CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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The study of migration in the ancient world unexpectedly became a topic of the global news cycle in the summer of 2017. ‘The Story of Britain’, a BBC cartoon for schools that depicted a black soldier in Roman Britain, after Britain, generated Twitter exchanges, subsequently expanded into blogs, newspaper articles and think pieces around the world. Historians, archaeologists, geneticists, statisticians as well as others from outside academia contributed to a debate about the amount of ethnic diversity in Roman Britain and the origin and impact of ancient migrants to the British Isles. The editors of this volume do not expect that it will have an impact equivalent to the BBC cartoon, but we hope that the chapters within it can both contribute to the gradual disentanglement of scanty, sometimes contradictory, evidence and present new ways of looking at ancient migration, while also laying bare some of the tacit or unwarranted assumptions that have been made.

The approach of this volume is to highlight and further the contributions that linguistic research brings to the study of ancient movements of people. It is indicative of modern approaches that much of the debate over the BBC ‘The Story of Britain’ cartoon centred around genetics rather than linguistics, with DNA evidence invoked by all sides to bolster their claims. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, comparative linguistics held an analogous position to that of genetics today, providing scientific support to theories of prehistoric and historic migrations. In the first edition of Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species* language relationships were already seen

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1 Since Mary Beard became a target for abuse after her participation in the debate, it is appropriate here to refer to her blog post which also summarises some of the principal arguments; www.the-tls.co.uk/roman-britain-black-white/ (posted 3 August 2017).
as intertwined with the ‘genealogical arrangement of the races of man’. The dispersal and spread of language families, in particular the Indo-European family, were generally explained as the result of prehistoric migrations of the peoples speaking the parent language (now known as Proto-Indo-European, but formerly also called Aryan). There were, it is true, some nineteenth-century scholars who rejected a prehistoric correlation between language and ethnicity. One such was the French orientalist Jules Oppert, who used his inaugural lecture for a course in Sanskrit at the Bibliothèque impériale in Paris in 1865 to argue for the genesis of new languages and peoples through mixing of different elements. Oppert’s apparent criticism of the bases for language families was, however, resoundingly rejected by Indo-Europeanists such as William Dwight Whitney, who categorically denied that modern parallels for language change, such as the adoption of Latin by speakers of other languages during the Roman Empire, could be assumed for prehistoric movements.

The rise of genetics as a guide to human prehistory has had the consequence that linguistic relationships are now less widely invoked as decisive evidence in arguments about ancient migrations. Moreover, the atrocities committed by the Nazis in Germany, and the continued presence of hate speech and hate crimes associated with advocates of an ‘Aryan Race’, have led both to criticism in some quarters of the entire enterprise of Indo-European studies and to a reluctance by some linguists to discuss anything beyond the purely linguistic. Linguists have also become more aware of the large range of circumstances that might explain the spread of language families, including the role played by linguistic contact. It is recognised that words, sounds and even linguistic structures can be ‘borrowed’ from one language by another in numerous ways, often through the medium of bi-or

2 Darwin (1859: 422).
4 Oppert (1866).
6 See recently the critique of Demoule (2014).
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Multilingual individuals. Many linguists are now consequently suspicious of easy equivalences between genetic phylogenies and language family trees. At the same time, archaeologists have moved away from seeking to explain cultural change through mass migrations of peoples, but have theorised different models to account for the spread of cultural artefacts, beliefs and languages. While the evidence for prehistoric mass migrations still remains contested, with much weight currently apportioned to a small amount of ancient DNA evidence, there is an increasing amount of study concerning movement of individuals and larger groups of people in early attested history, particularly in the Roman world. One spur for much recent research has been the programmatic work of Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell (2000), *The Corrupting Sea*, which sets forth a model of a ‘connected’, ‘networked’ Mediterranean in ancient and medieval history. In this approach, also followed notably by Cyprian Broodbank (2013) for the prehistoric period, small-scale movement of peoples and goods around the shores of the Mediterranean is seen as a near-constant feature of life since the first invention of seagoing craft. In these and other works, ‘connectivity’ has come to be used as a loose term describing the different ways in which individuals, goods and ideas have moved around the Mediterranean and even further afield, and how geographically distant regions came into close contact through an aggregation of many short journeys. As Luuk de Ligt and Laurens Tacoma have recently shown (in one of a recent flurry of publications partly arising from a project on migration supported by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research), prosopographic and demographic work on the abundant surviving Greek

