



THE ATHENS GREEK RELIGION SEMINAR, Tuesday, September 26, 2023

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*Religious Munificence in the Community:
A Phenomenon with Various Motives*

ABSTRACT

A large number of sources - mainly inscriptions - from the Hellenistic and Roman Imperial periods attest to the transfer of movable or immovable property to a community (*polis*, deme or association) by means of a perpetual conditional endowment in order to finance a purpose determined by the donor from the income generated by the investment. The management of the endowment is delegated by the donor to the recipient community. Much more than any other type of gift, these endowments (known as ‘foundations’ or ‘Stiftungen’ in previous literature) are used to finance cult activities. In many cases they relate to a cult in general, but in other cases, they relate to specific activities, always linked to the community in question, such as sacrifices, banquets, contests, and even entire festivals. Very often, the purpose of an endowment is to finance a new cult or a special celebration, which may even bear the name of the donor or provide for rituals to honour the donor during his lifetime or after his death. In this type of endowment, the aims of the donor and the recipient meet and serve each other, creating a win-win situation: the donor demonstrates his piety while ensuring his and his family’s prestige or memory within the community, and the community has the opportunity to enhance its religious life and increase the number of shared celebrations for its members, thereby strengthening its cohesion, its identity and, ultimately, its very existence.

The seminar takes place **Tuesday, September 26, 2023, 17.00 (Athens)** with live presence at the Swedish Institute or online via Zoom.

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