



**KADMOS, JASON, AND THE GREAT GODS OF
SAMOTHRACE: INITIATION AS MEDIATION IN A
NORTHERN AEGEAN CONTEXT¹**

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Samothrace abounds in traditions of heroes who come to the island for initiation into the mysteries of the great gods. Far more numerous than in other cults, these legendary figures crowd into the island's imagination of itself as the recipients of its greatest ritual treasure – divine protection for travel at sea. Their number seems, at the simplest level, a reflection of the cult's most singular promise for its initiates, and one naturally suited to the needs of a hero. That promise emerges naturally as well from the island's location and geology – set in characteristically rough seas, and possessing but one poor harbor, Samothrace nevertheless offered the highest beacon of the northern Aegean – Mt. Phengari, at 5,459 feet, visible from 100 miles away. This would be significant aid for navigators, who relied on easily visible landmarks.² The promise, and the heroes, may thus be easily accounted

¹ I offer warm thanks to Terry Papillon and Ann-Marie Knoblauch for their organization of the conference and the publication. A Margot Tytus Fellowship from the University of Cincinnati provided welcome time and resources for the further development of the argument.

² Morton 2001: 144 n. 4, 185-189; Horden and Purcell 2000: 442; Pliny *NH* 4.73; Lehmann 1998: 15-17.

for as a response to the cult's location and the tendencies of Greek heroic legend.

These hero initiates offer more intricate insight, however, into the nature of the cult and the gods than this simple explanation suggests. The prevailing critical approach to the legends identified elements of historical fact buried in the narrative – to read through the myths to the history hidden behind them. The myths are themselves, however, historical artifacts – cultural creations which impose pattern on the past. Such patterns, Appadurai has argued, constitute cultural commodities, which may be used to support groups and institutions.³ Both the historical elements the myths select, and the patterns into which they set them, are determined by the institutions they support. The myths thus reflect the structures, as well as the simple existence, of the institutions significant enough to trade in the market of cultural memory. The mysteries were Samothrace's single greatest commodity. Travelers flocked to the island for initiation for centuries after the 6th century BCE flourish of the town was long past. The patterns of these heroic legends reflect the particular needs of an initiatory ritual based on the type of the Greek mysteries located in the far northeastern reach of the Greek Aegean. The narrative dynamics of these heroes offer the background against which the elements that distinguish Samothrace from other cults appear not as a collection of hapaxes, but an articulate response to the historical demands of habitation and commerce in a region that was the boundaryland of Greek and non-Greek. These concerns reflect a pattern never irrelevant in Mediterranean history, and suggest a factor contributing to the cult's longevity beyond its history of wealthy patronage.

The heroes who guide this exploration are Kadmos and Jason. Both men have an intimate connection with the island's rites and gods: Kadmos figures in the liturgy itself, while Jason articulates its most famous promise. The pattern they share is the type of the protocolonial, a hero of first contact who must achieve mediation between his culture and the indigenous inhabitants of the country to which he travels. We will consider the heroes individually first, and then set their shared pattern against the background of Samothracian hapaxes, including the pre-Greek gods, the ritual installations on the site, its boundaryland location, and the language of the liturgy. We will finally consider how the ritual

³ Appadurai 1981.

dynamics particular to the Greek mysteries shape the functional relationship of these elements to each other.

KADMOS

Kadmos the Phoenician appears in the traditions of Samothrace as early as the fifth century BCE.⁴ Early sources mention only his marriage to Harmonia; the island's mysteries appear first in the fourth century, when Ephoros notes that Kadmos caught his first glimpse of his bride while she was being initiated, carried her off, and so established the custom of searching for the girl in the island's festivals. The hero has unusually strong ties to the rites. Beyond the commemoration of his marriage in the annual festival, he is cited as one of the gods of the cult, in the guise of Kadmilos, and he shares iconographic and narrative elements with Hermes, whose importance to the cult is attested in both textual and epigraphical sources.⁵ The hero also has an earlier connection with the mysteries on neighboring Lemnos, where Akusilaos, writing in the fifth century, identified Kadmilos as the father of the Kabeiroi, and a son of Hephaistos and the nymph Kabeiro.⁶ And on Imbros, an inscription from the 2nd or 3rd century CE (*IG XII 8 n. 74*) lists Kasmeilos along with Theoi Megaloi and five Titans; Hemberg has argued that this represents a much older tradition.⁷ Strabo identified these three islands as the places most famous for the celebration of the Kabeiroi (10.3.7) It is on Samothrace alone, however, that the rites rose to international prominence, the identity of the gods became contested, and Kadmos' visit summoned to provide an explanation.

These gods resist easy identification. Despite their patronage of one of the most prestigious cults in the ancient world, their character remains

⁴ Sources for Kadmos' legend prior to the end of the fifth century suggest that the story was already well-known by that time: Edwards 1979: 18-20; West 1985: 83; Schachter 1985; Tourraix 2000: 75-105.

⁵ Beekes 2004a; Cole 1984: 66-67; Hemberg 1950: 38-43, 92-96, 137, 165-66, 217-218, 316; Collini 1990: 257; Collart and Devambeiz 1931; Fraser 1960: p. 118-119, no. 63; Lehmann 1960: p. 121, no. 296; p. 124, no. 306a; Lehmann 1969: 232, no. 148; Astour 1967: 156; Vian 1963: 153-154.

⁶ Akusilaos *FGH* 2 no. 20; Hemberg 1950: 165-66 observes (n. 6) that Pherekydes, *FGH* I 406, may have considered Kadmilos the brother of the Kabeiroi and the nymphs.

⁷ Hemberg 1950: 293 disagrees with Pohlenz (Pohlenz, *Neue Jahrbueher fuer das classische Altertum* 37 (1916), 556), who argued for a late date.

obscure. The literary evidence is lacunous and fragmentary; Kabeiroi are daimones rather than Olympians, and their distinction from other divine groups, the Kouretes, Korybantes, Daktyloi and Telchines was not clear even for ancient authors.⁸ Indeed it is in connection with Samothrace that Strabo claims these groups are essentially identical, as he attempted to resolve why it was that some said the gods were Kouretes, others Korybantes, even Daktyloi or Telchines (10.3.7). None of the daimones, moreover, appear in inscriptions from the site itself. These refer only to Theoi Megaloi – a euphemism which has occasioned two very different hypotheses. Hemberg cited this lack of epigraphical evidence to claim that the gods of Samothrace were not Kabeiroi at all.⁹ Those working in Indo European linguistics, however, have seen another route through this term to unlock the identity of the gods. Kadmos' Phoenician origins, and his intimate connection with the rites, recommended reading Kabeiroi in terms of Semitic *kbr*, meaning 'great.' The term Theoi Megaloi, 'great gods,' thus became a Greek calque on a Semitic term – and the legend of Kadmos a signal of the derivation of the gods, and the cult, from the Levant.

