

TESTI
Antichità, Medioevo e Umanesimo

Latin and Coptic

Languages, Literatures, Cultures in Contact

edited by
Maria Chiara Scappaticcio
and **Alessia Pezzella**

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Remarks on the Scope and the Functions of the Code-switching in the Letters of Theon*

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Papyrus documents from Egypt allow us to examine phenomena of Graeco-Latin language contact and their social correlations. Code-switching (from now on CS) is among these manifestations and under certain circumstances can be viewed as a communicative strategy. In fact, in the written documentation of the ancient world CS usually implies a certain knowledge of the languages involved, and is bound to sociolinguistic issues, such as the communicative and social intentions of the speakers. CS, therefore, helps us to understand how the languages are used and perceived, and to what extent they are spread, especially in some contexts¹. Among the extant evidence on papyrus three Latin-Greek letters from late antique

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¹ The terms bilingualism and bilingual are employed in the broadest sense, which is now preferred by scholars. On this matter and on the various aspects of Graeco-Latin bilingualism see J.N. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language*, Cambridge 2003.

Oxhyrhynchus sent by a certain Theon show several code-switches and are of great interest for their sociolinguistic value².

The letters were written between the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 5th centuries AD in a highly readable format and according to the literary conventions of Christian epistolography³. The main message is in Greek, whilst Latin is employed in one or more of the following sections: the preface (probably the translation of a literary quotation), the original greeting formula «*vale apud Deum*» and the peculiar address «*reddere serbo dei tempore*» (P.Köln IV 200 l. 10). The relationship of the writer and the recipients of the letters with local languages is conceivable but impossible to establish with certainty, as it is hinted at by onomastics (with all its limitations) and the possibility of comparing the context with that of some literary sources.

The position and the content of the three code-switches suggest that the sender deliberately resorted to Latin in specific sections of the written communication with a precise meaning. These manifestations of CS have never been approached from a sociolinguistic

² P.Oxy. XVIII 2193 (TM 35623), 2194 (TM 35624); P.Köln IV 200 (TM 34796); L.H. Blumell, T.A. Wayment, *Christian Oxhyrhynchus. Texts, Documents, and Sources*, Waco 2015, pp. 585-596. Dr. A. Bernini is preparing a new edition of these texts for the forthcoming *Corpus of Latin Texts on Papyrus (CLTP)*.

³ L.H. Blumell, *Reconsidering the Dates of Three Christian Letters: P. Oxy. XVIII 2193, 2194, P. Köln IV 200 and a Reference in the Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, «Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete», 54 (2008), pp. 219-223. Previously, the script was dated back to the period between the 5th and the 6th centuries AD: P.Oxy. VIII, pp. 153-154; P.Köln IV, p. 211. On Christian letters: M. Naldini, *Il Cristianesimo in Egitto: Lettere private nei papiri dei secoli II-IV*, Firenze 1998²; L.H. Blumell, *Lettered Christians: Christians, Letters, and Late Antique Oxhyrhynchus*, Leiden 2012 (pp. 1-26 for the discussion of pre-existing bibliography); Blumell, Wayment, *Christian Oxhyrhynchus* cit. Cfr. also M. Choat, *Monastic Letters on Papyrus from Late Antique Egypt*, in *Writing and Communication in Early Egyptian Monasticism*, cur. Id., M.C. Giorda, Leiden 2017, pp. 17-72.

perspective, although the documents have already been studied from the historic-cultural and socio-cultural point of views⁴. In the present paper this topic and some issues outlined by Maria Chiara Scappaticcio earlier in this volume will be explored based on a methodology that integrates sociolinguistic research with palaeography, history, and philology. The scope and the functions of the code-switches will be examined and compared with those of the CS occurring in other letters that come mostly (but not only) from Oxyrhynchus (1). In addition, the language of the epistles and their context will be considered to understand both how Latin was used and perceived, and what its role was in a specific micro-context of the late antique Oxyrhynchus (2). Tracing the sociolinguistic dynamics operating in a micro-context will allow us to glimpse the synchronic interactions that many languages (local idioms, Greek, Latin) have had in different ways within a multilingual environment (3).

1. *The Dossier of Theon*

Three Latin-Greek letters (*P.Oxy.* XVIII 2193, 2194; *P.Köln* IV 200) are thought to belong to the dossier of a certain Theon, because they share palaeographic, structural and linguistic features. Moreover, they were found in the same archaeological context – this datum is certain for at least two epistles – and concern a Christian environment, as revealed by the onomastics and textu-

⁴ P.J. Sijpesteijn, *Apphus and Pascentius: servo dei tempore*, «Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete», 40.1 (1994), pp. 69-70; J. O’Callaghan, *Nota sobre ‘servus Dei’ en los papiros*, «Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik», 106 (1995), pp. 201-202; Blumell, *Reconsidering the Dates* cit.; Id., *A Potential Source for the Latin Preface in P.Oxy. XVIII 2194*, «Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik», 183 (2012), pp. 72-74; Id., *Lettered Christians* cit., pp. 21-22; 212-216.

al insights⁵. Theon is the sender of the two letters in which the *inscriptio* is preserved and possibly of the letter in *P.Köln* IV 200 that lacks the superior margin. He may be the homonym «ἄγιος ἀνήρ» mentioned in the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 6, 3 (Festugière) who would know Greek, Latin and Egyptian⁶. Twice he asks favours of Pascentius (*P.Oxy.* XVIII 2193, 2194), and once he writes to Aphous (*P.Köln* IV 200) for reasons now impossible to determine (although one of them is to comfort the addressee). The former is a clergyman or, more likely, a bureaucrat performing administrative tasks, whereas the latter is possibly the Apa Aphous who lived between the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 5th centuries AD⁷. As frequently happens in Christian papyrus letters, Theon supports his claims throughout the epistles with scriptural quotations, adapted to the new contexts of his messages⁸.

Palaeographic and linguistic features show that the letters were produced in a bilingual context. Theon did not write the epistles himself but resorted to a scribe. It is possible that he made use of the same scribe given the palaeographic analogies of the manuscripts. The scribe received a formal education in the Greek and Latin writing systems, which show a convergence especially in the shape of

⁵ The difference between a dossier and an archive is notoriously a much-debated topic among papyrologists. However, there are some solid points: an archive consists of a group of documents put together in Antiquity by one or more persons or by an institution for several reasons. Conversely, a dossier consists of documents that have been grouped together by modern scholars and often belong to different papyrological collections. On the matter see lastly K. Vandorpe, *Archives and Dossiers*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, cur. R.S. Bagnall, Oxford 2009, pp. 216-255.

⁶ Blumell, *Lettered Christians* cit. For details see Scappaticcio above p. 84 footnote 21.

⁷ For more details on the context see Scappaticcio above pp. 85-86 footnote 24.

⁸ Scappaticcio above p. 86.

some letters⁹. As for the Latin, he used a semi-uncial like that of some coeval literary texts on papyrus¹⁰. The scribe was able to give the manuscripts a neat layout, such as to make clear the various sections of the letters, even before reading. The peculiar Latin introduction is separated from the proper message by different editorial strategies. As earlier underlined by Scappaticcio, the graphic devices are different in the documents, in spite of their palaeographic affinities, and are consistent with the uses of the documentary and (para)literary papyrus texts¹¹. The employment of three oblique strokes at the end of the Latin introduction of *P.Oxy.* XVIII 2194 to isolate what appears to be a literary quotation (par. 2.2) calls for attention. This device can be paralleled both in form (although, to be precise, there is not perfect coincidence) and in function with those employed in some bilingual texts (Latin-Greek or vice versa and Coptic-Greek or vice versa) of the so called paraliterary genre (cfr. par. 2.3)¹². The care taken over

⁹ Blumell, Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus* cit., p. 586.

¹⁰ S. Ammirati, *Sul libro latino antico. Ricerche bibliografiche e paleografiche*, Pisa - Roma 2015, p. 53. The importance of valuing the intersection between literary and documentary papyri was often highlighted by J.-L. Fournet: e.g., Id., *Une éthiopée de Caïn dans le Codex des Visions de la Fondation Bodmer*, «Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik», 92 (1992), pp. 253-266; Id., *L'influence des usages littéraires sur l'écriture des documents: Perspectives*, in *Proceedings of the 20th International Congress of Papyrologists (Copenhagen, 23-29 August 1992)*, cur. A. Bülow-Jacobsen, Copenhagen 1994, pp. 418-422.

¹¹ Scappaticcio above p. 91. For material aspects of ancient epistolography see A. Sarri, *Material Aspects of Letter Writing in the Graeco-Roman World (c. 500 BC – c. AD 300)*, Berlin - Boston 2017.

¹² A definition of the paraliterary genre can be found in M. Huys, A. Nodar, *A Catalogue of Paraliterary Papyri (CPP): Presentation of the Project*, in *Proceedings of the 24th International Congress of Papyrology (Helsinki, 1st–7th of August 2004)*, cur. J. Frösen, T. Purola, E. Salmenkivi, Helsinki 2007, pp. 453-461, esp. 453-454.

the material aspects is also visible in the enlargement of characters for the writing of the address on the verso, at least in the epistle in *P.Oxy. XVIII 2194*. This feature is found also in other Greek and Latin letters on papyrus written between the imperial era and Late Antiquity and is part of the tendency towards the ornamentation of the writing¹³. All the above-mentioned features suggest that the scribe was a professional and had familiarity with both documents and bilingual (para)literary texts¹⁴.

2. *Code-switching in the Letters of Theon*

CS is today described as the alternate use of two or more languages within the same conversation or text. This phenomenon is typical of bilingualism, has multiple manifestations and, consequently, is classified differently by linguists and not without problems¹⁵. When the first studies on language contact began to appear,

¹³ Blumell, Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus* cit., p. 591; Sarri, *Material Aspects* cit., pp. 122-124.

