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FINANCIAL RESOURCES HOARDED IN GREEK SANCTUARIES. THE IMPACT OF MONETIZATION

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SUMMARY

The paper means to be the first attempt to analyze sacred resources' origin, placement and deployment in Archaic and Classical age and the impact of monetization on financial resources kept inside the sacred area. In fact, money introduction widely affected the sanctuary administration, entailing the necessity to identify strategies to measure and quantify preserved precious items. Such items composed a huge financial deposit, that finally acted as an actual State treasury requiring a coherent organizational system.

KEY WORDS

Greek Sanctuary, Sacred Funds, Chremata, Inventory Lists, Monetization

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INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive study concerning funds or *chremata* kept inside Greek Archaic and Classical sanctuaries has not been hitherto carried out and, therefore, the available documentation lacks a structured organization and did not result in a systematic study up to now. The paper means to be a first attempt to face a complex theme that has been only partially addressed by scientific literature up to now, i.e., the analysis of sacred resources origin, placement and deployment in Archaic and Classical age and the impact of monetization on financial resources kept inside sanctuaries.

Greek sanctuaries hoarded huge amounts of money and especially of valuable objects, such as chryselephantine statues, golden, silver, copper utensils and ware, that were preserved inside the temples to physically immobilize the circulating precious metals, thus establishing a permanent deposit for the sacred area, which could be used for the whole urban community's needs in critical periods.

There are several evidence proofing that the Greek sanctuary, in some cases, acted as the actual responsible for communal financial resources. Hoarded assets, formally owned by the deity, were managed by the collective body, thus proofing the deep connection existing between cult and ritual from one side and public economy from the other side.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SANCTUARIES TREASURES

Sacred resources could be collected via donation and dedication by individuals, tyrants, kings, collective bodies. They could also come from revenues in kind or in coins deriving from productive lands;² rents coming from houses

² As for sacred and lay properties in Athens, consider N. Papazarkadas. *Sacred and Public Land in Ancient Athens*. Oxford, OUP, 2011; see also: M. H. Jameson. The Leasing of Land in Rhamnous. *Studies in Attic Epigraphy, History and Topography Presented to Engene Vanderpool. Hesperia Suppl.*, 19 (1982), pp. 66 – 74.

and other sacred possession; animals' droves;³ tithes on products; *dekate*;⁴ income generated by sacrifices; war booties;⁵ taxes on trade;⁶ fees levied on participants in rituals; fines; interests charged on borrowed money;⁷ confiscations⁸ and so on.

Offerings made to sanctuaries could also consist of huge donations, such as when Polykrates of Samos gifted the island of Rheneia to Delian Apollonion or when Nikias of Athens gifted the hippodrome area to the same sanctuary.

Sanctuaries' money could be employed for ordinary expenses that could include, for example, temple building or restoration activities, sacrificial animals purchase, cult personnel payment, feasting implementation and ritual performance.

In some circumstances, some funds might be left over and used to generate income by means of financial operations such as money borrowing – a practice which began after the coined money introduction as will be shown later.

Collected funds could be partially stored as a deposit functioning as a sort of State treasure, ensuring the economic stability of the *polis* managing the sanctuary. Hence, this deposit was not only meant to be spent for sacred purposes but could be used for civic reasons as well. When the *polis*' budget,

³ On animal droves, see S. Isager. Sacred and prophane ownership of land. Agriculture in Ancient Greece, Proceedings of the 7th International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens. Göteborg, Stockholm: The Institute, 1992, pp. 119 – 122, 15 – 20.

⁴ According to Mattingly, maybe a dekate levied on Laurion mines was collected by the Acropolis sanctuary (H. B. Mattingly. Athenian Finance in the Peloponnesian War. *BCH* 92, 2 (1968), pp. 450 – 485); similarly, it looks like Samos inhabitants used to give the tenth part of their revenues to the Heraion (cfr. Hdt, 4.152.4 and *SEG* XII 391).

⁵ See, for instance, the Argive Heraion, that preserved part of the war booty after the Corinthian war.

⁶ As an example, at Delos, tax on *murex* fishing and tithes on naval traffic between Rheneia and Mykonos were levied by Apollo sanctuary (T. Linders. Sacred Finances: Some Observations. *T. Linders, B. Alroth (eds.), Economics of cult in the ancient Greek world, Proceedings of the Uppsala Symposium 1990, Boreas, 21 (1992), pp. 9 – 14, 10).*

⁷ On interests charged on borrowed money see: A. Dauphin-Meunier. Histoire de la banque. Paris, PUF que sais-je?, 1959.

