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### **The navy in 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens: evidence from Athenian religion.**

The 5<sup>th</sup> century was a time of religious innovation in Athens directed towards the spiritual needs of the increasing proportion of the population involved in the navy, as well as their families. In 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens the navy was of great importance to the economy and political stability of the state. Such an important factor in the shaping of society in 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens also influenced contemporary religion. This paper will examine some changes that the cults of four deities underwent in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, in order to accommodate the needs of a population increasingly occupied with maritime affairs, thus exploring issues of “polis religion”. Poseidon was transformed to the primary protector of the Athenian navy, as his 5<sup>th</sup> century temple in Sounion demonstrated, and three more deities acquired nautical attributes and/or festivals demonstrating their link to the marine element and the navy in particular (Apollo Delphinios, Artemis Mounychia, as the homonymous port in the Piraeus, and Aphrodite Ourania). The importance of these deities in Athens prior to the 5<sup>th</sup> century (Apollo Pythios, Patroos and Delios, Artemis Brauronia, Aphrodite Pandemos and Ourania), was underlined through their evolution in accordance with the *zeitgeist* of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The acquisition of new epithets was also complemented with the establishment of festivals celebrating the recently obtained functions of these deities; regattas in Sounion in honour of Poseidon, festival on the 6<sup>th</sup> of Mounychion in honour of Apollo Delphinios, festival of the Mounychia, in honour of Artemis Mounychia. Consequently, 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens clearly demonstrated how polytheistic societies can successfully manipulate religion, as a reflection of the changes undergone in society.