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The Campaign of Antiochus II Theos in Thrace

Antiokus II. Teos 'un Trakya Seferi

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Öz : Bu makalede yazar Antiokus II Teos 'un Trakya Seferi ile ilgili tüm antik kaynakları tarayarak bir sisteme oturtmaktadır. Sonuç olarak yazar Antiokus II Teos 'un Trakya ile herhangi bir ilgisi olduğuna dair bu kralın paraları dışında bir delil bulunmadığını savunmaktadır. Muhtemelen tarihi kaynaklarda iddia edildiği gibi Antiokus II Teos Trakya sahillerinin kontrolü için Yunan şehirleri ile hiçbir zaman savaşmamıştı. Bazı yazıtlar ve arkeolojik delillere göre Antiokus II Teos ve Yunan şehirleri ittifak olarak Seuthopolis kralına karşı savaşmış olabilirler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Antik Trakya, Antiokus II Teos, Seuthopolis

Abstract: The author presents a systematization of all ancient sources, which can be associated with the Thracian campaign of Antiochus II Theos. As a result he thinks that there is no indisputable evidence about the connection of this king with the Thracian lands, except his coins. Presumably he never made war with the Greek cities over the Thracian coast, as is considered in historiography. It is likely that they were his allies, which provoked the expedition against an anonymous ruler of Seuthopolis, as some epigraphical records and archaeological evidence suggests.

Key Words: Ancient Thrace, Antiochus II Theos, Seuthopolis

Antiochus II Theos (Ἀντίοχος ὁ Θεός), the third king of the Syrian kingdom, ruled between 261 and 246 BC. His kingship was mostly associated with the Second Syrian war against the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt (260-253 BC) and several revolts of his satraps.¹ The recent publication of this ruler's coins, found in the ancient Thracian lands² and the association of the fall of Seuthopolis with his campaign,³ give new information about his foreign activities.⁴ The facts of the Thracian policy of Antiochus II, despite the potential to be restored in general⁵, remain almost unknown. This is due to scanty sources. In spite of that, typical for a large proportion of the modern scholars who have worked on this issue, is the prioritization of written information and the neglect of other sorts including epigraphic evidence, although

¹ Edwyn Robert Bevan, *The House of Seleucus*, vol. I (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966), 171-80 with sources and literature.

² Jordanka Jurukova, *Coins of the Thracian Tribes and Dynasts* (Sofia: Peter Beron Publishing, 1992), 148.

³ Margarita Tacheva, *History of the Bulgarian lands in Hellenistic and Roman age* (Sofia: "St. Clement of Ohrid" University press, 1997), 22 sq.

⁴ John D. Grainger, *A Seleucid Prosopography and Gazetteer* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 13 sq.

⁵ Peter Delev, *Lysimachus* (Sofia: "St. Clement of Ohrid" University press, 2004), 287 sq.

there is an equal degree of uncertainty for assigning both groups of sources to this ruler. Namely the need to systematize the available sources, which can contribute with more or less probability to clarification of the Thracian campaign of the Syrian king, is the main reason for presenting this text.

