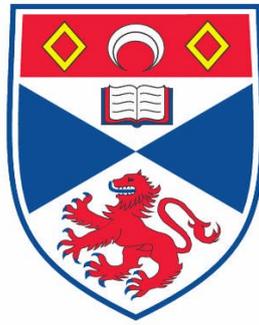


Cult associations in the post-classical *polis*

Julietta Steinhauer



This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews

30.05.2012

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the emergence, spread and characteristics of voluntary associations in the Greek cities of the Aegean world in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. It is based on archaeological and epigraphic evidence and contains two case studies on Athens and Delos and three thematic chapters.

The first chapter provides an introduction and definition of the subject matter, material, methods and state of research and the leading questions. The second chapter is a case study in which the evidence referring to voluntary associations in post-classical Athens is analysed. Chapter three comprises another case-study, investigating the evidence from Delos. Chapter four investigates the people involved in voluntary associations from founders to benefactors and ordinary members. I compare the evidence from various places and cults, focusing on the origins of people and their choice of deity. The fifth chapter discusses the location of buildings within cities, the kinds of building and facilities used by voluntary associations, and possible patterns in the structure of buildings. In chapter six I analyse the relationship between voluntary associations and civic institutions in the cities of Athens, Delos and Rhodes. Chapter seven provides a conclusion of the thesis.

The concept of the voluntary association offered worshippers in Greek *poleis* an opportunity to establish a religious identity that was characterised by new social spaces, new rituals and new approaches to older rituals that had previously not been provided by the *polis* religion. The successful establishment of a voluntary association was secured by various factors, yet one main concept seems pre-eminent: by using the pre-existing terminology and categories of civic institutions of each *polis* for their own purposes, voluntary associations of worshippers paved a way of communicating with both the civic authorities and individual inhabitants. In doing so, they also signalled openness to their environment, an aspect of particular importance to those worshippers who had immigrated to a new city.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Dissertation untersucht Erscheinen, Verbreitung und spezifische Charakteristika von religiösen Vereinen in den griechischen Städten der Ägäis anhand archäologischer und epigraphischer Zeugnisse von der hellenistischen Zeit bis zum Beginn des 3. Jh. n. Chr.

Das erste Kapitel bietet eine Einleitung, einen kurzen Forschungsüberblick, Definition der Terminologie, Vorstellung des Quellenmaterials, die Fragestellung und die wichtigsten Hypothesen. Im zweiten Kapitel wird das für das Thema relevante Material aus Athen, bestehend aus den Inschriften und archäologischen Hinterlassenschaften, in Form einer Fallstudie behandelt. Ähnlich gestaltet sich Kapitel drei, doch ist diese Fallstudie der Insel Delos und deren epigraphischen und archäologischen Funden gewidmet. In Kapitel vier werden die Personen untersucht, die als Gründer, als einfache Mitglieder, als Priester oder anderweitig Beschäftigte in den Inschriften erscheinen. Im Vordergrund stehen hier die Herkunft der einzelnen Personen verbunden mit der Wahl der typischen Gottheit. Kapitel fünf ist einzig den architektonischen Hinterlassenschaften gewidmet, die als Treffpunkte religiöser Vereine verstanden werden. Diese werden hier nach typischen Erkennungsmerkmalen sowie möglichen regionalen und überregionalen Mustern untersucht. Das Verhältnis religiöser Vereine zu den politischen und religiösen Institutionen ihrer jeweiligen beheimateten Stadt wird an den Beispielen der drei Städte Athen, Delos und Rhodos in Kapitel sechs analysiert. In Kapitel sieben, der Schlussbetrachtung werden die wichtigsten Erkenntnisse der Dissertation noch einmal zusammengefasst und interpretiert.

