

J. B. CURBERA

TWO CHRISTIAN INSCRIPTIONS FROM SICILY

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TWO CHRISTIAN INSCRIPTIONS FROM SICILY*

1. – In *NSc* 1893 p. 291 no. 52 (= Wessel 684; cf. Ferrua 20) P. Orsi published an inscription of a marble tablet from S. Giovanni's catacomb in Syracuse:

XC αὐτῆ
Σωφρωνία
ἀπεγέναιτο
τριάντα πέν-
τε αἰτῶν

The first line causes some difficulty which neither Wessel (“cogites de morte filiae in altera tabula indicata”) nor Ferrua (αὐτῆ ᾗ) Σωφρωνία) solves convincingly. In reality, the solution is much simpler. We should read a period at the end of the first line and a dative in the last word: Χρ(ιστὸς) αὐτῆ, “Christ for her” a prayer similar to Χριστὸς μετὰ σου,¹ τὸν Θεόν σοι or τὸν Κύριον σοι.²

2. – Marble tablet from San Giovanni published by P. Orsi in *Römische Quartalschrift* 10 (1896) p. 54 no. 357 (= Agnello 30) and by Ferrua no. 148.

ΚΥΡΑΚΗ
ΕΝΘΑΔΕΚΕΙ
ΤΕΕΖΗΕΕΗ
ΒΛΕΤΑΦΗΕΣΚ
ΤΟΥΟΚΤΩΒ

The problem here is how to interpret the second letter of the fourth line. According to Orsi it is an ι or a Latin L (the deceased was 12 or 32 years old), while Ferrua supposes that it is the Egyptian sign meaning “years”, unnecessarily repeated after the number (the deceased was two years old). But the drawings of Orsi and Ferrua show that the sign after the B does not correspond to a I or to a L or to the Egyptian sign. Its place and shape invite us to read the sign denoting 1/2 used in Greek papyri and inscriptions.³ We find it, for example, in

* Abbreviations: Agnello = G. Agnello, *Silloge di iscrizioni paleocristiane della Sicilia*, Rome 1953; Ferrua = A. Ferrua, *Note e giunte alle iscrizioni cristiane antiche della Sicilia*, Città del Vaticano 1989; *NSc* = *Notizie degli scavi*; Wessel = C. Wessel, *Inscriptiones Graecae Christianae Veteres Occidentis*, Bari 1989.

¹ C. M. Kaufmann, *Handbuch der altchristlichen Epigraphik*, Freiburg 1917, p. 141.

² See Ad. Wilhelm, *Sitz. Ak. Berlin* 1932 pp. 847–56, and L. Robert, *Hellenica* I (1940) pp. 33–35. Some examples in *MAMA* X, 49, 108, 162, etc.

³ A. Blanchard, *Sigles et abreviations dans les papyrus documentaires grecs*, London 1974, p. 30 and n. 8 (pp. 41–42); M. Avi-Yonah, *Abbreviations in Greek Inscriptions*, London 1940, p. 71, etc.

three Greek inscriptions from Rome: *IGUR* 275, 727, 1034. This is the simplest solution for the inscription of Syracuse. Cyriace lived for two and a half years. We should read: Κυρ(ι)ακή ἐνθάδε κείμε. ἔζησε ἔτη β' (καὶ ἥμισυ). ἐτάφη τέξ (= ταίς) κ' τοῦ ὀκτωβ(ρίου).

Roma, Escuela Española de Arqueología

J. B. Curbera