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Author(s): Fergus Millar

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LOCAL CULTURES IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE : LIBYAN, PUNIC AND LATIN IN ROMAN AFRICA

By FERGUS MILLAR

No subject in the history of the Roman Empire has more significance or more pitfalls than that of the local cultures of the provinces. The evidence is in each case, with the exception of Judaea and Egypt, relatively slight, disparate and ambiguous. But, on the one hand, the subject has very real attractions, which may lead to the building of vast but fragile historical theories, attempting to bring the distinctive culture of an area into a schematic relationship with events such as political movements or the spread of Christianity. On the other, we can never escape the possibility that the denial of the survival of a significant local culture may be falsified by new evidence; even worse, a local culture may have existed in a form which left no written records or datable artefacts.

Yet the problem must be faced, not only for the intrinsic interest which such cultures present, but for the light the enquiry sheds on Graeco-Roman civilization itself. We might conclude for one area that Graeco-Roman culture remained the merest façade, for another that it completely obliterated a native culture. More commonly, we will find a mixture or co-existence of cultures. In such a situation, again, the local element might have been culturally and socially insignificant, or, as it was in Egypt and in Judaea, embodied in a coherent traditional civilization with its own language, literature, customs, religion and (in Egypt) art-forms.

With local languages in particular, we are inevitably driven back to questions both about the role of Latin or Greek in the area, and about the status of any evidence in Latin and Greek emanating from it. Was Latin or Greek the language of the towns only, or of the upper classes, or was it widespread, with the local language a mere peasant *patois* (a now common view of Punic in Africa)? Or were there linguistic enclaves, like those of the Berber in present-day North Africa? Similarly, when later Christian sources are the only evidence for the survival of a native language—as with Galatian (Celtic), Mysian, Cappadocian and Isaurian in Asia Minor¹—what are we to make of the Greek inscriptions or literature from these areas from the preceding centuries? Asia Minor provides further examples of the contradictions inherent in our evidence. For instance, the documents of the Roman colony of Lystra and its territory are in Greek, the majority, and in Latin, its coin-legends purely Latin.² There is nothing in the documentary evidence, beyond the appearance of a fair number of native names, to prepare us for the fact that Paul and Barnabas could be hailed as gods in Lycaonian (Λυκαονιστί) within the walls of the town.³ In Phrygian, by contrast, we have about a hundred inscriptions written in Greek script, all funerary, the great majority accompanying a Greek text, and nearly all of the third century;⁴ but the language is not referred to in any literary source until the sixth century.⁵ An approximate parallel from another region to the case of Lystra is provided by Tomoi.⁶ The inscriptions reveal an absorption of Thracian cults, and a significant number of Thracian personal names in the Imperial period. But the language is Greek, and they give no hint of what Ovid reveals, that Getic and Sarmatian were spoken there, and Greek often with a heavy Getic accent.⁷

This last point raises a different question relevant to local cultures, namely whether it can be shown that the Greek or Latin of any area was spoken with a distinctive accent or with distinctive verbal or grammatical forms perhaps influenced by a native language. In the two areas whose Latin vocabulary and syntax have been studied, the results are extremely surprising. H. Mihăescu's study of the inscriptions and literary works from the Danubian

¹ For the most recent collection of the evidence see P. Charanis, 'Ethnic Changes in the Byzantine Empire in the Seventh Century', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* XIII (1959), 23.

² See B. M. Levick, *Roman Colonies in Southern Asia Minor* (1967), 153 f.

³ *Acts* 14, 11.

⁴ *MAMA* VII, see esp. i f., xxvii f. See O. Haas, *Die phrygischen Sprachdenkmäler* (1966).

⁵ Charanis, op. cit. (n. 1.), p. 23.

⁶ See I. Stoian, 'La città pontica di Tomis, Saggio storico', *Dacia* V (1961), 233; M. Danoff in *RE Suppl.* IX (1962), 1397 f.; I. Stoian, *Tomitana: contribuții epigrafice la istoria cetății Tomis* (1962).

⁷ See e.g. L. P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled* (1955), ch. x.

provinces⁸ up to the sixth century revealed no significant linguistic developments not common to the other areas of the Empire. This may be compared with the now classic demonstration by Kenneth Jackson⁹ that the vast majority of the words which passed from Latin into the Brittonic languages did so with an archaic and conservative phonology distinct from that of the vulgar Latin of the Continent; hence that the type of Latin predominantly spoken in Britain was the correct, 'book-Latin' of the schools. On the other hand the *graffiti* of Pompeii, for instance, show very substantial variations from 'correct' Latin, and reveal that the ordinary Latin of Italians was already before 79 developing forms like those of the Romance languages.¹⁰ So are we to conclude that the population of the Danubian provinces normally spoke their native languages—and for this we have no contemporary local evidence, beyond the fairly widespread appearance of native names¹¹—and used the indistinctive, relatively correct language of their Latin inscriptions as a learned language? Or did they speak a true vulgar Latin perhaps with local peculiarities, to which the formal inscriptions of the area offer no guide? That possibility may remind us of how much of the social history of the Roman provinces as we know it is based on the partial and unsatisfactory testimony of formal inscriptions.

