Accepted manuscript for the volume Multilingualism and History (ed. Aneta Pavlenko), to be published by Cambridge University Press

Chapter 3 Language shift, attitudes and management in the Roman West

Alex Mullen, University of Nottingham[i]

Travellers to western Europe would have encountered different soundscapes in the pre-Roman Iron Age and the end of the Roman period. In the western Roman provinces, a patchwork of local languages which existed in the Iron Age came under increasing pressure from Latin and by the end of the imperial period the linguistic landscape had been reconfigured.[ii] Meanwhile in the eastern provinces, Latin never developed a strong foothold: the mosaic of local languages, with regional link-languages such as Syriac, and Greek used as an imperial lingua franca, continued throughout the Roman period. Latin was regularly used in higher-level and highly 'Roman' contexts (Cotton et al., 2009; Millar, 1995) and in islands of Latinity, such as Berytus (Beirut), but it never became widely embedded as a vernacular of local communities as it did in the West.[iii] Operationally, the Roman Empire functioned in both Latin and Greek (Adams, 2003a; Rochette, 1997).

To explain the spread of Latin in western provinces commentators have long sought evidence for a Roman language policy, deeming such reconfiguration unlikely without institutional support.[iv] The general consensus is that there was none. Indeed many Roman historians, particularly since the publication of Millar (1977), might wonder whether such a search may have been ill-conceived from the start, since policy-making does not seem to have been much deployed during significant periods of imperial history. Moreover, treating the Roman Empire as a single entity is unwise: it spanned several centuries, a vast geographical area and numerous diverse communities. Language ideologies and practices in the Roman world were heterogeneous and shifting, as were methods of government and control. A better way to approach Latinization is to consider the differing perspectives and

practices of various social groups. Scholars of cultural change have come to appreciate the importance of local languages (e.g., Millar, 1968) and commentators are now able to exploit a growing body of work on the so-called 'Palaeoeuropean' languages and epigraphies.[v] Bi- and multilingualism, intertwined with the processes of language shift, maintenance, and death, created a variegated linguistic situation, with different levels of Latinization, local differences and regional complexities over time and space. Thanks to developments in interdisciplinary methodologies and datasets, we are finally in a position to explore these differences.[vi]

In what follows the focus will be on language management in the western provinces, with a crude, but important, distinction made between 'the elite' (differentiating between 'traditional' Roman and provincial elites) and the non-elite masses. 'The elite' is defined as a powerful group with access to higher-level education, positions of responsibility and often, but not always, wealth. This group expands and contracts to take in different professions and statuses, depending on the period, and membership can include anyone from emperors to penniless exiled poets. The term 'language policy' will refer here to governmental-level decision making and implementation of directives about language use. 'Language management', a broader term, encompasses expression of language ideologies and lower-level policies/rules of limited reach. With this context in mind, I argue that, while the Empire may not, at least until Diocletian, have had a wide-ranging language policy, there was an interest, at certain times and places, in language management.

1. Conceptions of languages: the discourse of the elites

Elite Greeks and Romans discussed language throughout their literature. To do so, they relied on a range of terms, including Greek *dialektos, glossa* and *phone* and Latin *lingua, sermo* and *vox*. Often used interchangeably, these terms covered a wide semantic field of language, dialect, discourse, speech, rhetoric and so on (for some usages, see Clackson, 2015a, 13–16). At times, Greek and Roman writers approached these discussions from what we could term a 'sociolinguistic' perspective, but their sociolinguistic interest was limited in

focus. Generally speaking, high-status Greeks and Romans display a relative lack of interest in languages other than Greek and Latin (Bozia & Mullen, 2021; Lejeune, 1949).

Romans had a complicated relationship with non-Latin languages. Their lengthy relationship with the Greek world began when Rome was but a collection of small settlements in the hills of Latium: Greek was used in the Mediterranean trading sphere and as the language of Greek colonies, including the southern coast of Italy, known, together with Sicily, as *Magna Graecia*. As Rome grew, first within Italy and then beyond (Lomas, 2018), taking in numerous Latin and non-Latin speaking communities, it was with Greek culture that those with higher-level education were primarily obsessed. They wrestled with a complex: they simultaneously felt inferior to Greek cultural legacy and superior to the Greeks they had conquered in the 2nd century BCE, viewed as decadent and effeminate (Clackson & Horrocks, 2007; Dubuisson,1981a). Their extensive cultural discussions are rarely primarily about language, rather the Romans commentate on the broader cultural entanglements between themselves and the Greeks. And yet bilingualism was commonplace among the Roman elite.[vii] The eastern part of the Roman world used Greek as a lingua franca and few leading males at the heart of the Roman world would not have been bilingual, at least to an extent. Even those who challenged the stranglehold of the Greek legacy – such as politician Cato the Elder in the 3rd–2nd century BCE and Fronto, Marcus Aurelius' Latin teacher, in the 2nd century CE – did so from a standpoint of conversance with Greek culture. Close analysis of Greek code-switching in Latin correspondence of the Roman elite shows that patterns of usage were dependent on the author, addressee, broader potential audience, topic, and the specifics of the cultural environment (Elder & Mullen, 2019). Every author had a subtly different sociolinguistic profile and a key conclusion of our studies of their complex repertoires is that the terminologies of bilingualism developed by Classicists do not necessarily capture this.

Despite bi- and multi-lingualism being commonplace, concepts akin to modern 'bilingualism' and 'multilingualism' do not seem to have been much in evidence in the

Roman world, and modern ways of thinking about bilingualism are not obviously in view. *Bilinguis* is used in Roman texts merely a handful of times and was often reserved to describe ambiguous, misleading speech rather than bilingualism as we understand it (Dubuisson, 1983; Poccetti, 1986). Elder (2019, 25) notes that, of the sixteen instances of the term in Latin literature up to 200 CE and late antique commentaries up to the early 5th century CE, nine express negative associations of untrustworthiness, two are physical descriptions of having two tongues, and only five have a sense of speaking two languages.[viii] The term *utraque lingua*, 'both [our] languages', indicates the notion of two linguistic parts of the same repertoire and it had a strong cultural and literary content, rather than purely linguistic (Dubuisson, 1981b, 281). It seems that this term was used by Romans to refer to the entanglement of Greek and Latin culture,[ix] whereas *bilinguis*, on the other hand, was usually reserved for 'foreigners' (Carthaginians, for example).

