

OSCAN EÍTUNS

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Among the Oscan epigraphic data from Pompeii there is a group of texts commonly known as ‘**eítuns** inscriptions’ after the keyword they contain. All of these were painted in red on the wall of buildings, usually at a certain height from the ground (c. 1.8–3m) and close to a street corner, so as to be easily visible and readable. In each case, the basic structure is the same: an ablative phrase **eksuk amvianud** is followed by the word **eítuns** and then an indication of place; the latter is further specified by a locative relative clause introduced by **puf** ‘where’ and containing the finite 3sg. verb **faamat** (or in one case, 3pl. **faamant**) as well as the verb’s subject in the form of one (or for **faamant**, two) personal name(s) in the nominative. A typical example – and the one that was first discovered, in 1780 – thus reads, according to the latest edition in the *Imagines Italicae* (POMPEI 2 = Vetter 23, Rix Po 34; cf. also POMPEI 3–7 = Vetter 24–28, Rix Po 35–39):¹

eksuk· amvianud· eítuns

anter· tiurri· XII· iní(m)· ver(u)

sarínu· puf· faamat

m(a)r(as)· aadiriis· v(ibieís)

In Crawford’s translation ‘The *eítuns* from this quarter, between Tower 12 and the *veru sarinu* [sc. ‘the Sarine gate’, A.W.], where Mr. Adirius, son of V., commands’, the rendering of **faamat** by ‘commands’ (or: ‘gives orders’) is nowadays uncontroversial; and most scholars will also accept that **amvianud** is the ablative of a noun corresponding to Gr. ἄμφοδον ‘street, block of houses, town quarter’ (i.e., **amviā-(ā)no-*, possibly a calque of ἄμφοδον), perhaps rather than an adverbialised ablative gerundive (‘by this route [~ going around]’).² Truly disputed, by contrast, remains the meaning and function of **eítuns**, and it is the origin and explanation of this lexical item on which we shall focus here.

Given the recurrent reference in all of the **ēituns** inscriptions to specific locations between or by landmarks such as towers and gates, but also public and even private buildings, it was quickly suggested that these texts may have served as signposts of one type or another, for example pointing to the nearest pub,³ taxi-stand,⁴ or ATM (cf. below). Accordingly, the main question was always what to make of **ēituns**.

To begin with, scholars thought of a verbal form connected with the root **(h)₁ei-* ‘go’, be it a 3pl. ind. (‘they go’) or a somehow remodelled equivalent of Umbr. 3pl. ipv. **etuta/etutu** ‘they shall go’ (i.e., 3sg. ipv. **eitō(d)* + 3pl. (secondary) **-ns**).⁵ This approach, which posed unsurmountable formal problems anyway, was however decisively disproved by the discovery of POMPEI 7 = Vetter 28, Rix Po 39, in which **ēituns** itself is missing from the extant part of the inscription, but in which no other supplement is conceivable between the formulaic start **eksuk amvī[an(n)ud** and the 3pl. pres. **set** ‘they are’ that immediately follows a gap of the right size. In the absence of any other plausible subject of **set**, [**ēituns**] has to fill this role, and a consonant-stem nom. pl. is of course also perfectly suitable for a sequence that ends in Oscan **-Cs** (< **-C-es*).