The question of whether provincial Latin or Greek might be spoken with a distinctive local pronunciation is baffling precisely because there seems to be remarkably little evidence for such a thing. For instance, Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists* gives a detailed account of the style and diction of numerous later first to early third-century sophists, who came from places as far apart as Egypt, Arabia, Syria, Anatolia, Macedonia, Greece, Italy and Gaul, and performed before highly critical audiences in the main centres of Greek culture. Yet there is only one clear reference to a local accent, when Philostratus says of Pausanias of Caesarea in Cappadocia that he orated παρεια τῆ γλώττῃ καὶ ὡς Καππαδόκαις ζύνηθες, ζυγκρούων μὲν τὰ σύμφωνα τῶν στοιχείων, συστέλλων δὲ τὰ μηχυνόμενα καὶ μηχύνων τὰ βραχέα.¹² Philostratus also says of Apollonius of Tyana as a child καὶ ἡ γλώττα Ἀττικῶς εἶχεν, οὐδ' ἀπήχθη τὴν φωνὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ ἔθνους.^{12a} The Cappadocian accent is perhaps also reflected in an incident in Gregory of Nyssa's life of Gregorius Thaumaturgus: when a peasant appointed bishop of Comana delivers his first address, an Athenian youth who is present bursts out laughing at τὸ ἀκαλλῆς τῆς λέξεως.¹³ Cappadocia apart, it is perhaps the correct interpretation of Dio of Prusa's first Tarsian Oration (xxxiii) that he is reproving the people of Tarsos for the peculiar accent with which they spoke Greek. Such evidence amounts to very little, and not much is added to it when one mentions a remark in the *Historia Augusta* about Septimius Severus: 'Afrum quiddam usque ad senectutem sonans'.¹⁴ Yet the remark, whether true or false, could hardly have been made if there had been no such thing as an African accent; and the African's striving after correct diction is clearly reflected in a speech by Apuleius at Carthage: 'Quis enim vestrum mihi unum soloecismum ignoverit? Quis vel unam syllabam barbaram pronuntiatam donaverit?'¹⁵

As a first step, though only as such, the languages of Roman Africa may be considered in isolation from other features of the provincial culture. The supposed remains of 'Berber' art¹⁶ (which may seem to the outsider no more than rustic Punic art), and the Punic art of the Roman period—especially the funerary *stelae*—which survived into the third century,

⁸ H. Mihăescu, *Limba latină în provinciile dunărene ale Imperiului roman* (1960), French résumé pp. 290 f. Compare S. Stati, *Limba latină în inscripțiile din Dacia și Scythia minor* (1961).

⁹ K. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (1953), 76 f., esp. 97 f. Compare now S. S. Frere, *Britannia: a History of Roman Britain* (1967), 311 f., and J. Liversedge, *Britain in the Roman Empire* (1968), 315 f.

¹⁰ V. Väänänen, *Le Latin vulgaire des inscriptions pompéiennes* (1966).

¹¹ See e.g. A. Mócsy, *Die Bevölkerung von Pannonien bis zu den Marcomannenkriegen* (1959); idem, 'Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der römischen

Provinz Moesia Superior', *Acta. Arch. Hung.* xi (1959), 283; G. Alföldy, *Bevölkerung und Gesellschaft der römischen Provinz Dalmatien* (1965).

¹² Philostratus, *VS* II, 13 (594).

^{12a} Idem, *vita AT* I, 7.

¹³ Migne, *PG* XLVI, 937.

¹⁴ *HA Sept. Sev.* 19, 9.

¹⁵ *Apul. Flor.* 9.

¹⁶ See W. H. C. Frend, 'The Revival of Berber Art', *Antiquity* XVI (1942), 342; A. Berthier, *Les Vestiges du Christianisme antique dans la Numidie centrale* (1943). Compare G. Camps, *Aux origines de la Berbérie: monuments et rites funéraires proto-historiques* (1961), pp. 567 f.

and has not yet been the object of any coherent general treatment,¹⁷ may be left aside; so may the cults of Roman Africa,¹⁸ and consequent theses about the connection of Baal and Saturn and of both with the theology of African Christianity.¹⁹ The isolation of one element is not merely a necessary working procedure. The example of the necropolis of Beth She'arim, where the tombs of leading third-century Rabbis, perhaps of the Patriarch himself, reveal Greek inscriptions and representational decoration,²⁰ warns us against assuming too readily that different 'local' elements in a provincial culture necessarily cohered.

The native languages of Roman Africa were of course Punic, written in a Semitic script which can reasonably be represented in standard Hebrew lettering, and another language too often called 'Berber'. The term expresses the assumption of a coherent social and linguistic continuum of the native population persisting from pre-Punic times to the present day. But 'Berber' is surely an Arabic loan-word from Greek—*barbaros*; for Ibn Khaldoun in the fourteenth century says that the name arose because the non-Arabic-speaking population of North Africa spoke a language of unintelligible 'ber-ber' noises.²¹ In this context the word has no place in our period, and the assumption of a continuum is (see below) though not disprovable, extremely fragile. The non-Punic native language will here have the neutral name 'Libyan', a mere label since no ancient literary source names it at all. For convenience the relatively limited evidence for Libyan will be considered first.

