

MIRACULOUS HEALING ΘΑΥΜΑΤΟΥΡΓΙΚΗ ΘΕΡΑΠΕΙΑ

Saint hieromartyr Therapon Bishop of ancient Kition, Cyprus, Healer of kidney pains

Hieromartyr Therapon Bishop of ancient Kition, Cyprus (3–4th century AD), born in the East, lived an ascetic life. Later he moved to the island of Cyprus, where he served as a Bishop. He died a martyr death, probably during the persecution under Diocletian (284–305 AD). The saint's relics, initially kept in Cyprus, were transferred to Constantinople to be protected during the second Arab invasion (653 AD). They were placed in a temple in honour of the Icon of Maria "Eleousa" ["the Merciful"]. In 806 AD, the saint's relics were transferred again, this time to a temple built in his honour. During the relics' transfer, myrrh flowed and miracles were reported. Since then, it has been popular belief that the seriously ill are healed through Saint Therapon's prayers. He is considered the protector of children suffering from fever and the healer of kidney pains. Miraculous healing of kidney pains is reported in a monument in Larnaka, believed to be the saint's grave. Healing of kidney pain is accomplished by rubbing the patient's waist on the monument of the saint. Therapon's role as a healer Saint in the Eastern Orthodox Church is explained by his miracles but also simply by his name – Therapon in Greek means server and healer. He is considered a healer of kidney pains, mainly on the island of Cyprus. Another recognised patron saint of kidney sufferers is the Saint virgin and martyr Marina of Antiochia in Pisidia (255–270 AD).

1. INTRODUCTION

Saint Hieromartyr Therapon, Bishop of ancient Kition in Cyprus, is a Saint of the Eastern Orthodox Church. He lived before the 7th century, most probably between the 3rd and 4th century AD and died a martyr death. Apart from Cyprus, Saint Hieromartyr Therapon is worshipped in many other Eastern Orthodox Church communities. However, there is no detailed description of his life.

The main source of information about the Saint's life and miracles is a single text, entitled –freely translated– as "Encomium of the miracles of Saint Hieromartyr Therapon". It has the form of a laudatio and was meant to honour the Saint. It was probably presented to a congregation and various versions are found in certain codices,^{1,2} namely,

the codex Laurentianus plut. 9,14 (11th century), the Codex Messanensis 29 (12th century), the Codex Monacensis Graece gr. 366 (State Library of Bayern, 10–11th century) and the codex of Patmos 257 (11th–12th century).³ Some researchers ascribe this encomium to Saint Andreas of Crete the Jerusalemite (660–740 AD), while others dispute this assumption on an argued historiographical basis.² All these manuscripts include only a short description and encomium of the saint's life, followed by a more detailed encomiastic description of all the miracles linked to him.^{1,2}

Many in the Eastern Orthodox Church believe that the seriously ill are healed through Saint Therapon's prayers. He is also considered the protector saint of children suffering from fever and a healer of kidney pains. Miraculous healing of kidney pains is reported in a monument in Larnaka,

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Περίληψη στο τέλος του άρθρου

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believed to be the saint's grave. This belief that he is a healer of kidney pains was the main reason for the present work.

1.1. The Saint's life

The Saint's encomium, from the codex Laurentianus plut. 9,14 (11th century), was printed for the first time in the *Acta sanctorum Maii* (1688, pp 682–692).⁴ The biographical information is very scarce and is added as an introduction (AASS Maii, page 281) to the main text (AASS Maii, pages 282–292), which concerns the miracles. This text passage (page 281) clearly states that the sources about the Saint's biography were probably worn out and therefore missing, due to the long time that had passed since his death.⁴ This fact is also attested in the book by L. Deubner (1900) entitled "De incubatione capita quattuor. Accedit Laudatio in miracula Sancti Hieromartyris Therapontis e codice Messanensi denuo edita", which cited the codex Laurentianus and a version of the Codex Messanensis 29 (12th century) as well.¹

According to these sources, the Saint lived before the 7th century, most probably between the 3rd and 4th century AD. He was born in the East (Syria or Mesopotamia), where he lived in a monastery. He became famous in the East for his ascetic life. He later moved to the island of Cyprus, where he served as a Bishop of Kition. He finally died a martyr's death,⁴ most probably at the time of the persecution under Diocletian (284–305 AD). The fact that his martyr's death took place in a paganistic environment is supported by many reports about this, found in the ecclesiastical hymnography devoted to Saint Therapon.⁵ The Saint's fight against idolatry is explicitly reported in the hymns of Joseph the hymnographer.⁵

1.2. Miracles, miraculous healing

After his death, the Saint was buried near Larnaca (ancient Kition). He was worshipped in Larnaca and his relics were kept there, in his church until the second Arab invasion in Cyprus. Many miracles are reported at the location of his grave. It was believed that the seriously ill were healed through the prayers of Saint Therapon.⁶ Today only remnants of this Byzantine Church are preserved near Larnaca (fig. 1).⁶ In order to be protected from the second Arab invasion (653 AD), his relics were transferred to Constantinople. The Saint was said to have appeared in a dream of the guardian of his grave, advising him to ship his relics away, to protect them from the imminent Arab invasion.

