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OXFORD STUDIES IN ANCIENT DOCUMENTS

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Languages and
Communities in the
Late-Roman and Post-
Imperial Western
Provinces

Edited by

ALEX MULLEN

and

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Preface

This volume is the result of collaboration coordinated by the LatinNow project, funded under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, grant no. 715626. It began life as a workshop organized by the LatinNow team in Autumn 2018, held at All Souls College, Oxford, and chaired by Alex Mullen, George Woudhuysen, and Paul Russell. Over two intellectually invigorating days, those who gave papers were encouraged and corrected by a wonderful audience of scholars, including Jim Adams (whose loss we feel acutely), Thomas Charles-Edwards, Patrick Sims-Williams, and Roger Wright. It was clear at the workshop that we had set ourselves a difficult task in seeking to examine the linguistic landscapes of the later-Roman and post-imperial West, but that there was promising scope for new work, ideas, and approaches to the problem, bridging the divide that too often still separates history from linguistics. Following the workshop, George Woudhuysen was brought in as an editor, Jonathan Conant came on board to tackle North African linguistic communities, Ian Wood agreed to contribute a chapter on Merovingian Latin, Nora White and Katherine Forsyth joined with David Stifter to work on the Irish material, and Paul Russell undertook the daunting task of writing a conclusion. On finishing this book, it is hard not to feel that we are only just getting to grips with this vast and complex subject. We hope that we have provided a solid foundation—there is so much more to be done.

We are grateful to the members of the LatinNow team for their contributions to the planning and presentations of the workshop. We would also like to express our thanks to the contributors, especially for their tolerant attitude to our endless requests for revisions, as we attempted to encourage conversations across disciplinary boundaries, and for (usually) acceding to our various editorial interventions. Shepherding an edited volume to the press—especially during a pandemic—always presents its challenges. We are particularly grateful to the contributors for cheerfully rising to meet the intellectual demands of the project at such a time. We acknowledge with gratitude bibliographical assistance from Eric Chevalley, Christine Mullen, and Anna Willi. We owe a debt to Justin Stover for his advice on aspects of later Latin literature, unstintingly given, to Gavin Kelly for his encouragement of and generous help with several aspects of this book, and to Graham Barrett for his stimulating commentary on a draft of the introduction. Much of the research for this book benefited from support of the staff of the Hallward Library in Nottingham (especially the Inter-Library Loan team) and the Bodleian in Oxford. We would like to thank also the Warden, Fellows, and staff of All Souls

College, as well as the Press, especially Charlotte Loveridge and Henry Clarke, the external readers, and the series editors for their support. We are, as always, grateful to our families.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to our friends and colleagues in the Department of Classics and Archaeology at the University of Nottingham. Nottingham—the academic home of E.A. Thompson, of Wolf Liebeschuetz, and of Robert Markus—has a long and storied tradition of the study of late antiquity, a subject that thrives there today. We hope to have continued it in the right spirit.

A.M.

G.W.

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Abbreviations follow Hornblower, S., Spawforth, A., and Eidinow, E. (eds) (2012) *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 4th edition. Oxford. Available online at <https://oxfordre.com/classics/page/3993> [last accessed 31 January 2023].

- AASS *Acta Sanctorum*
ACS Holder, A. (1891–1913) *Alt-Celtischer Sprachschatz*, 3 vols. Leipzig.
CCCM (1967–) *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*. Turnhout.
CCSG (1977–) *Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca*. Turnhout.
CCSL (1954–) *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*. Turnhout.
CGL Goetz, G. (1888–1923) *Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum I–VII*, 7 vols. Leipzig.
CHisp Gil, J. (ed.) (2018) *Chronica Hispana saeculi VIII et IX* (CCCM 65). Turnhout.
CIHM (1997–) *Corpus Inscriptionum Hispaniae Mediaevalium*. Turnhout.
CIIC Macalister, R. A. S. (1945, 1949) *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum*, 2 vols. Dublin.
CISP Davies, W. (2002) *Celtic Inscribed Stones Project*. London. <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/cisp/database/>.
CISW Redknapp, M. and Lewis, J. M. (2007), *A Corpus of Early Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture in Wales. Vol. 1. South-East Wales*. Cardiff.
 Edwards, N. (2007) *A Corpus of Early Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture in Wales. Vol. 2. South-West Wales*. Cardiff.
 Edwards, N. (2013) *A Corpus of Early Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture in Wales. Vol. 3. North Wales*. Cardiff.
CLA Lowe, E. A. (ed.) (1934–71) *Codices Latini Antiquiores*, 11 vols. Oxford.
CSEL (1864–) *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*. Vienna.
CVHR Vives, J., Marín Martínez, T., and Martínez Díez, G. (eds) (1963) *Concilios visigóticos e hispano-romanos*. Barcelona/Madrid.
eDIL *An Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language, based on the Contributions to a Dictionary of the Irish Language*. www.dil.ie.
EV Gil, J. (1991) ‘Epistulae’, in *Miscellanea Wisigothica*. 2nd edition. Seville, 1–49.
FV Gil, J. (1991) ‘Formulae Wisigothicae’, in *Miscellanea Wisigothica*. 2nd edition. Seville, 70–112.
GPC *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru/A Dictionary of the Welsh Language*. <https://geiriadur.ac.uk/gpc/gpc.html>.
HTVFE Martín-Iglesias, J. C., Díaz, P. C., and Vallejo Girvés, M. (2020) *La Hispania tardoantigua y visigoda en las fuentes epistolares: antología y comentario*. Madrid.
ICERV Vives, J. (1969) *Inscripciones cristianas de la España romana y visigoda*. 2nd edition. Barcelona.
IGEP Hoz, M. P. de (2014) *Inscripciones griegas de España y Portugal*. Madrid.

- JIWE* Noy, D. (1993) *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe, 1. Italy (Excluding the City of Rome), Spain, and Gaul*. Cambridge.
LV Zeumer, K. (1902) ‘Liber Iudiciorum sive Lex Visigothorum’, in *Leges Visigothorum. MGH. Leges Nationum Germanicarum 1*. Hanover, 33–456.
MGH (1819–) *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. Munich.
OED *Oxford English Dictionary*. www.oed.com.
PG Migne, J.-P. (ed.) (1857–66) *Patrologiae graecae cursus completus*, 162 vols. Paris.
PL Migne, J.-P. (ed.) (1844–64) *Patrologiae latinae cursus completus*, 221 vols. Paris.
PLRE (1971–92) *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, 3 vols. Cambridge.
PN Personal name
P.Vis. Velázquez, I. (2004) *Las pizarras visigodas (Entre el Latín y su disgregación. La lengua hablada en Hispania, siglos VI–VIII)*. Burgos.
REW Meyer-Lübke, W. (1935) *Romanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Heidelberg.
RIG Lejeune, M. et al. (eds) (1985–) *Recueil des inscriptions gauloises*, 5 vols. Paris.
SC (1942–) *Sources Chrétiennes*. Paris.
SMuz Gil, J. (ed.) (2020) *Scriptores Muzarabici saeculi VIII–XI (CCCM 65A–B)*, 2 vols. Turnhout.
SSRM *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*
TLL (1900–) *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*. Leipzig.
TTH (1985–) *Translated Texts for Historians*. Liverpool.

1

Language and History in the Late-Roman and Post-Imperial West

Alex Mullen and George Woudhuysen

In 449 CE, Priscus of Panium accompanied his friend, the general Maximinus, on a disastrous embassy to the court of Attila the Hun.¹ Though his account of this faltering diplomatic effort survives only in fragments excerpted from his *History*, the sheer vividness of what Priscus tells us about his journey across the Danube into the world of the barbarians has long made him a magnetic figure in the study of the later Roman Empire.² His descriptions of ruined cities, strange peoples, and fraught negotiations offer—arguably more than any other fifth-century source—a sense of how contemporaries understood the Empire’s misfortunes. In such discussions, one episode in particular has assumed a central place: Priscus’ encounter with a renegade Roman merchant, who had enthusiastically embraced the opportunities presented by the new Hunnic Empire.³ They engaged in a fierce debate over the merits of the Roman order, with the former merchant delivering a searing critique of its injustice and corruption and the historian offering a disconcertingly flimsy response. Priscus’ dawning awareness in the conversation that the Roman world was fragile and that Attila had the upper hand leaves an unforgettable impression.

One aspect of this momentous conversation has received somewhat less attention than the discussion of whether the Roman Empire was worth preserving. Priscus opens his detailed account of their meeting and long conversation with a series of linguistic observations:

This output has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 715626 (‘LatinNow’).

¹ For basic biographical details on Maximinus and Priscus, see *PLRE* ii. 743, 906.

² The fragments of Priscus’ work are most easily studied in the edition (with translation) by Blockley (1981), to which we refer, though see also the recent edition by Carolla (2008) and translation by Given (2014). For analyses of Priscus, see Thompson (1948); Maenchen-Helfen (1973); Baldwin (1980); Maas (1995); Treadgold (2007), 96–102. There may be more fragments of Priscus to be recovered from the (yet unedited) *Historia imperialis* of Giovanni de Matocciis (on whom see Stover and Woudhuysen 2017), see Festy (2014), though it is most unlikely they were mediated by the *Historia Romana* of Memmius Symmachus (cf. Stover and Woudhuysen 2021).

³ Blockley (1981), fr. 11.2.

As I was waiting and walking about before the circuit wall of the palace, someone, whom I took to be a barbarian from his Scythian dress, approached me and greeted me in Greek, saying, *'khaire'* ('Hello'). I was amazed that a Scythian was speaking Greek. Being a mixture of peoples, in addition to their own languages they cultivate Hunnic or Gothic or (in the case of those who have dealings with the Romans) Latin. But none of them can easily speak Greek, except for those whom they have taken prisoner from the sea coasts of Thrace and Illyria.⁴

In a few lines, Priscus offers a delineation of the link between language and culture and of the way that that link is never quite so straightforward as it first appears, while showing an appreciation of both multilingualism's importance (especially in a multi-ethnic empire) and of its limits. In fact, throughout the fragments of his *History*, Priscus proves himself carefully attentive to language. He points out to the reader those individuals—often ignored in classical authors—whose linguistic abilities facilitated interaction.⁵ Interpreters have a prominent role in his narrative: Vigilas appears as both interpreter and plotter against Attila, and we discover the name of another go-between, Rusticius, whom Priscus deploys because 'he knew the language of the barbarians' when trying to thaw the frosty communications.⁶ He notes that Rusticius was not north of the Danube as part of the embassy but rather there on other business. Similarly, Priscus also stops to tell us about another multilingual, Zercon the clown, whose ability to speak in a garbled mix of Latin, Hunnic, and Gothic was the entertainment when Attila dined (not that the Hunnic ruler ever seemed to laugh).⁷ In passing, he reveals the multiple parts that multilinguals were often called on to play.

Priscus clearly existed in a world where language mattered and where the linguistic map was shifting, as Roman power receded and barbarian groups came to occupy what had been the provinces of the Empire. He shows that contemporaries were aware of these realities and that they commented on them, often with considerable sophistication. Yet language remains surprisingly absent from modern discussions of the transformation of the Roman world, an absence

⁴ Blockley (1981), fr. 11.2 (p. 267).

⁵ On interpreters and their anonymity in classical context (with some notable exceptions), see Mairs (2012, 2020); Mullen (forthcoming); Wiotte-Franz (2001).

⁶ Vigilas: Blockley (1981), fr. 11.1 and 15; Rusticius: Blockley (1981), fr. 11.2 (p. 253). Priscus also mentions the *magister officiorum*, noting that he was in charge of the imperial messengers, interpreters, and bodyguards (Blockley 1981, fr. 11.1 (p. 254)), a reminder that the imperial government had formal arrangements for interpreting in a diplomatic context. Despite the focus in the parts of Priscus' work transmitted to us, interpreters do not receive attention in the later and post-imperial sources commensurate with their frequent use (indeed they only appear again in this volume in Chapters 3 and 10). Interpreters are often 'invisible' in historical sources, perhaps not least because 'not getting in the way' was a key part of their job. We tend to see only a small number of named individuals who, as in Priscus' *Histories*, sometimes have a significant role to play, for example Caesar's Troucillus/Procillus in Gaul, Conrad Weiser in colonial northeast America, and La Malinche in Mexico.

⁷ Blockley (1981), fr. 13.3.

that is all the more perplexing given the attention that has been devoted to questions of cultural transformation, identity, and their complexities.

1.1. Creating Dialogues: Linguistic–Historical/ Roman–Post-Imperial

Although, of course, they do not by any means always neatly map onto each other, languages are central to the creation and expression of identities and cultures, as they are to life in general. Any attempt to reconstruct life and language in their historical contexts needs, therefore, to engage with linguistics, just as linguists need to pay careful attention to the historical record and to historical perspectives. For students of those regions which formed the western part of the Roman Empire, the ease with which this can be done varies considerably. The scholar of the pre-Roman period is now amply served by many reference works, databases, surveys, and introductions to the ‘Palaeoeuropean’ languages and there has been sustained focus by classicists on the sociolinguistics of the Roman world.⁸ For those who study the later Roman Empire and its successor states, however, there has been no comparable effort and no single up-to-date work that sets out the main developments, key features, and debates concerning the late-Roman and post-imperial linguistic environment in the West.⁹ Such an understanding is of course vital not just for those who work on the late antique and medieval worlds, but also for those interested primarily in the situation in the early Empire who need to know what happened next, given the timescales over which linguistic change can take place. In parts of the Roman world where there is relatively limited direct evidence for the language of the local non-military populations (for example Britannia and parts of the Germanies), the later linguistic histories are a particularly necessary, though not unproblematic, piece of the puzzle (see Chapter 9).

The linguistic landscapes of the late-Roman and post-imperial West, and their social variegation are, of course, complicated and difficult to describe, not least because of the paucity of evidence in several regions. That is no excuse, however, for not investigating them. As a first step, we need overviews and syntheses that are sensitive to what we know, and to what we do not know. These will allow scholars of linguistics and history access to a state-of-the-art conspectus of the

⁸ Substantial investment has come from the European Commission, e.g. the Ancient European Languages and Writings COST-network, the SELECT Erasmus+ project, the LatinNow ERC project, and from national governments, e.g. *Alteritas* in Italy, *Hesperia* in Spain and Portugal, and the *Recueil informatisé des inscriptions gauloises* (RIIG) in France.

⁹ By ‘successor states’ we mean those polities that emerged on the territory of what had been the Roman Empire in the fifth and sixth centuries. We use the term ‘post-imperial’ in preference to ‘post-Roman’ to characterize the West after the end of Roman power, because it more accurately reflects a situation where the Empire had ceased to exist but culture, society, and patterns of thought often remained profoundly Roman.

complexities of the subject and a sense of where progress has been made and where problems remain. The divisions between linguists and historians and between Romanists and early medievalists remain firm, encouraged by disciplinary boundaries, funding arrangements, and different scholarly formations. They will continue to exist if no concerted efforts are made to lay the foundation for future multidisciplinary work. This book therefore starts to fill a significant gap in the literature: no up-to-date reference work in English, to our knowledge, describes the linguistic landscapes of the late-Roman and post-imperial Western world in their historical context and confronts the complex role of language in their communities, identities, and cultures.¹⁰ In meeting this challenge, examining what has kept the two disciplines apart helps to clarify the work that needs to be done.

1.2. The Challenge: The Scholarly Paradigm

In recent decades, scholars of the ancient world have made a sustained effort to integrate questions of language into the study of its history more generally and of identity in particular. The interest has a very long tradition, but new impetus was given on the Greek side by the work of Jonathan Hall and on the Latin by J. N. Adams.¹¹ As a result, the scope of classical linguistics has changed substantially in the last twenty years, as ancient sociolinguistics has embedded itself with the support of a new generation of scholars.¹² This sociolinguistic work requires historical context, as well as a degree of interdisciplinarity, and is arguably more easily comprehensible for non-linguists, for whom the technicalities of Indo-European linguistics—the mainstay of traditional classical linguistics—are often inaccessible. That said, the new departure for ancient linguistics still depends on that technical knowledge and Indo-European linguistics. To wrestle with the complexities of the ancient linguistic record we need a basis on which to interpret and categorize the linguistic materials, and to understand how languages might interrelate; we need the relative dating of linguistic features and examination of which linguistic developments are more likely to be the result of language change or contact. The focus of the two disciplines is, however, different: for hard-core Indo-Europeanists the messiness of human interactions effectively has to be set aside for the methods to work, whereas for the sociolinguists it is exactly the messiness which they wish to explore. In doing so, the field takes precious little inspiration from the commentary of elite Greek and Roman authors, who exhibit

¹⁰ This book forms a trilogy with Mullen (2023a) and Mullen and Willi (2024).

¹¹ Hall (1997, 2002); Adams (2003a, 2003b, 2007, 2013).

¹² For example, Clackson (2015); Dickey and Chahoud (2010); Mairs (2014); Mullen (2013a), and the publications of the LatinNow project team. Work on multilingualism in Egypt, thanks to the extensive evidence of papyrus documents, has a particularly long history. For recent examples, see Fournet (2011); Papaconstantinou (2010); Sidarus (2008).

deep concern for the quality of their own (Greek and Latin) languages and interactions, but show little interest in wider sociolinguistic variegation.¹³ The inspiration for this approach has come from the evidence itself and from the field of modern sociolinguistics which has undergone a period of expansion since the 1980s. Even if ancient sociolinguistics has already had an impact beyond classical linguistic circles, arguably its value is yet to be fully appreciated.

While ancient historians have at least begun to appreciate these insights from sociolinguistics, historians of the later-Roman world and the successor states have been less interested in questions of language. Any generalization such as this is (necessarily) slightly unfair, but here the unfairness really is slight. The vast and useful volumes produced by the subject-defining *Transformation of the Roman World* project, for example, gave no sustained overview of what happened to the linguistic map of the Roman world after Empire, even though this was one of its more obvious and, arguably, fundamental transformations. There were analyses of linguistic issues—Walter Pohl, for example, offered a brief and illuminating overview of how early medieval writers understood language and difference—but there was little for the reader who wanted some sense of what happened to language in late antiquity.¹⁴ This seems strange, given the considerable attention the project paid to questions of identity and the prominent role played in it by members of what is sometimes called the ‘Vienna School’, which has made the study of identity and ethnicity one of its central tasks. The more recent project ‘Visions of Community: Comparative Approaches to Ethnicity, Region and Empire in Christianity, Islam and Buddhism (400–1600 CE)’ (VISCUM), overseen by Pohl, broadens the geographical and chronological scope of the study of late antique identity and ethnicity in welcome ways, but again to date engages only sporadically with the issue of language.¹⁵ There are signs that this oversight is beginning to be addressed—Yulia Minets’s recent monograph on language and identity in late antique Christianity is a good example—but much of the recent work focuses as much on conceptions of language in late antiquity as on the actual linguistic situation.¹⁶ One would struggle to reconstruct, from the flood of recent scholarship on the later-Roman and post-imperial world, what happened to the linguistic map of what had been the Roman Empire in the centuries after its dissolution. Within the scholarly paradigm of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, in other words, we find surprisingly limited room for language.

Several explanations for this gap suggest themselves, including the less central position of language-learning in the modern discipline of late antique and medieval history (as compared to Classics), the more ambiguous role that language

¹³ Bozia and Mullen (2021); Lejeune (1949). ¹⁴ Pohl (1998), 22–7.

¹⁵ Two volumes in the *Historiography and Identity* series are yet to appear.

¹⁶ Minets (2022a). Quinn et al. (2014) is an interesting attempt to do both. See also Wiśniewski (2023).

played in defining the barbarian, and the less obvious linguistic diversity than that which characterized the regions gradually conquered by Rome. Another key reason might be a reaction to the linguistic chauvinism which some of our literary sources on occasion show. The *locus classicus* for this is perhaps Sidonius Apollinaris' description of some Burgundians who had been billeted on one of his properties in about 460, during the political manoeuvring in southern Gaul as imperial power receded.¹⁷ In a poem addressed to Catullinus, a former colleague, he writes:

Why—even supposing I had the skill—do you bid me compose a song dedicated to Venus the lover of Fescennine mirth, placed as I am among long-haired hordes, having to endure German speech, praising oft with wry face the song of the gluttonous Burgundian who spreads rancid butter on his hair? Do you want me to tell you what wrecks all poetry? Driven away by barbarian thrumming the Muse has spurned the six-footed exercise ever since she beheld these patrons seven feet high. I am fain to call your eyes and ears happy, happy too your nose, for you don't have a reek of garlic and foul onions discharged upon you at early morn from ten breakfasts, and you are not invaded even before dawn, like an old grandfather or a foster-father, by a crowd of giants so many and so big that not even the kitchen of Alcinous could support them.

But already my Muse is silent and draws rein after only a few jesting hendecasyllables, lest anyone should call even these lines satire.

(Sidonius *Carm.* XII, tr. Anderson 1936).

There is a sense in the study of late antiquity that our sources trade mostly in the linguistic snobbery of an educated elite, and Sidonius, with his magnificent disdain for the Burgundians, certainly seems an example of that. Distaste for the sources has sometimes bled into distaste for the subject: a sense that it is fruitless to collect ill-informed stereotypes and recycled ethnographic tropes in any quest to examine language. Yet, as we have seen with Priscus, some contemporary authors did exhibit a sophisticated sense of their linguistic environment. Moreover, even with Sidonius, appearances can be deceptive. The poem is at least partly tongue-in-cheek: a series of exaggerated observations designed to excuse the author's lack of willingness to write some poem that Catullinus had requested. In its final lines, the poet says that he is cutting his verses short, lest anyone be tempted to think it *satira*.¹⁸ One does not have to accept every argument of *persona* theory to agree that Roman satire in no sense offered a straightforward statement of the views of its authors. If we look past their humorous characterization,

¹⁷ On the date and context of the poem, see Kelly (2020), 171–2.

¹⁸ *sed iam Musa tacet tenetque habenas paucis hendecasyllabis iocata, ne quisquam satiram uel hos vocaret.*

Sidonius is clearly interacting with the Burgundians, aware of their language, and even (apparently) an audience for their poetry. In another mood and context, he writes to his friend Syagrius, who is in the service of the Burgundian monarchy. There, Sidonius says that he is tickled to hear that Syagrius' grasp of Burgundian is so good that its native speakers are worried about committing some solecism in their own tongue.¹⁹ Across the range of Sidonius' corpus, we get a sense of the way in which the linguistic map of southeastern Gaul was changing in the middle and later decades of the fifth century, as the Burgundians first arrived and then began to integrate themselves.²⁰ We see language contact, language change, and bilingualism as they played out. In other words, even superficially unprepossessing evidence can turn out to be rewarding when considered from a linguistic perspective.

A further significant reason that might be postulated for a certain avoidance of the study of language in late antiquity is the murky history of linguistics and philology in the early twentieth century, when their instrumentalization lent spurious precision to the darkest of political ideas in Germany. Kossinna and others combined Indo-European linguistics and archaeology to create a nationalistic 'settlement archaeology' paradigm designed to fix geographical origins for historically known groups back into prehistory.²¹ The devastating results provoked an understandable adverse reaction, perhaps especially evident from the Vienna School, whose work on identity in many ways grew out of a conscious decision to shun the methodologies—indeed the conceptual language—which had characterized the subject in German-speaking Europe before the Second World War.²² Yet this shunning has also overlooked, perhaps unwittingly, the subsequent disciplinary revolution in linguistics. The application of modern sociolinguistics to historical situations can challenge narratives of ethnic difference and superiority and play a key role in broadening the evidence and perspectives for social historians interested in examining the lives of the masses.²³

¹⁹ Sidonius, *Ep.* 5.5.3.

²⁰ For a brief overview of the history of the Burgundians in southern Gaul, see Shanzer and Wood (2002), 13–27.

²¹ For the resultant pushback and developments in archaeology, see Jones (1997).

²² Wood (2013), 299–302, 313–14.

²³ One striking aspect which emerges from this book is that ethnicity is not a concept on which the contributors rely. Ethnicity is not avoided through a knee-jerk reaction against endless debates on the subject, but after contemplation. Conant, for example, confronts the matter head on, concluding that though it is 'tempting' to understand the multilingual linguistic landscape of Africa in ethnic terms, 'the overlap between languages and ethnic identities was at best imperfect'. Conversance with a language was 'no guarantee of ethnic self-identification', and bilingualism was 'reasonably widespread'. Most crucially he reminds us that 'ethnic identity is multilayered, and the ordering of its layers—including its linguistic layers—is situationally specific' (see Chapter 2, p. 55). The contributors all make clear, however, that identities (though not necessarily ethnic) *are* linked to language and it is the link between these identities and a range of other social factors that determine linguistic developments.

In short, if the scholarly paradigm within which the western provinces in late antiquity have been understood leaves relatively little room for language, this is in part because of a disciplinary legacy which long ago created tramlines that have led disciplinary development only in certain directions. Certainly, it ought not to deter scholars of linguistics and history from engaging with each other's work.

1.3. The Challenge: Different Perspectives

Naturally enough, given the very real differences in scholarly formation and disciplinary traditions between history and linguistics, engagement will not always be easy. As Roger Wright remarked in a review of one of the most significant books on our subject, Michel Banniard's *Viva Voce*: this 'magnificent' cross-disciplinary work was produced in 'a field where divergence, misunderstanding, and recrimination are not unknown' and 'the most noticeable divide has been between the textual historians and the Romance historical linguists, who have often preferred to ignore each other'.²⁴

The different approaches which historians and linguists take to the same evidence can indeed lead them to work intensively on subsets of material or on certain aspects of larger questions without much interaction, sometimes in a way that obscures vision of the whole picture. A case in point for those interested in Latin after Rome is the Merovingian world, a vital piece of the puzzle, but to a disconcerting degree still largely *terra incognita*.²⁵ This large and relatively blank space on the linguistic map of the post-imperial West is all the more disheartening when it is recalled that the Merovingian kingdoms—covering what had been Roman Gaul, plus Raetia, Germania Superior, and part of Germania Inferior, and lasting from the mid-fifth to the mid-eighth centuries—have some claim to offer the richest evidence for the subject over the longest period of time of any portion of the Roman world. The Merovingian period produced an extraordinary variety and quantity of source material, which is unmatched outside the Mediterranean regions of the Empire and perhaps surpasses even those. Given the surge of interest in sixth- and seventh-century Gaul that has marked the past few decades, and the central place that some Merovingian authors have in the study of the early Middle Ages, this claim of our relative ignorance might seem rather adventurous, and there are certainly overviews of non-classical Latin that take account of Merovingian evidence.²⁶

²⁴ Wright (1993), 78.

²⁵ Though, *stricto sensu*, Merovingian Latin ought to be only that Latin written under Merovingian rule, the term is used more broadly in the scholarly literature for the Latin of Gaul between the fifth and the seventh centuries, as for example in Banniard (2001). For the concept of Latinity, see now Barrett and Margolis (2021).

²⁶ Herman (2000) remains one of the best introductions to the subject. Information on non-classical forms drawn from Merovingian evidence can be found scattered across Adams's *oeuvre*, particularly Adams (2007).

Yet there is no comprehensive, up-to-date account of who used Latin in Merovingian Gaul, what sort of Latin they deployed and in what contexts, and what language ideologies and practices were in play. It is telling, for example, that the excellent recent *Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World* does not devote a chapter to the subject.²⁷ In some ways, the most comprehensive study of the problem remains Max Bonnet's foundational *Le Latin de Grégoire de Tours*, but that was published in 1890 and, while both remarkably sophisticated and a treasure-house of information, is very much a product of its time.²⁸

One reason that our knowledge of Merovingian Latin has not developed socio-linguistic depth is perhaps the way that a single important issue has dominated linguistic approaches to the subject: the relationship between Latin and Romance. On this, the work of Roger Wright and Michel Banniard has been fundamental. They have argued, contrary to earlier attempts to portray Latin and Romance as diverging early and leading often quite separate existences, that the two languages were really part of a single linguistic continuum in the early Middle Ages. To put it as pithily as possible, Late Latin *was* early Romance, at least until around 800 when Alcuin, scholarly client of Charlemagne, and other reforming intellectuals embarked on a programme of linguistic *renovatio* that caused them to split into two different and diverging languages.²⁹ Before this, the written Latin of our sources and the spoken Romance of everyday life were—and were understood by contemporaries to be—the same tongue in different guises. Though quibbles have been raised, this portrait of the evolving linguistic situation in the post-imperial West is convincing and has gained general acceptance. Wright and Banniard's work is, however, closer to being the necessary foundation for any study of Merovingian Latinity than such a study itself, and at times the question of Latin versus Romance has almost seemed to swallow the broader subject of Merovingian Latin whole.³⁰

We can also observe how differing disciplinary perspectives play out by examining the approaches of historians and linguists to the same evidence. Consider Gildas, the author of the *De excidio Britanniae*, active (probably) in the early to mid-sixth century.³¹ The *De excidio* is the fundamental literary source for what happened in Britain after the end of Roman power, but it is also a complex work, which cannot be straightforwardly used to write history. What does it tell us

²⁷ Effros and Moreira (2020). ²⁸ Bonnet (1890).

²⁹ See, most influentially, Wright (1982) and Banniard (1992) (to be read with Wright 1993, a long, generous, and penetrating review). Both books, of course, have a much wider subject than Merovingian Latin alone. Banniard (2020a) is an Italian translation with a *retractatio* by the author of Banniard (1992).

³⁰ Banniard (2001), the title of which suggests a wide-ranging overview of Merovingian Latin, is very largely devoted to the issue of its relationship with Romance.

³¹ For the fundamental details about Gildas, see the discussion of Charles-Edwards (2013), 202–19. For the text and a translation of the *De excidio*, see Winterbottom (1978).

about the linguistic situation in Britain in the sixth century?³² The eyes of historians might naturally be drawn to Gildas' elaborate and rhetorical Latin, his acquaintance with a broad range of later Latin literature (secular and patristic), his obviously political purpose in writing, and his assumption that there is an audience for what he says.³³ They might then deduce from this a number of different things about Britain in the early sixth century. Gildas' rhetorical training and the formality of his Latin imply that a top-rate education could still be had on the island. The existence of that educational infrastructure suggests that there was still demand for educated Latinity, from government and/or the Church, which means that some institutions were still conducting their business not only in Latin, but in the formal Latin of the late-imperial bureaucracy. That Gildas wrote with an audience of churchmen and kings in mind suggests in any case that Latin was still the language of power and of religion. We might note that such fifth-century evidence as we have—especially the works of St Patrick—implies that this had long been the case, as do the Latin inscriptions (often of uncertain date), which seem to have become popular in post-imperial Britain, interestingly in parts of the country which had been virtually anepigraphic in the Roman period (see Chapters 8 and 9).³⁴ If Gildas does not necessarily tell us about how the mass of ordinary people communicated with each other, then the minimal assumption from his writings is still that considerable bilingualism existed in elite circles, if not that the elite spoke Latin as a first language. If administration and liturgy were Latinate, then it is reasonable to conclude that (again, as a minimum) people further down the social scale encountered Latin and that at least some of them had competence in it. At any rate, the historian might feel that a picture of the languages of Britain in the sixth century which treats Gildas as irrelevant for the linguistic situation is dismissing some of our best evidence.

In contrast, the approaches and inferences of a linguist might be quite different. They might be inclined to treat Gildas more as an isolated literary phenomenon, of limited relevance to broader sociolinguistic questions, citing the many historical cases where a tiny elite used one language, even as the mass of the population spoke another. They might bring with them a scepticism that literary texts of this type can ever offer the kind of broader insight that we really need, given that they are written by a vanishingly small section of society with access to the highest level of education. They might instinctively privilege the seemingly more demotic evidence that, for example, place-names and loanwords can provide.

³² We suspend here detailed discussion of where Gildas was writing, though it ought to be noted that no one would argue for the southeast of England, arguably the most Roman part of the island. There is something to be said in favour of the more western parts of the West Country (Sharpe 2002, 107–8). See Chapter 9 for further considerations.

³³ For these subjects, the fundamental introduction remains the collected papers in Lapidge and Dumville (1984). On Gildas' style, there is much of interest also in Winterbottom (1974–5, 1977) and, on his reading, in Wright (1991). See further Chapter 9.

³⁴ For the works of St Patrick, see Bieler (1952) and Freeman (2014). For patterns of epigraphic activity in Roman Britain, see Mullen (2024).

They might, finally, look at what happened to the linguistic map of Britain after the sixth century and see, between a highland zone where Celtic languages were primarily spoken and a lowland one where Germanic tongues were dominant, relatively little space for widespread Latinization amongst the local population.³⁵ This can leave them talking at cross-purposes with historians whose evidence is overwhelmingly written, overwhelmingly in Latin, and who operate on a model (often unspoken) where the overwhelming mass of the population in western Europe is assumed to have spoken some variety of Latin (with important exceptions).

Indeed, linguists tend to be drawn to issues that, from a historian's perspective, might seem marginal, given the weight of the Latin evidence, such as how late Gaulish survived (see Chapter 5), or how ogam evolved in Ireland (see Chapter 8). Linguistic studies of Visigothic Iberia provide a powerful example of this. Work in linguistics has given considerable attention to the question of how long Gothic survived, who spoke it, and what influence it might have had on Latin and the forms of Romance that later emerged in the Iberian Peninsula. There are disciplinary reasons for this, but also perhaps ideological ones: a long historiographical tradition of making the Visigoths meaningfully Germanic, because that contributes to making Spain meaningfully different from other Romance-speaking areas.³⁶ Yet Visigothic Iberia must have been an overwhelmingly Latinate region, and it certainly produced a vast and unusually sophisticated literature in Latin. Isidore of Seville, the most brilliant product of Hispania's later Latin culture, is often mined for what he might be able to tell us about Visigothic or for how he conceived of language in general, but less attention has been paid to his Latinity or to his view of Latin.³⁷ Chapters 3 and 4 make a strong case for taking all the evidence, both the traditionally 'linguistic' and the 'historical', together and judging it with sensitivity to context. These chapters demonstrate the complexity of the linguistic continua created and the need to think about a vast range of linguistic attitudes, varieties, and registers, as well as about the relationships between written and spoken language, driven as they were by all sorts of pressures: varieties of literacies, formulaic model texts, and the weight of classical or ecclesiastical learning.³⁸

Of course, there are also cases where the risk of misunderstanding lies not in difference, but in an apparent similarity of concepts and terminology. It is not uncommon, for instance, to see scholars of the early Middle Ages describe a contemporary author writing literary works as 'rhetorically skilled'. If by rhetorical skill (and related concepts) is meant only that a writer was able to use language,

³⁵ For the traditional highland-lowland division of Roman Britain, and current views on its utility, see Mullen (2024b).

³⁶ We are grateful to Graham Barrett for this crisp formulation.

³⁷ See Barrett (2019); Velázquez (2003b).

³⁸ On these issues, Barrett (p. 123) makes a particularly incisive point: 'We tend to approach the study of language in history through the effect of the spoken on the written, squinting at change over time through this lens, but how did the written affect the spoken?'

structure, and artistry (*inter alia*) to achieve their literary objectives, then that is obviously true of many early medieval authors. It can, however, be misleading, if it imports the associations of the classical art of rhetoric, with its figures, techniques, and theory.³⁹ Precisely what kind of education was available in, for example, Visigothic Iberia or Merovingian Gaul, is a difficult question, but it seems unlikely that many authors after the early sixth century had the kind of formal instruction in rhetoric that had marked the Roman period.⁴⁰ There are few more entertaining or effective narrators than Gregory of Tours, but he was not rhetorically skilled in the way that Lactantius—the professor of rhetoric at Nicomedia under Diocletian—was, or even that Sidonius, whom Mamertus Claudianus praised as the *veteris reparator eloquentiae* (‘the restorer of old-fashioned eloquence’), could be.⁴¹ The dominant influence on Gregory’s language and style was the Latin of the Bible, and it is striking that when he is at his most elaborate and ‘rhetorical’ (in the broader sense)—as in the famous preface to Book V of his *Histories*—that influence is more and not less obvious.⁴² Rhetoric is slippery in conception as well as in practice, and there is some risk that in describing this or that early medieval author as ‘rhetorically’ skilled, we can create a false impression of cultural and linguistic continuity across the classical and late antique period. The early medievalist implicitly locates their author in a rhetorical tradition stretching back deep into antiquity, while the ancient historian or classical sociolinguist learns that the phenomenon of ancient rhetoric had an exceptionally long afterlife. Their wording is the same, but the underlying concepts are very different in ways that profoundly affect how they understand the evidence they are discussing. It is vital that we treat those post-imperial authors who endeavoured to write in an elevated style on their own terms, rather than to conscript them into some broader late antique literary construct. Of course, they were influenced by classical and late antique Latin literature (to them, simply literature), but their preconceptions were not our preconceptions, and the landmarks they saw in the literary past were not always those familiar to us. Sidonius Apollinaris was *Sollius noster* to Gregory of Tours, but it was his masses which Gregory had collected and for which he had written a preface, not his poems or his letters.⁴³ Sensitivity to contextual differences and precision in terminology matter.

³⁹ There were exceptions to this, of course: someone like Gildas (see above) was clearly still operating at least partly within the classical rhetorical paradigm.

⁴⁰ In many ways, the best introduction remains Riché (1962). The publication of Alison John’s thesis (2018) on the Gallic schools in late antiquity should bring some much-needed clarity to the subject.

⁴¹ Lactantius: Jerome, *De vir. ill.* 80. Sidonius: Claudianus, *De statu animae praef.* Bourgain (2016), 166–88, offers a good overview of Gregory’s style, including an analysis of the ‘rhetorical devices’ he uses: the haul is not enormous. On Claudianus, see now John (2022).

⁴² On the preface to Book V, see the wonderful article by Halsall (2007), who brings out very clearly the role of the Bible (the suggestion of rhetorical influence, perhaps through Martianus Capella, is less compelling).

⁴³ *Sollius noster: Histories* 4.12, *Virtutes Iuliani* 2. Masses: *Histories* 2.22.

Another example of a potentially unhelpful blurring of terms can be found in the tradition of the study of the Latin used by select Merovingian authors writing literary works in relatively elevated language. In Chapter 6, Ian Wood examines the Latin used by, and the linguistic consciousness of, Gallic authors from the fifth century to the seventh. He deftly traces a path through the familiar landmarks of Merovingian Latin, from Avitus of Vienne, via Gregory of Tours and the *Austrasian Letters*, to the circle of Desiderius of Cahors, the *Vita Eligii*, and the (more profane than might be expected of bishops) correspondence of Frodebert and Importunus. As he notes, despite the fading of both classical norms and classical culture, ‘Merovingian authors retained an ability to use appropriate linguistic registers in their writings.’⁴⁴ If, he suggests, they increasingly opted for a simpler style than would have been used by their fourth- and fifth-century predecessors, then that was not necessarily an index of decline. This sympathetic portrait of the Latin of some Merovingian authors has become something like the consensus over the past generation or so. It has enormously enriched our understanding of the history and culture of Gaul from the fifth to the seventh centuries, and it is clearly more accurate than older ideas that leant vaguely on a half-understood portrait of the age as characterized by ‘barbarism and religion.’⁴⁵ It has also fitted snugly into the broader agenda of seeing late antiquity as an era of transformation, rather than decline and fall.

This revisionist account of literary Latin in the Merovingian world risks presenting an overly smooth narrative, however, one that has done away not only with the notion of decline, but with much sense of change, of difference, and of variety. It is true, for example, that Marculf—the creator of a legal formulary in the second half of the seventh century—both shows an awareness of the issue of register and could write relatively complex Latin.⁴⁶ Anyone familiar, however, with the full baroque splendour of late-imperial legalese cannot but be struck by how vastly simpler and plainer lawyerly Latin had become in two or so centuries and wonder at the cultural transformation this represents.⁴⁷ In integrating Merovingian authors into a literary or linguistic history of late antique Latin, it is vital that those things that make them distinctive are not obscured.

A certain blurring of conceptual boundaries has perhaps made it easier to put so much emphasis on continuity. There is, for example, a tendency in the scholarly literature on Gaul to assimilate the elaborate ‘jewelled style’ delineated by Michael Roberts in a classic book of the same name, the style *pingue et floridum*

⁴⁴ See Chapter 6, p. 166.

⁴⁵ The famous phrase is, of course, taken from Edward Gibbon. His attitude to the early Middle Ages was considerably more sophisticated and sympathetic than is generally understood: see Woudhuysen (2018).

⁴⁶ On which, see Wood’s discussion in Chapter 6 of this volume. On Marculf more generally, see Rio (2009), 81–101.

⁴⁷ On ‘bureaucratese’, see the classic article by MacMullen (1962).

(‘fat and flowery’) so characterized by Macrobius (*Saturnalia* 5.1.7), and the ‘esprit précieux’ that André Loyen detected in Sidonius and his contemporaries, and then to extend that amalgamated style deep into the Merovingian period proper.⁴⁸ The end result is a flexible concept of a high style that can stretch from Sidonius to the seventh century, uniting authors who are at first sight very different in interests, inclinations, and abilities. Even leaving to one side the difficulty of combining ancient and modern categories so freely, it is far from clear that this approach is correct on its own terms.

Roberts’s elegant book is primarily a study of the Latin poetry of the late fourth and fifth centuries, which explicitly disavows too much consideration of prose: the jewelled style was first and foremost a style of poetry.⁴⁹ Roberts was clear that features of it could be found in prose but, without the limitations imposed above all by metre, it was difficult for the style to reach its fullest expression there.⁵⁰ The book’s project was, moreover, wider ranging than mere language: it boldly sought to delineate a late antique aesthetic that crossed literature and artistic production. Macrobius—or to be pedantic, the character Eusebius who appears in his *Saturnalia*—offers the famous description of the *pingue et floridum* style in the course of a discussion of whether Virgil was an orator, as well as a poet.⁵¹ Though often understood as a generalizing description of a written style, Macrobius is actually presenting a specific *genus dicendi* (‘style of speaking’), which he associated with the younger Pliny and Symmachus in particular, and contrasted with the different oratorical approaches of Cicero, Sallust, and Fronto.⁵² Macrobius’ judgement was a judgement about oratory, not necessarily about writing more generally, and certainly not about all late ancient literature that aspired to complexity. It is true that Loyen did identify Macrobius’ *pingue et floridum* style with the ‘esprit précieux’ of the letters and poems of Sidonius and that Sidonius can be called ‘perhaps the most unremitting exponent of the synonymic, enumerative, and antithetical sequences characteristic of the jeweled style.’⁵³ Yet, while Sidonius invoked the same two authors mentioned in Macrobius as precedent for his own letter-collection (*Ep.* 1.1.1), it is worth remembering that he regarded Pliny and Symmachus as quite different in style. The former offered *disciplina* (‘instruction’) and *maturitas* (‘ripeness’), while the latter showed *rotunditas* (‘fullness’). Moreover, even if Loyen was right to link Macrobius and Sidonius as he did, his vision of the ‘esprit précieux’ (not a term he defined overly tightly) was one that looked backwards from the fifth century. He traced the roots of Sidonius’ style to the literature of the Principate and even earlier, to ‘Asianism’ and ‘Alexandrianism’. In many ways, the key argument of the book was that that aesthetic had its origins

⁴⁸ Roberts (1989); Loyen (1943).

⁴⁹ Roberts (1989), 8.

⁵⁰ Roberts (1989), esp. 63–4.

⁵¹ The answer of the dinner-party’s guests was, of course, in the affirmative. Strange as it may seem, the issue was clearly a live one in antiquity, hence (for example) Florus’ tract: *Vergilius orator an poeta*.

⁵² It should be noted also that it is far from clear that calling a style *pinguis* is a compliment.

⁵³ Loyen (1943), XIII–XVI; Roberts (1989), 31.

in the particular social context and turbulent politics of the 450s–470s in Gaul.⁵⁴ In other words, these three styles of Latin are quite different from each other, more limited in time, space, and generic extent than is sometimes understood. Not every piece of literary Latin written in late ancient Gaul can be assimilated to them, still less can they be extended to encompass all authors writing down to the late seventh century.

1.4. The Challenge: Difficult Evidence

Disciplinary differences can sometimes be magnified in the treatment of specific pieces of slippery evidence. An example used again later in this volume can both help to illustrate this and clarify how an approach that combines historical and linguistic study might aid progress.

Discussions of the survival, or otherwise, of Gaulish in late antiquity have invariably made reference to the *Passion of St Symphorianus*, an account of the fate of a martyr at Autun in (probably) the late third century (see Chapter 5).⁵⁵ Though the precise date of the *Passion* itself is not known and the issue is considerably complicated by the number of different versions that survive, we have good reasons to think that something like the extant text was composed no later than the fifth century.⁵⁶ In 1923, the Celticist Rudolf Thurneysen directed the attention of linguists to the text, with a few brief remarks in a long and variegated piece in *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*.⁵⁷ In the *Passion*, as Symphorianus is led away to execution, his mother addresses him, urging her son to keep his mind on God. In some manuscripts, she is said to do this *voce gallica*.⁵⁸ Given the date of both the martyrdom and the *Passion*—relatively early for Gallic hagiography, but late for Gaulish—it is unsurprising that this reference pricked Thurneysen's interest.

⁵⁴ Loyen (1943), 165–7, for a summary.

⁵⁵ The *Passio* dates his martyrdom to the reign of Aurelian, a common persecutor in the later hagiographic literature, though whether he actually made any martyrs is not at all certain (Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* 6 would tend to suggest not). In our discussion of the *Passio*, we are indebted to Eric Chevalley for kindly making his doctoral thesis (2006)—the first proper comprehensive study of the text—available to us. Cf. Chevalley (2014) for a study of the *Passio* in the Turin manuscript (D.V.3), an important early witness (late 8th c., see *CLA* 4.446), which Bishop (1990), 535 attributed to Corbie.

⁵⁶ Gregory of Tours mentions (*Gloria Confessorum* 76) a *historia passionis sancti martyris Simphoriani* and some of what he says about it overlaps with text found in extant versions of the *Passio* (particularly the *carpentum* that carried the image of the Cybele). He notes (*Histories* 2.15) that Eufronius, the Bishop of Autun, built a basilica in honour of Symphorianus in (probably) the middle of the fifth century. It is tempting to associate the first version of the *Passio* with this construction project. Cf. Van der Straeten (1961), 134.

⁵⁷ Thurneysen (1923), 10–11; he acknowledges a debt to Meyer (1901), 161–3, who seems first to have put the text into circulation.

⁵⁸ On this point, see further below.

In particular, he focused on a few words spoken by the mother as they appeared in two manuscripts:

Munich 22243 (second half of the twelfth century):

nate nate Synforiane memento betoto divo

Turin D. V. 3 (fourth quarter of the eighth century):

nati nati Synforiani mentem obeto dotivo

Thurneysen reconstructed the original text as *nate nate Synforiane mentobeto to divo*, with *nate* a Gaulish word for ‘son’, *to divo* the Gaulish for ‘your god’ and *mentobeto* an imperative of **mentabere*, derived from *in mente habere*, comparing it to Old French *mentevair*. This, he thought, showed ‘how even during the lifespan of Gaulish, vulgar Latin forms invaded it, which is not surprising’.⁵⁹ Other linguists have generally followed in his footsteps (albeit sometimes seemingly unconsciously), inclining towards analysing the words as some form of Latin or proto-Romance, with Gaulish elements.⁶⁰

In debating the linguistic nature of the Thurneysen’s readings, Adams rightly drew attention to the appearance of *nata* ‘girl’ in three spindle whorls also from Autun (*RIG* II.2 L-112, L-115, L-118; another, L-121, hails from Auxerre).⁶¹ Of these only L-118 has a datable archaeological context (second half of the second century CE). Recent analysis has suggested a likely date range of 90–235 CE for the couple of dozen known imperial-period inscribed whorls, almost entirely from this region. Several are written in Latin, several in Gaulish, and some in a mixture. Mullen has recently argued that some of these short texts contain phrases that may have been deliberately chosen because they work in two languages simultaneously: Gallic Latin and Gaulish.⁶² The word *nata* is an example of this kind of ‘bilingual word’. As Adams noted, ‘*Natus* (and *nata*) might have caught on in the Latin of parts of Gaul because of the coincidence of form between Gaulish *gnatos*, *-a* (lit. ‘son, daughter’) and Latin *natus*, *-a*’.⁶³ It seems not implausible that *nate* may therefore have been a natural appellation in Gallic Latin, originally a borrowing from Gaulish, and might have been given to the opening of the mother’s speech in the *Passion* to lend it a local flavour. Similarly *divus* may also have gained currency in local Latin, a compromise term between Latin *deus* (note the nominal use of Latin *divus* was otherwise a feature of high and poetic style and formulae) and Gaulish *de/ivos* < **deiwo-* (the Latin and Celtic terms are

⁵⁹ ‘wie noch zu Lebzeiten der gallischen Sprache vulgärlateinische Formen in sie eindringen, was nicht verwunderlich ist (Thurneysen 1923, 11)’.

⁶⁰ Meid (1980); (1983), 1028–9; Adams (2003a), 198–9.

⁶¹ Adams (2007), 303. For the inscribed spindle whorls, see Mullen (2022).

⁶² Mullen (2022), 55–9. ⁶³ Adams (2007), 303.

of course, in the first place, similar due to Indo-European heritage).⁶⁴ Given ongoing interest in bilingualism and language contact, it is unsurprising that the Symphorianus episode has assumed its place as a standard item in any study of later phases of Gaulish, one of a handful of attestations that the language survived (in some marginal form) into late antiquity.

What was not undertaken in scholarship after Thurneysen's work, however, was a serious investigation of the text of the *Passio sancti Symphoriani* and its transmission, at least until Eric Chevalley's dissertation of 2006, which offered an edition accompanied by a very full study. As he showed, it is only one family of manuscripts that describes the mother's words as being uttered *voce gallica*, a family that he cogently argued sat far down the *stemma*.⁶⁵ The overwhelming portion of the manuscripts, by weight and quality, say merely that her remarks were delivered in a *sedula voce* (an 'earnest' or 'insistent voice')—rather more prosaic, but also rather more conventional and appropriate to the hagiographic context. Similarly, the garbled words that Thurneysen found so interesting and which do have tantalizing points of contact with Gaulish are found in a handful of manuscripts. The rest of the tradition—and this was clearly a point in the *Passio* that generated some perplexity amongst scribes—has her say some version of 'keep God in mind' in what is very plainly Latin (*in mente habe deum tuum* is what Chevalley prints).⁶⁶ Moreover, even if the words on which linguists have fixed their attention were the archetypal reading (which is doubtful), they are only a fraction of what the mother says and the rest of her words are Latin. Divorced from its context in the citations of linguists, the 'Gaulish' has perhaps gained a disproportionate role in the mother's speech.

What we have here, in other words, is a tangle of early medieval textual confusion: evidence for Gaulish has not so much been found in the *Passio* as created from its raw material. What struck Thurneysen as possibly Gaulish seems most likely to be simple textual corruption of some of the mother's words (perhaps because of a difficult exemplar which made use of abbreviations that were unfamiliar to the scribe of a sub-archetype) combined with early medieval attempts to fix the text. Faced with a confusing string of words that he did not

⁶⁴ In Roman-period epigraphy from Britain we find *devo* 'by the god' in a Latin-language prayer for justice from Ratcliffe-on-Soar, Nottinghamshire, and in another from Lydney Park, Gloucestershire, to *devo Nodenti* 'the god Nodens' (for British Latin features in the Ratcliffe-on-Soar tablet, see Mullen 2013c). The examples of *devo* in Britain could be taken as code-switches into British Celtic, or as a contact-induced form along the lines of *divo* discussed above, or as Latin *deo* with the insertion of the [w] glide after a front vowel, a feature found in a few Roman-period Latin loanwords in Welsh (e.g. *pydew* < *puteus* rather than *puteus*) and perhaps in a curse table from Leicester (*euum* for *eum*). This glide in this specific vocalic position would be a distinctive feature of British Latin, see Adams (2007), 590–1, and (2016), 422, 424, though he is cautious and notes that, in the current state of knowledge, interpretation 'is difficult' (2007), 591.

⁶⁵ The two manuscripts are Munich 4585 (9th c., first or second quarter) and Vat. lat. 5771 (9th/10th c.) (for the dates, see Bischoff 1998–2017). Chevalley (2006), 141–2, 198.

⁶⁶ See Chevalley (2006), 179 with the *apparatus*.

recognize, it is tempting to imagine a scribe inserting the word *gallica* into the account, because it seemed appropriate to an episode taking place in Autun and because whatever he found in his exemplar struck him as strange and hardly Latin.⁶⁷ The Gaulish of third-century Autun may, in other words, be a product of medieval scholarship, rather than any late ancient reality. In a way, that would hardly be surprising, for context argues strongly against finding any Gaulish in the *Passion*. As we have already suggested, the account of Symphorianus' fate probably goes back to the middle of the fifth century CE. Our other evidence suggests that Gaulish had by this time faded as a living language, especially in large urban centres (see Chapter 5). It is perhaps just about possible that whoever composed the *Passion* might have imagined the mother speaking Gaulish, but it is vanishingly unlikely that they knew enough of the language to insert a proper sentence of it into her mouth. If anything, it seems most likely that corruption of the text occurred first and some inventive early medieval scholar, confronted by nonsense, labelled it as *voce Gallica*, which, as we shall see in Chapter 5, may mean Gallic Latin, Gaulish, or the language of Gaul.

What has happened here is perhaps a product of those differing perspectives we set out above. For linguists, the Symphorianus episode has become in a sense deracinated—ever greater linguistic sophistication is applied to the same fragment of text, without it being subject to a broader textual investigation. Conversely, historians have never looked over the disciplinary parapet to observe that a probably fifth-century *Passion* is thought to contain crucial evidence for the survival of Gaulish, a neglect obvious in the fact that this significant text took so long to receive a proper edition and dedicated study. What is needed is an approach that combines both the linguistic perspective on the possible origin of some of the words spoken by Symphorianus' mother and the broader problem of the survival of Gaulish, and a text-critical and historical one, which treats the *Passion* as a late antique composition that needs to be studied in its own right and handled with care.

This instance of textual uncertainty can be replicated by any number of other examples from across the post-imperial western provinces. Indeed, the textual foundations of our knowledge of the Latin used from the fifth century onwards are surprisingly shaky, and we remain relatively ignorant about less-, sub- and non-literary Latin. This is true even for well-documented areas, such as Merovingian Gaul. Scholars of the Merovingian period owe an enormous debt to Bruno Krusch (1857–1940) of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, who, with the assistance of others, provided editions of the works of Gregory of Tours,

⁶⁷ Cf. Chevalley's (2006), 199, slightly more cautious remarks, which arrive at a not dissimilar conclusion. For the sophistication of some misguided early medieval insertions in manuscripts, see (for example) Stover and Woudhuysen (2022). The question of when and why a scribe might have been tempted to describe the words as Gaulish is perhaps one that deserves further study.

Venantius Fortunatus, Fredegar, and a very large number of hagiographic works. Though not totally comprehensive, Krusch had a fair claim to have edited both the bulk and the quality of Merovingian literature, and his editions are still in most cases the scholarly standard. It is difficult not to be impressed by his industry and the knowledge of the Merovingian world on display in the introductions and notes to the texts he edited. Yet his editorial work is often seriously flawed, in ways that affect both our understanding of the texts and of Merovingian Latinity. This point has been made before, particularly in the context of the *oeuvre* of Gregory of Tours: Danuta Shanzer has quietly sounded the alarm for some time.⁶⁸ Since, however, one can still read paeans to Krusch's editorial achievements, it perhaps bears blunt restatement: Krusch's editions are not reliable. His reporting of readings (which he often had at second hand) cannot always be trusted. His *stemmata*, when he prints one, have a recurring and disconcerting feature: no matter how early, how numerous, or how close to the era of composition the manuscript witnesses, extant manuscripts are invariably linked only by lost exemplars, which often bear a heavier conceptual load than their parchment cousins. The text Krusch prints often bears little relation to the *stemma* he has provided, and in examining the textual *apparatus* that often takes up half the page, one has the sense that he picked readings almost on a whim. His true *ratio edendi* was a sense that Merovingian Latin was bad Latin. In practice, this meant that the more classicizing a text was, the more obvious it was to Krusch that it was a later (generally Carolingian) forgery, and the more incontestable it was that something was authentically Merovingian, the more vulgar its Latin ought to be.⁶⁹ Krusch was thus at liberty to dismiss anything too polished as not Merovingian and to present any undoubtedly Merovingian text in a luxuriantly unclassical orthography and syntax. This he did even when the results are patently absurd. As Orlandi has pointed out with a wary eye on Krusch's edition of Gregory of Tours, it seems unlikely that the occupant of an episcopal seat in the later sixth century could no longer really distinguish the Latin cases.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ See, for example, Shanzer (2005), 306 and cf. Orlandi (1996).

⁶⁹ For an example picked almost at random, see Krusch's remarks (1890), 233–4, on the life of Gaugeric of Cambrai, where the faulty orthography shows that the text 'nicht durch die Feile der Karolingischen Schule gegangen ist'. The point has been made before: Wallace-Hadrill (1953), 17. It is of course in any case overly simplistic to make such a sharp division between Merovingian and Carolingian Latin, given the frequency with which earlier texts were rewritten and adapted (especially in genres such as hagiography). See Verdo (2010) in general, or consider the way that the *Austrasian Letters* are a Carolingian compilation of Merovingian material (Barrett and Woudhuysen 2016a). There is a broader problem with attempts to rigidly subdivide the history of Latin across late antiquity and the early Middle Ages: Woudhuysen (2021), 235.

⁷⁰ Orlandi (1996), 69; Herren (2012), 92–4 is somewhat sceptical. The edition of Gregory's *Histories* had a particularly tangled genesis. The text, for which Krusch had assistance from Wilhelm Levison, appeared in two fascicles in 1937 and 1942. Krusch died in 1940, leaving the indices and notes towards a preface for Levison (by then driven from Germany by the Nazis) to complete. Levison died in 1947 with the indices complete but the preface not yet finished. The third fascicle containing them was

The consequences of Krusch's editorial technique for our understanding of the Latin used in Gaul after the Roman Empire are obvious and wide-ranging. Our sense of Merovingian Latin is still inclined to see it as non-standard, eccentric, or falling short of classical norms in some way, because the texts canonized as Merovingian have some of these features and the way in which they were edited has exaggerated them. Conversely, we are perhaps still overly impressed by the façade of correct Carolingian Latinity, because the underlying editorial assumption is that Carolingian authors wrote good Latin and that texts in good Latin are likely to be Carolingian.⁷¹ The effects of all this are perhaps most severe in the domain of Merovingian hagiography, which forms a sort of literary penumbra for Gaul from the sixth to the eighth centuries. The lives of Merovingian saints are so numerous, so variegated, and so complex as a body of literature as to give pause to anyone approaching them.⁷² This is a serious problem, for it is precisely the quantity and diversity of hagiographic texts that makes them so attractive for anyone interested in Merovingian Latin: saints' lives survive from all over the Merovingian world and offer probably our richest evidence for the language used by its (educated) inhabitants.⁷³ In the case of a self-conscious and stylish author like Gregory of Tours, scepticism about Krusch's presentation of his Latin has always been possible, if not necessarily easy.⁷⁴ There is now even a new edition of Book IV of his *Histories* by Kai Peter Hilchenbach, which adopts a bipartite *stemma* and prints a much less eccentric text (at least in terms of orthography and syntax).⁷⁵ Fascinating as they can be, the lives of Merovingian saints are less monumental than Gregory's work and less central to our understanding of the Frankish kingdoms: their Latinity has not benefited from the kind of reassessment that the *Histories* are beginning to see.

There are problems here beside the standard ones that arise from Krusch's editorial technique too. Krusch had what might be described as a mania for condemning Merovingian hagiographic texts as later forgeries.⁷⁶ His judgements

completed by Walther Holtzman and published in 1951. Though the preface was issued in Krusch's name alone, the degree to which some of the views in it are Levison's is not totally clear.

⁷¹ Goulet (2010), 21 makes this point in a very thought-provoking way. Given that Alcuin's grammar is far from perfect on every occasion, and that his style and syntax varies depending on the time of writing and the purpose, if his works circulated anonymously, would we necessarily have marked all of them as Carolingian?

⁷² Perhaps the place to start is the edited volume by Goulet, Heinzelmann, and Veyrard-Cosme (2010), or the monograph by Kreiner (2014). Heinzelmann (2010), 27–31, offers a brief overview of the surviving quantity of material—it is forbidding.

⁷³ See the pioneering work, from a linguistic background, of Marc Van Uytvanghe, especially (1976, 1985, and 1987).

⁷⁴ See, for example, the scathing review by Janet Nelson (1977) of Lewis Thorpe's (1974) wonderful translation of Gregory's *Histories*—the main flaw she identifies is failure to use Krusch, but that was perhaps not so accidental an omission as she implies.

⁷⁵ Hilchenbach (2009). Not everyone is persuaded by this approach: Bourgain (2016), 155–8.

⁷⁶ An example picked almost at random would be the *vita* of Apollinaris of Valence, condemned by Krusch (1896), 196, for no very good reason.

have rarely gone completely unchallenged, but they have helped to muddy the scholarly water. Any discussion of an individual *vita* now often comes with a bristling *apparatus* of footnotes setting out the controversy. That obviously makes the secondary work of examining a number of saints' lives to gain an impression of their Latin rather uninviting. Moreover, there is a subtle and unhelpful way in which Krusch's conception of the subject still holds sway. The volumes of Merovingian hagiography he edited for the *Monumenta* appeared under the title *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici et antiquorum aliquot* ('The martyrdoms and lives of saints of the Merovingian period and a few of older vintage').⁷⁷ In this, it is the saints, not the *passiones* and *vitae*, that are of the Merovingian period: hagiographic literature produced in, but not about, Gaul between the fifth and seventh centuries is notable by its absence.⁷⁸ From the standpoint of a historian, this decision is just about defensible, but for anyone interested in Merovingian literature, or Merovingian Latin, it is deeply misleading. It is likely that Merovingian accounts of earlier martyrs significantly outnumber those of contemporary figures, but they have attracted much more limited attention.⁷⁹ To Merovingian authors there were not, of course, sharply distinguished separate genres of past and present hagiography: there were the lives of the saints. There is, in other words, much more evidence for hagiographic Latin than is perhaps sometimes realized. One cannot but wonder whether these *passiones* of earlier martyrs—part of a literature that stretched across almost all of what had been the Roman West—might make Merovingian Latin look rather different, perhaps less unusual, than we sometimes imagine it. There is also the nagging worry that a rather colourless *passio* of an earlier martyr, written in somewhat nondescript Latin in (let us say) Lyon in about 550, but preserved only in an Italian manuscript, would never be identified as a Merovingian production.⁸⁰

The editions on which any more linguistically oriented account of the Latin used in the late-Roman and post-imperial West must rest are, in short, often unsatisfactory, both in terms of the material that they cover and how they edit it. Because of Krusch's peculiar editorial technique, Merovingian Gaul illustrates these problems particularly sharply, but they are certainly far from absent elsewhere. There are also somewhat broader issues in editing that are perhaps less easily solved. With a small number of exceptions, editors of Latin texts written during the later Roman Empire tend to present their syntax and orthography

⁷⁷ The last three volumes were edited with Levison (whose name appears on the title page), though Krusch in each case wrote the preface and was clearly the guiding hand.

⁷⁸ As, for example, the *Passion of St Symphorianus*.

⁷⁹ Heinzlmann (2010), 40–9 and 52–5, offers some very useful orientation on these texts. There are of course exceptions to this neglect: Van Egmond (2006) is an interesting example, which looks at all the hagiographic texts produced in Auxerre in the Merovingian period.

⁸⁰ Compare, for example, the way that the *Epitome de Caesaribus*, which is clearly an early medieval text, was universally treated as a composition of the late fourth or early fifth century until very recently (Stover and Woudhuysen 2021).

more or less in line with classical standards. The manuscripts may be full of medieval spellings and sometimes even show a more medieval approach to grammar, but the edition will generally smooth away these post-classical features, often without much thought having been given to whether this is in fact the correct approach. In contrast, the editor of an early medieval Latin work will generally take a more relaxed approach to its eccentric features, feeling no particular need to make orthography and syntax consistent with earlier norms or even within the same text. Editions thus perhaps overstate the difference between the Latinity of works written in (say) 375 and in 775.⁸¹ We see something similar in contrasting approaches to different sorts of textual production from late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. The epigraphist or the diplomatist is likely to leave some outright errors in the inscription or charter they are editing, since they regard the original form of the text as important evidence in its own right. The textual editor will not generally do this, and indeed will often be criticized for leaving unsignalled errors in the text (rightly when that betrays a lack of thought about how to constitute or construe it). A comparison of the documentary material from a particular region with any literary works produced there might well, therefore, overstate the difference in the language used in these two types of writing. An example can perhaps illustrate both the chronological and the generic point. Anyone who has worked with charters from the post-imperial West will be aware that they often do not conform to the norms of classical Latin. The temptation to treat their language as a distinctively early medieval phenomenon might be abated by a glance at the municipal decrees of the Roman West.⁸² These documents of the doings of the councils of small Roman towns—in some ways not all that dissimilar to charters—generally aspire to a style that is perhaps more elevated than the average early medieval document, but their spelling and grammar would often have had a Roman schoolmaster shaking his head. Because the municipal decrees survive as inscriptions, their idiosyncrasies are generally presented plainly in editions. It is difficult not to feel that if they happened to be preserved in manuscript (and were more the province of the Roman lawyer than the epigraphist), editors would have quietly removed their less classical features and thus created a divide in the linguistic correctness of (some) ancient and early medieval documents. We might wonder about where else in our evidence traps like this lie hidden.

It is not merely the case, however, that the evidence is difficult to edit, interpret, and use, and that it requires scholars to combine approaches from linguistics and history. It is also patchily distributed across the post-imperial West. No single region really gives us the chance to integrate the study of literary texts, place

⁸¹ This is perhaps revealed most clearly in cases where a work has been incorrectly categorized as late-Roman or early medieval. The *Origo Constantini imperatoris*, for example, is an early medieval text (though obviously based on late-Roman material), which editors have laboured mightily to make classical: see Stover and Woudhuysen (2023), 398–402.

⁸² A number of these are collected in Sherk (1970).

names, inscriptions, and documents on perishable or scrap materials. Britain and Ireland have extremely limited and often problematic corpora of linguistic evidence for the fifth and sixth centuries (see Chapters 8 and 9). It may also be the case that what we have is not all that representative of what was being written at the time: we have a long tradition in Irish scholarship (including in the *Auraicept na n-Éces*) that links the ogam letter forms to trees and numerous references in wider Irish literature to the writing of ogam on wood, and yet all (or virtually all) of this inscribed medium has been lost (see Chapter 8). Iberia has both a profusion of surviving literary works and a growing corpus of texts on slate that give us an insight into Latin at ground level, but the region has often been treated as peripheral and idiosyncratic, while the weight of the evidence for it falls in the seventh century, after that for many other regions (see Chapters 3 and 4). North Africa, which perhaps has the best evidence across the various categories (see Chapter 2), is plagued by a lack of systematic publication and had such a different destiny to the other Latin-speaking regions of the Empire that it has often been left out of the conversation. Many of our contributors are in fact in the vanguard of making this provincial evidence available: they are collecting the place-names, publishing the slates, editing the literary texts, and drawing together entire sets of inscriptions, such as the early Irish texts in Latin script, which have hitherto been almost completely ignored (see Chapter 8).

Even where there is a profusion of evidence of very different kinds across a broad stretch of time, it is not always easy to integrate its study. We have already seen that Gaul offers rich literary and hagiographic evidence for the use of Latin, though by no means all of this is available to scholars in up-to-date and reliable editions and the focus has tended to rest on a relatively small number of major authors from the fifth to the seventh centuries. Some other regions of the post-imperial West also offer rich literary and hagiographic evidence for the use of Latin, but one of the ways in which Merovingian Gaul is distinguished is by the quantity and variety of surviving material that falls outside those categories, but which have not been systematically made available to scholars. We have a good deal of surviving legislation, for instance, both in the form of the notoriously controverted *Lex Salica*, other law-codes, and scattered royal pronouncements, as well as the formularies that give us a rich insight into legal culture.⁸³ We similarly have a good, though far from complete, record of the canons of Church councils.⁸⁴ Merovingian Gaul was also a world of written private documents. Consider the story of Cautinus, the Bishop of Clermont, and Anastasius, one of his priests, told with relish and wit by Gregory of Tours.⁸⁵ Cautinus wished to steal some of Anastasius' property and the way he went about doing this was to try to obtain the deeds (*chartae*) to them. When flattery and threats had failed, Cautinus

⁸³ On the legal texts, Rio (2020) offers a succinct introduction.

⁸⁴ Collected in Gaudemet and Basdevant (1989). ⁸⁵ Gregory, *Histories* 4.12.

resorted to imprisoning and torturing Anastasius and eventually had him confined in a Roman sarcophagus (complete with its original occupant). Anastasius escaped and went to Chlothar, the king (r. 511–61), still clutching his *chartae*. The outraged monarch issued the priest with *praeceptiones* to give him greater security of tenure.

What it is interesting about the story is not merely how central documents are to it, but the way that simply seizing the property appears not to have occurred to Cautinus—he needed the charters. Such private documents rarely survive in the original before the eighth century (though there are extant wills across the entire Merovingian period).⁸⁶ While the extant original private charters of the Merovingian period (mostly from the monastery of St Gall) have been published in the *Chartae Latinae antiquiores* series, the most comprehensive collection of those preserved in later copies remains Pardessus's mid-nineteenth-century edition, itself largely based on the late-eighteenth-century work of Louis-George Oudard Feudrix de Bréquigny.⁸⁷ Though an impressive achievement for its day, this is obviously now outdated, and the entire corpus of private documents from Merovingian Gaul needs to be reassessed, especially with an eye on authenticity. There are, however, a larger number of surviving charters issued by the Frankish kings, much better published, though the issue of their authenticity is even more tangled than that of the lives of saints.⁸⁸ They are not, unfortunately, evenly distributed in time or space: most of the genuine ones are from the Abbey of Saint-Denis near Paris, the residue from elsewhere in northern France, and almost all date to the last century and a half of Merovingian Gaul. In spite of the richness of this evidence, sociolinguistic study of Merovingian legal and canonical material or documentary texts has barely begun. Some work has been done on the Latin of the legal texts, but less than might be expected given the quantity of surviving material and its variety.⁸⁹ The language of the Church councils is still essentially an untilled field, and the same might be said of the Latin of the liturgy.⁹⁰ In the 1920s and 1930s long monographs were written on the language of charters, but our understanding of the corpus has changed fairly fundamentally since then, and those studies tended to focus on the technical details of orthography,

⁸⁶ On the wills, see Nonn (1972). For the private documents in general, see Barbier (2014).

⁸⁷ For Merovingian Gaul, the relevant volumes of *ChLA* are XIII (Atsma and Vezin 1981) and XIV (Atsma and Vezin 1982); Pardessus (1843–9). There are more recent editions of some particularly important collections, though even they are now often rather old. Wissembourg: Glöckner and Doll (1979); Echternach: Wampach (1930); Stavelot-Malmedy: Halkin and Roland (1909); Le Mans (where the issues of authenticity are unusually difficult): Busson and Ledru (1901) and Weidemann (2002). Bruckner (1949) contains some very late Merovingian charters from Alsace. See in general on this material Ganz and Goffart (1990).

⁸⁸ The royal charters are edited in Kölzer (2001), on which see Murray (2005). Note also Heidrich's edition (2011) of the charters of the Arnulfings.

⁸⁹ For example, Rio (2009), 15–18, on the formularies. On Marculf, there is Uddholm (1953).

⁹⁰ Though see Demyttenaere (2013) and Rose (2013).

morphology, and syntax.⁹¹ There are interesting possibilities for future exploration in the fact that the personnel involved in the production of charters operated in the same milieu as those who copied manuscripts, and indeed were sometimes the very same people.⁹² Study of the language of the charters and other documents is not, in other words, an annexe to Merovingian Latin, but perhaps the crucial route to unravelling the problem more generally.⁹³

Epigraphic sources are another underused resource for Merovingian language. Though not as numerous or as extensive as their Roman counterparts, several hundred Merovingian inscriptions have been published, from more elaborate epitaphs to runes and graffiti on potsherds.⁹⁴ The diversity of the material is striking, and its distribution across the kingdom surprisingly even. Merovingian epigraphy offers remarkable insights into particular places across a broad sweep of time. Trier and the Rhineland, in particular, have a rich surviving body of material and Wolfgang Haubrichs shows in Chapter 7 how it can shed light on a host of historical and linguistic questions. The problem is that the epigraphic evidence is, in Mark Handley's crisp description, 'devastatingly fragmented'.⁹⁵ There is no comprehensive corpus of Merovingian inscriptions, and for many places the existing corpora that have been published are not even comprehensive for the cities or regions they take as their subject. New material continues to be published, perhaps faster than is generally realized. Attempts, therefore, to analyse the evidence of Merovingian epigraphy are still in their infancy but will surely aid our understanding of the Latin used in Gaul from the fifth century, progress on which traditional approaches—whether the question of Latin versus Romance, or the study of the same select authors—have perhaps reached their limits.

A selection of the better-published non-literary texts, both charters and epigraphy, was the subject of a recent doctoral study by Eloise Lemay, which demonstrates evidence of the expected social variegation in the language used—with literary inscriptions the output of a well-educated clergy, for example—but also relative control and consistency in written texts across the board.⁹⁶ While the non-standard features, what in aggregate used to be called 'Vulgar Latin', increase steadily over time in the epigraphy, there is still much standardization and knowledge of formulaic language in the non-literary texts throughout the period.⁹⁷

⁹¹ On the charters, see Vielliard (1927) and Pei (1932), as well as the articles of Martin (1927, 1929a, 1929b, 1929c, 1930). More recently, see Falkowski (1971) and Orlandi (2006). There are items of interest also scattered through Barbier (2014).

⁹² Something that emerges most crisply from Ganz (1983), a study with much broader and more important implications than has perhaps been realized.

⁹³ What might be remarked on here is how *ordinary* the language of Merovingian charters often appears, certainly set against some of the oddities Krusch admitted to his editions.

⁹⁴ There is now an excellent introduction to the material in Handley (2020).

⁹⁵ Handley (2020), 565. ⁹⁶ Lemay (2017).

⁹⁷ One conclusion is that Trier seems to show more conservatism than Aquitania Prima, but we need access to further evidence before stronger, more detailed, claims can be made.

Latin was clearly widely used as the main language of the population throughout this period, and the variant forms inevitably generated were probably not unintelligible to the high-status Latin-using elite and vice versa. There appear to have been no radical periods of linguistic change, for example at the fall of the western Roman Empire, and no obvious support for the by now rather hackneyed narrative of Merovingian Latin being in a tailspin. Detailed linguistic work such as this will be necessary to tell the sociolinguistic story of Merovingian Latin, but, as we have seen, the foundation of our knowledge is insecure. We urgently require further work on the building of non-literary corpora to supplement the editorial work still to be done on the full range of literary materials. Beyond the well-known works of those such as Gregory of Tours, there is an enormous quantity of Latin preserved in the lives of saints, or legal material, or inscribed on stone or portable objects, that has not yet been coordinated and assessed sociolinguistically. The reward of a proper understanding of the Merovingian sociolinguistic landscape is an enticing prospect indeed.

Names represent another category of evidence that has not been systematically collected and analysed across the western provinces, though the sociolinguistic rewards are potentially rich. Names are not easy evidence to deploy, raising numerous issues of analysis and interpretation. On the face of it, Chapters 7 and 9 seem to take different perspectives on the interpretation of names for thinking about spoken languages and linguistic contact. David Parsons worries about the dating and even the location of some of the place-names of post-imperial Britain, and about the chronology of the sound changes that modern scholars want them to have passed through or not, to prove use by, and contact between, speakers of specific languages. He points out that the sound changes are themselves surprisingly evasive and hard to date—some, such as the notoriously difficult vowel changes, can be given windows spanning several centuries—and the same sound changes can be attested in different languages, British Latin and British Celtic, for example, both through parallel developments or through contact. He also raises the problem of some Latin-origin place-names being used much later, once their original meaning has been lost (so Welsh *magwyr*, originally from Latin *māceria* ('wall'), can mean 'ruins', and when used to refer to a place which has Roman remains may have simply have meant 'the place with the Roman ruins', hundreds of years after Latin had disappeared as a locally spoken form) and by forms being created by analogy, which complicate the linguistic picture even further. He is forced to admit that often the evidence from later-Roman and post-Roman Britain leads to likelihoods and possibilities but rarely anything approaching certainty: 'the inability to be categorical about such a fundamental point in Britain's linguistic history is a reflection of the sparse and unsatisfactory nature of the evidence that survives.'⁹⁸

⁹⁸ See Chapter 9, p. 260.

Conversely Wolfgang Haubrichs's chapter is much more confident in its handling of the onomastic and toponymic materials. This is not the result of a lack of caution but, at least in part, of major differences in the available evidence. Unlike for Britain, in the *Belgicae* and *Germaniae*, as we have seen, the evidence of the charters and substantial epigraphic remains gives us a much larger set of material on which we can draw, not without its problems of course, and far from evenly spread, but generally much better dated and more copious. It even allows the tracking, for example, of single place-names intermittently, with dates, over time—something that is rarer for the material from Britain. Even if some of Haubrichs's interpretations of individual pieces of evidence or precise dates for sound shifts might be questioned, his conclusions about the speed of shift from Latin and to Germanic varieties in different regions rely on the careful aggregation of a very large body of evidence and the relative chronologies of his picture are secure. The results are striking: islands of Latin and areas of relatively slower shift to the Germanic languages can be identified, for example in the area around Trier, parts of the west bank of the Rhine, and to the north of the Somme. Indeed, these *Sprachinseln*, and others identified in Gaul as areas of the late speaking of Gaulish in Chapter 5, might well encourage historians to scour their own source materials again and to consider why these linguistic islands might have formed.

1.5. This Volume

This volume cannot solve all these problems. Instead, it takes the first step towards an interdisciplinary conversation that might lay the foundations for solving some of them. It offers an up-to-date overview of the linguistic situation in the western provinces in the later-Roman and post-imperial period. North Africa, the Iberian Peninsula, Gaul, Britain and Ireland, and the Germanies are covered—essentially the Gallic prefecture of the later Empire, plus an extension further into the heart of late-Roman North Africa, crucial due to its close relationship with the Iberian Peninsula and centrality to the western Empire. Provinces further east were obviously also linked to their western neighbours, but the area selected forms a geographical unit with strong cultural, linguistic, and historical connections. The chapters focus on late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, with a particular concentration on the fifth and sixth centuries CE, though some (for reasons of contextualization) reach further back, one much further back into prehistory (Chapter 8) and some extend as late as the eleventh century (Chapters 2, 4, and 7). Long chronological perspectives allow us to understand the narrower period with more clarity.

In that context it is important to underline that this book combines with its sister volumes, *Social Factors in the Latinization of the Roman West*, which follows a thematic approach, and *Latinization, Local Languages and Literacies in the*

Roman West. These both have as their focus the later Republican and Imperial periods, with an emphasis on the Principate. Taken together this trilogy therefore lays the groundwork for a sociolinguistic history from the earliest attestations of the Latin language in the western provinces, through its dendritic spread and interaction with a range of local languages and literacies, to its continued life either as a widely spoken language of the populations in the medieval period, or its relegation to a language of the Church and literature. *Latinization, Local Languages and Literacies in the Roman West* adopts, like this volume, a geographical organization and takes the story of Latinization deep into regionality. Its chapters should ideally be read with their companion chapters in this book for those who want to reconstruct a picture of sociolinguistic patterning over time.

We asked the contributors to the present volume to consider a series of questions and issues. What was the linguistic situation in the post-imperial period and to what extent was this a continuation, or not, of the situation in the later-Roman period? How widespread and embedded was Latin by the end of the Roman period, and in what forms was it spoken and written? What were the fates of the non-Latin languages and how widespread was bilingualism and multilingualism in the provinces? Beyond the linguistic description, we encouraged consideration of sociolinguistic dimensions, for example which parts of society were involved in, or excluded from, various linguistic changes, and what possible values might be attached to different linguistic varieties by different sectors of society? We also urged contributors to be explicit about the evidence used to reconstruct these linguistic pictures, its reliability, and its limits.

The mission was to try to bridge the gap between the historical and the linguistic, the Roman and the post-imperial, and to integrate into the discussion the historical perspectives and debates for which the linguistic evidence may be relevant. The creation of these dialogues was not always easy: it is not straightforward to put oneself in the mindset of a colleague in a different discipline and to try to peel back layers of assumptions and potential inadvertent miscommunications to find common ground. This book demonstrates how seemingly insignificant linguistic evidence and arguments can in aggregate make fundamental advances in our knowledge of language contact, shift, and death, educational levels, and sociolinguistic variation, and therefore have profound implications for writing social history. Detailed exploration of the social variegation of language has not, however, been undertaken in all the chapters, with some representing primarily linguistic or historical contributions. For some regions fewer of the foundations necessary for sociolinguistic analysis had previously been laid, and these chapters now form a substantial basis from which social historians and sociolinguists might work. As we discovered early on in our preparations for this volume, we are only at the beginning of a conversation.

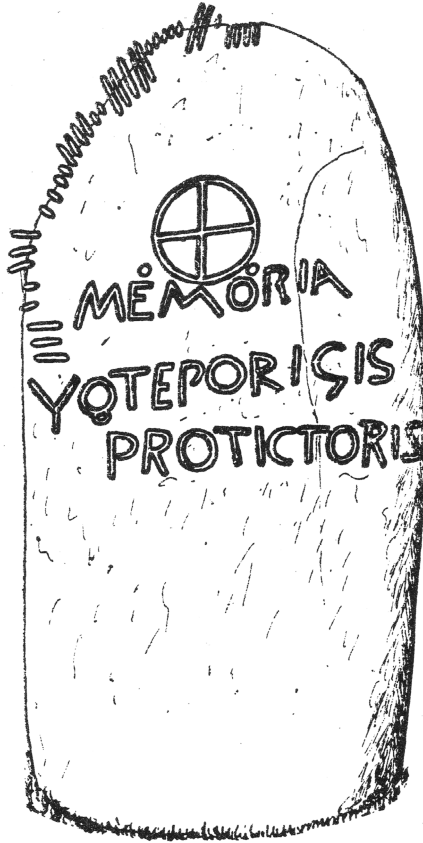
Some striking themes, conclusions, and directions for future sociolinguistic explorations have, however, already emerged from this collaborative work. One of

the most important is the conclusion that we must embrace complexity, exploring linguistic registers, varieties, and multilingualism, both on the vertical ‘social’ and horizontal ‘geographical’ planes. It is almost a trope for the introduction of an edited volume to say that the area it considers is complex, but if it is true of any subject then it is true of the study of language in the late-Roman and post-imperial West: embracing complexity is key to getting to the heart of the linguistic realities. This has not always been a focus for historians, some of whom, particularly in relatively monolingual Anglophone academia, tend to work with a subconscious vision of languages as having a one-in-one-out operation. So, for example, the questions have often been: did Germanic-speaking incomers to Britain encounter British Latin or British Celtic? Why don’t the British speak Welsh? When did the switch to Latin in Gaul occur? These and similar questions often overlook widespread bilingualism and multilingualism.

Our contributors show just how fruitful it is to think about different communities of speech—whether speaking different languages or varieties of the same language—and the ways that these do, or do not, interact. Sometimes it can be extremely difficult to access these communities, particularly when even basic knowledge of context is absent. But even often relatively decontextualized material such as the ogam stones, when scrutinized linguistically can yield tantalizing information. We might take the Castell Dwyran (Dyfed) stone (*CIIC* 358), probably of the fifth or sixth century CE, as an example (Fig. 1.1). In Chapter 8, Stifter and White remark that though the ogam text, VOTECORIGAS, appears to contain an Irish name, it is an artificial creation based on a British Celtic name, demonstrating linguistic awareness of the sound correspondences between British Celtic and Irish.⁹⁹ Along with the ogam, written vertically on the edge, we find on the face of the stone the Latin text MEMORIA VOTEPORIGIS PROTICTORIS (‘to the memory of Voteporix, the protector’), in which the name Voteporix, can be analysed as ‘Refuge-king’ or similar (the first element the same as that in Welsh *godeb* ‘refuge’). It has been suggested that this name may have been specifically chosen as reflecting the meaning of the Late Latin title *Protector*, indicating the possible convergence of three languages on a single stone. The name and title alignment may well be coincidental, but in any case it is not necessary to make this additional step to show that British Celtic, Irish, and Latin combine on this stone. It raises the intriguing possibility that a high-status British-Celtic-named individual chose to use both the Irish language and its script and the Latin language for a prominent statement close to a Roman road.¹⁰⁰ Richer material from other parts of our area of focus, for instance the Iberian Peninsula, allows us to reconstruct much more of the sociolinguistic complexity. Here we can even attempt a

⁹⁹ See Chapter 8, p. 229.

¹⁰⁰ See Sims-Williams (2003), 346–7, for the possibility that the individual was an ancestor of Gildas’ tyrant of Dyfed, Vortipori.



MEMORIA VOTEPORIGIS PROTICTORIS

Fig. 1.1 Castell Dwyran (Dyfed) stone with ogam text on edge and Latin on face, drawing from *CIIC* 358

reconstruction of the detail of the social hierarchy, glimpses of language and diffusion of educational practices and literary texts from the top to close to the bottom. On close examination, however, the intricate social networks and interactions are still only partially revealed in the evidence and sometimes even basic terms in the discourse can be hard for us to situate, for example who the *vulgus* or the *rustici* are in Isidore's invaluable but sometimes elusive commentaries (see Chapters 3 and 4).

In understanding language attitudes, spread, co-existence, change, and death, we have to consider power differentials. This comes through in several chapters, perhaps most explicitly in Chapter 2. Though Conant is careful to point out that 'power was not the lens through which late-Roman authors themselves understood the relationships between languages', he nonetheless argues that it was

crucial: ‘language’s association with power was perhaps the most critical factor in shaping its likelihood of taking root and becoming widely used in the late antique and early medieval Maghrib’. This power came in different forms and it was not only the preserve of the ruling class. Conant argues in fact that Latin and Punic persisted because ‘the decoupling of the Punic language from political power played a critical role in the idiom’s afterlife in North Africa—a story that would later repeat itself in the case of Latin...No less than language change, then, language persistence reveals something of the social patterning of power in post-Roman Africa, and of the remarkable resilience of the identities and communities that it fostered there.’¹⁰¹

An area for which we still know relatively little about the social status of the languages and communities and balances of power is late-Roman and post-imperial Britannia. Even reconstructing the nature of the linguistic landscape remains a fascinating problem, one tackled in Chapters 8 and 9. A major question that is constantly raised, and which is perhaps sensibly swerved by the contributors, is why northern Gaul and southern England, both integrated into the Roman Empire for generations by the fourth century, and both conquered by Germanic-speaking groups over the course of the fifth, ended up so different linguistically.¹⁰² It seems not unlikely that power and social status, both of the incoming populations (Franks in Gaul and the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes in Britain) and their languages, have to be considered part of the answer.¹⁰³ It is of course unlikely that all these migrant groups were exclusively Germanic-speaking. Their elites probably also spoke Latin given their close proximity on the Continent to a vast Latin-speaking population with which they were at times forced, and sometimes chose, to engage. Indeed, considering the importance of the Empire for at least some Germanic-speaking mercenaries and traders originating outside its official boundaries, we might even wonder whether the *lingua franca* between local and incomer on the beaches of southern and eastern England might in many cases have been Latin. The success of Latin on the Continent in this context is easy to explain. Harder is to work out why the Germanic language was so successful in Britain.

The storied and still live debate about the nature of the *adventus Saxonum* is well known.¹⁰⁴ Scholars do not agree on how many migrants arrived, over what time period, and who exactly they were.¹⁰⁵ Some have argued that elite males

¹⁰¹ See Chapter 2, p. 47, 56, 57 for quotations.

¹⁰² For some thoughts on this question, see Ward-Perkins (2000) and Halsall (2013).

¹⁰³ The contributors chose to use the term Anglo-Saxon to refer to the Germanic-speaking groups labelled as such by historians. This contextually defined use of the term is separate from the racist appropriations of it deployed in some circles in the US.

¹⁰⁴ For some key contributions, see Harland (2021); Hamerow (1997); Higham (2007).

¹⁰⁵ For important work on the nature and historical importance of migration in the post-imperial West, see, for example, Delaplace (2015), the illuminating multi-work review by Halsall (1999), and the work of the Center for Advanced Studies ‘Migration and Mobility in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages’ at the University of Tübingen.

were preponderant, others that entire communities moved. No one type of evidence available—historical, epigraphic, onomastic, linguistic, or archaeological—has been able to give us the answer.¹⁰⁶ Language change, of course, can happen through a range of processes including mass migration and assimilation, mass migration and genocide, elite replacement, or no demographic change at all. The combination of different disciplinary perspectives and evidence and subtle clues, such as types of contact feature within linguistic change, inch us further forwards, especially with the addition of new archaeological finds and/or techniques such as the relatively recent (and slightly daunting) science of ancient DNA (see Chapter 8). Indeed, cutting-edge work deploying aDNA from skeletal remains from later Roman and early medieval burials in combination with other archaeological evidence has presented perhaps the most convincing evidence-driven analysis of the possible migration patterns to date.¹⁰⁷ This transformational research has only been possible thanks to international collaboration and the slow and patient extraction and analysis of DNA from numerous European collections. The authors use aDNA from 460 medieval northwestern skeletons including 278 individuals from England. The results suggest that there was large-scale early medieval migration across the North Sea and that this occurred over a longer period than is usually claimed, starting in some areas in the later-Roman period, in others as late as the eighth century CE, and lasting until the eleventh century, in the later period merging with mobility related to the Vikings. The results show that migration into England was from the northern European continent (especially Denmark, the northern Netherlands, northern Germany, and southern Sweden) and was regionally contingent, with partial integration of migrants. It suggests that ‘the formation of early medieval society in England was not simply the result of a small elite migration’, but rather of mass migration of both males and females.¹⁰⁸

It seems possible that while this migration of Germanic-speaking groups to England was beginning in the later-Roman period, there may not have been a very strong attachment on the part of the locals to either the locally spoken British Latin or British Celtic in lowland Britain and that power was (no longer) predominately attached to either one in the dying days of Roman rule. The local forms of Latin may have been looked down upon by high-status Latin speakers and may never have developed ‘indigenous’ status, whereas British Celtic had a long history as the community language but had been under pressure from the rise of Latin and migration to the west of the island. We can be sure that the linguistic situation varied along geographical and social lines, and the Germanic-speaking incomers would have encountered different varieties of language, depending on

¹⁰⁶ See Harland (2021), for example, who discusses the shortcomings in the archaeology of ethnicity approach to ‘Anglo-Saxon’ material culture.

¹⁰⁷ Gretzinger et al. (2022). ¹⁰⁸ Gretzinger et al. (2022), 118.

where and when they landed and with whom they came into contact. It is conceivably the fact that the demise of Roman rule upset the social framework for this, perhaps relatively fluid and fragile, Latin–Celtic societal bilingualism that provided the ideal conditions for the uptake of a new language, whose speakers may have had a stronger sense of ethnolinguistic identity associated with their Germanic varieties.¹⁰⁹

Regional comparisons, for example inspired by a desire to explain the different results of contact with Germanic-speaking incomers either side of the Channel, must be a key feature of the next phase of work on the post-imperial provinces. There is of course a risk that a volume organized in a geographical manner might continue to encourage a long-standing limitation of our work on languages and identities, namely that discussion tends to take place on region-by-region basis, with experts tending to spend their careers focusing on specific regions. The solution to these problems naturally lies in comparison across and between regions. We might consider in more detail the entwined sociolinguistic histories of the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa, for example. Or, to take a different approach, North Africa, which has been relatively overlooked by linguists, perhaps because no Romance language survives there, could be compared with the most northerly province, Britannia. Both tend to be seen as peripheral, though this perceived ‘alterity’ for Africa is not a Roman-period reality, at least not for the non-desert zones. Or we could focus on social groups across the provinces, for example exploring the role of women, who appear frustratingly rarely in this volume, in linguistic change or maintenance. More detailed sociolinguistic work is already under way for the Roman-period West, and there is much catching up to do for the post-imperial western provinces. This book could not address all these cross-regional and sociolinguistic questions, but it provides some tools to think through future answers. There is work to be done.

