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FRENCH INSCRIPTIONS IN THE LATIN KINGDOM OF JERUSALEM: FROM THE WRITTEN WORD TO THE MUSEUM

ESTELLE INGRAND-VARENNE¹

Epigraphic transition to writing in the vernacular languages was one of the most striking phenomena in the sociocultural history of medieval Europe from the twelfth century onward, affecting all domains of written culture and progressing at different paces in different places. This transition took place in the Crusader states, as in France, in the mid-thirteenth century, but here with a radical turn from medieval Latin to Outremer French—an Old French dialect used in the Latin East. This paper examines isolated French words (names) in the extant inscriptions from the Kingdom of Jerusalem, tracing the transitional stages and identifying the actors and events instrumental in this shift. Is this transition simply a reflection of the limited preserved corpus of inscriptions? or can it be related to the history of the Crusader Kingdom, specifically the sojourn of the French King Louis IX in the Holy Land? This paper subsequently focuses on how the Outremer French inscriptions were viewed by the nineteenth-century orientalists and relates to the role that the inscriptions played in the conception of language in terms of national identity, and their place in the museums of France.

Keywords: Epigraphy, Inscription, Latin East, Outremer French, Sociolinguistics, Orientalism, Languages, Middle Ages.

INTRODUCTION²

Following the establishment of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1099, merchants, pilgrims and Crusaders came from the West and founded new town quarters, hospices, churches and castles, and inscribed or wrote inscriptions and graffiti on monuments and artefacts in their own languages using the Latin alphabet. The period spanning the twelfth

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and thirteen centuries witnessed one of the major linguistic and cultural changes of the western Middle Ages: the written use of vernacular languages in cohabitation with Latin, the vehicular language. This epigraphic transition occurred several centuries after the linguistic transformation, whereby two variants of the same language developed into two distinct languages. The transition from Latin to the Romance languages—particularly French—took place gradually between the fourth/sixth and the ninth centuries (Banniard 1992), with the graphic transition following later. Between the ninth and the eleventh centuries, some vernacular writings appeared sporadically, for example, the Oaths of Strasbourg between the grandsons of Charlemagne in 842. Later, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the graphic system of French writing was established, and there were even French texts written and copied in coherent sets, for example, the copy of the Song of Roland around 1120–1130. Finally, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the French writing system became normalized, and it cohabited with Latin until 1539 when the ordinance of Villers-Côteret established French as the official language of law and administration in France. In the Middle Ages, however, the monarchy was not concerned with the promotion of a national language.

French was one of the languages of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. In Acre (‘Akko), the political and administrative capital of the thirteenth-century kingdom, and a major trade centre, several languages were spoken: French (“langue d’oil”), Occitan, Italian (merchants from Genoa, Pisa and Venice), Catalan, German (Teutonic Order) and English (in the Montmusard suburb). The large pilgrim population from all over Latin Christendom and the men-at-arms may also have used other languages. The native Christian, Muslim and Jewish populations mostly used Arabic as their daily language, and also Syriac, Armenian and Greek (Murray 2011; Tuley 2016; Rubin 2018:70–82). French became the common language among the Latins, despite their linguistic diversity, competing with Latin as a written language of the Frankish community, and a form of local French, designated Outremer French, developed; this language was also adopted for monumental writing.

Several questions arise in this context: What was the nature of the transition from Latin to French and the epigraphic cohabitation of the two languages? Who used Outremer French in inscriptions, where and for what kind of texts? What does this usage reveal about changes in the status of the language? What did this usage contribute to Outremer French? Finally, how were the French inscriptions in the East perceived by the Orientalists, and transmitted to the museum collections? This paper addresses these linguistic and sociolinguistic issues by analysing the extant epigraphic documents in the Latin Kingdom (1099–1291), preceded by a preamble on Outremer French and the nature of the epigraphic sources.

OUTREMER FRENCH AND THE EPIGRAPHIC SOURCES

The mixture of dialects and language contacts gave rise in the thirteenth century to a new form of French, a kind of *koine*, Outremer French. The term “Outremer” appears in medieval sources, literally designating “[the land] beyond the sea”, i.e., at the other end

of the Mediterranean Sea, as seen from the perspective of the western Christians (Murray 2006b). It covered the area of the four Crusader States (Jerusalem, Tripoli, Antioch and Edessa), but Outremer French also developed in Cyprus, where the Latins settled at the end of the twelfth century, in Morea in the thirteenth century, and in Rhodes, occupied by the Hospitallers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The study of this language began in the 1920s and 1930s, but a significant development took place after the 1990s, thanks to a greater availability of reliable editions of texts produced in the East, the historical research on the sociocultural history of this area, and the works of four philologists: Laura Minervini (2010, 2018; 2021), Cyril Aslanov (2006a; 2008; 2013), Pierre Nobel (2003; 2006) and Fabio Zinelli (2018; 2021), who highlighted its lexical, graphic, phonetic and morphosyntactic features. Some French words had a different meaning in the Latin East, for example, the word *poulains*, designating Latins born in the East, and some regional French words gained a broad diffusion in the Levant, like the word *delier* for the month of December in Brittany, Champagne and Burgundy. There were many loan-words, for example, Arabisms, used in the vocabulary of trade, agriculture, war, administration and religion, which were adapted to the phonetics and morphology of French (*fonde*, *day*, *jarre*, *gazel*, *bedouin*, *caravan*, *carat*, *melech* etc.), and fewer Hellenisms, concerning the Byzantine institutions and traditions that played a role, such as *apodix*, which was a mandate for payment; *arconte*, a Greek notable (Minervini 2012).

