

= Tithonus poem =

The Tithonus poem , also known as the old age poem or ( with fragments of another poem by Sappho discovered at the same time ) the New Sappho , is a poem by the archaic Greek poet Sappho . It is part of fragment 58 in Eva @-@ Maria Voigt 's edition of Sappho . The poem is from Book IV of the Alexandrian edition of Sappho 's poetry . It has been partially known since 1922 , but in 2004 more papyrus fragments were published , drawing international media attention , which almost completed the poem . The poem is one of very few substantially complete poems by Sappho , and deals with the effects of ageing . There is scholarly debate about where the poem ends , as four lines previously thought to have been part of the poem are not found on the 2004 papyrus .

= = Preservation = =

= = = Oxyrhynchus papyrus = = =

Part of the Tithonus poem was originally published in 1922 on a fragment of papyrus from Oxyrhynchus . This fragment preserved part of 27 lines of Sappho 's poetry , including the Tithonus poem . The papyrus appears to be part of a copy of Book IV of the Alexandrian edition of Sappho 's poetry , as all of the poems appear to be in the same metre . From the handwriting , the papyrus can be dated to the second century AD . Today the papyrus is part of the collection of the Sackler Library in Oxford University .

= = = Cologne papyrus = = =

In 2004 , Martin Gronewald and Robert Daniel published three fragments of papyrus from the Cologne Papyrus Collection , which taken with the existing fragment from Oxyrhynchus provided the almost complete text to five stanzas of the poem . The Cologne papyrus , preserved on cartonnage , is from the early third century BC , making it the oldest known papyrus containing a poem by Sappho .

The papyrus is part of an anthology of poetry , with poems on similar themes grouped together . Along with the Tithonus poem , two others are preserved on the papyrus published by Gronewald and Daniel : one in the same metre , one written in a different hand and in a different metre . The metre of this last poem has characteristics which do not appear in any known metre used by the Lesbian poets . It also contains word forms which appear not to be in the Aeolic dialect used by Sappho , and refers to the myth of Orpheus in a form not known to have existed in Sappho 's time . For these reasons , the poem cannot be by Sappho .

= = Poem = =

The Tithonus poem is twelve lines long , and is in a metre called " acephalous Hipponactean with internal double @-@ choriambic expansion " . It is the fourth poem by Sappho to be sufficiently complete to treat as an entire work , along with the Ode to Aphrodite , fragment 16 , and fragment 31 : a fifth , the Brothers Poem , was discovered in 2014 .

The poem is written as an exhortation to a group of young women , putting forward the singer as an example to emulate . It discusses the singer 's old age , and tells the audience that while they too will grow old and lose their beauty , their musical abilities will be retained . It is one of a number of Sappho 's poems which discuss old age .

The poem 's common name comes from the Greek myth of Tithonus , which is mentioned in lines 9 to 12 of the poem . The story of Tithonus was popular in archaic Greek poetry , though the reference to him in this poem seems out of place , according to Rawles . Martin Litchfield West considers that these lines seem like a weak ending to the poem , though Tithonus functions as a parallel to Sappho in her old age .

= = = Metre = = =

The metre of the Tithonus poem was already known , before the discovery of the Cologne papyrus , from four quotations of Sappho . Two of these are preserved in the Enchiridion of Hephaestion ; he describes the metre as aiolikon and says that Sappho used it frequently . The metre is of the form " x - ? ? - - ? ? - - ? ? - ? - - " , which is part of the larger class of aeolic metres . The poems in this metre by Sappho are conventionally thought to have been from the fourth book of the Alexandrian edition , though no direct evidence either confirms or denies this .

= = = Continuation after line 12 = = =

Before the Cologne papyri were published in 2004 , lines 11 to 26 of Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1787 were considered to be a single poem , fragment 58 in the Lobel @-@ Page ( and subsequently Voigt ) numbering systems . The poem on the Cologne papyrus , however , only contains 12 lines . These begin with line 11 of P.Oxy 1787 , confirming the long @-@ standing suggestion that the poem began there . The Cologne version of the poem is thus missing what were long believed to be the final four lines of the poem .

Scholars disagree about how this should be interpreted . André Lardinois lists possible explanations which have been put forward : firstly that the Cologne papyrus did not contain the full poem , but only the first twelve lines ; secondly that the poem does end after line twelve and the final lines on the Oxyrhynchus papyrus were part of another poem ; and thirdly that there were two different endings for the poem , one at line twelve and one continuing on to line sixteen .

West argues that the four lines missing from the Cologne papyrus were part of a separate poem , though Lardinois comments that there is no evidence in the Oxyrhynchus papyrus to confirm or deny this . However , other scholars , including Gronewald and Daniel , who originally published the Cologne fragments , believe that the poem did continue for these four lines . Lardinois suggests that there may have been two versions of the poem current in antiquity , one ending after the twelfth line , the other continuing to line 16 . Gregory Nagy agrees , arguing that the two versions were appropriate for different performance contexts .

If the four contested lines were part of the Tithonus poem , the poem 's tone would have changed significantly . The sixteen @-@ line version of the poem has a much more optimistic ending than the twelve @-@ line version , expressing hope for an afterlife .

= = Reception = =

The publication of the Cologne papyri in 2004 , making the Tithonus poem almost complete , drew international attention from both scholars and the popular press . The discovery was covered in newspapers in the US and the UK , as well as online . The Daily Telegraph described the discovery as " the rarest of gifts " , while Marilyn Skinner said that the discovery was the find of a lifetime for classicists .

Since the discovery , there has been a significant amount of scholarship on the poem . At the 138th annual meeting of the American Philological Association , two separate panels discussed the poems , and papers based on these panels were later published as *The New Sappho on Old Age* , edited by Marilyn Skinner and Ellen Greene . At least two other collections of essays on the Cologne papyri have been published .