STUDIES IN ANCIENT ART AND CIVILIZATION, VOL. 29 (2025)
pp. 119-136, https://doi.org/10.12797/SAAC.29.2025.29.06

Jordan Iliev
Sofia, Bulgaria

Andrii Zelinskyi
Kyiv, Ukraine

EPIMENES OF SEUTHOPOLIS AS A POSSIBLE PHYSICIAN IN THE ODRYSIAN ROYAL COURT[1]

Abstract: This article examines what is known about Epimenes, the most enigmatic person in the so-called "Great Inscription" of Seuthopolis (IGBulg., III/2: no. 1731). It is pointed out that he is not known from other sources and everything about him is derived entirely from the text of this inscription. A number of hypotheses regarding Epimenes' personality have been proposed over the decades since the inscription's discovery, as most of them consider him a person with military and political power or a temple servant. Based on a new analysis of the available information, this article proposes an interpretation of Epimenes as a possible physician in the Odrysian royal court. This hypothesis fits well with the content of the inscription and at the same time is in full accordance with the realities of the early Hellenistic period.

Keywords: Hellenistic Age, Thrace, Seuthopolis, epigraphy, Odrysians, prosopography, physicians

[1] Sections 1-4 are written by J. Iliev | Sections 5-7 are written by A. Zelinskyi

Introduction

The rare appearance of epigraphic monuments from the Hellenistic Age in the Thracian lands often raises more questions than it answers. One such example is the *Great Inscription* of Seuthopolis (IGBulg., III/2: no. 1731; SEG, 42: no. 661; IGBulg., V: no. 5614).[2] Discovered in October 1953 during rescue excavations of a previously unknown city, the inscription provided the site with its now-familiar name (Pl. 1: 1).[3] It was found within a building that formed part of the palace complex, adjacent to the throne room (Pl. 1: 2). Archaeologists have interpreted this space as a temple dedicated to the Great Samothracian gods.[4]

Although no other written documents were found in the same building, three additional stone inscriptions and numerous graffiti on ceramic fragments were uncovered elsewhere in Seuthopolis. These discoveries indicate that the Greek language was widely used among the city's inhabitants (Nankov 2012, 109-126).

Beyond clarifying the city's name and revealing unique information, the *Great Inscription* also raises numerous questions. This is clear from its text, which reads as follows (Pl. 2):

> ἀγαθῆι τύχηι· ὅρκος Ἐπιμένει | Βερενίκης καὶ τῶν υἱῶν· ἐπειδὴ | Σεύθης ὑγιαίνων παρέδωκεν | Ἐπιμένην Σπαρτόκωι καὶ τὰ |5 ὑπάρχοντα αὐτοῦ καὶ Σπάρτοκος | ἐπὶ τούτοις τὰ πιστὰ ἔδωκεν | αὐτῶι, δεδόχθαι Βερενίκῃ καὶ τοῖς | υἱοῖς αὐτῆς Εβρυζελμει καὶ Τηρει |

---

[2] The epigraphic monument lacks an exact date. Georgi Mihailov attributed it to the very end of the 4th century BC (IGBulg., III/2: no. 1731), while other editors generally associate it with Seuthes III, whose reign is believed to have lasted from around 330 to c. 290/280 BC (SEG, 42: no. 661). According to Margarita Tacheva (2006, 206), this inscription predates 281 BC. A relatively new tool for dating inscriptions using artificial intelligence, Ithaca (https://ithaca.deepmind.com/), identifies, based on the specifics of the text, the period between 299 and 270 BC as the most likely timeframe for the inscription's creation.

[3] The construction of Seuthopolis, built on the site of an older Thracian settlement around a fortified Odrysian royal residence, is dated to circa 330-323 BC (Тачева 2000, 25), after 315 BC (Nankov 2012, 120, note 61) or 310 BC (Чичикова and Димитров 2016, 36-37). Two possible dates for the destruction of Seuthopolis circulate in the historiography: around 275 BC, associated with an attack by the Celts, or around 260-255/3 BC, linked to the Thracian campaign of Antiochus II Theos (Тачева 2000, 25-27; Тачева 2006: 192-193; Чичикова and Димитров 2016, 124-125). For further information on Seuthopolis and its contemporary settlements in Thracian lands, see Popov 2015, 117, with references.

[4] The mention of the temple as one of the locations where the inscription was stored is the basis for this interpretation, as well as a cult hearth, such as was found in the sanctuary of Samothrace (Чичикова and Димитров 2016, 101).

καὶ Σατοκωι καὶ Σαδαλαι καὶ τοῖς |10 [παρ]εσομένοις δεδόσθαι Ἐπιμένην | [Σπαρ]τόκωι, αὐτὸν καὶ τὰ ὑπάρχοντα | αὐτοῦ εἰς ἅπαντα τὸν βίον {τὸμ βίον(?)}, | παρέχεσθαι δὲ καὶ Ἐπιμένην τὴν | χρείαν Σπαρτόκωι ἢ οἷς ἂν |15 Σπάρτοκος συντάσσηι, καθ' ὃ ἂν | δύνηται· ἐξαγαγέτωσαν δὲ οἱ | Βερενίκης υἱοὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ τῶν | θεῶν τῶν Σαμοθραικίων, ἐφ' ὧι | ἀδικήσουσι Ἐπιμένην κατὰ |20 μηθένα τρόπομ μηθέν, ἀλλὰ | παραδότωσαν Σπαρτόκωι αὐτὸν | καὶ τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτοῦ· μηδὲ | τῶν ὑπαρχόντων μηδὲμ περι|αιρείσθωσαν μηθὲν ἀδικοῦντι· |25 ἐὰν δέ τι φαίνηται ἀδικῶν, ὑπὲρ | τούτων ἐπιγνώμων ἔστω Σπάρτοκος· | τὸν δὲ ὅρκον τοῦτον γραφῆναι | ἐ̣ιστήλας λιθίνας καὶ ἀνατεθῆναι | [ἐ]μ μὲγ Καβύληι εἰς τὸ Φωσφόριον καὶ |30 εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν παρὰ τὸμ βωμὸν τὸν | τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος, ἐν δὲ Σευθοπόλει εἰς τὸ | ἱερὸν τῶν Θεῶν τῶν Μεγάλων καὶ | εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν ἐν τῶι τοῦ Διονύσου ἱ[ερῶι] | παρὰ τὸν βωμόν· εὐορκοῦσιν δὲ καὶ |35 ἐ̣μμένουσιν ἐν τοῖς ὅρκοις εἴη αὐτ[οῖς] | λώιογ καὶ ἄμεινον, παρὰ δὲ Βερενίκης | εἶναι αὐτῶι τοὺς ἀρχαίους ὅρκους.

