ἂν ὑπὸ τῶν κακούργων ἀναιλούμεθα. Εὔπορος τοίνυν υἱὸς Ἑρμεία ἀπὸ κώμης Φιλαγρείδος τοῦ αὐτοῦ νομοῦ ἐσύλησέν με ἔνδων τῆς οἰκείας, ἐπιβὰς ληστρεικῷ τρόπῳ, καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν ἐσθηταν συνελάβετο καὶ ϛ[ἰς] τὸ ἴδιον ἀνεστιλατω μέχρεις δ[ευ]ρω, δυναμ[έν]ου μου καὶ τ[ὰ]ςἀποδίξει[ς] [ποι]εῖν ὡς τούτου τήνδε τὴν ϗ[α]κουργίαν π[ε]ποιημένου. [*background*]

διω ἀξ[ι]ῶ, πραιπόσιται κ[ύ]ριε, ἀπραγμώνος ἃ ἀφήρπασέν μου [π]αρασχεθῆναί μο[ι]· διάκων γὰρ τετύχηκα τῆς ϗ[αθ]ολικῆς ἐϗ[λ]ησίας. καὶ τούτου τυχὼν εἰσαειν σοι εὐχαρειστήσω. [*request*]

διευτύχει. [μετὰ τὴ]ν ὑπατείαν Φλ(αουίων) Σεργίου καὶ Νειγρεινιαν\οῦ/ τῶ[ν λαμπροτά]των, Μεχεὶρ ιζ. [*closing*]

To Flavius Abinnaeus, formerly one of the protectors, praefectis alae of the camp of Dionysias from Aurelius Heron, deacon, of the village of Berenicis in the same nome, greeting. [*opening*]

If we did not possess the truth of the laws we should long ago have been destroyed by evil-doers. Euporus, then, son of Hermias, of the village of Philagris in the same nome, robbed me in my house, entering it in the manner of a robber, and seized all my clothing, and appropriated it to his own use until now, although I can demonstrate that it was he who perpetrated this outrage. [*background*]

Wherefore I ask, my lord praepositus, that what he robbed me of should be given to me without demur, for I am a deacon of the principal church. And obtaining this I shall owe you thanks for ever. [*request*]

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10 White 1972.

11 Bell et al. 1962.

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> Farewell. After the consulship of Flavius Sergius and Nigrinia-
> nus the most illustrious, Mecheir 17 [*closing*]
> (*P.Abinn*. 55 = TM 10046 (IV AD))

Regarding the internal composition of the sections, three of them, namely the opening, the request and the closing, include for the most part fixed and formulaic elements, although a certain degree of flexibility through the centuries is shown. On the contrary, the background is described as the "most plastic and unstereotyped section within the structure", whose "idiosyncratic nature places it in sharp contrast to other structural items".[12] For this reason, in this paper I look specifically at the background of the document, where the writer illustrates the motivation for sending the text and the details of the offence endured in the form of a story. In this narration, additional features about the wrongdoer(s) who committed injustice against the petitioner are often expressed by relative clauses either to depict them in an unpleasant light or to enumerate their actions.[13] Moreover, different linguistic possibilities can be adopted in syntactic terms, and the type of information expressed by these clauses and their connection with the previous clauses is also noteworthy.

The corpus considered in this study includes all the papyrus petitions dating from the first to the eight century AD, that is, the Roman and Late Antique period, which amount to 1,321 texts. Not all petitions present relative clauses, also since they might be fragmentary or include only the opening section of the document: overall 1,737 relative clauses were annotated, from 632 texts. In order to "frame the bad guys", I have mostly focused on the relative clauses whose antecedent is represented by an animate noun, either proper or common, a pronoun or a participle referring to an animate entity, or an entire clause. In terms of the incidence of the phenomenon of continuative clauses (cf. § 3.2), 141 clauses were marked as continuative out of the relative clauses annotated in papyrus petitions; contrary to other types of relative clauses, most of these examples have animate nouns as antecedents.

Before moving to the petitions, a *caveat* about the evaluation and attribution of linguistic features in these documents is necessary. In papyrus petitions, the petitioner does not usually coincide with the actual writer of the text: although contributions of the petitioners are not excluded, these texts were mostly written by professional scribes, who usually remained anonymous and therefore unnoticed,

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12 White 1972, 14.

13 In addition to the wrongdoer, also the victim assumes a specific characterisation in papyrus petitions. For the depiction of the victims, see Baetens 2019.

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and followed specific editorial models.[14] The problem of the scribal involvement in petitions is also tackled by Kelly,[15] stating that petitions should not be used to "peer inside the minds of the petitioners" as they were, for the most part, written by scribes.

The scribal issue does not, however, prevent from conducting linguistic analyses and comparing petitions with other text types, as it was done in sociolinguistic studies about documentary papyri.[16] Moreover, this problem has been tackled from philological approaches to historical sociolinguistic perspectives:[17] the impact of the scribes on the composition of the document is generally thought to be greater at the level of orthography and phonology, while it is less reflected in syntax,[18] which represents the focus of this work; moreover, scribes might have adapted their language for a certain kind of author, especially when it comes to morphosyntactic variables, which oscillate between conscious and subconscious language use.[19] For practical reasons, I will use in this paper the term "writer" indicating the author of the composition, meaning the professional scribe who probably penned the document, without excluding an influence or contribution of the petitioner.

First, I will consider the broader category of Greek appositive clauses (§ 2), and then I will focus on the subcategory of continuative clauses (§ 3); after describing the functions of these clauses in papyrus petitions, I will further explore their stylistic and sociolinguistic features (§ 4), before drawing some conclusions (§ 5).

2 Appositive Clauses in Ancient Greek

In linguistic studies about relative clauses, a major typological classification concerns the distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive (or appositive) relative clauses.[20] This is exemplified by Andrews'[21] examples:

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14 Mascellari 2021, 28-30.

15 Kelly 2015, 85-6.

16 E.g. Bentein 2017; Bentein, Bağrıaçık 2018.

17 Grossman, Cromwell 2018.

18 Halla-aho 2018.

19 Bergs 2015.

20 These two types, however, do not cover the range of semantic possibilities of relative clauses. The existence of a further type, namely "maximalising relative clauses" or "third-kind relative clauses", is widely discussed in the literature (Grosu, Landman 1998; see also Probert 2015, 71-3).

21 Andrews 2007, 207.

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(1a) The Japanese **who are industrious** now outcompete Europe.

(1b) The Japanese, **who are industrious**, now outcompete Europe.

In the first type (1a), the restrictive relative clause 'who are industrious' is used to identify the antecedent 'the Japanese' by defining a subset of elements among it; in the second type (1b), the appositive clause adds some non-essential information concerning the antecedent.[22] This classification is not unproblematic, also in the case of Ancient Greek: first, since the two categories may formally overlap, subjective judgment on the part of the interpreter is required.[23] Second, when we look at Greek documentary papyri, we cannot rely on the most important cross-linguistic diagnostics to distinguish between the two types in contemporary linguistic varieties:[24] (i) prosody, because we only have access to historical written sources, and (ii) punctuation, because this practice was not systematically applied in the original papyri, or not at all used.[25] Therefore, the difference between clauses such as (1a) and (1b) would be acknowledged only on the basis of the interpretation of the meaning and its context. For instance, in (2) and (3), the restrictiveness opposition in papyri is shown: both documents, a letter and a contract, respectively, involve the possession of some *artabae*, but, while in (2) the relative clause is necessary to identify which *artabae* the receiver has to take, in (3) some further information is added about a referent already identified.

(2) μνήσ]θητι δέ, κύριε ἄδελφε, λαβεῖν τὰς δεκαὲξ ἀρτάβας ὰς ἔχει ἡμῶν Παπνοῦτις Ὡρίωνος ἵνα σὺν θεῷ τὰ παιδία ἡμῶν εὕρωσιν αὐτά. (*P.Neph*. 2, ll. 1-5 = TM 33556 (IV AD))

and remember, brother, to take the sixteen artabas which Papnuthis son of Horion has, so that, God willing, our children may have them.

(3) τιμῆς τῆς συνπεφωνημένης πρὸς ἀλλήλους τοῦ αὐτοῦ κατ ἐμὲ ἡμίσους [μέ]ρους σίτου ἀρταβῶν δώδεκα, ἄσπερ αὐτόθι ἔσχον παρὰ σοῦ ἐκ πλήρους διὰ χιρός (*P.Oxy*. LXXIII 4966, ll. 11-14 = TM 118656 (IV AD))

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22 Appositive clauses are less prototypical and generally less documented than restrictive relative clauses; moreover, they are not considered proper relative clauses in semantic-based definitions of the constructions (López Romero 2023, 6-7; for an overview of the definition of restrictiveness as a linguistic category, see Hayes 2018, 51-84).

23 Boyer 1988, 235.

24 Keenan 1985, 169; Quirk et al. 1985, 366; Porter 1994, 244; Halliday 2014, 467.

25 Punctuation is however applied in the papyrus texts by the modern editors, so it is possible to rely on the editions up to a certain extent, cf. infra.

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the price of my same half-share being agreed between us at twelve artabas of wheat, which I received from you on the spot in full from hand to hand.

Nevertheless, some formal aspects have been pointed out in order to distinguish restrictive from appositive clauses. In particular, according to Perna,[26] appositive relative clauses in Ancient Greek (i) are not internally-headed, (ii) do not appear before the main clause, and (iii) do not present phenomena of case attraction, either direct or inverse.

As for (i), if internally-headed relative clauses are always restrictive in Ancient Greek,[27] the situation changes in the Post-Classical period, with these clauses being used also non restrictively.[28] In (4), in the context of a long contract of will in which Psyphis divides his property among his children and grandchildren, the particular status of Psyphis' wife is expressed by an internally-headed relative clause: this does not select a relevant person among a possible set of women, since the head noun is already a proper noun, but it rather specifies the juridical nature of their relationship, making the relative clause appositive in meaning.

(4) ἐξ ῆ̣ς σύνεστιν ἀγράφους γυναικὸς Τετοσίρεως τῆς καὶ Διονυσίας (*P.Mich*. V 322a, l. 2 = TM 12132 (I AD))

by the wife with whom he lives without written contract, Tetosiris also called Dionysia.

Also in (5), the internally-headed relative clause is appositive: the head noun φόρον is marked by the accusative as a sort of casus pendens, repeating an already identified φόρου appearing earlier in the text, and connecting it with a clause introduced by ὅσπερ which adds information on the measuring of the rent.[29]

(5) εἰς σπορὰν καὶ κατάθεσιν ὧν ἐὰν αἱρῶμαι φόρου ἀποτάκτου πυροῦ ἀρταβῶν τριάκοντα ὅνπερ φόρον μετρήσω τῷ Ἐπεὶφ μηνὶ (*P.Charite* 7, ll. 11-15 = TM 15563 (IV AD))

to sow and plant with whatever I choose, at a total rent of thirty artabas of wheat, which rent I shall measure out in the month of Epeiph.

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26 Perna 2013, 187.

27 Perna 2013; Probert 2015.

28 Bentein, Bağrıaçık 2018.

29 One might also consider what happens in this clause as a case of *attractio inversa*, also based on the comparison with Latin (see Halla-aho 2009, 108-9).