As will be attested below, the paradoxical view sometimes argued, that when Augustine talks about 'lingua Punica' he means Libyan (or 'Berber') has been shown to have no foundation; and without the supposed testimony of Augustine the literary evidence reduces to at best a couple of oblique references. Sallust says of Lepcis Magna: 'eius civitatis lingua modo convorsa conubio Numidarum; legum cultusque pleraque Sidonica'.²² He clearly means to indicate the presence at Lepcis of some language other than Punic. Then there is, if the plural is pressed, a passing hint in Pomponius Mela's summary of the culture of the N. African coastline: 'ora sic habitantur ad nostrum maxime ritum moratis cultoribus, nisi quod quidam linguis differunt'.²³ Finally it may (or may not) be the same Libyan language to which Augustine refers, when he speaks of the language of the tribes beyond the Roman frontier.²⁴

None the less we have fairly substantial archaeological evidence for a language and script quite distinct from Punic which survived into the Roman period, and, as recent discoveries have shown, has left traces all the way from the Atlantic coast to Tripolitania. This may, or may not, be the, or an, ancestor of present-day Berber; the most recent textbook on the latter²⁵ argues that the connection is as yet unproven. This is not to say that the two languages can be shown to be fundamentally different. It is rather that what we know of Libyan depends solely on parallel Punic, and sometimes Latin, inscriptions; and the vast majority of all the known Libyan inscriptions reveal no more than proper names and a few formulae.²⁶ On the other hand it is agreed that the signs used on the Libyan inscriptions very closely resemble the script known as *tifinagh* now used by the

¹⁷ For examples and recent partial treatments see e.g. A. Berthier, R. Charlier, *Le Sanctuaire punique d'El Hofra à Constantine* (1955); C. G. Picard, *Catalogue du Musée Alaoui*, N.S. (collections puniques) I (1956); G. Charles-Picard, 'Civitas Mactaritana', *Karthago* VIII (1957); for a brief conspectus, G. Picard, *Carthage* (trans. M. & L. Kochan, 1964), ch. VII. See now, however, A. M. Bisi, *Le stele puniche* (1967), esp. 113 f.

¹⁸ See the survey by G. Charles-Picard, *Les Religions de l'Afrique antique* (1954).

¹⁹ See W. H. C. Frend, *The Donatist Church* (1952), 76 f.; cf. M. Leglay, *Saturne Africain: monuments I-II* (1961-6).

²⁰ See the most recent reports by N. Avigad, *Israel Exploration Journal* V (1955), 205; VII (1957), 73, 239; and M. Schwabe, B. Lifshitz, *Beth She'arim II: The Greek Inscriptions* (1967) (Hebrew with English Summary). Compare B. Lifshitz, 'L'Hellénisation des Juifs de Palestine: à propos des inscriptions de Besara (Beth-Shearim)', *Revue Biblique* LXXII (1965), 520.

²¹ Ibn Khaldoun, *Histoire des Berbères et des dynasties musulmanes de l'Afrique septentrionale*, trans. de Slane I (1925), 168.

²² Sall., *Bell. Jug.* 78.

²³ Mela, *Chorographia* I, 8, 41.

²⁴ *de civ. dei.* 16, 6.

²⁵ A. Basset, 'La Langue berbère,' in *Handbook of African Languages* I (1952), pp. 47-8.

²⁶ The standard collection and discussion is J.-B. Chabot, *Recueil des Inscriptions libyques (RIL)* I (1940-1); see however the excellent earlier discussion by S. Gsell, *Histoire Ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord* I³ (1921), 309 f. Compare also J.-G. Février, 'Que savons-nous du libyque?', *Revue Africaine* C (1956), 263. A more confident linguistic assessment of Libyan is made by O. Rössler, 'Die Sprache Numidiens', *Sybaris: Festschrift M. Krahe* (1958), 94. See now L. Galand, 'Les Études de linguistique berbère de 1954 à 1956', *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* IV (1965) (pub. 1966), 743 ff., on pp. 746-9, 750-52.

Tuareg of the Sahara.²⁷ The precise connection between the two may perhaps never be known.

The Libyan inscriptions are written in twenty-three signs of a rather rigid geometrical form (see Chabot, *RIL*, p. v), normally written in vertical lines beginning in the bottom right-hand corner. Only in the inscriptions of Dougga (*RIL* nos. 1-11) is the text written horizontally, beginning on the right of the top line, in imitation of Punic. Nos. 1 and 2 have parallel Punic texts; they are exceptional in being building inscriptions, probably contemporary, the former from the well-known mausoleum of Dougga, and the latter from the temple of Masinissa,²⁸ constructed in the '10th year of Micipsa'—139, or 138 B.C.²⁹ Apart from those from Dougga, almost all the known Libyan inscriptions (1123 in *RIL*) seem to be from grave *stelai*, which in form and decoration appear to be of a rustic Punic type; some have parallel Punic texts (*RIL*, p. XIII), for instance *RIL* no. 31 from the important Libyan-Punic site of Mactar (see below). Though there can be no meaning as yet, or perhaps ever, in the statistical distribution of known texts, it is noticeable that there is a concentration from the Algerian-Tunisian border region South-East of Bône (Hippo). From here come some of the known examples of Libyan-Latin texts, for instance *RIL* no. 85 and pl. III, v: '[. F]austus Asprenatis f. N. tr.[.]t[.]lici. Vix. annis LXXXV'. *RIL* no. 145 (= *ILAlg.* 138) has: 'Nabdhsen Cotuzanis f. trib. MISICTRI vix. annis XX h.s.c.' (the name 'Nabdhsen' is recognizable in the Libyan text also). *RIL* no. 146 (= *ILAlg.* 137) would be of exceptional interest if it were certain, instead of probable, that the Libyan text is parallel to the Latin, and not a later addition; for the Latin is of a veteran who was *flamen perpetuus* in his *civitas*.

