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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:

Χά αὕτη
Σωφρονία
ἀπεγέναιτο
τριάντα πέντε
τε αἰτῶν

The first line causes some difficulty which neither Wessel (“cogites de morte filiae in altera tabula indicata”) nor Ferrua (αὕτη ᾧ Σωφρονία) 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(ιστός) αὕτη, “Christ for her” a prayer similar to Χριστός 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
ΣΕΕΖΗΣΕΗ
ΒΛΕΤΑΦΗΕΕΚ
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 ι 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


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


³ A. Blanchard, Sigles et abréviations 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: Κυριακὴ ἐνθάδε κεῖτε. ἔζησε ἐτη β’ (καὶ ἡμίσυ). ἐτάφη τέξ (= ταῖς) κ’ τοῦ ὀκτωβρίου.

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