¹⁴ Cfr. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

¹⁵ There exists a copious bibliography on the theme. For the sake of brevity, cited here are some of the most important studies on bilingualism in the ancient world, to which the reader is redirected for further bibliography and discussion of the linguistic models so far proposed: Adams, *Bilingualism* cit., pp. 18-29; A. Mullen, *The Bilingualism of Material Culture?*, «HEROM, Journal of Hellenistic and Roman Material Culture», 2 (2013), pp. 21-43; O. Elder, A. Mullen, *The Language of Roman Letters: Bilingual Epistolography from Cicero to Fronto*, Cambridge 2019. It is also impossible to mention the tendencies of (socio)linguistic studies on CS. For this aspect see the introduction and the articles collected in *One Speaker, Two Languages: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on Code-switching*, cur. L. Milroy, P. Muysken, Cambridge 1995 and P. Gardner-Chloros, *Code-switching*, Cambridge 2009, pp. 1-20.

CS was looked at as an aberrant linguistic behaviour¹⁶. However, several studies have then shown that CS can also often be the mark of bilingual competence – varying in degree – and be connected to specific communicative and social intentions. This perspective, promoted especially by Shana Poplack and John J. Gumperz, who studied oral manifestations of CS in modern languages based respectively on variationist sociolinguistics and interactional sociolinguistics, has been enhanced in numerous works devoted to bilingual communities of the present and of the past¹⁷.

Sociolinguistic studies on CS from Greek to Latin and vice versa in the bilingual communities of the past are based on written sources (be they documents and / or literature). The greater formality of written evidence as opposed to the spontaneity of the oral evidence has been debated for many years and is no longer considered only a limitation, although linguists still have different opinions about that. The formality of a text ensures the largely deliberate and marked character, as well as the social significance, of the change of language¹⁸. Recent studies on written CS have thus confirmed the approach of James N. Adams, who was among the first linguists to evaluate the advantages of the written sources in studying bilingual phenomena¹⁹.

¹⁶ The locus classicus is U. Weinreich, *Languages in Contact. Findings and Problems*, New York 1953, pp. 74; 76.

¹⁷ S. Poplack, *Sometimes I'll start a Sentence in Spanish y termino en español: Toward a Typology of Code-switching*, «Linguistics», 18 (1980), pp. 581-618; J.J. Gumperz, *Discourse Strategies*, Cambridge 1982.

¹⁸ For the discussion of the concept of 'marked', of the 'markedness model' proposed by C.A. Myers-Scotton and of its applicability in studies on written evidence of the ancient world see Adams, *Bilingualism* cit., pp. 299-308; 410-413. In those pages one will also find an examination of the sources where CS is attributable to imperfect command of a language.

¹⁹ Work on the subject was initiated by the in-depth study of E. McClure, *The Relationship Between Form and Function in Written National Language-*

Intentional CS can be linked to a language choice, which can be described according to different models, and to the purpose of negotiating identities and social relationships²⁰. Adams has demonstrated that some models employed in sociolinguistic research on modern languages – especially but not only those of Poplack and Gumperz – can be applied also to the ancient bilingual communities, as long as they are adequately adjusted to the specific contexts²¹. In his monograph on the Latin language and ancient bilingualism Adams mainly focused on four general issues, since CS can: 1. establish a relationship with the addressee (e.g., solidarity, dominance, divergence, feeling of a shared mixed identity or culture); 2. express

English Codeswitching: Evidence from Mexico, Spain, and Bulgaria, in *Codeswitching Worldwide I*, cur. R. Jacobson, Berlin 1998, pp. 125-150 and during the years was further developed on the basis of different written sources. On this see Mullen, *The Bilingualism* cit., pp. 24-25; Elder, Mullen, *The Language of Roman Letters* cit., pp. 8-9 with further bibliography and indications of possible future research on CS. The impulse to study CS through the written evidence of the ancient world was given by the articles collected in *Bilingualism in Ancient Society. Language Contact and the Written Texts*, cur. J.N. Adams, M. Janse, S. Swain, Oxford 2002 and by Adams, *Bilingualism* cit., who was the first to deal with the matter in a systematic way on the basis of a selection of the Latin evidence, both literary and documentary.

²⁰ B. Spolsky, *Jewish Multilingualism in the First Century: An Essay in Historical Sociolinguistics*, in *Readings in the Sociology of Jewish Languages*, cur. J.A. Fishman, Leiden 1985, pp. 35-50, esp. 44-46; D.R. Langslow, *Approaching Bilingualism in Corpus Languages*, in Adams, Janse, Swain, *Bilingualism in Ancient Society* cit., pp. 23-51, esp. 36-41; S. Swain, *Bilingualism in Cicero? The Evidence of Code-switching*, in Adams, Janse, Swain, *Bilingualism in Ancient Society* cit., pp. 128-167, also for discussion of previous studies.

²¹ Adams, *Bilingualism* cit., pp. 297-416. Cfr. also Elder, Mullen, *The Language of Roman Letters* cit., pp. 40-110, who deal with the possibility of analysing CS from Latin to Greek in the epistles from the Republican age to the first two centuries of the Empire according to a grammatical approach.

different types of identity; 3. be the response to the topic of part of the discourse, if this is allowed by the addressee and the communicative context; 4. be a stylistic resource and evoke the exotic²². The first two points are often coincident, since in defining his identity the speaker will also have to negotiate his relationship with the addressee. Sometimes creating a relationship of solidarity with the addressee can involve accommodation, namely the act of modifying the language during an oral or a written exchange so as to make the language choice more acceptable or appropriate to the addressee and / or the circumstances of the communication²³.

In the present paper CS is conceived mainly as the alternate use of two languages, Greek and Latin, within the same written source; more specifically, their alternate use in different sections of the same document. In the sources cited below the change of language is not necessarily due to the initiative of the same person and can be paralleled with the examples of CS in an oral conversation due to the alternation of speakers (which in general are ascribed to CS)²⁴. The present analysis does not dwell on the possible categorisations of CS, since this operation is notoriously difficult²⁵, and is based on the theoretical framework and terminology proposed by Adams, aiming to understand the scope and functions of the code-switches in the letters of Theon.

²² Adams, *Bilingualism* cit., pp. 297-416.

²³ On the accommodation theory see *Ibid.*, pp. 350-351; 576; Mullen, *The Bilingualism* cit., p. 31 footnote 52.

²⁴ Adams, *Bilingualism* cit., p. 393. Cfr. Milroy, Muysken, *Code-switching* cit., p. 7: «Sometimes switching occurs between the turns of different speakers in the conversation, sometimes between utterances within a single turn, and sometimes even within a single utterance». See also Elder, Mullen, *The Language of Roman Letters* cit., p. 7. Examples of this type of CS are not numerous in the monograph of Adams, who takes account of CS within the same period: Adams, *Bilingualism* cit., p. 19 footnote 55.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-25.

A necessary premise concerns the discussion of the one responsible for the choice of language, since it is a well-known fact that in the written documentation of the ancient world the author of a text is not always identifiable with the scribe and vice versa. In a way, the problem is less prominent for private letters, since the communication is personal and, therefore, the linguistic and communicative strategies are almost certainly attributable to the sender (to his communicative and social intentions and / or to other factors, both internal and external to the communicative exchange) rather than the scribe. After all, in a multilingual province like Egypt it would not be economical for a scribe to be versed in just one language or script²⁶. Therefore, although some difficulties remain, scholars are inclined to believe that usually the scribe might be responsible for the graphic and some morphological features of the texts but have (almost) no role in shaping the syntax of the message and in choosing the language²⁷.

As for the letters of Theon, these overall considerations are confirmed by the circumstance that the scribe is well versed in Latin and Greek scripts (par. 1). Thus, CS relies on the communicative and social intentions of Theon. In the epistles, CS coincides with the switch of the alphabet and happens between the boundaries of different sections of the letter, occurring in: 1. the introduction that precedes the proper message; 2. the greeting formula at the end; 3. the address on the verso. The three code-switches are differently distributed in the letters. In the epistles addressed to Pascentius, CS is found in the introductory lines and in the address, whilst in the letter to Aphous, CS occurs in the peculiar greeting formula and in the address. The code-switches in the greeting formula and in the address can be considered as a creative production of Theon, whereas CS in the introduction is possibly an original use.

²⁶ Cfr. *Ibid.*, pp. 398; 542; 593-595.

²⁷ On this matter see H. Halla-aho, *The Non-literary Latin Letters. A Study of Their Syntax and Pragmatics*, Helsinki 2009.

2.1. Code-switching to Latin in the Coeval Greek Epistles from Oxyrhynchus: An Overview

The scope and functions of CS to Latin in the letters of Theon can be better understood if compared with those of the code-switches from Greek to Latin found in the coeval epistles from Oxyrhynchus. As noted by Jean-Luc Fournet²⁸, during Late Antiquity the Latin language gradually disappeared from private letters on papyrus. In the epistles, Latin continued to be displayed especially for official communications according to an established tradition or in specific sections of public documents issued by an authority. The former use is represented, for example, by letters of recommendation²⁹, and the latter in dating formulae and subscriptions such as *legi* and *recognovi*.

