



## The Epigrams of Sophronius

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*The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. 33, No. 1. (1983), pp. 284-292.

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*The Classical Quarterly* is currently published by The Classical Association.

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## THE EPIGRAMS OF SOPHRONIUS\*

Five epigrams in the *Greek Anthology* are ascribed to Sophronius, sophist, poet, theologian and finally patriarch of Jerusalem when it fell to the Arabs in 638.<sup>1</sup> Sophronius' other extant poems are all in the anacreontic metre, which he wrote with a certain fluency but (judged by classical standards) without perfect mastery.<sup>2</sup> It is in principle quite possible that he also composed in so traditional a genre as the classicizing epigram, but (as we shall see) there are in fact considerable doubts about four of the five in question.

## I

We may begin with the first, *AP* i. 90:

*Εἰς Κύρον καὶ Ἰωάννην*  
*Κύρω, ἀκεστορίης πανυπέρτατα μέτρα λαχόντι,*  
*καὶ τῷ Ἰωάννῃ, μάρτυσι θεσπεσίοις,*  
*Σωφρόνιος, βλεφάρων ψυχαλγέα νοῦσον ἀλύξας,*  
*βαῖον ἀμειβόμενος τήνδ' ἀνέθηκε βιβλον.*

'To Cyrus, possessed of the highest measure of the healing art, and indeed to John, the holy martyrs, Sophronius dedicated this book, as a slight return for his escape from a soul-distressing disease of the eyes.'

Sophronius thanks the healing saints Cyrus and John for curing him of a troublesome eye disease. The book which he offers them 'as a slight return'<sup>3</sup> is evidently his extant *SS. Cyri et Johannis Miracula*, the last chapter of which describes in detail the eye complaint alluded to in l. 3.<sup>4</sup> Even so, despite such welcome confirmation in detail, it should never have been assumed so confidently that Sophronius himself wrote the epigram.

Such 'Buchaufschriften' (of which there are many in *AP* ix) are rarely the work of the author of the book they introduce. In most cases they were written to accompany Byzantine calligraphic copies. So the fact that the allusions in the epigram are illustrated in the book is not in itself an argument in favour of its authenticity. Had it been written on the title-page without ascription (the normal practice), what guess would have come more naturally to an anthologist who disliked anonymous poems than Sophronius?

Such general suspicion is more than borne out by the separate transmission of the

\* Henry Chadwick was kind enough to comment on a draft of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> The identity of sophist and patriarch may now be regarded as settled: for this and all other biographical details see Christoph von Schönbörn, *Sophrone de Jerusalem: vie monastique et confession dogmatique* (Paris, 1972), pp. 53–95 and 39–42 (hereafter, Schönbörn), with Henry Chadwick, 'John Moschus and his friend Sophronius the sophist', *JTS* n.s. 25 (1974), 41–74. Schönbörn gives a full inventory of the works attributed to Sophronius (of which many are spurious); at p. 108, following editors of the *Anthology*, he lists the epigrams without comment.

<sup>2</sup> To be read now in the edition by M. Gigante, *Sophronii Anacreontica* (Rome, 1957), with a useful appendix of *testimonia de anacreonteis* and *index verborum*.

<sup>3</sup> For the βαῖον motif in late epigrams, see *Porphyrius the Charioteer* (Oxford, 1973), p. 92.

<sup>4</sup> 70, *PG* 87. 3. 3663 f., or pp. 394–400 in the new edition by Natalio Fernández Marcos, *Los Thaumata de Sofronio: contribución al estudio de la incubatio cristiana* (Madrid, 1975).

poem in *Vat. gr.* 1607<sup>5</sup> (the only manuscript that preserves the *Miracula* in its entirety) under the heading *Σενέκα ιατροσοφιστοῦ*, dismissed out of hand by all editors of the Anthology. A ‘misreading’ of *ἐνεκα ιατροσοφιστοῦ*, according to Stadtmueller, approved by Waltz. Yet (general considerations of probability aside) Sophronius was *not* cured ‘because of an iatrosophist’. It was precisely because regular medical science was powerless to help him that he was eventually recommended to approach SS. Cyrus and John.<sup>6</sup>

Assuming that such mechanical error can be ruled out, we are left with this otherwise totally unknown iatrosophist called Seneca – surely the last sort of guess that would occur to anyone looking for an ascription to a poem which purported to be by Sophronius. In fact the only plausible explanation for so unlikely an ascription is that Seneca the iatrosophist did indeed write the epigram.

