

Between Texts and Shrines in the Greek Cult of Saints (5th-7th Centuries)

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Introduction

In the fifth to seventh centuries, a new Christian genre emerged within the eastern Mediterranean. As the shrines of Christian saints became ever more visible across the contemporaneous landscape, so did admirers of those saints begin to promote them in the production of collections of posthumous miracles performed at individual cult sites. The most important of such collections, in Greek, are: from Seleucia, the *Miracles of Thecla* (444-476);¹ from Constantinople, the *Miracles* of Cosmas and Damian (c.527-c.623)² and of Artemius (c.658-668);³ from Alexandria, the *Miracles of Cyrus and John* (610-c.614);⁴ and, from Thessalonica, the *Miracles of Demetrius* (c.610).⁵ Although these will form the focus of our discussion, it should be noted that there also exist, from around the same period, various more minor collections (such as the *Miracles* of Therapon);⁶ groups of posthumous miracles appended to hagiographies or encomia (such as the *Miracles* of Theodore the Recruit);⁷ and a more neglected tradition in Coptic or Copto-Arabic (such the *Miracles* of Claudius).⁸ But the conclusions

¹ Ed. G. Dagron, *Vie et miracles de Ste. Thècle* (Brussels, 1978) (with 17-19 for the date).

² Ed. L. Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian: Text und Einleitung* (Leipzig, 1907). Deubner edits six separate collections. Elsewhere I have argued that at least the first three belong to the loose date range offered above; see P. Booth, 'Orthodox and Heretic in the Early Byzantine Cult(s) of Saints Cosmas and Damian,' in P. Sarris et al. (eds) *An Age of Saints? Power, Conflict and Dissent in Early Medieval Christianity* (Leiden, 2011) 114-128, at 116-117.

³ Ed. V. S. Crisafulli and J. W. Nesbitt, *The Miracles of St. Artemios: A Collection of Miracle Stories by an Anonymous Author of Seventh-Century Byzantium* (Leiden, 1997) with 33-35 for the date.

⁴ Ed. N. F. Marcos, *Los Thaumata de Sofronio: Contribucion al Estudio de la Incubatio Cristiana* (Madrid, 1975). There are numerous important corrections to the edition in J. Gasco, *Sophrone de Jérusalem: Miracles des Saints Cyr et Jean (BHG 477-9)* (Paris, 2006), with P. Booth, *Crisis of Empire: Doctrine and Dissent at the End of Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 2013) 46 n. 13 for the date.

⁵ Ed. P. Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des Miracles de saint Démétrius* (2 vols, Paris, 1979-81) vol. 1 47-165, with vol. 2 79-80 for the date.

⁶ Ed. L. Deubner, *De incubatione capita quattuor* (Leipzig, 1900) 120-134.

⁷ Ed. H. Delehaye, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires* (Paris, 1909) 183-201.

⁸ Ed. G. Godron, 'Textes relatifs à Saint Claude d'Antioche,' *Patrologia Orientalis* 35 (Turnhout, 1970) 508-669, at 616-662 (as part of Constantine of Assiout's *Second Encomium on St Claudius* [c.600]).

reached on the basis of the larger, more famous, Greek collections are intended here to have universal application.⁹

These collections can be classified as a genre due to basic similarities in form and in content. Each is comprised of a series of more-or-less independent vignettes which often reproduce a similar narrative patterning: a supplicant comes to the dead saint's shrine with some problem (often an illness), the supplicant petitions the saint for intervention, and the saint provides a miraculous solution, sometimes upon the completion of some prescription. Within such narratives, however, one discovers a remarkable degree of variation in terms of the basic emphases, so that, for example, some authors will attempt to integrate Hippocratic medicine within their schemes, and others will denounce it; while some authors will focus on an elite clientele, and others those of a lesser social status. The reader of the genre will soon begin to suspect, therefore, that what he or she is presented with in a particular collection is not some neutral or transparent guide to the basic functioning of a particular shrine, but an artful construct which makes particular choices in how it represents the cult which it describes, and which attempts to inculcate such choices as normative within its target audience.

This sense of discordance between text and cult is reinforced when we further reflect that the composition of miracle narratives was not, in the eastern cult of saints, under the control of a particular social group (for example, local clerics). Thus among the authors or compilers of our larger, more celebrated texts we can count the local archbishop, an eminent ascetic, a disgruntled priest-cum-rhetor, and a simple devotee. The status of the texts which such persons produced within a particular cult must therefore have varied according to the status of the particular author, and we should never assume that a particular text carried some sort of official sanction, or that it was drawn upon during a shrine's liturgical celebration. In some cases, in fact, such a use seems improbable if not impossible.

