

## POEM 17. HYMN TO ST. THEODOSIUS

*Physical description:* 3 fragments, not joined: A = height 4.5 x length 16.5 cm; B = height 12 x length 28 cm; C = height 3 x length 2 cm.

*Recto margins:* top margin (A) at least .5 cm; right margin (B) at least 6.5 cm

*Verso margins:* top margin (B) at least .5 cm; right margin (B) at least 6.5 cm; bottom margin (A) at least 2.5 cm.

*Hand:* Dioscorus, uncial, clearly written. *Plates:* 1-2.

*Date:* A.D. post June 6, 567 - ante circa 585. *Provenance:* Aphrodito

*Style:* encomium. *Vocabulary:* epic. *Meter:* dactylic hexameter.

*Subject:* St. Theodosius I (ob. 567), Patriarch of Alexandria (535-536).

*First edition:* Jean Maspero, *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire : Nos 67125-67278 : papyrus grecs d'époque byzantine. Tome second* (Cairo 1913), 161-164 (67183 recto & verso). [= Maspero].  
On-line at Internet Archive.

*Subsequent editions:* Ernst Heitsch, *Die griechischen Dichterfragmente der römischen Kaiserzeit*, Vol. 1, 2nd edn. (Göttingen 1963). [= Heitsch 1].  
On-line at Thesaurus Linguae Graecae.

Leslie MacCoull, "The Panegyric on Justin II by Dioscorus of Aphrodito," *Byzantion* 54 (1984): 575-85, pl. I-II.

Barry Baldwin, *An Anthology of Byzantine Poetry* (Amsterdam 1985), 100-105 [only verses 1-19].

Leslie MacCoull, *Dioscorus of Aphrodito: His Work and His World* (Berkeley 1988), 72-76. [= MacCoull, pp. 72-76]. On-line at UC Press E-Books.

Jean-Luc Fournet, *Hellénisme dans l'Égypte du VI<sup>e</sup> siècle. La bibliothèque et l'œuvre de Dioscore d'Aphrodité* (Cairo 1999), 409-411, 567-578, pl. LV-LVI. [= Poem 17].

See also: Clement Kuehn, *Channels of Imperishable Fire : The Beginnings of Christian Mystical Poetry and Dioscorus of Aphrodito* (New York 1995).

Ausilia Saija, *Lessico dei carmi di Dioscoro di Aphrodito* (Messina 1995).

Poem 17 (Heitsch 1) uses the encomiastic formula for a poem or prose in praise of an emperor visiting a city. More specifically, on the surface level, Dioscorus employs traditional elements for praising the arrival of an official image of the emperor. Dioscorus, however, used this encomiastic template to write a poem in praise of a saint: Theodosius of Alexandria. (Cf. the secular *diptych* form used by artists to represent saints.) Theodosius was elected Patriarch of Alexandria in 535. Though supported by both Copts and Melchites, he was removed the following year through local intrigue. After an investigation initiated by Empress Theodora, Theodosius was rightfully returned to the Patriarchy. But only briefly: he was soon removed by Emperor Justinian for refusing to recognize the Chalcedonian Creed. After a brief incarceration, Theodosius was allowed to choose his place of exile, and he spent much of the next three decades in Upper Egypt. Following his death in 567 he was canonized a saint and posthumously declared the thirty-third pope of the Coptic Church. The most complete biography is found in the tenth-century *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church in Alexandria*. Written in Arabic in Hermopolis, it might have drawn upon Coptic sources for the life of Theodosius. Poem 17, on the allegorical level, says that because of his inspired writing, his lifelong devotion to Christ, and the persecution that he endured, Theodosius is now preeminent among the saints.

