

BEYOND FREE-VARIATION
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ABSTRACTS

Alexander Bergs

Set them free... ? Investigating spelling and scribal variation in language and history.

Usually, when we think about historical linguistics, we do not consider sociolinguistics a promising or even an interesting additional perspective. Historical linguists deal with manuscripts, not people or social groups! The further we go back in time, the fewer social data (and linguistic data!) we find! Most of the variability that we observe is determined by language internal, not external, factors – if it is determined by anything at all! Even Labov cautions us that historical linguistics is actually "the art of making the best use of bad data" (1994).

In this paper, I will try to show that this is not necessarily so. In fact, I will try to identify certain domains where current sociolinguistic questions and methods could even be more fruitful in historical linguistics than in contemporary studies.

On the basis of several case studies of spelling and scribal variation in the Middle English period, i.e. between 1100 and 1500, I will discuss some general issues (problems, methods, principles...) that need to be taken into account when we "do" historical sociolinguistics, especially with regard to scribal practice. Eventually, however, it should become clear that a sociolinguistic perspective can indeed be very interesting and also very promising for almost all historical linguists, no matter what period or language they are studying.

Anne Boud'hors

Copiste et scribe : deux métiers pour un seul homme. Observations paléographiques et linguistiques sur quelques pratiques de la région thébaine d'après des textes coptes des 7^e-8^e siècles

La documentation copte (ostraca et papyrus) récemment découverte dans la région thébaine (fouilles de la TT 29) a mis en lumière deux personnages qui semblent avoir exercé dans la même zone, à un siècle de distance, des activités similaires: le prêtre Marc, au début du 7^e siècle, le moine Frangé, au début du 8^e siècle, ont été tous les deux à la fois copistes de manuscrits littéraires et scribes/rédacteurs de documents administratifs ou de lettres privées. L'étude des variations d'écriture (à la fois synchroniquement et diachroniquement) et des traits linguistiques de leurs productions respectives permet de répondre à certaines questions et d'en poser d'autres: dans quelle mesure ces deux scribes/copistes adaptent-ils leur écriture et leur langue au type de texte qu'ils écrivent? Les différences graphiques et linguistiques, que je tenterai de caractériser, entre les productions des deux personnages, semblent indiquer un certain relâchement dans la standardisation. Ces différences sont-elles dues à un niveau d'éducation plus ou moins élevé? A un écart de génération? Si la réponse à cette dernière question est positive, faut-il envisager que la conquête arabe ait pu jouer un rôle dans cette évolution?

Willy Clarysse

Patterns and Formulas in correspondence, from high to low.

Polite formulas in letters from low to high have often been studied. Letters from high to low also contain particular topics, which remain largely unchanged over time, though the formulas through which they are expressed may change. In the present contribution I have studied how landowners and other superiors in the private sphere addressed stewards (sometimes called *phrontistai* in the Roman period) and other agents, including sons as junior business partners. I have concentrated on a few archival groups of texts between the third cent. BC and the third cent. AD (Zenon, L. Bellienus Gemellus, the sons of Patron, Heroninus).

In these texts I look at some recurring topics, like orders and prohibitions, insistence upon obedience, anger and threats, urgency. Some of these are expressed by typical formulas. The absence of greetings, polite phrases, compliments, excuses and promises is also an important element of the genre. Usually the landlord writes briefly and curtly, keeping a clear distance with his subordinate, even when this is his son. The archive of the gymnasiarch Apollonios is a border case, in which landlord and correspondents seem to stand nearly on the same level. In a few instances we can see how the same message is adapted to correspondents of different levels and how inferiors react to messages from above.

the formal narrative properties of the texts must also be made, given the avoidance of the usual narrative markers (e.g. *ḥḥ.n, wn.in*), as well as a general indistinctiveness of morphology.

Although the texts are to a great extent structured by narrative events placed in chronological sequences, they are highly rhetorical in nature, perhaps more overtly so than is usual for royal monumental texts (something greatly lamented by J. Wilson in his original publications of the texts). With a particular focus on how narrative information is framed rhetorically and the effects this has on narrative interpretation, this paper explores some of the rhetorical techniques that make a crucial contribution to the distinctive form of the texts.

Glenn Godenho

Title: Idiosyncrasies in Ankhtifi's Inscription

The tomb complex of Ankhtifi near Mo'alla (Upper Egypt, 40km south of Luxor) is a key tomb from the First Intermediate Period, notably because its monumental size and lengthy inscription exemplify the developments in self-presentation at this time. This paper examines idiosyncratic elements in Ankhtifi's inscription, places them within a broader socio-political setting, and traces the ways in which Ankhtifi inscribed himself into the landscape in order to legitimise his position. In particular, it is evident that Ankhtifi, as local ruler, pursues a legitimation strategy that presents him functioning in many of the roles of the absent king. One manifestation of this is in the choice of rhetorical and verbal tropes in his biography, which serve as generic antecedents for Middle Kingdom *Königsnovelle*.

