

Multilingualism and Language Choice in the Imperial Roman Army



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Abstract

This thesis is a sociolinguistic study of language choice in the Roman army, focused on the period between the first and the third centuries AD. Its main aims are to revisit our understanding of language choice in military administration, and to identify patterns of language choice in communication between soldiers and their associates. These themes are approached through a tripartite framework inspired by discourse analysis, which includes the concepts of audience, identity, and practicality. The case studies examined in the thesis show that Latin was not the only language of military administration, but played a vital role in written contexts where the army acted in its institutional function. This “institutional” use of Latin is reflected at the interpersonal level, where it enabled soldiers and their associates to express belonging to the military experience. Latin and other languages appear also as *lingue franche* and as markers of different types of identities, often connected with questions of prestige. Overall, this thesis enables us to refine our understanding of the reasons that prompted soldiers and their associates to use one language instead of another when a choice was available, and to renew our appreciation for cross-linguistic communication in Roman military environments.

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List of abbreviations

The list below contains the abbreviations that occur in the text and in the bibliography.

AE	Cagnat, R. et al. (eds.) 1888— <i>Année épigraphique</i> . Paris.
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> . Berlin.
BASP	<i>Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists</i> .
BGU	<i>Ägyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen (später Staatlichen) Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden</i> . Berlin.
BICS	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies</i> . New York.
BIFAO	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale</i> . Cairo.
CAG	Provost, M. et al. (eds.) 1988— <i>Carte Archéologique de la Gaule</i> . Paris.
CEL	Cugusi, P. (ed.) 1992 <i>Corpus Epistolarum Latinarum</i> . Florence.
ChLA	Bruckner, A., Marichal, R. et al. (eds.) 1954— <i>Chartae Latinae Antiquiores</i> . Basel.
CIIP	Cotton, H. M. et al. 2010— <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae-Palaestinae</i> Vols. 1-4. Berlin and New York.
CIL	Mommsen, T. et al. (eds.) 1863— <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> . Berlin.
CIS	De Voügé, M. et al. (eds.) 1881— <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum</i> . Paris.
CLE	Buecheler, F. (ed.) 1895-1897 <i>Carmina Latina Epigraphica</i> . Leipzig.
CPL	Cavenaile, R. (ed.) 1958 <i>Corpus Papyrorum Latinarum</i> . Wiesbaden.
CPNRB	Mullen, A. and P. Russell 2007— <i>Celtic Personal Names of Roman Britain</i> . Online database accessible at: www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/personalnames/ .
C.Th.	<i>Codex Theodosianus</i> .
DDbDP	<i>The Duke Databank of Documentary Papyri</i> . Online publication accessible at: www.papyri.info .
FFL	<i>French Foreign Legion</i> .
ICERV	Vives, J. (ed.) 1959 <i>Inscripciones cristianas de la Hispania romana y visigoda</i> . Barcelona.
ICUR	De Rossi, G. B. (ed.) 1857-1888 <i>Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores</i> . Vols. 1-2. Roma.
I.Did.	Cuvigny, H. 2012 “Les inscriptions de Didymoi (I.Did. 1-10)” in H. Cuvigny (ed.) <i>Didymoi: Une garnison romaine dans le désert Oriental d'Égypte</i> , Vol. 2. Cairo. 117-178.
IFAo	<i>Institut français d'archéologie orientale</i> . Cairo.
ILAlg	Gsell, S. et al. (eds.) 1922— <i>Inscriptions latines de l'Algérie</i> . Paris.
ILS	Dessau, H. (ed.) 1982-1916 <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> . Berlin.
ILSlov	Lovenjak, M. (ed.) 1998 <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Sloveniae</i> . Ljubljana.
Inventaire	Cantineau, J. (ed.) 1930-1936 <i>Inventaire des inscriptions de Palmyre</i> . Vols. 1-9. Beirut.
IRT	Reynolds, J. M. et al. (eds.) 1952— <i>Iscrizioni puniche della Tripolitania</i> . Rome.
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i> . Cambridge.
KAI	Donner, H. et al. 1962— <i>Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften</i> . Wiesbaden.
LGPN	Fraser, P. M., Matthews, E. et al. (eds.) 1987— <i>Lexicon of Greek Personal Names</i> . London.
O.Amst.	Bagnall, R. S., Sijpesteijn, P. J. and K.A. Worp (eds.) 1976 <i>Ostraka in Amsterdam Collections</i> . Zutphen.
O.Claud.	Bingen, J., Bülow-Jacobsen, A., Cockle, W. E. H., Cuvigny, H. et al. 1992-2009 <i>Mons Claudianus, Ostraca Graeca et Latina</i> . Vols. 1-4. Cairo.
O.Did.	Cuvigny, H. et al. 2012 <i>Didymoi. Une garnison romaine dans le désert Oriental d'Égypte, Vol. 2: Les Textes</i> . Cairo.
O.Flor.	Bagnall, R. S. (ed.) 1976 <i>The Florida Ostraka: Documents from the Army in Upper Egypt</i> . Durham, NC.

- O.Krok.* Cuvigny, H. (ed.) 2005 *Ostraca de Krokodilo: la correspondance militaire et sa circulation*. Cairo.
- O.Max.* Items included in Bülow-Jacobsen, A., Fournet, J.-B. and H. Cuvigny 1994 "The Identification of Myos Hormos. New Papyrological Evidence", *BIFAO* 94, 27-42.
- O.Price* Price, P. I. (ed.) 1955 "Some Roman Ostraca from Egypt", *Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 9-10, 159-167.
- ORBIS* *The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World*. Online database accessible at: <http://orbis.stanford.edu/>.
- PAT* Hillers, D. R. and E. Cussini (eds.) 1996 *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*. Baltimore and London.
- P.Bodl.* Salomons, R. P. (ed.) 1996 *Papyri Bodleianae I*, 1-171. Amsterdam.
- P.Brooklyn* Shelton, J. C. (ed.) 1992 *Greek and Latin Papyri, Ostraca, and Wooden Tablets in the Collection of the Brooklyn Museum*. Florence.
- P.Dura* Welles, C. B., Fink, R. O. and J. F. Gilliam (eds.) 1959 *The Excavations at Dura Europos conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report V, Part I, The Parchments and Papyri*. New Haven.
- P.Grenf.* Grenfell, B. P. and A. S. Hunt (eds.) 1897 *New Classical Fragments and Other Greek and Latin Papyri*. Oxford.
- P.Hamb.* Meyer, P. M. et al. (eds.) 1911 *Griechische Papyrusurkunden der Hamburger Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek*. Berlin.
- P.Hawara* Lüddeckens, E. et al. (eds.) 1998 *Demotische Urkunden aus Hawara*. Stuttgart.
- P.Louvre* Jördens, A. (ed.) 1998 *Griechische Papyri aus Soknopaiu Nesos*. Bonn.
- P.Masada* Cotton, H. M. et al. (eds.) 1989 *Masada II: the Latin and Greek Documents*. Jerusalem.
- P.Mich.* Youtie, H. C. and J. G. Winter (eds.) 1951 *Michigan Papyri, VIII. Papyri and Ostraca from Karanis*. Ann Arbor.
- P.Oxy.* Grenfell, B. P., Hunt, A. S. et al. (eds.) 1898— *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*. London.
- P.Tebt.* Grenfell, B. P., Hunt, A. S. et al. (eds.) 1902-2005 *The Tebtunis Papyri*. London.
- PSI* Vitelli, G., Norsa, M. et al. (eds.) 1912— *Papiri della Società Italiana*. Florence.
- P.Wisc.* Sijpesteijn, P. J. (ed.) 1967 and 1977 *The Wisconsin Papyri* Vols. 1-2. Leiden.
- P.Yale* Welles, C. B. et al. (eds.) 1967-2001 *Yale Papyri in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library*. New Haven and Toronto.
- RIB* Collingwood, R. G., Wright, R. P. et al. (eds.) 1965— *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*. Oxford.
- RIG* Lambert, P.-Y. (ed.) 2002 *Recueil des inscriptions Gauloises Vol. 2: Textes Gallo-Latins sur instrumentum*. Paris.
- RIL* Chabot, J. B. 1940 *Recueil des Inscriptions Libyques*. Paris.
- RMD* Roxan, M. and P. Holder (eds.) 1978-2006 *Roman Military Diplomas*. Vols. 1-5. London.
- RMR* Fink, R. O. (ed.) 1971 *Roman Military Records on Papyrus*. Cleveland.
- SB* Preisigke, F. et al. (eds.) 1915— *Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten*. Berlin.
- TLL* *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* 1900— Leipzig.
- T.Londin.* Tomlin, R. S. O. 2016 *Roman London's First Voices: Writing Tablets from the Bloomberg Excavations, 2010-14*. London.
- T.Luguv.* Tomlin, R. S. O. (ed.) 1998 "Roman manuscripts from Carlisle: the ink-written tablets", *Britannia* 29, 31-84.
- T.Vindol.* Bowman, A. K. and D. J. Thomas (eds.) 1983-2003 *The Vindolanda Writing-Tablets (Tabulae Vindolandenses* Vols. 1-3). London.
- Bowman, A. K., Thomas, D. J. and R. S. O. Tomlin (eds.) 2010 "The Vindolanda Writing-Tablets (Tabulae Vindolandenses IV, Part 1)", *Britannia* 41, 187-224.
- Bowman, A. K., Thomas, D. J. and R. S. O. Tomlin (eds.) 2011 "The Vindolanda Writing-Tablets (Tabulae Vindolandenses IV, Part 2)", *Britannia* 42, 113-144.
- T.Vindon.* Speidel, M. A. (ed.) 1996 *Die römischen Schreiftafeln von Vindonissa. Lateinische Texte des militärischen Alltags und ihre geschichtliche Bedeutung*. Brugg.

1. Introduction

1.1 Multiple languages and the Roman army¹

Multilingualism was a fact of life in the ancient world, as it is today.² A large field in modern linguistics since the 1980s, the use of multiple languages has recently become an area of greater interest among scholars of antiquity.³ The insights that linguistic studies give us into bilingualism and multilingualism in the modern world can be applied to ancient documents, revealing linguistic attitudes from the past that might otherwise remain unknown.

This thesis is a work that takes a sociolinguistic approach to the study of multilingualism in the imperial Roman army, here framed as a community of speech. The thesis does not pretend to be a study of the history of the Roman army per se, but rather aims to examine the ways in which communication worked within the army in different functional, geographical, and chronological contexts. This work has two main aims: the first is to revisit the question of language choice between Latin and Greek in Roman military administration; the second is to examine the question of language choice in written communication between soldiers and their associates, and in stone inscriptions from military contexts. These two issues are addressed by taking a sociolinguistic approach to sources, with particular reference

¹ Dates are AD and translations my own, unless otherwise stated.

² In his monograph on the subject, Edwards (1994 1) describes the natural development and historical relevance of multilingualism as follows: “Multilingualism is a powerful fact of life around the world, a circumstance arising, at the simplest level, from the need to communicate across speech communities (...) To be bilingual or multilingual is (...) a normal and unremarkable necessity for the majority of the world”. Edwards describes monolingualism, which is limited to native speakers of “languages of wider communication” (for example English, French, and Spanish) as “linguistic myopia”, as opposed to the norm.

³ See in particular the works by Adams, Dubuisson, and Rochette in the bibliography. For a recent edited volume on language and identity in the ancient Mediterranean, see Molinelli 2017.

to three factors that commonly influence language choice: (1) audience, that is the people for whom specific documents were written, more or less directly; (2) the identities which people performed, more or less intentionally, in writing specific types of text; and (3) the practicalities involved in the production of various types of writings in bi- and multilingual situations. Contextualising communication, with emphasis on the needs, the intentions, and the sentiments of the people who engaged in it, will allow us to unveil aspects of language choice which have not been considered by previous scholarship.⁴

Documents from military garrisons give us the image of the Roman army as an institution where, unsurprisingly, Latin was a dominant language. Yet, by approaching documents with sociolinguistic questions in mind, we can reveal a greater complexity of linguistic patterns and dynamics within Roman military communities. With this scope, the present thesis proposes to look at the army not as a military machine, but as a social group. The needs, aspirations, and voices of the people whose writings survive will be at the heart of the discussion.

The foci of the present study are primarily on language choice (i.e. the choice of one or more languages over others), linguistic competence (i.e. the ability, or lack thereof, to communicate in one or more languages), and, interconnected with the two, language as an intentional or accidental manifestation of identity. Social realities are reflected in language and the way this is used, so aspects of social and military history may necessarily be identified in the phenomena explored here. It is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis to provide an exhaustive treatment of the texts written by Roman soldiers and their associates. In order to maintain the focus of the discussion on bilingualism and language as a reflection of social

⁴ In particular Adams 2003a, Eck 2009, and M. A. Speidel 2018.

dynamics, only primary sources that speak to the issue of language choice and language use will be considered.

Attempting to define the languages spoken within the imperial Roman army would be as absurd as trying to define the languages of Europe over a period of four centuries. By recruiting manpower from across the Empire and living in close contact with civilians in the provinces where it operated, the army brought together an immense spectrum of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. As an institution of considerable size that varied greatly diachronically and diatopically, the Roman army, like all large-scale communities today, can be the subject of a sociolinguistic enquiry only if we take a case-study approach to primary sources, while retaining an appreciation of the broader context. This will allow us to investigate the languages that the army as an institution adopted in official contexts, and how bi- and multilingualism may have influenced day-to-day communication between soldiers and their associates.

1.2 Military communities

The imperial Roman army readily lends itself to sociological investigation because of both its coherence *and* its composite nature on the ethnic, social, cultural, and linguistic levels.⁵ In the first instance, one could single out the army from the rest of imperial society based on

⁵ Generally, on the Roman army and community dynamics, see MacMullen 1963, Fentress 1983, Alston 1995, Cherry 1998, Goldsworthy and Haynes 1999, Pollard 2000, Stoll 2001, and Fentress 2006. On the army in Tripolitania and Britain, see Mattingly 1994 and 2006. For a recent account of social relations in and with the Roman army, see Potter 2011. For a comprehensive account of the auxiliary troops, with the composite nature of the Roman army at the heart of the discussion, see Haynes 2013.

profession.⁶ Unlike in previous phases of Roman history, in the imperial period the army was professionalised: being a soldier meant being employed by the emperors for, among other duties, the defence, expansion, and policing of the imperial territories.⁷ Some have claimed that it was precisely with the professionalisation of the military service that the Roman world saw the development of the concept of “civilian” as a condition opposed to “being a soldier”.⁸ On a professional level, then, soldiers and non-soldiers can be neatly separated from one another. This division was reflected in some aspects of Roman law. For example, even though evidence suggests that military men did live with women and formed families with them while in service, soldiers’ marriage was technically forbidden by law until the reign of Claudius, and frowned upon until the Severan period.⁹ A legal privilege enjoyed by some soldiers, conversely, was the *ius testamenti*, the right to bequeath possessions by dictating a will before leaving for military campaigns.¹⁰ In his study of the communities at Dura Europos on

⁶ On military service as a profession in the Roman world, see Rocco 2016.

⁷ The transformation of the army into a full professional body by Augustus is described by Suetonius (*Aug.* 49.2): *quidquid autem ubique militum esset, ad certam stipendiorum praemiorumque formulam adstrinxit definitis pro gradu cuiusque et temporibus militiae et commodis missionum* “He bound all his soldiery, wherever this was stationed, to a fixed pay scale and allowances, having defined the period of service and the rewards for its completion for each rank”.

⁸ Carrié 1993 103.

⁹ On the marriage of Roman soldiers, see J. B. Campbell 1978 and Phang 2001.

¹⁰ On the *testamenta militaria*, see *Dig.* 37.13.1 and Gaius, *Inst.* 2.11. The privilege continued for one year after the award of the *honesta missio* (*Dig.* 29.1.15.5). The testamentary privilege of Roman soldiers was regulated differently under different emperors. A reading of the *Digesta* (29.1 prologue) suggests that Hadrian extended the *ius testamenti* to auxiliary soldiers, who could dictate their will in whichever language they preferred: *faciant igitur testamenta quo modo volent, faciant quo modo poterint sufficiatque ad bonorum suorum divisionem faciendam nuda voluntas testatoris* “May they make wills in whichever way they wish, and in whichever way is in their abilities; the sole will of the testator shall be enough to divide his own possessions”. On this, see Giuffrè 2007 fn. 17. Soldiers’ wills exist in both Latin and Greek. Some examples are: *P.Hawara* 41, a first-century Greek translation of a Latin original (Hawara, AD 15); *CPL* 221, the will of Antonius Silvanus from the *ala I Thracum Mauretana*, in Latin (Alexandria, AD 142); possibly *ChLA* 5.301 (Oxyrhynchus, AD 147) in Latin, with clear

the Euphrates, Pollard (2000 7-8) speaks of the “institutional identity” which soldiers developed during service. This sense of belonging perhaps originated with the obligations of military life to which soldiers were bound, including, to mention a few, sleeping in the forts with their messmates, honouring the emperors and the standards, and learning combat techniques. All such activities, which some have called military routine or *habitus*,¹¹ had a psychological impact on the way in which soldiers perceived and presented themselves to the world. This feeling of belonging to a military social group has been analysed by James (1999) who, based on a sociological framework proposed by Anderson (1983), compared it to the sentiments of nationalism. In this view, Roman army is seen as an “imagined community”, that is, a social construct based on the ideological sentiments shared by a group of individuals who may or may not be physically close to one another.

Emphasis on the “otherness” of soldiers had led some to formulate dogmatic interpretations of the way in which the army operated in imperial society. Shaw (1983) stressed the exclusiveness of military life and the impact that this had on individual soldiers, defining the army as a “total institution”; that is, a community “in which members are immersed and enclosed – physically or symbolically – for a long period of time, to the exclusion of other attachments, and which aims fundamentally to change their identities”.¹²

interference from Greek (e.g. *angel*[. at line 4 is based on the Greek ἀνεκλόγιστος, the designation of an heir); *BGU* 1.326, the Greek testament of C. Longinus Castor, veteran of the Misene fleet, based on a Latin original (Karais, AD 194); a second-century record of inheritance from a military camp, in Latin (*P.Mich.* 435); the fragmentary second-century *P.Mich.* 437, also in Latin. Consider also the *rogatio testis ad testamentum signandum* at *P.Mich.* 446, in Latin; and *BGU* 7.1662, the payment of the legacy of Marcus Valerius Turbo to his children (Ptolemais Euergetis, AD 181). For a comprehensive treatment of soldiers’ wills, addressing both juridical and documentary evidence, see Amelotti 1966 81-110. See also J. B. Campbell 1984 210-229, and Phang 2001 217-221.

¹¹ Giddens 1984 and Bourdieu 1990.

¹² Scott 2011 1. The term “total institution” was first coined by Goffman (1961).

In Shaw's view, the army's inward-looking character and customs made soldiers "identif[y] themselves wholly with the interest of their commanding officers and of a militaristic central government against any local interest".¹³ This interpretation is unrealistic for two main reasons. Firstly, a vision of the Roman army as inward-looking is not entirely in line with the architecture and material culture of the spaces where soldiers lived: even though military forts, and especially the barracks where soldiers lived, could be defined as "inward-looking" and segregated, extramural settlements developed around many military garrisons, and soldiers' contact with civilians was a natural part of military life. From wives and soldiers' children to paramilitary personnel, the army community was also composed of non-soldiers. Secondly, the concept of "total institution" over-emphasises homogeneity, implying that the army imposed customs and beliefs on its members without allowing them to express their cultural backgrounds. This is again not reflected in the evidence, as we will see in the following paragraphs.

While the soldier was certainly "other" from the civilian in many respects, in practical terms these two groups, neither of which was homogeneous, existed and operated together. Arguably, the first successful framework to look at the Roman army in its social dimension was proposed by MacMullen (1984) who, in an article exploring the psychology of Roman legionary soldiers, emphasised the integration of the army in civil society. MacMullen saw the army as an "occupational community".¹⁴ Occupational communities are, by definition, groups of people brought together by a profession, including those who do not themselves directly practise it. A fundamental trait of these groups is that their members "are affected by their work in such a way that their non-work lives are permeated by their work relationships,

¹³ Shaw 1983 148.

¹⁴ The term has been adopted also by Haynes (2013 10-11).

interests and values".¹⁵ This description chimes with Roman military communities, which were themselves formed of soldiers, paramilitary personnel, and civilians whose life revolved around military forts. The presence of the army represented a potential source of wealth for local civilians, with the consequence that civilian settlements sometimes naturally developed in proximity to military forts:¹⁶ the *canabae* were urban-like spaces built outside legionary fortresses, some of which were so large that they could become *municipia* or *coloniae*;¹⁷ the *vici* are generally smaller in size and tended to be built around auxiliary forts.¹⁸ Recent archaeological studies have shed new light on the presence of women and children within military forts themselves, making the boundaries between spaces dedicated to soldiers and civilian settlements all the more blurry.¹⁹ Material culture has enabled archaeologists not only to appreciate the presence of women at military bases, but also to identify them as active and productive members of military communities.²⁰ A case in point was Grata, a woman who was involved in the supply of water and other goods to military forts in the Egyptian desert in the

¹⁵ Salman 1974 19.

¹⁶ On these, see Poulter 1989.

¹⁷ Salway 1965 9-11.

¹⁸ In the western provinces, it is more common to encounter military forts with adjacent civilian agglomerations than without. On this, see C. S. Sommer 1989 25. On the military *vici* and *canabae*, see also Davies 1991 and Bérard 1993.

¹⁹ For a recent account of children's shoes in the military camps at Vindolanda, see Greene 2014. Le Bohec (1994 228) observes that the great majority of the epitaphs of soldiers from the *legio III Augusta* in Numidia included mentions of wives. For a detailed discussion of soldiers' servants, see M. P. Speidel 1989. On women following soldiers on deployment, see M. P. Speidel 1977. For soldiers' wives exchanging written messages in northern Britain, see the well-known example of a birthday invitation at *T. Vindol.* 291. Cuvigny (2003 374-394) examines evidence for women living in contact with soldiers in the Egyptian desert. On this, consider also the evidence from Vindonissa examined by M. A. Speidel (1996).

²⁰ Allison 2005, 2006, and 2013.

second century (*O.Claud.* 126).²¹ Another strong link between military and civilians were veteran settlements. Despite being de facto composed of discharged soldiers and their associates, these could themselves be described as military communities, for most of their members had at some point been employed in the army. At the other end of their careers, the *tirones*, soldiers in probation, were not yet soldiers as such, and represented another grey area between the army as an institution and civil life. Speaking of a “community of soldiers” is therefore not entirely satisfactory when considering the Roman army as a social group. Military communities extended beyond soldiers, including other people who were associated with the army personally or professionally.

Yet focusing on the army’s integration with, instead of its segregation from, civil life can be equally misleading if adopted as an absolute model of investigation. As Pollard (2000 7) reminds us, “‘integrated’ and ‘separate’ models of the army’s involvement in provincial civilian life are polar extremes. Reality lies in between them”. The contrast between soldiers and civilians in the Roman Empire was not constant: depending on context, this opposition could be anything from clear cut to undefinable. The Empire was too culturally and socially heterogeneous for the military experience to be the same everywhere: some units were deployed in the Egyptian desert, others served in urban centres.²² Tacitus (*Hist.* 2.80.5) wrote that military life was much harsher in first-century Germany than in Syria because of the climate and the tougher obligations of service. Drawing on post-colonial discourse,²³ Mattingly (2011) has addressed this discordance speaking of the “discrepant experiences” of the social groups that composed Roman society. Archaeological evidence for the diversity of

²¹ § 3.2.1.

²² Mattingly 1997, 2006, and 2011; Haynes 2013 20-21.

²³ Said 1993.

experience across units has led James (1999) to argue that it is perhaps not even legitimate to speak of *one* Roman army, and that we should perhaps think of it as a multitude of military communities. The Romans themselves do not seem to have had a noun in the singular to refer to their troops, preferring to speak of *exercitūs* in the plural, *legiones*, *auxilia*, *numeri*, and *milites*.²⁴

The plurality of the Roman army is a concept that has recently been developed by Haynes (2013) and is key to a study of sociolinguistic dynamics among military communities. A fundamental concept advanced by Haynes is that of “incorporation”, a term that “conveys the force with which Roman systems of classification ordered and integrated individuals into provincial society, but does not conflate this pull with debates about the notional ‘Romanity’ of different patterns of material culture”.²⁵ Throughout this study we will see that incorporation is a concept reflected in many of the linguistic behaviours of military people in the Roman Empire. In particular, incorporation can be appreciated in the linguistic subgroups within the army, that is speech communities of military people brought together by the use of minority languages which, unlike Latin and Greek, were not widely spoken and written around the Empire.²⁶

Soldiers brought diversity into the army, transporting local traditions and languages around the Empire and acquiring new ones. This is true for the imperial army at its earliest stages and throughout the imperial period. The military profession would necessarily expose soldiers and their associates to some elements of “central” Roman tradition;²⁷ but, via the

²⁴ James 1999 14.

²⁵ Haynes 2013 22-23.

²⁶ These will be dealt with in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

²⁷ On the exposure of soldiers to Roman traditions through military ideals, see James 2001.

army, most of them came into contact with versions of Roman culture typical of the provinces where they served. Diverse cultural backgrounds were expressed through multiple channels in military communities, including religious practice,²⁸ fighting techniques,²⁹ and dress.³⁰

Community life has an impact on the way individuals and subgroups perceive and present themselves. It has been noted that the sharp differences in dress between soldiers noticeable in the material culture of the Julio-Claudian period became increasingly less evident in the second and third centuries.³¹ There was a need for soldiers to fit in with their messmates, and it is possible that this made them emulate one another in appearance and dress. The way in which Roman soldiers maintained and transformed their customs via contact with the army is, again, a fundamental element of the community dynamics which this thesis will explore by looking at evidence for language. Did soldiers feel the need to “fit in” linguistically, too? This is a question addressed several times in this thesis.

Another level of complexity that speaks to the community dynamics within the Roman

²⁸ Some eastern cults became very popular among military enclaves, and it is possible that these were brought into the army by soldiers themselves. For Iuppiter Dolichenus, an eastern cult particularly popular among Roman soldiers, see M. P. Speidel 1978. On Mithraism in the army, see M. P. Speidel 1980.

²⁹ Tacitus (*Hist* 4.12), for example, tells us about the Batavian troops in the first century, which included a selected body of cavalrymen with excellent swimming techniques, so skilled that they could cross rivers without breaking their formations. On the swimming techniques of the Batavians, see also Dio 69.9 and [Ps]Mauricius *Strategikon* 11, prologue.

³⁰ Iconography and material culture show that some units dressed distinctively. Syrian archers, for example, wore specific armour because it enabled them to perform well in their military speciality. Haynes 2013 292-296. On Syrian armour, see James 2004.

³¹ In an analysis of the statue of the “Warrior of Vachères” (late first century), originally thought to represent the quintessential Gallic warrior, Haynes (2013 243-245) points out that elements typical of Celtic armour found in this statue resemble the dress of Rome’s *auxilia* up to the end of the second century. This shows that indigenous elements could be “Roman” when they were adopted by Roman troops without losing their local legacy. Again, the concept of incorporation comes across clearly in this example.

military is the range of ranks and social strata that one finds within it. Military commanders could be members of the central or provincial elites. Conversely, at the bottom of the institutional hierarchy were ordinary soldiers, often recruited from the lower strata of society. One of the most significant diachronic changes that the army underwent in the imperial period concerns precisely the social origins of military commanders: we notice a progressive shift from a commanding class of senatorial rank to a less elitist assignment of roles of command.³² Some positions had higher status associated with them, the perception of which appears again to have changed over time. In second-century Egypt, for example, a soldier wrote home expressing frustration about being enrolled in the fleet instead of a legionary unit (*P.Mich.* 467, see § 3.4). In this period legionary forces still enjoyed a higher social prestige than the auxiliaries and the navy. In the third century, however, auxiliary cavalry forces might have possibly had a higher standing than legionary infantrymen.³³ The perception of which military posts were prestigious and appealing was itself circumstantial: serving in an urban centre as an infantryman might have been more appealing than holding a role with higher responsibilities in the middle of the desert, where soldiers are known to have endured harsher living conditions.

Becoming part of a military community was, in many ways, an opportunity for social mobility and financial security. Until the third century, military service represented a vehicle to citizenship rights, which were awarded to non-citizen soldiers and their children in recognition of their loyalty and service to Rome.³⁴ But there were more benefits to being a soldier. The epitaph of a *primuspilus* recovered in a base in Numidia (*AE* 1928 37) is

³² Le Bohec 1994 258.

³³ On status differentiation within the army, see Haynes 2013 251-270.

³⁴ On the conferment of citizenship rights to soldiers at the end of service, see § 2.2.1.

particularly telling of the personal satisfaction and social mobility that the military service could bring to some: “I wanted to hold the dead bodies of the Dacians, and I held them; I wanted to sit on the seat of peace, and I sat on it; I wanted to march in glorious triumphs, and I did; I wanted to have the financial commodities of a *primuspilus*, and I had them; I wanted to see the Nymphs naked, and I saw them”. Opportunities for soldiers did not end with discharge. Whatever their rank at the moment of enlistment, veterans could become active members of the political scene in civil communities, defying the rigidities of social hierarchies.³⁵ Service in the army also offered cultural opportunities, enabling soldiers to develop skills that they might have not acquired outside the military. Literacy and numeracy are arguably the most significant of these. Military operations required the production of a high number of written documents on a daily basis, often requiring basic numeracy (e.g. for turns of guard, purchase of goods, calculations of manpower, etc.) and sometimes more sophisticated numerical skills (e.g. for the building of forts, siege engines, etc.). There is abundant evidence for soldiers’ writing, including writing exercises,³⁶ assignment of orders and passwords,³⁷ and graffiti.³⁸ It has been suggested that the introduction of military writing in peripheral communities increased the opportunities for the propagation of literacy throughout the Empire.³⁹

The multiple identities that were brought into and expressed within Roman military

³⁵ See, for example, a second-century inscription from Numidia suggesting that veteran *decuriones* could become members of the *curia veteranorum* (CIL 8.18214).

³⁶ See, for example, *O.Claud.* 190, and *T.Vindol.* 118.

³⁷ For passwords and watches assigned in written form at Mons Claudianus, see § 2.5.2. On the assignment of orders, see Best 1966.

³⁸ Buonopane 2012.

³⁹ Bowman 1994 122-123.

communities make the army an extremely fertile ground for investigating social relations through language. Many theoretical frameworks have been proposed to interpret the impact that Roman military communities had on imperial society, and the impact that the experience of the army had on military people. Here, the army will be considered from two different angles, neither of which is intended to be strictly separated from the other. The first is the institutional one, which allows us to explore the linguistic attitudes performed by military units as official embodiments of Rome across the Empire. The second is the interpersonal one. This considers individuals and groups of military people, their lived experiences and aspirations, assessing how these were expressed and reflected through language choice in different social settings. Approaching the subject from these two angles, it will be possible to conduct an investigation of language choice in the army, evaluating its consistency and variation in a range of contexts.

1.3 The problem: one institution, many languages

The army was a Roman institution. As such, it was part of a world that officially functioned in two languages: Latin and Greek.⁴⁰ At the institutional level and among the elites, the two languages of Rome were both commonly used, often alternately according to the different domains in which communication took place.⁴¹ For example, Classical Greek culture was

⁴⁰ On the relationship between Latin and Greek in the imperial period, see Rochette 1997a, Adams 2003a, Clackson and Horrocks 2007.

⁴¹ "Domain" is a term used in sociolinguistics to define the contexts in which language is used. Fishman (1972) theorised that there are five primary domains of language use: family, friendship, religion, education, and employment. According to Fishman, when combined with other parameters (namely addressee, setting, and topic), domains can be used as main guidelines to investigate discourse and language choice among communities of speech.

admired across the Roman world and Roman elites were expected to be competent in Greek and familiar with Greek literature and the arts.⁴² The Roman admiration for all things Greek ran so deep that it has often been described as an “inferiority complex”.⁴³ But the Romans were also the conquerors of the Greek-speaking world, so their admiration was combined with a belief that they were, in some respects, superior to the Greeks, especially contemporary ones. Following their eastern conquests, the Romans adopted a laissez-faire language policy (or a non-policy, one could say), and did not impose the use of Latin on the Greek-speaking provinces.⁴⁴ This was at once a practical expedient, a sign of respect towards the Greek language, and possibly an assertion of confidence and of their ability to control the world. In the words of Kaimio (1979 111), by adopting this behaviour the Romans wanted to prove that “a simple matter like a foreign language posed no problems for these superhuman beings [i.e. the Romans]”. Literary sources suggest that different emperors had varying attitudes towards language choice in specific contexts,⁴⁵ but there is no evidence for any official language policies being implemented during the republican or imperial periods. It is therefore difficult to postulate that the army differed from other institutions in its approach

⁴² For a recent study of the relationship between Latin and Greek in the construction of “Romanness”, see Elder and Mullen forthcoming.

⁴³ Dubuisson 1981a and 1981b.

⁴⁴ Rochette 2011a and 2011b.

⁴⁵ Literary records reveal that attitudes towards the use of Greek were not consistent throughout the imperial period. Augustus was keen on the study of Greek literature, as a philhellenist, but he is said to have refused to ever write Greek (Suet. *Aug.* 89). Claudius is said to have deprived a legate from Lycia of Roman citizenship for his inability to speak Latin (Dio 60.17.4 and Suet. *Claud.* 16.2), a hyperbolic anecdote that reveals the contrasting sentiments towards the use of Greek in certain linguistic domains in Roman society. Nero delivered official speeches in the Greek colonies in Greek (Suet. *Nero* 7), while Tiberius and Valerius Maximus are said to have opposed the use of Greek in the Senate (Suet. *Tib.* 71, and Val. Max. 2.2.3). See Elder and Mullen forthcoming, especially chapter 5, for detailed discussion of the linguistic politics of emperors.

to language choice. Like other aspects of imperial administration, it is more realistic to think that the official business of the army was carried out in either Latin or Greek (or both), mostly depending on the geographical context.

Latin and Greek were used by Roman institutions and elites against a complex backdrop of multilingualism that characterised broader imperial society. In the West, Latin progressively began to be used alongside – and, in some places, instead of – indigenous languages, a status that, by the imperial period, Greek had already acquired across the eastern provinces.⁴⁶ Latin spread in diverse, non-linear patterns. Some communities adopted it during the late Republic; others (for example, in isolated, rural, northern areas) resisted it until later or completely. Social status was often key in the encounter and adoption of new languages. Generally speaking, elites in the provinces had easier access to Roman culture, but groups from lower social strata such as merchants and slaves were also among the early adopters of Latin in the West. Since the languages in contact with Latin were multiple, the results of the process of Latinization were varied, with different lexical, syntactical, and morphological elements emerging in the Latin varieties of the provinces.⁴⁷ The linguistic realities experienced by military communities differed across the Empire. There were areas of military stationing and activity in which Latin and Greek were dominant languages, others in which neither was an effective means of communication with the local population. Moreover, military communities were themselves composed of people with a diverse range of linguistic backgrounds, who brought diversity into the army and created vehicles for the propagation of multiple languages across the Empire.

⁴⁶ On the encounter between Latin, Greek, and other languages, see Adams, Janse and Swain 2002, Adams 2003a, Clackson and Horrocks 2007, Mullen and James 2012, Mullen 2013a, Clackson 2015.

⁴⁷ Adams 2007.

Attention to the multilingualism of the army initially arose among scholars in relation to technical vocabulary. The army needed words to describe its activities and equipment, which resulted in the coinage or adoption of nouns borrowed or calqued from other languages, including (but not exclusively) Greek.⁴⁸ At the same time, we can infer, soldiers developed colloquialisms and “in-group” language which they used in day-to-day military life. Scholarly interest in specific features of military language dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century, when corpora of Latin military words collected from literary and epigraphic sources were first published.⁴⁹ These lexica included neologisms such as *caput porcinum* “a pig’s head”, which indicated a military formation.⁵⁰ The word *concibones*, a compound of *cum* “with” and *cibus* “food”, meaning “meal companions”, is frequently attested and is a calque of a Germanic word.⁵¹ Another calque from Old High German is *companio*, a compound of *cum* “with” and *panis* “loaf”.⁵² Not uncommon in soldiers’ talk are semantic shifts too, with words acquiring peculiar meanings in military contexts. Consider for example *cuniculus* “rabbit”, also meaning “underground passage” indicating a pit for defence,⁵³ and *barritus* “an elephant’s cry” meaning “war cry”.⁵⁴ The military community

⁴⁸ On borrowing and calques, see § 1.6.2.

⁴⁹ I am aware of Kempf 1901 and Heraeus 1937.

⁵⁰ Ammianus (17.13.9) writes that this word was coined by the *simplicitas militaris*, a phrase used to describe the simple language of soldiers. In Vegetius (3.19) the term is used as a synonym of *cuneus* “battalion” lit. “wedge”, which derived from the pointed formation that allowed the army to penetrate the enemy’s troops.

⁵¹ See, for example, *CIL* 8.9060. The word is structurally paralleled in Old High German *gimazzo* “table companion”, where *gim* is a collective prefix and *mazz* means “food”. On this, see Adams 2003a 279.

⁵² Adams 2003a 279. On military terms with Germanic influence, see also D. H. Green 1998 185-186.

⁵³ Vegetius 2.11, 4.5, and 4.20. The men deputed to the creation of such constructions were called *cuniculares* (Ammianus 24.4.21-22 and Vegetius 2.11).

⁵⁴ Tacitus (*Ger.* 3.1) uses the term in reference to the Germans’ war cry. The *barritus* was inherited from the Germans and used within the auxiliary forces. On this, see Ammianus 16.12.43, 21.13.15, 26.7.17, and 31.7.11, Vegetius 3.18, and Arrian *Tactica* 44.1. In the *Anabasis Alexandri* (5.10), Arrian speaks of elephants’ cries as the

borrowed words from different languages to speak of wine consumption, as we gather from *caucia*, a word imported from Britain indicating a type of wine, and *cilliba*, a Greek word used by soldiers to indicate tables for the consumption of wine.⁵⁵ Another example of borrowing is the word *bineta* “fucker”, from the Greek βινεῖν “to fuck”, which is common in soldiers’ graffiti.⁵⁶

Some scholars have attempted to divide Roman military language between *sermo militaris*, defined as the technical terminology used in the army, and *sermo castrensis*, which allegedly collects the slang that developed among soldiers.⁵⁷ This subdivision of the military language into fixed artificial categories did not lead to any real advancement in the linguistic study of the Roman army, remaining little more than a reference for literary studies.⁵⁸ Yet, even if we abandon this approach to the subject in favour of a more sociological vision, the language of the Roman army cannot be completely encapsulated in loose definitions such as the one that has recently described it as a “demotic Latin dialect filled with military slang and technical jargon, much derived from the language of foreign auxiliaries”.⁵⁹ Leaving aside the problematic expression “demotic Latin dialect”, this definition does to a certain extent do justice to the linguistic diversity of the Roman army, recognising that its troops, by grouping men from different linguistic backgrounds, could be vectors of language change, a

war cry of the Indians, as opposed to the Greeks’ war cry. It is possible that Roman writers used the term to indicate specifically foreign-sounding war cries. Further on this, see M. P. Speidel 2004 98-100.

⁵⁵ Varro *Ling. Lat.* 5.1.26.

⁵⁶ Buonopane 2012 12.

⁵⁷ On *sermo militaris*, see De Meo 1986. On *sermo castrensis*, see Mosci Sassi 1983 and del Barrio Vega 2007. On the language of gladiators, see Mosci Sassi 1992. On the technical languages of Latin more in general, and Sconocchia and Toneatto 1997.

⁵⁸ Mosci Sassi 1983 28, and Perez Castro 2005. Cf. Haynes 2013 301-311.

⁵⁹ James 2013 118.

phenomenon that has also been studied in modern armies.⁶⁰ Yet, if such a definition of the military language were entirely valid, it would have some serious implications: did all Roman soldiers communicate in Latin, or variants of it? And did all Roman units function in Latin? An analysis of literary and documentary sources relating to the Roman military does not necessarily lead to positive answers to such questions, showing that generalising conceptualisations of a “military language” might not be the way forward in a linguistic enquiry of the Roman army.

Often overlooked in scholarship on military matters, the issue of multilingualism in the Roman army has only recently started to receive the attention of linguists and social historians. Such a delay could be imputed to the fact that only relatively new methods to study language and society have enabled a well-informed approach to matters of bi- and multilingualism in ancient writings. However, the deeply-rooted assumption that Latin was the undisputed official language of the Roman forces is probably the overriding factor explaining the indifference of much scholarship towards the multilingualism of the Roman troops. And this assumption has long provided a perfectly plausible, albeit simplistic, explanation for the good functioning of the Roman army despite its intrinsic linguistic diversity.

In *Bilingualism and the Latin Language*, Adams (2003a 600) quotes the following statements to exemplify the approach of modern scholars to the subject of language in the

⁶⁰ For instance, Italian has seen numerous changes caused by military environments. After the unification of Italy in 1861, the Italian language adopted dialectal expressions from Turin and Naples (the two major sites of military recruitment), new words coined at military bases and, following contact with Anglophone armies during the First World War, calques from English. On this, see De Bono 1931 132-134, and Renzi 1967a and 1967b. Renzi (1966 130) notes that Italian soldiers actively identified themselves as soldiers by using military jargon in conversation in civilian contexts.

Roman military: “Latin was the language regularly used within the army” (Welles, Fink and Gilliam 1959 235); “The internal administrative affairs were commonly carried out in Latin, while civil affairs were conducted in Greek” (Rea at *P.Oxy.* 50.3577); “In the East as in the West Latin was the language of the army” (Baldson 1979 131); and “The official language of the documents produced by the army is Latin” (translation of Rochette 1997a 147). The evidence considered by Adams in his study shows that all such statements, mainly advanced in publications concerned with historical rather than linguistic issues, are inaccurate and in need of reformulation. As far as we know, there is no evidence for an official language policy that imposed the use of Latin instead of other languages for military operations and administration. The image that military administrative documents present us with is that of an army that, much like the Roman Empire as a whole, was run in both Latin and Greek.

Until recently, there has also been a general tendency to over-simplify the diversity of the Roman troops, both linguistic and cultural. Not uncommonly one finds assertions such as “in normal circumstances, a certain degree of Latinization was a condition which recruits to the Roman army, at least to the legions, had to fulfil”.⁶¹ Similarly, upon describing the process of military recruitment, Le Bohec (1994 72) claims that it “began with a physical examination in which the examiner checked the general good shape of the young man (...) then authorities carried out an intellectual examination; in order to serve the recruit had to be able to understand Latin, since it was the language of command in the whole Empire”. Le Bohec does not offer primary evidence in support of such statements.⁶² Even Vegetius’ treatise *de re militari*, which describes the process of recruitment of Roman soldiers in detail, makes no mention of requirements for linguistic competence for enlistment in the army.

⁶¹ Kaimio 1979 153.

⁶² Cf. Vegetius 2.20, discussed in § 1.6.4.

Knowledge of Latin would certainly have increased the chances of career advancement, and, in many contexts, it would have ensured more effective communication. During his military service, the future emperor Maximinus Thrax is said to have addressed Septimius Severus in a Thracian-sounding variant of Latin,⁶³ and even though this account cannot be taken as factual evidence, it at least reveals that ancient writers were not completely indifferent to the linguistic competence of soldiers who joined the Roman army. Officers of higher ranks are also known to have spoken Latin as a second language. Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.10.3) recounts that a commander of Germanic origins, in a heated discussion with his brother, *pleraque Latino sermone interiaciebat*, meaning that he switched from one language to another. This suggests that during his military career, the officer had reached fluency in Latin, which interfered with his mother tongue.⁶⁴ The phenomenon is attested also at the African garrison of Bu Njem, where two *carmina epigraphica* provide evidence for centurions who had perhaps gained command of the Latin language to the point of attempting (almost successfully) the composition of Latin verse (§ 5.6).

As far as we know, every language spoken across the Empire had the potential to be spoken among the Roman troops, in that soldiers and their associates brought their native language(s) into the Roman units upon joining them, adding to the linguistic diversity of the whole military community. There is also diachronic change to consider. The spread of Latin increased over time, especially in the western provinces, and therefore the linguistic landscape around military communities was itself constantly evolving. Approaching documentary evidence with such premises in mind can result in a more sophisticated

⁶³ *HA Max.* 2.5.

⁶⁴ On interference, see § 1.6.2.

appreciation of the interaction between languages, identities, and community dynamics in the Roman army.

The general reluctance of scholars to acknowledge multilingualism in the Roman troops might also be due, in part, to the assumptions that the use of multiple languages could adversely affect the efficiency and stability of an army. Yet there are plenty of examples from the past and the present which show that multilingual forces can function well without strict language policies. For example, in the regulations of today's Swiss army, the only note on language can be translated as "to the extent possible, officers shall use the native language of the subordinates. In multilingual units, one must use the literary language",⁶⁵ suggesting a flexible attitude towards language choice and usage. The Swiss army is known to rely mostly on passive linguistic competence, which is the ability of individuals to understand one language without necessarily being able to speak it in response.⁶⁶ One could question the efficiency of this approach as a method to run an army, noting that the Swiss forces are traditionally not involved in major military operations, and can tell us little about multilingualism in battle contexts. But a number of modern armies present us with even more diverse linguistic realities than the Swiss one, not necessarily sacrificing their military efficiency.

However, in specific situations, and especially in times of crisis during military operations, multilingualism *can* undoubtedly destabilise the order of an army. For example,

⁶⁵ *Règlement de service de l'armée Suisse* (RS 1994). Note that the French and the Italian versions of the article read "literary language", whereas the German one reads "Schrift-beziehungsweise Hochsprache" which means "written or as appropriate high-standard language". This rule is aimed at limiting the use of Swiss German dialects in multilingual units. These, although mutually intelligible to Swiss German speakers, are not necessarily understood by speakers of French and Italian. On this, see Kreis and Lüdi 2009 7.

⁶⁶ Berthele and Wittlin 2013.

it is known to NATO military officers that, under stressful circumstances, there is a tendency to revert to national languages for technical operational vocabulary, abandoning the more common use of French and English.⁶⁷ Similarly, Tacitus (*Hist.* 2.37 and 3.33) writes about the difficulties caused by the presence of speakers of multiple languages in the Roman troops when, on two occasions, miscommunication between commanders and soldiers resulted in severe loss of order. In a study on multilingual armies across history, Spolsky (2009) refers to the need to make orders understandable to all soldiers in multilingual units as the “sergeant’s problem”, claiming that this must have been the biggest linguistic challenge with which Roman military commanders had to deal. As a possible solution to this problem, the author of the treatise *de munitionibus castrorum* (43) suggests that non-Latin-speaking units should be given orders in their own languages: *symmacharios et reliquas nationes quotiens per strigas distribuimus, non plus quam tripertiti esse debebunt nec longe abalterutrum, ut viva tessera suo vocabulo citationis audient* “Whenever we distribute the supernumerary and soldiers of other *nationes* along the *strigae* (i.e. passages in between two rows of military barracks), they will be divided into no more than three parts, and not far from each other, so that when the order is given they may hear it in their own language”. A contrasting position can be read in the late-antique treatise *Strategikon* (3 and 12), whose author suggests that orders were given in Latin regardless of the linguistic competence of those who received them.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Colonel Philip Thrope, NATO Plans Officer 2015, *per coll.*

⁶⁸ For a complete list of the Latin military commands recorded in the *Strategikon*, see Cascarino 2006 171. It is possible that these were stereotyped phrases used in battle and never translated into Greek, and they do not necessarily represent the language of military orders as such. It must be noted that the *Strategikon* is a Greek military treatise aimed at the commanders of the Byzantine army; yet, since it records customs inherited by the

Another possible consequence of multilingualism, and a potential cause of destabilisation, is the creation of linguistic subgroups within military units. There tends to be solidarity between speakers of the same native language in multilingual contexts, and military experts are aware of this. The author of the *Strategikon* (7.6) recommends: τοὺς δὲ ὁμογενεῖς τῶν ἐχθρῶν πρὸ πολλοῦ χωρίζειν καὶ ἐν πολέμῳ τούτους μὴ φέρειν κατὰ τῶν ἰδίων “Send the men of the same origin as the enemy a long way away, and do not bring them into battle against their own people”. Because of the inherent cultural and linguistic connection with the enemy, these soldiers could switch sides. For this same reason soldiers in the French Foreign Legion today are punished for speaking their native language while in service, especially during the period of probation.⁶⁹

Despite some obvious disadvantages, multilingualism can represent a significant strength for an army. Bilingual soldiers can be a precious resource for investigation against enemies, for negotiations, for the integration of military troops and local civilians, and for the exploitation of territories for the sustainment of military camps. Evidence for this can be found, for instance, in Caesar’s *commentarii*, which record the employment of interpreters during his campaign in Gaul.⁷⁰ It is uncertain whether the army employed professional interpreters for its operations by default. A debate on this possibility arose from the attestation of the verb *interpretari* (“to act as a mediator”?) in the writings from Vindolanda

Byzantine army from the Roman tradition, it can still offer evidence on the latter. On this, see Cascarino 2006 20.

⁶⁹ According to McGorman (2002 51) there is an unwritten rule according to which legionaries of the *FFL* can speak their native language(s) only during free time. Part of the *FFL* training consists of French courses that all recruits are expected to take, but fluency in French is not a requirement and most legionaries never reach it (former *FFL* soldier, *per coll.*, 2014). Improvised translators are often called upon, as happens in the Swiss army. On language learning in the *FFL*, see Lyons 2009.

⁷⁰ E.g. Caes. *Bell. Gall.* 5.36.

and from the Netherlands,⁷¹ paralleled by the attestation of the noun *interpretes* in the Danube area,⁷² which recent studies have argued refers not to linguistic but to trade negotiation.⁷³ Literary evidence on the activity of professional interpreters in the ancient world is generally not as copious as we might have expected, both within and outside military environments, perhaps because language mediators were perceived with suspicion in the Classical tradition. In matters of extreme importance such as military negotiations, entrusting information to language mediators might not always have been desirable.⁷⁴

Overall, the composite nature of the Roman army forms a fertile ground for research into the factors that prompted the employment of one language over others when speakers had the option.

1.4 *Status quaestionis*

Given the reluctance with which historians have approached multilingualism in the Roman army, no substantial studies have been published on the matter so far. Moreover, since the Roman army is more commonly a subject of interest for historians and archaeologists than linguists, an effective method for investigating language patterns in the Roman troops has been missing from the field of military studies. Only the application of insights from modern linguistics to the examination of ancient documents has allowed some opinions to be formulated on the subject over the last two decades.⁷⁵

⁷¹ *T. Vindol.* 213. On the Frisian Ox Sale, see Bowman, Tomlin and Worp 2009.

⁷² *AE* 1947 35.

⁷³ Mairs 2012.

⁷⁴ Mairs 2011. On the invisibility of interpreters in the ancient world, see also Venuti 1995.

⁷⁵ One of the first to give voice to the issue of multilingual armies in antiquity was Rochette (1997b), who

In his volume on bilingualism, Adams (2003a 599-623) approached the multilingualism of the Roman army by means of a sociolinguistic method, offering an analysis of a selection of military documents from Egypt. In doing so, he identified two main roles that Latin had in the Roman army: that of a “super-high” language of a bilingual military institution, that is the language of choice in particularly formal official circumstances, and that of an expression of Roman power. Adams’ conclusions, which provide an alternative for the loose notion of Latin as the “official language” of the army, constitute so far the only guidelines for the study of multilingualism in the Roman military. The image with which we are presented is that of a military institution that did not impose the constant employment of Latin on its soldiers, but in which Latin was a voluntary choice, or a forced one in certain contexts, prompted in some instances by practical concerns and in others by the desire to display authority. Particularly emblematic of the use of Latin as a language of power is a passage from Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* (9.39), in which a Roman soldier aggressively addresses a local man *latini sermonis ignarus* in Latin. Since it is legitimate to assume that the soldier, himself a speaker of Greek, as we learn later in the passage, knew that a local man in an eastern province was more likely to be a speaker of Greek, Adams (2003a 560-561) describes the soldier’s choice of Latin as an arrogant display of social superiority and power. As for the conceptualisation of Latin as a “super-high” military language, Adams achieves this definition by demonstrating that both Latin and Greek were used by the Roman army to write official documents, but that Latin was endowed with a particularly authoritative and symbolic force that Greek lacked.

Through a less extensive analysis of primary material, Eck (2004) reached similar

concerned himself with the armies of Hannibal. Despite his admission that the evidence on the matter poor, Rochette concluded that multilingualism in military contexts was overcome through the employment of language mediators.

conclusions. Eck's study emphasises the practical need for efficient communication that the army faced in the provinces, which required flexibility in language choice. On the matter of power, he argues that a complete abandonment of Latin in the army as the language signifier of Roman *maiestas* in the East could, and eventually did, result in Rome's loss of power in the late fourth and fifth centuries. One could, however, question whether the loss of Latin was really the cause or rather a symptom of the political changes imposed on the Empire in the late third century.

More recently, in *Blood of the Provinces* (2013 301-311), Haynes addresses the multilingual nature of the Roman troops as an issue of relevance to military history. Haynes explains the importance of Latin as a lingua franca in a multilingual environment, with strong emphasis on the symbolic value that it had in the lives of the recruits who were native speakers of local languages.⁷⁶ The study draws attention also to phenomena that had been overlooked in previous treatments of the subject, beginning with the linguistic challenges that commanders would face when assigned to units whose language they did not understand.⁷⁷ Evidence for this is found, for example, in the testimony of a *decurio* of Iberian origins who led an *ala* of Pannonian soldiers in the Augustan period.⁷⁸ A second aspect that Haynes unpacks is the "problem of social acceptance"; that is, the desire of soldiers to fit in with the rest of their units beyond professional practicalities.⁷⁹ Even though there is no clear direct evidence for this, the role of acceptance and the will to "fit in" are amply documented in studies on bilingualism. Some of the examples considered in this thesis will help us consider

⁷⁶ On this, see also Haynes 1999 169-170.

⁷⁷ Haynes 2013 303.

⁷⁸ *CIL* 3.2016.

⁷⁹ Haynes 2013 305.

these in relation to language choice in Roman military contexts.

After a discussion of the “spoken word” among auxiliary soldiers, Haynes includes a chapter on the “written word”.⁸⁰ As already mentioned, the efficiency of the Roman army relied on the production of a huge number of written documents to which many soldiers were exposed on a regular basis. Haynes emphasises the role of the Roman army as a vector propagating literacy throughout the Empire: the potential for communication by Roman soldiers, and in particular by those whose native languages were not expressed in written form, would increase exponentially with the acquisition of writing skills during service.⁸¹ Moreover, the culture of writing in the Roman army, which was not merely confined to tablets and papyri but also displayed in inscriptions of various kinds and graffiti, increased the potential of the Roman army to reach out and display the power of Latin and literacy to local communities.

The stress laid by Haynes’ study upon writing practice is particularly significant for the study of language in the Roman army as well as the broader study of identity in multilingual contexts. As Adams (2003a 42-67) reminds us, the “written word” has great sociolinguistic value. In the first place, it is legitimate to say that the spreading of writing entails, at least in part, the spreading of the language in which this written word is written. Moreover, writing and speaking, two interconnected forms of communication, can both reveal features of bilingualism: just as we can identify non-native features in speech, scripts and letterforms can also reveal the mixture of two linguistic identities.⁸² We have evidence, for example, of Latin

⁸⁰ “The Spoken Word” and “The Written Word” are respectively the titles of chapters 19 and 20 in *Blood of the Provinces* (2013).

⁸¹ On literacy in the army and its effects on provincial society, see also Wilkes 2001.

⁸² On this, see Mullen 2013a 106-110.

texts written in Greek script, which may reveal Greek writers with competence in the Latin language but with a partial grasp of its graphic system.⁸³ In the eastern Egyptian desert there are some rare examples of correspondence written in Greek but using Latin characters.⁸⁴ Some texts in Roman cursive can also reveal hands more accustomed to Greek writing.⁸⁵

The sociolinguistic value of scripts extends further. Following the adoption of sociolinguistic perspectives for the study of handwriting, scholarship has recently seen the exploration of the relation between the way that military administrative documents were written and the display of imperial power. J. Austin (2010) has examined military scribal practice, which in some garrisons reveals a striking consistency throughout long periods of time, as evidence for imperial authority over the production of written documents, and ultimately as an expression of power. The evidence considered by Austin is geographically limited to the garrison at Dura Europos and chronologically circumscribed to the third

⁸³ On this, see among others Kraemer 1984. For stone inscriptions see, for example, *CIL* 10.2145 = *IG* 14.844, a Latin funerary inscription from Puteoli in Greek characters. Cf. Dix 1997 on the interpretation of this text with a focus on its audience. Dix argues that the use of Greek characters in this inscription should not be read as a sign of interference from Greek onto the Latin graphic system; rather, by setting up a Latin inscription in Greek characters, the commissioner targeted a specific group of people who had mastered both languages enough to decode the text. The same treatment of Latin writing, but arguably prompted by completely different factors, is commonly attested in the *defixiones* (e.g. *ILS* 8757 from Africa). The *defixiones* were often written in Greek characters to make their content more cryptic, thus enhancing the magical force of their messages. Despite the different motives that prompted the employment of Greek characters to write Latin, the underpinning concept, that is the use of a graphic system associated with one language to write in another, is attested across stone inscriptions, *defixiones*, and correspondence, and presupposes awareness of (if not full competence in) both languages.

⁸⁴ *O.Max.* inv. 1234, *O.Max.* inv.736, *O.Krok.* inv. 616. On these, see Fournet 2003 440-441.

⁸⁵ A case in point could be that of Teres at Mons Claudianus (§ 3.2.2). Graphic interference has been observed also in the ostraca from Bu Njem in Tripolitania (§ 5.2). This phenomenon is common in modern times, too, for example about Hebrew signs put up by members of the Arab community in Israel, which appear more cursive than those put up by the Jewish communities.

century, but her work makes an innovative link between language and identity in the army through a method of enquiry that the author defines as “socio-palaeography”. Some of the issues touched upon in Austin’s study will be addressed and challenged in the present thesis, especially in relation to the potential role of clerks as perpetuators of guidelines in the administration of Roman military units, a concept already advanced by previous work on military clerks.⁸⁶

As far as I am aware, no other substantial research has been devoted specifically to the question of language choice in the Roman army. The present thesis explores this topic and develops the conclusion presented by Adams (2003a) and Eck (2004). It does so by analysing documents from situations where language choice took place, drawing data primarily from the realms of administration, correspondence, and epigraphic material. The results of this analysis will enable the nuancing of previous statements, and to gain a deeper insight in to the reasons which may have prompted individuals to employ one language instead of another on both the practical and psychological levels.

1.5 Multilingualism and language choice in the imperial Roman army

This thesis offers an examination of a selection of military writings. Its main aims are to reassess the role of Latin in the running of the army, and to identify the patterns of language choice in epistolary and epigraphic communication. To achieve these objectives, three main issues are addressed. The first, which is addressed in all chapters, is the broad problem of language choice when more than one option is available for communication. The thesis seeks to understand which languages were chosen by soldiers and their associates in a variety of

⁸⁶ Stauner 2004.

contexts, and which factors may have influenced such choices. A second issue considered is the question of the “official language” of the Roman army, which is explored with reference to military administrative documents (chapter 2), but which, we will see, is reflected in the linguistic behaviour of military people outside the bureaucratic realm. Thirdly, the thesis attempts to uncover the attitude towards language choice among some linguistic subgroups within the Roman army (chapters 4-6). All these themes are approached through an examination of the alternation between two or more languages in selected sets of documents (see § 1.7.1). Onomastic features such as personal names and theonyms will also be considered as lines of enquiry into the matter of language choice (§ 1.6.3). Whether written in Latin, Greek, or other languages, the choice of personal and divine names from a specific linguistic tradition are potentially revealing of identities, linguistic attitudes, and community dynamics.

The documents that survive from the Roman military are mostly written in Latin, Greek, or a mixture of the two, although they may contain features which reveal that their authors were speakers of other languages. The primary evidence will not be approached with the assumption that Latin had a set symbolic value in the army. As obvious as this concept may be, a *tabula-rasa* approach to primary sources will allow a better understanding of the factors that might have triggered the employment of Latin for its symbolic value over Greek and vice versa. As far as we can tell from the evidence currently available to us, the only other languages apart from Latin and Greek explicitly attested in Roman military writings are Punic and Palmyrene Aramaic. These will be the focus of chapters 5 and 6. Indirect evidence

survives also for Celtic, Germanic, and possibly other Semitic languages.⁸⁷ These will be considered in chapter 4.

This study is primarily composed of case studies, which are analysed following the broad principles that sociolinguistics uses to investigate bilingualism. This approach provides new ways of interpreting military writings, offering some insight into issues concerned with language and communication in the Roman world.

1.6 Methods and approaches

1.6.1 Sociolinguistics: a key to ancient identities

Sociolinguistics studies “the ways in which language is integrated with human society, with reference to such notions as race, ethnicity, class, sex, and social institutions”.⁸⁸ Broadly speaking, one of the aims of sociolinguistics is to understand the ways in which linguistic choices are deployed in the voluntary or accidental performance of identities,⁸⁹ a goal that coincides also with the scope of research into bi- and multilingualism, ancient and modern.⁹⁰ Historical sociolinguistics adopts a diachronic strategy in the study of language and society in the belief that “insights from the present can be used to explain the past”.⁹¹ This necessarily poses some issues of approach. The main one is that researchers of ancient linguistic phenomena rely entirely on written sources. These are most commonly found in the form of

⁸⁷ I refer in particular to the languages attested in the writings from Dura Europos in Syria. On this, see § 2.5.1.

⁸⁸ Spencer 2011 vii.

⁸⁹ On identity, see below (§ 1.6.1.2).

⁹⁰ Edwards 1994.

⁹¹ Schendl 2012 526.

letters, legal documentation, contracts, public and funerary inscriptions, religious vows, literary works, and scientific treatises, which are sometimes fragmentary and difficult to reconstruct, posing limits to their value as evidence of ancient speech. A second limit is that the reconstruction of the original context of written documents, essential in sociolinguistic investigation, often relies on partial information. In fact, linguists are not always able to trace the authors, commissioners, addressees, and the scribes of the texts they examine; nor are they always able to assess the extent to which the language of such texts has been affected, for example, by the transmission of manuscripts. Despite these two main caveats, insights from modern sociolinguistics have allowed scholarship to advance our understanding of ancient language and society, extending the enquiry also to the social classes and languages underrepresented in official documents and literary sources.⁹²

As for Classical scholarship, sociolinguistics has enabled us to elucidate language attitudes in Greek and Latin bilingualism, and to problematise the question of *utraque lingua* in the Roman world, an issue particularly relevant to the present enquiry.⁹³ The first to collect a huge corpus of bilingual writings furthering our knowledge of “language and identity”⁹⁴ in the Graeco-Roman world was Adams. His prolific research has resulted in the publication of volumes that will be referenced throughout this study.⁹⁵ The sociolinguistic method has been adopted also by historians, who have found in the examination of language attitudes a way

⁹² On the study of the ancient world through sociolinguistics, see Adams, Janse and Swain 2002, Adams 2003a, Rochette 2011a and 2011b, Mullen and James 2012, Mullen 2013a, and Clackson 2015.

⁹³ For a summary of the *status quaestionis* with reference to the phenomenon of code-switching in Roman literature, see Mullen 2015, now expanded in Elder and Mullen forthcoming.

⁹⁴ On identity, see below § 1.6.1.2.

⁹⁵ In particular Adams, Janse and Swain 2002, and Adams 2003a and 2007.

to investigate a variety of socio-historical issues that may not appear directly connected to language, and is increasingly being used also to examine material culture.⁹⁶

Largely stimulated by Adams' works, a sociolinguistic perspective on ancient history was adopted by Wallace-Hadrill in *Rome's Cultural Revolution* (2008). Structuring his argument on the phenomenon of code-switching (i.e. the switching from one language to another, § 6.1), Wallace-Hadrill showed that cultural change in the Roman world was not the making of new, fixed, hybrid identities, but the coming together of multiple ones, separate from one another and expressible simultaneously or in turn according to context. While only focusing on one key aspect of the manifestations of bilingualism,⁹⁷ the approach taken by Wallace-Hadrill was fundamental to breaking down the boundaries between sociolinguistics and the study of material culture in the field of Classical studies.

The story of a man in the Dacian *colonia* of Sarmizegetusa provides a telling example of the intricacies of identity in the Roman world which can be examined through sociolinguistic frameworks. Publius Aelius Theimes was a man of Palmyrene origins who served as a centurion in the *cohors I Vindelicorum* in the second century.⁹⁸ After leaving the army he settled in Dacia, a province known for the presence of Palmyrene *numeri*,⁹⁹ where he became active in the political scene of Sarmizegetusa. Theimes' names reveal that he had

⁹⁶ See, for instance, the analysis of the Ara Pacis by Hölscher 2004. On sociolinguistics for the study of archaeology, see Bucking 2012 and Mullen 2013b 32-38.

⁹⁷ Mullen (2013a) has criticised Wallace-Hadrill for focusing only on the phenomenon of code-switching and overlooking other manifestations of bilingualism, such as interference and borrowing (§ 1.6.2).

⁹⁸ *CIL* 3.12587 and *CIL* 3.7896.

⁹⁹ For the *numerus Palmyrenorum Tibiscensium*, see *AE* 1914 102, *AE* 1971 404, *AE* 1983 795, *AE* 1977 695, *AE* 2006 1175, *AE* 2015 15, *IDR* 3.1 153, *IDR* 3.1 164, *IDR* 3.1 256. For the *numerus Palmyrenorum Porolissensium*, see *AE* 1944 56, *AE* 1980 755, *AE* 2006 1129, *AE* 2015 1137, *IDR* App. 1.78. 1, *IDR* App. 1.78 2, *ILD* 680; *ILD* 704, *ILD* 744. For the *numerus Palmyrenorum Optatianensium*, see *IDR* 3.2 366 and *IDR* 3.2 416. Further on the *numeri Palmyrenorum*, see § 6.5.

Roman citizenship, possibly acquired via his father, who might have arrived in Dacia with the Palmyrene units the beginning of the second century. Theimes was a veteran soldier and yet, in funding the construction of a temple for the city, he acted as a civilian benefactor.¹⁰⁰ In addition to the “Romanity” expressed by his status, his *tria nomina*, and his involvement in Roman military operations as a commander, Theimes publicly presents himself as a Palmyrene by dedicating the temple to the Palmyrene gods Malagbel, Bebellahamon, Benefal, and Manavat. Stories like the one of Theimes help us understand the situational nature of identity, and the ways in which individuals can perform (or be invested with) multiple identities in turn or at the same time depending on context, the motives of their writing, and the audiences they hope to address.

