



Regione Toscana



## CLASSICAMENTE

*Dialoghi senesi sul mondo antico*

(VI series)

### INTRODUCTION

The PhD *alumni* and students of the *Anthropology of the Ancient World* curriculum of the PhD course in *Classics and Archaeology* would like to promote a sixth cycle of seminars of the series *Classicamente. Dialoghi senesi sul mondo antico*. Following the positive outcome of the fifth series, the sessions which will take place in the 2023/2024 academic year shall continue focusing on the different methodologies and research perspectives which have shaped anthropology of the ancient world as a field of study ever since its first development (with the works of Gernet, Vernant and Detienne). Space will also be given to those innovative approaches that constantly contribute to the hermeneutical expansion of this particular field of study. This year's series of seminars wishes to create a meeting point for scholarship on antiquity and contemporary debate on its reception in modern societies, underlining the cultural, social and ideological aspects which spark from the interaction between present and past.

The cycle will be structured in sessions regarding the following topics:

#### **1) New perspectives on the decolonisation of classics (21-22 November 2023)**

In recent years, Anglo-American academia has been faced with the challenge of discussing the social impact of Classics – seen as a structural element of the educational systems of the Global North – in modern and contemporary society. The public speeches of Dan-el-Padilla Peralta and the motion to abolish the *Classics* curriculum at Howard University (Washington D.C.) have raised the issue of the exclusive access to this type of studies and of their role in the making of a historical narrative deeply connected to Western hegemony. In European academia, the debate has found a varied reception and has given way both to reactions of acritical defence of classical studies and to constructive suggestions as to how they could (or should) be renovated. As young scholars of Antiquity, we believe we should contribute to the discussion and contextualise it within the Italian cultural horizon. Thus, we encourage papers on the following aspects:

1. Papers dealing with methodological issues and with the history of classical studies, presenting theoretical issues connected to the ongoing debate (*i.e.*, hermeneutical tools used to read ancient sources, the appropriation of classics as a resource for political entitlement, etc.);
2. Case studies demonstrating how by applying new perspectives to Classics (*i.e.*, the use of comparative ethnography) one may contribute to the establishment of an emic interpretation of ancient societies and their mental patterns.

## **2) Religious discourse and practice (14-15 December 2023)**

The goal of this session will be to focus on issues and methods which allow for a comparatist perspective of religious discourses and practices specifically regarding the Greek and Roman world, but possibly also taking into account ancient Egypt, the Near and Middle East, monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) and other religious systems belonging to contemporary culture.

Such forms of comparisons may operate on three distinguished levels:

1. The ways in which ancient societies perceived and analysed their religious differences and peculiarities through comparison with other cultures and how they thus explored their own religious identity through contrast;
2. The opportunity for modern scholars to trace influences, exchanges, reinterpretations, analogies and deep differences (in linguistic, figurative or mythical terms) between the various religious “languages” of Antiquity;
3. The extent by which cult practices operating in contemporary religions may or may not be compared to those employed by ancient societies.

In this perspective, we welcome papers dealing with the following topics: the construction of deity (divine naming, theogonies and tales on the relationships amongst deities, forms of iconographic representation, topographic and narrative embodiment of divineness), ritual practice and its spaces, religious experience, speculation on deity, otherness and access to religious life.

## **3) Flaws of communication (18-19 January 2024)**

As claimed by Herodotus (III 38. 1-2), only a fool would mock the customs of others; nevertheless, building the basis for efficient communication – especially when different civilisations, traditions or natural kingdoms are involved – is not always an easy task. What if all communication with the Other were to be seen as a form of misunderstanding? This is the thesis discussed by Christine and Véronique Servais as regards communication between human and non-human animals («Le malentendu comme structure de la communication», *Questions de communication*, 15, 1, 2009, pp. 21-49). Misunderstanding should here be understood as a heuristic tool, a communication structure capable of taking on the otherness of the agents of the communication act, in which there is no specific message to convey to a non-human receiver uniquely under the control of the human utterance. Quite on the contrary, all of the possible meanings are moulded by both participants of the speech act. The projection of one’s values in remote contexts – put simply, the tendency to adopt an etic perspective, disconfirming and de-valuing alterity – may lead to a fantasised, if not grotesque, representation of realities which are either unknown or mediated by enforced contingency (war, exploration, trade or interaction with the non-human animal world). Sometimes, however, the distance between civilisations or natural kingdoms can be annulled by pragmatic actions capable of going beyond strictly verbal communication. In this session, we intend to scrutinise recorded cases of these peculiar communicative situations from Antiquity, broadening our horizon of research beyond the Greek and Roman world. We would therefore suggest the submission of papers analysing the following topics:

1. Paradoxography as a privileged narrative tool employed to describe distant cultures. We would like to focus on the anthropological mechanisms underlying the geography of wonder, such as the

inversion of values often employed to describe remote societies or the images, often fantastical and stereotyped, employed to construe and define the ‘Other’;

2. Alternative means of dialogue and contact between cultures as regards the economy of ancient societies, with particular reference to the so-called *silent trade*, a specific form of non-verbal “silent” communication made possible by a shared trade logic;

3. Episodes taken from Greek and Latin literature in which cultural discrepancies between individuals or communities occur, both in times of war and in times of peace. Indeed, when two or more characters interact with each other according to the respective norms of their societies of origin, they create a communicative gap: the analysis of this gap allows for the observation of the cultural instances of the agents and of the reasons behind the misunderstanding;

4. Cases and episodes of interaction between human and non-human animals, in any context (relationships with pets, casual encounters with wild non-human animals, forms of address used by humans for non-human domestic, labour, or war animals), which showcase the varied forms of expressions exploited in the speech act, be it with “speakers” who cannot reply using words.

