



SAPIENZA
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA



Tracking Papyrus and Parchment Paths
An Archaeological Atlas
of Coptic Literature



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Coptic Literature in Context. The Contexts of Coptic Literature Late Antique Egypt in a dialogue between literature, archaeology and digital humanities

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Titles and Abstracts

in alphabetical order

Vicente BARBA COLMENERO

Universidad de Jaén

Sofía Torallas Tovar

University of Chicago

Archaeological and epigraphical survey of the Coptic Monastery at Qubbet El-Hawa (Aswan)

The site of Qubbet el-Hawa is located on the west bank of the Nile opposite the modern city of Aswan and the island of Elephantine. In the Coptic section of the site we found an archaeological sequence that would cover from the 6th Dynasty to the medieval period, right underneath the monastery that stands on the hill. In this paper we will contribute the first data from our archaeological and epigraphical survey since the first campaign in 2009. Various structures associated with the first place of worship of the monastery have been researched. They include a small chapel carved inside a tomb of the XII Dynasty, a production area for ceramics and a large garbage dump with abundant materials, among which a stratified sequence of inscribed ostraca can be used for paleographical study. These ostraca, though fragmentary, also confirm the connection of the site of Qubbet El-Hawa with the neighboring monastery of Apa Hatre.

Francesco BERNO

Sapienza Università di Roma

The section of the PATHs database dedicated to Works and Authors, and the Periodization of Coptic Literature: the case study of Coptic homilies

Among its scientific goals, the PATHs project includes a complete census of all the literary works preserved in Coptic, even if fragmentary, identifying them by a Clavis Coptica (CC) entry, and integrating in this respect the work of Tito Orlandi. Moreover, along with a modern conventional title and other significant external identifiers (e.g. CPG, BHO, etc.), each record provides as exhaustive as possible pieces of information on the work's authorship and period of composition. This latter aspect plays a pivotal role in any attempt to reconstruct the history of Coptic literature and the development of its characterizing features. Moving from the chronological

reference-system developed by the *Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari* in order to describe the routes of Coptic literary production, and in debate with the some recent and updated contributions dealing with specific aspects of such a complex topic, the present contribution pursues a double task. It aims 1) at providing a fresh and comprehensive *status quaestionis* of this relevant topic, and 2) at offering new insights into the vexing question on the re-use of excerpts from compositions originally written in Greek re-elaborated to form the late Coptic homiletic production. This analysis will lead to original working assumptions on the absolute and relative chronology of this specific Coptic literary production, and on the different stages in which selected corpora of Greek homilies were translated into Coptic.

Julian BOGDANI

Sapienza Università di Roma

The Archaeological Atlas of Coptic Literature: notes and considerations on the first release of a visualisation, querying and research tool

After more than two years since the PAThs project started its activities by mapping the available data, planning the structure of its information system, designing the descriptive protocols of the main entities (i.e. object of its research interests), it is time to share with a broader public the results of its newest technological achievement, the first working draft of the online Archaeological Atlas of the Coptic Literature.

The Atlas is not solely a user-friendly interface of the web database—that continues to represent the beating heart of the entire system—but also a research tool on its own, provided with specific data analysis and visualization tools. It is an open access platform, freely available on the Internet, that integrates full text search over the entire dataset, contextual browsing of the data, following the rather complex network of PAThs information system, geographical visualization on a rich set of basemaps representing both the current and the ancient geography of Egypt, etc. Different types of dynamic charts, aside with the other visual tools, permit an effective analysis of complex data able to address different research topics that will be introduced in the talk. Particular attention is paid to the interconnection formats and technologies, able to make PAThs dataset available from third-party users and applications. As an example, the data sharing protocol between PAThs and Pelagios will be briefly introduced.

