For the Latin literary author unusual foreign words had limited usefulness. They might lend an air of authenticity to an ethnographical account, for example Caesar's use of 'druides' in his excursus on the Gauls (Gal. 6.13.3, 8, 9; 14.1; 18.1; 21.1), or Tacitus' mention of 'giesum', the German word for 'amber', in the Germania (45.4). Foreign words could confer foreign colouring on a rhetorical passage, or convey a sense of the exotic or remote. They might heighten the effect of a barbaric scene, for example Lucan's deliberate use of the Gallic names of three Celtic gods in his description of barbaric Gallic sacrificial practices (1.444-6). Plautus uses Greek terms to reinforce the illusion of a Greek setting for a play, or to contribute to the impression of vulgar speech. Some foreign words had luxurious or effeminate connotations like 'mitra', the pansy headgear of various foreign peoples. For Virgil the term epitomized Phrygian 'effeminatio'. Other words had pejorative overtones which could be exploited, like 'Arabarches'. 'Arabarches' was a Ptolemaic term for a high-ranking customs officer, which Cicero could apply to Pompey when belittling his exploits in the East (Cic. Att. 2.17.3 with Shackleton-Bailey's note). Juvenal too uses it as a term of contempt (1.130 with Mayor's note). But it is the very foreignness of such words which is exploited in these circumstances. They are 'un-Roman', essentially bizarre, to be used sparingly and for deliberate effect.

In the higher genres foreign (that is, non-Greek) words are rare indeed, and in formal prose writing even Greek words are conspicuous by their absence. Why should this be?

Roman writers may conceivably have been influenced by prevailing attitudes in educated circles to foreign languages and the people who spoke them. The evidence would suggest a general indifference to foreign languages (other than Greek), and the learning of them. Ennius probably knew an Italian language (Oscan or Messapic), but among Latin writers of the Republic and early Principate, only Ovid professes to speak a barbarian tongue. However, his much-vaunted fluency in Getaic and Sarmatian (Tr. 3.14.45-50; 5.12.58; Pont. 3.2.40; 4.13.17) is probably a figment of his poetic imagination, used for his own poetic purposes.
Foreign languages were, after all, spoken by contemptible foreigners. How could any true-blooded Roman feel respect for the language of the Parthians, to take but one example? Like all barbarians, they were chauvinistically™ regarded as arrogant (Just. 36.1.4; 38.10.5; Sen. Ep. 1.4.7), cruel (Just. 39.1.3; Sen. Ep. 1.4.7), lying (Hor. Ep. 2.1.112), cunning (Flor. 2.20 (4.10) 3), rebellious (Just. 41.3.7), lustful and depraved (Just. 41.3.10; Luc. 8.397–411) — drunkards (Plin. Nat. 14.144, 148; Luc. 8.401) whose excesses, according to the Elder Pliny (Nat. 11.278) resulted in halitosis. Small wonder that Fronto should speak scathingly of Parthians using their own language in addressing a Roman (p.105 Naber), or that Lucan should scorn the Parthian as ‘ignorans Latiae commercia linguæ’ (8.348).

However, ethnic prejudice, though it may have reinforced a negative attitude to the use of foreign words in Latin, cannot adequately explain the dearth of foreign words in literary works. We need a literary explanation.

It would appear that Latin literary usage, especially prose usage, was heavily influenced by the rhetorical concept of ‘Latinitas’.™ ‘Latinitas’ was the use of pure, correct, careful Latin. Rhetorica ad Herennium 4.12.17 defines it as follows: ‘Latinitas est quae sermonem purum conservat ab omni vitio remotum’, and Cicero (Brut. 132) refers to ‘incorrupta quaedam Latini sermonis integritas’. ‘Latinitas’ was the Roman counterpart of Greek Ελληνικός. For Cicero it was the basic requirement of a good style, hardly meriting praise (Cic. Brut. 140, 258; de Orat. 3.52 cf. Quint. 8.3.1), but if one applied the principles of ‘Latinitas’, one’s speech bore the stamp of ‘elegantia’, which the Rhetorica ad Herennium defines as follows: ‘Elegantia est quae facit ut unum quidque pure et aperte dici videatur’ (4.12.17).