The main sources attesting to the use of French are documents (charters, official letters) written in the chancelleries, particularly related to the Hospitallers and the Templars, from the 1230s onward, as well as works of various genres (literary, legal, historiographical and religious) in manuscripts copied in the Latin East. However, it is difficult to determine whether these manuscripts originated in the Levant, as they are not preserved in their original location, and the signature of a local artist, the dedication to a local patron, or the style of the illuminations, are not certain indications. Apart from a single letter from Gerard of Ridefort, seneschal of the Templar Order to the Order's preceptor in Jerusalem, discovered in the 1920s in the al-Aqsa Mosque (Abel 1926; Borchardt et al. 2017:24), all the manuscripts produced in the Latin East, have since passed to the West. By contrast, inscriptions on stone monuments can be provenanced as they remain *in loco*, their context affording them meaning. The only Crusader-period texts preserved in place are the inscriptions on stone monuments.

A corpus of about 310 epigraphic texts³ is known to date from the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, many no longer extant today. Some of the texts were collected and edited in a seminal work by Sabino De Sandoli (1915–2001), an Italian Franciscan scholar at the Custody of the Holy Land in Jerusalem (De Sandoli 1974). This work was supplemented by texts from southern Lebanon, studied by Pringle (2004) and Treffort (2011; 2017), and

³ This figure remains approximate, as the corpus collection for southern Lebanon that was part of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, is not complete.

by about 30 new inscriptions uncovered in archaeological excavations carried out by the Israel Antiquities Authority. Moreover, research on the Crusades and the Latin East, carried out over the last thirty years, has modified our understanding of these texts. We will refer to De Sandoli's work, while awaiting the new corpus in preparation (Ingrand-Varenne 2021; forthcoming).

The corpus of 310 epigraphic texts exhibit three main characteristics. Firstly, 197 inscriptions—predominantly depicted in mosaics and paintings—come from the holy places (75 in the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem; 53 in the Nativity Church of Bethlehem; 32 at the Dome of the Rock, designated *Templum Domini*; 20 at the Tomb of the Virgin Mary in Jerusalem, and 17 at the Hospitaller Church of Abu Ghosh). These inscriptions are mostly not extant today, but they were transcribed in pilgrim accounts or by modern scholars. Secondly, 103 texts were engraved on stone, 73 being funerary texts, mainly coming from Acre, Jerusalem and Tyre. The texts associated with death represent only 23% of the Latin Kingdom epigraphic corpus, whereas in some regions of France, funerary texts represent 60–70% of the epigraphic documentation. Thirdly, from a textual and linguistic point of view, the twelfth-century Latin inscriptions were predominantly religious and theological poems, citing biblical passages and contemporary liturgy, whereas the thirteenth-century texts were mostly written in prose.

Out of the 310 epigraphic texts, 30 are in French—all engraved in stone. We focus on these inscriptions, with the aim of tracing the shift from Latin to French in the epigraphic documentation in the Latin East.

FROM ISOLATED FRENCH WORDS TO ENTIRE INSCRIPTIONS

The presence of isolated vernacular words (lexemes or proper names, morphological particularities, technical words) in Latin texts is an early phenomenon that occurred long before the twelfth century. The integration of a foreign word and linguistic mixing is common in the medieval period, especially as Latin was a readily permeable and welcoming language, and Old French was very similar.

Surnames were the first to appear in vulgar language. In the twelfth century, several personal names were engraved on the stones of the walls of the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth: the French name Ogier, inscribed nine times with graphic variants; the name Elias, six times; and John or IOHS, the Latin abbreviation of *Johannes*, three times (Fig. 1; Bagatti 2002:74–85). These names were accredited to stonecutters employed in the construction of the church—either in the initial building, or in the very large church built in 1170–1180 (on the history of the basilica, see Segal, Pinkus and Fishhof 2020). A similar case was observed with the name Ode, engraved in the church at Jacob's Well in Nablus (De Sandoli 1974:271–272, No. 365). Inscriptions in similar building contexts were also documented in France in this period (Ingrand-Varenne 2017:348–352).

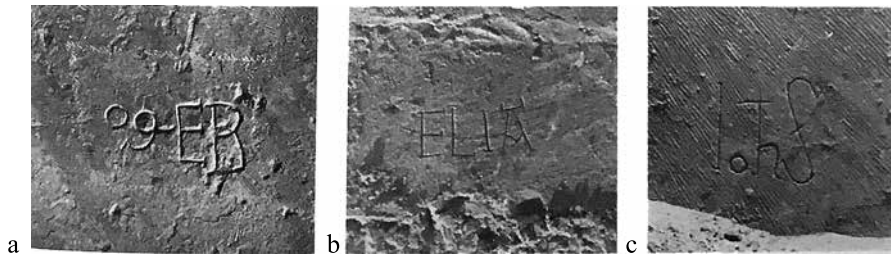


Fig. 1. The names of Ogier (a), Elias (b), and John (c) carved on the walls of the basilica of Nazareth in the twelfth century (photographs after Bagatti and Alliata 1984: Pl. 27, Figs. 7–9).

Vernacular names were also integrated in texts. While in the early Middle Ages, a single element system (the Germanic system of the single name) prevailed, a new more complex system comprising two elements (name and by-name) replaced it, this phenomenon designated the “anthroponymic revolution” (Bourin, Chareille 1986-1997; Beck, Bourin, Chareille 2001; Shagrir 2003:39–42). The by-name either retained its vernacular form and adopted a Latin inflection, or it was translated into Latin based on its etymology. The patronymic element contributed to a long-lasting cohabitation of the two languages. The second element of the name or by-name in its vernacular form reflected a habitual use of daily life, in which the mother tongue was used. Whilst the first element was always in Latin, the second one—a sobriquet, a function or a profession, a place name or a person’s name—could be in French. On the thirteenth-century tombstone of John of La Rochelle, preserved in the Church of Saint Anne in Jerusalem, the by-name “La Rochelle” (a port town on the southwestern coast of France) appears in French (De Sandoli 1974:147–148, No. 200; Fig. 2):

+ *Hi[c] ja[c]et Johanne[s] de La Roche[le], frater Ade de [L]a Rochele, cu[ju]s anima [re] qu[ie]scat i[n] [pace. A]men.*

