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Design & layout: Petru Ureche
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.

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 (TheCRA 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. 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 similarly 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 thanks (charis).2 Votive offerings are unique in that they ‘remain’, and whatever was dedicated was left in the sanctuary afterwards as a tangible reminder of the dedicatee’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 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 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.

Ek toû ierou μὴ ἐκφέρειν τῶν ἄναιθήματα
τῶν μηδὲ βλέποντες τὸν μηθὲν, [μηδὲ δὲ] παρὰ τάξεων τασσόντων τῶν πινακάδων, μητὲ ἄλλους ἄλλα
φερόντων ἄνευ τοῦ ἱεροῦ.

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 εἰσκοτητὰς τὸ ἄγαλμα τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπὸ τοῦ ἁγαθοῦ ἀνακεφαλείμονον ἐν τοῖς ἰεροῖς εἰς τὸν ἱερόν μηθὲν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ δὲ μηθὲν, μηθὲν, μηθὲν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ παρὰ τάξεων τασσόντων τῶν πινακάδων, μητὲ ἄλλους ἄλλα φερόντων ἄνευ τοῦ ἱεροῦ.

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 II 995, 6-12).5

Votive offerings could become damaged over time; occasional occurrences of ‘in poor condition (ouk hygiēς etc.)’,

2 Lombardi collect human and epigraphical materials concerning the management of dedications (Lombardi 2009). Sozin investigates the public control over space using mainly parallel epigraphical materials (Sozin 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).

3 Typicaly 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 (opacity, purity, or Kon gênesi and a gênesi to vêkhein). See also Pl. Ethik. 148 c.

4 LSCG 112, 6. Cf. IG XII S. 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 agorastonot, the intention of the regulation is similar. On the control of public space, see MA 2013, 70-75.

5 Cf. Herodas, Mne 4. A woman visiting the temple of Asklepios (probably in Kos) with her friend and two slaves sacrificed and dedicated a pinakes 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).
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.

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.

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.

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 be placed in the temple (temenos) or on the sacred ground (temenos).
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 τὸν παστάδεα τῶν ἀνατεθεισῶν τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως Ἀτταλοῦ μηθεῖ, εἰνενερχομενοὶ πλῆν τοῦ (?) βασιλέως αναθεῖνοι μηθέν, μηθεῖ σκανόν τινα ἀνάπτειναι τις ἐκτὸς τῶν παστάδων ἀπὸ τῶν τούποι τῶν ὑπὸ Ατταλοῦ τῶν θεῶν περιφέρεσιν τοῦ (?) μένουσιν εἰ δὲ μὲν, τὸ τῆς ἀνάθειας ἧς ἡ ἐξουσία ἦς τῶν τοὺς ἀριστήρων ἄρα, καὶ ἀποτεισάτω ὁ ἀναθεὶς ἢ παρὰ τὰ πράσσοντα στάτης] ἱεροῦ τοῦ Απόλλωνα τοῦ Πυθίων αἱ γενοῦ[...]

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 dedicatee 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.

Τοῦτον ἵστα ὑδῆ διῶμαι ἀπαν ἱερῶν τ’ ἐν αὐτῶν, ἐμφυτα καὶ πινακες καὶ ἀνάγματα δώρα τε πολλάδη.

To the gods belong all the constructions and sacred objects in the cave, the trees, the pinakes and the statues, and the many offerings (dôra te polla) (WAGMAN 2016, Inscription II, 8-9).15

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.


dôra te polla (WAGMAN 2010, WAGMAN 2016, 66-93, esp. 76-78. Wageman offered a new edition of this metric inscription published as I. Vallée Enipeus 73.

13 See also I. Milet 1, p. 160-162.
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. Wageman offered a new edition of this metric inscription published as I. Vallée Enipeus 73.

12 See the shorter version of this paper was read on Zoom at the Second Sino-Hellenic International Conference on Global Issues of Environment and Culture on 18 September 2021. Part of the paper was published as a book chapter in Japanese (Author Year). The research is supported by a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (20K01060).

16 Albert Tournaire, Sanctuaire d’Apollon à Delphes.
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AIO

CID
Corpus des inscriptions de Delphes (Paris: De Boccard, 1977-).

IG
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