



Associations in Context. Copenhagen: Copenhagen Associations Project, 11.10.2012-13.10.2012.

Reviewed by Annelies Cazemier

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Associations in Context

The international symposium 'Associations in Context: rethinking associations and religion in the post-classical *polis*' took place at the University of Copenhagen from 11th to 13th October 2012. It was organized by Annelies Cazemier and Stella Skaltsa, as part of the activities of the *Copenhagen Associations Project*. The conference was funded by the *Carlsberg Foundation*, whose Chairman, Flemming Besenbacher, addressed the assembled audience on the second day, introducing the work of the foundation and highlighting the importance of excellence in academic research.

Private clubs, societies, and associations gained an unprecedented prominence in the Greek world during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The significance of religion for understanding ancient associations has long been recognised, and various monographs have focused specifically on cult or religious associations. The aim of this conference was to go beyond so-called religious associations and to assess more generally the role of religion in ancient associative life (with a focus on the eastern part of the Mediterranean, from circa 300 BC to circa AD 300). Cultic activities, sacred space, and other religious aspects, such as theophoric names, were of importance to all sorts of private groups and associations. The conference addressed how these religious aspects related to other spheres of associative life, and what we know more generally about the wider context(s) of associations' activities and existence. In a series of twenty papers, scholars from Europe and North America assessed the nature, behaviour, and interactions of private associations within the social, religious, and economic landscape of the communities in which they are attested.

The papers covered a wide geographical area, from Macedonia to Egypt and from Syria (Palmyra) to the Aegean islands and central Greece, with some attention also to the western part of the Roman empire (esp. Ostia). How to define and identify 'associations' was a matter left open to the speakers, and thus a wide spectrum of groups, with varying levels of organization, was treated.

Religious aspects of associative life that were examined include the deities that were worshipped by associations, the cultic activities in which their members engaged, the monuments and dedications they set up, the relations of associations with specific sanctuaries, their use of (sacred) space, and their physical settings more generally. Attention was also given to the funerary functions of associations, and various papers focused on the economic sphere (e.g., associations of traders or craftsmen, the finances of associations, and associations' economic ties). All in all, the papers demonstrated that important insights can be gained from considering the various dimensions of associations (social, religious, economic, etc.) in close conjunction.

The conference began with a word of welcome by VINCENT GABRIELSEN, Director of the *Copenhagen Associations Project*, who introduced the project and its approach to studying private associations in the Greek-speaking world. The conference organizers, Annelies Cazemier and Stella Skaltsa, proceeded by introducing the central theme and questions of the symposium. The twenty conference papers were organized into eight sessions, which each addressed closely related topics and/or issues.

In the opening paper, ANNELIES CAZEMIER (Copenhagen) offered a preliminary investigation of the phenomenon of theophoric names (i.e., names referring to deities) for associations, notably in Rhodes and Delos, with the view to assessing its significance for creating and conveying a group identity. MARIO C.D. PAGANINI (Copenhagen) presented an interesting case study from Ptolemaic Egypt (2nd/1st c. BC), that of an association of landowners centred around the gymnasium, in order to highlight the extent to which religious practices and the dynastic cult were embedded in its activities. ANDREW MONSON (New York) then spoke about the diverse role of Egyptian associations in Ptolemaic and Roman times. He argued that they formed formal communities, with their own agendas, aims and modes of behaviour, which

however were directly linked to and flourished within broader political communities.

The following two sessions (2 and 3) focused on the physical settings of associations, their use of sacred space, and their public appearance and visibility. MONIKA TRÜMPER (Chapel Hill) examined the existence, design, use, and significance of sacred space in 'clubhouses' in Delos, placing special emphasis on natural rock-formations ('*nymphaia*') that have been found in three Delian buildings, among them two potential 'clubhouses'. STELLA SKAL TSA (Copenhagen) investigated the associations of locals and of members of the Ptolemaic garrison in Hellenistic Thera, showing, among other things, how sanctuaries served as loci of interaction between the different communities. HANNA STÖGER (Leiden), by employing spatial analysis (Space Syntax), assessed the use of space in guild buildings (*scholae*) in Ostia and investigated the position of these buildings in the wider urban landscape. CHRISTIAN A. THOMSEN (Copenhagen) highlighted the role of sanctuaries as gravitational centres for private associations. He explored where associations put up their decrees and monuments, asking 'who was the audience of these inscriptions' and 'what sort of values they intended to convey'. Finally, EMANUEL MAYER (Chicago) discussed professional associations of the Roman Imperial period and argued that their increased visibility was the result of dramatic changes in the urban economy.

