

CHAPTER 1

An Introduction to Studying Ancient Thrace

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Ancient Thrace, located beyond the northern periphery of the Greek world, was an extensive region that occupied part of southeastern Europe during the late second and first millennia BCE, before it was gradually conquered by the Roman Empire in the period from the third decade of the first century BCE to the beginning of the second century CE. Subsequently, the Roman provinces of Thracia, Moesia, and Dacia were set up in Thrace and a powerful process of Romanization unified most of the previous diversity. Due to intensive political developments, accompanied by powerful changes in ethnic landscapes and complex cultural interactions, the frontiers of Thrace were dynamic, flexible, and approximate (Fol and Spiridonov 1983).

The ancient Thracians were non-literary people and, except for some inscriptions in Greek from the Classical and Hellenistic periods or in Thracian language but with Greek letters, no domestic historical sources are known to have existed. The earliest foreign records that may refer to ancient Thrace are several Linear B texts, supposedly testifying to contacts between Mycenaean Greeks and Thracians that presumably occurred over the second half of the second millennium BCE. The earliest close communication and bilateral interaction between Greeks and Thracians, however, were related to Greek colonization in Thrace that began in the middle of the eighth century BCE and continued for several centuries. The Greek colonization caused the gradual Hellenization of the Thracian aristocracy and certain tribes, and was accompanied by intensive and complex multilateral interrelations (Theodossiev 2011a).

An interesting early example of very close contacts, joint state-community, and intensive interaction between Greeks and Thracians, well attested in the historical sources, is furnished by the political activities of the Athenian aristocrat Miltiades the Elder, from the family of the Philaidai, who was a potential rival of the tyrant Peisistratos. In ca. 560 BCE, following the request of the Thracian Dolonkoi who were looking for an ally against the neighboring Apsyntioi, Miltiades the Elder founded a colony in the Thracian Chersonesos, became a tyrant of both the Athenian colonists and Dolonkoi, and built a fortification wall across the peninsula. Miltiades died childless and was succeeded as tyrant by Stesagoras, the son of his half-brother Kimon the Elder. In ca. 524 BCE Stesagoras was assassinated during a war against Lampsakos and the rule was transferred to his brother, Miltiades the Younger, who was sent to protect Athenian interests in the region. The younger Miltiades concluded a dynastic marriage in ca. 515 BCE with Hegesipyle, the daughter of the Thracian king Oloros, and thus

reinforced the alliance between the Athenian colonists and the local Thracians. Hegesipyle would give birth to Kimon, the famous Athenian politician and outstanding strategos, ca. 510 BCE. Miltiades the Younger ruled the Thracian Chersonesos until it was occupied by the Persians in 493 BCE, when he fled to Athens and later served as one of the ten Athenian strategoi in the decisive battle of Marathon in 490 BCE (Loukopoulou 1989).

While many ancient Greek authors, like Herodotus among others, provided various secondhand accounts on Thrace, Thucydides, due to his family origins, was the first Greek historian who lived in the region, maintained close relations with Thracian nobles, and acquired a profound knowledge of local realities. Thucydides was a great-grandson of Miltiades the Younger and a great-great grandson of the Thracian king Oloros. Thucydides' father even bore a Thracian name unique for Athens: Oloros, evidently named after Hegesipyle's father. Thucydides possessed family gold mines at Skapte Hyle in Thrace and, during the Peloponnesian War, he was sent as an Athenian strategos to Thasos in 424/423 BCE, because he was well familiar with the Thracians. Thucydides failed to save the strategically important Athenian colony Amphipolis from the invasion of the Spartan strategos Brasidas, however, and was forced to spend the next 20 years, until 404 BCE, in exile, probably living on his family estate in Thrace and devoting his time to historical studies (Cartwright 1997).

