

THE POETS OF BU NJEM: LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND THE CENTURIONATE*

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A good deal has been written about the origin and recruitment of centurions, but their language use has not been analysed as an index to their literacy, culture, educational levels, and (in some cases) bilingualism. This paper will be about the sociolinguistics of the centurionate. I take as my starting point two poems from Bu Njem in the African desert, one of which has only recently been published for the first time.

The military outpost of Bu Njem (*Golas, Gholaiia*) lay 200 km south of Cape Misurata in the desert of Tripolitania. The fort, the construction of which began some time after 24 January 201, was garrisoned by a *uexillatio* of the *legio III Augusta*, and later by a *numerus collatus*.¹ From here there survive ostraca of various kinds dated mainly to the 250s,² but in this paper I am going to deal with the unlikely topic of poetic activity within the camp. Curiously, we have poems set up on stone in the name of two centurions, both of them acrostichs which spell out the centurions' names. The first, in iambic senarii and dated 202–3, has the name of Q. Avidius Quintianus,³ the second, dated to early 222, that of M Porcius Iasuchthas;⁴ *Iasuchthas* is of Libyan origin. This poem, on a charitable view, is composed in hexameters. The poems provide remarkable evidence for the cultural and linguistic level of centurions, if one can make the assumption that the texts were the responsibility of the two centurions themselves. Neither text claims explicitly that it was composed by the centurion. The poem of Avidius is accompanied by a statement 'centurio leg. III aug. *faciendum curavit*', and that of Iasuchthas ends (33) 'capita uersorum relegens adgnosce *curantem*', = 'reading the start of the verses, identify him who saw to it'. *curantem* no doubt refers primarily to the centurion's supervision of the building works commemorated,⁵ though the present participle could also refer to the setting up of an inscription.⁶ However, if either centurion received assistance in the composition of the text, it is inconceivable that he was of superior cultural level to his assistant(s); if he were, he would hardly have accepted their errors. Both centurions allowed their names to be attached to specimens of substandard/peculiar Latinity, and that implies either that they wrote the texts themselves, or were not capable of finding fault with their content. I therefore use both poems as evidence for the sort of Latin the centurions would have approved of, even if they were not themselves the sole authors of the poems. The question of the authorship of epigraphic poems will recur throughout this paper, and I would draw particular attention to the evidence in this respect of the three poems *CLE* 474–6, discussed below, p. 129.

I print below both poems with a literal interlinear translation. In this paper I will be concerned particularly with the problems raised by the effort of Iasuchthas. A more

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¹ See, for example, Y. Le Bohec, *La troisième légion Auguste* (1980), 441, n. 443.

² See R. Marichal, *Les ostraca de Bu Njem*, Suppléments de 'Libya Antiqua' VII (1992); also J. N. Adams, 'Latin and Punic in contact? The case of the Bu Njem ostraca', *JRS* 84 (1994), 87–112.

³ This poem has been comprehensively discussed by R. Rebuffat, 'Le poème de Q. Avidius Quintianus

à la déesse Salus', *Karthago* 21 (1987), 93–105. Note too the earlier discussions by B. Lavagnini, 'Epimetron. Il centurione di Bu Njem (Q. Avidius Quintianus)', *RFIC* NS 6 (1928), 416–22, and particularly W. Kroll, 'Metrische lateinische Inschrift aus Tripolitania', *Glotta* 19 (1931), 151–2. See also now E. Courtney, *Musa Lapidaria. A Selection of Latin Verse Inscriptions* (1995), no. 40.

⁴ For the *editio princeps* of the poem, see R. Rebuffat, 'Le centurion M. Porcius Iasuchthas à Bu Njem (Notes et documents XI)', *Libya Antiqua* NS 1 (1995), 79–123.

⁵ For the present participle in building inscriptions, see (e.g.) *RIB* 1060, 1091, 1202, 1235. I owe these references to I. Mednikarova.

⁶ For an example at the Colossus of Memnon, see A. and É. Bernand, *Les inscriptions grecques et latines du Colosse de Memnon* (1960), no. 13.

general aim will be to compare the Latinity of the two texts and to make deductions about the education of the writers and even the dialects of Latin which they spoke. It will be suggested that in the poem of Iasucthan in particular it is possible to hear the voice of the writer, and that that voice has the marks of a non-native speaker of Latin. In a general discussion later in the paper of the culture, literacy, and language use of centurions, the evidence of the two poems will be supplemented with items from elsewhere.

Q. Avidius Quintianus

1. Quaesii multum quot memoriae tradere
I have sought much what (1. 3 common vow) to hand down to posterity
2. Agens prae cunctos⁷ in hac castra milites
acting in command of all the soldiers in this camp
3. Votum communem⁸ proque reditu exercitu
and (what) common vow, for the return of the army
4. Inter priores et futuros⁹ reddere
to render up among previous and future (vows?).
5. Dum quaero mecum digna diuom nomina
While seeking privately worthy names of gods
6. Inueni tandem nomen et numen deae
I found at last the divine name of a goddess,
7. Votis perennem quem¹⁰ dicare in hoc loco
which to consecrate, everlastingly in vows, in this place.
8. Salutis igitur quandium cultores sient
Therefore, as long as there should be worshippers of Salus
9. Qua potui sanxi nomen et cunctis dedi
I have sanctified (her) name in the way I could, and I have given to all
10. Veras salutis lymphas tantis ignibus
the true waters of safety, amid such fires
11. In istis semper harenacis collibus
in those always sandy hills
12. Nutantis austri solis flammis feruidas
of the south wind causing to shimmer (nutantis?)¹¹ the fiery flames of the sun
13. Tranquille ut nando delenirent corpora
so that by swimming peacefully they might soothe their bodies
14. Ita tu qui sentis magnam facti gratiam
And so you who feel great gratitude for (this) deed,

⁷ *Agens prae cunctos* is difficult (see Rebuffat, op. cit. (n. 3), 95–6). Lavagnini and Kroll thought that *prae cunctos* was a mistake for *praecinotos*, and this view has its attractions, particularly since it is now clear that the verb could mean ‘enclose, protect’: *TLL* X.2.438.7ff. (‘-untur ea, quae munitionibus instruuntur, firmamentis teguntur sim.’; l. 42 ‘multitudo animantium’ (sc. *praecingitur*)).

⁸ Courtney, op. cit. (n. 3), 264, construes ll. 1 and 3–4 as follows: ‘quaesii quod uotum commune memoriae traderem proque reditu redderem’.

⁹ *Inter priores et futuros* is obscure. For the possibilities see Rebuffat, op. cit. (n. 3), 96–7.

¹⁰ The antecedent of *quem* is either *nomen et numen* or *deae*; the agreement (of gender) is wrong on either interpretation.

¹¹ I take *solis flammis feruidas* as object of the (hitherto) intransitive verb *nuto* (see below). An alternative possibility, adopted by Courtney, op. cit. (n. 3), 264, no. 11, following a suggestion of Kroll, would be to make *corpora* (13) subject of *delenirent*, in which case *flammis feruidas* would become object of *delenirent* (= ‘so that their bodies might ease the fiery flames of the sun by swimming’). This interpretation I find unsatisfactory for various reasons: (i) the object of *delenio* is characteristically a person or part of a person or a condition or feeling suffered by a person,

rather than an external force (*TLL* V.1.432.74ff., 433.25ff.); *corpora* is therefore a much more appropriate object of *delenirent* (with the soldiers as subject) than is *feruidas flammis*; (ii) the instrumental *nando*, juxtaposed with *delenirent*, would harmonize far more satisfactorily with a personal subject of the verb than with *corpora*, if that were subject (a point made by Rebuffat, op. cit. (n. 3), 99); (iii) if *corpora* is subject of *delenirent* and *feruidas flammis* object, a comma must be placed after *austri*, and *ut* therefore postponed to fifth position in its clause; the strong break in the middle of l. 12 would be unparalleled in the piece. If, on the other hand, a comma is placed after *feruidas*, *ut* neatly occupies second place in its line and clause, and l. 12 forms an uninterrupted colon.

The meaning of *nutantis* is far from clear (for some speculations, see Rebuffat, op. cit. (n. 3), 99), the problem no doubt partly created by the needs of the acrostich. Courtney translates ‘in these ever sandy dunes of the south’ (= *nutantis austri*), claiming that ‘the verb can mean “inclining towards the south”’ and citing Manil. 2.906. But the parallel is far from exact, and it seems to me, as it has seemed to others, that a reference to the Scirocco would be in order here, which would entail taking *auster* in reference to the wind rather than merely to the south.

15. Aestuantis animae fucilari spiritum¹²
that the spirit of your burning soul is revived
16. Noli pigere laudem uoce reddere
do not be reluctant to render genuine praise with your voice
17. Veram qui uoluit esse te sanum tibi
(of him)¹³ who wanted you to be healthy for your own benefit
18. Set protestare uel salutis gratia
but bear witness even for the sake of Salus.

M. Porcius Iasucthan

1. imp caes m aurelio antonino pio felici aug sacerdoti
In honour of imp. Caes. M. Aurelius Antoninus pius felix augustus, priest
2. amplissimo pontifici maximo trib pot v cos iiiii p p et
supreme, pontifex maximus, with tribunician power for the fifth time, consul for the fourth time, pater patriae and
3. m aurelio alexandro nobilissimo caes d n antonini aug fil aug
of M. Aurelius Alexander, most noble Caesar, son of our master Antoninus augustus, augustus (himself)
4. flauius sossianus u e uice praesidis numidiae per uexillationem
Flavius Sossianus, uir egregius, vice praeses of Numidia, through the uexillatio
5. leg iii aug p u antoninianae deuotissimi¹⁴ numini eorum
of the Legion III Augusta pia, uictrix, antoniniana, (all) devoted to their divinity
6. portam uetustate conlabsam¹⁵ lapidi quadrato arco curuato restituit
restored the gate which had collapsed through age, by means of squared stone in a curved arch
7. omnes praeteriti cuius labore uitabant
The labour of which (thing) all (our) predecessors avoided
8. rigido uigore iuuenum tertia augustani¹⁶ fecerunt
(that), with firm vigour of the warriors, the third Augustans did
9. creto¹⁷ consilio hortante parato magistro
by fixed design, encouraged by Paratus (?) the magister
10. iuncta uirtus militum paucorum uelocitas ingens¹⁸
linked (were?) the valour of a few soldiers (and) vast speed
11. usui compendio¹⁹ lapides de longe²⁰ adtractos chamulco
for use, by a saving of effort, stones drawn from afar by traction engine

¹² I take this line (with Kroll, op. cit. (n. 3), 152) as explanatory of *facti* in l. 14.

¹³ On the absence of an antecedent (*ei, eius*) here, see below, p. 125.

¹⁴ *Deuotissimi* is probably nominative plural, despite the fact that the nearest nominative is singular (*Flavius Sossianus*); therefore a *constructio ad sensum*, its number determined by the association of the *uexillatio* with *Sossianus* (see Rebuffat, op. cit. (n. 4), 87).

¹⁵ A cliché which the writer would have seen in other building inscriptions: cf., e.g. *CIL* III.4726, 4796, 5797 (all with the spelling *conlabs-*); for a literary example, see Suet., *Cal.* 21, and on inscriptional examples, see *TLL* III.1573.45ff.

¹⁶ *Tertia Augustani* is an odd phrase on which Rebuffat's note (op. cit. (n. 4), 88) is somewhat astray. He states: 'La forme *tertia augustani* est assurée par le Code Théodosien, IV, 12, 3 en 321: *tertiis augustaniis* [sic]. En revanche, la *Notitia Dignitatum*, *Occ.* 5, 254 et 7, 251 donne *tertio augustani*, mais peut-être est-ce une erreur de la tradition'. But the example from the Theodosian Code is not a parallel for *tertia Augustani*, and I do not believe that *tertio Augustani* is an error. If *tertia* (sc. *legio*) were personalized into a (collective) plural signifying the members of the Third Legion, the form of the (substantivized) adjective would become *tertiani*, and similarly *Augusta* would become *Augustani* on the same principle. Logically *tertia augusta* would produce *tertiani augustani*, and such names are attested in the *Notitia Dignitatum* (e.g. *Occ.* 7.235 *secundani Italiciani* for *secunda Italica*; cf. *Occ.*

7.84 with Seeck ad loc.). *tertii Augustani* is an illogicality. *tertio Augustani* on the other hand could be explained as a compound of later type with linking morpheme *-o*, as for example in *mulo-medicus* (for which class of compounds, see M. Leumann, *Lateinische Laut- und Formenlehre* (7th edn, 1977), 390). In the elliptical expression *tertia Augusta* (with *legio* understood) *tertia* would have been felt as adjectival, with *Augusta* substantival, and that is why a compound may have emerged. *tertia Augustani* on the other hand seems to be a conflation of *tertia augusta* and *tertiani Augustani*.

¹⁷ On *creto*, see below, p. 121.

¹⁸ For an alternative interpretation of this line, see below, p. 123.

¹⁹ There is a parallel to this use of *compendium* in a similar context at *Apul.*, *Mund.* 27 'an non eiusmodi compendio machinatores fabricarum astutia unius conuersionis multa et uaria pariter administrant?' ('is it not thanks to an economy of effort of this kind that inventors of machines employing the ingenuity of a single rotation operate at the same time many diverse things?'): cited at *OLD* s.v. 5 with the meaning 'compendious device'. In both passages the sense hovers between abstract and concrete, with a type of machine signified in the concrete meaning.

