

II Mysteries at the Interface of Greece and Anatolia: Samothracian Gods, Kabeiroi and Korybantes

After Eleusis the most famous Mysteries in Greece were those of the island of Samothrace, though their clientele mostly came from the neighbouring areas.¹ We know even less of them than of Eleusis,² yet we can still make some progress over earlier discussions because new inscriptions have turned up, excavations have increasingly elucidated the buildings of the sanctuaries in which the initiations took place, and Indo-European linguists are gradually deciphering the languages that were spoken on the Thracian and Anatolian coasts. Comparison with the Eleusinian Mysteries reveals that the Samothracians had modelled their own Mystery rites to a significant extent on those of Eleusis. In fact, the term ‘Mysteries’ is Athenian, which makes it likely that the Samothracians took it over from Athens,³ perhaps following their membership in the Attic-Delian League.⁴ This insight makes it possible to structure our material by following the order of the rituals in Eleusis. On the other hand, the Greeks themselves, notably already Herodotus (2.51) and his contemporary Stesimbrotus of neighbouring Thasos (*FGrH* 107 F 20), associated the Samothracian Mysteries with those of the Kabeiroi, a set of divinities that were the focus of Mysteries on neighbouring islands and in Boeotian Thebes, so we also need to be aware of possible resemblances between the cult of Samothrace and those of the neighbouring islands. We will therefore first look at the Samothracian Mysteries (§ 1), then at those of the Kabeiroi (§ 2) and, finally, at a different type of Mysteries, those of the Korybantes (§ 3), who were often identified with the Samothracian Gods and the Kabeiroi and who, like them, also derived from the Eastern Aegean and Anatolia. In conclusion we will briefly compare these different types of Mysteries (§ 4).

1 See the geographical survey in S.G. Cole, *Theoi Megaloi: The Cult of the Great Gods at Samothrace* (Leiden, 1984) 43–44, 49–51, updated by I. Rutherford, *State Pilgrims and Sacred Observers in Ancient Greece: a Study of Theōriā and Theōroi* (Cambridge, 2013) 56–57, 282–286.

2 For a good collection of sources with Italian translation, see P. Scarpi, *Le religioni dei misteri*, 2 vols (Milan, 2002) 2.3–99.

3 As is plausibly argued by Fritz Graf in idem and S.I. Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife* (London and New York, 2013²) 238 note 20.

4 For Samothrace’s membership, see M.H. Hansen and T.H. Nielsen (eds), *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis* (Oxford, 2004) 770.

1 The Mysteries of Samothrace

Unlike Eleusis, we have very little early information about the Samothracian Mysteries, and most of our evidence derives from the Hellenistic and Roman periods.⁵ This lack of sources means that we must be cautious in reconstructing the ritual. At the same time, the traditional nature of Greek ritual and its logic can help us to propose a reconstruction in line with what we know about Greek religion in general. This has not been done in recent studies of the Samothracian Mysteries. So let us begin at the beginning, but keep in mind that we are mainly reconstructing the Hellenistic ritual, which is better known thanks to interest in the sanctuary from Macedonian and Ptolemaic kings, who even invited famous sculptors like Scopas to work on it.⁶

We have no explicit information about admission to the Mysteries, but it seems likely that the admission policy was as liberal in Samothrace as it was in Eleusis. From the inscriptions and buildings we can see that men as well as women, slaves and freedmen as well as high officials and royalty were admitted. In fact, Philip II of Macedonia and his later wife Olympias were said to have met

5 B. Hemberg, *Die Kabiren* (Uppsala, 1950) 104–118; Cole, *Theoi Megaloi*, 26–37; W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1985) 281–285 and ‘Concordia Discors: The Literary and the Archaeological Evidence on the Sanctuary of Samothrace’, in N. Marinatos and R. Hägg (eds), *Greek Sanctuaries. New Approaches* (London and New York, 1993) 178–191, reprinted in Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III* (Göttingen, 2006) 137–151; R. Turcan, ‘Initiation’, in *RAC* 18 (1998) 87–159 at 102–104; D. Musti, ‘Aspetti della religione dei Cabiri’, in S. Ribichini *et al.* (eds), *La questione delle influenze vicino-orientali sulla religione greca* (Rome, 2001) 141–154; M. Mari, ‘Gli studi sul santuario e i culti di Samotraccia: prospettive e problemi’, *ibid.*, 155–167; K. Clinton, ‘Stages of Initiation in the Eleusinian and Samothracian Mysteries’, in M.B. Cosmopoulos (ed.), *Greek Mysteries* (London and New York, 2003) 50–78; W. Burkert, ‘Initiation’, in *ThesCRA* 2 (2004) 91–124 at 101–103; N.M. Dimitrova, *Theoroi and Initiates in Samothrace: the epigraphical evidence* (Princeton, 2008) 244–249 (I quote all relevant inscriptions from her edition); V. Masciadri, *Eine Insel im Meer der Geschichten. Untersuchungen zu Mythen aus Lemnos* (Stuttgart, 2008) 344–351; H. Bowden, *Mystery Cults of the Ancient World* (Princeton and London, 2010) 49–67; S. Blakely, ‘Kadmos, Jason, and the Great Gods of Samothrace: initiation as mediation in a Northern Aegean context’, *Electronic Antiquity* 11.1 (2010) = <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ElAnt/V11N1/pdf/blakely.pdf> and ‘Toward an archaeology of secrecy: power, paradox, and the Great Gods of Samothrace’, in *Beyond Belief: The Archaeology of Religion and Ritual = Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropology Association* 21.1 (2011) 49–71; R.L. Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2 vols (Oxford, 2000–2013) 2.37–43, 56–58, 522f.

6 *SEG* 29.795; Cole, *Theoi Megaloi*, 20–25; B.D. Wescoat, ‘Athens and Macedonian Royalty on Samothrace: the Pentelic connection’, in O. Palagia and S. Tracy (eds), *The Macedonians in Athens 322–229 B.C.* (Oxford, 2003) 102–116; O. Palagia, ‘Hellenistic Art’, in R. Lane Fox (ed.), *Brill’s Companion to Ancient Macedon* (Leiden, 2011) 477–493 at 493; C. Marconi, ‘Skopas in Samothrace’, forthcoming.

during the initiation ceremony, and women initiates dedicated votive statuettes to commemorate their initiation.⁷ As the prestige of the Mysteries grew, more mythological heroes were said to have been initiated, and in due time all of the Argonauts, including Heracles, Jason, Kadmos, Orpheus and the Dioskouroi, became Samothracian initiates.⁸

Unlike Eleusis, there was no single occasion for initiation. Apparently, it was possible to become initiated all through the sailing season, from April to November. Admittedly, older literature claims the celebration of a large festival,⁹ but on rather shaky grounds. Nonetheless, it seems that some occasions were more important than others, as is implied by the report of a fair in connection with the Mysteries, which would be out of place for just one individual's initiation.¹⁰ This larger occasion was most likely in June. The number of initiations in September is nearly the same, as far as we can judge from the votives of the initiates, but an important point favours the earlier month. As several scholars have noted, we can calculate that the Argonauts in Apollonius' epic were also initiated in June, and Apollonius will surely have selected the most prestigious moment for the initiation of his prestigious heroes.¹¹ We cannot say if the Mysteries were celebrated in connection with other festivals or if they were the occasion of a special celebration. In the latter case, we may expect that the initiation was spread out over two days because there were two degrees of initiation (see below), but we are unable to say anything more precise at this point.

How did the initiation start? We do not hear of a procession, comparable to the Eleusinian one, from the city of Samothrace to the sanctuary of the Great Gods, but it can hardly be supposed that the start of the initiation was not dramatised in some way. The sanctuary was close to the city, and the prospective initiates entered the sanctuary from the east, as was the case in Eleusis (Ch. I.2)

7 Plut. *Alex.* 2.2 (Philip and Olympias), doubted by Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 17, but see W. Greenwalt, 'Philip II and Olympias on Samothrace: A Clue to Macedonian Politics during the 360s', in T. Howe and J. Reames (eds), *Macedonian Legacies* (Claremont, 2008) 79–106; Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 42; S. Dillon, 'Marble Votive Statuettes of Women from the Sanctuary of the Great Gods on Samothrace', in O. Palagia and B.D. Wescoat (eds), *Samothracian Connections* (Oxford and Oakville, 2010) 165–172.

8 Ap. Rhod. 1.915–918 and scholia *ad loc.*; Diod. Sic. 5.48.5, 49.6; Val. Flacc. 2.437–438; *Orph. Arg.* 466–70.

9 Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 108 (July?); Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 283 (no date given).

10 So, persuasively, Dimitrova, *Theoroi and Initiates*, 248–249, who compares Ephoros *FGrH* 70 F 120; *I. Samothrace* 170; Plut. *Luc.* 13.2 (fair).

11 C.M. Schroeder, '"To Keep Silent is a Small Virtue": Hellenistic Poetry and the Samothracian Mysteries', in M.A. Harder *et al.* (eds), *Gods and Religion in Hellenistic Poetry* (Leuven, 2012) 307–334 at 322–324.

through the impressive, though narrow (2 m), Propylon, which was dedicated in the early third century BC and spanned the deep brook that formed the boundary of the sanctuary. Clinton has suggested that they were veiled or blindfolded, but there is no evidence for this.¹² Within the sanctuary the initiates immediately came to a circular space about 9 meters in diameter, paved with flagstones and surrounded by a grandstand of five steps, which is nowadays called the Theatral Circle.¹³ This installation, which is set in a natural hollow on the slope of a hill, was clearly very important in the ritual, as it is one of the oldest permanent structures of the sanctuary, although the Sacred Way, the road through the sanctuary, bypassed it in Hellenistic times. The area must have made a strong impression on viewers as it was framed by at least 22 statues of which the bases have been found, though not the statues themselves or the inscriptions that would have identified them.¹⁴ The open location of the Circle makes it unsuitable for a secret ritual, refuting the recent suggestion that a supposed part of the initiation ritual, the so-called *thronôsis*, took place here.¹⁵ In fact, the *thronôsis* is not attested at all for the Samothracian Mysteries but belongs properly to those of the Korybantes (§ 3).

Before they started their initiation, prospective initiates had to listen to a proclamation comparable to the one in Eleusis (Ch. I.1) regarding the absence of bloodshed and other crimes, as is shown by an anecdote recorded by Livy (45.5.4) about the Macedonian king Perseus in 168 BC. In Roman times, one of the priests, who seem to have been called Sai,¹⁶ asked the initiates what the worst deed was that they had ever committed. The ethical nature of the question fits the growing interiorisation of purity that we already noted in Eleusis (Ch. I.1). This seems a better explanation than Burkert's suggestion that the question was intended 'to elicit complicity, thereby securing unbreakable solidarity', as we have no inkling why or with whom the visiting initiates might be in solidarity.¹⁷

This is one of the very few occasions where we hear of an officiating priest; on Samothrace there was no family of priests comparable to those in Eleusis.

¹² *Contra* Clinton, 'Stages of Initiation', 65f.

¹³ B.D. Wescoat, 'Coming and Going in the Sanctuary of the Great Gods, Samothrace', in Wescoat and R.G. Ousterhout (eds), *Architecture of the Sacred* (Cambridge, 2012) 66–113 at 68.

¹⁴ B. Wescoat, 'Recent Work on the Eastern Hill of the Sanctuary of the Great Gods, Samothrace', in C. Mattusch *et al.* (eds), *Proceedings of the XVI International Congress of Classical Archaeology* (Oxford, 2010) 79–83 and 'Coming and Going', 76f.

¹⁵ Thus, rightly, Wescoat, 'Coming and Going', 79, against Clinton, 'Stages of initiation', 62–65.

¹⁶ Kritolaos *FGrH* 823 F 1; Varro, fr. 206, cf. G. Wissowa, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur römischen Religions- und Stadtgeschichte* (Munich, 1904) 117; Servius on Verg. *Aen.* 2.324.

¹⁷ Plut. *Mor.* 217d, 229d, 236d, *contra* Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 283 and *Kleine Schriften III*, 144.

