

# Marcus Encolpus' Tomb Inscription

**Post by “Cassius” of July 6, 2023 at 1:15 PM**

Directing your attention to footnote 57 of the below clip (rather than to the highlighted text) contains some interesting and specifically Epicurean text referring to Marcus Encolpus' friends and his position on key Epicurean issues.

It would be interesting to track down the full Latin and maybe find a photo.

Found at Naples, of Republican date<sup>52</sup> and with Greek overtones,<sup>53</sup> it commemorates someone otherwise known to us not as an Epicurean but as an entrepreneur (he rebuilt the Odeon of Pericles at Athens after its destruction by Sulla). There is no sustainable link with the Pisones, Philodemus, or Lucretius. But as a bit of Epicurean poetry, the distich dovetails with the flourishing Epicureanism in Campania in the late Republic, perhaps of the 'voluptuary variety' attacked by Cicero in *Against Piso*.<sup>54</sup> The epitaph describes the dead Stallius, formerly a member of the pleasure-loving Epicurean *chorus*, guarding his *sedes* in death.<sup>55</sup> As an Epicurean,<sup>56</sup> he presumably also watched carefully over his domain during his life, concerned with how best to administer it. Now his effigy, as the inscription announces, guards *has sedes* for all time. They remain strictly mundane.<sup>57</sup> As an Epicurean he expected no other, but believed he had attained the kind of timeless ideal of pleasure in life proclaimed in his epitaph, as he thought of himself as watching over it eternally (*tuetur*).

<sup>51</sup> CLE 961 = CIL 10.2971 = ILS 7781. The epitaph was brought to my attention by Ted Courtney, whose edition of and commentary on it is invaluable: *Musa Lapidaria: A Selection of Latin Verse Inscriptions* (Atlanta 1995) 48 (no. 22) and 241 (comm.). Further discussion in M. Leiwo, *Neapolitana: A Study of Population and Language in Graeco-Roman Naples* (Comm. Human. Litt. 102, Helsinki 1994) 130–31, who comments on the Campanian Greek traces in its latinity. The epitaph is not mentioned by M. Gigante, *Civiltà delle forme letterarie nell'antica Pompei* (Naples 1979), but see id., "Virgilio all'ombra del Vesuvio," *CErc* 31 (2001) (forthcoming).

<sup>52</sup> On metrical grounds (scansions *Stalliu'* and *Hauranu'*).

<sup>53</sup> The termination *-eius* is "pure Greek" (Courtney). For the *χορός* of philosophers see on Philod. *De piet.* 2491.

<sup>54</sup> So Courtney: "The tone is very much that of *Epicuri de grege porcum*."

<sup>55</sup> *Sedes* could of course mean simply 'environs,' 'situation.' But *tuetur* suggests proprietary rights, an ironical topos in monumental epitaphs.

<sup>56</sup> Actually *Epicureius* (here transferred poetically to *chorus*) indicates that Stallius was no mere Epicurean, but rather an Epicurean *philosophus*, i.e. teacher. Cf. the other instances of *Epicureius*, *Stoicus*, and *philosophus* cited in CIL ad loc.; for philosophical designations in inscriptions and papyri see J. and L. Robert, *REG* 71 (1958) 197–200.

<sup>57</sup> Perhaps as a sort of guardian deity, continuing to keep a benign watch over the property (see *OLD* s.v. *tueri* 2b). Cf. the divine *sedes* of Lucr. 3.18. The point is made more bluntly in *IGUR* 1245 (Rome II/III) in which the wealthy Epicurean M. Antonius Encolpus grants space in his tomb to his many *liberti* (except one, who is explicitly excluded), declaring to anyone who cares to read that now that he is dead he can categorically deny the existence of the river of Hades, of Charon, Aiakos and the hound Kerberos (ll. 14–15).

<sup>58</sup> Cf. H. Nettleship, *Ancient Lives of Virgil* (Oxford 1879) 37.

<sup>59</sup> Vergil's debt to Naples here is echoed by Ovid in his telling of Aesculapius' arrival in Italy: *Met.* 15.711–12 *Herculeamque urbem Stabiasque et in otia natam / Parthenopen*. Cf. *Stat. Silv.* 4.4.52–55 where Parthenope = Vergil.

This comes from the post here: [Names Applied to the Epicureans by Themselves Or Others](#)