²⁰ The compound *delonge* is attested particularly in the Old Latin Bible translations, but occasionally also in technical texts (e.g. *Vegetius*, but the Latin *Dioscorides*, *Anthimus*): see *TLL* V.1.469.39ff. It was excluded from high literature.

12. sub arcata²¹ militum uirtus funib cannabinis strictis
under the arches, the valour of the soldiers, with hempen ropes drawn tight
13. iam nunc contendunt fieri cito milites omnes
now all the soldiers strive that it be quickly done
14. arta uirtute sua opera aeternale fecerunt
by extreme(?) valour they did their eternal work
15. subsequentes stipendiis antecessorum onestia bona sumebant
following upon the service of their predecessors they acquired honourable advantage(?)
16. urgente tempore hiemis necumqua cessauerunt
with the period of winter pressing they never ceased
17. celerius excelsae turres quater diuisae cum uoce militum a terra uenerunt
quickly the lofty towers, divided into four (stages?), came from the earth to the accompaniment of the voice of the soldiers
18. torrens uirtus leg III aug p u
the rushing valour of the Legion III Augusta pia victrix
19. haec ut fierent milites omnes sibi zelum tradebant
that this should be done all the soldiers handed zeal to themselves (sic)
20. animaduertentes quod²² priores sibi uestigia fecissent
noticing that their predecessors had made traces for them
21. nunc et ipsi titulis suis uirtutis deuotionis ornauerunt²³
now they too adorned (them? uestigia?) with their own marks (?) of valour (and?) obedience/loyalty
22. contententes si amplius esset athuc opera fecissent
eager (lit. 'striving') that, if there were more (to do), they should as well have done the work (= operam)
23. ex numero militum quidam amplius uoluntatem suam dederit
(lit.) of the body of soldiers, one gave (unmotivated perfect subjunctive?)²⁴ his enthusiasm more (or quidam = quisque?)²⁵
24. necumquam operam suam erupi exhibuerunt
never did they allow their work to be broken off
25. tantus fuit eis zelus magna uir
so great was their zeal, and great . . .
26. laetis temporibus honoribus
in happy times . . . honours
27. effecta opera gaudet aeterna militum uirtus
the eternal valour of the soldiers rejoices in the completed work
28. gemma ut auro cluditur sic castram porta decorat
As a jewel is set in gold, so the gate decorates the camp
29. florida tertia augusta legio cum magna uirtute
The flourishing Third Legion Augusta with great valour
30. curauit faciendum deuotionis suae honorem
saw to it that it paid the honour of its obedience/loyalty
31. muneri quoque dictatores strenue cesserunt
to the task as well the 'dictators' strenuously devoted themselves (?)
32. animosos duo contemnentis residuum turpis oppresserat
?
33. capita uersorum relegens adgnosce curantem
reading the start of the verses, identify him who saw to it

²¹ On this word see Rebuffat, op. cit. (n. 4), 91. It may be added that the Romance evidence (OFr. *arche*, Opr. *arca*) shows that *arcus* developed a feminine by-form **arca* (see W. von Wartburg, *Französisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* I (1928), 130), of which *arcata* seems to be a derivative; the derivative in-*atus* of *arcus* is *arcuatus* (see *TLL*, s.v.). *arcata* too is reflected in Romance (OPr. *arcada* 'arche d'un pont; arcade' (v. Wartburg)). Though this last is feminine, the substantivized adjective in Latin (Iasucthan) is likely to be neuter (plural). Similarly *arcuatus* was used as a noun in the neuter (*TLL* II.374.3ff.), = *arcus*. **arcatum* thus corresponds to *arcuatum*, but with a root of different gender. The term in Iasucthan

could thus be an early anticipation of two Romance outcomes.

²² *animaduerto* is complemented by a *quod*-clause instead of the acc. + inf., in the typical late manner: cf. Sidon., *Epist.* 1.2.4.

²³ *titulis ornare* may well have been a familiar collocation (cf. *CLE* 511), but with *titulis* bearing a concrete sense ('inscription': *OLD* s.v. 2). Here the word seems to be more abstract (cf. perhaps *OLD* s.v. 7b '(w. gen. of cause or defining gen.) the distinction, honour (arising from, consisting in)'. *uirtutis deuotionis* seems to form an asyndeton bimembre.

²⁴ See below, p. 119.

²⁵ See below, p. 122.

I. THE POEM OF IASUCTHAN

The questions which I will deal with in relation to the poem of Iasucthan are mainly linguistic. Does the poem tell us anything of interest about the linguistic situation in the camp, particularly if it is compared with that of Avidius? What are the sources of its Latinity? Was the writer a native speaker of Latin? Does the poem throw any light on literacy and its acquisition in the army? What generalizations can be made about the social level of centurions' Latin? The poem of Iasucthan throws up many problems of interpretation, not all of which have been solved. I will be arguing that it provides not only remarkably early evidence about the loss of distinctions of vowel quantity in African Latin, but also about the emergence of a form of verse, destined to be perfected in the medieval period, which was based on accentuation rather than differences of vowel quantity.

The subject of Iasucthan's piece (the commemoration of a building repair) was probably fairly conventional in epigraphic verse. A parallel from Vojvoda in Bulgaria commemorates one Eusebius for repairing a harbour wall which had collapsed.²⁶ For acrostichs recording the name of the poet, see *AE* 1947.31, *CLE* 271²⁷ and particularly the so-called 'vision of Maximus' discussed below, p. 124, where a soldier incorporated the acrostich Μάξιμος δεκουρίων ἔγραψας. However in our African poem, as we have suggested, an additional role of the person named was probably to supervise the building works.

On the face of it this must be one of the most incompetent hexameter poems ever written, in that of the twenty-seven lines (the poem proper seems to begin at l. 7, though the acrostich, which spells *Porcius Iasucthan cent.leg. f.c. mac*, begins at l. 6)²⁸ not a single one scans. It is though manifestly intended, first as a poem, and secondly as a hexameter poem. Its claim to poetic status is obvious from the fact that it is an acrostich. Most of the lines have between fourteen and seventeen syllables, and that is virtually the standard variation possible in a hexameter line. There are recognizable snatches of hexameter rhythm, as for example in the first two and a half feet of l. 7 (*omnes praeteriti*), and l. 9 (*creto consilio*), though both these expressions are open to another explanation (see below). L. 13 is a near hexameter, with just one error, in the final syllable of *militēs*:

iām nūnc | cōntēn|dūnt fiē|ri²⁹ cītō | mīlītēs | ōmnēs

militēs can, at a pinch, as we will see, be scanned as a dactyl. L. 33 also is not very far from the mark:

cāpitā | uērsō|rūm rēlē|gēns ād|gnōscē cū|rāntēm.

capita and *curantem* can also be made to scan (see below).

But if these lines or part-lines are at least respectable as attempts at the hexameter form, that is not the case with the majority of lines. In most the density of errors is so great that any attempt at foot division is hopelessly arbitrary. Several lines, such as 11,

²⁶ A text with translation and commentary can now conveniently be found in Courtney, op. cit. (n. 3), no. 34.

²⁷ See in general E. Courtney, 'Greek and Latin acrostichs', *Philologus* 134 (1990), e.g. 7, 11-13.

²⁸ For some interpretations of *f.c.mac.*, see Rebuffat, op. cit. (n. 4), 98. *f.* is taken as = *fecit*, *c.* = *cum*, *cura* or *curante*, and *mac.* = *magistro* or *magistri*. It seems perverse though not to take *f.c.* as standing for *faciendum curavit*, especially as Avidius wrote *centurio*

leg. . . faciendum curavit to accompany his verses. *mac.* may well not be part of the acrostich. It is not an obvious abbreviation of *magister*, though it could be justified. It is incidentally likely that the first five lines, with their accumulation of official material and titles, come from a different source from the 'poem' proper, possibly from Sossianus himself or from an official exemplar.

²⁹ Rebuffat, op. cit. (n. 4), 114, scans *feri* as --.

15, 17, 21, and 23 have far too many syllables, and others (e.g. 20, 22) have so many errors that analysis is pointless.³⁰

That however is not the end of the story. An examination of the last two feet of the verses yields interesting results. These are the only two feet of the hexameter line which are fixed, in that they must comprise dactyl + spondee or trochee, and for that reason they might have been seen by those with little understanding of the structure of the whole line as a defining characteristic of the hexameter (see further below, p. 116). There is evidence that Iasucthan treated them as such. In the whole poem there is only one line which, by classical standards, has a correct hexameter ending (24 *exhibuerunt*). But the verse endings can be analysed according to a different principle. L. 8, for example, ends with a sequence of seven long syllables (*Augustani fecerunt*). But if an accentual system of scansion is applied, whereby a vowel in an accented syllable is treated as long, and vowels in unaccented syllables are scanned as short, the result is different: *ānī fēcērūnt*. On the accentual principle the last two feet are thus correct. Similarly in l. 13, quoted above, *mīlites* can be scanned as a dactyl because the final long *e* is not under the accent. And, at l. 33, also quoted above, *adnosce curantem* becomes a rhythmical hexameter ending, and the first word of the line, *capita*, might even be treated as a dactyl (*cāpītā*). It might be noted in passing that the expressions *omnes praeteriti* and *creto consilio* (see above) scan accentually as well as quantitatively, and thus provide no evidence for the writer's understanding of the principles of quantitative verse.

There are twenty-four complete lines of verse, if 18, 25, and 26 are left out of consideration. Seventeen of these lines, or about 71 per cent, have an accentual hexameter ending (I include in the figures 24 *exhibuerunt* as correct). The line endings which cannot be made to scan are 16, 21, 22, 23, 28, 31, and 32. These figures can be broken down further. Down to and including l. 20 there are thirteen lines, of which no fewer than twelve have the accentual type of ending; the odd line out is 16 *necumquacessauerunt*, in which the last four syllables might be acceptable, but the last syllable of *necumqua* spoils the rhythm. On this interpretation as far as l. 20 the poet had the success rate in line endings of 92 per cent. From l. 21 to the end, however, his successes are far fewer. Here a majority of lines, that is six out of eleven, are failures in this respect. The act of composition was clearly a struggle for this incompetent poet, and as he advanced he partly yielded before the difficulties. I stress that accentual scansion cannot be applied to parts of the line outside the ending to rescue the metre from chaos, although it is possible to find the odd word or groups of words which, it might be argued, scan accentually but not quantitatively (e.g. *capita* at 33). What is remarkable though is the apparent operation in so many lines of this accentual system in the last feet of the verse. It is the fact that the poem is precisely dated, to 222, that gives it its interest. A similar phenomenon is attested in works which are either undated or later, perhaps most notably in those of the African poet Commodian (see below), but our present case is very early; moreover other epigraphic poems with some accentual clausulae tend to have a much higher incidence of correct quantitative feet earlier in the line (examples are given below; see also n. 30). Iasucthan takes us early in the third century straight into a variety of Latin in which distinctions of vowel length appear scarcely to have been perceived. In an article on accentual verse Nicolau posed precisely the question when might the accent have begun to play a role in the scansion of the previously quantitative Latin metres,³¹ but he was unable to give a very precise answer.

Something must now be said about the linguistic background, and the above interpretation of the structure of the final feet justified. There is strong evidence that quantitative distinctions in the classical sense were perceived as lacking in African speech. We are told this explicitly by Augustine:

³⁰ The poems which Courtney, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 22; cf. 257, singles out from his selection (nos 34, 117; for the first, see above, and for the second, from Venafurum, see also *CLE* 1319 = *ILS* 5150) as so defective

in metre that an analysis of their faults is pointless are more correct than the poem of Iasucthan.

³¹ M. Nicolau, 'Les deux sources de la versification latine accentuelle', *ALMA* 9 (1934), 65.

cur pietatis doctorem pigeat imperitis loquentem *ossum* potius quam *os* dicere, ne ista syllaba non ab eo, quod sunt *ossa*, sed ab eo, quod sunt *ora*, intellegatur, **ubi Afrae aures de correptione uocalium uel productione non iudicant?** (*Doctr. christ.* 4.10.24)

Why should a teacher of piety when speaking to the uneducated have regrets about saying *ossum* ('bone') rather than *os* in order to prevent that monosyllable (i.e. *os* 'bone') from being interpreted as the word whose plural is *ora* (i.e. *ōs* 'mouth') rather than the word whose plural is *ossa* (i.e. *ōs*), given that African ears show no judgement in the matter of the shortening of vowels or their lengthening?

There is a comparable remark in the African grammarian Pompeius (*GL V.285.6*). In a passage at the start of the second book of Augustine's dialogue *De musica* (2.1.1) the teacher asks the pupil whether he has learnt the distinction between long and short vowels from a *grammaticus*, and the pupil then acknowledges his *imperitia* in such matters.³² What is especially interesting in this last passage is the statement that knowledge of the difference between long and short syllables is something acquired from a teacher. There is an implication that the quantitative system, at least by the time of Augustine (in Africa?), was an artificial thing which had to be learnt; it lacked any basis in real speech.

Particularly revealing is a statement by the grammarian Consentius about the nature of the African accent:

ut quidam dicunt 'piper' producta priore syllaba, cum sit breuis, quod uitium Afrorum familiare est (392.11) ut si quis dicat 'orator' correpta priore syllaba, quod ipsum uitium Afrorum speciale est. (*GL V.392.3*)

Just as some people say *piper* with the first syllable lengthened, when it is short, a vice which is characteristic of Africans As if anyone were to say *orator* with the first syllable shortened, which vice is particular to Africans.