Peter of Campagnolles from southern France, was the treasurer of the hospital in Acre, as revealed by his funerary inscription from 1206 (De Sandoli 1974:302–303, No. 405; Fig. 3): *Anno ab incarnatio(n)e D(omi)ni 1206 XV k(a)l(endas) nov(em)bri(is) [ob]iit fr(ater) Pet(rus) de Campaignolis, thesaurarius Accon(is). O homo q(u)id me [a]spicis quod es.*

Analysis of the written form of the patronymic name *Campaignolis* in the inscription, reveals a Gallicism that echoes the French form, Champaignoles, employed in the thirteenth century (Claverie 2013:70). The name *Campaignolis* is disguised by the addition of a Latin inflectional case-ending. This type of “microscopic Latinisation” facilitated integrating a French term into a Latin text and thus making it flow (Glessgen 2007:339). Identifying the “nuclear” language of certain words is sometimes difficult as the form is ambivalent.

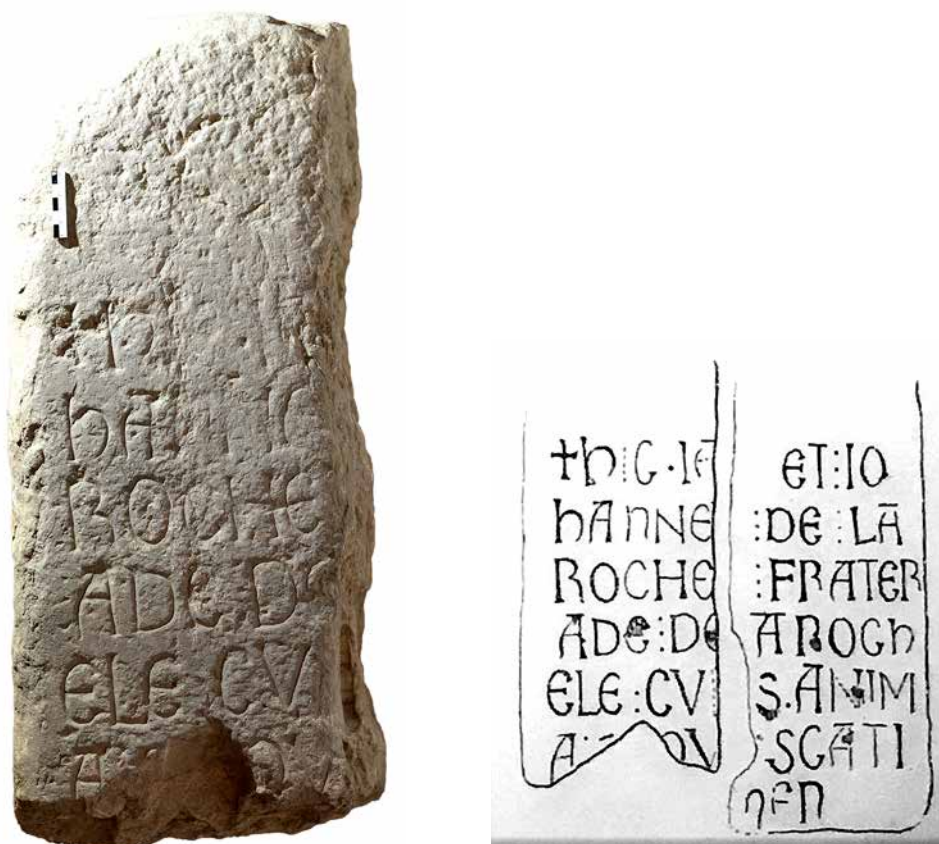


Fig. 2. Fragment of funerary inscription of John of La Rochelle, Church of Saint Anne, Jerusalem (26 × 59 cm) (photograph: Clément Dussart; drawing published by Clermont-Ganneau 1899:231).

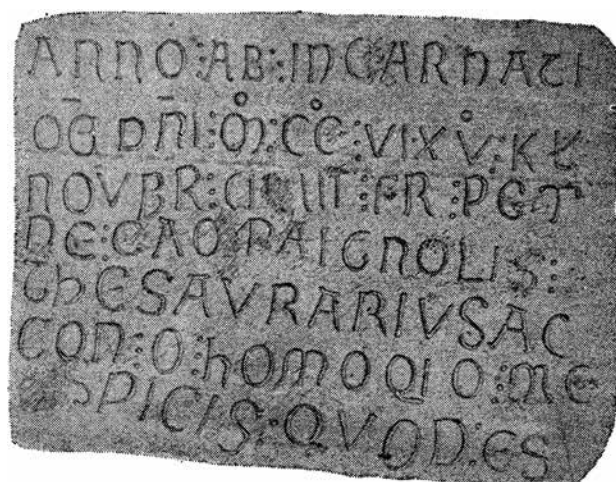


Fig. 3. Funerary inscription of Peter of Campagnolles, died 1206, Russian Orthodox Church on Mount of Olives, Jerusalem (marble; 18 × 14 cm) (drawing: Clermont-Ganneau 1897:151).



Fig. 4. Two sides of the inscription on the vase from Thibault de Bessan in 1253 (70 cm high, 63 cm wide; Louvre Conservation Center, Liévin) (photographs: Lisa-Oriane Crosland GRAPH-EAST).

Linguists term this intermediate phenomenon as “interlanguage” (Grondeux 2010:445–446; Beuscher 2003).

The French language was thus gradually immersed in small steps, until cohabiting with the Latin and forming bilingual texts, as on the marble vase of 1253, given to the Louvre Museum in 1891, its exact provenance in the East unknown (Fig. 4):

+ Li tre nobles chevalier mesire Tybaut de Bessan m(e) fist faire. *Anno D(omi)ni* 1253 me fist Lorens. *Cras dabor no(n) hodie*.

