

LATIN AND PUNIC IN CONTACT? THE CASE OF THE BU NJEM OSTRACA*

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I

The ostraca of Bu Njem¹ come from a military outpost on the North African fringes of the Empire. Vernacular languages were spoken in the area. The ostraca record, among other things, contact between soldiers and the local population, and contain various African (Punic or 'Libyan') words and names, some of them previously unrecorded. The soldiers themselves have in many cases African names, or names with a special African connection, and it is likely that many were recruited locally. If so they may not have been fluent Latin speakers, and consequently the Latin which they wrote raises unusual questions. Is it Latin at all, or perhaps a pidgin or creole? Or, on the contrary, is the language merely bureaucratic and formulaic Latin of no great interest? Do we, at last, have some hard evidence for a regional variety of Latin, in this case perhaps influenced by a substratum language or languages?

Marichal has produced a lavish edition of the ostraca, with a comprehensive commentary. He provides an illuminating list of misspellings and other linguistic irregularities (274–6), and a brief discussion of the language (46–8), but some wider linguistic issues and special problems remain to be investigated in detail. Marichal has himself observed certain linguistic peculiarities in some documents, which lead him to ask (48): 'Faut-il encore pour ceux-là parler de latin vulgaire? Ne vaudrait-il pas mieux parler de pseudo-sabir, de latin "créole" ou de latin "tiraillou", comme le français "tiraillou" des tirailleurs sénégalais?' We might even ask whether Latin was spoken at all at Bu Njem. Was it perhaps only written for record-keeping purposes?

In this paper I will attempt to answer such questions. I offer an interpretation of the character of the language, and an account of the influences which have made it what it is.

II. THE GARRISON OF BU NJEM

The oasis of Bu Njem (called *Golas* in the Latin documents) lies 200 km due south of Cape Misurata in the Roman province of Tripolitania.² On 24 January 201 a detachment of Legion III Augusta arrived in the area charged with the task of constructing a fort.³ The rectangular fortress which they built measures 91 m by 136 m.⁴ It was intended as a border fort on the edge of the territory of the Garamantes, who are mentioned several times in the Bu Njem documents.⁵

Bu Njem was garrisoned not only by a *uexillatio* of Legion III Augusta,⁶ but later also by a *numerus collatus*,⁷ a term which was applied to a small unit of men brought together from several sources for a special mission.⁸ Legion III Augusta was disbanded in 238 and not

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¹ R. Marichal, *Les ostraca de Bu Njem* (Suppléments de 'Libya Antiqua' VII) (1992).

² See R. G. Goodchild, 'Oasis forts of *Legio III Augusta* on the routes to the *Fezzan*', *PBSR* 22 (1954), 57; Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 107 (with map).

³ See *AE* 1976, 698, 'Vexillatio leg(ionis) III Aug(ustae) P(iae) V(indicis) S(uerianae) quae at castra

Chol. aedific(anda) uenit Muciano et Fabiano co(n)s(ulibus) VIII kal(endas) Febr(uarias) et reuersa est Antonino II et Geta Caes(are) Augg(ustis) co(n)s(ulibus) VII kal(endas) Ian(uarias)'. See further M. P. Speidel, *Roman Army Studies* II (1992), 275–6, Y. Le Bohec, *La troisième légion Auguste* (1989), 441, n. 443.

⁴ Goodchild, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 58.

⁵ See Nos 28, 71, 72 (with Marichal's notes in the latter two cases), 147.

⁶ See the inscriptions (numbered 67–15, 67–89) published by R. Rebuffat, J. Deneauve, and G. Hallier, 'Bu Njem 1967', *Libya Antiqua* 3–4 (1966–67), 97, 102.

⁷ See the inscription 67–15, in Rebuffat *et al.*, *op. cit.* (n. 6), 97.

⁸ See Y. Le Bohec, 'Un nouveau type d'unité connu par l'épigraphie africaine', in W. S. Hanson and L. J. F. Keppie, *Roman Frontier Studies 1979, Papers Presented to the 12th International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies* (1980), 950.

reconstituted again until 253. From 238 Bu Njem was probably manned only by a *numerus*.⁹ There is no evidence that Legion III Augusta returned after its reconstitution. Whatever the nature of the garrison at Bu Njem in the 250s, the period to which the Bu Njem documents belong, it was relatively small,¹⁰ and under the command of a *decurio*. If it was a *numerus*, Marichal may be right in suggesting,¹¹ on the evidence of document No. 95, that it was at least partly put together from an auxiliary cohort, the VIII Fida, which is mentioned in that document, and which must have been in the vicinity.

Between 1967 and 1976 the archaeologists excavating Bu Njem under René Rebuffat discovered 158 ostraca with writing in ink, which have now been edited by Marichal. They form the most important collection of Latin ostraca so far published. The pieces have been put together into 146 documents, many of which vividly evoke day-to-day military life in a desert outpost.

The documents are mainly official in content. There are numerous daily duty reports of a type found also at Vindolanda, and reports, probably written daily, of miscellaneous events at Bu Njem (67–73). Perhaps most interestingly, there are forty three letters (Nos 74–117) received at Bu Njem and recording such things as the dispatch of goods (e.g. 76–80), a sale (99), and chance arrivals at unspecified sites (e.g. 101). Although letters received at Bu Njem were by definition not written there, many were undoubtedly written by members of the garrison of Bu Njem who had been sent forth into the locality on commissions and were reporting back to base to the commanding officer. For example, Nos 76–9 are from a certain Aemilius Aemilianus, known from No. 68 to have been at Bu Njem, who had apparently been sent to organize the supply of wheat (*triticum*) for the garrison.¹² One letter which clearly comes from beyond the immediate environs of Bu Njem is No. 89, sent by officials of some sort and recording, as far as one can tell from the fragmentary text, the arrival of ships at Lepcis. Several of the letters are dated precisely, to the period between January 253 and July 259.

Marichal (64–5) has analysed the names in the documents, with interesting results. Of the cognomina, 11 per cent are Libyan or Punic in origin, and a further 45 per cent of the Latin cognomina are considered to be specifically African. Marichal finds that as many as 65 per cent of the cognomina have African connections.

Of the nomina, about 40 per cent are particularly common in Africa. Two imperial nomina, Iulius and Aurelius, account for more than half the nomina. Holders of these names will have received the gentilicium of the emperor reigning when they entered the army.¹³ Those with the nomen Iulius will have been recruited under Iulius Philippus (244–9) or Iulius Maximinus (235–8), those with the nomen Aurelius probably under Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander (222–35). The great majority of the named individuals must have been auxiliaries recruited in Africa, acquiring their Romanized names on incorporation.¹⁴ Since there is an almost total absence of the earlier imperial nomina Aelius and Vlpianus, which are common among soldiers of the XX Palmyrenorum between 203 and 212 but which disappear after 214, Marichal argues (65) that the soldiers of Bu Njem may have been recent recruits in many cases rather than the sons of veterans. Their exposure to the Roman army may have been of short-standing, and their first language not necessarily Latin.

Of the vernacular languages of Roman Africa the best known is Punic, a branch of Phoenician which survived the destruction of Carthage by the Romans in 146 B.C.¹⁵ By our period Punic was certainly still spoken in the countryside of western Algeria and Libya. Augustine provides evidence that at the time when he was Bishop of Hippo in Algeria (395–430) Punic was current in the area.¹⁶ There are twenty one references to Punic in

⁹ See Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 65.

¹⁰ The daily reports which form part of the material (Nos 1–62) present between forty two and ninety six men in active service (Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 70).

¹¹ *Bu Njem*, 65–6.

¹² On Aemilius, see Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 58 with n. 3, 61. *Aemilius* is a common name in Africa. It has been suggested that it may have been chosen by some of its African bearers because of its similarity to the Punic name *Himilis*: see A. R. Birley, 'Names at Lepcis Magna', *Libyan Studies* 19 (1988), 4–5.

¹³ Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 64.

¹⁴ Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 65. On Syrians in the Roman army in Africa, see in general Y. Le Bohec, 'Les Syriens dans l'Afrique romaine: civils ou militaires?', *Karthago* 21 (1987), 81–92.

¹⁵ See S. Segert, *A Grammar of Phoenician and Punic* (1976), 26.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Aug., *Epist.* 66.2, 108.14, 209.3, *Expositio ad Romanos inchoata* 13.1.

Augustine.¹⁷ Punic inscriptions from our period have been found in Tripolitania,¹⁸ and moreover one of the Bu Njem ostraca (146) seems to be in Punic.

Another language of the area is known vaguely as 'Libyan'. Millar argues that it cannot be assumed that 'Libyan' is the ancient precursor of the Berber which is spoken today. Whatever the case, there is substantial evidence for a language and script distinct from Punic which was known over the whole length of Roman North Africa.¹⁹ Some of the names at Bu Njem, though not of soldiers, are identified by Marichal (262) as Libyan.

III. THE LATIN OF THE DOCUMENTS

I turn now to the Latin of the documents, particularly the letters. In various respects it is very odd indeed, and difficult to fit into the rather limited categories traditionally used by classical scholars, as for example 'Vulgar Latin' on the one hand and varieties of 'literary Latin' on the other. Some of the deviations from educated orthographical or syntactic norms can, it is true, be classed as typical manifestations of the colloquial language. In 105.4, for example, there is a familiar use of *cum* + accusative which goes back in colloquial Latin at least as far as the first century A.D.:²⁰

tr]
asmissē **cum epistul-**
as tres opto [tē]
bene uale-
re

Cum generally takes an accusative at Bu Njem,²¹ though other ablative-governing prepositions, such as *ex*, *in*, and *ab*, regularly have the ablative.

But what are we to make of 109.5-6?

.] suo
. . P]omponius
Felix die Idu-
s Nouemres
opto te bone
ualere

To his . . . Pomponius Felix on the Ides of November. I hope that you are well.

Here the formulaic letter-ending *opto te bene ualere*, which is used, for example, by Claudius Terentianus (though with a different order) and was standard at Bu Njem (cf. 99, 105, 106),²² displays a form *bone* (reading certain) for *bene*. *Bone* does not seem to be otherwise attested.²³ *Bene*, one of the most common adverbs in the language, is generally reflected in Romance with the expected outcome of its original short *e* in the first syllable, though in some southern Italian dialects it is replaced by the reflex of the adjective *bonus*, *bona*, showing agreement of number

¹⁷ See P. Brown, 'Christianity and local culture in late Roman Africa', *JRS* 58 (1968), 87-8.

¹⁸ See F. Millar, 'Local cultures in the Roman Empire: Libyan, Punic, and Latin in Roman Africa', *JRS* 58 (1968), 132; also A. F. Elmayer, 'The re-interpretation of Latino-Punic inscriptions from Roman Tripolitania', *Libyan Studies* 14 (1983), 86-95; idem, 'The re-interpretation of Latino-Punic inscriptions from Roman Tripolitania', *Libyan Studies* 15 (1984), 93-105.

¹⁹ Millar, *op. cit.* (n. 18), 128-9. On the continued vitality of Punic/Libyan culture in Roman Tripolitania, see in general D. J. Mattingly, 'Libyans and the "Limes":

culture and society in Roman Tripolitania', *Antiquités africaines* 23 (1987), 71-93, esp. 73-80; and on the survival of African languages, also W. V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (1989), 179-80.

²⁰ cf. e.g. *CIL* 1v.221, *cum sodales*, 8976 *cum iumentum*.

²¹ See 8 *cum kamellos*, 67 *cum litteras*, 73 *cum suriacas*, 103 *cum epistulas duas* (cf. 104, 105); cf. 28 *cum Garamanti[bu]s*, 37 *cum asimis*.

²² See Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 62.

²³ See *TLL* 11.2103.8iff.

and gender with the subject, or alternatively by a non-agreeing reflex of *bonu*.²⁴ This latter might possibly derive from a Latin adverbial neuter *bonum*, which does not however seem to be attested. It is perhaps more likely that it represents a fossilization, within the Italian period, of the masculine form of the adjective used with adverbial function.

Bone is unrelated to this use of the reflex of *bonu*. The adverbial ending has been retained, but the root vowel of the adjective has been generalized to the adverb. It is difficult to see why such a commonplace adverb should have been modified on the analogy of the adjective. *Bone* is so odd that in itself it raises the possibility that there may be something abnormal about the Latin of Bu Njem.

IV. A PIDGIN, CREOLE, OR 'BROKEN' LATIN?

Marichal, as noted above, made the suggestion (48) that some of the texts may present not straightforward Vulgar Latin, but a creole. I do not, however, believe that the language of the ostraca is either a creole or a pidgin. I would prefer to put a rather different interpretation on the abnormalities of the Latinity. But I should first say briefly why Marichal's suggestion must be rejected.