Das Konzept des religiösen Vereins bot den Bewohnern in den griechischen *poleis* der Ägäis die Möglichkeit, eine religiöse Identität zu entwickeln. Diese Identität war von neuen sozialen Räumen, neuen Ritualen und neuen Konzepten alter Rituale charakterisiert, die zuvor im Rahmen der *polis* Religion nicht verfügbar waren. Die erfolgreiche Einrichtung eines solchen Vereins war von verschiedenen Faktoren abhängig. Dennoch, so scheint es, gab es einen Weg, der insbesondere zum Erfolg religiöser Vereine beitrug. Und zwar scheint es, als sei es die Verwendung der bereits existierenden Terminologie von öffentlichen Einrichtungen der jeweiligen *polis* gewesen, die maßgeblich dafür verantwortlich war. Auf diese Weise konnten die Gründer der Vereine sowohl mit den ansässigen Autoritäten als auch mit den einzelnen Bewohnern der Städte ihr neues Konzept problemlos kommunizieren. Außerdem signalisierten sie auf diese Weise eine gewisse Offenheit gegenüber ihrer Umgebung; ein Faktor der insbesondere für diejenigen wichtig war, die in eine griechische

polis immigrierten und die Gottheit ihres Heimatortes mit sich brachten und in Form eines religiösen Vereins zu etablieren suchten.

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μητρί

Abbreviations

Journals are cited according to the list of abbreviations published by L'Année Philologique, see: http://www.annee-philologique.com/aph/files/sigles_fr.pdf

Abbreviations of series, journals and lexica not found in L'Année Philologique

STAC = Studien zu Antike und Christentum

WUNT = Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

RGRW = Religions in the Graeco-Roman world

HO = Handbook of Oriental Studies

SHAW.PH = Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse

AAR = Journal of the American Academy of Religion

ThesCRA = Thesaurus Cultuum et Rituum Antiquorum

Editions of inscriptions

Kontorini 1983 = Kontorini, Vassa 1983. *Inscriptions inédites relatives à l'histoire et aux cultes de Rhodes au 2^{me} et au 1^{er} s. av. J.-C.*, Louvain

RICIS = Récueil des inscriptions concernant les cultes Isiaques

IG = Inscriptiones Graecae

IGBulg = Inscriptiones Graecae Bulgariae

SEG = Sylloge Epigraphicum Graecorum

IGUR= Inscriptiones Graecae Urbis Romae

IApameia= Corsten 1987, Thomas, Die Inschriften von Apameia (Bithynien) und Pylai, (Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien vol. 32) Bonn

IEph = Inschriften von Ephesus

IMagn = Inschriften von Magnesia am Mäander

ISmyrna = Inschriften von Smyrna

IMilet = Inschriften von Milet (Herrmann, Peter 1998. *Inschriften von Milet II*, Berlin)

IvP = Inschriften von Pergamon

1. Introduction

This thesis investigates a novel religious form that appeared in the Aegean world in Hellenistic and Roman times. The phenomenon was characterised by groups of people who met regularly and were primarily united by common rituals and the worship of a common deity. These groups differed from pre-existing forms in that they were neither based on pre-existing social entities such as families, nor on political and ethnic ones such as specific settlements or tribes, but primarily on shared ritual practice.

Scholars have approached this topic from several directions. The oldest approach investigates the groups' institutional novelty from a juridical-cum-legalistic perspective. In doing so, scholars encountered the difficulty of putting a name to the phenomenon, since ancient terms such as *collegium* and *koinon* were rather unspecific, and were applied to associations of various kinds: these terms were applied not only to groups of a primarily religious nature, but to others too, such as professional associations.¹ Members of groups of all kinds occasionally took part in shared cult activity, a fact which makes it even more complicated to distinguish between them. Yet groups who met for purposes other than religious ones are, although similar in appearance, not the subject of this thesis.

A series of modern terms have been devised by scholars with the intention of overcoming these terminological obstacles: new descriptions include 'voluntary associations' or 'elective cults', since membership in these groups appears to have been a matter of choice. Yet no agreed terminology exists. The term 'cult' to describe the groups as opposed to, say, 'religion' offers an unsatisfactory solution owing to its rather pejorative modern connotations and its lack of precision. A rough translation of the word *collegium* was introduced in the form of the German word *Verein*, which is used to describe the groups in a way that is just as vague as the ancient terminology.

