

Euphranor of Rhamnous, Aged 105, the Most Fortunate Athenian

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THE RECENT EDITION of inscriptions from Rhamnous by B. Petrakos includes a revised text and high-quality photographs of a grave stele from the fourth-century funerary precinct of the family of Euphranor.¹ The tall stele, which is decorated with rosettes, displays the names of seven individuals covering possibly three generations of the family; the base of the stele, which survives in pieces and is missing some text on the left, carries a verse epitaph for Euphranor son of Euphron, whose name appears in the upper part of the stele above the rosettes, indicating that it was probably inscribed first before the other names were added.² In what follows, I offer some notes on the text of the inscription, and then proceed to discuss two points of particular interest: the meaning of the epithet εὐδαίμων in this and other Athenian verse epitaphs, and the epigram's figurative reference to death as sleep.

Epigraphical and textual notes

Petrakos prints the following text, incorporating emendations proposed by W. Peek in verses 2 and 4:

Εὐδαίμων ὁ θανὼν [E]ὐφράνωρ Εὐφρονος υἱός
ἐνθ[ά]δ' ἔ[η]ν κ[α]ὶ ἑτῶν ἑκατὸν καὶ πέντ' ἐπὶ τούτοις,
τ[ρ]εῖς παίδ[ων] γενεὰς ἐπιδῶν, πάντας καταλείπων·
τ[οῦ]νεκεν εὐαίων ἔτ[υ]μ' ὃς πρῶτος κατέδαρθεν
Εὐφράνωρ πολλοῖσιν ἔβη ζηλωτὸς ἐς Ἄιδου.

¹ B. Petrakos, *Praktika* (1991 [1994]) 17–23, 58–59 no. 30 [*SEG* XLIII 88]; *Rhamnous* II 260.

² Other names were inscribed one by one, presumably after each person was buried in the precinct.

On the basis of the excellent photograph in Petrakos' edition, I note the following:

Line 2. The lost part of the stone, between the second *epsilon* and the *alpha* at the beginning of the next fragment, can accommodate the very common formula ἐνθάδε κείται. This reading requires four letters, ΚΕΙΤ, as opposed to Peek's three, ΗΝΚ, but both the size of the letters and the spacing in the inscription are inconsistent and would equally allow four letters.³ I believe that the line should be restored ἐνθ[ά]δε [κειτ]αι ἐτῶν ἑκατὸν καὶ πέντ' ἐπὶ τούτοις. The construction κείμει/κείται followed by ἐτῶν and the number of years is paralleled in many later epitaphs, when reporting of the age of the deceased became common (e.g. τριά<κο>ντα καὶ πέντε αἰτῶν κίτ<α>ι κόρη in *CIG* 2233 from Chios, ἐνθαδ' ἐγὼ κείμαι ... / εἰκοσιεπτὰ ἐτῶν εἰς Αἴδην καταβάς in *GVI* 1298 from Halai, etc.). The form in which the number of years is expressed in Euphranor's epigram, through a prepositional construction ἑκατὸν καὶ πέντ' ἐπὶ τούτοις, was probably dictated by the necessity to meet the meter (cf. [γ]ράμματ' ἐδίδαξεν ἔτεα πεν[τήκ]ον[θ' ὄδε] / δύο τ' ἐπὶ τούτοις in *IG* XII.1 141 from Rhodes, or εἴκοσι πλήσας ἔτη / καὶ τρί' ἐπὶ τούτοις in Merkelbach/Stauber, *SGO* I 05/01/31, from Smyrna).

Line 4. On the photograph, the first *tau* can easily be seen, as can the letters ETY on the small fragment to the right of the gap. There might be slight traces on fragments above and below the lacuna, but they are unidentifiable on the photograph. Comparison with the better preserved lines 1, 3, and 5 suggests that the space between the *tau* at the beginning of the line and the *epsilon* of ETY may be enough to accommodate about 12 to 14 letters. The restoration proposed by Peek requires 13, i.e. it fits the gap, but while the adverb ἐτυμῶς is fairly common in verse epitaphs, ἔτυμα is not attested as an adverb in either inscriptional or literary epigrams, and very

³ If line 2 began with ἐνθάδε κείται, the last *iota* would be the twelfth letter; it is inscribed under the *theta* of θανών in line 1, which is in the tenth position, but over the space between the *gamma* and *epsilon* of γενεάς in line 3, which occupy the twelfth and thirteenth positions.

seldom appears in other texts (where the more common adverbial form is ἔτυμον).

