

# Thracian Language and Greek and Thracian Epigraphy



Thracian Language and Greek  
and Thracian Epigraphy

By

Peter A. Dimitrov

**CAMBRIDGE  
SCHOLARS**

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P U B L I S H I N G

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To my children Vessela, Christina, and Georgi



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## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe the reader a short explanatory note.

First and foremost we should state that the material under study comes from direct sources such as inscriptions on stone, clay, and metalwork.

Therefore, before starting to read the present study, we should keep in mind that we will be facing a situation that is extremely complex. There exists a methodological problem, originating in the past, which has caused various misunderstandings. It is due to the volume of different entries assembled in the goal to compile a thesaurus of the Thracian language. Somehow, during the last two centuries, there was a whole set of methods applied that were not in accordance with the progress made by linguistics. For example, the choice made in assembling the two main *corpora* so far, that of Tomaschek and Detschew, which present data from literary and epigraphic sources. These data combined were not at all times convincing. Sometimes controversial entries were included the interpretation of which provoked long discussions. More attention was paid to details, which in most cases were not concerned with the discussion of the whole body of evidence.

One other point: whilst modern linguistics made a huge progress, Thracian scholars stayed within the general Indo-European theory of the Neogrammarians.

The method I used (as I explain in detail below) rests on the description of Thracian onomastics obtained after phonological analysis, because I am concerned with the fact that every single phonologically attested form of phonemes and morphs is relevant. For, it helps to list all possible forms of names thus showing all of the graphemes independently.

It was necessary to divide the material under study in sections in *Part I. The Evidence*. For purely practical reasons, it was deemed useful (and hereafter it will become clear from the presentation of the different sources) to repeat at some places some entries as cross-references, as this gives the study depth and facilitates the reader's understanding of the intricacy of the way the Thracian material has come to our knowledge. It also provides to a larger extent the natural environment that fostered the creation of such various forms.

An asterisk (\*) is used before an entry in Chapter Four for reconstructions of place names based on gods' epithets.

In epigraphic texts the Leiden system of conventions is used.

Last but not least, it is worth reminding that any linguistic situation is a part of the language development that has been termed “language change” for language tends to loom ahead and we only later become aware of its outcome.

Once, a modest Swiss scholar was able to realize that besides the “history” of a language there is also a synchrony. While the historical record of facts of a language is a long and complicated row of events dutifully described and satisfactorily accounted for, synchrony is that missing link that makes us witness the birth of the record yielding to its origin. The name of the above mentioned scholar is Ferdinand de Saussure from the town of Geneva whose doctrine of phonological system allowed for the next generations to speak about linguistics as a science.

My debts of gratitude are to all those who helped me with their remarks, observations, corrections, and guidelines. Above all, I am deeply grateful to the late Professor Georgi Mihailov under whom I started my doctoral dissertation back in the years. Also, I would like to thank many colleagues and friends; without their support, advices, and encouragements I would have long abandoned this project. I would like to acknowledge the expert help and advices of Dr. Maya Vassileva, Senior Researcher at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. My thanks also go to Dr. Thomas Corsten, Professor at the University of Heidelberg, Professor Stephen V. Tracy, former Director of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, and Dr. Jaime Curbera. Generous financial support from the Mellon Foundation enabled me to spend three months as Senior Mellon Research Fellow at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens benefiting greatly of its research facilities. Ms. Davidoff and Ms. Todoroff were instrumental in the technical aspects of the preparation of this book for print and deserve acknowledgement for their endurance.

# INTRODUCTION

## Definitions

The present study of the Thracian language is based on an updated collection of epigraphic material found in Bulgaria.

Our knowledge of the Thracian language comes from evidence that has been assembled by modern scholars throughout the last two centuries from two types of documents: literary documents derived from Greek and Latin writers and inscriptions. Owing to the fact that epigraphy has furnished less information, many scholars undertook investigations that were not based but on one principle, to find any form of indication leading to any possible information on the Thracian. Methodologically speaking, this kind of “thesaurus at any rate” has produced only more confusion extant in many writings to the present day. The multiplication of errors and misunderstandings dating from Antiquity to modern times is responsible for “rapprochements” of personal, god- and place-names in the vast area of the Mediterranean region using onomastic material, glosses or commentaries of ancient grammarians and lexicographers irrespectively.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, the updated collection of epigraphic material found in Bulgaria is a kind of evidence that comes to reinforce our knowledge of Thracian names and Thracian words and phrases sporadically discovered and unveiled after years of scholarly work done by archaeologists, historians, and linguists.

My goal as an author was to assemble the information from whatever direct epigraphic sources offered it, i.e. coins' legends or graffiti drawn on precious metalwork (mainly *phialae*), and inscriptions on stones.<sup>2</sup>

In his *Le dialecte éolien d'Asie* (p.11-12), Hodot is differentiating the two possible sources of his study by pointing out that the literary tradition of the Lyrics rests on fragments and glosses that are “on le sait indissociables” as far as the literary works pass through the intermediary of grammarians, “les érudits de l'Empire”, and on the other hand the papyri “conservant l'essentiel de l'oeuvre des Lyriques dependent de la

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<sup>1</sup> See Fol, 2000, 65-66.

