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Industrialization and Urban Growth: The History of Alappuzha Through Coir Industry

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Abstract

Alappuzha, an old city in Travancore State (Kerala) that may have only been urbanized in the 1750s. Trade and industry are key factors in a city's expansion. Alappuzha's growth into an urban city was influenced by its road and canal network leading to its port, which was once a major global trade center. The city's transformation into an industrial and urban center was because to the tireless efforts of Raja Kesava Das, the Dewan of Travancore. This study endeavors to provide a glimpse into the recent past of Alappuzha by recalling its urbanization and trade operations in relation to the growth of the coir industry in the area. The study aims to historicize the history of Alappuzha by examining urbanization processes, road and canal network structure, creation of sea port, coir industry growth, trade guilds, and commercial streets that enabled the city to develop into a port city. This study employs the historical research method to enhance data comprehension and test critical arguments, incorporating critical analysis of sources, time series analyses, comparative methods, counterfactual analysis, and outlier evaluation. The study analyzes primary and secondary sources, including government reports, official records of Travancore state, and previous studies, to analyze the history of Alappuzha. It finds that Raja Kesava Das's policies and contributions to urbanization and industrialization were closely linked to the development of the coir industry, which strengthened the commercial networks and economy of the state. The coir industry's history forms the socio-economic history of Alappuzha.

Keywords: coir industry, port city, urbanization, industrialization, socio-economic history.

1. Introduction

Alappuzha, an old city in Travancore, Kerala, is known for its scenic beauty, rich natural resources, and resemblance (once reoffered "Venice of the East" by then-Viceroy Lord Curzon) to city of Venice. The toponym "Alappuzha" is thought to derive from the root words Alayam and Puzha according to Herman Gundert's dictionary, which defines the name Alappuzha as the home of ponds and rivers, where 'Alayam' means 'home' and 'puzha' means 'watercourse' or 'river'. Hence the name Alappuzha implies a network of waterways and backwaters in the region. The place has a long history dating back to the Puranic age. The prehistoric past of the region is unknown, and no specific inscriptions or archaeological evidence have been found which give references to Alappuzha. Even though, there are fragmentary references in some temple inscriptions, Greek-Roman-Chinese coins, and other archaeological articles received in this region point to the fact that trade relations were active here from very early times. In terms of how the coastal regions were formed, silt and sand deposition are thought to have produced the coastal taluks of Cherthala, Ambalappuzha, and Karthikappally based on geological records.

The historical records of second Chera Empire (9th to 12th century AD) also mentions the area. Later, traders brought Buddhism and Jainism to the area (Karumadi Temple and Kaviyoor Temple representing the Buddhist and Jain faiths), and Christianity first appeared in the area in the first century A.D. with the founding of the church at Kokkomangalam by St. Thomas, a disciple of Jesus Christ. Little monarchies like Kayamkulam, Purakkad, Ambalappuzha, and Karappuram arose in the sixteenth century. Purakkad gained popularity as a trading hub for local produce and foreign commerce as Christianity progressed. There was Dutch East India Company's factory near Purakkad, and it was thought that Dutch seamen had given a crucifix there. Portuguese influence was also noticeable in the administrative politics of the area. With a port, thriving trade, the coir industry, and other amenities like the first post office, telegraph office, and modern coir factory, the location really rose to importance in the eighteenth century.

The principal means of subsistence for region's the coastal population was identified to be fishing and related fisheries activities, as well as coir work, based on historical sources, including Malayalam literature. However, Kuttanad and neighbouring lowlands served as a productive agricultural region. These represent Alappuzha's progressive elements in a passive state. However, the real development boom was brought about by the coir industry's entry into the global export firm for natural fiber products and the corresponding establishment of extensive canals, inland waterways, road networks, and a modern sea port close to the city's center. The fact that no historical research has been conducted on the growth of the coir industry and the influence seaport in Alappuzha to date. Hence the article covers the story, history and reality of the coir industry, focusing on Alappuzha and its socioeconomic prospects. It also examines the current state, labor conditions, production, and exchange effects of modernization.

The study has significance from a socioeconomic and contemporary standpoint because Alappuzha is currently one of Kerala's disadvantaged districts in terms of industry and lacks basic urban facilities, with the exception of the potential for a developing, regionally tailored tourism industry. Also, from an academic and administrative perspective, the study on the historical significance of a global industry, the coir industry, and the administrator's encouragement of infrastructure development as well as the region's plans for urbanization and industrialization will have an impact on future plans and policies for the district's infrastructure and industrial development.

2. Literature review

Alappuzha's history is threaded through the growth of the coir industry, sea port, and the socioeconomic repercussions because it was Kerala's coir industrial hub, engages both men and women in yarn spinning, weaving, loom work, and allied industries as the main source of life earning. So, the study looked at the key existing literature addressing the coir industry's history, development, power structures, class conflicts, and economic ties to locate the socioeconomic history of Alappuzha. Also, the contributions of Travancore royalty to the development and economic growth of Alappuzha were examined in depth using related secondary sources. Two sets of studies are evaluated in the review of literature section: one focuses on the administrative reforms in Travancore in the 18th and 19th centuries, specifically on the development of industry and infrastructure, and the other examines the origins, growth, and socioeconomic significance of the coir industry in Alappuzha. This will provide the precise context for the study, highlight the research gap, and make it possible to establish the goals for the investigation.

A general overview of the early Indian states, their administrations, nobility, wars, conquests, rivalries, principal forces, European powers, and the English East India Company, emphasizing their friendships and assistance, may be found in V. Nagam Aiya's Travancore State Manual (1906). It was written by the support of Travancore ruler, provides a comprehensive overview of the history, culture, economy, and society of the former Travancore kingdom. In

Kunju's study, "King Balarama Varma of Travancore," Kunju (1977) examines the administrative structure of Travancore in the 18th and 19th centuries. The study details the administrative consolidation between 1756 and 1763, dividing the Kingdom into three divisions, and interventions for the liberation of Cochin and capture of Calicut province in 1761. It also discusses territorial disputes, tensions with the East India Company, the creation of a sea port at Alappuzha, and policies to improve cashew and coir industries.

Additional contributions to the historiography commemorating Travancore's governance came from Thomas (2005), Lawrence (2010), Prakash (2018), Wilfred (2019), Racheal (2021), Amrutha and Pushpalatha (2021). These studies look at inheritance patterns, taxation, territorial expansion, historical Travancore monarchs, and royal boundary-strengthening tactics. Along with these topics, they cover trade and industry, urbanization, education in the West, irrigation and land tenure systems, political reforms, social and economic developments, and forest policies under royal reigns. These studies point that Travancore state policies focused on infrastructural development, including roads, canals, and waterways, which burdened the royal treasury. However, these efforts were justified to strengthen administration and improve security. Raja Kesava Das, a prominent figure, focused on internal reforms, agriculture, and industries, leading to modern Chala Bazaar, Alappuzha Port, and trade centres.