The surviving part of verse 4 states that Euphranor was the first to die, i.e. he died before his descendants. As a rule, burial precincts housed graves of several members of a family, and those descendants of Euphranor who set up his tomb and the enclosure probably expected to be buried there eventually, and several indeed were. This consideration suggests that the missing part of the verse may have had a reference to the burial ground in which Euphranor was the first to lie. If the letters ETY belong to one word, which is likely if only one letter is missing before ὄς, the most common word with a short *upsilon* that contains this combination is an aorist form of τυγχάνω, e.g. ἔτυχε. An epigram in the *Greek Anthology* ascribed to Theocritus furnishes a tempting parallel (*Anth.Gr.* 7.659 = Theoc. 7.1–2):

Νήπιον υἱὸν ἔλειπες, ἐν ἡλικίῃ δὲ καὶ αὐτός,
Εὐρύμεδον, τύμβου τοῦδε θανῶν ἔτυχες.

Young was the child you left, and you yourself were in your prime, Eurymedon, when you died and were allotted this burial.

In our case, the restoration τ[ύμβου τοῦδε θανῶν] ἔτυ[χ'] ὄς πρῶτος κατέδαρθεν, “having died, he who fell asleep first was allotted this tomb,” would entail repetition of the word θανῶν that already appeared in verse 1, which is somewhat awkward but perhaps not impossible.⁴ Nevertheless, even if, and this seems likely, the missing part of the line had some form of reference to the burial ground, its exact wording is impossible to reconstruct beyond reasonable doubt, and thus I hesitate to print anything in the lacuna.

On the basis of these observations, I read the following:

Εὐδαίμων ὁ θανῶν [E]ὐφράνωρ Εὐφρονος υἱός
ἐνθ[ά]δε [κείτ]αι ἐτῶν ἑκατὸν καὶ πέντ' ἐπὶ τούτοις,

⁴ Cf. the opening verses of an epigram from Amorgos, which has the finite form and participle of the verb: πόντῳ ἔπ' ἰχθυόεντι θανῶν ἐνὶ σήματι τῷδε / νηπίαχος κείμαι, πενταετῆς δ' ἔθαν[ο]ν (*IG* XII.7 445). Note also that Euphranor's name is repeated in the last verse of the epigram, suggesting that we cannot expect the verse to flow smoothly from the beginning to the end.

τρ[εῖ]ς παίδ[ων] γενεὰς ἐπιδών, πάντας καταλείπων
 τ[- - - - ^{ca. 12-14} - - - -] ἔτυ[-]ὸς πρῶτος κατέδαρθεν.
 Εὐφράνωρ πολλοῖσιν ἔβη ζηλωτὸς ἐς Ἅιδου.

The fortunate Euphranor son of Euphron lies here, having died at one hundred five years of age, after he saw three generations of children and left them all behind ... who fell asleep first. Envied by many, Euphranor entered the house of Hades.

The good fortune of Euphranor

Euphranor's epitaph opens by calling him εὐδαίμων, which I render as "fortunate." In literary sources of the archaic and classical periods the word εὐδαίμων generally implies such meanings as the enjoyment of divine favors and protection from adversity throughout one's life.⁵ The chorus in *Antigone* declares that "those are fortunate whose lifetime has no taste of evil" (Soph. *Ant.* 582, εὐδαίμονες οἷσι κακῶν ἄγευστος αἰών); the messenger in *Medea* closes his monologue by stating that "no man among mortals is fortunate" (Eur. *Med.* 1228, θνητῶν γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἐστὶν εὐδαίμων ἀνήρ), prompting the scholiast to explain, "by εὐδαίμων he means the man who, up to the very end, is unvisited by misfortunes" (εὐδαίμονά φησι τὸν ἄχρι τέλους ἀπείρατον κακῶν, II 207 Schwartz).