The argument has proved remarkably resilient. First proposed by Scaliger in the 16th century, it continues to fuel debate.¹⁰ It appealed to the model of civilization moving *ex oriente*, and the sensibility for scientific proof that accompanied the emergence of historical linguistics. There are limits, however, to how well the model accords with the other ancient data on the Kabeiroi, the site and the mysteries. When ancient texts suggest an ethnicity for the Kabeiroi, they are Phrygian, Pelasgian, or born from the earth in the places of their celebration, e.g. at Thebes or

⁸ Blakely 2006: 17-52; Hemberg 1950: 303-311, 330-354.

⁹ Hemberg 1950: 74-81; he has been followed by Cole 1984: 1-4, inter alia. See Graham 2002: 49 for a critique of the argument. Epigraphical evidence from sites beyond Samothrace include the name of the Kabeiroi: from the sanctuary of the Samothracian gods at Delos, *IG XI 2 n. 144 A, 90f*, 314-166 BCE, Hemberg 1950: 142; Chapouthier 1935: 181-182 cites in addition a round offering table from 159/8, dedicated by a priest of the Great Gods and Dioskouroi and Kabeiroi; in 158/7 BCE, an Athenian held the priesthood of the Great Gods Dioskouroi Kabeiroi; in 101, a ship in honor of Mithridates was consecrated to the Great Gods of Samothrace Dioskouroi Kabeiroi. A late Hellenistic epitaph, possibly from Amphipolis, describes the deceased as an initiate who saw the doubly sacred light of Kabiros in Samothrace, and the pure rites of Demeter in Eleusis; see Karadima-Matsa and Dimitrova 2003.

¹⁰ Hemberg 1950: 318-325; Beekes 2004a; Goceva 2002; Collini 1990; Burkert 1985: 457 n. 23; Musti 2002, Mari 2002.

on Lemnos. This is the same pattern for the other daimones to whom they are equated— Kouretes, Korybantes, and Daktyloi.¹¹ None of these divinities have compelling parallels in Near Eastern tradition, or narratives of advent from the east. Herodotus compared the Kabeiroi iconographically to Pataiki or pygmies, and claimed to have entered their temple at Memphis (3.37). He stopped short, however, of suggesting that they came from Phoenicia, Africa or Egypt into the Greek world – and as a matter of authorial style, is not shy of claiming derivation directly when he wishes to affirm it.¹² The site at Samothrace, in addition, shows no material or linguistic signs of Phoenician presence: toponyms, theophoric names, temple architecture, or cult images.¹³ Excavations place the earliest ritual activity at the 7th century BCE, at which time the ceramic evidence points to the Thracian mainland rather than the Levant.¹⁴ Kadmos also behaves differently on Samothrace than he does where legends of his advent coincide with evidence of Phoenician activity. At those sites, his establishment of the cult is clearly articulated, and he may leave crew members to serve as priests for the gods.¹⁵ On Samothrace, however, he stumbles onto a ceremony already in progress; he becomes an initiate, but not a founder. Attempts to use the hero to connect the Samothracian site with the Theban Kabeirion run similarly aground. There is far less evidence for the hero's connection to the cult at Thebes than there is at Samothrace, and nothing at all to suggest a role as a bringer of the cult, despite abundant traditions that he established cults in the city of Thebes itself.¹⁶

¹¹ Blakely 2006: 17-52.

¹² Harrison 2000: 208-222.

¹³ Thasos, with a marked literary tradition of Phoenician founding activities, has yielded limited material corroboration: Bunnens 1979: 358-366; Morris 1992: 144-146; Edwards 1979: 183; Pouilloux 1954; Vian 1963: 66.

¹⁴ Graham 1982: 116-117; 2002: 248-249; Lehmann 1998: 15; Matsas, Karadima, and Koutsoumanis 1993; cf. Prinz 1978: 187-205.

¹⁵ Vian 1963: 134-157; Edwards 1979: 32, 80-82, for cults on Thasos, Rhodes, Thera, Seriphos, Melos, Crete and Miletos. These stories, Vian notes, may reflect Theban rather than Phoenician contact. Cf. Bunnens 1986.

¹⁶ Vian 1963: 134, 146 n. 5; Schachter 1981: 89; 1985: 150-151; Hemberg 1950: 129. Pausanias attributes the foundation of the Theban cult to Prometheus and his fellow Kabeiroi, who received the rites as a gift from Demeter; Methapos reformed the mysteries, and the clan of Pelarge seems to have been involved in their re-establishment after an exile. There are no legends of Kadmos' initiation at Thebes, nor evidence that any of his life's events figured in the liturgy. Only one mutilated inscription, KASMIN, suggests a role for him on-site (*JG* 7.4126;

Kadmos' ethnicity itself, in fact, is less consistent a portion of his semiotic package than an essentialist reading of his myth would suggest. The etymological arguments for a Levantine origin have long been challenged, and caution advanced regarding arguments which rely on etymological evidence to the exclusion of other categories.¹⁷ The category in which Kadmos participates, in the broader world of Greek mythology, is that of foreign-born culture heroes, such as Danaos and Pelops. While not foreign in archaic texts, these heroes became so by the fifth century, as authors responded to the nationalism, racism and eastern aggression of the late Archaic and Classical periods. Thus Kadmos acquires both Egyptian and Phoenician origins by the fifth century; West proposes that this could have begun in the sixth century, contemporary with the Hesiodic catalog and the activities of the Ionian logographers, seeking to forge a new relationship with the cultures to their east.¹⁸ These textual traditions are not matched, however, in the hero's iconography. Miller notes that even as the texts focus increasingly on Kadmos' foreign origin, fifth and fourth centuries vase painters depict the hero without any sign of Orientalized dress, attendants or equipment. The most popular episode from his life, particularly on South Italian and Sicilian vases, is his slaying of the Theban dragon, a triumph over autochthonous forces which suggests a mythological character most essentially that of a founding hero.¹⁹ His ethnicity may shift, in texts, with the rhetorical purposes of the various authors who make use of his narrative. Thus Pindar, possibly because of his Boiotian patriotism, makes no reference to Kadmos' foreign origins; Athenian dramatists, in contrast, found in those origins a means to impugn the character of the Thebans who

cf. IG 7.3698), along with dubious information from Tzetzes (schol.to Lycophon 162) referring to Kadmos as the Boiotian Hermes.