* * *

This introduction opened with Priscus at the court of Atilla the Hun, surprised and disconcerted to encounter a native Greek-speaker who had so seamlessly blended in to the culture of the ‘Scythians’. It seems fitting, therefore, to close with another encounter between a Roman and a ‘barbarian’. In 722, the Anglo-Saxon missionary Wynfrith (more famous under the name he received on the Continent, Boniface) went to Rome from his work evangelizing amongst the Germans, summoned by Pope Gregory II—the letter of invitation was so elaborate that it seemingly took the recipient some time to realize what was asked of him.¹¹⁰ Wynfrith had met the Pope before, and when he arrived for his interview they exchanged a

¹⁰⁹ For ethnolinguistic vitality, see Mullen (2013a), 69–71.

¹¹⁰ The episode is recounted in Willibald’s *Vita Bonifatii* (ed. Levison 1905, 1–58), ch. 6. It is the subject of an excellent study by Wright (2002), 95–109, to whose interpretation we are indebted here.

few cordial words. When Gregory got down to business and began to question the missionary on his creed and his understanding of the faith of the Church, Wynfrith demurred. Emphasizing his foreignness and his lack of facility in the everyday language of his interlocutor, he humbly asked that he be allowed to submit written answers to the questions. The Pope agreed, and Wynfrith swiftly drew up a statement, ‘written with a polished expertise in eloquence.’¹¹¹ There is some temptation to read the episode as straightforwardly attesting to Wynfrith’s slightly shaky spoken Latin, but something much more interesting is surely going on. Not a native speaker of the language, but rather someone who had acquired Latin with all the rigour that Anglo-Saxon education of the late seventh century could instil, Wynfrith was more at home in the written medium, the best place to show off the elaborate and mannered prose of the tradition of Aldhelm of Malmesbury.¹¹² Pope Gregory II was a native of the city of Rome, he had been head of the papal *Bibliotheca* earlier in his career, and presided over what was probably western Europe’s most elaborate and Latinate bureaucratic machine—there can surely be no question that he was comfortable with the most formal of written Latin.¹¹³ Yet when seeking to probe the beliefs of a missionary from the far north, he defaulted to the rapid and flexible language that was spoken in the city of Rome in the eighth century. The issue in their interaction was not incomprehension, but comfort, not language, but idiom. This interview—between a native speaker of a Germanic language, who wrote perfectly correct formal Latin, and a Roman of Rome, who conversed as a matter of course in the language that perhaps was not yet, but would become a form of Romance—encapsulates so neatly the transformations that languages and communities in the late-Roman and post-imperial West experienced.

¹¹¹ Willibald, *Vita Bonifatii*, ch. 6 (ed. Levison 1905, 28): *urbana eloquentiae scientia conscriptam*, emending the *scientiae* of the edition. There is a colour to the *urbanitas* of something written at Rome that is not easy to capture in English.

¹¹² Boniface was, it ought to be remembered, the author of an *Ars Grammatica* (ed. Gebauer and Löfstedt 1980). On Aldhelm, see Winterbottom (1977) and Orchard (1994).

¹¹³ On Gregory, and on the papacy in general in this period, see Noble (1984).

NORTH AFRICA AND THE
IBERIAN PENINSULA

2

Languages and Communities in Late Antique and Early Medieval North Africa

Jonathan P. Conant

In the contested space of late antique western North Africa, language was political. By the fourth century CE, the history of this region had long been entangled with that of Roman imperialism. Latin-speakers referred to the local territories that had gradually been annexed by the Empire simply as ‘Africa’, a vast expanse of what is now Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and western Libya between the Mediterranean and the Sahara. Over the course of the fifth century, however, a combination of internal revolt and external invasion destabilized imperial control of this area to the point of collapse. Perhaps invited by the Roman general Boniface, or perhaps on his own initiative, in 429 the Vandal king Geiseric (428–77) led a warband into Roman Africa and proceeded to carve out a kingdom centred on Carthage that encompassed much of the central Maghrib. Further west, this same period saw the emergence of new Amazigh (or ‘Berber’) kingdoms inside what had once been imperial territory. In 533–4, the Emperor Justinian (527–65) launched a successful (re)conquest of the Vandal kingdom from Constantinople that established an East Roman or Byzantine presence in North Africa for the next century and a half. Starting in 647, the caliph ʿUthmān (644–56) and his successors began to send armies westwards too, conquering the entire Maghrib in the later seventh and eighth centuries and gradually integrating the region into the larger Islamic world.¹

The linguistic environment of post-Roman Africa was correspondingly complex. By the late-Roman period, an array of interrelated autochthonous languages had come to be spoken between Morocco and Libya. So had numerous tongues that reflected long-term histories of imperialism, colonialism, and overseas settlement in the region, including not only Latin, but also Punic, Greek, and, from the

¹ Most topics discussed in this chapter are the subject of extensive scholarly bibliographies. I have limited references to the most recent scholarship, particularly synthetic monographs, through which readers can further pursue questions of interest. On the post-Roman period in North Africa in general, see Conant (2012). The most comprehensive study of the Vandals in English is Merrills and Miles (2010); more recently, see especially Steinacher (2016). On autochthonous kingdoms, see Modéran (2003) and below, notes 69–70. On the Byzantine–Islamic transition, see Kaegi (2010), now with Bockmann, Leone, and Rummel (2019) and Stevens and Conant (2016). On the early Islamic period, see Fenwick (2020).

mid-seventh century, Arabic. Soldiers in the imperial armies and members of the Vandal warband alike may further have spoken some variety of northern frontier speech or military argot, though the evidence is thin. Other enclave languages, such as Armenian, further enriched the region's linguistic diversity in the shorter term.²

The sources from which to study developments within North Africa's late antique and early medieval linguistic landscape are rich but uneven. The region's autochthonous languages were not written in late antiquity, and so are accessible to modern scholars principally through the tools of linguistic analysis. By contrast, texts written locally in Latin (and to a much lesser extent in Greek) are relatively abundant, and include letters, poetry, histories and chronicles, holy biographies, theological treatises, conciliar documents, and sermons. These can be supplemented with the perspectives of outside observers writing across a similar range of genres, not only in Greek and Latin, but also in Syriac and Arabic. Even when originally composed in North Africa itself, however, by far the vast majority of the texts that survive from the region do so in copies that were transcribed and preserved in the churches and monasteries of medieval Europe. Indeed, of the thousands of extant Latin manuscripts produced before c. 800, fewer than twenty-five have been even tentatively attributed to North African scriptoria.³ These codices provide precious evidence for the circulation of ideas in the late antique and early medieval Mediterranean.⁴ Like African texts copied in Europe, though, African manuscripts typically survive because medieval European churchmen thought they were worth preserving. Exceptions to this rule are rare. One is a small collection of twelfth- or early-thirteenth-century Latin liturgical manuscripts seemingly produced in the Maghrib and housed at St Catherine's monastery in Sinai.⁵ Another is a fragmentary treatise on Manichaeism, now in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, which was written in a fifth- or sixth-century hand and was reportedly found by a French colonial administrator in 1918 in a cave near Tébessa, Algeria.⁶ The arid conditions of the Maghribi countryside have also preserved a small but significant selection of documentary evidence, including at least three assemblages of wooden tablets and a remarkable number of Latin (and some Greek) ostraca, ranging from numerous single finds to one exceptionally large group of over 140 sherds.⁷ North

² On African Latin, see Adams (2007), 516–76. On the Amazigh languages, the essential study is now Múrcia Sánchez (2011). For Punic, see Adams (2003a), 200–45; Jongeling (2008); Kerr (2010). The use of Greek in Byzantine Africa merits further study, but see Cameron (1982). On Arabic, see Larcher (2018); Benhima (2011); Aguadé, Cressier, and Vicente (1998). On 'Vandalic', see below, n. 19; on Armenian, see below, n. 78.

³ Stansbury (2022).

⁴ On which, see Graham (2011); Tizzoni (2014); Marcos Marín (2016).

⁵ Vezin (2002–3).

⁶ *Codex Thevestinus*, ed. Stein (2004) = *Codd. Lat. Ant.* (Lowe) 5.680 = Paris BnF, MS nouv. acq. lat. 1114 (available online at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105154748>) [accessed 4th July 2023].

⁷ Conant (2010b).

Africans furthermore continued to embrace the epigraphic habit throughout late antiquity and into the early Middle Ages, and thousands of inscriptions survive from the region, mostly in Latin, but also in Greek and Punic.⁸

In approaching this evidence, scholars have tended to work within established chronologies or language groups, focusing on the Vandal, Byzantine, or early Islamic periods, or on Latin, Greek, Punic, or the Amazigh languages. The principal focus of this chapter is similarly on the changing social function of Latin in post-Roman Africa; but the essay explores that history within the region's complex and multifarious linguistic landscape, and within a much longer chronological framework than is typical of studies of this sort: *c.* 400–1230. Taking such a long view reveals that, in the late antique and early medieval Maghrib, language use in general—and the use of Latin in particular—was a product of multiple factors, including region, class, occupation, the urban–rural divide, and, with time, even religion. Fundamentally, however, when North Africans were in a position to make choices about their use of language, their decisions were pragmatic ones, within the framework of social expectations in which they operated. Language change played out very slowly, over the course of centuries rather than decades. In the long term, though, perhaps the most critical factor in bringing about such change was the association of certain languages with the world of practical power: with the court and politics, social advancement and influence, property rights, dispute resolution, and estate management. Such an association was not the inevitable result of conquest, even when members of a new ruling class spoke a language other than that of the majority of their new subjects. Nor were the associations of languages with power felt uniformly across the expansive landscape of western North Africa. Rather, such associations were always negotiations, worked out between multiple actors, including not only rulers and elites, but also everyday Africans on the ground, with their own varied and even conflicting commitments.

2.1. Latin in Late-Roman, Vandal, and Byzantine Africa

The ascendance of Latin in North Africa by *c.* 300 was the product of a complex web of mutually reinforcing factors. In the Roman world, Latin was the language of power.⁹ It was the language in which emperors issued edicts, mandates, rescripts, and decrees; it was the language in which imperial bureaucrats communicated with the central administration, with each other, and with the provincials under their authority; it was the language of the law courts, official inquests, the army, and taxation. For the ambitious scions of elite families throughout the

⁸ Latin: Handley (2003), 18 and 207–8. Greek: see below, n. 80. Punic: see below, n. 61.

⁹ See especially Adams (2003b).

West, mastery of Latin was the essential prerequisite for service and advancement in the Empire's civil or military administration. This fact ensured that Roman-style education flourished in Africa, with the effect that Latin also served as the pre-eminent language of high cultural and written knowledge production—which could themselves also serve as a path to advancement. From the second century onwards, African writing in Latin included not just secular literature, history, philology, medicine, and so forth, but also Christian theological treatises, letters, pamphlets, conciliar documents, and martyrs' acts. Roman and post-Roman Africa was also enormously productive of inscriptions. Indeed, for the period c. 300–750, the city of Carthage alone has preserved almost as many epigraphic texts as has the whole of Gaul.¹⁰ Finally, Latin was a language of estate management, economic activity, and overseas communication, linking Africa to the rest of the late-Roman world. In Africa, as throughout the Empire's western provinces, Latin flourished because it was socially engrained in interactions that spanned virtually every aspect of ancient life: political, legal, intellectual, cultural, religious, and economic.¹¹

Across Roman Africa, therefore, Latin was widely spoken by urban populations. Outside of the cities, however, the late antique Maghrib can be roughly divided into three main concentric linguistic spheres. In the densely urbanized territory of what is now northern and central Tunisia, Latin served as the principal language of daily exchange, probably even in the countryside. To the west and southeast of this Latin-speaking core, in what is now eastern Algeria, southeastern Tunisia, and western Libya, Punic continued to be spoken, in some places even as the majority language. Elsewhere, North Africa's autochthonous Amazigh languages predominated.¹² However, the Amazigh, Punic, and Latin linguistic zones of classical North Africa were never entirely separate from each other, and scholars have been able to trace at least limited borrowing of loanwords between them.¹³

Neither the Vandal nor—at least in its early decades—the Byzantine conquest displaced Latin as the pre-eminent language of power in North Africa. It is true that, at much the same time that the Emperor Justinian launched his invasion of the Vandal kingdom, Greek was gaining ground in the areas of law and administration which traditionally used Latin in the Empire's eastern provinces.¹⁴ The effects of this transition were doubtless also felt in Africa, but in the immediate aftermath of the invasion of 533–4, Latin remained central to the region's new

¹⁰ Inscriptions: Handley (2003), 18 with epigraphic bibliographies at 195–9 (Gaul) and 207–8 (North Africa). See also, in general, Beltrán Lloris (2014).

¹¹ On the documentation that the activities discussed in this paragraph produced: Conant (2013). On African Latin: Adams (2007), 516–76. For social factors in the spread of Latin, see Mullen (2023c).

¹² For the linguistic map of Africa in late antiquity, see Múrcia Sánchez (2011), maps 3–6, 8–9, and 13.

¹³ Brugnatelli (1999); Adams (2003a), 213–40 and 242–7; Kossmann (2013), 58–76; Blench (2018).

¹⁴ See especially Dagron (1969); Kelly (2004), 31–5; Rochette (2011), 559–62.

Byzantine regime. Indeed, A. M. Honoré has convincingly argued that Justinian himself drafted several laws in the language for the African territories which he had so proudly reclaimed for the Empire.¹⁵ Recent research on the Vandal kingdom has similarly emphasized the extent to which the ruling Hasding dynasty sought to underscore the continuities between their regime and that of the Roman Empire.¹⁶ The Vandal court's enthusiastic embrace of Latin as the language of politics and high culture is thus hardly surprising. The Vandal civil administration built on late-Roman models, and it was largely staffed by Romano-Africans for whom Latin was a natural language of legal and bureaucratic communication.¹⁷ Only three laws or fragments of laws survive from the Vandal period, all of which date to the reign of Huneric (477–84), but they are all written in Latin, and in both form and content they adhere to the standards of contemporary legal practice within the Empire.¹⁸

If there was a 'Vandalic' language, by contrast, nothing indicates that it was ever used in a political context in North Africa. Evidence for the tongue is sparse in the extreme, fundamentally consisting of numerous personal names, two words from the 'barbarian' liturgy, and a line of 'Gothic' speech embedded in a satirical Latin poem. The warband that created the Vandal kingdom in the early fifth century was ethnically complex, consisting of two distinct groups of Vandals (Hasdings and Silings), as well as Alans, Goths, Sueves, and Hispano-Romans. These migrants had all spent at least a generation inside the territory of the Empire before crossing the Mediterranean, and it is conceivable that in Africa their numbers may have been augmented by defectors from locally stationed imperial troops, at least some of whom are described as Goths. In the early sixth century, a Vandal-Ostrogothic political marriage was said to have led to the arrival of another six thousand Gothic courtiers and troops in North Africa. Considerable scholarly effort has thus gone into exploring Vandalic within an East Germanic linguistic context, and above all its connections to Gothic. Nonetheless, it is worth considering that, if Latin was not always the *lingua franca* of the Vandal ruling class, then whatever idiom they used may well not have been a stable language at all, but rather a young and flexible argot with a strong East Germanic component. The same was probably true of the military patois spoken by the troops that garrisoned late-Roman Africa before the Vandal conquest. This tongue may also have been used in some liturgical contexts and, in certain quarters, perhaps even for daily exchange. In general, however, the language enjoys only the most shadowy of existences in the sources.¹⁹

¹⁵ Honoré (1975).

¹⁶ See above, n. 1.

¹⁷ Conant (2012), 143–6.

¹⁸ Full edicts: Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae* 2.39 and 3.3–14, ed. Petschenig (1881), 39 and 72–8. Fragment: Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis* 2.3–4, ed. Petschenig (1881), 25. See Classen (1977), 109.

¹⁹ The foundational study is Wrede (1886). See also Markey (1989); Tiefenbach (1991); Francovich Onesti (2002), 133–202. Goths in Africa: August. *Ep.* 185.1.1, in Migne, *PL* 33:792–815, at 793; Procop. *Vand.* 1.8.12. Military argot: Amory (1997), 102–8.

In terms of the ascendance of Latin, then, the Vandal century and the first decades of the Byzantine occupation, down to at least *c.* 570, can usefully be treated together. In this world, secular poetry and *belles-lettres* functioned within a literary economy based on patronage that extended all the way to the royal and, later, imperial court. The Vandal kings surrounded themselves with poets who celebrated them, their families, their public works, and their military victories in imperial-style Latin panegyrics.²⁰ This literary culture survived the Byzantine conquest, and around 548 a provincial grammarian named Gorippus (traditionally, ‘Corippus’) travelled to Carthage to deliver an epic, the *Iohannis*, which he had written to celebrate the victories of John Troglita, the general in command of imperial troops in Africa.²¹ Seventeen years later, we find Gorippus in the corridors of power in Constantinople itself, where he delivered two more panegyrics, one on the coronation of the Emperor Justin II (565–78) and the other dedicated to one of the most highly-placed officials at Justin’s court.²² It is not often easy to tell how successful poets were in furthering their personal ambitions through the composition of such poems of praise. The genre’s perils, however, are starkly illustrated by the case of Dracontius, who was imprisoned by the Vandal king Gunthamund (484–96) for writing a panegyric to a lord whom he did not know, and whose identity still remains a mystery. In his confinement, Dracontius sought to mollify Gunthamund’s anger and secure his pardon by dedicating to him an elegiac plea for mercy, but for the rest of the king’s reign the poet’s appeals fell on deaf ears.²³

As the case of Gorippus shows, though, literary patronage was not confined to the courts of kings and emperors. The sixth-century poet Luxorius, for example, specialized in barbed epigrams skewering the Carthaginian elite, but he also wrote to celebrate the gardens, baths, and weddings of Vandal grandees.²⁴ Literary networks exchanged, read, and appraised each other’s work, providing another context for aspirational poets to seek out patronage.²⁵ Borrowings between such authors’ compositions can help situate those who operated outside of the courtly frame. Thus, for example, Martianus Capella, whose allegorical *Marriage of Philology and Mercury* went on to have an outsized influence on European education in the Middle Ages, seems to have moved in the same circles as Dracontius.²⁶ The belletrist Fabius Planciades Fulgentius the ‘Mythographer’ was clearly educated within the Vandal-era literary milieu, with its love of wordplay, ornate expression, and deliberate obscurity; but his career may have overlapped with

²⁰ Hays (2004); Merrills and Miles (2010), 219–25; Conant (2012), 146–8.

²¹ Gorippus, *Iohannis*, ed. Diggle and Goodyear (1970). On the name, see Riedlberger (2015). See in general Hays (2016) and, for detailed studies, see most recently Gärtner (2008); Riedlberger (2010); Goldlust (2015, 2017).

²² Gorippus, *In laudem Iustini*, ed. Cameron (1976).

²³ Dracontius, *Satisfactio*, ed. Moussy (1988); Merrills (2004). On Dracontius: Pohl (2019).

²⁴ Shackleton Bailey, *Anth. Lat.* 282–370.

²⁵ Hays (2004), 125–7; Conant (2012), 135–6.

²⁶ Shanzer (1986), 17–21.

that of Gorippus.²⁷ A host of other poets, whose works were gathered with those of Luxorius and the Vandal-era panegyricists into a *Latin Anthology* around 530, are harder to date with precision.²⁸ In the Byzantine period, imperial officials at least occasionally extended their patronage to local poets when dedicating new (or newly restored) fortifications. In 539/40, for example, a tribune named Nonnus oversaw the construction of a city wall at Cululis (modern Ain Djelloula, Tunisia), which had been ordered by the Praetorian Prefect Solomon. Over the postern gate, Nonnus had an inscription erected in Latin hexameters, which celebrated his role, as well as those of Solomon and the Emperor, in safeguarding the city. Similar inscriptions continued to be erected into the seventh century, but the last metrical ones, honouring the prefect Thomas, date to the 570s.²⁹

Literary production in fifth- and sixth-century Africa thus functioned within a political and social framework that both valued and helped sustain demand for a Latin education.³⁰ Mastery of the classical grammatical and rhetorical tradition not only provided an entrée into the world of elite culture; it also remained a springboard to office and thus the key to social advancement. Indeed, a basic training in utilitarian literacy was available even in rural communities on the fringes of Africa's agricultural heartlands. As a result, written Latin was central to documenting a range of everyday exchanges in both town and country. Assemblages of Latin ostraca reveal the managers of Africa's rural estates deploying the written word in their assessment of taxes, rents, and labour services, and issuing receipts for payments in coin or kind.³¹ A cache of thirty-four Latin documents written on wooden tablets similarly survives from a Vandal-era estate called the Fundus Tuletianos, located south of Tébessa along the modern Tunisian-Algerian border. Known as the Albertini Tablets (after their first editor), these texts include a dowry, two tables of calculation, and numerous sales, mainly of small plots of olive, fig, and nut trees, but also of an olive press and an enslaved six-year-old boy. Most remarkable is the fact that the documents were produced by and for rural smallholders themselves, including nine who could write Latin well enough to draw up a legally valid sale, and twenty-four who could witness the act in a short formula written in their own hand.³²

If the ability to read and write Latin was substantially widespread in Africa, as ostraca and wooden tablets of this sort suggest, then the fact has important implications for our understanding of the intended audiences of the region's other great body of literary production: religious polemic. Political change and religious controversy frequently went hand in hand in late antique North Africa. In

²⁷ Hays (2003, 2004). ²⁸ For one list: Conant (2012), 135, n. 20.

²⁹ Hays (2016), 278–86. Byzantine-era fortifications and their inscriptions: Durliat (1981); Pringle (1981).

³⁰ Merrills and Miles (2010), 213–19.

³¹ Conant (2013), 37–42. The texts: Ast (2016); Albertini (1932).

³² Courtois et al. (1952); Hitchner (1995); Conant (2004).

contrast to Theodosian imperial policy, the Vandal kings withdrew their material and partisan support from the Nicene Church and extended it instead to the homoian (or 'Arian') one.³³ Justinian restored imperial backing to the Nicene Church but, roughly a decade after his conquest of Africa, he also sought to force a grand reconciliation within the greater Nicene community between adherents of the Chalcedonian and Miaphysite understandings of Christ's nature.³⁴ The religious policies of Justinian and the Vandal kings alike provoked an angry response from African churchmen. Nicene Christians perceived their change in status under the Vandal regime as a persecution, which they challenged in theological treatises, booklets, sermons, and letters addressed both to their own supporters and to their homoian opponents. This voluminous polemical pamphleteering was conducted in Latin, which was also the language of scripture, exegesis, and conciliar discussion for the African Church, homoian as well as Nicene.³⁵ The openly political nature of such controversialist literature is underscored by the fact that a handful of tracts were dedicated to the Vandal kings themselves, including the conqueror Geiseric, as well as Huneric and Thrasamund (496–523).³⁶ Justinian too received letters and treatises written in Latin by African bishops upset by his heavy-handed attempts to control the episcopate. Facundus of Hermiane in particular wrote to the Emperor at great length in an increasingly embittered effort to convince Justinian of his errors.³⁷

Latin was used not just to stake claims about the present, but also to curate memories of the past. Historians actively took part in the polemical debates of their day, and in the late fifth century Victor of Vita sought disingenuously to persuade readers of his *History of the Persecution of the Province of Africa* that Vandals bore an implacable hatred for all things Roman.³⁸ After the Byzantine conquest, Victor of Tonnena (or Tunnuna), similarly tried to shape perceptions of Justinian's religious policy by writing an emphatically pro-Chalcedonian chronicle of ecclesiastical affairs.³⁹ Memories of a more intimate sort are concretized in Africa's late antique inscriptions, the vast majority of which are epitaphs commemorating the beloved departed.⁴⁰ Among these, of course, were those whom Peter Brown has evocatively labelled 'the very special dead': individuals whose sufferings for the faith, either as martyrs or as living holy men and women,

³³ Whelan (2018). ³⁴ See especially Dossey (2016).

³⁵ Conant (2012), 159–86; Whelan (2018), especially 55–137.

³⁶ Gennadius, *De vir. ill.* 78 and 98, ed. Richardson (1896), 88 and 95; Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis* 2.56–101, ed. Petschenig (1881), 46–71; Fulgentius of Ruspe, *Dicta regis Trasamundi*, ed. Fraipont (1968b) and Fulgentius, *Ad Trasamundum regem*, ed. Fraipont (1968a).

³⁷ Facundus of Hermiane, *Pro defensione trium capitulorum*, ed. Clément and Vander Plaetse (1974) and Dossey (2016).

³⁸ Howe (2007) and Conant (2012), 130–1 and 159–86.

³⁹ Victor Tonnennensis, *Chronicon*, ed. Cardelle de Hartmann (2001).

⁴⁰ On African inscriptions, see Handley (2003), 18 and 207–8.

conferred upon them a special status in the eyes of their coreligionists.⁴¹ As was true throughout the Mediterranean, the cult of saints was resolutely local in late antique North Africa; but with time, Latin inscriptions also came to record the deposition of foreign saints' relics.⁴² The dates of their deaths structured Christian sacred time and were duly recorded in liturgical calendars like the one that survives from sixth-century Carthage.⁴³ Hagiographies were written in Vandal and Byzantine North Africa too, though fewer than in the late-Roman age of martyrs. The vision of the past that these texts present responded to the contemporary needs and concerns of the times in which they were written. Possidius of Calama's biography of Augustine provided a pastoral model for combating heresy like that of the homoian Vandals.⁴⁴ The *Passion of the Seven Monks* martyred under Huneric similarly sits comfortably alongside other works of anti-homoian polemic.⁴⁵ By contrast, the *vita* of Fulgentius of Ruspe, the leading Nicene theologian of early-sixth-century Africa, was written shortly after the Byzantine conquest. It tries to reconcile a bishop's worldly responsibilities with the pull of ascetic withdrawal, an issue of no little urgency as the Church of the Empire found itself once again restored to a position of social power under the Byzantine regime.⁴⁶

Though the theological and poetic literature of late antique North Africa clearly represent two very different bodies of work, and though they were composed by different authors, they were probably read by overlapping audiences. Victor of Vita almost seems to say as much towards the end of his *History of the Persecution* when he directly addresses 'the few of you who love the barbarians and praise them occasionally to your own condemnation.'⁴⁷ It is hard not to see in this quip a reference to the kingdom's panegyricists and court poets, some of whom took an active interest in religious affairs.⁴⁸ Indeed, Richard Miles has compellingly argued that the resolutely secular poetry popular at the Vandal court—to which Gorippus too was heir—served as a deliberate ideological counterbalance to the fierce diatribes surrounding questions of Christology.⁴⁹ Secular and clerical readers clearly engaged with each other's works. Imprisonment turned Dracontius' mind to thoughts of religion: he wrote his masterpiece, *On the Praise of God*, during his confinement as a reflection on God's relationship to humanity.⁵⁰ Later, in the Byzantine period, the bishop Verecundus of Iunca wrote a short poem about repentance that owes a good deal to Dracontius' work.⁵¹ As Gregory Hays has recently suggested, it is also conceivable that Gorippus had

⁴¹ For the phrase: Brown (1981), 69. ⁴² Duval (1982).

⁴³ *Kalendarium ecclesiae Carthaginensis*, in Migne, *PL* 13:1219–30. ⁴⁴ Hamilton (2004).

⁴⁵ *Passio septem monachorum*, ed. Petschenig (1881), 108–14. ⁴⁶ Leyser (2007).

⁴⁷ Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis* 3.62, ed. Petschenig (1881), 102: *Nonnulli qui barbaros diligitis et eos in condemnationem uestram aliquando laudatis*.

⁴⁸ See especially Shackleton Bailey, *Anth. Lat.* 248. ⁴⁹ Miles (2005).

⁵⁰ Dracontius, *De laudibus Dei*, ed. Moussy (1985–8).

⁵¹ Verecundus of Iunca, *Carmen de satisfactione paenitentiae*, ed. Demeulenaere (1976).

read the bishop's poem by *c.* 548, and that he makes a winking allusion to it in his *Iohannis*.⁵² Fulgentius of Ruspe corresponded with lay admirers who wanted to know how to defend Nicene doctrine against homoian arguments, including a young man named Donatus who had studied secular letters but not much scripture.⁵³ The *dux* Reginus, probably one of the military commanders in charge of the defence of Byzantine Africa, similarly corresponded with the Carthaginian deacon and canonist Ferrandus, who sent the officer a letter about reconciling his worldly and spiritual responsibilities.⁵⁴ A priest named Parthenius (or Parthemius) exchanged poetic pleasantries with a count named Sigistius.⁵⁵ In the 540s, the highest-ranking legal official at Justinian's court in Constantinople was an African named Junillus. A layman, Junillus had nonetheless composed an introduction to the Bible or, more accurately, translated a Greek treatise by Paul of Nisibis into Latin and rendered it into question-and-answer format. Junillus also seems to have moved in the same circles as Fulgentius of Ruspe.⁵⁶

In the fifth and early sixth centuries, then, Latin continued to play a pivotal role in a complex system, in which law and bureaucracy, education, secular literature, ecclesiastical writing, and even estate management and other acts of routine accounting all interacted with and largely reinforced each other. Fundamentally, though, Latin owed its cultural pre-eminence to a particular relationship with power. Latinity was the key to social mobility, and, as a result, it was deployed—at least in its written form—across a strikingly broad social register. However, in the last third of the sixth century, for reasons that were partly local and partly characteristic of the larger Mediterranean world, some of the threads out of which this system had been woven began to break. The result in Africa was that Latin literary production falls largely silent, reduced in the surviving record to a steeply diminished number of inscriptions and ecclesiastical letters. Hays has plausibly argued that these developments are real—not just a mirage of source preservation—and he has connected them to the disappearance of the classical school after *c.* 550. Within a generation, he argues, Latin authors will have lacked the grammatical and rhetorical training necessary to produce the kind of ornate literary compositions that had delighted readers in fifth- and early-sixth-century Africa.⁵⁷ Even so, it bears some emphasis that, as was true throughout the West, a basic education in Latin continued to be available in the Maghrib into the seventh century and beyond; only, now, scripture was increasingly viewed as the principal source of knowledge. This development was not unique to Africa. Indeed, to judge from the few writings that can plausibly be attributed to his own

⁵² Hays (2016), 270.

⁵³ Fulgentius of Ruspe, *Ep.* 8, ed. Fraipont (1968c), 257–73; see also Fulgentius, *Ep.* 9, ed. Fraipont (1968c), 277–80 and Fulgentius, *Liber de Trinitate ad Felicem* 1.1, ed. Fraipont (1968d), 633.

⁵⁴ Ferrandus, *Ep.* 7, in Migne, *PL* 67: 928–50; Cooper (2005).

⁵⁵ Bianco (1988).

⁵⁶ Maas (2003).

⁵⁷ Hays (2016), 276–88.

voice, even Justinian does not appear to have had a deep grounding in the classics.⁵⁸ Well aware of the changing times, Fulgentius the Mythographer tried to stage a rearguard battle to rehabilitate classical literature and its value for Christian students, but the effort proved futile.⁵⁹ The educational system that for centuries had supported the ascendance of Latin in North Africa was weakening. But so too was the monopoly that Latin had long enjoyed on access to the world of power.

2.2. The Wider Linguistic Landscape

Power was not the lens through which late-Roman authors themselves understood the relationships between languages. Their framework was a hierarchy of civilizations, with their own—inevitably—on top. Both in Italy and in North Africa itself, writers educated within the classical system could sneer at Punic language and culture, let alone those of Africa's autochthonous populations, confident in the superiority of Latin. Indeed, both the pagan grammarian Maximus of Madauros and the Christian polemicist Julian of Eclanum deployed anti-Punic prejudices of precisely this sort in letters to Augustine of Hippo, who defended Punic identity in fiery rejoinders framed in equally civilizational terms.⁶⁰ But the decoupling of the Punic language from political power played a critical role in the idiom's afterlife in North Africa—a story that would later repeat itself in the case of Latin.

Contemporary sources attest to three major enclaves of Punic persistence in late antiquity. In Tripolitania, both inscriptions and ostraca continued to be produced in the Punic language (but written in the Latin alphabet) down to the third and fourth centuries.⁶¹ The survival of Punic ostraca in this part of the Empire is particularly significant. As primarily administrative or economic texts intended for the review of local authorities—including, in Tripolitania, Roman military authorities—the decision to write in Punic suggests a wider bureaucratic acceptance of the language than scholars often assume.⁶² In eastern Algeria, Augustine was aware that some (but not all) members of his congregation in Hippo understood Punic as late as the early fifth century, and he was keen to find bilingual clergy who could preach to rural populations in the language.⁶³ Writing towards the middle of the fifth century, Arnobius the Younger similarly noted that Garamantes in the Fezzan region of southern Libya spoke Punic rather than the

⁵⁸ Honoré (1975), 122–3.

⁵⁹ Ferguson (2019).

⁶⁰ Conant (2012), 188–9.

⁶¹ Kerr (2010), 169–227. See also Marichal (1992).

⁶² Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this important point.

⁶³ The classic study is Green (1951), with Cox (1988). Rural clergy: see especially August. *Ep.* 20*, ed. Divjak (1981), 94–112.

autochthonous languages used elsewhere in the interior.⁶⁴ In the sixth century, the Byzantine historian Procopius agreed that those Africans who lived along the fringes of imperial power spoke ‘the Phoenician tongue’, and an addition to one of the manuscripts of Zachariah of Mitylene’s Syriac chronicle even claims that Africans spoke Latin and Syriac—presumably what modern observers would label Punic, given that the similarities between these sibling languages were well understood in late antiquity.⁶⁵

By the fourth and fifth centuries, however, it would seem that Punic was no longer a language of written knowledge production. Augustine and other late-Roman authors refer to ‘Punic books’, but they seem principally to have in mind geographical works composed—at the most recent—in the reign of Juba II of Numidia (30–25 BCE) and Mauretania (25 BCE–23 CE).⁶⁶ This was not because of any inherent ‘superiority’ of Latin over Punic. Nor yet was it because Punic was somehow unsuited to literary composition. Indeed, Augustine implies that in his day Christian devotional literature was written in the language.⁶⁷ Rather, it was because in the long term the dominance of Latin in the political sphere rendered works in Punic marginal as a tool of social advancement. Thus, to the extent that the language was written in late antiquity, it seems to have been done so exclusively in a religious and sub-literary sphere.

Recent research suggests that political developments similarly played a critical role in the linguistic reconfiguration of the western Maghrib in late antiquity. At least in part as a product of the same linguistic politics that shaped the fate of Punic, Amazigh languages were not written in late antiquity. Nonetheless, they dominated in the Atlas Mountains of the west, along the southern and eastern pre-desert, and into the Sahara. Based on a statistical analysis of cognates within the Amazigh branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family, Christopher Ehret has recently argued that, by c. 400, perhaps twelve distinct tongues were spoken across this expansive geographical area. In northern Algeria, an early form of Kabyle had predominated since the late Neolithic. In Morocco and far into western Algeria, the language ancestral to modern Tashelhit (or Shilha) had similarly been spoken since pre-classical times. In southern Tripolitania, Matmata only emerged as a distinct tongue in the early Roman imperial period, but the languages spoken in the Jabal Nafusa region and in the eastern Saharan oases were of comparable antiquity to Tashelhit.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Arnobius Junior, *Commentarii in Psalmos* 104, ed. Daur (1990), 159.

⁶⁵ Procop. *Vand.* 2.10.20; Ps.-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle* 12.7, trans. Phenix and Horn (2011), 435, n. 65. On the similarities between Syriac and Punic, see e.g. Jerome, *Commentarius in Ionam* 4.6, ed. Duval (1985), 298, and August. *In Evang. Iohan.* 15.27.

⁶⁶ Solin. 32.2; Amm. Marc. 22.15.8; August. *Ep.* 17.2, *CSEL* 34:41. For the classical period, see also Sall. *Iug.* 17.7 and now Roller (2022).

⁶⁷ August. *Enarratio in Psalmum* 118.32.8, ed. Dekkers and Fraipont (1956), 3:1776, with Lepelley (2005), 132.

⁶⁸ Ehret (2019).

Ehret also argues that by late antiquity a language which he calls proto-Central Amazigh had developed in eastern Algeria, in a region bounded by the Saharan oases of Wargla and Mزاب to the south and the Aurès Mountains to the north. Starting in c. 400, this language experienced a sudden and dramatic expansion westwards across the pre-Saharan zone and into the Moroccan Rif. Ehret argues that the spread of proto-Central Amazigh across this vast swathe of territory probably took place quickly, within at most two centuries, and as the result of a conquest rather than a gradual intrusion.⁶⁹ As Elizabeth Fentress and Andrew Wilson have shown, the construction of Saharan-style tumulus tombs across this same region and other archaeological evidence similarly suggests significant migration out of the oases at this time.⁷⁰ The resulting reconfiguration of power in the western Maghrib saw the coalescence there of what Alan Rushworth has called 'dual kingdoms,' presumably of Amazigh pastoralists and provincial Romano-African agriculturalists.⁷¹

Sociolinguistically, the ensuing period seems to have been one of transition, witnessing the dual pull of proto-Central Amazigh and of Latin as prestige languages. In the western Maghrib, Latin was predominantly a language of the cities. Not much ancient literature has been preserved from this region: from the late-Roman period, the extant texts mainly consist of the acts of military and urban martyrs, many of which were adapted to new devotional contexts in Iberia over the course of the Middle Ages.⁷² It is therefore hardly surprising that we know of only two Latin works from westernmost North Africa in the fifth century, and none from the sixth century or later. Both fifth-century texts are Christian, one a treatise on penitence by Victor of Cartenna, the other an anti-homoian polemical tract by Cerealis of Castellum Ripae.⁷³ These two bishops' cities may have passed from Roman into Vandal hands in the fifth century, but Castellum Ripae (modern Hadjar Ouâghef, Algeria) was located only about 25 kilometres from Tlemcen, an important centre of power in one of the new dual kingdoms that emerged from the Amazigh conquest. Here, as elsewhere across the pre-Saharan frontier zone, Latin played a central role in negotiating the transition. Indeed, in the decades around 500, individuals with a mix of Amazigh and Latin names laid claim to Roman and Roman-style titles and commemorated their deeds in a small handful of Latin inscriptions that span the Algerian pre-desert, from Altava and Albulae in the west (near Tlemcen) to Thanaramusa Castra in the centre and the Aurès Mountains in the east.⁷⁴ Inscriptions of this sort will primarily have addressed

⁶⁹ Ehret (2019), 466–70 and 480–2. ⁷⁰ Fentress and Wilson (2016), 41–63.

⁷¹ Rushworth (2004, 2000), with the corrective of Fentress and Wilson (2016), 62.

⁷² The history of these texts is complex; see Conant (2010a), especially 14–21, and the material cited there.

⁷³ Victor of Cartenna, *De penitentia* in Migne, *PL* 17: 971–1004 and Cerealis of Castellum Ripae, *Libellus contra Maximinum Arianum*, in Migne, *PL* 58: 757–68.

⁷⁴ Conant (2012), 276–8 and 293–4.

local populations, for whom Latin had long been the traditional language of power. Latin furthermore continued to function as a language of funerary commemoration for individuals with a mix of Roman, Punic, and Amazigh names in a dwindling number of cities across the sixth-century western Maghrib. In the cities of Volubilis (in northern Morocco) and Tlemcen, Latin epitaphs of this sort are attested as late as the 650s.⁷⁵

In the long run, however, the competing pull of proto-Central Amazigh proved to be more powerful. Critically, it was a sibling language of the early Tashelhit already widely spoken across western Algeria and Morocco. The establishment of proto-Central Amazigh as a new prestige language throughout much of the same region led to a process of linguistic levelling, eliminating idiosyncrasies of lexicon and syntax between the two languages.⁷⁶ Tashelhit continued to be spoken in southern Morocco, which presumably avoided conquest. Within the new dual kingdoms, regional diversification would with time lead to the emergence of the modern Amazigh languages of Wargla, Mzab, and Shawiya in the east, Shenwa in central Algeria, and Beni-Snous, Rif, Sanhaja, and Tamazight in the west. In the fifth and sixth centuries, however, Saharan conquerors and their rural subjects will have quickly come to speak a common language, sandwiching the region's Latin urban populations, and thus perhaps accelerating regional processes of linguistic change.

2.3. Greek

The period of Byzantine rule in the central Maghrib can similarly be understood as one of linguistic ambivalence, dominated by the two prestige languages of Latin and Greek. Of the two, Latin was by far the more widely spoken. It remained the principal language of the African Church, and it also continued to serve as the main language of epigraphy, which in this period includes epitaphs, dedications of public works, and testaments to both Christian and Jewish devotion.⁷⁷ Greek, by contrast, was increasingly ascendant as the language of law, government, and eventually even the army within the wider Byzantine world. Moreover, most of the military and civilian officials sent to administer Africa had their origins in the eastern Mediterranean. They spoke a variety of languages: we hear, for example, of Armenian officers in sixth-century Carthage speaking Armenian amongst themselves, conscious of the fact that they could not be understood by their fellow soldiers.⁷⁸ For daily exchanges, though, most officials would probably have used Greek in preference to Latin.⁷⁹ Imperial fortifications in Byzantine Africa

⁷⁵ Conant (2012), 289–90.

⁷⁶ Ehret (2019), 470. See also Souag (2017).

⁷⁷ Inscriptions: see above, notes 8 and 29. Jewish devotion: Stern (2008), 193–253.

⁷⁸ Procop. *Vand.* 2.28.16.

⁷⁹ Conant (2012), 244–6.

were sometimes dedicated with Greek or bilingual Greek-Latin inscriptions, particularly in the early years of the occupation. Vassilios Christides has plausibly argued that these texts were aimed at imperial soldiers who had been recruited in the East but stationed in Africa.⁸⁰ Similarly, in the 630s and 640s, when the eastern ascetic Maximus the Confessor wrote to Africa's civil and military officials, he did so in Greek.⁸¹ Only a few decades earlier, by contrast, Pope Gregory I (590–604) had written to a similar array of African officeholders in Latin.⁸² Scholars have justifiably read this linguistic shift as symbolic of an increasingly eastward reorientation in North African politics, society, and culture in the seventh century. In terms of the practical administration of the western provinces, however, it bears emphasis that neither Greek nor Latin was wholly dominant on the lead seals that imperial officials affixed to their documents. Moreover, as Cécile Morrisson and Vivien Prigent have recently demonstrated, it is not a safe assumption that Greek legends supplanted Latin ones over time. Indeed, the same individual could use seals in either language or, indeed, in a combination of the two. This was the case with a certain John, who combined the posts of *cubicularius*, imperial *spatharius*, and *magister militum* of Byzacena, and whose seals include inscriptions in Greek, in Latin, and in Greek rendered into Latin letters.⁸³ Rather than seeing the Byzantine period as characterized by a transition from Latin to Greek dominance—either abrupt or smooth—it is perhaps more fruitful to understand the two languages as having coexisted in dialogue and tension.

Alongside Latin, Greek was used by some urban populations as a language of daily exchange in the late antique Maghrib, at least in coastal ports. These cities had long been a focus of Greek settlement, and textual and epigraphic evidence alike attest to the continued migration of individuals, families, and even ascetic communities from Egypt, Syria, and the Aegean basin to sites up and down the African coast in both the Vandal and the Byzantine periods.⁸⁴ A cache of late-fourth- or fifth-century ostraca excavated from a purple dye production facility in Meninx, on the island of Jerba, similarly attests to the local use of Greek as a commercial language in exchanges with the Aegean.⁸⁵ Immigration and mercantile connections alike doubtless helped shape the local argot in Carthage, where the rectangular harbour was called the *Mandrakion* (Greek for 'little square') and the palace prison the *Ankōn* (Greek for the 'corner'). The Byzantine historian

⁸⁰ Bilingual inscriptions: Durliat (1981), 9–11, no. 2 = Pringle (1981), 322–3, no. 15 (Bordj Hallal); Durliat (1981), 18–21, no. 6 = Pringle (1981), 319, no. 5 (Madauros, mod. M'daourouch); Durliat (1981), 62–4, no. 26 = Pringle (1981), 328, no. 30 (Sidi Gherib). Greek inscriptions: Durliat (1981), 25–6, no. 10 = Pringle (1981), 321, no. 12 (Taoura); Durliat (1981), 35–7, no. 14 = Pringle (1981), 320–1, no. 9 (Sufes, mod. Henchir Sbiba). Christides (2000), 12.

⁸¹ Maximus Confessor, *Epistolae*, in Migne, PG 91: 363–649.

⁸² Gregory I, *Registrum epistularum* 1.74, 4.7, 4.32, and 7.3, ed. Norberg (1982), i. 82–3, i. 223, i. 251–2, and i. 445–6.

⁸³ Morrisson and Prigent (2018), 1813–16.

⁸⁴ Conant (2012), 86–8 and 349–51.

⁸⁵ Várhelyi and Bagnall (2009).

Procopius even records a street chant that the city's children recited in Greek.⁸⁶ Well into the early medieval period, Africa's coastal communities maintained close and enduring connections with Greek-speaking populations in Sicily and southern Italy, between which information, disease, and devotion to Christian saints' cults all flowed freely.⁸⁷

The evidence for Greek taking deeper root in Africa over the course of the sixth and seventh centuries is suggestive rather than conclusive, but there are signs of at least a piecemeal linguistic integration into the wider Byzantine world. A Greek education seems to have been at best selectively available in Vandal Africa, though the homoian scholars Fabianus and pseudo-Origen both understood the language.⁸⁸ Justinian's quaestor Junillus will have been educated under the Vandal regime too, and, as mentioned above, he was competent enough in Greek to produce a Latin rendition of a text by Paul of Nisibis. According to Procopius, however, Junillus had never studied Greek with a grammarian, he could not speak the language like a proper Hellene, and his subordinates only laughed at him when he tried.⁸⁹ Writing in the 530s, the biographer of Fulgentius of Ruspe similarly displays a certain touchiness about the proper pronunciation of Greek. Fulgentius' mother, Mariana, had made sure to teach her son the language from infancy, before he learned Latin, so that he could 'pronounce Greek speech more easily, retaining the aspiration just as if [he had been] raised there, rather than among Latinate Africans.'⁹⁰ By the reign of Heraclius (610–41), however, the situation seems to have changed somewhat. At least, at this time we find an African named Anastasius serving in Constantinople as an imperial *notarius* before becoming a monk and, with time, the disciple and lifelong companion of Maximus the Confessor.⁹¹ Anastasius was certainly fluent in Greek, and he is one of many potential candidates who may have written the eyewitness account of Maximus' imperial trial for treason in 655.⁹² Anastasius also wrote in Greek to fellow-monks in Cagliari on the theological issues of his day, though his letter only survives in a later Latin translation.⁹³ According to Bede, when Theodore of Tarsus was ordained Archbishop of Canterbury in 668, he was accompanied to Britain by an African abbot named Hadrian, who had earlier settled abroad in a monastery in Campania and who was expert in both Latin and Greek.⁹⁴ Less clear is the case of an abbot named Thalassius, who appears in a seventh-century morality tale as the head of a monastery in the region of Carthage.⁹⁵ He corres-

⁸⁶ Clover (1982), 11.

⁸⁷ Conant (2010a), 10–14 and 29–30; McCormick (2001), 504–5; Conant (2012), 367.

⁸⁸ Dossey (2003), 113–16. ⁸⁹ Procop. *Anecdota* 20.17.

⁹⁰ *Vita Fulgentii* 1.4, ed. Isola (2016), 159: *quo facilius posset, uicturus inter Afros, locutionem Graecam seruatit aspirationibus tanquam ibi nutritus exprimere.*

⁹¹ *Disputatio Bizyae cum Theodosio*, ed. Allen and Neil (1999), 141, lines 746–7.

⁹² Allen (2015), 11–12.

⁹³ Anastasius, *Epistula ad monachos Calaritanos*, in Migne, *PG* 90: 133–6 = Migne, *PL* 129: 623–6.

⁹⁴ Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* 4.1, ed. Colgrave and Mynors (1969), 328–30.

⁹⁵ Anastasius the Sinaite, *Περὶ τῶν ἐν Σινῶ ἀγίων πατέρων* 40, ed. Nau (1902), 83–7.

ponded with Maximus the Confessor and compiled a collection of Greek readings on ascetic life and practice.⁹⁶ Like Anastasius, then, he may have been an African bilingual in Greek and Latin. However, it is at least equally possible that he was a recent migrant from the East.⁹⁷

Indeed, while Africa was unquestionably a key node of Greek-language intellectual production and exchange in the seventh century, its importance seems mostly to have derived from the physical presence of eastern thinkers such as Maximus the Confessor. Other prominent easterners also spent time in Africa, including John Moschus and his disciple Sophronius, who travelled together through the region in c. 630 on their way to Rome.⁹⁸ But it was Maximus who developed the deepest and most lasting ties to Africa, which he visited for extended periods and on multiple occasions.⁹⁹ It was in Carthage, for example, that he articulated his protest against the Emperor Heraclius' edict of 632 compelling Jews to convert to Christianity.¹⁰⁰ Maximus may also have been in Africa when he wrote his *Questions and Answers to Thalassius*, a monumental Greek-language exposition on scriptural interpretation.¹⁰¹ After spending some time in Palestine, in the early 640s Maximus was back in Africa, where he wrote a treatise on the calculation of Easter and became embroiled in a political affair involving the imperial court, the praetorian prefect of Africa, and a community of refugee nuns from Alexandria.¹⁰² In 645, he engaged in a public debate in Carthage with Pyrrhus, the deposed Patriarch of Constantinople, about the variety and operation of Christ's wills, before moving on to Rome in the following year and, eventually, to his trials and exiles in the East. Like its surviving transcript, the debate between Maximus and Pyrrhus was certainly conducted in Greek, not in Latin.¹⁰³

In sum, then, while Greek undoubtedly played an important role in the political, military, religious, and even educational life of Byzantine Africa, as late as the seventh century the tongue had not wholly displaced Latin as the local language of power, let alone as a widespread medium of daily exchange.

2.4. Christian Latin in Islamic North Africa

Indeed, in the decade after the Arab capture of Carthage in 698, it was in Latin—not in Greek—that the region's new rulers gave expression to Islamic precepts on

⁹⁶ Thalassius, *Centuriae*, in Migne, PG 91: 1428–69. ⁹⁷ Jankowiak and Booth (2015), 25.

⁹⁸ Booth (2014), 110–11. ⁹⁹ On Maximus, see Allen (2015) and Blowers (2016).

¹⁰⁰ Maximus, *Ep.* 8, in Migne, PG 91: 440–5; Devréesse (1937); Jankowiak and Booth (2015), 20.

¹⁰¹ Maximus Confessor, *Questiones ad Thalassium*, ed. Laga and Steel (1980–90); Jankowiak and Booth (2015), 29.

¹⁰² Maximus, *Ep.* 12, in Migne, PG 91: 460–509; Maximus, *Computus ecclesiasticus*, in Migne, PG 19: 1217–80; Jankowiak and Booth (2015), 21 and 51–8.

¹⁰³ Maximus Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, in Migne, PG 91: 288–353, on which, see Noret (1999).

the gold and copper coinage. Initially these were universal monotheistic axioms like ‘God is one’ (*un(u)s d(eu)s*); but, with time, the coin legends became more insistent that, for example, ‘There is no god but He alone, who has no partner’ (*non est d(eu)s nisi ipse sol(us), c(u)i s(ocius) n(on est)*), a phrase evocative of the *shahāda* or Muslim confession of faith.¹⁰⁴ The legends are highly abbreviated and difficult to decipher, and while their meaning is the subject of some debate among modern specialists, the very opacity of the inscriptions probably implies that their target audience did not encounter Islamic theological concepts for the first time on these coins. This in turn suggests that the raucous religious disputation so characteristic of late antique North Africa continued into the early Islamic period in Latin.

Over the course of the early Middle Ages, however, Latin in North Africa slowly became an enclave language of Christian communities. Beginning in the reign of ‘Abd al-Malik (685–705), the caliphate underwent an Arabization of its bureaucracy and currency, although those changes only really begin to be visible in the Maghrib in the second decade of the eighth century. By the tenth century, legal opinions of Islamic jurists (*fatwas*) make it clear that Arabic had become the interlanguage between Muslims, Christians, and Jews.¹⁰⁵ Shortly thereafter, it may even have been common for Christian priests to preach to their congregations in Arabic.¹⁰⁶ Nonetheless, Latin (or more accurately Romance) remained a language of daily exchange, and Tadeusz Lewicki and Serge Lancel have gathered evidence for its influence on the vocabulary, personal names, and place-names of Maghribi Arabic. Romance seems to have been particularly well established in the Jabal Nafusa region of western Tripolitania and around Gafsa and Kairouan in central Tunisia.¹⁰⁷ Significantly, Latin was still used for Christian epitaphs in both Kairouan and En Ngila (near Tripoli) down to the eleventh century. A cemetery at Áin Zára (also near Tripoli) contains another sixty-one inscriptions in Latin that probably also date to the Islamic period.¹⁰⁸ I have argued elsewhere that the same is true of a small handful of epitaphs from burials in Sabratha and Lepcis Magna.¹⁰⁹ In giving voice to their grief, the Christians of early Islamic North Africa quote from or allude to texts from the Psalms, Lamentations, Ezekiel, 2 Esdras, James, and a variety of liturgical prayers, incidentally revealing that Latin was for them still a language of scripture and devotion.¹¹⁰ This impression is reinforced by an extraordinary collection of Latin manuscripts now in St Catherine’s monastery in Sinai, including an antiphony, an epistolary, and a psalter, the latter of which has been in place since 1230/31. Paleographical

¹⁰⁴ The foundational study and corpus is Walker (1956), xxxix–li, xcvi–ci, 54–73, 76, 78–9, 99–100, 114–18, and 231. See most recently Jonson (2012, 2015).

¹⁰⁵ Talbi (1990), 316–17 and 322–3. ¹⁰⁶ Valérian (2011), 147, n. 87.

¹⁰⁷ Lewicki (1951–2); Lancel (1981); McCormick (2001), 890, n. 83; Conant (2021).

¹⁰⁸ Valérian (2011), 138–9. ¹⁰⁹ Conant (2021).

¹¹⁰ Aurigemma (1932); Bartoccini and Mazzolenii (1977); Mahjoubi (1966).

considerations, the texts' use of the African version of the Old Latin Bible, and a liturgical calendar that accompanies the psalter and celebrates a characteristically African constellation of saints have long suggested that the codices originated in a North African milieu. A recent examination of the manuscripts by Jean Vezin suggests that they might even have been copied in the Maghrib itself, probably in the high medieval period. At least, the paper on which the antiphony was written seems only to have been produced in Christian Iberia in the twelfth century.¹¹¹ Ties to Iberia, Egypt, the Frankish world, and above all Rome are also attested in sources written by medieval Europeans to or about African Christians, including periodic correspondence from popes such as Leo IV (847–55), Leo IX (1049–54), and Gregory VII (1073–85).¹¹² Taken together, the evidence suggests that Romance-speaking or bilingual Romance-Arabic Christian communities persisted in the central Maghrib well into the Middle Ages, using Latin as the language of scripture, liturgy, and funerary commemoration, and maintaining contact with other Christian communities across the Mediterranean.

2.5. Conclusions

The linguistic situation in late antique and early medieval Africa was complex. Perhaps a dozen interrelated autochthonous Amazigh languages were spoken across the Maghrib, as were exogenous tongues including Latin (and later Romance), Punic, Greek, and eventually Arabic, as well as enclave languages such as Armenian and perhaps 'Vandalic'. Though it is tempting to understand Africa's multifarious and fluid linguistic landscape in terms of ethnicity, the overlap between languages and ethnic identities was at best imperfect. The two could certainly coincide: Armenian soldiers spoke Armenian in Byzantine Carthage, for example, and it seems likely that the Saharan conquerors who spread proto-Central Amazigh across the western Maghrib would have identified as Amazigh themselves. However, facility with a language was no guarantee of ethnic self-identification. If nothing else, the borrowing of vocabulary between Amazigh, Punic, Latin (or Romance), and Arabic suggests that bilingualism was reasonably widespread in the premodern Maghrib, at least in zones where these languages were in contact. More to the point, ethnic identity is multilayered, and the ordering of its layers—including its linguistic layers—is situationally specific. Thus, for example, the same rulers who helped spread proto-Central Amazigh also commissioned inscriptions in Latin celebrating their accomplishments. Latin was similarly the interlanguage of the Vandal kingdom, and while we can be confident that Vandal kings such as Huneric and Gunthamund spoke Latin, there is no

¹¹¹ See Gryson (2010) and Vezin (2002–3).

¹¹² Valérian (2011), 136–46; Conant (2012), 362–70.

solid evidence that they understood any form of East Germanic. The African poet Gorippus insisted on the shared Romanness of his Latin-speaking compatriots and the Greek-speaking troops sent by Justinian to secure the Maghrib for the Empire. In late-Roman Italy, by contrast, a Latin speaker of eloquence and sophistication such as Augustine could be dismissed as ‘Punic’.

Indeed, factors other than ethnicity were equally important in shaping the relationship between languages and communities. The urban–rural divide, regional differences, occupation, class, and even religion could all play a role. The production of Latin texts and inscriptions in North Africa tended to cluster in cities. In what is now Tunisia, eastern Algeria, and western Libya, substantial evidence—including that of ostraca and wooden tablets—further attests to the use of Latin in the countryside. In the latter two regions, as well as in the Fezzan, Punic was also spoken. Elsewhere, however, Amazigh languages probably predominated in the rural Maghrib. Latin was also a professional language, especially of the imperial bureaucracy and, in varying degrees, its successors throughout the region. In the late-Roman, Vandal, and early Byzantine periods, refined Latinity additionally served as a class marker, distinguishing the urbane and highly educated elite not only from Punic- and Amazigh-speakers, but also from rustics, city-dwellers, and even soldiers whose Latin was more commonplace. The authors and readers of Vandal-era secular poetry and *belles-lettres* in particular clearly valued an ornate Latinity, though the style was much less characteristic of contemporary ecclesiastical writers, and it seems to have fallen out of favour in the mid-sixth century. The various conquests to which the Maghrib was subjected in late antiquity also unsettled this situation, raising the status of proto-Central Amazigh, Greek, and Arabic. By the early medieval period, Latin had come to be associated exclusively with Christianity, while Arabic, originally identified with Islam, came to be the common language spoken between North Africa’s Muslims, Jews, and Christians.

In addition to all of these considerations, I have argued in this chapter, a language’s association with power was perhaps the most critical factor in shaping its likelihood of taking root and becoming widely used in the late antique and early medieval Maghrib. To be clear, the mere fact of being spoken by the ruling class did not guarantee that a language would make the leap to serving as a widespread medium of daily exchange. This reality is demonstrated by the cases both of Greek under the Byzantine regime and of whatever language or languages were spoken by the Vandal elite. What seems to have mattered above all was that mastery of a language provide access to the court, facilitate legal disputation, or smooth the path of social advancement. Latin continued to serve this function in Carthage and its hinterland through the late-Roman, Vandal, and early Byzantine periods. Greek began to share the field in the sixth century, but it was still not wholly dominant by the time of the Arab conquest, and its use by local populations was correspondingly uneven. In the western Maghrib, by contrast, the rapid and

widespread diffusion of proto-Central Amazigh in the fifth and sixth centuries suggests not just that it was the language spoken by the region's Saharan conquerors, but also that it became established regionally as a language of power, initially alongside Latin, but eventually replacing it. In the eighth century, Arabic similarly replaced both Latin and Greek as the language of power in what had been Byzantine Africa and began to enjoy ascendance across the northern Maghrib. Thus conquest, politics, ethnicity, regionalism, social status, and religious identity all played a role in shaping and reshaping the linguistic landscape of post-Roman Africa.

Even at its most rapid, however, language change in this region unfolded over the course, not of years or of decades, but of centuries. This was true of the spread both of proto-Central Amazigh and of Arabic, and it was probably also a factor in the patchy diffusion of Greek in Byzantine Africa. Once established, however, language persistence could be correspondingly long-lasting. The Maghrib's autochthonous languages endured through centuries of Roman imperialism. Similarly, over five hundred years after the final defeat of the Carthaginian Empire, Punic continued to serve as a language of daily exchange in the Empire's African provinces. Latin (or Romance) followed a similar trajectory over a comparable timeframe, surviving in Christian enclaves in the Islamic Maghrib well into the central Middle Ages. No less than language change, then, language persistence reveals something of the social patterning of power in post-Roman Africa, and of the remarkable resilience of the identities and communities that it fostered there.

Reflections on the Latin Language Spoken and Written in Visigothic Hispania

Isabel Velázquez

3.1. The Iberian Peninsula, a Mosaic of Languages and Peoples

The Iberian Peninsula formed a mosaic of peoples and languages (known as Palaeohispanic languages) before the arrival of the Romans. The conquest of the territory, which became the Roman province of Hispania, was almost fully completed in the era of Augustus (c. 31 BCE). From this point onwards, these Palaeohispanic languages progressively disappeared, and their written expressions ultimately vanished with them, with scarcely any records found after the third century CE. The Latin language became the only written language, and almost the only spoken language, as we shall see. This was the existing linguistic landscape on the Peninsula when the various Gothic peoples began their incursions in the fifth century.

From this point onwards, and above all following the settlement of the Visigothic people in Hispania after the battle of Vogladum (now Vouillé, in France), in 507 CE, the historical and political situation of the Iberian Peninsula reveals the continued expansion of the territory controlled by the Visigothic kings, including the annexation by Leovigild of Gallaecia and the northwest of the Peninsula, dominated by the Suebi (c. 568/9–86). The documentation provided by historical, literary, and epigraphic sources, and even archaeological sources, indicates that, having started out from a situation where there was a clear and inevitable distinction between the Gothic people and the Hispano-Roman population, there was a gradual and progressive assimilation and intermingling between the two groups.¹ In fact, the legislation of the *Liber Iudicum* or *Lex*

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¹ I refer both to the Visigothic people and to the Suebi, without addressing the question of the process of ethnogenesis of the Visigoths and the components of various origins that they might contain. On this issue, see, among others, the study by Heather (1994).

Visigothorum is, in my opinion, a clear indication of the existence of a new society requiring new legislation for the population as a whole.²

What languages were spoken and written in the sixth and seventh centuries on the Iberian Peninsula? And what languages did these populations speak when they entered Roman Hispania? How were they assimilated? It is this landscape which I shall aim to analyse in this chapter, from the perspective of Latin evolving as a spoken and written language in contact with other possible languages, and through the information offered by literary, epigraphic, and documentary written records.

3.2. The Linguistic Situation on the Iberian Peninsula During the Visigothic Era

Literary texts, inscriptions, and the very few documents preserved on parchment from the Iberian Peninsula during the Visigothic era, are written in Latin. It is true that the earliest of these reflect,³ when compared with the other written records, clear diastatic variations and a wide range of different levels of Latin usage, but it may be asserted that the entire written output from these centuries was generated under a single linguistic code which aims to comply with an orthographic norm, even if the non-literary texts by this stage already reveal extensive evolution. However, in my opinion we cannot speak of a new language (or new languages) derived from the Latin language, and sixth- and seventh-century speakers likewise undoubtedly had no awareness of speaking a different language from their forefathers, or, for those who had access to education, from what they studied at school.

As is well-known, there are two fundamental and almost opposing positions concerning the categorization of the main language of the Peninsula: there are those who hold that during this era an early Romance language was already spoken, although the written language does not precisely or consistently reflect this evolution, and in particular the authentic pronunciation of the language in these centuries; and there are others who consider this still to be the Latin language, however much it may have evolved.⁴ Whatever the starting point, however, there is a *communis opinio* that these centuries were of critical importance for the

² In the interests of space, I refer to my reflections in Velázquez (2003a), with full bibliographical references.

³ I include here also the *carmina latina epigraphica*.

⁴ Respectively, Wright (1989, 2003, 2013c) and Banniard (1992, 2013) as the authors most representative of the two positions. Regarding the latter, see now Banniard (2020a). Nonetheless, their opinions are not so diametrically opposed as they might initially seem. That said, I have expressed my support for the hypotheses of Banniard as to the continued currency of the Latin language in seventh-century Visigothic Hispania on more than one occasion: Velázquez (2003b, 2004). Recently in Velázquez (forthcoming).

development of the Latin language into the Romance languages, not only on the Iberian Peninsula but also in other parts of what had been the Roman Empire, where the Latin language was the official and prevalent tongue, ahead of other possible minority languages with which it might coexist.⁵

With regard to the Iberian Peninsula, the Latin language achieved progressive penetration, and for centuries coexisted with Palaeohispanic languages, which seem to have entered a clear decline in the first to second centuries CE, before completely disappearing,⁶ except in the case of Basque, still a living language today, but for which we have no written records from that period.⁷ However, we know essentially nothing of the coexistence of the Gothic or Suebian language with the Latin language on the Iberian Peninsula. With regard to the survival of the Gothic language as a living language, we must go back to the evidence of Ennodius (473–521), who mentions that Euric (466–84), who settled with the Gothic people in Toulouse, made use of interpreters at his embassies with the Romans.⁸ However, Euric himself was aware that, faced with an overwhelmingly Latin-speaking population, the code of laws that he aimed to issue must be in Latin, not in the Gothic language, nor even in a bilingual format.⁹ From this point onwards, laws or any other royally issued text were drawn up in Latin, which was unquestionably the primary language of communication of the established authority and the bulk of the population. As we shall see in Section 3.5, those indirect records that could suggest the survival of the Gothic language in Visigothic Hispania do not provide sufficient evidence to confirm this assertion, and furthermore tend to demonstrate that the language was no longer spoken in the sixth and seventh centuries.

In short, it may be asserted that Latin became the *lingua franca*, the language of communication and expression for the mechanisms of power, such as the legislative corpora issued by the Visigothic kings themselves. This language was backed up by a vast literary written tradition, and was the language of education and schooling, as well as the mother tongue of most of the population. The Palaeohispanic languages had gradually disappeared, and the same must have occurred with those languages of Germanic origin.

⁵ Löfstedt (1980); Wright (1989, 2003, 2013c); Banniard (1992, 2013); Herman (1997); Quilis Merín (1999); Gil Fernández (2004).

⁶ See De Hoz (2010), with key bibliography about Palaeohispanic languages, and, more recently, Simón Cornago (2013); Díaz Ariño, Estarán, and Simón (2019); De Hoz (2019); Beltrán Lloris (2020); Herrera Rando (2016, 2020).

⁷ Greek and Hebrew are, of course, separate cases, as are the various communities which spoke these languages, which for Greek includes those native Latin-speakers who learnt and spoke the language.

⁸ Ennodius, *Vita Epiphani* 90, ed. Vogel (1885), 95: *taliter tamen fertur ad interpretem rex locutus...* 'It is said that the king replied thus through an interpreter...'. See Ferreiro (1987–8); (1991), 242–3.

⁹ Regarding the Code of Eurico, see the edition of D'Ors (2014), and Pérez-Prendes (2002, 2011).

3.3. The Written and Spoken Latin Language: Two Different Languages, or Different Levels of Latin Usage?

Our only insight into the spoken Latin language and its evolution over time comes through written texts. As I indicated at the outset, the fundamental discussion for the study of the Latin language in the Visigothic era focuses on whether the language spoken by the population remained Latin or had already become a Romance language: that is, whether there was use of two separate languages or, on the contrary, use of variants from the same single Latin linguistic continuum, although with significant diastatic and diaphasic differences. As I have argued elsewhere,¹⁰ there must have been a clear distinction in use, especially between the most educated and the least educated and illiterate people, but this did not prevent vertical communication between different groups within the speech community. In my opinion, these people did not speak different languages, and there is no indication that the speakers thought that they were expressing themselves in two different languages. This is indicated by certain records concerning the linguistic awareness of these different levels of expression.

It is Isidore of Seville who states that he aims to write his *Regula monachorum* in a *sermo plebeius et rusticus* to allow all the monks to understand his instructions concerning the monastic lifestyle. The same author can adapt his form of speech to the linguistic level of his interlocutors, as recalled by Braulio of Zaragoza (c. 590–651), the disciple of Isidore of Seville, and later Bishop of Zaragoza, in his *Renotatio*:¹¹

uir in omni loquutionis genere formatus, ut imperito doctoque secundum qualitatem sermonis existeret aptus, congrua uero opportunitate loci incomparabili eloquentia clarus.

A man trained in all forms of speech, to such an extent that he could appear well-matched to both the uneducated and the learned man based on their language; indeed, in a suitable setting, he was dazzling in his incomparable eloquence.

One of the most pertinent testimonies concerning the differences between the spoken and written language can be found in the chapter on readers in Isidore of Seville's *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis* 2.11, especially when he speaks of the fact that readers must know how to read texts with the correct pronunciation and that inexperienced people make mistakes in pronouncing words.¹² Moreover, Isidore

¹⁰ Velázquez (2003b, 2004, forthcoming).

¹¹ Velázquez (2003b), 11. Martín (2006), 199–200.

¹² On the problem of the developmental stage of the language and on pronunciation, we must refer to Wright (1989, 2013c). However, I disagree with Wright on some points, especially as to whether what is spoken (and pronounced) in seventh-century Hispania is Latin or Romance, Velázquez (2003b).

mentions that educated people complain that those who do not know how to do so can hardly be understood:

plerumque enim inperiti lectores in uerborum accentibus errant, et solent inuidere nos inperitiae hii qui uidentur habere notitiam, detrahentes et iurantes penitus nescire quod dicimus.

Indeed, most ignorant readers get the accents wrong, and those who are knowledgeable often accuse us of ignorance, criticizing and swearing that they barely understand what we say.

Of course, there is complexity built in here as Isidore is talking about reading texts aloud and not speaking directly, but it is clear that he considers that the less well-educated read aloud in a way that betrays traits of their spoken languages. We could add to this other testimonies about the perception of the differences between the spoken and written language and between the language of the educated and that of the *vulgus* because this was something perceived above all by cultivated authors.

Apart from these testimonies, in my opinion, spoken, not literary, language had already evolved significantly from earlier Latin, as can be discerned through certain direct records from the era, such as the documents written on slate, mainly from the sixth and seventh centuries. These are texts by anonymous writers, sufficiently educated to write, but far removed from literary levels of language. Most of these slates come from the provinces of Ávila, Salamanca, and the north of Cáceres. Their importance lies in the fact that, together with a few parchment documents, they are the only original documents preserved from this era, aside from traditional lapidary epigraphy. In general, the texts have little syntax, comprising lists (*notitiae*) of names, animals, or clothing, or the texts of private sale and purchase agreements, court statements, and other types of *placita* or legal documents. These are formulaic in some cases, but also reflect some of the most characteristic features of the evolution of the Latin language in the Visigothic era. Some of these features are also confirmed through other inscriptions from the period, and some even through certain literary texts.

We may here enumerate some of the most significant aspects of the developmental stage of the language, on the basis of what the preserved texts show us, whether slate, or other inscriptions.¹³ The slates reflect the fact that the vowel system had already undergone a complete reorganization, because of the loss of

¹³ With regard to the following content, see above all: Díaz y Díaz (1957, 1965, 1986); Väänänen (1995); Herman (1995, 1997); Gil Fernández (1970, 1973, 2004); Lapesa (1985); Velázquez (2003b); (2004), 473–553; (forthcoming). For reasons of space, only the number of the piece is given in brackets, in accordance with the editions by Velázquez (2000, 2004) = *P.Vis.* For examples of other inscriptions, we refer to *ICERV*.

quantities which had occurred in previous centuries. They indicate a situation in which the vowel system has been reduced, as we shall subsequently see, with a prevailing trend towards more open vowel sounds than the older, short vowels $\tilde{i} > i > e$ and $\tilde{u} > u > o$. However, there is no evidence yet of linguistic traits characteristic of the Romance language, such as the diphthongization of these old, short vowels in tonic position, such as *bonus* > 'bueno'.¹⁴ It is thus easy to find examples of the opening of $\tilde{i} > e$ confused with the results of \bar{e} , and of $\tilde{u} > o$ with the results of \bar{o} , in any position, atonic or tonic: *baselica* (ICERV 308), *ceuaría* (52, 78, 96, 141, for *cibaria*), *ceuata* (31, for *cibata*), *ordenatu* (54, for *ordinatum*), but *ordinatas* in slate 39, *condiciones sacramentorum*, where we also read *essurdinatione*, for *ex ordinatione*, which may reflect a closed pronunciation of the *o* in *ordinatione* in a text that may have been dictated. Among the examples of opening of $\tilde{u} > o$ one may cite *kartola* (107, for *chartula*), but *cartula* in 40 and 73; *fibola* (103, for *fibula*), *sepolcri* (87, for *sepulcri*), *tegola* (ICERV 303, for *tegula*). Meanwhile, spellings of *e* for *i*, such as *perdedit* (102, for *perdidit*) may be the result of recomposition based on simple forms with *dedit*. The vowels \bar{e} and \bar{o} remain stable. Forms such as *uindo*, *uinditor*, *uindere*, *uinditio* (30, 40, 121, for *uendo*, *uenditor*, etc.) reflect a closed pronunciation which did not survive. Meanwhile, *i* for \bar{e} in *ficisti* (29, for *fecisti*), probably indicates the evolution at this stage to the Romance 'hiciste'; *dicendet* for *descendet* (39) may be explained by a confusion of prefixes. In the velar series of original long vowels, we find very few changes, although one may cite: *plomacios* (115, for *plumacia*), *Rofinus* (130, 132; although the correct form *Rufinus* in 6, 118, 139). The opposite case of the spelling *u* for \bar{o} , is in the minority, although there are some examples such as *subrina* (ICERV 534), but *sourino* (8); *maiures* (55, for *maiores*); however, this is typically maintained, and in fact this same word is in most cases seen with the graphical form in *o*, *maior*, in other slates and inscriptions. There are also other alterations which may be the result of contaminations between suffixes of the type *-esco/-isco* or *-ulus/-olus*.

We find the vowel dissimilation or assimilation common in the slates, reflecting popular speech, for example *deuinam* (4, 19), *deuinis* (7), *defenito* (8, 40), *Sabastianus* (ICERV 325). There are also signs of prothetic vowels, even in literary texts: *iscurra* (Isid. *Etym.* 10.152), *ispiritum*, *ispe*, etc. and post-tonic fall, with the typical *domnus*, abundant in western Romania. It is also common to find the raising of vowels in hiatus: *Purpuria* (ICERV 161), several times in the slates: *casios* (11, for *caseos*), *uinias* (40, 107, 116, for *uineas*), *Auriolus* (117, 125), *abias* (41, for *habeas*), but there is a notable inconsistency, as we also find *(h)abeas*, *debead*, etc. One cannot, meanwhile, argue for the diphthongization of short vowels in tonic position so typical of Castilian Romance $\tilde{e} > ie$ and $\tilde{o} > ue$, nor the evolution of

¹⁴ The diphthongization of short vowels in tonic position is a phenomenon of Castilian Romance, but not of others, such as Catalan.

the suffix *-ariu* > ‘-ero’.¹⁵ The diphthong *ae* had become a monophthong much earlier, maintained despite the weight of the written tradition. However, it is impossible to ascertain the vitality of *au*, whether this had already become a monophthong or still reveals vacillations, and with regard to *eu*, of Greek origin, it shows a degree of vitality explaining the interference between *eu/eo* in anthroponyms of Gothic origin (*Teud-*) and of Greek origin (*Theod-*: *Teodulfus*, *Teodulfus*, *Teodadus*, *Teodatus*), as reflected by the orthography of the slates.

As for the evolution of the consonantal system, in the Visigothic era it is possible that the final consonants *-m*, *-d*, and *-t*, including *-n(t)*, had already been lost, and were only maintained in the written form learned at school, as demonstrated by the continuous losses and confusion of endings between *-t/-d*, and even endings such as *ipsut* for *ipsum*.¹⁶ Meanwhile the final consonant *-s*, despite its tendency to disappear, is maintained with some regularity, undoubtedly because of its morphological value, in both the nominal and verbal paradigm.

One characteristic change of the evolution towards Romance language is the voicing of intervocalic voiceless consonants. There are some forms already documented in the Visigothic era, such as *pontiucatus* (ICERV 307, for *pontificatus*), *scroua* (52, for *scrofa*); in my opinion, however, this is an incipient phenomenon that was not yet widespread. There are two anthroponyms on the slates that could offer evidence of this phenomenon, but they are uncertain: *Fauila* (46) could be the Gothic *Fafila*, but it could equally reflect Latin *Fauilla*, and even the example *Profidentius* (1) could have been influenced by *Fidelis*.

Other phenomena of consonantism already confirm the evolutionary trend from the vulgar Latin language evidenced in previous eras, such as the loss of *h-*, abundantly represented, or the fricativization of the vowel /u/ in intervocalic position [w] and the confusion of the sounds [b] and [w] in the allophonic variant [β] reflected in the graphical confusion of / <u>. ¹⁷ We also find the labio-velar reduction /k^w/ > /k/ which may be seen in some graphical forms as *cod*, *co*, *cot* for *quod*, *comodo* for *quomodo*, and even reverse spellings such as *quollige* (103), although once again, the spelling learnt in school tends to support the correct forms.

¹⁵ I specifically cite these two features, because I initially held the view that these could be attested on the basis of some examples in the slates, and certain other documentary inscriptions, e.g. *ualiente*, *curriente*, etc., but these should be understood as analogue forms of verb participles in *-io*, such as *faciens*, etc. As for the suffix *-ariu*, this was present in one reading *meseru* (75), but this should now be read as *me seru[- -]*. Regarding these problems, see Herman (1995); Velázquez (2004), 482–5; (2008).

¹⁶ In slate 103, from El Barrado (Cáceres), to which I will refer briefly later on.

¹⁷ I use // to indicate phonemes, [] for phones, and < > for letters. So, for example, in referring to the confusion between and <u>, it should be understood that prior to the Renaissance there is no graphic differentiation between the vowel sound [u]/[w] and the consonant sound [v]/[β], i.e. *iuuentus*. The form *iuuentus* is a graphic convention of publishers. In this chapter, we maintain the systematic transcription with <u>: i.e., among the aforementioned examples, *uinia*, *Auriolus*, *Fauilla*. Regarding the early documentation of the changes here discussed, cf. among others, Díaz y Díaz (1960b), 166; (1998), 162; Väänänen (1995), 59, 101–3; Herman (1997), 48, 56; Stotz (1996–8) i. 117–48.

In the sixth and seventh centuries, the process of palatalization of consonant clusters has already occurred, as demonstrated by the examples of confusion and exchange of graphic forms both in the series *y/dy/gy/* and in the clusters *cy/ty*.¹⁸ Examples of the former include *aiute* (103, for *adiutet*), *facisteria* (49, for *facitergia*), *magior* (45, for *maior*); examples of the latter include *deletaciones* (29, for *delectationes*), *tercio* (45, 46, 47, for *tertio*), *uncia* (43, 50 for *untia*). These cases of *cy/ty* confusion are facilitated by the interferences between the suffixes: *-acius/-atius*, *-acius/-etius*, *icius/-itius*, *-ucius/-utius*: *Bonifatius*, *Gracianus*, etc. It is nonetheless possible that there were certain perceptible differences of pronunciation, as may be deduced from the words attributed to Julian of Toledo:¹⁹

alterum namque sonum habet i post t et alterum post c. nam post c habet pinguem sonum, post t gracilem. pernitias autem semper c habere debet.

Now, *i* has one sound after *t* and another after *c*. For after *c* it has a thicker sound, and after *t* is lighter, thus *pernitias* must always have a *c*.

In turn, Isidore of Seville reflects the special pronunciation of *ty* which he compares with the *ζ* of Greek (*Etym.* 1.27.28):²⁰

Y et Z litteris sola Graeca nomina scribuntur. Nam cum iustitia sonum z littera exprimat, tamen, quia Latinum est, per t scribendum est. Sic militia, malitia, nequitia et cetera similia.

Only Greek names are written with *y* and *z*. Thus, although *iustitia* reflects a sound with the letter *z*, since it is a Latin word it must nonetheless be written with *t*. Likewise *militia*, *malitia*, *nequitia* and other similar words.

Meanwhile, the palatalization of *c+e,i* or *g+e,i* may not yet have occurred, or might have been only in its early phase.

There is also a marked tendency towards the simplification of geminates and some consonant clusters, although in both cases the weight of the orthographic tradition influences apparent conservation. Among the geminates, we frequently find spellings such as *eclesia* (127), *sugerendum* (128), and, in contrast, *honorabilli* (41), *Possidius* (117). As for consonant clusters, the reduction of *ks > ss > s* would seem to represent the majority: *destiris*, *destra*, *disi* (29, for *dextris*, *dextra*, *dixi*); *essenplo* (39, for *exemplo*); *sestarium* (10, 45, etc., for *sextarium*); the cluster *kt*:

¹⁸ Väänänen (1995), 95; Herman (1997), 54; Velázquez (2004), 495–6.

¹⁹ This is a set of *excerpta* attributed to Julian of Toledo and concerning the *Commentaries to Donatus*, preserved in various manuscripts. This passage is specifically in the Codex Monacense Emm. G. 121, Keil (1868) 327, 22–30. Regarding the interpretation of this passage and the phenomenon of palatalization, see Gil Fernández (2004), 160.

²⁰ Spevak (2020), 121.

deletaciones (29, for *delectationes*), [*s*]antionis (8, for *sanctionis*); the cluster *pt*, is in general maintained in the slates and in this era. Nonetheless, one interesting piece of evidence is presented by Isidore of Seville in an attempt to explain the origin of the word *cattus* (*Etym.* 12.2.38): *hunc uulgo cattum a captura uocant; alii dicunt quod cattat, id este, uidet* ('This is popularly known as *cattum* [i.e. English "cat"] from capture, while others say it is because of *cattat* [i.e. Spanish "cata"], in other words, "sees").²¹ This erroneous explanation of the word's origin exemplifies the conservation of the *pt* cluster read in *captura*, but also the tendency to assimilation in *cattat*, a new verb (derived from *captare*) *cattare* > 'catar', with the meaning of 'see', which survived as such in Castilian Romance.²²

The reduction of the nominal inflection is clear, the result of the now consolidated trend towards the disappearance of the fourth declension in favour of the second, the loss of *-m* and the consequent opening of the final *ū* > *o* in the thematic inflection and of *i* > *e*, in those themes in *-i*. These phenomena led to the nominative, accusative, and ablative endings becoming the same. An increase in the prepositional use *de* + noun, rather than the genitive and ablative, also contributes to this simplification. Given all the above, to judge by the evidence offered by the slates and other inscriptions, it would seem that the 'nominative/accusative' opposition remains operative, above all in the singular, although we do see certain losses of *-s*, but in many cases, above all in names, when it is lost then the *-u(s)* is maintained in thematic nouns, or even a graphical form such as *Gregorios* (8) indicates the reluctance to give up writing the *-s*. The records of *-as* for *-ae* in the plural are, in my opinion, entirely unconnected with dialectal features inherited from ancient Latin, and instead correspond to the progressive loss of inflection, although the aforementioned nominative/accusative opposition remains current in the main. We may thus recall phrases such as *notitia de uer[uellas?] cot ispensas sunt* (97) or *uide [il]las tegolas cas astritas sunt* (103), which demonstrate this trend. In the thematic inflection, we still find the difference *-i* (nominative)/*-os* (accusative) to be operative, although by this point they are in competition, as in one single slate (53), a *notitia* of livestock, we find *nouellos*, *uitelli*, and *ecuas* to coexist.

There are also cases where we may detect a trend towards the loss of the neuter, above all in the masculine: *mancipios* (103, for *mancipia*), *castros* (20, for *castra*), *plomacios* (115, for *plumacia*), *mantos* (115, for *mantum*). But the trend does not seem consolidated. In fact, in the highly fragmentary text on slate 115, which is of great interest from a lexical and morphological perspective, these words are combined with another in the neuter plural: *duos gaunapa*.²³ The text reads as follows:

²¹ André (1986), 121.

²² Velázquez (2003b), 430–1, and below in Section 3.4. Also Adams (2007), 427.

²³ Regarding this term, see Velázquez (2022a).

- [n]otitia de cutis ila[- - -]
 duos gaunapa duos lino[s? - - -]
 plomacios qui<n>que mantos [- - -]
 maf[o]rte unu capernum u[num - - -]
 5 ol[.] tres culceta una [- - -]
 s duas faciales tres [- - -]
 urias ++are unu an[- - -]
 [- - -]isse mares[- - -]
 - - - - -

List of skins *ila*[- - -] two, two carpets, [N] <garment(s)> of linen [- - -], five feather mattresses, [N] cloaks, a stole, a <garment of> goat's wool (?), three *ol*[- - -?], one mattress, two [- - -], three towels, [PN] [- - -] *urias*, *one ++are*, *an*[- - -]

We may add to this evidence that of Isidore of Seville regarding the word *mantum*, which he gives as an example of a typical garment of the people of Hispania (*Etym.* 19.24.15): *mantum Spani uocant quod manus tegat tantum: est enim breue amictum* ('The people of Hispania refer thus to a cloak, because it covers only the hands: it is in effect a short *amictus* (cape)').²⁴ The currency of the word in Visigothic Hispania is corroborated by the presence on the aforementioned slate, although it survives in other Romance languages besides those of the Iberian Peninsula.

The pronoun system reveals various modifications. Some texts from the slates that are of legal content, and thus somewhat formulaic in character, still present a fairly regular *hic/iste/il*e opposition, but in general the interferences and confusion already denote a significant evolution. We already see an extension of *ipse* towards the sphere of the demonstratives, as reflected by the phrase *uindo portione de terra, ipsa terra* or *adduxi teste Froila, ipse Froila* (40), although it may here still retain its phoric and emphatic value.²⁵ There is as yet

²⁴ Velázquez (2003b), 370–1.

²⁵ This last sentence belongs to the text on the second side of this slate, which consists of a statement in court, the expository part of which can be considered as a possible transcription of the spoken language. Expressions such as the following sentences can provide information on the level of spoken language: ... *ego ad-^fdux*i teste *ipse Froila, fraude ad do-/mo Desideri, dum istare in dom<o> Desideri, / fu<i>t ueniens Froila et dix(it) mici: "leua, leuita, / et uadam(us) ad domo Busani et Fasteni [- - -] / sucisit fuim(us) ad domo Busani [.] unam ra[- - -] /¹⁰ [- - -] pro Froilane et dixit nouis: "uadam(us) / ad fragis, ad uimias p[o]stas et pono te ibi in fragis et le-/uau*i de domo Desideri p[- - -] *rales duos, dolabra una...*". In spite of its fragmentary state, we can translate it as: '... I adduced Froilan himself as a witness, in connection with a fraud, at Desiderio's house. While I was at Desiderius' house Froilan appeared and said to me: "Come, Levite (*leuita*, perhaps a verb derived from *leuare*?, although it is not documented), and let us go to Busano and Fasteno's house. He came over, we went to Busano's house... a [- - -], in favour of Froilán and he said to us: "Let's go to the strawberry field, next to the planted vines, and there I place you in the strawberry field and I took from Desiderio's house two [- - -] *rales*, a carpenter's axe". Regarding this side of the slate, see Adams (2016), 564–71. Regarding the full slate, Velázquez (2004), 219–39 (*P.Vis.* 40). This piece is derived from Diego Álvaro (Ávila).

no article, perhaps one of the defining features of the new Romance languages. However, certain phrases indicate that they are very close to the point of merging, as in the case of slate 103, to which I will return, as I believe it is perhaps one of the best exponents of the state of spoken language in this era. Here we read: *uide [il]las tegolas, oliba illa quolligie*.

In the verbal system, we find typical confusions for phonetic reasons, such as *amabit/amauit* and vacillation in the notation of the endings *-m*, *-t*, *-n(t)*, as I have indicated earlier. However, the verbal system reveals greater resilience, both at the level of conservation of these endings and above all of *-s*, and in the maintenance of the indicative/subjunctive opposition, with the latter indicating no notable retreat. There is, though, confusion between the imperative and subjunctive, as seen for example in: *rogo te domne ut, . . . p(er) te ipsut oliba illa quolligie* (imperative for subjunctive) (103). We likewise note a progressive replacement of the synthetic future in *-bo* with the periphrasis *habeo/debeo* + infinitive, although it is still possible that the value of auxiliary obligation may prevail: *ad petitione Basili iurare debead Lolus* (39) or *et kabemus nos uobis r[emi]ter[e][a]ngila* (for *ancilla*) *pro caballu* (42). As may be expected, the deponent forms and synthetic passive are only maintained in formulaic texts but must already have practically disappeared from the living language.

As I have already indicated, the slates, many of them fragmentary, present in general very scant syntax on account of their very nature, which is far removed from a literary style. Furthermore, some of the sentences are formulaic in nature, such as those with legal content, while others contain liturgical or biblical texts, and therefore offer little indication of the living language. However, in those fragments where we see a non-formulaic elaboration in the texts, there is an apparent trend towards simplification, the use of coordinated, juxtaposed constructions, but here, above all, because many of the texts are *notitiae*, lists or accounts of items. Alternations of the type *et/atque*, *non/neque* may be found in formulaic sentences, above all. The dependent sentences continue to use *ut* with the subjunctive (the use of the Romance conjunction ‘que’ had not yet taken hold), although confusions are on occasion seen, in both completive and final use. The use of the infinitive with final value is perhaps of greater interest: *dum uenisse* (for *uenissem*) *ad loc[um - -] tum lirigiare* (for *litigare*) *ad domo Froilane* (40). Causal sentences typically use *quoniam/quod*; relative sentences reveal a degree of solidification of pronoun forms.

These trends in the phonological, morphological, and syntactic system are in line with the typical evolutions of the vulgar Latin language in the western area, revealing a consistent panorama of the evolution of the living language in its process of evolution into the Romance languages, but without yet having undertaken the full transformation into what we would classify as separate Romance

languages.²⁶ The panorama may be exemplified by the text, slate *P.Vis.* 103, derived from El Barrado (Cáceres), which contains a letter written by Faustinus to Paulus. It is a personal letter, with advice as to the economic administration of the latter's estate, and in my opinion is a real gem, as it offers us an insight into the spoken language of the Visigothic era.²⁷ The proximity of certain expressions to spoken Romance language is striking. There is no article yet, as I indicated a few lines above, but expressions such as *oliba illa*, *illas cupas*, *illas tegolas* are precursors of its emergence and the mixture of subjunctive and imperative and the phrase *cas astritas sunt de fibula*, among others, unquestionably reflect a stage of spoken language:

I Front face:

[Domno] Paulo Faustinus saluto tuam
 [- - -]em et rogo te domne ut comodo consu-
 [etum] facere est p(er) te ipsut oliba illa quollige,
 [cur?]a ut ipsos mancipios in iura[re]mento

5 [coger]e debeas ut tibi fraudem non fa-
 [cian]t illas cupas collige calas

II Rear face:

[d]e cortices et sigilla de tuo anulo et uide
 [il]las tegolas cas astritas sunt de fibola quo
 [m]odo ego ipsas demisi; illum Meriacium manda
 [d]e Tiliata uenire ut aiute tibi, unum qui na[- - -]

5 'et unum at Mancio nostro'
 de Siriola Pesitula at illa amma at Na[- - -]
 [- - -]ris dirige pro die sto. sic
 [te Chris]tus custodiat

Faustinus to Paulus. I salute your [dignity], and ask you, lord, as is customary, to harvest the olives yourself. Try to oblige your servants by oath, so that they do not commit fraud against you. Take the cups, the wooden rods, and seal them with your ring, and check if the tiles are fixed with the staple, as I set them. Instruct that Meriatius come from Tiliata to help you, one who [comes from?],—and another for our Mancius—of Siriola <to> Pesitula, for that housewife, for Na[- - -]. [- - -] arrange [it] accordingly this day. May Christ thus preserve you.

²⁶ As reference works for the variation and diversification of the Latin language, see the publications cited and, in particular, Adams (2007, 2013), among other works by this author.

