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Theon of Alexandria (651)

T 1

**Suda, s.v. Θεών ὁ ἐκ τοῦ Μουσείου
(Theon from the Museum)**

Translation

Subject: **philosophy**; genre:
mathematics; genre: **astronomy**

Source Date: **10th century AD**Historian's Date: **4th century AD**Historical Period: **4th century AD**

Αἰγύπτιος· φιλόσοφος· σύγχρονος δὲ
Πάππῳ τῷ φιλοσόφῳ, καὶ αὐτῷ
Ἀλεξανδρεῖ· ἐτύγχανον δὲ ἀμφοτέρῳ ἐπὶ
Θεοδοσίου βασιλέως τοῦ πρεσβυτέρου.
ἔγραψε μαθηματικά· ... Περὶ τῆς τοῦ
Κυνὸς ἐπιτολῆς· Περὶ τῆς τοῦ Νείλου
ἀναβάσεως ...

Egyptian, philosopher, contemporary of
the philosopher **Pappos**, also from
Alexandria. The two of them met in the
reign of the emperor **Theodosius the
Elder** (379/95). He wrote mathematical
works ... *On the rising of the
(constellation of the) Dog*; *On the
flooding of the Nile* ...

Commentary

Theon is best known for his commentaries on the mathematical works of **Euclid** and **Ptolemy** (see Bibliographical Essay). As a historian, he is mainly represented by the **GreekFasti**, which have been preserved in one manuscript of his edition of **Ptolemy's Handy Tables**. The only edition of the **Fasti** is H. Usener, 'Fasti Theonis Alexandrini', Th. Mommsen (ed.), *Chronica Minora saeculorum IV.V.VI.VII (Monumenta Germaniae Historica: auctores antiquissimi XIII.3)* (Berlin 1898), 359-81. This list of **Roman** consuls is not mentioned in the **Suda** entry. Of his other historical writings, we only know the title of a work *On the Flooding of the Nile*, which gives no basis to assess its historical character.

T 2

**Malalas, Chronographia 13.36
(265.38 Thurn)**

Translation

Subject: **philosophy**; genre:
astronomy

Source Date: **6th century AD**Historian's Date: **4th century AD**Historical Period: **4th century AD**

ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ Θεῶν ὁ
σοφώτατος φιλόσοφος ἐδίδασκε καὶ
ἐρμήνευεν τὰ ἀστρονομικά καὶ τὰ Ἑρμοῦ
τοῦ Τρισημίτου συγγράμματα καὶ τὰ
Ὀρφέως.

During his reign (**Gratian's**, 364-78),
Theon, the most learned philosopher,
taught and interpreted astronomical
writings and the works of **Hermes**
Trismegistus and **Orpheus**.

Commentary

The text is that of J. Thurn (ed.), *Malalas: Chronographia (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae. 35. Ser. Berolinensis)* (Berlin 2000). See further on **Theon**, commentary on T1 and especially the Biographical Essay.

Biographical Essay

Very little is known about the life of **Theon**. He was a philosopher who lived during the fourth century AD in **Alexandria**, where he taught mathematics and astronomy. He was the father of the neoplatonic philosopher **Hypatia** (c. 370-415), who was also famous for her contribution to mathematics and astrology.

There is some internal evidence to date **Theon's** work: he observed two eclipses in **Alexandria** during 364 (**Commentary on Almagest** 6, p. 332 and 319, ed. Basel 1538), and his *Fasti* stop with the consuls for the year 372. External evidence is consistent with this dating: he lived under **Gratian** (364-378) according to **John Malalas**, and under **Theodosius I** (379-395) according to the *Suda* (T1). The *Suda* also states that **Theon** was member of the Museum, which is probable if this institution still existed at this time. If it did, then he will have been one of its last members.

Bibliography

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