

Fundraising Systems and Management of the Revenues in Sacred Spaces: the Case of the *Asklepieion* of Kos

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The author recently conducted intensive research¹ on the entire documentation of the *Asklepieion* of Kos, which has permitted us to comprehend the fundraising systems and the management of the revenues of the sanctuary. These aspects previously have been ignored.

Although the documents refer to a coherent fundraising system starting from the 3rd century BC, a sacred law on the protection of the *alsòs*, dating to the second half of the 4th century BC, states that anyone disrespecting the prohibition of cutting sacred trees must pay a fine of 1,000 drachmas.²

For the 3rd century BC, the oldest document is a decree on the sale of a priesthood dating back to 295–280 BC.³ It specifies that this kind of revenue was to be used for the construction of the *archeìa*, probably to be identified as some archives linked to the sanctuary itself.⁴

A very informative document is the *diagrafà*, which concerns the creation of a *thesauròs* in the temple and the foundation of the penteteric *Asklepieia*. An entrance fee also was due to the sanctuary.⁵ The same text mentions the revenues deriving from the sale of the wood and probably from renting lands, as well as the practice of paying a specific sum of money with each animal offer.⁶ The amount required varied according to the victim, as clarified by a text of the 1st century BC.⁷

Further sources of revenues derived from the sale of the flocks of the god,⁸ and from the sometimes onerous fines imposed on anyone accused of irregular behavior.⁹

An additional source of income was represented by donations, both from the euergetism of the Hellenistic sovereigns (first the Ptolemies and later the Attalids),¹⁰ and from generous private citizens.

Concerning the first group, even if there is not any explicit evidence of the amounts given, it is meaningful to note that the royal financial donation concerned the architecture of the sanctuary and the ritual activity itself. An inscription testifies to the latter focus and states that the donation by a Ptolemy (II or III) was allocated for the sacrifices.¹¹

As for the second group of donators (private citizens), they could have donated through legacies,¹² occasional payments, or votive offerings by individuals,¹³ as well as through collective donations for the penteteric festivals. The latter is attested by some lists of subscription,¹⁴ dating from 242 BC at least to the end of the 2nd century BC.

Since the middle of the 3rd century BC, the storage place of almost all the revenues seems to be the main *thesaurus*,¹⁵ created at that time. This can be recognized in the partially hypogean structure inside the cella of temple B. It is also possible that the *Asklepieion* was provided with smaller structures allocated to the storage of daily offers by



Fig. 1: Asklepieion of Kos, temple B, *thesaurus*.

individuals, that are attested elsewhere by the archaeological documentation.¹⁶ These would house “any other offer paid to the god” that the *tamiai* were charged to regularly put in the *thesaurus*.¹⁷

All the wealth collected here was directed to the organization of the *Asklepieia*,¹⁸ perhaps with some contributions by the different magistrates.

Around the middle of the 2nd century BC, a change is recorded:¹⁹ the half of the content of the *thesauròs* belonging to the god was entrusted to the *damosia tràpeza*. Asklepios probably had an account here (at least for a certain period), as is known in Kos in connection to the worship of Aphrodite in the *démos* of Halasarna,²⁰ and for Aphrodite *Pandémos* and *Pontia* in the harbor district of the city.²¹ A later text from the *Asklepieion*²² refers to a *tràpeza toù theoù*, not to be identified with the former mentioned *damosia trapeza*, but rather as a specific financial institution of the sanctuary. This is similar to the ones attested since the classical age in several sacred spaces,²³ whose main functions were: the deposit of money and treasuries (public or private ones),²⁴ lower interest rate lending activities,²⁵ exchanging money for the pilgrims, transactions with private or public banks, and occasional coin issues (for great events).²⁶

According to Bogaert, the “bank” of the *Asklepieion* took care of exchanging money for the pilgrims and of payments. Furthermore, Flavius Josephus records that Cleopatra III stocked a large part of her wealth in 102 BC in Kos, and that the Jewish communities of Asia Minor had deposited 800 talents here, fearing an attack by Mithridates.²⁷

Notes

- ¹ Interdonato 2013.
- ² IG XII, 4,1, 283.
- ³ Parker – Obbink 2001a, no. 3; IG XII, 4,1, 296.
- ⁴ IG XII, 4,1, 84 (1st c. BC) and 85 (1st c. BC–1st c. AD); IG XII, 4,1, 342 (2nd half of the 2nd c. BC); Parker – Obbink 2000.
- ⁵ IG XII, 4,1, 71, ll.10–11.
- ⁶ Herzog 1928, no.14, ll.27–30; IG XII, 4,1, 71.
- ⁷ IG XII, 4,1, 294–295; Parker – Obbink 2001a, no. 4.
- ⁸ IG XII, 4,1, 311 a–c, ll.10–11 (170–150 BC).
- ⁹ Parker – Obbink 2001a, no. 4; IG XII, 1, 294–295.
- ¹⁰ Interdonato 2013, 37–57; 184–189.
- ¹¹ IG XII, 4,1, 31, l.6.
- ¹² IG XII, 4,1, 352 (2nd half of the 1st c. AD).
- ¹³ IG XII 4,1, 120 (3rd c. BC: Le Guen 2001, no. 43); IG XII, 4,1, 81 (1st half of the 2nd c. BC: Parker – Obbink 2001b, no. 3).
- ¹⁴ IG XII, 4,1, 70 (242 BC; Hallof – Hallof – Habicht 1998, no. 24). – Hallof – Hallof – Habicht 1998, no. 25 (end of the 3rd c. BC); IG XII, 4,2, 427 (250–150 BC), 435 (post 200 BC), 444 (150–100 BC).
- ¹⁵ IG XII, 4,1, 71, ll.23 and 28.
- ¹⁶ See Kaminski 1991 and Knoepfler 1998.
- ¹⁷ IG XII, 4,1, 71, l.27.
- ¹⁸ IG XII, 4,1, 71, ll.19–21; IG XII, 4,1, 286, ll.4–5.
- ¹⁹ IG XII, 4,1, 342.
- ²⁰ SEG 1344.
- ²¹ Parker – Obbink 2000.
- ²² IG XII, 4,1, 294–295 (1st c. BC).
- ²³ Bogaert 1968, 279.
- ²⁴ Bogaert 1968, 282–283.
- ²⁵ Bogaert 1968, 290.
- ²⁶ Bogaert 1968, 295–298.
- ²⁷ Ios.ant.Iud. 13, 13,1, 349–350; Ios.ant.Iud. 14, 7,2, 113. Unfortunately, in none of these cases does the historian specify the exact location of these deposits.

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Fig. 1: by author.

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