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978-0-521-88149-4 - The Regional Diversification of Latin 200 BC-AD 600

J. N. Adams

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OF LATIN 200 BC-AD 600

Classical Latin appears to be without regional dialects, yet Latin evolved in little more than a millennium into a variety of different languages (the Romance languages: Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese etc.). Was regional diversity apparent from the earliest times, obscured perhaps by the standardisation of writing, or did some catastrophic event in late antiquity cause the language to vary? These questions have long intrigued Latinists and Romance philologists, struck by the apparent uniformity of Latin alongside the variety of Romance. This book establishes that Latin was never geographically uniform. The changing patterns of diversity and the determinants of variation are examined from the time of the early inscriptions of Italy, through to late antiquity and the beginnings of the Romance dialects in the western Roman provinces. This is the most comprehensive treatment ever undertaken of the regional diversification of Latin throughout its history in the Roman period.

J. N. ADAMS is a Senior Research Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. His recent publications include *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (Cambridge, 2003) and *Pelagonius and Latin Veterinary Terminology in the Roman Empire* (1995).

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Preface

No reader of Cicero and Martial, however attentive and learned, could possibly tell from their Latin that the one came from Arpinum in the Volscian territory and the other from Spain. It has sometimes been thought paradoxical that Latin of the Roman period seems to lack regional variations yet was able to generate in little more than a millennium a diversity of Romance tongues that are usually classified as different languages. Was the language at first uniform but subject in late antiquity to some catastrophic event that caused it to split up into numerous varieties? Or was regional diversity there from the beginning, obscured perhaps by standardised forms of writing? These questions have long been of interest, particularly to Romance philologists keen to identify the genesis of the different Romance languages. The study of regional variation by Latinists suffered a setback more than a hundred years ago when the supposed discovery of African features in certain African literary texts was exposed as misguided, but even among Latinists an interest in the subject has never entirely faded away. Several of the great names in Latin philology have addressed the subject, not infrequently lamenting its difficulty, and expressing frustration that the variations that common sense and their experience of other languages told them must be there, could not be found.

In this book it will be shown that Latin had regional variations from the earliest period, first within Italy itself and later across the provinces. The pattern of variation changed as the Romans increased their influence in Italy and came into contact with different vernacular languages in the provinces, though it is by no means only language contact that determined the variations that can be detected. It is African Latin that will emerge as the most distinctive regional variety, and that is a curiosity, given the weight of criticism that has fallen on the concept of *Africitas*.

Two main types of evidence lie behind Chapters III–IX. Chapters III and IV deal with the comments made by Latin speakers themselves about the local variations that they heard around them. The remaining chapters

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down to IX seek to find regional usages embedded without comment in literary and some other texts. The book has two complementary aims. I have, first, tried to identify stages in the diversification of the language, from the earliest period through to about AD 600, and the causes of any such diversity. I should stress that a neat history of regional variation in Latin, accompanied by maps showing territorial divisions of the language, cannot be written. Latin writers did not write in dialect, and any regional variation that there might have been is buried under the uniform standard language. Much effort must be expended in groping around trying to unearth mere snippets of information. My second aim has been to address a question that has long bothered scholars. Can literary texts ever be assigned a place of composition on linguistic grounds, and if so what are the criteria that might be used?

Such evidence as I have been able to find for regional variation in Latin has been set out in considerable detail, and for a good reason. Those investigating the diversity of Latin do not have the abundance of material available to students of dialects in modern languages, and signs of diversity have to be extracted from unpromising sources and carefully assessed. One must be wary of reading too much into the sketchy evidence, and I have had to reject many optimistic claims that have been made on behalf of this or that usage as a regionalism. After sifting there remains a core of material, and I have used this as the basis for addressing such general issues as the determinants of variation, provincial archaism, the relationship between variation in Latin itself and that in the Romance languages, attitudes to regional diversity and to provincial speakers, the effects of such language attitudes, the influence of Rome, the role of regional Latin in literary texts, and the interaction between the standard language ('classical Latin') and local forms. These general sections are mainly found at the ends of chapters and in the first and last chapters, but a few are placed within chapters. The most detailed methodological discussion is in Chapter X, where I have considered the question whether misspellings in imperial inscriptions reveal dialect variations across the Empire or merely variations in the literacy levels of stonemasons. Criteria for localising texts are considered mainly in Chapter V, but come up in the following chapters as well.

I have been interested in the subject for many years but had not had time to write anything up. All Souls College provides perfect conditions for anyone fortunate enough to be elected into its fellowship. This book could not have been completed anywhere else, at least in the time that it took at All Souls.

