

EPIGRAMS FROM TOMIS

Dragoș HĂLMAGI*

Cuvinte-cheie: *inscripții grecești în versuri, inscripții funerare, Tomis.*

Keywords: *Greek verse inscriptions, funerary inscriptions, Tomis.*

Rezumat: *Articolul reia opt epigrame grecești de la Tomis și din împrejurimi, cu noi sugestii de lectură și restituire.*

Abstract: *The present article reviews eight Greek epigram from Tomis and its surroundings, with new readings and supplements.*

Tomis, a Greek colony on the western coast of the Black Sea, acquired its fame as the remote place where Ovid was relegated by the emperor Augustus. Growing into the most important city of the Roman province of Moesia Inferior, Tomis attracted people from far and near and numerous funerary inscriptions have survived the ages, often in a fragmentary state. The present article consists of eight short notes on epitaphs in verse.

1. Three epigraphic notes of the late Maria Bărbulescu were published by her colleagues a couple of years ago. One of them concerns the inscription on a funerary altar discovered in 1988, during the demolition of an old building in the centre of Medgidia¹:

-----ΘΕΙΠΕ-----
[---- Χ]αιρει[ου ----]
[-- μνή]μησ εν[εκα υπε]ρ
[των γεν]ύων ἐξ[-----.]
5 [.. ή πύα]λος κ[αί ό βω]-
[μός? μή] βλάψη[ς τύμβον]

* Dragoș HĂLMAGI: Institute of Archaeology “Vasile Pârvan”, Bucharest; e-mail: dragoshalmagi@gmail.com.

¹ BĂRBULESCU 2019, p. 19–22, no. 1. The date and circumstances of its discovery are also recorded on the back of a plaster cast, which is found today at the Institute of Archaeology “Vasile Pârvan” from Bucharest.

- [μηδὲ τ]ὸν ἄλλ[ον ----].
 [...] ♣ Ἄθαν[αίων ----]
 [...]ς εὖ φρο[νῶν καὶ]
 10 [συγγεν]εῖς. ♣ χα[ίρει]
 [παροδ]εῖτα ♣ κ[αὶ σύ].

The syllable weights and positioning of the *hederae* are suggestive of an epigram in elegiacs, which I read as follows:

- [- - - φ]θειρη [♣ - - -]
 [- - - -] χαίρει[ν - - -]
 [- - - - -].ησεν [♣ - -]
 [- - Μο]ιρῶν ἐξ[ανύσαν]-
 5 [τα τέ]λος ♣ κ[- - - -]
 [- μη] βλάβη[ς - - - -]
 [- τάφ]ον, ἀλλ[ὰ - - -]
 [- - -] ♣ ἀθάν[ατος - -]
 [- - -]ς εὐφρο[σύνης μν]-
 10 [ησθ]εῖς. ♣ χαῖ[ρει ♣ ὦ πα]-
 [ροδ]εῖτα ♣ κ[αὶ σύ. ♣]

L. 3: a vertical hasta is visible at the beginning of the line.

The phrasing and the themes are quite common. As noted already², the first word recalls a verse from ISM II 380 = GVI 668: πάντα χρόνος φθείρειν ἔμαθεν, “he understood that time destroys everything”. The following pentameter (lines 3–5) looks surprisingly similar to the one used in an inscription from Phrygia (GVI 1435), θά[ψα] τὸ Μοιράω[ν ἐξ]ανύσαντα τέλος, “I buried the one fulfilling the decision of the Moirae”, and the next verse (lines 5–8) finds a close parallel in the same region (GVI 675a): μ[ὴ] β[λάβη]ς τύμβον, ἀλλὰ ἀναγνοὺς πάριθι, “do not damage the tomb, but read and pass by”. Finally, an analogy for the closing verse comes from the same ISM II 380: σωφροσύνης μνασθεῖς ἐρικυδέος ἦν ἔχε κείνη, “remembering the splendid wisdom that she had”. Verb ellipsis is recurrent in poetry: a comparable construction is found in an Attic epigram (CEG 2, 611): [ἀθά]νατος μνήμη σωφρο[ο]σύνης ἐνε[κ]α, “eternal remembrance of wisdom”.

The following epitaphs were included in the two volumes of Tomitan inscriptions and the corpus number is provided for convenience.