In the present study we seek to unveil the identities and the communicative intentions of people connected with the Roman military by looking at their choices of language in different types of writings. Here, the discussion is primarily concerned with texts that emanate from military communities where language choice is detectable. Primary evidence will be approached with the understanding of “discrepant experiences” championed by Mattingly (2011) at the basis of the analysis:¹⁰¹ emphasis is put on the tension between the multiple identities of the people who produced language, and on the way in which they negotiated them according to context. I structure the analysis on three main lines of enquiry extrapolated from the modern study of bilingualism and discourse: audience, identity, and the practical aspects that made language choice preferable or unavoidable. These are fundamental angles from which to analyse the phenomenon of language choice in communities of speech that, like the Roman army, can only offer data in written form. Instead

¹⁰⁰ So we understand from *CIL* 3.7954, a dedicatory inscription where Theimes is identified as a *Ilviralis collegii*.

¹⁰¹ On this, see above § 1.2.

of appealing solely to identity as a general, explanatory term for the linguistic phenomena examined here, this threefold framework will enable us to consider a wider array of factors that may have affected linguistic behaviour. As mentioned earlier (§ 1.2), particular emphasis will be put on the “institutional” contexts in which the army produced written documents, and on the interpersonal relations and activities that tied military people to one another, influencing the language in which they communicated.

1.6.1.1 Audience

Audience is a key factor that sociolinguists consider in the study of verbal and non-verbal communication. The major theory that has driven the study of audiences in communication is Communication Accommodation theory, which provides a framework to interpret the ways in which speakers attune their speech according to their interlocutors (direct, indirect, or imagined).¹⁰² According to the theory, the way in which speakers modify their speech varies along a continuum between “convergence” and “divergence”. Convergence is the process by which speakers select communicative behaviour in order to facilitate communication with their addressee(s) and create solidarity with them.¹⁰³ This strategy can be actuated by employing one language instead of another or by selecting specific linguistic features (such as lexicon, verbal forms, style), non-verbal features (such as explicative gestures, smiling etc.), and paralinguistic ones (such as the speed or length of an utterance). Divergence is the reverse process, by which speakers accentuate the linguistic distance from their interlocutors by adopting a communicative behaviour that is less accessible. The passage from Apuleius’

¹⁰² Giles, Taylor and Bourhis 1973. For a recent summary of the theory see Giles and Ogay 2007.

¹⁰³ On accommodation in bilingual communication, see Sachdev and Giles 2004.

Metamorphoses mentioned above (§ 1.4), in which a Roman soldier addresses a Greek-speaking man *Latini sermonis ignarus* in Latin, is an example of linguistic divergence. Interacting parties can perform different degrees of these strategies for a wide range of motives. In the context of the Roman military, we will consider audience in a variety of settings. We will see that the audience of administrative documents could vary, influencing the choice between Latin and Greek taken by the people who compiled them (chapter 2). We will also consider the audiences of epistolary communication, exploring the strategies that letter writers adopted to choose more or less efficient languages to get their messages across (chapter 3). Finally, we will focus on the audiences of stone inscriptions (chapters 4-6).

1.6.1.2 Identity

Intrinsically connected with (but not limited to) Communication Accommodation theory is the question of identity. At the beginning of the twentieth century, “identity” tended to be used by psychologists and sociologists as a loose, explanatory term for subscribing to specific sets of values and for a collective sense of belonging to specific cultural, religious, and social groups. In a well-known study, Goffman (1959) was one of the first sociologists to put forward a new way to examine and exploit identity in the study of social interactions. Goffman used a dramaturgical view to look at identity, theorising that people, like actors on stage, take on identities – or faces, as he defined them – to perform circumstantial roles in social interaction. This is one of the major theories that initiated changes in the way we view identity today.

It was not until the 1970s that scholarship in the social sciences promoted a definitive shift from the vision of identity as a fixed set of characteristics that define who or what a

person is, to a post-modern conception of identity as essentially a fluid, social construct.¹⁰⁴ Thereafter, studies on identity began to be carried out with a focus on individuals, their membership of social groups, and access to social spaces, in the belief that one-size-fits-all approaches are unlikely to lead to satisfactory examinations of human relations. Identity, claimed the sociologists,¹⁰⁵ is revealed not only in an individual's membership to a social group, but in an individual's knowledge of this membership and the emotional value attributed to it. In this view, identity is conceived as a dynamic, circumstantial perception of "self" which can only be examined in its plurality.

The study of language and identity sees language as a marker of identity at both the individual and social levels, based on the belief that through language we communicate, consciously and sub-consciously, a great deal about ourselves and our identity beyond what we say.¹⁰⁶ At a basic level, sociolinguists see the value of language as a lens through which to investigate society for two reasons. Firstly, language is one of the most common means of human interaction and, assuming that one does not live in isolation, language acts as a "gluing agent" that brings individuals together and enables their social interactions. Secondly, language is a system that humans use to represent the world around them, categorising what they experience into words. Linguistic features can therefore reveal a great deal about speakers' identities, whether performed or imagined. One of the first studies to address the issue of language and identity was published by Labov (1963). This now iconic study was carried out in Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts, where Labov conducted interviews to

¹⁰⁴ In general, on identity see the works of Tajfel and Turner, founders of the Social Identity theory, especially Tajfel 1982, and Tajfel and Turner 1986. For a recent comprehensive study on identity, see Weinreich 2003.

¹⁰⁵ On this in particular, see Tajfel 1978.

¹⁰⁶ On this, see Edwards 2009 19-25. In general, on language and identity, see also Joseph 2004 and Norton 2011. On identity with particular reference to second language acquisition, see Norton 2013.

understand what caused some inhabitants of the island to pronounce vowel sounds in a specific way. The study concluded that old-fashioned pronunciations (in particular the use of phoneme /ey/ instead of /aw/) was common among the people who lived off the traditional occupations of the island, such as fishing or farming. Labov was therefore able, for the first time in linguistics, to identify a linguistic choice which reflected speakers' attitudes towards traditions in a rural community that, like many others in America in the 1960s, was experiencing deep socio-economic change.

Identity is valuable to the study of language choice in that, in bi- and multilingual situations, the choice of one language over another can indicate the desire, more or less intentional, to perform a specific type of identity. In this thesis we will consider cases where language choice enabled speakers and writers to construct their military identity at both the institutional and interpersonal levels. Particular emphasis will be put on the process, more or less conscious, of language choice that may have influenced the shaping of the Roman army as an institution that presented itself as Latin-speaking in formal contexts. The same approach will be taken to examine the factors that may have influenced language choice in written correspondence between soldiers and their associates. We will then investigate the question of linguistic subgroups and how these related to the wider military community. Throughout the thesis, I will also examine instances in which identities are not intentionally expressed but transpire through features of speech that betray a writer's linguistic background.

1.6.1.3 Necessity and practicality

Necessity has been defined as “the mother of bilingualism”.¹⁰⁷ Studies of minority languages show that some language minority groups would simply not exist without competence in a second language.¹⁰⁸ To them, bilingualism means survival. In other contexts, some competence in a second or third language grants access to better opportunities than monolingualism.¹⁰⁹ For example, one of the biggest issues that concern today’s ministries of education around the world is the implementation of school programmes in English, which are seen as a way to provide younger generations with better career opportunities and social mobility.¹¹⁰

Bilingualism is, above all, a practical choice that allows two or more parties with different linguistic backgrounds to communicate more efficiently than they would otherwise. In the Roman world, some competence in the major languages of the Empire would have enabled local communities to exploit the presence of the military as a source of business. In turn, Rome’s troops could be more efficient if they had some members who could communicate with the peoples of the provinces where they served. There were situations in which, we will see, language choice was clearly prompted not by audience or identity, but solely by a practical approach to the circumstances. For example, writing and speaking Latin in regions where the local languages did not have a written form is a choice derived from the necessity to communicate in writing. An example of this is Roman Britain (§ 4.2). Similarly,

¹⁰⁷ Haugen 1972 309.

¹⁰⁸ Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) analyses this phenomenon in relation to indigenous minority groups and migrant families.

¹⁰⁹ Wei, Dewaele and Housen 2002.

¹¹⁰ For a recent account of the phenomenon, its implementation in different countries, and the sustainability of this educational model, see Macaro 2018.

the linguistic ability of available scribes or literate people who could write messages may have conditioned, in specific contexts, the choice of one language over another. In this thesis I will also consider some of the strategies that military people may have employed in order to write messages and other types of documents with the highest degree of linguistic clarity and efficiency possible (chapter 3). I will refer in particular to the employment of templates as practical tools that enabled non-native speakers or writers with limited literacy skills in a specific language to craft clear written messages. Templates, we will see (§ 2.3), may have also been employed within military administration, where precise information needed to be recorded in written form in order to manage the people and the resources of Rome's troops.

1.6.2 Guide to sociolinguistic terminology

Four features of bilingualism that we encounter frequently in ancient texts are code-switching, code alternation, interference, and borrowing. They are defined here in order to provide some general guidelines to the terminology used throughout this thesis.

- 1) Code-switching is a switch from one language to another, often followed by a switch back to the first language.¹¹¹ There are three main types of code-switching: intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag-switching. The first is found within a clause: *ut ille tuus τὸν πρακτικὸν βίον longe omnibus anteponat*.¹¹² Inter-sentential code-switching

¹¹¹ On code-switching, see Gardner-Chloros 2009, and Bullock and Toribio 2012. On code-switching with particular reference to written communication, see the collection of essays edited by Sebba, Mahootian, and Jonsson 2012. On code-switching between Latin and Greek, see Elder and Mullen forthcoming.

¹¹² "As your friend prefers the active life by a long way over everything else" (Cic. Att. 36.3).

occurs outside clause-boundaries: *venit ille ad me καὶ μαλα κατηφής*.¹¹³ Tag-switching sees instead a switch in exclamations only: ὦ Ζεῦ, *potin a med abeas, nisi me vis vomere hodie?*.¹¹⁴

- 2) Linked to code-switching is code alternation, which can be defined as the alternation between two or more languages performed in different contexts. However, code alternation is a useful concept to maintain when looking at ancient documents. One could argue that inscriptions in which two different languages are used for different portions of the text, and in which neither is the translation of the other, are examples of code alternation rather than code-switching. Similarly, code alternation could be identified when writers change language from one epistolary message to another. Examples of these will be dealt with in chapters 3-6.
- 3) Interference, or cross-linguistic influence, is the deviation from the common forms of a given language due to familiarity with another one. For example, spelling the future of the first-plural of *sum* as *eirimus* could reveal phonetic interference from Greek, where the verb “to be” is εἶναι (*P.Dura* 82 col. I, line 6). Interference can be phonetic, morphological, lexical, syntactic, semantic, or graphic.
- 4) Borrowing is also an indicator of language contact. There are different types of borrowing, and linguists have demonstrated that any part of language can be borrowed, not just lexemes.¹¹⁵ In terms of lexical borrowing, we find loanwords, which are words integrated from a foreign language (e.g. *ydreuma* in *O.Claud.* 2 for ὕδρευμα

¹¹³ “He came to me ‘and right down in the mouth’” (*Cic. Att.* 354.1), as translated by Shackleton Bailey (1999). It is possible that the Greek phrase belongs to a verse from a lost Greek play.

¹¹⁴ “Oh, Zeus! Can you not leave me alone, unless you want me to throw up today?” (*Plautus Cas.* 731).

¹¹⁵ On borrowing, see Thomason 2001.

may have indicated a well or water oasis in the Egyptian desert); calques, types of borrowing where each element of a borrowed word is translated (e.g. *falsidicus* based on the Greek ψευδολόγος); and loanwords that assume different meanings in the adoptive language (e.g. semantic extension in Sallust of *amare* with the meaning of the Greek φιλεῖν, “to love” > “to find pleasure in” > “to be in the habit of”).¹¹⁶

1.6.3 Onomastics¹¹⁷

Naming practices are a powerful tool to investigate people, the languages they speak, and the societies in which they live and operate. Onomastic features can be immediate markers of gender and filiation, and can provide information about the religious, social, linguistic, and ethnic identities of their bearers and of the people who assign them.¹¹⁸ Most importantly for the purpose of this thesis, personal names can be revealing of language contact and, much like other linguistic features, they are “social”: they can be chosen with certain audiences in mind, they can be assigned for practical reasons, or in the hope of investing their bearers with specific characteristics.¹¹⁹

In order to examine personal names as linguistic features, we must understand the main diachronic changes that naming practice underwent in the Roman world. Broadly

¹¹⁶ Coleman 1975 106.

¹¹⁷ I am grateful to Jean-Sébastien Balzat for reading and suggesting ways to improve on previous versions of this section.

¹¹⁸ Edwards 2009 34-36. For a recent summary on onomastic practices and identity, see Aldrin 2016. On personal names as markers of social identity, see Finch 2008.

¹¹⁹ The concept of *nomen omen* was especially rooted in the Roman tradition, where names and nouns were believed to be connected with the essence or nature of a person or thing. See, for example, Iustinianus at *Inst.* 2.7.3: *nomina sunt consequentia rerum* “Nouns take origins from the things they denote”.

speaking, between the republican and imperial periods, Roman names underwent three main phases of development, none of which is clearly distinct from the other. While in their earliest stages Roman names might have presented only a single onomastic element,¹²⁰ in the republican period Roman male citizens bore both a *praenomen*, which acted as the identifier (i.e. the main name by which an individual would introduce himself), and a *nomen gentilicium*, an onomastic element which indicated belonging to a certain social group, the *gens*. Despite retaining the function of main identifier, throughout the republican period the *praenomen* became heavily abbreviated in writing.¹²¹ This first binominal phase of the Roman naming system lasted until the second century BC, when a third onomastic element emerged: the *cognomen*.¹²² During the trinominal phase of Roman onomastics, the *cognomen* surpassed the *praenomen* as the main identifier, laying the grounds for a new binominal system formed of the *nomen gentilicium* and the *cognomen*. The *praenomen* became thereafter a fixed onomastic element used within family groups,¹²³ and eventually ceased to act as a main identifier in the second century. As the lengthy names of Roman emperors suggest, the use

¹²⁰ Solin 1996 5. Julius Paris *De Nominibus* 1.1: *Varro simplicita in Italia fuisse nomina ait existimationisque suae argumentum refert, quod Romulus et Remus et Festulus neque praenomen ullum neque cognomen habuerint* “Varro says that there were single names in Italy and in support of his claim he argues that Romulus, Remus, and Festulus had neither a *praenomen* nor a *cognomen*”.

¹²¹ That the *gentilicium* was more useful than the *praenomen* as an identifier can also be appreciated in the fact that only a very limited set of *praenomina* were actually used among Roman families. Salway (1994 125) estimates that 99% of Roman men in the archaic and republican periods bore one out of the seventeen most common *praenomina*: *Aulus, Appius, Gaius, Gnaeus, Decimus, Lucius, Manius, Marcus, Numerus, Publius, Quintus, Servius, Sextus, Spurius, Titus, Tiberius, and Vibius*.

¹²² Kajanto 1965. It is unclear how this developed. The etymologies of early *cognomina* suggest that in principle these may have been nicknames, and it has been argued that they were developed by the elites as a way to differentiate themselves from lower social strata.

¹²³ E.g. in the Flavian dynasty everyone bore the *praenomen Titus*.

of multiple personal names remained in fashion among the elites throughout the imperial period.

Roman names and their chronological changes can help us also in the identification of people's status. Broadly speaking, and depending on the chronological context, *tria nomina* were of Roman citizenship and free status. So we understand from Quintilian's statement (*Inst.* 7.8.27): *nemo habet nisi liber praenomen, nomen, cognomen* "Nobody bears a *praenomen*, *nomen*, and a *cognomen* unless he is of free status".¹²⁴ Freedmen and clients commonly adopted the *nomen gentilicium* of their benefactors, often in binominal combinations. Following the same principle, people who were made citizens in the imperial period assumed the *praenomen* and *gentilicium* of the ruling emperor, governor,¹²⁵ or commander, who were their benefactors.¹²⁶ Tacitus (*Hist.* 1.43.2) tells us of a British auxiliary soldier named Sulpicius Florus, *a Galba civitate donatus*, who bore the gentile name *Sulpicius* like Galba. Strictly intertwined with the issue of status and benefactors is the treatment of personal names after the promulgation of the Edict of Caracalla in 212, when all new citizens adopted the *gentilicium Aurelius*, that of Emperor Caracalla. The name *Aurelius* thereafter became so common that it lost any force as an identifier.¹²⁷ The result was that it was often dropped from naming formulae altogether. Later in this thesis we will see examples of how this emperor's name was treated in some military units in the third century (§ 2.5.1).

¹²⁴ It must be remembered, however, that the *tria-nomina* formula is broadly speaking a sufficient but not necessary indicator of free status.

¹²⁵ For examples of *gentilicia* inherited from governors, see Salomies 1993.

¹²⁶ One should nonetheless tread carefully while interpreting onomastic evidence, for there are cases in which names could be simply inherited or adopted without in fact forming *tria-nomina* patterns. This is, for example, the case of "polynomy", a phenomenon widely attested during the imperial period, and by which people could take up additional names. Further on this, see Bruun and Edmondson 2014 802.

¹²⁷ Blanco-Pérez 2016.

There is no necessary correlation between the names that people bear and their linguistic background. However, personal names can help in the identification of contact between languages and cultures. Throughout the republican and imperial periods, provincial societies used and adapted elements of the Roman naming system, creating diverse names and onomastic formulae. Examples of these can be found in the following illustrative phenomena, among others:

- 1) The treatment of Latin names by non-native speakers of Latin. This resulted in morphological changes to Latin names, which often appear with non-Latin endings (e.g. Ιούλιος for *Iulius*), and in the creation of new names combining Latin stems and non-Latin endings (e.g. Λουκάς). Personal names lend themselves to code-switching: when, say, the Greek name *Alexandros* is written with a Greek ending in a Latin text, a particular type of code-switching takes place.¹²⁸
- 2) The treatment of Roman onomastic identifiers. The Greeks, unfamiliar with the complexities of Roman onomastics in the republican period, were somewhat resistant (or simply indifferent) to the Roman usage of personal names. We know, for instance, that *praenomina* were often used as *cognomina* by speakers of Greek, who were perhaps unable to grasp the difference in value of these two onomastic elements.¹²⁹
- 3) The mixed use of elements from two different onomastic systems. It is extremely common to find Latin *nomina* followed by non-Latin names acting as *cognomina* and vice versa. Names followed by genitive patronymics without Roman filiation markers

¹²⁸ Adams 2003a 369-376.

¹²⁹ For example, Titus Quinctius Flamininus (consul 198 BC) was remembered in Greece simply as Τίτου (Polybius 18). Salway (1994 126) describes this form of address as unintended over-familiarity, because the *praenomen* was the identifier used in intimate contexts.

are also found in abundance in Roman imperial writing.

With specific reference to the army, personal names can reveal how identities changed via contact with military communities and culture. In a second-century letter from Egypt (*BGU* 423), a newly enlisted soldier named Apion informs his father that his name has been changed to *Antonius Maximus*. Name change among soldiers is unlikely to have been universal practice, since there are plenty of examples of Roman military men with Semitic, Greek, Celtic, and Germanic names; but Apion's words describe the process of name change as a fairly ordinary procedure in the army. Another example comes from a letter written by a soldier to a colleague using both his native and Latin names: Οὐαλέριος Παυλείνος ὁ καὶ Ἄμμωνᾶς Οὐαλερίῳ Ἀπολιναρίῳ τῷ ἀδελφῷ πλεῖστα χαίρειν "Valerius Paulinus, also known as Ammonas, to Valerius Apolinarius, his brother, very many greetings" (*SB* 6.9636, lines 1-3). The reasons for explicitly using two names in this letter could be multiple. In the first instance, we can suppose that having both a Latin and a native name made it possible to tell all the people named Valerius Paulinus apart from others with the same name enlisted in the same unit.¹³⁰ It is also possible that soldiers, especially after serving for prolonged periods of time, inherited names from their commanders, or acquired new ones in recognition of remarkable deeds. Flavius Cerialis, *praefectus cohortis* at Vindolanda in the late first century, for example, is believed to have inherited his *cognomen* from his commander Quintus Petillius Cerialis, who was governor of Britain in the 70s.¹³¹ Indeed, it could be suggested that traditional Roman names helped new recruits reinforce their sense of belonging to a Roman institution.

¹³⁰ On this treatment of personal names, see § 2.5.2.

¹³¹ *CIL* 16.20.

Onomastics has been used by scholars of the Roman army to investigate military communities following three main lines of enquiry. Le Bohec (1994 90-93) has used soldiers' names to exemplify the diachronic degree of ethnic and cultural diversity among legionary soldiers between the first and third centuries. In a contribution to the volume *Roman Onomastics in the Greek East: Social and Political Aspects*, Dusanič (1996 31-42) has revisited the naming formulae attested in military diplomas, arguing that some of the applicants for diplomas were soldiers who had already received citizenship rights.¹³² Other scholars have used onomastic data from auxiliary soldiers to unveil a diachronic change in naming practice prompted by service in the army.¹³³ It has been noted that in the early imperial period soldiers with non-Roman names tended to give their children Roman names. For example, in a first-century list of court proceedings from Alexandria (*P.Hamb.* 1), two generations of soldiers are mentioned: the older generation bears single Greek names with the genitive patronymic (διὰ τῆς Ἀπολλωφανοῦς τοῦ Πτολεμαίου, line 1), whereas soldiers of the younger generation all bear Latin names with the Latin filiation formula (Λούκιος Οὔετιος Λουκίου υἱὸς Διογένης τῶν ἀπολελυμένων ἰπέων, lines 7-8; and Μάρκωι Ἀντωνίωι Διονυσίωι ἰπεῖ ἄλης Αὐγούστης, line 5). We will see that this diachronic change of personal names via contact with the military is attested elsewhere in the Empire (§ 4.3.1).

While examining onomastic evidence from antiquity, we must remember that, like the broader concept of identity, names are situational and change according to context and to the nature of the documents in which they are written. In practical terms, this translates into

¹³² Cf. *CIL* 1.2709 (Rome, 89 BC). For peregrines using Roman naming formulae before the grant of citizenship, see also Alföldy 1966 52. For peregrines usurping Roman citizen naming formula, see Suet. *Claud.* 25 and *CIL* 5.5050, a bronze tablet with an edict issued by Claudius in 46 to regulate the citizenship rights of the Alpine tribes.

¹³³ Saddington 2000.

a variety of naming practices that are not reflected in the “rules” of the Roman onomastic system. For example, someone may be called a nickname by their relatives, but identify with a completely different name outside the family. More variety is offered in formal or legal writings, where personal names can show additional elements which are not ordinarily used by individuals to identify themselves. In the present study, we will consider a variety of onomastic phenomena attested in military writings. Naming practices will be analysed through the framework proposed for the whole thesis (§ 1.6.1): how did the use of personal names, and the languages in which these were expressed, change according to audience, the identity of their bearers (and givers), and the practical needs of military life? Pursuing this question will help shed light on some naming strategies in multilingual settings, and to contextualise onomastic data according to the different types of documents examined here.

1.6.4 Writing in the army and authorship

The written material with which this thesis is concerned is primarily papyrological and epigraphic. We must therefore consider carefully the role of the people involved in its production. As mentioned earlier, Roman military communities depended on a highly literate system. Basic military administration involved recordkeeping, which required both literacy and some numeracy skills (§ 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5). Military men were also involved in tasks such as tax collection and the purchase of goods (§ 5.5 *et passim*), and we know that they were assigned passwords and tasks in written form (§ 2.5.2). Soldiers of all ranks were constantly exposed to writing of some sort, from the more official kinds, such as unit recordkeeping, to more mundane writings such as the *tituli picti* on amphorae. Even outside the administrative sphere, soldiers needed some literacy skills in order to mark ownership on their armour and

other paraphernalia.¹³⁴ In the private sphere, soldiers dedicated inscribed altars to the gods, and set up inscribed funerary monuments for the deceased. In his study of the *auxilia*, Haynes (2013 321-322) reminds us that it is through contact with military communities that some provincial societies adopted the habit of dedicating to the gods and the dead in written form. There is also abundant evidence for soldiers' graffiti and private correspondence, suggesting that the habit of writing extended beyond the practical needs of military life and religious practice.

The levels of literacy required to run an army were of course dramatically higher than those needed to mark a helmet as one's own. In fact, one might be able to scribble and read one's name for practical purposes without actually being literate at all. Later in this study we will consider a record of receipts for hay from the *ala Veterana Gallica* (RMR 76) where only some of the payees seem to have been able to acknowledge receipt of money with a signature (§ 2.4). The Roman writing system itself offered different levels of difficulty that readers and writers would have to deal with. In Petronius' *Satyricon* (58.7) Hermeros says that he has not received formal education, but he can read the *lapidarias litteras*, implying that the texts inscribed by stone cutters in capital letters were easier to read than other scripts. On the other hand, Roman cursive letterforms, commonly used in handwritten documents, must have been rather more challenging to read.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Evidence for this could be found at Vegetius (2.18): *in aduerso scuto uiuscuiusque militis litteris erat nomen adscriptum, addito et ex qua esset cohorte quaque centuria* "At the back of every soldier's shield his name was written, plus the century and cohort to which they belonged".

¹³⁵ Tradition has it that Plautus (*Pseud.* 1.1.29-30) makes fun of the shape of Roman cursive writing, comparing it to the handwriting of a chicken, *gallina manus*. Since the *Pseudolus* is set in Athens, an alternative would be to read *gallina manus* as referring to Greek (not Latin) cursive writing.

Soldiers' levels of literacy upon enlistment varied. Vegetius (2.19) recommends his readers keep note of literate recruits during the enlistment process: *quoniam in legionibus plures scholae sunt, quae litteratos milites quaerunt, ab his, qui tirones probant, in omnibus quidem staturae magnitudinem, corporis robur, alacritatem animi conuenit explorari, sed in quibusdam notarum peritia, calculandi computandique usus eligitur*, "Since many posts in the legion require literate soldiers, those who select recruits should test in all of them height, physical strength, and zeal, but in some cases writing skills, as well as numeracy and accounting abilities should be prioritised".¹³⁶ As unreliable a source as Vegetius may be,¹³⁷ this piece of advice from the late-antique author reveals that literacy skills, even the most basic ones, were an important asset that soldiers could bring to a unit. In the same second-century letter mentioned above à propos of changing names in the army (BGU 423, § 1.6.3), newly enlisted Apion thanks his father for teaching him reading and writing, two skills that would secure him greater chances for career progression in the military.

There were of course some positions that required literacy and numeracy skills, while others could be filled by illiterate recruits. The highest posts that required literacy skills were commanding positions.¹³⁸ Commanders of all units, including tribunes and prefects, were responsible for overseeing the status of the troops and the resources at their disposal. Immediately below commanding officers were centurions and decurions. Among other tasks,

¹³⁶ It is possible that Le Bohec's claim on testing Latin competences during the recruitment process (reported above, § 1.3) is loosely based on this passage from Vegetius. But since no reference is offered, it is hard to tell.

¹³⁷ Vegetius wrote the treatise *de re militari* in the fifth century to present the principles of military practice supposedly adopted by the Roman army at the apex of Rome's expansion in the second century. This poses problems, in that Vegetius did not have a first-hand experience of Roman military life at the time. Note also that the principles outlined in his treatise may not apply to the army in all provinces (§ 1.2).

¹³⁸ For a comprehensive discussion of these, see Haynes 2013 324-331.

these were responsible for overseeing the daily recordkeeping of activities and resources at the disposal of their units.¹³⁹ Other soldiers whose duties required literacy skills were the *optiones*, the *duplicarii* and the *signiferi*.¹⁴⁰ The *tesserarii* (whose name derives from *tesserae*, i.e. the tablets on which they wrote orders)¹⁴¹ and the *sesquiplicarii* are also attested as literate.¹⁴² Based on this information, Haynes (2013) advances the possibility that all military ranks from the third grade and above required literacy skills. Further evidence for writing practice in the military has been identified through analyses of the administrative documents. A study by Stauner (2004) has unveiled the complexities of clerical work in the Roman army, shedding light on a distinct class of military men, the *scribae*. Deputed to clerical work of different kinds, these men might have been specifically trained in the techniques needed to write periodical and daily reports required for the running of military units.

The picture is more complicated when we consider the lower strata of the military hierarchy. In this thesis we will consider the figure of the *curatores*, men of various ranks in charge of military outposts in the desert, who entertained a high number of written exchanges with colleagues stationed at other bases (§ 3.2 and § 3.3). We will also see that civilian *vigiles* who carried out patrolling activities in the Egyptian desert were themselves assigned their turns of guard and passwords in written form (§ 2.5.2). Did these need to be

¹³⁹ Appian *Bell. Civ.* 5.5.46.

¹⁴⁰ The *renuntia*, strength reports attested in Britain at Vindolanda were periodically compiled and submitted by *optiones* (§ 2.3.3). In the imperial period the *optiones* were also called *optiones ab actis* (*CIL* 9.1617) stressing their clerical role. On the tasks of the *optiones*, see Breeze 1976. For the correspondence between a *duplicarius* and a man (possibly a colleague) named Tullio, see *T.Vindol.* 312.

¹⁴¹ Vegetius 2.7. See, for example, the signatures of an *optio* and a *tesserarius* (both in Latin) in the deed of sale *P.Dura* 26.

¹⁴² Possible evidence could be found in fragments *O.Krok.* 110 and 113-115, possibly showing a *sesquiplicarius* marking his possessions with his name.

literate? This is ultimately impossible to tell with certainty, but we can nonetheless assume that some literacy skills would have added efficiency in the execution of military duties even among soldiers of lower ranks. Moreover, as revealed by the payment records of the *ala Veterana Gallica* examined in the following chapter (§ 2.4), some bureaucratic procedures required written acknowledgements of receipt by soldiers, whether literate or not. This suggests that soldiers must have been incentivised to acquire basic literacy skills if they did not have them upon recruitment, and that the army may have put teachers at their disposal.¹⁴³ Several pieces of evidence can be mentioned in relation to learning in the army. The archive of a *praefectus cohortis* at Vindolanda includes evidence for learning of Latin poetry (*T.Vindol.* 118), perhaps suggesting that his children were schooled at the *praetorium*.¹⁴⁴ Ostraca from the Egyptian desert (e.g. *O.Claud.* 190) provide examples of learning among lower-rank men associated with the army. Examples of women writing in military contexts show that the extended military community participated in the literate culture of the army. We know of women from the higher strata of military societies exchanging messages at Vindolanda, as well as women taking part in the shipment of goods between military posts in Egypt.¹⁴⁵

More complexity is added by the fact that some members of the military community might have been more proficient writers in one language despite being able to converse in

¹⁴³ It is possible that the figure of the *pollio legionis* (e.g. *CIL* 3.5949) was connected with the teaching of Latin or literacy skills.

¹⁴⁴ For a recent reading of the tablet, see Kruschwitz 2014.

¹⁴⁵ See for instance, Valatta, a woman writing to the *praefectus alae Cerialis* (*T.Vindol.* 257), and the famous birthday invitation from Claudia Severa, wife of the prefect Brocchus, to Sulpicia Lepidina, wife of Cerialis (*T.Vindol.* 291). In Egypt there is evidence for women involved in letter exchanges with the *curatores praesidorum* and soldiers stationed at various desert outposts (e.g. *O.Claud.* 126; see § 3.2 and § 3.3).

multiple ones. This is a phenomenon attested abundantly in military documents. A famous example of linguistic interference is found in the Latin syntax of the letters of Claudius Terentianus (*P.Mich.* 467-471 and 476-480), a second-century soldier from Egypt, which reveals that he was probably a native speaker of Greek (§ 3.4). As noted in the section on the practical needs that may inform language choice (§ 1.6.1.3), throughout this study we will consider the possible techniques that the members of the military community may have adopted to maximise efficiency whenever bilingualism presented obstacles to efficient written communication, such as the employment of templates, translating tools, and code-switching. We will consider these especially in the contexts of Egypt in chapter 3 and Tripolitania in chapter 5.

The issue of literacy brings us to a final point related to writing that must be addressed; that is, the custom of employing scribes for the production of written documents in the ancient world. In the first instance, this phenomenon poses a methodological problem in that scribes acted as language mediators. While pursuing a linguistic enquiry of ancient material, it is our duty to ask whether we should consider scribes responsible for the language of our sources, or whether we should attribute linguistic features to those who dictated written messages to them. In other words, did scribes faithfully reproduce in written form whatever was dictated to them? On the one hand, it is not natural to think that scribes interfered with the production of language. On the other, we must recognise that, especially in highly multilingual contexts like Rome's military communities, these professional figures might at times have needed to make some linguistic choices on behalf of the author of a text in order to make it understandable. In a study of syntax in Latin documentary letters, Halla-aho (2009 22) reminds us also that "certain oddities in the syntax may not reflect anyone's competences,

neither the sender's nor the scribe's, but may be dictation errors without any linguistic motivation".¹⁴⁶ Yet even in the rare cases when we are able to identify irregularities as scribal errors, these are still linguistic phenomena of some kind, and deserve scholarly attention. The authors of the texts I examine here are considered, in general, as producers of language. The question of authorship is addressed when relevant, especially when two different hands are attested within a single piece of writing.

A second problem posed by the use of scribes relates to whether these professionals can be considered as responsible for language choice when more than one option was available, an issue particularly relevant for documents and collections of documents that present code alternation. In most cases, script change makes it impossible to assess whether one or more hands wrote mixed-language documents. In some other instances, especially when hands present particularly different styles and palaeographical features, accepting that scribes influenced language choice is more legitimate.¹⁴⁷ As far as professional scribal practice is concerned, it must be remembered that bilingualism was so rooted in some areas of the Roman world that it is difficult to assume that trained scribes were unable to produce writings in more than one language. In Egypt, for example, professional scribes would have hardly been monolingual and unable to accommodate someone who wished to write in either Latin or Greek.

¹⁴⁶ See, for example, a passage from the Vindolanda letters noted by Halla-aho (2009), where the draft of a message seems to have been corrected by a second scribe (*T.Vindol.* 218, lines 3-7): *rogo si quid utile mihi credid[eris] aut mittas aut reserves quid nobis opus esset Paterno n(ostro) h² et Gavoni h¹ ad te manda[[re]] h² vi* "Please either send or keep aside anything which you believe useful for me. I wrote to you via our friend(s) Paterno and Gavo what we needed". By adding *Gavoni* and correcting the infinitive *mandare* into the indicative *mandavi*, the second hand made the message syntactically correct.

¹⁴⁷ See, for instance, the professional letterforms in Teres' Latin message at Mons Claudianus and the shaky handwriting in Greek (§ 3.2.2).

In this thesis, I consider the explicit authors of documents as responsible for language choice. The question of scribal practice will be addressed in particular in relation to the practical strategies that letter writers or administrative clerks adopted to overcome the challenges posed by bilingual communication.

1.7 Selection of sources

1.7.1 Military documents and geographical frame

Some writings can be considered “military” because of their content, or because of the affiliation to the army of their authors or recipients. Others are “military” because of the context in which they were produced or discovered. In order not to lose focus from the primary concern of this study, the selection of documents considered here has been typological, with primary sources approached according to their function. In the first instance, this thesis looks at military administrative documents (chapter 2). The military character of these is defined by their content and purpose, which was to keep records of and manage personnel and finances, and to assign daily tasks to soldiers. Chapter 3 is concerned with correspondence. Military letters are identified through links between their authors or recipients (or both) and the army. Since the focus of this study is on language choice, the analysis includes only material from collections with both Latin and Greek pieces of correspondence, which allow for a more accurate identification of the motives which may have influenced language choice. The sets of writings considered in the chapter belonged to employees at military sites, their associates, and newly recruited soldiers. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 consider case studies based on their geographical location. Since the epigraphic sources for the study of Roman troops is unmanageably large, the field of investigation has been

restricted to three case studies: the region of Hadrian's Wall, examined as an example of a militarised frontier; the fortress at Bu Njem in Tripolitania, which provides insights into multilingual communication between the army and local tribes, and into the use of Latin as a language of prestige in military enclaves; and, finally, Roman Palmyra, chosen for the attestation of Palmyrene Aramaic alongside Latin in military texts. These case studies should allow us to appreciate some of the linguistic subgroups found within military communities, in three different areas of the Empire.

It should be noted that this thesis does not investigate the attitudes of Jewish soldiers as a linguistic subgroup in the Roman army. According to Josephus (*Ant. Jud.* 14.204), in the first century Julius Caesar ordered that μηδεὶς μήτε ἄρχων μήτε ἀντάρχων μήτε στρατηγὸς ἢ πρεσβευτὴς ἐν τοῖς ὅροις τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἀνιστῆ συμμάχιαν “Nobody, no commander, no pro-magistrate, no general nor ambassador shall recruit auxiliary troops in the lands of the Jews”. This is commonly taken as evidence of an edict that excluded Jewish men from conscription into the Roman troops. In fact, evidence for Jewish men fighting for Rome does exist,¹⁴⁸ but it is not abundant. In the first instance, Jewish soldiers are difficult to identify. Onomastics, for example, does not take us very far in understanding whether a soldier was ethnically Jewish or not. Tiberius Julius Alexander, military commander and *procurator* of Judaea in the first century, was a Jew with ordinary Roman and Greek names;¹⁴⁹ and, even though he abandoned his faith and led repressions of Jewish revolts (Josephus *Ant. Jud.* 20.5.2), one could assume that his linguistic background did include some Aramaic. Similarly, in Herod's army there were plenty of soldiers with Latin names who could be Jewish,¹⁵⁰ but again their

¹⁴⁸ See, for example, Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.85) on Tiberius recruiting 4,000 Jewish soldiers to fight in Sardinia.

¹⁴⁹ Turner 1954.

¹⁵⁰ Examples are *Rufus* (Josephus *Bell. Jud.* 2.52) and *Voluminus* (Josephus *Bell. Jud.* 1.535).

ethnic background remains a matter of debate.¹⁵¹ A synagogue has been discovered in the proximities of the Roman military base Dura Europos in Syria,¹⁵² suggesting that the community at the fort probably included Jewish people, but scholarship is yet to produce a comprehensive study on Judaism at this site. Complexity is added by the fact that, as argued by M. P. Speidel (1982b 238), Roman units could themselves be put at the disposal of the armies of client kings like Herod in Judaea.¹⁵³ As Roth (2007 420) notes, evidence for Jewish soldiers in the Roman troops is growing, but information about them remains nebulous and largely comes from literary sources. More substantial evidence for Roman units called *Iudaeorum* is found from the fifth century,¹⁵⁴ but this postdates the *terminus ante quem* of this work (§ 1.7.2). The present thesis does therefore not venture into an investigation of the linguistic attitudes among Jewish groups connected with the Roman army, but hopes to generate some interest in this matter.

1.7.2 Chronological frame

The present study considers exclusively Roman military communities of the imperial period. Linguistic variety within the Roman troops long predated the establishment of the imperial system, but a focus on the imperial evidence is necessary, in the first instance, because most

¹⁵¹ Roth 2007 410.

¹⁵² Gutmann 1992.

¹⁵³ This might have been the case of the *cohors Italica* mentioned in the *Acts of the Apostles* (10.1). The unit was stationed at Caesarea under the command of Cornelius, an allegedly Jewish centurion *religiosus et timens Deum*. The *Acts*, we know, are not an uncomplicated source, but Speidel advances the possibility that this *cohors Italica* is the σπειρής Αὐγοῦστα attested in an inscription from Caesarea (AE 1925 121). Yet, once again, this is far from certain.

¹⁵⁴ On this, see González Salinero 2003.

of the papyrological evidence on the Roman troops is found from the second century onwards. The *ante quem* chronological limit of this study is fixed at the end of the third century, due not to the lack of evidence beyond this date, but to the socio-political changes that took place in the course of the fourth century. In particular, the administrative and political division of the East from the West of the Empire makes the analysis of language choice more complicated, especially when adopting a framework which includes audience and identity as main lines of enquiry. It has been suggested that the crisis at the end of the third century influenced language attitudes in the Empire and perhaps consequently within the army. Rochette (1997a 116-126) has advanced the possibility that Diocletian instituted a language policy after the establishment of the Tetrarchy, imposing the use of Latin in official documents. It is difficult to see how the increased use of Latin in the fourth century might reflect a new official policy, especially because Rochette's analysis focuses exclusively on legal documents, which do not reflect the entirety of ancient society. Adams (2003a 634-638) confirms that this issue is in need of further investigation. Again, it is hoped that, by looking at the linguistic dynamics in the imperial army up to the end of the third century, this thesis will generate some interest in the linguistic phenomena that characterised Roman military communities in the later period.

2. Administration¹

2.1 Roman military administration and language choice

Language is a powerful means through which institutions can frame their role within society.² For instance, NATO is composed of member states whose languages amount to twenty-eight, but produces official documents only in English and French. The use of these two as official NATO languages reflects the origins of an organisation that, based in Brussels, was created through negotiations led by France, the UK, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the USA. However, by choosing English and French as its official languages, NATO also branded itself as a global diplomatic organisation. For, since the nineteenth century, French has developed a traditional role as the language of diplomacy, and English has steadily established its supremacy as a global lingua franca.³

The first theme that this study will consider is the question of language choice in Roman military administration, and the role that language played in the shaping of the institutional identity of the Roman army and its members.⁴ To do this, the present chapter explores a selection from the administrative “paperwork” that survives from Roman military units. The aim here is to understand whether there might have been, at least in certain contexts, a rationale behind the choice of Latin or Greek for administrative purposes. In

¹ I am grateful to Michael Alexander Speidel for reading and discussing this chapter with me, and for suggesting ways to improve it.

² On this, see Mumby and Clair 1997.

³ The language of diplomatic documents in the Western world was Latin until the eighteenth century, when it was replaced by French, which remains a traditional language for diplomatic exchanges today. On this, see Kurbalija and Slavik 2001, especially 156.

⁴ On institutional identity, see above § 1.2.

particular, I will consider the effect that audience, identity, and practicalities may have had on such a choice. As mentioned earlier (§ 1.3), military administrative documents from the Roman army present us with the image of an institution that was managed, on the practical level, in both Latin and Greek. One might wonder whether the two languages had the same value in military administrative workflows, or whether one was preferable over the other for the redaction of certain types of documents. In other words, given that in many geographical contexts the administration of Roman troops was bilingual, was the choice of between Latin and Greek in such contexts arbitrary?

The present chapter considers a selection of military administrative documents, here defined as writings “related to the operation of the army as an institution”.⁵ Recent scholarship has reconsidered these documents with particular reference to the military clerical offices within which they were produced, and their importance for the functioning of the army in its entirety. Scholarship has opened fundamental lines of enquiry for an understanding of language and writing in Roman military administration. Through a detailed analysis of military administrative documents, Stauner (2004) has unveiled the existence of fixed document types that were required for the management of military units. These are in particular (1) the morning reports, (2) strength reports, (3) rosters for guards, and (4) lists of names. According to Stauner, the production of these documents required: a systematic filing system; specific information recorded on the writing surface according to stereotyped layouts; the use of abbreviations and symbols; and the use of formal military terminology to

⁵ This is the definition that Adams (2003a 600) adopts for “official documents” in Roman military settings. I purposefully avoid the term “official” for now, but I will use it later in the discussion of the documents examined (§ 2.3.3 and 2.3.4).

describe ranks, titles, units, and duties.⁶ In Stauner's interpretation, this system of recordkeeping shared across Roman units was vital to (and perhaps overseen by) provincial governors.⁷ While ensuring efficiency within military units, some uniformity in military administration may also have provided provincial headquarters with the tools to control the good functioning of the troops stationed in the areas they oversaw.⁸

This approach has been recently supported by M. A. Speidel (2018), who has shown that the consistency of layouts in military registers is traceable back to 20 BC.⁹ Broadly speaking, Speidel (2018 182) sees Roman military administration as a system aimed at keeping constant record of all the army's resources, which resulted also in the efficient running of military units and the forging of an institutional identity for their members. A key aspect of Speidel's interpretation is the effect that formal recordkeeping had on individual soldiers: while absorbing the writing customs of military administration, these men developed skills that enabled them to communicate with one another and their associates, thus ensuring their wellbeing and readiness for work.¹⁰ As far as language choice is concerned, Speidel (2018 182) claims that "military documents written in Greek were only of minor, short-lived significance compared to those composed in Latin [...]. The army of the Roman emperors was, politically, still the *exercitus populi Romani*, and Latin, obviously, was the language of the Romans". The findings presented in this chapter reconsider these claims, proposing a more nuanced argument about what may have influenced the choice of Latin over Greek in military recordkeeping.

⁶ Stauner 2004 208.

⁷ Stauner 2004 209.

⁸ For a more recent treatment of the subject, see Stauner 2016.

⁹ On this, see also M. A. Speidel 2007 and 2010.

¹⁰ M. A. Speidel 2018 189.

Another systematic study of military administration documents currently available is the “socio-palaeographical” doctoral thesis defended by J. Austin (2010).¹¹ Examining the writing styles found at the military garrison at Dura in Syria, Austin discovers a correspondence between one of the scripts used at the camp and the fixed document types identified by Stauner (2004). This script, defined in the edition of the Dura papyri as “clerical hand”, is used in all the documents from the garrison that are structured according to specific, repeated layouts.¹² Among the standard features of these formats we find consistency in the dimensions of the margins, the width of the columns of text, and the space left between columns.¹³ Austin’s study is based on the belief that the higher administrative authorities of the Roman Empire, and ultimately the emperor himself, were greatly concerned with the “appearance of the writing that the state representatives, including those in the army, were to use in the documents they wrote on behalf of the State”.¹⁴ This view, combined with a detailed analysis of primary evidence, suggests that guidelines on how to produce certain types of administrative document may have been transmitted to all military units, perhaps even to the smallest military outposts.¹⁵ The uniformity of military administrative writing is seen in Austin’s study as one of many other normative factors which characterised the Roman army across the Empire. Austin ultimately understands the consistency of military administrative writing as a cohesive factor in the Roman army and in the Empire at large, thus as a creator of Roman military identity.

¹¹ Cf. § 1.4.

¹² *P. Dura* 98 and 105 (rosters), *P. Dura* 82 and 89 (morning reports), *P. Dura* 95 (strength report), *P. Dura* 83, 97 and 115 (lists of names), *P. Dura* 106 and 107 (rosters for guards).

¹³ J. Austin 2010 223.

¹⁴ J. Austin 2010 24.

¹⁵ J. Austin 2010 24.

The present chapter re-examines the uniformity of military administrative documents across provinces, taking a linguistic approach to primary evidence. The groundwork laid by recent historical and palaeographical analyses of military records will be exploited and questioned further: did the audience of a document influence the language in which it was to be written? Did the practicalities of military and civil administration have anything to do with language choice? And what is the role of identity in the choice between Latin and Greek in military administrative contexts? “Administrative documents” are defined as the documents produced by and for the army for the management of its soldiers and their duties. These include the documents that attest to soldiers’ belonging to the military, their presence at military bases, the fulfilment of their service, and the assignment of tasks.

In order to meet the stated objectives, primary evidence must be approached according to categories that speak to the issue of language choice. This chapter will therefore first consider the administrative documents that are found exclusively in Latin throughout time and different provinces, especially in those where Greek was commonly written both in the military and civilian spheres. What we will try to understand is whether these have survived only in Latin by chance, or whether it was routine to have them written in Latin. In the second instance, I will consider examples of military administrative writings that appear in Latin, Greek, and in a mixture of the two. The documents that are found exclusively and consistently in Latin in contexts where Latin and Greek were both used as administrative languages may help us uncover the factors that prompted the use of Latin in situations in which Greek would have been, in practical terms, a perfectly suitable choice. On the other hand, the documents that present a usage of both Latin and Greek allow us to appreciate the administrative situations in which the use of two languages may have been preferable and

more efficient. The evidence considered in this chapter includes documents from Egypt and Syria. Documents from Libya and Britain are exploited for comparison.

2.2 Leaving the army

2.2.1 Military diplomas

An analysis of language choice in Roman military administration ought to begin from the set of documents that are best attested both numerically and in most provinces of the Empire: military diplomas.¹⁶ Between the first and mid-third centuries, these bronze tablets formalised the rewards to auxiliary soldiers at the end of their time in the army.¹⁷ Such rewards were, in the first instance, the conferment of Roman citizenship and, from the reign of Claudius onwards, the right of intermarriage, the *conubium*, which allowed Roman citizenship to be transmitted to the children that soldiers had with women of peregrine status.¹⁸

¹⁶ About 1,000 examples of these documents survive today. Over 500 have been edited in *RMD*.

¹⁷ Not all soldiers received a diploma at the end of service. Diploma awards could be made to serving soldiers or soldiers who had already obtained veteran status. Veterans without diplomas are attested in *epikrisis* lists as *χωρίς χαλκῶν* “without bronze”. The award of diplomas was probably initiated during the reign of Tiberius and was maintained for about two centuries. After 212 the diplomas became increasingly infrequent. In 311 Diocletian established a standard system of military discharge, which replaced both military diplomas and discharge certificates (§ 2.2.2). On this, see Mann and Roxan 1988 346. Eck (2012) has recently argued that after the production of diplomas ceased, veterans continued to produce their own diplomas independently in order to prove their superior status over those who had not served the emperors.

¹⁸ Dio 60.24 3. No trace of *conubium* is found in the pre-Claudian diplomas (cf. Valvo 2001 161-166). The right of intermarriage might have been promoted by Claudius in order to make military service more appealing to non-citizens and to use the army as a means of further unification of the Empire. On this, see Mann and Roxan 1988 344. On *conubium* in the army, see Phang 2001 57-65. After 140, the right of intermarriage is no longer attested. On this, see Waebens 2012a.

All surviving diplomas are written in Latin and their text is structured according to a fixed format, which includes: (1) the name of the awarding emperor and his titles; (2) the ranks of the recipient(s); (3) the formula *qui militavit/militaverunt* followed by the names of the units in which they served;¹⁹ (4) the number of *stipendia* received; (5) the reason for the diploma award (commonly the *honesta missio*);²⁰ (6) the award of citizenship rights to men listed at the bottom of the tablet (and to their children, depending on the date of composition); (7) a list with the names of the beneficiaries; and (8) a declaration that the original copy of the document is displayed publicly in Rome. The latter point in the list is relevant for an understanding of the value of the diplomas because, if a document had a copy officially deposited in Rome, what was written in that document had to be treated as the law.²¹ The legal value of the diplomas is also confirmed by the fact that they were awarded by the emperor himself, as stated in the opening formula. This is why Riccobono (1941), editor of the *Fontes Iuris Romani Antejustiniani*, includes examples of military diplomas in the first volume of his corpus, dedicated to the *leges*; that is, the documents that pertained to the laws promulgated by the Roman State. There is, however, no reason to believe that the law in the Roman world was exclusively associated with the Latin language rather than with Greek. Tacitus (*Ann.* 12.60) writes the following about Claudius: *saepius audita vox principis, parem vim rerum habendam a procuratoribus suis iudicatarum ac si ipse statuisset* “The voice of the emperor was repeatedly heard establishing that the legal judgements issued by his procurators should have the same value as if he had issued them”. In whichever language the

¹⁹ Alföldy (1968) divides the military diplomas broadly speaking in three categories: type I is awarded to soldiers in service; type II to both veterans and soldiers in service; type III only to veterans.

²⁰ On this, see Rowell 1939.

²¹ On the official value of documents with copies deposited in Rome, see Meyer 2004 136. There is no surviving example of the copies at Rome.

procurators expressed themselves in the provinces, their words had full legal force. Thus, the choice of Latin for the compilation of military diplomas was prompted not solely by their value as legal documents, but by other factors including their audiences.

The direct addressees of the diplomas were, in the first instance, their beneficiaries. Yet, most importantly, the diplomas spoke to anybody interested in knowing the status and rights of their beneficiaries. As imperial declarations of a soldier's rights, they had a universal audience; and for such universal messages the emperors (via their delegates in the provinces) wrote Latin, both in the East and in the West. This choice also ensured that, wherever veteran soldiers decided to settle after leaving the army, they could trust that their diplomas would be understood by the provincial authorities in any geographical context.

There are also practical factors to consider. The production of the diplomas began within military units, which sent the names of discharged soldiers to the provincial headquarters.²² Presumably these issued the diplomas and notified some office in Rome, ensuring that copies of their content were displayed publicly on bronze panels. The routine process for the production of diplomas suggests that there was little flexibility in terms of language for the writing of these declarations: whether they were meant for beneficiaries whose preferred language was Latin or Greek, there was no option for differentiation. Masses of diplomas would have been issued yearly, and adopting one system instead of multiple ones would presumably have facilitated their production.

The product of this bureaucratic process is significant for an understanding of the language of the army as an institution. The production of the diplomas was managed by provincial offices, within which linguistic competence in Latin and Greek would vary from one

²² For a request for a military diploma, see Weiss 2015.

province to another. In the absence of any evidence pointing to the existence of a centralised body for military administration, it appears that the provincial offices endeavoured to maintain the use of the Latin language in the production of military diplomas. Local authorities themselves thus seem to have shaped the linguistic identity of the army as an institution that, at least in solemn circumstances such as the conferment of citizenship and intermarriage rights, branded itself as Latin-speaking. Therefore, even if Greek was one of the languages that Rome used to promulgate its laws and administer its provinces, when our field of investigation is restricted to official military matters connected with the membership of a soldier to the army, Greek no longer seems to have held the same force as Latin.

As markers of the new social identity that soldiers acquired with the *honesta missio*, the diplomas are also intrinsically linked with the question of individual identities. Until at least the year 212, after which they became increasingly obsolete, the diplomas were the physical proof of an individual's new role, or identity, in the Roman world. It is via documents written in Latin that individuals became invested in, and conscious of, their belonging to the body of Roman citizens. And consciousness of membership is, in sociological terms, one of the main factors that defines individuals' identity in society (§ 1.6.1.2). As Eck (2012) has argued in relation to the private production of diploma-like bronze documents in the late third century, soldiers themselves had a personal interest in possessing diplomas, in that these tablets enabled them to give proof of their direct bond with the emperor, and of their superior role in Roman society. It can therefore be suggested that, on the individual level too, Latin was the language in which soldiers would recognise their individual belonging to the army as an institution.

2.2.2 Discharge certificates

Another set of documents concerned with the end of military service are certificates of discharge,²³ declarations which soldiers could request upon leaving the army as proof of their veteran status. These did not grant any rights as such, but enabled retired soldiers to have their privileges recognised in certain situations when diplomas were not available.²⁴ For example, based on some second-century proceedings to the prefect of Egypt (*P.Hamb.* 31), we know that veterans could be asked to produce multiple sources of evidence, including a discharge certificate and witnesses, to have their veteran status recognised by local authorities. As far as we know, letters of discharge were mostly required for the *epikrisis*, an Egyptian census, for which retired auxiliary soldiers provided evidence of their veteran status in order to be exempt from the poll tax.²⁵ This already reduces the audiences of these documents, which, as far as we know from primary sources, can be identified broadly as local administrative offices in Egypt.²⁶

There are only a couple of known possible discharge certificates. One is a second-century wooden tablet from Egypt (*CPL* 113):

²³ On these, see Mann and Roxan 1988.

²⁴ It must be noted that a small number of diplomas from the first century (*CIL* 16.42, *CIL* 16.164, and *RMD* 80) report the formula *dimisso honesta missione*, which could be a discharge formula. Mann and Roxan (1988 345) suggest that these could help to distinguish the recipients who had already been discharged from those who were still in service.

²⁵ For a list of *epikrisis* documents of veteran soldiers, see Waebens 2012b 269.

²⁶ *BGU* 4.1033, *P.Hamb.* 31a, *BGU* 1.113, *BGU* 1.265, *BGU* 3.780, *SB* 6.9228, *PSI* 5.447, *P.Oxy.* 12.1451, *BGU* 3.847.

*M(anio)²⁷ Acilio A{va}viola et Pansa co(n)s(ulibus)
pridie Nonas Ianuarias*

T(itus) Haterius Nepos praef(ectus) Aeg(ypti)

L(ucio) Valerio Nostro equiti

alae Vocontiorum turma

Gaviana emerito hone-

stam missionem dedit

(Hand 2)

[Pe]rlegi o(mnia?) s(upra?) s(cripta) e(merito?)

h(onestam?) m(issionem?) dedi prid(ie) Nonas

(CPL 113)

During the consulship of Manius Acilius Aviola and Pansa, the day before the *Nonae* of January.

Titus Haterius Nepos, prefect of Egypt, gave the *honestam missio* to Lucius Valerius Noster, emeritus cavalryman of the *ala Vocontiorum*, from the turma of Gavius.

(Hand 2)

I read all the above and granted *honestam missio* to the emeritus on the day before the *Nonae*.

The text reveals that, unlike the diplomas, discharge certificates were ordinary permissions signed by military commanders or high-ranking administrators, in this case the prefect of Egypt.

The only other document in which the grant of *honestam missio* is explicitly stated is a bronze leaf tablet from Belgium (AE 1980 647), which was originally part of a diptych. Inscribed on its verso is the following declaration:

Honestam missionem

dedimus

Claudius Livianus praef(ectus)

Praetori subscripsit

XIII kalendae Feb(ruariae)

Gallo et Bradua co(n)s(ulibus)

(AE 1980 647)

We granted *honestam missio*.

Claudius Livianus, prefect of the *praetor*, signed below on the fourteenth day of the *Kalendae* of February in the consulship of Gallus and Bradua.

²⁷ Cf. the wrong *DDbDP* expansion *M(arcus)*.

Unlike in *CLP* 113, here the *honesta missio* is granted by two or more people (*dedimus*) and the declaration is undersigned by a praetorian prefect rather than by the prefect of Egypt. Discharge was ultimately awarded by the emperors, but it was clearly made official by administrative or military authorities.

A comparison between *CPL* 113 and the document from Belgium suggests that there were no specific guidelines for the content of discharge certificates. There also seems to have been a certain degree of flexibility in the production process of the certificates. For instance, a second-century petition by a group of soldiers from the *legio X Fretensis* (*PSI* 1026) suggests that discharge certificates could be issued to legionary soldiers. In this specific case, the petitioners had served in the Misene fleet before being transferred to Judea as legionary soldiers. They thus requested proof that they were veterans discharged from a legion and not from the fleet, a condition that would arguably grant them more privileges.

Unlike the diplomas, discharge certificates do not present themselves as fixed document types. Their production was “an ad hoc affair [...] it was not a regular and established process, but was carried out on the initiative of the men themselves”.²⁸ It follows that they appear in different formats, and that the information they record is not always the same. Yet, just like the diplomas, discharge certificates are concerned with audience and identity: they needed to be understandable in as many geographical contexts as possible and they certified a change in the social status of their beneficiaries.

The little evidence that survives is obviously not enough to claim that Latin was the language in which these declarations had to be written. Since there appear to have been no standard rules for their compilation, we could surmise that there were also no guidelines

²⁸ Mann and Roxan 1988 343.

regarding language choice. In practical terms, then, we could suggest that the choice of language for the compilation of these certificates may have rested with their producers or direct addressees.

It is nevertheless worth drawing attention to a second-century record of *epikrisis* of a veteran named Valerius Clemens. Below the Greek record, a note (*CIL* 16, appendix 8) reads, also in Greek: “The aforementioned veteran, to prove that he had served his time in the *cohors II* Pactumeius Magnus, produced a Latin letter written by the commander of the unit, Pactumeius Magnus, certifying that he had served in said cohort and had received the *honesta missio* on [...]”.²⁹ The veteran without a diploma had presented a discharge certificate at an office in Egypt, hoping to be entered in the census as a veteran and be granted veteran privileges. With this declaration, the office confirmed his status and recorded him as a veteran. The “Latin letter” mentioned in the text is no doubt an official declaration of discharge. It would, of course, be wrong to interpret this phrase as a sign that discharge certificates had to be written in Latin. Indeed, it may be relevant that whoever wrote this document thought it worth stating that the certificate produced was in Latin. This comment might be superfluous if the documents were standardly produced in Latin. Might it suggest that they could also be produced in Greek?

2.3 Recordkeeping of manpower and activities

Every Roman unit produced reports daily and periodically, providing detailed lists of the number of soldiers that formed each unit and sub-unit, the activities in which they engaged, and other information useful for the administration of troops. Vegetius (2.19) writes: *totius*

²⁹ On this, see also Mann and Roxan 1988 342.

enim legionis ratio, sive obsequiorum sive militarium munerum sive pecuniae, cotidie adscribitur actis maiore prope diligentia, quam res annonaria vel ciuilis polyptychis adnotatur

“For the administration of the whole legion, including their special orders, their military orders, and money, are entered daily in the acts with precision almost greater than the records of military finances or civil tax are noted in official registers”. As mentioned above (§ 2.1), scholars have recently endeavoured to show that Roman military administration relied on fixed document types, claiming that these were written in Latin, following the same format and with the same, formulaic wording all over the Empire. Other schools of thought reject the possibility that there was any administrative consistency across units, and argue that Roman administrative documents were simply produced out of the practical need to manage resources, personnel, and activities.³⁰

By adopting a sociolinguistic approach to the primary evidence, we can navigate between these claims and provide a new interpretation of the data at our disposal. My argument considers in the first instance two types of documents that appear repeatedly with the same format, layout, and language in different provinces: the morning reports, which were daily assignment of orders (§ 2.3.1), and the *pridiana*, yearly strength reports issued at the end of the calendar year (§ 2.3.2). These enable us to appreciate that specific styles of report-writing might have been adopted by more units and perpetuated throughout long periods of time. I then consider other types of daily and periodic reports for comparison (§ 2.3.3), where the choice of language and format was more flexible. Attempting to read these documents with sociolinguistic eyes will help us appreciate the communicative nature of the military reports, advancing our understanding of language choice for their compilation.

³⁰ Phang 2007 and Haynes 2013 325.

2.3.1 Morning reports

The morning reports survive only in Latin. The first document to have been identified as a sequence of morning reports is *P.Dura* 82, which was written at Dura between 223 and 233. The core elements of its structure can still be read. Each one of the three daily entries contains, in this order: (1) a date; (2) the name of the unit; (3) the total number of soldiers in the unit; (4) a breakdown of figures by rank; (5) the name of the commanding officer in charge; (6) a password; (7) a list of men on deployment; (8) a list of men returned from the previous day's deployment; (9) the *pronuntiatio* of orders; (10) an oath; and (11) a list of men at the standards. The document seems to have been written in the same hand throughout, and its letterforms suggest that it was written by a skilled clerk. Of the same kind are also *P.Dura* 83-89. Of these, *P.Dura* 83 and 89 are legible enough to see that they contained the same information found in *P.Dura* 82. The others are too fragmentary to read, but they are likely to have followed the same pattern of entries and the same format. Another example of morning report is *PSI* 1307, a strength report from a unit stationed in Egypt sometime in the first century.³¹ Its structure and breakdown of information mirrors that of *P.Dura* 82, and was

³¹ The exact provenience of the papyrus is unknown. Interestingly, the verso of *PSI* 1307 has five lines of writing, two in Greek and three in Latin, apparently unrelated to the report on the recto. The first Greek line at the top reads as an iambic tetrameter catalectic ἄρ' ἔστι πάσης πράξεως ἀνθρωπίνης ὁ καιρός, followed by another one, mostly illegible, but which seems to repeat the line above, as if the same verse had been written twice. The poetic nature of the line is clear, and we are most probably dealing with a fragment of a comedy (ed. C. Austin 1973 329 frag. 309). On the iambic tetrameter catalectic as a typical metre of Greek comedy, see West 1982 92. Three Latin lines are written the bottom of the leaf, and suggest a Virgilian-flavoured verse text:]VLI [| AE[NEAS DARDANIAE [| A]ENEAS DARDANIAE[. The repetition of the same words on two different lines suggests that we are perhaps dealing with a writing exercise. This is also suggested by the script of the texts, which is in rustic capitals, a typical script for literary writings. Other Virgilian quotations attested in military documents are found in *P.Masada* 721 (reporting *Aen.* 4.9), *T.Vindol.* 118 (*Aen.* 9.473), *T.Vindol.* 854 (*Geo.* 1.125), and *O.Claud.* 190 (*Aen.* 1.1-3). See also *T.Vindol.* 855 and 856, both including fragments of literary writings. For Virgilian verse on

written in a trained scribal hand in fine Roman cursive. The list is concluded by a report comprised of two fragments (*RMR* 52 and 53), which was probably written in Egypt between the second and third centuries.³² Despite its partial status of conservation, it is possible to identify the main breakdown of information throughout the text.

Table 1 summarises the content of the readable extant examples of morning reports:

	<i>P.Dura</i> 82 3rd cent Syria	<i>P.Dura</i> 83 3rd cent Syria	<i>P.Dura</i> 89 3rd cent Syria	<i>PSI</i> 1307 1st cent Egypt	<i>RMR</i> 52 & 53 2nd-3rd cent Egypt		
	Line	Line	Line	Line	Side	Frag	Line
Date	Col.i 1, 9 Col.ii 1, 14	4	Col.i 5, 11 Col.ii 5	?	V V	A B	Col.ii 1 2,3
Total strength	Col.i 1, 9 Col.ii 1,14	?	Col.i 5, 11	?	R	B	12
Men at the garrison	-	?	?	?	R R	B C	7 2
Breakdown by rank	Col.i 1, 9 [Col.ii 1, 14]	?	Col.i 5, 11-12	?	R R R	A B C	11 10 5
Name of unit	Col.i 2, 10 Col. ii 2, 15	3	Col.i 5, 11 Col.ii 5	?	R	C	6
Commander	Col.i 3, 11 Col.ii 3, 16		Col.i 1, 13 Col.ii 1, 5	Col.ii 6 (?)	R R	B C	12 7
Password	Col.i 3, 11 [Col.ii 3, 16]	10	Col.i 7, 13	Col.ii 14	R	A	6
Men deployed	Col.i 4, [12] Col.ii 4, [16?]	?	(<i>omnes permaserunt</i> , Col.i 6, 12)	Col.ii 9, 12	V	B	26
Men returned	Col.i 5, [15?] Col.ii 6-8	?	n/a	Col.ii 15 (?)	V	B	23

stone inscriptions in the proximity of military forts, see *RIB* 2491, a graffito on a tile recalling *Aen.* 2.1; *RIB* 2447, a dipinto on a wall plaster recalling *Aen.* 1.313 or 12.165; and *RIB* 1954, inscribed on the rock at a quarry in Cumbria recalling *Aen.* 4.700. On the evidence from Britain, see Kruschwitz 2015, and cf. Schumacher 2012 and Cugusi 2014a.

³² This assumption is based on the fact that the report belonged to the *ala veterana Gallica*. See M. P. Speidel 1982a.