Diodorus Siculus (5.47.14–16), writing in the first century BC, noted that the language of the ‘natives’ was used in the cult even in his day, nearly five centuries after the Greeks had arrived on the island. From ceramic inscriptions from the sixth to the fourth centuries BC, recent research has demonstrated that a form of Thracian was indeed spoken on the island in addition to Greek.¹⁸ In other words, some (many?) families had continued to speak the old language of the Thracian inhabitants of the island, though perhaps mostly at home.¹⁹ Unfortunately, it is unclear where the initial part of the ritual took place, and several scholars have advanced the idea that it may have been in the Theatral Circle.²⁰ However, Clinton has persuasively argued that the proclamation had to take place outside the sanctuary:²¹ in the Theatral Circle the initiands would already have been well on their way, and it would have been an awkward place to be turned back. In addition to the proclamation, there will also have been the customary purifications, perhaps with water from the brook at the edge of the sanctuary,²² but our knowledge of the ‘waterworks’ of the sanctuary is tantalisingly fragmentary.²³

As sacrifices took place in Eleusis preceding the initiation, we might expect them in Samothrace too. Although there is a so-called Altar Court, adjacent to the Hieron, which had a monumental altar with ascending stairs,²⁴ the main site of sacrifice will have been the construction at the heart of the sanctuary that is nowadays called the Hall of Choral Dancers, formerly known as the Temenos.²⁵ It was a large enclosed building of Thasian marble, about 34 metres long and 20.7 metres wide, decorated with a frieze of two processions consist-

18 C. Brixhe, ‘Zone et Samothrace: Lueurs sur la langue thrace et nouveau chapitre de la grammaire comparée?’, *CRAI* 2006, 1–20.

19 For the use of different languages on one Greek island, see M. Egetmeyer, “‘Sprechen Sie Golgisch?’ Anmerkungen zu einer übersehenen Sprache”, in P. Carlier (ed.), *Études mycéniennes 2010* (Pisa and Rome, 2012) 427–434. We may also compare the ‘Etruscoid’ language on Lemnos, see most recently C. de Simone, ‘Le lingue etrusco-tirsenica (Lemno, Efestia [teatro]) e retica tra due documenti epigrafici chiave’, *ASAA* 88 (2010) 85–100; H. Eichner, ‘Neues zur Sprache der Stele von Lemnos (Erster Teil)’, *Journal of Language Relationship* 7 (2012) 9–3 and (‘Zweiter Teil’), *ibid.* 10 (2013) 1–42.

20 Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 26; Blakely, ‘Toward an archaeology of secrecy’, 57.

21 K. Clinton, quoted by Wescoat, ‘Coming and Going’, 100 n. 10.

22 Thus Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 110.

23 Bonna Wescoat *per email* 11–8–2013.

24 K. Lehmann and D. Spittle, *Samothrace: Excavations Conducted by the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University*, Vol. 4.2 *The Altar Court* (New York, 1964).

25 For the description and reconstruction, I follow C. Marconi, ‘*Choroi, Theōriai* and International Ambitions: The Hall of Choral Dancers and its Frieze’, in Palagia and Wescoat, *Samothracian Connections*, 106–135.

ing of about 900 (!) dancing maidens who met in the middle of the façade.²⁶ A porch gave access to two aisles separated by a wall, a construction that has parallels on Thasos and Kos.²⁷ Notable in this building is the absence of benches or bench supports and the narrowness of the cellae, which almost certainly bars us from seeing in it the Samothracian equivalent of the Eleusian Telesterion.²⁸

On the other hand, we do know that this Hall was used for animal sacrifices and libations. The early excavators found two *bothroi* in the middle of its west aisle, and the absence of ashes, bones and pottery suggests that it was used for receiving blood or libations. The prominence of a ram's head on Samothracian coins suggests the sacrifice of a ram, which was the preferred victim both for pre-civilised and underworld gods and in Mysteries, as earlier scholars have already noted, and excavations in the Rotunda of Arsinoe have brought to light ram's horns.²⁹ The discovery in the sanctuary of thousands of sherds of Samothracian conical bowls, which were eminently suited for libations but not for much else, suggests the importance of libations in the initiatory ritual. The prospective initiates presumably arrived with such a bowl or were handed one by the priests at the start of the ritual. The large number of these bowls found inside the sanctuary suggests that they were the preferred vessel for libations from the second half of the third century BC onwards.³⁰

After the preliminary rites, the initiates will have moved to the building in which the actual initiation took place. It is one of the vexing problems of the Samothracian Mysteries that we still cannot be certain which building this was, as we have more cult buildings than the cult actions seem to require, and we cannot exclude that the functions of the various buildings changed over time. Of all the available buildings – the Hall of Choral Dancers, the Hieron, the Anaktoron and the Rotunda of Arsinoe II – the Hieron is the best suited, as along its walls (the building

26 B. Kowalzig, 'Mapping out *Communitas*: Performances of Theōria in their Sacred and Political Context', in J. Elsner and I. Rutherford (eds), *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods* (Oxford, 2007) 41–72 suggests that 'chorality' was a central part of the Mysteries, but the frieze alone hardly supports that statement.

27 M.-C. Hellmann, *L'architecture grecque*, 2 vols (Paris, 2002–2006) 2.222–225.

28 Thus, persuasively, Marconi, 'Choroi, Theōriai and International Ambitions', 123, against Clinton, 'Stages of Initiation', 61, and *per email* 21–8–2013.

29 J. McCredie *et al.*, *Samothrace, Vol. 7, The Rotunda of Arsinoe, Part I: Text* (Princeton, 1992) 239–241, cf. W. Burkert, *Homo necans* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1983) 283, 311; F. Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit* (Berlin, 1974) 27 n. 28 and *Nordionische Kulte* (Rome, 1985) 282; add now *SEG* 40.146.247–248 (Athens, Persephone), 43.630 A 17 (Selinus, Z. Meilichios), 50.168 A II.44 (Eleusis, Kore).

30 Wescoat, 'Coming and Going', 94f.

is 40 metres long by 13 wide)³¹ we find two long rows of marble benches supported by sculpted lion's legs, just as there were benches in the Telesterion of the Kabeirion in Lemnos and places to sit in the Eleusinian Telesterion (Ch. I.2).³² The main cella ended in a curved apse at the end, which is a feature of geometric and archaic temple buildings, but is rarely found later. This particular architecture suggests that there was an archaic forerunner of the present building which, however, has not (yet?) been found. In the middle of the central space, somewhat closer to the entrance than to the apse, was an *eschara*, an offering pit, for sacrifices. If this was indeed the building used for the initiation, there must have been 'two masculine images of bronze before the doors', as we are told by Varro,³³ who visited Samothrace in 67 BC.³⁴ Given his profound interest in and the importance he attached to the Samothracian Mysteries,³⁵ we may safely assume that Varro was also initiated during his visit. The information about the images is confirmed by a Gnostic author, who is quoted by the heresiologist Hippolytus in his *Refutation of all Heresies*:

There stand two statues of naked men in the Anaktoron of the Samothracians, with both hands stretched up toward heaven and their *pudenda* turned up, just as the statue of Hermes at Kyllene. The aforesaid statues are images of the primal man and of the regenerated, spiritual man who is in every respect consubstantial with that man (5.8.9, tr. Burkert).

The language of the last sentence is Gnostic, but the source was clearly well informed about the Mysteries.

It was now night, and the prospective initiates would have entered the building with their torches or been provided with lamps,³⁶ but what did they do there? The secrecy of the Greeks in matters of Mysteries means that we have hardly any idea,³⁷

31 For the building, see most recently K. Lehmann, *Samothrace: A Guide to the Excavations and the Museum*, rev. J.R. McCredie (Thessalonike, 1998⁶) 78–86; O. Palagia *et al.*, 'New investigations on the pedimental sculptures of the "Hieron" of Samothrace: a preliminary report', in Y. Maniatis (ed.), *ASMOSIA VII, The Study of Marble and Other Stones in Antiquity = BCH Suppl.* 51 (2009) 113–112; A. Sowder, 'A New Ceiling for the Hieron in the Sanctuary of the Great Gods on Samothrace', in Palagia and Wescoat, *Samothracian Connections*, 138–151.

32 As is stressed by Marconi, '*Choroi, Theōriai* and International Ambitions', 123.

33 Varro, *LL* 5.58, identified as Castor and Pollux by Servius on Verg. *Aen.* 3.12, to be read with Horsfall *ad loc.*

34 Varro, *Rust.* 2 *praef.* 6.

35 See P. Van Nuffelen, 'Varro's *Divine Antiquities*: Roman Religion as an Image of Truth', *CPh* 105 (2010) 162–188 at 174–182 and his *Rethinking the Gods: Philosophical Readings of Religion in the Post-Hellenistic Period* (Cambridge, 2011) 32–37.

36 Night and torches are mentioned by Nonnos, *D.* 3.43–51, 4.184–185, 13.402, 14.18, 29.213–214.

37 For the secrecy of the Samothracian rites, see Hdt. 2.51; Ap. Rhod. 1.920–921; Diod. Sic. 3.55.9, 5.48.4 and 49.5; Ov. *AA.* 2.601–604; Val. Flacc. 2.432–433, 439–440; Tert. *Apol.* 7.6; *Orph. Arg.* 467.

but it seems likely that, as in Eleusis, the initiates left the building for dances, which are explicitly mentioned.³⁸ These dances seem to have been quite ecstatic in character, as Diodorus Siculus (5.49.1) mentions cymbals and tambourines as a gift for Kadmos and Harmonia because of their wedding on Samothrace.³⁹ The regular identification of the Samothracian gods with the Korybantes (§ 3), which we already find in the fifth-century Athenian Pherecydes (F 48 Fowler), points in the same direction.⁴⁰

One may perhaps wonder if these dances were also connected with the search for Harmonia, another part of the Mysteries. The search must have been reasonably ancient, as it is already mentioned by the fourth-century historian Ephoros, who relates that ‘even now in Samothrace they search for her at the festivals (*heortais*)’, most likely the Mysteries.⁴¹ In the same fragment Ephoros tells us that Kadmos kidnapped Harmonia when sailing past Samothrace. It seems reasonable to suppose that the two events went together, and that the story of her kidnapping was the mythical explanation for the search. Most likely, the search is a calque on the search for Persephone in Eleusis. We do not know when Harmonia was first incorporated into the myths of Samothrace, but the mythographer Hellanicus (*FGrH* 4 F 23 = F 23 Fowler) already connected Harmonia, Kadmos and Samothrace, which points to somewhere in the later fifth century. Having returned from their dances and search, there may have been more happening, but it might equally be possible that, as in Eleusis, the first degree of initiation ended with the finding of Harmonia.

At the end of the initiation the initiates received a purple fillet. A scholiast on Apollonius Rhodius tells us:

They say Odysseus, being an initiate and using Leukothea’s veil in place of a fillet, was saved from the storm at sea by placing the veil below his abdomen. For the initiates bind fillets below their abdomens.⁴²

This notice is most interesting, as it confirms the primary goal of the Samothracian Mysteries: saving sailors from the perils of the sea, a goal that clearly

38 Kritolaos *FGrH* 823 F 1; Statius, *Ach.* 1.830.

39 L. Robert, *Opera minora selecta*, 7 vols (Amsterdam, 1969–1990) 6.598–599 notes that Diodorus was well acquainted with local poetry, and also restores an inscription mentioning a poem by Herodes of Priene about the wedding of Kadmos and Harmonia in a Samothracian context.

40 Pherecydes *FGrH* 3 F 48 = F 48 Fowler, cf. Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 304 with a full list of identifications of the Kabeiroi with the Korybantes.

41 Ephoros *FGrH* 70 F 120 (supplemented now by schol. Hes. *Th.* 937 p. 117.7 Di Gregorio).

42 Schol. Ap. Rhod. 1.917–918, tr. Burkert,

distinguished Samothrace from Eleusis. Over time, the story of Odysseus had evidently become associated with the Mysteries, and the purple fillet will have served as a kind of talisman. We already hear about the association of Samothrace with the sea in the fifth century, as the famous ‘atheist’ Diagoras, when confronted with the many votive tablets in Samothrace from grateful sailors, responded: ‘There would be many more of these if those who were not saved had made declarations’.⁴³ It is this connection with the sea that must have enabled the association of the Dioskouroi as saviours at sea with Samothrace.⁴⁴ The connection with the sea also inspired a Hellenistic grandee to construct a building in the sanctuary, in which he dedicated a real warship to the Samothracian Gods.⁴⁵

With their fillets around their hips the initiates will have left the sanctuary in a happy mood. Yet before they departed, they probably concluded their initiation with a good meal, as a number of dining rooms have been excavated on the same level as the initiation halls, and banqueting is also mentioned by Nonnos.⁴⁶ As there was no more need for further libations, they left their libation bowls behind when re-entering the Theatral Circle, as attested by the thousands of sherds of them found on the nearby Eastern Hill.⁴⁷ Some initiates may have discarded other items from the initiation too, as several lamps were also found on or near the floor of the Theatral Circle.⁴⁸

Yet the initiates did not depart without lasting souvenirs. In addition to the fillet, they also received a magnetic, iron ring, several of which have been found in the sanctuary. Pliny reports that iron rings coated with gold were called ‘Samothracian rings’, so people seem to have considered their rings valuable souvenirs, and well worth keeping. Some scholars have even connected the ring with the supposed power of a goddess, but there is no evidence for this suggestion.⁴⁹ The

⁴³ Diog. Laert. 6.59, tr. Burkert; see also Cic. *ND* 3.89; note also for salvation at sea, Pease on Cic. *ND* 3.89; add Ar. *Pax* 277–278; Alexis fr. 183; *PCG*, *Adesp.* 1063.15–16; Theophr. *Char.* 25.2 (probably); Athenakon *FGrH* 546 F 1; Schol. Ap. Rhod. 1.917–918; Robert, *Opera minora selecta*, 7.716–720; Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III*, 143.