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7 For two influential interventions into the debate by linguists, see Sims-Williams (1998) and Campbell (2015).
8 Renfrew (1987) was the first work to apply these archaeological ideas to the spread of Indo-European languages. Broodbank (2013) offers a prehistory of the Mediterranean which largely avoids the reliance on mass migrations of earlier accounts.
9 See, for example, the claims made in Anthony and Brown (2017). For a more nuanced and critical use of evidence from ancient skeletons, see Tacoma (2016b), and for a recent popular account stressing the fast-changing nature of the field, see Reich (2018).
10 See Pettigrew (2013) for a useful summary of the meanings of connectivity in ancient history.
11 de Ligt and Tacoma (2016b: 3–4). See also Tacoma (2016a) and Lo Cascio and Tacoma (2016).
and Roman epigraphic and papyrological sources adds substance to the idea of connectivity; de Ligt and Tacoma exemplify this through a number of studies which use the details provided by onomastic indicators and ethnic designations to track movement around and beyond the Mediterranean.

The new attention paid towards migration in ancient history, particularly in the Roman Empire, is greatly welcomed by the editors of this volume, but we feel that there is still a gap. Most of the recent work done on migration on historical times has paid attention to archaeological, osteological and epigraphic evidence, but within the epigraphic field the emphasis has been on onomastic rather than linguistic data. This volume will show how historical linguists (or indeed historical sociolinguists) can apply the evidence available to them to the emerging picture of migration. The chapters in this volume collectively show how to use research into language contact, language shift and language change to build up a better sense of the integration of migrants into their new surroundings: which elements, if any, of their former languages, scripts and naming systems did they keep, and what did they adopt? Careful consideration of linguistic evidence sometimes allows the researcher to separate temporary visitors or travellers from those migrants who permanently settle elsewhere, and to distinguish individuals or small groups belonging to specific language communities among wider mobile populations.\(^{12}\) Language and script use can sometimes show what was considered more salient to a community’s identity, whether an onomastic formulation, distinctive orthography or dialectal form.\(^{13}\) The survival or loss of a language can also reveal how different communities adapted to new surroundings, and in particular we look at the interactions between Greek colonists in Magna Graecia, Oscan mercenaries in Sicily and Italians at Delos and in Egypt with neighbouring groups.\(^{14}\) Finally, we ask whether the study of

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12 See in particular the chapters by Elder, James, McDonald and Clackson, Maras, Mairs, Rovai, Tagliapietra and Zair.
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14 See in particular the chapters by James, McDonald and Clackson, Rovai, Tikkanen, Tagliapietra and Zair.
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Language use and linguistic diversity can function as a point of entry into the exploration of ancient migration and mobility, asking whether the epigraphic picture tallies well with other sorts of evidence, and how far travellers, interpreters or other migrants are represented in any sort of writing, whether on stone, on perishable materials or in literature.  

