

Athenian ‘Cleruchies’ of the 5th century BCE: An analytical study of colonization as a political and military strategy of the Athenian imperial administration.

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‘Cleruchies’ are generally defined in scholarship as special Greek colonies in which the settlers received a plot of land and retained their original citizenship. The epigraphs of Classical Athens indicate a widespread popularity of the imposition of ‘cleruchies’ by Athens in the territories of the rebellious subject-allies towards the middle and the late 5th century BCE. However there is no intricate separate study in scholarship on ‘cleruchies’ and their importance in the Athenian imperial administration in the 5th century BCE. This research is intended to identify the factors that led to the widespread imposition of ‘cleruchies’ and their strategic importance in the Athenian empire. Moreover this study examines the nature of relations between Athens and the subjects upon which ‘cleruchies’ were imposed. The information for this qualitative research is gathered by the analytical study of the epigraphs and numismatics of the particular period and by the critical examination of the primary and the secondary sources. The findings of the research suggest that the allotments of the land received by the settlers in the cleruchies contributed to the ascendancy in their property classes which thereby increased the Athenian citizens’ eligibility for military service. The geographical locations of the cleruchies indicate the strategic importance of the settlements in securing the corn-routes and the sea trade routes of the Athenian empire. Moreover the cleruchies with permanently resident settlers acted as political and military defense during the Peloponnesian Wars against Sparta as well as the non-Greek communities. The findings of this study have helped to identify the political and military strategies implemented in the earliest western empire to control the autonomy and the sovereignty of the allies. This inquiry also shed light on the manner in which the earliest western empire strengthened her political stronghold while advancing her socio-economic interests at the expenses of the subjects.

Key words: Cleruchies, Greek colonies, Athenian empire, Classical period

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