

The Testament of Vibius Adiranus*

KATHERINE MCDONALD

ABSTRACT

This article reconsiders one of the best-known examples of Oscan epigraphy — the inscription which commemorates the testament of Vibius Adiranus to the vereiia- of Pompeii. It has been widely accepted that this inscription is a first-century A.D. copy of a second-century B.C. original, and is therefore the latest extant example of Oscan in a formal public inscription. This is challenged here with an analysis of both the linguistic detail and archaeological context, and it is shown that this inscription itself is more likely to be the original. The re-dating suggested here has implications for our understanding of language use at Pompeii; it also facilitates more accurate estimates of when the deaths of the Italic languages took place.

Keywords: Oscan; Latin; Pompeii; language contact; language death; epigraphy

I INTRODUCTION

The inscription which commemorates the testament of Vibius Adiranus (Po 3) and its use for the construction of a public building is one of the most attractive and best-known examples of Oscan epigraphy (Fig. 1).¹ Found in Pompeii in the late eighteenth century, it now seems to have been accepted by many scholars that, following the suggestion of Poccetti and others, there is strong archaeological and epigraphic evidence for considering this inscription to be a first-century A.D. recopying of a second-century B.C. original.²

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¹ H. Rix, *Sabellische Texte* (2002), Po 3; M. H. Crawford, *Imagines Italicae* (2011), Pompei 24, with picture; E. Vetter, *Handbuch der italischen Dialekte* (1953), #11. From this point, inscriptions will be referred to according to their numbers in Rix 2002, with concordances for the new *Imagines Italicae* edition prefixed by the word ‘Crawford’.

² This view is put forward at some length by P. Poccetti, ‘Il testamento di Vibio Adirano’, *Rendiconti della Accademia di Archeologia* NS 57 (1982), 237–45, using a number of arguments. See also P. Poccetti, ‘Note sulla toponomastica urbana di Pompei preromana’, in D. Silvestri (ed.), *Lineamenti di storia linguistica della Campania antica I. I dati toponomastici* (1986), 43. However, there is a long history of confusion over the date of this inscription. Buck appears to refer to it when he mentions ‘ein paar pompejanische Wandinschriften, die nachweislich nach den ersten Erdbeben (63 nach Chr.) geschrieben wurden’ (C. D. Buck, *Grammar of Oscan and Umbrian* (1928)). Conway in turn wrote that the late date implied by Buck ‘is very clearly true of the copy in its present position’, but suggests that the ‘original’ must predate A.D. 14 — it is not completely clear whether he believes the inscription to be recopied (R. S. Conway, *The Italic Dialects* (1897)).



FIG. 1. The testament of Vibius Adiranus (Po 3; Crawford Pompei 24; Vetter (1953), 11), now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli. (Photo: author; the author is grateful to the Soprintendenza di Napoli)

For this reason, the inscription has become evidence for the survival of the Oscan language, and a sophisticated Oscan epigraphic tradition, until imperial times. The fact that it was recopied has become widely accepted in the literature, where it has been used as evidence of a profound change in local attitudes to Oscan.³ For example, J. N. Adams, building on the idea that Po 3 was recopied, writes in *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* that, despite communities ostentatiously having changed their public language to Latin (e.g. at Cumae⁴), by the middle of the first century A.D. there was a re-emergence of ‘local pride ... antiquarianism or local patriotism’.⁵ Adams sees Po 3 not just as a sign of respect for old inscriptions, but also as ‘consistent with a residual knowledge of Oscan’ well into the imperial period. While there are scattered pieces of evidence for the survival of spoken Oscan into the first century A.D., and perhaps for some local preservation of pre-Roman inscriptions, these are far from conclusive; and it is the recopying of the testament of Vibius Adiranus which has always been made to bear the weight of the argument. Only very recently has anyone begun to question Poccetti’s dating and its implications.⁶

³ See for example A. E. Cooley, ‘The survival of Oscan in Roman Pompeii’, in A. E. Cooley (ed.), *Becoming Roman, Writing Latin? Literacy and Epigraphy in the Roman West* (2002), 81; J. P. T. Clackson and G. Horrocks, *The Blackwell History of the Latin Language* (2007), 62.

⁴ The story that Cumae sought permission from Rome to switch their official language to Latin in 180 B.C. is found in Livy 40.43.1.

⁵ J. N. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (2003), 147.

⁶ See Crawford, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 39, 657.

Unfortunately, the discussion of Po 3 has become clouded with circular reasoning, in part because of the separation of the archaeological and linguistic evidence.⁷ This contribution aims to untangle the evidence for and against the assertion that the testament of Vibius Adiranus was re-carved in the first century A.D. In the process, I also hope to clarify aspects of the attitude of the Roman colonists and their descendants to the Oscan language. In particular, I will address the visibility of the previous epigraphic cultures of the town at the time of the A.D. 79 eruption, and question whether notions such as local cultural pride and antiquarian interests are appropriate to the first-century A.D. citizens of Pompeii. This is a question which is relevant not just to the history of Pompeii, but to our ideas on the progress of Romanization and Latinization across late Republican Italy: if some Roman citizens of the first century A.D. did feel pride in or identify themselves with Italic speakers of previous centuries, it would be significant for our understanding of negotiations of linguistic and regional identities in the imperial period.

The text of the inscription reads as follows, with an English translation below. Following normal convention in transcribing Italic languages, characters in the Latin alphabet are transcribed in italics, and those in ‘native’ Italic scripts, including the Central Oscan alphabet used in this inscription, are in bold.⁸ Hyphens at the ends of words which continue over two lines are not a feature of the inscription, and are added for clarity only. Characters in brackets do not appear in the original inscription; these are expansions of abbreviations used in the text.

*v(iǐbis). aadirans. v(iǐbieís). étiuvam. paam
vereiiaí. púmpaiianaí. trístaa-
mentud. deded. éisak. éitiuvad
v(iǐbis). viinikiís. m(a)r(aheís). kvaísstur. púmp-
aiians. tríbúm. ekak. kúmben-
nieís. tanginud. úpsannam
deded. ísidum. prúfatted*

Vibius Adiranus, son of Vibius, gave in his will money to the Pompeian **vereiia-**. With this money, Vibius Vinicius, son of Maras, Pompeian quaestor, dedicated the construction of this building by decision of the senate, and the same man approved it.