Darlene BROOKS-HEDSTROM

Wittenberg University

Piecing Together a Monastic Kitchen in Late Antique Egypt

The monastic kitchen is a space not well studied in the history of monasticism in Byzantine Egypt. In large part, this lacuna is due to three factors that shaped the early phase of the field of archaeology and now the importance of archaeological science to take us to the microscopic view of the monastic diet. First, early monastic literature diminished the importance of eating and elevated fasting and moderate food consumption. Early archaeologists relied upon such accounts to craft a narrative of monastic settlements that were simple and lacking in complex cooking and storage facilities. Therefore when they encountered ovens, stoves, and storage rooms, they elected to focus on painted chapels or churches, which offered materials easier to digest and interpret for others. Second, Egyptian monasticism did not have extensive *typika*, monastic foundation documents, to turn to in aiding the reading of the built environment and how it functioned. Discoveries of monastic archives in middens, for example, included contracts, letters, and economic lists of goods, but little was found to help contextualize the various rooms and spaces of the monasteries under excavation. The site of Kellia, for example, offered extensive domestic residences that did not align at all with the documentary or literary record of monasticism in the Delta. Third, contemporary advances in the archaeological sciences and in systematic excavations have introduced us to new data reflecting the environmental history of late antique Egypt and the foodstuffs present at monastic communities at Kom el-Nana at Amarna, the Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit, and at the Monastery of John the Little in Wadi al-Natrun, just as a few examples. A focus on the microhistory of food and the persistence of the meta-narrative of monastic asceticism has obscured our view of the physical spaces as viable sources for the history of monastic cooking and baking.

This paper will present how the use of documentary sources, both monastic and non monastic, and the extensive archaeological remains of bakeries, courtyards, kitchens, refectories, and storage facilities, offer new methods for piecing together a monastic kitchen in Late Antique Egypt.

Christian Hervik BULL
University of Oslo

From the City to the Desert: Panopolis and the Pachomian federation as context for the Nag Hammadi Codices

There are two main hypotheses about the provenance of the Nag Hammadi Codices, discovered on the Dishna plain in 1945: either the texts were produced and read by a syncretistic or gnostic group of urban literati, or by monks in a desert monastery. The old dichotomy between the desert and the city has thus been central in the discussion of the provenance. Building on recent research suggesting different provenances for different subgroups of the Nag Hammadi Codices, of which one is likely from an administrative center like Panopolis and another near the Dishna plain, I will propose that the most plausible explanation for how these subgroups came to be united in one jar is the hypothesis that they were produced and used by Origenist-minded Pachomian monks.”

Paola BUZI
Sapienza Università di Roma

The places of Coptic Literature. Real and imaginary landscapes

What is a place? How can a place be defined? And, above all, what is a place in relation to Coptic literature? According to Marcel Mauss a place is an anthropological space, a symbolic construction, characterized by identity, history and relation. A place forges the identity of an individual and his sense of belonging. In a place one lives, cohabits, experiences a social, economic or religious *koinonia*. A place has a story, it narrates it, it embodies it.

This is certainly true, but a place does not have only a physical dimension. There exist imaginary places or places of memory, where the real and the imaginary are strongly interweaved. Even a physical place may be a very nuanced concept, above all in a country like Egypt, where towns are virtually non-existent. What is the relationship, for instance, between a hermitage of el-Asasif Valley and the entire landscape of the so-called Western Thebes? Did the monk Frange perceive to belong to a local community or did he consider his cell a microcosm, detached from the outside?

Since the PATHs project aims at classifying and describing Coptic literary and manuscript production in strict relation with the physical space of its production, storage and circulation, defining what a place is and what is not is a crucial process.

In order to introduce the works of the conference we will try to reflect on the places of Coptic literary analysing Coptic literature in its context and on the contexts of Coptic literature.

Nathan CARLIG
Sapienza Università di Roma

The PATHs protocol of codicological description/I: The book formats of the Achmîm papyri (4th cent.)

The codicological database developed within the PATHs project provides a new detailed protocol of description of Coptic manuscripts. It takes into account several features of the manuscript, such as writing material and support, layout, quire collation, dimensions, writing, signs, decoration, etc. The paper will focus on the sections of the codicological database regarding the page characteristics (cols. / page, lines / cols., characters /line) and the dimensions (leaf, writing frame, margins, intercolumnium, proportions height/width and written/unwritten space), which constitutes precise tools to identify book formats.

