Some thoughts on the papyrological edition[*]

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Abstract[1]

The papyrological edition has not stopped evolving since the publication of the first papyrus in the 18th century. And, despite the fixing of editorial norms with the Leiden system (1931), it continues to change. It improves at the same time as it adapts to the ever-changing requirements of the historical and philological sciences but also of the academic context. In this sense, it is a reflection of science and its organization. It is therefore not illegitimate to wonder whether certain developments are beneficial and whether certain adjustments would not be profitable.

Keywords

Papyrological edition, materiality and edition, bibliometrics

Between the first papyrus editions (Mabillon's *De re diplomatica* in 1681, Montfaucon's *Palaeographia graeca* in 1708[2] and above all Schow's *Charta borgiana* in 1788 [3]) and our current editions, the method of editing papyri evolved considerably. One might believe that the Leiden system (1931)[4] stabilized it by developing an editorial charter. This was certainly the case, but this system constitutes a rather minimalist platform which concerns above all editorial diacritics, and the papyrological edition, in its presentation and its economy, has continued to change according to the constantly evolving requirements not only of the historical and philological sciences, but also those of the broader academic context. From this point of view, it is a reflection of science and its organization.

The plenary session of this congress is an opportunity to take a step back from our editorial methods and to ask (1) if they should be adjusted according to the latest developments in our

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[2] Cf. Cavallo 2001.

[3] Cf. Donadoni 1983 and Capasso 1986-1987.

[4] Van Groningen 1932.

discipline and (2) if certain developments in the papyrological edition in recent decades are beneficial or should be reformed. Before I begin, I stress that the considerations I will present will be made in a constructive spirit and are at no time driven by the desire to give lessons ...

Completing the Leiden system? The difficult art of editing

It is not the actual editorial signs of the Leiden system that call for improvement or additions: in my opinion, their number covers just about every need.[5] However, the way in which these signs are used is not always well regulated, which leads to non-homogeneous editorial methods. I will limit myself to a few examples:

• the signs which indicate supralinear additions (` ´) are used to indicate an interlinear addition (that is to say an addition necessarily subsequent to the writing of the first text).[6] But we very often see them used for any sequence written above the line even when it is contemporary with the first draft: for instance, a letter or a word written in the line space at the end of the line because there is not enough space. However, this is not strictly speaking an addition but a sequence written above the line for contingent reasons. Wouldn't it be more logical not to clutter the text with these signs and relegate the information to the critical apparatus (for example: « μὀ because of lack of space » instead of μο`ι´ in the edition)?[7] There is no reason to overload the edition with purely accidental data. The critical apparatus may record them and thus makes it possible to prioritize information by relegating what is less important to a stratum lower than the edition.

• If the scribe makes a deletion, it is customary to use the double square brackets (⟦ ⟧). But this piece of information in the text should be accompanied in the critical apparatus by a few details on how the deletion is done : by crossing out, by erasing or by superimposing?[8]

• The use of < > (pointed brackets) or { } (curly brackets/braces) is not always consistent from one editor to another. They are supposed to signal letters omitted or unduly written by the scribe, that is to say errors falling into the category of the *lapsus calami*, i.e. careless mistakes (haplography or

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[5] Except that we cannot currently make the difference between the gaps due to a hole in the papyrus and those due to the erasure/disapperance of the ink or to the fact that it is masked for example by a stain of ink, both being rendered by square brackets; but it can be objected that it may not be necessary to express such a difference and to invent a special bracket for this. Papyrologists also did not agree on the kind of brackets (⌐ ¬, ∟ ⌐ or something else?) indicating a sequence read by a previous editor but which is no longer readable due to the degradation of the papyrus. See also the next footnote.

[6] The Leiden system does not include signs to indicate an addition below the line. Some papyrologists use slashes (/ \) or, less often, the reverse signs of those for supralinear additions (´ `). We should only use the latter if we also use ` ´ or the former if we prefer \ /.

[7] In the same spirit, we do not indicate a disalignment of the lines in an *ostrakon* if it is due to the shape of the sherd because it is not intentional.