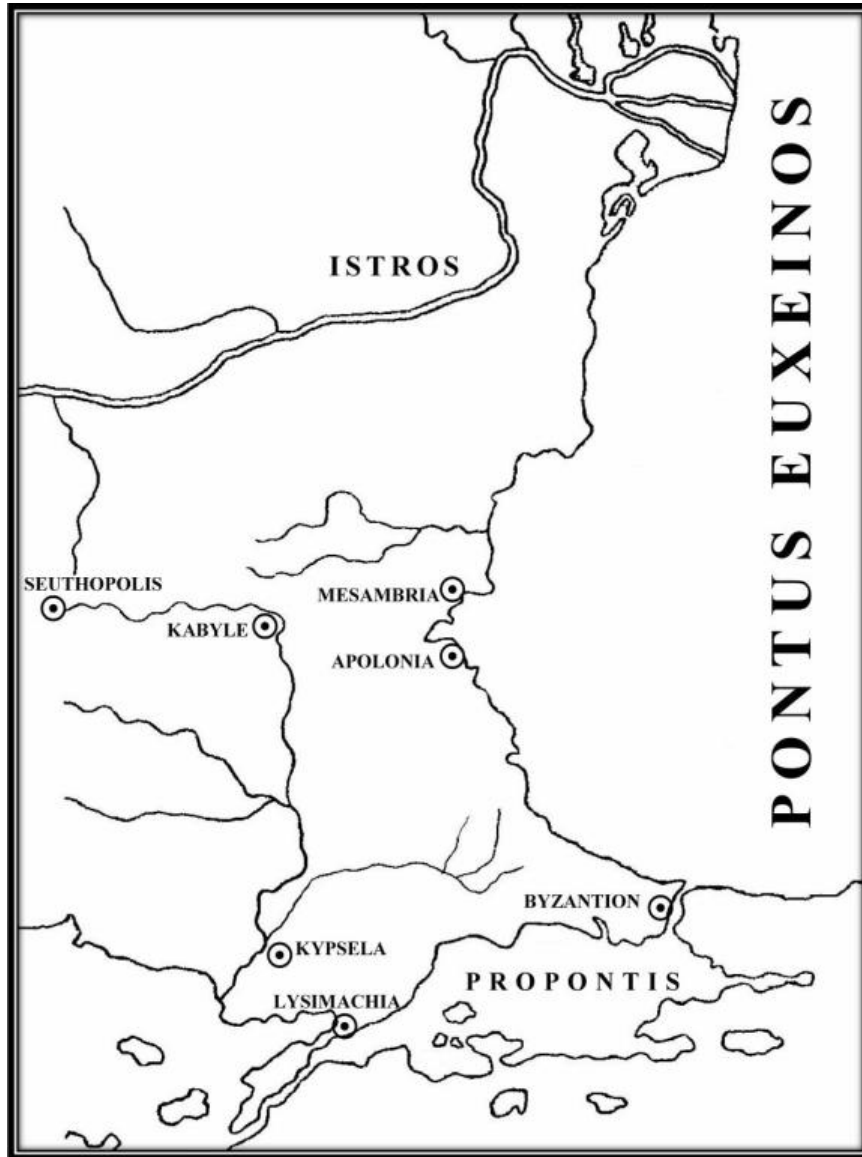


Fig. 1: South-Eastern Thrace with all major cities, which are mentioned in the text below

I. Ancient Sources

It is important to note that all details about the Thracian policy of Antiochus II Theos are too fragmentary and uncertain. For that reason any overview on this topic has a considerable degree of conditionality. The available sources can be classified in four groups: (1) references in ancient literature, (2) epigraphical sources, (3) numismatical evidence and (4) archaeological information.

1. References in Ancient Literature

The most important source associated with the activities of Antiochus II Theos in Thrace is a stratagem of Polyaeus (2nd c. AD) relating to a siege of Kypsela (see Fig. 1):

ANTIOXOS ANTIOXOY. Ἀντίοχος ἐπολιόρκει Κύπελα, Θρᾷτταν πόλιν, ἔχων σὺν αὐτῷ Θρακῶν εὐπατρίδας πολλοὺς, ὧν ἡγοῦντο Τήρης καὶ Δρομichaίτης. Τούτους κοσμήσας στρεπτοῖς χρυσοῖς καὶ ὅπλοις ἀργυροπάστοις προῆλθεν ἐπὶ τὴν μάχην. Οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν Κυπέλων ἰδόντες τοὺς ὁμοφύλους καὶ ὁμογλώσσους πολλῶν χρυσῶ καὶ ἀργύρῳ κεκοσμημένους, μακαρίσαντες αὐτοὺς τῆς μετ' Ἀντιόχου στρατείας, τὰ ὅπλα καταβαλόντες Ἀντιόχῳ προσέθεντο καὶ ἦσαν ἀντὶ πολέμιων σύμμαχοι. (Polyaeus, *Stratagems*, 4.16)

It is reported without a certain context. The Syrian king

had in his army many Thracians of good rank and family, who were commanded by Teres and Dromichaetes. To those he gave gold chains, and arms studded with silver; ornamented with which, they marched out to battle. The men of Kypsela, seeing their ὁμοφύλοι and ὁμογλώσσοι so richly equipped, concluded that they had chosen the better side; so they threw down their arms, and went over to Antiochus, becoming allies instead of enemies.

