

The Oldest Printed History Books on Ancient Thrace: The Odryian King Teres I and his Military Campaign Towards the Propontis

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Abstract

Until recently, Thracologists believed that the oldest printed history book on Ancient Thrace and the Thracians was printed in 1752 by Félix Cary. However, a 2024 study of G. Mitrev and Y. Iliev demonstrated that it was actually printed much earlier, in 1595, by Reinerus Reineccius. Nevertheless, Reineccius mistakenly believed Sitalces I to be the first Odryian king. The first part of this study briefly summarizes the history of Thracology and the earliest printed sources on Ancient Thrace, before exploring the military conquests of Teres I, the first Odryian king to establish a large kingdom. The failed Scythian campaign of the Persian King Darius I created a military and political vacuum, allowing Teres I to capitalize on the situation and pursue the conquest of the Propontis region.

Keywords: Odryian kingdom, Thracology, Teres I.

1. Earliest printed sources on Ancient Thrace

The history of the Thracians was for a long time studied in the shadow of Greek and Roman history and not as the history of an autonomous people, “the most numerous, except the Indians” (Hdt. 5.3). The Institute of Thracology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, founded in 1972, gradually succeeded in changing the perception about one of the most ancient Indo-European peoples that lived for millennia in South-Eastern Europe and North-Western Asia Minor, explaining and evaluating the history and culture of ancient Thrace and the Thracians at the transition between the Chalcolithic and the Early Bronze Age (second half of the 4th millennium BC) until several centuries after the Roman conquest of Thrace.¹

¹ It should be noted that the advent of Bulgarian Thracology was prone to pretense and exaggeration. As Delev (2022: 87) admits, there has been a short “transition from *Thracologia* to *Thracomania*” – in numerous cases “wishful thinking replaced cold-minded scientific analysis”, “resulting in widespread current notions of the greatness, uniqueness and exceptional character of the ancient Thracians and their civilization”. Nevertheless, “Bulgarian Thracology has contributed to an impressive advance of scientific knowledge on ancient Thrace and the Thracians.”

Only until a few years ago, Thracologists² believed that the oldest printed history book on Ancient Thrace and the Thracians was published in 1752 – *Histoire des rois de Thrace et de ceux du Bosphore Cimmerien éclaircie par les medailles* (History of the Kings of Thrace and of the Cimmerian Bosphorus, Elucidated by the Coins) by Félix Cary (1699–1754).³

- Until recently, Thracologists believed that the oldest printed history book on Ancient Thrace and the Thracians was published in 1752.
- The study of G. Mitrev and Y. Iliev (2024) demonstrated that this date should be 1595.
- Reinerus Reineccius mistakenly believed Sitalces I to be the first Odrysian king.