[8] This should be mentionned for any kind of correction. I notice that corrections are in general what is rendered in an edition in the most diverse way according to the editors. We should think of a way to homogenize them.

dittography). But we see them used by some editors to point out phonetisms or grammatical errors (e.g. ὑπατ<ε>ίας or ἥμ{ε}ισυ) which, because they are voluntary, should not be regularized in the text but in the critical apparatus («l. ὑπατείας», «l. ἥμισυ»). The DDBDP, which plays more and more the role of reference text, sometimes unduly uses these signs where they are absent from the edition: P.Gen. I² 13. l. 8: ὑπατίας Ῥουφ[ίο]υ Ὀλοσιανοῦ (apparatus: 8 ὑπατείας Οὐολουσιανοῦ) becomes in the DDBDP ὑπατ<ε>ίας Ῥουφ[ίο]υ <Οὐ>ολο<υ>σιανοῦ. [9]

Given that we are dealing here with simple phonetisms due to an insufficient command of Greek and a lack of knowledge of Latin onomastics, there is no need to correct them in the text.

These examples – I could have added many others – show that, if the Leiden system is now universally observed, the way it is applied is not always consistent and could sometimes be accompanied by remarks in the critical apparatus giving more precision. The art of editing, which often results from a clever alchemy between text and critical apparatus, is more complex than it seems. But the rules that govern it or that should govern it are more or less tacit, since we have nothing like, for example, Joseph Bidez and Anders Björn Drachmann, *Emploi des signes critiques, disposition de l'apparat dans les éditions savantes de textes grecs et latins. Conseils et recommandations*, Paris 1932 (revised edition in 1938 by Armand Delatte and Albert Severyns) or Jean Irigoin, *Règles et recommandations pour les éditions critiques*, Paris 1972, which give fairly complete instructions that apply to the critical edition of literary texts. We need a similar tool for editing documentary, and especially literary papyri, a field where the methods are even more diversified according to the editors, their school and the nature of the edited texts. It could be the task of a working committee to produce a set of precise rules and to submit them at a future congress of papyrology. [10]

The only real deficiency of the Leiden system, which has been denounced since the 1931 congress, is the lack of unification between papyrology and epigraphy. [11] I will not insist on this point here because it is a problem that goes beyond our community. But we could work so that the specialists of the various papyrologies (at least those where Greek letters are used) apply it in a homogeneous way. Indeed, it is clear that the editors of Coptic papyri do not always follow the same rules as for Greek papyri. For instance, abbreviations are not always resolved, errors are sometimes indicated by a *sic* in the text itself, the text is not punctuated, etc. Even if the new generation of Coptologists attempts to get closer to the rules of the Greek edition (which is probably more advanced), there is

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[9] The anonymous reviewer of this paper rightly notices that my example «is legacy data from Duke and doesn't correspond to DDbDP's current practice» and «that it will eventually get changed». It is nonetheless indicative of a still too widespread practice.
[10] The Association Internationale de Papyrologues decided to create this group at the end of the Lecce Congress and granted me its confidence in asking me to lead it.
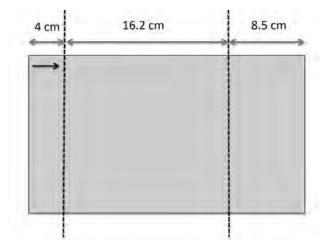[11] Van Groningen 1932, 263-264.

still a way to go – even if a complete unification is illusory because of specificities due to the linguistic and graphic systems specific to Greek and Coptic.[12]

Towards greater precision: the impact of studies on materiality and form

If our way of editing papyri is to evolve in a particular direction, it will likely follow the recent developments of one of the most characteristic tendencies of the sciences of Antiquity: studies on the materiality and form of ancient writings, which have literally exploded in recent years and which very legitimately try to make sense of material and formal facts – information that can illuminate the textual content (and the way the Ancients conceived it) or the socio-cultural or geographic context of the writer. These developments in the field of papyrology – what I called «paléographie signifiante» at the Helsinki Congress [13] – must make us rethink and evolve in our way of editing papyri, in particular documentary papyri (because editors are in general more attentive to the form of literary papyri).

This would imply a better description of:

1. the writing support: among others, intervals between *kollēseis* which are not systematically mentioned and which, when they are, are not in a precise way. I would recommend to add to the size a short formula such as «4 *k.* 16.2 *k.* 8.5 cm» for the sheet presented on Pl. 1. The *kollēseis* provide interesting information on the developments in the manufacture of papyrus rolls and qualitative diversification, which are still far from being exploited but, if studied systematically, could be fruitful.[14]

Pl. 1. An example of a sheet with two *kollēseis*.

