

John N. Adams, *The Regional Diversification of Latin 200 BC-AD 600*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 828 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0521881494.

*The Regional Diversification of Latin (RDL)* follows by four years the same author's hugely impressive *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (Cambridge, 2003), and it carries the same authoritative stamp. Weighing in at 828 pages plus front matter, *RDL* is not for amateurs or those with only a passing interest in the linguistic situation in ancient Italy. This is a specialist's book, and pretends to be nothing else. It tackles a range of difficult lexical, phonological and morphological questions in the history and spread of Latin, viewed through the lens of current sociolinguistic and dialectological theory. The primary data considered begin with Republican-era inscriptions and some of the earliest literary texts, mostly from around Rome. Additional material, much of it non-epigraphical, is investigated from various locales through the Imperial Age up until the period when the diversification of (Medieval) Latin starts to reveal the beginnings of the Romance languages. Indo-European matters are not considered.

Among the many goals addressed in the book are the following:

- a. Establishing that there was regional diversification even in the Latin of the Republic, contrary to the (now rarely held) position that the language was relatively uniform until about the eighth century.
- b. Evaluating the extent of phonological, morphological and lexical evidence for regional variation. A. approaches this task not only through linguistic evidence, but also by appeal to the theory and practice of modern dialectology, as represented primarily in the work of Trudgill (1986, 2004).
- c. Assessing the best evidence for variation, which Adams claims is to be found in testimonia, non-epigraphic documentary corpora and some literary texts.
- d. Outlining the multiple causes of the regional diversification of Latin.

The geographical focus of the book is on those areas where Latin "took root" (3) and had native speakers, notably Italy, Spain, Africa, Gaul and Britain; the eastern Empire, where Greek prevailed, is for the most part excluded.

A.'s investigation explicitly explores the following:

- a. Inscriptions of the early period.
- b. Materials on lead and wood, such as curse tablets and writing tablets, papyri and ostraca, mostly from Britain, Egypt, Africa and Gaul.
- c. *Testimonia* from literary authors commenting on particular regional or current usages worthy of note.
- d. Later literary texts which reveal regional or substandard usage.
- e. Imperial Age inscriptions which contain particular spellings and misspellings indicative of dialect differences, especially between Rome and other areas such as Campania.

The range of topics covered in *RDL* is staggering, as one might expect from a dialect study covering such a vast area over such a long period. After a rich 'Introduction' (ch. I), which includes theoretical discussion as well as a sample of the topics to be covered, the following chapters are developed in impressive detail: 'The Republic: inscriptions' (ch. II), 'Explicit evidence for regional variation: the Republic' (ch. III), 'Explicit evidence: the Empire' (ch. IV), 'Regionalisms in provincial texts: Gaul' (ch. V), 'Spain' (ch. VI), 'Italy' (ch. VII), 'Africa' (ch. VIII), 'Britain' (ch. IX), 'Inscriptions' (ch. X), 'Conclusion' (ch. XI). This is all followed by an Appendix of eighteen maps, a Bibliography, an *Index verborum*, a detailed Subject index, and an *Index locorum*.

A. navigates the issues with admirable skill and thoroughness, providing detailed discussion of even the smallest bits of relevant information, identifying forms, words, constructions as Latin, Faliscan, Etruscan, or one of the many Sabellian languages, or identifying its regional location. His presentation of the evidence is typically centered around an analysis of some distinguishing criterion, such as a particular form (*duno*, *bufo*), the testimony of an author (*Varro*, *Isidore*), a particular locale (*Campania*, *Praeneste*), a particular work (the comedies of Plautus, the

*Perigrinatio Aetheriae* [*Itinerarium Egeriae*]), a particular semantic grouping (words for *winds*, *testicles*), particular texts (*the Ravenna papyri*), word distributions (*manduco*, *comedo*) and so on. By way of demonstration, we will consider several representative illustrations A. takes up, two from the early period before Latin became standardized, and two from much later, viz. the fourth and fifth centuries.

#### a. Faliscan

The relation between Latin and Faliscan is a topic which is familiar to all classicists and historical linguists. This issue, which in many respects is as much about terminology as it is about linguistic substance, centers on the question of whether Faliscan should be considered a regional variety of Latin (Bakkum 2009), or whether it should be thought of as a separate language (Joseph and Wallace 1991). The solution to the matter of course has implications for the family tree of Italic languages and is in many ways a test case for ancient dialectology.

