

Framing the Bad Guys: Continuative Clauses in the Depiction of the Wrongdoer in Papyrus Petitions

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Abstract While the analysis of papyrus petitions has often been motivated by historical interests, less attention has been drawn to their linguistic features. In this paper, I investigate the use of continuative clauses in Greek petitions from Egypt (I–VIII AD): in particular, I focus on a specific textual unit of the text, illustrating how the wrongdoers and their acts in the concrete case of the document are characterised by means of relativisation. Moreover, I discuss the identification criteria of appositive clauses, as well as the functions that continuative clauses perform in the texts in the light of their syntactic, stylistic and sociolinguistic features.

Keywords Ancient Greek. Documentary papyri. Petitions. Relativisation. Continuative clauses.

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1 The Genre: Papyrus Petitions

Petitions constitute one of the most characteristic types of texts among documentary papyri from Graeco-Roman and Late Antique Egypt. Papyrus petitions involve a request, typically made by a social inferior to a social superior, in order to redress a crime through punishment or financial compensation, or to give assistance to a victim of injustice.¹ Although petitions deal with practical matters, representing an example of “everyday writing”, they are characterised by a higher degree of elaboration and rhetoricisation with respect to other text types, e.g. private letters, since their aim is to convince an addressee in a position of authority to intervene in a given situation.

Previous studies about Greek petitions have examined their formal structure² well as specific subtypes of the genre such as petitions involving a case of violence³ and petitions sent by women.⁴ Moreover, the analysis of this text type has often been motivated by a historical interest, since petitions represent a key element for understanding the legal and social context of ancient Egypt.⁵ Although less attention has been drawn so far to the linguistic features of Greek petitions, some work has been carried out on the rhetorical and stylistic mechanisms of the genre,⁶ inferential expressions preceding the request verb,⁷ and formulaic language.⁸ In this paper, I attempt to tackle a linguistic aspect of petitions so far unexplored, namely relativisation, by analysing some specific units within the text, which exhibits relevant aspects for interpreting the petition as a rhetorical and social instrument.

According to Mullins,⁹ the necessary constituent parts of a petition as a “form” are three: the background, the petition verb and the desired action. While the background expresses the evidence that the writer presents to convince the addressee to act in their favour, the desired action corresponds to the actual request made to

This research was supported by the Research Foundation - Flanders (grant nr. 11H7722N). Greek texts and translations into English are quoted in the given examples from the edition of the papyrus, with the exception of (11), where no previous English translation was available.

¹ Palme 2009, 377-8; Mascellari 2021, 15-21.

² Mullins 1962; White 1972.

³ Bryen 2008.

⁴ Bagnall 2004; Scheerlinck 2012.

⁵ Morris 1981; Ménard 2015; Kelly 2011.

⁶ Fournet 2004; 2019; Papathomas 2007a; 2007b; 2009.

⁷ Bentein 2006.

⁸ Mascellari 2021.

⁹ Mullins 1962.

the authority. Building on this basic structure, two elaborations frequently appear in the petition: the address, which identifies the person to whom the petition is directed, and the courtesy phrase, usually occurring immediately before or after the petition verb and consisting in a form of εἰς σοι δόξη. In a later study about official petitions, i.e. petitions addressed to public officials, from the Early Ptolemaic period to the fifth century AD, White¹⁰ indicates four constituent parts of the form of the petition: the opening, the background, the request and the closing.

Applying the latter template to a text from the archive of Abinnaeus,¹¹ we can identify the four parts of the petition:

Φλαουίῳ Ἀβιν[ν]έῳ ἐξαποπροτηκτῶρων ἐπάρχῳ εἰλῆς κάστρων Διονουσιάδος. παρὰ Αὐρηλίου Ἡρωνο[ς] διάκω[ν]ος ἀπὸ κώμης Βερνικείδος τοῦ αὐτοῦ νομοῦ χαίρειν. [*opening*]

εἰ μὴ ὑπῆρχεν ἡμεῖν ἡ τῶν νόμων ἀλήθεια πάλαι δ' ἂν ὑπὸ τῶν κακούργων ἀναιλούμεθα. Εὐπορος τοῖνυν υἱὸς Ἑρμείας ἀπὸ κώμης Φιλαγρείδος τοῦ αὐτοῦ νομοῦ ἐσύλησέν με ἔνδων τῆς οἰκείας, ἐπιβὰς ληστρεϊκῷ τρόπῳ, καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν ἐσθητὰν συνελάβετο καὶ εἶς τὸ ἴδιον ἀνεστιλατῶ μέχρεις δ[ευ]ρῶ, δυναμ[έν]ου μου καὶ τ[ῆ]ς ἀποδοξεί[ς] [ποι]εῖν ὥς τούτου τήνδε τὴν κ[α]κουργίαν πε[ρ]ποιημένου. [*background*]

διὼ ἄξι[ω], πραιπόσιται κ[ύ]ριε, ἀπραγμῶνος ἃ ἀφῆρπασέν μου [π]αρασχεθῆναι μο[ι]. διάκων γὰρ τετ[ύ]χηκα τῆς κ[α]θολικῆς ἐκ[λ]ησίας. καὶ τοῦτου τυχὼν εἰσαεῖν σοι εὐχαριστήσω. [*request*]

διευτύχει. [μετὰ τῇ] ὑπατείαν Φλ[αουί]ων Σεργίου καὶ Νειργεινιαν[οῦ] τῶ[ν] λαμπροτάτων, Μεχεῖρ ιζ. [*closing*]

To Flavius Abinnaeus, formerly one of the protectors, praefectis alae of the camp of Dionysias from Aurelius Heron, deacon, of the village of Berenicis in the same nome, greeting. [*opening*]

If we did not possess the truth of the laws we should long ago have been destroyed by evil-doers. Euporus, then, son of Hermias, of the village of Philagris in the same nome, robbed me in my house, entering it in the manner of a robber, and seized all my clothing, and appropriated it to his own use until now, although I can demonstrate that it was he who perpetrated this outrage. [*background*]

Wherefore I ask, my lord praepositus, that what he robbed me of should be given to me without demur, for I am a deacon of the principal church. And obtaining this I shall owe you thanks for ever. [*request*]

¹⁰ White 1972.

¹¹ Bell et al. 1962.

Farewell. After the consulship of Flavius Sergius and Nigrinianus the most illustrious, Mecheir 17 [*closing*]
(*P.Abinn.* 55 = TM 10046 (IV AD))

Regarding the internal composition of the sections, three of them, namely the opening, the request and the closing, include for the most part fixed and formulaic elements, although a certain degree of flexibility through the centuries is shown. On the contrary, the background is described as the “most plastic and unstereotyped section within the structure”, whose “idiosyncratic nature places it in sharp contrast to other structural items”.¹² For this reason, in this paper I look specifically at the background of the document, where the writer illustrates the motivation for sending the text and the details of the offence endured in the form of a story. In this narration, additional features about the wrongdoer(s) who committed injustice against the petitioner are often expressed by relative clauses either to depict them in an unpleasant light or to enumerate their actions.¹³ Moreover, different linguistic possibilities can be adopted in syntactic terms, and the type of information expressed by these clauses and their connection with the previous clauses is also noteworthy.

The corpus considered in this study includes all the papyrus petitions dating from the first to the eighth century AD, that is, the Roman and Late Antique period, which amount to 1,321 texts. Not all petitions present relative clauses, also since they might be fragmentary or include only the opening section of the document: overall 1,737 relative clauses were annotated, from 632 texts. In order to “frame the bad guys”, I have mostly focused on the relative clauses whose antecedent is represented by an animate noun, either proper or common, a pronoun or a participle referring to an animate entity, or an entire clause. In terms of the incidence of the phenomenon of continuative clauses (cf. § 3.2), 141 clauses were marked as continuative out of the relative clauses annotated in papyrus petitions; contrary to other types of relative clauses, most of these examples have animate nouns as antecedents.

