

The Linguistic Alterity

The main purpose of this section is to reinsert a very relevant part of the Mediterranean epigraphic production of antiquity to its rightful place alongside the Greek and Roman epigraphic cultures. Palaeo-European epigraphic cultures (Etruscan, Iberian, Gallic, Oscan, Celtiberian, Messapic,...) as well as other Mediterranean epigraphic cultures — including Phoenician— developed from the 8th century BC. E. until the Early principate in a more or less permanent dialogue with Greek and Roman epigraphic cultures. They produced differentiated responses, original developments, and also took loans, permitted exchanges or evolved through parallel paths. In many cases, this coexistence gave rise to epigraphic landscapes in which inscriptions in different languages coexisted or in which bilingual texts emerged.

The development of epigraphic studies has tended to be subdivided according to the different types of language and writing used in the production of inscriptions and this is perfectly understandable given the specific skills that each epigraphic set requires. However, as a matter of fact over almost a millennium the epigraphic cultures of the Mediterranean written in Palaeo-European and other languages developed alongside Greek and Latin epigraphies. Therefore, not only for historical but also for epigraphic and even linguistic reasons, it is essential to recover that coexistence in view of the intense relationships and exchanges that occurred between the classic and the 'peripheral' epigraphic cultures in the fields of writing, epigraphic types and supports, formulas and even lexicon. The aim then is tackling them together from the perspective of what we could call a comparative epigraphy.

This section tries to privilege the approach to epigraphic cultures that are expressed in fragmentary languages from a comparative perspective that takes into account both local epigraphic cultures alongside the classical epigraphic cultures which ended up reaching a global development on a Mediterranean scale despite the obvious regional differences.

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