

Athens and Rome: Life and Culture in Classical Antiquity

Lecture 35 – Religion – Greece

CLCS4007

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General Characteristics

- Embeddedness
 - Herodotus 1.144.2: there is the bond of Hellenic race, by which we are of one blood and of one speech, the common temples of the gods and the common sacrifices, the manners of life which are the same for all;
- Polytheism
- Piety
 - Isocrates 7.30: believing that piety consists, not in extravagant expenditures, but in disturbing none of the rites which their ancestors had handed on to them.
- Pollution
- Religious specialists
 - Poets and Seers
 - Herodotus 2.53.2: Hesiod and Homer I suppose were four hundred years before my time and not more, and these are they who made a theogony for the Hellenes and gave the titles to the gods and distributed to them honours and arts, and set forth their forms

The Gods

- Aphrodite: Goddess of Love, beauty and procreation
- Apollo: god of prophecy and oracles, healing, plague and disease, music, song and poetry, archery.
- Ares: god of war, battlelust, civil order and manly courage
- Artemis: goddess of hunting, wilderness and wild animals, childbirth, and the protectress of the girl child up to the age of marriage
- Athena: goddess of wise counsel, war, the defence of towns, heroic endeavour, weaving, pottery and other crafts
- Demeter: goddess of agriculture, grain, and bread
- Dionysos: god of wine, vegetation, pleasure and festivity, theatre
- Hephaistos: god of fire, metalworking, stonemasonry and the art of sculpture
- Hera: queen of the gods and the goddess of women and marriage
- Hermes: god of animal husbandry, roads, travel, hospitality, heralds, diplomacy, trade, thievery, language, writing, persuasion, cunning wiles, athletic contests, gymnasiums, astronomy, and astrology
- Poseidon: god of the sea, rivers, flood and drought, earthquakes, and horses.
- Zeus: king of the gods, the god of sky and weather, law, order and fate

The Gods

- Asclepius Ariadne Charites Deimos Dike Dioscuri Eileithyia Eirene Enyo Eris Eros Eunomia Ganymedes Harmonia Hebe Heracles Hestia Hygeia Hymenaeus Iris Leto Moirae Musae Nike Peitho Phobus Psyche Themis Thyone Tyche
- Atlas Cronus Dione Eos Hecate Helius Mnemosyne Oceanus Phoebe Prometheus Selene
- Hades Hypnos Persephone Leucothea Phorcys Britomartis Dryads Gaea Naiads Nymphs Pan Satyrs Plutus Nemesis and many others

Which God?

- Rain and Mountain tops:

- Zeus Ombrios (Showery) / Ikmaios (of Moisture)
- Zeus Laphystios (the Devourer)
- Zeus Lykaios (of the Wolf)
- Zeus Akraios (of the Heights)

- Of the Family

- Zeus Patroos (Ancestor)
- Zeus Phratrios (of the Phratries)
- Zeus Herkios (of the Courtyard)
- Zeus Ktesios (of Possessions)



- Righteous Zeus

- Zeus Hikesios (of Suppliants)
- Zeus Katharsios (of Purification)
- Zeus Exakester (of Making Amends)
- Zeus Horkios (of Oaths)

- Of the City:

- Zeus Polieus (of the city)
- Zeus Boulaios / Agoraios
- Zeus Tropaios / Eleutherios / Soter

- Chthonian Zeus

- Zeus Meilichios (Mild)

- Zeus Diktaios

- Zeus Ammon

- Zeus Naios (the Flowing)

- Zeus Olympios

The Gods

- Herodotus 1.32.1: Crœsus, thou art inquiring about human fortunes of one who well knows that the divine is altogether envious and apt to disturb our lot.
- Euripides, *Hippolytus*: **Theseus**: O father Poseidon, once didst thou promise to fulfil three prayers of mine; answer one of these and slay my son, let him not escape this single day, if the prayers thou gavest me were indeed with issue fraught.
- Xenophanes DK 21B11 (c. 6th c BC): Homer and Hesiod have attributed to the gods everything that men find shameful and reprehensible – stealing, adultery, deceiving one another.