With good fortune! An oath sworn by Berenice and her sons before Epimenes. Since Seuthes, being in good health, entrusted Epimenes and his possessions to Spartokos, and Spartokos gave assurances to him regarding these matters, be it decreed by Berenice and her sons – Hebryzelmis, Teres, Satokos and Sadalas – and by those bound by this oath that Epimenes shall be given over to Spartokos, along with his possessions, for the entirety of his life. Furthermore, Epimenes shall provide service to Spartokos or fulfil whatever commands Spartokos issues, to the extent that he is able. Let the sons of Berenice lead him out from the temple of the Samothracian Gods, provided that they commit no injustice against him in any way. Instead, they shall entrust him and his possessions to Spartokos. Neither of the possessions shall be taken away unjustly; but if anything seems to be unjustly done, let Spartokos serve as arbiter in such matters. Let this oath be inscribed on stone stelai and set up in Kabyle, in the Phosphorion, in the agora beside the altar of Apollon, in Seuthopolis in the temple of the Great Gods and in the agora in the temple of Dionysos, beside the altar. May matters turn out well for those who swear faithfully and abide by this oath. And let the previous oaths sworn by Berenice remain in effect for him.[5]

As the text makes clear, this document mentions eight individuals: Epimenes, Seuthes, Spartokos, Berenice and her four sons – Hebryzelmis, Teres, Satokos and Sadalas. They are listed without patronyms or titles, suggesting they were either well known to the intended audience or that an earlier inscription (cf. Тачева 2000, 31; Тачева 2006, 206) may have described their roles.

[5] For the preparation of this translation, the editions of Elvers (1994, 245), Тачева (2006, 205-206) and Graninger (2018, 180-181) were used.

Among these figures, Epimenes is the most enigmatic. Although the decree was issued solely because of him, no details about his identity have been revealed. The same is true for Seuthes and Spartokos, both of whom are known from other sources as kings. However, no such titles appear in the text, which is particularly intriguing. It follows that whatever Epimenes' occupation was, it cannot be expected to be stated in the inscription, especially given that even the kings themselves are unnamed as such.

Various aspects of this inscription and its content have been analysed in numerous publications (see Велков 1991, 7-11, no. 1; Elvers 1994, 241-266; Calder 1996, 167-178; Манов 1998, 8-15; Тачева 2000, 28-35; Тачева 2006, 202-212; Graninger 2018, 178-194). The following discussion revisits what is known about Epimenes and presents new arguments regarding his potential significance for the royal courts of Seuthopolis and Kabyle.

An enigmatic person in the royal court

Epimenes is not a Thracian name. It is relatively rare in antiquity and is most frequently documented in Macedonia and Thrace (LGPN, IV, 121). In the Hellenistic Age, it appears in only one other inscription from Thrace, found in Messambria–Nessebar (IGBulg, I^2: no. 334 quinquies), though there is no basis for assuming that both references pertain to the same individual. Thus, all available information about Epimenes comes solely from the Seuthopolis inscription.

Compared to Hellenistic cities, Seuthopolis was not of significant size – its area is estimated to be about 5 hectares. Therefore, it is believed to have served as a fortified residence for the king and his closest relatives, with no more than 40 families living there (Тачева 1987, 139-143). Based on the styluses and graffiti found throughout the dwellings at Seuthopolis, it has been suggested that the population was likely not restricted to Hellenized members of the Thracian aristocracy (Nankov 2012, 119).

Various analyses of the text quoted above from the Seuthopolis inscription have led to multiple hypotheses regarding Epimenes' role in the Thracian royal court.

Some of these interpretations rely on an in-depth understanding of the demographic and social structure of ancient Thrace. Their authors attempt to place Epimenes within Thracian society, considering him as a subordinate regional ruler (Фол 1975, 191), a high-ranking figure second only to the king (Тачева

2000, 34; Тачева 2006, 210), or a temple servant (Marazov 2008, 88-91; religious functions for Epimenes have also been suggested in earlier studies, see Рабаджиев 2002, 49-53 with references).

Other scholars have proposed alternative explanations without adhering strictly to the Thracian societal framework. This approach may be justified, as Seuthopolis was a city built in the Hellenistic style, which likely influenced the composition of the royal court as well. Unfortunately, many of these interpretations are merely asserted without supporting arguments.

Some interpretations of Epimenes' role have been abandoned over time. This includes the idea that his name represented a function (Ognenova-Marinova 1980, 47-48; Огненова-Маринова 1984, 30-34), a theory that has been categorically rejected on philological grounds. Another interpretation identified Epimenes as the commander of the Macedonian garrison in Kabyle (Манов 1998, 13; cf. SEG, 42: no. 661), but the author later dismissed this hypothesis, ultimately describing Epimenes as "a person who did not exist" in a more recent publication (Манов 2017, 152).

Hypotheses portraying Epimenes as a figure with military and political power continue to dominate historiography. Some scholars have even suggested that Spartokos obtained his royal title and the right to mint coins bearing his name only after acquiring Epimenes (Тачева 1987, 21; Драганов 1993, 16-17). According to this view, Spartokos served as Lysimachus' governor in Kabyle, while Epimenes functioned as an administrative official attached to him. However, this interpretation is problematic, as none of the individuals mentioned in the Seuthopolis inscription are designated as kings. A more convincing explanation for Spartokos' royal title and coinage is that they emerged after Lysimachus' death (Тачева 1987, 21; Велков 1991, 10; Рабаджиев 2002, 51).

