

Royal disease (Vasilios ńosos): Substantiating one of the names of tuberculosis in Greek, from “Atakta” dictionary by Adamantios Korais, (1832-1835)

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SUMMARY

The purpose of the present article is to substantiate the Greek name of βασιλειος νόσος (*Vasilios ńosos*) about tuberculosis, with the analysis of what Adamantios Korais mentions about scrofula in his dictionary “Atakta”. Korais relates the story of medicinal Royal touch about

scrofula connects and identifies the king with the name of the disease.

Keywords: Adamantios Korais, dictionary, Kings of France, χοιράδες (choirades), scrofula.

■ INTRODUCTION

Tuberculosis existed in human beings since antiquity. The first remarkable description of tuberculosis was realized by Hippocrates who named it *Phthisis* and meant the progressive damage and exhaustion of the organism [1].

Phthisis was incorporated and responded to the evolving course of the word. It was incorporated in the Greek vocabulary of the Medieval every day speech and it was named *Chtikio* [2].

Among the synonymous words of *Chtikio* the word βασιλειος νόσος (*Vasilios ńosos*) can be spotted [3]. In the Greek language the word Tuberculosis (Φυματίωση -*fimatiosi*) is a loan translation from the French term Tuberculose [4].

Scrofula is the subject of Korais statement in the present article. Scrofula has been concerning hu-

manity since antiquity. Despite the fact that its association with pulmonary tuberculosis was established in the times of Koch, their accurate description was realized by Hippocrates, who names them Χοιράδες (*Xirádes-choirades*) [5].

Hippocrates used to say that the disease derived from the temporary settlement of the organism's humors in the jugular lymph glands, which come to a state of long-term inflammation [6].

Choirades (*Χοιράδες - Xirádes*) followed the same evolutionary course in terms of language. At various times they had different names: *Lymphatic disease* (*xirádosi*), *Scrofula*, *King's Evil*, Βρογχοκήλη (*Bronchocele*), *Struma*.

The terms Χοιράδες (*Xirádes-Choirades*), or *Scrofula* (*Χελώνια-Xelónia*) are synonymous in the Greek language [5, 7] The terms *Scrofula* or *Struma* are synonymous in Latin and regarding the common English language the disease was named *King's Evil*. In Latin it was named *Regius morbus* (icterus) which literally means *Royal disease* and in English *King's Evil* [3].

“The latter appellation (*King's Evil*) is derived from

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the circumstance of Edward the Confessor, touching persons afflicted with it; and it is said they were miraculously cured thereby. This practice was continued down to the reign of Charles the Second, who touched 92,000 persons afflicted with the disease; and it appears that Queen Anne was the last Sovereign who practiced such a ridiculous and superstitious imposition" [8].

Scrofula, the current tuberculous lymphadenitis, has connected its history with the social belief regarding the therapeutic power attributed to the touch of English and French Kings.

The institutionalization of the royal touch as a "cure" for Scrofula, which was dominant in England and France for approximately 8 centuries and the "mental range of Korais", determined the objective of the present article [5, 9].

The objective of the present article is to substantiate the Greek vernacular name Βασίλειος Νόσος (*Vasilios nósos*) which was attributed to tuberculosis, based on the statement of Adamantios Korais regarding scrofula, in his dictionary "Atakta" [5, 7, 10].

Biography of Adamantios Korais

The recounting of Korais' life is based on the authenticity of the source, having been anthologized by Korais himself, a few years before his death. Adamantios Korais was born in Smyrna in 1748. He received his first education in the educational institute of Ierótheos Dendrinis, later named *Evangelical School of Smyrna*. He studied Medicine in the University of *Montpellier* where he graduated as excellently qualified submitting his diploma thesis in 1876 bearing the title *Pyretologiae Synopsis* and in 1787 his doctoral thesis *Medicus Hippocraticus*.

Coinciding with his studies, he published in 1787 Selle's "Clinical Medicine" which he translated from German into French.

From 1799 he began to publish translated works by ancient writers "Characters of Theophrastus" (1799), Hippocrates, "About Air, Water and Places -I" (1800), "The Trumpets of War" (1802) the first edition of Beccaria's "On crimes and punishments" (1802), "Memoirs of the present state of the Greek culture" (1803), "The Aithiopiaká" of Heliodorus (1804). In 1805 he delivers the translation of the "Geography" of Strabo to the emperor Napoleon. From 1805-1829 he publishes the "Greek Library" (*Ellinikí violiotiki*-17 volumes), "Parerga" (Works on the side - 9 volumes), "The Jokes of Hierocles", the first 4 rhapsodies from Homer's "Iliad" and the

first 2 volumes of "Atakta" (In a Disorderly Manner) [11].