²⁷ Velázquez (2000), i. 111–12, (2004), 362–8. A study of the language of this slate can also be found in Pountain (2001), 13–18, although it is based on the old edition by Gómez Moreno (1966) and should therefore be compared with the aforementioned edition and study of the language by Velázquez (2004). The commentaries on this slate by Castellanos (2020), 13–18, also based on the latter edition, may also be consulted. It is also discussed in Chapter 4 of this volume, using a different text and from a different perspective.

3.4. Isidore of Seville: Learned Speaker of Visigothic Hispania

I have thus far focused on the texts of the Visigothic slates (together with certain other examples of inscriptions), as these may be considered the examples closest to the level of spoken, not literary, language in the sixth and seventh centuries. However, as these are exceptional texts, they are a minority, and must be compared with the literary texts of the era. To my mind, in order to ascertain the state of the language, we cannot only rely on those records which seem closest to the spoken language, basing the study on a possible sampling of vulgarisms or breaches of the norm. It would be wrong not to consider all literary texts, of known authors, inscriptions in verse and with literary pretensions, liturgical, conciliar, and legal texts. In short, any written expression, since all these sources reveal one single language, living and intercommunicable, despite the clear and profound diastatic, diaphasic, or diamesic variations which exist.²⁸ Visigothic Hispania reveals a high level of culture, with an extensive array of authors cultivating the widest range of literary genres, and revealing a normative state of language, although the focus has often been on analysing certain peculiarities and characteristics intrinsic to the era. We find an unquestionably flourishing and remarkable panorama of authors expressing themselves in the Latin language.

Within this context, Isidore of Seville is undoubtedly the pre-eminent figure in the culture of Visigothic Hispania, being one of the leading members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, with a very prominent political role, a friend of King Sisebut, and serving as a guide and communicator across different strata of the linguistic community.²⁹ Through his grammatical works, *Differentiae*, *Synonyma*, and *Etymologiae*, he provides a great deal of information about communication among the different speakers of the language.³⁰ He aimed to explain how to speak *latine et perspicue*. He educated society, essentially clerics and monks, to learn about the scriptures and master proper expression and vocabulary (not elevated language) in order to be able to read in public and to convey doctrine and teachings to the whole population, whether learned or not, without distinction.³¹ A reading of Isidore's own reflections about language (*nostrum eloquium*) offers information about grammar, the mastery of language, the pursuit of correct expression, and about vulgarisms, solecisms, etc.—in other words, numerous insights into the living language that he spoke, as a learned speaker, that he wrote,

²⁸ The diatopic variants are not particularly perceptible.

²⁹ Without, of course, broaching the topic of culture in the Visigothic era, nor a specific study of the figure of Isidore of Seville in his work, see the now classic works by Fontaine (1959–83, 2000). One may consult Velázquez (1994, 2003b), with bibliographies; recently, Fear and Wood (2019); and specifically regarding the *Etymologies*, Elfassi (2019).

³⁰ I have addressed in depth the aspects described below in Velázquez (2003b).

³¹ In general, the works of Fontaine (2000); Magallón García (1996); Velázquez (2003b); Barrett (2019). Regarding Isidore as grammarian, see also Carracedo Fraga (2019), with bibliography.

as a learned writer, and with which he communicated with anyone, of whatever level, as recalled by Braulio of Zaragoza in his *Renotatio*.

Although it is not possible here to embark on a detailed analysis of the information offered by Isidore's works, I would like to make reference to one relevant aspect of the study of linguistic material conducted by Isidore in his *Etymologiae*, in which he established the origin and meaning of the words that he set out to explain. In studying the lexicon, Isidore proves himself to be a witness to his own era. It is true that he drew on numerous earlier sources, and that the *Etymologiae* are an ambitious compendium of the knowledge of the ancient world, but on occasion he makes reference to specific uses of contemporary language, as in the cases I cited earlier of *cattare* with the meaning of *uidere* or *mantum*, used by the *Hispani*. In this lexicon, he presents words documented in Latin for the first time, but the existence of which we can confirm through their survival in the Romance languages, or words which, while belonging to classical Latin or documented in earlier authors and eras, have undergone a change of meaning compared to previous instances. These lexical and semantic innovations witness a distinct stage of the living language.³²

By way of example, I may cite here such terms as *ala*, used according to Isidore by the *rustici* (*Etym.* 17.11.9):

inula, quam rustici alam uocant, radice aromatica odoris summi cum leui acrimonia.

Inula helenium, referred to by the peasants as 'ala', with an aromatic root, a strong scent, and slight acidity.

In the *Etymologies* we find *ala* with other meanings already known in Latin: 1.36.3 as *penna* ('wing, feather'); in 12.7.6 as *axilla* ('armpit') and in 9.3.63 as 'wing or flank of the army' (*TLL* I 1467,57). However, as the name of a herb, it is an innovation which must be accepted, since it is preserved with this meaning in Spanish, Catalan, and Portuguese, 'ala: elecampane, or helenium', and in ancient and modern German: 'alant' (*REW* 305).

If we take another example from botany, *serralia* is the name by which speakers, including Isidore (*nominamus*), referred to a type of lettuce (*Etym.* 17.10.11):

lactuca agrestis est quam serraliam nominamus, quod dorsum eius in modum serrae est.

It is the wild lettuce which we refer to as *serralia* ('sow thistle'), because the back has a serrated form.

³² For all that follows, I refer to my study Velázquez (2003b). Here I simply cite certain examples that are reflected and survive in the Romance languages.

Putting aside the problems with readings of manuscripts and etymological explanation that I have set out elsewhere,³³ we know the noun is the precursor of the Romance languages: Catalan ‘serralla’, Portuguese ‘serralha’, Spanish ‘cerraia’.

Isidore also cites as a Hispanism *ciconia* (*Etym.* 20.15.3), a synonym of *telo*, to designate a machine to extract water, the ‘cigoñal’ (‘well pole’), a term formed from a suffix. Columella (3.13.11–12)³⁴ had already noted *ciconia* as the name of a yardstick used to measure the depth of holes in the ground, but Isidore indicates the specific meaning maintained in Romance. He also cites as the name of an instrument *insubulus*, and the verb *insubulare* (*Etym.* 19.29.1):

insubuli, quia infra et supra sunt, uel quia insubulantur.

Warp beams (*insubuli*), because they are beneath and above, or because they roll up (*insubulantur*).

They are formations based on *in* and *subula*, the ‘awl’, an instrument for sewing, punching holes, or stitching, related to *suo-ere* (‘sew’) and *sutor* (‘cobbler’). It also appears in certain glossaries (*CGL* 2.88.30; 3.321.74; 366.41) and survives in Spanish ‘enjulio’ (also ‘enjullo’ and ‘ensullo’), Italian ‘subio’, French ‘ensoupté’, Provençal ‘ensouble’, Sardinian ‘insulos’, ‘insubros’ (*REW* 4474).

Among the animals, Isidore cites *formicoleon* (‘lion-ant’) (*Etym.* 12.3.10), a word made up of *formica* and *leo*, clearly a deformation of *myrmicoleon* (*TLL* 1093, 17), but this lexical innovation has survived in Old French ‘formicaleon’, Modern French ‘fourmilion’, and Italian and Provençal ‘formicaleon’. As a name for a horse based on its colour, he cites *mauro*, indicating that this is black, and that the name comes from the Greek (*Etym.* 12.1.55). It has been argued that this is a misreading of *maurus*, but the Spanish ‘morón’ supports the validity of the form *mauro* in equine nomenclature.³⁵

These are just some examples of terms studied by Isidore in his *Etymologies*, the analysis and confirmation of the survival of which in Romance languages allows us to ascertain that these are ‘living’ words in the spoken language. The same situation may be seen in connection with other terms of different origins—I refer to words of Gothic origin—the currency of which we may observe in the Visigothic era in Hispania, and elsewhere. Some of these are analysed by Isidore himself in his *Etymologies*, while others are documented in other texts, such as the aforementioned Visigothic slates, and of course in their survival in Romance languages.

In Section 3.2, I argued that the Gothic language was probably no longer spoken in Visigothic Hispania, or at least this is the conclusion we may draw from the various records available to us, as I shall demonstrate. However, even if the

³³ See the discussion in Velázquez (2003b), 459–62.

³⁴ Ash (1993), 316.

³⁵ Velázquez (2003b), 428–30.

language was no longer spoken, it did leave traces in the Latin language through lexical loans. Despite the problems in studying this, as will be seen, the Gothic lexicon constitutes a fundamental element in understanding which loans influenced the Latin language, and how they did so.

3.5. The (Non-)Survival of Gothic in Visigothic Hispania: Problems of Identification and Currency of Loanwords of Gothic Origin in Latin

All the evidence seems to suggest that the Gothic language no longer enjoyed currency in Visigothic Hispania (see Section 3.2). Some indirect records could, in principle, suggest that it did, but a thorough analysis does not provide any such proof, while there is no supporting direct evidence of the survival of either the Gothic or Suebian language. The first of these indirect records is the reference to Arian texts at the Third Council of Toledo (589), in which the profession of faith (*fidei confessio*) of the bishops of Toledo condemns the Arian heresy together with its dogmas, rules, organization, communion, and books: *dum patuerit uos tabem perfidiae Arrianae cum omnibus dogmatibus, regulis, officiis, communione, codicibus praedamnare*.³⁶ In Canon XVI of this profession of faith, reference is made to a *detestabilem libellum* published by the bishops themselves in the twelfth year of the reign of Leovigild (568–86), in other words around 580, which apparently contained the conversion of the Catholic bishops to Arianism (*quo continetur Romanorum ad haeresim Arrianam transductio*).³⁷ However, there is no suggestion whatsoever that these Arian codices were written in the Gothic language, much less the *libellum* published by the bishops in the era of Leovigild, which would undoubtedly have been written in Latin. The Catholic bishops in question would mostly have been of Hispano-Roman origin, and even the Gothic Catholic bishops would have used Latin as a means of communication.³⁸ We cannot know if the Arian books that Reccared (586–601) ordered to be burnt were written in the Gothic language, or by this stage in Latin, if we are to believe the passage from the Chronicle of Pseudo-Fredegar.³⁹ It is, however, not impossible that certain

³⁶ Martínez Díez and Rodríguez (1992), 76–7.

³⁷ Martínez Díez and Rodríguez (1992), 82–3.

³⁸ One may recall the writer Juan de Biclaro or Masona, the Bishop of Merida, protagonist of the *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium*, as examples of bishops of Gothic origin who communicated in Latin, although both are examples of those Catholic bishops who refused to convert to the Arian faith. One may even recall the passage from the *VSPE* 5.5 (Maya Sánchez (1992), 58–62) in which Masona and Sunna, both Goths, engage in a public debate about religion, on the instruction of King Leovigild. One cannot imagine that this public debate, before the faithful, would have been in the Gothic language.

³⁹ This is the only reference to this event, and most authors lend it scant credibility, cf. Orlandis (1962), 308–9; Thompson (1966), 155–6; Ferreiro (1991), 242. The passage contains the text: (*Chron.* 8, cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1960, 7): *omnes libros arrianos precepit (sc. Reccared) ut presententur quos in una domo conlocatis incendio concremare iussit*.

biblical or liturgical codices, or books of laws (see below) transcribed in the Gothic language might have survived as late as the seventh century, but then disappeared through disuse or destruction, or even because their text could not be understood.

I am not sure that the existence of books, in fact codes of laws, written in the Gothic language can be inferred from the prohibition of foreign law books and Roman laws set out in the *Lex Visigothorum* in the laws of Reccesuinth LV 2.1.10 and 2.1.11 (the latter with a second wording by Erwig), since they allude to books of foreign laws or laws prior to the Liber which he promulgated, which, although known, were not to be used. These are vague mentions, and it seems that they refer more to the difference in the evolution of the Latin legal language itself than to the existence of laws written in other languages, though the possibility cannot be excluded that they could indirectly refer to the existence of legal texts written in Gothic, even if these were no longer in force.

Another of the texts occasionally referred to, although always as doubtful evidence,⁴⁰ is the mention in the pseudo-Isidoran *Chronica Gothorum* (XVIII.1), from the eleventh century, of a king *sapientissimus in lingua barbara*, identified as Reccesuinth (653–72) and the Gothic language respectively. Dworkin indicates:

it is unclear whether this passage refers to the king's active use of the language or whether he was knowledgeable about the previous existence of the then already extinct language of his ancestors.⁴¹

However, this passage may not even refer to the supposed Gothic language and whether Reccesuinth spoke it, or was simply aware of its existence.⁴² It is possible that the reference might be to the fact that the king was familiar with certain of the Berber languages of Tingitana (see Chapter 2).⁴³ All this information is doubly uncertain, since we do not know whether the mention that the king was an expert in a *lingua barbara* comes from the Latin version of the work itself or from the Arabic translation and, above all, because it is not certain to which king exactly it refers, given the problem of textual transmission that exists in the manuscripts.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Piel and Kremer (1976), 29; Claude (1998), 121; Kremer (2004), 137.

⁴¹ Dworkin (2012), 66.

⁴² In my opinion, it is likewise unclear what inference might be drawn from the fact that the king was aware that this language had existed. All kings undoubtedly knew that their forefathers spoke an ancient language different from Latin, clear traces of which remained in the lexicon. See Section 3.4.

⁴³ The very mention of *lingua barbara* proves anomalous as a reference to the Gothic language, above all in the context of which he is speaking, regarding a possible embassy of the king to the barbarians and the people of Oribe: *hic direxit legatos ad barbaros et ad gentes Oribe, sicut narrant libri prophetarum*. This sentence immediately follows those cited in the previous note. Regarding this problem, see the introduction to the cited edition of González-Muñoz (2000), 73–9.

⁴⁴ In truth this is a *locus corruptus*. In the only manuscript transmitting this *Chronica* (Paris BNF 6113, f. 46r–v) we read *post regnavit Gondolus quatuor annis. post Gondolosa V annis et erat sapientissimus in lingua barbara*, which Mommsen (1894), 387, published as (c. 17) *post regnavit Gondolus*.

Aside, then, from these disputed passages, there is no other explicit reference which would suggest the survival of the Gothic language. The same may be said of the Suebian language, as clearly indicated by Ferreiro (1991) with regard to the evangelization conducted among the Suebi by Martin of Braga. There is no reference that he was familiar with the Suebian language, nor that he made use of interpreters to speak to the Suebian kings.⁴⁵ It should in any event be recalled that both Suebi and Visigoths had been settled in Hispania for more than a century by this point, and that their original languages must gradually have fallen into disuse.

It is, then, likely that the Visigoths who settled in Spain after 507 no longer spoke the Gothic language, at least not those who received a school education, which would be in Latin, or social classes with political responsibilities and a higher economic or social profile. Perhaps the lower classes, the less cultured or uneducated population, might continue to speak their language, but everyday coexistence with the Hispano-Romans would have caused them to gradually lose their mother tongue. It is in fact striking that most of the loans, aside from the extensive array of anthroponyms and toponyms, should belong to a lexicon which we could classify as closely linked to a domestic setting, everyday commercial and economic relations, mainly in the sphere of private life.⁴⁶

This incorporation of a lexicon of Germanic or Gothic origin within the general lexicon, as well as the toponyms and anthroponyms present in the Latin texts, and the terms that survived subsequently in the Romance languages of the Iberian Peninsula, emphasizes that the coexistence between the Germanic languages (and in particular the Gothic language) and the Latin language was not fleeting. This chapter does not aim to address such a complex issue as the history of coexistence of Latin- and Germanic-speaking communities and their mutual influences in the linguistic or cultural sphere, but simply to offer a brief consideration of the possible influence of the Gothic language on the Latin of the Visigothic era, the scope of which we can only perceive in part, and probably to a very limited extent, through lexical expressions.⁴⁷

A systematic and in-depth study of the possible lexicon of Germanic, and specifically Gothic, origin in the Latin language in the Visigothic era still remains to be written, owing to the huge obstacles to its creation. It should be borne in mind

(c. 18) *Post Gondolo, Soa V annis et erat sapientissimus in lingua barbara, Gondolus* thus being understood as Chindasuinth (642–53) and *Soa* as Reccesuinth. Meanwhile, González-Muñoz (2000), 178, publishes: *post regnavit Gondolus quatuor annis, post cum filio suo V annis, et erat sapientissimus in lingua barbara*. According to this reading, the *rex* with expertise in the *lingua barbara* could in truth be *Gondolus*, in other words, Chindasuinth, and the explicit mention of Reccesuinth would be concealed behind *filio suo* (unquestionably more comprehensible than *Soa*, even if mere conjecture). It should, furthermore, be recalled that certain post-Visigothic historical sources specifically omit Reccesuinth and attribute this embassy to Chindasuinth, as occurs, for example, in the *Crónica del moro Rasis* 130; see Catalán and De Andrés (1975), 269–70.

⁴⁵ Regarding this matter, I refer briefly to Thompson (1966) and to Ferreiro (1991).

⁴⁶ This inevitably also applies to the Suebian language and others. See Gamillscheg (1932); Mason (1979); Ferreiro (1987–8, 1991); Kremer (2004).

⁴⁷ For a brief but accurate consideration of these issues, see Kremer (2004).

that ‘Gothic’ and ‘Germanic’ origin must not be seen as identical, as the latter is a generic term, as is ‘Romance’,⁴⁸ since Germanic is divided into different language families. In fact, Gothic belongs to Eastern Germanic, while Suebian would seem to originally belong to Western Germanic; meanwhile, various peoples of Germanic origin ventured onto the Iberian Peninsula at different times during the process of ethnogenesis of the Gothic people. The main problem, however, may be the lengthy coexistence of the different Germanic-speaking peoples with the Roman world, and the consequent process of acculturation experienced over the centuries, culminating in the use of the Latin language as the means of communication between the two groups. As a result, although one may detect lexical loans, it is very difficult to specify how and when they entered the Latin language, beyond establishing *ante quem* terms for those for which we have confirmation in written texts.

Some terms may be considered ‘pan-Romance’, being present in various languages, and must reflect early inclusion in the Latin language:⁴⁹

burgs > Sp. ‘burgo’, ‘Burgos’, extensively used in various European languages;
 werra > It. ‘guerra’, Fr. ‘guerre’, Sp., Cat., Port. ‘guerra’, which replaced Latin
bellum; helm > Sp. ‘yelmo’, which replaced *cassis*; dard > Sp. ‘dardo’.

There are terms which were included later, but were also widespread across large areas of the Empire:

saipo > Lat. *sapone* > Sp. ‘jabón’; *thahsu > Lat. *taxo* > Sp. ‘tejón’; *bastjan (‘interweave’) > Fr. ‘bâtir’, Sp. ‘bastir’; sculca > Sp. ‘esculca’.

It is in some cases difficult to ascertain whether the loans belong to the common lexicon inherited from the Latin language by the Romance language, or whether they entered as a direct loan through some specific language of Germanic origin. For example:

cofea > Sp. ‘cofia’; falda > Sp. ‘falda, halda’; *falw > Lat. *faluus* (name of colour applied to a horse); harpa > Sp. ‘arpa’, Old Sp. ‘farpa’; hosa > Sp. ‘huesa’.

Within this set of words, I would highlight *waithanjan (‘graze, cultivate the land’) > Sp. ‘ganar’, since on a seventh-century incised slate from Diego Álvaro (Ávila) we find the expression *grande gannation[e]* (75). This is the first documentation of the term in a text of the living language, and must unquestionably be

⁴⁸ Kremer (2004), 133–4.

⁴⁹ The examples below are a sample of words of Germanic origin representing the different types of loans and the problems they raise. See, among others, Gamillscheg (1932); Pfister (1978); Mason (1979); Kremer (2004); Sala (2013), 202–12.

connected with the Gothic *ganan ('covet') which we find in the origin of the Spanish 'ganar', 'ganancia' ('earn', 'gain'). The written form with a double *nn* could be justified by a confusion with names derived from the Gothic *waidanjan.⁵⁰

Some terms of Gothic origin which exist in Spanish and Portuguese also appear in Italian and Occitan or French; and it is thus difficult to establish whether they entered Hispania having already been Latinized, or are derived from subsequent loans from the other Romance languages cited:

*bramón > Sp. 'bramar'; *spaiha > Sp. 'espía, espiar'; Old Sp. 'estala', Port. 'estala, estaleiro' ('stall'); wardja > Sp. 'guardia, guardián'; *wardôn > Sp. 'guardar'; *warjan > Sp. 'guarecer' (Old Sp. guarir); *warnjan > 'guarnir, guarnecer'.

On occasion, we do know whether words are loans of the second type, having entered in medieval times or later, from other Romance languages, such as:

Lat. *ambascia, ambasiata* (< *andbahti) ('position, service, delegation') > Prov. 'ambaissada' > It. 'ambasciata' > Sp. 'embajada'; Lat. *ardicus* (< *hardjan), 'arditz' (in medieval Latin-French sources) > Fr. 'hardi' > Prov. 'ardit' > Old Sp. 'ardido, fardido' / Sp. 'ardid'.

There may also be words of similar origins that are interrelated but not identical, the differences between which prove hard to establish in the languages that adopt them. Thus, a word such as 'albergue' ('hostel') from *haribaírgo enters the Romance language from the Occitan 'alberg'; while the equivalent French word 'héberge' is derived from the Frankish *heriberga.

This state of affairs demands, as I have already suggested, an in-depth study of the mechanisms of adaptation of Germanic (and Gothic) loans into the Latin of Visigothic Hispania. We can only have at our disposal the terms that are documented exclusively in that period and those that have survived in the Romance languages spoken in the Iberian Peninsula. These terms can be considered distinctively Iberian as opposed to other loans attested elsewhere.⁵¹ Another procedure is the confirmation of the use of some terms that may have been introduced some time before, but which we know were still in use in Visigothic Hispania, as in the case of known terms of the military or judicial lexicon, such as *saio*, *thiufadus*, *gardingus*. In these specific cases, it is possible that the entry into the Latin language might predate the era analysed here, but their continued currency in Visigothic Hispania is confirmed by their extensive use in the *Liber Iudiciorum* or

⁵⁰ Díaz y Díaz (1981), 112.

⁵¹ Also Kremer (2004), 137. The author recalls words that he considers to be 'Hispano-Gothicisms', such as 'brotar', 'espeto', 'espuela', 'estaca', 'ganso', 'gavilán', 'guardián', 'lastar', 'ropa' (Port. 'roupa'), 'tejuco' (Port. 'texugo'), triscar. The Old Sp. 'lúa' (Port. 'luva') was replaced with 'guante', a Gallicism also of Germanic origin. He also adds certain words of possible Suebian origin.

Lex Visigothorum, even confirming that some of these positions might have been held by Goths or Romans (*LV* 9.2.9):...*quisquis ille est, siue sit dux siue comes atque gardingus, seu sit Gotus siue Romanus, necnon ingenuus quisque uel etiam manumissus, ...*⁵²

Regarding this currency of terms in the Visigothic era, Isidore of Seville again provides information of great interest. Among the linguistic materials examined in the *Etymologies*, he mentions certain words of Gothic (or at least Germanic) origin which are of value, because they are documented for the first time in his work, and because they survive in the Romance languages. In the previous section, lexical innovations in the sphere of animal names, specifically colour names, were mentioned, and *mauro* as a name for a horse of dark colour was cited. The horse names cited by Isidore also include *guaranis*, which can be found in Castilian ‘garañón’ and Portuguese ‘guaranhon’ (*REW* 9573 and 9576). Regarding this term, he indicates that it is a popular designation (*uulgus*), together with *aeranis* for *ceruinus*. Both of these are lexical innovations documented by Isidore (*Etym.* 12.1.53):

ceruinus est quem uulgo guaranem dicunt. Aeranem idem uulgus uocat, quod in modum aerei sit coloris.

The colour *ceruinus* (dark tan) is vulgarly referred to as *guaranis*. The common people also call it *aeranis*, because it is of a bronze-like colour.

The variants of *guaranis* in the manuscripts (*guaranem: guarinen: guarananem: gauranem: gaurianem: uuarranem*) may indicate that the word recently joined the language and, since it is not Latin, it may have presented a degree of difficulty in adaptation. Sofer links this form to *waranio*,⁵³ which also refers to a horse (*equus admissarius*) in the *Lex Salica* 38.2 (*si quis waranione furauerit...*)⁵⁴, and with *warantia* (*CGL* 3.611.10 *erugia id est uarantia*; 3.590.10 *erugio uarantia*; 3.623.28 *erotraclano, id est erba rubiari uuarentia*), related to the French ‘garance’ (‘dye’s madder’; ‘light red colour’) < *wratja ‘dyed red, deep red’.⁵⁵ All of these forms could, in short, explain the name *guaranis* on account of its colour, as Isidore suggests. In turn, *aeranis*, referring to a deer-coloured horse, is, I argue, a new term, likewise not previously documented, but which may indeed be a vulgar designation derived from *aes*.

Another horse is named for its small size, *brunicus*, a term which Isidore also classifies as a vulgarism (*Etym.* 12.1.55):

mannus uero equus breuior [est], quem uulgo brunicum uocant
Mannus, meanwhile, a small horse, vulgarly named *brunicus*.

⁵² Zeumer (1902), 377.

⁵³ Sofer (1930), 21–3. ⁵⁴ Eckhardt (1962), 136.

⁵⁵ See Velázquez (2003b), 414–16.

According to Maltby, the source of this passage is from the scholiast Porphyrio to Horat. *Carm.* 3.27.7: *manni equi dicuntur pusilli, quos uulgo burichos uocant.*⁵⁶ Although this is more than likely, however, the variants of the manuscripts at no time offer a reading which could be assimilated with *bur(r)ichus*: *brunicum*: *bronicum*: *bronnium*: *brunicium*: *brunicum uel brunnum*. Sofer, instead, considers that the term could be a word from the spoken language, based on a root in **brun-*, which finds its parallel in Lithuanian *bėras* ('brown, chestnut') and the base of *brunus*, cited in the glossaries and by Rabanus Maurus as equivalent to the Latin *furuum* 'dark' (Spanish 'bruno' means 'black or dark in colour').⁵⁷ It is true that, following the stated source from Porphyrio, Isidore uses it to refer to a horse of small size, but he may have confused it with the name given to a horse for its colour, reflected in the other terms explained in the same chapter.

Among garment colours, Isidore cites certain terms of Germanic origin, such as *blauum*, along with other terms, but without any comment (*Etym.* 19.28.8) ... *Blatteum. Blauum. Mesticium*. The Germanic *blāw* (<**blêw*; English *blue* and German *blau*), proves highly successful in Romance languages: Old French *blou*, *bleve*; Modern French *bleu*; Catalan *blau*; Provençal *blau*, *blava*; Old Italian *bravo*, etc. (*REW* 1153). It is possible that this form, only documented here,⁵⁸ may have entered Latin, perhaps influenced by *flauus*, since, while the results in English and German seem to be derived directly from *blāw*, some of the Romance results can be better explained through the form we read in Isidore. Spanish has 'blav-o, -a', although this is typically applied to an earthy white or somewhat reddish colour. Although the typical explanation is that the Spanish term comes from Old French *blave*, it may, in my opinion, be derived from the word documented by Isidore.

The term (*h*)*osa* ('gaiters') is documented for the first time by Isidore, who indicates that he thinks that the material used to make them has changed. (*h*)*osa* is a Germanic loan (*Etym.* 19.34.9):

osas puto ab 'os' primum factas, et quamuis nunc ex alio genere, nomen tamen pristinum retinent.

I believe that *osas* were initially made of bone, and although they now use a different material, they still retain their original name.

This loanword is also found in Paul the Deacon *Hist. Langob.* 4.23⁵⁹ ... *postea coeperunt hosis uti super equitantes tubrucos mittebant*, where we also find

⁵⁶ Maltby (1999), 446–77.

⁵⁷ Sofer (1930), 68–9.

⁵⁸ And in *CGL* 2.570.12 (cf. *TLL* ii. 2052).

⁵⁹ Bartolini (1999), 164–5.

tubrucus, another Germanic term likewise documented by Isidore for the first time (*Etym.* 19.22.30):

tubrucos uocatos quod tibias bracasque tegant. Tubraci, quod a braciis ad tibias usque perueniant.

They are called *tubruci* because they cover the tibia and breeches. *Tubraci*, because they extend from the arm to the tibia.

Hosa is preserved in French *heuse*, *hoysseau* and in Old Castilian *uesa* ('boot'). It must be an early loan, since the Romance form has evolved with the diphthongization of *ō > ue*. *Tubrucus* and *tubracus* would seem to be two variants of the same term which entered Latin from the Germanic **theoch-broch*, the second element of which likewise gives us *braca*, another late loan into the language, which Isidore also mentions in the passage.

Another term of Germanic origin which appears for the first time in the work of Isidore is *reptus* (*Etym.* 19.23.4):

renones sunt uelamina humerorum et pectoris usque umbilicum, atque intortis uillis adeo hispida ut imbrem respuant. Quos uulgo reptos uocant, eo quod longitudo uillorum quasi reptat. De quibus Sallustius: 'Germani intectum renonibus corpus tegunt'. Dicti autem renones a Reno Germaniae flumine, ubi his frequenter utuntur.

The *renones* are shawls over the shoulders and chest as far as the belly button, made from rough hair so interlaced as to repel the rain. They are commonly known as *repti*, because the length of the hairs makes them look as if they crawl. Sallustius says of them: 'the Germans cover their naked body with *renones*'. But they are called *renones* because of the Rhine, a river of Germania, where they are typically used.

The term is connected with the Old Norse *ript* ('fragment', 'piece of cloth'), Old High German *reft*, *b(p)einrefta* ('trousers'), Old Slavonic *ript*, and various other forms. It is documented by Isidore for the first time, and appears in some medieval glossaries. But it is above all documented in a small, fragmentary slate (49) derived from Diego Álvaro (Ávila), datable to the seventh century, which contains a list (*notitia*) of clothes. The presence of this term in Isidore and in the slate confirms the currency of this word in the Visigothic era, as with the term *camisia*, likewise studied by Isidore, which also appears later in the same list.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Isid. *Etym.* 19.22.29: *Camisias uocari quod in his dormimus in camis, id est in stratis nostris* ('They are called *camisas* because we sleep in them in *camas*, in other words what we call beds'). *Etym.* 20.11.2: *Cama est breuis et circa terram; Graeci enim χαμαί breue dicunt* ('The bed is small and close to the ground; in fact the Greeks say *χαμαί* for what is small'). The word appears only in Spanish, Catalan, and Portuguese. It may be of Celtiberian origin, per Sofer (1930), 121–2; Adams (2007), 427, although

inauris [...]dus oli[- - -]
 ✕ *notitia de ripti[s? - - -]*
unum benula una [- - -]
quinq(ue) toniquas [- - -]
 [- - -]ta p(er) tuos facisteri[a? - - -]
camisias qua p(er) tuo [- - -]
et unum sabanu[m - - -]
 [- - -]ra una pedol[em - - -]

Earrings [- - -]dus oli[- - -]; ✕ List of *renones* [- - -] one, one overcoat [- - -], five tunics, [- - -]ta for your towels [- - -] shirts which by you [- - -] and a sheet, [- - -]ra one, [PN] gaiter(s) [- - -].

3.6. Final Considerations: The Latinization of the Onomastic Lexicon

It is hard to determine within the common lexicon which terms might be Germanic or Gothic loanwords, and which may have penetrated in eras prior to the settlement of the Goths in Hispania, and to what extent their productivity and survival in the sixth and seventh centuries could be the reflection of the survival of the Gothic language. This situation is further complicated if we consider the main lexical flow of Germanic/Gothic origin, in other words anthroponyms and toponyms, both contained in Latin texts of the Visigothic era, and inherited through the Romance languages of the Iberian Peninsula. The Gothic names documented in texts from the sixth and seventh centuries do not in principle allow us to ascertain whether they correspond to individuals of Gothic origin,⁶¹ or whether, as would seem to be the case, Gothic names were already being adopted by Hispano-Romans and vice versa.⁶² Except in some cases, where it may be known or suspected that the names correspond to the origin of the individuals, as with the names of kings,⁶³ some bishops, nobles, and perhaps judges,⁶⁴

the Greek origin suggested by Isidore may have some justification. Regarding this word and its possible explanation, see Velázquez (2003b), 362–3.

⁶¹ We do not broach here the complex issue of the ethnogenesis of the Germanic people and components of various origins which make up the group of what we call ‘Visigoths’. Furthermore, with regard to names of Suebian or Vandal origin, there are scarcely any records, aside from the posited, but not universally accepted, origin of the name of the Vandal people to explain the name of ‘Andalusia’.

⁶² Kremer (1982), 215–18; (2004). The fundamental texts for the study of onomastics are García Moreno (1974); Piel and Kremer (1976); Kampers (1979).

⁶³ It should nonetheless be recalled that King Theudis (531–48) was of Ostrogothic origin.

⁶⁴ In the legal documents contained on some slates, we find names of judges and deputies that are of Gothic origin. It is possible that, in these specific cases, the names could correspond to Goths holding these positions, but in my opinion the slates already reflect an intermingling of the population, given the combination of Hispano-Roman and Gothic names among the peasants. See Velázquez (2022b).

one cannot in general infer that behind a Gothic name there lies a person of Gothic origin, and that behind a name of Graeco-Latin origin, one of Hispano-Roman origin. It would seem that the intermingling of the population had already occurred, above all after the Third Council of Toledo (589). As a result, irrespective of the fact that the Gothic personal names documented in the texts from the sixth and seventh centuries may also have entered the Latin language earlier, what they denote is their typical currency and usage by the population, irrespective of the origin of the individuals bearing these names.

From a linguistic perspective, it is of interest to study how the Latin language adapts these names, as loans taken from another language, and the extent to which this form of adaptation could reflect aspects of the pronunciation of the living language, the way that the names were heard, how non-Latin phonemes such as a *w*, *h*-, and *þ*, were adapted, and the type of productive suffix used to Latinize such names. It is also important to observe the inherent composition of the names: whether they were bi-thematic or mono-thematic,⁶⁵ and how the former are composed and the latter adapted; whether hypocoristics have been formed; which are the most commonly documented female and male names, and whether they refer to particular sectors of the population. All of these would constitute suitable subjects for in-depth study.

Once again, the slates offer a rich repertoire of personal names, combining names of Gothic origin with Graeco-Latin or Latinized names. As I indicated earlier,⁶⁶ we find names of Gothic origin, aside from the names of the kings in the dating of documents, for example judges and deputies, which could perhaps refer to people of such origin, as in slate 39 (*Eunandus*, *Argeredus*, *Argiindus*, *Vuidericus*, *Gundacius*) and in 92 (*Argeredus Amaranus Gisadus*, *Ranulfus*). However, we find a constant mixture in the numerous lists of names which appear among the peasants, even with examples of female names, albeit less commonly. It is in fact worth again mentioning the second side of slate 40,⁶⁷ and its *profesio de ser[uitute]* in which, in ‘almost spoken’ Latin, *Vnigildus* declares that he goes to the house of *Froila* and to the house of *Desiderius* and of other individuals, whose names, *Busani* and *Fasteni*, are of doubtful origin.⁶⁸ This *Desiderius* is undoubtedly the same figure to whom on the first side of the piece his uncle *Gregorios* sells a piece of land. The witnesses signing the document are *Gandaarius*, *Vararicus*, and *Marius*.

One important avenue of inquiry is the form of adaptation of names of Gothic origin in these documents, which would, alongside many other examples, allow us to study this process of incorporation of the anthroponymic lexicon into the

⁶⁵ Kremer (2004), 141–3. I refer again to the outstanding study by Piel and Kremer (1976).

⁶⁶ See n. 64. ⁶⁷ Studied by Adams (2016), 564–71.

⁶⁸ Both in the genitive. *Busani* is perhaps related to a Gothic mono-thematic name *bos-*, and *Fasteni* perhaps to a cognomen *Fastini*; see Velázquez (2004), 230–1; (2022b).

Latin language, thereby also allowing us to analyse the linguistic mechanisms which operate at this stage of the language.⁶⁹ The same may be said of the toponyms. As Kremer points out,⁷⁰ we know of only three new foundations of places in the Visigothic era, *Reccopolis*, *Victoriacum*, and *Ologicus*, but these are names established ‘according to the classic Graeco-Roman model of formation’, and, in the case of Recopolis, created from the name of the Gothic King *Reccaredus*, although the formation of the toponym is not Germanic. Meanwhile, in the Romance language, and above all in the northwestern part of the Iberian Peninsula, numerous toponyms derived from anthroponyms are preserved, and many others referring to the ‘Goths’ themselves as a people. Here, perhaps more than in other areas, linguists need to ally themselves with archaeologists and historians in an attempt to ascertain the extent and timing of the generation of so many toponyms referring to Gothic origin, whether derived from anthroponyms or from other lexemes. In this regard, Kremer lists an extensive array of Romance names,⁷¹ many of them from the northwest of the peninsula, the origins of which require further study.⁷²

Of course, the study of the lexicon and the mechanisms of formation and transformation of new words, together the adaptation of linguistic loans, represents one channel for the study of Latin in the Visigothic era, and for the inevitable dialogue between Latinists and Romance philologists. Beyond this, however, in my opinion we need to turn to the texts themselves, literary, documentary, epigraphic, all without exception, including the countless problems of handwritten textual transmission, in an attempt to address the developmental stage of the language in a comprehensive and complete manner. We must not confine ourselves to cataloguing ‘errors’ or ‘vulgarisms’ and deviations from the norm. In my view, we need to seek out all data which (with the limitations that we are in all cases dealing with written records) would give us an insight into the language spoken, understood, and read by those who knew how to read and who studied at school—in short, by all the inhabitants of Hispania of the sixth and seventh centuries.

The linguistic materials selected and analysed in this paper give us an insight into the knowledge of spoken language in the Iberian Peninsula during the sixth and seventh centuries. Any analyses we may conduct will in all cases be indirect, but we can draw various conclusions as to the nature of the spoken Latin language and how it differed from the written, cultural language, which may be seen through literary works. In my opinion, as I have already suggested, the spoken language was still the Latin language, which had nevertheless developed into

⁶⁹ Regarding this, one may specifically consult the indexes of Velázquez (2004), 597–8, with the reference to the study of each of the names.

⁷⁰ Kremer (2004), 144.

⁷¹ Kremer (2004), 144–6.

⁷² One should also recall the names studied by Gamillscheg (1932, 1967).

diverse regional and social varieties, while still maintaining vertical communication among the different speakers of the language. These linguistic materials therefore grant us an insight into society itself. Language and the study of written sources always provides a means of analysis for a society and for an understanding of that society. In this case, we have seen a number of special texts, namely the Visigothic slates, which bring us into contact with a rural society with an agricultural and livestock farming economy, recording in *notitiae* their goods, payments in kind, or recording legal acts of sale and purchase, or statements in court. These texts are undoubtedly the pre-eminent written expressions closest to popular speech, although we cannot overlook the great cultural and literary landscape presented by written sources such as the works of writers including Isidore, Braulio, Eugenius of Toledo, Martin of Braga, and also poetic texts, both literary works such as *carmina latina epigraphica*, hymns, epistles, religious sources such as the councils, and such legislative texts as the *Lex Visigothorum*. In short, an extensive set of works on which progress is gradually being made in terms of the reliable edition of the texts and the study of their language. Such studies could make a substantial contribution to our understanding of the language and study of the evolution of the Latin language and its comparison with other languages, in order to explore in greater depth the vitality of linguistic loans from Gothic or other languages. Lastly, but no less importantly, the study of literary works, together with all other written expressions of this era, must serve for the study of society and of history, through the content that each offers, which unquestionably reflects the nature of this society and the course of its history.

4

Conservatism in Language

Framing Latin in Late Antique and Early Medieval Iberia

Graham Barrett

4.1. Introduction: Latin in the Land of Babel

Where else but in Iberia could the Jewish physician Ibn Baklarish have written his polyglot *Book of Simple Remedies*?¹ Prepared for the Huddid emir of Zaragoza in 1106, it is an alphabetical listing in Arabic of 704 medicinal substances complete with their synonyms in Persian, Syriac, Greek (distinguishing Classical from Byzantine forms), and ‘non-Arabic’: Berber, Romance, and Latin.² Multilingualism has long been wrapped up in the ‘historical enigma’ of Spain in particular, one answer to the question of its origins and development.³ In western Europe, the Peninsula is remarkable as a sustained interface zone of distinct languages, from before the start of the Roman conquest in the Second Punic War (218–201 BCE) to the *Siglo de Oro* or ‘Golden Century’ spanning the expulsion of the Jews in 1492 and the Moriscos in 1609. For much of this time, Latin was the dominant written register: with Romanization, the epigraphic evidence for the Palaeohispanic languages (Iberian, Celtiberian, Lusitanian, and Tartessian) scarcely outlives the age of Augustus (27 BCE–14 CE), though in spoken form they persisted for centuries, and Basque, of course, still flourishes today.⁴ Colonization in remoter antiquity had introduced Phoenicio-Punic, which can be documented almost as late as the Augustan period, and Greek, in continuous if declining use down to the early Middle Ages, while immigration in late antiquity brought in Germanic, the linguistic consequences of which remain keenly contested (see Chapter 3).⁵ But only conquest in 711 overlaid a new dominant language, Arabic, onto Latin

¹ When citing primary sources, I use section or document numbers in preference to pages where possible; for classical texts, unless otherwise indicated, I use the *Loeb Classical Library*. All translations are my own, and I have punctuated the Latin to reflect my interpretation.

² Burnett (2008).

³ Menocal (2004); Labanyi (2010), 10–41; e.g. Nickson (2015); Beale-Rivaya (2016); Hamilton and Silleras-Fernández (2022).

⁴ Díaz Ariño, Estarán, and Simón (2019); Herrera Rando (2020); Luján Martínez (2020); Moncunill Martí and Velaza Frías (2020); Beltrán Lloris and Jordán Cólera (2020); Wodtko (2020); Gorrochategui Churruca (2020); see now Mullen and Willi (2024).

⁵ Rodríguez Adrados (2005), 61–3, 207–68; Dworkin (2012), 65–80; Zamora (2019).

in al-Andalus, the Muslim-ruled south; this served to open up greater space too for Hebrew, the language of the Jews, who surprisingly are demonstrable in Iberia only from the third century.⁶ As the progress of ‘reconquest’ by the Christian kingdoms and counties of the north played out in the central Middle Ages, however, Latin was re-centred once more. The social and cultural tensions among these languages, alongside the nascent Romance vernaculars and academic Greek, bore creative fruit in the ‘Toledo School’ of translators in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and ultimately in the first polyglot Bible, produced at Alcalá de Henares in 1514–22.⁷ All this is familiar ground, yet the undoubted dynamism of the long-term context can disguise a basic conservatism in the Latin of the late antique and early medieval Peninsula.

4.1.1 Periods and Problems

Every student of the Latin language in Iberia during the six centuries from 400 to 1000 must recognize two challenges, namely the distribution and transmission of the surviving written evidence.⁸ Chronologically, the coverage is decidedly uneven: few sources from the fifth and eighth centuries, a few more from the sixth and ninth, a decent number (relatively speaking) from the seventh and tenth.⁹ In these best-recorded periods, furthermore, the evidence is itself uneven, typologically and geographically. From the Visigothic kingdom in its century of full maturity (the seventh), the sources are mainly normative (secular and canon law, monastic rules) or literary (epistolography, hagiography, theology, *liturgica*, manuals, chronicles, poetry), and confined to the royal capital of Toledo and the prime episcopal sees and intellectual centres of Seville and Zaragoza.¹⁰ To add to a respectable core of epigraphy, however, there are now the *pizarras* (‘slates’), at least 163 fragmentary texts plus many more numerical and pictorial inscriptions, shining new light onto literacy and learning in rural settlements on the northern Meseta between Ávila and Salamanca.¹¹ From the kingdom of Asturias-León in its century of consolidation (the tenth), the sources are mainly documentary, a corpus of some 3,000 charters mostly from the great monasteries of Galicia and Portugal in the west, Asturias, Cantabria, and León in the centre, and Aragón, Castilla, La Rioja, and Navarra in the east, plus twice that total from ecclesiastical

⁶ López-Morillas (2000); Rutgers and Bradbury (2006), 508–18; Toch (2013), 311–27; Gerber (2021).

⁷ d’Alverny (1982), esp. 444–57; Rummel (1999), 53–65; Burnett (2001), 249–73; (2022); Angold and Burnett (2022).

⁸ See Cano (2004), 83–324, for a point of departure.

⁹ Díaz y Díaz (1959), 1–695; Martín, Cardelle de Hartmann, and Elfassi (2010), 122–58 and 251–65; Colombi, Mordeglija, and Romano (2015).

¹⁰ Codoñer (2010), 93–226; cf. Handley (2005).

¹¹ Vives (1969); Handley (2003), 200–3; Velázquez (2004).

and secular collections across the Catalan counties.¹² This top-level picture nonetheless conceals a significant number of lay archives which over time have been absorbed into the holdings of cathedrals, monasteries, and churches.¹³ The major exception to the pattern of distribution is Córdoba in the mid-ninth century, where a martyr movement of voluntary public opposition to Christian integration with Islam brought a literary outpouring of Latin polemic.¹⁴ But it remains precisely the transitional centuries of the fifth to sixth and the eighth to ninth for which we have the least evidence, none at all even for some decades, however hard the few histories covering these periods are worked for what they can and cannot reveal.¹⁵ We look back from the post-Roman and post-Visigothic worlds which those transitions created and try to reconstruct the processes involved.

Even such sources as we have are often preserved in copies from later stages of transmission, meaning that we are not looking at texts as they were written between 400 and 1000 but encountering them as represented in subsequent centuries. According to the most recent inventory, there are 231 manuscripts transcribed in one or more of the Visigothic system of scripts native to the Peninsula dating to before the turn of the first millennium, but this figure includes component parts of originally singular codices and codicological fragments as brief as a folio, while up to half contain non-Iberian material (mainly the Bible and Patristics).¹⁶ In other words, direct and unmediated access to the Latin of the period is rare, and any linguistic analysis must reckon the complications of our materials. Visigothic law was conscious of the potential for change over time: Reccesuinth (649/53–72), when ordaining that no one should dare to offer a code other than his at court, further required that it be a copy *secundum seriem huius amodo translatum* ('in future transcribed adhering to the sequence of this [book]').¹⁷ In fact, all surviving manuscripts of the law are post-Visigothic in date, and reveal the tendency of scribes to modify and even select the contents to reflect regional traditions of use; the text which we have is as much the product of this dynamic early medieval transmission as of late antique legislation and codification.¹⁸ The output of Eulogius who was chief apologist of the martyr movement in Córdoba, is an extreme but cautionary case: it survives in an edition of 1574, based on a manuscript, since lost, from the cathedral library of Oviedo possibly dating back to the mid-ninth century and the lifetime of the author, but both of its editors confess to 'emending' and 'clarifying' (*emendandi / emendandis, illustrandi / illustrandis*) the difficult text, in the process hypercorrecting it to the

¹² Carvajal Castro et al. (2022), 3–7. ¹³ Kosto (2005), 60–3; (2013).

¹⁴ Christys (2002), 52–79; Codoñer (2010), 269–95; *SMuz* i. 377–704, ii. 705–917.

¹⁵ Collins (1989), 23–36; Arce (2003); Collins (2004), 26–50; (2012), 14–22 and 50–9; *CHisp* 11–241.

¹⁶ Castro Correa (2014, 2020); cf. Millares Carlo (1999).

¹⁷ *LV* 2.1.11; Díaz y Díaz (1976), 209–16; Álvarez Cora (1995), 5–10.

¹⁸ García López (1996), 39–205; Barrett (2020–1).

standards of Renaissance Latin, censoring some passages, and even introducing (*suppleuimus*) words where corruption seemed indicated.¹⁹ To an extent inscriptions and charters can provide a control, but even the rich documentation of the tenth-century Christian kingdoms and counties is preserved on the original parchment in only a minority of cases, one-fifth for Asturias-León and Navarra, two-fifths for Catalunya.²⁰ The majority is transmitted by high medieval cartulary copies, and where there are originals for comparison, as in the monastic archive of Sahagún or the cathedral of León, we observe that copyists intervened as they saw fit to improve language, standardize diplomatic formulae, update property boundaries, and more.²¹ Respecting these major caveats, we can nonetheless sketch some general features of Latin in its linguistic context during the periods 400–700 and 700–1000 as a starting point. We shall then consider the factors sustaining the conservatism of that Latin by exploring the cyclical relationship between text and speech.²²

4.2. Visigothic Latinity: Languages and Registers

Beneath the homogenizing level of hyperliteracy in Cicero, Virgil, and the rest of the canon which signalled membership of the imperial elite, there were always regional varieties of Latin, but they became more visible as that education began to lose its social and cultural function in the post-Roman period.²³ Latin as spoken by Iberians had long been identifiably different, though such descriptive statements as we have are mainly in the line of subjective centre-periphery judgments of provincialism.²⁴ The indigenous languages of the Peninsula affronted Roman ears, but the Latin of Córdoba poets too struck Cicero as *pingue quiddam sonantes atque peregrinum* ('sounding something gross and strange').²⁵ However much the epigrammatist Martial (d. c. 104) might dream of becoming to his native Bilbilis (northeast of Calatayud; see Fig. 4.1) what Catullus was to Verona, he also fretted that *non Hispaniensem librum mittamus sed Hispanum* ('we should inflict [on Rome] a book not only from Hispania but Spanish').²⁶ Every *rusticus* making it in the metropolis must have feared being judged *sua lingua disertus* ('articulate—in his own language'), as Valerius Messalla deflated the orator Porcius Latro, even if Seneca the Elder (d. 39), himself from Córdoba, was more inclined to forgive his characteristically Spanish *fortem et agrestem*

¹⁹ Wolf (2019), 113–19; *SMuz* ii. 728–31. ²⁰ Feliu (2020), 90–1; Barrett (2023a), 20–52.

²¹ Pérez González (1989); Fernández Flórez and Herrero de la Fuente (1995); Fernández Flórez (2004); Fernández Catón (2006); Pérez González (2017).

²² See Díaz y Díaz (1960b), 196–7. ²³ Adams (2007); Heather (1994); Everett (2009).

²⁴ Adams (2007), 231–40.

²⁵ Mela 3.15 (cf. Mart. 4.55.8–29, 12.18.7–12); Cic. *Arch.* 10.26 (cf. Sen. *Suas.* 6.27); see Adams (2007), 123–47.

²⁶ Mart. 1.61, 10.103, 12.*ep.*30–1; Adams (2007), 189–91.

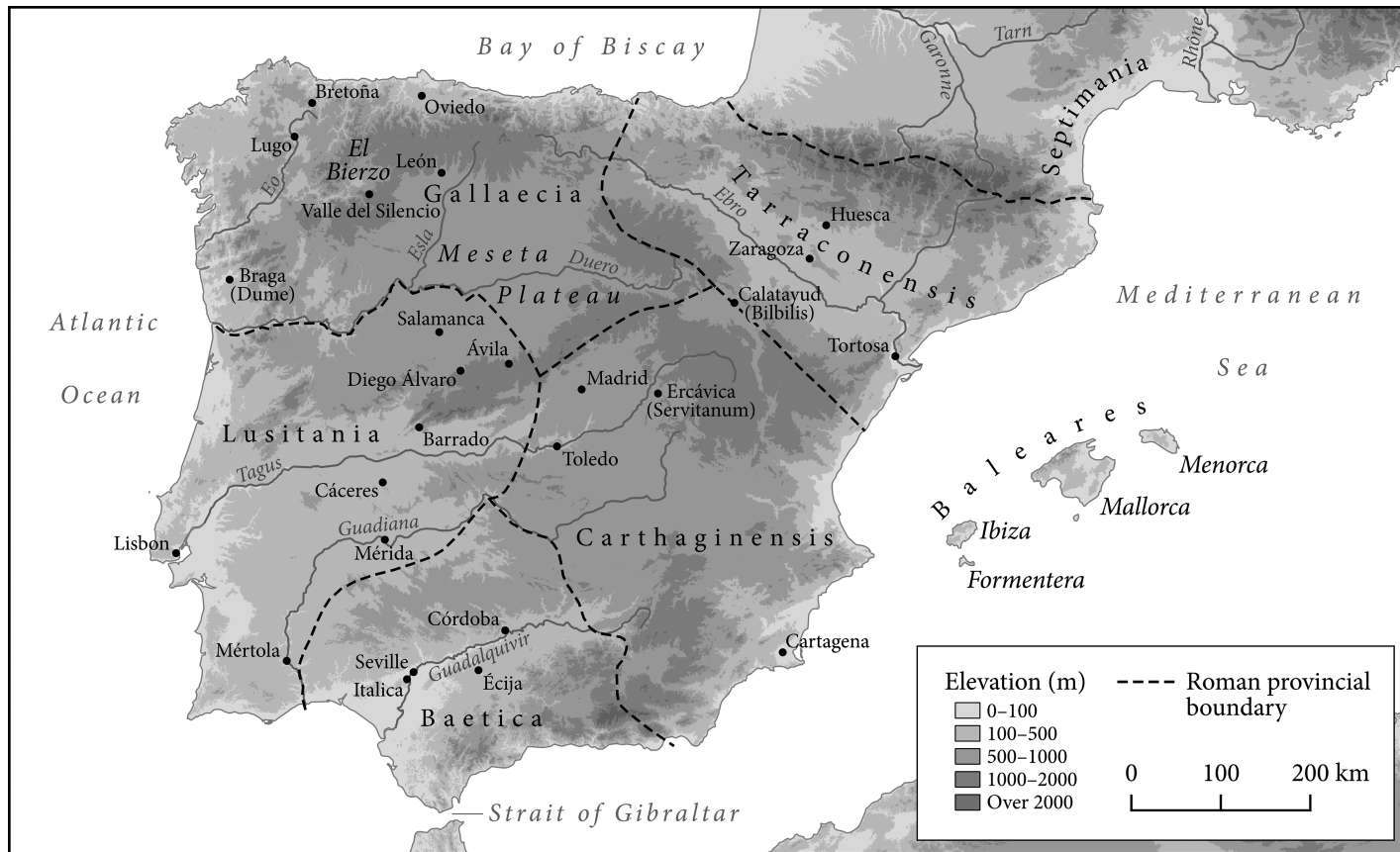


Fig. 4.1 Map of places named in late antique Iberia (c. 400–700)

(‘forceful and rustic’) voice.²⁷ The emperor Hadrian (117–38), his family probably from Italica (north of Seville), was reportedly ridiculed for speaking *agrestius* (‘in a rustic style’) when delivering an oration to the Senate, and devoted himself to Latin studies until he had attained *summam peritiam et facundiam* (‘the utmost expertise and eloquence’), yet even the second-century rhetorician Antonius Julianus could still be assailed, and by Greeks at that, as *barbarum et agrestem* (‘uncivilized and rustic’) for expressing himself *Hispano ore* (‘in Spanish speech’).²⁸ This provincial accent, however, is far less recognizable in the written record. Venerable scholars have claimed that Iberian Latin was peculiarly conservative as a reflection of the early Roman occupation of the Peninsula, to the extent of preserving archaic Oscan elements introduced by the immigration of soldiers from southern Italy in the second century BCE (whence, allegedly, the toponym Huesca). The theory has been substantiated by and supposed to explain the distinctive features of Ibero-Romance, our umbrella term for the earliest post-Roman descendants of Latin, but there is minimal evidence from before the age of Isidore of Seville (d. 636) for such regionalism beneath the level of a broad ‘lexical area’ encompassing some or all of Hispania and Gaul.²⁹ Emblematic is the confusion of *b* and *v*, one of the ‘Spanish symptoms’ of orthography which palaeographers have used to localize manuscripts.³⁰ Broadly speaking, it is attested across the Western Empire from as early as the first century CE, and probably under the influence of a common pronunciation change had comparable outcomes in all Romance languages; it is particular to Iberia solely when in the initial position (the first letter of a word), and not until the post-Roman period.³¹

4.2.1 Marginal Multilingualism

Latin during the Visigothic era operated in a multilingual environment with another three or four identifiable languages, but the distribution of the evidence indicates that this varied widely according to geographical and social context. Much obscurity and uncertainty, including about the language(s) which they used, attend the conquest and settlement of the Peninsula from 409 onwards by assorted Germanic peoples: Sueves (Suebi) and Hasding Vandals in the north-west, Alans and Siling Vandals in the south, followed within a decade by Visigoths in the northeast and centre. The Alans and Vandals set sail for North Africa in 429, passing from our consideration (notwithstanding a fanciful Renaissance

²⁷ Sen. *Con.* 2.4.8, 1.pr.16; Citroni (2002); Notter (2011); Julhe (2019), 79–83; Blake (2022).

²⁸ HA *Hadr.* 3.1; Gel. 19.9 (2, 7); Fündling (2006), i. 326–9; Fear (1995); Adams (2003a), 16–17.

²⁹ See Wright (2002), 25–30; Adams (2007), 370–431 and 705–10, with full references; Estarán (2019).

³⁰ Castro Correa (2020–1), 77–9; e.g. Jones (1927).

³¹ Adams (2007), esp. 626–8 and 655–7; (2013), 183–90.

derivation of ‘Catalan’ from ‘Goth-Alan’ said three times fast), while the Sueves were finally conquered by the Visigoths in 585.³² For most of its history the Suevic kingdom is poorly documented, but there are two points of linguistic interest. At an unknown date in the fifth or sixth century, some Romano-Britons settled in ‘Britonia’ on the northern coast of Galicia, traditionally (that is, absent any empirical foundation) said to be refugees from the Anglo-Saxons: by 569 there is record of a *sedem Britonorum* (‘see of the Britons’), whose bishop with the British Celtic name Mahiloc signed the Second Council of Braga (572), and a range of such lexical remnants, including Bretoña (north of Lugo), are recognizable in the region.³³ When the Sueves converted from Arian to Nicene Christianity in the 550s or 560s, the process was aided if not instigated by the missionary work of another immigrant, the Pannonian bishop Martin of Braga (c. 550–80), and his writings opened an important channel of influence from Greek into Latin.³⁴ Introducing his *Capitula*, an adaptation of select canons of the Eastern Church, he opined of prior efforts at translation, as Jerome had before him, that *difficile est ut simplicius aliquid ex alia lingua transferatur in alteram* (‘it is challenging to translate something straightforwardly from one language into another’), not to mention the potential for scribal confusions or omissions; he went on to state that he had corrected, clarified, and organized *quod translatores a Graeco in Latinum obscurius dixerunt uel scribtorum ignauia deprauauerat aut inmutauerat* (‘what translators from Greek into Latin have expressed with ambiguity or the negligence of copyists had changed or corrupted’).³⁵ Martin was also in at least one case a teacher of Greek, and his partial translation from the *Apophthegmata Patrum* (‘Sayings of the Desert Fathers’) was a project shared with his protégé Paschasius of Dume, who reassured his master that *sicut in dato mihi codice reperi ea scripta sic transtuli* (‘I have translated them exactly as I found them written in the manuscript given to me’).³⁶ With the kings of the Sueves, however, Martin communicated in Latin, and there is no sign that their conversion involved the Suevic language, which in any case is unrecorded.³⁷

Gothic is attested comparatively well, but not in Iberia. In the mid-fourth century, the missionary Ulfilas (d. 383) devised a Gothic alphabet based on Greek and used it to translate the Bible, drawing also from Old Latin translations and on

³² Ripoll López (1998); Collins (2004), 11–63, 174–86, and 197–212; cf. Jacopo Bracelli, *De bello Hispaniensi*, in Alizeri (1856), i. 50–3.

³³ *Parochiale Sueuum*, in Geyer et al. (1965), 13.1; II Braga, in Vives, Marín Martínez, and Martínez Díez (1963), 85; García y García (1986); Young (2003); Fernández Maceiras (2018).

³⁴ Branco (1999); Ubric (2015); Mülke (2020a).

³⁵ Martin of Braga, *Capitula*, in CVHR, *pr.*, 86; Jerome, *Chronicon*, in Helm (1956), *pr.*, 1–7; cf. Barlow (1950), 123–4; Gaudemet (1988).

³⁶ Paschasius of Dume, *Apophthegmata Patrum*, in Freire (1971), i. *pr.*, 165–6; Barlow (1950), 14–17; cf. Wortley (2019), 37–65.

³⁷ Martin of Braga, *Formula uitae honestae*, in Barlow (1950), *pr.*, 236; Ferreiro (1981, 1987–8); Mülke (2020b); see Koller and Laitenberger (1998).

a range of Latin loanwords already current: supposedly he omitted the Books of Kings lest they rouse the warrior spirit of the Goths further. The work is preserved only in part (passages from Nehemiah, the Gospels, and Epistles) in seven fragmentary manuscripts produced in early-sixth-century northern Italy; other survivals of the language include the final folio of a Gothic martyrology from the late-fourth- or early-fifth-century East, and deeds of sale drafted at Faenza and Ravenna in 538 and 551 with Gothic subscriptions.³⁸ Thus, we have an Arian missionary preparing a Gothic translation of the Bible for Arian converts, one further disseminated under Arian patronage in the Ostrogothic kingdom, and yet by the time the Visigoths under Reccared (586–601) officially converted to Nicene Christianity at the Third Council of Toledo in 589, the process played out entirely in Latin. There are no grounds for thinking of the *dogmatibus, regulis, officiis, communione, codicibus* ('doctrine, rules, hierarchy, communion, and books') of the Arian faith which the signatories condemned that they were written in Gothic, nor the *libellum detestabilem* ('hateful booklet') which they anathematized for recording the conversion of certain 'Romans' to the Arian heresy in the twelfth year of Leovigild (568–86), particularly given that this same Arian ruler granted diplomas in Latin.³⁹ When the presiding bishop Leander of Seville (d. c. 600) delivered his homily to close the council, recalling how *superbia linguarum diuersitate ab unione gentes separauerat* ('pride had divorced the nations from oneness with a multiplicity of tongues'), he was therefore not describing a former rift of incomprehension between Gothic and Latin, but conjuring the Tower of Babel as the image of sinful heresy and schism.⁴⁰ The imperative for one Catholic language was keenly felt, and his brother and successor in office Isidore of Seville returned to this theme in his own exegesis, likening heretics to post-Babel polyglots, confused and divided among themselves *diuersitate erroris quasi per dissonantiam linguae* ('by a multiplicity of wrongness, as if through a difference of tongue').⁴¹ Thereafter, the most abundant and least controversial witness to Gothic comes from onomastics, chiefly the names of higher-status individuals including kings, queens, and nobility, secular and ecclesiastical officials, and judges, though how many of these correspond to real live 'Goths' is ultimately unknowable.⁴² Outside the etymological dictionary of Isidore and words reverse-engineered from the Iberian Romance languages, some terms of Gothic derivation can be documented in use, such as the *gannation[e]* ('profit, proceeds, gain') noted in one account

³⁸ Heather and Matthews (1991), 117–85; Thompson (2008); Corazza (2017).

³⁹ III Toledo, in Martínez Díez and Rodríguez (1992), 76–7 and 82–3; Tomás-Faci and Martín-Iglesias (2017), 2; Koch (2012), 130–216; (2014).

⁴⁰ Leander of Seville, *Homilia in laude Ecclesiae*, in Martínez Díez and Rodríguez (1992), 148–59 (154); Genesis 11:1–9; cf. Ferreiro (1991); Gómez Cobo (2009), 290–5; (2011); Ferreiro (2016–7).

⁴¹ Isidore of Seville, *Expositio in Vetus Testamentum: Genesis*, in Gorman and Dulaey (2009), 9.3; Dencker (2017), 137–8 (cf. 114–16); Minets (2022a), 245–6.

⁴² García Moreno (1974); Piel and Kremer (1976); Kampers (1979); Reichert (1987–90); cf. Claude (1978); Amory (1997), 86–108 and 348–486; Koch (2012), 183–9.

kept on slate at Diego Álvaro (west of Ávila), yet this record is atypical in mentioning *Toledo*, the royal city, a unique departure from the rural world of crops and flocks which the *pizarras* normally inhabit.⁴³ At the same time, while the legal code of the Visigothic kingdom was composed in Latin, a law of Reccesuinth raises the possibility of alternatives when abrogating *alienis institutionibus* ('the precepts of other [peoples]'), just as a second revised by Erwig (680–7) rules out admission of any such lawbook at court, except in *preteritarum* ('prior') cases.⁴⁴ Germanic language in the code is nonetheless confined to the military and officialdom—*wardia*, *leudes*, *thiufadus*, *gardingus*, and *saio* ('formation, vassals, captain, palace guard, and bailiff')—reflecting two centuries of Visigothic acculturation by the time Leovigild had consolidated his rule, and of increasing intermingling and intermarriage with the indigenous population.⁴⁵

Greek has a similarly marginal foothold in the late antique Peninsula, though there is more substantial evidence for its use. It is attested in inscriptions mainly from the southwest and southeast: epitaphs from Mértola and Mérida on the River Guadiana, entrepôts of eastern Mediterranean commerce, and epitaphs and seals from coastal Cartagena, base of operations for the outpost of Byzantine rule lasting from the Justinianic reconquest of 551/2 until the Visigothic 're-reconquest' of 624.⁴⁶ Further testimony to this presence comes in the seventh-century *Vitas patrum sanctorum Emeretensium* ('Lives of the Holy Fathers of Mérida'), which narrates the careers of Paul and Fidel, a colourful dynasty of Greek bishops of the mid-sixth century, and their more or less believable social, economic, and cultural links with the East.⁴⁷ There is also a small but important body of inscribed ceramics and lead seals from the Balearic Islands, extending in date beyond the end of Visigothic rule, witness to the enduring viability of the maritime connections which had brought relics of St Stephen Protomartyr from the Holy Land to Menorca in 416 and set in motion the miraculous 'conversion' of the Jewish community on the island.⁴⁸ The 'official' language of the Byzantine province, however, does not seem to have been Greek, in that Comenciolus (for Comentiolus), *magister militum Spaniae*, commemorated improvements to a city gate of Cartagena in 589/90 with a partially metrical Latin inscription, just as the involved diplomacy between the patrician Caesarius and the Visigothic king Sisebut (612–21) was negotiated by an elaborate Latin

⁴³ *P.Vis.* 75; Velázquez (2003a), 181–6; Hilty (2005). ⁴⁴ *LV* 2.1.10–11; King (1972), 101.

⁴⁵ *LV* 2.1.16, 2.1.18, 2.1.24, 2.1.26–7, 2.2.4, 2.2.10, 4.5.5–6, 5.3.2, 6.1.5, 9.2.1, 9.2.3–5, 9.2.8–9, 10.2.6; Claude (1998); Liebeschuetz (1998); Sivan (1998); Wormald (1999, 2003); Banniard (2020b).

⁴⁶ *ICERV* 418–27 and 523–4; *IGEP* 293–305, 374–86, and 400–24; Vallejo Girvés (2012); Fernandes and Valério (2013).

⁴⁷ *Vitas sanctorum patrum Emeretensium*, in Maya Sánchez (1992), 4, at 25–46; Collins (2021a); Barrett (2023b), 284–8.

⁴⁸ *IGEP* 481–6 and 494–9; Bradbury (1996).

correspondence.⁴⁹ Isidore of Seville himself, despite family origins in the Byzantine province, does not appear to have been fluent in Greek: references to Greek writers and works in his *De uiris illustribus* ('On Distinguished Men'), a bio-bibliographical catalogue of Christian authors, tend towards the noncommittal and focus on Latin translations such that second-hand knowledge is all but certain, and indeed the hundreds of individual Greek words which he uses in his *Etymologiae* ('Etymologies') reveal varying degrees of engagement and understanding.⁵⁰ Some level of functional familiarity between the two languages, well shy of full bilingualism, must have been the norm.

Among the Jewish population of Iberia this is still more the case. In the face of escalating seventh-century legal injunctions against *scripturas* and *apocriphas* (canonical and apocryphal writings), *deotheres* (rabbinic doctrine or exegesis), *libros* ('books'), and *doctrinas* ('teachings') which *Christiana fides repudiat* ('the Christian faith rejects'), Jews balanced public use of Latin and Greek with private practice of probably limited Hebrew ritual.⁵¹ Jewish sources in the Visigothic realm are limited to inscribed epitaphs and prayers, mostly from sites along the eastern coast: these include the sole bilingual Latin-Greek text of any length from the period, the epitaph of a certain Rabla, native to Cyzicus (in Anatolia), and the only trilingual Latin-Greek-Hebrew survivals, such as a brief series of prayers, the Latin written over the Greek, and the famous epitaph of Melliosa from Tortosa, in which we encounter *in nomine Domini* ('in the name of the Lord'), a mix of Latin and Greek characters, among other traces of linguistic interference.⁵²

4.2.2 Communicating Status

Beyond multilingualism, Latin during the Visigothic era operated in a multi-register environment, and if we work through its levels of complexity from top to bottom, we may identify three broad linguistic expressions of education and communicative intention.⁵³ At the upper register, we are among the literate elite, a lineage of teachers and students, a closed network mainly populated by bishops, with little indication of a hinterland of intellectuals whose works have been lost.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ ICERV 362; EV 2–5; HTVFE 73–6; Prego de Lis (2000); Wood (2010a); Martínez Jiménez and Moreno Narganes (2015), 268–9.

⁵⁰ Isidore of Seville, *De uiris illustribus*, in Codoñer Merino (1964), 6, 26, 31 (cf. 28); Fontaine (1959–83), ii, 846–54; Bravo García (1989), 361–72.

⁵¹ *Confessio uel professio Iudaeorum ciuitatis Toletanae*, in Miguel Franco and Martín-Iglesias (2018), 136; LV 12.3.11; González Salinero (2014).

⁵² IGEP 232 (cf. 317, 424, 447, 482), 233, 238; Numhauser (2021), i, 55–169, at 112–28; Wasserstein (2015), 518–22; cf. ICERV 428–33; JIWE 183 and 185–7 (cf. 177); Adams (2003a), 18–29 and 424–5; Riess (2013), 159.

⁵³ Cuzzolin (2014); cf. Adams (2013), 3–27.

⁵⁴ Aherne (1966); Domínguez del Val (1998–2004), iv; cf. Fontaine (1959–83), ii, 831–88; Riché (1976), 246–65, 274–9, 281–90, 293–303, and 352–60.

Julian of Toledo (680–90) personifies the type. Jewish in ancestry and a disciple of the bishop-poet Eugenius of Toledo (647–57), he produced learned theological treatises on death and resurrection, the Three Chapters controversy, the fulfilment of Messianic prophecy, and Biblical exegesis, as well as a stylistically elaborate history of one episode in the reign of Wamba (672–80), in whose deposition he may have been involved; his authorship of a Latin grammar derived from the standard fourth-century handbook by Aelius Donatus is likely but not certain.⁵⁵ What distinguishes this level is the notable degree of conscious continuity with classical modes, even if the results can be artificial. Yet a brief consideration of the legal sources indicates that both the continuity and the artificiality were intentional. There is a tradition of legislation by Visigothic kings dating back to the fifth century, though subject to an insoluble debate about its applicability to Goths and Romans separately or to the whole territory of the Visigothic kingdom.⁵⁶ The oldest remains are the 61 enactments distilling Roman ‘vulgar’ or provincial law on property and transaction which are preserved in a sixth-century palimpsest manuscript, representing a fragment of a code most often attributed to Euric (466–84).⁵⁷ His son and successor Alaric II (484–507) then presided over the compilation and dissemination of the *Breuiarium* (506), an abridgement of late-Roman law and jurisprudence equipped with accompanying interpretations to which we owe the transmission of much of the Theodosian Code; the sole manuscript of the text from Iberia, a seventh-century palimpsest held in León, also contains a law of Theudis (531–48), intended as a supplement to the corpus.⁵⁸ In the next generation, Leovigild *correx*it (‘revised’) the laws of Euric, *adiciens* and *auferens* (‘adding, subtracting’) where needed, according to Isidore of Seville, but if his so-called *Codex Reuisus* survives at all, it is subsumed into the *Liber Iudiciorum* (‘Book of Judgements’) promulgated by Recceswinth in 654, amended and reissued by Erwig in 681, and supplemented thereafter.⁵⁹ The code is enormous, running to over 150,000 words in English translation. It recycles many earlier laws under the label of *antiqua* (‘old’), with the disclaimer *emendata* (‘corrected, improved’) reflecting the editorial work of the bishop-scholar Braulio of Zaragoza (631–51), though the labelling of each law is political or ideological as often as factual: on the pattern of Roman practice, it also codifies more recent rescripts given in response to cases. The point is that this continuity includes echoing the legalese of late-Roman bureaucracy in its fearsomely rhetorical,

⁵⁵ Hillgarth (1976); Martín-Iglesias and Yarza Urquiola (2014); Martínez Pizarro (2005), 78–171; Codoñer (2010), 155–72; Pabst (2021); cf. Maestre Yenes (1973); Carracedo Fraga (2015).

⁵⁶ Collins (2004), 223–39; Pérez-Prendes y Muñoz de Arraco (2004).

⁵⁷ D’Ors (2014); Díaz and González Salinero (2001).

⁵⁸ Haenel (1849); de Cárdenas et al. (1896); Matthews (2001); Sandoval Parra (2021).

⁵⁹ Isidore of Seville, *Historiae*, in Rodríguez Alonso (1975), 51, at 258–9; *LV*; Ramis Barceló and Ramis Serra (2015), 11–30; King (1972), 1–22.

obscurely ornate language.⁶⁰ Reccesuinth appreciated the problem, contrasting how existing laws *eloquiis polleant* ('may be of powerful diction') yet *difficultatibus herent* ('remain mired in perplexities'); while he pledged that *competentium ordo uerborum* ('the sequence of appropriate words') in his code *sufficiat ad iustitiae plenitudinem* ('should be adequate to the fullness of justice'), the product has justifiably been called out for 'its diffuse and stilted style, its tedious circumlocution and redundancy of phrase, its didactic sententiousness, its barbaric Latin and elaborate artificial rhetoric', with some seeing it as propaganda more than a pragmatic tool.⁶¹

The difficulty of Visigothic law is the result both of retaining prior legislation and deliberate choice. But why choose to be difficult? Something of an answer can be garnered from a second genre of high-register Latin, contemporary letters, where the classical *sermo epistolaris* and its 'stylistic preciosity' lived on.⁶² The so-called *Epistulae Visigothicae* are comprised of twenty letters exchanged among bishops, kings, monks, and counts between the late sixth and mid-seventh century, though it is uncertain whether they should be regarded as a discrete collection; notorious for their often impenetrable prose (and verse), they survive in sixteenth-century copies of the famous *Codex Ouetensis*, a lost manuscript from the cathedral library of Oviedo connected to the noted forger-bishop Pelayo (d. 1153).⁶³ Both stages of transmission raise a warning flag for possible tampering, but the key evidence here for Visigothic Latinity is a passage of metalinguistic commentary. Sisebut, writing in the mid-610s to the patrician Caesarius, clearly a senior figure in the Byzantine province based at Cartagena, recommends his agent Ansemundo ('probably a well-built guard') with curious words: *noster etenim est, etsi inpolitus eloquio, non puritatis studio* ('our man, I tell you, though unrefined in speech, is not so in zeal for integrity'), and while he may present *minus compte* ('in a less than polished manner'), nevertheless *ita est in cunctis instructus, et sic finaliter ordinatus, quatenus uestra clementia ab illo quesierit, opinor plenissimum uobis dare responsum* ('he has been prepared so comprehensively, and appointed so deliberately, that whatever Your Mercy should seek of him, I daresay he will give you the fullest answer').⁶⁴ Put otherwise, Sisebut has deliberately sent an agent who can only speak at a lower register, because he is the right choice to conduct their negotiations successfully; pairing *inpolitus* with *puritas* ('clarity' as much as 'integrity') serves as a reminder that sophistication can get in the way of comprehension. The intention of this top level of Latin was

⁶⁰ *LV* 2.4.13, 5.4.4, 9.1.17, 10.1.6 (cf. 2.1.26); Braulio of Zaragoza, *Epistolarium*, in Miguel Franco and Martín-Iglesias (2018), 29, at 100; *LV* 3.1.5, 4.5.6–7, 9.1.21, 9.2.8; Miguel Franco (2007); Martín (2011); Barrett (2020–1).

⁶¹ *LV* 2.1.10; Lear (1951), 2; Díaz and Valverde (2000); cf. Cooper (1952).

⁶² Schwitter (2017), 68; Halla-aho (2011).

⁶³ *EV*; Martín-Iglesias (2014); Collins (2014, 2021b).

⁶⁴ *EV* 3; *HTVFE* 74; Vallejo (2020); cf. Martyn (2008), 77, n. 140; Allen and Neil (2020), 104–7.

not primarily to communicate, but to perform ruling or elite status, as we can see too in the elaborate, verbose correspondence of Braulio with kings, fellow members of the clergy and nobility, even with the pope, when on behalf of the bishops of the Peninsula in 638 he made it clear to Honorius I (625–38) that he did not quite belong in the same league, reproving him for confounding Isaiah with Ezekiel.⁶⁵

Visigothic verse too bespeaks a self-confident exclusivity and positionality. From the mid-sixth century onwards there were close literary contacts with North Africa: both poetry and prose by writers rarely attested elsewhere, from Corippus to Victor of Tunnuna, enriched Iberian libraries as fugitive monks in quest of sanctuary arrived with their books.⁶⁶ At some point in the later sixth century Donatus, who fled the *uiolentias barbararum gentium* ('conflicts of barbarian nations') with seventy of his acolytes *copiosisque librorum codicibus* ('and with a great many book manuscripts'), founded the monastery of Servitanum (near ancient Ercávica, east of Madrid), an intellectual centre for successive generations; he is also credited with introducing the first monastic rule to the Peninsula, which may be the case for the south and centre, though Gallic monasticism had already reached the northeast.⁶⁷ Isidore reflects these connections in his *De uiris illustribus*, a catalogue otherwise devoted to reviewing Iberian writers and their achievements, by citing eight North Africans including the later-fifth-century poet Dracontius and his *De laudibus Dei* ('On the Praises of God').⁶⁸ At the acme of the tradition stands Eugenius of Toledo, who undertook to emend the first book of that effort on Creation, as well as the *Satisfactio* ('Redress') which Dracontius had offered the Vandal king for giving offence. In a supremely self-assured act of one-upmanship bequeathing to us a rare example of late antique editorial practice, he presented it to his royal patron Chindasuinth (642–53), reviewing his method as follows:

quo superflua demerem, semiplena supplerem, fracta constabilirem, et crebrius repetita mutarem. Versiculos sane quos huic operi detrahendos esse putavi, et sensu tepidi et uerbis illepidi et nulla probantur ratione subnixi; nec in eis aliquod reperitur quo lectoris animus aut mulceatur doctus aut doceatur indoctus.

to excise what was unnecessary, to fill in what was half-done, to restore what was fragmentary, and to vary what was too often repeated. You see, I determined that there were unsatisfactory lines which had to be purged from the work. On

⁶⁵ Braulio of Zaragoza, *Epistolarium*, in Miguel Franco and Martín-Iglesias (2018), 16.52–62; Knie et al. (2022), 87; Lynch and Galindo (1950), 39–100 and 231–54; Jiménez Sánchez (2018); Ferreiro (2020), 181–96.

⁶⁶ Fontaine (1959–83), ii. 854–9; Arce (2005), 355–9.

⁶⁷ Ildefonsus of Toledo, *De uiris illustribus*, in Yarza Urquiola and Codoñer Merino (2007), 3; Barroso Cabrera and Morín de Pablos (2003); Collins (2004), 147–61.

⁶⁸ Isidore of Seville, *De uiris illustribus*, in Codoñer Merino (1964), 24 (cf. 8–10, 12, 14, 19, 25); Wood (2012).

examination they turn out to be lame in meaning, crude in wording, the product of no thought, and for the reader there is nothing identifiable in them either to tickle the fancy of an educated mind or to instruct an uneducated one.⁶⁹

In his own multifarious epigrams, hymns, epitaphs, and riddles, Eugenius confidently applies classical prosody and poetic technique to a wide range of subject matter, and combines moral judgement (notably of Chindasuinth, once safely dead) informed by penitential thought with a highly individual capacity for self-reflection.⁷⁰ But his interest in instructing the uneducated mind may also be represented in a set of 25 poems of less certain Eugenic attribution which can be read as lessons for the ecclesiastical and secular nobility on behaviour and values.⁷¹ Broader buy-in to verse for the public performance of social standing among the cultivated elite may in turn be seen in the 24 metrical inscriptions which survive from the period.⁷² Even kings felt obliged to take part in this living culture of poetry, as Sisebut composed a poem on lunar eclipses in a subtle power play with Isidore on the role of verse in communicating scientific knowledge and truth, whereas Chintila (636–9) dispatched a four-liner beseeching salvation of St Peter to the same beleaguered Pope Honorius I in Rome.⁷³

4.2.3 Negotiating Register

At the middle register, we have a mass of material broadly educational or didactic in purpose and concerned with communication and comprehension. The contemporary conciliar Church intermittently engaged with schooling: the Second Council of Toledo (527) required that bishops make provision for the instruction of child oblates up to the age of eighteen, while the Fourth Council (633) added that bishops themselves should learn their Holy Scripture and canons and ensure that priests were fully briefed on their ritual duties, minimum expectations which the Eighth Council (653) felt moved to repeat in a tone of some vexation.⁷⁴ In the still underappreciated corpus of texts making up the Old Hispanic liturgy—a distinctive Peninsular tradition of chant, hymns, readings, and prayers—it is possible to recognize one aspect of this policy of promoting education. The tradition was born out of an intellectual-cultural project begun by the bishops after the

⁶⁹ Eugenius of Toledo, *Dracontii librorum recognitio*, in Alberto (2005), ep.7–11.

⁷⁰ Eugenius of Toledo, *Libellus carminum*, in Alberto (2005), 25; Fear (2010); Alberto (2014); Ungvary (2018).

⁷¹ Messina (1984).

⁷² Díaz y Díaz (1959), 60–70 and 368–80; Codoñer (2010), 387–95; Cugusi and Sblendorio Cugusi (2012).

⁷³ Sisebut, *Carmen de luna*, in Fontaine (1960a), 328–35; Ungvary (2019); ICERV 389.

⁷⁴ II Toledo 1, in Martínez Díez and Rodríguez (1984); IV Toledo 24–6, VIII Toledo 8, in Martínez Díez and Rodríguez (1992); Martín Hernández (1970); Fontaine (1972).

Third Council of Toledo had proclaimed conversion to Nicene orthodoxy in 589; consolidated by the later seventh century, though transmitted overwhelmingly in post-Visigothic compilations, it was designed to instruct both the clergy and lay society as a whole in the Bible, its exegesis, and a core doctrinal identity susceptible to be mobilized in anti-Jewish polemic.⁷⁵ When the hermit Valerius (d. c. 695) established himself as a somewhat volatile pedagogue to the peasantry in the Valle del Silencio, in the mountainous and isolated region of El Bierzo, he drew on the same tradition for teaching the basics of literacy, delivering a curriculum of reading, memorizing, and reciting the Psalter and canticles, and compiling his own copies of liturgical texts for use.⁷⁶

But the majority of material at this level consists of the vast output of manuals by Isidore of Seville, the one-man renaissance. In what seem at first to be little more than introductory textbooks ranging over the Bible, its contents, and its interpretation, Christian literature, political philosophy, and spiritual contemplation, the Church hierarchy, universal and Iberian history, the natural world, and the Latin lexicon, he pursued an overarching objective of Christianizing knowledge itself, culminating in the *Etymologiae* or *Origenes*, an argument for Christian encyclopaedism as much as simply an encyclopaedia of etymologies and origins.⁷⁷ Virtually all his writings achieved an immediate and extensive diffusion both within and well beyond the Peninsula, but the crucial question of who exactly constituted his audience has seldom been properly asked; taking a cue from the deliberately plain quality of Isidorean prose, the answer has mainly defaulted to clergy, kings, and counts in need of education.⁷⁸ But does he speak to the wider linguistic situation? The challenge of Isidore is that his work so often stands outside of time. Virgil, even Ennius, the fruits of his antiquarian research, are cited as if contemporaries and interlocutors: when he comments on a point of Latin vocabulary in the *Etymologiae*, written by the mid-620s but revised and expanded into the 630s, is he essaying a chapter in historical linguistics, diagnosing the language of his era, or padding out his dictionary with the rhetoric of social anthropology?⁷⁹ Isidore was in no doubt that what he elsewhere called *nostrum eloquium* ('our speech') was Latin, yet, as if unaware of any post-Roman evolution, he ends his diachronic survey of the language with the *mixta* ('hybrid') phase, contaminated by solecisms and barbarisms, explaining it as the product of empire.⁸⁰ Even so, he frequently qualifies a particular word as what the *rustici*

⁷⁵ Maloy (2020), 7–14 and 42–104; Collins (2002); and see now Hornby et al. (2022).

⁷⁶ Valerius of El Bierzo, *Replicatio sermonum a prima conuersione*, in Henriët (2021), 6.1 and 14.2; Udaondo Puerto (2003).

⁷⁷ Codoñer (2010), 139–55; Barrett (2019); cf. Fontaine (1959–83), ii. 863–88.

⁷⁸ Elfassi and Poirel (2004); Codoñer, Martín, and Andrés (2005); cf. Gutiérrez Zuluaga (1970); Fontaine (2000), 129–63.

⁷⁹ Messina (1980); Codoñer, Martín, and Andrés (2005), 274–99; Velázquez (2003b), 203–15.

⁸⁰ Isidore of Seville, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, in Lawson (1989), 1.2.7; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, in Valastro Canale (2004), 9.1.6–7; Müller (2006); Minets (2022b), 512–14.

(‘peasantry’) say or, using *uulgo* in the sense of it being ‘commonly’ said, tantalizes us with potential access to the everyday expression of early-seventh-century society. Some instances he categorically frames as present-day usage, *hodieque rustici... uocant* (‘the peasantry still today name...’) or *nostri uulgo... uocauerunt* (‘our people have commonly named...’), but in most cases we confront another problem of transmission: knowing whether he is instead channeling how one of his sources qualifies a particular word.⁸¹ For the present-day examples, Isidore reveals little more about the *rustici*, defining them as those who dwell in the idealized *rus* (‘country’) of Virgilian pastoral; with *uulgo*, however, he links *plebs* and *multitudo*, and derives the term from *uult* in the sense of living wherever ‘one wishes’, adding up to an overall connotation of ‘the dispersed majority of commoners.’⁸² In one entry on *ceruinus* (‘dun-coloured’, here a horse), these commoners say *guaranis*, seemingly a Germanic word, but also *aeranis* (‘bronzy’, from *aes*), manifestly Latinate.⁸³ Evidently, to Isidore, there was no meaningful distinction between the two in the spoken language as he knew it.

Where he did perceive a possible barrier was in registers of speech, reflecting variable profiles of education and culture in society, and he sought keenly to bridge them: according to the summary of Isidore by Braulio of Zaragoza, he was *in omni loquutionis genere formatus, ut inperito doctoque secundum qualitatem sermonis existeret aptus* (‘trained in every type of speaking, so that he might adapt himself in the nature of his discourse to the ignorant and the learned’).⁸⁴ Much rested on a ‘sympathetic’ pronunciation:

praeterea et accentuum uim oportet lectorem scire, ut nouerit in qua sillaba uox protendatur pronuntiantis. Plerumque enim inperiti lectores in uerborum accentibus errant, et solent inuidere [variant: irridere] nos inperitiae huius, qui uidentur habere notitiam, detrahentes et iurantes penitus nescire quod dicimus.

And it is also necessary for the reader to understand the import of accents, in order to know on which syllable the voice of the speaker should linger. For a great many ignorant readers miss the mark with the accents of words, and out of ignorance they, who *seem* to have an awareness of this, often envy [or mock] us, criticizing us and professing that they do not remotely understand what we are saying.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, 6.14.7, 17.9.82; Maltby (1999).

⁸² Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, 15.13.7, 9.4.6; Wright (1982), 89–95.

⁸³ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, 12.1.53; Velázquez (2003b), 414–16.

⁸⁴ Braulio of Zaragoza, *Renotatio librorum domini Isidori*, in Martín (2006), at 199, at 5–6; Banniard (1992), 181–251; Velázquez (2003b), 196–203.

⁸⁵ Isidore of Seville, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, 2.11.4; cf. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, 1.18.6, 7.12.24–5; Pseudo-Isidore, *Institutionum disciplinae*, in Fontaine (1988a), at 654, at 6–15.

The register negotiation here is between text and speech, ensuring that written Latin was fully understood when read aloud regardless of the literacy of the audience, and accents were basic equipment in the operation, invented to assist in identifying and pronouncing words.⁸⁶ In this regard, an important part of the 'project' was precisely to facilitate such vertical communication (see Chapter 3).

As Isidore conveys most clearly in the preamble to his monastic rule, from out of the many prolix and impenetrable teachings of the Holy Fathers, *haec pauca nos uobis eligere ausi sumus, ut sermone plebeio uel rustico quam facillime intellegatis, quo ordine professionis uestrae uotum retineatis* ('we have ventured to choose these few and to use common or peasant language so that you may understand as readily as possible how to keep the vow of your profession').⁸⁷ By combining an insistent *breuitas* (economy of expression) with a careful *sermo humilis* (plain speaking), he sought to ensure general acceptance of the central tenets of Christian faith and devotion.⁸⁸ This purpose may also help to account for the distinctive and much-imitated *stilus ysidorianus* ('Isidorean style') of relentless synonymizing which he adopts, atypically, in his *Synonyma*, two soliloquies of spiritual contemplation and consolation, and which Ildefonsus of Toledo (657–67) later took to an extreme in his influential work of Marian theology.⁸⁹ The style has often been written off as affectation or simple ostentation, awarded 'the palm for bombast' or deemed 'childish, thankless, and useless,' 'absurd,' and 'altogether ridiculous,' if grudgingly granted 'a sort of weird and hypnotic grandeur.'⁹⁰ But it can also be read as a range of possible expressions for a spectrum of contexts, a resource for use in negotiating between registers, and accordingly the *Synonyma* were received in the Middle Ages as both a moral treatise and a primer of grammar and rhetoric.⁹¹ The same aim at a universal linguistic interface may underlie the glossing which Isidore practises in his *Differentiae*, two books of orthographic lexicography and grammatical distinctions, to impose systematic boundaries on the indiscriminate employment of language.⁹² These efforts collectively laid the foundation for the *Liber glossarum*, an enormous encyclopaedic lexicon originating in Iberia and circulating amongst Carolingian libraries and scholars, but their first object was to create a network linking all levels of written and spoken Latin.⁹³

⁸⁶ Banniard (1975); Riché (1976), 302–3; Wright (1982), 87–9; Denecker (2019).

⁸⁷ Isidore of Seville, *Regula*, in Campos Ruiz and Roca Meliá (1971), *pr.*, 6–8; cf. Isidore of Seville, *Sententiae*, in Cazier (1998), 3.13; Allies (2010).

⁸⁸ Auerbach (1993), 25–66; Wood (2010b); Barrett (2019), 68–76.

⁸⁹ Isidore of Seville, *Synonyma*, in Elfassi (2009); Ildefonsus of Toledo, *De uirginitate sanctae Mariae*, in Yarza Urquiola and Codoñer Merino (2007); Fontaine (1960b, 1988b); Balleros (1973); Donalson (2011), xxii–xxiii.

⁹⁰ Winterbottom (1977), 58–62.

⁹¹ Elfassi (2006); cf. Velázquez (2003b), 61–141; Di Sciacca (2008), 16–36.

⁹² Isidore of Seville, *Differentiae*, 1, in Codoñer (1992), and 2, in Andrés Sanz (2006).

⁹³ See Grondeux and Cinato (2016).

