



Some remarks on the Latin of the Didymoi ostraca

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to discuss the linguistic data provided by over 400 ostraca from the *praesidium* of Didymoi in the Eastern Desert, with a focus on Latin texts and phenomena of interference with Greek. After providing an overview of the socio-historical context of Eastern Egypt, this research conducts a general quantitative analysis of the linguistic features of the Latin ostraca and compares them to other corpora which are similar in terms of chronology and geographic provenance. Our analysis reveals peculiarities of the Latin ostraca from Didymoi, which are further investigated through a qualitative analysis to identify potential levels of variation.

The results of the analysis aim to demonstrate two main points. Firstly, it is not to be ruled out that the Latin language had a greater presence in Roman Egypt than commonly believed, extending beyond the *coram imperio* public sphere. Secondly, the Latin language emerging from these ostraca is to be considered as a bundle of varieties reflecting in most cases interlanguage stages among learners who have Substandard Latin, variously tending toward Neo-Standard, as their target language.

KEYWORDS

Vulgar Latin, Latin and Greek contact, Greek contact, Papyrology, Roman Egypt

This paper aims to assess the linguistic data that is provided by a group of Latin and Greek ostraca from Eastern Egypt¹ – more precisely from the *praesidium* of Didymoi – which have been partially published by H. Cuvigny.²

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¹Papyrological editions are cited according to the Checklist available online at <http://www.papyri.info/docs/checklist>.

²CUVIGNY, H. (ed.): *Didymoi. Une garnison romaine dans le désert Oriental d'Égypte. Vol. 2: Le Caire 2012* (= O.Did.). The photos of the ostraca are published online on the IFAO website (<http://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/publications/fifao67/>).

As is known, since the second half of the 1st c. CE, Roman outposts were settled along the main routes that connected the city of Koptos to the Red Sea ports of Myos Hormos, and, further south, to Berenike, which were the principal pathways to the East.³ The most important *praesidia* along the route from Myos Hormos to Koptos were Krokodilô, Maximianon, and Persou; from Berenike to Koptos were Phoinikôn, Didymoi, Kompasi, and Dios (cf. Map 1). As for the fort at Didymoi, its activity declined around the middle of the 2nd c. CE due to the collapse of its well and was then rebuilt around 176/177 CE, before being finally abandoned, probably due to pressure from desert populations, around the middle of the 3rd c. CE.

1. OSTRACA FROM EASTERN EGYPT

The previously mentioned sites, as well as those at the quarries of Mons Claudianus and Mons Porphyrites, return conspicuous documentation, mainly on ostrakon. Chart 1 shows the chronological distribution of the 2,042 texts from the area of Eastern Egypt between the 1st and 3rd c. CE.⁴ The chart also shows a classification of texts on a linguistic basis, as distinguished from among 1) Greek texts, 2) Latin texts, and 3) bilingual/biliterate texts.⁵

As can be seen, most of the documentation is clustered in the 1st–2nd c. CE period, which corresponds to the peak of activity of the infrastructure networks and military allocations. There

³In antiquity, this area had played a central role in Egypt's economy, both because of the presence of gold and gemstone mines, which were exploited since the Pharaonic age, and because of its gateway to the Red Sea, which was the main link for trades with the East. During the Ptolemaic era, a complex network of infrastructures was implemented to connect the city of Koptos, along the Nile, to the ports of Myos Hormos and, further south, to that of Berenike. Along these caravan routes, there were intermediate stations placed in correspondence with wells. With the Roman occupation, the situation did not change, except that there was an increase in the trade of goods from India. From 76/77 CE these stations were occupied by Roman garrisons: merchants and travelers were probably being attacked by desert raiders, so the prefect of Egypt Lucius Iulius Ursus ordered the construction of military camps every 40 km. See for further discussion BRUN, J.-P.: Chronology of the Forts of the Routes to Myos Hormos and Berenike during the Graeco-Roman Period. In BRUN, J.-P. – FAUCHER, T. – BÉRANGÈRE, R. – SIDEBOTHAM, S. (eds): *The Eastern Desert of Egypt during the Greco-Roman Period: Archaeological Reports*. Paris 2018 <<http://books.openedition.org/cdf/5239>>.

⁴The figures reported hereto were extracted from papyri.info (last retrieval date: 10/27/2022). There are 86 texts outside the chronological span considered (1st–3rd c. CE), among which there are only 2 Latin texts (sb 22 15479 and 15480, 4th c. CE, from Abu Sha'ar). For the sake of expository clarity, it was decided to idealize chronological data of 142 texts which presented loose or cross-century datings as follows: texts with dates 1–220 CE, 51–200 CE, 76–200 CE, 1–300 CE were included in the 2nd c. CE; texts with dates 101–300 CE, 176–208 CE, 176–210 CE, 176–220 CE, 176–225 CE, 176–250 CE, 176–275 CE, 251–400 CE, 201–400 CE were included in the 3rd c. CE.

⁵In the latter case, an arbitrary category was employed that includes texts written in both languages in their respective writing systems (mainly texts presenting Latin in the *scriptio*). Admittedly, this is a loose classification, which is only meant to provide a preliminary quantitative picture. Indeed, it goes without saying that we are dealing with bilingual texts at the epiphenomenal level and that clues to bilingualism at a deep layer may also be suggested by elements that are hidden on the textual plane. On this issue, see ADAMS, J. N.: *Bilingualism and the Latin language*. Cambridge 2003, 527 ff. On the other hand, we have excluded from the data presented here texts in other languages (e.g., Egyptian, Palmyrene), which testify to the complex multicultural and multilingual framework of Roman Egypt. On this issue, FOURNET, J.-L.: The Multilingual Environment of Late Antique Egypt: Greek, Latin, Coptic, and Persian Documentation. In BAGNALL, R.: *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*. Oxford 2009, 418–451 and AST, R.: Berenike in Light of Inscriptions, Ostraca, and Papyri. In BRUN–FAUCHER–BÉRANGÈRE–SIDEBOTHAM (n. 3) <<http://books.openedition.org/cdf/5232>>.



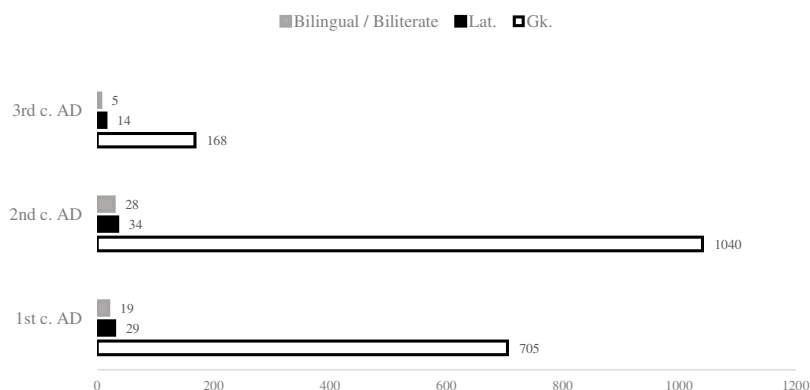


Chart 1. Chronological and linguistic distribution of texts from Eastern Egypt

are 77 texts in Latin, representing 12% of Latin texts from Egypt, and 18% of Latin texts from Egypt dated to the 1st–3rd c. CE period.⁶

A geographical projection of the data presented in Chart 1 is given in Map 1, based on the location a given record was found.

The thickest documentary points are represented by the ostraca from Berenike (O.Berenike), Mons Claudianus (O.Claud.), Maximianon (O.Max.), Krokodilô (O.Krok.) and, indeed, Didymoi (O.Did.).