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The presence of a superfluous element which replicates what is already otherwise expressed in the text was investigated by Bakker[30] with reference to pronouns, who calls such an element *pronomen abundans*.[31] In (6), the pronoun τούτ[ω]ν, denoting the same referent of the preceding relative marker ὧν, represents an instance of *pronomen abundans*:

(6) ἐν τῶι λεγομέν[ωι] Σαδήι [κλ]ήρ[ο]υ [ἄρο]υραι ἑπτὰ ἥμισ[υ τ]έτ[α]ρτον, ὧν γείτονες τούτ[ω]ν νότου πρότε[ρ]ον Ἡρα[κλεί]δου τοῦ Ζωί[λο]υ κλῆρ[ος βορρᾶ] [ἈΑπολ]λωνίου τοῦ Στράτωνος κλῆρος (*P.Ryl*. II 154, ll. 12-14 = TM 12939 (I AD))

7¾ arurae of a holding in the place called Sade, the boundaries of which are (of these), on the south the holding formerly belonging to Heraclides son of Zoilus, on the north the holding of Apollonius son of Straton

Although this phenomenon is limited in papyrological sources compared to Christian texts, where it is normally thought as a semitic influence,[32] all the examples in papyri pertain to appositive relative clauses.[33]

As for the second criterion described by Perna[34] (ii), although appositive clauses do not appear before the main clause in Classical Greek, they can be positioned also before the clause acting as antecedent in papyri in formulaic instances. In (7), the event which the writer wishes not to happen follows the wish itself, expressed by an appositive relative clauses with the formula ὃ μὴ εἴη.[35]

(7) ὧ[ν] δ ἂν ἀργήσῃ ὁ παῖς ἐν τῷ χρόνῳ ἐν ᾧ μισθὸν λαμβάνει ἢ ὃ μὴ εἴη ἀσθενήσῃ (*P.Oxy*. XXXI 2586, ll. 35-9 = TM 16900 (III AD))

and if the boy is idle on any days during the time that he is receiving wages, or (may it not happen) is ill.

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30   Bakker 1974.

31   Bakker 1974, 110.

32   Blass, Debrunner 1961, 155; Du Toit 2016, 55.

33   Some examples are however attested already in Classical Greek, see Bakker 1974, 11-13; Perna 2013, 212-14; López Romero 2023, 12-13.

34   Perna 2013.

35   On the formula ὃ μὴ γένοιτο, ὃ μὴ τύχοι and similar patterns in Classical Greek, see López Romero 2023, 168-72. In documentary papyri, this relative construction appear also in combination with the relative article το in the formula (ἐν) τῷ (δὲ) ἀβρόχῳ, το μὴ εἴη, cf. Cattafi 2023, 52.

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Similarly, in the appositive relative formula ὧν λόγον δώσει, the quantity constituting the head noun can freely appear before (8) or after (9) the relative clause.

(8) οἴνου μονόχωρα ἑκατὸν ὧν λόγον δώσει (*P.Flor.* II 124, ll. 5-7 = TM 10977 (III AD))

one hundred measures of wine of which he will render account.

(9) ὧν λόγον δώσει οἴνου μονόχωρον ἓν[36] (*P.Flor.* II 235, ll. 5-7 = TM 11115 (III AD))

a measure of wine of which he will render account.

The third criterion pointed out by Perna[37] (iii), also mentioned by Rijksbaron[38] and Pieroni[39] states that appositive clauses never present case attraction with the head noun. While this is true for Classical Greek, this phenomenon can happen in papyri in internally-headed relative clauses with non-restrictive meaning (cf. ex. (4)), but also in externally-headed constructions. In (10), an example also discussed by Cattafi,[40] the relative marker is attracted in the genitive because of the case-marking of the head-noun ἀναδιδόντος: the relative clause οὗ ἐνετειλάμεθα is appositive, expressing a further action performed by the antecedent.

(10) τὸν ἕνα´.[..]. ἀπὸ τῶν δύο´ ὧν εἴχαμεν ἔπεμψα ὑμ[ε]ῖν διὰ τ[ο]ῦ ἀναδιδόντος ὑμεῖν τὰ γρά[μ]ματα, [.-2].τος ἀπὸ Σε[ρ]ύφεως, οὗ ἐνετειλάμεθα τὰ κτήνη τὰ τρία´ ἀνεῖναι. (*P.Oxy.* LXXVIII 5180, ll. 2-5 = TM 170063 (II-III AD))

of the two that we had, the one... I have sent you through the person delivering you the letter,... from Seryphis, whom we instructed to send up the three beasts.

These examples show that the formal criteria which were brought up for Greek relative clauses in the Classical period do not help in their identification in the Post-Classical papyri, since there is no morpho-syntactic aspect of relative clauses that is limited to the restrictive

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36 Note the mismatch in number between the head noun and the relative pronoun: the formula remains unchanged also with a singular head noun.

37 Perna 2013.

38 Rijksbaron 1981, 240.

39 Pieroni 1998, 173.

40 Cattafi 2024.

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category, while only the presence of a *pronomen abundans*, albeit sporadic in the papyri, could be identified as a trademark of appositive clauses.

Finally, at a formal level, it is also worth mentioning that the strategy of relativisation employed is not relevant either to disambiguate restrictive from appositive clauses, since participles and finite clauses can be used together referring to the same head noun with a similar non-restrictive meaning (11). In the following petition from the Roman period, two features about the wrongdoer Leonides are provided, the first through a finite relative clause introduced by ὅς which specifies Leonides' position, and the second by a participial clause pointing out his possession of some land belonging to the petitioners' father:

(11) Λεωνίδης Πτολεμαίου Ἀλθαιεύς, ὅς ἐστι νῦν ἐπ᾽ Ἀλεξανδρείας, ἔχων πατρῴαν ἡμῶν ὑποθή[κ]ην [...] ἀρούρας τεσσαράκοντα [ἓ]ξ (*P.Berl.Moeller* 2, ll. 4-9 = TM 17455 (I AD))

Leonides, son of Ptolemy, Althaieus, who is now in Alexandria, and who has, as a pledge from our father, [...] forty-six aurorae"

We will therefore now turn to the content of the clauses as a possibly more reliable criterion in their identification in documentary papyri.

3 Continuative Clauses in Papyrus Petitions

3.1 From Appositive to Continuative

Among the category of appositive clauses, a further distinction is made between proper non-restrictive ("parenthetischen") and connective or continuative clauses ("anknüpfend"/"continuativ").[41] In (12a), the relative clause is added parenthetically as an additional specification about the head noun, while, in (12b), the relative clause rather expresses an event involving the head noun which happens after the event of the main clause, and therefore belongs to the continuative type:

(12a) Emil, **who brought the book to the library**, must have lost it somewhere on the way

(12b) She gave the book to Emil, **who brought it to the library**

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[41] The German terms are taken from Lehmann 1984, 272.

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According to Levinsohn,[42] many languages do not have appositive relative clauses or use them only in specific circumstances; it was also observed by Petersen[43] that Greek is "somewhat special in that […] the language also makes a further distinction within the non-restrictive category, namely that between 'appositional' and 'continuative'". Continuative relative clauses were investigated especially in the New Testament, recently by Hayes[44] and Du Toit,[45] but this phenomenon was noticed already in the first grammars of New Testament Greek: Winer[46] pointed out that ὅς is intended as continuative when it can be resolved into καὶ οὗτος, and Blass and Debrunner[47] described this use as "a loosening of the connection of the relative clause to the preceding complex sentence", where ὅς has the meaning of "and this, but this, this very thing". In terms of function, Greek continuative clauses are said to "move the thought of the sentence into a new area",[48] "advance the storyline or argument"[49] and "describe an event that involves the referent of the relative pronoun and occurs subsequent to the previous event or situation in which the referent featured".[50]

A continuum from modification to coordination has been postulated by Hayes,[51] where continuative clauses are situated at the very end of the coordination pole. This is exemplified in the figure below. In particular, Hayes distinguishes three types of appositive clauses, with (13a) being less prone to coordination compared to (13b) and (13c):

(13a) *Proper non-restrictive*: Give this to John, who sorely needs it.

(13b) *Continuative*: He gave the letter to the clerk, who then copied it.

(13c) *Sentential*: Pam didn't go to the show, which is a pity.

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42 Levinsohn 2000, 190.
43 Petersen 2001, 6.
44 Hayes 2018, 129-58.
45 Du Toit 2022.
46 Winer 1982, 680.
47 Blass, Debrunner 1961, 239-340.
48 Boyer 1988, 236.
49 Petersen 2001, 6.
50 Levinsohn 2000, 150.
51 Hayes 2018, 140.

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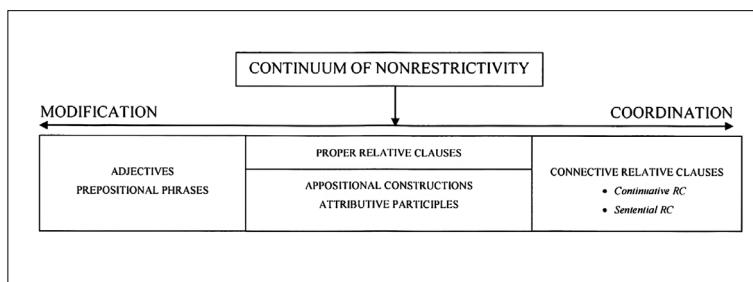
While it is accurate to intend the concept of restrictiveness as a continuum, I believe that the distinction between continuative and sentential relative clauses operates at two different levels: the continuative type refers to the meaning of the clause, which corresponds to the advancement of a story or an argumentation, while the sentential type refers to its form, namely the fact that the antecedent is represented by the entire preceding clause, and not by a noun phrase. Therefore, a relative clause can in principle be sentential in form and continuative in meaning at the same time, as in (14a) and (14b):

(14a) ὑμεῖς δέ μοι οὐδὲ ἅπαξ ἐδηλώσατε περὶ τῆς σωτηρίας ὑμῶν, ὅπερ κἂν νῦν ποιήσατε διὰ τῶν ἐρχομένων πρὸς ἡμᾶς (*P.Oxy*. XVII 2151, ll. 5-8 = TM 30674 (III AD))

but you have never once told me about your health, so do so now by the people who are coming to us.

(14b) Ὀννῶφρις Ὀννώφριος […] αὐθάδως κατέσπασεν ἀπὸ μέρους, ἐξ οὗ κινδυνεύει τῷ ὅλωι ἐξαρθῆνα[ι] (*P.Ryl*. II 133, ll. 16-19 = TM 12919 (I AD))

Onnophris son of Onnophris […] ventured to pull it partly down, whereby there is a danger of its being entirely carried away.

It is true, however, that, in the same way as the continuative type, also sentential relative clauses are appositive by definition, since they refer to sentences that, like proper nouns, indicate 'unique' objects and are semantically definite.[52] This is also reflected in the type of relative pronouns that introduce these clauses in the Greek language:

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52   Lehmann 1984, 273.

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according to López Romero,[53] in Classical Greek sentential relative clauses are only introduced by definite pronouns, such as ὅς, ὅσπερ and οἷος, but not, for instance, ὅστις or ὁποῖος. In papyrus petitions from the Roman and Late Antique period, these clauses are attested only in combination with ὅς, ὅσπερ, ὅσος and the relative article ὁ. Semantically, sentential relative clauses have been described in Archaic and Classical Greek as referring to the state of affairs described in the preceding clause.[54] In the context of private papyrus letters, these are often found in salutations and health wishes:

(15) πρὸ τῶν ὅλ[ων εὔχομ]αί σε ἐρρῶσθαι, ὅ μοι εὐκτόν ἐστιν (*P.Mich.* VIII 466, ll. 3-4 = TM 17240 (II AD))

before all else, I pray for your good health, which is my wish.

Moreover, although always in the neuter form, relative markers introducing sentential clauses are not always in the singular in documentary papyri, differently from New Testament Greek:[55]

(16) παρὰ πάντα δὲ σεαυ᾽τοῦ ἐπιμέλου ἵν ὑγιαίνῃς ἃ δὴ πρῶτον ἡμῖν τῶν ἐις εὐχήν ἐστιν· (*BGU* XVI 2622, ll. 22-4 = TM 23346 (I AD))[56]

above all, take care of yourself so you stay healthy – the first thing in our prayers.

Most appositive and continuative clauses in papyrus petitions, however, are not sentential, but they rather have a noun phrase as antecedent. In particular, in the background of the petition, the head noun is often represented by wrongdoers who are already identified, either by their proper name or by some other salient features (see § 2), while the continuative clauses follow the course of their actions. In the next section, we focus therefore on the use of continuative clauses in papyrus petitions, and the functions they performed within these texts, namely to "frame the bad guys" of the story.