<sup>2</sup> For a thorough investigation based on direct documents see Hodot, 1990.

“vulgate alexandrine”. It is imperative to underline what Hooker (1977, 14) said of Apollonius Dyscolus’ reporting on Aioleis: “By Aioleis he means not ‘Aeolians’ as that term would be understood by a modern student of the Greek dialects, but “the Lesbian poets as displayed in the Alexandrian vulgate”.

The need of such an update is all the more urgent given the growing interest in Thracian studies and language in particular, on the one hand, and the abundance of misunderstandings and *variae lectiones* within the context of the material used, on the other hand. In many articles and books, scholars have been referring to numerous forms of names or words without significant result due to the fact that a large number of newly published materials is missing in D. Detschew’s handbook *Die Thrakischen Sprachreste*, published in 1957. However, this is the one still indispensable handbook that each and every student of Thracian is counting on<sup>3</sup>.

Yet, over the years it became clear that corrections alone would not suffice, and that a thorough investigation into the story of the appearance of any evidence was necessary to prove that unique “ethnologische Untersuchung über die alten Thraker” that W. Tomaschek offered to the public first in 1893 and then in 1894<sup>4</sup>. Actually, it is the cultural value of the onomastic material that made the scholarly interest rise up and eventually provoked the re-evaluation of the items studied by Tomaschek and Detschew.

Thus, of many speculations on the etymology of a name or word, nothing proved to be more important than the secure reading, the authentic Thracian sound that can be found only in inscriptions<sup>5</sup>.

The one feature that makes this study different from those undertaken by Tomaschek and Detschew emerges from that very secure reading, for it gives us, along with many other important hints and insights through the phonology of the Thracian, the historical perspective and the relative chronology of a given language development. To this effect, Hodot comments (1990, 12) that

“les documents du second type sont eux des documents directs: ce sont les inscriptions gravées sur la pierre, incisées ou peintes sur

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<sup>3</sup> See K. Vlahov 1963, in an attempt to add up new entries to Detschew’s handbook, and also I. I. Russu’s (1964) review.

<sup>4</sup> W. Tomaschek, *Die alten Thraker*, *Sitzungsberichte d. Akad. Wien*, Bd. 128 (1893): I. Uebersicht der Stämme; Bd. 130 (1893): II. Sprachreste, 1. Glossen aller Art und Götternamen, Bd. 131 (1894): 2. Personenamen und Ortsnamen.

<sup>5</sup> For an interpretation of the method see Hodot 1990, 12: the literary tradition on Lesbian is “un témoignage médiatisé”.

la céramique, frappées sur les monnaies. Il est inutile de souligner quel avantage sur les textes littéraires ou grammaticaux peuvent présenter ces échantillons du dialecte qui nous viennent tout droit des usagers eux-mêmes. Toutefois, pour que ces témoignages épigraphiques et numismatiques soient pleinement utilisables, il faut qu'ils puissent être datés, au moins approximativement, et surtout que ne se crée pas à leur propos une nouvelle sorte de 'tradition', non plus manuscrite, mais imprimée, qui aboutirait au même résultat : déformer l'aspect originel du dialecte".<sup>6</sup>

Yet another major difference lies in the effectiveness and clarity of the data accumulated; whereas in the past, criteria for words of Thracian language origin were based upon their being referred to as such by ancient Greek and Latin authors, in this study they must qualify and be listed as Thracian only if the inscriptions themselves indicate it.

In many cases, a predicament emerges as to what to opt for, and the scholar is guided not just by explicit indications, such as e.g. the nation of a Thracian mentioned in the inscription but also by the already established tradition relying on the authority of scholars who have worked in the Thracian field. I found the principles discussed in Beschevliev's book (1970) *Untersuchungen ueber die Personennamen bei den Thrakern* very useful to this effect. The author discusses the subject in greatest detail reviewing methodologies and approaches used by scholars in recent times.

Moreover, in this study the geographical distribution of the names is limited to those territories, which are in the fringes of the Greek world.

