

# Integrating palaeographic research into the digital epigraphy of multilingual Sicily

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**Abstract.** In this paper we introduce the ERC Crossreads project (University of Oxford), which aims at the first comprehensive study of the material linguistic culture of ancient Sicily over a period of 1,500 years. A multilingual and multicultural region, the island's epigraphic material will allow us to explore written culture on a variety of durable supports (monumental inscriptions, graffiti, pot shards, brick stamps, metal plaques) in a variety of languages (Greek, Latin, Punic, Elymian, Sikel, Oscan).

Crossreads is composed of five distinct modules, each with its own dataset, connected by linking data: (1) epigraphic texts, encoded on the EpiDoc standard and published on the Inscriptions of Sicily website; (2) a second text layer for linguistic annotation; (3) a comprehensive petrographic analysis of the types of stone used for inscriptions in Sicily; (4) an image database (IIIF); (5) a systematic study of letterforms in this diverse corpus across time, supports and languages. This last seeks to answer a range of questions, such as: Are letterforms different depending upon material? Does the stone-type and surface determine the choice of forms in comparison with other materials? Are letter forms different depending on text function, e.g. private vs public? Do letterforms cross over between languages?

Comparison across such diverse sets of data presents technological challenges. The palaeographic analysis will develop modular tools from the Archetype framework, in collaboration with King's Digital Lab; the TEI texts together with the IIIFimage server form the basis for our palaeographic annotations and visualisation. The main challenge is designing an effective mechanism to integrate information from the multiple datasets in Crossreads to enable rich and complex queries. These results will additionally need to be visualised in a meaningful way, linking images to text to palaeographic annotations. All of this we aim to achieve using linked open data principles.

**Keywords:** Palaeography, Epigraphy, Archetype, Sicily

1. Prag, J.R.W. 2021. I.Sicily and Crossreads: a digital epigraphic corpus for ancient Sicily. In A. Karivieri, C. Prescott, P. Campbell and K. Göransson (eds.), *Trinacria, 'an island outside time'*. *International Archaeology in Sicily*, Oxford: Oxbow Books, 181-192.