The Latin-Libyan bilinguals, of which not all need be noted here, suffice to show, as do the Punic-Libyan inscriptions, that we cannot think in terms of rigid linguistic enclaves; they also exclude the hypothesis, once ventured by W. M. Green,³⁰ that Libyan was a 'secret language' used by the peasantry to baffle strangers. Its use on grave *stelai*, perhaps its only written use in the Roman period, was probably copied from Punic custom. We cannot hope to deduce from these texts how far, if at all, the language was in daily use.

Recent discoveries, however, have shown that it was known in some sense over the whole length of Latin North Africa. The nine Libyan inscriptions from Morocco known to Chabot are now joined by eighteen more;³¹ four of the total are bilingual Latin-Libyan. One of them is thought to date to the third century A.D. The Latin text reads: 'D.M.S. Tacneidir Securi [f.] ex Masaisulis vixit annos XXXXV'.³²

Libyan inscriptions have also been found in Tripolitania. A preliminary discussion of the thirty-nine known from Ghirza³³ suggests that they were cut on the stonework of mausolea, altars and buildings in the settlement at a later stage in the existence of these, and that none may be earlier than the fourth century, and some perhaps much later. But, while we await the full publication of the Ghirza remains,³⁴ another preliminary report³⁵ records three Libyan inscriptions from Bir Bu el-Gherab in the 'pre-desert' region of Tripolitania; these were on stone blocks apparently re-used in a building not later than the third century A.D.

Thus the Libyan inscriptions do little more than pose problems. But it seems clear that we are dealing with something more than a few mechanical formulae, perhaps inscribed for ritual or magical purposes; for it is clear at least that some people able to write Latin or Punic could also transliterate their names into Libyan. It was therefore certainly in some sense a 'live' alphabet. On the other hand we can hardly be wrong in presuming that it was not in any sense a language of culture, and it remains still to be shown that it was a

²⁷ See e.g. Basset, op. cit. (n. 25), 47.

²⁸ See G. Camps, *Aux origines de la Berbérie: Massinissa ou les débuts de l'histoire (Libyca VIII (1960))*, on p. 283 f.

²⁹ J. G. Février, 'La Constitution municipale de Dougga à l'époque numide', *Mélanges de Carthage (Cahiers de Byrsa X) (1964-5)*, 85.

³⁰ W. M. Green, op. cit. (below, n. 39), p. 189.

³¹ See Galand, Février, Vajda, *Inscriptions antiques du Maroc (1966)*; the Libyan inscriptions (nos. 1-27) are edited by L. Galand, whose introductory

discussion (pp. 1-36) is also the most detailed and up-to-date treatment of the Libyan script.

³² Galand, op. cit. (n. 31), no. 1 (Plate 1, 1) = *RIL* 882.

³³ J. M. Reynolds, O. Brogan, D. Smith, 'Inscriptions in the Libyan Alphabet from Ghirza in Tripolitania', *Antiquity* xxxii (1958), 112.

³⁴ The book by O. Brogan and D. Smith, *Ghirza*, forecast in *Libya Antiqua* 1 (1964), 66, n. 6.

³⁵ By A. di Vita, 'Archaeological News', in *Libya Antiqua* 1 (1964), on pp. 141-2, with pl. LXXXI.

language in current ordinary use at all. But before reaching firm negative conclusions we have to remember how post-war discoveries, archaeological and documentary, have shown that in Judaea, alongside Aramaic, both Greek and Hebrew were in more common use than had previously been supposed.³⁶

If we turn to Punic, the situation is quite different. Firstly, there is substantial literary testimony from the Imperial period for its survival. The most important evidence is that of Augustine.³⁷ The view once promulgated that when Augustine speaks of 'lingua Punica' he means 'Berber'³⁸ cannot survive the careful study by W. M. Green published in 1951.³⁹ The two essential points from the evidence of Augustine are firstly that the 'lingua Punica' was a Semitic language related to Biblical Hebrew; and secondly that it was fairly widespread not only in rural bishoprics but among Augustine's own congregation in Hippo. On the other hand it is clear that it did not rival Latin as a language of culture.⁴⁰

The literary evidence other than that of Augustine stretches from the late first to the sixth century, and deserves to be set out in full, in chronological order by the writers:

