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**Katharina Knäpper**, *Hieros kai Asylos*. Territoriale Asylie im Hellenismus in ihrem historischen Kontext, Stuttgart (Franz Steiner Verlag) 2018 (Historia-Einzelschriften 250), 348 S., ISBN 978-3-515-11992-4 (geb.), € 64,–

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The book by Katharina Knäpper, based on her 2013 ‘Dissertation’ at the Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität of Münster, has its main focus on the so called ‘territorial *asylia*’ of Hellenistic age. This definition is used to indicate a special *status* of sacred inviolability – expressed in the written sources by the binomial *hieros kai asylos* – that was requested by important sanctuaries, or *poleis* connected to sanctuaries, and granted to them by rulers, *poleis* or federal states. The central



and most extended section of the book (ch. 3, 75–248) is in fact devoted to the historical analysis of this Hellenistic institution, based primarily on epigraphic evidence that dates from the middle of the 3rd century to the first two decades of the 2nd century BC. Such analysis is structured so as to put special emphasis on the parties involved in the grant of territorial *asylia*. Part 3, indeed, contains two major sub-sections, of which the first one (ch. 3.3, 81–205) deals with the requests for *asylia* made by individual sanctuaries and *poleis*, and the second one (ch. 3.4, 205–248) is related to the recognition of territorial inviolability granted by different entities (other *poleis*, federations, Hellenistic rulers, etc.). The assumption being that, for a better understanding of this institution, we ought not to limit ourselves to shed light on its functioning, but we should also investigate the reasons why, from time to time and in the frame of specific historical contexts, some sanctuaries and *poleis* had asked for such award, and some other *poleis*, rulers, federations, etc. had responded positively to such requests. The core of the study in the third part is enclosed between two other sections, through which the territorial *asylia* of the Hellenistic age is interpreted in the light of a broader historical development, from the roots of Hellenistic *asylia* in earlier institutions related to protection and inviolability, i.e. prohibition of *sylān*, personal *asylia*, *hikesia* (ch. 2, 22–74), down to its transformation and epilogue under the Roman rule, in the course of the 1st century BC and the early Imperial age (ch. 4, 249–269). In an introductory chapter (ch. 1, 11–21), the author briefly outlines the primary objectives of her research and explains the methodological framework adopted in relation to a pivotal theoretical question posed by the study of *asylia*, that is, how to evaluate the relationship between political and religious spheres in antiquity (ch. 1.1, 18–21). The book ends with some final remarks (ch. 5, 270–276), in which all the main results of the investigation are clearly summarized, and, finally, with an epigraphical appendix (“Anhang”, 277–314), collecting new *asylia* inscriptions that were not previously included by K. J. Rigsby in “Asylia. Territorial Inviolability in the Hellenistic World” (Berkeley 1996), each provided with a short lemma and translation. Within the same appendix, two tables (no. 8, 298–311, and no. 9, 312–314) collect and display some essential data, deriving from *asylia* inscriptions and concerning, respectively, the sacred embassies for the request of sacred inviolability and the dissemination of the recognised award (i.e. places of publication, proclamations or other public announcements).

As the author points out in the introduction, the problem most thoroughly dealt with in the studies on territorial *asylia* has been to establish whether such award had a political or religious value. In his fundamental book of 1996, K. J. Rigsby had essentially carried out a ‘depoliticization’ of *asylia*, interpreting it as a religious act, aimed at increasing the honour of the god and devoid of any major practical implications in terms of territorial security. In opposition to such

a minimalist vision of *asylia*, many other scholars have instead highlighted the functions of *asylia* in diplomacy and foreign policy, its role in times of political uncertainty, or its legal aspects, even as evidence for territorial claims, and so on. Following these criticisms to Rigsby's interpretation, the author stresses the importance of analyzing the *asylia* agreements on a case by case basis, in the light of their respective historical contexts and with a special focus on the motives for the request/approval of the status of *hieros kai asylos* to a specific territory. This approach clearly aims to provide an interpretation of the phenomenon of territorial *asylia* less schematic but more adherent to the historical reality as it emerges from the ancient sources. The author notices that in order to pursue this kind of investigation it is necessary to first equip oneself with appropriate methodological and terminological tools. In this respect, she draws attention to two main elements of weakness affecting the current scholarly debate on territorial *asylia*. The first one deals with the relationship between politics and religion, the second one, to the use of the modern notion of 'asylum' ('Asylbegriff'), strictly derived from the Roman concept of *asylum*, in relation to the ancient Greek context. Scholarly literature often limits itself to pointing out that, in the ancient world, the boundaries between religion and politics were blurred; but, without a clear demarcation between these two spheres, any interpretation of the sources is liable to fall into vagueness. In this respect, following a widespread and time-honoured approach in Classical studies, the author recalls the 'habitus-field theory' of Pierre Bourdieu as a productive theoretical framework within which to address this problem. Religion and politics, indeed, can be understood as two discrete 'fields' in Bourdieu's terms. Thus, they were indeed subject to change, and their respective limits were always the result of negotiations and other social processes, that, from time to time, defined their 'habitus' by involving their 'actors'. Actually, the borders between the two wide 'fields' of religion and politics were heavily negotiated. These two fields, in fact, were characterised by similar aspects and large overlapping areas. One reason for that can be detected in the low degree of professionalisation in the ancient world. The particular relationship between religion-field and politics-field in antiquity was indeed shaped by the presence of 'actors' with very few access restrictions. Other reasons are related to the fact that these two 'fields' shared the same system of norms and values in the sphere of the *agōn*; and that, moreover, the identity of the ideal citizen was first characterized by behaviours that were positively connoted from a religious point of view. These considerations apply also to interstate relations, where the development of a discourse on religious values represented a 'capital', still in Bourdieu's terms, in the political field. These considerations form the guiding principles for the interpretation of *asylia* documents and the evaluation of the religious and political roots of *asylia* presented in this book. They respond to the need to refrain from oversim-