2 = ISM II 166³. The inscription is worn and difficult to read at times. Peek’s reading of line 3 appears particularly contrived (**Fig. 1**). The first letter is triangular, leaving no possibility for κείντο. Leaving the troublesome word aside, I am inclined

² BĂRBULESCU 2019, p. 20.

³ PEEK 1964, p. 128–130, no. 20.

to read the rest of the verse as – ~ γε, μ' Αἰδα⁴, γῆν οὐκ ἐμοί, ἀλλ' Αἶδη, “By Hades! ... the earth, not for me, but for Hades”.

3 = ISM II 245⁵. Tocilescu's facsimile is quite accurate, but the reading can be slightly improved:

```

-----
εἰ δὲ θ[έλεις γνῶναι τίς]
καὶ πόθεν [-----]
ἀστὸς βουλ[ευτῆς --]-
πιάδης Α[-----]
5 ὕδροπότ[ης ---- ἐν]-
θάδ' ἔχ[ει-----]
-----

```

There are numerous possibilities to end the first verse (“if you want to know who and from where”), including the conventional ὦ παροδείτα⁶. The other editions give [Ἀσκλη]πιάδης, yet a less usual name like [Καρ]πιάδης or [Θεσ]πιάδης would fit better the presumed line length and turn the verse into a pentameter. The word ὕδροπότης “water-drinker” demonstrates the ascetic virtues of the deceased, possibly a philosopher⁷.

4 = ISM II 283. Horia Slobozianu published a sarcophagus fragment found in the Turkish cemetery of Urluchioi and the reading of the inscription is far from satisfactory⁸. The previous editors identified an epigram of elegiacs, but the last verse inscribed on two lines reveals an atypical metric formula⁹. I suggest the following reading:

```

-----
-----ΚΗΣ
-----Σ, ἐρίοισιν ὑπάρχων
[-----]σ.η μ ο ν ἔ χ ω ν
-----I πορθνέα γὰρ λεύσω
5 [----- ἐπὶ τ]ῶδε δέμαι vacat
      vacat      δὲ τιμῇ τελιώσας.
[ χ α ἱ ρ ε π α] ρ ο δ ε ἱ τ α.

```

⁴ For a similar invocation of infernal deities, see *Eur. Med.* 1059: μὰ τοὺς παρ' Αἶδη νερτέροους ἀλάστορας.

⁵ TOCILESCU 1894, p. 97, no. 31; MIHAILOV 1943, p. 30, no. 32; PEEK 1964, p. 126, no. 17.

⁶ See, for example, GVI 961 (Hadrianuthera), GVI 1131 (Chios).

⁷ For another epigraphic instance, see IG II² 11606a, commented by OLIVER 1981, p. 218–220 (SEG 31, 238). A list of notable water-drinkers is compiled in *Athen.* 2.44 b-f.

⁸ SLOBOZIANU 1959, p. 747–748, with commentary in MARTIN 1990, p. 883–884.

⁹ As for example in a funerary epigram from Kaystros Valley (SEG 53, 1474): hexameter, pentameter, pentameter, hexameter.

The ending could be restored *exempli gratia* [τὴν μνήμην ἐπὶ τῷδε δέμαϊ | δὲ τιμῇ τελώσας. Positioned after γάρ, the verb closing the previous verse is best taken as a variant spelling of λεύσσω, so I translate: “for I look at the tomb I raised honourably upon this body”.

5 = ISM II 311. The stone (**Fig. 2**) was once built in the walls of Mihail Kogălniceanu’s house. Based on a cursory description and a squeeze, it was edited several times with little profit¹⁰. On a fragment of a sarcophagus wall (inv. no. MNA L 1508), measuring 42 x 29 x 10.5 cm, the inscription is laid out in a *tabula ansata*, with letters of 2,5–3,0 cm and 1,7–2 cm between the lines. Ligatures: H+N (l. 1), N+T (l. 3).

 -----Α τὰύτην πᾶθον [ῥ]σας
 -----κομίσας· Μοῖραι ΑΙΣΙ
 [------] πάντα νοοῦσαι· ΑΙΤΙ
 [------] τῆφον ἐκτελέσαν·
 5 ----- πολ]υφίλτατα δεκάκις
 ----- vacat

Three lines are missing: the epigram was seemingly composed of three elegiac distichs. There is a small addendum in line 5 and perhaps also at the beginning of line 6.

