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# 18. Inscriptions

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Abstract:

This chapter offers a survey of the epigraphic evidence from the Thracian space (in his geographical meaning), as documented by Greek and Latin inscriptions. A reconsideration of texts written in Thracian language is also proposed. Pre-Roman Thrace, that is Classical and Hellenistic Thrace, received here a privileged treatment: the main reason, beside the fact that other periods are better known, is that the literacy or the epigraphic practices were largely underestimated in previous surveys, while recent discoveries are radically changing the common perception. Using some examples of important inscriptions or of more recent finds, and giving the most convenient bibliographical references, the chapter focuses on the supports and the types of inscriptions, their contextual insertion, the statuses of their authors, the choice of language (Greek or Latin), their various political, social and cultural implications, taking also into account the historiographical trends.

Keywords: Thracian inscriptions; Greek inscriptions; Latin inscriptions; epigraphic practices; literacy.

## 1 Introduction

Until quite recently, the epigraphy was the notoriously scarcest evidence about pre-Roman Thrace, and to previous scholars this seemed of course coherent with the common image of Thracians as isolated and incompatible with “classical” cultures. This image was largely determined by the preceding views, that is, centered on “classical” civilization as naturally opposed to their surrounding and inferior “barbarians”, or, on the contrary, betraying strong nationalistic and identity assumptions, nourished by a somewhat Romantic view about “national ancestors”, as it often occurs in the traditional Bulgarian and Romanian historiography. However, recent evidence is showing, with the increasing amount of epigraphic data (as well as other archaeological, iconographic and numismatic finds), that the Thracian space was such as permeable to epigraphic practices as other “barbarian” lands at the periphery of the Hellenic world. Moreover, Thracians lived in the close periphery of the Greek space, and they were neighboring, excepting the Northern and the North-Western regions, with continuous Greek-speaking areas, like the colonial milieu on the Aegean, Propontic and Pontic shores, or the Macedonian kingdom (where a Greek dialect was gradually replaced by the *koine*).

This chapter will provide an overview of the epigraphy in the Thracian lands, keeping in mind that Thrace is a geographical expression, with fluid limits (Archibald 2010b, 327-330; and supra, **CHAPTER 1**); consequently, the conventionally Thracian space will be defined by somewhat natural borders: the Pontic coast on the East, the river Istrus in the North (even if Thracian populations lived beyond it), the Aegean and Propontic coasts on the South, the Illyrian and Macedonian lands in the West; it is noteworthy that the native populations from Eastern Macedonia belong to the broader Thracian realm. On the basis of previous surveys (Beševliev 1960; Velkov 1977, 16-17; Mihailov 1977, 1980a, 1984 and 1991) and recent discoveries, this chapter, although considering also the later periods, will primarily focus on the Greek inscriptions of pre-Roman Thrace (Classical and Hellenistic ages), given that the epigraphy of Roman Thrace was brilliantly examined in a recent contribution, with special emphasis on language and society (Sharankov 2011).

As Mihailov (1984, 109) put it, Greek and Latin inscriptions from Thrace “are numerous, of different type and of unequal value, but always precious”. The same can be said

about the scholarly editions and publications, as not all inscriptions are included in accurate corpora, which remain very dispersed, primarily in function of modern boundaries (Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, Turkey), but also by the nature of the language (Greek or Latin). Only inscriptions on durable materials (stone, pottery, metals) resisted across the time, and the regional and chronological discrepancies are still important: the quantity and quality of documentation varies according to regions and periods, to contexts or to social status. Actually, the main cause of these disparities is given by our knowledge of inscribed materials, be it by systematic excavations or by fortuitous discoveries. A more worrying point is implied by the activities of the looters using metal detectors, destroying ancient sites and alighting the market of antiquities with countless pieces without known provenance, nor archaeological context. Historians are always avid for public and official texts, pertaining to political and military history, or to prosopography in general, while the largest part of evidence has a private character, like the funerary monuments and the dedications. However, every piece of evidence, like a banal epitaph, can be exploited as mirroring the society, or the individuals, that produced it, despite their habitually standardized character.

Notwithstanding the long date Hellenic tradition, the epigraphy of the Thracian space is, during the Roman Empire, concerned maybe more than other provinces by the bilingualism, especially in Lower Moesia, Thrace being instead an overwhelming Greek-writing area. But the rapport between the two languages is extremely variable, as means of oral and especially written expression. To give only one example, at the periphery of the Thracian space, in the territory of the Roman colony of Philippi (in the province of Macedonia), the Thracian natives preferred to write more often in Latin than in Greek, as proved by more epitaphs and some dedications; Latin was of course the official tool of expression of the colony, but the explication lies in the limited extension of the Greek writing in this space before the Roman domination (as rightly observed Brélaz 2008). Nevertheless, even in this latinophone island the situation was more complex, as reflected by an epitaph from the territory of Philippi, composed in Latin, but with Greek letters: Αλιουπαιβες Ζειπαλα ουξωρι Τερτιε σουε φηκυτ, αν. χ ο'. Σεκουσ Φυρμι φειλια ρελικυτ βικανιβουσ Σατρικηνις etc. (Pilhofer 2009, 48); that is, in Latin transcription, *Aliupaibes Zeipala <filius> uxori Tertiae suae fecit an(no) ch(oloniae) LXX. Secus Firmi filia reliquit vicinibus Satricenis* etc., so “Aliupaibes, son of Zipala, made (the monument) for his wife Tertia, in the 70<sup>th</sup> year of the colony. Secus, daughter of Firmus, left to the *Satriceni* villagers etc.”.

## 2 Inscriptions in Thracian Language

As for the writing, the Greek was the mean normally used in the Thracian space, as Greek colonies were established since the Archaic period all along the North-Aegean, Propontic and Pontic shores, whereas Greek traders penetrated in the inland, inventing ways of accommodations with native communities and their élite. As for other peoples touched by this phenomenon, even the native names written in Greek have Greek endings and they are almost always respecting to Greek norms, for example for the rendering of genitive.

But our knowledge is nowadays changing: like in other peripheries of the Hellenic world (Asia Minor, Italy and Sicily, Gaul and Spain), there is now clear that Thracian communities successfully adopted the Greek alphabet to their language. Moreover, this was not an unique process, since more experiments occurred thanks to precocious contacts with Greek colonists. This is quite similar than to the use of the adapted alphabets for the different indigenous populations from Asia Minor (Anatolian languages such as Phrygian, Carian, Pisidian, etc.). According to the current state of research (Detschew 1957, 566-582; Schmitt-Brand 1981; Duridanov 1985, 88-103; Brixhe 2006; Dimitrov 2009, 3-19, with caution), the Thracian language or, more precisely, several Thracian idioms, are attested during the Archaic

and Classical ages by 4 different alphabets, all of them using Greek letters, in most of cases with some characteristic forms or letters:

1) An alphabet with patent archaic letters, on an epitaph (?) discovered in 1965 at Kjolmen (Preslav distr., NE Bulgaria), maybe from the second half of V BC (Georgiev 1966; Russu 1969, 49-51; Duridanov 1985, 95-98; Theodossiev 1997a; Dimitrov 2009, 3-13).