A second approach deals with the topic from a different angle. Instead of merely analysing the institutional form and the accompanying problems of terminology, scholars taking this line have focused instead on the new forms of rituals observed by the members of these groups, and the newly introduced deities worshipped by some of them.² But there is no consensus over which of these various subjects should be regarded as the defining feature of the phenomenon. These subjects are firstly new gods, such as Bendis, Isis and Mithras, secondly new ritual forms such as *mysteria*, and thirdly the emergence of apparently new institutions at the same time. These three aspects play a key role when it comes to voluntary associations. Yet they appear to be intertwined and inseparable and

¹ The professional groups could be actors, craftsmen and traders; other groups which used the same terminology were groups of magistrates and priests.

² Some of the groups worshipped "traditional" deities in a new way, with new ritual practices.

do not follow any fixed pattern, as is sometimes suggested.³ Some groups were devoted to the worship of the supposedly more ancient deities, such as Dionysus, occasionally including *mysteria*. *Mysteria*, however, originated in Greek religion and were adopted by worshippers of Dionysus as well as worshippers of the ‘new deities’ such as Kybele and Isis only at a later stage, if at all. And while some ancient gods like Dionysus were treated as new arrivals, some new arrivals like Isis had their antiquity stressed. In the end, many of the ‘new gods’ quickly became part of local panthea. Permission to build temples or sanctuaries was sometimes granted by the governing institutions, and the ‘new gods’ even obtained a place in the festive calendar.

In this thesis I will attempt to build upon the work of both scholarly traditions, the institutional or juridical-cum-legalistic and the social-religious one. I will, however, contribute to the debate in three ways. First I aim to offer a new perspective on the subject based on the material remains that can be connected to the phenomenon. Second, the focus of this thesis is neither the introduction and worship of new deities, nor the appearance of new rituals and initiatory rites, but rather the emergence and nature of the communities of worshippers which shaped the phenomenon. In contrast to the juridical-cum-legalistic view, the subject of this investigation is to identify and analyse the groups as social entities which create a specific form of material cult that was shaped by both new ideas and older traditions from within the Mediterranean and beyond. The third innovative aspect of my approach is the synchronic comparative perspective of a group of cults, an aspect that to the best of my knowledge has been largely neglected by scholarship. The main focus of this study is on the social realities that lie behind the phenomenon rather than theological claims and rituals.

1.2 Terminology

Religionsverein, Cult-association, Voluntary association, *Communauté religieuse* are all used to describe a broadly similar phenomenon: groups of people who voluntarily gathered regularly, at a specific place to worship a common choice of deity. The foundation of such groups was not initiated by any civic authority but mostly by individual people. To be part of such a group sometimes required certain criteria. Depending on each formation, those criteria could be fulfilled by kinship, some groups automatically included wives and children; by gender, as in the case of Mithraists who appear to have only consisted of male members; to social status, excluding those who could not match the financial contributions necessary to be part of some groups. The minimum requirement, however, that all groups have in common, is the mutual worship of a specific but not necessarily exclusive deity.

³ See under 1.3 in this chapter, History of scholarship.

The variety of groups and their differing character is reflected in the large number of terms in use, both nowadays and in antiquity. Owing to its novelty in the ancient world, we cannot identify a clear terminology and categorisation, at least for the Hellenistic period, simply because it did not exist. For Hellenistic Greece no evidence suggests that people thought of the groups that worshipped Isis, Bacchus and Jahveh as examples of the same phenomenon at all. Only much later, namely in the second century AD, one finds the awareness of such a phenomenon reflected in literary sources, for example in texts such as Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* and Lucian's *Peregrinus*. However, in order to set the limits of this study, some criteria must be defined in accordance with the epigraphic and literary remains.

Like the Roman *collegia* that are referred to by about fifty different terms,⁴ members of voluntary associations in Greece and the East chose various names to represent themselves in inscriptions. Certain groups could appear in the epigraphic evidence for instance as *koinon*, *thiasos*, *speira* or *synodos* or, most ancient and almost exclusively in Attica,⁵ as *orgeones*. These names perhaps indicated different kinds of groups that were formed around a deity, although the actual differences represented by each term are not entirely clear to the modern observer.