From this perspective, the Achmîm papyri (4th cent.), a group of six Coptic manuscripts found in Panopolis in the 1880's, offer an interesting case study. Three book formats can be identified, which are attested in other manuscripts of unknown provenance. Moreover some parallels can be made with the so-called “Bodmer Papyri” and the “Nag Hammadi Codices”.

Angelo COLONNA

Sapienza Università di Roma

Places, sites and PATHs. An archaeological perspective from the Delta

The Archaeological Atlas of Coptic Literature represents the final goal and the main outcome of the project “PATHs”, meaning that archaeology and geography are crucial aspects of the research as well as relevant coordinates for the understanding of ancient cultures with their material and intellectual products. Accordingly, places are an important domain of investigation and a core section of the database system informing the structure of the work.

In this perspective, the paper has a threefold goal: (1) to briefly introduce the Places-section of the PATHs database, discussing the basic concepts and issues underlying its formulation; (2) to review few cases so as to illustrate the problems faced and the strategies adopted in the representation and interpretation of relevant sites from an archaeological perspective. The study-cases will be derived from the Delta, an area often neglected in Coptic archaeology but appropriate to highlight the specificities the PATHs approach; in this regard, the diachronicity of the sites and their articulated pharaonic development will be especially remarked. Finally, (3) an attempt will be made to set their later urban reconfiguration against such a long *durée*, emphasising the diverse modes of engagement of late Antique communities with their pharaonic past within such a specific regional landscape.

Alain DELATTRE

Université Libre de Bruxelles

Coptic literary manuscripts from Antinoupolis: Old and new discoveries

Antinoupolis has been excavated by Italian missions since the 1930s and excavations have uncovered dozens of Coptic literary fragments. Most of them were found in connection with the sanctuary of Saint Collouthos in the northern necropolis. I will present the main discoveries and I will focus in particular on the most recent ones.

Andreas EFFLAND

German Archaeological Institute (Cairo), Research Cluster 4 & 6

The transformation of sacred space in the literary context of Abydos (3rd – 6th c. AD)

The site of Abydos flourished from the Predynastic period until Christian times (c. 3500 BC to AD 600). The general toponym ‘Abydos’ refers to numerous archaeological sites including several necropoleis (dating to different time periods), royal cenotaphs and graves, but also Late Antique churches and monasteries.

The narrative that overlaid Abydos in the pharaonic period is that of Osiris. The area became the primary destination for countless pilgrims at least from the second millennium onwards and the archaeological remains of the Osiris-cult are numerous.

According to textual and archaeological sources Abydos recognized a period of decline during the late Ptolemaic and early Roman period. The main performative focus shifted from the old osirian ritual activities to the establishment of an oracle of Osiris-Serapis.

During the 3rd and particularly the 4th to early 5th centuries, Abydos regained its importance, this time even reaching international prominence owing to an oracle located at this ancient holy site. During the late Roman period, the oracle of the god Bes gradually gained significance. Referring to this oracle are numerous graffiti on the walls of abydene sanctuaries and demotic and Old Coptic magical texts. This ritual practice at Abydos led to one of the most intensely discussed theological and theurgic controversies. During the 4th and 5th centuries, leading thinkers of the time, pagan philosophers and Christian fathers of the church were involved in this heated debate. The dispute reached its pinnacle with the manuscripts of theurgists and Neoplatonists as Porphyry, Iamblichos, but also Eusebius, Aurelius Augustinus, and Athanasius.

The main narrative that overlaid Abydos in the Late Antique and early Coptic period is that of the regional conflict between the pagan and christian cult. From archaeological sources as well as the legendary martyrdom of Panine and Paneu we can learn that pagan and christian communities seem to have coexisted at Abydos from the late 3rd century onwards. But Bes’s strong hold in Abydos by the 4th century is evident not only in

Ammianus Marcellinus's account but also in the Coptic *Life of Apa Moses*. The religious conflicts culminated in the late 5th and early 6th century after the death of Shenoute of Atripe. Due to his *Vita*, Moses ended the ancient cult in Abydos by carrying out exorcism at two specific sacred sites, especially against an evil demon, which was referred to as Bes.

