

Greek Inscriptions from Ancient Thrace: Hellenization and its Spatial Extent

This project aims to connect data from inscriptions with spatial information and therefore create more detailed image of Hellenization in Ancient Thrace



Picture 1: IG Bulg I, 2 78 (3) Dedication to Heros Karabasmos, Varna, Undated, Varna Archaeological Museum



Picture 2: IG Bulg V, 5652 Dedication to "Kyrios" Apollo, Rogovo, Yambol, Undated, Yambol History Museum

The dataset will be created from the major corpora of published Greek inscriptions found in modern Bulgaria, Northern Greece and European Turkey (*Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria repertae, Epigraphes tes Thrakes tou Aigaiou, Die Inschriften von Sestos und der thrakischen Chersones, Die Inschriften von Byzantion, Perinthos-Herakleia (Marmara Ereğlisi) und Umgebung*; In total almost 5000 inscriptions). A database is designed in MS Access 2010 to store the data about individual inscriptions. Although the database is not the primary goal of the project, it enables and facilitates access to the data by providing easy orientation in the large amount of inscriptions. The inscriptions were assigned spatial information (based on information given by the editors) and transformed into separate shapefiles in ArcGIS 10 (Geographical Information Software by ESRI).

As a case study to illustrate the potential of the project I selected the corpus IG Bulg I,2 published in 1970 by Georgi Mihailov. It contains 692 (659 without editor's double entries) Greek inscriptions found on the Black Sea coast. Several attributes were recorded for every inscription: approximate position/place of discovery; the date (as precise as possible); prosopography and ethnicity (presence of Greek, Thracian, Roman, oriental and geographical names); religious connotations (presence of names of Greek gods, heroes, or associated words); characteristic attributes of Greek public life (honours, officials, titlature etc.). The presentation of the project in its full length is beyond the scope of this poster, therefore I have chosen only one aspect to illustrate possible applications and benefits of the research: the phenomenon of the *Thracian rider*.

The Thracian rider (abbreviated as TR) was studied thoroughly in the past (namely in the excellent article by N. Dimitrova (2002), which served as a base for my research), but some of the factors were neglected or needed further examination. From 659 inscriptions in the IG Bulg I,2 86 (13,05 %) contain textual or visual reference to the TR. 49 inscriptions (7,43 %) have the word *heros* in the inscribed text, 68 (10,31 %) bear reliefs depicting a man riding a horse; 31 (4,70 %) display both text and relief. *Figure 1* shows spatial distribution of the Thracian rider monuments in the Black Sea area. 36 inscriptions come from Odessos, 6 from Messambria Pontica and 1-2 inscriptions come from other places. In regards to the date of those 86 inscriptions we encounter serious problems, with the majority of them remaining undated (77). The date of the remainder varies from 2/3 c. BC to 3 c. AD (1-2 inscriptions from each period). No serious conclusion can be made on the basis of such a small dataset. Only further expansion of the database (entering data from other corpora) could improve the chronology of TR occurrence.

Another study was concerned with the relation between the used text and type of an inscription. 49 inscriptions contain the word *heros*, but used in a different case. Nominative sg. is used 12x, with nominative pl. 1x, dative sg. 33x and dative pl. 3x (ergo: nominative 13x, dative 36x). The context of the "nominative inscriptions" was 10x funerary, 3x unknown. The name in the nominative represents the dedicant or eventually the deceased to whom the relief has been dedicated. Amongst the "dative inscriptions" were 28 dedicatory, 5 funerary and 3 of unknown function. The dative represents the name of a god, or hero.

As could be seen from the *Figure 2*, there is no spatial differentiation in the nom./dat. inscriptions found in the Black sea area, because both the dedication and the funerary "Thracian riders" were used together.

Next attribute I explored was the presence of personal names, divided into five groups (after Mihailov, 1970) : Greek, Roman, Thracian, Oriental and Other / Ambiguous. Among 86 inscriptions with the TR Greek names were found on 53, Roman on 30, Thracian on 12 and Oriental on 5 inscriptions; A combination of Greek and Roman was identified on 20, of Greek and Thracian on 11, of Greek and Oriental on 4, and of Greek, Roman and Thracian on 9. On the *Figure 3* we can see that the biggest concentration of inscriptions with Greek names is around Odessos (31 from 316) and Messambria Pontica (5 from 105), but those results were expected from the total number of inscriptions found in Greek colonies. Thracian and Roman names alike were evenly distributed in these cities, so based on the data, we can say that the population of Odessos and Messambria was a mixture of indigenous and newcoming people.