Kannan (1976), Jose, A. V. (1977), V. Meera (1983), Robin Jeffrey (1984), Thomas Isaac (1985), P. M. Mathew (1985), Alice Albin (1990), Isaac et al., (1992), Padmanabhan, V. T. (2002), K. T. Rammohan (2008), Mohanasundaram (2015), and Anu and Deepu (2018), Aswathy (2018), Pratheesh (2021, 2022), Pratheesh and Gopakumaran Nair (2022), and Raseena (2022, 2023) investigated the origins and development of the coir industry, its socioeconomic role during colonial times, labor position, labor unionism, and the current state of the coir industry in Alappuzha. Each study emphasizes the fact that the traditional industry's decline is putting the distinctive history and technology of the coir industry in Alappuzha, the country's center of coir production, in danger of disappearing. From a historical perspective, however, researchers such as Pylee, Devidas, and Balakrishnan have devoted much effort to recording the origins, growth, and functioning of the coir industry. But other scholars frequently leave these things out and present the commercial and economic viewpoints rather than the historical perspective.

The examination of these studies demonstrates that, while some academic studies on the coir industry employ non-academic or literary approaches, the majority of these studies employ Marxian historiography and are primarily concerned with economic interpretations. What is truly lacking is a honest historiographic approach to the history of Alappuzha as it relates to the development of the coir industry.

3. Methods

The main objective of the study is to provide answers to two questions: first, whether the Travancore ruler's attempts to industrialize and urbanize Alappuzha were based on opportunities to increase the state's overseas trade network and utilize the potential of the coir industry; and second, whether the coir industry encouraged the creation of the road-canal network and other urbanization activities in Alappuzha. To solve these research questions, the study uses a historical and sociological method and analyzed primary and secondary sources related to the Alappuzha coir industry to orient its socio-economic history. Primary sources include historical policies from royal and colonial administrations. Secondary sources aim to understand the industry's history, development, modernization, and labor responses. Data is collected through field trips and interviews with coir workers, particularly veterans, using sociological approaches. The archival sources used are acquired from Kerala State Archives, Trivandrum, and Alleppey port records. From the 14th century until the 1900s, the Travancore region's industrial, political, religious, and cultural affairs are covered in these records. It was also highlighted that the

Travancore rajas had made royal proclamations about state administration and policies. Treaties with English, Dutch, and other rajas, trade and allied activity, and the creation of institutions are among the other records. The port records of the man-made port of Alleppey include specifics about imports, exports, and overseas trade activities.

The two sections that make up the analysis and discussion portion are the industrialization-related infrastructure changes and evolution of Alappuzha's urban design and the socioeconomic contributions of the coir industry through its expansion that contributed to the town's urbanization and industrialization. The first section chronicles the history of Alappuzha's urbanization, while the second portion chronicles the development of the city's coir industry.

4. Analysis

Urban growth of Alappuzha. Although archaeological evidence points to human habitation in Alappuzha as early as the Paleolithic, and a primitive port at Purakkad near Ambalappuzha (certainly Bakare, or Barakart, the ancient harbor referenced in both foreign chronicles and archaic native inscriptions, is modern Purakkad) undoubtedly indicates the region's connections abroad, Alappuzha's modern history emphasizes the contributions of Raja Kesava Das, the ebullient Diwan of Travancore (Diwanship, 1789-1798), who turned the coastal region into a globally recognized spot by designing the sea port and allied infrastructure developments that ultimately resulted in the creation of the modern city of Alappuzha. Raman Kesavan, also known as Raja Kesava Das, was a Dewan of Travancore during the reign of Dharma Raja Karthika Thirunal Rama Varma (Racheal, 2021). His strong mathematical abilities and excellent statesmanship won him an appointment to head the state's commercial department by the Maharaja of Travancore, despite his lack of formal education (Michael Tharakan, 1984). He understood that the wealth and prosperity of the State depended on commerce and made efforts to improve the material prosperity of the State (Nagam Aiya, 1906).

Kesava Das, the commandant of the Travancore army during Tipu Sultan's aggression against Travancore (Battle of Nedumkotta, December 1789 – May 1790), and was appointed Diwan of Travancore following the success (Deepa, 2013). Raja Kesava Das then relocated the capital from Padmanabhapuram (today in Tamil Nadu's Kanyakumari district) to Thiruvananthapuram. Kesava Das' principal purpose was to enhance Travancore's economy by expanding trade, which helped maintain a standing army and prepare for the war with both Europeans and Mysore (Lawrence, 2016). The establishment of a new port at Alleppey, which was hitherto only a suburb, was his greatest success. Because of the Dewan's personal interest, Alleppey grew into a port town complete with stores, worshipping centers for different religions, schools, and a large warehouse. In order to accommodate the invited merchants from Sindh and Cutch, the town constructed a Hindu and Jain temples, court, other accommodation infrastructure and Maharaja's palace. He drew traders from Surat, Saurashtra, and Bombay as well. A timber depot was established, and Sarkar agents were posted in forests to gather produce from the hills, in an effort to turn the area into a hub of commerce. To conduct trade with other regions of India, particularly with Bombay and Calcutta, three ships were constructed at state expense.

While the ports in Kerala, which were occupied by Portuguese, Dutch or Mysore, steadily declined in importance, Alleppey rose to prominence as a major western marketplace (Kooiman, 2005). He also developed well designed interior canal network for navigation and a chain of roads leading to the port region in order to complete the success of the new port at Alappuzha (Ibrahim, 1978). The Gujarathi Street and Marathwada market were established and brought cloth merchants from Tinnevely. Because of the aforementioned activities, scholars who researched him referred to him as the "architect of modern-day Alappuzha."

Alappuzha's town planning and urbanization were managed under Raja Kesava Das's reign, along with the infrastructure development that brings in both the local and global economies (Prakash, 2018). The port, the road system, and the canal system make up the grid design for Alappuzha's urban growth, which approximates the town plan patterns that were utilized in the building of some of the first planned towns in history.