The organization of the lemmata is another element differentiating the present study. Etymological explanations have been included in few cases and only to help understand cultural or historical value. In many cases, out-of-date readings and variants were discarded from the list and about four hundred new names have been introduced. Thus, relying on a coherent body of entries, we were able to identify secure leads as to the structure of the roots in Thracian. Whereas earlier ideas were based on sometimes contradictory evidence, the disposition of the sequences is now well documented through more than one occurrence. We can be certain now (based on the entire collection), that stops rendered through  $\theta$ ,  $\phi$ ,  $\chi$  or  $\psi$  do not really exist in Thracian, do not appear in the beginning of the word, nor are they present in any other position. The few examples containing  $\theta$ ,  $\phi$ ,  $\chi$  or  $\psi$  are due to foreign word-editing and are a good example that some inscriptions were made by Greek nationals. One can

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<sup>6</sup> For the opportunities to follow the changes and the development of the Thracian language see also Fol 2000, 66.

compare *Rolistene* in one of the earliest original Thracian inscriptions on the gold ring from Ezerovo: *-stene* is in fact a Greek loan word (= *sthenes* “strong”). From forms such as *-theithes*, etc., we might assume that regressive assimilations in foreign loan-words from Asia Minor took effect at some point under the Late Roman Empire as the Thracians experienced a strong Roman influence.

Again through that extensive evidence, we can be sure that the spirant *s* was rendered with the Greek letter *theta*, except between vowels where *z* was used.

The inscriptions from Rogozen provided a secure lead to the mechanism of vowel prothesis in Thracian through Αργισκη, Ηργισκη, and Εργισκη.

There are many names that appear only in inscriptions, in their “unedited” form, e.g. Γονιμασηζη, Ποτεσοκουλα, Δειτουζαιπου.<sup>7</sup>

## The Thracians: A Brief Historical Overview

Thracian studies seem to have produced a solid record of topics exhaustively examined by scholars over the past one hundred and twenty years or so. Yet, the chronology that archaeology has produced through adjustments taken from various sites as well as later interpretations prove the existence of many points of indecision which need to be reformulated with precision in describing the inert model of Thracian reality.

In this section, our concern is to provide essential information about how it all began. Therefore, I am offering only a brief overview. In no respect is it an exhaustive piece of history of Thrace, as some might expect.

As tradition has it, the Thracians lived in numerous tribes spread over the islands of the Aegean and up north to the Carpathian Mountains. The islands of Euboiia, Lemnos, Samothrace, and Thasos trace back a path of historical and mythical memory of Thracian culture. Beyond the mythology of movement of migrant populations and historical evidence, we find Thracians settled in the lands north of the Mediterranean according to the earliest literary and epigraphic evidence. Who were the Thracians then? A simplistic and inaccurate answer to this legitimate question would be to leave them unnamed, with indeterminate Indo-European origin and culture. Yet, their language is termed “Indo-

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<sup>7</sup> We shall refer to these and many other examples in Chapter Five.



European” by criteria that handbooks prefer not to discuss at length. The several old scripts on stone or precious metalwork are referred to as “inscriptions..., neither of which we understand”.<sup>8</sup>

Apart from the fact that in modern scholarship less attention is paid to the Thracians and their history, politics has come to play a rôle by no means indecisive in delaying and putting the investigation off.<sup>9</sup> Methodology was seriously influenced by approaches applied to standard western-like colonialism.<sup>10</sup>

The Early History of the Thracian lands is derived from literary texts<sup>11</sup>; Homer provides the earliest and most abundant evidence.<sup>12</sup> While Hesiod’s scanty passages, along with those of the lyric poets Archilochus<sup>13</sup> and Alcaeus<sup>14</sup>, are imaginative and hopeful, the important descriptions by Herodotus and Thucydides show the Thracians as numerous people about quite a territory, and with established cultural traditions, warriors, allies, inhabiting and dwelling in plains and mountains, along rivers and lakes.<sup>15</sup>

We are also aware of the presence of newcomers around the end of the Eneolithic Age and on the eve of the Bronze Age.<sup>16</sup> They occupied the

<sup>8</sup> Beekes 1995, 23; 331.

<sup>9</sup> Archibald 1998, 3: “Modern political divisions, geographical and ideological, have almost to the present day conspired to prolong the isolation.”

<sup>10</sup> Tsetschladze 2006, 26-27: “books ...link ancient and modern colonization and ‘colonialism’(s)”; Owen 2000, 139: “Greek colonization of Thasos, and indeed of Thrace, is currently written from a wholly Hellenocentric and text-based perspective, behind which lies an unspoken and pervasive comparison with Western European colonialism”. See more opinions in detail in Tsetschladze 2006, 23-83. To this effect, see also Owen 2005, 5-7 etc.

<sup>11</sup> See the comprehensive account of Mihailov 1991, 591-618, as well as Fol 2000.

<sup>12</sup> Mihailov 2007, 9-42 [*Homère comme source historique des états thraces*].

<sup>13</sup> Frg 79a D(ieh): κὰν Σαλμυδ[ησσ]αῖι γυμνὸν εὐφρονέσ[ατα] Θρηῖκες ἀκρό[κ]ομοι; Frg. 51 D(ieh): “ἄνδρας . . . ὠλεύντας αὐλὸν καὶ λύρην ἀνήγαγεν ἐς Θάσον κυσὶ Θρέξιν δῶρ’ ἔχων ἀκήρατον χρυσόν, οἰκείῳ δὲ κέρδει ζύν’ ἐποίησαν κακά...”; see also Homer, B 536-8, where he mentions the Abantes in possession of Euboeia with Halkis, Erethria, and Histiaia.