Essential to the practice of ‘Latinitas’ was the careful selection of words (Cic. Brut. 140, 250, 253; de Orat. 3.40). To be avoided were ‘peregrinitas’ and ‘barbarismus’. These were broad terms but they included the use of foreign words (both Greek and barbarian). Quintilian refers specifically to the avoidance of words ‘peregrina et externa’ (8.1.2 cf. 1.5.8).

It is highly probable that such purist principles did influence choice of vocabulary, especially in the higher prose genres, and most particularly in historians.™ History as a genre was heavily influenced by rhetoric.

Such principles may also account in large measure for the cautious treatment of most foreign terms which do occur. They most often appear couched in a type of formula. The author first attempts to paraphrase or approximate the term in some way, then adds the foreign word in a kind of gloss, usually featuring the verbs ‘vocare’, ‘appellare’ or ‘dicere’ e.g. Caes. Gal. 1.16.5 (of the Aeduan chief magistrate) ‘summum magistraturn quem vergobretum appellant’, or Livy (speaking of elected Aetolian councillors) ‘in consilio delectorum, quos apocletos vocant’ (36.28.8).
By means of such formulas the writer distances himself from the word and marks it out as foreign. Pliny the Elder, a great user of such formulas, articulates the literary problem. He is conscious that his subject matter requires words which contravene the tenets of 'Latinitas' ('aut rusticis vocabulis aut externis, immo barbaris'). The best he can do is use them with an apology for the fact ('etiam cum honoris praefatione' (Nat. pr. 13)).

In many cases the foreign words couched in this way are unusual and appear as isolated examples in a single author. Often they represent a desire to render accurately a term found in a Greek source. But even where a term occurs more than once in an author, it is invariably excused at its first appearance, sometimes accompanied by an explanation of its meaning. Where an unusual foreign term is not afforded this treatment, we are entitled to investigate and to ask the reason why.

A case in point is the word 'sufes', less commonly 'suffes', the Latin version of 'shōfēt', the title of the chief magistrates of Carthage, and of many African towns under Punic influence. The success of this word is striking.

In the first place, 'shōfēt' was not an easy word for Romans to take over. To assimilate it required the writing of the word in Latin letters, the adding of Latin declensional endings and considerable juggling with orthography. Opinions apparently differed as to its declension. Generally it appears in the nominative singular or nominative or accusative plural as if it was third declension, but a second declension ablative plural is attested (Fest. 404lf = ORF 140 fr. 5). Manuscripts differ as to whether it was spelt with one f or two. Even more difficult was the Punic š sound. Latin had no sh combination — s was the closest approximation, resulting in a word 'sufes' which a Carthaginian would have had difficulty recognising as 'shōfēt'.

Yet this strange word 'sufes' must have been familiar in educated circles in Rome. It occurs six, possibly seven times in Latin works and is never couched in the usual formula. It appears first, if we are to believe the evidence of a corrupt passage in Festus, in Cato (Fest. 142L: 'Dixit Cato ... (P)enorurum IIII Suff(etes) (evocaverunt statim om)nis cohortes (etiam qui stipendia merit)averunt'). Festus also attests to its use by the orator Calidius (Fest. 404L = ORF 140 fr. 5: 'Calidius in oration[e in Q. Galli]ium ... Senatus cens(uit referentibus) su[etes]'). It appears without apology in an orator praised by Cicero for the pure flow of his style, in whom appeared no word 'aut durum aut insolens' (Brut. 274). It occurs three times in Livy. On the first two occasions it is explained for the benefit of readers who might be unfamiliar with it (28.37.2 (Gades) 'ad colloquium su[etes eorum, qui summus Poenis est magistratus, cum quaestore eliciu[te]' [Mago]: 30.7.5 (Carthage) 'Senatum itaque su[etes, quod velut consulare imperium apud eos erat, vocaverunt'). But no apology occurs — this in Livy who is careful to herald unfamiliar foreign terms with the usual 'ap-
pellant'/'vocant' formula. At Liv. 34.61.15 'sufes' appears without any qualification at all ('...cum sufetes ad ius dicendum consedissent'). The word re-emerges in Seneca in a list of chief magistrates and officials (Dial. 9.4.5 'non vis enim nisi consul aut prytanis aut ceryx aut sufes administrare rempublicam') — clearly as familiar as the Greek words πρύτανις or χηροξ. The term is also defined in Festus (Paul. Fest. 405L 'sufes consul lingua Poenorum').

We need to investigate both its appearance in Latin at all, and more particularly, its literary acceptability.

