CHAPTER 1

Introduction
Multiple languages, multiple identities

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1 THE ALLURE OF REGINA

Sometime in the second century AD, Barates, originally from Palmyra, in central Syria, set up an epitaph for his wife, Regina, of the British tribe of the Catuvellauni in both Latin and Palmyrene (the Aramaic dialect of Palmyra) (*RIB* I 1065, Fig. 1.1). This unique monument, found to the south of the Roman fort at South Shields (north-east England), has been a source of intrigue and pride since its discovery in 1878: a replica even stood until recently in a nearby supermarket car park.[1] Regina's tombstone distils the excitement about multiculturalism in a tangible form and she is regularly heralded as a poster girl of integration in the Roman Empire:[2]

> D M · Regina · liberta · et · coniuge ·
> Barates · Palmyrenus · natione ·
> Catuallauna · an · xxx ·
>
> To the spirits, Regina, the freedwoman and wife of Barates, the Palmyrene. She was from the tribe of the Catuvellauni and lived 30 years.
>
> RGYN' BT ḤRY BR'T' ḤBL
>
> Regina the freedwoman of Barates, alas.

The content of the epitaph might help us to reconstruct the story behind this stone. Regina is a member of a group centred on Verulamium (St Albans) and, depending on how we interpret this 'tribal' designation, we might well suspect that she is a native British woman. Her name might have assisted in firming up our suspicions, but it cannot be categorised

I am very grateful to James Adams, James Clackson, Patrick James, Paul Russell and an anonymous reviewer for their comments on this introduction.

[1] The replica now resides in the gardens of the museum, the original inside.

[2] Barates and Regina even feature in the *Minimus* Latin text books (Cambridge University Press).

as either Celtic or Latin.[3] In fact, we might consider whether this name has been chosen specifically because it functions as *both* Celtic and Latin (a 'cover name'), a strategy that seems to be attractive in certain contact situations.[4] She is a freedwoman and wife of Barates, who may be the same Palmyrene attested as a *uexil(l)a(rius)* 'standard-bearer' in another inscription from Corstopitum (Corbridge), about 50 km west of South Shields (*RIB* I 1171).[5] If we accept this identification, then Barates can be counted amongst the numerous military men stationed along Hadrian's Wall, though the possibility has also been raised that the standard-bearer need not automatically be associated with the military and might rather represent a corporation (*collegium*).[6] Debate has therefore ensued as to whether Barates has been enticed from one end of the Empire to the other by trade or by the military, though the two are clearly closely intertwined and both serve as key foci of linguistic and cultural contacts and vectors of Latin language and literacy.[7]

The explicit content of the epitaph only takes us so far. The consideration of other aspects, epigraphic and linguistic, might take us further. The Latin portion of the text is positioned above the Palmyrene, in larger lettering, surrounded by a border, and occupies three lines as opposed to one. The cursive Palmyrene script has almost certainly been incised by someone well trained in its carving; though the script contains curves which are not easily suited to stonework, the result looks fluid and neat. Given that local British workshops would probably have produced only Latin, or possibly Greek, inscriptions, this part of the text has almost certainly been created by Barates himself or an associate. The case is not so clear for the Latin.[8] It is possible that the Latin may have been inscribed by someone other than the composer and inscriber of the Palmyrene, though it is equally plausible

[3] *Regina* in Gaul is cited as Celtic by Evans (1967: 247).

[4] See Mullen 2007.

[5] The inscription reads *[D(is)] M(anibus)* | *[..]rathes · Pal|morenus · uexil(l)a(rius)* | *uixit · an(n)os · LXVIII* 'To the spirits, -rathes, the Palmyrene, a standard-bearer, lived 68 years'. See *RIB* I p. 386 for the question of whether this refers to the same Barates or not.

[6] See the note to *RIB* I 1171 and Mann 1954: 505. The term *uexillarius* is also attested in the Vindolanda tablets, see Bowman, Thomas and Tomlin 2010: 209 for discussion.

