

Vijay Vaidyanathan (M.Phil Classics)

Stasis in Hellenistic Asia: Civil violence, socioeconomic tensions, and interstate politics from Alexander to the Mithridatic Wars

This thesis is an historical investigation of stasis during the Hellenistic period. Roughly translated, the ancient Greek noun 'stasis' refers to one's political stance; more specifically, it described situations wherein a political dispute within a city-state (polis) escalated to violence between factions and culminated in a political revolution in the affected city. Outbreaks of stasis were an unfortunate and regular blight on democratic societies throughout the Greek world.

Previous assessments of stasis have tended to focus on the Classical period of Greek history, and investigations of the phenomenon's evolution in the Hellenistic period are much less common. Moreover, the Marxist approach to stasis (that is, conceiving of its causes purely in terms of socioeconomic inequalities and tensions, and analysing it by use of the Marxist framework of class struggle) has been by far the most widely utilised methodology in scholarly treatment of the phenomenon to date.

The present study seeks to investigate the under-examined nature of stasis during the Hellenistic period, an era when the parameters that governed political life for the Greek city-states were significantly different to the preceding Classical period. It largely eschews the Marxist approach in favour of considering instead the role of imperialism and interstate relations as triggers for stasis. The objective is to explore how the socioeconomic inequalities previously identified as causal agents for stasis intersected with the foreign policy priorities of the Hellenistic monarchies and the Roman Republic. In this way, this thesis makes an original and valuable contribution to the field.