¹⁷ Challenges began as early as 1807; see Edwards 1979: 51-64 for an overview of the history; see Beekes 2004b for a recent objection. On the dangers of using etymological evidence alone, Schachter 1985, Puhvel 1987: 19-20.

¹⁸ Miller 2005: 68-69; Gomme 1913; West 1985: 144-154; Kuehr 2006: 91-106; Beekes 2004b; Vian 1963: 62-68; cf. Edwards 1979: 65-86.

¹⁹ Miller 2005: 83. The only depiction of Kadmos and the Spartoi comes from Sicily, and he plays a significant role in Etruscan art as well, both of which recommend his role as a founding hero for Greeks overseas. Krauskopf 1974: 51-52 suggests that his popularity in Etruscan art may reflect traditions of founding heroes in the West who were among his descendants.

Medized in the Persian wars, as Demand has noted.²⁰ The visual evidence signals the extent to which the legend's semantic potential, even after the fifth century, continued to extend beyond Levantine origins. And indeed, a Phoenician origin for Kadmos, or the Kabeiroi, has never been brought into relationship with the other factors in the Samothracian site and cult that make it distinctive among the Greek mysteries.

JASON

Among these distinct characteristics is the unusual prevalence of heroic initiates. Kadmos was but one of many; their numbers included Odysseus, Agamemnon, and other Trojan heroes, Herakles, and the earliest group of Greek heroes rumored to have set sail to foreign lands, Jason and the Argonauts. Jason, like Kadmos, has particularly close connections to the Samothracian cult. His name has possible etymological connections to one of the Samothracian gods, Iasion or Iason, who appears variously as one of Harmonia's brothers, the lover of Demeter, struck by lightning for insulting Demeter's image, or one of the Kabeiroi.²¹ Jason's initiation, along with his crew, was a well-known event. Apollonios of Rhodes, Valerius Flaccus and the Orphic *Argonautica* all suggest that the Argonauts were initiated on their way to Colchis, putting in at the island by Orpheus' request that they all learn the rites and so sail with greater safety.²² Diodorus Siculus seems to draw on two traditions: he lists (5.50) Jason and the Dioskouroi among the heroes

²⁰ Demand 1983: 53

²¹ Iasos, Dionysius of Halicarnassus 1.61.2-4; Iason, Conon *Narrationes* 21 = *FGH* 26 F 1, 21; Stephanus Byzantius s.v. 'Dardanos'; Theocritus 3.50-51 (though the scholiast claims this refers to Crete); Scholia Parisina to Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* 1.917. Iasion, Diodorus Siculus 5.47.1-48.3; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3.12.1; Scymnus *Periegesis* 676-95 (*GGM* I 222-23); Strabo 7 fr. 49 = *FGH* 548 F 2a; scholia Laurentiana to Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* 1.916 = *FGH* 546 F 1a; scholia Parisina to Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* 1.915-916; Diodorus Siculus 5.48.4-50.1; Arrian in Eustathius *in Odyseam e* 12 = *FGH* 156 F 107; Mnaseas in Scholia Laurentiana to Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* 1917 = *FGH* 546 F 1b. Hemberg 1950: 105 n. 7 notes that Iasion Iasos, Iasios and Iason are common names for heroes or daimones throughout the Aegean, and would have been at home on the islands of the Thracian sea; see also Weicker 1916; Usener 1948: 156.

²² Valerius Flaccus 2.431-42; Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 1.915-21; 467-72, ed. Dottin p 465-70 = Kern *Orphicorum Fragmenta Testimonium*.

who were initiated on the island, but elsewhere (4.43.1) writes that Orpheus was the only Argonaut to be initiated, and twice describes his success in calling on the Samothracian gods to deliver the men from danger on the sea (4.43.1-2, and 4.48.5-7). The Argonauts, in gratitude for this salvation, dedicated altars to the Samothracian gods in the land of King Byzas, and bowls at the Samothracian sanctuary itself on their way home (4.49.8). Cole suggests that some dedications in the sanctuary may have borne inscriptions claiming to be set up by the Argonauts.²³

The tradition of Argonauts on Samothrace does not enter the literary record until the Hellenistic period, even though the legend itself is known as early as Pherekydes.²⁴ An encounter between the Argonauts and the Lemnian Kabeiroi, however, appears in the fragments of Aeschylus' Lemnian trilogy (*TGF* fr. 95-97). These suggest a meeting between the Argonauts and a chorus, presumably of the Kabeiroi for whom the play was named; either the sailors or the chorus members are drunk. Lemnos is the site of Jason's marriage to Hypsipyle, a tradition established by the time of the *Iliad*; one of the plays in Aeschylus' trilogy bore that title. The drunken encounter in these fragments of the *Kabeiroi* may reflect a satiric parallel to Kadmos' sacred wedding on Samothrace. It reflects, at the least, the Athenian awareness of the daimones of the region, and their encounter with traveling heroes, by the end of the sixth century BCE.²⁵

Jason's voyage also bears the strong Samothracian imprint of having two of the gods of the cult travel with him – the Dioskouroi. The Dioskouroi are equated to the Kabeiroi in numerous literary sources, including Aristophanes, Pausanias, Philo of Byblos, Damascius, Polemon, and an Orphic hymn; they are also said to be the same as Korybantes and Kouretes.²⁶ They are part of the voyage of the *Argo*

²³ Cole 1984: 68-69, 129 n. 563. Cole notes that no archaeological evidence from Byzantion has supported Diodorus' claim for dedications there.

²⁴ Scherer 2006: 9-42 for all the ancient sources. For Agamemnon on a Samothracian relief, dated at the time of publication to the sixth century, see Lehmann 1943: 130-134 and 1951: 6, n. 17.

²⁵ Hunter 1989: 15 notes evidence that the Lemnian episode was the subject of a much earlier epic poem, based on Homeric references to the son of Jason and Hypsipyle in *Iliad* 7.468-9, 21.40-1, *Odyssey* 11.235-59, *Odyssey* 12.69-72; Strabo 1.2.38 suggested that Homer's Circe was modeled on the Argonautic Medea.