The paper will focus on the 'coptic' occupied space within the sacred landscape of Late Antique Abydos.

Frank FEDER

Akademie der Wissenschafte zu Göttingen

Manuscripts wanting homes: early Biblical manuscripts from Hermopolis Magna and Antinoupolis

A considerable number of Biblical (and other) manuscripts is listed in collection catalogues and in Karlheinz Schüssler's *Biblia Coptica* with a provenance from Hermopolis and Antinoupolis. The Berlin Papyrussammlung's inventory book, for example, regularly refers to a provenance "From the excavation in Hermopolis 1906" or the like. This and the ongoing field work of the Italian mission in Antinoupolis could probably shed light on the (private and/or monastic) libraries where these manuscripts were kept.

Tea GHIGO

Sapienza Università di Roma - Universität Hamburg (UHH), Centre for the Studies of Manuscript Cultures

Scientific systematic study of inks from Coptic manuscripts

While studying the socio-geographic history of inks, division 4.5 of the BAM (Bundesanstalt für Materialforschung und Prüfung) together with the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures in Hamburg has developed a protocol for ink analysis. It consists of a primary screening to determine the type of the ink and a subsequent in-depth analysis using several spectroscopic techniques: XRF, FTIR, and Raman.

During many years of study, we concluded that the continuous production of Coptic manuscripts from late Antiquity to the Middle Ages offers a unique opportunity for historical study of the ink in a large geographic area. Thanks to the collaboration with the ERC project PATHs, and within the activities of a PhD research dedicated to this topic, we therefore created a new branch of our project focused entirely on the analysis of Coptic inks, pigments, and dyes. This pioneering systematic study of writing materials coming from a specific area and time frame (5th-10th century) aims not only at a better understanding of the complex Coptic multicultural and plurilingual society, but also and mainly at clarifying the links among the Coptic and other societies between the ancient and medieval eras. The first results have shown a rather complex scenario where inks of different type and manufacture were in use in the same scriptorium at the same time. Moreover, evidence of a conspicuous number of iron-gall inks containing exclusively iron without the presence of copper and zinc (that were generally contained in small quantities in the vitriol used to make the ink) suggest the use of a manufacturing process different of those reported in literature. Further investigation is needed to clarify the method employed to produce this kind of ink. Finally, we also found evidence of mixed inks containing both carbon and iron-gall ink. This category of ink, for a long time ignored, has lately been receiving more and more attention from the scholars, since it may be the technological link between Eastern and Western world.

Andrea HASZNOS

Akademie der Wissenschafte zu Göttingen

No Literary Texts from Elephantine?

In the case of the Western Theban region the modern scholar has a fairly solid fundament for starting investigations into the reading and writing culture and literary interests of the Coptic era, thanks first and foremost to the indispensable work of Walter Ewing Crum, and to the precious finds of – also recent – excavations. The modern scholar is not that fortunate, however, when looking to the southernmost ends of Egypt, the region of Elephantine and Aswan. Is it possible that we have no Coptic literary manuscript with known Elephantine/Aswan provenance, save for one Pachomius *Vita* fragment? If there was one such writing (probably a codex), there must have been more. What literature was read in the region and how does it connect with the even farther south?

Hugo LUNDHAUG

University of Oslo

Textual Fluidity and the Monastic Transmission of Coptic Apocrypha

This paper investigates the fluid transmission of apocrypha in Egyptian monasteries. By looking at the apocryphal literature preserved in Coptic manuscripts from the fourth century onwards, and taking textual fluidity fully into consideration, the paper discusses the production, use, and function of apocrypha from the perspective of monastic manuscript culture, highlighting continuity and change in the use of apocrypha in shifting contexts over time, utilizing insights from material philology.