2) An alphabet in the North-Aegean area of Zone-Samothrace-Maroneia. Recent excavations in the sanctuary of Apollo from the small city of Zone furnished a large quantity of graffiti on ceramics: only 38 in Greek, but ca. 220 in an unknown language, more probably a Thracian idiom (Brixhe 2006). The same alphabet is also present: a) on 3 stone inscriptions from Zone (IV BC; among them a bilingual text, in Greek and Thracian, *IThrAeg* 427); b) nearby, on the island of Samothrace, on 75 graffiti on pottery from the sanctuary of the Great Gods, from VI-IV BC (Lehmann 1960); c) at Maroneia, on the Aegean coast, 3 inscriptions on stone (*IThrAeg* 376, 377, 378), 2 of them with a slightly different alphabet. Almost all graffiti from Zone are from the second half of VI BC; if all Greek texts are written from left to right, almost half of Thracian texts are retrograde, an obvious identitary mark<sup>1</sup>. Most dedications are for Apollo (*abolo*) at Zone, and for Bendis (*benzi*) at Samothrace. The publication of this evidence will restore some of the complexity of the relationships between Greeks and natives, as several dedicators are bearing Greek names written in Thracian. Such an example is the graffito [*abolo uneso?*] *apolodore kae* (= Ἀπολλόδορος), “Apollodoros dedicated [this] to [Apollo *uneso*]”, where *uneso* is an epithet<sup>2</sup>, and *kae/kaie* is the equivalent of the Greek verb ἀνέθηκεν (Brixhe 2006, 123, no. 5).

3) The alphabet from Samothrace, known by only one example (IV BC), is slightly different from the Zone alphabet (Fraser 1960, no. 64).

4) Finally, the alphabet from Ezerovo-Duvanlij, identic to the Greek alphabet, but without *omega* (Filow 1934, 63-67, nos. 2-5, and 129-131, no. 1; Detschew 1957, 566-582; Duridanov 1985, 89-95 and 100-103; Dimitrov 2009, 13-17): a) the same text *dadaleme* written on 4 silver dishes found at Bašova Mogila, near Duvanlij (V-IV BC); b) inscriptions on a golden ring, found in the tumulus of Arabadžiskata Mogila, near Duvanlij (second half of V BC?); c) the famous ring from Ezerovo, found in 1912, with 61 letters in *scriptio continua* (first half of V BC?).

These pieces, dated to 3 periods and coming from 3 different regions, with various geographico-cultural contexts, generated quantity of delirious interpretations and deceitful explanations. Even the readings (except for the Ezerovo ring) are largely discordant, and no translation is assured. The expected publication of the graffiti from Zone will improve our knowledge on the Thracian language, even if the texts are standardized and very few words will be added to established Thracian glosses; the serious progress will be, instead, that our perception and understanding of the contacts between Greeks and Thracians will change radically. Unlike several Anatolian alphabets, still in use during Hellenistic and even Roman times, Thracian alphabets, with the notable exception of the well-defined area Zone-Samothrace-Maroneia, are mere local experiments, completely substituted by Greek (and later on Latin) inscriptions.

### 3 Inscriptions in Classical and Hellenistic Thrace

Classical and Hellenistic Thrace was longtime considered an anepigraphic space, by contrast to the regular epigraphic production of the neighboring Greek cities. However,

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<sup>1</sup> The model is the Parian alphabet (with the sickle-moon *beta*); there is no distinction between long and short vowels (no H and Ω), and no signs for aspirates (Θ, Φ, X); instead, we may note 2 signs for /i(:)/ and for y, and a specific sign (↯), maybe for [ks].

<sup>2</sup> As it occurs in the complete formulas.

spectacular discoveries in the last decades, notably from the burials of the ruling élite, but also other finds in commercial or fortified sites more carefully excavated, plainly infirm the fallacious character of the reconstructions proposed by the various branches of the discipline called “Thracology”: according to this still dominant view, we should imagine a non-literary society, where the orality, not judged (as previously) as a lack of civilization, would be instead valorized as a conscious choice of the élite, becoming thus as a mark of the aristocratic core of the Thracian culture, that is, a closed initiatic society, different in all ways from the “classic” one (Fol *et alii* 1976). All this appears nowadays as mere savant mythology, infirmed by all kinds of evidence, archaeological, literary, and also epigraphic. In fact, the spread of (even limited) literacy in Thrace is concerning first of all precisely the royal and aristocratic milieu, including for funerary and religious purposes! In the same way, all theories and other countless speculations about the peculiar character of the Thracian religion, described by modern scholars as dominated by initiation practices and the belief in immortality, are reconstructions harming the ancient evidence, being deeply anchored in inherited clichés and modern assumptions.

New finds are showing an unexpected diffusion of Greek language and writing in inland Thrace, from V BC onwards: the legends on tribal or royal coins were already noticed (Youroukova 1976; Peter 1997), but we can add dozens and dozens of inscribed vessels, jewels and arms (especially rings, but also helmets and swords), several funerary texts, more precious official inscriptions emitted by kings, and, last but not least, hundreds of graffiti on pottery. This considerable evidence requires further attention, and first of all caution. Some recent examples are useful, as correct reading and thereafter convenient interpretation are naturally crucial for territories with emerging evidence, as was pre-Roman Thrace:

1) Incorrect word-separation, and name not correctly recognized: A funerary text, inscribed on the lintel of the entrance of a monumental chamber tomb excavated in 2000 near Smjadovo (Šumen distr., NE Bulgaria), was read by the first editors as Γονιμασήςζη Σεύθ<ο>υ γυνή (cf. also *SEG* LII 712), and later even interpreted as a bilingual epitaph, in Thracian<sup>3</sup> [“Seze (= Sese) to my wife”] and Greek (“Seuthes’ wife”) (Dimitrov 2009, 17-18). Actually, the correct reading of this IV BC epitaph is:

ΓΟΝΙΜΑΣΗΙΗ	Γονιμαση ζή,
ΣΕΥΘΘΟΓΥΝΗ	Σευθ<ο>υ γυνή.

“Gonimase, Seuthes’ wife, (still) lives!”<sup>4</sup>.

This is a pure and altogether banal Greek inscription: the compound name of the deceased, bearing a new feminine Thracian name (for the second element, see below Kozimases), is followed by a verb (third person, sg.), and finally by the social identity, namely wife of a certain Seuthes. We can safely infer that Gonimasē was still alive when the tomb was built.

2) Abusive separation: The property mark on the base of a silver phiale from the inventory of an aristocratic tomb at Lešnikova mogila, near Kazanlāk (*SEG* XLVI 850, late V BC?), with irregular and sometimes reversed letters, was read by the first editors as ΔΥΝΤΟΖΗΛΑΥΙΟΣ, “(vessel of) *Dyntas* (*Dyntos*?), son of *Zeila(s)*” (Dimitrov 1995 and 2009, 31-32), or, slightly different, as Δυντο Ζημυιος, “(phiale of) *Dyntos* (son) of *Zemys* (?)” (Theodossiev 1997b). The correct reading is obvious: Δυντοζηλμιος, that is “(property) of *Dyntozelmis*”, so a single name of the owner in Genitive, precisely a Thracian compound name already known (Dana 2005, 293-294, cf. *SEG* LV 742; independently, Sharankov 2007b, 430-431).

<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the Greek adverb δηλαδή (“clearly, manifestly”), on a Rogozen silver-gilt phiale, was unduly considered a Thracian word (Dimitrov 2009, 28).

<sup>4</sup> As suggested also by K. Hallof, *SEG* LII 712, app. crit., and A. Avram, *BÉ*, 2009, 331.