- (1) Statius, *Silvae* iv, 5, 45-6 (to Septimius Severus):
non sermo Poenus, non habitus tibi, / externa non mens, Italus, Italus.
- (2) Apuleius, *Apologia* 98, 8-9 (on his step-son and opponent Sicinius Pudens):
loquitur numquam nisi Punice et si quid adhuc a matre graecissat; enim Latine loqui neque vult neque potest. Audisti, Maxime, paulo ante, pro nefas, privignum meum, fratrem Pontiani, disertum iuvenis, vix singulas syllabas fringultientem.
- (3) Ulpian, *Lib. 2. fideicommissorum* (*Dig. xxxii. 11. pr.*):
fideicommissa quocumque sermone relinqui possunt, non solum Latina vel Graeca, sed etiam Punica vel Gallicana vel alterius cuiusque gentis.
- (4) Ulpian, *Lib. 48 ad Sabinum* (*Dig. xlv. 1. 1. 6*):
proinde si quis Latine interrogaverit, respondeatur ei Graece, dummodo congruenter respondeatur, obligatio constituta est: idem per contrarium. sed utrum hoc usque ad Graecum sermonem tantum protrahimus an vero et ad alium, Poenum forte vel Assyrium vel cuius alterius linguae, dubitari potest.
- (5) *Epit. de Caes.* 20, 8:
(Septimius Severus) Latinis litteris sufficienter instructus, Graecis sermonibus eruditus, Punica eloquentia promptior, quippe genitus apud Leptim provinciae Africae.
- (6) *Historia Augusta, vita Sept. Sev.* 15, 7:
cum soror sua Leptitana ad eum venisset vix Latine loquens, ac de illa multum imperator erubesceret . . . redire mulierem in patriam praecepit.
- (7) Jerome, *Com. ep. Gal. II* (Migne, *PL* xxvi, 357):
Antiquae stultitiae usque hodie manent vestigia. Unum est quod inferimus, et promissum in oratio reddimus, Galatas excepto sermone Graeco, quo omnis Oriens loquitur, propriam linguam eandem habere quam Treviros, nec referre, si aliqua exinde corruerint, cum et Afri Phoenicam linguam nonnulla ex parte mutaverint.
- (8) Procopius, *de bello Vandalico* II, 10, 20:
(The Phoenicians) πόλεις τε οἰκήσαντες πολλὰς ξύμπασαν Λιβύην μέχρι στηλῶν τῶν Ἡρακλείων ἔσχον, ἐνταῦθα τε καὶ ἐξ ἐμὲ τῇ Φοινίκων φωνῇ χρώμενοι ὤκνηται.

These texts are of course of very uneven value. Apuleius is trying to discredit his stepson, and the proof that he spoke only Punic is supposed to be his speaking Latin

³⁶ See e.g. A. Díez Macho, 'La lengua hablada por Jesucristo', *Oriens Antiquus* II (1963), 95.

³⁷ Only the barest essentials are given here; compare P. R. L. Brown, 'Christianity and Local Culture in Late Roman Africa', above, pp. 85 ff.

³⁸ W. H. C. Frend, 'A Note on the Berber Background in the life of Augustine', *Journ. Theol. Stud.* XLIII (1942), 188, and *The Donatist Church* (1950), esp. 57-8; C. Courtois, 'S. Augustin et le problème de la survivance de la Punique', *Revue Africaine* xciv (1950), 259; *Les Vandales et l'Afrique* (1955), 126 f.

³⁹ W. M. Green, 'Augustine's Use of Punic', *Univ. of Calif. Stud. in Semitic Philology* xi (1951),

179 (I owe this reference to Mr. T. D. Barnes). See M. Simon, 'Punique ou Berbère? Note sur la situation linguistique dans l'Afrique romaine', *Recherches d'histoire Juéo-Chrétienne* (1962), 88; P.-A. Février, 'Toujours le Donatisme. A quand l'Afrique?', *Riv. di stor. e lett. religiosa* II, 2 (1966), 228.

⁴⁰ The most important passages for the Semitic character of the 'lingua Punica' are: *In Ps.* 123, 8; 136, 18; *In Rom. imperf.* 13; *C. Petil.* 2, 239; *Quaest. Hept.* 7, 16; *Loc. Hept.* 1, 24; and for its wide distribution: *Ep.* 66, 2; 84, 2; 108, 14; 209, 2 f.; *Serm.* 167, 4. All quoted in Green, op. cit. (n. 39).

haltingly; and the late biographical passages on Severus have little or no weight in themselves.⁴¹ But the two passages of Ulpian are quite another matter.⁴² He is speaking about what is legally permissible in the first passage, and envisaging an exchange of a dubiously binding nature in the second. He is, in other words, talking about the real contemporary world, and it is not an accident that the three languages used as examples are Punic (in both cases), Celtic, and Aramaic or Syriac. It ought to follow, unless Ulpian is making a wild error, that Punic was still used by persons of something more than the lowest social standing and, from the first passage, that it was *written*—though not necessarily (see below) in Semitic script. Jerome compares with those in Punic changes that have occurred in another living language, Galatian. The passage of Procopius is set in the very dubious context of a legend about the settlement of N. Africa, supposedly referred to in an inscription of Phoenician language and lettering at Tigisis; Courtois has argued that the inscription could not have had its supposed contents, and consequently that the people did not understand it (and therefore that in this sentence Procopius refers to Berber).⁴³ But the argument makes Procopius use ‘Φοίνικος’ in two different senses in the same passage, and proceeds too strictly from what we might presume but cannot know. The sentence is an addition by Procopius himself, who had been in Africa with Belisarius, and (especially when combined with Augustine’s evidence) should be taken to mean what it ways.

