

The Hellenistic West

Rethinking the Ancient Mediterranean

Edited by

JONATHAN R. W. PRAG

AND

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8RU, United Kingdom

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107032422

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First published 2013

Printing in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd. Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

The Hellenistic West : rethinking the ancient Mediterranean / edited by Jonathan

R.W. Prag and Josephine Crawley Quinn.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-03242-2

1. Mediterranean Region – Civilization – Greek influences. 2. Mediterranean Region – History – To 476. 3. Hellenism – History. 4. Greeks – Mediterranean Region – History. 5. Greeks – Colonization – Mediterranean Region. I. Prag, J. R. W., author, editor of compilation. II. Quinn, Josephine Crawley, author, editor of compilation.

DF235.H45 2013

937.00481–dc23

2013013369

ISBN 978-1-107-03242-2 Hardback

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JONATHAN R. W. PRAG

Preliminary remarks: contextualising epigraphic cultures in the West

The spread of writing in the West might seem to be reasonably treated, as it usually is, as just one aspect of the expansion of the classical world. But on closer examination, the history of non-classical writing is more complex. . . . The idea of a classical civilisation invented by Greeks and propagated by Romans, is in any case a myth, one that has effaced the contributions of groups like the Phoenicians and the Etruscans, and disguised cultural discontinuities that accompanied shifting configurations of power.¹

The aim of this contribution is to undertake a survey of the epigraphic cultures in the western Mediterranean (Italy and further west) over approximately the last four centuries BC.² The purpose of so doing is to explore the value and significance of the concept of the ‘Hellenistic’ in relation both to the western and the wider Mediterranean. The central result of this survey will be the observation that a wide range of epigraphic cultures first develop and/or transform and expand in precisely this period across the western Mediterranean, and so that from an epigraphic perspective the Hellenistic *period*, loosely defined chronologically, has some real significance across the whole Mediterranean region. From this observation two principal lines of thought develop: firstly, that this substantial, new and widely attested level of activity, which in certain respects looks like that familiar from the

Versions of this chapter were presented in Vancouver, Oxford, and Cambridge, and I am most grateful to audiences at all three for their feedback. I am particularly grateful to Alex Mullen for an advance copy of Mullen 2008, a copy of the relevant sections of her PhD thesis (see now 2013), and detailed comments; she is of course not responsible for my interpretation of her work. Jo Quinn laboured far beyond the call of duty to try to improve this text; its failings are all my own.

¹ Woolf 1994: 84–5.

² To the best of my knowledge, no such survey currently exists; cf. F. Beltrán Lloris 1995b: 170 with n. 6 for its desirability. It is an unavoidable corollary of such a survey that I shall deal in broad generalisations, and risk infuriating those who work on the specific regions and languages in question; I beg their indulgence, while welcoming criticism.

traditional Hellenistic world, is not therefore specific to the traditionally defined Hellenistic world, but reflects an increased Mediterranean-wide connectivity; and secondly, that Roman imperialism, and by implication Romanisation as seen in the spread of Latin epigraphy, cannot be the explanation for this pattern in the West – rather, Latin epigraphy is itself just one instance of a wider set of developments.

The study of epigraphy in the western Mediterranean brings together two particular historiographical trends. In the first place, study of the western Mediterranean in the Hellenistic period is most commonly approached in terms of the ‘Roman West’, endlessly contrasted with the ‘Greek East’: regions of the West are studied individually in relation to the Roman conquest, and from the time of the Roman conquest onwards almost always in a Romanocentric fashion.³ Secondly, an emphasis upon the concept of the Latin ‘epigraphic habit’ has reinforced one particular aspect of that Romanocentrism. The idea of the ‘epigraphic habit’ was coined by Ramsey MacMullen in his study of the Latin epigraphic culture of the High Empire.⁴ MacMullen highlighted the visible and rapid spread of Latin epigraphy from the Augustan period through to the third century AD and, precisely because the Latin ‘habit’ is, superficially at least, so uniform, so extensive, and so monoglot, it has been both very visible and very easy to delineate, if not quite so easy to explain. Although attempts at explanation have moved well beyond the much-caricatured Romanisation debates, and tend instead to focus upon social relations, structures of power and moments or periods of connectivity, it remains the case that the study of Latin epigraphic culture is, in general, remarkably narrow in its focus.⁵ Thus, for example, William Harris, in his major study of ancient literacy, in considering the (Latin) epigraphic evidence from across the provinces merely remarked, in a footnote, that ‘... some provinces ... made considerable use of other languages’.⁶ Harris’ dataset, based upon *CIL*, illustrates a much deeper-seated problem (and one hardly of Harris’ own making), which is that emphasised in the quotation from Woolf at the head of this

³ This point is expanded in the Introduction to this volume.

⁴ MacMullen 1982 and 1986, with imperial honorifics in Latin forming the starting point (although see already, e.g. Mrozek 1973).

⁵ See esp. Woolf 1996, as well as e.g. E. Meyer 1990 on North Africa; Mann 1985 on Britain; compare the studies on transformations in epigraphic culture in late antiquity, e.g. Roueché 1997; Galvão Sobrinho 1995.

⁶ Harris 1989: 267 n. 468; cf. the mapping of Harris’ data by Woolf 1998: 82 Fig. 4.1 (after Harris 1989: 265–9, esp. Tab. 4). On the validity of this ‘snapshot’, see Edmondson 2002: 44, with Prag 2002: 15.

chapter: the study of classical civilisation has tended to prioritise Latin and Greek material, and in the West to prioritise Latin above all, to the detriment or even exclusion of other languages and material – the Roman West is simultaneously the Latin West. Consequently, the Latin epigraphic habit has become emblematic of Roman imperial expansion in a way that goes far beyond that habit's actual historical value.

In a somewhat parallel fashion, Greek epigraphy is commonly seen as a defining feature of the 'Hellenistic' period, in the eastern Mediterranean:

It is [inscriptions], perhaps more than any other single artefact or activity, that define our period chronologically and geographically, for not only did they proliferate after the late fourth century in the older Greek-speaking regions, but they also came to be an invaluable trace element in the areas of conquest.⁷

Furthermore, 'Hellenistic epigraphy' has a broadly agreed content:

... far from negligible for the Archaic and Classical periods (especially the fourth century), [it] really comes to the forefront in the Hellenistic period (late fourth to late first century B.C.). Royal correspondence, official documents of the Greek cities (by far the largest category), honorific texts (statue bases and/or epigrams), religious ordinances, and funerary texts (epitaphs of varying elaboration) ...⁸

To take the most obvious example, what then should we make of the fact that Sicily, in the last three centuries BC, offers, in its Greek inscriptions, a perfectly good example of such 'Hellenistic epigraphy'?⁹ The Hellenistic world is generally defined with reference to the *diadochoi*, the Successor kingdoms (whence the 'areas of conquest' in the first of the two quotations above).¹⁰ On that basis, Sicily has no place within it, and indeed is commonly all but omitted from works on the Hellenistic world. On the basis of the epigraphic definition above, Sicily belongs firmly within such a world (as one of the 'older Greek-speaking regions'); indeed, given that Greek inscriptions, albeit often in small numbers, can be found in Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, southern Gaul, the Iberian peninsula and parts of North Africa, the above epigraphic definition might suggest that some attention be paid to the whole Mediterranean, except that these were never 'areas of conquest'. But, for precisely that reason, the western Mediterranean is, at best, treated as the periphery of a Greek-speaking Hellenistic world, an example of one

⁷ Davies 2006: 75–6. ⁸ Ma 2000c: 95–6.

⁹ Overviews in Prag 2003 and 2007a, and the 'Italy' section below.

¹⁰ As in, e.g., Ogden 2002b: x–xi, and see further the Introduction to this volume.

further implication of the word ‘Hellenistic’, and so of the Hellenistic world, viz. Hellenisation (and the implicit priority of Greek culture).

Vice versa, if one focuses solely upon the Latin epigraphy of Sicily, the island looks typical of the Latin epigraphic habit, participating in the process of Romanisation.¹¹ Either, therefore, one concludes that the island is simply a curious exception, as the clichéd ‘crossroads of the Mediterranean’ tag implies; or one must question why in the realm of epigraphy it remains legitimate to prioritise individual languages, when in other areas such a checklist approach to culture has increasingly been rejected. Academic specialisation, and in particular linguistic specialisation, provides one, banal, explanation. The tradition of publishing mono-lingual epigraphic corpora only reinforces the problem.¹² In combination with the historiographic tendencies already noted, this means that local epigraphic cultures are frequently studied from the limited perspective of specific languages and the local response to, above all, the Roman conquest (or occasionally Carthage or Hellenism). In the survey that follows examples of this process will be illustrated.¹³ The purpose of this survey, in setting the epigraphic cultures of the western Mediterranean side-by-side, is to move beyond the narrow confines of individual ‘habits’ or cultures, whether Latin, Greek, Iberian, or Punic, and so to begin to frame alternative models for the spread of epigraphic practice that are not, for example, language specific. The Hellenistic *period* is patently central to this development, but it is not at all clear that some of the other common boundaries of ‘Hellenistic’ (the Successor kingdoms or the specific use of Greek epigraphy) are helpful. But if, therefore, these broader constraints of ‘Hellenistic’ are not very helpful in the western Mediterranean, is there any good reason for so prioritising them in the East?¹⁴

¹¹ Prag 2002.

