

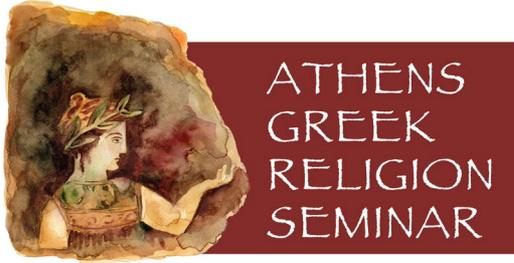
THE ATHENS GREEK RELIGION SEMINAR, Monday December 12, 2022,

Policing Sanctuaries in Ancient Greece

Jan-Mathieu Carbon, Queen's University at Kingston and Edward M. Harris, University of Edinburgh and Durham University

ABSTRACT

This essay examines how public officials and priests maintained order and enforced legal and religious norms in Greek sanctuaries. Four specific aspects of policing sanctuaries are examined: first, the exclusion of those disqualified from entering a sacred precinct; second, maintaining order inside sanctuaries; third, the regulation of sacrificial offerings and dedications made in sanctuaries; and fourth, the accountability of religious officials. Those excluded from sanctuaries might include murderers, the uninitiated from sanctuaries where mysteries were celebrated, or men from women's rites. In some cases foreigners were excluded. In many cases, such as at Olympia or Samothrace, the enforcement of regulations explicitly required the intervention of specific officials belonging to the sanctuary or specially appointed officers responsible for a festival: for example, the *rhabdouchoi* or other officials for direct policing; higher officials for adjudicating more serious cases. In smaller sanctuaries, published sanctions might have served primarily as deterrents and the precise mechanisms of their enforcement often remains unclear to us given the concision of the rules. Still, in both categories of sanctuaries, the publication of laws or signs was viewed as an essential step in making rules visible to worshippers and advertising the expected norms of behavior in these sacred sites. The policing of sanctuaries was a responsibility shared by the priests and other officials in charge of the sanctuary and the magistrates of the polis such as the Council at Athens. Like all officials of the state, religious officials were subject to the law and accountable to the Council and Assembly. At Athens all priests of public cults had to submit their accounts after their term of office (Aeschin. 3.18). In other city-states religious officials were subject to supervision and punishment by the political authorities. From a legal point of view, priests and other religious officials were just as accountable to the polis as other public officials. Priests could be punished not only for financial matters but also for failing to perform their religious duties. Their religious function did not give them a privileged position vis-à-vis the Assembly and the courts. Sanctuaries were sacred ground but did not place priests and other



religious officials beyond the long arm of the law. The powers exercised by public officials extended also to the space of sanctuaries. Different rules might apply in sanctuaries as opposed to other spaces in the Greek polis, but sanctuaries still fell under the overall jurisdiction of the state.

The seminar takes place **Monday, December 12, 2022, at 17.00 (Athens time)** with live presence at the Swedish Institute or via zoom link.

To participate, please register at:

<https://www.sia.gr/en/events.php?eid=311#ParticipationForm>