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I owe a particular debt to Eleanor Dickey. She read the whole manuscript with great attention to detail and commented bluntly on its shortcomings. I had to make numerous changes in response to her criticisms. James Clackson read a good part of the work, and made many telling observations and provided information about bibliography. Wolfgang de Melo, Peter Kruschwitz and John Penney read the second chapter, and all suggested significant changes.

Many others have given me help in different ways, and I am grateful to them all: Peter Brennan, John Briscoe, Anna Chahoud, Anna Davies, Trevor Evans, Klaus-Dietrich Fischer, Manfred Flieger and Friedrich Spoth of the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, David Howlett, Tony Hunt, Robert Hastings, John Hines, Geoffrey Horrocks, Nicholas Horsfall, Nigel Kay, Robert Kerr, David Langslow, Michael Lapidge, John Lee, Martin Maiden, Paolo Poccetti, Patrick Sims-Williams, Roger Tomlin, John Peter Wild, Andrew Wilson, Roger Wright.

The copy-editing of this book posed peculiar problems. The task was carried out by Iveta Adams with remarkable sharpness, diligence and learning. Countless errors were eliminated by her. Those that remain are entirely my own fault.

Abbreviations

- Barrington Atlas* R. J. A. Talbert (ed.), *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (Princeton and Oxford, 2000).
- CAH* *Cambridge Ancient History* (Cambridge, 1923–).
- CC* *Corpus Christianorum, series Latina* (Turnholt, 1954–).
- CE* F. Bücheler, A. Riese and E. Lommatzsch (eds.), *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1897–1926).
- CEL* P. Cugusi, *Corpus Epistularum Latinarum papyris tabulis ostracis servatarum*, 3 vols. (Florence, 1992–2002).
- CGL* G. Goetz et al. (eds.), *Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum*, 7 vols. (Leipzig and Berlin, 1888–1923).
- CHG* E. Oder and C. Hoppe (eds.), *Corpus Hippiatricorum Graecorum*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1924–7).
- CIE* *Corpus Inscriptionum Etruscarum* (Leipzig etc., 1893–)
- CIG* *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1828–77).
- CIIC* See Macalister (1945–9).
- CIL* *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (Berlin, 1862–).
- CL* Classical Latin
- CSEL* *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vienna, 1866–).
- DML* *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (Oxford, 1975–).
- FEW* W. von Wartburg, *Französisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Bonn, 1928–).
- FIRA* S. Riccobono (ed.), *Fontes Iuris Romani Antejustiniani*, 2nd edn, 3 vols. (Florence, 1940–1).
- GGM* C. Müller (ed.), *Geographici Graeci Minores*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1855–61).

List of abbreviations

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<i>GL</i>	H. Keil (ed.), <i>Grammatici Latini</i> , 8 vols. (Leipzig, 1855–80).
<i>ILCV</i>	E. Diehl (ed.), <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres</i> , 3 vols. (Berlin, 1925–31).
<i>ILLRP</i>	A. Degrassi (ed.), <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae</i> , 2 vols. (I 2nd edn 1965, II 1963).
<i>ILS</i>	H. Dessau (ed.), <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> , 3 vols. (Berlin, 1892–1916).
<i>IRT</i>	J. M. Reynolds and J. B. Ward Perkins (eds.), <i>The Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania</i> (Rome and London, 1952).
<i>KAI</i>	See Donner and Röllig (1966–9, 2002).
<i>LEI</i>	See Pfister (1979–).
<i>LL</i>	Late Latin
<i>LSJ</i>	H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (revised and augmented by H. S. Jones, with a revised supplement, 1996) (Oxford, 1996).
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i> .
<i> OCD</i>	<i>Oxford Classical Dictionary</i> , 2nd edn (Oxford, 1970), 3rd edn (Oxford, 1996).
<i>OLD</i>	<i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> (Oxford, 1968–82).
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia Graeca (Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca)</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1857–).
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina (Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina)</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–).
<i>PLRE</i>	A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale and J. Morris, <i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> , 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1971–92).
<i>REW</i>	W. Meyer-Lübke, <i>Romanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch</i> , 3rd edn (Heidelberg, 1935).
<i>RIB</i>	<i>The Roman Inscriptions of Britain</i> (Oxford, 1975–).
<i>RLM</i>	K. Halm (ed.), <i>Rhetores Latini Minores</i> (Leipzig, 1863).
<i>SB</i>	F. Preisigke (ed.), <i>Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten</i> (Strassburg, 1915–).
<i>TLL</i>	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Latinae</i> (Leipzig, 1900–).
<i>VL</i>	Vulgar Latin