Men ill	-	?	-	Col.ii 2	?	?	?
<i>Pronuntiatio</i>	Col.i 6, 16 Col.ii 11 [...]	?	Col.i 1,8	?	R V	B B	2, 14 29
Oath	Col.i 16 [...]	7	Col.i 1, 8	?	R V	B B	3 30
Men at the standards	Col.i 6, 17 [...]	?	Col.i 1, 8	Col.ii 17	R R R	B B C	3 9 4

Table 1: Information breakdown of the morning reports

Despite the fragmentary status of *P.Dura* 83, *PSI* 1307 and *RMR* 52-53, the table shows the consistency with which the information contained in these documents was collected and recorded in different geographical areas and throughout a period of time that spanned from as early as the first century to the third century. It is therefore legitimate to wonder whether morning reports conformed to some sort of guidelines of composition, which included rules for their content, structure, and layout. Was the employment of Latin one of these, too?

These reports were obviously compiled for practical reasons; that is, to keep track of units' personnel, deployments, and daily passwords. However, their content suggests that we should read them also from a different angle. In particular, the *pronuntiatio* (e.g. *decurio pronuntiavit quot imperatum fueri faciemus* "The decurion proclaimed the orders. We will do what is ordered"), the daily renewal of allegiance to the emperor in the oath (*ad omnem tesseram parati erimus* "We will be ready for all orders"), the mention of the *excubatio ad signa* (i.e. the honour guard of the standards), and the assignment of a password are all elements that suggest that these reports were written with some solemnity, and that they might have fulfilled a ritual as well as a practical function.

It has been claimed that the morning reports were the written counterpart of the military *salutatio*, a morning ritual of salutation in the camps.³³ Josephus (*Bell. Jud.* 3.5.3) describes this as follows: οὐδὲ γὰρ δεῖπνον ἢ ἄριστον ὁπότε θελήσειαν αὐτεξούσιον ἐκάστω, πᾶσιν δ' ὁμοῦ, τοὺς τε ὕπνους αὐτοῖς καὶ τὰς φυλακὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξεγέρσεις σάλπιγγες προσημαίνουσιν, οὐδ' ἔστιν ὅ τι γίνεται δίχα παραγγέλματος. ὑπὸ δὲ τὴν ἔω τὸ στρατιωτικὸν μὲν ἐπὶ τοὺς ἑκατοντάρχας ἕκαστοι, πρὸς δὲ τοὺς χιλιάρχους οὗτοι συνίασιν ἀσπασόμενοι, μεθ' ὧν πρὸς τὸν ἡγεμόνα τῶν ὄλων οἱ ταξίμαχοι πάντες: ὁ δ' αὐτοῖς τό τε ἐξ ἔθους σημεῖον καὶ τᾶλλα παραγγέλματα δίδωσιν διαφέρειν εἰς τοὺς ὑποτεταγμένους: “[Roman soldiers] do not lunch, nor dine on their own, but all together. Their times for sleeping, watching, and rising are announced by the sound of trumpets; nothing is done without this signal. In the morning, soldiers report to their centurions, and these in turn to the tribunes, to greet them; with these all the higher officers go to the general of the whole army; he habitually gives them the watchword and other orders, which they and all those under their command must carry out”. This passage almost reconstructs the content of the morning reports, which present themselves as formal, ceremonial documents. They cannot be compared to duty rosters such as, for example, *RMR* 9 (see § 2.3.3), which mechanically lists the engagements of the soldiers of the *legio III Cyrenaica*. In the morning reports, ordinary camp activities such as *ad balnea*, “cleaning the baths”, were not recorded because they were unfitting for the tone of the document.³⁴

³³ Haynes (2015 113) writes that the military “morning gatherings (...) would have stressed transmission of written orders and reports”. For morning rituals in military camps in the republican period, see Polybius *Hist.* 6.34. On military rituals in the imperial period, see Tacitus *Hist.* 3.24-25.

³⁴ Phang 2007 292.

If we consider these reports in a communicative dimension, they appear not as the product of a single voice, but as communal declarations made by military units. This is especially evident in the use of the plural in the verbs *faciemus* and *erimus*. The direct audience of these documents was obviously the people who took part in the daily running of the bases where they were written. However, if the same morning ritual was performed by more units in different places, they would appear addressed to the whole army as an institution. Through the performance of a morning ritual, in physical and written form, each unit renewed their allegiance to the emperor, shaping the institutional identity of the unit and its individual members. Again, we see that through ritual military men became conscious of their membership in the army. And such consciousness is, in modern sociological terms (§ 1.6.1.2), a fundamental element that shaped their institutional identity.

If we accept that the morning reports had a ritual force, then the use of Latin for their compilation may be at least partially symbolic too, much comparable to the rationale that informed language choice for the production of the military diplomas. As mentioned earlier (§ 1.3), the attitude of the Romans towards the use of Greek in official contexts was, broadly speaking, very flexible. There is nonetheless evidence for the ritual employment of Latin in contexts where language could be used as a statement of belonging and adhering to the Roman customs. Thus, even though the same information contained in the morning reports could obviously be written in Greek by units stationed in Egypt and Syria, Latin may have been perceived as more fitting for performing military rituals in spoken and written form.

2.3.2 *Pridianum* type

The *pridianum* was a periodical strength report, perhaps published yearly.³⁵ The surviving examples of this type of document present, much like the morning reports, a layout that contains: (1) the document heading; (2) the date of issuing; (3) the name of the issuing unit; (4) the name of the commander in charge; (5) the total number of soldiers enrolled; (6) the number of men recruited since the issuing of the previous report; (7) the number of men lost since the previous report; (8) the number of soldiers absent at the time of compilation of the report; and (9) the total number of soldiers present at the garrison. Four examples of *pridiana* survive, all in Latin. I consider these here in turn.

RMR 63, dated between 99 and 106, is a remarkable document for multiple reasons.³⁶ Firstly because, despite having been found Egypt, it records figures for a unit that at the time of its compilation was stationed in Moesia.³⁷ This oddity may suggest that data on individual units could be stored at offices in different provinces, perhaps in order to facilitate or

³⁵ The word *pridianum* literally means “a document redacted the day before”, possibly referring to the *Kalendae Ianuariae*. It is attested at *RMR* 63 col.i line 24, *ChLA* 11.501 line 2, and *RMR* 64 line 1. There is a debate on whether the *pridiana* were yearly reports or periodical reports issued several times over the calendar year. I shall not venture into this debate here. On this, see Stauner 2004 and Bowman and Thomas 1991, especially 63-66.

³⁶ Since in *RMR* 63 the content of the *pridianum* technically begins at col.i line 24, there are doubts about the nature of this document, in that it could be one of many continuous (monthly?) reports written on the same leaf of papyrus. The unclear nature of *RMR* 63 does not undermine the argument of this section, which is concerned with language choice for the compilation of strength reports.

³⁷ This is the *cohors I Hispanorum veterana*. On the identity of the cohort and its period of activity, see Fink 1958 110-111. The cohort had been active in Dacia at the time this report was compiled. On this, see Holder 2003 102. The location of the unit is revealed by the entry recording soldiers deployed *intra provinciam*, under which we read names of Moesian localities (col.ii, line 27: *Piroboridauae*; col.ii line 28: *Buridauae*; col.i line 29: *trans Danubium*).

coordinate the deployment of units and contingents between regions.³⁸ This is fundamental to the understanding of the audiences of the document, an issue to which I will return below (§ 2.3.4). *RMR* 63 also records an instance of intra-word code-switching: in providing a heading for the figure for soldiers deceased during the year, the scribe of the report wrote the word *Θetati*, using a Greek Θ, Greek shorthand for “dead”,³⁹ and a Latin adjectival ending. This is an unparalleled spelling of the military jargon *thetati*, which is widely attested in military records between the first and third centuries.⁴⁰

Another example of *pridianum* is *RMR* 64, a second-century papyrus from Egypt. This was the first to raise questions about the issuing of the annual strength reports in that the date of its publication indicates the end of August rather than the end of December, which was the customary date of publication of the *pridiana*.⁴¹ Some have explained this by arguing that the *pridiana* were lists of personnel issued along with the military payments three times a year.⁴² Others have claimed that military units in Egypt issued two *pridiana* per year, one at the end of the local calendar year (29th August) and the other at the end of the Roman one

³⁸ The fact that the report was recorded on papyrus could be taken as indicative of a local Egyptian production, assuming that in provinces such as Dacia wooden writing supports might have been more readily available. It is not impossible that the unit was to be sent to Egypt after having fought in Moesia. On the *cohors I Hispanorum veterana* and *equitata*, see Cavenaile 1975.

³⁹ Θ is a symbol of death attested in epigraphic and papyrological texts from the first century BC up until the reign of Nero. On the use of Θ, see Kruschwitz 2002, especially 109. Mommsen originally interpreted the sign as an O with a medial abbreviation bar signifying *obiit* or *obitus*. See Mommsen *CIL* 1 *Indices* 613. Cf. G. R. Watson 1952. The traditional mystical interpretation of Greek letters interprets Θ as a symbol of death. Consider, for instance, Isidorus *Etym.* 1.3.8. On the employment of Θ in military registers, see Isidorus *Etym.* 1.24.

⁴⁰ *RMR* 8 (here spelled *thetates*), *RMR* 34 (here in a Latinized form without aspiration *tetati*), *RMR* 73 (here only a Θ is indicated at col.iii line 26).

⁴¹ The document is dated to 31st August (line 13). Line 21 of the document reads *et post Kalendas Ianuarias accesserunt* and suggests that the previous report was written in December.

⁴² Mommsen 1909 558.

(31st December).⁴³ The latter solution is now commonly accepted. Again, I will return to this issue below (§ 2.3.4). Like the other texts, *RMR 64* is written by a clerk highly competent in Latin.⁴⁴

Two fragmentary documents complete the list of possible extant annual strength reports. *P.Brooklyn 24* is a *pridianum* from Egypt. The readable *antoniniana* and the mention of a certain Aurelius Septimius Heraclius as the prefect of Egypt (col.i line 3) may indicate that the document was redacted around 215.⁴⁵ *ChLA 11.501*, also from Egypt, is a fragment of the *pridianum* of an *ala Commagenorum*, possibly datable to the first century.

	<i>RMR 63</i> 1 st -2 nd c. Moesia/Egypt	<i>P.Brooklyn 24</i> 3 rd c. Egypt	<i>RMR 64</i> AD 156 Egypt		<i>ChLA 501</i> 1 st c. Egypt
<i>Pridianum</i>	Col.i 24	?	Col.i 1		2
Date	Col.i 23	?	Col.i 2		1
Military unit	Col.i 24	?	Col.i 1		2
Commander	Col.i 25	?	Col.i 6		3
Total strength	Col.i 26	?	Previous	Col.i 14	5
			Present	Col.i 15	
Accessions					
Title	Col.i 29	Col.i 1	Col.i 19		?
Breakdown	Col.30-34	Col.i 2	Col.i 21-?		6-12
Total accessions	Col.i 35	?	?		?
Net <i>reliqui n.p.</i>	Col.i 35	?	?		?
Losses					
Title	Col.ii 3	?	?		?
Transferred	Col.ii 4-8	Col.ii 4	?		?
Deaths	Col.ii 9-10	Col.ii 8	?		?
Total deaths	Col.ii 12	Col.ii 5	?		?
Total losses	?	Col.ii 7	?		?
Net <i>reliqui</i>	Col.ii 14	Col.ii 10	?		?

⁴³ Fink 1942 70-71.

⁴⁴ The only unremarkable, non-standard feature that can perhaps be identified in its text is the hypercorrection in *a Sempronio Liberal{a}e* (col.i lines 20-21 and 32), and *ab ala{e}* (col.i line 25), perhaps showing interference from the Greek construction [ἀπό] + [genitive].

⁴⁵ Thomas and Davies 1977.

Absences				
Title	Col.ii 17	?	?	?
Extra provincial	Col.ii 18-22	?	?	?
Net absentees	Col.ii 23	?	?	?
Extra provinciam	Col.ii 23	Col.ii 13	?	?
Intra provinciam	Col.ii 24-38	?	?	?
Total number of soldiers present	Col.ii 41	?	?	?

Table 2: Content breakdown of the surviving *pridiana*⁴⁶

Again, the repeated format of the *pridiana*, attested across three centuries, makes us wonder whether there might have been some guidelines for the compilation of these documents, which could have included the employment of Latin. What are the reasons to believe that Latin was the preferred language to write strength reports like the *pridiana*? Again, considering the *pridiana* from a communicative angle, that is considering their audience and purpose, may help us address this question.

These reports were written out of practical motives: in order to function, any army must keep record of the resources at its disposal. Just like the morning reports, the audience of the *pridiana* plays a fundamental role for an understanding of their format and language. In addition to the internal, practical needs of each unit, the strength reports were important sources of information for the higher levels of provincial administration. Some of the Dura papyri, for example, provide evidence for the control that provincial governors had over the activities of the military troops stationed in their territories.⁴⁷ The discovery in Egypt of a

⁴⁶ On the information breakdown of the *pridiana* and the morning reports, see also Stauner 2004 and Gellérfi 2011.

⁴⁷ E.g. *P.Dura* 56 is a series of letters written by military commanders to inform a *legatus pro praetore* of the accessions of individual soldiers. *P.Dura* 60 contains the copy of a letter sent by Marius Maximus to Minicius Martialis, an imperial procurator. In the letter Marius asks Minicius to keep careful record of the expenses of the units under his supervision, which were stationed across the region of Dura.

pridianum of a cohort stationed in Moesia is also indicative of the fact that information about unit resources was relevant to (and somehow communicated between) different provinces, possibly to inform strategic deployments. The military diplomas themselves attest to the knowledge that the provincial governments must have had of the soldiers who completed service, and therefore the number of men at the disposal of the emperors for military operations. Thus, even though the periodical strength reports would perhaps not normally leave the clerical offices of the units within which they were produced, it is likely that they were compiled with the possibility in mind that their content might be of interest to civil administration. Stauner (2004 111-112) has even claimed the *pridiana* were not documents for internal military administration, but reports compiled by the army specifically for provincial governors.

Some uniformity in military recordkeeping would have ensured efficiency both within and across units: it guaranteed that the clerks collected all the information needed for the good management of the troops without creating new layouts each time; and it facilitated the potential surveying of the manpower available at different garrisons and in different provinces. On a practical level, the consistent employment of one language and coherent formats for the yearly account of personnel and resources would have also ensured that the performance and strength of each unit could be compared with that of other troops. In this sense, the approach to language choice and clerical practice in military recordkeeping seems to have been a practical one.

There is another key aspect that deserves to be emphasised while considering the audiences of these documents. Much like the diplomas, the annual strength reports established a link, more or less direct, between the emperors and their soldiers. These documents were a means through which the emperors, via offices in the provinces, could

gather data about the formation of their troops stationed across the Empire. In an arguably hyperbolic description, Augustus is said to have left as part of his will a scroll with *a breviarium totius imperii, quantum militum sub signis ubique esset, quantum pecuniae in aerario et fiscis et vectigaliorum residuis* “A summary of the whole Empire, how many soldiers were enrolled under the standards and where, how much money was in the *aerarium*, in the *fisci*, and left to collect in taxes” (Suet. *Aug.* 101). Again, even though we cannot take it as factual evidence, the passage shows that there was awareness among ancient authors of the ways in which imperial resources, including military personnel, were managed on a large scale. The *pridiana* had the potential to be means through which the emperors and provincial governors informed military strategy, establishing a link between individual units and the highest spheres of military administration. Thus, like the diplomas and the morning reports, we see that the *pridiana* might have been endowed with a high-level value, symbolic and practical, that other administrative reports lacked.

2.3.3 Other types of daily records and strength reports

It is impossible to know whether the morning reports and the *pridiana* were compiled by all units around the Empire. What is certain, however, is that units produced numerous other types of daily and periodical reports to keep track of their activities, attesting to local idiosyncrasies in military administration. The style and logic of these varied according to the needs of the units that compiled them, and so did language choice. Here I consider a few examples representative of three different styles of reports.

A famous instance of daily reports is *RMR 9*, a duty roster from Egypt compiled by the *legio III Cyrenaica* at the end of the first century. The document is an isolated example of

a tabular record, with a grid clearly marked by horizontal and vertical lines.⁴⁸ The columns are headed by consecutive dates: *vi Nonas Domitianas* | *v Nonas Domitianas* | *iv Nonas Domitianas* | *iii Nonas Domitianas* | *pridie Nonas Domitianas* | *Nonis Domitianis* | *viii Idus Domitianas* | *vii Idus Domitianas* | *vi Idus Domitianas*. Each row of the table is assigned to an individual soldier, whose daily engagements are recorded horizontally across the ten columns, among others: *balneo* “cleaning the bathhouse”, *statione* “at the outpost”, *ad armanenta* “guarding weapons”, *exit cum asin*[.... “departed with a donkey” (?).

The reports from Vindolanda (*T.Vindol.* 130-157, many of which are fragments, *T.Vindol.* 857, and possibly fragments 859, 860, 870) follow a different logic, more closely comparable to that of the morning reports and the *pridiana* considered above. Most of these are headed by a date and the name of the unit that produced them, followed by the total number of soldiers and a breakdown of figures indicating their engagements. None of the Vindolanda reports can be classified as morning reports of the kind illustrated above at section 2.3.1: they are too detailed and lack the ritual language found in the morning reports. They do not resemble the *pridiana*, either, because they seem to have been issued on a monthly basis. Some of them are headed by the date of compilation, followed by the noun *renuntium*,⁴⁹ possibly meaning “report”, which might have been the title of a specific type of report compiled at Vindolanda. Amid the general linguistic coherence and correctness of the Vindolanda writings,⁵⁰ the repeated non-standard feature *debunt* for *debent* appearing in the

⁴⁸ Cf. *O.Claud.* 308, also in Latin but too fragmentary to include here.

⁴⁹ Often reconstructed at e.g. *T.Vindol.* 127, 131, 133, 134, 135, 136, 140, 141, 143, 147, 149.

⁵⁰ On this, see Adams 1995.

renuntia has led scholars to surmise that they were written with the aid of templates that included the unfortunate spelling error.⁵¹

Of a similar kind are the reports from the fort of Bu Njem in Tripolitania. Here, a set of third-century ostraca (*O.BuNjem* 1-62) comprise the daily strength reports of a small unit stationed in the desert.⁵² They are shorter than the Vindolanda ones, but broadly follow the same principle: they begin with a date and the number of men present at the garrison; a breakdown of ranks and locations follows; a list of men unfit for chores concludes the record. *O.BuNjem* 2, for example, reads: *XVII Kalendas Iunias numerus LIX, ex is librarius I, optio I, quintanari XXI, stationari III, ad aqua(m) balnei V, ad virgas I, ad Boinag I, egri VII, reliqui repungent XVIII [...] egri Aurelius Carinas, Iulius [...]*.⁵³ Again, the character of the ostraca from Bu Njem has led some scholars to understand them as the product of templates prepared by skilled clerks who knew exactly the information that was to record, and then filled in by less highly trained writers.⁵⁴

Unit records survive from the Egyptian desert (*O.Claud.* 48-82) in Greek and in succinct epistolary format, recording the accessions to the group of workers at Mons Claudianus. They are significantly less substantial than the Latin counterparts considered so far, but there is no reason to believe that larger military sites in the East would not have compiled fuller records of activities and personnel in Greek.

⁵¹ Adams 1995 102-103 and 130-131. On this, see also Clackson 2011 517.

⁵² The Bu Njem texts are considered in detail in chapter 5.

⁵³ "Seventeen days from the *Kalendae* of June. Number: 59. Of these, 1 *librarius*, 1 *optio*, 21 *quintanari*; 3 *stationari*; 5 taking care of the baths, 1 to the rods, 1 at *Boinag* (?); 7 ill; 19 available to be deployed [...]. The ill are: Aurelius Carinnas, Iulius [...]"

⁵⁴ Adams 1994 93-94.

What emerges from a general overview of the strength and daily reports from military units is the reflection of an administration founded primarily on the practicalities of day-to-day life, which was run in the language that most suited the people locally in charge of it. Stauner himself (2004 207-208), despite championing uniformity over diversity of administrative documents, acknowledges the “documentary pragmatism” of military administration, which included the use of Greek for some documents by units where this was the preferred written language. The duty rosters and strength reports considered in this section differ from the morning reports and the *pridiana* based on content, audience, and value. In the first instance, they contain information that cannot be classified as high level or solemn. If, on the one hand, the number of men present at a garrison could be data relevant to high-level military administration, on the other hand, a record containing activities such as *ad armamenta* in *RMR* 9 can only be considered ephemeral information that would soon expire. The audiences of these writings are thus likely to have been solely internal to the units that produced them.

There is no reason to believe that there was any symbolic value in the general military daily and strength reports. As we have seen, there is indeed some coherence in the arrangement of information in some of them. The reports from Vindolanda and Bu Njem in particular seem to have been crafted on the basis of templates which must have eased the task of recordkeeping. Yet these examples point to internal recordkeeping developed by each unit rather than to army-wide systems. Most of the examples of strength reports that survive come from provinces where Latin was the most commonly written language, making any judgements about language choice problematic. The ostraca from Mons Claudianus, however, suggest that Greek may have been used in the East for certain types of military recordkeeping.

2.3.4 Recordkeeping and military identity

There is admittedly not enough evidence to support any strong claims about the uniformity (or lack thereof) in recordkeeping of activities and personnel in military units. The uniformity emphasised by previous studies undoubtedly emerges when restricting our analysis to individual units. We can say this about the evidence from Bu Njem and Vindolanda, as well as Dura Europos, where it seems evident that fixed templates were used to produce administrative reports. Yet, in the words of the editors of the Vindolanda texts, when it comes to military reports “we should perhaps admit more decentralization and room for local initiative and variation than we have hitherto imagined. That said, it seems obvious that all army units must have been required to compile regular strength reports which were presumably submitted to the provincial governor”.⁵⁵

It is also important to emphasise that most of the reports are structured on straightforward principles of recordkeeping, such as the inclusion of the total number of soldiers fit for work and the breakdown of figures showing the engagements of different individuals. This weakens further the need to posit the existence of rules for the compilation of military reports across the Empire.

Reading daily and periodical strength reports with a sociolinguistic perspective and particular emphasis on audience and practicality, enables us to identify two levels of military recordkeeping: (1) an official one, concerned with symbolic ritual and provincial administration, here exemplified with the morning reports and the *pridiana*; and (2) a lower-level, internal one, aimed at recording ephemeral information of concern to the internal administration of individual units, exemplified in records such as the ostraca from Bu Njem

⁵⁵ Bowman and Thomas 1991 65.

and Mons Claudianus. There may well have been further paperwork generated in between these two levels. For example, some reports might have been compiled specifically for the commander of a unit before the issuing of more formal reports for provincial governors or for the official archives of the unit.⁵⁶

This understanding of military recordkeeping reflects the vision of the army as composed of multiple provincial groupings with their own administrative needs and idiosyncrasies, which converged, at the higher level, into one single Roman institution. This seems to be mirrored in the choice of language for different types of military reports. Most of the evidence that survives for these, both of the official and internal types, is in Latin. This suggests that there may have been a general preference for the Latin language in the management of military units, both in the East and in the West. However, as the Mons Claudianus ostraca show, language choice for internal reports must have been prompted primarily by practicality, largely based on the linguistic competences of the people who wrote and used them. We will see that this tendency is confirmed by other documents with internal audiences considered below (§ 2.4 and 2.5). As for reports that had official value, which were arguably more consistent in layout and content throughout time and across provinces, the repeated choice of Latin seems to have been influenced by other factors. We considered, in relation to the *pridiana*, the practical advantages for the provinces in having yearly reports in one instead of multiple languages. This might have facilitated the cross-comparison of performance and resources in different provinces. We also considered, in relation to the morning reports, the symbolic value of the use of Latin for the documents that were strictly connected with the identity of military units as constituent elements of a wider Roman

⁵⁶ Bowman and Thomas 1991 65-66.

institution. Overall, we could surmise that, when they presented themselves in official contexts, Roman military units did strive to employ Latin when possible, thus helping to shape the institutional identity of the army as Latin-speaking.

2.4 Accounting for money and other goods

Other documents that military units produced are records of the amounts of goods stored at military bases. Evidence survives mostly for receipts of payments issued *ad personam*, which proved that a unit had given a soldier a certain sum of money, or a certain amount of goods. These documents suggest that military units had a sort of banking system that enabled soldiers to leave their money or other goods deposited in the unit's treasury and withdraw only the sum or quantities of material they needed for their personal life or to perform their duties.⁵⁷

The content of these registers reflects what one would normally expect from ordinary registers of accounts: broadly speaking, each entry starts with the amount of goods or money available, then the amount withdrawn is subtracted, followed by the amount carried forward. Any consistency that one may encounter across units is therefore unremarkable, in that it was simply dictated by the basic principles of accounting. In terms of language choice, on the other hand, it seems that units kept track of their resources in both Latin and Greek. According to Fink (1971 242 and 278), the receipts of payments in Egypt are "almost all in Greek" and this is a sign of "the actual speech of the Roman army camps in Egypt". A closer observation of

⁵⁷ On military pay, see Brunt 1950, G. R. Watson 1956, and M. A. Speidel 1992.

some documents of this kind may enable us to formulate a more precise interpretation of the factors that prompted flexibility in the choice of language for their compilation.

The language of a second-century series of receipts for hay from Egypt is rather curious. This papyrus, edited by Fink as *RMR 76*, contains over forty entries signed by soldiers of the *ala veterana Gallica*, a well-documented unit with a significant presence of Thracian horsemen.⁵⁸ The unit is attested in Syria and Egypt between the middle of the first and the beginning of the third centuries,⁵⁹ so it is possible that many of its soldiers and associates in the second century were speakers of Greek and Semitic languages. Every receipt contained in the payroll is addressed to the curator of the unit, Iulius Serenus, and is structured according to the following pattern: (1) name of payee and military affiliation; (2) addressee (Ἰουλίῳ Σερήνῳ) and salutation (χαίρειν); (3) declaration of receipt (ἔλαβον / ἐλάβομεν) and amount of money or other goods received; (4) the date of receipt; and, occasionally, (5) the name of the person who wrote the receipt on behalf of illiterate colleagues. In his commentary on the text, Fink notices some interference from Latin in the Greek letterforms, especially in the use of *h* instead of the Greek *η*.⁶⁰ But other signs of bilingualism can be identified abundantly also in the morphology of the receipts. The military affiliations seem to use alternately the genitive and the ablative, even though the ablative case does not exist in the Greek language. Let us take, for instance, (ε)ἵλης Γαλλικῆς τούρμα Γαιμελία “Of the *ala Gallica*, from the *turma* of Gemelius”.⁶¹ Here the Greek for *ala* is in the genitive, as expected, and is followed by a regular adjective in the genitive. But τούρμα has an odd ending, and

⁵⁸ M. P. Speidel 1982a.

⁵⁹ The unit is attested in Syria between 88 and 91 (*RMD 5*). It is then attested in Egypt from 130. In general on this, see Holder 2003.

⁶⁰ On this, see also Adams 2003a 602.

⁶¹ *RMR 76* col.xiii line 16.

instead of writing “of Gemelius”, as in the rest of the receipts, the writer opted for the adjectival form Γαιμελία. Adams (2003a) explains the phrase τούρμα Γαιμελία as an ablative. In fact, he notices that the same shift from the genitive to the ablative case appears in a Latin receipt from the same unit, which features the sequence of genitive and ablative *alae veterane galliga turma Donaciani* “Of the *ala veterana gallica*, from the *turma* of Donatianus” (*RMR* 80 lines 1-2). In this specific example, the shift in case ending happens within the phrase *alae veteranae galliga*, where the adjective already in the case of the following noun (*turma*). We could consider the case-shift in the Greek receipts an example of interference from Latin. Other instances of Latin interference are found throughout the record, notably in the Latin inflection of the names of the *alae* and of the *turmae*, and in the anomalous case endings in the consular dates, in which the genitive ending -ou is replaced with -ω resembling a Latin ablative case (e.g. Αὐρηλίω Ἀντωνείνω καὶ Κομμόδω τῶν κυρίων αὐτοκρατόρων Τῦβι κ “During the consulship of Aurelius Antoninus and Commodus, on the 20th day of the month of Tubi”, *RMR* 76 col.iv lines 15-16).

It is impossible to infer the linguistic backgrounds of the people who compiled this document. That the unit in point had a history of serving in the East should probably favour the possibility that its members were more proficient in Greek than Latin. Yet, when we observe these administrative notes, it is evident that they were compiled by men who commanded Latin case endings more easily than the Greek ones, and who were more accustomed to keeping records of this type in Latin. The reasons why the receipts of the regiment were written in Greek are obscure. Considering the audience of these accounts, which was clearly internal as suggested by the explicit address to Iulius Serenus, we could suggest that the use of Greek was more fitting for the specific day-to-day needs of the unit and the linguistic competences of its members.

The structure and content of *RMR 76* recall a series of about eighty receipts for food and wine from the garrison at Pselkis, the southern frontier in Egypt, dated to the second century (*RMR 78*). These are all written in Greek. The transactions they record are minimal (in most instances amounting to two or three *denarii*), which has led Fink to suggest that they are “temporary records which would be sorted out at intervals, daily and monthly, and entered on a roll which constituted the permanent account”.⁶² This observation deserves attention when we analyse military administration from a wider angle: did daily receipts inform the compilation of general financial reports? The only reference to general unit accounts is possibly found in Vegetius’ treatise (*in brevis*, 2.19), but no primary documents attest to their existence. If the content of these ostraca informed the compilation of higher-level accounts, we could argue that the latter would also be written in Greek.

The flexibility of language choice for unit receipts is confirmed by rolls of receipts from Egypt in which entries are written alternately in Latin and Greek. Examples of these are the second-century papyri edited as *RMR 75* and *RMR 79*. Both are similar in format to *RMR 76*, in that they include an addressee and salutation before the receipt proper. Curiously, in *RMR 75* (line 15) we notice the same interference of the Latin ablative in the military affiliation

⁶² Fink 1971 311. He expresses scepticism about the military nature of the ostraca. In his words, “not only does the use of ostraca awaken doubt of the military character of these receipts, but also does the term *cibariator*. It is certainly not a military rank, and, with the possible exception of these receipts, is nowhere found in military context” (1971 311) (cf. *O.Claud.* 3-6). It is obviously difficult to concur with these remarks. Firstly, as we have learned from the later discoveries of collections from Bu Njem and the Egyptian desert, the use of ostraca as writing support for military communication and recordkeeping was common. Moreover, the role of the *cibariator* may have been only a paramilitary one, but this is not proof that the documents in question are not “military”. Quite the opposite. On this, see e.g. Evelyn White 1919 51: “The function of the *cibariator* was to issue wine (or money for the purchase of wine, see below) to troops from whose pay the price was deducted”. On the series of ostraca from Pselkis, see also a more recent commentary by La’da and Rubinstein (1996).

τούρμα Λογγῖνι, with *turma* inflected again as a Latin ablative like in *RMR 76*. It is possible that, in units where both Latin and Greek were used, the affiliation in Greek was commonly stated following the Latin ablative. This may therefore not always be a sign of straightforward interference: in contexts where both Latin and Greek were spoken, the Greek language may have adapted to the Latin way of expressing military affiliation, which became the norm in that variety of Greek. In the specific case of *RMR 75* the writers of each entry might have also used the entry above as a guideline to ensure that all the information required was inserted in the record, copying the Latin inflection in the word τούρμα. Alternatively, it is also possible that the whole unit used a template where τούρμα was inflected with a Latin ending, which was copied out by those who could not actively produce syntax.

Adams (2003a 601) defines military receipts as “semi-official” documents in that their character is not comparable, for example, to that of the diplomas. It is this “semi-official” value that, according to the solutions proposed so far, would also not bind the clerks to the use of Latin. But what does “semi-official” mean, as opposed to “official”? Again, considering audience and practicality may enable us to obtain a better grasp of the nature of these documents, and to formulate a more accurate explanation of their flexibility in language choice.

The features of the morning reports and *pridiana* outlined above enabled us to identify these as formal administrative writings. The purpose and audiences of the receipts and payrolls considered here are completely different, more comparable to the duty rosters and ephemeral strength reports considered in section 2.3.3. The nature of the receipts was obviously a practical one, because they enabled units to keep track of their resources. Yet, especially when they recorded the withdrawal of goods from a soldier’s allowance in the first

person (e.g. ἔλαβον / ἐλάβομεν in *RMR* 76), the receipts also served as evidence of the fulfilment of a transaction, which in turn enabled soldiers to keep track of the money or resources that the unit owed them. There was no intended audience for the receipts beyond the parties who compiled them (i.e. the clerks and the soldiers who withdrew the stated amount of goods). Based on the examples considered here, it is likely that the language in which the receipts were compiled was the language preferred by the administrators who managed the resources of each specific military unit and by the people who were issued the amounts of goods declared in the receipts.

2.5 Lists of names

Other documents that Roman military units kept for personnel management are lists containing the names of their members. Lists of personal names from antiquity are notoriously difficult to study in that their nature and purpose are often impossible to pin down. Lists could be anything from memoranda, formal registers, records of assignment of tasks, or indeed other types of writings, making it difficult to understand whether there might have been any rationale behind the choice of language for their compilation. Here I exploit the findings from the previous sections to explore this issue in the context of the Roman army, where lists of names are normally found in both Latin and Greek. I start from the hypothesis that lists with both internal and external audiences might have been more useful when written in Latin. Ephemeral lists compiled purely for internal purposes are instead more likely to have been compiled flexibly in Latin or Greek, or both.

When dealing with documents composed solely of personal names, we often speak of the choice between Latin and Greek in terms of scripts rather than language. We will see that

some lists contain other information in the marginalia, which reveal the language of the people who compiled and used them. However, in general, as far as short lists of names completely devoid of syntax are concerned, we can assume that military people were able to read them even without mastering the language of the script in which they were written.

Here I consider two types of lists: a general roster of a unit stationed in Syria in the third century, and a collection of second-century ostraca assigning turns of watches to paramilitary personnel in the Egyptian desert. These are only meant to be representative of some types of lists that would have been produced in military contexts, providing some elements to appreciate the possible factors that may have influenced the choice between Latin and Greek in their compilation.

2.5.1 General rosters

The third-century documents from the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* recovered at Dura Europos include twenty-seven lists of soldiers' names in Latin (*P.Dura* 98-124).⁶³ Two of these (*P.Dura* 100 and 101) compose what the editors have identified as a "general roster", that is the complete register (or a copy of it) of the men enrolled in the cohort between 219 and 222.⁶⁴

⁶³ The documents of the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* were recovered from the temple of Azzanathkona (room W13), where the cohort was headquartered until the middle of the third century. Following the abandonment of the headquarters, several administrative documents were left behind. If these writings were left behind, were they essential to the management of the unit? I am inclined to believe that, first of all, the documents recovered could be copies of originals that were kept by the unit after it left the headquarters in the temple. Alternatively, it is possible that the writings from the early third century were no longer relevant to the clerks in charge of the unit's administration in the 250s, and were therefore left behind when the unit abandoned the temple.

⁶⁴ The papyrus is fragmentary, but the editors estimate that it contained respectively 1,210 names in *P.Dura* 100 and 1,040 in *P.Dura* 101 (Fink 1959 31). The enlistment dates of the commanders listed in the roster suggest that the date of compilation of *P.Dura* 100 may have been 219, whereas *P.Dura* 101 might have been 222. The

This unparalleled document was used over a period of three years. Some names appear multiple times in the list, indicating the soldiers who stayed at the garrison over the years, with others leaving service or being transferred to different regiments. The list arranges soldiers' names in columns, according to the following order: (1) name of the century or *turma* (e.g. *centuria Castrici*);⁶⁵ (2) the date and place of enlistment of the commander of the unit; followed by (3) his title and full name (e.g. *Muciano et Fabiano consulibus ordinatus Aurelius Septimius Danymus*);⁶⁶ (4) the dates of enlistment, titles, and names of the high-level officers (*duplicarii* and *sesquiplicarii*, in order of seniority); and finally (5) the names of the men from lower ranks in order of year of enlistment.

The main purpose of the general rosters seems obvious: they enabled clerks and commanders to keep a record of all men enrolled in the unit, their ranks and levels of seniority. The explicit mention of the years of service of the soldiers indicates that the roster could also serve strategic purposes, for the length of service enabled identifying individuals and could be used to inform transfers and requests for discharge. The marginalia of the list suggest that further functions of the list were to keep records of the duties assigned to soldiers, and to record the locations of sub-units (e.g. *P.Dura* 100 marginalia, *Becchufrayn*). Some men are said to be *ad equum probandum* "training horses",⁶⁷ *ad frumentum* "in charge

two papyri are likely to have formed the *tabularii* of the unit. See, for example *P.Oxy.* 1022, a letter to the commander of the *cohors III Ituraeorum* informing him of six new additions to the cohort. A *cornicularius* from the unit wrote a note of receipt, specifying that the names of the new recruits had been added *in tabulario* "in the unit's register". In the late Empire the complete unit rolls with soldiers' names were called *matriculae* (Vegetius 1.26).

⁶⁵ *P.Dura* 100 col.xvi lines 9ff.

⁶⁶ *P.Dura* 100 col.i line 1.

⁶⁷ E.g. *P.Dura* 100 col.xxxviii line 18.

of the wheat”,⁶⁸ *ad hordeum* “collecting barley (?)”,⁶⁹ *ad leones* “hunting (?) lions”,⁷⁰ and *ad sacra himaginem* “at the standards”(?).⁷¹ Unless we consider *P.Dura* 100-101 a rough copy of a more formal piece of writing, we could suggest that these marginalia indicate the main duties held by members of the unit over some period of time rather than occasional engagements. For it is unlikely that clerks annotated such a complex and lengthy roster in use for three years with ephemeral information such as daily duties.

Based on its functions, the audience of the register seems twofold. The list was clearly written for one or more clerks of the *cohors*, who managed the units’ resources and kept track of deployments. Yet, especially considering the recording of the length of service of each recruit, it is possible that some information in the register informed the compilation of other high-level documents. For example, the morning reports of the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* (*P.Dura* 82-83 and 89, considered in § 2.3.1) recorded figures such as the number of men fit for fighting, which may have been calculated on the basis of general unit registers. If other documents such as the diplomas or the morning reports were written on the basis of general rosters, higher levels of efficiency would be reached if personal names were mechanically copied without switching between the Latin and Greek scripts.

This brings us to the question of identity, which can be addressed by analysing some onomastic elements of the roster. There are two different angles to consider in relation to this: the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the people on the list, some of which can be extrapolated on onomastic grounds, and the type of identity that was constructed for them

⁶⁸ E.g. *P.Dura* 101 col.xvi line 17.

⁶⁹ E.g. *P.Dura* 100 col.xxxiii line 26.

⁷⁰ E.g. *P.Dura* 100 col.xxxi line 3 and col.xxxiv line 30.

⁷¹ *P.Dura* 100 col.i line 4.

by the clerks who compiled the roster. Generally speaking, the onomastic information recorded in the scroll shows that the *cohors* was composed of men from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, bearing names of Latin, Greek, Semitic, and Persian origins. Many of these have Latinate endings, as in *Malchus*,⁷² *Boliadaeus*,⁷³ and *Azizus*.⁷⁴ Name pairings are of various types. We encounter Latin names paired in binominal formulae constructed on the pattern [*nomen*] + [*cognomen*] (e.g. *Ulpus Silvanus*); Semitic names followed by genitive patronymics (e.g. *Zebidas Ierhae* and *Malchus Abgari*). Some non-Latin names appear themselves in binominal form, such as *Zebida Eglā*⁷⁵ and *Acrabanes Simon*.⁷⁶ Name pairing is not typical of the Semitic or Persian onomastic traditions, where patronymics are preferred, and reveals a possible emulation of the Roman binominal system. There are several instances of mixed name pairings in the roster, for example *Antonius Barlaha*.⁷⁷ Non-Latin patronymics are attested with Latin *cognomina* used as main identifiers. These onomastic formulae are especially important in that they attest an inter-generational change in onomastic practice in provincial contexts: for instance, in the name *Bassus Malchi* “Bassus son of Malchus”,⁷⁸ we appreciate that a father with a Semitic name, arguably a Palmyrene,⁷⁹ had invested his son with a traditional Roman name. Alternatively, Bassus might have adopted a Roman name later in life, perhaps upon joining the army, maintaining the Semitic patronymic as an

⁷² *P.Dura* 100 col.viii line 9 *et passim*.

⁷³ *P.Dura* 100 col.ix line 2.

⁷⁴ *P.Dura* 100 col.ix line 3 *et passim*.

⁷⁵ *P.Dura* 100 col.xxxix line 9.

⁷⁶ *P.Dura* 100 col.xxxvi line 19.

⁷⁷ *P.Dura* 101 col.xxx line 28.

⁷⁸ *P.Dura* 100 col.xli line 18.

⁷⁹ The name is common in the Palmyrene inscriptions. On this, see for example the texts examined at § 6.4.

identifier. Inter-generational change in onomastic practice is a phenomenon attested elsewhere in military communities and will be examined more in detail in chapter 4.

The onomastic data from the roster provides the portrait of a highly composite unit, with multiple cultural and linguistic backgrounds among its members. Curiously, the clerks who compiled the roster strove to make the diversity of the unit converge into a common identity, here represented by an additional onomastic feature: every name in the recto of the document is suffixed by the name *Aurelius*, which appears in a neat column on the left preceding each entry.⁸⁰ The clerks who compiled the rosters appear to have used *Aurelius* as a name that everyone in the unit, whichever their actual *nomen*, should bear. The date of the papyrus suggests an obvious link with the proclamation of the Edict of Caracalla, and it seems that the clerks of the unit strove to indicate that the cohort was composed of Roman citizens. Many explanations of this peculiar use of the name *Aurelius* in *P.Dura* 100 have been proposed, and further interpretations are unlikely to provide any clearer directions of interpretation.⁸¹ It is evident that something had happened to the status of the soldiers on the list, and that the unit administration ensured this appeared clearly in the roster. Interestingly, some entries are evidently preceded by *Aurelius* in the year 219, but without it in 222. *Aurelius Iarhaboles Udathi* (*P.Dura* 100 col.viii line 13), for example, appears simply as *Iarhaboles Udathi* in *P.Dura* 101 (col.xiii line 25). It could be suggested that at some point the clerks of the unit discontinued the practice of indicating citizenship through the *nomen* of the emperor or that, as Fink (1959) suggests, some office from civil administration advised them to do so. This favours the hypothesis that civil authorities may have been among the potential

⁸⁰ The only entries that do not feature the prefix *Aurelius* are the names which already contain *Aurelius* as a *nomen*.

⁸¹ See, among others, Gilliam 1965, Salway 1994 133-136.

audiences of the information contained in roster, and that its nature was somewhat more formal than other lists attested in the records of the unit.

The logic with which the document *P.Dura* 100-101 is organised, and the precision with which its columns of text are drawn, has led recent scholarship to claim that the scroll was one of the fixed document types that military bureaux produced across all units. Whether the palaeographical approach proposed by Stauner (2004) and J. Austin (2010) in this respect is correct or not, it is clear that units needed to keep track of their members one way or another. At least in their headquarters, if not within smaller detachments, they must have kept registers of names similar to *P.Dura* 100-101. The language in which these were written could obviously vary; yet based on the audiences and purposes of these repositories of information, we could argue that the choice of language for their compilation might have not always been random. Would Greek have provided the same service as Latin in the compilation of a roster like *P.Dura* 100-101? In the specific case of the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* we can say with some confidence that this type of roster would have not been written in Greek because most of the evidence recovered from the unit is actually in Latin.⁸² Yet if we consider general unit rosters within the wider context of Roman military units, things are more complicated. Building on the results obtained so far from the analysis of other administrative documents, we can interpret the general rosters through sociolinguistic categories and propose, with due caution, that these documents were redacted more frequently in Latin than Greek.

⁸² The only non-Latin list that survives from the cohort (*P.Dura* 123) dates to the 230s. This is actually in the Greek script but reads as a mixture of Latin and Greek. The repeated ἴτεμ (*item*, “also”, “and then”) preceding personal names at the beginning of each line perhaps indicates that the list was in Latin written in Greek characters. The word ἀφσσηταω[...], which appears repeatedly in the list, could also be the transcription of a Latin verb of some sort (perhaps related to *apostato* “to abandon”, “to leave”?).

Above all, we should consider the practical advantages for a unit in having at least one full list of its members recorded in the Latin language. For, if the general rosters were used by military clerks as starting points for the production of other documents within the unit and at provincial level (as, for example, the diplomas), then some consistency in language use would have enabled the bureaucracy to function more efficiently. This would have prevented military clerks from having to transcribe personal names from one script to the other.

Secondly, we might consider the audience of the rosters. If the general rosters like the strength reports could be of interest to provincial authorities in relation to transfers and deployments, then it is possible that military units branded themselves as Latin-speaking when writing lists of personnel for provincial authorities.

Thirdly, there is the question of identity to consider, both at the individual and unit levels. At the individual level, even though arguably few people could access a unit's general rosters, it is fair to say that it would have been an advantage to all soldiers to recognise their names written in Roman characters. This is true for all non-Latin speakers, both literate and illiterate. Recording recruits' names in Latin in a unit's general roster was thus a first step towards the creation of a means for self-identification in the Latin language for all soldiers. Writing units' registers in Latin would have also favoured the shaping of an "institutional identity" for men of different linguistic backgrounds. The general rosters, if they did exist in every unit, were the first port of call for the identification of soldiers as men employed at the service of a Roman institution. Similarly, even though there is no direct evidence for them apart from their mention in the diplomas, the bronze panels listing soldiers' names at Rome were, visually speaking, a parade of the identity of Rome's armies. Seeing the names of Rome's soldiers bringing together multiple linguistic and cultural backgrounds in the Latin

language must have presented the Roman military as reflective of a multilingual empire, where Latin was a preferred choice for symbolic and solemn military affairs.

2.5.2 Lists for the assignment of turns

Lists were widely used within Roman military communities to assign duties and turns of guard. Stauner (2004) identifies the lists for the turns of guards as a type of fixed military document; but, as pointed out earlier, his claims are based largely on the guard rosters from Dura Europos (*P.Dura* 105-107, all in Latin). Indeed, the Dura papyri show that the clerks of the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* kept careful records of the turns of guard in a formal manner, including details about the people on the list and their affiliation. But claiming that all units around the Empire adopted the same formal system to assign a task as frequent as the turns of guard is somewhat problematic. A more likely scenario is that units produced lists assigning duties according to their internal needs, which differed greatly from one context to the other. It is also likely that, in bi- and multilingual contexts, lists assigning orders and turns for guards were written ensuring that their users could access them as easily as possible.

Mons Claudianus in Egypt is the only site that provides clear examples of language alternation in the assignment of turns of guard in the second century. Here, out of forty-eight lists of watches that we have (*O.Claud.* 309-356), one is in Latin (*O.Claud.* 355). I give an example of these documents below:

β
III Ἡρακλίδης

II Παμῖνεις

III Ψενταῖσις

I Νῦλος	5
I Διόσκορος	
III Σαραπίων Ἀπολι	
II Σαραπίων Περ[
III Ἑρμίας	
γ φρυγονατοι	10
Ἡρακλίδης	
(hand 2?) σίγνεν	
Κονκορδία	

(O.Claud. 310)

The lists include: (1) a Greek numeral at the top, which might indicate the day of the month according to the Egyptian calendar; (2) a list of eight names with a Roman (or, less often, Greek) numeral, corresponding to the turn assigned to each man; (3) a Greek numeral followed by φρυγονᾶτοι “men collecting wood”; (4) a personal name, possibly indicating the chief of the unit; and finally (5), usually written by a second hand, the word σίγνεν “password” followed by a password.

The language of these documents reflects a military community of soldiers and paramilitary personnel, where Greek and Latin were employed interchangeably, often within the same document, out of convenience. In the first instance, we see that the Greek numerals have a different function from the Roman ones.⁸³ Further evidence for mixed numerical systems is attested in military writings from Maximianon in Egypt (e.g. in *O.Amst.* 8 and 9), where lists of personal names follow the same logic of the ones at Mons Claudianus.⁸⁴

⁸³ Cf. the use of different numerical systems (in Latin and Celtic) in the first-century writings from La Graufesenque (Marichal 1988).

⁸⁴ For a commentary on these, see Cuvigny 2003 286.

Another common feature of bilingualism in the lists of guards is the employment of Latin words transcribed into Greek as passwords. These are common Latin propaganda words, and are comparable to those mentioned by the Greek historians:⁸⁵ Κονκόρδια (*O.Claud.* 310 and 312), Φορτούνα (319, 321, and 330), Μάρτις (320 and 326), Μινέρυα (323), Πάκε (328), Πιετάτις (311, 317, and 329), Σαλούτις Είνπερατόρις (331), Ούέστα (309 and 318), Ούικτόρια (316 and 322). The use of Latin words as passwords reflects an environment where Roman traditions were used by the army as markers of an institutional identity.

Two lists of watches from the site stand out from the other surviving examples: *O.Claud.* 355 is Latin, whereas *O.Claud.* 356 is written in Greek throughout, and without Roman numerals. There is no apparent reason that seems to have prompted the use of Latin in *O.Claud.* 355. Of the five surviving names on the list (*Ianua*[, *Iafraa*[, *Saladas*, *Aelius*, and *Dioscorus*), one is possibly Egyptian (*Iafraa*[, line 2), the others are Latin and Greek. Nothing suggests that the people who used the list would have preferred Latin over Greek. Since lists are by nature devoid of syntax, language choice in this instance must have been rather loose, perhaps based on the personal preference of whoever wrote the list. This, again, reflects the bilingual character of Mons Claudianus.

O.Claud. 356 stands out from the rest of the lists of *vigiles* from the site for various reasons: names and numerals are written in Greek throughout; it includes a title (βίγιλια Θῶθ κθ “watch of the day 29 of the month of Thoth”, line 1); and it only features names in pairs. These are a mixture of *nomina*, *praenomina*, Greek, and Egyptian names: Ἰούλις Ἀλέξανδρος; Ὠρος Ὠρου; Ἰούλις Οὐάλης; Λονγεῖνος Τούρβων. These are not traditional *duo nomina*

⁸⁵ Ἡρη (Herodotus 9.98); Ζεὺς σωτήρ καὶ νίκη (Xen. *Anab.* 1.8.16); Ζεὺς σωτήρ, Ἡρακλῆς ἡγεμῶν (Xen. *Anab.* 6.5.25); Ζεὺς σύμμαχος καὶ ἡγεμῶν (Xen. *Cyr.* 3.3.58); Ζεὺς σωτήρ καὶ ἡγεμῶν (Xen. *Cyr.* 7.1.9); Ἀθηναία (Xen. *Cyr.* 7.3.39). I owe these examples to Bülow-Jacobsen 1997 167.

composed of [*nomen*] + [*cognomen*] or [*praenomen*] + [*nomen*], but juxtapositions of names of any type, including an Egyptian name followed by a genitive patronymic, Ὠρος Ὠρου. According to the editor of the ostraca, two names are used here to indicate that the men on the list were soldiers as opposed to paramilitary men, who are allegedly listed on the ostraca that feature only single names.⁸⁶ I would rather argue that, considering the practical nature of these lists, two names and names followed by patronymics were used to tell homonymous individuals apart. For example, in *O.Claud.* 356, there are two men named Ιούλιος. Their respective second names, Ἀλέξανδρος and Οὐάλης, must have ensured that each man took his own turn and not the one of his colleague. In *O.Claud.* 310, quoted above, two men are called Σαραπίων, and both are identified by a second name (Ἄπολ[...] and Περ[...], lines 7 and 8). If we had two homonyms on the list, it would be impossible to tell them apart without the aid of further onomastic elements. It is clear that some names needed more details than others in order to fulfil their purpose in written lists.

It is likely that the choice between Latin and Greek for the compilation of the watch lists at Mons Claudianus rested solely on practicality, in a context where all the linguistic resources available were used to ensure efficiency. Mons Claudianus is so far the only site where lists assigning guards are attested in two languages. This enables us to appreciate the alternation between Latin and Greek and the way in which the two languages were exploited together in a bilingual context. It is of course difficult to tell the extent to which the material from Mons Claudianus is reflective of wider practice, but it certainly suggests that, in assigning turns of guard, practicality was prioritised over formality.

⁸⁶ Bülow-Jacobsen 1997 192.

2.6 Conclusions

From the material examined here, it is evident that, broadly speaking, Roman military administration relied heavily on local systems, which present their own idiosyncrasies in both format and language choice. In general, Latin cannot be considered *the* language of Roman military administration in both the western and the eastern provinces. What Stauner (2004) refers to as “documentary pragmatism” was paramount in the day-to-day production of administrative writings. This pragmatism, we can infer, included language choice, which appears to be based largely on the linguistic competences of the people in charge of bureaucratic matters and of those who made use of administrative texts.

A sociolinguistic approach to the primary evidence can nonetheless help to advance further our understanding of the mechanisms that may have influenced the choice of Latin over Greek in certain administrative settings. A careful consideration of the concept of audience makes it possible to identify two possible levels of administrative writings. On the one hand, we saw that some documents could have internal as well as external audiences. These include the diplomas, whose audience is in fact universal, the morning reports and documents such as the *pridiana*. Throughout the chapter I referred to these as high-level texts, emphasising that their purpose went beyond mere recordkeeping: these writings seem endowed with a symbolic as well as practical value. I suggested that general unit rosters could also be considered among high-level paperwork in that they could serve as the basis for the compilation of other formal writings. Overall, Latin seems to be the language that best suited the gravitas of these documents. In fact, it might not be a coincidence that none of these is attested in Greek. Considering the audience of some of the high-level texts has served as a reminder of the fact that military and civil administration were not always neatly divided from

one another. We return therefore to the vision of an army which was not segregated from civil life, but very much part of it.

The relationship between military units and the government of the provinces where they were stationed opened up the question of practicality. It was argued that it may have been more convenient to write higher-level documents in Latin for several reasons. In the first instance, it could be easier for some offices to issue multiple versions of the same document (like the diplomas) in one language. Secondly, publishing annual reports in one language may have facilitated cross-comparison of resources between provinces where both Latin and Greek were written and provinces where only Latin was employed. Although we can rely only on one single example, the *pridianum* containing the figures of a unit stationed in Moesia makes a case for this. As for documents written exclusively for internal audiences, on the other hand, a practical approach to language choice was the one that allowed both communicating parties to understand efficiently what they wrote and read. Again, practicality seems to reveal a correspondence between the level of the administration we examine and language choice.

We come finally to the question of identity. Military documents reveal the linguistic diversity that characterised Roman units. The pay rolls and receipts considered in § 2.4, for example, provide particularly telling examples of the use of *utraque lingua* in day-to-day military life. Rosters of names also allow us to appreciate the variety of onomastic data that clerks dealt with to manage military personnel. Yet, on some level, this diversity was united under a shared institutional identity. We considered military diplomas, which elevated worthy soldiers to citizenship rights. As the written counterpart of a daily renewal of allegiance to the Empire, morning reports created a shared sense of belonging to Rome's army beyond the units themselves. The same could be said for the general rosters, which

brought personal names of multiple origins together in official unit registers. All such records are only attested in Latin, which appears to be the language most suitable for forging and strengthening the sense of belonging to the Roman army as an institution. This was the case both at the individual and at unit levels. Soldiers forged their institutional identity via, among other things, the daily oaths and the writing of their names in official military lists. Military units, in turn, shaped their identity as part of an Empire-wide institution via, among other things, the issuing of morning reports and writings of the *pridianum* kind. Thus, even though Roman military administration was clearly carried out in two languages, only Latin seems to have been used in high-level institutional contexts. As suggested in relation to the strength reports (§ 2.3.3), the vision of Roman military administration as composed of (at least) two levels reflects the structure of the Roman imperial army itself: multiple provincial troops which were united *in nomen Romanorum*.

Overall, it is unlikely that language choice for administrative work in the Roman army was regulated by policy. Yet, reading administrative documents from the Roman army from a sociolinguistic perspective enables us to appreciate that there may have been a rationale, either imposed by particular circumstances or spontaneously developed, behind language choice for the management of Rome's troops. When both Latin and Greek were available, documents in which the army is presented as an institution tended to be written in Latin; internal, lower-level documents, on the other hand, were written in whichever language suited the circumstances.

Is it useful therefore to provide a definition of Latin as the "institutional language" of the Roman army? The obvious limitation in attempting to find any definitions of the role that a language plays within a bi- or multilingual community of speech is that linguistic attitudes are influenced by numerous factors. In the western provinces, for example, the use of Latin

in military administration must have been perceived in a completely different way than it was in the East and in Egypt. The same can be said about the definition put forward by Adams (2003a 608), which sees Latin as the “super-high language” in the military. This may hold for Egypt, which is the focus of Adams’ analysis, but it is an unlikely definition when the evidence considered is drawn from multiple provinces. What we can stress, however, is that in contexts where two languages were available, Latin could act as a marker of identity, which allowed the army as an institution to differentiate itself from the rest of provincial bureaucracy.⁸⁷ Thus, the use of Latin seems to have contributed to the reinforcement of the army as a social group, and to the forging of an institutional identity for both military units and their members.

⁸⁷ Daris 2000 108.

3. Military correspondence

3.1 Writing letters in the military

Military activities commonly involve physical distance between members of an army. Think, for example, of soldiers on deployment, or military bases with different outposts. It follows that, for the effective functioning of military life, soldiers and their associates must rely to a great extent on long-distance communication. There is plenty of evidence for soldiers' letters from the Roman Empire, both literary and documentary.¹ The contexts in which these were written and the purpose of their messages vary enormously across the material that survives, making it difficult to classify soldiers' correspondence into letter types that can be examined in isolation.²

To facilitate our understanding of the primary evidence and how this can illuminate the military community, we can broadly divide military letters into: (1) administrative correspondence written for the functioning of military units, comprising messages of various degrees of formality, including imperial *epistulae*, letters containing orders, letters recording

¹ References to letter writing and exchanges are found, for instance, in Caesar *Bell. Civ.* 1.1.1, 1.9.3, 1.53.1-2, 3.14.1-2, 3.36.6-7. *Litteris militis* is an expression attested in Fronto (*Ad Verum Imp.* 2.24), with the meaning of "military correspondence". In context, this expression is used to say that soldiers' letters were unrefined (possibly in style): *Quid nunc meae, quid philosophorum litterae agunt? Litteris militis vincimur* "Now, what is the point of my letter, what the point of the philosophers' ones? We are surpassed by soldiers' letters". Literary testimonies from the imperial period emerge in particular from the exchanges between Pliny and Trajan. See, for example, Pliny *Ep.* 10.106-107 on a centurion requesting citizenship rights for his daughter. Generally speaking, the greatest numbers of soldiers' letters are attested at Oxyrhynchus (*P.Oxy. passim*), Karanis (*P.Mich. passim*), Mons Claudianus (*O.Claud.*), Krokodilo (*O.Krok.*), Didymoi (*O.Did.*), Maximianon (*O.Max.*), Vindolanda (*T.Vindol.*), Vindonissa (*T.Vindon.*), Carlisle (*T.Luguv.*), London (*T.Londin. passim*), Bu Njem (*O.BuNjem*) and Dura Europos (*P.Dura passim*).

² For a recent overview of soldiers' letters, see Biville 2014.

activities,³ requests for goods and the deployment of personnel; and (2) private correspondence between soldiers and their families, friends, and colleagues.⁴ These two categories are of course only guidelines fabricated to aid the examination of the surviving evidence. As M. A. Speidel (2018 184) reminds us in a recent overview of everyday writing in the Roman military, the administrative and personal spheres could overlap in letter writing. An example of this can be found in the *litterae commendaticiae*, letters of recommendation which soldiers wrote in support of the promotion or appointment of worthy men.⁵ Technically speaking, when making a recommendation, a military commander simply wrote a letter to a colleague. Yet even if the message was directed to a close colleague, or a friend, the content of the epistle was ultimately meant to inform administrative decisions, such as transfers of personnel from one unit to another. There are also instances of letters which we would not technically consider as administrative, but which in practice regulated important aspects of military life. For example, we know of women in Egypt whose job was to house prostitutes within military groups for agreed periods of time; and their agreements with soldiers were carried out via written messages.⁶ Such messages were of course not administrative ones in the strict sense, in that military business would have arguably carried on with or without

³ It is fair to say that the records attested at Mons Claudianus mentioned earlier (§ 2.3.3), which followed an epistolary format, could also be considered “military letters”. We therefore appreciate the limits of classifying military writings into rigid document types.

⁴ Zerbini 2015.

⁵ A well-known example of these is *T.Vindol.* 250.

⁶ On this, see for example *O.Did.* 427, a letter written by a woman informing soldiers that a young prostitute was housed at Phoinikon.

prostitutes, but the entertainment of soldiers stationed in remote regions was an ordinary part of military life and required coordination.⁷

Letters are useful for investigating the Roman army in that they illuminate social relations within military communities. Surviving evidence provides examples of the many links between the people who belonged to the army as an institution and the civilians who took part in military life either by virtue of their profession (such as suppliers of foodstuffs) or of their relationships with soldiers (such as soldiers' relatives or the inhabitants of the *vici*). Some letters considered in this chapter enable us to appreciate these relationships, highlighting the tight interweaving between the military and civilian realms.

This chapter seeks to understand the factors and mechanisms that may have influenced language choice in the letters exchanged between members of military communities. In the previous chapter it was argued that high-level administrative documents which were (more or less directly) addressed to provincial authorities and the emperors were more likely to be written in Latin (§ 2.2 and 2.3). Unit documents with an internal audience – that is, documents of interest primarily to (members of) the individual units that produced them – were instead written more flexibly in Latin or Greek, perhaps accommodating the linguistic preferences of the people who compiled them (§ 2.4 and 2.5). We also saw that Latin had an institutional symbolism that the Greek language lacked. Part of the scope of this chapter is to understand whether this general pattern of language choice in military administration is reflected in the written exchanges between Roman soldiers and their associates.

⁷ There is evidence for contractors regulating entertainment. At Didymoi in the Egyptian desert there seems to have been a professional figure, the *conductor*, whose job involved tax collection, including the fees for the lodging of prostitutes in soldiers' barracks. On this, see Cuvigny 2012 24-28.

Another important theme is the question of military authority and prestige as potential factors influencing language choice in letter writing. In an article on communication between the central imperial power and the provinces, Millar (1966) provides an overview of the types of written communication entertained in the civil sphere by the *legati* and the proconsuls in the provinces with the emperors and the Senate in Rome. These included letters, edicts, and *mandata*. With reference to official messages from the emperors, Millar points out that these were written almost exclusively in reply to letters that the emperors received, in either Latin or Greek. Since only literary and indirect evidence of such letters survives,⁸ it is impossible to assess whether imperial functionaries in the provinces preferred Latin or Greek to address the emperors. If we were to restrict our field of investigation to the Roman army, would messages to military authorities be written as flexibly in Latin and Greek as they might have been in the civilian sphere? Previous scholars have argued that in contexts where both Latin and Greek were available, Latin was preferred for formal messages, whereas more flexibility between Latin and Greek is found in lower-level communication.⁹ An example of the first kind could be a Latin letter written in the second century by a newly enlisted soldier, who asks the prefect of Egypt to be confirmed after his probation and transferred into a cohort (*CEL* 149). But evidence for military men addressing the prefects of Egypt in Greek is not missing. We know, for example, that in the second century a veteran named Dionysius Amyntianus sent a petition in Greek to the prefect of Egypt asking to be released from the fort of a legion, where he had delivered blankets to a group of soldiers (*P.Oxy.* 2760). When both Latin and Greek were available, was language choice in military letters influenced by the

⁸ Millar 1966 158.

⁹ Daris 2008.

status and authority of their recipients? And were there other factors that encouraged a preference for Latin over Greek and vice versa?

The present chapter uses sociolinguistic concepts to analyse selected sets of military correspondence. My aim is to understand how and why letter writers opted to employ one language instead of another when a choice was available. I will try to elucidate this by considering carefully the audience of their letters, the accidental and intended expressions of identity that transpire in the language of the documents, and the practical aspects involved in letter writing. Compared to the administrative documents considered in chapter 2, letters are closer to being faithful reproductions of speech, and therefore provide further elements to contextualise their production, the language in which they are written, and their linguistic features. In particular, the pragmatics of some messages will be a valuable tool to investigate the reasons that may have prompted the choice of a language over another in written exchanges.

Again, the material considered in this chapter has been selected following criteria that enable us to address the issue of language choice. In order to appreciate this, we must focus our attention on contexts where a real choice between two or more languages actually took place, that is where more than one language was commonly written and read. For this reason, the present chapter considers only material from Egypt.

Language choice is a tricky issue when we look at individual letters in isolation. If we consider, for example, a set of Greek and Latin letters written by different senders to different addressees, we can only speculate about the motives that prompted their choice to communicate in Latin or other languages. To ensure a full appreciation of language choice, our line of enquiry must address correspondence that belongs to what scholars define as bilingual “archives” or “dossiers”; that is, collections of letters that belonged to the same

person, either because they received them or because they wrote them and kept copies of what they sent.¹⁰ This approach enables us, firstly, to single out the documents that someone wrote/dictated or received in Latin from those that they wrote or received in Greek. In the second instance, this approach enables us to gain a deeper understanding of the people who wrote, of their needs, their intentions, and ambitions, providing further elements to contextualise their linguistic behaviour.

A focus on collections of documents obviously poses some limitations. The first is a problem of attribution. Some archives assemble collections of texts discovered together, where each document is clearly written by or addressed to the same person. In these cases, an understanding of the circumstances that prompted writers to alternate languages is more easily achieved. However, we cannot rule out that some letters may have been wrongly attributed to the same addressee or sender. Second is a question of completeness, in that archives rarely survive in their entirety, and may thus only partially reflect the language attitudes of their owners. The present analysis relies only on relatively copious and well-published examples.

3.2 Letters at Mons Claudianus

Mons Claudianus was a military outpost in the eastern Egyptian desert active between the first and the third centuries.¹¹ The written evidence that survives from the site comprises

¹⁰ Papyrologists tend to consider archives as collections of documents which belonged to the same person, family, office, or similar. Documents assembled by editors are usually referred to as “arbitrary collections”, but scholars hold different views on this distinction. On this, see Vandorpe 2009 especially 217-219.

¹¹ The site lies roughly 60 km west of today’s Safage of the Red Sea. Generally on Mons Claudianus, see Bingen 2016 and the editions of the texts from the site (*O.Claud.*).

administrative documents, writing exercises, *tituli picti*, and letters, both administrative and private. Most of the surviving letters are concerned with the logistics and the activities that the military community carried out at the site, revealing a fast-paced working environment. The ostraca from the eastern desert unveil a network of satellite *praesidia* connected with Mons Claudianus.¹² The primary functions of these were to police the desert routes, to ensure communication between urban centres, and to supervise water supplies. Mons Claudianus was also used for the exploitation of the granite quarries adjacent to it.