plified attributions, to highlight rather the multifaceted aspects of territorial *asylia*. A similar critical approach is applied to terminology. The author challenges the use by scholarly literature of the notion of asylum (as “Asylrecht”, or “antike Asyl” in M. Dreher’s definition [25]) as a sort of umbrella covering different and not-consistent ancient institutions related to protection, from the containment of the right of self-help and reprisal (συλλάω, σύλη) to the seeking of protection through the ritual of ἱκεσία. In respect to this problem, these phenomena – i.e. those related to the semantic sphere of *sylān/asylia*, from the one hand, and of *hikesia*, from the other – are thus individually analysed in the second section of the book, in the belief that “an accurate use of technical terminology, without terms pretending to be coherent” is “more significant than a casual reiteration of what sounds familiar” (17). Although the Roman notion of asylum intrinsically differs in its rationale from its Greek model, nonetheless, it has usually influenced the modern interpretations of Greek *asylia*. The major difference is that the Roman notion of asylum necessarily implied the presence of a sanctuary as a place of refuge, thus diverging from the original semantic field of ἀσυλία/ἄσυλος. The author notices that the substantiated neuter τὸ ἄσυλον, possible derivation from the expression τὸ ἱερὸν ἄσυλον, never occurs in pre-Roman documents on inscriptions or papyri. Indeed, the notion of τὸ ἄσυλον – in which *asylia* and *hikesia* appear in some extent to have been merged together – was used by the Roman world to designate the sanctuaries that the Greeks defined instead through the adjective φύξιμος. Against the current view, in the pre-Hellenistic period the existence of a universal sacral ‘Asylrecht’ cannot be ascertained. Phenomena connected with the root συλ- (i.e. the right of reprisal and its restrictions through interstate *symbola* and the bestow of personal *asylia*) can be plainly understood outside of religion. In fact, as it can be observed in the epigraphic evidence, they were essentially connected with economic and commercial matters. And, on the other hand, the thesis according to which the prohibition of reprisal found its legitimation in the religious sphere should be dismissed. Differently, the religious background of *hikesia* can be undoubtedly recognized from its very origins. The book’s argumentations on the semantic sphere of *hikesia* provide a clear example of ‘negotiations’ performed on the borders between religion and politics as different Bourdieu’s fields. The sacred protection of refugees operated as a component of the social order. Nonetheless, over time the regulatory functions of such *nomos agraphos* were challenged or even opposed by further regulations in the secular sphere, as it can be observed both in literary sources (tragedy) and in inscriptions (see in particular those dealing with the protection of fugitive slaves). The connection of *asylia* with the religious sphere developed gradually. This can be partly observed in the transformation of the personal *asylia* from a privilege conferred to individuals for practical and economic purposes,

