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Language Contact and Identity in Roman Britain

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Abstract

Language is one of the most significant aspects of cultural identity. This thesis examines the evidence of languages in contact in Roman Britain in order to determine the role that language played in defining the identities of the inhabitants of this Roman province.

All forms of documentary evidence from monumental stone epigraphy to ownership marks scratched onto pottery are analyzed for indications of bilingualism and language contact in Roman Britain. The language and subject matter of the Vindolanda writing tablets from a Roman army fort on the northern frontier are analyzed for indications of bilingual interactions between Roman soldiers and their native surroundings, as well as Celtic interference on the Latin that was written and spoken by the Roman army. A similar approach is taken to the Bath and Uley curse tablets which reveal the wide range of Latin and Celtic literacy of Romano-British civilians.

Keywords

Roman imperialism, Roman provinces, Romanization, Language Contact, Bilingualism, Identity, Latin Epigraphy, Celtic Epigraphy
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# Table of Contents

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... i
Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................ ii
Table of Contents ......................................................................................................... iii
List of Figures ................................................................................................................. v
List of Appendices ......................................................................................................... vi
Chapter 1 ......................................................................................................................... 1
1 Introduction ................................................................................................................ 1
  1.1 From Romanization to Roman Identity ............................................................. 2
  1.2 Language Contact and Identity in the Roman World ....................................... 6
  1.3 Language Contact and Identity in Roman Britain ........................................... 19
Chapter 2 ......................................................................................................................... 24
2 Frontier Linguistic Identities ...................................................................................... 24
  2.1 The Stone Inscriptions of the Frontier ............................................................. 26
  2.2 Onomastics and the Ethnic Identities of the Military Community .................. 32
  2.3 Language Contact in the Roman Military Community ................................... 38
  2.4 Linguistic Diversity in the Roman Military ..................................................... 44
  2.5 Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 49
Chapter 3 ......................................................................................................................... 50
3 Language Contact in the Civilian Population ......................................................... 50
  3.1 Celtic Names and Identity ................................................................................. 54
  3.2 Literate Britons and Celtic Literacy ................................................................. 57
  3.3 Literacy at Rural Settlements ............................................................................ 67
  3.4 The linguistic landscapes of Gaul and Britain ................................................. 75
  3.5 Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 85
List of Figures

Figure 1: RIB 1065, Drawing of the epitaph of Regina Catuallauna, wife of Barates the Palmyrene. © Roman Inscriptions of Britain Online ................................................................. 11

Figure 2: RIB 1791, Drawing of a dedication to Virgo Caelestis by M. Caecilius Donatianus. © Roman Inscriptions of Britain Online ................................................................. 17

Figure 3: Tabella Sulis 10. © Tomlin 1988. ................................................................................. 60

Figure 4: Tabella Sulis 30. © Tomlin 1988. ................................................................................. 60

Figure 5: Tabella Sulis 14. © Tomlin 1988. ................................................................................. 63

Figure 6: Tabella Sulis 18. © Tomlin 1988. ................................................................................. 65
List of Appendices

Appendix A: Vindolanda Writing Tablets ................................................................. 97

Appendix B: Bath Curse Tablets ............................................................................ 100
Chapter 1

1 Introduction

The evidence of languages in contact in Roman Britain gives a perspective of the various identities that composed the population of this Imperial province. At the time of the initial conquest of Britain under Emperor Claudius in 43 AD, the first language of the native inhabitants of Britain was a Celtic language. When Roman rule ended in Britain at the beginning of the 5th century AD the Celtic language still remained, and unlike the vernacular languages of most other western provinces where Romance languages developed, Celtic remained spoken in Britain into the modern era. This conspicuous distinction between Britain and its continental neighbours has encouraged some to think that Britain was not as Roman as the more Latinized provinces. Other factors have indicated that Britain was less Latin and therefore less Roman, such as the relatively low number of Roman inscriptions on the island and the disproportionately strong Roman military presence for a province of its size. The purpose of this thesis is to prove that Celtic and Latin were not isolated from each other in Roman Britain and that bilingualism was widespread throughout the population. This conclusion implies that the native and immigrant inhabitants of Roman Britain shared cultural interactions in the creation of distinct and multicultural identities. The greatest stimulant for these interactions was Rome’s imperial power which confronted provincial subjects in the forms of law, government, the military, religion and economic activities. These domains of influence are also the predominant sources of epigraphic material from the Roman world. This is on the one hand fortuitous because they offer first hand accounts of the interactions between Roman power and provincial subjects. On the other hand, the prevalent absence of texts from outside of the influences of Roman power leaves the individuals isolated or distanced from the domains of Roman influence relatively silent.

This thesis examines the role that language played in cultural negotiations between subjected peoples and Roman power. Multiple types of evidence of language contact are considered: from documents and literary passages that infer that bilingualism and language contact were taking place, to inscriptions that are primary sources of bilingual
evidence. The first chapter outlines the current debates surrounding Roman imperialism and provincial culture, and provides the methodology that will be used to analyze the linguistic evidence in the subsequent discussions. The second chapter focuses on interactions that happened within the spheres of Roman influence by examining documents from Roman military contexts that reveal the particular multilingual nature of Roman military communities. The ink-on-wood writing tablets from the Roman army fort of Vindolanda are the most effective source of evidence for this purpose. It is made apparent that the Roman army in Britain had a powerful influence on language and other cultural practices, especially among those who profited from the army’s presence. The third chapter focuses on evidence of language contact in contexts outside of the sphere of Roman influence. In the absence of surviving texts, archaeological evidence of writing demonstrates that literacy, and therefore interactions with Roman culture, was widespread throughout the population of Roman Britain. The curse tablets from the religious sanctuaries at Bath and Uley, however, offer primary evidence of written British Celtic in the Roman period. The linguistic landscape of Roman Britain is then compared to the neighbouring continental province of Gaul in order to better understand the effects that Roman imperialism had on the linguistic landscape of Britain.

1.1 From Romanization to Roman Identity

The term ‘Romanization’ developed in modern scholarship at the height of modern European Colonialism. It refers to the process by which subjugated peoples of the Roman Empire were made Roman. Several critics of the Romanization model have established the ideological connections between Roman archaeologists and colonialism.¹ At an inaugural address at the first annual meeting of the Roman Society in 1911 Francis Haverfield expressed his understanding of the applicability of Roman methods of imperialism to the situation of the British Empire at that time.² Haverfield consolidated an interpretive framework for Roman history pioneered by Mommsen in the 19th century

¹ Hingley 1996; Freeman 1997; Mattingly 2011.
² Haverfield 1911, xviii; Hingley 1996, 38.
that attempted to demonstrate the progressive civilizing function of Roman imperialism.\textsuperscript{3} Haverfield stated in his seminal work \textit{The Romanization of Roman Britain} that “The men of the [Roman] Empire wrought for the betterment and the happiness of the world.”\textsuperscript{4} The interpretation of Roman imperialism as benevolent and benignly defensive persisted for much of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century until William Harris denounced this concept of ‘defensive’ Roman imperialism.\textsuperscript{5} The defensive model of Roman imperialism interpreted the expansion of Roman controlled territory as the result of not an aggressive policy, but as Roman reactions to external threats to themselves and their allies.\textsuperscript{6}

The nature of Roman imperialism and the various interpretations of it are important in understanding the origin and meaning of the term ‘Romanization’. The impulses for imperialism have been described as metrocentric, pericentric, and systemic.\textsuperscript{7} Metrocentric influences describe the internal socio-political factors that result in imperial expansion, while pericentric influences are their counterpart, the influences of external interstate relations. Systemic approaches attempt to describe imperialism as the result of complex countervailing impulses that result in historical outcomes beyond individual or group intentions. Harris applied a metrocentric approach to Roman imperialism that stressed the economic motivations for aggressive expansionist policies in the Roman Republican era, in place of the ‘defensive imperialism’ doctrine that focused on the benevolent aspirations of the Roman elite in their reaction to the pericentric impulses of the troubled Mediterranean world.\textsuperscript{8} Although aggression and elite Roman aspirations must be accounted for, there is considerable evidence such as periods of relative military inactivity and fluctuating military force sizes that suggest that Rome’s empire was not produced according to a predetermined policy, or strictly internal influences.\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{3} Freeman 1997, 29.
\textsuperscript{4} Haverfield 1912, 10.
\textsuperscript{5} Harris 1979.
\textsuperscript{6} North 1981, 1.
\textsuperscript{7} Mattingly 2011, 17; Champion 2004, 4.
\textsuperscript{8} Harris 1971.
\textsuperscript{9} Rich 1993, 52-55.
Mattingly concludes that it is best to approach Roman imperialism as the combined result of various motivations.¹⁰

The incorporating process of Romanization, according to some proponents of the Romanization paradigm, was a metrocentric interest that also justified imperialism.¹¹ Roman authors used the civilizing ethos as a retrospective justification for their acquisition of empire. A passage from Virgil’s Aeneid (6.851-853) characterizes the Roman conception of their predestined empire tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento, hae tibi erunt artes, pacique imponere morem, parcerre subiectis et debellare superbos (“You, Roman, remember these are your crafts, to rule peoples with supreme power, to impose the practice of peace, to spare the subjected and to dominate the proud”).¹² Tacitus represents the incorporation of the Britons into the Roman Empire as a deliberate policy of the governor Agricola.¹³ From the aristocratic Roman perspective of Tacitus the task of incorporating the Roman provinces was accomplished with willing subjects instead of through compulsion. The conquered peoples were apparently motivated to join the empire by means of the education of the subdued elite and by the introduction of Roman material, architecture, and customs. In this passage the implicit motivation for the Britons to adopt the materials and practices symbolic of Roman power was that they would gain advantages within the new power structure. Romanization paradigms, however, have accepted without scrutiny the elite Roman evaluation of how the peoples of the provinces were incorporated into the empire. The interpretation of Roman imperialism as a just, civilizing, beneficial and deliberate procedure was utilized by classicists to justify their own imperial societies, and their need to rationalize modern imperialism reciprocally informed their understanding of the Roman Empire.¹⁴ In this

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¹⁰ Mattingly 2011, 17.
¹¹ Haverfield 1911.
¹² All translations are my own unless stated otherwise.
¹³ Tac. Agr. 21; infra n.190.
¹⁴ For summaries of the connection between modern Classical Studies and Colonialism see Hingley 1996; Freeman 1997; and Mattingly 2011; 3-42.
way the entire concept of ‘Romanization’ has an enduring legacy of preference for the dominant imperial power.

Since the end of the 20th century the traditional acceptance of ‘Romanization’ as a basis for scholarly debate has been seriously questioned. Alternative models have been proposed that accept insights from post-colonial studies, in place of the Romanization paradigm and its dependency on the values of modern imperialism. Three elements of post-colonial studies that are beneficial to Roman archaeology have been proposed by Richard Hingley: the decentering of perspectives, the examination of varied responses to imperial power, and the evidence for overt and covert opposition to imperial power.\(^\text{15}\) Jane Webster employed these theories in order to denounce the term ‘Romanization’ and introduce the paradigm of ‘creolization’ as a viable alternative.\(^\text{16}\) Webster’s approach intended to decenter the discourse by describing the nascent provincial cultures that resulted from the interactions of incoming peoples and indigenous peoples.\(^\text{17}\) Martin Millett had previously attempted to approach Romanization with a neutral view in place of the pro-imperialist perspective, but Webster reveals that his approach was essentially one-sided because it was still focused solely on the advancement of Roman culture.\(^\text{18}\) Mattingly has articulated a similar critique of Webster’s own ‘creolization’ paradigm stating that “there is a danger here that we replace an elite-centered paradigm (Romanization) with its opposite.”\(^\text{19}\) Mattingly nevertheless remains entirely opposed to the concept of Romanization due to many of the issues discussed above, but particularly because of its inherent tendency to channel research with a focus on imperialist influences and to emphasize conformity in an empire that was actually very complex.\(^\text{20}\) The alternate approach proposed by Mattingly is to analyze the identities and discrepant experiences of individuals who were affected by Roman imperial power. The effects that

\(^\text{15}\) Hingley 1996, 45.  
\(^\text{16}\) Webster 2001.  
\(^\text{17}\) Webster 2001, 217.  
\(^\text{18}\) Millett 1990a, 37; Webster 2002, 214.  
\(^\text{19}\) Mattingly 2011, 204.  
imperial power structures have on the identities of individuals is central to Mattingly’s approach, because in the Roman provinces individual identities developed within the power relationships between the Roman Empire and its subjects.\textsuperscript{21}

This present study is indebted to the theoretical innovations in Roman archaeology discussed above. To search only for instances of native Britons developing knowledge of Latin would be to extract only a narrow understanding of the complex linguistic landscape of a unique province with a diverse population. Furthermore, it would be a mistake to consider the development of literary practices by Roman provincials as evidence of emulation and not innovation. The documentary evidence of Roman Britain, as will be demonstrated in what follows, offers more than evidence of Romanization. Debates around the use of a Romanization paradigm continue, sometimes with meaningful insights. Nevertheless I prefer to approach the topic of Roman imperialism with the view that Roman imperialism does not permit a single analytical framework, but instead requires different approaches for different questions.\textsuperscript{22} This thesis does not attempt to use the linguistic evidence from Roman Britain to support or deny the Romanization paradigm or any other analytical framework. Nevertheless, the evidence of language contact in Roman Britain is used for the purpose of understanding better how the interaction between British subjects and Roman power contributed to the various identities of the province’s population. The linguistic evidence is analyzed for numerous forms of variation which offers a broad impression of the diversity of Roman Britain rather than a process of conformity.

### 1.2 Language Contact and Identity in the Roman World

Language is considered one of the most significant markers of identity.\textsuperscript{23} David Crystal discusses the dangers inherent in the death of languages and the implications of language

\textsuperscript{21} Mattingly 2011, 206.  
\textsuperscript{22} Hingley 2014, 22.  
\textsuperscript{23} Adams 2003a, 751; Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 17.
death on cultural identity. He concludes that language is the most fundamental self-expression of a people’s identity, more prominent than rituals, music, painting, crafts or any other behavior, stating that “language is the primary index, or symbol, or register of identity.”

In his seminal work on bilingualism and the Latin language, James Adams states that his book is “overwhelmingly about identity” because the identities of bilinguals are brought into contrast by belonging to more than one speech group. A discussion about bilingual texts inevitably leads to observations regarding identity because at the core of these texts is an implicit discourse between two communities which are culturally distinct in respects other than language alone. One of the most transformative works in the debate of Roman imperialism is Siân Jones’ examination of ethnicity and identity in the archaeological record. Jones found that, generally, Roman-style material was used in cultural negotiations or to legitimize status but not as a mark of ethnic identity. Jones’ evidence, however, is confined to material culture which has significant limitations in terms of examining identity. Aware of this Jones states:

“The definition of past contexts of interaction in archaeology is problematic in itself, as it is rarely possible to obtain fine details of particular moments of social interaction and identification, such as those which can be examined in anthropological field work.”

It is argued in this thesis that the evidence of language contact in the epigraphic record of Roman Britain provides details regarding cultural contact that material culture alone can not. Although the evidence is far more finite than a hypothetical single interview with a living Romano-Britain would be, there are nevertheless numerous inscriptions and writing tablets that contain explicit markers of identity through their bilingual content.

24 Crystal 2000.
25 ibid. 39-40.
26 ibid. 751.
28 ibid. 133.
29 ibid. 130.
The Roman Empire was linguistically complex. Latin, as the native language of the city of Rome and its surrounding territory in Italy, was introduced to indigenous peoples across the empire and was used both in parallel and in place of their native Celtic, Germanic, Italic, Greek, Aramaic, Hebrew, Egyptian, Punic, or any other language by different people, at different times, in different ways, and for different reasons. To add to the complexity of this linguistic landscape across space and time, what it meant to be Roman was in the process of definition as Latin was gaining widespread use throughout much of the empire. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill stresses that the process of ‘romanisation’ was interconnected with the process of ‘hellinisation’. As the Roman Empire extended political control over its territory, Hellenistic culture was adopted at Rome and in the provinces. Romans perceived their role in this cultural process as the promoter of Hellenistic culture to barbarian peoples. Wallace-Hadrill offers ‘bilingualism’ as another framework derived from the terminology of linguistics to replace the Romanization paradigm. He argues that ‘bilingualism’ is a more viable paradigm for the development of Roman identity than ‘Creolization’ because Roman culture was not the fusion of two or more cultures into one unit, but the simultaneous use of multiple cultures. The bilingualism metaphor is used by Wallace-Hadrill to focus on the multiple identities that could be occupied by the Roman elite in a process, again derived from linguistics, known as ‘code switching’ which refers to the use of different languages in the same utterance. Wallace-Hadrill concludes that the result of Roman imperialism was not the creation of a new mixed culture, but the opportunity for the simultaneous use of Roman and native cultures through code switching.

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31 ibid. 26.
32 ibid. 13.
33 ibid. 13, 27.
34 ibid. 13.
35 ibid. 13.
The connection between the Latin language and Roman culture can not be assumed. Adams demonstrates that although Roman authors are very silent about communication across language boundaries and language attitudes, Romans did believe that Roman citizenship required the use of Latin. Adams sites a passage from Suetonius where the emperor Claudius revoked a Greek’s citizenship for not speaking Latin. Cicero (Verr. 5.167) explicitly states his opinion that the ability to speak Latin was a moral requisite for Roman citizenship: *non enim tam praeclarum est scire Latine quam turpe nescire, neque tam id mihi oratoris boni quam civis Romani proprium videtur* (“It is not so remarkable to know [how to speak correct] Latin than it is shameful to not know it, for this does not seem to me to be a characteristic so much of the good speaker than of the Roman citizen”). Although indigenous languages survived everywhere in the Roman Empire, and the use of Greek in the administration of the empire was permissible, the primary evidence from epigraphy supports to a certain degree the attitudes expressed above by a Roman emperor and senator. There were certain contexts where Latin was required of Roman citizens, particularly in the assertion of their status which happened most often in the writing of wills and birth certificates, or similar legal documents. Adams concludes that citizens who for the most part could not write Latin were required to produce texts written in Latin by scribes in order to benefit from the opportunities of citizenship such as inheritance. This is an example of the use of Latin as a matter of policy in the Roman Empire, but these documents also reveal the limitation of Latin in the Greek East, the persistence of Greek as the spoken language of the citizens, and the bilingualism of provincial communities. Adams also examines a large collection of graffiti on pottery sherds from Southern Gaul in order to demonstrate that on the one hand indigenous

36 Adams 2003b, 185-188.
37 ibid. 185; Suet. Claud. 16.2: *splendidum virum Graeciaeque provinciae principem, verum Latini sermonis ignarum, non modo albo ludicum erasit, sed in peregrinitatem reedges*. “[Claudius] removed a brilliant man and leader of the Greek province, who was however ignorant of Latin speech, not just from the register of jurors, but reduced him to foreigner status.”
38 Adams 2003b, 186.
39 ibid. 186.
40 ibid. 188.
languages were permitted throughout the Roman period, but on the other hand that even in unofficial and unintentional ways, Latin became a preferred language in public contexts where writers wanted to express their Roman identity. A famous bilingual inscription (figure 1) that uses code switching in order to promote a duel identity comes from South Shields (Arbaeia), a Roman army supply base at the mouth of the River Tyne and the eastern end of Hadrian’s wall. It is a professionally produced epitaph of a thirty year old woman named Regina who was a freedwoman, married to a man named Barates from the Syrian city of Palmyra, and born to the Catualluanian tribe from Southern Britain. Interestingly this monument includes a summarized translation of the Latin text in a form of Aramaic. The instigator of the monument, Barates, not only identifies as a Palmyrene, he also communicates in Palmyrene, making this inscription an example of how code switching could be used to substantiate a complex identity. A close reading of the texts and iconography of the monument reveal the dedicator’s duel Roman-Palmyrene identity. The Palmyrene script is executed more neatly than the Latin lettering which has been described as “erratic”. Several arguments can be made to account for this discrepancy. On the one hand, it could be that Barates inscribed the epitaph himself, and was more confident in writing his native language than Latin. On the other hand, the Latin text could have been inscribed by a stonecutter other than Barates, and if Barates did not write the Palmyrene text, both texts could have been inscribed by the same person or different people.

