

A priest in Homeric poems

Summary

The article deals with the issue of priesthood in Homeric poems. It comprises three parts: in the first part Greek terminology denoting a priest is analysed (ἀρητήρ, ἱερεύς, ἱρεύς, ἱέρειο); in the second part it is his functions and in the third part the relationship between the priest and the people that is reviewed. The priest fulfils mainly a religious function. It is prayer and making offerings that prevail here. These functions refer to the etymology of the Greek terms denoting a priest. It would seem that it is also the original role of a priest. These two basic functions result in a special relationship between the priest and the deity, which on the one hand means that the god protects his priest, and on the other hand that the priest is privileged to have special knowledge of the divine. The awareness of the bond between the priest and the god results in unusual respect and the trust of the people towards the priest. This is why in a situation of danger the priest becomes a part of national delegations aiming at providing security to all citizens.