⁴⁴ Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 225–239; Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 3, 63, 66, 74, 102; perhaps *PCG*, *Adesp.* 1146.21–22. Saviours at sea: Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 213.

⁴⁵ B. Wescoat, ‘Buildings for votive ships on Delos and Samothrace’, in M. Yeroulanou and M. Stamatopoulou (eds), *Architecture and Archaeology in the Cyclades* (Oxford, 2005) 153–172.

⁴⁶ Nonnos, *D.* 3.169–171, cf. Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 36–37, who not implausibly suggests that there was fasting during the initiation which was broken after the conclusion of the Mysteries.

⁴⁷ Wescoat, ‘Coming and Going’, 94f.

⁴⁸ J. McCredie, ‘Samothrace: Preliminary Report on the Campaigns of 1965–1967’, *Hesperia* 37 (1968) 200–234 at 232–233, pl. 69e.

⁴⁹ Lucr. 6.1044; Pliny, *NH* 33.23; Isid. *Or.* 19.32.5; *Et. Magnum*, s.v. *Magnêtis*; Zenobius 4.22; P.W. Lehmann and D. Spittle, *Samothrace V* (Princeton, 1982) 403–404; Wescoat, ‘Coming and

gift of the ring was not the final act of the initiation: many initiates set up a record of their initiation in the Stoa of the sanctuary, on the road from the sanctuary to the ancient city or in the city itself, as lasting monuments of their piety towards the gods and testimonies to their desire to be remembered by mortals.⁵⁰

Once their religious obligations had been fulfilled, it was time for leisure. In his *Life of Lucullus* (13.2), Plutarch reports that Voconius, one of Lucullus' naval commanders in the war against Mithradates, lingered on Samothrace, being initiated and celebrating a *panegyris*, and Louis Robert made the attractive suggestion that the pseudo-eponymous *agoranomos* of the Samothracian inscriptions was also responsible for the *panegyris* of the Mysteries.⁵¹ We already saw that the Eleusinian Mysteries were concluded with such a fair (Ch. I.4); the same was clearly the case on Samothrace.

Given the evident resemblance between the Samothracian and Eleusinian Mysteries, we may expect that the Samothracian *epopteia* was also modelled on the Eleusinian one. Although the Samothracian inscriptions give little information, what we know suggests that the *epopteia* followed some time after the first initiation.⁵² This time lapse probably explains why far fewer inscriptions mention *epoptai* (initiates of the highest degree) than *mystai*.⁵³ Once again we have no idea in which building this ritual took place, but in 1938 the excavators found a bilingual Latin/Greek inscription near the entrance to the so-called Anaktoron: a sign of the sanctuary's attraction to Roman visitors already in the last two centuries BC.⁵⁴ It states in Latin: 'those who have not accepted the rituals of the gods do not enter'. Earlier scholars thought that it had been discovered *in situ*, but renewed study of its discovery has shown that this is not the case. Its findspot therefore does not help us to locate the site of the *epopteia*. However, in 1951 excavators found a similar Greek, first-century BC, inscription in the vicinity of the Hieron stating: 'The uninitiated is forbidden to enter the temple (or cella)', which actually seems to have been part of the walls of that building.⁵⁵ Contrary to a suggestion by Kevin Clinton, these prohibitions, or so-called sacred

Going', 96 (pictures). Connection with goddess: Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 30; Blakely, 'Toward an archaeology of secrecy', 62.

50 For the locations, see Dimitrova, *Theoroi and Initiates*, 80–82.

51 Robert, *Opera minora selecta*, 6.607–608, cf. Dimitrova, *Theoroi and Initiates*, 26.

52 Dimitrova, *Theoroi and Initiates*, 246f.

53 As noted by Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 30.

54 For Romans on Samothrace, see Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 87–103.

55 *I. Samothrace* 168–169, cf. C. Marconi, 'Entering the Sanctuary of the Great Gods at Samothrace', communication to the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) Annual Meeting, Seattle 2013.

laws,⁵⁶ would be out of place at the entrance to the sanctuary, as there is no sign that the sanctuary was used only for the Mysteries or that all visitors had already been initiated; its function as asylum, the presence of a theatre and the celebration of the local Dionysia in the sanctuary speak against such an assumption.⁵⁷ We may therefore assume that these inscriptions stood near a building where the initiation into the second degree, the *epopteia*, took place.

From the available buildings, the Anaktoron, already mentioned, seems a likely candidate, although we should note that its name is modern, not ancient. As we saw, Varro also mentioned an Anaktoron, but in his case he clearly meant the Samothracian Telesterion, the location of which, as we also saw, has not yet been established with any certainty. The Anaktoron is of Roman imperial date, but it was preceded by at least two buildings of similar design, more or less on the same spot, which reminds us that the Eleusinian Anaktoron had remained in the same place despite successive reconstructions and innovations (Ch. I.2). Given that benches lined the eastern and northern walls of its main chamber, the *epopteia* could well have taken place there. However, nothing is certain, and new finds or new insights may force us to rethink this idea in the future.⁵⁸

We know very little about the ritual of the *epopteia*, but we may safely assume the usual preliminary lustration rites and sacrifices. It is also clear that a sacred tale was told during the Samothracian Mysteries and, given its scabrous character, I am inclined to place it during the *epopteia*, as scandalous things were also shown and told during the Eleusinian *epopteia* (Ch. 1.3). Regarding this sacred tale we even have two notices, one positive and one negative. Let us start with the positive information. In connection with the derivation of the names of the Greek gods from the Egyptians, Herodotus mentions that the Greeks derived their ithyphallic statues of Hermes from the Pelasgians, from whom the Athenians took over the custom and who, in turn, were followed by the other Greeks. He continues:

56 For the sacred laws, see R. Parker, 'What Are Sacred Laws?', in E.M. Harris and L. Rubinstein (eds), *The Law and the Courts in Ancient Greece* (London, 2004) 57–70; S. Georgoudi, 'Comment régler les *theia pragmata*. Pour une étude de ce qu'on appelle "lois sacrées"', *Mètis* NS 8 (2010) 39–54; J.-M. Carbon and V. Pirenne-Delforge, 'Beyond Greek "Sacred Laws"', *Kernos* 25 (2012) 163–182.

57 Asylum: Diod. Sic. 3.55.9; K.J. Rigsby, *Asylia: territorial inviolability in the Hellenistic world* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1996) 397f. Theatre and Dionysia: I. Rutherford, 'Theoria and Theatre at Samothrace: The *Dardanos* by Dymas of Iasos', in P. Wilson (ed.), *The Greek Theatre and Festivals* (Oxford, 2007) 279–293; Dimitrova, *Theoroi and Initiates*, 72–74.

58 For the building, see Lehmann, *Samothrace: A Guide*, 56–61.

Anyone who has been initiated into the Mysteries of the Kabeiroi, which the Samothracians celebrate (who got them from the Pelasgians), will know what I mean. (...) The Pelasgians had a sacred tale about this, as is made clear in the Samothracian Mysteries.⁵⁹

On the other hand, the learned, second-century BC historian Demetrios of Skepsis explicitly notes that no *mystikos logos* was told about the Kabeiroi on Samothrace. In other words, there was no mention of Kabeiroi in the sacred tale of the Samothracian initiation.⁶⁰ Can we say anything positive about the contents of this tale? Yes, we can. Burkert has noted that a First Mercurius (Hermes), son of Caelum (Ouranos) and Dies (Hemera) appears in the list of eponyms offered by the sceptic in Cicero's *De natura deorum*, 'whose nature was aroused in a rather obscene way, tradition says, because he was moved by the sight of Proserpina (Persephone)'.⁶¹ As Varro (*LL* 5.58) mentions that Caelum/Ouranos was one of the Great Gods of Samothrace, it seems that there was a story during the initiation about seeing Persephone and sexual arousal, as Burkert persuasively suggests. His suggestion seems to fit well with what Herodotus tells us. The full context of the passage quoted above is as follows:

Anyone who has been initiated into the Mysteries of the Kabeiroi, which the Samothracians celebrate (who got them from the Pelasgians), will know what I mean, since the Pelasgians, from whom the Samothracians took their rites, and who cohabited with the Athenians, previously lived in Samothrace. The Athenians, then, were the first Greeks to make ithyphallic Herms, and they learned the practice from the Pelasgians. The Pelasgians had a sacred tale (*hiros logos*) about this, as is made clear in the Samothracian Mysteries (2.51, tr. Fowler).

Apparently, the sacred tale related the aetiology of the ithyphallic Herms of the Anaktoron,⁶² and the somewhat peculiar nature of the subject may be responsible for assigning it a Pelasgian, non-Greek origin.⁶³ As Burkert observes, the erection is also referred to in Callimachus' ninth *Iambus*, where a visitor to a palaestra asks the statue of the ithyphallic god Hermes about his status. The god answers that 'he is, from farther back, a Tyrsenian (Etruscan), and in accordance with a mystic tale he has got his erection' (fr. 199 Pfeiffer = *Dieg.* VIII.37–39, tr. Burkert). Burkert

⁵⁹ Hdt. 2.51, tr. Fowler, cf. Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 74–78; Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III*, 140f.

⁶⁰ Demetrios *apud* Strabo 10.3.20 = Demetrios, fr. 61 = Demetrios *FGrH* 2013 F 61.

⁶¹ Cic. *ND* 3.56, see also Arnob. 4.14; Schol. Dan. on Servius on *Aen.* 1.297, cf. Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III*, 141f.

⁶² This is also noted by C. Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie bei Platon, Philon und Klemens von Alexandrien* (Berlin, 1987) 11.

⁶³ For the Pelasgians and their place in Greek mythology, see Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.84–96.

argues that Callimachus took the detail from Herodotus, but that seems unduly sceptical. Callimachus was very learned and also knew the name of the Samothracian god Kasmilos (see below).⁶⁴ There is no reason, then, not to accept his text as an important confirmation that a myth about the erection of Hermes was part of the Samothracian *epopteia*. Another scandalous story must have been the rape by Iasion of Demeter on Samothrace, rationalised by Hellanicus as an insult against her statue and by Conon against her *phasma*,⁶⁵ though the latter story was probably not very old and suggests, once again, Athenian influence.

The recent publication of an inscription has now also informed us about the *gran finale* of the *epopteia*. We are told of a certain Isidorus, an Athenian of probably the second or first century BC, that:

as an initiate (*mystês*), great-hearted, he saw the doubly sacred light of Kabiros (= the light of the two Kabeiros) in Samothrace and the pure rites of Deo (= Demeter) in Eleusis.⁶⁶

In other words, the climax of the rites in Samothrace was the showing of a great light, just as was the case in Eleusis (Ch. I.3). After the initiation, the *epoptai* proudly called themselves '*mystai* and pious *epoptai*' as the inscriptions show. The piety is probably a claim made by the Samothracian priesthood, as Diodorus (5.49.6) tells us that those 'who have taken part in the Mysteries become both more pious and more just – and both in every respect – than they were before'. Once again, a banquet will have concluded the initiation.

It is highly interesting that Isidorus calls the gods of Samothrace 'Kabeiros', just like Herodotus and Stesimbrotus (above). Evidently, non-Samothracians identified the gods with the Kabeiros. But is that right and what does it mean? Until now I have postponed discussion of the nature of the Samothracian gods, as their identification is riddled with problems, but we cannot pass over this question. We can hardly solve it, but it is perhaps possible to shed a little more light on the problem. We should start with the observation that the Samothracian themselves called the gods of their Mysteries 'the Gods' or 'Great Gods'.⁶⁷ Divine anonymity is noteworthy but

⁶⁴ A. Kerkhecker, *Callimachus' Book of Iambi* (Oxford, 1999) 204–207; E. Livrea, 'Il Giambo IX di Callimaco', *ZPE* 179 (2011) 84–88.

⁶⁵ For Iasion, Burkert compares *Od.* 5.125; Hes. *Theog.* 969–971, fr. 177; Hellanicus *FGrH* 4 F 23 = F 23 Fowler; Scymnus 684–685; Diod. Sic. 6.47–49; Dion. Hal. AR. 1.61.4. Add Strabo 7, fr. 20b, derived, according to Radt *ad loc.*, from Demetrios of Skepsis (fr. 62 Gaede = Demetrios *FGrH* 2013 F 62); Conon *FGrH* 26 F 1.21; Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.522f.

⁶⁶ *I. Samothrace* 29.13–16, cf. Dimitrova, *Theoroi and Initiates*, 83–90; R. Parker, *On Greek Religion* (Ithaca and London, 2011) 254.

