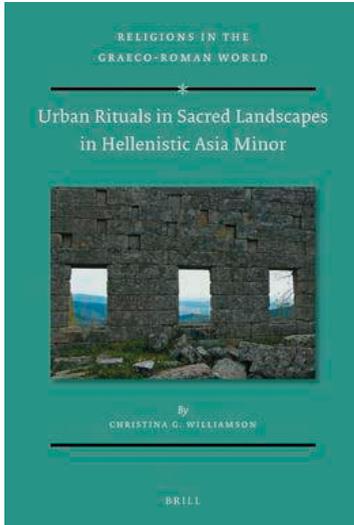


## URBAN RITUALS IN SACRED LANDSCAPES IN HELLENISTIC ASIA MINOR




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THIS BOOK PROVIDES AN INTERDISCIPLINARY discussion of the life of four sanctuaries in ancient Caria and their relationship with the cities that came to exert control over them in the Hellenistic period. The main purpose of the book is summarised by the question of “why autochthonous, local or regional sanctuaries were so vital to the development of poleis in Hellenistic Asia Minor even though they were located at great distances from the urban center” (p. 411). This implies envisaging city-sanctuary relationships as bidirectional, considering both the way cities appropriated and functionalised peripheral sanctuaries and their administration within a civic framework and how these sanctuaries contributed, both physically and symbolically, to the process of development and identity building of a growing city. The selected case studies – Mylasa

with the neighbouring sanctuaries of Zeus at Labraunda and of Sinuri at Tarla Tepe; Stratonikeia with the sanctuaries of Hekate at Lagina and of Zeus at Panamara – come from inner Caria and span the Hellenistic and early Imperial periods.

Out of a longer list of cities with important country sanctuaries in Asia Minor (pp. 4-5), Mylasa and Stratonikeia have been selected for their contacts and comparative potential. Both cities increased their territory and importance in the Hellenistic period, but this process displays different chronological phases, agents, and ways of incorporating peripheral sanctuaries into the religious, social, and political networks of the polis. Mylasa and the neighbouring sanctuary of Labraunda, situated NE of the city near a mountain pass leading to northern Caria, played a central role in the geo-political programmes of the Hekatomnids in the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. BCE. Later on, Labraunda remained in the Mylasan sphere of influence and this close relationship repeatedly resulted in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century into a conflict of interest concerning the administration of the sanctuary's treasure. Although less prominently, the sanctuary of the Carian god Sinuri, located SE of Mylasa at the borders with the territory of Stratonikeia, was also affected by Hekatomnid plans, but the later epigraphic record testifies to a 'urban microcosm' connected with the temple: although local communities played an important role in the life of Mylasa, the level of civic activity in the sanctuary of Sinuri never became comparable to Labraunda as regards administration and the showcase of public documents issued by the polis.

Unlike Mylasa, Stratonikeia was born as a Seleucid foundation, lived under Rhodian influence until 167/166 BCE, and later grew as an independent polis, progressively expanding its territory and enjoying alliance with Rome. In this case, too, the city's interaction with its major country sanctuaries reveals both similarities and differences. Stratonikeia managed to exert increasing influence over sanctuaries originally run by local authorities, but this process was faster at Lagina, where the rising role of Stratonikeia is contemporary to the absorption of the previously independent city of Koranza into a deme of the bigger polis, already before 167/166 BCE. Conversely, the sanctuary of Panamara probably remained under the administration of the *koinon* of the Panamareis until the late 2<sup>nd</sup> cent., although the epigraphic evidence points to a mid-2<sup>nd</sup> cent. phase when Stratonikeia already managed to impose a priest from the city. Both sanctuaries considerably increased their symbolic importance for Stratonikeia when Rome conceded them asylum rights after the attacks they suffered in time of war. A chronological difference is evident as the events leading to the concession of *asylia* were respectively connected with the war of Aristonikos in the years 132-129 (Lagina) and with Labienus' invasion of 40 BCE (Panamara).