Peek’s νεοῦσαι is difficult to resist: the Moirae spinning the life threads of the mortals is a common motif, and αἴσι[μα], “destined” may be restored at the beginning of line 3. The alliterations seem intentional. Separating the interjection at the end of line 3, one could speculate further αἶ, e.g. τί[λλοντα κόμη]ν τὸν τῆφον ἐκτελέσαν¹¹, “Alas! They erected a tomb tearing their hair (in grief)”. Finally, [πολ]υφίλτατα suggests a neuter plural and [τέκνα] appears an obvious choice in line 5 or 6.

6 = ISM II 459. Several attempts were made at the first verse¹², inscribed on the left margin of the stele. In my view, the distich runs as follows:

ἄρτ|ι μὲ|ν ἡ|ἰ|θέοις ἐ|ναρ|ίθμ|ιον | Ἄττ|αλο|ν εἶ|λε
 Μοῖρ' ὀλοή, γονέων δ{ἐ}' ἐλπ|ίδας ἐστέρ|ισε·

¹⁰ TOCILESCU 1882, p. 51, no. 97 with Th. Gomperz’s rather dismissive commentary (“in zweifelhaften Griechisch, wie es scheint, abgefaßten, schlecht eingemeißelten und schlecht erhaltenen Grabschrift”); MIHAILOV 1943, p. 27–28, no. 25; GVI 2090; PEEK 1964, p. 121–122, no. 9 (SEG 25, 765). See also ISM VI.2, 311.

¹¹ Cf. GVI 1981: γηραλέην δὲ κόμη<v> πολὴν τίλλουσα, “tearing much gray hair”. It is worth noting that τὸν τῆφον is a not an uncommon way to start the second half of the pentameter. It occurs one more time in Tomis: τὸν τῆφον οἶκον ἔχων (ISM II 344), and also in other epigrams (τὸν τῆφον ὡς ὀράας in SEG 51, 824 – Kalindoia; τὸν τῆφον ἐν πατρῷδι in GVI 1787 – Stratonikeia; τὸν τῆφον εἰ[δ]όμενος in GVI 1364a – Hermoupolis Magna). See also MERKELBACH 1980, p. 200 against the supplement [τὴν] στήλην in ISM II 459,

¹² ARICESCU 1977, 193–199 no. 1; VÉRILHAC 1979, 43–48; MERKELBACH 1980, 2000, no. 1.

“Now the deadly Moira seized Attalos, one of the young unwed, and took away the hopes of the parents.”

7 = ISM II 461¹³. The inscription starts with an irregular hexameter. The few surviving letters of the second verse (lines 3–4) are not enough for poetry, but are indicative of the origin of the woman: [B]εἰ|θουνή φιλ[– –].

8 = ISM VI.2, 602 is a fragmentary funerary inscription, largely undeciphered¹⁴. As I see it, the epitaph is in verse and it reads:

vestigia litt.

-----ν ἐποίησαν
 -----εος τοῦτο
 -----υν — ἐκλι- *vac.*
 -----πάντα βαρ-
 5 -----ντων. *vacat*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Authors

ARICESCU 1977 – A. Aricescu, *Deux epigrammes inédites de Tomi*, in: D.M. Pippidi, E. Popescu (ed.), *Epigraphica. Travaux dédiés au VIIIe Congrès d'épigraphie grecque et latine (Constantza, 9–15 septembre 1977)*, Bucharest, 1977, p. 193–202.

AVRAM 2014 – A. Avram, *Notes épigraphiques (IV)*, *Pontica* 47 (2014), p. 451–463.

BĂRBULESCU 2019 – M. Bărbulescu, *Notes épigraphiques concernant quelques inscriptions grecques de la collection MINAC* in: A. Avram, L. Buzoianu (ed.), *Varia epigraphica et archaeologica, volume dédié à la mémoire de Maria Bărbulescu*, *Pontica* 52, Suppl. VI, Constanța, 2019, p. 19–29.

MERKELBACH 1980 – R. Merkelbach, *Zwei Epigramme aus Tomi*, *ZPE* 39 (1980), p. 200–201.

