THE COLLEGE OF TREASURERS OF ATHENA ON THE ACROPOLIS DURING THE ARCHAIC PERIOD

The college of the Treasurers of Athena, charged with the supervision and management of the sacred wealth consecrated to the goddess on the Acropolis, is considered to be a very ancient institution. In fact, the presence of ταμίαι on the Acropolis is attested by epigraphy and literary sources from the first half of the 6th century BC. At the same time, the number of ex-voto offered to the goddess – statuettes and bronze objects as well as figurines and pottery - seems to increase considerably and the first statues on stone appear.

However, the "pre-history" of such an institution, whose central role in the administration of sacred properties of the πόλις is well known during the classical period, remains a controversial argument because of a scanty documentation. Historians provide different answers to questions concerning the date of birth of the college, the details of the duties of their treasurers, and the precise location of the buildings where the treasurers held office and the sacred treasure was kept. Especially, concerning the origin of the institution, a theory – even if strongly criticized - wanted the treasurers of Athena to be the heirs of an older and obscure institution, the ναύκραροι. This college, whose traces had been lost long time before the Persian Wars, would have exercised its power both in financial matters and in the domain of the sacred finance, gathering funds on the Acropolis and ensuring the protection of the goddess's ξόανον, as well as the treasurers of Athena would do in the classical period2.

We propose to investigate the figure and the functions of the sacred treasurers of Athena during the archaic period. In order to do this, we shall question briefly the authenticity of the link with their supposed predecessors - the ναύκραροι - through a cross-analysis of the information delivered on the subject by ancient authors. Then we will try to reconstruct the specificity of the college of the "archaic" ταμίαι by exploiting and trying to interpret a choice of inscriptions and archaeological data dating back mostly to the 6th century BC. J.-C3.

While emphasizing the peculiarities and the evolutions of the college of treasurers during the 6th century, we will try to show how the institution is placed in a certain continuity of the practices and functions exercised by the members of the institution between the archaic and classical period4.

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3 Inscriptions: IG I2 510; IG I3 590; IG I3 4. The bronze statuettes of Athena : MNAth Br 6457; MNAth Br. 6450.