We can go further. This poem does not stand alone in *Vat. gr.* 1607 (hereafter V). There it immediately precedes the book it announces, Sophronius’ *SS. Cyri et Johannis Miracula*, and is itself preceded (on fol. 33<sup>r</sup>–33<sup>v</sup>) by another epigram:

Τίς τὰδ' ἔγραψεν; “Σωφρόνιος.” Πόθεν; “ἔκ Φοινίκης.”  
 Φοινίκης ποιῆς; “τῆς Λιβανοστεφάνου.”  
 Ἄστν δὲ ποῖον ἔναιε; “Δαμασκόν.” Ζῶσι τοκῆς;  
 “Οὐ. θάνον ἀμφότεροι.” Οὐνομα δ' εἶπέ δύο.  
 “Μήτηρ μὲν τε Μυρῶ, γενέτης κικλήσκето Πλύνθας.” 5  
 Εἶχε γάμον γλυκερὸν, καὶ τεκέων ἀγέλην;  
 “Οὐ γάμον οὐ παῖδας σχέθε πάποτε, ἄζυγος ἦεν.”  
 Πῆ γῆς μονάσας καὶ τίνος ἐν μελάθρῳ;  
 “Ἐν χθονὶ θειοδόχῳ, καὶ ἐν οὐρσειν Ἰροσολύμων,  
 Ἐν μάνδρῃ μεγάλῃ Θεοδοσίου μεγάλου.” 10  
 Καὶ τίσι τόνδ' ἐτέλεσε καὶ ἔνθετο θέσκελον ὕμνον;  
 “Κύρω Ἰωάννῃ μάρτυσι θειονόοις.”  
 Τίπτε δὲ τόσσον ἔτευξε νόου πόνον; “Οὐνεκα καυτοῦ  
 Ὀμμασι νουσαλέοις δῶκαν ἀκεστορίην.”

Who wrote this? ‘Sophronius.’ Where did he come from? ‘Phoenice.’ Which Phoenice? ‘Phoenice, crown of Lebanon.’ Which city did he live in? ‘Damascus.’ Are his parents alive? ‘No, they are both dead.’ Give the name of both. ‘His mother was called Myro, his father Plynthas.’ Did he have a happy marriage, and a flock of children? ‘No marriage or children ever; he was a celibate.’ Whereabouts did he spend his monastic days; in whose house? ‘In the land that bore our Lord, in the hills of Jerusalem, in the great monastery of the great Theodosius.’ And for whom did he write, to whom did he dedicate this marvellous hymn? ‘Cyrus and John, the saintly minded martyrs.’ Why did he undertake so great a mental effort? ‘Because they healed his diseased eyes too.’

This poem (preserved only in V, and ignored by editors of the Anthology) is directly ascribed to Sophronius, ‘the author’ of the book (*τοῦ συγγράφοντος*). So when we find the second poem ascribed to this obscure Seneca, there can be no question of either mechanical error, carelessness or guesswork. The scribe of V was deliberately and carefully distinguishing between the epigram Sophronius himself wrote for his own book and another one which he evidently had reason to believe was the work of Seneca.

Can we in fact be sure that the first epigram is by Sophronius? Much of the biographical information it contains is indeed set out in the final chapter of the *Miracula*, with which it may usefully be compared:<sup>7</sup>

ἔστι μὲν ὄνομα τῷ γεγραφότῳ Σωφρόνιος, πόλις Δαμασκὸς ἢ μητρόπολις, πατρίς ἢ Φοινίκη, οὐχ ἢ παραλία ἀλλ' ἢ Λιβάνου τοῦ ὄρους ἐπάνωμος, ἧς ἔστι Δαμασκὸς ἢ ἀρχαία μητρόπολις.