Elite Romans who were not of provincial origins were generally not especially interested in the myriad languages beyond 'their own' Latin and Greek, as far as we can tell from their extensive writings (Lejeune, 1949; Rochette, 1995). Mirroring Greek practice, highly-educated Romans focused primarily on standardization of Latin, on linguistic purity and excellence (Clackson, 2015b) and the relationship in *utraque lingua*. They were clearly aware of the existence of other languages, referred to with terms such as *aliena lingua* and *alienus/externus/peregrinus sermo*, mentioned them in ethnographic discussions, remarked on the use of interpreters and exhibited curiosity when it came to loan-words (Mairs, 2020; Wiotte-Franz, 2001). Yet compared to their obsession with Greek, these languages received little attention, perhaps with the exception of Etruscan (the emperor Claudius apparently wrote a history of the Etruscans, which might have required mastery of the language (Cornell, 1976)) and Punic (Claudius also composed a history of the Punic-speaking Carthaginians; a treatise on agriculture by the Punic author, Mago, was translated into Latin; and there are several lines of Punic in Plautus' *Poenulus*). The exiled poet Ovid famously bemoans being stuck among 'barbarians' who speak no Latin on the Black Sea, and eventually claims to

have learnt Getan and Sarmatian (*Tristia*, 5.12.58). This is a rare instance of a well-educated Roman writing of his experience of a non-Latin speaking community, but we still get precious little information about the 'barbarian' languages themselves.

The 'local' provincial elites, particularly in non-Mediterranean provinces, had close links to non-Latin speaking communities and may have continued to speak local languages. But their voices are not commonly heard in the extant literature and when they are, the provincials, by virtue of their elite position, commonly felt the need to exhibit as much Romanness as possible. When terms such as *lingua Gallica* are used to describe provincial speech we are often unsure whether they refer to Gallic Latin (a contact-induced variety of Latin) or Gaulish (the Celtic language of Gaul) (Blom, 2009).[x] The African-born emperor Septimius Severus (193–211 CE) was embarrassed by the fact that his sister *vix Latine loquens* 'scarcely spoke Latin' (*Historia Augusta*, 15.7), but whether she was speaking a Punic-influenced Latin or Punic is unclear.

2. Linguistic attitudes and practices in the everyday life of the non-elites

It is, of course, even harder to reconstruct linguistic ideologies or attitudes for the masses of the provincial population who did not leave behind explicit commentaries on how they saw their relationship with languages, identities and cultures. Most of them never engage directly in the written record given the very high levels of illiteracy among the provincial population.[xi] Some provincials, however, contributed to the epigraphic record and, when they did, we can scrutinize the remains for evidence of language attitudes.

On the one hand, western provincials participating in the vast Roman documentary output would have had a clear view of what standard forms of Latin were, compared to any other languages they might have spoken. Formal military, administrative and legal texts followed strict and widely adopted conventions about layout, linguistic and orthographic norms, formulae and script (Mullen & Bowman, 2021; Willi, 2021). Financial and legal documents on stylus tablets, found in London and dated to the 1st century CE, demonstrate

the wholesale adoption of Roman documentary practices even in the earliest phases of the new province Britannia (Tomlin, 2016). In fact, it is hard to see how people engaged in formal documentary contexts across the Roman Empire, such as the writing of wills, military reports, and business contracts, would not have had a sense of linguistic norms and attitudes.

On the other hand, the vast majority of provincials not directly involved in the Roman imperial documentary machinery were probably used to operating in a context of more flexible multilingualism, involving local languages (e.g., Celtic and Germanic varieties in the northern provinces) and regional varieties of Latin (Adams, 2007). These provincials, the majority of whom lived in rural settlements, did not have access to systematic education and, as far as we can tell, instructional materials for learning local languages in the West did not exist. The known glossaries, colloquia, grammars, lexica and other learning aids were designed to teach Latin and/or Greek (Dickey, 2012), but the majority of provincials would never have come across one and, given the high levels of illiteracy, would not have been able to use it even if they had. More rudimentary educational practices, for example evidence for learning alphabets, can be found occasionally in the provinces and indicate usually ad hoc efforts to adopt literacy.

People engaged in production and trade, who often relied on internal administrative practices to organize their work, form one group which straddles the provincials participating in the formal Roman documentary output and the illiterate masses. Our evidence suggests that these participants, who may have learnt Latin and literacy on the job, sometimes blended Roman documentary norms (layout, symbols, script etc.) with a mix of local and Latin languages. Thus, La Graufesenque, a pottery production centre in south-western Gaul, that functioned in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE, produced firing lists in Gaulish, Latin and a mixture of both (Mullen, 2022b). In a comparable situation, though one more embedded in Roman structures of power, at Bu Njem, a Roman fort in North Africa, the solider Aemilius Aemilianus sent letters in the 3rd century CE to his Decurion recording the amount of grain

provided by the local camel riders, that feature both Roman and local measurements and terms (Felice, 2019, 244–257).

In the absence of a nation-state language ideology and widespread access to formal language instruction, languages may not have had a circumscribed meaning for many Roman provincials. Linguistic resources may have been carved up differently and attitudes to languages and identities may have been based on local concerns to which we now have no, or extremely limited, access (for instance, slightly different forms of Celtic used in neighbouring villages or territories may have had salience). In this context, we might wonder whether provincials with what *we* would consider more than one language, might have seen themselves as having multiple languages or a single repertoire, and whether they might have thought of themselves as bi-/multi-lingual at all.

An alternative is to consider the possibility of *translingualism* (Mullen, 2022a), a term deployed in modern sociolinguistics to describe multilingual contexts where flexible linguistic repertoires used in oral and/or written communication cannot be neatly divided into separate languages. This idea is relevant for thinking about the Roman world, in contexts where some individuals and communities may have had little awareness of their languages as strictly-bounded and named entities. Written sources are not likely to reflect this complexity, since by their nature they tend to rely on standardized linguistic entities, but even these offer indications that at least some Roman provincials may have seen their repertoires as relatively fluid, perhaps not so readily splitting up languages into discrete units as we do.