⁸ Confiscations were implemented by Halicarnassus sanctuary at the end of the V century B.C. (Syll 3 46, partic. ll. 1-65). Similarly, revenues deriving from confiscated possession are attested at Samos Heraion (M. C. Kritzas. Nouvelles inscriptions d'Argos: Les archives des comptes du trésor sacré. *CRAI*, (2006), pp. 397 - 434).

composed by ordinary revenues – that were indeed very limited up to the Hellenistic age – was in deficit, the primary sacred area's budget was used.

In fact, while the *polis* did not initiate, up to the V century B.C., a coherent system of taxation or of withdrawal of funds, the sanctuary continuously collected financial resources instead. Nevertheless, the sacred property was managed by the urban collective body, till the point that the *demos* was entitled to establish how and when to use the sanctuary finances and how and when to reintegrate them. So, the sanctuary was formally the owner of the sacred funds, but the *polis* could make use of them to cover unexpected, consistent, extraordinary expenses.

Such extraordinary expenses could be often associated with war purposes. In addition to well-known usage of divine funds hoarded in Athenian Acropolis during Peloponnesian wars, other examples can be cited: when planning the Ionian revolt, Hekastios suggested Aristagoras to finance the navy through the funds kept in the Apollonion in Branchidai (*Hdt. 5, 36, 3*) and later, Corinthians thought of borrowing money from Olympia and Delphi treasurers (*Thuc. 1, 121, 3*); the latter were in fact used by the Phokians in 356 - 346 B.C.

These cases count for the full availability of sacred resources for public purposes: treasures kept inside temples functioned as permanent reserves that could be turned into money, if this should be necessary, for instance to carry out extensive urban and architectural plans or during land or naval battles. As pointed out by J. K. Davies, in the fifth century "a city could not run a serious navy without holding a coldly instrumental attitude towards the assets of its gods".⁹ Hence, the relation between the *polis* and its main sacred area was not only a religious one but was indeed deeply connected to the establishment of collective financial possessions and to the management of public economy.

Question arises regarding where sacred *chremata* were kept. Literary and epigraphic sources, especially inventory lists, indicate that the usual place where divine funds were located is the temple. In fact, the edifice ensured the preserved items a special safety, both due to its placement, usually at the center of the sanctuary, and its internal organization consisting of several chambers that could be locked up. Moreover, stealing from the structure where the divine entity, represented by the statue, stood, was regarded as one of the outmost sacrilege acts. Lastly, temples were very often provided with bodies of magistrates or guardians in charge of their contents control.

The exact location of the resources inside the temple is not always identifiable and could vary from one place to another. Epigraphic texts from the

⁹ Davies (2001), pp. 117 - 128.

Archaic Acropolis of Athens, such as the so-called *hekatompedon* inscription, *IG I3 4*, show that the temple was composed by several rooms secured with keys and that the rooms hosted the sacred *chremata* that were supervised by *tamiai* who checked them periodically. Subsequently, inventory lists refer to the presence of shelves, boxes marked by letters and baskets.¹⁰ Shelves were used to contain precious objects such as *phialai* inside Samian *Heraion* as well.

Some temples had specific spaces where the funds were kept, such as internal trenches excavated in the floor. This kind of device was used in Kos' *Asklepieion*, which was provided with a fossa measuring 2,50 m per 1,50 and 1 m deep, covered with a marble slab and closed with four locks, and in the *Pythion* of Gortys (Fig. 1),¹¹ the *Asklepieion* at Lebena¹² and that of Epidaurus.¹³ Delos' *Artemision* and *Apollonion* had 88 containers, comprehending 12.000 drachmas and 50 kg of precious metals.¹⁴

At Argos, epigraphic texts mention the existence of stone containers where both coins and valuable items were put.¹⁵

MONETIZATION EFFECTS ON GREEK SANCTUARIES

In scientific literature, the discussion on the relation between sanctuary and money mainly focused on two, partially interconnected, aspects.¹⁶ The first one concerns the origin of mintage and its possible derivation from the sacred world and the related topic of the switch from sacred objects marked by a

 15 Kritzas (2006), pp 397 – 434.

 $^{^{10}}$ D. Harris. The Treasures of the Parthenon and the Erechteion. Oxford, Calderon, 1995, pp. 1 – 2.

¹¹ L. Savignoni. Il Pythion di Gortyna. *Monumenti Antichi*, 18 (1907), pp. 177-276, pp. 177-276, partic. pp. 227-228.