In this paper, I want to underscore this potential disconnect between text and shrine through exploring how single cults, even single shrines, could generate miracle narratives at multiple simultaneous levels – from the oral accounts of supplicants through simple narrative ex-votos to

⁹ For a useful guide to the various collections in Greek see V. Déroche, 'Pourquoi écrivait-on des recueils de miracles? L'exemple des Miracles de Saint Artémios,' in C. Jolivet-Lévy et al. (eds), *Les saints et leur sanctuaire à Byzance: Textes, images et monuments* (Paris, 1993) 95-116, 95 n.1; also S. Efthymiadis, 'Collections of Miracles (Fifth–Fifteenth Centuries,' in id. (ed.), *The Ashgate Companion to Byzantine Hagiography Volume II: Genres and Context* (Farnham, 2014) 103-142, esp. 106-115.

formal written records and collections of miracles. This phenomenon of multiple, simultaneous cultic literatures can be demonstrated through three principal means: first, through the actual survival of alternative (and often neglected) collections of miracles, alongside their more famous counterparts; second, through scattered references to the existence of wider, lost, cultic literatures within the now extant collections; and third, through the embedding within those extant collections of identifiable sources, whether earlier, alternative collections or simple written records.¹⁰ Thus, the existence of a miracle collection associated with a particular shrine should blind us neither to the existence of simultaneous, rival collections; nor to the pre-existent narratives which such collections subsume.

The existence of these multiple literatures underlines the fact that individual texts embed a particular perspective on a shrine's operation. For where we are able to access more than one text describing a single shrine—as we can with the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* and the *Miracles of Cyrus and John*—we are also able to perceive quite discordant emphases in respect of that shrine's basic character or practices. For the historian of the eastern cult of saints, the temptation is to exploit these texts as evidence both for the functioning of individual shrines, and for the quotidian existence of their clientele (often formed from the urban middle classes, whom most other sources occlude).¹¹ But before one can begin to contemplate extracting such information, it is important to recognise that the relationship between text and cult is often complex and unique, and that the text itself might be a far from neutral witness either to cult itself or to the phenomena which surround it. As a basic starting point, therefore, we should attempt, first, to understand both the status of the author and his text in relation to the cult itself; and, second, to situate that text against the potential matrix of competing voices which seems to have characterised all of our shrines in this period.

Multiple Literatures, Multiple Impresarios

¹⁰ For the multiple stages of transmission and thus authorship presupposed in a formal miracle narrative (as opposed to an oral tradition or simple written record) see also V. Déroche, 'Tensions et contradictions dans les recueils de miracles de la première époque byzantine' in D. Aigle (ed.), *Miracle et Karāma: Hagiographies médiévales comparées* (Turnhout, 2000) 145-166, at 147-148.

¹¹ An example: D. Montserrat, 'Pilgrimage to the Shrine of SS Cyrus and John at Menouthis in Late Antiquity' in D. Frankfurter (ed.), *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt* (Leiden, 1998) 257-79, approaching the Menouthis shrine from the perspective of the pilgrim experience.

Let me begin with some simple evidence for the existence of other miracle collections besides the canonical ones which we now recognise. The text which moderns call the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* corresponds to an edition of forty-eight miracles which Ludwig Deubner published in 1907. It is, however, composed of several collections which have been brought together from a large number of manuscripts, and which never appear together as a single unit (so that the edition itself does not in fact correspond to an extant textual witness).¹² Deubner isolated six separate collections, and suggested that the author of the second is also responsible for the prologue now attached to the first.¹³ All of the miracles seem to occur within the context of the saints' shrine in Constantinople, and most scholars agree that at least the first three, and perhaps the first five, derive from the sixth or seventh centuries (at least in their original form).¹⁴ The authors of the first five collections are anonymous, but the sixth was written in the fourteenth century at the hand of one Maximus the Deacon. In addition to adding his own collection of miracles, Maximus also re-wrote the first three collections, although Deubner did not repeat these rewritten collections within his edition.¹⁵

The *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* as a collection therefore bears witness both to the existence of multiple collections of the saints' miracles, which circulated as discrete texts within different manuscripts; and to the continuous updating of the saints' hagiographic corpus in the context of a single shrine, through the composition of new collections and through the incorporation and rewriting of older ones. Within these collections, moreover, one sometimes catches glimpses of a wider production of miracle narratives besides the extant texts. Thus Deubner's *Miracle 26* refers to the head of an unspecified heretical sect whom the saints healed without converting, and who then composed miracles in their honour.¹⁶ We can but speculate on the fate of this 'heretical' collection: perhaps it has been lost; perhaps it has been rewritten, cleansed of its doctrinal content, and subsumed within the now canonical collections. But this unusual detail once again reminds us of three salient

¹² Cf. Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian* 33-36.

¹³ *Ibid.* 26-27.

¹⁴ Cf. n. 0000 above.

¹⁵ On Maximus see A.-M. Talbot, 'Metaphrasis in the Early Palaiologan Period: The Miracula of Kosmas and Damian by Maximos the Deacon,' in E. Kountoura-Clarke (ed.), *The Heroes of the Orthodox Church* (Athens, 2004), 227-237.

¹⁶ *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* 26 (Deubner 167): 'And when, as the saints had prophesised, he obtained the headship [of his sect], at the precise moment which they had indicated to him, he composed, as I found out, miracles of the saints (τὰ θαύματα τῶν ἁγίων) ...'

points: first, the simultaneous existence within a single shrine of multiple miracle collections; second, the production of such collections at multiple levels besides a shrine's official hierarchy; and third, the potential for quite divergent perspectives on the same saints according to the particular ideological perspective of the author (here, doctrinal confession).

