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KEEPING THE SACRED LANDSCAPE BEAUTIFUL AND ELABORATE: MAINTENANCE OF SANCTUARIES IN ANCIENT GREECE

Abstract: The author explores the relationship between sanctuaries and society through the management of votive objects by authoritative bodies in ancient Greece. Sacred regulations and decrees prescribing the handling of votive offerings reveal constant social tensions regarding the disposal, recycling and reuse of votive offerings. On the one hand, such tasks were essential for the environmental management of a sanctuary, but on the other hand they were often totally forbidden. Sanctuaries were subject to necessary controls by various managing bodies in response to current issues. The same performance could be considered both welcome and unwanted. These phenomena suggest how alive sanctuaries would have been. The author attempts to reconstruct the living landscape of sanctuaries by examining the regulations governing the management of votive offerings.

Keywords: *Dedication, votive objects, management of sanctuaries, sacred regulations.*

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INTRODUCTION

Natural disasters, such as earthquakes and fires, and the destruction caused by war, led to natural consequence, the rebuilding of sanctuaries. However, even in normal circumstances, any sanctuary's landscape was constantly and gradually changing. Keeping a sanctuary tidy was a huge undertaking for any group or person(s) in charge. At the same time, installing a new dedication inevitably altered the landscape of a sanctuary, whether significantly or not. Thus, there might have been constant social tensions regarding whether the disposal, recycling and reuse of votive offerings were considered sacrilegious acts or essential for the environmental maintenance of a sanctuary. This paper explores the relationship between the sanctuary and society, particularly the relationship between the sanctuary and its worshippers through the management of votive objects by the authoritative bodies. Through this examination, we may get closer to the living image of the sanctuary.¹

¹ The primary research on the practice of votive offerings in ancient Greece remains the work of Rouse (ROUSE 1902). VAN STRATEN 1981 and VAN STRATEN 1992 reveal a variety of profound views on the act of votive offering and its relations to the worshippers. More scholars have turned their attention to votive practice in recent years and have tried different approaches. OSBORNE 2004 and BODEL 2009 discuss how to approach votive objects in the study of religious practice. Parker gives an excellent introduction to the dedication practice with bibliographies (*ThesCRA* I, 269-281). Price's description is also useful (PRICE 1999, 58-63). The introduction in LUPU 2009

THE ACT OF DEDICATION

Theoretically, for the ancient Greeks, any structure such as a temple was not necessarily an essential element of a sanctuary. What distinguished a sanctuary from other places was the presence of an altar and a boundary between the sanctuary and the outside world. Sometimes the boundary was enclosed by a wall, sometimes by a boundary stone, but whatever the case, it was considered a sanctuary if there was a plot and an altar within it.² It could be in a remote place, on a mountaintop, in a rocky cave, in a grotto, on the banks of a river, or in any other place where the natural conditions made it suitable for a sanctuary. Worshippers visited there and offered sacrifices and dedications to the gods in whatever way they saw fit. The accumulation of often mostly similar votive offerings by visitors also helped to shape the site as a sanctuary.

The essential acts performed to receive the blessings of the gods were sacrifice, dance and bringing votive offerings. Worshippers obtained favour and support (*charis*) from the gods through these acts of praise and thanksgiving (*charis*).³ Votive offerings are unique in that they 'remain', and whatever was dedicated was left in the sanctuary afterwards as a tangible reminder of the dedicator's devotion.

The most common word for a votive offering was *anathêma* (plural *anathêmata*), deriving from the verb *anatithenai*, which semantically means 'to raise up' or 'to set up'. Thus, in the first sense, votive offerings were 'things placed on top' or 'things set up on top'. They could be placed on a pillar as a pedestal or in a hollow in a rock wall. Smaller and lighter items were often pinned to the wall or hung from the branches of trees. As the word '*anathêma*' implies, a votive offering was placed to be seen, and thus a certain 'continuity' or 'permanence' was expected. From the moment votive offerings were set up for the gods, they became something to be shown to visitors to the sanctuary. In conjunction with the agonistic spirit in ancient Greek society, the 'set up' votive offerings also revealed the status of the dedicator in society. In short, it is no exaggeration to say that the sanctuary's landscape was created through the competition among votive offerings for self-presentation.

