

GRAIN TRADE AND DIFFUSION OF RELIGIOUS IDEAS OF THE PTOLEMAIC EGYPT. A FEW OBSERVATIONS OF THE CULT OF SERAPIS IN THE BLACK SEA BASIN

Jakub MOSIEJCZYK

Institute of Archaeology Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń

The study describes the spread of oriental cults in the basins of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Particular emphasis was put on verification of the Ptolemaic religion diffusion models. Questions are raised pertaining to the role of grain trade, which appears as an important factor in inculcating the Greek *poleis* in the Black Sea region with the Hellenistic Egyptian beliefs. The literature on the subject is very extensive. Already in the nineteenth century it was taken up by the Romanian archaeologist and historian G. Tocilescu. The topic was continuously explored over the century with the last decades bringing a number of specialised seminars which resulted in numerous papers and monographs dedicated to Serapis and Isis¹. In case of the Black Sea region, Russian-language literature, as well as a monograph by Dr. Magdalena Olszta-Bloch, written at the University of Nicolaus Copernicus, were referenced².

The origins of the cult of Serapis date back to the Hellenistic era. The deity was conceived in Ptolemaic Egypt during the reigns of the first three Ptolemies³. It is commonly believed that the reason for establishing the new religion was the urge to unify the Greeks and Egyptians within a common state⁴. To this end, the new deity combined the characteristics of the Egyptian and Greek beliefs. The religious syncretism determined the popularity of the cult⁵. Its universalism consisted in combining individual domains of specific gods. Sarapis was responsible for the main spheres of life, among which the most important was the domain of healing and ruling the underworld. The Greeks perceived him as Zeus, Asklepios and Dionysus⁶. The Egyptian elements included references to the Egyptian Osiris, accented by the bond with the chthonic world and the marriage with Isis⁷. Depicted seating on a throne, Serapis resembled Hades-Pluto. He was accompanied by Cerberus, the guardian of the underworld, lying at his feet, and by a snake,

¹ In preparation of the paper the latest and most important literature published mainly in the series *Religions in the Graeco-Roman World* (RGRW) were used.

² Olszta – Bloch 2011, *passim*.

³ Plutarch, *De Iside* 28, Tacitus, *Histories* IV 83–84 (Ptolemy I Soter 267–282) Manetho is sometimes thought as the creator of the cult of Serapis. Most probably the idea of the new deity emerged during the reign of Ptolemy I Soter (323–282), however the constitution of the cult in the community must have taken place during the reign of the next Lagids, Stambaugh 1972, p. 6–7.

⁴ Stambaugh 1972, p. 96–97.

⁵ Bianchi 1970, p. 97–106; Wild 1981, p. 151–154.

⁶ Olszta-Bloch 2011, p. 122–123, *cf.* Engellman 1975, *passim*.

⁷ Stambaugh 1972, p. 14–16.

probably alluding to Uraeus, the Egyptian symbol of power⁸. This religious structure gained recognition in the Hellenistic world and quickly spread to other territories. One of the ways of popularisation of the cult to other regions of the Mediterranean is tied to the development of grain trade routes which successively reached the Black Sea basin⁹. With the end of the Ptolemaic Egypt and the change of forces in the Mediterranean Basin, Serapis, probably along with the cult of Isis, gradually enters the territories of the Roman Empire¹⁰.

During the Hellenistic period, traces of Serapis in Greek *poleis* from the Black Sea region were recorded mainly in the form of inscriptions. These sources come from Chersonesus, Olbia, Tyras, Dionysopolis, Histria and Tomis¹¹. Moreover, few archaeological sources were discovered in the form of imported rings with iconography interpreted as images of Serapis and Isis. Two such monuments were discovered in Phanagoria and Panticapaeum¹². It should be noted, however, that their interpretation is problematic.

Serapis in the light of epigraphic sources from the Black Sea region

Chersonesus, situated on the Crimean peninsula, acquired one of the oldest traces of the oriental cults in the Black Sea region. It is a marble slab found in sector 96 during excavations carried out by the Russian expedition in 1993¹³. The monument was discovered in an ancient cistern and was probably recycled during the construction of the cistern. The Russian scientists suggested that the inscription was part of a larger whole, and was originally mounted in a sacrificial altar¹⁴. Due to the palaeography of the forged letters, the document was dated to half of the third century BC¹⁵. The transcription has not been yet incorporated into specialised inscription sets; its contents appear on the list of sources at the end of this study. The text of the document contains a simple dedication in honour of the Egyptian gods, including Serapis and Isis, made by Charmippos – son of Pritanios¹⁶. The Russian scientists see Charmippos as the son of the nobleman portrayed on the drachmas of Chersonesus at the beginning of the third century who goes by the same name¹⁷. Assuming such identification is correct; it would mean that the elites of the city had a significant share in promoting the Ptolemaic cults¹⁸. The hypothesis must be considered in conjunction with the increasing importance of the Bosporan Kingdom in the Hellenistic world. It is demonstrated by the iconography of the parade flagship with ΙΣΙΣ graffiti which was identified on the wall of the sanctuary of Aphrodite in Nymphaion¹⁹.