¹² L. Pernier. Templi arcaici sulla Patela di Prinias. ASAtene, 1 (1914), pp. 18 – 111.

¹³ R. Martin. Sur quelques particularités du temple d'Asclépios à Épidaure. *BCH*, 70 (1946), pp. 352 – 368.

¹⁴ See *ID* 442 which, though dated to 179 B.C., could nevertheless reflect a model set up in a prior age and remained essentially unchanged over time. In this regard, see also T. Homolle. Comptes des Hiéropes du Temple d'Apollon Délien. *BCH*, 6 (1882), pp. 1 – 167, partic. pp. 60 e 84.

¹⁶ Recently, on the money in Classical age, see S. v. Reden. *Money in classical antiquity.* 2nd ed. Cambridge, CUP, 2012.

financial value, such as *obeloi*, to coins.¹⁷ The second aspect involves the role of the sanctuary in mintage processes. Regarding the latter, scientific community approach sometimes asserted the primary role of the *temenos* in coins mintage,¹⁸ while other times clearly rejected its involvement in the coins production.¹⁹

Nevertheless, the debate hitherto never properly focused on the practical effects of the introduction of money on sanctuaries. Conversely, the adoption of coined money by most Greek microstates around 500 B.C. largely influenced and transformed economic actions taking place inside the sanctuaries, first entailing the necessity of specifying the financial value of the *chremata* preserved inside them.

Not only sanctuaries started to accumulate coins, but they also needed to measure, through monetary reference values, the preserved items. Therefore, at this stage, temple inventories edited by treasurers did not simply list the objects composing the treasures but had to clearly mention their value in monetary terms. Currency standards were used to express the value of growing amounts of dedications of various shapes and sizes that could be converted into coins when needed – and to control and manage such amounts, too.

So, while the first epigraph recording the resources dedicated by *tamiai* on the Athenian Acropolis, dated back to 510 B.C. (*IG I3 510*, Fig. 2), generally mentions *ta chalkia*, without specifying their exact value, all the Parthenon inventories of the Classical age clearly detail the weight and the financial value of each object.

Correspondingly, at Samos sanctuary of *Hera*, the list of offerings dedicated by worshippers not only mentions, one by one, the dedicated golden and silver objects, but also expresses their correspondence in Samian stateres. The epigraph significantly dates back to 580 B.C., immediately after the introduction of minted coins in Samos.

Sacred expenses started to be quantified in monetary terms as well. The first example in this respect is provided by the second temple of Apollo at Delphi, whose cost, according to Herodotus (*Hdt. II 180*) was about 300 talents in Aegina currency (since Delphi adopted the money circa 20 years later).

¹⁷ On religious influence on Greek mintage: Curtius 1869, Lenormant, F. La Monnaie dans l'Antiquité. Leçons professer en 1875-1877, Tome I, II, III. Paris, Lévy, 1878, E. Will. Réflexions et hypothèses sur les origines du monnayage. RN 5, 17 (1955), pp. 11 – 13.

¹⁸ B. Laum. *Heiliges Geld, Eine historische Untersuchung über den sakralen Ursprung des Geldes.* Tübingen, Mohr, 1924.

¹⁹ K. Regling. Tempelmünzen. *F. von Schrötter. Wörterbuch der Münzkunde.* Berlin-Leipzig, De Gruyter, 1930, p. 486.

In other words, the introduction of money caused first a stimulus and then a necessity to measure the preserved resources and this led to the creation of a technical language aimed to quantify the *chremata* kept inside sanctuaries in addition to expenses and income, thus changing their administration and control practices, as clearly reflected in temple inventories²⁰ and other sacred accounting documents, such as Delos accounts.

A further effect of numismatic production was, of course, the always-increasing presence of coins inside sanctuaries, although the main components of treasures continued to be golden, silver and copper objects that, nonetheless, could be easily melted and transformed into coins when the *polis* needed it. For instance, in Athens, during the Peloponnesian war, the golden *nikai* were melted to produce coins and later Lachares even used the golden parts of the Chryselephantine statue of Athena kept in the Parthenon to pay his soldiers. So, precious objects should be finally regarded as "potential" coins, to be promptly produced in emergency situations.

Moreover, the monetization process enhanced the awareness of the financial role played by the sacred area, although this role was antecedent to the process itself, and strengthened the image of the sanctuary as an economic center. By doing so, the adoption of coined money caused the spread of financial activities inside sanctuaries that included, *inter alia*, individuals' deposit and money lending actions.