Votive offerings were made in public and in private, and each person brought what he or she wished to the sanctuary, but this did not necessarily mean that they could set up whatever they wished. From the moment the votive

is a good and concise for the sacred laws regulating dedications (LUPU 2009, 31-41). Lombardi collects literary and epigraphical materials concerning the management of dedications (LOMBARDI 2009). Sosin investigates the public control over space using mainly parallel epigraphical materials (SOSIN 2005). Dignas illustrates the reality of the sanctuary through the behaviour of the visitors to the Asklepios sanctuary (DIGNAS 2007). Scott wrote a monograph on the relationship between sanctuary and landscape, using Delphi and Olympia as case studies (SCOTT 2010). Most recently, Rask has enquired how sanctuaries are shaped by votive offerings, mainly through examining votive deposits (RASK 2020).

² When a new polis was founded, the first thing to be done was to demarcate the city, and it was essential to decide where to place the sanctuaries and how to divide them. For example, in the construction of Alexandria, Alexander decided where the agora was to be placed and how many sanctuaries were to be built (Arr. *Anab.* 3.1.5).

³ Typically described by Theophr. *On Piety*, fr. 12, 42-44: We should offer sacrifices to the gods for three things. For honour, for thanksgiving, and for seeking what is good (ἡ γὰρ διὰ τιμὴν ἢ διὰ χάριν ἢ διὰ χρεῖαν τῶν ἀγαθῶν). See also Pl. *Euthyphr.* 14b-c.

offerings were brought into the sanctuary, they were subject to the rules and regulations of supervisors and authorities. In other words, all votive objects were subject to communal control.

THE MANAGEMENT OF SANCTUARIES

Whether placed inside or outside the temple, votive objects were subject to regulations concerning their handling. For example, an inscription from Loryma, a coastal territory of Rhodes in Asia Minor, dating to the third century BCE, refers to the handling of votive offerings.

Εκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ μὴ ἐκφέρειν τῶν ἀν[α]θημάτων
των μηδὲ βλ[άπ]τε[ι]ν μηθέν, [μη]δὲ παρὰ
τ[άξιν] τασσόν[των πίνακα]ς, μήτ[ε] ἄλλους ἐς
φε[ρόντων] ἄνευ τ[οῦ] ἱερέως.]

Do not carry out dedications (*anathêmata*) from the sanctuary, nor damage them, nor disorder the *pinakes*, nor bring in other ones without (the permit of) the priest (LSAM 74 = *I.Rhodische Peraia* 3, 1-10).

This inscription clearly shows how votive offerings were to be treated. The priest directed the place of a votive offering, and once it was placed, it could not be moved away without his permission. A badly damaged inscription from Paros, dating to the second century BCE, also forbids damage to the votive objects (*anathêmata*).⁴

On the other hand, an Athenian decree of the second century BCE requires the removal of painted plaques (*pinakes*) that might obscure the view of the statue of Asklepios and the clearing away of votive objects unworthy of being kept in the temple *cella*.

[μηκέτι ἐπισκοτῆται τ]ὸ ἄγαλμα τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπὸ τῶν
ἀνακειμένων ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ εἰκονικῶν πινάκων
ν [τὸν δὲ ἱερέα μεταθεῖν] αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν στοάν
καὶ [τὰ ἄλλα ὅσα πέρ ἐστιν] ἀνάξια τοῦ ἱεροῦ καὶ
εἰς τὸ [λοιπὸν μηθένα μετ]ατιθεῖν μηθέν ἐν τῷ [ἱ]
ερῷ ἄνευ τοῦ ἱερέως καθ' ἅπερ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὑπῆρχεν.

Do not block the statue of the god (Asklepios) with the votive painted *pinakes* in the temple. The priest is to move them to the stoa, and any other objects that are unworthy for the temple should also be moved to the stoa. In the future, it is forbidden to make any votive offering in the temple without the permission of the priest (LSCG 43 = IG II² 995, 6-12).⁵

Votive offerings could become damaged over time; occasional occurrences of 'in poor condition (*ouk hygiês* etc.)',

⁴ LSCG 112, 6. Cf. IG XII 5. 129, 43-46 (Paros, second century BCE). In this honorary decree, the honorand was granted the privilege of erecting a statue but was ordered to choose a place where the erection would not damage other statues (*anathêmata*) already in place. Although the place of the erection was not in the sanctuary but in the building of the *agoranomoi*, the intention of the regulation is similar. On the control of public space, see MA 2013, 70-75.

⁵ Cf. Herodas, *Mime* 4. A woman visiting the temple of Asklepios (probably in Kos) with her friend and two slaves sacrificed and dedicated a *pinax* to the right of Hygieia (19-20). Although this was a fictitious story and the statue of Hygieia was placed outside the temple, it suggests that painted *pinakes* were often placed around the cult statues. Corbett explores the accessibility within a temple for ordinary citizens (CORBETT 1970). Dignas agrees with his view (DIGNAS 2007).