¹² Contrast now the multi-lingual *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palestinae*, of which vol. 1.1, ed. H. Cotton *et al.* was published in 2010 (Berlin, De Gruyter); cf. Cotton and Price 2007 (note the comment top of 330 and contrast still, e.g., Decourt 2004: viii on bilingual texts).

¹³ I emphasise that it is not my intention to suggest that those who work on the epigraphies of the western Mediterranean (and who are the source of most of the material cited in what follows, and far better qualified to discuss it than I) are not fully aware of most or all of what is set out here. But the majority of published study is much narrower in its focus.

¹⁴ As the opening quotation from Woolf illustrates, these concerns are hardly new. See also, e.g., J. De Hoz 1995: 68: ‘The increase in the volume of writing [in Spain], however, is part of a much more wide-reaching process, which both precedes and is not limited to the Roman world but embraces the entire Mediterranean, and the manifestations of which have their closest chronological parallels in some of the Hellenistic centres of the third century, with repercussions that affected Italy as much as the Punic world or Iberian culture’ (my transl.). Likewise *ibid.* 71; *idem* 2006; Berrendonner 2002 quoted below.

The epigraphic cultures of the western Mediterranean

Some cautionary remarks are necessary before proceeding. The material from antiquity does not lend itself to statistical study – the idea that epigraphic survivals might be in some way a representative sample is at the very least highly questionable, and in the West in particular the total numbers are almost certainly too small to be statistically significant.¹⁵ But the problems of overly narrow concentration on (sub)sets of material hinted at above require that one attempts something broader; in the words of Moses Finley:

What I seek is a shift in the still predominant concentration of research from individual, usually isolated documents to those that can be subjected to analysis collectively, and where possible in a series over time; an emancipation from the magnetism of the words in an individual text in favour of a *quasi-* (or even *pseudo-*) statistical study.¹⁶

The numbers employed below have, I suspect, no statistical validity; but a synthesis of the bigger picture and of the more readily available sets of material may have some subjective value, and at the least be suggestive, if only when set alongside the existing study of those individual datasets. The majority of the material considered consists of inscriptions on stone; some discussions do include *instrumentum domesticum*, and even coin legends, but ‘statistics’ on this sort of material are rarely available (on the other hand, as for example Javier De Hoz has suggested, at least some of this material may be of considerable significance for delineating the period in question).¹⁷ The survey proceeds in a loosely anti-clockwise direction around the western Mediterranean, beginning with Italy and the Tyrrhenian islands, and ending with North Africa.

Italy, Sicily and Sardinia

As suggested in the Introduction, it is surely mistaken, or at least overly simplistic, to consider Latin as *the* driver of epigraphic practice in the West before the very late Republic. Even in Italy the Latin epigraphic culture is

¹⁵ For discussions of survival rates and sampling of epigraphic data, see esp. Duncan-Jones 1982: 360; Saller and Shaw 1984.

¹⁶ Finley 2000 (1982): 44, my emphasis.

¹⁷ J. De Hoz 2006. It should be added that the ‘statistics’ quoted for different epigraphies in what follows are all collected according to different criteria and definitions, by different scholars, so they are only very loosely comparable.

slow to develop, and it is only from the fourth, and in particular the third century BC onwards that it develops in anything like significant numbers (c. 40 inscriptions down to the early fourth century, c. 600 in the fourth/third century, c. 3,600 in the second/first century; there is an apparent gap in the period c. 450–350 BC, to which only a single inscription is assigned).¹⁸ Roman funerary epigraphy is a case in point, with barely twenty epitaphs from Rome itself pre-100 BC, and the development of epitaphic practice in mid-Republican Rome has been attributed to Etruscan or Hellenic influence.¹⁹ In fact, the content of Republican Latin epigraphy looks similar in many ways to eastern ‘Hellenistic’ epigraphy as outlined in the Introduction – should it therefore be classed as a nascent ‘Hellenistic’ epigraphic culture, as much from its content as from its chronology, notwithstanding the fact that it is not Greek? But how useful is such an assessment? Latin epigraphy is commonly studied either in isolation, or else in relation to the dominant Mediterranean epigraphic language down to the end of this period, Greek. Merely by way of example, an important paper by Silvio Panciera (1997) discusses the increase in Latin funerary epigraphy in Italy as a phenomenon illustrative of the spread of Roman imperialism, and considered otherwise solely in parallel with Greek epigraphic practice – but these were not the only two epigraphic cultures present in the region, and a wider range of explanations and interactions, at least at the local level, needs to be canvassed.

What then of the other epigraphic languages in Italy? The distribution of Greek material, present from the eighth century BC onwards, is difficult to quantify.²⁰ Some comments may be ventured on the principal islands, however, where (as with the rest of the West) Republican-period Latin epigraphy is minimal. In Sardinia, although epigraphic material is in general very limited, and the Latin material of the Imperial period dominates the landscape, it is noticeable that the Greek material, such as it is, appears only

¹⁸ Following the survey in Solin 1999; see also Panciera 1995 on lapidary material. Harris 1989: 175 suggests that 100 BC marks the tipping point in Latin epigraphy; Panciera 1995: 321–2 that lapidary epigraphy at Rome shows ‘a strong increase only in the second century and explodes in the first, following a quite sporadic use in the sixth and fifth centuries and a limited increase in the fourth to third centuries’ (my transl.).

¹⁹ Berrendonner 2009: 181 for numbers; 190–1 for suggested external influences for aristocratic epitaphs; cf. 196–7 for lack of obvious parallels for the rather different, seemingly distinctively Roman third-/second-century practices which develop at the level below the aristocracy. Michael Crawford points out to me that epitaphic practice across Italy and the Italic languages is very varied geographically with, for example, numerous examples among the Paeligni, none in Samnium.

²⁰ I am not aware of any published figures that attempt to quantify the phenomenon, but see, e.g. Lomas 1991 and the general remarks in Lomas 1993: 176–85 on Magna Graecia; overview of sorts in Lazzarini 2007 (noting the need for a replacement for *IG XIV*).

from the third century BC and, in the words of one recent discussion, reflects the island's 'opening up to the Mediterranean'.²¹ Giovanni Marginesu notes that the production of this material coincides with the Roman conquest, something which he does not believe should be put down merely to chance; he proposes that 'Sardinian Hellenism, in reality, presents one of the many faces of that diverse phenomenon that was Romanisation' (my transl.). Punic material, by contrast, first appears on the island in the early Archaic period, in the form of the Nora stele (perhaps *c.* 800 BC), but with very few exceptions the other material from the island does not predate the fifth/fourth century BC. The third century appears to mark the peak in Punic epigraphic practice in Sardinia.²²

Not dissimilar things can be said about Sicily although the numbers are larger.²³ Both Greek and Punic make a significant appearance in the Archaic period, alongside the evidence for several indigenous languages (Sikel, Sikan and Elymian), followed by what appears to be a marked gap in epigraphic practice in all languages at the end of the Classical period (esp. in the fourth century BC). In the Hellenistic period, Greek, Punic, Oscan and Latin are all visible, although only the first of these in large numbers: Oscan appears as a small pocket of material in third-century Messina; Punic shows a small resumption in activity in the third/second century BC (likewise in Malta, where the peak falls a little earlier in the fourth and third centuries); Latin pre-50 BC totals *c.* fifteen texts.²⁴ All of this material consists principally of official or civic texts, honorifics, dedications and funerary texts, but this is most marked in the flourishing Greek epigraphic culture of the last three centuries BC, which looks typical of 'Hellenistic epigraphy'.²⁵ This is followed by a major rise in Latin epigraphy in the later first century BC and the first two centuries AD, highly typical of the Latin 'epigraphic habit'; Greek epigraphy, however, does not diminish and overtakes Latin again in the third and fourth centuries. It has frequently been observed that Hellenistic-period Sicily shows few signs of Romanisation, epigraphic culture included.

²¹ 'Apertura all'ambito mediterraneo' (Marginesu 2002: 1825, and for the following quotation also). For Latin epigraphy on Sardinia see Mastino 1993 and for the material down to 31 BC (mostly graffiti on ceramic, and otherwise almost all first-century BC) Zucca 1996: 1450–89; Greek epigraphy, Marginesu 2002.

²² For Punic epigraphy in Sardinia, see the survey of Amadasi Guzzo 1990: 39–54, together with the texts in Amadasi Guzzo 1967.

²³ For a global quantitative survey of Sicilian epigraphy, see Prag 2002.

²⁴ For Oscan in Sicily, see Crawford 2011: 1511–23; 2006; Mastelloni 2005; for Punic see Prag 2002: Fig. 2 and Amadasi Guzzo 1999; details of most texts from Sicily and Malta in Amadasi Guzzo 1967; for Republican Latin texts Prag 2007a: 259–60. For languages in ancient Sicily, see now Tribulato 2012.

²⁵ Prag 2003, 2007a.