Georgi Mihaylov (IGBulg., III/2: no. 1731) expressed uncertainty regarding the identity of Epimenes but proposed that he served under Lysimachus. Mihaylov indicated that Epimenes commanded troops, lived in the area between Seuthopolis/Kabyle and was an adversary of Seuthes. Over time, these ideas evolved, leading to increasingly speculative claims, such as the assertion that Epimenes established his own kingdom in the Tundja Valley and attempted to assassinate Seuthes in his palace (Elvers 1994, 258; see also Lund 1992, 31) or sought to incite a palace revolt (Calder 1996, 172). However, there is no evidence in the existing sources to support such a plot.

Velizar Велков (1991, 8) described Epimenes as "some sort of political personality, the leader of a mercenary squad (?), who gets involved in the political

relations between Seuthopolis and Kabyle". However, he provided no arguments to support this claim.

William Calder III (1996, 172) suggested that Epimenes arrived in Seuthopolis as a result of an expedition undertaken by the sons of Berenice against his own town.

Some scholars refrain from making specific claims about Epimenes' role, simply defining him as "an important person" (Elvers 1994, 256; Чичикова and Димитров 2016, 36), while others do not speculate on his presence in the royal court at all (Graninger 2018, 178-194).

Another debated aspect of Epimenes' story concerns the explanation for his residence in the temple of the Great Gods in Seuthopolis.

Most scholars identify him as a fugitive who sought asylum in the temple (Фол 1975, 191; Тачева 1987, 18; 2000, 35; 2006, 210; Велков 1991, 8; Elvers 1994, 252; Манов 1998, 13; Graninger 2018, 187). However, this interpretation does not address a crucial issue: if the temple was indeed located within the royal palace itself, adjacent to the throne room – as suggested by archaeologists (Чичикова and Димитров 2016, 47-48, 101-104) – it remains unclear how a fugitive could have reached such a location.

Another equally plausible possibility, alongside those discussed in the preceding lines, is that he was housed in the temple simply to remain in close contact with the king and his family.

What is really known about Epimenes?

Based on the Seuthopolis inscription, Margarita Tacheva (2000, 28-35; 2006, 202-212) synthesised several deductions about Epimenes. However, since her findings were published only in Bulgarian, they have remained largely unknown to researchers. The key points, with minor adjustments and additions, are as follows:

- Epimenes and his possessions were inseparable; he was meaningless without them, just as they were meaningless without him.
- He was undoubtedly in a dependent position (though not a slave[6]), as he had no choice in whether to remain in Seuthopolis or move to Kabyle; his fate was decided by Seuthes, Berenice, her sons and Spartokos.

[6] His possessions (ὑπάρχοντα) are mentioned several times in the inscription, and this definitely proves that he was not a slave.

- Spartokos required him as a lifelong servant rather than for a specific, time-limited task.
- He was significant to both the authorities in Seuthopolis and those in Kabyle, as explicit assurances were made not only regarding his personal safety, but also the protection of his possessions.

This synthesised information casts doubt on many hypotheses regarding Epimenes' identity. There is no indication that he had an entourage or associates, as would be expected of a regional ruler or a high-ranking military figure; he most likely performed his functions independently, without the need for qualified outside help, but undoubtedly with his enigmatic possessions.

A possible physician

The available information, particularly the emphasised assurances, suggests that Epimenes was engaged in highly specialised work that required personal motivation; otherwise, an oath before him would have been unnecessary. The inscription explicitly states that he could suffer consequences only if he failed to perform his service conscientiously, yet it does not reveal the nature of this service. According to Elvers, Epimenes' role was a highly specific one, familiar to the individuals mentioned in the inscription, but the text does not allow us to determine even an approximate description of its nature (Elvers 1994, 257).

It can be assumed that his duties were associated with his possessions, although the text does not specify what these possessions were. What is clear, however, is that they could be taken away from him, which strongly suggests that they were portable.

Another notable aspect is the reference to Seuthes' health: the inscription states that he handed over Epimenes *being in good health*. This designation (ὑγιαίνων) is rarely used in ancient epigraphic documents and seems to be an unnecessary detail in the text. Could Epimenes' service have been related to Seuthes' health? It is well known that 'every Hellenistic dynasty included physicians within their courtly circles' (Flemming 2003, 459; on their place in the Hellenistic royal courts, see instances in Berrey 2017, passim; see also below). Thus, Epimenes may have been a physician, with his unspecified possessions possibly referring to medical instruments and drugs.

The profession of physicians is typically indicated by their names in epigraphic monuments (see Samama 2003, 13), but at least one chronologically

close example can be identified where a physician is not designated as such: this is the case of Euenor, mentioned in three inscriptions from Athens, two of which do not specify his profession (Massar 2001, 194-195 with references). It should be noted that no occupation or title is given for any of the individuals mentioned in the Seuthopolis inscription.

The situation of Epimenes – both extremely valuable and lacking autonomy – closely resembles that of Democedes of Croton, who was linked to the Persian royal court two centuries earlier. According to Herodotus, he was considered "the most skilful physician of his time". He enjoyed great favour with the Persian king Darius I (522-486 BC), had his own movable possessions, but was also unable to leave the palace at his own will. Additionally, there is information of an oath sworn by Atossa, Darius' wife, to Democedes in gratitude for the treatment he provided to her (Hdt., 3.125; 3.129-137).

A particularly intriguing detail is that Epimenes resided in the temple of the Samothracian gods at Seuthopolis. This temple was located within the palace itself, in the most heavily guarded area. It would have been impossible for someone to access such a location by chance. Undoubtedly, the nature of Epimenes' service required him to be in close contact with the ruler and his family.