The text presenting the sponsor and the craftsman is in French, but the latter is couched between the Latin dating *Anno D(omi)ni* 1253 and the Latin motto *Cras dabor no(n) hodie* (“Tomorrow I will be given, not today”). This Latin expression was engraved on a dozen medieval artefacts (seal matrix, femail, rings, abbey staff, ivory stick, drinking horn), and monuments (church wall), and it must have been a proverbial sentence against bad payers. The vase is dated to the mid-thirteenth century, the turning point when entire epigraphic texts in Outremer French began to appear. It is difficult to pinpoint an exact date due to the fragmentary state of the inscriptions. However, based on the dates provided by the texts, the first solely French epigraphic text is the funerary inscription of Jacques Lesaboni, preserved in the Louvre (De Sandoli 1974:312, No. 415; Fig. 5):

+ Ici gist Jaque Lesaboni e trepasa al secunt jor de genvrier en l’an 1257.

The date is actually the year 1258, as the year began on March 25th, the date of the Annunciation. The name of the deceased, Lesaboni, is certainly the transliteration of the Arabic name al-Saboni, the soap maker (Claverie 2013:75). According to a trade manual compiled in Acre around 1270, fine soap was manufactured in Acre and exported to



Fig. 5. Funerary inscription of Jacques Lesaboni, died 1258 (Acre; marble; 35 × 20 cm; Louvre Museum, Paris, RF4492) (photograph: © RMN-GP, Musée du Louvre).

Alexandria and Montpellier (Jacoby 1986). The soap-makers may have been local Christians, integrated with the Latin population. This inscription may thus also reflect the penetration of the French language into Frankish society, not only restricted to the elite. Noteworthy in this context is the sermon preached in Acre by Theobald Visconti, who was elected Pope (Gregory X) while on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Visconti is said to have preached his farewell sermon, first in Latin and then in French (Minervini 2018:20).

Another example is the marble slab, preserved in the Museum of Cluny, of Gauthier de Meinneabeuf and his wife, who died in 1278 (De Sandoli 1974 :308–310, No. 412; Fig. 6): + Ici gist sire Gautier Meinneabeuf qui trespasa l’an de l’incarnacion notre Seigneur Jhe(su)s Crit 1278 a 20 jors de jue; e sc’espouze madame Alema(n)ne qui trespasa a 27 jors dou mois d’aoust.

A beautiful inscription was carefully carved when Gauthier died on June 20th, and when his wife died two months later, her epitaph was added to the same slab (a fairly common phenomenon at the time) but in a hastier fashion, in *scriptura continua* without dots between words (Ingrand-Varenne 2016).

These two funerary texts show the peculiarities of Outremer French: *espouse* shows the use of the grapheme <-z-> for an intervocalic <-s->, while *trespasa* has only one <-s->, acting as a “deaf” form. We also find the spelling <-g-> for <-j-> in *genvier*. These examples are further supported by two other documents that are particularly helpful in the pronunciation of this language: an old French-Arabic glossary from thirteenth-century Acre, in which the French is transmitted in Coptic letters (Aslanov 2006b) and an Arabic–French pharmaceutical glossary composed in the Latin East around 1300, in which both languages

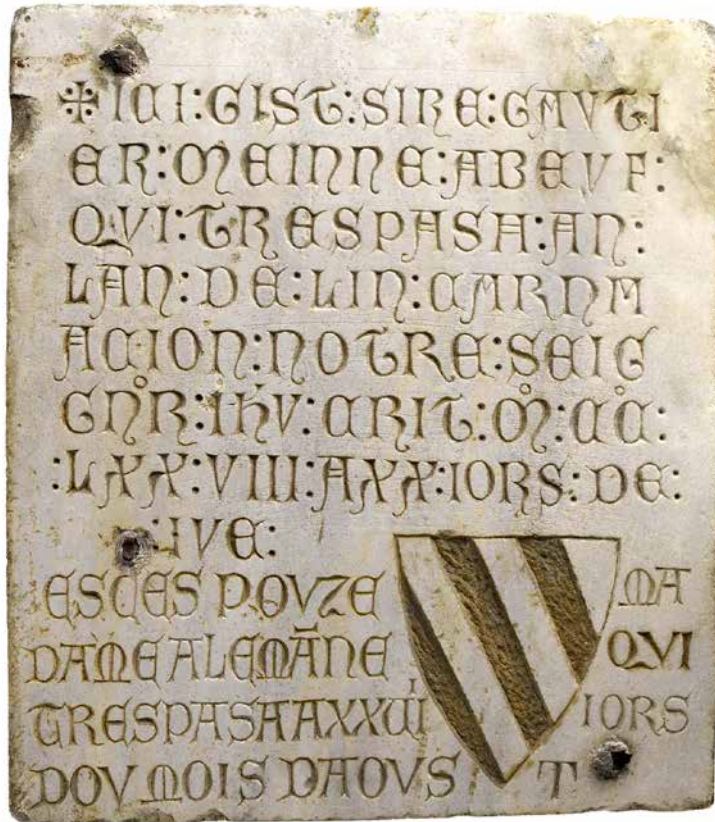


Fig. 6. Funerary inscription of Gauthier de Meinneabeuf and his wife Alemanne, died 1278 (Acre; marble; 55 × 48 cm, 5 cm thick; Cluny Museum, Paris, RF 861) (photograph: © RMN-Grand Palais, Jean-Gilles Berizzi).

are represented in Latin characters (Rubin 2018:66–68). On a graphic level, French followed in the footsteps of Latin, employing the same 23 Latin alphabetical signs, although the transcribed sounds were different. The “Y” no longer noted the sound of the Greek *y*, but it became an aesthetic variant of the Latin *I*, a “letter of nobility”, particularly used in proper names. This can be seen in the word *roy* (king) in the marble funerary inscription of Jean du Puis, a sergeant of the King, preserved in the Maritime Museum of Haifa (Prawer 1984; Fig. 7):

+ Ici gist Johan dou Puis, serga(n)t dou poussa(n)t roy de Fra(n)ce. Proies por l’ame.