Indeed, in the same year that Deubner published these collections a further Greek collection was discovered at Edfu in southern Egypt, contained within a single, tenth-century codex and published by Ernst Rupprecht in 1935.¹⁷ This collection—which again focuses on the saints' shrine at Constantinople—once contained forty-seven miracles of which thirty-eight survive in whole or in part, and of which fourteen are otherwise unknown in the collections published in the edition of Deubner.¹⁸ (One of these, we should also note in passing, speaks of an otherwise unknown 'encomiastic book' offered to the saints by one Stephanus the Sophist, probably the famed geographer of the age of Justinian, when the saints had cured him. This points again to the existence of wider, more informal encomiastic literature generated around the shrine; but also suggests that some of the unique miracles here go back to the sixth century).¹⁹

The most striking feature of this alternative Egyptian collection is a pervasive anti-Chalcedonian emphasis. In the Deubner collections, there is, besides a single reference to an Arian Exakionite, a remarkable absence of references to contemporaneous doctrinal conflicts, especially those which concerned the natures of Christ.²⁰ Moreover, two miracles even emphasise, in distinct contrast to other collections, that the saints will cure heretics as well as the orthodox.²¹ The Egyptian collection, in contrast, is consistent in denouncing the Council of Chalcedon. Thus the aforementioned Exakionite in the Deubner collection appears in the equivalent miracle here as a Chalcedonian;²² a simple 'pious man' in the former is in the latter a pious Severan;²³ while one notable miracle unique to the Egyptian collection concerns a 'Nestorian', who separated Christ into two natures and refused to

¹⁷ E. Rupprecht, *Cosmae et Damiani Sanctorum Medicorum Vita et Miracula e Codice Londiniensi* (Berlin, 1935).

¹⁸ *Ibid.* viii.

¹⁹ See *Egyptian Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* 10 (Rupprecht 28).

²⁰ Arian: *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* 17.

²¹ *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* 17, 26. For the significance of this emphasis see Booth, 'Orthodox and Heretic'.

²² *Egyptian Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* 21.

²³ *Egyptian Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* 22; cf. *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* 20.

call the Virgin Theotokos, and whom the saints force to recite a miaphysite creed before providing him with a cure.²⁴

When Rupprecht first published this Egyptian collection, he supposed that it witnessed an earlier stage of the cult's existence than that represented in the Deubner collections, so that the anti-Chalcedonian emphasis was pristine but had in the course of time been removed.²⁵ There is however little justification for thinking that these Egyptian miracles are somehow more primitive.²⁶ If we compare those miracles shared between the Deubner edition and the Egyptian collection, it is obvious that some form of close dependence exists, but the relationship between the two is not consistent: that is, sometimes the dependence seems to work in one direction; sometimes in another; and the obvious conclusion is that the miracles as we have them in both collections derive from a shared source or sources further up the line of transmission.²⁷ We cannot therefore be certain whether the anti-Chalcedonian emphasis within the Egyptian collection reflects a primitive theme within the writing of the saints' miracles (which the Deubner texts have then removed) or whether it has been added at a later stage (as the Egyptian provenance of the particular codex containing Rupprecht's collection might suggest). But the existence of this emphasis nevertheless underscores two points which are evident on the basis of the Deubner collections alone: first, that cults could generate multiple literatures, even if the vagaries of transmission obscure this production; and, second, that such literatures could adopt quite divergent perspectives on the same basic features of a cult and its shrines.

Let us now look at a different cult which nevertheless reinforces the same points: that is, the shrine of saints Cyrus and John at Menouthis, east of Alexandria. The saints' shrine itself had been established at some point in the fifth century, as a Christian replacement for a famous cult of Isis.²⁸ The *Miracles of Cyrus of John* was however composed in the second decade of the seventh century, when the celebrated ascetic Sophronius the Sophist was resident in Alexandria as doctrinal advisor to

²⁴ *Egyptian Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* 19.

²⁵ Rupprecht, *Cosmae et Damiani Miracula* viii.

²⁶ See the review of Rupprecht by F. Halkin, 'Publications récentes de textes hagiographiques grecs,' *Analecta Bollandiana* 53 (1935) 374–381 at 376-377.

²⁷ See the excellent discussion of V. Déroche, *Les Miracles d'Artémios (BHG 173a)*, unpublished Memoire d'habilitation (Paris Sorbonne, 2000) 211-215.

²⁸ For the debate as to when and by whom see J. Gascou, 'Les origines du culte des saints Cyr et Jean,' *Analecta Bollandiana* 125 (2007) 241-81.

and disputant for the Chalcedonian patriarch John the Almsgiver.²⁹ Sophronius's *Miracles of Cyrus and John* consists of seventy miracle narratives, divided according to the geographical origins of each protagonist, and culminating in a autobiographical tale in which the author reports his own experience of a cure.

In the preface to his collection, Sophronius claims to record two types of miracles: first, things he had witnessed himself; and second, things he had heard from the actual recipients of miracles or their associates.³⁰ It seems evident, however, that he has used a wider range of source material than his preface acknowledges. Two miracles seem to take their inspiration from shorter narrative texts set up at the shrine itself: one from a text which a supplicant is said to inscribe upon the wall of the saints' shrine upon being healed;³¹ and another from an iconographic panel which the healed patient set up in the saints' honour, and in which he featured alongside Christ, the Baptist, and saint Cyrus.³² In both cases, therefore, Sophronius seems to have elaborated more simplistic narrative and iconographic texts through which successful supplicants memorialised their own cures at the shrine.³³

At the same time, Sophronius also hints at the simultaneous existence within the saints' shrine of more formal literatures akin to his own. Thus it is perhaps suggested, in a fleeting comment contained within a miracle devoted to him, that the leading cleric within the shrine, the patriarchal *oikonomos* Christodorus, had also written a collection of the saints' miracles (which some have taken to indicate a kind of central archive of short miracle records under clerical supervision).³⁴ Sophronius thus acknowledges the existence of a collection composed by the *oikonomos* who, we might imagine, would have had a quite different perspective on the shrine's quotidian existence. (It is also interesting to note that Sophronius seems to include within his text a subtle critique of Christodorus himself, who is praised in that miracle devoted to him but several times presented as an *ignoramus*, while his own

²⁹ See Booth, *Crisis of Empire* 49-53.

