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INTRODUCTION

Languages in contact in ancient Italy

A traveller through Italy in the first millennium BC would have heard many different languages being spoken. Alphabetic writing systems reached Italy around the eighth century BC, thanks to the influx of Greek settlers and traders. This was several centuries before the expansion of Latin from the small area around the city of Rome to the whole peninsula and, eventually, to most of Western Europe. As a result, we have written evidence of a wide range of languages other than Latin, including some more famous languages such as Greek and Etruscan, but also Oscan, Umbrian, South Picene, Messapic and many others.[1] The spread of Latin wiped out the other languages of Italy: after the Social War (91–88 BC) between Rome and its Italian allies there was a sharp drop in languages other than Latin being written down. Apart from Greek, these languages have no modern-day spoken descendants.

The evidence we have represents a skewed sample of the total number of written texts that were produced. In the mild climate of Italy, unlike in the dry sands of Egypt or in the unusually anoxic conditions at Vindolanda, the vast majority of organic materials like papyrus and wood did not survive. Writing on more permanent materials such as bronze may also have been destroyed when metal objects were melted down, and texts on stone blocks may be hidden inside the walls of more recent buildings. More texts in the languages of Italy are discovered

[1] Oscan, Umbrian and South Picene and a number of less well-attested languages make up the Sabellian language group. Sabellian (also called Sabellic) is one branch of the Italic language family, whose other major branch includes Latin and Faliscan. The Messapic language belongs to a different branch of Indo-European. For the subgrouping of languages within Italic, see Rix 2003; Clackson 2015a.

every year, bringing us precious new insights, but also demonstrating how many inscribed objects may still be hidden underground.

The relative shortage of evidence, compared with the thousands of Latin and Greek inscriptions which have survived, might seem an insurmountable problem for anyone wishing to study these languages. And while we should certainly be cautious about over-extrapolating from the evidence, there are many things which become immediately obvious about the societies that produced these texts. Most strikingly, the texts produced in ancient Italy testify to widespread multilingualism and contact between languages. We can see this when multiple languages were used within one site at around the same time, or when elements of multiple languages appear in the creation of one text. These written sources provide plentiful evidence of contact between communities that we otherwise hear about only in passing from much later literary authors, or not at all.

Two very similar texts from Lucania demonstrate the different kinds of evidence for bilingualism in ancient Italy. They also show how much we benefit from comparing multiple similar texts, rather than viewing each inscription in isolation. Both texts were put up by magistrates to commemorate the building of city walls, one at Serra di Vaglio (Potentia 39) and one at Muro Lucano (Lu 4/Numistro 1).[2] They date to a similar period, around the fourth or early third century, and they were found at similar locations: inland urban sites high in the mountains of Lucania, originally founded by Oscan-speakers rather than Greek settlers. Both magistrates appear to be from Oscan-speaking backgrounds, if we can rely on the origin of their names. Both texts are written on stone and communicate a very similar message, though the formulae are a little different: '(This was built) in the magistracy of Nummelos' (Potentia 39)

[2] In this book, inscriptions are referred to by their numbers in both Rix 2002 and Crawford 2011b. The Rix numbers consist of two letters and a number; the Crawford numbers of a (Roman) place name and a number. Some Crawford numbers are abbreviated, so that Lucania or Brettii or Sicilia 1 is written Luc.Bret.Sic 1. Not all inscriptions have both a Rix and a Crawford number. On subsequent mentions, inscriptions may be referred to by one number only. Concordances are provided in Appendix 2.

and 'Mais Arries (commissioned this) in his magistracy' (Lu 4). The key difference between the texts is their language. Nummelos commissioned his inscription in Greek, and altered his name to give it a Greek ending, while Mais Arries had his inscription written in Oscan.