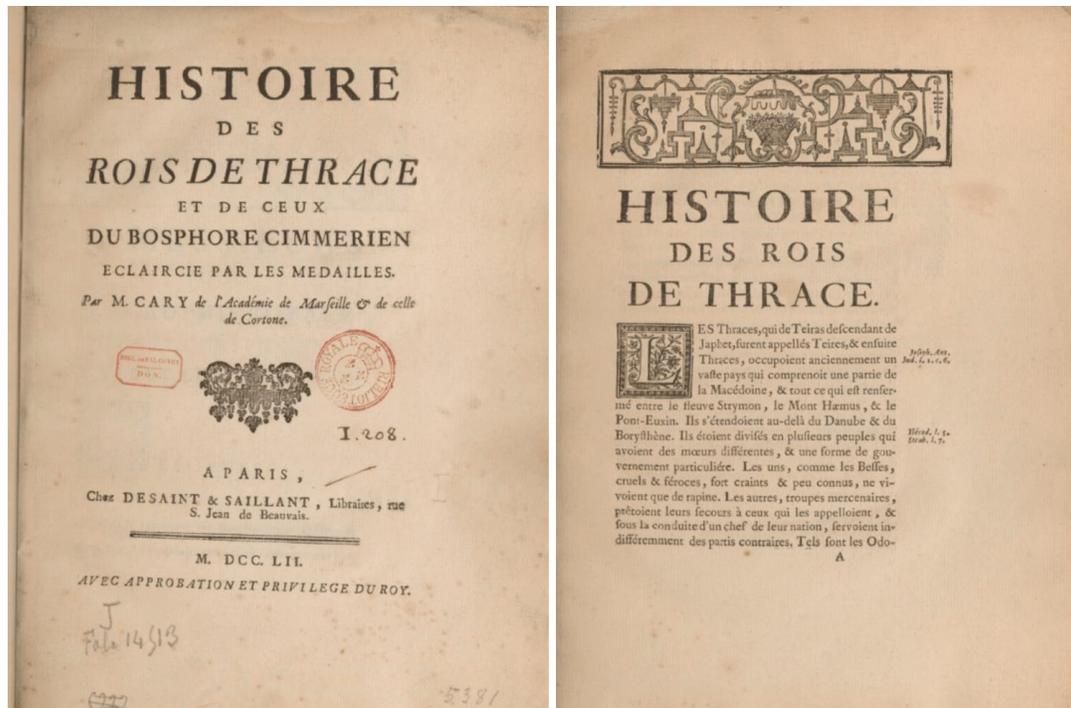


Figure 1. The title page of Cary's book and the beginning of the section about Thrace

But the research of Georgi Mitrev and Yordan Iliev (2024) showed that this date should be placed one and a half century earlier – in 1595. In that year, the German Professor of history Reiner Reineck / Reinhard Reinecke (1541–1595), who signed his books as Reinerus Reineccius, published the book *Historia Ivlia, Siue Syntagma Heroicum* (Julian History or Heroic

² Danov, 1968: 14-15; Fol, 1972: 13-14; Danov, 1976: 2; Jordanov et al., 1995; Peter, 1997: 20; Jordanov and Porozhanov, 1999; Boteva, 2009; Theodossiev, 2015: 5; Delev, 2022: 83.

³ Cary 1752; 1756. A previous minor study was published in the second of the three-volume series *A General History of Affairs in Asia, Africa and Europe . . . From the End of the Legendary Age to the Reign of Charlemagne . . . Enriched and Clarified by Thousands of Stories* of Sigebertus Haverkamp (1737), where he devoted a separate section to the history of the Thracian kings (pp. 298-310). Later important overviews of the Thracians: Cramer, 1828: 284-342; Bessel, 1854; Giseke, 1858; Roesler, 1864; Dumont, 1871; 1876; Gaertringen, 1886; Höck 1891; Tomaschek, 1883; 1884a; 1884b; Kacarov, 1916; 1930; Filov, 1917; 1934; Stein, 1920; Casson, 1926; Pârvan, 1928; Lenk, 1936; 1937; Detschew, 1957; Wiesner, 1963; Hoddinott, 1975; 1981; Danov, 1976; Archibald, 1998. For an overview of the most important publications in Bulgarian, see Delev, 2022: 83-85.

Composition), with a chapter *Regnum Thracivm* (Kingdom of Thrace).⁴ One third of the chapter was dedicated to the Odrysian kings, with the first king, according to Reineccius, being Sitalces I, who fought alongside Xerxes against the Greeks and was mentioned in Aeschylus' *Persians* (969). But Reineccius misinterpreted the name – Aeschylus actually writes about Sebalces (Σεβάλκης ἄναξ). Sebalces is by no means associated with the Thracians, either in Aeschylus' text or by any scholar of Thracology.⁵ In fact, it is Teres I (b. 540–448 BC) who was “the first to establish the great kingdom of the Odrysians” (Thuc. 2.29).



Figure 2. The title page of Reineccius' book and the beginning of the section about Thrace. (Mitrev & Iliev, 2024: 142)

⁴ Reineccius, 1595: 105-136. Reineccius also quoted researchers from the Renaissance era, indicating that a detailed study of ancient printed editions will undoubtedly rediscover forgotten publications and other information about the history of Ancient Thrace and the Thracians (Mitrev & Iliev, 2024: 150).

⁵ Mitrev and Iliev, 2024: 145.