The outposts were headed by military figures called *curatores praesidiorum*, who could be of the rank of decurions or centurions.¹³ These appear frequently in the letters sent to and from the sites. At the service of the *praesidia*, we will see, were a variety of professionals, both soldiers and civilians, including women. Onomastic evidence shows that the communities of the *praesidia* were composed of both local Egyptians and people from other parts of the Empire. The linguistic scene at the site must have therefore included at least Latin, Greek, and Demotic.¹⁴ According to the surviving evidence, the majority of orders, communications, and requests between the site and satellite outposts appear to have been written in Greek, both by soldiers and civilians. Latin was also commonly written, though less frequently than Greek. In his commentary on the Mons Claudianus ostraca, Adams (2003a

¹² On these, see Cuvigny 2003 and § 3.3.

¹³ Maxfield (2003) has suggested that their rank was never superior to that of the auxiliary centurions. She reports the case of a legionary centurion in charge of a *praesidium*, (*praepositus ab optimo Imp. Traiano opera marmorum Monti Claudiano*, *CIL* 3.25), as an exceptional instance of a high-ranking legionary officer in charge of a desert outpost. According to Maxfield, it is possible that the large scale of this specific project at Mons Claudianus required men of high rank as managers.

¹⁴ On the languages used at the military outposts in the Egyptian desert, see further below (§ 3.3). The material from other sites in the eastern desert includes some Palmyrene and Nabatean. For an overview of the languages in use at the desert outposts in Egypt, see Fournet 2003.

589) claims that the bilingualism in the Egyptian desert was “mundane”, that is to say unremarkable: soldiers and their associates chose one language over another according to what was most practical and instinctive in each particular situation. Here follows an analysis of two sets of documents which enable us to reassess the mundanity of language choice at Mons Claudianus.

3.2.1 The archive of Successus

A set of bilingual letters from Mons Claudianus survives as the archive of Successus (*O.Claud.* 124-136), a second-century collection of Greek and Latin messages on ostraca. We know little about the owner of these letters apart from the fact that he was involved in the provision of material and supplies at the quarries at Mons Claudianus.¹⁵ In one of the messages Successus is addressed as *καίσαριανός* (*O.Claud.* 125), an adjective used to indicate the group of freedmen and slaves in the service of the emperor, also known as the *familia Caesaris*. At Mons Claudianus, the members of the *familia* worked alongside soldiers and civilians, the *pagani*.¹⁶ In addition to *καίσαριανός*, Successus is called *Ἐπαφροδείτου* (*O.Claud.* 124), which could be read as a patronymic genitive or as an indication of his status: he could be either a slave, freedman, or an employee of a man named Epaphroditus. If this latter option is correct, it is possible that Epaphroditus held a managerial position at the quarries, perhaps in the role of *curator*, and that Successus replaced him when he was absent, managing in his stead the

¹⁵ Bülow-Jacobsen 1992 111.

¹⁶ The ostraca at Mons Claudianus reveal that both *pagani* and the members of the *familia* received pay, leading scholars to surmise that the employees of the site were all of free status. See R. B. Jackson 2002 48. This position could be contested, however, since slaves, although they were members of the *familia*, would naturally be left out of the payment records attested at the site because they were not entitled to a regular stipend.

provision of foodstuffs (*O.Claud.* 124, 134), water (*O.Claud.* 128, 129, 134), tools (*O.Claud.* 130, 131, 132, 133), and clothing (*O.Claud.* 135). We are therefore dealing with the archive of a man who was involved in the logistics of the army at the desert quarry.

The letters in the archive are twelve in total, and two of them are written in Latin (*O.Claud.* 131 and 135). Their content is summarised in table 3 below.

<i>O.Claud.</i>	Language	Sender	Recipient	Message
124	Greek	Ponticus <i>duplicarius</i>	Successus	A load of chaff has arrived at Raima via Avitus.
125	Greek	Ponticus <i>duplicarius</i>	Successus	A load of chaff has arrived at Raima via Peteesis.
126	Greek	Grata	Successus	Grata reports that Artimas has not received the water-skins sent by Successus, and neither has the <i>sesquiplarius</i> . The former <i>curator</i> Alexander told Geta that he had received the water-skins and passed them on to Castoras. Grata asks Successus to greet her brother Sabinus and others.
127	Greek	Artimas	Successus + Sabinus	[Fragmentary]. "You know I have no-one to write daily lists of water-skins for me. Greet your wife. Send..."
128	Greek	Leontas	Successus	Leontas asks Successus to give him four water-skins and send along two baskets to protect them.
129	Greek	Leontas	Successus	Leontas informs Successus that his water-skins have broken. He asks for new ones. He asks for a rope, a cloak, a ladder, wedges, and feathers.
130	Greek	?	Successus	The sender reports that he has no tools left and that some were broken during the visit of the prefect.
131	Latin	Athenor	Successus	Athenor asks for yoke straps to move (?) a column.
132	Greek	Hierax	Successus	Hierax asks to be sent five axes with handles because his men are currently unable to work.
133	Greek	Rusticus	Successus	Rusticus asks Successus to send him some ropes.
134	Greek	Domitius <i>curator</i>	Successus	Domitius writes that he has used the oil provided by Successus and a jar. He adds that someone made only one trip to carry water and used double the amount that he originally carried. Domitius asks Successus to send someone to observe a day of work at the site if he does not believe what he writes.
135	Latin	Agathon	Successus	Agathon informs Successus that he has received from Melanippus three tunics and a small cloak. He asks

				Successus to take care of something he is sending along with his letter.
136	Greek	Successus	?	"Successus....[illegible]"

Table 3: Successus' archive

As is the case with most of the documents from the site, the archive, including the letter presumably written by Successus himself, is mostly in Greek. It is difficult to confirm whether Successus' primary language was Greek or Latin, and whether he mastered both languages equally. His archive certainly shows that he was professionally competent in both, as was convenient within a work environment that apparently functioned bilingually.

Some information contained in the letters provides hints about Successus' personal life, from which we can perhaps surmise that Greek was spoken in his household. It has been suggested that Grata, the woman author of *O.Claud.* 126 was Successus' wife or sister.¹⁷ From *O.Claud.* 127 (line 11), we understand that Successus did probably have a wife, but we do not know whether this was Grata or someone else. Grata addresses her message to Σουκκέσω τῷ ἀδελφῷ "to brother Successus", a polite form of address in both Latin and Greek. She concludes her message extending her greetings to Sabinus, also addressed as τὸν ἀδελφόν. Since there is substantial papyrological evidence for women addressing men outside of their family nuclei as "brothers",¹⁸ we should not take a blood or marital relation between the Grata and Successus for granted as does Bülow-Jacobsen (1992) in the edition of the archive. The woman's message is concerned with the supply of material and is strictly professional. Thus, as far as we know, she could have been anything to Successus, from a wife, to a sister,

¹⁷ Bülow-Jacobsen 1992 113. Kinship terms, ἀνὴρ "man", and γυνή "woman" all have extended uses in the Egyptian papyri. On this, see Dickey 2004. In some cases, the extended usage of kinship terms could be complicated by the practice of sibling marriage, which was not uncommon in Egypt (Dickey 2004 156).

¹⁸ Dickey 2004 160.

a friend, or simply a woman associated with the *familia* employed at the quarries. In fact, Grata's life seems to have revolved around several men employed at the outpost, seven of whom are mentioned in her relatively short letter to Successus.¹⁹ The message from Grata and the message in which Successus' wife is mentioned are both addressed also to (or convey greetings for) Sabinus. Grata and the author of *O.Claud.* 127 must have therefore been close to Successus, or at least have corresponded with him frequently enough to know the people with whom he had regular contact. The fact that both these senders address Successus in Greek could therefore be taken as another hint that, amid the mundane bilingualism of the site, Successus' primary language, and the language he used with those who knew him best, was Greek.

Yet the language favoured by the recipient might not have been the only factor prompting his correspondents to choose Greek over Latin. As Adams points out (2003a 591), "those writing to Successus made the assumption that he could understand both languages; it was not then *his* language preference which determined their choice of language, but presumably their own". What Adams claims is that the correspondents of Successus did not perform convergence, but simply wrote the message in the language that they knew best. In this interpretation, then, language choice would be prompted by practical factors: the linguistic competence of those who sent letters and their will to be understood as clearly as possible. Yet if we look more closely at the content of the letters, we uncover details that give more insight into the factors that may have conditioned language choice in these letters.

An oddity about the language of the archive is that almost all the Greek messages are signed by correspondents with Latin names (*Ponticus, Grata, Rusticus, Domitius, Successus*),

¹⁹ In addition to the addressee, we read of Ἀρτεμιᾶς (lines 2), Γέτα (line 4), Ἀλέξανδρος (line 6), Καστορᾶς (line 8), Ἀρτεμιᾶς (line 9, but arguably the same as line 2), Σαβεῖνος (line 11).

whereas the two Latin ones were sent by Athenor and Agathon, both of whom bear Greek names.²⁰ This is likely to be nothing more than coincidence, but it can perhaps help us pose further questions. On the basis of the geographical context of these messages and on the origins of the names *Athenor* and *Agathon*, it is likely that the two men were speakers of Greek as well as Latin. If this is correct, why did they choose Latin in a context where Greek was so frequently written by both soldiers and military associates?

The messages by Athenor and Agathon are the most succinct of the whole archive, comparable perhaps only to *O.Claud.* 128 and 132. Unlike most letters in the archive, they do not report on deliveries and events: they are little more than simple requests, they are straightforwardly phrased and framed by formulaic opening greetings and closing salutations. Might the choice of Latin be in any way related to the simplicity of these messages? Would they have opted for Greek, had the syntax of their respective messages been more complex? I shall consider a second set of documents from Mons Claudianus before returning to these considerations.

3.2.2 Teres to Anius

A pair of second-century letters from the quarry site show a man alternating between Latin and Greek while addressing the same person, providing a clear example of code alternation.²¹

Ἀνεΐω δουπλεικαρείω Τήρης
κουράτωρ Ῥαιεμα χαίρειν. γεινώσ-
κειν σε θέλω ὅτει Ὀκτάεις ὁ ἔπιτες

1

To Anius *duplicarius*, Teres, *curator* at Raima, greetings. Be informed that Octavius the cavalryman has arrived in Egypt on the 11th hour of the 27th day

²⁰ Bülow-Jacobsen 1992 111.

²¹ Van Rengen 1997.

ἦλθεν ἀπὸ Αἰγύπτου ὥραν ἰα
 τῆς ἡμέρας τῆι κζ καὶ ἦναικέν σοι 5
 ἐπιμήνεια. λοιπὸν οὔν {λοιπὸν ον}
 ἔπεμσά σοι τὸν ταβελάρειν εἶνα πέμ-
 σεῖς ὄνον Ὀκταεῖω εἶνα σοι πέμ[ση].
 ταχύτερον οὔν αὐτὸν πέμσον ἐπὶ
 . . παψει Ὀκταεῖς εἰς Καινήν. λοιπὸν 10
 ἐρωτῶ σε πέμσον μοι κρειθήν, ἐπὶ οὐ-
 δ ε

(O.Claud. 366)

and that he has brought some monthly provisions
 for you. I have thus sent a *tabellarius* to you, so you
 may send an ass to Octavius, so he may send them
 [the provisions] to you. Send it promptly because
 Octavius... to Kaines. Please send me some barley...

Ani[o] Rogato Ter[es] 1
curator vac. *salu[tem]*.
rogo te domine
misi tibi per tabe-
llarium st[- -] 5
ut clavem ...l[- -]
. eas in co[. . .]r[.]
ut celerius mihi
remittas Ani, o-
mina clavem b- 10
onam. opto te be-
ne valere et
felicem esse.

(O.Claud. 367)²²

To Anius Rogatus, Teres the curator, greetings.
 Please, Lord, I have sent you via the *tabellarius*... so
 that a key... Go to (?)... so that you may send me a
 key quickly, Anius, a good one. I pray for your health
 and happiness.

The reasons prompting the sender to perform code alternation are not obvious. The editor advances the possibility that Teres' language choice was determined by a change of scribe.²³ The two letters could indeed have been written by different hands, but imputing code alternation only to a change of hand implies that one of the two scribes could not accommodate Teres' preferred language. The word ἐππες in the Greek message (O.Claud.

²² For a recent commentary on this letter, see Adams 2016 285-288.

²³ Van Rengen 1997 207.

366, line 3) has been read by Adams (2003a 592) as displaying interference from the Latin *equus*. According to this reading, we should be discouraged from believing that the author was incompetent in Latin. Yet this interpretation does not take us very far, because the unparalleled form ἐππες could be a simple misspelling of a term commonly used in Greek military writing. Adams also advances the possibility that Teres wrote the two messages himself and that Latin was his native language. Whether Teres penned both messages himself, neither, or one of them, he must have performed code alternation on purpose. The question then arises – why? Was this just an arbitrary, unremarkable choice, in line with the “mundane” multilingualism of the site?

If Teres’ preferred language was Greek, choosing Greek allowed him to write a longer and more complex message with less effort, in the spirit of practicality. Alternatively, if Teres was more competent in Latin, by choosing Greek he might have performed linguistic convergence, that is the process of adjusting one’s language in order to be better understood by an interlocutor or addressee. A palaeographical inspection of the two letters favours the latter option: Teres’ Latin handwriting is polished and clear, whereas the Greek presents thick and shaky strokes, revealing a more inexperienced hand.²⁴ Moreover, at line 6 of the Greek message there is what appears to be a dittography mistake. Nothing of the sort is found in the Latin. If Teres handwrote both the Greek and the Latin letters without employing a scribe, as has been suggested in previous commentaries,²⁵ then his unrefined hand in Greek perhaps betrays that he was more accustomed to writing Roman cursive. Either way, was that of Teres a choice based entirely on his own language skills, or were there more factors that Teres considered in choosing Latin over Greek and vice versa?

²⁴ See *Planche XLVII* in *O.Claud.* vol. 2.

²⁵ Van Rengen 1997 and Adams 2003a 592-593.

The editor claims that the two ostraca are both “*curator-like*”, which means that their content is typical of the sorts of messages that the *curatores praesidiorum* exchanged with their colleagues: they ask for something to be done “as soon as possible” and for supplies to be delivered “in order to” do something else.²⁶ Yet, as far as content and style are concerned they differ from one another. The Greek letter contains significantly more information than the Latin one. Here Teres reports the precise date and time of the arrival of a cavalryman, instructs Anius on how to obtain provisions from this colleague, and provides him with a list of supplies to send to Raïma. In particular, the central section of the Greek letter contains a syntactically complex concatenation of two final clauses: εἶνα πέμσεις ὄνον Ὀκταεῖω εἶνα σοι πέμψη (lines 7-8). The Latin message, on the other hand, constitutes a simple request for a key to be sent from Mons Claudianus to Raïma, framed by formulaic opening and closing salutations. There are therefore some small but meaningful differences between the two messages.

The simplicity of content and the formulaic style of Teres’ Latin letter to Anius raise the same questions as advanced in the examination of the Latin messages contained in Successus’ archive. Is it possible that Teres, like Agathon and Athenor, chose Latin when writing simple requests, and reserved Greek for messages with more complex syntax? If this interpretation is correct, then the archive of Successus and the letters to Anius enable us to identify a particular language attitude amid the loose bilingualism of Mons Claudianus. As far as we can tell from the few bilingual collections of letters surviving at the site, military men chose Latin for concise letters and Greek for more articulate ones, because Greek arguably allowed them

²⁶ Note the parallel expressions such as ταχύτερον (*O.Claud.* 366, line 9) and *celerius* (*O.Claud.* 367, line 8); and ἵνα... ἵνα (*O.Claud.* 366, lines 7-8) and *ut...ut* (*O.Claud.* 367, lines 6-8). Compare other exchanges between *curatores praesidiorum* (*O.Claud.* 360-365 and 368-376).

to write or to be understood more effortlessly. This is a practical choice made on the basis of the linguistic competences of the writers or of the addressees.

The reasons why members of the community at Mons Claudianus employed Latin in situations where Greek was a perfectly viable and possibly more convenient choice are difficult to pin down. We could tentatively suggest that there may have been an ambition among soldiers and their associates to employ Latin, possibly in the attempt to mirror the use that military administration made of this language at the institutional level.

3.3 More evidence from the eastern desert

South of Mons Claudianus was a series of Roman military forts along the route between the Nile and the Red Sea.²⁷ These served as stations for patrolling the desert route that connected Koptos (40 km north of Luxor) to Berenike on the shores of the Red Sea (300 km south-east of Luxor). Some fascinating sets of correspondence survive from these military bases, illuminating further the question of language choice in multilingual military contexts.²⁸ Most of the material that has survived emanates from the forts on the strip of land that connected the Koptos-Berenike route to the port of Myos Hormos on the Red Sea.²⁹ The ostraca and papyri from this area mostly contain letters between men employed at the forts, revealing daily collaboration between different outposts,³⁰ and therefore frequent written exchanges between their occupiers. Postal registers from the fort at Krokodilo (*O.Krok.* 1-3) suggest that

²⁷ For a full description of the forts along the route of the eastern Egyptian desert, see Cuvigny *et al.* 2003.

²⁸ Generally, on the documents from the eastern desert, see Maxfield 2003.

²⁹ See Περίπλους τῆς Ἐρυθρᾶς Θαλάσσης (Casson and MacMullen 1989 51). On the activity of the army in this area, see Cuvigny 2003.

³⁰ Collaboration with the base at Mons Claudianus is attested. See for example *O.Krok.* 6.

the army regulated the systematic distribution and reception of correspondence around the military bases in this region.

Even more so than the second-century material from Mons Claudianus, the evidence from these military bases presents us with a highly multilingual community. There is evidence for speakers of Demotic and Semitic languages, including Palmyrene Aramaic;³¹ soldiers with Dacian and Thracian names;³² men with Libyan names;³³ neologisms used by soldiers and their associates;³⁴ and interactions between the military outposts and speakers of local Egyptian languages.³⁵

In a survey of the multilingualism at the military sites in the eastern desert, Fournet (2003 431-432) shows that the use of Latin in the desert of Berenike was constant throughout the first and second centuries. Most of the evidence for Latin writing comes from the *tituli*

³¹ There is only one text in Demotic (*O.Max.* inv.1079, Fournet 2003 429). Demotic writing was gradually abandoned during the Roman imperial period. On this, see Bagnall 1993 237. A *numerus Palmyrenorum* is attested in an inscription from the second century at Didymoi (*I.Did.* 5). There are Palmyrene names inscribed in Greek on vessels at Didymoi (*O.Did.* 238, 265, and 285), and *O.Did.* 39 is written by a man who identifies himself as a Palmyrene cavalryman. *O.Did.* 285 and 286 are *tituli* in Palmyrene Aramaic. Cf. *O.Did.* 71, a list of soldiers' names (including Roman, Greek, and Egyptian names) which could indicate that some soldiers in the Palmyrene unit were recruited locally. For Nabatean graffiti at Krokodilo, see Briquel-Chatonnet and Nehmé 1997. On Nabatean inscriptions in the eastern desert, see also Littman and Meredith 1953 and 1954.

³² Consider the Dacian name *Dida* in an inscription from Krokodilo (Bülow-Jacobsen *et al.* 1995). For Dacian names at the desert outposts, see also *O.Did.* 64. Cuvigny (2003) reads the name *Cutus* at *O.Did.* 334-335 as Thracian. Other Thracian names at Didymoi are *Bitus*, *Dales*, *Drozenus*, *Tarula* (*O.Did.* 334).

³³ E.g. Εἰθαλας at *O.Krok.* 77 (see *LGPN*).

³⁴ Consider, for example, *κυκλεύειν* at *O.Did.* 67, used among soldiers to indicate the action of contracting the lodging of a prostitute.

³⁵ *O.Did.* 41-43 mention a ὑποτύραννος, a commanding figure associated with the tribes that populated the eastern region of Africa, especially Ethiopia. On this, see *Fontes Historiae Nubiorum* 3.318 and 331-343. The sender of *O.Did.* 43 identifies himself as a ὑποτύραννος Βαρβάρων, perhaps revealing that there was interaction between the fort and tribes that spoke languages which are not Demotic or Greek. Consider also the βάρβαροι in charge of camels at *O.Krok.* 6, line 5. On conflicts with local populations, see *O.Krok.* 87, lines 26-50.

picti on amphorae, which were shipped to the desert outposts full of food provisions. While interrogating the possible causes that might have influenced the choice of Latin over Greek for the writing of personal names on amphorae, Fournet rules out that the choice was made based on the language of the recipient of the amphora, that is through linguistic convergence. This claim is justified on the basis of the Latin *tituli* addressed to men with local Egyptian names: for example *Petersureti*[...] (*O.Max.* inv.552), *Pouonsis* (*O.Max.* inv.722), and *Panechem*[is] (*O.Max.* inv.1427) are all names suggestive of linguistic backgrounds where Greek would have been a more preferable choice than Latin. According to this reading, if the senders of these amphorae wished to perform convergence, they would have probably written the names in Greek because local Egyptians would have arguably preferred Greek over Latin. It is perhaps more likely that the providers of foodstuffs who sent the amphorae to military sites would not have concerned themselves with the linguistic abilities of the individual recipients of each amphora. It is more reasonable to believe that they adopted one language for a whole order they delivered, possibly basing their choice on the language of the person who dealt with them for the purchase the goods. The shipment of amphorae to the desert outposts is nevertheless especially revealing of the “mundanity” of bilingualism in this region. In the *tituli* at Krokodilo, the *sesquiplicarius* Domitius Fronto is addressed four times in Latin and once in Greek;³⁶ whereas Novellius, the *curator praesidii* at Maximianon is addressed twice in Latin and three times in Greek.³⁷

Even though, compared to the *tituli*, the letters from the eastern route present less alternation between Latin and Greek, a close examination of these can lead to more

³⁶ Fournet 2003 432.

³⁷ Fournet 2003 432, with references to the forthcoming edition of the ostraca from Maximianon (*O.Max.* inv.303 and 1272 in Latin; *O.Max.* inv.404, 450, 520, 1259, and 1535 in Greek).

sophisticated examinations of language choice at the desert outposts. As at Mons Claudianus, an overview of the surviving epistolary material shows that the *praesidia* and the satellite outposts communicated between one another primarily in Greek. Official correspondence was also distributed in Greek to all the *praesidia* along the desert route. For example, there is evidence for the prefects of Berenike communicating orders to the different bases on the route to Myos Hormos, always in Greek (*O.Krok.* 41 and *O.Krok.* 60-62).

As at Mons Claudianus, along the route Latin played a marginal role and was written mostly by native speakers with partial command of Greek. Native speakers of Latin communicated with colleagues whose primary language was Greek in three different ways:³⁸ (1) they wrote their messages in their preferred language without attempting any accommodation strategy towards their addressees; (2) albeit rarely, they wrote Greek in Roman script;³⁹ (3) they endeavoured to write their messages in Greek, performing convergence towards their addressees. Evidence survives also for Latin messages by native speakers of Greek or other languages, some of which might have been crafted with the aid of translating tools.⁴⁰ Throughout this section we will assess the multiple factors that might have prompted these senders to write Latin instead of Greek.

Here I consider selected documents from the collections of letters from the eastern desert with the aim of further testing the results obtained from the analysis of the letters at Mons Claudianus. Again, the selection of sources is based on the fundamental question of language choice between Latin and Greek, and the main lines of enquiry adopted to approach it are audience, identity, and practicality.

³⁸ Fournet 2003 439.

³⁹ *O.Max.* inv.1234, *O.Max.* inv.736, and *O.Krok.* inv.616. See also above (§ 1.4, in footnote).

⁴⁰ On this, see in particular *O.Did.* 417.

3.3.1 Choice of Latin influenced by content

A group of nine letters written by a soldier named Iulius has survived in the dumps of Didymoi (*O.Did.* 317-326). These are addressed to three of Iulius' colleagues: Valerius, Antonius, and Dolens. The stratigraphy and concatenations of events discussed in the letters suggest that they were all sent in the first century by the same man.⁴¹ The content of his messages is summarised in table 4 below:

<i>O.Did.</i>	Addressee	Language	Content
317	Dolens	Greek	Request to be sent four drachmas and a pence. Complains that colleague Crispus has already asked Dolens for these items. Renews the request for a pence. Asks if Dolens needs anything.
320	Antonius	Greek	Request to be sent some salt if Antonius has some to spare. Offers to pay if he receives the salt.
321	Antonius	Greek	[Fragmentary] Informs Antonius that he has received the salt. Offers a payment (?). Asks to receive a reply.
322	Antonius	Greek	Informs Antonius that he has received money from Valerius, and that he is sending the money as a payment for the salt.
323	Antonius	Greek	Answer to a request for a whetstone and incense. Asks for clarifications about Antonius' request. Informs him that he will send some incense if he receives some.
324	Antonius	Greek	[fragmentary] "Iulius to Antonius the dearest, greetings... send me... of the cavalryman... Iulius Tigellus greets you. Greet Clemens and be well. 16 th day of Mesore".
318	Valerius	Greek	Iulius informs Valerius that he is sending three letters, which Valerius should forward on via a cavalryman.

⁴¹ I am sceptical about the arguments advanced by the editor of the texts as to why Iulius, the sender of *O.Did.* 326, might not be the sender of the other letters, which are based mainly on subjective impressions rather than factual evidence.

319	Valerius	Greek	Iulius complains that he has not received any answer to the seven letters he had asked Valerius to forward. Asks for money and a pence because the one he is currently using belongs to someone else. He apologises for not having any incense to send. Asks Valerius to greet Antonia and Clemens.
326	Valerius	Latin	Iulius asks Valerius to join him at the “better <i>praesidium</i> ”.

Table 4: letters from Iulius to Dolens, Antonius and Valerius

The Greek letters are written by two different hands, which the editor calls “Iulius 1” and “Iulius 2”. An important difference between the two hands is that Iulius 2 always writes the name of the addressee in the dative with final *omicron* instead of final *omega* with adscript *iota*. This could indicate that Iulius 2 was a proficient speaker of Greek, but that his oral proficiency did not translate into standard orthography. Further uncertainty about case endings in the letters written by Iulius 2 is found at *O.Did.* 317, where the sender inflects the name of the addressee, *Dolens*, both in Latin (Δόλεντι το φιλτάτο, line 1) and in Greek (Δόλη ἱπιῖ, line 11), revealing a writer with competence in both languages. Because of the clear change of scribal hand, it is clear that Iulius wrote Greek with the aid of colleagues.⁴² The alternate use of Latin and Greek endings in *O.Did.* 317, however, is not a scribal error (unlike the random use of *omicron* instead of *omega*): it is the reproduction of Iulius’ speech. Since it appears that Iulius started off dictating the messages of *O.Did.* 317 by naturally inflecting the Latin name in Latin, and then switched to a Greek ending after dictating a whole message in Greek, we could describe this as a sort of code-switching did happen at some level.

Archaeological context and prosopographical data suggest that the Valerius who received *O.Did.* 326 (in Latin) is also the Valerius who received *O.Did.* 318 and 319 (in Greek).

⁴² There is no particular reason to believe that Iulius 1 was a scribe and Iulius 2 was Iulius himself. Further evidence of the fact that Iulius dictated his messages to scribes can be found at *O.Did.* 329, a letter from Iulius to Annius penned by Albucius.

Yet even if we were dealing with two different senders (one writing in Latin, the other in Greek), the content of the Latin message might still suggest some reasons why its sender wrote Latin when the more common language in use at Didymoi was Greek. The text of the message runs as follows:

<i>Iulius C(aio) Valer[io] Iusto frat(ri)</i>		Iulius to his brother Gaius Valerius Iustus,
<i>plurima[m salutem]</i>		many greetings.
<i>ant(e) omnia opto dios ut bene va-</i>		First of all, I ask the gods that you
<i>lias {valias} quon meum votu-</i>		are well, as I wish.
<i>m est. Si potes opera [dar]e ut</i>	5	If you can make the effort
<i>roges cetur[ri]oni ut venias</i>		to ask the centurion to come (here),
<i>oc melior praesidium... est.</i>		this is a better <i>praesidium</i> . ⁴³
<i>Epistula Sabino equiti</i>		There is a letter for Sabinus the cavalryman
<i>Comageno. Salutat</i>		from Commagene (/of the <i>ala Commagenorum</i> ?). ⁴⁴
<i>te Laelius. Vale.</i>	10	Laelius greets you. Farewell.

(O.Did. 326)

The content of the Latin message differs greatly from the rest of the letters that Iulius sent to Dolens, Antonius, and Valerius at Didymoi. First of all, it addresses Valerius with a formal *tria-nomina* formula, which in the first century indicated Roman citizenship. Secondly, half of the surface of the ostrakon is used to express hope that the recipient is in good health, articulated in two clauses, the second of which sounds redundant: *ante omnia opto dios ut bene valias* and *quon meum votum est*. Thirdly, the letter does not include any instructions, requests for

⁴³ Like the edition in *O.Did.*, I consider that *melior* modifies *praesidium*. This obviously entails a slight error in the inflection of what ought to be the neuter *melius*, and/or a misunderstanding of the gender of the noun *praesidium*. It is difficult to believe that the adjective is syntactically in agreement with other nouns in the text, or that it was meant as a standalone adverb.

⁴⁴ Military diploma *CIL* 16.29 from 83 is the only attestation of an *ala Commagenorum* in Egypt. At the end of the century, the *ala Commagenorum* was stationed in Noricum (*AE* 2003 1319).

material, or any urgent needs of the sender. The main message that Iulius hoped to get across in this letter is a piece of advice to a colleague: “Come here, this is a better *praesidium*”.⁴⁵

The editor is certainly right in singling out *O.Did.* 326 from the others in the collection: even though there is a sort of request to forward a letter at the end of it (lines 8-9), the flavour of the letter is not comparable to the fast-paced communication that men at Didymoi and other *praesidia* exchanged in Greek. All the letters written by the hands “Iulius 1” and “Iulius 2” had a clear purpose and requests for action. *O.Did.* 326, on the other hand, contains a message that only a soldier could have sent to a colleague. One could almost see it as authentic soldiers’ talk. Might the military relationship that transpires from the suggestion to move to another *praesidium* have anything to do with the employment of Latin? Might the less practical purpose of the message in this letter have influenced a preference for Latin over Greek? This, as we saw in the previous section (§ 3.2), is a pattern that emerges also from the bilingual sets of correspondence at Mons Claudianus.

A parallel example of this use of Latin is found in the letters to Arius, a soldier who was also stationed at Didymoi in the first century and who received private letters in both Latin and Greek (*O.Did.* 361 and 362). Again, prosopographical data suggests that we are dealing with the same Arius in both these letters.⁴⁶ The Greek letter (*O.Did.* 361) is a request for a water-skin, addressed to Arius possibly by a woman (...]απου, line 1). The message includes details about logistics, receipt of messages, illnesses that afflict some members of

⁴⁵ There are examples of soldiers asking to be transferred in more prestigious units. On this, see § 3.4. The editor suggests that a military base in the desert would qualify as a “better *praesidium*” than Didymoi based on its closeness to the valley. He suggests that the sender of this letter was based at Phoinikon, which is west of Didymoi (only 20 km away from the western bank of the Nile). See Bülow-Jacobsen 2012 244.

⁴⁶ Ἄπριος greeted in the closing salutations at *O.Did.* 355 (in Greek) could be the same man. Ἄπριος at *O.Did.* 389 is unlikely to be the same, as the ostrakon is dated to between 115 and 120.

Arius' family, and a reminder to feed the donkey. From the content of the messages, we gather that the sender was close to Arius in the private sphere. The handwriting of the message is exceptionally neat, its syntactical constructions flawless, and the choice of vocabulary unremarkable. The same cannot be said for the Latin message to Arius:

<i>C(aius) Lurius Ario fratri</i>		Caius Lurius to Arius, his brother.
<i>sal(utem) ante omnia opto te recte</i>		Greetings. First of all, I hope you are well.
<i>valere. Nugas facitis quod</i>		You are arguing about nothing.
<i>rixatis. Omo veteranus</i>		You are an experienced soldier.
<i>es ili tirones sunt. Tu de-</i>	5	They are new recruits. You must teach them. I
<i>bes ilis monstrarem. Ego</i>		always (send letters?)
<i>...] semper epstumas...</i>		you do not to me.
<i>.....] tu mi non. Salu-</i>		Greet Antesius and the <i>vexillarius</i> Longinus.
<i>tabis Antestium</i>		Farewell.
<i>et Longinum vex(illarium)</i>	10	
<i>Val(e).</i>		

(*O.Did.* 362)

This message is completely void of logistic information and requests for goods. It is a testimony to a quarrel that Arius, an experienced soldier, has had with some junior recruits. The sender calls the addressee “brother” as expected in the military realm, and the closing salutation includes other soldiers.⁴⁷ The syntax of the message is substandard. The expression *recte valere* at line 2 is extremely rare;⁴⁸ the use of *facio* (instead of *ago*) with *nugas* at line 3 is unparalleled; *epstumas* at line 6 could be either a misspelling for *epistulas* or a verb calquing ἐπιστήμη (“to know” or “to think”?); *tu mi non* at line 7 is an unparalleled way to say “you

⁴⁷ On extended salutations to other military men in correspondence, see § 3.4.

⁴⁸ *CEL* 87, a letter from Britain. See also an unusual opening formula at Cic. *Fam.* 9.9.1.

never do”; the use of the future in *salutabis* in the closing formula is also extremely rare, and is attested only in two letters from Vindolanda.⁴⁹ Again, it is difficult to identify the linguistic background of the sender of this letter based on a short, largely formulaic message. What we cannot avoid noticing, however, is that content of the letter is significantly different from the type of communication that soldiers exchanged between *praesidia* for the day-to-day running of military bases, and from the messages that they might have received from colleagues for the running of day-to-day business, like the other message received by Arius. Might the relative simplicity of the message have influenced the choice of Latin on this occasion, as seems to have been the case in the letters that Iulius sent to Valerius (*O.Claud.* 318-319, and 326)? If this hypothesis is correct, there seems to be a clear intent on the part of soldiers to write Latin instead of Greek when the circumstances allowed it.

The eagerness of some soldiers stationed in the desert to write Latin is attested in other documents. In the first century, a soldier named Cutus wrote three Latin letters to fellow soldiers at Didymoi. One of these concerns the shipment of wine (*O.Did.* 334); in another, Cutus asks that he be returned some money (*O.Did.* 335); the third has little readable text (*O.Did.* 336). The edition identifies the name *Cutus* as Thracian,⁵⁰ suggesting that Greek would be his preferred language. The two readable letters are filled with orthographic irregularities and inconsistencies. At *O.Did.* 334, compare *opuras* and *hopiras* (lines 6 and 8); the different endings in *Longino curatoriu* (line 2); *ut... et...* instead of *et...et...* (lines 2 and 4-5); different endings in *mea opuras* (lines 5-6); inconsistent use of labials in *haperis* (“you

⁴⁹ *T.Vindol.* 310 and 311, and reconstructed at *T.Vindol.* 509.

⁵⁰ Bülow-Jacobsen 2012 252. A parallel example of a Thracian name transcribed as *Cotus* is cited in the edition. The editor believes that there may be a correlation between the variation in spelling between *Cotus* and *Cutus* and the alternate use of *o* and *u* in Cutus’ letters.

have”(?) and *habis* (lines 6 and 8). At *O.Did.* 335, we find *lapsus calami* in *frat(r)i* and *h(a)bis*. Cutus’ hand is neat, but completely void of cursive traits, suggesting that he probably acquired writing skills later in life, perhaps in the military.⁵¹ The way in which military ranks are written in *O.Did.* 334 is remarkable: *sixoplixo* stands for *sesquiplicarius* (line 3), and *semiaphori* is a calque from Greek for *signifer* (line 4). The latter in particular would seem to suggest that Cutus was more accustomed to mentioning military ranks in Greek than Latin.

Then why the effort to write Latin at all? It is unlikely that Cutus performed convergence by choosing Latin. The direct addressees of this letters are named respectively *Drozenus* and *Tarula*, two Thracian names.⁵² Although certainty is impossible on the basis of onomastic data alone, in bilingual contexts Latin was probably not the preferred language of these addressees. Most of his indirect addressees – that is, the people he asks Drozenus to greet on his behalf – are also Thracians: their names are *Bitus* the *signifer*, *Dales*, and *Dinis Macapori filius*. The two other indirect addressees are *Antonius* the *sesquiplicarius* and *Longinus* the *curator*. Something must have prompted Cutus to choose Latin. The absence of Greek letters written by him does not allow for comparison, making it difficult to advance any firm hypotheses on the reasons behind his choice. Yet, what seems clear is that Cutus opted neither for convergence nor practicality as linguistic strategies: he wrote the language that was, on some level, the more challenging for him and presumably also for his addressees. The sentiment behind such a choice remains a mystery, but we could advance the possibility that Cutus wished to display belonging to the military community through the employment of a

⁵¹ Cf. *O.Did.* 63, a Latin list of soldiers’ names written in Cutus’ hand, which resembles more a writing exercise than an administrative document.

⁵² Τάρουλα is attested in Thrace, Ταρούλας in Macedonia. Δρόσος, Δρόσων, and Δροσίς are also attested in Thrace and Macedonia. See *LGPN* 4.

language that was perhaps associated with prestige among a group of Thracian soldiers stationed in the Egyptian desert.

3.3.2 Convergence and interference

Another phenomenon that speaks to the issue of language choice is known from the eastern desert: that is the literal translation of Greek syntax to craft Latin messages. This phenomenon is attested in the second-century letters to Claudius (*O.Did.* 417-420), and the early third-century letters of Aelius Silvinus (*O.Did.* 455-457). I consider these in turn.

Claudius received two Latin messages written by different senders on the same piece of ostrakon, one below the other (*O.Did.* 417). The authors of these were respectively a woman named Demeterus (lines 1-9) and a man named Numosis (lines 10-21). Both letters are practical messages. Demeterus informs Claudius of the fact that some goods have not been received and warns him to beware of everybody (lest they attack him?). Numosis asks Claudius how much he should charge for something he is selling and asks him to send greetings to Diurponais. In addition to orthographic irregularities and the repeated use of prothetic *e* in words beginning with *s*,⁵³ the most remarkable feature of the letters is that they present numerous expressions which are literal translations from Greek: *scire te volo conia* (i.e. *quod*, line 2) is a translation of γινώσκεις σε θέλω ὅτι; *sicot abui* (i.e. *sicut habui*, line 4) translates the causal clause ὡς ἔσχον; *frateri et magisteri* (lines 10-11) translates ἀδελφῶ καὶ κυρίῳ and is unusual compared to *fratri et domino*; the use of *conterane[um]* is also rare in

⁵³ *esopera* (i.e. *supra*, line 3), *esabario* (i.e. *sabarium* (?), line 19).

Latin and translates συμπολίτες.⁵⁴ These expressions are commonly taken as indicative of interference from Greek,⁵⁵ although alternatively they could reflect a specific variant of Latin that developed among the military communities in the desert and that was, by nature, heavily influenced by Greek syntax and vocabulary.⁵⁶ Whichever of these scenarios is correct, based on the high volume of Greek writing attested at Didymoi, it is still remarkable that Demeterous and Numosis opted to employ Latin rather than Greek.

Whether they crafted their messages using a translating tool or not,⁵⁷ both Demeterus and Numosis were clearly trying to accommodate Claudius' linguistic preference, performing convergence. Their messages were practical and required some sort of action from Claudius. This would support the vision of Claudius as more proficient in Latin than Greek. Being understood was crucial on both occasions, and both Demeterus and Numosis took a practical approach to the problem by writing in Latin. This possibility is supported by the fact that a letter from Claudius to Numosis survives (*O.Did.* 419), written in Latin. These surviving documents suggest that Claudius was probably not a native of Egypt.

⁵⁴ While one instance of the usage of *conterraneus* is attested in Classical Latin (Pliny *Nat. Hist. praefatio* 1, where it is explicitly described as a *castrense verbum*), I have been unable to find evidence for alternative ways to indicate fellow countrymen in the Latin letters.

⁵⁵ The editor of the ostraca supports this vision.

⁵⁶ I am more sceptical of this interpretation because there are very few Latin documents from Didymoi that present this peculiar use of Latin calqued on Greek. The only parallel examples are the letters of Aelius Silvinus (*O.Claud.* 455 and 456), considered further below in the section.

⁵⁷ There are different types of tools to support communication in bilingual contexts. Evidence survives for glossaries organised alphabetically and by topic, which functioned very much like modern dictionaries. Other learning tools were transliterated texts arranged in two columns: one had phrases written in Greek, the other their Latin translation. Some of these texts were written in the form of dialogues (hence their name *colloquia*), so that they could be more easily memorised by learners. On materials for learners of Latin, including the glossaries, see extensively Dickey 2016, especially 100-115 and 121-127. On the *colloquia*, see Dickey 2012 and 2015.

It is obviously difficult to speculate on Claudius' linguistic background beyond the point that he might have preferred Latin over Greek.⁵⁸ In my view, a clue could perhaps be found in the message from Numosis (*O.Did.* 417), where we understand that Claudius was associated with a man with a Dacian name, *Diurponais*.⁵⁹ The chronological context of these ostraca (AD 125-140) allows us to suggest that Claudius was perhaps one of a group of Dacian soldiers stationed in the desert, perhaps belonging to the second generation of military men recruited from Dacia. The role of Latin in this case might have therefore been that of a *lingua franca*, in that it ensured effective communication between soldiers whose linguistic background might not have included Greek and members of the military community of likely Egyptian origins.

The need to write Latin to optimise communication is attested at Didymoi well into the third century. Two third-century Latin letters found at the fort reveal that a man called Aelius Silvinus wrote to colleagues Secundinus and Crescens at Didymoi asking for food (*O.Did.* 455 and 456). In both of these, Aelius appears as a speaker of Greek crafting a Latin message: *bonam rem facies* is a translation of *καλῶς ποιήσεις* (*O.Did.* 455, lines 3-4); the genitive in *-as* (*palmulas*, *O.Did.* 455, line 6) could reflect influence from the Greek genitive singular; *pentecedecate* (*O.Did.* 456, line 3) is clearly a transliteration of *πεντακαιδεκάτη*. Again, there are not enough elements to assess whether Aelius wrote Latin calquing Greek because of interference or because he spoke a variant of Latin which developed under the influence of Greek syntax. Yet, again, considering the high number of Greek documents

⁵⁸ The letter of Claudius to Numosis (*O.Did.* 419) is filled with unremarkable orthographic features typically found in Latin documentary writings. These are far too common to enable us to identify them as revealing a particular regional variety of Latin.

⁵⁹ Dana 2003 177, referenced in the edition.

attested at Didymoi and at sites nearby, it is remarkable that he opted to write Latin. A straightforward explanation for this choice is that Aelius was accustomed to speaking Latin with his colleagues, who, as we understand from the content of his messages, seem to have been quite close to him.⁶⁰ Another possibility to consider is that Aelius, like Demeterus and Numosis at *O.Did.* 417, performed convergence to be understood as well as possible by his addressees. It was common for soldiers deployed to remote outposts in the desert to suffer hunger.⁶¹ If the salutation *si vixero redda(m) vobis* (*O.Did.* 455, lines 10-11) is to be taken literally,⁶² then we would be dealing with a man in severe need of food, who would want his addressees to act with urgency. With due caution, we can therefore interpret the choice of Latin performed by Aelius as a strategy to ensure that communication with his colleagues happened as swiftly as possible.

3.3.3 A statement of identity and a lingua franca

The material from the eastern desert allows us to confirm and develop the conclusions reached in the section on Mons Claudianus. In the first instance, the epistles of Iulius to Valerius and the messages received by Arius (§ 3.3.1) suggest that senders who wrote both Latin and Greek to bilingual addressees opted for Latin when their messages were syntactically simple and devoid of urgency. This is a pattern that was already observed at Mons Claudianus (§ 3.2), where the use of Latin in bilingual epistolary exchanges appears associated with syntactic simplicity and formulaic language. The content and structure of

⁶⁰ *Saluta uxorem tua(m) et filii(m)* (*O.Did.* 455, lines 8-9).

⁶¹ Bagnall 1986 28 (n. 27, line 5) and *O.Flor.* 7.

⁶² Cf. *P.Mich.* 468, a letter from Claudius Terentianus to Claudius Tiberianus, where the expression *si vixero* is clearly used hyperbolically. See § 3.4.

these bilingual pieces of communication point to a sort of desire to use Latin whenever this did not threaten effective communication. Further epistolary material recovered from the desert forts enables us to consider the possible factors at the root of this linguistic behaviour.

The letters from Didymoi suggest that, when corresponding parties had written competence in both Latin and Greek, Latin was a preferred choice for soldiers wishing to write about matters concerned with military life, such as the transfer from one base to another, and quarrels between colleagues. All these concepts are connected with the desire to fit in that soldiers must have developed in contexts where the army was the only operating institutional body. The sense of pride felt by those struggling to fit in linguistically is typified by Cutus' use of Latin (§ 3.3.1), which appears conditioned by the desire to be recognised as a speaker and writer of Latin in a community of men of Thracian origins.

Finally, Latin was also a necessity to the communities stationed in the desert, in that it enabled them to communicate with soldiers who may not have had a firm command of Greek. This might have been the situation of Claudius, who is associated with men of Dacian origins, and of Aelius Silvinus (§ 3.3.2). Overall, in this use Latin may be considered as a *lingua franca*, that is a choice that enabled the military bases along the desert route to communicate with one another regardless of the linguistic backgrounds of their employees, provided that they had some competence in Latin.

We therefore notice once again two levels that characterised military communication, which broadly reflect the levels of administration we identified in chapter 2. One is the practical one, where content was paramount. At this level, corresponding parties are more likely to have performed convergence, attempting to accommodate the linguistic preferences of their addressees when possible. This translates into a more flexible choice between Latin and Greek for written communication. The second level is strictly concerned with the identity

that soldiers performed more or less intentionally when communicating with their colleagues. The use of Latin in these situations seems to have been a less practical one, and it appears to have reinforced their sense of belonging to the army. This is especially evident in the employment of Latin to write about military matters when correspondents were competent in Greek, or indeed more competent in it than Latin.

3.4 The letters of Claudius Terentianus

One of the most famous examples of code alternation from the Roman world is a collection of letters on papyrus written by Claudius Terentianus, a soldier in service in Egypt in the second century, to the veteran Claudius Tiberianus from Karanis. Since they provide an insight into ancient letter writing, non-standard Latin, and everyday life in the Roman military and in Egypt, they have received extensive scholarly attention.⁶³

Terentianus writes to Tiberianus six times in Latin and five times in Greek. His Latin is filled with morphological and syntactical interferences from koine Greek, whereas his Greek is more standard. It is therefore legitimate to assume that Terentianus was a native speaker of Greek who knew Latin. The letters are summarised in table 5:

⁶³ For editions and commentaries of the letters, see Youtie and Winter 1951, Calderini 1951, Cavenaile 1958, Pighi 1964, Adams 1977 and 1978, J. N. Green 1991, especially 93-22, Halla-aho 2003, Stephan and Verhoogt 2005, Strassi 2008, Head 2014. Youtie and Winter (1951) transcribe the text of Terentianus' letters into Classical Latin, thus failing to convey the non-standard features of their language. Pighi (1964) translates literally the Greek letters of the archive into Latin and compares these translations to the Latin letters, thus showing the influence that koine Greek has on the variety of Latin written by Terentianus. On the language of Terentianus specifically, see Adams 1977, Lehmann 1988, Adams 2003a 593-597, and Nachtergeale 2015.

<i>P.Mich.</i>	Language	Message
467	Latin	Ter. informs Tib. that he has been enrolled in the navy and that he will be sent to Syria; he asks to be sent some garments and informs Tib. that everything is well at home; adds long list of greetings, including to his mother and father Ptolemaeus, and military men (marginalia, left).
468	Latin	Ter. thanks Tib. for sending a cloak; says that he is sending a scarf made by his (Ter.'s) mother for Tib.; wishes to be transferred into a cohort, but says that "nothing in the army happens without money" (alluding to bribery, perhaps?); says that a friend called Dios was enrolled in a legion; sends greetings from his mother, father, and siblings; says that everything is fine at home; lists greetings to military men, including a centurion, and other <i>contubernales</i> .
inv. 5395	Latin	Ter. informs Tib. of his oath to join the fleet. [The text is fragmentary]
469	Latin and some Greek	Ter. says his mother sends greetings to Tib.; she would like to be sent a cheap linen (?); invites Tib. to negotiate the price of the linen carefully; greets Tib. as his dearest, second only to the gods. The verso has the address in Greek: Κλαυδίω [Τιβεριανῶ] σπεκουλ(άτορι).
470	Latin	Fragmentary account of events; Ter. says his mother is pregnant; begs Tib. to go to Alexandria; mentions the killing of someone.
471	Latin	Lines 1-9 are illegible; Ter. says that someone has sent him <i>acu lentiaminaque</i> (needle and fabric) but no money; he managed to gather money from various sources; he found his mother pregnant at home, and she gave birth a few days later; describes an argument between someone and his father Ptolemaeus, who went to Alexandria with some newly recruited soldiers (<i>tirones</i>) leaving Ter. alone with his mother; Ter.'s mother said that she would accompany him back to the navy at Alexandria; on the day of the argument Ter. asked his friend Saturninus for money, but in the end his mother managed to earn some by selling pieces of fabric and to pay for his return to Alexandria.
476	Greek	The father of Iulius has told Ter. about a woman. Ter. says that he could have had many women but that he did not want any without Tib.'s consent; he says that he will remain without a wife if Tib. does not make up his mind; he says he has written the letter at night; greetings; Ter. signs as a legionary soldier (verso).
477	Greek	Ter. has been unable to deposit a document on behalf of Tib. because Tib.'s presence was required; he will not be able to deposit it until Tib. joins him in Alexandria; he asks to be sent some shoes; mentions that a revolt has taken place at Alexandria; informs Tib. he is wounded; sends greetings.
478	Greek	Ter. tells Tib. about his illness again and give thanks to the gods for his recovery; [the text is fragmentary] he sends greetings to the mother and to an unnamed lady.
479	Greek	Ter. is worried for Tib. because last time he saw him he was ill and has not heard from him since; invites Tib. to pass on a letter from the <i>dioketes</i> (financial official) to the <i>strategos</i> (governor with both military and civil duties) through the sister; enquires about Nemesianus as he has not heard from him and he worries; sends greetings.
480	Greek	Ter. informs Tib. that since he left he has been in touch with Aemilius about some documents, which cannot be legally registered without the approval of the <i>archidikastes</i> (a civil officer); he has paid Aemilius for his service and Aemilius says he will give them money back if Ter. and the father (possibly Tib.) are unsatisfied with his service.

Table 5: letters of Claudius Terentianus to Claudius Tiberianus

Terentianus was a soldier at Alexandria who joined the fleet against his will and was eventually transferred to a legion.⁶⁴ He was most probably a native speaker of Greek and, since his letters seem to reveal that he came from a family who lived in Egypt, he probably had some competence in the local Demotic language as well.⁶⁵ About Tiberianus, we know that he was a soldier at the time of Terentianus' recruitment and that he eventually retired from the army.⁶⁶ The outgoing letters of his archive reveal that Tiberianus wrote both Latin and Greek. His Latin, unlike that of Terentianus, is polished and does not present features of interference from Greek. This has led some to believe that Latin must have been Tiberianus' native language.⁶⁷

Terentianus addresses Tiberianus as his "father and lord" in both languages, which is why scholarship has long considered the two biologically related to one another.⁶⁸ However, Terentianus often refers to another man named Ptolemaeus also as his father (e.g. *P.Mich.* 471). The latter is often written about in relation to a woman whom Terentianus calls his mother, which would suggest that the two were his biological parents. Moreover, Terentianus often remarks the separation between his own household and Tiberianus, as for instance we see in the letter in *P.Mich.* 471, a message with a particularly strong domestic flavour, in which Terentianus reports on a visit to his parents. The biological relation between the two

⁶⁴ *P.Mich.* 467 and 476.

⁶⁵ Cf. Adams 1977, discussed below.

⁶⁶ *P.Mich.* 469 (verso) and 475 (verso).

⁶⁷ Adams 1977 and Daris 1991.

⁶⁸ The spectrum of meaning of πατήρ and κύριος is wide. A passage from Menander's *Dyskolos* (492-492) exemplifies this: δεῖ γὰρ εἶναι κολακικὸν τὸν δεόμενόν του. πρεσβύτερός τις τῆι ὑπακίκο· εὐθύς πατέρα καὶ πάππαν λέγω. γραῦς· μητέρ' "For someone who needs something must be flattering. An old man answers the door – I call him father or papa straightaway. If it's an old woman, I call her mother". I owe this example to Dickey 2004 138. The biological relationship between the two would be supported by the fact that in the only outgoing letter from the archive Tiberianus refers to Terentianus as his son (*P.Mich.* 472, lines 23-24).

correspondents is therefore not so obvious. Recent scholarship has argued, in line with the first editors of the letters, that the two soldiers were not biologically related but tied by a relation of adoption⁶⁹ or military patronage.⁷⁰ I concur with the latter interpretation, and in the present analysis I consider the two correspondents respectively as a newly enlisted soldier and his military patron.

The debate relating to Terentianus' letters has produced a variety of hypotheses to explain his code alternation. The first editors of the papyri tried to organise Tiberianus' archive in a chronological sequence, with the Latin letters preceding the Greek ones.⁷¹ Some obvious concatenations of events favour a chronological succession between the use of Latin and Greek. For instance, in a Latin letter Terentianus longs to be transferred into a cohort (*P.Mich.* 468), and in a Greek one he signs himself as a legionary soldier (*P.Mich.* 476). Similarly, Tiberianus is addressed as *speculator* in Latin (*P.Mich.* 469), but in the Greek letters he appears to be engaged with civil life more than with military affairs, probably suggesting that he had retired. Strassi (2008 95-97) also sees a shift from a phase in which Terentianus talks about his parents in Latin (*P.Mich.* 469 and 470) to a phase in which he mentions his own children in Greek (*P.Mich.* 481). However, chronology cannot be the sole explanation for the performance of code alternation. If Terentianus did switch from Latin into Greek in a chronological sequence, which might well be the case, he must have had a more or less conscious reason to do so.

Another theory connected with Terentianus' code alternation was put forward by

⁶⁹ For an onomastic treatment of the relationship between the two, concluding that Terentianus was adopted by Tiberianus, see Strassi 2008 109-112. Terentianus might have modelled his names on Tiberianus' *duo nomina*.

⁷⁰ Youtie and Winter 1951, Nachtergeale 2015. Cf. Adams 1977.

⁷¹ Strassi (2008) follows the same arrangement provided by Youtie and Winter (1951) in the first edition of the texts.

Adams (1977) in his philological examination of the letters. Since Tiberianus' Latin is standard compared to Terentianus', which is rather heavily influenced by koine Greek, Adams advanced the possibility that Tiberianus was an Italian native speaker of Latin, who settled in Egypt and married a local native speaker of Greek, Terentianus' mother. Terentianus would have therefore been brought up in a bilingual household, speaking Greek with his mother and Latin with his father. Building on this hypothesis, Terentianus would have written to Tiberianus in Latin while communicating about intimate matters, and in Greek for communications that required more formality. It is true that the Greek letters read somewhat more "formally" than the Latin ones. Two of the Greek messages, for instance, are concerned with bureaucratic matters that we do not encounter in the Latin ones.⁷² However, this explanation remains perhaps too vague and would support the possibility that the code alternation was based on the content of the messages, a possibility that Adams himself rejects.⁷³

In a recent article, Nachtergeale (2015) provides the first systematic sociolinguistic analysis of Terentianus' letters.⁷⁴ The study proposes to consider audience as a determining factor of Terentianus' code alternation, influencing style, lexical choices, and the choice between one language and another. Nachtergeale sees audience as a determining factor in Terentianus' use of Latin. Most of his readable Latin letters include long lists of greetings to military men associated with his addressee. According to Nachtergeale, this reveals that

⁷² Cf. *P.Mich.* 476, where Terentianus informs Tiberianus about his intentions to approach a woman, possibly to marry her. This could be interpreted both as a personal matter, in that it involves feelings, and as a formal one, in that there is an implicit request to Tiberianus to approve of Terentianus' association with the woman in question.

⁷³ Adams 2003a 595.

⁷⁴ Nachtergeale 2015.

Terentianus, while addressing Tiberianus, was also trying to reach out to his colleagues, among whom might have been some influential soldiers, such as the centurions mentioned in the letter *P.Mich.* 468. Using Latin to reach out to these military men of superior rank allowed Terentianus to create solidarity with them, the people who could ultimately help him achieve his goals, especially promotion to a legionary post. The same phenomenon is found in a letter of request to Tiberianus (*P.Mich.* 469, line 21), in which Terentianus adds the salutation *et tu nos saluta qui nos amant* “And please greet those who love us both”, which Nachtergaele interprets as a *captatio benevolentiae*. By referring to these “others” who loved both Terentianus and Tiberianus, the junior soldier again created solidarity with his addressee and increased his chances of obtaining what he desired. Thus, according to this reading, through the choice of Latin Terentianus seems to have also targeted a specific audience. These conclusions appear the most persuasive of those advanced so far by linguists and historians, and they will constitute the basis of the present analysis of Terentianus’ code alternation.

A key factor identified in this novel interpretation is that the employment of Latin enabled Terentianus to tap into the military identity of his multiple addressees in order to obtain something from them. An element of this attitude which can be investigated further is the psychological state of Terentianus in his interaction with Tiberianus, such as the “vivacity” and “bitter reflections” that some scholars have seen in the Latin letters.⁷⁵ Could some psychological attitudes of the newly enlisted soldier towards his military patron have favoured his performance of code alternation? The power relation between Tiberianus and Terentianus is undeniable, and so is the fact that their relationship was inter-generational.

⁷⁵ Daris 1991 64.

Whatever the actual relation that bound the two to one another, Tiberianus was an experienced military man and, as such, he had authority over Terentianus. In relation to Tiberianus, Terentianus was young and inexperienced, no matter how old he actually was at the time of his communication. Their difference in experience and age, and the relationship that tied the two correspondents, might enable us to take the interpretation of the determinant factors of code alternation a bit further.

It is common to believe that younger generations in antiquity were more deferential towards their legal guardians (and generally towards older generations) than modern ones, but this is likely to be an assumption based on our idealised vision of the past.⁷⁶ An emblematic example of inter-generational family relations is a letter from Oxyrhynchus (*P.Oxy.* 119), in which Theon laments that the father has not taken him on a trip to Alexandria. Theon threatens the father twice: first stating that he will not speak to him any more if he does not take him to Alexandria on his next trip;⁷⁷ then threatening not to eat or drink if he does not receive gifts.⁷⁸ It is of course impossible to know how old the sender was at the time when he sent the message. Whatever Theon's actual age at the time, the repeated hyperbole (such as "I shall not speak nor greet you again", "I shall not eat not drink") and possibly also the bottom-line interjection ταῦτα "that's it!" (*P.Oxy.* 119, line 15) suggest a petulant, childish attitude of a younger man in search for self-affirmation. To these we can add the sarcasm

⁷⁶ On this, Eyben (1993 206-208) notes that the imperial period saw a significant decline in respect for the *patria potestas*.

⁷⁷ ἢ οὐ θέλις ἀπενεκκεῖν με τὲ σοῦ εἰς Ἀλεξάνδριαν οὐ μὴ γράψω σέ ἐπιστολὴν οὔτε λαλῶ σέ οὔτε υἱγενῶ σε, εἶτα ἂν δὲ ἔλθῃς εἰς Ἀλεξάνδριαν οὐ μὴ λάβω χειρὰν παρὰ [σ]οῦ οὔτε πάλι χαίρω σε λυπὸν "If you won't take me with you to Alexandria I won't write you a letter or say a word to you or salute you; and if you go to Alexandria I won't hold your hand nor even greet you again" (*P.Oxy.* 119, lines 3-8).

⁷⁸ λυπὸν πέμψον εἰς με παρακαλῶ σε. ἄμ μὴ πέμψῃς οὐ μὴ φάγω, οὐ μὴ πείνω· ταῦτα "Send me a lyre (?) I implore you. If you don't, I won't eat, I won't drink. That's it!" (*P.Oxy.* 119, lines 13-15).

with which Theon starts the message: καλῶς ἐποίησες οὐκ ἀπενηχες με μετε ἔσοῦ εἰς πόλιν
“It was very nice of you not to take me to the city!” (*P.Oxy.* 119, lines 2-3). In order for his
letter to be effective, Theon must have counted on his father being able to understand the
pragmatic encoding of his message. We therefore appreciate that there was a thing such as
the negotiation of inter-generational identities in ancient talk.

In the analysis of epistolary exchanges between fathers and sons, or indeed, as might
have been the case of Terentianus and Tiberianus, between protégés and patrons, we should
not underestimate the inter-generational relation that tied correspondents. Whatever the
age of Terentianus at the time of writing, could his attitude in relation to Tiberianus have
influenced his performance of code alternation as well as the stylistic and lexical choices of
his letters? I propose here a reading of Terentianus’ Latin letters based on the
intergenerational power dynamics between him as a newly enlisted soldier, his senior
colleagues, and his parents.

In *P.Mich.* 467⁷⁹ Terentianus laments his failure to enrol in the legionary forces and
says that he was forced to enlist in the fleet instead. Terentianus’ frustration emerges in
several passages of this letter, especially in the first half, in which he presents himself as
hopelessly subject to fate and senior soldiers. Someone has told him *si non reddas ... referam
patri tuo* “If you don’t return it ... I will tell your father” (lines 9-10), a threat that recalls
parents talking to their children. A colleague has told Terentianus that he would be happy in
the fleet, but Terentianus tells Tiberianus *optime scis et tu quantum collegis sit mentitus* “You
know well how much he lies to his colleagues” (lines 7-8), seeking comfort in Tiberianus from
the lie he has been told. After his unsuccessful attempt to enlist in the legions, Terentianus

⁷⁹ Here I have followed the textual reconstructions proposed by Strassi (2008).

writes that he has signed up for the fleet *ne tibi paream a spe amara parpatum vagari quasi fugitivom* “So that you do not think that, carried by a bitter hope, I am wandering around like a fugitive” (line 17). The underlying message of this statement is that Terentianus joined in the fleet to please his patron rather than for his own good, emphasising the power relation that tied the two to one another.

The statement *scias autem rapi me in Syriam exiturum cum vexillo* “Know that I am being sent away to Syria with the unit” (line 8) is also significant. The choice of *rapi* in this context is unusual. The primary meaning of the verb is “to seize”, “to carry away”, and in the passive it has a rather strong negative connotation, corresponding to the English “to be abducted”, “to be punished”, and “to be raped”.⁸⁰ In this context, Terentianus used the verb hyperbolically in order to emphasise that everything was happening against his will.

The letter proceeds to report that two of his friends, Kalabel and Deipistus, have enrolled in the fleet with him. Terentianus expresses his astonishment at their willingness to join the fleet saying that *nullus computavit kusus suae vitae* (lines 13-14). The word *kusus* here is particularly interesting. The line could be translated as “nobody has considered the (better?) chances that life could bring”. Alternatively, and possibly more convincingly, one can read *kusus* as “chances of death” or “odds of survival”. Terentianus’ statement therefore translates also as “no-one has considered how slim their chances of survival are (in the fleet)”. If this reading is correct, the soldier is implying that he and his friends are likely to die in the fleet. We should therefore wonder whether serving in the legionary forces would have granted Terentianus and his friends more physical safety. Or is Terentianus in fact complaining about the rank he has been assigned instead?

⁸⁰ See *TLL*. On the sexual meaning, see Adams 1982 175.

In *P.Mich.* 468 Terentianus writes that he is severely ill (or wounded) in bed. The first part of the letter is a list of provisions that Terentianus is sending to Tiberianus. The list is interrupted by Terentianus' report that he has been victim of a theft while he was lying ill in bed. The section listing the provisions is then concluded by an apologetic request: *rogo te pater ut contentus sis ista modo si non iacuisse speraba me pluriam tibi missiturum et itarum spero si vixero* "Please, father, be content with this for now. Had I not been lying in bed I would have sent more, and more things will come, I hope, if I survive" (lines 20-23). The bottom line of this apology (*si vixero*) is an interesting choice in that, by employing *si* in replacement of a temporal conjunction, Terentianus seems to imply that he might not recover from his illness, or at least not anytime soon. Nothing would suggest that Terentianus' concern for his health is hyperbolic, if only he did not add a shopping list for Tiberianus immediately after.⁸¹ In fact, the hopelessness expressed in *si vixero* is at odds with the request for new military equipment that follows, which suggests that Terentianus is in truth expecting to get back to work soon. It is therefore possible that, once again, Terentianus chose his words hyperbolically to express his frustration more vividly and find comfort in Tiberianus. To *si vixero*, we can compare Terentianus' attitude in one of the Greek letters (*P.Mich.* 477). In this latter one, Terentianus is severely ill, to the point that he is not able to feed himself without the help of his colleagues, and yet he does not express concern over the fact that he might not live.⁸² We could therefore accept that in *P.Mich.* 468 the junior soldier was exaggerating

⁸¹ Cf. the use of *si vixero* at *O.Did.* 455 (§ 3.3.2).

⁸² ὁ γὰρ κάματος ἄρτι ἀγέλοιός ἐστιν κἄν δέον εἶνα τραφῶ ὑπὸ ἄλλου, ὡς ἀκούσεις παραγεινόμενος ἐπὶ τῆς πόλεως "For at this time the illness is not a laughing matter, and I am fed by someone else, as you will hear when you come to the city" (lines 37-39).

the seriousness of his condition, perhaps with the intent to secure himself Tiberianus' support.

In the list of items that follows *si vixero*, Terentianus does not miss the opportunity to report on a second episode in which he has been deprived of his possessions: *et rogo ut mi mittas dalabram eam quam mi misisti optionem illam mi abstulisse* "And please send me a pickaxe. The one you sent me has been taken by the *optio*" (lines 27-29). The climax of his frustration culminates in a wish to be transferred into a legion: *spero me frugaliter viciturum et in cohortem transferri* "I hope to live frugally and to be transferred into a cohort" (lines 36-38). In order to obtain a post in a cohort, Terentianus says that he plans to live sparingly. This would allow him to save money to pay for his promotion. While explaining this to Tiberianus, he comments with bitterness: *hic autem sene aere nihil fiet neque epistulae commendaticiae nihil valut nesi si qui sibi aiutaveret* "Here nothing happens without money, not even letters of recommendation are worth anything unless one helps himself" (lines 38-41). The general feeling that comes across in this letter is that of a frustrated junior soldier with limited control over events, his condition, and his career.