The analyses conducted so far on the ostraca from Maximianon, Krokodilô, Mons Claudianus, and Berenike, which are based on a far more extensive documentary material than that returned by papyri.info, have revealed a highly articulated cultural and linguistic picture. The archive from Berenike, for instance, portrays, in its onomastic and linguistic variety, the multi-ethnic atmosphere that is typical of a seaport town.⁷ Around the quarry of Mons Claudianus, from which the well-known bilingual archive of Successus comes, a community composed mainly of civilians and private workers, of Egyptian origin, may well have gathered.⁸ From the military garrisons of Maximianon and Krokodilô, more akin to the background of Didymoi, a minority Latin-speaking community striving to learn the Greek language and script emerged, but, conversely, also a group of Greek-speakers attempting to learn Latin writing and language.⁹

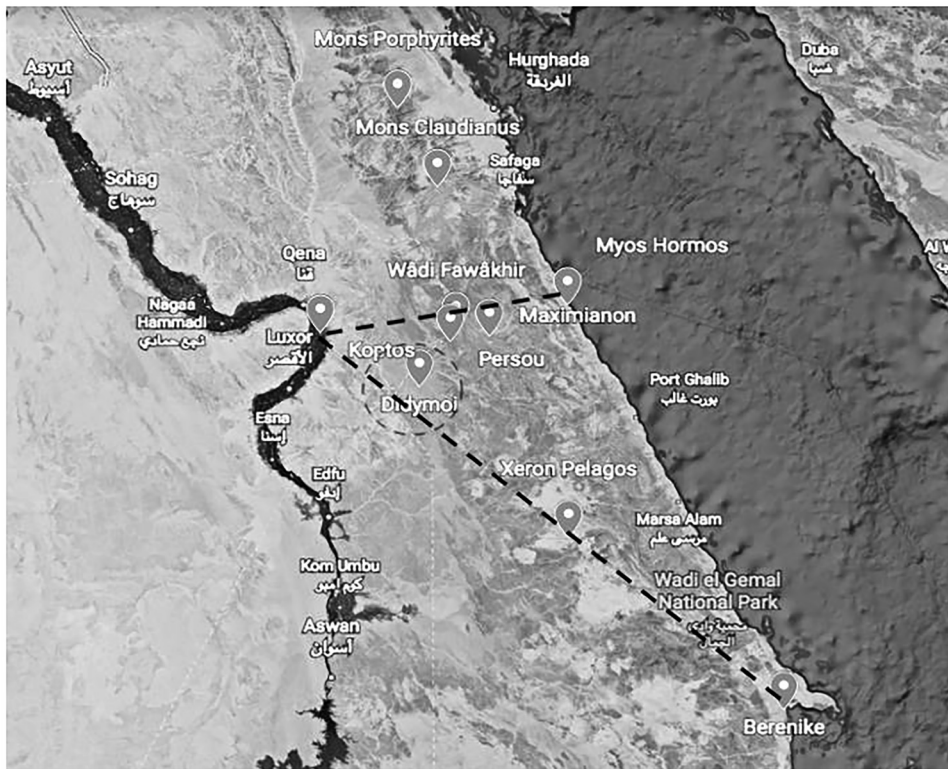
⁶Latin texts from Egypt have been partially annotated within the linguistic corpora CLASSES (Corpus for Latin Socio-linguistic Studies on Epigraphic textS, <https://classes-latin-linguistics.fileli.unipi.it>) and LLDB (Computerized Historical Linguistic Database of Latin Inscriptions of the Imperial Age, <http://lldb.elte.hu/en/database/>). In particular, the latter database presents the annotation of the ostraca under investigation in this study (§ 2).

⁷The Berenike ostraca present a great onomastic variety, with names not only of Latin, Greek, Egyptian, and Semitic origin, but also of Thracian, Celtic, and Germanic origin. For further discussion, see AST (n. 5).

⁸On the archive of Successus, see for example ADAMS (n. 5) 591–593. It is estimated that nearly 1,000 people operated at Mons Claudianus, of whom only 60 were military personnel. For further discussion see BÜLOW-JACOBSEN, A.: Quarries with Subtitles. In BRUN-FAUCHER-BÉRANGÈRE-SIDEBOTHAM (n. 3) <<http://books.openedition.org/cdf/5240>>.

⁹On this issue, see FOURNET, J.-L.: Langues, écritures, et culture dans les praesidia. In CUVIGNY, H. (ed.): *La Route de Myos Hormos: L'armée dans le désert Oriental d'Égypte*. Le Caire 2003, 427–500; SARRI, A.: *Material Aspects of Letter Writing in the Graeco-Roman World (500 B.C. – 300 A.D.)*. De Gruyter 2017 and FELICE, E. M.: *Multilingualism and Language Choice in the Imperial Roman Army*. PhD Thesis, Oxford 2019.





Map 1. Geographical distribution of texts from Eastern Egypt

2. THE DIDYMOI OSTRACA: DESCRIPTION OF THE CORPUS AND PRELIMINARY LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

Moving on to examine the documentation from Didymoi. Table 1 shows the corpus of texts published so far – which represents only half of the actual corpus – concerning text type and language.¹⁰ The chronological partition is based on the two main phases that can be identified on an archaeological basis.¹¹

The table presents 6 text types, i.e., inscriptions, documents related to *dekaniai* and *dekanoi*, official correspondence, small administrative documents (such as receipts, laissez-passers,

¹⁰In contrast to Chart 1, Table 1 also contains the corpus of Didymoi inscriptions (= I.Did, 10 in total), which are not included in the papyri.info database. The *Tituli palmyreniens* (O.Did. 285–286) and the *ostraca figurés* (O.Did. 466–479) were not included in this table.

¹¹The ostraca were found in the dump outside and inside the fort; the dump returned those from the first period and a small part of those from the second period; all the ostraca from inside the fort date back to the second period. Cf. CUVIGNY: Didymoi (n. 2) 2–5.



Table 1. Composition of the corpus of the Didymoi ostraca

Dating	Text Type	Latin	Greek	Bilingual/Biliterate	Total
First period (76/77–150 CE)	Inscriptions	2	1	/	3
	Dekaniai and dekanoi	/	21	/	21
	Official correspondence	/	1	/	1
	Administrative documents	2	46	1	49
	<i>Instrumenta inscripta</i>	18	69	2	89
	Private letters	9	123	/	132
	TOTAL	31	261	3	295
Second period (176/177–240 CE)	Inscriptions	/	7	/	7
	Dekaniai and dekanoi	/	/	/	/
	Official correspondence	/	23	1	24
	Administrative documents	1	49	2	52
	<i>Instrumenta inscripta</i>	10	61	2	73
	Private letters	3	14	/	17
	TOTAL	14	154	5	173
	TOTAL	45	415	8	468

private law acts), *instrumenta inscripta*, and private letters (which come mainly from two immediately nearby forts).

Preliminarily, a pronounced difference can be noticed in the number of documents between the two periods examined, with a ratio of 2:1 in favor of the first period. Moreover, documents related to *dekaniai* are found only in the first period, whereas the official correspondence is clustered in the second period. Additionally, in the first phase, a higher circulation of Latin texts is observed (with a percentage of 10% in the first period and 8% in the second period). On the other hand, in the second period, there is an increase in the presence of bilingual and/or biliterate texts.