An older inscribed artefact is a gold ring from Goljamata mogila, near Duvanlij, with the owner's name in Genitive (Filow 1934, 101, no. 1): Σκυθοδοκῶ, "of Skythodokos". This is a striking hybrid Thracian name, and its presence in V BC is easy to explain: while the second element, -τοκος, is well-known, the first part of the name reminds that of the Scythians, and confirms the close relationships between Odrysian and Scythian kings (cf. Herod. 4.80). Another interesting owner's mark is a IV BC inscribed gold signet-ring, from the recently excavated Dalakova mogila (Sliven distr., nearby Kabyle); two names in Genitive are engraved above a bearded head: ← Σηυσᾶ Τηρητος, "Of Seusas, son of Teres" (Kitov, Dimitrov 2008; *SEG* LVIII 699).

We may turn now to another kind of evidence. The discoveries of the past two decades are greatly improving our knowledge about the diffusion of epigraphic habit in inner Thrace (Domaradzka 2005b and 2007), both by systematic and more careful excavations, or by fortuitous finds. Of course, only the non-perishable support is preserved: on stone, on vessel (especially phialai), on potsherds; several funerary chambers furnished even inscribed or painted texts. The explanation of this gradual spread of epigraphic practices, both occasional or with permanent aims, lies primarily in the involvement and presence of traders and artisans from the Greek cities from the Aegean (Parissaki 2002) and Pontic coasts (Mihailov 1979).

Increasing evidence comes from the site of Vetren, maybe near the ancient *emporion* Pistiros, in the upper Hebros (Marica) valley, on the westernmost marches of the Odrysian kingdom; founded in the middle of V BC, it was under Thracian rule until the Macedonian conquest (Domaradzka 2002 and 2005a). Greek inhabitants are attested in IV BC: first of all, the epitaphs of Dionysios son of Diotrephe, from Apollonia (*IGB* III.1 1067-1068 = *SEG* XLIII 485), and of [---]s son of Metro[ph]on (*SEG* XLIII 485). At a more extended level, excavations in Vetren provided hundreds of graffiti, some of them with Greek names (*Antipatros*, *Athēnagorēs*, *Dionysios*, *Hekataios*, *Hēroxēinos*, *Kerdōn*, *Marōn*, *Philippidēs*), but also Thracian (*Ebryzelmis*, *Kotys*, *Seuthēs*, *Spokēs*, *Tērēs*), thus showing the coexistence and the sharing of practices.

The famous granite stele found at Vetren in 1990, a 45-line inscription in Greek (ca. 359-352 BC), more times edited and commented, challenged common opinions about "barbarian" kingdoms and Greek *emporion* (*IGBulg* V 5557 ter = *SEG* XLIII 486 = XLVII 1101 = XLIX 911; Velkov, Domaradzka 1994; Chankowski, Domaradzka 1999; Domaradzka 2002, 298-302; Loukopoulou 2005). This incomplete document is listing different privileges and guarantees confirmed by an Odrysian ruler, one of the successors of Kotys I (author of the first agreement), to the settlers of Pistiros, and also to the Greek merchants from Thasos, Maroneia and Apollonia, the latter being more probably from Chalcidice, than Apollonia Pontica by the Black Sea. The reminded agreement for mutual benefit with Kotys represents therefore the oldest document known from the chancellery of the Odrysian kingdom, a convention guaranteeing the *asylum* of the *emporion* and *emporitai* established in Pistiros, confirming their financial transactions with the natives and granting privileges to traders of the North Aegean connection, those from Maroneia enjoying a favored treatment. This explains well the Ionian forms of more graffiti from Vetren, with the important precision that they were inscribed on all kinds of ceramic supports: fine imported Greek pottery (Attic or Aegean), household pottery, amphorae, pithoi, roof-tiles, etc. Their character was also various: names of owners, dedications to Greek deities, numerical notations, but also figures, drawings and signs, sometimes with ligatures. On the same Hebros valley, at Simeonovgrad, a graffito records a Greek name, *Astykrat[ēs]* (Domaradzka 2005, 24).

This kind of evidence was already noticed in Seuthopolis, capital with an invented and royal name, appropriating then Helleno-Macedonian practices, like Philippopolis and Alexandropolis, Macedonians foundations in Thrace. "Seuthes' town", quickly excavated by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, furnished also inscribed texts. Most sensational was an official

inscription, discovered in 1953 (*IGBulg* III.2 1731; Elvers 1994; *SEG* XLII 661; Calder III 2004): it is the famous oath (ὄρκος) of Seuthes III's spouse, Berenike, of obvious Macedonian descent, sworn together with their 4 sons (Ebryzelmis, Teres, Satokos, Sadalas), before the dynast of Kabyle, Spartokos (ca. 300-280 BC). This exceptional document informs us about the existence of Greek temples in the two towns, where the oath became publicized: in Seuthopolis, a *Samothraikion* for the *Theoi Megaloi*, the Great Gods of Samothrace, and, in the agora, a temple of Dionysus; in Kabyle, a *Phosphorion* for the goddess Phosphoros (Artemis), and, in the agora, an altar of Apollo. Another text from Seuthopolis, engraved on a statue base, has a religious character: in the first half of III BC, Amaistas son of Medistas dedicated a statue after completing the charge of Dionysus' priest, in the Greek manner of religious magistracies: Αμαιστας Μηδιστα ἱερητεύσας Διονύσ[ωι] (*IGBulg* III.2 1732). Smaller finds are revealing every day practices: about 140 graffiti on Greek and Thracian ceramics were found in the capital, some of them with Greek names, like [*Ch*]arixenos, but also Thracian (fragmentary: *Seu[thēs]*, *Tar[---]*, *[---ze]lmi[s]*)<sup>5</sup>, as well as dedications to Hellenic deities, such as Heracles, Hera and Zeus (Čičikova 1987; Domaradzka 2005b, 23). More elaborate texts were also demanded: nearby, at Tăža, a fragmentary funerary epigram from II BC concerns the nobleman Spartokos and his beautiful horses (εὐίππων, *IGBulg* III.2 1730).

But the extent of literacy goes far further than the *emporion* from Vetren or the capital Seuthopolis. In NE Bulgaria, the Getic fortress from Sborjanovo, near Ispereh (ca. 330-250 BC), provided about 20 Greek graffiti, and also a dedication of Menechamos son of Poseidonios, to the goddess Phosphoros (*SEG* LV 739 = LVI 825). Kabyle, another important center already mentioned, furnished some inscriptions on stone and 20 graffiti, as the owner's mark on an amphora, Σαδαλας Τηρου, "Of Sadalas, son of Teres" (*IGBulg* V 5639 bis, III-II BC); further East, on the Pontic shore, Debelt (the future Roman colony of Deultum) furnished a hundred graffiti. Except Pistiros and Seuthopolis and several graffiti from the sites cited above, the most part of these "minor" texts remain unpublished. Elsewhere, one may cite smaller centers, such as Halka Bunar, near Gorno Belevo (Stara Zagora distr.), where a broken potsherd records a Thracian name, in Genitive: [Αμ]ατοκου or [Σ]ατοκου (*SEG* LV 737, end of IV-beginning of III BC).

It is worthy to remind that graffiti are found both on imported and local pottery: Greek writing and language was therefore not only the inherited cultural stock of Greek merchants and specialists, but the common mean even for parts of the native population, and royal decisions were sometimes intended for permanent publication and inscribed on stone, as elsewhere in the Greek cities or Hellenistic kingdoms. So, the spreading of literacy is coherent with the emergence of political communities in terms of networks and inter-relationships, and increasing urbanized nuclei (Archibald 2004, 2005 and 2010a), but also with the choice of Greek as *lingua franca*. The extent of literacy is additionally corroborated by the discovery of *styli* and metal ring for sealing (letters, acts), or, for the same practical reasons, by the adoption of the Greek system of numbers and measures (Nankov 2012).

