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ORTHOGRAPHY AS DESCRIBED IN LATIN GRAMMARS AND SPELLING IN LATIN EPIGRAPHIC TEXTS

BY CATARINA GASPAR

University of Lisbon
cgaspar1@campus.ul.pt

Abstract: This paper examines writing and orthography in the work of Latin grammarians and spelling variants in epigraphic texts. It focuses on the uses of the letter H and the spelling of the word *sepulchrum*. The word's spelling seems to be connected to the spelling of other words through the adjective *pulcher*, *pulchra*, *pulchrum*. The analysis indicates that the teaching and learning of orthography had a limited influence on epigraphic texts, but there is evidence of the consistently high frequency of the spelling *sepulchrum*. The paper also shows how data on Latin orthography can help in understanding the chronology of the evolution of spelling in epigraphic texts.

Keywords: Epigraphy; Latin grammarians; orthography; spelling options.

Introduction

As sources for studying and reconstituting Vulgar Latin, the writing variants found in epigraphic texts have long been the primary object of analysis; researchers have sought to find in them everything that has escaped the grammatical canon, which is deemed to be 'correct'. In his research on the territorial differentiation of Latin, Herman stated that 'nous avons par conséquent relevé toutes les graphies contraires à la norme et que l'on peut considérer comme témoignant d'une différence phonétique entre le parler représenté par l'inscription et la prononciation classique à laquelle correspond, grosso modo, l'orthographe traditionnelle'.¹

Orthography is a set of standards for writing a language, in which spelling often represents the sounds of the language. However, the orthography of Latin, like many Romance languages today, such as Portuguese, shows a hybrid pattern: it is both phonological and etymological. As Herman remarked, 'L'alphabet latin était, à l'origine, un "bon" alphabet: signes nettement délimités entre eux, et souvent (presque toujours pour les consonnes) relation biunivoque entre signes graphiques et phonèmes. La transposition entre la forme phonique des énoncés et leur forme

¹ See Herman 1990a, 14.

écrite s’opérait donc avec un certain automatisme’.² This may explain why the number of deviations in the spelling of words in Latin epigraphic texts is not as high as one might expect from the language’s wide diachronic, diatopic and dias-
tratic variation. Given the correlation between graphemes and sounds, learning how to write in the Latin language is not difficult. Differences in speech certainly existed due to the wide gap in literacy³ and scarce access to teaching and learning; many people were illiterate or almost illiterate. Nevertheless, it is worth asking the following questions. To what extent are the orthographical rules taught to someone learning how to read and write Latin reflected in the spelling peculiarities found in epigraphic inscriptions? Do these distinctive writing features always have a phonetic value? Do some forms used in the inscriptions reflect individual or local variations in writing? Alternatively, do they point to an orthographic system likely to have been widely taught? These and other questions should lead us to tread cautiously in assessing and interpreting orthographical peculiarities when trying to re-constitute ‘Latin des inscriptions’⁴ based on epigraphic sources.⁵

A connection is drawn between grammatical texts, specifically those dealing with orthography, and the spelling variants found in the inscriptions. For instance, there are two common spellings of the word *sepulchrum*: one with H and the other without (*sepulcrum*). According to the grammarians, one is ‘better’ than the other, as shown below.

Orthography

Languages today face the same challenges as classical languages in terms of changes in the writing system over time and the phenomenon of heterography,⁶ which explains why the same words and/or sounds can be written in different ways. Today,

² See Herman 1990b, 38.

³ See Bodel 2015.

⁴ Regarding the Latin found in inscriptions, Herman wrote that ‘La position théorique et méthodologique qu’implique cette démarche consiste à *considérer les fautes comme les produits du heurt entre deux systèmes grammaticaux et phonologiques au moins partiellement distincts*: l’assertion selon laquelle les fautes sont dues à l’influence ou à la pression de la langue parlée équivaut en effet à dire que les rédacteurs des monuments épigraphiques possédaient, d’une part, des habitudes et des connaissances graphiques et grammaticales en gros conformes aux normes classiques (acquises par l’apprentissage de l’écriture et la pratique des textes), d’autre part une certaine “compétence” de la langue latine; d’où un heurt entre deux systèmes, selon un mécanisme réglé par leurs relations’ – see Herman 1990b, 37–38.