Apart from Chersonesus, Olbia was also considered a place where the cult of Serapis was present. Such interpretations appeared after the publication of inscriptions discovered as early as the nineteenth century by M. A. Korostovcev. The text was dedicated to Isis, Serapis

⁸ Stambaugh 1972, p. 14–16.

⁹ Sociologists of religion point out that once a religion has established control over the expression of religious feelings, rituals end up regulating more or less the entirety of every-day life, which is reflected in all social acts. The term comprises such important aspects of production as: harvest, sailing and trade, cf. Alvar Ezquerro 2008, p. 208–211.

¹⁰ Versluys 2002, *passim*.

¹¹ Tacheva 1983, p. 3–19; Takács 1995, p. 182–184; Olszta-Bloch 2011, p. 124–130.

¹² Olszta-Bloch 2011, p. 126–127.

¹³ Vinogradov/Zolotarev 1999, p. 358.

¹⁴ Vinogradov/Zolotarev 1999, p. 359.

¹⁵ Vinogradov/Zolotarev 1999, p. 360.

¹⁶ Olszta-Bloch 2011, p. 215.

¹⁷ Vinogradov/Zolotarev 1999, p. 360–362.

¹⁸ Olszta-Bloch 2011, p. 125.

¹⁹ Grač 1987 p. 87–95.

and Poseidon. The chronology of the monument was initially set at the Hellenistic period²⁰. However, the document referred to the Roman period, as determined by D. V. Jurgevič based on the shape of the carved letters²¹. This interpretation was confirmed after the discovery of the missing piece of the inscription dedicated to Alexander Severus²².

Another place where inscriptions listing eastern deities were found is Tyras – on the west bank of the Dniester Liman²³. Discovered there was a short thanksgiving inscription made on a white marble. Despite the fact that the left side of the document was destroyed²⁴, it is possible to read an inscription entrusting the son of Cratinus of unknown name to: Isis, Serapis and all the gods who are with them²⁵. The document is dated to the first century BC²⁶.

Much more evidence of the Egyptian beliefs among the Greek *poleis* was discovered in the area of Dobruja. Save for Chersonesus, the oldest inscription from the eastern coast of the Black Sea was found in Histria²⁷. It was made on a marble stele²⁸. The palaeography of the text was set at the third century BC²⁹. The document analysis shows that the inscription was a type of a public decree which mentioned Serapis. It indicates that the introduction of the cult was carried out by the council of the *polis*, in reference to the oracle of Apollo at Chalcedon³⁰. Some of the researchers interpret the data as a top-down introduction of the new cult having characteristics of an official religion³¹. In addition, they see an analogy to the inscription of the Chersonesus, where the cult of Serapis was also supposed to be widespread³². All these hypotheses aside, what should be noted is a clear political context of the oriental religion being present in the region³³, although its nature is debatable. It must be emphasised that D. M. Pippidi points to the important role of trade in promoting the Ptolemaic religious ideas³⁴.

Also from Histria comes another similarly dated inscription³⁵. It mentions a local association of *heronautai* which is identified with a committee translated as *vessel of Isis* responsible for the organisation of the annual festival in honour of the goddess³⁶. What is important, the inscription mentions that the dedication was financed with own funds³⁷. This goes to show that the eastern cults in this *polis* could be regularly celebrated as early as that time. What is more, they must have been inspired by the local elites who had their own funds for this purpose.

During subsequent excavations in Tomis, a total of 5 inscriptions listing the eastern deities were uncovered. Among them, two are firmly dated to the late Hellenistic period³⁸. The first inscription³⁹, as in the case of Tyras, comprises a brief dedication in honour of Serapis made

²⁰ Olszta-Bloch 2011, p. 127.

²¹ Olszta-Bloch 2011, p. 128.

²² I² IosPE 184.

²³ Samoylov 1988, p. 8–9.

²⁴ Takács 1995, p. 191.

²⁵ SIRIS 713.

²⁶ Pippidi 1975, p. 103–104.

²⁷ SIRIS 709a; SEG 24; ISM I 5.

²⁸ Takács 1995, p. 190.

²⁹ Tacheva 1983, p. 16.

³⁰ SIRIS 709a, 5.

³¹ Pippidi 1975, p. 98.

³² Pippidi 1975, p. 98.

³³ Takács 1995, p. 190–191.