Overall, it can be noticed that about 9.5% of the corpus consists of Latin texts, a noteworthy percentage if one considers that the ratio of Latin texts from the garrisons at Krokodilô and Maximianon is around 4%.¹² If one adds to this figure the widespread presence of Latinate influence in at least a score of Greek texts (cf. § 3), this documentation turns out to be highly valuable for assessing the role of Latin in Egypt in the first three centuries of the Empire. As can be reasonably expected, the documents of major linguistic interest are the private letters – which have been receiving attention in recent studies¹³ – some of which are of considerable extent

¹²FOURNET: *Langues* (n. 9).

¹³See LEIWO, M.: Multilingual military forts in Roman Egypt. *Lingue antiche e moderne* 7 (2018) 165–190 and ADAMS, J. N. – AST, R.: The Latin of the Thracian soldier Cutus. *ZPE* 218 (2021) 243–264.



(e.g., O.Did. 417, containing two letters, one on the *recto* and one on the *verso*, consisting of a total of 22 lines).

2.1. Quantitative analysis

The Latin documentation was annotated in 2020 in the LLDB. Table 2 offers a synopsis of the 153 recorded relevant forms, shown below according to the database's categorization criteria.¹⁴

Table 2 presents data concerning the relevant forms recorded in the Latin texts. The first three columns pertain to the different levels of analysis, with data on the absolute number of forms and their respective percentage; the other three columns refer, for each level of analysis, to the subtype of relevant forms, of which the absolute number and the relative percentage are given.

By preliminary observation, this data delineates that the most significantly attested type of deviation concerns the grapho-phonological level, with a series of faults that are commonly found in other non-literary texts and that may be attributed to an imperfect orthographic mastery. A high concentration of Grecisms also stands out. This evidence, which in itself is trivial, needs a more in-depth quantitative and qualitative analysis.

To better assess this data, a comparison with Rustius Barbarus' ostraca – also recorded in the LLDB – which offer a syntopic and synchronic control group, is worthwhile. If one leaves out very common phenomena, which stand at similar values (e.g., in Rustius Barbarus' epistolary the deletion of final <-M> has an occurrence of 27%; the indicative in the place of the subjunctive in subordinate propositions of 25%; <-ES> in the place of <-is> in 2nd sg. person of 36%), Latin, as represented by the Didymoi ostraca, exhibits the following peculiarities: a high number of insertion phenomena (14% anaptyxis, and 5% prosthesis), a high number of Classical Latin /o:/ misspelt via <v> (13%), a high frequency of hapax or very rare words (23%), and the use of the dative instead of the genitive (14%).

This first glance suggests that the texts under investigation, alongside generalized phenomena which are commonly found in other non-literary Latin texts, present several emblematic – one can say idiosyncratic – phenomena that require further examination.

2.2. Intermediate remarks

The corpus of Latin texts from Didymoi presents an interesting picture of phenomena diverging from Classical Latin (= CL). In particular, the quantitative analysis conducted in § 2.1 highlighted, on the one hand, phenomena occurring in other non-literary texts and, on the other hand, a specific incidence of phenomena that instead show a lower frequency, if not absence, in the control group examined.

In order to corroborate the heuristic picture provided by this quantitative evidence, it is now necessary to proceed through a qualitative analysis by examining coherent subgroups. In fact, the typology of the texts under examination, characterized by a certain extent and the possibility of tracing, albeit in loose terms, the authorial and social network dimensions, allows the linguistic data to be grained.

¹⁴See for instance ADAMIK, B.: In Memoriam József Herman: von der Late Latin Data Base bis zur Computerized Historical Linguistic Database of Latin Inscriptions of the Imperial Age. *Acta Antiqua Hung.* 49 (2009) 11–22.



Table 2. Latin texts from Didymoi: relevant forms (according to LLDB)

Levels of analysis	N	%	Relevant forms	N	%
Consonantismus	58	38%	-m > ø	16	27%
			-s > ø	5	9%
			-n(+cons.) > ø	4	7%
			H > ø	4	7%
			qu > Q / C / K	3	5%
			V- > B	2	3%
			ll > L	2	3%
			x > SX / CS / XS / XSS / XX	2	3%
			mm > M	1	2%
			other	19	-
			TOTAL	58	100%
Vocalismus	40	26%	epenthesis seu anaptyxis	9	14%
			o: > V	5	13%
			e > I	4	10%
			e (+ voc) > I	3	8%
			commutationes uocalium uariae	2	5%
			prosthesis	2	5%
			apocope	1	3%
			u > O	1	3%
			i > E	1	3%
			u (+voc) > ø	1	3%
			other	11	-
			TOTAL	40	100%
Syntactica	22	14%	Graecismus	14	63%
			lexica (vocabula valde rara etc.)	5	23%

(continued)



Table 2. Continued

Levels of analysis	N	%	Relevant forms	N	%
			syntactica varia	2	9%
			semantica	1	5%
			TOTAL	22	100%
Nominalia	21	14%	dat. pro gen.	3	14%
			dat. / abl. pro acc. in obiecto directo	3	14%
			dat. pro acc.	3	12%
			masc. pro neutr.	2	10%
			commutationes in formatione substantivorum	2	10%
			neutr. pro masc.	1	5%
			acc. pro abl.	1	5%
			praep. > casu sine praep.	1	5%
			other	5	–
			TOTAL	21	100%
Errores non grammatici	7	5%	–	–	
Verbalia	5	3%	-is pro -ES (in 2 pers. verborum)	2	40%
			indicativus pro coniunctivo	2	40%
			cett. ad coniugationem pertinentia	1	20%
			TOTAL	5	100%
TOTAL	153	100%			

Moreover, in order to assess the relationship between Latin and Greek, it may be fruitful to examine not only interference phenomena within Latin texts but also within Greek texts, particularly with regard to the treatment of Latin borrowings.

To gather the ostraca under examination into coherent subgroups, the Latin and Greek documentation has been divided into three synchronic cuts, based on the dating proposed by the editors. Within each synchronic cut, data on text type, language, various possible levels of interference, onomastics, and, whenever possible, prosopography have been examined.



3. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

3.1. Texts from the 1st c. CE

Table 3 presents the texts clustered in the last quarter of the 1st c. CE.¹⁵

In this period, which corresponds to the construction of the *praesidium*, we record the highest concentration of Latin texts (14%). However, the *instrumenta inscripta*, which consist of few words, present a scanty or null linguistic interest. If we look at the data provided by the inscriptions, we can see that Latin is featured as a Super-High variety: out of three inscriptions,

Table 3. Texts from Didymoi (last quarter of the 1st c. CE)

Text type	Latin	Greek	Bilingual / Biliterate
Inscriptions (I.Did. 1–2, 10)	2	1	/
<i>Dekaniai</i> and <i>dekanoi</i> (O.Did. 1–4, 6–16, 19–21)	/	18	/
<i>Instrumenta Inscripta</i> ¹⁶	11	41	1
Administrative documents ¹⁷	2	18	1
Private letters	6	54	/
Iulius to Valerius, Antonius, and Dolens. Sertorius (O.Did. 319–326)	1	6	/
Albucius (O.Did. 327–329)	/	3	/
Iulia (O.Did. 331)	/	1	/
Three letters written by Cutus (O.Did. 334–336)	3	/	/
Epaphroditos 1 (O.Did. 337–338)	/	2	/
Gaius Antonius to Longinus Crispus (O.Did. 339–341)	/	3	/
Gaii and Longini (O.Did. 342–352)	/	11	/
Letters sent by Herennius (O.Did. 353–354)	/	2	/
Letters sent or written by Maximus (O.Did. 355–360)	/	6	/
Two letters to Arius (the Same?) (O.Did. 361–362)	1	1	/
Two letters of Diokentes (O.Did. 363–364)	/	2	1
Philokles' hand but without a prescript (O.Did. 393)	/	1	/
Letters not attached to a group (O.Did. 365–369, 370–374, 2 428–429)	11	1	/
TOTAL	22	131	2

¹⁵Private letters are divided into coherent subcorpora according to the edition and papyri.info. The same applies to Table 4 and Table 5.