Of course, it is also possible that Epimenes sought protection in the Temple of the Great Gods after Seuthes' death, without ruling out the possibility that he was a physician. For instance, ancient tradition refers to the physician Glaucus, who was entrusted with treating Hephaestion. After Hephaestion's death, Glaucus was executed on the orders of Alexander III the Great for briefly leaving Hephaestion unattended (Plut., Alex., 72.1-2; Arr., Anab., 7.14.4). It is plausible that fear of a similar fate led Epimenes to seek asylum in the temple at Seuthopolis.

Indeed, little is known about physicians in Thrace. One of Plato's dialogues mentions the healers of Zalmoxis and their methods (Plat., Charm., 155-157). The Getae, to whom the referenced character belonged, are known to have participated in the Odrysian king Sitalces' campaign in support of Athens during the Peloponnesian War in 429 BC (Thuc. 2.98.4). Given the presence of sick individuals in Sitalces' camp (Thuc. 2.98.3), it is implicitly possible that physicians were among the Odrysians in this campaign (see the context in Boshnakov 2007, 111-112, with references).

There is no direct evidence to support this interpretation of Epimenes' role, but the same can be said – perhaps to an even greater extent – of all the hypotheses proposed by researchers so far. Medical instruments and vessels for drugs

have not been found at Seuthopolis and Kabile[7], but such items are generally rare in the Hellenistic world (Кирова 2010, 17; on the rarity of such instruments; see also Bliquez 2015, 50-51).

Some more considerations

In light of the foregoing, attention should also be drawn to an interesting circumstance regarding the deities who guarantee the observance of the oath. Let us recall that in the case of Kabyle, the future (certainly forced) place of residence of Epimenes, steles inscribed with the oath were to be installed in the Phosphorion – the Temple of light-bearing Artemis – and near the altar of Apollo, located in the city agora (IGBulg., III/2: no. 1731, 29-30 = SEG, 42, no. 661, 29-30).[8] In both cases, these deities are associated, among other things, with medicine.

Light-bearing Artemis, whose attribute was a burning torch, was considered the patroness of childbearing. According to ancient Greek religious beliefs, the light of her torch guided newborn infants into the world [Orph. Hymn. 35.2-3; AP 9.46; cf. Eur. Hip. 165; Eur. Suppl. 955-960; Eur. Iph. In Taur. 1090-1015; Plat. Thaet. 249B; Cal. Hymn. 3.20-25; AP 6.201-202, 242; Diod. 5.72.5; Plut. Alex. 3; Paus. 4.30.5][9]. Apollo, on the other hand, was closely associated with healing too (Orph. Hymn. 33.2; Aesch. Agam. 146-147; Eur. Androm. 901; AB 95; Cal. Hymn. 2.38-41; Diod. 5.74.5-6; Paus. 1.3.3, 8.38.6, 41.5; Macrob. 1.17; see also Зелінський 2011, 53-64), a role particularly reflected in the famous Hippocratic Oath (Hippocr. Jusjur. 1).

We believe that the medical connotations of these divine guarantors of the Seuthopolis oath, as represented in Kabyle, serve as another indirect argument in favour of Epimenes' professional identity, as proposed above. It is quite pos-

---

[7] Several objects from the excavations at Seuthopolis were initially identified as medical instruments (Чичикова and Димитров 2016, 52), but this interpretation was later rejected (see Nankov 2012, 113).

[8] The existence of these sacred objects in Kabyle is indirectly confirmed by the frequent images of Apollo and Artemis on the local coins of the 3rd century BC (Драганов 1993, passim; cf.: Elvers 1994, 262; Janouchová 2013, 104).

[9] For Artemis Phosphorus as a goddess who aids in childbirth (see also: Themelis 1994, 111-115; Janouchová 2013, 99-105; Carrez-Maratray 2014, 145-150, 212; Abd el-Fattah *et al.* 2014, 161-166; cf.: Wise 2007, 30-31, 63-64). For other aspects of the cult of Artemis Phosphorus, including those related to military matters (see Fıratlı and Robert 1964, 156-158; Elvers 1994, 262-263; Piolot 2005, 113-140; Deoudi 2010, 68-69, 83).

sible that the selection of these deities was driven by the oath-makers' desire to instil in him a sense of peace of mind and confidence in his future safety. Additionally, their choice may have been intended to underscore the significance of medical services to Spartokos and his family, which were expected from their new lifelong household member (see above).

How did Epimenes appear in the Odrysian royal court?

Finally, it is worth considering how the central figure of the Seuthopolis inscription, Epimenes, may have arrived in the Odrysian kingdom – as a physician – on the outskirts of the Hellenistic world. Several possibilities come to mind.

Firstly, Epimenes could have come to Seuthopolis willingly, taking advantage of the trade routes leading inland from the Greek cities located on the coast of Southwestern Thrace: Aenus, Cardia, Abdera and so on (Lund 1992, 23; Драганов 1993, 89, 101; Chang 2005, 159-162; Тачева 2006, 147-149; Dimitrov 2016, 55-64). Since at least the 5th century BC, these poleis were well known to members of the renowned medical guild of the Asclepiads, originally from the island of Cos [Hippocr. Epidem. 2.2.1.5, 3.1, 12, 4.3, 4.21, 31, 48, 56, 5.100-101, 6.4.11, 7.10, 8.30, 32, 7.33, 112-117; Chang 2005, 158-164], who traced their lineage to Asclepius, the god of healing (on this, see for instance: Nelson 2013, 260-265).

Later, in 243 BC (see Bosnakis and Hallof 2020, 291-293, 298-300), the poleis of the Thracian coast became the focus of attention for the theoroi of Cos, who sought the adoption of Panhellenic status for the games held on the island of Asclepius in honour of the aforementioned deity (Rigsby 1996, 140-142 nos. 28-30). We even know the names of several hereditary physicians, Asclepiads, who lived in the poleis of the Northern Aegean, geographically close to Inland Thrace, during the 4th and early 3rd centuries BC. In particular, Nicomachus of Stagira, father of the philosopher Aristotle, entered the service of the Macedonian king Amyntas III (Diog. Laert. 5.1). Another example is Medeios, son of Lampon, whose ancestors had settled in Olynthus. In the first half of the 3rd century BC, he had a successful career at the Alexandrian court of the Ptolemies [AB 95; Bing 2002, 297-300; Зелінський 2011, 53-64].