Before moving to the petitions, a *caveat* about the evaluation and attribution of linguistic features in these documents is necessary. In papyrus petitions, the petitioner does not usually coincide with the actual writer of the text: although contributions of the petitioners are not excluded, these texts were mostly written by professional scribes, who usually remained anonymous and therefore unnoticed,

¹² White 1972, 14.

¹³ In addition to the wrongdoer, also the victim assumes a specific characterisation in papyrus petitions. For the depiction of the victims, see Baetens 2019.

and followed specific editorial models.¹⁴ The problem of the scribal involvement in petitions is also tackled by Kelly,¹⁵ stating that petitions should not be used to “peer inside the minds of the petitioners” as they were, for the most part, written by scribes.

The scribal issue does not, however, prevent from conducting linguistic analyses and comparing petitions with other text types, as it was done in sociolinguistic studies about documentary papyri.¹⁶ Moreover, this problem has been tackled from philological approaches to historical sociolinguistic perspectives:¹⁷ the impact of the scribes on the composition of the document is generally thought to be greater at the level of orthography and phonology, while it is less reflected in syntax,¹⁸ which represents the focus of this work; moreover, scribes might have adapted their language for a certain kind of author, especially when it comes to morphosyntactic variables, which oscillate between conscious and subconscious language use.¹⁹ For practical reasons, I will use in this paper the term “writer” indicating the author of the composition, meaning the professional scribe who probably penned the document, without excluding an influence or contribution of the petitioner.

First, I will consider the broader category of Greek appositive clauses (§ 2), and then I will focus on the subcategory of continuative clauses (§ 3); after describing the functions of these clauses in papyrus petitions, I will further explore their stylistic and sociolinguistic features (§ 4), before drawing some conclusions (§ 5).

2 Appositive Clauses in Ancient Greek

In linguistic studies about relative clauses, a major typological classification concerns the distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive (or appositive) relative clauses.²⁰ This is exemplified by Andrews’²¹ examples:

¹⁴ Mascellari 2021, 28-30.

¹⁵ Kelly 2015, 85-6.

¹⁶ E.g. Bentein 2017; Bentein, Bağrıaçık 2018.

¹⁷ Grossman, Cromwell 2018.

¹⁸ Halla-aho 2018.

¹⁹ Bergs 2015.

²⁰ These two types, however, do not cover the range of semantic possibilities of relative clauses. The existence of a further type, namely “maximalising relative clauses” or “third-kind relative clauses”, is widely discussed in the literature (Grosu, Landman 1998; see also Probert 2015, 71-3).

²¹ Andrews 2007, 207.

(1a) The Japanese **who are industrious** now outcompete Europe.

(1b) The Japanese, **who are industrious**, now outcompete Europe.

In the first type (1a), the restrictive relative clause ‘who are industrious’ is used to identify the antecedent ‘the Japanese’ by defining a subset of elements among it; in the second type (1b), the appositive clause adds some non-essential information concerning the antecedent.²² This classification is not unproblematic, also in the case of Ancient Greek: first, since the two categories may formally overlap, subjective judgment on the part of the interpreter is required.²³ Second, when we look at Greek documentary papyri, we cannot rely on the most important cross-linguistic diagnostics to distinguish between the two types in contemporary linguistic varieties:²⁴ (i) prosody, because we only have access to historical written sources, and (ii) punctuation, because this practice was not systematically applied in the original papyri, or not at all used.²⁵ Therefore, the difference between clauses such as (1a) and (1b) would be acknowledged only on the basis of the interpretation of the meaning and its context. For instance, in (2) and (3), the restrictiveness opposition in papyri is shown: both documents, a letter and a contract, respectively, involve the possession of some *artabae*, but, while in (2) the relative clause is necessary to identify which *artabae* the receiver has to take, in (3) some further information is added about a referent already identified.

(2) μνήσθητι δέ, κύριε ἄδελφε, λαβεῖν τὰς δεκαεῖς ἀρτάβας ἃς ἔχει ἡμῶν Παπνοῦτις Ὁρίωνος ἵνα σὺν θεῷ τὰ παιδιά ἡμῶν εὐρωσιν αὐτά. (*P.Neph.* 2, ll. 1-5 = TM 33556 (IV AD))

and remember, brother, to take the sixteen artabas which Papnuthis son of Horion has, so that, God willing, our children may have them.

(3) τιμῆς τῆς συνπεφωνημένης πρὸς ἀλλήλους τοῦ αὐτοῦ κατ' ἐμὲ ἡμίους [μέ]ρους σίτου ἀρταβῶν δώδεκα, ὥσπερ αὐτόθι ἔσχον παρὰ σοῦ ἐκ πλήρους διὰ χιρός (*P.Oxy.* LXXIII 4966, ll. 11-14 = TM 118656 (IV AD))

²² Appositive clauses are less prototypical and generally less documented than restrictive relative clauses; moreover, they are not considered proper relative clauses in semantic-based definitions of the constructions (López Romero 2023, 6-7; for an overview of the definition of restrictiveness as a linguistic category, see Hayes 2018, 51-84).

²³ Boyer 1988, 235.

²⁴ Keenan 1985, 169; Quirk et al. 1985, 366; Porter 1994, 244; Halliday 2014, 467.

²⁵ Punctuation is however applied in the papyrus texts by the modern editors, so it is possible to rely on the editions up to a certain extent, cf. *infra*.

the price of my same half-share being agreed between us at twelve artabas of wheat, which I received from you on the spot in full from hand to hand.

Nevertheless, some formal aspects have been pointed out in order to distinguish restrictive from appositive clauses. In particular, according to Perna,²⁶ appositive relative clauses in Ancient Greek (i) are not internally-headed, (ii) do not appear before the main clause, and (iii) do not present phenomena of case attraction, either direct or inverse.

As for (i), if internally-headed relative clauses are always restrictive in Ancient Greek,²⁷ the situation changes in the Post-Classical period, with these clauses being used also non restrictively.²⁸ In (4), in the context of a long contract of will in which Psyphis divides his property among his children and grandchildren, the particular status of Psyphis' wife is expressed by an internally-headed relative clause: this does not select a relevant person among a possible set of women, since the head noun is already a proper noun, but it rather specifies the juridical nature of their relationship, making the relative clause appositive in meaning.

(4) ἐξ ἧς σύνεστιν ἀγράφους γυναῖκός Τετοσίρεως τῆς καὶ Διονυσίας
(*P.Mich.* V 322a, l. 2 = TM 12132 (I AD))

by the wife with whom he lives without written contract, Tetosiris also called Dionysia.

Also in (5), the internally-headed relative clause is appositive: the head noun φόρον is marked by the accusative as a sort of casus pendens, repeating an already identified φόρου appearing earlier in the text, and connecting it with a clause introduced by ὅσπερ which adds information on the measuring of the rent.²⁹

(5) εἰς σπορὰν καὶ κατάθεσιν ὧν ἐὰν αἰρῶμαι φόρου ἀποτάκτου πυροῦ ἀρταβῶν τριάκοντα ὅνπερ φόρον μετρήσω τῷ Ἐπειφ μηνὶ
(*P.Charite* 7, ll. 11-15 = TM 15563 (IV AD))

to sow and plant with whatever I choose, at a total rent of thirty artabas of wheat, which rent I shall measure out in the month of Epeiph.

²⁶ Perna 2013, 187.

²⁷ Perna 2013; Probert 2015.

²⁸ Bentein, Bağrıaçık 2018.

²⁹ One might also consider what happens in this clause as a case of *attractio inversa*, also based on the comparison with Latin (see Halla-aho 2009, 108-9).

