

## CGRN 230

### *Purity regulation from the Vari cave*

#### **Date :**

ca. 450-400 BC

Justification: lettering (Kirchhoff; Sokolowski: ca. 500-450 BC).

#### **Provenance**

A cave located in the Athenian deme of Anagyrous, now called Vari [↗ \(https://pleiades.stoa.org/places/580129/\)](https://pleiades.stoa.org/places/580129/).

#### **Support**

Rupestral (rock-cut) inscription.

Height: n/a

Width: n/a

Depth: n/a

#### **Layout**

The inscribed area is partially smoothed along the left margin. The right upper part of the inscription, damaged by a stroke or cut, does not seem to have originally contained any letter in that space. The remaining surface is extremely uneven. In some places, it is impossible to differentiate the natural depressions in the stone from the marking of the letters. The letters are carved in the Attic alphabet and script.

Letters: height not recorded.

#### **Bibliography**

Edition here based on [IG I<sup>3</sup> \(http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/abbreviations/#IG%20I%C2%B3\)](http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/abbreviations/#IG%20I%C2%B3) 982.

Cf. also: Kirchhoff [IG I \(http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/abbreviations/#IG%20I\)](http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/abbreviations/#IG%20I) 431; Ziehen [LGS II \(http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/abbreviations/#LGS%20II\)](#) 8; Sokolowski [LSCG \(http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/abbrevia-](http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/abbrevia-)

[tions/#LSCG](#) 9.

Further bibliography: [Dunham 1903](http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/bibliography/#Dunham%201903) (<http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/bibliography/#Dunham%201903>): 296; [Németh 1994](http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/bibliography/#N%C3%A9meth%201994) (<http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/bibliography/#N%C3%A9meth%201994>); [Larson 2001](http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/bibliography/#Larson%202001) (<http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/bibliography/#Larson%202001>); [Schörner - Goette 2004](http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/bibliography/#Sch%C3%B6rner%20-%20Goette%202004) (<http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/bibliography/#Sch%C3%B6rner%20-%20Goette%202004>); [Scullion 2009](http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/bibliography/#Scullion%202009) (<http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/bibliography/#Scullion%202009>); [Pache 2011](http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/bibliography/#Pache%202011) (<http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/bibliography/#Pache%202011>); [Jim 2012](http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/bibliography/#Jim%202012) (<http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/bibliography/#Jim%202012>); [Laferrière 2019](http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/bibliography/#Laferri%C3%A8re%202019) (<http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/bibliography/#Laferri%C3%A8re%202019>).

## Text

τᾶντερ' ἔχ-  
σο κλύζετ[ε]  
καὶ τὸν ὄν-  
θον νίζετε.

## Translation

Clean the intestines outside and wash off the excrement.

## Traduction

Nettoyez les intestins à l'extérieur et lavez les excréments.

## Commentary

This inscription is found on the wall of a famous cave at Vari in Attica, on the slopes of Mount Hymettos. The Vari cave was in use from at least ca. 500 BC, when early cultic deposits are found; cf. Larson, p. 242-243. The majority of the reliefs and inscriptions adorning the cave's walls, however, are dated to ca. 450-400 BC, when it appears that a man named Archedamos from the island of Thera (or from Arkadian Therai) embellished the cave and perhaps adapted its layout. In some of the cave's inscriptions (cf. [IG I<sup>3</sup>](http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/abbreviations/#IG%20I%C2%B3) (<http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/abbreviations/#IG%20I%C2%B3>) 977-980), Archedamos refers to himself as a *nympholeptos*, one "seized by a nymph" (cf. Jim); the texts also make clear that he cultivated a garden and built a dwelling for the Nymphs. Archedamos himself is depicted in a stone-cut relief near the entrance to the cave; on this individual, see further Pache, p. 44-52. In sum, the cave is a shrine to Pan and the Nymphs, and contains many of the elements typically found in cave-shrines: a small, freshwater spring, terracotta figurines of Pan, and numerous reliefs and dedications to the deities (see Schörner - Goette and Laferrière on rituals performed in the cave). The cave consists of two main spaces, in which we find a number of different