Behind this statement is the principle which underlies the rhythmical line-endings in Iasucthan. In *piper* the first vowel is lengthened under the accent, and the long first vowel of *orator* is shortened in pre-tonic position. Into the same category of error as that seen in *piper* falls a mispronunciation mentioned by Augustine in the passage of the *De Musica* referred to above (*cano* with its first syllable scanned long). The effect which a stress accent can have on vowel length is well recognized, and not only for Latin.³³ I return to aspects of the phenomenon below.

Hexameter endings comparable to those of Iasucthan are a feature of the African poet Commodian, who is not precisely dated, with guesses ranging from the third to the fifth centuries.³⁴ He is generally treated as the first literary writer who provides distinctive evidence for these developments in the vowel system, but the evidence of Iasucthan has the advantage that it is so precisely dated. I give here a few line endings from Commodian's *Instructiones* which are comparable with certain lines of Iasucthan:³⁵ 1.6.23 *illi fecissent* (for a long final *i*, and the first vowel of *fec-* shortened, cf. Iasucthan l. 8 *augustani fecerunt*); 1.6.21 *in terra fuisse* (for the long *a* of the ablative singular of *terra* scanned as short, cf. Iasucthan l. 17 *a terra uenerunt*); 1.2.6 *reges orabant* (here not only is the long *e* in the final syllable of *reges* shortened (cf. *militēs* above), but the pretonic long *o* of *orabant* is also shortened, just as in Consentius' *orator*).

There are, of course, other African *carmina* which can, at least in line endings, be made to scan on the accentual principle. For example *ILS 1710 = CIL VIII.1027*, from

³² See H. Koller, 'Die Silbenquantitäten in Augustinus' Büchern De Musica', *Mus. Helv.* 38 (1981), 262-7.

³³ See e.g. W. S. Allen, *Accent and Rhythm. Prosodic Features of Latin and Greek: a Study in Theory and Reconstruction* (1973), 80-2; for the phenomenon in the history of Latin, see M. Leumann, op. cit. (n. 16), 55, 252-3.

³⁴ For the date of Commodian, see L. Krestan,

'Commodianus', *RAC* 3 (1957), 248; *Der Kleine Pauly* 1 (1964), 1260-1; R. Herzog and P. L. Schmidt, *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike IV* (1997), 629.

³⁵ See further Nicolau, op. cit. (n. 31), 59, Leumann, op. cit. (n. 16), 252. On Commodian's versification, see also J. Perret, 'Prosodie et métrique chez Commodien', *Pallas* 5 (1957), 27-42.

Carthage, has seven lines, four of which end in a perfectly classical manner. Two of the exceptional lines scan in the final feet if long final vowels are treated as short (*feci sepulchrum, perduxi libenter*). This poem has only two errors outside the clausula, and it thus contrasts with that of Iasucthan. Another African poem with a high degree of error is *CLE* 512, a thirteen-line piece in hexameters. Many of the line endings can only be made to scan accentually. l. 4, for example, is similar in its ending to 10 in Iasucthan (*ueritas omnis . . . uelocitas ingens*). But the difference between 512 and our poem is that in 512 the earlier feet in the line are far more often correct by classical standards.

It would seem then that Iasucthan did not have much awareness of the classical quantitative system. He was an African in origin, as his name virtually proves.³⁶ In view of Augustine's remark about the part played by *grammatici* in teaching the quantitative system, it seems reasonable to assume that he had not received the traditional literary education at the hands of a *grammaticus*. A mediocre writer, uninstructed in the quantitative system, might have been expected from hearing hexameters read aloud only to have been able to form some conception of the pattern of the final two feet of the line, where there is almost invariably a correspondence between the word accent and the first syllable of each foot. As Allen (op. cit. (n. 33), 346) puts it: 'What sort of idea, if any, of the underlying structure could (the less educated hearer) have derived from hearing or reading Latin hexameters? Certainly he would hear the clearly defined dynamic pattern in the last two feet; and this might give a hint, but little more in the absence of specific instruction, of the patterns underlying the rest of the line. That such may indeed have been the situation is suggested by the evidence of certain of the *Carmina Epigraphica* . . . [which] show little understanding of pattern in the first part of the line, whether quantitative or dynamic'.³⁷

By contrast with Iasucthan's effort, in many other African *carmina*, though errors often occur,³⁸ it is easy to find verses which successfully adhere to the old system, presumably as a reflection of the influence of *grammatici* on the writers. The question obviously arises where and how Iasucthan acquired his literacy, if he had not been instructed by a *grammaticus*. I return to this question briefly below.

The impression should not be given that a vowel system in which, as Consentius noted, stressed vowels were lengthened and unstressed vowels shortened, was peculiar to Africa. Inscriptional verses from (e.g.) Rome, Spain, Gaul, and Moesia, as well as Africa, show signs of lengthening under the accent and shortening of unstressed vowels.³⁹ Early signs of the beginnings of such a development can indeed be traced right back into the Republican period, during which there was an ongoing tendency for some short vowels in final position to be lost altogether,⁴⁰ and for long vowels in final syllables to be shortened under certain circumstances.⁴¹ A short final *o* in the first person singular

³⁶ On the name, see Rebuffat, op. cit. (n. 4), 97.

³⁷ F. W. Shipley, 'Carmina Epigraphica and some problems of the Latin hexameter', *PAPA* 58 (1927), xxx-xxxi, similarly notes that the uneducated would only obtain an impression of 'the more obvious and salient features' of the hexameter as they heard it read. His classification of defective hexameters (some work at the beginning as well as the end, but others only at the end, with the middle more or less unknown territory) is useful, and brings out well the feature (the rhythm of the line ending) which was the most salient to an uneducated reader/listener of the period when phonemic distinctions of vowel quantity had been lost.

³⁸ See Rebuffat's useful collection (with errors marked) of imperfect African *carmina*, op. cit. (n. 4), 116-19.

³⁹ From Rome, note for example the epitaph of Allia Potestas (cf. N. Horsfall, 'CIL VI 37965 = CLE 1988 (Epitaph of Allia Potestas): a commentary', *ZPE* 61 (1985), 251-72), which has a few shortenings in final syllables (ll. 14, 40); for another Roman example, see *CLE* 1150.3 (*spirito*); cf. É. Galletier, *Étude sur la*

poésie funéraire romaine d'après les inscriptions (1922), 303. For Gaul, see *CLE* 465.3 (*uixi*), 765.2 (*praecepit*), 769.9 (*cum uerecundia*); for Spain, *CLE* 541.8 (*paruolo*; c. third-century according to Buecheler); and for Moesia (Nicopolis), *CLE* 492.2 (*inclusae*), 19 (*nobili*), 20 (*carmini*). See further Galletier, op. cit., 302-4, Courtney, op. cit. (n. 3), 25. It should, however, be noted, first, that there had been a long history of vowel weakening (including shortening) in final syllables in Latin (see below), and the occasional shortening of long vowels in this position is of a different order from the lengthening of short vowels under the accent (on the difference between shortening in final syllables, and lengthening under the accent, see L. Mueller, *De re metrica* (2nd edn, 1894), 442). Secondly, many poems which allow such licences from time to time otherwise have substantial sections which scan correctly. The degree of error in Iasucthan cannot be exaggerated.

⁴⁰ On apocope of final *-e*, see, e.g. H. Drexler, *Einführung in die römische Metrik* (1967), 58-9.

⁴¹ See Leumann, op. cit. (n. 16), 107-10.

of verb forms is increasingly attested even in verbs which are not of iambic structure.⁴² As far as lengthening is concerned, the grammarian Sacerdos, who was probably not an African and certainly lived and worked in Rome,⁴³ could treat *perspicere possit* (Cic., *Verr. a. pr.* 34) as an heroic clausula (*GL VI.493*), and that implies lengthening of the second vowel of *perspicere* under the accent. A chant of boys playing soldiers, not specifically of African origin, in which certain short vowels have to be lengthened in places under the accent, can be found at *SHA, Aurel.* 6.⁴⁴ There may even be cases of lengthening under the accent in an epigraphic poem from Pompeii.⁴⁵

Nevertheless the persistent association of these 'vices' in the grammatical tradition with Africa must mean something. I would also draw attention to Herman's comparison of errors of versification in African *carmina epigraphica* as against Roman *carmina*.⁴⁶ He showed that in African *carmina* there is a higher incidence of lengthened vowels under the accent, and of shortened vowels in unstressed syllables, than in Roman *carmina*. It is distinctly possible that the modification of the classical quantitative system progressed more quickly in Africa than in other parts of the Empire or was more obvious there to casual observers, though it is of course possible that in areas with a strong grammatical tradition the true state of affairs was masked by the success of grammarians in teaching an artificial system.⁴⁷

By contrast with Iasucthan, the other centurion, Avidius, was able to avoid errors almost entirely.⁴⁸ It has been suggested by Rebuffat (*op.cit.* (n. 3), 102) that he had attended the school of a *grammaticus*, and he does indeed show a familiarity with some poetic turns of phrase (see below), though it has to be said that his syntax and morphology were decidedly substandard (see below). Rebuffat also argues that he may have been of Italian rather than African origin.

Twenty years is a short time in linguistic terms, and the two poems can be treated as more or less contemporary. They certainly tell us that there were poets of different abilities in the camp, but can we go further than that? Is it far fetched to hear in the two poems two distinct dialects or accents of Latin, the one preserving distinctions of vowel quantity, the other based on a system which, whatever its precise nature, was characterized by the loss of these distinctions? An alternative explanation would be that Avidius *spoke* a form of Latin in which the stress accent had undermined phonemic distinctions of length, but that he could *write* quantitative verse merely because he had been instructed to do so by a *grammaticus*. Versification is not necessarily an index to a writer's phonology because to many by this period distinctions of vowel quantity would have been learnt rather than rooted in speech. But if Avidius' awareness of the difference between long and short vowels was entirely artificial, with no basis in his speech whatsoever, it is odd, given his relatively low cultural level as marked by the substandard syntax and morphology of the piece (see below), that he was able to avoid mistakes almost entirely, particularly since African and other *carmina* in which the poets were only *partially* successful in reproducing the Classical system are so easy to find.⁴⁹ It is possible that in the early third century A.D. there were regional and social distinctions in the extent to which the quantitative system had been modified; and on this assumption we may tentatively hear in the two poems evidence for the dialectal mixture which must have been typical in many military outposts. And even if a purely cultural (as distinct

⁴² See Leumann, *op. cit.* (n. 16), 110; see also J. G. Fitch, 'Sense-pauses and relative dating in Seneca, Sophocles and Shakespeare', *AJP* 102 (1981), 303-5 (on the increase of *-ō* for *-ō* in the later plays of Seneca); N. Horsfall, 'Criteria for the dating of Calpurnius Siculus', *RFIC* 125 (1997), 176-7.

⁴³ See R. A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: the Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (1988), 352-3.

⁴⁴ See Leumann, *op. cit.* (n. 16), 56, 252-3.

⁴⁵ *CLE* 44 = *CIL* IV.5092 (*Venerem, ubi*); see Leumann, *op. cit.* (n. 16), 56, V. Väänänen, *Le latin vulgaire des inscriptions pompéiennes* (1966), 19.

⁴⁶ J. Herman, 'Un vieux dossier réouvert: les transformations du système latin des quantités vocaliques',

BSL 77 (1982), 285-302, = *idem, Du latin aux langues romanes. Études de linguistique historique* (1990), 217-31.

⁴⁷ Reservations must also be expressed about the unrefined statistical comparison of 'Roman' with 'African' *carmina*, without attention to the possible authorship of each individual poem. A poem found in Rome may in fact have been composed by an outsider. We will discuss below (p. 129) a 'Roman' *carmen* which in fact bears the name of a Thracian.

⁴⁸ For his few abnormalities of scansion, see Kroll, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 152. *harenacis* (11) has to be scanned with a long first *a*.

⁴⁹ See above, n. 38.

from linguistic) explanation is adopted for the difference in quality between the versification of Avidius and that of Iasucthan (i.e. Avidius had received metrical instruction but Iasucthan had not), it would remain true that in 222 in the African desert there was at least one Latin speaker, and he an African, who did not perceive the traditional quantitative distinctions between Latin vowels. The two poems would also underline the cultural diversity of the centurionate.

Whatever else one is to make of the poem of Iasucthan, it does at least suggest that the starting point in the transition from a quantitative vowel system to the Romance systems based on vowel quality must lie in the effects of the stress accent. And since in 222 we are plunged straight into a world in which there is virtually no trace of that quantitative system, we must assume that by this date in Africa change was well advanced.

The Sources of Iasucthan's Latinity

I turn now to the sources of Iasucthan's Latin idiom, and various other linguistic features of the work. Undoubtedly the most distinctive characteristic of the Latin is the peculiarity of the idiom, and an attempt will be made to account for that.

Spelling

The spelling of the text is overwhelmingly correct. The only error which Iasucthan commits from time to time consists in the banal omission of final *-m*, as in *labore* (7), *sua opera aeternale* (14), *opera* (22), *necumqua* (16), and possibly *arcata* (13), though this was probably a neuter plural (see n. 21). On the other hand *operam*, *suam*, and *necumquam* are all given an *-m* in 24. On many other occasions throughout the text the writer remembered to write *m* in final position. The only other spelling 'error' worth speaking of is *athuc* in 22. *at* and *ad* had long been confused (Quint. 1.7.5); it is not unlikely that *at-* here is a mistaken form of recomposition (see below), effected by a writer who assumed that an original *at-* had undergone assimilation of voice.