<sup>5</sup> For bibliography and description of this MS (which is of the late tenth century, not thirteenth, as Mai thought), see Fernández, pp. 232–5.

<sup>6</sup> § 70. 7, ὡς οὐδεμίαν ἔχει πρὸς ἀνθρώπων βοήθειαν...

<sup>7</sup> § 70. 4.

τὸ δὲ μοναστήριον ὅπερ ὁ ἱερὸς Θεοδοσίος, ὁ πάντων τῶν Παλαιστιναίων μοναστῶν τῶν τε πρὸ αὐτοῦ, τῶν τε μετ' αὐτοῦ, δι' ἀρετὴν ἠγησάμενος, ἀνὰ τὴν ἔρημον τῆς ἁγίας Χριστοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν πόλεως ἴδρυσεν.

The mention of Damascus and the monastery of Theodosius, and the careful distinction between *Phoenice maritima* and *Phoenice Libanensis*, are common to both. But there is no reference to Sophronius' parents in either the *Miracula* or any other of his extant writings. And there being (to the best of our knowledge) no biography of Sophronius, the confident statement that both of his parents were dead at the time he wrote the *Miracula* must derive from a very early and well-informed source. Why then doubt the attribution to Sophronius himself?<sup>8</sup>

As first published by Mai<sup>9</sup> and reprinted by Migne<sup>10</sup> and again in his new edition of the *Mir.* by Natalio Fernández Marcos,<sup>11</sup> the poem is disfigured by a number of false quantities and other infelicities. The only critic who has ever attended to it is Franz Buecheler, who threw out half a dozen characteristically acute corrections in as many lines exactly a century ago.<sup>12</sup> It is especially important to establish the text of this poem as securely as possible, since the metrical and prosodical standards it follows can then be used as a yardstick. And in the matter of prosody at least we have a check not applied by Buecheler, Sophronius' own *Anacreontica*, of which we now have the more solidly based edition by M. Gigante.

line 3: V's ἄστυ δὲ ποῖον; "ἐν αἷς Δᾶμασκός" makes no sense, and *Δαμασκός* is found three times in the *An.*, always with the first syllable short (3. 83; 10. 6; 9. 39). Buecheler's correction is certain, and one apparent false quantity eliminated.

4: a small detail, but in the *An.* Sophronius seems to use *δύο* or *δύω* according as the metre requires a long or short final syllable. He might therefore have intended *δύω* here.

5: V has *κυκλέσκειτο* (cf. Fernández, p. 234 on the common etacisms of the manuscript). Other orthographical trifles: V offers *εἶεν* at the end of 7 and *γέης* at the beginning of 8. Also *Θεοδοσίου* in 10, but poets generally use the *Θευ*-form when the metre requires it.

6: it is extraordinary that no one before Buecheler saw that V's *τοκέων*, 'parents', has to be changed to *τεκέων*, 'children'.

8: Buecheler rightly eliminated one more apparent false quantity by writing *μουνάσας* for V's *μόνάσας*. Sophronius always uses *μουνο*-forms where the metre requires it in the *An.*, and there are no fewer than four other such 'epic' lengthenings in this very epigram: *οὔνομα* (4), *οὔνεκα* (13), *οὔρεσιν* (9) and *νουσαλέους* (14).

9: *οὔρεσιν*. The final nu omitted by Mai and added by Buecheler is in fact given by V. Buecheler passed V's *ἱερο-* as a synzesis, yet elsewhere Sophronius writes the *ἱρο*-form when he wants the name to scan this way, like other classicizing Christian poets (e.g. Nonnus, in his *Metabole*).<sup>13</sup> Ps. Apollinarius even coins the dative form *Ἱεροουσαλή* to suit his metre (*Ps.* 64. 2). Gigante's index to the *An.* shows three examples of *Ἱεροσολύμων* and thirteen of *Ἱεροουσαλήμ*, each as metre requires. It is interesting to note that at *An.* 14. 6 and 24, where the MSS tend (against the metre)

<sup>8</sup> Conceivably an intelligent guess (Sophronius wrote the *Mir.* c. 610 when about 60), though who but the author would have thought to mention such a detail?