Thus, we may hypothesise that Epimenes, like many physicians seeking fortune in the Northern Aegean or along the northern coast of Propontis, ventured to the court of Seuthes III, king of the Odrysians, for reasons unknown to us.

Secondly, the central figure of the Seuthopolis inscription may have been captured by the Odrysians during the clashes between Seuthes III and one of Alexander the Great's successors, Lysimachus, which took place in the late 320s BC and the Third War of the Successors (315-311 BC) (Diod. 18.14.2-4, 19.73; Arr. Succ. 1.10; Paus. 1.9.6; Lund 1992, 20-30; Elvers 1994, 247; Делев 2004, 122-126, 147-151; Тачева 2006, 189-190; Delev 2015, 54-55). If the hypothesis presented here regarding Epimenes' professional identity is correct, then as a physician, he may have been serving in Lysimachus' army or directly alongside the successor himself,[10] which would increase the likelihood of his capture. An indirect confirmation of this scenario can be found in the text of the Seuthopolis inscription itself, where Epimenes appears as the object rather than the active subject of the oath (see above).

Thirdly and finally, Epimenes may have been present at the court of Seuthopolis due to his connection with Berenice, who, as suggested by the contents of the Seuthopolis inscription, played a key role in the negotiations concerning his fate. Contemporary historiography confidently identifies this woman as either a wife or widow of Seuthes III (see below). The spelling of her name ("Berenice", not "Pherenice") indicates her Macedonian origin (cf.: Lund 1992, 30; Делев 2004, 348, note 3; Тачева 2006, 100; Nankov 2011, 15-16; Dana 2015, 250; Dimitrov 2016, 55; Чичикова and Димитров 2016, 26-27). Furthermore, her marriage to the Odrysian king attests to her belonging to the Macedonian aristocracy (Чичикова and Димитров 2016, 27; for an alternative view, see Elvers 1994, 259-260). Some scholars have suggested that she may have been a relative of the aforementioned Lysimachus (Lund 1992, 30; Делев 2004, 169 note 5, 348 note 3; Dimitrov 2016, 55; cf. Elvers 1994, 259), Antigonus the One-Eyed, the founder of the Antigonid dynasty (Фол 1975, 116, 190; cf.: Lund 1992, 30; Elvers 1994, 259), or Antipater, the regent of Macedonia (Тачева 2000, 10-12; Тачева 2006, 189).[11]

---

[10] On the institution of military physicians in the Hellenistic period, possibly originating with Alexander the Great's Asiatic campaign, see for instance: Worthington 2014, 140; Bing 2002, 297-300. On the existence of personal physicians under the Hellenistic rulers of the Diadochi epoch, see Suda, iota, 567, delta, 1497; App. Syr. 59; Plut. Demetr. 38.

[11] Unfortunately, the authors of the above assumptions, given the extreme scarcity of the source material, had to rely primarily on logical inferences. However, in our view, the hypothesis of M. Tacheva regarding the origin of Berenice from the house of Antipater deserves special attention. In particular, we can offer an additional indirect argument in favour of the Bulgarian researcher's hypothesis. Based on the prosopographical data available to us, the name "Berenice" appears only in the onomasticon of the Antipater family. Notably, there is the well-known grandniece of the regent of Macedonia (Schol. Theocr. Idyl. 17. 61), who later became the wife and queen of Ptolemy I Soter, the founder of the

By the end of the 4th century BC, the practice of keeping personal physicians was well established in Berenice's homeland, having existed for nearly a century. This tradition was particularly associated with the kings of the Argead dynasty. According to the available sources, Macedonian rulers who may have employed personal physicians include Perdiccas II (Suda, iota, 564; Tzetz. Chil. 7.155; cf. Lucian. Quomodo, 35) and Archelaus (cf. Galen. De Nat. Hom. 11-13; Nelson 2007, 242-243), as well as Amyntas III (Diog. Laert. 5.1), Philip II (Plin. Hist. Nat. 7.124), Alexander the Great (Diod. 17.31.4-6; Curt. 3.6, 9.5.22-29; Arr. Anab. 2.4.7-11, 6.11.1-2; Plut. Alex. 19) and Alexander's widow, Roxana, the mother of Alexander IV (Suda, iota, 567, delta, 1497).[12] During Alexander's Asiatic campaign, even royal confidants were assigned their own physicians as well. We are talking about Hephaestion (Arr. Anab. 7.14.4; Plut. Alex. 72), Craterus (Plut. Alex. 41) and Peucestas (Plut. Alex. 41). Given this precedent, the presence of a personal physician in the retinue of a relative of one of the claimants to Alexander's political succession appears entirely plausible.

Conclusion

The contribution of this paper is to review the current state of knowledge about Epimenes of Seuthopolis and offer an interpretation of him as a physician. While this interpretation is plausible, it will remain only a hypothesis until confirmed by additional sources. Its advantage over other interpretations lies in its reliance solely on inferences drawn from the Seuthopolis inscription and supported by some mentioned parallels.

The insufficient evidence supporting previous interpretations of Epimenes' occupation has led us to propose our own perspective on this matter. We believe

Lagid dynasty, and the mother of his son and successor, Ptolemy II Philadelphus – see for instance: (Зелінський 2020, 79-83). This strengthens the possibility that the wife of Seuthes III, who shared the same name, was descended from Antipater himself or his elder (?) brother, Cassander. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that we do not know the name of what was probably the eldest of Antipater's daughters, who was married to Alexander of Lyncestis during the lifetime of Philip II (Grainger 2019, IX-XI, 8-9, 17). At the same time, in contrast to M. Tacheva, we do not rule out the possibility that the organiser of the aforementioned marriage was not Antipater himself, but his son – the future king of Macedonia, Cassander the Younger (about him see: Grainger 2019, 53-55, 66-73, 112, 114, 117, 122-123, 129-202).

