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A New Proper Name: Εὐδῆριος


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In the private collection of Prof. Dr. R.A. Lunsingh Scheurleer, Amsterdam, is a rather mutilated fragment of a statue of a horse (cf. Tafel 15ab). On the basis of the letters of the inscription (especially the delta) I dated this fragment of Italian marble to the II/III A.D. Its provenance is unknown. The most interesting feature of this artefact is the inscription of a name just above the neckstrap1: ΕΥ∆ΕΡΙΟΥ. Although proper names starting with the adverb εὖ are very well attested2 this specific name was to date not yet known. There can be no doubt that we are dealing with a compound of εὖ + δέρις = δέρη = δέρις = neck/throat (cf. δέρινος = necklace; δέριτηρ = a horse-collar). Εὐδέριος has the meaning "with a good/fine/strong neck/throat" which is a perfect name for a horse.

That a horse bears a name is nothing to be astonished about, on the contrary, it is only logical that an individual animal had a name too3. The immortal horses of Achilles who were even able to speak with a human voice to predict the death of Hector were called Ζάῦθος and Βάλας4. Alexander the Great’s horse, Bukephalos, enjoys world wide fame5. In curse tablets very many names of horses can be found6 and the names of the horses of the circus factions were known by name7. A horse was a possession of great value to its owner to be highly estimated. One is reminded of greetings given to somebody’s horse “which the evil eye may not touch”.8 Names were also given to other animals. Odysseus’ faithful dog was called Argos (Od. p 292ff.) and Zenon’s Indian hound Tauron even received two funeral inscriptions9. Even in simple documents the name of an animal is sometimes given10. Examples could be multiplied11.

The genitive Εὐδέριου depends on a not expressed substantive. When a mummy-label starts with a name in the genitive12 the underlying thought is "body of". Of a funerary stela starting with a name in the genitive13 the meaning is "stela/tomb of". A name in the genitive on, e.g., a ring implies that that ring belongs to the person mentioned14. In the present case we are dealing with a statue of the horse Euderios which was probably erected on the occasion of a glorious victory or because the horse died.
a) + b) Fragment of a statue of a horse with inscription