#### **4) Effective writing: performativity and agency of the written word (7-8 March 2024)**

The issue regarding the relationship between written text and orality is one of the most significant examples of the interaction between scholarship on Antiquity and Cultural Anthropology. From such interaction, it has become possible to appreciate the role played by writing in the recording of information and the production of public and private documents, underlining the way written text can modify the cognitive processes of those who employ it. Alongside these functional aspects of writing, one can also consider the agency and the performative aspect of writing which one can explore through pragmatic approaches.

This session wishes to deal with the performative aspects of the use of writing rather than with its informative aspects, so as to place this cultural practice amongst the direct forms of communicative interactions, and not simply amongst the forms of expression in which the content is mediated by a spatial and temporal distance.

We therefore encourage the submission of papers regarding the ancient Greek and Roman worlds, but also the Near/Middle East and ancient Egypt. We also encourage papers dealing with methodological issues regarding both cultural and historical anthropology, hoping this may allow for an interdisciplinary comparatist dialogue on writing. We thus welcome papers on the following topics:

1. The use of different material *media* and their relevance as regards the content of the written text;
2. The importance of written communication in the dynamics of cult practices and ritual contexts;
3. The relationship between the performative aspect of written communication and textual layouts.

#### **WHERE AND WHEN**

The sixth series will be hosted in person by the DFCLAM Department (*Filologia e Critica delle Letterature Antiche e Moderne*) at the University of Siena. The possibility to participate as speakers via remote online access **will not** be available.

Usually, each session takes place across one or two days. Works are commenced by an established key-note speaker working on the issues discussed during the session: selected speakers will then, in turn, present their paper. After each presentation, ample time is given for questions from the audience and discussion.

## **SUBMISSION NORMS**

This Call for Papers is for young scholars belonging to the following categories: MA graduates, PhD students and *alumni*, post-doc researchers, Early Career researchers, independent researchers who, in all cases, have obtained their PhD no earlier than 5 years prior to the submission deadline. Those interested are invited to present an **abstract (500 words max.)**, followed by a selected bibliography, which should be sent as a **.pdf file** by 31/07/2023, 24:00. To guarantee anonymity in the selection of abstracts, the .pdf file **must not contain any sort of personal information or means of recognition**.

In a separate file (in .pdf), those submitting should include their name and surname, title of the submitted paper, academic affiliation and a brief academic CV stating qualifications, formative experiences and any relevant publication.

**Abstracts may be submitted in the following languages: Italian, English, French.** If submitting a paper in a language other than Italian, a written text of the presentation will be requested to facilitate the participation of the audience.

MA graduates wishing to submit their abstract must also include in their submission a reference letter from a university lecturer. We welcome the submission of **panels with two or more presentations**, preferably representing different research perspectives on a coherent topic so as to enhance the dialogic aspect of our sessions. If submitting a panel, a brief presentation (200/250 words max.) highlighting the reasons behind the panel must be included. Those wishing to submit a panel with two or more presentations are invited to send their abstracts, CVs and the panel presentation to the email address [dialoghisenesi@gmail.com](mailto:dialoghisenesi@gmail.com) with the following subject: *Proposta di panel Dialoghi Senesi VI edizione*. In the body of the mail, the names, surnames and academic affiliation of each member of the panel should be clearly stated, alongside the title of the single papers and of the panel itself.

Selected speakers will be contacted by 15/09/2023, so as to allow sufficient time for the organisation and distribution of the seminars throughout the academic year.

## **SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE**

The abstracts will be examined by a scientific committee formed by Alessandro BARCHIESI (Siena/New York-NYU), Marco BETTALLI (Siena), Maurizio BETTINI (Siena), Simone BETA (Siena), Daniela BONANNO (Palermo), Corinne BONNET (Toulouse), Tommaso BRACCINI (Siena), Gianluca DE SANCTIS (Tuscia), Stefano FERRUCCI (Siena), Alessandro FO (Siena), Cristiana FRANCO (Siena-Unistrasi), Manuela GIORDANO (Siena), Mario LENTANO (Siena), Sonia MACRÌ (Enna), Enrico MEDDA (Pisa), Francesca MENCACCI (Siena), Francesca PRESCENDI (Paris), Silvia ROMANI (Milano), William SHORT (Exeter), Andrea TADDEI (Pisa), Cristiano VIGLIETTI (Siena).

## FURTHER DETAILS

Each speaker will be invited to submit a written version of their paper to the scientific journal *I Quaderni del Ramo d'Oro* for publication: the paper will thence undergo selection through a double blind peer review process.

For any further enquiries, please contact us at [dialoghisenesi@gmail.com](mailto:dialoghisenesi@gmail.com).