

Preface

This volume, the two already published, and those that are to follow have their origins in a Greek reading seminar at the University of Toronto begun in the 1990s and after a short hiatus, recommenced in 2003. Many of the texts selected for translation were epigraphical and related to associations, guilds and clubs from Attica, Asia and Egypt. The focus on private associations – cultic, professional, immigrant, domestic, and neighborhood – was a function of the conviction that in order to understand the associative practices of the early Christ groups in Asia, Macedonia, and Attica, it was critical to understand the structures, activities, leadership, finances, and recruitment strategies of the many associations that had existed at least since the fourth century BCE and which continued to play an important part in social life well into the high Empire.

Several monographs and larger studies have their origins in this seminar. Most notably, Bradley H. McLean's *An Introduction to Greek Epigraphy of the Hellenistic and Roman Periods from Alexander the Great down to the Reign of Constantine (323 BC – AD 337)* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 2003) is the published and greatly-expanded form of the notes he developed as the seminar oriented itself to epigraphical conventions. This work of course built on A. Geoffrey Woodhead's *The Study of Greek Inscriptions* (2nd ed.; Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981) and Sterling Dow's *Conventions in Editing* (Greek, Roman and Byzantine Scholarly Aids, 2; Duke University, 1969). Several of the members of the group wrote doctoral dissertations which applied knowledge of Greek and Roman associations to the interpretation of early Christian texts. Richard S. Ascough studied Macedonian associations in his 1997 dissertation, now published as *Paul's Macedonian Associations: The Social Context of Philippians and I Thessalonians* (WUNT 2/161; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003). Philip Harland's 1999 dissertation focused on associations in Asia to help him reshape thinking about the social context presupposed by the Apocalypse of John and the letters of Ignatius. The revised dissertation was published as *Associations, Synagogues and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), and Harland followed this in 2009 with *Dynamics of Identity and Early Christianity: Associations and Cultural Minorities in the Roman Empire* (London and New York: Continuum). Richard Last's *The Pauline Church and the Corinthian Ekklēsia: Greco-Roman Associations in Comparative Context* (SNTSMS 164; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

2015) compared the Corinthian Christ group with the rich data that is available from the study of ancient associations. And finally, Kloppenborg's *Christ's Associations: Connecting and Belonging in the Ancient City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019) mobilizes what is known about associative practices to think about the membership, practices, and civic relations of Christ groups.

This project is organized regionally and describes a spiral beginning in Attica, moving northward to Macedonia and Thrace (vol. 1), then through the Bosphoros region and Asia (vol. 2), and Egypt (vol. 3). Further volumes will treat the Aegean Islands, Syria-Palestine, North Africa, Italy, Hispania, Gallia, Noricum, Germania, Pannonia, Dacia, Moesia, and Roman Britain. They are designed principally to provide a "thick" context for the study of the associative practices of the Christ groups in the cities of the Empire.

Earlier studies of the development of the structure of Christ groups, even when they paid attention to Greek and Roman associations, tended to rely on a tiny handful of inscriptions or papyri in order to contextualize the practices of early Christ groups. This selection routinely included SIG³ 985 = TAM V 1539 (117) (Philadelphia, Lydia), IG II² 1368 (51) (Athens), CIL 14.2112 (Lanuvium) and one or two other documents. There is no doubt that these inscriptions are illuminating when it comes to considering associative practices. The dangers of so narrow a database are obvious, however: one might well conclude that these few data typify and define the nomenclature, membership profiles, and activities of *all* associations and infer, as some researchers did, that the several differences between these three or four associations and Christ groups meant that the latter were *sui generis* and that little or nothing was to be learned from a study of Greco-Roman associations. Nothing could be further from the truth. As the selection of inscriptions, papyri, and ostraca included here will show, associations display a wide variety of naming practices, forms of internal governance, membership profiles, activities, and relationships with their host cities. When the range of associations and their practices are seen, it becomes clear that Christ groups could fit rather comfortably within the spectrum of ancient associations, as indeed patristic writers such as Tertullian recognized (*Apol.* 39).