⁵ See Adamik 2012.

⁶ Bussmann 1996, 507 defined heterography as follows. ‘1. Use of the same written sign for different sounds, cf. Eng. <gh> in *through, enough, ghost*. 2. Different writing of words with the same pronunciation or meaning. 3. Any manner of spelling that differs from the norm.’

orthography is defined as the accepted way of spelling and writing words. For instance, according to *Merriam Webster*, orthography is ‘the art of writing words with the proper letters according to standard usage; the representation of the sounds of a language by written or printed symbols; a part of language study that deals with letters and spelling’.⁷ This definition is almost the same as that used in ancient times: the meaning of the Greek word ὀρθογραφία was ‘correct spelling, spelling according to accepted usage’, attested since the second century BCE. Since then, orthography has signified both ‘the normalized manner of representing a language (usually treated on the basis of single-word examples) and the theoretical system whose aim it is to regulate as adequately as possible the relationship between sound and script, and then to pass it on through teaching’.⁸ Orthographic rules are also connected to the creation of a ‘standard model of pronunciation’, namely orthoepy, and linked with diacritical marks (punctuation), symbols representing numerals and rules for the separation of words or syllables.

Given that orthography is related to rules and standardisation, it can be said that epigraphic texts are the result of orthography teaching and learning, as they were first written in draft form and subsequently carved. However, these texts were themselves also important to the processes of standardisation and creating orthographic rules. They were the visible written elements of the linguistic landscape, which included the epigraphic landscape in official and public spaces as well as private spaces. This can be seen in Quintilian,⁹ *Inst.*, 1, 7, 11–14:

Verum orthographia quoque consuetudini servit ideoque saepe mutata est. Nam illa vetustissima transeo tempora, quibus et pauciores litterae nec similes his nostris earum formae fuerunt et vis quoque diversa, sicut apud Graecos o litterae, quae interim longa ac brevis, ut apud nos, interim pro syllaba quam nomine suo exprimit posita est: XII. ut a Latinis veteribus d plurimis in verbis ultimam adiectam, quod manifestum est etiam ex columna rostrata, quae est Duilio in foro posita, interim g quoque, ut in pulvinari Solis, qui colitur iuxta aedem Quirini, ‘vesperug’, quod ‘vesperuginem’ accipimus. XIII. De mutatione etiam litterarum, de qua supra dixi, nihil repetere hic necesse est: fortasse enim sicut scribebant, etiam loquebantur.¹⁰

⁷ Definition available at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/orthography> (accessed on 24.02.2019).

⁸ Cf. ‘Orthography’ in *Brill’s New Pauly* 2006, available at https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/or...s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.cluster.New+Pauly+Online&s.q=orthography (accessed on 24.02.2019).

⁹ See Ax 2011.

¹⁰ ‘Orthography, however, is also the servant of usage and therefore undergoes frequent change. I make no mention of the earliest times when our alphabet contained fewer letters and their shapes differed from those which we now use, while their values also were different. For instance, in Greek the letter o was sometimes long and short, as it is with us, and again was sometimes used to express the syllable which is identical with its name. And in Latin ancient writers ended many

Other references to epigraphic texts in connection with the spelling of Latin words can be found in Velius Longus, *De orthographia*.¹¹

The ideas of ‘rules’ and ‘standards’ determine what should (or should not) be used to study the dialectal variation of the Latin language, and are also crucial when creating modern editions of epigraphic texts and justifying corrections. Such corrections usually change the text to the correct or expected standard spelling.

Indeed, orthography has been held dear and elicited much lively debate since the Roman Republic.¹² For instance, Caesar’s opinions on orthography (Suet., *Caes.* 56) are extant. The emperor Augustus also had ideas about literature, rhetoric, spelling and writing, which can be found in Suetonius (*Aug.*, 86). Suetonius mentioned that Augustus used colloquial Vulgar Latin with distinctive phonetics/pronunciation, such as his use of *simus* rather than *sumus*, swapping the vowels I and V (Suet., *Aug.*, 87). In terms of orthography, Suetonius said that Augustus favoured a written register that reflected the spoken language, as illustrated in the following passage (Suet., *Aug.* 88):