types of inscriptions: dedicatory inscriptions linked to six reliefs, inscriptions cut into the walls of the cave, inscriptions on separate stone blocks, and graffiti on votive deposits and vases ([IG I<sup>3</sup>](http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/abbreviations/#IG%20I%C2%B3) (<http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/abbreviations/#IG%20I%C2%B3>) 974-981; see Schörner - Goette). The present text, a short inscription containing a ritual norm, is found in the second, smaller room of the cave, near a rock-cut feature which might be identified as a cistern or basin. It is also opposite an inscription that reads "of Charis" ([IG I<sup>3</sup>](http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/abbreviations/#IG%20I%C2%B3) (<http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/abbreviations/#IG%20I%C2%B3>) 976), which is accompanied by a rocky protuberance shaped to resemble a head. For details on the placement of the different inscriptions and a map of the cave, see Schörner - Goette.

It is unclear whether this inscription should be understood in the context of purity, i.e. with implicit reference to the need to keep the sanctuary pure, or rather as a practical prescription, to some degree connected with sacrificial ritual, but primarily concerned with the cleanliness and maintenance of the sanctuary (for other examples of regulations concerning practical issues such as the presence of excrement or dung in sanctuaries, see Németh). The regulation can of course have fulfilled both functions; cf. Larson's interpretation that the inscription is meant to "protect the quality and sanctity of the cave's spring water" (p. 243). While the order to clean the intestines and wash off the dung is not strictly part of the ritual of sacrifice, it nonetheless relates to the ritual process and creates the proper conditions (purity/cleanliness) for it to take place. Moreover, through its focus on this portion of the animal, the text might imply that the intestines were part of the sacrificial ritual or at least consumed on the spot: see [CGRN 86](http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/file/86) (<http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/file/86>), Kos, face A, lines 33-35, for a distinctive norm which involves washing the intestines (next to the altar?) and burning them as part of the sacrifice. It is also possible the intestines were taken away and used to make sausages at a later stage (cf. e.g. [CGRN 57](http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/file/57) (<http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/file/57>), Aixone, on the subject of tripe and sausage). Overall, however, this perhaps seems less likely: if take-away of intestines was the norm, it would probably not have been necessary to order that these be cleaned outside the cave.

Lines 1-2: The inscription orders that the intestines of sacrificial animals should be cleaned outside the sanctuary, where the sacrifice itself is to be offered. Scullion has offered an alternative interpretation: instead of taking ἔχσο in line 1 to mean "outside the cave", he suggests that ἔχσο κλύζετε could be analogous to the gesture implied by the participle ἐκπλύναντες (in [CGRN 86](http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/file/86) (<http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/file/86>) A, Kos, lines 33-35; see above) and that the meaning could thus be understood as "cleaning out(ward) from their inside"; he accordingly translates as follows: "Rinse out the intestines and clean away the dung" (p. 158). Scullion considers that the word order of the sentence would be odd if ἔχσο was supposed to go with both clauses and that ἔχσο is a terse or elliptical way of referring to "outside the sanctuary". Considering the topography of the site and the particular context of the cave, however, the more widely accepted and more straightforward interpretation still seems a better fit: in an enclosed sacred site, where the presence of polluting or dirty matter would be particularly keenly perceived, it makes practical sense to specify that the intestines of the sacrificial animals be cleaned outside.

Lines 3-4: ὄνθος specifically refers to the excrement in the intestines of sacrificial animals (compare IG I<sup>3</sup> (<http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/abbreviations/#IG%20I%C2%B3>) 4B, lines 8-11). For a discussion of the difference between this term and κόπρος (dung), see Németh, p. 63-64.

## **Publication**

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