

DIVINE REALM AND HUMAN NEEDS: SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE 'MATERIALITY' OF THE SACRED SPACE

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Abstract

The contribution intends to explore the 'profane' aspects of the Greek sanctuaries, from the 8th until the 4th cent. BC., by providing an overview of the permanent and temporary buildings whose purpose is not restricted to the divine worship.

Sacred edifices and provisional instalments in the temenos can be erected to ensure the correct performance of the ritual actions, such as the pompe and the thysia, but certain constructions can be also motivated by not-strictly religious motivations. In some cases, temples themselves can function as public assets depository acting as State-treasure, besides being a main vehicle of political propaganda; likewise, thesauroi are aimed at pleasing the gods as well as self-celebrating the community that committed their constructions. At another level, the administration of complex sanctuary systems can entail the building of specific dedicated structures and the sacred staff (composed by priests, treasurers, scribes, secretariats etc.) can have their own residential units. The production and the selling of different genres of items (food, votives and so on) require workshops and shops. Further architectures, such as baths, toilets, kitchens, porches and dormitories, but also wells and tents address the most basic needs of the visitors who accessed the sanctuary.

The paper will hence focus on the lesser considered edifices of the Greek sanctuary, that reveal the material aspect of the sacred space, ultimately shaped on the human aspirations and needs.

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