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**LATINIZATION OF THE NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCES:
SOCIOLINGUISTICS, EPIGRAPHY AND BILINGUALISM.
A PRELIMINARY STUDY ON THE AREA OF NIJMEGEN**

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Abstract: The ERC research project LatinNow (Latinisation of the north-western provinces), is intended to be a broad-based investigation of linguistic change in the north-western Empire (namely Britain, Gaul, Germanies, Noricum, Raetia and Iberia). Drawing upon sociolinguistics, bilingualism studies, digital epigraphy, and archaeology, specifically the analysis of writing materials, the area of Nijmegen has been used as a starting point, showing the different phonological features available and how they are distributed on the different writing materials, in terms of studying changes in the Germanies.

Keywords: Latin linguistics, Germanies, writing-materials

1. Introduction

Many changes occurred linguistically in the Roman Empire: a patchwork of local languages dating from the Iron Age were gradually replaced by Latin, which had emerged as the dominant language. Yet how, when and why these changes occurred in different parts of the North West provinces remains poorly understood. Concerning the Germanies, linguists know virtually nothing about the language spoken in these areas, but in the Rhineland, personal names and also names of the different settlements recorded during the Roman occupation show Celtic features, whereas name of deities – such as the different names of the *matres* – have

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a Germanic origin. In such intertwined and varied situation, it is important to collect all the evidences in order to set the level of Latinization in this area.

This paper is an initial attempt to study the changes that took place in the area of Nijmegen² showing the linguistic outcomes which emerged from the analysis of the epigraphic documents from this area. As a matter of fact, in this area it was possible to collect just a few cases of deviation from the Classical norm.

2. Methodology

The data used in this analysis are from EAGLE³ (see <https://www.eagle-network.eu/>⁴) a large database of over 100.000 inscriptions marked-up (largely through an automated process) with EpiDoc⁵ and subsequently inserted in the GIS. The majority of the inscriptions are from Germania Superior, 23.000 samples, whereas there are only 11.000 from Germania Inferior, less than 50%. Nonetheless, it should be remarked that the online resources are not entirely reliable as not all the inscriptions are recorded. Also, the records may document the current location of the object rather than its original place of finding. In particular, Nijmegen was selected as a pilot study of this Province because there is a limited amount of data and it is possible to cross-check the information. I used an Excel sheet to collect all the divergent spellings in relation to the classical norm whilst documenting the location, the writing material, the text type, the date (when available), the deity (when it is a dedicatory inscription), and the commissioner, as well as any bibliographical references. This allowed me to compile evidence of sociolinguistic variation, and of changes to theonyms and onomastics. Cross-referencing these specific elements is a valuable tool for sociolinguist analysis because it may shed some light on the process of cultural syncretism.

3. A case study: Nijmegen

The site of Nijmegen, once known as *Noviomagus Batavorum*, was positioned in front of the Batavian and Frisian Germanic tribes of and in between the rivers

² On Roman Nijmegen, see Heijden 2008.

³ One of the planned outputs for LatinNow project is a publicly accessible GIS (Geographic Information System) done with the contribution of the EAGLE project. It will display the inscriptions of the north-western Roman provinces as points on a map. Users will be able to search for inscriptions, filtering the data by relevant features such as location, date, and writing material.

⁴ EAGLE (Europeana network of Ancient Greek and Latin Epigraphy). The purpose of this project was to gather and catalogue more than 1.500.000 images and other digital objects related to hundreds of thousands of Greek and Roman inscriptions accompanied by basic information, often also in English and in other modern languages.

⁵ At the moment, one of the main priorities is to cleaning the EAGLE data.

Waal and Rhine. The Roman occupation began in 12-9 BCE when Nero Claudius Drusus used the area as a base for further conquest of Germania⁶. This site was once used as an army camp, filled with thousands of soldiers and officers and this inevitably attracted a lot of commercial activity. Later, Emperor Marcus Ulpius Traianus allowed the city to use his family name and it became *Ulpia Noviomagus*. It soon turned into a flourishing centre of trade and industry with four to five thousand Roman-Batavian residents. In 70 CE, while Vespasianus was Emperor, a new legionary fortress was built and garrisoned by the *Legio X Gemina*, which stayed there until 104 CE (Parker 1993, 146). Among the collected materials, there are in fact many *laterculi*⁷ in which the name of this legion has been recorded (e.g. *CIL* XIII 12214, 15a 1; 12214, 17; 2214, 20; 12214, 26). After that period, the Emperor Trajan moved the legion on the Pannonian front and renaming the city *Ulpia Noviomagus Batavorum*. Nonetheless, there is evidence that the *legio IX Hispana* was garrisoned here after its withdrawal from Britain, between 121 and 146 CE (*AE* 1996, 1107; Campbell 2006, 27).