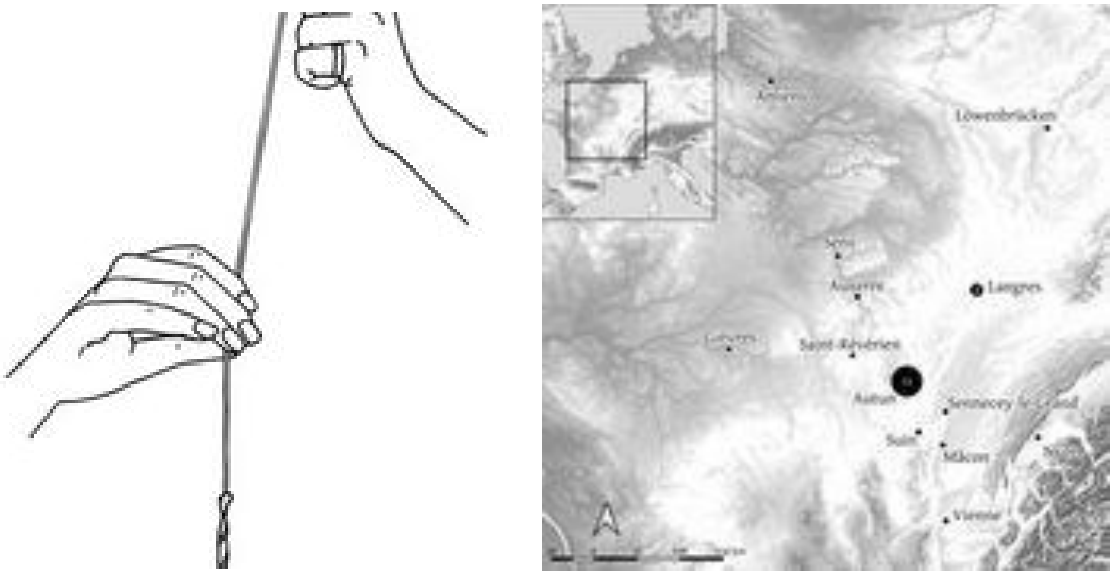

Fig. 3.1. (a) Spinning with a distaff, drop spindle and whorl (drawing Jane Masséglia, LatinNow). (b) Distribution of inscribed Roman-period spindle whorls (map Pieter Houten, LatinNow).

The flexibility of linguistic resources is reflected in the texts on Roman spindle whorls from eastern Gaul (Dondin-Payre, 2005; Mullen, 2022a). These small weights, which are on average 1.5 cm high x 2.5 cm in diameter, were placed at the end of the spindle to help regulate the speed of the spin (Fig. 3.1a). Imperial-period whorls do not appear to have been inscribed with the exception of this corpus of twenty-four. Half the known examples were found in Augustodunum (Autun, France), the rest are known from locations in France, Germany and Switzerland (Fig. 3.1b). All but two are made from the same material, namely the bituminous schist, probably from the quarries of Autun. It seems very likely that the majority, if not all, of these whorls were made in Augustodunum and the most plausible date range for their production is 90–235 CE (Mullen, 2022a).

The addressees seem to be female, and some texts have amatory or erotic content, for example MONI GNATHA GABI/BUÐÐVTON IMON, a Gaulish utterance, which can be translated as ‘Come girl, take my little kiss/cock’. The texts are thought to have been composed by men (Meid, 1983), but there is no clear reason to assume a male author/commissioner in *all* the cases. If we think that at least some spinners were women working in groups in workshops, we might wonder whether some messages may have been

created by female spinners for themselves and for other workers (e.g., SALVE SOROR ‘hey sister’). Co-workers in close quarters working on monotonous tasks often create distractions for themselves, such as in-group jokes or work songs, and a black schist whorl with white lettering would have delivered a striking visual effect, spinning until it became a blur and revealing the inscribed message when it slowed down.

The whorls can be described as ‘speaking objects’ that relay direct speech or speak themselves: some in Latin, some in Gaulish (Lambert, 2018; Mullen & Darasse, 2020), and some in both. Unfortunately, the traditional terminology of bilingualism studies, namely code-switching, interference, and borrowing, transferred into Classics most effectively by Adams (2003a), does not help much with the analysis of some of these texts. Take, for example, the following: NATA VIMPI / CVRMI DA ‘pretty girl, give me beer’ (Autun) and NATA VIMPI / VI(nu?)M POTA ‘pretty girl, drink ?wine’ (Auxerre) (Fig. 3.2).

Fig. 3.2. Replicas made by Potted History for LatinNow of spindle whorls with the texts: NATA VIMPI / CVRMI DA; NATA VIMPI / VI(nu?)M POTA; MARCOSIOR MATERNIA (photo Pieter Houten, LatinNow).

(g)nata, ‘girl’, which also occurs as *gnatha* in other whorl texts, is a noun in Latin and Gaulish, a legacy of shared Indo-European ancestry. Adams (2007) tentatively suggests that “the similarity of *natus*, *-a* to Gaulish *gnatus*, *-a* gave it some currency in the Latin of Gaul alongside the more usual terms *filius* and *filia,* and by extension *puer* and *puella*, particularly in the feminine” (p. 303). We might consider this a neat choice of appellation if one wanted to communicate simultaneously to both Latin and Gaulish speakers. *vimpi,* here in the vocative, means ‘pretty’ in Gaulish, and is commonly attested on the spindle whorls and on other small objects such as brooches (e.g., AVE VIMPI ‘greetings, lovely’) (Feugère & Lambert, 2011). The origin of the word is unclear, but it is likely to be related to Welsh *gwymp* ‘fair, pretty’. Given its widespread occurrence on portable Roman objects, it might also have been current in a regional form of Gallic Latin and may have worked bilingually.