²⁶ Hemberg 1950: 215-16, 330, 334-335; Chapouthier 1931: 181-183; Burkert 1985: 212-213. Aristophanes *Pax* 276-87; cf. Euripides *Orestes* 1635-37; Pausanias 10.38.7; Philo in Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 1.10 (*FHG* III

already in the sixth century BCE, when they appear with the ship on the metopes of the Sicyonian building at Delphi.²⁷ They are also associated with safety in sea travel at an early date, in presocratic fragments that antedate the *Argonautica*. Xenophanes in the 6th century and Metrodoros in the 4th describe the electrical phenomenon that plays about the masts of ships, known today as St. Elmo's fire, as their manifestation.²⁸ Diodorus Siculus suggests that they acquired this divine power in the course of the voyage itself (4.43.1-2). Samothracian power to ensure safe passage is also in evidence by the fifth century BCE. Cicero writes that Diagoras of Melos, upon seeing the votives at Samothrace, remarked that there would have been many more had not so many perished at sea (*de Natura Deorum* 3.37); Diogenes Laertius ascribes the comment to Diogenes of Sinope (6.2.59).²⁹ Cicero's Diagoras would place this event in the fifth century. Safety at sea was a concern with many ritual expressions, ranging from magical gems and shipboard shrines to the establishment of sacred sites on headlands.³⁰ The shared participation of the heroes and the rites in this category reflects a more substantial resonance between them than the lateness of the testimonia suggests.

567); Damascius *Vita Isidori* 302; Polemon *FHG* II 137, fr. 76 a, Scholia to Euripides *Orestes* 1637; Orphic Hymn 38; Ampelius, *Liber memorialis* 2.3, Scholia to Germanicus Caesar *Aratea* 146, Varro *de Lingua Latina* 5.10.57-58.

²⁷ Hermay 1986: 586, no. 218.

²⁸ Xenophanes, Diehls *VS* 21 A 39; Metrodoros, *VS* 70 A 10; see also Homeric Hymn 33, Alcman Fr. 34, Euripides *Helen* 1495-1505, 1664-5; Jaisle 1907: 58-72.

²⁹ Hemberg 1950: 101 n. 3 for discussion, also Burkert 1993: 183 and 189 n. 32. Hemberg notes in addition that, given the natural concern for safe travel to which the island's location would give rise, it is difficult to imagine that this promise was ever not a part of the cult. The bulk of the evidence for this promise lies in the Hellenistic period – see Hemberg 100 n. 1, Lewis 1958: 102-111. Burkert 1993: 183 notes that Aristophanes Pax 277-78 confirms the association in that period: in this passage, Trygaeus expresses hope that the Samothracian initiates will pray for the failure of Hubbub's journey – when Hubbub returns empty-handed, Trygaeus praises the Dioskouroi for their intervention. Given the centrality of the Dioskouroi at Sparta, to which Hubbub traveled, other scholars hesitate to declare this a firm identification; Olson 1998: 128 considers that this makes “a nice match.”

³⁰ Wachsmuth 1967; Morton 2001: 192-206; Halleux and Schamp 1985: 182.

This is particularly so because of the mythical status of the *Argonautica* as the first long distance voyage.³¹ As such, it represents the advent of the maritime technology that shaped Greek economic, political and military history, and made the dangers of sea travel immediately relevant. First inventions of this sort have a prominent role in mystery initiations; the invention of agriculture at Eleusis is the most familiar example.³² A long scholarly tradition proposed that Samothrace celebrated metallurgy, perhaps evolving from the initiatory rituals of prehistoric metallurgical guilds.³³ This argument was based on the associations of the Kabeiroi with Hephaistos, and the appearance of various degrees of metal working skills among the daimones to whom the Kabeiroi are assimilated. Samothracian Kabeiroi, however, follow Hermes in their form, not Hephaistos as they do on Lemnos, and there is no evidence that the cult was of particular concern for smiths or miners, or evoked their craft as a key metaphor for the celebrants.³⁴ Sailing, on the other hand, seems a very likely first invention to be celebrated in the Samothracian cult. The clarity with which it figures in the cult's promises recommends it; so too does its significance, as a technology as fundamental and perennial in the ancient Mediterranean economy as agriculture. Unlike agriculture, it was deemed a hazardous occupation, and its dangers constituted a literary topos from at least the sixth century BCE onward.³⁵ Jason's status as the captain of the first ship ever made would suit the semantics of the cult, both providing a new technology and articulating the promise unique to the cult.

As Jason embodies the first voyage, he also embodies the first contact in the region beyond Samothrace, on whose route Lemnos and Imbros were key ports of call – the Black Sea. Local historians of the Black Sea, including Hecataeus of Miletus, Pherecydes, Hellanikos, Herodoros of Heraklea, Timee of Tauromenion, Timonax, and others, referred to the voyage to recite the foundations of their cities and their colonies; most of the South Pontic coast was populated by the mythical

³¹ Herter 1942: 244-249; Couchoud and Svoronos 1921; Apollonios of Rhodes *Argonautica* I.915-921.

³² Kleingunther 1976: 33-37.

³³ Rossignol 1863; Gernet and Boulanger 1932: 73-82; Burkert 1985: 281.

³⁴ Herodotus 2.51; Kern 1890.

³⁵ Romm 1996: 127; Philo of Byblos (*FHG* 3.567.11) credits the Kabeiroi with the invention of sailing.

wave of Greek Argonauts.³⁶ These traditions responded to a range of historical needs and circumstances. They provided a medium for Greeks to speculate on the reasons for colonization in the region; they also articulated the ties between various Greek colonies, as well as between the colonies and their mother cities.³⁷ Braund has traced the dynamics enabled by the tradition of the Dioskouroi as founders. Memorialized in the city names Dioscurias, Tyndaris, and Cygnus, the twin heroes aided trade with other colonies located in the Black Sea, and political relations as far afield as Sparta. The legends also reached across the cultural divide, helping the Greeks incorporate their new neighbors into their own narratological traditions, and providing great interest for local non-Greek aristocrats. Malkin has explored the mediating function of these narratives.³⁸ The myths serve not simply as an imposition of Greek culture, but arenas for dialog, integration and re-invention. These processes were ongoing, as responses to new developments demanded new resolutions between the Greeks and indigenes. The legends reveal a range of indigenous behaviors consonant with the variety of historically attested phenomena, which extend from cooperative alliance to perpetually re-erupting hostilities. Jason's encounters at a single site often reflect both extremes. At Kyzikos he finds both a pitched battle with hostile 50-armed autochthones and a hyperbolically ideal host in the local prince. And at Colchis, acquiring the object of his journey, he must battle the earth-born children of the dragon's teeth, aided by the supernatural skills of the indigenous princess Medea.

