

The title(s) of Menander's *Sikyonioi*

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The title of Menander's *Sikyonioi* has long posed major critical challenges.¹ While the earliest sources, the colophon of the Sorbonne papyrus (third century BCE) and a wall painting from Ephesus (second century CE), attest to the masculine plural title Σικυώνιοι,² later indirect sources quoting fragments from the play transmit the masculine singular title Σικυώνιος;³ two indirect sources also testify to the existence of a feminine singular title Σικυωνία.⁴ It is now quite widely agreed upon that Σικυώνιοι is the correct title for the play, not least because it is the one used in the earliest testimonia.⁵ Still, two important questions remain a matter of contention even in the most recent scholarship.

¹ For a detailed discussion see Belardinelli 1994, 56-59 and Blanchard 2009, xxiv-xxxiii.

² See the text of the colophon in Blanchard 2009, 29 and the reproduction of the Ephesus painting on the front cover of Belardinelli 1994. Two shorthand manuals dating from the third/fourth century CE (*P. British Museum* 2562, no. 510 [= Men. test. 42 K.-A.] and *P. Mons. Roca* 1, no. 2339) attest to the plural title, too.

³ See Men. *Sic.* fr. 1, 3-5, and 7-9 Blanchard. To these witnesses we should now add the mosaic with a scene from *Sikyonioi* (dating from between the late second and early fourth century CE) found in Kissamos (Crete), where the play is given the masculine singular title Σικυώνιος (this mosaic has been published by Markoulaki 2016).

⁴ See Men. *Sic.* fr. 2 and 6 Blanchard.

⁵ All three most recent critical editions of the play opt for Σικυώνιοι (see Belardinelli 1994, Arnott 2000, and Blanchard 2009, esp. xxv-xxvi). Fountoulakis, in his review of Blanchard 2009, takes a different position and commends the masculine singular title Σικυώνιος (see Fountoulakis 2011, 307).

(1) While it is reasonable to assume that the singular title Σικυώνιος increasingly spread in popularity, as it was easily identifiable with the main character of the play, the (allegedly) Sicyonian soldier Stratophanes, how can we best explain the masculine plural title Σικυώνιοι? Who are these people from Sicyon that the title refers to? Some scholars have suggested that they are Stratophanes' Sicyonian foster parents,⁶ but, as they never appear in the play, this explanation has been met with a good deal of scepticism.⁷ Other scholars have suggested that these Σικυώνιοι are Stratophanes and his helpers, Theron and Pirrias.⁸ However, I do not think that Theron (who is a parasite, not one of Stratophanes' slaves) can be considered to be a Sicyonian: at the end of the play he marries Malthakê, and so he is most likely an Athenian citizen himself.⁹ Indeed, it seems that the meaning of the title Σικυώνιοι has not been satisfactorily explained yet.¹⁰

(2) The feminine title Σικυωνία has been explained as a reference to Stratophanes' foster mother, for her διαθήκαι and the γνωρίσματα she sends to Stratophanes provide a major turning-point in the plot.¹¹ But this explanation has received little consensus. In particular, Arnott rules out the identification of Σικυωνία with Stratophanes' foster mother because she never appears on stage. Instead, he puts forward the idea that the title Σικυωνία is due to "either a scribal error or a faulty expansion of a title that had been abbreviated in an earlier manuscript or on a didascalic inscription".¹² However this may be, are we really sure that, beside Stratophanes' foster mother,

⁶ This idea was first put forward by Barigazzi 1965, 83 (followed by Guida 1974, 234 and Blanchard 1983, 364 n. 139).

⁷ See Belardinelli 1994, 58.

⁸ See Barigazzi 1965, 63, Belardinelli 1994, 58-59, and Blanchard 2009, xxix-xxx.

⁹ Men. *Sic.* 145-146 and fr. 9 Blanchard. See also Arnott 2000, 208-209.

¹⁰ A third explanation for the title Σικυώνιοι (originally suggested by Fernández Galiano 1965a, 252 and 1965b, 330), according to which the Sicyonians are Stratophanes and his father, is extremely unlikely as the identification of the Σικυώνιος mentioned in *Sic.* 13 with Stratophanes' foster father is almost surely wrong (see Favi 2018).

¹¹ Blanchard 2009, xxviii.

¹² Arnott 2000, 196.

there is no other Sicyonian female character, or possibly a supposed Sicyonian one, that the title Σικυωνία may have been modelled after?

To my mind, these two problems are so tightly intertwined that they can receive a common explanation. Attention should be paid to the beginning of the second section of Stratophanes' speech at Eleusis, and in particular to lines 244-247:

ἀνέκραγον

“ὀρθῶς γε” πάντες, εἶτα “λέγε” πάντες πάλιν.

“Σικυώνιος τὸ πρότερον εἶναι προσεδόκων

κἀγώ”.

