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Lysander, Serapis and the School of Theophrastus

Lysander, Serapis ve Theophrastus
Okulu

Selene PSOMA¹

¹National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece, Athens
· selenepsoma@gmx.com · ORCID > 0000-0000-0000-0000

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LYSANDER, SERAPIS AND THE SCHOOL OF THEOPHRASTUS

Polymnia Athanassiadi vale!

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to draw attention to two stories found in the works of Plutarch. These are Lysander's last efforts to obtain oracles and overthrow the Spartan Constitution and the Sinopic tradition about the aetiological myth of the introduction of Sarapis' cult in Alexandria. There are several common points between the two: Plutarch, kingship, the young boy and his divine paternity, the Black Sea area, the travel by sea, Delphi, Apollo and oracles. After analyzing and comparing these common points, we argue for a shared cultural background in the early Hellenistic period. This background consists of the work of a historian and a philosopher of this period, Theophrastus, the successor of Aristotle in the Peripatetic School. Plutarch mentions that the story he narrated in *Lysander's Life* about the admiral's last effort to obtain oracles from Delphi and to make a change in the Spartan constitution by introducing the election of the king from the *tharistoi* goes back to a philosopher and historian. We know that he considered Theophrastus to be both a philosopher and a historian. The most famous pupil of Theophrastus, Demetrius of Phaleron, moved to Alexandria after 307 BC, became a worshipper of Serapis and wrote books about Serapis. Other students of Theophrastus were also great worshippers of this newly created god. This combined evidence permits us to advance the hypothesis that the story of Lysander served as a model for the construction of the Sinopic tradition about the introduction of Serapis' cult in early Ptolemaic Egypt.

Keywords: Lysander, Delphic Oracles, Apollo, Black Sea, Serapis, Theophrastus.



LYSANDER, SERAPİS VE THEOPHRASTUS OKULU

ÖZ

Bu makalenin amacı Plutarkhos'un eserlerinde bulunan iki hikâyeye dikkat çekmektir. Bunlar Lysander'in kehanetler elde etmek ve Sparta Anayasası'nı yıkmak için gösterdiği son çaba ile Sarapis kültürünün İskenderiyeye girişine dair etiyolojik mit hakkındaki Sinop geleneğidir. İkisi arasında bir dizi ortak nokta vardır: Plutarkhos, krallık, genç oğlan ve genç oğlanın tanrısal babası, Karadeniz bölgesi, deniz yolculuğu, Delphi, Apollon ve kehanetlerdir. Bu ortak noktaları analiz edip karşılaştırdıktan sonra, erken Helenistik dönemde ortak bir kültürel arka plan olduğunu savunuyoruz. Bu arka plan, bu dönemin tarihçisi ve filozofu, Peripatetik

Okulu'nda Aristoteles'in halefi olan Theophrastus'un çalışmalarından oluşmaktadır. Plutarkhos, Lysander'in Yaşamı'nda anlattığı, amiralin Delphi'den kehanetler elde etmek ve kralın thearistoïden seçilmesini sağlayarak Sparta anayasasında bir değişiklik yapmak için gösterdiği son çaba hakkındaki hikayenin bir filozof ve tarihçiye dayandığını söyler. Theophrastus'u hem bir filozof hem de bir tarihçi olarak gördüğünü biliyoruz. Theophrastus'un en ünlü öğrencisi Phaleronlu Demetrius MÖ 307'den sonra İskenderiye'ye taşınmış, Serapis'e ibadet etmeye başlamış ve Serapis hakkında kitaplar yazmıştır. Theophrastus'un diğer öğrencileri de bu yeni yaratılan tanrıya büyük bir inançla tapmaktaydı. Bu bir araya getirilmiş kanıtlar, Lysander'in hikayesinin, erken Ptolemaios Mısır'ında Serapis kültürünün tanıtılmasıyla ilgili Sinop geleneğinin inşası için bir model olarak hizmet ettiği hipotezini geliştirmemize izin vermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Lysander, Delphi Kehanetleri, Apollon, Karadeniz, Serapis, Theophrastus.



INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to draw attention to two stories found in the works of Plutarch, present their common points, argue for a shared cultural early Hellenistic background and show that the first one served as a model for the second. The two stories are: (a) Lysander's last effort to obtain oracles and overthrow the Spartan Constitution and (b) the Sinopic tradition about the aetiological myth of the introduction of Sarapis' cult.¹

Lysander

Although Xenophon, most probably following Lacratidas' advice to Agesilaus,² chose not to say a word,³ the conspiracy of Lysander to overthrow Spartan kings-

The author of the present study had the good fortune to be among Professor's Athanassiadi students, to attend her courses and become part of Polymnia's "learned world". A great researcher and an inspired teacher, à la manière d'Apollonius of Tyana, Professor Athanassiadi was then and still is a very much talented speaker. Attending her courses was for me an experience comparable to that of her favorite people, the inhabitants of Asia Minor, while hearing Aelius Aristides. It is with gratitude and respect that I offer these few pages in honor of my teacher on a subject that I hope will interest her. I am very grateful to my colleague and friend Eleni Fassa for precious comments and discussion.

¹ For Lysander's plans see Shipley 1997, 249-265. For the Sinopic version of the introduction of the cult of Sarapis see Fassa 2011, 153-156. See also Fassa 2013, 114-139; Larson 2016, 345-354.