For further specification the terms could be supplemented with the name of a deity. In later times the term *thiasos* was sometimes combined with other descriptions and then mostly used by professional associations.⁶ Other groups that centred around a deity created their names by simply forming an agent noun referring to the main deity worshipped, as for example in the case of the *dionysiastai*, but lacking a group term such as *thiasos*, *synodos* or *koinon*. Yet other names describe an activity linked to a main deity. For instance the term *deka*, ten, becomes *dekadistai* meaning those who met on the tenth day in order to honour a particular deity. In the case of the *dekadistai*, information about the identity of the deity in whose honour the group met is provided further down in the inscription.⁷ These names however, avoided any further specification of professional, local, or ethnic origin. Adding such information is a habit found most often among professional associations such as the Dionysian *technites* or the *Poseidoniasts* from Berytos. The so called *eranistai* are traditionally described as having both cultic and social reasons to get together. They might mark a

⁴ All collected in: Waltzing, Jean-Pierre 1895-1900. *Étude historique sur les corporations professionnelles chez les Romains*, Louvain, vol. I p. 339 ff., vol. II p.139 ff., p. 160 ff., vol. IV pp. 236-242. Ausbüttel, Frank M. 1984. *Untersuchungen zu den Vereinen im Westen des Römischen Reiches* (Frankfurter Althistorische Studien 11) Regensburg adds four further terms and explains: „Römische Juristen benutzten keine eindeutige Bezeichnung für Vereine, meist aber wurde der Begriff collegium oder corpus verwendet“ p. 16 and specifically on the voluntary associations: „Religiöse Gruppen galten auch als collegia, entsprachen dem Vereinsverständnis der Römer“ p. 17.

⁵ Arnaoutoglou, Ilias 2003. *Thusias heneka kai sunousias. Private religious associations in Hellenistic Athens*, Athens, p. 31.

⁶ However, these defining terms of mostly professional associations appear with the Roman rule over Greece, Van Nijf, Onno 1997. *The civic world of professional associations in the Roman East*, Amsterdam, p. 8.

⁷ See also chapters three and four.

point of intersection between all ‘private’ groups.⁸ Finally, some groups were known to others by simply using the name of the founder of each formation, such as the Zoroastrians, Christians, Manicheans and Buddhists. However, even these were not fixed names at the beginning but developed over the course of time. One must conclude that in most cases the names do not help much in understanding either the legal position of the groups⁹ or their ritualistic content.¹⁰

Having looked at the ancient nomenclature and the modern approaches, it seems very difficult to agree upon only one term to describe a phenomenon as diverse as this. It appears as if no single term covers all aspects. If one speaks for example of *Vereine* one immediately implies a legal notion.¹¹ Using other modern terms such as association or community again often implies modern legal and Christian connotations. Specifications such as cult-association or cult-community are perhaps more sensible but still do not do the phenomenon justice, leaving it with a compromise. If one continues one finds that none of the modern terms are perfect, but for the purposes of this thesis I need to decide upon one fixed term, while acknowledging its limitations. The term “voluntary association” appears to be the most appropriate one for this study and will be used throughout, whilst acknowledging that on the one hand it does not seem to be specific enough, since it thereby includes, at least by implication, any sort of association, whether meeting for religious or professional purposes, and yet on the other hand it seems too specific, by excluding Jewish groups.

Another term also needs to be introduced at this point. This is a term which will be used to describe deities that were worshipped for a longer period of time at various places but that were brought to Greece and Asia Minor, mostly in the Classical and Hellenistic periods, by new settlers. In the course of time most of these gods were accepted and worshipped in Greece. Because these gods, compared to more traditional deities, were a creation novel to their environment and often novel in their appearance, as they had been modified and engineered into fit their new surroundings, they were often referred to as ‘foreign’ or ‘new’. In the end the gods themselves are neither foreign nor new. On the one hand it is the representation that changed and on the other hand, and more importantly, the rites and ritual practices which changed and made those deities appear to differ from more traditional gods.

⁸ Arnaoutoglou 2003 analyses the history and terminology of *eranos/eranistai* for Athens in detail and shows that the diverse ways in which the terms are used is significant, but that a development of the term from a mostly economic meaning to associations connected to a religious pretext can be clearly observed from the 3rd century BC onwards, p. 75. He includes the *eranistai* in his study as cult-associations, p. 29 and pp. 70-87.

⁹ Arnaoutoglou 2003, concludes, that „the naming pattern did not follow one pre-determined model but complied with different needs in different contexts.“ p. 33.