<sup>9</sup> *Spicilegium Romanum* (Rome, 1846), pp. 95–6.

<sup>10</sup> *PG* 87. 3. 3421–2.

<sup>11</sup> *Los Thaumata de Sofronio*, pp. 6–7. I am most grateful to Professor Fernández for supplying me with an accurate collation of V for the two epigrams.

<sup>12</sup> 'Coniectanea' II, *Rhein. Museum* (1882), 329–30.

<sup>13</sup> See the index verborum in A. Scheindler's edition: here too there is a tendency for MSS to offer the more familiar *ἱερο*-form.

to give *ίρο-*, the metrical treatise of Elias the Monk quotes with *ίρο-*. If Sophronius recognized the *ίρο-* form as a valid metrical alternative in his *An.*, then it is likely that he wrote it here too.

11: certainly *έτέλεσσε* (Buecheler) for V's *-εσε*, as often in the *An.* (see Gigante's index).

13: certainly *καύτου* (Buecheler) rather than V's *καυτοί*. It is Sophronius too who has benefited from the martyrs, not the martyrs too who have benefited Sophronius. Confirmation is supplied by *Mir.* 70. 25, where, writing of himself in the third person and calling Cyrus and John the servants of Christ *σωτήρ*, Sophronius adds that they are *καύτῳ σωτήρες γενόμενοι*, 'his own saviours too'.

In making these corrections we are not (I think) correcting the poet. The result is a poem with much the same characteristics as the *An.*: heavily epicizing diction and shaky command of metre and prosody.<sup>14</sup> The lengthening of the first *a* in *μουνάσας* is paralleled by (e.g.) the lengthening of the second *a* in *παλάμης* at *An.* 4. 10 (against eight examples with short *a*). *θειοδόχος* in l. 9 is the 'epic' form of *θεοδόχος*, normally a term of Chalcedonian theology. In the *θειο-* form it is found three times in the *An.* (1. 122; 2. 123; 5. 55) and more relevantly still in the *θεο-* form three times in Sophronius' sermon on the nativity,<sup>15</sup> applied, as in our epigram, to the Holy Land. There can be no doubt that the longer epigram is by Sophronius.

It is intriguing to find so elaborate an example of the classical dialogue epigram employed by a future patriarch for so Christian a purpose. It is easy to cite the obvious classical models,<sup>16</sup> such as Leonidas (*AP* vii. 163) or Posidippus (*API* 275), which Sophronius may have known. But he is more likely to have felt their influence indirectly through the countless later imitations. The dialogue epigram was a favourite in the circle of Agathias: e.g. Agathias himself (*AP* vii. 522), Julian the Egyptian (vii. 590), Synesius scholasticus (*API* 267). A particularly elaborate example was inscribed on the base of a statue of the celebrated charioteer Porphyrius c. 500 (*API* 344). Indeed, there is a poem by Paul the Silentiary (vii. 307) that pokes fun at the rather laboured conventions of the form. Instead of just asking the necessary questions, the wayfarer keeps interrupting:

“ οὐνομά μοι . . . ” τί δέ τοῦτο; “ πατρίς δέ μοι . . . ” ἐς τί δέ τοῦτο;

'My name is . . . ' What does it matter? 'My country . . . ' And what does that matter?

To a member of Agathias' circle Sophronius' poem would have seemed hackneyed in theme and clumsy in execution. Some lines run fluently enough, but there are blemishes that Agathias would never have tolerated:<sup>17</sup> notably the very first line, with its jerky word break after the fourth element combined with the ponderous spondaic ending. There are also two illicit examples of hiatus, between the two halves of v. 4

<sup>14</sup> See Gigante, *Sophronii Anacreontica*, pp. 16–20.

<sup>15</sup> Ed. H. Usener, *Rhein. Museum* (1886), pp. 506. 14; 507. 21; 513. 6. Usener twice prints *θηροδόχος* against the older MS and Sophronius' usage.

<sup>16</sup> G. Rasche, 'De Anthologiae Graecae epigrammatis quae colloquii formam habent', Diss. Münster, 1910.