The most attested term used to designate the private individual's deposit is $\pi \alpha \rho \alpha \kappa \alpha \tau \alpha \theta \eta \kappa \alpha i$ (*Hdt. 6.86*), that is an amount, composed either by money either by objects, temporarily devolved to an individual or to an entity such as the sanctuary, which has to be given back to its owner in a subsequent moment. Private deposit is documented in the extra-urban sanctuary of *Hera* at Samos by Cicero who, while referring to those who steal money kept inside sacred areas, states that even Cleisthenes put his daughters' dowry inside one

²⁰ On temple inventories: J. Trhheux. Études sur les inventaires attiques (Le dernier inventaire de Pronaos; L'inventaire additionnel des trésoriers d'Athéna en 402/1 avant J.-C.; Un nouveau fragment de IG, II2, 1388). *EtACl*, 3 (1965), pp. 1 – 85; F. Costabile. Finanze pubbliche. L'amministrazione finanziaria templare. *Pugliese Carratelli G. (a cura di), Magna Grecia. Lo sviluppo politico, sociale ed economico, II.* Milano, Mondadori Electa, 1987, pp. 103 – 114; M. Vickers. Golden Greece. Relative Values, Minae, and Temple Inventories. *AJA* 94 (1990), pp. 613 – 625; J. Trhheux, e D. Knoepfler. Comptes et inventaires dans la cith grecque: actes du colloque international d'épigraphie tenu d Neuchâtel du 23 au 26 septembre 1986 en l'honneur de Jacques Trhheux. Genève, Droz, 1988.

of them, namely the *Heraion* (*Cic. De leg. 2.16*).²¹ Besides, according to Plutarch (*Plut. Vit. Lys. 18.3*), Lysander deposited in Delphi sanctuary 52 mines and 11 stateres. Also, Artemis temple at Ephesus was renowned for the security ensured to private deposits, as testified by Dio Chrysostom (*Dio 31.54-55*) and Artemidorus: The authors plainly affirm that when the *polis* needed financial funds, it normally took them from the goddess treasures, but never touched the individuals' deposits. This practice is also attested at Priene, Olympia, Tegea, Rodhes, etc.

As for borrowing practices, the case of the Rhamnous is emblematic. For five, probably sequential, years, around 440 B.C., the demos of Rhamnous recorded the amount of the treasure of the goddess Nemesis in monetary standards.²² The epigraphs refer to the treasure with the word *argyrion* and indicate its total amount in drachmas. The money was lent out, presumably to individual citizens, in lots consisting of 200 or 300 drachmas and it is likely that interest was charged. The increase from 39.528 drachmas to 56.606 drachmas can be thus explained, with an annual interest rate of over 7 per cent during the attested five years. It seems that the goddess and her temple exploited the sacred possessions that have been transformed into coins, by lending out money at interest, thereby augmenting the sanctuary wealth. Besides, the inscriptions indicate how these funds were managed and controlled by the public magistrates of the *polis*. Therefore, monetization clearly affected the

²¹ Sacrilego poena est, neque ei soli qui sacrum abstulerit, sed etiam ei qui sacro commendatum. Quod et nunc multis fit in fanis, < et olim > Alexander in Cilicia deposuisse apud Solensis in delubro pecuniam dicitur, et Atheniensis Clisthenes civis egregius, quom rebus timeret suis, Iunoni Samiae filiarum dotis credidisse).
²² The texts of the five lists reads as follows:

 $[\]rm I-Under$ the demarch Autokleides, the amount of the money owned by Nemesis was 37.000 drachmas, together with those owning the 200 drachmas. The sum of the other money of Nemesis was 2.728 drachmas and 3 obols.

II – Under the archon Mnesiptomelos, the amount of the sacred money was 51.397 drachmas and 5 obols.

III – Under the archon Nausimenes, the amount of the sacred money was of 37.000 drachmas, together with those owning the 200 drachmas. The sum of the other money of Nemesis was 11.723 drachmas and 2 obols.

 $[\]rm IV$ – Under the archon Euainetos, the sum of the 300 drachmas lots of money was 13.500. The whole amount was 55.712 drachmas and 1 obol.

V - Under the demarch Demophanes, the amount of the money managed by the hieropoioi was 5.206 drachmas and 4 obols. The sum of the 300 drachmas lots of money was 14.400 and that of the 200 drachmas lots was 37.000 drachmas. The whole amount was 56.606 drachmas and 4 obols.

demos' behavior: the collective body, instead of conceiving the *temenos* resources as something to be just kept locked inside the temple, started to use them in an active way to increase the sanctuary and the *polis* wealth.