Figure 1. Urban plan of Alappuzha, grid of canals and roads

When the port of Alappuzha was ready to operate in 1762, two parallel canals were built to make it easier for commerce barges to access the town center. As a result, more trading stores were progressively added to these canal's banks. The area along the Commercial Canal, close to Vembanad Lake, known as "Chunkam" (trade, as the Malayalam language puts it), was created as a marketplace for the distribution and re-distribution of import-export commodities. Other canals, such as the Alappuzha-Changanasery Canal and the Alappuzha-Sherthala (AS Canal), were also constructed and lead to Alappuzha Port (Census of India 1911). In order to discourage foreign traders from obtaining a monopoly on the spice trade in Travancore and to encourage local traders to export their goods, these canals connect the marketplaces of Vaikom and Changanassery, from where spices are collected and conveyed to Alappuzha.

Travancore's history was significantly influenced by the port of Alappuzha. As a statesman's point of view, she protected the Dutch, Portuguese, and English East India Company from growing influence in the spice trade of Travancore by maintaining more and much overseas trade just near Cochin. Travancore maintained more than eighteen ports, four of which were major ports that were independent of foreign monopolies or direct influence: Alleppey, Quilon, Vizhinjam, and Culachal. Travancore's advantageous location on the Malabar Coast, abundant natural riches, and kind climate drew traders and migrants to its key areas. Alappuzha settlement grew both during and after port's establishment. Despite not having a natural harbor, Alleppey was developed into a significant port with easy-to-use mooring facilities that could handle vessels of all kinds.



Image 1. Distant view of Alappuzha Port (1910) – Port Archive

When the port first opened in 1762, its main exports were goods, from within and those from Kottayam and the surrounding hill regions. The first ship left Alappuzha in 1786, carrying coir yarn, mats, fiber, tea, coconut oil, rubber, pepper, copra, oil cake, ginger, and prawns. Rice, piece goods, machinery, hardware, cement, and European-made goods were among the imported commodities. The fate of the coir industry was first regulated by the independence of local trade and handicrafts, but the completion of Alappuzha port and the advent of European manufacturers and exporters in the 1850s marked a turning point in the Indian coir sector's development.

Inception of Coir Industry. Coir fibers, originally used for traditional purposes, have evolved into a semi-industrialized sector by the mid-18th century due to market price stability and growing demand for coir for various uses. The first coir factory in India was opened in 1859, and European businessmen constructed fresh coir and coir product manufacturing facilities in Alappuzha (Balakrishnan, 2005). The coir factory of Darragh Smail & Co. Cocoa Mat was located near the port on the north side of the Vadai Canal. Following that, several European companies erected coir plants on either side of the Commercial or Vadai canals. Throughout human history, urbanization has been most concentrated around major bodies of water, mostly to meet food and water demands. This trend has been ongoing since the industrial revolution, as big quantities of water are required for industry. However, in Alappuzha, urbanization is also associated with water bodies as a low-cost means of transporting commodities to and from port (Gopinathan Nair, 1976). As a result, large-scale amenity and utility facilities grew along the banks of canals that connect the town to the port or coir factories to the port.

Alappuzha's urbanization was triggered by the expansion of coir manufacturing facilities and allied factories, as well as former agricultural laborers migrating to Alappuzha and settling near factories because the coir industry was a promising occupational sector that provided consistent income and employment, particularly for the socially and economically disadvantaged sections of rural areas. This movement also resulted in the establishment of large businesses, restaurants, and teashops, as well as banking, recreational, educational, and religious organizations in Alappuzha. By 1900, there were approximately hundreds of exports cum manufacture coir industries just near the port of Alappuzha, or near the canals. The direct export to overseas destinations via the Alappuzha port was a significant advantage for the flourishing of the coir industry. Similarly, as Cochin port regained importance, Alappuzha port survived by exporting a huge quantity of coir products such as coir fiber, coir yarn, coir rope, mat and matting, and other related products.

In addition to European businessmen, native businessmen, including members of the royal family, were drawn to the coir industry at the beginning of the 20th century and established coir production factories in Ambalappuzha, Punnappuzha, Omanappuzha, Kanjikkuzhi, Mararikkulam, Muhamma, Thennermukkom, Kadakkarappally, Cherthala, Vayalar, and Aroor. As a result, the coir sector in Alappuzha, which was valued as a worldwide export market that provided stable employment opportunities for the locals, saw its first industrial boom (Houtart & Lemercinier, 1978). In order to facilitate the expansion of the coir industry, a network of road transportations was established aside from Vembanad Lake and parallel to NH 47 (now NH66). Some of these roads, including Aspinwall Road, Goodacre Road, Travancore Mill's Road, Alleppey Coir Road, etc., are still recognized by the name of the coir plant to which they link.

Regarding the employment delivering potential, the coir industry was promising at that time. About 50,000 men were directly engaged in European coir companies, and an additional 50,000 worked in local coir companies. Since they earn a consistent and respectable wage compared to fishermen or agricultural laborers, these individuals were recognized as coir workers and appreciated in the sociocultural context. Women's employment options are mostly dependent on coir work, with the exception of loom work, which produces coir mats and matting, but other coir sector jobs include dehusking coconuts, retting husks, defibering, and spinning coir yarns. The coir industry quickly spread throughout Alappuzha's villages, with household loom units ranging from one to three looms, small scale units with five to ten looms, and medium-sized firms with twenty to thirty looms. All of the works at coir industry rely primarily on human power for loom operations at that time, but there was a surge of modernization at the period that included wood-cum-metal frames for looms, Wimbley and London looms, and other semi-automated tools and equipment that made human labor easier.

As the industry grew, it was divided into three functional areas: de-fibering, spinning coir yarn, and coir loom/weaving (Pratheesh & Nair, 2022). The dehusking and husk retting was the initial segment. Defibering and coir yarn spinning forms the next segment. Hand-loomed coir mats and matting are created by trained craftsmen weaving coir yarn together on a traditional handloom. As technology advanced, new types were created, but machines drastically altered the manufacturing process. In Alappuzha, women account for 86% of the coir labor force, whereas men dominate the coir loom industry. Until the 1980s, coir served as the major medium of commerce and value measurement in rural Alappuzha. We may therefore affirm the theory that industrialization fosters urbanization, which comprises the establishment of businesses, the creation of jobs, labor mobility, commercialization, and the construction of related infrastructure, using the example of the coir industry and Alappuzha's urbanization (Thomas, 2005). The establishment of schools; religious institutions such as the Jain Temple, the Latin Church, the Mosques near Sakkariyah Bazar, the Brahmin Temple, the Mahavishnu and Rasjeswari temples at Mullackal; parks; talkies; shopping areas like street markets and the establishment of Vazhichery market; the increase in public transportation such as bus and boat services; were the validation proof for the above stanza.