A pidgin is a simplified trade or contact language developed among speakers of different languages who do not have a chance to learn the languages of one another. A pidgin usually takes much of its restricted vocabulary from a single source language, but its grammar, such as it is, is not merely a simplification of the grammar of the lexical source language.

Thomason and Kaufman²⁵ list various traditional diagnostic features for identifying a speech form as a pidgin. First there is a lack of mutual intelligibility between the pidgin and any of the languages whose native speakers use the pidgin.

Hence a 'pidgin language must be learned . . . ; it cannot be produced by a speaker of any other language simply as an *ad hoc* simplification of his or her own language' (169).

'A pidgin is nobody's native language' (169). By 'nobody' in this context is meant 'no community' or 'no sizeable group of native speakers'.

If the language of the Bu Njem documents were a pidgin, native Latin speakers on these criteria would not have been able to understand it unless they had consciously learnt it. The Bu Njem material does not meet these criteria. It is immediately understandable as Latin, with a full Latin morphology. There are, for example, in the letters the perfect (95.4) and future tenses (81.4) in different persons and numbers, present, future, and perfect participles, the passive as well as the active (95.3), and a range of case inflections in both the singular and the plural.

The term 'creole' would be equally inappropriate. 'Creole' is used largely, but not exclusively, of a language that has evolved out of a pidgin. It may be a pidgin that has acquired native speakers. Romance creoles, and perhaps all creoles, are largely non-inflecting languages,²⁶ whereas even the limited material surviving at Bu Njem displays a good deal of the Latin inflectional morphology intact.

The Bu Njem Latin does not, on the face of it, even begin to have the flavour of a pidgin or creole. The conventional Latin cursive script, which is often of good quality,²⁷ implies that the writers, even if they were vernacular speakers, had received some formal instruction in the arts of Latin literacy. We do not, of course, know how they spoke, but there is no alternative but to treat the documents as written in a form of Latin. But what form of Latin is it?

²⁴ See P. Tekavčić, *Grammatica storica dell'italiano* II: *Morphosintassi* (1972), 568; G. Rohlfs, *Historische Grammatik der Italienischen Sprache* III (1954), 127 (§887); also W. Meyer-Lübke, *Romanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*³ (1935), 1028, 1208.

²⁵ S. G. Thomason and T. Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics* (1988), 168–70.

²⁶ See J. N. Green, 'Romance creoles', in M. Harris and N. Vincent (eds), *The Romance Languages* (1988), 441, J. A. Holm, *Pidgins and Creoles* I: *Theory and Structure* (1988), 53.

²⁷ See Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 58.

V. SOME ABNORMALITIES: THREE CASE STUDIES

If the auxiliaries at Bu Njem, or at least some of them, were recent recruits, and if they were Africans, as their names suggest, then there must have been among them language learners, that is, learners of Latin as a second language. I will here consider some of the phenomena in the letters in the light of this possibility. Second-language learning can be seen as a continuum, with some learners eventually achieving a close approximation to the target language, while others 'get stuck' along the way.²⁸ During the stages of imperfect learning, learners make classifiable varieties of errors.²⁹ Learners' errors are often due to interference from the first language, but not exclusively so.³⁰ Analogy (or overgeneralization) is a common source of error, as is the incomplete application of syntactic rules.³¹ Prefabricated patterns may be memorized, and used in contexts which strictly require that the pattern should be modified.³² Imperfect learning produces forms of speech which in English are traditionally called 'broken', as in 'broken English'.³³ Curiously we have a piece of anecdotal evidence for the use of 'broken Latin' by a Punic speaker in Africa. I refer to Apuleius' claim that Sicinius Pudens, a Punic speaker, could scarcely string Latin syllables together.³⁴

I propose in this section to offer three case studies from the ostraca, chiefly the letters, keeping in mind the possibility that there may be learners' errors in evidence.

v. 1. *The Syntax of quere ad*

In 95 a *decurio* sends an instruction to an *eques* apparently on detachment as part of the *numerus* at Bu Njem:

Pomponius Silluanus dec(urio) Iulio [[Ya]]
Vario eq(uiti) Coh(ortis) vijii Fid(ae) · salutem · quere
ad tessera in locum qui dicitur Secedi

Pomponius Silvanus, *decurio*, to Julius Varus, *eques* of the *Cohors VIII Fida*, greetings. Seek for the token (?) in the place which is called Secedi.

The *eques* seems to be ordered to 'seek for' (*quere ad*) the *tessera* (= *tesseram*, with omission of final *-m*; see below, vi. 6) at Secedi, a place in the region which is referred to also in No. 94.³⁵ Marichal (62) takes the expression to mean *aller chercher*, without observing the oddity of the construction. The verb *quaero*, if that is what we have here, regularly takes a direct object of the thing or person sought, and the plain accusative is the norm also with other verbs of 'seeking' or 'searching for' in Latin (e.g. *peto*, *requiro*, *inuestigo*), just as equivalent verbs in the Romance languages have a direct object. If the change from *quaero* + direct object to *quaero* + prepositional complement were motivated internally, within Latin itself, one would expect to find a synonymous or partly synonymous verb taking the *ad*-construction which might have served as an analogy for the development of the new construction with *quaero*. At 62. 11, for example, Petronius construes *adiuto*, which ought to take an accusative, with the dative ('si ante . . . uenisses, saltem *nobis adiutasses*'), and that is because various other verbs of 'helping' in Latin take the dative (e.g. *auxilior*, *opitutor*, *subuenio*). I can find no structural parallel for *quaero ad* in Latin, and it is difficult to see how the construction could have been

²⁸ See G. Sankoff, 'Variation, pidgins and creoles', in A. Valdman and A. Highfield (eds), *Theoretical Orientations in Creole Studies* (1980), 143-4.

²⁹ See in general J. C. Richards, 'A non-contrastive approach to error analysis', in idem (ed.), *Error Analysis: Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition* (1974), 172-88.

³⁰ *ibid.*, 172-3.

³¹ *ibid.*, 174-8.

³² See K. Hakatu, 'A case study of a Japanese child learning English as a second language', *Language Learning* 26 (1976), 332-3.

³³ See, e.g., C. H. Ferguson and C. E. DeBose, 'Simplified registers, broken language, and pidginization', in A. Valdman (ed.), *Pidgin and Creole Linguistics* (1977), 108-9.

³⁴ Apul., *Apol.* 98.8-9, 'loquitur numquam nisi Punice . . . enim *Latine loqui neque uult neque potest. audisti, Maxime, paulo ante, pro nefas, priuignum meum, fratrem Pontiani, disertu iuuenis, uix singulas syllabas fringultientem*'.

³⁵ On Secedi, see Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 62, 75, 106.

determined by internal pressures of another sort. In very late Latin examples such as Greg. Tur., *de Virt. Mart.* 2.25, 'sanitatem *ad te*, non tormenta *quaesivi*', are of a different type from *quere ad tessera*, because *ad* expresses not the direct object, but the person before, or to, whom the request is made (= *a te* in Classical Latin, or *apud te* in later Latin).

It is possible that the abnormality was caused by interference from outside Latin. In Punic the direct object of a verb, provided that that object is definite (i.e. determined by the definite article or definite for some other reason),³⁶ is marked as such not by inflection, but rather by a pseudo-preposition, referred to in the grammars as the *nota accusatiui*, which precedes the object.³⁷ The *nota accusatiui* is constructed as a preposition.³⁸ In the transliterated form *yth* it has been detected several times in the Punic passages of Plautus' *Poenulus* (e.g. 930).³⁹ The pseudo-preposition would certainly have been used with verbs of seeking before a definite noun-object.

Tessera is obviously definite, and *quere ad* might therefore be a Semitism. The choice of *ad* rather than another preposition would presumably have been motivated by the fact that *ad* + accusative may express the idea 'goal'.

v.2. Consular Dating in the Letters of Aemilius Aemilianus

Next I consider a group of four well-preserved letters written in January 259 by Aemilius Aemilianus to the *decurio* Octavius Festus (76–9):

- 76 Octauiio Festo dec(urioni) p(rae)p(osito) meo
Aemilius Aemilianus mi!(es)
salutem
transmisi at te domine
per kamellarios Iddibalis
selesua tridiçi · vji · septe
et semis q(uae) · f(iunt) · modios naginta
Consules futuros post Thusco
et Bas[şo çoş(ulibus)] xji Kal(endas) Febrarias

To Octavius Festus, decurion, my commanding officer, Aemilius Aemilianus, soldier, (sends) greetings. I have sent you, lord, by the camel drivers of Iddibal, 7, seven, and a half *selesua* of wheat, which is equivalent to 90 [*naginta* = *nonaginta*: see vi.9] *modii*. The consuls in office after the consulship of Tuscus and Bassus, 21 January.

- 77 Octauiio Festo dec(urioni) p(rae)p(osito) meo
Aemilius Aemilianus mil(es) salutem

transmisi at te domine per kamella-
rius · Iassucthan sbitualis tridici
vji [sic: i.e. viiii] · noue q(uae) · f(iunt) · modios centum octo

Consules · futuros post Thusco et
Basso cos(ulibus) · xji Kal(endas) Febrarias

To Octavius Festus, decurion, my commanding officer, Aemilius Aemilianus, soldier, (sends) greetings. I have sent you, lord, by the camel driver Iassucthan, 7 [i.e. 9], nine, *sbitualis* of wheat, which is equivalent to 108 *modii*. The consuls in office after the consulship of Tuscus and Bassus, 21 January.

- 78 Octauiio] Festo dec(urioni) p(rae)p(osito) meo
Aemi]lius Aemilianus mil(es) · salutem

³⁶ See Segert, *op. cit.* (n. 15), §62.3 on determination in Punic; also §74.24–241.

³⁷ Segert, *op. cit.* (n. 15), §56.5; also §66.131, 'The *nota accusatiui* is used for connecting the determined . . . direct object to its verb'.

³⁸ Segert, *op. cit.* (n. 15), §74.241.

³⁹ See M. Sznycer, *Les passages puniques en transcription latine dans le 'Poenulus' de Plaute* (1967), 48; also 64, 83, 86.

tr]ansmisi at ʔe domiṇe per ca-
 melarius Iaremaban · isdarim
].s tridici · xx · [uigiṇ]ti q(uae) f(iunt) ·
 m]odios sexsagi[nta · Con]sules
 fut]uros post Thu[sco] et Basso coṣ(ulibus)
]K(al)endas) · Februarias

To Octavius Festus, decurion, my commanding officer, Aemilius Aemilianus, soldier, (sends) greetings. I have sent you, lord, by the camel driver Iaremaban, 20, twenty, *isidarim* . . . of wheat, which is equivalent to 60 *modii*. The consuls in office after the consulship of Tuscus and Bassus, ? January.

79 Octauiio Festho dec(urioni) · p(rae)p(osito) [meo
 Aemilius Aemilianus m[il(es) salutem
 transmisi at te domi[ne per
 Macargum siddipia trid[ici · ji ·
 dua · q(uae) f(iunt) · uiginti qua[ttuor
 Cos(ulibus) futuris post Thusç[o et
 Basso Cos(ulibus)
 açç(epta) xji Kal(endas) · Febr(uarias)
].it j .

To Octavius Festus, decurion, my commanding officer, Aemilius Aemilianus, soldier, (sends) greetings. I have sent you, lord, by Macargus 2, two, *siddipia* of wheat, which is equivalent to 24 (*modii*). The consuls in office after the consulship of Tuscus and Bassus. Received 21 January . . .

These letters are not only interesting because of the constructions which will be dealt with in this section. They have a good deal to tell us about the manner in which communication in Latin took place at an official level at Bu Njem. There are clear signs that Aemilius was not engaging in free composition. I would suggest that he was following a model letter-form, into which he merely had to insert a limited number of variable lexical items at certain points.⁴⁰ In the few places where he did have to use Latin syntax creatively, his deviations from syntactic norms are remarkable.

Each letter falls into three sections, as can be seen from the way in which 77 is set out above. First there is a two-line address, in each case containing the same components and a fixed word order. If Aemilius had a model letter before him, the invariable elements will have been the words printed in bold, *praeposito meo* and *salutem*. He had to insert the appropriate names.

Then comes the formula *transmisi at te domine per*, followed by the name of the transporter, and a detailed statement, in formulaic order, of the goods to be transported and their quantity. The measure of quantity is expressed both in a native language and in Latin, and in numbers and words, surely a practice which reflects an official requirement.⁴¹ Again I have printed the standard elements in bold, but even the variable elements have a fixed structure. Incidentally Marichal's interpretation of the abbreviation *f.* as standing for *fiunt*, which entails giving it an accusative subject *modios*, is unconvincing. *Facent*, written in full in the same context in 81, suggests that *f.* stands for *faciunt*:⁴²

suscipies ab
 Glareo aṣgatui dua semis · **facent**
 m(odios) triginta

You will receive from Glareus two and a half *aṣgatui*, (which) makes 30 *modii*

⁴⁰ As an example of formulaic composition in a military context, I would cite the so-called *renuntium* documents from Vindolanda: see A. K. Bowman and J. D. Thomas, 'New texts from Vindolanda', *Britannia* 18 (1987), 132–5; eidem, *The Vindolanda Writing Tablets (Tabulae Vindolandenses II)* (1994), 73–6.