We cannot know for certain why the magistrates decided on different languages for these very similar inscriptions. Perhaps Nummelos usually spoke Greek and Mais Arries spoke Oscan, though it is unlikely that any member of the elite would have been completely monolingual in either language at this time. They may have had different audiences in mind, either because the populations of their towns were significantly different, or because one language or another held more power and prestige in their respective areas. The rationale may have been more ideological, such as a desire to align oneself and the community with a wider Greek-speaking world, or to privilege local relationships over wider Mediterranean networks. The difference in language may arise from something as banal as the availability of Greek- or Oscan-speaking stonemasons to carve the inscriptions. Alternatively, if everyone who could read was bilingual, then the magistrates may have seen no particular significance in the choice of language.

Taken separately, these texts do not necessarily tell us much about the nature of bilingualism and language contact in ancient Italy; when compared, they raise a whole range of new questions and possible answers. We will return to these texts in more detail in Chapter 7, after having explored many other types of texts in southern Italy. Only by bringing a range of these texts together, from different sites and time periods, can we start to construct a picture of the extent and nature of bilingualism in the region.

This book is concerned mainly with evidence of multilingualism and language contact in the texts produced in the Oscan-speaking region of Southern Italy, particularly Oscan in Lucania, Bruttium and Messana. In this region Oscan was in close contact with both Greek and Latin. These Oscan inscriptions are often grouped together because most texts from this area were written using an adapted form of the Greek

alphabet, though some of the latest texts were written in the Latin alphabet. Further north in Campania and Samnium, the 'native' Oscan alphabet based on the Etruscan alphabet and the Latin alphabet were the most common writing systems. The texts from Lucania, Bruttium and Messana are conventionally referred to as 'South Oscan', and date from the fourth century BC until the Social War (91–88 BC) or soon afterwards. This grouping is primarily orthographic rather than linguistic, though we will see some ways in which South Oscan differs linguistically from the Oscan texts of further north as well. The corpus of South Oscan texts has grown considerably during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, resulting in a collection that is considerably under-studied, both as individual texts and as a group.

South Oscan epigraphy offers the opportunity to study a relatively unusual form of ancient language contact. It is quite common to find ancient examples of contact between a local language and a regional or supra-regional high-status language, to which speakers of the local variety shift over a period of time. Contact between Latin and the majority of the languages of the Western Roman Empire follows this pattern, as does the interaction between Greek and the languages of Asia Minor. Contact between Oscan and Greek is very different, because neither was ever the dominant language of the entire region. In some cities, such as Naples in Campania, the aristocracy was Greek-speaking well into the Roman Imperial period despite a significant Oscan-speaking minority. In others, such as Laos and Paestum, the elite began to use Oscan rather than Greek in texts such as official dedications to deities at a particular date, before shifting to Latin. And at the sanctuary at Rossano di Vaglio, Oscan alone was used until Latin became the preferred written language. Greek never completely displaced Oscan, nor vice versa. The decline of both languages in Italy was caused by the expansion of Latin, with Oscan undergoing language death around the first century BC to the first century AD.[3] Greek survived elsewhere in the Mediterranean,

[3] Adams 2003: 112, 146–7; Clackson and Horrocks 2007: 83; Wallace 2008: 96.

but probably also ceased to be spoken in Italy, although the Griko dialect of Calabria and Puglia may show limited continuity of Greek in Italy up to the present day.[4] Because Greek and Oscan do not follow the typical High/Low pattern we see elsewhere, a close investigation of the language contact situation in Southern Italy adds a new facet to our understanding of how languages were used in the ancient world.

The aim of this book is to examine the evidence of language contact in South Oscan texts, both as a corpus and as part of a wider context of language contact in the ancient world. Perspectives from sociolinguistics, epigraphy and archaeology are all essential to achieving this. In the last decade, the study of ancient multilingualism has grown considerably, particularly in reference to fragmentary languages. This book therefore takes into account recent work on other smaller languages of the Mediterranean, and seeks to add to the theoretical and methodological frameworks that have begun to develop in the past ten years.

History of Lucania, Bruttium and Messana

With the accompanying maps, this section is intended to give background to the texts discussed in the rest of this book – this account is by no means exhaustive, and focuses mainly on contact and relationships between groups and communities.[5]

[4] Rohlfs 1967; Horrocks 2010: 383.