<sup>14</sup> See frg.77 (Diehl, E. Anth. Lyr. Graec., I, Leipzig, 1936).

<sup>15</sup> Archibald 1998, 3, using modern geopolitical terms, stresses on the importance of the Balkan Peninsula whose “regions were closely linked to the eastern Mediterranean through the periodic movement of people and through networks of friendship, alliance, and exchange”.

<sup>16</sup> Fol 2000, 63: newcomers appear at that time and it is not only the Varna necropolis that is a direct record of them but archaeological finds from other sites, as well.

territories south of the Carpathians to the fringes of the Greek world.<sup>17</sup> In the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC we find the Thracians, under different tribe names and in various places, settled in the territories that stretch roughly between the ancient Euxeinos Pontos (Black Sea) to the plains of Axios (Vardar River) and north of the Aegean up to the Transdanubian lands<sup>18</sup>. The Greek historians noticed the political activity of the strongest Thracian kingdom, i.e. that of the Odrysians. Approximately at that same time, the earliest original Thracian inscriptions appeared. By the fourth century BC the contacts and interactions with the Greek world (and language) were very intensive.<sup>19</sup> This was the time of the Odrysian political prime under king Kotys I (383-359 BC), the period during which the most spectacular Thracian tombs were built, as well as the most numerous inscriptions and graffiti on metal vessels were produced.<sup>20</sup> The Thracian lands were involved in the politics of the Hellenistic world, while the armies of Alexander the Great and his generals brought many Thracian mercenaries as far away as Asia and Egypt. Some local peculiarities in the use of the *koiné* can be traced. Thracians served as soldiers in almost all provinces of the Roman Empire, after the Thracian lands had been incorporated in the Roman Empire and became provinces: Moesia (later Superior and Inferior) and Thracia in the first century AD.<sup>21</sup> Despite the spreading of Latin as an administrative language, Greek continued to be widely used. A major part of the corpus of the Greek inscriptions found in Bulgaria originated from Roman Imperial times, thus offering opportunities to leads to Thracian language development. A large number of the 1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD votive inscriptions are dedicated to the Thracian *Heros* (Horseman) whose local epithets provide rich material for the present study.

Perhaps we should start the discussion by laying down the evidence and leave the dubious interpretations aside for now. Because of gaps here and there, it is hard to determine which evidence is to be considered most relevant for that period.

I would like to stress upon the rare occurrence of artifacts in tells being dated to the Late Bronze Age compared to those coming from necropoleis which are more numerous.

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<sup>17</sup> Fol 2000, 63: “These are located in the lands to the south of the Carpathians, on the Haemus Mountain and the Rhodopes, as well as in Hellas itself.”

<sup>18</sup> Mihailov 1991<sup>2</sup>, 591.

<sup>19</sup> “In the period reaching the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, these relations led to recorded translations”: Fol 2000, 67.

<sup>20</sup> Archibald 1998, passim; Marazov 1998, passim; Fol 2000, 67.

<sup>21</sup> Velkov and Fol 1978, 46-52.

Scholars are advancing the idea of a continuous habitation in nearly all of Thrace without breaks for the Late Bronze Age going into Early Iron Age (late second/early first millennium BC).<sup>22</sup> They speak of Thracians being present in the region all the way from as early as the Late Bronze Age.<sup>23</sup>

To place the Thracians in the context of the Eastern Mediterranean, we will follow the new lead offered by the study of W. Burkert.<sup>24</sup> Basically, this is a re-appraisal of the ‘provincial seclusion’ of civilizations in the Early Iron Age.<sup>25</sup> With more publications supporting the idea of the relations that had existed between ancient Greeks and the East in Anatolia, the discovery of the Hittite language and culture and later on the decipherment of the Bronze Age Linear B tablets, it became clear that a somehow mixed Bronze Age culture, a Bronze Age *koine*, had been in existence<sup>26</sup>.

Already in the Bronze Age Greeks had moved beyond the Balkan Peninsula on to the Aegean islands, Crete and Cyprus, along the coast of Asia Minor, and even southern Italy and Sicily.<sup>27</sup> The civilizations of the East in Egypt and Mesopotamia, and westward Palestine, Syria, and Anatolia were by far more advanced and interaction with them in the second millennium, during the Late Helladic period, took place at a different pace.

Roughly by the year 1200 BC all of these civilizations were affected by catastrophic waves of fires, floods and destructions and succumbed to obscurity.

In the East, the important Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon, with south of them the Philistines, and up north the New Hittite Kingdom and the Phrygians, seem to have no recollection of bloody and aggressive battles along their way of establishing themselves in the fringes of the collapsed world of the Hittites. There is an apparent cycle of cataclysms happening: cultural interactions fluctuated in a way we can glean from literary and archaeological sources.