<sup>17</sup> On Agathias' metrical practice see A. Mattsson, 'Untersuchungen zur Epigrammsammlung des Agathias', Diss. Lund, 1942, pp. 160–71. He does not comment on *AP* ix. 644. 3, *λιτά δέ σοι και δείπνα*, which seems to be a pointed 'correction' of the one and only false quantity in all 20,000 lines of Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*, *ἀγρονόμων λιτά δείπνα* (17. 59). For all their unreality to the Byzantine ear, Agathias seems still to have taken the traditional classical quantities very seriously.

and between the eighth and ninth elements in v. 7 – not to mention that lengthening of the *a* in *μουνάσας*.

## II

*AP* vii. 679–80 both commemorate the last resting place of John the Almsgiver, patriarch of Alexandria from 610 to 619:

*Τύμβε, τίς ἦ πόθεν, ἦν δ' ἔτι παῖς τίνος; ἔργα καὶ ὄλβον*  
*νεκροῦ, ὃν ἔνδον ἔχεις, ἔννεπε, κευθόμενον –*  
 “*Οὗτος Ἰωάννης, Κύπριος γένος, υἱὸς ἐτύχθη*  
*εὐγενέος Στεφάνου. ἦν δὲ νομεὺς Φαρίης.*  
*κτήμασι μὲν πολυόλβος ὄλων πλέον, ὧν τρέφε Κύπρος,* 5  
*ἐκ πατέρος πατέρων ἐξ ὁσίων τε πόνων·*  
*ἔργα δὲ θέσκελα πάντα λέγειν, ἅπερ ἐν χθονὶ τεύξεν,*  
*οὐδ' ἐμοῦ ἔστι νόου οὐδ' ἐτέρων στομάτων·*  
*πάντα γὰρ ἄνδρα παρήλθε φαεινοτάταις ἀρετῆσι*  
*δόξαντα κρατέειν ταῖς ἀρεταῖς ἐτέρων.* 10  
*τοῦ καὶ κάλλεα πάντα, τὰπερ πτόλις ἔλλαχεν αὐτή,*  
*εἰσι φιλοφροσύνης κόσμος ἀρειοτάτης”.* (679)  
*Ἄρχος Ἰωάννης Φαρίης ἀρετῶν ἱερῶν*  
*ἐνθάδε νῦν μετὰ τέρμα φίλη παρὰ πατρίδι κείται·*  
*θνητὸν γὰρ λάχε σῶμα, καὶ εἰ βίον ἄφθιτον ἔξει,*  
*ἀθανάτους πρήξεις τε κατὰ χθόνα ῥέξεν ἀπείρους.* (680)

Tomb, who was he, and where did he come from? Whose son was he? Tell of the deeds and wealth of the dead man you hold buried within.

‘He was John, a Cypriot by birth, the son of the noble Stephanus. He was pastor of Alexandria. He had an abundance of wealth, more than all the sons of Cyprus, from his father’s fathers and his own honest toil. To tell of all the marvellous deeds he did on earth is beyond the power of my mind and the capacity of the lips of others. For he surpassed in his most shining virtues every man who seemed to surpass others in virtue. His are all the beauties which this city possesses, the adornment of his most noble generosity.’ (679)

John, leader of the virtuous priests of Alexandria (?), now lies here at the end of his days<sup>18</sup> in his beloved native land. For his body was mortal even if he was destined for everlasting life, and the deeds he wrought on earth beyond number will live for ever. (680)

Both *AP* and Planudes ascribe both poems to Sophronius. With every justification, it might seem. Not only was Sophronius personally and intimately acquainted with John during his days as patriarch in Alexandria.<sup>19</sup> Together with his friend John Moschus he later wrote a *Life* of John.<sup>20</sup> Yet even here there is a problem.

The original version of Sophronius’ *Life* has perished, but in 1927 Père Delehaye published a conflated version of this and a subsequent *Life* of John by Leontius of Neapolis. The original version of Leontius’ *Life*, which was confessedly written to supplement that of Sophronius and Moschus, does survive, so that it is a fairly straightforward matter to work out what comes from them and what from Leontius.<sup>21</sup>

Now according to Sophronius and Moschus the name of John the Almsgiver’s father was Epiphanius. According to our epigram it was Stephanus. Nor is it possible to

<sup>18</sup> For the *μετὰ τέρμα* formula see *Athenaeum* 45 (1967), 144. <sup>19</sup> Schönborn, pp. 65 f.

