

CAPInv. 1486: **he hiera [xys]tike synodos**

I. LOCATION

i. Geographical area	Peloponnese with Adjacent Islands
ii. Region	Eleia
iii. Site	Olympia

II. NAME

i. Full name (original language)	ἡ ἱερὰ [ξυσ]τικὴ σύνοδος (IvO 436, ll. 5-6)
ii. Full name (transliterated)	<i>he hiera [xys]tike synodos</i>

III. DATE

i. Date(s)	85 AD
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IV. NAME AND TERMINOLOGY

ii. Name elements	Topographical:	<i>Xystos</i> was the practice track for the athletes.
	Other:	<i>hiera</i>
iii. Descriptive terms	σύνοδος, <i>synodos</i>	
Note	<i>synodos</i> : IvO 436, l. 6	

V. SOURCES

i. Source(s)	IvO 436 (85 AD)
Online Resources	IvO 436
i.a. Source type(s)	Epigraphic source(s)

i.b. Document(s) typology & language/script	A Greek inscription on an honorific monument erected by <i>[hoi apo te]s oikoumenes athle[tai</i> (ll. 1-2), the <i>sympas xystos</i> (l. 2) and the <i>hiera [xys]tike synodos</i> for the Elean <i>agoranomos</i> and <i>archiereus</i> L. Vettulenus Laetus.
i.c. Physical format(s)	A statue base of gray marble, whose left part is missing.
ii. Source(s) provenance	Olympia, in front of the eastern side of the temple of Zeus.

IX. MEMBERSHIP

ii. Gender	Men
Note	it is likely that the members were men.

X. ACTIVITIES

iv. Honours/Other activities	The <i>hiera [xys]tike synodos</i> , together with <i>[hoi apo te]s oikoumenes athle[tai</i> (CAPInv. 1477), and the <i>sympas xystos</i> (CAPInv. 1485) honour the Elean <i>agoranomos</i> and <i>archiereus</i> L. Vettulenus Laetus.
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XI. INTERACTION

i. Local interaction	The fact that the <i>synodos</i> honours a very prominent member of the Elean society shows its interaction on a local level.
ii. Interaction abroad	The <i>synodos</i> cooperates with <i>sympas xystos</i> and the athletes from all over the world who came to the 216th Olympic games: CAPInv. 1477 , and CAPInv. 1485 .

XII. NOTES

i. Comments

Pleket 1973: 216 "The synodos originally had an eponymous priest (Antonius' letter), then under Claudius a high-priest (ἀρχιερεύς, *archiereus*, *Pap.Lond.* 12 78, 1. 29) and in Severan times two archons, one treasurer and a secretary....*grammateus* of the *synodos*. As far as I know, the latter official is not attested in the sources but I assume that the synodos had one, just as it had a treasurer".

Poland 1909: 148 does not see a worldwide association in the *hiera xystike synodos* of the inscription from Olympia of the year AD 85, but an association that was limited to Olympia, "sie war vermutlich auf Olympia beschränkt".

We have no direct information, whether a local athletic guild existed at Olympia, whilst Pleket 1973: 204-5, doubted the existence of a branch of the international athletic organization at Olympia.

A recently excavated building in the southwestern section of the sanctuary of Olympia, constructed shortly before the end of the 1st c. AD, under Domitian, has been identified by the excavators as a clubhouse of an athletic guild, on the basis of a bronze victors list (including athletes dated to from the 1st c. B.C. to the 4th c. AD), which has been found in one of the buildings' drains as well as on the basis of clay floors in that building, which have been recognized as exercise spaces for athletes, see Sinn 1993: 157; 1994: 233 ff.; 1995: 162-8; 1997: 217-33; 2002: 189-92 and Ebert 1997: 317-35. This issue is discussed by Pleket 1973: 204-5: he argued against the existence of an official Olympic athletic guild. Pleket hesitates to recognize the so-called SW-building in Olympia as a clubhouse and inclines to see a training house for athletes, based on the clay floors which could be identified with *keromata*. The lack of certain evidence for the identification of the building with a clubhouse and the absence of a term, such as *synodos*, in the aforementioned inscription on the bronze plaque, offer no arguments for the existence of a local athletic guild in Olympia.

Even if the inscription from Olympia refers to the world-wide *hiera xystike synodos*, it remains unknown, what its relationship and differences from the *sympas xystos* were (see [CAPInv. 1485](#)). For the difference between *hiera xystike synodos* and the *sympas xystos* see Pleket 1973: 216.

The theory that the international athletic guild was dissolved between the reigns of Tiberius and Nero and the headquarters of a re-established *synodos* was founded in Rome (see e.g. Moretti 1953: 178, no. 65; Forbes 1955: 244) is rejected by Pleket 1973: 212-21, who accepts only that at some time the headquarters of the *synodos* have been moved to Rome, but it seems that it was a decision of the athletes and not an imperial order; however, both sides took profit from this move.

In any case, the branch of Rome of the *hiera xystike synodos*, known as *Curia athletarum*, is attested from AD 46 onwards, but the international guild acquired a permanent headquarters only under Antoninus mainly thanks to the efforts of M. Ulpius Domesticus (see Sinn 1992: 75-87). Volpe 2007: 427-37, presents evidence based on excavations of the south-western section of the Baths of Trajan in Rome and reconstructs the complex as a combination of Roman baths with a Greek-style gymnasium consisted of a large open space surrounded by colonnades. Volpe interprets the complex as the *xystos* and *balaneia* attested in inscriptions, such as ἀρχιερεύς τοῦ σύμπαντος ξυστοῦ καὶ ἐπὶ βαλανείων Σεβαστῶν, *archiereus tou sympantos xystou kai epi balaneion Sebaston*. This architectural complex included also the headquarters of the *hiera xystike synodos*, where the archive of the association was maintained (cf. IGUR I 236, ll. 9-11: ἐν ᾧ καὶ τὰ ἱερὰ καταθήσεσθε καὶ τὰ γράμματα πρὸς αὐταῖς ταῖς Θερμαῖς ταῖς ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πάππου μου γεγενημέναις, *en hoi kai ta hiera katathesesthe kai ta grammata pros autais tais Thermais tais hypo tou theou pappou mou gegenemenais*). Volpe places the headquarters of the *synodos* in one of the large exedras of the colonnade of this architectural complex, which can be identified as a library or archive; moreover, a number of the inscriptions which had been erected in the headquarters of the *synodos*, have been found there. This view is against the old identification of the headquarters with the entrance area at the north side of the complex or in a building found under S. Pietro in Vincoli (Rausa 2004: 539-40).

ii. Poland concordance

Poland H12

iii. Bibliography

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XIII. EVALUATION

i. Private association

Probable

Note

The worldwide importance of *hiera xystike synodos* and its role in the political sphere prevent us from defining it with certainty a private association.