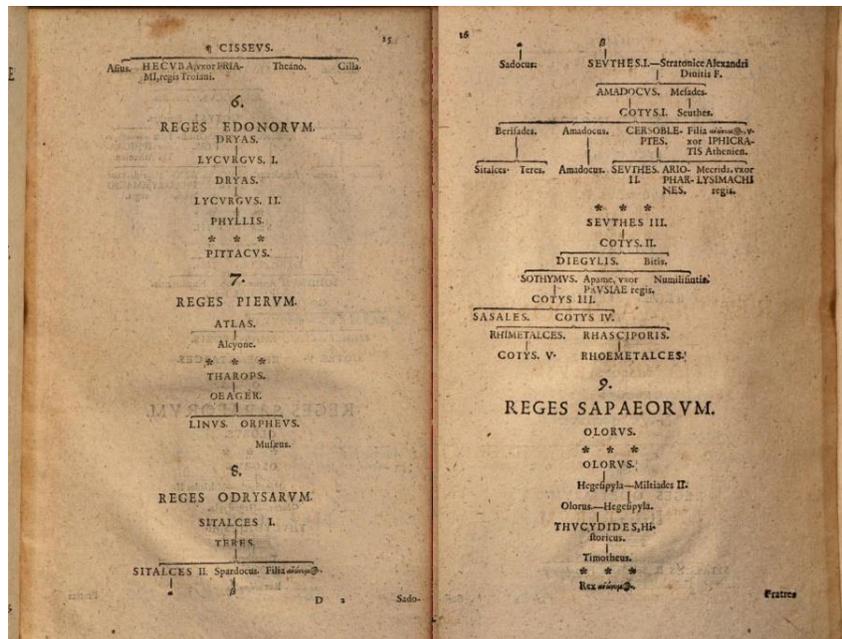


Figure 3. The Odryian kings according to Reineccius (Mitrev & Iliev, 2024: 145)



Figure 4. The Odryian kingdom during the reign of Teres I and Cotys I

2. Teres I

Teres I was the reason the Greeks for the first time described the Odryian kingdom. He “was the first to establish the great kingdom of the Odryians on a scale quite unknown to the rest of Thrace” (Thuc. 2.29.2).⁶ This was made possible only because of the Scythian campaign of

⁶ Fol (1972: 138), Tacheva (2006: 23) and V. Fol (2017: 182) challenge the idea that Teres was the first Odryian *basileus*. For his alleged predecessor, Olorus, see Porozhanov, 2009; 2021: 174-178. For all

Darius I (522–486 BC) in 513 BC,⁷ when the King of Kings failed to defeat the Scythian cavalry in the open steppes of the Northern Black Sea region. When Darius retreated back southward towards the Propontis (Sea of Marmara) and the Hellespont (Dardanelles), Teres benefited from the military and political vacuum emerging north-east of Haemus Mons, annexing the weakened Getae, who were previously subdued by the Persians.⁸ Many years after Darius' Scythian invasion, the Scythians counterattacked, “provoked by king Darius” (Hdt. 6.40), presumably in 496 BC.⁹ But that would not have been possible without crossing the Odrysian kingdom. Teres took advantage of the situation by marrying one of his daughters to the Scythian king Ariapeithes (Hdt. 4.92), thus securing the northern border, which allowed him to focus expanding southeast.