The presence of a superfluous element which replicates what is already otherwise expressed in the text was investigated by Bakker³⁰ with reference to pronouns, who calls such an element *pronomen abundans*.³¹ In (6), the pronoun τοῦτ[ω]ν, denoting the same referent of the preceding relative marker ὧν, represents an instance of *pronomen abundans*:

(6) ἐν τῷ λεγομέν[ωι] Σαδῇ [κλ]ήρ[ο]ν [ἄρ]οιυραι ἑπτὰ ἡμισ[υ] τ[έ]τ[α]ρτον, ὧν γείτονες τοῦτ[ω]ν νότου πρότε[ρ]ον Ἡρα[κλ]είδου τοῦ Ζωί[λο]ν κλήρ[ος] βορρᾶ [Ἄπολ]λωνίου τοῦ Στράτωνος κλήρος (P.Ryl. II 154, ll. 12-14 = TM 12939 (I AD))

7¾ arurae of a holding in the place called Sade, the boundaries of which are (of these), on the south the holding formerly belonging to Heraclides son of Zoilus, on the north the holding of Apollonius son of Straton

Although this phenomenon is limited in papyrological sources compared to Christian texts, where it is normally thought as a semitic influence,³² all the examples in papyri pertain to appositive relative clauses.³³

As for the second criterion described by Perna³⁴ (ii), although appositive clauses do not appear before the main clause in Classical Greek, they can be positioned also before the clause acting as antecedent in papyri in formulaic instances. In (7), the event which the writer wishes not to happen follows the wish itself, expressed by an appositive relative clauses with the formula ὃ μὴ εἴη.³⁵

(7) ὧ[ν] δ' ἂν ἀργήσῃ ὁ παῖς ἐν τῷ χρόνῳ ἐν ᾧ μισθὸν λαμβάνει ἢ ὃ μὴ εἴη ἀσθενήσῃ (P.Oxy. XXXI 2586, ll. 35-9 = TM 16900 (III AD))

and if the boy is idle on any days during the time that he is receiving wages, or (may it not happen) is ill.

³⁰ Bakker 1974.

³¹ Bakker 1974, 110.

³² Blass, Debrunner 1961, 155; Du Toit 2016, 55.

³³ Some examples are however attested already in Classical Greek, see Bakker 1974, 11-13; Perna 2013, 212-14; López Romero 2023, 12-13.

³⁴ Perna 2013.

³⁵ On the formula ὃ μὴ γένοιτο, ὃ μὴ τύχοι and similar patterns in Classical Greek, see López Romero 2023, 168-72. In documentary papyri, this relative construction appear also in combination with the relative article το in the formula (ἐν) τῷ (δὲ) ἀβρόχῳ, το μὴ εἴη, cf. Cattafi 2023, 52.

Similarly, in the appositive relative formula ὧν λόγον δώσει, the quantity constituting the head noun can freely appear before (8) or after (9) the relative clause.

(8) οἴνου μονόχωρα ἑκατὸν ὧν λόγον δώσει (*P.Flor.* II 124, ll. 5-7 = TM 10977 (III AD))

one hundred measures of wine of which he will render account.

(9) ὧν λόγον δώσει οἴνου μονόχωρον ἔν³⁶ (*P.Flor.* II 235, ll. 5-7 = TM 11115 (III AD))

a measure of wine of which he will render account.

The third criterion pointed out by Perna³⁷ (iii), also mentioned by Rijksbaron³⁸ and Pieroni³⁹ states that appositive clauses never present case attraction with the head noun. While this is true for Classical Greek, this phenomenon can happen in papyri in internally-headed relative clauses with non-restrictive meaning (cf. ex. (4)), but also in externally-headed constructions. In (10), an example also discussed by Cattafi,⁴⁰ the relative marker is attracted in the genitive because of the case-marking of the head-noun ἀναδιδόντος: the relative clause οὗ ἐνετειλόμεθα is appositive, expressing a further action performed by the antecedent.

(10) τὸν ἑνά'.[.]. ἀπὸ τῶν δύο' ὧν εἴχαμεν ἔπεμψα ὑμ[ε]ῖν διὰ τ[ο]ῦ ἀναδιδόντος ὑμεῖν τὰ γράμματα, [-2].τος ἀπὸ Σε[ρ]ύφεως, οὗ ἐνετειλόμεθα τὰ κτήνη τὰ τρία' ἀνείναι. (*P.Oxy.* LXXVIII 5180, ll. 2-5 = TM 170063 (II-III AD))

of the two that we had, the one... I have sent you through the person delivering you the letter,... from Seryphis, whom we instructed to send up the three beasts.

These examples show that the formal criteria which were brought up for Greek relative clauses in the Classical period do not help in their identification in the Post-Classical papyri, since there is no morpho-syntactic aspect of relative clauses that is limited to the restrictive

³⁶ Note the mismatch in number between the head noun and the relative pronoun: the formula remains unchanged also with a singular head noun.

³⁷ Perna 2013.

³⁸ Rijksbaron 1981, 240.

³⁹ Pieroni 1998, 173.

⁴⁰ Cattafi 2024.

category, while only the presence of a *pronomen abundans*, albeit sporadic in the papyri, could be identified as a trademark of appositive clauses.

Finally, at a formal level, it is also worth mentioning that the strategy of relativisation employed is not relevant either to disambiguate restrictive from appositive clauses, since participles and finite clauses can be used together referring to the same head noun with a similar non-restrictive meaning (11). In the following petition from the Roman period, two features about the wrongdoer Leonides are provided, the first through a finite relative clause introduced by ὅς which specifies Leonides' position, and the second by a participial clause pointing out his possession of some land belonging to the petitioners' father:

(11) Λεωνίδης Πτολεμαίου Ἀλθαίου, ὅς ἐστι νῦν ἐπ' Ἀλεξανδρείας, ἔχων πατρῶαν ἡμῶν ὑποθή[κ]ην [...] ἀρούρας τεσσαράκοντα [ἑ]ξ
(*P.Berl.Moeller* 2, ll. 4-9 = TM 17455 (I AD))

Leonides, son of Ptolemy, Althaieus, who is now in Alexandria, and who has, as a pledge from our father, [...] forty-six aurorae"

We will therefore now turn to the content of the clauses as a possibly more reliable criterion in their identification in documentary papyri.

3 Continuative Clauses in Papyrus Petitions

3.1 From Appositive to Continuative

Among the category of appositive clauses, a further distinction is made between proper non-restrictive ("parenthetischen") and connective or continuative clauses ("anknüpfend"/"continuativ").⁴¹ In (12a), the relative clause is added parenthetically as an additional specification about the head noun, while, in (12b), the relative clause rather expresses an event involving the head noun which happens after the event of the main clause, and therefore belongs to the continuative type:

(12a) Emil, **who brought the book to the library**, must have lost it somewhere on the way

(12b) She gave the book to Emil, **who brought it to the library**

⁴¹ The German terms are taken from Lehmann 1984, 272.

According to Levinsohn,⁴² many languages do not have appositive relative clauses or use them only in specific circumstances; it was also observed by Petersen⁴³ that Greek is “somewhat special in that [...] the language also makes a further distinction within the non-restrictive category, namely that between ‘appositional’ and ‘continuative’”. Continuative relative clauses were investigated especially in the New Testament, recently by Hayes⁴⁴ and Du Toit,⁴⁵ but this phenomenon was noticed already in the first grammars of New Testament Greek: Winer⁴⁶ pointed out that ὅς is intended as continuative when it can be resolved into καὶ οὗτος, and Blass and Debrunner⁴⁷ described this use as “a loosening of the connection of the relative clause to the preceding complex sentence”, where ὅς has the meaning of “and this, but this, this very thing”. In terms of function, Greek continuative clauses are said to “move the thought of the sentence into a new area”,⁴⁸ “advance the storyline or argument”⁴⁹ and “describe an event that involves the referent of the relative pronoun and occurs subsequent to the previous event or situation in which the referent featured”.⁵⁰

A continuum from modification to coordination has been postulated by Hayes,⁵¹ where continuative clauses are situated at the very end of the coordination pole. This is exemplified in the figure below. In particular, Hayes distinguishes three types of appositive clauses, with (13a) being less prone to coordination compared to (13b) and (13c):

(13a) *Proper non-restrictive*: Give this to John, who sorely needs it.