This introduction will leave the chapters in the rest of the volume to speak for themselves, but hereafter we shall attempt to tackle some of the general questions which arise from them. Most of the chapters address situations involving what we term the ‘fragmentary corpus languages’ of the ancient world (following McDonald 2015), that is to say Oscan, Etruscan, Gaulish, Palmyrene, Phoenician etc., in an encounter with one of the two major languages, certainly of the Western Mediterranean, Latin and Greek. The study of such languages is of particular interest to linguists, since it affords rare insights into varieties otherwise completely lost, and sometimes offers the missing pieces to puzzles of the array and spread of larger language families. For the ancient historian, these varieties can be used as a check on the information provided by literary sources, whether in Greek or Latin, Hebrew, Aramaic or Egyptian. To take just one example which will be discussed in more detail at various points in this volume, the presence of Oscan inscriptions in Messina helps to corroborate ancient accounts of the movements of the band of Mamertine mercenaries. The inscriptions in fragmentary corpus languages also show that the activities associated with networking and connectivity supposed for the ancient Mediterranean was not limited to certain seafaring or colonial societies, such as Greeks and Phoenicians; they serve to confirm the Horden and Purcell hypothesis that movement and migration were a fact of life for most Mediterranean peoples. Etruscan inscriptions found in the South of France and in North Africa dating from the Roman Republican period, or the Palmyrene inscriptions left in Rome and elsewhere during the Imperial period attest to the wide variety of ancient mobility.

15 See in particular the chapters by Elder, Isayev, James, Maras, Mairs and Rovai.
16 We reject other descriptions for languages of this type, such as Trümmer sprachen, as potentially misleading.
Fragmentary corpus languages therefore give a precious insight into movement of peoples and individuals beyond the Greeks, Romans and Phoenicians. Despite this, we do not know of any full survey in existence of ‘out of place’ texts in fragmentary corpus languages from the ancient world, and in what follows we give a brief account of what there is. We shall give here examples of documents in languages other than Latin and Greek which have been found over 300 km away from areas where the majority of their speakers lived, spanning a very approximate chronological period from 800 BCE to 400 CE. The geographical distance is chosen only as a very rough indication of movement, and inevitably our inadequate knowledge of the geographic extent of many ancient linguistic communities makes exact calculations impossible, as we shall see in the discussion of several examples below. We further note that the discovery of an inscription in a particular place does not necessarily mean that a speaker of the language of the inscription was necessarily in the same place, particularly in the case of texts on pots or other portable objects such as armour. We have generally erred on the side of inclusion of such material, noting its possible significance in our survey, although we have excluded the following categories.

First, coins and all other bullion are left to one side. Although coins often give the only surviving evidence for trade and travel, their monetary value is likely to have been more significant than any written legend they carried. Consequently, there is no necessary correlation between the language written on a coin and the language spoken by its final owner. In contrast, although there was certainly considerable ancient trade in ceramics and metalwork, meaningful writing is not generally found on such items. When a pot or a helmet has writing on it, the chances are much higher that its possessor could understand the message. This need not necessarily entail that the owner of an inscribed vessel was a native speaker of the language of the text; there are numerous Greek pots traded to Etruria in the middle of the first millennium BCE, but we cannot suppose that Etruria was colonised by Greeks. It does, however, indicate that Etruscans had sufficient contact with Greeks (or had had at an earlier period) in order to make sense of these inscriptions (Osborne 2007: 89). The survival of out-of-place graffiti or
memorial inscriptions in a fragmentary corpus language is a yet more secure indication that a speaker has travelled beyond the normal confines of his speech community.

Second, we have not listed scarabs, amulets, statues, obelisks or any other material bearing texts in hieroglyphic Egyptian; during the time period of our survey hieroglyphic Egyptian was a script of display and not in common use by individuals. The movement of prestige items adorned with hieroglyphs around the Mediterranean is more revealing about trade in luxury goods rather than the dispersal of speakers of Egyptian. We have also not given instances where spells and curses incorporate magical words or other material having its origin in words from real languages.\footnote{We thus exclude the gold amulet found near York, \textit{RIB} 706, with a short text apparently in Coptic, φνεβεννουθ, ‘the lord of the gods’ or ‘the divine lord’ since the presence of magical symbols on the same text, and the material on which it is written, indicate that this text was not necessarily written in a language which its bearer would have comprehended.}

Finally, we have generally not attempted to trace cases where a text in a known language includes an unrecognisable word, perhaps imported from a foreign language, such as the example of a supposed Thracian \textit{midne} in a Latin inscription (\textit{CIL} VI 32567), discussed by Elder in Chapter 11 of this volume. We shall work by reference to language group and language family, starting with Indo-European languages.

