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I. CHRIST. URBIS ROMAE 2564

(A COMPLEMENTARY NOTE TO H. SOLIN, VARIA ONOMASTICA IX)

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Recently, I.Christ. urbis Romae 2564 drew attention of H. Solin. In an article published in ZPE<sup>1</sup> he gives the following text of the inscription:

ΘΑΡΟΙΑΚΜΕ  
ΟΥΔΙΚΑΘΑ  
ΝΑΤΟC

This is also clearly visible on the photograph accompanying Solin's article.

H. Solin has suggested that the original name of the deceased person was Ἀσκλᾶς and I agree with him completely in this matter. According to Solin the corrupted form came into existence as a result of the lapicide's erroneous reading the cursive script of the redactor of the inscription. The lapicide, whose inexperience is clearly visible in the inconsequent use of the cursive and the monumental form of *alphas* mistook ΛΑ for M. Later on, probably under the influence of vocative ε-endings, and in order to facilitate the pronunciation, he added the central stroke in C thus producing E. As a result of his deductions Solin prints θαροῖ Ἀσκλᾶς.

It is evident to me that except for the mistakes discussed by Solin there is another one in the first line of this short text. Instead of θαροῖ we should undoubtedly read θάρσει (i.e. θάρσει). θάρσει ὦ δεῖνα (ὁ δεῖνα) οὐδεὶς ἀθάνατος (with numerous minor variants) is a funeral formula very well known from the first four centuries after Christ<sup>2</sup>. It was enormously popular in Syria and Phoenicia<sup>3</sup>, but its use is also attested elsewhere<sup>4</sup>. In Rome, it appears in Pagan and Christian as well as in Jewish epitaphs both in Greek texts<sup>5</sup> as well as a subscription to Latin inscriptions<sup>6</sup>. I.Christ. urbis Romae 2564 should, therefore, run θάρ(σ)ι, Ἀσκ(λᾶς), οὐδὶς ἀθάνατος.

<sup>1</sup> Text after H. Solin, *Varia Onomastica IX*, ZPE 87, 1991, p. 246sq, with the photograph on pl. XIX.

<sup>2</sup> For this formula, see generally M. Simon, *θάρσει, οὐδεὶς ἀθάνατος: Etude de vocabulaire religieux*, RHR 114, 1936, pp. 188–206 (reprinted [in:] *Le Christianisme antique et son contexte religieux. Scripta varia*, Wiss. Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 23, Tübingen 1981, pp. 63–81). As the subtitle of Simon's article stresses, this is a comparative study of religious ideas contained in this formula, and not the complete list of its attestations.

<sup>3</sup> See for example IGLSyr XIII (Bostra), where simple θάρσει appears seven times, θάρσει, οὐδεὶς ἀθάνατος seven times, θάρσει, οὐδεὶς ἀθάνατος ἐπὶ γῆς one time, and οὐδεὶς ἀθάνατος one time. For the formula θάρσει, οὐδεὶς ἀθάνατος in Palestine, see E. G. Kirk, *Early Christian gravestones—formulae of Southern Palestine*, PEQ 1939, pp. 181–186.

<sup>4</sup> See for example CIG 5200b (Ptolemais in Cyrenaica), IG XIV 2277: a sarcophagus from the 2nd cent. A.D. found in Milan, and now kept in the cathedral of Tortona, with the acclamation θάρσει, εὐγένει, οὐδεὶς ἀθάνατος added to the Latin inscription commemorating the deceased.

<sup>5</sup> IGUR 1112, 1113, 1114, 1217, CIJ I 123, 314, 335, 380, 401, 450, 539 (from Porto). For the acclamation θάρσει, οὐδεὶς ἀθάνατος in Jewish inscriptions, see G. Dellling, *Speranda futura. Jüdische Grabinschriften Italiens über das Geschick nach dem Tode*, Theologische Literaturzeitung 76, 1951, pp. 521–526.

<sup>6</sup> IGUR 1115.

The proposed correction which is indubitable to my mind, throws new light on the problem of mistakes in our inscription. In my opinion these are not misunderstandings between the redactor and the lapicide. The lapicide could mistake ΛΑ for Μ and add the central stroke in C, though I am not convinced it was the case, but he could not take C for an O, for these letters are easily distinguishable in cursive script. Neither can these be the mistakes of the redactor himself. Such errors like mistaking the round letters C, E, O for each other find its explanation only if we assume that the lapicide copied from another inscription, particularly if it was not very clear. Further on, we have to assume that the lapicide was completely not aware of Greek or, that he knew it only to a very small extent not enabling him to control his work.

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Addendum: The correction θάρ(σ)ι was already made by C. Wessel, *Inscriptiones Graecae Christianae Veteres Occidentis*, Bari 1988, n. 277. He did not recognise, however, the name of the deceased person and he prints

θάρ(σ)ι, Ἄ[σ]κμέ, | οὐδὶς ἀθάνατος (*palma*).