If Iasucthan had not been given a literary education, he had certainly been trained in spelling. One is reminded of the military scribes who were working at Vindolanda. I have argued elsewhere that, although it could not be said that their Latinity was that of the high literary language, they were remarkably successful in avoiding mundane spelling errors of the type which were phonetically based, such as the omission of *-m* and the substitution of *e* for the original *ae* diphthong.⁵⁰ Similarly Iasucthan always writes *ae* correctly (*Caes.*, *praesidis*, *Numidiae*, *Antoninianae*, *praeteriti*, *aeternale*, *excelsae*, *diuisae*, *haec*, *laetis* and *aeterna*). By contrast in the ostraca from the same site *e* is far more common than *ae* (51:14).⁵¹ Avidius, like Iasucthan, always uses *ae* correctly (*quaesii*, *memoriae*, *prae*, *quaero*, *deae*, *aestuantis*, *animae*). There is then a clear distinction between the spelling of the centurions' poems at Bu Njem, and that of the soldiers who wrote letters on ostraca. This distinction reflects a higher cultural level on the part of the writers of the poems, or, perhaps one should say, a more advanced training in the skills of literacy. It is worth recalling the evidence that ordinary soldiers at Bu Njem seem to have been given exemplars to follow, and that they fell constantly into error when free composition was required;⁵² this feature is consistent with a low level of literacy.

⁵⁰ 'The language of the Vindolanda writing-tablets: an interim report', *JRS* 85 (1995), 87–8.

⁵¹ See Adams, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 103.

⁵² See Adams, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 96, 103.

It was noted above that Iasucthan wrote *athuc* for *adhuc*. It is a characteristic of the text that compounds are written in non-assimilated forms: *conlabsam* (6),⁵³ *adtractos* (11), *adgnosce* (33). These forms are the very opposite of phonetic spellings, and they show not only a conscious attempt at 'correctness' of spelling, but also an ability to analyse compounds. There are no other spelling (as distinct from morphological) errors in the text (but on *creto* (9) see below). The diphthong *au* is always correctly written, as are the short vowels. Geminates are consistently correct.

In these various forms of correctness (and perhaps most notably in the use of *ae* and the recomposed compounds) there lies the work of one who had been trained in more than the mere rudiments of literacy. If that training had not been at the hands of a literary *grammaticus*, one is tempted to argue that in the army some sort of training in practical spelling and literacy must be assumed.

Morphology

There are few morphological oddities in the text. In *onestia* (15) Iasucthan has failed to make a distinction between the *-a* and *-ia* neuter plural endings. *dederit* (23) on the face of it is a perfect subjunctive or future perfect where an ordinary perfect is required. The perfect subjunctive did not live on into the Romance languages, except as an isolated survival in the East.⁵⁴ The writer may have known the form, but not its function (see further below, p. 122). *arco* = *arcu* (6) is a banal transfer of a fourth-declension noun into the second declension (for which see *TLL* II.475.8off.). And *lapidi* (6; abl.) is of a commonplace type, even in poetry.⁵⁵

The writer had learnt how to spell, and he could inflect nouns and verbs (for the implications of which, see below, p. 124). But there is more to language competence than spelling and inflection. There are syntax and idiom, and to these I will turn below. I consider first possible literary influences on the Latin.

Literary influences

Many *carmina epigraphica* contain accumulations of Virgilian or Ovidian phrases. Writers could also draw on other epigraphic texts which they had seen. We would not expect much in the way of literary phraseology in Iasucthan's poem if it is correct to suggest that the writer had not received any sort of literary education. There are however a few points worthy of comment.

The writer had a taste for the phrase *uirtus militum* (10, 12, 27, with a variant *uirtus leg(ionis)* at 18). At 27 *aeterna militum uirtus* is subject of a verb, and can be interpreted as a use of an abstract for concrete, with the key words *uirtus militum* roughly equivalent to *fortes milites*. There is a structural parallel at Virg., *Aen.* 10.410 'non aliter *socium uirtus* coit in unum', on which Harrison notes that *socium* (= *sociorum*) *uirtus* is a case of abstract for concrete, and paraphrases as *fortes socii*.⁵⁶ But it is far from certain that Iasucthan knew the Virgilian expression at first hand. A genuine Virgilian reminiscence one would expect in this genre to be clearcut, but these phrases are at best indirect developments out of the Virgilian phrase, which may possibly have generated literary circumlocutions in later Latin, including the epigraphic language. There is something

⁵³ *lab-* for *lap-* also represents an attempted recomposition which, even if it is a mistake, at least superficially reveals the writer's ability to associate the participial form with the present stem of the verb. But since the spelling is common in this verb in inscriptions recording building repairs (see n. 15), it could in this case merely have been copied from other inscriptions which the writer had seen.

⁵⁴ See, e.g., W. D. Elcock, *The Romance Languages* (1960), 105, 145.

⁵⁵ It reflects the confusion of consonant- and *i*-stem nouns. For some evidence, see Adams, *op. cit.* (n. 50), 99–100.

⁵⁶ S. J. Harrison, *Vergil Aeneid 10* (1991), 178 ad loc.

similar, though far from identical, in another epigraphic poem, *CLE* 69 ‘amicis gaudium / pollicita pueri uirtus indigne occidit’ (cf. 607, 1394). But in fact the source of the writer’s phraseology may lie in an entirely different quarter. A coin legend of the period of Gordian I (dated A.D. 238) has the expression *uirt. exercit.*,⁵⁷ and it may well be that a slogan of this type put the idea of such terminology into the poet’s head. Moreover on coins, as in l. 27, *aeterna* is attested as an epithet of *uirtus*.⁵⁸

As Rebuffat notes (op. cit. (n. 4), 28), the line that is arguably the author’s best (28) ultimately has its model in Virg., *Aen.* 10.134 ‘qualis gemma micat fuluum quae diuidit aurum’, but the dependence may be indirect. Rebuffat cites another allusion to the Virgilian line from a *carmen epigraphicum* (403), and it is possible that the Virgilian comparison had found its way into common currency. Various lines of Virgil have turned up in military environments (e.g. *Tab. Vind.* II.118),⁵⁹ but these cannot be taken as evidence that texts of the poet were readily available in military camps. An alternative explanation is that if rudimentary instruction in literacy was available within the army, stray lines of Virgil might have been used as writing exercises.

Rebuffat (op. cit. (n. 4), 87) observes that *iuuenes* (8) is a poeticizing term (roughly equivalent to ‘warriors’). He cites Virg., *Aen.* 9.174, but the usage was commonplace, and not specifically Virgilian. In *carmina epigraphica* note (e.g.) *CLE* 520.9 ‘furo[r] pugnæ Romanum iuuenem per hostica uulnera misit’.

What is most striking about the poem, apart from its metrical ineptitude, is the bizarre nature of the idiom. This will be discussed in the next section.

Peculiarities of idiom

I would first draw attention to certain signs of limitations in the writer’s vocabulary. He had a liking for one or two banal, multi-purpose verbs. *facio* occurs six times, several times at the ends of lines. In l. 8 they ‘did (it)’, with object unspecified. Twice they ‘did the work’ (*opera*) (14, 22). In 30 *curauit faciendum* is a combination used in a prose appendix by the other poet of Bu Njem, in another context, and it is more than likely that Iasucthan picked it up from there. But here it must be construed with *honorem*. *facere honorem* I have not been able to parallel, the standard idiom being *habere honorem* ‘to do honour’, often to a superior. The form of respect is here defined by *deuotionis*, ‘loyalty, loyal service’.⁶⁰ *facio* has intruded into a standard idiom.⁶¹ Also imprecise is the expression *sibi uestigia fecissent* (20). The poet presumably meant that predecessors had left traces for the soldiers to follow.

Another non-specific verb is *uenerunt* in 17: the towers ‘come’ from the earth rather than rising. On a charitable view *uenio ab* might be taken as a metaphor implicitly likening the rise of the tower to the growth of a plant. *uenio* is used by the poets in this sense (*OLD* s.v. *uenio*, 5), but this would be an esoteric interpretation, and it is safer to assume that the writer used a general term instead of something more precise. At 23 *uoluntatem . . . dederit* may belong in this section of the discussion, but the sense is unclear, not least because of the form of the verb (see above, p. 119). The constant use of multi-purpose verbs instead of *uoces propriae* is a sign of poor performance in writing, which may be associated with poor education, inexperience in writing, ignorance of the

⁵⁷ See H. Mattingly, E. A. Sydenham and C. H. V. Sutherland, *The Roman Imperial Coinage* IV.2 (1938), 159, 161. I am grateful to P. M. Brennan for suggesting this line of approach to the problem.

⁵⁸ See Mattingly and Sydenham, *The Roman Imperial Coinage* III (1930), 393 *uirtus aeterna Aug.* (A.D. 192).

⁵⁹ See A. K. Bowman and J. D. Thomas, *The Vindolanda Writing-Tablets (Tabulae Vindolandeses II)* (1994), 66, for a collection of such lines; to these should be added the expression *conticuere omnes*, found at Silchester.

⁶⁰ See *TLL* V.1.879.19ff. (a relatively late usage, quoted first from Tertullian).

⁶¹ *facio* had long shown a tendency to replace more precise verbs in colloquial or substandard writings (see J. B. Hofmann and A. Szantyr, *Lateinische Syntax und Stilistik* (1965), 755). Examples abound, for instance, in the *Peregrinatio Aetheriae*. In one chapter (20) chosen at random note *facto ibi triduo, facta est oratio, uirtutes faciant multas, fecimus . . . biduum, mirabilia fecerint, quae hodie faciant*.

subject matter and its terminology, or imperfect command of Latin. I leave this question open for the moment and turn particularly to oddities of expression.

In 9 *creto consilio* is odd, but may have a simple explanation. Superficially *cretus* would appear to be the rare past participle of *cerno*, which can mean 'examine', hence 'by examined plan'. But *certo consilio* is a set phrase (Cic., *Tull.* 25, *Rab. Post.* 21), and *creto* may be a misspelling (metathesis).

The comments which follow are not in any particular order. In l. 31 *cesserunt* is construed quite normally with a dative (*muneri*). The term *dictatores* must be an item of soldiers' humour referring to those supervising the project, presumably the *magister* of l. 9 and the centurion.⁶² But what would *muneri cedere* mean? There are two possibilities. A phrase such as *cedo tempori* (e.g. Cic., *Sest.* 63) would mean 'give in to circumstances', the implication being that the subject reluctantly has to give in to a force beyond his control. Here, however, the sense looks to be 'give oneself to, devote oneself (to the task)', not reluctantly, but by deliberate choice. The *dictatores* are praised, and it is not easy to see how praise would be conveyed by the classical sense of the word. On this view the verb would have been used in a sense which is apparently without parallel. A second possibility is that the verb retains the conventional meaning 'give in to' (see *OLD* s.v. 10) and that the composer was in effect saying that 'even the "dictators" gave in and helped'. On this interpretation the dictators would have given in reluctantly, and there would have to lie concealed a reference to some sort of incident or soldiers' joke. What perhaps stands against this interpretation is the presence of *strenue*, which does not seem consistent with reluctant submission to the task. I am inclined to think that the verb has been forced to bear a meaning which it did not otherwise have, though it is not completely to be ruled out that a semantic extension had taken place of a sort which has not found its way into literature.

Necumqua(m) (16, 24) is clearly a synonym of CL *numquam*. The combination *nec umquam* is, of course, commonplace in Classical Latin, but it means 'and not ever'. The usage here cannot be paralleled in the *Thesaurus* material (information from Dr Krömer), though it could just be explained from the use of *nec = non* found both in old compounds such as *necopinans*, and independently, particularly in later Latin.⁶³ The meaning of l. 24 as a whole is problematical. The idea seems to be that the men never allowed the work to be broken off/interrupted. *exhibeo* is construed with an infinitive, a usage which I have been unable to parallel. A meaning 'grant, put at one's disposal' can be quoted for *exhibeo* (*OLD* s.v. 6c) with a direct object (e.g. Livy 34.32.10 'exhibe liberam contionem uel Argis uel Lacedaemone'), but not, it seems, accompanied by an infinitive. *erupi* could mean 'be interrupted'. *rumpo* is commonly used thus in the classical period (*OLD* s.v. 7b: e.g. Mart. 9.68.3 'nondum cristati rupere silentia galli'). The compound *erumpo* appears with this sense for the first time in late Latin: e.g. Ven. Fort., *Vita Pat.* 17.49 'statim mulier (sc. muta) longa erupit silentia' (*TLL* V.2.843.15).

The intended implication of l. 22 must be along these lines: they were eager to do more, if only there were more to do. But the way in which the thought is expressed is odd in various ways. *contententes* seems to be construed with the pluperfect subjunctive *fecissent*, without a subordinating conjunction. It is in any case the infinitive which is normally used to complement the verb in this sense. Cic., *Att.* 9.17.1 ('nec dubito quin a me contendat ad urbem ueniam', 'I don't doubt that he will press me to come to Rome' (Shackleton Bailey)) is not a parallel, because it does not contain the use of *contendo = 'strive (to)'*. The distribution of *amplius* and *opera* across two clauses is also at the very

⁶² Rebuffat, op. cit. (n. 4), 95, states with reason that *dictatores* 'est évidemment ici une expression qui désigne les chefs, le centurion et le *magister*', and goes on to remark that attestations of the word which do not designate the Republican magistrate are extremely rare. In my opinion it is a mistake to attempt to identify here any sort of technical use of the word belonging to the Empire. The usage embodies soldiers' humour, and is a nickname given by them to the overseers of the work. Bits and pieces of soldiers'

wit are preserved (see W. Heraeus, 'Die römische Soldatensprache', *ALL* 12 (1900), e.g. 265), including a few nicknames (Heraeus, 278). One of these last, recorded by Tacitus at *Ann.* 1.23.3, was applied by soldiers to a satiric centurion (*cedo alteram*). One of the non-technical examples of *dictator* cited at *TLL* V.1.1003.61 (Fronto p. 226.23N.) is described there as used 'per iocum'.

