A note on the Paphian Cytherea
of Asclepiades / Posidippus, AP V 209,1f. = 36,1f. G.-P.*

The very first words of AP V 209 (Asclep. / Posidipp.) have puzzled scholars:\(^1\)

σήν, Παφίη Κυθέρεια, παρ’ Ἰόν’ εἰδε Κλέανδρος
Νικοῦν ἐν χαροποῖς κύμασι νηχομένην.

1 σήν. Παφίη Jac. : ἐν Παφίη PPl : ἐν Παφίη (ὤ supra scriptum rubr.) Q : ἐν
Παφίη Stephanus 1566 alii alia | παρ’ Ἰόν’ εἰδε Ιακ. : παρὴσθν εἰδε PI : παρ’
Ιόνι δὲ P 2 Νικοῦν Jac. : Νικοῦς PPl | νηχομένην P : νηχομένης PI

Σῆν is a very acute conjecture by Jacobs, accepted reluctantly by almost all the
editors in view of the unanimous and incorrect testimony of the manuscript transmis-
tion\(^2\). In what concerns us here, both the Palatine manuscript and the Planudean
Anthology have transmitted the same wrong reading: ἐν Παφίη Κυθέρεια\(^3\). Numerous

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\(^1\) I follow the edition by L.A. Guichard, Asclepiades de Samos. Epigramas y fragmentos.

\(^2\) See C.F.W. Jacobs, Anthologia Graeca sive poetarum Graecorum lusus ex recensione Brunckii,
Leipzig 1794-1814 (= Jacobs, Anthologia Graeca sive poetarum), VIII 137. Jacobs’ conjecture is
adopted by H. Stadtmüller, Anthologia Graeca epigrammatum Palatina cum Planudea, Leipzig 1894,
I 170, P. Waltz, Anthologie grecque, Paris 1928, II 94, H. Beckby, Anthologia Graeca, Münchentn
Epigrammatum Graeca, Oxford 1975, 123, E. Fernández Galiano, Posidipo de Pela, Madrid 1987, 141,
C. Austin-G. Bastianini, Posidippi Pellaei opera quae supersunt omnia, Milano 2002, 164 and
Guichard, o.c. Note that W.R. Paton, The Greek Anthology, London 1916, I 232, following F. Dübner,
Epigrammatum Anthologia Palatina cum Planudeis, Paris 1864-1877, reads σήν, Παφίη Κυθέρεια,
παρ’ Ἰόν’, a conjecture proposed by C.F.W. Jacobs, Anthologia Graeca ad fidem codicis olim Palatini
nunc Parisini ex apographo Gothano edita, Leipzig 1813-1817 (= Jacobs, Anthologia Graeca ad
Although it is meaningless, the reading ἐν Παφίη has been printed in all editions of the Planudean
Anthology previous to H. Estienne’s (Ἀνθολογία διορθωτέρα ἐπίγραμματος, Paris 1566), and still in
the first editions of the Palatine: R.F.P. Brunck, Analecta veterum poetarum Graecorum, Argentorati
1773, II 47, Jacobs, Anthologia Graeca sive poetarum, II 47 and Anthologia Graeca ad fidem, I 144.

\(^3\) The reading of Q (ἐν) is irrelevant. See Jacobs, Anthologia Graeca sive poetarum, VIII
137; Jacobs, Anthologia Graeca ad fidem, III 99 and Gow-Page, o.c. 141.
conjectures have been put forward, but none of them is completely satisfactory, with the result that the most recent editor of Asclepiades’ epigrams, L.A. Guichard, concludes that «la solución no es, sin embargo, definitiva»⁴. In fact, Jacobs’ conjecture, though possible, changes the natural word order excessively and, as has been pointed out, is much too reiterative, as well as being artificial and somewhat unconvincing⁵.

The rarity of the iunctura Ποφις Κυθέρεια has also been noted: they are two epithets of Aphrodite related to different geographical locations at which she was worshipped or with which she was closely connected⁶. In all Greek literature this iunctura is attested only here and, in the same metrical position, in AP XVI 160,1, an epigram attributed to Plato, which, according to Page, is notable for its poor quality⁷. Nor is it found in Latin. Moreover, as an invocation in the vocative case it is unparalleled⁸. Ποφις is first used as an epithet of Aphrodite in Ar. Lys. 556, but already in the Hellenistic period it was habitually used on its own⁹. As for Κυθέρεια, it is an ancient and very common invocation of Aphrodite¹⁰, either because it was the first place for which she made her peculiar birth or because she was the object of particular veneration there. As an invocation Κυθέρεια is attested as early as Theogn. 1386 (see also Bion Ad. 70 and Nonn. D. XV 273, both in the same metrical position). In the Anthologia Palatina the term is found also in the same metrical position in VI 18,5 and 19,1, both by Julianus Aegyptius, and IX 619,1 (Agath.). In a different metrical position in IX 791,1 (Apollonid.).