The fourth session contained two papers which focused specifically on groups of *Romaioi* (Romans and Italians). CLAIRE HASENOHR (Bordeaux) explored the Italian associations on Delos, arguing that the various groups found in the epigraphic and archaeological record constituted different branches of one association, that of the *Italici*. Religion served a dual function: it fostered internal cohesion among the members of this heterogeneous group and at the same time allowed the community to mark its presence in the Delian landscape, e.g. by setting up dedications and offerings. ONNO M. VAN NIJF (Groningen) investigated the presence and role of *Romaioi* in Greek cities in the late Hellenistic and Imperial period. In the course of time, they became more formally organized groups, interacting with local political structures and promoting the Imperial cult.

The next session (5) explored the role of cult in creating identity among communities both beyond and within the traditional *polis*. BARBARA KOWALZIG (New York) addressed the issue of interactive polytheisms in the Mediterranean, looking at the various deities (esp. Hermes and Herakles) to which dedica-

tions were set up by a number of associations in Delos. Within this system of interactive polytheism associations engaged with the local community and societies abroad, embraced members from a disparate ethnic and social background, and managed to survive economically. PASCHALIS PASCHIDIS (Athens) examined religious associations in Roman Macedonia. He compared them with non-associative cults with a view to assessing the different ways in which religious structures formed collective identities. He showed that in some cases, associative structures and official cult coexisted and interacted with one another.

The sixth session focused on three case studies of cultic groups or associations in Macedonia (Beroia), central Greece (Athens), and Syria (Palmyra). PARASKEVI MARTZAVOU (Oxford) offered a close reading of an inscribed monument from Roman Beroia that concerns a group centred around the cult of Zeus Hypsistos. Individuals, of probably various origins but with interrelated occupational links, shared in a religious experience. SARA M. WIJMA (Groningen) examined the *orgeones* in Athens, reconsidering in particular the modern distinction between 'foreign' and 'Athenian' *orgeones* of Bendis. She argued that they established their own shrines, but at the same time they had a role to play in Athenian *polis* religion. MICHAŁ GAWLIKOWSKI (Warsaw) offered an overview of the archaeological and epigraphic evidence for associations in Palmyra, highlighting the drinking and feasting elements that informed their actions.

The following two papers (session 7) explored the role of religion in the life of craft and trade associations. ILIAS N. ARNAOUTOGLU (Athens) examined the different ways in which craft associations displayed cultic activity. They did not show a particular preference for the cults of deities linked to their craft, but instead they normally honoured panhellenic deities and followed closely the cultic practices of individuals and other public bodies around them. MATT GIBBS (Winnipeg) examined the extent to which religion informed the behaviour of trade associations in Roman Egypt. He investigated the religious and socio-religious activities in which members of these groups took part, taking into account urban as well as rural communities.

The eighth and final session focused on the economics of associations and on their funerary functions. PHILIP A. HARLAND (Toronto) explored the various sources of income as well as the expenses of associations in Hellenistic and Roman times, with a focus on Asia Minor and the Aegean, in order to highlight the ways in which they survived financially in a 'competitive arena'. PHILIP

F. VENTICINQUE (Cornell College) examined charters of Egyptian associations in order to show the complexity of the financial aspects involved in funerals and commemorative practices of associations. STÉPHANIE MAILLOT (Clermont-Ferrand) also examined the role of funerals and commemoration in associations, but from a Greek standpoint (Rhodes, Cos, Delos and Athens), arguing that this funeral aspect had manifold significance for, and largely informed associative life.