[7] It is, of course, possible to have a foot in both camps, as we can see from a first-century inscription from Boldog in Slovakia referring to a certain *Atilius* as *inter(p)rex leg(ionis) XV, idem (centurio) negotiator* 'an interpreter of the fifteenth legion and also a trader', see Kolník 1978, also Adams 2003: 276.

[8] The presence of oddities in the Latin language and the fact that 'the confident execution of the Palmyrene inscription contrasts noticeably with the erratic lettering of the Latin inscription' (Phillips 1977: 91) have led to the assumption that Barates was responsible for everything. This is not a secure assumption. In any case, it is debatable whether the Latin should be termed 'erratic'. The epigraphy has an internal consistency and the letters M and G have a certain stylishness about them, indeed interpuncts have been included, which normally suggest a higher level of epigraphic awareness.

that it may have been produced by the same stone-cutter, who, if trained in Palmyrene epigraphy, may well have been versed in Latin too.

James Adams reveals more with a linguistic analysis of the inscription. He notes that the editors of *RIB* have mistakenly attributed *Regina, liberta, coniuge* and *Catuallauna* to the ablative case.[9] He argues that the ablative would be impossible to construe syntactically, but that the nominative, dative or genitive, which are found expressing the dedicatee in Latin, are not formally possible, even if non-standard variants are considered. Adams suggests that the forms are actually accusatives (missing the final *-m* expected in standard Latin), and that this interference in the Latin inscription betrays information about the origins of the author. In Greek honorific inscriptions the accusative of the honorand is used, often accompanied by a statue, and was the standard form in the Greek of Palmyra.[10] At South Shields, perhaps encouraged by the presence of the figure on this monument, the form of the Greek honorary inscriptions of Palmyra may have influenced the creation of this Latin funerary text. Adams proposes that 'Barates was presumably bilingual in Aramaic and Greek, and he imitated here in Latin the Greek construction which he knew from his place of origin'.[11] An inscription that on the face of it appears to be bilingual in fact demands a multilingual analysis.

Further analysis reveals that a fourth language may even be in play in this text from South Shields. The tribal name *Catuallauna* stands out as non-standard since other attestations, both literary and inscriptional, of this tribal designation show an *e*-vocalism in the middle of the name, as in Catuvellauni. The explanation for this change in vocalism can perhaps be sought in the Celtic languages, since in (Gallo-)Brittonic the name element *uellaun-* seems to have become *uallaun*, as, for example, in the Old Welsh personal name *Catguallaun* and the Middle Welsh personal name *Cas(s)wallawn*, whose earlier forms were almost certainly *Catuuellaunos, Cassiuellaunos*.[12] Though the assimilation of /e/ to an adjacent open vowel is not an unusual or distinctive sound change, and therefore not to be excluded as a feature of the Latin, Greek or Palmyrene of the inscription, it appears to be well attested in the (Gallo-)Brittonic branch of Celtic in precisely this linguistic environment, and it could be an indication of the British Celtic pronunciation of the tribal name, and

[9] Adams 1998, 2003: 254–255.
[10] From this usage the accusative spread to Greek funerary inscriptions and some Latin inscriptions in Greek environments; see Mednikarova 2003 for details.
[11] Adams 2003: 255. [12] For a discussion of *uellaun-*, see Evans 1967: 272–277 and Lambert 1990c.

a hint at the Celtic linguistic background of Regina, a member of that tribe.[13]