The other two readable Latin letters from Terentianus to Tiberianus provide an insight into the relation between the junior soldier and a woman whom he calls "mother". The feelings that emerge from these letters are of a son struggling to tolerate subjection to the older generation. In the first letter, Terentianus reports on an occasion in which he disagreed with the woman, in the second he even seems to mock her. *P.Mich.* 469 is a message that Terentianus writes on behalf of his mother. The letter is a request to Tiberianus to buy something for Terentianus' mother. The woman had ordered the purchase not out of need, but because she wanted to imitate the freedwoman of Germanus (lines 4-5). We could

wonder whether Tiberianus actually needed to know the reason for the request, or whether Terentianus was trying to undermine it.

In passing on the request on behalf of his mother, Terentianus asks Tiberianus to negotiate the price three times (*minore pretium merca*, line 8; *si potes mercare*, line 10; *ergo merca minore pretium*, line 17). This reiteration can reveal the young man's feeling of vexation under the woman's insistence. In reporting the apprehension of the woman, Terentianus tried to distance himself from it, seeking understanding from Tiberianus. This attitude becomes clearer in the exchange reported in the direct speech. Terentianus told his mother: *dico ille et ego nolim petere illas sed posso tibi epistula scribere et mittet tibi si invenerit* "I tell her I do not want to go look for them, but I can send him a letter and he will send them to you if he finds them" (lines 14-16). The line seems to imply that the woman was so insistent that she had asked Terentianus to go look for what she was after in person. By disagreeing with the woman, Terentianus distances himself from her insistence, showing that he was old enough not to obey her unconditionally. This attitude of Terentianus towards his mother suggests that he tried to downsize the scale of her request in the eyes of Tiberianus. Nachergaele (2015) reads in this attitude a strategy of persuasion. By distancing himself from the woman's insistence, the young soldier would be able to formulate a stronger request without coming across as insistent himself, and therefore increasing his chances of success. This interpretation is plausible, but we must emphasise that Terentianus was able to employ such a persuasion strategy because he could play on his role as a son and on the mother's role as a parent.

The relationship that Terentianus had with his mother is better exemplified in a letter that reports on a visit to his house during which she gave birth (*P.Mich.* 471).⁸³ This has a strong intimate flavour, including a description of a quarrel between Terentianus' father and someone unidentifiable, and alluding to Terentianus' constant anxiety in his search for money. Terentianus' subjection to the older generation is epitomised in the fact that, as emerges at the end of the letter, it is the mother who eventually, in the middle of the domestic turmoil, procured money to pay for his return to Alexandria.

Terentianus does not seem particularly comfortable with the mother's protectiveness. He reports in direct speech her words in reaction to the father's departure: *spectemus illum dum venit et venio tequm Alexandrie et deduco te usque ad nave* "Let us wait for him until he comes, and then I will come with you to Alexandria and I will escort you up to the ship" (lines 24-26). Given the evident lack of money in the household, it cannot have been an obvious choice for the woman to travel with Terentianus to Alexandria. Moreover, since she was about to give (or had just given) birth to a child, it was arguably inadvisable for her to be travelling at all. As for Terentianus, we can say that being walked back to work by one's own mother in front of other *commilitiones* would have not been altogether flattering. Should we perhaps read hyperbole in the expression *usque ad nave(m)*, and in particular in the adverb *usque*? Did the mother really intend to take her child back to work? Or is the young soldier mocking his mother in this line? On the basis of the documents discussed so far, we can suggest that the latter option is more likely.

In his Latin letters, Terentianus presents himself as struggling against subjection to third parties. Moreover, the passages analysed here appear pragmatically encoded with

⁸³ For a recent translation and commentary, see Adams 2016 265-284.

elements such as hyperbole, vivid imagery, and perhaps even sarcasm and mockery. Through these, the soldier expresses his longing for independence from his superiors in the army and the older generation, in particular his mother. If this reading is correct, it might not be a coincidence that such linguistic features can be identified in all the readable Latin letters and in none of the Greek ones.⁸⁴ It is therefore legitimate to wonder whether there might be a connection between Terentianus' choice of Latin and his youthful display of disagreement and struggle for self-affirmation.

As convincingly argued by Nachtergeale (2015), the use of Latin and the long lists of greetings to fellow soldiers enabled Terentianus to tap into the military identity of his addressee, and to create solidarity with him in order to reach his goals. According to the analysis proposed here, this interpretation can be pushed a bit further. Since Latin was not Terentianus' first language, we can assume that for him writing Latin required more effort than writing Greek. Employing Latin, however, must have been worth the effort for a soldier trying to impress an experienced military man and his colleagues: by demonstrating that he had mastered the language that mostly fitted military talk, Terentianus stated his (perhaps exaggerated) superiority to fellow soldiers, showing that he was worthy of being promoted to a legionary position. Terentianus' code alternation could therefore be explained on the basis that Latin was the language that allowed him to prove his empowerment and to create solidarity with other military men. The Latin language, we could say, enabled him to express his belonging to the army, or his institutional identity, and ultimately his military pride. Greek,

⁸⁴ *P.Mich.* 470 and *P.Mich.* inv.5395 are admittedly too fragmentary to be analysed. The first one has been claimed to be a copy of *P.Mich.* 471 (Strassi 2008). It is hard to make a whole text out of *P.Mich.* inv.5395, but the words *ed me iacentem in liburna sublatum mi est* "And as I was lying ill in the ship it was stolen from me" (line 4) suggest that its content must have been along the same lines as the other letters.

on the other hand, is the language that he used more naturally to communicate facts rather than his struggle for independence and recognition.

This new perspective for the reading of Terentianus' letters ties in particularly well with some of the hypotheses formulated so far in relation to Terentianus' code alternation. First of all, an understanding of the "wannabe" attitude of the sender can perhaps be an improvement of Adams' hypothesis, which championed informality and formality as the factors determining language choice. In fact, Terentianus' choice might have not been between Latin as the language of informality and Greek as the language of formality. It rather seems that Latin was the language that Terentianus used more immaturely in his struggle for self-affirmation; and Greek the language that he used more maturely, when he had accomplished his career goals. The identification of Latin as the language of military pride in Terentianus' letters can also (although it does not necessarily need to) support the chronological hypothesis, according to which Terentianus would have addressed Tiberianus first in Latin, when in need to prove his worth, and later on in Greek, when he was no longer in need of self-affirmation.

The value that Terentianus seems to have attributed to the Latin language might derive from the fact that Latin was the language used by the army when it presented itself as an institution. Imitating this choice enabled him, a junior recruit, to validate his identity as an accomplished soldier. If we consider this interpretation of Terentianus' code alternation in the broader picture of language choice in the Roman army, we could hazard a guess that aspiring soldiers, or newly recruited ones in general, employed Latin, perhaps not without some pride, even when Greek would have been a more practical choice. Mirroring language choice in high-level military administration perhaps enabled them to appear more independent, in control of their lives, and fit for the military world.

3.5 Conclusions

The epistolary collections that enable us to enquire into the issue of language choice in military communication are limited in number, and it is obviously difficult to draw general conclusions from the evidence they offer. As exchanges between individuals, these letters are ultimately reflective of the subjective nature of language, and of the way in which this is used in different ways by different people. Nonetheless, the evidence presented here enables us to start understanding the sociolinguistic mechanisms that might have informed language choice in bi- and multilingual military communities.

The letters from the eastern desert enable us to appreciate the practical spirit that informed language choice in epistolary exchanges between military outposts. At Mons Claudianus and Didymoi we saw that letters with instructions and requests were more commonly written in Greek, perhaps to raise the chances that their recipients understood them fully. Similarly, the letters from Didymoi provide examples of contexts where the employment of Latin might have been itself a choice to accommodate addressees whose linguistic background might have not included Greek. As expected, the practical spirit of military communities and the fast-paced work environment of military outposts prompted soldiers and their associates to perform linguistic convergence while communicating with their colleagues. Soldiers may have gone a long way to ensure effective communication, and we can be somewhat confident in saying that whenever someone did not master a language, colleagues or tools would come to his aid. In this respect, we considered that employing templates and translators might have aided letter writing.⁸⁵ There is also evidence for soldiers

⁸⁵ § 3.3.2.

writing on behalf of illiterate colleagues (*O.Did.* 136 and 329), and for others writing Greek in Latin characters (*O.Did.* 36).

A significant number of letters considered here point to the use of Latin as the language that enabled senders, in specific communication settings, to affirm their belonging to the military community and perform what I have called their institutional identity. This appears strongly in the letters of Terentianus, where a soldier struggling for self-affirmation employs Latin to lament discomfort to his military patron. The same could be said about the soldiers stationed at Didymoi, who wrote about matters concerning military affairs (such as quarrels among colleagues) in Latin and about more practical matters such as requests in Greek. Indeed, we have also considered soldiers like Cutus, who wrote a version of Latin filled with Greek interference, perhaps in an attempt to show off linguistic competence in their second language. This is perhaps the same attitude that influenced some of the writers at Mons Claudianus, who wrote messages with simple syntax in Latin, but preferred Greek for more detailed pieces of communication. All such usages of Latin are linked to the question of “fitting in” within the military community, a recurrent theme throughout bilingual soldiers’ letters.

Overall, the framework adopted to carry out this examination has proved useful. Broadly speaking, we can say that the role that Latin played in high-level administration may have had, in specific contexts, an impact on the preference for Latin in the epistolary exchanges between soldiers and their associates, enabling them to perform a military identity in situations where more than one language was available.

One of the questions that was raised at the beginning of this chapter concerns the status of military men, and whether this might have had an impact on the way their correspondents chose language to address them. The material considered shows that the

urgency of a message would have been the overriding factor to condition language choice. If a soldier wrote to a man of superior rank to obtain something, we can assume that he would have probably opted for the language in which he could better express himself. Yet, when two languages were available at both ends, things might have been different. The letters of Terentianus offer some perspective on this issue, suggesting that military status may have influenced the language in which soldiers addressed each other, especially when they attempted to impress colleagues with more authority. I suggested that this may be a reflection of the use that the army made of Latin in high-level administration, and the notion of “fitting in” is again very strongly linked to this behaviour.

4. Hadrian's Wall and surroundings

4.1 Using frontier communities to investigate language attitudes

Roman frontiers offer fertile ground for investigation into military matters, in that they are commonly characterised by the relatively permanent presence of military troops. In a historical analysis of the western imperial borders, Drummond and Nelson (1994 31-33) identify some factors that unified society at the borders of the Empire: among others, the contacts that frontier people had with the barbarians beyond the borders, which made them aware of the privilege of being on the side of Rome; and the presence of military communities, which represented a constant example of "Romanness".¹

The social complexity of frontier areas invites questions concerning the multitude of experiences that people had of Rome in these territories, as well as on the role that language played in such experiences. The present chapter examines patterns of linguistic behaviour in northern Britain, here taken as an example of a militarised frontier region. The primary intention is to disentangle the linguistic identities of some of the people who lived around Hadrian's Wall by looking at testimonies to their linguistic behaviour in public-facing writings.

¹ The soldiers who occupied the garrisons at the edge of the Empire were called *limitanei* (see e.g. Festus 25.2). One interpretation of this term, commonly attributed to Mommsen, is that the *limitanei* were peasant natives from the frontier areas who fought aided by mobile troops, the *comitatenses*. This view has been challenged by Le Bohec (2007), who has claimed that recruiting unskilled native soldiers to serve at the frontiers would not have been strategically efficient, in that areas of military tension would require professional military men in case of attack. On this, see Le Bohec 2007, especially 665. For a thorough analysis of the meanings of the term *limes* and *limitanei*, see Isaac 1998. Because of the ambiguity of the term *limitanei*, I intentionally avoid it in the present discussion. For a general overview of the presence of the army in Britain specifically, see Holder 1982.

The chapter seeks to understand how their language choices were influenced by linguistic competence, by the audiences for whom they wrote, by the identities they performed (more or less intentionally), and by other practical implications. Three phenomena are considered in this enquiry. First, we explore the choice of personal names, through which it is possible to unveil identity dynamics that often remain, as it were, hidden behind the Latin language (§ 4.3.1). Secondly, the chapter considers double theonyms as a form of religious language commonly used among (though not exclusively) military circles (§ 4.3.2). Attested in great number in the western provinces, double theonyms reveal aspects of both cultural and linguistic interaction, as well as the attitudes of Roman soldiers towards these phenomena. Finally, the chapter proposes to revisit the non-Latin inscriptions from northern Britain, providing fresh insights into the use of code alternation in a province where Latin was the most commonly written language (§ 4.4). The question that we will seek to answer while examining these issues is whether the choice of specific languages or linguistic features in the commissioning of epigraphic texts was random, or whether we can identify the social and cultural factors that may have conditioned it.

Only inscriptions on stone are considered in this chapter. This of course sets some limitations on the results of our analysis, in that lapidary texts only allow us to study the people who could afford to commission them. However, this selection of sources enables us to explore aspects of language which are not so commonly found in the texts so far discussed. I refer in particular to the combinations of personal names and theonyms, and to the effects that a broader, public audience could have on language choice.

The choice of the British border over other frontiers is prompted by a variety of factors.² As a western province, Britain allows us to examine language choice in situations where Greek was not so commonly written. In this respect, the inscriptions from northern Britain are particularly precious in that they are found in a geographical context which, until the coming of Rome, lacked a written tradition. They thus have the potential to provide insights into the relation between the adoption of Latin and Roman epigraphic writing as new forms of communication that local communities did not know before. In military terms, the British frontier is not necessarily the most significant border of the Empire: it was not at the centre of major military expeditions, nor was it comparable to the Rhine and the Danube frontiers in length. Yet Hadrian's Wall, as arguably the Antonine Wall after it, provided the Empire with a neat frontier line and, unlike other Roman border demarcations, it seems to have been conceived as a permanent structure. The Wall was, at least in part, a monumental frontier, and commissioning monumental dedications in its surroundings may have been particularly appealing during the Roman occupation of the region.³ Not all texts considered here make explicit mention of the army or affiliations to it. Some of these are considered as representative of Roman epigraphic practice in a region where a monumental border, strongly associated with Roman military activities, was a constant reminder of Rome's power to the people who lived and operated there.

² The delineation of the British frontier territory adopted in this chapter is based on the one proposed by Salway (1965 4): "Its limits may be defined in Roman terms by the Antonine Wall and its outliers in the north, and by the southern points in the system of communications marked by Scotch Corner, the Stainmore Pass and Overborough (Burrow-in-Lonsdale). This includes southern and central Scotland, Northumberland, County Durham, Cumberland, Westmorland and adjacent parts of Lancashire and Yorkshire". The focus of this chapter will be on the material from the Wall proper, but documents from further south will also be discussed when they provide useful parallels.

³ Drummond and Nelson 1994 29.

4.2 Linguistic landscape of Roman Britain

Traditionally studied by Celtic philologists,⁴ the interaction between different languages in ancient Britain has more recently attracted the interest of Classicists. Thanks to the surfacing of a considerable number of Roman military writings from the forts in the North, scholars are now able to look at the linguistic landscape of Roman Britain through larger corpora, unveiling an increasingly wide range of linguistic phenomena. Among these, language contact and the formation of non-standard versions of Latin have been tackled since the publication of new material.⁵ The adoption of sociolinguistic methods to explore such issues has enabled scholars to consider manifestations of bilingualism exploiting multiple sources for their investigation, including the full range of written sources, onomastics, and archaeological remains.

This is no place for a detailed discussion of the languages spoken in pre-conquest Britain, but some guidelines may facilitate the analysis of the phenomena considered in this chapter. Broadly speaking, the linguistic scene in Britain at the time of the Roman conquest and throughout the Roman occupation comprised at least Celtic, variants of which were spoken by the local population and people from the continent, and Latin, the language of the conquerors.⁶ Throughout this chapter, we will see that the linguistic landscape of the island was more complex than this, but the core interaction between Celtic and Latin must be the starting point for our enquiry.

⁴ In general, on this, see K. H. Jackson 1953.

⁵ Among others, see Mac Cana 1976, Evans 1987, Adams 1995, 2003b, and 2007 596-603, Mees 2005, Mullen 2007a and 2007b.

⁶ The history of the Pictish language attested in Scotland is complex and beyond the scope of this section. On this, see Charles-Edwards 2013 89-92.

One of the problems surrounding the language of pre-conquest Britain is that British Celtic appears not to have had a writing system of its own. Early scholars have argued that “British was not a written language, and that [in Britain] the *only* language of writing was Latin; it would not occur to anyone to write in British, nor would they know how to do so”.⁷ More recent studies have reconsidered such views. Writing equipment and coins from the late Iron Age, for example, suggest the possibility that the Britons were willing to write Roman characters before becoming part of the Empire.⁸ Other evidence for written Celtic has been found among the curse tablets from the Roman period at the sanctuary at Bath, two of which bear Celtic texts written in Roman characters.⁹ As for the penetration of Latin in the province, this process began with the first encounters that the Britons had with speakers of Latin. These are traditionally taken to have begun with the arrival of Caesar on the island in 55 BC, but some sort of Latin is likely to have been spoken, even if rarely, in Britain before the Caesarean investigations. Even though there is no direct evidence for this, the trade relationships that especially the south of the island entertained with the continent are likely to have produced interactions in Latin, a language increasingly used as a written *lingua franca*.¹⁰ Latin was increasingly taken up in Britain during the imperial period; eventually, Celtic-Latin bilingualism became the norm in some areas. This close contact between British Celtic and Latin is still

⁷ K. H. Jackson 1953 99-100. Cf. Tomlin 1987.

⁸ On literacy in Britain, see Raybould 1999, Ingemark 2000, and Hanson and Conolly 2002. Coin legends from Iron Age Britain include personal names and possibly also an early attestation of the Celtic equivalent for the Latin word *rex*. On this, see de Bernardo Stempel 1991 and Creighton 2000 168-172.

⁹ On texts in Roman script at Bath, see Tomlin 1987, Adams 1992, Mullen 2007b. Given the similarity between Gaulish and British Celtic, doubts remain on whether these were written by visitors from the continent or by indigenous Britons. Yet even if they were of Gaulish authorship, such attestations of written Celtic in Britain remain important testimonies of the diversity, linguistic and ethnic, of the people in the province. For a comprehensive discussion of the issue, see Mullen 2007b.

¹⁰ Mullen 2016 575.

witnessed by the numerous borrowings from Latin adopted into the local languages, many of which still survive today in Welsh.¹¹

Speaking of “British Latin” may not be a concept accurate enough to tackle primary evidence from the northern frontier and from the rest of the province.¹² Not all the people responsible for the writing of the documents surviving in Britain were Britons. It is therefore imperative that we approach primary evidence remembering that there were many varieties of Latin in Britain, derived also from, for example, the languages which arrived on the island via the army and merchants.¹³

The discourse on Roman imperialism has brought some to argue that in provincial settings Latin, like Roman customs and culture, was first adopted by the local elites who came into contact with the conqueror;¹⁴ and that only later did it spread among the lower social strata, less exposed to the cosmopolitan upper classes.¹⁵ This traditional assumption that cultural and linguistic change was driven by the higher classes in British society and in other provinces has recently been challenged. Some have reconsidered the value of a bottom-up spread of Roman culture and of the Latin language, starting from the lower classes and spreading to the elites.¹⁶ Yet, if taken independently from one another, neither the bottom-

¹¹ Mullen 2016 577.

¹² On Latin in Britain, see also Gratwick 1982.

¹³ Adams 2007 580-583.

¹⁴ Millet 1990, especially 100. This view has more recently been criticised as too dogmatic by, among others, Wollmann (1993 14-15).

¹⁵ K. H. Jackson (1953 97-108) identifies two types of Latin in Britain: Vulgar Latin, imported by traders and travellers from the continent, and a conservative type of Latin, acquired by the elites schooled in the traditional Roman manner. Aspects of the latter eventually made their way to the language spoken among the lower classes.

¹⁶ James 2001.

up nor the traditional approach do justice to the complexity of the spread of Latin and other languages into the British linguistic landscape.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis (§ 1.2), Mattingly (2011) has argued that the spread of Roman culture in Britain must have happened in different ways, through what he calls “discrepant experiences” (and therefore different perceptions) of what Roman culture was, and though different degrees of adoption and rejection of it.¹⁷ Similarly, the spread of the Latin language cannot have been as linear as traditionally suggested. There are many factors that influenced the exchange of cultural values and norms between the conquerors and the provincials, and these deserve attention in our analysis. A case-study method for the investigation of this subject may therefore lead to more satisfactory results. This may enable us to contextualise our sources with more precision and to examine a higher number of intertwined factors that generalising approaches may not take into account.

Before turning to the primary evidence, it is important to reiterate the importance of stone inscriptions in the study of language in the Roman Empire, a reminder that will serve us throughout this chapter and the following ones. Unlike other documents, stone inscriptions are public displays of writing. As such, they can help us examine language features and attitudes that we do not normally encounter in other documents. Stone inscriptions can also allow us to explore aspects of the Roman habit of producing epigraphic texts,¹⁸ and of the so-called “epigraphic consciousness” of the inhabitants of Britain, that is the awareness and ultimately the practice of the Roman epigraphic traditions.¹⁹ Lapidary texts will allow us to appreciate, for instance, that the local population of Britain was not prone to writing on

¹⁷ Mattingly 2011 203-245.

¹⁸ MacMullen 1982.

¹⁹ Mann 1985.

stone, whereas settlers from the continent are responsible for a great part of the British inscriptional record.²⁰ Conversely, as we will see later in this chapter and in more detail in chapter 6, people from the East seem to have embraced the Roman epigraphic tradition more promptly, displaying keenness to write their own languages alongside Latin.

4.3 Names and linguistic repertoires at the northern frontier

4.3.1 Names of people

Personal names are powerful indicators of identity. They can tell us something about the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the people who bear them as well as of those who assign them.²¹ Like other aspects of language, names are chosen according to their audiences, often considering practical factors. Among others, the practical implications of name-giving in bilingual contexts include intelligibility. In contact situations, name-givers who choose personal names from one language instead of another may also be prioritising prestige or other cultural attributes. Indeed, personal names also allow their bearers to feel that they belong to specific groups more than others.

In Roman Britain, personal names have been proven useful to understand the degree of penetration of Roman culture and Latin language into British society.²² By looking at how people from Celtic-speaking backgrounds recorded their names on stone inscriptions and other types of writings, we can discern the extent to which they wished to appear “Roman”

²⁰ Mann 1985 206.

²¹ § 1.6.3.

²² On this, see Mullen 2007a. For a searchable corpus of Celtic names from Britain, see the *CPNRB* database. For an overview of Germanic names, see A. R. Birley 2001.

as opposed to “local”, and ask questions about the reasons why they did so. Examining the role that contact with the army may have played in the phenomenon of name-giving can widen our understanding of social dynamics in military contexts, both in Britain and elsewhere.

As mentioned earlier in this study (§ 1.6.3), in the Roman tradition people originally bore two names, a *praenomen* (the personal name) and a *nomen* (indicating the affiliation to a *gens*). A third onomastic element developed in the republican period: at first, the *cognomen* allowed the identification of specific individuals within a *gens*, but spread among the *plebs ingenua* by the second century BC. Though apparently simpler for its use of single names, naming patterns in the Celtic languages show regional differences which we do not fully understand.²³ With the spread of Latin, Celtic increasingly saw the Latinization of name-endings and the pairing of Latin and Celtic names, which often resulted in mixed-language *duo* and *tria nomina*.²⁴

Filiation markers are important elements for tracking the relations between the Latin and the Celtic naming systems. In Latin, filiations were traditionally marked with [genitive_{father}] + [f(*ilius*)]. Celtic, attested in writing on the continent, on the other hand, marked filiations by means of simple patronymic genitives or by adjectival patronymics with suffixes such as *-iknos* and *-ios*.²⁵ Since no instances of Celtic patronymics are known from the

²³ For a general introduction to this, see Raybould and Sims-Williams 2007.

²⁴ Mullen 2007a 40-42.

²⁵ On Celtic patronymic suffixes, see D. E. Evans 1972 423-425 and Lambert 2003 30-32. On British Celtic filiation markers, see Mullen 2007a 43-46. Not all variations of Celtic used both adjectival suffixes and patronymic genitives. Mullen notes that Celtic in the Lugano script used both, Celtiberian only patronymic genitives, and Gaulish in Greek script only adjectival patronymics. It is therefore possible that the different variants of Celtic developed their own regional trends to mark filiation.

British record outside a Latin-language context, it is impossible to know for certain whether insular Celtic shared this way of marking filiations with continental Celtic, or whether it expressed parental relations in other ways instead. The use of the Latin filiation marker *f/fil/filius* for people with Celtic names is rarely used in the British epigraphic record.²⁶

In a study of onomastic patterns in Roman Britain, Mullen (2007a) reports that, of the Celtic names attested in the province, only 6% appear in the *duo-nomina* form, and that Celtic names in *tria-nomina* form are very rare.²⁷ She shows that all instances of Celtic names figuring in *duo-* and *tria-nomina* patterns are attested in typically “Roman” types of writing, such as tombstones and religious dedications, and that they refer to members of higher-level British society.²⁸ Interestingly, “the majority of the examples of Celtic names within the binominal system emanate from highly militarised areas, particularly Caerleon and York”.²⁹ Considering the evidence of onomastic change in soldiers’ families examined by previous scholarship (§ 1.6.3), the possibility that the military environment had something to do with changes in naming practices in Britain should not be underestimated.

The inscriptions from the British frontier present us with names of Celtic, Germanic, Greek, and Semitic origins. It could be argued that all inscriptions containing Celtic and Germanic names in Roman Britain are, to some extent, testimonies to language contact. Yet some of the texts from the area are particularly meaningful in this respect in that, in addition

²⁶ Mullen (2007a 44-45) notes that filiations with Celtic names appear in sixteen instances. Of these, only three have a filiation marker.

²⁷ The total number of *duo nomina* with Celtic names in Britain is twenty-eight, whereas *tria nomina* with Celtic names appear only in three inscriptions. For one of these, see further below (*RIB* 1743).

²⁸ Mullen 2007a 42. In addition to tombstones and religious dedications, higher-status Latin naming patterns with Celtic names are found on gold paraphernalia and formal documents.

²⁹ Mullen 2007a 40.

to Celtic and Germanic onomastics, they feature elements typical of Roman epigraphic conventions. I refer in particular to the texts that include epigraphic abbreviations and present an arrangement of information typical of Roman epigraphic writing. By indicating an understanding of Roman culture and of the Latin language, these texts can provide evidence for a linguistic and cultural interaction that went beyond the simple use of Latin for written communication: they are suggestive of members of British society who embraced Roman ways to honour the supernatural and the dead while retaining local traditions in the use of non-Latin names in their dedications. In epigraphic writing, Latin was a vehicle through which people could express new values, while displaying their roots through names and other genealogical information. In this section, I consider a set of lapidary texts from northern Britain with the aim of examining name-giving patterns among the people who lived around and frequented a highly militarised zone. Primary evidence enables us to look into three phenomena in particular: (1) the choice of language in name-giving, that is the choice of drawing a name from one linguistic repertoire instead of another; (2) the preference for names that work in more than one linguistic context; and (3) the possible creation of new names within multilingual military communities.

There are nine funerary texts from the frontier zone that feature Celtic and Germanic names. Seven of these are headed by the incipit *D(is) M(anibus)* or its variants. The remaining two are fragments, but it is likely that they also bore the same opening formula.³⁰ Of the texts in which the formula *DM* is readable, two are engraved on soldiers' tombstones. The first (*RIB* 1667) is an epitaph set up by Pusinna for her husband, a soldier enrolled in a Pannonian cohort

³⁰ According to early surveys, *RIB* 1722, now lost, recorded the names *Brigomaglos* and *[Bricoc]us*. The *CPNRB* database records also the fragment *RIB* 1832, in which *Sen[...]* dedicates to his wife *coniugi piissimae*.

at Housesteads in the second century.³¹ His name, *Dagvalda*, is otherwise unattested. E. Birley (1988 153) notes that the second element of *Dagvalda* is also found in the name of a Batavian commander, *Chariovalda*,³² raising the possibility that the dedicatee of the epitaph was himself a Batavian. This option is bolstered by the presence of Batavian and Tungrian units in this frontier zone from the first through to the third century.³³ However, based on the philological reconstruction of the name's elements it is difficult to narrow down the origins of the soldier to a specific group. The element *dag-* works in Celtic (*dago-* "good") and in Germanic (Proto-Germanic **daga-* "day"),³⁴ whereas the second element may come from the Proto-Germanic **waldan-* "to rule", "to have authority over".³⁵ The etymology of the name *Dagvalda* should make us wonder whether this name originated in areas where both Celtic and Germanic were spoken, either on the continent or in Britain, and therefore whether it was meaningful in more than one linguistic context.³⁶ Among the continental examples of personal names featuring the Celtic element *dag-*,³⁷ some are etymologically Celtic with a Latinate ending, like *Dagovassus* (*dag-* "good"; *uassos* "servant"); others, such as *Daganius* (*dag-* "good"; *anius*, a Latin name(?)), show again that the element *dag-* may have been useful for the formation of personal names in multilingual contexts.

The name of Dagvalda's wife, *Pusinna*, is far too common in the Roman world to speculate on her origins. As the wife of a soldier, Pusinna may have been a slave or a

³¹ On the dating of the text to the second century, see E. Birley 1939 215-216.

³² Attested at Tac. *Ann.* 2.11.

³³ In addition to *T. Vindol. passim*, see *RIB* 1578, 1579, 1580, 1584, 1585, 1586, 1591, 1598, 1612, 1618.

³⁴ *CPNRB* database and Kroonen 2013.

³⁵ Kroonen 2013.

³⁶ According to Mócsy (1983), names beginning in *Dag-* are generally concentrated in Gaul, the two Germanies, and Pannonia.

³⁷ Mócsy 1983 and Delamarre 2003.

freedwoman of provincial origins, who was given a Latin name at some point in her life, possibly even upon manumission. Alternatively, she may have come from a provincial family who by the second century had already encountered Roman customs and named their daughter in Roman fashion. The woman's familiarity with Roman epigraphic norms, noticeable in the use of the formula *DMS* (line 1), the closure *titulum posuit* (line 5), and in the type of information recorded throughout the text, provides additional evidence of her competence in the Latin language and her will to address audiences with a firm grasp of Roman epigraphic conventions. Even if we were to admit the possibility that someone crafted the text of the inscription on her behalf, Pusinna would have arguably been able at least to read and comprehend her husband's funerary monument.

The other epitaph from the frontier zone which explicitly belonged to a soldier with a non-Latin name reads:

Dis M(anibus) Nectovelius f(i)lius
Vindicis an(norum) IXXX
stip(endiorum) VIII nat-
ionis Brigans
militavit in
coh(orte) II Thr(acum).

(RIB 2142)

To the spirits of the departed.
 Nectovelius, son of Vindex, aged 29, who served nine years, from the Brigantes people. He served in the second cohort of the Thracians.

Found at Mumrills in Scotland and associated with the Antonine Wall, the text is dated to around the end of the second century.³⁸ The origin *nationis Brigans* tells us that the soldier

³⁸ The semi-abbreviated *Dis M* is rare but not unparalleled in Britain (RIB 619, 621, 1747). The expanded *Dis Manibus* and the abbreviation *DM* are more widely attested. The RIB edition suggests that the British texts featuring the semi-expanded *Dis M(anibus)* may all date to the early second century, except RIB 1747, which cannot be dated.

was originally from northern Britain.³⁹ His father Vindex was most likely from the same tribe. The involvement in the military of Nectovellius and the dating of the inscription reported in the *RIB* edition (AD 140-165) would suggest that he was a speaker of Latin, perhaps in addition to an insular variant of Celtic. This is important in that locals enrolled in the Roman forces were a channel through which the language of the military, and the diversity within it, could propagate among British communities. In turn, British soldiers were themselves a channel through which local Celtic words may have found their way into the military jargon and the Latin spoken in the province. An example of these is the adjective *corticus* “of bark”.⁴⁰ Interestingly, this adjective is attested at *T. Vindol.* 596 in connection with military cloaks and in nominal form in the Netherlands, the homeland of the cohorts stationed at Vindolanda.⁴¹

The name *Nectovellius* (*necto-* (?); *uelio* “honest”)⁴² probably contains two Celtic elements and a Latinate ending. It is impossible to know whether the name was assigned at birth with a Latinate ending, or whether it became Latinized during the man’s service in the Roman troops, or indeed just at the moment when his epitaph was commissioned. Interestingly, the name of Nectovellius’ father, *Vindex*, is an ordinary Latin name, attested widely across the Empire as a *cognomen*, which may also work in Celtic (*uindos* “white”).⁴³ Names which are meaningful in multiple languages are often referred to in onomastic

³⁹ For Britons serving in the army, see Dobson and Mann 1973. For the recent attestation of a soldier serving in the fleet in Germany and returning to Britain as a veteran, see Tomlin and Pearce 2018.

⁴⁰ Cf. the alternative translation in Adams (2007 606) as “tanned, of leather”. The adjective seems to have been used in Britain up to the medieval period.

⁴¹ Schorn and Minis 2018.

⁴² Delamarre 2003.

⁴³ Delamarre 2003.

scholarship as “cover names”.⁴⁴ These names are important for understanding expressions of belonging in multilingual settings, and speak powerfully to the concepts of audience and practicality: was it convenient, on the practical level, to assign cover names in situations of language contact? Later in this chapter (§ 4.4.2) we will consider a famous tombstone (*RIB* 1065) dedicated to a British woman named *Regina*, whose name is also meaningful in both Celtic and Latin.⁴⁵ Cover names present obvious social advantages, in that they allow people to fit into multiple linguistic environments as well as into contact situations like second-century northern Britain. Paralleled elsewhere in the Celtic-speaking provinces,⁴⁶ the use of names meaningful in more than one language may have served local communities as a linguistic strategy to embrace Roman onomastic traditions gradually, creating a transitional phase from Celtic to Latin practices. In this respect, the case of Vindex and Nectovellius perhaps represents a statement on the part of a father who, despite bearing himself a cover name himself, opted to honour his British origins by investing his son with a Celtic name.

The epitaphs of Dagvalda and Nectovellius, both of which read as standard Roman funerary texts, reveal an understanding of the traditional Roman way of honouring the dead. They both contain precise information about the deceased, and present a standard use of ligatures and abbreviations.⁴⁷ The personal names in both texts provide insights into local

⁴⁴ See, for instance, Mullen 2007a and 2013a. These names have also been defined “noms d’assonance” in Dondin-Payre 2001.

⁴⁵ § 4.4.2. *Regina* is listed as a Celtic name by D. E. Evans (1967).

⁴⁶ A transitional phase has been observed in the epigraphic evidence from central Gaul, where the shift from Celtic to Latin onomastics for Roman citizens in the first century saw first the adoption of Latin names coined by the locals (i.e. “noms latins mais à fréquence celtique, assonants, de traduction, patronymiques, ces caractéristiques étant souvent combinées”, Dondin-Payre 2001 225-226) rather than a brusque switch from one system to the other. On this, see Dondin-Payre 2001, especially 225-235.

⁴⁷ See the images of the texts published in the *RIB* edition.

onomastic practice among communities exposed to the military environment. These are evident in the formation of names with elements meaningful in more than one language, the possible use of cover names, the Latinization of name-endings, and the use of Celtic names in families who had embraced Latin name-giving.

More onomastic diversity is attested in *RIB* 1561, an undated epitaph dedicated by the *decurio* Nobilianus to his wife Aelia Comindus at Carrawburgh. The deceased woman bore two names, in line with the Roman fashion. The combination of a Latin *praenomen* with *Comindus*, which is of Celtic origin,⁴⁸ suggests that the woman was connected with Celtic-speaking communities in Britain or on the continent. Her tombstone was found at Carrawburgh, a settlement where, in addition to the traditional deities from the Graeco-Roman pantheon, the population dedicated to the Celtic goddess Coventina (*RIB* 1522-1529 and 1531-1535), the British god Belatucadrus (e.g. *RIB* 2038), the Germanic Mother Goddesses (*RIB* 1539-1541), and the *Veteres*, which are also associated with the Germanies (*RIB* 1548 and 1549). The religious scene around Comindus' epitaph suggests that Carrawburgh was a site that hosted people and soldiers from multiple cultural realities. It is impossible to assess whether the woman was born to a local or continental family who had already embraced elements of Roman culture, or whether she encountered them herself, perhaps via her husband Nobilianus. The impossibility of dating the epitaph with precision does not help. Later in this chapter we will see further examples of mixed linguistic identities within groups of the same origin in northern Britain.⁴⁹ For the time being, Comindus' epitaph

⁴⁸ Perhaps with the element *kom-* "with". The masculine ending *-us* is remarkable. The editors of *RIB* invite a comparison with the name *Tadia Vallanius*, attested in a second-century epitaph from Caerleon (*RIB* 369). The interpretation of this feature is not certain.

⁴⁹ § 4.3.2.

serves to remind us that the social relations of Roman soldiers, and especially soldiers' relations with women, created opportunities for language contact in Roman military communities.

The remaining inscriptions from the frontier with Celtic and Germanic names headed by the formula *DM* are not explicitly associated with the army and cannot be dated with certainty. They include: the epitaph of Lucius Novellius Lanuccus, *civis Romanus* (RIB 1743); a family epitaph dedicated by Delfinus, a man *ex Germania Superiore* (RIB 1620); the tombstone of Ahteha (RIB 1180); and the tombstone of Ertola, "actually called Vellibia" (RIB 1181, lines 3-4). All these texts, though apparently simple in content and structure, carry important information about the social and linguistic identities of the people involved in their production, and the identities that were presented in their funerary texts.

The *tria nomina* borne by Lanuccus at RIB 1743 reveal a Roman citizen of apparently Celtic origins at Great Chesters. His epitaph is not explicitly military, but since it was found within a fort on Hadrian's Wall, it can be argued with some confidence that both Lanuccus and his daughter Novellia Iustina, who set up the epitaph, were in some way related to the military community at Great Chesters. Moreover, according to the edition of the inscription, the specification of Lanuccus' Roman citizenship suggests that the text was not set up after the third century. Again, on the basis of onomastic elements, it is impossible to tell whether Lanuccus' background was continental or British, and to assess the extent to which he used Celtic beyond his *cognomen*. The inter-generational shift from a Celtic name (*Lanuccus*) borne by the man, to a Latin double name borne by his daughter (*Novellia Iustina*) might reflect the progressive adoption of Latin names by some in Celtic-speaking communities connected with the army. Lanuccus, himself invested with Roman citizenship before 212, may have

attempted to present his daughter as an integrated member of Roman society by giving her exclusively Latin names.

A similar pattern in name-giving is attested in *RIB* 1620, an epitaph from Housesteads:

<p>[<i>D(is)</i>] <i>M(anibus)</i> [...] <i>P</i> [...] [...] <i>ANL</i> [...] <i>MPR</i> [...] <i>E</i> [...] [...] <i>enioni Venocari (filio)</i> <i>Grato Fersionis (filio)</i> 5 <i>Romulo Alimahi (filio)</i> <i>Simili Daili (filio)</i> <i>Mansuetio Senicionis (filio)</i> <i>Pervince Quartionis (filiae)</i> <i>heres procuravit Delf-</i> 10 <i>inus Rautionis (filius) ex G(ermania)</i> <i>S(uperiore).</i></p>	<p>To the spirits of the departed (and) to... son of Venocarus; Gratus son of Fersio; Romulus son of Alimahus; Similis son of Dailus; Mansuetius, son of Senicio; Pervinca daughter of Quartio; their heir Delfinus son of Rautio, from Upper Germany, commissioned this.</p>
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(*RIB* 1620)

Interestingly, none of the names in the texts marks filiations with the abbreviation *f(ilius)*, or *f(ilia)* which is supplied by the editors. The omission of the filiation marker in the text may be due to reasons of space in some lines (such as lines 4 and 8-9), but it is also possible that the commissioner employed simple genitive patronymics as filiation formulae, perhaps in emulation of Germano-Celtic naming practices.⁵⁰ Whether intentionally or not, the commissioner of the text reveals a mixed linguistic background. The inscription is a list of men with ordinary Latin names, whose fathers bore either Celtic or Germanic names. As already observed in connection with the onomastic choice for Lanuccus' daughter (*RIB* 1743), this epitaph reveals an evident increase in the use of Latin names from one generation to the next

⁵⁰ For a parallel example of this phenomenon, possibly displaying interference from Greek (*PAT* 0251), considered in section 6.5.

among families from Celtic- and Germanic-speaking backgrounds, a phenomenon attested also across other north-western provinces.⁵¹ There is an exception. At line 9, we find a man with a common Latin name, *Quartio*, who is father to a woman with a less common Latin name: *Pervinca*.⁵² At first sight, there is nothing special about this name; but when we consider its distribution around the Empire, we understand more about its origins and use. *Pervinca* is attested in total nine times in the feminine, always in Celtic- and Germanic-speaking provinces.⁵³ The name as such is therefore Latin, but its attestations suggest that it may be a provincial Latin name that originated specifically in Celtic- and Germanic-speaking regions. Its masculine counterpart, *Pervincus*, is attested twenty-three times across the western provinces, and is mostly borne by military men.⁵⁴ In Rome, *Pervincus* appears in multiple inscriptions borne by a leader of military men from Raetia.⁵⁵ Based on the frequency with which it is associated with soldiers, I believe that this name may have originated from, or at least that it may have become particularly popular among, military communities. Its etymology, connected with the Latin verb *pervinco* “I conquer completely” or “I am victorious” strengthens this possibility.

⁵¹ Simkin 2012 97. On Gaul, see Stüber 2007 86-89. On the Iberian Peninsula, see Wodtke 2009 39. On the diplomas, see Saddington 2000.

⁵² Cf. *Pervica* RIB 1747.

⁵³ *CIL* 3.5825, *CIL* 3.15216, *CIL* 7.693, *CIL* 13.1842, *CIL* 13.2075, *CIL* 13.6033, *AE* 1977 607, *AE* 1996 985, *AE* 1987 783.

⁵⁴ *CAG* 67(2) p. 303, *CAG* 67(2) p. 347, *CIL* 3.6794, *CIL* 5.3299, *CIL* 6.3243, *CIL* 6.32848, *CIL* 13.1877, *CIL* 13.1896, *CIL* 13.6049 (?), *CIL* 13.6794, *CIL* 13.7063, *CIL* 13.7392, *CIL* 13.7398, *CIL* 13. 63521, *CIL* 13.10010.1528a, *CIL* 13.10017.0010 (?), *CIL* 13.11116, *AE* 2010 1088, *AE* 2011 859, *RIB* 2501. In eight of these texts, the name *Pervincus* is borne by a man explicitly presented as a soldier.

⁵⁵ These were soldiers serving in a *turma Pervinci* (*CIL* 6.3208, *CIL* 6.32848). The masculine and feminine variants of the name (*Pervincius*, *Pervincianus* and *Pervincia*) are also attested across the western provinces, especially in Upper Germany and Gaul, again often in association with military men. See for example *Pervincius Ursinus*, *miles custos armorum* at Mainz (*CIL* 13.6968).

The final examples of funerary texts found at the frontier which feature both Celtic names and the heading *DM* (*RIB* 1180 and 1181) are from Corbridge and are epitaphs of young girls. The girl's name in *RIB* 1180, *Atheha*, suggests Germanic origins (Old High German *ahta* "esteem", "reflection", "consideration"),⁵⁶ whereas her father, the commissioner of the epitaph, bears an ordinary Latin name: *Nobilis*. Given the attested presence of a Tungrian unit at Housesteads in the second and third centuries, it is possible that *Nobilis* was himself of Germanic origins. Alternatively, the daughter's name may have been chosen in accordance with the origins of the mother, who could have been a member of the Tungrian community at Housesteads.⁵⁷ Either way, the epitaph suggests once again that, at the British frontier, it was common for members of the same family to bear names from different onomastic traditions.

In *RIB* 1181, we read of a father with a Celtic name, *Sudrenus*, honouring his daughter *Vellibia*.⁵⁸ The girl also bears the nickname *Ertola*, which is otherwise unattested and which recent corpora list as Celtic,⁵⁹ though its etymological roots are hard to identify. Given the context and the name of the father, we should not rule out a Celtic or Germanic origin. Names beginning in *hert-* are usually aspirated in Celtic and Germanic contexts,⁶⁰ but can easily lose the aspiration in first position. For example, the name *Ertilia/us*, variants of which are attested

⁵⁶ Kroonen 2013.

⁵⁷ On Housesteads, see Crow 2004.

⁵⁸ *CPNRB* database.

⁵⁹ Delamarre 2007. A parallel could perhaps be found in *Lertola*, attested in Hispania Citerior (*AE* 1966 202).

⁶⁰ Reichert 1987. Examples of Germanic and Celtic names retaining aspiration in first position in Britain are: *Heuennius* (*T.Vindol.* 862), *Hrindepus* (*RIB* 3331), *Huepit[ā?]* (*T.Vindol.* 184), *Huctia* (*RIB* 3221). In addition to personal names, the name of the gods *Veteres* is also commonly found with *h* in first position (e.g. *RIB* 1549 and 2069). Note that Reichert (1987 426) catalogues the toponym *Hert* attested in the Danube area as possibly Thracian and unrelated to personal names. He is more positive about the Germanic origins of the name *Hart* (Reichert 1987 420).

in connection with Celtic contexts, may be the unaspirated version of *Hertilia*, which is also attested in Celtic areas.⁶¹ If *Ertola* is the unaspirated version of *Hertola*, then it is legitimate to wonder whether the name might have Germanic or Celtic origins. In fact, the first element could be linked to Proto-Germanic **herton* “hart”⁶² or Proto-Celtic **(h)arto* “hero”, “warrior”.⁶³ The ending *-ola*, on the other hand, may be a Latin diminutive suffix. It could thus be tentatively suggested that *Ertola* is a personal name composed of a root drawn from Germano-Celtic onomastics and a Latin suffix. Vellibia’s nickname might therefore mean “little heart”, or “little warrior”.

The Celtic and Germanic names attested on stone inscriptions in the region of Hadrian’s Wall are limited in number but offer valuable insights into the possible onomastic trends that characterised northern Britain. Overall, it may be inferred that the presence of military communities at the British frontier both brought Germano-Celtic names from the continent and also influenced people towards the adoption of Latin names, and possibly also towards the creation of new ones.

In the analysis proposed here, three main approaches towards name-giving can be identified. The first concerns the formation of personal names in provincial settings. We considered: (1) cover names; that is, names meaningful in more than one language, such as

⁶¹ *Ertilia* is attested in Rome (*CIL* 6.17281). The possible variant *Certilia/us* is attested as a *cognomen* in connection with Celtic *nomina* (e.g. *Deccius Ceritlianus*, *AE* 1935 102). *Hertilia* is attested twice in Numidia, where *Hertilia Redducta* is the wife of *Caius Antonius Celtiber* and mother of *Helvius Felix* (*CIL* 8.3690 and 3691, note the aspiration in first position in the son’s name). On these names in general, see Delamarre 2003.

⁶² Kroonen 2013

⁶³ Matasović 2009, based on the Proto-Indo-European **h₂rtk^o*- “bear”. It must be noted that Proto-Celtic **arto-* is itself often aspirated.

Vindex (RIB 2142) and *Regina* (RIB 1065); (2) names which feature onomastic elements from two different languages, such as *Dagvalda* (RIB 11667) and perhaps *Ertola* (RIB 1181); (3) names which may have been modelled on Latin verbs by speakers of Celtic and Germanic languages, as may be the case of *Pervinca* (RIB 1620); and (4) mixed *duo* and *tria nomina*, such as *Aelia Comindus* (RIB 1561) and *Lucius Novellius Lanuccus* (RIB 1743). Albeit in different ways, all these suggest the progressive expression of Roman identities through elements of traditional Roman onomastics by families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Some may have served provincial communities as a first step towards the adoption of the traditional Roman onomastic system, or as convenient acts of negotiation between their origins and central Roman culture. These onomastic patterns reveal that the communities of northern Britain were aware of the audiences of their names. Onomastic elements that function in more than one language, just like names composed of elements from two different traditions, can be forms of linguistic accommodation aimed at making their bearers “fit in” in contact situations. The practical aspect of this name-giving practice is obvious: names drawn from different languages are more easily understood in bilingual contexts.

A second onomastic pattern observed in northern Britain is transgenerational use of non-Latin names in name-giving. We have seen this behaviour in the case of Sudrenus father of Vellibia (RIB 1181) and possibly of Vindex father of Nectovellius (RIB 2142). An even starker statement of identity can perhaps be seen in the onomastic choices of those with Roman names who invested their children with Celtic and Germanic ones. This may be the case of Nobilis father of Ahteha (RIB 1180). These attitudes are likely to have been influenced, above all, by the linguistic background of name-givers, and by the desire to create solidarity between their offspring and the communities that shared their cultural backgrounds.

A third pattern is a transgenerational change towards Latin in name-giving. This is attested in *Lanuccus*, father of Novellia Iustina in *RIB* 1743, and in the names of fathers listed in *RIB* 1620: *Fersio* father of Gratus; *Alimahus* (?) father of Romulus; *Dailus* father of Similis; *Senicio* father of Mansuetius; *Rautio* father of Delfinus. By investing their offspring with Roman names, these parents performed a sort of linguistic accommodation in name-giving, focused on Latin-speaking audiences. By giving their children Latin names, these people created, at least on the onomastic level, more opportunities for them to belong to Roman society beyond the Celtic- and German-speaking provinces.

Most of the lapidary inscriptions from northern Britain are impossible to date with precision, which of course limits the present analysis somewhat. But even if more of the inscriptions were datable, it would perhaps be futile to attempt to find a chronological sequence in the emergence of these different approaches to name-giving. These are in fact likely to have overlapped and to have expressed different experiences of the spread of Roman personal names in the region. Moreover, given that the frontier territory continuously attracted people from around the Empire, these onomastic trends are likely to have changed over time. The more varied the cultural and linguistic scene on the border, the wider the choice from which the inhabitants of the region could choose personal names.

4.3.2 Names of gods

Further investigation into language use at the northern frontier can be carried out by extending our analysis to theonyms. The known inscriptions from the Wall region present us with a varied range of religious cults practised by its communities. In addition to traditional theonyms from the Graeco-Roman pantheon, religious texts include eastern, continental, and

local British deities. By adding theonyms to our analysis, we notice that frontier people with Celtic names, as well as men who explicitly presented themselves as members of Germanic tribes, worshipped Celtic and Germanic deities. For example, at South Shields we encounter Congennicus⁶⁴ honouring the goddess Brigantia (*RIB* 1053).⁶⁵ The same can be said about Madhus from Germania,⁶⁶ who honoured the Celtic goddess Coventina at Carrawburgh,⁶⁷ and about a dedication set up by men from a Germanic tribe to the Germanic goddess Ricagambeda (*RIB* 2107).

The theonyms from the frontier reveal a lively religious scene, into which people imported rites and in which they acquired others. Behind linguistic choices as simple as the format and wording of these dedications lies a rather complex issue, connected with the role that language played in the changing religious practices in the provinces throughout the imperial period.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ *Kon* “with”; *geno-* “born”; *-ikos* (Latin or Celtic suffix). On these etymologies, see also Delamarre 2003 and *CPNRB* database.

⁶⁵ On Brigantia, see Wright 2009, especially 16-20. According to Henig (1984 210), the Celtic goddess became particularly popular in the late second century, when she was associated with Julia Domna, wife of Septimius Severus. It is commonly believed that the goddess Brigantia and the god Bregans originated from the British tribe of the Brigantes, but recent philological reconstructions have challenged an etymological connection between the ethnonym and these theonyms. On this, see Beck 2013 57.

⁶⁶ The name could be based on the Proto-Germanic root **mahti-* “strength”, which gives the Old High German *maht* and German *Macht* “power”.

⁶⁷ The worship of Coventina is highly localised at Carrawburgh, which is why until recently it was believed to be a local British cult. However, the discovery of two vows to the same goddess Hispania have made scholars reconsider this traditional view (*AE* 1950 24, 1954 251, 1957 322). On this, see Allason-Jones 1996 111-112 and Irby-Massey 1999 155-157.

⁶⁸ With emphasis on provincial cities, this phenomenon is discussed by Van Andringa (2011). The author notes that different ethnic communities expressed their devotion to the emperors through different religious formulae and epithets. For instance, the imperial cult in Gaul saw the Bituriges Cubi invoke the *numen Augusti*, whereas the Aedui were more accustomed to invoking the emperor directly by name rather than his divine power. On this, see Van Andringa 2011 94.

This section explores religious language in the British frontier with specific reference to the combination of Latin and Celtic names to refer to apparently single deities in religious dedications.⁶⁹ This phenomenon is attested across the Empire from the first century BC⁷⁰ and, even though it is not attested exclusively within military environments,⁷¹ there seems to be a high concentration of gods with two names in frontier regions and in vows set up by military men.⁷² Much has been said about the employment of double theonyms in Britain and elsewhere in the Empire. The present discussion does not intend to propose alternative explanations to those advanced by scholars of ancient religion. However, I shall attempt to bring together two different strands of study concerned with this phenomenon, namely the historical approach and the philological one. First, the present analysis seeks to provide further insights into the patterns of double theonyms in northern Britain by investigating the coherence with which Celtic and Roman divine names were linked. Secondly, the analysis will focus on the commissioners of vows dedicated to double-named gods, considering whether honouring gods with two names may have been more popular among specific social groups. By doing so, insights will be offered into the possible social dynamics at the heart of this religious practice and its linguistic manifestations, thus expanding our understanding of linguistic subgroups within the Roman army.

⁶⁹ For double-named deities in Roman Britain, see Zoll 1995a and 1995b. Double theonyms are commonly found also in Germania Inferior. On these, see Derks 1992, de Bernardo Stempel 2005, and Spickermann 2013. On the phenomenon, see also Mattingly 2004 17-22 and Millett 1995 95-97. On Celtic theonyms, see Maier 1994 and Jufer and Luginbühl 2001.

⁷⁰ Spickermann 2013.

⁷¹ For example, the goddess Sulis Minerva worshipped at Bath is arguably the most famous example of a double-named deity in Britain, and her worshippers included people from all social groups.

⁷² According to Zoll (1995a 34), 60% of the religious dedications of Britain are concentrated around Hadrian's Wall. 25% of religious texts from the Wall feature double-named gods. Only inscriptions from the forts on the frontier and in southern Scotland are considered here.

The term “Romano-Celtic religion” is used to describe a range of phenomena that originated from the interaction between Celtic and Roman religious practices in the western provinces from the first century BC, which resulted in provincial forms of worship that included elements from both traditions.⁷³ J. Webster describes the complexity of the Romano-Celtic religious process as follows: “In the Roman west, indigenous beliefs encountered a Classical pantheon that was itself the product of centuries of religious interchange between Roman, Greek and eastern religions (...) Britons and Gauls, encountering these already complex gods of Rome, brought other strands of beliefs and practice into this arena”.⁷⁴ By expanding geographically, Rome encountered religious variety and generated more.⁷⁵ In this religious arena, Roman and Celtic deities began to be worshipped together, often in the form of syncretic divinities.⁷⁶

Romano-Celtic syncretism manifests itself in literary sources, iconography, and epigraphy. One type of Romano-Celtic syncretism is expressed in the equivalence between Celtic and Roman deities. Scholarship interested in this phenomenon commonly speaks of *interpretatio*, a term used by Tacitus (*Ger.* 43.3) to define the way in which the Romans

⁷³ Broadly on Romano-Celtic religion, see King 1990, and Häussler and King 2007, especially 7-12.

⁷⁴ J. Webster 2001 219. Note, however, that by describing the version of the Classical pantheon encountered in the provinces as “*the* product of centuries of religious interchange”, Webster runs the risk of describing this pantheon as monolithic, which is an image far from reality.

⁷⁵ North 1992, Häussler 2012 146-148, Woolf 2003 142-145.

⁷⁶ The syncretic character of culture in Roman Britain was already championed in the works of Collingwood (1932), who emphasised the hybrid culture of the province and laid the groundwork for later, core studies on Romano-Celtic religion (e.g. Henig 1984, G. Webster 1986, M. Green 1989). More recently, Romano-Celtic religious phenomena have been studied through modern post-colonial models and sociolinguistic frameworks. On this in particular, see J. Webster 1997. I do not discuss these models, because they are beyond the scope of this chapter. A concept that has been brought into the debate, perhaps a little too wishfully, is that of “creolization”, see J. Webster 2001. For a critique of this term’s use in the context of cultural change in the Roman Empire, see Mullen 2013a 66.

interpreted alien gods and cults in the provinces.⁷⁷ The term *interpretatio* has attracted criticism among historians, especially when used as an explanatory device.⁷⁸ For some, *interpretatio* is a concept strictly related to the expression of equivalence between deities through language.⁷⁹ However, the concept has also been used to investigate iconographic outputs.

In iconographic representations, syncretism primarily appears as “hybridization” and “divine marriage”. The first is, essentially, a mix of local divine iconography with its Roman counterpart.⁸⁰ Divine marriages are instead representations of divine couples in which one member is taken from the Roman pantheon and the other from the Celtic one.⁸¹ An example of divine marriage from Britain can be found in the relief of Mercury and the Celtic goddess Rosmerta at Gloucester.⁸² It is important to note that carving anthropomorphic representations of deities in stone was not a local custom in Britain but a Roman one. In honouring gods in the form of reliefs there is therefore a deeper motif of cultural interaction, that is the adoption of representational forms which were unknown before the encounter with Rome. This transportation of Celtic deities into the Roman system of worship has been

⁷⁷ J. Webster 1995a, 1995b, and Häussler 2012.

⁷⁸ Woolf 1998 232. Haynes (2001) criticises Irby-Massey (1999) for using the term loosely in her study of military religion in Roman Britain. The term is also problematic because it can describe a vague concept, as for example does J. Webster (1995b 176) when inferring that, in post-conquest Britain “the majority of *interpretatio* equivalences are not explicit, in that the Celtic side of the equation is un-named (...) the native deity is either subsumed, or the references may simply invoke the Classical god”. This statement shows the danger of applying the term *interpretatio* too broadly, which can easily result in circular arguments.

⁷⁹ de Bernardo Stempel 2008 70 fn. 32, quoting Henig 1984. On the native tribes of Gaul honouring gods with Latin names, see Caes. *Bell. Gall.* 6.17.

⁸⁰ J. Webster (1997 332-335) proposes as examples of hybridisation the pipe-clay statuettes representing fertility in the Classical form of Venus.

⁸¹ M. J. Green 1989 45-73.

⁸² On the relief, see M. J. Green 1989 54-61, and J. Webster 1997 325-327.

explained in numerous ways: as a wish to create continuity between the pre-Roman and the post-conquest religious practices; as the subjection of Celtic deities to Roman gods; and even as a subversive subjection of Roman gods to the power of native deities.⁸³ Whatever its precise nature, there may indeed be a negotiation of power underlying the expressions of Romano-Celtic syncretism.

Like anthropomorphic representations of deities on stone, epigraphic writing was a Roman medium, and it was adopted by Celtic-speaking Britain only via contact with Roman customs. It is thus essentially only via Roman epigraphy that we can trace Celtic religious language (if at all). For, unlike the names of Graeco-Roman deities, Celtic theonyms are not often mentioned in literary texts.⁸⁴ One example of syncretism within the epigraphic record is double-named deities.

There are three main ways in which double theonyms have been explained by historians and archaeologists. One approach maintains that this naming practice was initiated by the Roman invaders in the provinces, and that it reflects the imposition of the Roman system of belief on the indigenous ones.⁸⁵ This theory maintains that double theonyms were used by soldiers from the higher military ranks, whereas the indigenous population showed resistance towards the subjugation of their religious system by honouring local gods in Roman form and avoiding name pairing. Supporters of this view also emphasise the necessity for soldiers to embrace native Celtic cults in order to obtain the protection of local gods in foreign

⁸³ J. Webster 1997.

⁸⁴ G. Webster 1986 52. The only example of a Celtic theonym to appear in the Classical texts that survives is the triad "Teutates, Esus, and Taranis" in Lucan's description of the forest near Massilia (*Pharsalia* 1.445-446). G. Webster claims that the theonyms were chosen by Lucan as poetic devices, based primarily on their foreign sounds.

⁸⁵ Henig 1984, J. Webster 1995a and 1997.

lands.⁸⁶ A second approach has seen scholars attempt to identify native agency in the use of double theonyms, on the basis that indigenous people selected aspects of Roman religion (including iconography and theonyms) which they incorporated in local religious practice.⁸⁷ A third interpretation of double theonyms places agency specifically in the hands of the local elites.⁸⁸ This treatment of the phenomenon arose from a systematic analysis of epigraphic material from Germania Inferior, and it is the first to have reached a satisfactory level of precision. Following this model, further analyses of epigraphic evidence were conducted on the British inscriptions by Zoll (1995a, 1995b). The results of Zoll's studies show that, in Roman Britain, the use of double theonyms was not so much a practice of British elites, but rather essentially a military one.⁸⁹ This is especially appreciable in the high number featuring Mars, and in the high number of military men making dedications to double-named gods. This interpretation is, so far, the most satisfactory in that it results from the systematic approach to British inscriptions that has considered double theonyms in context, considering the personal names, social status, and titles of their worshippers as important lines of enquiry.

Table 6 summarises the information contained in the texts dedicated to double-named gods in the frontier region in northern Britain:

⁸⁶ Henig 1984 55.

⁸⁷ M. Green 1989 113. Note that Green's discussion is primarily restricted to Mars.

⁸⁸ Derks 1992.

⁸⁹ Zoll 1995a, 1995b, and 2016.

RIB	Find-spot	God(s) invoked	Commissioner(s)		
			Name(s)	Origin	Military affiliation
1120	Corbridge, Northumberland	Apollo Maponus	Quintus Terentius Firmus	Italy ⁹⁰	<i>praefectus castrorum</i>
1121	Corbridge, Northumberland	Apollo Maponus	Calpurnius [. . .]	-	<i>tribunus</i>
1122	Corbridge, Northumberland	Maponus Apollo	Publius Aelius [. . .]	-	<i>centurio</i>
1055	South Shields, Tyne and Wear	Mars Alator	Caius Vinicius Celsus	-	-
947	Carlisle, Cumbria	Mars Barrex	Iuanuarius Ri[.]regipau	-	-
948	Carlisle, Cumbria	Mars Belatucadrus		-	-
2044	Carlisle, Cumbria	Mars Belatucadrus	Matusi[... or M.A.T.	-	-
1784	Carvoran, Northumberland	Mars Belatucairus	-	-	-
2166	Barhill, Glasgow	Mars Camulus	Civ[.]sg[... ..]ivi[...]	-	<i>milites cohortis I Hamiorum</i>
2015	Hadrian's Wall, mile castle 59	Mars Cocidius	Martius	-	<i>centurio cohortis I Batavorum</i>
2024	Hadrian's Wall, mile castle 67	Mars Cocidius	Oppius Felix	-	<i>milites legionis II Augustae Felix optio</i>
949	Carlisle, Cumbria	Mars Ocelus Severus Alexander Julia Mamea The whole Divine House	-	-	-
1593	Housesteads, Northumberland	Mars Thincsus the Alaisiagae the divinity of the Emperor	-	Germania	-
1578	Housesteads, Northumberland	Silvanus Cocidius	Quintus Florius Maternus	-	<i>praefectus cohortis I Tungrorum</i>

Table 6: Double-named gods in the frontier region, Britain

⁹⁰ For another high-ranking Italian soldier dedicating to a double-named god see RIB 452, a second-century dedication to Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Tanarus at Chester.

Some of the texts listed in the table lack mentions of military affiliations, but it is likely that they were set up by soldiers. For example, in *RIB* 949 Julia Mamaea, the mother of the emperor Severus Alexander, is called *mater castrorum* “mother of the military camps”, which hints at a military authorship. The same could be argued for *RIB* 1593, also dedicated to the “divinity of the Emperor”, which was commonly worshipped in military circles. It is more difficult to prove the military character of the few texts which contain nothing more than the name of the god in the dative (e.g. *Mars Belatucadro*, *RIB* 948 and 1784), but, as maintained by Zoll (1995a, 1995b), military agency certainly seems key.

Scholars agree that, even though double theonyms enable us to learn the names of the Celtic gods and understand aspects of their character, it is impossible to find clear evidence for pre-conquest indigenous cults in paired theonyms.⁹¹ For, by the time local religious practice was syncretised with aspects of Roman practice, it was no longer completely “native”. Another aspect of double theonyms with which historians have concerned themselves, and which can be appreciated in the table above, is the fact that Roman gods are linked with more than one Celtic counterpart; and, similarly, Celtic deities occasionally (though arguably less frequently than the Roman ones) appear to have more than one Roman avatar. J. Webster (1995b 176) counts a total of sixteen Celtic avatars of Mars in Britain, whereas the British god Cocidius is paired with both Mars and Silvanus (*RIB* 993 and 1578). Webster argues that multiple combinations could reveal the polyvalence of a god, but perhaps also a misunderstanding of a god’s nature by non-indigenous worshippers.

While focusing on the power negotiations that can be traced in the employment of double theonyms, scholarship has overlooked an aspect of this naming practice that is, in my

⁹¹ Häussler 2007 81.

opinion, of importance for a deeper understanding of this epigraphic manifestation of Romano-Celtic syncretism. I refer to the meaning of the Celtic theonyms which are twinned with Latin ones. This issue was addressed by early commentaries on the double-theonym phenomenon, and has only relatively recently been reconsidered by Celtic philologists.⁹² Earlier scholarship pointed out that double theonyms may be based on two patterns: the pairing of Roman and Celtic gods – that is, the juxtaposition of two distinct deities belonging to two different traditions (perhaps equivalent to one another in function) – and the use of Celtic names as epithets of Roman deities.⁹³ Examples of the first type of pairing are *Sulis Minerva* and *Mars Nodons*, worshipped at their respective sanctuaries at Bath and Lydney Park;⁹⁴ the second type is evident in combinations such as *Mars Barrex* “Mars the highest”.⁹⁵ This suggestion has been dismissed by historians as a subjective one,⁹⁶ in the belief that theonyms as such are not fully translatable,⁹⁷ and that onomastic pairings in Romano-Celtic religion do not seem to have followed any explicit rules.⁹⁸

Philologists have recently turned to Celtic theonyms with a revived interest in name pairing. In particular, a study by de Bernardo Stempel (2008) has classified the double theonyms from Roman Britain based on three rules: a first one, which would be “a purely linguistic rendering of the name or attribute(s) of a Classical deity by a loan translation into

⁹² For early comments on Celtic theonyms, see K. H. Jackson 1983 and G. Webster 1986 54-55. For more recent studies, see de Bernardo Stempel 2008.