The examples of CS in the late antique Graeco-Latin letters from Oxyrhynchus fall into the second category. In these epistles CS has a social intention and can be interpreted as an act of either solidarity or divergence, shaping the relationship between sender and addressee³⁰. Usually the code-switches found in these sources are not attributable to the scribe who wrote the message. CS occurs in formulae and in stereotyped sections of: 1. official documents issued from the praefect's chancery dating to the 4th AD and containing orders from an authority to a subordinate; 2. a military letter datable to the 6th AD which is perhaps connected to a Christian milieu³¹. In all these cases,

²⁸ J.-L. Fournet, *La pratique du latin dans l'Égypte de l'Antiquité tardive*, in *Latin in Byzantium I. Late Antiquity and Beyond*, cur. A. Garcea, M. Rosellini, L. Silvano, Turnhout 2019, pp. 73-91, esp. 75-76.

²⁹ Cfr. the list made by P. Cugusi in *C.Epist.Lat.* I, p. 11. On recommendation letters see H.M. Cotton, *Documentary Letters of Recommendation in Latin from the Roman Empire*, Königstein 1981. *ChLA* XIX 687, on which see par. 2.4, is part of this group.

³⁰ The terms convergence and divergence are discussed by Adams, *Bilingualism* cit., pp. 301-305.

³¹ In the list of bilingual letters from Oxyrhynchus in Blumell, *Lettered Christians* cit., p. 212 footnote 217 there is also *SB* XVI 12990 (5th-6th AD);

CS is from Greek to Latin and mostly concerns the use of Latin as the language connected to the power and its manifestations.

In the official documents issued by the Roman administration in the Greek language – which was the one regularly used in administrative documents according to a long-standing tradition – CS mainly occurs in the dating formulae in Roman style, namely those formulae characterised by specific linguistic and formal features and by the use of the Roman calendar. These formulae conferred legal value on the document and at the same time authenticated it, since they were added after the text was written, at its bottom, by a different hand³². CS is apparently favoured by the Romanness of the dating formula and the circumstance that its presence is a formal requirement in numerous documents. The switch to Latin serves the purpose of highlighting the distance between sender, an authority, and addressee, a subordinate receiving instructions, thereby reinforcing the power of the former³³.

A good example of the pattern often found in the bilingual official letters from Oxyrhynchus is the original Greek letter sent in AD 335 by the prefect Flavius Philagrius to instruct Synesios, the strategus of the Oxyrhynchite nome³⁴. In the epistle there are two Latin dating formulae, namely the consular one «*Iulio Constantio v(iro)*

TM 36017). I have omitted this document from the evidence here examined, since in his new edition for the forthcoming *CLTP* Dr. Bernini has labelled it as a petition. I thank him for kindly sharing with me this information.

³² Adams, *Bilingualism* cit., pp. 392-393.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 393.

³⁴ *P.Oxy.* XLIII 3129 (TM 16008); LV 3793 (AD 340; TM 22517); 3794 (AD 340; TM 22518); L 3577 (AD 342; TM 15398); 3579 (AD 341-343; TM 15400); LXIII 4369 (AD 345; TM 22132). For the context of these manuscripts see G. Iovine, *Data epistula: Later Additions of Latin Dating Formulae in Latin and Greek Papyri and Ostraka from the First to the Sixth Centuries AD*, «Manuscripta», 63.2 (2019), pp. 157-230, esp. 163-167; 175-176.

c(larissimo) pat[r]icio fratre d(omini) n(ostru) [- - -]», and the one preceded by «dat(-), dat(a) [- - -] . . . Kal(endas) [- - -] Octobr(es) [- - - Al]ex(andri-ae)»³⁵. The former was written by a fourth hand in the bottom margin, whereas the latter by a third hand in the left margin. According to John R. Rea, the insertion of the Latin dating formula in the left margin should be viewed as an ancient Roman practice intended as a countersignature³⁶. The Roman character of these formulae has also been stressed recently by Giulio Iovine, who called them «inorganic» because they are added after the text was written³⁷.

CS can be a manifestation of authority and express acts of divergence also when it occurs in other syntactical contexts than the Roman dating formula³⁸. An instance is found in a Greek official letter which is addressed to the curator of the Oxyrhynchite nome at around AD 340 and concerns the works ordered by the *dux Aegypti* Flavius Valacius for the renovation of the walls of the fort of Psobthis³⁹. The epistle is entirely in the Greek language except for the greeting formula and the Roman dating formula, both in Latin. The sender is perhaps a subordinate instructed by the *dux*⁴⁰, and himself wrote the greeting formula «*opto bene valeas per multos ann[os]*». This formula is required by the literary conventions of the ancient epistolography and at the same time serves the purpose of authen-

³⁵ On Roman dating formulae preceded by *dat(-)* see *ibid.*

³⁶ *P.Oxy.* XLIII, p. 99. On the Roman character of this formula see J.R. Rea in *P.Oxy.* L, p. 192. On the forms of authentication in the papyrus epistles see Sarri, *Material Aspects* cit., pp. 125-192 (170-176 for the official context). The reading *Al]ex(andriae)* in place of [- - -] () is proposed by Rea (*P.Oxy.* L, p. 195).

³⁷ Iovine, *Data epistula* cit., who discusses some diplomatic aspects of the Latin dating formulae.

³⁸ Adams, *Bilingualism* cit., pp. 301; 383; 399.

³⁹ *P.Oxy.* LV 3793; TM 22517. On the date: *P.Oxy.* LV, pp. 63-64.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 63; 65; 66.

ticating the message⁴¹. The sender resorted to the Latin language deliberately, possibly as a result of his institutional role, and apparently not taking into consideration the linguistic preferences of the addressee, who perhaps was a Greek-speaker. This is implied by the writing in Greek not only of the letter here examined but also of another epistle addressed to the curator of the Oxyrhynchite nome and collected in the same *tomos synkollesimos*⁴². The distance between sender and addressee is reinforced by the Latin dating formula at the bottom of the text, which is written by a different hand from those responsible for the letter and the greeting formula.

In the only Greek letter from a Christian milieu the sender, possibly an army officer⁴³, gives orders to Paulus, perhaps a subordinate, to protect a recently plundered village⁴⁴. At the end of the message

⁴¹ Ll. 15-17. *Ibid.*, p. 63. Details on the structural and linguistic features of the ancient letters can be found in F.J. Exler, *The Form of the Ancient Greek Letter of the Epistolary Papyri (3rd c. b. C.-3rd c. a. D.): A Study in Greek Epistolography*, Chicago 1976; J.L. White, *The Greek Documentary Letter Tradition Third Century B.C.E. to Third Century C.E.*, «Semeia», 22 (1981), pp. 89-106; P. Cugusi, *Evoluzione e forme dell'epistolografia latina nella tarda repubblica e nei primi due secoli dell'impero con cenni sull'epistolografia preciceroniana*, Roma 1983; R. Luiselli, *Greek Letters on Papyrus, First to Eighth Centuries: A Survey*, in *Documentary Letters from the Middle East. The Evidence in Greek, Coptic, South Arabian, Pehlevi, and Arabic (1st - 15th c CE)*, cur. E.M. Grob = «Asiatische Studien», 62 (2008), pp. 677-737, with further bibliography.

⁴² *P.Oxy.* LV, p. 62.

⁴³ *P.Oxy.* VIII 1106 l. 1: κομμω[νι]τῶρ(τον); TM 37834. The reading was proposed by J. Maspero (*P.Cairo Masp.* III 67282, p. 14) in place of Κόμμω[νι] Ταυρ(-). The loanword from Lat. *commonitorium* indicates a letter of instruction, especially from the emperor; it occurs since the 5th century AD in literary sources and since the 5th-6th centuries AD in the documentary evidence, being then scarcely attested. See LSJ *Suppl.*; S. Daris, *Il lessico latino nel greco d'Egitto*, Barcelona 1991, p. 59.

⁴⁴ *P.Oxy.* VIII, p. 177. For Christians in the army being charged

both the scribe and the sender added their autograph subscriptions «*legi*», even though neither of the two is a native speaker of Latin. In fact, the scribe wrote «*legi scribus*» using *scribus* instead of *scriba*.⁴⁵ The double subscription recalls the double farewell greetings in Greek letters examined by Antonia Sarri⁴⁶. The recourse to the Latin language is not surprising in a military environment, as soldiers were well aware of the Roman character of the institution in which they served and were prone to resorting to Latin to shape a Romanised (if not bilingual) identity⁴⁷. Examples of CS such as those of the letter can be a result of the formal and bureaucratic character of the information and, in this specific case, they may have a social intention, marking a solidarity between the scribe and the sender and at the same time a distance between the sender and the addressee, and thereby highlighting the authority of the former⁴⁸.

The code-switches in the letters of Theon have a few elements in common with the abovementioned letters from Oxhyrhynchus in as much as they occur in conventional and structural sections of the epistolary communication in at least two cases (greeting formula and address). The comparison allows us to establish the following unparalleled features: 1. there is no scribe alternation; 2. the nature of the letters is mostly private; 3. there are both linguistic and stylistic peculiarities in the Latin lines (see par. 2.2); 4. the purposes of the switches of language are different. The code-switches likely mark a communication between pairs with equal cultural and linguistic com-

with safeguarding local villages or restoring order see Blumell, *Lettered Christians* cit., p. 109.

⁴⁵ *CbLA* IV, p. 18.

⁴⁶ Sarri, *Material Aspects* cit., pp. 184-188.

⁴⁷ For example, this datum is evident from the recourse to the Latin language in those specific sections of Greek funerary inscriptions where there are references to the Roman army: Adams, *Bilingualism* cit., p. 382.

⁴⁸ For CS to convey bureaucratic information see *Ibid.*, pp. 399-403.

petences and happen from the speakers' native language (Greek) to the language they somehow learned (Latin). CS possibly has a social intention as it would serve the purpose of shaping a bilingual identity while also negotiating an intimate relationship between the speakers based on a shared belief and a common cultural background.