¹⁶O.Did. 146–165, 167–175, 196–199, 201–215, 290, 293–298.

¹⁷O.Did. 47, 49, 51, 53–54, 57–58, 63, 75, 98, 99, 100–101, 103, 105, 107–108, 111, 133, 139, 141.



the two official ones, i.e. the dedication of the *praesidium* (I.Did. 1) and the dedication of the cistern (I.Did. 2) are in Latin, which emerges as a public language. The presence of contemporary copies of I.Did 1 (e.g., AE 2001, 2051, from Sikayt) confirms this picture. It is remarkable that in I.Did. 2 Latin is privileged also in case a greater familiarity with Greek is evident, as shown by the morphological interference in [MAGN]VN (l. 8). In contrast, the Greek inscription (I.Did. 10) is a private graffito of licentious content.

Among the small administrative documents, one laissez-passer is by the hand of the *decurio* (O.Did. 47); in another laissez-passer (O.Did. 49), the last lines, which are in Latin (ll. 5–6), contain the permission to let pass the persons indicated in the preceding portion of the Greek text (T]RANSMITTITES S S). The insertion of <S> is to be attributed to a simple mechanical error.

In general, we can infer that Greek was the language of common usage for both administrative and private correspondence. It is possible that this evidence is to be read not only in terms of a generalized proficiency in Greek but also in terms of a broader availability of scribes. The fact that the Greek records do not offer linguistic phenomena of particular interest (except for trivial cases such as iotacism) hints at the presence of a milieu of scribes with good literacy; this is also suggested, moreover, by a transliteration of Latin linguistic material in line with official spelling conventions, e.g., οὐηλάριος (O.Did. 147), Οὐαλერიος (O.Did. 290), Καπιτωλεῖνος (O.Did. 51).¹⁸ In rare cases, however, the widespread presence of misspellings may suggest dictation to someone unacquainted with writing (e.g., O.Did. 393).

On the other hand, some elements in the Greek texts suggest a circulation of Latin. In fact, there are several instances of a reflection of Latin cursive in the Greek script, as in two tickets (O.Did. 105, 107) and a private letter (O.Did. 428). While these details may suggest an effort made by Latin-writers to learn the Greek script, the absence of further contextual elements and other interference phenomena leads more cautiously to assume a general convergence in letters shape that is not necessarily to be attributed to the scribe himself (the interference concerns <ε> and <β>). A more apparent Latin influence can be detected, however, in O.Did. 148, which returns the form τύρμα, showing Latin morphology and <υ> (with Latin cursive influence) in place of <ου> to spell Latin /u/.

The form κοδούκτορα (O.Did. 355, a private letter) suggests the circulation of a phonetic form with anteconsonantal nasal drop¹⁹ that underlies the Greek adaptation of Latin *conductor* (but see, on the other hand, κονδούκτορος in O.Did. 4). Noteworthy, in O.Did. 325 (§ 3.1.2), is the adaptation κομονοπλάριου (l. 8) / κομον[o]πλάρις (l. 14), with reanalysis of Lat. *commanipularis*, -is (3rd declension) as a syncopated Greek form in -ι(ο)ς (2nd declension). Such an adaptation would imply an oral form that was circulating in army jargon, as suggested by the degemination of -mm-, already documented (cf. CEOMANIPVLIS (= *commanipulis*), CIL VI 3010, 3rd c., from Rome) and the syncope -p(u)l-, widely diffused (the noun is lemmatized in *ThLL* s.v. in the form *commanip(u)laris*). As for the vocalism κομovo-, an oscillation between the spellings *commanip-* / *commanup-* is found in Latin (cf. *ThLL* s.v.), therefore it is plausible that from *coman[u]plaris* a raising of /a/ in unstressed syllable by assimilatory processes had occurred.

¹⁸On this topic, see ROVAI, F.: Notes on the inscriptions of Delos: the Greek transliteration of Latin names. *Studi e Saggi Linguistici* 53.2 (2015) 163–185.

¹⁹The phenomenon is well-documented in contemporary non-literary Latin texts. See VÄÄNÄNEN, V.: *Introduction au latin vulgaire*. Paris 1981. See also, within the Didymoi corpus, forms such as LVGINO (O.Did. 335) LOGINO (O.Did. 363) (= *Longino*), cf. § 3.1.1 and ADAMS–AST (n. 13) 251.



Let us now dwell on Latin private letters, with a focus on the possible levels of variation, by following the partition shown in Table 3.

3.1.1. Texts by Cutus. A soldier whose name is spelled either <CVTVS> or <CVTOS> is the author of four texts, i.e., O.Did. 63 (a list of names), O.Did. 334, O.Did. 335, and O.Did. 336 (three private letters). An exhaustive analysis has already been conducted on this corpus, also including five texts that are still unpublished,²⁰ so only a summary with a few additional general considerations will be made. Cutus must have belonged to the milieu of Thracian soldiers stationed at Didymoi; indeed, both the name Cutus²¹ and that of other soldiers mentioned in these ostraca²² can be traced back to Thracian anthroponymy.

Cutus' texts show a large number of deviations from CL, especially in the grapho-phonological domain. Most of these errors reflect phenomena already well-documented in other non-literary texts; in other cases, however, peculiar phenomena are found, ranging from "invented" forms, such as CVRATORIV (= *curatori*) and SIXOPLIXO (= *sesquiplicario*),²³ to systematic and widespread misspellings of /o/ and, especially, /o:/ with <v>.²⁴ While it is true that <v> for /o:/ is documented in Latin non-literary texts,²⁵ nevertheless the high concentration in this group, which is in fact reflected in the quantitative data shown in Table 2, suggests that we are dealing with a specific feature of Cutus' interlanguage. It has been proposed that this feature, being unique to this subgroup among the Didymoi ostraca, could be related to the tendency in Thracian Greek, and, probably, also in Thracian, to the closure of /o/.²⁶ On the morphological and syntactic level, on the other hand, Cutus shows quite good proficiency in Latin.

The fact that Cutus was at an early stage of literacy learning is further suggested by the list of soldiers included in O.Did. 63, a writing exercise,²⁷ presenting a slow tracing of the letters.²⁸ This evidence not only accounts for the multiple errors in the grapho-phonological domain but, more generally, reveals a soldier of the auxiliary units, certainly a Greek speaker, who knew Latin and was striving to learn to write it as well.

²⁰ADAMS–AST (n. 13).

²¹Thracian onomastics shows a variety of forms possibly related to this base, i.e. Κοτις, *Cotia*, *Cotiso*, Κοτος, *Cotus*, Κοτυς, *Cotys*, Κοιτυς, Κουτυς, Κωτις. Cf. DETSCHEW, D.: *Die trakischen Sprachreste*. Wien 1976 [1957], 251, 256–261, 266, 273.

²²See, e.g. *Ditenis*, *Hezbeni*, *Desas* (O.Did. 63), *Bitos* / *Bitu* (O.Did. 63 and 334), *Dinis* (O.Did. 334 and 336).

²³The first one shows a mixture of two different endings; the second one is a rhyming deformation, cf. ADAMS–AST (n. 13) 249.

²⁴See, e.g., ANTONIV, BITV (= *Antonio*, *Bito*, O.Did. 334), RVGV, LVGINO (= *rogo*, *Longino*, O.Did. 335).