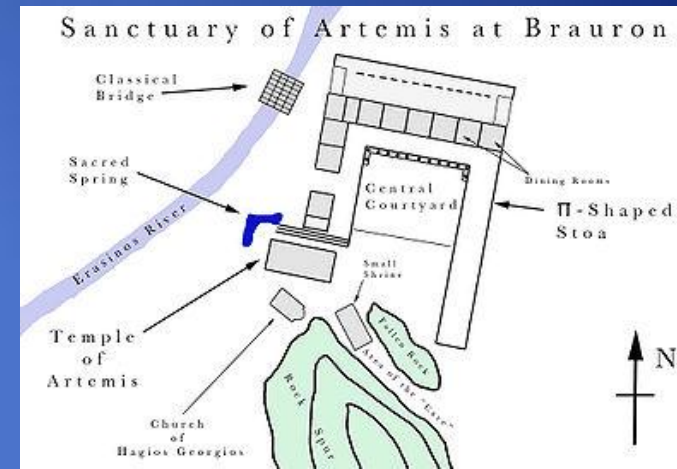
The Heroes

- Aristophanes, *Heroes* f 322 K-A: And so, men, be on your guard, and respect the heroes; for we are the stewards of good and ill: we watch for the unjust and thieves and robbers, and give them diseases.
- Heroes were a class of beings worshipped by the Greeks, generally conceived as the powerful dead, and often as forming a class intermediate between gods and men.
(OCD₃, s.v. hero-cult)

- (13) In Boedromion: the Prerosia; for Zeus Polieus, a choice sheep, a choice piglet, at/to Automenai(?) a bought piglet to be wholly burnt; the priest shall provide a lunch for the attendant; for **Cephalus**, a choice sheep; for **Procris**, a table; for **Thorikos**, a choice sheep; for the **Heroines of Thorikos**, a table; to Sounion, for Poseidon, a choice lamb; (20) for Apollo, a choice young he-goat; for Kourotrophos, a choice female piglet; for Demeter, a full-grown victim, for Zeus Herkeios, a full-grown victim, for Kourotrophos a piglet, [[for Athena, a sheep, to be sold]]; at the Salt Works, for Poseidon, a full-grown victim, for Apollo, a piglet.
- (25) In Pyanopsion: for Zeus Kataibates, on the land of the Philomelidai, a full-grown victim, to be sold, on the sixteenth; (?) for **Neanias**, a full-grown victim, at the Pyanopsia [- - -]
- (28) In Maimakterion: for **Thorikos**, a bovine worth not less than forty up to fifty drachmas; for the **Heroines of Thorikos**, a table. [...]
- (36) In Elaphebolion: for the **Heraclidae** [a full-grown victim]; for **Alcmena**, a full-grown victim; for the **Anakes** a full-grown victim; for **Helen** a full-grown victim; for Demeter, as the Chloia offering, a choice pregnant [ewe]; for Zeus a choice lamb.
- (40) In Mounichion: for Artemis Mounichia, a full-grown victim; to the sanctuary of Pythian Apollo, a triple offering; for Kourotrophos, a piglet; for Leto, a goat; for Artemis, a goat; for Apollo a goat lacking its age-marking teeth; for Demeter, a pregnant ewe as the Antheia (blossom) offering(?); for **Philonis**, a table; for Dionysus, to Mykenos (or Mykenon) a tawny or black [he goat].
- (47) In Thargelion: for Zeus, at/to Automenai(?) a [choice] lamb; for **Hyperpedios**, a sheep; for the **Heroines of Hyperpedios**, a table; for **Nisus**, a sheep; for **Thras**[- - -], a sheep; for **Sosineos**, a sheep; for **Rhogios**, a sheep; for **Pylochos**, a piglet; for the **Pylochian heroines**, a table.
- (52) In Skiophorion: an oath-victim shall be provided; at the Plynteria, for Athena, a choice sheep; for **Aglauros**, a sheep; for Athena, a choice lamb; for **Cephalus** a bovine worth not less than forty up to fifty drachmas; for Procris a sheep worth 20 drachmas(?). [SEG 33.147, 4th c.]

