

CAPInv. 1619: **hoi pro poleos mystai**

I. LOCATION

i. Geographical area	Western Asia Minor
ii. Region	Ionia
iii. Site	Ephesos

II. NAME

i. Full name (original language)	οἱ πρὸ πόλεως μύσται (I.Eph(esos) 275, l. 7)
ii. Full name (transliterated)	<i>hoi pro poleos mystai</i>

III. DATE

i. Date(s)	98 (?) - 192 (?) AD
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IV. NAME AND TERMINOLOGY

ii. Name elements	Cultic:	<i>mystai</i>
	Geographical:	<i>pro poleos</i>

V. SOURCES

i. Source(s)	I.Eph(esos) 275 (119/129 AD) I.Eph(esos) 1268 (98 (?) - 192 (?) AD) I.Eph(esos) 1595 (98 (?) - 192 (?) AD) I.Eph(esos) 1600 (180/192 AD) I.Eph(esos) 1601 (117/138 AD) I.Eph(esos) 1602 (98 (?) - 192 (?) AD)
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It is difficult to distinguish between the different associations for Dionysos in Ephesos; what is offered here is one of several possibilities. This entry has been made on the following assumptions:

1.) The *πρὸ πόλεως μύσται*, *pro poleos mystai*, are *not* identical with the οἱ τοῦ προπάτορος θεοῦ Διονύσου Κορησείτου σακηφόροι μύσται φιλοσέβαστοι, *hoi tou propatoros theou Dionysou Koreseitou sakephoroi mystai philosebastoi*. None of the defining characteristics of that name (the epithet of Dionysos, and the qualification as *sakephoroi*) is attested for the *πρὸ πόλεως μύσται*, *pro poleos mystai*.

2.) The *πρὸ πόλεως μύσται*, *pro poleos mystai* are identical with the Διονύσου Φλέω μύσται, *Dionysou Phileo mystai* that appear together with the *πρὸ πόλεως Δημητριάσται*, *pro poleos Demetriadistai* in I.Eph(esos) 1595, under a common priest. This is suggested not only by the common use of *πρὸ πόλεως*, *pro poleos*, but also by the offices of ἐπιμηλητής τῶν μυστηρίων and ἱεροφάντης, *epimeletes ton mysterion* (not attested for the Δημητριάσται, *Demetriadistai* apart from I.Eph(esos) 1595, where they are thus to be attributed to the Dionysiac group; the *πρὸ πόλεως μύσται*, *pro poleos mystai* had both offices, see above).

3.) The lists I.Eph(esos) 1600–1602 as well as the fragment 1268 a) belong to one group, which b) is identical with the *πρὸ πόλεως μύσται*, *pro poleos mystai*. Assumption b) is obviously plausible for I.Eph(esos) 1601 which mentions M. Antonius Drosos, who is also ἐπιμηλητής τῶν μυστηρίων, *epimeletes ton mysterion* in I.Eph(esos) 275, but the possibility should not be overlooked that he was in fact involved in two associations. Assumption a) is suggested by the similar style and content of the fragments; the time-span (between Hadrian and Commodus) is not really problematic.

4.) I.Eph(esos) 1270 (dated to the time of Domitian or Trajan) is not a document deriving from the “Mystenverein der eleusinischen Göttinnen und des Dionysos” (I.Eph(esos) ad loc.). The text mentions priests for life of Dionysos *Phleus* and the Eleusinian goddesses respectively, and thus proves that both cults were closely linked already in the late first/early second century. But if M. Antonius Drosos was indeed the “founder” (καθιερωκός, *kathierokos*) of the Dionysiac association, it came to life only late under Trajan or under Hadrian; its merging with the Demetriadistai took place around half a century later.

Online Resources

[I.Eph\(esos\) 275](#)
[I.Eph\(esos\) 1268](#)
[I.Eph\(esos\) 1595](#)
[I.Eph\(esos\) 1600](#)
[I.Eph\(esos\) 1601](#)
[I.Eph\(esos\) 1602](#)

i.a. Source type(s)	Epigraphic source(s)
i.b. Document(s) typology & language/script	I.Eph(esos) 275 is an honorific decree for Hadrian. I.Eph(esos) 1595 is a fragmentary decree with uncertain content. I.Eph(esos) 1600–1602 are lists of monthly sacrifices; I.Eph(esos) 1268 is a fragment that seems to belong to the same genre. All in Greek.
i.c. Physical format(s)	I.Eph(esos) 1268, 1600–1602: Fragments of marble plates used as wall covering. I.Eph(esos) 1595: Fragment of a column
ii. Source(s) provenance	I.Eph(esos) 275: Found at Selçuk on the Eastern corner of the Artemision-area I.Eph(esos) 1268: Found in the hard dirt of the “Hanghäuser” I.Eph(esos) 1595: Found at Ayasoluk I.Eph(esos) 1600–1602: Found in the theatre

VI. BUILT AND VISUAL SPACE

ii. References to buildings/objects

There is no way to know whether or not the Βαχχεῖον, *Bachcheion* mentioned in I.Eph(esos) 434 had anything to do with this (or another) Dionysiac association. In the inscription, it is most likely a building, not the designation of a group.