⁹³ See G. Webster 1986 54-55 and K. H. Jackson 1983.

⁹⁴ On the sanctuary at Bath, see Cunliffe and Verna 1985. On the sanctuary at Lydney Park, see Allen 2003.

⁹⁵ Delamarre 2003, s.v. *Barros* “head”.

⁹⁶ J. Webster 1995b 176.

⁹⁷ Derrida 1985 165.

⁹⁸ Hartog 1988 247.

the Celtic language”⁹⁹ (e.g. *Mars Camulos* for *Mars Victor*); a second one, which is “the translation of the name of a pre-existing Celtic god into Latin” (e.g. *Matres Campestris* for *Matres Mageiae*); and a third one, in which pairings suggest the functional equivalence of Celtic and Roman deities (e.g. *Esus Mars*). It is perhaps fair to say that philological reconstructions of this kind cannot stand alone as explanations for complex cultural phenomena.¹⁰⁰ Yet, even though they may not be the key to understanding religious syncretism in Roman Britain (which is beyond the scope of the present discussion), philological analyses of the Celtic theonyms can be exploited to address an aspect of the phenomenon which has been dismissed by historians earlier in the debate: are double theonyms always and everywhere random combinations, as some have argued? Or is the philological interpretation of double theonyms at least in part useful for an understanding of the British epigraphic material? An overview of examples from the British frontier region may offer an insight into this issue:¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ de Bernardo Stempel 2008 70-72.

¹⁰⁰ I refer in particular to the creation of conceptual frameworks such as the ones recently proposed by Hainzmann and de Bernardo Stempel (2013).

¹⁰¹ In this table, I do not follow the translations of the Celtic elements proposed by de Bernardo Stempel (2008 70-72), not all of which are widely accepted by Celtic philologists. My translations are based on Delamarre 2003 and Matasović 2009. Especially for the etymological reconstruction of *Mars Belatucadrus*, it is hard to concur with de Bernardo Stempel, who translates the theonym as “Mars strong in battle”, when most Celtic philologists would argue for a theonym connected with the realm of agriculture. Consider Proto-Celtic **blatu-* “flower”, and Gaulish *cadro* “beautiful”.

Double theonym	Translation	Graeco-Roman counterpart
<i>Apollo Maponus</i>	Apollo the son	Apollo Iovis filius
<i>Mars Alator</i>	Mars the nourisher	?
<i>Mars Barrex</i>	Mars the highest	θεῦρος Ἄρης
<i>Mars Belatucadrus</i>	Mars the beautiful flower	Mars Silvanus
<i>Mars Camulos</i>	Mars champion	Mars Victor
<i>Mars Ocelus</i>	Mars the highest	Mars Victor/Mars Pater
<i>Mars Cocidius</i>	Mars the blood-reddened	Mars Ultor
<i>Silvanus Cocidius</i>	Silvanus the blood-reddened	Mars/Silvanus Ultor

Table 7: Philological analysis of the Celtic elements in the double theonyms attested at the British frontier

Table 7 suggests that, overall, those who used double theonyms at the frontier seem to have been aware of the role that gods played in the Roman pantheon, and to have known the meaning of the Celtic terms they linked with them. If we compare these theonyms with the ones found further south in Britain, we find that the latter are not necessarily in line with the traditional character of the Roman deities they invoke. For instance, we find *Mars* paired with *Rigas* and *Rigisamus* (*rig-* “king”, *RIB* 711 and 187), emphasising a regal nature over the more common protective and combative role. Other examples of the linking of *Mars* with Celtic names in Britain are: *Mars Loucetius* (*loukket-* “light”, *RIB* 140), *Mars Braciaca* (possibly from the Gaulish *brakis-* “malt”, *RIB* 278), *Mars Medocius Campesium* (possibly from the Gaulish *medo-* “measure, judge”, *RIB* 191), *Mars Condates*, (*condatis* “confluence”, *RIB* 731, 1045, 1024).¹⁰² All such epithets are compatible with Mars, but they do not correspond to his typical roles in the Roman pantheon. Exceptions could be *Braciaca*, which may recall the god’s association with agriculture, and *Corotiacus* (*korio-* “army”), attested on a bronze statuette

¹⁰² On these inscriptions attesting to the role of Mars as the guardian of the meetings of two streams, see Alcock 1965 4.

base in Suffolk (*RIB* 213). Similarly, the obscure epithet for Mercury *Andescocivoucus* (*RIB* 193), part of which has been translated as “the great activator”,¹⁰³ is less straightforwardly aligned with the Graeco-Roman nature of the god.

If exploited with due caution, philological reconstructions are in my opinion useful to appreciate how, in the frontier region more than in the rest of Britain, theonyms were more commonly chosen according to the traditional role of deities in the Roman pantheon. The texts that support this enable insights into this aspect of provincial religious language that normally remains concealed in debates on the nature of provincial deities. May the military communities at the frontier have had a firmer grip on traditional Roman religious concepts than communities who did not live in such close contact with Roman soldiers? Did their experience of the military have an impact on their ways of naming deities?

It is, of course, difficult to draw lines between the different types of syncretism that we find in epigraphic writings. In this respect, it is perhaps fair to say that the philologists have gone too far in attempting to reconstruct, through linguistic analyses of Celtic onomastics, a strict set of rules that allegedly governed the phenomenon of double theonyms. Even though philology comes to our aid as we attempt an understanding of what they may have meant, speaking of “rules” in this context may be too bold. We know, for instance, of several dedications to the god Belatucadrus alone, honoured without his Roman counterparts. This Celtic deity has been simply paired with Mars rather than treated as an attribute or epithet of the Roman god. However, even if the examples reported in the tables above were divine pairs rather than theonyms followed by epithets, or indeed if they were paired according to the sensibility of the worshippers rather than alleged theonym-pairing rules, a coherent

¹⁰³ Based on a suggestion put forward by K. H. Jackson, reported in the *RIB* edition.

correspondence between the Roman and the Celtic elements can still be appreciated in almost all entries.

One of the double theonyms listed in table 7 stands out from the rest in that it features a Germanic element attested only in Britain. This is likely to reflect a deity imported from the continent:¹⁰⁴

<i>Deo</i>	To the god Mars Thincsus, to the two Alaisiagae,
<i>Marti</i>	Beda and Fimmilena, and to the <i>numen</i> of the
<i>Thincso</i>	Emperor, the Germans, citizens of Tuihantum
<i>et duabus</i>	(?), willingly and deservedly fulfilled this vow.
<i>Alaisiagis</i>	
<i>Bede et Fi-</i>	
<i>mmilene</i>	
<i>et N(umini) Aug(usti) Ger-</i>	
<i>m(ani) cives Tu-</i>	
<i>ihanti</i>	
<i>v(otum) s(olverunt) l(ibentes) m(erito).</i>	
	(RIB 1593)

This undated text from Housesteads is a dedication offered by a group of men of Germanic origins.¹⁰⁵ Another inscription from the same site is dedicated to “Mars, the two Alaisiagae, and the divinity of the Emperor” by the citizens of Tuihantum (?) serving in the *cuneus* of Phrygians (RIB 1594). This suggests that the men responsible for RIB 1593 may have been

¹⁰⁴ See Tiefenbach 2001.

¹⁰⁵ Scherer (1884) proposed to read Dutch origins in the tribal affiliation of the dedicators, allegedly connected with the city of Twente in today’s Holland. More recent studies on the early Germanic world support this view (e.g. D. H. Green 1998 250), but it must be remembered that the inscription from Housesteads is the only known piece of evidence for this tribe. As far I was able to find, the modern continental toponyms that share the first etymological element of the tribe of Tuihantum (from the Proto-Germanic **tw-* “two”, perhaps?) seem to be concentrated in the regions of Lower Saxony, Holland, and Belgium.

soldiers themselves. Linking the elements *Mars* and *Thincsus* may have been common practice elsewhere in the Empire, but in the absence of evidence for this, it is possible to consider that *Mars Thincsus* was coined in loco by Germanic-speaking soldiers at Housesteads. Despite its rather obscure origins, a philological reconstruction of the elements of the name *Thincsus* may suggest that, like the other Celtic deities associated with Roman gods at the frontier, the character of this Germanic god was compatible with that of Roman Mars. If the elements *tiu* (Old German “god”)¹⁰⁶ and the Proto-Germanic **pings-* “meeting”, “assembly” are identifiable in the theonym as some have argued,¹⁰⁷ then this Germanic deity could be a “god of the assembly”, perhaps corresponding to the Roman Mars Quirinus. If this interpretation is correct, *RIB* 1593 may provide us with further evidence that, in a province that experienced religious diversity and so-called Romano-Celtic syncretism, the military community seems to have expressed religious sentiments by bringing local cults into the religious arena in a way that was somewhat coherent with the Roman tradition. Moreover, the inscription may be evidence for the fact that double theonyms were a phenomenon driven by subgroups within the army. Unlike the rest of the double theonym examples from the frontier, *RIB* 1593 has a strong local flavour: in addition to Mars Thincsus, it honours the Alaisiagae, who are also Germanic deities;¹⁰⁸ and indeed, its commissioners may have omitted their military affiliation (but specified it in *RIB* 1594) in favour of a statement of belonging to a community in Germania. By doing this, the dedicators of the inscription selected their audience, creating solidarity with fellow Germanic-speaking people. Based on a comparison between Mars Thincsus and other double-named gods, we could tentatively identify this

¹⁰⁶ From Proto-Germanic **tiwa-*.

¹⁰⁷ Harte 2015 51.

¹⁰⁸ On these deities, see A. R. Birley 2008a 33.

specific use of a double theonym as a sign of in-group language in an ethnic subgroup within a military unit.

The phenomenon of double theonyms is a complex one and the present section is not intended to resolve its manifold intricacies. Rather, by bringing together elements of two different strands of research concerned with double-named gods, the present analysis enables us to appreciate two possible sociolinguistic phenomena connected with the military.

In the first instance, even though the existence of linguistic rules behind this religious custom was dismissed, the etymological reconstruction of the Celtic and Germanic elements in double theonyms makes it possible to identify the coherence with which gods' names were linked at the frontier. It is possible that soldiers and their associates, demonstrably the major commissioners of vows to double-named gods, were exposed to traditional aspects of Roman culture enough to understand the nature of the gods from the Roman pantheon, and to be able to associate them with suitable counterparts from local traditions. It is thus a possibility that military people played a key role in the spread of traditional concepts of Roman religion in provincial contexts where they represented a model of "Romanness" for people less connected with the army. In this respect we could suggest that, at least in certain contexts, the military environment did influence the ways in which deities were syncretised and expressed through double theonyms.

The text from Housesteads (*RIB* 1593) allows us to take the analysis of double theonyms a bit further, interrogating the possibility that cultural subgroups within the army may have been responsible for the incorporation of non-Roman gods in the arena of double-named deities in Roman Britain. Above all, the text set up at Housesteads invites further questions on the type of in-group religious language that cultural subgroups may have

developed in multicultural settings. Were these men incentivised to honour native gods while commissioning texts as military subgroups from the same province or tribe? Did they fashion themselves as ethnic subgroups participating in Roman culture and institutions by setting up these texts, choosing their audiences and performing multiple identities at the same time? An inscription on a slab at Vindolanda may confirm these suggestions:

*Cives Galli
de(ae) Galliae
concordes-
que Britanni.*

The citizens of Gaul (dedicated this) to the goddess Gallia, in harmony with the citizens of Britain.

(RIB 3332)¹⁰⁹

The commentators on this text claim that the commissioners of this text were soldiers in service at Vindolanda,¹¹⁰ though this may not necessarily be the case. It was not common for the Gauls to refer to themselves as *Galli* and this inscription is the only example of this emic usage of the ethnonym attested.¹¹¹ If the suggestion advanced with regard to the soldiers at Housesteads is acceptable, it should perhaps not surprise us that, while making a strong statement of identity by calling themselves *Galli*, the commissioners of RIB 3332 were

¹⁰⁹ Cf. a second-century dedication to Mercury by the *cives Italici* and *Norici* of the *legio VI Victrix Pia Fidelis* (RIB 2148).

¹¹⁰ A. R. Birley 2007 104-112 and 2008b. A. R. Birley (2007) argues that the use of *cives Galli* in the first line of the inscription is not sufficient to prove that the commissioners of this text were civilians. In fact, other examples from Vindolanda suggest that the civilians at the site referred to themselves as *vicani Vindolandenses* (RIB 1700). According to Birley, the commissioners are likely to be members of the *cohors IV Gallorum equitata*, which was stationed at the fort of Vindolanda from the third century. For a complete list of epigraphic attestations of *civis* or *cives* followed by an ethnonym, see A. R. Birley 2008b 179-181.

¹¹¹ A few sparse literary examples are to be added: *Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum* 4.52 and 495, Hydatius *Chronica* 156, Venantius Fortunatus *Carmina* 1.15.3 (I owe these examples to A. R. Birley 2008b). In military contexts, the ethnonym is commonly found in nomenclature (e.g. *cohors III Gallorum*).

honouring the patron goddess of their homeland. This statement of identity is also reinforced by the fact that the *Galli* were joined by a separate subgroup in the offering of their vow: the *Britanni*.¹¹² The fact that a group of Britons joined the Gauls adds interesting perspectives on the way in which native cults may have been imported into and spread among military communities.

Bringing together historical and philological perspectives on the issue of double theonyms has enabled this brief analysis to tap into aspects of double divine names that had not been considered previously. On the one hand, the overview proposed here allows us to appreciate a linguistic aspect of the coming together of traditionally Roman and native religious concepts within the military. On the other, revisiting the display of cultural and geographical roots by subgroups of military communities who brought their own cults to northern Britain introduced the issue of cohesion among people of the same origins,¹¹³ an issue will be dealt with more closely later in this thesis.

4.4 Non-Latin inscriptions at the northern frontier

While personal names and theonyms can only testify indirectly to language diversity and the dynamics of language contact, non-Latin inscriptions show situations in which commissioners openly presented themselves to the public as speakers of multiple languages. Perhaps because they are so restricted in number, most of these texts have received little if any

¹¹² A. R. Birley (2008b 185) suggests that the occasion for the joint commissioning of the text may have been “an outbreak of violence between Britons and the Gauls: an invocation of Concordia often implies fear of discord, or the wish to dispel it”.

¹¹³ § 1.3.

scholarly attention over the past fifty years.¹¹⁴ This small corpus includes a handful of Greek religious dedications and the bilingual Latin-Palmyrene epitaph to Regina (*RIB* 1065) mentioned above (§ 4.3.1). An overview of these inscriptions, considered collectively rather than in isolation from one another, may unveil some aspects of language choice at the northern frontier that have not been explored in the past.

Reviving our interest in the non-Latin inscriptions of Britain can enable us to draw parallels between language use in Britain and in other western provinces. In southern Gaul, for example, Greek has been found to appear as the language of liturgy, magic, medicine, drama, and art.¹¹⁵ On this issue, Mullen (2013a 273) reminds us that the Greek used in many of these texts from Roman Gaul is not colonial Greek, but an example of “Roman Greek”, that is a Greek “used in the contexts of the new Roman Empire as a language of high culture, education and distinctive domains”. The present section seeks to understand whether the inscriptions of northern Britain may reveal a similar employment of Greek, and whether the use of “Roman Greek” is attested in the military realm.

4.4.1 Greek texts

Among the Greek religious inscriptions from Roman Britain we count a couple of small altars dedicated to two Syrian deities at Corbridge.¹¹⁶ It is impossible to say with certainty whether

¹¹⁴ Roger Tomlin, *per coll.* (2014). This statement refers to the Greek inscriptions from the Wall region rather than to the epitaph of Regina at South Shields (*RIB* 1065). I am grateful to Roger Tomlin for his advice in selecting the material discussed in the present section.

¹¹⁵ Mullen 2013a 266-276.

¹¹⁶ Eastern deities are widely attested in Roman Britain. On the cult of Dolichenus in the army, see M. P. Speidel 1978. The London Mithraeum has strong military connections, including its vicinity to the Cripplegate fort. The other British Mithraea (at Caernarvon, Rudchester, Carrawburgh, Housesteads, and Ipswich) were all strictly

know nothing except their names, which are respectively Latin and Greek. In the eighteenth century, some suggested that Pulcher and Diodora were more fluent in Greek than Latin because they were siblings born to a Roman soldier stationed in Greece or in some neighbouring province, who had children with a Greek-speaking woman.¹²¹ Further attestations of eastern people in Britain have enabled more realistic interpretations of these texts. That Pulcher had no means to inscribe his dedication in Latin is highly unlikely in a context like third-century Corbridge. Kruschwitz (2015 60) has recently argued on onomastic grounds that in the altar “the choice of the Greek language for this single hexameter line (which would appear to be intentional) would seem related to the language of a target audience rather than that of the dedicant”. In other words, Pulcher, allegedly a native speaker of Latin, made the offering in Greek either because he wanted to perform convergence towards audiences who worshipped the eastern goddess, or because an invocation of the eastern deity would have been stronger when performed in Greek.¹²² As for the second altar, since votive offerings to Hercules Tyrios in the Greek East were traditionally made by men only,¹²³ a possible explanation for the commissioner being a woman is that Diodora acted as a priestess in the name of a community rather than as a private individual.¹²⁴

With some caution, the two altars could be taken as evidence of a community worshipping Syrian deities in third-century Corbridge. By the third century, Corbridge had

¹²¹ Barrington 1776 326.

¹²² However, we must note that taking a Latin name as common as *Pulcher* as indicative of a person more fluent in Latin than Greek, as Kruschwitz (2015) seems to do, is problematic in this context: *Pulcher* is an ordinary Roman name, but we can hardly claim that his bearer was of Latin-speaking origins solely on this basis.

¹²³ On this with a focus on Greek contexts, see Osborne 1993.

¹²⁴ Richmond 1943 203.

developed into a busy trade centre,¹²⁵ and it is likely that it attracted people from multiple linguistic backgrounds and with various degrees of competence in both Latin and Greek. We could therefore suggest that the two commissioners, whatever their origins, employed Greek with the intent to address the Greek-speaking worshippers of these eastern deities, thus reinforcing their religious identities through the use of Greek.

A comparison between the two vows from Corbridge and other Greek texts from Britain may enable us to elaborate further on the use of Greek in the province. A Greek text from Maryport (*RIB* 808) bears a dedication to Asclepius set up by Aulus Egnatius Pastor. None of the names in the *tria nomina* of the commissioner can be taken as firm evidence of eastern origins. In fact, the use of Greek in this text is more likely to be connected with the nature of the dedication than with the linguistic background of its commissioner. Medical inscriptions are attested across the Roman Empire in both Latin and Greek, as well as in bi- and trilingual versions.¹²⁶ Yet in the Graeco-Roman tradition, Greek was the preferred medical language.¹²⁷ Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* 29.6) writes that speaking Greek was so prestigious among doctors that patients were less inclined to believe practitioners who spoke Latin.

In Britain, parallel examples of Greek dedications by medical doctors are found further south, at Chester, where Hermogenes the doctor dedicated an altar to the saviour gods (*RIB*

¹²⁵ Bishop and Dore 1988.

¹²⁶ The corpus of Greek medical texts edited by Samama (2003) collects 524 inscriptions, approximately 300 of which are datable to the imperial period. An online search of the *Clauss-Slaby Epigraphic Database* (accessed May 2018) produces approximately 580 medical texts, and we can assume that most of these are also datable to the imperial period (these results include dedications to Asclepius and dedications to and by medical doctors; they do not include texts in which the noun *medicus* and variants of the name Asclepius appear as personal names). On the development of a Latin terminology for medical diseases and treatments starting from the late Republic, see Langslow 2000.

¹²⁷ The major schools of medicine were at Pergamum, Kos, Knidos, and Alexandria. On these, see Samama 2003 25.

461), and Antiochos, also a doctor, dedicated to Asclepius, Hygea, and Panakeia (*RIB* 3151). Both these commissioners bore Greek names and were involved in the medical profession, which might explain why their dedications were set up in Greek. But there may be more. After a first reading of *RIB* 461 it was reported that “the text as a whole is prose but there are dactylic sequences, which may be echoes of either epic or lyric metre, and the phraseology is markedly poetic”.¹²⁸ The text was perhaps an attempt at verse composition, with some difficulties in identifying the exact quantity of the syllables. At first sight *RIB* 3151 seems unmetrical, but on closer inspection, Clackson and Meissner (2001) have claimed that the two *hederae*, respectively at lines 4 and 7, divide the vow into roughly metrical lines, with lines 1-4 reading as a hypercephalic hexameter, that is a hexameter with an extra half foot at the beginning.¹²⁹ By supplying a supposedly missing θ after $\eta\pi\acute{\iota}\omicron\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\alpha$ and a $\kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}$ after $\Upsilon\gamma\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$, Clackson and Meissner propose to read the rest of the inscription up to the end of Πανάκειαν also as an hypercephalic hexameter.¹³⁰ It is of course difficult to support a theory that reworks a text to force it into a rather obscure metrical structure. It is perhaps more likely that the commissioner of the vow attempted but did not manage to compose accurate metrical verses. What is certain is that, as in *RIB* 461, there is some poetry in the dedication set up by Antiochos.

An appreciation of the poetical features in these Greek medical texts is important for the study of language choice in Britain. For these inscriptions present us with reasons to wonder whether the choice of Greek was prompted simply by the linguistic backgrounds of

¹²⁸ Wilson and Wright 1969 235. In fact, three lines of the text (4-6) read as a hexameter if we scan $\iota\alpha\tau\rho\acute{\varsigma}$ with three long syllables: $[\Theta\epsilon\omicron\acute{\iota}\varsigma]$ / $[\sigma\omega\tau\eta]\eta\rho\sigma\iota\nu$ / $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\epsilon\rho\mu\epsilon\nu\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\iota\nu$ / $\Upsilon\rho\mu\omicron\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta\varsigma$ / $\iota\alpha\tau\rho\acute{\varsigma}$ $\beta\omega\mu\omicron\nu$ / $\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu\delta'$ $\acute{\alpha}\nu\acute{\epsilon}\theta\eta\kappa\alpha$.

¹²⁹ On *hederae* as metrical punctuation, see Wingo 1972.

¹³⁰ According to this theory, the reconstruction of the text is the following: $\text{Πανυπείροχας ἀνθρώπων σωτήρας ἐν ἀθανάτοισιν} \mid \Upsilon\sigma\kappa\lambda\eta\pi\iota\omicron\nu \eta\pi\acute{\iota}\omicron\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\acute{\alpha} \ ? \ <\theta'\>\Upsilon\gamma\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu \ <\kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}\> \text{Πανάκειαν} \mid \epsilon\iota\eta\tau\rho\acute{\varsigma} \ (?) \ \Upsilon\alpha\tau\acute{\iota}\omicron\chi\omicron\varsigma$.

the commissioners and by the identity of the deities they worshipped, or whether it was also related to the poetic character of these vows. As mentioned above, the poetic element is certainly present in the Greek altars at Corbridge. As for the vow to Asclepius set up by Egnatius at Maryport (*RIB* 808), this is metrical in the final line, which reads as the final dactyl and spondee of a hexameter. This may of course be a coincidence, but a comparison with the texts from Chester suggests a correspondence between the employment of Greek and a taste for poetry in the composition of medical religious inscriptions in the province. It is possible that Egnatius himself, like Antiochos, attempted to write a poetic vow to Asclepius, failing to make it metrical throughout, and succeeding in verse composition only in the final line.¹³¹

The Greek texts considered so far seem to point to a use of Greek in connection with the writing of verse. This, however, does not seem to apply entirely to the Greek used in a bilingual second-century altar inscribed on two sides at Lanchester, a Roman fort about 15 km south of the Wall in County Durham:¹³²

<p>[<i>Aescula-</i>] <i>pio</i> <i>T(itus) Fl(avius) Titianus</i> <i>Trib(unus)</i> <i>v(otum) s(olvit) l(aetus) l(ibens) m(erito)</i> [Ἀσκληπι]ῶ [Τί]τ(ος) Φλάου [ι]ος Τιτιανὸ [ς] χε[ι]λίαρ [χ]ος.</p>	<p>The tribune Titus Flavius Titianus has fulfilled his vow to Aesculapius happily, willingly and deservedly.</p> <p>To Asclepius Titus Flavius Titianus, tribune.</p>
<p>(<i>RIB</i> 1072)</p>	

¹³¹ For poetry composition among military people, see § 5.6.

¹³² On the fort, see Casey, Noel and Wright 1992.

As considered above in the dedication by Egnatius Pastor, the use of Greek here was incentivised by the fact that Titianus made a votive offering to Aesculapius; and Greek, the language of medicine, was probably perceived as a way to strengthen it. Yet here there is no place for poetic composition: the vow is a straightforward dedication, without epithets of the god or specific requests for protection. There are many possible reasons why Titianus dedicated to Asclepius performing code alternation. Offering an altar inscribed on multiple sides enhanced the opportunities for passers-by to read it. By writing in two languages, Titianus multiplied his audiences, in that the inscription would have been intelligible to readers of both Latin and Greek who might have arrived at Maryport to do business in Britain. There is also a question of prestige to consider, in that an altar decorated on two sides would be a more expensive and impressive sign of devotion. Yet one wonders whether the need to perform code alternation, and therefore to include Latin alongside Greek, was also due to the fact that Titianus, a military tribune, thought it appropriate to include the language which would be more commonly understood by people connected with his profession in the province.

A parallel may be found in another medical text from Binchester, a military fort 25 km south of Lanchester:

<p><i>Aesculapio</i> [et] <i>Saluti</i> [pro salu]te <i>alae Vet</i> [tonum] <i>c(ivium) R(omanorum) M(arcus) Aure</i> [lius...] <i>ocomas me</i> [dicus v(otum) s(olvit)] <i>l(ibens) m(erito).</i></p>	<p>To Aesculapius and Salus, for the welfare of the <i>ala</i> of Vettonians, Roman citizens, Marcus Aurelius [...]ocomas, doctor, fulfilled this vow willingly and deservedly.</p>
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(RIB 1028)

The names *Marcus* and *Aurelius* may indicate a commissioner who acquired Roman citizenship after 212, whereas the surviving ending of his *cognomen* suggests eastern origins.¹³³ If this is correct, then we may wonder why a doctor from the East, who could speak Greek and who could have displayed his medical competence by dedicating in the language of the Graeco-Roman medical tradition, chose to honour Asclepius in Latin instead. This choice may indeed have been dictated by practical considerations, such as the commissioner's competence in written Greek or the availability of people able to carve Greek letters at Bimchester. Yet we should also wonder whether the choice of Latin might have been influenced by the fact that the doctor was offering a vow for a military unit. While dedicating to the gods of health, did medical personnel prefer to showcase their military affiliation, and to reinforce this through the use of Latin instead of opting for the language traditionally associated with medicine and poetry?

It is obviously difficult to identify the motives prompting commissioners to dedicate their vows in Greek in a province where Latin was the commonly written language. However, analysing this small corpus of texts as a group, and comparing these with evidence from further south in the province, we notice that Greek in Britain was used to inscribe specific kinds of religious vows, medical texts and, above all, verse. It thus appears that, in military religious contexts, Greek was employed in specific epigraphic domains. This phenomenon is paralleled in other western provinces, where Greek is found in specific types of writings.¹³⁴

A slight deviation from this general pattern can be identified in the medical texts dedicated by men who explicitly presented themselves as members of the military

¹³³ Some reconstructions of the *cognomen* include *Glossocomas*, *Habrocomas*, and *Crysocomas*. See *RIB* edition.

¹³⁴ Mullen 2013a 273.

community. It is possible that the military character of these vows, as well as the explicit indications of a military affiliation on the part of their commissioners, played a role in the choice of prose over verse, and of Latin over Greek, in the worship of the gods of health. In a sense, there seems to have been some tension between identities in the choice of Latin and Greek for certain types of vows: on the one hand, Greek is the language of culture and medicine, but, on the other, Latin may have better expressed belonging to the army in contexts where Greek was available.

We cannot argue that the environment at the frontier had an impact on the use of Greek more than other military settlements in Britain. As we have seen, for example, two Greek medical inscriptions were dedicated at Chester, which was home to one of the major legionary fortresses of the province. What the present overview of the frontier region can offer, however, is a new appreciation of the presence of Greek writing in Britain. This may have not looked as exotic to British frontier communities as one might expect. For the “Roman Greek” in which these vows were dedicated was ultimately the expression of aspects of Roman culture. Finally, considering the Greek texts from Britain as a whole enables us to find further evidence for a linguistic attitude which emerged also in chapters 2 and 3: that is the display of military affiliation, or the reinforcement of one’s military identity, through the use of Latin in contexts where Greek would have arguably been a viable choice.

4.4.2 A bilingual Latin-Palmyrene text

No study of multilingualism in the frontier zone in Britain can be complete without a discussion of the funerary stele of Regina from South Shields (*RIB* 1065). This inscription is a

unique attestation of Palmyrene Aramaic in the province and is one of the most important testimonies to ethnolinguistic diversity at the northern frontier.

*D(is) M(anibus) Regina liberta et coniuge
Barates Palmyrenus natione
Catuallauna an(norum) XXX
rgyn' bt hry br't' hbl.*

(RIB 1065)

To the spirits of the departed, Regina, freedwoman and wife of Barates the Palmyrene, from the tribe of the Catuvellauni, she lived 30 years. Regina freedwoman of Barates, alas!

The affiliation of the commissioner Barates to the Roman army is a subject of debate: some identify him with a standard-bearer attested at Corbridge,¹³⁵ while others are sceptical about the presence of Palmyrene soldiers in northern Britain altogether.¹³⁶

Regina's epitaph has captured the interest of linguists because of the multiple signs of bilingualism that it contains. The identification of the commissioner as a *Palmyrenus* and of the deceased as a *Catuallauna* suggests that Barates and Regina were provincials who probably communicated with each other in Latin as well as in their respective native tongues. As mentioned previously in this chapter (§ 4.3.1), the name *Regina* may have been one of the names that enabled Celtic speakers to embrace Roman onomastics without renouncing their local roots. It is impossible to know whether the woman was actually called *Regina* or whether this was a name chosen by Barates. Indeed, the meaning of the name itself ("queen") seems

¹³⁵ RIB 1171 from Corbridge is dedicated to a sixty-eight-year-old man likely to be named Barathes, who is referred to as a *vexillarius*. Given the advanced age of the man, some claim that he was a flag trader rather than a military standard bearer. On this see, among others, E. Birley 1953 81-82 and Mann 1954 505.

¹³⁶ Ted Kaizer, *per coll.* (2015). There is no evidence for Palmyrene units stationed at Hadrian's Wall, but we should not be sceptical about the possibility that Palmyrene soldiers enrolled in units whose ethnonyms point to other geographical origins.

appropriate for a dedication of a husband to his departed wife even if the name of the dedicatee were actually different.

From the text, it seems that Barates was a speaker of Latin and Palmyrene, but signs of interference suggest a richer multilingual background. The unusual case ending in *Regina liberta et coniuge* in the first line, erroneously taken to be an ablative in the *RIB* edition, has more recently been explained as an ordinary defective accusative, a case that can be used in Greek epigraphy to indicate the person(s) honoured in honorific or funerary inscriptions.¹³⁷ As a Palmyrene, Barates was a speaker of a variety of Aramaic and proficient in Greek, a language in common use at Palmyra (§ 6.3). It is therefore unsurprising that Greek influenced his Latin syntax. Another sign of multilingualism has been identified by Mullen (2012) in the spelling of the tribal affiliation *Catuallauna*. In comparison with other attestations,¹³⁸ this may reflect a British pronunciation of the tribal name known to us in Classical sources as *Catuvellauni*, possibly providing evidence for the way in which both Regina, a Briton, and Barates, who may have learnt some British Celtic from her, pronounced the ethnonym.

In comparison with the Latin, the Palmyrene section of the epitaph contains fewer details about the deceased, who is here referred to not as a “freedwoman and wife” but exclusively as a freedwoman. The Palmyrene text needed to be succinct so as to fit on the stele. This is confirmed by the fact that the Latin dedication is framed by a line, whereas the Palmyrene is squeezed below it, outside the frame. As the counterpart of the Latin *mulier* “woman”, “wife”, the Palmyrene term *’nth* meant both “spouse” and “woman” and lacked the juridical force of the Latin *coniunx*. It is possible that Barates, conscious of the inherent difference in meaning between these two Latin and Palmyrene terms, decided to limit

¹³⁷ Adams 1998 235-236.

¹³⁸ E.g. *civitate Cat|uvellaun|orum Toss|o]dio* (*RIB* 1962).

Regina's marital status and its juridical implications to the Latin section of her gravestone. If this is correct, the text may serve as evidence for a Palmyrene man with a strong command of the Latin language, who could distinguish nuances perhaps not obvious to the elementary learner.

That Barates' native language was written outside the frame originally carved to define the surface for the inscription suggests that he might have added the Palmyrene line as an afterthought, when the Latin had already been carved, perhaps wanting to dedicate a final, intimate message to his beloved wife. The exclamation *ḥbl* "alas" is commonly found in Palmyrene epigraphy, and in most contexts it is a simple closing formula. However, considering the audiences that this text would have had in Roman Britain, where no units of Palmyrene soldiers are explicitly attested, this interjection seems to have been written for the private sphere, addressing only Regina and those who could understand Aramaic.

To most people in Britain, the Palmyrene Aramaic dedication would have looked like a sequence of meaningless letterforms, or perhaps not even like letters at all. Possibly, then, the code alternation performed by Barates provides us with yet another testimony to in-group language in a military context, an attitude which had already been noticed in connection with military subgroups honouring local deities at the frontier and which will be considered later in this thesis (§ 6.5). By targeting a specific readership for his message, Barates arguably performed divergence from most passers-by, allowing only a specific part of the British population to understand his message to Regina. Barates' dedication may therefore reinforce the suggestion advanced earlier, according to which ritual, when practised privately by military subgroups rather than communally and in their official military role, allowed for a higher degree of freedom in the expression of ethnolinguistic diversity.

4.5 Conclusions

A multitude of cultural and linguistic identities can be identified in the lapidary texts from northern Britain. A sociolinguistic approach to these, with particular emphasis on their intended audiences, as well as the types of identities that their commissioners performed, has enabled us to revisit linguistic features that attest to social dynamics that often remain unnoticed. There is of course a chronological limitation to the analysis presented here. Attitudes towards language change over time, and we can rarely grasp what caused them unless we have elements to contextualise our sources. Since many of the texts considered here cannot be dated with precision and details about their original context have been lost, the best we can do is to read these pieces of communication and interpret them with the tools that are available to us. In this respect, patronymics are especially useful in that they allow us to appreciate transgenerational changes in naming practices even when texts are undated.

Four attitudes emerge from the material considered here: (1) linguistic change; (2) in-group language; (3) the display of cultural prestige; and (4) the display of military affiliation. Change can be appreciated, most of all, in name-giving practices. We saw that families from Celtic and Germanic backgrounds often invested their offspring with traditionally Roman or Latinized names. This reveals an intent for younger generations to fit in, at least from an onomastic perspective, in the Latin-speaking world and, arguably, in wider imperial society. This attitude is paralleled in modern times, when non-English-speaking parents give their children English names in the hope of supporting them in a globalised world.¹³⁹ I also

¹³⁹ This name-giving practice is especially common in African countries, where both English and indigenous languages are spoken. On this specific phenomenon, see Suzman 1994 and Gardner 1999.

addressed the use of personal names that are meaningful in more than one language. These “cover names”, whether situational or assigned to individuals at birth, reveal an awareness of audiences and a desire to ensure intelligibility in contact situations. It is possible to identify change also in the creation of names composed of elements that could work in different languages. These are the expression of multiple linguistic identities, which come together in new and essentially Roman ways of naming people. This phenomenon is paralleled in modern practice, where it has been observed that English has an impact on name-endings in some non-English onomastic systems.¹⁴⁰ Although linked to more complex phenomena of cultural change, double theonyms also reflect linguistic change, attesting to developments in the ways in which traditional Roman gods were perceived in provincial settings. In this respect, I suggested that the military environment favoured a coherent way of naming syncretic deities.

A more conservative attitude can be appreciated in linguistic manifestations of in-group language. This was identified in the continuity in local onomastic use, with parents investing their offspring with names drawn from local linguistic and cultural repertoires. Native personal names reflect a desire to identify with provincial traditions in a region where Latin was widely spoken, and Roman names widely used. The same in-group attitude is appreciable in the religious vows set up by commissioners who openly identify themselves with ethnic groups honouring deities from native pantheons. It is possible that in-group religious practice favoured the development of local cults based on native traditions from other provinces. The dedications by the *cives Tuihanti* and the *cives Galli* at Housesteads and Vindolanda, which honour respectively Mars Thincsus and the goddess Gallia (both unparalleled), could be an example of this phenomenon. Finally, we considered that code

¹⁴⁰ For an analysis of this phenomenon in Brazilian female personal names, see Thonus 1991.

alternation offered a strategy to address specific audiences with the content of an inscription that was most relevant to them. In the dedication from South Shields Latin is used as the lingua franca shared by Barates, his wife, and the province; Palmyrene, on the other hand, is the language to communicate intimate feelings, addressing a specific audience who understood it, and excluding those who did not. All such manifestations of in-group language reveal multiple identities, which are performed at once within the same inscription. The people who dedicated these texts were at once Roman, in that they commissioned inscriptions in the Roman manner, employing Latin and traditional Roman epigraphic language; but, in doing so, they also presented themselves as strongly connected to their native roots, expressed in personal names, theonyms, and language choice.

Amid the cultural diversity and the multiple identities expressed through onomastics and code alternation in northern Britain, we also find that language could serve as a statement of social prestige. In a province where Latin was the dominant language, Greek had the potential to speak more than just the words inscribed on stone. Greek does not appear directly connected with eastern linguistic backgrounds in this region, but rather with a display of professional or cultural prestige. For we see that it appears in the realm of medicine and poetry. This use of the Greek language is quintessentially “Roman”. With some caution, we could infer that Greek writing was itself meant, more or less directly, as a manifestation of in-group language: in a province where Latin was so predominant, knowledge of Greek was limited to the people who came from the East and to the higher strata of society who had access to the traditional Roman educational system.

In all such attitudes, the effect that the military had on the performance of identities through language is identifiable. In the first instance, we considered that interacting with or belonging to military communities could provide an incentive for people to Latinize their

names or assume and assign Roman ones. We also considered personal names with military connotations such as *Pervinca*, which were coined and became popular within military circles. Similarly, the military environment seems to have favoured the use of double theonyms, which appear more frequently and more coherently in military inscriptions than in non-military ones. It is possible that military communities were at the vanguard of this phenomenon in that they needed to win the favour of the local deities when they settled in military forts. The will to display connections with the military even changed the balance of prestige between languages. While Greek was associated with the realm of medicine throughout the provinces, vows to the gods of health set up by military men in the frontier zone show a preference for the use of Latin.

So did the army use Latin as the “language of power” at the British frontier? Because of the linguistic landscape of the province, the answer to this question is not so straightforward. Even though multiple languages were spoken in Britain, Latin was the main language of stone inscriptions and, more generally, of writing. It is therefore difficult to say that it had strong military connotations. However, in addressing this issue we should remind ourselves that Latin in part arrived on the island via the military occupation of the province,¹⁴¹ and thereafter provided new channels of communication, both spoken and written, to the local population and migrants. In this sense, even though its association with the original military occupation would have obviously decreased with time, Latin, and especially epigraphic Latin, continued to be linked with the military.

Overall, the few examples considered here can help us appreciate how, in a region with a high concentration of military communities like the British frontier, language use itself

¹⁴¹ See also § 4.2.

underwent a process of incorporation. The features I have considered here are all “Roman” at some level: personal names, whatever their origins, were written in Latin and treated in a Roman epigraphic manner; double-named deities were a “Roman” phenomenon; and the use of Greek itself was mainly “Roman” Greek. At the same time, however, the commissioners of these texts expressed (again, more or less consciously) belonging to diverse cultural and linguistic realities that, together, formed what was “Roman”.

5. Bu Njem

5.1 The fort at Bu Njem

The third-century fort of Bu Njem, otherwise known as Gholaiia,¹ provides an intriguing snapshot of communication in contexts where Roman soldiers operated. Built in Tripolitania by order of Septimius Severus in 201, the fort has preserved over 100 extant ostraca, thirty-four readable inscriptions on stone, forty graffiti, and inscribed pottery.² All these texts allow us to appreciate the penetration of the Latin language into a provincial military reality where Punic and Libyan, the main languages of Tripolitania, were still widely spoken and written. This chapter considers some of the surviving writings from Bu Njem, with the aim of understanding how and in which contexts soldiers and their associates employed Latin, other local languages, or a mixture of the two.

The beginning of military activity at Bu Njem dates to 24th January 201, when a detachment of the *legio III Augusta*, stationed at Lambaesis, began to build the fort in the desert.³ Evidence suggests that the army occupied this until the 260s, when the *cohors VIII Fida* arrived at Talalati by order of Gallienus, probably abandoning Bu Njem.⁴ The fort was part of the *limes Tripolitanus*, a system of garrisons and outposts that divided the coastal area of Tripolitania (which included the major urban centres of Sabratha, Leptis Magna, and Oea)

¹ The toponym *Bu Njem* is believed to come from an ancient Arabic word for “fort”. *Gholaiia*, a toponym of uncertain etymology, is attested in primary sources as the name of the fort during the Roman occupation. *AE* 1976 700, and *O.BuNjem* 75 and 81.

² Rebuffat 2000 227.

³ It is possible that the same unit then returned to the fort in the year 205. On this, see *AE* 1976 698. On the *legio III Augusta*, see Le Bohec 1989.

⁴ Rebuffat 2000 235.

from the unconquered territories occupied by the nomads.⁵ Between the *limes* and the coastal area lay the agricultural territory of Tripolitania.⁶ The purpose of the *limes*, and thus of Bu Njem which was part of it, was to control mobility and transport along the routes that led to water springs in the desert.⁷ Comparing the site with other settlements on the *limes*, Bu Njem seems to have controlled a rather large area, stretching 250 km north, and 300 km to the east and the west.⁸

The base is a permanent fort, comprising the headquarters, the house of the commander-in-chief, the barracks, the baths, and an administrative office. A drawing survives from a room in bathhouse, showing how the fort must have appeared to its visitors from the outside, with its four towers and walls still standing.⁹ Considering the space dedicated to the barracks, it appears that Bu Njem could host between 480 (a cohort) and 600 men (six centuries). From the ostraca that survive, we know that a *numerus* joined the legionary detachments stationed at the fort in the 230s,¹⁰ and that a cavalry unit was there in the 250s.¹¹ Interestingly, the fort was not designed in *pedes*, the typical Roman unit of measurement, but in Punic cubits.¹² This suggests that the layout of the base was planned by soldiers familiar with local measurements. One could suggest that the legate Quintus Anicius Faustus and his associates, who managed the building of the fort in the early third century,¹³

⁵ In general, on the *limes*, see Trouset 1974 and Rebuffat 1980. On the frontiers of Roman Africa, and with special emphasis on Tunisia, see Cherry 1998.

⁶ Mattingly and Hitchner 1995.

⁷ Trouset 1986 and Le Bohec 1989 443.

⁸ Rebuffat 2000 236.

⁹ Rebuffat 2000 258 fig. 5.

¹⁰ E.g. *O.BuNjem* 1-21.

¹¹ Evidence for this is found in the daily reports of personnel, *O.BuNjem* 1-62.

¹² Mattingly 1995 98. The perimeter of the camp corresponds to 180 x 270 cubits.

¹³ *IRT* 914-916.

were in part responsible for this. Did they brief builders with local measurements in order to avoid confusion and maximise efficiency? Or were Faustus himself and his associates more familiar with local measurements than with the Roman *pedes*? Curiously, the usage of local units of measurement is attested also in the ostraca that record the purchase and shipment of food supplies to the fort. As we will see later in the chapter (§ 5.5), this reveals that the army used local words to minimise miscommunication when dealing with local contractors.

As mentioned earlier (§ 2.3.3), plenty of records of activities provide evidence for the day-to-day duties performed at the base (*O.BuNjem* 1-62). The fort experienced various turnovers of personnel,¹⁴ and its men were sent on missions to nearby outposts and local tribes. We know for instance of a soldier who was sent on deployment *cum Garamantibus* (*O.BuNjem* 28), and that the Garamantes featured in various records of activities (e.g. *O.BuNjem* 147), pointing to a collaboration between members of the local tribe and the fort.¹⁵ It is possible that soldiers also acted as ambassadors to the local tribes if circumstances required it. Further opportunities for collaboration and interaction between the fort and local communities were provided by the transportation of goods. For this the army relied (almost entirely, as far as we understand from the ostraca) on local camel riders, who were familiar with the territory and could transport significant amounts of provisions. As in Egypt, soldiers

¹⁴ See, for example, *O.BuNjem* 5.

¹⁵ The conflictual relationships between the Romans and the Garamantes, inhabitants of the Fezzan area in southern Libya, are recorded in various historiographical works. Towards the end of the republican period, it was believed that Cornelius Balbus had defeated the Garamantes (Pliny *Nat. Hist.* 5.35-37). However, the local tribe did not hold back from invading the coastal area of Tripolitania in the first century, an attack that was punished with a counterattack led by Valerius Festus (Pliny *Nat. Hist.* 5.38). Thereafter, the relationships between the Romans and the Garamantes seem to have settled, with occasional collaboration between their leaders. Ptolemy (1.8.4-9) writes that Julius Maternus, *legatus pro praetore* in Numidia, entertained allied-like relationships with the leader of the Garamantes for an expedition to Ethiopia. On the tribal background of Roman Tripolitania, see Mattingly 1995 17-67.

carried out policing activities in the Tripolitan desert. At *O.BuNjem* 71, for example, a man named *Gtasazzeiheme Opter* is a fugitive slave who is presumably being kept by soldiers associated with the fort.

A satellite necropolis and a *vicus* provide evidence for the extended military community,¹⁶ and onomastic data show that a significant number of military men had local backgrounds. Different levels of literacy and mastery of the Latin language are attested, ranging from soldiers who composed poetry to men who wrote mechanically, probably copying their words from templates or working with memorised phrases. Most interestingly, the ostraca provide evidence for speakers of local languages, possibly belonging to the local tribes who enabled the fort to function the way it did.

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate some of the attitudes towards language choice among the people who lived and operated at Bu Njem, with reference to the audiences and the practical purposes of their writings. Most of the material recovered from the base is written in Latin.¹⁷ The focus of the present discussion is not on the type of Latin spoken and written by the people employed at the fort (§ 5.2). This is an issue that has already been thoroughly addressed in linguistic commentaries, especially by Marichal (1992) and Adams (1994).¹⁸ Here, I examine a selection of writings whose content shows how speakers and writers performed specific linguistic choices in contact situations. Part of my aim is to understand why they made such choices, and the consequences that these had on communication. With this aim in mind, the documents examined are those that contain evidence for language choice rather than for the regional diversification of Latin.

¹⁶ We should note that the overwhelming majority of funerary texts from Bu Njem honour civilians.

¹⁷ Cf. § 5.2.

¹⁸ See further below, § 5.2.

The chapter starts with an overview of the linguistic landscape of Roman Tripolitania and of the texts that survive from Bu Njem (§ 5.2). It then considers the onomastic data (§ 5.3), including double theonyms (§ 5.4), providing further context for the language dynamics attested in the Bu Njem texts, and then moves on to a selection of texts found within the fort. First, we shall consider the letters of Aemilius Aemilianus, where words from local languages are attested (§ 5.5). These enable us to understand some mechanisms that governed communication between military bases and local tribes in Tripolitania, and to advance our understanding of linguistic strategies that may have facilitated military operations in a provincial context. Finally, I consider two well-known inscriptions which illuminate the question of Latin as a language of prestige among military men in geographical areas where languages other than Latin and Greek were still alive (§ 5.6).

5.2 Linguistic landscape and the texts from Bu Njem

The local languages of Roman Tripolitania at the time that the fort of Bu Njem was active were Punic, a Canaanite Semitic language that developed as a variant of Phoenician,¹⁹ and a not-fully-deciphered language that we refer to as “Libyan”.²⁰ Since much of the history and usage of Libyan remains obscure, the relationship between these two local languages is not easy to pin down.

¹⁹ Generally, on the status quo of Punic studies, see Röllig 2012.

²⁰ The Libyan language is also referred to as ancient “Berber”. The fourteenth-century Arab historian Ibn Khaldoun speaks of the “Berbers” as the people of North Africa whose language was not Arabic.

The so-called Libyan language is only hinted at (but never explicitly mentioned) by ancient authors.²¹ Primary evidence for Libyan writing is found mostly in funerary texts throughout North Africa,²² some of which are bilingual Latin-Libyan or Punic-Libyan.²³ Scholars struggle to define the role that this language played alongside Punic before and after the Roman conquest of the Carthaginian Empire in 146 BC. It is not clear how many varieties of it were in use, whether it was commonly spoken, and when it fell into disuse.²⁴ In the words of Millar (1968 129), “Libyan inscriptions do little more than pose problems. But it seems clear that we are dealing with something more than a few mechanical formulae (...); for it is clear that at least some people able to write Latin or Punic could also transliterate their names into Libyan”.

The evidence for Punic is much more abundant, both in literary and documentary sources.²⁵ The relationships between Punic speakers and the Italian peninsula must date back

²¹ While writing about Leptis Magna, Sallust (*Bell. Jug.* 78) claims that “the language of this community has been altered by intermarriage with the Numidians”. This suggests that there were at least two languages spoken at Leptis during the reign of Jugurtha (118-105 BC). The first-century geographer Pomponius Mela (*Chorographia* 1.8.41) states that the northern coasts of Africa were inhabited by people extremely similar to the Romans in customs, “except that some speak a different language”; and that “different language” is often taken by historians to be Libyan. Further on this, see Millar 1968.

²² On this in general, see *RIL*. On Tripolitania in particular, see Reynolds, Brogan, and Smith 1958.

²³ The Libyan language is commonly written vertically but, perhaps due to the influence of Latin and Punic, the Libyan texts from the city of Dougga in Tunisia (*RIL* 1-11) present horizontal writing. On this, see also Galand 1973.

²⁴ Simon 1962. Variants of the Libyan alphabet are also abundantly attested in the Canary Islands, though many of the texts in the Canary-Island script remain only partially deciphered. Further on this, see Melka 2014. In terms of dating, as far as we know, inscriptions in Libyan are attested until at least the third century (see *RIL* 882). As suggested by Mattingly (1987), it is also possible that the use of Libyan remained popular among rural communities, whereas Punic was the language of the higher strata of society.

²⁵ Specifically on Tripolitania, see Levi Della Vida and Amadasi Guzzo 1987. Further texts in Punic from the west are edited in Amadasi Guzzo 1967 and 1990. More recent editions are Jongeling and Kerr 2005 and Kerr 2010.

at least to the sixth century BC, when the Phoenicians entertained trade relationships with the Etruscans. Literary evidence for this is found in Polybius (3.22.3), who mentions the treaty between the Etruscans and the Carthaginians, implying that negotiations between speakers of different languages had taken place. Evidence for such early interactions comes also from the Pyrgi tablets, bilingual dedications to the goddess Astarte written in Etruscan and Phoenician between the sixth and fifth centuries BC.²⁶ Several sources tell us that in 146 BC the Senate commissioned the translation of the Punic works by the Carthaginian general Mago into Latin.²⁷ This implies that at the time there must have been people *periti Punicae*, as Pliny calls them (*Nat. Hist.* 18.22), able to act as linguistic mediators. Also Hannibal's generals are said to be able to speak both Punic and Latin.²⁸ Further evidence for spoken Punic is found abundantly in Plautus' *Poenulus*, where the Punic passages suggest that theatre-goers in Rome must have been somewhat familiar with the foreign sounds of the North African languages.²⁹ On the legal front, the Roman jurists report that Punic could be used instead of Latin and Greek to write *fides commissa*;³⁰ and there is literary evidence for the

²⁶ For a recent commentary and interpretation of the tablets, see Garbini 2011.

²⁷ Pliny *Nat. Hist.* 18.22. See also Cic. *Oratore.* 1.249 and Varro *Rust.* 1.1.10. Columella (*Rust.* 1.1.13) refers specifically to the translator of Mago's work.

²⁸ Livy 26.6.11.

²⁹ Some have even claimed that the absence of Latin translation from some dialogues in Plautus is evidence that there were Punic speakers among his audiences. On this, see for instance Röllig 1980 288. In his recent edition of the *Poenulus*, De Melo (2012) claims that the Punic passages in the play were purposefully used by the playwright to confuse the audience, who would have not understood a word of it. It is also possible that the passages were meant to have a different effect on the members of the public who knew Punic and those who did not. For a commentary on the Punic passages, with a comprehensive overview of their syntax and morphology, see De Melo 2012 173-222.

³⁰ Ulpian, *Dig.* 32.11.

knowledge of Punic among the Severi.³¹ But the ancient author who best documents the usage of Punic in Roman Africa is Augustine. In various passages of his works, he writes that Punic was still widely spoken in North Africa in the fourth century, and that it was respected as the language of local tradition,³² while Latin was the language of culture.

Linguists refer to the Punic in use in North Africa after 146 BC as Neo-Punic.³³ This version of Punic is written in the Punic script but reflects an evolution in spellings and in letterforms, which are more cursive.³⁴ This is the phase where we start to identify Latin borrowings, especially in official nomenclature and titles. Examples of these are *ʿydlš* (“*aedilis*”) and *qwʿtrbr* (“*quattuorvir*”).³⁵ Most of the evidence for this phase of Punic is found in dedications of public buildings, and in honorary and funerary texts. Some of these are bilingual Punic-Latin, some are trilingual Punic-Latin-Greek. Such texts are of crucial importance to sociolinguistic analyses of Tripolitania.³⁶ In particular, they have allowed scholars to observe that the use of borrowings from Latin is not linear across the Punic texts where code alternation is performed.

³¹ *HA Sept. Sev.* 15.7 and *Stadius Silvae* 4.5.45-46. For further literary references to the usage of Punic during the Empire, see Millar 1968 130.

³² *At Epist.* 17.2 Augustine writes against a man who defended the superiority of Roman culture, saying that *ut homo Afer scribens Afris* “As an African man writing for African readers”, he should pay respect to his traditions and Punic writings. See also *Epist.* 66.2 for Christian groups in Africa speaking only Punic. For commentaries on Augustine’s use of Punic, see W. M. Green 1951 and Cox 1988.

³³ However, Wilson (2012 265-266) suggests that, considering the archaeological context of the inscriptions, it appears that Punic and Neo-Punic coexisted in the first century BC.

³⁴ Jongeling and Kerr 2005 1-2 and 6-7. On the script of Neo-Punic, see also Berthier and Charlier 1952.

³⁵ Röllig 2012 476. Generally on this, see Amadasi Guzzo 1988.

³⁶ The bilingual texts have been studied by Amadasi Guzzo (1988), Adams (2003a) and Wilson (2012), who have tried to elucidate the relationship between the Punic and Latin languages in Tripolitania. These texts are especially interesting for their instances of borrowing and calques, but also for their avoidance of Latin expressions in the Punic sections.

Another expression of the language of Roman Tripolitania is found in “Latino-Punic” writing; that is, Punic written in Roman characters. Evidence for this survives in seventy texts, which are all from Roman Tripolitania and date to the third century.³⁷ Writing a language in characters normally used for a different language is a widespread phenomenon, paralleled in antiquity and in modern times. In the specific case of Tripolitania, the Latino-Punic texts provide evidence that Punic continued to be spoken in North Africa well into the imperial period.³⁸ These texts are brief but present some interesting linguistic features, including Latin calques. For example, the phrase *auo sanu* (*auo* “lived”; *sanu* “years”) is a calque of *vixit annis* found abundantly in the Latino-Punic texts. Other examples are *baiaem* (“during one’s own life”), mirroring the Latin *se vivo*, and *bithem* (“at one’s own expense”), a calque of *sua pecunia*, both found in *IRT 828*.³⁹

Most of the written material that survives from the garrison consists of 146 published ostraca dated between 235 and 259 (*O.BuNjem*). These are testimonies to the second phase of the military occupation of the fort.⁴⁰ The morphology and syntax of these documents have been extensively examined by Marichal (1992) and Adams (1994, 1999),⁴¹ who will be referenced throughout this chapter. Marichal took the view that the language of the ostraca was a pidgin, which in linguistics is “a mixed language that is spoken only as a second (or third, or fourth,

³⁷ Kerr 2010.

³⁸ As mentioned earlier (§ 1.4, in footnote), examples of script adaptation are found abundantly in the Graeco-Roman worlds. Specifically in Roman North Africa, in the territory of today’s Algeria, we also find Punic writing in the Greek script. See Jongelin and Kerr 2005 2, and Kerr 2010. See also Adams 2003a 230-235.

³⁹ Vattioni 1976 538.

⁴⁰ *AE* 1976 698, mentioned in footnote at § 5.1.

⁴¹ Relying heavily on Marichal’s edition, these are to date the most thorough linguistic analyses of the Bu Njem writings.

or *n*th) language and that arises in a contact situation involving two or more (usually three) linguistic groups”.⁴² This view has been challenged by Adams (1994 90) because the very nature of pidgins (i.e. contact-induced languages with no native speakers) does not correspond to the language of the ostraca, which “is immediately understandable as Latin, with a full Latin morphology”. The language of the community at Bu Njem is better described as a version of Latin with evident interferences from local languages. Only one document (*O.BuNjem* 146) is written in unintelligible (possibly Punic?) characters. More documents in Libyan survive in graffiti from the *vicus* (see below).

Marichal’s edition arranges the texts according to content, including daily reports (*O.BuNjem* 1-62), lists (*O.BuNjem* 63-66), records of activities (*O.BuNjem* 67-73),⁴³ and correspondence (*O.BuNjem* 74-117). The content of the remaining ones (*O.BuNjem* 118-146) cannot be pinned down. Marichal classifies the texts also according to palaeographical parameters, identifying three different hands: a bureaucratic one, used in administrative writings; an epistolary one, attested in correspondence; and a hand which Marchical calls “rudimentaire”, found in some correspondence and other writings. The hand in which the documents are written is especially important in a linguistic examination for two main reasons. Firstly, because it can allow an identification of the clerical officers employed at the fort. In this respect, Marichal (1992 45) advances the possibility that the clerks employed at Bu Njem may have received training on how to write for bureaucratic purposes. Secondly, the writings in the epistolary hand present features that recall the Punic alphabet, such as sloping

⁴² Thomason 2008 243.

⁴³ These differ from the daily reports in that they are not framed by an initial salutation and by a closing date.

and arched horizontal strokes.⁴⁴ It is therefore legitimate to wonder, with due caution, if in palaeographic terms too the letters on ostraca at Bu Njem reflect some interference from Punic. Finally, the texts that Marichal classifies as “rudimentaires”, unrefined compared to the others, invite questions about the different levels of literacy present at the fort and among the extended military community at the *vicus*. Were these the hands of people who acquired writing skills via contact with the military without being formally trained in such skills? In this chapter I will consider different levels of Latin competence attested at Bu Njem, which speak to the necessity of acquiring Latin skills for practical purposes (§ 5.5), and to the desire to display knowledge of Latin as a statement of identity within the military community (§ 5.6).

As for stone inscriptions, the published evidence includes about thirty readable texts,⁴⁵ comprising religious, funerary, and building inscriptions dating from the year 201 to (possibly) the end of the occupation of the fort. Written in formulaic epigraphic language, these writings are precious for the identification of onomastic patterns, religious life, and relationships between members of the extended military community. Of these, two renowned *carmina epigraphica* (*IRT* 918 and *AE* 1995 1641, § 5.6), provide evidence for different varieties of Latin spoken and written by soldiers, and perhaps also for different levels of schooling among military men of African origins. All such phenomena are considered in this chapter.

Graffiti dating to the mid-third century have been found in the *vicus* near the fort,⁴⁶ on the walls of a building which was probably used for commercial purposes. Some are in

⁴⁴ Peckham 1968, Jongeling and Kerr 2005 10-12. In general, on the graphic features of the ostraca, see Marichal 1992 18-38.

⁴⁵ Undecipherable fragments are not included in this figure.

⁴⁶ Rebuffat 1975a.

Latin and contain a mixture of personal names and numerals, suggesting business activities. Others are in a language which is neither Latin nor Punic, and which remains impossible to decipher. The letterforms of the latter resemble (but cannot be read as) the Libyan known from the rest of North Africa. They are written horizontally and their ductus features similarities with Old Roman Cursive, which suggests that, whichever language they were writing, the authors were probably influenced by Latin on some level. This has led scholars to propose that there may have been another language spoken at Bu Njem, the so-called “libyque de Bu Njem”,⁴⁷ and that that its speakers were familiar with both Latin and Punic.

Finally, as mentioned above, an ostrakon found within the walls of the fort is in a language which cannot be interpreted (*O.BuNjem* 146). This is not the “libyque de Bu Njem” attested at the *vicus* but is written horizontally like it. The presence of such a piece of writing, albeit small and undecipherable, suggests that some local languages were probably read and written within the base at Bu Njem. One thus wonders whether the semi-literates from the fort⁴⁸ might have been semi-literate in Latin only, and efficient writers of their own local language. This question does not have a straightforward answer; yet the mixed use of Punic and Latin in some of the communications found at the fort that we will explore in this chapter (§ 5.5) suggests that this may have indeed been the case for some people at Bu Njem.

⁴⁷ This expression is part of the title of Rebuffat’s edition of the graffiti.

⁴⁸ E.g. the exercise *O.BuNjem* 144 mentioned above.

5.3 Names of people

The surviving onomastic evidence from Bu Njem sheds light on a variety of naming practices used in third-century Tripolitania.⁴⁹ On the basis of these scholars have claimed that, throughout its occupation, the fort was run by an army composed mostly of African people, with a few individuals from other regions of the Empire.⁵⁰ A closer look at the surviving data can help us nuance this claim and gain a fuller grasp of the composition of the community. In particular, it is possible to identify some attitudes towards name-giving that speak to onomastic change in a multilingual military community, and to identify instances in which multiple identities were expressed through naming practice.

Generally speaking, Latin names in the Bu Njem record are associated with soldiers in positions of command or at least responsibility. Stone inscriptions offer examples of names formed of three onomastic elements, including traditional *tria nomina*. Quintus Anicius Faustus (*IRT* 912-916), mentioned above as the man who oversaw the building of the fort, was a legate. Caius Iulius Donatus (*AE* 1985 849), commissioner of a dedicatory inscription in 248, was a *decurio praefectus alae*. Among the centurions we find the *tria nomina* attested at the fort: *Caius Iulius Dignus* (*AE* 1976 700), *Quintus Avidius Quintianus* (*AE* 1987 993), *Titus Flavius Apronianus* (*AE* 1979 645), *Marcus Caecilius Felix* (*AE* 1972 677).⁵¹ If these were of African origins, it is possible that they had been recruited from the elites of Tripolitania, where the use of *tria nomina* continued to be associated with the higher social strata into the third

⁴⁹ For a complete list of the personal names attested at the fort, see Marchial 1992 and Rebuffat 2000.

⁵⁰ Rebuffat 2000 233.

⁵¹ Quintus Geminius Celsus, Gaius Anstitius Felix, and Titus Iulius Crisontianus are soldiers of unspecified rank. The first two are known from two unpublished inscriptions from the necropolis of the fort. On this, see Rebuffat 2000 247. Titus Iulius Crisontianus is attested at *AE* 1972 682 as the dedicatee of a funerary inscription.

century.⁵² Marcus Porcius Iasucthan (AE 1995 1641, early third century) is the only known centurion in service at Bu Njem whose name included an explicitly Punic element.⁵³

Duo nomina formed of traditionally Roman *nomina* and *cognomina* are also mostly associated with soldiers in positions of command. In the ostraca we find that Pomponius Silvanus and Octavius Festus are *decuriones*,⁵⁴ and Manilius Florus a *praepositus*.⁵⁵ Tullius Romulus and Vicrius Verus are centurions.⁵⁶ Relying on the reconstruction of a dedication to the numina Invicta, Iunius Amicus, a *sesquiplicarius*, is identified as a clerk at Bu Njem.⁵⁷ It is not specified whether Peticius Pastor was a soldier in a position of command, but his dedication of a small altar to Sol Invictus (IRT 917) within the fort suggests that he probably did not belong to the lower grades of the military hierarchy.

Mixed names with Roman *nomina* followed by Punic names acting as *cognomina* are common among lower-rank soldiers, attested in lists of duties and various activities.⁵⁸ There are four examples of these in the ostraca, namely *Iulius Baltun*[..., *Titus Buzuris*, and *Cornelius Annibal*.⁵⁹ In the first, the Punic element could be a transcription of *b'lytn*, etymologically

⁵² This phenomenon is particularly evident in the inscriptions from Dugga. On this, see Dondin-Payre 2004 and 2012.

⁵³ The name is attested in the Libyan texts as *Ysktn* (RIL 241 and 256). Rebuffat 2018 43. On the use of non-Latin names in Roman onomastic patterns in North Africa before the second century, see Dondin-Payre 1981.

⁵⁴ *O.BuNjem* 94 and 95, *O.BuNjem* 76-79 and 82-85.

⁵⁵ *O.BuNjem* 75.

⁵⁶ IRT 920 and AE 1972 678.

⁵⁷ See the edition in *Libya Antiqua* 1969/1970 n. 142.

⁵⁸ These names are listed as unfit for work in the daily reports (*O.BuNjem* 22, 33, 34, and 68). *Tutus Buzuris* appears also in a log of activities (*O.BuNjem* 69), and *Cornelius Annibal* in a letter alongside *Iulius Bonilla* (*O.BuNjem* 68).

⁵⁹ Respectively *O.BuNjem* 69, *O.BuNjem* 22 and 69, *O.BuNjem* 32, 33, 34, and 68. *Iulius Bonilla* (*O.BuNjem* 68) is a reconstruction based on Pflaum 1961-1962. *Aurelius Marinus* (*O.BuNjem* 68), paralleled in the rosters and morning records from the same period at Dura (*P.Dura* 67, 98, 100-103, 105, 107, 110, 114, 122), is catalogued

associated with *b'l* "citizen".⁶⁰ *Buzuris* is unparalleled, and its meaning could correspond to Latin *Adiutor* (*zr* "help"). (*H*)*annibal* is one of the most common Semitic names attested in the Roman world (*hnb'l* "the favour of Baal").⁶¹ These names indicate a clear intent, on the part of name-bearers themselves or their name-givers, to appear more "Roman" than they would without a *nomen*. Since *Baltun*[, *Buzuris*, and *Annibal* were stationed at Bu Njem between the years 253 and 259, they belonged to the second generation of military men serving at the fort from the 230s onwards, when a local *numerus* had joined the fort. Albeit difficult to confirm, it is possible that such mixed names of the *duo-nomina* type were assigned by the families connected to the *numerus*, who wished to name their children in a manner that would allow them to fit in the military environment more than they would with indigenous single names. In this sense, we could suggest that the military community at Bu Njem, like some communities in northern Britain considered in the previous chapter (§ 4.3.1), underwent a trans-generational onomastic change.