⁴¹ See Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 59.

⁴² For such formulae, see P. Cugusi, *Corpus epistularum latinarum papyris tabulis ostracis seruatarum* (1992), II, 56.

Sbitualis is of unknown origin, but it was clearly an African term used by camel drivers. Marichal (101) acutely observes that this word must express the same quantity as *selesua* (76) and *siddipia* (79). Why did Aemilius use different vernacular words of the same meaning when stating quantities of *triticum*? One possibility is that the various camel drivers with whom he was dealing spoke different languages or dialects.⁴³ Was Aemilius perhaps adept in the vernacular dialects of the region, and is that why he was sent to deal with native transporters?

The third, two-line section, gives the date, by year, month and day.

The constant appearance of the verb *transmitto* in this context in the letters (some twelve times)⁴⁴ provides a further hint that a model letter-form was in use. *Transmitto* is an unexpected verb to find here. In private letters on different materials from various parts of the Empire *mitto* is often used in such contexts, a number of times in the expression *misi tibi per aliquem*.⁴⁵ Aemilius was not the only soldier at Bu Njem to use *transmitto* instead of *mitto* in letters.⁴⁶ A variety of letter-writers would hardly have concurred in selecting *transmitto* if they had not been led to do so by a standard form of letter. *Mitto* is not used in the letters, except by the second hand in 95, in a non-formulaic context (*misi tenses*). In the Bu Njem collection as a whole the semantic field 'send' is neatly divided up between *mitto*, used ten times outside the letters of dispatching troops on duties (always in the form *missus*),⁴⁷ and *transmitto*, used of dispatching goods or objects. This artificial distinction must reflect an official phraseology laid down for use in different types of documents.

Clearly this formulaic structure made only limited demands on the inventiveness of the writer, and it would have been possible for someone with imperfect command of the language to send a comprehensible letter by following the pattern.

In the last section, however, though it is devoted simply to the date, Aemilius ran into a difficulty: the names of the consuls of 259, Nummius Aemilianus Dexter and Ti. Pomponius Bassus, had not yet reached the African desert by the end of January.⁴⁸ It is not until July that we find a letter correctly dated by the names of the consuls of the year:

81 [j j j] kal(endas) Augustas · Aemi-
liano et Basso Cos(ulibus).

Aemilius' method of dealing with the problem is of some interest. Here for the first time he was called on to make creative use of Latin syntax. He set out to express some such idea as 'in the consulship after the consulship of Tuscus and Bassus', an idea which is logically expressed, for example, in Greek at *PSI 1101*: μετὰ τὴν Ἀντοχίαν[οῦ καὶ] Ὀρφέϊτου ὑπατεϊάν.⁴⁹ But Aemilius was incapable of modifying the ablative absolute *Tusco et Basso consulibus* to fit it to the new context. If Marichal's completion of *cos.* as *consulibus* is correct, as it must be (see below), then Aemilius has retained the ablative absolute as a sort of lexical unit of fixed form, and placed *post* in front of it without the alterations required after a preposition governing the accusative. *Tusco* and *Basso* are undoubtedly ablatives rather than misspelt accusatives of the sort which show omission of final *-m* and the Vulgar Latin change of short *ŭ* to close *o*. In the Bu Njem material, when final *-m* is omitted, as it often is, the *-u* spelling is always kept in second declension words.⁵⁰

Aemilius had no understanding of the syntax of the ablative absolute. He had learnt a prefabricated pattern which he was unable to analyse or modify in response to the context. This might well be a learner's error, but the oddity is open to more than one interpretation in this case. There is some evidence that the syntax of the dating system was little understood by this period, and that a consular date in the ablative absolute might be treated as a fossilized unit. At *CIL VI.266.a.39*, for example, *in* belongs with *dies*:

⁴³ cf. Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 101.

⁴⁴ See Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 269 s.v.

⁴⁵ See, e.g., Claudius Terentianus, *P. Mich.* viii.468.8, 'misi t[i]bi pater per Martialem imboluclum', and P. Cugusi, *Evoluzione e forme dell' epistolografia latina nella tarda repubblica e nei primi due secoli dell' impero* (1983), 101, 278–9; idem, *Corpus epistolarum latinarum*, I, 24; II, 59 (on 73.4–5).

⁴⁶ See, e.g. 86, and the other examples cited by Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 269 s.v.

⁴⁷ See Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 265, s.v.

⁴⁸ See Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 60.

⁴⁹ See the material cited by Marichal, *Bu Njem* 60; also P. Cugusi, *Corpus epistolarum latinarum*, II, 315 (on 214.6–7).

⁵⁰ Note 5 *ad balneu* (cf. 7, 17, 34, 39), 5 *ad prepositu* (cf. 12, 13, 30, 32, 34), 26 *ad fiscu*, 36 *ad lignu*, 46 *ad pretoruu*, 71 *seruu fugitiu*, 94 *-atianu*, 99 *asinu* (twice), 99 *decimu*.

ex Alexandro Aug. II et Marcello II cos. litigatum est *in Peregrino et Aemiliano cos. dies*.⁵¹

The names are in the formulaic ablative construction, when they ought to have been in the genitive dependent on *dies*, as later in the same inscription (b. 11):

litigatum est ex Alexandri Aug. II et Marcelli II cos. *in Peregrini et Aemiliani cos. dies*.⁵²

At *CIL* XII.1839 there is a perfectly logical construction, with names in the genitive dependent on *anno*:

anno imp. Caes. Neruae Traiani Aug. Germanici IIII Q. Articulei Paeti cos.

At *CIL* XIII.4565, however, *anno* is first followed by a genitive, but the stonemason then lapsed into a formulaic ablative construction:

VIII K. Octob. anno C. Passieni Crispi II T. *Stat(i)l(i)o Tauro cos.*

Finally, at *CIL* XI.1331 there is no genitive at all after *anno*; simply the ablative formula:

anno A. Licinio Nerua cos. . . .⁵³

I have not been able to parallel precisely *post* + abl. absol. in a consular date,⁵⁴ but the material cited here does suggest that the error which Aemilius has produced, while it might well be the effort of a second-language learner, is not necessarily such.

But what is one to make of *consules futuros* in e.g. 77? It is obvious enough what Aemilius intended, but the accusative expression is difficult to analyse. It would seem natural to attempt to analyse it as a type of accusative absolute.⁵⁵ If so, *futuros* might in theory be interpreted as either adjectival or participial. If it were adjectival (= 'the future consuls'), it would lack any marker of 'time within which' of the sort which the context seems to require. Adjectival accusative absolutes are rare, and are normally descriptive: e.g. *Pass. Barth. 7*, 'tunc ostendit eis ingentem Aegyptium nigriorem fuligine, *faciem acutam cum barba prolixa*'.⁵⁶

If, on the other hand, *futuros* is participial, then *consules* might stand to it in two possible relationships. First, it might be predicative. In any statement containing the copula there may be both a subject and a predicate. Thus in the clause *cum Caesar esset consul*, *Caesar* is subject and *consul* is predicate. In a normal (ablative) consular date, e.g. *Caesare consule, consule* (or *consulibus*) is predicative, though the copula is not expressed because the necessary participial form did not exist. If *consules* were predicative in our expression (i.e. = '... with X about to be consuls'), the obvious problem is that no subject (X) is expressed. Accusative absolutes do exist in which the subject noun-phrase is not expressed, but it can always be readily supplied from the context. It is impossible in our example to supply a subject such that *consules* might be interpreted as predicative.

An alternative possibility is that *consules* might stand to *futuros* as its subject. That would seem to entail giving *futuros* an existential sense, as in a paraphrase such as 'when there will be consuls', or, better, 'the consuls about to be after the consulship of . . .', i.e. 'the consuls who will be in power, exist, after . . .' This seems to be the most plausible interpretation of the phrase, but it is an inadequate expression of the idea which the writer must have intended. For one thing the phrase 'the consuls about to be, be in power, exist' implies that those consuls are not yet in existence. But the writer undoubtedly knew that there *were already* consuls; what he did not know is *who* they were. A second problem is that the accusative on its own fails to convey the required temporal notion. The letter was written *during/within* a consulship, and the accusative does not mark that notion.

⁵¹ It is worth stating that part of this inscription is now lost.

⁵² cf. G. Konjetzny, 'De idiotismis syntacticis in titulis latinis urbanis (C.I.L. Vol. VI) conspicuis', *ALL* 15 (1908), 330; J. Svennung, *Untersuchungen zu Palladius und zur lateinischen Fach- und Volkssprache* (1935), 253. Contrast E. Diehl, *De m finali epigraphica* (1899), 79.

⁵³ See *TLL* iv. 569. 56ff.

⁵⁴ But note the examples of *usque* + names in the ablative cited by Svennung, op. cit. (n. 52), 253 from an *Episcoporum catalogus*.

⁵⁵ On this construction in late Latin, see now A. Helttula, *Studies on the Latin Accusative Absolute* (1987).

⁵⁶ See Helttula, 6.

However one attempts to construe the phrase, there are difficulties. It does not fit the norms established by Helttula and others for the accusative absolute. The phrase looks like an *ad hoc* creation by someone who did not have the linguistic competence to express the idea he wanted.

I conclude this section with some statistics from the letters of Aemilius. In the repeated, formulaic parts of the letters, there are no errors of orthography or syntax, other than the assimilated form *at* for *ad*, but that had long been a common spelling even in educated writings (Quint. 1.7.5).⁵⁷ In the sections containing free composition there are twenty four errors:

- 76 *tridici, septe, naginta, consules futuros*, post + abl. absol.,
Thusco, Febrarias
77 *kamellarius, tridici, noue, consules futuros*, post + abl. absol.,
Thusco, Febrarias
78 *camellarius, tridici, consules futuros*,
post + abl. absol., *Thusco*
79 *Festho, tridici, dua*,
post + abl. absol., *Thusco*.

Of these about fourteen can be related to tendencies of Vulgar Latin. These errors will be discussed below. That leaves some ten errors which are difficult to explain, namely *consules futuros*, *per* + the apparent nominative *camellarius*, and the spellings *Thusco* and *Festho*. *Per* + nominative will be discussed below.

I offer the following three conclusions from the figures just given:

- (a). The correctness of the formulaic parts suggests again that Aemilius had a letter format to copy. The formulaic sections are short, but they did provide scope for spelling errors. For example, *n* is consistently written before *s* in *transmisi*, though a number of times at Bu Njem it is omitted in this environment. *Domine* is not syncopated.
(b). Aemilius had heard a form of colloquial Latin. *Dua*, for example, is a vulgarism noted by Quintilian (1.5.15; cf. *Tab. Sul.* 5.3). *Febrarius*, with loss of *u* in hiatus after the consonant cluster *br*, is a typical substandard form (see below, vi.2).
(c). There are various errors which cannot simply be said to reflect the influence of ordinary spoken Latin. Were these the errors of a second-language learner?

v.3. *Uses of the Nominative for the Accusative*

My next case has to do with the repeated use of nominative inflections where one might have expected an accusative. I begin by stating the evidence and will then move on to discuss its interpretation.

First, there is a group of examples where *per* is followed by *camellarius* and a name, apparently in the nominative:

- 77.3 *transmisi at te domine per kamellarius Iassucthan sbitualis tridici . . .*
78.4 *tr]ansmisi at te dõmĩne per camellarius Iaremãban*
80.5 *tr[ansmisi] at te dom[ine] . . .*
us Fezinis filius s[
tridici.

At 80.5 both *per* and the name are missing, but it is certain that *us Fezinis filius* in the context in which it is found must have been dependent on *per*.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ See F. Sommer, *Handbuch der lateinischen Laut- und Formenlehre* 1⁴ (revised by R. Pfister) (1977), 203.

⁵⁸ See Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 188 ad loc.

These examples are all in the letter-pattern discussed earlier. The section *transmisi-per*, as noted above, is formulaic, and the names and titles which follow are variables.

The second case of nominative for accusative is at 99.4:

un asinu *cuis* nobis atulisti Barlas decimu cal(endas) emit asinu.