Based on her doctoral thesis defended at the University of Groningen in 2012, Williamson's research combines archaeological and historical approaches with an

eclectic selection of methods derived from geographical and cognitive sciences. The theoretical and methodological framework of the research in Chapter 2 provides a useful introduction to challenges and advancements in the study of the life and functions of sanctuaries located outside urban settlements or even at the outmost peripheries of a Greek city's *chora*. In reviewing the available scholarship on the subject, Williamson observes that a major distinction exists between studies concerning the function of peripheral sanctuaries in Archaic and Classical Greece and Magna Graecia on the one hand, and, on the other, those focusing on rural sanctuaries in Hellenistic and Roman Anatolia. In the first cases, attention has been mainly drawn to archaeological and historiographic sources and the cultural/ideological implications of connections between peripheral sanctuaries and civic centres. On the contrary, the second group of studies has largely dealt with epigraphic data to tackle issues concerning the administration of peripheral sanctuaries and the change their status underwent in socio-economic and political terms, when these sanctuaries became increasingly dependent on civic institutions. Williamson convincingly shows that these alternative approaches leave the "second rise of the polis" in Hellenistic Asia Minor underrepresented in the scholarly debate (pp. 6-9). Moreover, they frame research in too schematic sets of structuralist binary oppositions such as core-periphery, urban-rural, civilised-wild, and Greek-non-Greek.

Williamson's criticism is well-informed and competently identifies both the disadvantages and potential of previous studies, paving the way to a *pars construens* where archaeological reports, epigraphy, and field reconstruction of ancient viewsheds and sacred routes are combined with new approaches harvested from recent research in cognitive, social, and spatial studies.<sup>1</sup> After reviewing various theoretical models of understanding rural environments as opposed to, or connected with, civic settlements, Williamson explores civic forms of interaction and integration of "country sanctuaries"<sup>2</sup> focusing on 1) cognitive ways of building territorial unity through vision and movement embracing landscapes, and 2) strategies to create regional identities based on ritual and socio-political interactions within and outside the *chora*. Space can be perceived and turned into memory by agents by means of both linear and concentric perspectives, and through both vision and movement.

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1. As summarised by the table at pp. 88-89, each case study is dealt with in a specific chapter discussing the following topics: historical and environmental background of relationships between city and sanctuary; urban integration via monumentality, public space, processional routes, ritual performances, legal administration and organisation, and urban mediatisation.

2. This generic term is preferred to others such as extra-urban, sub-urban, frontier sanctuaries, and alike, to avoid casting a predefined connotation on the sanctuary-city relationships.

Thus, the monumental organisation of country sanctuaries with surrounding walls and terraces elaborates the space in a concentric way that highlights the centripetal nature of a community gathered for a ritual, whereas other architectural devices such as windows and framed openings on the landscape establish visual linear connections with surrounding areas. Conversely, processional routes build up kinetic linear ways of perceiving and reinstating the link between city and sanctuary. Labraunda offers a perfect case study in these terms as the centripetal and hierarchical organisation of the sacred space combines with far-reaching viewsheds that stretch over the processional route from Mylasa and embrace the entire valley over which the city exerted its control. In more fragmented landscape scenarios, like the territory of Stratonikeia, the viewsheds enjoyed from the city and its country sanctuaries do not overlap, but rather combine different portions of landscape which, when considered together, embrace the territory of a young city aspiring to expand its political influence. Even in this case, though, sacred routes established a kinetic link through ritual processions, reusing and developing connections already used for transports in periods preceding the annexation of the sanctuary of Lagina and Panamara to the city. The case of Lagina is especially worth mentioning: the procession, with its centripetal movement from the sanctuary to the city rather than vice versa, enacted the *kleidos pompe*, i.e., the transportation of the key of Hekate's temple to the city, thus symbolising the integration of her cult into an institutionalised civic framework.