²⁵For further discussion, cf. ADAMS, J. N.: *The Regional Diversification of Latin 200 BC–AD 600*. Cambridge 2007, 72–78 and TAMPONI, L.: Sull'alternanza vocalica <o> - <u> nelle epigrafi latine di epoca arcaica. In MAROTTA, G. – STRIK LIEVERS F. (eds): *Strutture linguistiche e dati empirici in diacronia e sincronia*. Pisa 2017, 111–134.

²⁶See ADAMS–AST (n. 13) 261 and BRIXHE, C.: Zôné et Samothrace: leurs sur la langue Thrace et nouveau chapitre de la grammaire compare? CRAI (2006) 133. Indeed, the forms in which an alternation <o>/<v> is found are personal names whose spellings are oscillating in Greek inscriptions as well, i.e. Βιθος (*IGBulg* II 738) ~ Βιθους (*IG* VII 3519) ~ Βίτος (*SB* 3:7233); Κότυς (*I. Aeg. Thrace* E84) ~ Κουτυς ~ Κωτις ~ Κοτος; Μουκατορις (*IGBulg* V 5611) ~ Μοκατορις (*IK Byzantion* 214).

²⁷Cf. CUVIGNY, H.: Petits documents administratifs comptables et juridiques. In CUVIGNY: Didymoi (n. 2) 117–178, 128.

²⁸Cf. BÜLOW-JACOBSEN, A.: Private letters. In CUVIGNY: Didymoi (n. 2) 234–401, 251.



3.1.2. Letters by Iulius. A group of nine letters (O.Did. 317–324 and 326), written by two different hands, can be associated with a certain Iulius. Among them, only one is in Latin (O.Did. 326). The sender of the letter published in O.Did. 325 is Sertorius, mentioned by Iulius in O.Did. 319. In this letter, Sertorius addresses a certain Iulius Bithynus; if this Iulius is to be identified with the Iulius of the aforementioned epistolary corpus, it can be inferred that Iulius came from Asia Minor, a fact that would explain his predilection for Greek, of which he certainly had at least an oral command.

Assuming that the Iulius of the Latin letter O.Did. 326 is the same as the Iulius of the Greek letters,²⁹ it follows that Iulius also knew Latin, at least orally; the same is true of Valerius, who would be the recipient of both the Greek and Latin letters. Some further considerations are worth dwelling on. In the Latin letter, Iulius addresses Valerius by appealing to him with the *tria nomina*: it is thus possible that Valerius was a Roman citizen with L1 Latin, and that Iulius wrote to him in Latin as a form of accommodation.

The Latin text shows quite commonplace phenomena (e.g., VALIAS for *ualeas*, ll. 3–4; OPERA for *operam*, l.5; PRESIDIVM for *praesidium*, l. 7; OC for *hoc*, l.7) and a morpho-syntactic agreement mistake (MELIOR PRESIDIVM for *melius praesidium*, l. 7). The opening augural formula (ANT OMNIA OPTO DIOS VT BENE VA/LIAS VALIAS QVON MEVM VOTVM EST = *ante omnia opto deos ut bene ualeas quod meum uotum est*) finds parallels in CEL I 74, from the corpus of Rustius Barbarus (OPTO DEOS VT BENE VALEAS QUE (= *quae*) MEA VOTA, l.2) and, probably, in CEL I 218 (OPTO DEOS VT MI[HI V] ALEAS QVOD ME[V]M VOTVM EST], l. 3). Some misspellings (elision, word repetition, and substitution of *quod* with *quon*) suggest that Iulius may have learned some epistolary formulas orally.

3.1.3. Two letters to Arius. If the Arius mentioned in the letters O.Did. 361 (in Greek) and O.Did. 362 (in Latin) is the same person, it is to be assumed that he was able to understand both languages. Language alternation depends on the sender of the letters: the author of the Greek letter is a certain Φαμενωθε, who must have belonged to the Greco-Egyptian community; the author of the Latin letter, is a certain Gaius Lurius, who may well have Latin as L1.³⁰ In fact, common grapho-phonetic phenomena are found, such as the omission of <-s> (NVGA FACITIS, l. 3 = *nugas facitis*), of <H> (OMO, l. 4 = *homo*), the omission of the nasal before the sibilant, and hypercorrect spellings (TV DE/BES [...] MOSTRAREM, ll. 5–6 = *tu debes [...] monstrare*). Distinctive is the systematic use of the digraph <XS> for [ks] (RIXSATIS, l. 4; VEXS(ILLARIVM), l. 10) – which is well-documented, in the same period, in the *Corpus Vindolandense* – revealing the scribe's literacy training.³¹ The form EPSTVMAS (l. 7) is difficult to evaluate, also because of the fragmentary context.³²

²⁹On due caveats, cf. BÜLOW-JACOBSEN (n. 28) 244.

³⁰Cf. LEIWO (n. 13) 176–177.

³¹On the use of <XS> in the *corpus Vindolandense*, cf. COTUGNO, F. – MAROTTA, G.: Geminated Consonants in the Vindolanda Tablets. Empirical Data and Sociolinguistic Remarks. In MOLINELLI, P. (ed.): *Language and Identity in Multilingual Mediterranean Settings. Challenges for Historical Sociolinguistics*. Berlin 2017, 269–288. On the history of <XS>, cf. MANCINI, M.: Repertori grafici e regole d'uso: il caso del latino <XS>. In AGOSTINIANI, L. – MARCHESI, M. (eds): *Lingua, testi, storia. Atti della Giornata di Studi in ricordo di Aldo Luigi Prosdocimi* (Firenze, 6 giugno 2017). Roma 2019, 13–54.

³²BÜLOW-JACOBSEN (n. 28) 284 tries to explain the form *epstumas* in the following terms: “*epistumas* is not Latin. The immediate reaction is that it might be a derivative of ἐπιστήμη, *epistumo* or *epistimo* which might mean ‘think, believe’”. But the word *epistula* could also be involved in a distorted form. A wild guess might reduce the sentence to a common complaint about not receiving letter [...] ‘I always write letters, but you never write to me.’” By accepting this last hypothesis, as LEIWO (n. 13) observes, a particular word order would be attested (i.e., *empstumas [mittis?] tu mi non*), unless *tu mi non* is referred to the following *salutabis*.



3.1.4. Letter by Iulius Priscus (O.Did. 429). Finally, it is worth mentioning an isolated Latin letter, which cannot be placed in a coherent subgroup, traced back to Iulius Priscus and addressed to Vettius. Iulius Priscus was probably of Greek L1, as is evidenced by the final formula of greeting, i.e., *EROS* (l. 18) – which, albeit misspelled, would seem to trace Greek ἔρρωσο – and by the morphological interference in [P]RASIDIV (l. 16) (see, for example, *πρασιδίου* in O.Krok. 1 71).

As for the form *DEIVS* (l. 4) for *deos*, any attempt at explanation would seem desperate. However, considering the [P]RASIDIV further on, it would be consistent to assume a morphological interference with Greek (i.e., -ους transcribed via <-VS>). The hypothesis would be further corroborated by the presence of <EI> if it is to be understood as being analogous to <EI> (i.e., the form *DEIVS* would essentially retrace a *θείους*).