'broken (*kateagotos* etc.)' or similar expressions in entries in the inventory lists from elsewhere indicate this. At the same time, they were still treated as sacred treasures and they were therefore carefully listed.⁶ Among the votive offerings under control, precious metal votive objects were sometimes melted down to make new ones. An Athenian decree, dated to 220/19 BCE, details the procedure of the management of the Hero Doctor (*Hērōs Iatros*) by elected supervisors with the priest.⁷ An *oichonoe* for the god was to be made from the items melted down.

καθελόντες τοὺς τύπους καὶ εἴ τι [ἄ]λλο ἐστὶν ἀργυροῦν ἢ χρυσοῦν καὶ τὸ [ἀ]ργύριον τὸ ἀνακείμενον στήσαντες [κ]ατασκευάσουσι τῷ θεῷ ἀνάθημα ὡς ἂν δύνωνται κάλλιστον

(Those elected to take in charge), having melted down the models and anything else that there is in silver or gold, and having weighed the stored silver coin, will fashion for the god a dedication, as beautiful as they can, and will dedicate it. (*IG II³ 1 1154 = LSCG 41, 30-34, translation: AIO_630*)

The decree also ordered that the precious metal votive offerings and silver coins to be melted down should be inscribed on a *stele*, recording the names of dedicators and the weight of the objects (35-40). The list was inscribed at the bottom of the *stele*, and the *stele* was dedicated and erected in the sanctuary (54-79). Even if votive offerings lost their former shapes, dedicators' names could remain on the list, and they were expected to be preserved in perpetuity.⁸

In some cases, damaged votive objects were ordered to be repaired. The statues of Athena Nike, dedicated to commemorate Athenian victories in 426/5 BCE, were voted to be repaired in the 330s BCE.⁹ The golden statues of Athena Nike and the gold and silver ritual cups, which had been melted down into coins for the war effort in 407/6 BCE, were also renewed and re-dedicated probably at the same time.¹⁰

⁶ Most of the examples can be found in the inventory lists from Athens and Delos. Damaged objects were continuously inspected and kept in the temple inventories. The inscription from Iasos of the fourth century BCE (*I. Iasos* 220 = *LSAM* 59), which set out the duties of the priests, was thought to have required that votive offerings be stored in different ways depending on their state of disrepair. Fabiani's new edition of this inscription has rejected this interpretation (FABIANI 2016).

⁷ *IG II³ 1 1154 = LSCG 41*. This is a dedicatory monument to the Hero Doctor, and the decree was inscribed as part of the dedicatory inscription.

⁸ Similar decisions can be found in *IG II³ 1 1151* (223/2 BCE) and *IG II³ 1 1220* (c. 210 BCE) from Athens. A decree of the Boiotian Confederacy for repairing and replacing votives, dating to c. 200 BCE, followed a similar procedure (*LSCG* 70 [lines 1-52 only] = *IG VII* 303 = *I Oropos* 324). A long list of votive items, weights and dedicators' names is inscribed on the *stele*'s backside (53-102). In Athenian laws on votive objects of c. 335 BCE, enquiries were made on whether a new 'greater and more beautiful object' should be made each year for each god or goddess from the sacred fund (*IG II³ 1 445, 24-51*). Although the context was different, it was essential to keep the sanctuary more beautiful to show the community's piety. Cf. Dem. 22. 72-73 = Dem. 24. 181-182. Demosthenes condemned Androtion's act of melting down gold crowns with the dedicatory inscriptions, making new ones and inscribing his own name on them.

⁹ *IG II³ 1 444 = LSCG 35, 6-12, esp. 7-8*: [ἐπὶ τὴν] ἐπισκευὴν τοῦ ἀγάλματος τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς τῆς Νίκης (on the repair of the statue of Athena Nike).

¹⁰ [Plut.] *X orat.* 841d, 852b; Paus. 1.29.16. In a posthumous decree honouring Lykourgos, he was honoured because he provided adornment for the goddess Athena, solid gold Nikai, gold and silver vessels for the procession and ornaments of gold for one hundred basket-bearers ([Plut.] *X orat.* 852b; *IG II² 457+3207* [307/6 BCE]). It was not uncommon for metal votive offerings to be melted down to pay for the war effort. According to Pausanias (10.13.9), the Phokians removed and melted down the golden

COMPETITIVE ATTITUDE AMONG THE WORSHIPPERS AND THE REGULATION FOR VOTIVE PRACTICES

In the third century BCE, the Rhodians resolved to regulate the placement of new votive offerings in the sanctuary of Asklepios in Rhodes.