He died in Paris in 1883. His rich literary work was donated posthumously to the Library of Chios which bears his name.

Research data: the Atakta dictionary (disorderly dictionary)

The "Atakta" dictionary consists of seven volumes. Korais' writing was based on the ancient saying "The Principle of Education is the Visiting of Names", and in accordance with this saying he compiled the "Atakta".

The source of the data used in this article was extracted from the "Atakta" dictionary of Adamantios Korais; the dictionary is a collection of linguistic material that testifies to what has been said or written in a language.

The focus on recording information of the disease from the dictionary of Korais is not paradoxical, nor untimely. On the contrary, it is imperative. Had not Korais himself studied Philology and Medicine and had he not symptoms of tuberculosis from the age of 13? [11].

For every word - entry he registers, Korais seeks its etymology, its meanings, its local use, its similarity in the French language.

We shall trust his scientific knowledge and indulge in the information of his pen in his interpretation of the entry Χοιράδες (*choirades*) from the 4th volume of the Dictionary and the interpretation of the *Kings of France* and *Scrofula* from the 5th volume of the dictionary [5, 7, 10].

Korais in the first volume of his dictionary started writing "Atakta" in his later years; "In order to collect notes (...) that ... had been scattered in my library (...) I gathered in them meanings of words of the old and modern Greek language. Material from the common Dictionary, grammatical, ethical, political, historical, archaeological, perhaps even theological memoirs: all incomplete, all unsightly, all unattended, all in a disorderly manner Atakta (...).

And what inscription or what appropriate name should I give? I liked Philitas (...) [12] Philitas was from Kos: he flourished in the time of the Alexander, and he was teacher to Ptolemy II. In addition to "Atakta" he wrote "Elegies and Epigrams", and some other works. If we believe the Historians, Philitas tried to find the solution to the famous sophistry of Pseudómenon (about lying) and in the aftermath of this search, he fell ill from Phthisis and died, as written on the inscription on his grave.

«Ξείνε, Φιλητάς ειμί. Λόγων ο ψευδόμενος με
Ωλεσε, και νυκτών φροντίδες εσπέριοι » [11].
(“Stranger I am Philitas. For these reasons, the Liar
has killed me and the cares of the dark night”).
*Phthisis which derived from the pursuit of solution to
the sophism “Pseudómenon”! That was the naughtiest
of the Philitas’ Atakta (...)*”.

The last volume of the dictionary was published in 1835, after the demise of the author. The curator of the publication, Fournarakis F., in the preface of the dictionary states that Korais, despite his advanced age, compiled the dictionary within 10 months, and gave it the self-defined title: *Atakta Volume V, 15 May 1832* [11].

■ METHODS

The main analytical method in this article is based on the bibliography that Korais quotes in the interpretation of the words of the *Kings of France*, *Scrofula* and *Χοιράδες* (*Xirádes-choirades*) [5, 7, 10]. As a source for extracting and analyzing research data, we used digital technology, to locate the rare books cited by Korais in the interpretation of the words of the *Kings of France*, *Scrofula* and *Χοιράδες* (*Xirádes-choirades*), and related them to the history of the royal touch as an element of documenting the treatment of Cervical Tuberculosis Lymphadenitis.

To document the data of the analysis, we followed the method of quotation referencing the quotation of real excerpts, so as to keep the validity of Korais’s written speech.

Professor Babiniotis G. writes that “Korais is a spiritual character with a significant range, far above most other spiritual personalities not only of Greece but also of the rest of Europe of his time. Whoever sparks the spirit of Korais, the breadth (...) the sagacity and his combined power, his formidable judgment (...) the broadness of mind (...) his knowledge and judgment (...) scientific restraint (...) whoever equates all these virtues and gifts (sometimes even derogatively) (...), he does nothing but underestimate and distort the features of a rare physiognomy” [9].

■ RESULTS

Korais’ testimony about the Scrofula in the “Atakta” dictionary.

Documentation of the name Vasiliós nósos (royal disease) from “Atakta” Dictionary by Adamantios Korais

In the 5th volume of the dictionary it is clear that Korais identifies the Kings with the name of the disease, because he refers to the interpretation in the entry of the *Kings of France* in the entry *Scrofula* and from the entry *Scrofula* in the 5th volume in to the entry *Χοιράδες* (*Xirádes-choirades*) in the 4th volume [5, 7, 10].