² Ephorus FGh 70 F 207 (Plut. Lys. 30); Mor. 229f. See Mor. 212c : *τις τῶν γερόντων*.

³ Xenophon is very discreet as far as the royal families of Sparta and Spartan military nobility are concerned. He reproduced the dialogue of Agesilaus and Leotyichides but omitted the love affair of Leotyichides' mother with Alcibiades. He also omitted Lysander's efforts to overthrow the Spartan constitution. See Flower 1988, 127; Cawkwell 1979, 33-38 (list of omissions).

hip was well known in the 4th century BC Greece. Aristotle mentioned the story twice but quite vaguely.⁴ Ephorus offered more details and was the source of both Diodorus and Plutarch.⁵ What we learn is that Lysander's plan was to elect the king from the *aristoi*: ποιείσθαι τὴν αἵρεσιν (sc. τοῦ βασιλέως) ἐκ τῶν ἀρίστων.⁶ Lysander visited Delphi⁷ and Dodona⁸ but failed to persuade the priests to collaborate with him.⁹ He also tried with the priests of Ammon in the Libyan desert because his family had ties with the royal family of Libya.¹⁰ He offered them a lot of money, but the priests of Ammon refused to collaborate with the Spartan general and denounced him.¹¹ Only after Lysander's death did King Agesilaus II learn about this conspiracy.¹² This was the part of the story for which Ephorus was Plutarch's source. Plutarch narrated another story: Lysander's last hope was a young boy from Pontus, whose mother claimed he was Apollo's son.¹³ This part of the story occurs in the 26th chapter of Plutarch's *Life of Lysander*. This was the story:

Plut. *Lys.* 26: (1) Ἦν γύναιον ἐν Πόντῳ κύειν ἐξ Ἀπόλλωνος φάμενον, ᾧ πολλοὶ μὲν, ὡς εἰκὸς ἦν, ἠπίσταν, πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ προσεῖχον, ὥστε καὶ τεκούσης παιδάριον ἄρρεν ὑπὸ πολλῶν καὶ γνωρίμων σπουδάζεσθαι τὴν ἐκτροφὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν. ὄνομα δὲ τῷ παιδί Σειληνὸς ἐκ δὴ τινος αἰτίας ἐτέθη. ταύτην λαβὼν ὁ Λύσανδρος ἀρχὴν, τὰ λοιπὰ παρ' ἑαυτοῦ προσετεκταίετο καὶ συνύφαινε, οὐκ ὀλίγοις χρώμενος οὐδὲ φαύλοις τοῦ μύθου συναγωνισταῖς, (2) οἱ τὴν τε φήμην τῆς γενέσεως τοῦ παιδὸς εἰς πίστιν ἀνυπόπτως προηγόν, ἄλλον τε λόγον ἐκ Δελφῶν ἀντικομίσαντες εἰς τὴν Σπάρτην κατέβαλον καὶ διέσπειραν, ὡς ἐν γράμμασιν ἀπορρητοῖς ὑπὸ τῶν ἱερέων φυλάττοιτο παμπάλαιοι δὴ τινες χρησμοί, καὶ λαβεῖν οὐκ ἔξεστι τούτους οὐδ' ἐντυχεῖν θεμιτόν, εἰ μὴ τις ἄρα γεγρονῶς ἐξ Ἀπόλλωνος ἀφίκοιτο τῷ πολλῷ χρόνῳ καὶ σύνθημα τοῖς φυλάττουσι τῆς

⁴ Arist. *Pol.* 1301b19-20: ἐτι πρὸς τὸ μέρος τι κινήσει τῆς πολιτείας, οἷον ἀρχὴν τινα καταστήσει ἢ ἀνελεῖν, ὥσπερ ἐν Λακεδαιμονίᾳ φασὶ Λύσανδρον τινες ἐπιχειρήσει καταλύσει τὴν βασιλείαν καὶ Πανσανίαν τὸν βασιλέα τὴν ἐφορείαν; 1306b31-33: ὅταν τινὲς ἀτιμάζωνται μεγάλοι ὄντες καὶ μηθενὸς ἦττους κατ' ἀρετὴν ὑπὸ τινῶν ἐντιμωτέρων, οἷον Λύσανδρος ὑπὸ τῶν βασιλέων.

⁵ Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F 206 (Plut. *Lys.* 25); Nepos *Lys.* 3.2-4; Diod. Sic. 14.13.5-8; Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F 207 (Plut. *Lys.* 30); Plut. *Ages.* 20.3; *Mor.* 212c, 229f. See also Schepens 1993: 169-203 and esp. 200 with n. 89; 1999: 148.

⁶ Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F 207 (*Lys.* 26 and 30). Cf. Plut. *Ages.* 20.2-3; *Mor.* 212c and 229f; Diod. Sic. 14.13.8. See also Arist. *Pol.* 1301b19-20; 1306b31-33.

⁷ Lysander was not the first to try to receive oracular predictions and attract a favorable tradition of prophecy. Cylon attempted his coup after receiving an oracle promising him the tyranny of Athens. Cylon misinterpreted the oracle and the attempt failed (Hdt. 1.126). The Heraclids of Lydia had their power approved by an oracle (Hdt. 1.7) as did Gyges (Hdt. 1.13). Cypselus had his rule of Corinth prophesied by the oracle at Delphi (Hdt. 5.92b, 92e). Battus of Cyrene received the approval of Delphi that confirmed his position and that of his family (Hdt. 4.155). His descendant Arcesilaus had his position confirmed by Delphi (Hdt. 4.163). Miltiades received oracular support for his leadership of the Dolonci (Hdt. 6.34).