Eva Grob

The spread and adaptation of cursive innovations in the Arabic script

Traditional approaches see Arabic papyri primarily as script style exhibits for the scripts described in the literary sources. The few attempts to draw a typology of the script of early sources – including or even focusing on the documentary papyri themselves – concentrate on the first two centuries of the Hiġra. They describe the “Early Script”. Scholars have called this script “cursive”. They contrasted it with inscriptions and Quranic script styles and referred widely to it by the term *Nashī* (understood in a general sense). But within the development of the documentary scripts, the “Early Script” exhibits a low cursivity compared with the scripts from the 3rd / 9th c. onwards. However, there is a lack of surveys on script developments for documentary material stemming from after the first two centuries of the Hiġra, even though the papyri extant from this period far outnumber the early ones.

My presentation will give an overview on approaches to cursivity and trace the main palaeographic changes. Then we will concentrate on a few specific cursive features and the questions they raise regarding distribution (temporal distribution and distribution within the different textual genres), typological forerunners and external influences. We will see that the informal script of the Arabic papyri gives new insights into the perception and adaptation of the developing Arabic script.

From a historical perspective the time issue is interesting: the processes under consideration here precede the regulation and standardisation of cursive script styles in the eastern part of the Muslim empire.

Eitan Grossman

Post-Conquest Coptic literary manuscripts as sites of heteroglossia.

Hilla Halla-aho

Scribes in Greek and Latin private letters: linguistic perspectives

The purpose of this paper is to explore the use of scribes and scribal practices in Greek and Latin private letters from the Roman period, especially regarding their implications for a linguistic study on these documents.

What do we know about the use of scribes in composing private letters? First of all, the letters often have the closing salutation written in a different hand from the one that has written the body text of the letter. In these cases it is usually assumed that a (more or less professional) scribe wrote the letter on behalf of the sender, and the sender then added the closing salutation (and/or a postscript) in his or her own hand. Thus, it seems clear that scribes were not used only in those cases where the sender was illiterate. My approach to this question is that of a linguist: if a scribe was used, who was responsible for the composition of the text — the wording and the syntax — the scribe or the sender of the letter? Is it

possible to know this? What is the relevance of these problems for a linguistic (especially syntactic) study on the letters?

I shall illustrate these themes in the light of a number of Greek and Latin private letters from the Roman period.

Frank Kammerzell
TBC

Rachel Mairs
κατά τὸ δυνατόν: Demotic-Greek Translation in the Archive of the Theban Choachytes

The parallel legal systems of Ptolemaic Egypt meant that there were occasions on which it might be necessary to translate Demotic legal papers into Greek, but we have few cases where both the Demotic original and the Greek translation have been preserved. Two such sets of documents come from the archive of the Theban choachytes (*P. Choach. Survey* Nos. 12, 146 BC, and 17, 136 BC; Pestman 1993; Mairs and Martin 2008/09). In these - as in other translations of both Demotic, and later Latin, documents - it is stated that the translation has been made *kata to dunaton* 'as far as possible'. Opinions vary as to the implications of this phrase: an admission of imperfection, with which modern translators of Egyptian legal documents may feel some sympathy, or a standard, formulaic piece of legalese? It can also be difficult to gain much sense of who made such translations and under what specific circumstances.

Although their composers remain anonymous, the two Greek translations of *P. Choach. Survey* 12 and 17 allow us to look at the process of translation in some detail: the choice of what to translate and what to omit; the rendition of technical Demotic legal jargon into Greek; consistencies and inconsistencies in which items of Greek and Demotic vocabulary are considered equivalent. As well as examining such questions within each individual translation, comparison of the two sets of papers enables us to ask what, if any, translation 'methodology' was commonly employed.

Matthias Müller
Scribal variation within an archive from the early Libyan period in Egypt

An archive such as the one from mid 21st dynasty Tathne usually offers a broad corpus of texts written by several different persons. Typically, they contain more letters sent to than written by the person who gathered the archive. Hence, they contain specimens of different scripts and display varying abilities to write.

The simplest way to spot variation lies, therefore, in the comparison of the different writers' handwriting. The corpus contains letters and documents, among them a Royal decree, written by members of the Theban chancellery applying rather bold signs, which can be opposed to a more local handwriting style using tiny signs. Beside matters of form, some scribes of the archive also employ certain idiosyncrasies. This includes a reduced way of writing the conjunctive morpheme $m\bar{\lambda}=\bar{\lambda}$, resembling rather a Present I formation, which is, however, grammatically out of the question there. The representation of words of unknown graphical representation is often solved quite individually; the scribes employing different ways of representing a word within the so-called syllabic writing.