The conference was concluded by VINCENT GABRIELSEN, who summed up some of the points made and provided further food for thought in particular about associations and their position in the economic sphere, in interaction with entities such as market, temple, and state.

Throughout the conference, there was a lively and fruitful discussion, during which several issues were clarified and further points were raised. The papers illustrated how the various dimensions of associative life were closely connected, with religious aspects taking a prominent place, informing and expressing associations' internal dynamics as well as their outward group identity. Whilst some papers addressed the attachment of associations to particular cults, sanctuaries, or other localities (such as gymnasia, banqueting halls, or funerary sites), others paid attention to the workings of associative life in relation to the changing social, political, and economic environment of the Hellenistic and Roman periods. This seminal period in the history of private groups and associations will continue to inspire further research, not least by members of the *Copenhagen Associations Project*, who are working on a systematic inventory of all known associations in the Greek-speaking world. The results of the conference 'Associations in Context' will be published in a separate volume, edited by Annelies Cazemier and Stella Skaltsa.

Conference overview

Word of welcome by Vincent Gabrielsen, Director of the *Copenhagen Associations Project*

Introduction by Annelies Cazemier & Stella Skaltsa, conference organizers

Session 1

Annelies Cazemier (University of Copenhagen): 'Group identity and the gods: theophoric names of associations'

Mario C.D. Paganini (University of Copenhagen): "So that, after building a gymnasium and a hall, we may perform sacrifices on behalf of the Kings..." Religion and leisure: a gentry association of Hellenistic Egypt'

Andrew Monson (New York University): 'Political and sacred animals: religious associations in Greco-Roman Egypt'

Session 2

Monika Trümper (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill): 'The role of religion in Delian associations: sacred space in meeting places of associations'

Stella Skaltsa (University of Copenhagen): 'The religious and social landscape of private associations in Hellenistic Thera'

Hanna Stöger (University of Leiden): 'Ostia's guild seats - fact or fiction?'

Session 3

Christian A. Thomsen (University of Copenhagen): 'Before Gods and Men - the public relations of private associations'

Emanuel Mayer (University of Chicago): 'Pillars of Society: the public face of collegia in the Roman Empire'

Address by Flemming Besenbacher, Chairman of the *Carlsberg Foundation*

Session 4

Claire Hasenohr (University of Bordeaux): 'The Italian associations at Delos: cult, social integration and politics'

Onno M. van Nijf (University of Groningen): 'Staying Roman - becoming Greek: associations of Romaioi in Greek cities'

Session 5

Barbara Kowalzig (New York University): 'Religious associations in a world of interactive polytheisms'

Paschalis Paschidis (Institute of Historical Research - KERA, Athens): 'Civic cults and (other) religious associations: in search of collective identities in Roman Macedonia'

Session 6

Paraskevi Martzavou (Oxford University): 'I Beroia 27: a cultic group around Zeus Hypsistos in its socio-cultural and historical context'

Sara M. Wijma (University of Groningen): 'The Thracian managers of Bendis' cult in Piraeus: orgeones as official mediators in Athenian polis religion'

Michał Gawlikowski (University of Warsaw): 'The marzeħa of the priests of Bel and other religious associations in Palmyra'

Session 7

Ilias N. Arnaoutoglou (Academy of Athens - KEIED): 'Cult and craft. Variations on a (neglected) theme...'

Matt Gibbs (University of Winnipeg): 'Artisans and their gods: cult, religion, and ritual in the trade associations of Roman Egypt'

Session 8

Philip A. Harland (York University, Toronto): 'The economics of ritual in the associations'

Philip F. Venticinque (Cornell College): 'The eco-

nomics of association funerals and commemoration'

Stéphanie Maillot (Université Blaise Pascal, Clermont-Ferrand): 'Funerary aspects of religious associations in the Hellenistic period'

Conclusion by Vincent Gabrielsen, Director of the *Copenhagen Associations Project*

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the list discussion logs at:
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