Orthographiam, id est formulam rationemque scribendi a grammaticis institutam, non adeo custodit ac videtur eorum potius sequi opinionem, qui perinde scribendum ac loquamur existiment. Nam quod saepe non litteras modo sed syllabas aut permutat aut praeterit, communis hominum error est. Nec ego id notarem, nisi mihi mirum videretur tradidisse aliquos, legato eum consulari successorem dedisse ut rudi et indocto, cuius

words with d, as may be seen on the column adorned with the beaks of ships, which was set up in the forum in honour of Duilius. Sometimes again they gave words a final g, as we may still see in the shrine of the Sun, close to the temple of Quirinus, where we find the word *uesperug*, which we write *uesperugo* (evening star). I have already spoken of the interchange of letters and need not repeat my remarks here: perhaps their pronunciation corresponded with their spelling’ (transl. by Butler 1920–1922).

¹¹ Keil 1822–1894, *GL* 7, 53, 8–11: *non magis igitur in numero litterarum esse |oportere quam illam notam, qua centuria, et [qua] C conuersum, quo Gaia |significatur: quod notae genus uidemus in monumentis, cum quis libertus |mulieris ostenditur: Gaias enim generaliter a specie omnes mulieres |accipere uoluerunt.* ‘Besides, among letters should be highlight the one that is a symbol, for ‘century’, for the reverse C form, and that means ‘Gaia’: that’s why we see this kind of symbol in monuments, because it reveals that the deceased is woman’s freedman; for instance, ‘Gaias’ is [a designation] in general that all women accept well because of their genre.’ (transl. by the author). See also Keil 1822–1894, *GL* 7, 67, 2–5: *Varie etiam scriptitatum est mancupium aucupium manubiae, siquidem |G(aius) Caesar per i scripsit, ut apparet ex titulis ipsius, at Augustus [i] per |V, ut testes sunt eius inscriptiones.* – ‘Yet, ‘mancupium’ (possession; right of ownership), ‘aucupium’ (bird-catching, fowling), ‘manubiae’ (booty, prize-money) are written frequently in different ways, since that, G(aius) Caesar wrote them with I, as can be seen in his inscriptions, besides, Augustus [i] by V, as shown by his inscriptions’ (transl. by the author).

¹² See Desbordes 1990.

*manu 'ixi' pro 'ipsi' scriptum animadverterit. Quotiens autem per notas scribit, B pro A, C pro B ac deinceps eadem ratione sequentis litteras ponit; pro X autem duplex A.*¹³

Indeed, several emperors and prominent personalities from classical times used language as a component of their broad political and cultural strategies. Two well-known examples are Caesar, as already mentioned, who was referred to by various authors,¹⁴ and the emperor Claudius and his proposal for an alphabet (Suet., *Claud.*, 41).

Remarks on orthography and examples in inscriptions

Relating grammarians' discussion of Latin to the linguistic features of epigraphic texts allows the gathering of data related to the diversification of the Latin language.¹⁵ It would not pay to forget the difference between dialect and accent,¹⁶ which is also relevant to the different spellings in epigraphic texts.

Inevitably, the focus here is on the relationship between written and oral, and the written record of a given language is always less innovative than its oral usage. Language standardisation occurs in both, but imposes itself more forcefully on writing. As noted above, this paper focuses on a common noun with two possible spellings, *sepulchrum* and *sepulcrum*. Here, the presence or absence of the H is solely an orthographic matter, as the grapheme <H> was just a *nota aspirationis* for Latin grammarians.¹⁷

Some Latin dictionaries accepted both spellings of *sepulc(h)rum*, but others claimed that the spelling with the H is 'less correct', as stated by Charisius.¹⁸

¹³ 'He does not strictly comply with orthography, that says, the theoretical rules of spelling laid down by the grammarians, seeming to be rather of the mind of those who believe that we should spell exactly as we pronounce. Of course, his frequent transposition or omission of syllables as well as of letters are slipped common to all mankind. I should not have noted this, did it not seem to be surprised that some have written that he cashiered a consular governor, as an uncultivated and ignorant fellow, because he observed that he had written *ixi* for *ipsi*. Whenever he wrote in cipher, he wrote B for A, C for B, and the rest of the letters on the same principle, using AA for X' (transl. by Rolfe 1914).