[5] There is no work which deals with the history of both the Greek settlements and the Oscan-speaking peoples over the whole period covered by this book. The best historical and archaeological account of ancient Lucania is Isayev 2007; for Western Lucania see also Horsnaes 2002, and for Roman Lucania see Gualtieri 2003. For ethnicity and archaic Greek settlement in Bruttium, see Skinner 2012: 175–211; for Bruttium and southern Lucania leading up to and during the Second Punic War, see Fronda 2010. For the history of other Oscan-speaking areas of Italy, see also Dench 1995, who builds on older work by Salmon 1967, 1982. Bruttium lacks a recent historical or archaeological synthesis, but see Pugliese Carratelli 1987 for a short history of Bruttium. For the history of Magna Graecia, the classic treatment, now somewhat outdated because of new archaeological discoveries, is Dunbabin 1948; for 350 BC–AD 200, see Lomas 1993. The main ancient literary sources for the history of Southern Italy, Sicily and Magna Graecia are Polybius (particularly books 1–2, 9–11), Diodorus Siculus (particularly book 14.91–117; 16.5; 20.104–5; 22; 37.2), Livy (books 6–10; 21–30), Dionysius of Halicarnassus (books 17/18, 19, 20), Strabo (books 5–6) and Appian (*Samnite History*, *Hannibalic War*, *Civil Wars* 1).

The neighbouring areas of Apulia, Campania and the rest of Sicily are mentioned here, but they are not treated systematically. Lucania and Bruttium are not particularly well-defined regions in ancient sources.[6] Lucania roughly corresponds to modern-day Basilicata, though probably with a greater stretch of coastline on the Tyrrhenian Sea, and Bruttium to modern Calabria in the 'toe' of Italy.[7] Messana, which used Oscan in written texts for one or two generations, is a city in northern Sicily just across the straits from the Italian peninsula. Lucania, Bruttium and Messana never formed a single linguistic or political unit, but represent the area where Oscan was written using the Greek alphabet.

Lucania, Bruttium and Messana tend never to take centre stage in ancient historical narratives, and our understanding of events often relies on just one ancient historian, or occasionally competing versions from several. All of the Greek and Roman historians who narrated the events of Republican-era Italy wrote several centuries later than the earliest events they record, and if they used surviving records or eyewitness accounts these were from a limited range of perspectives. Livy unambiguously describes Rome as the greatest nation ever to have existed, and gives this as a major motivation for his writing.[8] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, also writing in the Augustan era at Rome but in Greek, makes similar statements about the supremacy of Rome and the inevitability of its rise to power.[9] Polybius, writing for a Greek audience around a century earlier, was also keen to explain how Rome had come to establish its empire by analysing past events.[10] This shared need to account for Rome's later dominance can often result in a teleological view of the Republican era, seeing the superiority and attractiveness of Roman culture at every turn. The surviving inscriptions written in Oscan in this region date from the fourth to the first centuries BC, and rarely refer to events recorded by the historians; outside of these dates, we have no Oscan-language perspective at all. For these reasons, what follows cannot be

[6] For details of the competing definitions, see Isayev 2007: 3; Skinner 2012: 176.
[7] Note that ancient 'Calabria' was in the heel of Italy rather than the toe.
[8] Livy 1.1–9. [9] Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.2–3. [10] Polybius 1.2.

