The Panionion: Where Religion and Politics Intersected in the Early Ionian League

Herodotus reports at least five political assemblies of the Ionian League (1.141, 151-52; 1.170; 5. 108-9; 6.7) that took place in the Panionion between 547 BCE (the Persian conquest of Lydia) and 494 BCE (the Ionian Revolt). In the middle of the first account (1.142-150), Herodotus introduces the backstory for the Ionians and their diversity: their previous twelve divisions on the Greek mainland; their migration, in four tribes mingled with non-Ionian groups, to western Asia Minor; and their four distinct dialects. At the same time, the historian points out the common political identity that the Ionian *dodekapolis* shared because of their exclusive membership in their holy place (ἱρὸν), the Panionion, and their participation in the religious festival of the Panionia. Overall, however, Herodotus' account is succinct and leaves the modern reader with questions about how a collective political identity could grow out of such diversity (Hall 2002; Kowalzig 2005; Greaves 2010; Mac Sweeney 2013). This paper addresses this issue with the Panionion as a focal point through which to explore how both religion and politics intersected in the operations of the early Ionian League.

The first half of the paper seeks out the political and religious features in the development of the Ionian League and the Panionion. Many scholars (Herda 2006; Crieelard 2009; Lohmann 2012) hold an interpretation that prioritizes politico-military forces in the creation of the common sanctuary. This follows from Vitruvius (*De arch*. 4.1.4-6) who connects the Panionion's origins to the Meliac War (c. 700 BCE), in which the Ionian League destroyed one of its own miscreant members, Melite, and then constructed the central meeting point for the remaining members. Others (Shipley 1987; Tausend 1992) doubt this account because an inscription from Hellenistic Priene (*I Priene* 37) indicates that the war was a contest between only a few individual Ionian city-states. Both interpretations, however, minimize the religious

details. This paper argues instead that a more significant episode came in 688 BCE, when Smyrna, an Aeolian city-state, was granted membership into the League (Her. 1.149-150; Strab. 14.1.4; Paus. 5.8.7). This inclusion of an outside group indicates that League identity was not based on geography or ethnicity; it was socially constructed through activities performed around the Panionion.

These activities are the subject of the latter half of the paper. Pausanias (7.4.10; cf. 7.5.1) mentions general sacrifices offered at the Panionion. Diodorus Siculus (15.49.1) and Strabo (8.7.2; cf. 14.1.20), quoting a passage in Homer (*Il*. 20.403-404), allude to specific bull sacrifices in honor of Poseidon Helikonios in the sanctuary. Herodotus (1.142-150) and the Parian Marble inscription (*IG* XII 5, 444) refer to festivals. And excavations (Kleiner et al. 1967; Herda 2006; Lohmann 2012) on the Mycale peninsula have uncovered a sixth-century BCE sanctuary (perhaps the archaic Panionion) that contains archaeological confirmation of these ritual ceremonies. On the basis of this evidence, this paper shows that this sanctuary bound the Ionians together as a cult community and provided a space for political discussions. As a result of these religious and political activities, both of which commemorated the participants' shared past and constructed their present and future interests, there emerged a common identity in the early Ionian League.

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