

CHAPTER 10

<c> for /g/

The writers on language were aware that <c> had previously been used for /g/ (e.g. Terentianus Maurus 210–211, 894–901 = GL 6.331.210–211, .351.894–.352.891). Instances of <c> for <g> are occasionally found in my corpora, but it is hard to take them seriously as examples of old-fashioned spelling.¹ In the curse tablets there are scores, if not hundreds, of instances of <g> in the corpus as a whole, and in most cases the few apparent cases of <c> are probably to be put down to the difficulty of distinguishing <c> from <g>, either in the writing or reading of small letters on a thin piece of soft metal which is generally then subject to folding and unfolding, abrasion, water and other types of damage etc. – cf. Väänänen's (1966: 53) comment that instances of <c> for <g> at Pompeii are 'simple writing errors' ('simples erreurs d'écriture'). For similar reasons, the few instances of <c> for <g> in the graffiti from the Palatine are not to be taken seriously.

Most of the curse tablets have only one or two apparent examples of <c> for <g>. Kropp 1.4.3/2 has *colico* for *colligō* beside two other cases of <g>, 1.10.2/1 has *[r]oco* for *rogō* beside *rogo* twice. 3.2/25 has no other instances of <g> beside *sacellum* for *sagellum*, but is fairly short. 3.14/1 has *defico* for *defigō* and also a number of mechanical errors: *intermxixi/ta* for *intermixta*, *fata* for *facta* (if this is not due to assimilation), *sci* for *sīc*, *possitt* for *possit*, *amere* for *amārae*. 11.1.1/3, along with two examples of *Callicraphae* for *Calligraphae*, has seven other examples of <g>.

In the first to fourth century AD, only 1.4.1/1 (Minturnae, c. AD 50) gives the impression that <c> for <g> could be intentional.²

¹ Naturally I exclude instances of the standard abbreviations *C.* for *Gaius* and *Cn.* for *Gnaeus*.

² A couple of earlier tablets, from Nomentum in Latium, dated 100–50 BC, also have several examples of <c> for <g>: *licua* for *lingua*, *uesticia* for *uestigia*, *unci* for *unguēs* (Kropp 1.4.2/2), *dicitos* (twice) for *digitōs*, *uncis* (twice) for *unguēs*, *defico* for *defigō*

Table 13 <c> for <g> in the Isola Sacra inscriptions

Clauce	Isola Sacra 204	No date
Clauceni	Isola Sacra 205	No date
Clauce	Isola Sacra 205	No date
sarco f̄acu	Isola Sacra 237	No date
cocnatu	Isola Sacra 321	Perhaps second century AD

it is used for all instances of /g/, in *acat* for *agat*, *ficura* for *figūram*, *dicitos* and *ticidos* for *digitōs*, and *cenua* for *genua*. However, it also has *hbetes* for *habētis*, *tadro* for *tradō*, *uitu* for *uultum*, *fulmones* for *pulmōnes*, *dabescete* for *tabēscetem*, and *ticidos* for *digitōs*. In particular, the use of <f> for <p>, <d> for <t>, and <t> for <d> suggests that the writer, as well as being prone to errors such as omitting or transposing letters, had particular problems in identifying stops correctly. Something weird is going on, but use of <c> for <g> cannot be attributed certainly to the type of education the writer received, rather than linguistic problems (or, conceivably, a form of ‘magical’ writing).

Visible in a small number of the Isola Sacra inscriptions is a curious tendency for /g/ to be represented by <c> when there is another <c> in the word (see Table 13). Whatever the explanation for this, it seems unlikely that it has anything to do with old-fashioned spelling.

Apart from in these corpora, the only other example of <c> for <g> is *q̄lquadrincento* (CEL 157, AD 167, Egypt) for *quadringenti*, where the editor is probably correct to suspect influence from *centum* ‘one hundred’ (the letter contains another 5 examples of <g>).

(1.4.2/3). In 1.4.2/2 the only instance of <g> is *dfigere* (which is however read as *deicere* by EDR071811), and there is no <g> in 1.4.2/3. However, 1.4.2/2 also twice has *ilatus* for *flātus*, as well as *exae* for *extae*, and *oclus* for *oculōs*, so <c> for <g> (albeit three times) as a mistake is not entirely out of the question. 1.4.2/3 has no particular evidence for errors other than spellings which reflect developments in the spoken language (other than *capilo* for *capillum*, since *o* for *u* is unexpected at this date).