⁶⁷ Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 2.

not unique in Greek religion. Anonymous gods are often foreign, chthonic or otherwise different from the Olympian gods.⁶⁸ In our case, the anonymity is probably to be explained by the special character of the Mysteries and its rituals.⁶⁹ The epithet 'great' is very common for gods, marking them out as highly important.⁷⁰ Yet it is striking that both names, 'Gods' and 'Great Gods', are attested only quite late and do not seem to occur before the first century BC in the surviving literature, occurring especially in Roman reports.⁷¹ It was the Roman attention to Samothrace in connection with the Aeneas legend that had raised interest in the names of the Samothracian gods.⁷² On the other hand, inscriptions outside Samothrace regularly mention the 'Samothracian gods' or 'the gods on Samothrace'.⁷³ There were priests, temples and, even, associations of worshippers, the so-called Samothrakiastai, of the Samothracian gods, in cities on the Black Sea, on islands in the southern Aegean and in coastal cities of Asia Minor.⁷⁴ They illustrate the attraction of the Mysteries, but they do not help us with the nature or names of the gods.

Although, then, the Samothracians themselves and many of their worshippers elsewhere referred to their gods only as 'the Gods' or 'the Great Gods', others were less satisfied with this anonymity. We have seen that already in the fifth century BC Herodotus and Stesimbrotus identified them with the Kabeiroi, and it is striking how often the Greeks and Romans tried to replace their anonymity with a specific name, as we also hear of Aōoi theoi, Daktyloi, Korybantes, Kouretes, Penates, Propoloi and Telchines.⁷⁵ I will reserve discussion of the name and nature of the Kabeiroi for the next section (§ 2), but here it is sufficient to note that they were often thought to be two in number.⁷⁶ This must have helped to identify

68 H.S. Versnel, 'Self-sacrifice, Compensation and the Anonymous Gods', in *Entretiens Hardt* 27 (Vandoeuvres and Geneva, 1981) 135–195 at 171–179; A. Henrichs, 'Anonymity and Polarity: Unknown Gods and Nameless Altars at the Areopagos', *Illinois Class. Stud.* 19 (1994) 27–58; P.W. van der Horst, *Hellenism, Judaism, Christianity: essays on their interaction* (Leuven, 1998) 187–220; E.J. Bickerman, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, 2 vols (Leiden, 2007) 2.952–960 (1937–1938¹); D. Ackermann, 'L'Hagnè Theos du dème d'Aixônè en Attique: réflexions sur l'anonymat divin dans la religion grecque antique', *ARG* 12 (2010) 83–118.

69 P. Scarpi, 'Des Grands Dieux aux dieux sans nom: autour de l'altérité des Dieux de Samothrace', in N. Belayche et al. (eds.), *Nommer les Dieux. Théonyme, épithètes, épicles dans l'antiquité* (Turnhout, 2005) 213–218.

70 H.S. Versnel, *Ter Unus* (Leiden, 1990) 194–196 and *passim*.

71 See the lists in Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 303, 305.

72 A. Fo, 'Samotraccia', in *EV III*, 672.

73 See the discussion in Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 212–238; add A. Avram, 'Autour de quelques décrets d'Istros', *Pontica* 33–34 (2000–2001) 337–348; *SEG* 42, 661, 999; 38.847; 40.657; 46.1567; 50.1211.

74 Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 57–86; add *SEG* 45.897–898 (temple); 39.737A (association).

75 See the lists in Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 304–305; add Horsfall on Verg. *Aen.* 3.12 (Penates).

76 Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 274.

them with the Dioskouroi, but also with the two ithyphallic Samothracian statues mentioned above and thus with the 'Great Gods'. There probably were other points of contact between the cult of the Kabeiroi and that of the Samothracian gods, but our evidence does not get us beyond general notions, such as ecstatic dancing.

The only 'native' names that we hear of are mentioned by Mnaseas of Patara, a little known scholar of around 200 BC, who relates that the gods were called: Axieros, Axiokersa and Axiokersos, whom he identifies with Demeter, Persephone and Hades; a fourth god, Kasmilos, served as an attendant and was identified with Hermes.⁷⁷ His information has recently been confirmed in an amazing manner. A fifth-, early sixth-century AD curse tablet from Antioch starts with: '*Axieris Kadmile, Axierissa Kadmilos*'.⁷⁸ The author of this curse tablet was clearly at home in the world of the Mysteries, as he also mentions the Korybantes (§ 3) and figures from the Eleusinian Mysteries like Brimo and Baubo. Knowledge of Mysteries was much sought after in Late Antiquity for magical practices,⁷⁹ but it is surprising to find these rare names on such a late curse tablet. Yet there can be no doubt that the author was well informed. One may wonder if there was not a handbook about Mysteries circulating in Late Antiquity.

According to the early mythographer Akousilaos, Kamillos (his spelling for Kasmilos) was a son of Kabeiro and Hephaestus, which seems to suggest that Kasmilos originally belonged to the sphere of the Kabeiroi,⁸⁰ but had been transferred in the course of time to that of the Samothracian gods, perhaps as a consequence of the identification of the latter with the former. On neighbouring Imbros the Kabeiroi were also worshipped together with Kasmilos who was also identified as Hermes (see also § 2),⁸¹ although in local inscriptions the Kabeiroi are always called 'Great Gods'. There seems to have been an active cross-fertilisation between the two neighbouring islands in the area of religion. Kasm(e)ilos is also the spelling in Hipponax (fr. 155b West² = 164 Degani²) and in Callimachus,

⁷⁷ Mnaseas *FGrH* 154 F 27 (*apud* Schol. Ap. Rhod. 1.916–918b) = Mnaseas, fr. 17; Dionysodoros *FGrH* 68 F 1 (Hermes); H.S. Versnel, 'Mercurius amongst the *magni dei*', *Mnemosyne* IV 27 (1974) 144–151; P. Cappelletto, *I frammenti di Mnasea* (Milano, 2003) 191–197.

⁷⁸ A. Hollmann, 'A Curse Tablet from the Circus at Antioch', *ZPE* 145 (2003) 67–82 (= *SEG* 53.1786).

⁷⁹ H.-D. Betz, 'Magic and Mystery in the Greek Magical Papyri', in C. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (New York, 1991) 244–259 at 249–250 = *Hellenismus und Urchristentum* (Tübingen, 1990) 209–229.

⁸⁰ Akousilaos *FGrH* 2 F 20 = F 20 Fowler. For the spelling Kadmilos, see Hipponax, fr. dub. 197 Degani² = *Adesp. Iamb.* 58 West²; Lycophron 162. The spelling Kasmilos is considered an Atticism by S. Hawkins, *Studies in the Language of Hipponax* (Bremen, 2013) 66.

⁸¹ *IG* XII 8.74; Steph. Byz. ι 57, cf. Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 37–43.

but we also find Kadmilos and, as attested by Akousilaos, Kamillos.⁸² The name has a foreign sound, and an Anatolian background seems likely, especially given the occurrence of the name in Hipponax, who was born in Ephesus.⁸³ This leaves us with 3 gods, one female (Axiokersa) and two males (Axieros, Axiokersos), to judge by their names, which until now have defied a convincing explanation. The frequent reference to a pair of two males would make no sense if there had been two females, as Burkert asserted,⁸⁴ but the identification of the three with Demeter, Persephone and Hades cannot have been very early and once again points to Eleusinian influence.

A triad of one female and two males also seems to lie in the background of the foundation myth of the Samothracian Mysteries. According to Hesiod (fr. 177), Elektra gave birth to Dardanos and Eetion,⁸⁵ and the already mentioned Mnaseas (fr. 41) related that Dardanos arrived on Samothrace with his sister Harmonia and brother Iasion. Later mythology reported that Iasion had founded the Mysteries of Samothrace (Diod. Sic. 5.49.2), married Cybele and fathered Korybas: once again one female and two males, but also an attempt to account for the orgiastic nature of the cult and its resemblance to the cult of the Korybantes (§ 3). Evidently, the composition of the triad had to stay the same, but the names could vary infinitely, the more so as there was no canonical iconography of the deities that would have helped to channel the tradition in a certain direction.⁸⁶

With the triads we have come to the end of the Samothracian Mysteries. We will meet more triads in connection with the Kabeiroi, and we now turn to these no less enigmatic gods.

⁸² Hipponax, fr. dub. 197 Degani² = *Adesp. Iamb.* 58 West² (Kadmilos); Call. fr. 723 with Pfeiffer *ad loc.*; Lycophron 162 (Kadmilos); Varro, *LL* 7.34; Iuba *FGrH* 275 F 88 (Kadmilos); Dion. Hal. *AR* 2.22.2 (Kadmilos, a probable emendation).

⁸³ Cf. R. Beekes, 'The Origin of the Kabeiroi', *Mnemosyne* IV 57 (2004) 465–477 at 467 and his *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, 2 vols (Leiden, 2010) 1.613–614; see also Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.41 n, 147, but the proposed connection with the Hattic god Hasammil seems a long shot.

⁸⁴ Thus, rightly, Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 2–3, against Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 458 n. 40 and *Kleine Schriften III*, 147f.

⁸⁵ Cf. Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III*, 138–139, refuting the objections of Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 3; see also Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.522.

⁸⁶ For the absence of a specific iconography, see D. Vollkommer-Glöker, 'Megaloi Theoi', in *LIMC* VIII.1 (1997) 820–828.

2 The Kabeiroi

There can be little doubt that the Kabeiroi constitute one of the most problematic groups of divinities: they are very difficult to interpret because of the great number of often confusing testimonies.⁸⁷ For our purpose we have to be selective, and we will concentrate on the main sites that are known to have had Mysteries associated with them. Demetrios of Skepsis (*apud* Strabo 10.3.21) noted that the Kabeiroi were worshipped most on Imbros, Lemnos and some cities of the Troad. In other words, for the Greeks these islands were the real centres of the cult of the Kabeiroi. It therefore seems reasonable to begin with them, the more so as they also demonstrate the problems posed by these gods.

We will start with Imbros,⁸⁸ where the extra-urban sanctuary of the Kabeiroi has only recently been identified.⁸⁹ Regarding its gods we are immediately confronted with the same problem as we encountered on Samothrace. Demetrios reports that their names were *mystika* ('secret') and he denies that the name of the Kabeiroi occurred in the Samothracian Mysteries, as we just saw (§ 1). Literary testimonies connect the Kabeiroi with Imbros,⁹⁰ although, as on Samothrace, in the local inscriptions they are called Great Gods.⁹¹ Especially interesting is a lemma in Stephanus of Byzantium that says: 'Imbros ... is sacred to the Kabeiroi and Hermes, whom the Carians call Imbrasos' (ι 57). To make it more complicated, we also have a local, late inscription that mentions a Lord Kasmeilos in the company of five Titans (*IG* XII 8.74). The Imbrians seem to have worshipped the same group of divinities as the Samothracians (§ 1), for they also worshipped a goddess in connection with the male gods (*IG* XII 8.51).⁹² Yet there was a differ-

87 See still O. Kern, 'Kabeiros und Kabiren', in *RE* 10 (1917) 1399–1450, with his *Nachtrag* in *RE* 16.2 (1935) 1275–1279; there is an excellent collection and discussion of testimonies by Hemberg, *Kabiren*. More recently: F. Graf, 'Kabeiroi,' in *Der Neue Pauly* 6 (1999) 23–27 (fine overview); S. Blakely, *Myth, Ritual, and Metallurgy in Ancient Greece and Recent Africa* (Cambridge, 2006) 32–54; Bowden, *Mystery Cults*, 49–67; R.L. Fowler, 'Herodotos and the Early Mythographers: the case of the Kabeiroi', in R.S. Smith and S. Trzaskoma (eds), *Writing Myth* (Leuven, 2013) 1–19.

88 For the Imbrian Mysteries, see Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 37–43; Masciadri, *Eine Insel im Meer der Geschichten*, 351–353.

89 B. Ruhl, 'Gli Ateniesi sull'isola di Imbro', *ASAA* 88 (2010) 455–468 at 463f.

90 In addition to the passages mentioned in the text, see schol. Hes. *Th.* 338; Eusth. *DP* 524 and on *Il.* XIV.281.

91 *IG* XII 8.51–52, 68–74, 87–89a–b.

92 Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 38–39. K. Clinton and N. Dimitrova, 'A New Edition of *IG* XII 8, 51', in A. Themom and N. Papazarkadas (eds), *Attika epigraphika: meletes pros timēn tou Christian Habicht* (Athens, 2009) 201–207 (= *SEG* 59.947) have now established that the Imbrian inscription includes a goddess among the Great Gods.

ence. On Imbros, the fourth Samothracian god also had an epichoric name, Imbrasos, which clearly points to influence from Caria and Lycia where places and names with the element *Imbr-* are well attested and probably go back to a Cuneiform Luwian word meaning 'open country';⁹³ on the other hand, on Imbrian coins it is always Hermes who is shown.⁹⁴ The presence of epichoric name shows that names were not the most important characteristic of this group of divinities, but that, rather, the names were adapted to local circumstances and traditions.

