

TEMI E TESTI

250

“GRAPHIC SYMBOLS, WRITTEN WORDS”

SERIES DIRECTED BY ANTONELLA GHIGNOLI

WRITTEN CULTURE IN LATE ANTIQUITY
AND THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

SIGNS TEXTS DATA

edited by

ANTONELLA GHIGNOLI – LUCIA C. COLELLA – MARTA MARUCCI



ROMA 2025

EDIZIONI DI STORIA E LETTERATURA

GRAPHIC SYMBOLS, WRITTEN WORDS

The Series aims to publish research on pragmatic literacy and the written culture of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. It is focused in particular on palaeographical and critical analyses of written records that consider both texts and graphic symbols as interrelated facets of written culture in this period.

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PREFACE

On 31 May and 1 June 2024 the international conference ‘Signs, Texts, Data: Research Routes through the Documentary Written Culture in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages’ (in Italian ‘Segni, testi, *data*: percorsi di ricerca attraverso la cultura scritta documentaria tardoantica e alto medievale’) was held in Rome. It represented the final scholarly event of the project NOTAE, a research project funded by an Advanced Grant from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme, and hosted by Sapienza University of Rome¹. In fact, the project would officially end shortly thereafter, on 30 June 2024.

The conference organisers² vision was to bring together a variety of strands of research, sometimes within the same research project, conducted by different scholars, all, however, united by an interest in direct written evidence from Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages and in the criticism of the texts they transmit, whether documentary or literary in nature, according to an approach that structurally integrates historical and textual criticism with material and palaeographic analysis – provided, however, that this latter also included the way in which the texts were arranged on their writing support (whether wood, stone, pottery, slate, papyrus or parchment) and the graphic elements present in the final text with functions other than the writing of an alphabetical text. It has now been proven by several investigations – thanks also to

¹ ERC-2017-AdG NOTAE (Grant Agreement no. 786572); official website: <https://notae-project.digilab.uniroma1.it> (06/2025).

² The conference was organised by the full research team of the NOTAE project: the scientific direction was the responsibility of the PI, Antonella Ghignoli, while the organisational and scientific secretariat was coordinated by Lucia Consuelo Colella and Marta Marucci, postdoctoral research fellows of the project. The members of the scientific committee of the conference were Tiziana Catarci, Massimo Mecella and Francesco Leotta (senior staff of the project NOTAE), and Maria Bocuzzi, Livia Briasco, Anna Monte, Aneta Skalec, Nina Sietis, Silvestro Veneruso and Zahra Ziran (postdoctoral research fellows).

the impetus provided by the NOTAE project, which is dedicated precisely to these graphic signs – that such marks are important for understanding a text as a historical source: they could serve to mark its structure (and therefore be drawn at the stage of the genesis of the text) or could be useful for readers in other ways, or they could be added thereafter (during the practical use of the text), or they could even be graphic ‘symbols’ (and not simply ‘signs’), like Christian symbols that might not only have a practical function. In addition to ‘signs’ and ‘texts’ there was also a third topic at the centre of the conference: that is, how ancient texts, scripts and graphic signs become *data* through digital processing and how they are shared in the research.

The proceedings were held in three sessions, devoted to ‘Research Paths on Late Antique Documentation’, ‘Research Paths between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages’ and ‘The Treatment of Data in Research Projects’, chaired respectively by Lucio Del Corso (University of Salerno), François Bougard (IRHT, Institut de Recherche et d’histoire des textes, CNRS Paris) and Serena Ammirati (University of Roma Tre). Fifteen papers were presented and discussed, delivered both by members of the host ERC project NOTAE and other invited international scholars, including (former) Principal Investigators and team members of five other research projects funded by the ERC: REDHIS (AdG 2013), PATHs (AdG 2015), PAGES (AdG 2019), MINiTEXTS (AdG 2020) and IN-ROME (AdG 2021). The event was inaugurated by Jean-Luc Fournet’s keynote speech on the concept of ‘paléographie signifiante’, which he himself introduced into papyrological research twenty years ago, initiating a very important breakthrough in this field of study, which was also an inspiration for the NOTAE project itself.

This volume originates from that 2024 conference. It contains, arranged in two parts, eleven contributions that represent in some cases the adaptation for print and in other cases the deepening and development of the papers presented at that conference by the contributing authors³, whom we would like to warmly thank for their work and generosity. Just as then, during the conference, so now, in this publication, we have allowed them to express themselves in the language they consider most congenial to communicating their research. In this way, we interpret the ‘international’ spirit of research in the humanities, a field in which – uniquely – an understanding of the main European languages has always been implied by centuries of

³ Please note that, unless otherwise indicated by the authors in their contributions, all written testimonies are cited according to the abbreviations indicated in the *Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic, and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca, and Tablets*, available at <https://papyri.info/docs/checklist> (06/2025).

papyrological, palaeographical, historical and philological disciplinary tradition, which, sharing methodologies and results expressed in each scholar's mother tongue, has in this way created and promoted an international, and thus multilingual, scientific community.

Allow us to conclude with some thanks: first of all to the other colleagues who presented important and inspiring contributions at our 2024 conference: Julian Bogdani (Sapienza University of Rome), Barbara Borg (Scuola Normale Superiore, SNS, Pisa), Silvia Orlandi (Sapienza University of Rome), Mario Paganini (Tor Vergata University of Rome; at the time of the conference, Austrian Academy of Sciences) and Aneta Skalec (Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences).

Our deep and sincere gratitude also goes to the ERC and its mission to promote independent and curiosity-driven primary research at the highest international level of research excellence. It has enabled the adventure of the NOTAE research project, which has not ended with the end of the administrative existence of its research team. It continues, in fact, both working to improve its main output, the NOTAE System⁴, and inspiring further lines of research that individual former team members and collaborators are currently pursuing (or will pursue in the future) independently: the funding of this project has also meant the creation of a small community of friendship and affection as well as scientific exchange.

Finally, a personal thank-you goes to the Host Institution of the NOTAE project, Sapienza University of Rome – a university which truly cares about its ERC grantees – and to the two departments – ‘Computer, Control and Management Engineering “A. Ruberti”’ and ‘History, Anthropology, Religions, Art History, Media and Performing Arts’ – which physically hosted our team at Sapienza and supported us with competence and understanding in the daily routine of our work from 2018 to 2024, years also marked by the unprecedented experience of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown: this experience, that the world seems to have forgotten, was terrible and entailed for us – to speak only of the relatively undramatic case of a research group in the humanities at work – difficulties and challenges unthinkable before.

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⁴ The contribution by Francesco Leotta, Marta Marucci and Livia Briasco in this volume is devoted to its description.