

*Conclusion*  
*Associations in Their World*

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**A World of Associations**

Following the overarching theme of associations' regulations, the chapters of this book have provided the reader with different insights into a large variety of ancient associations that were embedded in as many local realities, in an attempt on the one hand to highlight similar patterns but on the other hand also to stress the vivacity and diversity of the *fenomeno associativo*, 'associational phenomenon': although common traits certainly emerge, one should in no way expect uniformity. The world of associations was in fact a complex one: this book has mainly explored associations active in the Greek-speaking world, but even in this 'common cultural sphere' one sees a great variety of different options at play, which mirror the character of their various societies. The ways in which associations operated were a result of the strategies adopted by them on the basis of the different challenges they encountered and the way in which they appear to us is also linked to the contingent production and preservation of the sources, which varied depending on location and time. It is therefore not surprising that the picture we have gained from late Hellenistic and early Roman Athens is a different one from that of contemporary Mantinea, for instance: in Athens, as we have seen in the discussion by Arnaoutoglou in Chapter 6, associations made full use of the polis' general directions, trends and mechanisms in the regulation of members' behaviour so as to enhance their profile and foster their autonomy, room of action or survival, by providing an image that matched the expectations of the public administration. Chapter 7 by Zoumbaki, on the other hand, has shown how in Mantinea associations found specific scope of action during the recovery from a period of socio-economic difficulties in somewhat replacing the involvement of public institutions and by recruiting forces – and resources – from the ranks of local female notables for the purpose, in

particular to guarantee the survival of (public) cult practices that were being neglected by public authorities.

Egypt is another case in point: associations operated in a socio-cultural, political and administrative landscape, which is often rather unfamiliar to the reader who is accustomed to the Greek world. However, this is not because Egypt was different in absolute terms – no more than Athens was different from Corinth, Halicarnassus from Pergamum, Rhodes from Lesbos or Macedonia from Boeotia, for instance. Recent scholarship has in fact refuted the notion of ‘exceptional position’ – *Sonderstellung* – that Egypt would have allegedly occupied and which made it incompatible with historical comparison with the other parts of the Hellenistic and, especially, Roman world.<sup>1</sup> Rather, Egypt displays typicalities with which scholars of the Greek world simply need to become more familiar: polis status was not the standard and more common political-administrative feature of the majority of the country and complex cultural identities were at play in the society with the coexistence of different traditions, while legal systems and practices cohabitated side by side. Furthermore, papyri give us an insight into a range of dealings, which mostly remain unattested for the other parts of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. As the discussion by Langellotti in Chapter 8 has shown, for the associations of Egypt we have a good number of accounts, lists, dispositions, requests, receipts, regulations and contracts that allow more thorough investigations of an economic and administrative nature. The associations in the other provinces of the Roman Empire may well have behaved exactly in the same way but we simply do not have evidence to that regard, because of the different nature of our sources.

The snapshots gained in Chapter 9 of the associations of Ostia by Tran and in Chapter 10 of the Far East by Evers provide comparative material with associations outside the Greek-speaking Mediterranean and also beyond antiquity: the evidence presented opens up larger perspectives and nicely illustrates the spectrum of strategies that associations adopted in varying circumstances. In Ostia, for instance, associations embodied behaviours, values and procedures typical of the elites of the city, including their political overtones. This, however, was not much different from what one sees in action in some poleis of the Greek world. In fact, similar patterns of behaviour can also be identified in Indian and Chinese

<sup>1</sup> Egypt's *Sonderstellung* was rendered canonical by Wilcken 1912: I.I xv; for its removal (or at all events, review), see Lewis 1970 and 1984; Bowman 1976: 160–1; Keenan 1982–83: 30–1; Geraci 1989; Heinen 1989; Rathbone 1989; Bowman and Rathbone 1992; Bagnall 2005; Rathbone 2013.

associations, in particular regarding the creation of regulations endorsing specific behaviour and concerning the image they wanted to project to their political hosting communities. What we have before us was indeed a world of associations: although each association was unique and embedded in its local society (against which it needs to be accessed) and developed ways of furthering its agenda depending on circumstance and place, the chapters of this book have showed that common traits existed, because they emerged from similar concerns. This demonstrates the global character of the *fenomeno associativo*. With this comparative approach it is hoped the authors have offered an insight into the multifaceted world of associations for the benefit of a larger readership, not only for historians of the Greco-Roman world.

In all the examples investigated in the book, we see associations actively involved in the assertion of specific common values for their own purposes. The spectrum covered is large and stretches from values of mutual support, equality amongst members, fairness, reciprocal generosity, economic help to ideals of respect, obedience of the laws and the superiors, piety, sense of belonging and duty. A finding to be especially noted is that these values could encompass those shared by the larger community but could also include others that are not typically recognisable or largely diffused in their contemporary societies – these may be ideas of equality in political systems without an active tradition of democratic values, such as most of Egypt, India or China, for instance. Associations established strategies with the aim to achieve specific goals and to attain a particular profile in their communities, which allowed them to play a specific role and to promote their agenda. The various aspects embraced by the regulations and investigated in this volume cover the large interests that ancient associations had at heart: from financial and economic aspects, to moral and ethical features, behaviour, religion and regulation of space.

As appears clearly in their regulations, associations considered of great importance that these aspects were somehow codified and that the members were given directives. The image that they were giving of themselves to the outside world – as much as to the members themselves – mattered enormously. Through the implementation of several – sometimes punctilious – rules, associations were doing something vital for claiming their place in society by shaping themselves as ‘well-ordered’ groups. The following pages are devoted to some concluding remarks drawn from the previous chapters with a focus on the impact that associations exercised on their local communities, precisely thanks to the profile attained through the implementation of their regulations. The discussion is organised

around four main axes, which embody associations' spheres of action: their relation with the state, their role as social phenomena, their position within the local economy and their input to cultural life. These 'spheres' are not to be thought as separate from one another. They are coterminous, overlapping and interlinked; they are here addressed separately for convenience of argumentation only.