Here the nominative form *cuis* (misspelt), used by a common confusion instead of *qui*,⁵⁹ appears in a context in which the accusative *quem* is expected. The sentence has other bizarre features. The sense is 'one donkey which you brought to us, Barlas bought the donkey'. The head-noun *asinu* has been ineptly repeated in the main clause. The writer was unable to combine the two simple propositions 'you brought us the donkey' and 'Barlas bought the donkey' by means of a relative construction. I am unable to parallel such a repetition exactly. A case such as Claudius Terentianus, *P. Mich.* VIII.468.28, 'ea (dolabram) q[u]am mi misisti optionem **illan** mi ab[s]tulisse', is not the same ('that *dolabra* [not expressed in the Latin] which you sent me, the *optio* took it away from me'). Here it is not a noun which is repeated in the main clause: *illan* is redundant.⁶⁰

The third case of nominative for accusative is in a semi-literate letter (101) by a man who misspells his own name (*Flaniminus* for *Flamininus*):

Catulo ag(enti) · Emili[us]
Flaniminus · bice
piciparis scias dom-
ine benise a meos
refuga Aban ba-
rbarus tertium
idibus Febra-
rias trasm-
isi a te per M
[. . .] amb[.]

To Catullus, the *agens*,⁶¹ Aemilius Flamininus *uice principalis*⁶² (sends greetings). You should know, lord, that there came to my men the deserter⁶³ Aban the barbarian on 11 February. I have sent you by M. . .

Pice piciparis represents *uice principalis*.⁶⁴ There follows an epistolary formula *scias domine* which ought to be construed with an acc. + infin. *Benise* = *uenisse*, and *a meos* = *ad meos* (see VI.7). Then instead of the expected accusative subject there is a nominative, *refuga Aban barbarus*. *Refuga* might on its own have been interpreted as an accusative without final *-m*, but the form *barbarus* suggests that *refuga* too was intended as a nominative. There seems to be a similar case at 73, but the start of the text is missing:

2-3 super
 uenisse asinus
 cum suriacas.

. . . there arrived a donkey with *suriacae*.

⁵⁹ See E. Löfstedt, *Syntactica. Studien und Beiträge zur historischen Syntax des Lateins* (1956), II, 79-96.

⁶⁰ P. Cugusi, *Corpus epistolarum latinarum* II, 152 takes *ea* as a *nominatiuus pendens*.

⁶¹ On this term, see Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 110-11.

⁶² See Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 70.

⁶³ On the interpretation of *refuga*, see Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 110.

⁶⁴ I cannot parallel precisely *piciparis* for *principalis*. The omission of *n* before the stop is not exceptional. Such spellings are common at Pompeii, in the documents of Eunus, and in other colloquial texts: see, e.g. V. Vä-

nänen, *Le latin vulgaire des inscriptions pompéiennes* (1966), 67-8, S. Kiss, *Les transformations de la structure syllabique en latin tardif* (1972), 29-30, J. N. Adams, 'The Latinity of C. Novius Eunus', *ZPE* 82 (1990), 241. The suffix *-alis* must have assimilated to *-aris* (see E. Schopf, *Die konsonantischen Fernwirkungen: Fern-Dissimulation, Fern-Assimilation und Metathesis* (1919), 137 for assimilation of *l > r*, but the examples which he quotes are regressive — e.g. *cereberrimo* for *celeberrimo* — rather than progressive), and then a dissimilatory loss of the first *r* must have taken place (i.e. *r-r > ø-r*: cf. e.g. *castrorum > castorum*, cited by Schopf, 150).

Fourthly, note 72:

die s(upra) s(cripto) ·intr[oierunt] . . .
tes [probably = *Garamantes*] ferentes hor[deum] *muli* · n(umero) jii ·
et asinos · jiii.

On the aforementioned day there entered Garamantes(?) bringing barley, mules (3 in number) and 4 donkeys.

Here Garamantes(?) have entered the camp bringing *hordeum* (barley), mules, and donkeys. *Muli* must be object of *ferentes*. For *ferentes* with both an inanimate and animate object, cf. the preceding document, 71:

. . . ferentes litteras at te et Gtasazeiheme Opter seruu fugituu.

. . . bringing a letter to you and Gtasazeiheme Opter a runaway slave.

A plain direct object in 72 has been given a nominative inflection. Nominative inflections for an expected accusative are thus found in four different environments.

The use of the nominative for accusative is an oddity, and not only by the standards of educated classical Latin. Under various circumstances accusative forms encroach on the nominative in Vulgar Latin, but not as a rule nominative forms on the accusative.⁶⁵ The Romance languages, both in the singular and plural, largely preserve accusative forms rather than nominatives. The abnormality of the Bu Njem examples is nicely confirmed if they are contrasted with the findings of Herman's detailed study of errors in the use of the nominative in the corpus of African inscriptions.⁶⁶ Herman distinguishes between 'faults of agreement' (*fautes d'accord*), and 'faults of government' (*fautes de rection*). A fault of agreement can be seen at *CIL* VIII.21599:

pro salute imp. Caesaris M. <A>ntoni Gordiani . . . *pater patrie*.

Here *pater patrie* (nom.) is in apposition to the name in the genitive. Strictly it ought to be in the same case as the name, but the nominative often functions as a sort of unmarked case of apposition. A fault of government on the other hand is illustrated by *CIL* III.9735:

frateres frater (= *fratri*) fecerunt

'the brothers made it for their brother'. Here the noun *frater* is in the nominative instead of in the case required by its syntactic function, i.e. the dative.

Herman shows conclusively that errors involving the nominative of this second kind are extremely rare. In the African inscriptions (*CIL* VIII) there are forty six examples in which a nominative is employed instead of another case, usually a genitive or dative. Of these forty six errors, only two represent faults of government, and neither unequivocally shows a nominative for the accusative.⁶⁷ The vast majority of errors are in appositional expressions and the like.

If we return to our Bu Njem examples, we find on the contrary that these are largely errors of government. The only possible error of agreement is that in 101, where *barbarus* might be

⁶⁵ Isolated cases of the nominative for accusative can be found admitting of various explanations (see further below): see e.g. B. Löfstedt, *Studien über die Sprache der langobardischen Gesetze* (1961), 215–17. P. A. Gaeng, 'La morphologie nominale des inscriptions chrétiennes de l'Afrique', in M. Iliescu and W. Marxgut (eds), *Latin vulgare — latin tardif III. Actes du IIIème Colloque international sur le latin vulgare et tardif (Innsbruck, 2–5 septembre 1991)* (1992), 118, cites two alleged cases of nominative for accusative from African inscriptions, adding 'je n'ai trouvé aucun exemple de ce remplacement dans d'autres provinces étudiées'. His first example, *intus aque dulces* (= E. Diehl, *Inscriptiones Latinae Chris-*

tianae Veteres (1925–31), 785), is something of a curiosity. *Intus* is not a preposition, and in any case the words are correctly quoted from Virgil (*Aen.* 1.167), as Diehl points out.

⁶⁶ J. Herman, 'Recherches sur l'évolution grammaticale du latin vulgare: les emplois "fautifs" du nominatif', *Acta Classica Univ. Scient. Debreceniensis* 2 (1966), 109–12; = idem, *Du latin aux langues romanes. Études de linguistique historique* (ed. S. Kiss) (1990), 321–5. Here and later in this article I cite Herman's collected papers rather than the original publication.

⁶⁷ See Herman, op. cit. (n. 66), 322.

classified as appositional. But that is not necessarily the explanation for the nominative form, in view of 73.2–3, where *asinus* may be the primary subject in an acc. + infin. construction.

I now offer some further comments on the interpretation of these nominatives.

First, a form such as *barbarus* or *camellarius* might in theory be open to a simple phonetic or orthographic explanation. If neither *s* nor *m* were pronounced in final position, then someone attempting to write the language might write *s* or *m* where the other was historically correct. So *barbarum*, pronounced *barbaru*, is hypercorrectly written *barbarus*. Such an explanation would not be convincing for two reasons. First, in the Bu Njem material as a whole there are many cases of final *-m* omitted, but none of final *-s* (see VI.6). That would suggest that at this period and in this area, as in various other areas, final *s* was still stable. Secondly, a phonetic explanation would not account for the plural example *muli*=*mulos*.

Next *cuis*=*quem*. The use of *qui* or *quis* for *quem* is not a Vulgar Latin characteristic. The nominative-accusative distinction *qui*-*quem* was generally maintained, at least into early Romance.⁶⁸ It is very difficult to find cases of *qui* or *quis* for *quem*. I can offer only *Tab. Sul.* 99.2 ('exēcro qui inuolauerit **qui** Deomiorix de hosipitio suo perdidit'), which is not a true parallel, because *qui* is used where a neuter might have been expected. It is possible either that final *-d* has been omitted before another *d* (with *quid* used for *quod*, *quid* being the late Vulgar Latin neuter relative form), or that in these crude texts the writer changed construction after committing himself to the nominative form.⁶⁹ There are two possible explanations of *cuis* at Bu Njem. First, one cannot rule out a change of construction after the writer had written the nominative form. Alternatively, this may be a case of interference from Punic. The Punic relative pronoun was indeclinable, and hence did not show a distinction between nominative and accusative. Moreover in form it was rather similar to *quis*: it is sometimes transliterated in Greek and Latin as $\Upsilon\Sigma$, *ys*. Relative clauses are a common source of error among second-language learners,⁷⁰ and our sentence does have the additional abnormality of the repetition of *asinu*.

I turn now to *per camellarius*. One possibility is that *camellarius* is not singular but a misspelling of the accusative plural *camellarios*. This is the view of Marichal (47), whose interpretation of the group of examples is in my opinion implausible, and is certainly not consistent or adequately explained. His starting point is 76.5, where there is indeed an accusative plural form (*kamellarios*):

transmisi at te domine per kamellarios Iddibalis . . .

This is accompanied by what must surely be a genitive singular, *Iddibalis* = 'the camel drivers of Iddibal'.⁷¹ *Iddibal* is a Punic name attested in a number of Latin texts. Its usual nominative form is *Iddibal*, as in *CIL* v.4919.16, 'Iddibal Bosiharis f.', or in a fully Latinized guise, *Iddibalius* (*CIL* VIII.859). The genitive *Iddibalis* is well attested (*CIL* I². 2225, '[H]imilconi Idnibalis f. '; *CIL* v.4920.15, 'Boncarth Iddibalis f. ') and is predictable, given such names as *Hannibal*, *Hannibalis*. Marichal, however, apparently chooses to take *Iddibalis* as a plural, though he does not offer an explanation of his interpretation. In the index of native names (262) he glosses *Iddibalis* with the plural 'chameliers', but does not comment on the case form of *Iddibalis*. If he genuinely meant that the name was accusative (?) plural, this view would have the effect of producing a group of *camellarii* with the same name, unless, of course, one could assume that *Iddibalis* (plural) indicated a firm of camel drivers, a sort of *familia camellariorum*.⁷² But Punic did not possess such a plural use of personal names.⁷³ A further

⁶⁸ See W. D. Elcock, *The Romance Languages* (1960), 95. For Vulgar Latin developments in the paradigm of the relative, see V. Väänänen, *Introduction au latin vulgaire*³ (1981), 125.

⁶⁹ See J. N. Adams, 'British Latin: the text, interpretation and language of the Bath curse tablets', *Britannia* 23 (1992), 3.

⁷⁰ See, e.g., J. H. Schumann, 'The acquisition of English relative clauses by second language learners', in R. C. Scarcella and S. D. Krashen (eds), *Research in Second Language Acquisition. Selected Papers of the Los Angeles Second Language Acquisition Research Forum* (1980), 118–31, and M. S. Scott and G. R. Tucker, 'Error

analysis and English-language strategies of Arab students', *Language Learning* 24 (1974), 75, 87 (with tables showing the relative frequency of imperfect relative clauses).

⁷¹ *Iddibal* would be the $\sigma\nu\nu\omicron\delta\iota\alpha\sigma\chi\eta\varsigma$. For such men, see in general M. Rostovtzeff, 'Les inscriptions caravanières de Palmyre', in *Mélanges G. Glotz* (1932), II, 793–812 (at, e.g., 806).

⁷² This suggestion was offered by a member of the Editorial Committee.

⁷³ I am grateful to Dr Healey for information on this point.

difficulty for any interpretation which attempts to make the name plural lies in the ending (*-is*) of *Iddibalis*. This cannot be a Punic form. The base-form of the name is *Iddibal* ('DNB'L). The plural of masculine nouns was formed with the ending *-im*.⁷⁴ It follows that *-is* can only be a Latin inflection, and as such it is far more likely at this period and in this social milieu to be a genitive singular than an accusative plural. The *-is* accusative plural is not attested at Bu Njem, though *-es* is found (e.g. eight times in the letters). One is obliged to take *camellarios Iddibalis* at its face value. The reference may well be to a company (caravan) of sorts, but if so it will have been under the control of an individual *Iddibal*.