during the Classical period, to its connection with honorary religious offices (e.g. *theorodokia*) in Hellenistic inscriptions. Nonetheless, this is nothing but a marginal aspect in the ‘sacralization’ of *asylia*, whose matrix should not be directly related to *hikesia*, but more precisely to the idea of the inviolability of sacred places. The sacredness recognized since the Dark Ages to certain places, such as Delphi or Elis, furthered their removal from the secular sphere and their establishment as zones of peace, in the frame of strategies for the regulation of armed conflicts and violence de-escalation. These processes were not limited to sanctuaries; indeed, other kinds of places were embedded in this ‘sacred landscape’ by virtue of their Panhellenic significance, as in the case of Plataia after the Persian Wars. The inviolability of such territories was universally recognized as a matter of fact and was essentially intended as immunity from *sylān*. Expressions such as ἱεροσυλία (Platon) or συλᾶν νεώς/ἱερᾶ (Herodotus) were introduced in the Classical period for condemning this kind of violations. The territorial *asylia* has its root in this long-term background framework, even if it stands as a genuine Hellenistic institution. The author, indeed, describes the territorial *asylia* as an instrument of interstate diplomacy, that was used all over the Greek world from the middle of the 3rd century BC to the middle of the 2nd century BC, and having its *floruit* in the end of the 3rd century. The requests and acknowledgements of *asylia* responded to an internationally codified practice, for which the epigraphic evidence from Kos, Magnesia on the Meander, and Teos provide the most important cases. A relevant aspect of the proposed interpretation concerns the nature of the relationship established by the recognition of the status of *hieros kai asylos*. The *asylia*’s documents cannot be interpreted as bilateral treaties, but, more precisely, as ‘offers of agreement’ and ‘acceptances of agreement’, in which the contracting subjects could act on a level of equality or else of clear disparity (as in the case of acknowledgements issued by dynasts or by Rome). Most important, they were legally binding documents, that sanctioned a change in the claimant’s *status* with respect to a series of partner subjects and that guaranteed a certain degree of protection in the frame of an ‘*asylia*-network’. In opposition to Rigsby’s interpretation, the author stresses that violations and failures in *asylia*, attested by literary sources, do not testify to the poor functionality of *asylia*. On the contrary, they show *ex negativo* that the *status* of *hieros kai asylos* was a binding factor and that, moreover, it was strictly depending on its formal recognition: “non-agreed *asylia* has no political relevance” (245), precisely because of its contractual nature. The functions of *asylia* described here are directly linked to the historical context in which this instrument was developed, that is, in the climate of extreme international uncertainty from the middle of the 3rd century, in the aftermath of the Chremonidean War. The concentration of the requests for *asylia* at the end of the century, on the other hand, is understandable by virtue of the further emer-

gence on the international chessboard of new political subjects such as the *koinon* of the Aetolians, Rhodes or the league of the Cretan cities. During the Hellenistic period, certain sanctuaries were expanded as true ‘*hikesia*-centers’, as it can be inferred both from lexical (ἱερὸν φύξιμον, Plu.) and archaeological clues. This aspect was the most emphasized one in the Rome’s view of *asylia*. Tiberius’ threat to withdraw the privileges of *asylia* to sanctuaries that enjoyed them illegally or that had become places of protection for criminals and fugitives of all kinds (Tac. Ann. III. 36) represents nothing but the culminating point of a phenomenon of transformation of *asylia* that originates in the 1st century B.C. The presence of the Roman authority in the Mediterranean brought about a clear change in the procedures and purposes of the Greek territorial asylum. Now that the creation of diplomatic networks of protection was no longer an important factor, since Rome had substantially become the exclusive point of reference for international stability, it was the association of *asylia* with *hikesia* and other financial privileges that remodelled this former diplomatic instrument, which naturally faded away in the *pax romana*.

This is a welcome book, in which the multifaceted theme of territorial *asylia* is handled in an intelligent and inspiring way. Its main quality is that the author has successfully managed to organize such a complex subject – which spans chronologically and spatially widely – within a clear, solid and methodologically sound structure. The way in which individual aspects are examined separately and arranged between them succeeds in bringing to light the main themes and contents of her arguments. This is particularly true for the discrete analysis of the different institutions connected with protection in the second part, as well as for the individuation of distinctive categories of official reasons for the request and the acceptance of *asylia* in the third part.

Personally, I greatly appreciated the author’s aim to break the chains of consolidated terminological habits: this is not indeed an accessory aspect, since, very often, the correct interpretation of ancient phenomena appears misleadingly influenced by the same modern terms used to label them. The book is not without some weaknesses, partly explainable by the extent of the field of observation in which the author has engaged. The analysis of individual inscriptions is often limited to terminological considerations, sometimes discounting problems of interpretation or attribution that a richer epigraphic analysis would have brought to light (or with the risk of falling into error, as e.g. for the Athenian copy of the Delphic decree in honour of Athena’s priestess Nykis, IG II<sup>2</sup> 1136, described as an “agreement between Athens and Delphi”). In regard to some aspects dealt with in the book, moreover, the reader will maybe feel the need for a less cursory analysis (e.g. the regulations on retaliation in the *symbolon* between Oiantheia and Chaleion, or the peculiar role of the associations of Dionysos’ *technitai*). Given the

breadth and variety of the evidence considered, the reader left without indexes of the literary and epigraphic sources, in particular as regards the commentaries – scattered in the text – of the inscriptions collected in the appendix, may be somewhat lost.

A conclusive word: reading this volume is recommended not only to those who are interested in this specific subject, but also, more in general, to those who would like to take it as a case study on long-term historical evolutions of Greek institutions, in their dynamic interaction between religion and politics.