What is interesting are the names themselves: as was said previously, the names in dative represent divinity. In IG Bulg I,2, TR inscriptions are attested both Greek and Thracian gods/heroes. For example the traditional Thracian name Karabasmos is attested 11x in the dative form in the region of ancient Odessos; see *Picture 1*: IG Bulg I,2 78 (3). This suggests an existence of local cult of the Thracian *heros* within the territory of Greek colony.

Again in Odessos we encounter other divine names of mixed origin in the dative form: Perkon 2x, Manimazos 2x, Ordianos 1x, Asklepios 1x and Propylaios 1x. Heros Propylaios is also 2x attested in Messambria Pontica, another major Greek colony. Women's names are found twice: Tasage 1x and Myrsine 1x. Names found in nominative are considered to be typical Greek: Agathenor 2x, Aristokles, Artemidoros, Dionysios, Makedon, Simon, Soulpikios and Zenios. The spatial presence of Greek and Thracian names again confirms the theory of mixed population of the Greek colonies on the Black Sea coast and shared religious beliefs.

This study shows that Dimitrova's conclusions (2002, p. 219), were correct when stating that so far "no strict patterns can be established" either in chronology and spatial distribution of these monuments. Nevertheless, the expansion and improvement of the spatial map of the Thracian rider and its contextualization within other categories of archaeological evidence has the potential to illuminate regional development. The study of personal names, in particular, can add valuable information to the study of the Thracian rider cult and its diffusion amongst the population of Ancient Thrace, revealing potential differences between Greek and Thracian cultic practice.

Referenced work:

Dimitrova, N. (2002): *Incriptions and Iconography in the Monuments of the Thracian Rider, Hesperia* 71, p. 209-229
Mihailov, G. (1970): *Inscriptiones Graecae In Bulgaria Repertae*, vol. I, ed. 2: Orae Ponti Euxini, Sofia

