

# THE THYMAITIAN PHRATRY

THE THYMAITIAN PHRATRY is attested by two inscriptions. One was discovered on the southern side of the Athenian Agora; the other was found built into the wall of a building below the entrance to the Akropolis, near the Pnyx. Both provide evidence for the cult observed by the phratry.

1. Among the inscriptions published by J. V. A. Fine in his volume on mortgage stones from the Athenian Agora is a boundary stone which mentions a phratry.<sup>1</sup> A fragment of gray marble with preserved dimensions of 0.13 m. (height), 0.133 m. (width), and 0.047 m. (thickness), the inscription was discovered in Section X of the Agora excavations, on the north slope of the Areopagus.<sup>2</sup> The height of its letters varies from 0.017 m. to 0.02 m. For the reader's convenience, I reproduce Fine's text:

$\rho$   
 [— π $\epsilon$ ]πρ[αμένων—]  
 — καὶ Ἑρ—  
 — Θυμαί[τάδη—]  
 5 φράτρα[ι—]

Fine reads the dotted letter rho in line 1 and the letters ΠΡ in line 2. He accordingly restores [—π $\epsilon$ ]πρ[αμένων—] in line 2. This restoration in turn dictates the sense and even the physical extent of the rest of the document. Given the relatively extensive phrase which must follow and precede his restoration, it was impossible for Fine to determine the limits of the inscription on either side.<sup>3</sup> Given the sense of the restoration, “to sell” (or, in context, “to mortgage”), all names in the document must be construed as datives. Fine reconstructs the text accordingly. His version of it may be loosely translated: “mortgaged to [—]er[—] and to ER[— and? — of the deme] Thymaitadai and to the phratry [—].”

By a re-examination of the inscription I have ascertained that Fine's readings of lines 1 and 2 were mistaken. Consequently his reconstruction of the text must also be modified. In fact, the inscription is not a mortgage stone, as Fine supposed, but the boundary marker of a sanctuary.<sup>4</sup> I suggest the following reconstruction of the text:

[ἱερόν]  
 [.]HP[—]  
 καὶ Ἑρ[άκλειος]  
 Θυμαί[τίδος]  
 5 φρατρ<ι>α[s]

Line 2: [.]HP[—]

<sup>1</sup> J. V. A. Fine, *Hesperia*, Suppl. IX, *Horoi, Studies in Mortgage, Real Security and Land Tenure in Athens*, Princeton 1951, p. 11, no. 21. He includes a photograph, pl. 4.

<sup>2</sup> For a plan of the old sections of the Agora excavations see *Hesperia* 4, 1935, p. 312.

<sup>3</sup> Fine (footnote 1 above), *loc. cit.*: “There seems to be no way to determine how much of the stone has been lost on both sides.” Note however that according to his text line 5 begins with the word φράτρα.

<sup>4</sup> According to the Agora inventory card, the inscription was originally categorized by the excavators as the boundary stone of a sanctuary.

The letter which I read as eta is imperfectly preserved: the upper half of its left hasta has not survived. It was also imperfectly carved: while the upper half of its right hasta comes down level with its horizontal bar, it does not connect with it but is slightly off to the right. This anomaly may be explained by a comparison with the eta in line 3: the mason cut the uprights of this letter in two halves, dividing them at the horizontal bar. He has evidently followed the same procedure in carving the eta in line 2, with sloppier results.

Fine interpreted these traces as two letters, taking the upper half of the right hasta as a rho from his line 1 and the remainder of the letter as a pi in his line 2. This reading must be discarded. To begin with, the traces which he regards as the letter rho impinge considerably on his line 2, ignoring the interlineation which is observed throughout the rest of the text. Furthermore, what he reads as the letter pi in his line 2 measures barely 0.008 m. in height, about one half the size of the next smallest letter in the inscription.

*Line 5: φρατρ<ι>α[s]*

Only the left hasta of the alpha is visible.

Since the form φράτρα is not otherwise attested in Attica, it must be presumed that the stonemason has neglected to carve the iota.

In light of these new readings it is possible to reconstruct the dimensions of the inscribed text. Lines 3–5 each begin with a new word, and each of these words is aligned vertically with its fellows. Although the surface of the stone to the left of them is preserved, there is nowhere trace of any letter. It seems certain, then, that the last three lines of the text begin at the left limit of the inscription.

Line 5 begins with the word phratry, which is surely the first word after the proper name in line 4. Since the restoration of the name of the phratry is certain, line 4 determines the approximate extent of the inscription on the right.