The text is broadly formulaic, and it has a great deal in common with the other twenty or so inscriptions commemorating building projects that have been found in Pompeii. Apart from the doubtful identity of the **vereiia-** (on which more below), the only peculiarity of this inscription is that it is the only Oscan epigraphic record in Pompeii of money being left in a will for a building project. Elsewhere, when the source of the money is stated, it is either said to be the money of the official (presumably alive), or money taken as fines.⁹ The interest of the inscription, therefore, lies not so much in what it tells us

⁷ E. Dench, ‘Samnites in English: the legacy of E. Togo Salmon in the English-speaking world’, in H. Jones (ed.), *Samnium: Settlement and Cultural Change* (2004), 13.

⁸ The so-called ‘Central’ or ‘Native’ Oscan alphabet was an adaptation from the Etruscan alphabet, and was used to write Oscan in Campania, Samnium and surrounding areas from around the fourth century B.C. to (perhaps) the first century A.D. In other areas, and at other periods, scripts based on the Latin alphabet and the Greek Ionic alphabet were used. See M. Lejeune, ‘Phonologie osque et graphie grecque’, *Revue des Etudes Anciennes* 72 (1970), 271–4, for more details.

⁹ Magistrate himself donating money: Po 16 (Crawford Pompei 16). Money from fines: Po 4, 13 (Crawford Pompei 21, 22). Cf. Cm 7 (Crawford Nola 2); also Lu 5 (Crawford Potentia 1), where an amount of money is stated, but the source is not clear.

about Samnite Pompeii, as what it might tell us about the course of the shift from Oscan to Latin, and language attitudes during the Roman period.

II ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Accurate contextual information is not always available at Pompeii, particularly where inscriptions have been removed after their discovery. It was unfortunately common in early excavations for finds to be moved, sometimes to suit certain interpretations, and records were patchy; in other cases, the original reports have been misunderstood or mistranslated.¹⁰ It is all the more important, therefore, to be aware of circular reasoning in matters of dating and identification: in some cases, archaeologists posit a likely date or purpose for a building, which leads epigraphists to date an inscription, on which date later archaeologists base their identification of the building, and so on.

The traditional view¹¹ is that Po 3 was found in the late eighteenth century on a building known as the ‘Samnite Palaestra’ in the (so-called) ‘Triangular Forum’,¹² and became detached during the course of excavation.¹³ Because the inscription was apparently associated with a palaestra, the *vereiia-* of Pompeii (the institution to which Vibius Adiranus left his money) was identified as being comparable with the Greek *ephebes*; such a group might well have built a palaestra in the second century B.C.¹⁴ The Triangular Forum is thought to have fallen out of use later, and the area was converted into a park with decorative ruins around 30–20 B.C.¹⁵ The old palaestra was apparently partially destroyed in the earthquake of A.D. 62 and rebuilt to slightly different proportions, allowing an extension of the neighbouring temple of Isis, as shown by the differently executed column capitals and the lack of the eastern portico (Fig. 2).¹⁶ It is at this stage, well into the first century A.D., that the Vibius Adiranus inscription is said to have been re-carved and deliberately set into the eastern wall.

However, the identification of the ‘Samnite Palaestra’ has been called into serious doubt. It was first identified as a palaestra in the nineteenth century, partly on the assumption that *vereiia-* could be an association of youths.¹⁷ More recently, the existence of a better-equipped exercise ground by the Stabian Baths and an even larger Augustan ‘Great Palaestra’ has raised some doubts. There is also no plumbing in the building: a palaestra without a washroom is extremely unlikely for a city as wealthy as Samnite-period Pompeii.¹⁸ The wording of the inscription itself is non-specific, referring only to *tríbúm ekak* – ‘this building’. Thus, there are no longer strong archaeological grounds for calling this a palaestra. The identification now rests solely on two things: the interpretation of *vereiia-* as an association of young men, which is by no means certain linguistically,¹⁹ and the association of the inscription Po 3 with this particular building. The potential for problems is clear: this meaning of *vereiia-*, and the

¹⁰ S. E. Bon, ‘Formation processes at Pompeii’, in S. E. Bon and R. Jones (eds), *Sequence and Space in Pompeii* (1997), 10.

¹¹ Apparently first proposed by H. Nissen, *Pompeianische Studien zur Städtekunde des Altertums* (1877), 158.

¹² The use of this area is debated. See R. Laurence, *Roman Pompeii: Space and Society* (1994), 20–2 for the argument that it was a pre-Roman forum; L. Richardson, *Pompeii: An Architectural History* (1988), 67 describes it as the precinct of an archaic Doric temple.

¹³ Cooley, op. cit. (n. 3), 81.

¹⁴ Adams, op. cit. (n. 5), 147.

¹⁵ Richardson, op. cit. (n. 12), 72; though see M. Beard, *Pompeii: The Life of a Roman Town* (2008), 282 for the view that the ‘ruined’ effect is caused by post-discovery activity.

¹⁶ Richardson, op. cit. (n. 12), 73.

¹⁷ H. Rix, ‘Oskisch *vereiia-* à la Mommsen’, in J. Habisreiter, R. Plath and S. Ziegler (eds), *Gering und doch von Herzen: 25 Indogermanistische Beiträge Bernhard Forssman zum 65. Geburtstag* (1999), 237–8.

¹⁸ Richardson, op. cit. (n. 12), 74.

¹⁹ The main two suggestions connect it with defence, sharing a root with Oscan *veru-* and Gothic *warjan* ‘to ward off’, or see it as a synonym for *touto* ‘people, community’. See Rix, op. cit. (n. 17). Crawford proposes that it



FIG. 2. The 'Samnite Palaestra', Pompeii, taken from next to the western portico. Note the three sides of columns (north, west and south) and the wall of the extended temple of Isis (east). (*Photo: author; with permission of the Soprintendenza di Pompei*)

association of the inscription with this structure, are still cited without due consideration of the fact that this interpretation rests primarily on archaeological theories of the purpose of the building which are no longer current.