2.2. *The Introductory Lines*

The Latin lines that precede the usual *formula valetudinis* are apparently present only in the letters to Pascentius since the epistle to Aphous lacks the superior margin. The introductory lines are similar in both content and form and are known in a brief (*P.Oxy.* XVIII 2193 ll. 1-3) and a long (*P.Oxy.* XVIII 2194 ll. 1-5) versions; they catch the interest of the reader for at least two reasons. Firstly, they are a distinctive feature of the two epistles, especially if one thinks of the manifestations of CS in the coeval Greek letters from Oxyrhynchus (par. 2). Secondly, they most likely contain a literary quotation that implies a process of translation from Greek to Latin, which is not signalled by any metalinguistic remarks. The hypotext would not be the *Sapientia Salomonis* (2:23-24), as once proposed by the editor princeps Colin H. Roberts, but the *Acta Apollonii* (25), as shown by Lincoln H. Blumell⁴⁹. The *Acta Apollonii* are part of the Greek hagiographic literature and refer to a martyrdom which occurred at around the end of the 2nd century AD⁵⁰. They are known

⁴⁹ *P.Oxy.* XVIII, p. 154. *Vet. Lat. sap.* 2:23-24: «*quoniam Deus creavit hominem inexterminabilem et ad imaginem similitudinis suae fecit illum: invidia autem diaboli mors introivit in illum*». The hypothesis of the scriptural quotation, already questioned by P. van Minnen, *Notes on Texts from Graeco-Roman Egypt*, «*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*», 96 (1993), pp. 117-122, esp. 120, was refused by Blumell, *A Potential Source* cit., pp. 72-74; Id., *Lettered Christians* cit., pp. 228-230.

⁵⁰ On the *Acta Apollonii* see *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, ed. H.A. Musurillo, Oxford 2000², pp. xxiii-xxv and the information provided by Scappaticcio above pp. 87-88 footnote 27.

in two late recensions (one in Greek and one in Armenian), possibly reshaped during the textual transmission, as is customary for hagiographic literature. Furthermore, the Latin lines with which we are concerned here pose some problems in terms of the morphology and the syntax. For these reasons, before analysing the scope and function of the change of language, it is necessary to understand whether from a linguistic point of view it is plausible that this is a translation of *AApoll.* 25. In fact, Blumell, who himself detected the possible Greek source text, did not rule out the hypothesis that the substantive *lues*, which occurs in both the brief (*P.Oxy.* XVIII 2193 l. 2) and long (*P.Oxy.* XVIII 2194 l. 4) version, may allude generically to a negative event, despite being little convinced by the alternative since historical evidence is absent⁵¹.

The similarities between the introductory Latin lines and the description of the process against Apollonius before the proconsul of Asia Perennis are of style and content, whilst *Vet. Lat sap.* 2:23-24 shares with the Latin lines only a general sense.

P.Oxy. XVIII 2193 ll. 1-3: *Una mortis condidit deus, lues autem com (cum legendum) m[ort]rtis fieri.*

God ordained one death, in the moment of death they dissolve⁵².

P.Oxy. XVIII 2194 ll. 1-5: [± 12] . [. . .] . [± 22 | ± 15] *os et probatos et imperatorum (imperatorum legendum) et senatorum et maximo disserto et pauperos una mortis condidit deus, lues autem com mortis fieri.*

[... for all men(?), good] and bad, emperors and senators, the mighty, the eloquent, the poor, God ordained one death, in the moment of death they dissolve⁵³.

⁵¹ Blumell, *Lettered Christians* cit., pp. 229-230.

⁵² Translation from Blumell, Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus* cit., p. 587.

⁵³ Translation: *Ibid.*, p. 591.

A. Apoll. 25 Musurillo: γινώσκειν δέ σε θέλω, Περέννιε, ὅτι καὶ ἐπὶ βασιλεῖς καὶ ἐπὶ συγκλητικούς καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἔχοντας ἐξουσίαν πολλήν καὶ ἐπὶ πλουσίους καὶ πτωχοὺς καὶ ἔλευθέρους καὶ δούλους καὶ μεγάλους καὶ μικροὺς καὶ σοφοὺς καὶ ἰδιώτας ἕνα θάνατον ὥρισεν ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ πάντων καὶ δίκην μετὰ θάνατον ἔσσεσθαι ἐπὶ πάντας ἀνθρώπους.

But I wish you to know, Perennis, that for emperors and senators and for those who wield great power, for rich and poor, for slave and free, for the great and the insignificant, for the philosopher and the simple man, God has laid down one and the same death for all and a judgement after death that shall be for all mankind⁵⁴.

The syntax of the long version cannot be established with certainty due to the loss of the superior margin of the papyrus. However, two data deserve attention: the eventuality that in the lacuna was lost the independent sentence (1) and the joint recourse to the perfect «*condit*» and the infinite «*feri*» (2). These elements may suggest at least two scenarios: 1. the adherence to the mixed declarative clause of the Greek source text ruled by «*γινώσκω*», where there is an alternate use of explicit and implicit verbs (*P.Oxy.* XVIII 2194 ll. 4; 5)⁵⁵; 2. a reference, deprived of the original syntactical context. The latter hypothesis is perhaps preferable, since the former would result in a construction apparently not admitted by Latin grammar. Also, in the brief version, where the text is preserved in its entirety, one can see an unchanged resumption of the period from «*una mortis*» to «*feri*». These data are of interest for at least two reasons: 1. in neither case could the linguistic competence of the translator be assessed positively; 2. these may be hints that the passage from the Acts is not translated but quoted

⁵⁴ Translation from Musurillo, *The Acts* cit., p. 97.

⁵⁵ For the Greek construction see A.N. Jannaris, *An Historical Greek Grammar; Chiefly of the Attic Dialect as Written and Spoken from Classical Antiquity down to the Present Time*, London - New York 1897, par. 2030; *App.* VI 7b-c.

in a crystallised form in both the long and the short version. Some linguistic peculiarities shared by the two versions seem to point in the same direction.

The period «*una mortis condidit deus*» matches the Greek «ἐνα θάνατον ὤρισεν ὁ θεός»; on the contrary, the expression «*lues autem com mortis fieri*» does not perfectly correspond to «καὶ δίκην μετὰ θάνατον ἔσσεσθαι». The conjunction *autem*, present in both versions, is not a perfect equivalent of the *καὶ* in the source text⁵⁶. Anyway, as expected, *autem* occurs after the first element of the period⁵⁷.

The two versions of the preface share some other linguistic features. The expression «*una mortis*» (*P.Oxy.* XVIII 2193 l. 1; 2194 l. 4) can be understood in several ways (*unius mortis*, *unam mortem*) and is apparently formed by a nominative and a genitive⁵⁸. The hypothesis that the sequence can be equivalent to *unam mortem* due to the loss of the final *-m* may be consistent with the traces of an influence of the spoken language in «*com*» and in «*inperatorum*» (*P.Oxy.* XVIII 2194 l. 2)⁵⁹. Furthermore, the hypothesis would allow us to reconstruct a translation closer to the source text, whereas *unius mortis*, implying an infinitive with *esse* governed by *condo*, would be very different from the Greek text. Due to the loss of the superior margin of *P.Oxy.* XVIII 2194 the question arises whether *condo* is constructed

⁵⁶ For the various interpretations see Blumell, Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus* cit., p. 588; Scappaticcio above p. 89 footnote 31.

⁵⁷ *TLL* II 1576.84-1577.44; R. Kühner, C. Stegmann, *Ausführliche Grammatik der Lateinischen Sprache. Zweiter Teil: Satzlehre. Zweiter Band*, Darmstadt 1966, parr. 165; 174 A1-3.

⁵⁸ Blumell, Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus* cit., p. 592; Scappaticcio above pp. 88-89 footnote 29.

⁵⁹ On the late spelling of *cum* see J. Kramer, *Vulgärlateinische Alltagsdokumente auf Papyri, Ostraka, Täfelchen und Inschriften*, Berlin 2007, p. 71. For *u > o* cfr. also V. Väänänen, *Introduzione al latino volgare*, Bologna 1971 (ed. or. Paris 1963), pp. 77-78; 88. For the loss of final *-m* see Adams, *Bilingualism* cit., pp. 47; 51.

with indirect complement + genitive (*unius mortis*) + (implied) infinitive or with accusative (*unam mortem*) + indirect complements on the example of $\delta\pi\iota\zeta\omega$ ⁶⁰. The occurrences of *mortis* in the two versions of the preface possibly point to the latter hypothesis. The term *mortis* may witness the modification of a monosyllabic nominative of an imparisyllabic noun to bring it into line with the syllabic structure of the oblique cases. An example of this process, mostly occurring in Latin texts labelled as non-standard, can be found in the nominative singular «*lites*» in a letter from the archive of Claudius Tiberianus from Karanis⁶¹. According to this hypothesis one could also explain the presence of *mortis* in union with the preposition *com* as an example of the extended use of the nominative as a base-form. In Latin papyrus documents from Egypt drawn up by scribes with an imperfect command of the language the nominative is sometimes used instead of other cases. This happens because the nominative is the first case a language learner would learn and is thus at times perceived as a sort of base-form⁶². It is uncertain whether there is a concordance between «*lues*» and «*fieri*» (*P.Oxy.* XVIII 2193 l. 2; 2194 l. 4), since *lues* could be either a plural accusative or a singular nominative. The doubt arises, as the occurrences of the plural forms of *lues* recorded in the *TLL* VII 2.1794.73-75 are scarce and in the source text there is a singular accusative (« $\delta\iota\kappa\eta\nu$ »). However, no solid evidence can be cited to support either of the hypotheses.