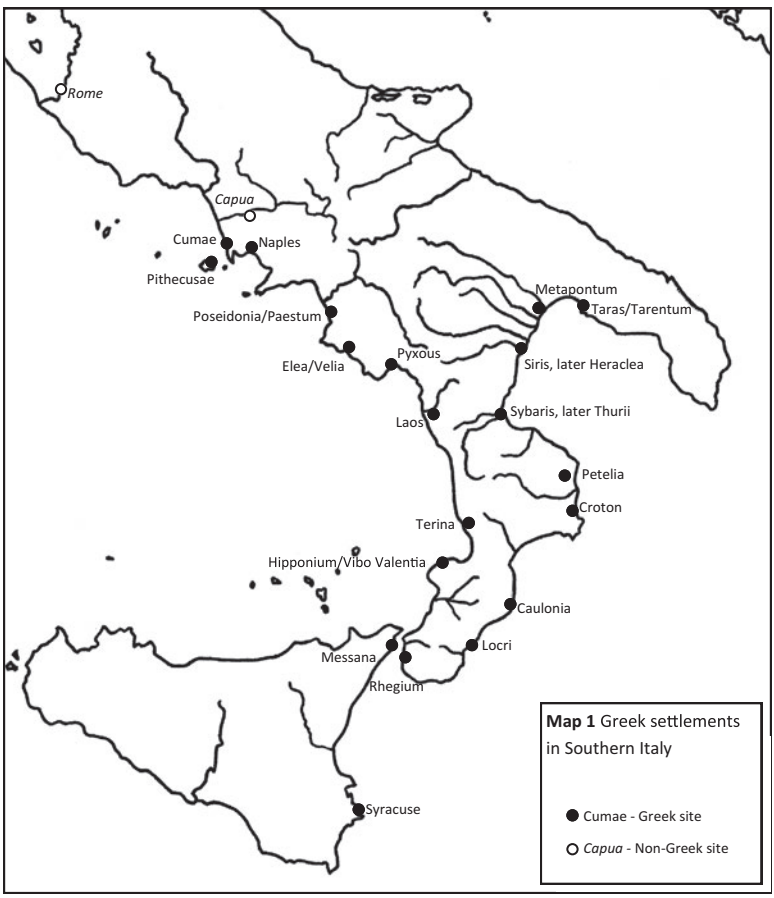
taken as anything more than an approximation of events in the region. Where dates of events are given, they are based on ancient sources and should be assumed to be approximate, and I have noted where the statements of historians directly conflict with other evidence. For details of individual sites, see the catalogue of sites in Appendix 1.

Greek trade and settlement

Greek first arrived in Italy as a language spoken by traders. Contact between Italy and Greece goes back to at least to the fifth or fourth millennium BC, with growth and change in these trade connections in the mid-second millennium BC, when the first Aegean pottery appears in Italy, and again in the first half of the first millennium.[11] There were always good reasons for the Greeks to head westwards: the west coast of Italy was rich in materials which mainland Greece lacked, such as copper, silver, lead and obsidian.[12] Trade with the wealthy Etruscan civilisation and its predecessors in Etruria and Campania would also have been an attractive prospect.[13] Aegean Greek ceramics are found in Italy as early as the sixteenth century BC, mainly in Apulia, the Gulf of Tarentum and the Bay of Naples.[14] The pattern of Greek trade and small-scale settlement in the Western Mediterranean from the sixteenth to the eighth century BC has traditionally been known as 'pre-colonisation', but more recently scholars have rejected this term as misleading given the level of ongoing contact in this period.[15]

From the early eighth century BC, the Greeks set up permanent settlement sites often known in English as 'colonies'.[16] The settlements referred to in the text are shown in Map 1. In

[11] Skinner 2012: 177–8; Broodbank 2013: 204–5, 431, 546.
[12] Broodbank 2013: 69.
[13] For discussion of possible motivations for Greek settlement abroad, see Garland 2001: 35–7.
[14] Ridgway 1992: 4–8. [15] Ridgway 2004: 17–18.
[16] Some of the most recent historical accounts of this period avoid the word 'colony' to stress the difference between Greek settlement patterns and modern European colonialism. See Osborne 1998; Vlassopoulos 2013: 103; Garland 2014: 34. I have avoided this term in favour of 'settlements'. Roman and Latin colonies (discussed below) are still referred to as 'colonies' as an Anglicisation of the Latin word *colonia.*



Map 1 Greek settlements in Southern Italy

Greek, they were known as *emporia* or trading outposts and *apoikiai* or permanent city-state settlements, literally 'homes away from home'.[17] Each settlement had a formal 'mother city' or *metropolis*, though most were settled by people from a mixture of cities and areas. Traditionally, settlements shared their language, customs and religious practices with their mother

[17] This account uses the traditional dates for the Greek settlements, but it is possible that the first settlements should be redated earlier, into the ninth century. See Ridgway 2004: 19–22.

city, and maintained various formal and informal contacts, but the settlements were politically independent. The Greeks were not the only ones settling the Mediterranean in this way: the Phoenicians were doing the same and were a significant presence in the early 'Greek' settlements such as Pithecusae.