The flowery letter *Y* evokes a fleur-de-lys, a symbolic reference to King Louis IX of France, who came to the Holy Land accompanied by a regiment of 100 horsemen, archers and sergeants, the military staying on to defend the kingdom.



Fig. 7. Funerary inscription of Jean du Puy, sergeant of the King of France (a), and detail of the word *roy* (b) (marble; 19 × 20 cm; National Maritime Museum of Haifa) (photographs: Estelle Ingrand-Varenne).

THE ACTORS OF THE LINGUISTIC SHIFT AND THE STATUS OF OUTREMER FRENCH

How did the French language come to prevail in the East, both in oral and in written form? There are two main explanations. Firstly, the most eminent leaders of the Crusader states came from the Gallo-Romance language area, and French was the language of the ruling-class and thus a language of power (Aslanov 2008). Godfrey of Bouillon, founder of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, and Baldwin of Bourcq, Count of Edessa and then King of Jerusalem, came from the northeastern area of the domain of Oïl (Wallonia and Ardennes); Bohemond of Taranto and his nephew Tancred, who reigned over the Principality of Antioch, probably spoke the Norman dialect. Among these state founders, only the Count

of Toulouse, Raymond IV, Count of Tripoli, was from Languedoc and could speak Occitan. Thereafter, other regions of the linguistic space of Oïl were represented: Anjou with Fulk, King of Jerusalem (1131–1143), Poitou with Guy of Lusignan, Ile-de-France with those of the Capetian dynasty who crossed (Louis VII, Philippe-Auguste, Louis IX), Norman England with Richard the Lionheart, Champagne with John of Brienne and Geoffrey of Villehardouin (Aslanov 2006a:18).

Secondly, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, no other Romance language in Europe had the same prestige as French for a variety of cultural, political and social reasons. The early emergence of French as a literary language, and the high level that this literature reached in verse and prose, favored its dissemination throughout western Europe, where, at the time, the choice of a vernacular language for literary reasons was independent of the author's nationality, as, for example, in the case of Philip of Novara, who was Italian by origin (Minervini 2006:479–481). It was not only literature that was affected. In the East, the French language was considered to have the capacity to transmit complex ideas, until then reserved to Latin, in particular law texts, and translations of Cicero (*De inventione, Rhetoric to Herennius*). The qualities attributed to the Latin inscriptions were transferred to the Romance language, a noble language of culture, a universal language. Henceforth French was attributed the sociocultural functions of the classical language (Morreale and Paul 2018).⁴ Another hypothesis explaining the prevalence of vernacular language was the distance of the East from Europe and from the great European centers of learning, the universities, and the absence of an academic elite who imposed Latin.

This new form of the French language developed in the East, and gained an enhanced status, unique at the time and enjoyed by no other vernacular language. It was the sociocultural language of the ruling elite, and the ethnocultural language spoken by the Franks, allowing communication between people of diverse origins; the French inscriptions moreover, enhanced this status. In thirteenth-century western France, the laymen were the social backbone who effected the linguistic transition to the vernacular French language, as is evident in the funerary inscriptions. By the late fourteenth century, the clergy's linguistic attitude had evolved through the funeral documentation, and French was not only used by default, for example, by a clerk with a poor mastery of Latin, but it was now embraced by the entire clergy, secular and regular, priests and bishops, simple brothers and abbots (Ingrand-Varenne 2017:449–465).

The linguistic situation in the East was different. Epigraphic writing, in particular epitaphs, remained the prerogative of the elite, among whom different groups can be distinguished. Laymen included knights, such as Bartholomew Chayn of Tyre who died in 1266 (Pringle 2004:139–140, No. 9). Urban notables and bourgeois included Nicholas Antiaume, a jurist belonging to a large bourgeois family of Acre (De Sandoli 1974:310–311,

⁴ See also the project “The Values of French Language and Literature in the European Middle Ages”, an ERC-funded project running 2015–2020 (Principal investigator: Simon Gaunt; Grant Agreement No. 670726).

No. 413). Among the merchants was Jacques Lesaboni, and the military administration was represented by the sergeant Jean du Puis, and there were also artists and craftsmen who signed their works in vernacular, for instance Lorens on the vase, and secular persons whose status remains unclear, as Dimon Chuns from Tyre “qui fu a tort ocis” (“who was wrongly killed”) (Treffort 2017).

In contrast to the epigraphy documented in western France, in the Kingdom of Jerusalem the French and Latin linguistic-sharing evident in the epigraphic texts did not correspond to the sociocultural cleavages of medieval society between clerks and laymen. Members of the clergy in the East also employed French. The epitaph for Brother Richard Chaperon, provincial Prior of the Friars of the Sack, also called Brothers of Penitence, was in Outremer French (De Sandoli 1974:317, No. 419; Fig. 8):

+ Ici [gis]t frere Rich[ard ---]oit Chaperon, prior p(ro)vincial des freres de pen(it)a(n)ce Ih(es)u Crist de la tere sainte [qui] tr[espasa ---].

This very fragmentary inscription was probably found in Acre, but is now lost. The religious Order of the Friars of the Sack was founded in Provence sometime before 1251, but it ceased to function in 1274 when the Council of Lyon ordered that all mendicant orders, apart from the Austin Friars, Franciscans, Dominicans and Carmelites, should be disbanded. A house of the Friars of the Sack in Acre is mentioned in the *Pardouns d’Acre*, a pilgrim’s guide compiled between 1258 and 1264, that follows an itinerary along forty churches in Acre, and explains that in this convent one obtained an indulgence of 140 days of remission from purgatory (Romanini and Saletti 2012). Since the house in Acre was sold in 1288, we can date the inscription to the second half of the thirteenth century.



Fig. 8. Funerary inscription of Brother Richard Chaperon, provincial prior of the Brothers of the Sack, who died in Acre (photograph: De Sandoli 1974:317).

