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A NEW READING OF AN INSCRIPTION FROM CORFINIUM? (CIL IX 3173 = ILS
5642)

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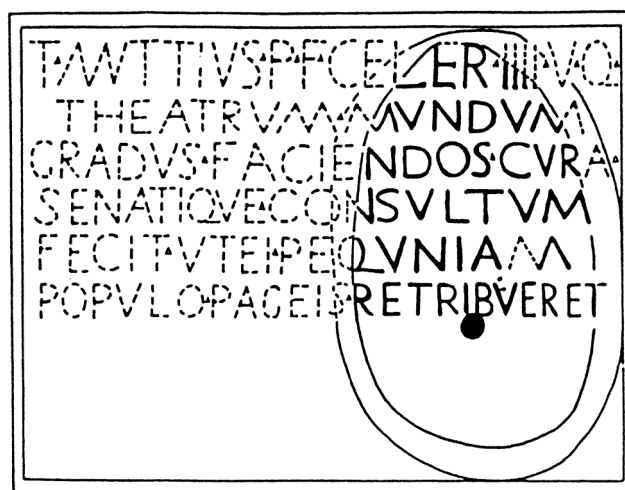
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A NEW READING OF AN INSCRIPTION FROM CORFINIUM?

(CIL IX 3173 = ILS 5642)*

The reading of the inscription CIL IX 3173 = ILS 5642 from Corfinium (Regio IV, Italia) has, until recently, rested exclusively on the version written down by Mascitti around 1698. Giacomo Mascitti had to read the text through a telescope, for the inscription had been built into the 'campanile' (bell-tower) of San Pelino cathedral. An earthquake in 1706 caused the tower to collapse, however, and the inscription was lost. Later editions of the text therefore all had to depend on Mascitti's imperfect reading. This led to a number of anomalies in the text. Indeed, since the end of the 17th century Mascitti was the last person to have seen the text in its entirety.

Recently (1960), however, a fragment of the inscription was unearthed during work on the church. In a substantial paper¹) the present authors managed, on the basis of this fragment, to eliminate the anomalies in the earlier editions, reconstitute the epigraphical context, and suggest a logical content for the text, which is of uncommon importance for the cult of Ceres - the 'mundus' phenomenon - and for the early history of building activity in Roman Corfinium. For a detailed argumentation the reader is referred to the article just mentioned (see now also AE 1983, 318). Here we will simply reproduce the text as we propose to read it (see Taf. VIIIa):



[T. Mutius P(ubli) f(ilius) Ce]ler, IIII [v(ir) q(uinquennalis),
 [theatrum,] mundum,
 [gradus facie]ndos cur[a(vit)]
 [senatique co]nsultum
 5. [fecit ut ei pe]gnum
 [populo pageis] retribuere.

* With thanks to colleagues R.Beyers (Antwerpen), J.Ijsewijn (Leuven), D.Sacré (Antwerpen).

M. Buonocore has now re-published the Corfinium inscription in *Supplementa Italica* N.S. 3, 1987, 145-147 no. 9. His version, based on a suggestion of Silvio Panciera, differs from ours, but in our considered opinion it lacks conviction. His text reads as follows:

*T. Mutius P. f. Celer IIII v(ir) q(inquennalis)
 theatrum, mundum,
 gradus, faciendos cura(vit),
 senatique consultum
 5 fecit{que} utci pecunia(m) a
 populo pageis retribuere[n]t.*

The restoration of lines 1-4 was adopted by Buonocore and Panciera from our text. The difficulties are in lines 5 and 6.

On line 5 Buonocore reads *fecit{que}*; according to *Supplementa Italica* N.S. 1, 1981, 17 sub VIII.1, this diacritical mark means: "litterae errore adiectae quas editor expunxit". The error, however, was not the Roman stonecutter's, but Mascitti's! In all probability the latter, reading through his telescope, wrote down the first word of line 5 as *fecit*; when he looked again to read the rest of the line he must have jumped up one line, thus adding the *-que* (*senatique*) of line 4 to *fecit*.²⁾ We therefore do not believe that *-que* should be joined to *fecit* in the edition of the text.

The interpretation of lines 5-6 by Buonocore and Panciera rests primarily on their restoration of the last word: *retribuere[n]t*. The archaic nominative plural [*pageis*] thus becomes the subject of *retribuere[n]t*. Their interpretation is phrased as follows: "Il documento, di notevole interesse, fa riferimento alle costruzioni di opere corfiniesi da parte del quattuorvir locale T. Mutius P.f. Celer (il *theatrum*, il *mundus* ed i *gradus*, edifici verosimilmente coesistenti) che, secondo la lettura propositami da Silvio Panciera, aveva fatto in modo, mediante un senatoconsulto, che i *pagi* (*pageis* = *pagi*) restituissero la pecunia a *populo* (probabilmente denaro pubblico con cui erano stati eseguiti i lavori)".