The second half of the example from Autun follows the same pattern: the first word, *curmi* 'beer', is Gaulish (it also occurs in the personal name Curmisagios 'beer seeker' and Old Irish *cuirm*, Welsh *cwrw* 'beer'), but is likely to have been borrowed into the Latin of the area. Terms for local beverages, such as beer, were commonly borrowed from local languages into regional varieties of Latin. At the turn of the 5th century CE, Marcellus of Bordeaux mentions *curmi* and another form referring to 'beer', *cervesa*, as ingredients to put into cough mixture (XVI 33) (see also Nelson, 2003). The final word of the text, *da*, is the imperative of 'to give' and, due to shared Indo-European origins, exists in both Latin and Gaulish. Following this analysis, all four words could be understood as entirely Gaulish, entirely Gallic Latin or both. The second half of the example from Auxerre is more difficult to interpret, due to the uncertainties over the interpretation of VIM (Mullen, 2022a). The most likely interpretation, 'drink wine', would take the first half as Latin/Gaulish/both and the second as Latin.

These texts do not fit neatly into the standard framework of bilingualism and might be better understood as reflections of *translingualism*. This term is a useful addition to the conceptual toolkit for dealing with multilingual texts, such as those on the whorls and other texts in mixtures of language which cannot be neatly divided up into separate languages. It is a helpful reminder that the languages sectioned off, described and labelled by linguists may not map onto the linguistic experiences of people who used them. This evidence on the ground suggests that local speech was not constrained by the socially and politically constructed notion of 'languages', nor split into the distinct entities we are trained to recognize through the lens of Indo-European lexica and Latin grammars. The creators of spindle whorls in provincial Roman Gaul may not have seen 'language' in such black and white terms. Alternatively, they may have distinguished 'languages' but felt free to manipulate them without limitations imposed by the 'monolingual standard' norms. Through enigmatic evidence like this we can try to evoke the possible range of mind-sets and contexts, however difficult that might be, of the ancient producers and consumers of language.

3. Evidence for language management in the Roman Empire

When we consider language management in the Roman Empire, we need to keep in mind these differing perspectives. In the past, modern nation-state ideologies inspired some scholars to turn to language policy to explain Latinization and language shift in the western provinces. For encouragement to seek out an imperial language policy one only had to "point to a linguistic map of modern Europe" (Kaimio 1979, 327). Yet scholars have struggled to find evidence of a wide-ranging imperial language policy or directive determining the broad uptake of Latin across the western provinces. Of course, given the partial nature of what has been transmitted from the ancient world, we always have the issue of how to judge the absence of evidence. But the Roman world was a highly literate environment and if there had been an imperial language policy, we might have expected to find direct trace. Given the apparent lack of imperial-wide policy-making prior to the 3rd century CE, the lack of interest in local languages on the part of the elite, and the multilingual realities for the bulk of the Empire's inhabitants, should we have expected an imperial language policy for the provinces? It seems likely that it would not have been a focus for the imperial administration and might have made little sense to the majority of those it would have targeted. Kaimio himself goes on to talk, relatively opaquely, about a 'conscious language policy' but denies that there was ever *one* 'systematized, far-reaching language policy' (*ibid.*) and argues that attitudes and tradition were the main drivers of language choice.

This is not to say that there was no hope or expectation amongst the elite that provincials would learn Latin. Roman elites appear to have considered language an important part of communal identity, as seen in the opening of Caesar's *Gallic Wars,* where the communities of Gaul are (crudely) divided according to *lingua, instituta and leges* (language, customs and laws). The ideology linking Latin to the Empire and Romanness is expressed in Vergil's *Aeneid,* a politically-charged epic and widely disseminated across the provinces as we see from writing exercises (see ink tablet 118 of the Vindolanda collection (Bowman &

Thomas, 1994)). Vergil's Jupiter states that the sons of Italy will keep their ancestral customs and speech and the Trojans will be submerged: *faciamque omnis uno ore Latinos* 'I shall make all to be Latins of one language' (12.837). We also find anecdotes ascribed to Emperors which suggest they sometimes made a show about language and Romanness, particularly concerning Roman citizenship and its association with the Latin language (Elder & Mullen, 2019; Rochette, forthcoming). The Emperor Tiberius once refused to let a solider respond in the Senate in Greek (Cassius Dio, 57.15, Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 71) and Claudius removed citizenship from a leading citizen of Greece because he did not know Latin, *Latini sermonis ignarum* (Suetonius, *Claudius*, 16.4). Roman authors also talk of 'nativization' of loan words, which were imbued with Roman citizenship – a striking metaphor (for discussion, see Elder, 2019; Elder & Mullen, 2019). Still, these scattered testimonies do not amount to an official policy. Although we may be able to reconstruct elements of what we might call 'linguistic imperialism', for most of the period we can uncover no official Latinization policy (Adams, 2003a,b; Dubuisson, 1982; Rochette, 2011). To use modern sociolinguistic terms, we can more easily recover aspects of language management.

Given the cultural context, it seems more likely that language management took a more piecemeal and ad hoc form, focusing on what the central powers needed to control. Evidence for language directives with narrower ambitions can perhaps be uncovered. One often cited piece of evidence comes from Valerius Maximus' collection of *Memorable Sayings and Doings*, written under Tiberius in the 1st century CE (Dubuisson, 1982, 192–196). In this he describes magistrates of old (*magistratus prisci*) following the rule that they should always deliver *responsa* to Greeks in Latin and force Greeks to use a Latin interpreter not only in Rome but even in Greece and Asia (2.2.2). These comments seem to channel an idealized vision of the 'good old days', no doubt intended to support Tiberius' ideological stance.[xii] The precise remit of Valerius Maximus' statement is not specified, but if we take it to mean that leading Romans should communicate in Latin on Roman business with Greek-speakers, it is demonstrably not a reflection of universal practice in the Republican period

(Greek was used by Aemilius Paulus to the Macedonian king in 168 BCE, by the consul Licinius Crassus in Asia in 131 BCE, and by Cicero in the Senate in Syracuse in 70 BCE). There is also no detail as to what form, if any, these rules for magistrates might have taken. It may have essentially been a cultural norm whose breach could attract reproach, if not specific punishment. Cicero underscores the absence of specific regulations when he takes umbrage at being accused of committing an *indignum facinus* 'shameful misdeed' by speaking to the Greeks in Greek in Greece (*In Verrem*, 2.4.147), implying that he felt he had stayed on the right side of a delicate, but unregulated, balancing act. Nevertheless, Valerius Maximus' words indicate that some Romans attributed great importance to the use of Latin in the work of representatives of Rome.