Back to Thrace, the set of gold vessels found at Vulchitrun (northwest Bulgaria)<sup>28</sup> dated to the mid-second millennium BC confirm the assertion of continuity by adding data that speak of lavish signs of rulers in the

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<sup>22</sup> Archibald 1998, 32-34; Georgieva 2001, 84.

<sup>23</sup> Fol 2000, 63.

<sup>24</sup> Burkert 2004, 2: “Classical”... does not connote isolation.”

<sup>25</sup> See Burkert 2004, 3 and Dornseiff 1959<sup>2</sup>: 30.

<sup>26</sup> Burkert 2004, 5: “There were contacts and interactions on all sides”.

<sup>27</sup> Burkert 2004, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Venedikov 1987.

Thracian lands. The tripartite vessel is considered a unique one with evidencing special rites for mixing three different liquids.<sup>29</sup> Mycenaean gold vessels and vessels from Alaca Höyük are said to exhibit comparable artistic traits thus paralleling the Vulchitran particularities.<sup>30</sup>

The Northern Aegean appears to have been related to Mycenaean developments in the sense that the Hellenes of the second millennium expanding toward the north might well have had visited the lands of the ancient Thracians. Recent archaeological finds provide the evidence for such an assumption as far as Linear A clay seals<sup>31</sup> and a clay spool<sup>32</sup> are concerned. Mycenaean ceramic sherds have been unearthed in Koprivlen (southwest Bulgaria) near Gotse Delchev (previously known as Nevrokop).<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, slabs engraved with spiral-like decorative motifs, were paralleled to gold objects found at Mycenae; a scene on one of them representing a male body with a sun-boat<sup>34</sup> conveys an eastern Mediterranean theme.

Recent discoveries offer more evidence on the 11<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> century BC life and culture in the Thracian lands.<sup>35</sup> Most of this evidence comes from burial mounds, while metalwork contributed to its chronological specification. Early Iron Age finds display local variants: those would differ in the Dobrudzha region (northeast Bulgaria), in Babadag further up in the northeast, along the Black Sea coast, Insula Banului to the west and Chatalka and Pshenichevo to the south.<sup>36</sup> Archaeological record speaks in favor of a continuous life over four centuries, from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> BC.

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<sup>29</sup> Venedikov 1987, 97-98 sees a similarity with Eleusinian mysteries' *kykeon*, a potion, that is known ever since Homer's *Od.* 10. 290, 316.

<sup>30</sup> Venedikov 1987, 60-62, 79-84; Sherratt and Taylor 1989, 121, fig. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Matsas 1995, 242.

<sup>32</sup> Fol and Schmitt 2000, 56-62.

<sup>33</sup> Alexandrov 2005, 47-49: Six fragments of imported Mycenaean pottery were found comparable to that from Mycenaean centres and dated to the early/middle Late Helladic IIIB.

<sup>34</sup> In the vicinity of Razlog (southwestern Bulgaria), seven slabs and fragments of at least ten more were found. See recently S. Ganeva's article with bibliography of earlier accounts: Ganeva 2005, 147-51.

<sup>35</sup> Chichikova 1972, 1977, who started publishing Early Iron Age archaeological materials (mainly pottery), was the first establishing Iron Age chronology for Thrace; 1990; Stoyanov 1997, 82 published the newly excavated site of Sboryanovo; Archibald 1998, 26-47 discusses chronological problems; see also Georgieva 2001, 83-94 and Gotsev 1994, 43-68. Gergova 1989, 231-40 pointed out to some specific traits of burial rites traced down in the transitional period through Late Bronze Age.

<sup>36</sup> Stoyanov 1998, 164.

Considering the Thracians in Anatolia, K. Sams discussed the “open lines of communication between Phrygia and Europe” and a “cultural corridor”.<sup>37</sup> Most probably as a tentative time mark of the Thracians’ south migration and southeastward expansion over the Bosphoros into Asia Minor one could set the very end of the second millennium BC. The Gordion archaeological record at least speaks of newcomers from different areas in Thrace judging on EIA handmade pottery.<sup>38</sup>

## Colonization

Because of its huge cultural impact, the Greek colonization waives of various “comings” of Greek settlers, merchants, etc. into the lands surrounding the sea, we have a enormous source of information indirectly or more straightforwardly leading to the early presence of the Thracians and their practices.

In terms of “earliest possible”, we need to better understand why we should abandon the model of violent conquest and subsequent “asymmetrical power relationships”.<sup>39</sup> There seems to be unanimity among scholars<sup>40</sup> that in those remote times, the Thracians were not just passive observers of the ‘coming of the Hellenes’ up north; they were partners in creating a new environment for socio-cultural and economic development in the Aegean. It is very true, that the earliest literary sources in Greek poetry about the inhabitants known ever since as the Thracians were not exactly positive.<sup>41</sup>

Contacts between Greeks and Thracians were not necessarily on a hostile note for the entire period of their early interactions. The verse of Archilochos<sup>42</sup> is to be interpreted in the light of modern scholars’

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<sup>37</sup> Sams 1994, 21 and 1995, 1147. See also: Vassileva 2005, 227-34 with bibliography.