Unfortunately, very little is known about the Mysteries. We hear of initiates (IG XII 8.70, 87–89), of Pythagoras having been initiated into the Imbrian Mysteries (Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras* 28.151), and of the secrecy of the names of the Kabeiroi (Demetrios, above). That is the sum total. Hemberg deduces from the location of the sanctuary near a brook that purifications must have played a role.⁹⁵ That is undoubtedly true, but does not get us very far.

We hear more about the cult of the Kabeiroi and their sanctuary on Lemnos.⁹⁶ Unlike Samothrace and Imbros, local inscriptions do attest their name on the island, but it is typical of the onomastic situation that we also find a dedication to the Great Gods and even to the Lords Gods.⁹⁷ As on the other islands, we also find a goddess here, Lemnos, a homonym of the island, who may well lie behind Artemis, who was the most prominent goddess of the island in the fifth century, and Cybele, who seems to have become prominent on the island in late Hellenistic times.⁹⁸ According to the heresiologist Hippolytus, already mentioned above

93 L. Zgusta, *Kleinasiatische Ortsnamen* (Heidelberg, 1984) 199; D. Schürr, 'Imbr- in lykischer und karischer Schrift', *Die Sprache* 35 (1991–1993) 163–175 and 'Karische und lykische Sibilanten', *Indogermanische Forschungen* 106 (2001) 94–121 at 104–105; I.J. Adiego, *The Carian Language* (Leiden, 2007) 335. Imbros in Lycia: C. Marek, *Die Inschriften von Kaunos* (Munich, 2006) 83 n. 63. Imbriades and other, related Carian names: SEG 59.1200.

94 G. Gorini, 'Le monete di Imbros dal santuario dei Cabiri a Lemno', in U. Peter (ed.), *Stephanos nomismatikos* (Berlin, 1998) 295–300.

95 Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 42.

96 Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 160–170; L. Beschi, 'Cabirio di Lemno: Testimonianze letterarie ed epigrafiche', ASAA 74–75 (1997) 7–192; Masciadri, *Eine Insel im Meer der Geschichten*, 331–344; R. Leone, 'Tra Lemno e Samotraccia: il santuario degli dei Cabiri di Chloi', ASAA 88 (2010) 273–80.

97 Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 162. For *Anakes* in connection with the Kabeiroi, see also Paus. 10.38.7. According to Graf, 'Kabeiroi', 124 and A.-F. Jaccottet, 'Les Cabires. Entre assimilation et mise en scène de l'altérité', in C. Bonnet et al. (eds), *Les représentations des dieux des autres* (Palermo, 2011) 1–16 at 2–3, the name Kabeiroi never appears on Lemnian inscriptions, but see S. Accame, 'Iscrizioni del Cabirio di Lemno', ASAA NS 3–4 (1941–1943 [1948]) 75–105 at 79 no.3, 84 no.4, 105 nos 23–24; SEG 45.1194; 50.831, 836–837.

98 Lemnos is also mentioned as 'Great Goddess' by Steph. Byz. s.v. *Lēmnos* and is perhaps still meant in Ar. fr. 384. Artemis and Lemnos: R. Parker, 'Athenian Religion Abroad', in R. Osborne and S. Hornblower (eds), *Ritual, Finance, Politics: Athenian democratic accounts presented to*

(§ 1), she gave birth to Kabeiros, ‘a fair child celebrated in unspeakable orgiastic rites’, but early mythographers give different genealogies. Akousilaos mentions a Kamillos, son of Hephaestus and Kabeiro, who was the father of three Kabeiroi and probably (though unfortunately the text is corrupted here) three Kabeiric nymphs, whereas Pherecydes cites three male and female Kabeiroi as offspring of Hephaestus and Kabeiro. On the other hand, the late antique but well informed Nonnos knows of only two Lemnian Kabeiroi.⁹⁹ As Hemberg rightly concludes, the different constellations all suggest the combination of a goddess and male Kabeiroi, who on Lemnos sometimes seem to have been an older and a younger god (Hephaestus and Kamillos). Given that on Imbros Hermes played a role next in rank to the Kabeiroi, it may be noteworthy that Hermes was prominent on Lemnos too.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps here too he was seen as an embodiment of Kamillos. The Kabeiric nymphs have not turned up in the inscriptions, but some representations of nymphs in the sanctuary may perhaps be associated with them.¹⁰¹ The mention of these female Kabeiroi or Kabeiric nymphs could well be a reflection of the attested presence of women in the cult.¹⁰²

Finally, the prominent position of Hephaestus on Lemnos meant that the god had to be incorporated into the cult of the Kabeiroi, in which he was so important that the Kabeiroi were also called Hephaesti, according to Photius (κ 3). This learned Byzantine bishop informs us that they were called Titans as well, which reminds us of the inscription from Imbros that has just been quoted. The reason for this equation is unclear, but Hephaestus could clearly upset the original constellation, as there was no authoritative genealogical myth in this respect.¹⁰³

David Lewis (Oxford, 1994) 339–346 at 345. Cybele: K. Welch, ‘A Statue Head of the “Great Mother” Discovered in Samothrace’, *Hesperia* 65 (1996) 467–473. In general, see also L. Beschi, ‘Immagini dei Cabiri di Lemno’, in G. Capecchi *et al.* (eds), *In memoria di Enrico Paribeni*, 2 vols (Rome, 1998) 1.45–58 at 56.

99 Hippolytus, *Ref.* 5.7.3 (Lemnos); Akousilaos *FGrH* 2 F 20 = F 20 Fowler (Kamillos); Pherecydes *FGrH* 3 F 48 = F 48 Fowler (the children Kabeiroi); Nonnos, *D.* 14.19–22, 17.195 (2 Kabeiroi). Note that Akousilaos’ information can also be found in Steph. Byz. s.v. *Nymphai Kabeirides*, which as Radt *ad* Strabo 10.3.21 (our source for Akousilaos) notes, points to a common source, probably, I suggest, Demetrios of Skepsis, who was interested in the Kabeiroi, as we have seen.

100 Beschi, ‘Immagini dei Cabiri di Lemno’, 53f.

101 Beschi, ‘Immagini dei Cabiri di Lemno’, 56f. Perhaps the mention of Lemnian nymphs in Schol. Pind. O. 13.74g should be connected with this, cf. Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 279.

102 Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.41.

103 For Hephaestus, see now Bremmer, ‘Hephaistos Sweats or How to Construct an Ambivalent God’, in J.N. Bremmer and A. Erskine (eds), *The Gods of Ancient Greece* (Edinburgh, 2010) 193–208.

As regards the actual initiation, we are again not blessed with many testimonies, but the inscriptions suggest that we need not take into account Eleusinian influence and can therefore suppose a single initiatory stage. The Italian excavations on the island have shown that the sanctuary of the Kabeiroi already contained a Telesterion in the seventh century, about 14 by 6 metres, with stone benches lining the walls, which was replaced by 200 BC with a much larger building, again with seating spaces.¹⁰⁴ The Roman dramatist Accius (*Philocteta*, fr. 2) and Cicero (*ND* 1.119: perhaps from the same tragedy)¹⁰⁵ tell us that there was a wood nearby, as was entirely normal for Greek sanctuaries.¹⁰⁶ Otherwise we know very little. We may safely assume purifications, perhaps with water from the sea, which was close to the sanctuary. There will also have been sacrifices,¹⁰⁷ and we know that the initiation, as could be expected, took place at night.¹⁰⁸ There will have been ecstatic dances, as Hippolytus' 'orgiastic rites' suggests: the comparison, if not identification, of the Kabeiroi with the Kouretes and Korymbantes (§ 3) argues for the ecstatic character of the dances, which is further confirmed by the discovery of *auloi* in the sanctuary.¹⁰⁹ A striking aspect must have been the large consumption of wine, as Aeschylus not only put the Argonauts drunken on the stage, but also has the Kabeiroi themselves drinking.¹¹⁰ Lemnian wine was well known for its quality,¹¹¹ and the discovery of many kantharoi, dating from the archaic period and with strong Anatolian connections, proves the importance of drinking in the sanctuary. They are also found on Samothrace, which indicates that drink was important also in the Samothracian

104 L. Beschi, 'Il primitivo Telesterio del Cabirio di Lemno (campagne di scavo 1990–1991)', *ASAA* 81 (2003) 963–1022; L. Beschi *et al.*, 'Il Telesterio ellenistico del Cabirio di Lemno', *ASAA* 82 (2004) 225–341 (seating: 240).

105 As is suggested by Masciadri, *Eine Insel im Meer der Geschichten*, 334. In general, see on Accius' tragedy, V. Tandoi, *Scritti di filologia e di storia della cultura classica*, 2 vols (Pisa, 1992) 1.234–270.

106 J. Scheid (ed.), *Les bois sacrées* (Naples, 1993); V.J. Matthews, *Antimachus of Colophon* (Leiden, 1996) 141–142; P. Bonnechere, 'The place of the Sacred Grove in the Mantic Rituals of Greece: the Example of the Oracle of Trophonios at Lebadeia (Boeotia)', in M. Conan (ed.), *Sacred Gardens and Landscapes: ritual and agency* (Washington DC, 2007) 17–41. For groves and oracles, see also C. Schuler and K. Zimmermann, 'Neue Inschriften aus Patara I: Zur Elite der Stadt im Hellenismus und früher Kaiserzeit', *Chiron* 42 (2012) 567–626 at 600–602.

107 Cf. Accame, 'Iscrizioni del Cabirio di Lemno', nos. 6.4–5, 11.2.

108 Cic. *ND* 1.119: *nocturno aditu occulta coluntur*; Nonnos, *D.* 4.183–185; perhaps, *Orph. Arg.* 28–30.

109 L. Beschi, 'Frammenti di auloi dal Cabirio di Lemno', in S. Böhm and K.-V. von Eickstedt (eds), *Ithake. Festschrift für Jörg Schäfer* (Würzburg, 2001) 175–180.

110 Athen. 10.428f = Aesch. *TrGF* 3 T 117a7 (Argonauts); Aesch. fr. 97 (Kabeiroi).

111 *Il.* VII.467; Ar. *Pax* 1161–1165; Androton *FGrH* 324 F 80.

Mysteries.¹¹² Such drinking seems to fit best into the final stage of the initiation. Was the ritual on Lemnos perhaps concluded with a symposium or banquet as we supposed for Samothrace? However that may be, the discovery of many iron rings in the sanctuary suggests that Lemnian initiates, like the Samothracian ones, went home with a concrete souvenir of their initiation.¹¹³

Other aspects of the Kabeiroi appear in Asia Minor, where we are especially informed about their cults in Pergamon and Miletus. In Pergamon, the cult had the reputation of being very ancient,¹¹⁴ which need not be true and may indicate somewhat strange rituals.¹¹⁵ We know that Mysteries of the Kabeiroi were performed on the Acropolis of Pergamon, probably during the festival of the Kabiria.¹¹⁶ As we have already seen, there were apparently two Kabeiroi, the elder of whom was actually named Kabeiros.¹¹⁷ From an honorary decree for a gymnasiarch of about 130 BC,¹¹⁸ just after the death of the last Attalid king, we learn that the Kabirion was closely associated with the gymnasium and that the festival of the Kabiria enjoyed sumptuous banquets thanks to the gymnasiarch's generosity. Even more detailed is an honorary decree for another well-known inhabitant of Pergamon, Diodoros Paspáros, who lived during the Mithradatic wars. From this inscription we learn of an 'initiation (*myêsis*) of the ephebes' that took place 'according to ancestral traditions'.¹¹⁹

Moreover, the decree mentions that Diodoros restored an old ritual, Kriobolia, literally 'the slaying of a ram', 'for the entertainment of the boys' in which the young, *neoi*, had to chase and catch a ram. Having caught the animal, its meat was the price for a festival, the Nikephoria. One cannot escape the impression that once again we have here the ram as a special animal for Mysteries, as we already saw above (§ 1), the more so as the ram figures on coins that were probably

112 L. Beschi, 'Gli scavi del cabirio di Chloi', in *Un ponte fra l'Italia e la Grecia: Atti del simposio in onore di Antonino di Vita* (Padua, 2000) 75–84 at 78–80; Leone, 'Tra Lemno e Samotraccia', 276; P. Ilieva, 'The Sessile Kantharos of the Archaic Northeast Aegean Ceramic Assemblage: the Anatolian Connection', *Studia Troica* 19 (2011) 179–203.

113 L. Beschi, 'Immagini dei Cabiri di Lemno', 52.

114 Paus. 1.4.6; Ael. Arist. fr. vol. 2.469 § 5.

115 For Pergamon, see E. Ohlmutz, *Kulte und Heiligtümer der Götter in Pergamon* (Würzburg, 1940) 192–202; Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 172–182.

