

The minor mystery cult of the Corybantēs is an interesting case to show how the evidence of local inscriptions significantly enlarges our documentary base and adds to our understanding of the literary record. Literary sources on the Corybantēs and their cult are not very numerous and rather vague. They identify them with several other groups, such as the Megaloi Theoi, the Cabiri, or the Kuretes (see B. Hemberg, *Die Kabiren*, 1950); Plato gives some insights into their (Athenian?) cult that are not very easily translated into ritual reality (*pace* Carl Levenson, *Socrates Among the Corybantēs: Being, Reality, and the Gods*, 1999). Only epigraphical sources give thick descriptions of the mystery cult on a strictly local level. An inscription from Ionian Erythrai has in the past been paramount among these sources (*I.Ery.* no. 206; originally published by Wilamowitz and Jacobsthal in 1909); the divinities are named Kyrbantēs, in a dialect form of the name known from Southwestern Anatolia. The fragmentary text (second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C.) contains the regulations about its priesthood and gives unparalleled insight into the rituals connected with the cult (e.g. the gender roles of priest and priestesses, the ritual called kraterismos, or the performance of ritual bathing). In recent years, new documents have been added to this one inscription (and its echo in a list of priesthoods, *I.Ery.* 201, with the *koine* name Korybantēs):

(1) A fragment of the same or a very similar law in the museum of Bonn and published by N. Himmelmann (*Epigraphica Anatolica* 29, 1997, 117-121); the text significantly enlarges our knowledge of the rituals (e. g. as to sacred meals, or to the role of private vs. public priests) (see also B. Dignas, *Ep. Anat.* 34, 2002, 29-40);

(2) A fragment of another sacred law from the same Erythraean cult, in the museum of Samos and to be published in IG XII; the difficult text talks, among other things, about the civic role of the initiates;

(3) A hellenistic inscription from the region of Thessaloniki (E. Voutiras, *Kernos* 9, 1996, 243-256); the text belongs to a private cult and confirms the importance of ritual baths known from the public cult of Erythrai.

This new corpus considerably broadens our knowledge of a minor mystery cult in the Greek world. It also raises questions as to what exactly was kept secret when a city published such detailed laws on one of its mystery cults, on the relationship between such a cult and the polis to which it belongs, and on the changing role of such cults in the public and the private sphere: Plato's emphasis on healing madness has no parallels in the Erythraean material. Nevertheless, the corpus gives a background to the Platonic passages that allows a more nuanced reading of them.

