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Francesca Cotugno
Università di Pisa – Universiteit Gent
francesca.cotugno@for.unipi.it

The case of devoicing final *-d* in the Vindolanda writing-tablets

This paper deals with a specific diachronic phonological feature which occurs in Tab.Vindol. 343, written presumably by Octavius to Candidus (early 2nd century CE). In the Vindolanda writing-tablets there are two different types of texts: those written by the prefects and their scribes and the other texts written by different scribes and other people whose competence and degree of literacy was variable. In this latter category, the deviations from the norm set forth by the Classical texts are much more frequent and allow linguistic considerations (Cotugno 2015b; Marotta, Cotugno in press).

Many languages were active to some degree in the Roman Empire and at Vindolanda, on the Hadrian Wall, Latin was used by people coming mainly from Gallia Belgica, a province inhabited by Celto-Germanic tribes. In this context, there are a few phonological features divergent from the Classical norm. The frequency of this divergence depends also on the text type (whether personal correspondence, formal correspondence, lists or military report) and possibly also on the military rank of the writer. Among the features available in the *Corpus Vindolandense* (Bowman e Thomas 1994; Bowman e Thomas 2003; Bowman, Thomas e Tomlin 2010; Bowman, Thomas e Tomlin 2011), the final-obstruent devoicing of final *-d* arises as a possible evidence of a local pronunciation based on the phonological process of the *Auslautverhärtung* (Brockhaus 1995). This process occurs in Germanic languages such as German and Dutch and in Celtic languages (Breton) and does not involve the opposition of voiceless and voiced sounds but the opposition of tense and lax pronunciation of the final obstruent (Jessen 1999). This is also the case of Octavius. His letter is also the longest of the *Corpus Vindolandense* and give us a depth insight of his writing skills and linguistic competence.

Final *-d* is correctly spelled in the large majority of the *Corpus Vindolandense*, but in the letter of Octavius the scenario is different insofar the incorrect spellings predominate (Adams 1995). Octavius misspells *quid* and *aliquid*, and he makes a distinction between *(ali)quit* and *quod*. It is also important to notice that he wrote very hastily and this is proved by the offsets on the surfaces of the *tilia*, indicating that the ink was still wet when the leaves were folded (Cotugno 2015a). This could mean that Octavius wrote the letter using features of the spoken language, insofar he adopted colloquial expressions and displays an accumulation of spelling abnormalities as compared both with other personal letters and military documents (Adams 1995). The Latin adopted by Octavius is interesting also for the use of monophthongisation, the standard contraction of *-ii-* in *-i-*, except for formulaic expressions (e.g. in *Ianuariis*), the syllabic reformulation from the heterosyllabic sequence of the hiatus into a tautosyllabic sequence, as highlighted by the usage of the graphic sign of the *I longa* (Cotugno 2015b).

In conclusion, this research aims at discussing the connection of Octavius' final-obstruent devoicing as a grapho-phonological phenomenon linked to a local pronunciation and to the process of the *Auslautverhärtung* which will be eventually attested in later Germanic texts (Mees 2002).

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