I move on to *per camellarius Iassucthan* and *per camellarius Iaremaban*. Here the names are uninflected. Marichal takes both as plural (262, s.vv., 'chameliers'), thereby apparently creating further groups of *camellarii* with the same name. The names cannot be plural (see above). Another difficulty for such an interpretation is that the *-os* accusative plural occurs regularly at Bu Njem, but there is no unambiguous use of *-us*.⁷⁵

Could we alternatively interpret *camellarius Iassucthan* on the model of *kamellarios Iddibalis*, i.e. as plural accusative + genitive singular? Such an interpretation is not out of the question. In Punic (though the names *Iassucthan* and *Iaremaban* are Libyan, not Punic)⁷⁶ a genitive relation may be expressed by juxtaposition of the dependent term with the head-noun (with the latter losing its stress: the so-called 'construct state').⁷⁷ In Latin, however, even of this unusual type, one would expect an explicit genitive marker. It is one thing to have an uninflected African name placed in *apposition* to an inflecting Latin word, but rather less likely that an uninflected name should have a more complex syntactic relationship, specified by no surface marker, to the juxtaposed Latin term. Even African names in the documents are given a genitive inflection (see 80.5). If Aemilius was capable of converting *Iddibal* to *Iddibalis*, then he could equally have converted *Iassucthan* to *Iassucthanis*.

I would offer two further points in favour of taking *per camellarius Iassucthan* and *p.c. Iaremaban* as cases of *per* + nominative singular (see also Appendix). First, in 79.3-4 there is an unambiguous reference to an individual Macargus who transports goods:

transmisi at te domi[ne per
Macargum siddipia trid[ici · ji ·

I have sent you, lord, by Macargus 2 *siddipia* of wheat.

This should be compared with the fragmentary document 88.5, where the same name, misspelt, is preceded by *camellarius*:

camel]larius · Ma<c>argus.

It follows that an individual camel-driver might be referred to in these documents by means of *camellarius* + name, and hence that an expression such as *camellarius Iassucthan* might in theory refer to a single individual. If *camellarius* + name in one document unequivocally refers to a single driver, it is difficult to believe that in other documents the same form *camellarius* + (uninflected) personal name refers to groups of drivers, particularly since Aemilius was capable of writing both the accusative form *-os* to mark plurality, and the *-is* genitive form to mark possession.

The expression *camellarius Macargus*, denoting an individual camel driver, has something else to tell us about the Latinity of the area, and about the interpretation of *camellarius Iassucthan* and *c. Iaremaban*. The word order *camellarius* + *Macargus* is aberrant, by the standards not only of Latin and Greek, but also of Punic, since it is the norm for a name to

⁷⁴ See J. Friedrich and W. Röllig, *Phönizisch-Punische Grammatik*² (1970), 104; Segert, *op. cit.* (n. 15), 111.

⁷⁵ It should, however, be noted that accusative plurals spelt *-us* do sometimes turn up in late texts. See, e.g., Löfstedt, *op. cit.* (n. 65), 86-8; J. Herman, 'Témoignage des inscriptions latines et préhistoire des langues romanes: le cas de la Sardaigne', in *idem, Du latin aux*

langues romanes, *op. cit.* (n. 66), 188; J. N. Adams, *The Text and Language of a Vulgar Latin Chronicle (Anonymus Valesianus II)* (1976), 42-3.

⁷⁶ See Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 262.

⁷⁷ See Friedrich-Röllig, *op. cit.* (n. 74), 154, 103 (§219); Segert, *op. cit.* (n. 15), 180.

precede the designation of a profession in all three languages.⁷⁸ The word order of *camellarius Macargus* must reflect a military convention (see Appendix). Whatever the motivation for the reversal, there is no obvious reason to look for a different syntactic relationship between *camellarius* + *Iassucthan*, from that between *camellarius* + *Macargus*.

My second argument in favour of taking *camellarius* as a nominative singular derives from the fragmentary passage 80.5:

tr[ansmisi] at te dom[ine] . . .
us *Fezinis filius* s[on]
tridici.

I have sent you, lord, by . . .-us, the son of Fezin(?) . . . of wheat.

Here *us Fezinis filius* must depend on *per*, as Marichal argues. If a name is missing, then it is inconceivable that *filius* could represent the plural *filios*. A group of transporters of the same name could not be sons of the same man. Even if we were to assume that a missing name was a collective indicating a *familia* of transporters, it would be hard to understand why a patronymic different from that collective/family name should have been attached. If on the other hand an individual was referred to, the patronymic causes no surprise.⁷⁹ Marichal must have accepted these various difficulties, because at 262 (cf. 37) he inconsistently takes *Fezinis filius* as referring to a single camel driver ('chamelier'). In fact the camel drivers of our documents, or at least those in charge of operations, are seen as individuals, not as undifferentiated groups. Not only are there *Macargus* and *Iddibal*, the latter with others under his control, but, in a different form of expression at 81, we hear of one *Glareus* ('suscipies ab Ġlareo ašgatui dua semis'). The patronymic at 80.5 (*Fezinis filius*) implies a traditional way of viewing such caravan leaders as individuals ('X the son of Y') rather than as unidentified members of a company. If *Macargus*, *Iddibal*, and *Glareus* were individual *camellarii*, why should *Iassucthan* and *Iaremaban*, named in a collocation of words identical to that containing *Macargus*, be taken to be pluralities of some sort? Groups of camel drivers there undoubtedly were, but the case of *camellarios Iddibalis* suggests that a caravan would be referred to by the name of its leader rather than by a collective/plural.

The problems raised by these various passages are numerous, but on balance I think it justifiable to take *camellarius Macargus*, *camellarius Iassucthan*, and *camellarius Iaremaban* as all of the same type, i.e. *camellarius* + name of an individual.⁸⁰ It would follow that in three places (I include *Fezinis filius*) *per* is construed with the nominative singular.

How is this usage to be explained, given that the nominative in this position would be highly deviant even by the standards of Vulgar Latin? At 79.4 Aemilius correctly wrote *per Macargum*; it would seem then that he applied a rule of Latin — i.e. the rule which converts a noun dependent on *per* into the accusative form — only sporadically. Punic did not have case inflections, and the form of a noun used after a preposition did not differ from that used when the noun was subject of a verb. It is as if Aemilius wrote out the given formula *transmisi at te domine per*, then sometimes filled the first empty slot with the base-form of the required noun, i.e. the nominative, forgetting to apply the rule that may have been alien to him, namely that *per* entailed not the base-form but the accusative.

A parallel of sorts for *per camellarius* might seem to be provided by C. Novius Eunus, *T.P.* xv.2.5–6, '*per Hessucus ser eius*' (contrasting with the correct version of the document,

⁷⁸ For Greek and Latin, cf., e.g. *O. Flor.* 15.3, ἐπεμφά σοι διὰ Κουίντου Ἰπποιατροῦ; R. Cavenaile, *Corpus Papyrorum Latinarum* (1958), 303.4, 'item per Dracontem **amaxitem**'; 303.8, 'misi tibe per Thiadicem **equitem**'; 304.13, 'misi tibe per Arrianum **equitem**'; *P. Oxy.* XLIV.3208, 'Ohapim **regium mensularium Oxsyrychitem**'. Some of these examples are in similar contexts to those in our documents. For information on this point about Punic, I am grateful to Dr Healey.

⁷⁹ In the caravan inscriptions of Palmyra (see Rostovtzeff, *op. cit.* (n. 71)), caravan leaders are constantly given their name and then a patronymic expression.

⁸⁰ Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 47, basing himself on the quantities transported according to letters 76–9, argues that in 79 one camel was needed, but in 76, 77, 78, three, four, and two respectively. This line of argument is questionable, and it does not help with the syntax of *per camellarius* + name. If there were more camels than one in a caravan, there might only have been one *camellarius*, or alternatively if there were more *camellarii* than one, Aemilius need only have named the leader.

xv.5.4-5, 'per Hesychum seruum eius'). *Per Hessucus* is likely to be an insignificant slip,⁸¹ but it at least deserves to be reconsidered in the light of the Bu Njem examples. There is a difference between *per Hessucus* and *per camellarius*. In the former it is the personal name which stands at the head of the phrase and bears the nominative inflection. There is evidence from various languages of a tendency for the nominative form of names to be used illogically instead of other case forms.⁸² Certain French personal names (Louis, Charles, Jules, Jacques, Georges) appear to reflect an original nominative form rather than the accusative which normally provided the base of Romance nouns,⁸³ though the origin of such names might alternatively lie in vocative forms (fossilized) which resulted from the merger of nominative with vocative. In Latin unconstrued nominative uses of names are well attested, but for the most part in association with verbs of naming or in appositional expressions.⁸⁴ It is not usual to find the nominative of a name which stands as the primary complement of a preposition. And such an explanation of *per Hessucus*, even if it were accepted, would in any case not be obviously applicable to *per camellarius Iassucthan*. An alternative hypothesis, that designations of occupations might have had a tendency to be fossilized in the nominative form, would be difficult to uphold.⁸⁵

It has been pointed out that the information conveyed by the case inflections in Latin was relatively slight.⁸⁶ Certainly after *per* the contribution of the case ending is insignificant, except in distinguishing singular from plural. The *-us* and *-um* endings might in theory have been used interchangeably to express singular number, with the case role of the noun expressed by the preposition. But in fact the reality of Latin usage was that nominative and accusative inflections were not as a rule used indifferently after *per*, despite the stray example in Eunus. Even at a much later period, in Merovingian Latin, a clear distinction was preserved between the nominative and oblique case forms,⁸⁷ and it is the oblique case forms which are selected after prepositions. It is remarkable that the Bu Njem material should contain a cluster of examples of *per* + nominative. Aemilius' exploitation of the potential interchangeability of the nominative and accusative singular after *per* cannot be paralleled, and I am inclined to look to the influence of Punic rather than to the apparent parallelism of *per Hessucus*, which is best dismissed as an error. *Per* takes the accusative with extreme frequency and consistency at all periods, whereas Aemilius prefers the nominative to the accusative.

Finally, the imperfect acc. + infin. in 101. Provided that *barbarus* is not simply an example of the nominative of apposition, then this would be a case of incomplete rule application.⁸⁸ After *scias* the writer has correctly used the infinitive *benise* but has failed to apply the second rule which converts the subject in such an embedded clause into the accusative. The surface case-form matches the underlying case.

⁸¹ As I suggested, Adams, op. cit. (n. 64), 243. This and a few other similar examples are also taken by the *TLL* (forthcoming, s.v. *per*) as arising 'errore scribae uel lapidarii'. The other examples cited are manifestly slips or special cases of other types: *CIL* III.7791, 'per Antiochu sacerdos loci' (acc. *Antiochu*, followed by an appositional nominative at a further remove from the preposition); *CIL* III.10515, 'per Siti doretus patrem' (= *per Sit* <*tium Theo*> *doretu* <*m*>, Mommsen(?); the mistaken nominative use is corrected in *patrem*); *CIL* III.14184.27, 'per L. Apronius Pium' (again the slip is corrected in the next name); *AE* 1964, 251, 'p(er) Qui(ntio) Prisciano et Iuli(o) Marco, *Ilviri quinquennales*' (another appositional nominative). I am grateful to Dr P. Flury for supplying me with material forthcoming in the *TLL*.

⁸² See Löfstedt, op. cit. (n. 59), 1², 76, with additional bibliography.

⁸³ See, e.g. A. Ewert, *The French Language*² (1943), 130.

⁸⁴ See Löfstedt, op. cit. (n. 59), 1², 76-80; also J. B. Hofmann and A. Szantyr, *Lateinische Syntax und Sti-*

listik (1965), 27-8, with bibliography; J. Bastardas Parera, *Particularidades Sintacticas del Latin Medieval* (1953), 23-4.

⁸⁵ Some of the Romance nouns which might seem to reflect Latin nominative forms (as distinct from expected accusatives) are indeed descriptive of occupations (e.g. Fr. *pâtre* beside learned *pasteur*, *peintre*, It. *sarto* (<*sartor*), *curato* (<*curator*)), but they are not normally accounted for by historical linguists from this semantic feature (see Ewert, op. cit. (n. 83), 130, Tekavčić, op. cit. (n. 24), 46). In these cases too (cf. Louis etc. above) it was probably the vocative (which was usually indistinguishable from the nominative) which was fossilized: see e.g. E. Bourciez, *Éléments de linguistique romane*⁴ (1956), 231, §216c.

⁸⁶ See H. Pinkster, *Latin Syntax and Semantics* (1990), 61.

⁸⁷ See in general L. F. Sas, *The Noun Declension System in Merovingian Latin* (1937).

