

A TRAVELLING STONE FROM CALLATIS

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Rezumat: *Inscripția funerară este scrisă în dialectul doric, sugerând că a ajuns la București de la Callatis (Mangalia de azi, județul Constanța). Două elemente remarcabile sunt numele Khoiros și Simoleon; din câte știm, primul mai este atestat o singură dată ca nume de femeie, iar al doilea apare aici pentru prima dată în lumea greacă.*

Abstract: *The funerary inscription is written in Doric dialect, suggesting it came to Bucharest from Callatis (present-day Mangalia, Constanța County). The two remarkable elements are the names Khoiros and Simoleon; as far as we know, for the first there is only one other mention as a woman's name and the second is mentioned here for the first time in the Greek world.*

The subject of this paper is an epigraphic monument that came to our attention in 2019. According to its private owner, it was discovered in Bucharest, near the crossroads between Mihai Eminescu st. and Polonă st., when the stone fence of a 19th c. house was torn down. Therefore its place of origin is unknown.

It is a block (Fig. 1) of white yellowish marble (23.5 × 18.7 cm; 6-8 cm thick), with a smooth surface and an unfashioned back. The sides were cut straight and we can still see the chisel marks. In the centre of the smooth surface, there is a four-row inscription. The height of the letters is approx. 2.3 cm and the space between rows is 0.7 cm. Around the inscription remains an uninscribed space: at the top 4 cm; at the bottom 3.43 cm; to the left 1.2 cm; and to the right approx.

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1 cm. Therefore, it is clear that the four rows represent the whole inscription and no part of the text was lost.

Χοῖρος
 Σιμολέοντος
 Ἀρίστωνος
 γυνά

L. 2. The left edge of the stone is partially broken in this area, so the final *sigma* is only partially preserved, but clearly visible.

Translation:

“Khoiros, daughter of Simoleon,
 wife of Ariston”

The Doric form *guna* suggests that the origin of the stone must be a Greek Doric town, and (supposing that the stone did not ‘travel’ to Bucharest from outside the country) the obvious candidate is the Greek colony of Callatis (present-day Mangalia, Constanța County), where in fact several similar documents, funerary inscriptions for women, were discovered and subsequently published. The form of the letters would indicate the 3rd c. BC as an acceptable date for the monument, as they are similar to the lettering of ISM III 153, 158 and 159¹, all three funerary inscriptions for women of the 3rd c. BC.²

By no means a unique monument, the interest of the present inscription resides in two of the names in the text, the woman’s and her father’s. The woman’s name, *Khoiros*, belongs to a series of female names formed from the Greek name for ‘pig’ (*khoiros*). *Khoiros* designates the younger variety as opposed to other Greek names for mature pigs, and has, in Attic comedy and probably in everyday life slang, remarks Henderson, an obscene connotation, designating the female genitals/young girls/courtesans and implying a connection with youth and/or a state of hairlessness³. Examples of female names derived from *khoiros* are *Khoirine*, *Khoiris*, *Khoiro* or the hypocorist *Khoiridion*⁴, but it should be said that the etymological connection is of no necessary consequence to the dignity and social status of the name bearers⁵, as it was previously recognized.

The name *Khoiros* itself belongs to male individuals (the LGPN online reveals a number of 11 occurrences)⁶, and also, in only one instance as far as we know, to a woman, in what is manifestly a series of female names, Εἰλαθάνη. Χοῖρος. Μυρρίνη. Καλλιστό, inscribed on an Attic grave stele dated to ca. 360 BC

¹ AVRAM *et al.* 1999, p. 96, 98, no. 7.

² The arrangement of the words on stone is identical to ISM III 158.

³ HENDERSON 1975, p. 131-132; also PERPILLOU 1980 on the etymology of *khoiros* and the centrality of hair to the definition of the ‘pig’.

⁴ BECHTEL 1917, 591-592; RÉVAILHAC 2017, on hypocorists.

⁵ *E. g.* the two *Khoirine* from Athens, a nurse, of lesser status, and a priestess discussed by KOSMOPOLOU 2001, p. 309 N8, but see also 288, 290, and 312-313 P4.

⁶ http://clas-igpn2.classics.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/Igpn_search.cgi?name=Χοῖρος (12.02.2020). Also see BECHTEL 1917, p. 588.

the relief of which represents three women. First published as a funerary relief of *hetairai* by J. Thimme⁷ on the strength of interpreting *Khoiros* as the name of a courtesan⁸, with the reading cited above, both its reading and interpretation were challenged by Jeanne and Louis Robert the following year⁹. The previously unknown name *Eilathane* was corrected as *Plathane*, while the assumption that the females were courtesans was nullified by the weakness of the link between the name *Khoiros* and the said profession, a weakness already discussed in previous publications cited by the Roberts.

The father's name, *Simoleon*, an expressive compound from the adjective *simos*, 'flat-nose', and the noun *leon*, 'lion', seems not to have been attested so far, though a variety of names formed from *Simos* are known¹⁰, and it might be sensible to preserve the original lettering than to correct it in, say, *Timoleon*.

Concerning the husband, Ariston, probably two Ariston (Ariston and Ariston Ekh[---]) appear in Callatian inscriptions of the 1st half of the 3rd c. BC. in fragmentary inscriptions (ISM III 66, l. 8; ISM III 125, l. 4). The first of them appears in a dedication of a group of participants to sacred feasts (*thoinatai*), according to the editors, but it doesn't seem possible to assert any connections between the bearers of the names.

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⁷ THIMME 1967, p. 199-202.

⁸ THIMME 1967, p. 200.

⁹ Bull. ép. 1968, 445, no. 182.

¹⁰ BECHTEL 1917, p. 490-491; SHAW 2014, p. 100, for *Simos* as the most popular satyr name on vases.



Fig. 1. The inscription.