(13b) *Continuative*: He gave the letter to the clerk, who then copied it.

(13c) *Sentential*: Pam didn’t go to the show, which is a pity.

⁴² Levinsohn 2000, 190.

⁴³ Petersen 2001, 6.

⁴⁴ Hayes 2018, 129-58.

⁴⁵ Du Toit 2022.

⁴⁶ Winer 1982, 680.

⁴⁷ Blass, Debrunner 1961, 239-340.

⁴⁸ Boyer 1988, 236.

⁴⁹ Petersen 2001, 6.

⁵⁰ Levinsohn 2000, 150.

⁵¹ Hayes 2018, 140.

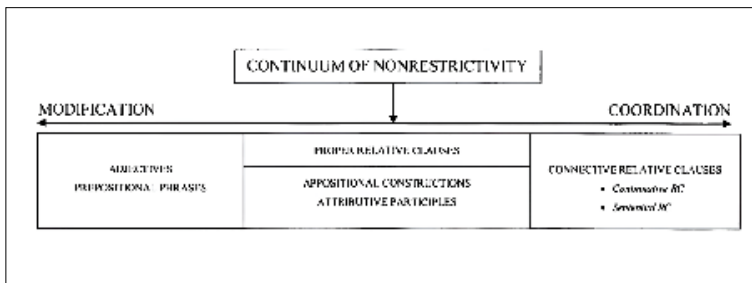


Figure 1 The continuum of restrictivity (from Hayes 2018, 140)

While it is accurate to intend the concept of restrictiveness as a continuum, I believe that the distinction between continuative and sentential relative clauses operates at two different levels: the continuative type refers to the meaning of the clause, which corresponds to the advancement of a story or an argumentation, while the sentential type refers to its form, namely the fact that the antecedent is represented by the entire preceding clause, and not by a noun phrase. Therefore, a relative clause can in principle be sentential in form and continuative in meaning at the same time, as in (14a) and (14b):

(14a) ὑμεῖς δέ μοι οὐδὲ ἅπαξ ἐδηλώσατε περὶ τῆς σωτηρίας ὑμῶν, ὅπερ κἄν νῦν ποιήσατε διὰ τῶν ἐρχομένων πρὸς ἡμᾶς (*P.Oxy.* XVII 2151, ll. 5-8 = TM 30674 (III AD))

but you have never once told me about your health, so do so now by the people who are coming to us.

(14b) Ὀννώφρις Ὀννώφριος [...] αὐθάδως κατέσπασεν ἀπὸ μέρους, ἐξ οὗ κινδυνεύει τῷ ὅλῳ ἐξαρθῆνα[ι] (*P.Ryl.* II 133, ll. 16-19 = TM 12919 (I AD))

Onnophris son of Onnophris [...] ventured to pull it partly down, whereby there is a danger of its being entirely carried away.

It is true, however, that, in the same way as the continuative type, also sentential relative clauses are appositive by definition, since they refer to sentences that, like proper nouns, indicate ‘unique’ objects and are semantically definite.⁵² This is also reflected in the type of relative pronouns that introduce these clauses in the Greek language:

⁵² Lehmann 1984, 273.

according to López Romero,⁵³ in Classical Greek sentential relative clauses are only introduced by definite pronouns, such as ὅς, ὅσπερ and οἷος, but not, for instance, ὅστις or ὁποῖος. In papyrus petitions from the Roman and Late Antique period, these clauses are attested only in combination with ὅς, ὅσπερ, ὅσος and the relative article ὁ. Semantically, sentential relative clauses have been described in Archaic and Classical Greek as referring to the state of affairs described in the preceding clause.⁵⁴ In the context of private papyrus letters, these are often found in salutations and health wishes:

(15) πρὸ τῶν ὅλ[ων εὖχομ]αί σε ἐρρῶσθαι, ὅ μοι εὐκτόν ἐστιν (*P.Mich.* VIII 466, ll. 3-4 = TM 17240 (II AD))

before all else, I pray for your good health, which is my wish.

Moreover, although always in the neuter form, relative markers introducing sentential clauses are not always in the singular in documentary papyri, differently from New Testament Greek:⁵⁵

(16) παρὰ πάντα δὲ σεαυτοῦ ἐπιμέλου ἵν ὑγιαίνης ἃ δὴ πρῶτον ἡμῖν τῶν εἰς εὐχὴν ἐστιν (*BGU XVI* 2622, ll. 22-4 = TM 23346 (I AD))⁵⁶

above all, take care of yourself so you stay healthy – the first thing in our prayers.

Most appositive and continuative clauses in papyrus petitions, however, are not sentential, but they rather have a noun phrase as antecedent. In particular, in the background of the petition, the head noun is often represented by wrongdoers who are already identified, either by their proper name or by some other salient features (see § 2), while the continuative clauses follow the course of their actions. In the next section, we focus therefore on the use of continuative clauses in papyrus petitions, and the functions they performed within these texts, namely to “frame the bad guys” of the story.

⁵³ López Romero 2023, 145.

⁵⁴ Perna 2013, 194; Probert 2015, 147-8; López Romero 2023, 143.

⁵⁵ Du Toit 2022, 168.

⁵⁶ This example also differs from the sentential relative clause introduced by ἃ quoted in Perna 2013, 194, since it refers there to two coordinated elements from the previous clause. See also some cases discussed by López Romero 2023, 144 on possible exceptions to the number rule.

3.2 Continuative Clauses in the Context of the Petition

The behaviour of continuative clauses has not been investigated yet in the papyri. In fact, Bakker thought that the phenomenon was not at all typical of this type of documents:

In the papyri relative connection does not occur very often. This is not surprising; this idiom is not at home in documents and letters, it is more suitable to the story.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, the fact that these clauses are suitable to the story and their presence in documentary papyri are not necessarily two mutually excluding elements: the background of papyrus petitions contains a story of variable length in which the events that induced to petitioner to write are narrated, which makes continuative clauses potentially ‘at home’ also in this genre of papyrus texts. To better understand this possibility, let us observe some examples of these clauses in the context of the petition.

In *P.Ryl. II 125*, Orsenoupis writes to the chief of police about some items deposited in a box by his mother, which have been stolen by the builder Petesouchus during the demolition of some walls. The continuative relative clause, introduced by ὅς καί,⁵⁸ highlights a turning point in the narration, after the list of the items that the box contained, revealing that Petesouchus not only stole them, but also lied about the fact that it was empty.

(17) Μεσορὴ μηνὶ τοῦ διελη(λυθότος) ιδ (ἔτους) Τιβερίου Καίσαρος Σεβαστοῦ ποιοιμέ[ν]ου μου κατασπασμὸν τειχαρίων παλαιῶ(ν) ἐν τοῖς οἰκοπέδο[ι]ς μου διὰ Πετεσοῦχου τοῦ Πετεσοῦχου οἰκοδόμ(ου), καὶ ἐμοῦ χωρισθέντος εἰς ἀποδημίαν βιωτ[ι]κῶν χάριν εὔρεν ὁ Πετεσοῦχος ἐν τῷ κατασπασμῷ τὰ ὑπὸ τῆς μητρός μου ἀποτεθειμένα ἐν πυξιδίῳ ἔτι ἀπὸ τοῦ ις (ἔτους) Καίσαρος ἐνωτίων χρυσο ζεύγο(ς) (τετάρτων) δ καὶ μηνίσκο(ν) χρυσο(ῦν) (τετάρτων) γ καὶ ψελίω(ν) ἀργυρῶν ζεύγο(ς) ὀλκή(ς) ἀσήμο(ν) (δραχμῶν) ιβ καὶ ὀρμίσκον ἐν ᾧ ἀργυρᾶ ἄξιο(ν) (δραχμῶν) π καὶ ἀργυ(ρίου) (δραχμᾶς) ξ, καὶ διαπλανήσας τοῖς ὑπ[ο]ουργοῦντας καὶ τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἀπηνέγκατο παρ’ ἐατὸν διὰ τῆς ἐατοῦ θυγατρὸς παρθένου· ἐκκενώσας τὰ προκείμενα ἔριπεν ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ μου τὴν πυξίδα κενήν, ὅς καὶ ὡμολ[ό]γησεν τὴν πυξίδα ὥς προφέρεται κενήν (*P.Ryl. II 125*, ll. 4-28 = TM 12911 (I AD))

⁵⁷ Bakker 1974, 97.