³⁰ Sophronius, *Prologue to the Miracles of Cyrus and John* 31 ed. P. Bringel, *Sophrone de Jérusalem: Panégyrique des saints Cyr et Jean*, *Patrologia Orientalis* 226 (Turnhout, 2008) 34.

³¹ Sophronius, *Miracles of Cyrus and John* 69.

³² Sophronius, *Miracles of Cyrus and John* 28.

³³ Cf. Déroche, *Miracles d'Artémios* 216-218, pointing also to Sophronius's probable knowledge of an earlier narrative concerning the iatrosophist Gesius (*Miracle* 28). See also Gascoü, *Sophrone* 10-11.

³⁴ Sophronius, *Miracles of Cyrus and John* 8 (Marcos 253): '... ἵνα καὶ γινώσκῃεν ἔχειν, οἱ Κύρου καὶ Ἰωάννου τοῖς θαύμασιν ἐντυγχάνοντες, καθ' ὃν ταῦτα καιρὸν ἀνεγράφησαν, Θεοῦ τοῦτο κελεύοντος, καὶ συνεργούντων τῶν δεδρακότων καὶ δρώντων τὰ θαύματα.' Central archive: Déroche, *Miracles d'Artémios* 219-220.

notarios is even unmasked as an anti-Chalcedonian heretic.)³⁵ Thus, although Sophronius's *Miracles* has dominated modern understanding of the nature of the Menouthis shrine, the text itself hints both at the varieties of written narratives accessible at the shrine itself, and at the potential tensions which might exist between different narrators, different impresarios, of the saints' activities.

Indeed, the notion of Sophronius's text as somehow instantiating an 'official' vision of cultic practice—and the concomitant notion that it might thus be used to extract more or less reliable information about the operation of the shrine—has now been dealt a significant blow.³⁶ In a recent article Vincent Déroche has published, from a single manuscript on Mount Athos, an alternative collection of *Miracles of Cyrus and John*, consisting of five miracles.³⁷ The publication of this alternative collection, which again underscores the multiplicity of narratives which must once have existed around the saints' shrine, represents a significant advance in our understanding, although it should be noted that despite this we still do not have access to the saints' entire extant hagiographic corpus. For there exist various miracles in Copto-Arabic which remain unpublished.³⁸

Internal references within the Athos miracles show that this group of miracles has been excerpted from a larger, otherwise lost, collection, and that it was written during the reign of Heraclius and under the patriarchate of Cyrus of Alexandria, and thus in the period c.633-c.641 (some two to three decades after Sophronius's own collection).³⁹ The compiler of the Athos miracles is anonymous, but was well-acquainted with the shrine, for he claims to have heard one miracle directly from its subject, and there names the presiding deacon as one Theodore.⁴⁰ For this reason, Déroche proposes that he was a simple devotee of the shrine.⁴¹

³⁵ See Booth, *Crisis of Empire* 56.

³⁶ For this notion see P. Maraval, 'Fonction pédagogique de la littérature hagiographique d'un lieu de pèlerinage: l'exemple des *Miracles de Cyr et Jean*,' in *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés: IVe-XIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1981) 383-97 at 394 n. 8.

³⁷ V. Déroche, 'Un recueil inédit de miracles de Cyr et Jean dans le Koutloumousiou 37,' *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici* 49 (2012) 199-220.

³⁸ See R. Boutros, 'Le culte des saints Cyr et Jean chez les coptes à la lumière des sources hagiographiques arabes,' in J.-Y. Empereur and C. Décobert (eds), *Alexandrie Médiévale* 3 (Cairo, 2008) 115-143.

³⁹ Déroche, 'Un recueil inédit' 212-214.

⁴⁰ *Athonite Miracles of Cyrus and John* 1. He seems to have served as the shrine's *oikonomos* (Θεοδόρου τοῦ θεοφιλεστάτου διακόνου ἐγκεχειρισμένου τὴν οἰκονομίαν [Déroche 201]). In Sophronius's collection the shrine's *oikonomos* is Christodorus (above p. 0000), while the deacons are named as John and Julian (*Miracles of Cyrus and John* 11, 36).

⁴¹ Déroche, 'Un recueil inédit' 215, 219.