¹⁰ In many cases and especially among the inscriptions from Athens the identity of the deity that is subject to worship is not provided, either by the inscription itself or by the location where it was found. This makes it impossible to decide what kind of group is represented.

¹¹ The modern word *Verein* normally describes a club or association that is legally registered and functions as a legal person – a concept that was unknown in ancient Greece.

1.3 History of scholarship

Much has been written about the institutional and legal side of voluntary associations, mostly focusing on the Roman *collegia*, starting with Theodor Mommsen,¹² whose research interest was followed soon after by Jean-Pierre Waltzing and others.¹³ In addition to a general interest among both theologians¹⁴ and historians, the newly established systematic *corpora* of inscriptions¹⁵ enabled scholars in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to deal more easily with the amount of material that was already available. The focus on the Roman “Vereine” remains a much discussed topic above all among German scholars and most recently stimulated a doctoral thesis, that analysed the development of historical thinking of the “Vereine” in the scholarship of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁶ Until now, much of the scholarly work on the Roman *collegia* has been focused upon questions concerning the legal¹⁷ or socio-economic situation of Roman *collegia*.¹⁸

At the same time, only a few scholars have been interested in the Greek version of the *collegia*.¹⁹ More recent publications analyse the epigraphic remains of Greek voluntary associations in more

¹² Mommsen, Theodor 1843. *De collegiis et sodaliciis Romanorum*, Kiel.

¹³ Waltzing 1895-1900 published a monumental corpus, collecting all the evidence he could find at the time. Mommsen’s dissertation about the Roman *collegia* in Latin was followed by the 1873 Habilitation of Max Cohn, another legal historian, with his dissertation *Zum römischen Vereinsrecht, Abhandlungen aus der Rechtsgeschichte* and a German book by Liebenam, Wilhelm 1890. *Zur Geschichte und Organisation des römischen Vereinswesens, drei Untersuchungen*, Leipzig, which focused more on the historic-economic situation of the associations.

¹⁴ For the theological approach see Schmeller, Thomas 2006. Zum exegetischen Interesse an antiken Vereinen im 19. und 20. Jh., in: *Vereine Synagogen und Gemeinden im kaiserzeitlichen Kleinasien*, Andreas Gutsfeld/Dietrich-Alex Koch (edd.) Tübingen, pp. 1-19 and in the same publication: Dietrich-Alex Koch and Dirk Schinkel, Die Frage nach den Vereinen in der Geistes- und Theologiegeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts, pp. 129-148.

¹⁵ Namely Mommsen’s *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* and Böckh’s *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum* soon followed by the *Inscriptiones Graecae*.

¹⁶ Dissen, Margret 2009. *Römische Kollegien und deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft im 19. und 20. Jh.*, Stuttgart.

¹⁷ „Für die europäische Religionsgeschichte spielt seit der Antike das Vereinsrecht eine besondere Rolle. Das Konzept des *collegium* (...) hat für die Formierung religiöser Organisation im Einflussbereich römischen Rechts eine kaum zu unterschätzende Bedeutung gehabt“ Rüpke, Jörg 2007. *Historische Religionswissenschaft. Eine Einführung*, Stuttgart, p. 121. See also: Cotter, Wendy 1996. The Collegia and Roman law: State restrictions on voluntary associations, 64 BCE-200 CE, in: *Voluntary associations in the Graeco-Roman world*, John S. Kloppenborg/Stephen G. Wilson (edd.) pp. 74-89; Boudewijn Sirks, Adriaan. J. 2006. Die Vereine in der kaiserlichen Gesetzgebung, in: Andreas Gutsfeld/Dietrich-Alex Koch (edd.) *Vereine, Synagogen und Gemeinden im kaiserzeitlichen Kleinasien* (STAC 25) Tübingen, pp. 21-40, and most recently Bendlin, Andreas 2011. Associations, Funerals, Sociality, and Roman Law: The Collegium of Diana and Antinous in Lanuvium (CIL 14.2112) Reconsidered, in: Markus Öhler (ed.) *Aposteldekret und das antike Vereinswesen* (WUNT I 280) Tübingen, pp. 207-296.