⁵⁸ When the relative pronoun has a continuative meaning, the combination with καί appears “redundant” (Nicholas 1998, 234). Note also the non-standard order of the two elements.

In the month Mesore of the past 14th year of Tiberius Caesar Augustus I was engaged in demolishing some old walls upon my land through the agency of Petesouchus son of Petesouchus, builder; and when I had left home on business concerning my livelihood Petesouchus discovered in the work of demolition certain articles deposited in a little box by my mother as far back as in the 16th year of Augustus, namely a pair of gold ear-rings weighing 4 quarters, a gold crescent weighing 3 quarters, a pair of silver bracelets to the weight of 12 drachmae of unstamped metal, a necklace on which were silver ornaments worth 80 drachmae, and 60 silver drachmae. Putting his workmen and my servants off the scent he had these conveyed to his home by his unmarried daughter, and having rifled the contents aforesaid he threw the box empty into my house; moreover he acknowledges (having found) the box but alleges that it was empty.

In a similar way, but with an adversary meaning, expressed by ὅς δέ, in a petition from the third century AD the daughters of Kopres write to the strategos because their uncle Chaeremon took possession of their property after the death of their father. Here the continuative relative clause points out the contradiction between how Chaeremon was supposed to act, and how he acted instead, ultimately unmasking him as the wrongdoer of the story:

(18) ὁ δὲ τούτου ἀδελφὸς Χαιρήμων ἅπαντα τὰ κατέλιπεν ἐνκομφωσάμενος καὶ παράσχετο ἡμῖν ταῖς γυναιξὶν σιτικᾶς δημοσίας ἀρούρας ταῖς μὴ δυναμέναις ὑπαντᾶν τοῖς φόροις τῶν ἀρουρῶν. προσήλθαμεν δὲ καὶ τότε τῷ γενομένῳ πρωτοστάτῃ τῆς κώμης Σερήνῳ τῷ καὶ Ἀρπ[ο]κρά καὶ ἐκέ[λ]ευσεν αὐτὸν ἅπαντα τὰ καταλιφθέντα ὑπὸ τ[ο]ῦ ἡμῶν πατρὸς ταῦτα ἡμῖν πα[ρ]ασχεῖν. ὅς δέ οὐδεμίαν ἡμῶν φ[ρ]οντίδα πο[ι]εῖται (*P.Cair.Isid.* 64, ll. 5-14 = TM 10394 (III AD))

But his brother Chaeremon appropriated all that he had left, and handed over to us, who are women, grain-bearing arouras of public land, although we are unable to meet the rents on the arouras. And at that time we approached the protostates of the village who was then in the office, namely Serenus also called Harpocras, and he ordered him (i.e. Chaeremon) to turn over to us all the property that had been left by our father. But he takes no account of us.

To introduce a continuative clause in papyri, not only ὅς, but also the pronoun ὅστις can be used in petitions in the same circumstances, further pointing towards an overlapping in meaning between the two

markers in the Post-Classical papyri.⁵⁹ In a petition from the archive of Sakaon,⁶⁰ the widow Aurelia Artemis is writing to the prefect because a certain Syrion is using his influence to steal her husband's property, now belonging to her and her children: the unmasking of Syrion as the 'bad guy' of the story is again realised in the text by means of a clause introduced by ὅστις.

(19) Συρίων γενόμενος δεκάπρωτος [ἀπὸ τῆς αὐτ]ῆς κώμης Θρασῶ ἀναπίσας μου τὸν ἀν[δρα Καῖτ ὀνό]ματι ποιμένιν αὐτοῦ τὰ πρόβατα – ὅστις [ἀδίκως τὰς τοῦ] προκειμένου ἀνδρὸς αἴγας καὶ πρόβατα τὸν [ἀριθμὸν ἐξήκο]ντα συναπέσπασεν αὐτῷ (*P.Sakaon* 36, ll. 8-11 = TM 13054 (III AD))

Syrion having become decaprotus of the aforesaid village, persuaded my husband Ganis to pasture his flock – it was he who wrongfully removed into his own keeping my husband's goats and sheep 60 in number.

Interestingly, in (17), (18) and (19), we can also observe different punctuation strategies employed by the editors of the texts in order to mark the beginning of the continuative clause after the main clause: a comma in (17), a full stop in (18) and a dash in (19); furthermore, in (24) the continuative clause will be introduced by another punctuation mark, the raised point. All these signs, which are not present in the original papyrus, further add to what underlined in § 2 about the use of punctuation as an interpretive mechanisms of the relative clause's meaning.⁶¹

3.3 Applying Loock's Model to Papyrus Petitions

We have seen so far that continuative clauses are a subdivision of appositive clauses and that, in papyri, they can highlight pivotal moments in the narrative of the petition. In order to better formalise the functions of continuative clauses and to differentiate them from other types of appositive clauses, the model developed by Loock⁶² on English attempts a positive definition of appositive relative clauses, that

⁵⁹ See Bentein, Cattafi 2024. Kriki 2013, 455 observes that continuative relative clauses in documentary papyri show a preference for the pronoun ὅσπερ, while ὅς is rarer. In my data on petitions, ὅς is the relative pronoun more commonly used to introduce finite continuative clauses, followed by ὅσπερ and ὅστις.

⁶⁰ Parassoglou 1978.

⁶¹ Compare it also with the absence and the presence of a comma signalling the distinction between the restrictive relative clause in (2) and the appositive clause in (3).

⁶² Loock 2007, 339; 2010, 95-139.

is, a definition made on the basis of what these clauses do in the text rather than by underlying what they are not (as in ‘non-restrictive’). Three types of appositive clauses are then distinguished: the relevance type, the subjectivity type, and the proper continuative type. By applying this model to Greek papyrus petitions, we can observe the specific functions performed by these three categories in the texts.

Loock’s relevance type has the goal of maximising the relevance of an utterance. In our documents, although the antecedent is already referentially identified, the writer needs to make it relevant within the discourse, by adding details unknown to the addressee which are important to create the appropriate contextual effects, namely to call on the addressee’s sympathy and maximise the possibility that the plaint will be considered. In these texts, this means increasingly characterising a certain figure as the wrongdoer of the story, amplifying their wickedness and, as such, the seriousness of the victim’s damage. In (20), the relevance appositive relative clauses introduced by οἵτινες, “justify and legitimise the referent’s presence”⁶³ in the petition: the fact that the money lenders carried off the children of Pamonthios is here the relevant piece of information, representing, as said immediately afterwards in the text, the reason that brings the victim’s brother to write the petition.