Another amazing discovery was occasioned by the excavation of an aristocratic tomb at Alexandrovo (near Haskovo, III BC): a Greek graffiti, Κοζιμασης χρηστός, was incised on the wall-paintings in the round chamber, at a height of about 170 cm above the floor, along to the drawing of a young men's profile below the text (*SEG* LIV 628). A controversy arised about the significance of χρηστός (for some, the signature of a "master"), and the identity of the portrait – the deceased Kozimases or the nobleman? (Sharankov 2005). By chance, the same name – and certainly the same person – appeared recently in another painted inscription on the frescoes decorating a royal grave from Seuthopolis (*SEG* LVIII 703, middle III BC):

<sup>5</sup> Add also Sharankov 2011, 136, fig. 1: Σευθο[υ] (IV BC); and another graffiti with a name in Genitive, Τηρου, at Philippopolis, in III BC (Sharankov 2011, 136, fig. 2).

Κοζιμασης ἐξωγράφησεν. Ροιγος Σευθου, “Kozimases painted (the tomb). Rhoigos, son of Seuthes”. More than the new evidence for the king Rhoigos, son of Seuthes III (recorded previously only on coins, ca. 300-250 BC), Kozimases’ qualification as a specialist in funerary paintings is now conspicuous. But much more can be inferred from his sole name: a new name for previous commentators, it is in fact recorded twice in Eastern Macedonia, with slightly different spellings: Κοσουμασης at Kalindioia (*SEG XLII* 582, line C<sub>32</sub>), and Κοζειμασης at Gazoros (*SEG XXIV* 614); it is worth mentioning that names in κοζι- are typical of Eastern Macedonia (*LGPV* IV 196 and 199). So, beyond the second degree mobility of this skillful professional in Thrace, it is allowable to suppose an even more important mobility: we can safely assume that Κοζιμασης was in fact originating from the Eastern Macedonia and, presumably with a larger team, contributed in exporting their *savoir faire* (architecture, paintings, and inscribed texts) that gradually spread from Macedonian lands, where old and new discoveries are now abundant, into inland Thrace. After the Greek link (North-Aegean, Pontic and Athenian), it was the Macedonian connection that permitted the extent of literacy in inner Thrace, during the first part of the Hellenistic period. Thrace appears then as a space concerned by coexisting acculturations, associating Greeks, Macedonians and various intermediaries, many of them being Thracian. But Greek specialists were of course always demanded: a recently found golden appliqué, in a tomb of Sinemorec (Burgas distr.), was inscribed by the end of III-beginning of II BC with the name of the artisan and of the owner (Manov 2009): Δημήτριος ἐποί(η)σεν. Κορτοζουντος, “Demetrios made it. Belonging to Kortozous” (apparently, a women name).

Not different was the origin of the pieces belonging to the famous Rogozen treasure (Vraca distr.), discovered in 1985 and 1986, and of other similar pieces from IV BC found in funerary aristocratic contexts North of the Haemus, such as Alexandrovo (Loveč distr.), Borovo (Ruse distr.), Braničevo (Šumen distr.) in Bulgaria, and Agighiol (Tulcea distr.) in Romania, that generated a huge bibliography (*SEG XXXVII* 618; Mihailov 1988; Painter 1988; Loukopoulou 2008, with the observations of A. Avram, *BÉ*, 2009, 324). More categories have been distinguished: a) 26 pointillé inscriptions (among them, 16 at Rogozen); b) negligent inscriptions with proper names (3); c) graffiti with signs and symbols (15); d) more careful inscriptions, in Greek, identifying a mythological scene: Αὐγή δηλαδή, “(this is) Auge, manifestly”. The presence of archaic ο for ου is remarkable (Κερσεβλεπτο, Σατοκοδ).

The owner’s names are those of several kings: Kotys, Kersebleptes, Satokos, Teres (and his father, Amatokos). Sequences with owner’s royal names in Genitive, followed by the mention of location, are recurrent (Archibald 1998, 265-269; Avram 2011, 64): Κοτυος, with the precisions ἐξ Αργισκης/Ηργισκης (Rogozen; and Κερσεβλεπτο ἐξ Εργισκης), ἐξ Απρδ (Rogozen), ἐξ Βεδ/Βεου (Rogozen, Vraca, Borovo, Agighiol), ἐκ/ἐγ Γειστων/Γηιστων (Rogozen, Alexandrovo), ἐκ Σαυθαβας (Rogozen). These are place-names from South-East Thrace, in the background of Thracian Chersonesus, already known (such as the future Apri), or still unidentified, alluding to the practices well-attested by literary sources of sending costly “gifts” to the Odrysian center. One of Kotys’ phialai presents the signature Δισλοιας ἐποίησε, “Disloias made it” (presumably a Thracian name), while another one flatteringly presents the king as Apollo’s child: Κοτυος Ἀπόλλωνος παῖς (*SEG XXXVII* 618, no. 14).

While there is a consensus that such vessels were linked to the Odrysian dynasty, divergent but convincing explanations were proposed: a) prestige gifts from the Odrysian rulers to satellite Triballian and Getic chieftains between Haemus and Istrus (Archibald 1998, 225); b) according to M. B. Hatzopoulos, Rogozen and other similar discoveries are relics of the royal treasure captured during the victorious campaigns of Philip II and the end of the Odrysian kingdom of Kersebleptes (360-341 BC), before being seized by Triballians over Philip’s loot on the aftermath of his expeditions against Thrace and Scythians (342-339) (Loukopoulou 2008, 161).



Other inscribed vessels appeared recently, revealing other practices: in the royal tomb of Goljama Kosmatka, near Šipka, together with the bronze helmet of Seuthes III (ca. 340-300/295 BC), inscribed Σευθου on the forehead, there were found two inscribed silver phialai and a silver jug, where numerals are indicating the weight according to Alexander's system of measures: Σευθου, ὀγκὴ τετράδραχμα Ἀλεξάνδρεια ΔΙΙΙ (12 tetradrachms of Alexander and 2 drachms); Σευθου, ὀγκὴ τετράδραχμα Ἀλεξάνδρεια ΙΔΗ (14 tetradrachms of Alexander and 2 drachms) (Manov 2006; *SEG* LV 776). The kingdom of Seuthes III, competitor of the restless Lysimachus, reveals its intended Hellenistic character.

