

Economical Officials and Management of Attic Sanctuaries in Classical Athens

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During the classical period in Athens, a high level of administrative complexity characterized the management of religious affairs and enabled the Athenian State to carry out a systematic account of its sacred wealth. Such an administrative system was built on the basis of a complex hierarchy of economical officers. In fact, from the last third of the 5th century BC, the number of administrative offices increased due to a gradual policy of centralization in the administration of the properties of Attic sanctuaries adopted by the *polis*.¹ The two central boards of Treasurers on the Acropolis collaborated with a network of administrators of local shrines who were charged with different and extensive tasks.² Additionally, a certain fragmentation and overlap between various fields of competence led some financial bodies to intermingle their specific functions. The financial management system of the main sanctuaries of Demeter and Kore in Attica clearly proves this.

Since the 7th century BC the *polis* exercised administrative supervision over the ancient sanctuary of the Eleusinian goddesses located in the Attic deme of Eleusis, the Eleusinion in the city of Athens, as well as the shrine of Demeter in Phalerus.³ During the 5th century BC the Athenian State adopted a form of unique and direct control over the finances of these three sanctuaries. The ancient *genoï* of the *Eumolpidae* and the *Kerykes* – from whom the priests and sacred officials of the cult were chosen – were in charge of the organization of rituals and religious affairs. As a result, the deme of Eleusis no longer had any direct jurisdiction over the sanctuaries.⁴ Moreover, a civic board of *hieropoioi* was responsible for both religious and financial functions, and acted in close cooperation with the two *genoï*.⁵ Together they ensured that the *polis* directed the local management of the three Eleusinian sanctuaries. Around 460 BC a reform of the status of the *hieropoioi* occurred, when a very important part of the fortune of Demeter, the proceeds from the *aparchai*, started to be stored on the Acropolis.⁶ From now on, the *hieropoioi* had to administer the treasuries of Demeter and Kore on the Acropolis, the very core of the management of sacred finances. This strategy allowed the Athenian State to dispose directly and rapidly with a consistent part of the fortunes of Demeter.

In the last decades of the 5th century BC, the new college of *epistatai* was created, which was in charge of the complete financial management of the sanctuaries of the Two Goddesses. This was a new step in the centralization process. The *epistatai* assumed and developed the financial prerogatives that formerly belonged to the *hieropoioi*, who still existed but their tasks were now confined to basic day-to-day financial operations. The administration of the three Eleusinian sanctuaries rested upon a hierarchical structure. At the head of this system, the *epistatai* worked in close coordination with the Athe-

nian *Boule* and the *logistai* in order to manage and oversee the finances of Demeter. In this capacity, they issued inventories and accounts of sacred properties and assured the collection and repayment of debts to the Goddesses.⁷

The policy of intensification of control over the administration of the Eleusinian sanctuaries continued during the 4th century BC. At the beginning of the period the fortunes of Demeter and Kore possibly passed under the exclusive supervision of the Treasurers of the Other Gods, based on the Acropolis. In order to have total and prompt access to the fortunes of Demeter, the *polis* once again limited the prerogatives of one of its local colleges, the *epistatai*. By the mid-4th century BC in fact, this board would work exclusively in close cooperation with the *treasurers* on the Acropolis and with the newly created *treasurers* of the Two Goddesses.⁸ The Eleusinian case offers a good insight into the ways in which the Athenian State operated at an institutional level, namely by reforming former officers or creating new magistracies. This was done in order to make the financial management of the fortunes of Attic sanctuaries ever more efficient.

Notes

¹ Samons 2000, 31–40. On civic magistrates charged with sacred administration, Aristot. Pol. 6, 1322B, 1–20.

² Chankowski 2008, 135–140.

³ Binder 1998, 131–139.

⁴ Clinton 1974; Clinton 2005, 8.

⁵ IEleusis 13 (IG I³ 5) l. 2: τὸς ἱεροποιῶς Ἐλευσινίων. IEleusis 28 (IG I³ 78a) l. 8–12; 17–18.

⁶ IEleusis 19c (IG I³ 6) l. 32–38: ἀργυρίο] τὸ ἐμ πόλει· τὸ δὲ ἀρ[γυρίον τὸ]ς ἱεροποιῶς τ[ὸ] το[ῖν Θεοῖν ἐ][μ] πόλει ταμειύεσθ[αι ..].

⁷ Cavanaugh 1980 gives a detailed analysis of the inscriptions IEleusis 30 (IG I³ 32), IEleusis 52 (IG I³ 386–387), and of the role and functions of the *epistatai* of Eleusis. The board is in fact characterized over time by several fluctuations in the number of its members and in the duration of its office.

⁸ After a gap in the epigraphical documentation between the last years of the 5th century and the mid-4th century, the *epistatai* appear in Eleusinian accounts and inventories exclusively associated with other economic officials, such as in IEleusis 144 (IG II² 204); IEleusis 158 (IG II² 1544; IEleusis 177 (IG II² 1672).

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