The phrase «*com mortis*» would have temporal value and indicate simultaneity with the action expressed by the verb («and that in the moment of death they dissolve»), whereas $\mu\epsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}$ refers to the

⁶⁰ LSJ, s.v. For the transitive use of *condo* with a meaning similar to that of *constituo*: *TLL* IV 135.34-73.

⁶¹ *P.Mich.* VIII 471 l. 27. J.N. Adams, *An Anthology of Informal Latin, 200 BC-AD 900: Fifty Texts with Translations and Linguistic Commentary*, Cambridge 2016, p. 278.

⁶² Id., *Bilingualism* cit., pp. 621; 633.

future⁶³. The change could be explained in at least two ways: it could be conscious, since simultaneity between the moment of the death and that of divine punishment would make the latter more formidable or, as is perhaps more plausible given the other linguistic peculiarities, it could be the result of an inadequate translation of *μετά*. In bilingual texts for learning Latin as a foreign language, such as glossaries and *colloquia*, the Greek preposition is often linked to *cum* (especially if it indicates the way something was done / is being done or that the action was done / is being done together with other people)⁶⁴. However, there does not seem to be any solid element to hypothesise a connection between the glossaries and the case here examined.

The phrase «*maximo dissertos*» (*P.Oxy.* XVIII 2194 l. 3), used in place of *maxime dissertos*, does not find a precise parallel in the passage from the Acts: following the order of the Greek text, it should match

⁶³ This hypothesis was suggested by J. Hammerstaedt and accepted by Blumell, *A Potential Source* cit., p. 73 footnote 13.

⁶⁴ Dosith. *gramm.* 79, 7; 81, 2 Bonnet; Fressura 1, 124; 203; 345; 3, 78; 4, 154; Internullo 1, 26; 50; 4, 9; Hermen. *Monac. coll.* 6b 2; 11k 5; 11l 2; S 13d 1; 30a 2; 31a 3; *Harl. coll.* 5c 2; 9a 4; 13b 4; 21f 3; 6; 22b 4; *Montepess. coll.* 4f 3; 8a 4; 18f 4; *Celtis coll.* 12b 1; 2; 33a 3; 62b 4 Dickey; *P.Bon.* 5 (late III - early IV AD; LDAB 5498; *MP*³ 2117) col. III l. 18; *CgL* II 118, 55 (Ps.-Phil.). The new reading of A. Gitner and Scappaticcio in *P.Bon.* 5 col. IV l. 26 for the forthcoming *CLTP* does not allow for the equivalence, which is instead reported in *C.Gloss.Biling.* I 16. There exists a mass of bibliography dedicated to the various and complex issues related to these texts (firstly on the concept of 'school' in Antiquity). See *The Colloquia of the Hermeneumata Pseudo-Dositheana. Vol. I: Colloquia Monacensia-Einsidlensia, Leidense-Stephani, and Stephani. Edited with Introduction, Translations and Commentary*, ed. E. Dickey, Cambridge 2012, pp. 1-51; *Artes grammaticae in frammenti: i testi grammaticali latini e bilingui greco-latini su papiro. Edizione commentata*, ed. M.C. Scappaticcio, Berlin 2015, pp. 32-48, with further bibliography.

«ἐπὶ τοὺς ἔχοντας ἐξουσίαν πολλήν»⁶⁵. However, the parallelism is not supported by the lexicon, since the adjective *dissertus* is not linked to the sphere of power either by means of synonymic relationships or by means of the semantic correspondences established in the ancient sources (e.g., ἐλλόγιμος, λόγιος, σῶφρων, σαφής)⁶⁶. The adjective *dissertus* recalls the semantics of σοφός, which in the source text appears right after «ἐπὶ τοὺς ἔχοντας ἐξουσίαν πολλήν». Can it be that the translator did not translate «ἐπὶ τοὺς ἔχοντας ἐξουσίαν πολλήν» and moved further? The answer appears to be no. In the Latin introduction there would not be a complete translation of *A. Apoll.* 25: from the list of people subject to death, which are expressed through binary categories, some pairs («ἐλευθέρους καὶ δούλους», «μεγάλους καὶ μικρούς», «σοφοὺς καὶ ιδιώτας»)⁶⁷ and the adjective πλούσιος are excluded. However, if *dissertus* would be a rendering of σοφός, the translator would interrupt the orderly process of translation only momentarily and only at this point, since after *maximo dissertos* he translates with «*pauperos*» (*P.Oxy.* XVIII 2194 ll. 3-4) the adjective πτωχούς, which is expressed in the Acts almost immediately after «ἐπὶ τοὺς ἔχοντας ἐξουσίαν πολλήν» («ἐπὶ τοὺς ἔχοντας ἐξουσίαν πολλήν καὶ ἐπὶ πλουσίου καὶ πτωχού»).

⁶⁵ Blumell, Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus* cit., p. 593. On the employment of *maxime* in a periphrastic superlative: Väänänen, *Latino volgare* cit., pp. 207-208.

⁶⁶ E.g., Char. *gramm.* 422, 20 Barwick: «*disertus. eloquens. facundus. praestans. diuinitus. caelitus*»; *CgL* IV 57, 27 (*Gloss. Cod. Vat.* 3321): «*prudens, intellectus*»; IV 229, 27 (*Gloss. Cod. Sangall.* 912): «*dissertum expositum*»; IV 332, 33 (*Abav.*): «*doctus, eloquens*»; *Lib. Gloss.* DI801: «*dissertus scolasticus*». In the bilingual glossaries edited in the *CgL* *dissertus* is equivalent to λόγιος (e.g., II 362, 6; III 178, 16) and to ἐλλόγιμος (II 295, 35), whereas *dissertus* to ἐλλόγιμος (e.g., III 446, 25; 479, 28), λόγιος (II 52, 37), φιλόλογος (II 52, 17), σῶφρων (III 332, 61) and σαφής (III 332, 52).

⁶⁷ Blumell, *A Potential Source* cit., p. 73 footnote 13.

Failure to comply with the binary trend of the source text is found not only in *maximo dissertos* but also in *pauper* (P.Oxy. XVIII 2194 ll. 3; 3-4). In addition, neither the long nor the brief version takes account of «ἐπὶ πάντων», which groups all the mortals, and of «ἐπὶ πάντας ἀνθρώπους», which groups the people subject to δίκη. In the Latin lines there would be not only some omissions, but also one addition. In the long Latin version, the adjective «*probatas*» (P.Oxy. XVIII 2194 l. 2) is not paralleled by any of the Greek terms in the source text, whereas the genitives of the two substantives «*imperator*» (P.Oxy. XVIII 2194 ll. 2-3) and «*senatores*» (P.Oxy. XVIII 2194 l. 3), governed by *probatas*, respectively match «βασιλεύς» and «συγκλητικοί». However, one cannot discount the hypothesis that the 'original' elements are not original at all and that the translator, whoever he is, is using a version of the *Acta Apollonii* which does not correspond to the preserved one.

Lexical equivalencies are usually precise and consistent with the ones found in documentary sources (especially with regard to the offices) as well as in the bilingual texts for learning Latin as a foreign language which belong both to the late antique and medieval tradition (e.g., *imperator* = βασιλεύς⁶⁸, P.Oxy. XVIII 2194 ll. 2-3; *senatores* = συγκλητικοί⁶⁹, l. 3). A peculiar correspondence is that between *lues* and δίκη⁷⁰. The choice of the Latin word is particular, in as much as it never has a sense fully coincident with that of δίκη,

⁶⁸ H.J. Mason, *Greek Terms for Roman Institution: A Lexicon and Analysis*, Toronto 1974, pp. 120-121. This correspondence occurs in Char. *gramm.* 49, 14 Barwick; Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum, Papyrussammlung, P. 21860 (P.Berol. inv. 21860) l. 32 (4th century AD; LDAB 8897; MP³ 3004.02); CgL II 78, 21 (Ps.-Phil.); III 297, 40 (*Herm. Mp.*); 510, 50 (*Gloss. Vat.*).

⁶⁹ Mason, *Greek Terms* cit., p. 88. This correspondence occurs in CgL II 440, 26 (Ps.-Cyr.); III 182, 56 (*Herm. Mon.*); 275, 49 (*Herm. Eins.*); 297, 50 (*Herm. Mp.*); 362, 36 (*Herm. Steph.*); *Hermen. Montepess. coll.* 4g 4 Dickey.

⁷⁰ P.Oxy. XVIII 2193 l. 2; 2194 l. 4. On this matter see Scappaticcio above pp. 89-90 footnote 33.

although the term is sufficiently employed in the Christian literature with metaphorical meanings⁷¹. Furthermore, the two epistles are the only occurrences of *lues* in the Latin documents on papyrus.

In conclusion, although the Latin lines sometimes do not perfectly match with the syntax and lexicon of the Acts, it is perhaps unlikely that they contain a generic allusion to a sententious message instead of a translation of *A. Apoll.* 25. In fact, a literary quotation, especially of one in a different language from the original and more specifically in Latin, would be more trenchant. Also, the description of the process against Apollonius and the contexts of the two letters sent by Theon share some similarities. Blumell noted that, despite the absence of allusions to either a martyrdom or a process, the quote possibly stands as a warning to Pascentius that he is mortal and exposed to the judgement of God – note that this is feared by Apollonius more than the decision of the inquisitor⁷². Finally, a literary quote would be coherent with the ways Theon quotes and adapts some Greek scriptural texts to the context of his epistles in order to reinforce his requests, and with the instrumental functions and the currency of these texts⁷³. The Christian works cited (*Genesis*, *Job* and *The Book of Sirach*) are among the most widely disseminated ones in Oxyrhynchus and, more in general, in Egypt⁷⁴. For these reasons it is perhaps possible that the *Acta Apollonii* had some circulation too. Scappaticcio was the first to propose this scenario, basing her suggestion on Euseb. *hist.* 5, 21, 2, where is witnessed the fame of Apollonius among the Christians⁷⁵. Other

⁷¹ TLL VII 2.1794.53-1797.82 (esp. 1797.52-68).