Richardson suggests identifying the building as a temple of Hercules, given the apparent presence of an altar and the popularity of Hercules at Pompeii; this identification does not rule out a connection with the youth of the town, but also does not presuppose it.²⁰ In any case, any theories about the provenance or purpose of this inscription which rest on archaeology alone should be treated with suspicion. We cannot even be completely sure that the inscription was built into the wall: early reports have it either at the foot of the wall, or in the wall, and it is perfectly possible that the block was used to build the floor rather than the wall.²¹ Reconstructing the meaning of the inscription from the purpose of the building thus seems unwise. The content of the inscription is more likely to refer to a public building than a private one, but there are multiple public buildings of

stands in contrast to 'people', and thus refers to a group of the élite, though he admits the meaning of the word remains problematic. Crawford, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 24–5.

²⁰ Richardson, *op. cit.* (n. 12), 75 (n. 4) — the layout of the building is not necessarily problematic, since temples of Hercules are apt to take unusual architectural forms.

²¹ In fact, the idea that the inscription was built into the wall may come from an early misunderstanding of the original reports. Crawford, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 657.

Samnite-era construction both in the Triangular Forum and at other locations around the town with which the inscription could be associated.²²

Most tellingly (and, I think, conclusively), in contrast to other scholars including Poccetti who believe the stone to be complete, Crawford has recently noted that it seems to him to be broken, pointing out the two small carvings protruding from the top edge of the stone, clearly visible in Fig. 1.²³ These he identifies as lions' feet, indicating that there was additional carved decoration on the top of the stone, and therefore that this copy was not carved with the intention of being built into a wall. Rather, it was used as building material in either the wall or the floor, and may not have been treated with particular reverence.

It could be argued that the first-century A.D. reuse of the inscription in a prominent location, in the wall of an important civic building, may be evidence that the inscription was understood and treated respectfully. However, it is not at all clear that the inscription would have been visible once it had been built into the wall. There are multiple examples of Oscan inscriptions being reused as building material (or being dumped with the intention of using them as such), with the inscription covered by plaster or placed facing inwards.²⁴ Even if it was visible, it is not clear that the presence or content of the inscription was significant to those building the wall. As sometimes happens in modern structures, the block (which is attractive and relatively undamaged) may have been used as material for a new structure and the text, visible or not, could have been thought decorative but unreadable, or could simply have been ignored.²⁵ In Pompeii itself, Oscan inscriptions seem to have been left visible and *in situ* only where their removal would destroy or remove a useful structure, such as a pavement or a sundial. This suggests that it was the stone itself that was thought worthy of preservation, rather than the inscription.²⁶

III EPIGRAPHY

The inscription is written on a limestone slab (0.41 by 0.76 by 0.035 m), right to left, in the Central Oscan alphabet. It is in a good state of repair and, despite a few cracks and some damage to the bottom edge of the stone, none of the letters is obscured.²⁷ The epigraphy of the inscription has often been cited as proof that it was recopied; it is time, however, to explore this claim in detail in relation to lesser-known Oscan inscriptions of comparable content and style.

Poccetti claims that the placement of the *praenomina* (lines 1 and 4) to the right of the line justification, marking not only that the forms are names but also the beginning of a paragraph, is unparalleled in Oscan epigraphy.²⁸ This paragraphing is a central feature in his argument for the view that the inscription has been recopied, since the content suggests that its composition was in the mid-second century B.C., based on the similarity of the institutions mentioned and the formulae used in other Samnite-era official

²² *ibid.*, 240.

²³ *ibid.*, 656–7.

²⁴ Crawford lists a number of official Oscan-era inscriptions found, often in fragments, in contexts that suggest they were used as building material and their inscriptions were ignored (Crawford, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 39).

²⁵ In the Greek world, see for example the Egesta decree (*IG* 1³ 11), used as a door sill in a modern house such that the letters were visible but, presumably, were thought unimportant to the extent that they were completely rubbed away in places. Thanks to Robert Pitt for this example.

²⁶ Crawford, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 38. Pompei 13, 14 (laid into the road or pavement), 21 (sundial). Rix *Po* 1, 15, 4.

²⁷ P. G. Guzzo, 'Alla ricerca della Pompei sannitica', in *Studi sull'Italia dei Sanniti* (2000), 111 goes so far as to suspect that it may have been 'rejuvenated' by a modern restorer.

²⁸ Poccetti, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 243.

inscriptions.²⁹ His idea that the recopying was after A.D. 62 seems to be based on the damage to the building, which is consistent with earthquake damage (although we cannot know that this damage happened in A.D. 62), rather than being based on any specific features of the inscription itself.

There are several objections to the claim that the epigraphy of the inscription is more like first-century A.D. Latin texts than second-century B.C. Oscan texts. Firstly, the material used, a high quality limestone, is consistent with other second-century B.C. inscriptions. The execution of the letters also seems to suggest an earlier date; the argument that the regularity of the letters must indicate strong Latin influence does not take full account of comparable Oscan inscriptions. If one compares Po 3 to one of the other well-carved Oscan official inscriptions, such as the Cippus Abellanus (Cm 1; Crawford Abella 1), the similarity of the letter forms is striking. The tendency to form ligatures, particularly with *a+r*, *d*, *m* or *n* and, in the Cippus, with *í*+ various other letters, speaks of a shared origin in a well-developed epigraphic tradition. From Pompeii itself, Samnite-era inscriptions of similar content to the Vibius Adiranus inscription, such as Po 2 and Po 9,³⁰ which also record the approval of a building project by a *kvaísstur*, show markedly similar letter-forms and ligatures (Figs 3–4). Po 3 also shows a clear understanding of specifically



FIG. 3. Po 2 (Crawford Pompei 12), official inscription from Pompeii, commemorating the completion of a road by the aedile. Now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli. (Photo: author; the author is grateful to the *Soprintendenza di Napoli*)

²⁹ Poccetti, op. cit. (n. 2), 244.

³⁰ Crawford, op. cit. (n. 1), Pompei 12, 20.