In our opinion this interpretation cannot stand, first and foremost for the simple reason that the stone quite manifestly displays *retribuere[n]t*. The cross-bar of the T is clearly visible on the stone itself, as well as on the photograph and on our squeeze. Further, the reading "*pecunia(m) a*" seems rather strange. The stone is somewhat damaged at this spot but the reading *pecuniam* would seem the obvious choice as part of the final M is still

1) H.Devijver-F. Van Wonterghem, *Un mundus (Cereris?) a Corfinium*. Nuova lettura e interpretazione dell'iscrizione CIL IX 3173 = ILS 5642, in *Historia* 32, 1983, 484-507 Pl.IV.

2) See *Historia* 32, 1983, 496 n.1.

legible.

Lines 5-6 might be translated as follows: "He proposed a *senatus consultum* so that he could return the money to the *populus* and the *pagi*". *Populo* and *pageis* thus become two datives in asyndetic conjunction (for that matter, there is another asyndetic construction in lines 2-3: *theatrum, mundum, gradus*)

The logic of this text seems to be the following: In the early stages of the urbanization of Roman Corfinium the costs were shared by the *populus* (the nucleus, the real center) and the *pagi* (the areas surrounding it).³⁾ T. Muttius Celer emerged victorious from the elections and became *quattuorvir quinquennalis*. One of his campaign promises would seem to have been that he would himself pay, as *summa honoraria*, for the *theatrum*, the *mundus*, and the *gradus*. But in order to return funds already collected to the *populus* and the *pagi*, he needed the approval of the local senate: he could not take money from the city treasury without a *senatus consultum*.⁴⁾

Such 'personal' financing of building costs does not seem exceptional.⁵⁾
We therefore believe that our reading can be maintained.

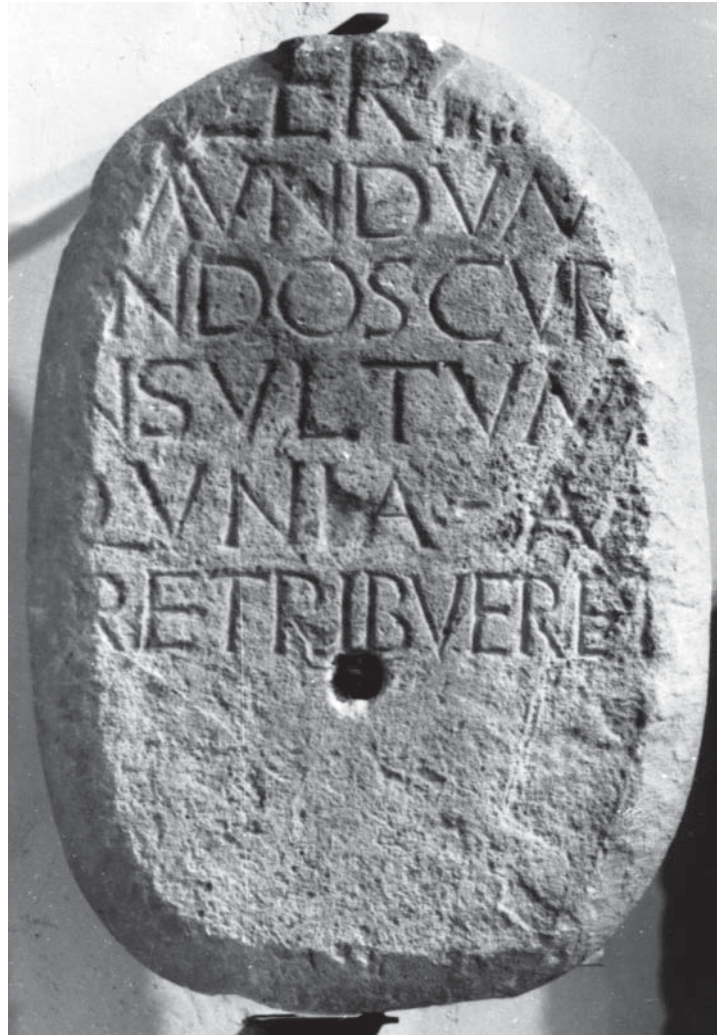
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3) Another possible interpretation is: he returns the money to the people (*populo*), dispersed over the *pagi* (*pageis*). See CIL XIII 5110 = ILS 7008: ... *civitas Helvet(iorum) qua pagatim qua publice statuas decrevit*; see also L.A.Churchin, *Vici and Pagi in Roman Spain*, in REA 87, 1985, 327-343.

4) See H.Dessau, ILS 5642 commentary; *Historia* 32, 1983, 507 n.100.

5) R.Duncan-Jones, *The Economy of the Roman Empire. Quantitative Studies*, Cambridge 1982², 90-93, 157-162.



a) Inschrift aus Corfinium (CIL IX 3173 = ILS 5642)