⁷² Blumell, *A Potential Source* cit., pp. 73-74; Blumell, Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus* cit., p. 593.

⁷³ Blumell, *Lettered Christians* cit., pp. 212-216; Blumell, Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus* cit., pp. 589; 593; 596.

⁷⁴ Blumell, *Lettered Christians* cit., pp. 233-235.

⁷⁵ Scappaticcio above p. 90.

factors might also point in this direction, namely the circulation in Oxyrhynchus of various Christian texts and the circumstance that biblical and hagiographic texts had a prominent role in late antique education, as they link fundamental concepts and ideals of Christian identity to the name of a famous and distinguished person⁷⁶.

Accepting the hypothesis that a translation of *A. Apoll.* 25 is contained in the introductory lines of the letters to Pascentius, the origin of this translation remains unclear. The unchanged resumption of the period «*una mortis*» to «*feri*» in the brief version (*P.Oxy.* XVIII 2193 ll. 1-3) and the presence of phonetic and morphosyntactic peculiar features common to both versions would suggest that Theon used a pre-existing translation. It is not easy to state whether its author was Theon or an anonymous translator, since the issue is complicated by several factors: 1. the absence of a mention of, or even a slight clue to, the (complete or partial) Latin translation of the *Acta Apollonii* in the surviving evidence; 2. the failure to adapt the literary quote to the syntax of the Latin lines, unless this is a further indication of an imperfect command of Latin; 3. the incompleteness of our data (first of all, the Latin lines of *P.Oxy.* XVIII 2194); 4. the late and most likely spurious character of the tradition of the *Acta Apollonii*. Consequently, the circumstance that the translation is sometimes messy and incomplete is relatively significant. Furthermore, the subjective character of the quote and its instrumental scope are controversial clues, since they could mean that Theon either translated a passage from the *Acta Apollonii* for his own needs or that, for the same reason, he referred to a specific passage already translated into Latin.

⁷⁶ Blumell, *Lettered Christians* cit., pp. 163-182. The concept of *παιδεία* and the educational environments, especially the monastic ones, are receiving renewed scholarly attention: *Ibid.*, pp. 183-236; C. Bay, *The Transformation and Transmission of Paideia in Roman Egyptian Monasticism*, «Eastern Great Lakes Biblical Society», 34 (2014), pp. 335-363 and the essays collected in *Monastic Education in Late Antiquity*, cur. L.I. Larsen, S. Rubenson, Cambridge 2018.

The issue is perhaps unsolvable and does not spoil the sociolinguistic value of the introduction. The Latin lines witness a contact with forms of the spoken language (*com, inperatorum*) and an imperfect command of Latin, consistent with the hypothesis that the translator (whoever he is) learned Latin as a second language. Words are not always inflected correctly: *pauper* has the ending of the plural accusative of the second declension (*pauperos*) instead of the ending of the third declension⁷⁷. Some terms are not inflected at all. More specifically, the substantive *mortis* may be an example of two features common in the writing of language learners, namely the creation of a new nominative for an imparisyllabic word and the use of the nominative as a base-form. The ending of *pauper* and the occurrences of *mortis* may also prove the difficulties in inflecting nouns of the third declension, given the absence of morphologic similarities between the Greek and Latin third declension. In addition to the unfamiliarity with the syntactic agreement, in the text one finds original uses of some parts of speech: the adjective *dissertus* is preceded by *maximo*, recurring in place of the adverbial form *maxime*. The Greek text of *AApoll.* 25 was perhaps subject to rearrangements (*lues, probatus*). Finally, even if the translator was not Theon, the latter employs the Latin lines in the introduction in a very creative way. The reference to the *Acta Apollonii* implies that Theon and the addressee, who has to detect the quote despite the linguistic reshaping and the absence of metalinguistic remarks, knew this literary work. This aspect, like the Greek scriptural quotations, denotes that the sender and the addressee shared a cultural background.

2.3. *The Greeting Formula*

The greeting formula «*vale apud Deum*» is written in Latin only in the letter to Aphous (*P.Köln* IV 200 l. 10). The wording is otherwise

⁷⁷ Väänänen, *Latino volgare* cit., p. 191. Cugusi in *C.Epist.Lat.* II, p. 381 compares the phenomenon with Prob. *app. gramm.* 5, 42 Asperti, Passalacqua: *pauper mulier non paupera mulier*.

unknown in the Latin evidence. As noted by Blumell, the similar formula «*vale in deo*» is found once in the writings of Angela of Foligno; in addition, comparable expressions are present in few and mostly late Greek lexicographic and documentary sources, where the verb ἐρρῶσθαι is followed by ἐν θεῷ⁷⁸. There is no perfect coincidence between these formulae and that written in the letter to Aphous, since in late Latin *apud* can be employed as an equivalent of σύν not of ἐν; furthermore, at the moment expressions like ἐρρῶσθαι / ἔρρωσο... σὺν θεῷ are unknown⁷⁹. Considering that most likely Theon is a Greek-speaker, it is possible that he has transferred into Latin expressions apparently typical of Christian letters in Greek, sometimes failing to make precise equivalencies. The transfer of formulae and idiomatic expressions from one language to another is found in some papyrus documents from Egypt and sometimes it relates to the fact that the author / scribe is unaware that a certain expression is not idiomatic in the language into which it is translated⁸⁰.

The presence of a code-switch in the greeting formula has some parallels in the bilingual papyrus evidence, both official and private. Parallels are not numerous; however, they are distributed in a period between the end of the 1st and the 6th century AD (namely, for the whole period covered by Latin papyrus evidence) and belong mostly to administrative and military contexts. In these texts, the message is in Greek and the greeting formula, basically an autograph, is one of the variations of the customary *bene valere*. The use of another language for the greeting formula can be interpreted in various ways.

The letter to the *curator* of the Oxyrhynchite nome analysed in par. 2.1 has shown that a switch of language in the greeting formula

⁷⁸ Blumell, Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus* cit., p. 596.

⁷⁹ *P.Köln* IV, p. 215; Blumell, Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus* cit., p. 596. The equivalence between *apud* and ἐν is not found in the bilingual glossaries of the medieval tradition edited in the *CgL*.

⁸⁰ See the evidence in Adams, *Bilingualism* cit., pp. 79-80.

can be an act of divergence. However, this type of CS can also be an act of convergence. In a Greek letter sent in around the 4th century AD to Flavius Abinnaeus the sender, Sabikas, *praepositus* of a *vexillatio*, wrote in his own hand the greeting formula «*et te per multos annos be[n]e valeres*»⁸¹. As already noted by Adams, it is implausible that Sabikas chose to write down the letter in Greek because he thought that otherwise Abinnaeus would not understand the message. In fact, the archive of Abinnaeus contains two Latin documents, concerning the appointment to the post of cavalry commander in Dionysias and the dismissal of this function⁸². One of them is issued by Abinnaeus through a scribe and possibly contains a clue that he knew some Latin⁸³. Therefore, the CS possibly marks the bilingualism of both the sender and the addressee and a shared feeling of belonging to the same social group⁸⁴.

CS has a ‘positive’ social meaning also in the letter to Aphous. More specifically, the greeting formula is among the hints of a Christian context, which is further characterised by the use of the Latin language with a precise meaning.

Remarkably, this peculiar use of Latin within a Christian milieu can be paralleled with that in the *tabulae ansatae* from the bilingual *Codex miscellaneus Barcinonensis* (Durham (NC), Duke University, P. 798 + Montserrat, Abadia, Roca 126-178 + Roca 292 + Roca 338 = P.Duke inv. 798 + P.Monts.Roca inv. 129-149) also because the possible context of the correspondence would be consistent with the one that is conceivable for the miscellaneous codex⁸⁵. The codex, al-

⁸¹ *P.Abinn.* 16 l. 20; TM 10018.

⁸² For a sociolinguistic analysis of the archive of Abinnaeus see Adams, *Bilingualism* cit., pp. 555-557.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 556.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 396; 399.

⁸⁵ The affinity between the two contexts had already been noted by Ammirati, *Sul libro latino* cit., pp. 59-60 footnote 8.

ready mentioned in earlier contributions within this volume, is assigned on palaeographic grounds to the second half of the 4th century AD; it was bought on the antiquities market and is connected with one of the most important late antique libraries, the so-called Bodmer Library, whose dating and origin are at the centre of a debate⁸⁶. This anthology of Christian and pagan texts in Greek and in Latin was assembled by a sole scribe at different times and has *tabulae ansatae* with an explicit at the end of Cic. *Cat.* 1 and 2, of the two prayers and of the tale about the Emperor Hadrian. The *tabulae* are similar in decorations and scripts⁸⁷. The Latin *tabulae ansatae* contain the expression «*feliciter Dorotheo*» written at the centre and under the tabula «*utere [f]elix Dorothee*». These dedications from the scribe to his client presuppose a close relationship between the two, possibly distinguished by a shared religious belief, a common cultural background, and a certain knowledge of Latin⁸⁸. The social intention of the dedications, which recalls that of the subscriptions found in some Latin grammatical treatises of Late Antiquity⁸⁹, is enhanced by the use of the Latin language, which evidently acquires a symbolic value. This aspect is strengthened by the circumstance that on the superior edge of the tabula one can read «*επαγαθω*» plausibly standing for *ἐπ’*

⁸⁶ MP³ 2921.1 + 2916.41 + 2998.1 + 2752.1 + 2998.11; LDAB 552; TM 59453. For details on the Bodmer Library and the codex see B. Nongbri, *God’s Library: The Archaeology of the Earliest Christian Manuscripts*, New Haven 2018, pp. 157-215; Buzi above pp. 63-68; Scappaticcio above pp. 91-92 footnote 38.