Another Greek historian, philosopher, and soldier, who had significant personal experiences in Thrace and gave valuable accounts, was Xenophon. After the Peloponnesian War, Xenophon left Athens and joined a Greek army of mercenaries hired by the Achaemenid prince Cyrus the Younger, who rebelled against his brother Artaxerxes II, the king of Persia. After the defeat of Cyrus at Cunaxa in 401 BCE, the Greek mercenaries, known as the Ten Thousand, returned by marching through Mesopotamia, Armenia, and northern Anatolia. In the winter of 400/399 BCE, the Greek mercenaries were employed by the Thracian paradynastos Seuthes II. They carried out combat operations and helped Seuthes to restore his political control over certain territories and Thracian tribes. Simultaneously, the Greeks were engaged in various other activities in Thrace. Xenophon participated in these events and directly observed the bilateral communication and close interaction between Greeks and Thracians. He left notable descriptions of not only Thracian political history, but also the royal court, social structure, military tactics, and everyday life. Due to his detailed and valuable firsthand accounts of various events and experiences, Xenophon could be considered the first foreign historian who personally explored and described ancient Thrace (Stronk 1995).

In modern times, during more than a century of intensive and rapidly developing research on Classical antiquity, Western scholars rarely studied ancient Thrace, which was usually considered as a peripheral region, related to the protohistoric European Iron Age and partly influenced by ancient Greek civilization. Many readers would be surprised to learn, however, that the first occasional excavations and archaeological explorations in Thrace date to the late sixteenth and seventeenth century, long before the study of the Classical world became an actual academic discipline, distinct from early modern European antiquarianism. The earliest evidence was produced by Reinhold Lubenau, a German pharmacist and traveler who described his travels from 1573 to 1589 in a manuscript completed in 1628, but not published until 1914–1915. There one may find brief reference to an excavation of a Thracian tumulus located near Philippopolis conducted by Jacques de Germigny in 1584; de Germigny, the French Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, excavated with Ottoman approval and discovered human bones and weapons, which were sent to King Henry III of France (Lubenau 1914, 108). Although Lubenau described some notable facts of the ancient history and topography of Thrace later in his manuscript, apparently following his antiquarian interests in the spirit of the Renaissance, he did not provide more information on this interesting archaeological discovery, the earliest known excavation of a Thracian site (Lubenau 1914, 108–112).

About one century later, in the turbulent historical period when the Ottoman Empire, already in possession of a significant part of continental Europe, was preparing to invade the Kingdom of Hungary, Count Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, a young Italian naturalist and geographer, born in 1658 in a patrician family in Bologna, became an officer in the army of Venice. In 1679, just a few years before the decisive Battle of Vienna in 1683, he was sent on a mission representing Venice to Constantinople in order to examine Ottoman military forces. While the reconnaissance mission was successfully accomplished, Marsigli remained devoted to his scientific interests and explored natural history and the Roman antiquities spread throughout the Ottoman Empire during his travels in 1679 and 1680 (Dimitrov 1946–1947). He not only wrote detailed descriptions and prepared precise maps and informative prints, which showed ancient settlements and monuments along the lower Danube, but also discovered and identified the remains of Ulpia Oescus, one of the major Roman towns in the Province of Moesia Inferior. Most importantly, Marsigli excavated several tumuli located in the vicinity of Ulpia Oescus and provided informative drawings and descriptions of Thracian tumuli that were observed by him. This was a notable moment for the nascent interest in studying antiquities located in the territory of ancient Thrace and, in fact, these were the first ever recorded archaeological excavations of Thracian tumuli conducted by a scholar who published the results. After a long career in the army of the Habsburg Empire and intensive scientific studies, Marsigli finally returned to his native Bologna and founded in 1711 the *Istituto delle Scienze ed Arti Liberali*. He lived long enough to see his fundamental scholarly work on the Danube published in 1726 in The Hague and Amsterdam (Marsigli 1726).

The first modern, holistic study on ancient Thrace, however, was the book written by the French philologist and numismatist Félix Cary and published in 1752 (Cary 1752). The book presented the history of the Thracian kings, based on numismatic evidence and historical sources. Cary was born in 1699 in Marseille and received an excellent education in the humanities, thus both gaining a profound knowledge of and developing an active interest in ancient history and collections of antiquities. As a young scholar, he acquired a distinguished reputation among the intellectual circles of the *Académie de Marseille* and soon he was internationally recognized. Later in his life, in 1751, Cary was admitted to the *Accademia Etrusca di Cortona* and in 1752, the year when his notable book on the Thracian kings was published, he became a member of the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, the most prestigious academy of France in the field of the humanities. Two years later, in 1754, Cary died, but up to the mid-nineteenth century his book remained the most comprehensive and important study of Thracian history. Due to his significant scholarly contribution, Cary is recognized as one of the founders of modern Thracian studies (Danov 1984).

