

CHAPTER 17

popl- and *pupl-* for *publ-*

The word *populus* goes back to **poplos*, and the unepenthesised form is still attested in inscriptions from the fifth to the early second century BC; *populus* is first seen in inscriptions dating from the second half of the second century BC (Sen 2015: 149–51). The word *pūblicus* ‘public’ and names such as *Pūblius* ultimately go back to derived forms like **poplikos*, **popliios* etc. At some point the first vowel became /u:/ and the second **p* became /b/. It is commonly supposed that this was due to contamination with *pūbēs* ‘manpower, adult population’, but a sound change is not ruled out. Both changes had taken place by the start of the second century BC on the basis of inscriptional evidence like *Publio(s)* (Marengo 2004: 169–70 no. 17: third or start of the second century), *Poublilia* (CIL 1².42), *pouublicom* (CIL 1².402), *pouublic[om]* (CIL 1².403), and long scansion of the first vowel in Plautus. On all this, see Sen (2015: 142–6, 151–2).

In the imperial period, the old spelling with <o> and <p> appears in names in *Poplicola*, *Popliçola* (TPSulp. 48) for *Pūblicola*, and with <o> but in *Poblici(us)* (Kropp 1.7.4/1, Cremona, early first century AD) for *Pūblicius*, *Poblicola* (TPSulp. 3, 77), *Po[b]lico[l]a* (TPSulp. 32) for *Pūblicola* and *Poblicius* (TPSulp. 98) for *Pūblicius*. I have not done a thorough collection of examples in the corpora, since this spelling probably has more to do with the choices of the bearer of the name than the writer (assuming that those with this name adopted a spelling pronunciation).

However, there are also forms which are spelt with <u> but <p> rather than . Whether *pūblicus* etc. is explained analogically, or by voicing of **p* to /b/ followed by ‘breaking’ of **o* to /ou/ > /u:/ as Sen supposes, there can never have been a form in which the

**o* had developed to /u(:)/ but **p* had not become /b/. So these forms must reflect not only old-fashioned spelling but artificial spelling. Again, in names such as *Puplianus* (P. Dura 100.xvii.13), I do not think that this tells us much about the education of the writer.¹

One writer, however, uses the spelling with <u> and <p> outside an onomastic context. C. Novius Eunus has *publicis* for *pūblicīs* (TPSulp. 51, 52). The standard form is found in the part of the tablet written by a scribe, and also in both hands of one other tablet. Prior to its appearance in Eunus' tablets this spelling only appears in the legal text CIL 1².583 (123–122 BC, Crawford 1996 no. 1), where it is presumably a false archaism felt to be appropriate for the legal register (the same text also has *poplic-* and *poblic-*). The old-fashioned nature of *publicis* is highlighted by the fact that neither *poplicus* nor *publicus* are attested even in legal texts after the end of the second century BC (Decorte 2015: 168–9). The spelling *public-* is attested in a handful of inscriptions later (or possibly later) than the tablets of Eunus: CIL 8.1280 (no date), CIL 14.3530 (AD 88), CIL 6.2097 (AD 61–180, EDR020711), *puplico(rum)* (ILA 492, AD 412–414).²

¹ James Clackson (p.c.) points out to me that, since the name *Publius* is written Πόπλιος in Greek, we could also envisage Greek influence, at least at Dura. There is practically no evidence that Eunus, whose spelling is discussed in the next paragraph, was a second-language speaker at all, let alone of Greek (Adams 1990: 245 mentions the 'remote possibility' one syntactic feature is a Grecism; on possible Oscan influence, see Adams 1990: 232–3 and Zair in press: 337–8, fn. 31).

² In this last inscription a mistake is not out of the question, since it also has *ciuiuat[is]* for *cūiūtātis* and *contatione* for *conlātiōne*.