MARTIN 1990 – A. Martin, Review of ISM II, *Latomus* 49, 4 (1990), p. 882–884.

МИХАЙЛОВ 1943 – Г. Михайлов, *Гръцките епиграми от българските земи*, *Годишник на Софийския университет, Историко-филологически факултет* 39 (1942–1943), p. 1–70.

MUNTEANU 1974 – M. Munteanu, *Cîteva inscripții tomitane inedite*, *Pontica* 7 (1974), p. 157–168.

OLIVER 1981 – J.H. Oliver, *Marcus Aurelius and the Philosophical Schools at Athens*, *AJPh* 102, 2 (1981), p. 213–225.

PEEK 1964 – W. Peek, *Griechische Epigramme aus Rumänien*, *Studii Clasice* 6 (1964), p. 119–136.

SLOBOZIANU 1959 – H. Slobozianu, *Considerații asupra așezărilor antice din jurul lacurilor Techirghiol și Agiea*, *MCA* 5 (1959), p. 735–752.

TOCILESCU 1882 – G.G. Tocilescu, *Inscripfen aus der Dobrudscha*, *AEM* 6 (1882), p. 1–52.

TOCILESCU 1894 – G.G. Tocilescu, *Neue Inscripten aus Rumänien*, *AEM* 17 (1894), p. 81–113.

VÉRILHAC 1979 – A.-M. Vérilhac, *À propos de quelques inscriptions du Pont*, *Epigraphica* 41 (1979), p. 43–58.

¹³ *Editio princeps*: MUNTEANU 1974, 161–164, no. 4.

¹⁴ *Editio princeps*: AVRAM 2014, p. 456, no. 12.



Fig. 1. Inscription on a funerary stele (ISM II 166, lines 1–6). (Photograph by Oana Borlean).

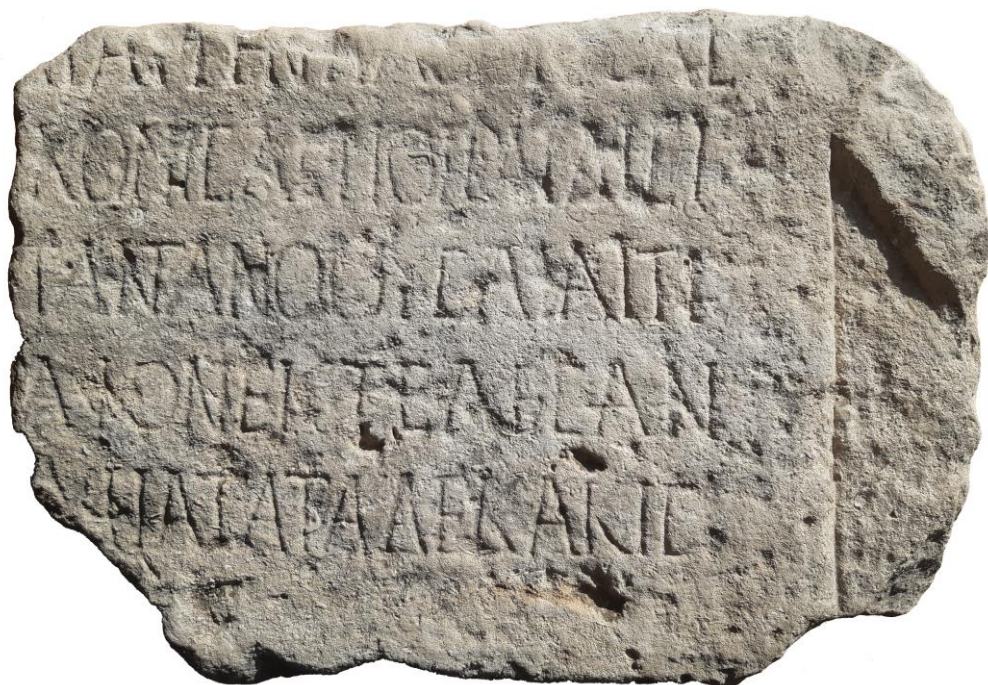


Fig. 2. Fragment of a sarcophagus inscription (ISM II 311). (Photograph by the author).