The date of the collection is significant because it corresponds to the period in which Sophronius had clashed, and even broken communion, with Cyrus over his attempts to re-establish communion with the Severans, first while as a monk in 633, and then again in 636 as patriarch of Jerusalem.⁴² One is forced to wonder, therefore, whether the production of a new collection of miracles under Cyrus might represent an attempt to dissociate Sophronius from the saints' cult, in a context within which his name had become associated with opposition to the Alexandrian patriarch. Indeed, one of the striking differences between the two collections (if we can assume that the five miracles preserved on Athos are representative of the wider collections from which they are excerpted) is, as with the various *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, a marked divergence in doctrinal politics: for while Sophronius's devotes several miracles to the denunciation of assorted miaphysite heretics who attend the shrine and convert,⁴³ the Athos miracles do not mention doctrine at all.⁴⁴ The two collections therefore seem to reflect the doctrinal approaches of the Chalcedonian patriarchs under whom each was composed: Sophronius's collection, that of John the Almsgiver, who is presented in later texts as a committed Chalcedonian;⁴⁵ and the Athos miracles, that of Cyrus, whose patriarchate was marked by the effort to re-establish communion with Egypt's Severan miaphysites, and thus in fact to transcend differences in doctrine.⁴⁶

For our immediate purposes, this new collection of *Miracles of Cyrus and John* is also notable because it contains a narrative which shares the same basic model as one contained within Sophronius's text. Thus *Miracle 5* of the Athos collection and Sophronius's *Miracle 19* both share a narrative in which a woman comes to the saints with a cancer, prays fervently and is cured. Sophronius's version is far more elaborate than that of the Athos author; and the two diverge on the cure which is supposed to have relieved the woman's affliction (a fact to which we shall return). Comparison of the two does not suggest that the Athos author is making direct use of Sophronius's earlier narrative, and it therefore seems that the two texts derive from a basic shared model, which we

⁴² See Booth, *Crisis of Empire* 209, 219-221, 239-240.

⁴³ See e.g. Sophronius, *Miracles of Cyrus and John* 12, 36, 37.

⁴⁴ See also Déroche, 'Un recueil inédit' 215.

⁴⁵ Booth, *Crisis of Empire* 51-54.

⁴⁶ Booth, *Crisis of Empire* 205-208; id. 'The Last Years of Cyrus, Patriarch of Alexandria (†642),' in J.-L. Fournet, and A. Papaconstantinou (eds), *Mélanges Jean Gascou, Travaux et Mémoires* 19 (Paris, 2016) 509-558.

might suppose to be an oral tradition, perhaps even the aforementioned collection which Sophronius' *Miracle* 8 attributes to the *oikonomos* Christodorus.⁴⁷ In either case, we are nevertheless presented with a remarkable situation, in which a miracle somehow remembered within the shrine itself has been elaborated through two different impresarios of the saints' cult, producing two miracles with quite distinct emphases.

In order to press home this point concerning the simultaneous existence within single shrines of multiple narratives, multiple literatures, multiple impresarios, let us now look at the *Miracles of Artemius*. It has long been observed that the miracles within the collection seem to fall into three or more approximate groups: thus those at the beginning and end of the collection (*Miracles* 1-14, 42-45) are short, somewhat unembellished, healing narratives of a more-or-less standardised kind; while those of the central section are far more elaborate and varied, and seem to fall into rough thematic doublets or groups.⁴⁸ One such group is conspicuous because all of its miracles (24-31) conclude with some famous sermonettes targeting the inadequacies of contemporaneous Hippocratic medicine.⁴⁹ The most obvious explanation for this basic dissonance is that the collection as we have it has been composed from several different parts: first, an earlier, more simple collection which opens the text; second, an original composition in the central section (where the addition of the sermonettes to some miracles perhaps indicates the exploitation of still further pre-existent cultic literature); and third, a final addition of the four concluding miracles.

Like other equivalent texts, the *Miracles of Artemius* also hints at the sources from which it has drawn its information, besides pre-existent collections. The text itself describes in vivid terms the lively community of clerics and lay devotees who gathered around the shrine, in particular for its weekend vigil, and several such persons are the protagonists of individual miracles. One such person is an anonymous devotee of the saint's vigil who features in two long and detailed miracles (nos 18 and 22), one concerning the theft of his clothes by a singer of psalms; and another concerning a hernia

⁴⁷ So also Déroche, 'Un recueil inédit' 218-219.

⁴⁸ See Déroche, *Miracles d'Artémios* 208, 221-225.

⁴⁹ On these see esp. J. Haldon, 'Supplementary Essay: The Miracles of Artemios and Contemporary Attitudes: Context and Significance,' in Crisafulli and Nesbitt, *Miracles of St. Artemios* 33-75.

which the doctors could not cure.⁵⁰ Another such person is one George, a monk and devotee of Artemius, who features as a protagonist in several vignettes at *Miracles* 38-40. We can perhaps assume, therefore, that the author, if not identical with one of these protagonists, is at least depending on the oral accounts, or perhaps even written records, which the saint's clerics and devotees produced, thus providing these central miracles with their vivid detail and insight.⁵¹ The internal textual structure of the Artemius collection, therefore, once again suggest to us the complex processes involved in the production of a miracle collections, and the diverse sources of which an author or compiler might avail himself.

Multiple Contexts, Multiple Perspectives

So far we have established that the canonical miracle collections with which we are most familiar both drew upon, and competed with, various others texts within their respective shrines, from informal memorials of individual miracles to more formal literary compilations. This diverse production of course raises the question of the status of different texts in relation to the shrine itself, and the potential contexts in which each was performed, circulated, and consumed. It might be thought that each of our main collections represents the 'official' memorial of a particular shrine or cult, that it was compiled from local records or oral traditions, approved by the presiding clergy and then excerpted and read out during regular liturgies or at the saint's feast – this might indeed be the case for, for example, Deubner's *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, the Athos *Miracles of Cyrus and John*, or the *Miracles of Artemius*.