The ruler is mentioned as Ἀντίοχος Ἀντιόχου, which make the identification with Antiochus II Theos very probable, but other persons in the Seleucid dynasty bear the same name, including the son of Antiochus II – Anthiochus Hierax.⁶ On the other hand, the identification is probable, based on the structure of Polyaeus' work, taking in mind that the quoted stratagem was preceding and following by stories, concerning respectively to Ἀντίοχος Σελεύκος and Ἀντίοχος Ἰέραξ, predecessor and successor of Antiochus II Theos.

Without any explicit reason Antiochus II Theos had been associated with a very brief statement, found in Memnon's "History of Heracleia" (1st c. AD):

Βυζαντίους δὲ Ἀντιόχου πολεμοῦντος, τριήρεσι συνεμάχησαν τεσσαράκοντα οἱ Ἡρακλεῶται, καὶ τὸν πόλεμον παρεσκεύασαν μέχρις ἀπειλῶν προκόψαι. (Fragment 15)

It states, that "when the Byzantines were at war with Antiochus, the Heracleians supported them with 40 triremes, but the war did not proceed beyond threats". The very general nature of this information does not need comment because this kind of comment can hardly be attributed any particular Syrian ruler.

⁶ Grainger, A *Seleucid Prosopography and Gazetteer*, 35 sq.

In a work that is no longer available, Johann Gustav Droysen at one time defined these two reports as being about one and the same campaign of Antiochus II.⁷ Here, however, it must be remembered that the already mentioned Antiochus Hierax, after the defeat in the war against his brother, fled to Thrace, where he was captured by troops of Ptolemy, subsequently escaped from them and finally – around 226 BC – was killed by the Celts.⁸ Despite the presence of the latter in the Thracian lands, it is difficult to assess, as far as possible, whether both written references must be associated with Antiochus Hierax, but such a possibility is supposed only to the second.

In Bulgarian historiography it is unanimously suggested that Τήρης (in some editions Τίρις), who appears in the text of Polyaeus, was identical with Τηρεύς, the epigraphically attested son of Seuthes III.⁹ Launching such a hypothesis only by *argumentum ex silentio* is impossible. More important here is the answer to the question why Teres and Dromichaetes, bearing Thracian names, are called “ὁμοφύλοι” and “ὁμογλώσσοι” to the inhabitants of Kypsela. So far it is difficult to answer because of the few (and at that – later) sources about this polis.¹⁰ Based on the coinage production, Kypsela is usually interpreted as having been the traditional residence of the Thracian kings and dynasts.¹¹

2. Epigraphical sources

A decree of Mesambria found in Apolonia (Sozopol) is associated with Antiochus II Theos, the left half of which is lost.¹²

[ἔδοξε τῷ δάμῳ ὁ δεῖνα τοῦ - - -ο]ν εἶπε· ἐπειδὴ
[ὁ δεῖνα τοῦ δεῖνος - - - - -], ας τᾶς ἐπιμα-
[χίας - - - - -]ς καὶ τεταγμέ-
[νος στραταγὸς - - - - - Ἄν]τιόχου ἐπ’ Ἀ-
5 [πολλωνιάταις - - - εὐνους ὧν διατελεῖ] ποτὶ τὸν δᾶ-
[μον - - - - - εἰσβαλό]ντων δὲ πο-
[λεμίων - - - - -] χ]ώραν ἐγβοά-
[θησε - - - καὶ εὐεργέτας καὶ ἀνὴρ καλ]ὸς καὶ ἀγαθὸ-
[ς γεγένηται - - - - -] δεδόχθαι τῷ

⁷ See literature in Getzel M. Cohen, *The Hellenistic settlements in Europe, the islands and Asia Minor* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 132.