5. Discussion

The discussion portion evaluates and interprets the findings from the preceding section, including their significance for the research question, its validations, and future research directions.

1. Did Raja Kesava Das's administrative changes lead to the urbanization of Alappuzha?

The academic studies of Houtart and Lemercinier (1978), Ibrahim (1978), Kooiman (2005), Kunju (1977), Lawrence (2016), Nagam (1906), P. K. Michael Tharakan (1984),

Gopinathan Nair (1976), Deepa (2013), Prakash (2018), Racheal (2021) and Thomas (2005), and the reports like the Census of India 1911, Travancore Administration Reports were used for examining the questions validity and solution. The analysis section laid out the explanations, which are summarized here.

Raja Kesava Das, a Dewan of Travancore was instrumental in turning the coastal region into a globally recognized city. He designed the sea port and infrastructure developments that led to the creation of the modern city of Alappuzha. Kesava Das's primary goal was to enhance Travancore's economy by expanding trade, which helped maintain a standing army and prepare for war with Europeans and Mysore. Alappuzha's town planning and urbanization were managed under his reign, with the development of a well-designed interior canal network for navigation and a chain of roads leading to the port region. The Gujarathi Street and Marathwada market were established, bringing cloth merchants from Tinnevely. When the port of Alappuzha was ready to operate in 1762, two parallel canals were built to make it easier for commerce bargages to access the town center. Other canals, such as the Alappuzha-Changanasery Canal and the Alappuzha-Sherthala (AS Canal), were also constructed to encourage local traders to export their goods.

2. Was the rise of the coir industry over the last century truly the narrative of Alappuzha's industrialization?

Except for the burgeoning tourism industry, Alappuzha is one of Kerala's most industrially backward districts. Contemporary industries were not familiar in Alappuzha due of its industrial backwardness and people's reliance on traditional industries like agriculture and coir. The preceding section provides an examination of substantial secondary sources, highlighting the coir industry's origins in Alappuzha and its expansion into a global export industry. Coir fibers, originally used for traditional purposes, became a semi-industrialized sector in the mid-18th century. The first coir factory in India opened in 1859, and European businessmen-built facilities in Alappuzha, leading to hundreds of export coir industries by 1900. As a result, it is unquestionably shown that the coir industry is a reality of Alappuzha's industrialization.

3. Has the expansion of the coir industry aided the urbanization of Alappuzha?

The establishment of Alappuzha port, as well as the subsequent designing of road and canal networks, all contributed to Alappuzha's infrastructural transformation into an urban center. In some ways, the port has been the driving force behind the rise of the coir business in Alappuzha, and the coir industry's exports through the port have helped to keep the port as a profitable endeavor in Travancore.

And this difficult stanza cannot be resolved by simple analysis and peripheral explanations. As a result, the query promotes more in-depth research into the subject. A specialized historiography of the coir industry, as well as emerging socio-cultural narratives through the evolution of the coir sector, are other threshold areas for further research.

6. Conclusion

The coir industry in Alappuzha has received substantial attention, but no anthropological or sociological research has been performed to depict the interplay between urbanization, industrialization, and socioeconomic expansion in Alappuzha through an examination of the coir industry and Alappuzha port. Scholarly research focuses on economic analysis, whereas non-scholarly works emphasize socio-cultural issues.

The coir industry in Alappuzha was largely shaped by urban developments, industrialization, and transportation. It provided employment opportunities for agricultural laborers, facilitated commercialization, and led to the development of schools, religious

institutions, and public transportation. The growth of the coir industry and Alappuzha Port's potential also boosted population growth and economic opportunities.

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The Greek-Albanian Relations During the Interwar Period (1918-1939)

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Abstract

This article examines Greek-Albanian relations during the Interwar Period (1918–1939), a time marked by diplomatic tensions, minority disputes, and foreign intervention. The primary sources of friction were territorial disagreements and the rights of ethnic minorities, specifically the Greek minority in Northern Epirus and the Muslim Cham population in Greece. While Greece prioritized the protection of its ethnic kin, Albania viewed these efforts with suspicion, responding with policies that curtailed minority rights, particularly in education. The evolving domestic politics in both nations, such as Zog's rise to power in Albania and Greece's post-Asia Minor diplomatic retrenchment, further shaped bilateral interactions. Italian ambitions under Mussolini played a crucial role in exacerbating tensions, culminating in Albania's transformation into an Italian protectorate by 1939. Despite occasional periods of rapprochement, notably under leaders like Venizelos and Pangalos, sustained cooperation remained elusive. This study underscores the intersection of nationalism, minority rights, and great-power rivalry in shaping regional dynamics, illustrating how unresolved historical grievances and foreign pressures hindered lasting Greek-Albanian rapprochement during the Interwar era.

Keywords: Greece, Albania, Northern Epirus, Zog, Mussolini.

1. Introduction

The Interwar Period in the Balkans, spanning from 1918 to 1939, was marked by profound political upheavals and persistent instability. This era began with the conclusion of the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922), a conflict that followed World War I and reshaped the geopolitical landscape of the region. The war's aftermath brought population exchanges, shifting borders, and deep-seated grievances that would fuel inter-state tensions in the following decades. By 1939, the Italian occupation of Albania symbolized the culmination of mounting pressures in southeastern Europe, setting the stage for World War II (Koumas, 2010).

Greek-Albanian relations during this turbulent period were dominated by mutual suspicion and recurring disputes. Two primary sources of friction were territorial claims and concerns over minority rights, both of which were exacerbated by broader regional dynamics. In particular, Greece remained dissatisfied with the international recognition of Northern Epirus as part of Albania, despite the presence of a substantial Greek-speaking Orthodox population in the

area. Successive Greek governments viewed the status of this community as a matter of national interest, fueling irredentist sentiments and complicating diplomatic relations (Papadopoulos, 1981).

Conversely, Albanian authorities harbored deep concerns about the treatment of the Cham Albanians, a predominantly Muslim population residing in Thesprotia, within Greek borders. Allegations of discrimination and forced displacement stoked fears in Tirana, prompting periodic diplomatic protests. These mutual grievances were not isolated disputes but interwoven with the broader strategic contest for influence in the western Balkans (Vickers, 1995).

The role of Italy under Mussolini further strained Greek-Albanian relations. Italy's aggressive policies in the region, driven by expansionist ambitions, heightened tensions and deepened mistrust between Athens and Tirana. Rome's efforts to establish Albania as an Italian protectorate created an environment of insecurity and suspicion, compelling both Greece and Albania to adjust their foreign policies in response to the shifting balance of power (Koumas, 2010).