Provincial elites of local ancestry form a group generally thought to have been important in the representation of Rome and the Latinization process across the Roman West (Beltrán, 2015). Romans used a carrot and stick approach to promote loyalty amongst local leaders (Ando, 2000), since these would be crucial in serving as role models for the Roman way of life and encouraging peaceful submission of their communities. The question whether language management might have targeted them specifically is hard to answer. We might look to the testimonies of Plutarch and Tacitus who describe how leading Romans, Sertorius in the Iberian Peninsula (*Sertorius*, 14.2–3) and Agricola in Britannia (*Agricola* 21.2), chose to educate the sons of the local elites. Their contexts are quite different — the former a Roman general leading a rebellion against the Roman Senate in the 1st century BCE and the latter a governor attempting the smooth integration of the new province in the 1st century CE — but both had the aim of making their respective populations more compliant by attempting to immerse them in Roman culture and its opportunities. However, these two testimonies stand out as rather unusual and the differential uptake of Latin and Roman culture amongst the local elites in the two provinces supports the suggestion that Romans had no uniform policy to promote Latin and to demote other languages.

We know that the local elite in the provinces did not take up Latin at the same pace or even unanimously. In some provinces, such as Britannia, the locals' lack of engagement with Latin epigraphy and the mere fact that Agricola deemed it necessary to teach Latin to the sons of the elite at the end of the 1st century CE suggest that they were not already immersed in it. Even in the early-to-be-incorporated province of Gallia Narbonensis, a leading local Roman citizen, Gaius Valerius Troucillus, still spoke Gaulish and was used as an interpreter in the mid-first century BCE by Caesar during the Gallic wars (see also Mairs, this volume). In the same area lapidary epigraphy in Gaulish flourished under Roman rule in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, at least some of which can be associated with local elites.[xiii] The Roman state did not desire or need to control the use of local languages as long as they posed no threat: Romans provided the incentives for Latinization and, when they bothered to notice, enough of the relevant provincials seemed to have made the 'right' choice.

Control was clearly exercised over documents, however, as seen through the consistency found in military, administrative and legal texts. We also have evidence for the rules themselves, for example, a series of testimonies relevant for the redaction of wills (Nowak, 2015). The jurists Gaius (2nd century CE) and Ulpian (3rd century CE) make it clear that wills written in Greek are not valid under Roman law (Gaius, 2.281; Ulpian, 32.11.pr.), though exemptions are made for the *fideicommissa* (directions in wills for an heir or legatee to transfer property to someone else) which could be written, according to Ulpian, 'in any language', specifying Punic and *Gallicana* (Gaulish?), as well as the obvious Latin and Greek.[xiv]

The *Gnomon of the Idios Logos*, a papyrus handbook, dating to the mid-2nd century CE and listing rules governing the operations of a provincial treasury department, also contains the directive that Roman citizens cannot have wills composed in Greek, with exceptions for veteran soldiers (*BGU*, 5.1210). Following the extension of the citizenship to all free-born in the Empire in 212 CE, significant numbers of newly enfranchised provincials who would have had their wills in Greek were subjected to this rule. This situation appears to

have been rationalised by a ruling of Severus Alexander (222–235 CE) authorising the production of wills in Greek. We do not have the original text of the pronouncement, but it is referred to explicitly in a will from Herakleopolites dated to 235 CE (*SB*, I 5294) (Rochette, 2000).[xv]

There is even evidence from the 4th century CE of directives concerning the choice of script types for documentary sources. The use of the so-called New Roman Cursive for Latin (described as *litterae communes*) in provincial chanceries appears to have been enforced by an imperial edict of co-Emperors Valentinian I and Valens in 367/8 CE:

> Emperors Valentinian and Valens Augustuses to Festus, Proconsul of Africa. Our Serenity has observed that the practice of imitating Our **celestial imperial letters** (*litterae caelestes*) has arisen from the fact that the office of Your Gravity, in composing references of cases to the Emperor and reports to Him, uses the same kind of script as that which the bureaus of Our Eternity use. Wherefore, by the authority of this sanction, We command that hereafter this custom, a teacher of forgery, shall be abolished and that everything which must be written either from a province or by a judge shall be entrusted to **commonly used letters** (*litterae communes*), so that no person shall have the right to appropriate a copy of this style, either privately or publicly. (19.19.3, translated by Pharr, 1952, p. 241)

Some have argued that the *litterae caelestes* being earmarked here for the very highest levels of bureaucracy describe a late form of the 'official' Old Roman Cursive script for Latin that developed in the early centuries of imperial rule. If correct, the restrictions against the use of that script had been so successful that from the later 3rd century CE it almost vanishes from our evidence, employed only in high-level, formal contexts (Mullen & Bowman, 2021). The fact that we have direct evidence for interference in the type of script used for writing Latin suggests that focused directives controlling aspects of documentary output, such as the choice of language, were likely to have been active throughout the imperial period, even if we have only rare instances of the rules themselves.

Evidence of a more systematic imperial policy may appear under Diocletian (284–305 CE).[xvi] Rochette (1997, 116–126) and others have claimed that there was a new and more aggressive language policy which aimed to bolster the role of Latin in provincial administration in the East. Numerous arguments have been made to counter this. Turner

(1961) argues that the imposition of Latin occurred in very restricted contexts and that perhaps Diocletian "desisted from frontal attack" (p. 168). Adamík (2010) contends that there was a striking change in the language of the eastern imperial administration, but that it had nothing to do with a language policy, rather it was the natural result of broader bureaucratic and governmental transformations. Adams (2003a, 635–637) suggests that the evidence itself needs to be reconsidered, since there is no radical change in the use of Latin but the continuation of patterns of language choice which can be traced as early as the Republican period. Faced with such differing perspectives, an empirically based and wide-ranging survey of the linguistic choices in the eastern Empire may be the only way to escape the impasse.