¹⁸ Patterson, John R. 1994. The collegia and the transformation of the towns of Italy in the second century AD, in: *L'Italie d'Auguste à Dioclétien*, Actes du colloque international organisé par l'École française de Rome (Rome, 25-28 mars 1992) Rome: l'École française, 1994, pp. 227-238, Van Nijf 1997.

¹⁹ The most important work on Greek ‘*collegia*’ has been published by Poland, Franz 1909. *Geschichte des griechischen Vereinswesens*, Leipzig. Poland, however, was the first one to try to investigate the Greek voluntary associations. His approach is an overarching one in terms of time, place, and kind in which he collects various socio-historical phenomena under the rather modern term “Vereine” that had been established from the Latin word *collegia*. It was recognised in the 1980s, however, that „die griechischen Vereine auf eine längere

detail but focus exclusively on one specific *polis* and mostly on Athens. Most recently two scholars presented doctoral dissertations on voluntary associations in Athens. One thesis focused on the legal status of voluntary associations in Athens: this was the main motivation for Ilias Arnaoutoglou who dealt exclusively with “private religious associations in Hellenistic Athens”. In comparison Paulin Ismard (2008) adopted a historical approach to understanding and analysing the social system of the various groups in Athens from the fourth until the first centuries BC.²⁰ Both scholars provide a very thorough but rather specific study of associations in Athens, but do not take their results beyond the border of the *polis*.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Franz Cumont began an important trend in the study of the religious history of the ancient world, and of voluntary associations as a part of it, with his lectures on *les religions orientales dans le paganisme romaine*. Even though Cumont was not the first to introduce the concept of the ‘Oriental religions’, he surely was responsible for much of our basic understanding and misunderstanding of the cults he collected under this term. His main claim was, to put it briefly, that the ‘Oriental religions’ were imported to Greece and Rome as a set of ‘religions’ which offered a new kind of spirituality and mysticism.²¹ However, in order to create the category of ‘Oriental religions’, he claimed that one common feature of all cults gathered under this label was the performance of mysteries. Although Cumont achieved a breakthrough in the way scholars approached the history of religions in his time,²² he also inspired some research over the course of the last century which raised doubts about his initial conclusions. Already by the 1930s scholars such as Schneider and Wilamowitz had formulated their doubts about his concept. They argued that the combination of the terms ‘Oriental religions’ and ‘mysteries’ was not a sensible one.²³ Indeed, they were able to show that a concept such as mysteries did not exist in the newly introduced cults before they

und andersartige Entwicklung zurückblicken“ and that one could have worked with the “umfangreiche und teilweise ungenügendedierte Quellenmaterial über die Vereine der östlichen Reichshälfte” that was apparently available, but decided not to, Ausbüttel 1984, p. 14.

²⁰ Arnaoutoglou 2003, Ismard, Paulin 2008, *La communauté des communautés: Les associations à Athènes, VIe-Ier siècles*, doctoral thesis, submitted at the Université Paris I-Panthéon-Sorbonne, U. F. R. d’histoire.

²¹ Cumont, Franz 2006. *Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain*, Corinne Bonnet/Françoise Van Haepere (edd.) Turin. Against the predominant attitude of his contemporaries, who merely saw the destructive power of these new cults, he described them as positive imports. His positive attitude and his attempt to draw the religious history of the ancient world from a pagan point of view led to the early ending of his career, Bonnet, Corinne 2008. Les ‘religions orientales’ au laboratoire de l’Hellénisme: Franz Cumont, in: *ARG* 8, pp. 181–205:184. The most recent discussion about his achievements and legacy celebrating a centenary of his publication is presented in a collection: *Les religions orientales dans le monde grec et romain : cent ans après Cumont (1906-2006): bilan historique et historiographique*, Colloque de Rome, 16-18 Novembre 2006, Brussels/Rome.

²² From now on the cults belonging to his definition of ‘oriental gods’ were thoroughly analysed in terms of their literary, archaeological and epigraphic evidence. This becomes most apparent when looking at Vermaseren’s enormous EPRO-series.

