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The interplay between philology and linguistics in the Trace of Basel

Exactly forty years after the publication of his discovery by S. McCluskey, W. R. Schmalstieg and V. Zeps, the Trace of Basel continues to arouse a great interest among the international community of Balticists and numerous contributions continue to appear on this topic. If the first publications generally focused almost exclusively on the linguistic aspects of the Trace of Basel, recently a different point of view based on the philological, codicological and palaeographic consideration of the micro-text has aroused a growing interest among scholars. This approach examines the relationships between the Trace of Basel and the context in which it was included, considering them of great importance for the correct linguistic interpretation of the micro-text. In the paper are discussed both the “linguistic” and the “philological” approach. Commenting on the interpretation of some well-known scholars as V. Mažiulis, W. P. Schmid, F. Kortlandt, J. Schaeken, I. Lemeškin and others, it is trying to show how the linguistic and philological approaches are not alternative, but closely related and constitute a continuum, a line along which the (correct) interpretation of the micro-text gradually takes shape.

Finally, on the basis of philological and codicological considerations it is presented a new hypothesis on the provenance of the Trace of Basel.