Over the next century, European interest in the antiquities spread across the northern Balkan territories of the Ottoman Empire was steadily growing and many diplomats, army officers, scholars, and travelers left notable reports, while some occasional archaeological discoveries were reported. Thus, in 1851, a monumental Thracian beehive tomb with an intact rich burial dated to the second half of the fourth century BCE was accidentally unearthed during agricultural works carried out by local peasants on the periphery of a tumulus located near the village of Rozovets, or, according to another version of the story, during excavations to collect stones from the tumular embankment. Most of the precious grave goods were collected by Ottoman authorities and temporarily exhibited in Plovdiv. The spectacular archaeological find was immediately reported and described in the Bulgarian press; this was the first discovery of Thracian material in the north Balkans that instigated a wider public interest and awareness (Theodossiev 2005).

Simultaneously, a certain interest in studying ancient Thrace appeared among European academics in the middle of the nineteenth century. For example, Bernhard Giseke, a renowned German scholar in Classical studies, wrote a remarkable monograph exploring the Thracians

and the Pelasgians and their interrelations, which was published in 1858 in Leipzig (Giseke 1858). Ten years later, in 1868, at the beginning of his career, Albert Dumont, a leading French scholar in archaeology and art history and an experienced government administrator, who was the founder of both the *École Française de Rome* and the *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*, and served as Director of both the *École Française d'Athènes* and *l'Enseignement Supérieur au Ministère de l'Instruction Publique*, carried out an archaeological mission in Thrace: this was the first ever organized scholarly expedition specifically devoted to Thracian studies. Dumont died in 1884; his detailed report on Thrace was published in Paris in 1892 (Dumont 1892) and became a landmark study widely recognized by scholars. One year after the archaeological mission of Albert Dumont was carried out in Thrace, another leading European scholar, the German and Austrian geologist Ferdinand Ritter von Hochstetter, launched his expeditions in the northern Balkans to study the geology of the region. In addition to his detailed geological explorations, von Hochstetter published the first systematic report on Thracian tumuli spread throughout the European part of the Ottoman Empire, as well as the results from the excavation of two small tumuli located between Plovdiv and Edirne (von Hochstetter 1870; 1872).

Despite the exciting discoveries and the significant scholarly contributions that occurred from the 1850s to the 1870s, comprehensive archaeological exploration of ancient Thrace began only after the liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottoman Empire in 1878, when several Czech scholars and intellectuals founded modern Bulgarian archaeology (Theodosiev, Koleva, and Borislavov 2001). Two of them, the brothers Karel and Hermengild Škorpil, were the first to document precisely the numerous Thracian tumuli spread across Bulgaria and to collect information about tombs and grave goods discovered during occasional, non-professional excavations. The results from their archaeological expeditions and field surveys were published in 1898 in Plovdiv (Škorpil and Škorpil 1898). This important publication was a significant scholarly achievement that fostered the development of Thracian studies in Bulgaria, but it was only a small part of the Škorpil brothers' major contribution to Bulgarian archaeology. The brothers were so devoted to Bulgaria that, according to their will, both were to be buried on Bulgarian soil: Hermengild, who died in 1923, was laid to rest in an early Christian monastery near Varna, while Karel, who survived his brother for over 20 years and died in 1944, was buried in Pliska, the medieval capital of the First Bulgarian Kingdom.

Another Czech scholar who played a prominent role in the foundation of Bulgarian archaeology was Konstantin Jireček, a renowned politician and historian. He developed a strong research interest in Bulgaria during his study at Charles University in Prague. Later, in 1879–1884, Jireček lived in Bulgaria and was appointed to different administrative positions, helping the young state to build its governmental and academic institutions. Thus, in 1881–1882 he served as Minister of Education. Still, before his arrival in Bulgaria, Jireček had published valuable studies on ancient historical geography (Jireček 1877), including an interesting attempt to localize the Celtic capital Tylis in Hellenistic Thrace (Jireček 1876).