Nor were the Thracian dynasts isolated from the Aegean space, and this external evidence still constitutes, alongside with some literary echoes, the core of modern chronology and hypotheses (Mihailov 1980a). Thucydides 2.29.4-6 relates about a treaty between Athens and Sitalkes in 431 BC, in the context of the Peloponnesian war, as well as the granting of Athenian citizenship to his son Sadokos, and of proxeny to his brother-in-law Nymphodoros of Abdera, confirming thus the role of North-Aegean Greeks as intermediating between their northern neighbors with the Athenian Empire. By the same time, the cult of Bendis was officially introduced at Athens (from 429/428 BC), for political reasons, but also as a special favor to groups of Thracian metics and slaves, both in Piraeus and in the city; the Thracian goddess remain quite popular in this milieu even in the Hellenistic epoch, as inferred from inscriptions and theophoric names (Masson 1988; Deoudi 2010). Other public inscriptions from Athens are recording Thracian kings: Medokos (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 22, in 390/389 BC); the Odrysian Ebryzelmis and more embassies (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 31, in 386/385 BC); a member of the Thracian dynasty, "Rheboulas, son of Seuthes [II], brother of Kotys", is indicated as resident in the deme Angele (*IG* II/III<sup>3</sup> 1.2 351, in 331/330). After the death of Kotys and the rise of Philip II in 359 BC, an alliance is concluded between Athens and Kotys' successors, namely Berisades, Amadokos and Kersebleptes (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 126, in 357/356 BC); then follows an Athenian *symmachia* with Ketriporis (in western Thrace) and his brothers, as well as with the Paeonian king Lyppeios and the Illyrian king Grabos, against Philip II (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 127, in 356/355 BC). Elsewhere, in the symbolic heartland of Greece, two decrees from Delphi, granting proxeny and other privileges, are honoring the sons of Kersebleptes, namely Iolaos, Poseidonios, Medistas, Teres (*FD* III.1 392, in 355 BC), and later on Kotys, son of Rhaizdos (*FD* III.4 414, in 276 or 267 BC).

As for the neighboring Greeks, the evidence is not scarce. One fragmentary treaty between the king Sadalas III and Mesambria (ὁμολογία Σαδαλα καὶ Μεσσαμβριανῶν) survived, concerning the problem of ship-wrecked on the shores of his kingdom (*IGBulg* I<sup>2</sup> 307 = V 5086, ca. 281-277 BC). Established before the Celtic invasion, the treaty is opportunely introduced by a decree honoring the king as benefactor and granting him the usual privileges, mentioning thereafter its exhibition in the temple of Apollo, along other honorific stelai for Sadalas' ancestors, which are luckily listed (Mopsyestis, Taroutinas, Medistas, Kotys). We may safely infer that Mesambria renewed the treaty with each king of the dynasty, like the preceding case of the Vetren stele, referring to the same oath as that in the time of Kotys I (Avram 2011, 69). One century later, an honorific decree from Mesambria honors a Thracian from the neighboring tribe of Astae (*IGBulg* I<sup>2</sup> 312).

Political history is highly dependent on inscriptions, which are confirming the existence or more centers of power. King Mostis (ca. 133-86 BC?), ruler in Propontic Thrace and known especially by coins, is recorded inside the limits of his kingdom, at Bisanthe and Heraion Teichos (*SEG* XXXVII 602 and XLII 662; Sayar 1992). The dealings as well as the war with the Dacian king Byrebistas, entitled "the first and the greatest among the kings of Thrace" (ca. 82-44 BC), are recorded by inscriptions from Dionysopolis (*IGBulg* I<sup>2</sup> 13, a decree for Akornion, after 48 BC), Mesambria (*IGBulg* I<sup>2</sup> 323-326, about the *strategoí*), and

maybe Odessus (*IGBulg I<sup>2</sup> 46*), with a list of eponymous-priests μετὰ τὴν κάθοδον, after their return in the liberated city.

Several common people of native origin are recorded in V-IV BC epitaphs of Pontic Apollonia, such as a women, *Paibinē* (*IGBulg I<sup>2</sup> 430*), and a father's name *Basstakilēs* (sic) (*IGBulg I<sup>2</sup> 440*); later on (III-II BC), in the same city, a fragmentary inscription records the possessions of Kotys son of Taroulas, as well as the tomb of a local dynast, Mostis (*IGBulg I<sup>2</sup> 469 bis*). As for the Thracian penetration in the Greek cities (Danov 1960 and 1983; Oppermann 2004), the evidence from Propontic and Aegean coasts is even more plentiful, even if general much later (Robert 1964; Parissaki 2007). At the end of the Hellenistic epoch, and especially in the imperial period, the more relevant dossiers are concerning Dionysopolis and Odessus on the western Pontic coast, where natives enter massively in the gymnasium and therefore can assume the highest magistracies (Dana, Dana 2013), while local games in Odessus were entitled in the Imperial period *Darzaleia*, pertaining to the local god Derzelas/Darzalas, revered as a "Great God".

Local chieftains are sometimes mentioned by decrees from Istros, concerning the dealings and troubles with the (Getic) king Zalmodegikos (*ISM I 8*, III BC), the Thracian chieftain Zoltes (*ISM I 15*, ca. 200 BC), and some others; as elsewhere in other Greek cities in permanent negotiation with foreign powers, the cautious style of such official decisions alludes to tribute (φόρος), regular tax imposed by a treaty, but also to equivocal "gifts" (δῶρα) for their "protectors" (Avram 2011, 61-70).

Finally, almost all members of the Sappaeon dynasty (and sometimes of the Astaeon tree) are honored by Thracian *strategoï*, but more often by civic communities as benefactors, or only incidentally mentioned, in dozens of inscriptions from the edges of the Thracian space: Abritus, Callatis, Tirizis, Dionysopolis, Odessus, Apollonia Pontica, Bizye, Selymbria, Perinthus, (future) Plotinopolis, Samothrace, Maroneia, Abdera, Neapolis, Philippi, Amphipolis, Thasos, Thessalonike; but also from Cyzicus, Chios, Ephesus, Chaironeia, Athens and Rome. Implied directly or indirectly in the Roman civil wars, and then reduced to a role of clientelar kings under Augustus and his successors, part of the Eastern dynastic network (Sullivan 1979), some Thracian dynasts had the occasion to assume evergetic positions in Callatis and Thessalonike, but also far further: before 19 AD, Kotys III was eponymous *archon* at Athens (*IG II<sup>2</sup> 1070 = Agora XV 304*, 9-10), while Rhoimetalkes III was eponymous *archon* at Athens in 36/37 AD (*IG II<sup>2</sup> 1967*, 2292, 3156), and eponymous stephanophore in Chios (Robert 1938, 143-144). It was under the patronage of one of these kings, Kotys (III?), that a *horothesia* reestablished the boundaries between Dionysopolis and Callatis (*IGBulg V 5011*).

Few words must be said about Thracians abroad (some examples in Fraser 1993), numerous as slaves and metics at Athens and sporadically in the Aegean world, but more plentifully recorded as soldiers and settlers in all the Hellenistic kingdoms (Lagid, Antigonid, Seleucid and Attalid), especially in the Ptolemaic Egypt, where most of the papyri are referring to clerouchs, and as further as Cirta in the Numidian kingdom, where two Thracian mercenaries are recorded on Greek inscriptions (Dana 2011b).

There is now sufficient evidence that the use of the Greek language in the pre-Hellenistic and early Hellenistic Thrace, together with the spread of literacy, confirm the closely connecting commercial and political factors (Domaradzka 2005a, 25). Yet, until the Roman epoch, the most important inscriptions concerning the political history of the Thracian space are that of the Greek edges and of the Aegean space, situation that changed radically with the provincialization of the former clientelar kingdom, in 45-46 AD.