μὴ ἐξέστω μηθεὶν αἰτήσασ[θαι ἀνά]θεσιν ἀνδριάντος μηδὲ ἄλλου [ἀναθ]ήματος μηδενὸς ἐς τὸ κάτω μέρος [τοῦ τ]εμένους ἀπὸ τε τοῦ προπύλου [ἐπ' ε]ύθειας ἔστε ποτὶ τὰ ἀναθήματα [ῶ]ν ἐντι ταὶ αἰτήσεις πρότερον γεγενη[μ]ῆναι, ἢ ἐς ἄλλον τινα τόπον ἐν ᾧ σταθέντα τὰ ἀναθήματα κωλύσει τοὺς περιπάτους·

No one is permitted to request the setting up of a statue or some other votive objects in the lower part of the sanctuary (*temenos*) from the entrance gate (*propylon*) towards those votive objects for which the requests were previously made. Nor may they be erected in any other place where such objects would obstruct the passage of worshippers (*LSCG Suppl.* 107, 10-18).

The reason for this regulation was primarily to prevent the obstruction of worshippers. However, a different perspective also appears, as the other epigraphical evidence shows. It seems that worshippers competed to place taller votive offerings, which sometimes obstructed the view of the main structure and prestigious votive offerings in the sanctuary. The prohibition on erecting a statue around the statues of Harmodios and Aristogeiton in the Athenian Agora without permission is also of the same essence as the prohibition on the excessive placement of votive offerings in prominent places.¹¹

Regulations were also issued to prevent new buildings from being damaged by votive offerings. In a Milesian inscription from the third century BCE, instructions regarding the setting up (*anatheinai*) of *pinakes* and other votive offerings brought to the temple of Apollo include a warning not to damage the wooden parts of the new stoa.

πρὸς τὴν ξύλῳσιν τῆς στοιῆς τῆς καινῆς τῆς ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος μὴ ἐξεῖναι πίνακα ἀναθεῖναι μηδὲ ἄλλο μηδέν, ὅπως μὴ βλάβπηται ἢ ξύλῳσις, μηδὲ πρὸς τοὺς κίονας· <ἢ>ν δέ τις βούληται ἀνατιθέναι τι εἰς τὴν στοιὴν τὴν καινὴν, ἀνατιθέτω πρὸς τοὺς τοίχους τοὺς ἀλειφομένους ὑποκάτω τοῦ ἀντιδοκίου τοῦ λιθίνου.

It is forbidden to place votive *pinakes* or other objects in the wooden part of the new stoa in the Apollo sanctuary in order to prevent any damage to the woodwork. They must

tripod bearing a cauldron on the serpent column, dedicated to Apollo in 479 BCE, during the Third Sacred War. The column remained *in situ* until Constantine the Great carried it away to Constantinople in 330 CE. Even if the most precious topmost votive object was lost, the bronze column with the votive inscription continued to stand at Delphi. For the meaning of ritual display in the religious reforms by Lykourgos, see LINDERS 1996.

¹¹ For hundreds of years since the Tyrannicides monument by Kritios and Nesiotes was placed in 477/6 BCE, the location where it was erected has had a special significance. In *IG II² 450, 7-12* (314/3 BC) and *IG II³ 1 853, 37-40* (295/4 BC), the honorands were asked to erect the statues in the most prominent place except near the Tyrannicides. See BALTES 2020, 351-353.

not be fixed to the pillars either. If anyone wishes to place something in the new stoa, they must be fixed to the plaster of the wall below the stone steps supporting the beams (LSCG Suppl. 123 = *I. Delphinion* 32, 1-5).¹²

Likewise, the Delphic Amphictyony forbade any votive offering to damage the Stoa of Attalos I except for that by the king himself.

εἰς τὰν παστά[δα τὰν ἀνατεθεισάν τῶι θεῶι] ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέ[ω]ς Αττάλου μηθενὶ εἶν[αι] ἐξουσίαν πλὴν τοῦ(?) βασιλέως] ἀναθεῖναι μηθέν, μηδὲ σκανοῦν μηδὲ π[ῦρ] ἀνάπτειν(?) ἐντὸς ἢ ἐκτὸς] τᾶς παστάδος ἐ[π]ὶ τῶι τόπ[ω]ι τ[ῶ]ι ὑπὸ Ατ[τάλου] τῶι θεῶι περιωρισ[?]μένον[ς]· εἰ δὲ μή, τό [τ]ε ἀνάθεμ[α] ἐξ[ουσία] ἐ[στω] τοῖς Ἀμφικτίοσιν] ἄραι, καὶ ἀποτεῖσ[α]τ[ω] ὁ ἀναθ[εῖς] ἢ] παρὰ τ[αῦτα] πράσσω[ν] στατήρας] ἱεροὺς τῶι Ἀπό[λλω]γι τῶι Πυθ[ίω] ἀρ[γυρίου] ...]