<sup>20</sup> The extent of Moschus’ contribution is uncertain, depending on whether he died before (Schönborn, pp. 105–6) or (more probably) after John the Almsgiver (Chadwick, pp. 51–3).

<sup>21</sup> *Anal. Boll.* 40 (1927), 5–74; cf. Schönborn, p. 106, and the notes to the translation in N. H. Baynes and E. Dawes, *Three Byzantine Saints* (London, 1948), pp. 195 f. Another conflation has been published by E. Lappa-Zizicas (*Anal. Boll.* 88 (1970), 265–78); a longer text of Leontius’ *Life* by A. J. Festugière (Paris, 1974).

eliminate the discrepancy by assuming an error in the biography,<sup>22</sup> for it goes on to make a play on the *meaning* of the name:

*Ἐπιφάνιος γὰρ ὁ τούτου γενέτης καλούμενος τοσοῦτον ἔσχε τὸ κατὰ τὸν βίον ἐπιφανὲς καὶ φερωνύμως ὡς φέρε εἰπεῖν ἐπίσημον, ὥστε τὰς τῆς Κυπρίων ἡγίας νήσου ἐπαρχικῶς ἐμπιστευθῆναι. . . (§2).*

‘Conspicuous by name and conspicuous by nature, with the prefecture of Cyprus as his reward.’

There can be little doubt that this flourish goes back to the sophist Sophronius rather than the plain-spoken Moschus. And if so, it is difficult to believe that he would have given the man a different name when writing the epitaph for his son’s tomb (*Life* and epitaph were presumably written at no great interval from each other).

It is true that, scanned strictly according to the classical rules, Epiphanius does not fit in a hexameter, but (a) *Ἐπιφάνιος* or *Ἐπιφάνιος* would have been perfectly acceptable in a proper name at this period (certainly to Sophronius, to judge from the epigram considered in §I), and (b), whatever the problems presented by Epiphānius, Stephanus is no substitute.

In the light of the common element *-φαν-* it is perhaps easy to see how one name might come to be confused with the other – but hardly by one man writing about the same person. We are bound, I think, to conclude with Delehay and Baynes that the epigram is not by Sophronius.

Yet a question remains. Which name is correct? On the face of it Sophronius and Moschus ought to have known. But an epigram engraved on the tomb of the man’s son surely cannot be wrong. And it seems clear that both 679 and 680 were indeed engraved on or near John’s tomb, that is to say at Amathus in Cyprus. It is true that all commentators have assumed that the city of v. 11 which John beautified is Alexandria, but they are surely wrong. Apart from the brief statement in v. 4, *ἣν δὲ νομεὺς Φαρίης*, there is no hint in the poem of Alexandria – or for that matter of John’s exalted status as patriarch. He is treated throughout as a wealthy and public-spirited Cypriot aristocrat – which is precisely what he had been up to the moment when he was suddenly, still a layman, appointed direct to the see of Alexandria by the new emperor Heraclius in 610. John is described as a Cypriot in v. 3 and then, after the reference to Alexandria in v. 4, as the richest son of Cyprus in v. 5, so that ‘this city’ (*πόλις . . . αὐτή*) in v. 11 is most naturally located in Cyprus. According to 680. 2 John lies ‘here . . . in his dear native land’. We know from the closing chapters of Leontius’ *Life* that John died and was buried in his native Amathus. It is natural to assume that both 679 and 680 stood together on the tomb (two epigrams in different metres on one monument were normal at this period).<sup>23</sup> It follows that the city of 679. 11 is Amathus. The ‘wealth’ referred to in 679. 1 is evidently material wealth, the *κτῆματα* of v. 4 which John possessed in such abundance from his ancestors and his own efforts; presumably from his activities before rather than during his patriarchate.