41 Adams 2003b, 181-191; see ch. 3.4 on the evidence from La Graufesenque.
42 RIB 1065: D(is) M(anibus) Regina liberta et coniuge / Barates Palmyrenus natione / Catvallauna an(norum) XXX “To the divine shades, Barates the Palmyrene (set this up) to his wife Regina, a freedwoman, Catualluanian by birth, and thirty years old”.
43 On code switching see infra n.34.
45 Mullen 2011, 544.
46 ibid. 544.
It is important, moreover, that the Latin text bares elements that suggest the Palmyrene origin of the writer through his use of epigraphic forms common in Palmyra. The *formulae* of Latin epitaphs would require the honorand to be in the nominative, genitive, or dative case. But *Regina, liberta, coniuge* and *Catuallauna* appear to be in the ablative. This reading would require that the author was unaware of Latin case meanings. Adams demonstrates that this error is not the result of the author’s ignorance of Latin syntax, but of his familiarity with Greek epigraphic *formulae* which he would have known from his
Hellenistic origins. It is common in Greek epitaphs for the honorand to be placed in the accusative and the dedicator in the nominative with a transitive honoring verb understood. There are parallels from Greek and Latin bilingual epitaphs where the Greek accusative has caused the honorand of the Latin text to shift from the dative to the accusative as well. The omission of the final –m in accusatives was a widespread substandard Latin phonetic development. Mullen concludes that Barates or a close associate was likely responsible for producing the epitaph because the inscription as well as the relief carving were clearly produced by someone acquainted with the epitaphs of Palmyra. Furthermore, there is no unit of Palmyrenes known to have served in Britain so they would not have been common enough in the area to not be personally associated with Barates. Mullen elaborates upon the iconography of the relief sculpture, concluding that the carving evokes both Romano-British and Palmyrene forms. Thus even to illiterates, who would likely have recognized the Palmyrene text as different from Latin and the distinctly foreign attributes of the sculpture, this monument was clearly an indication of Barates’ duel identity.

Unlike the Barates inscription, most inscriptions do not explicitly provide the origins of their instigator. In this study onomastics are employed whenever possible in order to postulate the ethnic origins of an individual because ethnicity is suggestive of language background. Even so, a Celtic or Germanic name alone does not account for language background or ethnic origin, so other identifiers are sought. Aside from the etymological origin of a name, the conventions that are used in naming in the Roman Empire are highly relevant to questions of identity and ethnicity. Individuals using the tria nomina of the Roman citizen tend to have Latin names, so do those with the Roman duo nomina. Even when these naming formulae do include a Celtic name the inscriptions are still from higher Roman social contexts. We can not be certain whether these Celtic names had any

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48 Mullen 2011, 545.
49 ibid.
50 see chapters 2.4 and 3.1.
significant meaning in terms of the identity of these people, nor can we suspect that they reflect their language background, but the context in which names are found can be considered in order to offer interpretations of a name’s cultural significance. For example, the personal names present in the curse tablets from the sanctuaries at Bath and Uley in Britain are never in the tria or dua nomina forms associated with Roman citizenship, and when they are at London they are only of the accursed, not the instigators of the inscription. Furthermore, of the 178 personal names present in the Bath and Uley tablets, Celtic names outnumber Latin names 95 to 83, suggesting that the habit of producing curse tablets had a particularly local significance. In any case this thesis does not unequivocally correlate the language of names with the language of the individuals to whom they belong, but in the presence of other linguistic and contextual evidence names are offered as an indication of language backgrounds. Broad correlations can be drawn between naming practices in the epigraphic record and other aspects of identity such as legal, social, and economic status.

Linguistic evidence is also not without its limitations when looking for markers of identity. It is true that language may not always act as a strong marker of identity, but it is argued here that the choice of language by bilinguals is often highly significant. Nevertheless, in examining the relationship between the two dead languages, Latin and British Celtic, our evidence is predominately that which was recorded in writing, with the exception of the evidence provided through language reconstruction. The usefulness of written evidence for discerning the language background of the author is inhibited by several factors inherent in the written form of communication.

Firstly, very few of the surviving texts were written in a Celtic language because Latin was the common language of writing in most of the Roman West. Exceptions to Latin’s exclusive use as the written language of the West include written Oscan used at Pompeii

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51 Tomlin 2002, 171; see infra ch. 3.1.
52 Mattingly 2011, 230.
53 See infra n.75 for a brief discussion of the evidence offered by language reconstruction.
into the imperial period, the continued use of Punic in Northern Africa, and the
development of a script known as Gallo-Latin used to write Gaulish (the form of Celtic
specific to Gaul) that used Latin characters. As a result of the disproportionate use of
Latin in writing, the evidence is under-representative of the prevalence of Celtic speakers
in Roman Britain.

Secondly, only certain social groups are well represented by epigraphy. This is known as
the ‘epigraphic bias’ because there is a disproportionately high representation of men, the
elite, Roman citizens, and freedmen, versus the low representation of women, slaves and
children. Lastly and most importantly for this study, the epigraphic record is impaired
by the issues of authorship, because in most cases inscriptions are the work of
professional scribes and stonecutters and not of the identified subject of the text. Even in
highly literate modern societies, written language is quite different than the spoken word.
Writing employs certain *formulae* and is limited to the subject matter of specific literary
contexts.

This study looks for indications of the effects of bilingualism on writing in order to give
indications of the language backgrounds of individuals and the linguistic landscape of
Roman Britain, so a confirmation of who exactly wrote a text is not always paramount.
Nevertheless, as in the Barates inscription above, the relationship between the authors
and the instigators of certain texts will be considered through linguistic, onomastic, and
orthographic evidence in order to derive certain conclusions regarding the language
background of writers and their linguistic landscape. For instance, in chapter 2 the rough
and unprofessional quality of a group of altars, dedicated to set of deities native to the
northern frontier of Britain and known as the *Veteres*, suggests that the writers of the
inscriptions were the dedicators themselves, many of whom appear by their names to be

54 See *infra* ch.3.4 for the use of Latin characters to write Gaulish.
55 Mullen 2011, 530.
native Britons, and who apparently had difficulty transcribing the name of these local deities in Latin characters, as the great variation in spelling implies.\textsuperscript{56}

Discussions regarding language in the Roman provinces often involve literacy, precisely because the best source of primary evidence of provincial language is the epigraphic record which of course required literate individuals in order to be produced. In addition, the Roman Empire introduced literacy for the first time to many of its subjects, so the spread of literacy is one way in which the effects of Roman imperialism can be examined. Harris’ influential work on the topic of ancient literacy is now considered overly pessimistic in regards to literacy rates, which he estimated could not have exceed 10% of the population in the western provinces of the Roman Empire.\textsuperscript{57} Alan Bowman reassess the suitability of Harris’ objective which was to realize the extent of literacy in the Greco-Roman world in terms of sheer numbers.\textsuperscript{58} Bowman emphasizes that although literacy in the ancient world can not be described as ‘mass literacy’, the sort where most people can read and write, there is an impression of ‘widespread literacy’, which refers to the presence of writing in most regions and social contexts. Harris proposed that the spread of literacy in the Roman Empire was the result of exposure to the written word, but that the rural poor who comprised the majority of the empire’s population had little exposure.\textsuperscript{59} Harris believed that the majority of documents that were not produced by the educated elite were produced by a class of literate craftsmen who were literate as a result of their professional experience, while other social groups such as women and peasants were mainly illiterate.\textsuperscript{60} To Harris the Latinization of the western provinces was both a result and an instrument of their Romanization, and he thought that this led to the spread of literacy from the Romanized elite down the social spectrum to a limited degree.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{infra} ch.2.1
\textsuperscript{57} Harris 1989, 272; Hanson and Conolly 2002, 15; Bowman 1991.
\textsuperscript{58} Bowman 1991, 123.
\textsuperscript{59} Harris 1989, 196.
\textsuperscript{60} Harris 1989 7-8, 13.
\textsuperscript{61} Harris 1989, 284.
Bowman disagrees with this stance, concluding that a clear line can not be drawn between literate and illiterate.\textsuperscript{62} Bowman argues that Harris’ approach disregards the participation of illiterates in literate practices, and furthermore that the evidence of graffiti and writing tablets suggest that literacy was far more widespread than explanations such as a clerical ‘craftsmen’ class can account for.\textsuperscript{63}

Harris’ work is nevertheless important for articulating two important issues. The first involves the relationship between monumental stone inscriptions and actual literacy rates. The second considers the relationship between literacy and the spoken language. These are notoriously complex and interrelated issues. Most monumental inscriptions were certainly produced by professional craftsmen, but as Bowman warns in the context of the Vindolanda writing tablets, the use of a scribe is not proof of the illiteracy of the text’s instigator.\textsuperscript{64} As discussed above, the language of public inscriptions was highly formalized and is often not representative of the spoken form of language, but there are also instances where it is obvious that the spoken word has influenced writing. Interestingly, the work of professional scribes was also influenced by the spoken word, because professionally and unprofessionally executed inscriptions alike regularly include ‘sub-standard’ spelling that reflects the spoken Latin of Roman Britain and not literary Latin.\textsuperscript{65}

An inscription (figure 2) from the Roman army fort of Carvoran on Hadrian’s wall is comprised of an original poem in an iambic meter. Marilynne Raybould notes the highly personalized nature of the poem’s composition that is highlighted by subtle allusions of particular significance which suggests that the dedicator was closely involved in the production of the text.\textsuperscript{66} The words \textit{DEA SYRIA} are prominently enlarged, perhaps by the

\textsuperscript{62} Bowman 1991, 123.
\textsuperscript{63} ibid. 123.
\textsuperscript{64} Bowman 1994b, 119.
\textsuperscript{65} infra n.106; Raybould 1999, 16.
\textsuperscript{66} RIB 1791. \textit{Imminet Leoni Virgo caelestis} situ spicifera iusti in/ventrix urbiurum conditrix / ex quis numeribus nosse con/rigit deos: ergo eadem mater divum / Pax Virtus Ceres dea Syria / lance vitam et iura pensitans. / In caelo visum Syria sidus edit/dit Libyae colendum: inde / cuncti didicimus. / ita intellexit
dedicator’s orders, and it is possible that the poem was written by the dedicator. Furthermore, this lengthy text does not contain ligatures (the combination of two letters into one symbol which is common in formulaic inscriptions). Raybould supposes that this is because the inscription was meant to be clearly readable, anticipating an audience acquainted with literary modes of writing. More personal documents such as the Vindolanda writing tablets and the Bath curse tablets, or ownership marks on pottery, allow less formal writing styles to be used, which give a greater indication of spoken language than monumental epigraphy does.

![Figure 2: RIB 1791, Drawing of a dedication to Virgo Caelestis by M. Caecilius Donatianus. © Roman Inscriptions of Britain Online.](image)

*numine inductus / tuo Marcus Caecilius Donatianus militans tribunus / in praefecto dono principis.* “The Virgin rides on the Lion in her place in the sky, abundant in grain, the inventor of justice, the founder of cities, on account of whose deeds it happened that (man) became aware of the gods: therefore, she is also the mother of the gods Peace, Courage, and Ceres, the Syrian goddess weighing life and law in her balance. Syria has sent out the consolation seen in the sky to Libya to be worshipped: from there we have all learned. So Marcus Caecilius Donatianus has understood having been led by your godhead, serving as a tribune in the position of prefect by a grant of the Emperor.

67 Raybould 1999, 15.
The role of languages in the Roman provinces has been a recurrent focus in Romanization studies. Haverfield devoted a chapter to “Romanization in Language”. He found evidence of writing only in Latin in Roman Britain. He thought that this implied the extensive transmission of Latin to all but perhaps the rural poor and therefore that it was a positive effect of Romanization. An essential source of evidence for the adoption of Latin by provincial peoples is epigraphy. In a general study of epigraphy in the Roman Empire Ramsay MacMullen began a debate on the ‘epigraphic habit’ and concluded that the practice of monumental writing was symptomatic of a need to express Roman identity, and that the decline of monumental writing in the 3rd century AD reflected doubts over the advantage of that identity. MacMullen’s thesis was elaborated upon by Elizabeth Meyer, who proposed that the decline of monumental epigraphy was connected to the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, an empire wide grant of citizenship to all free inhabitants by the emperor Caracalla in 212 AD. Before the *Constitutio Antoniniana* provincials needed to be enfranchised by a patron Roman citizen and this encouraged them to adopt Roman cultural habits such as Latin and setting up monumental inscriptions. After the universal grant of citizenship, however, expressing Roman identity was no longer required in order to benefit from the advantages of citizenship such as legally recognized marriage, inheritance, and political influence. Greg Woolf focuses on epigraphy in his many studies of Romanization and culture in the Roman provinces. In particular, Woolf found that monumental dedicatory and civic inscriptions predominate in Southern Gaul and are found concentrated around urban centers, while in the North-East of Gaul the numbers of votive and funerary inscriptions of soldiers are higher and more widely distributed across site types. Woolf concludes from this evidence that by the late 1st century BC there was a cultural revolution occurring all throughout the Roman Empire, in Italy as well as the provinces, where newly emerging

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68 Haverfield 1915, 29.
69 MacMullen 1982, 246.
70 Meyer 1990.
72 Woolf 1997, 344.
practices were the results of widespread cultural trends but took different forms specific to regionally diverse contexts.\textsuperscript{73}

Although this study does not focus on literacy \textit{per se}, literacy is certainly one important aspect of language contact in the Roman provinces, and the issues of how the act of writing influenced language or was influenced by language are recurrent throughout. However, acts of writing are not our only source of evidence for language contact and the status of languages in Roman Britain. The secondary evidence derived from language reconstruction is a topic explored briefly in chapter 3.\textsuperscript{74} Peter Schrijver analyzes the influence of Latin and Gaulish on British Celtic which is apparent in medieval and modern Celtic languages.\textsuperscript{75} Schrijver argues that there were two distinct Celtic language groups in Roman Britain, one in the Northwestern Highland Zone and one in the Southeastern Lowland Zone, and that these language divisions were the result of differing Roman and Gaulish influences on British Celtic. Schrijver’s observation corroborates a geographic division of Britain between the northwest and southeast that has been influential on the island’s social history.\textsuperscript{76} One key point of Schrijver’s argument is that Roman Britain does not appear to have been linguistically different from most other Northwestern provinces, where it was normal for Latin to become predominate in most areas with the exception of peripheral and inaccessible terrain.\textsuperscript{77}

1.3 Language Contact and Identity in Roman Britain

Just as the spread of literacy and the Latin language has been instrumental in the debates on Roman imperialism in general, these topics have been exceptionally prevalent in scholarship on the province of \textit{Britannia}. This has happened for a few reasons. Firstly, the evidence provided from Roman Britain is quite unique. Perhaps counterintuitively, a

\textsuperscript{73} ibid. 346.
\textsuperscript{74} \textit{infra} ch. 3.4.
\textsuperscript{75} Schrijver 2007.
\textsuperscript{76} See \textit{infra} n.197 and ch.3.4 for the interpretations of this geographic boundary in Britain.
\textsuperscript{77} ibid. 168.
paucity of stone inscriptions in Roman Britain has prompted a great deal of interest. John Mann concludes that the relatively low number of inscriptions from Roman Britain does not suggest that other practices or habits were different in this province from elsewhere. Mann argues that the lack of stone epigraphy in Roman Britain only reveals that the people of the province, particularly native civilians, did not have what he calls an ‘epigraphic consciousness’. Michael Jones presents an opposing viewpoint that this lack of epigraphic consciousness was representative of an unwillingness of the Britons to participate in Roman society. Jones, who agrees with Millett’s elite emulation model of Romanization, conflates the limited out-put of monumental epigraphy with the overall spread of literacy, then literacy with orality, and also the use of the Latin language as a requisite for Roman identity. Furthermore, Jones’ argument that Romanization failed in Britain is a fundamentally flawed approach because it presupposes criteria for the successful incorporation of provincial peoples.

Another reason that Britain’s history as a Roman province has been considered a deviation from the typical process of incorporation is the long standing presence of the army there in unusually high numbers. Britain has been described as “above all a military province.” Mattingly provides estimates for the military population in Britain in the 2nd century AD, supposing that approximately 55,000 soldiers, 10-12% of the Roman army, was stationed in a province covering 4% of the empire’s land area. In addition, the majority of these units were concentrated on the northern frontier of the province. Some have explained this phenomenon by arguing that the frontier Britons were unable to conform to Roman customs and society where other provincial peoples had been successful, and the lack of an epigraphic habit in Roman Britain has been given as evidence to support this opinion. Mattingly asks whether modern scholars have

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78 Mann 1985.
79 ibid. 206.
80 Jones 1987, 132.
81 Hassall 1984, 265.
82 Mattingly 2011, 221.
83 Jackson 1953, 97; Jones 1987, 131-2.
wrongfully placed the blame on the local population, and whether the Roman garrison remained there not by compulsion but for the opportunity of direct economic exploitation.\textsuperscript{84} Adding the numbers of Roman administrators to the military population of Britain for a total of approximately 60,000 people at any time, Mattingly concludes that only 3\% of the province’s population has produced the archaeological remains that until recently were almost exclusively focused on in excavations and studies of the Roman period in Britain.\textsuperscript{85}

Regardless of the reason for the unusually high military presence, its effect on the culture of Roman Britain is considerable. A number of sources of evidence including epigraphy reveal distinctions between the civilian inhabited Lowland South and the military occupied Highland North. The majority of stone inscriptions in Roman Britain were instigated by soldiers, and of the 2,216 inscriptions in RIB I 1,914 were from military sites.\textsuperscript{86} Additionally, the urbanization that followed the Roman conquest in the south did not occur in the north. Michael Jones considers whether these cultural differences were the result of the preexisting cultures of the Northern Britons, or whether it was the result of the Roman Empire’s inability to completely subdue the north of the island.\textsuperscript{87} I support Mattingly’s argument, however, and ask whether the divided culture of the frontier was no more than a product of the permanent presence of the Roman army and the indigenous experience of Roman imperialism. Chapter 2 demonstrates that writing was almost entirely restricted to military sites on the northern frontier, but nevertheless within the military sites there is evidence that Britons were incorporated into the military and adopted Latin and writing there. This does not suggest that the Northern Britons were incompatible with Roman society, but that they were not granted the opportunities to live in a demilitarized, urbanized, and Romanized region.

\textsuperscript{84} Mattingly 2011, 223.
\textsuperscript{85} Mattingly 2011, 220.
\textsuperscript{86} Mann 1985, 205.
\textsuperscript{87} Jones 1987.
A final issue with studies of the Latin language in Roman Britain is that some scholars use the Latin language to identify with modern cultural status. This issue is related to the tendency discussed above of scholars in the colonial era to allow their understanding of Roman imperialism to be shaped by their own imperialist societies. Haverfield’s optimistic portrayal of the prevalence of spoken Latin in Roman Britain is obviously distorted by a desire to equate the level of Romanization of Britain with other provinces in order to justify the perceived continuity between the British Empire and the Roman Empire. The self-identification of modern imperialists with the Roman Empire happened in competition with scholars from other modern imperialist nations that were doing the same, often with much more epigraphic evidence from their homelands and the benefit of speaking a Romance language. Jackson’s now discredited theory that the Latin of Roman Britain was archaic because it was supposedly learned as a second language through proper schooling gives the impression that Jackson was identifying the Latin of Roman Britain with modern British academia and valuing it over the vulgar forms of Latin observable elsewhere in the empire. On the contrary, Eric Hamp has identified social variation in the Latin of Roman Britain. Additionally, as discussed above, sub-standard developments appropriate to common speech are visible in all quality of inscriptions from the province, suggesting that the Latin spoken in Britain was influenced by the general population as it was in other western provinces.

This study is founded on the understanding that no single culture is worth more than another and I consider every indication of distinct cultural groups or individual identities in Roman Britain interesting in its own right, and significant to our understanding of how Roman imperialism was experienced. With that in mind the linguistic evidence from Roman Britain is not analyzed here for any other reason than to recognize the causes and effects of cultural contact in the Roman Empire. The focus of this study is not the linguistic evidence per se but the underlying cultural and historical influences that

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88 see Mattingly 2011, 47, for an unsettling portrayal of the perceived connections between French colonialism and Roman imperialism through linguistic evidence.


90 Hamp 1975.
produced this evidence. Other sources of evidence, particularly material culture, are appropriate for this topic and although they will be mentioned throughout, the linguistic evidence of cultural contact in Roman Britain is worthy of independent examination.
Chapter 2

2 Frontier Linguistic Identities

Non urbana mea tantum Pipleide gaudent
otia nee vacuis auribus ista damus,
sed meus in Getieis ad Martia signa pruinis
a rigidio teritur centurione liber,
dicitur et nostros cantare Britannia versus.
quid prodest? nescit sacculus ista meus. 91

The leisure time of Rome does not rejoice in my Muse alone,
nor do I offer such things to vacant ears,
but my book is worn out by the stern centurion
in the Getic frosts before the standards of Mars,
and it is said that my verses are sung in Britannia.
What’s the use? My money bag does not know that.

So Martial begins an epigram that ends by asserting his inferiority to the Augustan
patron, poet and statesman, Maecenas, and compares his own failings to the successes of
the incumbent emperor Nerva as the restoration of Augustus’ divinity on earth. Despite
the poet’s admitted weaknesses, he boldly proclaims his popularity not only at the Roman
center, but the periphery too. The fifth line emphatically sends his poetry to far off
Britannia, but does not specify who was reading it there. The particular military context
of the poem can not be ignored and it is logical to place his verses in the hands of the
centurions of that distant province. Yet the unrestricted and perhaps purposefully
ambiguous statement introduces the question of how far Latin had spread throughout the
population of Britain by the end of the 1st century AD, approximately sixty years after
Claudius’ invasion in 43 AD. The epigraphic and documentary evidence from the
northern frontier demonstrates the process by which the Roman military introduced the
Latin language to the peoples of the frontier. The vast majority of inscriptions from the
frontier of Roman Britain are written in Latin, but some simple inscriptions, particularly
dedications to local gods, include Celtic words transliterated into Latin. In the Latin of
the Vindolanda writing tablets there is also evidence of interference from Celtic speech.

