

DEMONASSA – THE TRUE STORY OF AN ILL-FATED QUEEN OF CYPRUS

By

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the probable roots and origins of the legend about Demonassa, the unknown queen of Cyprus. The story is told solely in the discourse *Peri Tyches* by Favorinus of Arelete and seems to be a rhetorical *exemplum* invented by the author. The detailed analysis of the individual parts of the story presents its complexity and eclectic character.

The recent decades brought without any doubt a great revival of interest in ancient rhetoric, as it is attested by a larger number of publications, conferences and projects concerning different aspects of the Greek and Roman art of oral expression. Among others also the so-called rhetorical topics or *exempla* deserve some attention from scholars as they tell much about both composition of the orations and the sublime ways of persuasion.

A rhetorical *exemplum* which deserves detailed investigation is the story of Demonassa. As the queen of Cyprus of this name is mentioned only once in extant ancient literature and there is no counterpart of the heroine in history, the legend has not provoked much modern scholarly interest. The purpose of this paper is to present the probable roots for this story. The analysis of the individual parts of it may shed some light on both the historicity of Demonassa and the origins of the legend.

The story about the Cypriot queen Demonassa was told solely in the discourse *Peri Tyches*, one of the two *Orationes* of Dio Chrysostomos, recently assigned to Favorinus of Arelate¹.

ἔρῶ δὲ ὑμῖν τινα καὶ Κύπριον λόγον, εἰ βούλεσθε. ἤνεγκεν ὁ παλαιὸς βίος καὶ

¹ Dio Chrys. 64, 2–4 = Favor. *De fort.* 2–4. For a recent Budé edition, see E. AMATO (edition and commentary), Y. JULIEN (translation into French), *Favorinos d'Arles, Œuvres*, vol. I: *Introduction générale – Témoignages – Discours aux Corinthiens – Sur la Fortune*, Paris 2005. For the issue of attribution, see the stylistic analysis in M. GOGGIN, *Rhythm in the Prose of Favorinus*, YCS XII 1951, pp. 151 and 191 f.; and the edition of A. BARIGAZZI, *Favorino di Arelate, Opere*, Firenze 1966, p. 245, with further bibliography.