



# XVII CONGRESSVS INTERNATIONALIS EPIGRAPHIÆ GRÆCÆ ET LATINÆ

BONONIÆ MMXXVII | 30<sup>th</sup> August – 4<sup>th</sup> September 2027

## Panel 18: Non-Verbal Message Non-Alphabetic Signs and Layout Choices in Greek and Latin Inscriptions

Chair: Valentina Garulli

What is an inscription? The most trivial answer is the following: it is a text, carved or painted either on a monument or on a smaller object.

In fact, an inscription is much more than this.

On the one side, inscriptions imply multiple contexts: historical, social, geographical, sometimes literary contexts, but first they belong to a material context. As a written text often preserved together with its original medium, it must be regarded together with the monument/object on which it was written. The medium includes the shape of both the monument/object and of the text itself, which is often displayed in the inscribed area according to a well-defined and recognizable project. Letter size, letter forms, line-spacing, blanks, line length, graphic devices for emphasis: all these features contribute to shape the message, as well as certain kinds of oral performance do.

On the other side, the inscribed text itself is a combination of alphabetic (thinking about Greek and Roman epigraphy) and non-alphabetic signs, all of them signifying, conveying one part of the message. These non-alphabetic signs are the most varied, especially within Greek epigraphy: some of them are attested in papyri and manuscripts too (*paragraphos*, *diple*, *diple obelismene*, *dicolon*), but sometimes with a different function. Such a variety not only makes it hard to detect the meaning of the signs used in every single inscription, but also reveals that it would be improper to assume that these signs had a specific – and not variable – meaning.

Both these aspects of ancient inscriptions – layout choices and non-alphabetic signs – deserve a special attention, since they are an integral part of the message, which cannot be fully understood without considering them. In other words, the entire monument is a unity and the text inscribed on it has to be read within the communication project it belongs to.

Within the frame of a new interest in the macro- and micro-context of inscriptions, and in particular in the monument as a whole, during the last few decades some attention has been paid also to these aspects of Greek and Latin inscriptions. Nevertheless, much still remains to be done. The next CIEGL seems to be the best occasion to share new research and to coordinate future efforts in the study of issues concerning layout and non-verbal signs in Greek and Latin inscriptions.





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This proposal for an open long panel aims to stimulate a wide-ranging reflection on layout choices and non-alphabetic signs in Greek and Latin inscriptions. In particular, are welcome paper proposals trying to answer the following questions:

- What is the interaction between book writing and epigraphy? This subject has attracted a great deal of attention in the field of (Latin) verse-inscription: this sort of osmosis that may have taken place between these two channels of communication can be supposed for inscribed texts as a whole?
- Can the imitation of a handwritten model explain the usage of at least a few of non-alphabetic signs?
- What may be the influence – if any – of local usages and epigraphic traditions in some noteworthy layout choices and non-alphabetic signs? In bilingual contexts, to what extent do the graphic uses of Greek and Latin epigraphy interact and influence each other?
- What can these phenomena reveal about authors of the inscribed text, clients and readers?
- Does the use of such signs and the other visual devices reveal anything about a possible oral performance of the inscription?
- Can we figure out some kind of classification of layout models and some controlled vocabulary for the non-alphabetic signs based on their shape and function? Accordingly, in the world of digital epigraphy, and especially of digital editions using the EpiDoc language, how can we combine the need for clarity with that for consistency when encoding the non-alphabetic signs and layout features? Could we encourage the development of a standardized system of tags?

Furthermore, this open long panel proposal aims at encouraging contributions that may approach these phenomena from different methodologies and perspectives, possibly sharing the effort of comparing the evidence concerning prose and verse inscriptions on the one side, Greek and Latin inscriptions on the other side.