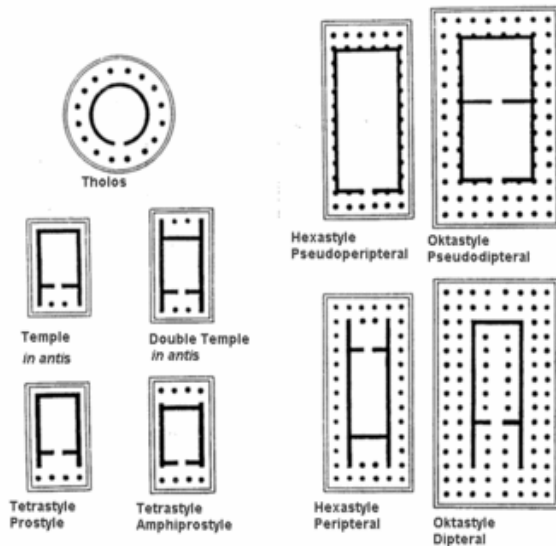
Cult Space

- Everywhere / Anywhere
- The Sanctuaries
 - The *temenos*
 - Periboloi
 - Horoi
 - The Propylaia
 - The Altar(s)
 - The Temple
 - Others: Treasuries / Stoas/Housing / Dining Rooms / Training Rooms, Exercise Areas, Stadia / Theatres / Fountain Houses / (sometimes) Incubation Houses / Shops



Cult Space: The Temple

- Temples were part of religion in the Greek world but cult did not take place in them.
- They were the houses of cult but not the place of cult practice.
- The Greeks from the 6th century onwards built large ornate temples.



Cult Practice

- Two key aspects of cult practice
 - Sacrifices
 - Festivals
- Sacrifice
 - Fruits, grains, animals etc.
 - Sacer-facere
 - Piety
 - Feast with the gods:
 - For at that time the feasts were in common and in common the councils for the immortal gods and for mortal human beings. [Hesiod F1 M&W]
 - There are three reasons one ought to sacrifice to the gods: either on account of honour or on account of gratitude or on account of a want of things. For just as with good men, so also with these (the gods) we think that offerings of first fruits should be made to them. We honour the gods either because we seek to deflect evils or to acquire goods for ourselves, or because we have first been treated well or simply to do great honour to their good character. [Theophrastus F 584A]



Cult Practice: Festivals

- *Ta Nomizomena*
- Central striking act:
Choes / Sphagia
- *Heortai*:
 - Democritus B230: a life without *heortai* is like a road without inns



Cult Practice: Festivals

- Types:
 - Life rites: wedding, funeral ...
 - Commemoration
 - Escort of the Gods
 - Tradition:
 - Miletus and the Molpoi
 - Thrasybulus and the restoration of the Athenian Democracy
- Symbolic Statements
- Accompanied by sacrifices, hymns and prayers