But of course such matters cannot be resolved in the absolute sense because the evidence we have is partly geographical (where does a given inscription come from?), partly cultural (what is the inscription about?), partly graphological (what alphabet is used?), none of which is linguistic in the strict sense. And what is ultimately needed to resolve any language-dialect question is fine-grained phonetic comparison and native-speaker judgments of mutual intelligibility. Working with what is available, however, A. analyzes the lexical, phonological and morphological material in satisfying detail. His discussion is built around the following inscription (*CIL* 365):

**Menerua.sacru / [L.]a.Cotena.La.f.pretod.de / zenatuo.sententiad.uootum /  
dedet.cuando.datu.rected / cuncaptum.**

The inscription, from Falerii Novi and datable to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, is written right-to-left in the Etruscan script, which is typical of Faliscan inscriptions and might point to a fundamental linguistic distinction between Faliscan and Latin. But as A. shows (105), the choice of script does not affect the basic linguistic character of the material being represented in that script. In any case A. thoroughly analyzes *CIL* 365, comparing it with other texts, and eventually arrives at the conclusion (106) that apart from the form **pretod** (= Lat. *praetor*), there is nothing in this inscription which is not found in Latin, especially non-urban Latin, and that this speaks strongly in favor of the Faliscan-as-Latin position. A similar demonstration is provided by Bakkum (2009) of the famous Faliscan inscription from Civita Castellana (*CIE* 8179-8180), surprisingly missing from A.'s discussion:<sup>1</sup>

**i. foied. uino. pipafo. cra. carefo**  
**ii. foied. uino. pafo. cra. carefo**  
(= Lat. *hodiē vīnum bibam crās carēbō*)

The conclusion: Faliscan is a dialect of Latin. This position, elaborated fully by Bakkum (2009), is based wholly on the structural-linguistic aspects of Latin and Faliscan. From a sociolinguistic perspective, however, the choice of script may indicate that the Faliscans were seeking to distance themselves from the Romans culturally, perhaps ethnically, and certainly linguistically. I suggest that while the Faliscans might have believed themselves to be different from the Romans, the Romans, to the extent that they cared about such matters at all, may not have shared the sentiment.

<sup>1</sup> This inscription provides a more interesting phonetic challenge than *CIL* 365, with the inconsistent *-f/-b-* alternation seen in Roman Lat. *rūber*, ‘Rustic’ Lat. *rūfus* ‘red’, where the *-f-* could reflect Sabellian (Osc. **rufu**, Umbr. **rofu** ‘red’) or Faliscan (cf. Lat. *carēbō* vs. Fal. **carefo** ‘I will do without’).

**b. Truc. 688**

A less global, but still interesting demonstration is A.'s treatment of the pronunciation of a word in the *Truculentus* of Plautus, where the rustic Truculentus cites Praenestine usage to justify his odd pronunciation:

Tr. *rabonem habeto, uti mecum hanc noctem sies.*

As. *perii! 'rabonem?' quam esse dicam hanc beluam?  
quin tu arrabonem dicis?*

Tr. *'a' facio lucri, ut Praenestinis 'conea' est 'ciconia'.*

Truculentus: Have a token (*rabonem*), so that you may spend the night with me.

Astaphium: I can't believe it! *rabonem?* What sort of monster am I to say this is?

Why don't you say *arrabonem?*

Truculentus: I'm making a profit on the *a*, just as to the Praenestines the *ciconia* ['stork'] is *conea*.

Here we get a glimpse into what must have been a stigmatized dialect pronunciation, with the Praenestiniens the brunt of the joke. We do not know if *rabonem* is really a Praenestinian form, but we do know that if it was, it had a socially diagnostic feature and was subject to ridicule.

**c. *Mulomedicina Chironis* and the *Peregrinatio Aetheriae (Itinerarium Egeriae)***

The *Mulomedicina* is a 4<sup>th</sup> century veterinary text which can be linked with various parts of Italy, the Mediterranean islands and Africa on the strength of surviving lexical terms such as *spanus*, a color term, *pala*, 'shoulder-blade', and *barbata*, a plant name. A. narrows it down (709) to a "southeastern text", though without explicit arguments. Similarly for the *Peregrinatio*, he notes the use of *plicāre* with the meaning 'to approach', which suggests the Iberian peninsula, and *pullus*, 'cock', which is found in Sardinia, Gallo-Romance dialects and Africa in the form of a loan word into Berber. His conclusion is that, given these distributions and considering the fact that the author was most likely not African or Sardinian, the work is northwestern (710).

With these and similar demonstrations throughout the book, A. makes a convincing case for regionalism in the history of Latin. Rich in breadth and depth of detail, sophisticated analytically yet thoroughly readable, *RDL* is now the standard in ancient Italian dialectology, and will remain so for decades to come.

**References**

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