4. An Empire of three hearts

Influenced by modern nation-state ideologies and policies, scholars have searched for the evidence of a policy mandating the use of Latin in the West to explain the attested language change. The consensus is that there was none, at least not until Diocletian, and this surprising absence has sometimes been explained through the lack of means of enforcement (Kaimio, 1979, 328). But given the Empire's ability to count and tax its subjects, to persecute specific religious groups and to maintain a well-organized army, it arguably could have attempted to enforce such a policy. A better explanation might be that no such pro-Latin and anti-local language policy for the provinces was necessary or, perhaps in a sense, conceivable. The Roman centre was not greatly interested in policies involving all its subjects, at least before the 3rd century CE, and elite Romans were disinterested in languages other than Latin and Greek and did not consider any practical issue with their use, as long as the Empire's functioning remained intact. The focus of their linguistic commentary was instead on the nature of 'their languages', the relationship between Latin and Greek and the smooth administration of the provinces. However, though there may not have been an Empire-wide policy of Latinization, there were certainly language ideologies and multiple

more narrowly-focused facets of language management concerning the use of Latin and Greek in the running of the Empire.

Scholarly discussions on the presence or absence of language policy have centred on the practices of the 'traditional' elites and the administration of Empire (Dubuisson, 1982). But the Roman Empire was full of diverse communities and, like the early Latin author Ennius (c. 239–169 BCE), had three hearts: Latin, Greek and local.[xvii] In providing a vision of the nature of Latinization in the western provinces and the existence, or not, of language ideologies and management, we need to remember to see the picture from different angles. Sociolinguists and historians have traditionally considered the sociolinguistic attitudes of the masses to be unimportant and/or impossible to reconstruct in the absence of explicit commentary. This chapter has tried to broaden the perspective and has briefly demonstrated how epigraphic remains can allow us to investigate sociolinguistic attitudes and practices of 'ordinary' provincials. The reconstruction of attitudes at different levels of society, including possible translingualism for at least some groups, enables us to demonstrate why language policies may not have made much sense in their linguistic worlds.

References

Adamík, B. (2003) Zur Geschichte des offiziellen Gebrauchs der lateinischen Sprache: Justinians Reform [The history of the official use of Latin: Justinian's reforms]. *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, 43*, 229–241.

Adamík, B. (2010) Sprachpolitik im römischen Reich: zur Frage einer angenommenen sprachpolitischen Reform unter der Tetrarchie [Language policy in the Roman Empire: the question of the posited language policy under the Tetrarchy]. *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, *50*, 17–29.

Adams, J. N. (2003a) *Bilingualism and the Latin Language*. Cambridge University Press.

Adams, J. N. (2003b) "*Romanitas*" and the Latin language. *Classical Quarterly, 53.1*, 184–205.

Adams, J. N. (2007) *The regional diversification of Latin 200 BC – AD 600*. Cambridge University Press.

Adams, J. N., Janse, M., & S. Swain (2002) *Bilingualism in ancient society. Language contact*

and the written text. Oxford University Press.

Ando, C. (2000) *Imperial ideology and provincial loyalty in the Roman empire*. University of California Press.

Beltrán, F. (2015). The epigraphic habit in the Roman world. In C. Bruun & J. Edmondson (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*. Oxford University Press, pp. 131–148.

Biville, F. (2018) Multilingualism in the Roman world. In *Oxford Handbooks online*. Oxford University Press, pp. 1–33.

Blom, A. (2009) *Lingua gallica, lingua celtica*: Gaulish, Gallo-Latin, or Gallo-Romance? *Keltische Forschungen, 4*, 7–54.

Bowman, A. & J. D. Thomas (1994) *The Vindolanda Writing-Tablets (Tabulae Vindolandenses II)*. British Museum Press.

Bozia, E. & A. Mullen (2021) Literary translingualism in the Greek and Roman worlds. In Kellman, S. & N. Lvovich (eds.) *Handbook of literary translingualism*. Routledge, pp. 45–59.

Clackson, J. (2015a) *Language and society in the Greek and Roman worlds*. Cambridge University Press.

Clackson, J. (2015b) Latinitas, Ἑλληνισμός and standard languages. *Studi e Saggi Linguistici, 53.2*, 309–330.

Clackson, J., & G. Horrocks (2007) *The Blackwell history of the Latin language*. Blackwell Publishing.

Cornell, T. (1976) Etruscan historiography. *Annali Della Scuola Normale Superiore Di Pisa. Classe Di Lettere e Filosofia*, 6, 2, 411–439.

Cotton, H., Hoyland, R., Price, J., & D. Wasserstein (2009). *From Hellenism to Islam. Cultural and linguistic change in the Roman Near East*. Cambridge University Press.

Czajkowski, K., Eckhardt, B. & M. Strothmann, M. (eds.) (2020) *Law in the Roman provinces*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Dickey, E. (2012) *The colloquia of the Hermeneumata Pseudodositheana Volume 1 colloquia Monacensia-Einsidlensia, Leidense-Stephani, and Stephani*. Cambridge University Press.

Dondin-Payre, M. (2005) Épigraphie et acculturation : l'apport des fusaïoles écrites [Epigraphy and acculturation: the contribution of the inscribed spindle whorls]. In Desmulliez, J. & C. Hoët-Van Cauwenberghe (eds.) *Le monde romain à travers l'épigraphie : Méthodes et pratiques*. Université Charles-de-Gaulle, pp. 133–146.

Dubuisson, M. (1981a) Problèmes du bilinguisme romain [Problems of Roman bilingualism]. *Les Études Classiques, 49.1*, 27–45.

Dubuisson, M. (1981b) Utraque lingua. *L'Antiquité Classique, 50*, 274–286.

Dubuisson, M. (1982) Y a-t-il une politique linguistique romaine? [Was there a Roman language policy ?] *Ktéma, 7*, 197–210.

Dubuisson, M. (1983) Recherches sur la terminologie antique du bilinguisme [Studies on the ancient terminology of bilingualism]. *Revue de Philologie*, *57.2*, 203–225.