Another name composed of elements from two languages is attested in a religious text (AE 1991 1620), which probably predates the ostraca by twenty years (AD 205-230 ca). The dedicator is the centurion Aurelius Varixen. Scholars tend to consider *Varixen* a local

by Marichal as a local name. The adjectival *cognomen* could be a cover name because, as Marichal points out, *Marinus* is connected with the Semitic **mar* ("lord"). However, Latin *Marinus* is well attested across the Empire and in a variety of social and historical contexts, which makes Marichal's theory difficult to confirm.

⁶⁰ Tomback 1978. Cf. Benz 1972.

⁶¹ According to Amadasi Guzzo (1986 27) *Hannibal* is one of the most common names attested in the inscriptions of Tripolitania. *Hannibal* is part of the theophoric names, which are common in Semitic onomastics, and which are believed to have influenced the development of theophoric names in Latin during the Christian period, such as *Bonifatius* and *Adeodatus*. The latter in particular is a calque from the Punic *Mutunba'al* "gift of Baal". On this, see further Kajanto 1963 101-103 and 1964 311-312, Syme 1978, and Cox 1988 88.

African name,⁶² based largely on the fact that his inscription is a dedication of a temple to the god Vanammon Augustus,⁶³ possibly connected with the Phoenician god Baal Hammon. But other origins should not be a priori excluded. The second element in *Varixen* could be of Germanic or Celtic origins: note, for example, the Proto-Germanic root **war-* “aware”, connected with **warjan* “to protect” (from which “guardian”), and the Germano-Celtic *rīk-* or *rigo* “king”.⁶⁴ It could be tentatively suggested that *Varixen* was of Germanic or Celtic origins, and that the centurion Aurelius Varixen dedicated a temple to a local deity in order to obtain its favour in a foreign land for himself and his *vexillatio*.⁶⁵ We observe the multiple identities encoded in the dedication set up by Varixen: a possible Celtic or Germanic one, expressed in the onomastic element *Varixen*; a Roman one, indicated by the name *Aurelius* and the traditional formulaic epigraphic language used in the text; a specifically military one, indicated in his military affiliation (*centurio ordinarius*);⁶⁶ and possibly an African one, expressed in the theonym of the deity. It is important to stress that Varixen’s inscription was dedicated outside the fort, in a place where the extended military community would be able to see it. The audience that Varixen addressed was therefore broader than his military circle; and by presenting himself the way he did, Varixen created solidarity with multiple groups (§ 5.4).

An even higher degree of interweaving between the Roman and the local onomastic traditions can be appreciated in *duo-nomina* combinations where the *cognomen* works in

⁶² Rebuffat 2000 233-234.

⁶³ On the cult of Hammon at Bu Njem, see the following section (§ 5.4).

⁶⁴ Kroonen 2009. Note also that the only other onomastic element attested with the same ending is the toponym *Brixen* (*CIL* 5.07817), located in Cisalpine Gaul.

⁶⁵ *Vanammoni Aug(usto) sac(rum) / Aurelius Varixen |(centurio) ordin(arius) / qui ex fortia et suff(ragio) vex(illationi) / profec(it) / templ(um) ex voto a solo extruxit l(ibente) a(nimo)*.

⁶⁶ On the *ordinarii*, see Gilliam 1940.

both Punic and Latin, a phenomenon already examined in the British evidence (§ 4.3.1). A straightforward example of a cover name from the fort could be *Evasius*, attested in a funerary text from the necropolis (*IRT* 922). This is paralleled abundantly in the African provinces,⁶⁷ and could be based on the Semitic root **hyw* “to live”, as well as on the Latin *evasio* (among others, “escape”, “salvation”).⁶⁸ Linguists and historians have read a cover name in (A)*Emilius*, attested nine times at Bu Njem and common in the Neo-Punic texts of Tripolitania, suggesting that it could be a Latin counterpart of the Punic *Himilis*.⁶⁹ *Aemilius* is obviously a common Roman name, which in my opinion makes it difficult to identify the contexts where it could act as a cover name. Yet, even if it were not a cover name as such, we can still appreciate that some names might have been, at least phonetically, more easily intelligible to speakers of Punic. Later in this chapter (§ 5.5) we will see that a man named *Aemilius Aemilianus* acted as a mediator between the fort and the desert tribes that supplied primary goods to the army. From the letters that survive, we gather that Aemilianus was able to communicate in multiple indigenous languages as well as in Latin. On this occasion it is therefore more legitimate to wonder whether Aemilianus assumed his Latin names with a pragmatic spirit, in order to work efficiently as mediator between multiple speech communities. We know from the ostraca that he presented himself with his Latin name while writing letters to Bu Njem: did he present himself as *Himilis* while dealing with local desert tribes? Again, the use of cover names at Bu Njem, much like the mixed *duo-nomina* types,

⁶⁷ See *AE* 1912 65, *AE* 1995 1683, *CIL* 8.157, *CIL* 8.158, *CIL* 8.277, *CIL* 8.356, *CIL* 8.12041, *CIL* 8.16528, *CIL* 8.23012c, *ILAlg* 1.2075. The only examples outside of Africa are *ICERV* 146 and *ICUR* 4.12289.

⁶⁸ *Evasius* died at the age of one year and four months and, like Ertola in *RIB* 1181, his funerary dedication mentions a nickname: *D(is) m(anibus) s(acrum) Evasius qui et Caluana uixit an(num) m(enses) IIII h(ic) s(itus) “To the spirits of the departed. Evasius, also called Calvana, who lived one year and four months rests here”*.

⁶⁹ A. R. Birley 1988, Bertrand 1994, Adams 2003a 455.

reveals a development in naming practice towards the adoption of traditional Roman personal names.

Non-Latin names of Punic and/or Libyan origins at the fort mostly identify camel riders. These men were contractors from desert tribes who provided transportation of goods to and from the fort. Some of these present Latinized endings, such as *Malchus* and *Macargus*, corresponding respectively to the Punic *mlk* “king” or *ml’k* “messenger” and *mkr* “trader”.⁷⁰ Local names offer instances of adaptation to the Roman onomastic system. Examples of these are *Amnon Mededet*, a *desertor*,⁷¹ and *Gtasazeiheme Opter*, a *servus fugitivus*.⁷² Provided that we accept that there are no omitted filiation makers in these formulae,⁷³ we can appreciate that, despite retaining local names, some individuals (or the people who named them) might have participated in Roman onomastic practice by using two names, which was not typical in the Punic tradition.⁷⁴ We could therefore suggest that, even if not as explicit as the juxtaposition of onomastic elements openly drawn from two different traditions, the use of double local names might itself be, on some level, a sign of linguistic change among those who lived in contact with the Roman military environment.

⁷⁰ E.g. *RIL* 651.

⁷¹ *O.BuNjem* 104.

⁷² *O.BuNjem* 71. Another name that is listed by Marichal under the non-Latin names is *Bocus Seb*[... at *O.BuNjem* 147. I have not been able to find parallel examples of this and its etymology is obscure. One wonders whether we could be dealing with the common Latin name *Boccius*, transcribed into Latin from the Punic name *bqy*. If this is acceptable, then we could, with caution, suggest that *Bocus* is a local version of a Latin name.

⁷³ There is no reason to believe that filiation markers were intended in these onomastic formulae because they occur in short messages on ostraca, where filiations are not commonly used.

⁷⁴ It is interesting to observe that the name *Opter*, despite its clear Semitic root (**ptr* “to explain”), has an ending that works for a Latin masculine noun. The name *Optatus* is itself common in Roman Africa and is attested three times at Bu Njem (but possibly indicating the same man; on this see, for instance, *O.BuNjem* 10, 28, and 68).

The names of the people who operated at the fort present us with the image of a community where Punic and Libyan were kept alive in naming practices. Overall, the claim advanced by previous scholars that the community at Bu Njem was mostly composed of men of African origin and a few people from other parts of the Empire seems accurate. The degree of Latinization of their names varied across social and military ranks. Perhaps unsurprisingly, we notice that the higher the military status, the more common it was for soldiers at Bu Njem to bear names formed of multiple Roman names, often arranged in *duo-* and *tria-nomina* patterns. It is probable that these people were named in the Roman manner by their families, who may have belonged to the provincial elites, but we cannot rule out that some of them assumed names in line with the Roman tradition while serving in the army, perhaps with a view to appearing more suitable for commanding military roles. At the other end of the spectrum we find that the camel riders who took part in the military activities were more commonly bearers of single Punic or Libyan names. A variety of patterns in between these two extremes reveals a middle ground or transitional phases that bridge the use of traditional Roman and local personal names. Among others, we can identify cover names, the adoption of Punic names as *cognomina*, and the adoption of the *duo-nomina* formula with names of local origins. As already argued in relation to the British evidence (§ 4.3.1), these onomastic patterns are indicative of audience awareness and reveal dynamic approaches to naming practice typical of bilingual contexts, where personal names are often assigned and assumed in the hope of fitting in. Despite obvious examples of local naming practices, there are clear instances of onomastic data that speak to linguistic change among the people who lived at and frequented the fort at Bu Njem.

5.4 Names of gods

Religious life at Bu Njem revolved around the temple of the Genius Gholaiiae, situated on the *via principalis* inside the military base, and five extramural temples.⁷⁵ Inside the fort, we know of religious dedications to deities associated with the Roman military tradition. Among others, we encounter: the emperors Septimius Severus⁷⁶ and Marcus Aurelius,⁷⁷ Sol Invictus,⁷⁸ the Numina Invicta,⁷⁹ and the Genius Vexillationis.⁸⁰ The extramural religious inscriptions, on the other hand, offer insights into a more varied religious scene. Here I consider the two examples of double theonyms attested at Bu Njem, advancing an interpretation of their employment with particular reference to their audiences and their context.

Based on the known evidence, the oldest temple to be built outside the walls of Bu Njem was dedicated to Iuppiter Hammon,⁸¹ a deity known from other sources in Tripolitania (see further below). An inscription on a limestone block found 1 km north of the fort reads:

<i>Iovi Hammon(i)</i>	Dedicated to Jupiter Hammon
<i>red(uci) Aug(usto) sacr(um)</i>	redux Augustus.
<i>Tullius Ro-</i>	Tullius
<i>mulus c(enturio) ex ma-</i>	Romulus, centurion,
<i>[i]oraio prae</i>	formerly a <i>maiorarius</i> ,
<i>[posit]us ve-</i>	commander of a detachment.
<i>[xillationis].</i>	
(IRT 920)	

⁷⁵ Generally on the temples of Bu Njem, see Brouquier-Reddé 1992 148-160.

⁷⁶ *CIL* 8.00006, *CIL* 8.10992, *IRT* 913, *IRT* 915, *AE* 1976 697.

⁷⁷ E.g. *AE* 1995 1641.

⁷⁸ *IRT* 917.

⁷⁹ *Libya Antiqua* 1969/1970 140.

⁸⁰ *Libya Antiqua* 1969/1970 34.

⁸¹ Possibly commissioned in 205. For a chronology of the history of the fort, see Rebuffat 2000.

The flavour of the inscription is military throughout, including three military titles of the commissioner, which take up most of the text. Yet the readership that Romulus hoped to address is likely to have extended beyond the military community at the fort and the *vicus*, including local desert tribes. We can infer this on the basis of the location of the temple, which was reachable by anyone outside the fort, and on the basis of the theonyms of its deity.

The second element of the theonym is associated with Baal Hammon, the supreme deity in the Phoenician pantheon, god of agriculture and consort of Tanit. In Roman Africa, Baal Hammon was commonly linked with Saturn, who was also connected (*inter alia*) to the realm of agriculture.⁸² In Tripolitania there are bilingual dedications in which the Latin version honours Saturn, and the corresponding Neo-Punic text refers to the honoured deity as “Hammon”, as if two different theonyms were used to indicate the same god in Latin and Punic respectively.⁸³ The role of Hammon as a chief god brought worshippers to link him also with Jupiter. This happened to the extent that the two Roman gods associated with Baal Hammon in Roman Africa became conflated into one deity. For example, it is not unusual to find Latin dedications to *Iuppiter Saturn* in the African provinces.⁸⁴ Hammon was worshipped by camel riders as the protector of caravan routes in Tripolitania already in the first century, and a cult of Hammon had been adopted by the local tribe of the Garamantes before the construction of the military fort at Bu Njem. So we understand from a passage of Lucan’s *Pharsalia* (9.511-514) describing the arrival of Cato’s army at a temple dedicated to Hammon in the desert: *Ventum erat ad templum, Libycis quod gentibus unum / inculti Garamantes habent. Stat sortiger illic / Iuppiter, ut memorant, sed non aut fulmina vibrans / aut similis*

⁸² Gilbert-Charles 1990.

⁸³ Szynger 1994.

⁸⁴ *CIL* 8.27763 and *AE* 2014 1552. For more on this, see Cadotte 2007 58-62.

nostro, sed tortis cornibus Hammon “They arrived at the temple, which alone the rough Garamantes keep among the tribes of Libya. Jupiter the fortune-teller stands there, as they recall, but neither shaking thunderbolts nor similar in appearance to ours: but in the form of Hammon, with curled horns”.⁸⁵

It is certainly difficult to read too much into the use of a double theonym in a province where, by the third century, Iuppiter Hammon had been worshipped for centuries. But the sociolinguistic framework used so far can perhaps add some perspective on the ways in which this linguistic phenomenon of syncretism was used and perceived in a territory controlled by the army. Because of its location and the popularity of Iuppiter Hammon among desert tribes, it is possible that the temple created a space of worship that would attract both military people and the tribes that lived around the *limes Tripolitanus*. The inscription by Titus Romulus itself seems to speak in the name of both the military community and camel riders. In my view this is evident also in the unparalleled use of the adjective *redux* “the escort” (line 2) attributed to the deity. In religious vows, this epithet is almost exclusively associated with the goddess Fortuna,⁸⁶ she who leads worshippers back to where they come from. Fortuna Redux is commonly associated with soldiers and their return home from military campaigns.⁸⁷ It is possible that the commissioner of this text, familiar with the epithet *redux* in military contexts, attributed it to Iuppiter Hammon, a deity worshipped by the Garamantes,

⁸⁵ On the temple, see also Rebuffat 1970 and 1975b 501-505.

⁸⁶ Of the eighty-one instances of the epithet *redux* attested in published Roman inscriptions, only three are not attributed to *Fortuna*: *Dianae reduci* (CIL 9.4644), *Iovis reducis castrorum* (CIL 6.428), *dis reducibus* (CIL 3.3429).

⁸⁷ Consider, for example, the *ara Fortunae Reducis*, erected by the Senate at the return of Augustus to Rome in 19 BC (Dio 54.10 and Propertius 4.3.71). On this, see further Kajanto 1988, especially 36. In literary texts, the verb *reducere* “to lead home” is commonly used to describe military operations, and the adjective *redux* for military commanders. See, for example, Caes. *Bell. Gall.* 3.29.3 *et passim*.

fashioning it with Roman military attributes. There is also value to the Garamantes in the choice of this epithet. *Redux* suggests the action of escorting and protecting someone along a journey, an image that speaks to the work of desert travellers. There may therefore be a small but significant level of cultural borrowing in this dedication, which is reflected linguistically in the choice of theonyms and epithet made by Romulus.

It is unknown whether the dedicator had direct connections with the camel-riding profession. Yet, by making a vow to a deity so rooted in the religious tradition of the desert tribes of Tripolitania with the words he chose, he established solidarity between the military community that he represented and the tribes of the Tripolitanian desert, creating a social space that attracted both the military community and local people. The inclusion of desert tribes sought (more or less intentionally) by Titus Romulus is perhaps reflected in material culture, which shows that the temple of Iuppiter Hammon remained active well into the fourth and fifth centuries, when the fort at Bu Njem had already been abandoned.⁸⁸

The other double theonym is attested at Bu Njem in an inscription from the later period (AD 238):

<p><i>Deo Marti Canapphari Aug(usto)</i> <i>pro salute et incolumitate domini n(o)stri</i> <i>Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) divi Septimi Severi [nepotis]</i> <i>Magni Antonini [filii]</i>⁸⁹ <i>M(arci) Aureli Severi [Alexandri] in-</i> 5 <i>victi Pii Felicis Aug(usti) pontificis</i> <i>maximi trib(uniciae) potestatis IIII co(n)s(ulis)</i></p>	<p>To the god Mars Canapphar Augustus For the health and wellbeing of our lord emperor Caesar, the <i>divus</i> Septimius Severus, nephew of the great Antoninus, son of Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander Augustus, the undefeated, <i>pius</i>, fortunate, four times holder of the <i>tribunicia potestas</i>, consul, father of the fatherland, and (for the health and</p>
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⁸⁸ Rebuffat 2000.

⁸⁹ I rely entirely on the *AE* edition for the reconstruction of *filii* and *nepotis*, which appear to be missing in the original text. On the omission of filiation markers in military inscriptions in contexts where Semitic languages were spoken, see further § 6.5.

<p><i>P(atris) p(atriciae) et Iuliae [Mam(a)erae] Aug(ustae) matris</i> <i>Aug(usti) n(ostri) et castrorum totiusque domus divinae per vexillationem [legionis III Aug(ustae) P(iae) V(indicis)] Severianae</i> <i>Curante T(ito) Flavio Aproniano (centurione)</i> <i>[leg(ionis) eiusdem] praeposito vexillationis.</i></p>	<p>10</p>	<p>wellbeing) of Julia Mamaea Augusta, mother of our Augustus and of the forts and all the divine home. Through the detachment of the <i>legio III Augusta Pia Vindex Severiana</i>, by order of Titus Flavius Apronianus, centurion of the said legion and commander of the detachment.</p>
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(AE 1979 645)

The text reads as an ordinary military dedication. It dedicates the temple to a deity called *Mars Canapphar*, which is otherwise unattested.⁹⁰ The second element of this double theonym refers to a Libyan god which the sixth-century poet Corippus associates with warfare.⁹¹ It can therefore be inferred that both theonyms belonged to the same realm, and that Canapphar was probably an equivalent of the Graeco-Roman god of war. Some have suggested that the man responsible for setting up this inscription was not of African origin,⁹² but this is impossible to confirm. What is certain is that, even if Apronianus were not from Tripolitania, he did have a grasp of both Roman and African religious traditions.

The original context of the dedication to Mars Canapphar may help us understand more about the use of the double theonym. The plan of the building where the inscription was recovered does not correspond to a typical Roman temple.⁹³ As per the drawing sketched by Rebuffat (1977 52), the main room of the temple presents itself as a vestibulum edged by

⁹⁰ Camps 1990.

⁹¹ The etymology of *Canapphar* corresponds to that of *Sinifer*, the god of warfare worshipped by Berber communities in the sixth century and mentioned by Corippus at *Iohannis* 5.37 and 8.305-306.

⁹² Cooley 2012 277.

⁹³ On Roman temple architecture, see Stamper 2005.

benches, ending with an apse at the back, which probably served as a cella. Cooley (2012 277) claims that, in a space with this sort of layout, worshippers would have gathered inside the shrine, with the statue of the deity remaining obscured in the apse, as typical of Mithraic rituals. We therefore appreciate how the linguistic manifestation of syncretism, expressed in the double theonym *Mars Canapphar*, is echoed by another level of religious interaction, which is in turn manifested in the architectural planning of the temple. This space for worship was itself an expression of an idiosyncratic cult, which contained elements of traditional Roman ritual, mixed with Mithraic and possibly also local ones. In this respect, whether Cooley (2012) is correct in her interpretation of the building plan or not, it is important to remember that, by the third century, the Mithraic cult had become extremely popular among military communities, and that the connections between Mithraic elements and Mars Canapphar may have spontaneously flourished in an environment like Bu Njem.

The surviving dedications to Iuppiter Hammon and Mars Canapphar do not suffice to advance any bold claims about the linguistic expressions of syncretic cults at Bu Njem or more generally in Tripolitania. However, a contextualisation of the two inscriptions, with particular attention to the origins and social roles of their potential readers, enables us to appreciate some dynamics revealed in the use of double theonyms at Bu Njem. The ways in which the two dedicators chose to worship gods with double theonyms are perhaps different from one another. Romulus' dedication seems to bring Iuppiter Hammon to multiple audiences, expressing not only the composite nature of a syncretic cult, but also the will to reach out to the diverse population who frequented the extramural temple. As I suggested, Romulus seems to perform a sort of linguistic accommodation towards both desert travellers and military men in his choice of the epithet *redux* to characterise Iuppiter Hammon; whether this mechanism of accommodation was accidental or intentional is impossible to tell. On the other

hand, Apronianus' dedication is filled with Roman military imagery and language, suggesting that the audiences he wished to address were essentially connected with the fort. Yet, overall, the resulting experience that worshippers had of the temple of Mars Canapphar may not have been completely free from elements from outside the traditional way of honouring Roman deities. In addition to the double theonym, the structure of the temple of Canapphar reveals connections with the local culture. We could almost see a form of code-switching in the construction and dedication of this temple: on the one hand it is traditionally "Roman"; at the same time, on the structural level, it is essentially "Roman African".

5.5 The letters of Aemilius Aemilianus

A set of letters from the fort that has enabled scholarship to gain an insight into the language spoken at the garrison is the correspondence of the soldier Aemilius Aemilianus (*O.BuNjem* 76-79). These texts belong to the later period of the occupation of the fort (AD 259) and provide invaluable elements for understanding communication between military outposts in multilingual contexts. I give the four texts of the letters below:

<p><i>Octavio Festo dec(urioni) p(rae)p(osito) meo</i> <i>Aemilius Aemilianus mil(es)</i> <i>salutem</i> <i>transmisi at te domine</i> <i>per kamellarios Iddibalis</i> <i>selesua tridici vii septe</i> <i>et semis q(uae) f(iunt) modios naginta</i> <i>Consules futuros post Thusco</i> <i>et Bas[so cos(ulisbus)] xii Kal(endas) Febrarias.</i></p>	<p>5</p> <p>10</p>	<p>To Octavius Festus, decurion, my commanding officer, Aemilius Aemilianus, soldier, greetings. I have sent you, lord, via the camel riders of Iddibal, 7, seven, and a half <i>selesua</i> of wheat, corresponding to ninety <i>modii</i>. On the day 21 January during the consulship of the successors of Tuscus and Bassus.</p>
<p>(<i>O.BuNjem</i> 76)</p>		

Octavio Festo dec(urioni) p(rae)p(osito) meo
 Aemilius Aemilianus mil(es) salutem
 transmisi at te domine per kamella-
 rius lassucthan sbitualis tridici
 vii nove q(uae) f(iunt) modios centum octo 5
 Consules futuros post Thusco et
 Basso cos(ulibus) xii Kalendas Febrarias.
 (O.BuNjem 77)

To Octavius Festus, decurion, my
 commanding officer, Aemilius Aemilianus,
 soldier, greetings. I have sent you, lord, by
 the camel rider lassucthan, 7 [actually 9] nine
sbitualis of wheat, corresponding to 108
modii. On the day 21 January during the
 consulship of the successors of Tuscus and
 Bassus.

Octavio] Festo dec(urioni) p(rae)p(osito) meo
 Aemi]lius Aemilianus mil(es) salutem
 tr]ansmisi at te domine per ca-
 melarius laremaban isdarim
] s tridici xx [vigin]ti q(uae) f(iunt) 5
 m]odios sexagi[nta. Con]sules
 fut]uros post Thu[sco] et Basso cos(ulibus)]
] Kal(endas) Februarias.
 (O.BuNjem 78)

To Octavius Festus, decurion, my
 commanding officer, Aemilius Aemilianus,
 soldier, greetings. I have sent you, lord, by
 the camel rider laremaban 20 twenty *isidaim*
 of wheat, corresponding to 60 *modii*. (On the
 day....) January during the consulship of the
 successors of Tuscus and Bassus.

Octavio Festho dec(urioni) p(rae)p(osito) [meo
 Aemilius Aemilianus m(il(es) salutem
 transmisi at te domi[ne per
 Macargum siddipia trid[ici ii]
 dua q(uae) f(iunt) viginti qua[ttuor] 5
 Cos(ulibus) futuris post Thusc[o et
 Basso Cos(ulibus)

To Octavius Festus, decurion, my
 commanding officer, Aemilius Aemilianus,
 soldier, greetings. I have sent you, lord, via
 Macargus 2 two *siddipia* of wheat,
 corresponding to 24 (*modii*). During the
 consulship of the successors of Tuscus and
 Bassus.

acc(epta) xii Kal(endas) Febr(uarias)
]it i.

Received on 21 January.

...

(O.BuNjem 79)

The letters are all sent by Aemilius Aemilianus to a *decurio*, Octavius Festus, and are all formulaic in structure, including: (1) a salutation; (2) the statement *transmisi at te domine per*; (3) the name of the man delivering the goods; (4) the quantity of goods transported expressed in local units of measure; (5) the equivalent in *modii*; (6) the date of shipment. The

stereotyped structure of the messages suggests that they were probably written following a template or based on some epistolary formulae that Aemilianus knew by heart. This is confirmed by the fact that, whenever the messages abandon their fixed format, the syntax and morphology of Aemilianus' Latin become less certain.

In the present section I exploit the sociolinguistic framework to investigate three main features contained in the letters: (1) the irregular interchange between the nominative and accusative cases; (2) uncertainty in case endings in consular dates; and (3) the use of non-Latin words for quantity. A renewed appreciation of the practical aspects and the audiences of Aemilianus' letters will enable us to gain a firmer understanding of the factors that may have influenced language choice in communication between groups from different linguistic backgrounds.

The first anomaly in Aemilianus' composition is the alternate use of nominative and accusative cases after the preposition *per*. He writes the phrases listed in table 8:

Document	Formula	Analysis
<i>O.BuNjem 76</i>	<i>per kamellarios lddibalis</i>	[<i>per</i>] + [acc. plur. (?)] + [gen. sing.]
<i>O.BuNjem 77</i>	<i>per kamellarius lassucthan</i>	[<i>per</i>] + [nom. sing.] + [nom. sing.]
<i>O.BuNjem 78</i>	<i>per camelarius laremaban</i>	[<i>per</i>] + [nom. sing.] + [nom. (/acc.?) sing.]
<i>O.BuNjem 79</i>	<i>per Macargum</i>	[<i>per</i>] + [acc. sing.]

Table 8: syntactic variation in Aemilius Aemilianus' letters

Marichal (1992) interpreted the forms *kamellarius lassucthan* (*O.BuNjem 77*) and *camelarius laremaban* (*O.BuNjem78*) as accusative plurals. This interpretation is problematic because, if they were misspelt accusative plurals with *-us* endings, the names of the camel riders should be in the genitive singular, meaning "the camel riders of lassucthan" and "the camel riders of laremaban". We gather that Aemilianus was able to inflect personal names in the genitive

from *O.BuNjem* 76, where he seemingly inflects the Punic *Iddibal* in the Latin genitive correctly.⁹⁴ The forms *lassucthan* and *laremaban*, however, do not appear to have genitive endings. The use of [*per*] + [*camellarius*] + [nominative_{pers.name}] could be modelled on the Punic language, where relations of possession and belonging can be established by juxtaposing two nouns, without inflection.⁹⁵ When uncertain about case endings, Aemilianus may have opted for the nominative case as a fixed lexical unit, possibly knowing that *per* would suffice to convey the concept “by means of” in Latin. We could speak of linguistic interference while looking at this feature of Aemilianus’ syntax, which possibly reveals that his linguistic background was Punic. The interpretation of *kamellarios* at *O.BuNjem* 76 as an accusative plural (as opposed to a nominative singular) suggested by Adams (1994) could be challenged by the fact that the phonemes /o/ and /u/ are written in the same manner in Punic.⁹⁶ It is therefore possible that Aemilianus’ indifference towards these phonemes in written form was also influenced by his native language.

If Aemilianus used templates for the composition of his messages, it is probable that these indicated how to write the message up to the preposition *per*. After this, the sender was left to fill in the message with the name of the camel rider, without indications about the

⁹⁴ Adams 1994. Cf. Marichal 1992 262, where *Iddibalis* is erroneously catalogued as a nominative name ending in *-is*.

⁹⁵ We should note that belonging is often not morphologically marked. This means that under some circumstances a possessive construction can look like simple juxtaposition of two nouns with the first one becoming unstressed. On this, see Segert 1976 180 and § 6.5 in footnote. The use of the nominative singular after the preposition *per* might be paralleled in a fragmentary letter about the dispatch of provisions found at the fort (*O.BuNjem* 80). Here we read *sal]ute[m tr[ansmisi] at te dom[ine... per (?)... us Fezinis filius s (...) tridici*. Though it is difficult to reconstruct with certainty, it seems that the content of the message reflects that of Aemilianus’ messages, with *per* expected after the verb *transmisi* and the name of the transporter before the quantity of goods dispatched.

⁹⁶ Segert 1997 58.

inflection of personal names. Overall, Aemilianus seems more confident in inflecting personal names than common nouns: see for example the correct inflection of *Macargum* in the accusative at *O.BuNjem 79*, *Iddibalis* in the genitive, and the two names in *Iaremaban* and *Iassucthan*, which could possibly work as accusatives in *-an*. Overall, Aemilianus may have been accustomed to hearing the expression [*per*] + [accusative_{pers.name}] in the correct inflected forms, but was unable to make this construction agree syntactically with other nouns.

Another feature of Aemilianus' letters which might indicate a Semitic linguistic background is found in the consular dates of the letters, as listed in table 9:

Document	Formula	Analysis
<i>O.BuNjem 76</i>	<i>Consules futuros post Thusco et Basso cos(ulibus) xii Kalendas Febrarias</i>	[accusative used in an absolute sense (?)] + [<i>post</i>] + [ablative absolute] + [<i>dies</i>]
<i>O.BuNjem 77</i>	<i>Consules futuros post Thusco et Basso cos(ulibus) xii Kalendas Febrarias</i>	[accusative used in an absolute sense (?)] + [<i>post</i>] + [ablative absolute] + [<i>dies</i>]
<i>O.BuNjem 78</i>	<i>Consules futuros post Thusco et Basso cos(ulibus) [...] Kal(endas) Febrarias</i>	[accusative used in an absolute sense (?)] + [<i>post</i>] + [ablative absolute] + [<i>dies</i>]
<i>O.BuNjem 79</i>	<i>Cos(ulibus) futuris post Thusco et Basso Cos(ulibus)</i>	[Ablative absolute] + [<i>post</i>] + [ablative absolute]

Table 9: Consular dates in Aemilius Aemilianus' letters

Aemilianus is clearly trying to write "in the consulship after Tuscus and Bassus" (AS 258-259). His avoidance of the names of the new consuls was due to the fact that these had not yet reached the African desert when Aemilianus was writing (see two paragraphs below).⁹⁷ Possibly working on the basis of a pre-written text, Aemilianus seems able to get the gist of

⁹⁷ Marichal (1992 60) notes that it was only in the summer of the year 259 that the names of the new consuls had reached the desert: *Kalendas Augustas Aemiliano et Basso cos. (O.BuNjem 81)*.

the ablative absolute expressed by *co(n)s(ulibus)*,⁹⁸ but again could not grasp its syntactical value. We therefore see that he is unable to modify the ablatives *Thusco* and *Basso*, belonging to the ablative absolute, into accusatives depending on *post*.⁹⁹

The accusative *consules futuros* is also problematic. Adams (1994) examines a number of possible readings of the phrase, which presents itself as an accusative absolute. *Futuros* could have either adjectival or participial value. *Futuros* with adjectival value would give us “the future consuls”, but this would lack a temporal marker required by the context. *Futuros* with participial value could have two distinct meanings: it could either be a predicative (“with X soon to become consuls”), or have a value that Adams calls “existential”, meaning “when there will be the consuls after Tuscus and Bassus”. Again, neither of these options is satisfactory in that they imply that the new consuls were yet to be elected. In fact, we know that the consuls after Tuscus and Bassus were already in service: it was Aemilianus who did not yet know their names. A better attempt is perhaps made in letter 79, where Aemilianus uses what appears to be an ablative absolute (*cos futuris post Thusco et Basso*), but in standard Latin this would also be an unlikely construction when followed by another ablative *consulibus*.

Attempting to determine which case Aemilianus chose to express the date in a period of transition may be pointless, for it is evident that he did not have full command of the syntactical value of Latin case endings. In fact, one could argue that Aemilianus did not have

⁹⁸ It is worth noting that Aemilianus wrote the abbreviated *cos* to say *consulibus*. The extent to which he knew that *cos* corresponded to an ablative form is impossible to tell. The inflection of *futuris* at *O.BuNjem* 79 would suggest that Aemilianus was aware of ablative endings; yet, on the basis of the treatment of case endings considered above, it is unclear whether he knew that *futuris* was meant to agree syntactically with *cos*.

⁹⁹ Adams (1994 94) notes that it is unlikely that *Thusco et Basso* in this context are accusatives with omission of final *-m* and with <0> representing the outcome of shot /u/.

much of an understanding of the concept of inflection at all, for he is likely to be a native speaker of a language that was not inflected. He seems somewhat familiar with the ablative absolute formation, which he probably heard and wrote frequently in formulaic consular dates, yet he was unable to use the ablative case to express original concepts.

The use of consular dates in a period of transition strengthens the view that Aemilianus wrote copying mechanically from a pre-made text. We know that the consuls were elected sometime during the calendar year and entered in service in the month of January,¹⁰⁰ when their names started to be disseminated around the Empire.¹⁰¹ Aemilianus wrote his letters around 21st January of the year 259. In favourable weather conditions, a journey from Rome to Oea on the coast of Tripolitania would take about nine days.¹⁰² Based on the data that we have on the routes through the African desert, one could estimate that a journey from Oea to Bu Njem could take up to twenty days.¹⁰³ It is therefore clear that the Bu Njem letters attest to delays in the communication of the consuls' names in the provinces, a phenomenon which became increasingly more common in the fourth and fifth centuries.¹⁰⁴

It is remarkable that Aemilianus, arguably a non-native speaker of Latin, felt the need to specify the full consular date in his messages in the period of transition from one consulship to the other. As far as we understand from the sequence of letters that survive, his notes were delivered by camel riders to the fort in a relatively short period of time, perhaps in one

¹⁰⁰ Note that we know that the day of consular elections under the Republic was twelve days before the *Kalendae* of March (Livy 42.28). The time of year for elections is not explicitly attested for the Empire, but we know that consuls tended to take office in January.

¹⁰¹ On the dissemination of the names of the consuls, with reference to the later Roman Empire, see *C.Th.* 8.11.2, 365 and *C.Th.* 8.11.3, 369.

¹⁰² *ORBIS* database.

¹⁰³ *ORBIS* database.

¹⁰⁴ Bagnall *et al.* 1987.

or two days.¹⁰⁵ It would arguably have made no difference to the *praepositus* at the fort to receive a message simply dated, say, *XII Kal Febr* without the consulship specified each time. Yet it seems that the sender strove to provide the consular date in full, perhaps unable to judge when the information provided in his template could be omitted. This strengthens the view that, whenever Aemilianus could not rely on his template, signs of his non-native command of Latin surfaced.

The features of Aemilianus' Latin considered so far present him as a non-native speaker of Latin striving to write messages as clearly as possible to his colleagues. He approached communication in a highly pragmatic manner: that is using formulaic language when possible and relying on his (albeit limited) knowledge of Latin to convey new concepts. This is a behaviour well paralleled in second-language learners, who tend to use a limited number of phrases and nouns in the target language even when they actually know plenty more.¹⁰⁶ Yet there is a third feature in the letters which reveals not only Aemilianus' learning of Latin and knowledge of Punic, but also his specific role as a linguistic mediator between two or more languages: the use of local units of measure converted into *modii*. Table 10 shows the amounts of goods that Aemilianus sent to Bu Njem along with his letters:

Document	Text	Value equivalence
<i>O.BuNjem 76</i>	<i>selesua tridici vii septe et semis q(uae) f(iunt) modios naginta</i>	7.5 selesua = 90 modii
<i>O.BuNjem 77</i>	<i>sbitualis tridici vii nove q(uae) f(iunt) modios centum octo</i>	9 sbitualis = 108 modii
<i>O.BuNjem 78</i>	<i>isidarim tridici xx [vigin]ti q(aue) f(iunt)]</i>	20 isidarim = 60 modii

¹⁰⁵ Perhaps even on the same day. *O.BuNjem 76* and *77* were written on 21st January; *O.BuNjem 79* was received at the fort on the same day.

¹⁰⁶ Ellis 1994 84-88.

	<i>modios sexagi[nta</i>	
<i>O.BuNjem 79</i>	<i>siddipia tridici [...] dua q(uae) f(iunt) viginti quattuor</i>	2 siddipia = 24 modii

Table 10: Quantities of goods in Aemilius Aemilianus' letters

The use of local units of measurement reveals that Aemilianus dealt with suppliers of wheat who weighed goods in the local manner, and evidently designated measures in their own languages. Adams (2003a 455) has claimed that the glosses of African words into *modii* show that, at the time of Aemilianus' service, local words were not yet fully integrated in the Latin language, implying that African terms would eventually make their way into the Latin spoken at Bu Njem in the form of borrowings. The alternation of Latin and local languages in commercial contexts is a phenomenon attested elsewhere in the Empire. At the potteries at La Graufesenque in Gaul, for example, mass firing of pottery was managed bilingually.¹⁰⁷ Here we find a distinction between lists written in Gaulish and in Latin.¹⁰⁸ Yet even in the Gaulish firing lists, Latin technical vocabulary and words for quantities appear in a sort of code-switching, which probably eventually favoured the borrowing of Latin technical vocabulary into Gaulish.¹⁰⁹

At first sight, it is indeed tempting to see the words *selesua*, *sbitualis*, *isidarim*, and *siddipia* as more or less integrated loan words, but this is not the use that Aemilianus made of them. In fact, Aemilianus does not "borrow" local words for quantities, nor does he attempt to integrate them into Latin: he explicitly *translates* (or equates) the quantities themselves into Roman *modii*. His intent is to keep the two systems separate from one another: one used

¹⁰⁷ On the language at La Graufesenque, see Marichal 1988, Flobert 1992, and Mullen 2013c.

¹⁰⁸ Adams 2003a 693-702.

¹⁰⁹ See for example *extra* in n. 14 of Marichal's edition.

to do business with local suppliers, the other to keep a record of goods at the fort. The use that Aemilianus makes of the Latin and local words for quantity does not reflect a linguistic phenomenon such as vocabulary integration or borrowing, as Adams (2003a 455) suggests, but rather the interaction between the Roman and local systems of measurement, a broader cultural phenomenon which happens to be reflected in language. In a way, Aemilianus is at once a linguistic and a cultural mediator between two communities of speech that would otherwise not do business with each other as smoothly. We could therefore say that he performed linguistic accommodation, expressing quantities in different languages according to the audience that he wished to address.

There is another level of complexity to embrace while looking at the use of local terminology by Aemilianus. Marichal (1979 448) has demonstrated that some of the words for quantities used by Aemilianus, namely the *selesua*, the *sbitualis*, and the *siddipia*, designated the same amount. A trivial calculation of the conversion rates reveals that the units called *selesua*, *sbitualis*, *siddipia*, and *agastui* (attested at *O.BuNjem* 81)¹¹⁰ all correspond to 12 *modii*:¹¹¹

$$7.5 \text{ selesua} = 90 \text{ modii} \rightarrow 1 \text{ selesua} = 90 \div 7.5 = 12 \text{ modii};$$

$$9 \text{ sbitualis} = 108 \text{ modii} \rightarrow 1 \text{ sbitualis} = 108 \div 9 = 12 \text{ modii};$$

$$2 \text{ siddipia} = 24 \text{ modii} \rightarrow 24 \div 2 = 12 \text{ modii};$$

$$30 \text{ agastui} = 30 \text{ modii} \rightarrow 30 \div 2.5 = 12 \text{ modii}.$$

¹¹⁰ This is a letter sent by a soldier named Aurelius Donatus, possibly to the same *praepositus* Octavius Festus addressed by Aemilius Aemilianus.

¹¹¹ Cf. the unit *gura* attested at *O.BuNjem* 86 and 87. No equivalence in *modii* is provided in the two records.

The *isidarim* at *O.BuNjem* 78 indicates one fourth part of the unit: 20 *isidarim* = 60 *modii* → $60 \div 20 = 3 \text{ modii}$. The connection between the *isidarim* and the concept of “one fourth” is evident also in the element *-ar-*, which derives from the Proto-Semitic **'arba'* “four”, also attested in Punic as *'ar'*.¹¹²

Some commentators have suggested that the multiple nouns indicating the same quantity of 12 *modii* show that the various farming communities who supplied the army spoke different varieties of the local languages.¹¹³ In my opinion, a slightly more precise explanation of these terms can be provided. Considering that the specific weight of a grain like wheat is roughly 0.8 kg/litre, a unit of 12 *modii* corresponds to 83 kg.¹¹⁴ Since ordinary camels and dromedaries can transport loads of about 200 kg,¹¹⁵ it is possible that this unit was based on the quantity that a camel carried on each side. If this is correct, it is likely that the words for quantity used by Aemilianus were the names that different farming communities used to indicate the containers with which camels were loaded for the transportation of goods, which in turn might have become the name of a fixed unit to indicate the volume of wheat. This means that in the case for example of *O.BuNjem* 76, where the shipment is of 7.5 *selesua* = 90 *modii* (roughly 610 kg of wheat), the load could reach the fort on three camels.

This more nuanced reading helps us understand why Aemilianus used these nouns in his letters. If he wrote Latin, why did he not limit himself to writing the purchased quantity of

¹¹² E.g. Krahmalkov 2001 216. The unit may have survived as the *rabo*, attested in Augustine at *Ep.* 102.23.

¹¹³ See, among others, Adams 2003a 455.

¹¹⁴ If the grains bought by Aemilianus were already ground into flour, then the quantity purchased would obviously weigh less.

¹¹⁵ Walz 1954 56. It is possible that the *camelarii* at Bu Njem rode dromedary camels rather than ordinary camels. There is only scanty evidence for camels in Tripolitania until the fourth century. Brogan (1954, Plate XVII) shows a relief from Ghirza with a caravan of loaded camels (or dromedaries). The physical strength of the dromedary is roughly the same of the camel. Hybrid camel types can carry loads up to 400-500 kg. On this, see Potts 2005.

wheat in *modii* to accommodate the *praepositus* who received the delivery at the fort? Aemilianus' letters are essentially delivery notes. Their scope was to ensure that the deliveries made by camel riders happened according to the sale agreements that he made with them. The camel rider presumably presented the letter to the *praepositus*, who in turn checked whether the number of units indicated in Aemilianus' note corresponded to the number of units received. For this reason, it was useful to indicate the number of containers carried by the camels, which were loaded with 12 *modii* each and corresponded to the local unit of volume. These could be easily counted on sight by the *praepositus*, who then accounted for them in *modii*.

From the dates of the letters we understand that the wheat suppliers and camel riders around Bu Njem lived relatively close to one another, and that Aemilianus was able to travel from a farming community to another within half a day of travel. Because of this proximity, it is likely that these communities also did business with one another. Overall, using different nouns for the same quantity while doing business adds complexity to negotiations. In the modern world, it is easy to find examples of similar names being used for the same units by communities sharing a measuring system but speaking different languages.¹¹⁶ Under the Roman Empire too, some units of measurement shared between Latin and Greek speakers had the same names in Latin and Greek.¹¹⁷ Unless we accept that farming communities and camel riders did not attempt to maximise efficiency in their day-to-day business, it is tempting to think that *siddipia*, *selesua*, *sbitualis*, and *agastui* were perceived as dialectal variants of

¹¹⁶ "Metre" is said in similar ways in languages from multiple language families: *mètre* (French), *Meter* (German), *méter* (Hungarian).

¹¹⁷ Roman *sextarius* = Greek ξέστης (1.8 litres ca.); Roman *cyathus* = Greek κύαθος (= 22 litres ca.); Roman *amphora* = Greek κεράμιον (0.04 litres ca.); Roman *cotyla* / *hemina* = Greek κοτύλη / ἡμίνα (= 3.7 litres ca.) On the units of volume, see among others, McCartney 1927 and Dannel 2006.

the same noun rather than words that developed completely independently from one another to indicate a shared unit of volume.

Reading Aemilianus' letters within a framework that considers their social dimension enables us to appreciate multiple layers of bilingual communication. First of all, Aemilianus emerges as a skilled speaker of multiple languages, able to communicate with different communities of farmers, camel riders, and military personnel. His Latin betrays interference from a Semitic linguistic background, which is particularly evident in his poor grasp of the syntactic functions of case endings. Yet his letters are "Roman" throughout: they include consular dates, Roman units of measure, and Roman epistolary formulae. This suggests that Aemilianus employed templates or similar tools to compose his messages in Latin. In fact, an examination of his syntax reveals that whenever he wrote original sections of communication without copying mechanically from a template, his morphological and syntactic accuracy decreased noticeably.

Another level of cultural intricacy is appreciable in the interaction between two systems of measurement, which happen to be reflected linguistically in the use of local nouns for quantities and their respective conversion into *modii*. By using this equation, Aemilianus appears to perform accommodation towards the camel riders who delivered the wheat as well as towards his commander who received it. For having the load written in both systems enabled the two parties to complete the exchange with transparency. It is impossible to know how Aemilianus calculated the equivalent of each purchase in *modii* so precisely. Yet, if we accept that the unit of volume used by local farmers was calculated on the basis of the physical containers used by camel riders for transportation, as I suggested, then Aemilianus would have only needed to multiply 12 *modii* by the number of containers he purchased in order to make the conversion.

The letters of Aemilianus are once again a reminder of the practicalities that influenced language choice for communication in military contexts where more than one language was available, as at the *limes Tripolitanus*.

5.6 Bilingualism and literacy among the centurions

The continued use of local languages and onomastics in third-century Tripolitania invites questions about the status that Latin held within military communities such as Bu Njem. By this time, Latin was widely used both in peripheral and urban provincial contexts. It was commonly used in civil administration, and for commercial purposes and, naturally, many people spoke it. Within military forts in particular, Latin was perceived, perhaps alongside other languages, as an important language of daily military routine. The material from Bu Njem nonetheless offers further elements of sociolinguistic value that may allow us to identify another use that soldiers made of Latin at the fort.

Two acrostic *carmina epigraphica* recovered from the bathhouse were dedicated respectively by Quintus Avidius Quintianus, centurion at Bu Njem between 202 and 203, and Marcus Porcius Iasucthan, centurion in the year 222.¹¹⁸ These have received a great deal of attention from philologists because of their morphological and occasional syntactical irregularities, and because of their problematic metrical structure.¹¹⁹ However, there is more that can be said about the significance of inscriptions of this sort in a context like a military fort in the desert.

¹¹⁸ Rebuffat 1985.

¹¹⁹ See, among others, Adams 1999.

The inscription by Avidius (*IRT* 918) is a poetic dedication in honour of the goddess Salus, set up on the occasion of the construction of the bathhouse. After much thinking, the poem says, Avidius decided to dedicate *veras salutis lymphas* (i.e. the baths), in the hope that his colleagues and future generations of soldiers may find refreshment from the heat: *tantis ignibus in istis semper harenacis collibus nutantis austri solis flammis feras tranquille ut nando delenirent corpora* “Amid such fire on these ever sandy hills, may they ease their bodies from the burning flames of the southern moving sun by swimming in tranquillity” (*IRT* 918, lines 10-13).¹²⁰ The poem is written in iambic *senarii* and contains archaising spellings, suggesting that Avidius was raised in a Latin-speaking environment and schooled by a *grammaticus*. The inscription was recovered from the same place where it was originally set up, in the *frigidarium*, above a door that led to a smaller section of the cold pool.¹²¹ It was in all respects a public inscription: everyone who went to the bathhouse would have seen it, and those who were literate would have read about the refreshing waters offered by Avidius while actually swimming in the cold pool. A bathhouse was a facility of no small importance for a Roman community, especially if stationed in the desert. With this poem, Avidius made sure that his provision of such a fundamental social space for the community was remembered by the generations of soldiers to come.

The poem by Iasuchan (*AE* 1995 1641), set up twenty years after Avidius’ dedication to Salus, inaugurates the restored arcade of one of the four gates of the fort. This was almost certainly composed in emulation of Avidius’ dedication from the bathhouse. Metrical inscriptions are not uncommon in Roman Africa, but the two poems at Bu Njem are the only

¹²⁰ Line numbers are given reflecting Rebuffat 1987.

¹²¹ Di Vita-Evrard and Rebuffat 1987.

known examples of *carmina epigraphica* in the province dedicated by centurions.¹²² Other acrostic inscriptions like the two *carmina* in question are also known from Africa,¹²³ but it might not be a coincidence that Iasucthan's and Avidius' compositions are both written in this format, with the first letter of each verse spelling the name of the commissioner. Moreover, as a user of the bathhouse, we can imagine that Iasucthan was familiar with Avidius' hymn to Salus when he decided to set up his dedication. It is unknown where the slab with his poem was mounted originally. Yet, like the dedication of the bathhouse, a text inaugurating the restoration of a gate must have been clearly visible to everyone who lived and worked at Bu Njem, and possibly to those who entered through the restored gate. The visibility of the inscription is also corroborated by its considerable size, which is 210 cm in height and 135 cm in width.

The text tells us that Iasucthan's soldiers have worked restlessly to restore a gate to its splendour, and they are praised for their ardour: *rigido vigore iuvenum tertia Augustani fecerunt* "(which) the soldiers of the Third Augusta made with the forceful energy of the young" (line 8).¹²⁴ The imagery that Iasucthan evokes throughout the poem is clearly centred around the themes of *virtus*, *vigor*, *zelus*, and *devotio*, which are mentioned repeatedly in his verses. There almost seems to be competition between the past generation of soldiers (those who served under Avidius, perhaps?) and the current one. The previous generation did marvellous things, but now Iasucthan's men have done something more: *arta virtute sua opera aeternale fecerunt, subsequentes stipendiis antecessorum onestia bona sumebant* "By their strenuous virtue they made their everlasting work, following upon the *stipendii* of their

¹²² Pikhlaus 1981.

¹²³ Cugusi 2014b.

¹²⁴ Line numbers for this poem are given reflecting Rebuffat 1995.

predecessors they acquired good honour” (lines 14-15). The restoration of the gate is presented as a physically strenuous, complex task. But the *tertia Augustani*, as the centurion calls his soldiers, have achieved its completion *together*. Overall, the poem is a hymn to military discipline and camaraderie, here presented not as ordinary military life, but as virtues of highly skilled men, able to carry out strenuous building work. The soldiers at Bu Njem are portrayed not as ordinary soldiers, but as technicians: they work following an agreed plan (*creto consilio*, line 9) under the command of a master (*hortante magistro*, line 9).¹²⁵

Iasucthan attempted to compose hexameters but, unlike his predecessor Avidius, he failed to make them scan correctly. The result is a poem that reveals deafness to vowel lengths, and in which rhythm is sought in accents rather than syllables.¹²⁶ In the words of Adams (1999 13), Iasucthan’s inscription “must be one of the most incompetent hexameter poems ever written”. The poem’s metrical and morphological irregularities have been a cornerstone of debate about the vowel system of African Latin.¹²⁷ Yet if we consider the poem in its geographical and social context, we can enrich our understanding of the social value that Iasucthan’s poem, and Avidius’ poem before it, had within the military community at the fort.

First of all, the two poems demonstrate the wide spectrum of literacy and culture in the military environment. In chapter 2 we saw the reports from Bu Njem (§ 2.3.3), which were written mechanically on a daily basis to keep records of activities and personnel. Above we

¹²⁵ Rebuffat 1995 109-110.

¹²⁶ *Afrae aures de corruptione vocalium vel productione non iudicant* “The African ears are cannot hear the alternation of vowels, nor their lengthening” (Augustine *Doct. Christ.* 4.10.24). On this, see also Consentius 5.392.3 and 5.392.11. Abundantly on the metrical structure of the poem, see Rebuffat 1995 and Adams 1999. For an early commentary on the poem, see Kroll 1931.

¹²⁷ Generally on this, see Rebuffat 1995 and Adams 1999.

considered again a mechanical use of the language, which enabled soldiers without a full command of Latin writing to communicate from a distance with colleagues. Here we find a different use of Latin, as a language of poetry and culture. As Carrié (1993 130) reminds us, “the Roman army was not an intellectual and cultural desert”. There was a “military culture” that revolved around discipline and the various obligations of day-to-day chores, but also a “military culture” with a taste for poetry and art. The abundant evidence for soldiers’ decorated tombstones is also evidence of this.

By coming in contact with the army, soldiers and their associates would necessarily also become exposed, one way or another, to such artistic expressions. Martial (11.3) describes centurions reading his epigrams in military camps: *meus in Geticis ad Martia signa pruinis a rigido teritur centurione liber* “My books are held by rough centurions under the signs of Mars in the freezing cold of Thrace”.¹²⁸ Centurions with poetic aspirations also appear in documentary sources. In particular, three inscriptions from Rome suggest that centurions endeavoured, not without a struggle, to commission metrical inscriptions.¹²⁹ Some of the texts considered in the previous chapter are metrical dedications in what we called “Roman Greek” (§ 4.4.1), and show that there was, among soldiers and their communities, a taste for poetry.

The eagerness with which some centurions sought poetic recognition raises questions about the perception of Latin as a language of culture among military groups. In both poems we see that Avidius and Iasucthan are trying to appear “Roman”. What is not “Roman” in their poems is there accidentally: it is the reflection of their potentially non-Latin linguistic

¹²⁸ Martial (7.11 and 4.29) asked his friend Aulus Pudens, a centurion and lover of poetry, to give him feedback on his own writings.

¹²⁹ *CIL* 6.3608, *CLE* 474, and *CLE* 476.

background. By setting up verse inscriptions filled with archaising and literary vocabulary, the two centurions expressed belonging to a romanticised version of Roman culture, where Latin was the main language and poetry learning was part of elite schooling. So, in the first instance, the use of Latin as the language of poetry in a context like Bu Njem was a statement of identity, both social and cultural. The two centurions held, in turn, the highest commanding position at the fort. It is therefore possible that their statement of belonging to the Roman tradition through the use of poetic and archaising Latin was also connected with prestige in the eyes of soldiers of lower ranks.

The language of these poems is also the language of camaraderie. This is particularly evident in the poem by Iasucthan, where soldiers are portrayed as one single body informally called *tertia Augustani*.¹³⁰ Of course, one might speculate that Iasucthan also spoke a local language to his soldiers in day-to-day life. Either way, by describing their unity and military *virtus* in Latin, one could say that the centurion “incorporated” diversity and regionalisms into the Latin language. In the poem by Avidius, Latin is an expression of camaraderie because, again, the use of the bathhouse was part of the social life of the people who lived at the fort: it was a space where they physically came together for a traditionally “Roman” activity.

As mentioned above, these two texts were meant to be seen by everyone who walked past them. Considering the various levels of Latin literacy that are attested within and around the fort, and the practical strategies that soldiers enacted to overcome the barriers posed by bilingualism, how did ordinary soldiers perceive the poems by Avidius and Iasucthan? It seems unlikely that many would have been able to appreciate the subtleties of verse composition. The use of Latin beyond its practical scopes among groups so linguistically diverse is indicative

¹³⁰ For informal names of military units, see also § 6.4.

of an intention, more or less conscious, to display power through language choice. By employing Latin in a form that was arguably only partially accessible to some soldiers at the fort, both Avidius and Iasucthan performed a sort of linguistic divergence. A use of Latin that might have alienated some of their subordinates enabled the two centurions to strengthen the internal hierarchies of military units, creating cultural and social aspirations among their colleagues. By composing Latin verse, Avidius presented himself as an example of “Romanness” to his subordinates, colleagues, and to Iasucthan, himself an ambitious Roman soldier. In turn, Iasucthan aspired to appear “Roman” and to become himself a model of “Romanness” for his colleagues and generations to come.

Bringing the Bu Njem poems under a light that considers the motives of their composition as well as their perception by readers makes it possible at least to raise questions about the social value that the Latin language had among multilingual military communities. Prestige, as we mentioned in the introduction, is situational and its perception varies greatly across different social groups. In the case of Bu Njem, we can perhaps hazard the guess that Latin verse would have had a strong visual impact on the soldiers stationed at the fort, in that it presented them with aspects of Roman culture and the Latin language that many of them had barely encountered, if at all.

5.7 Conclusions

The material from Bu Njem is extremely valuable for a sociolinguistic enquiry on the use of Latin and other languages within a community that operated in a relatively circumscribed area of the *limes Tripolitanus* in the third century. Indeed, the ostraca offer philological data for a reconstruction of the interaction between Latin and the local languages of North Africa.

Again, by focusing on the audiences of these texts, on the practicalities of everyday life, and on the sentiments of the people who wrote them, we can stretch our analysis of the communication a little further, advancing our understanding of the reasons that prompted language choice and linguistic attitudes among soldiers and their associates.

The material examined speaks powerfully to the notion of incorporation. We see that multiple languages continued to be spoken and written at the fort as in the rest of the province. Personal names present us with different degrees of Latinization across ranks and social strata, and again with some naming strategies that families may have adopted to make their children appear more “Roman”. The process that we appreciate, however, is not that of homogenisation. In fact, performing multiple identities at one time meant keeping elements of provincial culture alive in language. Among others, the name *Marcus Porcius lasucthan* is an example of this. The letters of Aemilianus are also indicative of a process of incorporation. Unlike previous readings of the epistles, I believe that there is value in reading the local units of measure not as words that would eventually become borrowings or loan words, but as non-Latin words that happened to reflect concepts, such as units of measure, that could not be otherwise expressed in Latin. These nouns are therefore not integrated into Latin, because they do not become part of it: they are simply used in communication maintaining their “non-Latinness”. A similar type of cultural interaction is perhaps reflected also in the two instances of double theonyms attested at the extramural temples, which appear to include audiences beyond the military community. Finally, the two poems recovered from the bathhouse are indicative of the roles that Latin may have played in among comrades, who used it as the language of camaraderie and power. Albeit on a different scale, the use that the two centurions make of Latin reminds us of Claudius Terentianus in his struggle to appear worthy

of his military title. We therefore notice once again that Latin could have connotations of prestige among soldiers in contexts where other languages were available.

Overall, the material examined here presents us again with language use at two levels, an issue that I already introduced in relation to military administration in chapter 2. On the one hand, Latin was the language of prestige, of military accounting, and of “traditional” onomastic formulae. It was also the language that better expressed the functioning of the army as an institution. On the other hand, the people who operated at Bu Njem continued to use other languages in multiple forms (such as personal names and units of measurement) and, by doing so, they maximised efficiency in the day-to-day activities carried out at the fort. We can therefore appreciate once again that the employment of Latin, while essential on one level, was always complemented by a pragmatic approach to communication, which gave voice to a multiplicity of identities that military people expressed in addition to their institutional one.

6. Palmyrene Aramaic in the Roman army¹

6.1 A distinct linguistic behaviour

The Palmyrenes are known for being the only linguistic subgroup explicitly attested in epigraphic remains from the Roman army. Adams (2003a 247) has described the linguistic behaviour of the Palmyrenes, emphasising their skills in language learning and their ability to retain their linguistic identity even while participating in Roman institutions.² The army was clearly no exception.

So far, we have examined indirect evidence for the use of languages other than Latin and Greek in military contexts. The *cives Galli* and *cives Tuihanti* in Britain, for example, provided examples of groups who set up dedications in Latin but who arguably also spoke Celtic and Germanic languages. Similarly, in the letters from Bu Njem, the use of indigenous nouns for units of measurement indicated members of the military community conversant in vernacular languages as well as Latin. Again, in the letters from the eastern desert in Egypt we identified some patterns of language choice that, combined with onomastic data, could point to linguistic subgroups of Dacian origins. Yet the specific use that the Palmyrenes made of their native language in the Roman army is unparalleled, for at least two reasons. First, unlike other attested linguistic groups, the Palmyrenes wrote their language even when away from their homeland: that is, in contexts where they represented a linguistic minority. In this

¹ I would like to thank Ted Kaizer for reading and providing feedback on parts of this chapter. I am also grateful to Eleonora Cussini for providing her opinion on my interpretation of some linguistic features of the texts from Dacia.

² For an extensive discussion of the Palmyrenes and their linguistic identity, see Adams 2003a 247-264.

respect, the use of Palmyrene is dissimilar to, say, the use of Punic in the bilingual military texts that we find in North Africa. The Palmyrenes brought their language, in written form, around the Empire, and often displayed it in geographical contexts where Aramaic writing would appear, to most audiences, rather exotic. Barates' bilingual dedication to Regina at South Shields in Britain (*RIB* 1065, § 4.4.2) provided a quintessential example of the Palmyrenes abroad. Secondly, the written use of Palmyrene Aramaic within Roman military communities does not rely on a practical purpose. While it is perfectly reasonable to think that Palmyrene soldiers spoke their native language with one another,³ the surviving evidence mostly presents us with examples of Palmyrene Aramaic employed in public-facing texts, where it appears in code alternation with Latin and/or Greek. Its use is therefore not related to practical choices, as it could have been in written correspondence, but rather to a desire, it seems, to showcase belonging to Palmyra.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the code alternation performed by Palmyrenes involved in the Roman army, unpicking the socio-communicative mechanisms behind it. Four texts are analysed as representative of the phenomena discussed: two inscriptions honouring military men from the centre of Palmyra (*PAT* 0308 and 1422), and two epitaphs of soldiers from Dacia (*PAT* 0251 and 0253). Here, the subject we are interested in is the way in which information was selected and arranged in each language, and the communication processes actuated by the commissioners to get the message across to their readers. The primary foci of the analysis will therefore be audience and identity. The first will enable us to understand the ways in which the Palmyrenes targeted the audiences of their writings through a careful choice of the information they delivered in each language.

³ For some historical considerations on this specific issue (though without linguistic foundation), see Southern 1989 100. Consider also the fragmentary ostraca from Egypt *O.Did.* 285 and 286. See § 3.4.

Intrinsically connected with audience awareness is the question of identity. We will see that, though the performance of code alternation, the Palmyrenes shaped their institutional identity as members of the Roman military, displayed belonging to Palmyrene culture and traditions, and strengthened a tightly knit speech community of Palmyrenes within the Roman army.

The chapter examines in detail two texts from the city of Palmyra and two texts set up by Palmyrene soldiers in the western provinces, spanning the second and early third centuries. These enable us to consider the discrepant experiences of Palmyrene soldiers: was the linguistic behaviour of those who participated in Roman military operations in their homeland the same as those who served away from home? Did belonging to a linguistic minority have an impact on language choice and the performance of code alternation?

6.2 Relationship between the Roman army and Palmyra

To attempt an examination of the linguistic attitudes of the Palmyrenes in the Roman army, we must first understand the relationship between the Roman and the Palmyrene forces. The Roman army operated in the Near East throughout the imperial period. Its role became more prominent from the second century onwards, following the campaigns of Trajan against Parthia, which increased the number of troops stationed in the area and intensified regional recruitment. As observed in the chapter on northern Britain, in provincial and peripheral settings the army was a visible example of “Romanness”. Similarly, in the Near East, the Roman army eventually became, in the words of Millar (1993 527) “the most substantial of all non-local influences”.⁴ As for language use in the army stationed in the eastern territories,

⁴ On this, see also Brennan 1998.

we might expect that both Latin and Greek were used in administration, and that Latin was preferable for writing documents with external audiences. In day-to-day activities, things would of course be different: locally recruited soldiers would speak Greek and/or Aramaic, and some would perhaps acquire varying degrees of Latin as a language of the institution that employed them. Butcher (2003 399) stresses that, for the members of military communities in the East, Latin may have also been a means to distinguish themselves from the rest of society. An overview of the inscriptional record from the Near East supports this view, revealing that the use of Latin in this region is almost exclusively limited to texts of military flavour, in particular funerary and honorific dedications, often found in bilingual Greek-Latin versions.⁵

Palmyra is likely to have been incorporated in the Roman territories in the first century, under the reign of Tiberius.⁶ By this time, it was probably already an urban centre, and it continued to develop further under the Roman rule. The city presented a sophisticated political structure, rooted in a local tribal system and subsequently fashioned on the model of the Greek polis.⁷ Because of its location between the Parthian and Roman Empires,⁸ Palmyra was an established crossroads of trade routes, and evidence suggests that the Palmyrenes were skilled at diplomatic operations. Appian (*Bell. Civ.* 5.9), for example, tells us that Ῥωμαίων καὶ Παρθυαίων ὄντες ἐφόριοι, ἐς ἑκατέρους ἐπιδεξίως εἶχον “Since they were

⁵ Isaac 2009 and Yon 2008 195. The number of Latin inscriptions from the Roman Near East and Egypt is about 4,000. On this, see also Eck 2009.

⁶ This is the most likely scenario, and the one supported by most historians, but there is actually no evidence to confirm it with certainty. On this, see Edwell 2008 34.

⁷ Sartre 1996.

⁸ Pliny *Nat. Hist.* 5.88. Cf. Will 1985.

neighbours of the Romans and the Parthians, they maintained friendly relations with both”, remaining neutral and becoming a bridge between the two empires.

As for military and paramilitary activities, Palmyra seems to have been equipped with armed forces before coming under the radar of the Romans during the conquest of Syria in the first century BC. Yet the nature of these armed forces is difficult to pin down. In an often-cited passage, Appian (*Bell. Civ.* 5.9) writes that Antony travelled to Palmyra with his troops in the hope of recruiting local cavalymen, for the Palmyrenes were known to be skilled archers on horseback. But this account is far from being a first-hand record of events.⁹ Plenty of inscriptions from the city and along the Euphrates show that Palmyra had a long tradition of camel riding, and that its elites were involved in the protection of caravans travelling the desert routes,¹⁰ but the extent to which we can consider these forces comparable to an army is, once again, impossible to tell.

According to the traditional view, informed by the first excavations of Dura Europos,¹¹ the Palmyrene army was primarily deputed to the protection of the desert routes and they allegedly continued to operate under the command of civic magistracies after the city’s annexation to the Empire. According to this view, the Palmyrene army was stationed at Dura

⁹ The use of Appian 5.9, often cited by historians as evidence of the activity of pre-Roman Palmyra, is not unproblematic. It is evident that Appian is providing a romanticised description of place, with some unlikely claims about its proximity to the Euphrates, when in fact it was located 200 km from the bank of the river. On this, see Hekster and Kaizer 2004.

¹⁰ On the Palmyrene elites, see Yon 2002. On Palmyrene elites with particular reference to the Hadrianic period, see Magnani and Mior 2017.