2. The other inscription by which the phratry Thymaitis is known is also a boundary stone.<sup>5</sup> It was found built into a late wall in the Lesche,<sup>6</sup> near the Pnyx, where it apparently has remained. If so, then it is buried beneath the boulevard which has been constructed over the Lesche. I have not seen the stone.

The inscription was first edited by Hiller von Gaertringen from a squeeze and a drawing by Prott.<sup>7</sup> His readings were verified by Kirchhoff, who saw the stone in 1896.<sup>8</sup> The inscription is dated to the 5th century B.C. by virtue of its letter forms and orthography.

ἱερὸν  
 Διὸς ξενί  
 ο Θυμαίτι  
 δος φρα  
 τρίας

<sup>5</sup> *IG I<sup>2</sup>, 886: "stela rudis marmoris s. lapidis calcarii albi, l. 0.19 a. 0.23."*

<sup>6</sup> This was not, of course, the original position of the stone. For the Lesche and the inscription see W. Judeich, *Topographie von Athen<sup>2</sup>* (*Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft III, ii, 2*), Munich 1931, p. 299.

<sup>7</sup> *SBBerl*, 1921, p. 442.

<sup>8</sup> At the request of Wilhelm, according to the commentary to *IG I<sup>2</sup>, 886*. For further discussion of the inscription see J. Toepffer, *Quaestiones pisistratae*, Dorpat 1886, p. 12; *idem*, *Attische Genealogie*, Berlin 1889 (reprinted by the Arno press, New York 1973), p. 315; S. Solders, *Die ausserstaetischen Kulte und die Einigung Attikas*, Lindstadt 1931, p. 3, no. 14.

## PHRATRY NAME

The name of the phratry is restored in the former inscription; it appears entire in the latter. The eponym of the phratry must be Thymaites, "the passionate one", the last of the Theseids, who plays such an important part in the legend of the origins of the phratry festival of the Apatouria.<sup>9</sup> The name Thymaites is not attested as a personal name in Attica. It is, however, used of certain Trojans of the period of Laomedon and Priam.<sup>10</sup> Otherwise, to the best of my knowledge, the name does not occur.

The feminine gentile ending of the name of the phratry, *Θυμαιτίς*, *-ίδος*, is unusual. Most Attic phratries have names which end with the patronymic suffix *-ίδαί*.<sup>11</sup> This peculiar form is paralleled in Attica only in the name of the phratry *Γλεοντίς*.<sup>12</sup> Curiously, Aristophanes also preserves a form of the same name.<sup>13</sup>

Thymaites was also the eponym of the coastal Attic deme, Thymaitadai,<sup>14</sup> which was reputed to be one of the most ancient settlements in Attica. The peculiar antiquity of the deme is reflected by its role in the legend of Theseus. According to Kleidemos, Theseus assembled his fleet for the attack on Crete in the harbor of Thymaitadai.<sup>15</sup> The deme was also one of the constituent villages of that venerable association, the Tetrakomoi.<sup>16</sup> This group of "four villages" was traditionally considered one of the original "twelve kingdoms" of Attica.<sup>17</sup>

The form of the deme's name, ending with the patronymic suffix *-ίδαί*, may be significant for its antiquity as a community. Such deme names probably derive from local pre-Kleisthenic cult centers.<sup>18</sup> The odd, adjectival form of the phratry name may be due to the existence of the homonymous deme. A similar consideration may be behind the form of the

<sup>9</sup> The fundamental essay on the Apatouria is by J. Toepffer, *RE* I, 1894, *s.v.* Apatouria, cols. 2672–2680. For more recent bibliography and a discussion of the myth see P. Vidal-Naquet, "The Black Hunter," in *The Black Hunter*, Baltimore 1986, pp. 105–128. For the variation of the name Thymaites/Thymoites, see L. Thraette, *The Grammar of Attic Inscriptions* I, New York 1980, p. 296. See also *IG* II<sup>2</sup>, 6269 and 6270. Hesychios, *s.v.* Thymaitadai, identifies the eponym of the deme Thymaites as Thymoites. The form Thymoites occurs almost exclusively in the literary testimonia, where it is a corruption, due to the form of the name of the more famous Homeric hero: cf. *Iliad* III.146.

<sup>10</sup> *Iliad* III.146 (cited by Charito, *Erotiki* v.5); Dictys Cretensis IV.22; Quintus Smyrnaeus II.9; Christodoros, *Ekphrasis* (*Anth. Pal.*) II.247; Servius, comm. to *Aeneid* II.32.