### Associations and the State

It is often said that associations imitated the state: this is true, at least to a large extent, as this volume demonstrates. The view that associations were the result of the decline of civic life and copied the democratic polis as the only way of perpetuating dying traditions in Hellenistic times has been now dismissed as false: besides the shortcomings of assumptions of civic decline, associations existed before Philip's and Alexander's new regimes.<sup>2</sup> The polis is generally regarded as the model of Greek private associations.<sup>3</sup> However, the parallels from (pharaonic) Egypt, India and China, as the discussion by Evers in Chapter 10 has shown, suggest that the development of associations based on an idea of equality and shared participation was not necessarily linked with democratic (political) ideals. It is therefore not always true that it was the democratic polis that was being imitated – one may wonder whether an ('aristocratic?') concept of 'a group of few equals' was ultimately behind associations' ethics.<sup>4</sup> For the Greek world, we are faced with a further intricate question of whether associations may have predated the emergence and formation of the polis: if so, imitation might have occurred the other way round. Future studies may be able to uncover any substance in this.

At all events, as repeatedly pointed out in the chapters of this volume, associations shared with state institutions much of the terminology used. The designation of officials often recalls those of the state (and of the temples, in the case of titles in Demotic texts of Egypt, for instance), the formulae adopted in associations' inscriptions and official decisions nicely reproduce those by civic institutions and the regulation by associations of sacred space and of religious practices recalls directives by states and sanctuaries. Associations employed procedures that could also be adopted

<sup>2</sup> See Harland 2003: 90–7, with critique of previous scholarship. On pre-Hellenistic associations, see Gabrielsen 2016a.

<sup>3</sup> See Gabrielsen 2007, for instance.

<sup>4</sup> Voting practices attested in Demotic regulations from Egypt, for instance, cast doubts on the purported 'Greek (democratic) model': see Paganini 2016, *contra* Boak 1937b and Muhs 2001.

by the state machinery: voting practices, rotation of offices and mechanisms for scrutiny and accountability, for instance. It is clear that associations adopted specific formal aspects that could link them to entities – state or religious institutions – which were obviously considered of some authority, worth and prestige. From these, associations could further boost their profile. The chapters of this volume have shown how values and ideals – whether taken from state ideology, democratic principles or from elsewhere – did not remain purely ideological. They were adapted to suit associations' needs for very practical purposes.

As the discussion by Giannakopoulos in Chapter 2 has argued, for instance, the *orgeones* of Bendis in fourth-century Piraeus (*CAPInv.* 230) adopted an examination of newcomers on the model of civic institutions, although slightly adapted to the association's needs for sake of convenience and time. Besides responding to practical needs for a controlled entrance into the group, by choosing to reproduce state procedures the association elevated the prestige and respectability of the group as a whole and of the single individual members, who could boast to have undergone strict scrutiny on a par with Athenian citizens and magistrates. Similarly, the third-century AD *gerousia* of Asclepius of Hyettus in Boeotia (*CAPInv.* 984), by adopting a name that recalled public bodies and distinguished groups of elders affiliated with mythical figures, was strategically hinting at a link with those prestigious counterparts. On their part, the Roman *collegia*, with their specific choice of terminology and self-definition as *ordines*, 'social orders, classes', were also mirroring public structures in order to gain respectability, as well as reproducing norms of behaviour and practices shaped on those of the city in order to elevate their profile to that of civic officialdom. This is one of the insights of Chapter 9 by Tran. It has been further noted by Evers in Chapter 10 how religious institutions offered a model of paramount importance, next to state institutions, for Indian and Chinese associations, as Buddhism played an important role in both. This attitude is noticeable for most of the ancient world: state and religion were not separable; often they were not even two distinct things. The official administrative apparatus of the political communities in which associations were active also represented a source of inspiration for the more practical aspects of associations' governance. As pointed out in Chapter 3 by Eckhardt and in Chapter 8 by Langellotti, some of the competences of presidents of associations in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, for instance, recalled those of local officials, who could seize non-complying individuals and bring them to justice.

In order to avoid being unlawful, associations obviously had to obey local legislation on matters that may be relevant to them. This is what is ratified in the allegedly Solonic legislation – as echoed in the Digest via Gaius centuries later – and what is specifically mentioned in the regulations of Indian associations.<sup>5</sup> This general attitude of obedience to the laws of the state is not surprising, as everyone is expected to comply with them. However, associations went a step further by specifically portraying themselves as respectful members of society, as honourable individuals, good citizens and loyal subjects. They wanted to display themselves as very well integrated into the public sphere and they operated in a way that showed their attachment to their local communities.<sup>6</sup> For instance, Arnaoutoglou in Chapter 6 has stressed how the Thracian *orgeones* of Bendis in third-century BC Piraeus (*CAPInv.* 232) made a point to mention clearly in one of their decrees that they were complying with the laws of Athens that prescribed the performance of the procession from the city centre to the harbour. The associations of Hellenistic Egypt, on the other hand, stressed with particular force, both in the (Demotic) regulations and in other texts, their devotion to the Royal House and their active involvement in cults in favour of the rulers.<sup>7</sup> A similar attitude has been underlined by Skaltsa in Chapter 5 for the second-century BC *Asklepiastai* (*CAPInv.* 857): this association probably gathered members of the local garrison and was created by the commander of a fortress in the Pergamene hinterland, who was making quite a statement of loyalty by founding a new sanctuary in honour of Asclepius and by manifestly promoting the cult of one of the major deities endorsed by the Attalid Kings.

Another insight of our study is that, in order to assert their social profile, it was of paramount importance for associations to cooperate and comply with the practices codified by the state. The purity rules of associations, for instance, paralleled those of their immediate regional context and hosting communities, as underlined by Carbon in Chapter 4. Thanks to Langellotti's analysis in Chapter 8, we have seen that associations in the village of Tebtynis in Roman Egypt were making a conscious effort to follow state directives concerning the registration of official documents. Their regulations were registered in the local record office, thus being officially recognised as valid by the state. Although reaping a few

<sup>5</sup> *Dig.* 47.22.4, also with Evers in Chapter 10. The value of the alleged Roman ban on associations has been challenged: Arnaoutoglou 2002 and 2005. See also Harland 2003: 162–73.

<sup>6</sup> For associations' attachment to the polis and participation in civic life in the Roman East, see also Harland 2003: 101–12.

<sup>7</sup> See now Paganini 2020a.

advantages from the practice (collection of registration fees and tally of associations – and their affairs – in a given place), the state did not officially require associations to register their regulations; associations decided to do so. The reasons are probably linked to some form of prestige or respectability, which the registration brought with it. The fact that registered regulations (as contractual agreements) could be officially used in courts seems to have been of secondary importance for associations, given that the practice was explicitly despised and avoided almost at all costs. Furthermore, associations in Roman Egypt developed the tendency to cooperate with the state machinery, in particular in matters of tax collection. In addition to practical advantages for members and for the state, the practice linked them with the public sphere even more tightly. A similar picture of close cooperation between state and associations emerges from the discussion by Evers in Chapter 10 about the associations in India too: their regulations were ratified and filed by the state and associations' assemblies could even act as public courts, following procedures similar to them, as the laws of an association had the force of state laws.

In the development of their procedures, associations also followed general trends typical of the socio-political climate in which they lived, sometimes to the detriment of some of the associations' leading principles. This can be noted, for instance, in the practice of euergetism and the ensuing awarding of honours to benefactors by associations: both followed well established patterns of the elites in Hellenistic and Imperial times. However, Giannakopoulos in Chapter 2 has argued that this custom promoted hierarchies between members of associations – beyond officials – against usual practice, and in the case of exemption from membership fees for benefactors, this constituted a deviation from the general associative principle of equal liability for regular contributions.<sup>8</sup> It has also been noted that dispositions concerning reduced entrance-fees for descendants of members were clearly codified only in the Imperial period: this reflected a general socio-political tendency of the time, also in public and semi-public bodies, by which a regularisation of the continuous presence of certain families over several generations was economically facilitated. A similar attitude is identified by Tran in Chapter 9 for the Roman *collegia*: they showed that they had internalised habits of the elites in the well-ordered organisation of their structure according to codified procedures.

<sup>8</sup> See also Arnaoutoglou 2003: 147–53.

However, compliance with state models was not the only option associations could decide to follow. In some cases, they deviated from state procedures and practices, creating something for themselves. If by demanding regular contributions from the members, associations were acting like a state exacting revenue, they, however, adopted a different approach. Associations employed a system of equal taxation, as the regular fees for membership (usually monthly) were exacted in the same amount from all members; on the other hand, state taxes were normally levied on the basis of wealth or income. In the case of honours for benefactors, the poleis did not normally grant exemption from taxation or levies, but associations frequently offered immunity from entrance-fees, membership fees and other levies as honours. In the case of democratic regimes, the Greek cities neither demanded compulsory participation in civic institutions or cults (with the exclusion of specific age categories) nor had norms to that effect. Associations, on the other hand, expected it and punished – more or less severely – those who did not show up: participation was in fact not only vital for the economic survival of associations but also essential for the promotion of an image of active, united, vibrant and important communities. These are some of the points made by Giannakopoulos in Chapter 2 and by Eckhardt in Chapter 3.

In very few cases it also happened that associations' regulations were somewhat in tension or diverged from those of the political hosting community: in this case, associations were suggesting a parallel system in competition with state channels. This can be observed in the case of regulations concerning dispute resolution mechanisms between members: by forbidding or hindering their members from bringing charges before the public organs of justice, associations were trying to substitute state courts and state officials with procedures of internal justice administered by the association's assembly or by (some of) its officials. This was presented not as an alternative but implemented 'by force' as the sole option for dispute resolution imposed on association's members – whether successfully or not is another matter. Dispositions concerning this occupy an important position in the Demotic regulations of the associations of Egypt in Hellenistic times and the practice was also favoured in Roman times, as Chapter 8 by Langellotti stresses.<sup>9</sup> In Athens, on the other hand, this procedure is absent in Hellenistic times but surfaces during the Roman period, namely, in the second-century AD regulations of the *Iobachoi* (*CAPInv.* 339), which punished anyone who brought their

<sup>9</sup> See also Paganini in press b.



complaints before polis lawcourts or Roman authorities. This has been interpreted by Arnautoglou in Chapter 6 as a desire by the association to stay clear of Roman intervention in their affairs. Arbitration between members and punishment of defaulters were dealt with internally, as one of the major prerogatives of an association's assembly in lieu of public courts, also in the associations of India from the third century BC onwards, as emerges from Evers' analysis in Chapter 10. In addition to offering a more inexpensive and theoretically more favourable place for dispute resolution than the official courts – one may also wonder whether associations believed it to be better than state tribunals – by asking their members to abstain from the usual channels for justice and to deal with their disputes internally, associations were requiring their members to have a deeper trust in the group than in the state courts. More than that: associations were ultimately expecting their members to display a deep sense of loyalty towards the group, by putting the association's reputation and well-being before their own. In fact, besides shunning a possible unnecessary state meddling in their affairs, associations wanted to avoid washing their dirty linen in public, so to speak: they strove to maintain an image of trustworthy, honest, respectful, correct and peaceful people to the outside world.

### **Associations as Social Agents**

Associations played a role of fundamental importance as features able to influence, shape and enrich the society of their communities, through a parallel process of social conservatism and of innovation.

The value of tradition, as noted by Carbon in Chapter 4, played a particularly important role for the codification of purity rules by associations, which often relied on existing regulations, recorded or not by the city and the community. In Hellenistic Athens, associations made a point to follow the paths offered by the polis, adopting its procedures and mechanisms, without a noticeable desire to innovate, at least in the formal aspects, in order to be fully integrated into the social fabric of the polis. When in Roman times associations started to put particular emphasis on concepts such as 'proper behaviour' or 'stability' – previously tacitly acknowledged – this has been seen by Arnautoglou in Chapter 6 as a response to please the conservative attitudes of the Roman administration. More manifestly, the conservatism by associations could also include the preservation of procedures that had been long abandoned in the general running of state affairs. In his analysis in Chapter 2, Giannakopoulos has

drawn the attention to the case of some second-century AD Athenian associations such as the *eranistai* from Paiania (*CAPInv.* 308) or the *Iobacchoi* (*CAPInv.* 339), for instance, where we see that they still preserved procedures, such as sortition, which had been associated with classical democracy but had long been abandoned in public proceedings by Athens. At the same time, they also stressed conservative values of family tradition, which were, however, very fashionable in the contemporary civic discourse. The Roman *collegia*, on their part, followed the standards established by the local elite in their eagerness for propriety and regulation, thus presenting themselves as *ordines* in a conservative attempt to foster respectability, as Tran has argued in Chapter 9. Reverence towards rulers is another feature of the conservative attitudes adopted by associations for the assertion of their profile within society.<sup>10</sup>

The idea of equality of members that associations fostered in their regulations could also be seen as a conservative position in the perpetuation of old traditions, which did not match – any longer – the model upon which their contemporary societies operated. However, such an idea may in fact recall an elitist concept of ‘equality of the few chosen’. As a matter of fact, the concept of ‘well-ordered groups’ promoted by associations and their general conservatism often embodied – or at any rate mirrored – the ideology of the higher end of contemporary society, with connotations of propriety, privilege and exclusivity. Rather than purportedly recalling old democratic ideas in a way that could have been perceived as somewhat subversive, they were more likely adopting the mainstream rhetoric of the local elites. Associations did not want to be regarded as dissidents, revolutionaries or modernisers; they strove to blend in with conventionality as much as possible.

At the same time as presenting themselves as more royalist than the King, associations nonetheless silently managed to act as innovators by easing new features or unconventional practices into society. Associations provided social and, in some cases, even legal scope of action for sections of the population that were otherwise barred from or limited in their official activity. This has been seen in many of the examples offered in the chapters of this volume. In the Greek poleis, for instance, foreigners contributed to the local society in a more formalised way thanks to their involvement in

<sup>10</sup> On associations upholding Imperial cults and loyalty in the Roman East, see also Harland 2003: 115–36.

associations, in particular in cities where foreign presence was particularly lively for commercial reasons. They could own land and have the right to tombs for their afterlife through membership in association: all these things were otherwise impossible for them. Furthermore, mixed associations of citizens and foreigners provided specific occasions for social integration, which the law either tended to discourage or at any rate did not envisage. This is the case of the Thracian *orgeones* of Bendis in third-century BC Piraeus (*CAPInv.* 232), who played an active part in the religious life of the city and managed to lobby the Athenian assembly to grant them the right to own land, or of the Hellenistic *koinon* of the Sidonians in Piraeus (*CAPInv.* 331), who owned a temple and were involved in its cults as one gathers from a bilingual Phoenician–Greek decree set up by the group. The association of the *Haliadai kai Haliastai* on second-century BC Rhodes (*CAPInv.* 10) welcomed into their ranks high-profile foreigners, to whom they also granted honours and tombs, and an association of *Temenitai* in first-century BC Miletus (*CAPInv.* 1001) gathered citizens and foreigners together and were in all likelihood providing tombs as one of the perks of membership. An association of *thiasotai* in third-century BC Athens (*CAPInv.* 284) was also formed by Athenian citizens and foreigners alike, both women and men, whereas the *Sabaziastai* in second-century BC Piraeus (*CAPInv.* 353) had only men, but both Athenian citizens and foreigners together – and even a slave. The *Heroistai Samothrakiastai* of Rhodian Peraea in the early Imperial times also welcomed foreigners into their midst, as did an association of purple-dyers in second-century AD Thessalonica (*CAPInv.* 786), whereas the *Geremellenses* of third-century AD Puteoli (*CAPInv.* 1080) probably gathered foreigners of Semitic origin and owned a temple in the city. The possibilities for active agency offered to foreigners by membership in associations were particularly exploited by those for whom travel or residency abroad was a fundamental part of their profession – associations provided logistic advantages to their business enterprises. Thanks to their mercantile character and strategic geographical position for commerce as maritime hubs, Delos and Puteoli became the ideal seat of associations that advertised their identity as foreign merchants and contributed in a fundamental way to the cities' vibrant economic, social and cultural life, while also leaving substantial traces in the topography. Examples of these are, on the one hand, the second/first-century BC Berytian *Poseidoniastai* (*CAPInv.* 9), with their impressive clubhouse, and the second-century BC Tyrian *Herakleistai* (*CAPInv.* 12) on Delos; and are, on the other hand, the second-century AD Berytian worshippers of

Jupiter Heliopolitanus (*CAPInv.* 1082) and the Tyrian *stationarioi* (*CAPInv.* 1079) in Puteoli.<sup>11</sup>

Associations operated as means for the social integration not only of foreigners but also of freedmen; they could furthermore provide opportunities for social climbing to others, whose social conditions did not allow them to enter the higher ranks of local society. This is what happened, for instance, in the Roman *collegia*, as pointed out by Tran in Chapter 9: their wealthiest members often used membership in a *collegium* and the undertaking of the collegial offices – with the possibilities of publicity and prestige this bestowed – as means to climb the social hierarchies beyond the associations for themselves or for their sons. Slaves were also sometimes included in associations with freeborn members or with freedmen: examples are a *synodos* of Heracles in second-century BC Athens (*CAPInv.* 36; in addition to slaves, this group included Athenian citizens and foreigners too), an association of *threskeutai* of Zeus *Hypsistos* in third-century AD Pydna in Macedonia (*CAPInv.* 41) and possibly some *mystai* of Dionysus in first/second-century AD Byzantium (*CAPInv.* 315).

Women, who largely did not enjoy civil rights, found in associations a way to create impact and a channel to express themselves as a group in a society that constitutionally silenced them, in particular in the Greek world. Examples of women-only associations are, for instance, a *thiasos* of women in third-century BC Miletus (*CAPInv.* 1238), the *koinon* of the priestesses of Demeter in first-century Mantinea (*CAPInv.* 430), a *thiasos* of women in the Egyptian village of Kerkethoeris in the third century BC (*CAPInv.* 766) and a *thiasus* of Maenads in first/second-century AD Philippi in Macedonia (*CAPInv.* 708). It is not surprising that the evidence of women-only associations tends to point towards a religious component, as religion was the main area of possible action for women in antiquity: that said, although providing some ground for social innovation, associations still remained generally conservative. Furthermore, the existence of associations (beyond familial associations) with mixed membership, that is to say, gathering both men and women, represented one of the very few opportunities in the ancient world to temporarily bridge the gap between the sexes and bring together in a formalised fashion two worlds that were normally kept separate in public life. Religious ceremonies, in particular civic cults, were the other occasion in which men and women at the same time could both have an active role in the proceedings, although the two

<sup>11</sup> See also the discussion by Evers in Chapter 10.

groups did normally not interact with each other.<sup>12</sup> Men and women appear, for instance, in associations of *thiasotai* in fourth- and third-century BC Athens (*CAPInv.* 268, *CAPInv.* 269, *CAPInv.* 276, *CAPInv.* 284), in the *dekadistai kai dekadistriai* on third/second-century Delos (*CAPInv.* 218), in an association of *Temenitai* in second-century BC Miletus (*CAPInv.* 998), in the *Athenaistai* of early Imperial Tanagra in Boeotia (*CAPInv.* 935), in an association of *eranistai* in first-century AD Athens (*CAPInv.* 321), in the Dionysiac *thiasos* of Amandos in second-century AD Locris (*CAPInv.* 437), in the *thiasus Placidianus* of second/third-century AD Puteoli (*CAPInv.* 1088) and in an association of *threskeutai* of Zeus *Hypsistos* in third-century AD Pydna in Macedonia (*CAPInv.* 41). The exact level and nature of the interaction between men and women in these associations remain, however, mostly unclear, due to the lack of further details in the sources.

In the case of the role of associations as social agents vis-à-vis women specifically, the example from Mantinea offered by Zoumbaki's analysis in Chapter 7 represents a unique case. Four associations only (*CAPInv.* 428, *CAPInv.* 430, *CAPInv.* 432, *CAPInv.* 433), dating to the first centuries BC and AD, are attested with certainty in the polis and women were involved in all of them (either as members, benefactresses or both), whereas in the evidence from the whole of the Greek-speaking world, the presence of women in the context of associations is around 6 per cent only. Much of the picture derived for Mantinea certainly depends on the poor epigraphic evidence for the region; however, the fact that all attestations of associations date to this specific period of time and that all of them involve women is noteworthy. In fact, it shows how associations seized the opportunity for agency during a period of economic recovery and focussed their efforts in a field left unattended by public institutions, namely, some public cults, using the strategy of attracting euergetism – exactly as their contemporary civic bodies were doing. Mantinean associations, both of priests and priestesses, for their own purposes and for the benefit of the entire community mobilised social entities, such as (wealthy) women, which traditionally had not had much scope in public life in the past.<sup>13</sup> However, also in this case conservatism and the general trends of contemporary society dictated the rules: women's intervention was mainly centred

<sup>12</sup> For the interesting and uncommon case of mixed priesthoods, contemporarily held by men and women, see Ackermann 2013.

<sup>13</sup> On a re-evaluation of the social standing of priests and priestesses in the Greek cities in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, see Mylonopoulos 2013.

on acts of benefaction and focussed around religion. From the late Hellenistic period onwards, in fact, the involvement of women as benefactresses at the public level increased, as the undertaking of civic offices became more a simple matter of wealth: for this they received various honours – above all, statues – by the civic communities.<sup>14</sup> The women's role in the case of Mantinean associations is certainly less remarkable than that of the Acmonian women in Phrygia. These set up a public monument in AD 6/7 and acted as a public body in their own right.<sup>15</sup> The rich women of Mantinea did not do anything comparable. However, they were 'hunted' by local associations – did men prefer to be rather involved in benefactions that brought more civic visibility? – and they were given a potential stage for the assertion of some 'involvement', although codified in the traditional pattern of euergetism in the religious sphere and at the time when civic institutions were doing the same. In the case of men-only associations, women could really venture into unchartered territory and dip their toes – even physically, if they decided to show up to the banquets to which they were invited as honours for their generosity – into an environment that was otherwise off limits for them.

In order to appreciate further the example of women's agency in associations at Mantinea expounded by Zoumbaki in Chapter 7, it may be useful to provide a brief parallel from Hellenistic Rhodes. Unlike in other Hellenistic cities, women are largely absent from priesthoods and from civic honorific habit on Rhodes: their scope of action was limited to the private sphere, and when they appear in public inscriptions, they mainly do so with an 'aristocratic' focus on familial networks.<sup>16</sup> According to the traditional attitudes of Rhodian society, women seem to have had few opportunities for visibility and agency in the private settings of local associations, which were usually happy to capitalise on 'underestimated' sections of society. Women were involved in some way in only about 3 per cent of the many Rhodian associations recorded in the sources and they pretty much only appear as honorands together with their husbands. In one case only, a woman is honoured by a Rhodian association in her own right: Stratonika was granted by the second-century BC association of the *Haliadai kai Haliastai* (CPIInv. 10) a statue, an olive wreath, the title of benefactress and honours after her death for her generosity towards the association – it is probable that she was a member

<sup>14</sup> See generally Kron 1996; van Bremen 1996; Ma 2013. For the Roman West, see Meyers 2019.

<sup>15</sup> *MAMA* XI 99: Thonemann 2010. <sup>16</sup> Zachhuber 2018, with further bibliography.

herself. However, she was not Rhodian but came from Halicarnassus. Perhaps the lack of Rhodian family lineage, so important for a woman on the island (and of a Rhodian husband, who would take care of her public image?) prompted Stratonika in her direct involvement with an association, which was well disposed towards (generous) foreigners – another member honoured by the *Haliadai kai Haliastai* was an Alexandrian, who was also a benefactor and probably member of three other local associations.

Although representing an almost unique setting for fostering integration and agency of social categories that were normally limited in their opportunities for impact, associations (at least those that had a public profile and left traces in the written sources) still remained to a large extent a business for men – as did most of the other aspects of the ancient world.

The impact on local society by associations can be also analysed in terms of exclusivity and inclusivity, not only on the social fabric but also on the physical space. In many cases, associations functioned as markers of distinction by excluding others from their activities and premises (which could, however, become local landmarks): this is exemplified by the Hellenistic familial foundations of Diomedon of Cos (*CAPInv.* 1919), Poseidonios of Halicarnassus (*CAPInv.* 830) and Epikteta of Thera (*CAPInv.* 1645). These associations regulated both membership and attachment to a specific place in terms of strict exclusivity, as Skaltsa's analysis in Chapter 5 has shown. Membership could also be strictly based on a specific profession or social status: the rules of the second-century BC association of Amon-Opet in Thebes of Egypt (*CAPInv.* 1480), for instance, established exclusive membership for the choachytes, 'water pourers', a branch of religious personnel in charge of funerary rituals. The choachytes largely belonged to interconnected families, so that membership in the association of Amon-Opet was also ultimately dictated by family membership. Other associations were open to a broader base: even so, it was important to present membership as an exclusive feature and a mark of prestige. This boosted the association's profile, made membership appealing for outsiders and attracted euergetism. In some cases, associations adopted a more inclusive approach: as noted by Skaltsa in Chapter 5, for instance, the third-century BC *Amphieraistai* of Rhamnous (*CAPInv.* 356) and the second-century BC *Asklepiastai* of Yaylakale in the Pergamene hinterland (*CAPInv.* 857) restored or built their own sanctuaries, which were, however, thereafter open to the local community.

### Associations as Economic Agents

As already mentioned in Chapter 1, several studies have shown the important role and impact of associations on the ancient economy.<sup>17</sup> There is no need to repeat their content here, beyond reminding once again that associations – especially, but not only, those referred to as ‘professional associations’ by traditional scholarship – could facilitate economic transactions in a number of ways, including provision of social capital, increase and diffusion of know-how and price information, decrease of transaction costs, risk management, organisation of labour, building of networks, implementation of trust and human capital, supply of capital, coordination of resources, optimisation of transport, organisation of local production and distribution and management of distant trade. Besides access to capital, the main reason why associations could operate as successful economic agents was their profile: thanks to the implementation of values and regulations that presented them as ‘well-ordered groups’, associations could successfully build economic networks that relied on trust, reputation, mutual respect and reliability. Individually, members of an association could count on the financial support of the group in the form of loans, as well as on the other advantages that membership in a successful and respected organisation brought with it in economic terms.

In the case of Egypt, as already noted, the nature of the evidence allows us a closer direct insight into various economic aspects in the life of associations, which we generally lack for the other parts of the ancient world: it is therefore not surprising that the material lends itself to investigations with a more economic focus. The analysis by Langellotti in Chapter 8 has argued that, while fostering traditional values of sociability, conviviality and personal relations, many associations developed specific economic strategies, such as collective action or a protectionist outlook, in order to increase their chances of economic success and limit risk, as a response to the economic set-up of Roman Egypt, which was increasingly organised according to a system of licence fees. In addition to associations’ regulations, papyri have preserved to us a variety of texts that testify the financial vivacity of (some) associations and allow us a close look into their economic dealings: accounts, lists, transactions, contracts and

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, van Minnen 1987; van Nijf 1997; Gabrielsen 2001; Monson 2006; Gabrielsen 2007; Liu 2009; Broekaert 2011; Gibbs 2011; Tran 2011; Verboven 2011; Venticinque 2013; Gibbs 2015; Venticinque 2015; Gabrielsen 2016b; Langellotti 2016b; Venticinque 2016: esp. 35–66; Evers 2017; Gabrielsen in press.



agreements. From these we also note that associations became increasingly more involved in financial transactions at the state level, from tax collection and compulsory services to the performance of administrative duties on behalf of the state.<sup>18</sup> Roman associations and Indian associations, in particular those gathering craftsmen and traders, displayed similar features and trends: as remarked by Evers in Chapter 10, they had some degree of economic corporeality and showed a progressive propensity for communal contracting as a group. This is something on which the evidence from other areas of the ancient world is largely silent.

However, one may still gather some information on the economic position of associations within local society even from sources that are less explicit on financial matters, and not just for those associations that we may think as primarily interested in business. The role of any association in attracting euergetism, for instance, was of significance to stimulate capital flow; in periods of stagnation or recession, this was even more important for boosting the local economy, as Zoumbaki has stressed in Chapter 7 in the case of Mantinea.

Associations' main source of income derived from members' fees and contributions, which went to cover the cost of running the group's activities. Realty could also form part of an association's assets and could be (partly) let out to third parties, thus constituting an additional source of revenue. When associations had at their disposal extra liquidity, they usually invested it (mostly through moneylending) and employed the accruing interest for financing their activities, evidence of their entrepreneurial mindset. The money that associations accumulated was mostly reinvested in the local market: this made them partly responsible for the economic vivacity of a place. Associations were consumers of marketed goods and services, as we can indirectly derive from their inscriptions and from direct evidence in the papyrus accounts: they spent money on a variety of items and services, from the more extravagant portraits, immovables (either rented or bought) and crowns of precious metals to the more mundane oil for lamps, foodstuff, drinks and sacrificial animals. Depending on the association's size and dealings, they also provided employment to various staff, from stone carvers, scribes, artisans of various kind, artists and musicians to cooks, architects, guards, cleaners and other servants.

This brings us to a further issue concerning the economic makeup of associations: were they rich? As is often the case, the answer is: it depends.

<sup>18</sup> See van Minnen 1987: 48–56 and Venticinque 2015.

Some associations sat at the higher end of the spectrum of economic wealth, others at the bottom end. However, those that left traces in our evidence were certainly positioned towards the upper end of the scale and were rich enough to afford carving inscriptions, bestowing honours, commemorating events, setting their regulations on stone or papyrus and making their existence tangibly noticeable in the public domain. Others had more limited means and did not leave traces behind: of them we know nothing. This bias of the ancient sources, which reflect a biased image of ancient society, is common and every historian has to come to terms with it.

What about the members? Some were very rich and could afford to make outstanding donations, others managed just about to pay the membership fees. Although quantifying the level of wealth is often difficult, it is safe to say that members had at their disposal means and time that they could spend in the framework of associations: this suggests that on average they were not in financial distress. In fact, fees of associations were often not inconsiderable sums of money and membership could be relatively expensive. An unnamed association of first-century AD Tebtynis in the Arsinoites of Egypt (*CAPInv.* 1408), for instance, required its members to pay a monthly membership fee of 12 drachmas, for a total of 144 drachmas a year: it has been suggested that this sum could be sufficient to support a family of four for a year; one would therefore surmise that the members of this association were relatively well off.<sup>19</sup> The same has been noted for the associations of the Arsinoites in Hellenistic times: Demotic regulations and accounts suggest that the members of these associations (men and women) belonged to relatively wealthy families that had somewhat high standards of living.<sup>20</sup> The evidence from the Greek world for the most part does not allow quantifications of this type. However, the fact that some associations, such as the third/second-century BC *eranistai ton Adoniazonton* in the Rhodian Peraea (*CAPInv.* 1124) or the second-century BC *Haliadai kai Haliastai* of Rhodes (*CAPInv.* 10), granted *ateleia*, exemption from membership fees, as one of the honours for their benefactors suggests that the disbursement of money for membership was not insignificant – otherwise, the value of the honour would have been trivial. Therefore, it seems that the members of most associations that left traces in our sources were to some degree well off – even though with a large range of gradation. However, their financial abilities could vary due to some contingent circumstances, and some may have found themselves unable to afford

<sup>19</sup> Venticinque 2016: 14–15.

<sup>20</sup> Monson 2006: 224–8.

membership any longer. This is exactly what happened to a certain Epiodoros, who on 25 July AD 184 wrote to the president and fellow members (*synoditai*) of an unnamed association of Karanis in the Arsinoites of Egypt (*CAPInv.* 1380): ‘Since I am doing poorly (financially) and I am unable to remain in the association, I ask you to accept my resignation.’<sup>21</sup>

### Associations as Cultural Agents

Thanks to their activities and the profile they attained in local society, associations could leave their mark also on the larger cultural sphere. We shall briefly focus here on two major cultural aspects: religion and material culture, in particular architecture and visual space.

The involvement of associations in the religious sphere is attested in almost every single piece of evidence concerning them. Virtually every association performed religious activities of some kind, as they were a very important part of communal life, in the building of the group’s specific profile: religion solemnised proceedings, embodied the group’s piety and devotion and was a means to deepen the feeling of belonging to the group and to seal practices that strengthened bonds of trust between members. However, associations were not simple passive performers; they often occupied a position of active prominence in the development of the local religious landscape.