Adam ŁAJTAR

University of Warsaw

Artur OBLUSKI

Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology

Literacy of Christian Nubia in context

Christian Nubia had a rich literary culture understood in a broad sense of the word as the entire written production. Its surviving output may amount, according to estimations, at ca. five thousand texts and is constantly growing thanks to new archaeological discoveries. Texts produced in Christian Nubia were executed on variety of media including sheets of parchment and paper (both loose and bound), stone and terracotta stelae, walls of buildings and rocks, objects of daily use made of clay, metal, and wood, ostraka, and many more. From the point of view of their contents the texts may be divided into several categories, the most important being: literary and subliterary works mostly of religious character, legal documents, epitaphs, commemorative inscriptions, dedicatory inscriptions, captions of painted representations, visitors' inscriptions in cult places, tags and signatures, school exercises. The texts are edited in either of three languages of Christian Nubian literacy: Greek, Sahidic Coptic, and Old Nubian, and many of them show code-switching. The use of either of three languages has chronological value. It is also connected with the character of the written text and the context of its coming into existence. Our presentation aims in tracing these relations with more details.

Tito ORLANDI

Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei – Sapienza Università di Roma

On the localization and construction of churches in Coptic literature

Coptic literature is plenty of information concerning the construction of churches and shrines. This paper will explore a selected corpus of cases in order to evaluate what we can learn from these narrations.

Ira RABIN

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- Universität Hamburg (UHH), Centre for the Studies of Manuscript Cultures

Analyzing historic inks: from Antiquity to the Middle Ages

While studying the socio-geographic history of inks, division 4.5 of the Bundesanstalt für Materialforschung und -prüfung (BAM) together with the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) in Hamburg has developed a non-invasive protocol for ink analysis. It consists of a primary reflectographic screening to determine the type of the ink (soot, tannin or iron-gall) and a subsequent in-depth analysis using several spectroscopic techniques: X-ray fluorescence (XRF), Infrared and Raman spectroscopies. The first of them, XRF elemental analysis aims at establishing the unique fingerprints of inks containing metals or trace elements in carbon inks. In addition, we use Raman analysis to identify so-called mixed inks, an ink category that received little attention so far. Finally, with the help of IR spectroscopy we obtain information about the ink binders.

Our research aims at creating a database of writing materials that will include characteristic data on inks,

parchment, and papyrus. Such a database would become a dating and localization tool if enough data is collected. The research projects at the BAM and the CSMC cover the period from late Antiquity to the Middle Ages in the Middle East and Europe.

The presentation shows the panorama of historic inks and our attempt to portrait the transition of the inks from those based on soot to the iron-gall inks commonly used in the Middle Age.

Ilaria ROSSETTI

PATHs-Places: reconstructing the Late Antique and early Medieval settlement dynamics. Some cases from the Eastern Delta.

The archaeological research in Egypt has always focused on the phases of greater monumentality of the sites, mainly Pharaonic, Ptolemaic and Roman, omitting different testimonies referable to last phase of the settlement lifespan, which remained for a long time undocumented or understudied.

Within the PATHs project, great importance is also given to the (re)contextualization of the manuscripts in their archaeological and topographical settings and one of its main goals is the creation of an Archaeological Atlas of the Coptic Literature, where Places became a crucial resource.

Purpose of my contribution is to present some of the major problems occurred during the realization of the *Places*-category in the PATHs database. To this aim and to understand the importance of this tool in the study of population dynamics, some cases studies will also be presented. Examples here discussed will be focused on archaeological evidence of the Eastern Delta, which although scarce, can still represent important tassels for the reconstruction of the Egyptian landscape in Late Antique and early Medieval era.

Caroline SCHROEDER

University of the Pacific

Understanding Space and Place through Digital Text Analysis

Coptic literature conveys diverse senses of space and place. A town, Jême. A monastic settlement, Scetis. The river. A monk's cell. The mountain. "Outside." Some places are named and concrete. Some spaces are more abstract. While the PATHs project has created new technologies for mapping, visualizing, and tracking Coptic text-bearing objects, a digital corpus of the *text* on those objects can provide a complementary dataset for geospatial research. Digital text analysis can identify named geographic entities within Egypt; entity recognition technology can also identify unnamed entities and abstractions. With a digitized, annotated corpus we can also research how Coptic literature talks about spaces and places—what kinds of vocabulary describe "the cell," "the mountain," or "Scetis"? This paper will present Coptic case studies in geospatial research using resources from the Coptic SCRIPTORIUM project, paying close attention to the new research questions digital technology enables as well as the challenges for such research.