The literary evidence may thus provide a framework against which to set the documentary evidence, from coins and inscriptions. The coin evidence is very limited: Punic lettering appears on the coins of a few *civitates liberae* of the early Empire, but disappears in the first half of the first century.⁴⁴ The very numerous Punic (or rather neo-Punic) inscriptions of Roman Africa, many with parallel Latin texts, are effectively impossible to survey with confidence, for they have never been assembled in any modern collection.⁴⁵ Furthermore, not only in *CIL* VIII but also in the otherwise excellent *Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania* (1952) the Punic parallel texts of Latin inscriptions are mentioned but not given. It may be sufficient therefore to start from the conclusion of G. Charles-Picard in his illuminating discussion of the civilization of Roman Africa: ⁴⁶ extended Punic inscriptions appear roughly up to the beginning of the second century, and brief *formulae* up to the beginning of the third. This view is based to a large extent on Charles-Picard’s own invaluable work at Mactar,⁴⁷ where nearly 130 Punic inscriptions have been found, though far from all published. Among them the latest extended texts have until recently been thought to be the three inscriptions, probably of the first century A.D., on the temple of Hathor Miskar (or Hoter Miskar); the dedicatory inscription on the frieze of the temple runs to forty-seven lines in ten columns.⁴⁸ A subsequent discovery, however, has produced two further inscriptions from the temple, one of a mere two lines, but another of eleven columns of three, five or six lines each. It records the repair of the temple, with the names of thirty-six contributors; eighteen of them appear to have transliterated Latin names. It is suggested by the editors that the occasion cannot have been earlier than the early second century, and may well have been considerably later.⁴⁹

⁴¹ For these points see T. D. Barnes, ‘The Family and Career of Septimius Severus’, *Historia* XVI (1967), 87 ff., on pp. 96 f.

⁴² So, rightly, R. MacMullen, ‘Provincial Languages in the Roman Empire’, *AJPh* LXXXVII (1966), 1 ff.

⁴³ Courtois, *op. cit.* (n. 38), 267–8. Compare the (not very effective) criticism by Ch. Saumagne, ‘La Survivance du Punique en Afrique aux V^e et VI^e siècles après J. C.’, *Karthago* IV (1953), 171 ff., on p. 177.

⁴⁴ L. Müller, *Numismatique de l’ancienne Afrique II* (1861); J. Mrzard, *Corpus Nummorum Numidiae Mauretaniaeque* (1955), e.g. no. 623–4 (Tingi).

⁴⁵ The Punic inscriptions of Carthage and its vicinity (only) are contained in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum* I (published in fascicules 1881–1962), nos. 166–6068; none appear to be from the Roman period. Others appear sporadically in the *Répertoire d’épigraphie sémitique* I–VII (1895–1950). Note, however, J. G. Février, ‘Les Découvertes

puniques et néopuniques depuis la guerre’, *Studi orientali in onore di G. Levi della Vida* I (1956), 274; J. Desanges, S. Lancel, ‘Bibliographie analytique de l’Afrique antique’ (appearing and to be continued in the new *Bulletin d’archéologie algérienne*)—so far: ‘1960–62’, *BAA* I (1962–65), 277 ff.; ‘II, 1963–64’, *ibid.* II (1966–67), 315 ff.; and J. Teixidor, ‘Bulletin d’épigraphie sémitique’, *Syria* XLIV (1967), 163 (also the first of a series).

⁴⁶ G. Charles-Picard, *La Civilisation de l’Afrique romaine* (1959), esp. 104, 109, 295.

⁴⁷ G. Charles-Picard, *Civitas Mactaritana in Karthago* VIII (1957); see esp. pp. 25 f., 42 f., 58–60, 68, 76.

⁴⁸ Text and translation, with photo, by J.-G. Février, ‘La grande inscription dédicatoire de Mactar’, *Semitica* VI (1956), 15.

⁴⁹ J.-G. Février, M. Fantar, ‘Les nouvelles inscriptions monumentales néopuniques de Mactar’, *Karthago* XII (1963–4; pub. 1965), 43.