⁸ For Dodona see Meyer 2013.

⁹ Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F 206 (Plut. *Lys.* 25).

¹⁰ Diod. Sic. 14.13.5-8. See also Malkin 1990: 541-5 with n. 1-2.

¹¹ See supra n. 9.

¹² Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F 207 (Plut. *Lys.* 26, 30); *Ages.* 20.2-3; *Mor.* 212c, 229f; Diod. Sic. 14.13.8.

¹³ For Shipley 1997, 251 ad *Ages.* 20.3: "Plutarch omits this in Agesilaos, since it was planned before the accession of Agesilaos and failed before his return from Asia".

γενέσεως γνώριμον παρασχών κομίσαιτο τὰς δέλτους ἐν αἷς ἦσαν (3) οἱ χρησμοί. τούτων δὲ προκατεσκευασμένων ἔδει τὸν Σειληνὸν ἐλθόντα τοὺς χρησμοὺς ἀπαιτεῖν ὡς Ἀπόλλωνος παῖδα, τοὺς δὲ συμπράττοντας τῶν ἱερέων ἐξακριβοῦν ἕκαστα καὶ διαπυθάνεσθαι περὶ τῆς γενέσεως, τέλος δὲ πεπεισμένους δῆθεν ὡς Ἀπόλλωνος υἱὸς δεῖξαι τὰ γράμματα, τὸν δὲ ἀναγνῶναι πολλῶν παρόντων ἄλλας τε μαντείας καὶ ἧς ἔνεκα τᾶλλα πέπλασται τὴν περὶ τῆς βασιλείας, ὡς ἄμεινον εἶη καὶ λῳίον Σπαρτιάταις ἐκ τῶν ἀρίστων πολιτῶν αἰρουμένοις τοὺς βασιλέας. (4) Ἦδη δὲ τοῦ Σειληνοῦ μειρακίου γεγονότος καὶ πρὸς τὴν πράξιν ἤκοντος, ἐξέπεσε τοῦ δράματος ὁ Λύσανδρος ἀτομία τῶν ὑποκριτῶν καὶ συνεργῶν ἐνός, ὡς ἐπ' αὐτὸ τὸ ἔργον ἦλθεν, ἀποδειλιάσαντος καὶ ἀναδύντος. οὐ μὴν ἐφωράθη γε τοῦ Λυσάνδρου ζῶντος οὐθέν, ἀλλὰ μετὰ τὴν τελευτήν.

There was a woman in Pontus who declared that she was with child by Apollo. Many disbelieved her, as was natural, but many also lent an ear to her, so that when she gave birth to a male child, many notable persons took an interest in its care and rearing. For some reason or other, the name given to the boy was Silenus. Lysander took these circumstances for his foundation, and supplied the rest of his cunning fabric himself, making use of not a few, not yet insignificant, champions of the tale, who brought the story of the boy's birth into credit without exciting suspicion. They also brought back another response from Delphi, and caused it to be circulated in Sparta, which declared that sundry very ancient oracles were kept in secret writings by the priests there, and that it was not possible to get these, not even lawful to read them, unless someone born from Apollo should come after a long lapse of time, give the keepers an intelligible token of his birth, and obtain the tablets containing the oracles. The way being thus prepared, Silenus was to come and demand the oracles as Apollo's son, and the priests who were in the secret were to insist on precise answers to all their questions about his birth, and finally, persuaded, forsooth, that he was the son of Apollo, were to show him the writing. Then Silenus, in the presence of many witnesses, was to read aloud the prophecies, especially the one relating to the kingdom, for the sake of which the whole scheme had been invented, and which declared that it was more for the honour and interest of the Spartans to choose their kings from the best citizens. But when at last Silenus was grown to be a youth, and was ready for the business, Lysander's play was ruined for him by the cowardice of one of the actors, or co-workers, who, just as he came to the point, lost his courage and drew back. However, all this was actually found out, not while Lysander was alive, but after his death. (trsl. B. Perrin)

Sarapis

To begin with, we need to stress that the cults of the Egyptian deities first appeared at Sinope, a city of Paphlagonia in the Pontus, only after the 2nd century AD.¹⁴

¹⁴ Podvin 2012, 207-212.

However, different sources, mainly from the Roman period, tell how Sarapis' cult was introduced to early Hellenistic Egypt from Sinope.¹⁵ Three of these sources briefly mention Serapis' relation to Sinope.¹⁶ The other three, Plutarch, Tacitus and the Scholia in Diogenes Periegeticus, present a very similar version. The Sinopic version of the introduction of the cult of Serapis is to be found in two works of Plutarch: in *De Iside et Osiride* and *De Sollertia Animalium*. Tacitus dedicated a chapter of the fourth book of his *Histories*. This was also the case of one of the versions of the Scholia to *Oikoumenes Periegesis* of Dionysius Periegetes.