More recently, in relation to epigraphic culture (and other aspects of Sicilian cultural practice) it has been suggested that the Hellenistic (i.e. Greek) epigraphic culture of the island may be at least partially linked to the consequences of Roman imperialism.²⁶ But, whether on Sicily or Sardinia, it is difficult to see how this might usefully be called 'Romanisation'. However pleasing the oxymoron – Hellenistic behaviour is a product of Romanisation – it still begs the question of what creates and drives the broader epigraphic phenomenon being described, especially when, as in the third century BC, four languages are in play simultaneously, of which Latin the least and the last.²⁷

Returning to the Italian peninsula, Etruscan material substantially outnumbers Latin. Furthermore, Etruscan, for which some 9,000 inscriptions survive down to the time of Augustus (as against c. 4,500 Latin), shows a substantial increase in survival after 400 BC (c. 900 pre-400 BC, as opposed to c. 4,000 in the period 400–200 BC).²⁸ Oscan, another of the more substantial epigraphic languages of Republican Italy, and which at least matches Latin numerically in the period pre-200 BC (the total number of recorded Oscan inscriptions is c. 1,150), also shows substantial growth in the surviving number of inscriptions in the period post-400 BC.²⁹ In an extended and detailed analysis of the shifts in practice in both Oscan and Etruscan in this period, Clara Berrendonner identifies not only significant quantitative increases in both epigraphies from the third century BC onwards, but also marked typological shifts in epigraphic practice. Although Berrendonner begins by observing the apparent paradox of such development following the Roman conquest – and this would be the 'typical' way of approaching the material, prioritising the role of Rome – her discussion goes on to complicate the issues by pointing out that some practices, such as stamps on building materials, begin in Etruscan or Oscan before they appear in Latin, and that it is to say the least difficult to give the Roman model priority.³⁰ The 'unification' of epigraphic practice in Italy subsequent to

²⁶ For links to Roman imperialism, Prag 2007b: 96–9; for the Imperial period, see also Salmeri 2004; Korhonen 2011.

²⁷ There are perhaps two Latin inscriptions from third-century Sicily – a milestone (*CIL* I².2877) and a dedication (*CIL* I².2219). Cf. Campagna 2011b for a nuanced account of public architecture on the island, suggesting (p. 180) that 'the Hellenistic appearance of the cities was one of the consequences of Roman government' (note, not 'Romanisation', but emphasising in particular economic considerations).

²⁸ Following the survey by Colonna 1999, who compares Etruscan with Latin; detailed tables of both Etruscan and Oscan, broken down by geographical region, are provided by Berrendonner 2002.

²⁹ For Oscan (and Umbrian and Picene) see now *Imagines Italicae* (= Crawford 2011).

³⁰ Berrendonner 2002: 819.

the Social War is a different development. Her conclusions are therefore of a rather different order, such as that:

... the epigraphic production testifies equally to a wish to demarcate public and private space, to the increasing complexity of administrative and juridical systems, and to the reinforcement of a sense of civic belonging – in sum, to the development of the public sphere.³¹

The same might no doubt be said about Latin epigraphy. Questions for the historian then become, why are such shifts taking place in this period, why do they manifest in these ways, and is it either helpful or meaningful to call this ‘Hellenistic’, beyond the term’s use as a chronological marker? Berrendonner remarks in general that, ‘the Hellenistic period coincides, across most of the Italian peninsula, with a notable development in the practice of epigraphy’, and on occasion refers to ‘documents hellénistiques’.³² But is there something more substantial here than mere chronological coincidence? If so, we are at the least stretching our use of the word ‘Hellenistic’. In a more widely ranging discussion of identity and cultural expression in southern Italy in the fourth century BC, Edward Herring has noted that, ‘The increased use of writing, a skill acquired from the Greeks, is another possible expression of cultural identity’ (he has in mind specifically Messapic and Oscan). He places this more broadly in the context of cultural threats and a sense of anxiety, driven no less by an increase in local and regional interaction than by the rise of Rome specifically. ‘The use of strong visible symbols of identity [such as writing] can be seen as a positive response to these perceived threats.’³³ This is perhaps a more useful way of approaching the broader issues; if we fall back upon the traditionally prioritised model of eastern Greek epigraphy of the Hellenistic period as the means to classify epigraphic cultures of a particular type/

³¹ Berrendonner 2002: 845 (my transl.). ³² Berrendonner 2002: 822–3 (my transl.).

³³ Herring 2007: 17. I do not here discuss the many other languages of the Italian peninsula which leave some trace in the epigraphic record. Bandinelli 2008, for example, discusses northern Italian practices (Cisalpinia) in this period, describing among other things the existence of an Archaic epigraphic phase with Gallic, Venetic, Camunnic and Retic traditions (43–4); a partial epigraphical gap in the fourth century (45); and the presence from the third century of a combination of local continuity of practices (48), and Roman institutional epigraphy (49), alongside a growth in local epigraphy of institutional and epigraphic varieties (50–3). This last can of course readily be classed as ‘Romanisation’; whether it should be is another matter. Kathryn Lomas points out to me that, based upon De Simone and Marchesini 2002 (*non vidi*), Messapic epigraphy appears to show its greatest period of output (or at least survival) in the third century BC. Rare examples of Punic epigraphy from the Italian mainland are largely limited to the Archaic/Classical periods (e.g. the famous Pyrgi tablets); the handful of Neo-Punic texts found at Pompeii (Jongeling 2008: 272–3) are all on Tripolitanian amphorae.

content, then we ultimately fail to escape that traditional Hellenocentric model and continue to treat the problem in a binary rather than a holistic fashion.

Southern Gaul and Hispania

Moving westwards around the northern side of the Mediterranean, southern Gaul and the Iberian peninsula provide good examples of the ways in which study of particular areas and traditions tends to be driven by meta-narratives and ideology.³⁴ So, discussion of the development of epigraphy in southern Gaul has often been driven by a discourse of Hellenisation, focused around Massalia (Marseilles); vice versa, discussion of epigraphic development in the Iberian peninsula is more concerned with elucidating a process of Romanisation attendant upon the Roman military presence from 218 BC onwards. Modern national boundaries can also limit study in a way that is not reflective of the ancient practices.³⁵ In both cases this risks missing crucial alternative perspectives.

In southern Gaul, Gallo-Greek (i.e. Gaulish written in Greek script) is a 'Hellenistic' epigraphic culture, at least in date. Gallo-Greek texts are known from the area of the Rhone basin, as well as being found along the line of the principal river valleys well into central Gaul. The letters of Gallo-Greek are said to have the phonetic values of 'Hellenistic' Greek *koine* of c. 200 BC (note the absence of direct evidence for Massalia as the source).³⁶ In this instance, considerable debate exists over the exact moment when the phenomenon first develops, and consequently as to whether it should be classed as 'Hellenisation' (favoured by those arguing for an earlier beginning, c. 250 BC) or an indigenous development, reflecting, for instance, a need to assert identity in the face of Roman conquest (associated with assigning the material a later date, principally the later second and first centuries BC).³⁷

³⁴ There are, needless to say, plenty of exceptions, and the wider shift in approach towards a discourse of Mediterranean interactions and a more 'Hellenistic' pattern, which Mullen 2008: 249 n.3 observes for southern Gaul, reflects the concerns of this volume (also Mullen 2013).

³⁵ Woolf 1994: 85; cf. Bats 1988.

³⁶ Mullen 2013: §4.2.1; cf. J. De Hoz 1998b: 124 for some evidence that Gallo-Iberic inscriptions of the Hellenistic period (i.e. Iberian written in a Greek script), in contrast to the earlier Greek material, show indications of influence from wider eastern *koine*, rather than being an isolated western development.

³⁷ Contrast Lambert 1997, arguing for 250–50 BC and Hellenisation, with Bats 2003, who argues that the first true examples of Gallo-Greek (as opposed to just Greek), especially on stone, only occur late in the second century BC, and who rejects 'Hellenisation' as an explanation. Cf. Mullen 2013: §4.2.2.

Somewhere over 300 documents are now recorded, of which over 73 are lapidary, over 223 are on ceramic and a small number are to be found on other materials. Of the lapidary inscriptions, *c.* 40 are funerary, *c.* 24 votive, with a small number of signatures or incomprehensible texts.³⁸ One notable feature of Gallo-Greek, from the perspective of ‘Hellenistic’ epigraphy, is the existence of public, or official documents. Examples include an inscription from Vitrolles which refers to a *praitor*, an inscription from Martigues referring to the construction of a road, a collective dedication, a number of inscriptions referring to tribal organisation, and one from Segomaros involving a sacred wood and referring collectively to the citizens of ancient Nîmes. By contrast, Gallo-Latin, which develops later and co-exists alongside Latin epigraphy, has only produced *c.* 17 lapidary inscriptions, most of which come instead from the Gallic interior, almost none from the south-east – it is not therefore something as simple as a mere chronological successor to Gallo-Greek, and cannot be used to support a blunt reading along the lines of Hellenisation followed by Romanisation.³⁹

Two particular sets of observations are worth highlighting here. The first is Michel Bats’ comments on the more general question of the adoption of language and writing (or at least, the practice of inscribing on durable materials). While Greek and Phoenician epigraphic practices can be traced back to the Archaic period in Gaul and Spain, and some very limited evidence exists for the development of local scripts and their use at such an early date, the majority of the local take-up of such practices belongs to the fourth century (in the case of Iberian, in both southern Gaul and Spain) or the third and second centuries (Gallo-Greek, Celtiberian). As Bats remarks: ‘The adoption of an alphabet and of writing is not only the resolution of a technical problem but at the same time marks a moment in the internal evolution of a society and of the functions which that society assigns to writing.’⁴⁰ The very obvious time-lags involved, sometimes of several centuries, require explanation – either in terms of the delay, or in terms of the impulse when it comes. Put bluntly, why now, why in the ‘Hellenistic’ period? Bats himself repeatedly emphasises both the personal and the commercial/economic aspects of much of the material, but one could also highlight the existence of public documents from communities among this material and what that might suggest about local community identity in this period.