91 Mar. Epi. 11.3.
In addition there is evidence of the Roman military’s linguistic diversity which had a character of its own influenced by soldiers from throughout the empire and recruited locally in Britain.

In this chapter the epigraphy and documents of the northern frontier are examined for evidence of language change in the written and spoken Latin of the military community. The influence of the military community on Celtic would be examined but the epigraphic evidence simply does not exist for this side of the language contact, which would require a Celtic epigraphic culture to show the influences of Latin on spoken British Celtic. This language shift can only be discussed through the evidence of language reconstruction, and as a result only brief comments are made in chapter 3.92 Firstly, I will outline the differences and similarities between the inscriptions from Roman Britain that were dedicated by individuals explicitly identified as soldiers and the inscriptions that were not certainly written by soldiers. One of the most important differences between these groups of inscriptions are the gods that are worshiped in religious dedications. The gods worshipped by soldiers tend to be from the traditional Greco-Roman pantheon, or include the equation of Roman with non-Roman gods. The gods worshipped in dedications that were not explicitly set up by soldiers are more often to Celtic deities than inscriptions set up by soldiers. This suggests that Roman soldiers chose not to identify as soldiers when worshipping gods that were introduced to them by the local population. This could also suggest that local civilians adopted Roman methods of worship and writing through their contact with the Roman military community. The evidence in the epigraphic record for the recruitment of soldiers from the local population is then examined in order to conclude that as military units became permanently stationed in Roman Britain they became less and less divided from the civilian population in terms of ethnic categories, but the cultural distinction between soldier and civilian remained prominent. Finally, the evidence from the Vindolanda writing tablets of the various identities of individuals in the military community is examined in order to conclude that the Roman military included numerous social strata based off of rank. These distinctions are reflected in the

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92 *infra* ch. 3.4.
soldiers’ proficiency in Latin. The broad conclusions drawn from these analyses are that
the Latin of the military communities on the frontier helped to differentiate the identities
of soldiers and some civilians from the rest of the civilian population. Nevertheless, the
presence of the military community provided opportunities for Latin/Celtic bilingualism
for soldiers as well as local civilians.

2.1 The Stone Inscriptions of the Frontier

The documentary evidence from the frontier of Roman Britain quantitatively and
qualitatively demonstrates a better knowledge of Latin in military contexts than among
civilians. In Marilynne Raybould’s comprehensive survey of a large sample of
inscriptions from Roman Britain she found that the stone work and lettering are of a
higher quality when the dedicator is explicitly identified as a soldier. Raybould selected
a study group of 282 religious dedications from Roman Britain made by soldiers, based
on the criteria of completeness and legibility. The study group was then classified in
four types, A through D, based on the quality of workmanship and legibility and a fifth,
type E, that includes inscriptions with grammatical, orthographical or lexical errors. Of
the 282 stones, 47% were either of professional quality without any cutting errors (type
A), or had only one or two minor issues such as a letter squeezed in at the end of a line
(type B). Raybould considers this high degree of workmanship to be a testament to the
fact that the majority of these dedications were set up for official purposes and that 72%
of them were set up by high ranking officers. Dedications whose masons payed little or
no attention to cutting straight or polishing and had a generally unprofessional
appearance (type C and D) accounted for only 5% and 10% respectively of the
dedications made by soldiers. Dedications with spelling and grammatical errors

93 Raybould 1999, 14.
94 ibid. 10.
95 ibid. 3.
96 ibid. 14.
97 ibid. 14.
98 ibid. 14.
accounted for a surprisingly high 31%, and the remaining 7% of stones were too fragmentary to demonstrate the proper criteria for classification. Raybould concludes upon this evidence that the majority of religious dedications commissioned by soldiers were produced in specialist workshops.

In contrast Raybould’s second study group which is comprised of religious dedications made by dedicators who are not identified as soldiers, are more often of lower quality, and this may be the result of their personal instead of official nature. Only 23% of the inscriptions in this group appear to be official and the other 77% are small personal dedications, while in the military group almost all of the dedications were official. The dedicators in the second study group could have been soldiers, and most of the inscriptions were found at military sites suggesting that this was the case. It is nevertheless significant that when the instigator of an inscription is identified as a soldier the inscription is usually of higher quality. Higher quality inscriptions would have cost more and it is reasonable to assume that finer religious dedications were meant for a more public audience than cheaper, unattractive inscriptions were. This indicates that inscriptions meant for a public audience were given greater value by soldiers, and apparently their status as a soldier was valued in public contexts as well. The dedications in the second study group were made by private individuals as well as civilian groups, such as local political institutions. The second study group contains two hundred and sixty stones, only forty (15%) of which are classified as professionally executed (type A or B), compared to 47% in the first study group. The more amateurish stones (type C and D) increased from 5% and 10% respectively to 13% and 13% in the second study group, and inscriptions with both type E linguistic irregularities and type D features are 21% compared to 1% in the military group. Additionally, the percentage of stones with

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99 ibid. 14.
100 ibid. 14.
101 ibid. 27.
102 ibid. 27.
103 ibid. 28.
linguistic irregularities (type E) increased altogether from 31% to 47% in the second study group.\textsuperscript{104} In sum, Raybould found a decreased level of professionalism in the execution of non-military dedications, but a wider range of production standards which reflects the more diverse means of production of the dedications in the second study group.\textsuperscript{105} There are a greater overall number of irregularities in the non-military dedications but in both groups there is a wide distribution of irregularities across the type classifications, suggesting that even professional craftsmen were influenced by the sub-standard phonological developments that are representative of the spoken word but are deviations from standard literary Latin.\textsuperscript{106}

It is apparent in the dedications to a unique set of deities from the Hadrian’s Wall frontier that the worship of local deities was not felt appropriate for public display in the military community. These dedications offer insight both into the adoption of local religious practices by the Roman military community as well as the adoption of Roman methods of worship and writing by locals who were incorporated into the military community. Raybould found that only 15\% of the soldiers’ dedications were to Celtic deities and a further 5\% included Romano-Celtic equation, compared to the 42\% of dedications to Celtic deities and 9\% with Romano-Celtic equation in the second study group.\textsuperscript{107} Forty eight inscriptions found in the region of Hadrian’s Wall, and another two from areas further south, are dedications on small altars to the otherwise unattested set of deities, the \textit{Veteres}. There is little consistency to the spelling, number, and even gender of the deities, to the point that one altar is dedicated to \textit{deo Veteribus} (RIB 1604). The forms \textit{Deo Votri, dibus Viteribus, deabus Vitiribus, deo Hveteri,} and \textit{deo Hvtri}, and others are attested. These deities never appear on official dedications, but are all on small personal altars, and only two of the dedicators are identified as soldiers, although they were all found at

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{104} ibid. 28.
\textsuperscript{105} ibid. 29.
\textsuperscript{106} ibid. 16. \textit{cf. supra} n.65
\textsuperscript{107} ibid. 11.
\end{flushleft}
military sites. The inscriptions furthermore demonstrate a wide variety in terms of quality, from a nicely polished and carved stone from Netherby (RIB 973) reading simply *Deo Huetiri*, “to the god Huetiris”, to a nearly illegible and problematic stone from Chesters possibly reading *Suadnus votum Do Votri S(olvit) “Suadnus fulfilled his vow to the god Votris”* (RIB 1458). In cases where the quality suggests professional workmanship and not the work of an amateur, the dedicator is more likely to be a soldier. The two inscriptions set up by soldiers support this conclusion. The altar of Julius Pastor (RIB 1795), a standard bearer (*imaginifer*) in the 2nd cohort of Dalmatians from Carvoran is among the finer stones of the set. The altar of an auxiliary centurion (*princeps*) with the Germanic name Unthaus at Lanchester (RIB 1088) is roughly inscribed and provides a problematic reading, but it demonstrates familiarity with the formulae of Latin epigraphy ending with the formula *pro se et suis* “for himself and his own”.

It is impossible to conclude whether any of these dedications were inscribed by the dedicators themselves. The few nicely inscribed ones were likely in the hands of professionals, but the very amateur inscriptions were clearly not inscribed by professionals so it is likely that they were inscribed by the dedicator or someone close to them perhaps with a similar linguistic background. Nevertheless, even the well executed altar from Netherby presents one of the more unusual interpretations of the *Veteres* in the form of *Huetiri*. Therefore, even professionally produced stones are representative of the linguistic variations in the military communities. Considering the wide degree of production standards and linguistic variation in this set of inscriptions it is likely that some were inscribed by continental soldiers or members of the military community familiar to Latin while others were inscribed by local civilians who were incorporated into the military community. The first language of any of the dedicators in this set of inscriptions is uncertain, but the great variation in spelling suggests that there were many whose first language was not Latin. Therefore these inscriptions are likely

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109 For the problematic issue of scribal culture in the epigraphic record see *supra* ch.1.2, and Harris 1989, 284.
evidence on the one hand of continental soldiers attempting to put unfamiliar words into Latin characters, or on the other hand of British natives putting familiar words into the unfamiliar literary language of Latin.

The apparent confusion in the *Veteres* inscriptions represents the challenge of Romanizing a proper name of a primeval deity or a group of deities which Anthony Birley proposes may have been worshipped locally before even the Celts migrated to the region. Collin Smith found that these linguistic variations are results of both Latin phonetic developments, and German or Celtic phonology. The desire of garrisons of Germanic soldiers living among Celtic natives to attempt phonetic spellings in Latin of a word previously only spoken inevitably led to numerous variations. Some of the dedications (RIB 1549-1603, Carrawburgh and Houseteads, and RIB 973, Netherby) use *Hv* to express the first sound, while another (RIB 727, Catterick) uses *Vh*. This represents a sound not easily expressed in Latin. This non-Latin name was eventually assimilated with the Latin adjective *Vetus*, though it is not certain that the original sense referred to ‘Old Gods’. It is possible that the similarity was coincidental, but the use of ‘Old Gods’ in order to refer to native deities of the region was a logical development. Confusion between *e* and *i* was a common occurrence in the epigraphy of Roman Britain. In the case of the *Veteres* the confusion was a result of the lack of a convention for spelling the name. The use of *dibus* in place of the dative plural *deis* from *deus* is accounted for with the same vocalic shift of *e* to *i* in the stem, and the replacement of the standard second declension ending *-is* with an irregular ending *–bus*. This development is seen elsewhere on the frontier, at Birrens in an official dedication from a soldier of the second cohort of Tungrians to all the male and female gods, *Dib(us) Deab(us)q(ue) omnib(us)* (RIB 2109).

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111 Smith 1983, 929.
112 Raybould 1999, 29.
113 ibid. 29.
114 ibid. 169.
115 Mann 1971, 224.
suggests the adoption of local practices by some soldiers. It is also evidence of local recruitment into the garrisons and incorporation of the local civilian population into the military society. This suggests the adoption of Roman practices to suit local customs, in this case the worship of a local deity with altars emulating Roman ones in form and language.

Irregularities in spelling names of other deities support this conclusion. Smith argues that the altars dedicated to *Coventina* (RIB 1522-1535), a Celtic goddess, at Carrawburgh (*Brocolitia*) have various spelling irregularities caused not so much by the difficulty of Romanizing the name, but by general sub-standard developments in the Latin of the Roman provinces. In the dedications to *Coventina* where -ent- was shortened to -et- and in cases where the dative ending -ae was shortened to –e, the German and Latin speaking soldiers of the second cohort of Batavians demonstrated common sub-standard developments. The shift of -ent- to -ont- in *Covontine* (RIB 1533) is less common. In two cases (RIB 1534-35), however, uncertainty over the sound may account for the first syllable spelled with a non-Latin vowel sound, *Cou*-. This case suggests that whoever produced the inscription was either proficient in Latin but attempting to represent a non-Latin sound, or that they were unfamiliar with Latin phonology and had an imperfect knowledge of Latin. Dedications made to the Celtic war-god *Belatucadrus* which have irregularities caused by both sub-standard Latin developments as well as difficulties of transcribing Celtic sounds into Latin have more in common with the *Veteres* altars than the dedications to *Coventina* whose irregularities are attributed above to the language shifts of provincial Latin. There are 27 inscriptions in RIB dedicated to *Belatucadrus*, five of which are equated with Mars. One dedication to this god from Carvoran (RIB 1776) reads *Do Blatucadro votu(m) s(olutum)*, “To the God Belatucadrus, a vow fulfilled”. The loss of -e- in the stem of *deo* is an error. The elision of the first syllable of *Bel-* to *Bl-* demonstrates an uncertainty of the Celtic name. The loss of the terminal -m in

116 Smith 1983, 928.
117 Mann 1971, 221.
118 Smith 1983, 928.
the accusative *votum* demonstrates a trend in sub-standard Latin phonology. These multiple errors in a single inscription indicate that the literacy of the writer was influenced by spoken Latin while at the same time the writer was challenged by the spelling of the foreign sounding name. There is the potential that the mason misheard the dedicators directions, but it seems unlikely that the dedicator would allow such an error. The mason could have simply been following a draft by the dedicator that already included the error.

### 2.2 Onomastics and the Ethnic Identities of the Military Community

In these examples of religious dedications to indigenous Celtic deities on the northern frontier there are numerous possibilities for the ethnic origins of the dedicators. When present, the names of dedicators on religious inscriptions or the names given on epitaphs are evidence of the complexities of the linguistic situation on the frontier and the multicultural composition of the army. The usefulness of these names, however, for determining the origins or first languages of individuals is limited due to naming conventions in the context of Roman inscriptions. The grant of universal citizenship to all free inhabitants of the empire in 212 AD distorts the impression of how many individuals with Roman names had actually adopted other practices that are considered significant to Roman identity. In 212 AD the emperor Caracalla issued an edict that granted Roman citizenship to all free inhabitants of the empire, according to Cassius Dio because the Emperor wanted to have more tax revenue.\(^{119}\) There is also very limited evidence for the certainty that native Britons were recruited locally to serve in the garrisons that were stationed permanently on the frontier. As a result, it is uncertain whether natives adopted the Roman practices associated with Roman soldiers such as the Latin language and, as a result, whether they were responsible for setting up many of the inscriptions at military sites. It will be argued below, however, that this was likely the case. It can be concluded

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\(^{119}\) Cass. Dio. 77.9.5; Millar 1962, 124.
that many of the inscriptions from the northern frontier were dedicated by or commemorate individuals with local origins but with varied identities.

Benet Salway criticizes a tendency of scholars to pinpoint the ideal of Roman naming conventions to the mid-Republican elite male *tria nomina* which used one of a few stock *praenomen*, an inherited gentilitial *nomen*, and an additional name, the *cognomen*, in order to differentiate one branch of a family from another within the growing Roman population. In the *tria nomina* system, the *praenomen* was used as a diacritic, the personal identifier, only in private familial contexts, and the *nomen* in official and public contexts, while the *cognomen* could be used as an additional diacritic in the public. Additional *agnomina* were occasionally added in a Roman’s lifetime in order to commemorate his deeds. Salway argues that because the Roman grammarian Varro portrayed this system as standardized in the 2nd century BC, modern commentators considered this interpretation valid without considering that the conventions were then and would continue to be in a constant state of flux.

This model, which overestimates the importance of elite naming practices, additionally led commentators to reach the conclusion that naming conventions were adapted on account of the incorporation of non-Italians as citizens as the Roman empire expanded in territory and population. Salway demonstrates that by the 1st century B.C. those foreigners incorporated into Roman society as freedmen, who were neither slaves nor citizens, added the *praenomen* and *nomen* of their Roman patron before their diacritic personal name used as a *cognomen*. At the same time the Roman nobility began to use individual *cognomina* as diacritics for their children whose *praenomen* became attached to their *nomen* and were used only in public contexts. Therefore, even before the *tria nomina* fell into disuse, Roman naming conventions had been significantly altered by the use of the *cognomen* as a diacritic. The prefect of the 9th Cohort of Batavians at Vindolanda and the most frequently attested individual in the writing tablets, Flavius

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120 Salway 1994, 124-145.
121 ibid., 128.
122 ibid., 128.
Cerialis, received his gentilitial *nomen* from his father who was possibly a Batavian elite who remained loyal to Rome during the Batavian revolt of 69 AD when he received Roman citizenship and adopted the *nomen* of his patron, the emperor.\(^{123}\) Flavius Cerialis’ diacritic cognomen was given to him by his father, who had benefited from the patronage of the emperor’s son in law, Petillius Cerialis, who put down the Batavian revolt in 70 AD.\(^{124}\)

Salway concludes that it was not the incorporation of foreigners into Roman society *per se* that resulted in the greatest shift in Roman naming conventions, but particularly the *constitutio Antoniniana* in 212 AD that undermined the importance of the gentilitial *nomen*.\(^{125}\) Before the universal grant of citizenship, citizens traditionally gained their status through a close relation with a member of the Roman ruling class. After 212 AD, however, new Roman citizens took the *praenomen* and *nomen* of the emperor Caracalla. The citizen status of all free inhabitants of the Empire was assured without interactions with elites who had strong Roman identities so the new citizens took little interest in Roman naming conventions. Salway argues that the discontinuation of the traditional process of incorporating Roman citizens led to the abandonment of the gentilitial *nomen* by way of newly enfranchised Romans, who only used the redundant Aurelius *nomen* in specific contexts, influencing previously enfranchised Romans to abandon theirs too.\(^{126}\)

One tombstone (RIB 1620) from the Roman army fort Housesteads (*Vercovicium*) on Hadrian’s Wall is representative of the difficulties in trying to ascertain status, origins, or language background from names alone, particularly when the inscription’s date is uncertain. The tombstone commemorates five men and one woman, whose names have differing origins. Each commemorated person has a single name with filiation. Add to these the name of the heir who set up the tombstone and his filiation and there are a total of fourteen names. The text of the tombstone is given here in full:

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\(^{123}\) Birley 2002, 45.

\(^{124}\) ibid., 45.

\(^{125}\) Salway 1994, 133.

\(^{126}\) ibid., 138.
[D(is)] M(anibus)  
[...] P [...]  
[...] ANL [...] MPR [...] E [...]  
[...] Venioni Venocari (filio)  
Grato Fersonis (filio)  
Romulo Alimahi (filio)  
Simili Daili (filio)  
Mansuetio Senicionis (filio)  
Pervince Quartionis (filiae)  
heres procuravit Delfinus Rautionis (filius) ex G(ermania) S(uperiore)

“To the departed spirits,  
(lacuna)  
To Venionis son of Venocarus  
To Gratus son of Fersio  
To Romulus son of Alimahus  
To Similis son of Dailus  
To Mansuetius son of Senicio  
To Pervinca daughter of Quartio  
The heir Delfinus from Upper Germany  
son of Rautio provided this.

Raybould finds the filiation (father’s name in the genitive case) Venocarus to be Celtic,  
the deceased Gratus, Romulus and Pervinca to be common Roman provincial names, the  
deceased Mansuetius and his filiation Senicio to be Celtic names specifically from Gaul,  
and the filiations Fersio, Alimahus, Dailus and Rautio to be Germanic.127 The single  
name with filiation before Caracalla’s universal grant of citizenship would be a good  
indication of non-citizen status but in the absence of positive dating evidence for this  
stone, found in the 18th century, one can not be sure that the deceased were not freeborn  
citizens. Even if the tombstone was early, the deceased may have been citizens due to the  
grant of citizenship to their fathers if they had achieved stipendium for 25 years service in  
the auxilia. Raybould proposes that the lettering seems to be in the style of the 3rd century  
AD. If this is true they were all granted citizenship and little can be inferred about their

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127 Raybould 1999, 95
level of interaction with Roman culture.\textsuperscript{128} In either case the deceased could be the sons and daughters of men who served at the fort and settled there after retirement.\textsuperscript{129}

In the above inscription the heir who set up the tombstone was from Upper Germany, but it is possible that any of the deceased were born in Britain, even the ones with German or Gaulish names, because it became unnecessary to give origins once troops began to be recruited locally.\textsuperscript{130} It is useful to consider the extent to which the Britons served in the Roman army in order to propose the likelihood of these locals using Latin in a military context. There is inadequate evidence to confirm the practice of local recruitment in Roman Britain, but it was still likely the case. Brian Dobson and John Mann found that Britain began supplying troops shortly after the Roman conquest and that by the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century AD it was the primary source of new recruits for the auxiliary units stationed there.\textsuperscript{131} Tacitus mentions that by the time of Agricola’s conquest, British auxiliaries were with the Roman army, whom Dobson and Mann presume were recruited into existing units, not their own British units. Dobson and Mann furthermore suggest that although there were British cohorts stationed abroad by the mid to late 2\textsuperscript{nd} century these were also recruiting locally as had become the common practice in all military units.\textsuperscript{132}

No British auxiliaries are attested epigraphically in Britain from the 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD.\textsuperscript{133} Epigraphic evidence of local recruitment in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century is unfortunately not sufficient to conclude that Britons were commonly recruited from and stationed in Britain. Dobson and Mann only site two soldiers serving in Britain with British origins at this time: a man from Gloucester who was recruited into the first Cohort of Varduli in the mid-130’s AD, known from a discharge diploma from ca. 160 AD, and a man whose origin was the \textit{civitas Brigantium} (a northern British tribe) and who served in the second cohort of

\begin{footnotes}
\item 128 ibid. 95.
\item 129 ibid. 95.
\item 130 Raybould 1999, 95.
\item 131 Dobson and Mann 1973, 201.
\item 132 Dobson and Mann 1973, 199.
\item 133 Tac., Agr. 31., Dobson and Mann 1973, 199.
\end{footnotes}
Thracians at Mumrill, on the Antonine Wall. In the 3rd century AD the evidence does not improve. This is partly because the auxilia were then almost entirely recruited from provincial citizens so there was no longer a need for discharge diplomas which stop being produced at this time. The lacking epigraphic evidence for this question is also due to the fact that Britain yields so few epitaphs. One epitaph is dedicated to a man at Great Chesters (Aescia), by his sister, which relationship Dobson and Mann take to infer the local origin of the family.