4. Writing materials

Focusing on this specific archaeological site, it is worth noticing that the writing materials available are varied, accounting for 338 elements in total (see table 1).

Writing material	N. of elements
Altars	17
<i>Laterculi</i>	107
Potteries	99
Bronze plates	5
Inscriptions on stone	79
Oculist stamp	1
Jewels	10
<i>Varia</i> ⁸	20
Total	338

Table 1: writing materials from Nijmegen

⁶ Both in Tacitus, in the *Historiae* (*Hist.* IV), as well as in the *Roman History* (LVI) of Cassius Dio, *Noviomagus Batavorum* is mentioned.

⁷ A *laterculus* is an inscribed tile which can be made of stone or of terracotta and it is used for publishing certain kinds of information in form of list.

⁸ The majority of them are fragments whose identity cannot be ascertained and it is not possible to identify which kind of evidence is.

According to table 1, from a mere quantitative perspective, the majority of evidence is composed by *laterculi*, pottery records and inscriptions on stone. However, it should be emphasized that in Nijmegen the divergent spellings are just a few (see Tables 2 and 3). However, I checked these divergent spellings from these writing materials and I noticed the distribution of the cases concerning the vocalism and the consonantism.

5. Vocalism

The data collected for the vocalism show a rather low number of elements deviating from the classical norm (see Table 2). The phenomena identified are just a few and occur only in 13 cases and with a scattered distribution. As a matter of fact, it was possible to identify a few cases of vowel lowering, namely $\tilde{i} > e$, $\bar{i} > e$, $\tilde{u} > o$ and $\check{e} > \check{i}$, vowel deletion, vowel insertion and graphemic misspellings. However, this latter case will be annotated but excluded as their explanation is merely graphemic as the only one case collected here is the form *Officina* written with a <C> instead of <O> (i.e. <Cfficina> instead of <Officina>). Items like this cannot be considered, as they are not related at all with the linguistic framework, but only on the graphemic layer.

Phenomenon	n. of cases	Writing material
$\check{i} > e$	3	1 <i>laterculus</i> , 2 potteries
$\check{u} > o$	1	1 inscription on stone
$\check{e} > \check{i}$	3	1 inscription on stone, 2 <i>laterculi</i>
$\bar{i} > e$	1	1 inscription on stone
V. Deletion	3	1 bronze object, 2 potteries
Vowel Insertion	1	1 inscription on stone
Graphemic misspelling	1	1 pottery
Total		13

Table 2: Phenomena of deviation from the Classical norm. Vocalism.

Concerning the cases of vowel lowering, 4 cases of a total of 7 involves vowel lowering. In the specific, cases like *Men(ervia)* for *Min(ervia)* on the *laterculi* (cf. *Leg(io) I Men(ervia)*, *CIL XIII 12130,04; 12130,05*) the personal name *Sintotalus*⁹ (*AE 1976, 514*) or *[Fl]avos* for *Flavus* (*CIL XIII 8732*) or *Vix(illarri) ix(ercitus)* instead of *Vex(illari) ex(ercitus)*, found on the same *laterculus* (*CIL XIII 12553,13*) and *it* for *et* (*AE 2007, 1768*).

Of the 3 cases of vowel deletion, one occurs in final position, as it is *matern* instead of *materni* (*AE 1968, 00405*). The other 2 cases are *Brixsae* instead of *Brixiae* (*CIL XIII 8733*) and *Abuds* instead of *Abudos* (*CIL XIII 10009, 317ii-ij*), both of them can hardly mirror the real pronunciation of these words and appear more as possible misspellings.

6. Consonantism

Moving on consonantism, it is noticeable that there are more cases concerning the consonantism than cases regarding the vocalism. Compared to writing tablets at large – with the exception of curse tablet – this is an opposite outcome as the general trend show more phenomena involving the vocalism. As mentioned before, in this area there are in total 13 cases concerning the vocalism, but it was

⁹ The case of *Sintotalus*, however, is debatable. Kakoschke (2008, 345) recorded it as a cognomen of Celtic origin from **sento-* and **talo*. Therefore, there is not complete certainty whether this form is a Celtic form or the Latinised form. As already stated by Alex Mullen (2007, 49), names with the *Sen-* element were probably preferred in the Roman period as they acted as a bridge between Celtic and Latin nomenclature, allowing the formation of the so-called ‘decknamen’ (i.e. “cover names”).

possible to collect 37 different cases concerning the consonantism, often involving the same word so we have the form *ola tene bibe* instead of *ollam tene bibe*. The majority of them are written on pottery and *laterculi* (see Table 3).