<sup>38</sup> Sams 1995, 1147-59, 1994, 21; 176.

<sup>39</sup> Owen 2005, 6: “the assumption that asymmetrical power relationship, drawn along ethnic lines, existed in all ‘colonized’ areas from the Late Geometric and Archaic periods onwards is one which still pervades much of the literature”; and Owen 2005, 18.

<sup>40</sup> See Tsatskheladze 1999 and 2006.

<sup>41</sup> See Vassileva 2005, 227-34 with bibliography.

<sup>42</sup> Frg 79a D(iehl): κὰν Σαλμυδ[ησσ]ῶι γυμνὸν εὐφρονέσ[ατα Θρή]ικες ἀκρό[κ]ομοι; Frg. 51 D(iehl): “ἄνδρας . . . ωλεῦντας αὐλὸν καὶ λύρην ἀνήγαγεν ἐς Θάσον κυσὶ Θρέτιν δῶρ’ ἔχων ἀκήρατον χρυσόν, οἰκείωι δὲ κέρδει ξύν’ ἐποίησαν κακά... ”;

perceptions about that as a major event in the Mediterranean world which customarily ancient historians use to describe as “Greek colonization”.<sup>43</sup>

There is a clear contamination as to who, when, and how participated in the process of Greeks undertaking those *periplooi*.<sup>44</sup> Thus, Archilochos was misinterpreted<sup>45</sup> for being studied from too narrow a point.

As I tried to explain elsewhere<sup>46</sup> the third century BC Hellenistic poet Apollonios of Rhodes worked on a project to describe (and revive) the deeds of the glorious wanderers of the past in his *Argonautika* by way of literary (poetic) techniques, where a substantial part is devoted to the ethnography and geography of islands of the Aegean and especially that of Lemnos. We have a clear patch of remote historic events related skillfully enough to let us think of a movement, slow as it might have been, towards the northern territories. The Lemnian women led by Hypsipyle<sup>47</sup> imply a vision of developments going way back to the time of courageous people sailing the wine-dark sea on the northern approach. There is even a good and sound story as to the many generations of Thracian families, depicting the way Thracians gradually started leaving Lemnos in order to gain territories on the “Thracian coast” opposite of Lemnos. They left their Lemnian wives with their sons on the island. This has been done in several attempts to obviously colonize the “lands on the Thracian coast”. Every time the Lemnian women were observing ships coming to the island from their *pyrgoi*, they were uncertain as to who was coming, deprived of their husbands at that time.

Apollonios of Rhodes seems to be very well informed as regards the geography of those events, describing what had been the most eye-catching mounts, their peaks, the coastal line along what is now Chalkidiki, as well as the islands of Lemnos and Samothrace. Was it just because in his time this was a socially calm and prosperous portion of the *oikoumene*, and therefore he felt at ease to describe it, or rather this is how it looked in the sources he used?

My intention, accordingly, is to include these problems, and relate them to other theoretical approaches in the study of Thracian antiquities, in

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<sup>43</sup> Here see Tsetskhladze 1999, and 2006; Owen 2005.

<sup>44</sup> Tsetskhladze and De Angelis 1994.

<sup>45</sup> See n.42 above. Owen 2005, 19: The author is of the opinion that a fragment of an inscription where Archilochos called the Thracians “dogs” was not correctly restored (after a 1930s scholar), and that it has no justification; it has rather a modern sounding.

<sup>46</sup> Dimitrov 2006a.

<sup>47</sup> Hypsipyle is not recorded in inscriptions. It is the name “of the one woman who dwelled the high gate” judging on the meaning of the name in Greek.

which remnants of onomastics are interwoven in a remarkably complex way.

A few words are needed to set the background of Thracian linguistics. We dispose of no other resource but the inscriptions. Again, for practical reasons inscriptions in the Greek language are considered in establishing the inventory of Thracian onomastics. Latin forms of names coming from Latin inscriptions are more of a supportive nature for two reasons: for being late or because of the fact that Thracian settlements were following a Greek tradition throughout the Roman imperial period, keeping Greek and less so Latin in their everyday administrative activities, with only a few exceptions.