4.2.4 Petrifying Speech

At the lower register, there was until recently little in the way of non-literary evidence surviving from the Visigothic period. The corpus consisted of five original parchment charter fragments from the very late seventh century and half a dozen high medieval or early modern copies of sixth-century documents: for the most part these inhabit elevated social settings, of kings, counts, judges, bishops, monasteries, but one sale of a cow and another case of stolen cereal were sufficient to bear out the expectation of Visigothic law that everyday business be transacted in writing framed by a robust legalese and bureaucratise.⁹⁴ In the past generation, however, the decipherment and publication of hundreds of *pizarras* has enabled us to glimpse the broad diffusion of an elementary and functional written Latin across the rural northern Meseta.⁹⁵ In part this is a matter of basic numeracy, as witnessed by the many inscriptions, the majority of them as yet unpublished, which bear lines of Roman numerals, though in the stuff of editorial nightmares an eminent epigraphist presented one to the public as an (uncertain) illustration of the Iberian language.⁹⁶ Dating is still admittedly a concern, since most examples have been found without secure archaeological context, and it is only the coincidence of some numbers with text that has argued for situating the corpus in the Visigothic period.⁹⁷ What was being counted also remains in debate, whether taxes, rents, tolls on transhumance, flocks, or crops, as does who was counting it. Typically, the counters are said to be local elites with the necessary managerial skill set, but these slates deviate from the normal system of Roman numerals in significant respects, such that they may be the work of peasants using their own simple but effective methods, akin to tally sticks.⁹⁸

Beyond numeracy, basic literacy too is attested by those slates inscribed with text, which bear witness to local use of writing in the ordinary course of life. The main advantage of such *pizarras* is that they are originals rather than copies. While some sets may in origin have made up the 'stone archives' of local elites, overall the corpus surviving today has been preserved and recovered essentially by accident, which gives us unmediated access to contemporary Latin literacy, compromised only by their abraded and fragmented condition.⁹⁹ Apart from a few with explicit dates, most can be dated roughly by palaeography to the sixth or seventh century, but stratigraphy situates the earliest finds in the late fourth or early fifth; that said, it is only assumptions about the dividing line of 711 that have

⁹⁴ Calleja-Puerta et al. (2018), 4–5 (cf. 1–3); Corcoran (2003); Tomás-Faci and Martín-Iglesias (2017); Marlasca Martínez (2010).

⁹⁵ Everett (2013), 82–93; Barrett (2019), 44–53.

⁹⁶ Hübner (1893), XV, at 207; see e.g. Abascal, Gimeno, and Velázquez (2000), 295–336.

⁹⁷ *P. Vis.* 2; Díaz y Díaz (1961).

⁹⁸ Fernández Cadenas (2021); cf. Martín Viso et al. (2020).

⁹⁹ Martín Viso (2013, 2015).

discouraged extending their potential use into the eighth century and beyond.¹⁰⁰ The range of everyday activities in which they played a role encompasses managing the land through short-term note-taking and longer-term record-keeping, as well as buying, selling, and litigating, and reflects the written word retaining its social purchase from the later-Roman world. Representative of this cultural continuity are two slates discovered in Braga, perhaps a pair, from the late fifth or early sixth century: uncharitably invoking supernatural powers to visit cancer upon an unfortunate third party, they sit squarely in the ancient tradition of *defixiones* or curse tablets.¹⁰¹ All this remarkably manages to be so in a rustic corner of the kingdom absent secure evidence for formal schools or schooling. Yet the slates themselves are the key to explaining the education underlying them, in that a good number seem to have been used in local and informal teaching. Treated in ascending order of complexity, from alphabets to model compositions, they reveal a foundational curriculum.¹⁰² At the more advanced stages of this initiation, as the hermit Valerius primes us to expect, the student worked with passages from the Bible (especially the Psalter) and liturgy, indicating access to texts emanating from books even in villages and the countryside. Some slates, indeed, contain whole creeds or prayers for use in devotion, while others, purely pictorial and scarcely studied, seem to illustrate Biblical passages (especially from Revelation).¹⁰³

On the question of language, these texts present proof of a continuum of usage crossing over registers and contexts. One slate headed *notitia de ripti[s]* ('a listing of garments') from sixth- or seventh-century Diego Álvaro consistently echoes the terminology for clothing which Isidore gives in his etymological survey, taking us beyond the pages of his dictionary into the world around him (see Chapter 3).¹⁰⁴ But they also provide insight into the conservatism of Latin in the period, best exemplified by an almost complete letter found at Barrado, northeast of Cáceres, from the late sixth or early seventh century. In it, Faustinus, owner or manager of a property, reminds 'lord' Paul (evidently a dependant, despite the honorific) of his traditional responsibility to see to the olive harvest, then adds a series of further instructions:

[Domno] Paulo Faustinus. Saluto tuam [grauitat]em et rogo te, domne, ut, comodo consu[etum] facere est, per te ipsut oliba illa quollige. [Cur]a ut ipsos mancipios in iura[re]mento [coger]e debeas, ut tibi fraudem non fa[cian]t. Illas cupas collige, calas [d]e cortices, et sigilla de tuo anulo. Et uide [il]las tegolas, cas astritas sunt de fibola, quo[m]odo ego ipsas demisi. Illum Meriacium manda [d]e

¹⁰⁰ Ruiz Asencio (2001); Dahí Elena (2007), 93–6; Pérez de Dios (2015).

¹⁰¹ *P.Vis.* 151–2; Velázquez (2010). ¹⁰² Velázquez (1998, 2001).

¹⁰³ Ruiz Asencio (2004); Santonja and Moreno (1991–2).

¹⁰⁴ *P.Vis.* 49; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, 19.20–34 (21.1, 22.6, 22.29, 23.4, 24.14, 26.7, 31.10).

Tiliata uenire, ut aiute tibi: unum qui na[...] [quina[rium]?) 'et unum at Mancio nostro' des. Iriola Pesitula at illa Amma at Na[...]oris dirige pro die sto. Sic [te Chris]tus custodiat.

Faustinus to [the lord] Paul: I greet your [dignity] and ask you, lord, to gather the olives by yourself, as it is customary to do. Bear in mind that you should compel the slaves under oath not to commit fraud against you. Gather the casks, the strips of bark, and seal them with your ring. And check that the tiles, which have been fastened by a clamp, are as I left them. Send for Meriacius to come from Tiliata and assist you: you should give him one [half-*denarius*?], plus one for our Mancius. Iriola Pesitula: dispatch her to Amma at [toponym?] for the day. And so may Christ watch over you.¹⁰⁵

The allowances necessary to make for comprehension may at first seem numerous, but they are minor, and virtually all in the realm of orthography: loss of vowels (*domne*, for *domine*; *sto*, for *isto*) and consonants (*astritas*, for *astrictas*; *aiute*, for *adiutet*), confusion of *c* and *qu* (*comodo*, but also *quo[m]odo*; *quollige*, but also *collige*; *cas*, for *quas*), *b* and *v* (*oliba*, for *oliua*), *t* and *d* (*ipsut*, for *ipsud*, rightly *ipsum*; *at*, for *ad*), *o* and *u* (*tegolas*, for *tegulas*; *fibola*, for *fibula*). Certainly, the writer struggled with the accusative case and the ablative of means; yet the syntax, though freer, is not so radically progressive as to need explaining to reader or hearer.¹⁰⁶

The language of this letter is immediately recognizable within a classical framework, imperfect but serviceable for the daily running of an estate in writing. How then does the elementary but educated written language of the *pizarras* relate to Latin as spoken in rural society? Record of direct speech is vanishingly rare at any register of our sources because of the varieties of mediation involved in writing it down. At the top, in the long series of decisions issued by the bishops assembled in council, there is nothing like the two teams of stenographers who transcribed verbatim the deliberations at Carthage in 411: the closest we come is a handful of procedural texts such as the minutes of the trial of Bishop Marcian of Écija in 638, but even they are streamlined into the conciliar template of collective responsibility and impersonal reportage.¹⁰⁷ In the middle, hagiography offers the largest body of what purport to be real people speaking, but the verbal fireworks, such as the persecutor Dacian and the martyr Leocadia of Toledo (d. 303/4) set off in her seventh-century passion, are contrived after the fact and often recycled from one text to the next.¹⁰⁸ At the bottom, however, we may be somewhat closer to speech,

¹⁰⁵ The text given here is based on *P.Vis.* 103; but I incorporate some of the readings proposed by Ammannati (2010); cf. Castellanos (2020), 38–40.

¹⁰⁶ Pountain (2001), 13–18; Adams (2013), 509–10; García Leal (2008). This text is also discussed in Chapter 3, though with a different reading and interpretation.

¹⁰⁷ Graumann (2021), 32–40 and 126–66; Martín-Iglesias (2018); Stocking (1997).

¹⁰⁸ *Confessio Leocadiae*, 4, in Yarza Urquiola (2020a), 8, at 432–4 (cf. 19–21).

in that the palaeography of the slates implies a broad diffusion of basic skills enabling some at least of the rural populace to make their own jottings or draft their own legal documents, with limited recourse to scribal intervention.¹⁰⁹ Another *pizarra* from Diego Álvaro, dating most likely to the first half of the seventh century, preserves on its reverse side part of a *profesio de ser[uitute]* ('declaration of liability') delivered by Unigildus in a case of strawberry fraud at the house of one Desiderius, where he further quotes words spoken by Froila, a witness on his behalf.¹¹⁰ The text can be paralleled with the slate letter of Faustinus, and though many of its features are shared with both informal and formal Latin throughout the history of the language, it also has some local evolutions: a preference for verb-object syntax, use of prepositions for the oblique cases, and certain proto-Spanish verbal usages.¹¹¹

Yet on the obverse of the same *pizarra* is a text from the same date and context which cautions against treating 'slate Latin' as straightforwardly unmediated speech. Though fragmentary, it is clearly a charter of sale, and its language draws flexibly on the collection of model documents known as the Visigothic formulary. The template with the most overlap is a charter recording the sale of a slave, but by comparing text and model we can see how the writer of the document has cut that particularity from this instance:

Domno e sourino meo Desiderio, Gregorios uinditor. Quoniam hoc inter nobis placuit adque conuenit, ut ego tibi uindere et uindo portione de terra, ipsa terra in possession[e...re]gias [...] te [...]dus [...] quanque [...] aderato et [defe]nito pretiu cot inter nob[is] bone pacis conue[nit], id est, auri solido nom[ero...] relicas, qua p[er?] te [...] pro cos tu intor dedist[i, et ego u]inditor de te a[cc]epi [...] no ad integrum ad e[...] [...]sti nicilque penitus de ipso p[retio apud te remansisse?] [pol]licemur qu[...] in tuo iure [...]in?]ferat ad eu[m...]que in p[...] uel [...]is[...]e[...]

Gregory, the seller, to my lord and nephew Desiderius. Since this has pleased and been agreed between us, that I would and do sell you a piece of land, the very land in the ownership...you control...how...appraised and assigned the price which has been agreed between us in good faith, that is, gold *solidi* numbering...remaining, which by you...for which you as buyer have delivered [and I] as seller have received from you...in full for...and we guarantee that nothing whatsoever of this [price has been left with you]...in your right...may he pay to him...and in...or...

Servi uenditio. [...] annorum circiter tot, [numeri ill.], qui nobis ex comparatione ab ill. iure noscitur aduenisse. Definito igitur et accepto a uobis omne praetium

¹⁰⁹ Ruiz Asencio (1991), 198–202; Ruiz Asencio (1993); Collins (2004), 170–3; Velázquez (2009).

¹¹⁰ *P.Vis.* 40.2; see also Chapter 3.

¹¹¹ Adams (2016), 46, at 564–71; cf. Adams (2013), 371–6.

quod in placitum uenit nostrum, id est, auri solidi numeri tot, quos a te datos et a me acceptos per omnia manet certissimum, nihil penitus de eodem praetio apud te remansisse polliceor, et tradidi tibi supra memoratum seruuum, non causarium non fugitiuum non uexaticium, neque aliquod uitio in se habentem nec cuiuslibet alterius dominio pertinentem. Quem ex hac die habeas, teneas, et possideas iure tuo, in perpetuum uindices ac defendas, uel quicquid de supra fati serui personam facere uolueris, liberam in omnibus habeas potestatem. Quod etiam iuratione confirmo [...]

Sale of a slave: . . . of roughly so many years, numbering X, who is known to have entered into our right by purchase from X. And so, having assigned and received from you the whole price which has come into our agreement, that is, gold *solidi* numbering so many, which it remains most certain have been given by you and received by me in all respects, I guarantee that nothing whatsoever of the same price has been left with you, and I have transferred to you the above-mentioned slave: not under litigation, not a runaway, not a rabble-rouser, neither having in himself any vice nor belonging to the ownership of anyone else. And from this day you may have, hold, and possess in your right, claim and defend him forever, and have free authority in all respects to do whatever you wish regarding the person of the above-said slave. And I also affirm this by oath.¹¹²

This formulary is not unproblematic, at least as a formulary: it is transmitted through the same channels as the *Epistulae Visigothicae*, early modern copies of a lost high medieval codex. But its constituents are well attested as models for early medieval and late antique documentation, and the slate charter is standard formulaic language from start to finish.¹¹³ In mixing and matching from models, the writer has introduced many changes in orthography, logically enough reflecting spoken Latin, yet far fewer in morphology, syntax, and basic form and content, as the source text acted as a constraint on individual expressive freedom. The same operation of ‘linguistic braking’ applies even more to another *pizarra* from Diego Álvaro of a judicial oath sworn in the late sixth century to formalize and confirm an exchange of horses, which closely tracks the formulary model for such *condiciones sacramentorum*, and in general to all the slate charters, contracts, and affidavits demonstrating an everyday use of writing for legal affairs.¹¹⁴ The templates collected in the Visigothic formulary, however, appear from internal evidence to emanate from the 610s, pre-dating the Visigothic code and referring back to later-Roman law transmitted by the *Breuiarium*.¹¹⁵ As such, the language of these slates is as much the text of the fourth and fifth centuries as the speech of the sixth and

¹¹² *PVis.* 40.1; *FV* 11 (cf. 27); Córcoles Olaitz (2008a), 312–22.

¹¹³ Fernández Flórez (2002), 13–122; (2009); Calleja-Puerta (2018).

¹¹⁴ *PVis.* 39; *FV* 39; see also *LV* 12.3.15 (cf. 2.1.24, 2.4.3, 2.4.5); Díaz y Díaz (1960a).

¹¹⁵ Córcoles Olaitz (2008b, 2010).

seventh.¹¹⁶ But to say more than that we need to look ahead to the world after the conquest of 711 and the evidence which it has left behind of writing, speaking, and the relationship between them.

4.3. Post-Visigothic Latinity: Charters and Martyrs

If we look more briefly at the post-Visigothic period, we find at least in the Christian north that the quantity of source material organized by linguistic register increases rather than decreases as we move from top to bottom. This opposite weighting reflects a cultural continuity with the past, which as we shall see acted as a restraint on new upper- and middle-register Latin, and an economic discontinuity, whereby the lower-register title deeds and other records of Visigothic-era proprietorship have been intentionally discarded, or simply not preserved, in changed circumstances. But the consequent contrast can also enable us to think through how Latin retained its conservatism across both eras. At the lower register, the great corpus of charters is a window onto daily life as it involved transaction in and litigation over land, weighted towards the higher social echelons in terms of the main actors but universal in terms of wider participation. This documentary habit was not an innovation but a tradition, in that scarcely a generation stands between the Muslim conquest in 711 and the first surviving documents from early medieval Iberia: we are dealing not with a new written culture, but the continuance of an old one.¹¹⁷ One facet of such a linear development is that the script used for writing parchment charters, mainly Visigothic cursive, evolved directly out of what had been employed for the *pizarras*, and indeed new slates were still being written, notably a ninth- or tenth-century phylactery or amulet from Carrio (southeast of Oviedo; see Fig. 4.2), invoking the angels and saints against hail, right out of the Graeco-Roman world of weather charms.¹¹⁸ At the middle register, weighed against 10,000 or more charters, the balance of the evidence comes in the form of a series of chronicles written from the early tenth century onwards by clerics and scribes in the court circles of Asturias-León and Navarra. While some are bare lists, others draw on the historiography of Isidore of Seville, filling out his intermediate level of homespun Latin with a soupçon of learned references, though the chronicle-miscellany of Albelda, a monastery in La Rioja, shows a more serious interest in Arabic history and theology.¹¹⁹ To these should be added a handful of hagiographies—mostly remote in subject, set in late antiquity, but with a few more recent passions—and further elaboration of the

¹¹⁶ Banniard (2006), 200–1. ¹¹⁷ Barrett (2023a), 52–8.

¹¹⁸ *P.Vis.* 104; Fernández Nieto (2010); Alturo i Perucho (2020).

¹¹⁹ *CHisp* 383–484; Lacarra (1945); David (1947), 257–340; Martín (2009); Bautista (2009); cf. Wright (1991); Sirantoine (2018), 122–30.

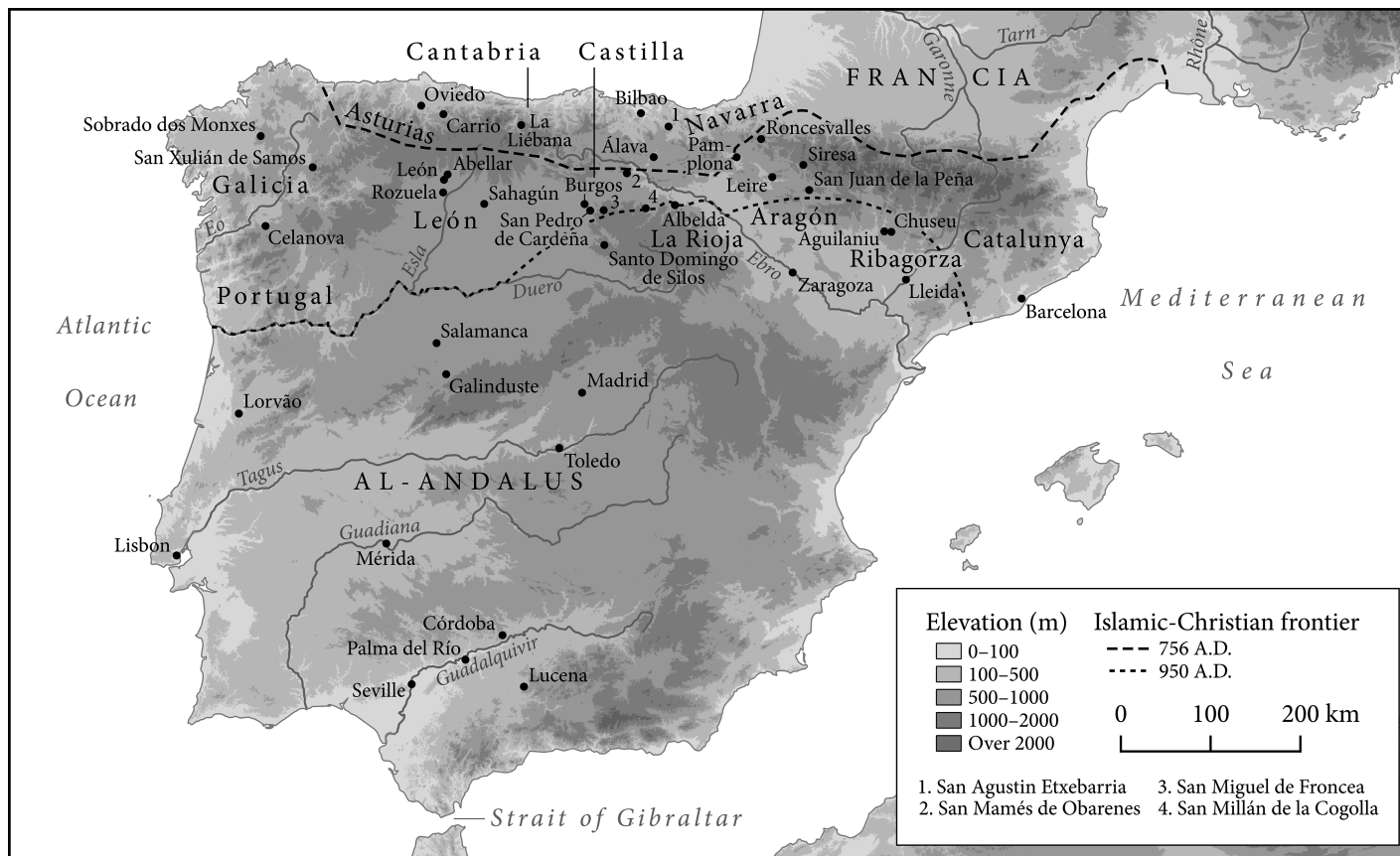


Fig. 4.2 Map of places named in early medieval Iberia (c. 700-1000)

Old Hispanic liturgy.¹²⁰ At the upper register, there is little beyond the immense commentary compiled by Beatus (d. 800?) on the Book of Revelation and his interventions in the Adoptionist controversy raging in Iberia and Francia over the humanity of Christ; his works are outliers, from the mountain fastness of the Liébana in southwest Cantabria (though he may have spent time at the Asturian court), and after him there are scant signs of high literary output, in contrast to an active culture of reading and disseminating books.¹²¹ This bleak picture may be qualified by the significant number of contemporary inscriptions, some quite basic but many of them metrical, now at long last deservedly in the process of systematic publication, though the principal outlet for verse composition in these centuries was hymnography.¹²²

4.3.1 Contesting Bilingualism

The opposite distribution of evidence is true for the Muslim south, where the Latin sources come almost exclusively from the upper register, and by far the majority describe the milieu of the Umayyad capital at Córdoba. For the eighth century we have two related chronicles of intricate style, which draw on a common eastern source and show some Arabic competence; the later of the two, ending in 754, intersperses events with notices of Christian intellectuals in the manner of the *De uiris illustribus* genre, praising their gifts in chant and study.¹²³ The bulk of the material, however, is connected to the ‘martyrs of Córdoba’, a circle of ascetics, intensely pious men and women, and troubled children from mixed families who sought and gained death in the mid-ninth century by denouncing accommodation and acculturation with Islam in public confrontations and blistering diatribes.¹²⁴ What most perturbed Eulogius (d. 859) and Alvarus (d. 861), the champions of the movement, was what they perceived to be a forsaking of their heritage for Arabic language and literature, and in response they worked to resurrect the past, cultivating a deliberately archaizing Latin. This took various interrelated forms: for Eulogius, commemorating his fellow ‘voluntary martyrs’ by recasting them as victims of the state in a new Roman persecution; for Alvarus, participating in learned epistolary debates about grammar, rhetoric, and theology as a Christian man of letters, and adopting the ‘synonymous style’ of Isidore and Ildefonsus of Toledo in his own searching confessional;

¹²⁰ Yarza Urquiola (2020a), 16–46 and 149–60; (2020b); Zapke (2007); Ivorra (2017), 37–41 and 49–58.

¹²¹ Gryson and Bièvre (2012); Löfstedt (1984); Cavadini (1993); e.g. Díaz y Díaz (1991, 2001).

¹²² Diego Santos (1994); Pérez González (2014); Castro Sánchez (2010); Pereira García (2017); see *CIHM*.

¹²³ *Chronica Muzarabica*, in *CHisp* 44, 47, 57, 67, 72a, 75a; Hoyland (1997), 611–30; (2011), 16–19.

¹²⁴ See e.g. Colbert (1962); Wolf (1988); Coope (1995); Tieszen (2013), 45–97; Sahner (2018), 140–54 and 216–21.

and for many members of the circle, a verse revival building on their internalization of Prudentius (d. c. 405), the poet of Roman martyrdom in Iberia.¹²⁵ To that end Eulogius travelled north across the frontier *circa* 848–51, visiting the monasteries of Siresa in Aragón and Leire (or Leyre) in Navarra and bringing back hitherto unknown and inaccessible copies of Virgil, Juvenal, Horace, Avianus, and Aldhelm for communal use.¹²⁶ So at least he and Alvarus tell us, though there may be an element of fiction here, linking their movement to the legitimacy of the ‘independent’ Christian north. Manuscripts did of course circulate between the Muslim and Christian realms, along with styles of architecture, art, and illumination: historians have controversially applied the label of ‘Mozarabic’ (from *musta‘rab*, ‘Arabized’) to these cultural manifestations, in some cases to prove an exodus of ‘Mozarabs’ from persecution in the south, but the term is not attested until 1024.¹²⁷ Whatever the source of such treasures, the writers among the martyrs were invigorated to produce convoluted and recondite Latin, some of it high incomprehensible, as with the upper register of Visigothic literature: the point was again to be exclusive, insulated from ordinary spoken reality.¹²⁸ But it marks a departure from what had gone before, as we see from the canons of a Church council held at Córdoba in 839, written up in an intelligible and accessible prose; the consequence of such exclusivity was to stretch the relationship between Latin in writing and everyday speech, perhaps even beyond the breaking point of comprehension.¹²⁹

If we skip ahead to the end of the story, slow demise seems to be the lesson of Alfonso VI of León-Castilla (1065–1109), who reconquered Toledo in 1085 and found the Christian community functioning largely in Arabic, not least for their charters.¹³⁰ And yet, he used Latin to address them in his own diplomas.¹³¹ The language was tenacious, and this tenacity could owe something to the identity of the original conquerors back in 711, contingents of Berber (Amazigh) tribesmen whose native tongue was not the Arabic of their political masters, but Latin (see Chapter 2); in any case, written Berber is unattested in the Peninsula until the high Middle Ages.¹³² The trend was nonetheless towards Arabicization, and while Eulogius and Alvarus firmly censured those Christians who learned Arabic, especially the rules of prosody, in building their rhetorical case for linguistic peril

¹²⁵ *SMuz* i. 377–704; ii. 705–917 and 1163–80; Wood (2015); Barrett (2020), 73–81.

¹²⁶ Alvarus, *Vita Eulogii*, in *SMuz* i. 9; Eulogius, *Epistolae*, in *SMuz* ii. 3.2–4.

¹²⁷ Ruiz Ascencio (1987), 806; Miller and Kassis (2000); Hitchcock (2008), 1–74; Aillet, Penelas, and Roisse (2008); Aillet (2010), 1–39; cf. Gómez-Moreno (1919); Díaz y Díaz (1983); Williams (2017), 21–66.

¹²⁸ Herrera Roldán (1995); González Muñoz (1996).

¹²⁹ *Concilium Cordubense*, in *SMuz* i. 365–75; Banniard (1992), 423–84; Wright (2002), 158–74; (2012a).

¹³⁰ González Palencia (1926–30), i. 117–40; cf. Miguel Franco (2022).

¹³¹ See e.g. Gamba (1998), 86; Estévez (2012).

¹³² Wright (2012b); Meouak (2015); Tilmatine (2021).

and renewal, they themselves were able to recognize and transcribe some common Arabic, probably from speech.¹³³ In this context, study of Arabic strophic poetry (*muwaššah*; plural *muwaššahāt*) from al-Andalus has revealed that, in a practice attested from the eleventh century but likely developing in the tenth, a minority feature a two-line concluding refrain (*kharja*; plural *kharajāt*) mixing colloquial Arabic and Romance. Until quite recently it was patriotically presented as the survival of a tradition indigenous to Iberia and stubbornly read in the context of Romance lyric, but the latest scholarship argues for a framework of Classical Arabic prosody (*arūḍ*) and origins in the simple popular Arabic couplet (*zajal*; plural *azjāl*). However interpreted, the 69 refrains with Romance text (43 in Arabic, 26 in Hebrew) reflect exactly the interaction which Eulogius and Alvarus denounced a century earlier still, with a 3:2 ratio of Latinate to Arabic constituent language.¹³⁴ In part Arabicization reflected conversion to Islam, but according to one much-debated model the mid-point in that process did not arrive until the mid-tenth century, when the geographer Ibn Ḥawqal (d. c. 978) could still meet more than one Christian peasant community numbering in the thousands, seemingly in the region due north of Córdoba.¹³⁵ Incentive to learn Arabic was more a product of its dominant sociocultural position, above all in the capital city which in due course would become famous for the caliphal library of al-Ḥakam II (961–76).¹³⁶ Here the historian Ibn al-Qūṭīya ('Son of the Gothic Woman', d. 977) tells us of Ibn Antunīyān al-Naṣrānī ('Son of Antonianus [and a] Nazarene'), a Christian who had mastered Arabic and achieved renown as a poet before converting to Islam for court preferment under the emir Muḥammad (852–86).¹³⁷ Samson, meanwhile, another devotee of grammar and Christian polemicist, admits in his *apologia* of 864 that he too had toiled for the regime, taking diplomatic letters bound for the Frankish king and turning them into Latin.¹³⁸

For both sides, however, a degree of bilingualism must have been normal. The record of a dispute in 987 between the villagers of Aguilaniu and Chuseu, north of Lleida, points to official Muslim oversight of court cases within the subject Christian population, as the local judge Fortún, a priest, operated *sub imperio Zamega aluazir* ('under the authority of Zamega the vizier').¹³⁹ Similarly, the

¹³³ Millet-Gérard (1984), 71–6; Wasserstein (1991, 1998); Mellado Rodríguez (2018); Sorber (2019); Monferrer-Sala (2020b), esp. 313–19; Wolf (2023).

¹³⁴ Corriente (1997), 70–121 and 268–332; (2008b), 229–76; cf. Hitchcock (1980); Jones (1988).

¹³⁵ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ*, in Romani Suay (1971), 63; Bulliet (1979), 114–27; cf. Harrison (2012); Bulliet (2017); Fierro (2017).

¹³⁶ Wasserstein (2012); Monferrer-Sala (2023).

¹³⁷ Ibn al-Qūṭīya, *Tārīkh iftitāḥ al-Andalus*, in James (2009), 115–16 (cf. 110–11); Coope (2017), 77–80.

¹³⁸ Samson, *Apologeticus*, in *SMuz* ii. 2.pr.9; Pleuger (2014); Busic (2019a), 556–8 and 561–74.

¹³⁹ Abadal y Vinyals (1955), 270; Salrach i Marès and Montagut i Estragués (2018), 98; Collins (1986a), 96–7.

recently rediscovered fragmentary original of a communiqué sent from the caliphal chancery to the count of Barcelona in the 950s confirms that Latin remained the *lingua franca* of the constant and convoluted diplomacy between the Christian and Muslim realms of the Peninsula.¹⁴⁰ Arabic annotation and translation of Latin texts began in the mid-ninth century, and could be controversial: Ḥafṣ ibn Albar al-Qūṭī ('the Goth', d. c. 961), possibly son or grandson of Alvarus, translated the Psalter into the Classical Arabic metre of *rajaz* (literally, 'spasm') in 889, recognizing in his verse preface the challenge of interpreting without reinterpreting the Vulgate text.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, these efforts ultimately embraced the Bible, select Visigothic secular law and Church councils, and the early fifth-century history of Orosius, and could in a context of bilingualism respond not only to a declining Christian use of Latin, but also to increasing Muslim interest in Iberia before al-Andalus.¹⁴² The crazy chronicle of Pseudo-Isidore seems to result from successive Latin-Arabic-Latin translations, potentially in the mid-tenth century: as such, when it refers to a king 'Gondolosoā', apparently Chindasuinth, as *sapientissimus in lingua barbara* ('most sagacious in the barbarian tongue') and dispatching *legatos ad barbaros* ('embassies to the barbarians'), should we understand it to be a Latin epithet for Germanic, or an Arabic one for Latin?¹⁴³ Passage between languages was not one-way, and the Arabic astronomical calendar of 'Arīb ibn Sa'īd, composed during the reign of al-Ḥakam II, was translated into Latin later in the tenth century, though the traditional attribution to Recemund, a Christian bishop in caliphal service and ambassador to Otto I (936–73), rests on collapsing three differently named persons into one.¹⁴⁴ The field most resistant to Arabicization was epigraphy, still being produced into the eleventh and early twelfth century, after other forms of written Latin cease to survive. In the main they are simple, standard epitaphs, which look to Visigothic and late-Roman models and change little with time, but they remain well executed and distributed widely. While publication is by no means complete, such Christian writing in Arabic seems to begin in the ninth century and pick up in the tenth, with graffiti on ceramics, columns, and bronzes.¹⁴⁵ Yet in what has been edited, for a definitely bilingual example we must wait until the epitaph for a certain John of 998, found at Palma del Río southwest of Córdoba, who used an alternative Arabic name of Bāsim ibn 'Abbās

¹⁴⁰ Baiges i Jardí and Puig i Ustrell (2019), 393; Collins (1990), 112–13; cf. El-Hajji (1970), esp. 55–118 and 125–54; Drocourt (2010); König (2023), 47–9.

¹⁴¹ Ḥafṣ ibn Albar al-Qūṭī, *Arabic Psalter*, in Koningsveld (2016), 202–3; Busic (2019b), 23–6; cf. Urvoy (1994).

¹⁴² See e.g. Koningsveld (1994); Aillet (2014); Monferrer-Sala (2017, 2020a); Penelas (2001); Sahner (2013); Elices Ocón (2021a, 2021b).

¹⁴³ *Chronica Pseudo-Isidoriana*, in *SMuz* ii. 18; cf. Piel and Kremer (1976), 29; Christys (2010).

¹⁴⁴ *Calendarium Cordubense*, in *SMuz* ii. 1265–330; Christys (2002), 108–34; Bongianino (2022), 106–7.

¹⁴⁵ Barceló (2019).

ibn ‘Umar when he was operating in Muslim society.¹⁴⁶ Even so, the biographer Abū Muḥammad al-Ruṣāṭī (d. 1147) retells an evocative parable originating with the chronicler Aḥmad al-Rāzī (d. 955) and almost certainly set in the mid-ninth century. The Umayyad governor of Mérida, where church columns were then being inscribed in Arabic, was an admirer of its antiquities: happening upon a carved marble slab, he asked for a translation, but only a decrepit old cleric could be found to identify it as Roman and interpret it.¹⁴⁷ The moral of this story? Latin epigraphic continuity was (or should be) marginal, if not moribund.

4.3.2 Complex Monolingualism

Comparing north and south gives the impression that Latin in the former was a living language, while in the latter it was dying. But was the living language in the north still Latin? This has been one of the great debates of early medieval Iberian linguistics: essentially, were there two independent languages, a written ‘Late Latin’ and a spoken ‘Early Romance’, or a single language, ‘Early Ibero-Romance’, with two different registers and an archaic spelling regime?¹⁴⁸ What is at stake here, for every historian, is the relationship between writing and speaking—of our sources to the world behind and beyond them. To take one of the charters which comprise most of our evidence for this period, does it merely stand for a cleric literate in Latin making notes on an illiterate lay society fluent in Romance, or is it perhaps a sinister sign of ‘temple literacy’, an exercise of power by one member of a closed elite caste? Alternatively, and crucially, could it be read aloud to, understood by, and engaged with by contemporaries, whatever the form of their education and culture?¹⁴⁹ Comment on *quod nuncupant uulgi* (‘what the common people call it’) or similar in the documentation is rare and limited to places seemingly with local names.¹⁵⁰ And while tenth- and eleventh-century glossaries and manuscript glossing at the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla in La Rioja, linking Latin words to what seem like Romance equivalents, have often been interpreted as the first signs of the emergence of ‘Old Spanish’, they document a spectrum of lexical variety but reveal no awareness of two distinct languages. The most satisfying solution to the problem is a ‘complex monolingualism’ modelled on the relationship between spoken and written French, or indeed on English: a language with a conservative written form capable of both recording and being pronounced to accommodate an evolving socially and geographically variable spoken form. In the paradigm proposed by Roger Wright,

¹⁴⁶ González Fernández (2016), 43; *SMuz* ii. 1341–65; cf. Martínez Núñez (2014), 65–6.

¹⁴⁷ Abū Muḥammad al-Ruṣāṭī, *Kitāb iqtibās al-anwār*, in Torres Calzada (2014), 243–4; cf. Catalán and Andrés (1975), 24; Manzano Moreno (2006), 326.

¹⁴⁸ See Wright (2013c, 2017).

¹⁴⁹ Barrett (2023a), 1–15.

¹⁵⁰ Ruiz Asencio (1987), 521; Ruiz Asencio and Ruiz Albi (2007), 9.

this continuum between a Late, Vulgar, or ‘Notarial’ Latin inextricable from Early Romance did not begin to fracture until Carolingian orthographic reforms reached the Catalan counties in the ninth century, and Cluniac norms began to be imposed upon the rest of the Christian north after the Council of Burgos mandated replacement of the Old Hispanic by the Roman rite in 1080.¹⁵¹

On occasion we catch sight of just how broadly that linguistic continuum stretched. The famous *nodicia de kesos* (‘listing of cheeses’) was written *circa* 974/5 not for posterity, but on the reverse side of a charter of 959 whereby a couple made a donation *post mortem* to the monastery of Rozuela, just south of León, with usufruct of some lands; the text could be part of managing that property, or simply be using the hair side of the parchment as scrap. By its informal nature, however, it is a unique case of writing free from the formulism typical of the documentation, and so its fate is typically to be cited as evidence for the ‘origins of Spanish’.¹⁵² Yet if we read it through comparison with another list of cheeses written on slate at Galinduste, south of Salamanca, in the late sixth or seventh century, it points instead to a long-term conservatism and continuity:

Notit[i]a de casios id est Cus[...] leuauit fromas + sep[tem...] Maurelus froma una Ioan[nes...] a + n liuertus froma un[a...]i r i[...].

Listing of cheeses: that is, Cus...took seven cheeses, Maurelus one cheese, John...the freedman one cheese...¹⁵³

Nodicia de kesos que espisit frater Semeno. In labore de fratres in ilo bacelare de cirka Sancte Iuste kesos V. In ilo alio de apate II kesos. En qu[e] puseron ogano kesos IIII. In ilo de Kastrelo I. In ila uinia maiore II. Que lebaron en fosado II ad ila tore. Que baron a Cegia II quando la taliaron ila mesa. II que lebaron Leione. II [...]que[...] alio [...] Vane Ece. Alio ke leba de sopbrino de Gomi de do[...]a[...] IIII que espiseron quando llo rege uenit ad Rocola. I qua Salvatore ibi uenit.

Listing of cheeses which brother Jimeno used up. In the work of the brothers on that vineyard near San Justo, five cheeses. On that other one of the abbot, two cheeses. In what they put down [planted?] for this year, four cheeses. On that one of Castrillo, one [cheese]. On that larger vineyard, two [cheeses]. What they took on moat work [military service?], two [cheeses], at that tower. What they took to Cea, two [cheeses], when they cut [wood] for that table. Two [cheeses] which they took to León. Two [cheeses]...which...another...[toponym?]. Another [cheese] which he took from the nephew of Gómez from...Four

¹⁵¹ Wright (1982), 104–260; (2002), 3–17 and 211–42; (2008); (2010–16); Vones (2007); Dworkin (2018), 3–16; cf. Emiliano (1991, 2005).

¹⁵² Fernández Catón (2004); Menéndez Pidal (1980), 24–5; Frank-Job and Selig (2016), 25–30; Böhmer (2018), 121–2.

¹⁵³ *PVis.* 11.

[cheeses] which they used up when the king came to Rozuela. One [cheese] when Salvador came there.¹⁵⁴

In three or four centuries, *notit[i]a* has become *nodicia*, while *casios* has become *kesos* (from *caseus* or *caseum*); the Visigothic evolution of *froma*, from *forma* (something like a ‘round of cheese’), has proved to be a linguistic dead end, missing from the later text and without equivalent in modern Spanish (though obviously *fromage* in modern French). There is slow change here, at least in some aspects of orthography and using the preposition *de* with the accusative case, but there is also striking coexistence of classical and Romance forms, as *casios* sits next to *id est* on slate, or *ogano* (from *hoc anno*; *hogaño* is a colloquialism of the Castilian countryside today) leads to *ibi uenit* on parchment. In the later text, the verbal forms stand out perhaps the most, yet for *espisit/espiseron* (Latin *expedire*), *puseron* (Latin *ponere*), and *lebaron* (Latin *leuare*), all ordinary usages in modern Spanish (*expedir*, *poner*, *llevar*), there is also *taliaron* (formed from the Latin noun *talea*), which exists in modern Spanish (*tajar*) but secondary to the standard *cor-tar* (Latin *curtare*). Both lists of cheeses are snapshots of a language looking backwards and forwards at once, uncertain of the course in either direction.¹⁵⁵

4.3.3 Accommodating Multilingualism

The advantage of complex monolingualism as a model lies in allowing for how Latin can flexibly accommodate registers and varieties of speech in a single written form. This is a fundamental aspect of the corpus of charters, which make room not only for a range of Early Ibero-Romance forms, but also for Basque and Arabic.¹⁵⁶ Of the other languages of the Visigothic era, British Celtic, Suevic, and Gothic are long gone, but so is Greek: there are no more ‘proper’ inscriptions, only a few short prayers, stamps, and seals of the eighth or ninth century, then nothing beyond some fossilized elements of the liturgy.¹⁵⁷ One intriguing exception is Andreas *episcopus de Grecia* (‘bishop of Greece’) and Gregorius *discipulus illius Pable clerici* (‘the student of Pávlos the cleric’), who witnessed a testament granted to the cathedral of San Salvador de Oviedo in 1012.¹⁵⁸ The surviving original parchment has ten brief lines of Greek in contemporary minuscule, as yet undeciphered, just to the right of their names, but absent any other evidence the bilingualism may have been on their part alone.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ Fernández Catón et al. (2003), 1b; see Pérez (2010), s.v. ‘fossatum’.

¹⁵⁵ Wright (1982), 173–5; Morala Rodríguez (2008); Díaz de Bustamante (2008); Velázquez-Mendoza (2021); see Menéndez Pidal, Lapesa, and García (2003), s.v. ‘ogano, ogan’.

¹⁵⁶ See e.g. Fernández Corral (2001–2); Pérez Rodríguez (2011).

¹⁵⁷ *IGEP* 202, 426, 482–6, 498, A II 4; Janeras (1995).

¹⁵⁸ García Larragueta (1962), 41.

¹⁵⁹ Vigil (1887), i. A 40, 2, pl. A II.

Hebrew tells a different story, and in two parts. The ninth century is generally the watershed for knowledge and use of the language in the European diaspora, or at least in high culture, and literary works do begin to survive in the Peninsula from the late tenth onwards, but written in al-Andalus.¹⁶⁰ The noted inscription of Rabbi Jacob, son of Rabbi Senior, from Mérida, has lately been re-dated to the early eighth century, soon after the Muslim conquest, and indicates that the public language of Jews initially remained the Latin of its text.¹⁶¹ By a century later, however, Hebrew was making inroads, and Bodo-Eleazar, the turbulent Frankish deacon who famously converted to Judaism in 838, may have picked it up in Zaragoza, or enough of it to cite in the original language passages common to Biblical polemic in his epistolary debate with Alvarus in 840, though they may both have relied upon Jerome instead.¹⁶² From a small number of Rabbinic responsa and records from the Cairo Genizah, and occasional mention in Arabic sources, one can reconstruct aspects of cultural and economic life in the urban Jewish communities of al-Andalus, especially at Córdoba and Lucena to the south, culminating with the emergence in the mid-tenth century of a class of scholars and courtiers in the capital such as Ḥasday ibn Shaḡrūt (d. 970), founder of a Talmudic academy and physician to the caliph ‘Abd al-Raḡmān III (912/29–61), but one can also exaggerate and romanticize this ‘golden age’ under the seductive influence of later Sephardic poetry.¹⁶³ In the Christian north, in contrast, the public language of Jews remained Latin for far longer: we can identify Jewish communities especially in and around the city of León, which Ḥasday himself visited in 941 and 956 as ambassador, and a Jewish quarter is attested from the later tenth century onwards, but when Jews are present in the documentary record, whether granting, receiving, or witnessing charters, it is in the Latin language.¹⁶⁴ There may have been just enough knowledge of Hebrew for one retelling of the discovery of the True Cross by the Empress Helena (d. c. 330) to put plausible if garbled words in the mouth of Judas Cyriacus, the Jew who revealed its whereabouts, but this legend, though preserved in a tenth-century passionary from the Castilian monastery of San Pedro de Cardeña, developed out of earlier versions dating back to the fifth century.¹⁶⁵

Basque presents a unique problem, in that whereas its speakers in Iberia pre-date the arrival of the Romans, substantial texts in the language do not appear until the sixteenth century, though the recent discovery in Navarra of the ‘Hand of Irulegi’, inscribed in the first century BCE, is an important corrective.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁰ Morag (1992); Lange (1996); cf. Valle (2003).

¹⁶¹ *JWE* 197; González Salinero (2021).

¹⁶² Riess (2019), 60–91; Lange (1996), 119–20.

¹⁶³ Brann (2000); Sivan (2000), 380–5; Toch (2013), 103–52; Gerber (2021); Ray (2023), 11–54; cf. Wasserstein (2015), 511–18 and 522–6; Cole (2007), 21–170.

¹⁶⁴ Martínez Peñín (2007); Carriedo Tejedo (2008); cf. Rodríguez Fernández (1969, 1976).

¹⁶⁵ *Inuentio Sanctae Crucis*, in Yarza Urquiola (2020a), 33, 10; Head (2000), 89–90.

¹⁶⁶ Trask (1997), 35–49; see Aiestarán, Gorrochategui, and Velaza (forthcoming).

Basques seem to have been at least partly outside the effective reach of late-Roman authority, judging by a letter of the Emperor Honorius from 407–11 referring to them menacing the city of Pamplona, and of Visigothic control too, as the metrical epitaph of Oppila (642) laments his heroic death in battle against them.¹⁶⁷ In the early Middle Ages, the Basque-speaking lands in the Peninsula stretched from the eastern frontier of Asturias-León across the Navarrese kingdom and into the Catalan counties, where the army of Charlemagne was ambushed by Basques at the Pyrenean pass of Roncesvalles (Errozabal, Orreaga) in 778, but the epigraphic and documentary record is entirely in Latin, if bristling with Basque onomastics.¹⁶⁸ Something of a step change can perhaps be traced in evidence of the eleventh century: the wealth of archaic personal and place-names present in a 1025 list of payments due in iron bars from villages in Álava to San Millán or the 1053 foundation charter of San Agustín Etxebarria, southeast of Bilbao, and especially a 1055 donation to the Aragonese monastery of San Juan de la Peña which casts the boundary clause in a blend of Latin and Basque.¹⁶⁹ Nonetheless, one can infer the use of the language from its implication in the development of its neighbours, such as the initial sound change from Latin *facere* ('to do') to Castilian *hacer*, though one here confronts a spectrum of explanations from lack of fluoride in Basque drinking water compromising the relevant teeth to the safer if more indirect influence which contact and bilingualism can exert on choosing between existing variants.¹⁷⁰ This is part of a broader pattern of contact perceptible in the San Millán glosses of the late eleventh century, which include two Basque equivalents for Latin phrases or clauses.¹⁷¹ But it can be identified earlier in the still unpublished cartulary of San Miguel de Froncea, a monastery situated to the east of Burgos. The toponym comes from the Basque words *haran* and *luze* ('valley' and 'long'), and the charters themselves recognize this fact, referring alternately to the *loco quem uocitant Franunceam* ('place which they name Froncea'), as in 932, or the *locum quod uocant Valle Longum* ('place which they name Long Valley'), as in 996.¹⁷² The etymology presupposes both bilingual awareness and comfort with incorporating Basque elements into otherwise wholly standard Latin records.

¹⁶⁷ Lacarra (1945), 268–70; ICERV 287; Larrañaga Elorza (1994); Moreno Resano (2011); Andreu Pintado (ed.) (2009); Collins (1986b), 31–98.

¹⁶⁸ See e.g. Michelena (1990), 21–38; Azkarate Garai-Olaun and García Camino (1996); Ruiz Asencio, Ruiz Albi, and Herrero Jiménez (2010); Collins (1986b), 99–179.

¹⁶⁹ García Andreua and Peterson (2010), 583; Irigoyen (1986), 212–13; Ubieto Arteta (1962–3), 117; Collins (1986b), 194–5.

¹⁷⁰ Trask (1997), 415–29; Wright (2002), 21–5 and 299–301; Echenique Elizondo (2008); Dworkin (2012), 26–8; cf. Quilis (1996–7).

¹⁷¹ Michelena (1990), 39–49 (esp. 41–4).

¹⁷² Oviedo, Biblioteca de la Universidad, MS 456 (late 14th/15th c.), fols 1r–v and 12v; see Peterson (2017), 217–18 and 228–31, who is preparing an edition of the cartulary.

The incidence of Arabic in the documentation, however, is great enough to sustain a cottage industry of scholarship, and admits of certain patterns susceptible to historicizing. The brief Muslim conquest of Galicia in the eighth century may lie behind a moderate representation of Arabic personal names in the charters of monasteries later established in the region, for instance, while the longer period of Muslim rule in La Rioja, lasting into the ninth, is visible in a definite substrate of Arabic toponyms, though either or both could be the consequence of migration, acculturation, or even Berber settlement as much as simply Islamic political authority.¹⁷³ The corpus is full of Arabisms, words borrowed for a broad range of objects (household and religious furnishings, luxury trade goods, farming tools) and a wide variety of concepts (administrative, economic, and judicial terminology, military operations, customs and habits, legal status, and ethnic origin).¹⁷⁴ They speak to multiple contacts across permeable state and linguistic borders, against the background of conquest and reconquest, and each borrowing tells its own story: the use of the Arabic word *al-fitna* ('civil war') for many of the rebellions by the nobility of Asturias-León against the kings of the late tenth and early eleventh century reflects how high politics tended to spill over the Christian-Muslim frontier from both sides, while perhaps also serving to condemn what were basically power struggles as attacks on the integrity of a Christianized *ummah* or commonwealth of believers.¹⁷⁵ Multiple modes of transmission lie behind this enrichment of Latin with Arabic, and many were peaceful, just as the mingling of bloodlines led the label *Sarraceno*, first used for both Arab and Berber Muslims, on a journey eventually to become a proper name or patronymic for Christians too.¹⁷⁶

Normally such adoptions are presented to us as accomplished fact, vocabulary in use, but on occasion we can glimpse how linguistic accommodation operated in practice. The monastery of Lorvão was founded in the late ninth century near the River Mondego in central Portugal, a region which changed hands from Muslim to Christian rule four times between the eighth and the eleventh, and its twelfth-century cartulary preserves two charters from 1016/17, drawn up at a time when the area was under caliphal control.¹⁷⁷ Both record sales made by Muslims to the abbot of Lorvão. In one, the vendor Zuleiman iben Giarah Aciki delimited the property with reference to a hill named after a certain Iben Zuleimen, and sold it for the price of twenty silver *kazimi*, dirhams taking their name from Qāsim ibn Khālid (d. 944), master of the mint at Córdoba

¹⁷³ Hitchcock (1990); Peterson (2009, 2011), with full references; Corriente, Pereira, and Vicente (2015–22), v. 23–107.

¹⁷⁴ Corriente (2004, 2008a); Oliver Pérez (2004); Dworkin (2012), 81–117.

¹⁷⁵ Martínez Sopena (2004, 2008); Aillet (2011); see Oliver Pérez (2004), s.v. 'alfétena, alfetana, alfetene'; Corriente (2008a), s.v. 'alfétena'.

¹⁷⁶ Oliver Pérez (1994); González-Blanco García (2006).

¹⁷⁷ Fernández Catón et al. (2008), 9–10; Aillet (2009).

synonymous with high-quality coinage.¹⁷⁸ In the other, Mahomat son of Abderahmen grandson of Harit expressed his lineage with the Latin *filius de* and *neptus de* instead of the Arabic *ibn*, clearly conversant with both forms. The two charters are dated by the Islamic Hijra calendar to the *mense ragiab* ('month of Rajab'), and witnessed by men with Arabic names. What is most notable is the light touch of scribal adaptation: land passed from Muslim to Christian in standard Latin diplomatic, with only slight alterations to allow for religious sensibilities, most notably substituting in the neutral God for the Trinity in the invocation, and dropping Christ and the saints entirely from the sanction. The result is an assimilation of Arab-Muslim onomastics and terminology into a conservative documentary Latin framework of business otherwise as usual.¹⁷⁹

4.3.4 Continuing Formulism

Even as charters accommodated a varied and diverse linguistic environment, however, they remained fundamentally formulaic. Just as on slate, so also on parchment, some emerge unaltered from the models collected in the Visigothic formulary, others play with elements of the rhetoric and legalism which they contain. Mostly it occurred at several removes from any actual formulary book, much less the Visigothic formulary as we have it; scribes reached for older charters to provide models for drafting newer ones.¹⁸⁰ This causes the same problem of evidence when it comes to representation of direct speech: virtually all 'testimony' in early medieval Iberian court cases turns out to be repurposed from one text to another, subject to contraction or expansion.¹⁸¹ There was a rich array of formulaic options which scribes tapped to varying degrees, like ecclesiastical writers mining the text of the Bible, but though there are regional patterns, they correspond to scribal and scriptorium practices more than to dialects.¹⁸² As such, the corpus of documentation has a ballast of language dating back via the Visigothic era to the world of late-Roman law, which weighs down the formal written Latin of the early Middle Ages. We can perceive the imprint of that framing in every charter, such as by comparing a brief extract from an example of 943, preserved in the twelfth-century cartulary of Celanova in southern Galicia, with its closest Visigothic model:

Ego Rudesindus episcopus, tibi liberte mee Muzalha salutem. Incertum uite tempus est, eo quod mortali ducimur casu, quia nec initium nascendi nouimus nec

¹⁷⁸ See Oliver Pérez (2004), s.v. 'cazmí, kazmi, hazumi'; Corriente (2008a), s.v. 'cazeno'; Freudenhammer (2022).

¹⁷⁹ Barrett (2022). ¹⁸⁰ Barrett (2023a), 107–15.

¹⁸¹ Carvajal Castro (2017), 30–41 and 44–6.

¹⁸² Davies (2007), 91–3; (2016), 95–120; (2019).

finem scire ualemus, cum ab hac luce celerius transeamus, atque prophetico eloquio docti qui dicit...

I, Bishop Rosendo, to you my freedman Muzalha, greetings. A lifetime is uncertain, in how we are brought to our deathly fall, for we are neither aware of the beginning of our birth nor are we able to learn our end, when we should so swiftly cross over from this light; and in the prophetic speech of the sage who says...¹⁸³

Ill. ill. liberto nostro salutem. Incertum uitae tempus, quo mortali ducimur nulli cognitus est dies, quia nec initium nascendi nouimus dum in hac uita uenimus, nec finem scire posumus dum a seculo presenti transimus...

X, to our freedman Y, greetings. A lifetime is uncertain: the day on which we are brought to death is known to no one, for we are neither aware of the beginning of our birth, when we came into this life, nor can we learn our end, when we cross over from the present world...¹⁸⁴

The charter is a grant of manumission by Bishop Rosendo (d. 977), the founder of Celanova, to his slave or dependant, and the address and preamble have been altered only slightly from the formulary. At the end of what is quoted here, the scribe has copied out Isaiah 58:6, 'Loose the bands of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke', a Scriptural injunction to liberate men further framing the act in the late antique Latin of the Vulgate Bible. As the text continues, the sense of anachronism increases, for Rosendo grants his new freedman Roman citizenship and a *peculium* to go with it.¹⁸⁵

How can we explain this profound cultural conservatism in language, and what were its consequences? The kingdom of Asturias-León, of which Galicia formed one part, defined itself in a certain sense negatively: not a new realm, nor a new dynasty, but a government-in-exile, the continuation of the Visigothic kingdom, in mountain redoubt awaiting restoration. To make the case its kings from Alfonso II (791–842) or Alfonso III (866–910) onwards deliberately did not do much of what kings ordinarily would. They did not issue new laws; they did not hold new Church councils; they did not set out new procedures for recording court cases, making donations or sales, or agreeing exchanges; they did not coin new money; they did not sponsor monastic or liturgical renewal. In every respect, the old forms were allowed to suffice, and from this rhetoric of legitimacy through continuity flowed a particular Latinity of rootedness in a past made present.¹⁸⁶ The legal culture of the charter therefore carried on as it had in the former age, and indeed the scribe continued to stock the Visigothic law code in his mental

¹⁸³ Sáez and Sáez (2000), 76. ¹⁸⁴ FV 2.

¹⁸⁵ Carzolio de Rossi (1998); Córcoles Olaitz (2006).

¹⁸⁶ Barrett (2020), 81–92; Deswarte (2003); Bonch Reeves (2016), 153–94.

library, deploying it in a range of modes, from full quotation to brief distillation. Two further examples from Galician monasteries can stand for the rest, one a confession from 858 in the archive of Sobrado dos Monxes, the other a testament granted to San Xulián de Samos in 978, both preserved by high medieval cartularies. Each brief extract is paired here with its legal reference:

Commiscui me in adulterio cum seruo Hermegildi nomine Ataulfo.

I have mixed myself up in adultery with the slave of Hermegildo by the name of Ataulf.¹⁸⁷

Si ingenua mulier seruo suo uel proprio liberto se in adulterio miscuerit, aut forsitan eum maritum habere uoluerit, et ex hoc manifesta probatione conuincitur, occidatur.

If a freeborn woman has mingled herself in adultery with her slave or her own freedman, or perhaps has wished to have him as a husband, and is convicted of this by direct evidence, she should be killed.¹⁸⁸

Si maritus mulieri de quibuscumque aut de quantocumque donationem uoluerit, facere liberam habeat potestatem.

If a husband has wished [to make] a gift to his wife of any [property] or of however much, she should have free authority to do [whatever she chooses with it].¹⁸⁹

Si mulier a marito extra dotem de quibuscumque rebus, quacumque donatione uel profligatione acquisitis aut illi debitis, quoquo tempore quodcumque donatum acceperit... si ex ipso coniugio filii non fuerint procreati, quidquid mulier de rebus sibi donatis facere elegerit liberam habeat potestatem.

If a wife has received from her husband any present at any time beyond the dowry of any property acquired by gift or settlement or owed to him... if children have not been produced from that marriage, the wife should have free authority to do whatever she chooses with the property presented to her.¹⁹⁰

In the first, the 'speaker', whose name is Letasia, confesses in the characteristic language of Visigothic adultery law, even though the scribe has drawn specifically on the provision applying to sex with her own slave rather than one belonging to another. This is one of many such confessions, each referring to the code, and ultimately to a clause that any public authority may bring a charge and stand to benefit from the penalty imposed on the perpetrator; landlords took full advantage to enrich themselves, transmuted text into power. In the second, to justify the granters, Ermegildo and Eldonza, endowing their estate in pious gift, the

¹⁸⁷ Loscertales de García de Valdeavellano (1976), i. 75.

¹⁸⁹ Lucas Álvarez (1986), 132.

¹⁹⁰ LV 5.2.4.

¹⁸⁸ LV 3.2.2.

scribe has distilled a complex set of rules, on a wife receiving property from her husband outside the dowry and the conditions with respect to children under which she could dispose of it, down to a simple supporting statement using language from the code itself. Visigothic inheritance law recurs often as the framework for donations and testaments; this scribe knew it well enough to compose originally, and yet still textually.¹⁹¹

4.4. Conclusion: Latin between Text and Speech

Early medieval scribes internalized in memory and replicated in writing the language of late-Roman and Visigothic legal and documentary culture, but they spoke that language too. Confirmation of a charter relied on two oral processes: the swearing of oaths, such as the *condiciones sacramentorum*, originating ultimately in text, and the reading aloud of the document to the assembled parties and witnesses. This is simply taken for granted: as the Galician aristocrat Ilduara Ériz put it in a testament of 925, *presenti adfui et propriis auribus audiui* ('I was present for and heard it with my own ears'), even as the ten witnesses to a pious donation by Egilo and her sister Goto to Cardeña in 950 *legendo audierunt et sic rouorauerunt* ('heard it from reading and thus confirmed it').¹⁹² 'Reading' a charter in reality meant listening to the scribe read it: text was heard, both in transaction and at court, hence when fifteen parties made gifts to the monastery of San Mamés de Obarenes northeast of Burgos in 1009, they called the document which they had listened to being read aloud *hanc dicta uel scripta* ('the spoken and written').¹⁹³ The key figure bridging the two was the scribe, who when speaking his writing adjusted it from conservative text to evolving speech. The challenge came not from vocabulary, syntax, or phonetics, but some aspects of grammar such as nominal morphology; nonetheless, the scribe could manage them by a 'sympathetic' or 'comprehensive' reading, anticipating the expectations of his audience. This would in turn have called for some *praelectio* ('preparatory study') to flag those passages requiring register adjustment and obscurities needing careful pronunciation or elucidation, but Isidore of Seville expected no less of his reader.¹⁹⁴ For listeners, text would have been 'read as Romance... felt as Latin': when they first heard a charter, much probably sounded idiosyncratically 'notarial', or old-fashioned, but only the first time, as constant cycling of the written back into the spoken kept both registers securely in contact.¹⁹⁵ The process of cycling may be

¹⁹¹ Castro (1999); Barrett (2020–1), 31–49; (2023a), 272–8 and 292–300.

¹⁹² Sáez and Sáez (1996), 23; Fernández Flórez and Serna Serna (2017), 49.

¹⁹³ García Andreva and Peterson (2010), 421.

¹⁹⁴ Wright (1994), 165–208; (2005); (2012c); (2013a).

¹⁹⁵ Pensado (1991), 201; Menéndez Pidal (1980), esp. 454–60; Álvarez Maurín (1993, 1995); Pérez González (1999); (2008), esp. 86–98.

further illuminated by two famous sets of glosses from San Millán and Santo Domingo de Silos in Castilla, whence all debate over the origins of the Romance languages in the Peninsula proceeds.¹⁹⁶ Marginal notes respectively on a series of sermons and chapters of a penitential, sources of authority for right practice in life not so far removed from law, they were aids for explaining them in more familiar terms; both are now dated to the late eleventh century, when Cluniac clergy from beyond the Pyrenees were arriving in the ‘Reconquest’ kingdom of León-Castilla and needed assistance in what Iberian priests and monks did as a matter of course, adjusting from text to speech.¹⁹⁷ Yet such aids form part of a glossing tradition stretching back to Isidore, the ‘synonymous style’, and the *Liber glossarum*, an explanatory tendency traceable as early as antiquity itself.¹⁹⁸ All were tools to be used in moving among registers, converting between expressive modes. As replies to the lexical question of conservatism in writing versus evolution in speaking, they were variations on the scribal habit of updating boundary clauses when copying them. The burden of the scribe was to ensure that old texts fit new realities; as they remained current, they had to be understood.¹⁹⁹

We tend to approach the study of language in history through the effect of the spoken on the written, squinting at change over time through this lens, but how did the written affect the spoken? We have seen two constraints on Latin in late antique and early medieval Iberia: formulism, or the recourse to old models for drafting new charters, and reading as hearing, or the recycling of text into speech. Owing to the uneven distribution of the evidence, we know far more about both phenomena in the centuries after 711 than before, but we may extend the pattern back in time given the demonstrable continuity of legal and documentary traditions.²⁰⁰ What then were the consequences? In the late seventh century, our friend Valerius composed a letter to the monks of El Bierzo praising the example of Egeria, who had left an account of her pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the mid-380s. Of her language—by then three centuries old and a blending of Vulgar Latin, which she used to report her observations and conversations, and Ecclesiastical Latin, which she employed to filter her itinerary through Scriptural history—he said nothing.²⁰¹ This lack of notice should surprise us more than it does: from our vantage point the centuries may easily collapse together, but they remain centuries, a long passage of time separating Egeria from Valerius. The explanation for his silence lies in formulism and recycling, which involve a steady process of adjustment, like the thought experiment of Eulogius extending his

¹⁹⁶ Hernández Alonso et al. (1993); Menéndez Pidal (1980), 1–24; Böhmer (2018), 122–5; cf. Pountain (2001), 19–28.

¹⁹⁷ Wright (2002), 232–42; cf. Gimeno Menéndez and García Turza (2010).

¹⁹⁸ Wright (2006); cf. Adams (2003a), 450.

¹⁹⁹ Wright (2013b); Barrett (2023a), 171–6.

²⁰⁰ Collins (1990).

²⁰¹ Valerius of El Bierzo, *Epistola beatissime Egerie laude*, in Díaz y Díaz (2006), 228–41; Löfstedt (1911); Väänänen (1987); Moure Casas (2006).

journey northwards and arriving in time to hear the Strasbourg Oaths in 842. The slow daily progress of overland travel through subtly changing zones of a dialect continuum or the regular reading aloud of conservative writing brought comparably constant contact with other or older Latin, easing the friction between them.²⁰² And encountering Latin from the past was hardly confined to transaction and litigation in land: consider the sources and practices of the liturgy, wherein late antique Latin was made omnipresent by daily performance of the Bible in the Old Hispanic rite, running through the whole Psalter, for instance, in the night services of a single week.²⁰³ Braulio of Zaragoza had written a life of Aemilianus (San Millán, d. 573) in the 640s; his Latin was echoed back to the ears of worshippers in the eleventh century as the office of the saint included its entire text as a series of lessons.²⁰⁴ Ildefonsus of Toledo too had written his synonymizing treatise in praise of the Virgin Mary in response to the establishment of her feast in 656, to be read in full during the morning office, and this still formed part of the Marian liturgy at Toledo as late as the thirteenth century.²⁰⁵ Perhaps we can find in the trends of such encounters the logic behind archaizing episodes in other fields of Latin. Perhaps, too, recycling of the lower and middle registers of Visigothic Latin combined to make the upper register more accessible, and pushed those seeking exclusivity to greater heights of intricate obscurity.

But it was in the everyday world of charters that written and spoken Latin most often met and renewed their connection. When Letasia confessed to adultery in 858, whatever she had said in court would have been read back to her from the official record, adapted into the language of a law code from the mid-seventh century, incorporating *antiquae* laws from the sixth. Did she make any more comment than Valerius had before her? Or had she even been obliged to use that past Latin for her spoken confession? In 952, when a certain Velasco Hálliz lost his dispute with the monastery of Abellar just north of León, *ex ore suo proprio profatus est* ('he pronounced with his very own mouth') the terms of the sanction clause barring him from any further action.²⁰⁶ In the early Middle Ages, the Christian north of the Peninsula was a highly textual society, not only in the number of charters manifestly in circulation, but in the degree to which those documents cite other texts, namely charters, Visigothic secular and canon law, Holy Scripture, monastic rules, and a range of literature. This wealth of charters and their intertextuality in part made up for the lacking upper and middle registers of Latin, deeply embedded in the corpus, whereas in the Muslim south, as documentary practice gave way to Arabic, there was nothing left to ground those registers. Yet in the north we can also map early medieval change over time, as a model for thinking about what late antique trends in Latin are simply no longer

²⁰² Wright (2002), 175–90.

²⁰³ Hornby and Ihnat (2019).

²⁰⁴ Boynton (2002).

²⁰⁵ Ihnat (2016, 2019); Janini and Serrano (1969), 72–3.

²⁰⁶ Sáez (1987), 256; cf. Everett (2003), 132–8; Balzaretto (2006).

recoverable from what survives. Of the corpus of documentation overall, more than a third of charters cite other texts: in Asturias-León and Navarra in the period between 911 and 1031, for which we have representative and reliable data, the annual figure grows from 30% to 40%. For secular legal citation, the overall rate is about a tenth, the annual figure rising from 5% to 15%.²⁰⁷ As time passed, in other words, the charter came to feature steadily more legalese, recycled into speech through the reading aloud of its text. Put another way, if you had lived through the tenth century, you would have heard more and more seventh-century Latin. The basic conservatism of Iberian Latinity is a product of this framing, as the formulaic charters central to everyday life echoed the language of the past back into the present.

²⁰⁷ Barrett (2023a), 261–3 and 364–5.

GAUL AND THE GERMANIES

Gaulish in the Late Empire (c. 200–600 CE)

Alderik H. Blom

5.1. Linguistic and Historical Background

Gaulish was a Celtic language spoken in pre-Roman and Roman Gaul on the non-Italian side of the Alpine range, that is, in the *Tres Galliae* and *Gallia Narbonensis*. It belonged to the Celtic branch of the Indo-European family tree of languages. This Celtic branch is itself further subdivided between *Continental Celtic*, a group of languages attested in antiquity and comprising, besides Gaulish in Gaul, also Celtiberian in Spain and Cisalpine Celtic (Lepontic and Cisalpine Gaulish) in northern Italy, and *Insular Celtic*, the Celtic languages of the British Isles, attested from the later-Roman period (see Chapter 8). Insular Celtic also includes Breton, which is the result of early medieval migration from Britain to the Continent.

Despite our comparatively good linguistic grasp of this ancient Celtic language, our understanding of many of the extant Gaulish inscriptions continues to be imperfect. One key reason for this is that many texts have reached us in a fragmentary state. Even when we can read them with apparent success, the lengthier texts displaying a more elaborate syntax remain opaque to us and tend to generate multiple interpretations. A further difficulty is the possibility that some of these texts present a language mixture or even, in the case of magical texts, the use of non-lexical elements (*voces magicae*).¹ Finally, the *scriptio continua* frequently makes it difficult to identify coherent syntactic sequences, as often no word-dividers or spaces are used.² Still, the corpus is growing steadily and our knowledge is constantly being refined.³

In Gaul, the Gaulish language was written both in the Greek alphabet and in the Latin script.⁴ These Gallo-Latin inscriptions seem to appear from around the Caesarian period onwards.⁵ Since this chapter deals with Gaulish in the late

¹ Blom (2012b). ² Mullen and Ruiz Darasse (2020), 774.

³ In particular through the collaborative work of the RIIG project <https://riig.huma-num.fr/> [accessed 20 April 2022].

⁴ Mullen and Ruiz Darasse (2020), 757–71.

⁵ However, for the uncertainty of the dating of Gaulish inscriptions, see Mullen and Ruiz Darasse (2020).

Empire and beyond, this is the only corpus considered here.⁶ The epigraphic practice in Latin script appears with a wider range of functions and on a greater range of materials than in Greek script and includes, apart from lapidary inscriptions also spindle whorls, fire-dogs, and tiles. The census of Gallo-Latin inscriptions made recently by the AELAW network counted the following published Gallo-Latin texts: 270 coin legends, over 250 inscriptions on pottery, 17 epitaphs and other inscriptions on stone, and 33 inscriptions on metal, mostly lead (13) and bronze (15).⁷ Ceramic appears to have been the preferred medium for Gaulish inscriptions in both Gallo-Greek and Gallo-Latin.⁸ By contrast, the total corpus of Latin texts found in Gaul is very much larger: at least 5,600 inscriptions of a religious nature alone from the *Tres Galliae*, *Narbonensis*, and the *Germanies*, to which must be added about 110 curse tablets.⁹

Of all attested Continental Celtic languages, Gaulish is known to have persisted the longest as a community language. It is widely assumed that it continued to be spoken alongside Latin and the various other vernaculars of Gaul, such as Aquitanian and, perhaps, the Germanic and Insular Celtic dialects introduced later by new groups of immigrants,¹⁰ for two or possibly more centuries after its written use had petered out, probably in the third or fourth century.¹¹ This makes it the only Palaeoeuropean language to have coexisted in writing alongside Latin until far into the imperial period.¹² Moreover, during that period Gaulish must have constituted a substrate influence on the regional variety of spoken, if not so much of written, Latin, as can be gauged from a variety of Romance dialects that survived into modern times (see Section 5.2.3 below).

This chapter discusses the rather limited source material on which this generally accepted scenario is based. Thus, the chronology and the likely course of the process of this, in the end, unstable Latin–Gaulish bilingualism resulting in the eventual disappearance of the latter, will be established for as much as the available evidence allows. First, however, the historical background of late antique and early medieval Gaul must be briefly sketched.

The so-called crisis of the third century ended a period of relative calm. The first raids by Germanic groups took place in 197 CE, and these incursions were to become more frequent. The Gallic Empire was formed during 260–74 CE, partly in order to protect the Rhine borders against invaders. Probably under Diocletian (284–305 CE) and Maximian (286–305 CE), the restructuring of the imperial

⁶ For the Gallo-Greek inscriptions in historical context, see Mullen (2013a, 2024a).

⁷ Mullen and Ruiz Darasse (2020), 759. For the AELAW network, see <http://aelaw.unizar.es/> [accessed 20 April 2022].

⁸ Mullen and Ruiz Darasse (2020), 760. ⁹ Cazanove and Estarán (2023), 179.

¹⁰ Kerkhof (2018), 31; Falc'hun (1963), 29–40; Fleuriot (1978), 75–83. Fleuriot (1980), 51–78, argued that Gaulish was still a spoken language in Armorica by the time of the Breton settlement. These theories, however, are by no means generally accepted; cf. Schmidt (1986).

¹¹ Broderick (2014); Blom (2009a). ¹² Cazanove and Estarán (2023), 178.

administration was accompanied by the establishment of two new dioceses—one centred on Trier and another on Vienne—and the further strengthening of the defensive fortifications along the Rhine *limes*. In the end, the defensive line along the Rhine was exchanged for a new row of fortresses and restored town-walls throughout northern Gaul, which followed the Roman road from Boulogne-sur-Mer to Kortrijk and Tongeren in what is now Belgium,¹³ all this in order to respond more adequately to incursions across the border by raiding parties.¹⁴ The last decades of the third century are therefore marked by the unrest caused by these groups and, additionally, by revolts of so-called *bagaudae*, rebellious residents of rural Gaul and Spain, probably triggered by fiscal pressure.¹⁵ Significantly, this is occasionally identified as a Gaulish term **bāg-auda*, meaning ‘fighter’; it may be related to Old Irish terms like *bág* (< **bāgā*) ‘combat’ and *bágach* (< **bāgākos*) ‘bellicose’.¹⁶

After the reforms of the third century, the northern border therefore no longer constituted a single military defence line, but rather a military defence zone.¹⁷ The countryside in these parts was increasingly settled by land-seeking immigrants and treaty-bound colonists (*dediticii* or *foederati*), whereas many of the Gallo-Roman estates on the northern border appear to have been abandoned in the course of the fourth century.¹⁸ Thus, even if recent research has found signs of continuous human settlement here and there,¹⁹ in many other parts of the Rhine frontier zone the villas and fields that once formed the lifeline of the Roman border troops fell into disuse, forests spreading in every direction.²⁰

After the northern border defence was largely abandoned in the early fifth century, the political geography of the area changed even more markedly.²¹ In the course of the fifth century, then, Gaul increasingly changed from a constituent part of the Roman Empire into a rather introverted society consisting mainly of semi-independent Gallo-Roman warlords and estate-holders.²² Indeed, some of these withdrew from Roman society altogether and established virtually independent communities defended by their own peasant militias by tightening their hold on the land-bound peasantry,²³ indicating that, in the course of the fifth century, Roman authority in Gaul had been seriously, and fatally, disrupted. A notable case of this development is the fifth-century kingdom centred on the city of Soissons. It was governed by autonomous Gallo-Roman warlords who had few

¹³ Bulet (2017), 51–3; Reddé et al. (2006), 21–66; Van Durme (1996), 168; Petrikovitz (1971).

¹⁴ Schrijver (2014), 142; Van Durme (2002), 11. ¹⁵ Krause (2003).

¹⁶ Delamarre (2003), 63–4. ¹⁷ Kerkhof (2018), 29.

¹⁸ Heeren (2017); Kooistra (1996), 10. ¹⁹ Van Thienen (2016).

²⁰ Kerkhof (2018), 29; De Planhol (1994), 68; Tummers (1962), 8.

²¹ Drinkwater (1992), 216.

²² Esmonde Cleary (2013), 42–96; Drinkwater and Elton (1992).

²³ Drinkwater (1992), 214–15.

ties to either Italy or Byzantium, featuring a series of rulers ending with Syagrius,²⁴ the warlord who was defeated by Clovis, king of the Salian Franks, in 486 CE. During the fifth century, then, the northern half of Gaul had become politically separated from the rest of the Western Empire.

By this stage even southern Gaul appears to have become increasingly detached from the Empire. For example, in 469 CE the Gallo-Roman prefect Arvandus was tried for treason in Rome because he had written that Gaul ought to be divided between the Burgundians, the Goths, and, presumably, even if they are not mentioned, the Gallo-Roman estate-holders.²⁵ In this letter, so Sidonius Apollinaris tells us (*Ep.* 1.7), Arvandus referred to the western Emperor Anthemius (467–72 CE) as a Greek ruler with whom no peace should be sought.²⁶ Such ‘barbarian’ kingdoms were indeed formed in fifth-century Gaul. The Salian Franks established themselves in the north between the Rhine and the Somme; the Alamanni in Helvetia and the northeast; the Burgundians in the plains of the Saône and the Rhône; the Visigoths throughout the southwest. Clovis (466–511) created a kingdom comprising the majority of Gaul.²⁷

In order to determine, with our limited means, the history of the Gaulish language during those last centuries of the Roman Empire and, possibly, the early Middle Ages, we must now consider in more detail the three types of available evidence. These consist, first of all, of the corpus of Gaulish texts allegedly dating from the period after 200 CE, which will be discussed in Section 5.2.1. As the language is unlikely to have died out at the same time as our epigraphic material disappears, however, we shall also in Section 5.2.2 consider external testimonies hinting at the continuing existence of Gaulish, in which several Greek and Latin authors identify specific names, forms of speech, or lexical items as ‘Gaulish’ (*gallice*, *lingua gallica*) or ‘Celtic’ (*celtice*, *lingua celtica*). The third type of evidence, finally, derives from the study of modern Romance dialects and substrate theory, which to a certain extent indicates where Gaulish survived the longest, and gives us some clues about the nature of Latin–Gaulish bilingualism. This chapter finishes with a, necessarily speculative, Section 5.3, which sketches how the process of bilingualism and language death may have unfolded.

5.2. Evidence for the Survival of Gaulish

5.2.1 Middle and Late Gaulish Epigraphy

The relevant epigraphic evidence belongs to the so-called ‘Late Gaulish’ period. A word first needs to be said, therefore, about the periodization of the Gaulish language, an area in which, with the growth of the available corpus, some headway

²⁴ MacGeorge (2002), 80; James (1988), 67–77.

²⁵ Kerkhof (2018), 31.

²⁶ Anderson (1936), ii. 371.

²⁷ Barrett and Woudhuysen (2016b); Lafond (2004), 673.

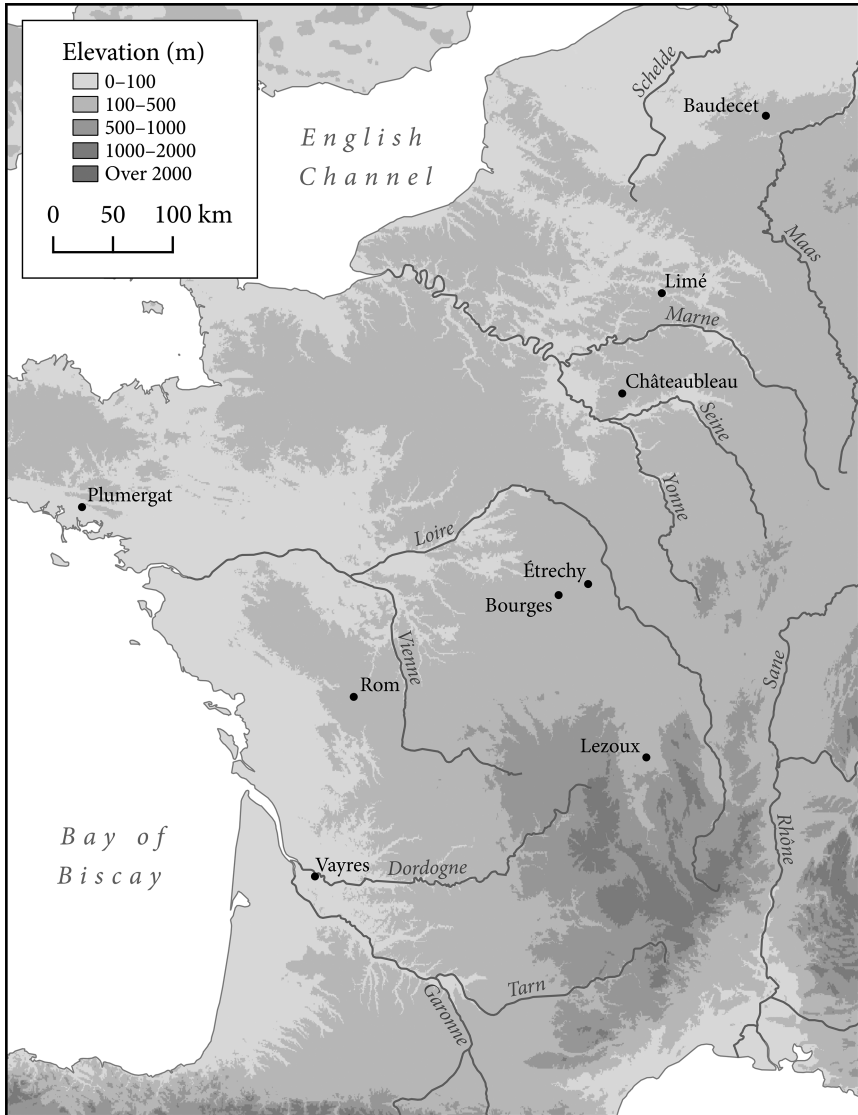


Fig. 5.1 Map of find-spots of Late Gaulish inscriptions

has been made in recent years, though we should be cautious and bear in mind that most dates assigned to Gaulish texts are only an approximation. Some of these inscriptions were found centuries ago, and their archaeological context is now completely lost to us.

According to Stifter, *Middle Gaulish* is the language during the period from, approximately, the beginning of the Christian era to around 200 CE. Most of the longer extant Gaulish texts, such as the inscriptions on metal from Chamalières and Larzac, the potters' administrative texts from La Graufesenque, and the

calendars can be assigned to this period.²⁸ Stifter notes, based on the traditional dating in the *RIG* corpus, that the great bulk of the Gallo-Latin inscriptions in Latin script can roughly be assigned to the first century CE. He argues that the retreat from public epigraphy in the Gaulish language occurred early due to pressure from the Roman epigraphic habit.²⁹ Even so, we should be cautious since much of the dating in *RIG* is based on traditional historical perspectives on ‘Romanization’ rather than, for example, the intrinsic dating of objects or stratigraphy, and should not be used in circular argumentation. Extant documents from the Middle Gaulish period betray engagement with Roman epigraphic cultures, but also the development of local epigraphic specificities, and a persistence of a written vernacular language resilient enough to cater for a range of communicative situations and registers.

Late Gaulish refers to the final period of the language, which lasted from around 200 CE until its death at an undetermined date around the middle of the first millennium.³⁰ Extant texts from this period are much rarer than from the preceding one.³¹ Nine probably late examples will be discussed here. These ‘late’ texts show unambiguous signs of a language still developing, albeit very probably under strong influence from the regional Latin superstrate.³² During the Late Gaulish period the language pulled back further from the urban centres into rural retreats, probably accompanied by a loss of social prestige of its speakers.

It is significant, perhaps, that, with the exception of the stone inscription of Plumergat (L-15)—allegedly late, but impossible to date with precision—all later Gaulish texts are found on *instrumenta* and appear to continue the various genres of writing attested for the Middle Gaulish period. Thus, there continue to be potter’s accounts, now from Vayres (L-27), an amorous pledge scratched on a vase from Lezoux (L-70), a possible funerary or votive inscription on a vase from Bourges (Place de Séraucourt) (L-79), a problematic inscription on a vase from Étrechy, possibly dating to as late as the fourth century (L-80), and an, at least partially Latin, toast on a glass drinking vessel from *villa* d’Ancy in Limé (L-132). Most of these texts, however, consist of a few words only, and not infrequently their interpretation is highly uncertain.³³

²⁸ For the periodization, see Stifter (2019). Chamalières: *RIG* ii. 2, L-100; Larzac: *RIG* ii. 2, L-98; La Graufesenque: Marichal (1988); for discussion of bilingualism on the site, see Adams (2003a), 687–724; Blom (2012a); Mullen (2013b, 2023d); calendars: *RIG* iii.

²⁹ Stifter (2019), 113, thinks this was within one or two generations, but see Cazanove and Estarán (2023) for the view that the shift to exclusively Latin public epigraphy might need to be pushed into the second century CE.

³⁰ Stifter (2012), 527. ³¹ Stifter (2012), 525.

³² Stifter (2019), 114–15; Kerkhof (2018), 51–4; Schrijver (2002); Lambert (1997).

³³ The vase inscription of Séraucourt near Bourges was found in 1848 and its original context is therefore lost to us. Still, its script is generally dated to the early fourth century, and that its language is Gaulish is undisputed. Because of the formulaic nature of the text, its interpretation as a dedication has been more or less fixed: *buscilla sosio legasit in alixie magalu* (‘Buscilla placed this for Magalos in Alixion’). If we accept the proposed late date, then the Bourges inscription would be one of the latest

Only three somewhat longer inscriptions have hitherto come to light from the Late-Gaulish period. Most important of these is one of the several inscriptions found at Châteaubleau. The site of Châteaubleau, in the vicinity of Paris, has been excavated intermittently since the nineteenth century. Over these years the site has yielded a considerable number of roof-tiles inscribed in Latin, frequently containing banter between the workers at the tilery.³⁴ In 1997 a fully intact roof-tile was discovered, this time inscribed with eleven lines of cursive script in Gaulish.³⁵ In all likelihood, this tile can be dated to the late third to early fourth century.³⁶ While much of its text has remained obscure until now, it clearly constitutes one of the few undoubtedly Gaulish inscriptions from the late period, which, moreover, appears to be written in a dialect of northern Gaul. Indeed, Schrijver has noted two diphthongs occurring in final position (-*ou* and -*ie*) which must be secondary developments of earlier long vowels (-*ū* and -*ē*). Since this diphthongization is mirrored in the Latin of northern Gaul, he suggests these sounds could well be the result of a convergence of the northern Gallo-Romance and Late-Gaulish vowel systems, which itself would be indicative of a long period of language contact.³⁷ Initially it was thought that this inscription (L-93) might be a public announcement of a temporary nature, for which cheaper materials were often used. Despite attempts to interpret it as a legal document, it has proved rather difficult to find any certainty. However, it does appear to mention a married couple, and may therefore relate the conditions of a marriage or divorce.³⁸

The nature of the other two surviving longer inscriptions, however, is much more difficult to establish. The lead tablet of Rom, dated on the basis of the script to around 300 CE, was found during excavations in 1887 in a dried-up well on the site of ancient Rauranum. Most of the archaeological context is lost to us, but the tablet, inscribed on both sides, is known to have been deposited along with other finds, some of them rolled up or pierced with nails, suggesting a connection with magical practice, and more specifically with curse tablets.³⁹ Even if previous attempts to interpret the text as either Latin or Gaulish fail to convince,⁴⁰ I have argued elsewhere that the letter combinations and several recurring elements suggest that there might be, after all, a sizeable Gaulish element in the inscription. However, in an inscription of this date and genre, *voces magicae* and related

texts documenting the use of the Gaulish vernacular in the decades after 300 CE. See Lambert (2018), 138–9; Isaac (2001). For a slightly differing interpretation, see Dupraz (2015).

³⁴ Lambert (2018), 209. ³⁵ *RIG* ii. 2, L-93.

³⁶ Schrijver (1998–2000), 135. Another shorter Gaulish inscription of four lines (L-90) was found in 1969, and, as recently as 2017, another, consisting of nine lines, came to light (Lambert and Pilon 2018). This text, apparently written in two different hands, is very similar to the longer text discovered in 1997 (L-93) in both script and language. The recently found nine-line inscription may constitute a contract of sorts (Lambert 2018, 211). However, neither of these two inscriptions appears to have been written any later than 200 CE.

³⁷ Schrijver (1998–2000), 141. ³⁸ Lambert (2018), 209.

³⁹ *RIG* ii. 2, 285–6; Blom (2009b), 53–4. ⁴⁰ Meid (1996b); Egger (1962); Haas (1958–9).

non-lexical elements can be expected to occur and the use of foreign-looking vowel strings and the curious letter combination <hz> may point in this direction. Indeed, the text of Rom may have been purposely made partially or entirely incomprehensible. Nonetheless, if a significant part of the text is indeed in Gaulish, then several features of its language are of potential significance, showing some similarities in its vocalism and loss of final consonants with, for example, the long Châteaubleau inscription discussed above.⁴¹

A small gold tablet inscribed with Roman capitals was found in 1989 during excavation of a Gallo-Roman *vicus* at Baudecet, near Gembloux, close to Namur in modern Belgium.⁴² It was found to have been rolled up, broken in two, and thrown in a pit next to a small so-called *fanum*, which suggests a ritual deposition. It has been dated, once more on palaeographic grounds, to the second half of the second, or early third century CE.⁴³ The text on the tablet is extremely difficult to understand, but has been tentatively interpreted by Toorians and Schrijver as a Gaulish medical incantation.⁴⁴ As will be seen below, Schrijver identified features in the Baudecet text (the aforementioned diphthongization of final *-ū* to *-ou*) as evidence for his theory of a convergence in the vowel systems of northern Gallo-Romance and (northern) Late Gaulish. The same feature is also, and less controversially, visible in the Châteaubleau inscription discussed above. However, the Gaulish character of the Baudecet text has been disputed from the start,⁴⁵ and Lambert has made a strong case for interpreting the tablet within the context of an Orphic mystery cult. According to him, the text is written in a very poor Greek, in Latin characters, and contains no Gaulish at all.⁴⁶ Clearly, then, like the Rom tablet, the Baudecet text should be used only with the greatest caution when speculating about the uses of Gaulish in the third and fourth centuries, even if both inscriptions provide fascinating glimpses into the uses of language and literacy in Gaul during this period.

The picture that emerges from this survey seems to support Stifter's general characterization of the later stages of the Gaulish language, which had

[...] remained relatively well-entrenched in Gaulish society up to the end of the first or middle of the second century [...] After this time [...] the language must have lost ground massively and rapidly among those portions of society that would previously have been interested in writing in the vernacular mother tongue and would thus have given it sociolinguistic support.⁴⁷

As Broderick points out, however, even if 'around the middle of the second century CE the upper echelons of Gaulish society evidently ceased to write in Gaulish,

⁴¹ Blom (2009b), 68.

⁴² Piso (1993).

⁴³ Schrijver (2005a), 60–1.

⁴⁴ Schrijver (2005a), 61–3; Toorians (2000), 128–32.

⁴⁵ Plumier-Torfs et al. (1993).

⁴⁶ *RIG* ii. 2, L-104.

⁴⁷ Stifter (2012), 525–7.

implying they transferred their skills to writing in Latin, this does not imply ‘that either educated or non-lettered Gauls ceased to *speak* [my emphasis] Gaulish’⁴⁸ Apart from the epigraphic record, therefore, some further hints about the use and continuity of Gaulish alongside Latin can be gauged from external testimonies from late antiquity and, possibly, from the early Middle Ages. To these we shall now turn.

5.2.2 External Testimonies from Late Antiquity

It is unclear how long Gaulish remained spoken after the date of our latest reliable epigraphic documents. However, there are various passages from late antique authors which have time and again been invoked to indicate the continuous survival of Gaulish.⁴⁹ Some of these testimonies, such as that of Irenaeus of Lugdunum, Aulus Gellius, or the often-cited comment in Ulpian’s *Digests* (see Section 5.3 below), fall within the Middle Gaulish period, for which, as we have seen, reliable epigraphic evidence for the presence of Gaulish has survived.⁵⁰ It is the later statements, then, that are the most important for our purpose, and they will be discussed in this section.

Unfortunately, such testimonies are mostly ambiguous and vague. As detailed discussion has shown, interpreting evidence for the survival of Gaulish in the later fourth and fifth centuries, or possibly even during the sixth, is fraught with difficulties.⁵¹ References in Latin texts to *lingua gallica* or *lingua celtica* are problematic, since this seemingly straightforward appellation also appears, in addition to references to Gaulish, to indicate rural or substandard varieties of Gallic Latin. It will be shown below that, when used in generalizing terms, it can refer to the Gaulish language as well as to varieties of Latin spoken in Gaul, whereas, when used in learned etymologies, it mostly indicates Gaulish lexis, or words perceived to be Gaulish—at least until the early Middle Ages, after which it is also used to identify Gallo-Romance lexis. It may therefore be that, in many cases at least, the term has rather a geographic (‘a word used in Gaul’) than a genuinely linguistic (‘a Gaulish Celtic word’) connotation. This is why we need to look into the two types of testimony separately.

5.2.2.1 External Testimonies Involving Names and Lexis

Weisgerber had already suggested that, from the first attestations of such terminology, there had always been some confusion among Latin authors about

⁴⁸ Broderick (2014), 48–9.

⁴⁹ Weisgerber (1969a), 37–9; Sofer (1941), 110–16; Budinszky (1881), 114–16.