⁸⁸ For this phenomenon as a feature of second-language learning, see Richards, op. cit. (n. 29), 177-8.

v. 4. *Conclusion*

The ostraca are so fragmentary that one is inevitably clutching at straws in attempting to identify interference from a substratum language. Possible learners' errors are also difficult to pin down with any certainty; because 'vulgar' documents regularly contain aberrations which do not admit of rational linguistic explanation. Nevertheless I have discussed a considerable accumulation of abnormalities: *bone, quere ad, consules futuros, cuis = quem, per camellarius, muli = mulos, benise . . . barbarus*. Of these I would particularly stress the unusual collection of nominatives for the accusative. The evidence does not prove that there were Punic- (or Libyan-) speaking soldiers at Bu Njem who had learnt Latin imperfectly, but it is consistent with such a conclusion. One of the writers who committed such errors, Aemilius Aemilianus, seems to have negotiated with native camel drivers, and he used various African terms synonymously. If he was not guilty of mistakes, that could mean that he had an understanding of local dialects.

Two of the most striking errors listed above are in letters written in hands described by Marichal (41) as 'rudimentary', namely *cuis = quem* (along with the associated repetition of *asinu*) in 99, and *benise . . . barbarus* in 101. The writers were barely literate. Letter 95, containing *quere ad*, is in a mediocre hand.⁸⁹

The army coped, it seems, with low levels of literacy by standardizing the form of documents, at least locally to meet local requirements. It thereby diminished the element of free composition required of the writer. The case of *transmitto* vs. *mitto* suggests that polysemy was avoided in the simplified official lexicon.

VI. VULGAR LATIN ELEMENTS

An extreme possibility was raised at the start of this paper, namely that Latin may have been written in official documents at Bu Njem, but scarcely spoken. Doubts have already been cast on such a possibility. The errors committed by Aemilius Aemilianus are in some cases abnormalities, but he also, as I have suggested, admitted some misspellings which reflect the genuine colloquial language. In this section I examine systematically Vulgar Latin elements in the Latin of Bu Njem. It will be shown that the documents display a mass of features redolent of substandard varieties of the spoken language. There is a good deal of consistency to the misspellings which will be dealt with. Consistently *correct* spellings would reveal little about the currency of spoken Latin at Bu Njem, since they might reflect the efforts of a small secretariat who were carefully following model documents and spelling rules. Consistent *misspellings*, on the other hand, are likely to have been determined by the speech patterns of the area rather than by a rule book.

VI.1. *ae / e, Vowels*

E is constantly written for the original *ae* diphthong (some fifty one times, compared with fourteen examples of *ae*, one of which is hypercorrect, 133, *aegregia*). The great majority of examples of the digraph are in names, such as *Caecilius* (twice), and particularly *Aemilius* (three times) and *Aemilianus* (six times). In common nouns and adjectives, on the other hand, the *e*-spelling is regularly used (e.g. twenty two times in the adjective *aeger*, which is never spelt with a digraph). I conclude that the *ae* diphthong had definitely been converted into a monophthong at Bu Njem.

On the other hand there is not a single misspelling in the documents which reflects the Vulgar Latin merger of *ē* and *ĩ* or *ō* and *ũ*. When, for example, final *-m* is omitted in the

⁸⁹ Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 62.

accusative singular form of a second declension word, final *-u* is retained,⁹⁰ even though in other late documents it is not uncommon in this environment for an *o*-spelling to be found, reflecting the merger of *ū* with *ō* in the form of close *o*.⁹¹

The situation at Bu Njem — with *ae* reduced to a monophthong, but the distinctions between *ō/ū* and *ē/ī* preserved — is exactly that found in the first century A.D. in the tablets of Novius Eunus,⁹² and it provides a further indication that *ae* was reduced to a monophthong before the vowel mergers took place.⁹³ Flobert has recently suggested on the evidence of the use of an apex over *ae* in some inscriptions of Lyons and Vienne that '*ae*, comme *au*, est encore une diphthongue sous le Haut-Empire',⁹⁴ but the evidence of Eunus is unequivocal and early,⁹⁵ and the placing of an apex over *ae* in inscriptions may reflect a 'correct' writing convention inspired by the very fact that in speech *ae* had been monophthongized.⁹⁶

There remain a few vocalic misspellings at Bu Njem which are special cases, but typical of varieties of spoken Latin.

Carcare for *carcerem* (8) displays opening of *e* before *r*.⁹⁷ Cf. *Appendix Probi* 43, *carcer non carcar*, and note the form of the Latin loan word in Welsh, *carchar*.⁹⁸

If *accipit* at e.g. 8.13, 14 ('*balneus accipit . . . furnus accipit . . .*') is intended as a perfect tense (cf. 41 '[ac]cepit [balneus]'),⁹⁹ the spelling could not be taken as a manifestation of a general confusion of *ī* with *ē*; it would show an Umlaut change, of a type well attested,¹⁰⁰ effected originally in the first person by the following *ī(-cepī > -cipī, feci > fici* etc.), and then generalized to the other persons. The *i*-spelling is common in perfect forms of *capio*,¹⁰¹ but our cases, if they are such, are remarkably early.

Fornus for *furnus* at 7 and 49(?) represents a conflation of *furnus* with its near synonym *fornax*. There is some interchange between *o* and *u* in the spelling of these two words.¹⁰²

Vrtato at 113 (= *Hortato*) shows the closing effect of *r* + consonant on a preceding *o* (e.g. *Appendix Probi* 25, *formica non furnica*).

The spelling *ura* = *hora* (113) is abnormal.¹⁰³ It is not clear how it should be interpreted, but aberrant spellings showing *u* for *ō* are not uncommon.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁰ See n. 50.

⁹¹ Similarly in Terentianus *-u* occurs as an accusative singular ending, but *-o* does not (J. N. Adams, *The Vulgar Latin of the Letters of Claudius Terentianus* (P. Mich. VIII, 467-72) (1977), 23), and in Eunus there is one case of *-u* (acc.) but none of *-o* (Adams, op. cit. (n. 64), 236). Contrast the material assembled from later texts and discussed by Löfstedt, op. cit. (n. 65), 226-33, where *-o* rather than *-u* is in alternation with *-um*. In the early period, represented for example by the Pompeian inscriptions, accusatives in *-o* (for which see Väänänen, op. cit. (n. 64), 29) are likely to derive from the old accusative *-om*, whereas in the late period such misspellings would reflect the merger of *ō* and *ū*.

⁹² Adams, op. cit. (n. 64), 231.

⁹³ On this chronology see Adams, op. cit. (n. 64), 231, R. G. G. Coleman, 'The monophthongization of *ae/* and the Vulgar Latin vowel system', *TPhS* (1971), 185.

⁹⁴ P. Flobert, 'Le témoignage épigraphique des apices et des *I* longae sur les quantités vocaliques en latin impérial', in G. Calboli (ed.), *Latin vulgare - latin tardif II. Actes du IIème Colloque international sur le latin vulgare et tardif* (Bologna, 29 août - 2 septembre 1988) (1990), 105.

⁹⁵ Similarly at Pompeii *ae* is often replaced by *e* (Väänänen, op. cit. (n. 64), 23-5), and in Terentianus the *e*-spelling is almost as common as *ae* (Adams, op. cit. (n. 64), 11-12). On the other hand at La Graufesenque *ae* occurs a few times, but there is no case of reduction to *e* (R. Marichal, *Les graffites de La Graufesenque* (1988), 59). It is obviously likely that there were regional variations in the chronology of the monophthongization of *ae*.

⁹⁶ The stability of *ē/ī* and *ō/ū* at Bu Njem might be seen as at variance with Herman's argument ('Un vieux dossier réouvert: les transformations du système latin des quantités vocaliques', in idem, *Du latin aux langues romanes*, op. cit. (n. 66), 217-31) that in Africa 'l'allongement des voyelles accentuées brèves et l'abrégement massif des voyelles longues non accentuées semblent avoir été particulièrement précoces' (217).

⁹⁷ See e.g. Herman, 'Évolution *a > e* en latin tardif? Essai sur les liens entre la phonétique historique et la phonologie diachronique', in idem, *Du latin aux langues romanes*, op. cit. (n. 66), 209; Adams, op. cit. (n. 64), 13-14; idem, op. cit. (n. 64), 231; Marichal, op. cit. (n. 65), 58.

⁹⁸ See further Adams, op. cit. (n. 69), 12, with bibliography.

⁹⁹ See Marichal, *Bu Njem*, index 274; also 46.

¹⁰⁰ See A. Carnoy, *Le latin d'Espagne d'après les inscriptions*² (1906), 28; Bourciez, op. cit. (n. 85), 150; Löfstedt, op. cit. (n. 65), 22-8, 98-9; Adams, op. cit. (n. 65), 40-1.

¹⁰¹ Löfstedt, op. cit. (n. 65), 22, 26. Löfstedt (27) offers an additional explanation of *-cipit* for *-cepit*: 'Bei der Schreibung *-cipit* für *-cepit* mag auch das *c* einen Einfluss ausgeübt haben . . . Eine derartige Beeinflussung halte ich für sehr wahrscheinlich bei der regelmässigen Schreibung *mercide* statt *mercede* im Sangallensis des Edikts'.

¹⁰² See Adams in A. K. Bowman and J. D. Thomas, *Vindolanda: the Latin Writing Tablets* (1983), 73.

¹⁰³ See Löfstedt, op. cit. (n. 65), 71-2.

¹⁰⁴ See Löfstedt's list, op. cit. (n. 65), 69-70.

VI.2. *Hiatus*

Vowels in hiatus were subject to various types of modifications at an early stage, as various recently published documents from the early Imperial period show.¹⁰⁵ The Bu Njem tablets show some typical changes:

(a) Contraction of two vowels of the same or similar quality:¹⁰⁶ *mi* (86), *quintanari* (2, 3, 5, 7, 9, etc.), *stationari* (2, 6, 7, 8, 9, etc.). *Ex is*, which is common in daily reports,¹⁰⁷ may represent *his* or a contraction of *iis*.

(b) Closing of *e* > *i* after a consonant:¹⁰⁸ *ualias* (99).

(c) Insertion of the glides [w] or [j] between vowels of different quality in hiatus:¹⁰⁹ *duua* (86), clearly a phonetic spelling of the vulgar neuter form *dua*, which occurs at 79, 81; *tuuos* (86). The glide in the latter may perhaps be taken as countering a tendency for *tuus* to be reduced to *tus*; *tus*, with reflexes in Romance, is already attested in Claudius Terentianus (*P. Mich.* VIII.471.17).¹¹⁰

For the glide [j], see *ḡalneiī* (7). The presence of this glide in such environments may be vividly illustrated from the Latin of La Graufesenque, where *I longa*, which was undoubtedly used in the area to signify [j], frequently appears between vowels in hiatus: e.g. *uinarijus*, *inbratarija*, *atramentarijī*, *mortarijī*.¹¹¹ The spelling *Pompeus* for *Pompeius* (26, 67), which is attested, for example, at Pompeii¹¹² and also in African inscriptions,¹¹³ is presumably an inverse spelling in reaction against the tendency for *i* to be written between vowels where a glide had developed.

(d) Loss of pretonic *u* after the consonant cluster *br*: *febrarias* (74, 76, 77, 101), > It. *febbraio*, Fr. *février* etc. The form is already found at Pompeii (*CIL* IV.4182).¹¹⁴ In the fragmentary text 83 there may be a comparable misspelling *tra* = *tria* ('. . . uiginti tra . . .'). *Tra*, which reflects first a shift of the accent to the more open vowel (*tria* > *triá*), then loss of unstressed *i* after the consonant cluster *tr*, occurs twice in Novius Eunus.¹¹⁵

(e) In *octaum* (106), *fugitiu* = *fugituum* (71), and *Datius* (26, 67) [w] was presumably absorbed by the following back vowel, as in *auunculus* > *aunculus* (> Fr. *oncle*); cf. also *Appendix Probi* 29 *auus non aus*, 62 *Flauus non Flaus*, 174 *rius non rius*, and the constant spelling *serus* = *seruus* in the Bath curse tablets.¹¹⁶

(f) If *Optantus* (97) represents *Optantius*, then the spelling belongs to a familiar category,¹¹⁷ whereby *i* (or *e*) in hiatus in an unstressed syllable is omitted in writing. Another spelling of this type in the ostraca is *facent* = *facient* (81). It is of some interest that a poem found in the bath-house at Bu Njem, written by a centurion Q. Avidius Quintianus (for which, see below, n. 162), contains the form *harenacis* = *harenaceis*, with the syllabic structure guaranteed by the metre. Such forms must represent the syllabic reduction caused by the conversion of the short vowel into *yod*.