The epithet εὐδαίμων is applied in funerary verses in classical Athens to those who are said either to have lived long or to have left descendants behind. It seems thus to denote a life free of the misfortune of an untimely death, whether one's own or that of one's descendants. In what appears to be the earliest extant example, the deceased is made to say of himself, "fortunate I died having traversed ten decades of years" (*CEG* 477.1, εὐδαίμων ἔθανον δεκάδας δέκ' ἐτῶν διαμείψας). In the epitaph for Archippos of the deme of Skambonidai, the reference to his descendants comes to the forefront, as he claims that "fortunate I died leaving my children's children" (*CEG* 524.4, εὐδαίμων δὲ ἔθανον παίδων παῖδας καταλείπω[ν]). The same sentiment is expressed in the epitaph for Chairestrate, "fortunate she left the light, having seen her children's chil-

⁵ For a detailed study of the use of the epithet, see C. de Heer, *ΜΑΚΑΡ-ΕΥΔΑΙΜΩΝ-ΟΛΒΙΟΣ-ΕΥΤΥΧΗΣ. A Study of the Semantic Field Denoting Happiness in Ancient Greek* (Amsterdam 1969) esp. 38-44, 56-67.

dren” (*CEG* 566.4, φῶς δ’ ἔλιπ’ εὐδαίμων παῖδας παίδων ἐπιδούσα). The epigram for Simon, daughter of Theoboulos, speaks of her fortunate lot, πότμος (*CEG* 613):

εὐδαίμων μ’ ἔλαχεν πότμος ἢ γ’ ἐτέκνωσ[α]
 τρεῖς παῖδας καὶ ἐκ τούτων ἐτέρους παῖδας προσιδ[ούσα]
 θν[ή]ισκω, ζηλωτῆς μοῖρας θανάτου τε τυχοῦσ[α].

A fortunate lot fell to me, who gave birth to three children, and having seen other children from them, I die, having obtained an envied fate and death.

The idea that the person is fortunate who lived to see his or her grandchildren was apparently so common that the personal name Eudaimon became synonymous with living long enough to see one’s children’s children. In a partially preserved verse epitaph a certain Eudaimon comments on the appropriateness of his name (*CEG* 574.3–4):⁶

Εὐδαίμων δὲ ὄνομ’ ἔσχον επε[-----]
 παῖδας γὰρ παίδων εἶδον ὁ πᾶσ[ι φίλος].

I had the name Eudaimon ... for I who am dear to many have seen the children of my children.

The epitaph for Euphranor speaks of his old age and of his descendants: his good fortune encompassed both. Living to an exceedingly advanced age, he saw not only his children’s children, but the latter’s children, too. The common formula παίδων παῖδας καταλείπων (or ἐπιδών) was modified to accommodate not two but three generations of descendants.⁷ Not only did Euphranor see them born, but they all survived him, which in a time of high child mortality and frequent wars was probably truly remarkable. His exceptionally good fortune must have made him “envied by many” (πολλοῖσι ζηλωτός) as he departed to the house of Hades. The reference to how he was viewed by others nicely balances the emphatic statement in the opening of the epigram that he was εὐδαίμων.

⁶ Other verse epitaphs that comment on the fittingness of the name of the deceased include *CEG* 93 and 517.

⁷ If the restoration in *CEG* 757 is correct, this epigram attests a woman named Lysimache, priestess of Athena Nike, who by the age of 88 saw four generations of offspring.

The epitaph for Simon cited above displays a similar circular composition: a reference to Simon's fortunate lot opens the epigram and her envied fate is mentioned in the last verse. Another person who lived to an enviable old age was Hedytion, nicknamed Kerkope. In her epitaph she is made to say of herself, "having died well, envied I go to the bridal chamber of Persephone, after counting in my old age nine decades" (*CEG* 592.2–4, εὐθ[α]νάτως δὲ / στείχω ζηλωτὴ Φερσεφώνης θάλαμον, / γήραι ἀριθμ[ή]σασ' ἐννέα ἐτῶν δεκάδας). Euphranor, envied by many, had the fortune of an even longer life.