Moving to network analysis, Williamson builds on Ma's use of the category of peer polity interaction to describe the mutual recognition and collaboration between cities in the Hellenistic period.<sup>3</sup> In this respect, *asylia* stands out for its central role in the strategies adopted by Stratonikeia to advertise the city at a regional level when asylum right was conceded by Rome. This event marked a fundamental step in the civic use of the sanctuaries as the proclamation of their *asylia* and the circulation of narratives of divine intervention against the impious enemies of the temples offered Stratonikeia a chance to advertise its prestige and the support it enjoyed from Rome by sending sacred envoys to cities both within and outside Anatolia.

In another important section of the book, Williamson shares the recent scepticism about interpretative models suggesting a Hellenistic shift from "indigenous" Eastern autonomous sanctuaries and the imposition of a Greek system of civic control over religious life (see esp. pp. 140-149). Dealing with the debated case of the conflict between Mylasa and the priests of Labraunda for control over Zeus' treasure, Williamson embraces Maddoli's proposal that the litigation did not originate from the attempt

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3. Ma, 2003.

of the city to erode an assumed traditional autonomy of Anatolian sanctuaries with regard to sacred economy and administration, but from a competition for the legacy of Hekatomnid hegemony in the region.<sup>4</sup> According to this interpretation, since the priesthood of Labraunda was originally related to the Hekatomnid family, the local priests claimed ancestral rights of administering the cult by hereditary tradition; conversely, the institutions of Mylasa advertised, and finally imposed with royal mediation, their prerogative of exerting hegemony over the surrounding settlements and sanctuaries, which also stemmed from the political programme of the Hekatomnids.

Williamson also negatively reassesses the utility of applying the category of ‘frontier sanctuaries’ to the four cases under examination (see esp. pp. 417-419). Concerning Mylasa, she argues that although both Labraunda and the sanctuary of Sinuri were located at the periphery of the city’s *chora*, these sanctuaries do not appear to have played an actual role in Mylasa’s active definition and defence of borders. Labraunda’s position made it an important natural limit and passage point towards Alinda, but the evidence does not preserve any traces of the explicit engagement of either city in negotiating control over this frontier. As for the sanctuary of Sinuri, its location near the border with Stratonikeia might have turned it into a conflict zone, but the evidence concerning the sanctuary and its community rather points to the life of local groups interested in financially exploiting their sacred land estates and defending them from the occasional aggression of royal armies. Finally, the way Stratonikeia used Lagina and Panamara to support its regional interests shows that these peripheral sanctuaries primarily helped the city address local communities and expand its influence rather than marking defensive borders. Williamson’s assessment of the lack of evident defensive functions for the four sanctuaries is convincing, yet her understanding of frontiers as exclusively separating institutions appears somewhat reductionist in the light of current research. As a matter of fact, frontier studies nowadays envisage borders not only as political devices separating places, but also “as zones where two social systems (non-state societies, states, even world systems) come in contact, interact and overlap”.<sup>5</sup> From this perspective, studying the major country sanctuaries of Mylasa and Stratonikeia with a focus on their different degrees of involvement in the political programmes of these cities would have provided a welcome complement to Williamson’s research.

In general terms, the author’s eclectic methodology finds its place in a well-established framework concerning the exploration of new theoretical and interdisci-

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4. Maddoli, 2007, esp. pp. 306-316, no. 20B.

5. van der Vleuten & Feys, 2019, quote p. 31.

plinary methodologies for the study of ancient history. Studies following this trend occasionally favour the speculative task of assembling new methodological packages to the detriment of a fine-grained analysis of the evidence. It is a pleasure to see that Williamson has avoided this risk. Her chapters dedicated to the four sanctuaries under examination provide a sound and detailed overview of the available evidence, organised in a coherent sequence discussing the physical and social environment of the sanctuary, the monumental and ritual space, ritual performances, administration, and the mediatisation of the sacred space by the city. The result is that the reader may “look across the gaps in data and beyond a single data type”, compare different contexts, and “understand the repertoire of options that cities had” (p. 433) when they used peripheral sanctuaries to foster community building and recognition both within the borders of the civic *chora* and at the regional or macro-regional level (Caria, Anatolia, and beyond).