Phenomenon	N. of cases	Writing material
-s deletion	1	1 pottery
-m deletion	3	2 pottery, 1 <i>varia</i>
Other consonant deletion	1	1 inscription on stone
Assimilation	1	1 inscription on stone
Gemination	2	2 pottery
Degemination	3	3 pottery
g = c	12	12 <i>laterculi</i>
Loss of aspiration	1	1 pottery
x > xs	2	2 inscriptions on stone
Graphemic misspellings	11	10 <i>laterculi</i> , 1 pottery
Total		37

Table 3: Phenomena of deviation from the Classical norm. Consonantism.

Among the collected phenomena, the – relative – highest number of occurrences interestingly involves the realization of <g> as <c>. A double interpretation is possible. On the one hand, it is possible that forms like *Cemina* for *Gemina* (*CIL* XIII 12214, 15a; 12214, 17; 12214, 19; 12214, 20; 12214, 26) or *Cermanici* for *Germanici* (*CIL* XIII 12521, 26; 12521, 32b; 13, 12553, 14) share a mere graphemic interpretation, as these two graphemes have a very similar realization. Another interpretation, grounded on the phonological level, consider these cases as possible cases of devoicing of the voiced velar [g] into [c].

Other features involving consonantism never exceeds 3 occurrences. For gemination, the only cases attested concern the proper name *Maccari* instead of *Macari* (*CIL* XIII 10010, 1196, 06; 10010, 1196, 06 b) on the pottery vessels on which was written the name of the *officina* where they were produced. For degemination, there are 2 cases concerning the form *ola* for *ollam* (*AE* 1997, 1156; 1997, 01157) and *comunis* instead of *communis* (*CIL* XIII, 10001, 082y). Concerning the features which involve the morphological position, there are 3 cases regarding the loss of final *-m* and 1 case for final *-s*. These are the two aforementioned cases of *ola* for *ollam*, *piu* for *pium* (*AE* 2009, 928) and the personal name *Suilliu* for *Suillius* (*CIL* XIII, 10001, 437). For the phenomenon labelled as ‘other deletion’, the only accountable occurrence is the loss of [w] before the back vowel [u] in the word *serus* for *servus* (*AE* 1976, 513). Also, for

assimilation there is only one case – *Vollinia* for *Voltinia* (*CIL* XIII 8737) – and one personal name *Cresti* for *Chresti*¹⁰ (*AE* 1976, 516) as evidence of loss of aspiration (Kakoschke 2007, 238).

Also in this case, there are available graphemic misspellings which are like *Flavia* with the <F> written with as a <E> or *Inferioris* with <N> written as a <V>. It is noticeable, however, that this graphemic misspelling is reiterated many times (*CIL* XIII 12521, 26; 12521, 32b; 12521, 34; 12521, 35). The same consideration has been made for the cases of <x> written as <xs> whose only case – i.e. *Brixsae* for *Brixiae* – cannot be considered as pertinent on the phonological level but only on the graphemic level for what concerns <x> written as <xs>¹¹ materials and divergent forms

7. Writing material and divergent forms

Concerning the phenomena of vocalism, most of the occurrences are on the pottery records, inscriptions on stone and *laterculi*. It is noteworthy that the majority of misspellings are not on stone but are on pottery records with 46% of occurrences – corresponding to 7 cases. Similarly, the 20% (i.e. 2 occurrences on a total of 13 occurrences) have been found on *laterculi* (see Figure 1)

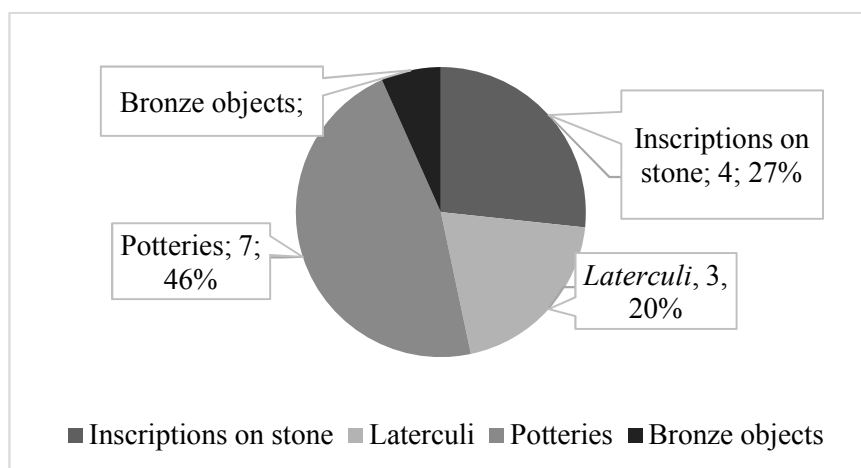


Figure 1: Writing materials and divergent forms. Vocalism.