³⁸ After Lambert 1997. ³⁹ See e.g. the cautions in Woolf 1994: 96–7.

⁴⁰ Bats 1988: 133 (my transl.).

The second consideration is both a more specific set of observations, and a partial follow-up to the first. In a study of a set of Gallo-Greek dedications, Alex Mullen has brought out the range of Italic linguistic influences to be found within the principal formula employed, thereby complicating the more traditional idea of primarily Greek linguistic influence (but, crucially, without invoking specifically Roman origins, Oscan being at least as significant as Latin). Mullen also highlights the implications of a distribution map of the Gallo-Greek material: Massalia is visibly on the periphery of this material's distribution, which is concentrated upon the confluence of the major rivers in the region, strongly suggesting that communication and trade were key elements in the use and diffusion of epigraphic practice.⁴¹ If the delay of centuries in the take-up of writing/epigraphic culture is a point requiring explanation, then the local presence of Massalia is usually considered central to the issue, since it provides an obvious source for the adoption of such a practice; but if Massalia is in fact peripheral to the practice when it does develop, then the Greek colony appears peripheral to our possible explanations both for the non-take-up in the Archaic/Classical period and for the take-up in the Hellenistic period. Another motivation (and source) appears to be desirable. Throughout Mullen's discussion the emphasis is upon complexity and a range of both internal and external factors. Within the context of the broader, western Mediterranean picture the chronological parameters are once again striking.

Against all of this should be set the limited evidence provided by the Greek epigraphy of the region of ancient Gaul. Of the 169 inscriptions now collected in *Inscriptions Grecques de la France*, a mere four are dated earlier than the third/second century BC – although these include a striking fifth-century BC commercial document on lead from Pech Maho.⁴² A significant body of material belongs to the later Hellenistic period, while the greatest proportion of the texts is Imperial in date. The lack of material highlights the relatively *a priori* nature of the debate regarding the process of Hellenisation in the development of Gallo-Greek. The chronology of the material itself, seeing its first significant developments in the third/second century, fits eminently well with the wider patterns observed in this paper, not simply in Gallo-Greek but across the western Mediterranean as a whole.

⁴¹ Mullen 2008 and 2013 (Map 3); see also on northern Italy/southern Gaul, Häußler 2002.

⁴² *Inscriptions Grecques de la France* (IGF) = Decourt 2004. IGF 2 (funerary or dedicatory text from Marseilles, C5 BC); IGF 84 ('le galet d'Antibes', C5/4 BC); IGF 130 (letter on lead plaque, C4/3 BC); IGF 135 (commercial document on lead from Pech Maho, second quarter C5 BC). Note also the third-century BC letter on lead from Marseilles, IGF 4. See now Mullen 2013: ch. 6 for a larger collection of non-lapidary Greek epigraphy from the region.

Turning to the Iberian peninsula, the principal scripts of interest are Iberian and Celtiberian.⁴³ The former has its origins in the South-West script which develops c. 700 BC from the Phoenician alphabet, used in turn by the Iberian peoples from perhaps the end of the fifth century BC, with modifications such as being written left–right generally assumed to develop under Greek influence. The most notable early (fourth-/third-century) texts are commercial documents on lead from Ampurias (compare that from Pech Maho, above), taken to be of Greek inspiration – although it is worth pointing out that the Pech Maho texts include Etruscan also, and the archaeological evidence from all these sites suggests a highly complex world of interaction between natives of the Iberian peninsula and southern Gaul, Greeks, Etruscans, Phoenicians/Punics and others.⁴⁴ A modest corpus of Phoenicio-Punic texts is attested for Spain, with some presence in the Archaic period, but which shows the greatest period of activity precisely in the period of the fourth to second centuries BC.⁴⁵ Greek material is present in the peninsula throughout antiquity, but in small numbers; almost half the material comes from Ampurias/Emporion alone.⁴⁶ The Archaic material is predominantly to be found on functional objects, on ceramic and metal, frequently associated with trade and commerce; documents on lead are notable in the fifth to third centuries BC, with funerary epigraphy developing principally from the first century BC onwards, more closely in tandem with the familiar later Latin ‘habit’. Of the Iberian material itself, much is undated, but it is generally considered to cluster between the late third and late first centuries BC, from which period c. 1,750 Iberian inscriptions survive, ranging across coin legends, epitaphs on stone, inscriptions on mosaics and amphorae and graffiti on ceramics. Celtiberian is a later and smaller phenomenon, constituting a small sub-group of c. 100 inscriptions belonging to the second/first centuries BC, using either Iberian script or occasionally the Latin alphabet.⁴⁷

⁴³ See the collection of papers in F. Beltrán Lloris 1995a; also F. Beltrán Lloris 1999; and see now the overview in Simkin 2012.

⁴⁴ See esp. the comments of Gailledrat and Solier 2004: 438–9, with further references.

⁴⁵ Fuentes Estañol 1986 provides the most complete corpus of the Spanish material, detailing 24 texts of C8–C5 BC, 60 of C4–C2, and 30 of C2–C1.

⁴⁶ M. P. De Hoz 1997 for a corpus (127 distinct texts, across all materials, between C7 BC and C4 AD; overview at 90–1); corrections in M. P. De Hoz 1998; cf. Ramírez Sádaba 2009 for an overview (comments at 59 on Archaic material).

⁴⁷ For a useful tabulation of Celtiberian inscriptions, see Villar *et al.* 2001: 87–101. Iberian and Celtiberian material as a whole is collected in *Monumenta Linguarum Hispanicarum* (Wiesbaden, 1975-), ed. J. Untermann, esp. vols 3 and 4.

The quantity of ‘public’ epigraphy in both Iberian and Celtiberian is very limited – but importantly it does exist. Particularly striking among the Celtiberian material are the Celtiberian texts on bronze from Botorrita, on which Beltrán Lloris observes: ‘These two bronzes [now three], again leaving aside their exact meaning, have other points of interest. One of them is the use of writing to produce texts for public exhibition (perhaps in the monumental building of the acropolis) . . .’ And, in the case of the second Celtiberian text (= Botorrita 3), with its list of names, he observes: ‘What is striking is not so much the permanent exhibition of personal names (which is a normal feature of classical epigraphy), but the fact that they are exhibited not individually, but as a collective manifestation linked to an official act of the community, which surely expresses a remarkable collective instance of what the Germans call “Selbstdarstellung”.’⁴⁸ Particularly in the case of Celtiberian, where all the material is dated to after the arrival of the Romans, it is inevitably tempting to attribute such activity to Roman influence. And yet, Latin material from the region before the late Republican period is very scarce indeed and largely restricted to official acts of Roman magistrates – a pattern that is repeated across the western Mediterranean (and should be placed alongside the slow growth of Latin epigraphy within Italy itself, noted above).⁴⁹ The need for caution is rightly recognised: ‘the appearance of the first indigenous inscriptions, barely a generation after the conquest, comes therefore too soon for this first epigraphic flowering to be attributed exclusively to Roman influence.’⁵⁰ In the case of Iberian epigraphy it is instead a question of whether particular categories of epigraphic material are attested before the Roman arrival in 218 BC – the question matters within the existing debate because if Iberian epigraphy precedes the arrival of the Romans *en masse* then the role of

⁴⁸ F. Beltrán Lloris 1999: 146. There are altogether four Botorrita bronzes, nos. 1, 3, 4 being in Celtiberian, no. 2 in Latin (see respectively Beltrán and Tovar 1982; Beltrán Lloris *et al.* 1996; Villar *et al.* 2001; and J. Richardson 1983 for the Latin document).

⁴⁹ Díaz Ariño 2008 collects all Latin epigraphy down to 31 BC for the Iberian peninsula, with a survey at 35–44; the earliest Latin epigraphy (late third century BC) is graffiti and stamps on amphorae; the earliest inscribed text is Díaz Ariño 2008: C58 = *CIL* I².iv.3449.1 (a graffito dedication to Minerva on stone) of c. 200 BC, and the first examples of the use of Latin by the local population belong to the second half of the second century BC or later; cf. Stylow 1998 for Hispania Ulterior (nothing pre-50 BC); cf. Prag 2007a: 259–60 for a similar picture in Sicily (c. 15 texts on stone, all by/for Romans/Italians); Quinn 2003: 16 for the same in North Africa (5 texts on stone all by/for Latin speakers); Zucca 1996 collects the full range of material for Africa, Sardinia, and Corsica to 31 BC.