The Czech contribution to Thracian studies and linguistics was as important as their involvement in the foundation of Bulgarian archaeology. Wilhelm Tomaschek was one of the first scholars to produce comprehensive publications on Thrace. His articles were published in 1893 and 1894 in Vienna and, some 90 years later in 1980, they were reprinted as a book (Tomaschek 1980). Born in 1841 in Olomouc, Moravia, Tomaschek became a Professor in Geography and Oriental Studies, first at the University of Graz, and later at Vienna. Despite some earlier significant contributions to the study of ancient Thrace mentioned above, Tomaschek is usually considered the founding father of modern Thracology, mostly due to his interdisciplinary and analytical holistic approach (Fol 1984; Danov 1984). Shortly before Tomaschek's outstanding articles appeared, Friedrich Hiller von Gaertringen, a German Classical epigraphist and archaeologist just in the beginning of his academic career, wrote a remarkable study

in Latin exploring the Greek written sources on ancient Thrace (Hiller von Gaertringen 1886). Several years later, Hiller von Gaertringen was elected a Corresponding Member of the German Archaeological Institute and was appointed Editor of *Inscriptiones Graecae*.

The earliest British scholarly involvement in the archaeology of ancient Thrace dates to the first decade of the twentieth century, when Frederick William Hasluck explored in detail and published one of the most impressive Thracian tholos tombs situated at Eriklice in the European part of Turkey (Hasluck 1910–1911; 1911–1912). The tomb was discovered in 1891 during the construction of an Ottoman military fort and contained an intact aristocratic burial with rich grave goods, which furnish a date ca. 350–320 BCE (Theodossiev 2011b). The publication of Hasluck was the first holistic and analytical study of this remarkable funerary monument and even today it may serve as an excellent model for studying and publishing the numerous late Classical and early Hellenistic monumental tombs of Thrace. Hasluck was a leading archaeologist and historian who graduated from King's College, Cambridge, and became affiliated with the British School at Athens, where he served as Librarian and Assistant Director from 1906 to 1915. Thus, while based in Athens, he had the opportunity to participate in several archaeological expeditions in Greece and Asia Minor and to travel widely throughout the entire region. During the First World War, Hasluck worked at the British Embassy in Athens and assisted British intelligence operations, which were carried out during the war.

About two decades after Hasluck's contribution to Thracian archaeology, the first fundamental scholarly work in English exploring ancient Thrace was published in 1926 by Stanley Casson (Casson 1926). Casson was a British scholar, born in 1889, who studied Classical Archaeology at Lincoln College and St. John's College in Oxford. Later, he held academic positions as Fellow of New College, Oxford, Lecturer at Bristol University, and Visiting Professor at Bowdoin College in the United States. He also served as Assistant Director of the British School at Athens from 1919 to 1922 and in 1928–1929 he directed the British Academy excavations in Constantinople. Like Marsigli, Casson was not only a devoted and prolific scholar, but he also had a distinguished military career. During the First World War he served as a British Army officer with the East Lancashire Regiment and in 1915 was wounded during a battle in Flanders in Belgium. Subsequently, he served on the General Staff in Greece, Turkey, and Turkestan, before he was demobilized in 1919. During the Second World War, Casson was sent on a mission to Greece as Lieutenant Colonel in the British Intelligence Corps, where he served as an SOE Liaison Officer until he was killed in a plane crash in 1944. His book on ancient Macedonia, Thrace, and Illyria remains a seminal work that inspires those who study the northern Balkans.

The first American involvement in Thracian archaeology were the excavations conducted by Karl Lehmann in the Sanctuary of the Great Gods in Samothrace, which began in 1938 (Lehmann 1955). Although the site and its architecture were mostly relevant to Classical archaeology, some Thracian finds and inscriptions that were discovered during the excavations immediately grabbed the attention of scholars. Lehmann was born in 1894 in Rostock, Germany. He studied at the universities of Tübingen, Munich, and Göttingen and defended his dissertation in Classical archaeology at Berlin University. Later, Lehmann served as Assistant Director of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut in Rome and taught in Berlin, Heidelberg, and Münster. After the Nazi Party came to power in 1933, Lehmann was discharged from his academic position. He first went to Italy and then emigrated to the United States, where he was appointed Professor at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, in 1935 and continued his remarkable academic career.