If we conclude on this meager evidence that Britons did not serve in the permanent frontier garrisons in any significant number, we must also accept that Britons did not serve in the Roman army altogether, because there were no new British units being raised to serve elsewhere in the Empire at a time when units were recruiting locally everywhere else in the Empire. Dobson and Mann make the argument that this was not the case because there is no reason that Britain would have operated entirely differently than the other provinces. The evidence that would confirm the practice of local recruitment, which are epitaphs that give *origines*, are lacking because the local origins of the majority of troops were assumed and not remarkable enough to mention in an epitaph. The service of locals in the Roman army in Britain would have brought the local Celtic languages into direct contact with the Latin of the military community, as well as the native languages of the soldiers and their followers from Gaul, the Germanies, and elsewhere. There is epigraphic evidence that shows the effect that the incorporation of Celtic speakers into the Roman military community had on Latin, but there is no primary

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134 Dobson and Mann 1973, 200. *CIL* xvi 130: [co(hortis) I Fid(ae) Va]rdul(orum) | (milliariae) cui pra(e)st | Verus [Satu]rnino Glevi ([Roman citizenship is granted] to Saturnino from Glevum of the faithful thousand strong first cohort of Varduli whose commander is Verus, *RIB* 2142 *Dis M(anibus) Nectovelius f(ilius) | Vindicis an(norum) IXXX stip(endiorum) VIII| natis Brigans militavit in coh(orte) II Thr(acum), (To the departed spirits (i.e. here lies), Nectovelius the son of Vindicis, 29 years old, 9 (years) in the military, a Brigans by birth, served in the second cohort of Thracians).  
135 Dobson and Mann 1973, 195.  
136 Dobson and Mann 1973, 200. *RIB* 1742 (Great Chesters): D(is) M(anibus) Ael(io) Mercuriali cornicul(ario) Vacia soror fecit (To the departed spirits, for Aelius Mercurialis the horn bearer, (his) sister Vacia made (this)).  
137 Dobson and Mann 1973, 201.  
138 Dobson and Mann 1973, 201-203
evidence to demonstrate the effects that Latin had on the local Celtic languages. The language shift of the Latin spoken at the Roman army fort of Vindolanda will be discussed in the following section.

2.3 Language Contact in the Roman Military Community

The Vindolanda writing tablets are a valuable source of evidence for the interactions of an auxiliary fort with its surrounding area, but the periods of occupation from which the tablets are preserved, in the late 1st and early 2nd century AD, come from before local recruitment occurred in Roman Britain. The tablets were all written by Tungrian and Batavian soldiers or their civilian accompaniment of women, children, slaves, and merchants, so the tablets are representative of the provincial Latin of Gallia Belgica and the Rhine frontier and not the Latin spoken by the native population of Britain. Adams is cautious about considering the language of the writing tablets as representative of the actual speech at the fort, because many of the tablets were evidently written by scribes. For instance many of the letters signed by the prefect of the 9th cohort of Batavians, Flavius Cerialis, are the work of scribes. At least four hands other than that of Cerialis were used to write his correspondence. Eight draft letters of Cerialis, however, are written in the same hand, which the editors of the tablets, Bowman and Thomas, consider to be written by Cerialis himself. Numerous other letters are penned by one hand and signed by another which clearly indicates that the body of the text was written by a scribe, and the signature by the signatory, Cerialis. Adams finds that the work of the scribes at Vindolanda demonstrates conservative and archaizing writing more often than substandard spelling, which suggests that the scribes were formally trained.

The work of scribes in some tablets has produced an impression of the Latin spoken at Vindolanda through scribal errors in recording dictations. As Bowman and Thomas note,
Tablet 234 is the only clear example of dictation in the tablets. This tablet concerns the provision of goods by Cerialis to an individual named September in order to help endure the stormy October weather at Vindolanda. In the penultimate line the scribe has erased *et hiem* and replaced it with *etiam* in the phrase *qui feramus tempestates etiam si molestae sint* “with which(?) we may endure the storms even if they are tiresome”.

Bowman and Thomas propose that the scribe was in the process of writing *tempestates et hiemae* (storms and the winter) when he realised that Cerialis had actually said *etiam*. Adams draws two conclusions from this dictation error. Firstly, the scribe was accustomed to hear Cerialis speak without the initial aspirate *h* - with the result that when he heard *etiam* he assumed on account of logic that Cerialis said *et hiem* - without the aspirate. Secondly, the scribe’s ability to insert the aspirate without hearing it is a testament to his formal training in writing.

In the absence of British writers, the tablets nevertheless give indications of interactions with Britons which would have necessitated bilingualism in some form. There are possibilities that some Britons may be named in the tablets, though there can be no certainty in the matter to distinguish continental Celtic names, or even some Germanic names, from insular Celtic names. There are a number of activities described in the tablets that may have involved local civilians, but it is not always obvious that activities such as trade and commerce were conducted by civilians because soldiers would have been tasked duties not traditionally associated with the military. The surest example of a civilian writer was penned by a *homo transmarinus*, a man from across the sea. This tablet contains a draft of an appeal to the governor, addressed as *maiestas*, majesty, from the anonymous *transmarinus*. This foreigner claimed that he was assaulted by a group of soldiers and he begged the magistrate to punish the soldiers. A grim implication can be

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143 *Tab. Vindol.* 234, App. A1; Bowman and Thomas 1994, 208. see *infra* n.171 for another possible dictation error.

144 ibid. 209.

145 Adams 1995, 90.

146 Bowman and Thomas 1994, 32.

drawn from his final appeal “I implore you not to allow me a man from overseas [...] to be bloodied as if I had committed some crime” (*imploro ne patiaris me hominem trasmarinum [...] virgis cruent[at][m] esse ac si aliquid sceler[i]s commisissem*).

Apparently the writer felt that this assault should not happen specifically to a man from the continent and one wonders if it would have been more acceptable to assault a native Briton. Bowman and Thomas suggest that the appeal has a civilian tone, derived from the context of the incident as well as some of the language used, particularly referring to himself as a *homo* not a *miles*. It is clear that this was a draft of the petition because it was written on the reverse side of a trading account written in the same hand, signifying that the *transmarinus* was a civilian trader. This introduces the possibility that the traders in many of the other tablets were civilian. In any case, the economic, industrial, and agricultural activities presented in the tablets would have been facilitated by locals at certain levels. Another tablet demonstrates that Britons supplied the military with wagons.

The most well attested aspect of the fort’s activity in the Vindolanda Tablets is the management and procurement of supplies. This is due to the large number of accounts that were recorded. Tablet 213 is an example of how this economic activity could have produced interactions with the local Britons. In this letter from the fort’s second period of occupation (c.90-c.100AD) Curtius Super addresses Cassius Saecularis, who was perhaps acting as an *optio* (supply officer), asking the latter to give barley, *hordeum*, as a commercial good, *commercium*, to an unspecified group. After a salutation and a lacuna of one line, the letter begins its message, *ut interpreteris*, “so that you may interpret”. The meaning of *interpretor* here is debatable. On the one hand, as Bowman

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148 Bowman and Thomas 1994, 329
149 ibid. 329; *Tab. Vindol.* 180.
151 Bowman and Thomas 1994, 187.
153 ibid. 187.
and Thomas prefer, it could mean that Super was asking Saecularis to explain the situation to whomever was receiving the goods.\textsuperscript{154} On the other hand, as Ian Haynes argues, this could be evidence of interpreters being present in the Roman Army.\textsuperscript{155} The reading of \textit{interpreter} as ‘translate’ would mean that Super asked Saecularis to accompany a trading party to meet with a group that did not speak Latin, presumably local traders who spoke British Celtic.\textsuperscript{156} Bowman argues that the military trading party that Saecularis was accompanying was the subject of \textit{habeant}, meaning that they were to purchase the barley from the native Britons.\textsuperscript{157}

In either case the reading that Saecularis was to trade with civilians is acceptable, but this can not confirm the meaning of \textit{interpretor}, the primary meaning of which in the Oxford Latin Dictionary is to explain things such as laws, omens, or agreements.\textsuperscript{158} Only the sixth and final meaning in the \textit{OLD} is ‘translate’ and in every case the meaning of translation is assured by the context, a good example from Tacitus being \textit{Et manebant structis molibus litterae Aegyptiae, priorem opulentiam complexae: iussusque e senioribus sacerdotum patrium sermonem interpretari} (“and there remained on the massive buildings Egyptian letters, embracing their ancestral magnificence; and one of the elder priests was ordered to interpret the ancestral speech”).\textsuperscript{159} No precise contextual evidence is given in tablet 213 but if we are to take \textit{interpretor} in the sense meaning ‘explain’, then we can at least consider that bilingualism could have played a role in the interaction. Haynes concludes that at this stage of the province’s history, before local recruitment, the \textit{auxilia} from the continent were linguistically isolated among the locals, and that interpreters would have surely been necessary.\textsuperscript{160}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{154} Bowman and Thomas 1994, 187.
\textsuperscript{155} Haynes 2013, 304; \textit{cf.} Bowman and Thomas 1994, 187.
\textsuperscript{156} Bowman and Thomas 1994, 187.
\textsuperscript{157} Bowman 1994, 39.
\textsuperscript{158} \textit{OLD} s.v. 1.
\textsuperscript{159} \textit{OLD} s.v. 6; Tac., \textit{Ann.} 2.60.
\textsuperscript{160} Haynes 2013, 304.
\end{footnotesize}
Interpreters in the Roman army are attested in various sources. Caesar mentions in his commentaries on the Gallic War that when he held an important embassy with Diviciacus, a Gallic leader of the Aedui, he dismissed his ‘regular interpreters’, *cotidianis interpretibus*, and replaced them with Gaius Valerius Troucillus, a trusted friend from Gallia Provincia. 161 An Augustan era epitaph from the Danubian frontier commemorates Quintus Atilius Primus a centurion of the 15th Legion who was an *interprex*, ‘interpreter’, and a *negotiator annorum*, an officer in charge of trade.162 This individual may have been a legionary counterpart part to Saecularis. In the absence of more substantial evidence in the Vindolanda tablets regarding the demand for interpreters, there is the possibility that it could have been common for Celtic speaking soldiers at Vindolanda to converse with the locals by using their native language, and therefore they did not require interpreters in any official sense. As will be discussed below, it is evident that some of the soldiers were bilingual in Celtic and Latin.

The origins of the traders referred to in the letter to Cassius Saecularis are uncertain, but there is evidence in another writing tablet of interactions between the Roman military and British soldiers. In a letter dating from period III at Vindolanda (98-104/5 AD), during the occupation of the 9th cohort of Batavians, a soldier criticizes the tactics of the British cavalry.163 The nature of this interaction is highly debatable because it is unclear whether the British cavalry were allies or enemies of the Roman auxiliaries. It is possible that this invective, which includes a diminutive form of ‘Briton’, *Brittunculi*, referred to the enemy, but Haynes proposes that this is evidence for auxiliary forces training newly formed British units, and therefore having an active role in the incorporation of provincial communities.164 This tablet is one of the most explicit references in the Vindolanda Tablets to people with British origins, but it is unfortunately lacking any reference to linguistic identity. Nevertheless, it raises a number of questions regarding the cultural and

161 Caes. *BG*. 1.19.3
164 Haynes 2013, 128.
linguistic environment in which it was written. The *Brittunculi* referenced here may have been locally recruited auxiliaries but at this early date it is not likely that they would have remained in Britain once the cavalry *ala* had been raised. Whatever role the Batavians may have played in training British recruits, communication would have been a critical element of their participation. This interaction would have required interpreters who could translate Latin communications into the local Celtic language. Theoretically, interpreters could have been present in both the British cavalry and the Batavian cohort.

Even though it is evident that Latin was not the first language of many of the soldiers at Vindolanda, and their knowledge of Latin varied (see below), some knowledge of Latin was still required even in the most ethnically homogenous units. Their commander, Flavius Cerialis, a Batavian by origin but a Roman equestrian, may have spoken Latin as a first language. The high level of Latinity in his writing tablets suggests this. 165 Haynes supposes that in the average auxiliary cohort the commander did not have the same ethnicity as the soldiers and that commanders were obliged to serve as part of their Roman political career. 166 The commander would not have had the time or inclination to learn the native language of his soldiers, so his communications may have needed to be translated at some point down the chain of command, perhaps at the level of the most subordinate officers. By the time recruitment was taking place away from the unit’s native homeland, the new recruits who were not familiar with the unit’s ancestral language would have needed to know Latin, or the auxiliaries would have had to become familiar with the language of the local population. Elements of both of these processes are apparent in the epigraphic evidence and the changes started by the time local recruitment and veteran settlement began. The ancestral language of the unit lost its importance but it did not disappear entirely.

165 *infra* n.175.

166 Haynes 2013, 305.
2.4 Linguistic Diversity in the Roman Military

The Latin spoken at an auxiliary garrison was unique not only from its surroundings on the frontier, but also from the Latin spoken in any civilian context of the Empire. The speech of the Roman *auxilia* was influenced by the locals where the unit was stationed and the language of the unit’s original homeland. The Latin recorded by soldiers in the Vindolanda writing tablets is representative of their rank. Lower ranking soldiers demonstrate more sub-standard spelling and grammar and increased foreign inclusions while the letters of the unit’s prefect demonstrate aptitude for the conventions of classical literary Latin. The prefect of the 9th cohort of Batavians, Flavius Cerialis, demonstrates the increased Latinity of the camp’s commander compared to his subordinates. The correlation between rank and Latin proficiency is not consistent in stone inscriptions, however, where there is little correlation between rank and quality of masonry or spelling irregularities.

The influence that the Celtic languages, whether continental or insular, had on the Latin of the Vindolanda tablets is more apparent in the tablets written by the enlisted soldiers and servants than it is of the executive officers and their retinue. One Vindolanda writing tablet concerns the receipt of items with Celtic names by a man with the Celtic name Gavo. Adams concludes that in this account Gavo was involved in the supply of, among other provisions, two sorts of textiles with the Celtic names *bedocem* and *tosseas*. The introduction of these Celtic words into the Latin at Vindolanda reveals the influence that vernacular languages could have on the regional diversity of military Latin. It is impossible, however, to know whether Gavo’s first language was Latin or Celtic and whether these loan words entered his vocabulary from interaction with native Britons, or if they were borrowed from his own first language, which could have been Celtic. Bowman and Thomas are uncertain about Gavo’s status, whether military, civilian, free, or slave, but they consider him an entrepreneur due to the large sums of money he was

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168 Adams 2003a, 441.
169 ibid. 456.
paying for numerous goods which were perhaps purchased for the occupants of the praetorium in light of their value.\textsuperscript{170}

Another Vindolanda writing tablet gives a more certain indication of a writer who had a Celtic language background or whose Latin was influenced by Celtic.\textsuperscript{171} A letter sent from one slave, Severus, to another, Candidus the slave of another prefect of the 9th cohort of Batavians, Flavius Genialis, includes a previously unattested word \textit{souxtum}. Adams considers \textit{souxtum} to be a Celticized spelling of \textit{suptum}, ‘cost’. Adams suggests that this letter may have been recorded by a scribe who preserved the Celticized pronunciation of \textit{suptum} in Severus’ speech, implying that the Latin in use at Vindolanda was influenced by personnel whose first language was Celtic.\textsuperscript{172} Another argument is that \textit{souxtum} is a British Celtic word referring to a certain type of cooking vessel which in this case would be used at the Saturnalia.\textsuperscript{173} Adams argues that the Celtic inclusions in this tablet were the results of the continental Celtic origins of the soldiers serving at Vindolanda and that it was not caused by interaction with native Britons. Nevertheless, Adams acknowledges the two possible routes of language contact with the Latin spoken at the fort: interaction with the locals and the origins of the tablets’ authors themselves.\textsuperscript{174}

The distinct form of Celticized Latin apparent in these tablets should be compared to the far more literary form of Latin displayed by the prefect of the 9th Cohort of Batavians, Flavius Cerialis, the most well attested individual in the Vindolanda writing tablets.\textsuperscript{175} As mentioned above Cerialis was born to a noble Batavian family that had remained loyal to the Romans during the Batavian revolt.\textsuperscript{176} The Batavian auxilia were one of the few peoples of the empire whose auxilia were commanded by their noblemen, and Cerialis

\textsuperscript{170} Bowman and Thomas 1994, 159.
\textsuperscript{172} Adams 1995, 94.
\textsuperscript{173} Lambert 2004, 54.
\textsuperscript{174} Adams 1995, 94 and 128.
\textsuperscript{175} \textit{supra} n.165.
\textsuperscript{176} \textit{supra} n.123.
commanded his fellow Germanic tribesmen while taking an active part in Roman imperial society.

_Nec opibus (rarum in societate validiorum) attritis viros tantum armaque imperio ministrant, diu Germanicus bellis exerciti, mox aucta per Britanniam gloria, transmissis illuc cohortibus, quas vetere instituto nobilissimi popularium regebant._

“And not with wealth diminished (which is rare in an allegiance to a more powerful people) [the Batavians] supplied great men and arms to the empire, long practiced in the German wars, with glory recently increased in Britannia, while cohorts were sent there, which by the old custom the most noble of the people commanded.”  

A draft of a letter of recommendation that Cerialis wrote demonstrates his participation in the sort of nepotism which had brought his own family into prominence within the Roman administration. This _littera commendaticia_ does not have the name of its author preserved but Bowman and Thomas attribute it to Cerialis on the orthographic grounds that the hand writing matches a tablet where the name Cerialis appears in the nominative. The letter was sent to a Grattius Crispinus whom Cerialis refers to as his _dominus_ twice, and by the context of Crispinus’ superiority Bowman and Thomas suppose he was of senatorial status and possibly a legionary legate. This unfortunately fragmentary draft letter asked that Crispinus act as a reference for Cerialis to the provincial governor Marcellus in the event of some opportunity, _occasionem_, perhaps for a promotion. Adams considers this letter the most formal example of literary Latinity in the corpus of Vindolanda tablets, citing formal literary phrases such as _libenter amplexus sum domine salutandi te occasionem_, “I happily embraced the opportunity, lord, of greeting you” with the genitive gerund _salutandi_. It is evident that Cerialis took

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180 Bowman and Thomas 1994, 200.

181 Adams 1995, 129.
composition very seriously in making an impression upon a senior officer whom he hoped would in turn make an impression on the governor. It is uncertain what Cerialis hoped to achieve through the patronage of Crispinus, but Bowman proposes that word may have reached the governor in light of another tablet.¹⁸² Two men named Niger and Brocchus who were perhaps fellow officers of Cerialis whom they refer to as frater, wish the prefect luck in his immediate endeavour, and assure him that he will meet the governor soon.¹⁸³

Cerialis is one of the clearest surviving examples of the incorporation of a provincial elite into Roman society. His presence on the northern frontier as both a Roman equestrian and a Batavian nobleman helped to consolidate Roman authority both by ensuring the continued service of the German warriors and by acting as a symbol of the opportunity for provincials to take part in Roman society. To Tacitus the incorporation of the local elite was a matter of strategy in the Roman conquest. A passage from De Vita Agricola which outlines the various measures the Flavian governor Agricola took in order to incorporate the province, gives the impression of the Roman state’s intellectual investment in the local British elite:

*Iam vero principium filios liberalibus artibus erudire, et ingenia Britannorum studiis Gallorum anteferre, ut qui modo linguam Romanam abnuebant, eloquentiam concupiscerent.*

“Then indeed [Agricola] taught the sons of the leaders liberal arts, and compared the abilities of the Britons with the pursuits of the Gauls, in order that no one would despise the Roman language, but so that they would strive for fluency.”¹⁸⁴

Raybould notes that there is no certain epigraphic evidence for these literate British elite who were taught by Agricola.¹⁸⁵ Although many inscriptions were dedicated by the elite, their role in the authorship and their origins can not be known. There is, however, the

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¹⁸⁴ Tac., Agr. 21.
¹⁸⁵ Raybould 1999, 166.
evidence from Britain in the letters of Cerialis of how eloquent the Latin of provincials could become with exceptional opportunities.