[12] In this context, it is also necessary to mention Calligenes, the personal physician of the penultimate representative of the Antigonid dynasty, Philip V (Liv. 40.56.11; Iliev 2023, 162-163, 171), who likely retained his position under the last representative of the aforementioned dynasty, Perseus.

that Epimenes may have been the personal physician to the family of the Odrysian king Seuthes III. This hypothesis not only aligns with the content of the inscription, but also helps clarify some of its more obscure aspects. Moreover, it is fully consistent with the realities of early Hellenistic history.

That said, when dealing with the remote past, the available information often permits only the formulation of hypotheses. However, proposing an original hypothesis can, at times, provide new momentum for research and renew scholarly discussions, thus constituting a valuable scientific contribution.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the editorial team of the journal and the four anonymous reviewers, whose insightful comments greatly contributed to enhancing the manuscript. Special thanks are also due to Prof. DSc Konstantin Boshnakov for his valuable recommendations and comments, as well as for taking the time to read the draft of this paper. Any errors or omissions remain the sole responsibility of the authors.

References

Abd el-Fattah A., Abd el-Maksoud M. and Carrez-Maratray J.-Y. 2014. Deux inscriptions grecques du "Boubasteion" d'Alexandrie. *Ancient Society* 44, 149-177.

Berrey M. 2017. *Hellenistic Science at Court.* Berlin–Boston. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110541939.

Bing P. 2002. Medeios of Olynthos, Son of Lampon, and the Iamatika of Posidippus. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 140, 297-300.

Bliquez L. 2015. *The Tools of Asclepius: Surgical Instruments in Greek and Roman Times*. Leiden–Boston. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004283596.

Boshnakov K. 2007. Diplomacy in Time of Plague. In K. Boshnakov (ed.), *Jublilaeus* 6 (Сборник в памет на Карел и Херменегилд Шкорпил: Материали от Международен университетски симпозиум), 103-115.

Bosnakis D. and Hallof K. 2020. Alte und neue Inschriften aus Kos VI. *Chiron* 50, 387-326.

Calder W. M. 1996. The Seuthopolis Inscription IGBR 1731: A New Edition. In R. W. Wallace and E. M. Harris (eds), *Transitions to Empire: Essays in Greco-Roman History, 360-146 B.C. in Honor of E. Badian*, 167-178. Norman–London.

Carrez-Maratray J.-Y. 2014. *Bérénice II d'*Égypte, une reine dans les étoiles. Paris.

Chang H.-H. 2005. The Cities of the Hippocratic Doctors. In Ph. J. van der Eijk (ed.), *Hippocrates in Context: Papers Read at the 11th International Hippocrates Colloquium, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 27-31 August 2002*, 157-170. Leiden–Boston.

Чичикова М. and Димитров К. [Čičikova M. and Dimitrov K.] 2016. Севтополис – градът на Севт III [Sevtopolis – grad″t na Sevt III]. Plovdiv.

Dana D. 2015. Inscriptions. In J. Valeva, E. Nankov and D. Graninger (eds), *A Companion to Ancient Thrace*, 243-264. Oxford–Malden.

Делев П. [Delev P.] 2004. Лизимах [Lizimah]. Sofia.

Delev P. 2015. Thrace from the Assassination of Kotys I to Koroupedion (360-281 BCE). In J. Valeva, E. Nankov and D. Graninger (eds), *A Companion to Ancient Thrace*, 48-58. Oxford–Malden.

Deoudi M. 2010. *Die thrakische Jägerin. Römische Steindenkmäler aus Macedonia und Thracia*. Ruhpolding–Mainz–Wiesbaden.

Dimitrov K. 2016. Trade and Monetary Economy in the Early Hellenistic City of Seuthopolis in Thrace. In U. Fellmeth, J. Krüger, K. Ohr und J. Rasch (eds), *Wirtschaftsbauten in der antiken Stadt. Internationales Kolloquium 16.-17. November 2012*, 55-64. Karlsruhe.

Драганов Д. [Draganov D.] 1993. Монетосеченето на Кабиле [*Monetosečeneto na Kabile*]. Veliko Tarnovo.

Elvers K.-L. 1994. Der "Eid der Berenike und ihrer Söhne". Eine Edition von IGBulg. III 2, 1731. *Chiron* 24, 241-266.

Fıratlı N. and Robert L. 1964. *Les stèles funéraires de Byzance gréco-romaine*. Paris.

Flemming R. 2003. Empires of Knowledge: Medicine and Health in the Hellenistic World. In A. Erskine (ed.), *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, 449-463. Blackwell.

Фол А. [Fol A.] 1975. Тракия и Балканите през ранно-елинистическата епоха [*Trakiâ i Balkanite prez ranno-elinističeskata epoha*]. Sofia.

Grainger J. D. 2019. *Antipater's Dynasty: Alexander the Great's Regent and His Successors*. Barnsley.

Graninger C. D. 2018. New Contexts for the Seuthopolis Inscription (IGBulg 3.2 1731). *Klio* 100/1, 178-194. https://doi.org/10.1515/klio-2018-0006.

Iliev J. 2023. The Thracian exile of Perseus in 179 BC. *Živa Antika* 73, 161-174. https://www.doi.org/10.47054/ZIVA23731-2161i.

Janouchová P. 2013. The Cult of Bendis in Athens and Thrace. *Graeco-Latina Brunensia* 18/1, 95-106.

Кирова Н. [Kirova N.] 2010. *Медицината в провинциите Долна Мизия и Тракия (I – края на III в.)* [*Medicinata v provinciite Dolna Miziâ i Trakiâ (I – kraâ na III v.)*]. Sofia.

