



TYCHE

Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte Papyrologie und Epigraphik

Herausgegeben von

Gerhard Dobesch, Hermann Harrauer
Peter Siewert und Ekkehard Weber

Band 6, 1991

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Tafel 1–16

LESLIE S. B. MACCOULL

“The Holy Trinity” at Aphrodito

In her systematic treatment of Coptic letter formulae, *Untersuchungen zum koptischen Briefformular* (Würzburg 1983), A. Biedenkopf-Ziehner collects several closing formulae mentioning the Holy Trinity (106–107, 252–253). Her Types (c) through (h) include: (c) ΟΥΧΑΙ ΖΗΠΧΟΕΙΣ Η ΑΓΙΑ ΤΡΙΑΣ, “Farewell in the Lord” [by far the most common Coptic closing phrase], “The Holy Trinity” [in Greek]; (d) ΟΥΧΑΙ ΖΗΝΤΕΤΡΙΑΣ ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ, “Farewell in the Holy [Coptic] Trinity”; (e) ΟΥΧΑΙ ΖΗΘΑΓΙΑ ΤΡΙΑΣ, “Farewell in the Holy Trinity” [the last two words in Greek]; (f) ΟΥΧΑΙ ΖΗΝΤΒΟΜ ΝΤΕΤΡΙΑΣ ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ, „Farewell in the power of the Holy [Coptic] Trinity; (g) ΟΥΧΑΙ ΖΗΝΤΒΟΗΘΙΑ ΝΤΕΤΡΙΑΣ ΕΤΟΥ-ΑΑΒ, “Farewell in the help of the Holy [Coptic] Trinity”; and (h) ΟΥΧΑΙ ΖΗΠΡΑΝ ΝΤΕΤΡΙΑΣ ΕΤΟΥΑΑΒ, “Farewell in the name of the Holy [Coptic] Trinity”. For Type (g), attested only once¹, there is a sixth-century Antinoopolite provenance: the papyrus was excavated by Johnson at Antinoopolis. For the other five types, no use in the Aphrodito area can be found in Biedenkopf’s lists, owing of course to the lack of Coptic material known hitherto from this area. And for Type (c), the most common of the six, only a seventh-eighth-century use in the Theban area is documented in the 1983 study. However, with increasing knowledge of the archives of Dioscorus of Aphrodito and his family in both Greek and Coptic², further attestations can be gathered to demonstrate the use of Η ΑΓΙΑ ΤΡΙΑΣ as a documentary formula in sixth-century Aphrodito (and including Antinoopolis and the Antaeopolite nome).

Preserved in a transcription among the Crum Papers in the Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, is a Coptic letter written to Dioscorus and another addressee whose name is lost, by a writer concerned with a legal case involving the wife of Psaaneche and a field worked by Onophris son of Thomas³. The document probably dates to the 550s. The closing formula is Biedenkopf’s Type (c), ΟΥΧΑΙ ΖΗΠΧΟΕΙΣ Η ΑΓΙΑ ΤΡΙΑΣ.

¹ J. W. B. Barns, *Two Coptic Letters*, JEA 45 (1959) 81–82.

² For the latter, L. S. B. MacCoull, *The Coptic Archive of Dioscorus of Aphrodito*, CdE 56 (1981) 185–193; eadem, *Dioscorus of Aphrodito*, Berkeley 1988, 36–47; eadem, *Missing Pieces of the Dioscorus Archive*, CdE 65 (1990) 107–110; eadem, *More Missing Pieces of the Dioscorus Archive*, Actes IV^e Congrès des études coptes, Louvain-la-Neuve 1991, 104–112; eadem, *A Coptic Monastic Letter to Dioscorus of Aphrodito*, Enchoria [forthcoming]. For the former, see below, and J. Keenan, *On Languages and Literacy in Byzantine Aphrodito*, Proceedings XVIII Int. Congress of Papyrology, Athens 1988, II 161–167.

³ Numbered (e) in Crum’s file of Jkow (Aphrodito) transcriptions, fortunately made on the basis of earlier copies by Lacau before the Aphrodito Coptic material was largely lost; the whereabouts of the originals remains (except for one: see MacCoull 1991, above n. 2) unknown. I am grateful to the Griffith Institute for the opportunity to work with the Crum Papers, still a priceless resource for all Coptic specialists.

Numbered Inv. 4058 in the Tanta Museum, Egypt, is a Coptic letter⁴ addressed to Dioscorus (as “your sonship”, **ΤΕΚΜΝΤΩΗΡΕ**) by an ecclesiastic (**ΕΛΛΗΧΙΣΤΟΣ**) apparently named Anoup or Anouphios. The closing formula is likewise Type (c), **ΟΥΧΑΙ ΖΗΠΧΟΕΙΣ . . . Η ΑΓΙ[Α ΤΡΙΑΣ**. (The rough breathing is written over the eta). This Anoup/phios may be identified either with Anouphis the priest, signer of P.Cair. Masp. III 67283 II 4 (first half of A. D. 547), or with Anoup son of Apollo and Mesiane, who became a monk of Dioscorus’ father’s monastery (the “Apa Apollos” monastery of the Holy Christ-Bearing Apostles of Pharou) in A. D. 569/570 (P.Cair. Masp. II 67176r, III 67353r⁵).