There are isolated morpho-syntactic deviations. An interesting feature is the construction of *amo* with the object marked via the dative: *TIBI AMO TANQ[VAM MEO] / FRATERI*³³ (ll. 6–7). On a phraseological level, the formula of good wishes in which one prays to the gods that the friend will be well presents an altogether unusual appearance: the expression *OPTO DEIVS (= deos), VOLO TE VALE[RE]* differs from the two more common formulas *opto (deos) (ut) bene ualeas* (see, e.g., T.Vindol. 2 309; *CEL* I 19, 74, 83) and *opto te bene ualere* (see, e.g., *CEL* I 141, 159). The insertion of an additional predicate (i.e., *VOLO*) may be a case of sentence reprogramming.

3.2. Texts from the 2nd c. CE

Table 4 presents the texts dating from the 2nd c. CE. There are overall 147 documents, which consist, in order, of private letters (73, of which 3 are in Latin), minor administrative documents (28, all in Greek), *instrumenta inscripta* (36, of which 7 are in Latin), 7 inscriptions (all in Greek) and only 2 documents relating to *dekaniai* (all in Greek).

Table 4. Texts from Didymoi (2nd c. CE)

Text type	Latin	Greek	Bilingual / Biliterate
Inscriptions (I.Did. 3–9)	/	7	/
<i>Dekaniai</i> and <i>dekanoi</i> (O.Did. 5, 17)	/	2	/
<i>Instrumenta Inscripta</i> ³⁴	7	27	2
Administrative documents ³⁵	/	28	/
Official correspondence (O.Did. 27)	/	1	/

(continued)

³³The form *FRATERI* (l. 2 and l. 7) is an epenthetic form: on this aspect, see the remarks on O.Did. 417. (§ 3.2.1).

³⁴O.Did. 166, 176–192, 195, 200, 202–203, 216–223, 288–289, 291, 299, 300, 304.

³⁵O.Did. 48, 50, 55, 59–61, 64–67, 76–82, 102, 106, 109, 110, 112–113, 115, 131–132, 134, 140.



Table 4. Continued

Text type	Latin	Greek	Bilingual / Biliterate
Private letters	3	70	/
Iulius to Valerius, Antonius, and Dolens. Sertorius (O.Did. 323)	/	1	/
Philokles to Kapparis (O.Did. 376–382)	/	12	/
Sknips at Didymoi (O.Did. 383–386)	/	3	/
Philokles to Various Persons (Other than Kapparis and Sknips) (O.Did. 387–391)	/	6	/
Letters Written in Philokles' Hand but without a Prescript (O.Did. 394–398)	/	5	/
Mokotralis, in Philokles' Hand (O.Did. 399)	/	1	/
Nemesous, Theanous and Other Contemporaries of Philokles (O.Did. 400–410)	/	11	/
Letters to Ammonios (O.Did. 413–414)	/	2	/
Letters to Diogenes (O.Did. 413–414)	0	2	0
Epaphroditos 2 (O.Did. 415–416)	0	2	0
Claudius, Crescens and 'Numosis' (O.Did. 417–420)	3	1	0
Theotimos (O.Did. 421–425)	0	5	0
Thaisous (O.Did. 426–427)	0	2	0
Letters not Attached to a Group (O.Did. 375; 430–450)	0	22	0
TOTAL	10	135	2

Although the proportion of Latin texts is lower as compared to the documentation of the last quarter of the 1st c. CE, Latin elements in Greek texts may be spotted, with convergence phenomena suggesting the circulation of Latin in everyday interactions.

An example in this regard is the inscription I.Did. 7, found within the *aedes*, by Οὐέττις Κρισπίνος **ισστρατιώτης** χώρτης **Ι Λυσιτανώνρομ**: Λυσιτανώνρομ is a form that hybridizes Greek and Latin genitive plural desinences;³⁶ in the first syllable we note graphemic interference between <v> and <υ>; the prosthetic vowel in **ισστρατιώτης** is characteristic of Latin-Greek hybrid forms.³⁷

Moreover, indications of phonetic spellings emerge in the Latin material attested in Greek records and may attest to some noteworthy phonological developments. Of great interest in this

³⁶Cf. also CUVIGNY, H.: Un soldat de la cohors I Lusitanorum à Didymoi: du nouveau sur l'inscription I. Kanaïs 59 bis. *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 101 (2001) 153–157.

³⁷Cf. BARCHI, S.: On vowel prothesis before sC in Substandard Latin and Koine Greek: a synoptic review. *Studi e Saggi Linguistici* 57.2 (2019) 45–81.



regard is O.Did. 441, a private letter that exhibits the following spellings: Δομπτίω (l. 1), Λονζίνοϛ (l. 6, for *Longinus*), τάβλαν (l. 10). The last form is certainly commonplace and well-documented among Latin loanwords in the Greek of Egypt.³⁸ The gemination of /tj/ is also well-attested, since the late 1st c. BCE, especially for the onomastic base *Domit-*.³⁹ The form Λονζίνοϛ is remarkable. If the phenomenon is to be read internally in Latin⁴⁰ – as would be suggested by handwriting that shows the extensive influence of Latin cursive; in fact, the author of the letter, Τερέντιος, would be first and foremost a Latin-speaking and Latin-writer⁴¹ – the spelling demonstrates, in addition to the merger into /j/ of [g] before [e], [i] and [j] (into which [d] before [j] also converges), a further process of fricativization / affrication, which in Latin is often spelled via <z> and in Greek via <ζ>.⁴²

It is worthwhile to dwell now on the group of three Latin letters from the circle of Claudius, Crescens, and Numosis (O.Did. 417–420).

3.2.1. Claudius, Demetrous, Numosis and Crescens. A very interesting group of texts consists of the letters between Claudius, Crescens, Numosis, and Demetrous, three in Latin (O.Did. 417, 419, 420) and one in Greek (O.Did. 418). The edition provides a detailed commentary on these texts, so only a few additional observations will be made.⁴³

O.Did. 417, of considerable length (22 lines), consists of two different letters, both addressed to Claudius. The first is sent by Demeterus (= *Demetrous*), the second one by Numosis. The two texts were written by the same hand, probably that of Numosis himself. Claudius did not know Greek, except orally. Hence Numosis and Demeterus wrote to him in Latin.⁴⁴ Possibly, Numosis spoke and wrote Greek, but also had a basic knowledge of Latin, whereas Demeterus – who appealed to Numosis to write her message – did not know Latin and spoke to Claudius in Greek. The fact that Numosis was more familiar with Greek is evident from a number of often erroneous lexical and syntactical calques that reveal the use of a glossary.⁴⁵

³⁸Cf. DARIS, S.: *Il lessico latino nella lingua greca d'Egitto*. Barcelona 1991, 289–290.

³⁹Cf. BARCHI, S.: *Continuity and Discontinuity in Substandard Latin. Three Case Studies in Phonology and Orthography*. PhD Thesis. Sapienza University of Rome / Roma Tre University 2021, 221.

⁴⁰In fact, Greek [g] before [j] had undergone fricativization since the 4th c. BCE. In papyri, the phenomenon is suggested by a variety of spellings, involving 1) omission of <γ>, 2) omission of <ι>, 3) reverse spellings with <γ> in place of <ι> (= /j/). Cf. GIGNAC, F. T.: *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods. Vol. I: Phonology*. Milano 1976, 71 ff.

⁴¹Cf. BÜLOW-JACOBSEN (n. 28) 376.

⁴²See e.g., AZVITORIBUS (CIL VIII 18224, 2nd c. CE) and Ζούλια (IGVR II 305, 3rd c. from Rome). On this issue, cf. LOPORCARO, M.: Phonological processes. In MAIDEN, M. – SMITH, J. C. – LEDGEWAY, A. (eds): *The Cambridge History of the Romance Languages. Vol. 1: Structures*. Cambridge 2011, 689–698, and, as far as Greek script is concerned, LEIWO, M.: The Mixed Languages in Roman Inscriptions. In SOLIN, H. – SALOMIES, O. – LIERTZ U.-M. (eds): *Acta colloquii epigraphici Latini Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum* 104. Helsinki 1995, 293–301, 297.