2. The mutual suspicion of the years 1920-1928

As mentioned before, during the Interwar period, Greek governments, at a policy level, focused on ensuring protections for the Greek population in Northern Epirus rather than pursuing territorial claims against Albania. Following the Asia Minor Catastrophe (1922), Greece's economic struggles and diminished international standing often led to a passive stance towards its neighbour states. Accordingly, Athens not only refrained from asserting claims to Northern Epirus post-1922 but sometimes viewed requests for Northern Epirotes protections as an obstacle to good relations with Tirana or Rome (Koumas, 2010).

Meanwhile, hundreds of Northern Epirotes emigrated after the 1921 loss of their homeland, primarily settling in Athens and Thessaloniki. By 1920, the Greek Ministry of Health had registered 150 such migrants (Greek Ministry of Welfare, n.d.), a number that would increase over the following years, enabling the creation of associations. Chief among these was the Northern Epirotic Association of Athens-Piraeus, founded in May 1920, followed by a similar group in Thessaloniki (INR, Skenderis Archive, 1920). Both lobbied for Greece to claim Northern Epirus and improve living conditions for émigrés. It's noteworthy that, during the interwar years, Northern Epirotes consistently held out hope that Greece would reclaim the region, while documenting and protesting abuses against Greeks in the area to increase Greek government awareness (MFA, 1922, F. 14/1).

Characteristically, the Epirotic Association of Corfu sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a telegram on 17 June 1922 mentioned the following:

The Albanian Government, on the one hand, is making advances towards the Greek Government towards the recognition of Albania as a state, on the other hand, it is following its persecutions in Northern Epirus, on all fronts and by all means oppressing them their native populations Robbery gangs of Muslims are formed by the tolerance of these Governors. The authorities of the Prefecture of Gjirokastër and incited it, if not by them, at any rate by the Beys and Agads of that Prefecture, plundering the countryside, exclusively Greek and Christian, are taken as a reasonable occasion to exterminate other gangs of Muslims, and they are, moreover, for the pretexts, those of them from non-patrimonial bodies of "Vatras" are managed (MFA, 1922, F. 14/4).

Also, the expatriate Northern Epirus of Ioannina begged the Greek government in May 1922 to order the occupation of Northern Epirus:

The inhabitants of the North Epirus in Ioannina are in Gen. Having gathered today in view of the exterminating persecution of all Greeks practiced by the Turkalvans in our special homeland, we strongly protest in front of the civilized world and we appeal to the Greek Government, beseeching it warmly as it is order the advance of the Greek Army and liberation of the burdensome Albanian yoke the distressed part of the Greek motherland declaring that in our conviction we are determined to sacrifice everything in defense of our ethnic and human rights that are being violated (MFA, 1922, No. 14/4).

Despite these protests, the influence of the Northern Epirotic Association of Athens-Piraeus remained limited, with fewer than 150 members initially. Until 1924, the Greek state showed little interest, and later regimes, like Theodoros Pangalos' dictatorship (1925-1926), exhibited outright hostility. As a result, the association remained marginal, with its petitions rarely appearing in the Greek press until the School Question erupted in 1933 (see below).

On the other side, at the same years Albania faced a political chaos. In May 1921, Albanian leaders, primarily the Muslim beys, elected Iljas bey Vrioni as prime minister. Vrioni, a descendant of an aristocratic Ottoman family and closely aligned with the conservative Progressive Party, was staunchly opposed to agrarian reform and aimed to strengthen the landowning class' influence. On the other side, Fan Noli's Democratic (or People's) Party, initially comprising northern Catholic leader Luigj Gurakuqi, veteran nationalist Hassan Prishtina, and Ahmed Zogu, promoted economic changes and the westernization of Albania. In their political statements, Noli and his supporters often portrayed the Greeks of Northern Epirus as a threat to Albania's survival (Vickers, 1995).

Indeed, Albania exploited Greece's muted approach and the limited power of the Northern Epirotic associations to intensify oppression against the Greek minority, beginning in 1921. In response, Greece officially appealed to the League of Nations for protection in February 1921, sparking months of negotiations. Albania's primary strategy involved downplaying the size of the Greek minority, claiming it was only 15,000, while alleging—without evidence—that hundreds of thousands of Albanians resided in Greece and Yugoslavia. In contrast, Athens advocated for a range of cultural, educational, and religious freedoms for its minority population, similar to protections given in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Romania (MFA, 1921, F. 3/5).

Under those circumstances, the League of Nations sent a committee to Northern Epirus, which, in November 1921, confirmed the existence of around 40,000 Greeks and recommended improvements to their treatment by the Albanian government. In particular, the committee pointed out the creation of obstacles on the part of the Albanian side in the teaching of the Greek language. The general impression of the officials of the international organization was that the Albanian authorities treated with suspicion not only the Greek teachers, but also the Patriarchate of Constantinople, considering them as levers of pressure in favor of Athens. (MFA, 1922, F. 13/4; MFA, 1922, F. 24/6; Divani, 2002).

On October 2, 1921, Albania agreed to a final minority protection agreement based on a seven-article draft, stipulating equal treatment for all racial, linguistic, and religious groups in Albania (MFA, 1921, F. 4/1). The agreement allowed each group to maintain schools and religious institutions and prohibited discrimination. Thus, Albania was required to recognize a Greek National Minority around Gjirokastër and in Himarë's four villages (Divani, 2002), under a protective status akin to other Geneva-based member states (MFA, 1921, F. 4/1).

Despite these guarantees of Greek language instruction and Orthodox Christian worship, Northern Epirotes expatriates continued protesting Albanian state policies. Incidents like the violent seizure of Greek churches by Albanian nationalists in 1921 and 1922 and the establishment of an autonomous Albanian Church following the 1922 Synod of Berat only aggravated tensions. Characteristically, Patriarch Meletius IV refused to recognize the move

(MFA, 1922, F. 24/6; Benaki Museum, Eleftherios Venizelos Archive, F. 37/6; MFA, 1922, F. 13/4; MFA, 1922, F. 24/6; Bido, 2020).

Additionally, unresolved ambiguities in the Greek-Albanian border drawing, especially regarding the Greek-speaking villages of Kakavia and Katouna, further complicated relations. To address these issues, in March 1922, the League of Nations sent an International Commission, led by Italian General Enrico Tellini, to finalize the border. The review lasted three years and was marred by Tellini's assassination on August 27, 1923. Rome immediately blamed the incident on the Greek side, with the Italian ambassador in Athens delivering a stern ultimatum demanding moral and financial compensation. At the same time, on August 31, 1923, the Italian fleet bombarded Corfu, then succeeding in capturing it without bloodshed. Finding itself in a tragic situation after the Asia Minor Catastrophe, the Greek government contented itself with appealing to the League of the Nations. There, Mussolini's threats resulted in a new diplomatic defeat for Athens, which was called upon to pay 50 million lire to Italy and to hold official memorial services for the dead Italians. Also, final demarcation, signed on January 30, 1925, set the Greco-Albanian border from Prespes to Mount Bandaros, Aaos river, and Ftelias Bay (Papafloratos, 2009).