Plut. *De Iside et Osiride* 28 (*Mor.* 361f): Πτολεμαῖος δὲ ὁ Σωτὴρ ὄναρ εἶδε τὸν ἐν Σινώπῃ τοῦ Πλούτωνος κολοσσόν, οὐκ ἐπιστάμενος οὐδ' ἑωρακῶς πρότερον οἶος ἦν τὴν μορφήν, κελεύοντα κομίσει τὴν ταχίστην αὐτὸν εἰς Ἀλεξάνδρειαν. ἀγνοοῦντι δ' αὐτῷ καὶ ἀποροῦντι, ποῦ καθίδρυται, καὶ διηγουμένῳ τοῖς φίλοις τὴν ὄψιν εὐρέθη πολυπλανῆς ἄνθρωπος ὄνομα Σωσίβιος, ἐν Σινώπῃ φάμενος ἑωρακεῖναι τοιοῦτον κολοσσόν, οἷον ὁ βασιλεὺς ἰδεῖν ἔδοξεν. ἔπεμψεν οὖν Σωτέλη καὶ Διονύσιον, οἱ χρόνῳ πολλῷ καὶ μῶλις, οὐκ ἄνευ μέντοι θείας προνοίας, ἤγαγον ἐκκλέψαντες.

Ptolemy saw in a dream the colossal statue of Pluto in Sinope, not knowing nor having ever seen how it looked, and in his dream the statue bade him convey it with all speed to Alexandria. He had no information and no means of knowing where the statue was situated, but as he related the vision to his friends there was discovered for him a much travelled man by the name of Sosibius, who said that he had seen in Sinope just such a great statue as the king thought he saw. Ptolemy, therefore, sent Soteles and Dionysius, who, after a considerable time and with great difficulty, and not without the help of divine providence, succeeded in stealing the statue and bringing it away. (trsl. F.C. Babbitt)

Plut. *De sollertia animalium* 36 (*Mor.* 984a8-b9): ἱστοροῦσι δὲ καὶ τοὺς πεμφθέντας εἰς Σινώπην ὑπὸ Πτολεμαίου τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἐπὶ τὴν Σαράπιδος κομιδὴν, Σωτέλη καὶ Διονύσιον, ἀπωσθέντας ἀνέμῳ βιαίῳ κομίζεσθαι παρὰ γνώμην ὑπὲρ Μαλέαν, ἐν δεξιᾷ Πελοπόννησον ἔχοντας, εἶτα ῥεμβομένους καὶ δυσθυμοῦντας αὐτοὺς προφανέντα δελφίνα πρῶραθεν ὥσπερ ἐκκαλεῖσθαι καθηγούμενον εἰς τὰ ναύλοχα καὶ σάλους μαλακοὺς ἔχοντα τῆς χώρας καταμένειν ἀσφαλεῖς, ἄχρις οὗ τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον ἄγων καὶ παραπέμπων τὸ πλοῖον εἰς Κίρραν κατέστησεν. ὄθεν

¹⁵ Plut. *Mor.* 361f; 984a8-b9; Tac. *Hist.* 4.83; Clemens *Protrepticus* 4.48.1-6; Cyrillus (of Alexandria) *Ad Iulianum* 1.16.1-16; Scholia ad Dion. Perieg. 2.55.1-28; Theophilus *Ad Autolyc.* 1.9.

¹⁶ Clemens *Protrepticus* 4.48.1-6: Οἱ μὲν γὰρ αὐτὸν (sc. τὸν Αἰγύπτιον Σαάραπιν) ἱστοροῦσιν χαριστήριον ὑπὸ Σινωπέων Πτολεμαίῳ τῷ Φιλαδέλφῳ τῷ Αἰγυπτίῳ πεμφθῆναι βασιλεῖ, ὃς λιμῷ τρυχομένους αὐτοὺς ἀπ' Αἰγύπτου μεταπεμγαμένους σίτον [ὁ Πτολεμαῖος] ἀνεκτήσατο, εἶναι δὲ τὸ ξόανον τοῦτο ἄγαλμα Πλούτωνος; Cyrillus of Alexandria *Ad Iulianum* 1.16.1-16: Ἐκατοστῆ εἰκοστῆ τετάρτη ὀλυμπιάδι, Πτολεμαίου τῆς Αἰγύπτου βασιλεύοντος τοῦ ἐπικλην φιλαδέλφου, τὸν Σάραπιν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ φασὶν ἐλθεῖν ἐκ Σινώπης, τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ εἶναι τῷ Πλούτωνι; Thphr. *Ad Autolyc.* 1.9: ... καὶ Σάραπιν τὸν ἀπὸ Σινώπης φυγάδα εἰς Ἀλεξάνδρειαν γεγονότα...

ἀναβατήριον θύσαντες ἔγνωσαν ὅτι δεῖ δυεῖν ἀγαλμάτων τὸ μὲν τοῦ Πλούτωνος ἀνελεῖσθαι καὶ κομίζειν τὸ δὲ τῆς Κόρης ἀπομάξασθαι καὶ καταλιπεῖν.