The children of the dragon's teeth figure as well in the myth of Kadmos who must, at Thebes, slay a dragon, sow its teeth, and fight the earthborn warriors who emerge. The episode reflects a pattern which is fundamental to both figures. Both Kadmos and Jason are heroes of first contact – Jason as the protocolonial voyager in the Black Sea, Kadmos as the founder at Boiotian Thebes. This aspect of their narratives most shaped the use of their legends in the Greek world, in numerous Black Sea foundation legends, and the visual tradition of Kadmos. It casts a more essential light on the dynamics of the Samothracian cult than do the heroes' specific connections to the liturgy and the promises of the rites. Samothrace is positioned, both geographically and mythologically, at the

³⁶ Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* I.1-4; Lordkipanidze and Lévêque 1996, *passim*; Braund 1996; Lordkipanidze 1996; Lévêque 1996; Tsetskhladze and De Angelis 1994; Delage 1930: 60-67; Grammenos and Petropoulos 2003.

³⁷ Strabo 1.2.39; Braund 1996; 2002; Grammenos and Petropoulos 2003.

³⁸ Malkin 2005.

boundary of the Greek and non-Greek worlds. Greek, Anatolian, and Thracian cultures converge on the island and its neighbors, Imbros and Lemnos; together with Samothrace, these are the sites Strabo identified as the three most important places for the celebration of these gods (10.3.7). The daimones of the rites embody the autochthonous, pre-Greek, non-Hellenic spirits of the place. This is the natural frame of action for heroes whose task it is to provide first contact with a new ethnicity. It is also, however, the framework for a ritual of initiation, sealed by secrecy. The mysteries, positioned in this setting, suggest a combination of ritual and symbol responsive to the need for mediation which enabled the Mediterranean economic network.

SAMOTHRACE AS A BOUNDARYLAND

Several factors signal Samothrace's geographical status as the far northeastern boundary of the Greek world. The island lies just 29 nautical miles south of the southern coast of Thrace; to the east, on a clear day, Troy is visible from the top of Mt. Phengari. Thracian settlers populated the island at least as early as the 9th century BCE: Iron age settlements on Vrythos and at Mandal Panagia show Thracian mainland styles, and Zerynthos and Mt. Saos reflect pre-Greek constructions and tribal names.³⁹ The Greek settlers arrived in the sixth century, and by the fifth had established settlements on the Thracian mainland opposite, in the coastal strip of the eastern part of the *peraia*. The settlements seem to have been vital for their survival: Antiphon notes the scanty resources of the island itself (*Oratio* 15, fr. 50), and the fertility of the mainland was advantageous for the settlers.⁴⁰ The settlements seem also to provide key advantages in terms of trading networks, positioning the Greeks at the intersection of maritime and overland routes.⁴¹ Appian wrote that the Thracians, fearful of pirates and unfamiliar with the sea, had shown little interest in the area, but the Greeks and Chalcideans made it a commercial success, providing the Thracians with welcomed access to maritime trade

³⁹ Graham 2002; Hemberg 1950: 120-126; Brixhe 2006: 1-2 notes that the pre-Greek tribes of Samothrace came from the Thracian mainland in the area which subsequently became the Samothracian *peraia*.

⁴⁰ Isaac 1986: 125-158; Funke 1999: 55-75. Part of the *peraia* was considered a gift to the Great Gods: see *IG XII* (8), p 40 nr. 102, McCredie 1968: 220-222.

⁴¹ Isaac 1986: 136-137; for discussion of the region as an interface in the Bronze Age, Privitera 2005, Mountjoy 1998.

(*BCE* IV 13, 102). Ships sailing along the coast would have, in the Greek settlements, nodes of access into the Odrussian trading routes of the interior. Archibald characterizes the Samothracian *peraia* as a ‘chain of fortlets’, east of which lay the estuary of the Hebros, the major access route for trade with interior Thrace. While an integrated regional study is needed, both the history and cults suggest fluid relations between incoming Greeks and indigenous Thracians. Casson referred confidently to the Samothracian merchants as “the pioneers of Odrussian trade”: the mainland data confirm the potential for commerce to play a formative role in their character and economies.⁴² Imbros and Lemnos are also characterized, in Greek history, as the loci on which the Greeks encountered indigenous cultures, and in so doing gained access to significant long distance routes.⁴³

It is not remarkable that non-Greek populations held the island before the Greeks arrived; the extent to which the Samothracian Greeks enrolled that fact in the historical memory of myth, and in the institutions of the mysteries, is. Strabo, focused on the classification of ritual behaviors among the various communities within the *oikumene*, describes the various daimones of the rites – Kouretes, Korybantēs, Daktyloi, Telchines or Kabeiroi – as essentially identical on the basis of their performances: armed, ecstatic dance in attendance on the Great Mother (10.3.7). In myth, for which he had little interest, a more essential commonality is their association with an earlier historical stratum. This association is articulated through assimilation to earlier generations of gods, an assertion of autochthony, and equation to ethnicities who owned territory prior to the arrival of the Greeks. Photios describes the Lemnian Kabeiroi as Titans; the Theoi Megaloi of Imbros are cited alongside Titans in a 2nd or 3rd century CE inscription from Imbros; and at Thebes, Pausanias includes Prometheus and his son among the Kabeiroi, and describes them as the first generation of inhabitants. A sherd from the Theban Kabeirion depicts the emergence of Pratolaos from the soil, facing a man and a woman named Mitos and Krateia, e.g. seed and force; the Kabeiros observes the scene, reclining in Dionysiac form on a sympotic couch. The mysteries on Lemnos celebrated “the beautiful child Kabeiros, born in unspeakable rites,” and recognized the daimones as chthonic creatures. A lyric fragment names

⁴² Archibald 1998: 146-147; Isaac 1986: 127; Casson 1926: 92-93.

⁴³ Beschi 2000; Papageorghiou 1997; Conze 1860: 77-121; Collini 1990: 272-273; Stroud 1998; Papageorghiou 1997.

Kabeiroi together with Kouretes, Korybantes and Daktyloi as examples of the first men, who emerged from the earth at the dawn of civilization; Hippolytus wrote that the mysteries celebrated the primal man, Adam.⁴⁴ Mythologically, this autochthony was often connected to the daimones' emergence from the ground at the birth of Zeus; the legendary-historical counterpart took the form of pre-Greek tribes who did battle with Greeks over the territory from which they were eventually expelled. Thus the Aetolian Kouretes and the Telchines on Rhodes offer striking repetition of the pattern of pre-Greek indigenes who fail to maintain ownership of their territory, and are either expelled to wander in search of new land, or remain as invidious, destructive forces to vex the next inhabitants.⁴⁵ Strabo chides his contemporaries for their inability to distinguish these historical ethnicities from the mythological daimones (10.3.7); while only the daimones dance around Zeus, however, both mortals and daimones are chronologically lodged in the generation prior to Greek arrivals.