⁵⁰ F. Beltrán Lloris 1995b: 174 (my transl.).

‘Romanisation’ in the phenomenon’s development receives a seemingly clear (and negative) answer.⁵¹

As with other regions, the coincidence with the arrival of the Roman Empire is obvious – and may well not be merely coincidental – but whether it follows from that that the discernible developments in epigraphic practice have anything to do with anything that might be called ‘Romanisation’ is far less obvious. One might argue that the clash between Rome and Carthage in the later third century in the western Mediterranean basin is itself simply emblematic of the greatly increased levels of exchange and interaction, of connectivity and complexity in this region in this period.⁵² The lack of precision in the available evidence, which inhibits clear answers regarding the chronology and priority of particular languages and practices, means that the debates about the growth of epigraphic practice in the Iberian peninsula provide a particularly clear example of the ideological issues at stake: put simply (too simply), should one prioritise indigenous practices, Romanisation, or even, as Javier de Hoz has come to argue more recently, ‘Hellenistic’ practices, detectable both in the occasional public presentation of magistrates, and in the presence of *instrumentum domesticum* and ‘industrial epigraphy’?⁵³ The fact that it is not so simple is readily illustrated by the suggestions of both Jürgen Untermann and Francisco Beltrán Lloris that the use of Iberian script by the Celtiberians, in apparent preference to Latin, in the second/first centuries BC, was most likely a consequence of the Celtiberians having learned writing from the Iberians in the *emporia* of the Catalan and Valencian coast – which promptly turns most of the uni- or bidirectional models of influence on their heads; but then, the Ampurias texts of the fourth century probably implied as much already.⁵⁴

One particular example of this development and the difficulties of assessing it may be seen in discussion of the phenomenon of the *tessera hospitalis* in the Spanish context.⁵⁵ Because the greatest concentration of such material is found in the Iberian peninsula, and because the Celtiberian examples

⁵¹ See for instance J. De Hoz 1995: 60 on funerary epigraphy.

⁵² For increased commercial activity in the Tyrrhenian basin in this period, and the steady rise in Roman involvement, see, e.g. Bechtold 2007, Tchernia 2007, Olcese 2004, Vandermercsh 2001.

⁵³ ‘Too simply’, because of course many offer rather nuanced positions across and between these alternatives, e.g. F. Beltrán Lloris 1995b; for Iberian epigraphy as a Hellenistic phenomenon, J. De Hoz 1995 and 2006.

⁵⁴ Untermann 1995b: 197; F. Beltrán Lloris 1995b: 181–2.

⁵⁵ The Spanish material is variously surveyed in Abascal 2003: 249 Tab. 1 (28 Celtiberian examples, 8 Celtiberian written in Latin letters, 8 Latin); Díaz Ariño 2008: 56–8 (c. 50 Celtiberian *tesserae* written in ‘paleohispanic’ or Latin alphabet, alongside 9 Latin examples); and Balbín Chamorro 2006: 149–92 (45 examples).

all appear to post-date the Roman conquest – in contrast to the few Latin examples from Italy, some of which seem to precede the Celtiberian material – a very similar debate regarding directions of influence is found as in relation to other regions and epigraphic cultures in this period.⁵⁶ Explanatory hypotheses for this development range from the existence of an indigenous Celtiberian practice, to the complete rejection of any indigenous origin, alongside finely nuanced attempts to find a middle ground.⁵⁷ It is worth adding that the vast majority of this material is not susceptible of accurate dating; consequently the dates tend to be shifted by a century or so either way according to the hypothesis being presented, offering a further example of the way in which the narrative affects the interpretation.

Although the existence of similar material beyond Spain and Italy, and across a broader range of time, is frequently acknowledged, such material is all too often subordinated to the primary argument over the historical developments of the Iberian peninsula and specific problems internal to the Iberian material.⁵⁸ It is, however, possible to argue that enough aspects of the practices associated with *hospitium* (formal ties of hospitality) and *tesserae hospitales* (tokens of guest-friendship) are attested at other moments and in other places that the Celtiberian examples should not necessarily be prioritised for any other reason than their numerical preponderance (although that fact itself undoubtedly requires explanation). Ivory and bronze *tesserae*, of similar form but in diverse languages, are occasionally found elsewhere: Etruscan examples from Rome and Carthage in the Archaic period; Greek examples from Sicily and southern Gaul in the Hellenistic period.⁵⁹ An Athenian text of the 370s BC appears to imply a

⁵⁶ Italian examples include *CIL* I².23, 828, 1764.

⁵⁷ Respectively (illustrative examples only): Ramos Loscertales 1942 (indigenous); Dopico 1989 (non-indigenous); F. Beltrán Lloris 2004 (suggesting an indigenous tradition of *hospitium*, which in turn adopted a specifically Latin practice of using bronze *tesserae*; further developed – very speculatively – in *idem* 2010).

⁵⁸ I (over)simplify deliberately and leave aside, for instance, detailed consideration of specific *formulae* in the various *tesserae*, or the transition from *tesserae* to *tabulae* and the appearance of *patrocinium*; useful recent overviews of the problem in Díaz Ariño 2008: 56–8; Balbín Chamorro 2006: 13–15, 44–7; Abascal 2003: 247–57; cf. F. Beltrán Lloris 2004: 35–6; J. De Hoz 1999.

⁵⁹ *IG* XIV.2432 (excellent photographs in Barrool 1969: Pl. VIII, with pp. 372–3; also Guarducci 1967–78: II, 582–3 with Fig. 183; now *IGF* 1, albeit with no reference to the Iberian tradition), recording links between one of the Alpine peoples and another community; *IG* XIV.279 from Lilybaeum in Sicily, containing mixed Punic and Greek nomenclature (see C. Di Stefano 1984: no. 153 and Fig. 70). Neither can be more closely dated than the later Hellenistic. Etruscan *tessera* on ivory from S. Omobono (Rome), Pallottino 1979; Etruscan *tessera* from a sixth-century burial in Carthage, Rix 1991: *Af.* 3.1, with photographs in Peruzzi 1970: I, Tav. i-ii, discussion Prag 2006: 8 (nb *Puinel* is an Etruscan personal name, not an ethnic). Ve 221 = Crawford 2011: 209 is sometimes cited as a possible Oscan example on ivory.

very similar practice in use to facilitate relations between Athens and the king of Sidon, since the actions described there can only be understood through the employment of something like a *tessera hospitalis*.⁶⁰ Literary texts across a broad range in time and space, both Greek and Latin, reflect the same practice or something very similar.⁶¹ Many of the general elements, such as the symbol of clasped right hands, likewise find a broader Mediterranean context – in other words, viewed from the outside, the Iberian examples look like one manifestation of a pan-Mediterranean phenomenon.⁶²

Given the existence of wider evidence for *hospitium* practices in the ancient Mediterranean, a focus upon the question of whether Iberian *hospitium* reflects specifically indigenous customs or the adoption of Roman practices risks missing the point. An alternative strategy in this debate has been to examine the hypothesis that the use of bronze in particular (both in the *tesserae* and in other inscriptions) is a distinctively Roman practice in origin, taken up in the Iberian peninsula.⁶³ However, an emphasis upon bronze as a primarily Roman practice in this period seems no less open to question than other assumptions about directions of influence or choices in the prioritisation of cultural developments within a rather wider world.⁶⁴ Both Javier De Hoz and Paolo Poccetti observe the earlier use, especially in the Greek-speaking world, of metal as an epigraphic support.⁶⁵ Poccetti in turn observes a general expansion in the use of bronze

⁶⁰ *Syll.*³ 185, ll.18–25, discussed in Gauthier 1972: 81–2.

⁶¹ Especially Plaut. *Poen.* 1047–52 (NB based ultimately upon a Greek New Comedy original and with a Punic context, reworked for a Latin audience), but also *Cist.* 503; see the wide range of material collected in Lécivain 1900: 297–9, and Gauthier 1972: ch. 2 *passim* and esp. 65–7 (on Plato, *Symp.* 191d, 193a and Arist. *Mete.* 360a 25–6 for use of the σύμβολον (*symbolon*, ‘token’) as a metaphor or simile, in a way which presumes the idea of a specific object, split in two with the intention of being able to be reunited for recognition purposes).

⁶² Knippschild 2004: esp. 299–302 puts this material in relation to Persian practice; Knippschild 2002: esp. 29, 40 links this material to wider Mediterranean practice; Herman 1987: 63–5 offers a distinctly Hellenocentric perspective instead. Messineo 1983 focuses on the four examples mentioned above (my n. 59) and takes them to be representative of ‘un’antica consuetudine pan-mediterranea’ (p. 4).

⁶³ See in particular the very rich explorations of J. De Hoz 1999 and F. Beltrán Lloris 2004 (the latter now suggesting, in Beltrán Lloris 2010, that aspects of the practice originated in Punic North Africa, and reached Spain and Roman Italy via Sicily – a speculative hypothesis based primarily upon later evidence); also the more Italo-centric and wide-ranging survey of Poccetti 1999. A useful survey of specifically Roman use of bronze now in Mitchell 2005: 178–85; for Greek use of bronze see also the material cited in Crema 2007: esp. 249–52.