Money circulation affected offerings regime as well. Initially, sacred areas did not own financial funds to buy material for their rituals and ceremonies, so that they had to totally rely on worshippers' offerings that would mainly have been animals or food, as testified by literary and epigraphic sources. For example, the *lex sacra* from the Eleusinion in Athens (*IG I3 232*, partic. *ll. 59-68*), dating back to 500 B.C., records items such as containers filled with wine, honey cups, olive oil, cheese, beans, sesame cakes.

Nevertheless, the in-kind offering regime, however stable, was somehow invaded by money. The switch can be observed at Delphi, where the *pelanos* originally denoted a cake made of flour and honey to be burnt on an altar (*CID I 8, ll. 24-28*) and, slightly later, it became a fee levied in coin (*CID* I 9).

Other proofs of the tendency to monetize can be found in calendars of sacrifices that started to mention fees for priests as well as for offerings and victims. One of the most exemplary documents in this regard is provided by the regulations (*IG 13 6 C, ll. 5-50*) set out around 460 B.C. for the Mysteries in the Eleusinion at Athens, that clearly reflect the "irresistible convenience of coin"²³ by mentioning exactly how much money should be levied from *mystai* or initiates for festival organizers, for priests and so on.

So, while the earlier texts, such as the treaty of Argos, Tylissos and Knossos (*IC I VIII 4** and XXX = ML 42), dealt with the parts of the victim, specifying which of them had to be given to the deity, later documents dealt with fees to be paid for the victim instead.

In some sites the process was further developed: For example, in the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis (Fig. 3), resources that had been previously collected in kind were sold out so to be monetized and the income thus generated could be used to create donations to be kept in the sanctuary, as the First Fruits Decree of 420 B.C. indicates.²⁴ In this case, the sanctuary's assets became so consistent that it could financially help the city of Athens during its critical moments.

²³ Davies (2001), p. 120.

 $^{^{24}}$ [...] The hieropoioi [...] will sell the barley and the wheat and are to dedicate dedications to the Two Goddesses [...] (*I*G I3 78).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the mentioned examples demonstrate how deeply the introduction of coined money affected sanctuary overall organization and strongly stressed its role as an economic space where collective funds were hoarded, managed and where a great variety of financial transactions took place.

It can be assumed that sanctuaries treasures were marked by a bipolar structure: a sector was composed by coins and another one by valuable objects.

This monetary sector could be immediately spent, and it was hence likely used for ordinary and recurrent expenses, such as those related to ritual performance or building construction and could be used for lending actions dedicated to single individuals. In general, any limited expense could be covered by this monetary sector.

Objects made of precious metals instead composed the remaining, wider, part of the sanctuary treasure, thus creating a huge amount of hoarded gold, silver, and copper, which lastly functioned as a public estate, a sort of *polis* deposit to be used in extraordinary cases by melting its items, although formally through an act of "borrowing". Chryselephantine statues, golden crowns, silver *phialai*, copper censers, jewels and all other kind of precious utensils were thus used to guarantee Archaic and Classical cities' economic stability, providing them with readily available currency in critical moments such as wars.

The study of monetization processes in relation to sanctuary finally reveals the crucial interdependence existing between *polis* and *temenos* in the management of public life and particularly in the organization of collective economy.

Images



Fig. 1 – Gortyn, Pythion (A. Di Vita. *Gortina di Creta. Quindici secoli di vita urbana.* Roma, L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2010)

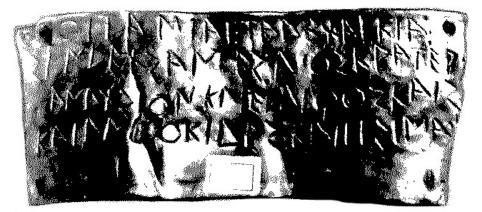


Fig. 2 – Inscription of the *tamiai* from the Athenian Acropolis, *IG 13 510* (Jeffery, L. H. *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece. A Study of the Origin of the Greek Alphabet and Its Development from the Eighth to the Fifth Centuries.*, Oxford, Calderon, 1961)



Fig. 3 – Eleusis, Telesterion (Lippolis, E. e Livadiotti, M. e Rocco. G. Architettura greca. Storia e monumenti del mondo della polis dalle origini al V secolo. Milano, Mondatori, 2007)

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