If the daimones are chronologically pre-Greek, they are also ethnically non-Hellenic. They remain beyond the edge of the cultural boundary: Herodotus deemed the Kabeiroi Pelasgian, Pausanias and Aristides, Pergamene, and numerous authors, Phrygian. Nikolaos of Damaskos described the Kaberoi emerging from the Anatolian hinterland to aid the inhabitants of Assesos (*FHG* 3.388 fr. 54); Byzantine lexicographers derived their name from Mt. Kabiros in Phrygia.⁴⁶ Mnaseas offers names for the Samothracian gods which begin with the prefix Axio-; Hemberg notes that this is the name of a Thracian river god. Philo alone claims they are Levantine, enrolling them in the genealogy of Sydyk in Beirut (*FHG* III 569; Eusebius *PE* 1.10). The daimones to whom the Kabeiroi are equated, and who are also attested for the site, repeat this plethora of identities: Kouretes may be Phrygian, Arcadian, Cretan, or simply earth-born; Korybantes, attending on Kybele, come from Anatolia, but at the birth of Zeus, spring from

⁴⁴ Photios s.v. *Kabeiroi*; *IG* XII 8 n. 74, see Hemberg 1950: 293; Pausanias 9.25.6; Wolters and Bruns 1940: 96, taf. 5; Hippolytos *Refutatio Omnium Haeresium* 5.7.3, 5.8.9-10; *PMG* 985; Hemberg 1950: 292-294.

⁴⁵ Blakely 2006: 27, 353-373.

⁴⁶ Herodotus 2.51; Pausanias 1.4; Aristides *Panegyric* 2.469; for Phrygians, Scholia to Aristophanes *Pax* 177-178; Scholia to Apollonios of Rhodes 1.197; Nonnos 3.7., 3.194, 43.307-13, Scholia to Libanius *Oratio* 14.64; Etymologicum Gudianum, Etymologicum Magnum, and Zonaras lexicon s.v. *Kabeiroi*; Beekes 2004a.

whatever ground hosts the event.⁴⁷ Daktyloi originate from either Trojan or Cretan Ida – but in a manifestation of their need to come from elsewhere, they travel from Crete when they come to the Argonaut's aid on Mount Dindymene on the Black Sea, rather than from the much closer Ida of Troy (Ap. Rh. *Argonautica* I.1123-31).

In the daimones of the island, chronological and ethnographic boundaries thus coincide. Entrants into the sanctuary experienced reflections of this in the installations at the site, and the language of the liturgy itself. The sanctuary is unusually full of escharai, bothroi, and rocks used as ritual objects. Rock altars have been identified at several dates and loci. A gigantic stone, set into the Cyclopean wall which runs beneath the Arsinoeion, has a leveled off surface, and indications of a channel for pouring libations.⁴⁸ A second stone, located in the paved area immediately outside the Arsinoeion, is separated by a narrow channel from the tufa flooring which surrounded it. Lehmann proposed that this space allowed libations to be poured by a person standing on a proximal stone, which was leveled off for the purpose.⁴⁹ Facilities for libations into the earth have been identified in four of the sanctuary's structures, and often seem to incorporate a stone as the object of attention. A pit 2.5 meters deep, shaped like a tall beehive, occupied the central position in the south precinct of the Orthostate structure which preceded the Arsinoeion; its top was level with the floor of the structure.⁵⁰ A stone at the bottom seems the object of libations poured into the shaft; animal bones were found nearby. Lehmann dated this to the 7th century; McCredie corrected the date to the 4th. The other installations are clearly Hellenistic.⁵¹ A raised bothros, located in the far southeast corner of the Anaktorion, held a stone; a shaft located near the doorway of the Arsinoeion, contemporary with the 3rd century BCE date of the building, runs down to the bedrock. It yielded a considerable quantity of sheep bones, suggesting sacrificing and feasting nearby.⁵² A bothros, used for liquid libations, and an eschara, for burning, were located inside the open air Hall of Choral Dancers; both were originally constructed in the 7th century, and re-installed in the 4th. The eschara held a fire-resistant stone,

⁴⁷ Blakely 2006: 17-52.

⁴⁸ Lehmann 1950: 7-8; 1951: 2-3.

⁴⁹ Lehmann 1951:3-5.

⁵⁰ Lehmann 1950: 11-12.

⁵¹ Lehman 1950: 11-12; McCredie 1979: 28-32.

⁵² For Anaktorion, Lehmann 1940:334 and figure 11; for Arsinoeion, 1951: 9-10; Roux and Lehmann 1992:239-242.

whose signs of burning suggest its position there during the rites. An eschara has also been identified in the marble floor of the center of the Hieron.⁵³ Liquid libations are argued to have taken place in the apse. In the Roman period, a hole cut into the marble floor occupied the place customarily taken by a cult statue. The apse-shaped hole is dated to the Roman period, and positioned over a large piece of red porphyry which emerged from the bedrock; Lehmann proposed a receptacle for libations in the Hellenistic period as well.

These installations have clear chthonic force, possible Thracian analogies, and arguable suggestions of archaism. Archibald notes that Thracian ritual has a prominent role for pits, nameless gods and Hermes, whose combined force reinforces the linguistic evidence for an orientation to the cultures of the *peraia*.⁵⁴ A long scholarly tradition has associated aniconic cult objects with the most primitive stage of religious celebration. Donohue demonstrates that this evolutionary model is based exclusively on literary sources, and contradicts archaeological and iconographic evidence. The latter show aniconic and anthropomorphic divinities together, suggesting that the supposedly archaic form may be a deliberate choice rather than a survival from an earlier period. The authors who gave rise to the archaic theory, however, were themselves Greeks, antiquarians such as Callimachus, Plutarch and Pausanias, as well as the Christian authors, Clement and Themistius.⁵⁵ These authors reflected concepts that suited their interests, and were acceptable to their audience: the aniconic could be associated with the archaic, even if incorrectly. This sense of the past is appropriate for the pre-Greek character of the *daimones*, and takes architectural form on the site as well. The frieze of the fourth-century Propylon of the Temenos bears the earliest example of the archaistic style in Greek sculpture. Dancing maidens parade across its surface with the features, proportions and gait of figures appropriate to their date, but stylized folds in their garments,

⁵³ For Hall of Choral Dancers, see Lehmann and Spittle 1982: 17-19, 27, 44, 271 and plates LVI-LIX; for Hieron eschara, see K. Lehmann 1969: 30-31; Lehmann 1950: 5-6; 1951: 20-27; for apse, K. Lehmann 1969: 36-38. Lehmann notes that escharai of this type, with frames to support a metal grille, are well known, found at Lato, Perachora, Dreros, Lesbos, Thasos - all of them from the archaic age.