(20) οὗτος Ἰὰρ ὁ/ ἀδελφὸς ἡμῶν ἔτυχεν ποτε οἶνοπράτης καὶ ἐπὶ πολλῷ ἐνοχληθεὶς ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ πατρίδι ἀρχωντῶ [[παρα]] παρὰ τὴν δύναμιν αὐ[το]ῦ εἰσπράττεσθαι καὶ ἐκ τούτου ὄγκον ἀργυρίου δαν[ει]σάμενος καὶ ταῦτα ἀπετηθεὶς καὶ μὴ δυνάμενος ἀπαντᾶν πρὸς τὰ χρεωστούμενα ἠναγκάσθη ὑπὸ τῶν δανιστῶ πάντα τὰ ἑαυτοῦ ἄχρι καὶ τῶν ἱματίων τῶν τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην αὐτοῦ περισκεπασμένων πολλῆσαι· καὶ τούτων πραθέντων μόγις τὴν ἡμίσιαν τῶν ἀργυρίων τεδύνηται περινοῆσαι τοῖς δανισταῖς, οἵτινες οἱ ἀνελεήμονες ἐκείνοι καὶ ἄθεοι ἀπέσπασαν τὰ πάντα τὰ ἑαυτοῦ τέκνα νήπια κομιδῇ. ὅθεν ἐπιτίνωμεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ταυτηνὴ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν, ἀξιοῦντες ὑμ[ᾶς] σ]υμβαλέσθαι αὐτῷ εἰς ὃ ἐὰ[ν] δύνασθε[δοῦν]ε (P.Lond. VI 1915, ll. 16-31 = TM 16853 (IV AD))

For this brother of ours was formerly a wine dealer, and having been long troubled by the magistrates in his native place with taxes exactions beyond his means, and having as a result borrowed a large sum of money, and being asked for this and being unable to meet his debts, he was compelled by the money lenders to sell all his possessions, even to the garments that covered his nakedness. And after selling these, with difficulty could he get together the half of

⁶³ Loock 2010, 109.

the money to pay the money lenders, who, those pitiless and godless men, carried off all his children, mere infants. Wherefore we direct to you this letter, asking you to help him in so far as you can give.

A similar effect can be achieved by means of participial relative clauses, as in (21), where the attention of the addressee is guided towards the negative qualities of Ptolemaeus, who is first presented in a more neutral light with details about his family and his provenance, and afterwards, by means of adjectives and then participial relative clauses, is progressively depicted as a ‘bad guy’. When the focus lies on a concrete instance justifying the negative moral judgement, as in (20), the relative clause introduced by a pronoun is preferred, while participles are used to draw the characterisation of the wrongdoer as someone who is used to unethical behaviours, as in (21).

(21) ὧν ἔστιν Πτολεμαῖος υἱὸς Πάππου[υ] τινὸς γεγυμνασιαρχικότος ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἀρσινοεΐτου, αὐθάδης τῷ τρόπῳ κ[αὶ] βί[α]ις, δανιστιμὸν βίον ζῶων καὶ πράσσω ἀνόσια πάν[τα] ἀπειρημένα, στατηρί[α]ιό[υ]ς τόκους ἀπαιτῶν τῇ περὶ αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ νομῷ δυσ[άμει] (SB XX 14401, ll. 6-10 = TM 14880 (II AD))

One of these men is Ptolemaeus, son of a certain Pappus ex-gymnasiarch, from the same Arsinoite nome, reckless in his conduct and violent, leading the life of a moneylender and committing every impious and forbidden act, by demanding interest at the rate of a stater per mina per month by virtue of the power he has in the nome.

In Loock’s categorisation, the subjectivity type of appositive clauses is used to convey an opinion or a comment on behalf of the speaker. Also this function is pertinent to the goals of papyrus petitions, in which the writers, playing the role of victims, wish to express judgements and to present a personal version of the events occurred; a shift from objectivity to subjectivity, from the ‘referential’ level to the level of ‘commentary’ is provided by the relative clause.

In (22), the ‘bad guys’ Theodorus and the komarchs are first presented in their concrete actions. A comment of the writer is then added, generalising the wrongdoers’ behaviour in order to shed on them negative light and to reinforce the victim’s position by appealing to a common ground of values. As it is the case in example (22), on a formal level the subjectivity type is often represented by a sentential relative clause in combination with a neuter relative marker (cf. 14a-b, 15, 16), referring back to the entire preceding clause.

(22) τὰ δινὰ πάσχομεν ὑ[πὸ] τ[ῶ]ν τοῦ πραιποσίτου τοῦ πάγου Θεοδώρου καὶ τῶν κωμάρχων. καταπλήτ[ου]σιν ἡμᾶς, ὅπερ δικν[ύει]

[τῇν π]ροαίρεσιν τούτων τῶν παμπονήρω[ν ἀ]νδρῶν (*P.Cair.Isid.73*, ll. 3-4 = TM 10404 (IV AD))

We suffer severely at the hands of the praepositus of the pagus Theodorus and of the komarchs. They terrorise us, and this reveals the character of these utterly wicked men.

Moreover, next to the pronoun strategy, also this type of relative clauses is found with the participial strategy. In (23), the participle ὀφίλων appears in an internally-headed construction, where a woman, Aurelia Taÿsirie, judges her husband Paul as not deserving to be called as such. While due to the fragmentary nature of the text we do not know the story behind this accusation, which would have probably been described in the following lines, the comment added about Paul is at this point a subjective judgement to condition the hearer's evaluation of the facts before even introducing them, calling on an element of sympathy towards the victim. In (23), this judgement is expressed about the wrongdoer as an individual rather than about an action as in (22).

(23) ἀλλότρι[α τῶν ν]όμων διεπράξατο κατ' ἐμοῦ ὁ μὴ καλεῖσθαι ὀφίλων ἀνὴρ μου Παῦλος [υἱὸς(?) Κ]άστορος (*P.Harr. II 218*, ll. 5-7 = TM 15218 (IV AD))

Paul, son of Castor, who does not deserve to be called my husband, acted illegally against me.

The proper continuative type has, according to Looock, the function of enabling a movement within the narrative time. This effect is also relevant to the genre of petitions, since, in the background, a convincing narrative has to be presented to the addressee (see § 1); this goal can be reached by means of continuative clauses, which bring the spotlight to the wrongdoer as accountable for a sequence of events.

In (24), the wrongdoer in the text is the soldier Iulius: approached by the petitioner, an old man, he reacts to his inquiry in a violent way. The sequence, however, starts from a simple episode of rural life, before moving to the central story with the actions of the 'bad guy': the passage between the two situations, both of which involve Iulius, is marked by a continuative clause introduced by ὅς, which promotes him at the foreground of the narrative.

(24) χοίρου υἱὸς ἀποπλανθείσης τῆς θυγατρὸς μου ἐν τῇ κώμῃ καὶ ὀνομαζομένης ὡς παρὰ Ἰουλίῳ στρατιώτῃ, προσήλθον αὐτῷ αἰτήσεων ὅρκον περὶ τούτου· ὅς λαβόμενός μου τοῦ πρεσβύτου ἐν τῇ κώμῃ μεσούσης ἡμέρας, ὡς οὐκ ὄντων νόμων, πληγαῖς με ἤκισατο (*SB IV 7464*, ll. 9-11 = TM 14020 (III AD))

A sow having escaped from my daughter in the village and being reported to be at the house of the soldier Julius, I went to him to demand his oath about this matter, and he laying hands on me, old as I am, in the village in the middle of the day, as if there were no laws, belaboured me with blows.

The chain of events in the narrative can be realised also with participles referring to the wrongdoer.⁶⁴ Differently from the previous case, in (25), a short petition from the archive of Euhemeria, the story starts in medias res with the introduction of a female character, Herais, who first enters the petitioner's house and then assaults his daughter. The temporal sequence of the wrongdoer's actions builds up with two participles,⁶⁵ εἰσελθὼν and συνλαβὼν, which are followed by three coordinated finite verbs expressing the types of violence inflicted.