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[53] López Romero 2023, 145.

[54] Perna 2013, 194; Probert 2015, 147-8; López Romero 2023, 143.

[55] Du Toit 2022, 168.

[56] This example also differs from the sentential relative clause introduced by ἃ quoted in Perna 2013, 194, since it refers there to two coordinated elements from the previous clause. See also some cases discussed by López Romero 2023, 144 on possible exceptions to the number rule.

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3.2 Continuative Clauses in the Context of the Petition

The behaviour of continuative clauses has not been investigated yet in the papyri. In fact, Bakker thought that the phenomenon was not at all typical of this type of documents:

> In the papyri relative connection does not occur very often. This is not surprising: this idiom is not at home in documents and letters, it is more suitable to the story.[57]

Nevertheless, the fact that these clauses are suitable to the story and their presence in documentary papyri are not necessarily two mutually excluding elements: the background of papyrus petitions contains a story of variable length in which the events that induced to petitioner to write are narrated, which makes continuative clauses potentially 'at home' also in this genre of papyrus texts. To better understand this possibility, let us observe some examples of these clauses in the context of the petition.

In *P.Ryl.* II 125, Orsenoupis writes to the chief of police about some items deposited in a box by his mother, which have been stolen by the builder Petesouchus during the demolition of some walls. The continuative relative clause, introduced by ὃς καί,[58] highlights a turning point in the narration, after the list of the items that the box contained, revealing that Petesouchus not only stole them, but also lied about the fact that it was empty.

(17) Μεσορὴ μηνὶ τοῦ διελη(λυθότος) ιδ (ἔτους) Τιβερίου Καίσαρος Σεβαστοῦ ποιουμέ[ν]ου μου κατασπασμὸν τειχαρίων παλαιῶ(ν) ἐν τοῖς οἰκοπέδο[ι]ς μου διὰ Πετεσούχου τοῦ Πετεσούχου οἰκοδόμ(ου), καὶ ἐμοῦ χωρισθέντος εἰς ἀποδημίαν βιωτ[ι]κῶν χάριν εὗρεν ὁ Πετεσοῦχος ἐν τῷ κατασπασμῶι τὰ ὑπὸ τῆς μητρός μου ἀποτεθειμένα ἐν πυξιδίωι ἔτι ἀπὸ τοῦ ις (ἔτους) Καίσαρος ἐνωτίων χρυσο ζεῦγο(ς) (τετάρτων) δ καὶ μηνίσκο(ν) χρυσο(ῦν) (τετάρτων) γ καὶ ψελίω(ν) ἀργυρῶν ζεῦγο(ς) ὁλκῆ(ς) ἀσήμο(υ) (δραχμῶν) ιβ καὶ ὁρμίσκον ἐν ᾧ ἀργυρᾶ ἄξιο(ν) (δραχμῶν) π καὶ ἀργυ(ρίου) (δραχμὰς) ξ, καὶ διαπλανήσας τοὺ[ς ὑπ]ουργοῦντας καὶ τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἀπηνέγκατο παρ' ἐατὸν διὰ τῆς ἐατοῦ θυγατρὸς παρθένου· ἐκκενώσας τὰ προκείμενα ἔριψεν ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ μου τὴν πυξίδα κενήν, ὃς καὶ ὡμολ[ό]γησεν τὴν πυξίδα ὡς προφέρεται κενήν (*P.Ryl.* II 125, ll. 4-28 = TM 12911 (I AD))

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[57] Bakker 1974, 97.

[58] When the relative pronoun has a continuative meaning, the combination with καί appears "redundant" (Nicholas 1998, 234). Note also the non-standard order of the two elements.

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In the month Mesore of the past 14th year of Tiberius Caesar Augustus I was engaged in demolishing some old walls upon my land through the agency of Petesouchus son of Petesouchus, builder; and when I had left home on business concerning my livelihood Petesouchus discovered in the work of demolition certain articles deposited in a little box by my mother as far back as in the 16th year of Augustus, namely a pair of gold ear-rings weighing 4 quarters, a gold crescent weighing 3 quarters, a pair of silver bracelets to the weight of 12 drachmae of unstamped metal, a necklace on which were silver ornaments worth 80 drachmae, and 60 silver drachmae. Putting his workmen and my servants off the scent he had these conveyed to his home by his unmarried daughter, and having rifled the contents aforesaid he threw the box empty into my house; moreover he acknowledges (having found) the box but alleges that it was empty.

In a similar way, but with an adversary meaning, expressed by ὃς δὲ, in a petition from the third century AD the daughters of Kopres write to the strategos because their uncle Chaeremon took possession of their property after the death of their father. Here the continuative relative clause points out the contradiction between how Chaeremon was supposed to act, and how he acted instead, ultimately unmasking him as the wrongdoer of the story:

(18) ὁ δὲ τούτου ἀδελφὸς Χαιρήμων ἅπαντα τὰ κατέλιψεν ἐνκολφωσάμενος καὶ παράσχετο ἡμῖν ταῖς γυναιξὶν σιτικὰς δημοσίας ἀρούρας ταῖς μὴ δυναμέναις ὑπαντᾶν τοῖς φόροις τῶν ἀρουρῶν. προσήλθαμεν δὲ καὶ τότε τῷ γενομένῳ πρωτοστάτῃ τῆς κώμης Σερήνῳ τῷ καὶ Ἁρπ[ο]κρᾷ καὶ ἐκέ[λ]ευσεν αὐτὸν ἅπαντα τὰ καταλιφθέντα ὑπὸ τ[ο]ῦ ἡμῶν πατρὸς ταῦτα ἡμῖν πα[ρ]ασχεῖν. ὃς δὲ οὐδεμίαν ἡμῶν φ[ρ]οντίδα πο[ι]εῖται (*P.Cair.Isid.* 64, ll. 5-14 = TM 10394 (III AD))

But his brother Chaeremon appropriated all that he had left, and handed over to us, who are women, grain-bearing arouras of public land, although we are unable to meet the rents on the arouras. And at that time we approached the protostates of the village who was then in the office, namely Serenus also called Harpocras, and he ordered him (i.e. Chaeremon) to turn over to us all the property that had been left by our father. But he takes no account of us.

To introduce a continuative clause in papyri, not only ὃς, but also the pronoun ὅστις can be used in petitions in the same circumstances, further pointing towards an overlapping in meaning between the two

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markers in the Post-Classical papyri.[59] In a petition from the archive of Sakaon,[60] the widow Aurelia Artemis is writing to the prefect because a certain Syrion is using his influence to steal her husband's property, now belonging to her and her children: the unmasking of Syrion as the 'bad guy' of the story is again realised in the text by means of a clause introduced by ὅστις.

> (19) Συρίων γενόμενος δεκάπρωτος [ἀπὸ τῆς αὐτ]ῆς κώμης Θρασὼ ἀναπίσας μου τὸν ἄν[δρα Καῆτ ὀνό]ματι ποιμένιν αὐτοῦ τὰ πρόβατα – ὅστις [ἀδίκως τὰς τοῦ] προκειμένου ἀνδρὸς αἶγας καὶ πρόβατα τὸν [ἀριθμὸν ἑξήκο]ντα συναπέσπασεν αὑτῷ (*P.Sakaon* 36, ll. 8-11 = TM 13054 (III AD))

> Syrion having become decaprotus of the aforesaid village, persuaded my husband Ganis to pasture his flock – it was he who wrongfully removed into his own keeping my husband's goats and sheep 60 in number.

Interestingly, in (17), (18) and (19), we can also observe different punctuation strategies employed by the editors of the texts in order to mark the beginning of the continuative clause after the main clause: a comma in (17), a full stop in (18) and a dash in (19); furthermore, in (24) the continuative clause will be introduced by another punctuation mark, the raised point. All these signs, which are not present in the original papyrus, further add to what underlined in § 2 about the use of punctuation as an interpretive mechanisms of the relative clause's meaning.[61]

3.3 Applying Loock's Model to Papyrus Petitions

We have seen so far that continuative clauses are a subdivision of appositive clauses and that, in papyri, they can highlight pivotal moments in the narrative of the petition. In order to better formalise the functions of continuative clauses and to differentiate them from other types of appositive clauses, the model developed by Loock[62] on English attempts a positive definition of appositive relative clauses, that

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[59] See Bentein, Cattafi 2024. Kriki 2013, 455 observes that continuative relative clauses in documentary papyri show a preference for the pronoun ὅσπερ, while ὅς is rarer. In my data on petitions, ὅς is the relative pronoun more commonly used to introduce finite continuative clauses, followed by ὅσπερ and ὅστις.

[60] Parassoglou 1978.

[61] Compare it also with the absence and the presence of a comma signalling the distinction between the restrictive relative clause in (2) and the appositive clause in (3).

[62] Loock 2007, 339; 2010, 95-139.

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is, a definition made on the basis of what these clauses do in the text rather than by underlying what they are not (as in 'non-restrictive'). Three types of appositive clauses are then distinguished: the relevance type, the subjectivity type, and the proper continuative type. By applying this model to Greek papyrus petitions, we can observe the specific functions performed by these three categories in the texts.

Loock's relevance type has the goal of maximising the relevance of an utterance. In our documents, although the antecedent is already referentially identified, the writer needs to make it relevant within the discourse, by adding details unknown to the addressee which are important to create the appropriate contextual effects, namely to call on the addresse's sympathy and maximise the possibility that the plaint will be considered. In these texts, this means increasingly characterising a certain figure as the wrongdoer of the story, amplifying their wickedness and, as such, the seriousness of the victim's damage. In (20), the relevance appositive relative clauses introduced by οἵτινες, "justify and legitimise the referent's presence"[63] in the petition: the fact that the money lenders carried off the children of Pamonthios is here the relevant piece of information, representing, as said immediately afterwards in the text, the reason that brings the victim's brother to write the petition.

(20) οὗτος ⸌γὰρ ὁ⸍ ἀδελφὸς ἡμῶν ἔτυχέν ποτε οἰνοπράτης καὶ ἐπὶ πολλὺ ἐνοχληθεὶς ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ πατρίδι ἀρχοντω ⟦παρα⟧ παρὰ τὴν δύναμιν αὐ[το]ῦ εἰσπράτε̣σθαι καὶ ἐκ τούτου ὄγκον ἀργυρίου δαν[ει]σάμενος καὶ ταῦτα ἀπετηθεὶς καὶ μὴ δυνάμενος ἀπαντᾶν πρὸς τὰ χρεωστούμενα ἠναγκάσθη ὑπὸ τῶν δανιστω πάντα τὰ ἑαυτοῦ ἄχρι καὶ τῶν ἱματίων τῶν τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην αὐτοῦ περισκεπασμένων πολῆσαι· καὶ τούτων πραθέντωνμόγις τὴν ἡμίσιαν τῶν ἀργυρίων τεδύνηταιπερινοῆσαι τοῖς δανισταῖς, οἵτινες οἱ ἀνελεήμονες ἐκεῖνοι καὶ ἄθεοι ἀπέσπασαν τὰ πάντα τὰ ἑαυτοῦ τέκνα νήπια κομιδῇ. ὅθεν ἐπιτίνωμεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ταυτηνὶ τὴν ἐπιστολήν, ἀξιοῦντες ὑμ[ᾶς σ]υμβαλέσθαι αὐτῷ εἰς ὃ ἐὰ[ν] δύνασθε[δοῦν]ε (*P.Lond.* VI 1915, ll. 16-31 = TM 16853 (IV AD))

For this brother of ours was formerly a wine dealer, and having been long troubled by the magistrates in his native place with taxes exactions beyond his means, and having as a result borrowed a large sum of money, and being asked for this and being unable to meet his debts, he was compelled by the money lenders to sell all his possessions, even to the garments that covered his nakedness. And after selling these, with difficulty could he get together the half of

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[63] Loock 2010, 109.