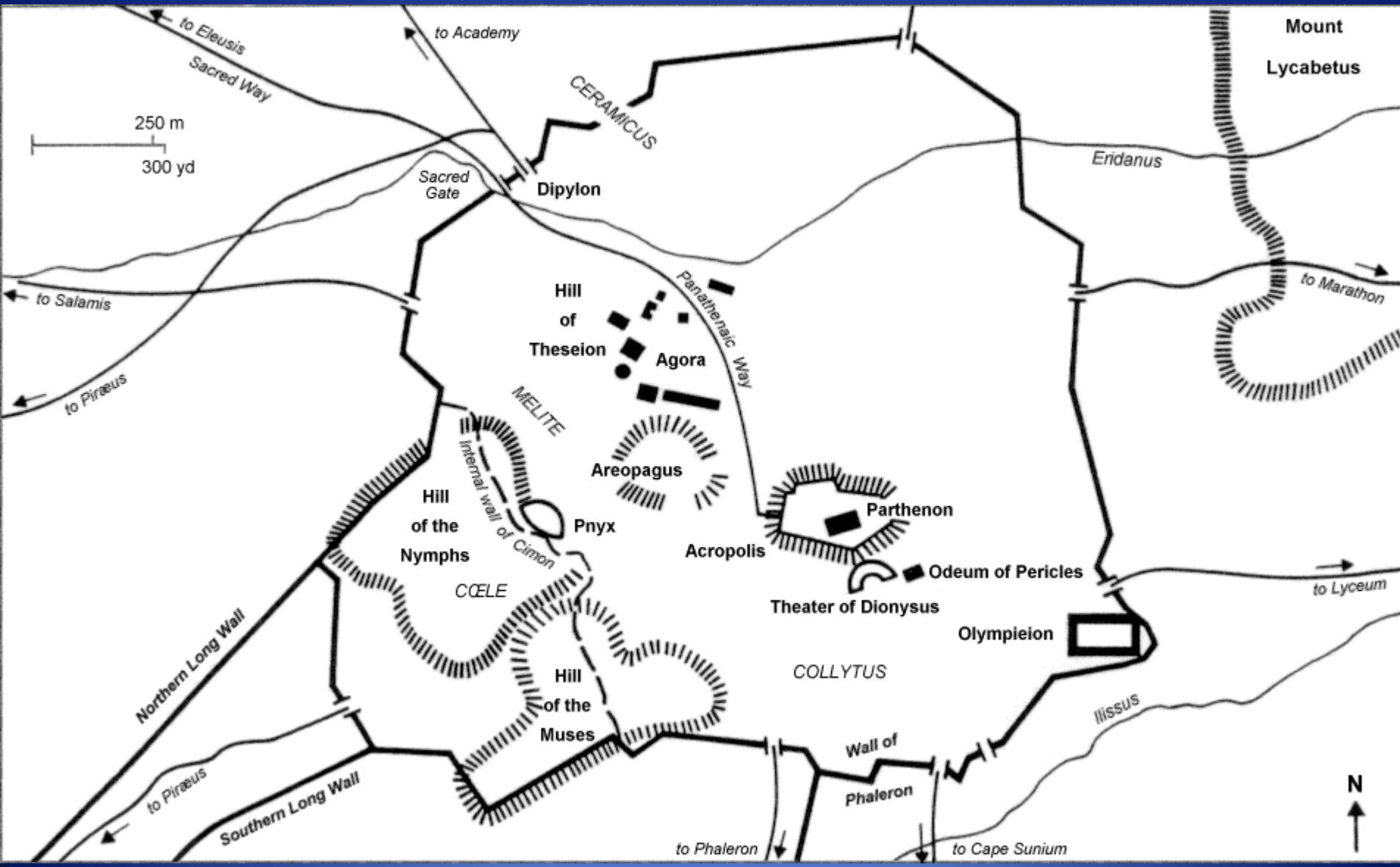
Case Study: The Panathenaea

- Competitions
 - Dual aspect: domestic and Hellenic
 - Pyrriche
 - Pannychis

Aristophanes' *Frogs* 1078ff.

- **Aeschylus:** Of what crimes is he not guilty? Didn't he show pimps, women giving birth in temples, sleeping with their brothers, claiming that life is not life? And then our state is filled with these bureaucrats and oafish democratic apes always cheating the people, and there's no one able to carry the torch any more because of lack of training.
Dionysus: No sir, not any more! So that I laughed myself dry at the Panathenaic games, when some slow guy ran, hunched over, pale, drunk, left behind and doing miserably. And then the folks of the Ceramicus at the gates hit his stomach, ribs, sides, butt, and he, getting whacked with their hands, broke wind, blew out the torch and ran away.

