CHAPTER FOUR

FESTIVALS AND FINANCES: THE ECONOMIC ADMINISTRATION OF ATHENS

In Ferguson’s analysis of this period, economic management looms as an important aspect of Demetrius’ governance of the city. An interest in economic affairs is consistent with developments in Athenian politics throughout the second half of the fourth century, when power came to reside increasingly with those who administered the city finances.¹ In fact, Demetrius’ financial control has been viewed as analogous to that exercised earlier by Lycurgus; in consequence, the creation of the major financial office of Hellenistic Athens, that of ‘treasurer for the administration’ (ho epi têi dioikêsei), has been variously attributed to both these men.² Whether or not Demetrius acted under this formal title, the comments of his contemporary critics, Duris and Democharaes, do attest to a general financial direction of the

¹ On the changing face of Athenian financial administration in the fourth century (in particular, the rise of individual treasurers to challenge the financial control of the council), see Faraguna 1992, esp. 171–94; Rhodes 1972, 105ff, and Mossé 1989, 27ff.
² On Lycurgus’ rather problematic title, see Mossé 1989, 27–28; Faraguna 1992, 195–209; Rhodes 1993, 515–16; Lewis 1997, 221ff. Lycurgus’ management of the city finances is well attested (see Hyp. F118; [Plut.] Mor. 841b cf. 852b; Dion. Hal. Din. 11), but the silence of the Ath. Pol. regarding a treasurer epi têi dioikêsei and the similarity of descriptions of Lycurgus’ function to the language used of theoretic commissioners (compare Aesch. 2.149 cf. 3.25) has complicated the issue of Lycurgus’ official designation; Lewis argues, moreover, that Hyp. 3.28, which has often been taken as a reference to Lycurgus and to his tenure of a new financial post epi têi dioikêsei is instead a reference to Demosthenes’ tenure as theoretic treasurer in 337/36 (but see Whitehead 2000, 449–50 for reservations). But if SEG 19.119 belongs to the Lycurgan period, it may provide an indication that the post existed at this time. The dilemmas are compounded by the ambiguity of the term dioikêsis, which can have a general as well as official connotation. In the case of Demetrius, the explicit evidence for his position as a formal treasurer depends on Plut. Demetr. 8.4 (= Demetr. 29 SOD), where Demetrius is described as administering (dioikôn) the city on Cassander’s behalf. It would be dangerous to press this for proof of Demetrius’ formal assumption of the treasurership here, since Plutarch uses dioikês elsewhere in patently non-magisterial contexts: compare Demetr. 19.4, also Diod. 18.74.3 (= Demetr. 16A SOD) where all those who retained citizenship in 317 are described as administering (dioikeisthai) the city.
city by Demetrius that invites comparison with Lycurgus, or again with Eubulus.  

Demetrius’ regime certainly did bring renewed prosperity to Athens, with Duris claiming that annual revenues amounted to twelve hundred talents (Athen. 542b = Demetr. 43A SOD) and with Demetrius himself boasting that food was plentiful and cheap (Polyb. 12.13.9–10 = Demetr. 89 SOD). This may be seen as a considerable achievement. The payment of mercenaries in the Lamian War must have drained Athenian reserves, and throughout the interim democracy of 318 the city was cut off from a prime source of revenue, the Piraeus trade, by Cassander’s garrison in the port. While allowing for comic exaggeration, early difficulties are implied by the fragment of a comedy by Timocles in which one speaker at a banquet complains that the ‘supervisor of women’ who inspects the number of guests at feasts would do better to scrutinise the houses of the dinnerless (Athen. 245b = Demetr. 153 SOD). During the regime itself, there were other impediments to prosperity. Hostility between Cassander and the Antigonids caused the loss of the islands of Delos, Imbros, Lesbos and Samos, all traditionally controlled by Athens, a loss which could have impacted adversely on the movement of Athenian merchant fleets.

That economic stability was of concern to Demetrius is intrinsically plausible, and it is clear that he took pride in the prosperity Athens enjoyed under his aegis. His arch-critic, Demochares, was to complain that Demetrius “had been such a leader of his fatherland as to be proud of those points in his administration that would make a common tax-collector (telônês banausos) proud of himself” (Polyb. 12.13.9 = Demetr. 89 SOD). It is quite another matter to assume, as Ferguson does, that it was economic concerns which motivated much of Demetrius’ legislative activity, and that he was driven by a desire to safeguard the material interests of those middle classes of which a supposed ‘Aristotelian polity’ was to be composed. Ferguson’s thesis was

\[\text{\textsuperscript{3}}\text{ Thus Mossé 1992, 88 suggests that through his position as epimelêtês, Demetrius may have had assigned to him a financial control comparable to that of Eubulus and to Lycurgus.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{4} On the mercenaries, Diod. 18.9.3.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{5} Compare the later commercial significance of Delos, for example: Habicht 1997, 246ff. On the island losses, and Athenian policy responses, see below, 253ff.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{6} Ferguson 1911a, 55. In a slightly different fashion, Wiles 1984 also sees an economic interest as a motivating factor in Demetrius’ reforms, which were, he argues, designed to reduce the differences between rich and poor, thereby encouraging}\]