Dubuisson, M. (1986) Purisme et politique : Suétone, Tibère et le grec au Sénat [Purism and politics: Suetonius, Tiberius and Greek in the Senate]. In Veremans, J., Decreus, F. & C. Deroux (eds.) *Hommages à Jozef Veremans*. Peeters, pp. 109–117.

Elder, O. (2019) *Language and the politics of Roman identity*. PhD thesis, University of Cambridge.

Elder, O. & A. Mullen (2019) *The language of Roman letters: bilingual epistolography from Cicero to Fronto*. Cambridge University Press.

Felice, E. (2019) *Multilingualism and Language Choice in the Imperial Roman Army*. DPhil thesis, University of Oxford.

Feugère, M., & P.-Y. Lambert (2011). Une belle gauloise... A propos d'une fibule inscrite de Laon [A pretty Gaulish girl… On an inscribed fibula from Laon]. *Etudes Celtiques*, 37, 147–152.

Hahn, L. (1907) Zum Sprachenkampf im römischen Reich bis auf die Zeit Justinians [On linguistic conflict in the Roman Empire up to the time of Justinian]. *Philologus*, 10, 677–718.

Harris, W. (1989) *Ancient Literacy*. Harvard University Press.

Jireček, K. (1911) *Geschichte der Serben* [History of the Serbs]. F.A. Perthes.

Kaimio, J. (1979) *The Romans and the Greek language*. Societas scientiarum Fennica.

Lambert, P.-Y. (2018) *La langue gauloise* [Gaulish]. Third edition. Editions Errance.

Lejeune, M. (1949). La curiosité linguistique dans l'antiquité classique [Linguistic curiosity in classical antiquity]. *Conférences de l'Institut de Linguistique de l'Université de Paris*, *8*, 45–61.

Lomas, K. (2018) *The rise of Rome. From the Iron Age to the Punic Wars*. Harvard University Press.

Mairs, R. (2020) Interpretes, negotiatores and the Roman army: mobile professionals and their languages. In Clackson, J., James, P., McDonald, K., Tagliapietra, L. & N. Zair (eds.) *Migration, mobility, and language contact in and around the ancient Mediterranean*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 203–229.

Mari, T. (2021) *Consentius'* De barbarismis et metaplasmis*: Critical edition, translation, and commentary*. Oxford University Press.

Meid, W. (1983) Gallisch oder Lateinisch? Soziolinguistische und andere Bemerkungen zu populären gallo-lateinischen Inschriften [Gaulish or Latin? Sociolinguistic and other remarks on 'everyday' Gallo-Latin inscriptions]. *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt, II.29.2*, 1019–1044.

Millar, F. (1968) Local cultures in the Roman Empire: Libyan, Punic and Latin in Roman

Africa. *Journal of Roman Studies,* 58, 126–134.

Millar, F. (1977) *The emperor in the Roman world 31 B.C.–A.D. 337.* Duckworth.

Millar, F. (1995) Latin in the epigraphy of the Roman Near East. In Solin, H., Salomies, O. & U.-M. Lierz (eds.) *Acta colloquii epigraphici Latini Helsingiae 3.–6. Sept. 1991 habiti*, pp. 403–419.

Mullen, A. (2013) *Southern Gaul and the Mediterranean. Multilingualism and multiple identities in the Iron Age and Roman periods*. Cambridge University Press.

Mullen, A. (2021) Socio-literacy: an interdisciplinary approach to understanding literacy in the Roman North-West. In Moncunill, N. & M. Ramírez-Sánchez (eds.) *Aprender la escritura, olvidar la escritura: Nuevas perspectivas sobre la historia de la escritura en el Occidente romano*. Anejos de Veleia, pp. 349–372.

Mullen, A. (2022a) Materializing epigraphy: archaeological and sociolinguistic approaches to Roman inscribed spindle whorls. In Cousins, E. (ed.) *Dynamic Epigraphy: New Approaches to Inscriptions*. Oxbow, pp. 39–64.

Mullen, A. (2022b) Transformations de la Gaule sous l'Empire romain : une culture de l'écrit au service de la production de masse [Transformations of Gaul under the Roman Empire: the development of literacy for mass production]. In M. Coltelloni-Trannoy & N. Moncunill (eds.) *La culture de l'écrit en Méditerranée occidentale à travers les pratiques épigraphiques (Gaule, Ibérie, Afrique du Nord)*. Peeters, pp. 131–162.

Mullen, A. & Bowman, A. (2021) *Manual of Roman Everyday Writing. Volume 1 Scripts and Texts*. LatinNow ePubs.

Mullen, A. & C. Darasse (2020) Gaulish. *Palaeohispanica*, *20*, 749–783.

Mullen, A. & P. James (2012) *Multilingualism in the Graeco-Roman worlds*. Cambridge University Press.

Nelson, M. (2003) On a beautiful girl and some good barley beer. *Etudes Celtiques*, 35, 257–259.

Nowak, M. (2015) *Wills in the Roman Empire: A documentary approach*. University of Warsaw.

Pharr, C. (ed.) (1952) *The Theodosian code and novels, and the Sirmondian constitutions*. Princeton University Press.

Poccetti, P. (1986) Lat. *bilinguis*. *Annali Dell'Università Degli Studi Di Napoli "L'Orientale". Rivista Dipartimento Del Mondo Classico. Sezione Linguistica,* 8, 95–129.

Rochette, B. (1995) Grecs et Latins face aux langues étrangères [Attitudes of Greeks and Romans towards foreign languages]. Contribution à l'étude de la diversité linguistique dans l'antiquité classique. *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'histoire*, 73, 1, 5–16.

Rochette, B. (1997) *Le latin dans le monde grec: recherches sur la diffusion de la langue et des*

lettres latines dans les provinces hellénophones de l'Empire romain [Latin in the Greek world : research on the spread of the Latin language and texts in the Greek-speaking provinces of the Roman Empire]. Collection Latomus.

Rochette, B. (2000) La langue des testaments dans l'Egypte du IIIe s. ap. J.-C. [The language of wills in Egypt in the 3rd century CE] *Revue internationale des droits de l'Antiquité*, *47*, 449–461.