FIG. 4. Po 9 (Crawford Pompei 20), official inscription from Pompeii, commemorating the completion of a project by a magistrate. Now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli. (Photo: author; the author is grateful to the Soprintendenza di Napoli)

Oscan practices, such as the use of word dividers, even though we have examples of Latin-influenced engravers making mistakes with these from an early period.³¹ By contrast, one seems to find epigraphic forms more typical of Roman officialdom in Pompeii in the Latin inscriptions put up after 80 B.C., even those from the early years of the colonization, which have much more rounded lettering and have little in common with the earlier Oscan tradition.

Even the paragraphing by offsetting of the *praenomina* to the right of the margin, which Poccetti thinks so characteristic of later Latin inscriptions, does have parallels in Oscan epigraphy. For example, Po 6,³² though it does not mark out the name of the magistrate in the first line, does indent the word *ísidu(m)* ‘the same man’ by one full letter-width (Fig. 5). This layout both marks the beginning of a new sentence, and re-emphasizes the importance of the magistrate in completing and approving the project. The fact that this layout is uncommon in Latin inscriptions of early date does not necessitate an imperial date for Po 3; this might have been an occasional practice of Oscan epigraphy before it became common in Latin. With so few monumental Oscan inscriptions extant, it is not always possible to know which tradition has influenced which.

³¹ e.g., in the Tabula Bantina (Lu 1; Crawford Bantia 1), written in Latin characters, from the second half of the second century B.C. This has *ex.elg.* for *exeic*, seemingly because the engraver misunderstood the first part of the word for a Latin preposition. It should be noted, though, that there are mistakes of this kind in texts not showing extensive influence from Latin — see the Agnone Tablet (Sa 1; Crawford Teruentum 34) for an erroneous interpunct in *anter.statai* in both instances.

³² Crawford, *op. cit.* (n. 1), Pompei 8.

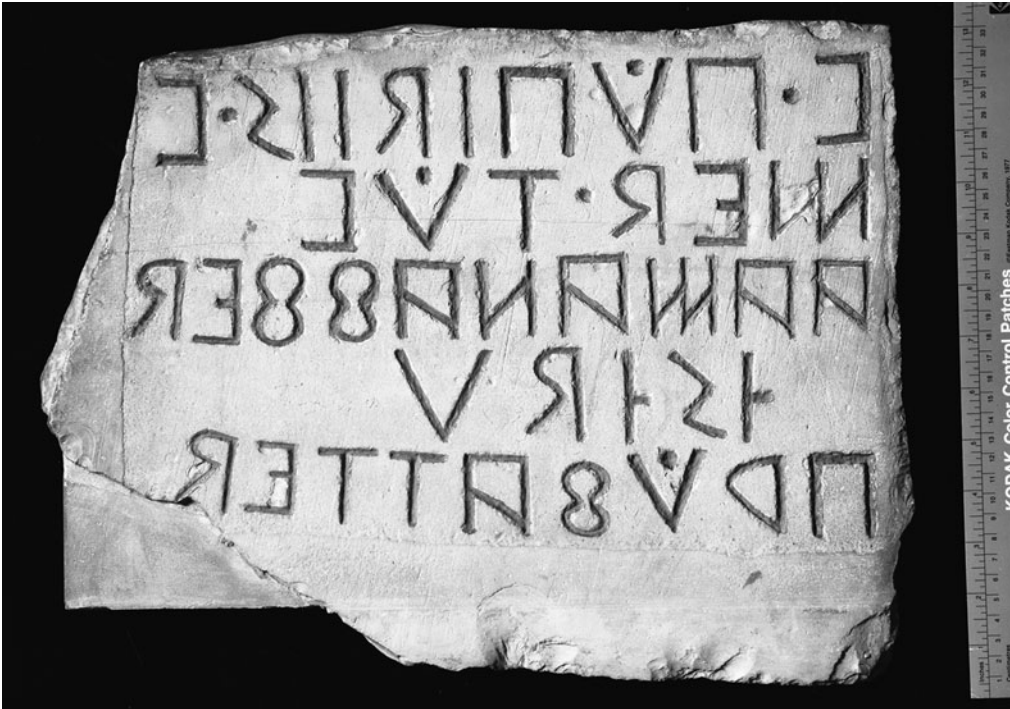


FIG. 5. Po 6 (Crawford Pompeii 8), official inscription from Pompeii, commemorating the completion of a project by a magistrate. (Photo courtesy of the British Museum)

It may be argued, however, that someone recopying an inscription would keep as close to the style of the original as possible, changing very little in the lettering, the layout and the material used, and thus it would be extremely difficult for a modern observer to tell the difference between a second-century B.C. inscription and a copy from the first century A.D. Although there is not a great deal of comparative data, since we have few inscriptions known to be later copies, the Columna Rostrata inscription (*CIL* 1² 25) may provide a useful counter-example. This text celebrates the naval victory of the consul C. Duilius in 260 B.C., and is thought to have been re-cut in the early imperial age.³³ The reason we know that the Columna Rostrata cannot be the third-century original is because of the style of lettering and because it is on marble, not tufa, as the original inscription almost certainly would have been.³⁴ As well as updates to bring the spelling into line with imperial standards, such as regular use of final *-m* and I-longa, there are false archaisms — all of these indicate changes to the original text, if one ever existed.³⁵ It seems, therefore, that on the rare occasions when archaic inscriptions were recopied, the epigraphic style tended to be altered and updated, and even artificially archaized, which cannot conclusively be shown to have been done to Po 3.

³³ Clackson and Horrocks, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 108.

³⁴ A. E. Gordon, *Illustrated Introduction to Latin Epigraphy* (1983), 16.

³⁵ Clackson and Horrocks, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 110.

IV LINGUISTIC ‘INFLUENCE’ FROM LATIN

It is widely agreed that there is a considerable degree of Latin influence on the Oscan of this text. ‘Influence’ is an inexact term, and can cover a wide range of activity: deliberate borrowing of terms or structures from a second language (L₂) to one’s first language (L₁), the subconscious interference of L₁ on L₂, and other kinds of behaviour. How we account for the influence of one language on another in any text has a great deal to do with the text’s context and apparent intention.³⁶ However, as we will see, it is not the case that the Latinate features we find in Po 3 must have originated in the influence of post-colonization Latin, since many have parallels in Oscan texts of the second century B.C.