Those developments didn't affect significantly Albania: the latter remained deeply divided along religious, social, and ethnic lines, which became increasingly apparent after the state borders were secured and external threats diminished. For example, the northern Catholic groups preferred Shkodra as the capital instead of Tirana and frequently demanded extensive autonomy. Tensions reached a peak when the powerful Catholic Mirditës tribe rebelled against the central government, with their leader Marka Gjoni establishing a short-lived autonomy near Prizren from July 17 to November 20, 1921, with the backing of Yugoslavia (Frashëri, 1964).

This fragmented situation paved the way for the rise of Ahmed Zogu. Born in northern part of Albania in 1895, Zogu had participated in the Albanian independence movement of 1912 and served in World War I with the Austro-Hungarian army. Backed by the southern beys and related to Essad Pasha Toptani, Zogu soon came into conflict with Fan Noli. Thus, seeking to broaden his support base, Zog, then the Minister of the Interior, attempted to subdue the northern Catholic tribes. His successes in curbing these secessionist forces led to his appointment as prime minister on December 16, 1922 (Tallon, 2014).

As prime minister, Zog aimed to alleviate Albania's religious divides. In August 1923, he convened a conference of leading Muslims in Tirana, where he led a push to sever ties with the caliphate, abolish the title of bey, and ban polygamy. These efforts, however, alienated a segment of the Muslim landowning class, forcing Zog to resign (MFA, 1923, F. 24/6).

Albania's government remained absorbed with its domestic problems, which Zogu's resignation did little to solve. In this context, political assassinations continued to increase, and no party managed to secure a decisive electoral win, leading to a revolt in June 1924 under Fan Noli. Soon after, Prime Minister Shefqet Verlaci quickly resigned, while Zog fled to Yugoslavia for safety (Frashëri, 1964).

Fan Noli, a Catholic clergyman and scholar, took over Albania's leadership and initiated extensive agrarian, political, and educational reforms. However, his methods proved harsh, which undermined proclamations of free speech and land redistribution, as potential rivals faced severe repression. Discontent with Noli's rule spread, and Zogu seized the opportunity to return. On December 13, 1924, Zog, now leading an armed force of 5,000 men, invaded Albania from Yugoslavia, supported by Yugoslav troops, his tribal connections, and White Russian fighters seeking refuge after their defeat by the Bolsheviks. He also received financial support from Greece and Northern Epirotes, hoping he would adopt a flexible stance towards them. Although these hopes soon faded, Zog's forces took Tirana on December 24 without resistance (Divani, 2002).

To distance himself from previous political regimes, Zogu promptly scheduled elections, declaring Albania a “democratic state without monarchy.” However, it quickly became apparent that he did not intend to relinquish power. As president, Zogu consolidated control through assassinations of political rivals like Luigj Gurakuqi, suppression of Fan Noli’s followers, and persecution of the Kosovo Committee. The latter was created by Kosovo Albanians, aiming to integrate the disputed region into the state of Tirana. Its dissolution by Zogu served to maintain friendly relations with Yugoslavia. In this context, although Albania now had a constitution and an elected government, Zogu maintained veto power over legislation and control over the military (Vickers, 1995).

The establishment of Zogu’s regime initiating a phase of Greek-Albanian rapprochement. In late 1925, Zogu assured Greek diplomats of improved conditions for Northern Epirots, pledging to honor their educational and religious freedoms (HLHA, Eleftherios Venizelos Archive, F. 1/584). On his behalf, the Greek dictator General Theodoros Pangalos, reciprocated with diplomatic goodwill gestures, sending the pro-Albanian Alexandros Kontoulis as ambassador to Tirana. Kontoulis strongly supported Tirana’s views, including establishing an autocephalous Albanian church (Kollaros, 2022).

Pangalos’s motives are debated, but it seems he sought to use friendly relations with Albania as leverage to strengthen ties with Rome, in case of a new Greek-Turkish conflict. Besides, he believed the economic revival of Epirus and Balkan stability would follow peaceful coexistence. In this context, by 1925, Greece eagerly pursued peace with its neighbors, given its lingering Asia Minor wounds (Divani, 2002).

This warming of relations led to trade, shipping, citizenship, extradition, and refugee agreements between Greece and Albania from August to October 1926. However, anticipating a high financial burden related to compensating expropriated Albanian properties, the Greek Parliament rejected these agreements after Pangalos’ fall (Manta, 2004).

As about his domestic policy, Zogu claimed his goal was to maintain order, and to achieve this, he sought the allegiance of the unruly northern tribes, often using large financial incentives to buy loyalty. This practice, however, depleted state funds, pushing Zogu to establish trade agreements with Italy and Britain, particularly for the exploration and sale of oil discovered off the Albanian coast in 1919. While these agreements brought foreign capital into Albania, they also gave Italy significant influence over the country’s economy (Divani, 2002).

British interest eventually waned when the Anglo-Persian Oil Company deemed Albanian oil prospects unviable, leading to a shift in British policy. Consequently, Albania signed the Pact of Friendship and Support with Italy in November 1926, followed by a second treaty in 1927, establishing Albania as an Italian protectorate. These agreements stipulated that any threat to Albania’s territorial integrity would be considered an attack on Italy, paving the way for Italian settlers to establish a foothold in Albania (Motherwell, 1928; Yzeiraj, 2021; Manta, 1996; Xhelaj, 2013).

On September 1, 1928, Zogu abandoned his Turkish-sounding surname, declaring himself “Zog I, King of the Albanians.” Knowing that the northern Catholics might resent a Muslim monarch, Zog strategically placed Catholic clan leaders in prominent military roles and declared Albania would have no official religion. Under a new constitution, the Albanian king gained extensive legislative, judicial, and executive authority through 234 constitutional articles. Although formally a democratic constitutional monarchy, Zog held absolute power (Vickers, 1995).