⁴³BÜLOW-JACOBSEN (n. 28) 352–355.

⁴⁴Claudius might have been of Dacian origin, since he is mentioned together with a certain *Diurponain* (l. 20), a name of Dacian origin. Cf. BÜLOW-JACOBSEN (n. 28) 352.

⁴⁵See e.g. CONIA (= *quoniam*) calquing Greek ὅτι in the sentence SCIRE TE VOLO CONIA (l. 2), which corresponds to Greek γινώσκεις σε θέλω ὅτι; and SICOT (= *sicut*) calquing Greek ὥς in the sentence SICOT ABVI FRUMENTVM (ll. 4–5), i.e. since/when I had the wheat, cf. BÜLOW-JACOBSEN (n. 28) 352–355.



The first noteworthy element is the anaptyxis within the *muta cum liquida* cluster, i.e., DEMETERV (= *Demetrous*, l. 1), ESOPERA (= *supra*, l. 3), FRATJERI (= *fratri*, ll. 10–11), MAGISTERI (= *magistri*, l. 11), SCRIBRE (= *scribe*, l. 14), and CERESCENTI (= *Crescenti*, l. 16). Similar cases occur in other Latin letters from Didymoi (see § 3.1.4). The form ESOPERA for *supra*, which also calques Greek ὑπέρ, finds parallels with SOPERA (CEL 146, l. 22) and SVPERA (CEL 157, l. 8).⁴⁶ Ultimately, it can be pointed out that the Latin of Numosis (but, apparently, also that of Iulius Priscus) was marked by a productive phonological process.⁴⁷

In addition to anaptyxis within the *muta cum liquida* cluster, this ostrakon shows other instances of insertion, namely prosthesis and paragoge. Paragoge, quite rare in Latin, is found in DONICO (= *donec*, l. 8). As for prosthesis, it is attested before /s/ in ESOPERA and ESABARIO (l. 19).⁴⁸ In this case, the prosthetic vowel is to be related to the segmental nature of /s/, which is supposed to be tense enough to become a syllabic segment.⁴⁹

O.Did. 419 is written by the same Claudius who is the addressee of the above letters. The letter shows very common non-classical forms, such as the final <-M> omission and external sandhi assimilation (AT TE, l. 5). This supports the hypothesis that Claudius had Latin as L1. The presence of the *appositio partitiva*, is remarkable, as it is also found in CPL 304 (from Rustius Barbarus' epistolary) and in O.Did. 455–456 (see § 3.3 for further discussion).

The name of the sender of the letter published in O.Did. 420 is not clearly legible. The letter is addressed to Crescens, who is probably to be identified with the Crescens mentioned in O.Did. 417. Note that in this the case the name is not marked by anaptyxis (CRESCENTI, l. 1; and, also, [FRA]TRI at l. 2): the hand writing undoubtedly presents a quite different degree of competence on the grapho-phonological level than Numosis. Worthy of particular interest is the spelling

⁴⁶These cases of insertion – overall six – imply a heterosyllabic treatment of the *muta cum liquida* cluster. As is known, the syllabification of this cluster is rather oscillating throughout the history of Latin, and some Southern Italo-Romance varieties (e.g., the dialect of Bisceglie) show outcomes implying its heterosyllabicity in Vulgar Latin. Moreover, the phenomenon of consonant gemination before /r/, which is sometimes found in non-literary Latin (cf. e.g. AGGRO, widespread in O.Vandal), is to be put in relation to a tendency to obtain an optimal onset, entailing a *C.r* syllabification, i.e., *C.r* (*ag.ro*) > *C.Cr* (*ag.gro*). On this issue cf. LOPORCARO (n. 42) and references therein.

⁴⁷Cf. BARCHI, S.: On the graphemic alternance <e> ~ <i> and <o> ~ <u> in Latin papyri and ostraca: some new remarks. *Actes du 13ème Colloque International sur le latin vulgaire et tardif. Budapest, 3-7 Septembre 2018* = *Acta Antiqua Hung.* 59 (2019) 35–44.

⁴⁸The form ESABARIO is peculiar. The sentence runs: *interroga si accepit esabario* (ll. 18–19). It is likely that ESABARIO, which possibly stands for *esabarium* (acc. sg.), indicates a type of good that is usually sent to soldiers. Indeed, private letters usually refer to the sending of various types of goods (see e.g. Claudius Terentianus' as well as Rustius Barbarus' epistolaries). It is not clear which kind of word, perhaps a Greek borrowing, is to be supposed for *esabarius/esabarium*. By accepting the hypothesis that the initial *e-* represents a prosthetic vowel, *sabarium/sabarius* is to be assumed. Perhaps, as also suggested by BÜLOW-JACOBSEN (n. 28) 355, it should be connected with *sabanum* / σάβανον 'line cloth or towel'. This word is commonly attested in Latin and Greek papyri, where it is usually mentioned in contexts referring to the sending of goods, cf. e.g. *mihi tibi [...] imboluclum in quo habes [...] sabana* (CEL 142, ll. 8–11; 98–1187 CE) and *παρέλαβον [...] το σάβανον* (O.Claud. I 142, ll. 4–6; 109 CE). The form with the -iov suffix, i.e. σάβανιον, is attested as well (e.g., P.Gen. (2) 1 80). The form *sabarium* instead of *sabanum* might have been influenced by the Latin suffix -arius, or, more likely, by the enlarged variant of the diminutive suffix -iov, i.e., -αριον (see e.g., παιδίον ~ παιδάριον).

⁴⁹Cf. MAROTTA, G.: The Latin syllable. In HULST VAN DER, H.: *The syllables. Views and Facts*. Berlin–Boston 1999, 285–310.



SI PPOTER[IS] (= *si poteris*, l. 2). The temptation to interpret this form as evidence of phonosyntactic doubling not triggered by assimilatory processes is bound to arise, but, with the caveat of *testis unus*, we defer the matter to further study.

The cluster of the letters examined shows different varieties of Latin. On the one hand, the handwriting of Numosis, probably a Greek-speaker, seems to exhibit an interlanguage stage characterized by the presence of a productive phonological process aimed at the creation of CV syllables. On the other hand, the Latin of Claudius, who is the recipient of Numosis' letters, shows deviations typical of Neo-Standard Latin. A similar picture applies to O.Did. 420, which does not show the productivity of anaptyxis.

3.3. Texts from the 3rd c. CE

Table 5 presents the texts dating from the 3rd c. CE, in which three elements emerge: the decline in the proportion of Latin texts, the presence of official correspondence (all in Greek), and a higher number of bilingual/biliterate texts. However, traces of the circulation of Latin can be spotted: O.Did. 96 and 166, for example, show the influence of the Latin cursive; O.Did. 71, in an elegant cursive, was probably written by the hand of a Latin-writer; O.Did. 36 is a Greek letter in Latin script, addressed to the *curator praesidii*, who probably knew Greek but could not read it.

The three Latin letters (O.Did. 455–457), by Aelius Silvinus, show a good degree of orthographic proficiency, with commonplace spellings (e.g., CASIOS for *caseos*, omission of the final <-M>). Peculiar, on the morphosyntactic level, is the *appositio partitiva*.