Another feature of the text, the designation *Palmyrenus*, should encourage us to think about language and identity.[14] Palmyrene is a rare example from the Roman Empire of a non-Greek local language used epigraphically late into the Empire in contexts where other communities would uniquely use Greek or Latin (e.g. in military inscriptions), suggesting a strong link between ethnic identity and language for Palmyrenes, and high ethnolinguistic vitality (see pp. 26–29 for this concept).[15] Perhaps this explains the addition of the Palmyrene to the epitaph. It contains less factual content than the Latin, the only addition being an expression of grief, and, as Adams notes, 'there will never have been many Palmyrenes at South Shields capable of reading the Aramaic text (no Palmyrene unit of the Roman army is known from Britain)'.[16] Yet, Barates clearly saw the Palmyrene as vital in representing his identity, and it is a neat example of Adams' claim that 'a bilingual epitaph may be not only a means of imparting information about the deceased, but a form of display by the dedicator in which he expresses symbolically a feature of his identity or that of his referent'.[17] Indeed, the fort and port was likely to have been a multicultural locus throughout its history, a fact which may have facilitated the addition of the non-Latin personal expression of grief.[18] The advantage of the foreignness of the Palmyrene script is that even illiterates would presumably have been able to recognise that there was something else on the stone that was not Latin.

[13] I am grateful to Paul Russell for discussing this option with me.

[14] This expression of ethnic origin can be paralleled elsewhere, for instance at Rome: *CIL* VI 19134, VI 50.

[15] Note Adams' (2003: 247) comment: 'unlike many of the speakers of the vernacular languages who came into contact with the Romans, they [the Palmyrenes] held on to their original linguistic identity, even when they were far from home and participating in Roman institutions'. Key evidence can be found in Adams 2003: 247–271; Taylor 2002; see also Clackson, this volume.

[16] Adams 2003: 32. There is a reference to the *praefectus numeri barcariorum Tigrisiensium, Arbeia* (normally equated with South Shields) in the *Notitia dignitatum* (11.22) (late fourth to early fifth century AD), which perhaps indicates the presence of people from the region of the Tigris in a later period, see Rivet and Smith 1979: 216–225.

[17] Adams 2003: 32.

[18] The museum guide and displays at the South Shields' fort call the site *Arbeia* and state that it means 'the place of the Arabs'. This assertion appears to be based on the reference in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, which refers to boat-men from the Tigris region (n. 16), and the suggestion of Kennedy (1986) that these men may have given the ethnic/regional name ('Arbāyā/ē) to the site. There are problems with this assertion, however, not least the fact that *Arbeia* may not certainly be the fort at South Shields. Rivet and Smith (1979: 256) offer parallels for the name but state that the etymology of *Arbeia* is unknown. If *Arbeia* were the ancient name for South Shields before the arrival of the men from the Tigris, it is possible that the name may be a Celtic equivalent of *Horrea classis*, which fits with a key function of the site as a huge granary at various periods (Paul Russell pers. comm.).

In assessing unusual epitaphs such as these it is essential to understand the broader linguistic context of the Empire and the possible negotiations of multiple identities within it.

2 CROSSING BOUNDARIES

Just as languages do not tend to follow man-made borders, neither does multilingualism. In the ancient world, as in the modern, monolingualism was a minority trait: 'the idea that monolingualism is the human norm is a myth'.[19] Those who work on language contact in the modern world are faced with an overwhelming variety of languages, communities and contexts, but they are still able to employ the same set of terminologies, frameworks, generalisations and interpretations across the spectrum to attempt to understand the diversity. In the same way, the complexity of multilingualism in the ancient world, though mesmerising and often approached through quite different evidence, can be submitted to the same modern theory. While the context and results of multilingualism in the medieval monasteries of Ireland (Moran) versus multilingualism in pre-Roman Iberia (Simkin) might appear, and are in many respects, worlds apart, the bilingual phenomena attested are created through analogous linguistic interactions and are representative of similar human processes. Instances of interference, for example, might look different in dissimilar contexts but are, in broad terms, fundamentally the same.[20] Modern bilingualism theory is only 'modern' in that it is a product of the modern world and, in some sense, 'under construction', rather than only being applicable to modern contexts.