Lund H. S. 1992. *Lysimachus: A Study in Early Hellenistic Kingship*. London. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203034040.

Манов М. [Manov M.] 1998. Големият надпис от Севтополис. Археология [Golemiât nadpis ot Sevtopolis. *Arheologi*â] 39/1-2, 8-15.

Манов М. [Manov M.] 2017. В търсене на Тюлис или Тракия между 341 и 218 г. пр. Хр [*V tărsene na Tŭlis ili Trakiâ meždu 341 i 218 g. pr. Hr.*]. Sofia.

Marazov I. 2008. Quis autem erat Epimenes? Проблеми и изследвания на тракийската култура [*Problemi i izsledvaniâ na trakijskata kultura*] 3, 88-91.

Massar N. 2001. Un savoir-faire à l'honneur. "Médecins" et "discours civique" en Grèce hellénistique. *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 79/1, 175-201. https://doi.org/10.3406/rbph.2001.4514.

Nankov E. 2011. Berenike Bids Farewell to Seuthes III: The Silver-Gilt Scallop Shell Pyxis from the Golyama Kosmatka Tumulus. *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 15/3, 1-22.

Nankov E. 2012. Beyond Hellenization: Reconsidering Greek Literacy in the Thracian City of Seuthopolis. In *Vasilka Gerasimova-Tomova: In memoriam*, 109-126. Sofia.

Nelson E. D. 2007. Hippocrates, Heraclids, and the "Kings of the Heracleidai": Adaptations of Asclepiad History by the Author of the "Presbeutikos". *Phoenix* 61/3-4, 234-246.

Nelson E. D. 2013. Coan Asylia: Small-State Diplomacy and the Hippocratic Legend. In F. De Angelis (ed.), *Regionalism and Globalism in Antiquity: Exploring Their Limits*, 247-266. Leuven–Paris–Walpole.

Ognenova-Marinova L. 1980. Quia autem erat Epimenes? *Klio* 62/1, 47-48. https://doi.org/10.1524/klio.1980.62.62.47.

Огненова-Маринова Л. [Ognenova-Marinova L.] 1984. Бележки върху надписа от Севтополис [Beležki v"rhu nadpisa ot Sevtopolis]. *Thracia* 6, 30-34.

Popov H. 2015. Settlements. In J. Valeva, E. Nankov and D. Graninger (eds), *A Companion to Ancient Thrace*, 109-125. Oxford–Malden.

Piolot L. 2005. Nom d'une Artémis! À propos de l'Artémis *Phôsphoros* de Messène. *Kernos* 18, 113-140. https://doi.org/10.4000/kernos.922.

Рабаджиев К. [Rabadžiev K.] 2002. Елински мистерии в Тракия: опит за археологически прочит [*Elinski misterii v Trakiâ: opit za arheologičeski pročit*]. Sofia.

Rigsby K. 1996. *Asylia: Territorial Inviolability in the Hellenistic World*. Berkeley–Los Angeles–London.

Samama É. 2003. *Les médecins dans le monde grec: sources épigraphiques sur la naissance d'un corps médical*. Genève.

Тачева М. [Tačeva M.] 1987. История на българските земи в древността, част *II* [*Istoriâ na b"lgarskite zemi v drevnostta, čast II*]. Sofia.

Тачева М. [Tačeva M.] 2000. Севт *III,* Севтополис и Кабиле *(341-252* г. пр. Хр.*)* според епиграфските и нумизматичните данни [*Sevt III, Sevtopolis i Kabile (341-252 g. pr. Hr.) spored epigrafskite i numizmatičnite danni*]. Sofia.

Тачева М. [Tačeva M.] 2006. Царете на Древна Тракия, книга I [*Carete na Drevna Trakiâ, kniga* I]. Sofia.

Themelis P. G. 1994. Artemis Ortheia at Messene: The Epigraphical and Archaeological Evidence. In R. Hägg (ed.), *Ancient Greek Cult Practice from the Epigraphical Evidence: Proceedings of the Second International Seminar on Ancient Greek Cult, organized by the Swedish Institute at Athens, 22-24 November 1991*, 101-122. Stockholm.

Велков В. [Velkov V.] 1991. Надписи от Кабиле. Кабиле [Nadpisi ot Kabile. *Kabile*] 1, 7-53. Sofia.

Wise S. 2007. *Childbirth Votives and Rituals in Ancient Greece*. PhD Dissertation, University of Cincinnati.

Worthington I. 2014. *By the Spear: Philip II, Alexander the Great, and the Rise and Fall of the Macedonian Empire.* New York.

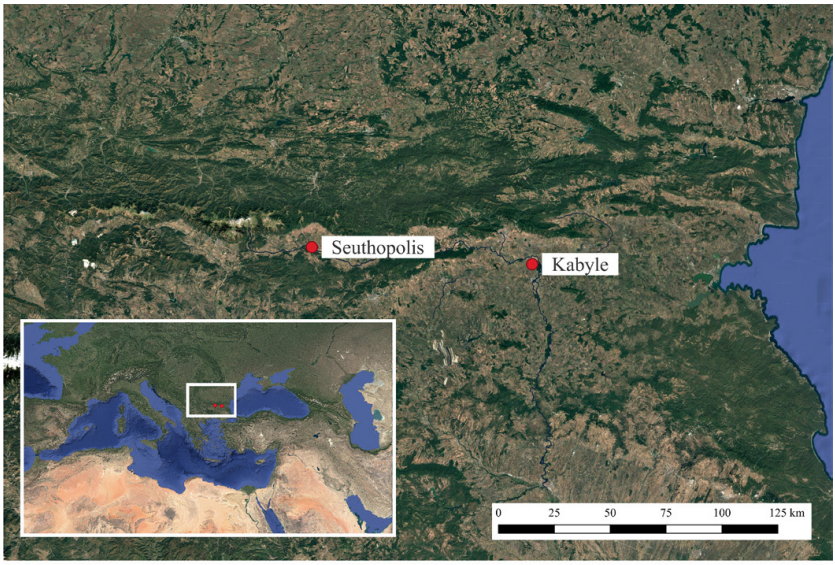
Зелінський А. Л. [Zelìns′kij A. L.] 2011. Інтерпретація присвяти лікаря Медея Аполлону Піфійському [Ìnterpretacìâ prisvâti lìkarâ Medeâ Apollonu Pìfijs′komu] (Posidippus 2002, 95). Сходознавство [*Shodoznavstvo*] 55-56, 53-64.