<sup>11</sup> Cf., e.g., the list of phratries compiled by K. Latte, *RE* 20, 1, 1941, *s.v.* phratry, col. 755; C. Hedrick, *The Attic Phratry* (diss. University of Pennsylvania, University Microfilms 8417309), Ann Arbor 1984, p. 451.

<sup>12</sup> B. D. Meritt, "Greek Inscriptions," *Hesperia* 17, 1948 (pp. 1–70), p. 35, no. 18 with photograph, pl. 9.

<sup>13</sup> *Wasps*, 1130–1138. He refers to a "Thymaitian *sisura*", or cloak.

<sup>14</sup> See Hesychios, *s.v.* Thymaitadai, and footnote 9 above.

<sup>15</sup> *FGrHist*, no. 323 (Kleidemos), F 17; compare also no. 328 (Philochoros), F. 111, with Jacoby's commentary.

<sup>16</sup> See A. Palaïou, «Ἀττικαὶ Ἐπιγραφαὶ», *Πολέμων* 1, 1929, pp. 44–52, 107–111. Cf. also Solders (footnote 8 above), pp. 113–114, 126; D. Whitehead, *The Demes of Attica*, Princeton 1986, pp. 185, 224.

<sup>17</sup> The best treatment of the 12 kingdoms may be found in Jacoby's notes to *FGrHist*, no. 328 (Philochoros), F. 94.

<sup>18</sup> See J. Traill, *Hesperia*, Suppl. XIV, *The Political Organization of Attica*, Princeton 1975, pp. 100–103. Cf., however, Whitehead (footnote 16 above), pp. 24–25.

name of the phratry Gleontis, which is a syncopated form of the name of the Ionian tribe, G(e)leontes, to which the feminine gentile ending has been added.<sup>19</sup>

The significance of the form of the names is ambiguous. We might construe them as simply adjectival: the phratry from the tribe of Geleon; the phratry from the town Thymaitadai. In this case it would follow that the formation of the phratries is later than the formation of tribe or village. It is also possible (and I think more likely) that the form is simply intended to distinguish the phratries from their homonymous groups.

The latter interpretation is supported by the attested practice of an Attic *genos*. A settlement sprang up around the aristocratic family of the Boutadai. Gradually (or perhaps by Kleisthenic *fiat*) this settlement came to be known by the family name. The *genos*, disgusted, added the prefix Eteo-, "true", to its own name to distinguish themselves from the demesmen and to indicate that they were the authentic descendants of Boutes.<sup>20</sup>

#### PHRATRY CULT

In the fragmentary inscription from the Agora (1), the phratry appears to worship two heroes or gods: [.]HP[ - ] and HP[ - ]. I will hazard no guess as to the name of the former, but the latter is very likely Herakles. Herakles was the special deity of the Tetrakomoi.<sup>21</sup> Assuming some connection between the phratry and Thymaitadai, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the phratry might worship the same hero which the deme adored.

The second boundary stone (2) attests the worship of Zeus Xenios by the phratry. Some scholars have explained this cult with reference to the foundation myth of the Apatouria.<sup>22</sup> A certain Melanthos was driven from his homeland in Messenia.<sup>23</sup> Accordingly he approached the Pythia to determine where he should settle. He was told that he should find his home in the place where he would be honored with strange gifts of guest friendship, ξένια: the head and feet of a victim. He received such gifts at Eleusis.<sup>24</sup> Melanthos stayed in Attica and eventually became king of the land, founding the royal line of the Medontidai.

This inscription is the only attestation of Zeus Xenios as the special god of a phratry. The god, however, was commonly linked in the minds of the Greeks with another aspect of Zeus which was significant for the phratry: Zeus Herkeios, the god of home and hearth.<sup>25</sup>

Although we are relatively well informed of the role of Zeus Herkeios in official Athenian cult,<sup>26</sup> there are only two citations concerning the connection of the god with the phratry.

<sup>19</sup> This syncopation seems to be a feature of Classical Attic Greek, for it is twice attested in the name of the tribe itself, Γ(ε)λέοντες, both times in a calendar of the late 5th century: F. Sokolowsky, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques, supplément*, Paris 1962, no. 10. For the syncopation see E. Schwyzler, *Griechische Grammatik I*, Munich 1938–1971, p. 682, note 3 and Threatte (footnote 9 above), pp. 398, 408.

<sup>20</sup> For the Eteoboutadai see, e.g., Toepffer, *Attische Genealogie* (footnote 8 above), pp. 113–133.

