

ΘΡΑΚΕΣ

α.12

Ἴπποι.

From what Homer tells us elsewhere, and from additional sources, we may conclude that of all the races that bred horses, and took just pride in them in the early centuries before Christ the Thracians were probably the most renowned.

Basil G. Tozer
: The Horse
in History.
London 1908

α.14-15.

The Odysseus and Diomedes are known to have mounted their Thracian horses, we have it on irrefutable evidence that at this period chariots were still generally used, so that most likely horses were ridden but seldom.

Indeed the Homeric poems provide us with probably as much authentic information as to the methods of managing and breeding horses that were in vogue in Greece, in Thrace and in Asia Minor in the very early years before Christ, as any half-dozen other volumes put together that purport to deal with the ways and customs of a period of which, when all is said, little enough is known.

Naturally the Thracians had in those days some of the best horses that could be procured, while those they drove in their war chariots are said to have been quite univalled.

That they possessed very many chariots is proved by Homer's realistic account of the slaying of Rhesus, the Thracian king, with a dozen or so of his bravest followers, and the episode in connection with that incident.

Indeed when Odysseus and Diomedes had captured Delon, the Trojan spy, the latter at once declared that there were also Thracians, new-comers, at the furthest point apart from the rest, and amongst them their king Rhesus, son of Eioneus, adding that his were "the

fastest horses that ever I beheld, and the greatest, whiter than snow, and for speed like the winds.

"His chariot too is fashioned well with gold and silver, and golden is his armour that he brought with him" marvellous, a wonder to behold?

Apparently most of the horses bred by the A

v. 23-24

In the early days of the Homeric or Iron Age the Celts of Noricum and the Danube, the still retaining chariots, had begun to ride on horseback, & - by the 3rd c. B.C. these Celtic tribes already possessed well-trained and - very formidable cavalry. As a natural result the demand for still better horses grew steadily, and soon it became common to import horses into the Upper Balkan, and countries beyond the Alps, from the Mediterranean - area.

Herodotus tells us that the Sigynnae, the only tribe north of the Danube that he mentions by name, had horses with shaggy hair five fingers long all over their bodies.

These horses were small and flat nosed and incapable of carrying - men, but when yoked under a chariot were very swift. Consequently the natives drove them largely in chariots.

v. 15

"Xanthos" signifies Dun, and a balios (sic) dapple; but then we have to remember that a xanthos, was used frequently to denote also the colour of gold. Achilles' steeds were mostly dapple-dun, and ~~be~~ they had more or less heavy manes.

They belonged most likely to the breed so popular among the Sigynnae of central Europe about the 5th c. B.C.

v. 50 - The particulars are difficult to obtain, there is reason to believe that the horse named after the Thracian river Strymon - owing to its having been bred in that vicinity - and that was immolated by Xerxes before his invasion of Greece, was as usual, Δάκτυλος, a white horse.

v. 63 - The mythical mares of King Diomed of Thrace, the tyrant whose grim humour - we are told, led him to feed his horses on the strangers who visited his kingdom, were alleged to be of the breed of Thessaly, a statement made indirectly in the description of Herodotus' conquest of the tyrant and his subsequent casting of the tyrant's quivering carcass to his own horses to be devoured.