¹⁴ See, for example, Cassiodorus, *Inst.*, *De orthographia*, 1, 14, which refers to Varro as a source for Caesar's tendency to swap I and U.

¹⁵ See Adams 2007.

¹⁶ According to Chambers and Trudgill 1980, 5, "'Accent" refers to the way in which a speaker pronounces, and therefore refers to a variety which is phonetically and/or phonologically different from other varieties. "Dialect", on the other hand, refers to varieties which are grammatically (and perhaps lexically) as well as phonologically different from other varieties.'

¹⁷ See Niedermann 1906, 78–79; Bassols de Climent 1983, 181–182.

¹⁸ See Lewis and Short, *Latin Dictionary*: "*sēpulcrum* (less correctly *sēpul-chrum*; cf. *Charis.* p. 56 P)" – cf. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=sepulcrum&la=la#lexicon> (accessed

Nevertheless, both spellings had a strong tradition in poetry, prose, theatre and juridical texts. In epigraphy, the word was used with increasing frequency after the second century CE and in early Christian times.¹⁹ In some regions, especially Rome, there are some instances of the spelling *sepulchrum*, but *sepulcrum* is the older and more common variant.²⁰ As a result, the spelling with H was seen as a sign of erudition and cultural sophistication.²¹ As Bassols de Climent remarked, ‘La aspiración se propagó también a algunos nombres comunes, aunque no en forma uniforme, pues se observan muchas vacilaciones. Generalmente, se trata de oclusivas en contacto o en la proximidad de líquidas y vibrantes, por ejemplo: *anchora, brachium, chorona, pulcher, sepulchrum, lachrimis*, etc. Es muy difícil determinar si estas aspiraciones son una simple imitación del griego o responden a ciertas condiciones fonéticas latinas que las favorezcan; la realidad es que los propios gramáticos y escritores latinos no acaban de ponerse de acuerdo entre sí sobre las palabras en las que deben figurar letras aspiradas.’²²

As shown in Table 1, Latin grammarians mentioned the variant spellings of the noun *sepulc(h)rum*, i.e., with or without the letter H; likewise, they differed in their own spelling of the noun.²³

1	Flavius Caper, <i>De orthographia</i> ²⁴	<i>GL 7, 93,1: Pulchrum cum h scribendum, sepulcrum sine h.</i>
2	Q. Terentius Scaurus, <i>De orthographia</i> ²⁵	<i>GL 7, 17, 15–16: H nulli consonantium praeicitur.</i> <i>GL, 7, 20, 4–8: Et pulcrum, quamvis in consuetudine aspiretur, nihilo minus tamen ratio exiliter et enuntiandum et scribendum esse persuadet, ne una omnino dictio adversus latini sermonis naturam media aspiretur. Quamvis Santra a Graecis putet esse translatum, quase polichrum.</i>
3	Gell., NA, 2, 3	<i>Qua ratione verbis quibusdam vocabulisque veteres immiserint ‘h’ litterae spiritum. 1 ‘H’ litteram sive illam spiritum magis quam litteram dici oportet, inserebant eam veteres nostri plerisque vocibus verborum firmandis roborandisque, ut sonus earum esset viridior vegetiorque; atque id videntur fecisse studio et exemplo linguae Atticae. 2 Satis notum est Atticos hichthyn et hippon et multa ibidem alia contra morem gentium Graeciae ceterarum inspirantis primae litterae dixisse. 3 Sic ‘lachrumas’, sic ‘sepulchrum’, sic ‘ahenum’, sic ‘vehemens’, sic ‘incohare’, sic ‘helluari’, sic ‘halucinari’, sic</i>

on 25.02.2019). This is also supported by the etymology of the word, related with the verb *sepelio* – see Vaan 2008, 555.

¹⁹ See Bonneville, 1984, 128.

²⁰ See Bassols de Climent 1983, 181–182.

²¹ See Bassols de Climent 1983, 170–171; Väänänen 1988, 105.

²² See Bassols de Climent 1983, 170–171.

²³ See Mari 2016, 242–243.

²⁴ Keil 1822–1894, *GL* 7, 93,1.

²⁵ Keil 1822–1894, *GL* 7, 17, 15–16; 7, 20, 4–8.