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⁵ See Gow-Page, o.c. 141, West, o.c. 159 and Fernández-Galiano, o.c. 142.

⁶ See Gow-Page, o.c. 141: «the conjunction of the two geographical epithets [...] is perhaps not very happy», and Fernández-Galiano, o.c. 142. A number of editors have chosen to break the iunctura Ποφις Κυθέρεια: the edition by H. Estienne (o.c.) splits the invocation by punctuating as follows: εν Ποφις, Κυθέρεια κτλ. This reading was also recommended independently by Lumb, o.c. 16, West, o.c. 159 suggested reading εν Πφόθο ή Κυθέρεια κτλ. Gow-Page, o.c. 141, proposed in their commentary ην Ποφις, Κυθέρεια κτλ.


¹⁰ It is found as early as Homer (Od. VIII 288, XVIII 193) and is very frequent afterwards (cf. Hes. Th. 196, 934, Aesch. Suppl. 999). Further passages in W.H. Roscher, Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie, II/1, Leipzig 1890-1897, 1769-1771, s.v. Kythereia.
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Perhaps we are dealing with a text that became corrupted at a very early period when a marginal or interlinear explanatory gloss was introduced in place of the original text. In the present case, it is reasonable to consider the possibility that the presence of Παφή in the iunctura Παφή Κυθέρα arises from an annotation by an anonymous scholiast to call attention to the goddess who is protagonist of the epigram, Aphrodite, whose power is about to be made manifest\textsuperscript{11}. Perhaps at some point, under the influence of AP XVI 160,1 [Plat.], it was mistakenly introduced into the text, burying the original reading, which was possibly an extremely rare term.

A good candidate would be εὐψάμαθον. It is attested only once, and precisely in the same iunctura, in AP VI 223,2 (Antip.) κατ’ εὐψάμαθον ... ἡμόνος. This epigram is transmitted within a clearly Meleagrian series and is therefore attributable with some certainty to Antipater of Sidon for whom we have evidence that he used compositions by Asclepiades as models\textsuperscript{12}. In addition, the confusion between εὐ- and εὖ is palaeographically very simple. Most likely there was first an artificial separation between εὐ and ψάμθον, ψάμθον later being replaced by the explanatory gloss and εὖ, now isolated, being corrupted into εὖ, leaving the line meaningless.

If this is so, the epigram, which is full of traditional amatory topoi, presents a perfect balance between earth and sea, reinforced by parallel expressive epithets: from the sandy beach (εὐψάμαθον ... παρ’ ἡμόν’ εἶδε Κλέανδρος) the lover spots the girl swimming in the blue waves (Νικοῦν ἐν χαροποῖς κύμασι νησιομένην) and falls in love with her at once (κατομένον δ’ ὑπ’ ἔρωτος ἐνὶ φρεσκὶ), though his love is not returned (ἀνθρακας ὀνήρ / ξηρούς ἐκ νοτηρής παιδός ἐκεσπάστη). In this case the balance is strengthened by the use of antonymous adjectives corresponding, on the one hand, to the lover who is on land (ἀνθρακας ὀνήρ / ξηρούς) and, on the other, to the beloved in the sea (ἐκ νοτηρῆς παιδός). The choice of epithets helps to underline the girl’s rejection of Cleander’s love. In the following distich the parallelism and contrast are maintained. Both move into a situation of instability: the lover, in the light of her rejection, is shipwrecked on land (χῦ μὲν ἐναιχῇ γαῖς ἔπι), while the girl is swept out to sea but is saved (τὴν δὲ θαλάσσης / φανόοσαν πρηεῖς εἰχοσαν αἰτιαιλοί). Finally, in the last line it is revealed that the goddess Aphrodite, the real protagonist of the epigram, as the anonymous scholiast correctly saw, has answered the prayers of the lover and not only saves the girl but makes her return Cleander’s love\textsuperscript{13}. She manifests herself, therefore, as goddess of

\textsuperscript{11} See infra. For annotations of this type see West, o.c. 22f., Tarrant, o.c. 130: «most private copies, therefore, probably contained a certain amount of independent annotation meant to explain obscurities or facilitate reference».


\textsuperscript{13} This type of plea to Aphrodite on the part of lovers is habitual (cf. Anacr. PMG 357). In the Anthologia, cf. XII 131 (Posidipp.) = 139 A.-B. Recall the words of Aphrodite in Eur. Hipp. 3-6 τοὺς μὲν σέβοντας τάμα πρεσβεύω κράτη / σφάλλω δ’ ὀσι φρονούσιν εἰς ἡμᾶς μέγα.
love, but also as protector of seafarers, a doublet very much to the taste of Hellenistic epigrammatists\textsuperscript{14}. With the manifestation of Aphrodite’s power, the epigram comes to a conclusion in ring fashion.

\textsuperscript{14} Cf. \textit{AP IX} 143 (Antip.), X 21.5-8 (Philodem.), V 17.3-6 (Gaet.) and V 11.