We have roughly twenty comparable Oscan official inscriptions on stone from Pompeii from the Samnite period of the town, some complete, some very fragmentary. The longest is eleven lines, and the shortest (complete) inscription is one line, but the majority of the complete inscriptions are two to four lines long. They are generally very formulaic, and tend to include a selection of a stock of elements. All of those in which the beginning of the inscription survives start with the name of the magistrate(s) responsible for putting it up, with their official titles. In many cases the magistrates are specifically said to have overseen and approved the project; it is also common to include the phrase *kúmbenniéis tanginúd*, ‘by decision of the council’.³⁷ Sometimes the project being commemorated or other circumstances surrounding the commissioning of the inscription are mentioned, but not always. Further details of the usual structures and vocabulary used are found in the discussion below.

Of course, for any of the features detailed below, it would be possible to counter-argue that someone recopying an inscription would not change the features of the inscription materially. However, this is not what we find on the C. Duilius inscription (discussed above), where the language has been changed from the original. In addition, any inscription damaged enough to merit recopying might have had considerable lacunae, where inconsistencies could creep in when the text was rewritten. The fact that the text seems to be so consistent with the Oscan of the second and first centuries B.C. indicates, therefore, that the inscription is probably original.

Phonology

Although difficult to gauge in any written text, there is no evidence of phonological interference from Latin in Po 3. There may be phonological interference in one of the imperial-age inscriptions — the letter *o* in Po 67 (g. *ivdaííeos*) could show a change in the quality of the vowel /ú/ [ɔ] which the writer was unsure how to represent in Oscan.³⁸ Confusions of this type do not occur in the Vibius Adiranus inscription, where all vowel signs, including *i*, *í*, *u* and *ú*, are used in keeping with the practice we find in Oscan inscriptions from the Samnite period of the town.

Lexicon

The word *kvaísstur* is a clear second-century borrowing from Latin. There was no elected position of *kvaísstur* in Pompeii after 89 B.C., so this term is likely to have been limited to the pre-Roman phase of the town.³⁹ Indeed, this term appears in several other Pompeian

³⁶ See Adams, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 27–8.

³⁷ This term for ‘council’ is found in Pompeii only; elsewhere, the usual phrase is *senateís tanginúd*. See J. Untermann, *Wörterbuch des Oskisch-Umbrischen* (2000), 412.

³⁸ Although see Crawford for doubts on the authenticity of this graffito (his Pompei 147), Crawford, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 839.

³⁹ See H. Mouritsen, *Elections, Magistrates and Municipal Elite: Studies in Pompeian Epigraphy* (1988), 28–30,

inscriptions of the Samnite period of the town (Po 4, 8, 9, 14⁴⁰) and thus is a well-established magistracy of the second century B.C. The gemination of *s* before *t* is paralleled in a number of other Oscan words (*pússtíst* ‘positum est’, *passtata* ‘porticum’), and indicates that the borrowing has been phonologically incorporated into the language.

The verb *prúffated* is cognate with Latin *probavit*, which is used in analogous contexts.⁴¹ Because the development of a verb from an adverb (Latin *probe*) is rather unusual, it is usually considered that Oscan practice was influenced by Latin, even if this is a calque based on an existing Oscan adverb (unattested, but see Umbrian *profe*) rather than a direct borrowing.⁴² However, this is a common word in this position in Oscan public inscriptions from the Samnite period, well attested in second-century inscriptions.⁴³

In form, at least, *tanginom* (abl. *tanginúd*) is an inherited Italic word,⁴⁴ common in Oscan public inscriptions.⁴⁵ However, it is possible that its semantic range has been influenced by Latin *sententia*, so that the phrase *kúmbennieís tanginúd* (or, outside Pompeii, *senateís tanginúd*) has the same range as *senatus sententia*. This is an instance in which Latin is likely to have influenced Oscan early; although many of the inscriptions containing this phrase cannot be dated precisely, the Cippus Abellanus and Sa 8 are both from the second century B.C. Also, *senatus sententia* is a phrase characteristic of early Latin legal texts and need not have come from imperial-period Latin influence.⁴⁶

Although *tristaamentud* could feasibly be an inherited Italic word, *tristaamentud ... deded* is said to be based on the Latin phrase *testamento dare*,⁴⁷ and *tristaamentud* is said to be a borrowing of Latin *testamento* with influence from the native word *trstus* ‘witness’.⁴⁸ In the context of a system of law which was apparently heavily influenced by Latin by the second century B.C., this explanation is plausible.⁴⁹ The marking of the double vowel also indicates that this word is likely to have been borrowed: although Oscan often marks long vowels with double letters (e.g. *Aadirans*, *tríúbúm*, etc.), *tristaamentud* is the only known case of a vowel being doubled to show length in Oscan script in any position other than the initial syllable.⁵⁰ Since the *a* in Latin *testamento* is long, this may indicate a borrowing taken into Oscan after an earlier sound change had shortened all Oscan long vowels in non-initial position. Unfortunately, we have no other examples which allow us to confirm exactly when the Oscan sound change took place. We do, though, have the additional evidence that the extended suffix *-men-to-* is not

on details of magistracies; see Cooley, op. cit. (n. 3), 79 for another view, relying on Q in later inscriptions being *quaestor*, not *quinquennalis* or *quattuorvir*.

⁴⁰ Crawford, op. cit. (n. 1), Pompei 21, 19, 20, 23.

⁴¹ Clackson and Horrocks, op. cit. (n. 3), 63.

⁴² *ibid.*, 64.

⁴³ At Pompeii, forms of this verb are attested finally in Po 1, Po 3, Po 5, Po 6, and probably in Po 10, Po 13. (Crawford Pompei 13, 24, 9, 8; probably 25, 22.)

⁴⁴ Buck, op. cit. (n. 2), 14. Cf. also English *think*, Gothic *þagkjan*.