It is hardly surprising that a Punic word should find its way into Latin. The Romans had early commercial dealings with Phoenicians, though they appear to have learnt little Punic from trade contacts18 — Greek was the trade language of the Mediterranean.19 As early as 509/508 B.C., according to Polybius, a treaty was made between Romans and Carthaginians (Plb. 3.22 cf. D.S.16.69; Serv. A.4.628; Oros. 3.7.1) and other diplomatic missions would have provided further contact prior to the Punic Wars.20 According to Diodorus (22.9), during the war with Pyrrhus, the Carthaginians sent a fleet to the aid of the Romans, in which Roman soldiers actually served.21 The army was perhaps the best vehicle for contact with foreign languages — Polybius tells us that long-serving mercenaries in Hannibal's army learnt Punic (1.80.5). In the course of the Second Punic War we hear of Carthaginian deserters among the Roman auxiliaries (Liv. 28.20.1). In 204 B.C. Hannibal sent numbers of Roman prisoners to Libya (App. Lib. 15), where the opportunity existed to pick up at least the odd word of Punic. Towards the end of the war Punic nobles fled to the Romans (App. Lib. 55), and in 149 B.C. the sons of three hundred Carthaginian nobles were sent to Rome as hostages (App. Lib. 76). And captives in the wars would have been transported to Rome as slaves.

All this must have had an effect on the knowledge of Punic at Rome. Around 150 B.C. there were experts available to translate Mago's treatise on agriculture into Latin (Plin. Nat. 18.22). That the lower classes, too, must have acquired some knowledge of Punic, probably from Carthaginian slaves, is attested by Plautus' use of Punic in the Poenulus.22 People in the audience must have been able to appreciate the scene (5.2), where much of the humour lies in Milphio's rehash of Hanno's Punic by Latin words sounding similar to the Punic, but with different meanings.23 Even if Plautus derived the Punic from his Greek original,24 or it was added by a later hand, it would not have been included if it was not understood by the author or he felt that the joke would be lost on his audience. It is therefore hardly surprising that Punic words should find their way into Latin.

It is also not surprising that the particular word 'shôfēt' should be adopted. It was after all a magistracy held by Hannibal himself. Moreover, it was a title used in official Roman parlance for the chief magistrates of
African towns — it appears in Latin inscriptions.25 Roman authors also know about the functions and attributes of the ‘shōfēt’ — more than they do about any other non-Greek office. Writers are interested in, and know, how the magistracy related to the Roman consulship, for instance. The ‘shōfēt’s duties26 seem to have included the convocation and presidency of the senate (Livy. 30.7.5; 24.10), the submission of business to the People’s Assembly (Livy. 33.46.5–7; 47.2) and acting as judges (Livy. 34.61.15). There appear to have been two of them. This is implied by Cicero’s and Aristotle’s comparisons of ‘shōfēTIM’ with Spartan kings (Cic. Rep. 2.41f.; Arist. Pol. 1272b 37f.), and stated explicitly by Nepos (Han. 7.4).27 Moreover, inscriptions suggest they were eponymous (CIL 8.5306, 12286), and there is evidence for the fact that they were annually elected officials (Nep. Han. 7.4) like the consuls. In fact Trogus/Justin refers to Hannibal as ‘consul’ (31.2.6) rather than ‘sufes’, and other authors also equate the two offices (Nep. Han. 7.4; Liv. 30.7.5; Sen. Dial. 9.4.5 cf. Paul. Fest. 405L).28 Indeed the second of Livy’s explanations of ‘sufes’ (30.7.5) may be an attempt to show off his learning as much as to ensure the understanding of his readers.

Again it is perfectly comprehensible that the Punic name for this official should have come to Rome along with knowledge about his functions and attributes.

What is not so obvious, however, is why ‘sufes’ should be so acceptable in literary circles — so much so that it not only appears in literary works, but appears without the requisite distancing formula. It is in fact one of the few Punic words to gain literary acceptance.

The Carthaginian constitution, and the ‘shōfēTIM’, had a respectable literary ancestry. Aristotle had discussed them in his Politics (2.8). But the term ‘sufes’ does not derive from a Greek literary source. The Greek term for ‘shōfēt’ is βασιλεύς. (They appear so in Aristotle, Polybius, Diodorus and Diogenes Laertius).29 Where we find the Latin term ‘rex’ for ‘shōfēt’ we may assume that the author is following a Greek source and translating the βασιλεύς he found there.30 ‘Sufes’ did not derive from a Greek source, but the question is indeed one of sources. For a word to have literary respectability it required the sanction of previous usage. Once employed, it became easier for subsequent writers to use the word again. The auctoritas of a reputable author lent weight to the vocabulary he employed.