⁸ Grainger, A *Seleucid Prosopography and Gazetteer*, 35 sq.

⁹ Jordanka Jurukova, “The political situation in South-Eastern Thrace around the middle of the 3rd century BC”, *Archaeologia*, 2 (1982): 1-8.

¹⁰ Luisa Loukopoulou. “Thrace from Nestos to Hebros”, *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical poleis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 878.

¹¹ Jurukova, *Coins of the Thracian Tribes and Dynasts*, 150.

¹² Georgi Mihailov. *Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria repertae, volumen I. Inscriptiones orae Ponti Euxini* (Serdicae: Academia Litterarum Bulgarica, 1970), № 388.

- 10 [δάμωι ἐπαινέσαι τὸν δεῖνα ἐπὶ τῇ εὐνοίᾳ καὶ τῇ (?) προαιρ]έσει, ἂν ἔ-
 [χων διατελεῖ εἰς τὸν δᾶμον, καὶ στεφανῶσαι αὐτὸν χρυσέ]ω στεφάνω
 [- - - - - ἐπὶ τᾷς ἐ]χφορᾷς τὰν
 [- - - - -]ς ἀποδαμη-
 [σα - - - - - τῇ πό]λει τοὺς οἰκεί-
 15 [ους - - - - -] δὲ καὶ τὰν ἐπι-
 [μέλειαν - - - - -] στεφανου
 [- - - - - ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τοῦ Ἀπόλλων]ος.

The supplementing of the name [Ἀν]τιόχος in the end, and the position [στρατηγός] in the beginning of the fourth line contribute to the dating of this fragment to 260 – 250 BC . In the second line is found the term ἐπιμα[χία], interpreted as “defensive alliance”. It is said that the king of Syria helped the city against some Celts. However, the fragmentary state of the inscription leaves significant uncertainty in its interpretation.

Similarly, a too fragmentary inscription from Kabyle has dated paleographically to the Hellenistic age (see Fig. 2).¹³

ΤΩ
 ΤΩΙ
 ΕΥΜΑ
 ΒΑΣΙ
 5 ΤΗΣΠ
 ΓΑΛΛΑ
 ΤΑΙΚ
 ΙΔΙΑ
 ΤΩΝ



Fig. 2:
The inscription from Kabyle

With the addition of a few words this may be interpreted as concerning relations of Kabyle with the Celtic kingdom in Thrace, or with the presence of Antiochus II Theos.¹⁴ Such a hypothesis seems very doubtful, though possible, because it is based on several letters, the context for the use of which is unknown.

¹³ Velizar Velkov. “Inscriptions from Kabyle”, *Kabyle*, vol. 2 (Sofia: BAS, 1991), № 2.

¹⁴ Ibid., 11-2. See also Julij Emilov. “The Galatians and Kabyle – a fragmentary inscription and its context”, in *Stephanos Archaeologicus in honorem Professoris Ludmili Getov* (Sofia: “St. Clement of Ohrid” Sofia University Press, 2005), 324-32.

An important epigraphic document may be attributed to the foreign policy of Antiochus II Theos without similar limitations.¹⁵ The inscription is dated to the end of