⁵⁴ Archibald 1999: 459.

⁵⁵ Donohue 1988: 121-150; 177-194; 219-231.

and swallow-tailed mantles, which allude to the remote past.⁵⁶ And on the western hill of the sanctuary, a retaining wall supporting Hellenistic room 10, built at the end of the 3rd century, includes a faux doorway built in a distinctly Mycenaean style. The door is a trilithon, with the relieving triangle characteristic of Mycenaean engineering; it leads nowhere, but evokes the distant Bronze Age past of the mainland Greeks.⁵⁷ The structure exemplifies the sanctuary's capacity to trade in the past as a commodity, even to the point of importing prehistoric forms otherwise unknown on the island.

The language of the rites constitutes the third index of archaising experience of the ritual, with manifestation in the Hellenistic period of the cult's floruit. Diodorus Siculus, writing in the first century BCE, wrote that the autochthonous inhabitants of the island used an ancient language which was peculiar to them, many words of which were preserved to his day in their rites. (5.47.14-16) Archaeological evidence for this language has been found in the form of one 5th/4th century inscription on stone, and over 70 ceramic inscriptions from the 6th to the 4th centuries. These inscriptions are all written in Greek letters, but incomprehensible as Greek; the ceramic graffiti are highly abbreviated, as are the Greek ceramic inscriptions as well.⁵⁸ The Greek ceramics, Lehmann noted, are characteristically inscribed simply with the name of the god to whom the object is dedicated; the non-Greek inscriptions are believed to do the same. Five of the 62 found have the whole word, DINTOLE, or DEN TO LE. 'Din' is known from proper and place-names in Thracian and Thracian-Phrygian, such as Mt. Dindymene, where the Argonauts celebrated the rites of the Great Goddess. Bonfante identified the language as Thracian; Brixhe affirms this conclusion, based on the analysis of a substantial corpus of ceramic graffiti from the temple of Apollo in Mesembria, ancient Zone, on the Samothracian *peraia*.⁵⁹ The sacred language of the rites thus seems to correspond to the

⁵⁶ Lehmann and Spittle 1982: 3-12; Hadzi 1982: 172-220; Lehmann 1951: 16-18.

⁵⁷ Lehmann 1998: 115; McCredie 1974; Alcock 1997: 21-22, 29. The site of Mikro Vouni has yielded evidence of contact with Minoan Crete: see Matsas 1991.

⁵⁸ Graham 2002: 250-255; Lehmann 1960: 29, 45-64; while abbreviations on ceramic inscriptions are common in the period, the proportion of extreme abbreviation is higher on Samothrace than known from other sites. For the stone inscription, see Fraser 1960 no. 64.

⁵⁹ Lehmann 1960: 45; Bonfante 1955; Brixhe 2006.

historical language of the pre-Greek ethnicity – as Diodorus suggested it did.

Diodorus described the use of the indigenous language some 3 centuries after the latest of these inscriptions was made. This extraordinarily long use has been explained as a survival from pre-Greek times, possibly an indication that the priesthoods of the sanctuary were held by ancient local families.⁶⁰ The dynamics of the ritual, however, encourage more intricate questions about the linguistic encounter which awaited the initiates. Analogous cases from other ritual settings offer several hypotheses, including an increase in secrecy, an articulation of political power, and a guarantee of divine cooperation. Lehmann compares the Samothracian case to the use of Egyptian in the cult of Isis at Rome, and notes that Pausanias observed an incomprehensible foreign tongue in sanctuary rituals at Hierocaesarea and Hypaepa in Lydia (Paus. 5.27.5-6). Lehmann suggested the languages would heighten the secrecy of the experience, and the sense of the sacred.⁶¹ Eteocretan inscriptions at Praisos on Crete offer a different investigative model, relevant to the notion that Samothracian elites controlled the priesthoods. Viviers proposes that the Eteocretan inscriptions were all of an official character, either political or religious. The language was a mechanism for supporting an ideology of autochthony that developed among the elites, rather than simply the preservation of an intact ethnic identity from the distant past.⁶² This hypothesis is difficult to investigate for Samothrace, given the lack of detailed information about the families and political events inside the town itself.

A third possibility comes from the world of magic. Secrecy played a significant role in magic, as in mystery cults; the magical papyri employ the imagery of mystery initiations, referring to magic as a mystery, the magicians as initiates or mystagogues, and to outsiders as uninitiated. Betz notes the magical elements in the mystery cults as well, in the form of fire rituals for Demophon and Triptolemos, oaths of secrecy, symbols,

⁶⁰ Lehmann 1960: 18-19; Graham 2002: 254.

⁶¹ Lehmann 1960: 18-19. See also Hatzfeld 1920: 85 no. 18, pp 84-87, an inscription from the sanctuary of Hekate at Lagina; the local Artemis, with her surname of Carian nature, is comparable to other Olympian deities and Hekate who appear in the area as the local adaptation to Hellenic type; the inscription refers to the Meter Thesmophoro, suggesting the capacity for a Greek festival with characteristics of the mysteries to become attached to the local gods.