This being so, and since there is no reason why for example a participial form **ei-t-ont-es*,⁶ should have yielded **ēituns** and not **†ēitú(n)z** (cf. e.g. **húrz** ‘enclosure’ < **g^hort-os*), the only acceptable starting point now appears to be a nom. pl. in **-ōn-es*, which parallels Osc. **humuns** ‘men’ (< **hom-ōn-es*) but excludes any *direct* insertion into the verbal paradigm of **ei*.⁷ Instead, **eitōn-* might be “a noun of action like Grk. ἄγων or denote persons like most of the Latin nouns in *-ō, -ōnis*”.⁸ The latter option would still point strongly⁹ towards a nominal basis such as **eito-*, perhaps with the meaning **‘going, march’ (vel sim.)*, making **eitōnes* ‘march-men’ or ‘marchers’.¹⁰ Although this is impossible to disprove, the absence of independent evidence for the missing link **eito-* in either Sabellic or indeed Italic and Indo-European more generally does not inspire confidence; a possible nominal derivative in **-to-* of **h₁ei-* is in fact found at least in Germanic and Celtic, with the meaning ‘oath’ (Goth. *aīps*, OHG *eid*, OIr. *óeth* etc.; cf. also Gr. οἶτος ‘fate, doom’?), but it there displays an incompatible *o*-grade in the root – a fact which in turn undermines a further theory according to which **ēituns** would designate ‘enrolled soldiers’ who had sworn an oath of allegiance (i.e., **eitōn-* ‘oath-man’).¹¹ Meanwhile, the comparison with ἄγων and similar non-neuter *n*-stem nouns, and the assumption of a “technical military sense [...] ‘goings’ = ‘mobilization’”¹² leads

onto even more slippery territory because the few apparently deverbal nouns that would be comparable with this in Latin are concrete nouns (e.g. *carbōn*-‘piece of charcoal’), not abstract *nomina actionis*.

Having said that, there is one element that unites all the interpretations just outlined, namely that the **εἴτυνς** inscriptions had a military function. This was first suggested by G. Fiorelli, who also already connected the texts with L. Cornelius Sulla’s siege of Pompeii during the Social War (89 B.C.), and it was subsequently elaborated on by H. Nissen.¹³ Following a suggestion by H. Bücheler, Nissen adduced a clinching argument in favour of Fiorelli’s contextualisation in the form of a directly comparable text from Hellenistic Smyrna whose military background is guaranteed and where the phrase τοὺς ἐν τῷ ἀνφόδῳ is strikingly reminiscent of **eksuk amvíanud eítuns** in Pompeii (*ISmyrna* 613a; cf. *ISmyrna* 613b, 613c, *IStratonikeia* 1003, 1004):

τοὺς ἐν τῷ ἀν-
φόδῳι τετά-
χθαι ἀπὸ τοῦ
πύργου τοῦ τῆς
Ἀγαθῆς Τύ-
χης ἕως τοῦ
τῆς Εὐετηρί-
ας.

‘The (men/soldiers) in the quarter are to be positioned [along the stretch of the wall] from the Tower of Good Fortune up to the Tower of Prosperity’.

While Nissen himself had little to say on **εἴτυνς**,¹⁴ and even openly challenged the natural inference that the defense of Pompeii must have been organised in a similar way as that of Smyrna, by assigning the men from each quarter an assembly place or part of the town’s walls to hold,¹⁵ Fiorelli’s hypothesis thus remains by far the most attractive way of making sense of our dossier. In particular, it is distinctly preferable to a later suggestion by F. Skutsch, who thought of advertisements for nearby *mensae argentariae* or ‘banks’, with the final **puf faamat** clause in each case referring to the bank’s owner in his role as an ‘auctioneer’ (“*hac via (mensae) argentariae inter turrim XII et portam Sarinam* (u.dgl.), *ubi praedicat praeco NN*”).¹⁶ Not only is a purely directional ‘this way’ difficult to read into **eksuk amvíanud**, but it also remains unclear why private ads of this kind should have been presented

in such a formulaic as well as cumbersome way: which modern bank would put up signs saying, for example, ‘To the bank, where *Credit Suisse* is offering its services’?

And yet, Skutsch’s idea had one advantage over its competitors, relating to the term **eifuns** on which it was all based. In order to explain **eifuns**, we need not postulate any unattested **eito-* or the like; for, as Skutsch noted, in the lexeme “klingt eins der bekanntesten oskischen Wörter an: bantin. *ēituā* = pompejan. *ēitiuvā-* ‘Geld’”. Given the way in which the frequent Latin denominatives of the type *praedō* ‘robber’ (cf. *praeda* ‘booty’), *lin-teō* ‘linen-weaver’ (cf. *linteum* ‘linen’), *epulō* ‘banqueter’ (cf. *epulae* ‘banquet’) etc. are formed – by designating a person after a thing with which he/she is especially associated –,¹⁷ it makes perfect sense to derive **eifuns**, via **eituōnes*, from **eit(u)uā* ‘money’, no matter what the ultimate origin of the latter word is.¹⁸ The only reservation concerns Skutsch’s next step, his conclusion that ‘money-men’ have to be (something like) ‘bankers’ (*argentārii*) and that the military theory therefore has to be abandoned.