Зелінський А. Л. [Zelìns′kij A. L.] 2020. Від басилевсів-фараонів до фараонів-басилевсів: перші 100 років птолемеївської монархії [*Vìd basilevsìv-faraonìv do faraonìv-basilevsìv: peršì 100 rokìv ptolemeïvs'koï monarhìï*]. Vinnytsya–Kyiv.

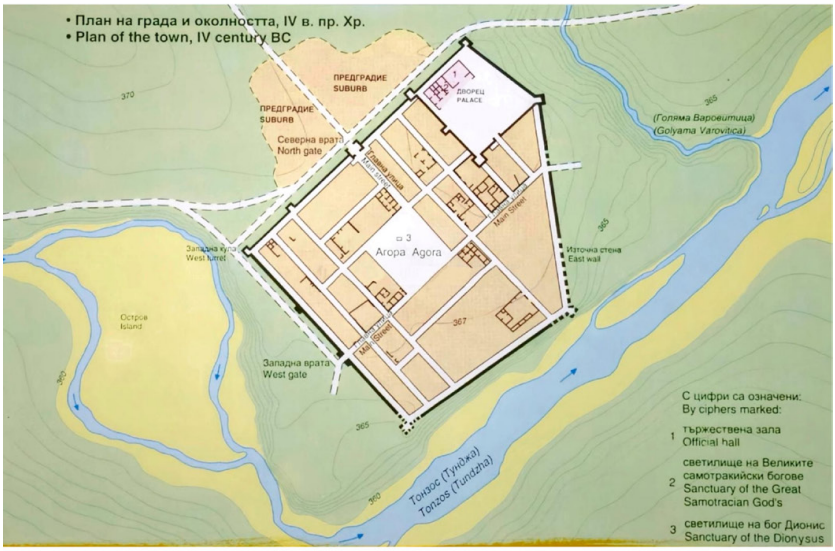
Jordan Iliev PhD
Research Centre for History and Archaeology of War
Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv
j.iliev@uni-plovdiv.bg

Andrii Zelinskyi DSc (History)
State Institution | Institute of World History of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine
z-al@ukr.net

PLATE 1



1

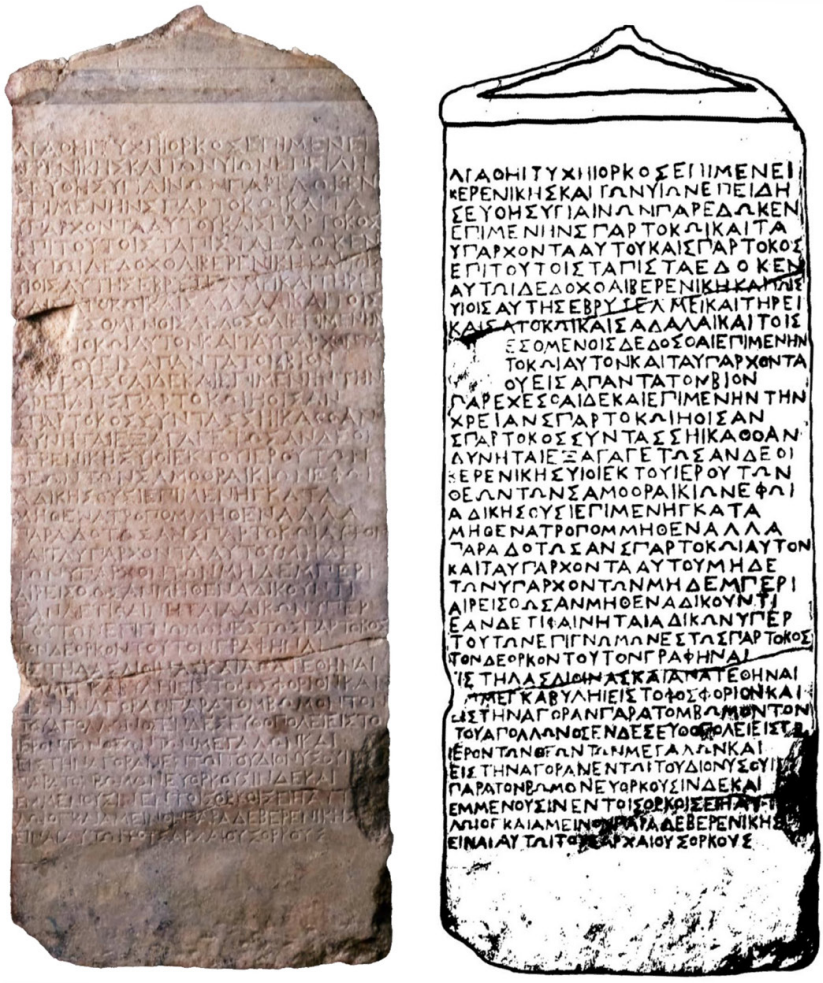


2

Pl. 1:1 – Locations of Seuthopolis and Kabyle

Pl. 1: 2 – Plan of Seuthopolis, showing the palace and the temple of the Great Samothracian Gods. Source: Photograph by the authors of an information plate displayed in the exhibition at the Regional History Museum "Iskra" in Kazanlak

PLATE 2



Pl. 2 – The Seuthopolis inscription (IGBulg., III/2: no. 1731).
Source: Public Domain/Bulgariana, modified by the authors (see the original image at http://bulgarianheritage.bulgariana.eu/jspui/handle/pub/452; drawing by the authors)