Despite the exceptional orthography of Flavius Cerialis, the stone inscriptions of soldiers show little correlation between problematic spelling and rank. Raybould’s first study group comprised of 282 religious dedications whose authors are identified as soldiers has 89 spelling irregularities, most of which reflect common pronunciation in place of correct orthography.186 Of these, 60 were dedicated by soldiers of the rank of decurion or higher while only 29 were from men of lower ranks. The majority of dedications were made by men of higher rank, 203 out of 282, or 72%, which accounts for 67% of the spelling irregularities, while the remaining inscriptions from lower ranks, 79 out of 282 or 28% had 33% of the irregularities, meaning that the contribution to the numbers of irregularities is approximately proportional to the total number of inscriptions from each group. However, Raybould remarks that for the most part the study group of military dedications represents a consistently grammatically correct body of Latin which implies that the authors of these texts had taken part in some form of schooling.187 As discussed above, the cause of this discrepancy is more likely that inscriptions by dedicators identified as soldiers were more likely to be official than those not dedicated by soldiers, and therefore were more often inscribed by professional artisans.188 It is therefore more likely that what is being observed here is the educated writing of artisans and not soldiers. In contrast almost half of the religious dedications of the second study group which were not clearly dedicated by soldiers have irregularities.189 Drawing conclusions from these figures regarding the level of schooling of the dedicators is problematic, because many of these inscriptions were made by specialist workshops too. Nevertheless, it is apparent that soldiers paid a higher regard to correct Latin than civilian

186 Raybould 1999, 14.
187 ibid. 14.
188 supra 21.
189 ibid. 28.
and private dedicators did. This suggests that the dedications of soldiers belonged to a unique epigraphic culture that anticipated a literate audience.

2.5 Conclusion

There are considerable differences between the Latin written by soldiers and civilians at Britain’s frontier. The inscriptions of soldiers have fewer irregularities, and the inscriptions whose instigators are not identified as soldiers are more commonly of unprofessional quality. Nevertheless, there is considerable evidence for the interaction between these two communities, and a mutual influence of language contact apparent in their literary activities. Several Vindolanda writing tablets demonstrate the interactions between the Germanic and Gaulic auxilia and the local Britons that would have necessitated language contact in one form or another. Other Vindolanda writing tablets demonstrate the influences that this contact could have had, though it is possible that these loan words and spelling irregularities were the result of the Germanic and Gallic origins. Nevertheless, the recruitment of soldiers from the local Britons and the settlement of veterans in the area is also suggested in some of the tablets. This process is mainly demonstrated by a lack of epigraphic evidence to the contrary. The practice of local recruitment and settlement would have increased the amount of language contact between the Latin of the garrison and the local natives while further distinguishing the multicultural nature of the military Latin. There was a gradient in the Latin of the Vindolanda tablets as well, with the finest examples of literary Latin written by the fort’s commander, Flavius Cerialis. Public inscriptions in military contexts, however, are representative of a literate community where the inscriptions of the common soldiers and higher ranking officers are of equal quality in terms of both masonry and literary execution, which on the one hand suggests the presence of a class of literate scribes, but on the other hand is evidence for a widespread adherence to correct Latin in the military ranks.
Chapter 3

3 Language Contact in the Civilian Population

Sequens hiems saluberrimis consiliis absumpta. Namque ut homines dispersi ac rudes eoque in bella faciles quiéti et otio per voluptates adsuescerent, hortari privatim, adiuvare publice, ut templa fora domos extruerent, laudando promptos, castigando segnes: ita honoris aemulatio pro necesitate erat. Iam vero principum filios liberalibus artibus erudire, et ingenia Britannorum studiis Gallorum anteferre, ut qui modo linguam Romanam abnuebant, eloquentiam concupiscerent. 190

The following winter was spent on very useful projects. For in order that the scattered and wild people, who had been easily pacified in war for this very reason, would be accustomed to leisure on account of their own desires, [Agricola] encouraged individuals and helped communities, so that by praising the eager ones, and chastising the slow ones, they built temples, markets, and houses. Thus there was ambition for praise instead of an obligation. Then he educated the sons of the leaders in honorable skills, and preferred the abilities of the Britons to the trained skills of the Gauls, with the result that those who had recently rejected the Roman language, gained an ambition for eloquence.

This passage has been formative above all others in the discourse of Romano-British archaeology. The Roman initiated process of civilizing the conquered that Tacitus wrote about has influenced the models of Romanization for Britain and other provinces as well. Tacitus’ statement that Agricola, the governor of Britain from 77-84 AD, “encouraged individuals and helped communities to build temples, markets, and houses”, reveals the elite Roman perception that these Roman institutions brought social coalescence and cohesion to the provinces. There were British equivalents for these institutions but it was the specifically Roman versions with the Latin names templo, fora, and domus that were significant to Tacitus. Tacitus also describes the Roman education of the elite British youth which resulted in the adoption of Latin by the native Britons. Haverfield established the doctrine among Roman archaeologists that in Britain, Roman material

culture and the Latin language were pragmatically imposed by “foreign” Romans and that in time “Native elements succumbed to the conquering foreign influence.” Millett adapted Haverfield’s paradigm, adding to it that the emulation of Roman culture was instigated by the native elite themselves who stood most to gain from adopting Roman culture, and that they were then emulated by the lower classes. In this model, Romanization succeeded in some places or failed in others because its success was predetermined by the social hierarchies of the communities that were contacted by Romans.

Millett’s Romanization model was met with substantial criticisms, including Jane Webster’s Creolization model, that saw little difference between Millett and Haverfield and called for an increased focus on the cultural developments of the natives following colonization, whether they were active, passive, resistant, or receptive. Webster’s creolization model also received criticism, most of all because in focusing on the native perspective it disregarded the role of the elite in cultural negotiations, and the influence of Roman power. In the passage discussed above Tacitus gives us the impression that Agricola pragmatically educated the British elite as part of an overall program of civilizing the conquered Britons. It should not follow, however, that the education of the elite was the only venue for language contact in Roman Britain. Even in the opinion of Tacitus this is not evidently the case. The epigraphic and archaeological evidence suggests a diverse linguistic landscape, in which the British Celtic language continued to be spoken and influenced the Latin of the province, while Latin literacy was widely achieved by Celtic speakers. Roman literary practices were used by Britons in Roman as well as native cultural contexts, and even in the production of a few rare Celtic texts.

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191 Haverfield 1915, 37.
192 Millet 1990a, 37.
193 Millet 1990a, 39.
194 Webster 2001, esp. 213-216.
195 Mattingly 2011, 203.
British historians and archaeologists have observed that there is a geographic barrier in Britain that has influenced the cultural history of the island. This division runs west from the Vale of York, south of the Pennines and along the Welsh border, separating the more fertile low-lying land that was open to invasion from the Continent from the higher, rockier areas of the North.\textsuperscript{196} Jackson elaborates that in Roman Britain the Lowland Zone was more populated, peaceful, and prosperous, than the more sparsely settled Highland Zone that was inhabited by turbulent natives who did not adopt Roman culture or settle in Roman towns.\textsuperscript{197} He argues that the bellicose nature of the frontier people necessitated the permanent occupation by the Roman military which also protected the province from the “barbarians” to the North. Mann concludes that the epigraphy of Roman Britain is separated by this geographic divide as well.\textsuperscript{198}

Suitable hard stone is found in the northern highlands, while only soft stone ill-suited for inscriptions is found in the southern lowlands, limiting local production there and leading to the reuse and destruction of Roman stones in the south in sub-Roman periods. Nevertheless, the lack of inscriptions outside of areas under military control has been used to conclude that Britons did not adopt the Latin language and Roman customs in general.\textsuperscript{199} It must be acknowledged that this disproportionate impression of literacy could be an accident of archaeology or a tendency of archaeologists to concentrate excavations on more developed sites, but the impression is nevertheless based on an observable phenomenon. Mann finds that 1,914 of the 2,216 inscriptions in RIB I were from areas under direct military control.\textsuperscript{200} He furthermore demonstrates that in the epitaphs of urban civilian centers of the Lowland Zone soldiers are disproportionately well represented, although still in the minority in most cases.\textsuperscript{201} Mann concludes that the

\textsuperscript{196} Haverfield 1915, 24, Jackson 1953, 96, and Mann 1985, 204.
\textsuperscript{197} Jackson 1953, 96.
\textsuperscript{198} Mann 1985, 204.
\textsuperscript{199} Jones 1987, 132.
\textsuperscript{200} ibid. 205.
\textsuperscript{201} Mann 1985, 205.
practice of inscribing on stone that was at first brought by Roman soldiers did not take hold in these communities.\textsuperscript{202}

Millett has suggested that the lack of inscriptions in Roman Britain is similar to the other militarized provinces of the Roman North West, especially the Germanies.\textsuperscript{203} He argues that the epigraphy of Britain differs from Mediterranean provinces because in Britain it was less important for individual citizens to commemorate themselves as the donors of public benefactions. The Romano-British elite did not take part in this specific epigraphic habit because their power base was so well established that they did not need to compete for power, and therefore that they had no reason to lay claim to their acts of public benefaction.\textsuperscript{204} Whatever the reason was for the sparse epigraphic habit in Roman Britain, monumental epigraphy does not offer very much insight into the linguistic landscape of the province, other than to demonstrate that some civilians of the demilitarized lowlands took part in a practice that involved literacy and was more representative of the literacy of craftsmen than it was of the general population. For this reason, other sources of evidence such as graffiti, and the Bath Curse Tablets offer greater insight into the linguistic landscape of Roman Britain.

Haverfield reached the conclusion that throughout the Roman period Latin had almost entirely eclipsed Celtic as the spoken language in Britain based on the evidence of graffiti etched in bricks and tiles at Silchester.\textsuperscript{205} These graffiti were so casual that Haverfield thought that they did not require the presence of specialized scribes, nor that they were likely to have been written by incomers to Britain. He argues that the complete absence of Celtic inscriptions in Britain is further evidence of the near extinction of Celtic, and that the only demographic in which he suspects Celtic continued to be spoken, though it could never be known for sure, was the rural peasantry.\textsuperscript{206} Jackson on the other hand does

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\textsuperscript{202} ibid. 205.
\textsuperscript{203} Millett 1990b, 82.
\textsuperscript{204} ibid. 83.
\textsuperscript{205} Haverfield 1915, 30.
\textsuperscript{206} ibid. 34. cf. Mullen 2007a, 31.
\end{flushleft}
not interpret the lack of Celtic writing as evidence for the absence of Celtic speakers, because he concludes that “It should always be borne in mind that British was not a written language, and that the only language of writing was Latin; it would not occur to anyone to write in British, nor would they know how to do so.” More recent evidence and interpretations challenge Jackson’s conclusion that it would not occur to anyone to write British Celtic in Latin characters.

Knowledge of Latin phonetics would be required to write British Celtic with Latin characters and there are examples that British Celtic was written in Latin characters. In Gaul it was a common practice to write Gaulish in Latin characters, and in the Hellenistic period, Gaulish was written in an adapted form of the Greek alphabet. Celtic names were written in Latin characters frequently, and these were put into coin legends before the Roman conquest of Britain. This demonstrates that some Britons understood Latin phonetics even before there was a Roman presence in Britain. Celtic names are attested in all written media (stone inscriptions, graffiti on pottery, and curse tablets). Many individuals that were at least literate enough to write their names in Latin characters did not adopt Roman names. The Bath and Uley curse tablets provide numerous examples of Celtic named individuals who wrote texts that include substandard Latin spellings. Some of these spelling deviations are peculiar to Britain, suggesting that the curse tablets represent the spoken Latin of Romano-British civilians. In addition to written evidence, writing paraphernalia found in a wide variety of site types (urban/rural, humble/affluent, military/civilian) suggests that there were literate individuals not only at urbanized and militarized centers but also at high and low class rural civilian sites where no epigraphic evidence has survived.

3.1 Celtic Names and Identity

Before analyzing the two examples of Celtic writing from the Bath Curse tablets it will be useful to examine the onomastics of Roman Britain in order to demonstrate that native

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207 Jackson 1953, 99-100.

208 For interpretation of Pre-Roman coin legends in Britain see Williams 2003 and 2007; cf. infra n.317.
Britons had acquired Latin literacy. There are numerous Celtic names found in the epigraphy of Roman Britain, which is almost entirely written in Latin. The presence of these names in the epigraphic record suggests the adoption of Latin literacy by native Britons. Names alone are not conclusive evidence for the origins or native language of an individual, but they can reveal something about a person’s identity, and language is also a powerful marker of one’s identity.\(^{209}\) It is possible that the bearer of a name may not speak the language from which their name originated, and they may be unaware of their name’s origin, but even in cases where someone’s name no longer represents their spoken language, their name may still be an important part of their identity. Nevertheless, because language is such an integral component of identity, there are correlations in Romano-British onomastic evidence between the adoption of Roman naming conventions and levels of interaction with Roman society.

Alex Mullen compiled the total number of names with Celtic elements in the epigraphic record of Roman Britain and found that rarely were there *tria nomina* including a Celtic name and seldom did *duo nomina* not include a Latin name, whether *nomen* or *cognomen*.\(^{210}\) The vast majority of Celtic names appeared alone or with genitive filiation, as was the custom before the introduction of the Roman system of naming. The appearance of a Celtic name alone can not prove the British origins of an individual because of our incomplete understanding of British Celtic in general, and the difference between Insular and Continental Celtic names.\(^{211}\) Thus onomastics can not be used to confirm the British origins of people who took part in writing.

The frequency of Celtic names does, however, reveal that when someone with a Celtic name chose to adopt Roman naming formulae, they most often took Latin names as well. Only 28 of the *duo nomina* attested in Roman Britain include a Celtic name, accounting for 6% of the total number of Celtic names, and very few of these are not accompanied

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\(^{209}\) Adams 2003a, 753 on the interrelationship of identity, language, and names.

\(^{210}\) Mullen 2007b, 40-3; see chapter 2.2 for a description of Roman naming conventions.

\(^{211}\) ibid. 39.
by a Latin name. Mullen also finds that the majority of the cases where Celtic names were used in Roman formulae were found in militarized areas.

Similar conclusions can be derived from the instances of *tria nomina* that include a Celtic name. Whenever a Celtic name is included in the *tria nomina* in Britain, it takes the place of the *cognomen* while the *praenomen* and *nomen* are always Latin, and Mullen provides the British client king Togidubnus as the most famous example. Togidubnus was a British nobleman of the southern kingdom of the Regni who became a client king of the Romans after the Emperor Claudius’ conquest. His full name, Tiberius Claudius Togidubnus, demonstrates the preservation of the native name as the *cognomen* in a *tria nomina*. The maintenance of the native diacritic name as the *cognomen* for enfranchises of Roman citizenship was conventional throughout the empire. In total, Mullen only found 8 certain examples of Celtic *cognomina* used in *tria nomina*, with an additional 6 problematic examples, accounting for less than 2% of the Celtic names recorded in Britain, and in comparison with the 470 Latin *tria nomina*. All of these 8 certain examples were recorded on objects associated with Roman cultural practices such as tombstones, religious dedications, a gold ring, a stamp and a legal document. This signifies that those with Celtic names in Roman formula had considerable interactions with Roman culture, that these people identified themselves as Romans, at least in Roman contexts, and that they were likely to be members of upper-class society.

A further conclusion can be drawn from these figures regarding the linguistic environment of these inscriptions. The majority of names in Roman formulae are entirely Latin, while the majority of Celtic names do not occur in Roman formulae. This gives the

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212 ibid. 40.
213 ibid. 40.
214 ibid. 42., *RIB* 1.91: *Ti(beri) [Claud(i)] [To]gidubni r[eg(is) m]agni
216 *supra* n.122.
217 Mullen 2007b, 40.
218 ibid. 42.
impression that in Roman Britain there was a developing culture of at least basically literate individuals who did not identify themselves as Romans and who knew Latin phonetics well enough to at least accomplish the basic literate activity of writing their name. Furthermore, these Celtic names without Roman formulae tend to be written on objects not necessarily associated with Roman practices such as pottery and curse tablets.\footnote{ibid. 40.}

### 3.2 Literate Britons and Celtic Literacy

The linguistic identity of most of these Celtic named individuals, many of whom recorded only their names, remains uncertain but the surviving texts demonstrate that some of them could write Latin. The curse tablets from Bath offer an unparalleled glimpse into the literacy of civilians in Roman Britain because, unlike in the epigraphy of military sites, the civilian status of the authors of the curse tablets is almost certain.\footnote{ibid. 46.} Britain has produced a sizable number of the ancient world’s curse tablets, numbering now over 300, two thirds of which come from the shrines at Bath and Uley.\footnote{ibid. 230.} Only one British curse tablet was found at a military site, and none of them are from the northern frontier where stone epigraphy is heavily concentrated.\footnote{ibid. 230.} This is interesting because it reveals that the curse tablets were a widespread form of epigraphic communication among the civilians of Roman Britain. The context of the Bath and Uley tablets is far different from the writing tablets of Vindolanda, because the curse tablets were for the most part written by the civilians of the civitas of the Dobunni, whom Roger Tomlin describes as “Roman subjects but not necessarily ‘Romans’, except that they wrote Latin.”\footnote{Tomlin 2002, 167.} Although most of these curse tablets are dated to after the \textit{Constitutio Antoniniana}, none of the names recorded there are in the \textit{duo} or \textit{tria nomina} form. This suggests that the Roman formulae that the majority of the dedicators would have adopted...
for legal purposes were not felt appropriate in the context of curse tablets, which were subversive and clandestine in nature.\textsuperscript{224} In contrast, two curse tablets from London contain \textit{tria nomina} and four have \textit{duo nomina} suggesting that at the Roman provincial capital, Roman naming conventions and, by association, Roman identity and cultural practices, were more firmly rooted and eclipsed local traditions.\textsuperscript{225}

The majority of the names in Britain’s curse tablets are Celtic. The ratios of Celtic to Latin names at Bath is 80:70, and 15:13 at Uley.\textsuperscript{226} Mullen stresses that the difference between the formation of Insular and Continental Celtic names is very uncertain, so it is not possible to confirm the British origins of the dedicators, though it is safe to assume that many were native Britons and locals, given their civilian status.\textsuperscript{227} Although many of the dedicators were locals, the likelihood that they all personally inscribed the curse tablets themselves is diminished by their formulaic content, which suggests that they were written with the assistance of religious practitioners who worked at the sanctuary.\textsuperscript{228} This brings about again the problematic question of how scribes impact our estimates of literacy rates in the Roman Empire.\textsuperscript{229}

Harris’ seminal work on the subject of ancient literacy estimates low literacy rates (under 10\%) for the reason that the majority of inscriptions were written by scribes.\textsuperscript{230} Harris speculates that even in the writing of legal documents on perishable materials, people would have been able to hire assistance to do so. Language is by its nature formulaic and requires consensus among its practitioners. Legal or religious contexts exaggerate the habits of uniformity in language, so it may be the case that the repetitive language of the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{224} ibid. 47; see chapter 2.2 for a discussion of the impact of the \textit{Constitutio Antoniniana} on naming practices.
\textsuperscript{225} ibid. 47.
\textsuperscript{226} Tomlin 2002, 171.
\textsuperscript{227} ibid. 46.
\textsuperscript{228} Tomlin 2002, 170.
\textsuperscript{229} see \textit{supra} n.60 and n.229 for discussions about the impact that scribes leave on our understanding of ancient literacy.
\textsuperscript{230} Harris 1989, 214.
\end{flushleft}
curse tablets is not the result of scribes, but of a recognized way of addressing the gods.\(^{231}\) Tomlin uses orthographic analysis to conclude that no two of the tablets at Bath were written by the same individual, and therefore it is unnecessary to consider the tablets as the work of scribes based on the formulaic content alone.\(^{232}\) Furthermore, only one tablet was explicitly written for another person. Tomlin prefers the hypothesis that the repetitive and formulaic content of the curse tablets is the result of literate petitioners taking advice on an agreed format of addressing the gods before writing their own texts.\(^{233}\)

The quality of the tablets at Bath and Uley vary widely in both orthographic and linguistic terms. This variation in the quality of execution of the tablets suggests that the writers had different levels of literacy. The finest tablet in both regards is the tablet of Docilianus (Fig. 3), which petitions for divine retribution over the theft of his hooded cloak, *caracalla*, and, as Tomlin remarks, reads more like a letter addressed to the goddess Sulis than a curse.\(^{234}\) Another well executed curse tablet from Bath is a list of names inscribed on a pewter plate (Fig. 4).\(^{235}\) This tablet demonstrates the ability of locals to write in sophisticated cursive. The plate is a cheap local equivalent of costly Roman silverware and it is inscribed with a cursive text that Tomlin dates to the 2\(^{\text{nd}}\) century AD. The names are almost entirely Celtic, or at least contain Celtic elements. Those names that appear Roman in this tablet, such as *Matarnus*, occur in numerous sub-Roman Welsh inscriptions, meaning that they became well established names in Western Britain and so they could have been names of locals at that time.\(^{236}\) If the dating of this inscription before the *Constitutio Antoniniana* is correct then it appears that a member of a group of locals was considerably experienced at writing.