⁴⁵ At Pompeii, found in Po 3, Po 4, Po 9, Po 10, and probably Po 14 (Crawford Pompei 24, 21, 20, 25, and probably 23). Elsewhere, found in (among others) the Tabula Bantina, Cippus Abellanus, Sa 2, Sa 8, Sa 9 (Crawford Bantia 1, Abella 1, Teruentum 36, 21, 33). See Crawford, op. cit. (n. 1), 1635, for a full list of attestations.

⁴⁶ See *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus*, 186 B.C.: lines 8, 17, 21, 23.

⁴⁷ Adams, op. cit. (n. 5), 137.

⁴⁸ Poccetti, op. cit. (n. 2), 245; Clackson and Horrocks, op. cit. (n. 3), 62.

⁴⁹ There are probable parallels for lexical borrowings from Latin legal language in the second century B.C., such as *ehpreívíd* for *ex privato* (Sa 16, Crawford Teruentum 9).

⁵⁰ There are two instances of *afaamated* in two Oscan inscriptions written in Greek script (Lu 6, 7; Crawford Potentia 9, 10). In Oscan script we have only the form without the prefix, *faamated* (Sa 13; Crawford Teruentum 12).

characteristic of Oscan derivational morphology, and appears only here and in *pavmentúm* in Cm 4 (Crawford Cumae 2), which is borrowed from Latin. On that basis, it seems likely that *tristaamentud* is indeed a borrowing from Latin legal language. Because of the examples above, in which Latin legal lexemes were borrowed into second-century texts, there is no reason that *tristaamentud* must have been borrowed any later.

Morphology

There are no borrowings from Latin morphology in the inscription. Of course, absence of evidence is not to be equated with evidence of absence; while morphological borrowing may occur at an advanced stage of language shift, it need not occur, and even if it was happening in Oscan during the period when Po 3 was written, it would not necessarily be reflected in the inscription. In fact, Adams lists no clear morphological borrowings from Latin into Oscan at any time,⁵¹ and so the fact that there is no such borrowing in this particular inscription tells us very little.

Syntax

The relative clause which begins in the first line of the inscription (*eítuivam paam ... deded eísak eítuivad*), characterized by so-called *attractio inversa*, in which the subject and object of the relative clause are both fronted and the antecedent is included in both the matrix clause and the relative clause, is reminiscent of Latin legal texts. In particular, the phrasing *eítuivam paam ... eísak eítuivad ...* seems to parallel the Latin legal phrase *pecunia quae ... ea pecunia ...*⁵² However, as Adams points out, the construction can also be paralleled in Hittite and Vedic.⁵³ It is nevertheless likely that this particular phraseology has been borrowed from Latin legal language, rather than inherited from an earlier common ancestor, because of the exact correspondence of the meaning.⁵⁴ The use of Latin models for Oscan official and legal inscriptions, particularly in their syntax and content, is clear from the last quarter of the second century B.C., and so the Latin influence here should be seen as consistent with a second-century date, probably post-123 B.C. based on the kind of Latin texts this inscription uses as models.⁵⁵

Therefore, not only is the Latin influence on the text datable to the second century B.C., because of parallels with other Oscan texts, but we also do not see the kind of syntactic, morphological and phonetic interference which would be likely if the inscription had been re-copied in the mid-first century A.D. There is also no sign of false archaisms — or false Oscanisms — which, from the comparative evidence of the Columna Rostrata, one might expect in a later copy.

V ATTITUDES TOWARDS OSCAN, 89 B.C.—A.D. 79

As we have seen, there is little epigraphic or linguistic evidence in the Vibius Adiranus inscription which would indicate that it was recopied after the earthquake of A.D. 62, and the archaeological evidence is less than conclusive. However, there are wider implications for the date of this inscription. If, as others have done, we agree that it was

⁵¹ Adams, op. cit. (n. 5), 140–1.

⁵² Pocetti, op. cit. (n. 2), 239.

⁵³ Adams, op. cit. (n. 5), 137.

⁵⁴ Clackson and Horrocks, op. cit. (n. 3), 63.

⁵⁵ Crawford, op. cit. (n. 1), 2, 657.

copied in the first century A.D., then this leads to some conclusions about the general Roman attitude to Oscan which may be misleading.

The opinion of Poccetti is not only that this inscription has been recopied, but also that this recopying is a sign of Romanized Oscan families taking pride in the achievements of their pre-Roman ancestors.⁵⁶ This has been accepted by Adams as a plausible reading of the evidence, and he even sees it as evidence for the survival of Oscan as a spoken language into the imperial period.⁵⁷ However, I would argue that the idea of élite families which had been Romanized for several generations wanting to ‘mantenere vivo il ricordo delle virtù degli avi’⁵⁸ is inconsistent with the attitude to Oscan which we find elsewhere in the town, and, although a possibility for some residents of Pompeii at some periods, it should not be assumed on the basis of this inscription alone.

The example usually given for a comparable use of Oscan by later residents of the town is Po 8 (Crawford Pompei 19), which was reused in the house of Cornelius Rufus. Poccetti sees this as showing pride in the family’s civic achievements, but it is not even clear that this inscription referred to family members. It may have simply been reused as building material, as many of the Oscan inscriptions from Pompeii found in modern times had been, with or without the inscription visible.⁵⁹ A further possible example of the reuse of Oscan inscriptions in élite homes, which Poccetti does not cite, is Po 20 (Crawford Pompei 36), which may have stood in a visible context on an altar in the atrium of the House of the Faun.⁶⁰ Given the overall old-fashioned aesthetic of the house, though, this is more likely to be an example of a desire to be seen as an old family — and perhaps here there is a hint of antiquarianism — rather than pride in particular Oscan-speaking ancestors. Even so, the house was discovered full of bits and pieces of stone for use in rebuilding, and it is not clear that the altar was in fact on display.⁶¹

In fact, it is rare to find any evidence from Italy of Latin-speaking Roman citizens deliberately marking themselves out as having had non-Latin-speaking ancestors, particularly Italic-speaking ancestors.⁶² Some languages did have these connotations of group identity in imperial Italy: the Jewish community at Venusia continued to use Hebrew tags on funerary inscriptions up to the sixth century A.D., long after they were primarily Latin-speaking.⁶³ However, there are obvious religious and cultural motivations in that case which do not have a parallel here; we have no evidence of Oscan as a language of ritual after its loss in other domains, nor was it associated with the continuation of a separate religious identity. With so little evidence of this kind of activity anywhere in Italy, and only a couple of potential examples in Pompeii itself, it seems unwise to assign a motive of ancestral pride to the Pompeian élite without question. It is very difficult to say that any particular importance was attached to these inscriptions at all, since context suggests that they were simply viewed as reusable building material (with the inscription visible or not). As stated above, there are

⁵⁶ Poccetti, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 243.