116 Mysteries: Ael. Aristides, *loc. cit.* (note 114); OGIS 2.764. Festival: *IvP* 252.26.

117 Kabeiros: *IvP* 251.1, 34, cf. Ohlmutz, *Kulte*, 197; Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 176 n. 3.

118 H. Hepding, 'Die Inschriften', *Athen. Mitt.* 32 (2007) 241–414 at no. 10 (273–278, supplanting *IvP* 252), cf. M. Wörrle, 'Zu Rang und Bedeutung von Gymnasion im hellenistischen Pergamon', *Chiron* 37 (2002) 501–516.

119 OGIS 2.764; for the date, see C.P. Jones, 'Diodoros Paspáros Revisited', *Chiron* 30 (2000) 1–14, whereas Ohlmutz, *Kulte*, 198 and Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 179 dated him to about 125 BC.

connected with the cult of the Kabeiroi.¹²⁰ Finally, given that we already noted the combination of Kabeiroi and a female deity on Imbros and Lemnos,¹²¹ it is important to observe that the sanctuary of the Kabeiroi was close to that of Meter Basileia, an association that we also find in Anthedon, Chios and Thebes (below).¹²²

Although, then, we cannot reconstruct the Pergamene Mysteries in detail, we can still see some important features that we have already met or will meet again. The ritual contained an excellent sacrificial meal, which will probably have concluded the Mysteries. Important for us is also the close connection with the world of the ephebes. This strongly suggests an initiatory background of the Mysteries, which we will also find in Miletus, our next cult.

In Miletus, the sanctuary of the Kabeiroi was situated in neighbouring Assesos, somewhat outside the main city, as was the case with those on Samothrace, Imbros, Lemnos and in Thebes (below).¹²³ Here we hear only of a myth, of which the fullest version is told by the Augustan historian Nicolaus of Damascus (*FGrH* 90 F 52). According to him, the sons of the murdered king Laodamas had taken refuge in Assesos. When they were besieged, help appeared in the shape of two young men from Phrygia, a country whose language was related to that of the Greeks but still suggested something foreign.¹²⁴ The two youths, Tottes and Onnes, brought a chest with the *hiera*, 'holy objects', of the Kabeiroi, which were probably shown during the Mysteries. After a sacrifice, the sons of Laodamas and their army confronted the opponents with the chest at the head of the phalanx, secured victory and reasserted their right to the throne.¹²⁵ Most older studies of the Kabeiroi have overlooked the fact that the story is already told by Callimachus (fr. 113e Harder = 115 Pfeiffer), which takes it back to the earlier Hellenistic period.¹²⁶ From his account, which survives only in fragments, we can see some of the main lines as filled out by Nicolaus, but we also hear of the education of Tottes and Onnes 'at the furnaces of Hephaestus'. This connection suggests influence from Lemnos and an association with smithing.

120 This is also the conclusion of Ohlemutz, *Kulte*, 199 and Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 179f.

121 See the list in Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 288–290.

122 Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 117f.

123 For Miletus and Assesos, see Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 137–140.

124 Ch. de Lamberterie, 'Grec, phrygien, arménien: des anciens aux modernes', *J. des Savants* 2013, 3–69.

125 One is reminded of the story of the usage of the ark in battle by the Israelites against the Philistines in *1 Samuel* 4.1–11.

126 See the extensive commentary in A. Harder, *Callimachus: Aetia*, 2 vols (Oxford, 2012) 2.875–891.

The name Tottes can hardly be separated from the place name Tottoa in Phrygia, which probably goes back to Luwian Tuttuwa, and the name Onnes is almost certainly also of Anatolian origin.¹²⁷ As regards their character, we note that they are youths and two in number, just like the Dioskouroi and Kabeiroi elsewhere. Moreover, the fact that they are described as non-Greek suggests a non-Greek appearance, perhaps with ithyphallic statues in the background. Now the great goddess of Assesos was Athena, who was also the most important divinity of Milesian Pidasa;¹²⁸ in fact, she was widely worshipped in Caria and adjacent Ionia.¹²⁹ The more recent discovery of Archaic votives for her in Assesos, which used to be a Carian town, implies that an epichoric divinity probably lies behind Athena, but all attempts at identification have been unsuccessful.¹³⁰ We may perhaps see here too the combination of a goddess with two youths, as on Samothrace and elsewhere. In the Milesian variant of the cult there was evidently a connection between youths, war and the Kabeiroi, which suggests that a ritual connected with puberty-initiation lies in the background of the myth.

Our last location is Thebes, where excavations have given us plenty to think about but little that is easy to interpret.¹³¹ The little we know about the cult dates mainly from the archaic and classical period, but the situation is complicated by the fact that Pausanias, who visited the sanctuary in the later second century AD, refuses to tell us anything about the Kabeiroi or the ritual connected with them (9.25.5), as he is wont to do with Mysteries.¹³² On top of this refusal we are confronted by the problem of how to interpret the many (fragments of) vases with comically distorted figures found in the Kabirion, which seem to date from about the mid-fifth century to the destruction of the city by the Macedonians in 335 BC.¹³³

127 Tottes: Zgusta, *Kleinasiatische Ortsnamen*, 628 §1356. Onnes: L. Zgusta, *Kleinasiatische Personenamen* (Prague, 1964) 374 §1089–2: ‘Mitglied einer selbständigen, wenn auch nicht entwickelten Lallnamensippe’.

128 H. von Aulock, ‘Eine neue kleinasiatische Münzstätte: Pedasa (Pidasa) in Karien’, *Jahrb. Num. Geldgesch.* 25 (1975) 123–128.

129 A. Laumonier, *Les cultes indigènes en Carie* (Paris, 1958) 544, index s.v. Athèna.

130 W. Held, ‘Funde aus Milet XIV. Ein Reiterrelief aus Milet und die Kabiren von Assesos’, *Arch. Anz.* 2002, 41–46; P. Herrmann *et al.*, *Inschriften von Milet, Teil 3. Inschriften n. 1020–1580* (Berlin and New York, 2006) 171–174 (votives and definitive identification of Assesos).

131 P. Wolters and G. Bruns, *Das Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben*, 6 vols (Berlin, 1940–1982) 1.81–128; Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 184–205. For the Boeotian spelling Kabirot rather than Kabeiroi, see S. Radt, *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta* 3 (Göttingen, 1985) 214. For the onomastic evidence for their regional worship, see F. Marchand, ‘Rencontres onomastiques au carrefour de l’Eubée et de la Béotie’, in N. Badoud (ed.), *Philologos Dionysios* (Geneva, 2011) 343–376 at 351f.

132 V. Pirenne-Delforge, *Retour à la source. Pausanias et la religion grecque* (Liège, 2008) 291–346.

133 A.G. Mitchell, *Greek vase-painting and the origins of visual humour* (Cambridge, 2009) 253f.

Can we take these as direct illustrations of the ritual performed or should we resign from attempting a ritual interpretation at all?¹³⁴ Perhaps there is a middle road. It is clear that some of the vases refer to the ritual by their representation of a specific sash (see below). I take it therefore that we can also deduce some other features of the ritual from the vases, as has been done by Albert Schachter in his excellent analysis of the sanctuary and its rites, and in my analysis I mainly follow his reconstruction.¹³⁵

The Theban Kabirion was situated about six kilometres west of Thebes, in the folds of low hills. Originally, there was no Telesterion, and initiation must have taken place in the open or in a temporary construction. The entry to the Mysteries was apparently open to slaves and free, men and women, of whom the latter perhaps dedicated necklaces, given the enormous quantity of beads that have been found, more than in any other Greek sanctuary. Women's names have also been found on the sherds of the many kantharoi found in the sanctuary.¹³⁶ Entry was not free, and there seem to have been entry tokens.¹³⁷ The presence of expensive bulls (see below) and heavy drinking (below) in fact suggests that the Mysteries in the sanctuary were very much an upper-class affair.

As in Eleusis, the initiation seems to have begun with a procession, which will have been followed by purifications and preliminary sacrifices. The construction of bathing installations already in late classical times attests to the importance of purifications,¹³⁸ the water of which will have been supplied from the brook that bordered on the sanctuary.¹³⁹ Although we cannot place the sacrifices at precise moments of the initiation, their importance appears from the vase paintings showing sacrificial processions and the many dedications of

134 M. Daumas, *Cabiriaca: Recherches sur l'iconographie du culte des Cabires* (Paris, 1998) 30–41, with a ritual interpretation, which is opposed by Jaccottet, 'Les Cabires'.

135 A. Schachter, *Cults of Boiotia 2* (London, 1986) 66–110, summarises and updates the results of the German excavations of the sanctuary, further updated and corrected in his 'Evolutions of a Mystery Cult: the Theban Kabiroi', in Cosmopoulos, *Greek Mysteries*, 112–142, not refuted by M. Daumas, 'De Thèbes à Lemnos et Samothrace. Remarques nouvelles sur le culte des Cabires', *Topoi* 12–13 (2005) 851–881. For the reconstruction, see Schachter, *Cults*, 101–102, who is much more prudent than Daumas (previous note) and who provides all references when none is given in my text.

136 As noted by Schachter, 'Evolutions of a Mystery Cult', 128.

137 Schachter, 'Evolutions of a Mystery Cult', 118.

138 Bathing: G. Bruns, 'Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben', *Arch. Anz.* 1967, 228–273 at 245–250.

139 See the photo in Schachter, 'Evolutions of a Mystery Cult', 115; Bruns, 'Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben', 245f.

bulls – 534 out of the 562 lead and bronze statuettes that have been found.¹⁴⁰ The two priests seem to have been appointed for life, and this may imply Eleusinian influence.¹⁴¹ The actual initiation will have taken place at night, as torches on the vases suggest,¹⁴² and as was usual in Mysteries (Ch. 1.2). The rest is silence. We do not have a single thread of evidence about the actual ritual during the night but, as with the Lemnian Kabirion, we have an enormous amount of sherds of black glaze ware, which is indicating the amount of drinking that must have gone on and which probably concluded the ritual, as we suggested above for Samothrace and Lemnos. There can be little doubt that all that drinking is reflected in the many kantharoi with the famous scenes parodying everyday activities, such as hunting, athletics, slavery and weddings, but also local and pan-Hellenic mythological scenes, such as Kadmos, Odysseus and Circe or the Judgement of Paris.¹⁴³ After the performance of the ritual, the initiates seem to have left with a souvenir. In Samothrace, they received a purple fillet (§ 1), and on vases from the Kabirion, we sometimes see the banqueters, but also the god Kabiros himself, with a sash tied in a special knot.¹⁴⁴ Was this sash perhaps the Theban equivalent of the Samothracian fillet?

We hear nothing about the specific nature of the Theban Mysteries, but we have one important indication. From early in the fifth century to the end of the Classical period, there is an enormous quantity – more than 700 – of terracotta figurines of boys and youths, as well as some *kalos* graffiti that suggest pederastic activities.¹⁴⁵ This prominence of male youths surely points to the importance of a stage of male initiation, the more so as the dedication of numerous toys, such as peg tops and a yo-yo, suggests a dramatisation of the end of childhood.¹⁴⁶ This insight may help us to shed light on a much discussed vase from the Kabirion. On

140 Wolters and Bruns, *Das Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben*, 36–43; Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 197–199; B. Schmaltz, *Metallfiguren aus dem Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben: Die Statuetten aus Bronze und Blei* (Berlin, 1980); R. Wachter, *Non-Attic Greek Vase Inscriptions* (Oxford, 2001) 325–327.

141 Schachter, *Cults*, 83, who compares IG VII.2420, 3646, 3684, 3686.

142 Schachter, *Cults*, 101, 107 note 2.

143 For the vases, see more recently G. Gadaleta, 'La zattera di Odisseo e il culto cabirico a Tebe', *Ostraka* 18 (2009) 357–375; Mitchell, *Greek vase-painting*, 248–279; D. Walsh, *Distorted Ideals in Greek Vase-Painting* (Cambridge, 2009) 58–64, 251–253.

144 Schachter, *Cults*, 93 n. 1, 101; Mitchell, *Greek vase-painting*, 255–259.

145 B. Schmaltz, *Terrakotten aus dem Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben* (Berlin, 1974). *Kalos* graffiti: IG VII.3596–97, 4122. For the *kalos* inscriptions, see F. Lissarrague, 'Publicity and performance. *Kalos* inscriptions in Attic vase-painting', in S. Goldhill and R. Osborne (eds), *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy* (Cambridge, 1999) 359–373; I. Scheibler, 'Lieblingsinschriften', in *Der Neue Pauly* 7 (1999) 181–183; N.W. Slater, 'The Vase as Ventriloquist: *Kalos*-inscriptions and the Culture of Fame', in E.A. Mackay (ed.), *Signs of Orality: The Oral Tradition and its Influence in the Greek and Roman World* (Leiden, 1999) 143–161.