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[12] One of the innovations that we could introduce is the use of capital letters for proper names (which Coptic unicode fonts allow) as we do for Greek proper names.

[13] Fournet 2007.

[14] See, for instance, the few lines that I devote to this subject in the description of P.Cair.Masp. I 67024 in Fournet 2018, 599.

2. the positioning of the text on its support: the fibre orientation is a prime datum for the better identification of certain documentary genres,[15] and for the history of writing modalities.[16] However, even where it is mentioned in the introduction, it is not systematically indicated in the edition in the form of an arrow (↓ or →) – the only way for the reader to seize in a single blow this piece of information and to allow an automated processing of this fruitful data. I note, for example, that the P.Oxy. series has not used arrows for documents since the end of the 1970s, and does so only occasionally for certain literary texts.

The use of arrows (↓ → ↘ ↗) is also to be systematized for *ostraka*; in this case, they mark the position of the text in relation to the orientation of the wheel marks. We used this system (I believe, for the first time systematically) in the newly published O.Krok. II.[17] It is a piece of information that can also make sense for *ostraka* since it allows one to highlight scribal habits and the conventions regulating the use of ceramics for writing according to their types.[18]

3. the text itself, in other words, paleographic data strictly speaking. I will limit myself to three data points that do not seem to me sufficiently taken into account:

• The vacats are too rarely mentioned in the editions while they could be recorded easily and rapidly in the critical apparatus (for example: «between αβγ and δεζ vac. 2» to indicate a 2 letter long vacat). Constituting a breach of the *scriptio continua* system, they are often significant (either in terms of text structure, allowing the editor to avoid errors of interpretation, or in terms of prosodic evolution).

• Abbreviations are not always indicated in the critical apparatus. An example, among many others, with the word οἰν(ο)κρέ(οις) in two sixth century papyri (P.Petra I 7. l. 4 and 8. l. 4),[19] whose abbreviation is not indicated in the critical apparatus by the editors, despite the fact that it is highly instructive and helps avoid a misinterpretation. Transliterated in the translation, it is commented on in the following way: «[...] Several suggestions have been made about the nature of this foodstuff – wine and meat, or some kind of combination of them» (p. 108). I do not think there is still a debate about the nature of the *oinokreon* which is not meat preserved in wine, but – to cite Jean Gascou – «une formule de rationnement et de perception comportant […] 1 de viande et 2 de vin».[20] Now the nature of the compound – formed by juxtaposition of the two component words[21] – is clearly reflected by the way in which it is abbreviated in the papyrus: οι͜ν κρε͜. The word is treated as if there were two

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[15] See Fournet 2007, 359-366.
[16] Ibidem, 354-359 on the evolution of the letter form.
[17] Bülow-Jacobsen / Fournet / Redon 2019.
[18] See, for instance, Bülow-Jacobsen / Fournet / Redon 2019, 196.
[19] I take up again the example that I developed in Fournet 2003, 401.
[20] Gascou 1989, 292 (= Gascou 2008, 327).
[21] See Cadell 1983, 123.

words, each abbreviated independently, a way of rendering palaeographically the fact that the two compounds were understood as being added one to another, and not subordinated one to another (in the latter case, there would have been no internal abbreviation at that time, but only a final abbreviation). Here we see how the way in which a word is abbreviated is consubstantial with its meaning.

Many other considerations require that abbreviations be indicated in editions even if it is the most laborious aspect of the editorial work; I will not dwell on these. I would just like to insist on the fact that we have to be as precise as possible. I notice, for example, that letters written *above* the last letter of the abbreviated word (e.g. οὐ̑) are often put in superscript *after* the last letter (ου^λ) whereas these are ways of abbreviating not always belonging to the same period. Some unicode fonts now allow us to render the abbreviations very faithfully (with the IFAOgrec Exposant font, for instance, it is now possible to type one letter, even a dotted one, above another). We have no more excuses not to be scrupulously accurate in our apparatus criticus!