<sup>22</sup> As suggested by H. Usener (who did not have the advantage of Delehay’s text), *Der Heilige Tychon* (Leipzig, 1907), p. 81 n. 2, against H. Gelzer, *Leontios von Neapolis Leben des Hl. Johannes des Barmherzigen* (Freiburg and Leipzig, 1893), p. 114, who had doubted the ascription of the epigram.

<sup>23</sup> See *Athenaeum* 45 (1967), 145; the classic illustration is the long series of sixth-century charioteer epigrams from statues in the hippodrome of Constantinople (*Porphyrius the Charioteer*, ch. IV). The later hands of J and C in *AP* divide 697 itself into two poems at v. 7, almost certainly wrongly.

It was evidently with this wealth that he beautified Amathus, before his sudden move, late in life, to Alexandria.

These are epigrams written for John's tomb in Amathus by one who knew him as a local benefactor rather than as a prince of the church in distant Alexandria. This man was better placed than even Sophronius and Moschus to know the name of John's father, himself too a local aristocrat. But epigrams inscribed on monuments (especially tombs) are not normally signed, and when they were collected by some Byzantine anthologist they must perforce have been left among the anonyma. It was not long before some well-informed lemmatist made the intelligent but incorrect guess – Sophronius.

### III

There remain ix. 787 and i. 123. First ix. 787:

*Εἰς τόπον ἐπιξενουμένων*  
 ‘Ὅ πρὶν ἀλωόμενος καὶ ἀνέστιον ἶχνος ἐλαύνων,  
 εἴτ’ ἀφ’ ὁδοπορίας, εἴτ’ ἀπὸ ναυτιλίας,  
 ἐνθάδε νῦν προσιῶν στήσον, ξένε, σὸν πόδα <δεῦρο,>  
 ναιετάειν ἐθέλων, οἶκον ἔτοιμον ἔχων.  
 εἰ δέ με καὶ τίς ἔτευξεν ἀνακρινέοις, πολιῆτα,  
 Εὐλόγιος, Φαρίης ἀρχιερεὺς ἀγαθός.

#### On a Guest-house

‘Stranger, who formerly on your arrival by land or by sea wandered about with homeless feet, approach now and stay your steps here, where, if you wish to dwell, you will find a lodging all ready. If you want to know who built me, citizen, it was Eulogius, the good patriarch of Alexandria.’

Eulogius was a predecessor of John the Almsgiver, patriarch of Alexandria from 580 to 608. Now we know that Sophronius was in Alexandria at least twice during this period,<sup>24</sup> and it might seem to be pushing scepticism too far to doubt his authorship here too.

None the less there are at least two reasons why we should hesitate. First, the familiar general point that, if this is the original inscription from the guest-house (and it certainly looks like an authentic inscriptional epigram), then it is not likely to have been equipped there with its author's name. The ascription to Sophronius *could* be yet another informed guess.

More important, Sophronius is not even the unanimous attribution of our two MS sources. *AP*, normally (and rightly) regarded as more authoritative in matters of ascription, offers *Σώφρονος πατρικίου*. It is only Planudes who writes *Σωφρονίου πατριάρχου*. Of course it is tempting to explain *AP*'s heading as no more than an incorrect expansion of *Σωφρον. πατρ.*, intended as an abbreviation for *Σωφρονίου πατριάρχου*. But then Planudes' ascription could as easily be an intelligent expansion of the same abbreviation – or indeed a deliberate correction of the heading we find in *AP*. This is perhaps a case where the principle of *lectio difficilior* has a certain force. We might expect any reasonably literate Byzantine (such as the scribe B who copied both poem and lemma here) to be familiar with the name of Sophronius and to be able to distinguish between the abbreviations for patriarch and patrician. Thus we

<sup>24</sup> Schönborn, p. 164. There are some interesting scraps of evidence in Moschus' *Prat. Spir.* on Eulogius' other foundations in Alexandria: e.g. Dorothea's church of the Theotokos (§77, *PG* 87. 2. 2930D) and a martyrdom of St Julian (§146, 3012A).



should not be too hasty in adopting so obvious a correction of the otherwise unknown name of Sophron the patrician, carefully written out in full. It may be added that the style and versification of the poem, as indeed of vii. 679 and 680, are well above the level of the one epigram we have so far been able to accept as genuinely Sophronian, the longer introduction to the *Miracula*.