146 See the list of the finds in Wachter, *Non-Attic Greek Vase Inscriptions*, 326f.

a Kabirion kantharos fragment, we see at the right the god Kabiros reclining, with wreaths and ivy in his hair and his name inscribed, with a youth called Pais who clearly is his wine-pourer. Neither of them is caricatured, unlike the other three figures towards the left: a boy named Pratolaos and an embracing couple named as Mitos and Krateia. In 1890, Otto Kern (1863–1942) interpreted the vase as a scene of Orphic anthropogony, and he is still followed by Burkert.¹⁴⁷ Kern could arrive at this explanation by interpreting the name Pratolaos as ‘the first man’, but its proper meaning is: ‘the first in the army’ or ‘the first amongst his people’, and Kern’s other arguments were even less plausible. The names Mitos and Krateia are perfectly explicable from Boeotian onomastics, and the most plausible explanation is that they are the representation of a family of worshippers, albeit somewhat caricatured.¹⁴⁸

Yet this persuasive interpretation pays no attention to Pais and his action on the vase. From this vase and other inscriptions we know that Pais was worshipped together with Kabiros.¹⁴⁹ In other words, we have here the pair of two Kabeiroi that we also encountered elsewhere. Yet it seems important to note that the younger member of the Theban pair is represented as a wine-pourer, as we know from elsewhere in Greece that pouring wine was one of the roles of young males during their initiation or the period preceding full adulthood, the most prominent example being Ganymede as wine-pourer of Zeus.¹⁵⁰ In other words, it seems that in Thebes the initiation of the youths was reflected in the representation of Pais, whose name ‘boy, servant’ perfectly fitted this function.

Kabiros and Pais were not the only divinities worshipped in the Kabirion. Pausanias (9.25.5) tells us that in addition rites were also performed for Mother. Thus we are once again confronted with the constellation of two males and a female. Pausanias (9.25.6) further tells us that not far from the Kabirion there was a grove of Kore and Demeter Kabiria. The latter gave ‘something’, presumably the sacred objects of the Mysteries, to Prometheus and his son Aetnaeus, two original inhabitants of the place who were called Kabeiroi. The myth clearly reflects Eleusinian influence as now it is Demeter who gives and the Kabeiroi who receive. The two original inhabitants reflect both the older Kabiros and his son and also,

147 O. Kern, ‘Die boiotischen Kabiren’, *Hermes* 25 (1890) 1–16 at 7; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 282; Graf, ‘Kabeiroi’, 126; Blakely, *Myth, Ritual, and Metallurgy*, 42.

148 Wachter, *Non-Attic Greek Vase Inscriptions*, 325–326 (onomastic analysis); Schachter, ‘Evolutions of a Mystery Cult’, 131 (family of worshippers).

149 Wachter, *Non-Attic Greek Vase Inscriptions*, no. BOI 16 (*IG* VII.3599), BOI 26 (*IG* VII.3626), BOI 28 (*IG* VII.3970); *IG* VII *passim*.

150 Bremmer, ‘Adolescents, Symposium and Pederasty’, in O. Murray (ed.), *Symptotica* (Oxford, 1990) 135–148.

via the name Aetnaeus, ‘The Man from Etna’, the ‘smith’ connection of the Kabeiroi of Lemnos and Miletus. The connection of the Kabeiroi with smiths can also be found in Macedonian iconography at the turn of the era where they are always given hammers.¹⁵¹ We see here the continued influence of the Lemnian cult of the Kabeiroi together with Hephaestus.

Finally, the cult of the Kabeiroi was typical of western Asia Minor and adjacent islands with extensions to Northern Greece, especially Thessalonica, and Thebes.¹⁵² There is no connection with Phoenicia or the Levant. This makes very improbable Scaliger’s (1540–1609) Semitic etymology, originally proposed in 1565, which connected Kabeiroi with Semitic *kabir*, ‘mighty’.¹⁵³ The Anatolian centre of the cult rather suggests an Anatolian origin for the name. This seems fairly certain in the case of Kasmilos, and Beekes has also made a good case for the Kabeiroi, even though our available evidence does not yet allow us to understand their name properly.¹⁵⁴

The Mysteries of the Kabeiroi, then, originated at the interface of Greece and Anatolia. Anatolia was probably also the cradle of the divine triad consisting of a goddess and two male companions. In the area of northern Lycia, southern Pisidia and the Kibyrtis, the Dioskouroi are often represented accompanied by an unnamed goddess who has been identified in all kinds of ways, though not yet with any certainty. A recent inscription calls the anonymous goddess Helen, but that is of course a sign of the increasing Hellenisation of an epichoric cult that has so far defied all attempts to trace its Anatolian ancestors. Could it be that the triad of divinities is an avatar of the divine triads that we find in the Hittite period?¹⁵⁵

Undoubtedly the Kabeiroi are old, which explains the local character of their cults and the influence of prominent local gods, such as Hephaestus on Lemnos. Where we have a good view of the evidence, we can see that they consisted of two

151 Blakely, *Myth, Ritual, and Metallurgy*, 33–36; Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.42f.

152 See the various maps in Hemberg, *Kabiren*.

153 As Schachter, *Cults*, 96 n. 4 and ‘Evolutions of a Mystery Cult’, gives 1619 as date for this etymology, when Scaliger had been dead for a decade, and Blakely, *Myth, Ritual, and Metallurgy*, 58 puts Scaliger in the fifteenth century, the original reference may not be superfluous: J.J. Scaliger, *Coniectanea in M. Terentium Varronem de lingua Latina* (Paris, 1565) 146: ‘Nam Phoenicia & Syriaca lingua Cabir potem, & potentem significat’.

154 Beekes, ‘The Origin of the Kabeiroi’, whose collection of evidence seems to me to be of uneven value; see also his *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, 1.612.

155 Helen: B. İplikçioglu and C. Schuler. ‘Ein Tempel für die Dioskuren und Helena’, *Anzeiger der philosophisch-historischen Klasse* 146.2 (2011) 39–59. Hittite: P. Taracha, *Religions of Second Millennium Anatolia* (Wiesbaden, 2009) 45f. Note also the map of the triad in F. Chapouthier, *Les Dioscures au service d’une déesse* (Paris, 1935) 100 with its strong concentration in south-western Anatolia and northern Greece.

gods, Kabeiros and a younger one, but these two were often identified with other minor gods, such as the Kouretes or the Korybantes (§ 3). Their function in Pergamon, Miletus and Thebes points to a background in puberty rites, which in Lemnos, under the influence of the Hephaestus cult, was perhaps transformed into a cult by a guild of smiths, although our evidence for a connection with iron working is not very early.¹⁵⁶ The Mysteries must have been characterised by orgiastic dances and heavy drinking. All in all, they seem to have been a jollier affair than the more serious Eleusinian Mysteries.

3 The Korybantes

Both the Samothracian gods and the Kabeiroi were sometimes identified with the Korybantes, but we will see that, although sharing some similarities, their rituals also displayed considerable differences from those we have already discussed.¹⁵⁷ Our early evidence comes mainly from Plato,¹⁵⁸ but recent finds of contemporary inscriptions of Erythrae with sales of the Korybantic priesthoods have considerably enriched our knowledge.¹⁵⁹ Whereas earlier studies concentrated on the literary evidence, contemporary discussions have focused on the epigraphical material. It therefore seems important to present a synthesis of both types of sources. Naturally such a new picture can only be an ideal cult type, as we have no idea of local differences. Moreover, the Erythraean inscriptions mention both a public and a private cult whereas the Platonic descriptions clearly concern only a

156 Fowler, 'Herodotos and the Early Mythographers', 15.

157 For the older literature, see O. Immisch, 'Kureten und Korybanten', in W.H. Roscher (ed.), *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie II.1* (Leipzig, 1890–1897) 1587–1628; J. Poerner, *De Curetibus et Corybantibus* (Halle, 1913); F. Schwenn, 'Korybanten', in *RE* 11 (1922) 1441–1446, but Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 319–334, updated in 'The Kyrbantes of Erythrai', in G. Reger et al. (eds), *Studies in Greek Epigraphy and History in Honor of Stephen V. Tracy* (Bordeaux, 2010) 301–309, is now the starting point for any modern discussion.

158 E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951) 77–79; I.M. Linforth, *Studies in Herodotus and Plato*, ed. L. Tarán (New York and London, 1987) 159–200 ('The Corybantic Rites in Plato', 1946¹).

159 *I.Erythrai* 201,206+SEG 47.1628 (cf. SEG 52.1147); E. Voutiras, 'Un culte domestique des Corybantes', *Kernos* 9 (1996) 243–256 (= SEG 46.810); N. Himmelmann, 'Die Priesterschaft der Kyrbantes in Erythrai (neues Fragment von I.K. 2, 206)', *Epigraphica Anatolica* 29 (1997) 117–122 = *Tieropfer in der griechischen Kunst* (Opladen, 1997) 75–82 (cf. SEG 47.1628); P. Herrmann, 'Eine "pierre errante" in Samos: Kultgesetz der Korybanten', *Chiron* 32 (2002) 157–172 (= SEG 52.1146 = IG XII 1.6.1197), who persuasively assigns this inscription to Erythrae.

private cult. Yet the differences seem to be less important than the similarities. In the following we will try to integrate the literary and epigraphical evidence.

Before we start the analysis of the ritual, though, we will first look at the name of the divinities and their nature. Later literary evidence usually speaks of Korybantes, but the oldest inscriptions always speak of Kyrbantes, as do some of the oldest literary references: this must have been the original spelling.¹⁶⁰ The centres of their cult were the islands of Rhodes and Kos, where we also find the spelling Kyrbanthes,¹⁶¹ and their Anatolian *hinterland*. From here the cult spread to Ionia, Crete and Athens, where they seem to have arrived in the later fifth century BC.¹⁶² The original location is confirmed by the prominence of toponyms with the element Kyrb- in the south-western corner of Anatolia.¹⁶³ Despite recent advances in Anatolian linguistics we are not yet able to explain the name properly.¹⁶⁴

The Korybantes were minor divinities at the fringe of the Olympic pantheon, whose profile remains extremely unclear in our evidence. Pherecydes (F 48 Fowler) mentions that they were nine in number and were the children of Apollo and Rhetia, but he does not add anything else. Their shadowy profile also appears from the fact that already in the fifth century, starting with Euripides in his *Bacchae* (125), poets began to identify them with the Kouretes, with whom they clearly shared ecstatic dancing and the use of weapons in their dances (Ar. *Lys.* 558). The latter detail points to a genderisation of the ritual: it is hardly likely that women would handle arms; moreover, given their sedentary life one would expect them to tire more quickly in the ritual than well-trained youths like the Platonic Clinias (below). The loss of the divinities' identity is clearly manifested in literature, where Korybantes and Kouretes could be mentioned interchangeably; similarly, their iconography, when it becomes visible in the fourth century, does not allow us to distinguish properly between the two groups.¹⁶⁵ Admittedly, the late antique Nonnos knows the exact names of the – in his case – seven Korybantes, but the names are manifestly his own inventions.¹⁶⁶

160 Pherecydes *FGRH* 3 F 48 = F 48 Fowler; Soph. fr. 862. Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 332 n. 124 suggests that the later form (Koryb-) is due to influence from the Kouretes.

161 Rhodes: *Parola del Passato* 4 (1949) 73. Kos: *IG XII* 4.1.299, cf. S. Paul, *Cultes et sanctuaires de l'île de Cos* (Liège, 2013) 160f.

162 Crete: Strabo 10.3.19; Steph. Byz. ι 35. Athens: see below.

163 Zgusta, *Kleinasiatische Ortsnamen*, 314; Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 331–332; Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.52.

164 Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, 1.755.

165 R. Lindner, 'Kouretes, Korybantes', in *LIMC* VIII.1 (1997) 736–741 (iconography); Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.51 (literature).

166 Nonnos, *D.* 13.143–145, cf. Robert, *Opera minora selecta*, 7.202–206.

In the end, the Korybantes remain impossible to pin down properly, but it is clear that they were associated with madness. The chorus in Euripides' *Hippolytus* speculates on Phaedra's wasting away by asking: 'Are you wandering seized, princess, by Pan or Hecate or the holy Korybantes or the Mountain Mother?' (141–44). In Aristophanes' *Wasps* Bdelycleon first tried to purify his father from his madness by performing the Korybantic rites (119–20) before taking refuge in other rituals, and it is with madness that Plato also associates them, as we will see now when turning to their ritual.

Who was allowed to participate in the Korybantic Mysteries? It will not be surprising that once again we hear of both men and women. Plato (below) mentions only men, and aristocratic ones at that, but inscriptions from Thessalonica and Erythrae, dating to the fourth and second century BC respectively, mention women; in fact, in fourth-century Erythrae the majority of the participants seem to have been women. This gender difference is reflected in the presence of priests and priestesses; the Erythraean inscription stipulates that the priests had to wash the men and priestesses the women.¹⁶⁷ As we have seen with other Mysteries, the initiation was not for free, and for the public initiation in Erythrae strangers had to pay even more than locals,¹⁶⁸ a unique condition that seems to have been determined by the public character of the Mysteries.