• changes in writing styles. If the changes of hands are systematically indicated in the editions (« (h1) ... (h2) ... (h3) »), it is not the case for the shifts of writing styles. In Roman, and even more so Byzantine, documents we can observe stylistic differentiations with a functional value. These graphic differentiations place certain parts of the text in opposition in a variety of ways depending on the type of document, the period and the region. I will content myself here to quickly point out the most important ones: main text ≠ (contrasted with) endorsement; protocol[22] ≠ body; *inscriptio* ≠ rest of the document; body ≠ notarial *completio*; body ≠ part with numerical figures (*gnōsis*). However, to indicate these shifts, editors use the same method as for hand changes. This is very detrimental because, given the meaning that papyrologists give to the term *hand*, it means that the text is written by different writers. We must therefore invent a new system that allows to visualize in the editions these stylistic changes (at least if they are sure): I proposed in 2008[23] to signal them with « (s1) … (s2) ... (s3) » – a system that I have applied in recent publications.[24]

Recognizing and marking these stylistic differentiations would be progress, because they are never random but are always meaningful. They are indicative of a more acute attention paid by the Byzantines to the graphic element of documents, which results in a greater sophistication of the graphic system, and which, by the implementation of different styles, makes the text more readable by highlighting its articulations, and superimposes on it a graphic rhetoric that adds semantic and emotional value. Attention to this phenomenon would in any case help avoiding certain errors due to
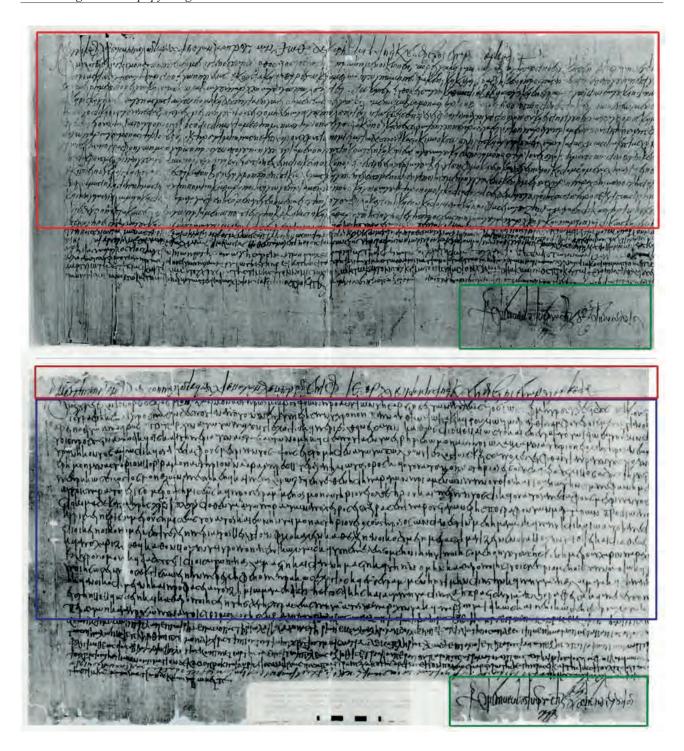
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[22] I use this word in the sense of «introductory part of a legal text», including usually a divine invocation, the date and the place where the act was drawn up.
[23] P.Worp 35, 245-249.
[24] Delattre / Fournet 2018.

the fact that papyrologists too often do not distinguish hands from styles and assign to different people the various writing styles of the same individual.

An example is found in two famous texts, P.Dubl. 32 (= SB I 5174; XX 14689) and 33 (= SB I 5175; XX 14690), two sales of monasteries written in Arsinoe in 512 and 513 (Pl. 2). The first is entirely written in a sloping cursive; the second begins with a protocol in a sloping script (l. 1) before switching to an upright cursive used for the rest of the text. According to the last editor, «the first line [of P.Dubl. 33] is written in the same hand as the bulk of [P.Dubl. 32]» and the body of P.Dubl. 33 is regarded as written by another hand. It seems therefore that the body of P.Dubl. 32 and that of P.Dubl. 33 are written by two different scribes. However, the notarial completion, identical in both texts (and written in a third style!), shows that they were written by the same person, a certain Eulogios. We must therefore consider that the latter had two styles of writing: in P.Dubl. 33 he develops a graphic opposition between protocol and *sôma* (specific to the acts of this area); but in P.Dubl. 32, he uses the same style throughout the text for a reason unknown to us. Here we have two telling examples of the graphic versatility of late antique professional writers who are able to adopt extremely different scripts depending on the situation.

Pl. 2. Left part of P.Dubl. 32 (above) and P.Dubl. 33 (below): the sloping cursive is outlined in red, the upright cursive in blue, the *completio* in green. Photo from McGing 1990, pl. 10-11.