Euboean settlements were among the earliest Greek sites in Italy, founded mainly on the west coast. These sites boast the oldest writing in the Greek alphabet, including the cup of Nestor, inscribed with Greek hexameter verse in the late eighth century. Settlements were also founded by Achaean, Doric and Ionic settlers.[18] The Achaean settlements came to dominate the southern coast and the 'instep' of Italy, apart from the Doric city of Taras/Tarentum.[19] Some settlements founded settlements of their own: for example, Poseidonia/Paestum was founded by Sybaris. Many settlements had established stories of their origins which provide a traditional foundation date. These are sometimes too far in the mythical past to be credible, such as the tradition that Petelia was founded by the hero Philoctetes in the aftermath of the Trojan War or that Metapontum was first founded by Nestor.[20] Some settlements' early histories do not survive in our sources: we know nothing of the foundation of Laos, except that it already existed in 510 and refugees from the destruction of Sybaris settled there. The Greeks of Italy are usually known collectively as 'Italiotes' or 'Italiote Greeks', and the Greek-settled area of Italy is called 'Magna Graecia', or Great Greece.

Our histories of the Greek settlements are patchy in the Archaic period. We know that Sybaris expanded hugely in territory and influence, founding both Laos and Poseidonia/Paestum and sharing a coin standard with Croton, Metapontum and Caulonia until its destruction. Archaic Sybaris

[18] These are the group names that Greek sources use to classify the settlements, although 'Achaean' Greeks spoke a Doric dialect.

[19] Some sites are known by different names at different times. These sites include: Zancle/Messana, Poseidonia/Paestum, Taras/Tarentum, Hipponium/Vibo Valentia, Elea/Velia. In most cases the latter name is that used by the Romans, and this name will mostly be used in the rest of this book, apart from in this historical introduction, where both are included. Thurii Copia is usually known by both its names.

[20] Malkin 1998: 210–33.

Table 1 *Foundation dates of Greek settlements in Italy*[21]

Settlement	Date (arch) = from archaeological evidence (lit) = from literary evidence	Dialect area: mother city or cities
Pithecusae	750–725 (arch)	Euboean: Chalcis, Eretria
Rhegium	730–720 (arch)	Euboean: Chalcis
Zancle/Messana	730–720 (arch)	Euboean: Chalcis
Cumae	725–700 (arch)	Euboean: Chalcis, Eretria
Sybaris	720. Destroyed 510.	Achaean: Achaea
Croton	709	Achaean: Achaea
Taras/Tarentum	706	Doric: Sparta
Siris	*c.* 700 (arch). Destroyed sixth century.	Ionic: Colophon
Locri Epizephyrioi	679	Doric: Locris
Metapontum	*c.* 650 (arch)	Achaean: Achaea
Caulonia	*c.* 650 (arch)	Achaean: Croton
Hipponium/Vibo Valentia	*c.* 650 (arch)	Doric: Locri Epizephyrioi
Paleopolis (later Neapolis/Naples)	*c.* 650 (arch)	Euboean: Cumae
Poseidonia/Paestum	625–600 (arch)	Achaean: Sybaris
Laos	?	?Achaean: Sybaris
Elea/Velia	*c.* 540	Ionic: Phocaea
Terina	*c.* 500	Achaean: Croton
Pyxous	?471 (lit)	?Euboean: Rhegium, Zancle
Thurii Copia	*c.* 443. Founded on the site of Sybaris.	Panhellenic: nominally Athens, refugees from Sybaris
Heraclea	433. Possibly on the site of Siris.	Doric: Taras, Thurii

[21] Adapted from Graham 1982a: 160–2. This table includes the settlements mentioned in the text.