The ERC funded project NOTAE (ERC-2017-ADG n° 786572) represents the first attempt to investigate the presence of graphic symbols in documentary records as a historical phenomenon from Late Antiquity to early medieval Europe. In this lecture Antonella Ghignoli, PI of the Project, will first deal with the definition of ‘graphic symbol’ both as element of a ‘documentary text’ (meant in a broad sense) and as subject of historical and palaeographical investigation. She will then discuss the reasons why it is legitimate investigating this subject in a longue durée, from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages.