

# Review

ANNELIES CAZEMIER and STELLA SKAL TSA (EDS), *ASSOCIATIONS AND RELIGION IN CONTEXT: THE HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN* (Kernos Supplément 39). Liège: Centre international d'étude de la religion grecque antique; Presses universitaires de Liège, 2022. Pp. 381, illus. (some colour), map, plans. ISBN 9782875623041 (pbk). €40.00.

The resurgence of scholarly interest in Greek and Roman associations in the past few decades has led to rich explorations of their structural organisation, social locations within their urban communities and links to broader contemporary cultural trends. One debated element is the proper taxonomy to use in identifying associations, with a common division between 'professional' and 'religious' functions as the default for two broad etc categories in scholarly discussions. This edited collection of fourteen essays uses inscriptions and archaeological remains in order better to understand the 'religious' element in all its complexity. In the Introduction (9–20), S. Skaltsa and A. Cazemier delineate the two-fold approach used in the essays: an examination of the wide range of cultic and other activities of associations that have been classified as 'religious' and an assessment of the religious actives of associations that have fallen outside the formal designation 'religious'.

The essays cover diverse geographic and temporal boundaries but are arranged for ease of access for those who want to concentrate on a particular place. The first two essays focus on Athens, with S. Wijma contrasting the *orgeones* of Bendis in Classical and Hellenistic times with other *orgeones* whose cult was linked to local heroes and deities, with the former developing a mediating role in religion in the Athenian *polis* (21–44). C. Thomsen looks at the role of honour in the same period, noting how associations used sanctuaries for honorific display (e.g. decrees and public crownings), giving the associations both a public presence and a place in competition for recognition both in and beyond the boundaries of their sanctuaries (45–58).

P. Paschidis turns attention to associations in Roman Macedonia (59–78), arguing that the division between 'civic' cults and 'religious' associations is moribund. He convincingly argues that there are two religious strands in the evidence that cross these artificial distinctions. In the first strand groups form their collective identities by drawing on local histories, while in the other strand groups focused on mythical and ritual narratives linked to the area.

Delos is the focus of the following two essays, with C. Hasenohr looking at Italian associations on the island in the second through first centuries B.C.E. (79–92). Despite variations in names and activities, Hasenohr argues that there was a single association of *Italici*, comprised ostensibly of people of Italian origin, that manifests in various sub-groups. While economic and political connections to Rome gave this large association its prominence and power, the religious elements gave its members a sense of cohesion, even for those who were not of direct Italian descent (e.g. foreigners, slaves). M. Trümper uses features of the archaeological remains of the clubhouse of the 'Poseidoniastes' to identify two other possible club buildings on the island, with particular attention to sacred elements such as altars and especially *nymphaia* (93–124). While not secure in such identification, this is a methodologically important way forward for understanding the cultic and social purposes of buildings where we have no direct evidence of an associational connection. Much less is known about associations on Thera, although Skaltsa assesses five inscriptions from the third to second centuries B.C.E. to demonstrate that associations of foreigners coexisted with those of locals during the thriving period of the Ptolemaic presence there (125–48). Although there was a clear separation in terms of membership, the associations resemble one another in worshipping the same gods and undertaking similar cult and social practices.

Death and burial are the themes that link the next three essays even as they retain a geographic focus. S. Maillot looks broadly at the funerary activities of Hellenistic associations known through boundary stones and decrees, particularly on Rhodes and Kos (149–68). Rightly eschewing the categorisation of such groups as *collegium funeraticum*, she nevertheless shows how central were burial and commemoration to the self-understanding of the associations. There was a practicality to it — bodies need burying — but this was ritualised in religious and symbolic ways. J.-M. Carbon gives more attention to tomb markers and boundary stones set up by associations on Kos in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, drawing from them an impressive amount of information

concerning the membership profile and organisational structure of the groups and pointing to their focus on local and foreign cults (169–206). While it is not possible to suggest a single model for understanding the groups on Kos as they varied in structure, that there were cult groups on the island is clear. Turning to more practical matters, P. Venticinque examines the economic dimensions of association burials in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt (207–26). This fits into broader discussions of the economic dimensions of associational life — e.g. membership dues, economic situation of members, the role of patronage — and given the near ubiquity of member burial, Venticinque's paper provides an important starting point for probing the financial implications of the promise of a decent burial that proved attractive in recruitment and the subsequent network links that are forged through membership.

M. Paganini provides a detailed examination of *I.Prose 40*, an honorific inscription set up by an association of landowners for a benefactor, highlighting the distinction clear in many other associations between religious focus (here the cult of the king) and networking and social connections (227–48). These two elements should not be treated as separate since they work together in bonding group members. The scholarly binary between 'religious' and 'professional' associations is addressed directly in the next two essays. I. Arnaoutoglou rightly demonstrates the crucial element of cult in occupational associations as it is expressed both directly and indirectly (249–70). Such associations did not always worship a deity directly linked to their craft but often did participate in cult activities that were linked to panhellenic deities with no occupational connections. M. Gibbs similarly looks at religious activities of trade associations but with a specific focus on Roman Egypt as evidenced in papyri (271–86), demonstrating that religious activities such as sacrifices, pilgrimages and celebrations were central to the identity of group members. Finally, M. Gawlikowski looks at the epigraphic and archaeological evidence for associations in Palmyra, where convivial activity (*marzeħa*) was central to forging bonds and a sense of identity among members (287–301).

Overall, the essays herein broaden the scope of how scholars can talk about associations as 'religious', providing much detail and nuance about various cultic and social activities that gave associations their public presence and identity. Perhaps understandably, but also somewhat frustratingly, the essays deploy implicit presumptions about what is 'religion' without ever problematising or interrogating that category. Skaltsa and Cazemir note early on that it is 'omnipresent' and 'intertwined' with other elements of societies, 'which requires a careful and nuanced understanding distinct from modern perceptions of religion' (16), yet this is not pursued in full here or in other essays. Nevertheless, the essays in this volume provide the promised complex and versatile picture of associational life that includes but is not limited to elements that get classified as 'religious'.

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