

CAPInv. 1325: **he hiera synodos ton peri ton Breisea Dionyson techneiton kai myston**

I. LOCATION

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

II. NAME

i. Full name (original language)	ἡ ἱερά σύνοδος τῶν περὶ τὸν Βρεισέα Διόνυσον τεχνειτῶν καὶ μυστῶν (I.Smyrna 639, ll. 1-3)
ii. Full name (transliterated)	<i>he hiera synodos ton peri ton Breisea Dionyson techneiton kai myston</i>

III. DATE

i. Date(s)	80 (?) - 249 (?) AD
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IV. NAME AND TERMINOLOGY

i. Name in other forms	συνόδος τῶν περὶ τὸν Βρεισέα Διόνυσον, <i>synodos ton peri ton Breisea Dionyson</i> (I.Smyrna 600, ll. 5-6) συνόδος τῶν ἐν Σμύρνῃ μυστῶν, <i>synodos ton en Smyrnei myston</i> (I.Smyrna 600, ll. 25-26) οἱ τοῦ μεγάλου πρὸ πόλεως Βρεισέως Διονύσου μύσται, <i>hoi tou megalou pro poleos Breiseos Dionysou Mystai</i> (I.Smyrna 622, ll. 6-8) ἡ ἱερά σύνοδο[ς] τῶν Βρεισέω[ν], <i>he hiera synodo[os] ton Breiseo[n]</i> (I.Smyrna 652, ll. 2-3) μύσται πρὸ πόλεως Βρεισεῖς, <i>mystai pro poleos Breiseis</i> (I.Smyrna 729, ll. 1-3)
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ii. Name elements

Cultic:	<i>mystai</i> (I.Smyrna 601, l. 7; I.Smyrna 622, l. 8; I.Smyrna 639, l. 3; I.Smyrna 706, l. 1; I.Smyrna 729, l. 1)
Professional:	<i>technitai</i> (I.Smyrna 598, ll. 7, 38, 43; I.Smyrna 599, l. 6; I.Smyrna 601, l. 7; I.Smyrna 639, l. 3)
Theophoric:	Dionysos <i>Breiseus</i> . In some instances (I.Smyrna 652 and 729), the <i>mystai</i> themselves are called <i>Breiseis</i> , perhaps in analogy to terms like <i>Dionysiastai</i> that are found elsewhere.
Topographical:	Smyrna (I.Smyrna 600, l. 25)

iii. Descriptive terms

σύνοδος, *synodos*

Note

synodos: I.Smyrna 598, ll. 30, 38; I.Smyrna 600, ll. 25-26; I.Smyrna 601, l. 6; I.Smyrna 639, l. 1; I.Smyrna 652, l. 2

The term *synodos* is not always present; the collective *mystai* can also stand alone, as in I.Smyrna 622 and 729.

V. SOURCES**i. Source(s)**

I.Smyrna 598 (150 AD)
 I.Smyrna 599 (249 AD)
 I.Smyrna 600 (158 AD)
 I.Smyrna 601 (161/166 AD)
 I.Smyrna 622 (129/132 AD)
 I.Smyrna 639 (80 AD)
 I.Smyrna 652 (80 - 249 AD)
 I.Smyrna 706 (80 - 249 AD)
 I.Smyrna 729 (247/249 AD)
 I.Smyrna 731 (80/83 AD)
 I.Smyrna 732 (80 - 249 AD)

Note

If I.Smyrna 652 (honorific decree for the *agonothetes* C. Iulius Cheirisophos, l. 10) is indeed to be dated “etwa 1. Jh. n. Chr.” (Petzl), it could be the earliest piece of evidence. The first securely dated texts are the dedications to Titus (80 AD) and Domitian (83 AD) in I.Smyrna 731. The latest piece is the bronze seal (I.Smyrna 729), showing either Philippus Arabs or (less likely) Gallienus with their imperial households (for 247-249 AD, see Klose 1983).

Online Resources

[I.Smyrna 598](#)
[I.Smyrna 599](#)
[I.Smyrna 600 part 1](#)
[I.Smyrna 600 part 2](#)
[I.Smyrna 601](#)
[I.Smyrna 622](#)
[I.Smyrna 639](#)
[I.Smyrna 652](#)
[I.Smyrna 706](#)
[I.Smyrna 729](#)
[I.Smyrna 731](#)
[I.Smyrna 732](#)

i.a. Source type(s)

Epigraphic source(s)

i.b. Document(s) typology & language/script	<p>The evidence is divided into</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - letters from the association to emperors (I.Smyrna 598 to Antoninus Pius); - dedications made by the association to emperors (I.Smyrna 731, ll. 0-20 to Titus, ll. 21-27 to Domitian; I.Smyrna 622 to Hadrian); - letters from emperors to the association (I.Smyrna 599 from an unknown emperor; I.Smyrna 600 and 601 from Marcus Aurelius); - an archive of letters from proconsuls to the association (I.Smyrna 598); - honorific decrees (I.Smyrna 639 for an <i>asiarches</i>, I.Smyrna 652 for an <i>agonothetes</i>); - lists of members (I.Smyrna 706; possibly I.Smyrna 732); - an oval bronze seal showing an imperial family (I.Smyrna 729).
i.c. Physical format(s)	Most of the inscriptions are lost, greek.
ii. Source(s) provenance	Smyrna