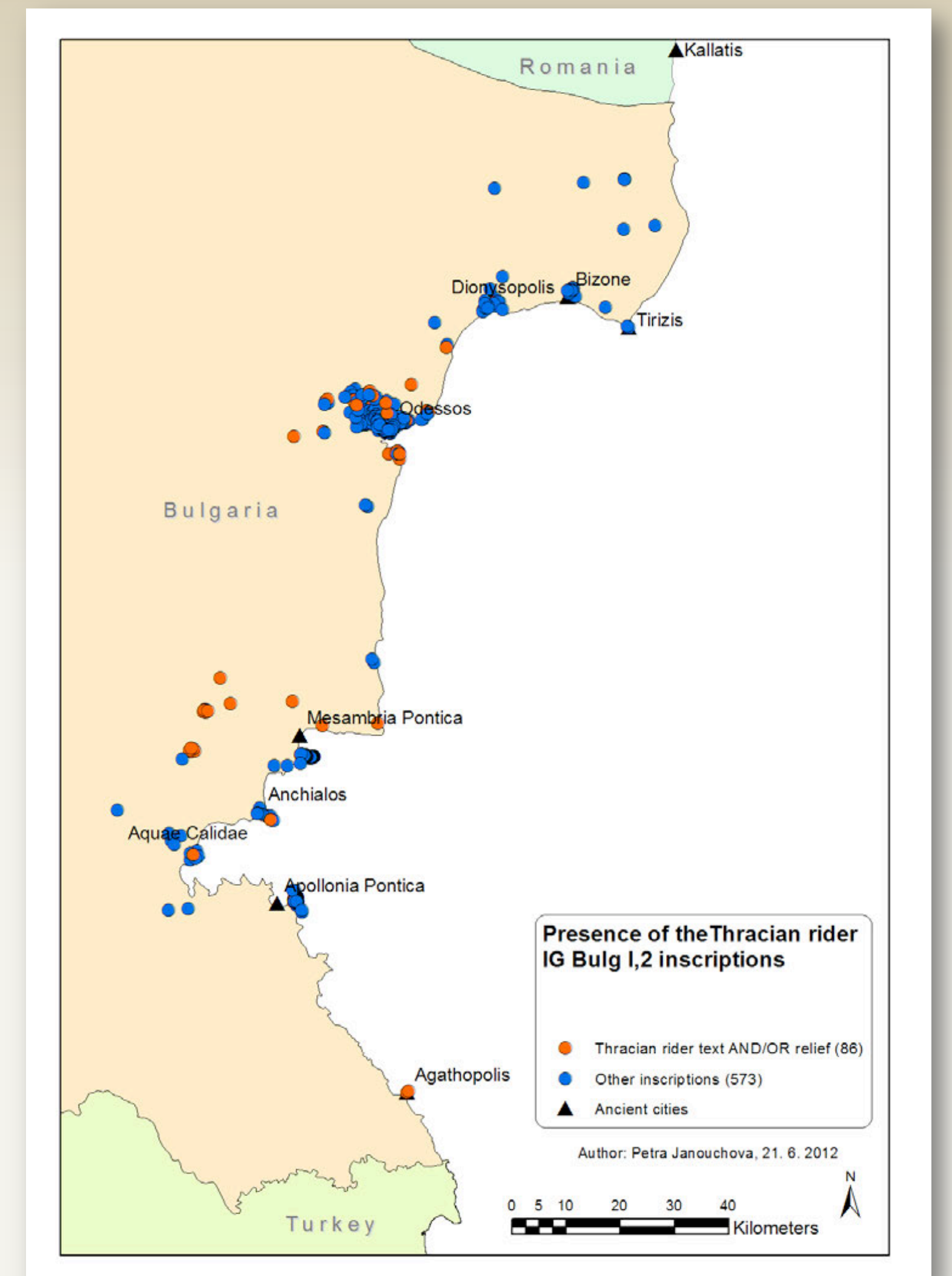


Figure 1: Thracian rider presence

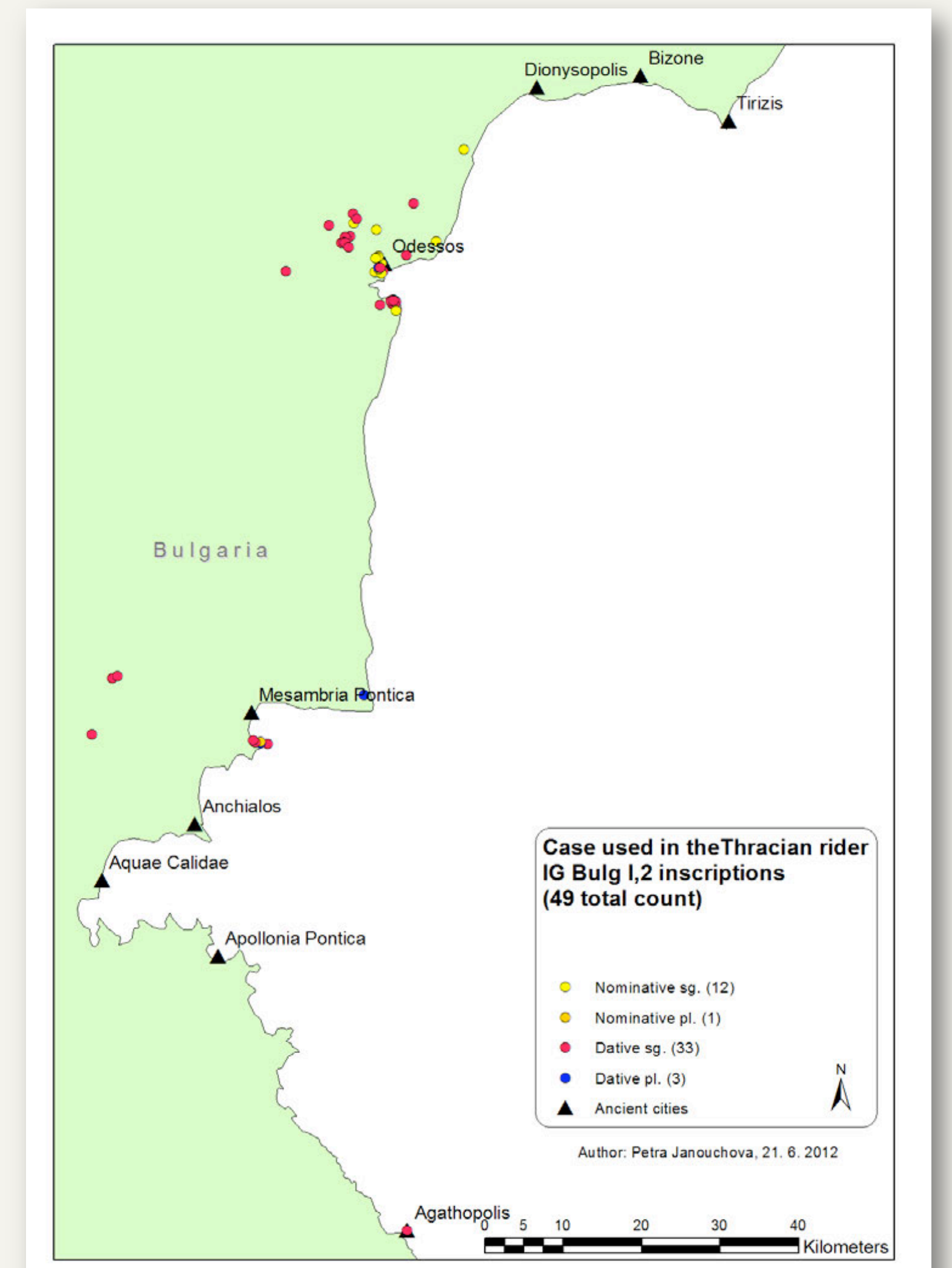