⁵⁰ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 1.3 in Rousseau and Doutreleau (1979), 25; Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 15.30.5–7 in Rolfe (1948), ii. 316.

⁵¹ For detailed discussion, see Blom (2009a) and Broderick (2014).

attributing certain lexical items to Gaulish, and that, by the fourth century at the latest, *lingua gallica* could indicate Gallic Latin as well as Gaulish.⁵² Nonetheless, most authors writing before the third century (Suetonius, Festus, Aulus Gellius, and Ulpian) seem, as far as can be ascertained, to use the term to indicate the indigenous Celtic language of Gaul.⁵³ Considering the fact that epigraphic evidence exists for the language in this period, this need hardly be surprising.

However, Servius' early-fifth-century commentary on Virgil's *Aeneid* may serve as an example of the ambiguous usage of the term (*lingua gallica*) remarked upon by Weisgerber. Thus, while the commentary may contain one Gaulish etymology (*uirga*), identified as such by Servius,⁵⁴ his usage of the term *gallica* elsewhere in the text is undoubtedly confused and also includes non-Celtic terms, such as *uolema*, which is more likely to be of Oscan origin.⁵⁵ As already said, it may therefore be that, in such cases at least, the term has rather a geographic than genuinely linguistic connotation. This could of course also be the case with earlier authors, but this is difficult to establish, as several lexical items mentioned by them are at least plausibly Celtic in origin. The example of Servius serves to illustrate a genuine problem in the designation of a lexical item as *gallice* or *lingua gallica*, as we shall see below: Servius, and writers like him, were heirs to the grammatical tradition and were probably deriving such terms from much earlier sources, which may just be unreliable, as etymologies often were. This means that such authors cannot be used as reliable sources of information for the state of the Gaulish language in their own time.

Even so, authors such as Eucherius, Macrobius, Venantius Fortunatus, and John the Lydian generally use the term, consciously or not, to identify genuinely Gaulish lexis.⁵⁶ So do Gregory of Tours and Julian of Toledo later in the sixth and seventh centuries, albeit that they, again, both use the designation exclusively for learned etymologies.⁵⁷ Isidore of Seville's use of the term appears again, like Servius', rather confused and includes non-Celtic terms, most probably derived from his sources;⁵⁸ here I would again suggest that the term rather means 'a word

⁵² Weisgerber (1969b), 152.

⁵³ Blom (2009a), 42–4. Suetonius, *Diuus Iulius*, 24.2 in Ihm (1958), 11 (*alauda*); Festus, *De uerborum significatu* in Lindsay (1913), 4 (*ambactus*), 29 (*benna*), 31 (*bardus*), 37 (*cimbri*), 226 (*petoritum*).

⁵⁴ Thilo and Hagen (1923–7), ii, 295.

⁵⁵ Servius, *Georgica* 2.88 in Thilo and Hagen (1923–7), iii, 226. Cf. André (1981), 132–3; Porzio Gernia (1981), 101.

⁵⁶ Eucherius, *Passio Agaunensium martyrum* 1.3 in Blom (2009a), 27 (*Augaunum*); Claudian, *De mulabus gallicis* 19–20 in Platnauer (1972), ii, 192; Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 6.4.23 in Willis (1970), i, 374 (*uri*); Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina* 1.9.9 in Leo (1881), 2 (*nemetum*); John the Lydian, *Περὶ ἀρχῶν τῆς Ῥωμαίων πολιτείας* 2.13 in Bandy (1983), 104–5 (*fibula*, *balteus*, *cartamera*).

⁵⁷ Blom (2009a), 32–3. Gregory of Tours, *Historiae* 1.32 in Arndt and Krusch (1884), 49 (*uasso*) and 790. Cf. Fournier (1955); Julian of Toledo, *Grammatica* 2.14.3 in Maestre Yenes (1973), 23 and 179 (*mastruca*, *cateia*).

⁵⁸ Blom (2009a), 31–2.

used in Gaul'. Finally, Bede, writing in the eighth century, clearly does not use the term to refer to a Gaulish, but to a Latin name, albeit one set in ancient Gallic territory.⁵⁹ Again this suggests a geographical rather than a linguistic connotation.

From the later ninth century onwards several authors, from both West and East Francia, instead use the term (*lingua gallica*) for Gallo-Romance, that is, early French words and names. Uncontroversial examples of this usage can be found, for example, in Notker Balbulus of St Gall (c. 840–912 CE), Widukind of Corvey (died after 973 CE), Richer of St Rémy (late tenth century), and Ademar of Chabannes (989–1034 CE) and later authors.⁶⁰ It is important to realize, however, that these medieval authors mostly wrote historical works and probably relied far less on the grammatical tradition which informed most of the authors mentioned earlier. Their use of the term *gallica* to indicate contemporary Gallo-Romance probably reflects this, but can, again, just as much be taken geographically ('a word used in Gaul').

As for the term (*lingua celtica*), attested significantly less often than *gallica* to identify specific words or names, the earliest attestations in Latin occur in the work of Pliny the Elder.⁶¹ In fact, the term is only used again by Ausonius (c. 310–95 CE) several centuries later, who qualifies the name of the fountain *Divona* in Bordeaux as derived from *lingua Celtarum*; again, this is probably a learned etymology which may not tell us much about the survival of Gaulish in Ausonius' time.⁶² From the ninth century on, *lingua celtica*, too, tends to indicate Gallo-Romance, even if Sigibert of Gembloux (c. 1030–1112 CE) could still use the term to refer to a Gaulish place-name (*Augustodunum*), probably because he copied the line of poetry from a learned observation by Heiric of Auxerre in the ninth century.⁶³ Erudite antiquarian knowledge of local Gaulish toponyms and learned etymologies could of course have lingered on long after the language itself had disappeared. The ambiguous use of the terms *lingua gallica* and *lingua celtica* probably indicates that they were, at least by the early Middle Ages, not regarded as two different languages. Thus, to those learned authors place-names such as *Augustodunum* may have been regarded as belonging to the same 'indigenous language of Gaul' as the Old French noun *veltre*, identified as *lingua gallica* by Notker Balbulus.

⁵⁹ Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.11 in Colgrave and Mynors (1969), 486–7 (*traiectum*).

⁶⁰ Notker, *Gesta Karoli Magni* 1.20 in Haefele (1959), 26; Widukind, *Res gestae Saxonicae* 2.17 in Hirsch and Lohmann (1935), 82; Richer, *Historiae* 4.100 in Hoffmann (2000), 300; Ademar, *Historiae* 3.40 in Blom (2009a), 39.

⁶¹ For all of attestations of *celtica* in Pliny, see ACS, i. 923–4.

⁶² Ausonius, *Ordo urbium nobilium*, 160–3 in Evelyn-White (1967–8), i. 284.

⁶³ See Blom (2009a), 16–18, for discussion. Sigibert of Gembloux, *Vita Deodorici*, ed. Pertz (1841), 477; Heiric of Auxerre, *Vita S. Germani* 352–3 in Traube (1896), 448.

5.2.2.2 External Testimonies Concerning Language and Possible Non-Epigraphic Sources of Late Gaulish

Famous, but controversial, has been Jerome's (c. 345–420 CE) statement in his commentary on Paul's letter to the Galatians (2.3.8–9) that the language of the Treveri on the Rhine is similar to that of the Galatians in Asia Minor:

*Galatas excepto sermone Graeco, quo omnis oriens loquitur, propriam linguam eandem paene habere quam Treueros. nec referre si aliqua exinde corruperint, cum et Afri Phoenicum linguam nonnulla ex parte mutauerint et ipsa Latinitas et regionibus cotidie mutetur et tempore.*⁶⁴

Apart from the Greek language, which is spoken throughout the entire East, the Galatians have their own language, almost the same as the Treveri; it is meaningless [to say] that they later altered part of it [the language], since even the Africans have changed some part of the language of the Phoenicians and that Latin itself may change daily and in the course of time from region to region.

Even though Jerome is indeed known to have spent time both with the Treveri (in 370 CE), as well as with the Galatians (in 373–4 CE),⁶⁵ it has been suggested that his statement need not be based on personal experience, but could in fact reflect a literary commonplace. Suggested possible sources for his statement, then, have been authors such as Varro, or even Posidonius,⁶⁶ and would thus reflect the linguistic situation of the first century BCE rather than that of Jerome's own time.⁶⁷ Recently, however, the notion that Jerome is indeed speaking about the present has been taken up again by both Meissner and Broderick, who suggest his statement about Gaulish should be taken seriously as reflecting the contemporary situation.⁶⁸ Indeed, Meissner seeks to support Jerome's above statement with reference to an inscription from Trier dated around 400 CE (*CIL* XIII 3909), which mentions Artula, mother (here: *matir*) of Ursuia (Ursula), both names meaning 'little she-bear' in Gaulish and Latin respectively.⁶⁹ The daughter would then have received the Latinized version of her mother's name, which suggests that a minimum of bilingual understanding must still have been possible.⁷⁰ Moreover, the spelling of the word *matir* rather than *mater* could suggest Gaulish influence, which is significant since it looks as if Ursula may have carved the epitaph

⁶⁴ *CCSL* 77a 83 (ed. Raspanti).

⁶⁵ For the biographical background, see Hofeneder (2011), 376–7.

⁶⁶ Lambert (2018), 10; Schmidt (1983), 1010; Weisgerber (1969a), 37.

⁶⁷ Krappe (1929), 126–9. Another option is that the statement is derived from the work of Lactantius (c. 240–320 CE), in which case the information would be more contemporary. Thus Birkhan (1997), 301–2; Müller (1939), 67–74; Neumann (1980), 177; Weisgerber (1969b), 155–7.

⁶⁸ Originally suggested by Sofer (1937), and recently by Meissner (2009–10) and Broderick (2014), 16.

⁶⁹ Delamarre (2003), 55–6.

⁷⁰ Stüber (2007), 91.

herself.⁷¹ Slight though that evidence may be, combined with material from other sources, it seems increasingly likely that Jerome's observation does indeed reflect the situation of his own time, in which case it may be a precious testimony for the survival of a Gaulish dialect in the later fourth century around Trier on the Rhine as well as in Asia Minor.

An equally problematic testimony occurs in Aelius Lampridius' biography of Severus Alexander (Roman Emperor from 222 to 235 CE) in the *Historia Augusta* 60.6. The *Historia Augusta* is the modern name of a collection of thirty biographies of Roman emperors from Hadrian to Numerianus and Carinus (284–5 CE); Aelius Lampridius is named as one of the six otherwise unknown authors. The authorship and date of this collection is therefore problematic, but it is now generally accepted that it was written by one person, most probably around 400 CE.⁷² In it is related how, as the Emperor went to war:

*mulier dryas eunti exclamauit gallico sermone: uadas nec uictoriam speres ne[c] te militi tuo credas.*⁷³

a prophetess cried out to him in the *sermo gallicus* as he was marching out: 'May you go, but not hope for victory nor put your trust in your soldiers'.

As the text does not include any lexical items or phrases, this passage is of little assistance in establishing what is meant exactly by *sermo gallicus*. Moreover, the *Historia Augusta* is a notoriously difficult source.⁷⁴ The episode, therefore, even if we could establish its meaning, would still have only dubious evidential value.⁷⁵

In the *Dialogi de Vita Martini* 1.26 by Sulpicius Severus (c. 363–425 CE), one of the partners in the dialogue utters the rhetorical commonplace that his deficient Latin might insult the refined ears of his interlocutors (*ueeor ne offendat uestras nimium urbanas aures sermo rusticior*). One of them answers *uel celtice aut si mauis gallice loquere dummodo Martinum loquaris* ('speak Celtic or, if you prefer, Gaulish, as long as you speak about Martin').⁷⁶ While it is certainly possible that both terms refer to Gaulish, since the statement is an exaggeration suggesting an outlandish idea, the context makes it difficult to determine whether the Gaulish language, as we understand it today, is meant. The person who shows himself to be so self-conscious about uttering his provincial speech among his Aquitanian fellows identifies himself as a 'Gaulish man' (*dum cogito me hominem Gallum inter Aquitanos uerba facturum*), having a mode of speech which he also calls *sermo rusticior*, and being himself a *gurdonicus homo* (probably 'a rustic')⁷⁷ who says nothing with affectation or artificiality (*nihil cum fuco aut cothurno loquentem*). Later on in the dialogue, the same speaker uses a technical term for a

⁷¹ Meissner (2009–10), 109–11.

⁷² Johne (2005), 406–9.

⁷³ Hohl (1971), i. 299.

⁷⁴ Hofeneder (2008).

⁷⁵ Blom (2009a), 26–7.

⁷⁶ Halm (1866), 179.

⁷⁷ As suggested by Evans (1966), 27–31.

simple stool, which ‘we Gallic country people call a *tripetias*, but which you rhetoricians and certainly yourself... call a *tripodas*’ (*quas nos rustici Galli tripetias, uos scholastici aut certe tu... tripodas nuncupatis*). The word *tripedia* or *tripetia* is a (vulgar) Latin, not a Gaulish term.⁷⁸ This dialogue, therefore, is greatly concerned with different styles and registers of Latin speech, commending the simple style that St Martin himself supposedly used (*ut mihi liceat exemplo iliis inanes sermonum faleras et uerborum ornamenta contemnere* ‘that by his example I may despise the empty trappings of speech and the ornaments of words’). As I have argued elsewhere, the terms *gallice* and *celtice* may therefore also just as well refer to a vulgar, local variety of Latin.⁷⁹

Shortly after 400 CE, Marcellus of Bordeaux, most likely to be identified with a high officer (*magister officiorum*) at the imperial courts of Theodosius I and Arcadius in Constantinople, compiled his book on medical remedies, *De Medicamentis*.⁸⁰ In this work, a small number of spells and charms are recommended that traditionally have been thought to be written in Gaulish,⁸¹ even if Marcellus says nothing about their provenance. Indeed, most of them instead conform to the standard types of magical language in the ancient world, which we have already encountered in the inscribed tablets of Rom and Baudecet (see Section 5.2.1 above). I have argued elsewhere that these spells have virtually no evidential value for the continued existence of Gaulish as a spoken, everyday language, even though, like the inscriptions of Baudecet and Rom, they provide fascinating insights into the use of ritual language, which might include garbled Gaulish elements.⁸² On the other hand, the few plant names transmitted by Marcellus may be Gaulish in origin, but, again, they need not be taken directly from the living language, but instead reflect a type of antiquarian knowledge akin to the learned etymologies discussed above (Section 5.2.2.1).⁸³

Later in that century, Sidonius Apollinaris (c. 430–after 480 CE) wrote shortly after 471 CE in a letter to his relative Ecdicius (*Ep.* 3.3.2) that

*sermonis celtici squamam depositura nobilitas nunc oratorio stilo, nunc etiam
Camenalibus modis imbuebatur*

in their efforts to throw off the scurf of Celtic speech, the nobility were initiated now into oratorical style and now again into the measures of the Muses.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ Niermeyer (2002), 1346. It is borrowed into all the Brittonic languages in a form with *-e-*: Welsh *trybedd*, Old Cornish *tribet*, Breton *trebez*.

⁷⁹ Blom (2009a), 11–13.

⁸⁰ Discussed at length in Blom (2010a). For the identification of Marcellus as *magister officiorum*, see *PLRE* i. 551–2, and Matthews (1971), 1073–99.

⁸¹ Notably Meid (1996a), for a critical review of which, see Blom (2009c).

⁸² Blom (2010a). On ritual language in general and its use of *vores magicae*, see Blom (2012b).

⁸³ Blom (2010b); *contra* cf. Broderick (2014), 38–44.

⁸⁴ Anderson (1936), ii. 12–15.

Indeed, many of Sidonius' letters betray a concern for the survival of erudition, for the standards of classical Latin, so pleading for a specific style and register.⁸⁵ In *Epistula* 4.3.10, for example, he complains that the same town councillors of Clermont are for the most part men of exceeding illiteracy (*turba numerosior illiteratissimis litteris uacant*), but that in his addressees' illustrious breast there have remained traces of 'our vanishing culture' (*in inlustri pectore tuo uanescentium litterarum remansisse uestigia*).⁸⁶ It is therefore perfectly possible that Sidonius, like Sulpicius Severus, used the phrase *sermo celticus* to refer to an uneducated variety of Latin, rather than to the Celtic vernacular.⁸⁷

A similar piece of rhetorical prose occurs in a remark by Cassiodorus (c. 490–585 CE), who in his book *Variae* 8.12.7 (dated around 526 CE) cites a letter to Athalaric, king of the Ostrogoths:

*Romanum denique eloquium non suis regionibus inuenisti et ibi te Tulliana lectio disertum reddidit, ubi quondam Gallica lingua resonauit.*⁸⁸

Finally you found Roman eloquence in regions that were not originally its own; and there the reading of Cicero rendered you eloquent where once the Gaulish language resounded.

Again, however, this rhetorical trope has little value in terms of evidence for the continuous existence of Gaulish. More promising then, at first sight at least, is a passage from the *Vita sancti Symphoriani*, a hagiography usually dated sometime after the middle of the fifth century (though see now Chapter 1 this volume).⁸⁹ Here we are told that, as the Christian martyr Symphorianus of Augustodunum (165–80 CE) was being led to execution,

uenerabilis mater sua de muro sedula et nota illum uoce gallica monuit dicens nate nate Synforiane mentobeto to diuo.

his venerable mother warned him from the wall eagerly and loudly in Gaulish: 'O son, son Symphorianus, think of your God!'

Unfortunately, the mother's reported speech has been transmitted in a very corrupt state in the various manuscripts, the earliest of which date from the eighth century. The mother's words have therefore had to be reconstructed by Thurneysen.⁹⁰ Based on this reading, Adams has shown that the reconstructed

⁸⁵ *Epistolae* 2.10.1, 3.14.2, 4.3.10, 4.7.2, 4.17.2, 8.2.1, 9.11.7.

⁸⁶ Anderson (1936), ii. 126–9. ⁸⁷ Blom (2009a), 15–16. Cf. Broderick (2014), 28.

⁸⁸ Fridh and Holpörn (1973), 134–5.

⁸⁹ Meyer (1901), 163, without giving evidence. Presumably, the date derives from the assumption that the *Vita* was composed by Bishop Euphronius of Augustodunum (d. after 472 CE).

⁹⁰ Thurneysen (1923), 10–11.

utterance appears to be basically in Latin.⁹¹ He pointed out that Gallic Latin may have preferred *natus* rather than *filius*, since Gaulish had a word (*g*)*natos* with a similar meaning;⁹² *mentobeto* is an imperative derived from the phrase *in mente habeto*, which has survived in Old French *mentevoir* and Old Provençal *mentaure*, and therefore also indicates regional Latin usage;⁹³ *to(m)* (> French *ton*) may represent the reduced form *tum* of Latin *tuum*.⁹⁴ The term *diuus*, finally, could again reflect Gallic Latin usage, even though, admittedly, Latin *diuus* is a rare word. However, *diuus*—rather than the more common form *deus*—may have gained currency in Gaul because of the influence of Gaulish **dīuo(s)*. Of course, it cannot be excluded that *diuus* is Gaulish here, in which case it would then have to be regarded as a switch into Gaulish within a predominantly Latin utterance.⁹⁵ Since, however, the entire phrase can plausibly explained as a (Gallic) Latin utterance, it does again highlight the problem of understanding the exact meaning of the term *gallica uoce* and related appellations dating from this period (see Section 5.2.2.1 above). If we follow the new analysis in Chapter 1 this volume, there might be further layers of complexity, with the *gallica uoce* added by a scribe trying to make sense of a confused text.

Finally, the language of *Endlicher's Glossary*, an early medieval word-list found in two versions (called variously *de uerbis gallicis* or *de nominibus gallicis*) in manuscripts dating from the eighth century onwards, has hitherto often been thought to reflect the survival of Late Gaulish.⁹⁶ However, it appears mostly to consist of *glossae collectae* on Latinized place-name elements from Gaul (*auallo*, *lautro*, *onno*, *brio*, *treide*), taken from Latin texts, some of them plausibly from Gregory of Tours' list of bishops in *Historiae* 10.31 or, perhaps, its sources.⁹⁷ Since the bishop's list provides an epilogue to the work as whole, and has been dated to the 590s,⁹⁸ this would provide us with a *terminus post quem* for the glossary. However, considering the generally unstable nature of glossaries it cannot be expected that all the items sprang from the same single source (names such as *Rhodanus*, *Lugdunum*, and *Areuernus* being quite common, even if they also occur in Gregory), nor that the different versions of the glossary were conceived as finished texts; they were probably expanded in the course of time. As to the glossed items themselves, several of them have plausible Gaulish etymologies, even if they have generally been Latinized. This is not surprising considering that, in all likelihood, they were taken from Latin texts. Some of them also occur in medieval Latin (*breialo*, *cambiare*) and/or later Gallo-Romance

⁹¹ Adams (2003a), 302. An analysis curiously disregarded by Broderick (2014), 34, who, following Meid (1980), continues to see it as Gaulish. Kerkhof (2018), 48, also favours a Gaulish interpretation.

⁹² Delamarre (2003), 181–182; Adams (2003a), 198–9. ⁹³ Meid (1980), 12.

⁹⁴ See Adams (2003a), 198, for attestations elsewhere. Cf. Fleuriot (1991), 7, and Meid (1980), 13, for a Gaulish interpretation.

⁹⁵ Adams (2003a), 198; Meid (1980), 12–13. ⁹⁶ Lambert (2018), 206–7.

⁹⁷ The evidence is set out in Blom (2011), 177–9.

⁹⁸ Heinzelmann (2001), 115; Pietri (1982), 560–1.

dialects (*caio*, *breialo*, *nanto*). Some of the terms are probably Latin (*nate*, *ambe*, *lautro*). There are interesting hints, finally, that some of the analysis (the gloss on *Lugdunum* and the term *bigardio*) has been carried out by (a) speaker(s) of a West Germanic dialect.⁹⁹ This variety of languages under the heading *verba gallica* or *nomina gallica* need not surprise because of the ambiguity of the terminology in early medieval sources set out above. The possible late date, the complex textual transmission, the unclear provenance, and the problematic content of the glossary seriously jeopardize the value previously attributed to this text as a source for Late Gaulish. Most probably it was compiled out of merely antiquarian interest in a dead language.¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, the text once more illustrates how Gaulish elements could survive, sometimes ill understood and mixed up with regional Latin and even Germanic elements, into medieval manuscripts under the heading *gallica*, itself very likely, again, to be understood primarily as a geographic term.

5.2.3 Gallic Latin and the Gaulish Substrate

This brings us to our final type of evidence and the question of the nature of Gallic varieties of Latin (Gallic Latin), as well as the possible influence Gaulish may have had on them. Again, the question can only be answered approximately due to the paucity and genre of the extant sources. Moreover, in order to discern specific Gallic peculiarities in the Latin of Gaul in the later Empire we must distinguish carefully between the classical Latin of the literary texts, the often formulaic language of the epigraphic record, and that of the spoken language ‘behind’ these texts, even if official Latin must, during the period under scrutiny, still have been largely comprehensible to the greater part of the population.¹⁰¹ The following discussion will, however, leave out the evidence of Gaulish personal names.¹⁰² Although this material is important from linguistic and socio-historical perspectives, the problems involved in dating Gaulish names, mapping their changes over time, and considering their relationship to any spoken varieties make it difficult to use this material with confidence in tracking the processes of language shift.

Various classical authors show their awareness of spatial, as well as social, variation in the Latin spoken in Gaul.¹⁰³ As we have seen, later authors such as Sulpicius Severus and Sidonius Apollinaris, and probably the *Life of Symphorianus* also, similarly appear to refer to regional accents or substandard uses of Latin. Apart from these indirect hints, we can furthermore identify, despite considerable

⁹⁹ Blom (2011), 168–72. ¹⁰⁰ As argued in Blom (2011), 180–1.

¹⁰¹ Banniard (1992), 487–8, 497–503, and 531–2.

¹⁰² Sims-Williams and Raybould (2007a, 2007b, 2009); Delamarre (2017); Stüber (2007); Evans (1967); Schmidt (1957).

¹⁰³ Adams (2003a), 190–1; Lodge (1993), 35. See Mullen (2022), 56, n. 70, for the Roman-period provincial attestations.

methodological difficulties, a number of regionalisms in provincial texts from ancient Gaul preserved in later medieval manuscripts. At least some of these Gallic Latin words have a plausible Gaulish etymology, such as *bracis* and *ceruesia*, both attested in a Latin school exercise probably from Bordeaux,¹⁰⁴ suggesting the borrowing of Gaulish elements into the Latin of the area. In fact, both terms have survived into modern French (as *brai* and *cervoise*, respectively) and *cervesa* occurs in western non-lapidary epigraphy.¹⁰⁵

When we come to the epigraphic evidence, it needs to be recalled that, even if the spread of the ‘epigraphic habit’ must be seen as a sign of the adoption of a Roman practice, the terse and formulaic language of the greater part of the lapidary inscriptions discloses little information about the Latin competence of the people who set them up, and nothing at all about the vast majority of the population, probably more than 99 per cent, which did not partake in the ‘epigraphic habit’. The Roman world may have been highly literate, but literacy remained low, and of those literates even fewer would have created stone texts.¹⁰⁶ Admittedly, there are marked regional differences: for example, the density of stone inscriptions drops beyond Mediterranean Gaul, the military settlements, and the Rhône valley;¹⁰⁷ and the social range of Latin lapidary epigraphy did not remain constant over time, with late antique Christian inscriptions probably reflecting a wider social range.¹⁰⁸ However, despite this somewhat broadening social range, the surviving lapidary inscriptions still cannot be considered representative for the general population.¹⁰⁹

Indeed, the lapidary inscriptions in Roman Gaul demonstrate a form of Latin which, even where it shows variety in comparison with other provinces, nonetheless appears to owe little to Gaulish influence. Moreover, Adams, while considering the methodology of assessing orthographic variation in the epigraphic record, has rightly stressed the fact that regional variation may reflect variations in literacy just as much as dialectal variation.¹¹⁰ That said, the confusion of and <v> is practically unattested, and final *-t* is nearly always spelt. Only the confusion of <i> and long <e> and, to a lesser extent, the similar confusion between long <o> and <u> in both accented and unaccented syllables, appears more frequently in Gaul than in many other provinces.¹¹¹ Only prothetic vowels of the type *iscripta* for *scripta*, so frequent elsewhere, are strikingly absent in Gaul. This feature may therefore represent a state of the language during a period well before the

¹⁰⁴ *Colloquium Celtis* 72e (*bracis*) and 44c (*ceruesia*) in Dickey (2015), 189 and 228. See Adams (2007), 276–369, and Dionisotti (1982), 123, for discussion.

¹⁰⁵ Delamarre (2003), 85 (*bracis*) and 133 (*curmi/ceruesia*). ¹⁰⁶ Mullen (2023a), 13.

¹⁰⁷ For a discussion of the contours of the epigraphic habit in Gaul, see Mullen (2024a).

¹⁰⁸ Herman (1983), 1054. See now in general Mazzoleni (2018) and Salway (2015).

¹⁰⁹ Woolf (1998), 101. ¹¹⁰ Adams (2007), 626 and 629–36.

¹¹¹ Herman (1983), 1055; Gaeng (1968), 275–87.

emergence of Romance, which distinguished Gaul from, say, Rome.¹¹² Even so, this feature is unlikely to derive from Gaulish influence.

The morphology and syntax of these Latin inscriptions also does not markedly deviate from what is found elsewhere. The loss of the fourth nominal declension and the substitution of *-us* for *-ōs* (acc. pl.) and *-is* for *-ēs* (nom./acc. pl.), for example, are common everywhere in late antiquity. In fact, generally nominal and verbal inflection is well preserved in Latin stone epigraphy from Gaul.¹¹³ However, the replacement of the nominative plural ending *-ae* by *-as*, a development also visible in later Gallo-Romance, is now known to be attested in Gaul from first- and second-century graffiti from La Graufesenque. While this feature is also known from Africa and Italy, in Gaul it was probably taken from Gaulish, which had the same ending.¹¹⁴ Apart from features such as these, however, the evidence of a specifically Gallic Latin is not obviously betrayed in lapidary epigraphy, and only the ending *-as*, known from graffiti on pottery alone, may betray Gaulish influence.¹¹⁵ Unfortunately, the evidence of what has been called ‘everyday Roman writing’,¹¹⁶ that is, graffiti on ceramic, texts on wood, etc., has not yet been systematically published for Gaul in the way that it has, for example, for Roman Britain (a province with significantly fewer lapidary inscriptions), so the materials which might provide the evidence for Gallic Latin have unfortunately not yet been thoroughly analysed.¹¹⁷

Another way to access possible regional differences in the Latin of Gaul is through the study of modern Gallo-Romance dialects:¹¹⁸ as an earlier language spoken in the area, Gaulish probably influenced spoken Latin as a ‘substrate language’, contributing some of the vocabulary and phonological and grammatical features that are only visible in the later Romance dialects of the area that developed from Gallic Latin. However, the substrate influence of Gaulish on Gallo-Romance is not easy to trace, even if it has certainly been identified in vocabulary,¹¹⁹ and very plausibly in phonology.¹²⁰ Thus, even if estimates vary,

¹¹² Adams (2007), 672–3. ¹¹³ Herman (1983), 1058. Cf. also Pirson (1901).

¹¹⁴ Adams (2007), 674–5. This disproves the notion expressed in Gaeng (1977), 48, n. 83, that *-as* was unknown in late antique Gaul and only began to occur in the Merovingian period.

¹¹⁵ Mees (2003), 14–15.

¹¹⁶ For an introduction to Roman everyday writing, see Mullen and Bowman (2021).

¹¹⁷ See Mullen (2024a).

¹¹⁸ Lodge (1993), 52. See in general Wright (2002).

¹¹⁹ For example, see Lambert (2018), 188–203, and Birkhan (1997), 293. The geographical proximity of Gaulish and Latin led to language contact at an early stage. Gaulish speakers were present in northern Italy around 400 BCE and during the invasion of 386–5 BCE they penetrated as far as Rome. Early Celtic loans into Latin such as *gladius*, *uestimenta*, *uehicula*, *arma* probably date from this period, see Lambert (2018), 204–6; Adams (2003a), 184–5; Porzio Gernia (1981), 117; Schmidt (1957), 171–2; Sofer (1941), 119; (1936), 78–9; Vendryes (1925), 266. However, it is often difficult to determine from where and from what period specific loans may have come originally.

¹²⁰ Delattre (1969–70), 480–91; Sofer (1941), 127; Vendryes (1925), 272–6. For a more recent discussion, see Ternes (1998), 277–9.

between some 200 and 400 words of Gaulish origin appear to have survived in modern French or other Gallo-Romance dialects, including Provençal.¹²¹

In terms of phonology, the raising of Latin *u* to Gallo-Romance *ü* has been ascribed to Gaulish influence,¹²² even if this development is obviously not visible in the epigraphic record, nor attested in Gaulish itself but only in Brittonic Celtic.¹²³ It has furthermore been suggested that the lenition (weakening in pronunciation) of intervocalic plosive consonants in Gallo-Romance should be ascribed to Gaulish influence.¹²⁴ Indeed, there are attested cases of the loss of intervocalic *-g-* in Gaulish, for example *caio* < **cagio-* and *Maiorix* < *Magiorix*. Still, Watkins suggested that Gaulish lenition may only have been partial.¹²⁵ Moreover, some of the orthographic evidence cited in favour of Gaulish lenition is ambiguous, since it clearly was difficult to represent lenited consonants in the Greek and Latin scripts. Finally, while various Romance dialects show different types of consonant mutations, these are also attested well outside the original Celtic-speaking areas and do not therefore necessarily indicate Gaulish influence.¹²⁶

A less problematic candidate for Gaulish influence on Gallic Latin is the palatalization of various clusters, such as *pt* > *it* in French *chétif* (older *chaitif*) < */*kaxtivus*/ from Latin *captivus*; *ps* > *is* in French *caisse* < */*kaxsa*/ from Latin *capsa*, and *kt* > *it* in French *fait* < Latin *factum* and French *saint* < Latin *sanctus*.¹²⁷ Even if this development is not uncommon in other languages, it is clearly paralleled in both Gaulish and Brittonic, for example in Welsh compounds in *-noeth* < */*nokt*-‘night’, cf. French *nuit* < Latin *noct*-.¹²⁸

One further feature has recently been used to indicate the contact and mutual influence between Latin and Gaulish. As we saw earlier (in Section 5.2.1), Schrijver suggests that several Late Gaulish texts show diphthongs in *Auslaut* that must have developed from earlier long vowels. In fact, these diphthongs coincide with the results of Early Gallo-Romance diphthongization (i.e. Late Spoken Latin *ē, ō, ā, ē, ē* > Old French *ei, ou, ie, uo/ue*). Even though, like some of the features mentioned above, these parallel changes are visible in Old French only centuries later,¹²⁹ Schrijver convincingly argues that, even if they first occur in Gaulish texts, the diphthongization in Gaulish should be explained as the result of extensive influence from Latin.

¹²¹ Lambert (2018), 187. ¹²² Ternes (1998), 277–8.

¹²³ Mees (2003), 15; Birkhan (1997), 296.

¹²⁴ Martinet (1955), 257–96; Tovar (1951), 102–20. For discussion of (Gallo-)Romance lenition in general, see Kerkhof (2018), 134–43.

¹²⁵ Kerkhof (2018), 53–4; Watkins (1955).

¹²⁶ Lambert (2018), 48–9; Birkhan (1997), 294–5. Ternes (1998), 271–4, argues that these features are more likely contact-induced or areal features.

¹²⁷ Lambert (2018), 47; Birkhan (1997), 296.

¹²⁸ Mees (2003), 16.

¹²⁹ Schrijver (2005a), 65, n. 23.

The diphthongisation appears in those Celtic-speaking areas where Celtic was superseded by Romance and also in relatively late texts; not in Irish, which lay outside the Empire, nor in the British Highlands, where Celtic survived; this suggests that the diphthongisation in Celtic was part of the process of unstable Celtic–Latin bilingualism which led to the death of Celtic in those areas.¹³⁰

The Gaulish loanwords, then, the evidence of palatalization and diphthongization, and possibly the raising of *u* to *ü*,¹³¹ substantiate the hypothesis of a Gaulish substrate to Gallic Latin/Gallo-Romance resulting from a long period of bilingualism and mutual influence.

5.3. Latinization and the Fate of Gaulish: Spatial and Social Dimensions

The Latinization process in Gaul, as elsewhere in the Empire, involved different types of bilingualism and shift, and varying levels of competence in each language. This language shift was not uniform and took place at various speeds on different levels at different times.¹³² Indeed, provincial Latin itself is complex: there is not one Latin, but rather an array of regional and social variations.¹³³ Varieties of Latin diffused at divergent speeds across geographical space, across sociolinguistic functions (various domains of language use such as trade, administration, writing, and informal speech), and social strata.¹³⁴ The factors that have been identified as influential in the spread of Latin across the western Empire: status (including citizenship), urbanism, administration, the economy, infrastructure, mobility, the army, education, law, imperial religion, Christianity, language management, and language attitudes, were all at play to a greater or lesser extent in Gaul.¹³⁵

The spatial diffusion of Latin in Gaul was an uneven process and markedly different per region, with the province of Narbonensis the most prolific in terms of epigraphic output and likely to have been the earliest to move to Latin.¹³⁶ Latin diffused through Gaul from numerous, essentially local, bases, such as the recently founded towns, roads, military installations, and villas.¹³⁷ There was a

¹³⁰ Schrijver (2005a), 65.

¹³¹ Various other phenomena in French have also been ascribed to Gaulish or general Celtic influence, none of them entirely convincingly: the reduction of unaccented vowels through syncope or apocope, e.g. Latin *ciuitate* > French *cité*; the nasalization of vowels before nasals, e.g. Latin *planta* > French *plante* [plât], and the vocalization of *l* in closed syllables, e.g. Latin *falsu* > French *faux*.

¹³² For example, Hock and Joseph (1996), 367–452; McMahon (1994), 284–313; Thomason and Kaufman (1988), 110–46.

¹³³ Mullen (2023a), 10. ¹³⁴ See Mullen (2024a).

¹³⁵ Mullen (2023a), 12; (2024a).

¹³⁶ Mullen (2024a); Woolf 1998: 76–105.

¹³⁷ Mullen (2024a).

marked difference between the city and the countryside beyond the villa estates, and the process of Latinization is likely to have started in the towns, from there to spread to the rural hinterlands.¹³⁸ Latin was probably strongest in the provincial capitals and along the military borders, whereas the bulk of the rural population may only have acquired rudimentary Latin, depending on their relations with the Roman administration and political powers.¹³⁹

The fact that the Latin language seems to have had less influence in the more remote areas of Gaul¹⁴⁰ resulted in the retention of several Gaulish *Sprachinseln*, mostly in the countryside.¹⁴¹ Based on the concentration of Gaulish lexis in various dialect areas of modern France, such pockets in which the language survived have been identified in the Jura and the Swiss Alps,¹⁴² in the Auvergne and northern Languedoc in central Gaul, in present-day Wallonia,¹⁴³ and in Armorica (Brittany).¹⁴⁴ Of course, such concentrations of substrate lexis can only indicate where Gaulish may have survived the longest, not when it ceased to be spoken in those areas. As we have seen, even if most of our late Gaulish epigraphy cannot be assigned specifically to these areas, it is significant that most of the later inscriptions are from the northern half of Gaul and from smaller rural settlements (Châteaubleau, Baudecet, Bourges, Plumergat).

On the basis of the lexical evidence it can therefore be argued that pockets of Gaulish-speaking communities survived in the mountainous regions of the Central Massif, the Jura, and the Swiss Alps, possibly even into the fifth century. Indeed, Kerkhof recently argued that, in isolated pockets in the north also, Gaulish must have been spoken long enough for it to be encountered by Frankish Germanic speakers.¹⁴⁵ According to him, several of the vernacular ‘Malbergian’ glosses,¹⁴⁶ usually thought of as Germanic and occurring in the *A*-recension of the Merovingian Salic Law (*Lex Salica*),¹⁴⁷ the first codification of Frankish customary law, in fact have a Gaulish etymology, suggesting direct Gaulish–Frankish language contact.¹⁴⁸ This *A*-recension has generally been dated to the later reign of Clovis, that is, between 507 and 511 CE, even if some authorities prefer an earlier date during the decades between 460 and 480 CE.¹⁴⁹ Admittedly, the transmission history and the reliability of these vernacular glosses in their extant, rather garbled form is problematic in the extreme. Still, if Kerkhof’s etymological suggestions are correct, this would again suggest the survival of spoken Gaulish, in some areas of northern Gaul at least, into the fifth century.

¹³⁸ Broderick (2014), 47; Woolf (1998), 106–41 and 142–68.

¹³⁹ Polomé (1983), 528. ¹⁴⁰ Vendryes (1925), 268. ¹⁴¹ Broderick (2014), 48.

¹⁴² Muller (1982); Hubschmied (1938). ¹⁴³ Legros (1942).

¹⁴⁴ Gvozdanović (2009); Fleuriot (1980), 77; Falc’hun (1963). ¹⁴⁵ Kerkhof (2018), 31.

¹⁴⁶ Seebold (2007); Schmidt-Wiegand (1957, 1969).

¹⁴⁷ See in general Ubl (2014). On dating the *Lex Salica*, see Collins (1998), 11–15.

¹⁴⁸ Kerkhof (2018), 56–60. Cf. Flobert (2002).

¹⁴⁹ Kerkhof (2018), 40; Charles-Edwards (2000b).

The growing numbers of Latin speakers in Gaul probably consisted mostly of native groups who had gradually shifted, through various types of bilingualism, to Latin.¹⁵⁰ Still, so far as is known the Romans did not pursue any ‘language policy’ in the modern sense of that term, at least until Diocletian.¹⁵¹ No attempt is known to either suppress or promote a specific provincial vernacular for political or other reasons.¹⁵² Overall, the Romans, in Gaul as elsewhere, appear not to have been very interested in languages other than Latin and Greek.¹⁵³ While the Roman state did not need to control local languages as long as their use posed no threat, some control was exercised over the format, content, and even script forms of more formal documents.¹⁵⁴ Still, the relatively tolerant attitude of the Roman authorities towards the written use of, among others, the Gaulish language can perhaps be gleaned from the *Digest*, a Justinianic compilation which includes the work of the legal scholar Domitius Ulpianus (170–228 CE). In an extract from Ulpian’s second book on *fideicommissa* it is suggested that such testamentary provisions may also be composed in Gaulish:

*fideicommissa quocumque sermone relinqui possunt, non solum Latina uel Graeca, sed etiam Punica uel Gallicana uel alterius cuiuscumque gentis.*¹⁵⁵

Fideicommissa can be left in any language, not only in Latin or Greek, but also in Punic or Gallican, or the language of any other nation.

It is interesting to note that, even though such vernacular *fideicommissa* have not been found to date, some Gaulish inscriptions, such as a fragment found at Lezoux dating to the first half of the second century and possibly one of the Châteaubleau inscriptions (see Section 5.2.1 above), have recently been interpreted as legal acts written in the Gaulish vernacular.¹⁵⁶ Nonetheless, Latin was the (written) language of government and administration and this must have led to its rapid spread at least in certain zones. By contrast, Gaulish had no established written tradition in these registers, even though it may have stayed in use, as was suggested above, for a long time in informal and private (including religious) discourse.¹⁵⁷ This is further borne out by the fact that the most common genres of the Gallo-Latin texts (coinage, graffiti, curse tablets, and some twenty lapidary inscriptions) are derived from Roman/Mediterranean practices.¹⁵⁸

The presence of the army, of military camps, and of the commercial centres that developed around these, has often been assumed to have exposed the

¹⁵⁰ Herman (1983), 1050–1. ¹⁵¹ Mullen (2023a), 9 and 19–21; (2023b).

¹⁵² Broderick (2014), 48. See in general Adams (2003a, 2003b).

¹⁵³ Lejeune (1949); Mullen (2023b). ¹⁵⁴ Mullen (2023a), 21; (2023b).

¹⁵⁵ *Digest* 32.11 in Mommsen, Krueger, and Watson (1985), iii. 73.

¹⁵⁶ Lambert, Alfonso, and Wittman (2017), 138–9.

¹⁵⁷ Lodge (1993), 44. ¹⁵⁸ Woolf (1998), 96–7.

soldiers, and possibly the local population, to Latin to a much larger extent.¹⁵⁹ Even those who challenge the weight of this factor admit that ‘service in the army, the *auxilia* in particular, as well as marriage, trade, business, or friendship between locals or foreigners and Roman soldiers will no doubt have contributed to the spreading of Latin used as *lingua franca* in the West.’¹⁶⁰ Thus, the encampment of thousands of Roman soldiers demanded a steady supply of provisions, the production of which prompted the establishment of large farming estates in the southern part of Germania Inferior and in the north of Belgica Secunda.¹⁶¹ These estates supplied the Roman border with troops and were managed by Roman colonists (see Section 5.1 above).¹⁶² These colonists constituted a relatively homogeneous ethno-linguistic group, whose *Romanitas* was furthermore continually reinforced by the presence of the Roman army and the settlement of Roman traders and veterans in the frontier zone.¹⁶³ Thus, the new defensive fortifications built up in the north of Gaul (see Section 5.1 above) in the late third century may in fact have brought about a reinforcement of the Latin language in the area, prompting any remaining Gaulish-speaking communities to switch, at least partially, to Latin.¹⁶⁴ The penetration of Latin therefore probably accelerated, or was completed, during the crisis of the third century. The increased presence of the army and invading Germanic bands introduced many new groups with whom the only means of communication probably was Latin, even if this does not appear to exclude entirely the possibility of Frankish–Gaulish language contact (as argued by Kerkhof, see Section 5.2.3 above).¹⁶⁵

The changing aspects of religious practice also must have influenced the language-attitude of the population, but, again, not in a straightforward way. Religious practice can, on the one hand, have been a Latinizing factor, as in the spread of Roman civic (imperial) religion, whereas in other cases, visible in mixed-language and Gaulish magical texts of a more local and private nature, it may instead have been a conservative factor, which would allow, in certain circumstances and situations, the maintenance of the local language.¹⁶⁶ In this respect, too, different regions of Gaul show different speeds and modalities of Latinization, creating ‘a heterogeneous process and diverse outcomes in the religious sphere.’¹⁶⁷ Thus, despite the ubiquitous *interpretatio romana*, names of local divinities were frequently retained even if their cult appears to have become Roman in outlook, as for example in the case of the votive altars of Nehalennia in the Rhine estuary.¹⁶⁸ Similarly, the curse tablet found at Chamalières may be

¹⁵⁹ Schmidt (1983), 1005; Whatmough (1970), 64.

¹⁶⁰ Speidel (2023); for a response to Speidel’s revisionist stance, see Mullen (2023a), 22.

¹⁶¹ Heeren (2017); Kooistra (1996), 9. ¹⁶² De Planhol (1994), 49.

¹⁶³ Schrijver (2014), 141–3; Adams (2007), 22. ¹⁶⁴ Kerkhof (2018), 28.

¹⁶⁵ Herman (1983), 1052. ¹⁶⁶ Cazanove and Estarán (2023), 176–95 (at 195).

¹⁶⁷ Cazanove and Estarán (2023), 195.

¹⁶⁸ Woolf (1998), 206 and 233–4. In general, see De Vries (1960).

connected to the Gaulish divinity *Maṑonos aruer(n)īiatis* even if most of the names in the text are Roman.¹⁶⁹ The pillar of the *nautae* found in Paris presents a complex combination of Roman and Gaulish names and depictions of divinities which can be interpreted in several ways, and may represent either a complete mixture or instead a juxtaposition of cultures and distinct devotions.¹⁷⁰ Cazanove and Estarán, however, argue that ‘it is likely that, by the end of the second century, Latinization had been successful, at least for dedications placed by individuals in a private capacity in public sanctuaries.’¹⁷¹

Whether conversion to Christianity, a religion initially confined to urban centres such as Massilia (Marseille), Vienna (Vienne), and Lugdunum (Lyon), may have had any impact on the language used by its converts is a question which, unfortunately, is difficult to answer. While the impact of Latinization on Christianization is obvious, the reverse is less so, even if Christianity is likely to have enhanced the prestige of Latin, and Latin literacy, especially as the main language of the liturgy.¹⁷² Indeed, in western areas of the Empire other than Africa, Christianity was not quick to make full use of the opportunities created by the spread of Latin.¹⁷³ The available sources for Gaul give us precious little information as to how often, if at all, Christianity came into contact with people who did not speak Latin in the countryside. In regions such as Gaul it began to penetrate the rural interior only in the late fourth century, and our evidence shows us little if any contacts of Christianity with local languages, in most places, Wiśniewski argues, ‘Christianization simply followed Latinization.’¹⁷⁴ In cases where Latinization had not been completed, for example in the Gaulish *Sprachinseln* discussed earlier, we find no real effort to use Gaulish by apostles of the rural countryside such as St Martin—the vehicle of evangelization appears to have been Latin.¹⁷⁵

5.4. Conclusion

All this clearly shows that the available evidence, heterogeneous as it is, cannot yet provide us with a full picture of how Gaulish and Latin coexisted after 200 CE. The epigraphic evidence, despite the many problems of interpretation, is the most direct and reliable testimony to the presence and survival of Gaulish. After its disappearance from the record, the picture becomes even more diffuse. The literary *testimonia*, themselves a highly diverse collection, are for the most part not

¹⁶⁹ *RIG* ii. 2, L-100; Schmidt (1983), 1007.

¹⁷⁰ *RIG* ii. 1, L-14. For discussion, see Cazanove and Estarán (2023), 191–2.

¹⁷¹ Cazanove and Estarán (2023), 189. ¹⁷² Wiśniewski (2023), 214.

¹⁷³ Wiśniewski (2023), 203.

¹⁷⁴ Wiśniewski (2023), 196–214 (at 214). Furthermore, Schmidt (1983), 1008; Whatmough (1970), 45; Vendryes (1925).

¹⁷⁵ Van Dam (1985), 119–40; Bardy (1948), 75.

conclusive and only provide tantalizing but problematic glimpses. The evidence from loanwords and other linguistic features in Gallo-Romance, finally, do indeed hint at a long period of coexistence of Latin and Gaulish, at least in those *Sprachinseln* where the language may have survived even into the fifth century. The replacement of Gaulish by Latin, itself developing over time into many varieties of its own, appears to have taken place at different speeds in different places, even if, for now, a detailed regional picture is lacking, as is a clear record of the differences between the different social strata. Nonetheless, the case of Gaulish clearly illustrates that integration into the Roman Empire did not necessarily imply the suppression of vernacular literacy, neither did the adoption of Roman writing habits entail the abolition of the native tongue.¹⁷⁶ And yet, Gaulish was eventually replaced by Latin, leaving us hard-to-interpret traces and a host of questions we are still trying to answer.

¹⁷⁶ Stifter (2019), 121.

6

Registers of Latin in Gaul from the Fifth to the Seventh Century

Ian Wood

6.1. Setting the Scene

The period between the late fifth and the late eighth century saw major changes in the Latin language in Gaul. What used to be interpreted as degeneration is now understood in terms of linguistic change, and perhaps also as a growing consonance between orthography and Latin as it was spoken—not least because of the work of József Herman and (more recently) of Roger Wright and Michel Banniard.¹ Merovingian Latin is no longer dismissed as simply bad—although Auerbach had long ago put forward the argument that Gregory of Tours' Latin had a mimetic vividness to be admired.² Much remains a matter of debate, not least because manuscripts are as likely to reflect the competence and training of the copyist as that of the original author. For instance, in the case of the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours some manuscripts are more classical in their orthography and grammar than others. Some editors have preferred the readings of the less 'classical' manuscripts and others have preferred those that are more 'correct'. Determining which are closer to the author's original language is no simple matter. Although there is some case for thinking that the earlier manuscripts are more likely to reflect what was actually written than the later ones, this is usually little more than an assumption and for several important texts we in any case have no such early manuscript. Moreover, there was not necessarily any steady pattern of change: there is considerable variation in language between manuscripts of the same date.

In general, however, it is true to say that the Latin written in Gaul between the late fifth and the eighth century departed increasingly from the classical norm. In part this can be attributed to the decline of the schools of Gaul. Reference to professional rhetors ends in the early sixth century. Certainly there was some Latin education even after the schools of rhetoric ceased to function.³ We hear of

¹ Herman (2000); Wright (1982); Banniard (1992).

² Auerbach (2003), 77–95.

³ Riché (1962), 69–75, 150–71, and 220–91.

the teaching of the Psalter in some local churches, as well as more advanced learning in monasteries, the households of bishops, and at the royal court. We can also trace the transmission of books of grammar.⁴ Most obviously there are those of Donatus and Priscian, but there are also other texts which may even have been composed in sixth- and seventh-century Gaul.⁵ It is, therefore, not surprising that some authors could write relatively classical Latin with a reasonable degree of competence.

It is not, however, just spelling and grammar that deserve consideration; there is also the question of the style. Scholars have long been aware of the deployment of different registers of Latin by writers of the sixth and seventh centuries, and have indeed commented on the register or registers employed by individual writers. It is, however, worth gathering together some of the material, in order to emphasize the fact that writers of the Merovingian period, at least until the end of the seventh century, were entirely capable of making stylistic choices, even if the language they wrote was increasingly unclassical. Why they chose as they did is also a question worth considering. This chapter thus traces the evolution of the Latin used in Gaul between the later part of the fifth century and the eighth by examining the works of several major authors of the period.

6.2. The Fifth and Early Sixth Century

André Loyen's study of the Lyon-born Sidonius Apollinaris, written almost eighty years ago, made the *stylum pingue atque floridum* ('the rich and florid style'), a key marker of what Loyen himself described as 'l'esprit précieux', central to the literary culture of the fifth century.⁶ It was a style that was entirely apposite for the exchange of letters between members of the late-Roman aristocracy, and for the couching of panegyric. Indeed, in terms of survivals, the fourth and fifth centuries were the Golden Age of Latin prose and verse panegyrics. This 'precious' style was not, however, appropriate for all communication: it was essentially a level of language used for and between the elite. As Pierre Riché noted in 1962, Caesarius of Arles (469/470–542), who was unquestionably trained in the basics of grammar and rhetoric, rejected the high-flown style of Sidonius' surviving works (though we should, of course, remember that we do not have any sermon literature from Sidonius, which may well have been more 'humble' in style).⁷ That Caesarius made a choice is apparent from his *Vita*, which relates that, having been elected Bishop of Arles, he considered working with the rhetor Julianus Pomerius to enhance his monastic simplicity with secular knowledge (*ut saecularis scientiae disciplinis monasterialis in eo simplicitas poleretur*).⁸ This was revealed, however,

⁴ Wood (2017).

⁵ Wood (2016), 204–5.

⁶ Loyen (1943).

⁷ Riché (1962), 70.

⁸ *Vita Caesarii* 1.9, ed. Krusch (1896), 460. For Pomerius, see Leyser (2000), 65–80. For Pomerius' Latin, see Prendergast (1938). For the impact of Pomerius on Caesarius' style, see Delage (1971), 49–50.

to be an evil idea when Caesarius dreamt that he was being gnawed by a snake. There is, of course, a parallel to be drawn with Jerome's dream that he was denounced as a 'Ciceronian, not a Christian' by a heavenly judge: *Ciceronianus es, non Christianus*.⁹ Caesarius' rejection of secular learning, which is apparent in his condemnation of classical literature, certainly did not mean that he lacked ability as a writer and speaker—Bill Klingshirn has noted the quality of his Latin, and his use of rhetorical devices—both of which were compatible with what was regarded as a simple Latin style.¹⁰

We can see how deliberate was such a choice if we look at the letters and sermons of Avitus of Vienne (d. c. 518). Avitus was a close relative, possibly even the nephew, of Sidonius, and in most of his surviving works he employed the *stylum pingue atque floridum* of his uncle.¹¹ He was sensitive enough about the correct use of language to be rattled when accused of a barbarism in pronunciation in the course of a sermon: he justified his pronunciation by citing Virgil.¹² The sermon in which he committed his supposed barbarism, however, was delivered in the course of a ceremony of dedication, when the audience would certainly not have been the standard congregation of a church. Even so, Avitus addressed his critic, almost certainly the Bishop of Lyon, as *rhetor*, and the noun was surely intended to be derogatory. On the other hand the sermons written by Avitus for the standard feasts of the Church (*homiliae de diuersis temporibus anni*) are generally simpler in style than those written to celebrate the dedication of a church.¹³

One can illustrate the difference by taking the opening sentence of a sermon on the first day of Rogation and that of the homily preached at the dedication of the monastic basilica at Agaune. The Rogation homily begins:

legimus in historia regum quendam celebrem prophetarum exiguo superni pastus alimento multis diebus iter longissimum sine ullo adminiculo cibi terrestri egisse; adeo diuini beneficii uirtus in corpore humano sequestrata infirmitate praeualuit.

We read in the Book of Kings that a certain notable man among the prophets undertook a very long journey for many days with a small amount of heavenly nourishment, without any support from earthly food: and indeed the strength of divine help was effective in the human body, taking away its weakness.¹⁴

The dedication homily begins:

praeconium felicitis exercitus, in cuius congregatione beatissima nemo perit, dum nullus euasit, cum iniustam sanctorum martyrum mortem quasi sortis iustitia

⁹ Jerome, *Ep.* 22, ed. and trans. Wright (1933), 126–7.

¹⁰ Klingshirn (1994), 19. See also Delage (1971), 180–208.

¹¹ On the relationship between Avitus and Sidonius, see Shanzer and Wood (2002), 5.

¹² Avitus, *Ep.* 57, ed. Peiper (1883); also ed. Malaspina and Reydellet (2016). See Wood (1993), 37–8.

¹³ Wood (1986), 74–9. ¹⁴ Avitus, Homily 7.

iudicari, qua bis super aciem dispersa mansuetam centuplex decimatis fructus adcreceret et odio in prosperum subfragante eatenus elegerentur singuli, donec simul conligerenter electi, ex consuetudinis debito series lectae passionis expliciuit.

According to appropriate custom, the order of the passion read has unfolded the praise of the happy army, among whose most blessed company no one perished, though no one escaped, since justice decreed as if by lot the unjust death of the holy martyrs, so that once [the judgement] had twice been dispersed over the gentle battle-line, fruit might grow one hundredfold through those decimated, and as hate made the recommendation to good effect, men might be chosen one by one until the elect were all gathered at once.¹⁵

It can scarcely be said that the opening of the Rogation sermon is rustic in style, but it is straightforward, unlike the opening of the dedication sermon, which is broken up into a series of paradoxical subordinate clauses, which make it impossible to translate the central clause into English without reorganizing the sentence entirely. Such verbal gymnastics were no doubt expected by the elite audiences of such dedication sermons and of other private ceremonies—and we catch a glimpse of them in a letter of Avitus, in which he expresses his regret at not being able to attend a church dedication.¹⁶

In the letters attached to his poems, Avitus talks directly about questions of register. In his comments he is explicit about the virtues of a simpler style. The poems were religious works: five of them versifications of the Books of Genesis and Exodus, and a sixth a poem in praise of virginity. In the introduction to his biblical epic, the *De spiritalis historiae gestis*, he notes the problems of writing religious verse, which required correct, rather than eloquent, expression.¹⁷ What was required was a style appropriate to religious vocation (*religionis propositae stilum*) as much as adherence to the law of metre. A clergyman's speech should rather lack grandeur than correctness (*salubrius dicenti clerico non impletur pompa quam regula*). And Avitus makes a similar point when sending his poem on chastity to his brother, Apollinaris, Bishop of Valence:

deceat enim dudum professionem, nunc etiam aetatem nostram, si quid scriptitandum est, grauiori potius stilo operam ac tempus insumere nec in eo inmorari, quod paucis intellegendibus mensuram syllabarum seruando canat, sed quod legentibus multis mensurate fidei adstructione deseruiat.

It has long suited our vocation, and now our age too, if something has to be written to take on the work and occasion in a more serious style instead, and not to

¹⁵ Avitus, Homily 25: I have emended *ex consuetudine solemni*, Peiper's Latin text, from what was visible in the papyrus in 1976: trans. Shanzer and Wood (2002), 379, with some alterations.

¹⁶ Avitus, *Ep.* 50, trans. Shanzer and Wood (2002), 326–30.

¹⁷ Avitus, *De spiritalis historiae gestis: Letter to Apollinaris*, trans. Shanzer and Wood (2002), 260–2. For a new edition of the poem, see Hecquet-Noti (1999–2005).

linger on writing that sings in verse to few who understand and measures syllables, but on what serves many readers and has measured an increase in faith.¹⁸

Admittedly, the convoluted expression employed by Avitus in addressing his brother scarcely adhered to the serious, straightforward style that the Bishop of Vienne thought was appropriate for religious writing. But he was well aware that his style was difficult. He refused to be involved in an embassy to Byzantium on the grounds that his Latin would be less intelligible to the Greeks than something less polished (*quod minus fuerit expoliturum*).¹⁹

6.3. The Age of Gregory of Tours

Avitus, then, had an understanding of the importance of register in writing: some topics demanded clarity rather than decoration, and some audiences should be addressed in a simpler style, while some might be addressed in something a good deal more polished, and infinitely more difficult to follow. This same understanding underlies the much better-known assessments of Latin made by Gregory of Tours (c. 539–94), even though the Latin of the two men may seem worlds apart. In the First Preface to his *Histories*, Gregory admits that his style is not polished (*etsi incultu effatu*), but he notes that rhetoricians are not understood by many: ‘few understand a philosophising rhetor, many one speaking in a rustic fashion’ (*Philosophantem rethorem intellegunt pauci, loquentem rusticum multi*), a statement that is itself eloquently expressed! And he famously closes the *Histories* with a demand that even the most learned should not change his text, even if they find his Latin uncouth (*ut tibi stilus noster sit rusticus*—another neat expression) except to put it into verse.²⁰ Gregory returns to the question of his lack of grammatical and rhetorical skills on a number of occasions, most notably in the prefaces to the *Gloria Confessorum* and the *De virtutibus sancti Martini*. In the former—the last book of his *Miraculæ*—he envisages criticism not just of his skill but also of his linguistic errors—confusion over genders and cases—and he notes that he writes briefly, in an obscure style.²¹ He addresses the question of his literary skill even more directly in the preface to his *De virtutibus sancti Martini*. He explains that he had been instructed three times in a dream to record the miracles performed in Martin’s name, but that he felt that he did not have the skills of the earlier Gallic writers Sulpicius Severus or Paulinus of Périgueux, both of whom had already written about the saint. It was his mother who finally convinced him

¹⁸ Avitus, *De consolatoria castitatis laude: Letter to Apollinaris*, trans. Shanzer and Wood (2002), 263–4. For a new edition of the poem, see Hecquet-Noti (2011).

¹⁹ Avitus, *Ep.* 49.

²⁰ Gregory, *Historiae* 10.31, ed. Krusch and Levison (1951). See Shanzer (2005), 303–19.

²¹ Gregory, *Liber in Gloria Confessorum, Praefatio*, ed. Krusch (1885b).

that his own style was entirely accessible to readers, and as a result he set down the miracles of Martin in a *sermo incultus* ('unpolished language'), bearing in mind that Christ had called not on orators, but on fishermen, not on philosophers, but on rustics, to spread the Word.²²

Gregory was expressing an idea that can be found even among the most literate authors of the sixth and seventh centuries. As we have already seen in Chapters 3 and 4, Isidore, for instance, regarded simple writings as being preferable to the pretentious display of grammar, and he advocated humble eloquence rather than pompous and ornate speech, which could be deluding.²³ What was important was an understanding of the divine mysteries. But Gregory's insistence on his *rusticitas* is not quite what it seems. It is not only the vividness of Gregory's writing that is now recognized: Danuta Shanzer and Joaquin Martinez Pizarro, among others, have provided sharp proof of Gregory's literary skill.²⁴ Although he claimed that his Latin was rustic, he was perfectly capable of employing rhetorical tricks that show an awareness of Latin style, even if the grammar of his works is frequently weak—and here there is always the problem of the extent to which the manuscript texts that we have reflect Gregory's own language rather than that of his copyists. It is a problem that has been compounded by the choices of editors, who have sometimes opted for one reading rather than another on the assumption that the Bishop of Tours was grammatically incompetent. It is worth noting that Gregory's *sermo rusticus* is not the *simplicitas* of Caesarius. On the one hand it is less grammatically correct, but on the other it does not eschew reference to the classics. He regarded Sallust as providing clear guidelines on the task of the historian, quoting the *Cataline*:

arduū uidetur res gestas scribere: primum quod facta dictis exaequanda sunt; deinde quia plerique quae delicta repraehenderis maleuolentia et inuidia dicta putant

It seems hard to write history, first because the facts should be recorded accurately; and second because many think that the criticisms you make of wrongdoing are marks of malevolence or jealousy.²⁵

²² Gregory, *Liber de virtutibus sancti Martini*, 1, *Praefatio*, ed. Krusch (1885b); Auerbach (1965), 103–11.

²³ Isidore, *Sententiae* 3.13.10: *simplicioribus litteris non est proponendus fucus grammaticae artis. meliores sunt enim communes litterae, quia simplices, et ad solam humilitatem legentium pertinentes; illae uero nequiores quia ingerunt hominibus perniciosam mentis elationem*, ed. Cazier (1998), and *Sententiae* 3.13.2: *quidam plus meditare delectantur gentiliū dicta propter tumentem et ornatum sermonem, quam scripturam sanctam propter eloquium humile. sed quid prodest in mundanis doctrinis proficere, et inanescere in diuinis; caduca sequi figmenta et caelestia fastidire mysteria? cauendi sunt igitur tales libri, et propter amorem sanctorum scripturarum uitandi*.

²⁴ Shanzer (2005, 2003); Pizarro (2016), 338–74.

²⁵ Gregory, *Historiae* 4.13, citing Sallust, *Catalina* 3.2. See also Gregory, *Historiae* 7.2.

He even quotes the *Aeneid* on several occasions.²⁶ It is also clear that he had some understanding of metrics. In his obituary notice for Chilperic, he noted that the king, in his attempt to copy the poetry of Sedulius, mixed up short and long syllables, and clearly did not know what he was doing.²⁷ Dag Norberg's assessment of Chilperic's verse is a little kinder, placing it in the context of rhythmic poetry.²⁸ Danuta Shanzer has gone further and argued that Chilperic was 'smarter and cleverer than anyone else', and she has noted the courtliness in his writing.²⁹ Gregory's critique of Chilperic, and the literary understanding that it reveals, however, raises the question of whether his own grammatical weakness was a deliberate choice—an emphatic espousal of *rusticitas*, as Erich Auerbach came to argue.³⁰ Indeed, parts of the critique itself, including the famous denunciation of the king as 'the Nero and Herod of our time', provide a clear indication of the rhetorical abilities of the Bishop of Tours.

There are, in fact, several indications that Gregory was able to adopt different registers to suit the task in hand. Although we have no surviving sermon from the Bishop of Tours, Shanzer has noted the employment of what she calls a 'higher rhetorical style' in various sections of the *Vita Patrum* and in other books of the *Miracula*. In particular, she has argued that passages that are 'suspiciously generalizing or moralizing', as well as full-scale 'rhetorical outbursts', are fragments of sermons.³¹ Guy Halsall has convincingly argued that the preface to Book V of the *Histories*, which is one of the most extended outbursts in the whole of Gregory's *œuvre* actually originated as a sermon addressed to the Merovingian prince Merovech in 576.³²

Gregory was not the finest writer of his day in the Merovingian world: we can compare him with Venantius Fortunatus to see that there were finer stylists. Fortunatus, in his verse, writes in what Michael Roberts has described as 'the jeweled style'³³—which one may take as the equivalent of Sidonius' *stilum pingue atque floridum*, or Loyen's 'esprit précieux'. But Fortunatus also chose different registers for different types of work. His prose hagiographical *vitae*, which were intended to be read aloud, deliberately adopted a rustic style. In what is still the most detailed analysis of Fortunatus' prose, Richard Collins, however, urges caution in accepting the hagiographer's description of his style.³⁴ In the preface to the *Vita Albini* Fortunatus reveals that his prose is still that of the rhetor, even if the text is addressed to the general public.³⁵ The *Vita Albini* was written *ad aedificationem plebis*, but it was commissioned by a bishop, Domitianus, whose rhetorical skills, according to Fortunatus, were comparable to those of Cicero. And the Italian hagiographer set out to write something appropriate to the dedicatee.

²⁶ Kurth (1919). ²⁷ Gregory, *Historiae* 6.46.

²⁸ Norberg (1954); also Kindermann (2002). ²⁹ Shanzer (2015), 685 and 687.

³⁰ Auerbach (1965), 103–11. ³¹ Shanzer (2003), 47–8. ³² Halsall (2007).

³³ Roberts (1989, 2009). ³⁴ Collins (1981), 109.

³⁵ Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita Albini* I–IV, ed. Krusch (1885a), 27–33.

Gregory's view that rhetors were not easily understood was clearly not shared by everyone.

In fact there was a significant group of highly literate aristocrats active in Gaul at the end of the sixth century. Among the fifth- and sixth-century letters preserved in the *Epistolae Austrasicae*, collected in a single ninth-century manuscript, one may note those of Gogo and his correspondents.³⁶ Gogo, a trusted servant of the Frankish kings who ruled Austrasia (the eastern part of the Merovingian kingdom), himself had close links with Fortunatus, who described him as both an Orpheus and a Cicero.³⁷ The comparison is unquestionably a huge exaggeration, but Gogo wrote well enough, and he was capable of citing Virgil.³⁸ Perhaps more impressive than Gogo was another correspondent, who also appears as a recipient of letters from Fortunatus, the patrician Dynamius of Provence.³⁹ Fortunatus praises the patrician's eloquence, and also identifies him as a poet.⁴⁰ One poem of his has survived, the *Laus de Lerine insula*, as have two hagiographical works, the *Vita Maximi Reieninsis*, and the *Life of Marius of Bevons*, although the second work may only be preserved in a revised form.⁴¹ The preface to the *Vita Maximi* concludes with a comment on the author's *dictio impolita* ('rough speech'), which is certainly no more than a standard expression of humility. It was not just Fortunatus who showed literary ability at the end of the sixth century, which surely strengthens the case for believing that Gregory of Tours chose deliberately to adopt a rustic style, and suggests that he might well have deployed a different style when he was writing to members of the royal court.

6.4. The Seventh Century

From a generation later we have letters of Desiderius of Cahors (c. 590–655). These may have been collected together at some point in the early Carolingian period, although the collection may date to the same period as the *Vita Desiderii*, which includes other letters (from the saint's mother, and from king Dagobert) that probably came from the same archive.⁴² This may suggest that the letter collection had already been put together in the late seventh or early eighth century,

³⁶ Dumézil (2007). On the formation of the *Epistolae Austrasicae* collection, see Barrett and Woudhuysen (2016a).

³⁷ Venantius Fortunatus, *Carm.* 7.1 and 7.2, ed. Leo (1881); for more recent editions, see Reydellet (1994–2004); Roberts (2017). See the discussion in George (1992), 136–40.

³⁸ *Epistolae Austrasicae* 13, ed. Gundlach (1892a).

³⁹ *Epistolae Austrasicae* 12, 17; Venantius Fortunatus, *Carm.* 6.9 and 6.10. Dumézil (2009), 167–94. See also George (1992), 141–6.

⁴⁰ Venantius Fortunatus, *Carm.* 6.10.38 and 57–8.

⁴¹ For the *Laus*, see Dumézil (2009), 191–2; for the *Vita Maximi*, see Gennaro (1966); for the *Vita Marii*, see *PL* 80:25–32.

⁴² For the collection of the letters, see Mathisen (2013, 1998).

which is the date recently advanced for the bishop's *Vita*, although there is no doubt that the text was subject to a degree of *réécriture* in the ninth century.⁴³ Desiderius was one of a remarkable group of men attached to the courts of Chlothar and Dagobert I, which has long attracted attention.⁴⁴ Essentially they were the successors of Gogo and his circle. His hagiographer noted his literary education and training in Gallic eloquence, an observation that Ralph Mathisen has shown to be fully justified, although the bishop's style is not florid.⁴⁵ Desiderius' early education apparently took place in his parent's home, perhaps largely at the hands of his mother, Herchenfreda, whose literary abilities are known from letters preserved in the *Vita Desiderii*.⁴⁶ Subsequently he continued his learning at the royal court, whose importance in the schooling of courtiers has been examined by Martin Heinzelmann.⁴⁷ Desiderius' letter collection includes items addressed to, as well as written by, the bishop. Differences in orthography suggest that Desiderius was a better Latinist than were his correspondents, but like them he wrote in what was effectively a court style.⁴⁸ One of Desiderius' correspondents, Sulpicius of Bourges, certainly had access to a letter of Gogo that was later included in the *Epistolae Austrasicae* collection.⁴⁹ It would seem that the circle to which Desiderius belonged was consciously continuing the stylistic traditions of court writers from a generation earlier. Indeed, Desiderius himself may well have looked back to the letter-writing of Ruricius of Limoges, a contemporary of Avitus, who also admired the writings of Sidonius.⁵⁰ Desiderius may even have been distantly related to the earlier Bishop of Limoges.⁵¹ On the other hand Desiderius himself cites very little other than the Bible, whereas one of his correspondents, Bishop Paul of Verdun, cites, or rather mis-cites, two lines of Virgil.⁵² The style of the Bishop of Cahors is elegant, but it is scarcely *pingue*. One might understand it as being a style appropriate for a churchman, to recall Avitus' discussion of the requirements of religious verse, where the absence of grandeur (*pompa*) is perfectly acceptable.⁵³ To use another phrase of Avitus, it was a *gravior stilum* ('more serious style').⁵⁴

But not all bishops stuck to a sober style. From the generation after that of Desiderius we have the extraordinary exchange of letters between Frodebert/Chrodebert of Tours and Importunus of Paris, in which the two bishops accuse

⁴³ See Bate, Carpentier, and Pon (2021). ⁴⁴ See Hen (2007), 94–123.

⁴⁵ *Vita Desiderii* 1.1, ed. Bate, Carpentier, and Pon (2021); Mathisen (2013), 460–1.

⁴⁶ Bate, Carpentier, and Pon (2021), 54. *Vita Desiderii* 1.6. ⁴⁷ Heinzelmann (1990), 105–38.

⁴⁸ D. Shanzer is preparing a new translation and commentary of the letters of Desiderius.

⁴⁹ Desiderius of Cahors, *Ep.* 2.1, citing *Epistolae Austrasicae* 13: see Norberg (1961), 43. On the likelihood that the *Epistolae Austrasicae* had not yet been gathered into single collection, see Barrett and Woudhuysen (2016a).

⁵⁰ Ruricius, *Ep.* 2.26, ed. Krusch (1887). Mathisen (1999), 53–6.

⁵¹ Mathisen (1999), 72.

⁵² Desiderius of Cahors, *Ep.* 2.12, citing Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.625–6.

⁵³ Avitus, *De spiritalis historiae gestis: Letter to Apollinaris*.

⁵⁴ Avitus, *De consolatoria castitatis laude: Letter to Apollinaris*.

each other of various wrongdoings, both financial and sexual.⁵⁵ Grammatically the letters are certainly not classical: the editor, G. J. J. Waalstra, remarked 'les fautes contre la grammaire classique sont très nombreuses.'⁵⁶ At the same time, the two warring bishops demonstrate some appropriate stylistic awareness. Waalstra quoted the rhetorical maxim *in epistolis considerandum est, quis ad quem et qua de re scribat* ('in letters one should consider who is writing to whom, and what is the subject matter'), and went on to illustrate their correct style of address, as well as their use of proverbs, as recommended by rhetorical handbooks.⁵⁷ He also noted an apparent citation of Terence by Importunus, although this has been questioned by Danuta Shanzer, in a study that lays bare the 'stylised ritual competitive abuse' of the letters.⁵⁸ This was certainly not the *gravior stilum* appropriate for clergy.

Frodebert's ability to choose the literary register that he wished to employ is clear when one considers his two other surviving letters, one addressed to abbess Boba, and the other to abbot Dado, sent in response to the latter's gift of a copy of the *Vita Eligii*.⁵⁹ Waalstra noted the lack of grammatical vulgarisms in these two letters, and suggested that this should be attributed to their textual transmission.⁶⁰ But the distinction between these additional letters and those contained in the exchange with Importunus goes beyond a simple question of grammatical correctness. There is also a considerable difference in style. Frodebert/Chrodebert certainly tailored his language to his addressee. The letter to Boba, in particular, is a canonical directive, dealing with a case of adultery committed by a nun. The vocabulary is ecclesiastical and it is swamped with biblical allusions: we hear of *peccatrix*, *adulteria*, and the dangers of carnal thoughts.⁶¹ The rhetorical fireworks of the exchange with Importunus are entirely absent; so too is the vulgar language—although, as Shanzer has noted, there is a curious coda to the letter, in which Chrodebert thanks Boba for a garment she has sent, *corpori meo tamquam sciendo congrue praeeparatam* ('fittingly prepared for my body, almost deliberately').⁶² In contrast to the use of biblical language to address the question of adultery, in the exchange of letters with Frodebert/Chrodebert Importunus accuses his colleague of having a *cauta longa*—a euphemism for his penis⁶³—when he says that God punishes fornicators.

Dado's letter to Chrodebert is essentially a simple covering note. But he too seems to have known what was the appropriate register—assuming, that is, that the text of the *Vita Eligii* is largely his. That the hagiographical text as we have it is

⁵⁵ Waalstra (1962). ⁵⁶ Waalstra (1962), 247.

⁵⁷ Waalstra (1962), 37.

⁵⁸ Waalstra (1962), 72–3 and 162; Shanzer (2010), 393 and 386. Shanzer supplies a new edition and translation of the letters at 396–405.

⁵⁹ Boba: *Epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae* 16, ed. Gundlach (1892b), 461–4; Dado: ed. Krusch (1902), 741.

⁶⁰ Waalstra (1962), 37.

⁶¹ *Epistolae aevi Merovingici collectae* 16, ed. Gundlach (1892b).

⁶² Shanzer (2010), 393.

⁶³ Waalstra (1962), 72–3; Shanzer (2010), 393.

in part a *réécriture* is certain, but there is debate about the extent to which it has been rewritten.⁶⁴ Unlike the main body of the narrative, the preface is stuffed with literary allusions, to Sedulius' *Carmen Paschale*, Rufinus' historical writings, Jerome's letters, and the *Life of Hilary*, as well as references to a whole host of classical philosophers, poets, historians, and rhetoricians.⁶⁵ While the preface does not seem to be part of the earliest phase of writing, it does seem to belong to a revision from the period 673–84.⁶⁶ Moreover, one finds exactly the same literary exuberance in the prefaces of some other hagiographical works of the Merovingian period. Jonas of Bobbio (d. after 659), born in Merovingian-ruled Susa, in particular, indulges in a display of rhetoric in his letter commending the *Vita Columbani* to abbots Waldebert and Bobolenus, providing an extraordinary contrast between Ireland and Arabia, the Apennines and India, apples and dates.⁶⁷ And in the preface to the first book of the *Vita Columbani* he inserts a range of references to other authors, including Athanasius, Jerome, Sulpicius Severus, Hilary, Ambrose, and Augustine.⁶⁸ Although there are quotations, notably from Gregory the Great, in the course of the narrative, in the main body of the text Jonas limits his citations, for the most part, to the Bible.

Borrowings from the *Vita Columbani* (written 642/3) have been noted in the *Life of Segolena of Troclar*, which is itself cited by the late-seventh-century *Vita Wandregisili*, and so must date to the middle of the seventh century.⁶⁹ Despite his (or her?) knowledge of Jonas' work, the author of the *Vita Segolena* composed a clear and unadorned prologue. But he (or she) certainly had an appreciation of stylistic register. Having acknowledged that the work had been commissioned by the abbess and nuns of Troclar, the author states that he (or she) will carry out the task *sub compendio brevitatis* ('with concise brevity') and *rustico quidem sermone* ('in rustic language indeed').⁷⁰ Not that there are no rhetorical flourishes in what follows. God will judge the hagiographer's words:

igitur quoniam tantae matris Segolena adgredimur texere gesta, erit nostrorum arbiter dictorum, uirtutum Largitor immensus, qui ei munera uitae perennis gratia sua largitus est.

Therefore since we are attempting to describe the deeds of so great a mother as Segolena, the boundless giver of miracles will be the judge of our speech, He who by his grace granted to her the gift of life eternal.⁷¹

⁶⁴ Heinzelmann (2010), 69.

⁶⁵ Dado, *Vita Eligii*, ed. Krusch (1902), 663–5.

⁶⁶ Heinzelmann (2010), 69. The key discussion of the dating of the *Vita Eligii* is Beyer (2007).

⁶⁷ Jonas, *Vita Columbani: Letter to Waldebert and Bobolenus*, ed. Krusch (1905), 144–8.

⁶⁸ Jonas, *Vita Columbani*, 1.pref., ed. Krusch (1905), 151–2.

⁶⁹ Levison (1909); Réal (1995); Gouillet (2010), 12.

⁷⁰ *Vita Segolena*, prol., AASS, July 24.

⁷¹ *Vita Segolena* 1.3.

The narrative is, in fact, elegantly presented: the statement that the text will be rustic in style is no more than self-deprecation. It is worth noting that the community seems to have valued education. Segolena herself had been *studiosis laboribus operibusque pro sexu instituta* 'educated in accordance with her sex in zealous labours and works'.⁷²

In the preface to the *Vita Eligii* Dado (Bishop of Rouen 641–684/6) denigrates rhetoricians, but other bishops clearly continued to approve of rhetoric. We can deduce as much from the comments on the learning of Bonitus of Clermont, whose education concluded with an examination by *sophistae*.⁷³ Even more compelling is Marculf's preface to his collection of *formulae*, where he addresses Bishop Landeric. The author states that he himself is an old man, about seventy years of age, that he has a tremulous hand, and he cannot see well. He has, however, set down the documents *iuxta simplicitate et rusticitatis meae natura* ('in keeping with simpleness and the nature of my rusticity'). Landeric and his colleagues, however, are *prudentissimos uiros et eloquentissimos ac rethores et ad dictandum peritos* ('most prudent men and most eloquent, rhetors indeed and skilled in dictation'), so Marculf hopes that his rusticity will not mar the eloquence of the learned or of the rhetors (*nec praeiudicat mea rusticitas eruditorum et rethorum flores uerborum et eloquentiae facundiae*).⁷⁴ Marculf's rhetors, one might note, are not equivalent to those decried by Gregory of Tours, but (like those of Fortunatus) the bishops themselves: that is to say, preachers. Of course, Marculf's proclamation of his own simplicity is false modesty: the preface is a skilful piece of writing. And Landeric and his episcopal colleagues may well have been less literate than Marculf himself. Even so, we have here a neat expression of different registers of language, right at the end of the seventh century or the start of the eighth.

6.5. Conclusion

Despite the slow, but steady, withering of classical grammar and changes in orthography, some Merovingian authors retained an ability to use appropriate linguistic registers in their writings. The dominance of the *sermo humilis* or the *sermo rusticus* cannot be taken as an indication of literary decline. It reflects a desire for clarity, especially when the subject matter was religious, an attempt to speak to a broader Christian community who continued to speak Latin, but a Latin that was increasingly far from that of the elites of the Roman Empire. As Avitus and Isidore both noted, elaborate rhetoric was not appropriate for

⁷² *Vita Segolena* 1.4.

⁷³ *Vita Boniti* 1–2, ed. Krusch (1913). See Mathisen (2013), 461.

⁷⁴ Marculf, *Formulae* 1.pref., ed. Zeumer (1886), 36–7.

conveying the Christian message. Bishops tended increasingly to leave out literary embellishment—Desiderius of Cahors appears to cite nothing other than the Bible even when writing to members of his own circle (although there are hints of knowledge of the epistolary tradition). It was the dictates of clerical culture and the appreciation of the linguistic abilities of their broader audiences, rather than linguistic decline amongst the elite, that led to the eclipse of the ‘jeweled style’. But Christian writers could still use rhetorical flourishes if they wanted (as did Frodebert and Importunus), and hagiographers could adorn their prefaces with displays of learning in order to indicate the importance of the protagonist of their ensuing narrative. One might even add that this was not a world devoid of poetry, but in so far as there is writing that can be called poetic in the late Merovingian world it should probably be sought in the Latin of the Mass.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ See Rose (2017), 78–85.

Death and Survival of Latin in the Empire West of the Rhine (Belgicae, Germaniae) and the Rise of the Frankish-Theodisc Languages

Wolfgang Haubrichs

7.1. Introduction

In this chapter I treat the regionally restricted survival of Latin and Gallo-Romance after the fall of the western Empire, mainly in the two provinces of Belgica I/II and in the two provinces of Germania Inferior (II) and Superior (I).¹ That is, I am concerned with the survival of Latin-based languages west of the Rhine (including the Rhine valley itself) until they were replaced by varieties of Frankish, a West-Germanic language, which became, with the languages of the Alamanni, the Baiuvarii, and the Saxons a constituent part of the Carolingian *lingua theodisca* and the predecessor of Dutch, and Low and High German.

In these regions of persistent contact between Romance and Germanic languages we meet two remarkably different types of linguistic acculturation which must first be set out. The migrations of Germanic peoples into the western, Latin-speaking parts of the *Imperium Romanum* during the fifth and sixth centuries produced strikingly different linguistic results. We may distinguish between two basic processes.² The first concerns those regions where migrants ultimately formed a minority; here, their linguistic acculturation to the Latin-speaking (or, later, Romance-speaking) majority was only a matter of time, albeit with sociolectal and regional differences. This is primarily valid for the southern and western provinces, being far from the *limites* of the Western Empire. This is above all the case for the Vandals in Africa (see Chapter 2), the Ostrogoths in Italy, the

¹ The chapter is in some parts a revised and expanded version of Haubrichs (2020).

² For linguistic acculturation in the West of the former Roman Empire, see Dietz et al. (2003), 242–304; Haubrichs (2003a), 695–709; Haubrichs and Pfister (2014), 225–44; Haubrichs (2022). Hardly relevant to the early Middle Ages, despite its title, is Classen (2016).

Burgundians of the Rhône and Saône valleys, and finally the Visigoths in Spain (see Chapter 3).

The Franks in northern Gaul and the Langobards in Italy constitute special cases of this first type. For the Franks, we have to reckon with a long-lasting bilingualism from the last decades of the fifth century, especially in the districts near the subsequently established Romance–Germanic language border (Champagne, Picardy, Wallonia, Ardennes, and Lorraine). This is shown not only by the intensive Germanization of the personal names of Romance-speaking people in northern Gaul, but also by enclaves of Frankish toponyms and hydronyms, and by the large quantity of early Frankish loanwords in French and Gallo-Romance dialects of the contact areas in Gallia and the two Germaniae, to which we shall return below.

The scenarios of progressive integration of the Germanic *gentes* and their gradual amalgamation with majority Romance-speaking societies have hitherto remained the focus of historical research. Too often the simultaneous process of the integration of Romance-speaking people into Germanic-speaking societies is almost entirely forgotten. This constitutes the second basic type of linguistic acculturation. Mention should of course be made of the linguistic and cultural transformation of large parts of Roman Britain, caused by the migrations of North Sea Germanic groups of Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Frisians, and others, and the subsequent assimilation of remaining Latin- and/or Brittonic-speaking populations (see Chapters 8 and 9). The same is true for the ‘de-Latinization’ of the northern parts of Germania Secunda and Belgica Secunda, that is to say, the later Low Franconian-, Dutch- and Flemish-speaking parts of the northern Rhineland, Netherlands, and northern France.³ The following investigation, as a further significant example of such acculturation, will concentrate on the Germanic–Romance interference zones west of the Middle and Upper Rhine in Merovingian times (Fig. 7.1).

7.2. Language Contact and Interference West of the Middle and Upper Rhine

In late antiquity, after the loss of the *Agri Decumates* (about 260), the *limes* of the *Imperium Romanum* in the West opposite so called ‘*Germania libera*’, was essentially formed by two large rivers, the Rhine and the Danube. After the river *limites* were also given up by the middle of the fifth century and these regions were no longer protected by Roman administrative and military forces, they came to be dominated by new Germanic-speaking settlers and developed complex structures

³ van Durme (1996); Besse (1997), 304–532; (2000), 35–102; (2003), 246–51; Haubrichs (1998), 102–29.

of linguistic interference. In the Rhineland, these settlers were mainly Frankish and Alemannic groups, but there were also mixed zones featuring a *pêle-mêle* of *Romani* and *Germani*. We find compact enclaves of Latin speakers which are known as Roman 'relic areas' (*Reliktgebiete*) of different natures and temporal duration, especially in the surroundings of *civitates* and *castella*. Linguistic evidence for this development is mainly offered first by remaining Latin-Romance toponyms and early forms of Germanic place-names; second, by Latin loanwords in the Germanic target languages (*Zielsprachen*) and dialects; third, by Frankish

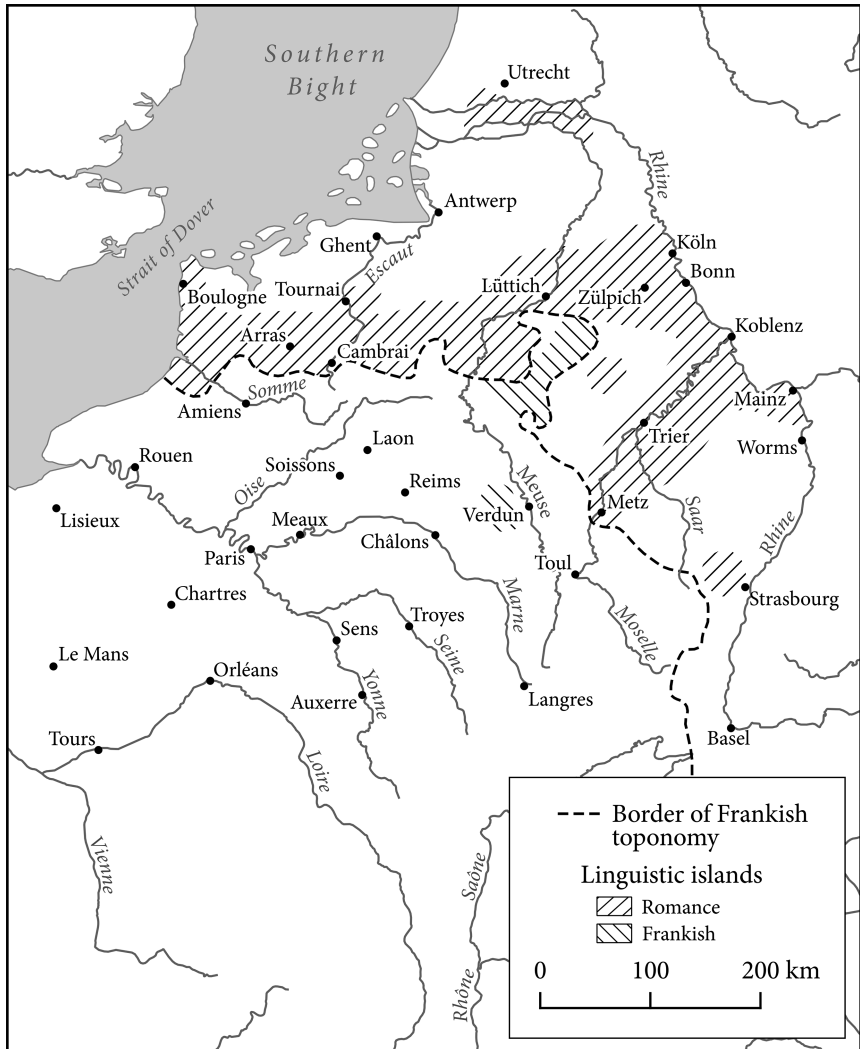


Fig. 7.1 Romance and Frankish linguistic islands between the Rhine and Seine in the Early Middle Ages

loanwords in the Latin-based dialects of eastern, northern, and central France (mostly limited to the far west of the fundamentally Romance-speaking two Belgicae); and last but not least, by early personal names, to be found in contemporary inscriptions, charters, etc.⁴

It might be useful at this point to make some introductory remarks on the linguistic structure, data collection, and historical value—especially for the question of continuity—of toponyms (place-names, field-names, river-names, etc.). Toponyms are composed of lexemes and other elements (e.g. suffixes) of the language in which they originate. They are particularly valuable for the question of the continuity of languages and their speakers if they can be shown to have their origins in a specific language (here Latin and Gallo-Romance) or in a predecessor language (e.g. Celtic, Indo-European) before they enter the target language (here Frankish and Old High German) as loan-names. In these cases they may carry the traces of their linguistic development, as is the case for loanwords more generally (see Chapter 9). For example, names and words from predecessor languages may have passed through the last receiving language (Latin, Gallo-Romance) before their reception into the target language and show this process through the analysis of a combination of their lexical origins and linguistic features that have been received from the transitional and final adopting language.

How do we identify and collect the data of these valuable loan-names and loanwords? These are the names and words that cannot be etymologically explained from the target language; that is, according to their linguistic nature, they must have come from earlier linguistic strata. Since ancient sources flow only sparsely and, as far as names are concerned, selectively, especially for central places or rivers, these foreign names and words in the target language are often transmitted rather late. Their integration into the target language, however, can be determined more closely in time by datable linguistic developments such as phonological changes, of which they bear the traces. Here are two principles that can determine the dating of the final integration of pre-Germanic toponyms and Latin borrowings into the Germanic languages of the incoming migrants. First, do the toponyms or loanwords reflect early medieval Romance linguistic developments (giving us a *terminus post quem*)? Second, do the toponyms or loanwords already show recent linguistic developments of the Germanic target languages (giving us a *terminus ante quem*)?⁵

How can the sound changes just mentioned be dated? This is done on the basis of collections of well-dated and located sources (e.g. texts on various media such as wood, stone inscriptions, manuscripts). Two examples may illustrate this: (1)

⁴ Haubrichs (1996), 559–71; (1998), 106–12.