This paper will address the above-mentioned issues of a corpus-based study, drawing data from the archive known so far as el-Hibeh-Archive currently being prepared for edition by Dominique Lefèvre and the present speaker.

Richard Parkinson
The Moving Hand: Thoughts on a Middle Kingdom Copyist (P. Berlin 3022 and 3023)

The scholarly reception of the Middle Kingdom *Tale of Sinuhe* has been partly based on the assumption that the earliest copy from the late 12th Dynasty (P. Berlin 3022) was made by an 'ignorant' scribe, as opposed to the later 13th Dynasty manuscript. This was the opinion of A. H. Gardiner (1916), most recently reasserted by F. Feder (2004). A re-examination of the manuscript, however, reveals a high level of correction that implies a considerable degree of care; almost all corrections are apparently made quickly to phrases immediately after copying them. The scribe has a strong preference for re-filling his pen/brush at the start of metrical lines of verse, which suggests a continual - if fluctuating - awareness of the poem's language during copying. He also has a strong preference for writing in vertical lines

without rubrics. A comparison of the same scribe's idiosyncrasies in his copy of *The Eloquent Peasant* (P. Berlin 3023) reveals something of his attitude to the contents of the poems. A flexible attitude to textual variation is suggested by his manner of adapting a third manuscript to complete his own copy of *The Eloquent Peasant*. Any discussion of these poems' texts cannot be abstracted from the material process of copying the manuscripts or from this individual's idiosyncrasies and preoccupations. A new photographic edition of the papyri is planned.

Stéphane Polis

Scribal Variation across "Textsorten" and Time. A Case Study: Imn-nxt son of Ipwy

Joachim Quack

On the Regionalisation of Roman Period Egyptian Hands

In earlier periods of Egyptian history, cursive writing tends to display a certain degree of uniformity all over the country, and it is difficult to localise a hieratic text just on the basis of its ductus. Even the supposed opposition between Memphite and Theban hands in the Ramesside period is problematic and hard to sustain. Beginning in the Ptolemaic period and even more so in Roman imperial time, indigenous Egyptian scripts tend to become regionalised to such a degree that for relatively well-known places, the attribution of an unprovenanced item simply on the basis of the individual hand can become a viable option. Even places of comparatively limited distance can develop seriously different features in orthography as well as preferred sign forms. For example, the hands of Soknopaiou Nesos in the North of the Fayum and Tebtunis in the South of the Fayum can hardly be mistaken for each other (even if there are exceptional cases where either a manuscript or a scribe has travelled from one place to the other); and both are very different from Upper Egyptian places like Thebes. I intend to illustrate the phenomenon by selected examples and ask for its reason. The most likely point is that there was no superregional centre setting standards to be emulated all over the country, given that the writing in the higher levels of the administration was Greek. Thus, teaching Egyptian writing was purely a local tradition taking place in the temple schools; and local habits could grow freely.

Sebastian Richter

A Scribe, his bag of tricks, what it was for, and where he got it: Scribal registers and techniques in the Bodl.Mss.Copt. (P) a.2 & 3

The topic of my paper will be the overall scribal traits, the distinct grapheme inventories and some linguistic features of late Coptic alchemical recipes as provided by two mss. written by one scribe which are kept in the Bodleian Library. What do the scribe's choices in terms of writing style and graphemic inventories tell us about these texts, their context and their purposes? What scribal milieu and what scribal attitudes do they bear evidence for? Some conspicuous features, among them the use of cryptography and of a particular, sportive way of spelling numerals, are shared by a number of other types of Coptic texts, and seem to indicate a certain professional and intellectual milieu where those skills were cultivated and transmitted.

Kim Ryholt

Scribal Habits at the Tebtunis Temple Library

The Tebtunis temple library provides a unique opportunity to investigate the operation of an institutional library from ancient Egypt. The present paper will mainly focus on a range of formal features, paleography and the maintenance of texts. An analysis and comparison of formal features—such as the choice of new vs. reused papyrus, choice of script, use of illustrations, guide-lines, and pagination—with contemporary material from other regions reveals considerable variation in practice and some general local trends. However, there is also significant variation within the temple library itself and it can be shown that some features are closely linked to specific scribes and their personal habits. The many distinctive hands attested in the library leads to the related question of paleography and orthography and the extent to which these factors may help to determine the provenance of specific text. Finally, the maintenance of texts through corrections, repair and re-copying will be addressed.

Petra Sijpesteijn

Scribal tradition in Islamic Egypt.

Andréas Stauder

Variation and scribal repertoires: Old Kingdom tomb biographies

For the Old Kingdom, the uneven distribution of the extant artifactual corpus (particularly the scant documentary evidence) makes the major part of the underlying variation inaccessible, with the effect that a discussion of classical sociolinguistic issues (such as *e.g.* prestige or social networks) is often extremely difficult.