Figure 2: Nominative/Dative usage

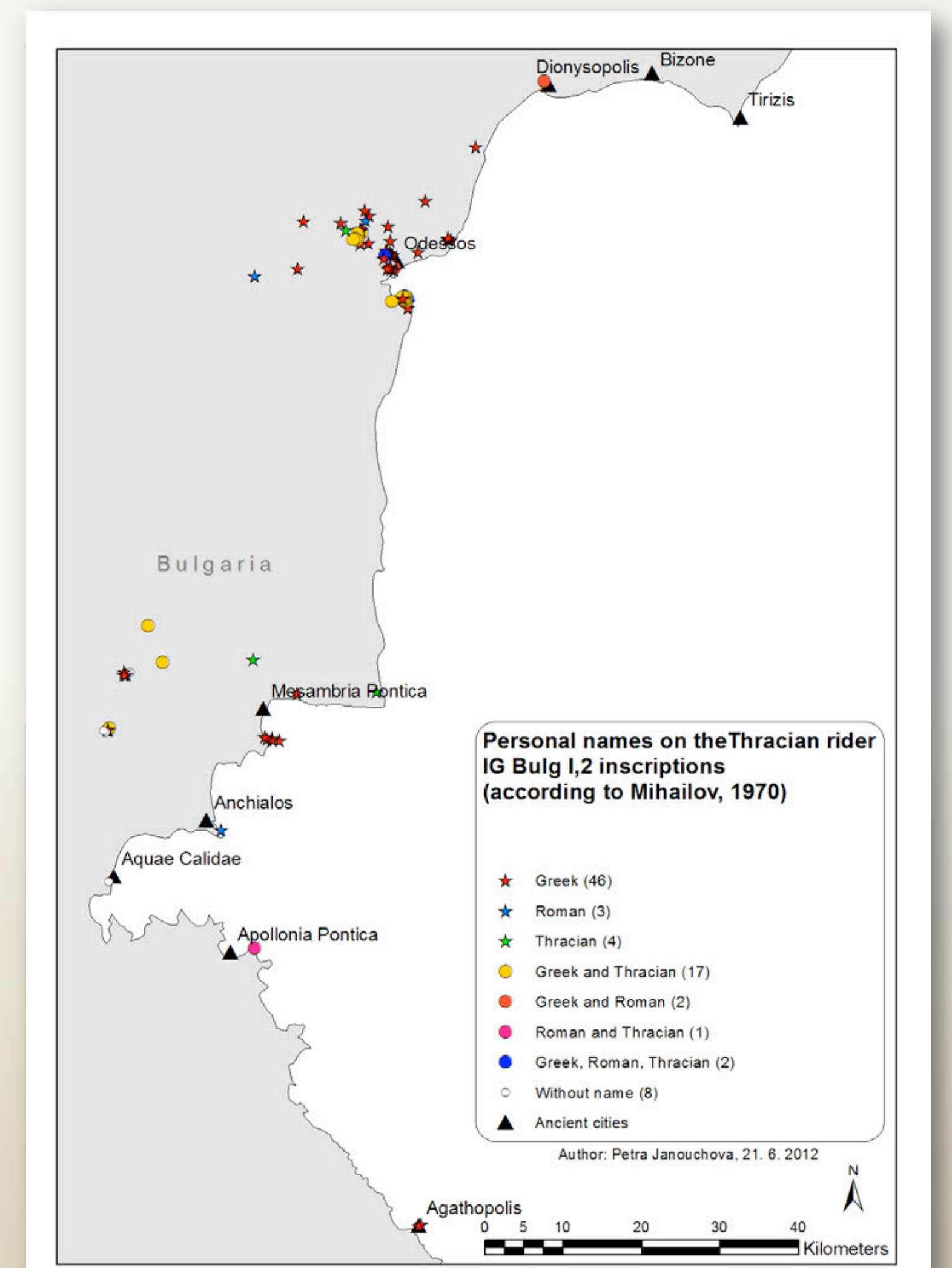


Figure 3: Ethnicity of personal names