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the money to pay the money lenders, who, those pitiless and godless men, carried off all his children, mere infants. Wherefore we direct to you this letter, asking you to help him in so far as you can give.

A similar effect can be achieved by means of participial relative clauses, as in (21), where the attention of the addressee is guided towards the negative qualities of Ptolemaeus, who is first presented in a more neutral light with details about his family and his provenance, and afterwards, by means of adjectives and then participial relative clauses, is progressively depicted as a 'bad guy'. When the focus lies on a concrete instance justifying the negative moral judgement, as in (20), the relative clause introduced by a pronoun is preferred, while participles are used to draw the characterisation of the wrongdoer as someone who is used to unethical behaviours, as in (21).

(21) ὧν ἐστιν Πτολεμαῖος υἱὸς Πάππο[υ] τινὸς γεγυμνασιαρχηκότος ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἀρσινοείτου, αὐθάδης τῷ τρόπῳ κ[αὶ] βί]αι]ος, δανιστιμὸν βίον ζῶν καὶ πράσσων ἀνόσια πάν[τα] ἀπειρημένα, στατηρι[αίο]υς τόκους ἀπαιτῶν τῇ περὶ αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ νομῷ δυν[άμε]ι (*SB* XX 14401, ll. 6-10 = TM 14880 (II AD))

One of these men is Ptolemaeus, son of a certain Pappus ex-gymnasiarch, from the same Arsinoite nome, reckless in his conduct and violent, leading the life of a moneylender and committing every impious and forbidden act, by demanding interest at the rate of a stater per mina per month by virtue of the power he has in the nome.

In Loock's categorisation, the subjectivity type of appositive clauses is used to convey an opinion or a comment on behalf of the speaker. Also this function is pertinent to the goals of papyrus petitions, in which the writers, playing the role of victims, wish to express judgements and to present a personal version of the events occurred; a shift from objectivity to subjectivity, from the 'referential' level to the level of 'commentary' is provided by the relative clause.

In (22), the 'bad guys' Theodorus and the komarchs are first presented in their concrete actions. A comment of the writer is then added, generalising the wrongdoers' behaviour in order to shed on them negative light and to reinforce the victim's position by appealing to a common ground of values. As it is the case in example (22), on a formal level the subjectivity type is often represented by a sentential relative clause in combination with a neuter relative marker (cf. 14a-b, 15, 16), referring back to the entire preceding clause.

(22) τὰ δινὰ πάσχομεν ὑ[πό τ]ε τοῦ πραιποσίτου τοῦ πάγου Θεοδώρου καὶ τῶν κωμάρχων. καταπλήτ'τουσιν ἡμᾶς, ὅπερ δικν[ύει]

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[τὴν π]ροαίρεσιν τούτων τῶν παμπονήρω[ν ἀ]νδρῶν (*P.Cair.Isid*.73, ll. 3-4 = TM 10404 (IV AD))

We suffer severely at the hands of the praepositus of the pagus Theodorus and of the komarchs. They terrorise us, and this reveals the character of these utterly wicked men.

Moreover, next to the pronoun strategy, also this type of relative clauses is found with the participial strategy. In (23), the participle ὀφίλων appears in an internally-headed construction, where a woman, Aurelia Taÿsirie, judges her husband Paul as not deserving to be called as such. While due to the fragmentary nature of the text we do not know the story behind this accusation, which would have probably been described in the following lines, the comment added about Paul is at this point a subjective judgement to condition the hearer's evaluation of the facts before even introducing them, calling on an element of sympathy towards the victim. In (23), this judgement is expressed about the wrongdoer as an individual rather than about an action as in (22).

(23) ἀλλότρι[α τῶν ν]όμων διεπράξατο κατ᾽ ἐμοῦ <u>ὁ μὴ καλεῖσθαι ὀφίλων ἀνήρ μου</u> Παῦλος [υἱὸς(?) Κ]άστορος (*P.Harr*. II 218, ll. 5-7 = TM 15218 (IV AD))

Paul, son of Castor, who does not deserve to be called my husband, acted illegally against me.

The proper continuative type has, according to Loock, the function of enabling a movement within the narrative time. This effect is also relevant to the genre of petitions, since, in the background, a convincing narrative has to be presented to the addressee (see § 1); this goal can be reached by means of continuative clauses, which bring the spotlight to the wrongdoer as accountable for a sequence of events.

In (24), the wrongdoer in the text is the soldier Iulius: approached by the petitioner, an old man, he reacts to his inquiry in a violent way. The sequence, however, starts from a simple episode of rural life, before moving to the central story with the actions of the 'bad guy': the passage between the two situations, both of which involve Iulius, is marked by a continuative clause introduced by ὃς, which promotes him at the foreground of the narrative.

(24) χοίρου ὑὸς ἀποπλανηθείσης τῆς θυγατρός μου ἐν τῇ κώμῃ καὶ ὀνομαζομένης ὡς παρὰ Ἰουλίωι στρατιώτῃ, προσῆλθον αὐτῷ αἰτήσων ὅρκον περὶ τούτου· <u>ὃς</u> λαβόμενός μου τοῦ πρεσβύτου ἐν τῇ κώμῃ μεσούσης ἡμέρας, ὡς οὐκ ὄντων νόμων, <u>πληγαῖς με ἠκίσατο</u> (*SB* IV 7464, ll. 9-11 = TM 14020 (III AD))

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> A sow having escaped from my daughter in the village and being reported to be at the house of the soldier Julius, I went to him to demand his oath about this matter, and he laying hands on me, old as I am, in the village in the middle of the day, as if there were no laws, belaboured me with blows.

The chain of events in the narrative can be realised also with participles referring to the wrongdoer.[64] Differently from the previous case, in (25), a short petition from the archive of Euhemeria, the story starts in medias res with the introduction of a female character, Herais, who first enters the petitioner's house and then assaults his daughter. The temporal sequence of the wrongdoer's actions builds up with two participles,[65] εἰσελθών and συνλαβών, which are followed by three coordinated finite verbs expressing the types of violence inflicted.

(25) Ἡραῒς γυνὴ Ἡρακλᾶτος τοῦ Π[.] . . . τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς κώμης <u>εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὴν ὑ[πάρ]χο(υσαν) ἐν τῇ κώμῃ οἰκ[ίαν] καὶ συνλαβὼν</u> <u>τὴν θυγατέρα μ[ο]υ</u> ἔδ[ωκ]εν πληγὰς π[λ]είους εἰς πᾶν μέρος καὶ περιέ[σ]χισεν χιτῶνα πορφυροῦν καὶ ἀπηνέγκατο ἀφ' ὧν χιρίζω τοῦ γυμνα[σ]ιάρχ(ου) ἀργυ(ρίου) ρ (*P.Ryl.* II 151, ll. 5-17 = TM 12937 (I AD))

> Herais wife of Heraclas son of ..., an inhabitant of the village, having entered the house which I possess in the village seized my daughter, gave her numerous blows all over her body, tore her purple tunic, and carried off 100 drachmae from the money of the gymnasiarch which I administer.

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64 The use of tenses is also noticeable in participial clauses: while in the relevance type in (21) and the subjectivity type in (23) the participle appears in the present form, in the continuative type in (25) it appears in the aorist.

65 On the use of participles to "sketch the circumstances under which the main events in the past occurred" in papyrus petition, see Bentein 2015, 476.

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4 Stylistic and Sociolinguistic Aspects of Continuative Clauses

4.1 Stylistic Effects of Continuative Clauses

Continuative clauses are frequently attested in the Greek New Testament: according to Boyer,[66] the text presents 422 instances of continuative clauses. In a passage from the Gospel of Luke (26), the similarities with the examples from the papyri appear striking: the continuative clause is introduced by ὃς καὶ as in (17) and it is found in an analogous context of most instances in the petitions, with the narration of negative characters behaving aggressively towards other individuals, e.g. beating them (cf. 24, 25).

(26) ἄνθρωπός τις κατέβαινεν ἀπὸ Ἰερουσαλὴμ εἰς Ἰεριχὼ καὶ λῃσταῖς περιέπεσεν, οἳ καὶ ἐκδύσαντες αὐτὸν καὶ πληγὰς ἐπιθέντες ἀπῆλθον ἀφέντες ἡμιθανῆ (Luke 10,30)[67]

A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.

The main function of these clauses in the New Testament is believed to be the increasing of coherence in a sentence or in a larger textual unit:[68] in particular, coherence is increased because continuative clauses provide both a referential link and temporal continuity with what precedes the clause,[69] while, at the same time, establishing a relationship which can be conceptualised in terms of background and foreground: the informational content of the continuative clause pertains to the foreground, and that of the main clause preceding the relative pronoun usually pertains to the background.[70]

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66   Boyer 1988, 236.

67   Example quoted from Du Toit 2022, 166-7.

68   Du Toit 2022, 174, cf. Rutten, Van der Wal 2017, 135 on Dutch.

69   Du Toit 2022, 178.

70   I believe that this view can be associated to the notion of linguistic framing. Runge 2010, speaks about subordinate clauses as "framing devices": when placed before the main clause, they seek to "establish an explicit frame of reference for the clause that follows" (Runge 2010, 209-10). Levinsohn 2000, 192 notices the "rhetorical effect" of continuative clauses, namely to "move the story forward quickly by combining background and foreground information in a single sentence". He also adds that "since the clause prior to the relative pronoun commonly introduces participants, such sentences will tend to occur at the beginning of episodes".

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In the case of papyrus petitions, coherence represents an essential element in the version of the events which has to be delivered, as it is connected with the communicative goal of the text, namely to persuade the addressee to accomplish the petitioner's request. Here, two aspects of coherence which are provided by continuative clauses seem especially pertinent to the rhetorical purpose of the petition: repetition and integration.

On the one hand, as a pervasive mechanism in texts, repetition can generate multiple effects, from facilitating comprehension by offering redundancy of information, to functioning as an intensifier and creating rhetorical crescendo in oratorical discourse.[71] In the background of petitions, although the names of the wrongdoers are not directly reiterated, they are recalled to memory through relative pronouns or participles referring back to them: an accumulation of information and occurrences is then provided about the same individual, with the effect of making the character of the 'bad guy' and its negative characterisation more prominent to the addressee.

On the other hand, integration, which is considered one of the main features of the written language, takes place when more ideas units are combined into a single unit through subordinating conjunctions and other devices.[72] In papyrus petitions, the story is not presented as a fragmentary juxtaposition of events: the use of continuative clauses connects the premises of the story with the details of the incrimination and brings the narrative into a single flow, strengthening the connection between its different parts. For instance, in (27), Sarapion writes a petition to the strategos, asking for an intervention concerning his fugitive slave Euporos, who attacked him when Sarapion tried to recapture him in Memphis. Integration and repetition are achieved by means of two continuative clauses referring back to the wrongdoer Euporos: the chain of reference starting with Εὔπορον and continuing with ἐξ οὗ, ὃν, ὑπ' αὐτοῦ and σὺν αὐτῷ makes the character about whom action is demanded more prominent, whereas all the chunks of the story are brought together in a single unit, ensuring the coherence of the text.

(27) γενόμενος ἐν τῇ Μέμφει τῇ ιε´ Ἰουλίᾳ [Σ]εβαστῇ τοῦ ἐνεστῶτος μηνὸς Καισαρείου συνέλαβον τὸν σημαινόμενον δοῦλον Εὔπορον ἐξ οὗ δεήσει γνωσθῆναι πᾶσαν τὴν περὶ τῶν προγεγραμμένων ἀλήθειαν, ὃν καὶ ἀγείοχα ἐπὶ σὲ μεθ' ἱκανῆς τῆς γεγονοίας μοι ἐπιθέσεως καὶ πληγῶν ἐπιφορᾶς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τε καὶ τῶν σὺν αὐτῷ περιχυθέντων (*P.Oxy.* II 283, ll. 11-16 – TM 20554 (I AD))

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71   Tannen 2007.