Case Study: The Panathenaea



Case Study: The Panathenaea

- Citizens

- Prytaneis, magistrates, officials
- Well-born girls: Basket-bearers
- Handsome old men: Olive-branch-bearers
- Peplos-making girls
- Hoplites
- Cavalry
- Ephebes

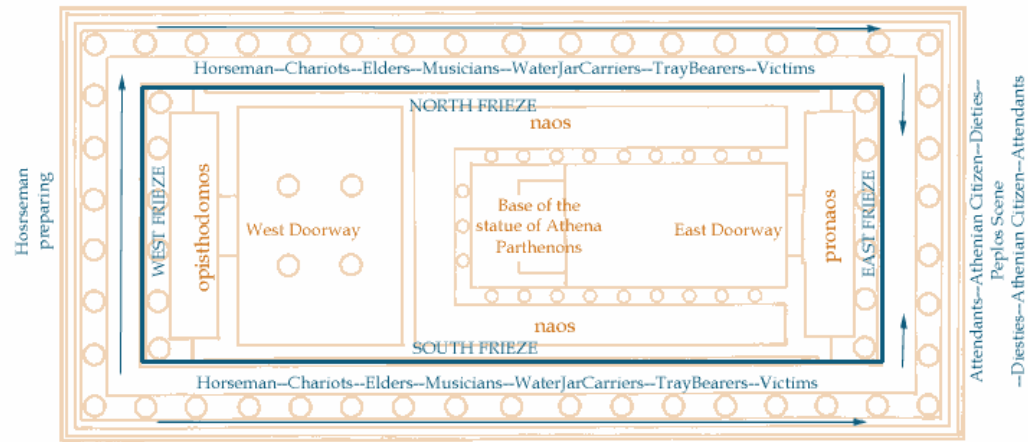
- Non-citizens:

- Metics: Men: tray-bearers/Women: parasol-and stool-bearers
- Colonists
- Freedmen: oak-bearers

- The Ship

- Sacrifices

Case Study: The Panathenaea



Public vs. Private?

The Mystery Cults:

- Graeco-Roman mystery cults were forms of personal religious choice that may be assigned to one of three groups: “mystery” proper, an entire initiatory structure of some duration and complexity, of which the exemplar is Eleusis; “mystic” cult, involving not initiation but rather a relation of intense communion, typically ecstatic or enthusiastic, with the divinity (e.g. Bacchic frenzy); and “mysteriosophic” cult, offering an eschatology, and a practical means of individual reunion with divinity—the primitive or original form is Orphism.
 - *Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World*. Ed. John Roberts s.v. mystery cults

