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***Religious Scandals as Part of Political Struggles of Late 5th Century Athens:
the Case of Hermokopidai and Profanation of the Eleusinian Mysteries***

Abstract

The author of the paper investigates the role of religion in the public and political life of the Athenians in the late 5th century BC. She concentrates on two scandals, the cuttings of the pillar stones of Hermes at the dawn of the Sicilian expedition (415) and rumors and accusations for the profanation and parody of the Eleusinian Mysteries, displaying the use and abuse of religion in the political struggle in Athens during and after the Peloponnesian War.

As known, the religious issues were often used for eliminating the political enemies of democratic and oligarchic parties and the background of the religious accusations were almost always politically motivated. Since these two religious scandals are vividly described in Andokides' speech *On the Mysteries*, it will be the main source for this investigation. We learn not only the names of the participants, investigators, accusers, witnesses, traitors, and other people involved in this religious scandals that had such a huge impact on the fate and history of Athens, but also different aspects of social, political and economic life of Athens in the late 5th century BC. The names given by Andokides, corroborated from other sources, show that the participants of the scandals

were mostly from aristocratic families involved in political struggles. Unfortunately, we still do not know enough about that, so this paper will also try to give some possible new explanations.