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INTERPUNCTS AS EVIDENCE FOR THE ENCLITIC CHARACTER OF PERSONAL  
PRONOUNS IN LATIN

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 111 (1996) 208–210

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OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS IN LATIN

The Romans are said to have placed medial points between words until the first century A.D. (Sen., *Epist.* 40.11)<sup>1</sup>. Interpuncts are not without linguistic interest. Often in those texts in which interpuncts are regular, they are not used after prepositions<sup>2</sup>, and that is obviously a reflection of the proclitic character of prepositions: the preposition formed a single accentual unit with the dependent term<sup>3</sup>. When regular interpunction was abandoned, the way was open for interpuncts to be used only occasionally, with a functional role, marking off syntactic or sense units of one kind or another<sup>4</sup>. A study of these irregular interpuncts may reveal something of the writer's ideas about the cola into which his speech or writing fell.

There is also, as I will suggest below, another respect in which interpuncts may take on a linguistic significance. I refer to the light which they throw on the enclitic nature of (semantically) unstressed personal pronouns. I concentrate here on two texts, the Vindolanda writing tablets and the ostraca from Wâdi Fawâkhir<sup>5</sup>, but some illustrative material from other documents will also be cited. Both sets of texts come from military environments in the late first or early second century, but they are from opposite ends of the Empire. I review first some significant aspects of interpunction in the two groups of texts, then move on to interpuncts and pronoun enclisis.

In *O. Wâdi Fawâkhir* 1–5 (letters of Rustius Barbarus) there are 10 prepositions, only one of which is separated from its dependent term by an interpunct<sup>6</sup>, even though interpuncts are common in the texts. The significance of these figures is underlined by the fact that five of the prepositional expressions in question are both preceded and followed by interpuncts (as e.g. 1.4f. *·per Popilium·*, cf. 1.6 *per Draconem*, 1.8 *per Thiadicem*, 2.12f. *per Arrianum*, 2.14 *in linteolo*). For a similar phenomenon at Vindolanda, note *Tab. Vind.* II.315:

et alias · ad Vocusium  
Africanum · praefectum

Other examples at Vindolanda of prepositions undivided from the dependent term are:

211 de hac · re  
323 ex ratiunculis · (in a text in which interpuncts are regular)

There are signs too in Rustius Barbarus of the use of interpuncts to mark off sense units, constructions and the like. At 2.5, for example, a verb-phrase consisting of infinitive + auxiliary verb forms one unit, and its object (preceded by a temporal adverb) another:

stati amicitiam tuam · obliscere debio?

Two three-word expressions, of loosely balanced structure, are separated at 2.6:

non sum talis · aut tan leuis ·

Note too 3.8:

siue [..]inum · siue raphanum

<sup>1</sup> See M. B. Parkes, *Pause and Effect. An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West*, Aldershot 1992, 10; T. N. Habinek, *The Colometry of Latin Prose*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1985, 43 with n.; P. J. Parsons, in R. D. Anderson – P. J. Parsons – R. G. M. Nisbet, *Elegiacs by Gallus from Qaşr Ibrîm*, *JRS* 69, 1979, 131 with n. 43.

<sup>2</sup> See E. O. Wingo, *Latin Punctuation in the Classical Age*, The Hague 1972, 16.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. W. S. Allen, *Accent and Rhythm. Prosodic Features of Greek and Latin: A Study in Theory and Reconstruction*, Cambridge 1973, 24–25.

<sup>4</sup> See R. W. Müller, *Rhetorische und syntaktische Interpunktion. Untersuchungen zur Pausenbezeichnung im antiken Latein*, Tübingen 1964, 36–37.

<sup>5</sup> A. K. Bowman – J. D. Thomas, *The Vindolanda Writing-Tablets (Tabulae Vindolandenses II)*, London 1994, O. Guéraud, *Ostraca grecs et latins de l'Wâdi Fawâkhir*, *BIFAO* 41, 1942, 141–196.

<sup>6</sup> Non-separation: 1.4f., 1.6, 1.8, 1.10, 2.8, 2.12f., 2.14, 3.4, 3.5; separation: 3.12 (*con · amicitiem*).