Case Study: Eleusis

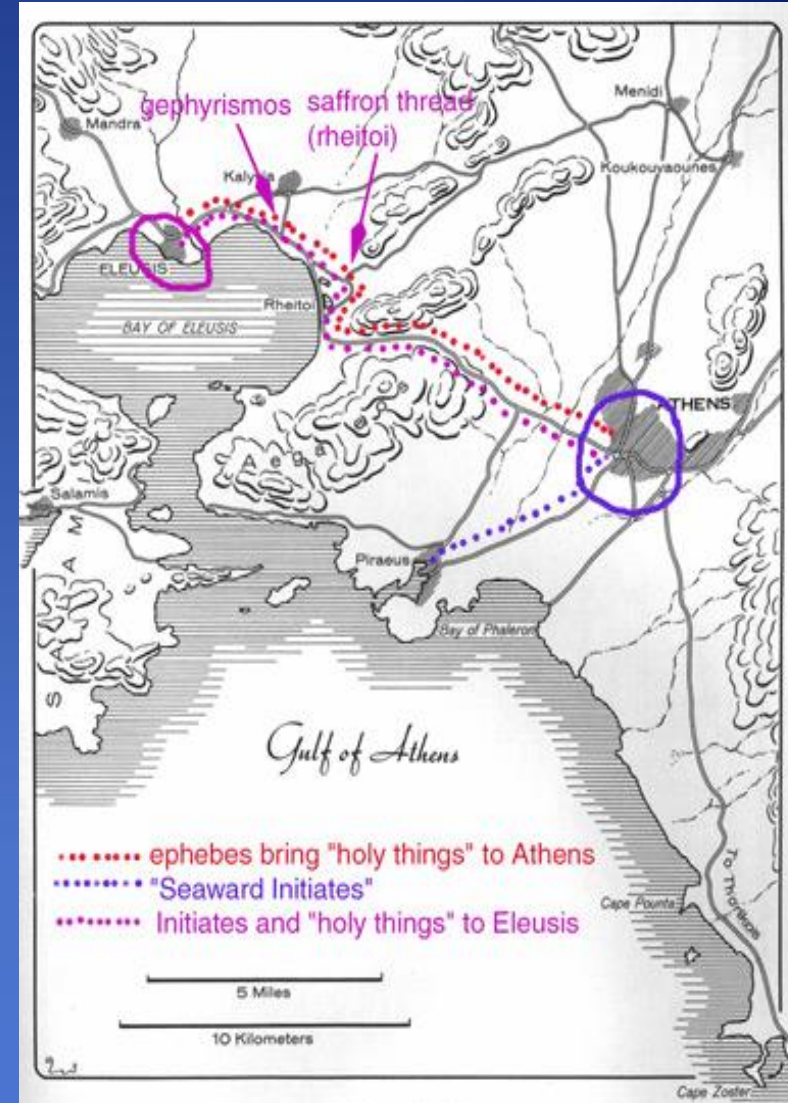
- The Eleusinian mysteries were one of the great mystery cults in the Greek World.
- They were celebrated in Eleusis in Attika in honour of Demeter and Persephone.
- They were an initiatory cult, probably with afterlife connections.
- Everyone was welcome in the Eleusinian mysteries, including slaves, women, foreigners.



Case Study: Eleusis

Athenian Connection

- Athenian Control
 - First Fruits decree: The Athenians shall bring first fruit offerings to the two goddesses from the fruits of the field ... the allied states shall also bring first fruit offerings in the same manner ... they shall send them to Athens ... the city council shall also send notice to all other Greek cities ... and shall urge them to make first fruit offerings if they wish.
- Eleusinian in central Athens
 - De Polignac: linking of city to periphery?
- Foreigners – to Athens first.
- Solonian and Periclean Telesteria
- Singular representative child nominated by Athenians.



Case Study: Eleusis

- These accordingly magnified the manner and loudly proclaimed that the affair of the mysteries and the mutilation of the Hermæ were part and parcel of a scheme to overthrow the democracy, and that nothing of all this had been done without Alcibiades; the proofs alleged being the general and undemocratic license of his life and habits. Alcibiades repelled on the spot the charges in question, and also before going on the expedition, the preparations for which were now complete, offered to stand his trial, that it might be seen whether he was guilty of the acts imputed to him; desiring to be punished if found guilty, but, if acquitted, to take the command. [Thuc. 6.28-9]

Sicilian Expedition Cont'd

- So, maintaining such secrecy as they could, they gave orders for the departure of the expedition; the men were to prepare themselves against a given signal. [4] The preparations were made and they were on the point of sailing, when the moon, being just then at the full, was eclipsed. The mass of the army was greatly moved, and called upon the generals to remain. Nicias himself, who was too much under the influence of divination and such like, refused even to discuss the question of their removal until they had remained thrice nine days, as the soothsayers prescribed. This was the reason why the departure of the Athenians was finally delayed. [Thuc 7.50]

Bibliography

- Kearns, E. (2006), 'Religious Practice and Belief' in K. Kinzl (ed.) [A Companion to the Classical Greek World](#). Oxford: Blackwell, 311-26.
- Bremmer, J. (1999) [Greek Religion](#). New Surveys in the Classics 24. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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