(25) Ἡραῖς γυνὴ Ἡρακλᾶτος τοῦ Π[. .] τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς κώμης εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὴν ὑ[πάρ]χο(υσαν) ἐν τῇ κώμῃ οἰκ[ίαν] καὶ συνλαβὼν τὴν θυγατέρα μ[ο]υ ἔδ[ωκε]ν πληγὰς π[λ]εῖους εἰς πᾶν μέρος καὶ περιέ[σ]χισεν χιτῶνα πορφυροῦν καὶ ἀπηνέγκατο ἀφ' ᾧ χιρίζω τοῦ γυμνα[σ]ιάρχ(ου) ἀργυ(ρίου) ρ (P.Ryl. II 151, ll. 5-17 = TM 12937 (I AD))

Herais wife of Heraclas son of ..., an inhabitant of the village, having entered the house which I possess in the village seized my daughter, gave her numerous blows all over her body, tore her purple tunic, and carried off 100 drachmae from the money of the gymnasiarch which I administer.

⁶⁴ The use of tenses is also noticeable in participial clauses: while in the relevance type in (21) and the subjectivity type in (23) the participle appears in the present form, in the continuative type in (25) it appears in the aorist.

⁶⁵ On the use of participles to "sketch the circumstances under which the main events in the past occurred" in papyrus petition, see Bentein 2015, 476.

4 Stylistic and Sociolinguistic Aspects of Continuative Clauses

4.1 Stylistic Effects of Continuative Clauses

Continuative clauses are frequently attested in the Greek New Testament: according to Boyer,⁶⁶ the text presents 422 instances of continuative clauses. In a passage from the Gospel of Luke (26), the similarities with the examples from the papyri appear striking: the continuative clause is introduced by ὃς καὶ as in (17) and it is found in an analogous context of most instances in the petitions, with the narration of negative characters behaving aggressively towards other individuals, e.g. beating them (cf. 24, 25).

(26) ἄνθρωπός τις κατέβαινεν ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλὴμ εἰς Ἱεριχὼ καὶ λησταῖς περιέπεσεν, οἱ καὶ ἐκδύσαντες αὐτὸν καὶ πληγὰς ἐπιθέντες ἀπῆλθον ἀφέντες ἡμιθανῆ (Luke 10,30)⁶⁷

A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.

The main function of these clauses in the New Testament is believed to be the increasing of coherence in a sentence or in a larger textual unit:⁶⁸ in particular, coherence is increased because continuative clauses provide both a referential link and temporal continuity with what precedes the clause,⁶⁹ while, at the same time, establishing a relationship which can be conceptualised in terms of background and foreground: the informational content of the continuative clause pertains to the foreground, and that of the main clause preceding the relative pronoun usually pertains to the background.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Boyer 1988, 236.

⁶⁷ Example quoted from Du Toit 2022, 166-7.

⁶⁸ Du Toit 2022, 174, cf. Rutten, Van der Wal 2017, 135 on Dutch.

⁶⁹ Du Toit 2022, 178.

⁷⁰ I believe that this view can be associated to the notion of linguistic framing. Runge 2010, speaks about subordinate clauses as “framing devices”: when placed before the main clause, they seek to “establish an explicit frame of reference for the clause that follows” (Runge 2010, 209-10). Levinsohn 2000, 192 notices the “rhetorical effect” of continuative clauses, namely to “move the story forward quickly by combining background and foreground information in a single sentence”. He also adds that “since the clause prior to the relative pronoun commonly introduces participants, such sentences will tend to occur at the beginning of episodes”.

In the case of papyrus petitions, coherence represents an essential element in the version of the events which has to be delivered, as it is connected with the communicative goal of the text, namely to persuade the addressee to accomplish the petitioner's request. Here, two aspects of coherence which are provided by continuative clauses seem especially pertinent to the rhetorical purpose of the petition: repetition and integration.

On the one hand, as a pervasive mechanism in texts, repetition can generate multiple effects, from facilitating comprehension by offering redundancy of information, to functioning as an intensifier and creating rhetorical crescendo in oratorical discourse.⁷¹ In the background of petitions, although the names of the wrongdoers are not directly reiterated, they are recalled to memory through relative pronouns or participles referring back to them: an accumulation of information and occurrences is then provided about the same individual, with the effect of making the character of the 'bad guy' and its negative characterisation more prominent to the addressee.

On the other hand, integration, which is considered one of the main features of the written language, takes place when more ideas units are combined into a single unit through subordinating conjunctions and other devices.⁷² In papyrus petitions, the story is not presented as a fragmentary juxtaposition of events: the use of continuative clauses connects the premises of the story with the details of the incrimination and brings the narrative into a single flow, strengthening the connection between its different parts. For instance, in (27), Sarapion writes a petition to the strategos, asking for an intervention concerning his fugitive slave Euporos, who attacked him when Sarapion tried to recapture him in Memphis. Integration and repetition are achieved by means of two continuative clauses referring back to the wrongdoer Euporos: the chain of reference starting with Εὐπορον and continuing with ἐξ οὗ, ὃν, ὑπ' αὐτοῦ and σὺν αὐτῷ makes the character about whom action is demanded more prominent, whereas all the chunks of the story are brought together in a single unit, ensuring the coherence of the text.

(27) γενόμενος ἐν τῇ Μέμφει τῇ 15' Ἰουλίᾳ [Σ]εβαστῇ τοῦ ἐνεστῶτος μηνὸς Καισαρείου συνέλαβον τὸν σημερινόμενον δοῦλον Εὐπορον ἐξ οὗ δεήσει γνωσθῆναι πᾶσαν τὴν περὶ τῶν προγεγραμμένων ἀλήθειαν, ὃν καὶ ἀγείοχα ἐπὶ σὲ μεθ' ἱκανῆς τῆς γεγανοῦσας μοι ἐπιθέσεως καὶ πληγῶν ἐπιφορᾶς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τε καὶ τῶν σὺν αὐτῷ περιχυθέντων (P.Oxy. II 283, ll. 11-16 – TM 20554 (I AD))

⁷¹ Tannen 2007.

⁷² Chafe 1979.

I reached Memphis on the day Julia Augusta, the 15th of the present month Caesareus, and seized the above-mentioned slave Euporus, from whom the whole truth respecting the aforesaid matter will have to be learnt, and have brought him to you at the expense of a severe and violent attack upon myself by him and those by whom he was surrounded.

4.2 Sociolinguistic Status of Continuative Clauses

The comparison with the Greek New Testament in § 4.1 opens up also to another scenario: as (26), the majority of continuative clauses in the New Testament are found in the gospel of Luke,⁷³ which is considered of higher register⁷⁴ compared to the other gospels.⁷⁵ We could therefore hypothesise that a further sociolinguistic element might be attached to their use also in documentary papyri.

In general terms, appositive relative clauses are connected to a higher sociolinguistic degree compared to restrictive clauses,⁷⁶ as they express additional information.⁷⁷ In the case of continuative clauses, this sociolinguistic element can be linked to their specific syntactic profile, since continuative clauses are used as strategies to connect sentences rather than to establish a subordinate relationship. In this sense, linking sentences by means of relative clauses has been variously evaluated in scholarship, being associated with both popular speech⁷⁸ and, at the opposite end, with literary style, in opposition to coordination.⁷⁹

Also in Ancient Greek, continuative clauses are equated more to discourse connectives rather than subordinate clauses,⁸⁰ and, as such, they represent an alternative which can be preferred to other

⁷³ Bakker 1974, 106.

⁷⁴ Burkett 2002, 195.

⁷⁵ Moreover, one could argue that the use of continuative clauses in Luke could be also affected by the interference of Biblical language and Semitic syntax in particular, which is characterised by parataxis. On Semitisms in Luke, see Hogeterp, Denaux 2018.

⁷⁶ Leafgren 2004; Loock 2010, 211-12; see also Cattafi 2025 for some data about the functions of restrictive and appositive clauses in Greek documentary papyri.

⁷⁷ Loock, however, opposes the traditional view of appositive clauses interpreted in the terms of their optionality and suppressibility in comparison with restrictive relative clauses, and focuses instead on their informational content: in this sense, appositive clauses are seen as “a syntactic means of backgrounding information” (Loock 2010, 48).