72   Chafe 1979.

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I reached Memphis on the day Julia Augusta, the 15th of the present month Caesareus, and seized the above-mentioned slave Euporus, from whom the whole truth respecting the aforesaid matter will have to be learnt, and have brought him to you at the expense of a severe and violent attack upon myself by him and those by whom he was surrounded.

4.2 Sociolinguistic Status of Continuative Clauses

The comparison with the Greek New Testament in § 4.1 opens up also to another scenario: as (26), the majority of continuative clauses in the New Testament are found in the gospel of Luke,[73] which is considered of higher register[74] compared to the other gospels.[75] We could therefore hypothesise that a further sociolinguistic element might be attached to their use also in documentary papyri.

In general terms, appositive relative clauses are connected to a higher sociolinguistic degree compared to restrictive clauses,[76] as they express additional information.[77] In the case of continuative clauses, this sociolinguistic element can be linked to their specific syntactic profile, since continuative clauses are used as strategies to connect sentences rather than to establish a subordinate relationship. In this sense, linking sentences by means of relative clauses has been variously evaluated in scholarship, being associated with both popular speech[78] and, at the opposite end, with literary style, in opposition to coordination.[79]

Also in Ancient Greek, continuative clauses are equated more to discourse connectives rather than subordinates clauses,[80] and, as such, they represent an alternative which can be preferred to other

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[73] Bakker 1974, 106.

[74] Burkett 2002, 195.

[75] Moreover, one could argue that the use of continuative clauses in Luke could be also affected by the interference of Biblical language and Semitic syntax in particular, which is characterised by parataxis. On Semitisms in Luke, see Hogeterp, Denaux 2018.

[76] Leafgren 2004; Loock 2010, 211-12; see also Cattafi 2025 for some data about the functions of restrictive and appositive clauses in Greek documentary papyri.

[77] Loock, however, opposes the traditional view of appositive clauses interpreted in the terms of their optionality and suppressibility in comparison with restrictive relative clauses, and focuses instead on their informational content: in this sense, appositive clauses are seen as "a syntactic means of backgrounding information" (Loock 2010, 48).

[78] "There seems to be a natural tendency in the popular speech towards linking sentences by means of relatives" (Reul 1901, 71)

[79] "Popular speech seems to prefer coordination (with and), where literary style employs subordination by means of a relative clause" (Reuter 1936, 51).

[80] Tabachovitz 1943, 11.

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forms of linguistic connectives. The popularity of continuative clauses in the Koine might be related to the weakening of the relative pronoun in the same period, whereby these markers loses its function as a relative in order to become mere connectives.[81] In turn, the presence of competing connective constructions hints to the possibility of a sociolinguistic value comparatively assigned to the different options used in documentary papyri: in particular, continuative clauses can be compared to the coordinating conjunction καί, which is frequently found in contemporary private letters in order to connect subsequent clauses, as in (28):

(28) πέμψο(ν) οὖν ἡμεῖν Διονύσιον, αὐτὸς γὰρ οἶδεν τὸν λόγον τῆς μετρήσεως, καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀναβάσι ἐνεβαλόμεθα. καὶ νῦν ἐνοχλεῖ ἡμεῖν καὶ τοῖς γεωργοῖς κτήνη οὐκ ἔχωσι, καὶ περὶ χόρτου καὶ περὶ τῆς δαπάνης ἐνοχλεῖ. (*P.Oxy.* XIV 1671, ll. 5-14 = TM 31782 (III AD, private letter))

Send us then Dionysius, for he knows the account of the measuring, and we did the lading on the journey up. And now he worries us and the cultivators who have no animals, he worries both about fodder and about expenses.

According to Ljungvik,[82] such paratactic καί formations present in the papyri, especially in private letters,[83] were in fact common in the Greek Umgangssprache, but such an hypothesis remains yet to be tested on a corpus.

For this reason, I have conducted a comparison between finite continuative relative clauses and sentence connective καί in a corpus of papyri, looking at the ratio between the two constructions in petitions and comparing it with that of letters in the same corpus. The corpus include five papyrological archives from the Roman and Late Antique period, all of which contain both text types: these are the archives of Apollonios strategos of the Apollonopolites Heptakomias (TM 19 (I-II AD)), Sarapion alias Apollonianus and sons (TM 210 (II-III AD)), Flavius Abinnaeus (TM 1 (IV AD)), Dioskoros (TM 72 (V-VI AD)) and Apiones (TM 15 (V-VII AD)).[84]

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81 Bakker 1974, 105.

82 Ljungvik 1932, 54-5.

83 Although they are not absent in petitions, where they can be combined with continuative constructions: see ex. (25).

84 More information on the five papyrological archives is available at `https://www.trismegistos.org/arch/index.php`. For the archive of Dioskoros in particular, see Fournet 2008.

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The cumulative results of the five archives [tab. 1] show that the ratio between finite continuative clauses and sentence connective καί is 0.25 in petitions, compared to 0.09 in letters, meaning that the option of using a continuative clause to connect sentences compared to connective καί is considerably higher in petitions, and more sporadic in the case of letters.[85] The results of the investigation in the single archives, which is reported in tables 2-6 [tabs 2-6], show the same trend operating in all archives, except for the archive of Apollonios, the oldest of the five archives, where the ratio between petitions and letters is roughly the same; finally, no continuative clauses in letters were found in the archives of Abinnaeus and Dioskoros.

Table 1   Continuative clauses vs connective καί in five papyrus archives

	Continuative clause	Connective καί	Ratio
Petitions	18	72	0.25
Letters	15	165	0.09

Table 2   Archive of Apollonios strategos of the Apollonopolites Heptakomias

	Continuative clause	Connective καί	Ratio
Petitions	2	12	0.17
Letters	12	67	0.18

Table 3   Archive of Sarapion alias Apollinianus and sons

	Continuative clause	Connective καί	Ratio
Petitions	2	4	0.5
Letters	1	8	0.12

Table 4   Archive of Flavius Abinnaeus

	Continuative clause	Connective καί	Ratio
Petitions	1	11	0.09
Letters	0	3	0

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85   The difference is statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level, with p-value < 0.006514.

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Table 5   Archive of Dioskoros

	Continuative clause	**Connective καί**	**Ratio**
Petitions	12	37	0.32
Letters	0	45	0

Table 6   Archive of the Apiones

	Continuative clause	**Connective καί**	**Ratio**
Petitions	1	8	0.12
Letters	2	42	0.05

This distribution illustrates that the choice of continuative relative clauses to connect sentences could be then constructed as a less colloquial option in Post-Classical Greek papyri.[86] Moreover, what was observed in papyri about their preference in certain types of texts would be confirmed by the case of the Greek New Testament, where the most high-register gospel presents a greater concentration of continuative clauses, and by the case of Medieval Greek, where continuative clauses have been associated with texts with a higher register and in official documents;[87] finally, in the literary Koine, authors such as Polybius and Diodorus were using relative pronouns and adverbs instead of demonstratives to connect sentences.[88]

In papyrus petition, the preference for continuative clauses was then also motivated by the strive for formality of the writers, who wanted to distance themselves from the features of the colloquial language: a sociolinguistic layer could have therefore complemented the stylistic effects and the suitability of function of continuative clauses in petitions (cf. § 4.1), with these clauses being particular appropriate to petitions both as formal documents and as expositions of coherent narratives. These two aspects are connected, since the coordination with 'and' also marks a lower level of integration.[89]

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[86]   Bakker 1974, 106 observes that one does not need to intend continuative clauses in itself as an exclusive literary feature, absent in the everyday speech: in this case, however, speakers would have more likely used ὅπου instead of other pronouns.

[87]   Nicholas 1998, 233; Kriki 2013, 455.

[88]   Blomquist 1969, 136.

[89]   Chafe 1979, 1097.

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5   Conclusions

In this paper, I have taken into account Greek petitions from Egypt dating back to the first eight centuries AD and I have shown how relative clauses are used in petitions as linguistic strategies to present the character of the wrongdoer in a negative light and connect the elements of the story narrated in the document. To this end, I have highlighted the syntactic and semantic features of appositive and continuative clauses in documentary papyri, and I have looked at the functions that these relative clauses perform within the background and in the broader context of the petition, in order to investigate how they can be meaningful in the linguistic construction of the text as a rhetorical and social instrument.

From this analysis, it emerged that (i) the linguistic features of appositive clauses in documentary papyri are different from the same clauses in Classical Greek, and formal aspects are therefore virtually unable to distinguish them from restrictive relative clauses in papyri; (ii) Loock's categorisation of appositive relative clauses into relevance, subjectivity and continuative type can be applied to papyrus petitions in order to shed light on the rhetorical representation of the wrongdoers from the point of view of the petitioner; (iii) at a textual level, continuative clauses mainly increase the coherence of the narrative by providing at the same time repetition and integration in the document; (iv) a higher sociolinguistic value could be attached to continuative clauses in the papyri compared to connecting sentences by means of καί.

While future research is needed to investigate their presence in other genres and texts from the Post-Classical period, as well as their evolution into Byzantine Greek, it was shown that reasons at different levels of the language can motivate the use of continuative constructions. Bakker's observation[90] about Greek continuative clauses being 'suited to the story' is true, but this does not entail that their use is 'not at home' in Greek documentary texts: in fact, papyrus petitions contain stories of people in Roman and Late Antique Egypt, which have 'bad guys' as main characters of the action and are narrated from the victims' perspective, hoping to be heard and to obtain justice.

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[90]   Bakker 1974, 97.

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Competing Grammars and Language Change: Evidence from Correction and Revision Processes in the Private Papyri from Ptolemaic Egypt

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Abstract   In view of the variation they present and their connection with the contemporary language, documentary papyri from Egypt represent a valuable source for a sociolinguistics of Ancient Greek. This paper explores the heuristic potential of the traces of authorial corrections and textual revisions for the study of individual repertoires. Two cases of phrasal corrections, taken from a corpus of Ptolemaic papyri, are discussed: both can be traced back to the gradual restructuring of the system of Classical complement sentences. They offer an interesting perspective on language change, since the formulations and re-formulations of the writers reveal the grammars that competed within the speakers' competence, providing glimpses into the dynamic relationship between synchronic variability and diachronic evolution.

Keywords   Historical sociolinguistics. Language of papyri. Post-classical Greek. Complementation. Infinitive.

Sommario   1 Aspects of Variation Within Private Papyri from Egypt. Between Social Dimension and Individual Repertoires. – 2 Formulation and Re-Formulation Between Linguistic Variability and Evolutionary Drift. – 2.1 The Accusative and Infinitive (AccInf) Across Registers. – 2.2 Infinitives and Participles in Conflict. – 3 Concluding Remarks.

1 Aspects of Variation Within Private Papyri from Egypt. Between Social Dimension and Individual Repertoires

The Greek letters preserved within the papyri of Egypt (dated from around 300 BC to 600 AD) have opened up to linguistic data that are often difficult to access in the study of ancient languages, offering an insight into the language of everyday use, which is often only indirectly reflected in the literary canon on which historical research traditionally depends.[1]

These texts (from familiar letters to recommendations, business correspondence and petitions) reflect an ephemeral communication aimed at satisfying immediate and circumstantial needs. They were not designed to survive over the centuries or to be shared beyond the circle of recipients to whom they were addressed: they were "written to be seen by relatively few eyes, and not to be given publicity".[2] This is also evidenced by the quality of the writing material on which they were recorded, which is poorer than that of literary papyri texts, and therefore prone to faster deterioration.[3]

The bulk of the letters preserved doubtless represents only part of the correspondence circulating in Egypt: due to the inherent fragility of the papyrus, letters were prone to rapid deterioration even in the immediate term (see, e.g., 1).[4] They were not only subject to the action of environmental agents (as noted by the author of 2), but due to the absence of an institutionalised postal service many of them were lost as is perhaps the case of the testimony in (3).[5]

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1 Cf., e.g., Clackson 2015, 103 ff., and in particular Evans, Obbink 2010 on the language of papyri.