Here are some avenues that could allow the papyrological edition to evolve in the direction of a greater attention to the formal and material data.[25] This attention to materiality and form is in no way a mere concession to the fashion for materiality I mentioned above. It is the foundation of the papyrological work since the papyrologist has the chance to deal with original ancient writings, which are *unica*. He therefore has the duty to give a precise account of this originality which is expressed above all in the form these writings have. Without this, we would not know how the ancients conceived materially their relation to a text, how they wrote and read, what precise form they gave to a writing according to its nature and its function.

Must we edit everything in the same way? The pressure of bibliometrics

Other fashions influence our way of editing papyri, and these are not always opportune or beneficial. I would like to conclude with an evolution affecting the papyrological edition that I consider a deviance.

If our way of editing papyri is dependent on scientific advances, it is also impacted by the way in which science is organized, in other words by the academic context. As a matter of fact, our academic systems give more and more importance to bibliometrics, which favors quantity to the detriment of quality. We are forced to publish more and more and indulge in what can be called a "race to publication." Young scholars, looking for a position, are even more subject to this pressure and must find ways to build an impressive bibliography in record time. In addition, the exponential development of *Festschrifts* and conferences encourages us to produce ever more numerous contributions that are sometimes out of step with the research we are conducting. All these evils have a consequence: the proliferation of editions of texts that are not always interesting, often without scientific exploration, and scattered in disparate volumes. How many times have I heard a colleague say to me: «I have been invited to contribute to the *Festschrift* of So and So: what the hell will I edit?». It is no longer the interest of the text that motivates publication but external and contingent circumstances that become the driving force of the papyrological edition!

But we are lucky: the richness of our collections full of unedited papyri puts us in a position where we can respond to this ever-increasing demand – unlike other disciplines such as epigraphy. We always have a little papyrus available (at least if we have easy access to papyri), which we are ready

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[25] This evolution should perhaps encourage us to divide the critical apparatus of papyrological editions in two, at least in the case of long texts (that is to say endowed with a substantial apparatus). It may indeed be advantageous to mark more clearly the difference between paleographic data (what is on the papyrus) and grammatical or textual information (what the editor adds): the readers can thus find their way more quickly through the maze of a long critical apparatus by locating at a glance the graphic specificities of the writer and with another glance the type of errors which he commits. See P.Aphrod.Lit., 369-370.

to offer for any occasion. But all this is sometimes done at the expense of quality: papyri which, a few decades ago, would have been judged hardly worthy of being edited as *descripta* in a volume of papyri become the subject of articles and are published without any driving problem or scientific questioning justifying the edition. Papyri that should be published together are sometimes deliberately dissociated and edited in the form of several articles. Our bibliographies become longer to the detriment of scientific coherence.

This editorial over-activity comes at a price: in so doing, we devalue the impact of our editions and, more broadly, we devalue the impact of our discipline. I have often heard non-papyrologist colleagues tell me: «You papyrologists, you don't deserve any praise for writing articles. It is easy for you: you always have a fragment to publish!».

Should not we edit less but better? That is to say prioritizing editions of large groups of papyri (where it is legitimate, next to important texts, to publish smaller fragments because they belong to the same collection or to the same archive) or articles in which we edit coherent bunches of papyri or texts advancing our knowledge either because they are important or because they give rise to an update of an issue they raise (what I'd call a «problematized edition», in other words, with an underlying scientific question).

Does this mean that we have to give up editing insignificant or less important fragments? Certainly not: any fragment deserves to be edited, if for no other reason than it could later on be joined to another fragment. But perhaps not just anywhere. We should aim for a closer integration of paper edition (as long as they are regarded as the standard for the publication of primary sources) and online resources by reserving the first for papyri really worthy of being edited and deserving detailed commentaries and developing online editions for texts that present unresolved difficulties (*Warte-Texte*) or that are of secondary interest, but which could perhaps one day be joined with another fragment. This solution would make it possible to declutter publications of editions of virtually insignificant papyri without depriving our community of texts that, even if very fragmentary or repetitive, could be utilized for online lexicographical researches.

I know that this solution has a great disadvantage: an online edition is not worth the same as an article from a bibliometric point of view! But online editing is in the course of becoming increasingly important. When I see what is happening with the corrections to papyri (formerly only published in the form of articles, now more and more published directly online), I am optimistic that online editions will be in the near future a valid alternative to the paper edition. This alternative deserves in any case to be the subject of a collective reflection and discussion.

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