In reality, there is a rather simple way of bringing together the loose ends. In English, as in other modern European languages, the most basic term for army personnel is derived from a word for ‘money’ paid for the discharge of military duties: Engl. *soldier*, Fr. *soldat*, Germ. *Soldat*, etc. all relate directly to Engl. *sold* (now obsolete for the ‘wages’ or ‘salary’ esp. of soldiers), Fr. *solde*, Germ. *Sold*, etc., thereby continuing the same relationship between Lat. **sol(i)dārius*, **sol(i)dātus* and the base noun *sol(i)dus* denoting the payment (orig. ‘gold-coin’) received by members of an armed force. The fundamental idea is easy to make out: a soldier is someone who, in contrast with ‘normal’ people who earn their living as artisans or farmers, has to be remunerated to make up for the unavailability of such ‘normal’ income. In societies that make use of professional soldiers – as opposed to general recruitment – this distinction may be particularly prominent, and terms like Lat. *mercēnārius* (cf. *mercēs* ‘pay, wages’) or Gr. μισθωτός (cf. μισθός ‘pay, wages’, incl. ‘pay, allowance for public services’), though also applicable to other kinds of ‘hired servants’, therefore specifically denote ‘mercenaries’. But even in Latin, where the most generic noun for ‘soldier’ is of a different origin (*mīl-it-*, perh. ‘the one going in a group of thousand’?), the usual way of referring to the performance of military service by citizens is *stīpendia merēre/merēri* (e.g. Cic. *Cael.* 11, *de or.* 2.258, etc.), highlighting the role played by the *stīpendium* ‘(soldier’s) pay, stipend’ no less than the term *stīpendiārius* as a rough

equivalent of *mercēnārius* for ‘mercenary’ troops does (cf. *B.Afr.* 43; contrast Liv. 8.8.3 *stīpendiārīi factī sunt* about the citizen army). Moreover, various sources indicate that payment for soldiers was instituted early in Ancient Italy, the historic event with which it was associated being the siege of Veii around 400 BC (cf. Liv. 4.59.11, Diod. Sic. 14.16.5); and it has been argued that this “represented [an] important point in the gradual shift away from *gens*-based warfare and toward a community-centered military force” as “the state viewed warfare as being beneficial to the community as a whole, and not just the individual combatants”.¹⁹

In other words, for all that we know about the sociopolitical importance of Italic-speaking mercenary contingents in Southern Italy and Sicily throughout the second half of the first millennium BC,²⁰ the semantic explanation of *eĭtuns* as ‘soldiers’ in the original sense of the word does *not* depend on the Pompeian inscriptions addressing mercenaries rather than ordinary people called to arms. In fact, the specification of each group of *eĭtuns* as *eksuk amvīanud* speaks in favour of the latter view: ‘the soldiers from this quarter’, not soldiers brought in from outside, ‘[are to be positioned] between Tower X and Tower Y’ etc. Also, it is no doubt precisely because they were ordinary people with *other* everyday concerns that they needed clearly advertised information about their assembly points and assignments at a time of crisis.

By way of conclusion, one more point may be worth touching upon at least briefly. If the above account is accepted, we can still ask whether there is not ultimately *also* a connection between *eĭtuns* and the root **(h)₁ei-* ‘go’. That the Oscan ‘money’ word, *eĭtiuva-/eitua-*, may be somehow derived from this has long been suspected, and it is often assumed that the missing link must be the idea of ‘mobile goods’, perhaps mediated through a word for ‘cattle’ comparable with Gr. πρόβατα (to βαίνω ‘walk’).²¹ However, since *eĭtiuva-* appears to be an *a*-stem derivative based on an abstract noun **ei-tu-*, such a theory presupposes a much more complex semantic evolution than the one we see in Lat. *pecus* ‘livestock’ → *pecūnia* ‘possessions consisting of livestock’ > ‘money’: viz., **eitu-* ‘going’ > ‘the possessions that go’ > ‘livestock’ → **eitu-ā-* ‘possessions consisting of livestock’. By contrast, no such complication would arise if we could simply start from hypothetical **eitu-* ‘going, march, journey’ and assume that **eitu-ā-* began life as a feminine adjective qualifying some other noun for ‘money’ (or ‘possessions’ more generally) as ‘money/provisions for a march/journey’²² – which is exactly what the initial purpose of the Roman soldiers’ *stīpendium* was. When Diodorus talks about