³⁴ Pippidi 1975, p. 98–102.

³⁵ SIRIS 709.

³⁶ Vidman 1970, p. 76–87.

³⁷ Takács 1995, p. 190–191.

³⁸ Takács 1995, p. 187.

³⁹ SIRIS 706.

by the son of Polydorus of unknown name. He was probably a stranger in the town who came from Sinope, which can be explained by the commercial exchange between these two centres⁴⁰. The text indicates that the sacrifice was made as a result of an instruction revealed in a dream⁴¹.

The second of the documents is much more extensive and causes numerous problems. The inscription was made on a marble slab. It is seen as a dedication to commemorate a construction of a sanctuary⁴². The text presumably begins with a greeting. It lists Dionysios the son of Hedylos who built the temple with his own money⁴³. Mentioned next is Isidoros – the priest of Zeus who was involved in the construction works⁴⁴. The theophoric name of the priest which is to be associated with Isis leads to the conclusion that the priest must have been familiarised with the Egyptian cult back in his family home⁴⁵. A service to Zeus did not rule out a participation in creating the pantheistic sanctuary which worshiped not only the Great Zeus, but also Serapis, Isis and Anubis, and all the gods⁴⁶. Some researchers believe the chronology of the document should be moved to the first century AD, as in the early stages of the cult the syncretism of deities was not as strongly developed⁴⁷.

The last Tomis inscription may hypothetically be dated to the late Hellenistic period, but it is also considered a text from the first century AD⁴⁸. It was placed on a stele by decision of the council of *polis*⁴⁹. It is one of the few records of *Charmosyna*⁵⁰ being celebrated outside of Egypt⁵¹. It was dedicated to all those who rejoice the “joys” of Isis⁵². It proves the existence of the temple of Serapis, next to which it was exposed to the public view, as mentioned in the text⁵³. According to some researchers, the name of the festival was unknown to the inhabitants of Tomis. Such conclusions were drawn after analysing verses 6–7⁵⁴. Assuming the correctness of such interpretation, the inscription should be read in a political context. It can demonstrate the relationship between the city elite and the local place of the Eastern cult.

On the coast of the Black Sea, below the line of the Danube, there is one more well-known inscription listing Serapis⁵⁵. The epigraphic material formed on a marble slab dates to the second half of the first century BC⁵⁶. It was discovered in the region of Southern Dobruja in the ancient Dionysiopolis⁵⁷. The inscription mentions a citizen named Akornio who during Dionysiawas to be awarded a golden crown for organising processions and sacrifices in honour of ΘεόςΜέγας,

⁴⁰ Tacheva 1983, p. 11, Taking into account the creation of the cult of Serapis (according to Plutarch, De Iside 28), the absence of Serapis monuments in Sinope is surprising, as this is where the model of the divine statue was taken from, Kater-Sibbes 1973, p. 54.

⁴¹ SIRIS 706.

⁴² Takács 1995, p. 187.

⁴³ SIRIS 705, 1–2.

⁴⁴ SIRIS 705, 1–2.

⁴⁵ Clarysse/ Paganini 2009, p. 68.

⁴⁶ SIRIS 705, 5–6, Naming Serapis next to Zeus points to his significant role in the society of the Black Sea region. Serapis appears as a universal deity, responsible for the most vital spheres of life, and therefore a very powerful one, cf. Bianchi 1970, p. 97–106.

⁴⁷ Tacheva 1983, p. 10.

⁴⁸ Tacheva 1983, p. 9.

⁴⁹ Takács 1995, p. 188.

⁵⁰ Charmosyna is a religious holiday associated with celebrating the death and resurrection of Osiris and the birth of Horus-Harpocrates Herodotus III, 27.

⁵¹ Tacheva 1983, p. 9.

⁵² Takács 1995, p. 188.

⁵³ SIRIS 704, 20–21.

⁵⁴ Tacheva 1983, p. 9–10.

⁵⁵ SIRIS 703; IGRR I 662; IG Bulg. 13.

⁵⁶ Tacheva 1983, p. 6–7.

⁵⁷ Takács 1995, p. 186.

which in this case refers most likely to Dionysus – the patron deity of the city⁵⁸. In addition, information was given that he was recognised by the majority as the priest of Serapis⁵⁹. It is hard to clearly state whether the divinities were one and the same being for the followers from Dionysiopolis. However, the information contained in the document indicates a relationship in the perception of the two deities. It can be caused by the said linking of domains. In this case, by the supernatural providence associated with the earthly cycle, abundance of crops and trade⁶⁰. Reference to Serapis may indicate a long-range maritime trade. It is worth noting that the Akronio's undertaking was completed at his own expense⁶¹. He had to be one of the richest and most influential citizens of Dionysiopolis.