- 0 [ὁμνύω Δία, Γῆν, Ἥλιον - - -]
- 1 [καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους θεοὺς πάντ]ας
[καὶ πάσας ἐμμεν]εῖν ἐν τῇ
[φιλίαι καὶ συμμα]χίαι ἣν πεπόημα[ι]
[- - - -] τῶν ἐκγόνων
- 5 [- - - -] καθότι συντέ-
[θειμαι καὶ δι]αφυλάξω τὴν πόλιν
[ἐν αὐτονομίαι καὶ] ἐν δημοκραται
[- - - -]σαν καὶ ἀφρούρητον
[καὶ ἀφορολόγ]ητον, καὶ ἐάν τις πολεμῇ
- 10 [ἢ τῇ πόλει τ]ῇ Λυσιμαχέων ἢ τοῖς φρου-
[ρίοις ἢ τῇ χ]ώρῃ, βοηθήσω καθότι συν-
[τέθειμαι] χρώμενος λιμέσι τοῖς Λυσιμα-
[χέων ὁρ]μητηρίοις, δι' [ο]ὓς ἂν ἀποδείξω
[καὶ ὧ]σπερ ἐν τῇ ὁμολογίαι διέσταλ-
- 15 [μαι], καὶ οὐκ ἐγκαταλείψω τὴν συμ-
μαχί[αν ἣν πεπ]όημαι πρὸς Λυσιμα-
χεῖς τρόπῳ οὐθενὶ οὐδὲ παρευ-
[ρ]έσει οὐδεμιᾷ, ἐμμενόντων
[κ]α[ὶ] αὐ[τ]ῶν ἐν τῇ πρὸς ἐμὲ συμ-
- 20 μαχίαι· [εὐ]ορκοῦντι μέμ μοι εὖ εἴη,
[ἐφ]ορ[κοῦ]ντι δὲ [τ]άναντία·
ὅρκος Λυσιμαχέων·
ὁ[μν]ύ[ω] Δ[ι]ά, Γῆν, Ἥλιον, Ποσειδῶ,
[Δήμη]τρα, Ἀπόλλω, Ἄρη, Ἀθηνᾶν,

¹⁵ Peter Frisch. *Die Inschriften von Ilion. Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien*, 3 (Bonn: Habelt, 1975), № 45 (B); Matthias Barth and Josef Stauber, eds., *Inschriften Mysia & Troas* (Packard Humanities Institute, CD # 7 Troas, 1996), № 173; Michel Austin. *The Hellenistic World from Alexander to the Roman Conquest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 310.

- 25 [Ἀρ]εῖ[α]ν [καὶ] τῇ[ν] Ταυροπόλον καὶ τοὺς
 ἄ[λλους] θ[ε]οὺς πάντας καὶ πάσας
 [ἐμ]με[νεῖ]ν ἐν τῇ φιλίας καὶ συμμαχίας
 [ἦν πεπό]ημαι πρὸς βασιλέα Ἀντίοχον
 [καὶ τοὺς] ἐκγόνους αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐάν τις
 30 π[ολεμῇ] αὐτῷ συμμαχήσω καὶ οὐκ ἐγ-
 [κ]αταλείψω τὴν συμμαχίαν ἦν
 [π]επ[ό]ημαι [π]ρὸς βασιλέα Ἀντίοχον
 τρόπ[ωι] οὐθενὶ οὐδὲ παρ<ευρ>έσει οὐδεμιᾷ,
 ἐμμενόντος καὶ βασιλέως Ἀντιόχου
 35 ἐν τῇ συμμαχίᾳ· εὐορκοῦντι μὲ μοι
 εὖ εἴη, ἐφιορκοῦντι δὲ τάναντία.

The 80's or beginning of the 60's of the third century BC. The name Antiochus I Soter (281 – 261 BC) can be recognized in the text, Antiochus II or other, but at any rate an eponymous ancestor of Antiochus III the Great (223-187 BC).¹⁶ It is a treaty of alliance between one of the first two Seleucid kings, mentioned above, and Lysimachia, read on a marble fragment from Ilion.¹⁷ It emphasizes the autonomy and democracy in the city, the lack of a garrison of Antiochus and freedom from taxes. Military actions provided an opportunity for mutual aid, which is explicitly highlighted in an attack on the city and its territory. For securing this aid, the Syrian king could have the ports of Lysimachia as his starting point. The latter indicates that the military aid is expected from the sea and the potential enemy to be found inside the mainland. Moreover, it is not a precedent in the history of Thracian Chersonese in earlier and later political events.¹⁸

3. Numismatical Evidence

There are significant difficulties with the study of the Seleucid coinage and often emissions of certain rulers were attributed to others. This fact must not be forgotten in their interpretation.¹⁹

Observations of experts on the spread of coins relating to Antiochus II in the Thracian lands are united around their concentration in Eastern Thrace, in several points: Lysimachia,

¹⁶ John Ma. *Antiochus III and the cities of Western Asia Minor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 266-7.