⁶³ See, e.g., E. Löfstedt, *Philologischer Kommentar zur Peregrinatio Aetherae* (1911), 88.

least crude. One might have expected an adjective in agreement with *opera* standing in the same clause.

At 23, as we saw, *dederit* is an existing form used with the wrong function. I cannot cite an exact parallel, but it is certainly the case that a learner of a second language will sometimes use a 'correct' form with the wrong function. The Greek who attempted to translate two fables of Babrius into Latin (*P. Amh.* II.26) used perfect (passive) participles (*auditus*, *putatus*) as if they were active (= ἀκούσας, νομίσας), and a future participle (*missurus*) as if it were a past. The literal meaning of the line of Iasucthan would appear to be 'from the number of the soldiers a certain one gave his support further'. It is a difficulty that an unnamed individual (*quidam*) should be referred to allusively in such a public text, and apparently for that reason Rebuffat (op. cit. (n. 4), 94) took *quidam* in the sense *chacun* (i.e. = *quisque*). This usage would not seem to be paralleled, though the *qu-* words such as *quisquis*, *quisquam*, and *quisque* gave trouble to some speakers, and various other confusions are attested. However, this interpretation does not do justice to the comparative *amplius*, which, juxtaposed with *quidam*, does seem to imply that one individual outshone the rest. It would not be justifiable on the evidence of this context to bring into existence a usage *quidam* = *quisque*; there may well be buried here a joking allusion to an identifiable individual. That the piece contains references to characters of the camp is also suggested by *duo* at 32, though the line as a whole is not comprehensible, since it is unclear what *turpis* means, and whether *animosos* (*duo*?) is object of *contemnetes* or of *oppresserat*.

In 13 the passive infinitive with *contendo* 'strive' (*contendunt fieri cito*) is at the very least unusual (though Virg., *Aen* 3.61 'omnibus idem animus, scelerata *excedere* terra, / *linqui* pollutum hospitium et *dare* classibus Austros', shows the potential artistry of an unexpected passive surrounded by actives). The expression *sibi zelum tradebant* (19), 'they handed to themselves enthusiasm', is also peculiar. Remarkably, the poet uses *zelus* twice (cf. 25), a Greek word which seems to be found more often by far in the Latin Bible than elsewhere in Latin,⁶⁴ both in a bad sense ('jealousy') and in a good sense ('emulation, enthusiasm'). Here it has a good sense, but I have not been able to parallel the awkwardly expressed verb-phrase.

Subsequentes (15) + dative (= 'following upon?') is not the normal construction (the accusative), but the analogy of (e.g.) *succedo* could have generated the dative construction. The verb-phrase *onestia bona sumebant* is puzzling, and not only because of the morphology of *onestia*. *bona* cannot have its concrete sense 'goods' here, because there is no implication that the soldiers obtained material benefit. *bona* can mean '(moral) virtues', but it is not virtue that is acquired here but honour or the like. The problem does not lie in *sumo*: the verb is sometimes used of acquiring honour *et sim.*, as at *CLE* 1410 'sumpsisti inlustrem sed iam grandaeus honorem', 2103 'quo sumit femina laudem'. *honorem* would have given good sense here, but could *onestia bona*, 'honourable benefits', have such an implication? *honestum et bonum* is an attested collocation (*TLL* II.2098.69ff., with 2083.42ff., 45), but an asyndeton does not seem plausible, and in any case the problem of meaning would remain. Whatever the phrase is intended to mean, it does not embody standard or transparent idiom.

Syntactically I would mention the various hanging constructions which are not incorporated into a sentence, such as the ablative constructions *creto consilio* and *hortante parato magistro* in 9, the nominative *militum uirtus* and ablative *funib cannabinis strictis* in 12, where there is no verb to determine the cases, the accusative *lapides . . . adtractos* in 11, and less remarkably the nominative *florida tertia augusta legio* in 29. Of these the oddest is *lapides adtractos*, which could have been rendered perfectly classical, without detriment to the metrical line-ending, if *adtracti* had been written for *adtractos*. What makes the construction strange is the fact that the (accusative) participle functions in effect as the finite verb of a main clause, rather than as the verbal part of an embedded construction (such as an acc. + infin. or 'accusative absolute'). On the whole, however,

⁶⁴ See B. Fischer, *Novae Concordantiae Bibliorum Sacrorum iuxta Vulgatam Versionem critice editam* (1977), citing more than fifty examples.

the errors noted in this paragraph are perhaps best related to the author's inability consistently to fit complete sentences into the metrical line. Many of the lines end with a third-person verb in the past tense (in fifteen cases), but that monotonous structure could not be achieved in every line, and in some cases the writer in effect left the line unfinished.

Following a suggestion of Dr R. S. O. Tomlin, I am inclined also to add *iuncta uirtus militum paucorum uelocitas ingens* (10) to the imperfect constructions noted in the previous paragraph. The line could be construed (as it is in the translation) as having a twofold subject in asyndeton (*uirtus . . . uelocitas*), with the auxiliary (or copula) *est* (or *erat*) understood with *iuncta*. But the sequence of thought might alternatively be that, though the soldiers were few in number, they were able to achieve great speed because they *combined* their valour. On this (Tomlin's) view, *uelocitas ingens* would express the consequence of the *iuncta uirtus*, but the syntax of the line would not bring out the relationship between the two nominal elements. The syntax would be that of note-taking: 'valour of few *combined* — great speed'.

In conclusion, there is a mixture in the text of bizarre idiom and syntax with correct spelling (and for the most part morphology). Oddities include the unspecified relationship between *uirtus* and *uelocitas* in 10, the passive *fieri* with *contendunt* in 13, the expression *onestia bona* in 15, *necumquam* = *numquam*, the verb-phrase *sibi zelum tradebant* in 19, *contententes* complemented by a pluperfect subjunctive in 22, the expression *uoluntatem suam dederit* in 23 and the functional confusion in the verb, the use of *exhibuerunt* with an infinitive in 24, the expression *faciendum honorem* in 30, the meaning of *cesserunt* in 31, and the incomprehensible l. 32. To these might be added the expression *tertia Augustani*, discussed above, n. 16. Three explanations, which are not mutually exclusive, might be offered for the peculiarities. The writer may have been so stretched in his attempt to handle an alien metrical form that he produced incoherent phraseology from time to time. This is a factor invoked above to account for incomplete lines or constructions, but it could scarcely explain unusual meanings (such as that of *necumquam*, which could so easily have been replaced by the standard word *numquam*). Or he may have been deliberately seeking originality of expression on the grounds that that was what a poet should attempt. The metaphorical use of *torrens* (with *uirtus*) at 18, an adjective which, when metaphorical, was usually applied to the flow of speech (e.g. Sen., *Epist.* 100.10, Juv. 3.74), might just be interpreted thus. Finally, he may have been an African whose first language was other than Latin, and whose command of Latin was imperfect. He had been trained in spelling and inflection, perhaps in the army itself, but control of idiom is not so easy for a foreigner to acquire. It is worth recalling that at least some of the writers of ostraca at Bu Njem seem to have been using a reduced form of Latin, in that they tended to use the nominative as a sort of base form where oblique cases were required.⁶⁵ Linguistically reduced forms of communication, based on French, are typically used by recruits to the French foreign legion, who are additionally trained in literacy. There were then learners of Latin as a second language in the camp. Our writer had advanced beyond the stage of using Latin without cases, but it is distinctly possible that Latin was not his first language. The Libyan name is consistent with such a possibility.

As a rough parallel for the stage which the writer had reached, in his command of a second language and his literacy in that language, one might cite the nineteen-line translation (mentioned above, p. 122) which has survived of parts of two fables of Babrius (*P. Amh.* II.26). The translator was a Greek in the process of learning Latin. There is a difference between this translation and our poem, in that the translator had not mastered the relationship between the form and function of passive and non-finite verb-morphemes; thus, for example, as was noted above, he uses the correct perfect passive participial forms *auditus* and *putatus*, but with active function (translating Greek aorist *active* participles). The poet of Bu Njem was able to use passive morphology with the correct function, even if some such forms were not correctly incorporated into a

⁶⁵ See Adams, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 96–103.

sentence (e.g. *adtractos* in 11). Nevertheless, there is a parallelism between the two texts, in that both combine correct spelling with oddities or errors of expression.

There were of course foreign learners of Latin (literacy) who could not spell correctly. One thinks, for example, of the Latin military document (a list of soldiers of the *ala III Assuriorum* dated to the period A.D. 319–29) which may be consulted at *ChLA* XVIII.660, in which are found the Grecizing spellings *prigiceps* (ii.2), *turmης* (ii.2), *Diuggenης* (ii.14) and *Caisaris* (i.3) with a Greek-style digraph. The writer must have been a Greek who had no more than the rudiments of literacy in Latin script. But the poem from Bu Njem and the translation of Babrius bring out the potential distinction between the acquisition of literacy in, and the acquisition of full control over, a second language. The first does not entail the second. It would appear that a relatively advanced learner of Latin as a second language might have learnt the verb- and noun-paradigms of Latin, and their correct spelling, without necessarily acquiring command of their functions or of the idioms in which they participated. To a considerable extent the learning of inflections and spelling may go hand in hand in second-language learning. Perhaps the two most common spelling errors in Latin inscriptions and manuscripts consist in the omission of final *-m* and the writing of *e* for the original *ae* diphthong, though neither error is much in evidence in Iasucthan. The reason for their absence may partly be that both final *m* and *ae* occur most frequently in case inflections. A second-language learner, learning Latin inflections from scratch and at the same time their written forms, would be less likely to commit phonetically determined spelling errors in inflections than a native speaker who used endings intuitively and associated with them a phonetic realization rather than a written form.

A striking instance of a soldier attempting to compose verse in a language of prestige and culture to which he was probably not born is provided by the so-called 'vision of Maximus' found at Kalabcha (Talmis) in Nubia. In this case the soldier was a decurion not a centurion, and the language Greek not Latin. The Greek of this work, which is in Sotadeans, pentameters, and hexameters, has a strangeness of idiom which has been ascribed to imperfect learning,⁶⁶ much as we have argued for imperfect control of Latin idiom in the poem of Iasucthan. The writer, Maximus, seems to have been Nubian or Egyptian.⁶⁷

II. THE POEM OF AVIDIUS

The Latinity of the poem of Avidius is a mixture of the literary and the substandard, and as such presents a contrast with that of Iasucthan (and of some other centurions whom we will discuss below). Of literary phrases the alliterative combination *nomen et numen* is noteworthy. It is elsewhere attested twice, both times in the tragic poet Accius (*Trag.* 646, 691–2).⁶⁸ The archaic genitive plural *diuom* (5) had a long history in poetic language,⁶⁹ but Avidius may have known it from *carmina epigraphica* (cf. *CLE* 432, 579, 1254). Also archaic, poetic, or artificial were *cuncti* (twice; *omnis* never; by contrast Iasucthan has *omnis* three times, *cuncti* not at all), *sient* and *lymphas*. The writer also had some success in working in alliterative phrases (*cunctos in hac castra, digna diuom, nomen et numen, flammis feruidas, aestuantis animae*).

But an accumulation of substandard usages also stands out in the text. In ll. 1–3 *quaesii . . . quot . . . tradere . . . uotum communem* the apparent use of the infinitive in an indirect question anticipates a Romance construction (cf. Fr. *je ne sais que faire*), which is quoted from much later Latin: e.g. Coripp., *Ioh.* 1.273 'nescitque miser quo flectere puppem'.⁷⁰ This seems to be one of the earliest examples of the construction. There is

⁶⁶ See É. Bernand, *Inscriptions métriques de l'Égypte gréco-romaine. Recherches sur la poésie épigrammatique des grecs en Égypte* (1969), 598. The text is printed as no. 168 in Bernand.

⁶⁷ See ll. 24–5, and on their interpretation, Bernand, *op. cit.* (n. 66), 606–7.

⁶⁸ See E. Wölfflin, *Ausgewählte Schriften* (1933), 268.

⁶⁹ See *TLL* V.1.1652.31ff.

⁷⁰ See Hofmann-Szantyr, *op. cit.* (n. 61), 539; D. Norberg, 'Zum Infinitiv in lat. Frage- und Relativsätzen', *Glotta* 27 (1939), 261–70, esp. 268.

an analogous construction later in the poem: 6–7 ‘*inueni tandem nomen et numen deae / . . . quem dicare*’ (infinitive in a final relative clause). Again this is an anticipation of a deviation attested somewhat later: *Grom.* p. 350.3 ‘non *inuenimus* lapides peregrinos quos ponere’, Oribas., *Syn.* 8.12 La ‘non potest . . . *inuenire* locum, *ubi caput lenire*’.⁷¹

Courtney (op. cit. (n. 3), no. 40), following both Kroll and Lavagnini, prints *tradere(m)*, *reddere(m)*, and *dicare(m)*, observing in his commentary (263 on 8 *quandium*) that ‘the writer has omitted *m* so often that in compunction he now adds it hypercorrectly’. It is certainly possible that the three verb-forms were envisaged as first-person singular imperfect subjunctives, with final *-m* omitted, but in fact it is misleading to state that the writer leaves out *-m* often. The three examples in verb-forms are the only cases in the poem: in nouns, adjectives, and adverbs *-m* is regularly written throughout (fifteen times). The hypercorrect *quandium* serves to show the writer’s desire to write *-m* correctly, and to bring out the abnormality of the fact that the only three words allegedly without *-m* happen as they stand to have the form of infinitives, which are open to another (syntactic) explanation. The parallelism of phraseology between the construction in 6–7 (with *inuenio* in the main clause) and the later examples cited above (in which the infinitives cannot be explained away as first-person subjunctives without *-m*) also favours the interpretation of *dicare* as an infinitive. That a careful writer of *-m* should have left it out only in verbs suggests not only that he pronounced the verbs thus, but also that he could not distinguish them syntactically from infinitives.