Diffusion models of the cult – critical take

Over the years of research, the epigraphic material described above contributed to elaborating a number of theories regarding the infusion of oriental cults in the Black Sea region. One of the numerous views on this issue is the concept of direct political pressure. It was to be carried out through active diplomacy of the Ptolemaic court in relation to the Bosphoran Kingdom⁶². Such interpretations are especially popular in Russian literature. They were constructed in opposition to the first concept of M. Roztovtsev who pointed to a significant part of the economy (including grain trade) in the contacts between the Bosphorus and Egypt⁶³. Treister, on the other hand, formulated his ideas bearing in mind monuments in the form of the already mentioned rings decorated in line with Ptolemaic aesthetics, which he described as direct evidence of political contacts⁶⁴. Historical context was also significant. In this case, the desire of gaining new allies by Ptolemy II is highlighted, which would be necessary after the defeats suffered during the Second Syrian War⁶⁵. Yet another important element is the widely discussed papyrus from the Zenon archive informing of the visit of the deputies of Pairisades II in Egypt⁶⁶. Individual was identified as the king of Bosphorus⁶⁷. The document was repeatedly summoned as further evidence of the links between the discussed centres⁶⁸. However, the papyrus does not clearly explain the reason for the visits⁶⁹. Hence, it is indicated by Roztovtsev as evidence of an agreement on economic matters, and by other Russian researchers as evidence of the diplomatic or military conditions⁷⁰.

Further proof of political motives for the introduction of the cult is the iconography of the ship from the sanctuary of Aphrodite in Nymphaion. According to the interpretation of the N. Grač, it constitutes a direct graphical record of the visit, which should be read as a response to the said visit of the deputies of Pairisades II in Egypt⁷¹. This thesis was eagerly taken up by Russian and Ukrainian scholars⁷². Moreover, it is also accepted in the works of the American researchers

⁵⁸ Takács 1995, p. 186.

⁵⁹ SIRIS 703, 10–14.

⁶⁰ Bianchi 1970, p. 97–106.

⁶¹ SIRIS 703, 13.

⁶² Treister 1985, p. 138–139; Grainger 2010, p. 93.

⁶³ Roztowzew 1925, p. 111–128.

⁶⁴ Treister 1985, p. 126–127.

⁶⁵ Treister 1985, p. 138–139; Grainger 2010, p. 117–136.

⁶⁶ P. Lond. 7. 1973 (SB III 7263). The critical analysis is presented in the monograph: Olszta-Bloch 2011, p. 36–71.

⁶⁷ Olszta-Bloch 2011, p. 35.

⁶⁸ Olszta-Bloch 2011, p. 37.

⁶⁹ P. Lond. 7. 1973 (SB III 7263).

⁷⁰ Treister 1985, p. 138–139.

⁷¹ Grač 1984, p. 81–88.

⁷² Olszta-Bloch 2011, p. 25.

who focus on defining the technical parameters of the trireme⁷³. However, an important voice in the discussion is the iconographic critical analysis carried out by M. Nowicka who postulates a different interpretation. According to this researcher, the image of the warship should be perceived more allegorically than simply a record of a historical fact⁷⁴. The temple context of the graffiti has its significance. Through the mythological images in the form of Dioscuri –the patrons of trade, the image is linked to a diplomatic gift or establishing new business contacts⁷⁵. The causative factor is found more in the individual approach of the author of the graphics, who could be an inhabitant of Egypt, than in the official propaganda of the Bosporan Kingdom⁷⁶.

In the light of the discussed interpretations, the political model of infusion of the Serapis cult may explain the appearance of the oldest inscriptions of Tomis and Histria dated to the third century BC. However, the theses on political motives of introducing the cult seem exaggerated⁷⁷. The diverse and highly questionable source material inclines to consider alternative concepts. Contacts between Egypt and the Pontic centres during the third century BC must have been present. They did not necessarily have to be formalised at the state level. Disputable is the nature of these contacts, which could be indirect or direct. It should also be noted that the popular concepts of the Russian researchers emphasising the diplomatic contacts may result from the desire to highlight the political importance of the northern coast of the Black Sea⁷⁸.

In response to the concepts of the political impact of Lagids on instilling the oriental beliefs and the presence of Egyptian imports, an interesting thesis was formulated regarding the return of Thracian and Scythian mercenaries from service in the Ptolemaic army⁷⁹. Once a contract was fulfilled, the Barbarians were to return to their homeland, bringing new religious ideas with them⁸⁰. Such infusion model of the Serapis cult is quite convincing considering the historical context of the Syrian Wars⁸¹. The proposed theory can explain the occurrence of short thanksgiving inscriptions known from Tyras and Tomis⁸². However, the argument is not strong enough to explain the circumstances of dedication of the remaining inscriptions.