⁷⁸ “There seems to be a natural tendency in the popular speech towards linking sentences by means of relatives” (Reul 1901, 71)

⁷⁹ “Popular speech seems to prefer coordination (with and), where literary style employs subordination by means of a relative clause” (Reuter 1936, 51).

⁸⁰ Tabachovitz 1943, 11.

forms of linguistic connectives. The popularity of continuative clauses in the Koine might be related to the weakening of the relative pronoun in the same period, whereby these markers lose its function as a relative in order to become mere connectives.⁸¹ In turn, the presence of competing connective constructions hints to the possibility of a sociolinguistic value comparatively assigned to the different options used in documentary papyri: in particular, continuative clauses can be compared to the coordinating conjunction *καί*, which is frequently found in contemporary private letters in order to connect subsequent clauses, as in (28):

(28) πέμψο(ν) οὖν ἡμεῖν Διονύσιον, αὐτὸς γὰρ οἶδεν τὸν λόγον τῆς μετρήσεως, καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀναβάσει ἐνεβαλόμεθα. καὶ νῦν ἐνοχλεῖ ἡμεῖν καὶ τοῖς γεωργοῖς κτήνη οὐκ ἔχωσι, καὶ περὶ χόρτου καὶ περὶ τῆς δαπάνης ἐνοχλεῖ. (*P.Oxy.* XIV 1671, ll. 5-14 = TM 31782 (III AD, private letter))

Send us then Dionysius, for he knows the account of the measuring, and we did the lading on the journey up. And now he worries us and the cultivators who have no animals, he worries both about fodder and about expenses.

According to Ljungvik,⁸² such paratactic *καί* formations present in the papyri, especially in private letters,⁸³ were in fact common in the Greek Umgangssprache, but such an hypothesis remains yet to be tested on a corpus.

For this reason, I have conducted a comparison between finite continuative relative clauses and sentence connective *καί* in a corpus of papyri, looking at the ratio between the two constructions in petitions and comparing it with that of letters in the same corpus. The corpus include five papyrological archives from the Roman and Late Antique period, all of which contain both text types: these are the archives of Apollonios strategos of the Apollonopolites Heptakomias (TM 19 (I-II AD)), Sarapion alias Apollonianus and sons (TM 210 (II-III AD)), Flavius Abinnaeus (TM 1 (IV AD)), Dioskoros (TM 72 (V-VI AD)) and Apiones (TM 15 (V-VII AD)).⁸⁴

⁸¹ Bakker 1974, 105.

⁸² Ljungvik 1932, 54-5.

⁸³ Although they are not absent in petitions, where they can be combined with continuative constructions: see ex. (25).

⁸⁴ More information on the five papyrological archives is available at <https://www.trismegistos.org/arch/index.php>. For the archive of Dioskoros in particular, see Fournet 2008.

The cumulative results of the five archives [tab. 1] show that the ratio between finite continuative clauses and sentence connective $\kappa\alpha\iota$ is 0.25 in petitions, compared to 0.09 in letters, meaning that the option of using a continuative clause to connect sentences compared to connective $\kappa\alpha\iota$ is considerably higher in petitions, and more sporadic in the case of letters.⁸⁵ The results of the investigation in the single archives, which is reported in tables 2-6 [tabs 2-6], show the same trend operating in all archives, except for the archive of Apollonios, the oldest of the five archives, where the ratio between petitions and letters is roughly the same; finally, no continuative clauses in letters were found in the archives of Abinnaeus and Dioskoros.

Table 1 Continuative clauses vs connective $\kappa\alpha\iota$ in five papyrus archives

	Continuative clause	Connective $\kappa\alpha\iota$	Ratio
Petitions	18	72	0.25
Letters	15	165	0.09

Table 2 Archive of Apollonios strategos of the Apollonopolites Heptakomias

	Continuative clause	Connective $\kappa\alpha\iota$	Ratio
Petitions	2	12	0.17
Letters	12	67	0.18

Table 3 Archive of Sarapion alias Apollinianus and sons

	Continuative clause	Connective $\kappa\alpha\iota$	Ratio
Petitions	2	4	0.5
Letters	1	8	0.12

Table 4 Archive of Flavius Abinnaeus

	Continuative clause	Connective $\kappa\alpha\iota$	Ratio
Petitions	1	11	0.09
Letters	0	3	0

⁸⁵ The difference is statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level, with $p\text{-value} < 0.006514$.

Table 5 Archive of Dioskoros

	Continuative clause	Connective <i>kai</i>	Ratio
Petitions	12	37	0.32
Letters	0	45	0

Table 6 Archive of the Apiones

	Continuative clause	Connective <i>kai</i>	Ratio
Petitions	1	8	0.12
Letters	2	42	0.05

This distribution illustrates that the choice of continuative relative clauses to connect sentences could be then constructed as a less colloquial option in Post-Classical Greek papyri.⁸⁶ Moreover, what was observed in papyri about their preference in certain types of texts would be confirmed by the case of the Greek New Testament, where the most high-register gospel presents a greater concentration of continuative clauses, and by the case of Medieval Greek, where continuative clauses have been associated with texts with a higher register and in official documents;⁸⁷ finally, in the literary Koine, authors such as Polybius and Diodorus were using relative pronouns and adverbs instead of demonstratives to connect sentences.⁸⁸

In papyrus petition, the preference for continuative clauses was then also motivated by the strive for formality of the writers, who wanted to distance themselves from the features of the colloquial language: a sociolinguistic layer could have therefore complemented the stylistic effects and the suitability of function of continuative clauses in petitions (cf. § 4.1), with these clauses being particularly appropriate to petitions both as formal documents and as expositions of coherent narratives. These two aspects are connected, since the coordination with ‘and’ also marks a lower level of integration.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Bakker 1974, 106 observes that one does not need to intend continuative clauses in itself as an exclusive literary feature, absent in the everyday speech: in this case, however, speakers would have more likely used *ὅπου* instead of other pronouns.

⁸⁷ Nicholas 1998, 233; Kriki 2013, 455.

⁸⁸ Blomquist 1969, 136.

⁸⁹ Chafe 1979, 1097.

5 Conclusions

In this paper, I have taken into account Greek petitions from Egypt dating back to the first eight centuries AD and I have shown how relative clauses are used in petitions as linguistic strategies to present the character of the wrongdoer in a negative light and connect the elements of the story narrated in the document. To this end, I have highlighted the syntactic and semantic features of appositive and continuative clauses in documentary papyri, and I have looked at the functions that these relative clauses perform within the background and in the broader context of the petition, in order to investigate how they can be meaningful in the linguistic construction of the text as a rhetorical and social instrument.

From this analysis, it emerged that (i) the linguistic features of appositive clauses in documentary papyri are different from the same clauses in Classical Greek, and formal aspects are therefore virtually unable to distinguish them from restrictive relative clauses in papyri; (ii) Loock's categorisation of appositive relative clauses into relevance, subjectivity and continuative type can be applied to papyrus petitions in order to shed light on the rhetorical representation of the wrongdoers from the point of view of the petitioner; (iii) at a textual level, continuative clauses mainly increase the coherence of the narrative by providing at the same time repetition and integration in the document; (iv) a higher sociolinguistic value could be attached to continuative clauses in the papyri compared to connecting sentences by means of καί.

While future research is needed to investigate their presence in other genres and texts from the Post-Classical period, as well as their evolution into Byzantine Greek, it was shown that reasons at different levels of the language can motivate the use of continuative constructions. Bakker's observation⁹⁰ about Greek continuative clauses being 'suited to the story' is true, but this does not entail that their use is 'not at home' in Greek documentary texts: in fact, papyrus petitions contain stories of people in Roman and Late Antique Egypt, which have 'bad guys' as main characters of the action and are narrated from the victims' perspective, hoping to be heard and to obtain justice.

⁹⁰ Bakker 1974, 97.

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