⁶⁴ Note the remarks of Mayer and Velaza 1989: 667–8.

⁶⁵ J. De Hoz 1999: 438–9; Poccetti 1999: esp. 555–6; also Crema above n. 63. For early Hellenistic examples (first half of the third century BC), clearly illustrative of a well-developed practice which can hardly be attributed to Roman influence (although the reverse might be true), note

among many Italic peoples (in particular in central and southern Italy, as well as among the Etruscans) from the third century onwards. Poccetti also observes that Latin epigraphic practice appears to be much slower to adopt another wider Mediterranean practice, that of lead *defixiones* (curse tablets), in contrast to other Italic peoples (Poccetti suggests Oscan mediation for the specific adoption by the Romans, while also noting a broader fourth-century climate for epigraphy on metal in the western Mediterranean, which extends to the Iberian coast). Interestingly, as De Hoz observes, it is the use of lead that is best attested in the Iberian peninsula in the same ('proto-Hellenistic?') period, in contact with Greek, Etruscan, and perhaps Punic, elements.⁶⁶ Once again it is therefore the period around the third century BC which seems to be the key moment for the diffusion of epigraphic practice – and once again, it is by no means a development restricted to Rome or to Latin epigraphy (or to the Iberian peninsula), and Rome's own place in that expansion should hardly be considered in isolation.⁶⁷ Notwithstanding this broader picture, there remains a temptation to channel, for example, the use of bronze in Celtiberian inscriptions, through a primarily Roman filter.⁶⁸

In other words, both the *tesserae hospitales* and the use of bronze could be argued to represent aspects of a much broader set of developments in epigraphic culture across a much broader region, in multiple languages, and in multiple different epigraphic genres. Specifically in relation to the spread of (bronze) *tesserae hospitales*, there may be considerable value in revisiting Philippe Gauthier's suggestion that levels of literacy are a key consideration in the use of such *symbola* or *tesserae*.⁶⁹ It is Gauthier's hypothesis that the increasing spread of literacy renders physical and visual tokens of this sort increasingly redundant (whence their apparent disappearance from mainland Greek culture in the course of the fourth century BC), with letters on papyrus and similarly ephemeral documents taking

purely *exempli gratia* the Entella tablets from Sicily (Ampolo 2001) and the Locri archive from Magna Graecia (De Franciscis 1972); western and southern Greece produces considerable amounts of such material also, and from an early date (for a fifth-century example from Argos, by no means unique, Charnoux 1953: 395–7).

⁶⁶ Poccetti 1999: 555 (cf. Berrendonner 2002: 841–2 on Oscan use of epigraphy in public construction preceding that in Latin); J. De Hoz 1999: 442–8. The most obvious examples of texts on lead from the Iberian coast are the commercial documents from Ampurias (and Pech Maho on the Gallic coast), noted above.

⁶⁷ Cf. Mullen 2008, above, on mixed influences on Gallo-Greek.

⁶⁸ Thus, even in the excellent discussion of J. De Hoz (which goes far beyond what this paper attempts), while allowing that the use of writing may precede the Roman conquest, it is nonetheless by the second century a 'Roman' model that drives much of the *epigraphic* practice in the region (1999: 456–62); it is rather as if once the Romans arrive, the rest is forgotten.

⁶⁹ Gauthier 1972: 86–9; compare the remarks of Woolf 1994.

their place. Such a hypothesis would in fact tie in rather nicely with the rise in the phenomenon of the *tessera* in the western Mediterranean at the same period in which a broad range of epigraphic practice begins to appear in the region – coincident, one assumes, with the first real steps forward in the spread of public literacy in the region.⁷⁰ The fact that the use of *tesserae* declines again as we move into the high Empire would also fit with Gauthier's hypothesis, in turn reflecting the moment when literacy arguably took a greater hold across the western Empire. The exact relationship between the spread of epigraphic culture, and more specific elements such as the use of bronze (or other metals), or specific practices such as recording *hospitium* still need to be teased apart, and some of the answers will of course be contingent upon local factors, but the wider context is, I suggest, at least as important, and answers of a more systemic nature also need to be sought.

North Africa

Within North Africa, Cyrenaica marks the traditional limit of Hellenistic studies and of Hellenistic epigraphy as traditionally defined.⁷¹ There are, however, two other major epigraphic cultures of the Hellenistic period which belong within this survey: Punic and Libyco-Berber. Compared to most of the epigraphic cultures considered in this study, Phoenicio-Punic epigraphy is quantitatively significant, with surviving inscriptions totalling nearly 10,000 items. The material is, however, widely spread over time and space, spanning 1,000 years and the whole Mediterranean, and the major concentrations of material, such as at Carthage itself, tend to be of narrowly specific types. Although what follows will focus upon North Africa, and particularly Carthage, it is difficult to treat the Punic material without reference to the wider western Mediterranean basin (although the existence of Punic material in Sicily, Sardinia and Spain has already been noted above).⁷² The Archaic material from the western Mediterranean, predominantly stelai from the *tophet* sanctuaries at Carthage and Motya in western Sicily, is small in quantity and mostly lacks the features that mark out the

⁷⁰ J. De Hoz 1999: 456 for the penetration of writing ahead of epigraphy among Celtiberians. As noted above, cf. Harris 1989: esp. 174–5, suggesting the major transition in literacy in the Roman world begins around 100 BC, although perhaps later in the western provinces (267–73).

⁷¹ In the absence of a true corpus, the majority of the Hellenistic-period Cyrenaican material is presented and discussed within Laronde 1987.

⁷² General survey in Amadasi Guzzo 1995, which is the basis for much of what follows.

later development of Punic (in terms of both script and language), suggesting essentially autonomous developments.⁷³ The distinctive traits which are associated with Punic, and which mark it out from Phoenician, emerge subsequently and in particular from the fourth century onwards: indeed one could very tentatively suggest that the diffusion in the western Mediterranean of Punic texts in the form typical of that to be found at Carthage is essentially a Hellenistic phenomenon, chronologically speaking. The great majority of Punic epigraphy is votive, or else funerary, and predominantly on stone; other types of text, such as honorifics, are rarely found in western Punic epigraphy (although they are found in small numbers in the Archaic eastern Phoenician material).⁷⁴ The material from Carthage, which far outweighs that from elsewhere (over 6,000 texts), dates principally to the period of the fourth to second centuries BC. Smaller but still substantial concentrations of similar material are found at other sites across Libya, Tunisia and Algeria, such as at Constantine (anc. Cirta with the sanctuary of El Hofra).⁷⁵ Even on this very limited basis, therefore, it might be possible to argue that the epigraphic culture of Punic sanctuaries, especially the *tophet*, is chronologically at least 'Hellenistic'.

Examples of what one might classify as typical Hellenistic epigraphy in terms of content are rare in the Punic corpus, and in particular in the North African material: a highly unusual example of a public dedication from c. 400 BC appears to commemorate a military expedition to Sicily, but in general Punic epigraphy contributes almost nothing to political/military history.⁷⁶ The formulation of votive texts shifts over time, and although most of this change relates to shifts in religious practice, Maria Giulia Amadasi notes that in the most complex texts of the Hellenistic period one finds details of *sufets* or other magistrates currently in office as well as those responsible for the actual work of the dedication. Additionally, a small but significant body of Punic texts of the Hellenistic period reflects some of the patterns associated more generally above with 'Hellenistic' epigraphy, and which do not feature otherwise in Phoenicio-Punic epigraphy. These include the several categories of inscription (mostly North African) gathered by Maurice Szyncer containing the term *'M* ('the people'), which reflect civic activity and identity: third-century BC inscriptions of Carthage recording manumission at the decree of the people; and a more dispersed set of texts, again mainly third-century,

⁷³ For the Motya material in detail, Amadasi Guzzo 1986.

⁷⁴ For categories of Punic material, Amadasi Guzzo 1989–90.

⁷⁵ The Carthage material is primarily collected in *CIS I*; for Constantine, see Bertrand and Szyncer 1987.

⁷⁶ *CIS I.5510 A–B*, see now Amadasi Guzzo 2006 with earlier bibliography.

consisting of votives set up at sanctuaries in one city by members of another, recorded as ‘belonging to the assembly of the people of x’.⁷⁷ This latter group finds a broader context in the multi-cultural, multi-lingual presence detectable at several western Mediterranean sanctuaries within the Punic sphere, such as that at Eryx in Sicily, Tas-Silġ in Malta, or of Sid/Sardus Pater at Antas in Sardinia.⁷⁸ Such sanctuaries themselves provide one very obvious channel through which the transmission of specific practices, such as writing, are disseminated and taken up. One interesting feature which emerges from the large quantity of onomastic data to be garnered from Punic epigraphy in the western Mediterranean is the gradual diffusion of non-Semitic names in the fourth/third centuries BC, interpreted by Amadasi to suggest ‘una certa frammistione di popolazione’, i.e. increased interaction and connectivity.⁷⁹

In other words, although the North African Punic epigraphic habit of the fourth to second centuries BC is not typical of the Hellenistic world as traditionally defined, it is nonetheless the case that it is in precisely this period that a particular Punic epigraphic culture flourished, and one which shows some of those elements which elsewhere have attracted the label ‘Hellenistic’, such as the presence of magistrates in texts, acts of public epigraphy and the epigraphic representation of the civic community. Many other elements of Carthaginian culture accord with this – most obviously the relatively late introduction of coinage, adopted at the end of the fifth/beginning of the fourth century, which is in clear dialogue with material from Sicily and the Hellenistic East⁸⁰ – and the broader claim has been made that by the time of the Punic Wars the city was ‘by now an integral part of a broadly unified Mediterranean reality’.⁸¹ Such a view sits well with the preceding discussion about the priority or otherwise of Rome in relation to developments in the Iberian peninsula and elsewhere.