For these reasons, it is worth to consider the former concepts which explained the contacts between Egypt and *Pontus Euxinus* from the perspective of economic relations. As mentioned previously, these theses were first formulated by M. Rostovtsev⁸³. They were based on the assumption of competition between grain producers. Both centres were to seek to monopolise the market of the eastern Mediterranean⁸⁴. The described relations were direct in character. Due to the criticism of Rostovtsev's views, which consisted in indicating the lack of conditions for developing competition between such distant centres during the Hellenistic period, the return to his assertions appears impossible⁸⁵.

Despite all this, it is very likely that the development of grain trade routes, progressing from the third century BC, had a significant impact on the appearance of numerous monuments in

⁷³ Murray 2001, p. 251–252.

⁷⁴ Nowicka 1999, p. 67–72: The author indicated the place of exposition of the graffiti. The monument was situated between other private votive gifts, in a niche of a less important part of the temple.

⁷⁵ Nowicka 1999, p. 69.

⁷⁶ Nowicka 1999, p. 72.

⁷⁷ Olszta-Bloch 2011, p. 126.

⁷⁸ Olszta-Bloch 2011, p. 19.

⁷⁹ Grainger 2010, p. 206.

⁸⁰ Litvinenko 1991, p. 23–25.

⁸¹ Avram 2007, p. 128.

⁸² SIRIS 706, 713.

⁸³ Roztowzew 1925, p. 111–128.

⁸⁴ Olszta-Bloch 2011, p. 22.

⁸⁵ Olszta-Bloch 2011, p. 23.

the Egyptian type as well as imports. The mutual contacts, however, were indirect. The centres on the islands seem an important element of the economic chain. They were the place to stop during travel, making them a link between distant sites. In the beginning, an important role in such mediation was played by Rhodes⁸⁶. From 167 BC the said centre lost to Delos, which successfully competed for the primacy in grain redistribution⁸⁷. What is important, Delos was at that time already a strong centre of the Serapis cult outside of Egypt⁸⁸.

The process of transport of goods and ideas via Rhodes is evident on the west coast of the Black Sea. In the urban centres, where traces of the Serapis cult have been discovered, Hadra ware can be found⁸⁹. On the island of Rhodes these types of vessels are popular in funeral context and make a fine argument for a lively activity between the centres⁹⁰.

With respect to the northern region of the Black Sea coast, relations with Rhodes over the third and second centuries BC are also visible. They are evidenced by a rich archaeological material in the form of amphorae of Rhodes found on the sites of the Crimea⁹¹.

For Black Sea region the importance of trade routes leading towards the south was evidenced during the conflict on the Bosphorus between the coalition of Histria and Kalatis and Byzantium. The influence in Tomis was a key factor to the dispute⁹². On the one hand, it shows the economic strength of the Pontic centres and their pursuit of monopoly in the grain trade. On the other hand, it illustrates the strategic value of the basin of the Propontis which allowed the exchange of goods⁹³. On these grounds, the economic infusion model of the Egyptian religious ideas appears as most likely.

Final conclusions

The discussed epigraphic material from the Pontic centres attest to the presence of the Serapis cult in the region already in the third century BC. The observed infusion of the eastern religious ideas took place relatively early. First dedications are more associated with individual actions. A relatively small number of inscriptions show they were most likely not the result of political or diplomatic game aiming at imposing the beliefs of the Ptolemaic Egypt on the residents of the Black Sea region. These inscriptions expressed a personal need of an individual. To quote the documents: they were revealed in a dream or an oracle. At the end of the Hellenistic era the cult is well developed, with a centre believed to be located in the sanctuary of Tomis. Despite numerous concepts suggesting the cults were common and centrally ordered, the element of individualism is not to be dismissed. Almost all the dedications in honour of Serapis are accompanied by a note highlighting they were erected at own expense. Therefore, the oriental religions could in fact be infused by the wealthy, possibly city elites, who drew on the trade. It is the economic motives which are considered most likely in spreading the Ptolemaic ideas. All of the *poleis* where inscriptions appeared were situated in convenient locations to foster the exchange of goods – including the Dniester and the Danube liman. They were strong grain production centres that in the shortage market were in demand. Through the islands of Rhodes and Delos the goods were redistributed to other parts of the eastern Mediterranean. Along with the Egyptian goods came religious ideas which were successfully cultivated throughout the Hellenistic and the Roman period.

⁸⁶ Olszta-Bloch 2011, p. 115–116.

⁸⁷ Tomlinson 1976, p. 77.

⁸⁸ Bruneau 1970, p. 458–466; Wild 1981, p. 154–155.

