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Law and Order: A Legal Document from a Greek *emporion* in Thrace

In 1990, archaeologists in Vetren, Bulgaria, discovered an inscription issued sometime shortly after the death of the Thracian king Kotys I (359 BCE) that records the rights Thracian authorities granted to Greek resident traders living in an *emporion* called Pistiros (Velkov and Domaradzka, *BCH* 1994). The inscription describes traders' rights vis-à-vis both other merchants and Thracian natives and rulers; the limits of the Thracians' power over the Greeks living in Thrace; and various economic provisions. This little-known inscription is of singular importance: its detailed legislation reveals the inner workings of trade across cultural borders and the legal mechanisms a host society used to manage and control foreign communities in its lands. Yet, scholarship has focused mainly on the inscription's economic aspects (e.g. Avram, *Il Mar Nero*, 1997-98; Bravo, *BCH* 1999; Archibald, *TALANTA* 2000-2001). In this paper I analyze the legal stipulations for what they imply about interethnic relations between Greeks and Thracians. I demonstrate that law and religion served to mediate both between the host society and the Greeks of Pistiros and among the diverse community of traders who came from different *poleis*.

The text begins with an oath sworn by the Thracian rulers to Dionysus. I suggest that as a divinity that both Thracians and Greeks recognized, Dionysus could serve as a cultural intermediary between the two groups, guaranteeing the text's provisions to both.

More than religion, however, law emerges as the main vehicle used to mediate both among different Greeks and between Greeks and Thracians. To regulate affairs among the resident traders who brought claims against one another, the Thracian rulers legislated that traders were to be judged by their "*syngeneis*" (1.4-7). I argue that *syngeneis* were not the traders' relatives (*contra* Velkov and Domaradzka, *BCH* 1994, 4); rather the term refers to arbitrators from *syngeneis poleis* – a term that describes friendly interstate relations in diplomatic documents. The practice of sending foreign arbitrators from *syngeneis poleis* was an easy way for foreign royals to adjudicate affairs in subjugated communities whose ethnic make-up was not homogeneous without infringing on the cities' autonomy. Other portions of the decree focus on the relations between the Greeks and Thracians of Pistiros. Thracian debts owed to the Greeks could not be cancelled; the traders' land and other possessions could not be confiscated; soldiers could not be sent to Pistiros; and, hostages could not be taken from among the residents (1. 7-20). The Thracian authorities thus granted the Greek traders the right to pursue their operations without any threat to their safety and with limited autonomy.

In sum, the legislation recorded on this inscription reveals how an *emporion* located in a non-Greek land was organized legally and how the different resident groups interacted with one another in day-to-day life. Law and, to a lesser extent, religion could create a mutually comprehensible world for both Greeks and Thracians.