At Lepcis Magna, neo-Punic (paralleling Latin texts) appears for the last time under Domitian;⁵⁰ similarly, the newly-discovered neo-Punic texts from the Wadi El-Amud in Tripolitania appear to date to the first century A.D.⁵¹ But a recently re-published tomb from the Gefara, the now semi-desert coastal plain stretching S-W from Sabratha and Tripoli, has not only splendid rustic relief-carvings of scenes from classical mythology, but parallel inscriptions in Latin and neo-Punic. The Latin text runs: 'Dis Manibus Sacr. / Q. Apuleus Maxsimus / qui et Rideus vocaba/tur Iuzale f. Iurathe n. / Vix. an. LXXXX Thanubra / coniunx et Pudens et Se/verus et Maximus f. / piissimi p. amantissimo sua pecunia fecerunt'. It thus illustrates graphically the Romanization of a prosperous local family, presumably of farmers. More important for the present purpose is the date, which, as the Latin lettering suggests, seems to be the late second century, perhaps even the early third.⁵²

The progress of discovery thus begins to indicate that Punic inscriptions which were more than brief formulae were made at least on occasion up to the end of the second century—and not long after that Latin inscriptions too become substantially less frequent. If that were all, we should be left to ponder the apparent disparity between the disappearance of Punic inscriptions and the evidence of Ulpian, Jerome, Augustine and Procopius. But from Tripolitania, but so far from there alone, we now have another element in the pattern.

Tripolitania has revealed a number of inscriptions written in Latin lettering but in a language that is not Latin. One comes from Lepcis (*IRT* 826) and one from Zliten on the coast not far to the East of it.⁵³ But the majority come from the settlements of the Roman period in the (now) 'pre-desert' region of the interior. This fact was the starting-point for the first attempt at a coherent treatment of these documents, by R. G. Goodchild.⁵⁴ He concluded tentatively, first, that the language of the documents, though showing definite Punic influence, was more probably basically Libyan; and, second, that these inscriptions should be later than the neo-Punic ones of the same area, and should be associated with the establishment of *limitanei* in the area from the early third century onwards; the recurrence of the word *TRIBUNUS* in the inscriptions, e.g. in *IRT* 886 (Bir ed Dreder), gave definite support to the hypothesis of a military association. Bir ed Dreder, the site of the largest group (nineteen) of these inscriptions, was described subsequently by Goodchild, and still taken to be a settlement of *limitanei* of 'Romano-Libyan' culture.⁵⁵ Two further examples, from the Wadi Sofeggin and Wadi Zemzem, were published in 1955;⁵⁶ and three more, one partially in Latin, from other wadis in 1960.⁵⁷ Subsequently, however, G. Levi della Vida showed that at least substantial parts of many of these inscriptions could actually be read as Punic, even if somewhat debased Punic.⁵⁸ The demonstration seems incontrovertible, and three more such inscriptions published since have been interpreted in the light of it.⁵⁹ It thus becomes unnecessary in principle to see these documents as the product of some novel factor in the social development of the hinterland, and to dissociate their authors, in date and otherwise, from those of the neo-Punic inscriptions of the same area.

Furthermore, in a revolutionary reappraisal of the documentary and archaeological evidence from the Tripolitanian hinterland and the forts of the *limes*,⁶⁰ A. di Vita has shown, firstly, that an agricultural population of probably mixed Libyan and Punic origin, but of Punic language and culture, was firmly established in the hinterland certainly from the first

⁵⁰ *IRT*, p. 80, and nos. 318 and 349a.

⁵¹ G. Levi della Vida, 'Le iscrizioni neopuniche di Wadi El-Amud', *Libya Antiqua* I (1964), 57; for the setting and date, O. Brogan, 'The Roman remains in the Wadi el-Amud: an interim note', *ibid.* 47 f.

⁵² O. Brogan, 'Henscir el-Ausāf by Tigi (Tripolitania) and some related tombs in the Tunisian Gefara', *Libya Antiqua* II (1965), 47, on p. 54 f., with pl. xvii-xviii. The neo-punic text is given in the earlier publication by P. Berger, 'Le Mausolée d'El-Amrouni', *Rev. Arch.* xxvi (1895), 71.

⁵³ R. Bartocchini, *Africa Italiana* I (1927), 232 f. Cf. *IRT*, 852.

⁵⁴ R. G. Goodchild, 'The Latino-Libyan Inscriptions of Tripolitania', *Antiquaries Journal* xxx (1950), 135.

⁵⁵ R. G. Goodchild, 'La necropoli romano-

libica di Bir ed-Dréder', *Quad. di arch. della Libia* III (1954), 91; for the inscriptions see pp. 100-104.

⁵⁶ J. M. Reynolds, 'Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania: a Supplement', *PBSR* xxiii (1955), 124 f., nos. 20, 24.

⁵⁷ O. Brogan, J. M. Reynolds, 'Seven New Inscriptions from Tripolitania', *PBSR* xxviii (1960), 51 f., nos. 5-7.

⁵⁸ G. Levi della Vida, 'Sulle iscrizioni "latino-libiche" della Tripolitania', *Oriens Antiquus* II (1963), 65; *idem*, 'Parerga Neopunica', *ibid.* iv (1965), 59.

⁵⁹ O. Brogan, J. M. Reynolds, 'Inscriptions from the Tripolitanian Hinterland', *Libya Antiqua* I (1964), 43 f., nos. 3 (partially in Latin), 4, 5.

⁶⁰ A. di Vita, 'Il "limes" romano di Tripolitania nella sua concretezza archeologica e nella sua realtà storica', *Libya Antiqua* I (1964), 65.

century A.D., and at any rate long before the extension of Roman forts to cover the area from the Severan period onwards; and, secondly, that *limitanei* do not belong in the third century at all. Thus, while acquiring a new viewpoint on these inscriptions, we are deprived of the proposed chronological framework for them. Some certainly seem to be late: that at Zliten mentioned above is a graffito from a late third-century tomb; and the lettering of one (*IRT* 877), from the hill country S-W of Lepcis, is said to be fourth-fifth-century.