It is worth noting that, in classical Athenian epitaphs, reference to the precise age of the deceased is by itself an indication of how fortunate, or unfortunate, the commemorated person was. Fourth-century verse epitaphs⁸ never report the age of people who died in what we might call middle age. Among those who died young, the oldest was the deceased of *CEG* 553, aged thirty;⁹ at the other end, the youngest of those who died old was the deceased of *CEG* 554, aged seventy.¹⁰ Death at a young age is particularly pitiable, and mentioning the precise age is an expression of grief; living to a very advanced age is especially fortunate, which epitaphs document by including the remarkable number of years of one's life. Euphranor lived to the age of 105, the highest age attested so far in Attic epi-

⁸ As a rule, only verse epitaphs report the age of the deceased in Athens in the fourth century; the non-metrical epitaph for Dexileos *IG* II² 6217 is exceptional, as it includes both the years of his birth and death, thereby providing his age at death. The unique inclusion of this information was perhaps meant to indicate that Dexileos could not have been involved in the coup of 404, as he would have been too young then, see Rhodes/Osborne, *GHI* p.43.

⁹ Philetairos was twenty-two (*CEG* 480); Pamphile was nineteen (*CEG* 538); the deceased of *CEG* 584 was twenty; Hegilla in *CEG* 590 was twenty-four; Kleoptoleme (*CEG* 591) was twelve; and the deceased in *CEG* 557 was just nine years old.

¹⁰ We also hear of people ninety (*CEG* 531 and 592) and one hundred (477) years old. On the phenomenon of the celebration of longevity in fourth-century epitaphs, see also S. C. Humphreys, *The Family, Women and Death: Comparative Studies* (Ann Arbor 1993) 107.

taphs.¹¹ He therefore excelled in both aspects of the fortunate life, living long and leaving descendants, and he was thus, we might say, the most fortunate Athenian man documented.

The sleep of death

In line 4 of his epitaph, Euphranor's death is equated with falling asleep. The comparison of death with sleep in antiquity has been the subject of several studies,¹² with most attention paid to the artistic representation of Sleep and Death, a famous pair of brothers,¹³ and to the development of the concept in the Hellenistic and later periods. In a detailed study published in 1933, M. Ogle argues that for the Greeks "the conception of death as a sleep is not a reflection of popular ideas but represents rather, as is surely the case with the Hellenistic epigram, a literary convention" (84), and concludes that this conception "was not a natural one to the Greek folk" (87). The eventual popularity of the idea in sepulchral art and inscriptions in the post-Hellenistic era, Ogle suggests, was the result of the influence of oriental cults on Greek art and thought in the period after Alexander's conquests. R. Lattimore concurs that the background of the figurative reference to death as sleep in epitaphs "lies in Jewish, not Greek, sources."¹⁴ Citing a fragment from Aristophanes' lost play *Tagenistai*, in which death is referred to as falling asleep (in an expression that is, as we will see, curiously similar to the diction of our epitaph), G. Woehrle points out that this literary convention must have become popular enough to be alluded to in comedy. In what follows I will examine the employment of the metaphor starting with

¹¹ A woman of 105 appears in an epitaph of the Imperial period from Sidon (*SEG* L 1418).

¹² M. Ogle, "The Sleep of Death," *MAAR* 11 (1933) 81–117; C. Mainoldi, "Sonno e morte in Grecia antica," in R. Raffaelli (ed.), *Rappresentazioni della morte* (Urbino 1987) 7–46; G. Woehrle, *Hypnos der Allbezwinger. Eine Studie zum literarischen Bild des Schlafes in der griechischen Antike* (Palingenesia 53 [Stuttgart 1995]). See also R. Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs* (Urbana 1942) 82–83 and 164–174.

¹³ Sleep and Death are brothers in Hom. *Il.* 14.231 and 16.672 and Hes. *Theog.* 756.

¹⁴ Lattimore, *Themes* 164 n.50.

Homeric epic and ending with Euphranor's epitaph, and argue that rather than a literary convention, the comparison as it appears in the epitaph and the *Tagenistai* reflects the existence of a common (perhaps ancient and doubtlessly natural) euphemism that did not necessarily derive from literary and philosophical tradition.