The fact that even high church officials employed the vernacular language is evident in the tombstone of William of St. John, Archbishop of Nazareth, who died in 1290. His tomb slab is exhibited in the Acre Municipal Museum. The career of this prelate is distinctive as he seems to have been one of the few Templar bishops elected in Syria in the thirteenth century. Moreover, his epitaph was engraved on a tomb slab with an effigy. Only three examples of this type of inscribed slab are known in the Latin Kingdom, whereas in the West, this type became widespread at the beginning of the thirteenth century.

The most interesting cases are several thirteenth-century funerary inscriptions associated with the Hospitallers, also known as the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. In the first half of the thirteenth century, the inscriptions were written in Latin (Peter of de Campagnolles in 1206, Peter of Vieille Bride, Master of the Hospital who died in 1242; De Sandoli 1974:303–305, No. 406). However, in the latter half of the century, French was used, for instance, for Brother Thomas Mausu, treasurer of the Hospital, who died in 1275 (De Sandoli 1974: 313–314, No. 416; Fig. 9):

+ Ici gist frere Tomas Mauzu, tresorier d(e) l'Ospital S(aint) Joha(nes) q(u)i trepassa le I
 jor d(e) septe(m)b(re) l'a(n) d(e) l'i(n)carn(ation) Jh(es)u Crist 1275. Prie tuit p(or) s'arme.

Another stone, preserved in the Louvre Museum, with an epitaph or inscription recording the construction of a building, cites the names of two important members of the Order of St John: Hugh Revel, Master of the Hospital of St John, and Jousseaume d'Estornel,

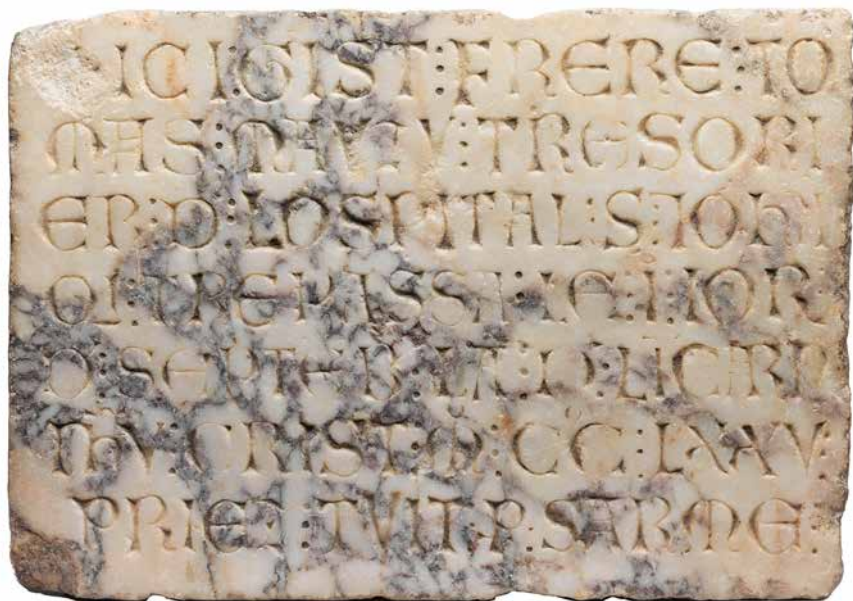


Fig. 9. Funerary inscription of Thomas Mausu, treasurer of the Hospital, died in Acre 1275 (marble; 29 × 20 cm; preserved in the Louvre Museum, Paris, RF 1143) (photograph: © RMN-Grand Palais, Michel Urtado).

vice-master in 1250 (De Sandoli 1974:316, No. 418). The order, founded in Jerusalem and charged with the care and defense of the Holy Land, seems to have had a special relationship with the French language. The first Hospitaller document in French was written in Acre in 1231, shortly after the first document in Outremer French, which was a charter dated January 1228 of Bohemond IV, Prince of Antioch, who donated a mill and the adjacent vineyard to the hospital of the Teutonic Knights of Jerusalem (Hiestand 2013:271–272). The Hospitallers produced many texts in French, and between 1231 and 1266, nine charters in the Hospitaller Order archives in the Latin Kingdom employed the vernacular. French played such an important role in Hospitaller culture that historian Anthony Luttrell characterized French as “the official language of the Hospital” (Luttrell 1998). Apart from the diplomatic and epigraphic documents, the prayers recited by the Hospitaller priests in the conventual hospital for its patrons and for the sick, probably composed in Acre in 1197, were also written in French. Moreover, the formal written Rule, first conceived as a Latin text established by Raymond of Puy, perhaps in the 1130s, had a French translation, as confirmed in 1185 by Pope Lucius III, although the earliest extant witness to the French-language version dates only to the 1270s.

The epigraphic transition took place in the East, as in France, in the mid-thirteenth century, but whereas in France it was gradual, in the East it seems to have been more radical. Let us, for example, consider the charters. Between 1228 and 1291, 108 of the 740 documents known from the Latin East, including the Principality of Antioch and the Kingdom of Cyprus, were in French. Although the number of charters written in the vulgar language increased after 1250, it never exceeded 25% of the total in each decade. By contrast, in the charters of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, the transition to the vernacular occurred very quickly in the years 1249–1250, only the ecclesiastical institutions continuing to use Latin (Hiestand 2013:278–279). What triggered this change in the mid-thirteenth century?

King Louis IX (1226–1270), who vowed to go on crusade when he was seriously ill in 1244, launched the Seventh Crusade in 1248 with an expedition to Egypt that failed and ended in his captivity and subsequent release. The king continued to Acre, and unlike other Christian rulers, who stayed for less than two years, he decided to stay in the East for an indefinite period of time, only curtailed by the death of his mother, Blanche of Castile, in November 1252; he therefore departed in 1254. King Louis IX was not the official sovereign of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, and he wielded no political authority, but at this time the kingdom had no ruler, the monarchy was fictitious and the great seignorial lineages were the masters of power. King Louis IX was both protector and *de facto* ruler for four years.