⁸⁷ Ammirati, *Sul libro latino* cit., p. 59.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁸⁹ M. De Nonno, *I codici grammaticali latini d’età tardoantica: osservazioni e considerazioni*, in *Manuscripts and Tradition of Grammatical Texts from the Antiquity to the Renaissance*. Proceedings of a Conference held at Erice, 16-23 October 1997, as the 11. Course of International school for the study of written records, cur. M. De Nonno, P. De Paolis, L. Holtz, I, Cassino 2000, pp. 133-172, esp. 146-149.

ἀγαθῶ, which would be a translation of *feliciter*⁹⁰. The identification of Dorotheus, only mentioned in the dedications, with Dorotheos (Antioch, AD 255-Edessa, AD 362), presbyter of Antioch, author of one of the visions of *P.Bodm.* 39, who during his life had held duties on behalf of Diocletian, is uncertain and excluded by some scholars⁹¹. His identity is still debated and far from certain⁹². However, there exists a connection between the *Codex Miscellaneus Barcinonensis* and the manuscripts preserved at the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin (one of the most important is the Greek-Latin glossary mostly on Paul. II *Cor.* 268, *Gal.* 89, *Eph.* 66, *Rom.* 1: Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Ac. 1499 = P.Chester Beatty inv. Ac. 1499)⁹³ and those at the Martin Bodmer Foundation in Geneva. These oldest examples of antholo-

⁹⁰ Ammirati, *Sul libro latino* cit., p. 58 footnote 2.

⁹¹ The identification was proposed by P. De Paolis, *Cicerone nei grammatici tardoantichi e altomedievali*, in *Atti dell'XI Colloquium Tullianum (Cassino - Montecassino, 26-28 aprile 1999)* = «Ciceroniana N. Ser.», 11 (2000), pp. 36-67, esp. 46 footnote 25 and rejected by J. Gil and S. Torallas Tovar in *P.Monts.Roca III*, pp. 30-31. According to Ammirati, *Sul libro latino* cit., p. 58, the possibility cannot be excluded that the manuscript is a copy made a short time later from an antigraph kept by Dorotheos himself. This hypothesis is challenged by the textual and archaeometric analysis by T. Ghigo, S. Torallas Tovar, *Between Literary and Documentary Practices: The Montserrat Codex Miscellaneus (Inv. Nos. 126-178, 292, 338) and the Material Investigation of Its Inks*, in *Coptic Literature in Context (4th-13th cent.): Cultural Landscape, Literary Production and Manuscript Archaeology*. Proceedings of the Third Conference of the ERC project 'Tracking Papyrus and Parchment Paths: An Archaeological Atlas of Coptic Literature. Literary Texts in their Geographical Context' ('PATHs'), cur. P. Buzi, Roma 2020, pp. 99-112, who confirmed that the manuscript was composed at different times according to the needs of the scribe.

⁹² Buzi above pp. 65-68 with references to the hypothesis of Á.T. Mihálykó.

⁹³ Buzi above pp. 62-63 footnote 76 and Scappaticcio above p. 94 footnote 42 with bibliography. On the Beatty papyri see Nongbri, *God's Library* cit., pp. 116-156.

gies of Christian and pagan literature share a common type of book (the so-called 'library book')⁹⁴ and possibly belong to a common historical-cultural context, presupposing common reading interests and learning practices among the Christian communities of late antique Egypt⁹⁵. The neat but not sophisticated book typology of the *Codex Miscellaneus Barcinonensis*, typical of 4th to 5th century AD Egypt, can be described as a study manuscript collecting different texts according to the educational needs of educated people⁹⁶. The manuscript implies the existence of Christian circles interested in Christian and profane literature and, most importantly, in acquaintance with Latin.

The connection of the letters of Theon with these manuscripts is also suggestive because the oblique strokes marking the end of the quote from *A. Apoll.* 25 and the beginning of the letter in *P.Oxy.* XVIII 2194 (par. 1) can be paralleled with the editorial strategies in the bilingual glossaries to Paul's *Epistles*⁹⁷.

2.4. *The Address*

The address, written on the verso, is the only example of CS present in all the three of the letters sent by Theon (*P.Oxy.* XVIII 2193 v l. 1, 2194 v l. 1; *P.Köln* IV 200 v l. 1). Its pattern is: *redde serbo dei tempore* + name of the addressee in the dative case. In the address, the recourse to *b* in place of *v* finds parallels in Latin documents from other provinces of the empire and proves a contact with the spoken language⁹⁸. The writing of the address in a language dif-

⁹⁴ On the 'library book' see the bibliography cited by Ammirati, *Sul libro latino* cit., p. 58 footnote 9.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 61. See also Ghigo, Torallas Tovar, *Between Literary and Documentary Practices* cit., p. 103.

⁹⁶ Ammirati, *Sul libro latino* cit., p. 61.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60 and footnote 8.

⁹⁸ J.N. Adams, *Latin and Punic in Contact? The Case of the Bu Njem Ostraca*, «The Journal of Roman Studies», 84 (1994), pp. 87-112, esp. 106.

ferent from that used in the message is a relatively common practice in the bilingual documents on papyrus from Graeco-Roman Egypt. Usually, the switch of language is a form of accommodation to the language use preferred by the carrier of the letter and might be interpreted as an act of convergence.

For example, on the verso of a recommendation letter of uncertain provenance, written in a particularly elegant Latin according to a well-established tradition for these documents (par. 2.1), there is the address «*domino suo Fl(avi) Achillio ἡγεμ(όνι) Φοιναίκης Vitalis*»⁹⁹. Here the names of both the sender and the addressee are in Latin, while the title of the addressee are the only two words in Greek. Vitalis, perhaps the homonymous *rationalis* of an official letter of the 4th century AD, asks the *praeses Phoeniciae* Flavius Achillius to help Theophanes, *scholasticus* of the prefect of Egypt, during his business trip from Egypt to Antiochia (AD 317 and 324)¹⁰⁰. Scholars

⁹⁹ *CbLA* XIX 687 (TM 70001). R. Marichal (*CbLA* XIX, p. 69) read the name of the addressee. According to P. van Minnen, *Bemerkungen zu Papyri XXXII. Korr. Tyche 886-949*, «Tyche», 34 (2019), pp. 259-268, esp. 265, one can read «*Fl(avius)*» also before *Vitalis*. Different dates, always within the 4th century AD, are indicated in *C.Epist.Lat.* II, p. 325. A duplicate of the epistle but addressed to Delphinus, perhaps another governor of an unknown province, is preserved in *P.Ryl.* IV 623 (AD 317-324; unknown provenance; TM 17314). On the documents belonging to the so-called archive of *Theophanes* – which were actually sent – see A. Moscadi, *Le lettere dell'archivio di Teofane*, «Aegyptus», 50 (1970), pp. 88-154; Cugusi in *C.Epist.Lat.* II, pp. 324-332; J. Matthews, *The Journey of Theophanes. Travel, Business, and Daily Life in the Roman East*, New Haven - London 2006, pp. 33-40; S. Ammirati, *Cum in omnibus bonis ... Un inedito frammento berlinese tra papirologia e paleografia*, *Ianuensis non nascitur sed fit. Studi per Dino Puncuh* = «Quaderni della Società Ligure di Storia Patria», 7 (2019), pp. 79-89, esp. 86-89.

¹⁰⁰ *P.Vind.Bosn.* 14 l. 5 (Hermopolite; TM 17303). For the identification of the three see Moscadi, *Le lettere* cit., pp. 89-96; *C.Epist.Lat.* II, p. 324.

do not agree on the number of hands active in the address: Robert Marichal and Paolo Cugusi believed that the Greek title was written by a different scribe from the ones respectively responsible for the message and the subscription, whereas Peter van Minnen hypothesised that the whole address was written by the same scribe as that of the letter on the recto¹⁰¹. Anyway, the writing of the title of the officer in Greek may be interpreted as an act of accommodation to the language use of the carrier of the letter¹⁰². At the same time, the latter is excluded from the other information of the address.

The switch to Latin as an act of accommodation is also plausible for the letters of Theon. The wording of the address has no parallel in the extant Latin evidence, despite the currency of *servus Dei*¹⁰³. Given this circumstance and the fact that Theon was presumably a Greek-speaker, the address possibly hides the same process of transference of Greek expressions into Latin which is detectable in the greeting formula (par. 2.3). In fact, the address recalls Greek wordings of the kind ἀπόδος + dative case¹⁰⁴.

3 Conclusions

The recourse to the Greek language for the messages, together with the linguistic peculiarities of the Latin lines, and partly the onomastics, suggests that Greek was the language preferred by the speakers (at least by the sender). The Greek language shows features

¹⁰¹ *CbLA* XIX, p. 68; *C.Epist.Lat.* II, p. 329; van Minnen, *Bemerkungen* cit., pp. 265-266.

¹⁰² Matthews, *The Journey* cit., p. 33.

¹⁰³ Blumell, Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus* cit., p. 589. On the interpretation of the formula see Scappaticcio above pp. 85-86 footnote 24.