It is however more difficult to uphold such a use for other collections. In a recent paper John Duffy has underlined the remarkable rhetorical complexity of Sophronius's *Miracles of Cyrus and John*, which is composed in the Asiaticising 'syntonic' style,⁵² and which is marked with the famous, double-dactyl clausulae which finish ninety per cent of Sophronius's sentences in his recognised prose

⁵⁰ On these see S. Efthymiades, 'A Day and Ten Months in the Life of a Lonely Bachelor: The Other Byzantium in *Miracula S. Artemii* 18 and 22,' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004) 1-26.

⁵¹ See Déroche, *Miracles d'Artémios* 201-207, 218-220,

⁵² As Sophronius states at *Prologue to the Miracles of Cyrus and John* 6.

works.⁵³ This huge text moreover is replete with various rhetorical word-games and excurses, it presents a consistent autobiographical voice, and its narratives are linked through cross-references and placed according to a wider organising principle, that is, is the geographical origins of the protagonists. Thus the text would have been difficult to excerpt, difficult to perform, and difficult to understand for all but the most sophisticated (and patient) listeners. While Sophronius does no doubt draw, to some extent, from oral reports or written records from the shrine itself, therefore, it is more tempting to regard his extensive composition in the first instance not as a liturgical piece designed for regular performance before the shrine's clientele, but rather a sophisticated take on the genre of miracle writing, designed for an elite, Chalcedonian audience in Alexandria, to be consumed either in private or declaimed at more select gatherings.⁵⁴

That miracle collections might indeed be designed for such contexts finds some confirmation in a much earlier collection, that is, the *Miracles of Thecla*. It is evident that the collection as it stands is a second edition, for the author has, after the completion of an earlier version, interpolated one miracle (12) and added two more (45-46) to the conclusion.⁵⁵ Thus the text, though the product of a single pen, again bears witness to the processes of rewriting and updating which we have seen in respect of other collections. The *Miracles of Thecla* is of interest to us, however, for a number of further reasons: first, from autobiographical information contained within the text we know that the otherwise unknown author in fact existed—much like Sophronius—on the margins of the shrine which he celebrates, for although he was a priest there, successive bishops of Seleucia excommunicated him (for reasons which are unclear);⁵⁶ second, the *Miracles of Thecla*—much, again, like Sophronius's *Miracles*—is a sophisticated composition with various recondite references to classical texts;⁵⁷ and third, it is marked with a profound sense of rhetorical competition around the saint, as various local grammarians and rhetors appear as the protagonists of the narratives, some of

⁵³ J. Duffy, 'Reliques of Old Rhetoric: Artistic Elements in the Homilies of Sophronius of Jerusalem' (forthcoming).

⁵⁴ Pace Maraval, 'Fonction pédagogique' 393.

⁵⁵ See G. Dagron, *Vie et miracles de Ste. Thecle* (Brussels, 1978) 13-19.

⁵⁶ See esp. *Miracles of Thecla* 12, 41, and the Peroration, with Dagron, *Vie et miracles de Thècle* 15-16; also D. Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia, 2004) 79-92.

⁵⁷ See esp. S. Johnson, *The Life and Miracles of Thekla: A Literary Study* (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

whom the author insults.⁵⁸ The author, therefore, composes the final edition of his text from outside of the shrine's official hierarchy, in a high literary style, and in patent competition with other impresarios of Thecla's cult.

The reader of the *Miracles of Thecla* is thus forced to wonder how the text was in fact performed, and whether the contexts in which miracle collections could be delivered and consumed were not far more diverse than we often suppose. Indeed, in *Miracle 41*, when speaking of the saint's annual festival, the author makes a precious distinction between the clerics who speak from the ambo and those devotees who speak from a *deiktērion* outside of the church, delivering more informal eulogies for the saint.⁵⁹ Other collections are less forthcoming about the wider context of epideictic competition which surrounded individual shrines (and perhaps it is a unique feature of Thecla's shrine, or of this earlier period). But from this perspective the potential contexts in which various cultic literatures could be produced and received seem to proliferate; and understanding the precise relationship between the author and the shrine which he describes, and in turn between the text and its cult, becomes all the more important.

One thing which should now be clear is the considerable range in our authors' statuses. Amongst our Greek miracle collections, bishop John of Thessalonica, author of the first *Miracles of Demetrius*, is the sole senior cleric.⁶⁰ Otherwise the author of the *Miracles of Thecla* is a cantankerous rhetor and priest; the author of the larger *Miracles of Cyrus and John* is a monk and spiritual advisor to the patriarch; and the author of the *Miracles of Artemius* is, it seems, a simple devotee of the saint's shrine in the capital (this, we might presume, is also the status of the various authors of the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*). Authorship of a collection, therefore, did not depend on some sort of official status within the shrine; and in two of these cases—the *Miracles of Thecla* and the larger *Miracles of Cyrus and John*—the author soon fell foul of the local, ecclesiastical, authorities. Thus the status of such texts might well have fluctuated in line with the author's own reputations.