⁶² Viviers 1996.

formulae, and quotations on the Orphic gold tablets.⁶³ The languages of the papyri themselves are a melange of genuine Greek, Egyptian and other contemporary languages, imitations of these invented by the magicians, and languages which lie beyond human. These include the speech of sacred animals, e.g. baboonic or falconic, and the language of the daimones themselves. The latter is an imagination and imitation of “non-human language that exists prior to human articulation and comprehension,” expressed in the secret names of the gods, the *voces magicae*, or ‘authentic names.’⁶⁴ The practitioner’s use of the language marks his intimacy with the divine, ensures his success, and is part of a larger pattern whereby the magical specialist impersonates the gods.⁶⁵ These ritual dynamics resonate with the Samothracian cult – with modifications – at several levels. First, if the graffiti on the sherds and the language described by Diodorus are understood as the language of the Samothracian gods, then the Thracian identification of those inscriptions marks the coincidence of divine and ethnographic categories. This is appropriate for a cult whose gods, as Strabo noted, were often confused with non-Greek ethnic groups. Second, participants in the cult would understand the speech if they were conversant with contemporary Thracian, as they may be if they were among those doing commerce in the region. The language of the gods, impermeable in the world of magic, was thus potentially transparent in the Samothracian cult. Third, the use of the divine language would signal on Samothrace, as in the magical papyri, an intimacy between the celebrant and the divine. In magic this intimacy takes the form of a divine epiphany, manifested as favors granted to an individual. The island suggests a very different dynamic – the assimilation of the initiate into the community of the gods. This responds in the first place to the fact that the gods of Samothrace are consistently understood as a group, even in those texts which provide individual names, in opposition to the individual Kabeiros on the Theban sherd, or the sacred child Kabeiro born in the Lemnian rites.⁶⁶ It is

⁶³ Betz 1990a: 219-229.

⁶⁴ Betz 1995: 164 cites I.226; IV.1812; XII.153, and refers to Hopfner 1921: para. 687.

⁶⁵ Betz 1995: 164 on the ensurance of success; for impersonation of the god, see examples in Bourghouts 178, including no.’s 2, 13, 19, 36, 91,98, 126, 145.

⁶⁶ See Karadima-Matsa – Dimitrova 2003: 340; Thebes, Hemberg 1950: 184-86; a single Kabeiros is known as well at Pergamon, Hemberg 1950: 176-78, Thessalonike, 1950: 205-210. The only indications of a single Kabeiros at Samothrace is the Hellenistic epitaph in Karadima-Matsa – Dimitrova, and an

resonant as well with the phenomenon of adoption into the divine which appears in widely distinct mystery cults. An Orphic tablet promises the bearer that he has become a god instead of a man; an initiate claims to have become the son of earth and starry heaven; an inscription from the sanctuary of Meter at Phaistos offers a miracle to those who guarantee their lineage, but divine hostility to those who force themselves into the race of the gods.⁶⁷ Visual evidence of masking in the context of mysteries, such as the donkey headed figures of Arcadian mysteries, further substantiate an altered identity.⁶⁸ Language, as Hall has demonstrated, is a powerful marker of ethnicity.⁶⁹ By participating in the language of the gods, the initiate becomes, if momentarily, one of their race – an adoption for which the mysteries have demonstrated ritual authority.

It is here that the function of the mysteries overlaps with the function of heroic myths in an evocative way. Malkin, Hall and others have noted the capacity of foundation myths to manipulate genealogy as well as ethnography, allowing new settlers to carve out identities for themselves and achieve mediation, if not assimilation, with other groups.⁷⁰ The heroic initiates of Samothrace suggest an alternative route to this kind of genealogical manipulation. The implicit narrative of Jason and Kadmos on the island is that of first encounters between prototypical new arrivals and the local indigenes. The mystery cult, as the frame of this encounter, offers a ritual means of achieving the mediation otherwise expressed through myths of descent from the heroes' line. While genealogy suited the needs of those settling in a given area, Samothracian initiation constituted an obtainable token of mediation – tied not to the city of one's origin but only to one's ability to travel to the rites. The blessings of initiation then travelled with the initiate—quite literally—in ensuring safe passage. The island's location, language, chthonic installations, archaic style, heroic initiates, traveling promises and flexible gods combine in a narrative which is responsive to a demonstrated need – the mediation between Greeks and non-Hellenes. The need was hardly limited to the northeastern Aegean, any more than were Samothrace's

early coin, whose image W. Schwabacher interpreted as a Kabeiros – see *ANSMN* 5, 1952, 49-51.

⁶⁷ Orphic tablets, Burkert 1985: 293-295; Burkert 1987: 20; 76-77; *IC* I xxiii 3; Ghidini 2000: 13-40.

⁶⁸ Jost 2003: 160; cf. Seaford 1981.

⁶⁹ Hall 1995.

⁷⁰ Hall 1997; Malkin 2001.

initiates. But the island drew on the images and narratives of its setting – and made them paradigmatic of patterns that defined the process of interactions in the Mediterranean network.

CONCLUSIONS

The Samothracian rites were simultaneously transcendent and pragmatic. At a symbolic level, heroes and travelers encountered, in the mysteries, the daimonic hypostases of the pre- and non-Greek people they would encounter in Thrace, Phrygia, and Thebes. The encounter took the form of an idealized mediation: a distinctly Greek ritual form – a mystery cult – in a sanctuary marked by installations at once chthonic, archaic, and evocative of Thracian ethnicity. The Thracian elements served the purpose of the rites – they were not simply an accident of place and survival. They were maintained, cultivated, even accentuated by the Greeks who employed legend, architecture, and mythic type to turn the past into a paradigm, ritually repeatable and accessible to all comers. The prehistoric past and the ethnographic other collapse in the ritual context; the rites insert the question of divinity into that juncture. The mystery religions had particular power to bridge the gap between human and divine, including the vocabulary of adoption and new identity. Samothracian initiation ensured not merely the passage between mortal and immortal realms, typical of Greek mysteries, but coordinated that movement with the passage across the ethnic boundary between the Greek and non-Hellenic worlds.⁷¹

The scholarly impulse to investigate Kadmos' ethnicity is acute in its recognition that ethnicity and origins were potent cultural tokens in the ancient Mediterranean, infused by networks of exchange in which cultural difference did not dissolve into a Hellenized whole. Kadmos, however, represents cultural categories beyond ethnicity. With Jason, he represents the type of the protocolonial, a hero of first contact. Combined with the geographical location, archaeological evidence, and ritual powers of the mysteries, the heroic narratives provide a pattern in which the autochthonous identity of the daimones was of greater semantic weight than the heroes' countries of origin. For both heroes and daimones, however, ethnicity is less valuable as historical memory than

⁷¹ Bremmer 1999: 82 notes that two recently published Orphic gold leaves, symbola, were described as “passports”: *SEG* xlv. 750.

as a pattern of interaction. Samothrace provided the ritual matrix through which the adventures that defined the protocolonial heroes, both Levantine and Thessalian, became paradigms for the interactions that defined economic and political life in periods long after the great age of colonization. The responsiveness of this symbolic package to these practical needs is one factor to be added to studies of the cult's long prosperity – which extended far beyond the island's own floruit, or its narrow northern Aegean corridor.

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