In antiquity the Celtic languages were spoken in the British Isles, north-eastern Spain, much of what is now France, eastern Switzerland and in Italy as far south as the Po Valley. It is possible to recognise separate varieties among the Celtic languages attested epigraphically within our time period, principally Celtiberian, Gaulish and Lepontic. The scantiness of the Celtic evidence from Britain makes it difficult to ascertain whether Celtic words and texts from Britain, in particular two curse tablets from Roman Britain (\textit{Tab.Sulis} 14 and 18 ), were written in the continental variety now known as ‘Gaulish’ or in the native British Celtic (sometimes referred to as ‘Brythonic’ or ‘Brittonic’).\footnote{See Mullen (2007) on this question.} The range of Gaulish texts found on the continent is wide, stretching from Todi in Umbria in the south-east,\footnote{\textit{RIG} II.1, E-5 = \textit{CIL} I\textsuperscript{v} 2103 = \textit{CIL} XI 4687.} Amélie-les-Bains in the
Pyrenees in the south-west,\textsuperscript{20} to Châteaubleau, 65 km to the south-east of Paris in the north. There are ten or so Gaulish inscriptions attested in Italy, which are usually referred to as ‘Cisalpine Gaulish’, although there is variation in the terminology used, since there is disagreement as to whether Cisalpine Gaulish should be seen as a separate dialect from Transalpine Gaulish, or whether it is more closely related to Lepontic, a Celtic variety spoken around the northern Italian lakes (which itself may or may not be a separate language from Gaulish. For discussion of these matters see Eska (1998) and Uhlich (1999), (2007)). Most of these inscriptions are plausibly to be associated with the incursion of Gauls into the Po Valley in the fifth century, although some, notably the Todi inscription, a bi-version bilingual with Latin, may reflect later arrivals to Italy. Other scholars have looked for Celtic in inscriptions from further south in Italy. For example, Luuk de Ligt, as a sideline to his studies on Roman republican history, has explained otherwise enigmatic texts from the Adriatic coast (de Ligt 2007a) and as far south as Sicily (de Ligt 2007b) as Celtic; neither proposal has generally been accepted by Celticists.\textsuperscript{21}

Several short and fragmentary inscriptions have also been deemed Celtic from the eastern Alps. These have been recently discussed by David Stifter (Stifter 2009, 2010 and 2012), who has reached the conclusion that only one of them, a graffito on a tile found in Graffenstein near Klagenfurt in southern Austria, dated to the second century CE, is likely to contain any genuine Celtic material. Historical sources and some onomastic evidence document the presence of Celtic speakers further east, in Anatolia, but there is as yet no surviving text written in any variety of Celtic known from this area.\textsuperscript{22}

The evidence for Germanic languages south of the Alps in our time period centres around inscriptions on two of a cache of twenty-six bronze helmets found near Negova, in what is now

\textsuperscript{20} RIG L97, see Mullen (2013: 118) on these texts.
\textsuperscript{21} See also Prosdocimi (2006) for other possible early Celtic texts in Italy.
\textsuperscript{22} For a collection of material relating to Celtic from Anatolia, known as ‘Galatian’, see Freeman (2011). Eska (2013) adds some further pieces of evidence, and assesses the Galatian material linguistically, concluding that the language is not far removed from Gaulish.
eastern Slovenia. The helmets and the script of the inscriptions are both of a recognisable northern Etruscan type, dated to the fifth to fourth centuries BCE, although the cache itself was made later, possibly in the first century BCE. The text on the two helmets is variously interpreted, but one inscription (normally known as Negau B) contains a recognisable Germanic name, Harigasti. Although the earliest runic inscriptions do fall within our time period, and are found over a wide area of northern Germany and southern Scandinavia, none can plausibly be claimed to be outside the normal range of speakers of these languages.