They also relate that Soteles and Dionysius, the men sent by Ptolemy Soter to Sinope to bring back Serapis, were driven against their will by a violent wind off course beyond Malea, with the Peloponnesus on their right. When they were lost and discouraged, a dolphin appeared by the prow and, as it were, invited them to follow and led them into such parts as had safe roadsteads with but a gentle swell, by conducting and escorting the vessel in this manner, it brought them to Cirrha. Whence it came about that when they had offered thanksgiving for their safe landing, they came to see that of the two statues they should take away the one of Pluto, but should merely take an impress of that of Persephone and leave it behind. (trsl. H. Cherniss and W.C. Helmbold)

Tac. Hist. 4.83: Origo dei nondum nostris auctoribus celebrata: Aegyptiorum antistites sic memorant, Ptolemaeo regi, qui Macedonum primus Aegypti opes firmavit, cum Alexandriae recens conditae moenia templaque et religiones adderet, oblatum per quietem decore eximio et maiore quam humana specie iuvenem, qui moneret ut fidissimis amicorum in Pontum missis effigiem suam acciret; laetum id regno magnamque et inclutam sedem fore quae excepisset: simul visum eundem iuvenem in caelum igne plurimo attolli. Ptolemaeus omine et miraculo excitus sacerdotibus Aegyptiorum, quibus mos talia intellegere, nocturnos visus aperit. atque illis Ponti et externorum parum gnaris, Timotheum Atheniensem e gente Eumolpidarum, quem ut antistitem caerimoniarum Eleusine exciverat, quaenam illa superstitio, quod numen, interrogat. Timotheus quaesitis qui in Pontum meassent, cognoscit urbem illic Sinopen, nec procul templum vetere inter accolae fama Iovis Ditis: namque et muliebrem effigiem adsistere quam plerique Proserpinam vocent. sed Ptolemaeus, ut sunt ingenia regum, pronus ad formidinem, ubi securitas rediit, voluptatum quam religionum adpetens negligere paulatim aliasque ad curas animum vertere, donec eadem species terribilior iam et instantior exitium ipsi regnoque denuntiaret ni iussa patrarentur. tum legatos et dona Scydrothemidi regi is tunc Sinopensibus imperitabat) expediri iubet praecepitque navigatoris ut Pythicum Apollinem adeant. illis mare secundum, sors oraculi haud ambigua: irent simulacrumque patris sui reveherent, sororis relinquerent.

The origin of this god has not yet been generally treated by our authors: the Egyptian priests tell the following story, that when King Ptolemy, the first of the Macedonians to put the power of Egypt on a firm foundation, was giving the new city of Alexandria walls, temples, and religious rites, there appeared to him in his sleep a vision of a young man of extraordinary beauty and of more than human stature, who warned him to send his most faithful friends to Pontus and bring his statue hither; the vision said that this act would be a happy thing for the kingdom and that the city that received the god would be great and famous: after these words the youth seemed

to be carried to heaven in a blaze of fire. Ptolemy, moved by this miraculous omen, disclosed this nocturnal vision to the Egyptian priests, whose business it is to interpret such things. When they proved to know little of Pontus and foreign countries, he questioned Timotheus, an Athenian of the clan of the Eumolpidae, whom he had called from Eleusis to preside over the sacred rites, and asked him what this religion was and what the divinity meant. Timotheus learned by questioning men who had travelled to Pontus that there was a city there called Sinope, and that not far from it there was a temple of Jupiter Dis, long famous among the natives: for there sits beside the god a female figure which most call Proserpina. But Ptolemy, although prone to superstitious fears after the nature of kings, when he once more felt secure, being more eager for pleasures than religious rites, began gradually to neglect the matter and to turn his attention to other things, until the same vision, now more terrible and insistent, threatened ruin upon the king himself and his kingdom unless his orders were carried out. Then Ptolemy directed that ambassadors and gifts should be dispatched to King Scydrothemis – he ruled over the people of Sinope at that time – and when the embassy was about to sail he instructed them to visit Pythian Apollo. The ambassadors found the sea favorable; and the answer of the oracle was not uncertain: Apollo bade them go on and bring back the image of his father, but leave that of his sister (trsl. C.H. Moore).

Scholia ad Dion. Perieg. 255.1-28: Τῷ Λάγου Πτολεμαίῳ ἐπιφανείς τις δαίμων ἐκέλευσε πέμπαντα ναῦν κομίσαι αὐτόν. Αὕτη ἔστιν ἡ αἰτία δι' ἧς τιμᾶται ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ ὁ Σινωπίτης Ζεὺς. Βασιλεὺς τις εἶδεν ὅτι ἐπέστη αὐτῷ δαίμων ὃς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· “Εἴσαξον με ἐν τῇ πόλει σοῦ.” Διαπορούμενος οὖν ὁ βασιλεὺς περὶ τούτου διὰ τὸ μὴ γινώσκειν αὐτὸν πόθεν εἶη καὶ τις ἐστίν, ὕστερον ἐκοινώσατο τοῦτι καὶ τοῖς μεγιστάσιν αὐτοῦ οἵτινες πρὸς λύσιν τῆς ἀπορίας τοῦτι προσεφθέγγαντο· “Ἔστω σοι βασιλεῦ ὅ τι καταλαβᾶτω ναῦς τοῖς πελάγεσι, καὶ οὕτωςι φερομένη ἔνθεν κάκειθεν ὑπὸ τῶν πνευμάτων ἔλθοι ἂν ἐκεῖσε ὅπου τὸ δαιμόνιον· ἔνεστι προνοία παντὸς τούτου». Οὕτως ἤδη τῆς νηὸς ἐπιβάντες τινὲς προστάξει βασιλικῆ ἐφέροντο ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ πλανώμενοι. Ἑλληνίσαντες οὖν ποτε καὶ χρησμολογηθέντες ἀπελθεῖν πρὸς τὴν Ποντικὴν Σινώπην παρεγένοντο ἐκεῖσε. Ἐνθα εὐρόντες τὸ ἴδιον ἄγαλμα ἐκόμισαν αὐτὸ εἰς τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως χώραν τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν. Παρ' οὗ δημοτελὴς τετέλεστο ἑορτὴ, καὶ πολλῆ τιμῆ πρὸς τούτου τετίμητο, ἀλλὰ δὴ καὶ πρὸς τῶν ὑπ' αὐτόν.