Although a complete collection of association inscriptions and papyri is an important desideratum, it must be stated clearly from the outset that these volumes are not intended as a *corpus inscriptionum orgeonum, thiasorum et collegiorum*. Such a corpus would be unmanageably large, since for Attica alone IG II² includes over one hundred *decreta collegiorum et sodaliciorum* (no. 1249–1368), seventeen *catalogi thiasotarum, eranistarum, orgeonum* (nos. 2343–2361) and numerous dedications from various associations. Since the publication of *Inscriptiones Graecae* in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many more inscriptions have come to light. The publication of *Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien* (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1972–) has added hundreds of Asian inscriptions mentioning associations. Hundreds of Greek and Demotic papyri and inscriptions from Egypt relate to associations.

The corpus of Latin inscriptions was already huge, as is clear from a simple perusal of Jean Pierre Waltzing's *Étude historique sur les corporations professionnelles chez les Romains depuis les origines jusqu'à la chute de l'Empire d'Occident* (Louvain: Peeters, 1895–1900). The corpus of Italian inscriptions and those from the Western provinces has only become larger. Thus, a complete corpus of associations would probably include ten to twenty thousand inscriptions and papyri, and when furnished with notes, commentary, and indices would represent a multi-volume publication taking a decade or more to compile.

Without aspiring to a comprehensive publication of inscriptions and papyri, the present project aims at a representative selection that illustrates the variety of association types, activities, leadership structures, membership profiles, recruitment strategies, and fiscal practices. A relatively small number of association *nomoi* or bylaws are extant and we have included all the Greek and Latin bylaws that are in a reasonably complete state of preservation, as well as one or two Demotic bylaws. For other types of documents, however, we have had to make a selection. Decrees voting honors to members or patrons are particularly plentiful in the epigraphical record, as are dedications of association members to the gods, and funerary inscriptions honoring deceased members and patrons. These tend to be highly formulaic and repetitive. To print all of them would scarcely enhance our knowledge of the general practices of associations. We have, therefore, offered a selection that illustrates the variety of practices, names and internal structures of associations, the distinctive formulae which appear in their inscriptions, and various singular features not attested in the other inscriptions. Other honorific inscriptions and dedications are listed in the notes and indices. Hundreds of membership lists are available, but little would be gained by publishing all of these. We have selected a few membership lists, principally to illustrate a range of membership profiles. Some associations were gender-exclusive clubs, while others included citizens and metics, and yet others included freeborn and servile members. Élite patrons are present in some groups, but not in others.

The reader will quickly note the uneven profile of the dossier on associations. While associations are found in Attica from the fifth and fourth centuries BCE onward, and in Egypt from the third century BCE, most of the evidence from Macedonia and Thrace (and Italy) comes from the imperial period or later. For reasons of preservation, almost no papyri are available from the Egyptian Delta, but many inscriptions have survived. For Middle and Upper Egypt both papyri and inscriptions are available. This also means that some of the data that have the potential to tell us the most about the internal workings of an association – account ledgers and lists of expenditures for monthly meals – are missing from the Delta. Moreover, almost all of the association bylaws from Egypt come from two archives, both from the Fayûm: the Demotic materials from mummy cartonnage and the Greek texts from the Kronion archive from the mid-first century CE.

The bylaws, honorific decrees, membership lists, tomb inscriptions, and dedications included here each illustrate either something typical of associations in general or some feature that is noteworthy or unusual about the association in question. Inevitably, we will have omitted inscriptions that are of importance to the study of particular locales, deities, professions, or ethnic groups. This is the risk involved in any selection from a very large set of data.

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Peter Arzt-Grabner read through the entire manuscript, saving me from numerous errors and infelicities. Matthew Gibbs also reviewed the collection, offering a number of helpful suggestions. Christina Gousopoulos has contributed the lemma ‘Association?’, which evaluates whether the evidence warrants considering the groups featured in each of the entries as “certainly” or “probably” or “possibly” a formally constituted association or guild.

The arrangement of the inscriptions and papyri in this volume is both chronological and regional. The data are divided into three large groupings, the Delta, Middle Egypt (the region around Memphis and the Fayûm), and Upper Egypt. Within each division the materials are presented chronologically.

For the first time in the GRA series, we have included inventory numbers of the Copenhagen Associations Project, which has only recently become available (<https://ancientassociations.ku.dk/assoc/index.php>). The CAP database includes most of the associations included in GRA III. In the future, we will also include references to the Ghent Database of Roman Guilds (<https://gdrp.ugent.be/>).

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