As the ship sailed to Constantinople, myrrh began to



Figure 1. The remnants of a Byzantine underground small Church, which are saved near Larnaca.

flow from the relics, and those on-board were miraculously saved during a storm by praying to Saint Therapon. In Constantinople, the relics were placed in a church built in honour of the Icon the Mother of God of "Maria Eleousa" ["Maria the Merciful"]. In 806 AD, the saint's relics were transferred again, this time to a temple built in honour of Saint Hieromartyr Therapon. Myrrh flowed from the relics and miracles were reported.

Many miracles of Saint Therapon are described in the encomium, a compendium of miracles. This is possibly the work of Saint Andrew of Crete (660–740 AD), although this is disputed by many researchers.^{1,6} Collections of miraculous healing in Byzantine bibliography bear obvious resemblance to collections of clinical cases in the medical works of antiquity, for example those of Hippocrates.⁷

In all, 15 miracles are described in 28 narrative sections. Most of these took place in the church of "Maria Eleousa"; one of these sections concerns the miraculous healing of kidney disease.^{1,6} Miraculous healing of kidney pains was re-

ported in a monument in Larnaka, believed to be the saint's initial grave. Healing of kidney pain was accomplished by rubbing the patient's waist on the monument of the saint.⁶

Today, Saint Hieromartyr Therapon is worshipped in many communities of the Eastern Orthodox Church, such as Athens, Thessaloniki, Lesvos, Crete and Cyprus. In Cyprus, there are two churches in the Saint's honour, one in Larnaca and an older one in Anglisides, a village near Larnaca. The oldest icon of the Saint in Cyprus (fig. 2) is found in the church in Anglisides, built by the village inhabitants in 1733.⁶

2. CONCLUSIONS

In Greek hagiography and patrology, many Saints are named patrons of various body organs, organ ailments and diseases. The central role of Hieromartyr Therapon in the Eastern Orthodox Church, as a healer Saint, is explained by his miracles but also simply by his name – Therapon in Greek means server and healer. He is considered a healer of kidney pains, mainly on the island of Cyprus. Another recognised patron saint of kidney sufferers is the Saint virgin and martyr Marina of Antiochia in Pisidia (255–270 AD).⁷



Figure 2. The miraculous 18th century icon of Saint Therapon kept in the homonymous Church (built in 1733) in the village Anglisides near Larnaca in Cyprus.

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Ο Ιερομάρτυς Θεράπων, Επίσκοπος Κιτίου της Κύπρου (3–4ος αιώνας μ.Χ.) γεννήθηκε στην Ανατολή και έζησε ασκητική ζωή. Αργότερα μετέβη στο νησί της Κύπρου, όπου υπηρέτησε ως επίσκοπος. Πέθανε μαρτυρικά, πιθανώς κατά τη δίωξη του Διοκλητιανού (284–305 μ.Χ.). Τα λείψανα του αγίου, που φυλάσσονταν αρχικά στην Κύπρο, μεταφέρθηκαν στην Κωνσταντινούπολη για να προστατευτούν κατά τη δεύτερη αραβική εισβολή (653 μ.Χ.). Τοποθετήθηκαν σε ναό ο οποίος είχε χτιστεί προς τιμήν της εικόνας της Παναγίας της «Ελεούσας». Το 806 μ.Χ., τα λείψανα του αγίου μεταφέρθηκαν ξανά, αυτή τη φορά σε ναό που χτίστηκε προς τιμήν του. Κατά τη μεταφορά των λειψάνων, έρεε μύρο και έγιναν αναφορές για θαύματα. Έκτοτε, επικράτησε η πεποίθηση ότι οι σοβαρά άρρωστοι θεραπεύονται μέσω των προσευχών του Αγίου Θεράποντα. Θεωρείται προστάτης των παιδιών που πάσχουν από πυρετό και ότι θεραπεύει τους πόνους στους νεφρούς. Σε ένα μνημείο στη Λάρνακα, που πιστεύεται ότι βρίσκεται ο τάφος του αγίου, γίνεται αναφορά για θεραπεία των πόνων στους νεφρούς. Η θεραπεία του πόνου των νεφρών επιτυγχάνεται τρίβοντας τη μέση του ασθενούς στο μνημείο του αγίου. Ο ρόλος του Θεράποντα ως θεραπευτή Άγιου στην Ανατολική Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία εξηγείται από τα θαύματα του, αλλά και απλώς από το όνομά του - Θεράπων σημαίνει υπηρέτης και θεραπευτής. Θεωρείται θεραπευτής των πόνων των νεφρών, κυρίως στην Κύπρο. Ένας άλλος γνωστός προστάτης των νεφρών είναι η Αγία παρθενομάρτυς Μαρίνα της Αντιόχειας Πισιδίας (255–270 μ.Χ.).

Λέξεις ευρητηρίου: Άγιος Θεράπων, Επίσκοπος Κιτίου, Θεράπων, Ιερομάρτυς, Νεφρός

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