The tremendous contribution of King Louis IX to the political, military and architectural strength of the Latin Kingdom was paralleled by the equally important stimulus he provided to Crusader art during his stay. At this time, the role and prestige of the French and the French language were reinforced by his presence, and French cultural and artistic activity developed in Acre, as attested by a luxurious manuscript, the vernacular Bible of Acre, possibly prepared for the king himself (Manuscript A: Paris, Arsenal 5211; Nobel 2006; Weiss 1998; on Bible written in French, see Ferrer and Valette 2017). In effect, French

flourished in the diplomatic documentation of the East after the departure of the king. Rudolf Hiestand considered that no close interdependence existed between the presence of the French king and the progress of the vernacular, arguing that the French royal chancellery had little influence in the East because it used Latin (Hiestand 2013:294–295). However, the choice of language in the inscriptions depended on factors other than those of administration and royal authority, and the inspirational presence of Saint Louis probably stimulated the development and the status of the French language.

Latin was not entirely eradicated in the inscriptions of the second half of the thirteenth century, but it was now confined to certain groups or communities. One example is a bell made in Acre in 1266 by renowned Italian founders: “In the name of the Lord, Amen. In the year of the incarnation of the Lord 1266, Giacomo bell founder from Messina and Andreotto from Pisa made me in Acre. A healthy spirit, spontaneous, honor for God and liberation of the homeland. Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with you” (Bresc and Bresc-Bautier 2010). This bell was found by sponge fishermen off the Dalmatian coast, and it was probably on a ship that left Acre in 1291, after the fall to the Mamluks. The Italians of the maritime Republics of Genoa, Pisa and Venice had a special status with the trading posts and colonies in the East, independent of the authorities of the Latin states, and thus detached from the influence of Outremer French.

The late thirteenth-century inscriptions in Outremer French are very different from those of the twelfth century. While the twelfth-century texts are mainly theological poems appearing on glittering mosaics and colored paintings in the Holy Places, the thirteenth-century inscriptions comprise very brief texts, lapidary in the literal as well as in the figurative sense, including funerary texts on very small stones, often recycled, presumably embedded in church or cloister walls, even if none have been found in their original location. This can be explained by the political situation in the second half of the thirteenth century, when the kingdom was reduced to a coastal strip, no longer possessing the *loca sancta* of Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth, and when in 1260, the kingdom was besieged and conquered by the Mamluks who governed Syria and Egypt, and threatened by the Mongols from Persia. The kingdom was not only powerless, but also internally divided by conflict between the various military orders, and between the Italian communes. This was the period termed by the historian René Grousset as “the Frankish anarchy” (Grousset 1936).

From a sociolinguistic point of view, the fact that written French penetrated the Church and was not rejected, played an important role in the history of the language(s) in the Church. In the ninth-century Carolingian period, there was a movement toward the vernacular with the first translations of the Bible and preaching in popular language. In the thirteenth century, French was thus already used orally in the church, in preaching, and at specific times of the liturgical year for the feasts of popular saints. In the liturgy and the para-liturgy, the vernacular language was used for transmitting messages between people on the same hierarchical level (designated horizontal communication, as opposed to vertical communication between people on different hierarchical levels). The shift from Latin to French in medieval epigraphic texts did not break the Latin linguistic hegemony, but it

rendered the sacred and community space of the church more multilingual and polyphonic, and it made French more visible. From then on, people could see French engraved under their feet in the nave and inscribed on the walls in the chapels. In the context of medieval inscriptions, the epigraphic message imparted a durability and universality in power to the French linguistic medium employed. The epigraphic discourse played a part in raising French to the status of a prestigious language, an acrolect in sociolinguistic terminology. French was written in capital letters in the inscriptions, and luxury materials, such as marble, accommodated the Romance language, reinforcing the exceptional status of French (Ingrand-Varenne 2017:467–493).

THE TRANSMISSION OF THE FRENCH INSCRIPTIONS TO THE MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

The preservation of several Latin Kingdom French inscriptions in the Louvre and Cluny Museums in France, is not incidental. For many nineteenth-century French intellectuals, the Crusades were the ‘stuff of dreams’, the focus of two great romantic fascinations: the journey to the East and the poetic resurrection of the Middle Ages. For these Orientalists, the relationship with the French language played an important role. One of them, Charles Clermont-Ganneau (1846–1923; Fig. 10), pursued his archaeological research whilst holding various diplomatic posts, and focused on the epigraphy of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. He had considerable field experience and an excellent knowledge of the local languages of the countries where he stayed. As a disciple of Ernest Renan, he is best known for his work in Semitic epigraphy, becoming Professor of Archaeology and Oriental Epigraphy at

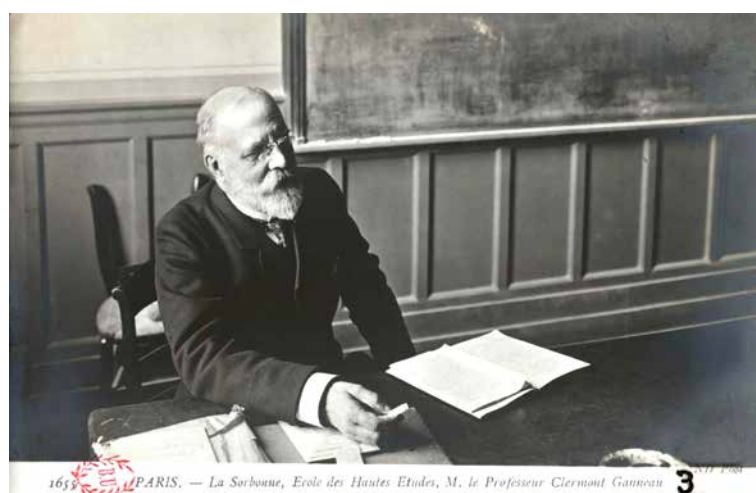


Fig. 10. Portrait of Charles Clermont-Ganneau (photograph: Wikimedia Commons by the Bibliothèque de la Sorbonne).

the Collège de France in 1890 (Ingholt 1923; Cagnat 1924); however, he was interested in many types of inscriptions, not only ancient. His missions abroad yielded many finds that enriched the collections of the Louvre Museum, for example, the inscriptions of Thomas Maus and Brother Richard Chaperon (see Figs. 8, 9):

M. Clermont-Ganneau communicates to the Academy various monuments of the Crusades that he has just received, with other antiquities, from his Arab correspondents in Syria. Two of them are in French. He expresses the wish, which the Academy identifies with, that these monuments be acquired by our museums to be added to the still so few French monuments of the Holy Land and be placed next to those he has already brought back from his previous missions; these are true pages of our national history (Clermont-Ganneau 1894:275).