		<i>'honera', sic 'honestum' dixerunt. 4 In his enim verbis omnibus litterae seu spiritus istius nulla ratio visa est, nisi ut firmitas et vigor vocis quasi quibusdam nervis additis intenderetur.</i> ²⁶
4	Charisius	<i>Gramm. 1, 93, 5–9:</i> ²⁷ <i>Pulchrum Varro adspirari debere negat, ne duabus consonantibus media intercedat adspiratio; quod minime rectum antiquis videbatur. Vnde et sepulchrum hodieque manet, quod sit seorsum a pulchro propter recordationem doloris. Aliis placet sepulchrum compositum a semis et pulchro, quia pulchrum superficie, intus ossibus plenum.</i> <i>Gramm., 1, 7, 14–17: H littera proprie continens adspirationem recepta uulgo in numerum mutarum omnibus uocalibus praepositur; nulli subiungitur nisi consonantibus, ut in Thracea Thracia et nominibus Graecis, ut Thebae.</i>
5	Consentius, <i>De barbarismis et metaplasmis</i> ²⁸	<i>12, 4–8: adspirationis, ut si quis Traciam dicens primam (5) subtiliter efferat aut Kharthaginem dicens primam (6) enuntiet cum adspiratione, aut si dicat pro Euro Heurum, (7) ut adspirationem addat priori syllabae: sed hic modus (8) erit et per adiectionem.</i>

Table 1 – References to the letter H in the works of Latin grammarians

Caper (1), for instance, said only that *sepulchrum* is the wrong spelling; he accepted the use of H in the adjective *pulcher*, *pulchra*, *pulchrum*. The other authors quoted above focused on the relationship between the spelling and pronunciation of such words and of the H; Scaurus (2), for example, emphasised that an aspiration is involved, due to the mutual influence of Latin and Greek. This idea – that not sound but breath is being dealt with – was extended by Aulus Gellius (3), who added a diachronic perspective. He noted that the *ueteres* tended to strengthen pronunciation using an *aspiratio*, and thus added H to the spelling of some words, even when it was clearly superfluous.

Charisius (4) offered a kind of ‘etymological explanation’ or justification of the spelling with H, based on morphological and semantic factors. This grammarian did not focus on the ‘most correct’ spelling, but sought to explain and justify different spellings. This is indicative of an important difference between the second-century

²⁶ ‘The letter h (or perhaps it should be called a breathing rather than a letter) was added by our forefathers to give strength and vigour to the pronunciation of many words, in order that they might have a fresher and livelier sound; and this they seem to have done from their devotion to the Attic language, and under its influence. It is well known that the people of Attica, contrary to the usage of the other Greek races, pronounced ἰχθύς (fish), ἵππος (horse), and many other words besides, with a rough breathing on the first letter. In the same way our ancestors said lachrumae (tears), sepulchrum (burial-place), ahenum (of bronze), vehemens (violent), incohare (begin), helluari (gormandize), hallucinari (dream), honera (burdens), honustum (burdened). For in all these words there seems to be no reason for that letter, or breathing, except to increase the force and vigour of the sound by adding certain sinews, so to speak’ (transl. by Rolfe 1927).

²⁷ See Barwick 1964. See also Kaster 1988, 392–394.

²⁸ Mari 2016, 12, 4–8.

grammarians and their counterparts from the fifth century onwards. Regarding the letter H, like the other authors, Charisius mentioned the aspiration and its use in Greek. Consentius (5) made the same observation.

Examples of epigraphy

This paper focuses on epigraphic data from the Iberian Peninsula. In these inscriptions, both Roman and early Christian, the most common spelling is *sepulcrum* as can be seen in table 2:

	n.
<i>Baetica</i>	9
<i>Hispania Citerior</i>	28
<i>Lusitania</i>	9
Total:	46

Table 2 – *sepulcrum* in Iberian Peninsula²⁹

The abbreviated spelling of the word is found in many sepulchral inscriptions indicating that the monument must not be inherited by *heredes*: *h(oc) m(onumentum) s(iue) s(epulcrum) h(eredem) n(on) s(equetur)*. An initial conclusion is that in the Iberian Peninsula, as in other parts of the Roman Empire, the spelling *sepulchrum* was much less common than *sepulcrum*, as can be seen in table 3:

	n.
<i>sepulcrum</i>	118
<i>sepulchrum</i>	59

Table 3 – *sepulcrum* vs. *sepulchrum*³⁰

Due to the focus here on spelling, we search for epigraphic texts from the Iberian Peninsula in which the word *sepulchrum* is written out in full. The full word is used in just two inscriptions, both from the same province: Hispania Citerior. The first one was found in Montjuïc, Barcelona, as follows.³¹