Based on a rich multilingual bibliography and a thorough discussion of ancient sources, Williamson convincingly advocates a holistic approach that does not only imply broadening the types of sources considered, but also exploiting the evidence “in combination with an awareness of theoretical potential (...) [T]his requires a wider range of theories to draw on in properly assessing the different data, while yielding a list of factors to consider” (p. 425). Her concluding assessment of the contribution of new approaches from social sciences (pp. 425-437) is both very useful to summarise the results of her research and an honest statement about the potential and limits of application of new models. For instance, Williamson (p. 429) acknowledges that the sparse evidence available to scholars in ancient history often hinders an efficient usage of network models, so in most cases network should be understood in a metaphorical way. Nevertheless, despite the fragmentary nature of our documents, Williamson’s effort to combine all the possible types of datasets – written, material, and derived from digital landscape analysis – offers the best possible approximation to a sound discussion of the nodes and agents by which important rural sanctuaries and cities came into interaction.

Among the possible ways of expanding the application of her method to new case studies, Williamson (pp. 435-437) concludes that a versatile compound of interdisciplinary analytical tools and a high-resolution discussion of the available evidence will offer a chance to reassess the place of the polis in the heterogeneous societies of Hellenistic Asia Minor and could foster the definition of new interpretative models also via a more systematic comparison with polis-building and city-sanctuary interactions in other regions and epochs, such as the Archaic period. To make this fascinating programme possible, I would like to add one ingredient that in my view is still missing or underexploited in Williamson’s research: the role played by the religious

life of the city. In other words, attention should be systematically paid not only to the gods and rituals associated with country sanctuaries and the impact civic institutions exerted on them, but also to what happened to the pantheon of the polis as the other protagonist of a story of mutual influences. I list here a few relevant questions:

- Are the deities worshipped in a rural sanctuary already present in the city before it starts exerting control over this sanctuary, or do they bring an innovative addition to the civic pantheon? In the first case, does the cult attested in the sanctuary show different connotations than in the city? To sum up, do the religious practices of the sanctuary affect the development of the religious life of the civic community inside the polis, and to what extent?
- Does the growing influence of a city and its pantheon bring about any change in the characterisation of the deity and her/his divine companions in the sanctuary? Is civic influence only related to administration and ideology, or does it also have an impact on rituals and beliefs connected with the sanctuary?

These questions show that the city, with its specificities, cannot disappear from our focus: for sake of completeness, our approach should be dual and constantly consider both involved parties and their reciprocal influences. Of course, we should be aware that the evidence concerning regional interactions between cities and rural sanctuaries is often too fragmentary to enable a sufficiently detailed analysis. Still, in line with the spirit of Williamson's research, this effort would already be commendable if it reached the goal of defining a checklist of indicators concerning the impact of city-sanctuary interactions on the rituals and representations of the divine *both in the sanctuary and in the city*.

As a conclusion, I feel the need to state that this final observation does not diminish the value of Williamson's study, rather putting her conclusions in a perspective that looks at future developments. Williamson's book bears a useful contribution to the understanding of territorial developments and the political use of religion in building local civic identities in Hellenistic Anatolia while also providing a useful model to scholars who might be interested in testing her method to new case studies or scaling it up to the discussion of larger regions. Her commitment to blend the analysis of multiple, and occasionally unconventional, source types with theoretical discussion should once more be praised for its balance, which gives value to the evidence rather than limiting it to the role of proving a theoretical model correct. Thus, Williamson convincingly advocates the advantages of an open methodological eclecticism that proactively tailors analytical tools to deal with concrete questions

and problems. One may expect that her contribution will encourage more scholars to reassess old problems with new attentive and critical eyes.

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