⁵ The fact that toponyms etc. occasionally preserve an older linguistic situation (e.g. in a copy of an older original) is not important here. According to the rules of phonetic chronology it is only a question of the secure first evidence of a phonetic appearance that gives the *terminus ante quem*. This phonetic change can, of course, have happened earlier.

the Old High German shift of the velar tenuis [k] > [ch] can be determined by the carving (in runic letters) of the name *Do(r)-rih* < **riġja-* ('powerful') on the Würmlinger lance point found near Tübingen (c. 600/620);⁶ (2) the older Old High German and Langobardic shift of the dental tenuis [t] may be determined (among other things) by the name of the *dux Zabān* taken from Langobardic sources (to c. 574) < Germanic **tabna* ('sacrifice, offering'; cf. Old Norse *tafn*) in Gregory of Tours (d. after 593), *Historiae* (4.44).⁷ Thus, the shift of [t] must be dated to the second half of the sixth century at the latest.

We now return to our investigation of Belgica I/II and the two provinces of Germania Inferior (II) and Superior (I). Among the toponymic relics along the Rhine *limes* between Cologne and Koblenz, Romance phonetic developments of the Merovingian period, such as the voicing of voiceless stops or the palatalization of [ki, ke] > [tʃi, tʃe] are hard to find.⁸ Pre-Germanic [k] before [i, e] remains preserved, for example, in *Kehrig* south of Mayen in the eastern Eifel, twelfth-century *Kirriche* < **Ciri-acu* (derived from the Latin personal name (PN) *Cirius* with the Gallo-Romance suffix *-acum*, which normally indicates a Roman fundus, named originally after the first owner or the founder); or in the early German loanword *Kirche* ('church') < Graeco-Latin **kyri(a)ka* ('house of the Lord'). However, the voicing of [p] > [b], which is a sound change attested in central Gallia from the fifth and sixth centuries (but not so early in the Rhineland) can be found in *Lövenich* southeast of Erkelenz, eleventh-century *Luvenich* < **Lubin-iacu* < Latin **Lupin-iacum* (derived from the Latin PN *Lupinus*). The Romance phonetic substitution [gu] or [g] for Germanic [w], not easily spoken by the former, and still today present in French or Italian lexemes such as *Guillaume* < *Willi-halm*, *guerra* < **werra* ('war, turmoil'), is to be seen in the eighth century *in pago Riguerinse*,⁹ 770 *in pago rigorinse*¹⁰ < **Riwarinse* (with loss of [p] before labial consonant) < **Ripuarinse*, as in the name of the *pagus* of the *Ripuarii*, **Rip-warii*, situated around Cologne. The evidence for long-lasting Romance continuity becomes more frequent in urban centres of the northern Rhineland: e.g., the loss of intervocalic [g] in fourth-century *Rigomagum oppidum*, giving us *Rigomo* in 755, *in regomensi marca* (and not **Regomagensi*) in 773 < Celtic *Rigomago* (now Remagen on the Rhine);¹¹ or, as in French, the Gallo-Romance delabialization of Latin [kw], which means the loss of the labial element, in Dutch

⁶ Nedoma (2004), 281–8, no. 36.

⁷ Haubrichs (2010), 531, no. 102.

⁸ For the toponymic material of the Rhineland, see Wirtz (1972); Haubrichs (2003a), 695–7.

⁹ *Fredegarii Continuationes*, ed. Krusch (1888), c. 42, 186. Cf. *Virtutum s. Geretrudis Continuatio*, ed. Krusch (1888), c. 4, 473, ad a. 782: *in terra Riguanense* < **Riguarense*.

¹⁰ Glöckner (1929 ed.), i. 287–8, no. 11. The document was *actum Rigimago* (Remagen) *seu Lauresham* (Lorsch) and written by a *presbyter* with a Latin name, *Saluius atque Thutearnus*.

¹¹ Gysseling (1960), ii. 833; Rasch (2005), 84. Beside the Romanized forms of the toponym, an early Frankish loan-name without the loss of intervocalic [g] as base of the attested German form must have existed: see 770 *Rigimago*, 856 *Regamaga*, 1140 *Riemage*, 1143 *Rimagen*. Cf. Niemeyer (2012), 518.

Aken, 972 German (*vulgari vocabulo*) *Ahha* < Gallo-Romance **Aka*, derived from Latin *Aqua*, *Aquis* (Aachen, North Rhine-Westphalia).¹² But also the numerous Romance anthroponyms and micro-toponyms (field-names) in the region demonstrate continuity.

In order to date the beginnings of the integration of remaining pre-Germanic names, the criterion of the Old High German sound shift must be considered, although this criterion can only be used south of the border with Low Franconian (the 'Benrath line' near Düsseldorf), a dialect that did not experience the sound shift.¹³ For the Ripuarian dialect in the Cologne region, the sound shift is assuredly attested at the latest in the eighth century. All toponymic examples show the change of [k] > [χ] (in German written as <ch> or <h>) around the seventh or eighth century, e.g. **Lacīn-iacu* > 1135/42 *Lechenihc*, today *Lechenich* north of Euskirchen;¹⁴ third century *Antunnaco* > 804 *Antiniche*, today *Andernach* on the Rhine.¹⁵ But considering the earlier shift of [t] > [ts] (written as <z, tz, c>) in the sixth century, a remarkable division can be noticed: at the outer margins of the Rhenish centres we find, e.g., *Merzenich* near Düren, 1140 *Mercinich* < **Martīn-iacu* (derived from the Latin PN *Martinus*);¹⁶ *Zons* near Dormagen, 1020 *Zu(o)nce*, 1057 *Zuonozo* < **Tōnatio*;¹⁷ *Gürzenich* west of Düren, 1170 *Gurcenich* < **Curtīn-iacu* (derived from the Latin PN *Curtinus*).¹⁸ Quite the opposite is to be found near the Rhine and in the suburbs of the Roman urban centres. As evidence of Romance continuity, pre-Germanic [t] is preserved there, e.g. *Metternich* near Koblenz, 1184 *Metterich* < **Meteri-acu*; *Ober-winter* near Remagen < Latin **vīnitōriu* ('wine cellar'); and, as above, *Antunnaco*.¹⁹ One could point to further cases near Cologne and Jülich.

The phonetic reception of Latin [v] corresponds to this picture of relatively late integration of Latin place-names in Frankish on the Rhine *limes* and around *Juliacum* (Jülich). In an earlier period, what is written as a *V* in Latin is rendered by Germanic [w] as in German *Wein*, Old High German *wīn*, English *wine* < Latin *vinum*, but after 700 by Old High German [f] (written also as <v>) as in German *Veilchen*, Old High German *fiol* < Latin *viola*.²⁰ To the first period belong, e.g., *Königs-winter* near Bonn and *Ober-winter* < **vīnitorium* (see above). We meet cases of [f] only in a narrow circle around Cologne and Bonn, and near *Koblenz* < *Confluentes*, especially just to the south in the so-called 'Rheinengtal',

¹² Gysseling (1960), i. 31.

¹³ For the Old High German sound shift, see Haubrichs (1987), 1350–91; Braune and Heidermanns (2018), i. §§ 83–90.

¹⁴ Gysseling (1960), i. 599; Wirtz (1972), 115, no. 62.

¹⁵ Gysseling (1960), i. 56–7; Wirtz (1972), 106, no. 5.

¹⁶ Gysseling (1960), i. 691; Wirtz (1972), 118, no. 78.

¹⁷ Gysseling (1960), ii. 1104–5; Wirtz (1972), 40, no. 17; Schützeichel (1986), 439–48.

¹⁸ Gysseling (1960), i. 430; Wirtz (1972), 111, no. 37.

¹⁹ Gysseling (1960), i. 694; Wirtz (1972), 118, no. 82.

²⁰ Cf. Buchmüller-Pfaff (1990), 694–7; Kleiber and Pfister (1992), 79–80; Haubrichs (1997), 222.

e.g. *Virnich* (pronounced *Firnich*) southwest of Euskirchen, 1140 *Virnich* < **Vern-iacu*.²¹ In the Moselle region around Trier we find quite a few toponymic elements and toponyms, replacing Latin [v] by [f]:²² Gallo-Romance **vabero* ('marshland') normally > *wav(e)ra*, but near the central Moselle repeatedly with the result *fēber*; Gallo-Romance **nāva* ('valley, channel') > repeatedly *nāf*, *nēf* ('wet hollow'); *Fellerich* (Kreis Trier-Saarburg), 949 *Ualeriacum*, 1030 *Uelreche* < **Valeriacu*; †*Födelich* (Kreis Trier-Saarburg, Gemeinde Langsur near Trier), 811/12 *Fedriche* < **Vatiriacu*. The substitution of Latin [v] by Frankish [f] and not by [w] shows us that in the core of the *Mosella Romana* these place-names were not integrated into Old High German earlier than the eighth century and that there was a continuation of the Romance language in this area.

In contrast, we find no Romance sound change in the northern Rhineland after the seventh century. On the other hand we find the Old High German linguistic developments after 700. The first Old High German phonetic change, which, after the shift of [k], seized the whole region, is the 'umlaut', the vowel mutation of [a] before [i, j], e.g. in *Kerpen* west of Cologne, 870 *Kerpinna* < **Carpinea* ('plantation of hornbeams')²³ and (as mentioned above) *Merzenich* < **Martīn-iacu*. So, in the northern Rhineland, the era of bilingualism in *everyday spoken* language (of course monks, clerics, administrators, etc. continued to learn and use literary Latin) had probably come to an end at the latest in the first half of the eighth century. The process of assimilation to the majority language west of the Vosges in the Lotharingian *pagi* of the Saargau and Seillegau is similar:²⁴ the typical Romance post position of the personal name in place-names, a morphological construction well attested in the early documents of the monastery of Weissenburg (Bas-Rhin, France), e.g. in 661 *uilla Gairoaldo*, 712 *uilla Geboaldo*, 717 *uilla Charibode*, no longer occurs after 721. Likewise, the Romance double forms of toponyms, as for example in 713 *in uilla Hagenbah que nuncupatur Disciacu*, disappear after the year 737.

Compared to the northern regions, the Middle Rhine region and Alsace between Bingen and the area around Colmar and Breisach preserve a clearly smaller number of pre-Germanic place-names (c. 17), and this is also the case if we consider the toponymic evidence from sources such as the *Notitia dignitatum*, the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, the *Itinerarium Antonini*, the *Geographus Ravennatus*, etc.²⁵ Furthermore, all these toponyms show the Old High German shift of [t] > [ts] and [p] > [f(f)], [pf] (dated to the sixth or seventh century).²⁶ Map 2 (Fig. 7.2),

²¹ Gysseling (1960), ii. 1017; Wirtz (1972), 109, no. 28.

²² Cf. Haubrichs (2017a), 78.

²³ Gysseling (1960), i. 559; Kleiber and Pfister (1992), 83. Cf. the toponym *Kerpen* near Trier: Jungandreas (1962), 191.

²⁴ Haubrichs (1983), 249–51.

²⁵ Cf. the collection of ancient toponyms in Rasch (2005) with map on p. 130.

²⁶ Kleiber (1983), 169–72 and map no. 4–5; Haubrichs (1987), 1368–70 and map no. 3; Greule (2009), 161–2; Haubrichs (2009), 56–9.

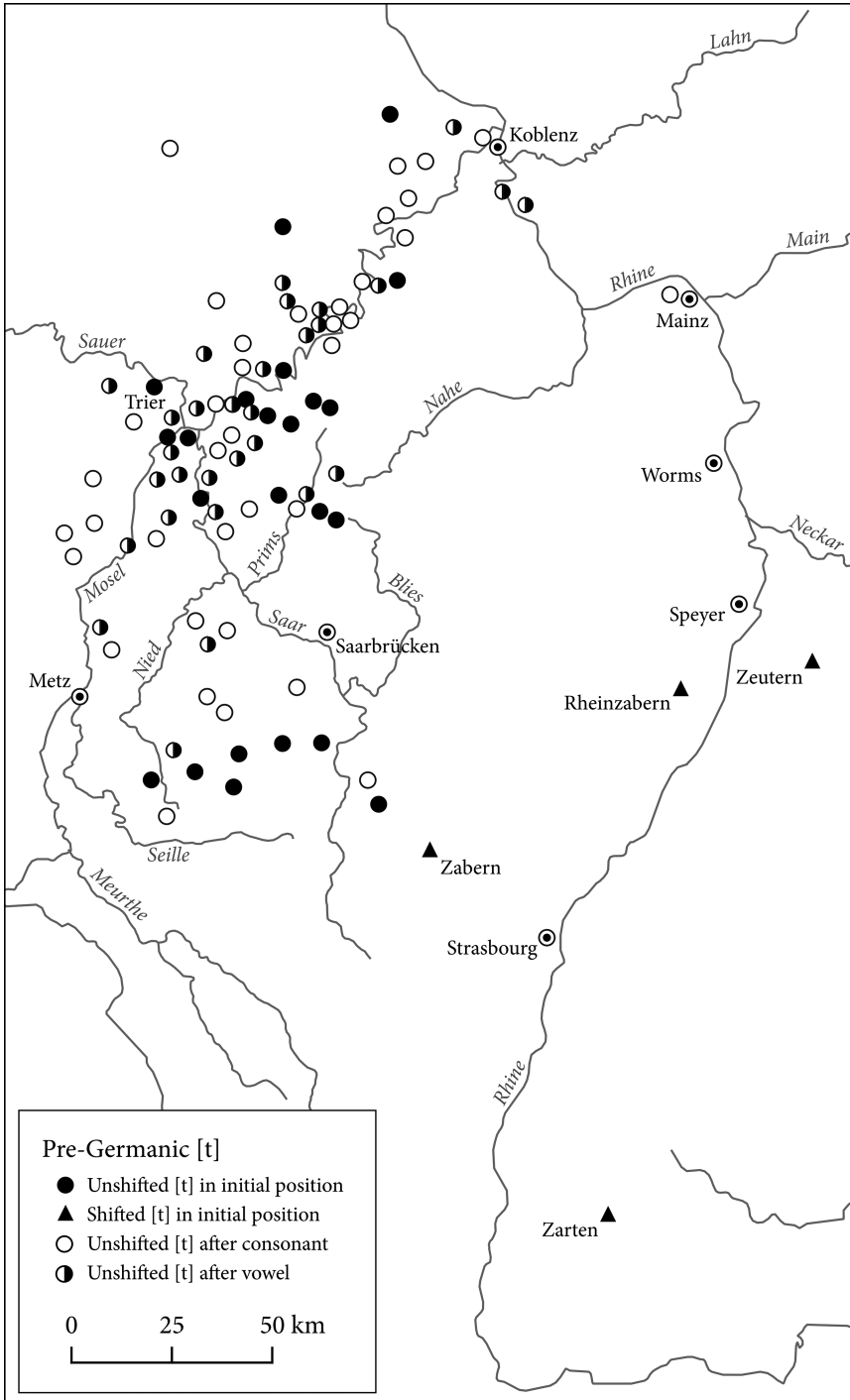


Fig. 7.2 Fates of pre-Germanic [t] in the Rhineland and Moselle region

demonstrating the distribution of pre-Germanic [t], shows the preservation of pre-Germanic /t/ between the Rhine and Moselle, while in the Middle and Upper Rhine valley and east of the Rhine pre-Germanic toponyms are shifted: Rhein-zabern south of Speyer, about 300 *Tabernis*, 1258 *Zabern*; *Zabern/Saverne* west of Strasbourg (Bas-Rhin), fourth-century *Tres Tabernas*; east of the Rhine *Zarten* near Freiburg im Breisgau < second-century *Tarodounon*; *Mutzig* near Molsheim < **Mutti-acu*; *Pfortz* on the Rhine near Germersheim east of Landau, eighth-century *Porza* (Rav. IV 26) < Latin *portus* ('harbour'); *Epfig* near Barr (Bas-Rhin), 762 *Hepheka* < **Appi-acu*.

The completed Germanic sound shift tells us that on the Middle and Upper Rhine we must suppose a rather early integration of the older Latin-speaking Roman settlement. Oddly, pre-Germanic place-names often correspond to estates of the Merovingian and Carolingian royal *fiscus*; for example, in the only compact zone of Romance continuity in northern Alsace (west of Strasbourg), around the royal *palatium* of *Marlenheim*, the place-name *Marlenheim* developed with an analogous Frankish suffix from older *Marilegium*, already mentioned in 589 and 590.²⁷ There one finds Romance names which are the result of Merovingian settlement,²⁸ e.g. *Neugartheim*, 1166 *Nougerthe* < **Nucarētum* ('walnut tree planting'), which do not show the shift of [k], but do feature the Romance voicing of [k] > [g].²⁹ To this we should add ecclesiastical and religious place-names of the type *dominus* + name of a saint, like *Dompfieter*, tenth-century *Domni Petri*, elsewhere only found in the Romance-speaking West with examples like *Dompierre*, *Dammartin*, *Domremy*, etc.³⁰

Otherwise, in the fertile *pagi* and 'Gauē' of the Middle Rhine around Mainz, Worms, and Speyer, covered with ancient Germanic settlement names with the elements *-heim* and *-ingen*, we can detect Romance continuity only in centres situated on the Rhine itself (*Antunnaco*/Andernach, *Baudobriga*/Boppard, Bingen, *Magontia*/Mainz).³¹ And it is certainly not by chance that we find the place-name *Finthen*, 1108 *Fundened* < **fontanētu* ('source, font, spring'), without the Germanic shift of [t], at the head of the Roman aqueduct of the important military centre of *Moguntia*/Mainz, called *Ageduth* (thirteenth century), derived from Gallo-Romance **ake-ductu* < Latin *aquae-ductu-* with Romance voicing.³² A continuous culture of inscriptions here in the Middle Rhine reveals, in contrast

²⁷ Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, ed. Krusch and Levison (1951), 9.38 (*Marilegio villa*), 10.18 (*domus Mariligensis*), MGH SSRM i.1 458, 509.

²⁸ For the Merovingian settlement around Marlenheim and Maursmünster/Marmoutier (*marca Aquilensis*), see Jochum-Godglück (1995), 573–95 and map on p. 577; Haubrichs (2009), 56–8.

²⁹ Haubrichs (2009), 57.

³⁰ Haubrichs (2009), 56. For the onomastic type *dominus* + name of a saint, see Haubrichs (2000a), 220–9, with map on 226–7.

³¹ For the numerous Romance place-names and field-names in the 'Rheinengtal' between Bingen and Koblenz, see Halfer (1988).

³² Kleiber and Pfister (1992), 38–42.



Fig. 7.3 Gravestone of ARMENTARIVS, Boppard, fifth century or first half of sixth century? (Nikitsch 2004, no. 1). With kind permission from the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz. Photograph: Thomas G. Tempel.

to Cologne, bearers of Romance personal names until the seventh century and of Romanized Germanic names until the eighth century.³³ Let us take as examples epitaphs from the *vicus* of *Baudobriga* (today Boppard, Rhein-Hunsrück-Kreis, Germany), situated not far away from Mainz. In the oldest layer of inscriptions around the church of Saint-Severus, dating from the fifth century or the first half of the sixth century, we find only long well-formulated epitaphs concerning persons with Latin or non-Germanic names: ARMENTARIUS, son of BERANCIO and EU[c]HARIA (fifth or early sixth century; see Fig. 7.3);³⁴ NOMIDIA < *Numidia*

³³ Schmitz (1997), 177–202; (2001), 261–305; (2018), 387–411; Haubrichs (2014), 1–37.

³⁴ Nikitsch (2004), no. 1.



Fig. 7.4 Gravestone of NOMIDIA, Boppard, fifth century or first half of sixth century? (Nikitsch 2004, no. 4). With kind permission from the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz. Photograph: Thomas G. Tempel.

and her sister AGRIPINA < *Agrippina* (fifth or early sixth century; see Fig. 7.4).³⁵ The language shows features of late spoken Latin such as the degemination of intervocalic consonants or the lowering of Latin [u] to [o]. In the more recent and shorter inscriptions we hardly ever find a Latin name, but plenty of Germanic names, some of them Romanized as in FREDOARA from Germanic **Frithu-wara* ('keeper of peace'; see Fig. 7.5) with the Late Latin lowering of [i] > [e] and the Romance substitution of Germanic [wa] by [oa, ua].³⁶ Others are well preserved Germanic names as in AUDULPIA ('distinguished she-wolf'; see Fig. 7.6).³⁷

³⁵ Nikitsch (2004), no. 4.

³⁶ Nikitsch (2004), no. 10.

³⁷ Nikitsch (2004), no. 7.



Fig. 7.5 Gravestone of FREDOARA, Boppard, possibly second half of sixth century or seventh century (Nikitsch 2004, no. 10). With kind permission from the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz. Photograph: Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, Mainz.

At Wiesbaden (*Aquae Mattiacae*) and Worms on the Rhine (*Borbetomagus*), some inscriptions of the fifth and sixth centuries even provide evidence of a Romance-East Germanic mixed culture.³⁸ Let us take as examples epitaphs from the *civitas* of *Borbetomagus*. On the so-called Remico-stone found in Goddelau near Worms (c. 500) the female names of the *matrona* REMICO and perhaps also DADILQ have the characteristic East-Germanic endings in *-o* of female short names, in contrast to West-Germanic short names in *-a*.³⁹ The wonderful

³⁸ Haubrichs (2008), 136–8.

³⁹ Boppert (1972), 168; Haubrichs (2003b); (2006), 295–7; Kessel (2018), 109–10, no. 89. For more details of the funerary epitaph and images, see <https://edh.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/edh/inschrift/HD027709> [last accessed 6.4.2023].



Fig. 7.6 Gravestone of AVDVLPIA, Boppard, second half of sixth century or seventh century? (Nikitsch 2004, no. 7). With kind permission from the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz. Photograph: Thomas G. Tempel.

tombstone shown in Fig. 7.7 (again *c.* 500) concerns a young man of 21 years bearing the compound-name AIGTTHEVS < Germanic **Aiht-thewa-* ('follower of wealth'), whose second element **thewa-* ('follower, servant') is specifically East-Germanic.⁴⁰ These East-Germanic names could be remnants of the Burgundians, who spoke an East-Germanic language and settled under King Gunthari before 443 in the regions of the Middle Rhine.

With the exception of a few surviving Roman centres, it can be assumed that along the Middle Rhine and in northern Alsace only a restricted and short-lived continuity of the Latin language existed. The complexity of the cultural, linguistic, and ethnic conditions in the early Middle Ages, however, is shown by the immense quantity of Germanic toponyms, which in many cases contain Romance and Romanized personal names, as well as by the place-names composed with the ethnonym *walaha* ('Romani'), wherever the settlers may have come from.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Boppert (1998–9), 229–40; Haubrichs (2004), 300–2; (2014), 18, no. 68; 29–30, no. 117; Kessel (2018), 101–2, no. 83.

⁴¹ Haubrichs (2000b), 103–42; (2001), 159–82; (2011b), 129–52; (2017a), 66–8 and 81–5. Abbreviations: † = sign for a deserted village; or. = original document; cop. = copy.

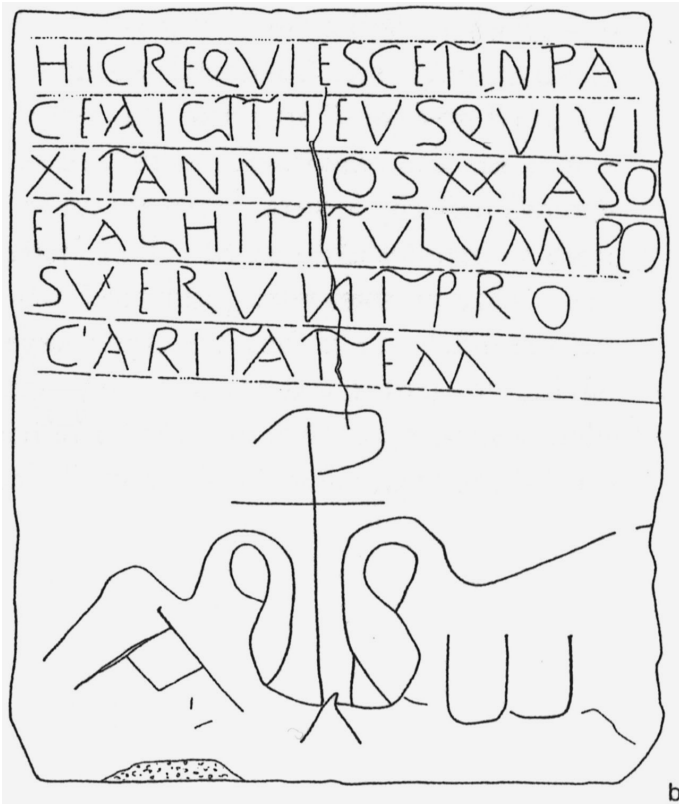


Fig. 7.7 Gravestone of AIGTTHEVS (drawing), Worms, c. 500 (Mainz, Landesarchäologie); Boppert (2005–6), 10. With kind permission from the Generaldirektion Kulturelles Erbe Rheinland-Pfalz, Direktion Landesarchäologie, Mainz.

Latin-Romance personal names in Frankish place-names composed with the patronymic suffix **-ingas* and the element **-haima* (a selection):

†*Paschasenges* (1162 or.) near Sarrebourg (Moselle), derived from Late Latin PN *Paschasius* + Germanic suffix **-ingas*;

Florangel/Flörchingen near Hayange (Moselle): 898 or. *Florichingas*, derived from Latin PN *Floricus* + Germanic suffix **-ingas*;

Pfaddersheim, dialectally *Peddersam* (Stadt Worms): 754 *Paterno villa* (Romance exonym, preserved in the monastery of Gorze near Metz), 766/67 *Phetersheim* < **Paternes-haima*, derived from Latin PN *Pater(i)nus* + Germanic **-haima-* ('home, court');

Kerzenheim near Eisenberg (Donnersbergkreis): 1143 *Kerntzheim*, derived from PN **Kernzo* < Late Latin *Car(i)ntio* + Germanic **-haima-* ('home, court').

Romanized personal names in Frankish place-names (a selection):

Clouange near Hayange (Moselle): 1279 or. *Clowanges*, derived from Romanized PN **Cloio* < *Clodio* < Germanic **Hludjo* (with Romance phonetic substitution of Germ. [hl] by [kl] like in *Chlodwig* < *Hlud-wig-*) + Germanic suffix **-ingas*;

Uelversheim near Oppenheim (Kreis Mainz-Bingen): eighth-century *Ulfridesheim*, derived from Romanized PN *Ulfarid* < Frankish **Wulfa-rid-* (cf. *Uluerid/Uluerido*, 773/74 witness in a Weissenburg charter)⁴² with Romance loss of initial Germanic [w] + Germanic **-haima-* ('home, court');

Göllheim (Donnersbergkreis): 819 *Gylnheim*, 1248 or. *Gillinheim*, derived from Romanized PN **Gillo*, gen. **Gillin* < Frankish **Gis(i)lo* (with Romance vowel-syncope and assimilation [sl] > [ll]) + Germanic **-haima-* ('home, court').

The ethnonym *Walaha* in place-names (a selection):

Wahlenheim (Bas-Rhin): 774 in... *loco qui vocatur Uualohom* < **Walahōn* (Dat. plur.) ('with the *Romani*');

Wahlheim (Kreis Alzey): eighth century, copy c. 1190 *Walaheim* < **Walaha-haima-* ('home, court of the *Romani*');

Wallstadt (Stadt Mannheim): 767 *Walaha-stat* ('locus, place of the *Romani*'); Groß-, Klein-*Wallstadt* (near Aschaffenburg, Franken): tenth century *Ualohostat* < **Walaho-stat* ('place of the *Romani*') (gen. plur.)

Waldorf (near Sinzig on the Rhine): 927 *Walathorp* < **Walaha-thorpa* ('Romance settlement') (neighbouring village with the ethnonymic place-name *Franken*);⁴³

Wahlen (Kreis Merzig): eleventh century *Wala* < **Walaha* (Nom. plur.) ('the *Romani*');

Vahl-lès-Bénestroff (Moselle): tenth century *Vvala* < **Walaha* (Nom. plur.) ('the *Romani*');

Valmont/Walmen near St Avold (Moselle): 1160 *Walemannia*, derived with the collective suffix *-ja* from Old High German **wala(h)-man* ('the Romanus');

Valmunster/Walmünster near Bouzonville (Moselle): tenth-century *villa Walamonasteri*, 1138/51 *Walamunstre* < **Walaha munistri* ('monastery of the *Romani*' or 'monastery in a Romance region').

Many Romanized personal names of Germanic origin are also to be found in the early medieval inscriptions of the Rhineland and the Moselle region.⁴⁴ These examples show that Latin and Gallo-Romance dialects were spoken in the Roman

⁴² Glöckner and Doll (1979), no. 53 (774) and 178 (774). Cf. in no. 128 (773) the witness *Uluerit*, certainly the same person.

⁴³ Cf. Ewig (1995), 304–13.

⁴⁴ Cf. Haubrichs (2017a), 66–7.

centres of the Rhineland and the *Mosella Romana* at least until the end of the seventh and the beginning of the eighth centuries. Some examples include:

Romanized personal names in early medieval inscriptions (a selection):

Achi-fracius (Boppard, Rhein-Hunsrück-Kreis, sixth or seventh century)
 < Germanic **Agi-* ('terror'), using the Merovingian spelling <ch> for the securing of the non-fricative pronunciation of plosive Germanic [g];

Grutilo (Worms, fifth or sixth century) < Germanic **Hrūth-ilo* with Romance phonetic substitution of Germanic [hr] by [kr], here written <gr>;

Eg(o) Chr/odevi/ndvs, inscription (Krefeld-Gellep, seventh century)
 < Germanic **Hrōdi-* ('glory') with Romance phonetic substitution of Germanic [hr] by [kr], written <chr>;⁴⁵

Flode-rici (Trier, sixth to eighth century) < Germanic **Hluda-* ('loud, famous') with Romance phonetic substitution of Germanic [hl] by [fl];
 cf. French *flanc* < Frankish **hlanka* ('hip, loin');

Ebre-childis fem. (Trier, seventh or eighth century) < Germanic **Ebur-hildis* ('fight of the boar') with Romance Merovingian spelling <ch> of Germanic [h] before vowel;

Raino-valdus (Leutesdorf, Kreis Neuwied, seventh century) < Germanic **Ragino-walda-* ('trustee of good advice') with Romance loss of intervocalic [g];

Fredo-ara (Boppard, Rhein-Hunsrück-Kreis, sixth or seventh century)
 < West-Germanic **Fridu-wara-* (fem. 'peace-keeper') with Late Latin lowering of [i] > [e] and Romance loss of intervocalic Germanic [w];

Aso (Worms, fifth or sixth century) < Westgermanic **Anso* ('hero?') with loss of nasal [n] in the phonetic cluster [ns]—cf. Latin *mensa* > *mesa* etc.;

Gari-sindus (Andernach, sixth or seventh century) < West-Germanic **Gair(a)-swintha-* ('spear-strength') with Romance phonetic substitution of the Germanic diphthong [ai] by [a].

The mobility of this elite, attested in apparently expensive gravestones composed by Romance-speaking people and Romanized Franks, is also demonstrated by two Byzantine inscriptions of commemorative character, dated to the late sixth or early seventh century, found in a Syrian church.⁴⁶ The first inscription, engraved on a censer, has the Gallo-Romance name *Karilos* < *Carilus*, nearly totally restricted to the Latin West; the second inscription offers the name *Framarich* < **Hramna-rikja-* ('mighty as a raven'), not Latinized and not declined according to Frankish tradition. The name-element **fram-*, derived with the Romance

⁴⁵ Pirling (1986), 185 and 187; (1998), 254.

⁴⁶ Fourlas (2015, 2019).

phonetic substitution of Germanic [hr] by [fr] (cf. in the *Lex Salica ad-framire* < **hramjan*) from Frankish **hramn* ('raven'), is almost totally restricted to the north of Gallia and Belgium, the West Frankish region. The two westerners in Syria belonged in all likelihood to the 'army of heroic men,' an elite unit of horse-men, which Tiberius II Constantine collected against the Sasanians in 573/74, 'by recruiting the best men [...] from the tribes beyond the Alps in the vicinity of the Rhine,' as the contemporary historian Evagrius Scholasticus (c. 536–593/94) tells us.⁴⁷

The tightest and densest zone of Romance continuity within the parts of the *Imperium* situated on the left side of the Rhine is found along the River Moselle, between Koblenz and the area between Remich (Luxembourg) and Sierck (Moselle, France), in the lower valleys of its tributaries the Saar and Sauer, and continuing down to the strongly Romance centres of Metz and Toul in Lorraine.⁴⁸ Here we can find (see Fig. 7.2) more than fifty examples of unshifted pre-Germanic [t],⁴⁹ for instance:

- Temmels* (Kreis Trier-Saarburg): 634 *Tamaltio*, 836 *Tamaltio*, c. 1150 *Temelcen*;
Tholey (Kreis St Wendel): 634 Cop. tenth century *Teulegius*, *taulegius*, *toleio*,
 853 *ad Toleiam*, 865 *Teologium* < Latin **tegul-eium* ('brick/tile works, building with a tiled roof'); derived from Latin *tegula* ('brick, tile');
Brettnach (Moselle, canton Bouzonville): 971 *Bretenaco*, 1184 *Britthenach*,
 1480/81 *Brettenach* < **Brittan-acu* (derived from Latin PN *Brittanus*);
 †*Menter* (Moselle, canton Faulquemont, commune Bambiderstroff): 848
Menturis, ninth century *ad Meenterum*, the modern field-name *Menter*
Guerten, hydronym *Menter-bach* < Latin **mentarium* ('mint plantation');
Mettlach (Kreis Merzig): 774/91 *Medolago*, *Medolaco*, 853 *ad Mediolacum*, 884
Medelacha, 1142 *Methelach* < **Metell-acu* (derived from Latin PN *Metellus*),
 with Romance voicing of intervocalic [t] in the early Gallo-Romance forms;

To illustrate further this situation of Latin-Romance continuity, Fig. 7.8 provides a map of the most characteristic and most frequent toponymic type of Gallia: formations with the personal name of a landowner and the Gallo-Romance suffix of *-(i)acum*—as in **Ciri-acum*, **Lupīn-iacum*, **Rubīn-iacum*, **Lacīni-acum*, *Antunnaco* < **-acum*, **Martīn-iacum*, *Curtīn-iacum*, **Meteri-acum*, *Juli-acum*, **Verniacum*, **Mutti-acum*, **Appi-acum*, **Britann-acum*, and **Metell-acum* mentioned above.⁵⁰ The map shows the Roman province of Belgica Prima, containing more

⁴⁷ Evagrius Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.14, ed. Hübner (2007); English translation by Whitby (2000), 273–4. cf. Fourlas (2019), 97.

⁴⁸ Kleiber (1983); Kleiber and Pfister (1992), 11–18, 43–51, and 71–97; Buchmüller, Haubrichs, and Spang (1986–7), 24–163; Haubrichs (1987), 1372–91; (2011a), 41–68; (2017a), 70–80.

⁴⁹ For unshifted [t] and [p] in loanwords of the Moselle region, see Haubrichs (2017a), 70–1.

⁵⁰ Cf. Buchmüller-Pfaff (1990), 1–47 and 743–834.

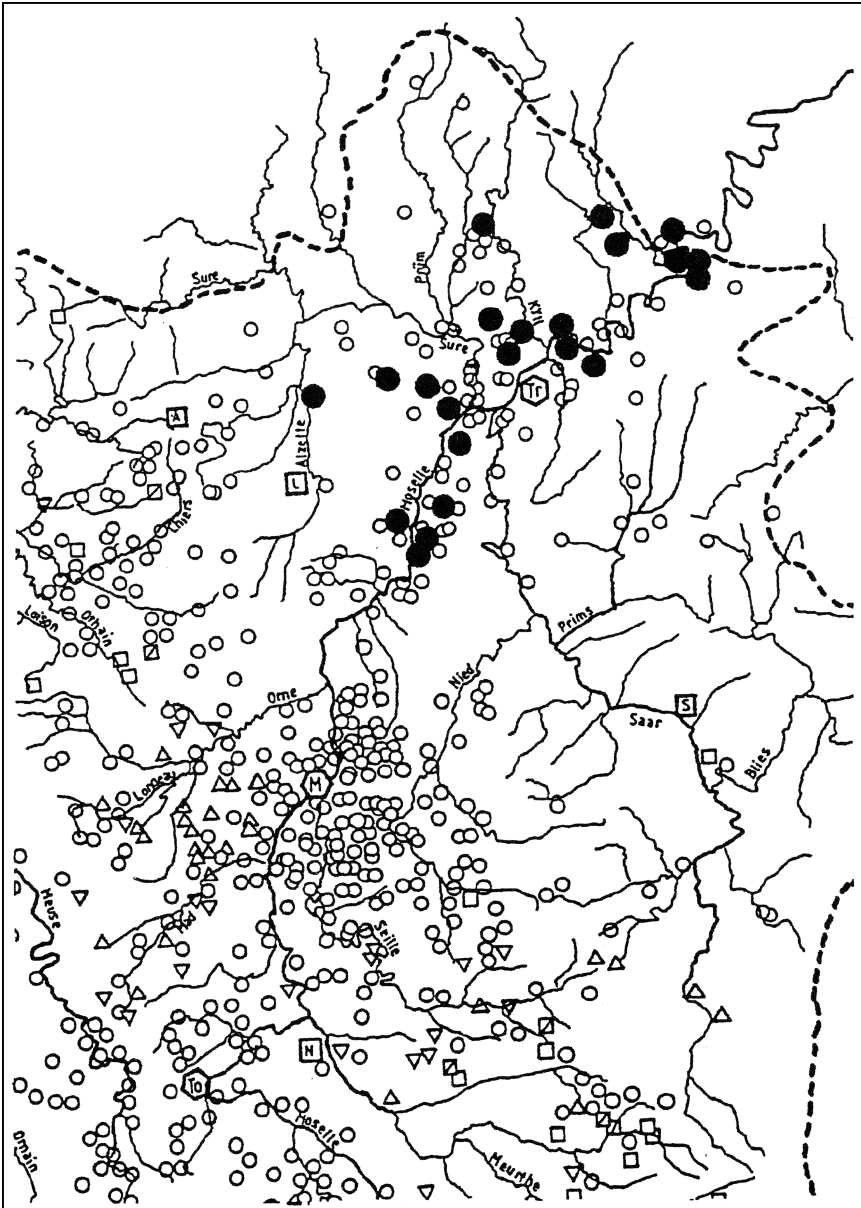


Fig. 7.8 The *-(i)acum*-names and unshifted pre-Germanic [k] in the province of Belgica Prima: Buchmüller-Pfaff (1990), 663. Reproduced with kind permission from Monika Buchmüller.

Hexagons: *civitates* (Tr = Trier, M = Metz, To = Toul)

Squares: major cities (A = Arlon, L = Luxembourg, N = Nancy, S = Saarbrücken)

Small circles, not filled: toponyms with the suffix *-(i)acum*

Small squares, not filled: toponyms with the suffix *-iacas*

Triangles, standing on tip: toponymic compounds with *iaca-curtis/-iaca-villa*

Triangles, standing on base: toponymic compounds with *-iaca-finis/-iaca-marca*

Large circles, filled: *-(i)acum*-names with unshifted pre-Germanic [k]

than 900 specimens of this toponymic type, collected and analysed in 1990 by Monika Buchmüller-Pfaff. The map gives also an impression of the overwhelming accumulation of *-(i)acum* in the later Romance-speaking regions of the south with the centres of Metz, Toul, and Verdun and in the later Frankish-speaking north a lengthening of—the *-(i)acum*-zone around Trier, the lower Moselle, and its tributaries.⁵¹

The intensity and longevity of the so-called *Mosella Romana* is characterized by two factors: first, by the cultural impact of the important *civitates* of Trier and Metz and of other late antique *castra* and *vici* which were often also ecclesiastical centres. These places have preserved one of the most extensive cultures of Latin inscriptions and epitaphs,⁵² as we can see from Fig. 7.9, a map indicating all late antique and early medieval funeral inscriptions preserved in the region. The highest frequency, with several hundreds of epitaphs, can be found at Trier. The Roman and post-Roman centres on the Rhine yield smaller quantities: Cologne, Bonn, Remagen, Andernach with an important Merovingian *palatium*,⁵³ Koblenz, Boppard, Bingen, Mainz, Wiesbaden, and Worms.⁵⁴

A survey given in a 2014 article contains all personal names found in Rhenish and Moselle inscriptions between the fifth and the seventh century.⁵⁵ We may count 111 personal names of Latin-Romance tradition and 118 names of Germanic provenance, many of them highly Romanized. For the elites who used the epigraphic culture of Roman tradition we may therefore assume a dominance of Latin or at least bilingualism for some centuries after the end of the Western Empire. But when we look in more detail we discover considerable differences: Romance names prevail at Trier (and until the end of the sixth century also at Cologne) with 66 Romance-Latin (79%) compared to 18 Germanic names. The Moselle valley (Gondorf/*Contrua*, Karden/*Carodunum*) follows the Roman continuity of the regional centre, Trier. In contrast to this, Wiesbaden and Worms show us only names of Germanic tradition; Mainz and Boppard (*Baudobrigum*) change in the sixth century from a Latin-Romance name culture to a Germanic one; Andernach (*Antunnaco*) preserves a mixing of both. So in the middle of the conservative areas of traditional Roman epigraphic culture a new diversity was established, produced by the immigrants, who, however, adopted the culture of inscriptions, securing their social status.

The *Mosella Romana* region is also characterized by the material culture of wine-growing on the Moselle and its tributaries, manifesting itself in a great number of loanwords drawn from the regional Latin and viticultural jargon

⁵¹ For the preservation of [k] in some *-iacum*-names of the Trier region, see n. 74 below.

⁵² Schmitz (1997, 2001); Handley (2003); Haubrichs (2014), 7–10, 13–14; (2017a), 62–7.

⁵³ For the rich early medieval epigraphic tradition in the region of Andernach, see now Nikitsch (2021), 67–141, no. 1–66.

⁵⁴ Cf. Haubrichs (2017a), 62–6.

⁵⁵ Haubrichs (2014), 7–18; cf. Kessel (2018).

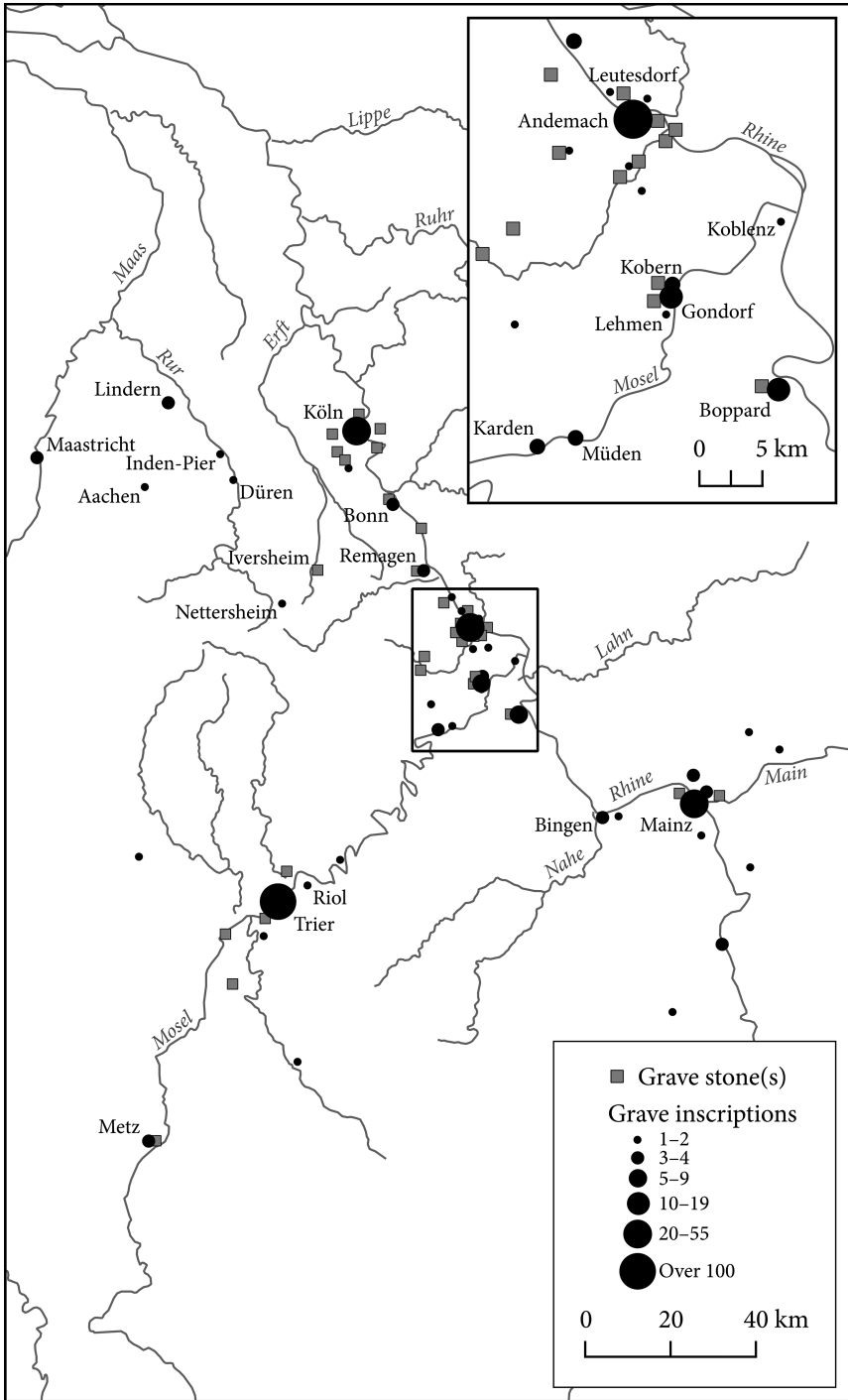


Fig. 7.9 Find-spots of late antique and early medieval grave inscriptions (epitaphs) in the Rhineland: after Schmitz (2001), 263

(see Fig. 7.10, a map sketched in 1982 by Rudolf Post, showing the distribution of Latin-Romance relic vocabulary between the Rhine and Moselle),⁵⁶ e.g. *Gimme* ('bud, shoot') < Latin *gemma*; *pauern* ('to scoop must') < Latin *purare*; *Pichter* ('small vineyard') < Latin *pictura*; *Plänter*, *Plenter* ('new planting of vine') < Latin *plantarium*; *Kabe* ('main vine plant') < Latin *caput*; *Päutert* ('vine plant of inferior quality') < Latin *putus* ('small guy'); *Pfroffe* ('vine shoot') < Latin *propagine*; *Legel* ('tub') < Latin *lagella*; *Bäschoff* ('carrier for grapes') < Gallo-Romance *bascauda*; *Pand* ('wine mould') < Latin *pannus*.⁵⁷ However, a great number of the borrowings come from a more general agrarian context, which can only be explained by long-term bilingualism. We must therefore conclude that there was significant Romance continuity, comprising much more than viticulture. It is absolutely clear that the highest frequency of Latin loanwords can be found in the area of the *Mosella Romana* around the regional centre of Trier.

The Moselle region (including parts of Lorraine) is also characterized by plenty of Latin or Gallo-Romance loanwords which, parallel to the above analysed pre-Germanic toponyms, do not show the Old High German shift of [t] > [ts] and of [p] > [pf]. It is crucial to note that the forms cited, especially the toponyms, are not unique written forms, possibly conservative, possibly created by copying older documents. On the contrary, in the aforementioned phonetic changes they coincide with later documented forms and with today's dialectal forms, the forms of the continuously spoken language. And they are unexceptional in the given regional boundaries. It is this accumulation of evidence obtained from the toponyms which also secures the interpretation of the loanwords: we have to date their integration into Frankish after the sixth century.⁵⁸ Some rare loanwords of the *Mosella Romana* did even not undergo the shift of [k] and therefore were integrated after the seventh century.⁵⁹

Unshifted pre-Germanic [t] (a selection):

Fontel, *Füntele* (Lorraine and Saarland, Kreis St Wendel) ('small well')
< Late Latin **fontan-ella*;

Gott ('little brook') (Wadrill, Kreis Merzig and Hunsrück) < Latin *gutta*
(‘drop’);

Mert̄er, *Mert̄el* ('clay pit, ditch') (Lorraine; Saarland) < Late Latin
**mortārium* ('mortar');

Mol̄ter ('payment for milling') < Gallo-Romance **moltura*;

Päutert, Luxemburg *Pout̄* ('failed vine plant') < Latin *pūtus* ('little boy');

⁵⁶ Post (1982), 303, no. 57.

⁵⁷ Cf. Post (1982); (1989), 161–74; Schorr (2011), 507–34; Barme (2006), 363–79.

⁵⁸ Post (1982), 271–8; Schorr (2011), 507–34; Haubrichs (2017a), 70–1.

⁵⁹ Haubrichs (2017a), 71. Cf. below n. 64 and 74.

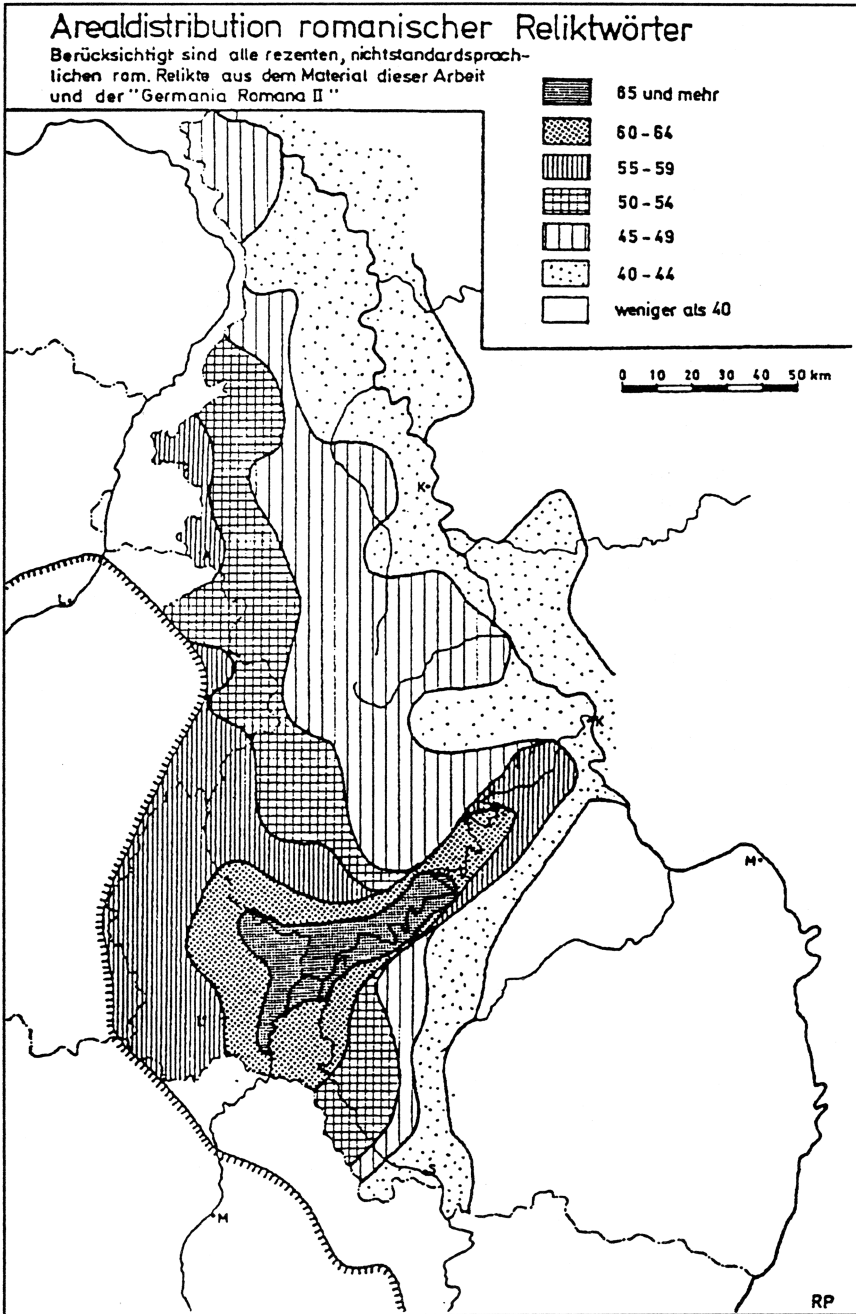


Fig. 7.10 The distribution of Latin and Romance loanwords in the Rhineland and the Moselle region: Post (1982), 203, map 57. With kind permission from Rudolf Post.

Plänter, Lorraine *Plen̄ter* ('vine plantation, vineyard') < Latin *plantārium* ('plantation');

Quattertipsche ('lizard') < Latin *quattuor-pedia* ('quadruped, four-footed beast');

Schaute ('paddle of the millwheel') < Latin *scūtum* ('shield');

Tirns, *Teres* ('pumpkin') < Late Latin *terrosu(s)* ('earthy').

Unshifted pre-Germanic [p] (a selection):

Gäpp, *Kepp* ('tip, point of a sack') < Latin *caput* ('head, end');

Keiper ('tapper of bear, waiter') (Kreis Prüm) < Latin *cuparius*, derived from *cupa* ('barrel, vat');

Peipel ('butterfly') < Latin *pāpilio*;

Pülpes ('crowfoot') < Latin *pulli pēs* ('foot of chicken').

Unshifted pre-Germanic [k]:

Leiken ('couch grass'), *Leikel* ('piece of a thread') < Latin *līcium* ('thread');

peiklich ('piebald, dappled') < Latin *pīca* ('magpie').

The core of the *Mosella Romana* is also occupied by a near-unbroken chain of pre-Germanic place-names, micro-toponyms, and hydronyms (see Fig. 7.11, concerning only a small part of the whole region south of Trier between the Moselle and lower Saar).⁶⁰ An indication of their etymological diversity can be seen in some examples from the surroundings of Trier: *Pellingen* (Kreis Trier-Saarburg), 973 *Pallinc* < Indo-European **pol-*, **pal-* ('to pour, humid, marsh') + pre-Celtic suffix **-inkon*; *Krettnach* (Kreis Trier-Saarburg, Stadt Konz), 1147 *Cretenach* < Latin PN **Crit(t)ōnus* (cf. PN *Crittius*, *Critonius* etc.) + Gallo-Romance suffix **-acum*; *Tawérn* (Kreis Trier-Saarburg), 1000 *Taberna* ('inn') (with preservation of the Latin accent); *Tarforst* (Stadt Trier), 1135 *Centarbers* < Romance **Cent arbors* ('hundred, many trees') (the last three examples without the shift of pre-Germanic [t]).⁶¹

The entire Roman province of Belgica Prima (the later ecclesiastical province of Trier) in the early Middle Ages is characterized by a complex mosaic of bilingual zones of interference, of Frankish linguistic islands in what will later become Old French-speaking districts,⁶² and, above all, of numerous larger or smaller Romance islands in the future *theodisc*, that is German-speaking districts. This is also shown in some inscriptions and texts from *Contrua*/Gondorf on the Moselle (seventh century), from Leutersdorf near Andernach, and finally from the monastery of Prüm (Eifel), all of which offer unambiguously Romance forms.⁶³ The

⁶⁰ Haubrichs (1997), 236, map 1. A map containing all pre-Germanic place-names in the *Mosella Romana* can be found in Kleiber and Pfister (1992), 46, no. 3.

⁶¹ Jungandreas (1962), 792, 254, and 1025; Haubrichs (1997), 211–37.

⁶² Haubrichs (1992), 652–61 and map no. 2.

⁶³ Kramer (1997), 281–6; Alföldy (1966), 444–5; Haubrichs and Pfister (2001), 173–4; Barne (2008), 15–30; Haubrichs (2017a), 60–2.

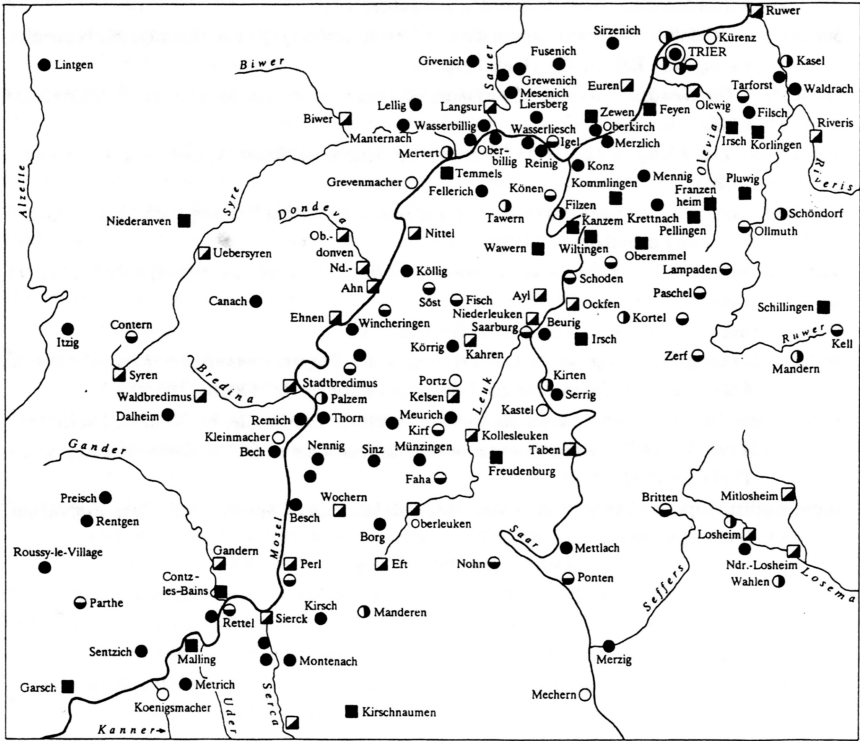


Fig. 7.11 Pre-Germanic place-names and river-names south of Trier: Haubrichs (1997), 236, map by Raimund Zimmermann

■ Pre-Romance place-names; ▣ Pre-Romance river-names; ● Romance -(i)acum- names; ○ Other Romance place-names; ◐ Romance field and river-names; ◑ Place-names derived from Romance loanwords. The courses of the rivers bearing pre-Germanic names are drawn on the map.

Gondorf inscription, set up for a certain Mauricius by his wife Montana reads as follows:

hoc tetolo fecet Montana, conlux sua, Mauricio, qui visit con elo annus dodece; et portavit annus qarranta; trasit die VIII K(a)l(endas) Iunias.

This epitaph was set up by Montana, his wife, for Mauricius, who lived with her twelve years; and he reached the age of forty years; he passed away on the 24th of May.

Features of spoken Latin, sometimes also of a regional Romance dialect, are evident on phonetic, morphological, and syntactic levels, offering parallels even to Italo-Romance with *con elo* ('with her') and *dodece* ('twelve'). We also find the Gallo-Romance oblique instead of a classical Latin accusative (*tetolo*); [iu] > [lu] (*conlux*), to compare among other things with Italian *luglio* ('July') < Late Latin

juliu(m); [ks] > [ss, s] (*visit* < *vixit*); Gallo-Romance [kw] > [k] (*qarranta* < *quaranta*); loss of [n] in the cluster [ns] (*trasit* < *transit*) etc. So the inscription shows, in contrast to most Merovingian epitaphs in the Rhineland and in the Moselle region, the deep influence of spoken Latin or Romance.

The language shift from the Latin/Romance of the *Mosella Romana* to Frankish and Old High German could not have happened before the seventh century because no pre-Germanic toponym features the sixth-century Germanic shift of [t] > [ts] (see above *Krettnach*, *Tawérn*, *Tarforst*). However, the shift of [k] > [χ] (seventh or eighth century) was always carried out (see above **-acum* > *-ach* in *Krettnach*; also in the loanword *Macher* < Latin *maceria* ('walls, stonework')).⁶⁴ In the south of Belgica Prima this element of the sound shift even occurred before the Gallo-Romance palatalization of [ki, ke] > [tʃi, tʃe], which can be seen in the Roman toponym of *Tarquimpol* (Moselle) < 1295 *Tachempach* with [χ] < fourth-century *Decem pagi*.⁶⁵ The adoption of regional Latin loanwords with preserved [ki, ke] also belongs to this period, such as *Kirkel* < *circulus* ('circle') or *Kermeter* < *coemeterium* ('cemetery').⁶⁶ On the other hand, in the north of the province, that is in the 'real' *Mosella Romana*, the Romance palatalization to [ts, tʃ] came before the Old High German shift, perhaps in the seventh or eighth century: cf. the place-name *Detzem* near Trier < Latin (*ad*) *Decimas*; *Zerf* on the Hunsrück (Kreis Trier-Saarburg) < 802 *Cervia (silva)* ('deer woods').⁶⁷ This testifies again to a long-lived Romance culture in that region.

As in the northern Rhineland, a second differentiation results from the fate of Latin [v], which early on was rendered by Old High German [w], but from the eighth century onwards was replaced by Old High German [f].⁶⁸ On the margins of the *Mosella Romana* we find in the north the Latin place-name *Wittlich* (Eifel) < **Vitelliacum*,⁶⁹ and in the south *Vic-sur-Seille* (Moselle), tenth-century *Wich* < antique *Vicus Bodatius*, indicating an earlier shift to Frankish;⁷⁰ but compare in the heart of the *Mosella Romana*, near Trier, *Filzen* < **Villicina* with an [f], suggesting a later linguistic change.⁷¹

A further example neatly illustrates how, with the help of phonetic chronology, we can determine the lifespan of linguistic islands. On the Hunsrück in the northern Saarland, Romance [eu] with loss of intervocalic [g] < [egu], as in *Tholey* (Kreis St Wendel), 634 (tenth-century copy) *Toleio*, *Taulegius*, *Teulegio* < **Tēguleiu* ('brick works, building with a tiled roof'), was not affected by the Old High

⁶⁴ Buchmüller, Haubrichs, and Spang (1986–7), 74–5.

⁶⁵ Haubrichs (1987), 1380, no. 59; 1382, no. 73. ⁶⁶ Haubrichs (1987), 1390.

⁶⁷ Haubrichs (1987), 1389, no. 128, 90; (1997), 221; 231, no. 141.

⁶⁸ Cf. Haubrichs (1987), 1390–1; (1997), 222; cf. above n. 20–2.

⁶⁹ Buchmüller-Pfaff (1990), 507, no. 843.

⁷⁰ Haubrichs (1987), 1381–2, n. 112; 1382 no. 80 (Moyenvic, Moselle: sixth or seventh century *Mediano vico*, 968 *Mediovic*, thirteenth century *Medwich*).

⁷¹ Haubrichs (1997), 229, no. 103.

German sound change [eu] > [eo] > [io] > [ie] (eighth or ninth century);⁷² instead, Romance [eu] > [au] > [o] developed there, so that we can suppose the existence of Romance speakers until the ninth century. Elsewhere, we have to reckon with the final integration of the outlying Romance islands in the eighth century.⁷³

The core of the *Mosella Romana* around Trier and Bernkastel on the Moselle preserved its linguistic identity for much longer. Here we meet in older forms of place-names even relics of unshifted [k], e.g. *Lorich* near Trier, 981 *Lorreke* < **Lauriacu*; *Welsch-Billig* (Kreis Trier-Saarburg), 981 *Billike* < **Billiacu*; *Mehring* at the Moselle (Kreis Trier-Saarburg), 1103 *Merniche*, 1190 or. *Merrike*, 893/1222 *Merrighe* < **Mariniacu*; also, *Nennig* (Kreis Merzig) < **Nanniacu*, 924 *Nannec* and **Nanniei* with Romance development of the suffix *-iacu*⁷⁴ (see the map in Fig. 7.8). Many place-names and field-names (micro-toponyms) preserved the Latin ‘penultima’-accent: examples include *Tawérn* (Kreis Trier-Saarburg) < *Tabérna* (see above); *Wadríll* (Kreis Merzig), 981 *Waderola* < Indo-European hydronym **Wadrā* + Romance suffix *-óla*; *Bonefánt* (Ediger, Kreis Cochem-Zell) < *(*ad bonum fóntem* (‘at the good spring’); *Kastelláun* (Rhein-Hunsrück-Kreis), 1226 *Kestilun* < Gallo-Romance *Castellióne*; repeatedly field-name *Plantérs* < (*ad*) *plantárias* (‘at the plantations’), etc.⁷⁵ The extension of this phenomenon can be illustrated by Fig. 7.12, a map indicating the preservation of Romance accentuation: it reaches from Remich in Luxemburg to the lower Moselle and Koblenz. A French sound change of the ninth and tenth centuries, namely the palatalization [á] > [é], is to be found in nuclei of the *Mosella Romana* around Cochem, Bernkastel, Trier, and on the lower reaches of the Saar.⁷⁶ Occasionally, even the eastern French diphthongization of long é > ei > oi > o (dated to the tenth or eleventh century) was realized: e.g. 1065 *Faverota* < **Fabārētu* (‘bean planting’).⁷⁷ Hence, for the region between Bernkastel and Trier, we have to suppose that the final shift from Latin-Romance to Germanic occurred around the year 1000.⁷⁸

Correspondingly, the Frankish expansion far in the west of the Rhine-Meuse region also created settlements and linguistic islands, often in hilly forests such as the Ardennes (north of Trier), Argonnes (west of Verdun), and in the *Vosagus* (Les Vosges between Lorraine and Alsace/Palatinat), often situated near Merovingian *fisci*, and in many cases recognizable by clearing names such as *Brabant-sur-Meuse* (Meuse), 1028 *Braiban* < **Brāka-banti* (‘uncultivated area’) (cf. *Brabant* in Belgium, about 743/50 in *Bracbante*); *Waly* (Meuse), 870 *Wasloi*,

⁷² Pfister (1985), 294–5; Haubrichs (1987), 1379.

⁷³ Buchmüller, Haubrichs, and Spang (1986–7), 105–39.

⁷⁴ Buchmüller-Pfaff (1990), 102–3, no. 100; 373–4, no. 585 and 662–70.

⁷⁵ Kleiber (1985), 14–20; (1998), 135 and 147 map 5; Haubrichs (2017a), 78–80 and map 7; (2021), 267–8.

⁷⁶ Kleiber and Pfister (1992), 78–9.

⁷⁷ Kleiber and Pfister (1992), 73.

⁷⁸ Cf. Kleiber and Pfister (1992), 90; Haubrichs (2017a), 80.

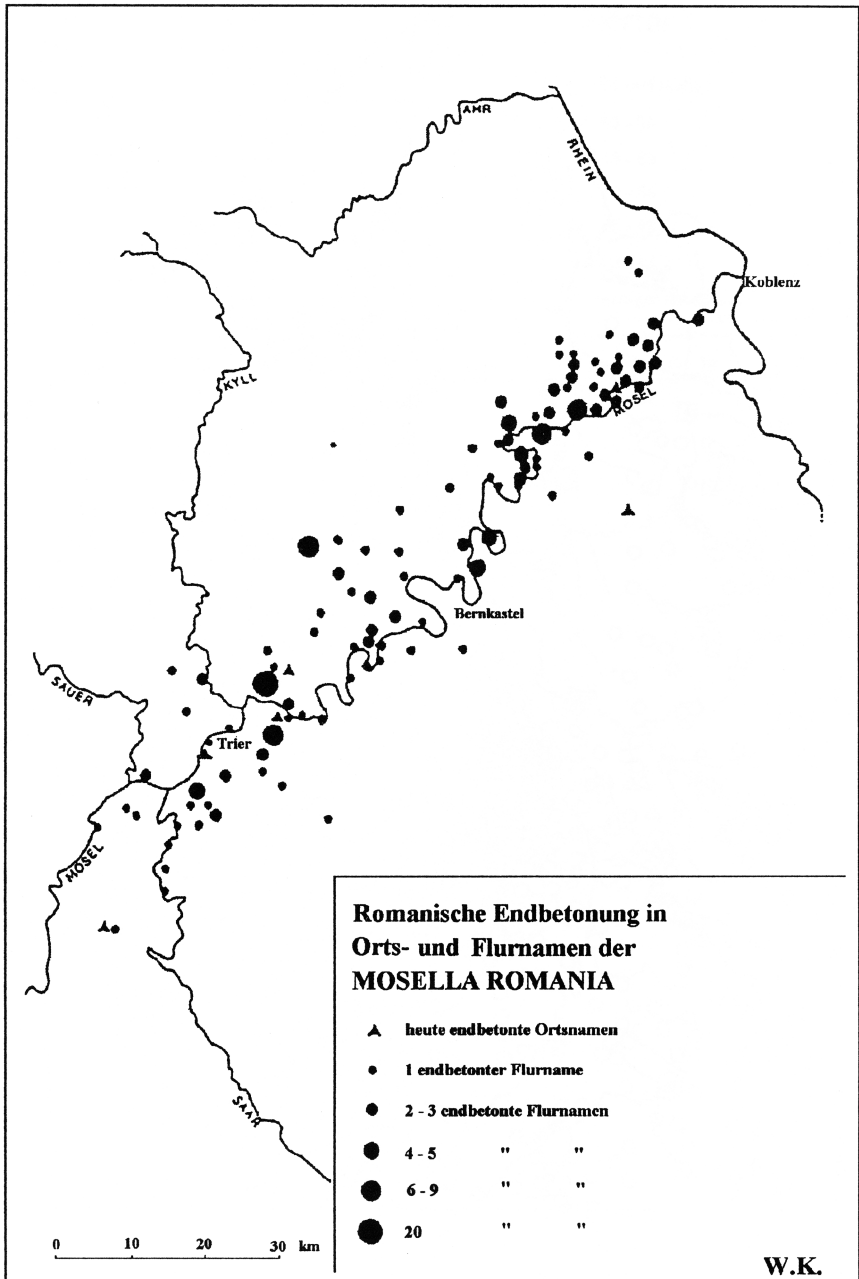


Fig. 7.12 Preserved Latin-Romance penultimate accent in place-names (*Ortsnamen*) and field-names (*Flurnamen*) of the *Mosella Romana*: Kleiber and Pfister (1992), 49. With kind permission from the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz.

637/38 *supra fluvium Resbacem* < **Ris-baki* ('flowing (little) river').⁸² The **Ris-baki* must have existed before the monastery was founded.

The contact areas of northeastern Gaul are very clearly testified by an immense number of Frankish loanwords in Old French and Gallo-Romance dialects, as I have mentioned above.⁸³ The borrowings encompass nearly all areas of life; I cite here only a few examples:

animals and birds: Old French *froiz* ('frogs') < **froska*; Old French *hairon* ('heron') < **haig(i)ron*, cf. Old High German *heigaro*; Old French *mulet* ('wood mouse') < **mul-* ('mole');

plants: Old French *hestre*, French *hêtre* ('young beech') < **haistru*; *escot* ('tree stump') < **skota* 'shoot';

the human body: Old Liègois *flancke*, French *flanc* ('hip') < **hlanka* ('hip, loin');

human characteristics: Old French *estout* ('bold, proud') < **stolt-* ('proud');

clothes and equipment: French *froc* ('dress, frock') < **hrokka*; Old French *guant*, French *gant* ('glove') < **wanta*, cf. Latin seventh-century plur. *wantos* ('gloves');

tools: Old French *clenche*, Old Picard *clinke* ('door-handle') < **klenka*, **klinka*; French *houe* ('scratch plough') < **hauwa* ('hoe');

containers: Old Liègois *banste*, Old Flemish *bance* ('big basket') < **bansta*, already in the eighth-century Romance Reichenau Glosses as plur. *banstas*;

agriculture and farming: Old French *franc* ('pigsty') < **hranna*, already *hranne* in the *Lex Salica*; French *herde* ('herd, crowd') < **herda*; Old Picard *gauffre*, French *gaufre* ('waffle, honeycomb') < **wāfla*;

architecture and buildings: Old French *hale* ('covered market') < **halla* ('hall'); Middle French *hutte* ('wooden hut') < **hudda*, Old High German *hutta*;

enclosures and settlements: French *haie* ('hedge') < **hagja*; Anglo-Norman *ham* ('hamlet'), frequently in toponyms of northeastern France < **haima* ('home, settlement'); Old Picard *hangar* ('shed') < **haim-gard* ('enclosure beside the house');

hunting: Old French *beter* ('to fight, to bite') < Germanic **baitan*; Old French *algier* ('spike') < **āl-gēr* ('eel-spear');

weapons and warfare, which are richly represented: Old French *bou* ('bangle') < **bauga* ('ring'), in the Reichenau Glosses *baucus*: *armilla*; Old French *gunfanun* ('battle flag') < **gund-fanon*; Old French *garçon* ('servant, knight') < **wrakkjon* ('victim of persecution, exiled, warrior');

horse breeding and riding: Old French *estalon* ('stallion') < **stallon*; French *galoper* ('to gallop') < Romance **gual-lopa-* < Germanic **wala hlaupan* ('to run well');

⁸² Leblond and Lecomte (1910), 117–20, no. 2; Kölzer (2001), i. 127, no. 49; ii. 594, Dep. No. 224: ... *super fluvium qui appellatur Resbacus*...

⁸³ Haubrichs and Pfister (2008), 260–70.

and, also richly represented from an early date, administration and law: Old French *mareschal*, French *maréchal* ('marshal') < **marah-skalk* ('horse servant'), already *mari-scalcus* in the *Lex Salica*; Old Lorrain *eschavigne* ('lay judge') < **skapin*, Old High German *sceffin*; Old French *haschiere* ('agony') < *harm-skara* ('humiliating punishment'), also in Carolingian *capitularia*; French *gage*, Old Liègois *wage* < **waddi*, Latin *wadium* already in Merovingian *formulae*; Old French *manaie* ('power, power of disposal') < **man-haidu* ('manliness, bravery, courage').

We know Latin possessed terms and words for many of these several hundred Frankish loanwords covering such diverse and commonplace areas of life. The survival of most of the borrowings in Old French and its regional dialects can therefore only be explained by a vivid, intensive, and long-lasting state of multilingualism.⁸⁴

7.3. Conclusions

The subject of this chapter was the survival of Latin and Gallo-Roman dialects west of the Rhine in northeastern Gallia in the early Middle Ages and the gradual replacement of these languages by Frankish varieties, the predecessors of Dutch, Low Franconian, and High German. This occurred, with great regional differentiation, in the contact zones between the languages in a long-lasting process over several centuries and not in the course of a one-time event, such as an invasion. The phases of this process are primarily attested by four groups of linguistic remains: (1) contemporary Germanic-Frankish loanwords, few of which are attested early (mainly in Latin legal texts such as the *Lex Salica*), personal names (mainly in inscriptions, charters, and chronicles or hagiographic texts) and, very rarely, Frankish toponyms; (2) toponyms originating from Latin or Gallo-Roman dialects (or predecessor languages), received by the target languages (Frankish, Dutch, Old High German), that is the loan-names; (3) Latin or Gallo-Roman loanwords, mostly attested in later sources, in the Germanic-Frankish target languages; (4) Frankish loanwords, mostly attested later, in Old French and in the Gallo-Roman dialects of eastern and northern France and Walloon Belgium.

The methods of historical linguistics and phonetic chronology allow us to draw the following conclusions, underscoring regional diversity. In the northern Rhineland, later Gallo-Romance sound changes, such as the palatalization of [ki, ke] > [tsi, tse], which in any case developed later in the east than in central Gallia, can be found only rarely, except in the centres of the *civitates*, *castella*, and *vici*.

⁸⁴ For Carolingian multilingualism, mainly of the elites, and the exchange of officials between the East and the West of the Frankish Empire, see Hellgardt (1996), 1–48, esp. 15–17, 20–4, and 38–46; Haubrichs (1995), 157–9; Depreux (2011), 381–93; Haubrichs (2020), 95–103.

The reception of Frankish and Old High German phonetic changes did not occur here until the seventh century. This marks the beginning of the integration of Latin or Gallo-Roman speakers, which becomes stronger and is completed in the eighth century.

In the Middle Rhine area and in Alsace, i.e. along the entire Rhine between Bingen, Mainz and Breisach, Colmar, only a few pre-Germanic place-names have been preserved at all, and these are especially those of the Roman centres (but not all of them either: cf. Speyer and Strasbourg). In this region, largely identical with the Roman province of Germania Superior, the shift from Germanic [t] > Old High German [ts] (sixth century) is evident in partial contrast to the Lower Rhine and in complete contrast to the Moselle region (including Lorraine). So there the integration of the *Romani* still remaining in the region started early and intensively. In Alsace, the continuing Roman settlement names are strongly connected with Merovingian fiscal centres. On the Middle Rhine, Roman epitaphic culture survives in the centres in part into the eighth century; the inscribed personal names, both Latin-Roman and West Germanic, attest to an ethnically mixed population, at least among the upper classes. In the countryside, where the early Germanic place-name types, especially those compounded with *-*haima*, dominate, there also exist some, but not many, traces of Romance or Romanized Frankish personal names. Most clearly the settlement names composed with the Germanic folk name of the Romans, that is *Walaha*, indicate a Latin or Romance-speaking population of the Merovingian period, which, of course, may also have come with the Frankish settlement of these areas from the west.

The densest and longest-lived zone of Latin-Roman continuity was the *Mosella Romana*, the valley of the Moselle between the Luxembourg–French border at Remich and the confluence of the river with the Rhine at *Confluentes*/Koblenz. There we find not only an unbroken chain of pre-Germanic toponyms and hydronyms, but in the regional centre of Trier (and also elsewhere, selectively) an unbroken tradition of epitaphs, i.e. witnesses of Latin public written culture, with as many as 79% containing Latin or Romance personal names. This strong continuity can be explained on the one hand by the nature of the former imperial metropolis of Trier, but on the other hand by the viticulture of the Moselle region, which archaeologists have shown to have had continuing economic importance, and from which an enormous number of special oenological, but also general agricultural technical words entered the Frankish successor dialects of the region. Furthermore, continuity is attested (also for the subsequent Lorraine area around Metz) by the absence of Frankish Old High German phonetic changes, which only gradually appear in the seventh and eighth centuries. Occasionally, in the countryside along the Moselle and near Koblenz and Andernach, we even find phonetic traces of spoken provincial Latin in inscriptions of the seventh century. Furthermore, a large number of toponyms preserve even today, which is very rare, the Latin *penultima*-accent. While the edges of the *Mosella Romana* do not

show any more Romance phonetic change after the eighth and ninth centuries, in the core of the region around Trier and Bernkastel on the Moselle there are still isolated signs of the reception of Eastern French phonetic change until the tenth century. After a bilingual phase of the seventh or eighth century, the Mosellanic Romance will probably have been restricted to a language used only in the home.

On the western side of the later Romance–Germanic linguistic border, evidence of Frankish settlement and language islands can be found (though more research remains to be done) in the forest areas of the Argonne near Verdun and in the Belgian-Luxembourg Ardennes, but these were integrated into the emerging French by the eighth century at the latest. However, a huge number of Frankish loanwords in Old French and in the dialects of northern and eastern France and Walloon Belgium attest to the great extent of contacts between Franks and Romans in these areas of the Merovingian Empire until the extinction of the Frankish language in the west (in around the eighth century), contacts that involved agriculture, military affairs, law, but also everyday terms, whose reception into such a developed written language as Late Latin can only be explained by a long-lasting bilingualism of the speakers, especially the Franks.

IRELAND AND BRITAIN

Early Literacy and Multilingualism in Ireland and Britain

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by Katherine Forsyth*

8.1. Introduction

The main focus of this chapter is on the early literate tradition in the Irish language and how this tradition was born in the multilingual interaction with a neighbouring written culture, namely that of Latin in the island of Britain. Since a crucial part of this interaction with Ireland happened through British intermediaries or took place in Britain, both regions of the western archipelago will be considered in this survey, though the very different historical and sociolinguistic scenarios in the two islands necessitates looking at each separately.

In addition to Latin in the specific flavour as spoken in ancient Britain, hereafter referred to as British Latin, the two main languages are Irish and British. Irish (also called Goidelic) and British (also called British Celtic or Brythonic) are two distinct branches of the Celtic branch of the Indo-European languages, the others being Celtiberian and Gaulish (including Lepontic), which died out before the middle of the first millennium CE.¹ However, Irish and Latin cannot be looked at in isolation and aspects of the oldest written stages of other languages will also have to be considered briefly.

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¹ Celtiberian and Lepontic disappeared around the first century CE, Gaulish probably three or four centuries later. For more information about these languages, see Beltrán Lloris and Jordán Cólera (2020), Mullen and Ruiz Darasse (2020), and Stifter (2020b).

8.2. Background and Prehistory

When they come into the light of history around the beginning and in the first half of the first millennium CE respectively, British and Irish appear firmly established as the dominant languages in their islands. The earliest evidence is composed of personal and place-names in classical sources and on Latin and Irish epigraphy. With our knowledge of medieval and ancient Celtic languages and with our tools of comparative linguistics, these names can usually be very easily identified and analysed as Celtic, e.g. the name of the first-century BCE British king *Cunobelinus* ('being strong like a dog') < Celt. **kuno-* ('dog') < PIE **kun-* + **beli-no-* ('having strength') from the PIE root **bel-* ('strength'), or the Primitive Irish name CATTUVIR ('battle-man') < Celt. **katu-* < PIE **k̑atu-* ('fight') + **ȗiro-* ('man') from PIE **ȗiHro-* ('young man').

Any scholarly survey is incomplete and conveys a misleading picture of certainty if it does not address those aspects about which we know nothing. There is indeed plenty in the early history of multilingualism in the western archipelago about which we know next to nothing. While the outlines at least of the linguistic picture in antiquity and the early Middle Ages are clear, the situation in prehistory, even shortly before the dawn of history, is largely unknown. Celtic is a language family which develops out of Proto-Indo-European, an unattested proto-language reconstructed by linguists, which has its roots ultimately in the east of Europe.² From this it follows that the language or languages must have been brought to the islands by immigration sometime between the disintegration of Proto-Indo-European as a single language around the middle of the fourth millennium BCE, and the historical period. Opinions are strongly divided as to when this occurred. From a linguistic point of view, on account of the close similarity of the earliest accessible stages of the Insular Celtic languages to their Continental Celtic siblings and to reconstructed Proto-Celtic, their separation cannot have occurred very far back in time.³ On the other hand, a popular hypothesis among archaeologists is that, in the absence of a notable horizon in the archaeological record that would indicate large-scale immigration, an ancestral form of the Insular Celtic languages must have been present in Britain and Ireland at least since the arrival of the Corded Ware/Bell Beaker culture in the third millennium BCE. A variation of that theme is the hypothesis that Celtic developed as a trade or vehicular language along the Early Bronze Age Atlantic

² Anthony and Ringe (2015).

³ Mallory (2013), 261–2. Since all languages are constantly changing and evolving, the observable similarities between these languages is an indication that only comparatively little time can have passed since they separated from another. However, it is not possible to put a precise figure on the duration.

seaboard that stretches from the Iberian Peninsula to the western islands and even further north.⁴

Progress in the palaeogenetic study of ancient DNA (aDNA) has added crucial new arguments to this debate. Geneticists observe a massive influx of populations with presumably Indo-European ‘steppe ancestry’ into Britain and subsequently Ireland in the middle of the third millennium BCE.⁵ This apparent early Indo-European immigration into Britain is very unlikely to be the ancestor of the later Insular Celtic languages since it is too early to explain the close similarity of Insular and Continental Celtic languages. It must constitute a sort of *Indogermania submersa*, i.e. lost branches of Indo-European. If such languages were still spoken in the historic period, they have gone unrecorded.

More promising from a comparative-linguistic perspective, albeit still uncomfortably early for the introduction of Celtic, is another wave of DNA that reached southern England from France at the end of the Bronze Age c. 1200–800 BCE.⁶ Astonishingly, the genome of this population shows more archaic ‘neolithic’, i.e. pre-Indo-European characteristics, than the earlier immigration in the mid third millennium BCE. If these genomes can be identified with the earliest Celtic speech communities, the implication would be that the Celtic variety of speech resulted from the language shift of local, non-Indo-European population groups in western Europe, probably in the region of modern-day France, to Indo-European, perhaps during the second millennium BCE. This has major ramifications from the point of view of language-contact studies. This scenario would be an obvious candidate for explaining some of the unusual typological structures of the Insular Celtic languages (unusual compared to other Indo-European languages). These could be due to substratal influence from the predecessor idioms when the speakers of those languages transferred some of their speech habits, especially in phonology and syntax, during the shift to their new target language, i.e. Celtic.

While the Celtic languages on these islands are well known from their younger stages (see Sections 8.3 and 8.4), no primary records of the prehistoric languages survive. There is only indirect evidence in the form of layers of loanwords that lack Indo-European explanations, and in the form of etymologically obscure place-names that are suspected of having been borrowed from local non-Celtic languages.⁷

⁴ See, for example, Cunliffe (2018), 54–8; Koch and Cunliffe (2016). These hypotheses, irreconcilable with the linguistic facts, have received detailed criticism from, among others, Sims-Williams (2020), 6–8, and Isaac (2004), 49–52.

⁵ Haak et al. (2015); Allentoft et al. (2015); Cassidy et al. (2016); Olalde et al. (2018).

⁶ Patterson et al. (2021). This research was only published at the end of 2021 and its full implications and ramifications have not yet been analysed.

⁷ See, for example, Schrijver (2000, 2005b); Van Sluis (forthcoming); Stifter (forthcoming); Broderick (2013).

8.3. The Linguistic Situation in Prehistoric and Early Historic Britain

From the known later distribution of languages in Britain and their fates in the long perspective, and from indirect evidence such as inscriptions, it can be inferred that the multilingual situation in Britain must have been complex and, as it were, in flux for an extended period in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. In the observable early history of the island from the first century BCE onwards, two major turning points of the linguistic situation occurred: the first at the arrival of the Romans in Britain, and the second after their withdrawal and the so-called *adventus Saxonum*.⁸

At the beginning of the first century CE, when the island became more prominent in the Mediterranean field of vision, British Celtic appears to have been the dominant language. It has been speculated that we actually have to reckon with more than one variety of Celtic: one in the east, that was influenced by interaction with Gaulish, and another variant in the west and northwest.⁹ Schrijver builds an argument on this division between ‘Lowland Celtic’ and ‘Highland Celtic’, but the evidence for it rests on tiny and scattered information.¹⁰ The prime evidence for Celtic in this period lies in the names of individuals and of population groups reported by classical authors and coin legends, which are consistent with British Celtic.¹¹

For the three and a half centuries after its annexation to the Empire (43–c. 410), it can be argued that in numerical terms Celtic probably remained the majority language of the Roman province, though the prestigious Latin superstrate must have exerted strong sociolinguistic pressure on the Celtic vernacular and a form of local Latin may even have become the ordinary means of communication in the cities and in the lowlands of southern Britain (see Chapter 9).¹² The local language seems to have retained a particularly strong position in less accessible areas

⁸ See Chapter 1, especially xxx, and 9.

⁹ Cf. the statement in Caesar’s *De Bello Gallico* 5.12 that there were contacts between Gaul and Britain in his time. This is possibly borne out by tribal names that are found on either side of the Channel, for instance *Belgae*, *Parisii*, and *Catuuellauni/Catalauni*. For archaeological evidence for the interaction between the Continent and Britain in the third century BCE, see for example Stead (1979); Giles (2012), 19–30.

¹⁰ Schrijver (2014), 30–4. Whether any of the assumed pre-Celtic languages were still spoken in Britain at that time is unknown. The language of the Picts in Scotland has been the object of much speculation, but the current consensus sees in Pictish a northern sibling of British Celtic, essentially one that, by virtue of having stayed outside the Roman Empire, may have been more conservative and less Latinized than the southern varieties. In the case of Pictish, we may not even be dealing with a single uniform language at all, but rather with a rich and complex dialectal continuum. Most information has to be deduced from place-names, in addition to personal names and perhaps a few written traces on ogam stones. See Forsyth (1997); Price (2000), 127–31; James (2013); Rhys (2020a, 2020b); Rodway (2020).

¹¹ See Cooley (2023) and Mullen (2024b), for the advent of literacy in Britain.

¹² Schrijver (2014), 32–3. For the sociolinguistics of Roman Britain, see Cooley (2023); Mullen (2016, 2024b); also Chapter 9 of this volume.

such as the uplands and marginal regions, for example Wales, Cornwall, and Cumbria. This assumed numerical dominance of British Celtic is not, however, reflected in the epigraphy of the time. Aside from a tiny number of apparently vernacular inscriptions such as two curse tablets from Bath,¹³ and possibly two further ones from Uley,¹⁴ literacy during the Roman period was restricted to writing Latin. We see Celtic almost exclusively in the names embedded in Latin inscriptions.¹⁵

The second turning point for the linguistic make-up of Britain occurred with the withdrawal of Roman forces in the early fifth century and the inward migration of Germanic-speaking groups. These external factors led to changes in the balance of sociolinguistic powers and, in the long term, to a post-Roman language map that was very different from that of pre-Roman Britain. In the early eighth century, i.e. three hundred years later, the Anglo-Saxon historian Bede (*HE* 1.1) speaks of five languages spoken by four nations (*gentes*) in Britain at his time: English, British, Irish, Pictish, and Latin as a supranational language.¹⁶ With five, or potentially even more,¹⁷ languages involved, and without even taking regional variation into account, the question of the relative value attached to the languages becomes difficult to answer.

Divergent opinions have been offered about the precise fate of Latin as a living language in Britain, and in Wales in particular, after the influx of Germanic language. The stylistic quality of the Latin that high-status early medieval authors were able to achieve cannot serve as a guidance for the fate or the standard of the language at large. These authors received their excellent command of the language over years of schooling. The lapidary inscriptions, which are virtually the only direct evidence for the languages in the so-called ‘Dark Ages’, therefore play a central role in answering this question.¹⁸ A striking feature of their Latin is the grammatically faulty language—faulty from the point of view of endings expected in classical Latin. Especially in the bilingual Latin–Irish stones from Wales, there is very often a genitive case where a nominative would be expected in standard Latin. For example, the ogam inscription TRENAGUSU MAQI MAQITRENI (‘(stone) of Tréngus, son of Mac-Thréuin’) (W-PEM-004 = CISW P12 = CIIC 428)¹⁹ conforms to the normal and syntactically correct Irish formula of expressing all names in the genitive. The Latin counterpart TRENAGUSSI FILI MACUTRENI HIC IACIT is asyntactical in Latin and could have resulted from transference of the Irish to the Latin formula by speakers with little competence in the latter.

¹³ Tomlin (1987); Mullen (2007).

¹⁴ A. Mullen (pers. comm.).

¹⁵ See Russell and Mullen (2007–).

¹⁶ See Ní Mhaonaigh (2021).

¹⁷ If we allow for the possibility of locally very confined ‘hidden’ languages.

¹⁸ See n. 56. See Charles-Edwards (2013), 116–91, for their wider historical context. Their linguistic evidence for the development of the British languages is studied by Sims-Williams (2003).

¹⁹ Reference to ogam inscriptions will be with OG(H)AM sigla and CIIC number.

Linguists have interpreted this data in opposing ways, depending on their theoretical framework (see also Chapter 9). For scholars looking at it within the framework of classical Latin, the faulty grammar is evidence for the rapid loss of language competence soon after the Roman period, and the inscriptions are the product of people without any real knowledge of Latin.²⁰ Others, looking at them through the lens of diachronic variation and language-contact studies, interpret the same evidence as proof that the language was still spoken as a local vernacular language, at least by some people. What strikes us as ‘bad’ would in fact reflect the natural Latin development in Britain.²¹ A different approach is taken by Harvey who, by studying systematically the vocabulary of the medieval Latin-language literature of Wales, concludes that the language enjoyed a tenacious hold on early medieval Celtic Britain for several centuries and that the possibility should be entertained that the language, Cambro-Latin, continued in active use for much longer than usually believed.²²

In Wales, the pre-Roman vernacular language remained, or became, the established standard language of the country after the demise of Latin,²³ while in the rest of the former province of Britannia varieties of Old English ousted any rival idioms in the long term.²⁴ Only on the margins of the Anglo-Saxon sphere did older languages manage to hold on for a while: Cumbric, closely related to Welsh, seems to have survived in Cumberland until the twelfth century; Cornish in Cornwall is comparatively well documented from the early modern period until it died out in the eighteenth century, only to be revitalized in the twentieth century.²⁵ The expansion of Anglo-Saxons also prompted an emigration of speakers of Old British languages from Cornwall and Devon to neighbouring Armorica, most heavily c. 450–c. 600.²⁶ Those settlers renamed the region *Britannia*, i.e. *Breizh* in the local language, *Bretagne* in French, *Brittany* in English. This set another scene for multilingual interaction between varieties of British and Romance.²⁷ When these languages finally come fully into the light of documentation, they are already internally differentiated: Welsh, Breton, Cornish, and to the degree that we can say anything about them, Cumbric and northern British.²⁸ No fully attested form of British serves as the ancestor of all the younger languages, unlike Old Irish which is the most ancestral, common stage of all known Gaelic languages. Breton is internally very strongly differentiated into mutually

²⁰ For example Adams (2007), 616–20.