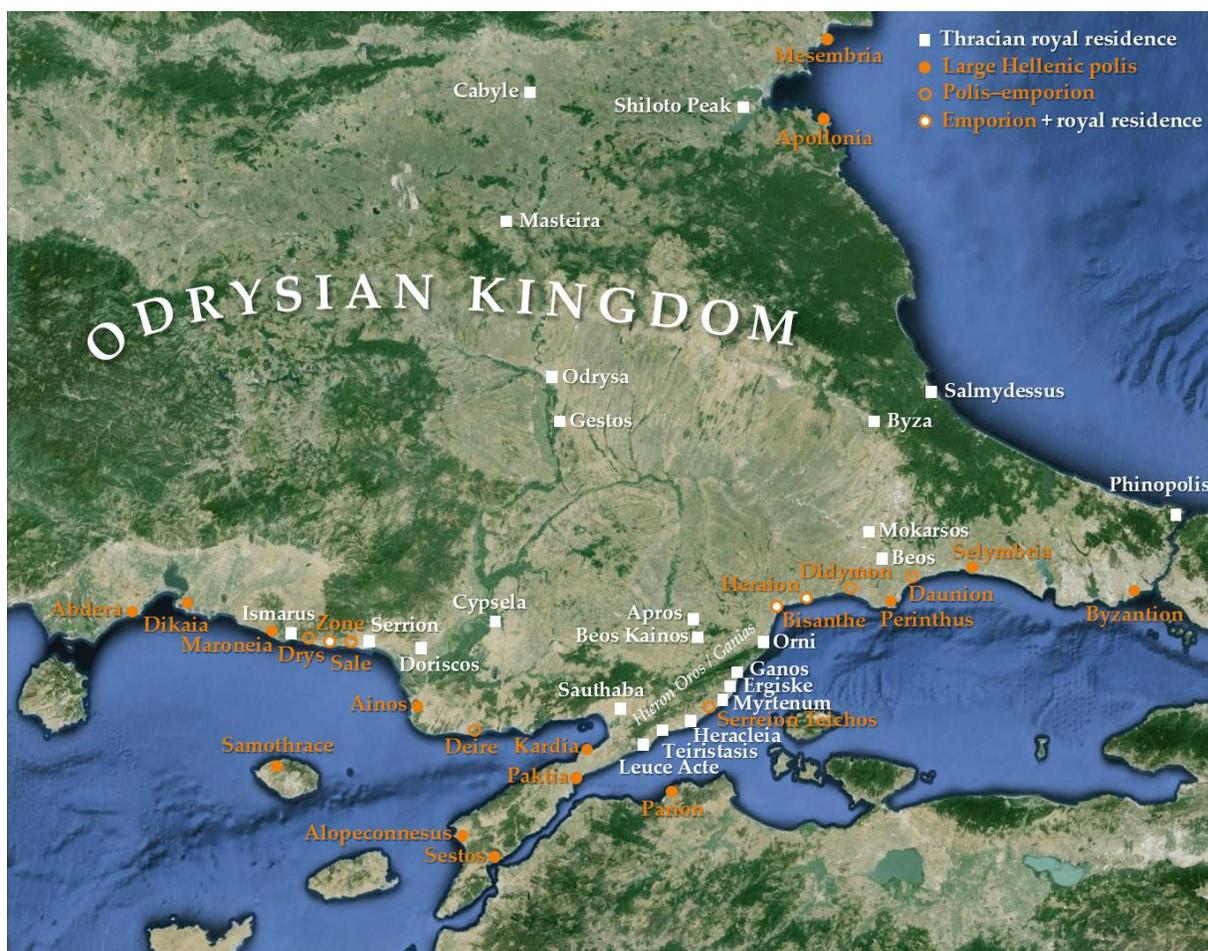


Figure 5. Fortress-residences (tyrseis) of the Thracian kings and Hellenic poleis on the Thracian Sea, Sea of Marmara and Black Sea, 5th – middle of 4th century BC. Adapted after Porozhanov, 2021: 368 (cf. Porozhanov 2009b).

theories about Olorus' descent see Tzvetkova, 2008: 143-145. The name of Thucydides' father, Olorus (Marcel. *Thuc.* 2; cf. *Thuc.* 4.104.4; *Plut. Life of Cimon* 4.1), the name of his mother, Hegesipyle, his rights to exploit gold mines in Thrace, and the influence he enjoyed within the Thracian boundaries, reveal Thucydides' Thracian connection and suggest that Thucydides' family's ties to Thrace went back to his great-grandfather, the Thracian king Olorus (Porozhanov, 2009: 132; 2021: 177; Theodossiev, 2015: 4).

⁷ Vasilev, 2015: 70; Porozhanov, 2021: 179.

⁸ Vassileva, 2015: 320-321; Zhekov, 2019.

⁹ Cawkwell, 2005: 48; Tzvetkova, 2008: 151-154.