(g) *Puros* = *pueros* (86) is a special case. One might perhaps have expected the insertion of a glide (cf. *CIL* IV.3730 *poueri* = *pueri*, XI.6289 *puuer*) rather than loss of the unstressed vowel, but vowel loss/contraction and glide-insertion are complementary tendencies. Thus we find both *Febrarias* (see above, (d)) and *Februarias*¹¹⁸ as variants of *Februarias*; note too *mortarijī* at (c) above, alongside *stationari* in (a).

¹⁰⁵ See Adams, op. cit. (n. 64), 233–5; Marichal, op. cit. (n. 95), 64–5 (on *I longa* and its significance at La Graufesenque); Flobert, 'Les graffites de la Graufesenque: un témoignage sur le gallo-latin sous Néron', in M. Iliescu and W. Marxgut (eds), *Latin vulgare — latin tardif III. Actes du IIIème Colloque international sur le latin vulgare et tardif (Innsbruck, 2–5 septembre 1991)*, 106; also Väänänen, op. cit. (n. 64), 33–41.

¹⁰⁶ For early examples of the phenomenon see Väänänen, op. cit. (n. 64), 39–40; Adams, op. cit. (n. 64), 235.

¹⁰⁷ See Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 53–4.

¹⁰⁸ For examples at Pompeii, see Väänänen, op. cit. (n. 64), 36–7.

¹⁰⁹ For a few such examples, see Väänänen, op. cit. (n. 68), 45; idem, op. cit. (n. 64), 49; Adams, op. cit. (n. 69), 10.

¹¹⁰ See B. Löfstedt, 'Die betonten Hiatusvokale in Wörtern vom Typus *pius, tuus, meus*', *Eranos* 60 (1962), 88–9; also C. Lyons, 'On the origin of the Old French strong-weak possessive distinction', *TPhS* (1986), 1–41, esp. 20–1.

¹¹¹ See Marichal, op. cit. (n. 95), 64.

¹¹² See Väänänen, op. cit. (n. 64), 49.

¹¹³ See Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 64 n. 8.

¹¹⁴ See Väänänen, op. cit. (n. 64), 41.

¹¹⁵ See Adams, op. cit. (n. 64), 233–4.

¹¹⁶ See Adams, op. cit. (n. 69), 9.

¹¹⁷ See Adams, op. cit. (n. 64), 233 with bibliography.

¹¹⁸ At Vindolanda: see *Tab. Vind.* II, 186 (op. cit. (n. 40)).

(h) For elision of *u* before a following vowel, see 99 *un asinu* (= *unu(m) asinum*). Here again the vowel which is lost is unstressed. Cf., at Pompeii, *CIL* IV.4385 *audomnia* (= *aude omnia(?)*), 8931 *mentules* (= *mentula es*).¹¹⁹

VI.3. Syncope

Represented by the spelling *speclis*.¹²⁰

VI.4. Prothetic Vowel

Found in the verb *scio* (83 *isciāş*, 104 *iscire*). Cf. Log. *iskire*.¹²¹

VI.5. *b / u*

b is often written for *u* (84, 85 *Octabio*, 85 *Octabis*, 89 *nabes*, 97 *nabibus*, 101 *benise*, 101 *bice*, 108 *b[alere]*, 110 *basa*, 147 *salbo*), but there is no case of *u* for *b*. The greater frequency of *b* for *u* is familiar from a wide variety of documents.¹²²

Of particular note is the spelling *Nobuem̄(res)* at 17. Cf. *CIL* III.7595, 'Iunius Ermes II u(ir) Iobi *buotun* . . .' (= *uotum*, but text problematical); note too Isidore's etymology of *uacca*, *Etym.* XII.1.31, 'uacca dicta, quasi *boacca*'. The spelling *bu* for *u* may be an attempt to represent the bilabial fricative [β] which possibly developed from a merger of *b* and *u*.¹²³

VI.6. Final *-m*, *-s*

In the Bu Njem material as a whole there are forty four cases of the omission of final *-m*, forty two of them in accusative singular forms (cf. 76 *septe*, 77 *noue*). Final *-m* is written fifty four times (about forty one times in the accusative singular; not all forms are possible to interpret, because of the fragmentary state of some texts).

The breakdown of these figures across the various declensions is of considerable interest. The following table shows the frequency of *-a* vs. *-am*, *-u* vs. *um*, and *-e* vs. *-em* in the accusative singular:

<i>-a</i>	<i>-am</i>
18	3
<i>-u</i>	<i>-um</i>
22	19
<i>-e</i>	<i>-em</i>
2	19

The omission of *-m* is thus markedly more frequent after *a* than after *u* or *e*. This phenomenon has been observed in a wide variety of late texts.¹²⁴ However the

¹¹⁹ See Väänänen, op. cit. (n.64), 41.

¹²⁰ Found ten times: Marichal, *Bu Njem*, index 266, s.v.

¹²¹ See Meyer-Lübke, op. cit. (n. 24), 7722.

¹²² See A. S. Gratwick, 'Latinitas Britannica: was British Latin archaic?', in N. Brooks (ed.), *Latin and the Vernacular Languages in Early Medieval Britain* (1982), 23; Adams, op. cit. (n. 64), 235.

¹²³ On the bilabial fricative, see Väänänen, op. cit. (n. 68), 50.

¹²⁴ See Löfstedt, op. cit. (n. 65), 226–8 for statistics and discussion. Löfstedt (228) relates the frequency of *-a* to the transfer of neuter plurals into the feminine singular.

disproportionate frequency of *-a* is to be explained, it provides a subtle unifying thread linking the Latin written at Bu Njem with that written in other areas.

The figure for the retention of *-m* after *-e* is artificially high, since eighteen of the nineteen cases are accounted for by *salutem* at the head of letters. This conventional letter-opening was so well established that it was correctly spelt.

In contrast to final *-m*, final *-s* is remarkably stable. I have noted some 363 examples of *-s* in final position, but no certain example of *-s* omitted (*-atianu* at 94 is probably an accusative singular, and it would be unjustified to treat *ad tessera* at 95 as a reduction of *ad tesserās*, given the frequency with which *-m* is omitted after *-a*).

The contrasting treatment of these two final consonants is typical of many texts. *-s* was undoubtedly preserved much longer than *-m*.¹²⁵

VI.7. Simplification, Gemination

There are only two examples of false geminates. *Appoca* (< ἀποχή) at 86 is probably a special case, displaying a particular type of orthographic error: a digraph has been used in the wrong part of the word (*pp* — *c* rather than *p* — *ch*; cf. Claud. Terent., *P. Mich.* VIII.468.54 *Tjurranium* for *Turannium*, and *Acceronio* = *Acerronio* in Novius Eunus, *T.P.* XV.2.1).¹²⁶ The other case is in the name *Silluānus* at 95.

Simplification of geminates is especially common in the inscriptions of Africa.¹²⁷ The only examples noted by Marichal¹²⁸ show the change *ss* > *s* (147 *iusero*, *iuse[runt]* (cf. e.g. *CIL* V.215), 68 *misus* (cf. *CIL* III.1636), 95 *tesera*, 101 *benise*, 107 *risimo*), but this list is not quite complete. Add *atulisti* (99), and note too the following misspellings, two of them in the same letter: 101.4, 'scias domine benise *a meos* refuga Aban barbarus'; 101.9, 'trasmisi *a te* per M'; 104, 't[rans]misi ā ṭe'. The second and third examples are not difficult to interpret. In the formula *transmisi at te* the *d* is regularly assimilated to the following *t* (*at te*, see e.g. 76–9; a common assimilation of voice (see below), which caused confusion in the spellings of *at* and *ad*: see Quint. I.7.5).¹²⁹ For *at te*, see e.g. Claud. Terent., *P. Mich.* VIII.472.17. The writer has simplified the geminate in *atte* (which, since *ad* was proclitic, had only one accent and was in effect a single lexeme).

A meos might possibly be interpreted along the same lines. The *d* may have been assimilated to *m* (**am meos*), and the geminate simplified. But what makes *a meos* exceptional is the fact that the consonant group *-dm-* (as in compounds beginning *adm-*) was not usually subject to assimilation.¹³⁰ It is a possibility that *a meos* represents interference from Punic. Note Segert §35.23 (67): 'At the end of a word or syllable, the dental consonants /d/ and /t/ and the liquid /l/ — articulated at the same place — frequently disappeared in later Punic'. This feature might of course also account for *a = at*. *A meos* is the more remarkable in that the misspelling opened the way for *ad* to be confused with its opposite *a* (*ab*), especially since prepositions regularly took the accusative in Vulgar Latin.

There is a striking accumulation of errors in the letter numbered 101, some of them typical of Vulgar Latin, but others abnormal. More or less unsurprising are *bice = uice*, the metathesized spelling *Flaniminus*, *benise = uenisse*, the date *idibus Febrarias* (see below), the spelling of *Febrarias*, and *trasmisi*, but *piciparis = principalis*, *a meos*, and the nominative *barbarus* in an acc. + infin. construction are less easy to explain. The second group of errors suggests that Flamininus' Vulgar Latin had peculiar features.

I note in passing that *at = ad* occurs ten times in the Bu Njem material, six times in the expression *at te* (71, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80), and at 15 (*at porta*), 34 (*at balneu*), 46 (*at pretoriu*), 37 (*at cens*[]). In nine of the ten cases it precedes a voiceless stop. Here is clear evidence that the spelling was determined by assimilation of voice to the following phoneme.

¹²⁵ But on the special case of the documents of La Graufesenque, see Marichal, op. cit. (n. 95), 68–70; Flobert, op. cit. (n. 105), 109–10.

¹²⁶ See Adams, op. cit. (n. 64), 238.

¹²⁷ See Kiss, op. cit. (n. 64), 75–6.

¹²⁸ *Bu Njem*, index, 275.

¹²⁹ See Sommer, op. cit. (n. 57), 203; Adams, op. cit. (n. 91), 27–8.

¹³⁰ See O. Prinz, 'Zur präfixassimilation im antiken und frühmittelalterlichen Latein', *ALMA* 21 (1951), 97–8; Kiss, op. cit. (n. 64), 33. Such assimilations can, however, be found in medieval manuscripts.

VI.8. *Assimilation in Consonant Clusters*

With *Nouemres* (109), showing *mbr* > *mr*, cf. *memra* = *membra* Audollent 134.B.1,¹³¹ = *CIL* x.8249. Similar is *umlicus* (Audollent, 135.A.4), < **umblicus* < *umbilicus*.¹³²

The loss of *n* before *s* was a standard feature of the spoken language from an early period (see Velius Longus, *GL* vii.79.1–2 on Cicero's pronunciation of *forēsia*, *hortēsia*).¹³³ It is attested at Bu Njem a number of times in the prefix *trans-* > *tras-* (86, 101, 105, 148).

VI.9. *Haplology*

The spelling *Restutus* for *Restitutus* (40, 50) is widespread, but *naginta* (76), which, as Marichal suggests,¹³⁴ must stand for *nonaginta*, is probably unique in extant Latin. If so it would not be the only unique misspelling of a numeral (cf. *trigina*, twice in Novius Eunus).¹³⁵

VI.10. *Intervocalic Voicing of Stops*

Triticum is always spelt with its first intervocalic stop voiced (*tridicum*: 76, 77, 78, 79, 80). Evidence continues to accumulate suggesting that voicing was widespread in this lexical item (cf. *CIL* iv.8830, Novius Eunus, *T.P.* xv.3.1);¹³⁶ persistent voicing in one word is not necessarily evidence for a general voicing-rule in this environment.

There is no other case of an intervocalic stop voiced at Bu Njem.

VI.11. *Dates*

There are some orthodox dates in the Bu Njem material, but also certain oddities. The date in 105 is traditional in form:

tertium Idus Martias.

Here *ante diem* is omitted before *tertium*, a common form of omission (e.g. Tac., *Ann.* vi.25.3, 'quintum decimum kal. Nouembris').¹³⁷ *Idus Martias* follows in the accusative plural (with *Martias* agreeing with *Idus*). Cf. 106:

octaum Id[us] Maias.

But contrast 101:

tertium Idibus Febrarias.

Febrarias has its almost fossilized accusative form, but it qualifies the ablative *Idibus* in this case. Cf. *CIL* x.4545¹³⁸, 'dps est Idib. Magias', Diehl, *ILCV* 2955E, 'dp. Nonis Nobenbres', Diehl, *ILCV* 3101, 'depositus Vrsicinus Nonis Octobres'.¹³⁹ The lack of agreement in these

¹³¹ A. Audollent, *Defixionum tabellae* (1904); on the phenomenon, see Sommer, op. cit. (n. 57), 186.

¹³² See M. Jeanneret, *La langue des tablettes d'exécution latines* (1918), 55. J. Pirson, *La langue des inscriptions latines de la Gaule* (1901), 93, cites *Iamblychus* = *Iamblichus* from *CIL* XIII.2374, but I have been unable to find the correct inscription.

