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ANNÉE ÉPIGRAPHIQUE 1996, 659: EVIDENCE FOR AN UNKNOWN CONSUL?

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In *AE* 1996 one finds under no. 659 a revised text of an inscription from Prodo (Italy, Regio VII), generally known until now as *CIL* XI 2898 (ed. E. Bormann); its first transcript had been made by G.B. Passeri (1674-1780). This newly revised text was published by M. Munci in *RPAA* 66 (1993-1994), pp. 325-339 on the occasion of the rediscovery of the inscription; since its first transcript was made, the stone had not been revised independently because its precise location was unknown.

Along with printing a photo of the text Munci publishes both an interpretive transcript (p. 328) and a drawing of the inscription (p. 330). The transcript has:

[---]ae Gaudentiae bene me[renti vix(it)]
 [pl(us) m(inus)? an]nos XXXIII menses XI [dies -3/4-]
 [dep(osita) -1/2-]I kal(endas) Sept(embres) d(omino) n(ostro) Theodosi[o Aug(usto) IIII et]
 [Fl.? Hie]rodulo v(iro) c(larissimo) consulib(us).

There is a slight discrepancy between the transcript and the drawing, in that in the drawing the abbreviated word ‘vix(it)’ in l. 1 is presented as written in full, i.e. ‘vixit’; this engenders certain consequences, for which see below. Moreover, there is reason to transcribe in l. 3 ‘kal(endas)’, as the drawing shows that the stone has in fact ‘KALs’; the small ‘s’-sign after ‘KAL’ is probably an abbreviation squiggle rather than an intended final ‘-s’ [with ‘internal’ word abbreviation between ‘KAL-’ and ‘-s’]).

What interests us here especially is the question of the text’s date and its implications for the Western consular formula of A.D. 411. *AE* summarizes Munci’s argument as follows:

“L’intérêt du texte est de donner les noms d’un couple consulaire inconnu jusqu’à présent. Or, seul Théodose II, lors de son quatrième consulat en 411 p.C., n’est pas associé à un collègue dans les documents occidentaux. En Orient, les textes donnent *Honorius Aug. IX Theodosius Aug. IV* par erreur; Honorius a revêtu son neuvième consulat seulement l’année suivante, lorsque Théodose en était à son cinquième. L’a. examine le formulaire des documents mentionnant le consulat en 411 p.C. Selon lui, à Ravenne et à Rome, dans les premiers mois, on utilisait la formula *p(ost) c(onsulatum) Varanae*; type de datation qui disparaît à partir de juin, lorsque la nouvelle du quatrième consulat de Théodose est connue en Occident dans ces villes. Pour expliquer la mention de *Hierodulus*, absent des Fastes et de l’inscription du 23 septembre (*ICVR*, II, 4171 = *ILCV*, 4405), l’a. émet plusieurs hypothèses, mais laisse la question ouverte: Honorius aurait nommé pour la partie occidentale un consul passé inaperçu, en raison de la situation de crise en Italie, ou mort prématurément; ce consul aurait pu aussi avoir été nommé par l’usurpateur Attale; considéré comme illegitime, il aurait été rayé des Fastes par la suite. -- Date: 14-31 août 411 p.C.”

This summary does not pay attention to Munci’s observations on the second consul’s name (‘Hierodulus’) itself; he notes that this name (partly *restored* in this inscription) does not look like a really attractive consular name; in Latin the name (a transliteration of the Gk. Ἱερόδουλος) is hardly attested at all. In fact, Munci admits it only because the far more attractive name ‘Theodulos’ (Gk. Θεόδουλος) cannot be read; his drawing supports his observation that the preserved diagonal stroke belonging to the letter preceding the preserved name ending ‘-odulo’ can belong only to the right hand bottom part of an ‘A’, an ‘M’ or an ‘R’. In this situation the restoration of the second consul’s name as ‘[Fl. Hie]rodulo’ seems a counsel of despair and for this reason there should remain strong doubts about admitting him as the hitherto unknown Western colleague next to the Eastern emperor Theodosius’ 4th consulate in the year A.D. 411 (cf. *CLRE* s.a., pp. 356-357).

* I am grateful to my colleague R.S. Bagnall for reading an earlier version of this note and polishing my English.