the introduction of the *stipendium* in the context referred to above, he tellingly does so with the words τότε πρώτως ἐπεψηφίσαντο Ῥωμαῖοι τοῖς στρατιώταις καθ' ἕκαστον ἐνιαυτὸν εἰς ἐφόδια δίδοναι χρήματα 'This is when the Romans decided for the first time to give to the soldiers each year money as a traveling allowance' (Diod. Sic. 14.16.5). And just as ἐφόδια can then, in Greek, occasionally shade into a more general term for 'financial resources' (cf. e.g. Dem. 49.67 ἐφόδια τῷ γήρᾳ ἱκανά 'sufficient means for his old age', Ar. *Plut.* 1024 γραδὸς καπρώσης τὰφόδια κατεσθίειν 'to eat up the possessions of a lecherous old woman'; LSJ s.v.), so Oscan **eitu-ā-* may have become less specific over time, ending up as a synonym of *aragetú-* (cf. Lat. *argentum*; Osc. abl. sg. **aragetúd múltas(ikúd)** in Nola [NOLA 2 = Vetter 116, Rix Cm 7] = **eítiuvad múltasikad** 'money from fines' in Pompeii (POMPEI 21 = Vetter 12, Rix Po 4]). Given our regrettably limited knowledge of the Oscan language, this cannot of course be proved; but neither should it be ruled out merely because it would make the history of the Oscan word for 'money' slightly less colourful than is traditionally supposed.

NOTES

1 M. H. Crawford (*et al.*), *Imagines Italicae: A Corpus of Italic Inscriptions*, vol. II, London 2011, 617-618.

2 Cf. J. Gil, "Inscripciones oscas pompeyanas", *CFC* 1 (1971) 179-210, at 204 and 206-207, and J. Untermann, *Wörterbuch des Oskisch-Umbrischen*, Heidelberg 2000, 93 and 253-254, s.vv. **amviannud** and **faamat**, with references.

3 T. Mommsen, *Die unter-italischen Dialekte*, Leipzig 1850, 185 ("es scheinen Inschriften gewesen zu sein, die durch die Stadt vertheilt nach einem Hause, vielleicht Wirthshaus, wiesen").

4 R. S. Conway, "Oskisch **eituns**", *IF* 3 (1894) 85-87 ("Droschkenhalteplatz, Droschkenanstalt", presupposing an "Etymon *eito-* 'Weg'", whence **eituns** = "engl. 'roadsters, road-men'").

5 For references, see Gil, *op. cit.* (n. 2) 199-200, and Untermann, *op. cit.* (n. 2) 213.

6 Cf. F. Ribezzo, "La nuova '**eituns**' di Pompei", *RIGI* 1 (1917) 55-63, at 61 ("participio presente derivato dalla base di un ptc. passato-passivo"!).

7 Pace J. B. Hofmann, "Altitalische Dialekte", in *Stand und Aufgaben der Sprachwissenschaft*:

Festschrift für Wilhelm Streitberg, Heidelberg 1924, 361-391, at 391 ("*eituns* und *eituns set* = 'itūrī sunt'", as if based on an active perfect participle **eito-*); cf. also E. Vetter, "Literaturbericht für die Jahre 1922 und 1923 (Schluß): Italische Sprachen", *Glotta* 15 (1926) 1-13, at 5 (**eituns** is "wie *deivatuns* 'iurati' als Partizip Perf. aufzufassen"; but *deivatuns* in BANTIA 1 = Vetter 2, Rix Lu 1, l. 9, is no doubt a mistake for *deivatus*, and E. Vetter, *Handbuch der italischen Dialekte*, vol. I, Heidelberg 1953, 55, more cautiously speaks of a "Bezeichnung der aufgegebenen Bürger [...], gewissermaßen

‘Marschierer’,
‘Mobilisierte’”).