Linguistically

The lexical expression of the disease by Korais is a representation of information in the written text we studied.

By reading the text, we encounter the words “*Páθος*” (*Passion*), “*Nósos*” (*Disease*), “*Nósima*” (*Illness*), “*Óηγος* of the choirades” (*Mass of the choirades*), “*Βροηχοκίλι*” (*Goiter*), “*Κίλι* of *σρόηχος*” (*Loop hernia*), which Korais uses for his statement of the pathological condition that he records.

The words “*disease (nósos)*, *illness (nósima)*, and *passion (páθος)*” are general terms frequently used in medical terminology, while the more specific terms “*Χοιράδες*” (*Xirádes-choirades*), *scrofula*, *Mass of the Xirádes*, *Goiter*, *Loop hernia*”, state specific types of damage in the human body.

The finding that the words “*Χοιράδες* (*choirades*), *Scrofula*”, state specific types of damages done to the human body, is a useful start to the exploration of their significance. With literary precision, Korais registers their importance. Their name comes, according to Paulus Aegineta, “*either form choirades rocks (rocks that stand out from the sea) or swines, because swines have similarly hard cervices*” [13].

The information “*swines have hard cervices*”, in the respective animal disease is important for someone to understand why the disease was named as such. Korais assumes that because of the hardness of their composition *Χοιράδες* (*choirades*), were named *Scrofula* [14].

At the same time, the rendering of the vernacular Greek name «*Σφαλάγγια*» (“*Sfalángia*”) from Thesaly, provides the dimension which the disease is being perceived by the society, as a phenomenon (or event) that needs to be addressed or studied [7]. It is remarkable that Korais is adding on every entry registered at the dictionary, apart from the definition in Greek, its definition in French language *Ecrouelles* (*Χοιράδες - Choirades*), *Scrophules* (*Χελώνια-xelónia*), *Bronchocele* (*Βροηχοκίλη-Vroηχοκίλι*), *Bernie du gosier* (*Κήλη του βρόγχου - Kíli of σρόηχος*) [5, 7].

Summarizing, based on the of the findings, we could attribute *scrofula* to its meaning with two

different names, the medical terminology and the vernacular name.

Cause of the disease-Signs of the disease

Reading the document, it is understood that Korais as a doctor, scholar, and translator of the Hippocrates's documents, mentions that the cause of the disease is known since the time of Hippocrates. At the same time, Korais as a doctor is using observation, as the main method of recording the disease. The expression *"the volume of the scrofula extends several times and goes down to the chest"*, in the analysis of the entry, he extends the observations of *Paulus Aegineta* who mentions as areas of findings the scrofula *"the neck, the armpits and the bubonic area"* [5, 13].

Epidemiology of the disease

Apart from the clinical observation in the cause of the disease, Korais is extending the area of knowledge for the disease recording its geographical epidemiology.

Epidemiology of the disease in Europe

11th - 18th Century

The timing of the establishment and dominance of the royal touch *"the miracle started on the 11th century... Until the middle of the last century in Europe ... Even the King of England had the touch"* captures the geographical allocation of the scrofula for the period between the 11th - 18th Century in two countries, France and England.

Information such as the frequency of the ceremony *"each king was practicing this treatment at different times within a year, but with grandeur during his coronation"* and the number of sick people attending it, was also increasing.

"Then, they were coming not only from all over France, but from all over Europe, immense number of scrofula patients ..." indicating the community's exposure to the disease and provide information for the development of the disease in the aforementioned areas [5].

Epidemiology of the disease in Europe 19th Century

The report regarding the form of the epidemic *"the disease is endemic"* identifies the infectious disease that often occurs in specific locations *"in the valleys of the Alps, the Pyrenees, in Savandia and other similar locations (...)"*. At the same time, from the Thesalian vernacular name «Σφαλάγγια-Sfalángia» for

the disease, we receive epidemiological data in a certain area of Greece, Thessaly [5].

Epidemiology of the disease in the areas of Lombardy - Sauoye - Turkey 16th Century

At this point, we could refer to the comparative epidemiological data of the disease between Europe and Turkey that Korais is offering from the reference: *"Unknown, the disease to the Turks, because they are eating raw garlic and onions, as Belon mentions"* [5, 15].