A god appeared to Ptolemy son of Lagus and ordered him to send a boat and bring him to Alexandria. This is the reason the Zeus Sinopites is worshipped in this city. A king had a dream that a god asked him “Bring me in your city”. The king did not know who the god was and from where he came from. He asked his great men for advice and some of them tell him the following: “You should know you king that you should send a boat and the winds will bring her where the god is. There is provision for this”. And in this way they occupied a boat and following the king’s orders they were wondering in the sea. They anchored in a port and received an oracle telling them to go

to Sinope, a city in the Pontus. They went to Sinope and found there the same statue, and they brought it to the king's city, in Alexandria. And there was a public celebration, and he received many many honors (my translation).

According to these sources, King Ptolemy I, the son of Lagus, had a dream.¹⁷ A youth of singular beauty counselled him to send to Pontus and fetch his effigy from the country.¹⁸ Ptolemy asked for help identifying the god.¹⁹ He then sent to Pontus and Sinope and brought to Alexandria the cult statue of Apollo's father, Zeus, according to Tacitus and the Scholia, or of Pluto, according to Plutarch.²⁰ Tacitus, Plutarch and the Scholia mention an oracle by Apollo of Delphi.²¹

There are some common points between the story narrated by Plutarch in the 26th chapter of his *Life of Lysander* and the Sinopic aetiological tale of the introduction of Serapis' cult.

1. Plutarch is the first common point. The story with the boy from Pontus and Lysander's last attempt to overthrow the Spartan double kingship occurs in the 26th chapter of his *Life of Lysander*. The Sinopic version of the introduction of the cult of Serapis in Egypt occurs in his essay about the worship of the Egyptian deities. The visit to Delphi to ask for an oracle during the trip to Pontus was narrated in his essay *On the Intelligence of Animals*, where he said that the boat of Ptolemy's friends Soteles and Dionysius was guided from cape Maleas to Delphi by a dolphin.
2. The second common point is kingship. Lysander wanted to obtain an oracle to overthrow the Spartan constitution and became king.²² Ptolemy was about to set up in the newly built capital of his newly acquired kingdom, when he saw the dream, and a kingship full of prosperity was promised to him.²³ The god Serapis and his cult were further linked to the kingship of Egypt under the Ptolemies.²⁴
3. The third point in common is the young boy. A youth of singular beauty or a young man appeared to Ptolemy. In the 26th chapter of the *Life of Lysan-*

¹⁷ Tac. *Hist.* 4.83; Plut. *Mor.* 361e; Scholia *ad* Dion. Perieg. 255.1-28. For both Clemens and Cyrillus of Alexandria (see previous note), the cult was introduced by Ptolemy II Philadelphus. According to Clemens, Ptolemy II received the cult statue of Sarapis from Sinope as a gift of gratitude: the king sent them grain during a period of *limos*.

¹⁸ Tac. *Hist.* 4.83; Plut. *Mor.* 361e-362d; Scholia *ad* Dion. Perieg. 255.1-28.

¹⁹ See previous note.

²⁰ See previous note.

²¹ Tac. *Hist.* 4.83; Plut. *Mor.* 984a8-b9. See also Scholia *ad* Dion. Perieg. 255.1-28.

²² Plut. *Lys.* 24.2-5.

²³ Tac. *Hist.* 4.83.

²⁴ Fassa 2013, 114-139; 2015, 133-153; Larson 2016, 345-354.

der the story begins with a woman pregnant with a boy and it was this boy who should read the oracles about Sparta's kings.²⁵

4. The divine paternity of the youth is the fourth common point. The youth in the Sinopic narration is a god and a son of a god,²⁶ and in Lysander's story, the boy is the son of Apollo.²⁷
5. Pontus is the fifth common point. The youth ordered Ptolemy to send his best friends to Pontus and Sinope to learn about his statue and cult.²⁸ The boy Lysander expected to read the oracles was born and lived in Pontus.²⁹
6. The sixth common point is the travel by sea. Both Apollo's son and Sarapis were supposed to travel by sea. The boy was supposed to travel from Pontus to Delphi to read the old prophecies.³⁰ The cult and the statue of Sarapis should travel from Pontus to Alexandria.³¹
7. Delphi is the seventh common point. Dionysius and Soteles visited Delphi on their way from Alexandria to Pontus. At Delphi, the boy was supposed to read the old prophecies revealing how the kings of Sparta should be chosen.³² Lysander was spreading rumours from Delphi about these oracles at Sparta.³³
8. Apollo is the following common point. Ptolemy instructed the embassy he sent to Sinope to consult Apollo Pythios.³⁴ This is what they did, and they followed a dolphin that brought them from cape Maleas to Kirrha.³⁵ Apollo's prophecies should be read by his son to reveal the change in Spartan kingship.
9. Oracles are the last common point. The boy was to read the old prophecies while the envoys of Ptolemy I asked for an oracle.

