

Hesiod's Tripod Rededicated: A Reinterpretation of *WD* 650-662

In this paper, I offer a reinterpretation of Hesiod's tripod dedication in the *Works and Days* (*WD* 650-662) in light of recent archaeological and epigraphic studies. Based on the practices of tripod dedication in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE and the evidence of early dedicatory epigrams, I argue that—in addition to affirming the divine authority bestowed on the poet—*WD* 650-662 reperforms Hesiod's tripod dedication to the Muses and thereby guarantees their favor immediately before the poet requires their inspiration in order to continue singing.

Accepting 660 BCE as the *terminus ante quem* for the composition of the *Works and Days* (West 1966; Janko 1982), I begin by considering the tripods dedicated during the eighth and seventh centuries BCE. Following Catherine Morgan (1990), I focus primarily on the sanctuary to Zeus at Olympia, which—of the cult sites of the eighth century—is notable for the number of its tripod dedications. Morgan asserts that the eighth century witnessed an increase in the number and size of tripod dedications and proposes that at least some of the tripods were made in one place before being transported and dedicated in another. Nassos Papalexandrou (2005) similarly observes that the transition from the ninth to eighth century heralded more intricate ornamentation as tripods became *agalmata*. These larger and more elaborate tripods reflect the way in which elites began to compete for social status in the late Geometric and early Archaic period by displaying their wealth and piety at panhellenic sanctuaries. Thus, as his description of the tripod agrees with this archeological evidence, Hesiod appears to be competing with local elites for poetic authority by dedicating an *agalma* at the sanctuary of the Muses (Papalexandrou 2008).

Although the transition from the eighth to the seventh century signaled no major shift in

dedicatory practice, epigrams seem to have appeared on dedications for the first time. Joseph Day (2010) posits that dedicatory epigrams were meant to be read aloud by passersby at the sanctuary. The formulaic language of epigrams (i.e., the name of the dedicator, the verb ἀνατίθημι in the aorist, the object's self-referential με, and the name of the deity in the dative or vocative) and their thematic resonances with epic and epinicion prompted viewers to recite the verses and thereby reassert the dedicator's status within the community and relationship with the divinity. According to Day, this recitation constituted a reperformance that served to rededicate the object and remind the god or goddess of the *agalma* which had pleased him/her before, thereby ensuring that the dedicator would continue to receive the support of his divine patron.

Hesiod's description of his tripod dedication seems to function in a similar way to a dedicatory epigram. Although the later tradition assigned two lines of hexameter to Hesiod's dedication, Hesiod seems not to have included an epigram in the *Works and Days*. However, upon closer consideration, line 658 (τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ Μούσῃσ' Ἐλικωνιάδεσσ' ἀνέθηκα) essentially operates as a dedicatory epigram, as it contains an explicit mention of the dedicator (ἐγὼ), a reference to the object dedicated (τὸν), a form of ἀνατίθημι in the aorist (ἀνέθηκα), and the deities to whom the dedication is being made in the dative (Μούσῃσ' Ἐλικωνιάδεσσ'). As epigrams served to reperform the dedications of *agalmata* in order to sustain humans' reciprocal relationships with divinities, Hesiod's 'epigram' at the end of his digression seems to be a reminder to the Muses of his earlier offering. After this section, Hesiod will proceed to instruct his brother Perses on a topic in which he has no real experience or expertise: sailing. In order for his poetry to succeed, Hesiod must therefore rely on the Muses' inspiration. Thus, Hesiod reminds the Muses of his tripod dedication to ensure their help in following section.

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