Agostino SOLDATI

Sapienza Università di Roma

The section of the PATHs database dedicated to the edition of Coptic colophons and the case study of the scribal subscription of Phoibammōn, bishop of Syene

The PATHs database offers to the user an exhaustive digital edition of all extant Coptic colophons (7th to 11th cent.). Besides the critical edition resting on an accurate re-examination of the original or of its reproduction, each entry is supplied with an English translation, a palaeographical description and a textual version where all the main prosopographic, geographic and cultural features are tagged. In the frame of the reappraisal of such documentary corpus, the reconnaissance of Italian collections yielded some intriguing firstlings as well. The Roman Biblioteca Corsiniana hosts a relevant part of the written material found by Ugo Monneret de Villard during his excavations of the Anbā Hadrā monastery in Aswān (1924-1926). Among documentary and literary papyrus, parchment and paper fragments a parchment bifolium in very good order has been discovered. It preserves, after some litanies, an autographic memorial of an already attested Syenite bishop, Phoibammōn, bearing the date of 1070.

Eva SUBIAS

Universitat Rovira i Virgili

Further reflections on the Byzantine fortress at Oxyrhynchus

In 2012, during the 10th Conference on Coptic Studies, and previously at the 4th Iberian Egyptology Conference in Lisbon in 2010, I described the excavations to the northeast of the city between 2005 and 2010. During those presentations, being aware of the importance of the find and that I would no longer be able to continue excavating, I made certain possible, albeit premature, interpretations. Fortunately, my interventions stimulated the interest of other academics, this time linguists who have taken an interest in the site and have continued to analyse its historical context. Although in earlier papers I have tried to provide all of the archaeological data, there are still details that have not been studied in depth and which could influence the architectural interpretation of the remains.

Alin SUCIU

Akademie der Wissenschafte zu Göttingen

Coptic literary rotuli and scrolls: A typological assessment

It has often been noted that early Christians groups were committed to the codex as a format for their religious texts, probably in an attempt to distinguish themselves from the pagan and Jewish communities, which widely used the scroll. It is not surprising thus that Coptic literary texts copied on *rotuli* and scrolls are few in number. Among the most well known some such artifacts are the letters of the leaders of the Pachomian *Koinonia* and festal epistles of the patriarchs of Alexandria. The present paper reviews all the Coptic literary *rotuli* and scrolls and proposes a hypothesis regarding the use of these manuscripts on the basis of the typology of texts they contain.

Sofia TORALLAS TOVAR

University of Chicago

A Letter of Athanasius in translation

P.Monts.Roca inv. 14 is a papyrus scroll containing the Coptic translation of the Epistle of Athanasius to Dracontius. This roll opens many questions about issues such as communication of the patriarchate of Alexandria in the fourth century, the format of the Festal Letters and the translation of official documents among other. In this communication I will examine the examples of Coptic translations and their materiality (the fragments that have been preserved) in order to understand the circumstances in which these translations were produced.

Gertrud VAN LOON

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

Colouring words, imagining narratives: the visualization of literature

Biblical narratives, apocryphal stories, and Saint's lives were not only transmitted orally and in writing but they were also "translated" into images. In churches, chapels and monastic buildings all over Egypt we find colourful remains of series of paintings where stories are told in successive scenes. Similar narratives unfold in stone, wooden or ivory reliefs.

Whereas some faithfully follow one particular narrative, others show a more complex composition. This contribution will present some of these picture stories, look at the sources chosen and the principles of transmitting written words into images.