\(^{231}\) Tomlin 1988, 63.
\(^{232}\) Tomlin 2002, 171.
\(^{233}\) ibid. 171.
\(^{236}\) Tomlin 2002, 173.
Figure 3: *Tabella Sulis* 10. © Tomlin 1988.

Even if tablet 30 was the work of a professional scribe, this tablet still demonstrates advanced Latin literary skills used for the purposes of local British religious practice.
Engraving metal tablets with the hopes of receiving divine intervention was a well established Greco-Roman tradition, but the corpora from Bath and Uley demonstrate a uniquely local character. The British curse tablets are almost entirely focused on the issue of theft, while in other provinces numerous other issues such as economic or amatory problems and various other forms of competition are common topics.\textsuperscript{237} Furthermore, 31 of the 36 named individuals in the stone epigraphy at Bath are Roman citizens, some are soldiers, and many of them are demonstrably visitors from other regions.\textsuperscript{238} Lower status locals, however, seem to predominate in the curse tablets, which suggests their preference to worship without the use of monumental epigraphy, even though they did not lack the literate abilities to do so.

There are other curse tablets from Bath and Uley that demonstrate the poor literacy or even illiteracy of their authors. Bath tablet 113 is inscribed with marks that only vaguely suggest letters and are not actually writing but the imitation of writing by an illiterate. Tomlin interprets this as confirmation that the petitioners of curse tablets needed to write their own curses.\textsuperscript{239} Some of the tablets are encrypted, a practice that demonstrates the appreciable literacy of writers who were able not only to write but to write in purposefully irregular ways. In one case a petitioner not only wrote the text backwards word for word and letter for letter, but also with reversed cursive letters.\textsuperscript{240} Tomlin wonders if the two texts from Bath that are written in Celtic were done so as a means of encryption.\textsuperscript{241} One tablet from Uley long eluded deciphering until it was finally discovered that it was a Latin text written in Greek cursive which further elucidates the potential depth of the skills of literate individuals present at a rural site in Roman Britain.\textsuperscript{242} This wide range of writing skills demonstrates that the petitioners of the Bath

\textsuperscript{237} Mattingly 2011, 231.
\textsuperscript{238} ibid. 231.
\textsuperscript{239} Tomlin 2002, 171.
\textsuperscript{240} ibid. 174.
\textsuperscript{241} ibid. 174. \textit{infra} n.250.
\textsuperscript{242} ibid. 175, \textit{Uley} 52.
and Uley curse tablets had varying backgrounds of education and experience with the Latin language.

Adams’ analysis of the linguistic variations and innovations in the language of the Bath tablets reveals a large number of phonetic spelling irregularities and examples of innovative usages and loan words.\textsuperscript{243} He concludes that these linguistic irregularities and innovations represent a general lack of formal education among the petitioners. One common development seen in the Bath tablets is the use of \textit{tulit} without the standard prefix \textit{sus}- as the perfect for \textit{tollo}, as in tablet 47 where it means ‘to steal’, \textit{[si servu]s is liber hoc tulerit | [non il]i permittas [...] “whether a slave or a free man stole this, may you not permit them”}.\textsuperscript{244} Adams notes that this usage of \textit{tulit} in \textit{si} clauses persists into Germanic and early Frankish law codes which was the result of a widespread vernacular usage throughout the late empire.\textsuperscript{245} \textit{Involo} is also used colloquially to mean ‘steal’ thirty times in place of the standard \textit{furor} which occurs only once.\textsuperscript{246} Adams concludes that \textit{involo} was the current term in the Latin of Britain, while he acknowledges the possibility that this could be a misrepresentation due to the formulaic and legalistic content of the Bath tablets.\textsuperscript{247} Bath tablet 98 includes this irregularity and other atypical usages, such as the use of the construction \textit{utrum... utrum}, meaning ‘whether... or’, in place of \textit{si... si...} or \textit{sive... sive} in a list of mutually exclusive alternatives.\textsuperscript{248} The former construction is peculiar to this tablet while the proper construction is used in no less than thirty five of the Bath tablets. Tomlin also considers this evidence of formulaic content.\textsuperscript{249}

\textsuperscript{243} Adams 1992.
\textsuperscript{244} ibid. 2. \textit{Tab. Sulis} 47.
\textsuperscript{245} Adams 1992, 2.
\textsuperscript{246} ibid. 19.
\textsuperscript{247} ibid. 19.
\textsuperscript{248} \textit{Tab. Sulis} 98.
\textsuperscript{249} Tomlin 1988, 67.
Aside from the majority of curse tablets written in the local British form of Latin, two Celtic texts from Bath have until recently eluded adequate interpretations. These tablets demonstrate that Celts in Britain transliterated relatively elaborate Celtic statements into Latin. These two curse tablets (Bath tablets 14 and 18) allow for the possibility that other British Celtic texts were written that have not survived or have not yet been found. Unfortunately, Mullen finds no conclusive evidence to confirm that the texts were not written by Celts from the continent where written forms of Celtic were more common and well established. Mullen’s interpretation of these texts is conveyed here in order to demonstrate the certainty that they are Celtic transliterated into Latin.

Figure 5: Tabella Sulis 14. © Tomlin 1988.

Bath tablet 14 (Fig. 5) is a problematic and fragmentary curse tablet in four conjoining pieces inscribed in five different scripts, and it is the only Bath tablet written in more than two hands. The many hands that went into producing Bath tablet 14 suggest that at least some if not all of the writers were locals. Every line of text is missing part of its

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250 Tab. Sulis 14, and 18, App. B; see Mullen 2007a for a detailed interpretation of the text.
251 Mullen 2007a, 41.
right side. The reading of these mixed cursive and capital lines is made more difficult by the superimposition of three lines in two scripts between and on top of the other nine lines. Tomlin’s edition includes another fragment, too fragmentary to interpret, inscribed with capitals perhaps in the same hand as lines 1-6 of the main tablet. Despite the fragmentary and convoluted remains of the text some of these lines can be interpreted as Celtic statements transliterated into Latin characters.

Tomlin was intrigued by the highly Celtic appearance of the text, but preferred to interpret most of the extent words as personal names.\textsuperscript{253} Mullen on the other hand has recently offered an interpretation of some of the text based on its context as a curse tablet and its etymological ties with the Brittonic languages.\textsuperscript{254} The general sense of the text as interpreted by Mullen is “I curse him/her who stole my sword… I swear to you Sulis.” Mullen isolates \textit{luciumi} from \textit{o} in the first line, as a verb possibly meaning ‘I swear’.\textsuperscript{255} Celtic curse tablets from Gaul commonly begin with verbs, and Mullen describes \textit{luciumi} as having a first person singular thematic ending plus a pronomial affix –\textit{mi}.\textsuperscript{256} The meaning of \textit{luciumi} may be related to the verbal nouns \textit{lugae} in Old Irish and \textit{lhw} in Welsh meaning ‘oath, curse’, which would make the meaning of \textit{luciumi} correlate well with the semantics of curse tablets in general.\textsuperscript{257} Mullen determines that the \textit{o} at the end of line 1 is the prevocative particle as the Latin \textit{o} or Greek \textit{o}, the context of which is interrupted by the \textit{lacuna} but will be made evident below.\textsuperscript{258} Lines 2 and 3 are too short to interpret but 4 is more complete, reading \textit{tittlemimcatacimluci}.\textsuperscript{259} Mullen isolates \textit{tittlemim} from \textit{catacim}, and determines that these are either parallel feminine nouns, or that \textit{tittle} is a third person singular verb with a reduplicated first syllable, and that \textit{mim} is

\textsuperscript{253} ibid. 129.
\textsuperscript{254} Mullen 2007a.
\textsuperscript{255} ibid. 34.
\textsuperscript{256} ibid. 34.
\textsuperscript{257} ibid. 34.
\textsuperscript{258} ibid. 34.
\textsuperscript{259} Tomlin 1988, 128 incorrectly reads \textit{tittlemimcatacimluci}. 
a first person possessive adjective of *catacim*. The verb *tittle* may be related to the Old Irish verb *tlen*—‘steal’ and its verbal noun *tóol*—‘theft’, and here it could mean ‘he / she stole’. The meaning of *catacim* may be related to the Old Irish *cath* and Middle Welsh *cat* meaning ‘battle’ and the Old Irish adjective *cathach* meaning ‘violent’ or substantively as ‘something taken into battle’. Thus Mullen prefers the translation of the line as “he / she stole my sword”. The last four letters of the line, *luci* are perhaps repetition of *luciumi* particularly in light of the possibility that this word reappears in line 5a. Line 5a is written in a new capital script and reads [*uc*[2-3]*miotouesulara*. [c.2]. *irando*]. Tomlin suggests that the coincidence of letters with *luciumio* in line 1 must mean that the term is repeated at the beginning of line 5a, making a tricolon of clauses that begin with *luciumi*. Mullen interprets *toue* as the genitive second person singular personal pronoun with *Sulara* which may signify the Celtic goddess *Sulis*. The following lines are indecipherable. A full translation of the text can not be offered but altogether Mullen’s interpretation is fitting for a Bath curse tablet because the tablets often include repetitious phrases in a legalistic manner, and often deal with theft and of course cursing.

Figure 6: *Tabella Sulis* 18. © Tomlin 1988.
Bath tablet 18 (Fig. 6) is another text inscribed in Celtic, and it is complete so a better translation can be offered.\textsuperscript{266} This tablet is a small circular pendent inscribed with six short lines in a single capital script. Mullen provides the translation: “I, Vindiorix, O divine Deieda / Deveda, shall fix an evil (?fate) on Cuamiina”.\textsuperscript{267} Mullen interprets the first word \textit{adixoui} as a Celtic verb related to the Latin word \textit{defigo} ‘to fasten, curse’, with perhaps a subjunctive first person singular inflection.\textsuperscript{268} The second line reads \textit{deiana} or \textit{devina}, possibly the vocative of the Latin \textit{divina} and may be an adjective for the third line \textit{deieda} or \textit{deveda}, altogether meaning ‘O divine Deveda / Deieda’.\textsuperscript{269} Mullen concludes that the fourth word \textit{andagin} is a feminine singular accusative substantive adjective with an alpha privative prefix on \textit{dagin} which means ‘good’, so \textit{andagin} means ‘bad’ but there is no noun that it modifies.\textsuperscript{270} The fifth word \textit{Vindiorix} is a compound name with the Celtic roots \textit{vind} ‘white’ and \textit{rix} ‘king’, in the nominative.\textsuperscript{271} The final two lines are the single word \textit{Cuamiinai} which Mullen takes to be a feminine name in the dative.

Bath tablets 14 and 18 are the only substantial surviving examples of Celtic writing in Roman Britain, and Tomlin concludes that there is little hope of finding many more texts of this sort in Britain.\textsuperscript{272} There is, however, evidence to suggest that more Celtic texts could have been written in Roman Britain on perishable materials that have not survived. Bath tablets 14 and 18 demonstrate that context determined whether or not a bilingual Celtic speaker would write a text in Latin or Celtic. The curse tablets were a localized practice, and most importantly they took place in the religious and private spheres. There could have been contexts other than curse tablets or stone epigraphy that allowed for Celtic writing in Roman Britain, but these contexts were likely private because Latin

\textsuperscript{266} \textit{Tab. Sulis} 18, App. B4.
\textsuperscript{267} Mullen 2007a, 41.
\textsuperscript{268} ibid. 38.
\textsuperscript{269} ibid. 39.
\textsuperscript{270} ibid. 40.
\textsuperscript{271} Tomlin 1988, 133.
\textsuperscript{272} Tomlin 1998, 129.
prevailed in public contexts. The following section will address further evidence that more Celtic texts could have been produced in Roman Britain.

3.3 Literacy at Rural Settlements

There are several examples of writing that occurred at rural sites in Roman Britain. The evidence of writing throughout the countryside of Roman Britain suggests that there were native Britons whose first language was likely Celtic and who had acquired Latin literacy. Aside from the Uley curse tablets, there are no substantial sources of documents from rural sites in Roman Britain. The majority of texts from the countryside are graffiti on pottery which are usually a single name as an ownership mark. Many of these ownership marks were Celtic names which suggests that there were native Britons who could at least put their own Celtic names into Latin writing. There are also writing implements and paraphernalia found at rural sites that were used to write on perishable materials. This supports the conclusion that there were literate native Britons who could have written more substantial texts. How these writing implements were used can only be speculated upon because their associated texts have not survived. Most motivations for writing would have required that the texts be written in Latin. In light of the evidence of written Celtic at Bath, however, it seems likely that these writing implements could have been used to write Celtic. There are many Celtic individuals named on pottery sherds found in rural contexts so these writing implements could have belonged to native Britons. The reasons for writing Celtic are more likely to have been private correspondence or work related accounting than for any official purpose such as wills, property deeds, or other contracts, which had to be written in Latin.

A useful source of evidence of civilian literacy in Roman Britain is inscribed pottery. Pottery inscribed after firing was likely inscribed where it was used, unlike pottery inscribed before firing which was probably marked before it was imported to Britain from the continent. The most common type of inscription found on pottery are ownership marks. Ownership marks are usually in the form of a single personal name in the
This was the preferred method of marking a vessel because it was an informal practice. A simple diacritic name would normally be sufficient. Nevertheless there are examples of *duo* and *tria nomina* used as ownership marks on *terra sigillata*, a relatively valuable imported pottery. Ownership marks give a limited impression of literacy, because they are not substantial texts, but they still should be regarded as evidence of literacy because they were likely written by the named owners themselves, who could presumably understand the phonemes of more Latin characters than the ones in their names alone. This demonstrates that there were at least basically literate individuals from the entire spectrum of sites in Roman Britain, from urban to rural, military to civilian, and wealthy to modest.

In a detailed study of graffiti in Roman Britain, Jeremy Evans concludes that tabulating the graffiti on pottery may be more of an indication of the likelihood of theft than of literacy rates. Nevertheless, it does provide some comparable figures for the frequency of basic literacy across site types. Evans’ analysis finds, as is expected, that the majority of graffiti come from military and urban sites while a minority come from villas and other rural sites. Perhaps surprisingly, however, the latter two have nearly equal figures, 8% and 7% respectively, demonstrating that the wealth of villas compared to more humble rural sites did not stimulate increased literacy among their inhabitants.

Raybould finds little correlation between the ethnicity of names in graffiti and types of sites in which they were found. The majority of the names are either fully Latin, or are Latinized Celtic names known from other provinces, while strictly Celtic names represent a minority. Nevertheless, Celtic ownership marks are apparent at all site types. Therefore the evidence of graffiti demonstrates overall that individuals with Latin literacy were present beyond the sites with close connections to Roman administration and at sites

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273 Raybould 1999, 126.
274 Mullen 2007b, 42.
275 Evans 1987, 196.
276 Evans 1987, 193.
277 Raybould 1999, 127.
lacking in stone epigraphy. This also suggests that there was a widespread population of Latin speakers in Roman Britain. If these Celtic named writers were in fact Celtic speakers, then they were either Latin bilinguals or they would have been contacted by Latin speakers in some way in order to understand how to reproduce the sound of their names with Latin characters.

Similar conclusions can be drawn from the distribution of metal *styli* used to etch writing onto wax tablets or lead curse tablets. These are fairly common artifacts and their distribution across all site types of Roman Britain supports the same conclusions drawn from the graffiti. William Hanson and Richard Conolly found that over 70 villa sites have yielded *styli* while approximately 50 more humble rural sites have as well. The presence of writing implements at humble rural sites suggests that native Britons used them. Whether or not these *styli* were used to inscribe Celtic texts that have not survived is uncertain but their prevalence and the ability of others to transliterate Celtic into Latin characters in other contexts at least suggests the possibility that these *styli* were used in some cases to write Celtic. It seems reasonable that the owners of these *styli* would have been bilingual and able to write Latin and Celtic in the appropriate contexts for those respective languages. The context of writing itself was likely to necessitate the use of Latin because this was the appropriate language for public affairs which were the primary motivation for writing. In the more modest and less public rural sites that were distanced from the Roman administration, however, more Celtic texts could have been produced.

Hanson and Conolly do not make conjectures about how these writing implements were used at modest rural settlements, but some reasonable comparisons can be made with texts from other types of sites. It is important to consider for what purposes these writing implements from rural sites may have been used in the absence of accompanying texts. These *styli* of course could have been used to place marks of ownership on pottery if sufficiently sharpened, but any sharp tool could be used to accomplish this. They also could have been used to inscribe curse tablets deposited at shrines. The type of *stylus* in

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278 Hanson and Conolly 2002, 156.
question, however, was used primarily for inscribing texts on wax writing tablets. The *styli* differ from the ink pen tips that would have been used to inscribe the thin leaf tablets which are the most common form of tablet at Vindolanda. Metal *stylus* were used on wax tablets consisting of a wooden frame with a recess for a surface of wax that was inscribed with the metal *stylus*. They were commonly used for correspondence even though they were more cumbersome than leaf tablets, because they were more durable. At Vindolanda many of the leaf tablets were drafts, particularly those of Flavius Cerialis which were addressed to individuals at other locations. One may suspect that the final copies were recorded on *stylus* tablets, perhaps by scribes. On the other hand numerous leaf tablets are clearly examples of correspondence sent to Vindolanda from elsewhere, and therefore they are not drafts. The reason for using the more expensive *stylus* tablets instead of the cheaper leaf tablets was probably dependent on how official the document was. More official documents might require the use of a seal, which would have been stamped in wax by the signatory inside a metal seal box that would then all be fastened to the *stylus* tablet by a chord. Ton Derks and Nico Roymans conclude that this method could not be used on leaf tablets because the pressure of the chord would break the tablet.

The type of correspondence that took place at rural sites can at present only be speculated upon given the lack of primary evidence, but the official sort of correspondence that would require *stylus* tablets was almost certainly in Latin. A good example of a *stylus* tablet used for official purposes was found in London. The tablet was found in a 2nd century context and is dated to March 14th, 118 AD. It is some sort of inquiry into the possession of a wooded plot of land. Only one third of the tablet survives. It was

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279 For a description of various *stylus* tablets see Derks and Roymans 2002, 90.
280 Bowman and Thomas 1994, 42; see *Tab. Vindol.* 225, *supra* n.178, for an example of a draft penned by Flavius Cerialis himself; see *Tab. Vindol.* II 344, *supra* n.147, for another draft letter.
282 Derks and Roymans 2002, 90.
283 ibid. 91.
284 Tomlin 1994, 302.
285 ibid. 302.
originally comprised of three tablets that were bound together in a folding triptych. This was a standard format for Roman legal documents.\textsuperscript{286} Furthermore, the text only remains as scratches that were impressed upon the wood itself. This is common in surviving \textit{stylus} tablets. The woods (\textit{silva}) is called \textit{Verlucionium}, which is a word with Celtic etymology. The \textit{silva} was in the \textit{civitas Cantaciorum}, in a \textit{pagus}, a subdivision of the \textit{civitas}, with an unfortunately fragmentary name \textit{DIBVSSV}[...]. This \textit{civitas} was located in the county of Kent at Canterbury on an important trade route connecting Britain with the continent. The opening phrase of the tablet’s message, \textit{Cum ventum esset in rem preasentem}, “When one has come to the place in question”, is a standard legal phrase used in land boundary disputes, and the text continues to describe the boundaries and limits of the property.\textsuperscript{287} The tablet refers to Lucius Julius Bellicus buying the land from Titus Valerius Silvinus. Tomlin suspects that these Roman citizens were not British because of their Latin \textit{tria nomina}.\textsuperscript{288} The text ends \textit{L(ucius) Iulius Bellicus testatus est se} “Lucius Iulius Bellicus testified that [...]”. This suggests that there was some sort of dispute over the land that perhaps the governor’s office in London had become involved in. This text came from a relatively urbanized site in a \textit{civitas} so it is not a decisive counterpart for the sort of text that \textit{styli} may have been used on at rural sites. Furthermore, the people involved were Roman citizens who were likely native Latin speakers. Nevertheless, this text is a reminder of the sort of opportunities to use Latin writing that any land owner in the province may have had. Professional scribes were instrumental in writing official texts, particularly in the provincial capital, but it is unlikely that they would have been employed permanently on rural sites. Therefore, the \textit{styli} found at these sites were used by their civilian British owners in order to produce Latin documents for the Roman administration.