⁸⁹ Lungu 2007, p. 1021.

⁹⁰ Lungu 2007, p. 1025.

⁹¹ Sztetylko 1972, p. 75: In Tanais up to 90% of imports of transport ceramics came from Rhodes.

⁹² Buzoianu/Bărbulescu 2007, p. 294.

⁹³ Buzoianu/Bărbulescu 2007, p. 295.

Inscription index⁹⁴:**Chersonesus III BC**

Χάρμιππος Πρυτάνιος
κατ' επίταγμα
Σαράπιω Ἴσιου Ἀνούβι⁹⁵

Histria III BC

[*Ἐδοξετη β]ουλη[ι καί τωιδή | μωι · ἐπι]μνηιεύον[τος --- | ...]υ του Κρατε
[---Ἡρακ]λεί]δης Μονίμου ειπ[εν άπο] |
5 σταληναιυποτου [δήμουεις] Καληδόνα ανδρ[ας τρεις] | οί χρησμονλήψον[ται παρα |
το]υ Θεου τη πόλει υ[πέρτου | Σαρ]άπιος τίνα Κ---⁹⁶

(SIRIS 709a = SEG 24 = ISM I 5)

Histria III BC

--- φιλ[ον | --- Μενε]κράτους [--- | --- π]αστοφόρων [-- | --- γ] υναικα δεαύτου |
5 --- ι]εροναιυταιάν[έθηκαν | ---] έκτωνιδίων [--- | --- π]ροστατουντος [του | κοινου] Ἄρισ
τάρχου --- |---⁹⁷

(SIRIS 709)

Tyras II-I BC

--- ς Κρατιίνου Σαράπιδι *Ἴσιδι | --- Θεοισυνάοις χαριστήριον⁹⁸

(SIRIS 712)

Dionysopolis second half of the I BC

--- αιπαρα--- | --- τονάνελαβε--- | --- ος Θεόδωρον καί Επι --- |
--- σαν τοις ιδίοις δαπανημασι --- |
5 --- ατων συναποδ[η]μων άπη[ρ]ατ[ο--- | --- εϊς Ἄργεδαυον προστον πατέρα α[υτου] |
--- παραγε]νόμενος δε και συντυχων αμα--- | --- ν την απ' αυτου κατεκτησατο τη[ς δε |
--- απέ]λυσεν τονδημονιερους τε γενόμεν[ος |
10 ---? του Θεου Μεγ]άλου τάστε πομπας και τάς θυσίας [έ | πετέλεσε λαμπ]ρος και τοις
πολιταις μετέδωκεν τ[ων | κρεων] τωτε Σαρ]άπει λαχωνιερους ομοίωσ τοις δαπ[ανή |
μασιν ανεστράφ]η καλως και φιλαγάθως |

⁹⁴ The transliteration was written using simplified Greek alphabet.⁹⁵ after: Olszta-Bloch 2011, p. 125.⁹⁶ after: Takács 1995, p. 190.⁹⁷ after: Takács 1995, p. 190.⁹⁸ after: Takács 1995, p. 191.

14–42 *ommitted*

43 δε[δο | χθ]α[ιτη] βουλη και τωδήμο έπηνησθαι μεν επι τούτοις 'Ακορνίων[α] |
 45 Διον[υ]σίου και στεφανωθηναι αύτονεντοιςΔιονυσίοιςχρυσ[ω] | στεφάνω και
 εικόνηχαλκηστεφανωσθαι δε αυτον και ειςτον λ[οι | πι]ονχρ[όν]ον καθ' εκαστον ετοσε
 ντοιςΔιονυσίοιςχρισωστε[φάν|ωδε[...]]σθαι δεαντου και ειςάναστασιν άνδριαντος
 τό | ποντον έπιφανέστατον τηςάγορας⁹⁹

Tomis I BC

Σαράπιδ[ι] | οςΠολυδώ[ρον] κατάοναρ | Σινωπεύς¹⁰⁰

(SIRIS 706)

Tomis I BC

[Άγαθητύχ]η·Διονύσιος'Ηδύλουέκτων | [ιδίωνκ]ατεσκεύασενδιά
 το[ύ]ε[ρέωςτ]ού [Διός]ΙσιδώρουτούκαίΘεα [Δί] τωι | [μεγάλοι] καιΕϊσιδικαί |
 5 [Άνού]βιδικαίθεοιςπασιν¹⁰¹

(SIRIS 705)

Tomis I BC

-.λνι ---| σδρο --- | [πι]ρώτου [της*Ισι] |
 5 δοςτοις [καλου] μένοιςΧα[ρμο] | σύνοιςάρετης| ένεκενκαίσω | φροσύνης·τηνδέ |
 10 επιμέλειαντης | άναγορεύσεως | τουστεφάνουποι | [ε]ισθαιτουςπροσ | [ε]δρεύοντας
 [τωί]
 15 |ερωι·τοδεψήφισ|μαέσγραφηνα[ι]|ειςτελαμωνα|λευκουλιθουκα[ι]|άνατεθηναιειςτ[ο]
 20 ίεροντουΣαρά | πιδος¹⁰²

(SIRIS 704 = SEG 24, 1053)

⁹⁹ after: Takács 1995, pp. 186–187.