The remarkable success of ‘sufes’ may well be due to the fact that Cato used the term in his account of the Punic Wars, though too much reliance cannot be placed on the corrupt text of Festus 142L. It is however an attractive idea.

Cato certainly exerted a powerful influence on the terminology used for Carthaginian institutions, and his usage is frequently unusual. For in-
stance, the Roman terms 'dictator' and 'dictatura' are only applied to Carthaginian commands and commanders. They appear in no other foreign context, even Greek. 'Dictator' is a term Cato uses of Hannibal.

If a Roman writer wished to lend local ethnic colour to a description of North Africa he mentioned their huts. 'Mapalia' or 'magalia' (again note the variations in the spelling of this Punic word) appear in Sallust (Jug. 18.8), Virgil (G.3.340; A.1.421; 4.259), Mela (1.4.1), Livy (29.31.8; 41.27.12), Lucan (4.684), Pliny (Nat. 5.22), Martial (8.53(55)3), Tacitus (Hist.4.50) and Valerius Flaccus (2.460). But these rustic dwellings, along with their name, go back to Cato (Serv. A.1.421; Fest.132L). It seems quite probable that Cato used the word 'sufes'. The surprising subsequent career of this odd Punic word, like 'mapalia', can then be ascribed to the 'auctoritas' of Cato. Indeed 'sufes' in Livy may go directly back to Cato, or to an annalistic source using Cato. At 34.61.15 Walbank suggests an annalistic source. Walsh and Briscoe suggest Polybius with annalistic additions. For Livy 28.37.2 Klotz suggests Coelius as a source, and Coelius used Cato (cf. Gel. 10.24.7).

It is indeed ironic that Cato, with his policy 'Delenda est Carthago', could be responsible for the survival of Punic words in Latin literature.

NOTES

1. For the Germanic origin of 'glesum' see Ernout-Meillet, Dictionnaire Etymologique s.v. 'glaesum'. On the surprisingly few German words attested in Latin authors see L.R. Palmer, The Latin Language, London 1964, 175.

2. Cf. e.g. Tacitus' use of 'sceptuchi' (Ann. 6.33.3) or 'megistanes' (Ann. 15.27.3; cf. also Sen. Ep. 21.4; Fron. Str. 2.9.5; Suet. Cal. 5).


4. Cf. e.g. Cur. 280–6 where the terms 'strategus', 'tyrannus', 'agoranomus', 'demarchus' and 'comarchus' appear.

5. On the use of Greek to provide vulgar colour in writers like Plautus, Lucilius and Petronius see J. Kaimio, The Romans and the Greek Language, Helsinki 1979, 301–2; 304–6, 307, with bibliographical references.


7. For a survey of Latin authors' use of Greek loan words see Kaimio (above, n.5) 302–14.


11. W. Kroll, Studien zum Verständnis der römischen Literatur, Stuttgart 1964, 87 n.1, while not questioning Ovid’s knowledge of the language, suggests that he tries to arouse pity by being obliged to learn Getic.

12. For a more balanced view of the Parthians and their relations with Graeco-Roman culture, see J. Wolski, ‘Die Parther und ihre Beziehungen zur griechisch-römischen Kultur’, Klio 35 (1983) 137–49.

13. The word occurs for the first time in extant Latin literature in Rhet. Her. 4.12.17. By around 50 B.C. the term was well established, cf. Cic. Att. 7.3.10; Var. L. fr. 115 (Goetz-Schoell). For a full discussion of the term with references see H. Lausberg, Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik I, München 1960, 249, 254ff.

14. P. Oksala, Die griechischen Lehnwörter in den Prosaschriften Ciceros, Helsinki 1953, 24–6, 34–8, attributes the absence of Greek words in Terence and in Cicero’s speeches entirely to such purist principles. Tibullus, too, who earned the accolade ‘elegans’ (Quint. 10.1.93), a hallmark of the adherent of ‘Latinitas’, is singularly free of Greek words (see Kaimio (above, n.5) 312).