## IV

Lastly i. 123:

Πέτρα τρισμακάριστε, θεόσσυτον αἶμα λαχοῦσα,  
οὐρανίη γενεή σε πυρίπνοος ἀμφιπολεύει,  
καὶ χθονὸς ἐνναετῆρες ἀνάκτορες ὕμνοπολοῦσι.

‘Thrice-blessed rock, who didst receive the blood that issued from God, the fiery children of Heaven guard thee around, and Kings, inhabitants of the Earth, sing thy praise.’

‘On the Rock of Calvary in Jerusalem’ (εἰς τὸν Κρανίου λίθον ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ), runs the lemma, plausibly enough.

What exactly is the ‘rock’? We happen to learn from a remark of Antiochus, a monk of the monastery of S. Saba near Jerusalem writing not long after the capture of the city by the Persians in 614, that another monk of the place, Modestus, saw to the rebuilding of the church of Holy Calvary (Ἅγιον Κρανίον) after it had been burned by the Persians.<sup>25</sup> But the last two lines do not look as if they refer to a church. The choirs of heavenly angels and earthly kings which are said to surround the rock suggest rather a mosaic or painting on which kings and angels were represented. Even so, it would be natural for such a mosaic or painting to have been made for the rebuilt church of Holy Calvary – and for the epigram to have been written to commemorate the work on its completion, perhaps inscribed beneath it. If so, then time and place certainly suit Sophronius. Had the poem been transmitted anonymously, once more Sophronius, patriarch of Jerusalem from 634 to 638, would have been an obvious guess. But we must not discredit the good name of scholarly caution. There is no serious reason to doubt that he wrote it. The style is more fluent than the long epigram on the *Miracula* and there are no metrical blemishes. But then three lines are too small a sample for fair comparison.

On the positive side it might be added that Sophronius had a profound attachment to this sacred spot, as attested by two of his *Anacreontica*. First 18 (‘On the Holy Cross’) 41 f., and especially 20 (‘On the longing he had for the Holy City and the Blessed Places’) 29 f.: ‘I shall prostrate myself and kiss the Holy Rock, very centre of the earth (ζάθειον μεσόμφαλόν τε πέτραν), where stood the Cross...’ Then there is the libellus that Stephen, bishop of Dora, submitted to the Lateran Council of 649.<sup>26</sup> Stephen described how, when he was a priest under Sophronius’ jurisdiction, Sophronius administered a solemn oath to him on the Hill of Calvary: ‘he took me and stood me, unworthy as I was, on the Holy Calvary (τῷ ἁγίῳ Κρανίῳ), where for our sakes he who by nature is God above us, our Lord Jesus Christ, saw fit to be crucified in the flesh, and there he bound me with indissoluble oaths’. A little later Stephen refers again to this ‘awesome oath in that most awesome and Holy Place’.

Even if *AP* i. 90, vii. 679–80 and ix. 787 have to be taken away from him, Sophronius was clearly capable of producing passable classicizing elegiacs. If so, he must be about

<sup>25</sup> *PG* 89. 1428A.

<sup>26</sup> J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum... Collectio* X. 896 BC.

the latest identifiable practitioner of the classical epigram before the onset of the Byzantine Dark Ages. It is thus a curious coincidence that he should also be perhaps the first practitioner of the true Byzantine anacreontic.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Defined as religious poetry in four-line stanzas with regulated accents and intercalation of the so-called 'cucullion' every three or four stanzas – and acrostich. It is high time that a comprehensive corpus and study of Byzantine anacreontic poetry (secular and religious) was undertaken. Gigante's edition of Sophronius is a first step; for the rest there is much of value in T. Nissen, *Die byzantinischen Anacreonteen* (Sitzungsber. der Bay. Akad. der Wissenschaften, Philos.-hist. Abt. 1940, Heft 3).

*Postscript:* on the question of the identification of sophist and patriarch (above, n. 1) see now I. Ševčenko, *La civiltà bizantina dal IV al IX secolo* (Bari, 1977), 137 f.