⁵⁸ See e.g. *Miracles of Thecla* 19, 21, 30, 38-40.

⁵⁹ *Miracles of Thecla* 41 (Dagron 398-400), calling this 'the place where speakers exhibit themselves, that is the pulpit (ἄμβων) or the auditorium (ἄκροατήριον),' and stating that 'I was no longer one of those who speaks within churches'.

⁶⁰ Note, however, that in the Coptic tradition Constantine bishop of Assiout (Lykopolis) is the author of the *Miracles of Claudius*; see above n. 0000.

Given the complexities of the relations between author, text, and shrine, it must be appreciated that behind each of these texts there lies a particular perspective, and before each collection can be exploited as a source for the phenomena which it describes that perspective must be understood, and placed in the context of the range of choices which the authors of miracle collections might make. The most obvious manifestation of this phenomenon is that which we have explored in part above, that is, the doctrinal stance of a given shrine and its associated saint or saints. First let it be said that in the period of our miracle collections, in the fifth through seventh centuries, diverse evidence, including miracle collections themselves, suggests that churches and saints' shrines—in particular those within or close to prominent urban centres—attracted Christians of various degrees of doctrinal conviction and confession. Across a range of literature, various authorities on either side of the Chalcedonian divide inveigh against the indiscriminate participation of Christians in the liturgies of those churches whose clerics belonged to a different faction – healing shrines, in particular, seem to have presented an acute example of the problem.⁶¹ Against this background, an author's placement of the saint or saints in one doctrinal camp or another might of course reflect the official doctrinal affiliation of a shrine's clerics; but such placement was not a matter of simple fact but of constant renegotiation and restatement, in a context within which a continuous stream of supplicants might 'read' the saints according to their own doctrinal expectations, and in which impresarios from rival doctrinal factions might produce and even perform their own miracle narratives, subverting the dominant doctrinal message offered in a shrine's liturgies. Thus when Sophronius tells us of the diverse punishments which his saints inflicted upon diverse heretics at their shrine at Menouthis, it is quite evident that he does so against a background in which anti-Chalcedonian Christians made regular appeals to the saints, and in which the shrine's authorities were in effect powerless to prevent them.⁶²

At the same time, the decision *not* to comment on contemporaneous doctrinal issues—as we find, for example, in the *Miracles of Thecla* and in Deubner's *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*—cannot be taken to indicate the absence of such issues from the relevant shrine, or the indifference or

⁶¹ See Booth, 'Orthodox and Heretic' 122-123.

⁶² See Booth, *Crisis of Empire* 54-55, with E. Wipszycka, *The Alexandrian Church: People and Institutions* (Warsaw, 2015) 424-432.

its supplicants to doctrinal questions. One suspects, for example, that the failure to comment on doctrine in the *Miracles of Thecla* might be bound up with the author's own reported excommunications; while in the Constantinopolitan *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, which do refer to the presence of undesignated 'heretics' within the saints' clientele, the failure to be more specific is part of the authors' desire to emphasise the inclusive nature of the cult, in a context within which other supplicants or impresarios, we can assume, were not so accepting.

From all these miracle collections, one can in fact deduce that the cult of saints was an arena in which various groups collided, besides orthodox and heretic: rich and poor, male and female, local and foreign, Christian and non-Christian, etc. All of these supplicants no doubt brought with them different conceptions, different assumptions, about the operation of a shrine and its saints. Collections of miracles, in particular those which were intended to be read in or around the shrine itself, are not simple descriptive texts, but are rather attempts to impose order upon this cacophony, to shape the experiences of their audiences and to inculcate them in the particular ideological perspective of a given collection.⁶³

These attempts extended well beyond the realm of doctrine. Indeed, through comparing the various collections, one can begin to appreciate the potential range of questions which authors confronted in the depiction of a particular cult. For example: Should named recipients of the saints' favour belong to the social and cultural elite,⁶⁴ or members of the middle classes?⁶⁵ Should the saints' activities be limited to locals; or embrace those from further afield?⁶⁶ Should the saint perform various kinds of miracles,⁶⁷ or specialise in a particular kind of miracle such as healing, perhaps even in a particular kind of healing (such as Artemius's famous specialisation in afflictions of the groin or genitals)?⁶⁸ How should illness and its causes be represented, and how also the relationship between the saints' healing and the world of Hippocratic medicine? Should secular doctors complement the

⁶³ On the Sophronius's collection as *paideusis* see Maraval, 'Fonction pédagogique'; for the same approach to the *Miracles of Artemius* see Déroche, 'Pourquoi écrivait-on des recueils de miracles?'

⁶⁴ As in the *Miracles of Thecla* (e.g. 13, 15, 18-20, 30, 35-40, 42-44) or *Miracles of Demetrius* (with J. Skedros, *Saint Demetrios of Thessaloniki: Civic Patron and Divine Protector, 4th-7th Centuries C.E.* [Harrisburg, 1999] 115-120).

⁶⁵ As in the *Miracles of Artemius*.

⁶⁶ As in Sophronius, *Preface to the Miracles of Cyrus and John* 6.

⁶⁷ See e.g. the *Miracles of Thecla*, with Dagron, *Vie et miracles de Thècle* 102-103.