⁷⁷ Szyncer 1975; the latter group (pp. 59–66) are found in particular at Carthage, but also elsewhere in North Africa and in Sardinia; the Carthaginian texts attest to individuals from across the western Mediterranean, such as Cossura (Pantelleria, *CIS* I.265), Ebusus (Ibiza, *CIS* I.266), Heraclea Minoa (in Sicily, *CIS* I.3707), Sulcis (in Sardinia, *CIS* I.5606).

⁷⁸ Eryx, e.g. *CIS* I.135 (= *ICO Sic.* 1, Punic), *IG* XIV.282 (Greek), *CIL* I².2221–3 (Latin); dedications to the goddess of Eryx are attested well beyond Sicily, e.g. *ICO Sard.* 19, and the cult was also imported to Rome in the Second Punic War (see in general Schilling 1982: 233–66). Tas-Silġ, e.g. dedication in Punic by Massinissa (*Cic. Verr.* 4.103), a pair of Graeco-Punic bilingual baetyls (*ICO Malta* 1 / 1bis = *CIS* I.122 / 122bis, see Yarrow, Chapter 12 in this volume), and extensive ceramic graffiti dedications (*ICO Malta*). Antas, e.g. Amadasi Guzzo 1990: no. 17 (dedication by an individual describing himself as ‘of the people of Cagliari’). Compare also the discussion of a Sardinian trilingual dedication to Eshmun/Asklapios (*ICO Sard.* 9) by Culasso Gastaldi 2000.

⁷⁹ Amadasi Guzzo 1990: 38; cf. Bourdin and Crouzet 2009 for a specific study.

⁸⁰ Cf. Yarrow, Chapter 12, this volume; Prag 2011b with bibliography on the Siculo-Punic material in particular.

⁸¹ Bondi 2001: 400 (my transl.).

However, Punic is not the only epigraphic culture to be found in North Africa in this period: Libyan, or Libyco-Berber, is attested by a body of over 1,100 texts from antiquity, found mostly in Algeria, as well as Tunisia and Morocco (as well as a debated set of material from the Canary Islands).⁸² The material presents considerable difficulties of interpretation, and is no less subject to the pull of ideologically driven narratives than many of the other epigraphic cultures here considered. Even the choice of name is not without implications, Libyco-Berber appearing to be the currently accepted ‘compromise’ – as the name indicates, the language, or languages, represented by the several related alphabets used in these inscriptions, is generally taken to have some relation to modern Berber. However, even the relationship between the variant versions of Libyco-Berber attested in the epigraphic record is highly uncertain.

As often, dating lies at the heart of the issue, since only a single Libyco-Berber text (*RIL* 2, from Dougga) contains secure internal evidence for a date (138 BC). Consequently, many scholars tend towards a date in the third or second century BC for the appearance of these inscriptions and the development of the script. However, a strong, but by no means watertight case has been made to date one major text to the sixth or fifth century BC,⁸³ and arguments have been offered to date some texts as early as the fourteenth or thirteenth century BC.⁸⁴ There is greater unanimity on dating the end of the practice to around the fifth century AD. Needless to say, those who argue for an early, or very early date, tend to be those who downplay the extent of Phoenician or Punic influence on the formation of the language and its written form(s), and place greater emphasis upon indigenous traditions.⁸⁵ Here too the problem lies in ambivalent evidence, since the alphabet is largely lacking in vowel phonemes, making a Semitic model highly likely, while some half-dozen characters have close correlates in Punic. By itself this does not suggest direct borrowing so much as some

⁸² Recent discussion in Kerr 2010, cf. Chaker n.d., also Pichler 1970; the principal *corpus* is that of Chabot 1940–1 (= *RIL*), supplemented but not superceded.

⁸³ Camps 1978: 148–51, preceded by trenchant arguments against the *a priori* tendencies in the arguments over the relationship of the variant alphabets; but the case for the early date of this particular text depends wholly upon the dating of inscribed iconography in rock art, which is inevitably speculative. It is notable that with one exception the rest of the material collected in Camps 1978 (summary table p. 166) is dated to the third century BC or later.

⁸⁴ Chaker and Hachi 2000 (arguing for a two-stage process, where the underlying principles and many of the symbols evolve early in an indigenous context, but are then redeveloped in full as an alphabet in the course of contact with Phoenician/Punic practices – summary on p. 107).

⁸⁵ In part reacting against the earlier tendency to attribute a civilising role to Carthage, clearly visible in, e.g. Mommsen 1903: 674–6 and Meltzer 1879–1913: III, 594–608 (so e.g. Chaker n.d.: 10 n. 6 and Camps 1978: 143–5).

level of influence, and the chronology of that influence and its relationship to the language's origin is at the heart of the debate. One recent linguistic analysis by Robert Kerr has plausibly concluded that the best explanation of the various elements is to hypothesise the invention of the alphabet for epigraphic purposes, most probably to be placed in the time of the reign of Massinissa, in the first half of the second century BC.⁸⁶ As Kerr reasonably suggests, the use to which the alphabet can be seen to be put in the second century in a public setting makes eminently good sense in the context of a kingdom active on the international stage and seeking to distance itself from Carthage.⁸⁷ Viewed in this light, the hypothetical development of Libyco-Berber epigraphy at this point fits eminently well alongside the developments suggested by so-called 'Numidian Royal Architecture', as analysed in Chapter 7 in this volume by Josephine Quinn, who argues that this is all about 'the exploitation of real and symbolic sources of power', in ways that 'cut across lines of conventionally understood political, ethnic or cultural identities', and belong in a much wider set of Mediterranean interactions. From an epigraphic perspective, it is also noteworthy that the local kings of the region inscribe otherwise in Punic, and only begin to make use of Latin from the time of the Civil Wars onwards; Latin itself is almost non-existent in the region before 50 BC (five texts, all by/for Latin speakers).⁸⁸

However, it must be acknowledged that this is only one interpretation, and the evidence is by no means conclusive. The uncertain relationship of the different variants of Libyco-Berber, and the potentially earlier date of some of the material, as well as the extensive presence of graffiti, not merely official or funerary texts, have encouraged some to suggest multiple lines of development and that the use of the script(s) extends some way below the elite.⁸⁹ From the perspective of this discussion, the interpretations are not mutually exclusive and both find a place in the picture I am seeking to

⁸⁶ Kerr 2010: esp. 54–62. This is of course an interesting return to the chronology of the earlier model of Massinissa the Carthaginian- and Roman-influenced 'civiliser', and specifically as responsible for the development of the Libyco-Berber script (e.g. Meltzer 1879–1913: I, 439, after Mommsen 1903: 674–6 (Meltzer of course citing an earlier edition of Mommsen)), but it is important to emphasise that Kerr does not express it in these terms, and develops a clearly linguistics-based argument (Chaker and Hachi 2000: 107–8 are conscious of similarly echoing earlier interpretations by Gsell and others, but likewise from a different starting point). It is tempting to draw a parallel with the creation of the Old Persian script under Darius, used on the Bisitun Inscription.

⁸⁷ Kerr 2010: 61–2.

⁸⁸ The point is made by Kerr 2010: 52, 52 n.33 and 62; in more detail Quinn 2003: 16; material in Zucca 1996: 1429–50.

⁸⁹ Neatly summed up in Mattingly and Hitchner 1995: 172.

develop. The potentially widespread adoption of writing, perhaps at a relatively early date but which only visibly comes into its own in the course of the third century, speaks of North African society participating in a broader set of western Mediterranean cultural developments. The specific use made of it in an official context in the second and first centuries BC speaks more directly to the use of writing in a public and official context, symbolic of power and authority, again within a wider stream of Mediterranean developments. The latter use, language and location aside, does not look out of place in a typical account of Hellenistic epigraphy; the wider adoption, besides being Hellenistic in date, looks to be no less representative than other Hellenistic epigraphy of the social and cultural developments and interactions of the period.

Epigraphy, connectivity and changing relations of power

It should be apparent from the preceding survey that the period from the fourth to the first centuries BC (i.e. the 'Hellenistic' period) in the western Mediterranean is distinctively rich and diverse from an epigraphic perspective. Not only that, but a number of patterns can be observed that repeat across the region. At a basic level, the spread and use of epigraphy in diverse languages becomes a visible and significant phenomenon. The Hellenistic period marks the moment when many of these regions and peoples experimented on a significant scale with such practices. This is true not only for those peoples who did not previously inscribe, but also for those who did so already, among whom both the scale and the nature of the practice underwent visible transformations, often loosely to be placed in the (long) third century BC. At a more specific level, but not confined to individual languages, particular types of epigraphic practice seem to gain greater prominence, whether commercial documents and *instrumentum domesticum*, or building inscriptions, or public documents and the formulae and content associated with such practices.