#### **4 Inscriptions in Roman Thrace**

Throughout the imperial period, thousands of inscriptions are known in the Thracian space, and the gain extends furthermore to their quality and variety: different kinds of official texts (decrees, laws, official letters, honorific and public dedications), boundary stones, milestones, personal dedications, epitaphs and epigrams, catalogues, graffiti. Before the Roman domination, the epigraphic habit (at least, on stone) was regular on the coasts, were lied the long-date Greek cities, but by the II AD it covers already all inland Thrace. One of the main factors, along with the diffusion of the Greek as an epigraphic mean, was the urbanization and/or municipalization in Thrace and Lower Moesia, principally in II AD, and especially under the reign of Trajan. Yet, strong geographical and chronological disparities do exist, both real or determined by insufficient exploration: to give only one example, the inner European Turkey is very scarcely investigated; little is known about the two Roman colonies in Thrace, founded in I AD, Apri (*colonia Claudia Aprensis*) and Deultum (*Colonia Flavia Pacis Deultensium*), also because the discoveries are still largely unreported, while all kinds of evidence are plentiful for Philippi (*colonia Augusta Iulia Philippensium*), in Macedonia. Other regional discrepancies are determined by different factors: in Lower Moesia, *municipia* and *coloniae* furnished official evidence, but also part of the epigraphic production emitted by more common persons is showing the superior visibility of many immigrants, military as well as civilians (for example, different specialists from Bithynia).

But for the general diffusion of the epigraphic habit, the first proof is given by the widespread dedications to indigenous divinities, in most of the cases with Greek or Roman names, even in rural context. Such as an example is the dedication *ILBulg* 209, found in the Asclepieum from Glava Panega, in Lower Moesia: *Silvano sancto ex vico Longinopara heredes Eftecenthi Coci v(otum) p(osuerunt)*, “To saint Silvanus, the heirs of Eftecenthus son of Cocus, from the village Longinopara, set up according to a vow”. Not only the Thracian onomastics reveals interesting, but also the hybrid name of the *vicus*, whose meaning was “village of Longinus”, in so associating a Latin name and a well-known Thracian place-name element, *-para*.

Concentration of inscriptions, except the Greek cities of the coasts (such as Perinthus, seat of the provincial governor), is plain in the urban centers like Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana, Pautalia, Serdica, Nicopolis ad Nestum, and also in the military regions or on the Danubian limes – where the evidence is mainly, but not exclusively, in Latin. While the quasi-totality of inscriptions from the province of Thrace are in Greek, Lower Moesia is a bilingual province; Greek is however privileged in dedications, especially in non-military context. Nevertheless, the famous “Jireček line” as departing the use of Greek and Latin in the Balkans is neither a linguistic, neither an ethnic frontier (Mihăescu 1978, 73-75; Gerov 1980b; Rizakis 1995; Galdi 2008). Even in areas where Latin inscriptions are dominating, Greek loan-words are noticeable, and, inversely, more Latin loan-words occur in Greek inscriptions (Sharankov 2011, 140 and 152-153).

Roman Thrace is thus definitely part of the Hellenophone provinces, another peculiar sign being the existence of the provincial *koinon*: the seat of the Thracian Common Council was at Philippopolis, and honorific evidence attests at least 18 thracarchs, many of them of clear native descent (Sharankov 2007a). At the confluence of Hellenic and Roman traditions, Thrace offers also abundant epigraphic, iconographic, numismatic and archaeological evidence on agonistic festivals, athletic contests and gladiatorial games (Vagalinski 2009).

Thousands of dedications, and also countless anepigraphic reliefs, were discovered in Thrace and Lower Moesia, primarily honoring indigenous gods; many of them are posted by militaries in service or veterans, but also by women. As the growing evidence suggests a proliferation of rural sanctuaries, there is now conclusive documentary evidence about the development of several regional sanctuaries, with a large quantity of dedications, thus showing the popularity of some local divinities: such examples are Asclepius

*Saldouissēnos/Saldokelēnos/Saldēnos* at Glava Panega, and Apollo *Aulousadēnos* (Draganovec, in Lower Moesia; and, in the territory of Philippopolis, Asclepius *Zymydrēnos* at Batkun, and the Nymphs at Burdapa. The epithet of the protecting god of Philippopolis, Apollo Kendrisos, is Thracian, and gave even that name to a tribe (*phyle Kendriseis*) and to local games (*Kendriseia*), attested in inscriptions and on coins. Religious mobility is epigraphically attested, for example, at the Asclepieum of Glava Panega in Lower Moesia, where more dedicators from Pautalia (province of Thrace) made gifts, among them the councilor (*bouleutēs*) Dizas son of Moukases and the *phylarchos* Priscus son of Iulius (*IGBulg* II 511, 536, 540, 544).

Most of the divine epithets are in fact derived from place-names, and inform us about the indigenous geographical names: so, today Kopilovci, in the territory of Pautalia, was *\*Karistoron/\*Caristorum*, easily recognized after the epithets of Zeus and Hera Καριστορηνοί, worshipped in a sanctuary where were found some 20 dedications in Greek, but also one in Latin, for Jupiter Optimus Maximus *Cari[storenus]* (*ΑΕ*, 1915, 90).

However, if very few epitaphs (stelai and altars) were discovered in inner Thrace (Slawisch 2007), yet pertaining to their social status and cultural identity (Ivanov 2008), more are known in Lower Moesia (Conrad 2004), and many more funerary monuments are present all over Eastern Macedonia, including the Middle Strymon valley, in most cases concerning the whole family.

Some catalogues are extremely important, such as the foundation charter of the emporium at Pizus, from 202 AD, followed by a list of about 200 settlers, and an edict of the governor Sicinnius Clarus on the establishment of *emporia*, market towns (*IGBulg* III.2 1690); other are concerning various religious associations, for example the catalogue of a Bacchic thiasus from Cillae, in the territory of Philippopolis (*IGBulg* III.1 1517). For the inner organization and the peculiar structure of the province, namely the strategies (Parissaki 2009), of particular interest is the precious catalogue of 33 *strategoï* from Thrace, setting up an honorific inscription for the governor M. Vettius Marcellus (*IThrAeg* 84, ca. 46-60 AD).

Like other epigraphic evidence, the major gain is the onomastic insight into a provincial society, and revealing the ethnic and cultural features (a majority of Thracian names, but also various Greek and Latin names), as well as the juridical status (peregrines, Roman citizens, slaves and freedmen). As in other provinces of the Empire, both occidental and oriental, it would be abusive to take this profusion of native names (with different spellings) as proof of resistance, or a kind of resurgence of traditions; this is in fact an ordinary result of an evidence in unceasing augmentation, and the mark of the diffusion of epigraphic habit<sup>6</sup>.

More hundreds epitaphs are known from the old Greek city of Odessus in Lower Moesia, thus constituting a mirror for the local society, among other, in showing an intense presence of Getic and Thracian groups in the town, even at the highest levels. For example, the epitaph *IGB P 178 bis* is quite representative: Ἀγαθήνωρ Ἀπολλωνίου καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες αὐτοῦ Βοων Ζωπύρου καὶ Τουτας Ζωπύρου καὶ ὁ υἱὸς αὐτῶν Ἀγαθήνωρ καὶ ἡ θυγάτηρ Ζουδιεγίπτους χαίρετε, “Agathenor son of Apollonios and his wives, Boon daughter of Zopyros and Toutas daughter of Zopyros, and the daughter Zoudiegiptous, farewell”. It is striking to note that wives (and daughters) usually bear indigenous names, while husbands (and sons) Greek ones; in fact, the socio-cultural milieu was the same, but men were more concerned by the public space than women. This pattern well-attested at Odessus is similar to what can be observed elsewhere, en Egypt or Syria during the Imperial epoch. Also, we may suppose that Agathenor successively married two sisters (both wives have the same father’s

<sup>6</sup> On names in Latin inscriptions, the monograph of Minkova 2000 is to be avoided (see Dana 2008).

name), firstly Boon, and, after her death, her sister Zoudiegiptous, in doing so reinforcing the alliance to the same family.