From Plato (*Euthd.* 277d) we learn that the Mysteries consisted of two parts, as he clearly distinguishes the preliminary rites from the actual initiation. We do not know how the beginning of the ritual was dramatised, but undoubtedly, once the candidate was received, the first act will have been the ablutions, which is explicitly mentioned for the Erythraean ritual.¹⁶⁹ Next will have been the sacrifice, which is also mentioned in the Erythraean inscriptions.¹⁷⁰ Yet the public character of these sacrifices may suggest that the actual performance of the Mysteries took place at a somewhat later stage. It is striking that in Erythrae the Korybantes received offerings for heroes (*enagismous*).¹⁷¹ Were they too low in rank to receive the proper sacrifices for gods? We do not know which animals were sacrificed, but

167 Men: Plato, *Euthd.* 277de, to be added to R. Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens* (Oxford, 2005) 120 note 18; *I. Erythrae* 206; *IG XII* 1.6.1197. Women: Plato, *Leg.* 7.790d; *SEG* 46.810 (Thessalonica), 47.1628; *IG XII* 6.1197 (Erythrae), cf. Graf, 'The Korybantes of Erythrae', 304 (majority). Priests: *Tit. Cam.* 226 no. 90.134 (Kameiros); *SEG* 47.1628 (Erythrae); *IG XII* 4.1.299 (Kos). Priestesses: Posidippus fr. 28.21; B. Haussoullier, 'Inscriptions d'Halicarnasse (1)', *BCH* 4 (1880) 395–408 at 399 no. 8 (Halicarnassus); *SEG* 47.1628 and *IG XII* 1.6.1197 (Erythrae).

168 Cf. B. Dignas, 'Priestly Authority in the Cult of the Corybantes at Erythrae', *Epigr. Anat.* 34 (2002) 29–40.

169 *I. Erythrae* 206.8, 10; *SEG* 47.1628.20, 22

170 *I. Erythrae* 206; *SEG* 47.1628.

171 *IG XII* 1.6.1197.

it may well be that once again a ram was the preferred animal, as was the case in the other Mysteries we have discussed (§ 1 and 2).

In the epigraphical sources the sacrifice is closely connected to a rite not mentioned by Plato: the performance of the krater ritual (*kratêrismos*). The *bricolage* of initiatory rituals cited by Demosthenes in his attempt to slander Aeschines includes the list ‘performing on the initiates the fawn skin ritual (*nebrizôn*), the krater ritual (*kratêrizôn*) and cleansing (*apomattôn*) with the loam and the bran’.¹⁷² This ‘description’ strongly suggests that the so-called krater ritual was also performed in Athens and was part of the preliminary rites of the Korybantic Mysteries, which apparently consisted of washing, sacrificing and drinking. Yet the sparse elucidations of late lexicographers do not help us to understand this part of the ritual better. According to Fritz Graf, the mention of the krater ‘points to wine drinking, presumably a lot of it’, but is this likely?¹⁷³ Binge drinking was not characteristic of women in the ancient world, and wine was often even forbidden to them.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, the position of the krater ritual within Demosthenes’ list of rites suggests a preliminary rite rather than a concluding meal, just as is the case in Erythrae where the krater ritual is closely related to ablutions.¹⁷⁵ The ancient commentators and lexicographers were, perhaps, not that far off the mark with the latter half of their explanation: ‘mixing wine in a krater or offering libations of wine from a krater during the Mysteries’.¹⁷⁶

The high point of the preliminary rite is described in detail by Plato in his *Euthydemus*. When Clinias becomes bewildered by the questions of the sophists, Socrates comforts him by telling him that they are only teasing him:

They are doing the same thing that is done by the ministrants in the rite of the Korybantes, when they perform the *thronôsis* (literally ‘enthronement’) of the person for whom they are going to administer the rite. In that preliminary ceremony there is dancing and playing around ... intending afterward to proceed to the rite proper (277de, tr. Linforth).

172 Dem. 18.259 = OT 577 I Bernabé, cf. Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 321–323, who takes Demosthenes’ description of the ritual too literally and neglects its slanderous character; G. Martin, *Divine Talk* (Oxford, 2009) 104–115; A. Henrichs, ‘Mystika, Orphika, Dionysiaka’, in A. Bierl and W. Braungart (eds), *Gewalt und Opfer: im Dialog mit Walter Burkert* (Berlin and New York, 2010) 87–114 at 102–106; Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.374.

173 Graf, ‘The Korybantes of Erythrai’, 306.

174 Cf. Bremmer, ‘The Old Women of Ancient Greece’, in J. Blok and P. Mason (eds), *Sexual Asymmetry, Studies in Ancient Society* (Amsterdam, 1987) 191–215.

175 The local myth related by Phylarchos *FGrH* 81 F 69, which Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 324 adduces, does not point to drinking but to a libation.

176 Photius κ 1063, with the parallels adduced by Theodoridis *ad loc.*

It is clear from this description that the ‘enthronement’ is still part of the preliminary rite. We hear a little more from Dio Chrysostom (12.33), who mentions that ‘in the so-called *thronismos* the initiators, having seated the initiands, dance in circles around them’, but that is more or less it.¹⁷⁷ Dancing is mentioned already by Sophocles (fr. 862), and its frenetic character must have been such a striking part of the ritual that the corresponding verb *korybantiaô* already means ‘to be mad’ in Aristophanes.¹⁷⁸ As was the case in the maenadic ritual, the tambourine and pipes, played in a certain tune,¹⁷⁹ helped to promote a kind of trance among the initiators, which was supported by whirling dances, so well known from the Turkish dervishes today.¹⁸⁰ Plato repeatedly refers to the ritual and mentions that the participants in the ritual dance in ecstasy (*Ion* 533e).¹⁸¹ This part of the initiation must have been pretty arousing, as Plato’s Alcibiades says that when he listens to Socrates the emotional effects surpass those experienced in the Korybantic rites and make his heart pound and fill his eyes with tears (*Symp.* 215cd). From Plato’s description it seems that the aim of this part of the ritual was to bewilder the initiand. Can we perhaps compare it with the frightening experiences before the final revelation that are attested for other Mysteries (Ch. I.3)? However this may be, it seems to have been the end of the preliminary part of the ritual.

What followed remains unknown. It is almost certain that the highlight of the Korybantic Mysteries took place at night, but that is really the only thing we can say.¹⁸² Likewise almost certain is that the initiation was concluded with a nice meal. This seems obvious from the names of the two Erythraean Korybantic priest-hoods, the Kyrbantes Euphronisioi, ‘of merriment’ and Thaleioi, ‘of good cheer’, but both Greek terms also have connotations of festive meals and drinking.¹⁸³

177 For a full collection of texts, see R.G. Edmonds III, ‘To sit in solemn Silence? *Thronosis* in Ritual, Myth, and Iconography’, *AJPh* 127 (2006) 347–366.

178 Ar. *Ve.* 8, *Eccl.* 1069; Men. *Sic.* 273.

179 Ar. *Ve.* 119–120 (tambourine); Eur. *Bacch.* 124–125 (tambourine); Plato, *Crito* 54d (flute), *Ion* 536c (tune), Men. *Theoph.* 28 (pipes); Posidippus fr. 28.22 (pipes); Long. *Subl.* 39.2 (pipes); Plut. *Mor.* 759b (tune); Max. Tyr. 38.2 (pipes); Origen, *CCels.* 3.16 (pipes and tambourine); Iambl. *Myst.* 3.9 (pipes, cymbals, tambourines and tune).

180 I agree with Dodds, *The Greeks*, 96–97 that Pliny, *NH* 11.147 refers to trance rather than ordinary sleep. For maenadism and dervishes, see Bremmer, ‘Greek Maenadism Reconsidered’, *ZPE* 55 (1984) 267–286 at 271; Y. Ustinova, ‘Corybantism: The Nature and Role of an Ecstatic Cult in the Greek Polis’, *Horos* 10–12 (1992–1998) 503–552 (not without errors).

181 See also Philo, *De vita contemplativa* 3–4.

182 *Orph. Hymns* 39.3.

183 *I. Erythrae* 204, as persuasively explained by Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 325–328. The distinction probably arose in their area of origin, as we still read Θαλείοις in the fragmentarily preserved Koan inscription *IG XII* 4.1.299 (line 12), but we do not hear of it outside Ionia.

When they had concluded their ritual, the participants could call themselves *kekorybantismenoi*.¹⁸⁴ They had performed the Korybantic ritual but stayed connected to the cult in some manner, perhaps to help with the initiation of others.

Why did people want to perform the Korybantic ritual? Nowhere in our evidence is there any hint of a connection with the afterlife, let alone with safety at sea. It is only Plato who, in terms less clear than we would like them to be, suggests that the Korybantes would cure ‘phobias or anxiety-feelings arising from some morbid mental condition’.¹⁸⁵ It is in this connection, probably, that we should look again at the over-representation of women in the Erythraean ritual (above), which matches the mention of women by Plato and the votive to the Korybantes by a woman in Thessalonica. We may here also compare a recently published second-century BC inscription from Priene concerning the sale of the priesthood of the Phrygian Mother.¹⁸⁶ In this ecstatic cult it was women who were initiated, although the cult was closely regulated by the city. The important place of women did not escape the insightful French classicist Henri Jeanmaire (1884–1960), who already at the end of the 1940s compared the possession of women in the African cults of *zar* and *bori* with possession in the maenadic and Korybantic rituals.¹⁸⁷ However, the women in the African cults often came from the lower strata of society and were possessed by minor divinities, whereas those of Erythrae and Priene belonged to the better parts of society, as will have been the case with the Athenian and Thessalonican women we mentioned. It may well be that the Korybantic ritual enabled these women to escape the boredom of everyday life. Just as the maenadic ritual will have been an exciting event,¹⁸⁸ so the Korybantic ritual must have enabled middle- and upper-class women to escape the loom and the wool basket, if only for a single day.¹⁸⁹

184 IG XII 1.6.1197.

185 Ar. *Vesp.* 119; Plato, *Leg.* 7.790d, cf. the clear discussion in Dodds, *The Greeks*, 78–79 (quotation).

186 H.-U. Wiemer and D. Kah, ‘Die Phrygische Mutter im hellenistischen Priene: eine neue *diagraphé* und verwandte Texte’, *Epigr. Anat.* 44 (2011) 1–54.

187 H. Jeanmaire, ‘Le traitement de la mania dans les “mystères” de Dionysos et des Corybantes’, *Journal de Psychologie* 46 (1949) 64–82 and *Dionysos* (Paris, 1951) 119–138, to be added to the bibliography in R. Parker, *Miasma* (Oxford, 1983) 247 n. 62.

188 See my ‘Greek Maenadism Reconsidered’ and ‘A Macedonian Maenad in Posidippus (AB 44)’, *ZPE* 155 (2006) 37–40.

189 Parker, *Miasma*, 244–248.

4 Conclusion

When we now look back at the Mysteries of the Samothracian Gods, Kabeiroi and Korybantes, we can see that these divinities, who derive from the interface between Greece and Anatolia, display some striking similarities but also major differences. The protagonists of all three Mysteries retain something mysterious. Even though we sometimes hear their names, these are often attested only at a late period and sometimes, perhaps, are no more than late inventions. In all three rituals, ecstatic dancing, wining and dining seem to have been much more important than in the Eleusinian or Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries (Ch. III). These similarities seem to have influenced the Greeks much more than the differences, and, from the fifth century onwards, this led to an increasing identification of these gods, first in literature but eventually also in inscriptions, as is witnessed by the fact that in a second-century AD Pergamene inscription it is the Kabeiroi, not the Kouretes, who are present at the birth of Zeus.¹⁹⁰ Yet when we look at their functions, the differences seem profound. The Mysteries of Samothrace were meant for sailors, the Kabeiroi had clear associations with coming-of-age rituals, even though in literature they could also become saviours at sea (*Anth. Pal.* 6.245), and the Korybantes were worshipped for their healing powers, at least among Athenian women. At the same time, we see the rise of a certain privatisation of Mysteries. Whereas in Samothrace, on Lemnos and in Pergamon the Mysteries are part of *polis* religion, in the case of the Erythraean Korybantes we can see the development of a private cult, which had clearly also arrived in Thessalonica and Athens. The most influential private Mysteries in the classical period, however, were the Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries, and we now turn to them, no matter how enigmatic they will prove to be.

¹⁹⁰ R. Merkelbach and J. Stauber, *Steinepigramme aus dem Griechischen Osten I* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1998) 06 / 02/ 01. For further bibliography, see the various lists in Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 303–305; Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.34–36.