Official documentation, however, was not the only possible use for writing instruments at rural sites. Private correspondence is equally as plausible, though no text survives to

\textsuperscript{286} See Derks and Roymans 2002, 90 for the use of triptychs for legal texts and diptychs for personal correspondence.

\textsuperscript{287} ibid. 302.

\textsuperscript{288} ibid. 303.
illustrate the point. Derks and Roymans examine the remains of seal boxes in the *civitas Batavorum* on the central part of the Lower German frontier in order to find evidence for the Roman army’s role in the spread of Latin literacy on that frontier.\(^{289}\) The homeland of the Batavians was one that Derks and Roymans described as a “non-villa landscape”, where rural sites continued to have traditional long houses throughout the Roman period.\(^{290}\) Their study presented striking evidence that the distribution of seal boxes in the *civitas Batavorum* differed remarkably from elsewhere. They found that 33\% of the seal boxes found in the *civitas Batavorum* are from rural settlements while 10\% of the seal boxes of the rest of Northern Gaul were found at rural sites.\(^{291}\) Furthermore on the German *limes* they found that outside of the *civitas Batavorum* seal boxes from rural settlements were “virtually unknown”.\(^{292}\) Derks and Roymans attribute the high numbers of seal boxes found in the *civitas Batavorum* to the historical circumstances of the Batavians and their high level of involvement in the Roman military.\(^{293}\) They determine from the evidence of the pre-Flavian recruitment patterns that the Batavians were the principal supplier of auxiliary troops to the Roman army. Probably one or two members of every Batavian family served in the *auxilia*. Derks and Roymans conclude that the sort of correspondence that would encourage the widespread diffusion of literacy in a rural area of the German frontier would have been simply keeping in touch with family members in the military.\(^{294}\) One Vindolanda leaf tablet provides first hand evidence of this sort of personal connection between the Batavian soldiers and their homeland.\(^{295}\) This fragmentary tablet says that it accompanied a shipment of socks, underpants, and sandals, and also sent good wishes to the messmates, *contiberales*, of the recipient.

\(^{289}\) Derks and Roymans 2002.

\(^{290}\) ibid. 88.

\(^{291}\) ibid. 97.

\(^{292}\) ibid. 94.

\(^{293}\) ibid. 87-8.

\(^{294}\) ibid. 100.

\(^{295}\) *Tab. Vindol.* 346.
Colin Andrews’ study of the use of seal boxes in Roman Britain disagrees with Derks and Roymans in terms of seal-boxes being evidence of literacy.\(^{296}\) He argues that the immediate assumption that seal-boxes are associated with literary objects is unfounded.\(^{297}\) He believes that writing tablets did not need the protection of seal-boxes because a wax seal could be impressed directly to the flat surface of writing tablets.\(^{298}\) Andrews thinks that seal-boxes were more likely used to protect seals on non-rigid items such as money bags than writing tablets. Furthermore, using \textit{stylus} tablets as correspondence would be inconvenient due to their size and excessive cost. Finally, he proposes that the tablet discussed above accompanying goods sent from home was a leaf tablet, and that leaf tablets were less cumbersome and therefore more likely to be used for long distance communication.\(^{299}\)

If, however, seal-boxes are interpreted as writing paraphernalia, Andrews’ account of their archaeological distribution is useful to the discussion of Latin literacy in Roman Britain. Norfolk County, which includes the homeland of the \textit{Iceni} tribe, has an unusually high concentration of small finds recorded in the Portable Antiquities Scheme database, including more Roman seal-boxes than any other county in England.\(^{300}\) The unusually high concentration of seal-boxes in this region of the province may be the result of a high rate of veteran and foreign settlement there after the Boudiccan revolt of 60-61 CE.\(^{301}\) This would make the homeland of the \textit{Iceni} similar to the \textit{civitas Batavorum} on the Rhine frontier where seal boxes and the Roman military presence were also unusually prominent. The Batavians were at the center of a large scale uprising as well ten years later which was followed by a renewed intensity of the recruitment of Batavians into the Roman military.\(^{302}\) It is possible that the Iceni, like the Batavians, were recruited heavily.

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296 Andrews 2012.
297 Andrews 2012, 92.
298 ibid. 88.
299 ibid. 95.
300 ibid. 57.
301 ibid. 66.
302 ibid. 71
into units to serve elsewhere in the empire, and that veterans returned home after their service. Once they returned home they held correspondence with people where they had been stationed.\(^303\) In Norfolk the find spots of seal-boxes are in keeping with the pattern that Derks and Roymans describe on the German *limes*. A substantial number of seal-boxes come from rural settlements there.\(^304\) In the frontier zone, however, the British evidence diverges from the Batavian material. Seal-boxes along the frontier are mostly limited to military sites and are not found in the rural hinterland. This is unlike the seal-box distribution in the *civitas Batavorum*. Andrews believes that this is a result of a lack of metal detection and rural excavations in the northern counties of England.\(^305\) The high distribution of seal-boxes in Norfolk county suggests that higher rates of literacy occurred where military personnel settled. Furthermore, it was their association with the Roman military that encouraged the soldiers and veterans to read and write even after their retirement.

Finally, record keeping for trade and commerce is another possible use of writing implements at rural settlements. *Stylus* tablets were more expensive than leaf tablets because they were made of imported wood, but unlike leaf tablets they could be reused.\(^306\) Therefore *stylus* tablets had greater value and may have been preferable at remote rural sites where disposable leaf tablets may have been scarce. A large portion of the Vindolanda writing tablets deal with the management and procurement of supplies.\(^307\) Supplies, trade, and commerce necessitated an abundance of record keeping and it is reasonable that the peasantry of rural settlements also had supplies, costs, and money to account for. The sort of interaction represented in Vindolanda Tablet 213 (the letter regarding a rendezvous with possibly local natives in order to buy barley) may have created a need for keeping accounts on the civilian side of the arrangement.\(^308\)

\(^{303}\) ibid. 71.
\(^{304}\) ibid. 71.
\(^{305}\) ibid. 71.
\(^{306}\) Birley 2011, 31.
\(^{307}\) Bowman and Thomas 1994, 187; *supra* n.151.
\(^{308}\) *supra* n.152.
Whether or not any of the sorts of hypothetical documents discussed above were inscribed in Celtic instead of Latin is conjectural. In consideration of Bath tablets 14 and 18 written in Celtic and the writing of Celtic names on pottery, it is possible that more Celtic documents were written. The contexts that probably necessitated writing at rural sites (law, commerce, and correspondence with soldiers) are all related to Roman society and Roman literary practices, suggesting that Latin literacy was more often used than Celtic literacy at rural settlements. Nevertheless, there are private contexts that could have encouraged Britons to write in Celtic. The private religious context of the sanctuary at Bath motivated some to write in Celtic. Working life could have encouraged the use of Celtic writing as well. In Southern Gaul at a pottery producing center called La Graufesenque potters inscribed accounts of their work on scrap pottery in Gaulish, but when they inscribed their goods with potter’s marks they chose to write their names in Latin forms. In consideration of the numerous pieces of evidence of the widespread use of writing in Roman Britain it seems very likely that there were lower status civilians in Roman Britain who used written Latin in public contexts and written Celtic in private contexts. This evidence demonstrates the widespread use of Latin throughout the province of Britain, and suggests that there was a substantially bilingual population.

3.4 The linguistic landscapes of Gaul and Britain

The linguistic landscapes of Gaul and Britain in the Roman Period are distinctive from one another but they share similarities. The epigraphic output of Gaul was more substantial than it was in Britain. While these linguistic landscapes differ in this sense, the richer epigraphy of Gaul can supplement the more meager evidence from Britain in regards to how Latin interacted with indigenous languages in the Roman Empire. The epigraphic cultures of both provinces were influenced by Roman geopolitical factors, and similar isolated cultures of epigraphy with the militarized and non-militarized regions are apparent in both provinces. In both Britain and Gaul there was a tendency for indigenous peoples to use Latin in public contexts even when they were of an unofficial nature, and

309 Adams 2003b, 189, cf. ch. 3.4.
Celtic could have been used. This is discussed below in reference to the literacy of Gallic pottery makers. Nevertheless, the historical reality of Britain’s late and sudden incorporation into the Roman Empire caused considerable differences between the linguistic landscapes of these provinces.

Prior to Roman contact, the linguistic landscape of Britain was influenced by contact with the mainland. Tacitus described the peoples of Britain as the descendants of migrants from Gaul who had not yet been influenced by the luxuries of Roman civilization:

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in universum tamen aessimanti Gallos vicinam insulam occupasse credibile est. eorum sacra deprehendas ac superstitionum persuasionem; sermo haud multum diversus, in depopendis periculis eadem audacia et, ubi advenere, in detrectandis eadem formido. plus tamen ferociae Britanni praeferunt, ut quos nondum longa pax emollierit. nam Gallos quoque in bellis floruisse acceperimus; max segnitia cum otio intravit, amissa virtute pariter ac libertate. quod Britannorum olim victis evenit: ceteri manent quales Galli fuerunt.```

Of course in forming a general opinion, it is believable that the Gauls occupied [Britain]. You can find their religious rites and superstitious beliefs; their speech is not much different, and they have the same eagerness in seeking out danger and, when they find it, the same cowardice in avoiding it. The Britons nevertheless display more ferocity, than those that peace has long since softened. For we are told that the Gauls also excelled in wars; recently idleness has followed with leisure, and courage has been lost together with liberty. Which has happened to those of the Britons long since conquered: the rest remain such as the Gauls were.

Language was an important factor for Tacitus in establishing the Gallic ancestry of the Britons. Tacitus acknowledges the similarity between the Celtic of the Gauls and the Britons, but as a Roman from Southern Gaul he was aware of their differences. Ellis Evans explains that it is unknown when and how Celtic was brought to Britain, but there are potential influences from an unknown Non-Indo-European language indigenous to

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310 Tac. Agr. 11.3-4.
Britain that predates the arrival of Celtic. The influences of this Non-Indo-European language separate British Celtic from its continental ancestor, Gaulish, which came to Britain sometime in the first half of the first millennium BC. Evans concludes that it is impossible to isolate the pre-Celtic influences on British Celtic in a way that would describe the origins of this pre-Celtic language because the evidence used to do so is in the modern form of British languages whose ancient forms are unknown.

Nevertheless, developments are apparent in the Celtic of Britain that separate it from the Celtic of Gaul.

The cultural influences of Gaul on Britain become more apparent in the period immediately before the Roman conquest of Britain than they were between pre-Roman Gaul and Britain. In the century between Julius Caesar’s conquest of Gaul in the 50s BC and Claudius’ invasion of Britain in 43 AD the culture of Southern Britain was influenced by the changing culture of Gaul and the Roman Empire. Colin Haselgrove found that the material influence on Britain from Belgic Gaul increased substantially after the Roman conquest of Gaul as is demonstrated by newly imported objects, techniques, and burial practices. (Writing was also introduced to Britain in this period). The cultural contact between pre-conquest Britain and post-conquest Gaul was even more intense than the influence that Italy or Mediterranean Gaul had on temperate Gaul before Roman conquests occurred there. Haselgrove found that before Julius Caesar’s conquest of Gaul, imports to the northern regions of Gaul from Italy and the Roman province in Southern Gaul were mainly limited to the southern peripheries and the most socially developed urban centers. The difference between the influences that Roman civilization had on Gaul and Britain in the periods before the Roman conquests in these

312 ibid. 954.
313 Mullen 2007a, 41; Jackson 1953; Schrijver 1995.
314 Haselgrove 1984, 18.
315 ibid. 15.
316 Haselgrove 1984, 17.
regions reflects the cultural development of the Roman Empire. In the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, when pre-Roman Gaul was influenced externally by Roman culture, the Roman Republic had not yet developed into the cosmopolitan empire that was established under the Emperor Augustus. The opposite was the case for Britain, which was influenced by the Roman Empire and the Gallo-Romans in the period before the Roman conquest.

Writing was also first introduced to Britain in the century before Roman conquest. The evidence of writing in Late Iron Age Britain is mainly limited to the personal names of rulers inscribed on coins. Williams argues that the coin legends of Late Iron Age Britain were influenced by the Roman Empire but also that they show innovative local forms of writing. 317 Around 25 BC, shortly after the Roman conquest of Gaul, writing began to appear on the coins of the southern kingdoms of Britain, in both the Gallo-Latin script and the traditional Roman script. 318 The former script is a distinct form of Latin characters adopted to write Gaulish, while the latter refers to the text traditionally used to write Latin. The coins minted by rulers of the Southern Kingdoms in Britain increasingly used the peculiar format of the ruler’s name written in Roman characters placed horizontally in a box across the center of the coin. Williams argues that these coin designs invoke the symbolism of stamps on pottery imported to Britain from Gaul and Italy. 319 These makers’ marks appeared on transport vessels that brought wine and food used in high status dining contexts in pre-Roman conquest Britain. They were also common on terra sigillata finewares, including the Arretine wares from Italy, and their cheaper imitations from Gaul.

All of these prestigious objects were associated with high status eating and drinking practices that were new to southern Britain but increasing in popularity by the end of the

317 Williams 2002.
318 ibid. 135.
319 ibid. 140.
1st century BC.\textsuperscript{320} The peculiar coin designs of pre-conquest Southern Britain utilize the prestige of imported pottery and drinking practices through the symbolism of Roman methods of writing. These coin designs differ from Gallic counterparts because they do not use Gallo-Latin script, and because they have the distinct design reminiscent of pottery stamps in place of writing the legend around the circumference. Williams emphasizes that the coin legends are not to be interpreted as evidence for Romanization, but of the conscious choice of British rulers to adapt symbols of local significance.\textsuperscript{321} Williams concludes that these coin designs fulfilled the same purpose that monumental stone epigraphy would have. They affirmed the power relationship between rulers and subjects through the symbolism of prestige, wealth, and control that accompanied continental imports.\textsuperscript{322}

The indigenous Celtic languages of both Britain and Gaul survived throughout the Roman period, but these languages were only used in specific contexts. Schrijver uses language reconstruction to conclude that Latin had become the predominant spoken language in Roman Britain by the end of the Roman period.\textsuperscript{323} Latin was also the predominant spoken language in Gaul. In the Roman period in Britain the linguistic landscape did not differ from other provinces where Latin had displaced the native languages in speech and writing in all but the peripheral and inaccessible regions.\textsuperscript{324} In the Pyrenees mountains Basque has come down from the Celtic language that survived Latin, and so has Albanian in the Balkans, just as Welsh, Cornish, and Breton survived Latin in Britain.\textsuperscript{325}

Schrijver argues that Latin loanwords that entered Highland British Celtic did so before there was a widespread phonetic shift in both the early Romance and Celtic languages of

\textsuperscript{320} ibid. 144. \\
\textsuperscript{321} ibid. 147. \\
\textsuperscript{322} ibid. 147. \\
\textsuperscript{323} Schrijver 2007. \\
\textsuperscript{324} ibid. 168. \\
\textsuperscript{325} Ibid. 168.
Western Europe from the 5th to 7th centuries. This widespread phonetic shift was more likely the Latinization of Celtic than the other way around because it can be observed in languages outside of Celtic contact zones such as Romanian and Southern Italian. Latin loanwords were introduced to Highland Celtic during the Roman period when Latin was a prestige language. It is commonly the case that prestige languages donate words. Schrijver proposes that when the widespread phonetic and syntactic shifts mentioned above happened in Highland British Celtic it was not the result of Britons adopting a prestigious Latin accent, but of an overwhelming migration of Latin speakers. The cause of this migration was the Anglo-Saxon settlement in the Lowland Zone. This displaced a large population of Latin speakers to the Northern Highlands where their speech was phonetically influenced by the influx of Latin speakers. Latin soon became extinct among this population.

Schrijver’s conclusion presupposes that Latin was the spoken language of the Lowland Zone. Schrijver explains the distinction between the Celtic of the Lowland Zone and the Highland Zone, demonstrating that Lowland British Celtic was undergoing the same language death that Gaulish was during the Roman period. Although Highland British Celtic was phonetically influenced by low prestige Latin speaking migrants after the elimination of Roman power, phonetic changes in Lowland British Celtic occurred beforehand. Schrijver proposes that the ua dipthong in the dative name Cuamiinai in the Bath Curse Tablet 18 is representative of a similar sound shift in Gaulish. This tablet may have been inscribed by a visitor from Gaul, but Schrijver concludes that it was probably inscribed by a local because the majority of the tablets concern petty theft and sums of money and because no soldiers are attested in the tablets. He furthermore considers this ‘diphthongisation’ the result of Latin influence on Gaulish and Lowland British Celtic alike. Schrijver’s argument departs from the tendency to attribute the lack of Romance

\[326\text{ ibid. 166.}\]
\[327\text{ ibid. 167.}\]
\[328\text{ ibid. 167.}\]
\[329\text{ ibid. 168.}\]
language in medieval and modern Britain to the circumstances of the Roman period, but correctly places it on the influences of the subsequent period.

Woolf outlines the differences between the linguistic landscapes of Gaul in the pre-Roman and Roman periods.\textsuperscript{330} The most notable difference between these periods is the diversity of epigraphic languages used in the pre-Roman period and the predominance of Latin in the epigraphy of the Roman period. The epigraphy of Southern Gaul in the 4\textsuperscript{th} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} centuries BC included Iberian texts, as well as Gaulish written in a modified Etruscan script, and Gaulish written in a Greek script known as Gallo-Greek.\textsuperscript{331} The majority of these inscriptions were written on coins or pot sherds, but it is possible that longer texts were written. For example Caesar mentioned that the Helvetii used writing tablets in his \textit{Commentaries} of the Gallic War.\textsuperscript{332} These various forms of writing were at first introduced intermittently and irregularly to Gaul through trade. Woolf argues that the arrival of Latin epigraphy in Gaul accompanied the introduction and adoption of Roman cultural practices, at the same time Gallo-Greek and Iberian disappeared from the epigraphy of Southern Gaul.\textsuperscript{333} The development of Roman cultural practices that required writing Latin in Gaul happened at the same time throughout the entire province from about 20 BC, under the emperor Augustus, and did not lag behind the protracted conquest of the entire province.\textsuperscript{334} These cultural practices which included ceramic and architectural styles, local government formation, and religious practices, were accompanied by the monumental commemoration of the dead and inscribed votive offerings.\textsuperscript{335} Woolf demonstrates that the increase of Latin epigraphy in Gaul at the end of the 1\textsuperscript{st} millennium BC was caused by the changing organization of the Roman

\textsuperscript{330} Woolf 1998, 91-98.
\textsuperscript{331} ibid. 92.
\textsuperscript{332} ibid. 92; Caes. \textit{BG}. 1.29.
\textsuperscript{333} ibid. 93.
\textsuperscript{334} ibid. 94.
\textsuperscript{335} ibid. 97.
Furthermore, the Latin epigraphy of Gaul was influenced by geopolitical factors that correspond with other regions of the Empire, including Britain. Woolf finds that in Southern Gaul Latin inscriptions are predominantly civic and monumental and are concentrated around urban centers, while in the North-East most Latin inscriptions are tombstones and votive offerings of soldiers with a wide distribution throughout rural, urban, and military sites. This is similar to how inscribed altars and epitaphs are concentrated on the militarized frontier of Roman Britain.

In Gaul, Celtic survived far into the Roman period as a language distinct from Latin. Woolf concludes that Latin was the written language of the province and the language of power and education when spoken, but that the vernacular languages of Gaul continued to be spoken throughout the Roman period. Adams examines Latin and Gaulish graffiti from the pottery production center at La Graufesenque in Gallia Narbonensis in order to argue that there were informal and unintentional ways in which provincials outside of the liberally educated elite were encouraged to learn and use Latin. The reason for choosing Latin over Gaulish was to assume a Roman identity. The potters at La Graufesenque produced massive amounts of Gallo-Roman terra sigillata pottery that was imported throughout the western provinces. In their work, the potters inscribed scraps of pottery with inventory lists. Adams compares pieces of graffiti from La Graufesenque written in Gaulish with others written in Latin to find that the potters were trained to write Latin in a restricted form, but could use this ability to write in their native Celtic language.

Two of these texts will be discussed here for comparison’s sake: one written in Latin, the other in Celtic. The texts are inventory lists of separate lots of fired pottery. The language

336 Ibid. 98.
337 Woolf 1997, 343.
338 Woolf 1999, 93.
339 Adams 2003b, 188.
340 Adams 2003a, 698.
is in a very restricted form, only using nouns and numbers, and no verbs, but the use of large Roman numerals and other sigla (shorthand non-phonetic symbols for words) demonstrates that the literary training of the potters was considerable. The texts are given here in full and are numbered by their publication number in Marichal’s edition:

19

τυθος sextametos
cassidanno MONTANOS
A]GEDILLI canastri S = CCCXX
castri = = CCL
pannas S=DC
uinari XXC
mortari S = CL
]mortari = = CC
[[ [uinari XXC]]
]FELIX catilli LIII
]MASUETOS catilli DCL
T]RITOS LXXXIV licu[ia
A]GIOS par[...
]S acita[bli
...

