

Organisers:

Sandra Erker | Jan R. Stenger

DFG-funded project: Monasticism and Local Self-Organisation

DFG PAK 1066: Lokalität und Gesellschaft—Horizontale Bindungskräfte in der Antike

Letters are a significant element in the surviving monastic literature of Late Antiquity, encompassing both letters written by monks and those addressed to them. From the time of Saint Antony, the founder of Christian monasticism, ascetic letters were preserved and, in some cases, handed down in collections.

Monastic letters are extant in various ancient languages, sometimes in translation, including Greek, Syriac, and Coptic. Additionally, letters have come to light on papyri discovered in Egypt, such as the archive of Paphnoutios.

This extensive and diverse epistolary legacy documents that there was a great need for written communication within monasticism, both internally in exchanges between monastics and externally, in dealings with society.

The conference aims to explore monastic letters from an interdisciplinary perspective—patristics and church history, philology, and ancient history—considering different languages and specific examples. It will examine the ways in which letters served as a medium for monks' social interactions and the functions of epistolary commerce in monastic life. A comparison will be made to investigate how late antique monks communicated and acted in letters, in which areas and matters they intervened, which functions letters fulfilled in the process, and the extent to which the form of letter writing was relevant to these activities.

Guests are welcome to attend the in-person conference. Please register:

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Further information:

<https://www.theologie.uni-wuerzburg.de/at/projekte/lokalitaet-und-gesellschaft/>

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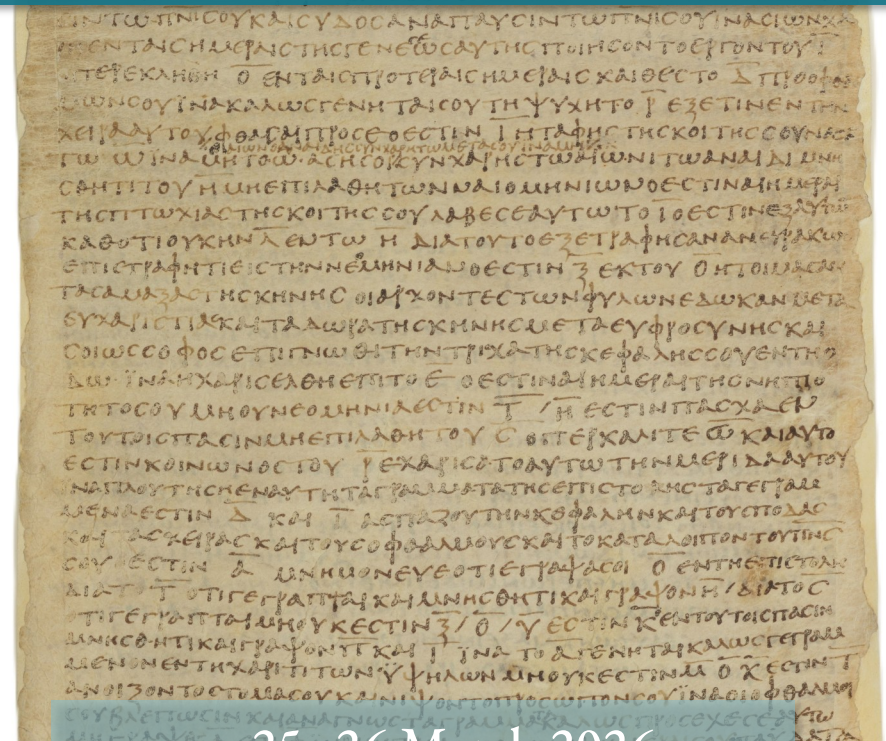
Image: Letters of Pachomius 1-3, 7, 10, 11a, Chester Beatty W 145; source: Chester Beatty Digital Collections, https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/object/W_129/1/



International Conference

Monastic Letter Writing in Late Antiquity

The Role of Epistolary Communication in Monastic Life and Organisation



25–26 March 2026

Institut für Klassische Philologie,
Residenzplatz 2, Würzburg
Griechischbibliothek (Südflügel: R.3.27)



Wednesday 25 March

9:00: *Arrival*

- 9:30–10:00 **Jan R. Stenger** Start of the Conference
Julius-Maximilians- & Introduction
Universität Würzburg
- 10:00–10:50 **Peter Gemeinhardt** The Narrative Construction of the Pa-
Georg-August-Universität chomian Origins: Observations on the
Göttingen *Letter of Ammon*
- 10:50–11:20: *Coffee break*
- 11:20–12:10 **Paula Tutty** Reveal and Conceal: Presenting the
self in early monastic letters from
Egypt
- 12:10–13:00 **Hugo Lundhaug** Monastic Letters of Instruction from
University of Oslo Fourth- and Fifth-Century Upper Egypt
- 13:00–14:30: *Lunch*
- 14:30–15:20 **Marianna Thoma** The Epistolary Corpus of Isidore of
National and Kapodistrian Pelusium and the Papyrus Letters from
University of Athens the Monasteries of Late Antique Egypt
- 15:20–16:10 **Elizabeth Mattingly** Hybrid allegiances and the heavenly
Conner *politeia*: cultural leadership in the let-
University of Maryland ters of Isidore of Pelusium
- 16:10–16:40: *Coffee break*
- 16:40–17:30 **Francesco Celia** Isidore of Pelusium and Doctrinal Au-
Università degli Studi thority in the Christological Debates of
di Padova His Time
- 17:30–18:20 **Johan Leemans** The Bible in Isidore of Pelusium:
KU Leuven Exempla, Proverbs and 1 Corinthians
- 19:00: *Dinner*

Thursday 26 March

- 9:30–10:20 **Sandra Erker** Counselling, Connection, and Com-
Julius-Maximilians- munal Pressure. The Versatile Role
Universität Würzburg of the Letter in Isidore of Pelusi-
um's Monastic Correspondence
- 10:20–11:10 **Madalina Toca** What did Severus of Antioch know
Universität Wien of Isidore of Pelusium? Revisiting
the earliest reception of the Isidori-
an corpus
- 11:10–11:40: *Coffee break*
- 11:40–12:30 **Brouria Bitton- Ashkelony** Letters to Monks from Isidore of
The Hebrew University Pelusium and Barsanuphius and
of Jerusalem John of Gaza: A Social History Per-
spective
- 12:30–13:20 **Jennifer Hevelone- Harper** Organizing a Christian Community
Gordon College, MA in Sixth-Century Gaza: Barsanu-
phius and John and their Correspon-
dents
- 13:20–14:50: *Lunch*
- 14:50–15:40 **Jan R. Stenger** Spiritual Direction in Epistolary
Julius-Maximilians- Form: Barsanuphius and John
Universität Würzburg Guiding the Progress toward
Ascetic Perfection
- 15:40–16:20 **Sandra Erker** Concluding Remarks
Jan R. Stenger and Discussion
Julius-Maximilians-
Universität Würzburg
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