Francesco VALERIO

Sapienza Università di Roma

The PATHs protocol of codicological description/II: Scribes and scripts in the library of the Monastery of the Archangel Michael at Phantoou

The library of the Monastery of the Archangel Michael at Phantoou is perhaps the most spectacular finding of the 20th century in the field of Coptic studies. It is in fact the only library of the synaxarial epoch of Coptic literature which has come down to us in its entirety, or so, and which has provided us a good deal of complete codices, often preserving their original bindings and equipped with signed and dated colophons. Thus, this collection offers us a unique opportunity of studying all the material features of the Coptic book of 9th-10th century (palaeography, decoration, codicology, binding technique), which can be quite precisely located in a geographical and chronological frame. The present paper looks at the palaeographical face of the Phantoou codices, combining the evidence provided by the colophons and a formal analysis of the distinctive elements both of the scripts and of the ornamentation displayed in each manuscript. The aim of the formal analysis is to work out a typological classification of the various hands, which leads to identify manuscripts written by the same hands, or by similar hands. The colophons eventually allow to give a name at least to some hands and to supply the activity of the scribes with a chronological and geographical set.

Valeria VITALE

School of Advanced Study University of London

The Pelagios Project

Pelagios is an international digital humanities project, currently funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. It aims to facilitate the creation, visualisation and exploration of connections among historical digital resources, mainly based on their common geographical references. Pelagios' free tools, Recogito and Peripleo, exploit the power of Linked Open Data to make historical documents more accessible and to offer new keys to investigate them. The online tools support collaboration, and help lowering barriers for researcher that are less familiar with formal machine languages (such as RDF, XML, Geo-JSON or SPARQL). The talk will introduce the project, its achievements and its ethos, especially with regards to the creation of a community of users and data contributors. It will proceed offering a brief overview of the Pelagios tools, and how they can be applied in the investigation, preservation and communication of cultural heritage as well as a support for teaching, and for public engagement in cultural institutions.

This contribution will highlight the crucial role performed in the Linked Open Data ecosystem by digital gazetteers such as the Pleiades Gazetteer of the Ancient World or the Historical gazetteer of China. Assigning uniform resource identifiers (URI) to places, digital gazetteers allow us to disambiguate and geolocate place references, and to annotate those references in various kind of digitised documents, from historical texts to museum records. For any level of granularity, from large regions to single buildings, Linked Open Data technology enables different views and perspectives on the same object to be found together and to complement each other, contributing to make research richer and more diverse, and implicitly revealing bias and subjectivity embedded in each representation.

Valeria VITALE

School of Advanced Study University of London

Workshop: "Creating and sharing semantic annotations with Recogito"

This workshop will present Recogito, the free online tool developed by Pelagios Commons to create and share semantic annotations, and show how its application in academic research, teaching and the GLAM sector.

The workshop will start with a brief introduction to Linked Open Data, and in particular GeoData, and how they can be used to enhance the study and communication of the past, creating, sharing and analysing semantic connections between data contributed by different authors. It will then proceed to show how Recogito allows the production of digital annotations on historical documents, and what is its relevance in scholarly research.

Recogito displays a simple and clear interface that features a set of options to create annotations about places, people and events on documents in different formats: texts, images and tabular data. More specifically, for place-names and other geographical references, Recogito enables users to associate each annotation with its geo-coordinates, creating a link with the information stored in a number of digital gazetteers, including some dedicated to the ancient world such as Pleiades and the Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire, or other contemporary like Geonames. Users can upload documents in their personal working space and choose the degree of collaboration and openness that better suits a project, or its different stages: from individual annotations only visible to the creator, to real time collaborative annotations of the same document, to Linked Open Data available for all to search and download.

Designed primarily for geographical information, Recogito represents a powerful tool to study and analyse ancient documents and their relationships in a spatial perspective, but is also flexible enough to be used in wider contexts. Recogito can be seen as a standalone annotation tool as well as a useful intermediate step in a more complex research workflow. In fact, all annotations created in Recogito can be subsequently downloaded in a variety of standard digital formats including CSV, RDF XML, JSON-LD, and TEI, and then imported and further processed in multiple other applications from GIS to network analysis software.

Thanks to Recogito's user friendly design, researchers without any previous knowledge of formal languages such as RDF XML or GeoJSON are able to create valid semantic annotations on their digital documents. In this sense, Recogito allows collaboration among researchers with different skills, and levels of expertise and helps lowering one of the barriers that often prevents non expert users, and especially humanists, from experimenting with digital approaches in their own research.