¹⁷ Stanley M. Burstein. *Translated documents of Greece & Rome, vol. 3. The Hellenistic Age from the battle of Ipsos to the death of Kleopatra VII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 29-30, № 22.

¹⁸ Julia Tsvetkova. *History of the Thracian Chersonese – from the Trojan War until the time of the Roman conquest* (Sofia: Faber, 2008), 121 sq.

¹⁹ Otto Mørholm. *Early Hellenistic coinage – from the accession of Alexander to the Peace of Apamea, 336 – 188 BC* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 122 sq.

Apolonia and mostly in Kabyle.²⁰ Detailed studies are available only to the found concerning Kabyle coins of the Syrian ruler.²¹ Among the most important conclusions, based on his coinage and its contramarks in this city, is the specification of the dating of Antiochus' presence in Thrace around 250-246 BC.²²

According to new studies, a coin emission of Antiochus II Theos had been minted in Byzantion. Only one very worn coin (see Fig. 3) has been published. On the obverse is presented Apollo with a laurel wreath, on the reverse – Kithara (lyre) and the inscription: [β]ασιλε[ύς Ἀντιόχου]. It is dated to the third quarter of the 3rd century BC.²³



Fig. 3: Coin of Antiochus II Theos, minted in Byzantion (250 – 225 BC)

Image source: <http://www.s137585473.websitehome.co.uk/> [accessed October 5, 2012]

The volume of coins, whose burial is dated in the years around the Thracian campaign of Antiochus II, is too few. Only one coin, found near the village of Novo Selo, District of Stara Zagora, is dated to 275-250 BC.²⁴ Another four, dated to 250-200 BC come from the vicinities of Komotini²⁵, Plovdiv²⁶, Varna²⁷ and Silistra.²⁸ Obviously, this information cannot be directly linked to the activity of Antiochus II in Thrace and so cannot help to clarify some essential points for this study.

²⁰ Jurukova, *Coins of the Thracian Tribes and Dynasts*, 148.

²¹ Dimitar Draganov. *The Coinage of Kabyle* (Sofia: DIOS, 1993), pass.

²² Ibid., 66.

²³ William Stancomb. *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, vol. 11. The William Stancomb collection of coins of the Black Sea region* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), № 57.

²⁴ Margaret Thompson, Otto Mørkholm, Colin Kraay. *An Inventory of Greek Coin Hoards* (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1973), № 861.

²⁵ Ibid., № 868.

²⁶ Ibid., № 869.

²⁷ Ibid., № 871.

²⁸ Ibid., № 870.

4. Archaeological information

It is not necessary here to repeated that the archaeological discoveries in Seuthopolis, commented upon by Margarita Tacheva²⁹, which documented the destruction of the city by Hellenistic siege equipment. Yet this evidence cannot be fully exploited in context with evidence from the other excavated objects in Southeastern Thrace because as whole the information is not systematized and even their dating is still relative. Furthermore, archaeological information from some places testify to the dynamic development of defense equipment, whose modifications at the moment is impossible to associate with particular political events.

Some interesting possibilities to thinking arise from changes in the foreign economic relations of Kabyle, documented by amphora stamps. Recent studies show that stamps disappeared evidencing imports from Thassos, Amphipolis and Herotimos in the middle of the third century, but contacts with Rhodes, Sinope, Knidos and Kos were preserved.³⁰ However, the available information does not allow determining whether this change can be attributed to the event in question here.

II. Interpretation

The review of the current state of the available source, presented above, shows that little from the traditionally employed historical sources about the Thracian policy of Antiochus II Theos can be considered as indisputable. Ancient tradition cannot provide unambiguous information on the activity of this ruler in Thrace. For now, the coins may be considered the only indisputable sources, but more promising are the archaeological ones.