Convinced that disciplinary boundaries impede research into ancient multilingualism, we have assembled contributors from a range of backgrounds. The scope of their collaboration is dauntingly broad: beginning with the advent of alphabetic scripts in the Mediterranean basin (Clackson) and finding an end-point somewhere in thirteenth-century Iceland (Blom). As long as evidence for multilingualism is available, any time or place in the past could have been used to illustrate the themes, but we have opted for the Mediterranean and Northern Europe in antiquity and the early Middle Ages. We felt it was acceptable, indeed desirable, to wish away periods, and

[19] Thomason 2001: 31.

[20] It would be unwise to formulate this statement in stronger terms. Sociolinguistics reminds us of the context-specific nature of language use and we should only think of sociolinguistic uniformitarianism operating in very broad terms. See Langslow 2002: 50–51 for a plea for caution.

in particular the divide between the ancient and the medieval.[21] Though diverse in their chronological and geographical dimensions, all the chapters are connected by the theme of the Graeco-Roman world. In this volume that world is plural. It encompasses the Graeco-Roman world of antiquity (Clackson, Simkin, Evans, Blom, Langslow, Bucking, Wilson and Osborne), but also its extensions, for example, the Graeco-Roman world of the Irish medieval mind (Moran), the continuation of classical traditions in the early medieval West (Russell), the use of *linguae sacrae* and *uoces magicae* in late antiquity and the early medieval period (Blom) and the transformation of the Near East and Egypt under the Islamic Empire (Papaconstantinou).

The problem of the over-rigid compartmentalisation of disciplines, linguistic competence, time-periods and subject matter is a recurring battle-cry for many of the contributors. We hear, for example, from Papaconstantinou about the lamentable state of publication of certain kinds of papyri: in the past those in Arabic, and not dealing with the formation of the Islamic state and society, have been sorely overlooked. Similarly, Wilson complains about the publication of inscriptions in different languages in different corpora, particularly heinous when bi- or tri-version bilingual inscriptions are split between corpora, and the lack of images, or even discussion of the material support for the inscriptions, in epigraphic editions. Papaconstantinou also bemoans the divisions between Classicists, Semiticists and Egyptologists. Her comparison of the fates of Coptic and Aramaic represents an important offering 'since Aramaic is studied in departments of Semitic Studies, and Coptic in departments of Egyptology, so that their common aspects as vectors of Eastern Christian cultures are not brought out' (p. 62).

The volume is loosely arranged in pairs of chapters. These pairs comprise themes deemed to be cross-culturally significant in the study of ancient multilingualism. In several pairs East and West have been joined to avoid this standard division, which, as I have argued elsewhere, can be unhelpful, not providing thematic coherence, forcing marginal areas or documents into one or other sphere and playing down cross-fertilisation.[22] Many of the themes raised by the pairs of contributors overlap and are developed across the volume.

Clackson and Papaconstantinou, considering the Roman and Islamic Empires respectively, treat the subject of language maintenance and shift,

[21] Horden and Purcell 2000 do this with skill, though their work lacks discussions of language use and epigraphy.
[22] Mullen 2010.

the former using largely epigraphic and anecdotal material and a sociolinguistic approach (deeming gender an important factor) and the latter using documentary sources and taking a more historical perspective. Though quite different in approach, they demonstrate key similarities: both argue for the importance of comparative studies and use modern linguistic theory in an attempt to illuminate the past. We shall consider below (pp. 26–29) the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality and how their chapters might allow us to make additions to the standard picture presented in modern bilingualism studies. This bi-directionality of influence reminds us of the potentially mutually enriching interaction between studies of contemporary and ancient multilingualism.[23]