3. The Italian aggression and the events of 1928-1939

Following the fall of Pangalos' regime (1926), Greek-Albanian relations soured, as no subsequent Greek government matched his conciliatory approach toward Tirana. Thus, until Venizelos' 1928 electoral victory, the two nations frequently aired grievances before the League's Council of Ministers, with Albania decrying oppression against Chams and equating it to Northern Epirotes' grievances. Chams, even though they were Muslims, were excluded from the Lausanne Agreement (1923) after a related appeal by Albania to the League of Nations in March 1924. From that period, the goal of Tirana to use the population in question – according to Eleftheria Manta – is evident as a “counterweight to the Greek minority” (Manta, 2004). Also, the Albanian government increased persecution against the Greek population in Korçë exacerbated tensions, although Venizelos' 1928-1932 administration temporarily improved relations due to Zog's respect for him (Divani, 2002).

Tensions between Athens and Tirana reached new heights in 1933, following the Albanian government's decision to amend Articles 206 and 207 of the 1928 Constitution. These constitutional changes ostensibly aimed to nationalize education, ensuring free state-run schooling for all Albanian citizens. However, the reforms quickly revealed ulterior motives: under the guise of promoting universal access to education, the Albanian government banned private schools, effectively shuttering the Greek minority's educational institutions. This policy directly targeted the Greek community's ability to sustain its cultural and linguistic heritage, intensifying existing frictions between the two countries (Benaki Museum, Eleftherios Venizelos' Archive, F. 399/68).

In reaction to this assault on Greek education, Vasileios Mattheou Sachinis, a wealthy banker from Dropoli, discreetly founded the “New Friendly Society” in Gjirokastër in 1933. Modeled after earlier nationalistic organizations, its mission was to protect and preserve Greek education in Northern Epirus. The organization quickly gained financial backing from the Greek state via the Greek consulate in Gjirokastër and, during the 1933–1934 school year, mobilized Greek communities in Northern Epirus to boycott Albanian state schools. This grassroots resistance saw Greek families refusing to enroll their children in the state-mandated education system, triggering sharp reprisals from the Albanian authorities. Reasonably suspecting Athens of orchestrating this defiance, the Albanian government responded with a wave of mass arrests targeting prominent Greek community leaders in Northern Epirus. The ensuing atmosphere of fear and repression was widely condemned in the Greek press, which described the situation as an “intolerable state of affairs” (Papadopoulos, 1981).

Public opinion in Greece grew increasingly inflamed, with nationalist rhetoric beginning to resurface by early 1934, even as the country faced political and economic instability. Despite mounting public pressure, Prime Minister Panagis Tsaldaris opted for a realistic approach. Rather than issuing provocative irredentist declarations or risking military escalation—at a time when Greece was politically and economically disadvantaged—Tsaldaris directed the New Friendly Society to pursue legal remedies through international institutions. Indeed, on January 2, 1934, representatives of the Greek minority in Northern Epirus filed an appeal with the League of Nations. The League referred the case to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, which finally vindicated Greece (Papadopoulos, 1981).

This episode exemplified the broader challenges faced by Greece in balancing nationalist aspirations with the constraints of international politics. While it underscored the vulnerabilities of the Greek minority in Albania, it also demonstrated the Greek state's capacity to adapt its tactics to changing geopolitical realities, leveraging international institutions as a platform for addressing minority rights. The case further illuminated the intersection of education, identity, and nationalism, illustrating how cultural institutions could become battlegrounds in broader struggles for political sovereignty and ethnic autonomy.

In Albania, despite ongoing disputes with Yugoslavia over Kosovo and Greece concerning the status of Northern Epirus, Zog eventually recognized that the most serious threat to Albania was Italy. By the early 1930s, Mussolini had adopted an increasingly aggressive approach, using Albania's economic difficulties and a 1925 loan as leverage (Frashëri, 1964). Meanwhile, Zog faced mounting internal dissatisfaction; Northern Epirotes held a deep-seated distrust of any Albanian government, while Albanians grew more critical of his administration. Zog tried to suppress dissent by orchestrating political assassinations, such as the 1933 killing of Hasan Prishtina in Thessaloniki, and briefly attempted liberal reforms between 1935 and 1936. However, these actions only intensified public discontent (Vickers, 1995).

Zog's position worsened in June 1936 with the appointment of Count Galeazzo Ciano as Italy's Foreign Minister. From the start, Ciano—a fervent proponent of Albania's annexation by Italy—envisioned Albania as a colony for millions of Italians (DDI, vol. XI, no. 171 and 304). While these plans developed slowly, Italian influence over Albania increased steadily: by summer 1938, Italy accounted for over 92% of Albanian exports and 82% of its imports. Given this economic control, Mussolini issued an ultimatum on March 25, 1939, demanding that Albania become an Italian protectorate (Vickers, 1995).

The subsequent Italian invasion reflected Mussolini's strategy, which aimed not just at economic or political dominance but at bold territorial expansion. The intervention in Albania, following years of economic and cultural entrenchment, was a stark example of Italian imperialism (DDI, Ottava serie, Vol. XI, no. 635). Thus, on April 7, 1939, some 40,000 Italian soldiers landed in Vlorë and faced little resistance. Zog fled to Greece with his family and close allies; his radio calls urging Albanians to resist were largely unheard, as few citizens owned radios. Subsequently, the Italians established a compliant government under Shefqet bey Verlaci, while in 1941 King Victor Emmanuel III formally united Italy and Albania. Zog would never return to his homeland (Frashëri, 1964).

4. Conclusions

The Greek-Albanian relations during the Interwar Period (1922-1939) reflect a tumultuous chapter in Balkan history shaped by ethnic disputes, diplomatic maneuvers, and external power dynamics. Central to these relations was the unresolved issue of minority rights, particularly concerning the Greek-speaking population in Northern Epirus and the Muslim Cham community in Greece. Both nations pursued competing narratives of victimization and entitlement, often turning to international organizations such as the League of Nations for mediation. Despite occasional diplomatic overtures, mistrust remained entrenched, fueled by nationalistic aspirations and historical grievances.

The interwar period also saw the significant influence of external powers like Italy, whose aggressive expansionist policies destabilized the region further. Italy's strategic ambitions culminated in the 1939 occupation of Albania, effectively ending any possibility of Greek-Albanian reconciliation before World War II. The Italian intervention highlighted the fragility of regional autonomy in the face of great power politics, reducing both Greece and Albania to weak peripheral players in a broader European struggle.

Domestically, both countries grappled with political instability that hampered consistent foreign policy strategies. In Albania, the consolidation of power by King Zog offered a semblance of stability but also provoked internal dissent and dependency on foreign aid. Greece, recovering from the Asia Minor Catastrophe, was often preoccupied with internal challenges, limiting its ability to assert a cohesive Balkan policy.