Also pertaining to the affairs of the latter Anoup and his half-brother Julius son of Sarapammon and Mesiane is a Coptic document written by Dioscorus and dated Hathyr, new moon, third indiction, fourth year of the reign and consulship of Justin II, = 4. XI. 569⁶. To the docket addressing the document to the superior (**ΝΟΒ ΝΡΩΜΕ**) of his father’s monastery of Pharou, Dioscorus adds (line 29 of the section P.Alex. inv. 689) the phrase **Η ΑΓΙΑ ΤΡΙΑΣ**, and, in Greek, “May I be protected from above by your prayers.”

Dating from Dioscorus’ time in Antinoopolis (566–573) is Crum’s transcription numbered (c) in the Griffith Institute⁷, a Coptic letter written by Dioscorus to Apa Victor the *ἔκδικος* (*defensor civitatis*) of Tkoou (Antaeopolis), dealing with finances and, apparently, illness. Once again the closing formula is Type (c), **ΟΥΧΑΙ ΖΗΠΧΟΕΙΣ Η ΑΓΙΑ ΤΡΙΑΣ**.

Not datable from internal evidence is Cairo (Egyptian Museum) Coptic papyrus S. R. 3733 (8), a letter apparently addressed to Dioscorus (“your lordship the *προστάτης*”) dealing with a property dispute⁸. Although the right-hand side of the papyrus is broken off, the closing formula can be read as a variant on Type (c), or rather a conflated variant of Types (c) and (d): **ΟΥΧΑΙ ΖΗΠΧΟΕΙΣ ΕΡΕ ΤΕΤΡΙΑΣ ΕΤΟΥ[ΑΑΒ...**, “Farewell in the Lord; may the Holy [Coptic] Trinity [Greek]...” (sc. “bless you” or the like).

Recently published Greek documentary evidence from Aphrodito shows that “The Holy Trinity” was not exclusively an epistolary formula, but was also used to conclude fiscal documents⁹. Two tax receipts and a rent receipt dating from the 530s–540s, P.Lond. inv. 2841, 2838, and 2842, all conclude with the phrase *ἡ ἁγία τριάς* after the last signature in each section¹⁰. The editors (105–106 in note on no. 1 line 3) adduce as a visual parallel

⁴ Being published in Enchoria by the present writer (above n. 2).

⁵ MacCoull, *Dioscorus* (above n. 2) 36–45. Cf. also P.Cairo Masp. III 67342, mentioning “the affair of Abba Anoup”.

⁶ L. S. B. MacCoull, *A Coptic Cession of Land by Dioscorus of Aphrodito*, Acts II Intern. Congress of Coptic Studies, Rome 1985, 159–164; eadem, *Dioscorus* (above n. 2) 37–39.

⁷ As above, n.3.

⁸ MacCoull, *Missing Pieces* (above n. 2) 109.

⁹ R. Pintaudi, P. J. Sijpesteijn, *Papiri tardo-bizantini conservati alla British Library*, ZPE 78 (1989) 103–108, nos. 1–3.

¹⁰ As do also both SB XVI 12510. 5 (corrections by Pintaudi, Sijpesteijn [above n. 9] 105, from the ed. pr. by C. Wehrli in Proc. XVI Intern. Congr. Papyrology, Chico 1981, 487–490), a posthumous tax receipt by Apollos (through his heirs, i. e. presumably Dioscorus and siblings) dating to 551, and P.Cair. Masp. III 67325 VIII v 13, a tax receipt by Apollos dating to either 529 or 544 and recopied for his records by Dioscorus ca. 585.

to this expression the notarial practice of writing three crosses or *chrisma* to conclude a section of a document, further maintaining that this is not the same as the use of three *τίμιοι σταυροί* as the “mark” of an illiterate signer (examples listed p. 106, as in P.Lips. 90, 9).

Can we also think about Trinitarian piety at Aphrodito? So far no churches or monasteries dedicated to the Holy Trinity are attested for the area; Trinitarian invocations in documents, introduced under Phocas, are found all over Egypt¹¹. Though Dioscorus emphasized the Trinity in his poetry¹², the documentary formula is used by many writers besides the lawyer-poet. The most that can be said is that the formula is first found in the area of sixth-century Aphrodito and then spread to, or was independently evolved in, the Theban region in the next two centuries.

As a postscript, one might mention the Coptic letter (now destroyed) formerly in the collection of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, inv. 20, published in 1912¹³ which closes (line 11) with an abbreviated conflation of Types (c) and (e), viz. *ΟΥΧΑΙ Η ΑΓΙΑ ΤΡΙΑΣ*. (The *ΟΥΧΑΙ* might, however, also be construed with the preceding phrase *ΩΙΝΕ Ν̄CΑ ΤΕΤΝ ΟΥΧΑΙ*, “(I) ask after your health.”) This leads to uncertainty about the letter’s place of origin and date: either the eighth-century Theban area or sixth-century Aphrodito might be possible, in the absence of determining internal evidence either way (or a plate, to compare the palaeography)¹⁴.

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¹¹ Indices in P.Mich. XIII, P.Vat. Aphrod.; R. S. Bagnall, K. A. Worp, *Christian Invocations in the Papyri*, CdE 56 (1981) 119, 130.

¹² L. S. B. MacCoull, *A Trinitarian Formula in Dioscorus of Aphrodito*, BSAC 24 (1982) 103–110.

¹³ N. J. Reich, *Koptische Manuskripte*, WZKM 26 (1912) 338–343. I am grateful to Dr E. Arnold of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek for informing me by letter (10. 12. 1990) of the fate of the papyrus in World War II.

¹⁴ I should also like to thank J. Timbie, T. Wilfong, and, as always, Mirrit Boutros Ghali (PS 45:2).