2 Turner 1968, 127, who also discusses the different attitude of the writer in other documentary texts such as inscriptions, "which were designed for public exhibition and consequently have a certain self-consciousness".

3 Cf. Sarri 2018, 112.

4 Papyri are quoted in accordance with the *Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraka and Tablets* by J.F. Oates and W.H. Willis (http://www.papyri.info/docs/checklist). The Greek text is based on the digital edition available on the Papyrological Navigator (http://www.papyri.info). The use of critical symbols follows the so-called Leiden Bracketing System. Accordingly, square brackets indicate portions of text integrated by modern editors and dots to indicate gaps in the text. Double square brackets mark deletions, while interlinear additions are marked with \ /. Parts intentionally omitted by the Author are marked by three dots in square brackets [...]. All the passages discussed are provided with an English translation, which – when not otherwise specified – was done by the Author.

5 See also Turner 1968, 130 fn. 5.

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(1) *PSI* IV 403 2-7; III BC

τὴμ μὲν ἐπιστο- | λὴν ἣν ἀπέστειλας οὐ- | κ ἠδυνάμην ἀναγνῶι- | ναι διὰ τὸ ἐξηλεῖφθαι· | ἐδόκεις δέ μοι περὶ τοῦ | κλήρου γεγραφέναι.

I could not read the letter you sent me because it is ruined; it seemed you had written me (lit. 'you seemed to have written me') about the piece of land.

(2) *P.Lond.* VII 2033 2-4 recto; 257-48 BC

ἣν ἐγράψατε ἐπιστολὴν | Μένωνι περὶ τοῦ Καλλικῶντος κερματίου |οἱ μῦες κατεβεβρώκεισαν.

The mice have eaten the letter you wrote to Meno about Callicon's money.

(3) *P.Mich.* VIII 484 3-5; II AD

ἤδη σοι ταύτην τρίτην ἐπιστολὴν | γράφω καὶ σοί μοι οὐδεμίαν ἀντιφώ- | νησιν ἔπεμψες

This is already the third letter I'm writing to you, and you haven't sent me any response yet.

Due to their expressive immediacy, letters, as so-called 'ego-documents', are generally acknowledged to be valuable tools for historical sociolinguistics.[6] Accordingly, the text type as well as the communicative context in which they were produced contribute to making the documentary papyri of Egypt valuable resource for a sociolinguistics of Ancient Greek.

Despite the limits of the epistolary style – based on the use of fixed formulae and clichés[7] – the language of these letters displays regular deviations from the Classical model (still dominant in contemporary literary texts) that cannot be attributed solely to the writers' poor command of the Greek language, but that may be revealing of trends in the contemporary language,[8] as shown by the recurrent parallels with the language of the Septuagint and early Christianity.[9]

Given the fragmented and incomplete status of the correspondence preserved in papyri, it is not easy to define factors underlying the distribution of variants. However, the use of homogeneous data sets (according to the text type, the period or the writers' profile)[10] is generally assumed compensate for the risk of generalising on "bad

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6   See, e.g., Koch, Oesterreicher 1985 and van der Wal, Rutten 2013, and in particular Elspass 2012 on epistolary documents.

7   Cf., e.g., Bruno 2015.

8   Cf., e.g., Stolk 2020.

9   Cf., e.g., Horrocks 2010, 106.

10   In a gross simplification of the authorship issue, the sender of the letter is here conventionally assumed to be the author of the text, regardless of the possible recourse to scribes (cf., e.g., Dossena 2012).

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data" (in the sense of W. Labov).[11] For instance, letters belonging to the same epistolary type offer similar interactional "frames" characterised by specific expressive features.[12] Moreover, due to the consolidated networks of writers included, archives and dossiers[13] provide significant data for the reconstruction of individual tendencies and personal repertoires.[14]

A further dimension of variation can be captured in the authorial corrections and revisions of the texts, which provide sets of forms competing within the same context in the usage of the speakers (i.e., the writers) offering an intra-individual perspective on language use.[15] In the following, such textual interventions will be exploited to open a window on language change, by revealing shifts in the linguistic norms and emerging linguistic trends over time.

The linguistic revision of papyri is a process that is assumed to be regular in letter production:[16] document archives often include drafts and copies of the letters sent, and correctional interventions are widely accepted even in their final versions.[17] Such interventions have been classified by scholars according to the portion of text affected (from the single grapheme to the word to the sentence) and the linguistic level of relevance (from spelling to morpho-syntax).[18] Their heuristic value has also been discussed: R. Luiselli considered such interventions as the reflection of the stylistic concerns of more educated authors,[19] while J.V. Stolk evaluated their frequency in the different epistolary genres and in the various stages of textual composition.[20]

11   Labov 1994. Cf. Herring, van Reenen, Schøsler 2000, 4.

12   Cf. the discussion in Bruno 2022 on the basis of Terkourafi 2001.

13   See Vandorpe 2009, 218, who discusses these two types of collections. Unlike archives, which are a group of documents deliberately collected and kept together by an individual or a community in the past, dossiers include documents on a particular subject only subsequently brought together by scholars.

14   Cf., e.g., Evans 2010; 2012 or Vierros 2020. See also Nachtergaele 2015, 315-18, who recognises in the archive of Zenon the expression of courtesy with ὀρθῶς (instead of καλῶς) and ποιέω, a distinctive expressive feature of the language of Apollonius, the finance minister of Ptolemy Philadelphus.

15   Since corrections may be recorded at all the stages of the text production, a question about the authorship of the intervention also arises (see fn. 4). Cf. Luiselli 2010, 73) for discussion of the notion of "self-correction", and Papathomas 2018 on the role of an official "Korrektor" within a corpus of later letters (fourth-eighth cc. CE).

16   Cf. Papathomas 2018.

17   Cf. Luiselli 2010, 73 ff.

18   Cf., e.g., Papathomas 2018.

19   Luiselli 2010, 71.

20   Stolk 2024.

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Two cases will be here discussed in § 2. Both can be traced back to one of the most notable diachronic developments in the history of the Greek language, namely the restructuring of the system of Classical complement sentences.[21] The process led to the loss of non-finite (infinitive and participial) complements in the later stages of the language, as well as to a drastic reduction in the finite strategies in use both in terms of complementiser classes and verbal themes of the dependent clause.[22]

The two cases discussed were taken from a small corpus of Ptolemaic papyri, in which early traces of this long and gradual process have been singled out.[23] Both cases can be classified as 'phrasal' corrections, i.e. corrections involving deletions, additions, and changes that concern two or more words with effects on the relationships between units at the propositional level and/or relationships between propositions.[24] They capture two different aspects of the crisis of the system of Classical infinitives: their expansion in articulated form (see § 2.1), and the de-systematisation of their opposition with the participle system, which is also associated to an early decline (see § 2.2). As we will see, both the phenomena end up causing an unexpected – and fleeting – expansion of the contexts in which infinitives are at use in the Hellenistic koine.[25]

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[21]   Cf. Joseph 1987, 366; Horrocks 2007, 620.

[22]   Cf. Joseph 1983, 37.

[23]   Cf. Bruno 2024. The corpus includes more than 200 documents dated between the third and second centuries BC. It comprises fifty-two papyrus letters selected by White 1986 for the early Ptolemaic period, about a hundred documents from the Zenon archive (261-29 BC) collected by Edgar 1931 for the university of Michigan, and about seventy texts (mostly petitions, but also letters and dreams) from the *katochoi* of the Serapeum archive (164-52 BC) edited by Wilcken 1927, where technical texts (e.g., accounts and receipts) were excluded (as, e.g., also in Bentein 2015).

[24]   Cf. Stolk 2024.

[25]   Cf. Lee 2007, 113 for a periodisation of the Koine into *early* (third-first cc. BC), *middle* (first-third cc. AD), and *late* (fourth-sixth cc. AD).

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2 Formulation and Re-Formulation Between Linguistic Variability and Evolutionary Drift

2.1 The Accusative and Infinitive (AccInf) Across Registers

Let us start by comparing the passages in (4) and (5), taken respectively from a draft and a more definitive version of a letter from the archive of the scribes of the village of Kerkeosiris (2nd century BC).[26] The documents belong to the original core of the archive and are linked to activities of the scribe Menches (Ἕλλην ἐγχώριος 'a local Greek') between 119 and 110 BC.[27]

(4) *P.Tebt.* I 26 14-21; 114 BC

προσέπεσεν \ἡμῖν/ ⟦μοι⟧ | \πε[ρ]ὶ τοῦ/ ⟦[π]ερι του⟧ τοὺς ἐκ τῆς κώμης | [β]ασιλικοὺς γεωργοὺς ἐγκαταλεί- | [πο]ντας τὴν ἐπικειμένην | ἀσχολίαν ἀνακ[ε]χωρηκέναι | ἐπὶ τὸ [ἐν Ν]αρμούθι ἱερὸν | τῆι ιθ τοῦ ὑποκειμένου μηνός.

I learned that the crown tenants from the village, having left their prescribed occupations, had retired to the temple in Narmouthis on the nineteenth of the month written below. (transl. by J.L. White)

(5) *P.Tebt.* IV 1099 3-4; 114 BC

προσέπεσεν ἡμῖν τοὺς ἐκ τῆς κώμη[ς βασι]λικοὺς γεωργοὺς | ἀνακεχωρηκέναι ἐπὶ τὸ ἐν Ναρμοῦθι ἱερόν.

I learned that the crown tenants of the village had retired to the temple which is in Narmouthis. (transl. by J.L. White)

In these passages, Menches informs the royal secretary Horos, his superior and main interlocutor, of the strike of the workers on the royal estates, who have taken refuge in the temple of the city of Narmouthis. This information is provided in greater detail in (4) taken from the draft,[28] where the workers' negligence is claimed (see ἐγκαταλεί[πο]ντας τὴν ἐπικειμένην ἀσχολίαν at ll. 16-17), and the date of the event is mentioned (see τῆι ιθ τοῦ ὑποκειμένου μηνός at l. 21). In both texts, the news of the retreat in the temple is conveyed through a subordinate clause with the accusative and infinitive (hereafter AccInf), which in the draft (see 4), unlike (5), is introduced by the preposition (περί) and combined with the article (τοῦ).

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26 Cf., e.g., Pestmann 1983.

27 While some scholars identify Menches as the member of a Hellenised Egyptian family (cf, e.g., Vandorpe 2012), others consider him as a descendant of Greek settlers (as, e.g., Pestman 1983).

28 Cf. White 1986, 83.

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The hesitation of the writer between bare or articulated AccInf is clearly visible from the accumulation of corrections in (4). The author intervenes in the text firstly to correct the articulated infinitive by eliminating the preposition and the article (see ⟦[π]ερι του⟧ at l. 15), which are subsequently reintegrated through an interlinear addition (see \πε[ρ]ὶ τοῦ/ at l. 16). Both the preposition and the article will be however ultimately rejected in the letter, where the AccInf is adopted as the more acceptable solution (see 5).

Although the articulated use of the infinitive is documented from the earliest stages of the language, in Hellenistic koine its frequency of use increased compared to that of the Classical prose writers.[29] The strategy reflects the ability of Greek to nominalise any predicate by prefixing the infinitive form with the article,[30] and the spread of the construction is commonly seen as an early indication of the weakening of infinitive complements, which are "morphologically strengthened by the addition of an extra particle".[31] Moreover, while the article initially varies according to the relationship of government with the predicate or the preposition, in later stages it tends to evolve into an empty element "closely associated with the infinitival expression",[32] as in (6) taken from the New Testament, where τοῦ introduces the AccInf with ἐγένετο.

(6) *Act. Ap.* 10.25

ὡς δὲ ἐγένετο τοῦ εἰσελθεῖν τὸν Πέτρον, συναντήσας αὐτῷ ὁ Κορνήλιος πεσὼν ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας προσεκύνησεν.

