

The *Tonaia* and Samian Autochthony

The *Tonaia* (“binding”) on Samos has traditionally been interpreted as a pre-marriage ceremony (e.g. Varro *ap. Lactant. Div. Iust.* 1.17.8 with Nilsson 1957) or, more recently, as a New Year's ritual in which the normally chained cult image was set free (e.g. Graf 1985, Bettinetti 2001). This paper will argue that a different factor— namely a dichotomy between autochthonous and colonial narratives— can re-contextualize these theories and help define the link between civic ritual and ethnic identity on Samos.

According to Menodotus of Samos (*FGrHist* 541 F 1 *ap. Ath.* 15.672), the celebrants of the *Tonaia* bring the statue of Hera to the beach, purify her and then re-enthroned her in her temple. This ritual is a reflection of the myth where Argive pirates attempted to steal the image of Hera (ἀρπάσαι τὸ βρέτας) and the superstitious and barbarian Karians could not trust that the goddess did not leave of her own free will (αὐτόματον) and fastened her tight to a mat of willow shoots (πρὸς τι λύγου θωράκιον ἀπερείσασθαι).

I contend that the performance of the *Tonaia* mediated the complex relationship between the belief in the autochthonous origin of the Heraion, the Argive ancestry of the cult of Hera, and the inclusion of the Karian population from the Ionian coast. The removal, binding and final loosening and re-consecration of her *bretas* represents the ultimately denied *possibility* of the goddess' forcible repatriation (rape) back to Argos, as well as the *aition* for the Karian's marginal status in the procession and ritual.

Bibliography

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