Moreover, it should also be observed that in l. 3 Theodosius' iteration numeral has been *restored* as 'IIII'. This restoration seems inspired by the number of letters lost at the right hand side of the inscription; in the drawing an equal number of 10 letters has been restored in l. 1 ('[RENTI·VIXIT]'), respectively in l. 3 ('[O·AUG·IIII·ET]').

If, however, one restores in l. 1 an equally likely abbreviated form 'VIX(it)' rather than the full form 'VIXIT', one would restore fewer letters also in l. 3. This comes down to scaling down the number of I's in the restored Theodosius' consular iteration number 'IIII' by 2, hence the iteration number can be *only* 'I' or 'II'.¹ Theodosius' second consulate, however, cannot be admitted because this was held in A.D. 407 by Theodosius as junior consul next to the emperor Honorius (cos. VII), and Theodosius' name appeared in 2nd place in the consular formula. Therefore, if an iteration number 'IIII' for Theodosius' consulate is open to doubt and an earlier, 2nd consulate is unacceptable, it remains to consider the consequences deriving from a possible restoration of the iteration numeral as 'I'.

Theodosius' first consulate fell in A.D. 403 and he held it with Fl. Rumoridus as the second consul (cf. *CLRE* pp. 340-341). About the latter man not much more is known than that he was the *magister utriusque militiae* of the emperor Valentinian (cf. *PLRE* I 786). Some stonecutters apparently encountered problems in correctly spelling his name in the inscriptions they executed: evidently the name 'Rumoridus' was not familiar to them. Thus *ILCV* 3771 presents the ablative 'Erumorido', *ILCV* 2757 'Romorido' (cf. *ILCV* 2852: 'Romoridi' [gen.]), and *ILCV* 3811A 'Rimorido'; another variant spelling is found in *ILCV* 3036B and 3036B adn. (= *CIL* XI 4044, 4045), both presenting the ablative 'Romodoro'.² Given these available spelling errors other, even more aberrant spellings may be conceivable. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that in l. 3 of the text under review the stonecutter (distracted perhaps by the more familiar name 'Theodulus', or the term 'modulus', familiar within his trade) might have spelled the 2nd consul's name as 'Fl. Rumodulo' (or, for that matter, as 'Fl. Romodulo'; in this case the name of 'Romulus' may also have crossed the stonecutter's mind). Whatever the precise origin of the erroneous spelling of Rumoridus' name may be, however, in general it seems far more economical to suppose a simple spelling error³ on this grave stone rather than a completely unknown consul bearing an unlikely name. Once such an approach is accepted for fully restoring the name preserved in part as 'jmodulo' one is bereft of all 'evidence' for a western consul 'Fl. Hierodulus' officiating in A.D. 411.⁴ In terms of likelihood it seems an inescapable conclusion, that the text under review records a burial in late August, 403 A.D.⁵

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¹ A consular iteration numeral 'III' cannot be used, because 'Theodosius Aug. III' (in A.D. 393) should have preceded the name of his colleague (Fl. Abundantius). For various reasons the iteration numerals 'V', 'VI', 'X' and 'XI' cannot be used either, cf. Munci, *loc. cit.*, 331. The loss of text (an unknown Latin numeral) in the right hand lacuna in l. 2 prevents us from using the number of letters lost there for the restoration of the lacunae in ll. 1 and 3.

² This form itself looks like another name on '-dorus', cf. the originally Gr. consular names 'Isidorus', 'Theodorus', and 'Cassiodorus', listed in *CLRE* p. 722.

³ It is no great step from 'Romodoro' to 'Romodulo'; on various errors in consular datings on inscriptions cf. *CLRE* pp. 63-66.

⁴ In *CLRE* p. 668 s.a. 412 reasons were given for rejecting *CIL* XI 2898 as reliable evidence for a consular dating in this year. Under the prevailing circumstances these reasons were only too valid. I myself would now add to *CLRE* s.a. 403 under 'ITALY' an entry: '*CIL* XI 2898 = AE 1996, 659 (Prodo, reg. VII; 14-31 .viii)' with a reference to the present paper.

⁵ It is of minor consequence that if in l. 3 the maximum number of letters lost between '[dep·]' and the first preserved letter in 'jI Kal.Sept.' is indeed 2. The earliest possible date of the burial is 'XVjI Kal.Sept.' = 17.viii; the earliest possible date given in AE, '14 août' (= XVIII Kal.Sept.), is not warranted. The stonecutter, however, may also have abbreviated 'depos(ita)', rather than 'dep(osita)' (cf. *ILCV* III 510).