As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. (NIV)

Just like nouns, nominalised infinitives can also occur with prepositions (as περί in 4). Accordingly, the articulated infinitive not only produces variants of infinitive complements but also expands the use of the infinitive to the domain of adverbials, whereas in Classical times the infinitive had a more limited usage.[33]

Somewhat paradoxically, the same evolutionary trend that ultimately leads to the decline of subordinate infinitive clauses determines in Post-Classical Greek a new productivity of the infinitive in its articulated uses, which due to the introductory article and

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29 Cf. Horrocks 2010, 94.

30 Cf. Cristofaro 1996, 24.

31 Joseph 1983, 49-50.

32 Mandilaras 1973, 334.

33 As, e.g., the infinitive of purpose, which is attested since Homer (see Wakker 1988), but becomes particularly common in the Post-Classical language (Horrocks 2010, 94; Joseph 2002, 15 fn. 26).

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preposition display greater syntactic analyticity and semantic transparency than bare infinitives.[34]

For instance, compared to (5), in (4), the syntactic subordination between the governing and the complement clause is defined not only by the (non-finite) form of the predicate and the accusative marking of the subject of the complement, but also by the presence of the article and the preposition, which (twice) mark the clause boundary between the two clauses. This avoids the formal ambiguity of the AccInf with structures that also present an accusative plus an infinitive, but involve a different syntactic configuration, as in the case of object-control constructions such as (7) below.[35]

(7) *PSI* V 502 24; 257 BC

ἠξιοῦμεν αὐτὸν συμπαραγενέσθαι· ὁ δ᾽ ἔφη ἄσχολος εἶναι πρὸς τῆι τῶν ναυτῶν ἀποστολῆι.

I asked him to assist us; but he said that he was busy in the dispatch of sailors. (transl. by J.L. White)

In (4), furthermore, due to the preposition περί, the AccInf is qualified as the subject matter of the news. This solution is not uncommon in the documents of the period, especially with verbs of communication, as illustrated in (8) and (9) respectively with γράφω and ἀπαγγέλλω.

(8) *P.Dryton* I 36 2-7; 130 BC

ἐπεὶ πλειονάκις σοι γρά-|φω περὶ τοῦ διανδραγαθήσαντα|σαυτοῦ ἐπιμέλεσθαι μέχρι τοῦ|τὰ πράγματα ἀποκαταστῆναι,|ἔτι καὶ νῦν καλῶς ποιήσεις παρα-|καλῶν σαυτὸν καὶ τοὺς παρ᾽ ἡμῶν.

Since I wrote to you often about acting consistently in a brave manner so as to take care of yourself until matters return to the normal, so also once again please encourage yourself and our people. (transl. by J.L. White)

(9) *UPZ* I 59 25-7; 168 BC

ἔτι δὲ καὶ Ὥρου τοῦ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν παρακεκο-|μικότος ἀπηγγελκότος ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀπολελύσθαι σε|ἐκ τῆς κατοχῆς παντελῶς ἀηδίζομαι.

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34 Cf. Joseph 1987, 360. Similar increases in productivity are not uncommon in the slow decline of the Greek infinitive (Joseph 2002, 16 fn. 26). See also the case of the so-called 'temporal' or 'circumstantial' infinitive, which represents a particular development of the infinitive in medieval Greek (cf. Joseph 1983, 60).

35 The syntactic relationship between the accusative item and the main predicate is in these settings shown by the advancement to subject in passive contexts such as (i):

(i) *P.Yal.* I 42 25-9; 229 BC
καὶ|τ[ού]των χάριν παρακατεσχέ-|[θη]ν ὑπὸ τοῦ διοικητοῦ, μ[ή-]|ποτε ἀξιωθεὶς ἐ[μφ]ανίσηι τῶι|διοικητῆι μὴ δύνασθαι ἀχθῆναι.
and on this account (or, their account) I have been detained by the dioiketes, lest having been asked he might make clear to the dioiketes for he (they?) cannot be held (for trial). (transl. by J.L. White)

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> Moreover, now that Horos, who brought the letter, has reported about your release from possession (by the god), I am altogether unhappy. (transl. by J.L. White)

Returning to (4) and (5), the author's final resolution in favour of the bare AccInf in the more accurate version of the letter confirms the generally recognised correlation between the AccInf and higher levels of formality.[36] K. Bentein, for instance, in a corpus of later documentary letters, observes its use in formal and formulaic contexts where non-finite patterns generally display a higher frequency.[37]

Compared to the Classical system, where the alternation between complement sentences is sensitive to the notions of 'assertivity' and 'factivity',[38] new socio-pragmatic factors now guide speakers' choices so that "register now became the determining factor in the choice for a complementation pattern".[39]

However, in cases such as (4) or (5), which depend on an impersonal construction (see προσέπεσεν 'it was told'), the AccInf tends to persist even in informal contexts:

> the verbal infinitive […] is required by impersonal verbs or expressions. […] So too in P-B both in literal and colloquial. This use of the infinitive seems to have proved the most popular and so lasted the longest in the P history of the infinitive.[40]

Accordingly, the persistence of the AccInf with impersonals occurs across various registers. This finds an interesting counterpart in the rarity of possible 'personal' (i.e., raising) counterparts of these structures, which are practically limited to atticising compositions, according to an evolutionary trend anticipating the transition to the modern language.[41]

Alongside its status of prestige variant, the resilience of the AccInf in Post-Classical Greek can also depend on structural factors, such

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36 Cf., e.g., Hult 1990, 147-207 and Kavčič 2005.

37 Cf. Bentein 2017, 31, but also Bruno 2024. See Cristofaro 1996, 132, on a corpus of literary texts, who considers that although a decreased use of AccInf can be observed since Attic prose (fifth-fourth cc. BC), in later texts, this trend emerges especially in authors less influenced by the stylistics of the literary canon.

38 See respectively Crespo 1984 and Cristofaro 1996; 2008 on the relevance of these notions within the Ancient Greek complementation system. Both the notions of assertivity and factivity concern the truth-value of the predication: the former in terms of the attitude of the speaker, the latter in terms of presupposition of the event involved. As argued by Anand, Hacquard 2014, the two aspects may not necessarily overlap.

39 Bentein 2017, 31.

40 Jannaris 1897, 484-5.

41 Cf. Jannaris 1897, 485, but also Hult 1990, 165.

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as the preference for subordinate clauses provided with their own subject (e.g., the accusative subject of the infinitive), thus avoiding cross-referencing with arguments of the main clause (as in personal/raising counterparts such as in 3, where the grammatical subject of ἐδόκεις is semantically linked to γεγραφέναι).[42]

The persistence of the AccInf in Post-Classical Greek hence appears to be linked also to the ability of Ancient Greek infinitives to express a subject distinct from that of the governing predicate, and which is marked by the accusative case.[43] This occurs not only when the subject of the infinitive is not coreferential with the governing clause but also in emphatic contexts.[44] In Ancient Greek, infinitive subjects thus apparently emerge in the same circumstances as full subjects in pro-drop languages, i.e., when "they are discourse prominent or when they are distinct from a previous subject".[45]

This is confirmed by fact that the AccInf also occurs in lower register productions, as in (10), an excerpt from the dream reports of the Serapeum archive (on which see § 2.2), which are generally characterised by an inaccurate and poorly controlled writing.[46]

(10) *UPZ* I 77 18-25; 161-58 BC

τὸ ἐνύπνιον, ὃ εἶδον Παχὼν | κ. οἴομαι ἀρειθμεῖν με | λέγων ὅτι Θῶυθ (ἔτους) κ | ἥως κ. | (ἔτους) κγ Παχὼν δ. ᾤμην | ἐν τῷ ὕπνῳ ἐπεικαλεῖν με τὸν | μέγιστον Ἄμμωνα ἔρχεσθαι ἀ[πὸ] | βορρᾶ μου τριτος ὤν, ἥως παραγ[ί]νηται.

The dream that I (Ptolemaios) saw on Pachon 20. I seem to be counting (the days of the month) Thoth of year 20 until the 20th day. Year 23. Pachon 4. I (Ptolemaios) seemed in the dream to be calling upon the very great god Ammon, calling upon him to come to me from the north with two other (gods). (transl. by J. Rowlandson)[47]

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42   Cf. Bruno 2024.

43   Cf. Sevdali 2013. This is long debated aspect of Ancient Greek syntax with implications for the theoretical notion of finiteness, since Ancient Greek shows non-finite forms able to introduce their own (accusative) subject (cf. e.g., Spyropoulos 2005 and Sevdali 2013 against the hypothesis of Exceptional Case Marking [ECM]). See also Philippaki-Warburton, Catsimali 1997, 583), who in these cases assume the accusative as a "default case" for the subject of complements. Historically, in less formal approaches to the issue, a diachronic relationship (in terms of reanalysis) is found between direct object control structures and AccInf (cf. e.g., Hettrich 1992).

44   Cf. Luraghi 1999 for discussion on co-referential subjects in AccInf within Classical Greek.

45   Sevdali 2013, 21, who also discusses null subjects in AccInf (not only unspecified subjects but also cases with specific reference).

46   Cf. Mayser 1926, 356.

47   Rowlandson 1998.

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In (10), despite the coreference with the main subject, the author opts for AccInf with οἴομαι.[48] Dream reports are characterised by a high rate of orthographic and morpho-syntactic variation.[49] The author of these texts is the recluse Ptolemaios, whose productions in the archive reveal a poor command of the Greek language,[50] which in the context of these personal annotations could reveal innovative trends censured in more controlled and formal compositions (such as his petitions in the same archive).

In the end, what emerges is a scenario in which, in the slow decline of non-finite complementation, despite AccInf being still perceived as a prestige variant compared to its articulated variants, the ability of the AccInf to express its own subject ensured it a certain diffusion in the language of use as a facilitating strategy in the recovery of the subject.[51] The persistence of AccInf could thus be related to the presence (as in a finite subordinate) of an overt subject and traced back to the same evolutionary trend that ultimately imposed finite subordinates.

2.2   Infinitives and Participles in Conflict

The Passages in (11) and (12) Introduce Another Element of the Crisis of the Classical Infinitival Subordination: The Conflict with the Participle System

(11) *UPZ* I 15 18-23; 156 BC

νυνὶ δὲ ὁ προ[γεγραμμένος] | Ἀπολλώνιος εἰς τὴν ἐμ Μέμφ[ει] ση[μέα]ν | πρώτην ἐντέτακται, ὑπὸ δὲ τῶ[ν ὑ]πη- | ρετῶν περισπᾶται εἰς τὰς λε[ι]τουργίας | καὶ κουκ ἐᾶται περὶ ἐμὲ γίνεσθαι, οὗ χάριν, | βασιλεῦ, σε ἠξίωσα.

Now, the above-mentioned Apollonios has been assigned to the first body of troops in Memphis, and he is compelled to the service by the attendants and is not allowed to stay by me, that's why, King, I asked you.

(12) *UPZ* I 16 22-5; 156 BC

διὸ ἀξιῶ, Ἥλιε βασιλεῦ, μὴ ⟦με⟧ ὑπεριδεῖν με | ἐγ κατοχῆι ὄντα, ἀλλ', ἐάν σοι φαίνηται, ⟨προστάξαι⟩ | γράψαι τῶι Ποσειδωνίωι, ἐᾶσαι αὐτὸν {ὄν}⟦τα⟧ ἀλειτούργητον \ἵνα/ περὶ ἐμὲ ⟦ὄντα⟧ \ἦι/

Therefore, I ask you, Sun King, not to neglect me as I am in katoche, but, if you please, to give the order to write to Poseidonios to exempt him from military service (lit. 'to let him be free from military service'), so that he can stand by me.

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48   On the technical use of οἴομαι in dream language, cf. Bruno 2020; 2023.

49   Cf. Bentein 2015.

50   Cf. Vierros 2020.

51   Cf. Bruno forthcoming.

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These passages are taken from two petitions preserved in the archive of the *katochoi* of the Sarapeion of Memphis, one of the most significant sources for reconstructing life within the sanctuary in the second century BC.[52]

The writer is Ptolemaios – i.e., the dreamer in (10) above –, who, along with his younger brother Apollonios, is the main author of the archive's documents, which date between 164 and 150 BC, during the brothers' stay in the sanctuary.