The Greek inscriptions have a history of their own in Thrace proper. Their geography may well be divided in three major parts: (1) Thrace as part of present-day Bulgaria (2) Thrace as part of present-day Greece (and all of the Greek territories in Antiquity), and (3) Thrace in present-day Turkey along with Asia Minor where traces of Thracians were found in inscriptions. This division alone makes for the innumerable difficulties in presenting the material.<sup>48</sup> The legends on a limited number of coins were used in this study. Their complexity requires a separate way of investigation, and the evidence they provide was utilized with caution.<sup>49</sup>

With many inscriptions found on metalwork, it became even more difficult to keep up with the line of equally treating all inscriptions and positive data at yield. For epigraphy developed its own way<sup>50</sup> and therefore facts are hardly to be interpreted from a single point of view. For example, we cannot be sure that the value (in terms of alphabet reform, editing, and lettering) of an inscription found on the Athenian agora could be attributed automatically to an inscription found in Thrace. The situation is comparable to that found in similar fields, such as history of religion<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> Detschew's *Die thrakischen Sprachreste* is a good example of the diversity of facts that at times do not help to solve the problem. Doing away with some of them is and always will be a problem of methodology in approaching the material.

<sup>49</sup> See Dimitrov and Penchev 1984.

<sup>50</sup> See Bodel 2001, 2, 10-15.

<sup>51</sup> See to that effect among many other problems the one outlined by Archibald (1999, 431): "Archaeology can be expected to play a far more significant role in the interpretation of religious behavior, not simply because written sources are meager but because it provides evidence which no ancient writer was capable of giving." And further on, p. 435, "our problem is how to define what was distinctive about the religious behavior of Thrace and how mutual interactions with other traditions affected this distinctiveness."

## **Phonology and Phonetics of the Thracian names based on the inscriptions found in Bulgaria**

The scanty evidence from the chronological layers does not yield to working with a wealth of examples, nor is it any easier to describe in an exact way the clusters in their succession one upon another through the time of transformations of the Thracian language.

The outline of the theory of the phonological level in the name system is very important for practical reasons. The inscriptions on stone and metal, or graffiti scratched on clay vessels, have increased in number, presenting unconditionally precise records for the history of the Thracian territories.

The history of research conducted and dedicated to the Thracian names so far, speaks for itself, supporting the assertion that the theory of their phonological level is essential to the understanding of the whole process. The system of the names at its phonological level is extremely interesting by its various developments, the latter being of high historical importance in solving a range of dubious problems. Owing to the fact that the phonemes in Thracian had not been the object of special interest for the 19<sup>th</sup> Century scholars, an impression was formed in modern scholarship leading to the conclusion that the whole system is hypothetical and therefore impossible.

However it may be, it has been proved wrong by Dimiter Detschew, who undertook a passionate journey into the phonological and morphemic structure of combinations beyond the etymological explanation, within the general theory of the Indo-European phonology. In fact, this is the first attempt in the history of Thracian language studies.

Due to the etymological approach, which later became a principle of methodology, we have many valuable observations and achievements at hand. Due to that same approach, there are also theoretical misunderstandings, which hindered the ongoing investigations into the system of the Thracian language. Having undergone research mainly by Bulgarian scholars, the Thracian language has also become the object of interest of foreign scholars, in regard to the study of the so-called “peripheral cultures” within the Hellenic world, such as the Asia Minor regions of Bithynia, and especially Phrygia.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See for example Brixhe and Panayotou 1994, Corsten 1990 and 2007, Gaertner 2001, etc.



There are several investigations, for which I have substantiated the necessity of theoretical outline, and have showed the lack of systematical presentations of the Thracian language wealth. This problem is connected to another range of developments, which only seem external, but in fact are the core of the same phenomenon: Thracian names are present in less than ten inscriptions in Thracian language, while thousands of them were found in inscriptions written in Greek and Latin, the latter being used in this study as supporting evidence because of their later origin. For centuries Greek had been the language of civilization in the Hellenic world, as well as in the adjacent transitional lands. Greek has been the official language of the Thracian kings and dynasts' courts and administration until the time Latin took over. The several genuine Thracian inscriptions were written in characters of various Greek-like alphabets. Judging on the script used in the Kyolmen inscription we could imagine an epichoric variant, not necessarily derived from a Greek prototype.<sup>53</sup>

The method of presenting the material, adopted here, is based on the approach of the material used. It consists of studying the chronological layers of evidence. In the notion of chronology as part of the notion of phoneme (providing the phonemic variants and therefore the history of the language), the study is centered on the history of the linguistic transformation as evidenced in the Greek inscriptions found in Bulgaria, reflected in the history of the phonology of the Thracian names, as well as the rich cultural environment. The information that comes along with each text enhances the understanding of the layers. The latter, in the light of the interdisciplinary analysis, open new and unexpected perspectives of describing the culture that once flourished in these vast territories.

Secondly, with using this approach in order to study the phonology, i.e. the theoretical value in the nature of the Thracian phonemes, only the epigraphic evidence is being employed, and mainly that from Bulgaria.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, the method of our investigation lies in the philosophy of the principles adopted: secure data with examples that can explain the developments under study by reaching a solution.

The basis of this method is trying to comprehend the phonology of the Thracian language. We take into consideration the concept of the

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<sup>53</sup> Inscribing or carving letters on metalwork betrays an Iranian parallel as evidenced in Thrace and Persia. See to this effect Vassileva 1992-1993 and Zourmatsi 2000.

