

Your name:

The UK Linguistics Olympiad 2019

Round 1



Problem. 6. Cippus Abellanus (15 marks)

The Cippus Abellanus is a document carved into stone from the 2nd century BCE, dealing with a legal dispute between the cities of Abella and Nola in southern Italy. It is one of the most important surviving documents written in the ancient Oscan language. A portion of the Cippus Abellanus is shown below, with its English translation.



ዘሉ ዘብከን ነፃ ገናይ ብህርያት ንኣኩም
 ገለጹልኩም ነፃ ገናይ ብህርያት ንኣኩም
 ዘሉ ዘብከን ነፃ ገናይ ብህርያት ንኣኩም

“Behind the walls which go around the sanctuary, in this area neither the inhabitants of Abella nor the inhabitants of Nola [are permitted to build] anything.”

Below are sixteen words which appear in the Cippus Abellanus, transcribed in our alphabet. Some of them appear in the portion of the inscription shown above, and some do not:

eisei	fufans	feihúis	amfret	pússtis	tereí
svai	ehtrad	pidum	fisnam	pús	inim
púst	anter	prúftú	eisúd		

Q.1. Circle or underline the Oscan words which do appear in the portion of the document shown above.

Q.2. Using our alphabet, give the Oscan words for:

a. neither/nor	
b. inhabitants of Abella (one word)	
c. inhabitants of Nola (one word).	

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Solution and marking.

Scoring (max 14)

- Q.1: 1 for each correct word, and deduct 1 for each wrong word. (max 8, min 0)
- Q.2: 2 for each correct word, 1 with a wrong letter. The question asks for our alphabet, so only give 1 if the answer is written in Oscan script (also shown in the solution below), with or without the dots for word boundaries. (max 6)

Q.1 eisei fufans feihúis amfret pússtis terei
 svai ehtrad pidum fisnam pús inim
 púst anter prúftú eisúd

Q.2	a. nep ·ΠΞ·	b. Abellanús ·ʒVHJ]JH·
	c. Nuclanús (accept Nuvlanús)	·ʒVHJ]VH·

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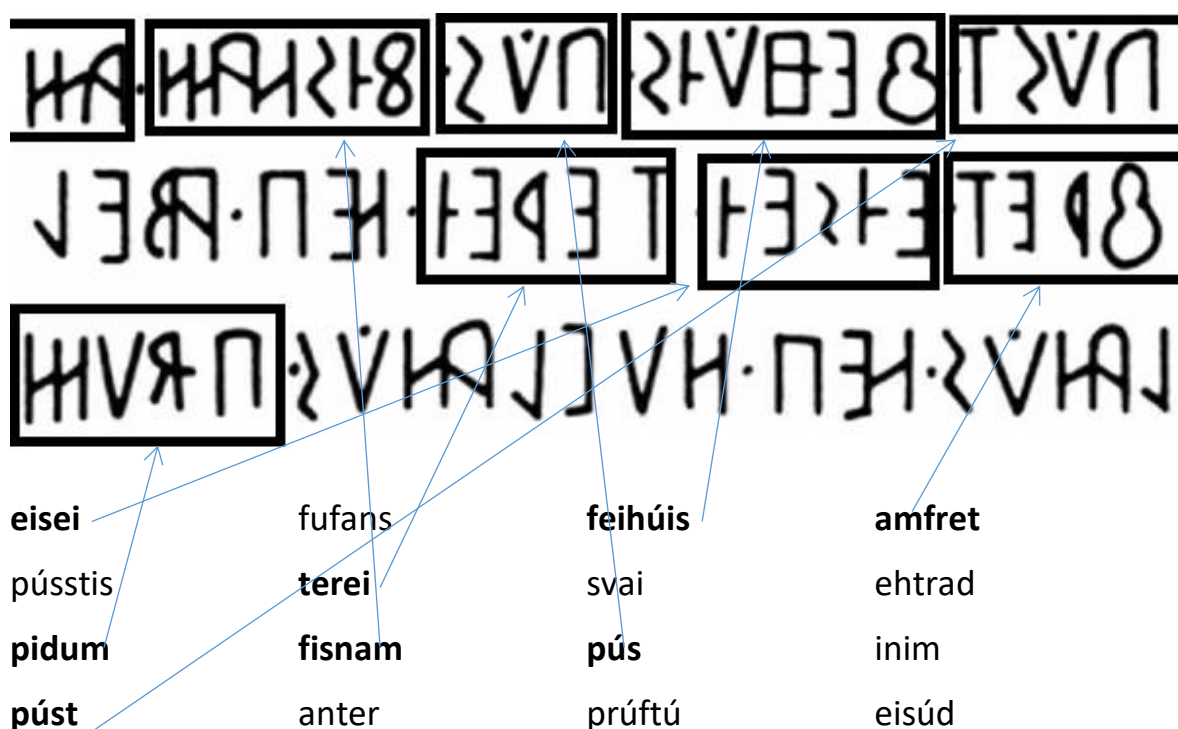
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Commentary

- The writing in the inscription runs right-to-left, top-to-bottom, and words run across lines.
- The dots at mid-height indicate gaps between words.
- Many letters are mirror-images of their Roman/English or Greek equivalents.
- Vowels are sometimes joined to their following or preceding consonants. This explains the ei in feihúis.
- A dot above the letter u indicates an accent.

The eight words appear as follows:



2. (a) neither/nor - **nep**

(b) inhabitants of Abella – **Abellanús** (the letter l is easily “guessable” by analogy with the other mirror-reversed letters)

(c) inhabitants of Nola – **Nuclanús** (actually it is **Nuvlanús**, but again the “reversible” analogy would suggest a letter c).

Source: <http://www.sanniti.info/smcippus.html>