The comparison of sleep and death appears in Homer and Hesiod either as a simile or as a metaphor. In similes, the comparison is built on the notion of sleep as a calm and imperturbable state, while the serenity of falling asleep is compared to peaceful death. Odysseus sleeps "sweet sleep ... most like death" (*Od.* 13.79–80, νήδυμος ὕπνος ... θανάτῳ ἄγχιστα εἰκώς); in Hesiod's *Works and Days* men of the Golden Race, who lived without sorrow and toil and had all good things, "died as if overcome by sleep" (116, θνήσκον δ' ὡσθ' ὕπνῳ δεδμημένοι).¹⁵

When in epic sleep is a metaphor (as opposed to a simile) for death, the emphasis seems to fall on the abruptness of the cessation of life. Iphidamas, smitten by Agamemnon's sword, "falls into bronze sleep" (*Il.* 11.241, κοιμήσατο χάλκεον ὕπνον), and Promachos "sleeps subdued by the spear" of Trojan Akamas (14.482–3, Πρόμαχος δεδμημένος εὔδει / ἔγχει). In a fragment of Hesiod's *Melampodia*, "sleep of death covered Calchas" after he was defeated in a riddle contest with Mopsos (*Hes. fr.* 278.13, Κάλχανθ' ὕπνος θανάτοιο κάλυψεν). Although much about this fragment is uncertain (even the word ὕπνος has been suspected), there seems to be some implication of sudden death caused by external force.

In tragedy the metaphoric equation of death and sleep, as in epic, often connotes abrupt cessation of life. In most instances, the verb denoting sleep is used transitively with the meaning "to put or send to sleep," often with the implication of violence and quickness. The metaphor is used to describe the murder of Myrtilos by Pelops: "Myrtilos was put to sleep, plunged into the sea, hurled headlong from the golden chariot with cruel tor-

¹⁵ There is also an implicit comparison of peaceful sleep with death in *Od.* 18.201–202: awaking from her soft sleep, Penelope wishes that Artemis would send her soft death, with both sleep and death described as μαλακόν.

ments” (Soph. *El.* 508–512, ὁ ποντισθεὶς Μυρτίλος ἐκοιμάθη, / παγχρύσων δίφρων/ δυστάνοις αἰκίαις / πρόροριζος ἐκριφθεὶς). In *Hecuba* the chorus refers to “the race of Titans, whom Zeus put to sleep with his thunderbolt of double flame” (Eur. *Hec.* 472–474, Τιτάνων γενεάν, / τὰν Ζεὺς ἀμφιπύρῳ / κοιμίζει φλογμῶ). Antigone compares her imminent death to that of Niobe, inflicted on her suddenly by a divinity: “very much like her, the god sends me to sleep” (Soph. *Ant.* 833, ὅ μὲ δαίμων ὁμοιοτάταν κατευνάζει). In a few instances, the notions of sleep, sex, and death are mingled together, as in Orestes’ telling his mother that “after she dies, she will share a bed” with Aigisthos (Aesch. *Cho.* 906, τούτῳ θανοῦσα ξυγκάθευδ’), or in Antigone’s song with its imagery of marriage to death (Soph. *Ant.* 806–822).¹⁶ Violence or force is implied in all these scenes.

The cessation of life described by the metaphor in tragedy can, however, also mean the cessation of suffering, with the quickness of falling asleep contrasted with the pain of a slowly approaching and inevitable end. Ajax calls on Hermes “to lull [him] to sleep well, without convulsions, in one rapid bound” (Soph. *Aj.* 832–833, εὖ μὲ κοιμίσει, / ξὺν ἀσφαδάστῳ καὶ ταχεῖ πηδήματι); upon learning the fate of Agamemnon, the chorus asks that some Fate, not painful and not lingering, *quickly* bring endless sleep to them (Aesch. *Ag.* 1449–1451).¹⁷

The connotation of calmness and peacefulness that was apparent in the epic simile of death as sleep is rare but not completely absent from tragedy.¹⁸ To Oedipus’ question whether Polybos died through treachery or sickness, the messenger responds that “slight weight lays old bodies to sleep” (Soph. *OT* 961, σμικρὰ παλαιὰ σώματ’ εὐνάζει ῥοπή). Oedipus assumes this to mean that Polybos died of sickness, as if understanding

¹⁶ Cf. also Eur. *Hipp.* 563.