VII. ORGANIZATION

iv. Officials	<p>Priest (ἱερατεύων, <i>hierateuon</i>): I.Smyrna 731, l. 7. The priesthood seems to have been hereditary (διὰ γένους, <i>dia genous</i>) at least in this period.</p> <p>Treasurer (ταμίαις, <i>tamias</i>): I.Smyrna 622, l. 11.</p> <p>Organizer of the contest (ἀγωνοθέτης, <i>agonothetes</i>): I.Smyrna 731, ll. 12, 25.</p> <p>Leader of the contest (ἑυστάρχης, <i>xystarches</i>): I.Smyrna 731, ll. 13, 26.</p> <p>Financial administrator (διοικῶν, <i>dioikon</i>): I.Smyrna 731, l. 14 (perhaps not a real office; cf. Tod 1915: 2).</p>
vi. Laws and rules	<p>The lists I.Smyrna 706, 731 and 732 seem to record new members who had joined the association in the respective years. They show a distinction between those whose father had already been a member (<i>patromystai</i>; on the term, cf. Tod 1915: 2) and others. Presumably, the <i>patromystai</i> had to pay a smaller fee for admission. That fee is also referred to (as <i>(e)iselysion</i>) in the lists: "those who have paid the entrance fee" must be regular members who have joined the association.</p>

X. ACTIVITIES

iii. Worship	<p>I.Smyrna 598, although fragmentary, offers some glimpses into the religious life of the association. It mentions sacrifices (ll. 14-15), "taking part in" something and a <i>krater</i> (on the connection: Petzl 1974: 83). The <i>synodos</i> celebrated the birthdays of the emperors, but also the Panathenaia and "the festivals decreed by the city" (l. 23-26; Petzl 1974: 83-5).</p>
Deities worshipped	<p>Dionysos <i>Breiseus</i>.</p> <p>On the god and his cult, cf. Hasluck 1912/13. The epithet πρὸ πόλεως, <i>pro poleos</i> may indicate that the sanctuary was "before the city", or that the god was a patron deity of the city; cf., also at Smyrna, Demeter πρὸ πόλεως, <i>pro poleos</i>, who also had her <i>mystai</i>.</p>
iv. Honours/Other activities	<p>The association honoured an <i>asiarches</i> and an <i>agonothetes</i> (I.Smyrna 639 and 652). Most epigraphic testimonies relate to relations with the emperors (see above, typology of documents, and below, interaction abroad).</p>

XI. INTERACTION

i. Local interaction	<p>The association was involved in civic festivals (I.Smyrna 598), and must have been an important part of local religious life and (through its relations with the emperors) politics (Hirschfeld 2006).</p> <p>Harland 2009: 155-6 thinks that designations like $\pi\rho\delta\ \pi\acute{o}\lambda\epsilon\omega\varsigma$, <i>pro poleos</i> could be chosen by the associations themselves and are therefore an expression of rivalry for status, but this must remain speculative: If the sanctuaries (none of which has yet been found) were indeed "before the city", or if the city itself regarded these gods as patron deities, the argument collapses.</p>
ii. Interaction abroad	<p>The association not only made dedications to emperors (Titus, Domitian, Hadrian), but took care to entertain and document continuous diplomatic relations to Rome. Thus, a letter was sent to Marcus Aurelius on the occasion of the birth of an unknown son (who died soon; for debate: Kier 1980; Petzl 1983), and both I.Smyrna 598 and 731 appear to be "archives", assembling a number of documents (dedications and letters) that illuminate the association's relations to Rome. For the collection in I.Smyrna 598, the association specifically asked for copies of documents to be sent from Rome, thus ensuring both authenticity of the documents and another occasion for diplomatic contact.</p>

XII. NOTES

i. Comments	<p>The Dionysiac artists were a world-wide ("oecumenical") association with several branches; the Smyrnaean one was dedicated to a local form of Dionysos.</p>
ii. Poland concordance	<p>Poland D 43B (I.Smyrna 731) Poland D *43C (I.Smyrna 601) Poland D 43D (I.Smyrna 732) Poland D 44 (I.Smyrna 639) Poland D 75 (I.Smyrna 598)</p>
iii. Bibliography	<p>Harland, P.A. (2009), <i>Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians. Associations, Judeans, and Cultural Minorities</i>. New York, London.</p> <p>Hasluck, M. (1912/13), 'Dionysos at Smyrna', <i>ABSA</i> 19: 89-94.</p> <p>Hirschmann, V. (2006), 'Macht durch Integration? Aspekte einer gesellschaftlichen Wechselwirkung zwischen Verein und Stadt am Beispiel der Mysteren und Techniten des Dionysos von Smyrna', in A. Gutschalk and D.-A. Koch (eds.), <i>Vereine, Synagogen und Gemeinden im kaiserzeitlichen Kleinasien</i>, Tübingen: 41-59.</p> <p>Klose, D.O.A. (1983), 'Das Siegel der Mysteren des Dionysos Breuseus', <i>JNG</i> 33: 41-3.</p> <p>Krier, J. (1980), 'Zum Brief des Marcus Aurelius Caesar an den dionysischen Kultverein von Smyrna', <i>Chiron</i> 10: 449-56.</p> <p>Petzl, G. (1974), 'Urkunden der smyrnaischen Techniten', <i>ZPE</i> 14: 77-87.</p> <p>Petzl, G. (1983), 'T. Statilius Maximus - Prokonsul von Asia', <i>Chiron</i> 13: 33-6.</p> <p>Tod, M.N. (1915), 'Notes on Some Inscriptions from Asia Minor', <i>CR</i> 29: 1-4.</p>

XIII. EVALUATION

i. Private association Note	<p>Probable</p> <p>The Dionysiac artists are a special kind of "private association", as they had diplomatic relations with Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors, and presented themselves as a separate state on a number of occasions.</p>
ii. Historical authenticity	<p>Certain</p>