¹⁰⁴ Cugusi, *Evoluzione e forme* cit., pp. 66-67 and footnote 114; *C.Epist.Lat.* II, p. 381.

of so-called postclassical Greek: besides the customary instances of etacism and confusions between τ and δ («οὐεδρανός», *P.Oxy.* XVIII 2194 l. 7), the nominative is employed in place of the accusative in the substantivized use of the infinite to indicate purpose («πρὸς τὸ μηθεὶς τῶν ἐκτὸς ὀχλήσιεν αὐτῶ περὶ τοῦ πλοίου», *P.Oxy.* XVIII 2194 l. 10)¹⁰⁵. The nature of the three documents and the presence of certain literary and linguistic strategies suggest that Theon and his addressees possibly had the same linguistic and cultural competences: they are able to quote and detect literary texts, even if the quotation implies a formal or linguistic reshaping. Furthermore, they seem to know both Greek and Latin. In addition, Theon is in the position to have his manuscripts of a certain value produced by a competent scribe. Considering the complex linguistic environment of late antique Egypt, it is plausible that at least Theon and Aphous had some knowledge of the Egyptian language¹⁰⁶. If so, regardless of the identification of Theon with the homonymous mentioned in *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 6, 3 (Festugière), the letters would be among the very few documentary sources witnessing the existence of a plurilingual speaker in a Christian milieu. This datum would be consistent with what different sources (mostly literary) tell us about the fluid linguistic and cultural environment of late antique Egypt, where Latin had a limited but significant written and oral diffusion for eminently pragmatic reasons and for prestige or as a technical-liturgical language next to Greek and local idioms¹⁰⁷. However,

¹⁰⁵ F.T. Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, Milano 1976, pp. 80-81; 189-190.

¹⁰⁶ On language and culture in late antique Egypt see M. Choat, *Language and Culture in Late Antique Egypt*, in *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, cur. P. Rousseau, Oxford 2009, pp. 342-355 with further bibliography.

¹⁰⁷ In addition to the bibliography cited by Scappaticcio above pp. 76-77 footnote 3 see also B. Rochette, *Des pèlerins latins en terre sainte. Rencontre de langues et de cultures*, «Byzantion», 66.2 (1996), pp. 363-372; Id., *Le latin dans le monde grec. Recherches sur la diffusion de la langue et des lettres latines dans*

besides the onomastics, which are not always a reliable source of information, there are no clues in the epistles.

The Latin language is used in stereotyped and structural sections, which usually show some opposition to innovations. This aspect underlies the symbolic value of the CS, which is also enhanced by the many and remarkable differences that can be established with the coeval code-switches from Greek to Latin in the coeval official correspondence from Oxyrhynchus. In the epistles of Theon, the switches are from Greek to Latin and occur in a private communication; they are written by the same scribe who was responsible for the messages under dictation by the sender and can be considered as creative strategies originally produced by Theon (greeting formula, address) or at least employed by him originally (introductory lines). CS is deliberate and has social meaning.

So far, these code-switches have not received much scholarly attention nor have they been interpreted from a sociolinguistic point of view. Scholars have mostly tried to identify the reason why Latin is used in the introductory lines in the epistles to Pascentius. One of the reasons would be the identity of the addressee, who has a Roman name and possibly administrative duties, for which at this chronological stage the knowledge of some Latin was plausible¹⁰⁸.

les provinces hellénophones de l'Empire, Bruxelles 1997, pp. 150-153; Id., *Les ἐρμηνεῖς dans le christianisme primitif. Aux sources du schisme byzantin*, «Byzantion», 67 (1997), pp. 421-438; R. Mairs, *Hermēneis in the Documentary Record from Hellenistic and Roman Egypt: Interpreters, Translators and Mediators in a Bilingual Society*, «American Journal of Ancient History», 7.2 (2019), pp. 1-53, esp. 46-49; J.-L. Fournet, *The Rise of Coptic: Egyptian versus Greek in Late Antiquity*, Princeton - Oxford 2020.

¹⁰⁸ Blumell, *Lettered Christians* cit., p. 217 footnote 234; Scappaticcio above p. 90. Much of the legal writing of this time and the teaching in law and rhetoric schools are in Latin: R. Cribiore, *Higher Education in Early Byzantine Egypt: Rhetoric, Latin, and the Law*, in *Egypt in the Byzantine World (300-700)*, cur. R.S. Bagnall, Cambridge 2007, pp. 47-66.

Addressing Pascentius, Theon would use a language associated with prestige especially in Late Antiquity, partly accommodating the language uses of a potential Latin speaker partly giving authority to his words. Such a hypothesis, although sketching some important elements, does not explain the scope and the function of the CS. Here, therefore, an alternative is proposed.

The change of language significantly occurs at the beginning of the epistolary communication and takes the form of a literary quotation apparently not signalled by metalinguistic features. If one accepts the hypothesis that the introductory lines contain a translation of *A. Apoll.* 25, CS helps us partly to understand the diffusion of religious texts in late antique Oxyrhynchus, both of the scriptural and the hagiographic ones. The circulation and use of religious texts in this city are consistent with the presence of the translation of *A. Apoll.* 25 in the introductory lines of the letters to Pascentius. In these lines, the switch of language has a social meaning in as much it underlies the circumstance that both belong to a Christian milieu, and both know the religious texts and the language of Rome, which they acquired in some way. CS expresses cultural solidarity since it shapes a relationship of shared cultural and religious background as well as common bilingual competences between the sender and the addressee. This function is here stressed by the absence of metalinguistic remarks (at least in the preserved text) signalling the quotation and /or the translation from Greek to Latin and finds parallels in other contexts of the ancient world, where a quotation in another language is employed to negotiate a relationship between the sender and the addressee¹⁰⁹. Thus, CS is part of the same communicative

¹⁰⁹ This is a well-known fact for the Greek quotations in the letters of Cicero to Atticus: G.E. Dunkel, *Remarks on Code-switching in Cicero's Letters to Atticus*, «Museum Helveticum», 57.2 (2000), pp. 122-129, esp. 127-129; Swain, *Bilingualism in Cicero* cit.; Adams, *Bilingualism* cit., pp. 312-316; A. Mäkilähde, *Solidarity in Cicero's Letters: Methodological Considerations in Analysing the Functions of Code-switching*, «Pallas», 102 (2016), pp. 237-245.

strategy of the scriptural quotations and establishes a relationship of equality between the sender and the addressee. In fact, it would be pointless to evoke literary texts if the addressee were not thought to have the necessary linguistic and cultural skills to identify them. The relevance of alluding to an intimacy between the sender and the addressee, based on a shared background, is even clearer if one keeps in mind that in both the epistles to Pascentius Theon is asking favours of him. The presence of literary quotations and their meaning possibly connect to the two complementary processes referred to by Fournet as the «litterarisation of the document» and the «documentarisation of literature»¹¹⁰. These aspects may be considered as part of a broader tendency, especially detectable in late antique Greek papyrological evidence, to use (more or less reworked) quotations from literary works, paraphrases, refined expressions or terms in order to indicate one's own culture and to use it to one's own advantage¹¹¹.

The particular type of CS outlined here is unique among the documentary sources on papyrus from a Christian milieu, and, on the contrary, is very frequent in letters belonging to historical linguistic and cultural contexts far removed from that of the letters of Theon¹¹². For example, it can be compared with the so-called emblematic switching, which Otta Wenskus found in some of the code-switches of the epistles of Cicero¹¹³. These switches occur mostly at the beginning and at

¹¹⁰ J.-L. Fournet, *Archives and Libraries in Greco-Roman Egypt*, in *Manuscripts and Archives. Comparative Views on Record-Keeping*, cur. A. Bausi, C. Brockmann, M. Friedrich, S. Kienitz, Berlin 2018, pp. 171-200.

¹¹¹ Id., *Culture grecque et document dans l'Égypte de l'Antiquité tardive*, «Journal of Juristic Papyrology», 43 (2013), pp. 135-162.

¹¹² Cfr. e.g., Elder, Mullen, *The Language of Roman Letters* cit., pp. 94-103.

¹¹³ O. Wenskus, *Emblematischer Codewechsel und Verwandtes in der lateinischen Prosa. Zwischen Nähesprache und Distanzsprache*, Innsbruck 1998.

the end of the texts and are loosely adapted to the new syntactic context. According to Adams, they would establish «a particular type of cultural equality» and be «a mark of shared bilingualism»¹¹⁴.

The recourse to the Latin language as a means of generating a sense of belonging to the same social group is also detectable in the greeting formula «*vale apud Deum*» and in the address «*redde serbo Dei tempore*». In the latter case, it is possible that the switch of language is an act of accommodation to the needs of the carrier (or the carriers).

The three letters witness the existence of a bilingual context, perhaps in connection with local idioms too (this aspect, though, cannot be verified with certainty) includes the senders, the addressees, and perhaps also the carrier (or the carriers), but its actual extension is unknown. The city of Oxyrhynchus appears to maintain a Roman(ised) character in the Late Antiquity and the Byzantine age, as shown by various sources in the archaeological tradition, and to have a Christian identity¹¹⁵. Latin is mostly used as an identifying mark among individuals, who share a religion and a cultural background and who perhaps belong to the same social group. The hypothesis is intriguing because the use of Latin with a similar social meaning is known from some miscellaneous literary manuscripts from late antique Egypt that relate to coenobitic contexts and preserve texts of a different nature pointing to quite a broad spectrum of skills. In environments like these, the language of Rome could be learned both for pragmatic purposes (for example, to communicate with Latin speakers) and for its prestige.

¹¹⁴ Adams, *Bilingualism* cit., pp. 345-346; 399. On CS in the letters of Cicero see Swain, *Bilingualism in Cicero* cit.; Adams, *Bilingualism* cit., pp. 308-347; Elder, Mullen, *The Language of Roman Letters* cit., pp. 111-174.

¹¹⁵ Blumell, *Lettered Christians* cit.; Blumell, Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus* cit.; Nongbri, *God's Library* cit., pp. 216-246. See also Buzi above pp. 49-52.