VII. ORGANIZATION

i. Founder(s)	M. Antonius Drosos is called καθιερωκός, <i>kathierokos</i> , "founder" or "dedicator", several times in I.Eph(esos) 1601.
iii. Members	The lists I.Eph(esos) 1600-1602 give the names of several people who attended the monthly sacrifices, but all of them seem to have official functions. It is not clear if ordinary members were not mentioned in the list, or if every member was obliged to fulfill a cultic role.
iv. Officials	ἱερεύς, <i>hiereus</i>: I.Eph(esos) 275, ll. 8-9; I.Eph(esos) 1595, ll. 2-3. In the latter inscription, the priest officiates "for life" and is also the priest of the <i>Demetriastai</i>; cf. the comments below and the entry on the <i>Demetriastai</i>. According to the reconstruction of I.Eph(esos) 1600 (time of Commodus), the list was introduced by [ἱερεῖς οἱ ὑπογε]γραμμένοι ὑπὸ [---], [<i>hiereis hoi hypoge]grammenoi hypo [---]</i>], but this is not certain and seems to stand in contrast with the existence of a single ἱερεύς, <i>hiereus</i>. ἱεροφάντης, <i>hierophantes</i>: I.Eph(esos) 275, ll. 9-10; I.Eph(esos) 1595, ll. 7-8; I.Eph(esos) 1600, l. 8. ἐπιμελητὴς (τῶν μυστηρίων), <i>epimeletes (ton mysterion)</i>: I.Eph(esos) 275, ll. 10-11 (M. Antonius Drosos, the "founder"); I.Eph(esos) 1595, ll. 9-11; I.Eph(esos) 1600, ll. 10-11 (plural). μυσταγωγός, <i>mystagogos</i>: I.Eph(esos) 275, l. 13. It is not certain that this was really an office within the association, because it is mentioned as a qualification of the man in charge of erecting the monument; in a similar manner, his son is called (l. 14) <i>hymnodos</i>, referring to a civic institution. The title <i>mystagogos</i> does not appear in the other inscriptions. Several cultic designations (βουκόλος, <i>boukolos</i>, θυρσοφόρος, <i>thyrsophoros</i>, etc.) appear in the sacrificial lists I.Eph(esos) 1600-1602; all of them are familiar from other Dionysiac contexts (cf. Merkelbach 1979).

IX. MEMBERSHIP

iv. Status	The officials mentioned in I.Eph(esos) 275 are Roman citizens; M. Antonius Drosos is known from other contexts as a dedicator. The list I.Eph(esos) 1600 is commented in I.Eph(esos) ad loc.: "Diese 'Priester' sind vermutlich alle Mitglieder eines Mysterienvereins und zwar zum großen Teil wohl einfache Leute, welche doch im Rahmen des Vereinskultes eine besondere Funktion erhalten haben".
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X. ACTIVITIES

ii. Meetings and events	The lists I.Eph(esos) 1600-1602 show that the group assembled for monthly sacrifices.
iii. Worship	Merkelbach 1979: 151 argues against serious religious activities, but the lists do show that a large number of Dionysiac roles was taken over by members.
Deities worshipped	Dionysos <i>Phleus</i> Hadrian (?)
iv. Honours/Other activities	Hadrian is honored as σύνθρονος τοῦ Διονύσου, <i>synthronos toi Dionysoi</i> in I.Eph(esos) 275, ll. 7-8 (it is impossible to translate "the initiates ... who are enthroned with Dionysos", as Harland 2014: 277 does). This may indicate that Hadrian received special worship. A possible parallel is I.Eph(esos) 3329, a dedication to Trajan, τῷ καὶ θεασώτῃ Διονύσῳ, <i>toi kai theasotei Dionysou</i> – the claim is probably not that Trajan is an honorary member of an association (thus Harland 2014: 279, but there is no evidence that an association was involved, and θίασος, <i>thiasos</i> is not a term normally used for associations in Ephesos), but rather that he belongs to the entourage of Dionysos.

XI. INTERACTION

i. Local interaction

Based on the assumptions detailed above, the following scenario could be developed. Already in the early first century AD, there was a group of *Demetriastai* - an association that was probably founded in private initiative, but closely linked to civic affairs and the imperial cult (cf. entry on the *Demetriastai*). In the time of Trajan or Hadrian, this group (with its self-confident assertion to act *πρὸ πόλεως*, *pro poleos*) served as a model for M. Antonius Drosos when he founded a similar group of *πρὸ πόλεως μύσται*, *pro poleos mystai* for Dionysos *Phleus*, with a number of organizational characteristics that were specific to Dionysiac associations, but generally designed to serve the same purposes as the *Demetriastai* (including the incorporation of the imperial family into the cult: Livia and the sons of Drusus in the case of the *Demetriastai*, Hadrian as σύνθρονος Διονύσου, *synthronos Dionysoi* in the case of the Dionysiac *mystai*). Due to the close connections between the two civic cults (I.Eph(esos) 1270) and the similar purposes of the respective associations, both groups joined forces approximately in the time of Commodus (I.Eph(esos) 1595).

XII. NOTES

iii. Bibliography

Harland, P.A. (2014), *Greco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations, and Commentaries. II. North Coast of the Black Sea, Asia Minor*. Berlin, Boston.
Merkelbach, R. (1979), 'Die ephesischen Dionysosmysten vor der Stadt', *ZPE* 36: 151-6.

XIII. EVALUATION

i. Private association

Probable

Note

The status of *mystai*-groups is not quite clear; most of probably served both the private interests of their members and the needs of civic religion.

ii. Historical authenticity

Certain