ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΜΕΙΖΟΝΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΜΟΥ

Authoring : *Fafouti Stamatia*
Translation : *Πανουργιά Κλειώ*
For citation : *Fafouti Stamatia , "Apsirtus of Prussa", Encyclopaedia of the Hellenic World, Asia Minor*
URL: <http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=7720>

Summary :

Apsirtus was one of the greatest veterinarians of antiquity. He composed valuable works concerning the care and treatment of horses and possibly held an important office in the imperial court.

Date and Place of Birth

2nd or 3rd century AD

Date and Place of Death

3rd century

Main Role

Veterinarian

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1. Biography

Apsirtus was one of the most important equine veterinarians in Antiquity. Early researchers believed he came from Prussa – hence his name – and that the period of his prime was the 1st half of the 3rd c. AD. Contemporary research however has altered these views and it is now believed that Aspirtus probably came from Clazomenae and that a date between 150 and 250 AD would be more correct, if it is true that he served his military service on the Danube front.[1]

Apsirtus seems to have espoused the methodic school of medical thought. His texts sometimes examine theoretical issues especially in connection to the etiology of diseases. What distinguishes him however are his timely observations about the treatment methods which demonstrate intensive medical practice.

2. Equine veterinary in Antiquity

Veterinary, in particular equine veterinary, constituted an important branch of medicine in Antiquity. Horses were vital in war and for many other activities. Particularly during the Roman period the organization of the “cursus publicus”, the public transport and communications system, was based on the speed of horses. Especially with regard to the use of horses for military purposes, it is known that throughout most of Antiquity someone’s ability to keep and train a war-horse was a measure for class ranking and a sign of aristocratic birth. During the 5th and 4th c. BC, we find the first observations on horse diseases in works by Simon the Athenian, Xenophon and Aristotle. These observations are however of a haphazard nature. The first works dedicated specifically to equine veterinary in the Greek language appear in the Roman period. Their main author of this period was Eumelus.

Works dedicated exclusively to equine veterinary in Latin date from the 4th or 5th c. These include *Ars Veterinaria* by Pelagonius and *Mulomedicina chironis* by Vegetius. During the mid-Byzantine years excerpts from these works were collated into an extensive volume, the *Corpus Hippiatricorum Graecorum*, also known as the *Hippiatrica*.[2]

3. Tradition and influence of his work

In his works Apsirtus names some of his predecessors such as Mago of Cyrene and Eumelus. He also influenced later practitioners. Initially he was followed by Ierocles, who elevated the status of Apsirtus’ works because of his better use of the Greek language. The texts of both Pelagonius and Vegetius include influences from Apsirtus. Through the translations of Theomnestus, the works of

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Apsirtus became known in the Arab world.

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1. For this dating see: Björck, G., *Apsyrtus, Julius Africanus et l'art hippiatrique grecque* (Uppsala 1944).

2. Oder, E. – Hoppe, K. (eds.), *Corpus Hippiatricorum Graecorum*, 2 vol. (Lipisiae, 1924/1927).

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