Simkin and Evans take as their subjects the Iberian peninsula and a Greek–Egyptian community. A unifying theme of their chapters is the close scrutiny of the types of evidence which have become familiar to those studying multilingualism of the past. They show the diverse ways of interrogating the evidence and offer prospects for future research. Evans demonstrates the importance of context in identifying possible bilingual phenomena (see pp. 18–19 for definitions), explaining that many so-called Egyptianisms in the documentary papyri dissolve when the non-standard Greek of the texts is properly understood. His interdisciplinary approach is essentially sociolinguistic, but he also argues that we should treat the papyri as textual artefacts, plundering them for information from the handwriting, format and materials used; indeed the writing equipment employed by the author can be an indicator of his or her possible origins. Simkin guides us through the multilingual complexity of the Iberian peninsula, an area usually relatively inaccessible to non-specialists. He surveys the numerous indicators of language contact, showing us how to use (and how not to use) evidence from languages which are often imperfectly understood. Of particular interest is his incorporation of what he terms 'direct' and 'indirect' evidence, which includes, in the latter category, 'epigraphic influence'. His suggestions for epigraphic material which might be of interest in reconstructing language contact draw on a range of features beyond those usually cited in standard tomes on bilingualism. His subsequent sections on personal names and the function of Iberian, where he uses a variety of evidence to interrogate networks and movement of people, are both also crucially important for reconstructing language contact. Though he does not commit himself to the label 'indirect' for these forms of evidence, the positioning of these sections following the indirect 'epigraphic evidence'

[23] Note also the comments in Langslow 2002, especially 24–25, 51.

suggests that he sees them as such, though personal names could arguably be classed as either 'indirect' or 'direct', or perhaps both. Indeed, names as markers of identity and changes in naming practices under new socio-political circumstances and evolving cultural configurations are a concern in many of the chapters. As Evans reminds us, 'personal names are hardly the most secure indicators of the ethnicity or first language of an individual' (p. 110): of his brush documents, almost certainly the product of an Egyptian milieu, only sixteen out of thirty-eight authors have Egyptian names. Osborne highlights the various strategies of adopting new names in contact situations (translation, homophony ('cover names'), replacement), which often mask, or may, with care, reveal, original names.[24]

Blom and Langslow move us into the multilingualism of the world of technical discourse. One key question is how we should interpret multilingualism when it appears in such highly specialised contexts. Can the terminologies and theories of modern studies, which are primarily designed to treat spoken language, help us in any way? Both Blom and Langslow demonstrate that modern terminology and theory can indeed be applied to their evidence, though sometimes not without considerable difficulties. Blom categorises the features of ritual language by looking at a wide range of examples from the ancient and medieval worlds and by applying the findings of anthropological studies of ritual. Of particular interest is his discussion of the use of extracts of languages whose meaning had become opaque to evoke an otherworldly atmosphere. In these instances we have an auditory code-switch whose incomprehensibility is key to its function of communicating and performing ritual – not a feature discussed in studies of contemporary code-switching. In many cases in the written form these code-switches also involve a change of script, which adds a visual code-switch and potentially a further element of obscurity and mystery to the text. Langslow, in the chapter which most closely reflects the vast corpus of research by modern linguists, uses modern theory to try to categorise and understand some of the oddities in the technical discourse of Latin translations of Greek medical texts. We shall discuss further below the terminology and theories of contemporary bilingualism and their application to the ancient evidence (pp. 15–23).

Northern Europe in the medieval period is the focus of the chapters by Moran and Russell. Moran raises the theme of multilingual education. Some multilinguals gain their languages from multilingual homes and communities without formal education, but many become multilingual

[24] See Mullen 2007 for a discussion of naming strategies.

through education and formal learning. A large proportion of research into modern multilingualism treats second and third language acquisition, and investigates educational policies for multilingual communities. Despite the fact that our evidence is written and often therefore implies instruction at some level, education has not featured highly in recent discussions of multilingualism in the ancient world, nor have researchers effectively exploited contemporary theory. Indeed, in a recent volume on multilingual Egypt, Papaconstantinou notes that it is the 'one subject [that] is consistently neglected'.[25] In Moran's chapter the education under the spotlight is erudite and monastic. He asks how far a classical language such as Greek, which was never widely spoken in Ireland, was known in these closed circles, and how the knowledge had been transmitted. His close reading of the evidence allows us to attempt to reconstruct the written materials available in such monastic contexts. Next, Russell ranges over a considerable amount of material which has appeared in different guises in the preceding chapters: the literary and/or technical manuscripts of scholars, epigraphic remains and the linguistic evidence of loanwords and other linguistic features. His broad chronological view allows us to consider the nature of the transition from the Roman to the medieval period as he considers and develops the main themes of the preceding contributions: the function and fates of languages (Clackson and Papaconstantinou), the scope and limitations of the evidence (Simkin and Evans), the difficulties of treating technical discourse (Blom and Langslow) and the importance of context.