²¹ For example Schrijver (2014), 34–48; Charles-Edwards (2013), 110. ²² Harvey (2015).

²³ On the shifting balance between the different languages in Wales, see also Charles-Edwards (1995); Sims-Williams (2002).

²⁴ The varieties of Anglo-Saxon speech themselves came repeatedly under external pressure: from the ninth century onwards Anglo-Saxon dialects were heavily influenced by Old Norse, and since the end of the eleventh century by Norman French.

²⁵ For Cornish, see Payton (2000); for Cumbric, Price (2000), 109–26.

²⁶ Minard and Koch (2006).

²⁷ For early Brittany, see Brett, Edmonds, and Russell (2021).

²⁸ See Schrijver (2011).

incomprehensible dialects. It has been speculated that influences from surviving Gaulish speech communities and from Romance communities were responsible for the emergence of the dialects of Breton, but this is difficult to demonstrate.²⁹ Perhaps the emigrants already brought some dialectal distinctions to the Continent.

Like the Germanic languages, Irish in Britain is the language of later-Roman and early-medieval immigration. While Irish colonial activities led to the lasting establishment of Gaelic speech communities in northern Britain, those in the south left no traces beyond the early Middle Ages. Their presence can be mainly deduced from the distribution of ogam inscriptions, monolingual and bilingual, mainly in parts of southern Wales and in Cornwall and Devon. These will be the focus of Section 8.5.³⁰

8.4. The Linguistic Situation in Prehistoric and Early Historic Ireland

In so far as it is knowable, the contrast between the—ostensibly simpler—linguistic situation in Ireland at the dawn of history and that of Britain is striking. All we can see is Goidelic, a separate branch of the Celtic languages that in Ireland is represented by Irish. Although there must have been non-Goidelic languages in prehistory, any direct evidence is lacking. Native sources from the seventh century onwards make no reference to local languages other than Irish in late antiquity or in the early Middle Ages. Notwithstanding occasional names that resist analysis, and loans from Latin, the earliest epigraphic sources from Ireland, the ogam inscriptions, basically preserve names that can be understood as Celtic. Nevertheless, several hypotheses about more complex scenarios even for the historical period have been put forward.

The presence of speakers of British Celtic languages on the island has been postulated on the basis of the fact that several tribal names recorded in Ptolemy's *Geographica* (second century CE) have parallels in Britain or Gaul and/or contain the sound *p*, a sound that was alien to Irish at that time.³¹ For instance, the *Manapii* in the southeast of Ireland recall the *Menapii* in Belgium; the *Brigantes* have a corresponding population group in Britain. From the naïve point of the traditional distinction between *q*- and *p*-Celtic languages, names with *p* appear to attest to the presence of *p*-Celtic varieties.³² However, alternative explanations are possible. The names could be *q*-Celtic formations that were transmitted to

²⁹ Falc'hun (1977); Fleuriot (1980), 51 ff.; Ternes (2011), 439–45. See Chapter 5 for the possible survival of Gaulish in areas such as Brittany.

³⁰ For evidence for Irish settlements in Wales, see Dillon (1977); Swift (2007); Wmffre (2007).

³¹ See Toner (2000) for the Ptolemean evidence from Ireland.

³² For example O'Rahilly (1946), 85–91. This has been rejected by Greene (1966), 132–4.

Ptolemy via the mediation of *p*-Celtic speakers who replaced the foreign sounds by the corresponding ones of their own language.³³ For example, *Manapii* could be the British pronunciation of Irish **Manak^ui*, a name that is in fact reflected in its *q*-Celtic form in the modern place-name *Fir Manach/Fermanagh*. The name of the *Cruithin* in the northeast of Ireland is the equivalent of *Priteni*, an ancient name for the Britons, and it is at least possible that this community was linguistically British. Their name disappears from the historical sources only in the eighth century. According to the radical position of Schrijver, Goidelic was itself only a sub-branch of British Celtic that was ‘*q*-ified’ under the substratal influence of a non-Celtic population when the language was brought to Ireland very late in history, namely in the first century CE.³⁴

Another indicator of possible hidden complexity is the fate of Irish in the early period itself. Primitive Irish of the fourth century resembles Old Irish of the seventh century as much,³⁵ or as little, as Latin resembles French, even though only three centuries separate the two stages. Through the lens of language-contact studies, the massive typological and structural transformation in such a short period can be interpreted as the result of a rapid shift of large population groups to a new language across three generations, without proper acquisition of the target language in the first generation. If this hypothesis is correct, the very fact that such a shift occurred speaks to the relative prestige of the languages involved. The shift, and the transformation of Irish, may have been accelerated by natural disasters as, for example, documented in the mid-sixth century (the Annals of Ulster speak of a famine in 536 and of epidemics in 549, 554, and 556). This great upheaval of the phonological system of Irish forms part of a much larger areal, almost *Sprachbund*-like phenomenon. Structurally similar transformations affected languages in the entire northwest of Europe during the middle of the first millennium CE, including the Germanic and some Romance languages.

What language(s) those populations spoke before they shifted to Irish is unknown, but it has been argued that a small group of loanwords in Irish with initial *p* that cannot be shown to originate in any of the known European languages of the time come from a pre-Celtic language on the island. Since Irish acquired the sound *p* only in around the sixth century CE, the loans cannot have entered earlier than that and the pre-Celtic language must have been spoken as late as the middle of the first millennium CE, if only in a geographically and socially marginal position.³⁶

³³ Cf. Toner (2000), 73.

³⁴ Schrijver (2015), 72–87

³⁵ Traditionally, the following periods of Early Irish are distinguished (after Stifter 2009, 55–6): Primitive Irish (fourth–sixth century; only attested in ogam inscriptions); Early Old Irish or Archaic Irish (seventh century; the beginning of the manuscript tradition); Old Irish (eighth–ninth century); Middle Irish (tenth–twelfth century). Everything after 1200 counts as Modern Irish.

³⁶ Schrijver (2000, 2005b). Schrijver (2005b), 137, very tentatively points to a remote region in Co. Mayo and Galway that could have formed the residual area of speakers of that language.

This is the situation when a new ‘player’ appeared on the scene, but one that was neither a substrate nor a superstrate, but an adstrate, namely Latin. The historical context of the Irish language is almost unique among the non-classical languages in early medieval western Europe in that the country in which the language originated, Ireland, was never subject to Roman rule.³⁷ This is not to say that there was no early interaction with the Roman world and with Latin. Indeed, there was constant and increasing interaction throughout the entire ancient and early medieval period. Scant archaeological evidence even attests to a small-scale Roman presence in Ireland. Very early loanwords such as *ingor* (‘anchor’) < non-classical Latin *ancura* also give evidence of prehistoric exchange before the much broader influx of Latin borrowings into Irish from around the fourth century.³⁸ From the fourth and fifth centuries the contacts intensified in two ways. On the one hand, Irish raiders and settlers expanded across the sea into Britain and established settlements in the west of the island. In that sense, some speakers of Irish were part of the Roman Empire. The other, much more consequential, interaction was the arrival of Christianity in the fourth or fifth century.

In view of the invisibility of any other local language on the island in our documents, the default assumption has to be that monolingualism was the norm in early medieval Ireland for the vast majority of the population. This does not exclude a limited amount of bilingualism in special cases, for example in the case of merchants and clerics who were in exchange with Britain or other parts of Europe. Some inferences about language contact and, consequently, bilingualism or even multilingualism can be made on the basis of loanwords. In addition to the large number of Latin loanwords, a corpus of slightly over forty loanwords from British Celtic has been identified in the Goidelic languages, chiefly pertaining to aspects of daily life.³⁹ These loans may have originated among the Irish settlers in Wales, or in Scotland through their interaction with northern British populations. Interactions between Irish and British ‘saints’ left their imprint rather in the form of British-Latin loanwords. There are hardly any Anglo-Saxon loans in Old Irish, despite Irish missionary activities in Northumbria, dynastic relationships, and political interactions between the two countries. In the seventh century several monasteries were established throughout Ireland specifically for Anglo-Saxon monks to study in the island. These include Mag nÉo na Saxan (‘Mayo of the Saxons’) in Co. Mayo and Rath Melsigi in Co. Carlow. The number of

³⁷ Johnston (2013), 14–16.

³⁸ Raftery (2005), 175–80; Freeman (2001), 1–13; Johnston (2013), 10–11; see O’Sullivan et al. (2013), 249–55, for archaeological evidence for contact with the classical world. The classic treatment of Latin loanwords in Old Irish is McManus (1983); see also Fomin (2018), 159. Fomin (2018) sees an earlier and deeper influence of Latin on Ireland and Irish, but his conclusions derive partly from too uncritical an acceptance of early dates for certain pieces of Early Irish literature.

³⁹ Loanwords among the Insular Celtic languages are collected in Bauer (2015). Entirely anecdotally, we have the impression that Scottish Gaelic has a higher rate of British loanwords, probably from the time when northern varieties of British were still spoken in Scotland in the Middle Ages.

Germanic loanwords increases only with the incursions of the Vikings in the ninth century.

The chief manifestation of bilingualism that we know about in Ireland before the Viking period beginning in the ninth century relates to Latin in its British guise. Lacking any local substrate of Latin on which to build, the Irish found themselves in a situation where they had to learn Latin from scratch. Latin bilingualism was accordingly intimately tied to literacy. The Irish learners had to engage in a reflective way with the foreign language. This in turn made them reflect theoretically upon their own language, with a number of diverse, and far-reaching, consequences, besides the opening up of the language to a continuous influx of Latin loanwords. One consequence is the invention of the ogam script (see Section 8.5), which presupposes a knowledge of Latin. Another consequence is the ‘invention’ of glossing Latin texts in the vernacular. While adding interlinear or marginal comments to a manuscript was a long-established practice, the Irish are the earliest known group for whom these comments, the technical term for which is ‘glosses’, are not in Latin, but in their own language. With the emigration of Irish scholars to the Continent from the seventh century, this practice spread to other vernacular languages in Europe, boosted by the cultural momentum of the Carolingian Renaissance.⁴⁰ The fact that the glossing was done in the vernacular and that a huge corpus of native Old Irish grammatical terminology exists, created after the model of Latin,⁴¹ shines indirect light on the fact that Irish played an important role even in classroom discourse.

Latin was probably mostly an *instructed language* in Ireland, less a *language of instruction* (except, perhaps, for the teaching of Latin itself). Its knowledge was school-based. Although British Latin had become the language of written expression with Christianity, it cannot be assumed that for its Irish practitioners Latin was ever anything other than a technical and prestigious foreign language. It is conceivable that a large portion of the people—fundamentally clerics—who learned Latin in monastic schools did not necessarily attain a high enough proficiency to communicate comfortably in it. The written evidence is only representative of the literate elite, for instance Adomnán of Iona (c. 628–704). Real fluency in Latin may have been the preserve of a small group among the educated religious elite. Very little can be said about lay society, but in the early Middle Ages Latin literacy is not likely to have been widespread outside monastic settings and educational contexts.

Literacy takes a twofold shape in Ireland. Its earliest manifestation is in the form of inscriptions in the native ogam script, predominantly surviving on stone

⁴⁰ Blom (2017), 19. The Old Irish glosses, mainly of the eighth and ninth centuries, are edited in *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus* (Stokes and Strachan 1901–3). Bronner (2013) is a complete catalogue of all Old Irish language remains in contemporary manuscripts. Most of these texts are commentaries and notes on Latin works.

⁴¹ Ahlqvist (1993).

monuments from the fourth century CE onwards.⁴² Ogam epigraphy is perhaps indirectly modelled on Roman memorial stones and very occasionally contains Latin names, but it is exclusively in the Irish language in Ireland. Ogam literacy, however, goes beyond the island of Ireland to include Britain and is treated in greater depth in Section 8.5. Literacy in Roman letters is slightly younger. It is intimately linked to Christianity and begins to spread with it from the fifth century.

The literary, in contrast to the literate, tradition commences slowly in the fifth and sixth centuries, at first exclusively in Latin, with only sporadic instances of Irish, mostly in the form of personal names and place-names. The earliest datable texts in Ireland other than epigraphy are the fifth-century writings of St Patrick.⁴³ In addition to saints' lives, the Irish produced and copied instructional literature, biblical commentaries, Latin grammars, canon law, handbooks of penance, devotional hymns, and computistical texts. While first the recipient of learning, during the sixth and seventh centuries Irish monasticism spread through Christian Europe bringing with it Hiberno-Latin literacy. The earliest surviving manuscript sources (sixth–ninth century) contain extensive evidence for knowledge of, and use of, Latin in Ireland. These include the *Cathach* or *Psalter of St Columba*,⁴⁴ the famous *Book of Kells* and the *Book of Durrow*, as well as other, less well-known, gospel books, such as the *Codex Usserianus Primus* and the *Book of Dimma*.⁴⁵ The Springmount Bog writing tablets, discovered in 1914 in Co. Antrim in Northern Ireland and now in the National Museum of Ireland, date to late sixth/early seventh century. These six wooden wax tablets contain the Vulgate text of Psalms 30–32 and are the earliest examples of Irish handwriting in the Latin script known as Insular minuscule.⁴⁶

From approximately the middle of the seventh century, written literature in the vernacular language develops, and with it Old Irish as a written standard language. The crucial step was the establishment of a commonly accepted orthographic method for encoding the language. The principles underpinning the rather unusual spelling rules of Old Irish⁴⁷ derive from the post-Roman pronunciation of Latin in Britain.⁴⁸ This is in stark contrast to the British-speaking

⁴² Harvey (1987b).

⁴³ See <https://www.confessio.ie/#>. Like the vast majority of early-medieval Irish literature, Patrick's writings only survive in manuscripts that are many centuries younger than their original composition [accessed 24 June 2023].

⁴⁴ Royal Irish Academy MS 12 R; <https://www.ria.ie/cathach-psalter-st-columba> [accessed 24 June 2023].

⁴⁵ Trinity College Dublin MS 58 (*olim* A. I); MS 57 (*olim* B. 61); MS 55; MS 59 (*olim* A. IV. 23); <https://www.tcd.ie/library/early-irish-mss/> [accessed 24 June 2023].

⁴⁶ Charles-Edwards (2002).

⁴⁷ For instance, using the letters *p*, *t*, *c* to write the sounds [b d g] word-internally, and using *b*, *d*, *g*, *m* to write the voiced fricatives [v ð γ v̄] in the same position.

⁴⁸ Harvey (1989, 1990); Ahlqvist (1994). For the Old British context of this, see Schrijver (2011), 17–40.

countries, where the vernaculars were elevated to the prestige of commonly written languages only much later. Despite the occasional examples of short texts in Old Welsh and Old Breton writing in the ninth and tenth centuries,⁴⁹ it is not before the High Middle Ages that full-fledged literacy sets in in Wales, and still later in the case of Breton and Cornish.⁵⁰

By the ninth century writing in Irish had become so ordinary that vernacular literacy took over from Latin as the primary medium of writing in many genres. This is, for example, manifest in the Irish annals, where entries written entirely in Irish become more dominant from the 810s. Across the early Middle Ages, then, several shifts in literacy can be observed in Ireland. The early post-Roman period saw Irish only in ogam script on stone monuments, running parallel to Latin script and language in early manuscripts from the fifth century. From the seventh century, the Irish language in the Latin script started to appear in manuscripts, but also on inscribed stones (mainly grave-slabs; see more on this in Section 8.6). Irish became dominant from the ninth century. However, Latin and Irish coexisted as written languages. The Irish never ceased to produce material in Latin and in a combination of Latin and Irish. For instance, Latin discourse particles (e.g. *dixit*, *finit*, *iterum*, etc.) continued to be used in otherwise Irish texts for a long time. It is fair to say that literacy and literature in Ireland were almost always bilingual, but the relative prestige of the two involved ‘players’ was constantly fluctuating.⁵¹ Most importantly, the Irish language was never overtaken by Latin, but became the dominant language of literary sources.

8.5. Ogam in Ireland and Britain

The earliest epigraphic remains of the Irish language survive in the form of short inscriptions on stones and, in much smaller numbers, on *instrumenta* from the late fourth century onwards. They are a prime piece of evidence for multilingual interaction—or the absence thereof—of the Irish in Ireland and in Britain. They are written in the singularly original ogam script that consists of strokes and notches arranged along a stem-line.⁵² Ogam is most commonly found on the arrises of objects, typically on standing stones, and usually going from bottom left upwards and then down to the right bottom. Slightly under 500 ogam stones are

⁴⁹ In fact, many of the extant Old British glosses seem to have arisen in a multilingual context with a strong, if not dominant Irish element.

⁵⁰ See Schrijver (2011), 5–11 for the scarce written sources of Old British languages.

⁵¹ Cf. Bisagni (2013–4), 15–16.

⁵² *Ogam* is the medieval form of the name, pronounced [ˈoʊəm]. The modern form *ogham*, pronounced [ˈo:m], is also in scholarly and popular use. Stifter (2020a, 856; 2020c, 84–6) suggests that the name *ogam* may have originally referred to the ‘furrows’ or ‘tracks’ left by the engravers on the objects. He also discusses various alternative explanations of the word.

extant today, plus around two dozen portable objects.⁵³ Around 400 stones are known from Ireland, especially clustered in the south in counties Kerry, Cork, and Waterford. In Wales, which has around forty, the stones show a concentration in those areas in the southwest that were occupied by the Irish in late antiquity and in the early Middle Ages,⁵⁴ namely Pembrokeshire, Breconshire, and Carmarthenshire. Cornwall and Devon together have half a dozen, and a single, very early stone is known from Silchester in England, as well as three inscribed *instrumenta*. Approximately forty stones are known from Scotland plus ten *instrumenta*, to which can be added three sites with graffiti.

As a graphic system, ogam is among the most abstract and non-iconic writing systems ever devised for human communication. The letters consist of bundles of one to five identical straight parallel strokes, arranged in four classes or groups (Old Irish *aicme*, pl. *aicmi*). Each class is characterized by a specific location relative to a stem-line, which is either notional (when the inscription is in 3D along the axis of the object), or drawn-in (when written in two dimensions across the face of the object). There is evidently grammatical thinking behind the arrangement of the script, since all vowels are grouped together in one *aicme* (short notches in the earliest variant), whereas all consonants are represented by strokes. It is widely believed that the grouping of ogam letters is based on Latin grammarians' classification of Latin letters into vowels, semivowels, and mutes.⁵⁵ However, as in the choice of letters (see below), there may be a more sophisticated decision behind the—ostensibly puzzling—grouping into *aicmi*. The distribution of sounds between the three consonantal *aicmi* is neither random nor due to natural phonetic classes, but may reflect an attempt to maximally differentiate glyphs in writing. Consonants that most commonly occur in clusters have been assigned to different *aicmi*, while consonants that hardly ever occur in contact with each other are grouped into a single *aicme*.⁵⁶

Because of the degree of design that must have gone into this, it is widely agreed that familiarity with the Latin grammatical tradition was an essential factor for the creation of ogam. It was one of the results of the linguistic reflection that Irish scholars engaged in as a consequence of learning Latin as a foreign language. The chosen values of the letters seem to be the result of a phonological

⁵³ The ogam inscriptions known in the mid-twentieth century were collected in *CIIC*. The early medieval inscribed stones of the former Roman province of Britannia are edited in *CISW I–III*, superseding the earlier collections in Nash-Williams (1950); Okasha (1993); Thomas (1994). The stones in Scotland, which diverge from the other traditions in many respects, are collected in Forsyth (1996). The chief digital edition is *Ogham in 3D* (White 2013), which uses 3D-technology to record the objects. Older, but now discontinued digital collections are *TITUS Ogamica* (Gippert 2001) and the *Celtic Inscribed Stones Project (CISP)*; Davies 2002). Ogam has seen a number of relatively recent corpus studies, especially McManus (1991); Ziegler (1994); Sims-Williams (2003). Forsyth (2006) and Stifter (2020a, 2022) provide overviews of scholarship, with an emphasis on linguistic aspects. The *BabelStone Blog* (West 2008–) offers useful information about the inscriptions and their supports in Britain.

⁵⁴ Dillon (1977).

⁵⁵ Thurneysen (1937), 202–3.

⁵⁶ Forsyth (forthcoming).

analysis of the target language, tailored towards the phonological profile of Primitive Irish before the rise of the dichotomy between the neutral and palatalized consonant series, and before the phonemicization of lenition.⁵⁷ Letters of the Latin alphabet which represent sounds that are unnecessary for Primitive Irish, such as P or X, have been discarded, while letters such as Q and G^w have been created for Primitive Irish phonemes that are not adequately represented by a single letter in the Latin script. Although ogam reflects the consonantal phonology of its target language at the time of its creation very well, the grammatically crucial distinction between long and short sounds cannot be graphically expressed. The letters bear names according to the acrostic principle. A sub-group refers to natural objects and phenomena such as trees, but there is no uniform underlying system, and some names are apparently meaningless.⁵⁸

The Latin model shines clearly through the structure of this writing system. The very fact that ogam is organized as an alphabet is proof that it was not invented from scratch. Alphabetic writing is not a natural way of encoding language—ideographic writing and diverse forms of syllabic scripts are much more common ways of creating writing systems. It can even be argued that the concept of alphabetic writing arose only once, namely in eighth-century archaic Greece, from where it spread rapidly and successfully across the entire Mediterranean world.⁵⁹ In any case, ogam must have been created on the model of an alphabetic script and the Latin one was the only available model in the area. There are other features of the script that mirror Latin writing: it is not possible to distinguish long from short vowels; although writing consonants double is very common in the inscriptions, this is avoided at the beginning of words;⁶⁰ and inscriptions have a dextroverse orientation, i.e. are to be read from left to right, and not the other way round.

In its core graphic inventory, namely the 4 × 5 basic signs, the script is uniform throughout its history (Fig. 8.1). Under minute scrutiny, however, occasional traces of experimentation can be discovered already in the earliest period, even though it is not possible to arrive at a coherent big-picture view of the internal development of the writing system at that time. Already the earliest witnesses contain extra letters (*forfid*, pl. *forfeda*), whose purpose may have been, it has been argued, to render lenited consonants and [p], a sound that was foreign to Primitive Irish.⁶¹ From their shape it is evident that they are additions to the

⁵⁷ The emergence of so-called palatalized consonants and lenition (variants of consonants that are pronounced in a more ‘relaxed’ fashion) are important sound changes that affected Irish roughly in the sixth century, after the invention of ogam, and that radically transformed the character of the language. Even though the ogam script stayed in use, it could no longer adequately represent the sounds of the language after the operation of those changes. See Stifter (2020a), 866–7.

⁵⁸ McManus (1988); see also McManus (1986).

⁵⁹ See the thoughts about the development of alphabet writing in Diringer (1949).

⁶⁰ Harvey (1987a). ⁶¹ Sims-Williams (1992).

		transliteration	traditional name
<i>aicme 1</i>	┆	B	<i>beith</i> ('birch')
	┆┆	L	<i>luis</i> ('rowan?')
	┆┆┆	V (F)	<i>fern</i> ('alder')
	┆┆┆┆	S	<i>sail</i> ('willow')
	┆┆┆┆┆	N	<i>nin</i> ('ash-tree?')
<i>aicme 2</i>	┆	J? (H)	<i>úath</i> ('whitethorn?')
	┆┆	D	<i>dair</i> ('oak')
	┆┆┆	T	<i>tinne</i> ('holly, elder?')
	┆┆┆┆	C	<i>coll</i> ('hazel')
	┆┆┆┆┆	Q	<i>ceirt</i> ('apple-tree?')
<i>aicme 3</i>	┆	M	<i>muin</i> ('vine?')
	┆┆	G	<i>gort</i> ('ivy?')
	┆┆┆	G ^w ? (NG)	<i>ngétal</i> ('wounding')
	┆┆┆┆	ST (Z)	<i>straif</i> ('sulphur, sloe?')
	┆┆┆┆┆	R	<i>ruis</i> ('elder-tree?')
<i>aicme 4</i>	┆	A	<i>ailm</i> ('pine?')
	┆┆	O	<i>onn</i> ('ash')
	┆┆┆	U	<i>úr</i> 'heath?'
	┆┆┆┆	E	<i>edad</i> ('aspen?')
	┆┆┆┆┆	I	<i>idad</i> ('yew?')
the <i>forfeda</i>	┆┆┆	K, EA	<i>ébad</i> ('aspen, elecampane?')
	┆┆┆┆	Ó	<i>ór</i> ('gold')
	┆┆┆┆┆	UI	<i>uilleann</i> ('elbow')
	┆┆┆┆┆┆	IO, I	<i>iphín</i> ('gooseberry?')
	┆┆┆┆┆┆┆	P	<i>peith</i> ('?')
	┆┆┆┆┆┆┆┆	CS, X, AE	<i>emoncholl</i> ('twin hazel')

Fig. 8.1 The ogam alphabet and its traditional letter names. The values as understood today are given in the transliteration first, followed by the traditional values in parentheses.

elegant core system, and this could perhaps be regarded as evidence for a greater age of the script than is usually assumed. The most common among these extra signs is 𐌀, traditionally transcribed K, but perhaps meant for the velar fricative [x]. However, evidence for their originally intended values is thin on the ground and no uniform system developed out of this. After ogam had become the object of vernacular antiquarian study and speculation in the eighth century, the characters were reinterpreted. The traditional ogam spelling system was replaced by one that serves as a cipher for Old Irish manuscript spelling. Signs that clearly had been intended for consonants originally, but whose meaning was no longer understood, were reassigned vocalic values in order to cater for the Old Irish language, which had evolved a long way from the Primitive Irish of the earliest ogam inscriptions. For instance, 𐌀 was assigned the new values É, EA, EO and it was given the name *ébad*. Other major changes are the shift from writing vowels as distinct dots or short strokes on the stem-line to perpendicular strokes, matching

in length the consonant strokes, and the introduction of literacy aids such as ‘feather marks’ to indicate the direction of writing. Practices arising in the scrip-torial tradition of writing ogam in manuscripts in turn influenced the writing on objects in the later Middle Ages. Scribes in Scotland, especially in Shetland, were particularly inventive as regards graphic experimentation with the ogam inventory.⁶² It is hoped that further progress in understanding the palaeography of the ogam script will be made in the OG(H)AM project.

8.5.1 Periodization of Ogam

Four more or less distinct periods of ogam usage can be distinguished in history, with the invention of the writing system constituting, as it were, ‘Period 0’.

Period 0. Due to a lack of historical sources, the date and circumstances of invention are shrouded in darkness. Inferences about its origin are only possible from the character of the script itself and from the geographical distribution and the dates of the earliest inscriptions. There are a handful of directly dateable objects, but the dating of ogam inscriptions mostly depends on circumstantial information, such as accompanying archaeological finds, which are few, or on identifying the named individuals with historic persons, which has proved difficult. Moreover, we can only operate with the surviving texts on more durable material. If there had been an earlier tradition on perishable supports such as wood, this is by necessity lost to us. The most common method of relative dating is linguistic, i.e. inferring an approximate date from the changes that are reflected in the language. This can be circular, since some of the changes have in turn been dated on the basis of ogam inscriptions. Palaeographic considerations come into play chiefly for the bilingual inscriptions in Wales that also have a Latin text. The earliest dates that archaeology has produced are assigned to the late fourth century, namely for the Silchester stone from a villa in Hampshire (E-HAM-001 = *CIIC* 496), for an unedited small stone from the royal site of Raffin, Co. Meath (I-MEA-007), and for an unedited bronze votive plaque from Newgrange (I-MEA-010), part of a much larger collection of objects that includes Roman finds. It is noteworthy that two of the oldest dated objects have a Roman connection. The conservative estimate is that the invention of the writing system took place not much earlier than this in the fourth century. However, structural arguments for an earlier invention, perhaps as early as the first or second century CE, have been put forward.⁶³

It is likely that the invention of ogam was a single event in history, created in a stroke of genius by a single individual who was familiar with Latin writing and

⁶² Forsyth (1996), xlii–lx.

⁶³ Harvey (2001); (2017), 59.

grammatical theory. Because of the chronological coincidence, there may also be a connection with the arrival of Christianity in Ireland.⁶⁴ A region for the natural meeting of Irish language and Latin learning would be the west of Roman Britain, where Irish settlements had been established in late antiquity. The bilingual ogam inscriptions in the west of Britain could thus be viewed as a response to being confronted with a tradition of public written monuments, a tradition that is deeply engrained in Roman culture.

However, there are also arguments that speak against Wales and for Ireland as the cradle of ogam. In sheer numbers, the monuments in southern Ireland, including those with very early linguistic features, outweigh those in Wales several times over. For southern Britain, Ziegler assigns 15 of the 44 ogams to her earliest period; Sims-Williams, more cautiously, counts 12.⁶⁵ The percentage of stones with early features can therefore hardly be called as impressive as one would expect if Britain had been the cradle of ogam. If ogam had been imported into Ireland from Britain, the question could be asked why the dominant format there—bilingual epitaphs in Irish and Latin—was so completely ignored on the other side of the sea. It is hard to conceive how one of the distinctive features of ogam, the convention of verticality, could have first arisen in the context of Roman epigraphy that is exclusively horizontal. Conversely, it is easy to see how the external model of ogam would have influenced the local Latin epigraphy in Wales to become vertical itself.⁶⁶ What is more, it is probably just a modern misconception, suggested by their sheer numbers, that ogam pillars represent the earliest type of use of the script. From a functional perspective, the available formulae are much more diverse in Ireland than in southern Britain. Biodiversity is typically much greater at the point of origin than in those regions to which species spread, as it were, by colonization. If it is legitimate to use this analogy, Ireland must have been the starting point and southern Britain is a region into which the tradition spilt over.

On balance, therefore, an invention in Ireland appears more likely. One possible scenario is that it was exported from Ireland to Wales, Cornwall, and Man, but only with a fraction of its formulaic richness. One region in the south of Ireland, namely the Waterford–East Cork area, may have had an old dynastic link with Wales.⁶⁷ This suggests itself as a channel of transmission for the art of writing. It looks as if the practice arrived early in Wales and was quickly combined with the local tradition of Latin epigraphy. The practice stayed for a few generations so as to witness some of the important changes of the language, but then disappeared fairly soon again. Unlike Ireland, there are no ogams with manifestly late, i.e. Old Irish linguistic and orthographic traits.

⁶⁴ Swift (1997).

⁶⁵ Ziegler (1994); Sims-Williams (2003).

⁶⁶ K. Forsyth (pers. comm.).

⁶⁷ See Charles-Edwards (2000a), 163–4.

Period 1 'classical ogam'. The fifth to seventh centuries are usually regarded as the core of the ogam tradition. Traditionally this is labelled the 'orthodox period', but in order to avoid the impression that texts after that period are 'unorthodox', we call it the 'classical period', in the sense of the first major flourishing of the tradition. Notwithstanding the practical difficulties in dating individual inscriptions, it is likely that most of the extant corpus in Ireland, and apparently all of the monuments in southern Britain, belong to this period of ogam usage. Some of the stones from Gaelic Scotland, Man, and Pictland also belong to this period, but in all three areas ogam continued to be used monumentally for several further centuries (to the tenth or even eleventh century). Linguistically, classical ogam spans the Primitive Irish stage (fourth–sixth centuries) of the development of the Irish language, and Archaic or Early Old Irish (seventh century)—two stages of the language that are drastically different from each other typologically and grammatically. If the stones from Pictland are in a form of Pictish, that language would also be recorded in ogam.

Period 2 'reformed ogam'. The period from the eighth century onwards throughout the Middle Ages and the early modern period is often called 'scholastic' ogam, as if the practical use of the script had ceased and it had become the object of learned interest alone. But not only had ogam always been a scholarly phenomenon, it is becoming more and more evident that the tradition was kept alive both in scriptoria and outside them. Nevertheless, with the 'explosion' of Irish monastic learning, ogam was drawn into this orbit and many practical aspects of ogam writing became heavily influenced by, or identical to, the Latin-script-based Old Irish manuscript tradition. This is most evident in the radically different orthography, but also in the reinterpretation of the value of individual signs, and in manuscript-inspired discourse markers such as feather marks to indicate the beginning of texts, or in word spacing. We propose the term 'reformed ogam' for the period when manuscript spelling practices replaced the classical ogam orthography, without wanting to create the impression that the script was now confined to a two-dimensional medium. Still, the number of objects—monuments and *instrumenta*—in Ireland is small compared to that of the first period, whereas in Scotland and the Isle of Man ogam epigraphy flourished and expanded during this period. In Scotland especially, the inventory diversified in the shapes of the letters and in the attested formulae. The languages recorded in this period are Old, Middle, and Classical Modern Irish as well as Scottish Gaelic, and perhaps Pictish in Scotland.

Period 3 'antiquarian ogam'. Knowledge of the ogam script never died out in Ireland. Therefore, unlike other ancient writing systems, it did not have to be deciphered by modern scholars. The medieval learned tradition of Ireland produced tracts on ogam which preserve information on how to decode them, so that even after the end of independent Gaelic culture in the middle of the seventeenth century, there were scholars in Ireland up to the middle of the nineteenth

century who could read or produce ogam inscriptions. They are few in number and they are typically in Modern Irish.

Period 4 'revivalist ogam'. The active use of ogam was never entirely abandoned and continues up to the present day. With the revival of Irish language and culture from the end of the nineteenth century and with the beginning of the academic study of the 'Celtic' past, ogam came back prominently into the public eye. As a conspicuous token of Gaelic culture and Celticism, it has occupied a small but important niche in the cultural consciousness of twentieth- and twenty-first century Ireland. It is, for instance, found on private and public buildings, and with the digital revolution and its inclusion in Unicode in 1999, ogam can now also be used for computer applications. It is characteristic of the use of the script in the revivalist period that it is practically never used for the language it was originally designed for, namely Primitive Irish, but chiefly for Modern Irish and for other languages, especially English.

8.5.2 Functions of Ogam Inscriptions

In sheer numbers, the best-attested function of ogam inscriptions is commemorative, probably accompanying burials. Medieval literary sources do mention ogams in connection with burials, but in the absence of modern excavations of ogam stones and their contexts in Ireland, no direct archaeological evidence for this has yet been found. However, bilingual ogams in Britain provide crucial support in that they often feature the Latin funerary formula *hic iacit* ('here lies'), e.g. Latin TRENACATVS IC IACIT FILIVS MAGLAGNI ('Trénchad lies here, son of Málán') beside the Irish version TRENACCATLO ('of Trénchad'; with the spelling mistake L!) (W-CGN-001 = CISW CD26 = CIIC 353). Although classical ogams never contain verbs, the Latin formula finds a functional equivalent in the formulaic use of KOI ('here'). It is only used on early stones in Ireland, for example the very early BROINIENAS KOI NETTA-TTRENALUGOS ('of Broíniu, here, (son) of Nad-Trénlug') (I-COR-071 = CIIC 120), but never in Wales. This looks like Latin influence across the sea on the epigraphic formula used in Ireland.

Since burials are typically on boundaries of kin-land in Ireland, ogams also serve as demarcations of land and as legal documents of power claims. The stones themselves are occasionally secondary usages of pre-existing prehistoric monoliths, i.e. of monumental objects that already served as markers in the landscape. Examples of both occur in Scotland and Wales, too.

One feature that is striking in contrast to Mediterranean epigraphy is the fact that ogam stones are rarely pre-fashioned. Very often they are inscribed in the form in which they were encountered on the spot. If Roman epigraphy were the primary inspiration for ogam, the question arises why its most obvious advantage, namely making use of the prominently visible, large, and empty surface, was

deliberately ignored. The edges of stones are their most vulnerable parts, and letters incised there are easily lost through weather and other adverse factors. On the other hand, the long-term durability of the stones over centuries may not have been a prime concern for the original carvers.

Even though ogam on stones (pillar stones, slabs, etc.) dominates numerically in the surviving corpus, the nature of the script—incisions along a stem-line or a sharp edge—and the fact that the letters are called *fedae* ('woods, trees'; sg. *fid*) in Old Irish hints at the possibility that the script may have originated as marks to be carved into wood. It is easy to incise notches along edges of sticks with a small knife. Historical sources do not tell us if familiarity with the ogam script had to go hand in hand with knowledge of Latin writing. Occasional references in the narrative literature to the use of ogam by 'ordinary' people could be interpreted as hinting at a more widespread knowledge among people without Latin education.⁶⁸ However, since none of those texts are earlier than the eighth century, after the heyday of committing ogam to stones, it is possible that such depictions owe more to antiquarian imagination than to genuine collective memory.

Whatever the original domain of ogam may have been, the fact remains that the number of extant ogam inscriptions on portable objects is small in comparison to the stone monuments. Currently, slightly over two dozen small objects with sometimes only fragmentary text are known from Ireland and Scotland, including four stray finds hailing from England. None are known from Wales. In Ireland, these objects date from both the classical period and the later, reformed period of ogam use. Only one of the portable ogams from Scotland has been dated (fifth–sixth century). These objects fulfil very diverse functions: there are, for example, objects associated with weaving, knife-handles, brooches, and antler pieces.

Ogam is evidently best suited for three-dimensional writing and was not designed for the two-dimensional page. However, the 'gravitational pull' of the culturally dominant medium vellum proved inescapable, and the script did eventually cross that divide as well. Manuscript ogam comes in two forms: in practical use as marginal notes, and as the subject of scholarly treatises. The earliest examples of the former, around half a dozen, are in manuscripts from the eighth to ninth centuries. Perhaps they had a cryptographic purpose, when, for instance, a scribe left the personal comment *LATHEIRT* ('hangover') (St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Codex Sangallensis 904, p. 204). Whether the marginal use continues an even earlier practice is impossible to say due to the lack of surviving older manuscripts. Ogam as a writing system is the subject of grammatical reflection in Old and Middle Irish texts such as *Auraicept na nÉces* ('The Scholars' Primer') or *In Lebor Ogaim* ('The book of ogam'). In the latter, it is presented in

⁶⁸ See the collection of examples in McManus (1991), 153–61.

displays more progressive features than the ogam part. Examples are Latin SAGRANI, which shows the loss of *g that is still written in Irish SAGRAGNI ('of Sárán') (W-PEM-001 = CISW P110 = CIIC 449); and in the case of Irish MAQITRENI it is only the corresponding Latin spelling MACVTRENI (W-PEM-004 = CISW P12 = CIIC 428) that reveals that the archaic sound *kʷ had already lost its labiality and had merged with *k, and that the medial vowel had become an indistinct schwa. The divergence between the two versions demonstrates that even at that time a standard of writing ogam had already imposed itself, a standard that must have been taught in one way or another.

The sequence of directly observable linguistic changes allows us to define relative chronological periods in the evolution of Primitive Irish. Ziegler suggests four periods (indicated by Roman numerals).⁷⁰ Sims-Williams operates with a more fine-grained system of fifteen stages, each corresponding to an important sound change, but he, too, groups them into four broad periods, albeit not corresponding exactly to Ziegler's.⁷¹ A note of caution regarding the reliability of those periods has to be sounded in so far as the scribes of the monument were well aware that words could be spelt in more archaic ways than they pronounced them themselves, and they made frequent and more or less successful use of making the texts they were writing look more archaic than they were. Pseudo-archaisms of this sort distort the overall dating of the stones more towards the past. In the case of the bilingual inscriptions from south Britain, it is conceivable that the use or retention of overt endings may have been reinforced by the Latin versions of the inscriptions.

Ogam inscriptions in Ireland consist almost exclusively of personal names in the genitive singular. The basic formula records the name of a male individual, followed by a patronymic, i.e. the name of the father or, more rarely, of the grandfather or a further-removed ancestor. The two names are usually separated by the word MAQQI ('son') in numerous variant spellings, or AVI ('grandson, descendant'), and they are optionally followed by the formula word MUCOI that indicates the kin group. A typical inscription looks for example like CATTUVVIRR MAQI RITUVVECAS MUCOI ALLATO ('of Cathair son of Rethach from the kin-group of Allaid') (I-KER-122 = CIIC 250). In most cases, the presence of the formula word MUCOI triggers the suppression of the name of the father. Occasionally, the patronymic slot contains more than just one name.

⁷⁰ Periods according to Ziegler (1994), 25–6, and their distinctive sound changes: I 'Primitive Irish' (400–500; lenition, raising/lowering); II 'Archaic Irish' (500–50; reduction of final syllables, VXR > VR); III 'Early Old Irish' (550–700; syncope); IV 'Old Irish' (700–900; weakening of internal and final syllables). The descriptive names for the periods, which Ziegler borrowed from historical stages of the Irish language, are partly at odds with the current periodization of Early Irish, for which see, for example, Stifter (2009), 55.

⁷¹ Main periods after Sims-Williams (2003), 322–46: 1–5 fifth century; 6–7 early sixth century; 8–14 early to mid-sixth century; 15 mid-sixth century onwards. Sims-Williams applies his periods only to the ogam inscriptions in Britain.

More details in the form of appellative nouns are very rare. If they are found, they typically specify the social position of the dedicatee, e.g. QRIMITIR RONANN MAQI COMOGANN ('of the priest Rónán son of Comgán') (I-KER-013 = *CIIC* 145). Sometimes the inscriptions are restricted to the recipient himself and no ancestor is named, e.g. LUGUTTI VELITAS ('of Luchtae (?) the poet') (I-KER-123 = *CIIC* 251) or only the individual name is mentioned, e.g. CRON[A]N ('of Crónán') (S-ARG-002 = *CIIC* 507).

Ogam inscriptions in the south of Britain adhere fundamentally to the same pattern, although the amount of formulaic variation and the number of generic nouns is much more limited. Single names (20, almost half!) and son–father relationships or tribal affiliation (17) preponderate, for example on one of the rare monolingual stones from Wales: NETTASAGRI MAQI MUCOI BRIACI ('of Nad-Sáir son of from the kin of Briäch') (W-PEM-006 = *CISW* P5 = *CIIC* 426). To judge from the fact that endings tend to be preserved, the south British texts belong largely to the earlier part of the classical period. This is unlike Ireland, where many names on ogams are endingless, which means that they must have been created after the apocope of final syllables in the sixth century.

8.5.4 Sociolinguistic Aspects of Ogam

The value of the information that ogam inscriptions offer about multilingualism differs hugely among the major regions: Ireland, southern Britain, Scotland, with the Isle of Man perhaps as a fourth mini-region. It is smallest in Ireland, where ogam stones contain very little evidence for bilingualism at all. Of the 400 stones, only two inscriptions are bilingual in the sense of providing texts in two different languages ('bi-version bilinguals'). The Irish part of the bilingual from Colbinstown (I-KDE-001 = *CIIC* 19), OVANI AVI IVACATTOS ('of Ovanas (Úaman?) grandson of Éochad'), belongs to an early period on account of the fully preserved endings and the unaffected vowels. Structurally, this text is otherwise unremarkable, but it is unclear how it relates to the notoriously difficult Latin part. The most commonly accepted reading, IVVERE DRVVIDES, seems to mean 'the druids helped'. However, the fifth letter is not fully legible. Instead of R, the reading N has also been suggested, in which case it could be interpreted as 'young druids'. Since there is no tradition in Ireland for erecting Latin dedicatory inscriptions, it has been suspected that the Latin text was created by someone from outside Ireland, possibly from Britain. It is not certain if there is any connection between the two texts at all.⁷²

⁷² It is hoped that 3D groove analysis to be undertaken as part of the OG(H)AM project will clarify whether the Irish and the Latin text could have been written together.

One very late ogam inscription from Ireland, the Killaloe cross (I-CLA-004 = *CIIC* 54), is paired with an Old Norse text in runes. It dates to the eleventh century, long after the classical phase of ogam epigraphy. In this case, the two texts clearly belong together as a unit since they complement each other in content. The Norse text on the front side of the base conforms to a typical runic producer formula (Þ)URGRIM RISTI (K)RUS INA ('Thórggrim sculpted this cross'). The Irish text on the side does not contain one of the traditional ogam naming formulae, but it gives a formula that may imitate the contemporary Irish Latinized inscriptions (see Section 8.6), namely a request for a blessing for a person: BÉANDACHT [FOR] TOROQR[IM] ('a blessing on Thórggrim'). The relationship between the two versions resembles that of the Latin–Irish bilinguals in Wales: from the physical arrangement it is evident that the Irish is subordinate to the Norse, even though Irish must have been the dominant language. The orthography follows the conventions of manuscript-based Middle Irish (period 2 in Section 8.5.1).

The last item to be mentioned, technically not a bilingual, but a bigraphic text, is an Irish cross-slab from Clonmacnoise (I-OFF-002). Underneath the personal name COLMAN ('Colmán') in Latin letters has been added the ogam BOCHT ('poor'). A date as late as the eleventh century has been suggested,⁷³ but the orthography would allow anything from the eighth or even seventh century. It is a rare example of the deliberate use of both writing traditions in a single epigraphic text. Several features set it apart from the classical tradition and associate it with reformed manuscript-style ogam: the orthography is Old Irish, a stem-line has been drawn, and a feather mark is present, although against the direction of reading.

Foreign influence is also very limited among Irish personal names. Although a large number of Latin loanwords entered Irish in the fourth and fifth centuries, this had little effect on the naming system of the laity, which stayed thoroughly native in the early period. Accordingly, only about a dozen borrowed Latin names occur on the stones in Ireland (c. 3% of the inscriptions). The only generic noun that is borrowed from Latin is QRIMITIR ('priest'), ultimately going back to Latin *presbyter*. In comparison, ten Latin names are found on stones in southern Britain, which means that their relative frequency is six times higher than in Ireland. For instance, in a short bilingual inscription from Cornwall, the two Latin words INGENVI MEMORIA are exactly mirrored in the ogam version IGENAVI MEMOR ('(to the) memory of Ingenuus') (E-CON-002 = *CIIC* 466), with both the noun and personal name being Latin loans into Irish.

The relationships of Ireland and Britain with Latin are very different, and this becomes even more strikingly evident in other features of the local Irish ogam

⁷³ Swift (2008), 125.

corpus in Britain that distinguish it from that in Ireland.⁷⁴ The most obvious difference of the almost fifty inscriptions in southern Britain (including some *dubia*) is that they are overwhelmingly bilingual, and they thus allow more insight into the multilingual milieu in which they were produced.⁷⁵ Only five stones in Wales and a solitary stone in England are monolingually Irish. The others contain Latin (or Old British) versions of the Irish text; only rarely do they differ in content. The relative status of the two languages is expressed directly and indirectly: ogam engravings are by their very nature marginal (namely on the edges of the stones), but they also tend to be shorter and thus convey less information. Leaving aside six unclear or damaged texts, seventeen examples are shorter than the Latin part (often just a single name), while in only fourteen examples are the two parts identical in information. This can be interpreted as reflecting the lesser prestige of Irish, while Latin is more central and occupies the prominent position.⁷⁶ Only once is the Irish text longer than the Latin (W-GLA-001 = CISW G86 = CIIC 409). One may suspect that the Latin was typically viewed as the 'original' and the Irish version as an addition. But this generalization does not extend to all Irish-Latin bilinguals. Sometimes the two texts are deliberately aligned with each other. In other cases, it is impossible to decide which version depends on the other, and in a few cases the two texts do not seem to have a relationship with each other at all. An alternative assessment is possible. The two constituent texts of the bilinguals could be meant to reach different audiences: the short Irish version may have been sufficient for the Irish 'in-group', who were familiar with the named individuals and their public roles, while the longer Latin text addressed the out-group, for whom more credentials had to be provided.⁷⁷

Be that as it may, the very fact that those bilingual monuments were created underlines the desire to present the native Irish language on a similar footing to the prestige language Latin. The use of a different script stresses the desire to do so in a way that is as different as possible. If the scribes had incised the Irish name formula in Latin letters, the text would not have looked very different from the Latin version, given the similarities in the endings. Without a tell-tale word such as MAQQI or FILIVS, it would sometimes be impossible to tell which version is which language. The ogam script maximizes the difference between the two.

A small but maybe significant difference between Irish and British monuments is that we do find a tiny number of inscriptions in Britain that are dedicated to women. The best-preserved example is Latin AVITORIA FILIA CVNIGNI, Irish INIGENA CUNIGNI AVITTORIGES ('of the daughter of Cuinén, Auitorigia') (W-CMN-004 = CISW CM7 = CIIC 362), with the word for 'daughter' expressed

⁷⁴ See Swift (2007) for a detailed study of the Welsh ogams.

⁷⁵ See also Sims-Williams (2002).

⁷⁶ This situation is reminiscent of the Gaulish bilinguals from Italy, where such a subordinate relationship is even more manifest by Latin being written above the shorter Gaulish.

⁷⁷ K. Forsyth (pers. comm.).

in both languages. In the Irish, the name of the dedicatee is mentioned last, against the exclusive practice elsewhere of naming the individual first. VELVOR[IA] FILIA BROHO[MAGLI] shows the same Latin formula, unfortunately only [...]V[.]R[...] survives of the ogam counterpart (W-CGN-X01 = CISW CD14 = CIIC 349).⁷⁸ Probably the same man Brohomaglas/Brocmmál appears together with his wife Cauna in the Latin inscription BROHOMAGLI IATTI IC IACIT ET VXOR EIV{S} CAVNE, but in the corresponding Irish part Macalister could only make out a single [...]R[...] that could form part of the man's name (W-DEN-X01 = CISW D9 = CIIC 401).

In Ireland, all recipients of memorials are male. However, on Irish ogam stones, but not on British, feminine names can appear in the names of kin groups, possibly referring to a female eponymous character. A total of six stones in Co. Kerry mention the kin group of the *Corcu Duibne* (mod. *Corca Dhuibhne/Corkaguiney*), whose name derives from the mythical female person *Duibne*, e.g. MAQQI-ERCIA MAQQI MUCOI DOVINIA ('of Mac-Erae son of from the kin group of Duibne') (I-KER-043 = CIIC 175). The name of the male recipient Mac-Erae is furthermore remarkable in that it also contains a female name element. Literally his individual name means 'son of Erc', *Erc* being another frequently occurring name of a mythical female being.

As in the two inscriptions mentioning the man Brohomaglas/Brocmmál, occasionally several stones can be pieced together to give insight into the social networks of people and into their attitudes towards language. Probably just as important in this respect are those bilinguals which are not there, namely Latin inscriptions that record Irish names, but without an ogam version of the text. They may either give indirect evidence of the disappearance of the language or of its loss of status. The bilingual inscription from Pembrokeshire, Latin ANDAGELLI IACIT FILI CAVETI and Irish ANDAGELLI MACU CAV[ETI] (W-PEM-003 = CISW P22 = CIIC 433) honours 'Indgell son of Cuäd'. Indgell's brother Cóemán, on the other hand, is remembered on a Latin-only stone, namely COIMAGNI FILI CAVETI ('of Cóemán son of Cuäd') (CISW P21 = CIIC 434), which adheres completely to the underlying Irish formula 'X son of Y' in the genitive. Finally, Indgell's son has a monolingual Latin monument as well: CURCAGNI FILI ANDAGELLI ('of Corcán son of Indgell') (CISW P58 = CIIC 441). The reasons for the different treatment remain opaque, but it can be speculated that Indgell himself, or his contemporaries, represented the last generation for which Irish had sufficient status to be used on a public monument. Thereafter, the language sank into oblivion.

Some of the names on ogam stones in southern Britain are in fact British rather than Irish, even if embedded in an Irish formula. For example, MAGLICUNAS

⁷⁸ A possible third example is too fragmentary to discuss (W-PEM-015 = CISW P30 = CIIC 439).

(W-PEM-014 = CISW P70 = CIIC 446) corresponds to the well-known Welsh name *Maelgwn*; the expected Old Irish **Málchú* does not exist. The case of the well-known monument from Castell Dwyran in Carmarthenshire is particularly complex linguistically. The Latin version reads MEMORIA VOTEPORIGIS PROTICTORIS ('to the memory of Voteporix, the protector'). The Old British name *Voteporix* is a compound of **rīx* ('ruler') and **uotek^uo-* ('refuge'; cf. Welsh *godeb* with the same meaning), i.e. 'refuge-ruler'. The ogam text contains only VOTECORIGAS (W-CMN-005 = CISW CM3 = CIIC 358) and is a one-to-one phonetic transposition of the name into Irish, including the automatic substitution of P, which does not exist in Irish, by C, the younger reflex of Proto-Celtic **k^u*. However, Irish does not have a reflex of Proto-Celtic **uo-tek^uo-* ('refuge'). (There is nothing speaking against it having had such a formation in prehistory, but if it did, it was lost without trace.) This means that even though VOTECORIGAS looks like a well-formed Irish name, it is actually artificially created after the British model, revealing linguistic awareness of the sound correspondences between British and Irish. The bilingual stones from Britain are not only used to render the names of genuinely Irish individuals both in their native language and in the prestigious Latin, but the relationship can also go in the opposite direction. Somebody must have regarded it appropriate to convert the name of a high-status British person into Irish. In this way, the question of the relative levels of prestige of the languages becomes more complex. *Voteporix* could even be a British rendering of the Late Latin title *Protector*, in which case the inscription would be not only bilingual but trilingual.

The ogam tradition in those regions of Britain that had never belonged to the Roman Empire, namely Scotland and the Isle of Man, differ profoundly from those in the south in respect to chronology, language, and character. The later-medieval tradition of ogam in Scotland is much more varied linguistically, but assessing multilingualism of the texts runs up against the issue that it is not always clear what the matrix language is in the first place. Around half a dozen inscriptions in Argyll are in an early form of Gaelic and are from the early, classical phase of ogam use, as are several monuments outside this region, including one from Orkney. The latter group's linguistic affiliation is still a mystery, not least because of their occasionally very different orthography. The language of some of the stones could be a mixture of Pictish and Irish or even of Norse and Pictish.⁷⁹ This area is usually designated Pictland, and the tradition of writing ogam on stone monuments persisted longer there than it did elsewhere.

In an inscription such as ETTLIETRENOIDDORS (S-PER-003), it is neither clear how many words we are looking at, nor what they mean. EDDARRNONN (S-FIF-001) is a recurring name in Pictland, perhaps *Eternon*, ultimately from

⁷⁹ See Rodway (2020), for a critical assessment of the limited value of these inscriptions for our knowledge of the Pictish language; see also Forsyth (1998).

Latin *Aeternus*, but whether it is written in Pictish or in a Gaelicized form is unknown. MAQQ or MEQQ, evidently the word for ‘son’, does occur in several of these stones, but it could either be a borrowed formula word from Gaelic contexts, or it could even be a spelling for British **map* (‘son’). A stone from Orkney, I[-]IRRANN U[-]RRACT KEVV CÉRROCCS (S-ORK-001), appears to contain a genuinely British phrase ‘I[.]irann made this cross’ (the latter word being a loan from Latin *crux*). Finally, in the case of the stones from Shetland we may even be looking at texts in Norse, e.g. CRROSCC NAHHTVDDADDS DATTRR ANN[-] BENISES MEQQ DDROANN[-] (S-SHE-001). Apart from the obvious Latin loan for ‘cross’, this text could contain the Old Norse words *dótr* (‘daughter’) and *ann* (‘gave’). The orthography and the letter shapes in some of the Scottish inscriptions are noticeably different from those elsewhere. Graphic gemination of consonants, except in word-initial position, is almost the rule. Inscriptions from Orkney and Shetland not only use *forfeda* more commonly, but also make use of innovative shapes of letters (e.g. a ‘rabbit ears’ sign that perhaps stands for D; angled A; backward sloping undulating I; cross-hatched double R; diamond-shaped O). Word division, basically absent elsewhere, is occasionally marked with a colon (:). Ogam on stones in Pictland is not infrequently combined with Pictish symbols (16 examples) and there is a unique example of a (different) text in the Latin alphabet (language uncertain) accompanying an ogam (S-ABD-001).

The Isle of Man, finally, at the crossroads of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, overlaid by the Norse-speaking Vikings, is also a perfect melting pot in the ogam tradition. Its eight extant ogam stones show influence of all the neighbouring languages: British and Irish names in Irish formulae, Irish and Latin bilinguals, and Norse and Irish bilinguals with Latin loanwords (*krus* = *crux*) in the Norse.

8.6. The Transition to Latinate Writing

With ogam being so inherently unsuitable for the recording of texts that are longer than three or four words, it is no surprise that the Latin alphabet was eventually adopted and adapted to write the Irish language, as soon as a thoroughly literate culture took hold in Ireland as part of Christian culture. The transition in epigraphy lagged somewhat behind this.

In contrast to ogam, the inscriptions in the Latin script in Ireland have seldom received the scholarly attention they deserve as a unique linguistic and historical source. The exceptions to this are publications by Okasha and Forsyth (2001) on the approximately 125 Early Christian inscriptions of Munster, and Ó Cróinín (2013) on the approximately 300 inscribed slabs (of c. 700 cross-slabs altogether) from the important monastic site of Clonmacnoise, which has by far the largest collection of early Christian grave-slabs anywhere in Britain and Ireland. The

relative neglect of the remaining Irish Latinate inscriptions is partially due to the absence of a complete corpus. No modern comprehensive collection has been attempted so far, nor do they have a separate category in the *Archaeological Survey of Ireland*,⁸⁰ but come under various monument categories (e.g. cross-slabs, cross-inscribed pillars, and inscribed stones, the majority of which are uninscribed). Their complete, up-to-date geographical distribution has not been mapped. Preliminary work has shown that their number across Ireland may exceed 600, but their distribution is limited and uneven. They tend to be found in clusters and are 'particularly prominent in the Irish midlands and in the colonies of the southern Hebrides; in contrast, they are relatively rare both in the northeast and south of Ireland. Where grave-slabs do occur, very large numbers can be found on individual sites,'⁸¹ such as the 700 from Clonmacnoise (300 with inscriptions) and over 200 from Gallen (15 with inscriptions), both Co. Offaly; over 100 from Iona (Scotland; 9 with inscriptions), 62 (most with traces of inscriptions) from Toureen Peakaun, Co. Tipperary, and 63 (22 with inscriptions) from Inishcaltra in Co. Clare.⁸²

Cataloguing of early inscriptions in the Irish language began in earnest in the early twentieth century. In 1903, Whitley Stokes and John Strachan printed the text of ninety-six inscriptions for the entire island.⁸³ Macalister published his *Studies in Irish Epigraphy* in three volumes around the turn of the century (1897–1907). He followed this with his *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum* in two volumes, covering inscriptions from Ireland, Wales, England, the Isle of Man, and Scotland. Ogam inscriptions occupy the volume published in 1945 and 'half-uncial' inscriptions that of 1949 (with 452 examples from Ireland). This remains invaluable today,⁸⁴ though many new inscriptions have since come to light. These important but now outdated print sources form also the core of the Irish Latinate components of the *CISP* online database, which otherwise has a geographically and epigraphically much wider outlook. The Early Medieval Irish Latinate Inscriptions project (EMILI) started in 2021 to create a complete digital database of all Latin-script inscriptions in Ireland.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ The *Archaeological Survey of Ireland* (ASI) is a unit of the *National Monuments Service* (NMS). The ASI was established to compile an inventory of the known archaeological monuments in the state. The information is stored on a database and in a series of paper files that collectively form the ASI Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). See <https://www.archaeology.ie/archaeological-survey-ireland> [accessed 24 June 2023].

⁸¹ Swift (1999), 111.

⁸² Okasha and Forsyth (2001), 224–329.

⁸³ *Thes. Pal.* ii. 286–9.

⁸⁴ Some of the recorded inscribed stones and fragments have since been lost and these early accounts and drawings are all that remain.

⁸⁵ The start-up of EMILI was funded by a 2021 Royal Irish Academy Nowlan digitization grant. EMILI is based in the Department of Early Irish at Maynooth University and the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies. The project aims to develop a free, online, searchable digital corpus, including digital editions, of ultimately all early Irish Latinate inscriptions, primarily on stone monuments, but also a dozen on portable objects of various materials, mainly in the National Museum of Ireland collection. See <https://emili.celt.dias.ie/> [accessed 24 June 2023].

While ogam was still being used and adapted after the seventh century in Scotland, in Ireland there was a move from ostensibly secular ogam-inscribed pillars and standing stones to more overtly Christian epigraphy in the Latin script. Despite their restricted distribution and their limited textual content, it is clear that Irish Latinate inscriptions are inextricably linked with the establishment of Christianity in Ireland. The vast majority occur on cross-inscribed grave-slabs found at monastic sites. A few examples of inscribed stones that appear to be in a transitional style (e.g. *CIIC* 186, Kilfountain, Co. Kerry, and *CIIC* 1, Inchagoill, Co. Galway, see Fig. 8.2) contain text in the Latin insular script but retain features of earlier ogam-inscribed stones, such as the use of unworked upright pillars, as opposed to recumbent grave-slabs, and vertical text as opposed to horizontal. The corpus of inscriptions from Ireland consists of at least 600 such inscriptions in the Latin or Roman script, mainly in a form of insular script generally described as ‘half-uncial’ and dating from around the seventh to the twelfth centuries, but occasionally also in insular minuscule script, for example at St Berriherth’s Kyle.⁸⁶ There is also a small number of Latin-language inscriptions including a few bilinguals in Latin and Irish, as well as one in Greek. For example, out of seventy-six



Fig. 8.2 Inchagoill inscribed pillar, Co. Galway (<https://emili.celt.dias.ie/GAL-011>). Image by Digital Heritage Age, CC0. Public Domain.

⁸⁶ Okasha and Forsyth (2001), 13.

analysable inscriptions in the Munster corpus, ten are in Latin: five from Tullylease, Co. Cork and five from west Kerry with just *nomina sacra*. One of the latter group also contains the full Latin alphabet (not just the letters used in Irish), occurring alongside the *nomen sacrum*, on a stone from the important early Christian and medieval ecclesiastic site of Kilmalkedar, Co. Kerry.⁸⁷ The evidence examined so far for the rest of Ireland suggests a similar pattern in which the small number of inscriptions in Latin generally occur at specific sites, such as Templebreacan (Inishmore), Co. Galway, where four of the eight inscriptions are in Latin or are bilingual in both Latin and Irish. Examples include Latin S(AN) C(T)I BRE(CA)NI ('of Saint Breccán') (EMILI-0013 = *CIIC* 531) and VII ROMANI ('seven Romans') (EMILI-0016 = *CIIC* 534) and bilingual OR(OIT) AR II CANOIN ('a prayer on behalf of the two canons') (EMILI-0017 = *CIIC* 535).

Another major change is the type of inscription and formula used. While ogam inscriptions are memorials with names and patronymics in the genitive case (see Section 8.5), Irish Latinate inscriptions on grave-slabs are thoroughly Christian, asking for a prayer or a blessing for a named individual in the dative or accusative case, rarely accompanied by a patronymic, e.g.:

OR(ÓIT) DO/AR X ('a prayer for/on behalf of X')

Other formulae are less often encountered, e.g.:

BENDACHT AR/FOR X ('a blessing on X')

Inscriptions of this type also occur on a smaller number of portable objects (see Fig. 8.3), most of which also have an ecclesiastical context, such as reliquaries, bell-shrines, book-shrines, croziers, and hand bells.⁸⁸ The formula is also found in manuscript sources, for example in the eighth-century *Book of Dimma*⁸⁹ at the end of the Gospel of Luke: *oroit do Dianchridiu diaroscribad hic liber et do D[i]mmu+ scribenti amen* ('a prayer for Díanchride for whom this book was written and for Dímmae the writer. Amen'). Very few of the individuals named in inscriptions have been identified, but those who have are generally ecclesiastical personnel with obits in the annals. They are easy to identify as churchmen⁹⁰ since there is a very sharp dichotomy in medieval Ireland between native names used by the laity and names of clerics, derived from international Christian tradition

⁸⁷ Okasha and Forsyth (2001), 165–9.

⁸⁸ Johnson (2020), 155; Michelli (1996).

⁸⁹ <https://www.tcd.ie/library/early-irish-mss/book-of-dimma/>. Digitized and available at <https://doi.org/10.48495/9306t370s>. Annotated text available here: https://chronhib.maynoothuniversity.ie/chronhibWebsite/tables?page=0&limit=0&fprop=Text_Unit_ID&fval=S0016-3&dtable=morphology&ctable=sentences&search=false

⁹⁰ Swift (1998), 110; (1999), 111–18.



Fig. 8.3 Terryhoogan inscribed hand-bell (<https://emili.celt.dias.ie/ARM-001>). Image courtesy of National Museum of Ireland ©NMI.

or containing the elements *máel* ('shorn, tonsured') or later *gilla* ('servant') collocated with the name of a saint. With regard to generally longer inscriptions on mainly eleventh-century reliquaries, Michelli has noted that a distinction appears to be made between commissioners, i.e. high-ranking members of families with connections to the relic, and craftsmen who are generally not given obits in the annals. An interesting observation is that most of the craftsmen appear to have been at best only partially literate.⁹¹

8.7. Conclusion

Britain and Ireland confront us with two closely related Celtic languages whose fates differed fundamentally during the first millennium CE. The question of when and how Celtic languages arrived in these islands has been debated for a long time, but it can be expected that ongoing research on ancient DNA will mean a major game-change in the debate in the coming years.

After the conquest of southern Britain and its annexation to the Roman Empire in the first century CE, British Celtic (and later the individual languages Welsh, Cornish, and Breton) underwent profound structural and lexical influence from Latin. At the same time, British Celtic lost ground first to Latin and, from the fifth century, to the West-Germanic dialects brought by the Anglo-Saxon invaders of Britain. During the provincial period, bilingualism must have been widespread.

⁹¹ Michelli (1996), 5–12.

The dominance of the imperial language was such that no vernacular literacy developed before well into the Middle Ages. Population movements in the wake of the Anglo-Saxon invasion brought varieties of British Celtic to Armorica on the Continent, and movements westwards of populations within the country may have created the context in which grammatical features of the incipient British Romance language were transferred into British Celtic.

While the dominance of Latin was felt on an everyday basis in Britain and thus left indelible linguistic marks, in Ireland the exposure to Latin was of a very different nature. The major wave of influence began several centuries later, around the fourth century, in the wake of the Christianization of the country. As for the Irish language, the influence was chiefly lexical and limited to specific areas of the lexicon. Although the sources only allow us a limited view, it looks as if knowledge of Latin was mostly restricted to clerical circles. Latin never became a spoken language outside of Christian ritual and, unlike Britain, it never occupied specific registers of everyday communication. But there was also a very different kind of influence from Latin in Ireland. First, Latin literacy provided a model for the invention of a native type of writing in the form of the ingeniously idiosyncratic ogam script around the fourth century. This writing system spread to all regions in the western archipelago in which Irish was spoken or where Irish culture exerted influence, namely, apart from Ireland herself, Wales, Cornwall, Scotland, and the Isle of Man. Ogams in each of these regions show their own special types of interaction with the local languages and with Latin. The 'outsider' status of Latin, as it were, meant that for everybody in Ireland who used Latin, it was a foreign, second language. This was conducive to the emergence of literacy in the vernacular language. With a delay of two or three centuries, Latin literacy finally led to the emergence of the manuscript-based Irish literary tradition in the Latin script from the seventh century onwards. The Latin script was germane to the medium of manuscripts, for which ogam was not well suited, but it also largely replaced ogam in epigraphic use in Ireland. Ongoing research projects on ogam inscriptions and on Irish inscriptions in the Latin alphabet will alter the picture of literacy in Ireland and Britain.

The Romance of Early Britain

Latin, British, and English, c. 400–600

David N. Parsons

9.1. Introduction and Background

The two centuries following the breakdown of Roman imperial authority were of central importance to the linguistic history of Britain. During this period the British Celtic which, when the Romans arrived, had been the principal vernacular language of the island, underwent a series of major modifications on its journey towards medieval and modern ‘neo-Brittonic’ languages. By 600 CE these languages, or perhaps rather ‘regional varieties’ at this stage, were also on the way to becoming confined to those western areas—Cornwall, Wales, and Cumbria—where they survived longest.¹ In their place, across the east and south of the island, came English, a language which also at this time went through an accelerated phase of development as commonalities were forged from a group of emigrant Germanic dialects. Meanwhile, the Latin which must have been spoken by some around 400 CE, and was perhaps the vernacular favoured by many at that time, is likely to have all but disappeared as a community language during these two hundred years.

Evidence for the details, and especially the chronology, of these seismic developments is far from what we would wish it to be. Contemporary written records are extremely limited in quantity and very partial in the kind of linguistic information they might possibly convey. The other tools available to the historical linguist, involving reconstructions and extrapolations of various kinds, are sufficient

I should like to thank the editors, Paul Russell, and the various colleagues who contributed to discussions at the meeting at All Souls for helpful suggestions.

¹ Also Brittany: Breton is widely believed to be the language of emigrants from southern and southwestern Britain in the post-Roman period; for a recent review, see Guy (2014). Note that I use ‘British’ or ‘British Celtic’ for the language as spoken until c. 400, and also as a general term for the language and its descendants where no chronological point is being made. The ‘Brittonic’ or ‘neo-Brittonic’ languages are the post-Roman derivatives, best represented by the surviving Welsh and Breton, together with Cornish, which survived to the eighteenth century. Cumbric, in northwestern England and southern Scotland, is barely recorded outside names: it seems to have died out around the twelfth century.

to provide a skeletal framework, but probably raise at least as many questions as they answer. It has become outmoded to dub these centuries ‘the Dark Ages’, but it is not a wholly inappropriate label in this context.

The background to the fifth and sixth centuries—if, for present purposes, we leave aside the Germanic background of Old English—is principally the linguistic inheritance from the later-Roman period.² Here also many large questions remain unresolved, but scholars are increasingly open to the possibility that Latin may have been spoken rather widely across various gradations of British society. How far it may even have supplanted British Celtic in the most Romanized areas is not clear, but the discovery over the last three decades or so of large numbers of curse tablets indicative of local, low-level Latinity (and literacy) tends to suggest rather extensive bilingualism, at the least. This is a significant shift in evidence, and opinion, from earlier generations who envisaged Latin as largely restricted to towns and to rural elites. Although a number of scholars in the later twentieth century did challenge the orthodoxy and hypothesize that Latin-speaking may have been more widespread, it is the evidence of the tablets that has largely changed the balance of the discussion.³

Not that there was ever any doubt about the enormous impact that the language had in the province. An important element in the history of both British Latin and British Celtic is the large body of Latin loanwords found in Welsh and the other Brittonic languages—a common estimate is that around 900 of them are recorded. These loanwords span a wide range of semantic categories reflecting not only areas of Roman culture, learning, and engineering, but also relating to everyday, domestic life, including some very basic vocabulary which presumably ousted Celtic cognates: Welsh *coes* (‘leg’) < Latin *coxa*, Welsh *braich* (‘arm’) < Latin *bracchium*, Welsh *barf* (‘beard’) < Latin *barba*, Welsh *pysg* (‘fish’) < Latin *pisces*, Welsh *rhwyd* (‘net’) < Latin *rete*, Welsh *fflam* (‘flame’) < Latin *flamma*, Welsh *cawl* (‘soup’) < Latin *caulis* (‘cabbage stalk’), and so on.⁴ The borrowed words develop phonologically in line with the Brittonic linguistic developments of the post-Roman period—Latin *lactis* (‘milk’) becoming Welsh *llaeth*, Latin *cultellus*

² Discussed also in Chapter 8 and Mullen (2024b).

³ For the tablets see, e.g., Tomlin (1988, 2002); Adams (2016), 398–428; Mullen (2024b). The older view that Latin had a very restricted distribution is best represented in the influential work of Kenneth Jackson (1948, 1953), and is discussed further below with reference also to some of the dissenting voices. Among the latter, Greene (1966, 1968) stands out as an early advocate of a more widespread Latinity. It should be noted, however, that over a longer span these debates have been cyclical: in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries scholars such as Pogatscher (1888) and Haverfield (1915) also favoured the extensive penetration of Latin into Roman British society.

⁴ As well as Jackson’s treatment (1953, esp. 76–94), the loanwords have been studied by Loth (1892), Lewis (1943), Haarmann (1970, 1973), and others; the critical review by Evans (1983, 963–71) remains valuable. Note that for convenience and brevity Welsh examples alone are generally cited to illustrate British usage in this chapter, but that the assumption of early borrowing is supported in a large number of cases by the attestation of the words in two or three of the recorded branches of Brittonic: thus Welsh *braich*, for instance, is matched by Breton *brec’h* and Middle Cornish *breg’h*.

(‘knife’) giving Welsh *cyllell*, for instance—and it has generally been supposed that the bulk of them were taken into British during the period of Roman occupation. In this chapter, therefore, the loanwords are treated as part of the ‘background’ to the post-Roman centuries, even though the evidence for them is first found in medieval and later texts. We shall return in the final section, however, to some further consideration of the chronology of the Latin influence on surviving later Brittonic.

That influence is not restricted to the lexicon. Several morphosyntactic features in the Brittonic languages seem likely to be innovations reflecting Latin models. One probable case is the synthetic pluperfect tense of verbs, consisting of a preterite stem with imperfect endings, as Middle Welsh *carasswn* (‘I had loved’); this is thought to be a calque on a Latin pattern, perhaps owing a greater debt to the pluperfect subjunctive *amavissem* than to indicative *amaveram*.⁵ Another likely calque is the development, across the Brittonic languages, of compound prepositions, particularly those in which an original **di* (‘from’; Old Welsh *di*, Middle Welsh *y*) is combined with another simple preposition to produce a compound, as Middle Welsh *y ar* (‘from on’) or *y am* (‘from around’).⁶ These combinations sometimes add a separative sense but sometimes appear not to alter the semantics at all. In Late Latin something very similar took place, and a number of those compounds survived amalgamated as new simple prepositions in Romance languages, e.g. French *dès* < *de ex*, *dans* < *de intus* and *devant* < *de ab ante*.⁷

Various other developments in the structure, and also the phonology, of Brittonic show similarities with those of Late Latin or early Romance, though the degree to which such parallels reflect direct influence and how far they may be simply coincidental or ‘areal’ is hard to judge. Both languages, for instance, underwent a range of vowel reductions and lost much of their earlier case systems, but whether this took place in Brittonic *because* it had happened—or was happening at the same time—in British Latin, is a moot point: many other languages have tended in the same direction. Nonetheless, such specific cases of apparent influence as those mentioned above, combined with the hundreds of loanwords and the fact that Britain was under Roman occupation for nearly four hundred years, give a reasonable context within which to consider the various suggestions of contact-induced changes. Again, further discussion of these possibilities is postponed until the final section.

⁵ The proposal of a Latin model was first set out in detail by Mac Cana (1976). For the specific suggestion of the subjunctive as a model, and a detailed review of the issues, see Russell (2011), 150–3.

⁶ The loss of the dental from the Middle Welsh form (cf. Middle Cornish *thy*, Middle Breton *di*) rendered the segment less distinctive, but it was re-marked within Welsh by the addition of still another preposition, *o* (‘from’), to give *ody*, modern *oddi*. Modern Welsh forms are thus *oddi ar* and *oddi am*. See Russell (2011), 149; also Evans (1964), 60; Falileyev (2000), 43.

⁷ The topic is discussed in some detail by Russell (2011), 147–50; see also Sommerfelt (1957) and Greene (1968), 76.

For most of this chapter we shall leave to one side the uncertain traces of linguistic influence and concentrate on surveying the limited material that might offer more tangible or direct evidence for the use of Latin in Britain in the centuries after 400. Above all, this comprises the few texts that do survive from the period, particularly the *De Excidio Britanniae* and the early post-Roman funerary inscriptions of western and northern Britain. In addition there are two further sets of loanwords which, unlike the borrowings into British, certainly belong, at least in part, to the post-Roman period. One group is thought to reflect British missionary activity in Ireland, which introduced into Irish a good number of Latin words, many of them apparently shaped by British pronunciations. Indirectly, therefore, these throw a little light on Latin usage in Britain. The other group comprises loanwords from British and Latin that were adopted by the earliest Anglo-Saxons. Some of this evidence comes specifically in the form of toponyms, and there are, finally, various aspects of onomastic evidence that can be interrogated for clues about linguistic usage in the centuries under review.

The material is treated in two sections, largely reflecting the conventional distinction between the ‘highland zone’ of the west and north, and the ‘lowland zone’ of the south and east. Although these terms are imprecise, and the boundaries between them woolly in detail, they continue to offer a convenient shorthand for discussions of this kind: the highland zone represents the less thoroughly Romanized margins of the island in which Celtic languages survived into the medieval period; the lowland zone denotes the more intensely Romanized region, which was also to bear the initial brunt of the *adventus Saxonum*.⁸

9.2. British Writers and the Highland Zone

9.2.1 Latin in the Church

Although the paucity of sources makes it so difficult to be certain about the events and circumstances of ‘sub-Roman’ Britain, it has always been clear that a degree of Latinity was still to be found. At the top end of the scale, this is evident in the most celebrated work to survive from the island at this period, Gildas’ *De Excidio Britanniae*, ‘On the Ruin of Britain’. Gildas wrote in the sixth century, perhaps its first half,⁹ and the sophistication of his Latin style—for all that it is difficult and

⁸ For a thought-provoking review of the nature and significance of the highland/lowland divide in post-Roman Britain, see Woolf (2003), 355–61; and cf. now Woolf (2020). The possibility that Gildas may have been writing in the lowland area (see n. 13 below) complicates the division for my purposes, but his evidence clearly belongs thematically on the British side of the equation and is discussed in the ‘highland’ section.

⁹ For a review of the numerous discussions of the text’s date—many of which circle around the traditional suggestion of ‘c. 540’—see George (2009), 2–4.

idiosyncratic—illustrates a remarkable level of cultural attainment at a time usually portrayed (not least by Gildas himself) as one of disaster and chaotic collapse. Laced throughout with extensive quotation from the Bible, the *De Excidio* draws also on patristic authors, especially Jerome, hagiography, and Christian history, especially Eusebius as translated by Rufinus.¹⁰ In addition, the work is marked by the phraseology and cadences of classical Latin verse, with a particularly noticeable debt to Virgil.¹¹ Overall it has been argued, and widely accepted, that the language and form of the text place it firmly in a learned, rhetorical tradition well evidenced on the Continent in the fifth century in the work of authors such as Faustus of Riez and Sidonius Apollinaris.¹² That such a work could be produced and find an audience in sixth-century Britain clearly indicates that the Latin culture of the late Empire did not simply melt away with the waning of Roman authority at the beginning of the fifth century.¹³

Gildas, of course, was a cleric,¹⁴ and it may be that the Church was quite exceptional in providing a context for such learning. Indeed, a significant strand in twentieth-century scholarship regarded the Christianity, and attendant Latinity, of post-Roman western Britain as an import from Gaul in the fifth and sixth centuries.¹⁵ Modern work, however, is firmly of the view that the Christianity of this period is more likely to represent continuity from that of the Roman province,¹⁶ and it might in consequence be suspected that high standards of Latin education may also reflect survival rather than reintroduction.

At a less exalted level than the rhetoric of Gildas, it is thought that Latin is likely to have remained an everyday spoken language in the post-Roman

¹⁰ For the Bible, see O'Loughlin (2012), esp. 29–51; Kerlouégan (1987), 100–12. The other prose sources are examined by Wright (1984), 108–11, and Kerlouégan (1987), 73–100.

¹¹ For the debt to Virgil, to classical Latin poetic phraseology more generally, and for Gildas' stylistic choices which render his prose redolent of poetry, see, e.g., Winterbottom (1978), 7–10; Wright (1984), 112–28; Lapidge (1984), 40; less enthusiastically, Kerlouégan (1987), 71–3 and 333–4.

¹² Kerlouégan (1968); Winterbottom (1974–5); George (2009), 1. Lapidge (1984, 47–8) offers a fuller list of the rhetorical writers with whom Gildas can be compared. It should be noted that Faustus of Riez was a Briton, though he rose to prominence on the Continent—it is not known where he received his own education, but his career and subsequent reputation are important for showing continuing links between Britain and Romanized Gaul during the fifth century (Charles-Edwards 2013, 199–202).

¹³ The major study emphasizing the significance of Gildas' education is Lapidge (1984); see further below. The question of where in Britain Gildas was writing is relevant here. He is 'western' or possibly 'northern' in his outlook, in that he was evidently living outside the areas of early Anglo-Saxon settlement in the east, and the locatable leaders whom he addresses live in the west. A precise location is elusive, however. Dumville (1984, 78–80) reviews suggestions without finding a conclusive answer; Sharpe (2002, 107–8) proposes somewhere in western England, in a belt between Shropshire and Dorset, as a likely—and sufficiently Romanized—context.

¹⁴ Winterbottom (1978), 118, 51 (§65, 1); George (2009), 79; Charles-Edwards (2013), 205.

¹⁵ The key work is Nash-Williams (1950), taken up by, among others, Bowen (1956, 1969).

¹⁶ Sharpe (2002), building in part on the archaeologically informed study by Thomas (1981). The debate blends into concepts of 'Celtic Christianity' as a phenomenon distinct from the late antique Christianity of Britain and mainland western Europe: Sharpe's study is a firm corrective to this idea too; see also, e.g., Hughes (1981); Davies (1992); Bradley (1999), 225–9.

Church. Evidence for this comes from Ireland. Firstly, there are the autobiographical writings of the fifth-century St Patrick, a Briton who was taken as a slave to Ireland in his teens: he apologizes in his *Confessio* for his imperfect command of a Latin which he has learned, and which—as modern analysis shows—clearly reflects the ‘vulgar’ developments of his day.¹⁷ Secondly, there are the indirect indications of the Latin loanwords in Irish.¹⁸ These are generally regarded as stemming from British missionary activity in Ireland from the fifth century onwards and the phonology of a large group of them is marked by developments that took place in Brittonic. So, for instance, Old Irish *póc* (‘kiss’), from Latin *pax*, *pāc-em* (*osculum pacis* ‘kiss of peace’), reflects the rounding of [a:] > [ɔ:] which is a regular Brittonic sound-change of perhaps the later fifth century.¹⁹ It additionally reflects, in its final consonant, the voicing or lenition of [k] > [g], which is also characteristic of Brittonic, though this change in the loanword is less evident because such lenition was not at first indicated in writing, either in early Brittonic or in Irish.²⁰ While some of these Latin words may have been adopted into British Celtic before they were transferred to Ireland,²¹ it is generally thought that many or most of them are likely to have been passed on by Brittonic-influenced Latin-speakers, and the statistics seem to support this, since Irish would appear to have borrowed many more Brittonic-coloured words of Latin origin than native British Celtic ones.²² This suggests that the immediate source of the loanwords in Ireland is principally Latin pronounced ‘after the British manner’,²³ in turn suggesting a

¹⁷ Hood (1978), 18–19, and 24, 42 (§9). Note, however, that recent detailed study by Adams (2016, 475–84) contests the view that Late Latin features in Patrick’s writings necessarily reflect his own spoken variety or living British usage: he argues that most of the non-classical elements could derive from the Bible and other Christian texts. On Patrick’s Latin, see also Lapidge (1984), 34; Greene (1968), 77–8. Suggestions that Patrick’s language may have been shaped during time in Gaul rather than in the Britain of his birth are contested by Dumville (1993), 25–8. See also n. 65 below.

¹⁸ Jackson (1953), 122–48; McManus (1983).

¹⁹ On the sound-change and its date, see Jackson (1953), 287–92; Sims-Williams (2003), 281–2. Cf. McCone (1996), 149–52, arguing for a significantly earlier date. Sims-Williams (1990), 225, elaborates on this example.

²⁰ Perhaps because the alphabet and orthographical practice were borrowed along with the words (Jackson 1953, 73), though this is open to question (Greene 1968, 81–2; Harvey 1989; cf. Sims-Williams 1991, 25–6).

²¹ Terms thought to be borrowed through the medium of British include OIr *lúirech* (‘breastplate’) and OIr *féil* (‘festival, feast-day’), which derive from ancestral Brittonic forms of Welsh *llurig* and *gwyl* respectively, and not directly from Latin *lorica* and *vigilia* (McManus 1983, 50–1, n. 80; 63, n. 131; Jackson 1953, 315 and 462–3). Jackson does acknowledge, however (1953, 124, n. 3; 315), that the extent of British influence on the pronunciation of Latin may have varied, and that ‘a more Briticizing Latin’ might possibly underlie some forms. Cf. Parsons (2011), 128–30. McManus (1983, 49, n. 67) notes a number of loanwords in Irish which derive from Latin forms either more or less ‘vulgar’ than those which furnished the equivalent British loans, potentially suggesting a range of pronunciation in British Latin, if that is correctly regarded as the source.

²² ‘Slightly over forty’ according to Chapter 8, p. 211, citing Bauer’s Vienna thesis of 2015.

²³ The oft-quoted phrase is MacNeill’s (1931, 40–1), endorsed as ‘the true situation’ by Jackson (1953, 125). Greene (1968, 81–4) added complexity by arguing that once British-Latin pronunciation was established in Irish Latin, loanwords that may have come from other directions might appear, misleadingly, to have come from Britain. He preferred to think in terms of a shared ecclesiastical culture with movement in both directions.

tradition of Latin-speaking in the British Church in, probably, the sixth century, which it is tempting to see as a linear survival of the practices of the earliest Christian institutions in the late-Roman period.

9.2.2 Latin beyond the Church

It is then a question as to whether the British Latin of Gildas, the writings of Patrick, and the loanwords in Irish should be seen as various reflections of a restricted ‘ecclesiastical’ Latin—a survival in the very particular context of the Church, an institution based upon written scripture which reached Britain through the medium of the Latin language—or whether the Latinity of the Church was echoed elsewhere in society. There is reason to favour the second interpretation. Some have proposed that the *De Excidio* itself, our principal textual source for Britain in the period, carries significant implications for secular as well as ecclesiastical Latinity. Gildas’ work takes the form of an open letter addressed to the rulers and judges of his day as well as to churchmen. One of those rulers, Maglocunus of Gwynedd (northwest Wales), is described as having formerly been the pupil of a learned teacher (a *magister elegans*), tending to indicate Latinate instruction in a secular context;²⁴ and it might be supposed that Maglocunus and his peers, and their associates across western Britain, would be able to follow the damning criticisms of their behaviour levelled at them by Gildas in his highly wrought prose.²⁵ And that prose style has been held to imply the kind of late-Roman schooling in rhetoric which aimed at preparing students for life as civil servants, administrators, and lawyers. Such an education contrasted markedly, to judge by slightly earlier Continental evidence, with that offered in a monastic setting, where elements such as the ready familiarity with Virgil would have been quite out of place.²⁶ This has led to the conclusion that Gildas’ audience

²⁴ Winterbottom (1978), 104, 35 (§36, 1); Lapidge (1984), 50; Charles-Edwards (2013), 643. It is a complicating factor that Maglocunus, later tradition’s Maelgwn, seems also to have been a monk for a period (Winterbottom 1978, 102, 33 (§34, 1); Charles-Edwards 2013, 215). Lapidge (1984, 50) argues that his training under a *magister elegans* would not have come in a monastery.

²⁵ At one point in the *De Excidio*, Latin is apparently referred to as *nostra lingua* (‘our language’) (Winterbottom 1978, 97, 26 (§23, 3)), and this is often cited as particularly telling evidence for the currency of the language in the upper echelons of sixth-century British society (e.g. Charles-Edwards 2013, 75). There are some uncertainties here, however. The passage is a famous one relating the arrival of the first three ships of the Anglo-Saxon invasions: *tribus cyulis* (‘three “keels”, ablative), are *navis longibus* ‘in our language’. Although *navis longa* is a standard Latin expression for ‘warship’, its equivalent is Welsh *llong* ‘ship’. This might either be a partial borrowing of the Latin or a native Celtic word of equivalent form (*GPC* s.v.; Loth 1926, 133–5; Matasović 2009, 244), but in either case—if **long* were already the word in British Celtic—then Gildas’ wording could be thought to be playing on the equivalence, in which case his meaning here would be ambiguous. Note also that it has been argued that this passage is a later interpolation into Gildas’ text (Woolf 2002; accepted by George 2009, 40–1).

²⁶ Lapidge (1984), 29; cf. O’Loughlin (2012), 122. It might be noted that the arguments relating to Gildas’ own education depend on the untestable assumption that he received his training in Britain and not on the Continent, a rider added by Lapidge himself at p. 48, n. 104. Charles-Edwards (2013,

‘was one for which Latin was a living language’, and even that the nature of the text suggests ‘that much more of the fabric of Roman civilization was still visible in sixth-century Britain than has hitherto been assumed’.²⁷

The other main indication that Latin was used beyond the Church comes from the major body of primary evidence which survives from the period, the inscribed stones of western Britain. So-called ‘Group I’ stones extend from Brittany in the south through the southwestern peninsular of England, Wales, and the Isle of Man, and then there is a scatter across southern Scotland reaching to the upper Tweed basin in the northeast.²⁸ Overall, there are nearly 250 stones in the category, spanning perhaps two centuries from the fifth to early seventh centuries. The tradition seems to be principally Christian in inspiration, although many of the individual inscriptions do not make an expression of faith explicit—importantly for the present discussion, although there are some that are clearly ecclesiastical in context, many others appear to be secular. It was for a long time believed that the mainly western distribution reflected a tradition brought in, via the Atlantic and Irish Sea, by missionaries from Gaul after the collapse of the western Empire,²⁹ but there are now strong arguments for continuity, as with the Christian faith itself. It appears that the practice of raising such memorials evolved, in part at least, directly from the late-Roman monumental tradition within Britain,³⁰ although there may also have been influences from contact with western Gaul,³¹ just as there was very clearly an important Irish dimension in many regions, and the tradition overlaps significantly with that of the Irish ogam stones.³²

214–15) enters some caveats about applying the attested evidence of schooling on the Continent in the fourth and fifth centuries directly to the fifth and sixth centuries in Britain (and later in Ireland), where, he suggests, such education ‘was also put to good use by the Church’ (p. 215). It should be noted that Kerlouégan (1987) takes a considerably less positive view of Gildas’ Latin and in particular the significance of his familiarity with secular poetry (see, for example, his conclusions 580–93, and his characterization of ‘un latin artificiel, correct et recherché’ (593)).

²⁷ Lapidge (1984), 38 and 50. Despite his reservations (see n. 26), Charles-Edwards (2013), 215, accepts that ‘[t]he probable conclusion is that there was some form of Roman administration surviving in Britain approximately about 500’.

²⁸ See *CIIIC*, i. There are now modern editions of the stones in Wales (*CISW*, i–iii), Cornwall (Okasha 1993), and Brittany (Davies et al. 2000); a useful survey of the Scottish material is Forsyth (2005). See also Chapter 8.

²⁹ Nash-Williams (1950). ³⁰ Handley (2001); Tedeschi (2001).

³¹ See the discussion in Parsons (2013), 42–5. Handley (2001) may have gone too far in rejecting all influence from western Gaul in favour of continuity within Britain, given (a) the geographical distribution of the Group I stones in western areas largely devoid of Roman-period epigraphy, (b) the range of epigraphical similarities with Gaul, and (c) clear archaeological evidence for contacts between the regions. On a point of detail central to Nash-Williams’s argumentation, Edwards, for instance, concludes recently: ‘The balance of probabilities remains that the *hic iacet* formula was introduced into western Britain from Gaul, its nearest neighbour’ (*CISW*, iii. 123). The difference is that she does not follow Nash-Williams in suggesting that all elements of the tradition come by that route.

³² See Chapter 8 for that tradition and the evidence for Irish language in inscriptions from western Britain.

