

## Trading Places and Worship Spaces: The Political, Social and Economic Roles of Religious Sanctuaries Built by and for Resident Aliens in the East Mediterranean

Much attention has been paid recently to communities of resident aliens in the polities of the East Mediterranean (Velissaropoulos 1977; Whitehead 1984; Möller 2000; Demetriou 2012; Kaplan 2015). These communities were established as semi-autonomous enclaves under the authority of the host state. Most, labelled as *emporion* in ancient or modern texts, functioned to support traders living abroad; some, particularly in Egypt, were camps of mercenaries in the employ of the host state. A large number of these communities included sanctuaries to one or more gods of the resident aliens. These sanctuaries usually were established with the permission of the host state, and in a number of cases, were associated with a deity of the host society. Generally, such sanctuaries are thought to have served the religious needs of the resident aliens who supported them, and to have played some role in the syncretism of religious ideas between societies. But it is likely that they also served specific political, economic and social functions for the enclaves that established them. Recently, Maria Aubet has explored the role of the cult of Baalat-Hathor as an expression of Egypt's role as a colonial power in Byblos in the second millennium BCE (Aubet 2013, 258-265), particularly in light of the intensive trade relations between Egypt and Byblos. It is worth considering whether sanctuaries served a similar political role elsewhere in the Mediterranean, particularly in the first millennium BCE, even among those states of the region whose relations were based not on imperial control but on more equitable diplomatic and economic connections. It is worthwhile especially to consider what the function of the sanctuary was in terms of the social and economic organization of the resident alien enclaves and their relation to the host communities. Among the sanctuaries to be considered are those of Athena-Neith in Sais, Egypt; the Greek sanctuaries in the *emporion* of Naukratis; the

sanctuary of Phoenician Aphrodite in Memphis; the Jewish Temple of Jahweh in Elephantine; and the references to cults of foreign gods worshipped in Jerusalem in the Solomonic and Divided Monarchy eras. The several foreign cults in the Peiraeus of Athens—those of Zeus Ammon, Bendis, Sabazios, Isis and others (Garland 1987)—can be added to consideration. These various examples demonstrate a pattern in which the alien community is given special authorization to control the sanctuary; and this authorization grants the resident alien community an autonomous political identity that allows it to negotiate the terms of its members' standing with the host community. In addition, the common association of the resident aliens' sanctuary with a major deity of the host community—or in some cases, the adoption of the aliens' deity by the host, as for example, with the worship of Bendis and Sabazios in Athens—provided a means of integrating the resident aliens into the ritual community of the host polity. And while these relationships were not formally reciprocal, in the sense that mutual religious rights were granted by treaty or with an explicit recognition that similar arrangements would be made at home—nevertheless, the comparatively well attested cases of Egypt's relations with the various Greek cities, and the Odrysian Thracian kingdom's relations with Athens, demonstrates a growing pattern of mutual tolerance of the religious institutions of the respective partners, a manifestation of strengthened diplomatic relations between the host polities and guest communities.

### Bibliography

Aubet, Maria E. 2013. *Commerce and Colonization in the Ancient Near East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Demetriou, Denise. *Negotiating Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean. The Archaic and Classical Greek Multiethnic Emporia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Garland, Robert. *The Piraeus From the Fifth to the First Century B.C.* London: Duckworth, 1987.

Kaplan, Philip. "Sojourner in the Land: The Resident Alien in Late Period Egypt," in *Walls of the Prince: Egyptian Interactions with Southwest Asia in Antiquity. Essays in Honor of John S. Holladay, Jr.* Edited by Timothy P. Harrison, Edward B. Banning & Stanley Klassen. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015, 396-414.

Möller, Astrid. *Naukratis: Trade in Archaic Greece.* Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000

Velissaropoulos, J., "Le monde de l'emporion," *Dialogues d'Histoire Ancienne* 3 (1977), 61-85.

Whitehead, D. "Immigrant Communities in the Classical Polis; Some Principles for a Synoptic Treatment," *L'Antiquité Classique* 53 (1984), 47-59.