As stressed in the analysis by Skaltsa in Chapter 5, some associations were responsible for the ‘invention’ of completely new cults: the family foundation of Epikteta on Hellenistic Thera (*CAPInv.* 1645), for instance, established the cult of the diseased members as heroes; this involved the creation of priestly offices (first held by Epikteta’s grandson) and the regulation of specific rituals to be performed regularly. In other cases, associations introduced or facilitated the spread of ‘foreign’ cults, either unadulterated or with some form of *interpretatio*, ‘adaptation’: this is the case of the *xenoi Apolloniatai* of Hermopolis Magna in Egypt (*CAPInv.* 194), who in 79/8 BC dedicated a temple to Apollo, Zeus and the companion gods and introduced their own – in all likelihood, Idumaeans – rituals that they continued to perform ‘in foreign tongue’ even three centuries later.<sup>22</sup> Finally, associations often set up or restored sanctuaries and temples (which often belonged to them) of traditional deities, thus rejuvenating local religious practices: Chapter 5 by Skaltsa has drawn our attention to the third-century BC *Amphieraistai* of Rhamnous

<sup>21</sup> *P.Mich.* IX 575, ll. 4–8.

<sup>22</sup> See Paganini 2020b: 204–6.

(*CAPInv.* 356), who restored a temple of Amphiaraus for the advantage of all the faithful, and to the second-century BC *Asklepiastai* in the Pergamene hinterland (*CAPInv.* 857), who founded a new sanctuary in honour of Asclepius and opened it to the larger community by encouraging practices such as incubation, thus enriching the religious life of those living in the vicinity.

The involvement of some associations for the preservation of specific (civic) cults has been particularly stressed in case of Mantinea by Zoumbaki in Chapter 7. One can observe that associations took on the responsibility of the organisation, upkeep and financial survival of ritual and material aspects of the cults. They ensured the continuity of the performance of popular cults of the city, thus playing a fundamental role as integral constituents of local religious life well beyond the confines of the association. The same was the case of the Thracian *orgeones* of Bendis in third-century BC Piraeus (*CAPInv.* 232), who were in charge of performing a procession from the city to the harbour, or the Tyrian *stationarioi* (*CAPInv.* 1079) in second-century AD Puteoli, as Chapter 10 by Evers has recalled: they took part in the larger religious life of the city, by participating in the public festivals, for the organisation of which they also partly paid – in addition to worshipping their own ancestral gods. The involvement of associations in larger religious ceremonies can also be envisaged in many other cases, for which evidence is, however, mostly lacking.<sup>23</sup>

Associations could even foster new trends in traditional religious practices or a new interpretation of traditional beliefs. By embedding cults for the rulers – as well as other cults – within their activities, the associations of Hellenistic Egypt, for instance, may have acted as the diffusers of more intimate and personalised forms of group cult, in addition to the largely distant state religion and temple celebrations: the Royal House and the other gods were made part of the communal life of private individuals, still in a codified and somewhat institutionalised way but beyond the high walls of the temples and their priestly personnel.<sup>24</sup> Another interesting case is the one of the precepts dictated by Dionysios for his *oikos* in Philadelphia (*CAPInv.* 348): as the analysis by Carbon in Chapter 4 has noted, they have a strong ethical dimension, rather than focussing on a series of cases of impurity with the correlated behaviour to neutralise them, as the norms of purity usually do. The possible followers of Dionysios were required to abide by a series of detailed moral principles: rather than following norms

<sup>23</sup> See also van Nijf 1997: 191–206.

<sup>24</sup> Paganini 2020a.

for the purity of the sanctuary, they were asked to shape their character according to the moral principles established by the founder. Associations could therefore contribute to shaping the larger cultural values of reference of their local societies; this has been argued also by Arnaoutoglou in Chapter 6 and by Langellotti in Chapter 8 in the case of Roman Athens and Roman Egypt, respectively, where associations adapted or stressed specific community values in order to meet new needs, arisen to conform to the Roman administration.

On a more tangible level, associations exercised a not inconsiderable impact on material culture, in particular on the visual space of their communities. By setting up inscriptions in various parts of the public and private space, associations were leaving a recognisable mark on the topography of the places where they were active. In the village of Tebtynis in Roman times, for instance, the associations' presence was particularly felt along the processional avenue of the temple, which was dotted with banqueting halls and inscriptions signalling the meeting-place of associations; the same practice is also well attested in the Hellenistic period.<sup>25</sup>

With their clubhouses or with the erection of sanctuaries or shrines primarily for their use, associations were establishing a physical place for themselves in the local urban fabric. Archaeological remains are often difficult to link with certainty to associations; in the few cases when this has been possible, such as on Delos, at Athens or Ostia, complexes of considerable dimensions and structure testify even nowadays to the impact that these buildings had on the local topography.<sup>26</sup> With their specific choices of architecture and ornaments, associations were further setting visual trends, often vesting space with special symbolism: as stressed in Chapter 5 by Skaltsa, the monumentalisation of the founding act and the testamentary dispositions of Epikteta on Thera (*CAPInv.* 1645) on a large pedestal, for instance, with further display of statues of the heroised dead, enclosed in a larger memorial, created an important new element in the local topography and became a prominent reminder of the role of the association in the local societal and physical landscape.

Associations could also shape the local necropolis: this is particularly recognisable on Cos and on Rhodes in Hellenistic times, where associations set up tombs and monuments that often functioned as landmarks in

<sup>25</sup> Paganini 2020b.

<sup>26</sup> Trümper 2011; Skaltsa 2016; Zevi 2008. See also [www.ostia-antica.org/dict.htm](http://www.ostia-antica.org/dict.htm) for floorplans and pictures of Ostian clubhouses.

the necropolis' landscape. In the case of Rhodes, associations built even larger funerary complexes in which members regularly gathered in order to perform communal activities of remembrance and honour for deceased members. In this way, associations were affecting not only the cities of the living but also the world of the dead.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Cos: Maillot 2013. Rhodes: Fraser 1977; Gabrielsen 1994.