¹⁰⁰ after: Takács 1995, p. 187.

¹⁰¹ after: Takács 1995, p. 187.

¹⁰² after: Takács 1995, p. 188.

Bibliography:

- Alvar Ezquerro 2008 = J. Alvar Ezquerro, *Romanising Oriental Gods. Myth, Salvation and Ethics in the Cult of Cybele, Isis and Mithras*, RGRW vol. 165, Leiden-Boston, 2008.
- Avram 2007 = A. Avram, L'Égypte lagide et la mer Noire: approche prosopographique, in: *La Méditerranée d'une rive à l'autre : culture classique et cultures périphériques. Actes du 17ème colloque de la Villa Kérylos à Beaulieu-sur-Mer les 20 & 21 octobre 2006*. Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, 2007, pp. 127–153.
- Bianchi 1970 = U. Bianchi, "Dio Cosmico" e culti cosmopolitici, in *Mythos*, vol. 30, Genova, 1970, pp. 97–106.
- Bruneau 1970 = Ph. Bruneau, *Les cultes de Délos à l'époque hellénistique et à l'époque imperial*, Paris, 1970.
- Buzoianu/Bărbulescu 2007 = L. Buzoianu, M. Bărbulescu, Tomis, in *Ancient Greek Colonies in the Black Sea 2*, BAR International Series, vol. 1, ed. D.V. Grammenos, E.K. Petropoulos, 2007, pp. 290–332.
- Clarysse/Paganini 2009 = W. Clarysse, M. Paganini, Theophoric Personal Names in Graeco-Roman Egypt. The Case of Sarapis, in *Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete*, vol. 55,1, 2009, pp. 68–89.
- Engellman 1975 = H. Engellman, *The Delian Aretalogy of Sarapis*, EPRO vol. 44, Leiden, 1970.
- Grač 1984 = N. Grač, *Otkrytienovogo istoričesko goistočnika v Nimfee*, VDI 1984/1, 1984, p. 81–88.
- Grač 1987 = N. Grač, Ein neu entdecktes Fresko aus hellenistischer Zeit in Nymphaion bei Kertsch, in *Skythika*, pp. 87–95.
- Grainger 2010 = J. D. Grainger, Syrian Wars, in *History and Archaeology of Classical Antiquity*, Leiden, 2010.
- Herodotus = Herodotus, *Histories*, transl. A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1920.
- Kater-Sibbes 1973 = G. J. F. Kater-Sibbes, *Preliminary catalogue of Serapis monuments*, EPRO vol. 36, Leiden, 1973.
- Latyshev 1916 = B. V. Latyshev, *Inscriptiones antiquae orae septentrionalis Ponti Euxini graecae et latinae vol. 1–3 Inscriptiones Tyriae, Olbiae, Chersonesi Tauricae*, St. Petersburg, 1916.
- Litvinienko 1991 = J. N. Litvinienko, *Ptolemeevskij Egipeti Severnoe Pričarnomor'e v III v. do n.e.*, VDI nr1, 1991, pp. 12–27.
- Lungu 2007 = V. Lungu, *L'Égypte Lagide et les cités grecques du Pont Ouest*, [in:] *Actes Du Neuvième Congrès International Des Égyptologues*, OLA vol. 2, ed. J. C. Goyon, Ch. Cardin, 2007, pp 1197–210.
- Murray 2001 = W. M. Murray, A trireme named Isis: the sgraffito from Nymphaion, in *IJN*, vol. 30, 2001, p. 250–256.
- Nowicka 1999 = M. Nowicka, Quelques remarques sur l'«ISIS» de Nymphaion, in *A*, vol. 50, 1999, pp. 67–72.
- Olszta-Bloch 2011 = M. Olszta-Bloch, *Ptolemejski Egipet i Greckie Centra Północnego Wybrzeża Morza Czarnego*, Toruń, 2011.
- Pippidi 1975 = D. M. Pippidi, Sur la diffusion des cultes égyptiens en Scythie Mineure, in *Scythica Minora. Recherches sur les colonies grecques du littoral romain de la mer Noire*, București-Amsterdam, 1975.
- Plutarch = Plutarch, *Moralia*, transl. F. C. Babbitt, Harvard University Press, London, 1936.
- Roztowzew 1925 = M. Roztowzew, *Skythien und der Bosphorus*, t. 1, Berlin, 1925.
- Samoylova 1988 = T. L. Samoylova, *Tira*, Kiev, 1988.
- Staumbaugh 1972 = J. E. Staumbaugh, *Sarapis under the early Ptolemies*, EPRO t. 25, Leiden, 1972.
- Sztetyło 1972 = Z. Sztetyło, *Rola Mirmekionu w życiu gospodarczym Państwa Bosporańskiego w IV–I w. p.n.e.*, Warszawa, 1972.
- Tacheva 1983 = M. Tacheva, *Eastern Cults in Moesia Inferior and Thracia: (5th Century BC–4th Century AD)*, EPRO vol. 95, Leiden, 1983.
- Tacitus = Tacitus, *Histories*, transl. C. H. Moore, vol. II, Loeb Classical Library, London, 1943.