<sup>54</sup> It should be noted here that on several occasions occurrences found in Greece, Anatolia, and elsewhere around Thrace proper, were used as parallels to Thracian forms.

phonological rule, for rules may change under certain conditions just like the language changes are made functional within a system.

The method itself does not automatically guarantee results.<sup>55</sup> A number of procedures might have been lost due to impossible reconstructions within the Thracian language, e.g. lack of sufficient cases or insecure readings.

In the categories of Thracian sounds, the interrelationships between various classes<sup>56</sup> have been proposed and later perceived as theoretical entities that may change according to “sound laws”<sup>57</sup>, an equivalence that should be the same for e.g. Ezbenis and Asbenoi. In their analysis, the fluctuation *e/a* is to be referred to the way these “sounds” were pronounced (closed or open pronunciation); the shift of *s>z* is a later development<sup>58</sup>, or a feature that is not marked by any specific conditions<sup>59</sup>, or the shift was conditioned according to its word-initial or intervocalic position<sup>60</sup>. It is true that the intervocalic *S* normally changes to *Z* between vowels, however in our example we observe the same opposition between */s/* and */z/*. If we take its chronology into consideration, *S* and *Z* are synchronic (as they appear in our Evidence) and therefore this opposition is irrelevant in regard to their morphophonemic involvement. There is a piece missing in this easy-to-solve puzzle. And it is namely that we are not dealing with sounds but rather with those “unreal sounds” or abstractions.<sup>61</sup>

The underlying PIE *\*/w/* and its treatment in Thracian through the Greek beta conditioned the shift. A plausible reason could be the word initial varying between */a/* and */e/*.<sup>62</sup> Hence, the above-mentioned classes may be distinguished for subclasses, called allophones,<sup>63</sup> which can be analyzed for distinctive features; sonority is the one in our case. This very feature is crucial to the understanding of the phenomenon, for this “sound

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<sup>55</sup> Beekes 1995, 103.

<sup>56</sup> See Lehmann 1993, 8 for a brief but succinct presentation of the phonological theory.

<sup>57</sup> See Dečev 1960; Georgiev 1983; Duridanov 1985.

<sup>58</sup> Duridanov 1985, 108.

<sup>59</sup> Dečev 1960, 162-63: “Es folgt daraus, dass im Thrakischen das ide. *s* teilweise unverändert bleibt, teilweise zu *z* wird”.

<sup>60</sup> Georgiev 1983, 1173-74: “Ide. *s* ist im Thrakischen erhalten geblieben.... Im Anlaut vor Vokal und intervocalisch wird *s* oft zu *z* (wie im Deutschen)”.

<sup>61</sup> Lehmann 1993, 12: “besides the perceived, articulated sounds, classes were proposed that were labeled ‘phonemes’... The classes... are abstractions”.

<sup>62</sup> See Dimitrov 1994.

<sup>63</sup> Lehmann 1993.

change” that we identify as a principle has long been explained, and leads us to believe that generally one specific trait *per se* is involved.<sup>64</sup>

No doubt, sounds cannot be phonemes for they belong to a different category. Their functional analysis is also called phonetics.<sup>65</sup> Only on the surface could one register the phonetic units, as they belong to the physiology of the articulation.

We now arrive at the subsequent conclusion: first, there is no /z/ in Thracian as a continuant of PIE \*/z/ as the latter simply does not exist. Second, /z/ in synchrony is just an allophone, a variant of the phoneme /s/<sup>66</sup>. Third, there may be another condition involved, e. g. assimilation *e-e*. Fourth, only the phonemic analysis with the appropriate distribution of the phonemes can lead us through establishing the etymology of this Thracian etymon of *e/asba* from PIE \* h<sup>1</sup>ek’w-o-s. Fifth, this conclusion would not be possible, if we were to disregard the information from our direct source and the method of the phonological (phonemic) analysis.<sup>67</sup>

With those considerations in mind, I welcome you to Part One.

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<sup>64</sup> Lehmann 1993, 78; Lehmann 1952, 3.

<sup>65</sup> So Anttila 1989, 207-8: “Phonetics in this framework was called *functional*, and an enormous amount of work has been directed toward the principles and procedures for arriving at this level. These principles are generally known as *phonemic analysis*, and the functional phonetic surface units as *phonemes*.”

<sup>66</sup> So Bonfante 1937, 127-29: In his critic of Jacobsohn’s (Festschrift Kretschmer 1926, 72 ff.) he examines a large group of words contrasting them against their correspondent cognates in other Indo-European languages to finally make valuable observations on the phonological and phonetic development in Thracian. Among other, he pointed out to the way Thracian sounds were represented through Greek script.

<sup>67</sup> There is no mention of *Asbenoi* in Detschew, for this essential item was unknown to the literary tradition.



**PART I:**  
**THE EVIDENCE**