In lines 246-247 Stratophanes says ‘I thought I was Sicyonian myself too’, and the most reasonable way to understand this assertion is that someone else had also been thought to be a Sicyonian. If this interpretation is correct,¹³ the only good assumption we may readily draw is that Stratophanes' κἀγώ implies a reference to Philumena. Indeed, this would not be out of place at all in this context,

¹³ I do not think that Arnott 2000, 257 n. 20 is right in suggesting that Stratophanes' foster parents are implied by the soldier's words. They are never mentioned previously in his speech, and hence it would have been rather difficult (if not plainly impossible) for the audience to understand whom Stratophanes was hinting at. Along the same lines, I doubt whether one might alternatively take Stratophanes' words in lines 246-247 to mean ‘(just like others thought I was a Sicyonian), I too thought I was a Sicyonian’. In the soldier's speech, at least in what survives of it, no mention had been made so far of his own reputation in Athens nor did Moschion address the issue of his nationality in *Sic.* 199-214. In fact, Stratophanes' family background only comes into play at lines 246-247 (see also *Sic.* 239-240 ἀκούσατε | καὶ τὰμὰ δ', ἄνδρες, where τὰμὰ ought to mean ‘my vicissitudes’: apparently, they had not yet been told to the Eleusinians). Before that, Stratophanes is only said to be the κύριος of Philumena and the δεσπότης of Dromon (see *Sic.* 194 and 207 and Blanchard 2009, 42 n. 4 and 43 n. 10). Finally, I would also rule out the possibility of taking lines 246-247 to mean something like ‘(just like someone else was thought not to hail from where s/he actually does), I wrongly thought I was a Sicyonian’, for this would not explain κἀγώ instead of ἐγώ (this latter form being metrically equally admissible at the beginning of line 247).

given that the focus of the long preceding passage was the recovery of Philumena's Athenian citizenship. Strangely enough, scholars have not asked whence Philumena was supposed to hail before she was declared an Athenian citizen. The most reasonable answer is that, like Stratophanes, she was deemed to be a Sicyonian too.

In the very scanty remains of the first half of the play there is no evidence that might explain why and when Philumena had been said to be Sicyonian. However, there are plenty of possible explanations for that. For instance, we may think that Stratophanes had freed the girl and thus made her a citizen of Sicyon.¹⁴ As an alternative, Philumena may have been said to be Sicyonian as she was a slave to the Sicyonian soldier Stratophanes and hence a member of his οἶκος.¹⁵ It is also possible that if the girl had been left in Sicyon when Stratophanes was fighting in Caria and if she was eventually purchased there by Smicrines and Moschion,¹⁶ then she was probably said to be a Σικυωνία when brought to Athens. Finally, we may also envisage the possibility that, when Stratophanes purchased Philumena and Dromon in Mylasa,¹⁷ the latter lied and told him that Philumena was a Sicyonian.¹⁸ We do not have sufficient clues for choosing between any of these alternative explanations, nor can we take it for granted that these are the only possible options. In any case, Philumena's Athenian origin was certainly unknown to all other characters apart from Dromon, and before the recovery of her citizenship she may well have been wrongly thought to be a Sicyonian, as Stratophanes' κἀγώ in line 247 evidently implies.

Whatever the explanation behind the origin of Philumena's alleged Sicyonian nationality, what matters most is that this new interpretation of lines 246-247 squares perfectly well with one

¹⁴ This is pretty much what happens to Crateia in Menander's *Misoumenos*, for in *Mis.* 38 the soldier Thrasonides complains that, although he has freed the girl, she does not show him the slightest form of attachment.

¹⁵ A parallel here would be Terence's *Andria*, where Glycerium is said to hail from Andros as she was entrusted to Chrysis' family in Andros and later passed off as Chrysis' own sister after they moved to Athens.

¹⁶ See for instance Blanchard 2009, lix.

¹⁷ *Men. Sic.* 5-19.

¹⁸ This is an intriguing possibility put forward and discussed by Traill 2008, 20.

special feature of the play. Indeed, *Sikyonioi* is a very peculiar play in that it involves a double *agnitio*, as both Philumena and Stratophanes recover their true identities as Athenian citizens and thus eventually rejoin their actual families. In light of this fact, and given the new interpretation I suggest for lines 246-247, the plural title Σικυώνιοι should now be taken to mean ‘The (alleged) Sicyonians’ (i.e. Stratophanes and Philumena), and together with the alternative titles Σικυώνιος (‘The [*sc.* alleged] Sicyonian man’) and Σικυωνία (‘The [*sc.* alleged] Sicyonian girl’) it may be regarded as being typologically comparable to titles such as e.g. *Andria* and *Perinthia*, ‘The (alleged) girl from Andros/Perinthos’.¹⁹

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¹⁹ See Ter. *An.* prol. 9-12: *Menander fecit Andriam et Perinthiam. | qui utramvis recte norit ambas noverit: | non ita dissimili sunt argumento, [s]et tamen | dissimili oratione sunt factae ac stilo.*

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