In l. 7 the relative pronoun *quem* has a mistake of gender, whether its antecedent is taken as *deae* or *nomen et numen*. If *deae*, the masculine form of the relative has been used for the feminine, itself an anticipation of a Romance development.⁷² Equally substandard would be the use of the masculine in reference to a neuter antecedent. Another error of gender is in 2 (*in hac castra*). Since *castra* (fem.) is also used by Iasucthan (28 *castram*), it is obvious that the word was current as a feminine in the camp. *castra* is well attested as a feminine (*TLL* III.548.45ff.), in Africa (e.g. *CIL* VIII.9725, 10937) as well as elsewhere. The expression *uotum communem* (3) also shows the writer’s uncertainty in the matter of gender, because he has the neuter form *quot* = *quod* in agreement with it.

Various points can be made about ll. 16–17. The relative clause has no antecedent, which logically would have been *ei* or *eius* in attachment to *laudem* (‘praise of him who . . .’). This type of elliptical relative clause, in which an antecedent in an oblique case has to be understood, is typical of substandard texts in the later period, though it could also be paralleled in old Latin.⁷³ Also of note here is the expression *te sanum tibi*, where the reflexive dative (of advantage) is pleonastic. Kroll (op. cit. (n. 3), 151) thought that *tibi* was a metrical convenience, but in fact the pleonastic reflexive dative of advantage (which was to generate numerous reflexive verbs in the Romance languages),⁷⁴ is attested with *sanus* in the *Mulomedicina Chironis*,⁷⁵ and with other adjectives and verbs it is widespread in colloquial language. Petronius, for example, has the combination *malo mihi* (50.7), Plautus numerous such verbal expressions, and a familiar adjectival expression is *suus sibi* (from Plautus onwards).⁷⁶

The poem of Avidius thus displays traces of literary phraseology grafted on to a living language with a range of features which can be deduced to have been found in later spoken Latin as it foreshadowed Romance.

III. CENTURIONS, LITERACY AND CULTURE

The survival of two poems which bear the names of centurions is of a general significance which goes beyond the mere presence in the poems of interesting specific

⁷¹ Hofmann-Szantyr, op. cit. (n. 61), 539.

⁷² Hofmann-Szantyr, op. cit. (n. 61), 440.

⁷³ See Hofmann-Szantyr, op. cit. (n. 61), 555–6.

⁷⁴ See in general E. Dahlén, *Études syntaxiques sur les pronoms réfléchis pléonastiques en latin* (1964).

⁷⁵ 502 ‘qui et *sibi* quidem post unam horam *sani*

fiunt’. See H. Ahlquist, *Studien zur spätlateinischen Mulomedicina Chironis* (1909), 34 and Dahlén, op. cit. (n. 74), 120 (this last cited by Courtney, op. cit. (n. 3), 265).

⁷⁶ See Hofmann-Szantyr, op. cit. (n. 61), 94, W. M. Lindsay, *Syntax of Plautus* (1907), 41.

phenomena. Evidence which throws light on the sociolinguistics of the officer classes deserves to be exploited. I again make the assumption that Iasucthan and Avidius either wrote the poems, or were unable to contribute any improvements to the Latinity, and that the poems are therefore relevant to the culture of those whose names they carry. The poems invite some observations about the cultural level not only of Iasucthan and Avidius, who were probably from rather different backgrounds, but also of the class of centurions in general.

It must, however, be stressed that centurions were not as a group socially homogeneous, because they might either rise through the ranks or be commissioned directly into the office.⁷⁷ Those of the second type would undoubtedly often have been of higher educational, as well as social, level. As far as social standing is concerned, it is of interest that a letter at Vindolanda (*Tab. Vind.* II.255), almost certainly from a centurion to the equestrian commander Cerialis, is markedly familiar in tone, and that could be because the centurion was commissioned *ex equite Romano*.⁷⁸ It is to be expected therefore that there should be considerable variations in the quality of centurions' linguistic performance.

I begin with the question of literacy and culture among centurions. Out-and-out illiteracy in legionary centurions would have been virtually inconceivable. Even before they reached the centurionate those promoted from the ranks would have served for fifteen to twenty years,⁷⁹ and in the day-to-day administration of military affairs a functional literacy would have been a prerequisite, even if it was only acquired in the army itself (see above, p. 118). Centurions' tasks requiring literacy are not difficult to find. For example, in the Republican period the wooden tablet containing the password was delivered by a soldier from each maniple to his maniple commander, who was a centurion by rank.⁸⁰ Of note is the career of Petronius Fortunatus, recorded in an inscription from Cillium in Africa (*CIL* VIII.217 = *ILS* 2658) (see further below, p. 127).⁸¹ For forty-six years he served as centurion in thirteen different legions, but in the first four years after his recruitment he was *librarius*, *tesserarius*, *optio*, and *signifer*. The function of the *librarius* was to keep the accounts pertaining to soldiers (*Veg.*, *Mil.* 2.7).⁸² Petronius was clearly literate on his recruitment, and he thus calls to mind Vegetius' dictum (*Mil.* 2.19) that the army needed a proportion of literates among its recruits.⁸³

The educational aspirations of 'great (or 'big'?) centurions' (for their sons) at Venusia are hinted at by Horace (*Sat.* 1.6.72-4). The famous grammarian M. Valerius Probus constantly sought the centurionate, if Suetonius is to be believed (*Gramm.* 24.1), and that anecdote more than any other evidence implies that the highly educated would not have been out of place in the office. The *chirographum* of a centurion P. Alfenus Varus, a *trecenarius*,⁸⁴ survives at *CIL* IV.3340, no. xlv, in the form of a receipt. That the text is in the hand of Varus establishes his literacy, but the general correctness of the spelling and syntax establishes nothing about his degree of education, because the text is formulaic and could have been copied from an exemplar. What is interesting however is that one of the variable terms in the document (a name), which would not have been in the exemplar, has a learned spelling of a type recommended by *grammatici*: *Iucundus*

⁷⁷ See the detailed discussion of Le Bohec, op. cit. (n. 1), 147-84, with the general remarks at 148 on methods of recruitment to the centurionate.

⁷⁸ See Bowman and Thomas, op. cit. (n. 59), 224, 227.

⁷⁹ See B. Dobson, 'The centurionate and social mobility during the Principate', in C. Nicolet (ed.), *Recherches sur les structures sociales dans l'antiquité classique* (1974), 99-116, especially 101.

⁸⁰ See *Plb.* 6.34.7-12; E. E. Best, 'The literate Roman soldier', *CJ* 62 (1966-7), 123; W. V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (1989), 166-7.

⁸¹ On this inscription, see D. Pikhous, 'Le carmen de Cillium et l'épigraphique versifiée de l'Afrique romaine', in *Les Flavii de Cillium. Étude architectur-*

ale, épigraphique historique et littéraire du mausolée de Kasserine (*CIL* VIII, 211-216), Collection de l'École Française de Rome 169 (1993), 149-51.

⁸² See also *Der Kleine Pauly* 3 (1969), 626 s.v. *librarius*.

⁸³ For this connection drawn between the career of Petronius and the passage of Vegetius, see E. Birley, 'Promotions and transfers in the Roman army II: the centurionate', *The Roman Army Papers 1929-1986* (1988), 208-9.

⁸⁴ The post of *trecenarius* was of high status, but its exact nature is unclear. See especially B. Dobson and D. J. Breeze, 'The Roman cohorts and the legionary centurionate (Appendix II: *trecenarius* and *princeps castrorum*)', *Epigraphische Studien* 8 (1969), 118-22.

is spelt with *q* instead of *c*, in line with the grammarians' rule that *k* should be written before *a*, *q* before *u* and *c* before other letters.⁸⁵

Centurions with literary interests are portrayed in the poems of Martial. At 11.3 a centurion (a type rather than a specific person in this case) stationed in Moesia Superior is imagined as an avid reader of Martial's epigrams. Martial injects humour into the picture by implying a certain roughness on the part of the centurion,⁸⁶ just as in Lucilius the Hellenophile T. Albucius would, it is implied, have looked down on centurions (Lucil. 88–94).⁸⁷ More interesting is a real centurion, Aulus Pudens, who was a close friend of Martial's (see 1.31, 4.29, 5.48, 6.58, 7.11, 9.81, 13.69). He is presented as interested in Martial's poetry (e.g. 4.29) and even as a critical reader who suggests improvements to the poet's efforts (7.11). He was aspiring to the *primus pilus* (1.31, 6.58). 10.26 is an epitaph for another centurion, Varus, who was also clearly a friend of Martial's. And 1.93 commemorates two *primi pili*, Fabricius and Aquinus, who lie buried together. The poem ends with the epitaph from their tomb, an elegant couplet which is testimony to the educated circles to which they belonged. But it would not do to suggest that Martial's centurion friends were typical of the class.

The *trecenarius* Varus mentioned above would have been of high standing (see n. 84) and no doubt some education, but in fact we have a text from a centurion at the pinnacle of the hierarchy (a *primus pilus*), and this has some interesting features. The inscription (*AE* 1928.37) is again from Africa (Aquae Flavianae near Kenchela).⁸⁸

optau Dacos tenere caesos: tenui.
[opt]au in sella pacis residere: sedi.
optau claros sequi triumphos: factum.
optau primi commoda plena pili: hab[ui].
optau nudas uidere nymphas: uidi.

Quite apart from the correctness of the Latin and the contrived rhetorical structure,⁸⁹ it has been suggested that there may be a connection (direct or indirect) between the final line of this allusive piece and Catullus 64.16–17.⁹⁰

The five lines do not scan as verse,⁹¹ but the structure is reinforced by marked rhythms at key points of the line. Three lines (1, 3, 5) have a triple trochee in the clausula before the colon (on my punctuation). L. 4 has a double trochee in this position, and l. 2 can be interpreted as showing a trochee + cretic. The usual question mark stands against the authorship of the piece, but if it was not composed by the centurion himself (note however that it is in the first person) it at least gives an indication of the educational standards of those with whom he associated. It is a far cry from here to the centurions of Bu Njem.

The monument of Petronius Fortunatus referred to above is reported in the nineteenth century still to have had the remnants of a verse inscription, in which reference was made to the monument rising to the clouds.⁹² From the same town of Cillium there survives the magnificent monument of the Flavii, with two verse inscriptions of high quality, one of ninety lines and the other of twenty,⁹³ the first of which embodies references to the height of the monument (16 *aetherias surgunt monumenta per auras*, 78 *nubila pulsant*). It is not impossible that the Petronii had copied their fellow townsmen in setting up a verse memorial with literary pretensions.⁹⁴ The

⁸⁵ See Donat., *GL* IV.368.7.

⁸⁶ See N. M. Kay, *Martial Book XI: a Commentary* (1985), 64 ad loc.

⁸⁷ For centurions as falling short of the highest social class, see further Val. Max. 3.8.7 with C. Skidmore, *Practical Ethics for Roman Gentlemen. The Work of Valerius Maximus* (1996), 103. I am grateful to T. P. Wiseman for these references.

⁸⁸ The inscription is discussed from a different point of view by Y. Le Bohec, *L'armée romaine sous le haut-empire* (2nd edn, 1990), 252; for bibliography, see also Pikhaus, op. cit. (n. 81), 136 n. 12, 138 n. 18.

⁸⁹ Note, for example, the framing of each line by

verbs, the hyberbaton in most lines, including the separation of *primi* from *pili* in a poetic manner (cf. Mart. 1.93.3), and the iteration of the compound *residere* with the simplex *sedi*.

⁹⁰ See A. Balland, 'Sur la nudité des nymphes', *Mélanges offerts à Jacques Heurgon* (1976), 1–11.

⁹¹ Balland, op. cit. (n. 90), 2, speaks of 'quasi-vers'.

⁹² See Pikhaus, op. cit. (n. 81), 150.

⁹³ The texts are now re-edited and discussed in detail in the work cited at n. 81; see also Courtney, op. cit. (n. 3), no. 199.

⁹⁴ See Pikhaus, op. cit. (n. 81), 151.

family of the Flavii were descendants of an African who had served in the Roman army,⁹⁵ and their monument might be seen as reflecting an advanced stage in the social and educational aspirations of the military classes in a provincial region.

At the Colossus of Memnon there survive 108 Greek and Latin inscriptions written or commissioned by visitors, usually high functionaries or high-ranking officers in the Roman army, who had 'heard the voice of Memnon'.⁹⁶ Of these ten are written by or are in the name of centurions (2, 7, 10, 25, 44, 45, 47, 51, 53, 101), and this small corpus provides evidence about both the culture and the language choice of centurions. Almost all the military inscriptions at the Colossus, whether by centurions or others, are in Latin,⁹⁷ but that does not necessarily reflect monolingualism on the part of the writers.

Of the ten centurions' inscriptions, three are in Greek (51, 53, 101). All of the Greek inscriptions are in verse, whereas all of the Latin are in prose. The Latin inscriptions vary slightly by period, but all give the full name, title, and legion of the centurion, and most the date as well (44, 45, and 47 are without date).