[D(is)] M(anibus) / [---] I vel L · IIIII VIR(I, -o) · AVG(ustalis, -i) / [---]
]++SEPVLC~~HR~~VM / +++++ I NI[.]CRAE / [--- H]ERES [E]X TEST(amento)

²⁹ As an indication, albeit non-conclusive, Epigraphische Datenbank Clauss-Slaby yields these numbers – See <http://www.manfredclauss.de> (assessed on 23.03.2019).

³⁰ As an indication, albeit non-conclusive, a search of the Epigraphische Datenbank Heidelberg yields these numbers – see <https://edh-www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de/home> (accessed on 23.03.2019).

³¹ See Fabre, Mayer, Rodá 1997, 202–203.

In their commentary on this inscription (IRC IV, 203;), Fabre, Mayer and Rodá argued that *sepulchrum* ‘constitue une forme orthographique qui correspond à une préciosité cultivée’³² (par reference à *pulcher*), ce qui laisserait entendre que le commanditaire avait lui-même choisi son formulaire’.³³ The authors also recalled Bonneville’s idea that such inscriptions originated from the upper echelons of society in ancient Barcelona.³⁴

The second example retrieved is an inscription from ancient Tarraco, as follows.³⁵

Ornate ° ea quâe linqu[it---]s fuit suae r[e]bus ° posit(i)s ° negl[---]s / [---]unu++PAIVIII[-
--]s **se+[-]rum** ° ubi ° perpetuo ° remane[t, -nt?]

In this inscription, according to the editors,³⁶ the spelling of *sepulc(h)rum* in l. 2 is uncertain, given the poor condition of the monument. However, it can be considered another possible example of the H variant, probably from an earlier period than the first one. As only two examples are available, and one is uncertain, it is possible to speak of the near-absence of evidence of the spelling *sepulchrum* in epigraphic texts from the Iberian Peninsula.

As the spelling without H (*sepulcrum*) was the most common in the epigraphic texts examined, it can be concluded that epigraphic data from the Iberian Peninsula are in line with data from other parts of the empire. This may be due to chronological factors (such as the spread of the word in epigraphic texts from the second century CE onwards) or the grammarians’ idea that *sepulcrum* was the correct form. The absence of the H from this spelling of this word may also explain the unusual spelling of another word, *pulcra*, in an early Christian poetic inscription from Beja, Portugal.³⁷

³² Tantimonaco 2017, 282.

³³ See Fabre, Mayer, Rodá 1997, 203.

³⁴ According to Bonneville 1984, 128, ‘Il s’avère en fait qu’il n’est devenu frequent en épigraphie que dans le courant du IIe siècle, dans les épitaphes en vers et dans un milieu assez original du point de vue culturel; il sera particulièrement prise dans l’ épigraphie chrétienne.’

³⁵ Cf. CIL II 4283; CLE 1096; RIT 921; Hep. 12, 2002, 398; CIL II 2, 14, 2306.

³⁶ Cf. CIL XVIII 2 – <http://cle.us.es/clehispaniae/comment.jsf?idioma=2&code=T13> (accessed on 23.03.2019).

³⁷ Cf. Fontaine 1994, 109–123; Dias, Gaspar 2006, 44–45: *Circundate uos omnes ° pariter / plorate mecum quia hoc nouum / non est mori ° flete mecum om/nes quos ualde tangit causa dolo/ris et adflictio mortis ° promi/te luctibus et meritis almis Mau/ra(m) fuit mici subrina ° pulcra / illa nimis aspectibus decora et / facie pulcra quem mater castam / generavit et terra uirginem sus/cepit et sine inequitate sepulcro / restituit ° eu me miseram qui ta/lem etatis florem a XV anno / perdidit ° eu me desolatum / qui dum cepi gaudere tunc de/solabor et multis dolo/rib(u)s pro te adfligo hoc ego / Calandronius oro D(eu)m ut ti/bi det requiem sempiterna(m) / requieuit in pace D(omi)ni / quarto kal(endas) Agustas era / DCCIII.*