<sup>21</sup> See Palaïou (footnote 16 above).

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., the commentary to *IG I<sup>2</sup>*, 886.

<sup>23</sup> This same Melanthos duels with Xanthos in the aetiological myth of the Apatouria. See footnote 9 above.

<sup>24</sup> See *FGrHist*, no. 327 (Demon), F. 1 with Jacoby's commentary.

<sup>25</sup> See W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche*, Stuttgart 1977, p. 374; cf. Suidas, *s.v.* Herkeios Zeus.

<sup>26</sup> Particularly from the oath sworn by the Thesmothetai at their dokimasia. Cf., e.g., P. J. Rhodes, *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia*, Oxford 1981, pp. 617–618. The god also had an altar on the Akropolis, *FGrHist*, no. 328 (Philochoros), F. 67. For sacrifices to the god by the Athenian state, see the official state calendar of sacrifices from the Agora, Sokolowski (footnote 19 above), no. 10, A 61; for sacrifice by

According to Plato, in Athens Zeus Herkeios and Zeus Phratrios were one and the same.<sup>27</sup> Demosthenes describes how the gennetai of Apollo Patroios and Zeus Herkeios introduced an orphan “into his father’s phratry, and brought him to the shrine of Apollo Patroios and to the other sacred places.”<sup>28</sup>

#### PHRATRY SANCTUARY

Both inscriptions of the Thymaitian phratry were discovered in approximately the same area, although on opposite sides of the Areopagus hill. Neither stone was found *in situ*. I think it unlikely that the phratry kept two separate shrines in such close proximity in the heart of Athens: the boundary stones probably came from the same precinct of the phratry.

Even though the only evidence for this phratry comes from the vicinity of the Areopagus, it is unlikely that the *original, traditional* center of the phratry was located in the city. The phratry was a regional organization which normally maintained its ancestral shrines in the vicinity of its constituency.<sup>29</sup> Because of its name, it is likely that this phratry originally had some ties with the deme of Thymaitadai. I would suggest that the phratry’s original, traditional seat was located in the neighborhood of its homonymous deme.

It is an easily comprehensible effect of the “Synoikism of Attica” that rural groups should need to keep meeting places in the heart of the city, near the Agora. One phratry from the Dekeleia, the Demotionidai, is certainly known to have had an informal meeting place near the Athenian Agora.<sup>30</sup> Other phratry shrines are known in the city, all located in the vicinity of the Classical Agora.<sup>31</sup> It seems to me likely that the location of the shrine of the Thymaitian phratry in the city was also an effect of the “centralization” of Attica. Accordingly, I am inclined to guess that the temenos stood close to the southern edge of the Agora, on the north slope of the Areopagus.<sup>32</sup>

CHARLES W. HEDRICK, JR.

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT BUFFALO  
Department of Classics  
Buffalo, NY 14260

---

a deme, the calendar from Thorikos, G. Daux, “Le calendrier de Thorikos,” *AntCl* 52, 1983, pp. 150–174, with bibliography there cited. On Zeus Herkeios see J. Jessen, *RE* 8, 1912, *s.v.* Herkeios, cols. 686–687; A. B. Cooke, *Zeus, a Study in Ancient Religion*, Cambridge 1914–1940, pp. 66–67; M. P. Nilsson, *Greek Popular Religion*, New York 1940, pp. 66–67; A. Andrewes, “Philochoros on Phratries,” *JHS* 81, 1961 (pp. 1–15), pp. 7–8.

<sup>27</sup> Plato, *Euthydemus*, 302 C.

<sup>28</sup> Demosthenes, LVII.53–54.

<sup>29</sup> For a brief note on this subject see T. J. Cadoux, *OCD*<sup>2</sup>, *s.v.* Phratriai.

<sup>30</sup> They used the same meeting place as the demesmen of Dekeleia: see *IG* II<sup>2</sup>, 1237, lines 63–64 and Lysias, XXIII.2.

<sup>31</sup> For another such shrine consult C. W. Hedrick, “Old and New on the Attic Phratry of the Therrikleidai,” *Hesperia* 52, 1983, pp. 299–302. For further information see Hedrick, *The Attic Phratry* (footnote 11 above), p. 137.

<sup>32</sup> Considerably more can be said about the geographic distribution of phratry shrines and the distinction between “urban” sanctuary and traditional seat of the phratry. I shall return to the subject in a future paper. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of the Agora, the anonymous referee of *Hesperia*, and my friends and colleagues for their courtesies and advice.