16. Latin words caused difficulties for Carthaginians too. Hannibal suffered considerable losses as a result of native guides misunderstanding his pronunciation of Clusium. They led him to Clusinum instead (Liv. 22.13.6; Plut. Fab. 6.1. Cf. also Liv. 23.34.6).

17. On this passage see Peter, HRR p. CLXIII–IV.


19. Kaimio (above, n.5) 300 n.18.

20. An embassy is attested in 343 B.C. (Liv. 7.38.2) and further treaties were made (Plb. 3.24 (306 B.C.?), 25 (279 B.C.).

21. Valerius Maximus (3.7.10) mentions the sending of such a fleet but, in his version, the Romans rather disdainfully declined its services.


23. See Szncyer (above, n.22) 134.

24. If these passages were indeed in his original this would indicate that the Greeks likewise were familiar with Punic. For Greek knowledge of Punic see Szncyer (above, n.22) 35–7. Also E.J. Bicke(n)man(n), ‘An Oath of Hannibal’, TAPhA 75 (1944) 87–102 and ‘Hannibal’s Covenant’, AJPh 73 (1952) 1–25 on a fragment of Polybius Book 7 containing an oath of Hannibal confirming his alliance with Philip V of Macedon, and clearly derived from a Punic original. However, it should be noted that a Greek version could have been produced by Carthaginians rather than Greeks. Hannibal himself knew Greek (Nep. Han. 13.2; Cic de Orat. 2.75).
25. Thus in Latin inscriptions recording the establishment of client relationships (CIL 5.4919, 4921, 4922) and in a later bilingual inscription from Leptis Magna (Punic and Latin) (CIL 8.7) which derives from a triumphal arch, perhaps of Septimius Severus. See also AE 51.205.2; CIL 8.12286.


27. But Cato (Fest. 142L) mentions four (if the reference is indeed to 'suffetes'). G. Ch. Pickard, 'Les Sufetes de Carthage dans Tite-Live et Cornelius Nepos', REL 41 (1963) 280, postulates a college comprising two chief, and some subordinate, 'sufetes'.

28. Nevertheless, the parallel was not exact in all respects, for the office of 'shōfēt' did not include generalship of the army. See Gsell (above, n.26) 199–200.

29. Arist. Pol. 1272b 58; 1273a 8, 30 (cf. Isoc. Nicotes: βασιλευομένους); Plb. 3.33.3; 42.6; 6.51.2; D.S. 25.16; D.L. 3.82.

30. Cato HRF 80 = Serv. A. 4.882; Nep. Han. 7.4; Just. 22.7.7; Sil. 8.211. It is likely that in the corrupt section of the Republic (2.41f.) where, following Aristotle, Cicero discusses the Carthaginian constitution, he likewise rendered Aristotle's βασιλεῦ as 'rex'.

31. Cato HRF 86 = Gel. 10.24.7 'Et historiam autem et verbum hoc sumpsit Coelius ex origine (IV) M. Catonis, in qua scriptum est: 'Igitur dictatorem Carthaginensium magister equitum monuit...'; HRF 87 = Gel 2.19.9: 'M. Cato in quarto origini: 'Deinde dictator iubet postridie magistrum equitum ac sessit'. No later author saw fit to refer to Maharbal as 'magister equitum', but 'dictator' reappears in Livy (23.13.8, where the text is suspect, and the significance of the term unclear) and Frontinus has Carthaginian 'dictatores' (Str. 2.1–4 (Gundermann)). 'Dictaturea' occurs in Just. 19.1.7 of Hasdrubal's military commands.

32. Servius on A. 4.259 identifies the two words. Though they may be unconnected in origin (see Austin at A. 1.421; Smith at Petr. 58.14), they certainly had a similar meaning. The word 'mapalia' actually passed into Roman proverb (cf. Petr. 58.14; Sen. Apoc. 9.1).

33. Walbank Comm. on Polybius vol. 3 p.490; P.G. Walsh, 'Massinissa', JRS 55 (1965) 157; Briscoe at Liv. 34.60–2. For further bibliography see Walbank, Briscoe locc. cit.

34. A. Klotz, Livius und seine Vorgänger, Amsterdam 1964, 189.
Acta Classica is published annually by the Classical Association of South Africa. The journal has been in production since 1958. It is listed on both the ISI and the SAPSE list of approved publications.

For further information go to: