

A Lease of Sacred Lands from Eastern Phokis (*IG IX 1.87*)

This paper deals with a lengthy Hellenistic inscription from Eastern Phokis: *IG IX, 1.87*, concerning the leasing of sacred land. It contains details of the revenues (*prosodous*) from the land and refers to “the two sacred plots” (*toin hieroin choriain*) for Artemis and Apollo (lines 11-12). The inscription is unusually rich and detailed, recording the names of the landholders, the size of the plots, and their location arranged in sequence.

Unlike earlier scholarship on the lease (McInerney 2010), this paper attempts to locate the specific location of the sacred estates within the topographic setting of the Exarchos valley, near ancient Abai and Hyampolis. The paper argues that Dittenberger 1897 was incorrect to read the land lots as occurring in one continuous line from west to east (*‘hos omnes agros uno tractu ab oriente ad occidentem se excepisse’*) and that instead we have a large rectangular piece of land internally divided into tiers of lots, running from north to south, clustered in groups of three. Internal references within the inscription point to the presence of Apollo in the region and the use of the sacred estate to negotiate the competing claims of the sanctuary of Artemis Elaphebolos and the oracle of Apollo at Abai.

The inscription suggests that much of the land dedicated to the gods was donated in the form of a lease for all time, effectively removing the land from political discussions regarding land redistribution, but keeping it in the hands of the local elites who dedicated it to the gods.

In addition to shedding light on the complex legal systems deployed to handle land ownership, the inscription may also help us to settle a contemporary debate

regarding the identification of the temple complex located nearby at Kalapodi. Recent German excavators (Niemeier 2016) have proposed identifying this as the *temenos* of Apollo at Abai, an oracular site that remained important at least until the age of Hadrian. If, however, the sacred land described in this inscription lies between the sanctuaries of Artemis and Apollo, this would fit much more plausibly with the traditional identification of Abai with the ruins located in the Exarchos valley (Yorke 1896), while Kalapodi would appear to be an extra mural sanctuary under the control of the town of Hyampolis.

Bibliography

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