

# I TRACI TRA GEOGRAFIA E STORIA

ARISTONOTHOS  
*Scritti per il Mediterraneo antico*

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*I Traci tra geografia e storia*

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La curatela di questo volume è di Paola Schirripa

In copertina: Il mare e il nome di Aristonothos.

Le “o” sono scritte come i cerchi puntati che compaiono sul cratere.

*Questa serie vuole celebrare il mare Mediterraneo e contribuire a sviluppare temi, studi e immaginario che il cratere firmato dal greco Aristonothos ancora oggi evoca. Deposto nella tomba di un etrusco, racconta di storie e relazioni fra culture diverse che si svolgono in questo mare e sulle terre che unisce.*



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# I TRACI TRA GEOGRAFIA E STORIA

## INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Paola Schrripa*

In February 2004, thanks to the generous support of Professor Federica Cordano, I organized a Symposium on Thrace and the Thracians at the University of Milan. The Proceedings of this Symposium have known a relatively widespread success, even abroad, although the contributions were entirely written in Italian. It was with pride and pleasure that we heard that the volume had become popular in Bulgaria as well, the homeland of the ancient Thracians.

During these last few years the University of Milan has not neglected its long-running interest in Thrace: in 2012 professor Cordano organized a Seminar on Greek cults in Thrace and, as editor, I assembled the contributions into a miscellaneous volume. We tried to adopt a different perspective to look at the Thracian world from the one we had previously, and we focused on the Greek cities founded in Thrace, by analyzing Greek cults in the area through a cross-cultural approach.

Over the last decade scholars have engaged in lively debates about the culture, the history and diachronic development of Thracian civilization. Taking into account new archaeological data, scholars have investigated historical and religious aspects of that civilization, its material culture, and Greek and Roman interaction with the Thracians. Nevertheless, if we consider the double meaning of the word in its concrete and metaphorical shade, the Thracian “space” is still worthy of exploration, and we are pleased to present to the reader this new interdisciplinary and diachronic volume that sets out to reconstruct the fascinating world of the Thracians, taking advantage of the results of recent scholarship, and of the intertwining of different domains and fields of research such as epigraphy, history, archeology, geography.

The contributors of this volume work in Italy, France, Greece, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria, respectively. They are Romanians, Bulgarians, French, Czechs and Italians. The international milieu of the authors seems to us to be the best way to deal with a key topic that entails a philosophical challenge to the notion of identity and, in particular, “barbarian” identity across the ages and viewed through its transformations and its elusive nature, despite every effort to find a definitive classification (and recent scholarship has often given



proof of failing in this sense). Interdisciplinary methods, various human and academic experiences and deeply rooted scientific interests may give us the opportunity to find an intermediate way to work together, to have a dialogue together, in many languages, in many ways.

The volume opens with what is nothing more than a general retrospective re-reading of my study of 2004; on the basis of the analysis of Thracian myths in Attic drama, I then argued that the Athenians across the classical age regarded the Thracian world as primitive and violent, a feature that has been often underlined by scholars. After a few years I would like to challenge my own argumentation by giving the reader a provocative view of the notion itself of “Thrace” and Thracian scholarship, in the light of the following crucial question: is it possible to get rid of the prejudices and the bias hidden or manifestly shown in ancient Greek and Roman sources in order to give a reliable portrait of Thrace? A few recent scholarly contributions are stimulating in this respect because they still seem to be deeply indebted to the ancient imagery created by Greek myth and by Greek historiography, as is the case with the socio-economic analysis of the Odrysian kingdom and the royal system of taxation. The *imagerie* and the *imaginaire* of Thrace and the ways through which these have been conceptualized have often revealed themselves to be misleading, but they have influenced, consciously or unconsciously, the modern reading of Thrace and Thracian culture, the complexity of which, on the contrary, cannot be oversimplified.

The other contributions can be divided into these following categories and strands of discussion:

- 1) The geography of Thrace.
- 2) The diachronic history of the region.
- 3) The literary aspects.
- 4) The material culture.

Within this framework, Federica Cordano analyses the topography of Mont Haemus by following, in particular, the narrative of Strabo and of the late commentaries, and she argues that Mont Haemus played a pivotal role in the history of the Thracian tribes, by identifying it as a crucial crossing towards the Black Sea. The “syntax” of space and geography helps us reconstruct the human and historical experience and Federica Cordano assesses how the configuration of space over the decades affected the history of the populations of the area.

In more historical terms, the contributions of Maria Mainardi, Thibault Castelli, Francesco Camia, Jordan Iliev and Alexandru Avram, here cited accord-

ing to a mere chronological order, focus on more specifically historical topics. Maria Mainardi starts from the historical premise that the mining site of Krenides was attacked by a Thracian King in 356 B.C. Krenides asked the help of Philip II from Macedonia, and Mainardi canvasses a well-cut history of the scholarship devoted to the subject in order to assess the historical events and to give an identity to the Thracian king.

Thibault Castelli's article points to the political and economical relationships between the Greeks and the Thracians around the bay of Bourgas across the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C. He emphasizes the fortified nature of this site, and, in order to classify the political status of the settlement, he offers a significant overview of the numismatic evidence and of the huge amount of artefacts founded in the area in light of a critical reading of past theoretical works on defining, classifying, and interpreting the historical and ethnic identity of the site, thus drawing attention right from the beginning to the interdisciplinary nature of his work. Camia's and Iliev's contributions can be read as strongly linked to each other: they deal with the theme of the Roman conquest of the region from two different perspectives. Jordan Iliev draws the long history of Thracians and Roman contacts from the 2nd century B.C. to the fatal date of 46 AD when the northern region of Mont Haemus became a Roman province. Francesco Camia is more interested in the process of the Thracians' Romanization from 46 AD and in the percentage of the distribution of citizenship to the Thracian people, an historical and political phenomenon which entailed a massive and irreversible change in the life of the region and a crucial crisis of the notion of Thracian self-identity. Alexandru Avram examines the conditions and the historical effects of the Roman conquest across the Danube provinces by analyzing the distribution of the ethnic names of the Daces in the Danube region to better define the relations between the so-called Daces and the other peoples settled in the region. In this light, the relations within the Daces, the Romans and the declining Odrisian kingdom are carefully investigated.

Moving towards more historiographical and cultural aspects, Dan and Madalina Dana carefully analyse the fragments of the authors of the so-called *Trakikà*. The fortune of recent scholarship engaged with the re-discovery of fragmentary history does not hide the intrinsically magmatic and elusive nature of this kind of sources, and the survey given by D. and M. Dana challenge the crucial question linked to the factual existence of a local history in Thrace.

The contributions of Federica Giacobello, Simone Romano, Martin Trefný and Tokto Stoyanov deal with the material culture of the region from different perspectives: F. Giacobello analyses the *imagerie* of Thracian women in Greek

iconography with special regard to Attic and Italic pottery. Simone Romano and Martin Trefný examine the model of spectacle fibulae between central Europe and the Balkanic peninsula. T. Stoyanov analyses the archaeological context of the decoration of the silver jug from Naip with a “White Lotus” and he carefully investigates the decorative details of the jugs coming from Naip that present remarkable novelties in style. A Greek workshop was probably at work to satisfy the Thracian taste.

The overall view of the contents of the volume is not exhaustive in itself and risks undermining the scientific value of each contribution. Thus, I would like to warmly thank every single author of this small book for taking part in this publication with enthusiasm. Most of them have been friends for long; others have become friends thanks to this common project and I am pleased to have had the academic and cultural opportunity to cross their paths.

*Milan, July 2015*

ARISTONOTHOS  
Scritti per il Mediterraneo antico

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