The link between text and monument is essential, not only in terms of monumentality or expenses, but also in association with images or in the contextual insertion. The most relevant case is the omnipresence of the motive of the so-called Thracian Rider (*Heros equitans*), extremely popular in both votive and funerary contexts. This theme was furthermore undoubtedly perceived and used as an identity mark, as its diffusion concerns primarily Thracian-speaking populations, attribution that is very frequently confirmed by onomastics. Enormously popular in Thrace, Lower Moesia and Eastern Macedonia, the theme of the Thracian Horseman occurs also, albeit sporadically, in Western Macedonia, and even on monuments erected by Thracian soldiers at Rome, both votive and funerary.

Military employment and recruitment heavily concerned the Thracian space, and this is intensely reflected in the inscribed evidence. While Thrace was a *provincia inermis*, with only several auxiliary units, countless Thracian recruits served in all other provinces, including on the Danubian limes and in Lower Moesia. They are attested in all the corps of the Roman army, mainly in the auxiliary troops (as the majority of Thracians were until 212 peregrines) and in the praetorian fleets (of Misenum and Ravenna), but also, especially during the III<sup>rd</sup> century, in the two elite units from Rome, the praetorian cohorts and the imperial guards (*equites singulares Augusti*); some special formulas similar to military diplomas, from III AD, are even concerning service in legions. As every year thousands of Thracian veterans returned home, and given also the recent use of metal detectors, hundreds of military diplomas are coming from Bulgaria in the last two decades. These privileges on bronze, copies of imperial constitutions exposed at Rome, granted Roman citizenship (*civitas Romana*) to veterans and their offspring, and also recognized their peregrine unions as legal marriages (*conubium*). Maybe up to 200 such documents on bronze granted to Thracian soldiers are known up-to-now, and the evidence is increasing, bringing to light new names, new place-names, and unexpected material for a military and social history of these populations (Dana 2013).

Nor were these soldiers in service all over the frontiers, or in the center of the Empire, lost for their communities. They did more than returning home after 25 or more years of military service, many of them with wives and children. A pertinent example is provided by the imperial response from 238 AD to the villagers of Skaptopara (in the territory of Pautalia), to their petition for help against the abuses of some powerful local men; Gordian III's rescript, inscribed partly in Latin, and mostly in Greek translation, was in fact sent to their devoted compatriot (*convicanus*) Aur. Pyrrus/Πύρρος, a praetorian of the X<sup>th</sup> cohort that petitioned the emperor (*IGBulg IV 2236*; Hallof 1994).

Concerning the language choice, soldiers were the privileged vehicle for the Latin expression: as proved in a recent study, it is striking that from the 37 epitaphs of soldiers and veterans in the province of Thrace, 25 are in Latin, 7 in Greek and 3 bilingual (Slawisch 2007, 169); the contrast is even more strongest if we consider that almost all Latin inscriptions are coming from Perinthus. Elsewhere, the presence of garrisons well explains the use of Latin: such is the case of a funerary altar from II AD with the Thracian Rider found in Kabyle (*AÉ*, 1978, 730; Slawisch 2007, 189, no. K 3):

*D(is) M(anibus).*  
*Val(eria) Festiva et Ulpus Vi-*  
*tales Damanaeo Ama-*  
*zeni, generi (sic)<sup>7</sup> suo, milit(i),*

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<sup>7</sup> Various spellings and mistakes occur in Greek and Latin inscriptions, some of them pertaining to the spoken language, other to faults of the stone-cutters (see, e.g., Sharankov 2011, 137-138). According to Bojadjev 2000, in a monograph about the ethno-linguistic relations in Thrace and Lower Moesia, Latin ceased to function as an

5 *c(ustodi) ar(morum) leg(ionis), mil(itavit) an(nis) XXIII, vix(it)  
an(nis) XXXX, cui bene mer(enti)  
aram posuerunt.*

“To the spirits of the departed. Valeria Festiva and Ulpus Vitales to their son-in-law Damanaeus son of Amazenus, soldier, keeper of arms of the legion, who served 24 years, lived 40 year; they set up the altar to the well deserving”.

The defunct, belonging to an unspecified legion from Lower Moesia, was more probably *custos armorum* (keeper of arms) than *car(cerarius) legionis*, as more editors preferred to develop the abbreviation. He is curiously named only by his ancient peregrine nomenclature, even if he was a Roman citizen, as his service in a legion compulsory implied; the same northern origin is confirmed by his onomastics, of Daco-Moesian character.

In other contexts, the choice of both languages was presumably implied by the origin of the author of the command, or by the composite milieu where the inscription was posted. Such an example of a bilingual inscription, recently published but whose provenance is unfortunately unknown, was graved on a votive relief in the series of the “Thracian Rider”, maybe from I AD (Dimitrova, Clinton 2010; *AE*, 2010, 1868):

*Felicio C(ai) Menani  
ser(vus) votum solvit pro  
se / Φηλικίων Γαίου Μενά-  
νίου δούλος εὐχὴν  
5 ἀπέδωκεν ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ.*

“Felicio, slave of Gaius Menanius, fulfilled a vow for himself”.

It is striking however that here the dedication was firstly written in Latin, than translated into Greek, as proved by the strange expression εὐχὴν ἀπέδωκεν ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ.

Some epigrams and more elaborate texts are exciting, such as a recently published funerary epigram carefully engraved on a statue base of, and alluding also to the patron-god of the Thracian metropolis, Apollo Kendrisos. It records a presumably Bithynian, more probably trader than poet, Maximus of Apamea, who died aged of about 70 years at Philippopolis: the deceased is presented as someone “loved by Thrace and the world”, Θρήκη καὶ κόσμῳ πεφιλημένος (Sharankov 2007c and 2011, 143; Jones 2011; *SEG* LVII 635).

## 5 Inscriptions in Late Antique Thrace

Thrace remained part of the Later Roman Empire, and Greek and Latin inscriptions, albeit in much lesser quantity, were quite regularly engraved. This time, and despite their drastic diminution, the choice of Latin is more important, albeit privileged in military and administrative context. So, a IV<sup>th</sup> century Latin epitaph from Serdica commemorates Felix, *sig(nifer) d(e) n(umero) Divit(ensium)*, dead at 30 years, and native from today Amiens, *civis [A]mbianensis* (*CIL* III 7415; Beševliev 1964, no. 6); on the stele, the defunct is depicted between two horses, in a standard military scheme. The Christianization of this space made that most of inscriptions are pertaining to the new religion, first of all the epitaphs, many among them commemorating for priests and bishops; they are marked by crosses and other Christian symbols, in addition to the usual formulaic expressions and sometimes specific dating formulas. Other monuments include several honorific dedications (especially for emperors), various building inscriptions, boundary marks between villages and estates, milestones, and also stamps on bricks.

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instrument of universal communication as early as in the second half of I AD; his conclusions are surprising, as the author seems to ignore that the so-called “vulgar Latin” was, as everywhere in the Roman Empire, the spoken language, and definitely not the Ciceronian phrasings.