Table 5. Texts from Didymoi (3rd c. CE)

Text type	Latin	Greek	Bilingual / Biliterate
<i>Instrumenta inscripta</i> ⁵⁰	10	62	2
Administrative documents ⁵¹	1	48	3
Official correspondence ⁵²	/	23	1
Private letters	2	13	1
Another Letter to Avizina (O.Did. 392)	/	1	/
Phase 11 of the Rubbish-Dump (O.Did. 451–454)	/	4	/
North-West Corner (O.Did. 455–461)	2	4	1
South-West Corner (O.Did. 462–465)	/	4	/
TOTAL	13	146	7

⁵⁰O.Did. 193–194, 224–287, 292, 301–301.

⁵¹O.Did. 52, 56, 62, 68–74, 83–97, 104, 114, 116–130, 135–138, 142–145.

⁵²O.Did. 22–26, 28–46.



A list of such forms, along with those ones attested in Rustius Barbarus'epistolary and in O.Did. 419 is shown below:

O.Did.419	<i>coliclos fascēs</i>
O.Did.455	<i>palmulas matiu</i>
O.Did.456	<i>lentic[ulas] [ma]tium</i>
O.Did.456	<i>p[alm]ulas matium</i>
CPL 304	<i>matium salem</i>
CPL 306	<i>fasco coliclos</i>

In all these cases, a meronymic relationship between a unit of measure and a type of food is found. Noteworthy, the semantic head is always represented either by *matium* (Gk. μάτιον 'Egyptian measure of capacity', cf. *LSJ s.v.*), which is attested in Latin only in these texts, or by *fascis*, *-is* 'bundle, faggot' (also in the metaplasmatic form *fascum*). The meronymic relationship is not expressed by means of a hierarchical dependency, i.e., by expressing the determiner via the genitive case (e.g., *palmularum matium*), but by juxtaposing the determiner and the determined, which display the same case. Such a juxtaposition is typical of recipe language⁵³ and of lists, such as those found in the examined private letters, in which a given quantity of goods is requested (see also *amicla par unu*, *amictoria [pa]r unu*, *sabana par unu*, *saccos par unu* in *CEL* 142). It is worth noting that the word order found in Rustius Barbarus' examples is different from the word order displayed by the ostraca of Didymoi and by the other proposed examples. Indeed, Rustius Barbarus' examples of *appositio partitiva* show a word order of the type determined-determiner, consistently with a Noun-Genitive and Noun-Adjective prevailing order within Rustius Barbarus' epistolary.⁵⁴

4. CONCLUSIONS

The quantitative data revealed a conspicuous number of phenomena diverging from CL. While some of these are found in other non-literary texts, some phenomena emerge as having a particular incidence that needs to be grained through qualitative analysis (§ 2).

From a methodological point of view, we intended to point out that it is more fruitful, where textual conditions permit, to conduct a qualitative analysis, which prevents the distortion and flattening of general data. In fact, it should be emphasized that among the highest percentages of misspellings, the anaptyxis and the spelling of /o/ and /o:/ via <v> occur, phenomena that are, however, specific to particular subcorpora (§§ 3.1.1, 3.1.4, 3.2.1).

⁵³See e.g., *farinam facito libras iiii* (Cato, *R.R.* 109), *puluerem coeliaria tria* (*Physica Plinii*, 'Florentino-Pragensis', 2. 17. 26, 29). Cf. BAUER, B. L. M.: *Nominal apposition in Indo-European: Its forms and functions, and its evolution in Latin-Romance*. Berlin 2017, 371ff; ADAMS, J. N.: *An Anthology of Informal Latin 200 BC – AD 900: Fifty Texts with Translations and Linguistic Commentary*. Cambridge 2016, 497.

⁵⁴Cf. FEDRIANI, C. – RAMAT, P.: Ordini OV e VO in latino: per una rilettura sociolinguistica. In MOLINELLI, P. – PUTZU, I. (eds): *Modelli epistemologici, metodologie della ricerca e qualità del dato. Dalla linguistica storica alla sociolinguistica storica*. Milano 2015, 69–92. According to ADAMS: *An Anthology* (n. 54) 315, on the other hand, this aberrant order is influenced by Koine Greek, which displays a similar construction, continued in Modern Greek.



What emerges is a picture in which, although Greek was certainly the main vehicular language in a multi-ethnic context, it is reasonable to assume that Latin had a greater circulation than what we can deduce from a simple count of Latin texts vs Greek texts (which, in any case, is higher than in other documentary points). Latin circulated not only among those who spoke it as their first language or in contexts where it was used as a Super-High variety, but also among those who were exposed to Spoken Latin and were trying to learn to write it, as in the case of Cutus and Numosis. (§ 3).

Furthermore, there is additional evidence supporting this picture beyond the analyzed Latin texts. Among Greek texts, there are instances of graphemic interference, Latin loanwords with phonetic spellings, morphological reanalysis processes, and hybridization phenomena. All these elements point in the same direction. In fact, it was also our purpose to highlight the importance of not restricting the analysis to the superficial data of the Latin documentation. It is also valuable to seek hidden clues, both on a paleographic level and in the treatment of linguistic material of Latin origin, within the Greek documentation. This small piece contributes to enriching the picture of Latin circulation in Egypt and the learning of Latin as L2 as well as adding to the framework of the Latin-Greek diasystem.⁵⁵

The Latin that emerges from the examined ostraca must be considered as a bundle of varieties that contribute to changing the uniformity picture of Vulgar Latin. In fact, we can note multiple levels of variation reflecting in most cases interlanguage stages among learners who have Substandard Latin, variously tending toward Neo-Standard, as their target language (§§ 3.1.1, 3.1.4, 3.2.1). In the interlanguage varieties identified, idiolectal traits (§ 3.1.1), as well as phenomena of morphosyntactic interference with Greek (§§ 3.1.2, 3.1.4, 3.2.1), and productive phonological processes (§ 3.2.1) are spotted.

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⁵⁵There is a plethora of studies on the topic. See in particular KAIMIO, J.: Latin in Roman Egypt. *Actes du XVe Congrès de Papyrologie III. Brussels 1979*, 27–33; MOLINELLI, P.: La subordinazione e i modi nei testi papiracei in latino. *Quaderni del Dipartimento di Linguistica e Letterature Compare (Università di Bergamo)* 10 (1994) 381–395; MOLINELLI, P. – RIZZI, E.: Latin and Greek compared: word order in a bilingual papyrian text (P. Bon. 5). In HERMAN, J. (ed.): *Linguistic Studies on Latin. Selected Papers from the 6th International Colloquium on Latin Linguistics (Budapest, 23-27 March 1991)*. Amsterdam–Philadelphia 1994, 113–127; ROCHETTE, B.: *Le latin dans le monde grec*. Brussels 1997; ADAMS: *Bilingualism* (n. 5) 527–641; BIVILLE, F.: Situations et documents bilingues dans le monde gréco-romain. In BIVILLE, F. – DECOURT, J.-C. – ROUGEMONT, G. (eds): *Bilinguisme gréco-latin et épigraphie*. Lyon 2008, 35–53; SCHIRRU, G.: Latinismi nel greco d’Egitto. In MANCINI, M. – LORENZETTI, L.: *Le lingue del Mediterraneo antico. Culture, mutamenti, contatti*. Roma 2013, 301–331; DICKEY, E.: *Learn Latin from the Romans: a complete introductory course using textbooks from the Roman Empire*. Cambridge 2018; DICKEY, E.: Where do you put the Latin of a bilingual text, and why does it matter? In AST, R. – LICHT, T. – LOUGOVAYA, J. (eds): *Uniformity and Regionalism in Latin Writing Culture of the First Millennium C.E.* Wiesbaden 2022, 3–16.

