

21. *Italic.* The Italic branch has its center in Italy, and to most people Italy in ancient times suggests Rome and the language of Rome, Latin. But the predominant position occupied by Latin in the historical period should not make us forget that Latin was only one of a number of languages once found in this area. The geographical situation and agreeable climate of the peninsula seem frequently and at an early date to have invited settlement, and the later population represents a remarkably diverse culture. We do not know much about the early neolithic inhabitants; they had been largely replaced or absorbed before the middle of the first millennium B.C. But we have knowledge of a number of languages spoken in different districts by the sixth century before our era. In the west, especially from the Tiber north, a powerful and aggressive people spoke Etruscan, a non-Indo-European language. In north-western Italy was situated the little-known Ligurian. Venetic in the northeast and Messapian in the extreme southeast were apparently offshoots of Illyrian, already mentioned. And in southern Italy and Sicily, Greek was the language of numerous Greek colonies. All these languages except Etruscan were apparently Indo-European. More important were the languages of the Italic branch itself. Chief of these in the light of subsequent history was Latin, the language of Latium and its principal city, Rome. Closely related to Latin were Umbrian, spoken in a limited area northeast of Latium, and Oscan, the language of the Samnites and of most of the southern peninsula except the extreme projections. All of these languages were in time driven out by Latin as the political influence of Rome became dominant throughout Italy. Nor was the extension of Latin limited to the Italian peninsula. As Rome colonized Spain and Gaul, the district west of the Black Sea, northern Africa, the islands of the Mediterranean, and even Britain, Latin spread into all these regions until its limits became practically coterminous with those of the Roman Empire. And in the greater part of this area, it has remained the language, though in altered form, to the present day.

The various languages that represent the survival of Latin in the different parts of the Roman Empire are known as the Romance or Romanic languages. Some of them have since spread into other territory, particularly in the New World. The most extensive of the Romance languages are French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian. French is primarily the language of northern France, although it is the language of literature and education throughout the country. In the Middle Ages, it was divided into a number of dialects, especially Norman, Picard, Burgundian, and that of the Ile-de-France. But with the establishment of the Capetians as kings of France and the rise of Paris as the national capital, the dialect of Paris or the Ile-de-France gradually won recognition as the official and literary language. Since the thirteenth century, the Paris dialect has been standard French. In the southern half of France, the language differed markedly from that of the north. From the word for *yes*, the language of the north was called the *langue d'oïl*, that of the south the *langue d'oc*. Nowadays the latter is more commonly known as Provençal. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it was the language of an innovative literature, the lyrics of the troubadours, but it has since yielded to the political and social prestige of French. A patriotic effort at the close of the nineteenth century, corresponding to similar movements on behalf of

Irish, Norwegian, and other submerged languages, failed to revive the language as a medium of literature, and Provençal is today merely the regional speech of southern France. In the Iberian peninsula, Spanish and Portuguese, because of their proximity and the similar conditions under which they have developed, have remained fairly close to each other. In spite of certain differences of vocabulary and inflection and considerable differences in the sounds of the spoken language, a Spaniard can easily read Portuguese. The use of Spanish and Portuguese in Central and South America and in Mexico has already been referred to. Italian has had the longest continuous history in its original location of any of the Romance languages because it is nothing more than the Latin language as this language has continued to be spoken in the streets of Rome from the founding of the city. It is particularly important as the language of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio and as the vernacular language in which the cultural achievements of the Renaissance first found expression. Romanian is the easternmost of the Romance languages, representing the continued influence of Roman legions in ancient Dacia. In addition to these six languages, about a dozen Romance languages are spoken by smaller populations. Other languages on the Iberian peninsula are Catalan, a language of the northeast but also found in Corsica, and one with an extensive literature, and Galician in the northwest, similar to both Spanish and Portuguese, having features of each, just as Catalan shares features of Provençal and Spanish. The Rhaeto-Romanic group in southeastern Switzerland and adjacent parts of the Tyrol includes Romansch and dialects in which Germanic elements are especially prominent. Walloon is a dialect of French spoken in southern Belgium.

The Romance languages, while representing a continuous evolution from Latin, are not derived from the Classical Latin of Cicero and Virgil. Classical Latin was a literary language with an elaborate and somewhat artificial grammar. The spoken language of the masses, Vulgar Latin (from Latin *vulgus*, the common people), differed from it not only in being simpler in inflection and syntax but also to a certain extent divergent in vocabulary. In Classical Latin, the word for horse was *equus*, but the colloquial word was *caballus*. It is from the colloquial word that French *cheval*, Provençal *caval*, Spanish *caballo*, Italian *cavallo*, and so forth are derived. In like manner, where one wrote *pugna* (fight), *urbs* (city), and *os* (mouth), the popular, spoken word was *battualia* (Fr. *bataille*), *villa* (Fr. *ville*), and *bucca* (Fr. *bouche*). So *verberare* = *battuere* (Fr. *battre*), *osculari* = *basiare* (Fr. *baiser*), *ignis* = *focus* (Fr. *feu*), and *ludus* = *jocus* (Fr. *jeu*). It was naturally the Vulgar Latin of the marketplace and camp that was carried into the different Roman provinces. That this Vulgar Latin developed differently in the different parts of Europe in which it was introduced is explained by a number of factors. In the first place, As Gustav Gröber observed, Vulgar Latin, like all language, was constantly changing, and because the Roman provinces were established at different times and the language carried into them would be more or less the language then spoken in the streets of Rome, there would be initial differences in the Vulgar Latin of the

different colonies.*⁵ These difference would be increased by separation and the influence of the languages spoken by the native populations as they adopted the new language. The Belgae and the Celts in Gaul, described by Caesar, differed from the Iberians in Spain. Each of these peoples undoubtedly modified Latin in accordance with the grammars of their own languages, as normally happens when languages come into contact.*⁶ It is not difficult to understand the divergence of the Romance languages, and it is not the least interesting feature of the Romance group that we can observe here in historical time the formation of a number of distinct languages from a single parent speech. Such a process of progressive differentiation has brought about, over a greater area and a longer period of time, the differences among the languages of the whole Indo-European family.

(Baugh, Albert C. and Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. 6th ed. London: Routledge, 2013. pp. 23–26.)

*⁵ The Roman colonies were established in Corsica and Sardinia in 231 B.C. Spain became a province in 197 B.C., Provence in 121 B.C., and Cacia in A.D. 107.

*⁶ The principle can be illustrated by a modern instance. The Portuguese spoken in Brazil has no sound like the English *th*. Brazilians who learn English consequently have difficulty in acquiring this sound and tend to substitute some other sound of their own language for it. They say *dis* for *this* and *I sink so* for *I think so*. If we could imagine English introduced into Brazil as Latin was introduced into Gaul or Spain, we could only suppose that the 195 million people of Brazil would universally make such a substitution, and the *th* would disappear in Brazilian English.