The final pair, Bucking and Wilson, builds in particular on this last aspect with two approaches to the integration of archaeological and textual material. With Bucking we return to education, though we are no longer in the erudite, monastic *scriptoria* of Ireland, but are considering functional scribal or basic literacy in Egypt (in another, but different, monastic context). Bucking ponders the unhelpful divide between 'word and dirt' and argues that by appreciating in detail the archaeological context of the graffiti at Deir el-Bahri and Beni Hasan, many of which involve sections of alphabets in various orders and combinations, we form a better picture of whether these have anything to do with education or the realm of

[25] Papaconstantinou 2010: 11. This is probably an overstatement; recent discussions include the work of Bellandi and Ferri (2008), Bucking (2007 and this volume), Cribiore (1996, 2001), Dickey (2010, 2012), Dickey and Ferri (2010) and Rochette (1997). Earlier work on the Graeco-Roman world was also interested in bilingual education, see, for example, Haarhoff 1920, Lewis 1976. The entries on bilingualism in the different editions of the *OCD* are of interest: the first edition has no entry under 'bilingualism', the second has a discussion of the elite and education by Theodore Haarhoff, and the third, supplied by Rosalind Thomas, provides a wider overview.

ritual, or both. His focus on the archaeological context encourages us to think about the precise location of texts, their measurements, their height from the floor, the light sources and the way in which the multiple texts, writers and readers interact. This chapter successfully responds to the manifesto, the volume *Ancient Graffiti in Context* (Baird and Taylor 2011a), which urges us to treat ancient graffiti with methodological rigour, accepting that they do not necessarily compare with modern graffiti,[26] that the distinction between text and image is largely artificial, and that analysis of their 'dialogues'[27] and their 'broader spatial and social environment'[28] is essential. Evoking a distinctively archaeological technique, Bucking even suggests that multiple graffiti on the same surface can be viewed stratigraphically. Wilson similarly argues for the importance of understanding the epigraphy of North Africa in its setting. His approach focuses especially on the importance of function, display and viewing as inseparable from the meaning of the words and provides another example of how to reconcile word and dirt. We shall consider this approach further at the close of this chapter (pp. 29–35).

Finally, Osborne rounds up the volume with a sceptical approach to our efforts. He reminds us, for example, that even the definition of 'language' is open for debate, though in his range of possible definitions he omits an important perspective, namely language as a grouping of idiolects *deemed a language by their speakers*. Languages are perhaps primarily social, political, cultural creations, and all the contributors (perhaps most vehemently Osborne) agree that there is little point in analysing language contact divorced from speakers. Throughout the volume we encounter the intimate connection between language and identity, and Osborne reminds us of the extreme position of the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis by suggesting that languages 'are at least part of the process by which we have ideas in the first place' (p. 327). The relationship between languages and culture is more complicated, as Papaconstantinou reminds us. She ends her chapter with the potentially incendiary comment that we should not necessarily mourn the loss of a language – this is to take a 'language-centred perspective' and does not appreciate the 'human dimension' (p. 76). In her case study of the Copts, the shift to Arabic and the loss of Coptic may be the sign of newly found prosperity and confidence. We might wonder whether the shift to Latin in the Western provinces might also be viewed, at least for some

[26] Modern graffiti-making is often viewed as an illicit lower-class practice. In the ancient world it could be the product of the elite and part of literary or political expression; equally though, ancient graffiti can also be the result of non-literates copying, see Baird and Taylor 2011b.
[27] Baird and Taylor 2011b: 7. [28] Benefiel 2011: 24.