The base language of the vast majority of these inscriptions is Latin: a few are wholly Irish, which is evidently a reflection of the elite status of that language in parts of Wales, Devon and Cornwall, and the Isle of Man; none, at this date, is in Brittonic Celtic. The texts are for the most part simple, repetitive, and formulaic. With a small number of rather more elaborate exceptions,³³ there is little here that can begin to be compared with the high style of Gildas: ‘here lies X son of Y’ is the typical central content, sometimes expanded with brief statements about further relationships or the status of the deceased. They are, moreover, frequently full of errors, by the standards of classical Latin, and have sometimes been held to indicate no more than the terminal decline of a language kept alive only as a traditional, half-understood medium felt suitable for funerary inscriptions. Yet a growing number of recent scholars now suggest, on the contrary, that they demonstrate a continuing and vibrant role for spoken Latin in fifth- and sixth-century Britain. This would still be in a relatively high-status context—the sponsorship of memorials carved in stone, even fairly simple ones, was probably never a concern of the average person—but, as noted, it takes us out of specifically ecclesiastical settings, and it suggests that spoken Latin may have been heard across western and northern areas of Britain, the very areas that were presumably *least* Romanized under the Empire.

Much of the evidence that leads to these conclusions appears deceptively simple at first glance. In an inscription such as DOMNICI IACIT FILIVS BRAVECCI (‘Dom(i)nicus lies (here), the son of Braveccus’)³⁴ it could be argued that the carver has made a couple of careless or ignorant errors in producing genitive *Dom’nici* for a correct nominative *Dominicus*,³⁵ and in misspelling the verb *iacet* ‘lies’) as *iacit*, which is more properly ‘throws’).³⁶ Alternatively, because such ‘errors’ abound across the corpus, it can be suggested that these spellings imply a range of reductions in medial and final syllables that closely parallel developments in the Late Latin or early Romance of much of western Europe. Such reductions accompanied the decay of the case system in Romance languages, and led to a tension in written texts between the way a word ought to be spelt according to traditional norms, and the way it now sounded in daily speech. The argument

³³ E.g. the eighteen inscribed lines—unfortunately not all fully legible—on a sixth-century stone from Llantrisant, Anglesey (*CISW*, iii. 210–16, no. AN46). Thomas (1998, 84–6) and Howlett (2005, 42–5) discuss this stone in the context of a number of others, some of them apparently short and simple, in which they find levels of learning and sophistication that have not seemed so apparent to others.

³⁴ *CISW*, ii. 171–3, no. CD22.

³⁵ Syncope of the first *i* in Latin *Dominicus* is implied by this reading, but it is alternatively possible that DOMNICI instead represents an unrelated Celtic name: *CISW*, ii. 172; Sims-Williams (2003), 57, n. 221.

³⁶ The omission of *hic* might also speak in favour of carelessness, perhaps as a result of eyeskip in a sequence -ICI (H)IC IAC-. On the other hand, there are occasional parallels elsewhere and the usage may possibly be thought of as an abbreviation of the common formula. On *iacit*, see further n. 40 below.

pursued in detail in a number of recent studies is that the inscriptions of western Britain reveal carvers with none of the advanced classical education that shaped Gildas' writing, and only a rather hazy sense of the spelling conventions of the past, but a spoken competence in a form of Latin which had neutralized the contrasts between many declensional and verbal endings and was well on its way to becoming a British dialect of Romance.³⁷

This case is not an entirely straightforward one. It is complicated, for instance, by the fact that the name of the commemorated person often appears, as above, in what appears to be genitival form—but before this can simply be counted as evidence of confusion, it has to be recognized that contemporary Irish usage placed a genitive here regularly and correctly: 'X's [stone/memorial]' is apparently to be understood.³⁸ Moreover, a good proportion of the stones in Wales, Cornwall, and Man show Irish influence, and not a few of them bear parallel Irish-language texts in the ogam script, with the commemorated 'subject' expressed by the genitive in this way. It must, therefore, be possible that this has had an effect on the syntax of the British Latin memorials, as various scholars have argued.³⁹ Nonetheless, while we might allow for the possibility that such influence played a role, perhaps early in the tradition, in the frequent selection of a Latin genitive for the name of the deceased, it does not provide a complete solution for the many inscriptions which then make that name the subject of a finite verb, often in some form of the *hic iacet* formula; nor for those which make inaccurate use of other cases, as in the repeated nominatives of CATACVS HIC IACIT FILIVS TEGERNACVS;⁴⁰ nor is

³⁷ Detailed arguments along these lines are presented by Charles-Edwards (2013, 95–112) and Schrijver (2014, 34–48); see also Charles-Edwards (1995), 715–17; Woolf (2003), 370–3; Harvey (2018), 26–8. The more recent studies are in part responses to the analysis by Adams (2007, 616–20), who argued that the inscriptions indicated a lack of familiarity with Latin, and that although the language was evidently felt to be appropriate for epitaphs, it was copied inaccurately and largely incomprehensibly from models. He concluded (p. 619) that '[b]y the time when these inscriptions were written Latin was all but a dead language'. Jackson's view is not easy to summarize but appears to lie to some extent between the two poles. He accepted that the inscriptions were part of the evidence which showed 'that during the fifth and sixth centuries the upper classes and the rulers of the Highland Zone had some knowledge of Latin' (1953, 119), and recognized that '[t]he peculiarities in question are all part of the development of living Vulgar Latin' (1953, 191). However, following the consensus of his day, he believed that 'the British monuments derive principally from Gaul' (1953, 190), and that their orthography reflects this origin rather than local language. He characterized the epigraphers who produced so many non-classical forms as 'lazy or ignorant' (1953, 188); he also put some of the forms down to Irish influence (see my following paragraph).

³⁸ See Chapter 8; McManus (1991), 51–2.

³⁹ Especially Jackson (1953), 622–4. See the conspectus of the views of Jackson, Ifor Williams, J. N. Adams, V. E. Nash-Williams, and R. A. S. Macalister on this genitival construction in Charles-Edwards (2013), 97–100 and 107–8, and Harvey (2018), 26–7. George Woudhuysen reminds me that the genitive is common on inscribed Roman *instrumenta*, implying 'product of', 'stamp of', 'property of', etc., and so a Latin background to the usage on the stones is not out of the question.

⁴⁰ *CISW*, i. 194–6, no. B21. On *iacit*, see in particular Schrijver (2014), 38–9; and Harvey (2018), 27–8; cf. Handley (2003), 188, n. 88. It is remarkable that IACIT is almost always the spelling in the British inscriptions, so that it looks less like a sporadic feature than most of those mentioned further below, and more as if it had become part of a local formulaic convention (cf. Howlett (2005, 31): 'survives in so many scores of inscriptions that one must reckon it acceptable literary usage'). Harvey

it a comfortable suggestion for inscriptions in Brittany and Scotland, which also attest genitival ‘subjects’, though ogam memorials are rare or unknown in those areas.⁴¹ It has been suggested that the preference for the genitive as the ‘unmarked’ form of the personal names may have arisen from its frequent use in patronymics.⁴² However that may be, the supporting evidence for reduction, loss, and hypercorrection in other elements of the inscriptions—NOBILI for *nobilis*, VASSO for *vassus*, MVLITVDNEM for *multitudine*, for instance⁴³—and the fact that these are exactly the kinds of development characteristic of Late Latin in much of western Europe, adds weight to the suggestion that they were erected by people for whom Latin was a contemporary spoken language.

The use of the Latin language in these fifth- to early-seventh-century inscriptions is one symptom of a continuing *Romanitas*, an attachment to the Roman past. The epigraphic habit itself is an aspect of this; Christianity itself is arguably another. A few inscriptions attribute decidedly Roman-sounding titles and social ranks to individuals: the outstanding example is the Ffestiniog, Caernarfonshire, stone which involves a *cives* who is cousin of a *magistratus*.⁴⁴ Whatever precisely these terms implied in the post-Roman society of Gwynedd, there is evidently an indication that some sense of a continuing Roman order persisted—an impression given also by Gildas’ *De Excidio* and implicit, in an ecclesiastical context, a century or so earlier in Patrick’s narrative of his own origins as the son of a *diaconus* and grandson of a *presbyter*.⁴⁵ One other measure of this continuing cultural attachment is found in the personal names on the monuments. Many of these are etymologically Latin, and although the choice of a personal name need not correlate with an individual’s own language, the patterns in these Group I inscriptions are interesting and appear significant. Patrick Sims-Williams has set out the material for the largest group of texts, those from Wales; he calculates that over

(2018, 27) notes, interestingly, that the few British exceptions which read IACET are also consistently correct in other elements of their grammar, as if the verbal form provides a litmus test of good traditional schooling, as opposed to the more ‘freewheeling’ (2018, 28) usage characteristic of the British corpus more widely.

⁴¹ For this argument, see Charles-Edwards (2013), 110. It should be noted that Forsyth (2005, 122) discusses an ogam discovery from Selkirk and suggests, in connection with southern Scotland’s “genitival” stones, that Irish influence ‘may have been felt in Scotland more directly than previously thought’ (pp. 130–1).

⁴² Charles-Edwards (2013), 111. Schrijver (2014, 42–8) argues instead that the usage may arise from a merger of nominative and vocative functions in some paradigms. This case is not straightforward, however, and involves undemonstrable analogical extensions across the system.

⁴³ These forms come respectively from *CISW*, iii. 349–51, no. F1, *CISW*, iii. 210–16, no. AN46 (the Llantrisant inscription, see above n. 33), and *CISW*, iii. 244–6, no. CN3. See further the discussions in *CISW*, and note that in the last case the corpus (rather questionably) reads MVLITVDINEM, without syncope, by assuming a ligature of I and N in which the I, as the left-hand stave of the N, is invisible; the hypercorrect final -M on the dative is certain, however. For further examples that may similarly point to Late Latin developments and confusions, see Charles-Edwards (2013), 97; Schrijver (2014), 40–1.

⁴⁴ *CISW*, iii. 385–9, no. MR8, with discussion. See also Charles-Edwards (2013), 177–8, and Harvey (2018), 28–30 (though the latter’s reinterpretation does not convince).

⁴⁵ Hood (1978), 23, 41 (§1).

fifty different Latin names, such as *Iustus*, *Martius*, *Paterninus*, *Potentina*, and *Saturninus*, are found in the fifth- and sixth-century inscriptions, nearly a quarter of the name-stock, the remainder being Celtic, either British or Irish. In the later pre-Norman inscriptions from Wales, datable between the seventh and the twelfth centuries, the proportion of Latin names falls to just 6%.⁴⁶ Further, although precise dating within the early group is perilous, Sims-Williams notes that the occasional combinations of Latin with Latin patronymic, as SEVERINI FILI SEVERI or IOVENALI FILI ETERNI HIC IACIT, are found in inscriptions that appear to belong relatively early in the sequence, in the fifth or the early part of the sixth century.⁴⁷ These observations tend neatly to suggest a narrative in which a fairly strong culture of *Romanitas* survived through the fifth and into the sixth century, but may have been on the wane by 600.⁴⁸ The history of spoken Latin in post-Roman western Britain might plausibly be set in such a context.

9.2.3 The Evidence of Place-Names

Further evidence for linguistic choices in our period in highland Britain becomes increasingly indirect. There are doubtless place-names which were coined in these centuries, but it is not easy to identify which they are in the later record. Latin-language names in the west and north of Britain are in any case rare. In Roman-period sources from Wales there are only two possible Latin coinages out of forty-four names,⁴⁹ but the west is not particularly out of line in this respect, since Latin names are scarce across Britain: the Romans were apparently happy to adopt Celtic nomenclature for the majority of places of interest to them, even the ones they seem to have built themselves.⁵⁰ One very interesting Latin name that

⁴⁶ Sims-Williams (2002), 15–19. Though the statistics have not been analysed in the same way, Latin names are also familiar on the Group I stones from other areas: e.g. *Latinus*, *Viventius*, and *Florentius* on stones from Whithorn and Kirkmadrine in southwest Scotland (Forsyth 2009, 25–6). For Cornwall, Okasha (1993, 43) calculates 20% Latin personal names, though this is across a corpus of broader date than the Group I category.

⁴⁷ Sims-Williams (2002), 16. These examples are, respectively, *CISW*, ii. 270–1, no. CM36, and *CISW*, iii. 293–5, no. CN31.

⁴⁸ Note similarly that in the fifth century St Patrick, Latin *Patricius*, had a Latin-named father and grandfather, but that of Gildas' five tyrants, in the (first half of the?) sixth century, three had Celtic names against two Latin (Sims-Williams 2002, 15).

⁴⁹ This is based on the collection in Rivet and Smith (1979). Both of the examples involve significant uncertainty. In the case of *Traiectus* ('crossing'), the location is not certainly in (or on the boundary of) modern Wales, but it may refer to a crossing of the Severn in the area of the modern motorway bridges (Rivet and Smith 1979, 177–8 and 474). In the case of *Albinumno* in the Ravenna Cosmography, Rivet and Smith's interpretation depends on an emendation to *Albiniano*, understood as an ablative/locative meaning '(at the home of) Albinianus'; this place seems to have been in Monmouthshire or Glamorgan (1979, 247).

⁵⁰ See Rivet (1980); also Parsons (2011), 122–3, on the small number of Latin place-names in Roman Britain as a whole, and on their unclear significance for the wider linguistic situation.

may possibly belong to the early post-Roman period, and derive from a social context comparable with that represented by the inscribed stones, is Powys, the name of a medieval province or kingdom. It is Latin *pagenses* ('people of the *pagus*, country-dwellers'), perhaps involving some implied contrast with those who looked to the *civitas* of the Romans.⁵¹ However, the date of this coinage, as well as its precise application and implications, remains uncertain,⁵² and the example is an isolated one: comparable names of polities and territories across post-Roman western Britain are in British or Irish Celtic,⁵³ not Latin.

To find a more marked Latin influence on place nomenclature we need to turn, once again, to the Church. Ecclesiastical terms feature heavily among the body of loanwords borrowed into British, and some of them appear as generic elements in place-names that may denote early sites. A good example is British **merthir*, a borrowing of the (ultimately Greek) complex of words represented by Latin *martyr* ('martyr'), *martyrium* ('martyr's grave'). In Brittonic place-names it may have meant '(Christian) graveyard'.⁵⁴ The pattern of the element's attestation, in Wales in particular, indicates that it was productive at a relatively early date, and it is tempting to associate its adoption with the popularity of martyr-cults which radiated around Europe in the fifth and sixth centuries.⁵⁵ Other elements that have been considered to point to a similarly early period include Welsh *diserth* < Latin *desertum* ('desert', in an extended sense 'deserted place, retreat') (*Diserth* and *Dyserth*),⁵⁶ and a putative **baseleg*, representing Latin (ultimately Greek) *basilica* ('church') (*Basaleg*).⁵⁷ Neither of these derivations seems to me as straightforward as is usually presented, however.⁵⁸ Various other terms, including the relatively common *eghwys* (< Latin *ecclesia*), and the rare **aradur* ('oratory' < Latin *oratorium*) and *mystwyr* (< Latin *monasterium*), might be added to the inventory,

⁵¹ See Charles-Edwards (2013), 14–16, for this suggestion. See also Jackson (1953), 443–4; Sims-Williams (2014), 33–4.

⁵² The question is interestingly complicated by an apparent second instance in southeastern Wales at Dinas Powys—the origins and application of the term in this case are even more obscure (Pierce 1968, 219–20; Owen and Morgan 2007, 124–5).

⁵³ Irish in the case of the peninsular of the Llŷn in northwest Wales (cf. Leinster), and probably also the wider territory of Gwynedd (cf. Féni); see Owen and Morgan (2007), 184 and 296; Charles-Edwards (2013), 175–9.

⁵⁴ Parsons (2013) offers an extended discussion of this element and a justification for the proposed sense.

⁵⁵ Sharpe (2002) sets out the European background and discusses its relevance to Britain and Ireland; also Parsons (2013), 10–11.

⁵⁶ Williams (1945), 74; Owen and Morgan (2007), 125 and 135.

⁵⁷ Williams (1945), 7; Owen and Morgan (2007), 24; Morgan (2005), 41–2.

⁵⁸ Although *desertum* is applied to churches in Ireland (eDIL s.v. *dísert*) and in some Welsh texts, there is room for doubt about the possible place-name instances, since an alternative interpretation *di-serth* ('very steep') seems to suit most of the sites (cf. Padel (1985, 85–6) for the equivalent suggestion for Dizzard in Cornwall); note also that in discussing usage of *desertum* in an eleventh-century Cambro-Latin text, Charles-Edwards (2013, 606–7), suggests that application to a church in Ireland 'may be an invention of the ninth century', which, if applicable also to Wales, would conflict with any 'Age of the Saints' implication for Welsh place-name usage. In the case of *Baseleg* doubts begin with the form: why would early *basil-* not have triggered *i*-affection to *besil-* (cf. James 2014, 26)? I hope to pursue both of these puzzles elsewhere.

though they have not specifically been associated with the early period, and in the case of *eglwys*, which remains the normal word for ‘church’ in Welsh, any narrow chronological association for the word’s use in place-names would be implausible.⁵⁹ Besides, all of this material is open to the same reservation: although it reflects the pervasive and well-documented influence of Latin on the language of the Church, it is not clear evidence for spoken Latin. While it is quite possible that *merthyr*-sites were originally named and known as *Martyres* or *Martyrium* before following the path of British phonological development, it is also possible that the names were coined after the terminology was assimilated into British.

Beyond the Church there are some uncertain suggestions of the application of Latin terms to ‘Roman features’ in the landscape. Welsh *caer* (‘fort’) is widely used of Roman towns, and may, like Old English *ceaster*, derive from Latin *castra*, though there is no settled agreement on this etymology.⁶⁰ Latin *maceria* (‘wall’) left derivatives in Welsh, Cornish, and Breton, and it is striking that two Roman villas have been discovered at sites named with the term: at Magor Farm in Illogan, Cornwall, and at Abermagwr, Ceredigion, Wales.⁶¹ These recall the tens of place-names in France, of the type Mézière(s) and Mazière(s), which are considered to denote remains of the Roman period,⁶² and suggest the possibility that the Latin-derived term was applied to such buildings when they were recognizably Roman and standing. Again, however, such examples—whilst apparently suggesting that Latin could have impacts at a local level in rather remote western regions of Britain—fall well short of indicating a role for it as a vernacular language in these areas.⁶³ Indeed, it must be conceded that there is no obvious confirmatory support in the place-name record for the stratum of spoken Latin that could be suggested by the fifth- and sixth-century inscriptions.⁶⁴ This is readily explained on the assumption that in western Britain Latin, even though it may

⁵⁹ On these terms, see Pierce (1984), 485–6, with references; Roberts (1992), 41–3. The Latin element in the ecclesiastical place-names of western and northern Britain is by no means restricted to Wales, of course. Other regions provide further instances of related terms and offer new ones, as for instance Cornish *alter* (‘altar’) in Altarnun (Padel 1985, 4; 2002, 315–16). For southern Scotland, see the survey of Latin terminology in James (2014), shading into—and sometimes difficult to separate from—the Latin element in Irish and Scottish Gaelic names. For these, and particularly Scottish Gaelic *cill* (‘church’ < Latin *cella*), see the survey in Taylor (1998).

⁶⁰ For a link with Latin *castrum*, -a, see Schrijver (1995), 447; (2022), 176. Other scholars have tentatively discussed an origin in Latin *quadra* (‘square’): Padel (1985), 50; James (2014), 10. Matasović (2009, 184) favours a non-Latin option, relating the term to a Celtic **kagyo-* (‘pen, enclosure’).

⁶¹ See Davies and Driver (2018), 146–7. The word has also been identified in names elsewhere in Britain, in Makerfield, Lancashire (Ekwall 1922, 93–4) and Moggerhanger, Bedfordshire (Coates 2005). See also Parsons (2011), 123–4.

⁶² Dauzat and Rostaing (1963), 455–6. Haubrichs (Chapter 7 of this volume) also notes this loan-word in Continental usage.

⁶³ In southwestern Wales, at least, it should be noted that Welsh *magwyr* became generalized in the sense ‘ruin’, and it is found in many minor place-names in Pembrokeshire and Cardiganshire: it must be possible, therefore, that its apparent application to a Roman site at Abermagwr is coincidental: Davies and Driver (2018), 147.

⁶⁴ Though the instability of early place-names in Wales, as identified by Hall (2012, 112–24), could have played a part in obscuring such a stratum if there were strong enough grounds to suspect that it ever existed.

have developed ‘naturally’ and in line with the Romance vernaculars of the Continent, was restricted to a small social elite and/or that it was a language of bilinguals, most or all of whom spoke British Celtic in ordinary daily life.⁶⁵

9.2.4 The Survival of British

Other considerations also require some such hypothesis. The great majority of the personal names in the inscriptions are Celtic, and they provide extensive evidence for the developing Brittonic language in the post-Roman centuries.⁶⁶ And, of course, subsequent developments need to be addressed. After the period of the Group I inscriptions, there is little to suggest that spoken Latin persisted in use anywhere in Britain, and it is clear that in the early medieval period Brittonic languages—Welsh, Cornish, and Cumbric—were the vernaculars of peasantry and elites alike, wherever they were not extinguished by incoming Germanic (or, in parts of the Cumbric north, Gaelic) speakers. The question of how and why the shift of linguistic emphasis took place among the elites, if that is the correct way to characterize what happened, is an intriguing one. Charles-Edwards and Woolf have drawn parallels with cases in neighbouring lands in which the elite took on the language of the majority population: the Franks in post-Roman Gaul, for instance, or the Normans in medieval England.⁶⁷ Woolf has also advanced some thoughts about why such a transition may have taken place in Wales: he suggested that an elite Romance culture in the highland west may have been supported by, and dependent upon, an equivalent, and more deep-rooted, Romance culture to its east, and that the Anglo-Saxon conquests in central Britain between the sixth and eighth centuries may have upset this balance and precipitated a shift in outlook towards seeking strength and support in the local, predominantly Brittonic-speaking, population.⁶⁸

One linguistic element relevant to such a development may be the adoption of **kombrogi* (Cymry, Cumbrians), meaning something like ‘fellow residents’, and **kombrogika* (Cymraeg, Cumbric), meaning something like ‘speaking the shared language of the district’. These appear to be explicitly Brittonic modes of self-identification, and it may well be that they had particular resonance in Wales during a transition from a Romanizing, Latin-favouring, elite to one that spoke

⁶⁵ Gildas himself is (tentatively) thought to have been bilingual: Lapidge (1984), 34; Sims-Williams (1984), 169–70. Certainly, his Latin plays on the British meaning of the personal names of the tyrants he attacks (Jackson 1982). Patrick’s difficulties with Latin seem also to imply that he was British-speaking (though this is contested by Thompson 1985, 40–1); see further Hanson (1968), 160–70; Adams (2016), 484. Just as with Gildas, it is not known where in Britain Patrick lived.

⁶⁶ Sims-Williams (2003) is the fundamental study.

⁶⁷ Charles-Edwards (2013), 114–15; Woolf (2003), 373 and 380; (2020), 21.

⁶⁸ Woolf (2003), 376–9. For some of his more recent thinking on the question, see Section 9.4.

Cymraeg, Welsh.⁶⁹ Beyond this, it is hard to comment directly on the period from linguistic evidence alone. What can be said is that by the ninth century in Wales, although surviving texts are principally in Latin, it now appears to be a scholarly and learned language.⁷⁰ It is sometimes glossed with vernacular equivalents, and vernacular boundary-clauses—their local minor names all in Welsh—are appended to Latin charters.⁷¹ Surviving literature that may have been in circulation by this point (though the manuscripts are all much later) looks back to a heroic age of sixth- and seventh-century warfare: the language of the poetry is Welsh, and the names of the heroes whose deeds it recounts are predominantly British Celtic.⁷² There is little hint of a continuing sense of *Romanitas*, and although medieval texts, especially genealogical writings, continue to trace roots in the Roman past, they do so from the standpoint of a Welsh Celtic present.⁷³

9.3. English and the Lowland Zone

9.3.1 The English Problem

The other side of this equation involves the other side of the island, the east and south, where Romanization went furthest and Anglo-Saxon conquests were first focused. The legacy of these conquests effectively obliterated most traces of Romano-British society and its languages, so that we are left without even the limited resources that we have examined so far: there are no further textual survivals and there are no inscriptions that continue Roman epigraphic traditions.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ For discussions of these terms, and their probable origins in the Roman or early post-Roman period, see Charles-Edwards (1995), 710–15; (2013), 1; James (2008), 188–91; Woolf (2010), 230–2. An early common origin of the terminology would be consonant with its later use for the peoples of both northern Britain (Cumbria) and Wales, and with the application of Old Irish *Combrek* to the language also of Cornwall (Russell 1995).

⁷⁰ Charles-Edwards (1995), 719–20; (2013), 114–15. This is certainly the conventional view, though it should be noted that Harvey (2015) has argued, from the nature of the Latin vocabulary coined by authors from a ‘British-Celtic’ background, that a spoken British Latin may have lasted out of sight for much longer, and perhaps even beyond the Norman Conquest.

⁷¹ For a discussion of eighth- and ninth-century glossing, in Welsh and Irish, in a manuscript of Juvenius, see McKee (2000); see also the overview in Russell (2017), 8–12. The earliest surviving Welsh charter-bounds are ninth-century marginalia in the Lichfield Gospels (Jenkins and Owen 1983, 1984); the many examples of bounds from the Book of Llandaf, a twelfth-century compilation, may include still earlier examples, although their dating is difficult (Coe 2004; Sims-Williams 2019, 47–8).

⁷² Sims-Williams (2016) offers an honestly inconclusive recent review of the dating of this early poetry. As Woolf suggests (2003, 374–5), whether or not the compositions are contemporary with the events they purport to describe, their British-Celtic background, and their geographical settings in northern Britain—outside both Wales and the heavily Romanized southeast of the island—are important for understanding perceptions among the later medieval society which valued them.

⁷³ Ward (1972); Woolf (2003), 369–70; Guy (2018).

⁷⁴ There is a possible exception in a group of five Latin memorial stones at Wareham in Dorset, which may represent British survival (though they have also been considered the work of immigrants from Brittany). They appear not, however, to belong to our period, but have been dated between the

The handful of short runic inscriptions that survive from the fifth and sixth centuries appear, in so far as they are understood, to be wholly Germanic and to throw no light on language(s) encountered in Britain.⁷⁵ For these there are only the more indirect indications of the loanwords absorbed by Old English, of the place-names that survived the conquest, and of such personal names as were encountered by the Anglo-Saxons in the early centuries, albeit that they are recorded in non-contemporary records. It might be conceded at the outset that none of this material is sufficient to give anything like a clear indication of the linguistic make-up of southern and eastern Britain when the Anglo-Saxons arrived there.

Relevant loanwords, of course, are of two kinds: those from British Celtic and those from Latin. Notoriously, only a tiny number of the former are found in Old English, around a dozen or so, several of which are known only in toponymic contexts.⁷⁶ In sharp contrast, there are hundreds of terms borrowed from Latin, mostly nouns spanning a wide range of semantic categories.⁷⁷ However, before jumping to the conclusion that most of the inhabitants of Britain encountered by the Anglo-Saxons were therefore likely to have been Latin-speakers, it must be recognized that there are significant problems in dating this evidence, none of which, of course, is recorded before the horizon of the earliest surviving manuscript sources, which for Old English do not begin much before *c.* 700.⁷⁸ Many loans from Latin are common to the various Germanic languages, and may have been absorbed on the Continent, before the conquest of Britain. Many others

seventh and ninth centuries, or even later. See CASSS, vii, 65, with references. A stray Irish ogam stone from Roman *Calleva*, Silchester in Hampshire, may also be mentioned—it has been dated to the late fourth or fifth century (Fulford, Handley, and Clarke 2000), though it may be rather later (Sims-Williams 2003, 54–5, n. 207). On the uncertain geography of Gildas, see above n. 13. His text certainly does not much concern itself with the lowland zone: he mentions only St Albans and the Thames, erroneously implying that the former lies beside the latter (Winterbottom 1978, 92, 19 (§10–11); Sharpe 2002, 117).

⁷⁵ Parsons (1999), 40–75. The sixteen inscriptions discussed there are markedly eastern and/or southern in distribution, and were almost all found in characteristically Germanic burial contexts, either on grave-goods or inscribed or stamped on cremation urns.

⁷⁶ For lists and reviews, see Campbell (1959), 220; Breeze (2002), 175–81; Coates (2007), 177–80; (2017), 156; Durkin (2014), 77–81. The only widely accepted instance that remains a common item in present-day English is OE *binn* ('manger, receptacle, bin'); it is not, however, clear that this is better explained as an Old English borrowing from Brittonic (cf. Welsh *ben* 'cart, wagon'), than as an earlier loan into Germanic from Celtic on the Continent: see *OED*² s.v. *bin* n.; Seebold (2002), s.v. *Benne* Sf; and cf. Durkin (2014), 77, who suggests that it was probably transmitted via Latin, perhaps on the Continent. For some of the Brittonic toponymic vocabulary in England, see Section 9.3.3.

⁷⁷ Durkin calculates at least 600 pre-Conquest loanwords (2014, 100), and lists a large selection of them (2014, 108–19). He lists nouns under semantic categories, and also details smaller groups of adjectives and verbs.

⁷⁸ The earliest substantial source of Old English to survive in near-contemporary form is the collection of glosses assembled at Canterbury at the end of the seventh century: see, e.g., Pheifer (1974, 1987); Bischoff and Lapidge (1994), 173–9. Some of the Kentish laws date from earlier in the seventh century, but they survive only in a twelfth-century manuscript and have been subject to an uncertain degree of linguistic updating: see Oliver (2002), 25–51. There are no texts that can be dated with any security to the period before 600 surviving either in contemporary manuscripts or as later copies.

were introduced to England from the very end of the sixth century onwards, in association with conversion to Christianity and the reception of Latin learning which followed in its wake across hundreds of years. The difficulty in the present context is to identify and quantify loanwords that entered English during the fifth and sixth centuries, when they might have been acquired directly from Latin-speakers on British soil.

It might be thought that since there are so few loanwords into Old English from British Celtic, then a good proportion of the recorded Latin borrowings are likely to have been adopted during this period, on the assumption that—however violent some aspects of the conquest may have been—there must have been a fair degree of social and linguistic contact between the settled population and the incomers. Yet any such assumption is open to question, and other possibilities have often been entertained. Some have argued that the Romano-British population was substantially displaced,⁷⁹ whereas others believe that while there was extensive continuity in population, the social and linguistic relationship between the ethnic groups would have been so unbalanced as to discourage any lexical transfer from the British or Latin substrate to the English superstrate.⁸⁰ No modern scholar appears to have argued in any detail that the Latin loanwords themselves constitute evidence of contact and continuity.⁸¹

9.3.2 Early Latin Loanwords in Old English

It is, on the whole, possible to identify and exclude later, learned borrowings where they are not assimilated into the patterns of Old English phonology.⁸² That leaves a large group of ‘early’ loans which appear to have passed through some or

⁷⁹ Recent proponents of large-scale displacement include Padel (2007) and Coates (2007, 2017).

⁸⁰ This is the line generally taken by various recent scholars who have argued, controversially, that a British substrate is responsible for influencing the phonology and/or structures of early English (albeit that the effects tend not to become visible until the later middle ages): see, e.g., Tristram (2007), and various contributors to Filppula, Klemola, and Paulasto (2008) and Filppula and Klemola (2009). Similarly, and even more controversially, Schrijver (2009; 2014, 71–93) suggests that English has a Celtic substrate more akin in its phonology to Irish than to Brittonic Celtic; he allows also that the immediate substrate in southeastern English might be Latin, but, if so, that it was Latin which had itself been subject to the influence of this hypothetical ‘Irish-like’ Celtic of lowland Britain. Very differently, Woolf (2007) argues that under a system of social apartheid, and without violent extermination or flight, British language and identity might have disappeared gradually over the course of several centuries without leaving much mark on the English language.

⁸¹ Schrijver—in accepting the significance of some of the place-name evidence for Anglo-Saxon contacts with Latin, discussed further below—does, however, comment that the Latin terms in place-names are unlikely to have been borrowed on the Continent, since most Anglo-Saxon settlers came from areas far beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire (Schrijver 2014, 204, n. 17 (referring back to pp. 33–4)). Such an objection runs, characteristically, counter to the mainstream consensus, reflected in the survey below, that many Latin terms in Old English are very likely have been borrowed into Germanic before the settlement period.

⁸² For the distinction between early and later groupings, see Campbell (1959), 200–19; Wollmann (1993), 2–4; Durkin (2014), 101–4.

all of the sound-changes which came to distinguish Old English from its nearest relatives during the fifth and sixth centuries.⁸³ Thus, for instance, *cealc* < *calc*, *calc-em* ('lime') shows the breaking of *æ*, fronted from earlier *a*, before *l* + consonant, while *cylen* < *culina* ('kiln') exhibits *i*-mutation of original *u*. Other examples also give evidence for developments that had taken place in Late Latin pronunciation, notably the lowering of the short high vowels *i* and *u* to (or towards) *e* and *o* respectively (e.g. OE *peru* < *pirum* ('pear'), OE *torr* < *turris* ('tower')),⁸⁴ and the intervocalic voicing of the unvoiced consonants *c*, *p* and *t* (e.g. OE *finugle* < *fenuculum* ('fennel'), OE *cæfester* < *capistrum* ('halter'), OE *rude* < *ruta* ('rue [the shrub]')).⁸⁵ On occasion a combination of developments indicates a relative chronology of the changes across the two languages: an example is OE *byden* < **butina* (Greek *βούτινη*, 'vessel, barrel'), in which Latin voicing must have predated the borrowing of the word and the operation of Old English *i*-mutation.⁸⁶

Most of the sound-changes mentioned in the previous paragraph have generally been ascribed to the period with which we are concerned in this chapter, and it is possible that many of these sorts of word were borrowed by the earliest Anglo-Saxons from speakers of British Latin. This is, however, treacherous territory, for several reasons. Not least of these is the point made above, that loanwords from the Roman Empire could have been filtering into Germanic speech on the Continent for centuries before the Anglo-Saxon settlements. Consequently, any word which passed through the sequence of Old English sound-changes need not have been adopted on British soil, but may already have been in the language. It would be possible more confidently to ascribe borrowings to the period 400–600 in cases which appear to miss out on the earliest Old English sound-changes but take part in later ones, but potential examples of this are few and their interpretation often disputed. A possible instance is Old English *mægester* < Latin *magister* ('master'), which arguably shows *i*-mutation of an *a* that had escaped early fronting; if the term had been adopted before the general change of *a* > *æ*, subsequent *i*-mutation might be expected to have produced ***megester*.⁸⁷ Lying behind much of this material, however, there is also the unsettling possibility of analogy, which threatens to disrupt calculations. Thus Campbell interpreted OE *sealm* ('psalm' < *psalma*) as having passed through early fronting and breaking, as *cealc* above,⁸⁸ while Wollmann argued that the borrowing was unlikely to

⁸³ Durkin's list of the early borrowings (2014, 108–14) aims at comprehensiveness, and contains 261 items.

⁸⁴ Campbell (1959), §498.

⁸⁵ Campbell (1959), §530. On *cæfester*, see further below; it is an example of the voicing of *p* > *b*, which in early Old English is realized as [v], spelt <f>, intervocalically.

⁸⁶ Wollmann (1990), 388; (1993), 23; Campbell (1959), §499.

⁸⁷ Campbell (1959), §406, cautiously accepted by *OED*³, s.v. *master* n.¹. Pogatscher (1888, 128), on the other hand, suggested that *i* may instead have undergone the Late Latin lowering of *i* and been borrowed as *e* (cf. *peru* < *pirum* above), which would not trigger *i*-mutation.

⁸⁸ Campbell (1959), §495.

antedate conversion to Christianity at the end of the sixth century and—since the sound-changes in question belong very early in the English sequence, probably in the fifth century—concluded that *sealm* was likely to be a later, analogous form.⁸⁹

Among the various uncertainties, a central problem is the dating of the relevant sound-changes. The Old English developments including fronting, breaking, palatal diphthongization, and *i*-mutation are all imprecisely dated, though they presumably all belong to the centuries between the settlements beginning in the early fifth century and the earliest written records of the language.⁹⁰ It is harder to put comparable *termini* around the relevant changes in Latin, which was spoken continuously over such a long period, and—although often written down or inscribed—was to a large extent effectively concealed behind a deeply entrenched traditional orthography. In these circumstances the dating of the sound-changes mentioned above has been highly controversial, with estimates varying by many centuries. Modern research into the lowering of *i* and *u* tends to emphasize that there was a tendency towards lowering, such that the vowels might sometimes be written <e> and <o> respectively, from the earliest centuries CE, although the final outcome of the changes, resulting in mergers between original *i* and *ē* as *e*, and between *u* and *ō* as *o*, may not have been reached until the fifth century.⁹¹ This gives a rather unhelpfully long window within which the lowered sounds might have been borrowed and allows the possibility that such words might have been borrowed before 400. In the case of the voicing of intervocalic consonants, there are also some signs that movement towards the sound-change began very early, though there has been rather more of a consensus towards a generalization of the change in Gaul at a relatively late period, centring, indeed, around the turn of the fifth century.⁹² This could be rather more helpful for periodizing the loans

⁸⁹ Wollmann (1993), 25. There is of course also the possibility—indeed likelihood—that some Christian terminology entered Germanic language before conversion (Wollmann 1993, 3–4, with references; also 1990, 392–4). Yet, whatever the merits of particular instances, the general principle that languages can be quite adept at ‘camouflaging’ late-adopted loanwords is evident. For late borrowings of Latin into Welsh, some of which looking plausibly ancient, see Evans (1983), 965. Durkin (2014, 143–58) provides a lucid introduction to analogy and other questions of method relating to interpreting the Latin loanwords in Old English.

⁹⁰ Although Jackson thought it as late as the seventh or eighth centuries (1953, 316), *i*-mutation has often been ascribed to the first half of the sixth (Luick 1921, §201; Coates 1984; Wollmann 1990, 388; 1993, 23). The earliest direct evidence for it is probably a runic inscription on a brooch found in Norfolk, archaeologically dated to about the middle of the seventh century (Parsons 1999, 53–4).

⁹¹ See Loporcaro (2011a), 53–8; (2011b), 110–12 and 115–16; Leppänen and Alho (2018). The latter offer a broad conspectus of earlier work, citing scholarly assessments of dates for the neutralization of distinctive vowel quantity ranging from the third century BCE onwards. For discussion of the chronology in the British context, including Jackson’s (1953, 86) opinion that it was generally completed on the Continent by the third century, see Parsons (2011), 116–17, with references.

⁹² For various views on the date, see Smith (1983), 914–15 and 942; Loporcaro (2011b), 153–4. The latter draws attention to Cravens (1991), who argued that the voicing in the imperial period was widespread but allophonic—i.e. non-contrastive—but that it was later phonemicized in parts of the west. The degree of complexity in the disparate evidence suggests that some recent work which dates the voicing to the fourth or fifth century without reservation, such as de Vaan (2020), is perhaps optimistic to do so.

into English, though it is rather alarming to note suggestions that the loans have played 'a significant role... in the dating of Gallo-Romance voicing',⁹³ which in this context might suggest a circular argument.

The pioneering scholar in this field, Alois Pogatscher, was guided by a fifth-century date for the voicing of consonants (and also, in his opinion, for the vowel lowering) to ascribe practically all the relevant Old English loanwords to contacts with speakers of British Latin.⁹⁴ Many subsequent commentators, however, have chosen to be much more circumspect, even when they accept the dating. The suggestion is that continuing contacts, trade, and movement between the Anglo-Saxon settlers and Germanic speakers on the Continent can account for loans throughout the fifth and sixth centuries. This position tends to be buttressed by two arguments: that many of the loans into English have equivalents in the Germanic languages and dialects of northwest Europe, and that Latin in Britain is likely to have been restricted to a very small proportion of the population. The latter proposal is, of course, the one that is at issue in the present discussion: what we would like to know is whether the Latin loanwords into Old English are indicative of surviving spoken Latin in southern Britain, without recourse to other types of evidence. The former point has more substance here, for a good many of the loans into English do also have congeners on the Continent. Some terms might, of course, have been borrowed independently (or even in some cases, conceivably, exported from Britain to the Continent), but the general opinion has been that words found on both sides of the Channel are likely to have been first borrowed outside England.⁹⁵ Some of the (relatively few) words which evidence the Romance voicing fall into this bracket, and it is possible, for instance, to suppose that *byden* ('barrel, vessel'), which has an Old High German equivalent *butin*, may have spread via the wine-trade on the Rhine,⁹⁶ and that *biscop* ('bishop', German *bischof*, where initial *b* is from intervocalic voicing in original *episcopus*), may reflect early Germanic contacts with Christianity in Gaul.⁹⁷

In general, scholars have therefore remained wary of placing Latin loans on British soil. Sometimes this caution may go too far. In his discussion of Old English *caefester* ('halter, horses' headgear'), mentioned above, Wollmann observes that the word is not recorded in other Germanic languages, but that it is also reflected in Welsh *cebystr*.⁹⁸ He is concerned to argue that it is not possible to decide whether Latin or British is the immediate donor language to English,

⁹³ Wollmann (1993), 25 and n. 88.

⁹⁴ Pogatscher (1888). Wollmann observes (1993, 23) that Pogatscher made an exception for the word *biscop*, which he thought must be a common Germanic borrowing before 450; see below.

⁹⁵ See, e.g., Durkin (2014), 72–5 and 155–8.

⁹⁶ Wollmann (1993), 23.

⁹⁷ Green (1998, 301–5) argues that *episcopus* is likely to have been borrowed into Germanic from Gaul in the fifth century, and introduced to England in the sixth by the Franks known to have been instrumental in the early evangelization of Kent. Cf. Durkin (2014), 161, and the further literature there cited. The dual treatment of Latin *p* in this word raises many questions.

⁹⁸ Wollmann (1993), 20–1.

though the example might instead have been chosen to illustrate the possibility of the three languages meeting in southern Britain. For Wollmann, however, Jackson's broader conclusions remained wholly authoritative: the evidence from within British indicated that Latin would rarely have been encountered by the incoming Anglo-Saxons, and this orientated all discussion of the loanwords, such that the onus of proof is placed heavily on any suggestion of borrowing within Britain. When the evidence for this falls short—and it is not clear what criteria might be conclusive in its favour—the assumption has been that borrowing was more likely to have taken place on the Continent. If the pendulum is now swinging back the other way, towards the possibility of rather extensive Latin-speaking in the post-Roman south and east, it might encourage a rethink here; although, again, the nature of the late-recorded evidence makes it difficult to imagine that the evidence of the loanwords in Old English can ever be decisive in favour of a widespread British Latin in the fifth and sixth centuries.

9.3.3 The Evidence of Names

One specific area of vocabulary, however, which might suggest borrowing *in situ* is that found in place-names. As in Wales, a very small number of Latin-language names in England are recorded in Roman-period documentation. Examples such as *Calcaria* ('lime-works') for Tadcaster,⁹⁹ *Pontibus* ('(at the) bridges') for Staines,¹⁰⁰ and *Villa Faustini* ('Faustinus' villa') for, perhaps, Scole in Norfolk,¹⁰¹ left no trace in later toponymy, and may have been administrative coinages, possibly simple ad-hoc descriptions in the records. The survival of other names, however, must indicate that they attained local currency. One example is Lincoln, *Lindum Colonia*, a hybrid formation presumably to be parsed 'the *colonia* of *Lindum*', where the first element is a British word, surviving in Welsh *llyn* ('pool').¹⁰² A second instance is Speen in Berkshire, which can be identified with *Spinis* in the Antonine Itineraries, representing Latin '(at the) thorn trees'.¹⁰³ Such instances demonstrate a use of Latin names or terminology that took sufficient hold in Britain for the Anglo-Saxons to take them on. It is, however, quite possible that British mediation was involved, and such names—which are exceptionally rare—offer very doubtful evidence for the continued currency of Latin in the post-Roman period.

⁹⁹ Rivet and Smith (1979), 288–9.

¹⁰⁰ Rivet and Smith (1979), 441.

¹⁰¹ Rivet and Smith (1979), 499.

¹⁰² Rivet and Smith (1979), 393. The generic may also have survived as the first element of Colchester, but that is not certain (Carroll and Parsons 2007, 102–3).

¹⁰³ Rivet and Smith (1979), 462; Coates and Breeze (2000), 40–3; Parsons (2011), 131.

More promising in this respect is the Latin vocabulary borrowed into Old English and attached to places that were, or may have been, Roman sites encountered by the Anglo-Saxons.¹⁰⁴ OE *stræt* ('street' < (*via*) *strata*), applied to Roman roads, and *ceaster* ('walled town' < *castra*), applied to Roman towns, are obvious examples; another clear instance is the recurrent *wīc-hām*, involving Latin *vicus*, a compound which correlates well with small Roman roadside towns. Other Old English words of Latin origin found in southern English place-names include **funta* ('spring, well' < *fontana*), *port* ('harbour' < *portus*), *camp* ('wasteland, open land' < *campus*) and **corte* ('enclosure' < *co(ho)rs*). For all of these a case has also been made that the choice of the elements may reflect recognized Roman associations of the site: thus names in **funta* (like Havant, Hampshire, and Cheshunt, Hertfordshire) might have denoted springs or wells developed in some way, perhaps for the drawing of water, while those in *camp* (as Shudy Camps, Cambridgeshire, and Warningcamp, Sussex) could denote 'open land beyond the [Roman] cultivated area'. The implication of such names could be that the vocabulary, if not the name itself, may have been passed on in an immediately local context, and that the local informants may have been Latin-speaking.

These suggestions are not, of course, certainties: some of the loanwords may have been imported from the Continent (congeners of *stræt* < *strata*, for instance, are found across the Germanic languages), while others may have been mediated to English through British (Latin *fontana*, for instance, gave both Welsh *ffynnon* and Old English **funta*). Nonetheless the restricted southern and eastern distribution of a number of the items is interesting, as is a notable contrast with the vocabulary derived from British which survived into medieval and later place-names in southern and eastern England. This, as several studies have emphasized in recent years, is dominated—beyond river-names and the names of some larger Roman towns—by a rather small group of topographical elements including (in modern Welsh form) *coed* ('wood'), *crug* ('barrow, barrow-shaped hill'), *rhos* ('moor'), *penn* ('head(land), ?hill'), which seem never to be naturalized into English usage: they do not form compound generics like *wīc-ham* and they are not qualified by English terms, such as personal names in Havant and Warningcamp.¹⁰⁵ They seem to have been adopted as names, as labels for particular topographical features, but not in general to have been assimilated into productive English-language usage. Again—and parallel to the proportions of loanwords in English more widely—one must wonder if this contrast might result from a greater degree of bilingual exchange between English and British Latin in post-Roman southern Britain than between English and British Celtic.

¹⁰⁴ This material is treated more fully in Parsons (2011), 125–8, and draws particularly on studies by Margaret Gelling (1967; 1977; 1988, 63–86). For a sceptical account, see Dietz (2011).

¹⁰⁵ Coates (2007), 181; (2017), 164; Parsons (2011), 126–7; Padel (2013), 24–34; Schrijver (2014), 33–4.

One further aspect of toponymic study might be mentioned. It might be hoped that the phonology of place-names adopted by the English, irrespective of their ultimate origins, might indicate if they had been transmitted by Latin rather than British speakers. Kenneth Jackson reviewed this material and concluded that positive signs of distinctive Late Latin sound-changes were lacking, and although one might now add some possibilities and caveats, it is not possible to claim that evidence for Latin-speaking emerges clearly from this kind of material.¹⁰⁶ However, study along these lines indicates that it is in fact difficult, across large parts of southern and eastern England, to find much that conclusively indicates the distinctive sound-changes of fifth- and sixth-century Brittonic either.¹⁰⁷ Survivals of any kind are few, and analysis of them is hampered by many factors: we are trying to compare and coordinate details across three languages all of which are otherwise unattested at the period; it appears that similar changes were taking place in the different languages at about the same time, whether coincidentally or as a result of contact (e.g. consonant voicing in British Celtic and British Latin, *i*-affection/mutation in British Celtic and Old English); moreover, while there is a suspicion that Latin was pronounced 'after the British manner', it is unknown how far this assimilation might have gone. In these circumstances it is perhaps not surprising that clear, generally accepted conclusions about the linguistic situation encountered by the Anglo-Saxons are hard to come by. There are a few names, such as the River Brent in Middlesex and the settlement group Andover, Candover, and Micheldever (all of them with *-def(e)r-* spellings in the Anglo-Saxon period), which appear simplest to explain in terms of fifth- or sixth-century Brittonic sound-changes.¹⁰⁸ This would tend to confirm at least that British was still spoken in these areas in the post-Roman period, though that need not of course imply that Latin was not also current. Yet these interpretations do not amount to proofs, and have recently been challenged in pursuit of a suggestion that Latin may have wholly displaced British across a large part of southern Britain before it was, in its turn, replaced by the English of the invaders.¹⁰⁹ It must be conceded that this possibility is not out of the question.

¹⁰⁶ Jackson (1953), 256–61. This material is discussed in detail in Parsons (2011), 128–31.

¹⁰⁷ Discussed in Parsons (2011), 131–4.

¹⁰⁸ Jackson (1953), 602; Sims-Williams (1990), 239 and 252–3; Coates (1989), 23, 48, and 116; (2017), 160; Parsons (2011), 133.

¹⁰⁹ Schrijver (2014, 52–3) argues this case in connection with the names 'Brent' and 'Andover', etc. To an extent, my previous treatment conceded the ground ('the number of clear post-Roman Brittonicisms is certainly very small, and we may indeed conclude that there is none which is indisputable'; Parsons 2011, 134). However, my formulation here, that it is 'simplest to explain' them as Brittonic, stands, since the operation of Old English *i*-mutation rather than Brittonic final *i*-affection in these names, as Schrijver requires, entails the otherwise undemonstrable survival of British final syllables in place-names transmitted in England (Jackson 1953, 628–30; cf. the early date proposed for the loss of Brittonic final syllables by Sims-Williams 1990, 247–8). Schrijver's point that in 'Andover', etc., the second vowel was unstressed in Old English, and would have been represented as *e* whatever its original quality, goes back to Jackson (1953, 285), but Jackson's assertion here is questionable: the modern names all retain a marked secondary stress on the penultimate syllable. Schrijver (2014, 53–7)

The inability to be categorical about such a fundamental point in Britain's linguistic history is a reflection of the sparse and unsatisfactory nature of the evidence that survives to us.

As we have seen, in the absence of relevant fifth- or sixth-century texts from southern or eastern Britain,¹¹⁰ that evidence is indirect, principally taking the form of loanwords and place-names first attested centuries later and bringing with them many uncertainties in dating and interpretation.¹¹¹ The only other indications from later-recorded textual sources are still more indirect, involving the choice of personal names which may, but certainly need not, reflect wider language usage. According to the early annals of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle—not contemporary in their surviving form, but undoubtedly first written down earlier than the ninth-century date of the earliest compilations—the formative phases of Germanic colonization involved a range of interactions with local leaders who bore etymologically Celtic names. The text relates that in the middle of the fifth century the Anglo-Saxons were invited in, to help defend the land against hostile attacks, by the British king *Wyrtegeorn*, or *Vortigern*,¹¹² while by the late sixth century they were involved in battles against local leaders, also described as kings, called *Coinmail*, *Condidan*, and *Farinmail*, who may have been associated with the former Roman centres of Gloucester, Bath, and Cirencester.¹¹³ In the meantime, during the early sixth century according to the Chronicle narrative, the Anglo-Saxons of central southern England were led by a man whose name was *Cerdic*, which is also of Celtic etymology (and thus complicates straightforward views of ethnic conflict).¹¹⁴ The impression created by this admittedly tiny sample of names, therefore, is not of a southern British society that had been still more

goes on to make much of the name of London in this context, and I agree that my earlier treatment (Parsons 2011, 133) should probably not stand, though Bynon's suggestion (2016) that the name is best explained as a very early borrowing into Germanic, before the settlements began, offers a compelling alternative to Schrijver's interpretation.

¹¹⁰ It might be noted, however, that the Silchester inscription (see n. 74 above), although using the ogam script and apparently framed in Irish, records a Celtic name *TEBICATO[S]*, which may be British rather than Irish (Sims-Williams 2003, 54–5). This fits neatly with the observations immediately below.

¹¹¹ The use of the Old English term *wealh*, plural *wealas*, for the native inhabitants of Britain deserves notice here. This is the equivalent term to the *walh* applied on the Continent to Latin/Romance speakers (see Haubrichs, Chapter 7 of this volume) and it is clear that it was adopted in early Germanic to denote 'Romans'. No doubt the word was used in Britain because the early Anglo-Saxons recognized the inhabitants as such. Yet it is quite unclear how far that involved a judgement about language as opposed to other cultural attributes, i.e. how far Latin-speaking was a defining factor in the choice of the term. If it ever was, it certainly did not remain so: hence we find the *Corn-wealas* of Cornwall, the *Stræclæd-wealas* of Strathclyde and, of course, the generalization in the name of 'Wales'. See further, Insley (1979–80); Charles-Edwards (1995), 714; Woolf (2010), 231–2; (2020), 25.

¹¹² Jackson (1953), 273; (1982), 35–40.

¹¹³ On these names, see Jackson (1953), 464–6 and 677; Sims-Williams (1983), 33–4. Sims-Williams regards the annal as doubtful and implies that the source for the Brittonic names could originally have related to a later period.

¹¹⁴ Parsons (1997). Coates (1989–90) additionally discusses the name *Ceawlin*, which may also be Brittonic.

Romanized than the western Britons memorialized in the inscriptions, but one in which British Celtic naming traditions survived.¹¹⁵ What this might have meant for everyday vernacular language, however, is quite uncertain; and on the other side of the ledger could of course be placed the legendary Arthur, assigned by later Welsh sources to the same period: his name, Latin *Artorius*, does hint at the *Romanitas* of the inscriptions.¹¹⁶

9.4. Theories and Conclusions

Any assessment of the fate of Latin in post-Roman Britain needs to steer a course through this rather inadequate material. The most solid starting-point may well seem to be the one relegated to the background here, the immense influence of Latin on the surviving Brittonic languages, to some extent measurable in terms of the lexicon, and probably or possibly detectable also in a range of other features. Combined with the growing evidence for ordinary demotic Latinity before 400, one might simply think that Latin—the language of power and prestige—must have taken a deep hold across most of Britain, not just in the lowland zone. The fifth- and sixth-century evidence from the west might well be thought consistent with this, suggesting a continued role for Latinity, written and spoken, at different levels of sophistication within the Church (Patrick, Gildas, Irish loanwords), as also in at least the upper echelons of secular society (Gildas, inscriptions). The surviving materials do not clearly explain the presumed subsequent decline in Latin, but there are some hints of a waning of *Romanitas* during the sixth century, and one might hypothesize that an older elite was overtaken by political and social groups, or simply new generations, for whom Latin was not a vernacular language. Throughout the highland zone it might be supposed that Latin-speakers were predominantly always bilinguals, and that such a shift might therefore have been gradual rather than revolutionary.

On such a view of the west, it makes sense to assume that further south and east Latin would have been still more common, and would probably have penetrated more deeply through the strata of society. Whether it had in some regions wholly displaced British Celtic as the vernacular language of whole communities remains unknown, however. In a number of relatively northern and western parts of England the place-name evidence for the operation of fifth- and sixth-century Brittonic sound-changes is fairly secure, but that leaves large regions in the south-east in which there is no clear evidence at all. We have seen that names and

¹¹⁵ See similarly Woolf (2003), 369–70.

¹¹⁶ See Zimmer (2009) on the ultimate, possibly Continental Celtic, etymology of his name. Also Woolf (2020, 23–4) speculating, with all due caution, on a possible historical context for such a Latin-named war-leader.

loanwords offer only faint, and somewhat contradictory, pointers. If communicative contact between Anglo-Saxons and the settled population was ever sufficiently close and harmonious as to allow the transmission of any significant amount of vocabulary to the politically dominant group, then the substrate language must surely have been Latin. It is, however, far from clear that linguistic relations were ever so favourable—the tiny number of pre-English place-names (of any origin) that survived in many eastern areas tends to be against it—and many scholars have worked for generations with models of large-scale destruction and flight, of linguistic apartheid, or, at the least, of a thoroughly asymmetrical relationship in which Old English resisted practically all borrowings from the dominated population. It is hardly possible, on what we have in front of us, to discount such models. In such circumstances we probably have to admit that, unless new types of direct evidence appear, we can know almost nothing about the nature and degree of surviving Latinity in the lowland zone after c. 400.

If these are the straightforward conclusions to be drawn from my discussion, however, they are drawn from confessedly inadequate evidence. There is undoubtedly room for other arguments and hypotheses, and to bring the chapter towards a close two of these will be discussed. They represent both older and more recent views, and in some respects present almost diametrically opposed scenarios, although in fact they are to some extent built on differing inferences from a single shared observation.

The first interpretation is that of Kenneth Jackson, who dominated the field in the middle of the twentieth century. Jackson believed that ‘the great bulk of the population’ encountered by the invading Anglo-Saxons ‘spoke British and probably knew little Latin’, suggesting that the language had been so socially restricted in Roman Britain that, beyond the military, it had little currency outside the small proportion of people, administrators and traders, who lived in towns.¹¹⁷ A central element of his reasoning derived from study of the Latin loanwords in British. Although Jackson acknowledged their large number and range, he concluded that the Latin from which they derived was not a demotic one, but a ‘semi-artificial’ variant acquired in the schoolroom. He based this view on the absence from the loans of several phonological features of Late Latin which he believed to have been widespread in the spoken language elsewhere, and particularly in Gaul. He found no certain trace of these features either in the transmission of place-names to English, and felt that—while all kinds of vulgarisms may perhaps have been heard in the towns or the military—the variety of Latin that left its significant lasting effect on British was distinctly old-fashioned. In seeking a sociolinguistic explanation for this circumstance, Jackson suggested that this may involve

¹¹⁷ Jackson (1953), especially Chapter 3, ‘Britons and Romans under the Empire’; also Jackson (1948). The quotation above is from Jackson (1953), 105. Jackson’s views are summarized more fully, with responses from subsequent scholarship, by Parsons (2011), 114–21, and Mullen (2024b).

pedantically correct and outmoded Latin taught by schoolmasters to the rural upper classes, who were then the conduit to ultimately surviving British usage.

This theory, and especially the principal conclusion that the currency of Latin must have been very limited in post-Roman Britain, was very influential, but the details of the argument came under sustained attack during the 1980s, and can hardly be said to have withstood scrutiny.¹¹⁸ Although Jackson's analysis of the sounds represented by the loans in British is mostly hard to fault, two main lines of criticism have been levelled at his further deductions. One is that the reasoning sometimes depends on a chronology for Latin developments that is doubtful, or at least open to question.¹¹⁹ The other is that Jackson may have underrated the extent to which Britons assimilated and approximated Latin sounds to their own norms.¹²⁰ Between them, these reservations cast considerable doubt on the case for an archaic British Latin which lay behind the loanwords, and without the support of a clear phonologically-based argument, the route from the schoolroom into enduring Brittonic usage has failed to convince as a likely sociolinguistic context.

The second hypothesis considered here is the more recent proposal by Peter Schrijver that Latin was so widely spoken in late-Roman and early post-Roman Britain that it is likely to have supplanted British Celtic to a significant degree in lowland areas.¹²¹ He argues, somewhat as above, that the extent of Latin influence on surviving highland varieties of British is so strong that the lowlands must have been affected to a still greater degree, and he observes that since Latin replaced earlier languages in many parts of the Empire, it is not unlikely that it did so here too. More specifically, Schrijver goes further than many scholars in arguing for a direct link between comparable developments in Late Latin and in Brittonic. He identifies a number of phonological and structural changes that are similar in the two languages (including the new quantity systems (see below), the voicing of *p*, *t*, and *k*, loss of final nasals, and loss of case system) and argues that this is no coincidence, but that western British Celtic 'became Latinized' during the fifth and sixth centuries.¹²²

This position faces a challenge, however, which brings us back once more to the form of the loanwords. There are good reasons for believing that the Brittonic

¹¹⁸ The intense period of reassessment in the 1980s included Gratwick (1982); Evans (1983); Smith (1983); McManus (1984); Russell (1985).

¹¹⁹ As with the loss of contrastive vowel length in Latin: see above p. 255 and n. 91, and further below.

¹²⁰ Thus intervocalic *b* and *w* seem generally to have been preserved in British Latin, rather than merging in [β] as they tended to elsewhere (though for an apparent local exception, see Mullen 2024b). Jackson regarded this as an archaism, but it may instead have been due to the influence of British Celtic, which had both phonemes: Smith (1983), 944; McManus (1984), 157; Russell (1985), 22; Parsons (2011), 116. For a comparable example, involving the absence of Latin palatalization in British, see Koch (1988), 24; Sims-Williams (1990), 224. I hope to show elsewhere that the apparent absence of the lowering of Late Latin *i* in British loanwords (which I suggested was an unresolved problem in Parsons 2011, 116) might also be explained by an aspect of assimilation into British.

¹²¹ Schrijver (2002); (2007); (2014), 31–4 and 49–58.

¹²² Schrijver (2014), 32.

versions of the linguistic developments in question belong to the fifth and sixth centuries, while the bulk of the Latin loanwords appear to have been absorbed earlier, during the Roman period. Certainly, whatever the absolute chronology, the loanwords reflect a starting point in classical Latin phonology before going through the Brittonic sound-changes; if they had undergone the similar Late Latin changes before borrowing, they would have emerged quite differently into Brittonic. Particularly clear examples are afforded by the various changes which introduced 'new quantity systems', resulting in vowel length becoming reorganized according to phonetic environment. In both languages, for instance, etymologically short vowels lengthened in open syllables, so that British **sēnos* ('old') became, ultimately, Welsh *hēn*, while classical Latin *fīdes* became Late Latin *fīdes*. The outcome in the Latin words found in Brittonic consistently shows that the Brittonic change operated on the original Latin quantity—thus *fīdes* gave Welsh *ffydd* [fi:ð], where the retracted [i] derives from the British short vowel, and not ***ffidd* [fi:ð], which would have resulted from the clear [i] of a Latin long vowel. The conclusion to be drawn from this is evidently that the Latin words had been borrowed into British before these quantitative rearrangements affected either language.¹²³

This chronology raises various questions. For Jackson the problem lay in absolute dates: he believed that a number of the Late Latin changes, including the quantitative changes just mentioned, were general in the spoken language of the Continent by the third or fourth centuries, and thus that the loans into British proceeded from an old-fashioned or artificial Latin. As noted above, however, more recent work has relieved most of the tension here, partly by allowing later dates for some of the Latin sound-changes. For Schrijver the challenge lies rather in explaining why the loanwords seem consistently to have been borrowed *before* the sound-changes that he suggests gave western British its 'Latin "accent"'.¹²⁴

Schrijver does not duck this problem; he embraces it. The facts, he argues, indicate two distinct periods of Latin influence on British, one characterized by the borrowing of many words, and a subsequent one characterized by phonological modifications and the apparent absence of further lexical borrowing. Drawing on general models of language contact,¹²⁵ he suggests that the former phase took place while Latin was the language of prestige from which the subjugated British naturally borrowed vocabulary, but that in the later phase the sociolinguistic situation had radically changed. The transfer of elements of a sound system without further lexical borrowing, he suggests, indicates speakers of a language with low prestige switching to one with higher status and carrying across some of the

¹²³ Jackson (1953), 88 and 270–1; Sims-Williams (1990), 218–19.

¹²⁴ Schrijver (2002), 101, for the phrase; and 100–1 for his exposition of the problem.

¹²⁵ Particularly as set out by Thomason and Kaufman (1988) and Thomason (2001).

sounds of their mother tongue. On this basis he deduces that in the second phase of influence Latin had become the low-status language, and paints a colourful picture of the historical context for the reversal, imagining:

large numbers of destitute Latin-speaking refugees from the Lowland Zone entering the Highland Zone before the gradual advance of the Anglo-Saxon warrior-settlers in the fifth and sixth centuries.¹²⁶

In switching languages, Schrijver reasons, aspects of these refugees' Latin pronunciation left a deep imprint on western British Celtic: given that Welsh, Cornish, and Breton are 'packed with...Latin features,' he suggests that they must have arrived in very large numbers, enough 'to swamp the population of Celtic speakers in the west.'¹²⁷ His proposal therefore seeks both to provide a chronologically nuanced explanation for Latin influence in western Britain, and to offer indirect evidence for a large Latin-speaking population in the southeast.

Schrijver's theory is an intriguing and rather appealing one. Many scholars have noted the general similarities between developments in Latin and Brittonic, and speculated on a connection between them. Given the chronological disjuncture which has been described—apparently an unavoidable deduction from internal linguistic logic—some special argument has to be presented if both the loanwords and the quantity reorganization in the two languages are to be regarded as signs of direct influence. Whether Schrijver's suggestions are necessarily the best or only way to account for the evidence might be questioned, however. In general terms, some have aired doubts about the value of historical reconstructions based on models of linguistic contact: the influence of superstrates on substrates and vice versa seems rarely to produce such clear-cut distinctions as are suggested here.¹²⁸ More specifically, the little evidence that we have for Latin from western Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries does not seem to sit entirely comfortably with Schrijver's scenario. To judge by the inscriptions, as we have seen, it was a language with high status, having apparently survived among a social elite as a vernacular marked by various of the Late Latin developments that have parallels in Brittonic. One might think that a massive influx of refugees speaking a similar variety of Latin and swamping the local population

¹²⁶ Schrijver (2014), 33.

¹²⁷ The quotations are from Schrijver (2014), 32, 33, respectively.

¹²⁸ Russell (2011, 142–3) sets out a number of reservations, and stresses some expressed by Thomason and Kaufman themselves about the uncertainties inherent in applying their models to unattested past situations (e.g. Thomason and Kaufman 1988, 118). The primary burden of Russell's paper is to review the claims of morphosyntactic influence on Brittonic languages, and in two of the three features Schrijver lists (loss of a case system and loss of neuter gender) he finds the evidence for Latin influence less than compelling (Russell 2011, 144–7). Schrijver (2014, 3–4) himself emphasizes the limitation of his approach when applied to documented complex situations.

could have worked to shore up this elite language rather than contribute to its abandonment.¹²⁹

Woolf's most recent review of the question of British ethnogenesis, as he terms it, offers a new model that might help account for some of the awkwardness in the evidence.¹³⁰ He suggests that, as far back as the third and fourth centuries, highland regions may have been subject to local British rulers, 'kings' in the making, who functioned as clients of the established Roman authorities further east. Such an arrangement might help explain the degree of Latinization evident in surviving highland Brittonic languages without calling on disproportionate influence from Romance-speaking refugees from the southeast: it may be that, with the support of such elite rulers, Latin had a much greater effect in the west of Britain than might be deduced from the very limited archaeological and historical indications of Romanization in settlement and society.

Woolf's suggestion does not obviously supply a solution to the chronological 'mismatch' between lexical borrowing and the putative phonological influence of Latin on Brittonic. Yet perhaps this is a problem with no basis. After all, one scholar's 'more or less identical developments' is another's 'a number of vague parallels',¹³¹ and there are a number of significant differences of detail between the operation of similar-looking changes in the two languages which stand in the way of a self-evident equation.¹³² It has proved quite possible for some Celticists to propose internally motivated mechanisms for the new quantity system in Brittonic without looking to Latin influence at all.¹³³ Or perhaps there is a link, but it is partial and indirect. If, for instance, Schrijver were correct to suggest that

¹²⁹ Compare the different emphasis of Woolf's suggestion of 'a massive switch to Old Welsh by preferential Romance speakers who, as the social elite, exerted influence on subsequent development of the language in disproportion to their numbers' (Woolf 2003, 378). One further small reservation over a point of detail in Schrijver's scenario might be added here. In a separate argument he identifies—from one of the Bath curse-texts which may be in British Celtic (see Mullen 2024b)—evidence in lowland British for diphthongization characteristic of Late Latin in northern Gaul which seems thence to have been taken into northern Gaulish Celtic (Schrijver 2005a; 2014, 49–52). Schrijver (2014, 53–6) suggests that the same diphthongization, in either the Latin or Celtic of the southeast, might account for aspects of the development of the place-name London (particularly in its Brittonic form, **Lundein*, Welsh *Llundain*). It is then perhaps unfortunate for his wider theory that this diphthongization, the sole feature identified as particularly characteristic of the Latin of the British lowland zone, is apparently not among the substrate influences carried into highland British.

¹³⁰ Woolf (2020).

¹³¹ Respectively, Schrijver (2002), 95; Sims-Williams (1990), 218. Note also the latter's comment (219) 'that the connection, if any, between the Vulgar Latin and neo-Brittonic quantity systems has never been demonstrated in detail'.

¹³² Schrijver (2007, 166–7) himself notes 'details differ' on several items in his proposed list of linked developments, including the quantity systems and the operation of syncope and apocope. See also Evans (1983), 972–4.

¹³³ McCone (1996), 158–65. Cf. Rhys (2020b), 39: 'we cannot rule out the possibility that it [the Brittonic quantity system] was an independent native development'. James (2014, 1, n. 2) likewise observes that in northern Britain syncope, apocope, and consonant-voicing all seem to have operated in similar ways as they did in the Brittonic of further south and west, but that an influx of lowland Latin-speaking refugees seems an unlikely explanation for them to the north of Hadrian's Wall.

the shift of the stress-accent to the penultimate syllable in British before *c.* 400 was one aspect of Latin influence,¹³⁴ then that prosodic alteration might have conditioned subsequent changes along similar lines in the two languages: those changes may have been working themselves out in Brittonic in the sixth century essentially independently of contemporary developments in spoken Latin on the Continent.¹³⁵

I do not, however, wish to conclude in quite so speculative a vein. The meagre evidence for Latin in Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries is such that a fair degree of speculation is inevitable. It can, however, be restated that the evidence for the continued use of spoken Latin in western Britain for a century and more after the break with Rome is not negligible, and that on that basis alone we must suppose it to have had a firm hold, at least as a language of bilinguals, in the lowlands, before the Anglo-Saxons obliterated what came before. Contrary to some older views, there seems very little reason to think that spoken Latin in Britain at the start of the fifth century would have differed much from contemporary spoken Latin in Gaul, except in so far as usage in Britain may have been marked by some British phonological features. No doubt there would have been variety in the extent to which such features may have been heard, just as there will surely have been variety of different kinds in the Latin spoken across the country and across society. Unfortunately, those relatively fine details cannot be made out from the faint impressions that survive.

¹³⁴ Schrijver (2002), 93.

¹³⁵ For the prosodic background to the Latin quantity changes, see Marotta (2022), 189; cf. also Leppänen and Alho (2018), 479, comparing the parallel processes in later Germanic languages, including Middle English open syllable lengthening. For a *c.* 600 date for the new quantity system in Brittonic, see Jackson (1953), 338–44; Sims-Williams (2016), 212 (retracting an earlier date suggested in Sims-Williams 1990, 250); Rhys (2020b), 39. It might be added that chronological considerations perhaps allow at least one more of the putative similarities between the languages—the voicing of *p*, *t*, and *k*—to have had a direct effect by *c.* 400 (see above pp. 255–6 and n. 92; also Sims-Williams 1990, 223–4); there may in that case be no need of a later highland substratum theory to account for this feature.

A Critical Afterword

Paul Russell

Now preserved in a shelter in the churchyard of Maughold Church, a few miles southeast of Ramsey on the Isle of Man, is a fragment of an inscription carved in mudstone on which there are two lines of runes and one line of ogam (Maughold I (MM 145)).¹ The first line reads [I]uan brist raisti þasir runur ('John the priest put up these runes'). The second line presents an almost complete *futhark* (a list of runic letters in order), and the last line the first of two groups of signs of the ogam alphabet, which breaks off at the right-hand edge, both being abecedarian in form. If John the priest is to be identified with *iuuan brist i kurnapal* ('John the priest in Kvernadálr (modern Cornaa)') (Maughold II (MM 144)), it may date to the latter part of the twelfth century.² Although rather later in date than much of the material discussed in this volume, it nicely illustrates a juxtaposition of scripts which can probably be taken as proxies for language. This and other inscriptions suggest that both Norse and Irish were spoken at this period in Man. Some one quarter of the attested names are Irish names, often in forms which indicate that they may be broadly contemporary with the inscriptions:³ *baþrik* (Padraic), *aþan-man* (Adamnán), *mal lümkun* (Mael Lomchon), *mal murü* (Mael Muire), *tufkals* (Dubgall) (the last three from the same inscription, Kirk Michael III (MM 130)).⁴ Though caution might be expressed about names as indicators of the language of their owner, the forms of the names seem to reflect their pronunciation.⁵ Historically, the Isle of Man was a linguistic melting-pot from an early period: another inscription at Maughold commemorates one *Guriat*, a Brittonic form suggesting the presence of at least some Brittonic speakers in Man.⁶

The Manx material provides possible evidence of Irish and Norse bilingualism in contrast to much of the evidence in western Europe, where Latin is often the major player. Furthermore, the presence of John the priest may be significant if we can take it as illustrating the Church's involvement in literacy and a reminder of the importance of Christianity in understanding the linguistic communities

¹ Barnes (2019), 203–7 (with plates 121–3); the runic transcriptions follow Barnes's conventions. I am grateful to the editors for their painstaking reading and thoughtful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

² Barnes (2019), 207–11, at 210. ³ Barnes (2019), 36.

⁴ Barnes (2019), 174–82. For another example, cf. the Bride inscription (Barnes 2019, 146–51).

⁵ Cf. Barnes (2019), 150. ⁶ Charles-Edwards (2013), 468.

(written and oral) of all of the regions covered in this volume. For present purposes, it illustrates the kind of question that can be asked of such material: for example, while John would have spoken Norse, he probably used Latin in the course of his ministry (the loanword *krus* figures in a number of inscriptions), but were there Irish speakers in his congregation? Kirk Michael III, which was noted above as containing Irish names, is a long inscription which records that Máel Lomchon erected a cross for his foster-mother, Máel Muire, daughter of Dubgall, who was married to Aðísl. Families with Irish naming patterns, then, clearly not only intermarried with those using Scandinavian names but also used Norse for epigraphic purposes. Now does that tell us something about language use? The answer is that we cannot know, but it should not stop us thinking imaginatively: what language(s) did they speak around the dinner table? What language(s) did Máel Lomchon's birth family speak? Probably Irish if his name is anything to go by. What language did they all speak when they went into Ramsey on market-day? The cultural and sociolinguistic questions that such evidence raises have yet to be explored in detail but present similar problems to the material discussed in this volume and deserve the same attention.

Most of the papers in this volume were first presented at a workshop at All Souls College in Oxford in 2018. Its aim was to bridge the gap between linguists and historians (or attempt to) in thinking about the social dimensions of language in the later-Roman and post-imperial West and the story of Latinization. As is noted in the Preface, there was 'promising scope for new work, ideas, and approaches to the problem.'⁷ In practice, as is hinted at in Chapter 1, while useful conversations can take place, the highly detailed and technical, almost word-by-word, approach of linguists is very difficult to integrate with broader wide-ranging historical approaches. That divide is still visible among many of the chapters in this volume, despite the valiant efforts of the editors. The contributions of Conant and Wood on language communities in North Africa and literary communities in fifth- to seventh-century Gaul are interesting, but do not really integrate a linguistic approach to the evidence they study. The chapters of Velázquez and Barrett on Iberia are noteworthy in discussing a similar range of material in almost diametrically different ways, linguistically and historically driven respectively. For example, although they discuss the same letter, from Faustinus to Paulus, preserved on a slate, even the text is set out on the page differently, with Velázquez presenting it line-by-line and Barrett as a simple paragraph of text.⁸ Indeed in subtle but significant ways they edit, translate, and interpret the texts differently. These approaches are in many ways complementary, but the reader will have to expend some effort to coordinate them and to work out why the same evidence can be seen simultaneously from different perspectives. Other chapters, for example, by

⁷ Preface, v.

⁸ Chapter 3, p. 69 and Chapter 4, pp. 103–104.

Blom, Haubrichs, and Stifter and White, have a more linguistic focus than those of Conant, Barrett, and Wood, and they also work within the established paradigms in their fields. They generally set about telling us what might be possible within the linguistic and epigraphic evidence, but relatively little about what could be done beyond that, for example the specific historical context and debates that might be usefully deployed to illuminate the linguistic evidence or be illuminated by it. The discussions are useful in setting out what we know and do not know in the current state of evidence, but they do not yet fully pursue the original interdisciplinary mission of the volume. They serve a useful purpose in making sometimes complex linguistic materials accessible and in highlighting the new epigraphic projects that they and others are pioneering. As the contributors themselves admit, however, there is work ahead to do. Again, as with the chapters on the Iberian Peninsula, the two contributions on Gaul by Blom and Wood give the impression of talking about different worlds: there is a geographical and chronological overlap, but little conceptual or methodological contact. The question of why it is possible to talk about Gaul in these two contrasting ways might have been itself worth exploring. One immediate response might be that Gaul was such a large and multicultural area that what could be said about Provence or Central Gaul would not have much application in Brittany or Aquitaine (or vice versa), but again the differences would be worth exploring.⁹ The final chapter by Parsons squares up to the issues of how we join up the dots. He comes to no firm conclusions, though we have a sense of what the issues are and explore a number of different approaches to the problems. In his case, he is writing about later- and post-Roman Britannia, on which there has been much excellent detailed recent work on the issues of reconstructing and understanding languages in its communities, a situation which is not necessarily replicated in the other regions.¹⁰ The trajectory of his approach, namely setting out the methodology and questioning the assumptions made of the evidence, is going in the right direction, and it is hoped that the other contributions in this volume, which lay the ground work for the other areas, will act as a catalyst for others to follow a similar route.

Some of the difficulties are systemic. If we are to make progress, in an ideal world several improbable things would need to happen. The most important—and this was one of the challenges laid down for the contributors—would be for linguists to learn how historians think and for historians to understand that the linguistic details, and how linguists think about them, are central to their approach. But neither is likely to happen in the present academic climate. Institutions like the idea of interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary but, with a few exceptions, tend to avoid appointing people to permanent departmental posts who see such activity as central to their work. The skill-sets of linguists, both the

⁹ For some discussion of this issue, see Chapter 1, pp. 8–9.

¹⁰ For details, see the copious references in Chapter 9.

practical language-learning and a grasp of the current methodological approaches, are substantial enough to keep someone busy for a career without also developing the kinds of expertise which historians regard as essential. Similarly, it may not always be obvious to historians how much linguistic approaches could enrich their study of what may feel to them like straightforwardly *historical* subjects. Historians need to be able to encourage linguists to read the historical texts as historians, and both probably need to learn from scholars of literature about the pitfalls of reading literary texts too literally.

However, not only do linguists and historians need to talk to each other, but linguists of one period and region should be talking to those whose interests lie in different periods and places. There are cases in this volume where the linguists could usefully create productive dialogues. For example, Haubrichs's work on local names in identifying 'Romance islands' in a sea of Germanic speakers might be usefully deployed in looking at early medieval Britain, or at the distribution of Gaelic and Old Norse local names in the Hebrides. In such cases, it is often easier to see the differences, and therefore assume there is nothing of value to be had, than to see through to the underlying similarities which might lead to productive dialogue.

Matters are also not helped by the fact that the linguistic study of the earlier stages of languages, often labelled unhelpfully 'philology', has for some time been regarded as being at the unfashionable end of the continuum of linguistic accomplishment. Work on language contact, whether in the detailed linguistic specifics or broadly conceived, has been seen as a branch of sociolinguistics and for languages in the modern world that makes sense. But, if one then tries to map that expertise back into the past to earlier stages of languages—even only to the nineteenth or eighteenth centuries, let alone into the medieval or classical forms of a language—the methodological frameworks at the very least require refinement.¹¹ Much good work on developing methodologies for ancient sociolinguistics has been done by scholars working within the classical world, where there is significant, though difficult, evidence to work with.¹² But here we come back to the point made above: the theoretically and methodologically important work that people increasingly want to do can work for the past only with a solid foundation of what might be regarded as old-fashioned (even unfashionable) expertise. Truly interdisciplinary research sets the bar even higher, for it requires those same kinds of expertise but in multiple disciplines.

Students of sociolinguistics in the modern world are never short of data—quite the reverse—and that is precisely where the study of early stages of languages fall

¹¹ It is revealing that a search of a library catalogue for titles containing 'handbook', 'language-contact', 'multilingualism', 'bilingualism' turned up eight volumes published in the last decade, none of which grant more than a nod, if that, towards the issue of how one works with languages in the past.

¹² See, for example, Adams (2003a, 2007, 2013); Clackson (2015); Mullen (2013a, 2016); and the essays in Dickey and Chahoud (2010).

short. Gaps in our knowledge are inevitable, so we have to work out how to bridge the gaping holes between the small islands of evidence. Moreover, we have to be able to squeeze out as much information as we can from what little evidence we have. Historians—and indeed archaeologists who are well trained in making the best of thin evidence—have a part to play in all of this, by offering possible scenarios which are consistent with both the linguistic evidence and with the useful parts of the various theories of, for example, bilingualism and multilingualism which have been developed over the years. We cannot hope to be able to work at the level of granularity possible if the informants are living and breathing, but general frameworks and ideas can be useful in shaping possible scenarios. Much useful work has been done in some fields, as Parsons notes, but it needs flexibility and a greater willingness to test the evidence with several different models, competing or otherwise (an excellent starting point concerning language contact being Mullen (2012)).

One issue to which the editors draw attention, and it is alluded to above, is the differing levels of detail at which linguists and historians often work: ‘linguists tend to be drawn to issues that, from a historian’s perspective, might seem marginal, given the weight of the Latin evidence...’¹³ Curiously, relatively few linguists have worked, and currently work, on the dominant language of western Europe in the late antique and early medieval period, namely Latin. Even for the imperial period, where the extant remains are more systematically published, Pirson (1901) is still the only scholarly monograph dedicated to the Latin of Gaul.¹⁴ Linguists are rightly interested in the linguistic remains of languages other than Latin, and that of course means that those who work within the cultures of western Europe often need to spend time in the margins where those linguistic remains reside. But that should not be at the expense of detailed work on the enormous quantity of material surviving in Latin. Writing as a Celticist, I am very used to the margins, as they do offer some of the most interesting and illuminating evidence, and indeed evidence about how people, not all of whom were native speakers of Latin, were thinking about the Latin they were reading and perhaps teaching.

To take a very literal example, much of the earliest evidence for the insular Celtic languages—and (for the purposes of this discussion) especially the Brittonic languages—survives between the lines and in the margins of Latin texts, such as Ovid, Martianus Capella, or Juvencus. They are an important source of evidence for a very particular kind of sociolinguistics, often in an educational and probably ecclesiastical environment, where we see speakers of Celtic languages struggling to explicate and annotate Latin texts, and their efforts, and especially

¹³ Chapter 1, p. 11.

¹⁴ For important other work, see Adams (2007) sections IV.3, V, X; Herman (1983). Mullen (2024a) discusses the latest research on the sociolinguistics of Roman Gaul.

their mistakes, can be very revealing.¹⁵ The activity is not, however, as immediate as it might appear. It has been shown that glossed manuscripts were often copied together with the glosses and other kinds of commentary (evidenced by copying errors in both the main texts and the glosses).¹⁶ In other instances, manuscripts were collated and glosses copied from one glossed manuscript to supplement the glosses in another copy, and in some cases translated from one language to another.¹⁷ Furthermore, in many cases, the bulk of the glosses is in Latin but the later layers are in the vernacular, and even the latter show evidence of being copied.¹⁸ This of course raises problems of dating: the thought-processes which produced a particular vernacular gloss may not be contemporary with the manuscript copy. In most cases we have to live with what we have, but it is sometimes possible to separate out layers of glossing by comparison with other manuscript copies. More immediate access, however, can be gained from a particular kind of gloss, if it is available: the dry-point gloss, where a gloss is written with a pointed-instrument without ink leaving only an indentation in the vellum.¹⁹ The point of such glosses is that the glossator knows they are there and can refer to them, but they are invisible to a copying scribe. Such glosses are rare (often because they have not been found), but they are likely to be the product of the thinking of one glossator on one manuscript. For example, Cambridge UL Ff. 4. 42 is a copy of Juvenecus glossed in Latin, Old Welsh, Old Irish, and perhaps also Old Breton. One dry-point gloss in late Old Irish had already been identified,²⁰ but in a recent inspection more glosses have come to light, possibly by the same scribe, and they have the potential to show us not only language being produced at a very particular point in time (c. 900) but also importantly the addition of more Irish glosses to a manuscript probably in south Wales, which raises all kinds of interesting historical and linguistic questions.

Even where we are fortunate to have plenty of evidence (which is usually in Latin or Greek), different problems present themselves. As noted in Chapter 1, the evidence provided by textual descriptions of language contact—the linguistic anecdote—has to be read with care. Chapter 1 begins with a fascinating linguistic anecdote about Priscus: at the court of Attila he reports that he encountered a smartly dressed Scythian (or at least Priscus assumed he was Scythian from his dress) who greeted him in Greek. Priscus' surprise is less that he was speaking a language different from that which Priscus supposed to be his native language, but rather that Greek was an unusual language for him to be speaking, Gothic or Latin being more common. It then turned out that in fact he really was a Greek merchant who had by chance ended up in Attila's court. But it is clear that, in a

¹⁵ On the revealing nature of mistakes by glossators, see Russell (2017), 84–5 and 166.

¹⁶ Russell (2017), 89–119; (2022). ¹⁷ Cf. Russell (2017), 114–18; (2022), 112–14.

¹⁸ See, for example, Russell (2017, 2022).

¹⁹ Cf. Nievergelt (2023) in a volume of essays which is a model of how such things can be done.

²⁰ McKee (2000), 196 and 154–5.

world where Greek-speakers were not expected to dress like barbarians, the mismatch between appearance and language had initially thrown Priscus' expectations. However, the very fact that he was attentive to language should perhaps make us wary of taking his comments at face value, and therein lies the difficulty of the traveller's tale, especially when it is recounted by a linguistically aware narrator: he would perhaps have been a much more reliable informant about something he was not interested in. Such anecdotes also present significant difficulties for linguists and historians interested in language, since they are not amenable to supplementary interrogation: what, for example, is the distinction between 'speaking Greek' and 'cultivating Hunnic, Gothic, or Latin'? What kind of Greek would those captives from Thrace or Illyria be imagined to have spoken?

Much of this volume is concerned with different types of evidence and explaining what information can be extracted from them. The anecdote is one such source, but with several additional layers of complexity, not the least of which is the need to decode the literary intentions of the author describing a linguistic interaction. All of this not only involves thinking in linguistic terms but also requires an ability to interpret the text probably in multiple ways, the simplest of which may be the broad and narrow context in which the anecdote appears. There are good reasons, then, for treating such anecdotes with some suspicion; while they figure in our sources and cry out to be exploited, in many cases the historian or literary scholar is better placed than the linguist to be able to draw out the nuanced conclusions that such passages have to offer. Even so, whoever may take the lead, it is in the nature of our fragmentary and episodic textual evidence that even when it offers intriguing material, it can admit of more than one interpretation, and often raises more questions than it answers.

That said, the anecdote can sometimes draw attention to things that others would not notice, and in this case, as the editors note, Priscus also refers to that most invisible of people, the interpreter.²¹ In and around positions of power such figures would have been very common, but they rarely surface in the literature, and often when they do it is not because of their linguistic skills but because they play some other role in the narrative, as is the case with *Vigilas*, described as a *hermēneús* in Priscus' account.²² Even so, such figures might also have acted as general go-betweens rather than necessarily having a linguistic role, and the range of meaning of *interpres* and *hermēneús* seem to support that.²³ To take a later example, in the medieval March of Wales, where speakers of Welsh, Norman French, and English would have been in regular contact, the presence of the *latimarius/latimerius*, usually rendered as 'translator, interpreter', is often noted. His function, however, seems to have been at least as much to do with protocol

²¹ This invisibility might help to explain their surprising absence from this volume, mentioned only by the editors (p. 2) and Velázquez (pp. 60 and 75).

²² Blockley (1981), fr. 11.1 (p. 245).

²³ Mairs (2020).

and the management of high-level political discussion as with the linguistic transaction itself, and he was sometimes of sufficiently high status that such roles were hereditary.²⁴ As with conversations between modern politicians, translators may well have been used even when each side could speak the other's language so as to ensure that no misunderstandings or confusions could arise: not all speakers of medieval Welsh, even if they had a working knowledge of French or English, would have been up to the nuances of complex political negotiation in their second language. In other words, we have to be aware that it does not follow that the use of interpreters indicates that each side was ignorant of the language of the other (unless that is explicitly stated), but rather they knew how important it was that the communication was understood by both sides not only clearly but, crucially, in the same way.

In addition, such narratives can bring textual problems. For example, as the editors observe, the much-discussed Gaulish words in the *Passion of St Symphorianus* may simply disappear when subject to textual and philological scrutiny, as they were almost certainly not part of the archetype.²⁵ There is a nice irony that, when scribes garble Latin they might produce something that looks like Gaulish, but when faced with something in a different language they are most likely to try and turn it into Latin, Greek, or whatever the matrix language is. More generally, and this applies particularly to the textual evidence from the medieval period: the standard editions of texts are frequently old and not always reliable, the product of different methodological worlds. To take the example of early medieval Britain, we really need new editions (and translations) of Gildas' *De excidio Britanniae* and Nennius' *Historia Brittonum* to replace the nineteenth-century editions. In short, if we want to access the sociolinguistic variety of the Latin to understand the diverse communities that used it (and vice versa), much more primary work in editing and making available the vast amount of texts in different registers needs to happen as the basis for wide-scale interdisciplinary analysis.

In my closing comments at the 2018 workshop, I observed that the excellent work of the linguists and historians present sometimes felt like ships passing in the night. The editors have taken care to ensure consistency and explanation of terminological use and avoidance of jargon, in an attempt to ensure that the contributions are intelligible to readers from different disciplinary backgrounds. However, in terms of methodology and, as we have seen, geographical range, there are still ways in which the chapters in this collection do not interact as closely with each other as they might. Methodologically, much is assumed by several of the contributors and little made explicit, despite the efforts of the editors in Chapter 1 to contextualize the work. One problem is that there are potentially

²⁴ Bullock-Davies (1966); cf. also Russell (2013), 81–2; (2019), 11–12. On the hereditary families, see, for example, Suppe (2002, 2007), and Russell (2019), 11, n. 17, for further work.

²⁵ Chapter 1, pp. 15–18.

(and necessarily) several methodologies and theoretical perspectives deployed and these, and the similarities and differences between them, need to be made more explicit, not least for other scholars to know how to coordinate information from the different chapters or to pursue their own work on different areas.

In the concluding chapter to a collection of essays on multilingualism in the Graeco-Roman worlds, Robin Osborne, talking of life in Athens, remarked:

Life in Athens, like life today, whether at the level of linguistic or of material culture, was sustained by a curious *bricolage*. This *bricolage* returns to being so much collecting flotsam or jetsam unless we reconstruct the nature of the world of cultural interaction in which what beachcombers pick up makes sense.²⁶

Another way of expressing that sentiment is that we need to work out how to join up the dots between the disparate fragments of evidence, even though, as suggested above, the siloization of modern academic research does nothing to encourage this kind of thinking, and a few days at a workshop, however stimulating, cannot break the barriers down. It can, however, sow some seeds even if they may take time to germinate. All this could give rise to lamentation and breast-beating, but at the same time it can be a catalyst to work out where the field can go beyond this. There is, admittedly, a particular problem in dealing with western Europe in the late antique and early medieval period, and that is the overwhelming dominance of a high-status Latin, the medium by which we gain access to that world. All the other vernacular languages either developed from Latin, ultimately acquiring an independent linguistic identity, or struggled to survive in its penumbra. Only out on the fringes of the Empire did other languages thrive, though even there Latin as the language of education and worship retained a powerful influence. How, then, do we make sense of all the bits that Osborne's beachcomber has picked up, and how can we fill the gaps? Linguistic theory can help, as can cultural modelling from different cultures elsewhere in Europe and beyond, but in the end the imaginative leaps have to be risked. It may well be that different combinations of models and evidence come up with different accounts of the cultural and linguistic interactions, but that is surely better than having no account at all because we have lacked the will to be imaginative.

²⁶ Osborne (2012), 334.

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