¹⁷ Cf. also Soph. *Trach.* 1041–1043; Eur. *Hipp.* 1376–1377 and 1386–1388, *Tro.* 591–594.

¹⁸ The immobility, not the calm and peacefulness, of a body asleep is the basis for the metaphor in Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus* where Oedipus proclaims threateningly that his “corpse, covered, sleeping and cold, will be drinking the warm blood of [the Thebans]” (621–622, εὔδων καὶ κεκοιμημένος νέκυς / ψυχρὸς ποτ’ αὐτῶν θερμὸν αἷμα πίεται).

the verb of putting to sleep (εὐνάζω) in its usual “tragic” sense, but the messenger adds that Polybos died “also in fitting measure with his long time” (963, καὶ τῷ μακρῷ γε συμμετρούμενος χρόνῳ), apparently emphasizing the fact that Polybos’ end came in accordance with the right measure of a long life, and was not abrupt and violent.

In a fragment from Aristophanes’ *Tagenistai* the equation of sleep and death is void of the connotations found in epic and tragedy. The speaker describes the advantages of the underworld, and in the chain of quasi-logical arguments he claims that the dead, once in the underworld, go straight to drinking, and “it is on account of this that they are called lucky” (*PCG* III.2 Ar. fr.504.9, διὰ ταῦτα γάρ τοι καὶ καλοῦνται μακάριοι).¹⁹ He brings further support to his argument by quoting what he says is a common pronouncement (10–11):

πᾶς γὰρ λέγει τις ὁ μακαρίτης οἴχεται,
κατέδαρθεν· εὐδαίμων, ὅτ’ οὐκ ἀνιάσεται.

For everybody says: “So-and-so is blessed who goes away and has fallen asleep.” Fortunate he is, since nothing will pain him.

It is this fragment that leads Woehrle to observe that even if the conception of death as sleep were a literary convention, it must have been popular enough to be alluded to in comedy. Euphranor’s epitaph expresses the metaphor of death as sleep with the same verb and in a strikingly similar way: it appears along with the euphemism of death as departing (οἴχεται in the comic fragment and ἔβη ... ἐς Ἅιδου in the epitaph), and it does not seem to be charged with any additional sentiment. It is not impossible that both Aristophanes and the author of

¹⁹ The epithet μακάριος, the earliest recorded instance of which is in Pind. *Pyth.* 5.46 and which becomes common in Euripides and Aristophanes, seems to imply some general idea of being lucky and fortunate. Unlike its older cognate μάκαρ, which is largely employed of gods, μακάριος is applied only to men; for detailed discussion see de Heer, *MAKAP* 28–32, 56–57, 81–87. The word μακαρίτης, used in the following line, which I render as “blessed,” is from its first known appearance in Aesch. *Pers.* 633 confined to the dead. The joke thus seems to be built on a quasi-logical leap from the meaning of one cognate word to that of the other with total disregard for their contextual differences.

Euphranor's epigram adopted a literary convention of alluding to death as sleep, but stripped it of all literary connotations. It seems more plausible, however, that the comparison of death to sleep was a natural and universal euphemism that could be exploited as a basis for a simile or a metaphor. The evidence for the employment of the metaphor of death as departing seems to reflect a similar situation, in which a widely-used euphemism could be developed into a literary image or a philosophical idea.²⁰ Descriptions of death as departing for Hades are attested from Homer onwards and can be found in inscriptional funerary verses already in the archaic period. Some authors, such as Pindar, elaborate on the concept more than others, while Plato exploits this universal euphemism to express his fundamental belief in the immortality of the soul. The comparison of death to sleep has, I think, undergone a similar transformation. Superficial similarities between the appearance of sleep and death were never foreign to the Greeks, but the metaphorical equation of death to sleep was employed to different ends.

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²⁰ Cf. D. Tarrant, "Metaphors of Death in the *Phaedo*," *CR* 2 (1952) 64–66.