When one of his local contacts pointed out to him the stone plaque of Gauthier de Meinneabeuf (see Fig. 6), he wrote: “In any case, this text remains a precious document for the history of the Crusades and for our national history. I will take care to obtain the original, which has its marked place in our museums” (Clermont-Ganneau 1882:41).

Moreover, when German or Italian archaeologists discovered inscriptions in French from the medieval Latin East in the nineteenth century, they sent them to their French colleagues. This is undoubtedly the case for the stone vase (see Fig. 4) given to the Louvre in 1891 by Cesare Augusto Levi, Director of the Provincial Museum of Torcello, on the Venetian Island of Torcello (Levi 1891). The same is true for the epitaph of Bartholomew Chayn, knight of Sour/Tyre (Pringle 2004:139, No. 9; Fig. 11):

+ Ici gist messire Berthelme Chayn ch(evalie)r de Sur {et} trespassa en l’an de l’incarnation n(ost)re seignor Jh(es)u Crist 1266 samadi au seir le premier jor de jenvier laquel amm[...].



Fig. 11. Funerary inscription of Bartholomew Chayn, Knight of Tyre, died 1266; its present location is unknown (photograph: Deichmann 1935:45).

The stone was discovered by Johann Nepomuk Sepp (1816–1909), a German historian and politician, native of Bavaria, who journeyed to Tyre in Lebanon during the reign of Wilhelm I, Emperor of Germany, to excavate the remains of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa (1122–1190), allegedly buried there after having accidentally drowned in Anatolia during the Third Crusade. Sepp's expedition did not achieve its aim, as the remains of the Staufer Emperor were not found, but he shipped a dozen crates of archaeological finds, including the Frankish inscription, to Berlin, where the contents were displayed in museums. As Clermont-Ganneau reported, "by a singular irony of fate, these costly excavations, undertaken with political aims for the greater glory of Germanism and whose failure raised such lively polemics in Germany, had for its main result the exhumation of the tombstone of a French knight" (Clermont-Ganneau 1884:459). The inscription of this knight of Tyre was probably given to a French museum, but its present location is unknown. Clermont-Ganneau's designation "a French knight", rather than "a Frankish knight", reflects the general shift in the nineteenth century—the period of construction of the Nation-States—of their notably linguistic identity with the idea of a national language (Aslanov 2002). Bartholomew Chayn was probably a Frankish, and not a French knight. The term "Frank" in the Middle Ages did not necessarily mean someone originating in France or even in francophone lands, but it was rather a generic term applied by Easterners in the Crusader period when referring to anyone coming from the West.

The equivalence of these two words Franks/French effected by Clermont-Ganneau is typical of the nineteenth-century research on the Crusades, which was intended to record and glorify the contribution of individual countries to the Crusader movement. The construction of nineteenth- and twentieth-century nationalism used linguistic identity as the primary criterion for grouping inhabitants of a particular territory or state, each state requiring its own language (Grévin 2016). The inscriptions gave 'monumental' proofs, further enhanced on a pedestal with the 'museification' of these stones in important institutions. Epigraphy played a capital political and cultural role at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. German and Austrian epigraphists launched their great corpus collaborative enterprise, the *Deutsche Inschriften*, in 1934, to better identify the replacement of Latin by German and the decline of dialects, as an important factor for the formation of a nation (Koch 1986). The conception of language as a marker of national identity is anachronistic for the Middle Ages, and it reflects the projection of assumptions and circumstances current in the modern world back to the Middle Ages, where contemporary attitudes were rather different (Murray 2011:112).

CONCLUSIONS

The 30 or so inscriptions engraved in stone attest to the epigraphic use of Outremer French in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. They also testify that this was the only vernacular language employed in the epigraphic documentation, despite the multilingual and multi-graphic society of the Levant. Those who spoke, or who are mentioned, in the epigraphic

texts represent only a small part of the population. They were, however, of various societal categories, ecclesiastical and lay, as well as socio-professional. The shift from Latin to French remains difficult to date as the inscriptions are fragmentary and do not bear a precise date. Nevertheless, they align with the same chronological framework as in France, with a delay of a few decades in relation to the charters. However, unlike in France, the transition in the Kingdom of Jerusalem was swift and was related to the four-year stay of Louis IX in the kingdom in the mid-thirteenth century. Whilst his influence on epigraphic use was not direct, his presence and activity in the Levant increased the prestige of the French language, which already was an acrolect.

The ‘afterlife’ and the reception of the French inscriptions by the Orientalists is as interesting as their production. The nationalist linguistic vision of the nineteenth century, the creation of the notion of “national heritage” and the location of these stones inscribed in Outremer French in the greatest museums of France changed completely the role of the language and its original historical context. This “petrification” and “museification” gave an image of the language that was both intended and manipulated: intended, as writing in stone gave Outremer French a timeless, eternal, long-lasting character that spoke to everyone; manipulated, as the nationalist vision was completely anachronistic from a medieval point of view.

This study will be pursued with the epigraphic documentation of the other Crusader states, in particular the northern states, where French appeared for the first time.

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