Twice an appositional term signifying a profession is separated from the personal name with which it is in apposition:

- 1.6 per Draconem · amaxitem ·  
2.12f. per Arrianum · equitem ·

For this same form of punctuation at Vindolanda, see *Tab. Vind.* II.315 cited above, and also II.345:

[pe]r A[t]tonem · decurionem ·

And there are various cases of interpuncts in Rustius Barbarus which may be described as clausal dividers:

- 1.2 quid est · quod mi non rescripsisti ·  
1.9 quod · dixit se posse tollere  
2.2 opto deos · ut bene ualeas que mea uota sunt

At *Tab. Vind.* II.164 two parallel negative clauses are punctuated as balancing units:

· non utuntur equites · nec residunt Brittunculi ·

In the address of *Tab. Vind.* II.260 the name of the addressee is divided from that of the sender:

Flauio Ceriali praef(ecto) coh(ortis) · a Iustino col(lega) ·

And for clauses or verb-phrases marked off at Vindolanda, see:

- 242 çraş · ðene mane Vindolandam ueni · ut ...  
266 uoło ueniat · ad me Coris · et accipiat

But perhaps the most interesting, and consistent, pattern in Rustius Barbarus is that seen in the following examples:

- 1.4f. misi tibi · per Popilium · et Dutoporim · panes  
1.7f. misi tibe · per Thiadicem · equitem panes  
2.12f. misi tibe · per Arrianum · equitem · chiloma

In each case *misi* and *tibi* are undivided, like the prepositional expression which comes next. *Tab. Vind.* II.345, a text in which interpuncts are regular, is identical, though the order of the constituent phrases is different:

[pe]r A[t]-  
tonem · decurionem ·  
misi tibi ·

Here, as at Wâdi Fawâkhir at the opposite end of the Empire, we find an undivided prepositional expression comprising *per* + name, an appositional title separated from the name, and a dative pronoun juxtaposed with the verb without an interpunct. With this should be compared the fragmentary text *Tab. Vind.* II.339:

· et suasit me ·

It is surely not fanciful to see a parallelism between the units *per* + name on the one hand, and *misi* + *tibi* on the other. Prepositions, as noted above, are *proclitic*, in the sense that a constituent comprising preposition + noun had a single accent; we have the evidence of Quintilian for this (1.5.27). I would suggest that the failure of our various writers to separate the personal pronoun from the verb reflects the *enclitic* character of the pronoun, in the sense that the unit verb + (indirect) object pronoun formed an accentual unit. It is assumed that Latin had a set of unstressed (enclitic) personal pronouns, but since in Latin (unlike Greek) there are no distinctive enclitic forms of pronouns, this assumption is based on various types of indirect evidence<sup>7</sup>. The evidence of interpuncts in the texts from Vindolanda and Wâdi Fawâkhir implies that phrases of the type *per Popilium* and *misi tibi* had something in common. The most likely shared feature is that both types had a single accent, and that in turn would mean that *tibi* was unstressed.

In the ostraca from Wâdi Fawâkhir (nos. 1–5) there are 19 places where a pronoun follows a verb, and in 15 of these there is no interpunct between verb and pronoun<sup>8</sup>. To this evidence can be added that of one of the Greek ostraca (*O. Wâdi Fawâkhir* 44.7):

<sup>7</sup> See J. N. Adams, Wackernagel's law and the position of unstressed personal pronouns in Classical Latin, *TPhS* 92, 1994, 104–105.

<sup>8</sup> Verb + pronoun with no interpunct: 1.4, 1.7f., 1.9, 1.10, 1.12, 2.12, 2.15, 2.16, 2.17, 3.2, 3.11f., 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 5.13; with interpunct: 1.10, 3.6, 3.7, 3.15.

]ν · ἐπεῖ σοι · Ὀνυ[

Here the writer adopts in Greek the Latin custom of interpunct. There is however no interpunct between the verb and pronoun.

For another text in which pronouns are regularly undivided from the term which precedes them, see Marichal, *ChLA* X.424:

- 4f. hominem probum · commendo  
tib[i]
- 6f. rogo in meum · honorem  
adiuues eum · saluo pudore
- 8f. salutem dic · nostris · omnibus  
salutem tibi · dicunt nostri

Note too *ChLA* XI.466.21f.:

postea res-  
pondit mihi · per lib[ellum?]

The conclusion of this paper, namely that there is evidence to be derived from the manner of interpunct at Vindolanda and Wâdi Fawâkhir for the enclitic (unaccented) character of semantically unemphatic personal pronouns in Latin, must be regarded as tentative, as the material is not extensive. The picture may become clearer as more texts are discovered, particularly if editors are careful to record interpuncts. It is a striking fact that writers at both Vindolanda and Wâdi Fawâkhir punctuate formulae of the type *mihi tibi per X* + title in exactly the same way, and this must reflect the influence of the training in modes of literacy imparted by the army.