⁵⁷ Adams, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 147.

⁵⁸ Poccetti, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 243.

⁵⁹ Cooley, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 80; Crawford regards Po 8 (his Pompei 19) as having been dumped in a cupboard for future use as building material (Crawford, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 39).

⁶⁰ Cooley, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 81.

⁶¹ Crawford, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 681.

⁶² Ovid is clear about his Paelignian background (*Amores* 3.15.5–10), but rather than revering his ancestors sees himself as surpassing them; he also does not mark them out as specifically non-Latin-speaking (F. Millar, ‘Ovid and the Domus Augusta: Rome seen from Tomoi’, *Journal of Roman Studies* 83 (1993), 6). The claim to Etruscan ancestry by Maecenas in the first century B.C. is a possible exception to the general rule — Hor., *Od.* 3.29. However, Etruscan had a cultural standing at Rome that Italic did not, as shown by the continued study of Etruscan by the Roman élite into the imperial period, including famously by the emperor Claudius (Suet., *Life of Claudius* 42.2).

⁶³ A. Wallace-Hadrill, *Rome’s Cultural Revolution* (2008), 76.

examples both in the modern world and in Pompeii itself of the reuse of ancient inscribed stones in houses and other structures where the text simply goes unnoticed, even if visible.

Conversely, there is evidence that the Roman colonists may have been actively antagonistic towards the Oscan-speaking population of Pompeii after 80 B.C., making it unlikely that by the first century A.D. wealthy citizens would necessarily want to advertise their connection to the earlier life of the town.

Cooley states that there is no evidence of the inscriptions of the town being systematically erased, and that Oscan was not seen as a symbol of the rebellious allies during or after the Social War.⁶⁴ There are two possible objections to this. Firstly, the rebels themselves did set up Oscan as a collective language alongside Latin, and in an aggressive way, issuing coins bearing Oscan legends with symbols of their desire to trample Roman oppression.⁶⁵ There is some evidence that, even after the Social War, Romans felt there to be antagonism between themselves and the Samnites: in 62 B.C., Cicero was still able to speak of considerable tension between the Pompeians and the Roman colonists.⁶⁶ Secondly, there is clear evidence of the removal of Oscan inscriptions from public view, and in some cases Latin replacements. The weights and measures table (*mensa ponderaria*) still visible in the Pompeian forum not only had its measures altered to the Roman standard, but also had the Oscan characters on it chipped away and replaced with a Latin inscription commemorating the adjustments.⁶⁷ Other inscriptions were plastered over, some of which have only recently been revealed. For example, Po 54 (Crawford Pompei 1), of which only a few letters were visible when Rix brought out his edition, has now had the plaster covering it removed to reveal the whole inscription, which reads **I. mummis I. kúsúl**.⁶⁸ The message itself could not have been objectionable to the colonists, being the name of a Roman consul, and thus it seems to have been covered up because of its language alone. On the basis of this evidence, it seems unlikely that the élite would associate themselves with a language and a culture which, relatively recently, had been the symbol of a rebel population.

Not only does the idea of an ‘antiquarian’ attitude towards Oscan seem somewhat inconsistent with the attitude of the Roman colonists to the Samnites, although it remains a possibility, but the ‘recopying’ of this inscription is unlikely based on the evidence we have for the knowledge of Oscan at Pompeii in the final years of the town. Although it is extremely difficult to estimate how much the language was spoken, particularly in the lower echelons of society, after the colonization, the evidence we have does not suggest that knowledge of Oscan script continued for long in the great majority of the population.

The three inscriptions in the Oscan alphabet dated to the Empire are Po 66, 67 and 68.⁶⁹ The first, a graffito from a brothel wall, reads **markas** (or possibly **margas**).⁷⁰ This is apparently a name, and Rix has it as the genitive of a female name, though it does not correspond to any known female name, and the prostitutes themselves are unlikely to have been literate.⁷¹ Perhaps more likely is that it is a client’s name, and it is a variation on the common Oscan male name *Maras*, maybe with the influence of Latin *Marcus*, given the similarity between the Oscan letter <G> and the Roman <C>. Po 67 is another name — **g. ivdaííeos** — but, since it contains the Latin letter <O>, it cannot be said even to be fully in the Oscan alphabet. As in Po 66, this does not seem to be a truly Oscan

⁶⁴ Cooley, op. cit. (n. 3), 80.

⁶⁵ Wallace-Hadrill, op. cit. (n. 63), 89.

⁶⁶ Cic., *Sul.*, 29.60–2.

⁶⁷ Crawford, op. cit. (n. 1), 662–4.

⁶⁸ Wallace-Hadrill, op. cit. (n. 63), 131–2; Crawford, op. cit. (n. 1), 615.

⁶⁹ Crawford, op. cit. (n. 1), Pompei 46, 147, 146.

⁷⁰ Rix, op. cit. (n. 1), 108 reads *margas*; Vetter, op. cit. (n. 1), 64 reads *markas*.