The first Greek inscription (51), dated 8 May 150, presents a striking contrast with what had gone before under the name of centurions. The body of the text comprises ten hexameter lines (most of them damaged) in a flowery poetic Greek indebted to Homer.⁹⁸ The centurion reveals his name and rank in an acclamation (εὐτυχῶς + dative of the name, Μαρῖω Γεμέλλω, with a symbol for *centurio*) before the start of the poem, and after the poem he addresses a similar acclamation to his wife. His legion is not stated. This inscription is literary, personal, and non-official, and is without Romanizing information. 53 is in the name of the same centurion, again in hexameters (fragmentary). Again Gemellus names himself with his rank in an acclamation, but as before he does not mention his legion. The third Greek piece (101) is in six lines of Homericizing hexameters. On this occasion the centurion does not give his full name (he is merely 'Iulius'), and, like Gemellus, he does not specify his legion: he is simply [ἐκα]τόνταρχος λεγεῶνος (6).

The Latin inscriptions provide information about the dedicator (as a member of the Roman army and as a visitor to the Colossus on a particular day), not about Memnon, who is not addressed but merely named in the formula 'I/he heard Memnon'. Of particular note in this respect is the inscription No. 7, which states the centurion's full name with filiation, tribe, *origo*, and legion, after which there is a long-winded accumulation of information about all of his visits to the Colossus. An entirely different tradition lies behind the Greek verse inscriptions, certainly those of the centurions but others as well. In these Memnon tends to be addressed directly, and mythological information is often included. The god may be *honoured* by the verse, as is particularly clear in No. 13 (not by a centurion), where there is a switch from Latin prose, recording the usual official Roman details, into Greek verse, with the express aim of honouring the god (5f. 'et *honoravit* eum uersibus infra scriptis'). Typically, there is also here a transition from third to second person as the change of languages occurs. Memnon, rather than or as well as the dedicator, is the focus of such texts.

There is clearly a functional distinction between these Latin and Greek inscriptions by centurions. Latin is the language chosen to set out the military man's position in the army, and to record precisely the date of the visit; it is a public voice, as it were, suited to expressing the formal *persona* of a high-ranking member of the Roman army. On the other hand centurions who wrote Greek verses (and note that Gemellus seems to have claimed explicitly to have been the composer of 51, if the usual restorations of l. 9 are accepted: e.g. [ταῦτ' ἐγραψα] ἔγωγε Γεμέλλος) were participating in a Greek cultural tradition at the Colossus and thus presenting themselves in a rather different light, not merely as soldiers, but as *au fait* with a regional form of Greek literary culture. If on the other hand they had the versions written on their behalf, they were still making a language choice and differentiating the two languages functionally.

⁹⁵ This is clear from the prose inscription which accompanies the verses; see also J.-M. Lassère in the work cited in n. 81, 220-1.

⁹⁶ See A. and É. Bernand, *op. cit.* (n. 6).

⁹⁷ To the centurions' inscriptions listed above can be added the military inscriptions nos 6, 9, 14, 20 (Greek), 38, 39 (Greek), 46, 56, 60, 74.

⁹⁸ See A. and É. Bernand, *op. cit.* (n. 6), 133 n.1.

It is worth noting in confirmation of the above interpretation that the centurions' inscriptions as a group show a parallelism with a pair of texts by another type of officer, a Prefect of the Alexandrian fleet, Q. Marcius Hermogenes, at the same site. In March 134 he 'heard Memnon', and recorded that fact in a banal Latin prose inscription (38) which gave his full name and title, and also the date. But Hermogenes also recorded his presence in Greek (39), this time in a verse couplet of which the second line is fragmentary. In the Greek Hermogenes did not state his title or the date. It goes without saying that he was bilingual, but one can go beyond that fact to his attitude to the two languages. Greek seems to be chosen at least partly to demonstrate the literary culture of the writer or referent; in all of these Greek 'military' inscriptions the soldier's membership of the Roman army is incidental, and detailed information about it is not provided. Latin, on the other hand, was the language which an officer might select, even in a non-Latin-speaking area, when he wished to establish his military credentials. There can be no question that many Latin military inscriptions from all over the Empire are the work of, or at least record, soldiers whose first language would not have been Latin. The centurions' inscriptions at the Colossus thus display on the one hand claims to participation in a literary culture, this time in Greek, and on the other the making of language choices determined by the function of the inscription, a topic to which we will return below.

The evidence of the previous paragraphs points to some educated users of literary Latin and Greek within the centurionate. Iasucthan on the other hand was culturally a more marginal figure, literate no doubt and with some awareness of traditional literary practices, but lacking the education of some other holders of the office. Iasucthan (and Avidius) do not stand alone among centurions in their less than assured command or judgement of the (Latin) literary language. Of note is an inept hexameter epitaph set up at Rome by a certain Iul. Valens for his son (*CIL* VI.3608 = *ILS* 475). The *praescriptum* in prose reveals him to have been a centurion. Interestingly, he was a Thracian,⁹⁹ and it may be conjectured that Latin was his second language (cf. the Thracian emperor Maximinus, discussed below, p. 132, who was a learner of Latin rather than a native speaker). The date of the piece (not long after 202)¹⁰⁰ makes it almost exactly contemporary with that of Iasucthan:

Perlege cuncta precor, cultor, pietate parentis
 cum simul et matre, quod nobis inane sepulchrum
 fecerunt, quanto in munere positum uides.
 quod si fata mihi dedissent luce uidere,
 ista prius ipsis facerem, non ut poscere mun[us], 5
 munus inane quidem. terra nunc diuidit ista
 corpora nostra nimis grauiter parua aduers[us] uota parentum.
 quod peto, si colitis Mane[s], cuncti meo nomini semper
 hac mihi terr[a] leue optetis. uobis dii fortuna beata
 et semper honoratam prestant suo numin[e] sancto, 10
 ex qua possitis obiti bene linquere n[at]os.

As in Iasucthan's effort, so here scarcely a single line scans correctly as a hexameter (1 is an exception), though several come close and other lines have sequences of dactyls and spondees (e.g. 7, 8) without achieving the right number of feet or complete correctness. Two of the clausulae (in 3, 8) can only be scanned accentually, but in most lines the ending is quantitatively correct.

There is more to be said about the circumstances of composition of this poem that is relevant to the interpretation of such evidence. The poem is very similar to two other epigraphic poems from Rome (*CLE* 474, 476). For example, the last four lines (*quod peto . . . natos*) are virtually identical to the last four lines of 476, and very similar to the last three lines of 474. The line opening of 6 (*munus inane quidem*) is the same as that of 474.10. *terra nunc diuidit ista / corpora* (6f.) is much the same as 474.10f. (*terra nunc*

⁹⁹ See M. P. Speidel, *Die Denkmäler der Kaiserreiter. Equites Singulares Augusti* (1994), no. 760 with 732.

¹⁰⁰ See Speidel, *op. cit.* (n. 99), 424 on no. 760.

dividit ista / ossua).¹⁰¹ The couplet at 4–5 (*quod si . . . facerem*) is similar to 474.8–9 ‘quot si fata eo sinuissent¹⁰² luce uidere, / ista prius triste munus posui dolore repletus’, though the apodosis is illogical in 474 but meaningful in 475 (see below). In 3 *quanto . . . uides* is similar to 474.2. There are also similarities between 474 and 476 (cf. 474.3 ‘Pannonia terra creat, tumulat Italia tellus’ with 476.7 ‘me Germania creat tellus myseram quem nunc hic Fabia terra tegit’).

A superficial explanation of these similarities might be that various composers had drawn on epigraphic poems which they had seen about Rome. But with the publication of Speidel’s book (see n. 99) it has now become apparent that all three poems bear the names of men linked with the *equites singulares Augusti* (474 = Speidel 596, 475 = Speidel 760 (cf. 732 for the referent), 476 = Speidel 761). They are moreover the only *poems* in the large corpus of inscriptions of the *equites*. It is highly likely that all were the work of an incompetent poet¹⁰³ who had some sort of connection with the unit. It is possible in places to observe an attempt to reuse lines in a different context. In 475, for example, the deceased is a child, and the apodosis (5) is an appropriate declaration that the child would have preferred to bury his parents. At 474 on the other hand the deceased is not a child, and the apodosis had to be changed, with unsatisfactory results.

Those associated with the three poems are in a number of cases outsiders to Rome and not necessarily first-language speakers of Latin (Pannonian and German dedicatees, and a Thracian dedicator; it is of course also likely that the families of the Pannonian and German were outsiders). It seems a fair guess that the commissioners of the texts went to the same composer. Their acceptance of the epitaphs betrays a low cultural level on their part, but, despite that, at least an aspiration to have their relatives commemorated in Latin verse. There was presumably a connection between their places of origin and the quality of the poems they accepted. What these various poems (and others, such as that of Maximus, referred to above, p. 123) seem to reveal is a certain influence of the Roman army in inspiring cultural aspirations in its officers.¹⁰⁴

We have seen evidence, largely of an indirect kind, for bilingualism in the centurionate (so Iasucthan and the Thracian Valens), for language learning, and also for the functional differentiation of languages by centurions (those who left inscriptions at the Colossus of Memnon). I offer finally in this section some more concrete remarks about multilingualism and language attitudes within the centurionate.

Centurions originated from diverse areas spread across the Empire,¹⁰⁵ areas in which a multitude of languages was spoken. If Iasucthan was an African who had learnt Latin as a second language, he would not have been alone among centurions in this form of bilingualism. There is an obvious linguistic distinction to be drawn between, say, the modern British army, in which English is the sole language and most officers have traditionally been from a restricted social class in which monolingualism is the norm, and the Roman army, in which Latin would have been learnt only as a second language by many recruits. Almost all bilinguals in the British army are bilingual by choice, and their learnt language is not that of the army itself. Bilinguals in the Roman army were mainly bilingual by necessity, and in this case their second language will usually (but not always: see below on Atilius) have been the language of the army. Some recruits, particularly in auxiliary units, might well have remained largely monolingual in a language other than Latin (note ps.-Hyg., *Met. castr.* 43, Tac., *Hist.* 2.37.2, 3.33.2), but their officers could not have survived without Latin; the implication, for example, of

¹⁰¹ On the plural *corpora* ‘body parts’, see J. N. Adams, *Pelagius and Latin Veterinary Terminology in the Roman Empire* (1995), 581.

¹⁰² With this substandard form of the perfect, cf. *reguit* in another centurion’s inscription, *ILS* 2671.

¹⁰³ So Speidel, *op. cit.* (n. 99), 424 on no. 760, though with two crucial misprints: ‘Das Gedicht ist aus derselben Feder wie 594 und 760’ (substitute 596 and 761); see also *idem*, 425 on no. 761.

¹⁰⁴ It is worth recalling that the new fragment of the poet Gallus (see R. D. Anderson, P. J. Parsons and R. G. M. Nisbet, ‘Elegiacs by Gallus from Qasr Ibrim’, *JRS* 69 (1979), 125–55) was found in a

military environment in Egypt, to which it was probably taken by an officer. At the pilgrimage site of Philae in Egypt one Junius Sabinus of the *cohors III Ituraeorum* has left four lines of Greek verse (*IGP* 159) which contain a rare verb (ἐγάνωσεν), lit. ‘brighten, polish’, used in a metaphorical sense ‘praise’ which may only be attested elsewhere in Pindar’s *Paeans* (7.8). I owe this reference to I. C. Rutherford.

¹⁰⁵ See E. Birley, ‘The origin of legionary centurions’, in *idem*, *Roman Britain and the Roman Army: Collected Papers* (1953), 104–24.

Tac., *Ann.* 2.10.3 is that an officer (in this case a German) in a foreign unit would necessarily be bilingual, in order to mediate between higher authority and his troops, who, it seems to be suggested, would sometimes have been monolingual. Foreign recruits into (or who had risen to) the centurionate would almost inevitably have been fluent bilinguals. There are a few inscriptions and other texts which throw up evidence, direct or indirect, for forms of bilingualism among centurions and for their attitudes to competing languages.

A letter on papyrus (second or third century A.D.) from a centurion Domitius Annianus to the elders and public officials of the unidentified village of Taurinus in the Fayum (see *ChLA* III.207, with brief commentary) is in Greek for the first ten lines, in a hand with strongly marked Latin characteristics, but then switches into Latin for the recording of the date. If the centurion wrote the letter himself, he was obviously used to writing in Latin, but was able to use Greek to accommodate his addressees.

T. Statilius Solo, a *primus pilus*, set up a bilingual epitaph for his foster child Epaphroditus at Brigetio in Pannonia (*CIL* III.11034):¹⁰⁶

D.M. Epaphrodito alumno suo T. S[t]a[tili]us Solo p(rimus p(ilus) leg(ionis) I ad(iutricis)
p(iae) f(idelis) et Postumia Flora
Ἐπαφρόδειτε ἥρωος, χρηστὲ χαίρει

The centurion would not have gone to the trouble of ordering a bilingual text if there had not been an element of bilingualism in his family. It is of note that the Greek and Latin texts are not equivalent. The aim of this bilingual text (as in the case of many others) is not then to impart the same information to potential passers-by speaking different languages. The Latin tells us more about the dedicator as a member of the Roman army than about the dedicatee. The Greek on the other hand does not mention the dedicator. There is in the Greek a relic of an old type of epitaph. It has been shown that χαίρει was originally addressed to those who had achieved special status after death, such as heroization, and the recollection of that usage accounts for the presence here of ἥρωος.¹⁰⁷ The Latin and Greek in this inscription have different functions. The Latin is used to locate the dedicator in the Roman army whereas the Greek places the deceased (and indeed the dedicator) within a Greek cultural background. In effect the bilingualism of the inscription confers a double identity on the dedicator (rather than the deceased). He was a member of the Roman army and symbolically Latin is used to express that fact, but a participant in a traditional Greek culture. It is likely that, given the deceased's Greek name, he was a Greek, and the direct address of him in that language (contrasting with the third-person formality of the Latin) creates a presumption that Greek would have been Statilius' family language. Many bilinguals have an informal (mother) tongue, which is characteristically the language of the family, and a more formal language, the dominant language of the state in which they live, used for example in public transactions. A model such as this, I would argue, is applicable to language-mixing among lower-class Greeks resident in Rome (see, e.g. *IGUR* 501).