⁶⁸ On this specialisation see Déroche, *Miracles d'Artémios* 232-236.

activities of the saints,⁶⁹ or challenge them?⁷⁰ How should a supplicant be seen to attain the saints' approval? What should be the competing roles of repentance, ritual, doctrine?⁷¹ Such questions could, of course, be multiplied.⁷²

In answering these and other questions, the authors of miracle narratives or collections need not have articulated the practices or beliefs prevalent at the respective shrine; and their responses to such questions need not have been those of other impresarios or supplicants. If, for example, we compare Sophronius's *Miracles of Cyrus and John* with the alternative collection produced two decades later—while again bearing in mind that this collection is incomplete, and contained within a single manuscript—we find much in common, in terms of the processes of supplication, incubation, and prescription of cures. But we also find much different: for example, in the Athos miracles the authorial voice intrudes far less on the narratives, which are composed in simpler Greek, and denuded of Sophronius's complex rhetorical and theological themes; there is no indication of the saints' conversion of anti-Chalcedonian heretics or their participation in the eucharist (two notable themes of Sophronius);⁷³ the author places a distinct emphasis on the relics of the saints (unlike Sophronius who, in his much larger collection, mentions them three times in passing);⁷⁴ there is an open acknowledgement of supplicants' consultation with dream interpreters (again in contrast to Sophronius, who hints at such persons once);⁷⁵ and there is even a doublet, as we have seen, in which the author treat the same tale, but where the cure described is of a less thaumaturgic and more

⁶⁹ As in the *Miracles of Thecla* and the *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*; see Booth, *Crisis of Empire* 59 n. 72.

⁷⁰ As in the *Miracles of Cyrus and John* and the *Miracles of Artemius*. On the former see D. Montserrat, "Carrying on the Work of the Earlier Firm": Doctors, Medicine and Christianity in the *Thaumata* of Sophronius of Jerusalem,' in H. King (ed.), *Health in Antiquity* (London, 2005) 230-242; Booth, *Crisis of Empire* 59-69. On the latter Déroche, *Miracles d'Artémios* 290-304.

⁷¹ See Booth, *Crisis of Empire* 80-85.

⁷² Cf. also Déroche, 'Tensions et contradictions', treating in particular the intellectual problems of the saints' relation to God, the attitude to Hippocratic medicine, and the extension of the saints' power outside of the shrine.

⁷³ See Sophronius, *Miracles of Cyrus and John* 12, 37, 38, 39, with I. Csepregi, 'Mysteries for the Uninitiated: The Role and Symbolism of the Eucharist in Miraculous Dream Healing,' in I. Perczel et al., (eds.) *The Eucharist in Theology and Philosophy: Issues of Doctrinal History in East and West from the Patristic Age to the Reformation* (Leuven, 2006) 97-130.

⁷⁴ See *Athonite Miracles of Cyrus and John* 1, 3, 4; cf. Sophronius, *Miracles of Cyrus and John* 33, 34, 35 (Marcos 313, 315, 322).

⁷⁵ See *Athonite Miracles of Cyrus and John* 4-5; cf. Sophronius, *Miracles of Cyrus and John* 11.

Hippocratic nature (the author being in general far less hostile to secular medical healing than Sophronius).⁷⁶

In his exploration of these differences, Déroche has emphasised the importance, in shaping each collection, of the difference in the author's perspective: Sophronius as a cosmopolitan sophist and Chalcedonian polemicist; and our second author as, it seems, a local devotee of the saints.⁷⁷ But the frequent divergences in the descriptions of basic cultic practices at the Menouthis shrine are also a salient reminder of our more general dependence, in understanding various features of individual eastern cults, on the particular perspectives of different authors, perspectives which might well have existed in wider tension with those of other cultic observers, whose voices nevertheless now lie silent.

Conclusion

The existence of eastern miracle collections which are more-or-less forgotten—whether because unpublished, or because lost, or because eclipsed by more famous collections—serves as a pertinent reminder that the dominant collections with which we are now most familiar existed alongside other cultic literatures concerning the same saints, and that those literatures did not necessarily recapitulate the same concerns or emphases. Such collections were not innocent descriptions of a shrine's existence, but were embedded in a series of constant and ever-evolving tensions. We might conceptualise these tensions as being both horizontal and vertical: horizontal, in the competition of their authors with other cultic impresarios, other cultic literatures of various kinds; and vertical, in the attempt to confront and to redirect the assumptions and expectations of the various persons who came to supplicate the saint(s).

The relationship between these Greek miracle collections and the relevant cult was, therefore, more complex than is often supposed. The authors were of diverse status, and as such their status within a given cult varied from person to person, from context to context. Some texts were perhaps performed with official sanction during regular liturgies or at the saints' annual feast; but others were

⁷⁶ See Déroche, 'Un recueil inédit' 217-219.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 219-220.

performed or circulated in less formal contexts. Moreover, the status of a given text might change over time, in particular if its author became suspect for some reason; or if it were eclipsed through, or subsumed within, the production of a new rival collection. We must suppose that much cultic literature has been lost in the progress of time. But precious references to otherwise unknown texts, and the gradual publication of more minor collections often contained in single manuscripts (such as the *Egyptian Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* or the *Athonite Miracles of Cyrus and John*) allows us to recapture something of the complex accords and disaccords which existed between texts and their cults, and of authors' varied attempts to direct and to contextualise the experiences of a diverse cultic clientele.