⁷¹ Rix, op. cit. (n. 1), 142.

name; it could be an ethnic based on the Latin *iudaeus* ‘Jew’, though this is speculative. The final example, Po 68, seems to read *neypús. ieri sal* — which is unintelligible as Oscan. In fact, Crawford casts serious doubt on the authenticity of both of the latter two graffiti.⁷²

It is problematic, therefore, to place Po 3 in a period when there are so few Oscan-alphabet inscriptions, and those which exist show no real knowledge of the Oscan language or nomenclature, show no professionalism of execution, and could plausibly have been written by non-residents of the town (or, indeed, may not be ancient at all). Rather, it causes less tension with the other evidence of language use in the town to date Po 3 to the pre-colonization period, when all public inscriptions at Pompeii were in Oscan. Of course, this evidence does not preclude the possibility that many people did in fact speak Oscan and that the Oscan script was still known by some stonecutters. We can only speak in terms of probabilities based on the evidence, and thus far evidence for the ongoing use of Oscan in high-end inscriptions has not emerged.⁷³

VI POMPEII AS A MODEL FOR ‘ROMANIZATION’ AND LANGUAGE SHIFT IN ITALY

The study of linguistic ‘Romanization’,⁷⁴ ‘Latinization’, and language death in the Italian peninsula will always be hampered by the patchy availability of evidence from many of the languages and communities involved. As a result, those sites which do furnish us with more evidence for the process of language shift tend to serve as models for other areas where this information is lacking. This is particularly true of Pompeii, where the evidence is uniquely rich and well-studied, with an unparalleled range of texts, from expensive officially-sanctioned inscriptions to personal graffiti and dipinti.

Any conclusions based on Pompeian material must therefore be undertaken with particular care, and the dating of Po 3 is no exception. As we have seen, Adams has suggested a connection between the recopying of Po 3 and ‘local pride’ in Oscan, and perhaps ongoing knowledge of the Oscan language in the area. Local pride and the survival of the language are, of course, not the same thing. As stated above, there is little evidence that Roman citizens anywhere in first-century A.D. Italy constructed their identity based on the Italic languages spoken by their ancestors more than a century previously. While local origins and non-citizen ancestors could be celebrated, Roman citizens did not, I suggest, regard Oscan as a language of ongoing historical or cultural significance, unlike Etruscan or Greek.

Other scholars have gone even further — Cooley has argued that ‘the situation at Pompeii perhaps suggests that other local Italic languages too may have persisted for longer than is sometimes supposed’.⁷⁵ This kind of extrapolation from the evidence found in Pompeii to other areas and other languages can be justifiable; but in this case, where a great deal of the burden of proof rests on just one inscription, it may result in unhelpful and misleading generalizations about the date and speed of the death of local

⁷² Crawford, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 39, 838–9.

⁷³ M. H. Crawford, ‘Italy and Rome from Sulla to Augustus’, in *Cambridge Ancient History* 2, vol. 10 (1996), 429.

⁷⁴ The term ‘Romanization’ has come under scrutiny, in particular for being over-simplistic and over-emphasizing the rôle of Rome in what was often a locally-driven phenomenon, but an equally succinct adequate replacement has yet to be proposed. See for more detailed discussions of this issue: Wallace-Hadrill, *op. cit.* (n. 63), 10; E. Curti, E. Dench and J. R. Patterson, ‘The archaeology of central and southern Roman Italy: recent trends and approaches’, *Journal of Roman Studies* 86 (1996), 181; E. Bispham, *From Asculum to Actium: The Municipalization of Italy from the Social War to Augustus* (2007), 3–10. Pompeii (and indeed much of Italy) has, in any case, a complex history and cultural identity that may not be well-represented by words such as ‘Romanization’ or alternatives. See A. Wallace-Hadrill, ‘Pompeian identities: between Oscan, Samnite, Greek, Roman, and Punic’, in E. Gruen (ed.), *Cultural Identities in the Ancient Mediterranean* (2011), 415–27.

⁷⁵ Cooley, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 84.

languages in Italy. The idea of some knowledge of Oscan persisting into the first century A.D. runs counter to the general picture of a (cross-linguistically speaking) sudden language shift at Pompeii. Language death, as shown by studies of modern languages, typically takes three generations or more;⁷⁶ less than this, which is certainly possible in the case of Pompeii, where Oscan-language epigraphy is relatively plentiful in the mid-second century and almost non-existent after 80 B.C., indicates exceptional pressure of some kind. The duration of language death is an important indication of the enormous economic and social pressure on Italic-speaking populations in the first century B.C.; an accurate estimate of how and when the death of Oscan took place is therefore central to our understanding of the process of 'Romanization'. Such an estimate relies on a number of factors, and as such is beyond the scope of this article, which seeks to clarify one factor only — the end point of monumental epigraphy in Oscan at Pompeii.

VII CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of this reassessment of inscription Po 3, it does not seem likely that it was recopied after the earthquake of A.D. 62. The linguistic influence of Latin on the text is consistent with the Oscan we find in the second and first centuries B.C. The epigraphy, while of a very high quality, nevertheless shows many more features in common with second-century B.C. Oscan inscriptions than early imperial Latin ones. The archaeological evidence, too, is far less indicative of a first-century A.D. date than we are sometimes led to believe: previous accounts have not always fully explained the uncertainties and misunderstandings surrounding the location in which the inscription was first found, and the new observation that the stone is incomplete seems to confirm that the inscription was not re-carved specially to be fitted into the new wall of the temple of Isis. I would go so far as to question the idea that there were many Oscan inscriptions visible in first-century A.D. Pompeii; and those that were visible, whether reused in new structures or left in their original contexts, may not have been read.

While a change in the dating of this inscription must also change our views on the state of Oscan at Pompeii in the decades before its destruction, it removes several apparent inconsistencies rather than creating more. In particular, the difficulty of the gulf between the level of understanding of Oscan in Po 3 and in the only other first-century A.D. Oscan inscriptions, which are mainly unintelligible graffiti, is no longer an issue. Redating this inscription to the second century B.C. also helps to explain away the apparent contrast between the 'pride' of Roman citizens at Pompeii in their Oscan-speaking ancestry with the silence on the matter we find elsewhere in Italy. It also fits better with the general picture of an abrupt end to monumental Oscan epigraphy, and the dating and duration of the death of Oscan. I therefore suggest that the testament of Vibius Adiranus is not a later recopying, but a late second-century original inscription of a similar date to other public and official inscriptions in Oscan from the area.

Pembroke College, Cambridge
km44o@cam.ac.uk

⁷⁶ J. F. Hamers, and M. H. A. Blac, *Bilinguality and Bilingualism* (1989), 176; C. Myers-Scotton, *Multiple Voices: An Introduction to Bilingualism* (2006), 100.