No one is permitted to consecrate a statue or offering under the stoa offered to the god by King Attalos, nor to camp there, nor to light a fire inside or outside the stoa in the place consecrated to the god by Attalos. In case of infringement, the Amphictyony shall have the power to remove the offering, and the dedicator or the offender shall pay a fine of ...staters sacred to Apollo Pythios (CID IV 85 = LSCG Suppl. 43, 7-13, 209/8 BCE).

Furthermore, as we saw above, the Athenian decree of the second century BCE ordered the removal of votive *pinakes* that obstructed the view of the cult statue and the clearing away of votive objects deemed unworthy of being kept in the sanctuary.¹³ However, the removed votive offerings were not discarded but moved to the stoa and kept there. If they were disposed of, they were usually buried in a designated place in the sanctuary.¹⁴

A votive inscription inscribed on the rock face at the entrance to the cave dedicated to the nymphs, Pan and other gods of Pharsalus in Thessaly shows a very different perspective.

Τούτων ἐστὶ τ[ὸ] δ[ω]μά[μα] ἅπαν ἱερῶτά τ' ἐν αὐτῶι, ἔμφυτα καὶ πίνακες καὶ ἀγάλματα δῶρα τε πολλὰ[ά].

To the gods belong all the constructions and sacred objects in the cave, the trees, the *pinakes* and the statues, and the many offerings (*dōra te polla*) (WAGMAN 2016, Inscription II, 8-9¹⁵).

Any votive offering brought into the sanctuary was welcomed and accepted as appropriate to the sanctuary for those in charge of the sanctuary. When the environment permitted, a sanctuary full of votive offerings was a source of pride for the custodians.

CONCLUSION

The votive objects brought to the sanctuary played a significant role in shaping the landscape of the sanctuary in each period. At the same time, there was a constant competition over the placement and protection of votive objects. Although carried out for private motives, once an object was brought into the sanctuary, the act of offering the votive would then also become public. The boundary was very blurred. A votive offering placed in a sanctuary was on the one hand a link between the venerator and the gods, and on the other hand a means of self-expression visible to other visitors to the sanctuary. Votive offerings themselves expressed the relationship between the venerator and his/her family, his/her group, and society as a whole. The act of votive offering was, therefore, an act of social competition.

The bringing of votive offerings to a sanctuary also demonstrated the importance of that sanctuary in society. Each sanctuary, therefore, welcomed visitors and votive offerings, but at the same time, had to regulate individual acts of veneration in order to control the sanctuary space. This struggle between the venerators and the polis and other groups characterised the nature of each sanctuary.

It is clear from what we have seen so far that the sanctuaries were overflowing with objects, large and small, which increased in number over time. Although most of the regulations on votive offerings found in various places date from the Hellenistic period, the management of the ever-increasing number of votive offerings must also have been a critical issue in earlier times. These regulations in themselves show how alive and chaotic sanctuaries would have been.

Today, archaeological sites are primarily composed of partially restored monumental buildings and dedicatory bases. In reality, sanctuaries would have been full of votives in ancient times, large and small, old and new. Tournaire's reconstruction of Delphi painted in 1894 reminds us of what a sanctuary might have looked like in the past.¹⁶ Archaeological sites tend to be static, and museums tend to display artistic materials rather than people's everyday actions. Regulations on the management of sanctuaries and the handling of votive offerings provide a living reconstruction of the sanctuaries in ancient Greece.

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¹² See also *I. Milet* 1, p. 160-162.

¹³ LSCG 43 = IG II² 995, 6-12.

¹⁴ See RASK 2020 on votive deposits elsewhere. Cf. LAUGHY 2018. Laughy examined the life cycle of the votives until they were placed on a waste heap within a decade or two.

¹⁵ WAGMAN 2010, WAGMAN 2016, 66-93, esp. 76-78. Wagman offered a new edition of this metric inscription published as *I. Vallée Enipeus* 73.

¹⁶ Albert Tournaire, *Sanctuaire d'Apollon à Delphes*.

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AIO

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