



THE ATHENS GREEK RELIGION SEMINAR, Tuesday, June 16, 2026

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Affordability, Affluence, and Society: priesthood sales and the economies of Hellenistic poleis

ABSTRACT

Priesthood sales were practised in Greek poleis, particularly in the Greek East and Asia Minor, from the 5th c BCE to the Roman Imperial period (3rd c CE). They were one of several modes of filling priestly positions and varying modes could co-exist. The (mostly epigraphic) evidence for such sales peaks in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE, suggesting greater changes in the ways poleis approached the allocation of such offices, including widening participation for women. The evidence, though plentiful, lacks explanatory power as to the reasoning behind the processes that led a polis to sell priesthoods. In this paper, I will explore possible explanations for the introduction of, or switch to, such sales, exploring economic, administrative, and societal reasons that have been that may have led poleis to take up this practice.

The seminar takes place Tuesday, June 16, 2026, 17.00 (Athens) in a hybrid format with live presence at the Swedish Institute at Athens and online via Zoom.

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