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MODELING THE MYSTERIES: GIS TECHNOLOGY, NETWORK MODELS, AND THE CULT OF THE GREAT GODS OF SAMOTHRACE (SANDRA BLAKELY)

The mystery cult of the Great Gods of Samothrace promised safety in sea travel as the reward for initiation. This ongoing project tests the hypothesis that the promise was real, effected through the human social networks created through initiation and festival participation. A GIS database of sites plots the locations of Samothracian affiliation, based on epigraphic and textual evidence for initiation, theoroi, proxenoi, koina, priesthoods and shrines; historical comparanda suggest the potential for these to support long distance maritime travel. Network models recommend the hypothesis that Samothrace functioned as a super-node connecting smaller independent networks, offering an economic argument for the cult's longevity.