There is a complete lack of evidence about the thesis for military actions of this Seleucid king against the Greek cities on the Thracian coasts adopted in modern historiography.³¹ The available information rather implies the existence of the opposite hypothesis. Arguments in this direction, except the epigraphic data, is provided by some of the numismatical evidence: the minting of a silver issue of Antiochus II, dated conventionally to 250-225 BC is placed in the supposedly besieged Byzantion.³² Coins of this city, as illustrated by the hoard of Mektepini (in modern Central Turkey), circulated together with the coin production of other cities in Thrace, such as Callatis, Odessos, Perinthus, Lysimachia and Kabyle. It must be noted that its burial is dated to around 190 BC.³³

The situation in inland Thrace seems to be different. The political picture is very unclear, due to the lack of sufficient data about the interweaving of the interests of the claimants to the legacy of Lysimachus, the unknown number of the Thracian dynastic houses, the Celtic

²⁹ Tacheva, *History of the Bulgarian lands*, 26 sq. with literature. See also Margarita Tatscheva. *Seuthes III, Seuthopolis and Kabyle, 341 – 252 v. Chr. nach den epigraphischen und numismatischen Angaben* (Sofia: Agato, 2000), 5-50.

³⁰ Lyudmil Getov. *Amphorae and amphora stamps from Kabyle, 4th – 2nd c. BC* (Sofia: “St. Clement of Ohrid” University Press, 1995), 114 and most clearly on the table in p. 190.

³¹ See the older literature in Peter Delev. “From Corupedion towards Pydna – Thrace in the Third century”, in *Thracia 15, In honour of Alexander Fol's 70th anniversary* (Sofia: Tangra TanNakRa Publishing House, 2003), 113 sq.

³² Stancomb, *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum*, № 57.

³³ Thompson et al., *An Inventory of Greek Coin Hoards*, № 1410.

invaders and ambitions of the Ptolemies.³⁴ The enemies of the Lysimachians, unnamed in the third mentioned above epigraphic monument, remain enigmatic. However, there are several opportunities for suggestion, especially having in mind the campaign of Antiochus II against Seuthopolis and the destruction of the city, dated around 250 BC.³⁵ On the one hand, they could be identified with the inhabitants of Kypsela, thus perhaps explaining the strategem of Polyaeus. On the other hand, the anonymous ruler of Seuthopolis may have been a possible enemy of the Lysimachians. We should not exclude the possibility that the two political forces, residing in Kypsela and in Seuthopolis acted in unison to a certain point.

These considerations permit presentation of a working hypothesis on the Thracian campaign of Antiochus II Theos, which can be limited to the following points:

- (1) Strained relations between the Greek cities and their Thracian hinterland allowed the Syrian king to intervene actively in Southeastern Thrace, as evidenced by the contract with Lysimachia.
- (2) As guarantor of the set clauses in this contract, Antiochus II probably undertook military intervention in the Thracian lands, which aspects are not known, but their echo is probably stored in the strategem of Polyaeus. The anecdote emphasizes the authority of some local dynasts, which might have chosen to be allies of Antiochus in his conflict with a powerful ruler of the interior (?), but so far there is no information in this direction.
- (3) The main object of the intervention was the so far anonymous ruler residig in Seuthopolis. Destroying the danger of Seuthopolis led to the documented prosperity of some of the poleis in Southeastern Thrace and explains the thanksgiving decree of Apollonia.

The date of the campaign cannot be specified with certainty for now. According to some authorities the expedition must have been carried out in the beginning of Antiochus's kingship (Wilken) or before 259 BC (Droysen). A second group of researchers suggest around 255 BC (Niese), but others suggest generally the last years of his reign (Beloch).³⁶ New numismatic studies, as was already mentioned above, limited the search in the period 250-246 BC.

As a final note to this work, it is important to emphasize that the proposed hypothetical reconstruction has a significant degree of conditionality, because of the lack of enough sources. A more precise definition in terms of context and details of Antiochus's campaign will depend on future detailed studies on this problem.

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³⁵ Tacheva, *History of the Bulgarian lands*, 22 sq.

³⁶ Cohen, *The Hellenistic settlements in Europe*, 132 with literature.

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