

**MEMOIRS OF THE
AMERICAN ACADEMY
IN ROME, VOL. XXV**

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VOLUME XXV



AMERICAN ACADEMY IN ROME

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SYMMACHI, HOMO FELIX

BY

JAMES HENRY OLIVER

SYMMACHI, HOMO FELIX

Two mosaics portraying gladiatorial combats were found together in the seventeenth century in a property called the "Orto del Carciofalo" on the Via Appia outside of Rome. Today these mosaics, illustrated in the plate, are nos. 3600 and 3601 in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional (hereafter MAN) in Madrid.¹ Professor Marion Blake discussed them in these *Memoirs* XVII (1940) 112-113 from drawings since she herself had never seen the originals and did not have any photographs. According to her note 213, she found most details in the drawings published by Winckelmann in *Monumenti antichi inediti* I plates 197 and 198.

Of the pair it is MAN 3601 = Winckelmann 198 in which we are primarily interested for its inscription. We may begin with Winckelmann himself who says of the scene: "è figurato un combattimento di soli gladiatori anch'essi col lor lanista allato, con la visiera dell'elmo calata, che loro cuopre il viso, così com'Eteocle e Polinice combattendo insieme ci son descritti da Stazio". It is notable that he identifies the two non-combatants as *lanistae*, but Winckelmann does not reveal how he interpreted the inscription, except that he misread each *theta* as a *phi*.

It was Marini who identified this sign as the *theta nigrum*. He went on to describe it as: "l'indizio che gl'infelici Gladiatori *Calendione e Materno* eran

1. Bibliography of the pair of mosaics: - Johannes Winckelmann, *Monumenti antichi inediti* (Rome, 1767) I plates 197 and 198, and II 258-259; Gactano Marini, *Gli atti e monumenti de' Fratelli Arvali etc.* I (Rome, 1793) 165; A. L. MILLIN, *Description des tombeaux qui ont été découverts à Pompei dans l'année 1812* (Naples 1813) 31-32 and 35-37; Johann Caspar Orelli, *Inscriptionum latinarum selectarum amplissima collectio etc.* (Zurich 1828) no. 2553; A. CHABOUILLET, "Observations sur une statuette représentant un rétiaire ainsi que sur divers monuments relatifs à cette classe de gladiateurs", *Revue archéologique* VII (1851-2) pp. 407-410; Charles Loriquet, *La mosaïque des promenades et autres trouvées à Reims: étude sur les mosaïques et sur les jeux de l'amphithéâtre* (Reims, 1862) 214 and 217; Emil Hübnér, *Die antiken Bildwerke in Madrid* (Berlin, 1862) 196-197 nos. 399 and 400; E. Bormann, W. Heinzen and Chr. Huelsen, *Corpus inscriptionum latinarum* VI, 2 (Berlin 1882) no. 10205; Thomas Ashby, "Drawings of Ancient Paintings in English Collections: Part I, the Eton Drawings", *Papers of the British School at Rome* VII (1914) 17; Marion Elizabeth Blake, "Mosaics of the Late Empire in Rome and Vicinity", *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* XVII (1940) 112-113; Louis Robert, "Monuments de gladiateurs dans l'orient grec", *Hellenica*, III (1946) 123-136 and V (1948) 84-86; António Blanco Freijeiro, "Mosaicos romanos con escenas de circo y anfiteatro en el Museo Arqueológico Nacional", *Archivo español de arqueología* XXIII (1950) 127-142 (with an accurate description of the colors and technique) and figures 8-9, the first photographs (here reproduced); Jean Colin, "Juvenal, les baladins et les rétiaires d'après le manuscrit d'Oxford (Juv., Sat., VI, 365, 1-26)", *Atti della Accademia delle Scienze di Torino* LXXXVII (1952-3) 365 (without mention of Blanco's basic publication).

Note that in the quotations from Marini and from Millin on p. 10 the punctuation and spelling has been somewhat modernized.