Two further elements are worth highlighting briefly, as possible avenues for further investigation. Firstly, I have several times noted that there are some suggestions of a 'gap' in epigraphic practice in various areas, broadly between the late Archaic and the early Hellenistic periods, often to be placed very approximately in the first half of the fourth century BC, whether in Sicily or the Iberian peninsula, in Latin or Punic epigraphy. I suspect that such a gap is itself an artifact of the narratives illustrated above that drive the interpretation of both epigraphic and material culture in the face of

difficulties in dating; but whether this is the case requires further study. Secondly, if the discussion initiated here is to be developed further, it seems imperative to take the numismatic evidence more fully into consideration. Space (and lack of competence) precludes examination of this material, but the spread of local coinages in the western Mediterranean, and the diverse use of languages, legends and types shows some striking affinities with the trends in the epigraphic material.⁹⁰

What is it therefore that is ‘special’ about this period? Two major themes suggest themselves, and they take their inspiration respectively from the principal pre-existing models of the Hellenistic period and Romanisation. As already suggested at the start of this chapter, calling such patterns of practice ‘Hellenistic’, other than by virtue of their chronology, does not seem particularly constructive, and hardly offers an explanation; frequently it only encourages the even more problematic application of the concept of ‘Hellenisation’.⁹¹ One theme, however, which recurs in many recent discussions of this epigraphic material is that of pan-Mediterranean interactions, of a Mediterranean (or Hellenistic) *koine*. So, for example, Javier De Hoz, discussing the Iberian material, remarks:

we must remember that, regardless of wars and conquests, the Mediterranean had been, for centuries, a zone of contact and exchange in which technologies and skills, frequently involving writing, were transmitted, and that a whole series of epigraphic practices existed, which were linked to commerce and manufacture, of Hellenistic origin, and which, with adaptations and local peculiarities, were being taken up in Italy and Iberia prior to 218 [BC].⁹²

As was noted at the very beginning, it is quite possible to draw parallels with epigraphic practice in, e.g. Asia Minor or the Aegean, traditionally described as Hellenistic. But how far the observation of such parallels should lead to a suggestion of ‘Hellenistic origin’ is another matter (compare the discussion of Andrew Wilson in Chapter 5 in this volume). Should we define or map the Hellenistic by, for example, the distribution of particular patterns of Greek epigraphic practice, or by the far more extensive web of economic (and human) connections across (and beyond) the Mediterranean in this period?⁹³ Perhaps we should be considering what, if anything, the West has

⁹⁰ Cf. Liv Yarrow’s paper, Chapter 12, this volume. See for example Chaves Tristán 1998 on coinage of Baetica in this period, Frey-Kupper 2006 on Sicilian coinage, or the development of Siculo-Punic coinage (Manfredi 2000; Cutroni Tusa 2000, cf. Prag 2011b), or Punic coinage more generally (Manfredi 2006).

⁹¹ Cf. Bats *et al.* 1992: 469 urging that the latter term be banned.

⁹² J. De Hoz 1995: 71 (my transl.). ⁹³ The paradox internal to Davies 2006, noted at the start.

in common with the East in this period: rather than emphasising epigraphic practice or material culture *per se*, I would, therefore, prefer to emphasise the conditions which generate that material culture and the Mediterranean *koine*, and I take epigraphy to be particularly illustrative of those changing conditions.

The regional discussions cited earlier in this paper repeatedly place the emphasis on what can most easily be tagged as ‘connectivity’ and its consequences. Thus Sardinian epigraphy illustrated an ‘opening up to the Mediterranean’; Etruscan and Oscan revealed increasing administrative and juridical complexity, civic identity, the growing public/private divide, ‘in sum, the development of the public sphere’, in other words, an effort to present an outward-facing identity; in southern Italy it was an assertion of identity in the face of increased regional interaction and perceived cultural threats; in southern Gaul it marked ‘the internal evolution of a society’, with a predominance in commercial and economic material, and repeated emphasis upon increasing complexity; in Spain, ‘a remarkable collective instance’ of self-representation; Carthage was ‘an integral part of a broadly unified Mediterranean reality’. Increasing commercial interaction, human movement, social complexity and concern with collective and personal representation are constant themes of the Hellenistic period, all of which find one obvious outlet (among many) in epigraphic practice. Viewed in this light, the division between East and West is highly artificial (cf. Nicholas Purcell, Chapter 13 of this volume), since these are common themes across the Mediterranean. Calling any of this ‘Hellenistic’ begins to look increasingly counter-productive (and unnecessarily Hellenocentric), so-called ‘Hellenistic epigraphy’ of the East itself belonging within a wider world of contemporary development.

In the second place, as has been repeatedly highlighted in this chapter, many regional discussions of epigraphic practice, and indeed discussions of the western Mediterranean as a whole in this period, have taken the rise of the Roman Empire as central to any explanatory model. The coincidence with Roman expansion is indeed striking, but as many commentators have observed (those quoted above, and others), the relevance of that coincidence is far from immediately obvious. In Sicily, in Spain, in southern Gaul, almost the first visible *Latin* epigraphy, frequently in virtual isolation both spatially and chronologically, is a solitary surviving milestone, and Latin epigraphy in the West, outside Italy, is scarce in the extreme before 50 BC. This is hardly the material for such ‘epigraphic revolutions’ – although it is perhaps emblematic of the role of the inscribed word and the changing world of the western Mediterranean in this period. The Latin

epigraphic habit suggests that Rome is no more than another example of the wider phenomenon.

In other words, on the basis of the picture of epigraphic development in the western Mediterranean from the fourth century BC onwards, I wish to suggest not only that Romanisation is not the relevant model, but also that the 'Hellenistic' world, as traditionally defined, is itself merely part of a broader set of developments. If that is the case, besides increased connectivity, what common factors might we observe? One repeating theme across these regional discussions, besides increasing interactions (economic, military, demographic), is that of clear shifts in regional power structures. In this respect, Roman imperialism is a major consideration, but hardly unique in the western Mediterranean. For Greg Woolf, looking at southern Gaul and Spain, the key lay in the significance of power relations:

... as a context shaping the way that writing was adopted, adapted, used, and rejected. The punctuation of the history of the spread of writing [at least as witnessed in epigraphic practice] resulted from shifts in power ... In this respect, then, writing seems no different from other aspects of culture, for example the potter's wheel, viticulture, or stone architecture.⁹⁴

That being so, to prioritise writing in Latin (or Punic or Greek), as opposed to writing itself, risks missing the point. But use of the term Romanisation makes such prioritisation almost unavoidable, and the term 'Hellenistic' has a very similar effect. The world of Alexander and his Successors, the 'Hellenistic East', was itself an area of massively shifting power relations, and that is often cited as a major consideration in the development and understanding of 'Hellenistic culture'.⁹⁵ Rome and Carthage may not be Hellenistic kingdoms, Syracusan leaders mere pretenders to such a title, but these still lie at the heart of major shifts in the power relations of the West (and, indeed, of the East), to which communities and individuals felt the need to respond. In the struggles over Hellenisation and Romanisation, it should not be forgotten that Carthaginian hegemony in the western Mediterranean, however precisely it should be understood, took on new forms from the fourth century onwards.⁹⁶ The Hellenistic period, whether in the East, under the Successors, or in the West in the face of first Carthage, and then Rome, saw the rise of a new level of power relations, with *supra-polis* (i.e. city-state), indeed supra-regional powers emerging across the

⁹⁴ Woolf 1994: 98 (my insertion in square brackets).

⁹⁵ See Ma 2000b for an excellent discussion of one aspect of this.

⁹⁶ See e.g. Bondi 1990–1 on Sicily, and 2006: 134–5, 2009b: 462 on the developments in territorial control of Sicily and Sardinia in this period; Wagner 1989 on Spain.

Mediterranean. Alongside Nicholas Purcell's 'novel conditions of circulation' (Chapter 13), we should perhaps think about 'novel relations of power' across the Mediterranean from the fourth century onwards, and the ways in which communities and individuals can respond. The Hellenistic kings were just one part of this; Rome, Carthage, Syracusan tyrants, the Numidian kings and the Spaniards who called Scipio 'king' were some of the others.⁹⁷ Polybius was right, and for precisely that reason it is time we put the 'Hellenistic' behind us.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Polyb. 10.38.3.

⁹⁸ Polyb. 1.3.4: 'But ever since this date [220 BC–216 BC], history has been an organic whole (συνεκτατοειδῆ), and the affairs of Italy and Libya have been interlinked with those of Greece and Asia . . .' (trans. Paton, revised Walbank and Habicht). Cf. Eckstein 2006 for an IR-theory-based analysis of the entire Mediterranean as a single system, placing the key moment of power-transition in the same period (explicitly with Polybius) – although still ultimately oriented around an approach that deals with Rome in the West, the Hellenistic states in the East.

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