### Restored Greek Transcription

recto ↑

- 1 [P .....]ς ἄμμιν ἴκανε φερέσβιος ἐσθλοσυνάω[ν],  
[.....]ς ἄμμιν ἴκανεν. ἐλευθερίας καὶ ἀρωγῆ[ς]  
[δεινῶν σφ]αλμάτων λαθικηδέος ἤγαγε τέρψιν  
[ἀνδράσι τε κρατ]εροῖς πολυτε[ρ]πέσιν ἠδὲ γυναῖξι[ν].  
5 [λῳίον ἐστιν ἐὸν παναοίδιμον οὔνομα μέλψαι],  
[ὄττι χ]άρις καὶ χάσμα καὶ ἐ[ύε]πίης φ[ί]λ[ο]ν ἄνθο[ς],  
[ύμνε]ῦσαι νέον υἷα πολυσκῆπτρου παλλατίου  
[καὶ πολυ]κυδήεντα φιλόχριστον βασιλῆα·  
[οἶον δῶρο]ν ἐπήρατον ὃν Θεὸς ὤπασε κόσμῳ!  
10 [ἦλυθεν] οὐ κατὰ κόσμον ἀληθέα πάντα νομεύει(ν).  
[κλεινότη]ατον δ' ἀτίταλλε θ[εοφ]ραδέεσσιν βουλαῖς  
[σώφρον]ος εὐσεβίης Θεοδοσίου πάνσοφον ἄσθμα,  
[ἐκ γέν]νης μεθέποντα Θεοῦ δέος ἠδέ γε θεσμούς,  
[θείω]ν χριστοφόρων ὃς ἀλουργίδα οἶδε φορῆναι.  
15 [σπεύδεο] νῦν, στρατάρχε, σέθεν καλέειν ναετῆρας.  
[...].ος ἔπλεο μοῦνος, ἀγακλυτὰ δῶρα κομίσης.  
[πάντ]η κοιρανίης σκοπιάζετε πυθμένα ῥίζης  
[σώφ]ρονα, κυδαλίμης σοφίης ἐγκύμονα θεσμῶν,  
[τοῖς]προτεροῖς βασιλεῦσιν αἰοίδιμον ἐς θρόνον υἷα.

verso →

- 20 [P χαίρε]τέ μοι, βασιλῆες, ἐπὶ χρόνον ἄσπετον εὐκ[λ]εις.  
[κοιρα]νίης ἀπάνευθε τεῆς φθόνος αἰὲν ἀλάσθω,

- [.....] κοιρανίης φθόνος ἔρπελος αἰὲν ἀλάσθω.  
[.....]... ὑμετέρησιν ὑπέσσεται δέσμια χερσίν.  
[ἦλθον] πεφρικότα τραγικώτερα δάκρυα λείβειν·  
25 [πίστ]ιν ἀερτάζεισ θεοδέγμονα κυδιανείρην.  
[μῆ τ]ρομέεις, σκηπτοῦχε, τὸ σὸν κλέος οὔποτ' ὀλεῖται·  
[σὺ] στέφος ὑψικάρηνον πάμφυλον ἔσσι κιβώτιν,  
[ἀκτ]ῖνες ἀστράπτουσι τῆς περικαλλέος ὀμφῆς.  
[.] στέφος ὑψικάρη[νον .].ν.. λαυράτα ... κατ..αφ..[  
30 [.....]..σ ἰμείρων φιλοπάρθενος ε[  
[οὐδαμὸς] δὲ ἀναξ πανομο[ί]ος ἔπλετο σείο.  
[οὐραν]όθεν Θεὸς ὑμῖν πόρεν διαδήματα φωτός.  
[.....].....λεν.....αφθιται..ατα.ε[  
[.....]...[.....]. ἄν[αξ χθον]ός ἠδ[ἐ .].λλ.[  
35 [.....]τα ταῦτα [.....]ρο...[

1 εσθλοσυναῶ[ν] 2 ἴκανεν 7 νεον : ο post corr. υἷα παλλατιῶν 10 νομευῖ  
11 δ' Pap θεωρητοι[σιν] in mg. dextra 13 γε : post corr., και ante corr., lege τε  
14 χριστοφορων : post corr. 18 κῦδαλιμης εγκῦμονα 19 υἷα 21 versus inter lineas  
ερπελος ειη in mg. dextra, alt. ε post corr. 23 ὑμετρησιν Pap, iota adscriptum  
χερσίν 25-30 litterae in mg. dextra erasae aut abolitae 25 δεοδεγμονα ante corr.  
26 versus inter lineas 29 ὑψικαρη[νον]