Taking advantage of the collapse of the Persian presence in Europe due to the failed invasion of Greece in 480–479,¹⁰ Teres aimed to conquer the Thracian Chersonese (Gallipoli Peninsula) on account of economic benefits – control of sea trade.¹¹ That meant heading to Southeastern Thrace and setting foot permanently on the Thracian coasts by subduing the Thracians from the hinterland of the Sea of Marmara near the Thracian sacred mountain Hieron Oros (*Ganias* was the local Thracian name)¹² and the so-called Thracian Delta – the territory between Salmydessus and Byzantion. The reason was not only and not so much the eviction of the Persians from Sestos (478 BC) and Eion (475 BC), but also the settlement of the Athenians in these strategic locations. Hence, when in 465–463 BC the Persians abandoned the Thracian royal fortress Doriskos, located approximately in the middle between Sestos and Eion, it was immediately occupied by the Thracians, *most probably* by Teres I.¹³ However, Teres' military campaign towards the Propontis wasn't always that glorious: despite his large army, his incursion into the lands of the Thynians – renowned as the most militant Thracians and masters of night warfare – resulted in heavy losses and he was even robbed of his baggage train (Xeh. *Anab.* 7.2.22).

Written sources and field research in the Southwestern Black Sea coast unequivocally proved Salmydessus to be a massive, fortified Thracian residence with ports, and royal and cultic prerogatives.¹⁴ It is very probable that it was used by Teres; all the more considering that, in order to advance southward to the Thracian Delta, the Sea of Marmara and the Thracian Sea, he could not afford to leave his rear unguarded. Kalin Porozhanov surmises, that after Teres established his presence on the coasts of Black Sea (Salmydessus and Phinopolis)¹⁵ and Sea of Marmara,¹⁶ and after regaining Doriskos in 465–463 BC, he established a permanent presence on the Thracian Sea coast.¹⁷

The Greek colonies on the Thracian coasts, however, maintained their relative political independence, buying off the constant political pressure of the Odrysians with taxes paid in various forms (in fact, the pressure had no other goals; cf. Demosth. 23.110). The power of the Odrysian kingdom was a direct function of the king's military capacity to actually control the territories under his control; any temporary weakening inevitably provoked resistance tendencies, as Xenophon (7.2.32) attests: the southeastern tribes of the Melanditae, Thynians, and the

¹⁰ Rehm, 2010: 143.

¹¹ On the later war for the Thracian Chersonese see Jehne, 1992; Cargill, 1995; Heskell, 1997; Tzvetkova, 2008.

¹² Porozhanov, 2021: 310.

¹³ Porozhanov, 2021: 320–321. But why *most probably*? Sparadocus is mentioned by Thucydides (2.101; 4.101) as the brother of Sitalces (444–424 BC) and father of Seuthes I (424–405 BC). He was probably the eldest son of Teres I. His reign, according to the dating of his coins, is placed around the middle of the 5th century BC, after Teres and before Sitalces, and is dated between 448/447 and 445/444 BC (Fol 1972: 140–141). There is another hypothesis, according to which his reign began in 465/464 and ended in 445/444 BC (Tacheva, 2006: 52–53; Popov, 2009: 84). It has been assumed recently that from 465/464 BC Sparadocus was most likely a *paradynas* of his father Teres I and occupied the throne after his death in 448/447 BC (Porozhanov, 2021: 192). Hence, it was most probably Teres occupying Doriskos in 465–463 BC.

¹⁴ Porozhanov, 2005: 21–34.

¹⁵ I have never seen a map with Phinopolis within the boundaries of the Odrysian kingdom. Thus, it is not included in my map (fig. 4) as well.

¹⁶ Xenophon (*Anab.* 7.5.8) attests about the presence of Teres' grandson, Seuthes II (401/400–387/386 BC), on the Sea of Marmara – on Bisanthe, Ganos, Neon Teichos (= Heraion Teichos, according to Porozhanov, 2009b: 266).

¹⁷ Porozhanov, 2021: 184.