¹⁰ This form derives from the Greek χρηστός ‘good’.

¹¹ See Leumann 1977, 15 and Wachter 1987, 294 and 497–498 for the use of <xs> instead of <x>.

A similar situation is available for the consonantism, but the number of cases for the *laterculi* increased to 58% (and 22 cases), as there are the forms pertaining to the phenomenon of consonant devoicing, like *Cemina* for *Gemina*, reiterated different times (see Figure 2). Moreover, there is a relative high amount of cases collected from pottery records: 10 cases (26%) compared to the total number of occurrences (37 cases).

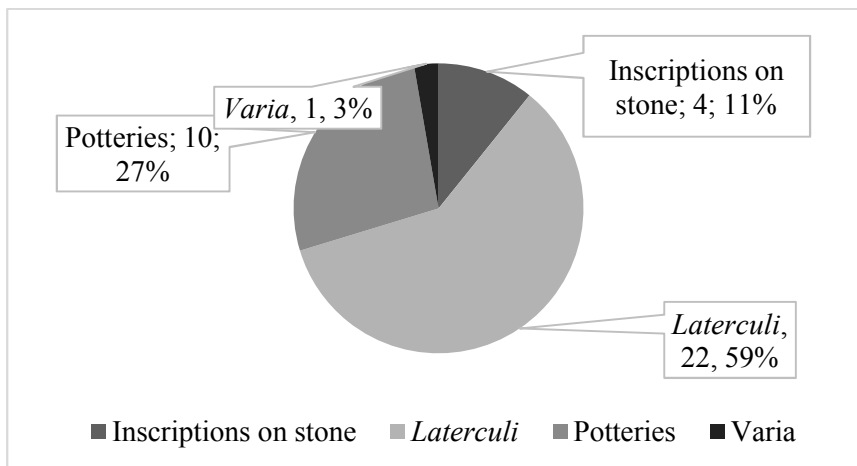


Figure 2: Writing materials and divergent forms. Consonantism

Therefore, taking into account Nijmegen it is important to notice the relevance of divergent spellings on the *instrumenta domestica*. Moreover, it should be stressed that even if the divergent spelling on the *laterculi* scored the 20% and 58% respectively for vocalism and consonantism this is caused by the reiteration of a certain deviant misspelling (such as *Menervia*, for legio *Minervia* or *Cemina* for *Gemina*) which definitely raised the percentage of occurrences in an environment with a low number of non-classical forms.

8. Conclusion

Focussing on the specific analysis of the deviating forms from Nijmegen, this survey highlighted a relatively low number of deviations from the classical norm, concentrated on specific objects with a prevalence of pottery records. An important *caveat* is mandatory. The poor quantity of data which we are dealing with our sociolinguistic analysis is not often a consequence of a specific sociolinguistic situation but it may represent a starting point of the sociolinguistic analysis itself, as often we are dealing with corrupted and very scattered data. However,

the collected phenomena from Nijmegen did not show peculiar linguistic features which can be ascribed to the production of the local population as the findings are mainly related to the legions garrisoned in that place (e.g. *Legio X Gemina* or *IX Hispana*). Moreover, there is the possibility that the pottery records, in which the name of the different makers has been written, can be imported from other places and other provinces. It should also be highlighted that – compared to other different records, like writing tablets – the length of these text is significantly shorter, as they are rarely longer than a few words. In this way, the chances for spotting deviation from Classical norm are significantly lower. For the case of *laterculi* and all those documents in which the text is the same, like the name of the *officina* where the pottery vessels were produced, there is always the chance of using a stamp or copying a text. This also lower the chances of misspellings.

The analysis has been already extended to other important areas of the Germanies and in the near future the research will be focussed on specific cases of phonological variation like those emerged from the analysis from Nijmegen, extending the investigation.

In this sense, we are moving towards the creation of databank for specific elements, which collects linguistic features linked with writing materials, texts and people involved, together with the help of the GIS, the same goes for onomastics and of course also for linguistic features.

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List of Abbreviations

AE = *L'Année épigraphique*. 1888- (Also included in *Revue archéologique*.)

CIL XIII = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. Inscriptiones trium Galliarum et Germaniarum Latinae: Instrumentum domesticum. xiii, in 2 fascicules*, Berlin, 1901-1906 (fasc. 1. (1901), fasc. 2 (1906)).

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