On the other hand, one observes varying degrees of *formality* in the written *performance* - saussurean '*exécution*' - of the language, particularly so in the pragmatically over-determined funerary and/or non-perishable spheres. This talk will address such issues of variation in Old Kingdom tomb biographies.

By taking some verbal constructions used in the foreground of the 'narrative' parts of these funerary inscriptions, I will selectively illustrate three levels of variation: within a single text; from one text to another; tomb biographies as opposed to other Old Kingdom 'text groups'. In a very exploratory manner, some hypotheses of possible parameters underlying these levels of variation will then be suggested.

Merja Stenroos

From scribal repertoire to text community: The challenge of variable writing systems.

This paper attempts to outline some of the challenges in the study of scribal variation in historical periods. The systematic study of scribal variation is a relatively new concern: earlier generations of scholars would often dismiss it as 'corruption' and tend to treat written language as imperfect evidence for an idealised, uniform spoken system. It is now realized that, in the absence of a standard, written language shows natural linguistic variation. Just like variation in speech, written variation may be expected to be orderly and describable, even if the patterns are complex. The systematic study of scribal variation makes it possible to build up a much more nuanced picture of historical languages; at the same time, it makes the description of them a more complex venture.

The discussion is mainly based on the study of Middle English (ca 1100-1500), a period that is of particular interest for the study of scribal variation. Firstly, the surviving materials, especially for the latter part of the period, are abundant and represent a wide variety of genres. Secondly, for historical reasons, written Middle English is extremely variable. It forms a 'dialectal phase' of the language, during which writing does not follow any national or regional norm.

The study of written variation in Middle English was developed from the 1950s in connection with work on the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (A. McIntosh, M. L. Samuels and M. Benskin. Aberdeen University Press. 1986). This research tradition is based on two major insights. Firstly, the language of each individual text, the *text language*, should be studied in its own right; scribes are expected to be competent language users, and their output is studied directly rather than as a corruption of authorial usage. A crucial concept here is the scribal *repertoire*. Secondly, the primary object of study is the written language itself. In a seminal paper, McIntosh ('The Analysis of written Middle English' in *Transaction of the Philological Society* (1956): 26-55) showed that spelling variation could be as systematic as variation in speech, and that it should be studied directly. This made possible a much more detailed comparison between texts, making possible the localization of more than 1000 texts using the so-called *fit-technique*.

The *Atlas* tradition has to a large extent dealt with geographical variation. In recent years, there has been an increased focus on other dimensions of variation, most importantly across genres and registers. The Middle English Grammar Project, ongoing at Stavanger and Glasgow, is building up a text corpus (M. Stenroos, M. Mäkinen, S. Horobin, J. J. Smith (compilers), 2008- *The Middle English Grammar Corpus*, University of Stavanger¹) that will make it possible to relate spellings to a wide range of 'textual parameters', including geographical localisation, date, genre, register, prose/verse and script type. The main problem in using such a corpus is that each scribal repertoire has its own dynamics, which should not be lost sight of. At the same time, linguistic variation takes place within a community. A study of scribal variation therefore needs to combine the viewpoints of the philologist and the corpus linguist, focussing both on the individual text language and on the community of which it forms part.

¹ (version 1.0, April 2008)

http://www.uis.no/research/culture/the_middle_english_grammar_project/meg-c/

Jean Winand
Words of Thieves

The corpus of the Great Tomb Robberies (GTR) is rich and diverse. In this paper, I will mainly concentrate on the papyri reporting the declarations made by the suspects : P. BM 10052, P. BM 10053, P. BM 10054, P. BM 10403, P. Léopold II-Amherst and P. Mayer A. I will raise two main issues :

1) The protocol followed by the scribes for reporting the interrogations of the suspects at first glance seems highly stereotyped. Differences nonetheless occur, both in phraseology and in the spellings of some extensively used words, like *itʒi* « steal », *itʒw* « thief », *smtr* « testimony », or some grammatical words, like *bwpw*.

2) How were the testimonies of the suspects recorded? more or less *verbatim* or did some kind of rewording occur when the scribes gathered their notes for producing the final version on papyrus? It seems that some kind of uniformisation happened, which is only to be expected for this material. But in many cases, one has the feeling that the very words uttered by the suspects (or by the officials who asked the questions) have been preserved more or less faithfully. If this is so, it gives us an exceptional access to different levels of language, as the suspects belonged to different classes of society. It also offers some insight on how the scribes who were in charge of taking notes during the interrogation sessions worked. As was already noted, the GTR corpus contains some lexical hapax and some exceptional constructions that most probably reflect personal idiolects. For instance, in some passages, one has the distinctive impression that some kind of slang was used.