

Theoroi and Initiates in Samothrace. The Epigraphical Evidence. By NORA M. DIMITROVA. Hesperia Supplement 37. Princeton, NJ: The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2008. Pp. 280. Paper, \$55.00. ISBN 978-0-876-61537-9.

The epigraphic habit at Samothrace from the 2nd century BCE to the 3rd century CE is distinguished by the inscription of sometimes lengthy lists of names of individuals (in Greek and Latin) who visited the island either seeking initiation in the cult of the Great Gods or as sacred ambassadors to an unspecified Samothracian festival, and sometimes as both. Catalogues of initiates are known in such quantity from nowhere else in the Greek world, but they make up nearly 75% of all known inscriptions from the city of Samothrace and its chora. In *Theoroi and Initiates in Samothrace*, Nora Dimitrova (henceforth D.) provides a new edition of and commentary on 171 inscriptions that mention either group (including more than 30 *in-edita*), together with a series of exegetical essays that situate this evidence in its historical and religious context.

The work falls into two parts; the first treats the *theoroi* (28 inscriptions), the second the initiates (143 inscriptions). Short essays book-end each section and provide critical background, including, discussion of the etymology of the word *theoros* and the function of *theoroi* in antiquity, and a general introduction to *myesis* and mystery cult. In Appendices I–II, D. collects 8 further inscriptions that bear on the two primary groups. Following the Appendices are a bibliography, a concordance of previously published inscriptions and of inscriptions in museums, an index of names (subdivided by language and office), and a geographic index.

The new editions are based when possible on autopsy, and D. has spent weeks of study not just at Samothrace, where the majority of the inscriptions are located, but also in Paris, Vienna, Berlin and Kavala, tracking down squeezes and *membra disiecta*. Couple this autopsy with the fact that D. is a careful, conservative (in the best sense of the word) editor and the results are transformative for the study of Samothracian history and religion. Roughly 500 names of *theoroi* and initiates are corrected from earlier publications, and some 100 new names are added. There are new or corrected provenances for several of the now more than 700 initiates and 250 *theoroi* recorded in the inscriptions.

D. offers new readings in nearly every inscription she has examined in person. A brief, representative selection: at no. 4, D. reads the relatively common Βακχύλλος for Friedrich's otherwise unattested

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Βά[ττ]αλος. There will be no ghost names here; at no. 12, a likely record of Kyzikene and Mylasan *theoroi* possibly dating to the early 2nd century BCE, Friedrich had read at lines 9–10 Κυζικηνῶν | [μη]νὸς Ποσειδεῶν[ος]. An initiate's name and father's name are expected, not a dating formula. D. now reads: [-----]ΝΟΣ Ποσειδέου, "...nos, son of Poseideos"; at no. 17, a record of *theoroi* from Stratonikeia and Sardis, possibly dating to the 1st century BCE, Triantaphyllos had read θ . τος at ii.4, which gives no sense. D. now reads ἀρχιθεωρός (relatively clear in the photograph). The Stratonikeian *theoroi* thus had a lead *theoros* (paralleled elsewhere in the corpus) who is recognized as such. One could go on.

Some exceptional texts are collected here. No. 29 is a 2nd–1st century BCE epitaph for Isidore, a mime from Attica who was initiated at Eleusis and also Samothrace, where he saw the "doubly sacred light of Kabiros" (l. 16: Καβίρου διχ' ἱερὸν φῶς). This is the first mention of Kabiros in a Samothracian document in relation to the cult of the Great Gods, as well as the first hint that seeing light was featured in the Samothracian Mysteries. Isidore's initiations invoke a lengthy, prosperous life and a position among the *euseboi* in the underworld—the first indication that the latter was a possible outcome of the Samothracian Mysteries. No. 46, a stele dated to ca. 40–45 CE, commemorates the initiation of Gaios Ioulios Raskos, probably the son of Rhoimetalkes II, and the inscription (?) offers clear evidence that Thracian royals participated in the cult. No. 66, a stele precisely dated to September 4, 100 BCE, records the initiation of (among others) Lucius Tullius, the uncle of Cicero, who was campaigning against Cilician pirates under the leadership of M. Antonius, grandfather of Mark Antony the triumvir. But the value of this collection goes beyond such extraordinary texts; it lies rather in what Robert called the *mise en série*, tracing the evolution of a fundamental institution over the course of centuries.

In the commentaries and essays, D. is sensitive throughout to archaeological context, problems of sanctuary topography, and the crucial distinction between *Fundort* and *Standort*. Many of the *theoroi* records were inscribed on wall blocks that do not fit the dimensions of any known building associated with the temenos of the Great Gods, and D. infers that these may have been published in the city, not the sanctuary. D. likewise suggests that the initiate catalogues will have been published outside the sanctuary and will thus have been visible to those who had not yet been initiated. Her attention to onomastics is laudable (this was a major failing of P. Fraser's 1960

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corpus of Samothracian inscriptions), [[1]] and the work is particularly strong on Thracian names. D. suggests that the *theoroi* of this corpus were attending the Samothracian Dionysia and that some took advantage of the opportunity to seek initiation; the point is persuasive and well-argued, but may be controversial. D. finds no evidence of a major, annual festival of the *Mysteria* in these inscriptions, but thinks it likely that there were multiple iterations from late spring to early autumn at which visitors might be initiated.

Criticisms are few and superficial. Occasionally, D.'s epigraphic commentary could have elucidated more fully what portions of dotted letters are visible on the stone, especially within a sequence of letters that does not construe (e.g., nos. 68, 128, 161; but cf. no. 133). And practically every inscription, even when letter forms are the only criterion for dating, can be supplied a more specific date than "Date?" (see, e.g., nos. 126–7); "post-Archaic" *vel sim.* would be an improvement. Finally, as is inevitable in publications of this sort, there are some minor inconsistencies of line number between text, apparatus and commentary, none of which will cause confusion.

The *Hesperia* Supplement monograph series has long been a premier venue for epigraphic publication, but D.'s edition represents a new height: text and commentary are laid out cleanly and legibly; there are 133 black and white photographs and drawings of the inscriptions; and it is possible in many cases to check D.'s text against an illustration without turning a page.

In sum, D. has presented what will be the standard corpus of Samothracian inscriptions concerning *theoroi* and initiates for this generation, as well as an invaluable resource for advanced students and scholars researching nearly any aspect of the religion and history of the island.

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[[1]] P.M. Fraser, *Samothrace 2.1: The Inscriptions on Stone*, New York 1960.