The difficulty that the spelling of the word caused in general explain the examples quoted in LLDB as can be seen in table 4:

Spelling	LLDB n.
ISEPLVICRVM	LLDB-20240 LLDB-14418
SIPVL II	LLDB-78960
SE[P]IVLCHRVM	LLDB-73346
SAPVLICHRVM	LLDB-310
SEPVLCVMI	LLDB-42532
SEPVK	LLDB-41790 LLDB-41789
SEPVRI[CRVM	LLDB-55482
SIPVRCLV	LLDB-44703 LLDB-44702 LLDB-44701
SVPVLCRS	LLDB-24322 LLDB-24321 LLDB-24320
SEPVCRVM	LLDB-39897

Table 4 – *sepulcrum* spelling examples in LLDB³⁸

As the word become to be more frequent in epigraphic texts, the difficulty in its spelling and the number and variety of errors as increased. Moreover, if we consider jointly all kind of errors concerning the word *sepulcrum* we can conclude that they can be found in different regions of the Roman Empire, as can be seen in chart 1:

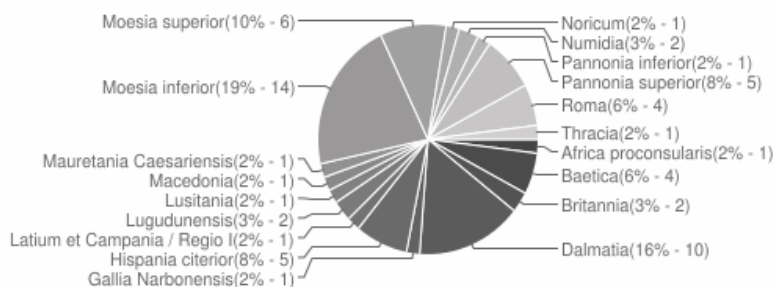


Chart 1 – Geographic distribution of errors concerning *sepulcrum* in LLDB³⁹

³⁸ See Computerized Historical Linguistic Database of Latin Inscriptions of the Imperial Age – <http://lldb.elte.hu> (accessed on 22.08.2019).

³⁹ See Computerized Historical Linguistic Database of Latin Inscriptions of the Imperial Age – <http://lldb.elte.hu> (accessed on 22.08.2019). In this chart we have jointly *sepulcrum* spelling errors with the semantic replacement by *memoria*; as this paper focuses on orthography and spelling, this semantic aspect will not be object of further comments here.

Conclusions

The association between the epigraphic evidence and the information provided by grammarians – initially by Caper (*Pulchrum cum h scribendum, sepulcrum sine h.*) and subsequently by grammarians following his train of thought – may be chronologically coincident with the dissemination of the word *sepulcrum* in epigraphic texts across the Roman Empire in the second century.

Bearing in mind that orthography is related to rules and standardisation, the epigraphic evidence from the Iberian Peninsula seems to be in line with the main advice given by Latin grammarians: to use *sepulcrum* rather than *sepulchrum*. The variant with the H can be understood as an erudite or culturally refined feature of the text, or as a result of the influence of the Italian Peninsula, specifically Rome, as the only two possible examples of *sepulchrum* were found in the Iberian Peninsula, in an area of Hispania Citerior that had a strong relationship with Rome via the Mediterranean. In addition, the relationship between epigraphic texts and orthography is evident from the contamination of the spelling of other words, such as *pulcher*, *pulchra*, *pulchrum*, by *sepulcrum* (without H).

To conclude, it seems that the orthographical rules taught to those learning how to read and write Latin are some degree reflected in the spelling idiosyncrasies found in inscriptions. This is evident from the study of graphemes such as H. The example analysed shows us that spelling variants in epigraphic texts may not only be related to phonetic variation but also influenced by the orthographical trends and rules conveyed in the works of Latin grammarians. These texts, written and carved, offer insight into individual and local variation in spelling, as well as the main spelling options spread by the teaching and learning of the Latin language in the Roman Empire.

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