A few decades earlier, however, still in the beginning of the twentieth century, foreign scholarly research and publication galvanized domestic academic interest in ancient Thrace. As a result, several Bulgarian and Romanian scholars began exploring Thracian history and

archaeology and published numerous articles and books, both in their native languages and in German, English, and French. Their significant contribution was extremely important not only for the development of Thracian studies in Bulgaria and Romania, the countries that are the main successors of the Thracian heritage, but also for increasing foreign interest and fostering international scholarly collaboration. One of the leading scholars in that time was Gavril Kacarov, a Bulgarian ancient historian, classicist, and archaeologist born in 1874, who graduated from Leipzig University and had an impressive academic career. He published a number of influential articles and books in Bulgarian and was the pioneer of Thracian studies in Bulgaria. In addition, his detailed studies on the cultural and political history of Thrace (including the Roman period), published in German and English in 1916 and 1930 (Kacarov 1916; 1930), were fundamental works for all Western scholars who were interested in the region. He published a monograph in German exploring the Thracian Horseman (Kacarov 1938), with a complete catalogue of the votive reliefs, which remains an important contribution. Another leading international scholar of that time was Vasile Pârvan, a famous Romanian ancient historian and archaeologist born in 1882, whose major and holistic works on the northern areas of Thrace, published in Romanian and English in 1926 and 1928 (Pârvan 1926; 1928), inspired many generations of scholars, both in Romania and abroad. Pârvan was the contemporary Romanian counterpart of Kacarov and is widely recognized as the founder of modern archaeology in Romania. Last, but not least, was Bogdan Filov, a famous and internationally renowned Bulgarian archaeologist and art historian, born in 1883. He studied in Germany at the universities of Würzburg and Leipzig and defended a doctoral dissertation at Freiburg University, which was subsequently published (Filov 1906). Filov had a brilliant academic career in Bulgaria, but his involvement in policy during the Second World War cost him his life; after the communist coup d'état in 1944, he was sentenced to death by the so-called "People's Tribunal" which was imposing communist terror throughout Bulgaria. Filov published a number of fundamental books and articles on various research topics, and is regarded as the founder of Thracian archaeology in Bulgaria. Two important studies were published in German in 1917 and 1934, which helped to put Thracian archaeology on the international scholarly scene (Filov 1917; 1934).

After the Second World War, there were new, official attempts to develop and institutionalize Thracian studies in both Bulgaria and Romania during the late 1960s and the 1970s; the process was supported by local political élites. Thus, in 1972, the Institute of Thracology was founded in Bulgaria, which was followed by the establishment of the Institute of Thracology in Romania in 1979. The main contribution of Thracology was the application of an interdisciplinary methodology, combining history, archaeology, Classical philology, epigraphy, and linguistics. In addition, international congresses of Thracology were regularly organized from 1972, which fostered international cooperation far beyond the Iron Curtain that divided Europe during the Cold War and limited the academic research of eastern European scholars. Christo Danov and Alexander Fol were two of the most prominent and internationally renowned scholars directly involved in the foundation of Thracology, who published numerous important articles and some seminal books (Danov 1976; Fol 1972; 1975). Simultaneously, during the 1970s, Bulgaria began to organize international exhibitions displaying the fascinating Thracian treasures, which were held predominantly in Western countries; this initiative publicized on a global scale Thracian studies and heritage and helped to overcome gradually the international isolation of Bulgarian scholars.

Today, 25 years after the Fall of the Berlin Wall, scholars in southeastern Europe are free to conduct their research in a wider international context, without the political and ideological restrictions that were imposed in the past. The present *Companion* clearly demonstrates how the academic community is benefited by the liberation of Europe and is excellent

evidence of productive international scholarly collaboration. The reader of the *Companion* will find in-depth studies on a variety of exciting topics, many of them still unknown to scholars outside the region, while the separate chapters are written by leading experts in the relevant fields. Of particular interest is the study of the multifarious relations and interactions between Thrace, the Greco-Roman world, and Anatolia, which sheds new light on the complex aspects of important historical processes and contributes to our further understanding of antiquity in the Mediterranean and Europe.

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