Ultimately, Greek-Albanian relations during the Interwar Period illustrate the complex interplay of national identity, minority rights, and geopolitical ambition. While the

bilateral disputes reflected deep-rooted historical issues, they were inseparable from the broader international context of the time. The unresolved legacies of this period continued to shape the Balkan political landscape well into the 20th century, leaving a historical imprint that resonates in the region's contemporary dynamics.

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The Oldest Printed History Books on Ancient Thrace: The Odrysian 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 Odrysian 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 Odrysian 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: Odrysian 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.

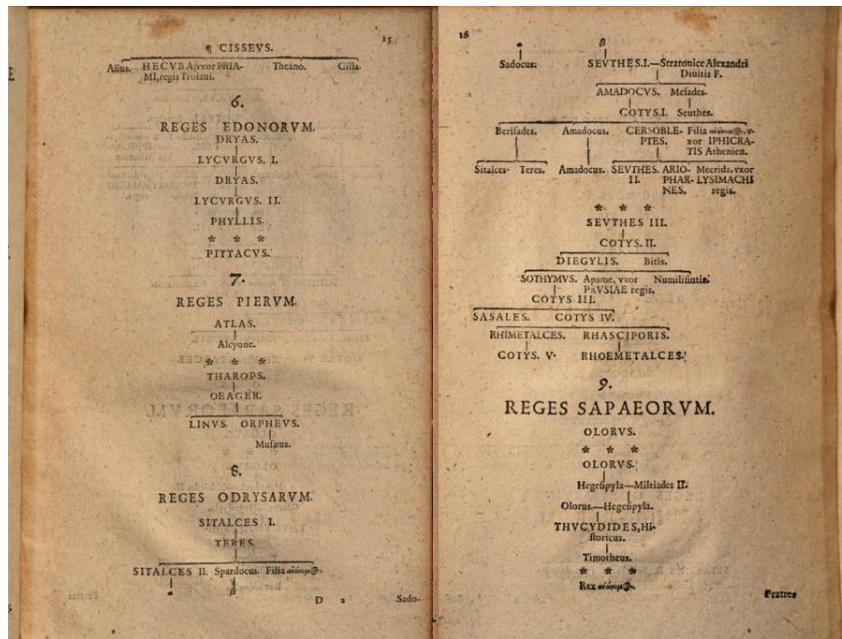


Figure 3. The Odrysiens kings according to Reineccius (Mitrev & Iliev, 2024: 145)



Figure 4. The Odrysiens 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 Odrysiens kingdom. He “was the first to establish the great kingdom of the Odrysiens 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 Odrysiens *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.

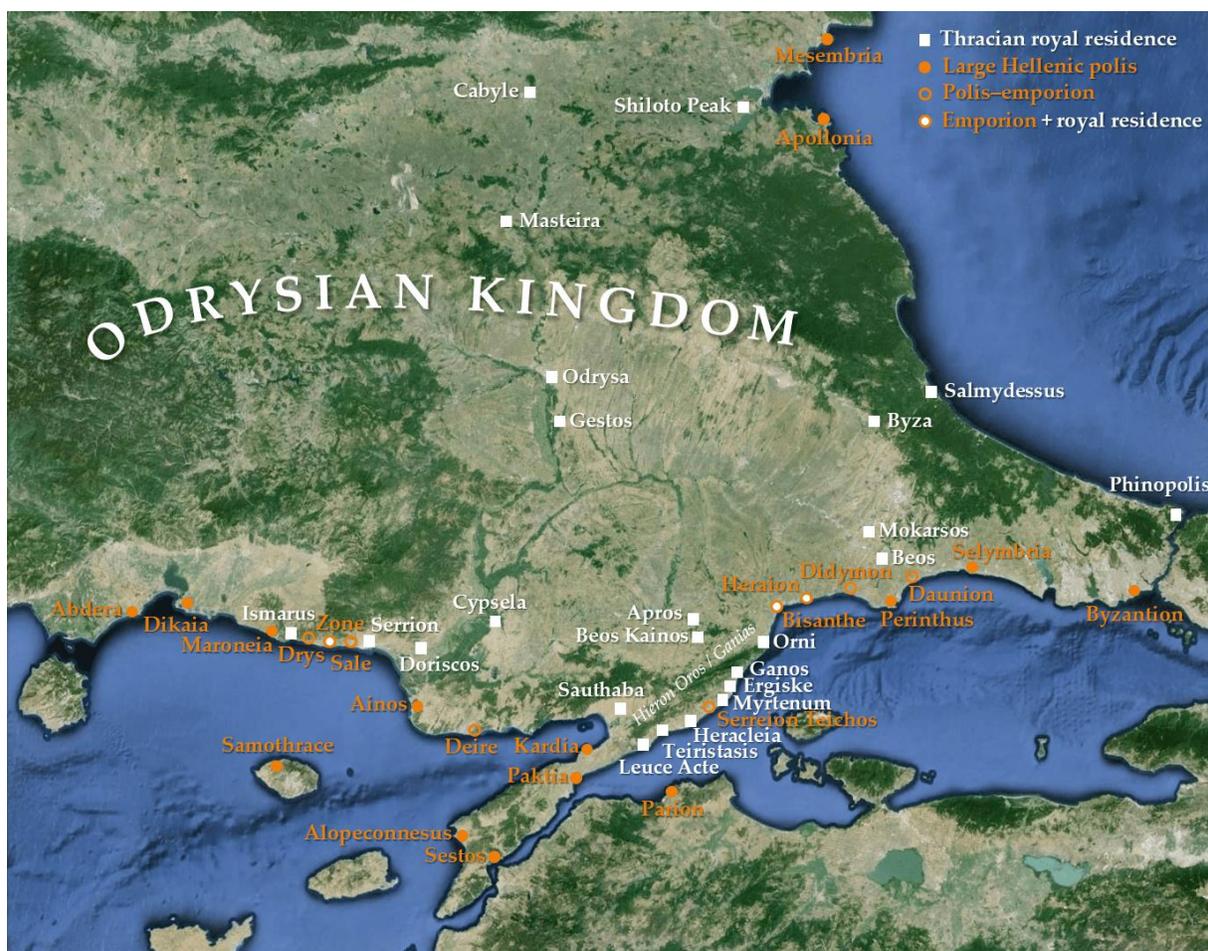


Figure 5. Fortress-residences (tyrseis) of the Thracian kings and Hellenic poleis on the Thracian Sea, Sea of Marmara and Black Sea, 5th – middle of 4th century BC. Adapted after Porozhanov, 2021: 368 (cf. Porozhanov 2009b).

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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AIMS AND SCOPE

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