8 C. D. Buck, *A Grammar of Oscan and Umbrian*, Boston ²1928, 365; cf. already C. D. Buck, “Greek ἄμφοδον, Oscan **amvianud**, and the Oscan **eituns**-inscriptions”, *CPh* 17 (1922) 111-118, at 117-118.

9 Deverbatives in *-ōn*- are rare and clearly secondary in Latin (M. Leumann, *Lateinische Laut- und Formenlehre*, München 1977, 361-362), so that any derivation from a verbal root **eit-* (J. Vendryes, “Osque *eituns* et latin *iter*”, *BSL* 25 (1925) 44-48, at 46) or stem **eitā-* (‘frequentative’; cf. Umbr. 3pl. subj. *etaia(n)s* ‘they shall go’) → **eitōn-* ‘marcher’ is at best an *ultima ratio*.

10 Cf. V. Pisani, *Le lingue dell'Italia antica oltre il latino*, Torino ²1964, 67-68 (“soldati di pattuglia”), though with a better starting point **eitu-* (on which see further below); E. Pulgram, *Italic, Latin, Italian 600 B.C. to A.D. 1260: Texts and Commentaries*, Heidelberg 1978, 96.

11 Thus A. L. Prosdocimi, “Osco **eituns*.... puf....

faamat”, *AGI* 60 (1975) 83-92, at 86-88.

12 Buck, *op. cit.* (n. 8) 365; contrast J. Whatmough, “Epigraphica”, *Language* 29 (1953) 297-300, at 298 (“**eitones*” = “broad streets, avenues”).

13 G. Fiorelli, *Descrizione di Pompei*, Napoli 1875, 153-154; H. Nissen, *Pompeianische Studien zur Städtekunde des Altertums*, Leipzig 1877, 492-510.

14 He quotes advice from H. Bücheler, who implausibly saw in **eituns** “ein Nomen = *itunus*” equivalent with “*itus* oder *itiner*” (Nissen, *op. cit.* (n. 13) 499, followed by R. von Planta, *Grammatik der oskisch-umbrischen Dialekte*, vol. II, Strassburg 1897, 609-610).

15 Instead, he took the **eituns** inscriptions to signpost *vici* that were not barricaded, but through which the city-walls could still be accessed during the siege (Nissen, *op. cit.* (n. 13) 505-509).

16 F. Skutsch, “Vom pompejanischen Strassenleben”, *Glotta* 1 (1909) 104-113, at 109-113; cf. also F. Müller Jzn, *Altitalisches Wörterbuch*, Göttingen 1926, 161-162

(**eituns** = sg. **eitū-no-s* ‘Geldwechsler’”).

17 Cf. Leumann, *op. cit.* (n. 9) 361.

18 Note that the weak palatal glide(?) between the dental and the following *-ū-* in **eitiuva-** (= *eitua-* in the Latin alphabet) would regularly fail to arise in **eituōnes* > **eituūnes* > **eitūnes* if this was formed on the basis of **eituā* before the latter underwent anaptyxis to **eituā*; cf. also e.g. the Oscan words in **-tur** < **-tōr-* and **-tud** < **-tōd*.

19 J. Armstrong, *War and Society in Early Rome: From Warlords to Generals*, Cambridge 2016, 211.

20 See especially G. Tagliamonte, *I figli di Marte: Mobilità, mercenari e mercenariato italici in Magna Grecia e Sicilia*, Roma 1994.

21 For references, see again Untermann, *op. cit.* (n. 2) 212, s.v. **eitiuvam**.

22 Cf. similarly, it seems, F. Heidermanns *apud* Untermann, *op. cit.* (n. 2) 212 (“vielleicht urspr. ‘Wegeged’”).