Trinapsae drove out the Odrysian paradynast Maisades (father of Seuthes II) “when the affairs of the Odrysians fell into a bad state.”¹⁸

There are no written accounts regarding the tribute paid to Teres. But using the existing Athenian tribute lists from 454/453 to 404/403 BC (or rather the absence of evidence in the registers on taxes paid by *poleis* located along the Thracian coasts), Porozhanov calculated the eventual tribute paid (voluntarily or through coercion) by the Greek *poleis* and *emporía* (trading posts) on the Thracian Sea and the Sea of Marmara to Teres (on whom their existence depended much more than Athens) to be of 9-13 talents and 2000 drachmas.¹⁹

Teres died in ca. 448 BC, allegedly at the age of 92 (Lucian *Long Lives* [*Macrobii*] 10 = Theopompus Fr. 310). He was succeeded by his son Sparadocus on the throne.²⁰ Soon after the death of Teres, probably during the reign of Sitalces, he was associated in Greek literature with Tereus – a legendary Thracian king in Daulis (Phocis). That “merger” with the mythological hero was politically motivated: to seek ancient ancestry and to justify the close relations with the Thracian kings, who frequently threatened and violated Athens’ interest and the city-state was forced to make concession. Apparently, the connection between Teres (Τήρης) and Tereus in the minds of the citizens was so strong that Thucydides (2.29.3) felt the need to clarify the lack of connection between them,²¹ thus delicately correcting Herodotus (7.137), who thought Tereus (Τηρεύς) was the father of the Thracian king Sitalces.²²

3. Conclusion

Plutarch (*Sayings* [*Apophth.*] 174d) described Teres so: “Teres, the father of Sitalces, said, when he was out of the army and had nothing to do, he thought there was no difference between him and his grooms”. Although Teres did not conquer the Thracian Chersonese, his successful military and diplomatic actions resulted in the Odrysian kingdom becoming a primary

¹⁸ Delev, 1997: 7. Paradynasts (*paradynastoi*) were co-rulers or governors who controlled separate regions of the kingdom.

¹⁹ Porozhanov, 2021: 179-191, via Meritt, 1939–1953. Porozhanov (2021: 321-322) writes the following:

“According to the Athenian tribute lists, 16 *poleis* along the Sea of Marmara and the Northern Aegean Sea, six paid nothing, nine paid partially, and one paid a symbolic amount for its size. The following data can be derived for the reign of Teres I, more specifically for the five years from 454/453 until 450/449 BC.

There are no preserved data on payments to Athens by Bisanthe and Sereion Teichos, and by Deire, Sale, Zone and Drys. The absence of data by these six cities persisted for 50 years. On the basis of indirect evidence it may be assumed that these cities paid to the Odrysian royal court, starting with Teres I, the following probable sums: Bisanthe – 2 talents per year, Sereion Teichos – 1000 drachmas or 2 talents, Deire 1 or 2 talents, Sale – 1 or 2 talents, Zone – 2 talents, and Drys – 1 talent. This adds up to 7-11 talents per year as revenues for the Odrysian treasury.

Daunion/Damnion Teichos and Didymon Teichos paid the symbolic 1000 drachmas to Athens in 452/451, 454/453 and 453/452 BC accordingly. No data on payments to Athens by these cities-fortresses have been preserved for the remaining four or three years of the reign of Teres I. This could mean that they paid 1000 drachmas per year to the Odrysian royal court, i.e., a total of 2000 drachmas.

Maroneia and Dikaia on the Thracian Sea made symbolic payments to the Athenian Empire, totally unproportional to their size and wealth. For Maroneia that was 1 talent and 3000 drachmas, and for Dikaia – 3000 drachmas, i.e., half a talent. This gives grounds to assume that it was perfectly possible that such payments were made at the same time to the Odrysian royal court as well, i.e., a total of 2 talents per year.”

²⁰ See Fol, 1981: 214-215; Popov, 2011: 88.

²¹ Fol, 2017: 182-183.

²² Tacheva, 2006: 23.

factor on the Balkan Peninsula,²³ covering at its peak the territories between the mouth of Istros (Danube), Abdera and the Propontis (Thuc. 2.96-2.97); almost a third of the entire Balkan Peninsula.²⁴ And while we might never have any new substantial information about Teres, Reineccius' quotations from Renaissance-era researchers suggest that a detailed study of ancient printed editions may rediscover forgotten publications and offer new insights into the history of Ancient Thrace and the Thracians.

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²³ Fol, 1972: 162-164.

²⁴ Archibald, 1998: 11.

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