- Takács 1995 = S. A. Takács, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman world*, RGRW vol. 124, Leiden-New York-Köln, 1995.
- Tomlinson 1976 = R. A. Tomlinson, *Greek Sanctuaries*, London, 1976.
- Treister 1985 = M. Treister, *Bospori Egipet v III v. do n.e.*, [in:] VDI 1985/1, 1985, pp. 126–139.
- Versluys 2002 = M. J. Versluys, *Aegyptiaca Romana Nilotic Scenes and the Roman Views of Egypt*, RGRW vol. 144, Leiden-Boston, 2002.
- Vidman 1969 = L. Vidman, *Sylloge inscriptionum religionis Isiacae et Sarapiacae*, Berlin, 1969.
- Vidman 1970 = L. Vidman, *Isis and Sarapis in Die Orientalischen Religionen im Römern. Epigrafischen Studien zu den Trägern des ägyptischen Kultes*, RGVV 29, Berlin, 1970.
- Vinogradov/Zolotarev 1999 = Y. G. Vinogradov, M. I. Zolotarev, *Worship of the sacred Egyptian triad in Chersonesus (Crimea, Ancient civilization from Sythia to Syberia 5,4)*, 1999, pp. 357–381.
- Wild 1981 = R. A. Wild, *Water in the cultic worship of Isis and Sarapis*. EPRO vol. 87, Leiden, 1981.
- Woodhead 1969 = A. G. Woodhead, *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, vol. 24 Leiden, 1969.

GRAIN TRADE AND DIFFUSION OF RELIGIOUS IDEAS OF
THE PTOLEMAIC EGYPT. A FEW OBSERVATIONS OF THE
CULT OF SERAPIS IN THE BLACK SEA BASIN
(Abstract)

Archaeological finds indicate that the cult of Serapis and Isis was present in the Black Sea region as early as the Hellenistic period. Questions regarding the circumstances of the influx of the new religious idea were raised mainly by the Russian researchers, and more recently by M. Olszta-Bloch from the University of Nicolaus Copernicus. The syncretic deity of Serapis was established during the reigns of the first Ptolemies (305–221 BC) in order to integrate diverse society of the Hellenistic Egypt which consisted of groups of indigenous Egyptian population as well as Greek immigrants – both constituting a ruling elite.

One of the first recorded archaeological sources mentioning the new oriental deities in the Black Sea region was the inscription of Chersonesus in the Crimea. Palaeography of the document was estimated at the mid–3rd century BC. Inscriptions of equally early chronology were identified in Olbia at the mouth of the Boh and Dnieper rivers, Tyras over Dniester, Tomis as well as Histria at the mouth of the Danube. The influx of new religious ideas can be explained by a number of hypotheses. Among the explanations for the phenomenon are direct political actions of the Ptolemaic rulers of Egypt, which are seen in the far-reaching diplomatic policy of the first Lagidae. Another hypothesis leans towards the return to homeland of the Thracian mercenaries employed by the Ptolemaic army. Lastly, some point to actions of individuals who promoted the ideas of Oriental deities as part of their personal beliefs.

The presented study takes into account all previous concepts of adoption of the oriental cults in the Black Sea region during the Hellenistic period. It backs the hypothesis on spreading the cult through individual worshipers as the most likely. Moreover, it associates it with trade. The sites mentioned above were strong centres of grain trade. Due to the lack of convincing evidence of direct trade between the Black Sea centres and the Ptolemaic Egypt, it is assumed that the adoption of cults was indirect. The study points to the lively trade contacts with non-Egyptian centres, where temples in honour of Serapis and accompanying deities operated. Among these centres Chalcedon in Asia Minor and – above all – Delos and Rhodes are named. The discussed examples are yet another argument for the diffusion model of spreading the oriental cults in the Black Sea settlement as well as the Mediterranean.