So, using the French doctor – traveler *Pierre Belon* as source of information, he adds Belon's recorded data for the disease in Turkey in the 16th Century. From his travels in Turkey during the 16th Century, Belon recorded: *"the disease exists in Lombardy and Sauoye and stems from the drinking of non-drinkable (inappropriate) water. In Turkey, the disease does not exist because, even though Turks are also drinking non-drinkable water, they are eating raw garlic and onions"* [15].

Patients in France

Korais being exponent of Hippocrates' rational medicine, comment in caustic way the patients: *"the symptoms of the disease make the poor patients stupid, and indeed swines, known in French as "Cretins"*. The writer explains that those names come from the symptoms of the disease and socially the scrofula patients are considered in France *"god's chosen or saints"* [5].

The story of the Royal touch - the ceremony

While Korais is recording the Royal touch of scrofula, he focuses on the disease itself and rejects the superstition of touch in the treatment of the disease with the quotation: *"The stupidity of the humans has lots of forms and shapes"*.

Stupid and less sociable belief in the healing power of the touch of Kings for Korais. *"One of those forms of stupidity in Europe was also the stupid belief, which was dominant until the middle of the last Century, that French Kings were receiving together with the crown also the divine gift to heal scrofula just with a touch. Each king was practicing this treatment at different times within a year, but with grandeur during his coronation. Then, they were coming not only from all over France, but from all over Europe, immense number of scrofula patients which the King was touching with his right hand and healing them, after he had heard the holy service and prayed in front of the holy table. The*

beginning of the miracle happened on the 11th Century. The King of England also had the same gift, starting a bit earlier, as historians have recorded" [16].

Korais' focus in the treatment of the disease from Kings with the use of the word "miracle" symbolizes partially the social dimension of the disease and reflects the position of health in the prosperity of the human society.

The story of the Royal touch in general

It is obvious the intention of the writer in this paragraph to emphasize in the importance of ancient scripts in the narration of the healing royal touch from the books of *Plutarch* and *Tacitus* in the chapters *Pyrrhus* and *Vespasian* respectively [17, 18].

Historically, the gift of healing touch can be found on the example of the Epirus King *Pyrrhus*. According to *Plutarch*, King *Pyrrhus* "was healing splenetics, (...) he was sacrificing white rooster to *Apollo* and to *Asclepius* (...) he was stepping on the spleen of the patient, who was laying on the ground with his right Royal foot (...) was receiving with great pleasure, as reward for the therapy, the slaughtered rooster, and that divine power remained only on the large toe of his right foot because even after the death of *Pyrrhus*, that remained unharmed after his body was cremated" [17].

Continuing *Korais* refers to the absence of the miracle worker king to Greek and Romans, from the days of *Pyrrhus* to the period of the Roman Emperor *Vespasian*. The last one cured two patients, a blind man and a paralyzed one from *Alexandria*. His therapeutic method entailed the touching of the patient's eye with saliva and touching (stepping) on the paralyzed man with his feet. After fifty years, a second miracle - worker Roman King made his appearance, *Hadrian*, who cured two blind men.

Transition of miraculous touching from King to Monks
We bring in our search the text, as it is recorded by the author, the allusion concerning the transition of miraculous cure of the diseases from kings to the representatives of the Church: "The question is obvious why the Greek-Roman Christian emperors, who imitated many insanities of the Roman emperors and none of their virtues, did not think of making miracles. They were also called Saint and Devine as the Kings, however none of them attempted to cure anyone, whether the person was blind or paralyzed, and despite having imposed free will of religion they neglected the

ruling of the country and were occupied with the seeking of religion and the structuring of church hymns [19]. The attentive reading of this story answers the question. In the years of the Greek-Romans, and mainly from the Middle Ages and afterwards, the crowd of Monks grabbed the workshop of miracle working, as a means to increase their income accordingly to their followers; so, Kings did not have any reason to work miracles like the monks, nor did they need to use an overused means, but they had other means, which were more effective. The monks "stole" people's strain through their miracles and superstitions; the emperors imposed hefty taxes, part of which was enjoyed by the Monks again, because from these taxes they built and multiplied monasteries, churches and temples were erected and the ministers of the churches got rich."

■ CONCLUSIONS

For the interpretation of the word *Kings of France* in the 5th volume of the dictionary "Atakta", *Korais* refers to the word *Scrofula*.

With the documentation of the history of therapeutic king touching for the scrofula, *Korais* correlates and identifies in a very witty way the name of the disease. The Royal disease, or the King's disease and by extension the disease whose cure belonged exclusively to the King. So, *Royal disease* (*Vasilios nósos*).

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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