²⁵ Tac. *Hist.* 4.83; Plut. *Lys.* 26.1, 3, 4.

²⁶ Tac. *Hist.* 4.83; Plut. *Mor.* 361e and 984a.

²⁷ Plut. *Lys.* 26.1, 2, 3.

²⁸ Tac. *Hist.* 4.83; Plut. *Mor.* 361e; Clemens *Protrepticus* 4.48.1; Thphr. *Ad Autolyc.* 1.9; Cyrillus of Alexandria *Ad Iulianum* 1.16.1-16; Scholia *ad* Dion. Perieg. 225.1-28.

²⁹ Plut. *Lys.* 26.1.

³⁰ Plut. *Lys.* 26.3.

³¹ See *supra* n. 34.

³² Plut. *Lys.* 26.3.

³³ Plut. *Lys.* 26.2.

³⁴ Tac. *Hist.* 4.83.

³⁵ Plut. *Mor.* 984a.

Two of the meeting points of our two stories deserve two more words: Pontus and Apollo Pythios.³⁶ Pontus was considered an area on the margins of the inhabited world and, thus, an ideal place to deliver mysterious stories.³⁷ Apollo Pythios was the god of Delphi and a very significant deity in the Pontus area.³⁸ Greek cities founded colonies in this area following instructions and oracles of Apollo of Delphi.³⁹ It is time now to turn to the sources of Plutarch for the two stories.

The source of Plutarch's story about Lysander

For Lysander's life Plutarch relied on Hellenistic writers and Theophrastus, as he explicitly says.⁴⁰ For our story, Plutarch says that this was "the account of one who was both a historian and a philosopher."⁴¹ As Plutarch did not name the philosopher and historian he followed, there were several attempts to identify him: (a) Ephorus, as was proposed in the Loeb edition and translation of 1916 by B. Perrin, (b) Poseidonius of Apamea, as was proposed by F. Jacoby, and (c) Theophrastus, as was proposed by J. Smits and R. Flacelière, who commented on Lysander's life.⁴² Jacoby presented no arguments in favour of the identification with Poseidonios of Apamea and included the passage in his commentary on Ephorus *FGrHist* 70 F 206-208. However, the philosopher and historian could not be Ephorus because Ephorus was not a philosopher. One recalls that for Plutarch, Theophrastus was a historian and a philosopher.⁴³ We can thus follow J. Smits and R. Flacelière propose to identify the historian and philosopher with Theophrastus.

Theophrastus had ties with Ptolemy I and Alexandria. Ptolemy sent for him (ἔπεμψεν ἐπ' αὐτόν [sc. τὸν Θεόφραστον]), as we learn from Diogenes Laertius.⁴⁴ One of Theophrastus' students was Demetrius of Phaleron.⁴⁵ Demetrius established himself in Egypt after 307 BC and played a significant role in the organization of the kingdom. He was an enthusiastic pupil of Sarapis who healed his eyes. He wrote païans for the beloved god that were still popular many centuries later.⁴⁶ De-

³⁶ For an oracle of Autolykos, Sinope's oikist (Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* 2. 946-961), at Sinope see Strabo 12.3.50.

³⁷ For Pontus see Dana 2011: 341-343.

³⁸ Dana 2011, 355-370.

³⁹ See previous note.

⁴⁰ Flacelière 1971, 161-166; Bommelaer 1981, 40-45. For Theophrastus see See Plut. *Lys.* 13.2.

⁴¹ Plut. *Lys.* 25.5: τὴν δὲ ὅλην ἐπιβουλὴν καὶ σκευωρίαν τοῦ πλάσματος οὐ φαύλην οὖσαν οὐδὲ ἀφ' ὅν ἔτυχεν ἀρξαμένην, ἀλλὰ πολλὰς καὶ μεγάλας ὑποθέσεις, ὥσπερ ἐν διαγράμματι μαθηματικῷ, προσλαβοῦσαν καὶ διὰ λημάτων χαλεπῶν καὶ δυσπορίστων ἐπὶ τὸ συμπέρασμα προϊούσαν, ἡμεῖς ἀναγράφομεν ἀνδρὸς ἱστορικῷ καὶ φιλοσόφου λόγῳ κατακολουθήσαντες: ...was no insignificant, nor yet eagerly undertaken, but made many important assumptions, like a mathematical demonstration, and proceeded to its conclusion through premises which were difficult and hard to obtain".

⁴² For Poseidonius see Jacoby 1926, 96. For Theophrastus see Smits 1939, 11, 232; Flacelière 1971, 162.

⁴³ Plut. *Alc.* 10.4: ἀνδρὶ φιλικῷ καὶ ἱστορικῷ παρ' ὄντινόν τῶν φιλοσόφων.

⁴⁴ Diogenes Laertius 5.37.2-3. See also Fraser 1994: 180.

⁴⁵ Diogenes Laertius 5.39.10-11; 5.751-2.