Rochette, B. (2010) Greek and Latin bilingualism. In Bakker, E. (ed.) *A companion to the Greek language*. Wiley Blackwell, pp. 281–293.

Rochette, B. (2011) Language policies in the Roman Republic and Empire. In Clackson, J. (ed.) *A companion to the Latin language*. Wiley Blackwell, pp. 549–563.

Rochette, B. (forthcoming) The attitude of the Roman emperors towards language practices. In Mullen, A. (ed.) *Social factors in the Latinization of the Roman West*. Oxford University Press.

Tomlin, R. (2016) *Roman London's First Voices: Writing tablets from the Bloomberg excavations, 2010-14*. Museum of London Archaeology.

Turner, E. (1961) Latin versus Greek as a universal language: the attitude of Diocletian. In *Language and culture: essays presented to A.M. Jensen*. Det Berlingske Bogtrykkeri, pp. 165-168.

Wallace-Hadrill, A. (2008) *Rome's cultural revolution*. Cambridge University Press.

Willi, A. (2021) *Manual of Roman Everyday Writing. Volume 2 Writing Equipment*. LatinNow ePubs.

Wiotte-Franz, C. (2001) *Hermeneus und Interpres, zum Dolmetscherwesen in der Antike* [Hermeneus *and* Interpres, *on interpreting in Antiquity*]. Saarbrücker Druckerei und Verlag.

[i] This output received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 715626 (LatinNow). I am very grateful to Aneta Pavlenko, James Clackson and Greg Woolf for their insightful comments on the previous versions of this chapter.

[ii] 'West' and 'East' in this chapter refer to the two halves of the Roman world, the former composed of the western provinces stretching from Hadrian's Wall in Britain to the Balkans and including North Africa apart from Egypt, and the latter stretching from the Balkans, across Greece, to Syria and including Egypt. The conceptual line drawn by modern scholars, known as the Jireček Line (Jireček, 1911), is based on the boundary between Latin and Greek usage.

[iii] The timing of the change depends on the provinces in question. In parts of the Iberian Peninsula and southern Gaul, Latin spread as early as the 2nd century BCE and had become the dominant language, at least in some contexts, during the 1st century CE. Elsewhere, for example in Britain, Latin only really began to spread widely in the 1st century CE and even by the end of Roman rule at the beginning of the 5th century CE, British Celtic was still being spoken, bilingually or monolingually, in some communities.

[iv] Early commentators compared modern imperial contexts and considered the Roman army central to the spread (e.g., Kahn, 1907). More recently scholars have confronted the matter directly, e.g., Dubuisson (1982) and Rochette (2011). One issue plaguing this subject is a lack of clarity on what exactly language policy means.

[v] See https:// ifc.dpz.es/ojs/index.php/palaeohispanica/issue/view/20 [last accessed 31.3.2021].

[vi] The ERC-funded project LatinNow is exploring differential Latinization, fates of local languages, bi- and multilingualism and literacy across the north-western provinces, using an interdisciplinary approach that combines sociolinguistics, epigraphy and archaeology. We are able to harness the results of the boom in Digital Humanities which has created numerous large datasets (including 181,000 epigraphic records from the Europeana EAGLE project).

[vii] For studies of bi- and multi-lingualism in the Roman world, see Adams (2003a, 2003b, 2007), Adams, Janse & Swain (2002), Biville (2018), Clackson (2015a), Cotton et al. (2009), Kaimio (1979), Millar (1968), Mullen & James (2012), Mullen (2013), and Rochette (1997, 2010).

[viii] Horace, *Satires*, 1.10.30; Curtius Rufus, 7.5.29; Ennius, *Annals*, 477; Lucilius, 1124; Porphyrion, *Commentary on Horace*, 1.10.30.

[ix] For the occasional use of *utraque lingua/uterque sermo* beyond Latin-Greek bilingualism, see Biville, 2018, 22.

[x] Rochette (1995, 12) claims that Latin grammarians do not refer to 'local' languages before the Byzantine period, with the exception of some etymological comments in Varro. This overlooks the work of the 4th century grammarian Consentius (*De barbarismis et metaplasmis*) who discussed the barbarism of provincial speech, with the focus on regional varieties of Latin, and *barbarolexis*, words from foreign languages in Latin (Mari, 2021). Biville (2018) is right to temper the notion, inspired, in her view, by Lejeune (1949), that Romans were never interested in local languages, but her snippets of non-specific evidence scattered over centuries hardly support her conclusion that Romans were interested in multilingualism.

[xi] For the debates on levels of literacy (largely referring to Harris, 1989) and how we might more fruitfully approach it using a focus on *socio*-literacy, see Mullen, 2021.

[xii] Emperor Tiberius' linguistic strategies in the Senate, that most Roman of places, included apologising for a Greek loanword in Latin (*monopolium*) and asking that the Greek word (ἔμβλημα) be replaced by a Latin word or phrase (Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 71.1, also Cassius Dio, 57.15.1–3) (Dubuisson, 1986), thus underscoring "his own linguistic sensitivity and desire to retain strict Latinity" (Elder & Mullen, 2019, 224).

[xiii] Beyond the Mediterranean provinces, the 2nd century CE villa at Meikirch (Switzerland) was clearly inhabited by affluent provincials, if not necessarily by local leaders, and has (to us incomprehensible) texts on its frescoes in what appears to be, at least in part, Gaulish. Lapidary Gallo-Latin is traditionally dated to up to the Caesarean period, but largely on the incautious assumption that after that point locals with the means to put up lapidary texts were using Latin. Since much of the non-lapidary Gallo-Latin corpus can be dated to the imperial period it is not unlikely that some of the lapidary texts should be dated to the same era (Mullen & Darasse, 2020, 776).

[xiv] Ulpian's text is transmitted to us via the much later Justinianic *Digest*, 32.1.11.

[xv] For the law as practised in the provinces, see Czajkowski et al., 2020

[xvi] The other is Justinianic, for which see Adamík, 2003.

[xvii] This is a comment made by the 2nd century CE author Aulus Gellius. Ennius apparently said he had *tria cordia* 'three hearts' because he spoke Greek, Oscan, and Latin (for contextualization of this comment, see Wallace-Hadrill, 2008).