¹³³ See Sommer, op. cit. (n. 57), 183–4; M. Leumann, *Lateinische Laut- und Formenlehre*⁶ (1977), 146.

¹³⁴ *Bu Njem*, 101 n. 14, 184, 274.

¹³⁵ Adams, op. cit. (n. 64), 241.

¹³⁶ See Adams, op. cit. (n. 64), 240, with bibliography.

¹³⁷ See Konjetzny, op. cit. (n. 52), 329 with n. 3; Svennung, op. cit. (n. 52), 252.

¹³⁸ = Diehl, *ILCV*, op. cit. (n. 65), 2349 adn.

¹³⁹ See further Diehl, *ILCV*, III, 304.

examples reflects the syntactic opacity of the traditional dating system, which was clearly not felt only by those at Bu Njem.

The ablative use of *Idibus* above (assuming that the form was interpreted by the writer as an ablative), must have arisen from a conflation of such expressions as *Idibus Febr.* and *tertium Idus Febr.*

Also abnormal is 103:

nono Idus Ma[.

Here *nono* (sc. *die*) in the ablative is due to a shift from the expression-type *tertium Idus Martias*, where *tertium* lacks a transparent morphological marker indicating 'time at which', to the type *tertio die Idus Martias*.¹⁴⁰ What makes our date unusual is that the seventh of March or May (i.e. nine days before the Ides) happens to be the Nones,¹⁴¹ yet the writer chose to date by the Ides. The old dating system was obviously in a state of collapse.

There remains an unusual use of *Iulium* and *Ianuarium* at 95:

uarias misi tesseract Secedi Iuli-
um Ianuarium Secedi
viii kal. Maias.

I sent various *tesserae* to Secedi, in July and January, to Secedi, 24 April.

Why should *Iulium* and *Ianuarium* be in the accusative instead of the ablative (with or without *in*)? One possibility is that there has been an analogical extension of an attested syntactic development in dates. The expression-type *tertium Idus Martias* (see above) gave rise to a fossilized use of *Idus Martias* et sim., in the sense of the ablative *Idibus Martiis*: e.g. *CIL* vi.9488.1, 'defunta est Idus Sept.'¹⁴² It is possible that on the analogy of this use of the accusative unaccompanied names of the months came to be used in the accusative instead of the ablative (= (*mense*) *Ianuario* etc.).

VI.12. *propositus* = *praepositus*

Praepositus is used frequently in the documents, of the commanding officer.¹⁴³ Twice it is replaced by *propositus*, both times in letters by one Octabis [*sic*]¹⁴⁴ Aemilianus. The hand of the letters is classified by Marichal (41) as 'rudimentary'.

84 Octabio Fes[to decurioni
proposito m[eo Octabis Emilianus.

85 Octabio F[esto decurioni proposito meo
.....
Octabis Em[ilianus salutem
[d]ecurio **prop[ositus]**.

This is a significant error. The prefixes *prae-* and *pro-* were conflated as Latin developed into Romance.¹⁴⁵ *Propositus* < *praepositus* survived as OFr. *provost*, whereas the form *praepositus*

¹⁴⁰ See Konjetzny, op. cit. (n. 52), 329, and cf. *O. Bu Njem*, 109 *die Idus Nouemres* (cf. Diehl, *ILCV*, III, 307, e.g. Nos 2459, 2610 adn.).

¹⁴¹ cf. Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 62.

¹⁴² See Konjetzny, op. cit. (n. 52), 330 n. 2, Svennung, op. cit. (n. 52), 252.

¹⁴³ See Marichal, *Bu Njem*, index 266, s.v.

¹⁴⁴ The alternation *-ius/-is* is not uncommon in Latin *gentilicia*: see F. Neue and C. Wagener, *Formenlehre der*

lateinischen Sprache I³ (1902), 211. In the early period the *-is* form reflects Oscan influence: see Leumann, op. cit. (n. 133), 423. In the later period Greek influence is a possibility, since *-ios* and *-iov* tended to be reduced to *-is* and *-iv*, and these endings appear in Latin loan-words: see B. Meinersmann, *Die lateinischen Wörter und Namen in den griechischen Papyri* (1927), 116. It is difficult to know what to make of such a spelling at Bu Njem.

¹⁴⁵ See Svennung, op. cit. (n. 52), 378.

is reflected in Provençal (*prebosde*) and Catalan (*prebost*).¹⁴⁶ *Propositus* occurs at (e.g.) *CIL* III.14406a.¹⁴⁷

VI.13. *Indeclinable Place Names*

Twice *Golas* is used as an indeclinable place name complementing *moror* 'live, stay':

75 dedi ad usus[m]ilitum
]mor[ant]ium [G]olaş.

... I presented for the use of soldiers staying at *Golas*.

81 ad usus militum moran-
tium *Golas*.

Here the indeclinable (fossilized) name has locative function.

On the other hand another vernacular place name, *Secedi*, is used (without case marker or preposition) in a directional sense (= 'to') at 95:

uarias misi taseras **Secedi** Iuli-
um Ianuarium **Secedi**
viii kal(endas) Maias.

The writer has here insistently repeated himself.

By contrast, with this same place name the idea of separation ('from') is expressed by a preposition at 94 (*a Secedi*). There is a system of sorts at work here. A non-declining non-Latin place name might be used on its own in locative or directional senses,¹⁴⁸ but required a preposition to express separation. There was a falling together of locative/directional adverbials in Vulgar Latin, as evidenced on the one hand by locatives such as *Romae*, *Alexandriae* used in a directional sense,¹⁴⁹ and on the other by accusatives used in a locative sense: e.g. *Anon. Val.* 71, 'item *Ticenum* palaciu terminas amphitheatrum et alios muros ciuitatis fecit', 80, 'Romae et *Rauennam* triumphauit'.¹⁵⁰ Separation would, however, normally need to be explicitly marked.¹⁵¹

VI.14. *cum suriacas* (73)

What does *suriacas* mean? Marichal (III) paraphrases it as 'étoffes syriennes', without explanation, but I would tentatively propose another possibility. If *suriacas* is a substantivized adjective, then its feminine gender would derive from that of the deleted noun. A possible noun is *faba*.

Syriaca (*faba*) has an interesting history. It must originally have indicated a type of bean (see below), but the expression acquired another meaning which I mention here only to eliminate it from consideration. *Faba syriaca* was a popular name of the nettle-tree, Fr. *micocoulier* (= L. *Celtis australis*):¹⁵² see Serv., *Georg.* II.84, 'lotos ... illa deorum miseratione in arborem uersa est, quae uulgo faba Syriaca dicitur'.

¹⁴⁶ Meyer-Lübke, op. cit. (n.24), 6722; and particularly W. von Wartburg, *Französisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* IX (1959), 303 on the history of the word and its various meanings.

¹⁴⁷ Cited by Meyer-Lübke, op. cit. (n.24). See further M. Bonnet, *Le Latin de Grégoire de Tours* (1890), 238 n. 5.

¹⁴⁸ But note *ad Boinag* (e.g. 2).

¹⁴⁹ See Adams, op. cit. (n.91), 37-8, and in general Hofmann and Szantyr, op. cit. (n.84), 277-8, with bibliography.

¹⁵⁰ See Adams, op. cit. (n.75), 57-8.

¹⁵¹ An example such as Paul. Diac., *Hist. Rom.* xv.15, 'egressus igitur *Constantinopolim*' (cited by D. Norberg, *Beiträge zur spätlateinischen Syntax* (1944), 53), where the original accusative form has been fossilized as the place name, is only superficially aberrant, because separation is marked by the prefix of the verb.

¹⁵² See J. André, *Lexique des termes de botanique en latin* (1956), 132 (s.v. *faba*); idem, *Isidore de Séville, Etymologies Livre XVII* (1981), 90 n.197, on Isid. xvii.8.9.

The substantivized feminine *syriaca* survived in Romance dialects with two meanings: (a) of the above tree, in Sardinia;¹⁵³ (b) 'bean', in Calabria.¹⁵⁴ *Suriacae* (plural)¹⁵⁵ could be a regional term for 'beans', imported perhaps from the south of Italy, but in the absence of a wider context this suggestion is offered as no more than a guess.

VII. CONCLUSION

It is clear that colloquial varieties of Latin were spoken at Bu Njem. There are numerous misspellings in the tablets which were phonetically inspired (e.g. *e* for *ae*, *Vrtato*, *tuuos*, *balneii*, *Febrarias*, *octaum*, *Nobuembres*, *Nouemres*, *un asinu*, *iscire*, etc.): that is, they can only be attempts to represent the sounds of the language. Many of these representations, as we have seen, are characteristic of texts from other parts of the Empire which have been used by scholars to deduce the nature of Vulgar Latin. Three consistent features of the Latinity are particularly worth stressing: (a) the *e*-spelling for *ae*, unaccompanied by any evidence for the merger of *ē* and *ī* or *ō* and *ū*; (b) the relative frequency with which final *-m* is omitted after *-a*; and (c) the elimination by various strategies of vowels in hiatus. All of these features can be paralleled in early colloquial documents from other areas, such as the legal texts of C. Novius Eunus, the Pompeian inscriptions, and the letters of Claudius Terentianus. Their attestation at Bu Njem establishes that the Latin written in the area was influenced by colloquial speech.

If some of those who wrote the Bu Njem documents were Punic or Libyan in origin, they were exposed to and had picked up colloquial varieties of Latin. It has to be admitted that there is no decisive and unequivocal evidence in the documents for substratum influence on the writers' Latin. There are, however, both some suggestive elements and abnormalities which are difficult to account for as ordinary Vulgar Latin phenomena. To the evidence discussed in v above can now be added *a meos* = *ad meos*, though characteristically the misspelling is open to more than one explanation. Other anomalous spellings are *Vabius* (= *Fabius*?) at 118, and the aspirated forms *Thusco* = *Tusco* (76, 77, 78, 79), and *Festho* = *Festo* (79). These have not been discussed above, because a decisive explanation for them is lacking, but it is possible that they reflect the influence of a vernacular sound system. Whatever one makes of such phenomena, they are aberrant, and imply that the Latin of the area had its own distinctive features. I would tentatively propose that the best explanation of the abnormalities is that some of those stationed at Bu Njem were native speakers of another language such as Punic, and that their bilingualism was imperfect. The tablets seem to present us with a linguistic situation which must have been common in military outposts on the fringes of the Empire. Speakers of vernacular languages were recruited into the army, where they came into contact with Vulgar Latin but found it difficult to achieve perfect bilingualism. In this context it is worth drawing attention to Rebuffat's remarkable demonstration that the camp at Bu Njem was laid out according to the Punic cubit rather than the Roman foot.¹⁵⁶ The implication of this discovery is surely that the surveyor who planned the camp was of Punic origin.¹⁵⁷ The construction of a military camp will have been determined by official policy. If Punic culture could leave its mark at Bu Njem at this level, then it is obviously not unreasonable to assume that speakers of vernacular languages had infiltrated the Roman army in this area.

Marichal (48) notes that a certain Geminus Crescens in Letter 99 concludes with two formulae of farewell, *ualias* and *opto te bene ualere*. Was he merely being insistent, or does the repetition betray an uncertainty about the use and meaning of such formulae?¹⁵⁸ Equally bizarre is the apparently pointless use of *item* at 86.3: 'transmisi a te domine · item per purōs tuuos'.¹⁵⁹ These oddities, along with the variable case usage employed by Aemilius after the

¹⁵³ See M. L. Wagner, *Dizionario etimologico Sardo* II (1962), 450 s.v. *surdzāga*; also Meyer-Lübke, op. cit. (n. 24), 8502.

¹⁵⁴ See Meyer-Lübke, op. cit. (n. 24), 8502; G. Rohlf's, 'Span. *judia*, kalabr. *surāka* "Bohne"', *ZRP* 40 (1920), 340; idem, *Nuovo dizionario dialettale della Calabria* (1977), 704, s.v. *suriaca*.

¹⁵⁵ *Faba* is not infrequently used in the plural, though it is normally singular: see *TLL* VI.1.2.52ff.

¹⁵⁶ R. Rebuffat, 'Notes sur le Camp Romain de Gholaia (Bu Njem)', *Libyan Studies* 20 (1989), 155-67, esp. 161-2. This reference was drawn to my attention by a reader.

¹⁵⁷ Note Rebuffat, op. cit. (n. 156), 162: 'Il nous paraît très possible que le géomètre chargé de tracer le camp ait été de civilisation punique'.

¹⁵⁸ cf. Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 48.

¹⁵⁹ Noted by Marichal, *Bu Njem*, 48 (cf. 194).