A large part of the names are Christian, but Greek and Latin onomastics are also frequent. Despite their relative scantiness, Thracian names are still occurring in the inscriptions from Late Antiquity, until VI AD, and this is altogether coherent with the increasing presence of persons from Thrace in the imperial structures, ecclesiastical, administrative and mainly military. However, the contrast is strong with their spectacular presence during the Imperial period. Three examples from V-IV AD will suffice:

(1) a priest buried at Serdica, in Dacia Mediterranea: † *Ic requiescit corpus viri religiosi Buraidi presbyteri* †, “Here rests the body of the pious priest Buraides” (Beševliev 1964, no. 12);

(2) a military from an élite unit (*domesticus*), *Fl(avius) Moco, de patria Artaco, de vico Calso*, honoring the memory of his wife *Dona (= Domina/Domna)* at Beroe (formerly Augusta Traiana) (Beševliev 1964, no. 192);

(3) the painted epitaph on a fresco on the wall of a grave from Beroe, honoring the memory of a woman: † Ἐνθάδε κατάκειται Ζιασαλβη ἡ μακαριστάτη, “Here lies Ziasalbe the most blessed”, with the precision of the date, 2<sup>nd</sup> December of the 14<sup>th</sup> indiction, under the consulate of Belisarius, that is 535 AD (*SEG XLIX 873*).

Christian gravestone inscriptions are not only precious for their onomastics, since they are giving often indications about occupations and birth places. A recently published Christian epitaph, from V-VI AD, found in today Sozopol (Christian name given to former Apollonia Pontica), was inscribed contrariwise on a “pagan” marble funerary stele depicting the funerary feast, from late Hellenistic or Imperial times. The deficient orthography is usual for this period: † Ἐνθάδε κατάκειτε Βητάλιο(ς) πρεσβ(ύτερος) Δηβελτοῦ †. Κ(ύριε) Χρι(στ)έ, “Here lies Vitalius, priest of Deultum. Lord Christ!” (Dana 2010; *Αἴ*, 2010, 1456). If here we are dealing with a minor mobility, as Sozopolis and Deultum were neighboring cities, a long-scale mobility continued to affect the Thracian space, as many Syrians or people from Asia Minor, usually indicating their provinces, cities and even villages, are mentioned in epitaphs, especially at Odessus, but also in Serdica and Philippopolis.

## 6 Conclusion

Some 35 years ago, Georgi Mihailov still judged: “La Thrace de l’époque classique reste un pays anépigraphé” (Mihailov 1980a, 21). However, as already seen, Thrace never was an isolated area: we definitively entered in a new phase, allowing us a better understanding of mutations that affected local communities in the Balkans. Further discoveries of texts in Thracian alphabet are to be expected, but even more new inscribed texts in Greek of Classical and Hellenistic times in inner Thracian lands. Epigraphy still constitutes the main source of evidence for Roman Thrace, and will never lose its supremacy, as in all other provinces of the Empire, but it becomes gradually invaluable for later and especially previous periods. Systematic excavations and the edition of new and more accurate corpora, reexamining previous and new evidence, will diminish the regional and chronological disparities, thus contributing to release this space from its relative isolation in the Western scholarly milieu.

### Further Reading

Latin inscriptions from the Thracian space known until 1902 are collected in *CIL III*; a new regional corpus covers only the western part of Lower Moesia (B. Gerov, *ILBulg*, 1989); additions are currently signaled in *Αἴ*, with revised texts. Greek inscriptions from Bulgaria, much more numerous, are excellently edited in the corpus of G. Mihailov (*IGBulg*, I-V, 1958-1997); for the first edition of the first volume, the observations of Robert 1959 are always useful; the novelties are annually registered, with improved texts, in *SEG*, while the most relevant inscriptions are commented in the *ΒἸ*. Late antique inscriptions, both Greek and Latin, are edited by Beševliev 1964; more studies are collected in Velkov 1977 and 1980. Other inscriptions, mainly Greek, are edited in Beševliev 1952 (Sofia

Museum) and Manov 2008 (Middle Strymon valley). Regional corpora are concerning Scythia Minor (*ISM* I-III, V; IV, in press), Aegean Thrace (*IThrAeg*) and European Turkey (Taşlıklioğlu 1961-1971). Inscriptions from the Greek cities of the North Propontic coast are published in the series *Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien* (Bonn), nos. 19 (Sestus and Thracian Chersonesus) and 58 (Byzantium and Selymbria); for Perinthus, see Sayar 1998; those from Eastern Macedonia are discussed in the Athenian collection MEΛETHMATA. For the region of Philippi, in Macedonia, the corpus of Pilhofer 2009 will be soon superseded (cf. Rizakis *et alii* 2007); for corrections of inscriptions from Aegean Thrace and Oriental Macedonia, see Mihailov 1975 (25-35) and 1980b.

More epigraphic studies are included in the volumes in honor of B. Gerov (Tačeva and Bojadžiev 1990) and G. Mihailov (Fol *et alii* 1995); several contributions of the great Bulgarian epigraphist are conveniently collected in Mihailov 2007. Selected topics, paying attention to contexts, can be found in Iakovidou 2007, and especially in the two volumes of *Thrakika Zetemata* (Loukopoulou and Psoma 2008; Parissaki 2013). Each year, new inscriptions are published in two publications from Sofia, *Archaeologia Bulgarica* and *Numismatica, Sphragistica, and Epigraphica*. In the future, Nikolaj Šarankov, who is currently ongoing the corpus *IGBulg*, will publish dozens of invaluable inscriptions discovered in the temple of the Pontic Mother of Gods from Dionysopolis (cf. Lazarenko *et alii* 2010), while Lidia Domaradzka is preparing the corpus of *Classical and Hellenistic Greek Graffiti from Thrace*.

Thracian language, so controversial, remains unfortunately a topic subjected to exaggerations and speculations; the best presentations are the critical overviews of Brixhe and Panayotou 1997 (and Panayotou 2007); the evidence from Zone will be published by Claude Brixhe (cf. Brixhe 2006). For the Thracian names (see briefly Mihailov 1977), the corpus of Detschew 1957 and the regional repertory *LGPN* IV (2005; corrections in Dana 2006) will be superseded in 2014 by *Onomasticon Thracicum* (cf. Dana 2011a).

On the language of Greek inscriptions from Bulgaria, the monograph of Mihailov 1943 is now supplanted by Slavova 2004 (focus on phonology) and 2009 (Greek cities of the Black Sea coast); as for the Latin language in the Balkans, Mihăescu 1978 is still valuable.

The iconographic and epigraphic repertory on the “Thracian Rider” of Kazarow 1938, partially supplanted by the incomplete *CCET* (*Corpus Cultus Equitis Thracii*, Leiden, I-II and IV-V, 1979-1984, *EPRO* 74), is now substituted by the monumental work of Oppermann 2006; on this peculiar figure, see the stimulating study of Dimitrova 2002; about cults in Thrace and Moesia, see the survey of Velkov, Gerassimova-Tomova 1989. The funerary stelai are now collected in corpora for Lower Moesia (Dimitrov 1942; Conrad 2004) and Thrace (Slawisch 2007).

Useful regional analyses are provided on Byzantium (Robert 1964), Aegean Thrace (Parissaki 2007), Propontic Thrace (Loukopoulou 1989), Western Thrace (Gerov 1959-1969) and Middle Strymon valley or Bulgarian Macedonia (Manov 2008; Slavova 2010), and, generally, Gerov 1980a and 1988; with extreme caution, one may consult Samsaris 1989 (Lower Strymon) and 1993 (Thracians on the present Greek territory). Language and society in Roman Thrace, as mirrored in epigraphy, are commented in the illuminating paper of Sharankov 2011. For some examples of inscribed votive or funerary reliefs, coming from known locations or from the market of antiquities, see Dana 2006 and 2009; Sharankov 2007b and 2009.

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*BÉ* = *Bulletin épigraphique* of the *Revue des Études Grecques*. Paris.

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