¹¹ Cumont 1926.

Europos from the second century, and subsequently developed a system of forts along the Euphrates expanding its control of the desert routes.¹²

That Palmyra had an army of some sort which continued to operate under Roman rule is an attractive possibility and is commonly accepted in the field of Palmyrene studies.¹³ Yet some have recently challenged this vision, on the grounds of the complete absence of explicit mention of a Palmyrene army in the city's epigraphic record.¹⁴ Scholars have therefore proposed more nuanced portrayals of the Palmyrene forces, advancing the possibility that the city had two distinct military bodies.¹⁵ One of these was the official army of the polis deputed to patrolling the desert and comprising detachments stationed at Dura Europos and other strategic locations. Evidence for this could be found, with due caution, in the Palmyrene texts that mention mounted forces stationed on the Euphrates in the second and third centuries.¹⁶ The second body, on the other hand, would consist of mercenary forces. These were allegedly hired at public expense for the protection of caravans and operated under the

¹² Smith II (2013 143-149) admits that the evidence for this is meagre. On the Palmyrenes at Dura Europos, see the epigraphic evidence collected by Dirven (1999).

¹³ On the Palmyrene army see, for example, Hartmann 2001 54, Yon 2002 112-118, and Smith II 2013 143-144.

¹⁴ M. Sommer 2016 13-14.

¹⁵ This possibility was first proposed by Young (2001 157-166) and has more recently been supported by Smith II (2013 145-146).

¹⁶ Note that, again, all the evidence we are able connect to the alleged Palmyrene army dates from the second century onwards, weakening the possibility that the polis had an official military body before its military occupation in 165. One of the main garrisons on the Euphrates was Ana, which appears repeatedly in the Palmyrene texts. Horsemen were stationed here sometime in the second century (*PAT* 0200). We also know that a horseman stationed at Ana dedicated an altar in 132 (*PAT* 0319), though he identifies himself as a Nabatean (*sic*, even after the end of the Nabatean Kingdom) and as a member of a (non-Palmyrene) tribe. A cavalry force under the command of a *strategos* is believed to have been at Ana around 220 (*PAT* 2757). On this, see generally Kennedy 1986 and Millar 1993 133-134.

command of members of the local elites.¹⁷ Evidence for these could be seen in the several inscriptions from the city which honour individual men for defending caravans. The illusive nature of the Palmyrene forces has led some to claim that, even before the arrival of Rome, the Palmyrenes did not have an army but rather a “police du désert”, as proposed by Yon (2002 112-118). Whatever the nature of the Palmyrene units, or desert police, nothing is known about their recruitment process, and their internal structures remain equally mysterious.

If taken literally, the passage of Appian mentioned above (5.9) suggests that Roman soldiers had entered Palmyra already in the first century BC.¹⁸ Primary evidence provides us with further evidence as early as the beginning of the first century AD. We know, for example, that Minucius Rufus, *legatus* of the *legio X Fretensis*, dedicated a group of statues to Tiberius and his sons at the Temple of Bel around the year 15 (*AE* 1933 204). In the same period, possibly around the year 18-19, a man named Mabogaios, στρατιώτης σπείρης Δαμασκηῶν, died in the city.¹⁹ In the agora we find the bases of two statues dedicated to Caelestinus, a centurion who served in multiple legions between the first and the second centuries (*PAT* 0308 and 1422, see § 6.4). Although we know little about them, these soldiers must have been involved in the public life of Palmyra before the city was garrisoned. Caelestinus in particular is called *curator* of the banks of the Euphrates, possibly alluding to the fact that he acted as a commander during Vespasian’s operations for the conquest of Commagene in 72.²⁰

¹⁷ On the Palmyrene elites controlling caravans, see Yon 2002, especially 101.

¹⁸ Cf. Hekster and Kaizer 2004.

¹⁹ Gawlikowski 2006.

²⁰ As’ad and Delplace 2002 385.

As far as we can tell, it seems that the Roman army started recruiting men from Palmyra at least from the period of preparation for Trajan's offensive against Parthia,²¹ for we find evidence of military units composed of Palmyrene men from the early second century onwards.²² One of these was a *numerus Palmyrenorum*, which was soon redeployed to Dacia after the victory over Parthia in 117.²³ Other units *Palmyrenorum* are the *ala I Ulpia dromadariorum Palmyrenorum*, attested from the 140s,²⁴ and the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*, garrisoned at Dura Europos in the third century. The latter might have originated from the local Palmyrene units stationed at Dura Europos before the garrison was taken over by the Roman forces. Overall, it appears that Palmyra had its own armed forces for the policing of the desert and yet, from the beginning of the second century, Palmyrene men were themselves recruited into the Roman army, first into irregular units and subsequently into regular auxiliary regiments. This suggests that the organisation of the military scene at Palmyra changed over time, adapting to the needs of Rome.

The extent to which the Romans allowed Palmyra to carry out armed operations independently after the second century is difficult to tell. On a practical level, Rome had an interest in maintaining the Palmyrene forces: the locals knew how to travel the desert and could facilitate logistic operations for the Roman army. Moreover, Palmyra taxed the

²¹ On this, see Weiss and M. P. Speidel 2004 254, and Isaac 2000 143-144. Some have suggested that the archers portrayed on Trajan's column are in fact from Palmyra. On this see, among others, Hannestad 1988 157-160 fig. 97. If this interpretation is correct, then the Palmyrenes were already being recruited into the Roman army for the Dacian campaigns earlier in Trajan's reign. Cf. M. P. Speidel 1975.

²² Kaizer (2004) has put forward the hypothesis that Palmyrene soldiers were involved in the Roman siege of Jerusalem in the year 70.

²³ Two diplomas testify to the discharge of Palmyrene men from units in Dacia in the 120s (*RMD* 27 and 28). For a recent overview of the Palmyrenes in the Roman army, see Schmidt Heidenreich 2016.

²⁴ *AE* 2004 1925 and *ZPE* 197 227.

transportation of goods into and from the Roman territories, and it was arguably in Rome's interest to ensure that these taxes continued to be collected as efficiently as possible. Everything seems to suggest that the Roman army and the Palmyrene forces coexisted and collaborated peacefully, at least until the middle of the third century. Again, how they did so, and how duties were divided between them, escapes us. It has been suggested that the Palmyrene territories, the so-called *Palmyrena*, were divided into areas for military operations, with the Roman army possibly controlling the north and the west.²⁵ In the meantime, as the Palmyrenes continued to carry out policing operations and to escort caravans, the Romans seized the opportunity to take control of the garrison at Dura Europos. This was a turning point in the history of Roman Palmyra: while at first the region of the Euphrates served as a bridge between the East and the Roman Empire, the establishment of a Roman garrison at Dura Europos transformed it into a frontier that served Rome as a buffer against Parthia.²⁶

There were obvious benefits for the Palmyrenes in collaborating with the Roman army, including increased security and efficiency in administration. While Palmyrene archers and camel riders were recruited into the Roman army, some probably remained at the service of the city's protection of the desert, acting as a civilian police body. As we learn from some inscriptions, the Roman units provided support to civilian policing activities carried out by the locals.²⁷ The Palmyrenes appear thus to have established a sort of collaboration with the

²⁵ Smith II 2013 145-146.

²⁶ Edwell 2008 147-148. The defensive character of the Euphrates region under Roman control is evident also in the appointment of a *dux ripae*, "a military officer whose duty it was to watch over a certain district (the *ripa*) and to protect it from sudden incursions which were at all times imminent" (Gilliam 1941 165).

²⁷ See for example *PAT* 1397, a bilingual Greek-Palmyrene dedication to a legionary centurion by Marcus Ulpius Abgaros and his caravan. For more on the family of Abgaros, see *PAT* 1422.

Roman army.²⁸ We do not know how long this military collaboration lasted, nor whether it was ever formally agreed. But the rise of the short-lived Palmyrene Empire in the third century indicates that this military collaboration between Palmyra and Rome, whatever its nature, did eventually fail.

6.3 A note on language use at Palmyra

Palmyra is located in a region where, under the rule of Rome, three languages were used: Latin, Greek, and Aramaic.²⁹ The inscriptional record reveals that Greek was the most commonly written language in the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea regions during the Roman period.³⁰ In civil administration, Latin was seldom employed,³¹ whereas Greek was commonly used for the promulgation of edicts, which were often read publicly.³² Aramaic was itself employed in administrative negotiations.³³ In the second-century archive of Babatha from Judea, for example, we find the Greek translations of documents and contracts,

²⁸ Isaac 2000 225 and Edwell 2008 54.

²⁹ As Millar notes (1993 503), the eastern provinces of the Empire represented a territorial limit of Roman power in that they were a buffer region against the enemy, but also a linguistic frontier: here the Aramaic dialects distinguished the autochthons from the speakers of Greek who settled in the region, often referred to as the “Greeks who settled in Syria” in the Aramaic texts.

³⁰ On language and bilingualism in Syria and Mesopotamia, with a section specifically dedicated to Palmyra, see Taylor 2002.

³¹ Despite the evidence for provincials learning Latin throughout the imperial period, it seems that speaking Latin was not a requirement for carrying out governmental business in the East, provided that one could communicate in Greek and Aramaic. On this, see Millar 2006 91 and Bryce 2014 280-281.

³² Millar 2006 85-91. This observation was made with reference to the fifth century, but it is likely to reflect the reality of the previous centuries, too.

³³ In the Roman period there is mainly evidence for Nabatean, Palestinian, Palmyrene, Edessan, and Hatran Aramaic writing. For an edition of Aramaic texts from the Roman period, see Healey 2009.

including a census return, which were originally written in Aramaic.³⁴ The Greek translations of Babatha's documents serve to exemplify an important aspect of language use in the Near East: unlike Greek, Aramaic never became an official language of Roman administration.

The inscriptions from Palmyra reveal that the city deviated from the standard linguistic patterns of the Roman Near East, providing evidence for a remarkable employment of Aramaic in official administrative contexts.³⁵ This was perhaps due to the relatively high degree of independence that the city enjoyed under Rome. In official public inscriptions, Palmyra is clearly fashioned as a bilingual polis. Considering the inscriptions from the agora, for example, we find that the dedications set up by "the Senate and the People" are mostly written in Greek and Aramaic, and rarely in one language only.³⁶ Among a plethora of honorific dedications, a famous bilingual Greek-Palmyrene inscription outlining the tariffs and regulations of import and export tax to trade through Palmyra (*CIS* 3913) is an important witness to the use of the two languages in Palmyrene administration.³⁷

In addition to Greek and Palmyrene Aramaic, Latin is also found in mono-, bi-, and trilingual inscriptions from the city. Most of these were set up by official order of the city in the first and second centuries and concern members of the civic elites.³⁸ In line with the use of Latin in the rest of the Near East, monolingual Latin texts from Palmyra tend to be

³⁴ The text reveals itself to be a translation due to its lack of articles, which we would expect in a Greek text. On this, see Lewis 1989.

³⁵ Taylor 2002 317-324.

³⁶ Delplace and Dentzer-Feydy 2005. On the relationship between Greek and Palmyrene with particular reference to the third century, see Swain 1993.

³⁷ Generally on the so-called Palmyrene Tariff, see Matthews 1984 and Healey 2009 164-205.

³⁸ Of the 2,832 texts edited in *PAT*, eight are trilingual Latin-Greek-Palmyrene, and one is bilingual Latin-Palmyrene (*PAT* 0308). On the bilingual texts from Palmyra, see also Yon 2008. For a more recent catalogue of the Latin inscriptions from Palmyra, see As'ad and Delplace 2002. For additions to the *PAT* edition, including bi- and trilingual texts, see Yon 2012 and 2013.

associated with military contexts.³⁹ The use of Latin in multilingual writings is instead associated with the public praise of benefactors. The earliest of these is a text from 74,⁴⁰ in which the political institutions responsible for its commission are named respectively: βουλή καὶ δῆμος, *bwl' wdms*, and *boule et civitas Palmyrenorum*. Some have considered the use of the word *boule* in the Latin section of the text as a statement of identity of the city of Palmyra, which retained its character of Greek polis instead of employing more standard Roman formulae such as *senatus et civitas* or *senatus populusque*.⁴¹ When examining the trilingual texts from the city, scholars have described Latin as the language of the central power of Rome, Greek as the language of culture and commerce, and Palmyrene Aramaic as the language of the indigenous people, used in both the private sphere and in relations with the territories outside Roman control.⁴²

Perhaps the most fascinating issue surrounding the history of language at Palmyra is the complete disappearance of Latin from the inscriptional record of the city in the third century. It is commonly believed that Latin fell into disuse after the city was proclaimed a

³⁹ As'ad and Delplace 2002.

⁴⁰ As'ad and Yon 2001 n. 13.

⁴¹ Smith II 2013 121. See also Andrade 2013 191-196. However, it must be noted that this linguistic choice is not unusual in the cities of the Near East. On this formula, see also Starcky and Gawlikowski 1985 44.

⁴² As'ad and Delplace 2002 374. On the Palmyrene trilingual texts, see also Millar 1995 409-412. The trilingual inscriptions from Palmyra are the following: (1) a funerary inscription for the family of Hairanes Bonne (*PAT* 2801); (2) a funerary inscription for C. Virius Alcimus and T. Statilius Hermes (As'ad and Gawlikowski 1997 n. 113); (3) a funerary inscription for the family of L. Spedius Chrysanthus (*PAT* 0591); (4) a dedication of the city to Hairanes (As'ad and Yon 2001 n. 13); and (5) a dedication to L. Antonius Callistratus (*PAT* 1413). All these are dated to the first century, except for (5), which is dated to 174.

Roman *colonia* (AD 213-216), but the reasons for this remain elusive.⁴³ The present chapter will not venture into this issue.

6.4 Code alternation in military texts from Palmyra

As anticipated in the previous section, code alternation at Palmyra is not extraordinary linguistic behaviour. Of the 3,000 known Palmyrene texts, about 200 are bilingual, and a handful trilingual. A recurring feature of the bilingual Palmyrene texts, paralleled all over the Roman Empire, is that they usually contain more information in one of the languages.⁴⁴ Isaac (2009 61) observes that in the trilingual inscriptions, as a general rule, “the Latin is always brief, the Greek longer, and the Palmyrene longest”.⁴⁵ We will see that this does not necessarily apply (*mutatis mutandis*) to the bilingual military inscriptions from the city.

Two texts from the city (*PAT* 0308 and 1422) are particularly illustrative of the mechanisms that could govern language choice in honorific inscriptions for military men. Both texts belong to the agora, an open space with eleven entrances that hosted honorific inscriptions all around it.⁴⁶ Together with the Great Colonnade, which ran along the main

⁴³ On the disappearance of Latin from the Palmyrene inscriptional record, see Millar 1993 327 and 2013 17, Yon 2002 30, and Smith II 2013 132.

⁴⁴ For a recent, general overview of code alternation in the Palmyrene inscriptions, see Lieu 2017.

⁴⁵ An example of this can be found in the first-century trilingual dedication on a tomb built by Lucius Spedius Chrysanthus for himself and his family (*PAT* 0591): [L. S]pedius Chrysanthus | [vi]vos fecit sibi et suis | Λούκιος Σπέδιος Χρύσανθο[ς] | ζῶν ἐποίησεν ἑαυτῷ καὶ τοῖς | ἰδ[ίου]ς ἔτους θξτ' μηνὸς Γ[ορπ]ιαίου | byrh 'lwl šnt 3.100+60+5+2+[2] bnh [lwqy]ws | 'spdy[s] krystws mks' bhywhy [qbr' dnh] | lh wlbwhy wlbny byth ly[q]rh[wn] “Lucius Spedius Chrysanthus built this during his life for himself and his dear ones. Lucius Spedius Chrysanthus during his life built this for himself and his dear ones in the month Gorpaios of the year 369. In the month of Elul of the year 369. Lucius Spedius Chrysantus, a tax-collector, during his life built this for himself and in honour of his sons, and the sons of his house”.

⁴⁶ On the agora of Palmyra, see Delplace and Dentzer-Feydy 2005.

street of the city,⁴⁷ the agora boasts the highest concentration of epigraphic remains in Palmyra: here, both individual citizens and the city council dedicated inscriptions praising worthy citizens, creating a parade of honorific dedications that could be seen by anyone who passed through the busiest spaces of the city. The first-century dedication to a military commander named Caelesticus reads as follows:⁴⁸

<p>[Caelestico (centurioni) leg(ionis) III Gallicae] IIII Scy(thicae), VI Ferr(atae) [curatori - - - curator]i ripae superior(is) [et inferior(is), curator]i coh(ortis) I Sebas[t]e- nae supium (?) ---] Hierapoli Elabelus qui et Saturninus Malichi f(ilius) 5 H(onoris) C(ausa) ʃlm qlstqs qtrywn ʃ dy mn lgywn ʃ dy ʃrb ʃt ʃ dy ʃbd [ʃ]h ʃhb[ʃ] ---.</p>	<p>To Caelesticus (centurion) of the legions III Gallica, IIII Scythica, and VI Ferrata. [Curator] of the upper [and lower] banks, curator (?) of the cohors I Sebastena (?) ... at Hierapolis. Elabelus also known as Saturninus, son of Malichus, for honour's sake. A statue of Caelesticus, the centurion of the fourth legion, which Elahbel has made...</p>
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(PAT 0308)

This is the only Latin-Palmyrene text known from the city and is one of the earliest attestations of the presence of Roman soldiers in Palmyra.⁴⁹ The Latin section provides more substantial information on the dedicatee, whereas the Palmyrene section is more concise. As

⁴⁷ Galikowski 2005 55.

⁴⁸ As printed in Delplace and Dentzer-Feydy 2005. This reading is based on the first inspection of the inscription, when line 2 was still readable. See also the CIS edition (CIS 3962). This reading is much more precise than the PAT one, where there is a clear misreading of line 3. A high-resolution photograph of the inscription shows clearly the words coh(ortis) I Sebaste-. See Delplace and Yon 2005 155.

⁴⁹ The dating of the text to around 70 is based on the units in which Caelesticus served. The legio III Gallica was in Syria during the reign of Augustus until the 60s; it then returned to Syria under Vespasian and remained there throughout the reign of Diocletian. The IV Scythica was in Syria in the middle of the first century, and the VI Ferrata during the reign of Augustus and throughout the second century. On epigraphic evidence of Roman military units stationed at Palmyra, see As'ad and Delplace 2002 385.

is very common in Roman near-eastern epigraphy, here Latin is employed as the language most suited for military matters: it is used to communicate a full list of the units in which Caelesticus served, and to mention his involvement in policing the banks of the Euphrates. The Palmyrene section essentially contains only the name of the referent and his military rank. Yet one could say that there is in fact little “Palmyrene” in the Aramaic lines of the inscription. For the rank of Caelesticus, *qtrywn’ dy mn lgywn’*,⁵⁰ which constitutes much of the Palmyrene section, is itself a phrase whose content words are borrowings from Latin. Based on the known parallel attestations,⁵¹ it is possible that the borrowings *qtrywn’* and *lgywn’* were integrated into Palmyrene Aramaic already in the first century, but we cannot be sure to what extent local Palmyrenes were familiar with them. Be this as it may, in arranging information the way he did the commissioner targeted a specific audience with this dedication: readers of Latin and readers of Palmyrene Aramaic with some knowledge of Roman military terminology. Readers of Palmyrene without some understanding of Roman military ranks would have been virtually unable to access the message of the dedication altogether.

In contrast with Latin, the Palmyrene simply says that Caelesticus was a centurion “of the fourth legion”, meaning the *IV Scythica*. It is worth noting that, despite using borrowed military terminology such as *qtrywn’* and *lgywn’*, transliterating the Latin name *Caelesticus* into *qlstqs*, and providing a Latinized version of his own name at line 6, the dedicator did not transliterate the name of the fourth legion *Scythica* into Aramaic.⁵² Again, did “the fourth

⁵⁰ Here *qtrywn’* and *lgywn’* are linked by the pronoun *dy* “who” in idiomatic combination with the preposition *mn* “from”, “part of”, meaning “the one of”.

⁵¹ The noun *qtry’* is attested in a third-century text from Numidia (*PAT* 0253, see below); *lgywn’* is paralleled in *PAT* 1397 and 1548, both from the second century, and *PAT* 0278 and 0290 from the third century.

⁵² On the transliteration of Greek and Latin names into Palmyrene, see Starcky 1971.

legion” mean something to all speakers of Palmyrene Aramaic, or was this phrase meaningful only to a restricted group of Palmyrene speakers? Avoiding official nomenclature is a phenomenon attested in other inscriptions from the Roman Empire, and it appears to be a colloquial way to refer to military units.⁵³ Another example from Palmyra is found at *PAT* 0290, where the commissioner calls himself στρατιώτης λεγεῶνος Κυρηναϊκῆς in Greek and *dblgywn’ dy bšr’* “in the legion at Bosra” in the Palmyrene equivalent. It is typical of the Semitic languages to express concepts through the use of periphrasis, often indicating the geographical location of someone or something in order to describe it. In a bilingual Greek-Palmyrene text (*PAT* 0270), for instance, a group of merchants call themselves *tdmry’ wywny’ dy bslowy’* “the Palmyrenes and Greeks at Seleucia”. In the Punic inscriptions from Africa, Libya is often called *šd lbm* “the land of the Libyans”.⁵⁴ We can suggest that the avoidance of the ethnonyms *Scythica* and *Cyrenaica* could be defined, in the first instance, as a Semitic feature. It is however likely that, in the Roman military realm, such treatment of a unit’s name would not appear foreign to those who were familiar with the colloquial names of Roman units.⁵⁵ We therefore may be dealing with another choice of words that aligns the Palmyrene section of *PAT* 0308 with traditional Roman military language. This strengthens the view that Elahbel, in making this public dedication to Caelesticus, was creating solidarity with audiences familiar with the Roman military realm both in the Latin and Palmyrene languages.

As well as creating a sort of military aura through the employment of Latin and using Palmyrene to present information in a very specific manner, the commissioner of the

⁵³ In particular, referring to military units by their geographical locations instead of their official nomenclature is a phenomenon which has been described by M. P. Speidel (1981) as a form of colloquialism in military speech.

⁵⁴ For an example of this, see *KAI* 11.2.

⁵⁵ Consider also the colloquial expression *tertia Augustani* used by Iasucthan at Bu Njem (§ 5.6).

inscription appears to have made a conscious effort to appear related to the Roman culture in the Latin section of the text. Here, in addition to providing a Latinized version of his name (*Elahbelus*, line 6), he specifies his nickname: *Saturninus*. It is possible that Elahbel acquired a Roman name by contact with the military environment, possibly working with Caelestinus as a colleague or subordinate.⁵⁶ What is interesting from an onomastic perspective is that Elahbel's Latin and Palmyrene names are both evocative of the sacred sphere: *Saturninus* is related to the Roman god Saturn, and *Elahbel* is etymologically connected with Bel, the divine protector of Palmyra.⁵⁷ One therefore wonders whether the choice of *Saturninus* as a nickname was random or was rather informed by an understanding of Roman onomastic practices and culture.

A similar use of code alternation can be appreciated in a second-century dedication to a military commander:

[Τιβέριον Κλαύδιον Φι ---]		[To Tiberius Claudius Fi---]
ἑπαρχον σπειρης πρώτης Αύγουσ-		prefect of the first cohort Augusta
της Θρακῶν ἰππέων καὶ χειλῖαρχον		of Thracian cavalrymen, and legionary
λεγέωνος ἑκκαίδεκάτης Φλαουίας		centurion of the <i>legio XVI Flavia</i>
Φίρμης καὶ ἑπαρχον εἴλης πρώτης	5	<i>Firma</i> , and prefect of the <i>ala I Ulpia</i>
[Ούλπί]ας δρομαδαρίων Παλμυρη-		of Palmyrene camel riders, and citizen of
[νῶν καὶ πολεῖτη]ν τῆς Παλμυρη-		Palmyra. Marcus Ulpianus

⁵⁶ Cf. a funerary inscription from the city commemorating a soldier named *Saturninus* (As'ad and Delplace 2002 n. 24). We know of at least three other men called *Elahbel* active at Palmyra between the first and second centuries. For a comprehensive prosopographic study of Palmyra, see Piersimoni 1995. This study suggests that the Elahbel of PAT 0308 was a priest.

⁵⁷ On the onomastic association between Roman Saturn and chief deities from provincial religious traditions, see § 5.4.

[ν]ῶν πόλεως, Μάρκος Οὔλπιος		Yarhai, son of Hairanes, of the tribe Sergia,
Αιρανου υἱός, Σεργία, Ιαραίος τὸν		to his friend.
ἑαυτοῦ φίλον [---]	10	
Šlm[h] dnh dy ṭbrys qlwdys py[---]		This statue is of Tiberius Claudius Fi-
’l’ drmdry’ b[---]gr[.]yn[.] d[y ’qym]		leader of the <i>ala</i> of camel riders, to whom Marcus
lh mraq[s] ’lpys [y]rhy br ḥyr[n ’bgr		Ulpus Yarhai, son of Hairanes of Abgar, his friend,
rḥmh lyqrh byr]ḥ ’b šn[t ---].		dedicated in his honour,
(PAT 1422)		in the month Ab of the year [...

The name *Ulpus* suggests that the commissioner’s family probably acquired Roman citizenship during the reign of Trajan. We are thus likely to be dealing with a witness to the relationships between Roman military men and the highest strata of Palmyrene society in the middle of the second century, a time when the Romans had won over Parthia and the city continued to flourish under the control of a Roman garrison.⁵⁸ The Greek section provides a summary of Tiberius Claudius’ military career, including three commanding positions, and specifies that the dedicatee was a Palmyrene *polites*, a title used specifically to distinguish the Palmyrenes from members of other Greek *poleis* in Roman Syria.⁵⁹ Here, the commissioner presents himself as a member of the tribe *Sergia*, telling the reader that he is a Roman citizen.

⁵⁸ This text is dated between 150 and 160 based on the name of the commissioner, a member of one of the notable families of the city involved in the protection and leadership of caravans. On Yarhai’s family, see Bowersock 1989 167 and Yon 2002 100-101. Cf. *PAT* 1397, a dedication by Marcus Ulpus Abgar and his caravan to a legionary centurion. Marcus Ulpus Abgar is commonly considered to be the brother of Marcus Ulpus Yarhai. On this, see Delplace and Yon 2005 215.

⁵⁹ On the concept of Palmyrene citizenship, see Andrade 2013 197. For the conferment of honorary citizenship to other military men, see also *Inventaire* 9.23: ἡ βουλή [καὶ ὁ δῆμος] Γ Ουείβιον Κέλερα, ἑπαρχὸν τῆς ἐνθάδε εἵλης, τὸν πο|λείτην καὶ σύνοδρον τιμῆς καὶ εὐνοίας ἔνεκεν “The Senate and the People, to C. Vibius Celer, commander of the *ala* that is stationed here, citizen and delegate to the assembly, a testimony of his honour and goodwill”.

All the information delivered in Greek speaks to social status and to the participation in Roman institutions. We could say that Greek is used here as the language of social prestige. On the other hand, as we have seen in the dedication to Caelesticus, the Palmyrene lines provide fewer details about the referent. The dedicator opted to summarise the career of Tiberius Claudius by mentioning only one of the posts he held: the one as prefect of the *ala* of camel riders. We know that we are dealing with a Roman unit because the noun *ala* is borrowed from Latin, possibly via Greek.⁶⁰ Yet the word *praefectus* is not borrowed and, again, no mention of the official title of the unit (πρώτη Ούλπία δρομαδαρίων Παλμυρηνῶν) is made. In Palmyrene, Tiberius Claudius is simply a “commander of the *ala* of camel riders”. It was superfluous to write that the camel riders were Palmyrenes, a detail so obvious to the reader of Aramaic that it needed no specification. Yarhai himself is presented in completely different terms in the Palmyrene lines: here he is not a Roman citizen but simply “Marcus Ulpius Yarhai, son of Hairanes [son of Abgar]”, possibly with the mention of multiple generations in the filiation formula, another typical feature of Palmyrene epigraphic language.⁶¹ Given the social status of the commissioner, it would have arguably been more relevant to the reader of Palmyrene to know who Yarhai was in the local context, that is a member of one of the most prestigious families of the city,⁶² rather than reading about his membership in a Roman voting tribe.

It would obviously be wrong to claim that the Greek section of this inscription would have appeared foreign to the inhabitants of Palmyra. In the second century, most people who lived in the city were familiar with written and spoken Greek, and seeing Greek inscribed on

⁶⁰ Brock 2005 23.

⁶¹ *Passim* in the PAT edition.

⁶² On the notables of Palmyra, see Piersimoni 1995 and Yon 2002.

public-facing texts was ordinary. The author reveals a firm grasp of both the Greek and Palmyrene epigraphic conventions.⁶³ Again, what is remarkable here is not the alternation between two languages per se, but the message they convey. Code alternation allows Yarhai to display, on the same stele, that he and his friend belonged to multiple traditions. Greek enables him to perform convergence with audiences from all over the Empire, including Palmyra, and to portray himself and Tiberius Claudius as Roman citizens. Aramaic, on the other hand, enables Yarhai to create solidarity with indigenous readers, thereby excluding those who might not have been able to read Aramaic and capture the subtle choices of content he made in performing code alternation. Here, both Yarhai and Tiberius Claudius are fashioned as Palmyrenes. Tiberius Claudius is said to have participated in Roman institutions as the leader of a military *ala*, but he did so in the most “Palmyrene” way possible: by leading camel riders. As for Yarhai, despite bearing a *praenomen* and a *nomen*, he is presented as the son of Hairanes and grandson of Abgar.

PAT 0308 and 1422 are only representative of a wider phenomenon of multilingualism at Palmyra. As mentioned above, it is not uncommon to find bi- and trilingual texts in the eastern provinces. Yet, when we restrict our field of investigation to texts connected with the Roman army, we can appreciate how some social dynamics experienced by the military community in the city are reflected in language choice. Despite presenting very similar treatments of information in Latin or Greek by contrast with their Palmyrene sections, the two texts reveal

⁶³ Note the accurate use of the Greek accusative, filiation formulae, and tribal affiliation in the Greek. In the Palmyrene he uses the typical formula *šlm' dnh dy* “a statue dedicated to” as the opening, and the Palmyrene date at the bottom. On the use of calendar dates in Palmyrene inscriptions, see Gianto 2005.

different attitudes on the part of the commissioners towards their dedicatees, their audiences, and the types of image they wished to project of themselves as dedicators.

In the dedication to Caelesticus, we see a will to showcase a strong relation with the Roman army. The use of Latin, the specification of Elahbel's Latin nickname, the repeated use of borrowings for Roman military terminology, and the colloquial treatment of official Roman military nomenclature seem to reveal that the commissioner intended to permeate his dedication with military flavour, both in Latin and in Palmyrene, targeting only audiences with a grasp of Roman military institutions. The dedication was set up in the late first century, which was relatively early days for Roman soldiers at Palmyra. At this time, the presence of military men in the city may have still been perceived with some sort of respect and perhaps fear by the indigenous population.

Things are slightly different in the dedication to Tiberius Claudius where, in line with language use in the eastern provinces, Greek is the language that better expresses participation in Roman institutions. These come across powerfully in the status of the commissioner and his dedicatee, who are both citizens of the Roman Empire and citizens of Palmyra, and in the involvement of the dedicatee in leading military positions. The Palmyrene, on the other hand, has a stronger local flavour, prioritising camel riding and family relations as the markers of social prestige over affiliation to Roman institutions.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Adams (2003a 259) suggests that despite its clear military flavour in the Greek section, the text might have been dedicated in the private sphere rather than as a means to honour to the military career of Tiberius Claudius. This, in Adams' view, would also explain why the dedication was set up in Greek and Palmyrene rather than in Latin and Palmyrene (a more common choice for Palmyrene military texts). However, it is difficult to accept that military texts in the city would be set up primarily in Latin. There is in fact plenty of evidence for Greek-Palmyrene texts concerning people involved in Roman military activities at Palmyra (e.g. *PAT* 1397 and 0290).

These inscriptions, where Latin and Greek appear as markers of military identity, do not follow the general pattern observed by Isaac (2009 61) in relation to the trilingual inscriptions at Palmyra.⁶⁵ Here the Latin and Greek parts are at least as long as the Palmyrene, and the Palmyrene is used to convey concepts strictly related to the Roman culture and tradition. The linguistic features observed in the code alternation in the two texts could be taken as representative of the changing nature of the military scene in the city of Palmyra. At first, the Roman army was perceived as separate from the military forces of the city. Expressing belonging to the Roman military community may have been a stark social statement for local Palmyrenes like Elahbel. In other contexts, such as second-century Palmyra, when Parthia had already been defeated by Rome, Palmyrene soldiers had started to participate in Roman military activities, developing their own role and identity within the Roman military institution. The feeling of belonging to a subgroup within the Roman army is reflected in the linguistic behaviour of Palmyrene soldiers deployed to other provinces of the Empire, where audiences were completely different from the urban readership in Palmyra.

6.5. Palmyrene soldiers abroad and code alternation

The bilingual Palmyrene inscriptions concerning soldiers beyond Palmyra, primarily found in military sites in Dacia and Numidia, present similar linguistic features to one another and, unlike the texts from the city, they are all funerary texts. These inscriptions were set up by members of communities composed of a substantial number of Palmyrenes,⁶⁶ who operated

⁶⁵ Quoted earlier in this section.

⁶⁶ On the Palmyrene communities in Dacia, see Bianchi 1987 and Țentea 2012. On the Palmyrenes in Africa, see Equini Schneider 1988.

in contexts where Latin was the most commonly written language, and where Palmyrene was rarely seen, if at all, on public-facing inscriptions. The role of code alternation in these texts is thus different from what we saw in Palmyra. Here, Palmyrene enabled commissioners to showcase their local roots alongside the language of Rome in the West, and is perhaps a stronger statement of identity compared to the texts examined above. As already mentioned in relation to the epitaph of Regina at South Shields (§ 4.4.2), in bilingual Latin-Palmyrene texts from the West, Palmyrene acts as a minority, in-group language. In this sense, the employment of Palmyrene Aramaic away from Syria is at once a statement of belonging to a specific linguistic and cultural group, and an act of linguistic divergence from many readers.

One of the second-century texts from near Tibiscum in Dacia reads:

<i>D(is) M(anibus) M(arcus)</i>		To the spirits of the departed. Marcus
<i>Fl(avius) Guras liddei</i>		Flavius Guras son of liddeus,
<i>optio ex n(umero) Palmur(enorum)</i>		<i>optio</i> of the <i>numerus Palmyrenorum</i> .
<i>vixit ann(is) XXXXII mil(itavit)</i>		He lived 42 years, served in the army
<i>ann(is) XXI. Ael(ius) Habibis</i>	5	for 21. Aelius Habibis
<i>pontif(ex) et h(eres) b(ene) m(erito) p(osuit)</i>		chief priest and heir, willingly and deservedly set this up.
<i>gwr' ydy hptyn.</i>		Guras son of Iaddi. <i>Optio</i> .

(PAT 0251)

The Latin section provides extensive information about the deceased, including his *tria nomina*, full military affiliation, age at death, and years of service. The Palmyrene includes nothing more than three essential words: the deceased's Palmyrene name (*Guras*), a patronymic, and the noun *hptyn*, borrowed from Latin. Despite the disproportionately longer Latin text, it would be wrong to claim that the Palmyrene is any less “military” than the Latin section of the inscription, for the only word that it is actually written in Palmyrene beyond

Guras' name is actually his Roman military title.⁶⁷ It is fair to say that many people able to read Palmyrene in second-century Tibiscum were more or less directly connected with the military community therein, and would have been able to understand Guras' role in his military unit.⁶⁸ Like the dedication of Elahbel to Caelestinus in Palmyra (*PAT 0308*), the use of Palmyrene in this text is essentially a "Roman military" one. In Latin, Habibi writes that Guras belonged to (and had arguably arrived in Dacia via) a *numerus Palmyrenorum*. No mention of Guras' origins is needed in the Aramaic: anyone able to read the Palmyrene Aramaic characters would have understood that Guras' homeland was Palmyra.

There is an interesting sign of bilingualism in Guras' epitaph. Editors tend to supply the words for "son", respectively *filius* and *br* at lines 3 and 7, when in fact they appear neither in the Latin nor in the Palmyrene. According to Adams (2003a 255-258), the absence of the filiation marker is to be taken as a sign of interference from the dedicator's primary language, in that Aramaic can establish relationships of belonging simply by juxtaposing the name of the father with that of the son.⁶⁹ This interpretation does not stand up as strongly to further considerations of the Palmyrene corpus. An overview of the Palmyrene texts edited by Hillers and Cussini (1996) shows that in Palmyrene Aramaic it was far from common practice to mark patronymics in epigraphic writing without *br*. In this respect, *gwr' ydy* at line 7 of Guras'

⁶⁷ For the opposite view, see Adams 2003a 256.

⁶⁸ In general, on Roman military units stationed at Tibiscum and other military settlements in Dacia, see the material collected by Țentea (2012).

⁶⁹ It must be noted that belonging in Aramaic is indicated not simply by juxtaposing nouns or personal names, but through the construct state, a syntactical feature typical of the Semitic languages which modifies head nouns (and not modifiers, as in Latin and Greek). The construct state has inflectional endings. In the masculine singular, however, it happens that the absolute and construct states present the same endings, thus giving the impression that belonging (including father-and-son relationships) is expressed simply through juxtaposition. For reference, see Van Pelt 2011. It should also be noted that most Semitic languages developed filiation formulae, with the construct state for father-son relationships becoming increasingly more unusual.

epitaph represents an unusual filiation formula by Palmyrene standards. This is especially at odds with the habit of including multiple generations with multiple filiations markers in Palmyrene epigraphy.⁷⁰ As already argued in relation to the linguistic background of Barates at South Shields, Habibis must have himself been a speaker of Greek in addition to Palmyrene and Latin. I therefore propose that the omission of *f(i)lius* from the Latin section of *PAT* 0251 was not a Semitic feature but rather a sign of interference from Greek, where filiations are commonly marked through bare genitive patronymics. This feature is partially paralleled in a bilingual text from third-century Numidia (*PAT* 0253, text reported two paragraphs below); here the filiation *br* appears in the Palmyrene but not in the Latin, where only the genitive of the father's name is used, mirroring the Greek construction. We therefore appreciate once again that, in addition to their own language, the Palmyrenes affiliated to the Roman army were also vehicles for the propagation of Greek and linguistic features influenced by Greek around the Empire. So, overall, unlike what we saw in the epitaph of Regina in Britain, here the interference from Greek seems to have affected the Palmyrene as well as the Latin text of the inscription. We could wonder whether Habibis, a speaker of Palmyrene Aramaic, was as familiar with the Palmyrene epigraphic norms as he was with the Graeco-Roman ones. It is possible that, by dedicating in Palmyrene, he used a language with which he was familiar, and which most suited his ethnolinguistic background, but which was not his preferred choice for commissioning stone inscriptions. This possibility is ultimately impossible to confirm, but it

⁷⁰ Consider, among many others, *PAT* 1429, an inscription in the agora containing multiple two-line texts. Here there are six multiple filiations, all with *br* repeated twice to mark fathers and grandfathers. Cf. the reconstruction of line 13 proposed in *PAT* 0308 above, suggesting that when multiple filiations were specified, the second one (establishing a relationship between the father and the grandfather) could omit the marker *br*.

certainly suits a geographical context where Habibis would have been less exposed to epigraphic writing in Aramaic than in other parts of the Empire.

More bilingual Latin-Palmyrene inscriptions are attested in the western provinces, many of which are too fragmentary for us to attempt any examinations of the nature of their code alternation. We know that the military community at Tibiscum used the Palmyrene dating system on bilingual inscriptions, continuing the use of the epigraphic conventions typical of Palmyra. A funerary text associated with the *numerus Palmyrenorum* (PAT 0994) is dated to the year 470 of the Palmyrene calendar, corresponding to AD 158. A fragment of a Latin-Palmyrene funerary text associated with the army in Numidia (PAT 0990)⁷¹ shows that in the third century the Palmyrenes abroad continued to dedicate funerary inscriptions with the element *ḥbl*, expressing grievance, which we already encountered at South Shields. Yet, as well as maintaining a strong tradition of Palmyrene epigraphic writing, the Palmyrene community within the Roman troops also absorbed elements typical of Roman epigraphy. A third-century bilingual dedication from Numidia reads as follows:

<i>D(is) M(anibus) S(acrum)</i>		Sacred to the spirits of the departed,
<i>Suricus Rubatis</i>		Suricus son of Rubat,
<i>Pal(murenus) sag(ittarius) c(enturia) Maximi</i>		Palmyrene archer in the century of Maximus.
<i>(vixit) ann(is) XLV m(ilit)-</i>		He lived 45 years, served in the army
<i>avit ann(is) XIII</i>	5	for 14 years.
<i>npš' dnh dy</i>		Dedicated to
<i>šrykw br rbt</i>		Suricus son of Rubat,
<i>tmdwry' qšt'</i>		Palmyrene archer
<i>qṭry' mksmws</i>		in the century of Maximus.
<i>br šnt 40+[5]</i>	10	45 years old.
<i>ḥbl.</i>	(PAT 0253)	Alas!

⁷¹ The Latin text is too fragmentary to examine, but Chabot (1932 266) reports readable elements including *mil*, which would suggest that the dedicatee was a soldier.

Here both sections are crafted in accordance with the Latin and Palmyrene epigraphic traditions respectively, including fixed elements such as *DMS* and *hbl*, but they present a very similar treatment of information in both languages. Suricus' military affiliation is mentioned in Latin, as expected, and in the Palmyrene. Unlike the text from Tibiscum, here we find the ethnic origin of the dedicatee clearly stated also in the Palmyrene section, where he is said to be a *tmdwry* "Palmyrene" archer in the century of Maximus. In addition to specifying the military affiliation of Suricus, the Palmyrene states his age at the time of death, which is paralleled but not common in Palmyrene funerary texts,⁷² and it does not include the much more common date of death according to the Palmyrene calendar, which is widely found in funerary inscriptions from Palmyra and other provinces.⁷³ At Lambaesis in Algeria, for example, *Mocimus Sumonis filius Palmurenus* is said to have lived thirty years in the Latin section of his epitaph, but the Palmyrene section states that he passed away in the year 461 (AD 149). The same phenomenon is attested at Tibiscum (*PAT* 0994), where Neses son of Yarhai from the *numerus Palmyrenorum* is said to have died at the age of thirty in Latin, whereas the Palmyrene reports only that he died in the year 470 (AD 158). Again, we find that the information conveyed in the Palmyrene section of Suricus' epitaph is intended for a Palmyrene-reading audience with a clear understanding of Roman epigraphic norms and familiar with Roman military terminology. If it were not for the employment of Palmyrene

⁷² The only known examples are *PAT* 0007, 0716, 0717, 0721, 0888, 0923. Of these, the dated ones were all set up from the second half of the second century onwards; that is, during the Roman occupation.

⁷³ For examples of funerary texts in Palmyra with only the year and not the age of the deceased specified, see among others *PAT* 0094, 0649, 0657, 0658, 0662, 0665, 0732, 0733, 0813, 0821, 0830, 0868, 0095, 0910, 1010, 1055, 1160, 1162, 1217-1219, 1266. *PAT* 0922 mentions both the age of the deceased and the year of death. For bilingual Greek-Palmyrene examples with the date specified in both languages, see among others *PAT* 1134, 1141-1143.

Aramaic, the funerary inscription of Suricus would read as an ordinary Roman dedication throughout: by the third century, Roman epigraphic language had been adopted – or indeed borrowed – into Palmyrene. The use of Palmyrene in this text is obviously meant to honour the origins of the deceased and of the commissioners; yet it does not appear to stand in stark contrast with the Latin. It rather echoes the message written in the Latin section. Again, what we read here is essentially “Roman Palmyrene”.

The epigraphic phenomenon of the Palmyrenes abroad is not limited to the Roman military. Merchants and travellers who commissioned inscriptions around the Empire contribute to our understanding of the Palmyrenes as a people who evidently had a strong tradition of epigraphic and possibly literary writing.⁷⁴ But for military men in particular, the professional contexts in which they set up their bilingual funerary texts are fundamental. First and foremost, Palmyrene Aramaic is attested only in funerary texts, suggesting that the will to display soldiers’ belonging to the Palmyrene culture may have been more imperative in contexts where individual identity was key. Secondly, we must also consider the institutional context of the Palmyrene inscriptions in the West. In fact, we must remind ourselves that the military Palmyrene texts from Dacia and Numidia emanate primarily from the *numeri Palmyrenorum*. In the second century, the *numeri* were still irregular units formed of “barbarians” recruited from outside the Roman territories and therefore had a strong ethnic character.⁷⁵ In this respect, it is perhaps curious that the *numeri Palmyrenorum* were called *numeri* at all, for the city of Palmyra was already part of the Empire at the time of their

⁷⁴ Millar 1993 328-329.

⁷⁵ On the Roman *numeri*, see in particular Southern 1989.

formation.⁷⁶ A recent study by Grainger (2017) suggests that the auxiliary units called *numeri Palmyrenorum* were in fact recruited not from Palmyra but from the unoccupied territories outside the city. Alternatively, continues Grainger, it is possible that Palmyra was still not yet considered an ordinary Roman territory at the time of their formation. Either way, even if they were called *numeri* simply out of convenience, the units *Palmyrenorum* were clearly considered ethnic units, and this may have reinforced the inclination of their members to display Palmyrene origins on stone inscriptions.

The Palmyrene texts from the *numeri* stationed in the West enable us to appreciate how the commissioners' perception of audience changed according to geographical location, influencing the way in which content was selected for the Palmyrene sections of bilingual dedications. If in Palmyra it may have been a strong statement to write "Roman Palmyrene" in the first century, among the second- and third-century *numeri* the use of military terminology and Roman epigraphic conventions in the Palmyrene language must have been ordinary business.

6.6 Conclusions

The few texts considered here have enabled us to examine only particular aspects of language choice between Palmyrene, Greek, and Latin in public inscriptions related to the military.

⁷⁶ We know that in the second century some *numeri* were raised in Palmyra and then posted to Dacia, Numidia, and Egypt. Note that the activity of Palmyrene soldiers in Egypt significantly postdates the second century. Consider: *P.Oxy.* 43.3115, an order to supply barley to the Palmyrene soldiers from 271; *SB* 5.8810, a dedication dated 216; *O.Did.* 286, an ostrakon datable to 235, with two legible Greek letters followed by two lines of Palmyrene writing. It is possible that the units stationed in Egypt were deputed to patrolling the desert and protect caravan transits. On this, see Alston 1995 188.

Considering these in the wider framework of Palmyrene epigraphy, there are some general patterns worth emphasising in connection with the language attitudes of Palmyrene soldiers and their associates.

Most importantly, unlike many linguistic groups that participated in Roman military life, the Palmyrenes had a long epigraphic tradition. By the time the Roman army took over Palmyra and local men began to be recruited into Roman units, the Palmyrenes had developed their own linguistic means and skills to participate in Roman institutions. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that they emerge in primary evidence as a strong linguistic group within the Roman army.

The phenomenon that the present chapter set out to examine was specifically the Palmyrene attitude towards code alternation and, more broadly, language choice. A focus on the concept of audience enabled us to identify a specific use of Palmyrene, which I termed “Roman Palmyrene”; that is, the employment of Palmyrene Aramaic to convey essentially Roman concepts. This linguistic behaviour is suggestive of commissioners whose intention was to target specifically readers of Palmyrene Aramaic who had an understanding of Roman military terminology, culture, and epigraphic conventions. In specific writing contexts, such as urban Palmyra in the first century, this can be interpreted as a sign of in-group language used by those who actively participated in Roman institutions, and of divergence from those who did not participate in Roman military life. In other situations, such as the communities that developed around the military settlements in the West, the use of Roman military language in Palmyrene would have reinforced the identity of the Palmyrenes as a distinct, constituent element of the Roman army.

All such linguistic attitudes ultimately show the multiple identities that the Palmyrenes performed while participating in Roman institutions. In particular, it is evident that Palmyrene

soldiers participated fully in military life, without giving up their sense of belonging to a distinct community within the army – and not least where language was concerned. Examining the use of code alternation performed by the Palmyrenes enables us to appreciate linguistic behaviours that once again align with the concept of incorporation.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Review of the framework

On the western bank of the Nile, opposite Luxor, stand two massive stone statues of Amenophis III, pharaoh of Egypt in the fourteenth century BC. Damaged by an earthquake in 27 BC, the fractured side of the northern statue began to make a sound at sunrise, becoming an attraction for pilgrims already in the first century BC.¹ The sound was believed to be the voice of the colossus, and hearing it was an omen of good fortune. Those who heard it recorded the event by inscribing an account of their aural experience on the base of the statue; 107 such inscriptions survive, of which sixty are Greek, forty-five Latin, and two Greek-Latin bilingual.²

An overview of the texts reveals that Roman soldiers were assiduous visitors of the site.³ In 134, Marcius Hermogenes left two inscriptions the colossus inscriptions:

Μάρκιος Ἑρμογένης ἔκλυον μέγα φωνήσαντος
Μέμνονος, ANTEΛΛΟΥ
ΔΑΟ βαλόντος.

I Marcius Hermogenes heard Memnon speak
loudly at sunrise.

(A. and É. Bernard 1960, n. 39)

¹ Strabo (17.1.46) writes that the prefect Aelius Gallus visited the site in 24 BC. Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.61) tells us that Germanicus visited in 19. For a recent historical study of the colossi, see Rosenmeyer 2018.

² For an edition of the inscriptions on the colossus, see A. and É. Bernard 1960.

³ Of the fifty-nine inscriptions that report the profession of their authors, forty-five are signed by soldiers or members of provincial administration.

*Q(uintus) Marcius Hermogenes praef(ectus)
classis Aug(ustae) Alex(andrinae) [audit
Memnonem
Hora (prima et dimidia) Nonis Martis Serviano III
et Varo co(n)s(ulibus).*

(A. and É Bernard 1960, n. 38)

Quintus Marcius Hermogenes, prefect of the *classis Augusta* at Alexandria, heard Memnon at the first hour and a half, on the Nones of March, in the third consulship of Servianus and the consulship of Varus.

There is nothing remarkable about Hermogenes' use of two languages per se. The context of these lines is second-century Egypt, where both Latin and Greek were commonly written and spoken. In terms of audience, then, it is difficult to argue that Hermogenes was actively targeting a specific group with each language. A. and É. Bernard (1960 12) claim that the Latin lines inscribed by Hermogenes lack originality compared to his Greek inscription. In their view, Greek is the language of the "vanité litteraire" that enables commissioners to show their poetic ability, while Latin only conveys factual information and is therefore "banale" compared to the Greek hexameters. This is a wrong view of the social role played by language choice and code alternation in the Roman world, especially considering the military content of the Latin section. What is interesting in this text is that, comparable to the bilingual military inscriptions from the city of Palmyra (§ 6.4), Hermogenes uses both languages to express social prestige: Greek is used as the language of poetry, Latin as the language most suited for expressing military matters.⁴ Whatever his linguistic background, code alternation is a communicative strategy that enabled Hermogenes to present himself to the world as a cultured Roman, a soldier, and arguably

⁴ Cf. A. and É. Bernard 1960, n.13. This is also bilingual, with Greek verse embedded in the Latin text, which is in prose. The two lines in Greek here are a quotation of the words supposedly uttered by the colossus.

also as a Roman citizen.⁵ It is through code alternation that Hermogenes, more or less consciously, could express a multiplicity of identities.

Linguistic behaviours of this sort are extremely common in the Roman world, reflecting the concept of *uterque sermo noster* (Suet. *Claud.* 42.1). However, despite the ordinary nature of code alternation in Roman epigraphic writing, when we revive our interest in the identities performed in the written word and for the audiences of written texts, we can advance our understanding of the factors that influenced the choice of one language over another, or indeed the rationale behind the employment of more than one language in the same piece of writing.

The present study was carried out following a methodology used in modern sociolinguistics, and especially through a tripartite framework structured on major factors that govern the ways in which we attune our language: audience, identity, and the practical aspects involved in getting our message across to our interlocutors. Largely inspired by Adams' work, this framework has enabled us to read written material from the Roman army through sociolinguistic lenses, generating new perspectives on the mechanisms that influenced language choice among military people. This, in turn, has enabled us to gain a better understanding of the "official language" of the Roman army, and to assess the value of the choices made between Latin and other languages by those who participated in military life (see below, § 7.2). In doing so, the framework has reinforced the vision of the Roman army as an institution composed of multiple provincial armies, and showed how this composite structure was reflected in the way writers connected with the army approached the issue of language choice (more or less consciously) in day-to-day life. This appeared

⁵ Note the use of *tria nomina* in the Latin as opposed to the use of two names in the Greek.

particularly strongly in chapter 2, which considered the communicative potential of administrative “paperwork” produced by military units. The general impression that emerged is that administrative documents were written at two levels. The first was a high-level, formal one, with writings aimed (directly or potentially) at audiences outside the units that produced them. This is the level at which the army presented itself as an institution. Here, we can observe situations in which Latin was a choice that, albeit not imposed, was necessary – or at least preferable – to facilitate workflows within units, and between units and provincial civil administration. The second level is the interpersonal one, a reminder of the fact that military units were composed of and administered by people who prioritised efficiency. This level of administrative writing, mainly appreciable in the documents produced by and for individual units, is reflected in a more flexible, pragmatic choice between Latin and Greek, largely influenced by the geographical context and by the language competences of the parties. The vision of the Roman military as an institution that unified regional armies is reflected also in the testimonies to the multiple linguistic groups that composed the Roman troops, which are again a theme that emerged in various forms and circumstances throughout this thesis. Consider for instance the letters from Bu Njem, and the onomastic patterns observed in the funerary and religious texts from Britain. The use that linguistic subgroups made of Latin and local languages points to the experience of process of incorporation.

Overall, despite the manifold limitations of studying language as a social phenomenon both in the present and in the past (§ 7.3), the framework of analysis used here has enabled us to develop a stronger perception of the factors that might have influenced language use in Roman military environments, and to observe some patterns of language choice within military communities. There are many aspects of language that were considered in the analysis of primary sources. Here, I summarise the main findings of this study.

7.2 Patterns that have emerged

The present study set off to explore the question of language choice in Roman military contexts and – a concept intrinsically connected with this – the role of Latin as the official language of the imperial Roman army. Three main patterns emerged from the analysis.

First, Latin served multiple purposes. In administrative contexts, it seems to have been used to record information aimed at broad audiences or for documents endowed with a symbolic force. This is especially evident in the diplomas and in the strength reports. I argued that compiling specific administrative “paperwork” in Latin would have facilitated the comparison of information about units stationed all over the Empire, and would have therefore facilitated the cross-management of units and their deployments. Latin is therefore at once a lingua franca for units recruited from different parts of the Empire, and a symbolic language used in solemn, formal circumstances. Does this suffice to consider Latin the official language of the Roman army? Because of the array of meanings that the adjective “official” can carry, and the misunderstandings that can arise from it when used in a loose sense, I have purposefully avoided using this term in my analysis. All things considered, it would be foolish not to consider Latin as an “official language” in military contexts; but since Greek enjoyed an equally official role in large parts of the Empire, and Latin was often the only available language for writing in many provinces, we can perhaps propose some alternative definitions. Overall, in contexts where other languages were available, Latin was the language through which the army could distinguish itself from other Roman institutions. We could therefore speak of it as an “institutional” language of the army. The army as an institution also seems to have differentiated itself from the “civilian” through Latin, the language that best expressed its esprit de corps. This definition is of course mostly applicable to situations where

both Latin and other languages were available for administrative purposes, which are the only contexts that are valuable to investigate this type of language choice.

Second, the practical and symbolic roles that Latin held at the institutional level are reflected at the interpersonal level. Latin was exploited as a lingua franca in communication between individuals with different linguistic backgrounds. This was possibly the case, for example, of military men from Dacia who exchanged pieces of communication with speakers of indigenous languages (§ 3.3.3). The evidence from Egypt and North Africa suggests other practical usages of Latin. Whether Greek was available or not, communicating parties could copy Latin mechanically from pre-written templates, which facilitated written communication in language contact situations. No primary evidence survives for such tools, but the epistolary material from the Egyptian desert and Tripolitania suggest that they were probably a common aid that supported daily communication between military forts and outposts.

Through the employment of Latin, individuals and groups could distinguish themselves as participants in the military experience from those who did not take part in it. In other words, Latin was a language that enabled writers to create and reinforce their military identity when Greek and other languages were commonly written and spoken. This is evident in the correspondence between Roman soldiers (chapter 3, *passim*), the onomastic data from the western provinces, and in plenty of examples of code alternation in public-facing inscriptions. Latin enabled members of military communities to feel that they “fit in” in a social scene where Latin had a symbolic value. Opting for Latin over or alongside other languages could be a statement of social validation, and examples survive of writers who made special efforts to write Latin rather than other languages more readily available. Among other examples from Egypt (§ 3.2 and § 3.3), the letters of Terentianus are particularly relevant to the subject of fitting in: here Latin emerges as the language of camaraderie, which

enables a junior soldier to feel deserving of promotion before a senior colleague. In this respect, I suggested that the status of an addressee could have an impact on language choice in bilingual situations, depending on the identity that senders wished to display when writing to their superiors. All things considered, in multilingual interpersonal relationships, Latin appears to have been the language of power: the choice that many speakers and writers in the army made when they wanted to be perceived as associated with Roman might. A representative example of this is also the dedicatory inscription to Tiberius Claudius at Palmyra (*PAT* 1422, § 6.4), where Latin is used specifically to express the relationship between the referent and Roman institutions, whereas Aramaic conveys his role in the Palmyrene social fabric. The association of the Latin language with power is still visible in contexts where Latin was the most common (if not the only) language of writing. Here it was used as the language with which speakers of local languages participated actively in imperial society. This is, again, especially evident in the onomastic patterns observed in northern Britain (§ 4.3, including personal names and theonyms). Assigning Roman names to the new generations indicates the will of provincial military communities to invest their children with an identity that would help them fit into the wider imperial society. Another example is found in the *carmina epigraphica* set up by the centurions at Bu Njem (§ 5.6). Here Latin is an elite language used to compose poems permeated with traditional Roman imagery, which is the power that had extended its control in Africa up to the *limes Tripolitanus*. We therefore encounter once again the desire to fit in, socially and emotionally, through the Latin language.

Third, languages other than Latin played a crucial, active role in the running of the army. Above all, relying on multiple languages ensured efficiency in fast-paced garrison environments. This emerges clearly in multiple pieces of correspondence from the Egyptian desert, where Greek is omnipresent, and even more strongly in the letters of Aemilius

Aemilianus at Bu Njem (§ 5.5). In the latter, the use of local languages proved itself crucial for the successful interaction between the contractors who delivered goods at the fort and the military personnel who received them. In remote settings such as desert outposts, language mediators such as Aemilianus ensured the sustainment of military communities. Though direct evidence for this is not available, except perhaps in some pieces of Palmyrene writing at the Egyptian desert outposts, on the basis of the texts examined here, we can surmise that languages other than Latin and Greek were also spoken to run day-to-day activities within military forts. Think for example about the *numeri Palmyrenorum* stationed in Dacia and in Numidia, or about the Germanic units in northern Britain.

The usage of languages other than Latin and Greek on stone inscriptions enabled us to expand the discussion to the linguistic subgroups that composed the Roman army. There is explicit evidence only for the use of Palmyrene Aramaic in Syria and Dacia, and for Berber languages in North Africa, but various pieces of information from epigraphy and literature project the image of military communities as much more linguistically diverse than commonly assumed. As well as developing a military identity by participating in military activities, these groups reinforced and held on to their identities as ethnolinguistic communities within the army by communicating in their native languages as well as in Latin and/or Greek. Evidence of this ethnolinguistic vitality can be found again in name-giving patterns, which often reveal an eagerness to invest name-bearers and deities with local identities by giving them names drawn from indigenous onomastic traditions.

Overall, contextualising communication through a careful consideration of the multiple factors that influenced it can help us unlock some aspects of language use and identity that often remain obscure or overlooked in historical contexts. Carrying out this type of analysis on Roman military writings can help us appreciate to a greater extent how multiple

identities, and especially those developed through an experience of the army, were expressed through language choice in situations where more than one language was available. It also contributes to a more sophisticated understanding of the practicalities that may have influenced language choice in work environments where effective written communication was paramount for the delivery of day-to-day tasks.

Studying patterns of language choice in Roman military communities also enables us to interrogate broader aspects of language history in which the army, a constituent member of Roman imperial societies, played an active role. The Roman world was composed of multiple, interwoven linguistic entities, which underwent significant change throughout the imperial period. One of the most significant of these was the progressive, differential Latinization of the Roman territories, a phenomenon of particular significance in the western provinces. Because of their composite nature, military communities lend themselves as useful case studies for the observation of attitudes towards Latin in the East and in the West. The material presented here showed diverse attitudes towards the adoption and employment of the Latin language in different domains of communication: we saw enthusiastic writers of Latin as a second language; the practical efforts to employ Latin to be understood by readers; and possibly even examples of more or less explicit linguistic resistance. Language patterns among military communities offer insights into the role that social status played in the progressive linguistic change undergone by the Roman world. The elites and administrative classes, who expressed themselves linguistically in some of the stone inscriptions considered here and in the high-level administrative documents, were more exposed to Latin and therefore adopted it more readily than other social groups. They also show sensibility towards the use of traditionally Roman expressions of language: among others, the composition of hexameters by native speakers of Punic is a telling example. Military documents also attest

to the “boot-on-the-ground” role played by members of less prominent social classes in the gradual processes of language change. Finally, the material considered here offers insights into important elements of language interactions, appreciable in the use of other languages alongside or instead of Latin in various domains, especially in name-giving and religious practice.

The army therefore presents us with multiple and diverse “micro versions” of the Roman world, providing examples of the multiple attitudes that the broader community had in a linguistically composite and dynamic landscape such as the Empire. In turn, a focus on the material produced by the participants in military life helps us acknowledge the importance of the role that the army played as a vector of Latinization and language change more in general in the Roman territories. There is obviously no simple way to look at this issue, but we should not yield too readily to aporia on the matter. The documents considered here broadly portray the army as an accelerating factor of language spread. The habit of military people to record information in writing, in the form of administrative records, on stone inscriptions and paraphernalia, should encourage us to believe that, as well as favouring the increase of literacy, military communities played an important role in the propagation of Latin (and other languages, as I have argued in different points of this thesis) across the Empire.

There is another layer of complexity to consider in relation to the impact that the army had on language spread and use. In addition to addressing the question of identity expressed in the employment of Latin when other languages were available, parts of this work considered the notions of “Roman Greek” and “Roman Palmyrene”. Experiencing military life also entailed coming in contact with linguistic domains, such as the arts and medicine, which traditionally saw the employment of Greek in the West as in the East. We could therefore

suggest that the army also played an active role in the spread of what we have defined as “Roman Greek” in parts of the Empire where Greek may have not been, at least among most of the population, a commonly written language. The notion of “Roman Palmyrene”, on the other hand, opens routes to consider the impact that the army had on indigenous languages. Participation in military communities led to the creation and borrowing of terminology to express Roman military concepts in local languages. The military experience could therefore result into the development of new, “military” linguistic identities within broader language groups. In Palmyra, we argued, there existed groups who used Roman military words in Palmyrene already in the first and second centuries, and those who adopted Roman military terminology in “Roman Palmyrene” at a later stage. Observing the role that the army played in phenomena of this type enables us to expand our understanding of how power dynamics are reflected in language use, an issue commonly tackled in modern and historical linguistics.

7.3 Limitations and further work

The main limitation of any study focused on specific social groups is the fluidity of human societies. In the introduction I outlined how we can define military communities in order to study them as social groups in the Roman Empire (§ 1.2). In principle, I proposed to reject the binary notion of the army based on profession, in favour of a more realistic vision where both soldiers and non-soldiers are constituent parties of and active participants in military life. This in turn causes problems, because we are not always able to tell who among the civilians was in contact with the army. Unless we have explicit evidence of their contact with the army, civilians are usually left out of examinations concerned with military matters. Chapter 2 on the British border attempted to overcome aspects of this limitation, considering the

epigraphic record from the region as an expression of a frontier society characterised by the permanent presence of the army. However, evidence of military language, and of the impact that the army had on language choice, is likely to remain hidden in documents which we simply cannot connect to the army based only on their content and find spot.

This brings us to our second limitation, which is caused by the case-study approach that we must take to the observation of social phenomena, past and present. There is no one-size-fits-all answer to the question of language choice in the Roman military, nor in any other socio-historical context. As the concept of “discrepant experiences” used by Mattingly (2011) reminds us, it is pointless to formulate generalising theories to explain how humans behave, interact with one another, and react to events. We are therefore bound to the use of case studies as representative of the wider social phenomena we wish to study, in the belief that some aspects of social history are reflected in interactions within smaller groups and between individuals. This approach is even more imperative in the study of antiquity, which investigates the past only through the limited evidence that has survived across millennia.

The availability of data (or the lack thereof) is an obvious limitation to historical work, in particular when this is concerned with language use. Whatever the intentions and efforts made by their writers, “historical documents survive by chance, not by design”. This is how Labov (1994 11) explains the now often-cited “bad data problem” that afflicts historical sociolinguistics. The conclusions that we as historians can draw on what we study are necessarily influenced by the types of documents at our disposal, which are the only sources that can teach us something about the ancient world. There is also a quantitative factor to consider. Historians simply cannot access the same amounts of data available to modern linguists, who recruit participants for their studies in person. This is an obvious limitation to this thesis and to any study on ancient communication.

A question that this study promised not to consider (§ 1.7.2) and that remained unanswered by Rochette (1997a) and Adams (2003a) is that of a change in language attitudes during the reign of Diocletian at the turn of the fourth century. According to previous studies, there might not be enough evidence to explain the patterns of language choice in this period. This thesis has added some perspective on the study of language choice in the Roman Empire, showing that some broader sociolinguistic dynamics are reflected in the language of the Roman army. I refer, for example, to the performance of multiple identities through language choice among the Palmyrenes, the potential audience awareness in the redaction of military administrative documents, and the coherence with which theonyms were paired among military circles. We can therefore tentatively suggest that limiting the field of investigation into language use at the time of Diocletian to documents with military connections might lead to more satisfactory answers than achieved so far. This approach might prove particularly fruitful in relation to historical events in which the Roman army played a significant role, such as the establishment of the Tetrarchy in 293 and the persecutions of Christians at the beginning of the fourth century.

These suggestions for further work are based on a vision of the Roman army as a sounding board for Roman society. As I hope to have demonstrated, by applying sociolinguistic frameworks to the study of Roman military communities we can reach a greater appreciation of some social dynamics of the Roman world which, without these frameworks, would be unattainable.

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