Here at last the documentary and the literary evidence begins to come together, in time if not specifically in place. While the main result of this survey must be to reaffirm the extent of our real ignorance about African society, some partial and preliminary conclusions may be drawn.

Firstly, the Libyan alphabet was in use in Roman Africa and the values of the signs were understood, as were probably the meanings of at least some words. The fact that it is known solely from funerary *stelai* makes it impossible to say whether or not the language was spoken, or if so by what sections of the population.

Extended Punic texts, written in neo-Punic script, are very rare both in public inscriptions or on private monuments after the end of the first century A.D., but are not quite unknown, while brief formulae continued to be inscribed until about the end of the second century.

There are indications that in Tripolitania at least Punic, in some form, continued to be inscribed in Latin script into the fourth century.

The evidence of what was inscribed in durable form does not, however, allow any conclusions either about what was written in non-durable form (i.e. on parchment or papyrus) or as to what language it would have been written in. There is, it is true, not the slightest reason to think that in the Roman period any substantial literary works were written in Punic—which had never been the vehicle of a significant literary culture⁶¹—or translated into it (as Greek Christian writings were for instance into Coptic). None the less, Augustine reveals that acrostic psalms were being composed in both Latin and Punic in his time;⁶² were the Punic ones never written down? Ulpian's evidence suggests that *fideicommissa* could be written in Punic in the early third century.⁶³

The documentary evidence not only cannot by its nature disprove the evidence of Augustine that Punic was widely spoken in Numidia in the late fourth and early fifth centuries; it now offers some trace of confirmation for it. Taken as a whole, the literary and documentary evidence surely makes it reasonable to accept that Punic was a common spoken language throughout the lifetime of Roman Africa.

Such conclusions, however, take us only a small way towards understanding the *place* of Punic in North African society, that is its social role and its significance *vis à vis* Latin. But even though many of the known Punic inscriptions have never been published, and those that have been are not gathered in an up-to-date *corpus* (which should include parallel Latin, and occasional Libyan, texts), we need not doubt that they would not approach the more than 30,000 Latin inscriptions known from Africa. It cannot be doubted that, as a result of the twin processes of immigration⁶⁴ and Romanization (of which the most vivid single document is the Latin inscription of A.D. 88 from Mactar, giving the *iuvenes* with their Libyan, Punic and Latin names),⁶⁵ knowledge of Latin was general throughout the whole area covered by the African provinces; and we cannot define any precise social level at which it remained unknown.⁶⁶ But there were still congregations in Augustine's time

⁶¹ The fairly scanty references in ancient sources to books written in Punic in the Carthaginian period are collected by S. Gsell, *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord* IV (1920), 212 f.

⁶² In *Psalms* 118, 32, 8 (*PL* xxxvii, 159 f.); see Green, *op. cit.* (n. 40), 185.

⁶³ One may note the bilingual Latin (*IRT* 338) and neo-Punic text from Lepcis Magna dating to A.D. 53, where the Punic translates, with some difficulty, the expression 'testamento adoptatus'. See G. Levi della Vida, *Rend. Acc. Naz. Lincei* 1949, 400 f., and cf. J.-G. Février, 'Textes puniques et néopuniques relatifs aux testaments', *Semitica* XI (1961), 5.

⁶⁴ Especially emphasized recently by L. Teutsch, *Das römische Städtewesen in Nordafrika* (1962).

⁶⁵ See Charles-Picard, *op. cit.* (n. 47), 77 f.

⁶⁶ The spread of Latin may be conveniently illustrated by the recent publication of fifty grave *stelai*, many of distinctly Punic style, from Sétif (Sitifis in Mauretania) dating to the second and third centuries; all have inscriptions in Latin. See P.-A. Février and A. Gaspary, 'Le Nécropole orientale de Sétif. Rapport sur les fouilles effectuées de 1959 à 1964', *Bulletin d'archéologie algérienne* II (1967), 11.

where Punic was necessary. On the other hand the extensive works of Tertullian and Cyprian, written entirely in Africa, contain not a single reference to Punic. Does the comparison with Augustine suggest a penetration by the Church into the lower levels of the population? But even if in the second and third centuries the intellectual and public lives of the educated classes were conducted entirely in Latin, was the same necessarily true of their private lives? Among the Bar-Kochba documents in the 'Cave of Letters' was found the archive of a family from Moab (the 'Archive of Babatha'); the documents in it cover the years A.D. 92 to 134, and are written in three languages, Nabataean, Aramaic and Greek.⁶⁷ Suppose that—by some chance comparable to the preservation of a Greek papyrus at Thessalonika—a family archive of the second or third, or even the fourth, century were to be discovered at Lepcis or Hadrumetum or Mactar: would it certainly be in Latin alone?

The Queen's College, Oxford

⁶⁷ See *Israel Exploration Journal* XII (1962), 235 ff. and 258 ff.