The two petitions are closely linked: they are both addressed to Ptolemy V in the year 156 BC, to denounce the living conditions of Apollonios during his service in the military corps of the *epigonoi*:[53] one petition occupies the *recto* (*UPZ* I 15), and the other the *verso* (*UPZ* I 16) of the same scroll. Because of the strict similarities in both form and content, U. Wilcken considered them two versions of the same petition: the draft (*UPZ* I 16) on the *verso* (outside the scroll), where corrections and cancellations abound, and the fair copy (*UPZ* I 15) on the *recto* (inside), "sauber und korrekt, [...] kalligrafisch geschrieben".[54]

In the selected passages, Ptolemaios uses the verb ἐάω in two very similar phrasings, where he complains that Apollonios cannot be with him due to military service. In particular, the comparison between the phrasings in (11) (the fair copy) and (12) (the draft), as well as the many corrections in (12), highlight Ptolemaios' difficulties with the complementation of ἐάω.

While in (11), where the writing is more accurate, the verb following the Classical pattern combines with an infinitive (see γίνεσθαι at l. 22) whose subject is controlled by the main clause, in (12) ἐάω takes two participles (see {ὄν}⟦τα⟧ | ἀλειτούργητον at ll. 24-5 and περὶ ἐμὲ ⟦ὄντα⟧ at l. 25). In (12), Ptolemaios immediately regrets this choice,[55] as shown by his interventions in the text. One concerns the elimination of the first participle (see {ὄν}⟦τα⟧ at l. 24),[56] so that ἀλειτούργητον (l. 25) is then intended as the direct object predicative; the other concerns the replacement of the second participle (see ⟦ὄντα⟧ at l. 25) with an explicit subordinate clause introduced by ἵνα and the subjunctive ἦι (both added in the interlinear space, cf. \ἵνα/... \ἦι/).

The different variants generated by the corrections can be traced back to different factors: some have to do with the slow decline of non-finite subordination in Greek, while others are related to the

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[52] Cf. Wilcken 1927, and in particular Legras 2011a for the socio-cultural context.

[53] Cf. Legras 2011b.

[54] Cf. Wilcken 1927, 171.

[55] Cf. Wilcken 1927, 177.

[56] In this case, it is generally assumed that the sender wanted to delete the participle ὄντα completely despite the fact that the intervention concerns only the last two letters.

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process of composition and the re-structuring of the period towards a different informational structure.

Ptolemaios' uncertainty between the infinitive (γίνεσθαι in 11) and the participle (ὄντα in 12) with ἐάω provides evidence of the "progressive de-systematisation" of the opposition between the two complementation patterns in Post-Classical Greek.[57] In particular, the participle, presumably due to its greater morphological complexity,[58] faced an early crisis in its predicative uses, where it was replaced firstly by the infinitive and then by its finite counterparts.[59]

It is not uncommon in documentary papyri for participles and infinitives to alternate in the same contexts regardless of the factuality of the statement as was the case in the Classical system.[60] As non-finite complements, they both appear to be preferred in high and formal contexts, where "contrary to what was the case in Classical times, the accusative and participle tends to side with the accusative and infinitive".[61] Let us consider, e.g., (13) below, where γιγνώσκω takes the infinitive instead of the expected participle in a factual context,[62] where the author does not express a judgment, but becomes aware of a fact.[63]

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[57] Cf. Bentein 2017.

[58] Cf. Jannaris 1897, 506, but also Mandilaras 1973, 355 on papyri. Mandilaras, e.g., observed systematic deviations in the language of papyri that revealed "a decreasing awareness of the participle as an inflected form agreeing with its subject".

[59] Cf. Jannaris 1897, 506.

[60] The distribution of participial vs. infinitival complements has been traditionally traced back to the dimension of factuality. (cf. e.g., Schwyzer 1950, 395, but also Cristofaro 1996).

[61] Cf. Bentein 2017, 102.

[62] Along with perception predicates, also with knowledge predicates, participial complements tend to remain longer (cf. James 2008, 237). While with perception verbs participles occur at least until the eighth century, with knowledge verbs there are no examples beyond the fourth century (cf. Bentein 2017, 9-10). See also Cristofaro 2012, who suggests that participial complements originally spread from perception to knowledge predicates. Accordingly, in its decline, the participle may persist longer within the original core of the class.

[63] Cf. Kühner, Gerth 1904, 53, who in such contexts renders γιγνώσκω respectively as 'urteilen, beschliessen' and 'erkennen' (see also Horrocks 2010, 92; Bentein 2017, 10). Cf. also Mayser 1934, 48, who notes that although in papyri γίγνωσκω tends to prefer finite complements (cf. ii below), infinitive (cf. 13) and participle (cf. iii below) alternate too in these settings as free variants. Note that in all selected contexts, γιγνώσκω introduces the disclosure formula preannouncing in the body of the letter the transition to a new thematic unit (cf. Porter, Pitt 2013, 43).

(ii) *P.Cair.Zen*. II 59263 4-5; 251 BC
γίνωσκε δὲ καὶ Ἀπολλώνιον παριληφότα τὰ κατὰ πόλιν πάντα
Know also that Apollonius has undertaken all matters concerning the city

(iii) *UPZ* I 70 14-17; 152-1 BC
γίνωσ\κε/ ὅτι πιράσεται | ὁ δραπέ[τ]ης μὴ ἀφῖναι | ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ τῶν τόπων | ἵναι

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(13)   *UPZ* I 68 2-3; 152 BC

γίνωσκέ με πεπορεῦσθαι εἰς Ἡρα- | κλέους πόλιν ὑπὲρ τῆς οἰκίας.

Know that I have gone to Herakleopolis about the house. (transl. by J.L. White)

On the contrary, in (12), the misuse concerns the spread of the participle in a causative construction, where infinitives were retained longer, and even in later texts "only the accusative and infinitive is attested".[64]

Ptolemaios might have used it instead of the infinitive in order to achieve a more refined expression by distancing himself from the common usage (which in this case would be correct), where the infinitive was still current.

This fits with the interactional frame of the petition genre, which is characterised by a more elaborate writing style: petitions typify formal interactions (where the sender addresses officials and authorities), which are – by definition – asymmetric, since the sender addresses an influential recipient, who is able to redress a wrong suffered.[65]

Such uncertainties in the use of the participle instead of the infinitive are not uncommon in Ptolemaios. Let us consider (14) below (taken again from a petition), where ἀξιόω, which typically introduces the request for redress, here takes the participle ἀναγκασας instead of the infinitive ἀναγκάσαι (as generally understood by editors, cf. e.g. U. Wilcken).[66]

(14)   *UPZ* I 32 34-5; 162-1 BC

ἀξιοῦμέν σε | [ἀ]να[γ]κασας αὐτοὺς | ἀπ[ο]δ[ο]ῦναι ἡμῖν

We ask you to force them to pay us.

We now move on the second participle taken by ἐάω in (12) (l. 25, ὄντα), which Ptolemaios corrects and replaces with a finite clause introduced by ἵνα (ἵνα περὶ ἐμὲ ἦι).

Subordinate ἵνα-clauses in Post-Classical Greek early became alternatives to completive clauses, particularly to the (so-called) 'dynamic' infinitival complements,[67] which do not refer to facts, but rath-

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Know that the runaway will try to hinder us from staying in these parts. (transl. by J.L. White)

64   Bentein 2017, 33.

65   See also (iv) below, with a further extension of the participle in the functional domain of the infinitive (with the adjective ἱκανός 'capable').

(iv) *P.Cair.Zen.* I 59060 11; 257 BC
ἀλλὰ σὺ εἰκανὸς εἶ διοικῶν ἵνα ἀποσταλῆι ὡς ἀσφαλέστατα
but you are well able to manage that it be sent with the greatest possible security. (transl. by J.L. White)

66   Cf. Wicken 1927.

67   Cf. Kurzova 1968.

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er to 'a potential state of affairs'.[68] In these contexts, they compete with ὅπως-clauses which tend to be preferred in more formal and higher-register contexts.[69]

However, here, the correction affects not only the form of the predicate (i.e., finite or non-finite), but also its syntax, due to the adverbial (i.e., final) value of the ἵνα-subordinate clause, as can be argued from the comparison with (15), another excerpt from the *Reinschrift* strongly related to (12). Note that here Ptolemaios replaces ἐάω with ποιέω, whose syntax is apparently easier for him.

(15) *UPZ* I 15 40-1; 156 BC

πρ[οσ]τάξαι γράψαι | Ποσειδωνίωι τῶι | ἀρχισωματοφύλακι | καὶ στρατηγῶι | ἀλειτούργητον αὐτὸν | ποιῆσαι, [ἵ]να περὶ ἐμὲ ἦ.

Order to write to Poseidonios, head of the guard corps and strategos, to exempt him from military service, so that he can assist me.

Ptolemaios shifts from the coordination by asyndeton of the two participial complements (αὐτὸν {ὄν}⟦τα⟧ | ἀλειτούργητον and περὶ ἐμὲ ⟦ὄντα⟧) to a subordination relation, where the [ἵ]να-clause explicitly states its purpose value.

Once again, as in § 2.1, the speaker's corrections lead to a more analytic syntax and more explicit semantics, which cannot be ensured by non-finite complements.

3   Concluding Remarks

The papyrus letters from Egypt have enlarged our view of the Post-Classical language by providing valuable data, from a sociolinguistic perspective, for the reconstruction of the repertoires of both communities and individuals. A unique access to individual repertoires can be in particular found in the traces of the corrections and revisions that these texts underwent. Parallel versions of these documents and their drafts, as well as the author's interventions in the text (e.g., additions, substitutions, and deletions), make the selection process implied by every linguistic act visible, and exceptionally recorded in a written source. Formulations and re-formulations can therefore be assumed to be variants of the same linguistic function ("alternative ways of saying 'the same' thing" in the words of W.

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[68]   Cf. Rijksbaron 2006, 97.

[69]   Cf. Hult 1990, 225, and Mayser 1926, 247 and Clarysse 2010, 43 on the papyri language). Cf. also Bruno 2024 for lexical factors underpinning the distribution of ἵνα vs. ὅπως complements.

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Labov).[70] The intervention of the author not only provides evidence of their commutability in the very same context, but also offers a glimpse into the speaker's judgment on them, since one variant is censored, and the other one preferred.

This has provided the lens through which the decline of the system of infinitive complements has been considered in § 2, where two corrections were the starting point for reconsidering some factors that were relevant in the diachronic process (i.e., the pursuit of greater syntactic and semantic transparency) underpinning the emergence of synchronic variants.

The first case (§ 2.1) displays the uncertainty of the speaker between the bare AccInf and an articulated variant, where, because of the article and the preposition, the boundary between matrix and subordinate clause (and its semantic value) is made explicit. In the second case (§ 2.2), the author has difficulty choosing between the infinitive and the participle depending on ἐάω, and, again, the shift from complement to adverbial clause appears as an interesting solution for the writer.

Corrections and revisions thus offer a privileged perspective on the gradual restructuring of the Greek completive system, as the formulations and re-formulations of the writers reveal the grammars that competed within the speakers' competence, providing a unique glimpse into the dynamic relationship between synchronic variability and diachronic evolution.[71]

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70 Cf. Labov 1972, 188. The role of syntax in sociolinguistic research is still debated in view of the difficult definition of the notion of sociolinguistic variable at this level (where formal differences are considered to always entail functional variation). See also Bentein 2020 on a corpus of Greek documents ranging from the Ptolemaic to the Byzantine times, who challenges the assumption that syntax is "il livello di analisi […] meno coinvolto nella variazione" (the level of analysis […] least affected by variation) (Berruto 2009, 21).

71 Cf. Weinreich, Labov, Herzog 1968, 201.

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