



Giovanni Marginesu

Callia l'Ateniese

Metamorfosi di un'élite, 421-371 a.C.

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Kallias is a key figure in the period between the Peace of Nikias (421 BCE) and the Battle of Leuktra (371 BCE). Descendent of a powerful and wealthy Athenian family, he became *dadouchos*, a high-ranking priest, and he took a central role in civic rites. A powerful diplomat, he led negotiations between Athens and Sparta. Despite all of this, comedians and his enemies treated him as a man surrounded by sycophants, plagued by sexual desires, and exploited by the Sophists. Old and physically depleted by vice, Kallias would have celebrated a suicide symposium drinking hemlock, the same poison that killed Socrates. Investigating the enigmatic contradictions between the two portrayals, a picture emerges of an unscrupulous élite, committed to resisting and finally adapting to a changing world in which the use of money, the engagement of finance, evasion of taxes, and hedonistic gratification come at the expense of shared civic values. In this way, the bitter exemplarity and reality of this case study reveals a dark side of Classical Greece.

CONTENTS

Premessa | Abbreviazioni | Introduzione. Il quadro storico e le fonti | Gli atenati. | La vita | La reputazione | Conclusioni | Bibliografia | Indici

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