Another centurion's dedication to an *alumnus*, at Bostra, is also bilingual (*CIL* III.103),¹⁰⁸ this time with the (fragmentary) Latin and Greek versions apparently identical. Such inscriptions take us into the private world of centurions.

A revealing bilingual epitaph of a centurion was found at Tarsus in Cilicia (*CIL* III.222):

Iulio Seuero (centurioni) leg. V Maced. dulcissimo marito Iulia Hermione Ytale matrona
memoriae causa
Ἰουλίῳ Σευήρῳ (sic) (ἑκατοντάρχη) λεγ. πέμπτης Μακεδ. Μαρίτων γλυκυτάτ(ῳ) συνβίῳ
Ἰουλίᾳ Ἐρμιόνη Ἰτάλη ματρῶνα μνήμης (χαίριν)

¹⁰⁶ cf. B. Dobson, *Die Primipilares. Entwicklung und Bedeutung, Laufbahnen und Persönlichkeiten eines römischen Offiziersranges* (1978), 258–9.

¹⁰⁷ See C. Sourvinou-Inwood, 'Reading' Greek Death (1995), 180–216.

¹⁰⁸ cf. Dobson, op. cit. (n. 106), 287.

This inscription tells us something about the problems of producing a bilingual text, about the various participants in such a production, and also about the role and status which might have been assigned to Latin in some bilingual centurions' families. The Latin text is perfectly correct in syntax, morphology, and vocabulary, but that cannot be said of the Greek. γλυκυτάτῳ συνβίῳ is a literal rendering of *dulcissimo marito*, but before the Greek phrase Μαρτίων is added. The word is superfluous and meaningless in the Greek text, and it could not possibly have been put there by someone who knew Latin; indeed its ending suggests that its author thought of it as a name, Grecized from Latin -o to Greek -ων.

The sequence of events would seem to have been roughly as follows. A Latin text was written, either by the widow or by a drafter. This was then translated into Greek, by someone who knew the meaning of *marito*. Then another person (perhaps the stonecutter), who did not know what this word meant, thinking that a name had been left out of the translation, added Μαρτίων.

The bilingual implications of the inscription are various. It was no straightforward matter for the widow to have the text set up in Latin as well as Greek. She had no difficulty in drafting the Latin, or having it drafted, but getting it presented on stone with a Greek translation proved problematical, in that the stonecutter was a Greek, and he or his drafter (i.e. the person responsible for the addition of Μαρτίων) did not know much (or any) Latin. It would have been simpler for the woman to have had the epitaph done only in Greek. That she persisted with a Latin version, despite the difficulties, and despite the probability that she was herself Greek, reveals the importance which she attached to this Latin text. It was the symbolism of Latin which was important. The area was Greek-speaking, and the Latin version would have been unnecessary and ineffective merely as a means of transmitting information. The use of Latin was symbolical of the husband's membership of the Roman army. It is possible to deduce the different roles of the two languages in this particular family. Greek, the private language, was used for the benefit of the woman herself, whereas the Latin by its mere presence conveys a public message.

The role of Greek as the family language of three centurions, two of them *primi pili*, can be deduced from *ILS* 8871 = *IGRR* III.28 (Apamea),¹⁰⁹ *ILS* 8872 (Hieropolis in Cilicia) and *IGRR* IV.266.¹¹⁰ Here members of the families of the deceased, a wife, a son, and a wife and children, commemorate the centurions in Greek, thereby providing evidence that the centurions would have heard (and no doubt used) Greek in the family.

An inscription, though monolingual, may betray the bilingualism of its composer. One such text is a dedication by a centurion on an Alexandrian statue base honouring a praetorian prefect, Domitius Honoratus, (*CIL* III.12052; cf. III.14127):¹¹¹ '[L(ucium) Domitium] Honoratum prae(fectum) praetor(io) vac. em(inentissimum) u(irum) Pacilius Tychianus (centurio) leg(ionis) II Tr(aianae) F(ortis) [G(ermanicae) Seu(er)iana(e)]'. There is a hint of a bilingual background to this inscription. The syntax of the text is Greek-influenced, in that the name of the dedicatee is in the accusative rather than the dative. For this typically Greek structure, see, e.g., *ILS* 8871, cited above. If Tychianus did not cut the inscription himself, he is at least likely to have commissioned the text in this syntactic form. Latin dedications set up by bilinguals or in Greek-speaking areas often have this Greek structure.¹¹² Again we have a sign of a difference between the centurion's private or first language, and the language he considered appropriate in a particular circumstance in a public document. His Greek name should be noted.

Not all bilingual centurions were bilingual in Greek and Latin. The Thracian emperor Maximinus as a youth under Severus (193–211) could scarcely speak Latin, according to the *SHA*, and he once put a request to the emperor in a mixed language which was 'almost Thracian': *Maxim.* 2.5 'hic adulescens et semibarbarus et uix adhuc

¹⁰⁹ cf. Dobson, op. cit. (n. 106), 320.

¹¹⁰ cf. Dobson, op. cit. (n. 106), 322.

¹¹¹ For an up to date text, see F. Kayser, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines (non funéraires) d'Alexandrie impériale* (1994), no. 19, pp. 69–73. I am grateful to Dr Benet Salway for drawing my attention

to this inscription and for offering a convincing interpretation of its oddities.

¹¹² See, e.g. *CIL* III.90, 402, 416, 7240, 7241, 7265, Speidel, op. cit. (n. 99), 688c (from Anazarbos in Cilicia).

Latinae linguae, prope Thracica imperatorem publice petit, ut . . .'. Later, under Caracalla (212–17), he held centurionates and the rank of *primus pilus* (*Maxim.* 4.4), by which time he would presumably have achieved some sort of bilingualism in Thracian and Latin, if only imperfect; he did not understand Greek, if the same work (9.3–5) is to be believed. Centurions bilingual in Greek/Latin and Palmyrene Aramaic are also attested, if, that is, the bilingualism of honorific inscriptions can be taken as an index to the bilingualism of the honorand.¹¹³ Another such case is found in the archive of Babatha from the so called 'Cave of Letters'. On 6 May 124 Babatha's husband Judah negotiated a loan with a centurion Magonius Valens of the *cohors I miliaria Thracum* in a mixture of Aramaic (translated in the extant document, but not in the original which will have been retained by the centurion) and Greek.¹¹⁴

A rather different type of bilingual centurion, at least from the first of those mentioned above, seems to be attested in an inscription from Boldog in S.W. Slovakia:¹¹⁵

Q(uintus) Atilius Sp(urii) f(ilius) Vot(uria tribu) Primus inter(p)rex leg(ionis) XV. idem
(centurio) negotiator an(norum) LXXX H(ic) s(itus) e(st) Q(uintus) Atilius Cog(i)tatus Atilia
Q(uinti) l(iberta) Fausta Priuatus et Martialis hered(es) l(iberti)? p(osuerunt)

Atilius was probably from N. Italy¹¹⁶ and thus a native speaker of Latin. He must have been (in this area) an interpreter between Romans and barbarians, presumably Germans (e.g. Marcomanni, Quadi).¹¹⁷ In this case the centurion would appear to have acquired not Latin but a barbarian language through service in the army, but it has to be acknowledged that since he was illegitimate (note *Spurii filius*) the circumstances of his linguistic upbringing are obscure. Whatever the case, one may conjecture that the learning of Germanic by native speakers of Latin was not common even in the army; interpreters of Germanic are more likely to have been Germans who had learnt Latin through service in the army (note Hariobaudes at *Amm.* 18.2.2; cf. the linguistic accomplishments of the Germans Arminius at *Tac., Ann.* 2.10.5 and the guardsman at *Jer., Vita Hilarionis* 13). Atilius is thus an interesting figure whose situation merely hints at the linguistic diversity of the centurionate.

IV. CONCLUSION

It has been suggested that the practice of direct commission into the legionary centurionate made the body socially more heterogeneous than many other groups (see also above, p. 126), such as governors, legionary legates, and officers of the *auxilia*.¹¹⁸ That suggestion is confirmed by the linguistic evidence, which points to a variety of social dialects among centurions, and differing degrees of literacy and literary culture.

Literacy is not a single state; a hierarchy of literacy skills can be established within the army, not least among foreign recruits. The Greek who wrote the list of soldiers of the *ala III Assuriorum* (see p. 124) lay somewhere near the bottom of the pile among such outsiders. He could not so much as convert the Greek digraph $\alpha\iota$ into its Latin correspondent *ae*, and several times he slipped into Greek or Grecizing spellings in his Latin. At the fort of Bu Njem the poems which carry the names of the two centurions belong to a higher literacy level than the letters on ostraca from the same site, many of

¹¹³ See *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum* II.3962 = D. R. Hillers and E. Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts* (1996), 0308 (Latin and Palmyrene), J. Starcky, *Inventaire des inscriptions de Palmyre* X (1949), 81, = Hillers and Cussini 1397 (Greek and Palmyrene). This second centurion (Julius Maximus) accompanied a caravan, and was honoured with a statue; he would almost certainly have been an Aramaic speaker.

¹¹⁴ See N. Lewis, *The Documents from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters. Greek Papyri* (1989), no. 11.

¹¹⁵ See T. Kolník, 'Q. Atilius Primus — interpres

centurio und negotiator: eine bedeutende Grabinschrift aus dem 1. Jh. u. z. im Quadischen Limes-Vorland', *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 30 (1978), 62.

¹¹⁶ See Kolník, *op. cit.* (n. 115), 67.

¹¹⁷ See Kolník, *op. cit.* (n. 115), 66, 68.

¹¹⁸ See e.g. B. Dobson, 'Legionary centurion or equestrian officer? A comparison of pay and prospects', *Ancient Society* 3 (1972), 193; *idem*, 'The significance of the centurion and "primipilaris" in the Roman army and administration', *ANRW* II.1 (1974), 403–7.

which will have been written by African recruits. In the letters, for example, *h* and final *-m* are regularly omitted, *e* is written for *ae*, *ii* is contracted and gemination and simplification of consonants often do not follow the correct classical norms,¹¹⁹ whereas the two poems are for the most part correct in all of these respects. There may have been different degrees of instruction in literacy skills available in the army to soldiers of different ranks. More will have been expected of senior officers than of the ordinary rank and file, and more advanced instruction available to them. At the most humble level ordinary soldiers who were no more than semi-literate could on special occasions when writing was required of them be given an exemplar to copy, and there is indirect evidence for this practice at Bu Njem. It is of interest that in the poem of Iasuchan there seems to be a correlation between correctness of spelling and correctness of morphology, and that may be because inflection was taught to foreigners as a branch of spelling.

Soldiers of different types, such as Junius Sabinus, author of a Greek poem at Philae (see n. 104), the officer who bore the text of the poet Gallus to Qasr Ibrîm, and the decurion Maximus who left his remarkable ‘vision’ at Talmis, can readily be found in the Roman army with the trappings of Greek or Latin literary culture, such trappings perhaps contributing to their possessor’s prestige. Educated men with literary interests and skills are attested within the centurionate, as for example Aulus Pudens and the *primus pilus* from Aquae Flavianae in Latin and Gemellus in Greek. The culture of some seems to have inspired aspirations in other, more marginal figures, outsiders to the centres of culture who lacked the full literary education. Notable cases are the Thracian Valens and of course Iasuchan, who had obviously not been trained by a *grammaticus*, but was so struck by the acrostich form of verse that he had himself commemorated in this manner. Iasuchan could with greater facility have commemorated the building works in a prose inscription, but the choice of hexameters reveals his cultural pretensions.

Latin was under most circumstances the public voice of the Roman army, including of course the centurionate. Eloquent testimony to this is the inscription from Cilicia (see p. 131) which betrays the difficulty of the dedicator in having a Latin inscription set up in public in a Greek-speaking area, and hence her determination to have this done, not for the sake of its content but as a form of symbolism. Behind this public voice there can be detected among centurions diverse patterns of bilingualism and second-language competence. Some Latin-speaking centurions learnt other languages as they moved around the Empire, in at least one case to such a level that the man could act as an interpreter. Those from non-Latin-speaking areas acquired Latin, but not necessarily perfect competence in the second language. Complex attitudes to the use of various languages can be uncovered in some centurions or in members of their families. Sometimes the linguistic attitudes of bilinguals can be expressed in oppositions. We have seen cases of Greek treated as the private or family language, in opposition to Latin, as the public language of the army. On the other hand both Latin and Greek could on occasion fulfil the role of ‘public’ languages, with the subject and intention of the utterance on the one hand, and the status of the writer on the other, acting as the determinant of language choice: thus at the Colossus of Memnon both Greek and Latin clearly had an official, public status among functionaries and high-ranking soldiers, but among soldiers the nature and purpose of the inscription influenced the selection of language, and among functionaries the rank of the official (though the latter is another story which does not belong here).

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¹¹⁹ See above, p. 118, and for additional details see Adams, *op. cit.* (n. 2).