74a.

Flamine . [
ESCENTE III[
Furnus secund[us]
IUCUNDUS pan (X)CD[
GEMINUS pannas D. [ pan-]nas DC APRIMAN[
BURRUS ped IX bes C[
Vinaria CCC itus CL[
ria CC PRIMULUS cat[
ALBANUS catil bur
STAPANUS catil (X)DL APRI[
catil DCCC BELANIO ca[
CRESCENS catilla (X)DL L[
catilla (X)
VILIESIUS par (X) (X)C[
].PINUS CC[
].R[

341 ibid. 698.
b.

Furnus secundus
J. Idus Maias
CRES|CES k

The most prominent feature of these texts are the names of pottery and of potters, which are transcribed in capitals above. Adams demonstrates that the majority of the vessel types have names with Latin or Greco-Latin origins, by which he means Greek names of pottery types that had been adopted into Latin for a long time. In both the Latin and the Celtic texts the endings of the personal names are not dependent on the origins of the names (Latin or Celtic) but on the chosen language of the text. In text 19 all of the personal names that have inflected endings have Celtic endings of the o-declension in the nominative –os (i.e. not Felix, but the Latin Masuetos and Montanos, and the Celtic Tritos, Agios, and Agedili(o) as well which Adams claims has lost its final –s). In text 74 all the names end in the Latin nominative –us with the exception of Belanio. These inflections are significant choices because the usual language of the names was subordinated to the chosen language of the texts.

In the Celtic text 19, the sigla ‘=’ is used for the Latin bessalis, ‘two thirds’, and ‘==’ meaning triantalis, ‘one third’, of a foot, presumably, as a size identification for the pottery. The numerals as well are all in Latin. This reveals that the Celtic potter received training beyond the Latin alphabet. Another interesting element is that these lists are often started by the generic term τυθος meaning ‘lot’ and an ordinal number which in the case of text 19 is the Celtic sextametos ‘seventh’. The Latin equivalent in text 74 is furnus secundus with the meaning ‘second firing’. Adams points out that this is an example of an interesting phenomenon of bilingualism when two idiomatic expressions

343 Adams 2003a, 696.
344 ibid. 700.
345 ibid. 697.
346 ibid. 696.
with separate meanings are used to convey a single idea, in this case a group of pottery.347

The bilingual elements of these texts reveal that the Celtic speakers at La Graufesenque were able to write in Latin, but that they were not always compelled to do so. There are other contexts where it appears that the potters of La Graufesenque felt that Celtic was inappropriate. Adams demonstrates that the preference of these potters in their maker’s marks was not just to use the Latin –us ending, but to translate their Celtic names into Latin ones, for example: Primus for Cintusmos, Secundus for Allos, and Tertius for Tritos.348 Adams believes that Latin was chosen by the potters for maker’s marks because of their collective evaluation of Latin as a more suitable language than Gaulish for the world outside of their community.349 The potters believed that there was a connection between using Latin and being Roman because they used Latin when they expected a wider audience. Adams concludes that this attitude was widespread and that by the 1st century AD it was causing the language shift that eventually led to the death of Gaulish.350

3.5 Conclusion

The notion that Latin entirely eclipsed British Celtic in all but the rural population, or that British Celtic was never written, are seriously challenged by the evidence examined above. It is evident that many people who identified themselves using Celtic nomenclature had at least basic literary skills, and two tablets from Bath demonstrate that Celtic could be transliterated into Latin where it was felt appropriate. The presence of writing implements throughout all social contexts in the province proves literacy was widespread. Similarities between language use in Roman Britain and Gaul demonstrate that many of the opportunities for writing were stimulated by Roman society: curse

347 ibid. 699.
348 Ibid. 699.
349 Adams 2003b, 190.
350 ibid. 190.
tablets belonged to a Greco-Roman tradition, trade was influenced by the interregional connections of the Roman Empire, the most common reason for long distance correspondence was service in the Roman military, and legal documents were the results of Roman public administration. But this does not necessarily support the conclusion that Latin spread from the educated Romano-British elite down the social hierarchy. Literacy could have been imposed upon Britons in the form of obligatory interactions with Roman society, but literate individuals could choose to use these skills as opportunities within or outside of Roman society. Their motivation for writing could have been something as simple as protecting their belongings from theft with an ownership mark, or something as complex as invoking the wrath of a god to avenge a theft.
Chapter 4

4 Conclusion

The linguistic landscapes of the militarized Northern Highland Zone and of the civilian Southern Lowland Zone in Roman Britain show similarities and differences. The two regions have disparate amounts and types of evidence available for analysis. The majority of stone inscriptions in the province come from militarized areas while in the civilian areas there is a comparative lack of epigraphic culture. The scant epigraphic habit in the civilian areas was limited to soldiers and higher status individuals who identified as Romans. As a result, in both regions stone inscriptions tell us far more about those who had an active role in the proliferation of Roman imperialism than about those who were subjected to this imperialist power. Other documentary evidence, however, can supplement the information given through stone epigraphy.

The Vindolanda writing tablets give the best indication of the Latin spoken by the cosmopolitan military community, but these tablets do not represent the language spoken by the local indigenous population of the northern frontier. The curse tablets from the sanctuary at Bath provide a civilian counterpart to the military documents of Vindolanda. The Bath curse tablets illustrate the linguistic landscape of a group of civilians in Roman Britain who for the most part did not identify themselves with Roman names. These curse tablets demonstrate that lower status individuals and native Britons spoke Latin and had adopted writing for a purpose of local significance. Furthermore, in two instances the Latin alphabet was used to write Celtic at Bath.

In the militarized areas the opportunities for civilians to acquire literacy did not exist as they did in the demilitarized areas. As a result, there is inadequate evidence to consider to what extent Latin affected the spoken language of the local population, but language reconstruction suggests that Latin was more prominent in the civilian regions than it was outside of the military communities in the militarized areas. The motivations for acquiring literacy and learning Latin were influenced by interactions with Roman power. In the militarized areas these motivations were limited to those who were incorporated into the Roman military, while, in the civilian administrated regions, interactions with
Roman society promoted a widespread literate and Latin speaking population, in contrast to the impression given by stone epigraphy.

The Roman army has been considered the main motivation for provincials to learn Latin. This influence was mainly, but not entirely, limited to those who had been incorporated into the Roman military. The evidence for local recruitment in Britain is limited, but it was likely the case the native Britons were the main source of new recruits for garrisons stationed permanently in Britain by the 3rd century AD. At this point the veterans were settling locally and raising families, and their offspring were being recruited into the military. This contributed to a Latinization of the frontier population, but this was isolated to areas directly controlled by the military. The epigraphic record shows only the influence of Celtic speakers on the Latin of the military community and not the influence of Latin on the local British Celtic because only Latin inscriptions have survived in the frontier region. The transliteration of the names of Celtic deities in various forms into Latin on small personal altars at military sites on the frontier demonstrates the interactions of locals and soldiers and the incorporation of locals into the military. The linguistic variation in these altars suggests that they were inscribed by the dedicators themselves. Therefore, locals had learned Latin and literacy through interaction with the military.

The ink-on-wood writing tablets of the Roman army fort at Vindolanda also show the influence of Celtic on the speech of the Roman army. Although some of these writing tablets indicate that the Roman army was in close contact with the local population, the evidence of language contact in the Latin of Vindolanda can not certainly be attributed to local sources. This is because many of the soldiers in the Tungrian and Batavian auxiliary cohorts that served at Vindolanda likely learned Latin as a second language. As a result, the language shift in the Vindolanda writing tablets was influenced by the language of the garrison’s homeland and not the local British Celtic.

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351 Adams 2003a, 761.
The evidence from the militarized areas of Roman Britain does not suggest that the Roman army was instrumental in the dissemination of Latin outside of military contexts. The speech of the Roman army separated the soldiers from their surroundings, as did several other cultural factors. This has been demonstrated by the graffiti and papyri of militarized city in Syria, Dura-Europos. Nigel Pollard found that at this Hellenistic city in the Roman Near East, Latin was used almost exclusively in official contexts, while in private contexts Greek appears to have been the language used by soldiers of the eastern Army. This contrasts with the circumstances in the West where Latin was the primary language of the Roman military in all contexts, official or private, and moreover where Latin was the *lingua franca* of the entire population as Greek was in the East. Nevertheless, Latin was used to differentiate the military publicly from its civilian surroundings on the British frontier because Latin was symbolically attached to the army.

The civilian population in the Southern Lowland region of Roman Britain exhibits a far greater familiarity with Latin than the civilians in the militarized areas. This is partly due to the epigraphic evidence that survives, but also can be demonstrated through language reconstruction. Although there are far fewer stone inscriptions in the civilian region, the corpus of curse tablets from Roman Britain reveals the use of Latin and writing by native Britons who do not identify as Roman citizens. Roman Britain has yielded a significant proportion of the Roman world’s curse tablets mainly from the large caches of curse tablets found in the sanctuaries at Bath and Uley. These tablets appear to have been written by natives because Celtic names without Roman formulae represent the majority of the writers and there are specifically local traits to these curse tablets. The Latin in these curse tablets shows regional variation and is a good indication of the type of Latin spoken by the majority of the civilian population in Roman Britain. While the tablets do not suggest a formally schooled population, they demonstrate a wide variation from illiterates to well trained writers. The use of Celtic texts in two of the tablets suggests that Latin was not the only language spoken by many of the writers, and that the curse tablets were written in a religious context where writing in formal Latin literary style was not

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required. Writing paraphernalia found throughout the various site types of the province also suggests that in other private contexts, native Britons who had learned Latin literacy able to transcribe Celtic into Latin characters. Language reconstruction also demonstrates that Latin was widely spoken by the civilians of the lowland south, but in light of the Celtic texts written at Bath, it can not be the case that Latin entirely eclipsed British Celtic.

The linguistic landscape of Roman Britain shares similarities with other provinces, but like any other province it has unique characteristics. Schrijver has presented the theory that Latin was spoken widely by the southern British peoples while the peoples of the north under direct military control and isolated from the societies of the south had not adopted Latin to a great degree by the end of Roman rule in Britain. This influence of native Celtic speakers and the continued migration of non-Latin speakers to Britain in sub-Roman periods led to an early death of Latin in Britain which prevented the development of a Romance language. This should not, however, account for a distorted concept of how the Roman province of Britain compared to other Roman provinces. In Gaul and Germany, the epigraphic cultures were governed by the geopolitical forces of the Roman empire. Specific epigraphic cultures belonged to civilian and militarized regions. Furthermore, there were other vernacular languages in the Roman Empire that survived Latin and the development of Romance languages, such as Basque and Armenian, which were contained in isolated and peripheral regions like the British highlands. The great difference between the linguistic landscapes of Britain and other Roman provinces is the lack of a lapidary epigraphic record in Roman Britain. Whether or not this apparent lack of an epigraphic culture was authentic or an accident of archaeology, it can not contradict the fact that other forms of written communication seem to have been widespread in Roman Britain. Therefore, although the evidence is quite distinct in Britain, similar conclusions can be drawn in Britain and in other provinces regarding the effect that the Roman Empire had on language contact.

353 supra n.323
Roman imperialism brought British Celtic speakers into contact with Latin at all levels of society. In most contexts where writing was required, native Britons were obligated to use Latin because writing was mostly necessary for interactions with Roman society. The choice to write in Latin was furthermore natural because Celtic did not have an independent written form. Nevertheless, in some contexts which were not the results of Roman imperialism, Celtic may have been preferred and written in Latin characters. The need for native Britons to speak Latin in formal contexts can only be speculated upon, but the widespread use of Latin in written communication suggests that many Britons were fluent Latin speakers and bilingual.
Bibliography


Jackson, K. 1953. Language and History in Early Britain: a chronological survey of the Brittonic Languages 1st to 12th c. AD (Edinburgh).


### Appendix A: Vindolanda Writing Tablets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix Number</th>
<th>Tablet Number</th>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Transcription[^354]</th>
<th>Translation[^355]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>II 234</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>i Flauius Cerialis Septembri suo salutem</td>
<td>Flavius Cerialis to his September, greetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>quod uis domine cras</td>
<td>As you wish, lord, tomorrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>id est iii Nonas Oc[t]ó-bres merc.. pa..[</td>
<td>which is the 5th of October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>. . . . . . . . . . . . . .</td>
<td>goods(?) [I will send(?)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>qui feramus tem-pestates [[et hiem]] etiam si molestae sint</td>
<td>By which(?) we may bare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>. . . . . . . . . . . . . .</td>
<td>the storm even if</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>. . . . . . . . . . . . . .</td>
<td>it is tiresome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>II.344</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>i eo magis me ca[ c.12</td>
<td>even more he beat(?) me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>d...[.]em mercem [ c.8</td>
<td>[... goods [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>r[.] uel effunder[ c.3 ]r[</td>
<td>or poured them out(?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>[ho]mine probo tuam mai[tes-</td>
<td>From an honest man, I beg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>[t]atem imploro ne patiaris me</td>
<td>you, majesty, not to allow me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>[i]nnocentem urgis</td>
<td>to have been blooded with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>cas[t]igatum</td>
<td>rods and, lord because (?) I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>esse et domine prou[.]. prae-</td>
<td>was unable to complain to the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>[fe]cto non potui queri quia ua-</td>
<td>prefect because he was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>[let]udini detinebatur</td>
<td>detained by ill-health I have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ques[tu]s sum beneficiario</td>
<td>complained in vain (?) to the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>. . . . . . . . . . . . . .</td>
<td>beneficiarius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>II 344</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>[ c.8 cen]turionibus</td>
<td>and the centurions of his (?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>[ c.7 ] numeri eius [</td>
<td>unit. I beg your mercy not to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>[c.3 tu]am misericord[i]am</td>
<td>allow me, a man from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>imploro ne patiaris me</td>
<td>overseas, and innocent, about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>hominem trasmarinum</td>
<td>whose faith you may inquire,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>et innocentem de cuius f[ide</td>
<td>to have been blooded with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>inquiras urgis cruent(at)u[m</td>
<td>rods as if I had committed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>esse ac si aliquid sceler[i]s</td>
<td>some crime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>commississem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[^354]: All transcriptions follow the editors Bowman and Thomas, 1994.

[^355]: All translations are my own but follow the interpretations of the editors Bowman and Thomas, 1994.
| A3 | II.213 | 1 | Curtius Super Cassio suo salutem | Curtius Super to his Cassius, greetings […] |
| 2 |  |  | .[..][..][..][..][ |  |
| 3 |  |  | . . . . . . |  |
| 4 |  |  | ut interpreteris |  |
| 5 |  |  | et ut hordeum commer- |  |
| 6 |  |  | cium habeant a te [ |  |
| 7 |  |  | [...]be.m...ua.e |  |
| 8 |  |  | ]e.da |  |
| 9 |  |  | . . . . . . |  |
| Back |  |  | Cassio Saecu- |  |
| 1 |  |  | [lari] |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |  |

| A4 | II.164 | 1 | -ne nu[di su]n[t]. Brittones ninium multi equites | (-ne?) … they are naked. |
| 2 |  |  | gladis non utuntur equi- | (There are) very many British |
| 3 |  |  | tes nec residunt | cavalrymen. The cavalry do |
| 4 |  |  | Brittunculi ut iaculos | not use swords nor do the little |
| 5 |  |  | mittant | Brits stay in place while they |
| 6 |  |  |  | throw javelins. |

| A5 | II.192 | 1 | a Gauuone | (Received) by Gavo |
| 2 |  |  | bedocem (denarios) [ | a bed sheet for (?) denarri |
| 3 |  |  | fabae m(odios) .v (denarios) [ | 5 modii of beans for (?) |
| 4 |  |  | lanae p(ondo) xxxiiix[ | denarri, 38 pounds of wool |
| 5 |  |  | p(ondo) . (denarios) xii | […] |
| 6 |  |  | s(emissem) (assem i) [ | pounds of (?) for 12 denarri, |
| 7 |  |  | tosseas iii [ | half an as, |
| 8 |  |  | mellis m(odios) [ | three bedspreads […] |
| 9 |  |  | sagum [ | (?) modii of honey |
| 10 |  |  | s(summa) [[(denarri) lxx[] | a cloak […] |
| 11 | Back |  | (denarri) [ | total (70 denarri) […] |
| 12 |  |  | ratio Gauonis | (?) denarri […] |
| 13 |  |  |  | An account of Gavo. |

| A6 | II.301 | 1 | S[eu]r[us] Candido suo salutem | Severus to his Candidus, |
| 2 |  |  | souxtum saturnalicium | salutations! |
| 3 |  |  | (asses) iiii aut sexs rogo frater | The expense for Saturnalia |
| 4 |  |  | explices et radices ne mi- | I ask, brother, that you give 4 |
| 5 |  |  | nus (denarri) s(emissem) ii | or 6 asses and the radishes |
| 6 |  |  | vale frater | and not less than 2 half denarri. |
| 7 |  |  |  | Be well brother. |
| 8 |  |  |  | To Candidus, a slave of the |
| 9 |  |  |  | prefect Genialis, |
| Back | 10 |  | Candido Genialis praef(ecti) | from Severus, |
a Seuero
... i seruo

slave of (?)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tablet Number</th>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>Translation/Interpretation</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>B1: Bath Curse Tablets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Front</td>
<td>Docilianus Bruceri deae sanctissim(a)e Suli devoevo eum [q]ui caracellam meam involaverit si vir si femina si servus si liber ut [1-2]um dea Sulis maximu leatum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Docilianus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bruceri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>deae sanctissim(a)e</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Suli</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>devoevo eum [q]ui</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>caracellam meam</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>involaverit si</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>vir si femina si</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>servus si liber</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>ut [1-2]um dea Sulis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>maximu leatum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>[a]digat nec ei so-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>mnnum permit-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Back</td>
<td>tat nec natos nec</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>nascentes do-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>[ne]c caracallam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>meam ad tem-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>plum sui numi-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>nis per[t]ulerit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix B: Bath Curse Tablets

356 These translations follow the interpretations of Mullen 2007a.
| B2  | 30  | 1 | Severianus fil(ius) Brigomall(a)e | temple of her divinity. |
|     |     | 2 | Patarnianus filius               |
|     |     | 3 | Matarnus ussor                  |
|     |     | 4 | Catonius Potentini              |
|     |     | 5 | Marinianus Belcati              |
|     |     | 6 | Lucillus Lucciani               |
|     |     | 7 | Aeternus Ingenui                |
|     |     | 8 | Bellaus Bellini                 |
|     |     |   | Severianus son of Brigomalla;   |
|     |     |   | Patarnianus (his?) son;         |
|     |     |   | Matarnus (his?) wife; Catonius  |
|     |     |   | (son of) Potentinus; Marinianus  |
|     |     |   | (son of) Belcatus; Luciullus     |
|     |     |   | (son of) Luccianus; Aeternus     |
|     |     |   | (son of) Ingenuus; Bellaus (son |
|     |     |   | of) Bellinus.                   |

| B3  | 14  | i | luciumio[ |   |
|     |     |   | cittimediu.xṣ[ |   |
|     |     | 2| uibç[. ]trieveṣ[ (cursive) |   |
|     |     | 3| estaidimau[. ] . .[ |   |
|     |     | 4| ttîlemmacatamiclu[ |   |
|     |     | 5| lendierand[. . ]nno(or d)a(or n)[ |   |
|     |     | 6| [.u][c][2–3]miotousesula. |   |
|     |     | 7| [c.2].iranḍo[ |   |
|     |     | 8| [c.4].m(over r)noṭtanou.m(or .a)dij[ |   |
|     |     | 9| [c.6]cij. eleubarrau.[1–2]. [ |   |
|     |     |   | [staginemse[c.2].. [ (cursive) |   |
|     |     |   | [fer[ (cursive) |   |
|     |     |   | [r.(over [?])| (cursive) |   |
|     |     |   | (ii) |   |
|     |     |   | luio |   |
|     |     |   | lai(or mi or n)qtit |   |
|     |     |   | riri |   |
|     |     |   | I curse (swear?) |   |
|     |     |   | (?) |   |
|     |     |   | (?) |   |
|     |     |   | (?) |   |
|     |     |   | He/she stole my sword (I swear?) |   |
|     |     |   | (?) |   |
|     |     |   | I swear to you Sulis(?) |   |
|     |     |   | (?) |   |

| B4  | 18  | 1 | adixoui |   |
|     |     | 2 | dejana / deuina |   |
|     |     | 3 | Dejeda / Deuada |   |
|     |     | 4 | andagin |   |
|     |     | 5 | Vindiorix |   |
|     |     | 6 | cuamiin | aį |   |
|     |     | 7 | I, Vindiorix, O divine |   |
|     |     |   | Deieda / Deveda |   |
|     |     |   | shall fix an evil (?fate) on |   |
|     |     |   | Cuamiina |   |
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