

Theokritos' 'Idyll 7': Evidence for the Value of the Cult of Demeter to Kos  
Naomi R. Kaloudis (University of Missouri, Columbia)

My paper will focus on the period around Kos' *synoikism* in 366 BCE and Demeter's importance to its inhabitants at this time. Reasons for her status on Kos are many: her position as a healing goddess, the constant concern for a fruitful crop, and the uneasy climate around the period of Kos' *synoikism*. Mausolos' recent *synoikism* of Caria created much anxiety for the Koans and possibly caused Kos to move its capital from the western part of the island to the eastern. I propose that the Koans looked to the cult of Demeter for stability and protection during this time of unrest. The Thesmophoria was important on Kos and is attested to in both archaeological and literary evidence. Her priestesses had much affluence in the community and this is witnessed in both honorary and dedicatory sculpture and inscriptions starting in the Late Classical period. One inscription in particular set up by the priestess Aischron associates Demeter's mystery cult to her role in safeguarding her worshippers. Likewise, the Hellenistic poet Theokritos recorded a journey taken by suppliants of Demeter to celebrate her harvest festival in *Idyll 7*. This idyll continues a tradition of Demeter worship that was first documented by Philitas in his poem *Demeter*; and they both highlight many aspects of her Koan cult with a focus on her medicinal and agricultural aspects. In summary, the protection, security, and healing aspects that surround Demeter's mystery cult compelled the Koans to seek her aid as documented by the priestesses and poets.

Selected Bibliography:

Buraselis, K. (2000). *Kos between Hellenism and Rome: Studies on the Political, Institutional and Social History of Kos from ca. the Middle Second Century B.C. until Late Antiquity*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society.

Cole, S. G. (1994). 'Demeter in the Ancient Greek City and its Countryside.' In: S. E. Alcock & R. Osborne (ed.), *Placing the Gods: Sanctuaries and Sacred Space in Ancient Greece*, 199-216. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Krevans, N. (1983). 'Geography and the Literary Tradition in Theocritus 7.' *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-) 113: 201-20.

Sherwin-White, S. (1978). *Ancient Cos: An Historical Study from the Dorian Settlement to the Imperial Period*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Spanoudakis, K. (2002). *Philitas of Cos*. Leiden: Brill.