⁴⁶ Diogenes Laertius 5.76.7-10: λέγεται δ' ἀποβαλόντα αὐτὸν τὰς ὄψεις ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ, κομίσασθαι αὐτὸς παρὰ τοῦ Σαράπιδος· ὄθεν καὶ τοὺς παιᾶνας ποιῆσαι τοὺς μεχρὶ νῦν ἀδομένους...

metrius also wrote five books of dreams in which Serapis was involved.⁴⁷ Another student of Theophrastus was the poet Menander.⁴⁸ For Menander, Serapis was a σεμνός θεός.⁴⁹

The link between Lysander's last effort to change Spartan Kingship and the Sinopic version of the introduction of Serapis and his cult is revealed with the identification of Plutarch's philosopher and historian as Theophrastus. The model used by the council of experts, convened by Ptolemy I and including Demetrius and Timotheus from Athens as well as the Egyptian Manetho for the Sinopic version of the introduction of Serapis was the story narrated by Theophrastus about Lysander's last effort to change Spartan kingship.⁵⁰ If Theophrastus is to be identified with the historian and philosopher behind the narration of Lysander's last attempt, the story with the boy from Pontus would have served as a model for the construction of the Sinopic version of the introduction of the cult of Sarapis.

The story was certainly well known in Alexandria, and this was the reason why Plutarch says that it "was not insignificant, nor yet eagerly undertaken, but made many important assumptions, like a mathematical demonstration, and proceeded to its conclusion through premises which were difficult and hard to obtain". Lysander could have inspired Ptolemy I, who gained kingship almost with the spear. Lysander was the first man in the Eastern Mediterranean to receive lavish honours from the oligarchs of Samos for bringing them back after 35 years of exile,⁵¹ while the Rhodians awarded Ptolemy the title of Soter for helping them against Demetrius I.⁵²

The story survived Ptolemy I and reached Plutarch. Under the reigns of Ptolemy II, III and IV, the kings of Egypt grew closer to the Spartan kings and supported them against the Antigonids of Macedonia. Areus I was endorsed by Ptolemy II against Antigonus Gonatas during the Chremonidean War early in the 360s.⁵³ Cleomenes III was an ally of Ptolemy III against Antigonus III.⁵⁴ After his defeat in Sellasia, Cleomenes sought refuge in Egypt and later committed suicide there under Ptolemy IV in 219 BC. One of his closest relatives and enthusiastic supporters, Hippomedon, son of Agesilaus of the royal house of the Eurypontids, was a high

⁴⁷ Artemidorus 2.44.25-30: οὐδέ μοι πιθανὰ ἐδόκει ταῦτα, καίτοι Γεμίνου τοῦ Τυρίου καὶ Δημητρίου τοῦ Φαληρέως καὶ Ἀρτάμωνος τοῦ Μιλησίου τοῦ μὲν ἐν τρισὶ βιβλίοις τοῦ δὲ ἐν πέντε τοῦ δὲ ἐν εἰκοσὶ δύο πολλοὺς ὄνειρους ἀναγραψαμένων καὶ μάλιστα συνταγὰς καὶ θεραπείας τὰς ὑπὸ Σαράπιδος δοθείσας.

⁴⁸ Diogenes Laertius 5.371.

⁴⁹ Fr. 139 Körte, A., Thierfelder, A.

⁵⁰ Larson 2016, 345f354.

⁵¹ Duris *FGrH* 71 and 26; Phot. s.v. Λυσάνδρεια; Hsch. s.v. Λυσάνδρεια. See also Habicht 1970, 3-6, 243-244.

⁵² Habicht 1970, 109-110.

⁵³ For Areus I see Paschidis 2008: 256-259.

⁵⁴ For Cleomenes III see Paschidis 2008: 260-262.

Ptolemaic official and general of Thrace and the Hellespont.⁵⁵ Hippomedon and his two grandsons from the wedding of his daughter with Archidamos were the closest relatives of the dead king. They deserved the Eurypontid throne of Sparta more than a certain Lykourgos, who paid the ephors with one talent each and thus became king and a Heraclid.⁵⁶ In the late 5th century BC, an *aristeia* was not enough, and Lysander, a Heraclid, needed Apollo and his oracles to become king. Still, in the late 3rd century BC all Lykourgos needed was money. This new world, part of which was Serapis, was undoubtedly built πλὴν Λακεδαιμονίων.

CONCLUSION

The similarities and common points between the Sinopic version of the introduction of Serapis' cult and the story about Lysander's last effort to overthrow the Spartan Constitution by using oracles can be explained with the help of literary sources. After collecting and comparing the literary evidence for both, what becomes clear is their common early Hellenistic cultural background. This background involves intellectuals active in the Ptolemaic court of the late 4th/ early 3rd century BC, such as Demetrius of Phaleron, who was a student of Theophrastus, as well as Theophrastus, the successor of Aristotle in his Peripatetic School. The last effort of Lysander to establish himself as king of Sparta is narrated by Theophrastus with all known details involving the young boy Silenus, a son of Apollo, born in the Black Sea, who was supposed to travel to Delphi and read ancient oracles supporting the election of the kings of Sparta from the best citizens. The story narrated by the teacher of Demetrius of Phaleron served for him as well as for other intellectuals of Alexandria to invent and shape the myth of the introduction of the *semnos theos*.

Conflict of Interest

Within the scope of the study, there is no personal or financial conflict of interest between the authors.

Ethics

Regarding the Ethics Committee authorisation; the authors and reviewers of this study have declared that there is no need for Ethics Committee authorisation.

⁵⁵ For Hippomedon see Paschidis 2008, 259-260.

⁵⁶ Plb. 4.35.13-14.

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