There are only a few inscriptions in the Indo-European languages of Italy other than Latin that have been found outside the Italian peninsula. McDonald and Clackson, in Chapter 4 of this volume, discuss the case of a silver cantharus found in Alesia which may have an Oscan text engraved on it. A second notable example is Umbria 3 (in Crawford et al. 2011), a bronze cooking pot with a female personal name written in both Latin and Umbrian dating from the middle of the first century BCE. Its provenance is recorded as ‘Hongrie’ (‘Hungary’) by its earlier owner Wilhelm Froehner, who had purchased the object on the antiquities market. This was ingeniously emended to ‘Ombrie’ (‘Umbria’) by Michel Lejeune, but Michael Crawford sees no reason to doubt Froehner’s original attribution. Oscan lettering has also been found on amphorae exported to Spain (María José Estarán Tolosa forthcoming).

There is better evidence for mobility within Italy and Sicily. Chapters 6 and 7 by Tagliapietra and Zair in this volume discuss the case of Oscan inscriptions from Messina associated with the Mamertini. Messina is geographically close to Oscan-speaking areas of southern Italy, but the self-designation of the Mamertini tallies with literary sources and allows us to recognise them as a band of mercenaries from Campania, who took control of the port in 280 BCE. Of the other Sabellic languages, it is worth mentioning the case of two very short fifth/fourth-century BCE inscriptions.

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23 See Markey (2001), who also reads Celtic words on the other helmet, Negau A.

24 According to some accounts these inscriptions are dated to the fourth century, a hundred or so years later than other South Picene inscriptions, although Crawford calls into question the late date (Crawford et al. 2011: 249).
South Picene texts, both written on bronze helmets, which are separated by over 300 km from the rest of the South Picene corpus. One, Interpromium B (in Crawford et al. 2011), was found in a grave in Bologna, the other, Interpromium A, a warrior’s tomb in Apulia; the interpretation of both texts is uncertain.

Moving to the Indo-European languages of ancient Anatolia, the most widespread of the first-millennium languages is undoubtedly Carian. The Carian language, which employs its own adaptation of the alphabet, is attested in around thirty texts from Caria itself but a larger number, around 170, from Egypt (Adiego Lajara 2007: 17–18), with a further bilingual text from Athens and one other from Thessalonike. Many, but not all, of the Egyptian texts originate from Carian mercenaries, who, according to Herodotus (2.151 f) were recruited by the Pharaoh Psammetichus I in the mid-seventh century BCE, and who settled originally in the Nile Delta, later moving to Memphis. Carian graffiti are found at Abu Simbel in the far south of Egypt, 1,000 km from the Mediterranean, and Carian names occur alongside Greek in the well-known inscriptions left by Greek mercenaries there (Meiggs-Lewis, GHI 7 (a-g) = Syll.³ 1). It is furthermore likely that the reference to ἀλόγλοσοι (i.e. ἀλλόγλοσσοι), ‘speakers of other [i.e. non-Egyptian] languages’, distinguished from Αἰγυπτίοι in one of these Abu Simbel texts (GHI 7a line 4), refers to the contingent of Greek and Carian soldiers fighting together.²⁵

Speakers of Iranian languages were frequent visitors to the Eastern Mediterranean, especially during periods of military conquest under the Achaemenid Empire in the sixth to fourth centuries BCE and subsequent Parthian Empire (third century BCE to third century CE). The use of Aramaic as the lingua franca of Persian rulers means that comparatively few inscriptions in Iranian languages are found in areas further west. Most notable are inscriptions featuring Old Persian cuneiform alongside other languages erected during the reign of Darius the Great, near what is now the Suez Canal.²⁶ The Parthian Empire left its mark in Parthian and Middle Persian graffiti,

²⁵ See discussion at SEG 51, 2201.
²⁶ See Schmitt (2009) for these texts.