²³ Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, Ulrich von 1931. *Der Glaube der Hellenen* (2. Bde.) Berlin, p. 852 Schneider, Carl 1939. Die griechischen Grundlagen der hellenistischen Religionsgeschichte, *ARW* 36, pp. 300-347:300-301. However, Schneider’s political motivation to show „unvermischten Hellenismus“ (p. 346) is very obvious and probably led to his stark criticism of Cumont’s positive attitude towards the Oriental countries.

arrived in Greece. If anything, they argued, mysteries became an additional feature of these cults after they had contact with Greek mysteries – a statement that later represented the main claim of Walter Burkert’s research.²⁴

A rather different idea about ‘Oriental religions’ and specifically the accompanying mysteries was formulated by Ugo Bianchi. Bianchi’s ideas have been perpetuated and developed further by Giulia Sfameni Gasparro.²⁵

An important contribution to the discussion of 'oriental gods', 'sects' and other appearances outside the frame of 'civic religion' in the Roman Empire has been presented by Richard Gordon in the ninety-nineties.²⁶ Gordon’s novel ideas about the relationship between politics and religion in the Roman world were followed by John North’s research into religious pluralism in the Roman world. This led to a wholly new understanding of the main developments in the history of religions. Since then, scholars from various fields have been building on these new approaches. John Kloppenborg investigated the phenomenon from a theologian’s or religious studies perspective, whereas Jörg Rüpke inspired classicists of all areas to contribute to the discussion.²⁷

Other new publications that analysed similar phenomena from a different perspective, such as Onno van Nijf’s work on the professional *collegia* in the Roman East, utilised socio-economic approaches. Van Nijf focuses on the activities and participation of the private associations of a (more or less overtly) professional character in order to trace individuals at lower levels beneath the élite that otherwise would have remained invisible.²⁸

The most recent summary of the *status quaestionis* is provided in the form of a collection of essays edited by John North and Simon Price.²⁹ The aim of this publication is to gather

²⁴ Burkert, Walter 1987. *Antike Mysterien: Funktionen und Gehalt*, München, p. 16.

²⁵ Sfameni Gasparro, Giulia 2011. Mysteries and Oriental Cults: A problem in the History of religions, in: John A. North/Simon R. F. Price (edd.) *The Religious History of the Roman Empire. Pagans, Jews and Christians*, Oxford pp. 276-324, published earlier as: Sfameni-Gasparro, Giulia 2006. Misteri e culti orientali: un problema storico-religioso, in: Corinne Bonnet/Jörg Rüpke/Paolo Scarpi (edd.) *Religions orientales – culti misterici. Neue Perspektiven – nouvelles perspectives – prospettive nuove* (PawB 16) Stuttgart pp. 181–210.

²⁶ Gordon understands the 'Oriental gods' and other nonconformities which can be classified as somehow religious phenomena as „structural products“ of Roman emperors, created to demonstrate right and wrong in the social order, indicating who is part of the Imperium and who is not. Gordon, Richard 1990. Religion in the Roman Empire: the civic compromise and its limits, in: Mary Beard/John North (edd.) *Pagan priests. Religion and Power in the Ancient World*, London, pp. 235-255:252-255.

²⁷ Kloppenborg, John S./Wilson, Stephen G. (edd.) *Voluntary associations in the Graeco-Roman world*, London/New York 1996; Rüpke, Jörg (ed.) *Gruppenreligionen im römischen Reich* (STAC 43) Tübingen 2007.

²⁸ Van Nijf 1997, p. 5.

²⁹ North, John A./Price, Simon R. F. (edd.) *The Religious History of the Roman Empire. Pagans, Jews and Christians*, Oxford 2011.

together the latest ideas about the changes in religious history that occurred, according to the editors, in the Graeco-Roman world from the second century BC onwards.³⁰ Most of the articles in the collection were first published only a decade earlier. The editors' approach to the topic is novel and this is perhaps the point of most importance for this study: Instead of seeing the eastern origin of the former 'oriental cults' as a common criterion, they emphasise the voluntary nature of these cults. This criterion led to the creation of a new term for the phenomenon, namely "elective cults" as opposed to civic cults which lacked the voluntary character. According to the editors 'elective cults' include newly-introduced cults many of which were formerly called 'Oriental religions'. Among these elective cults they count alongside the 'Oriental religions' other groups such as Jewish and Christian ones.³¹ Among the most striking new trends in view of my research is Jörg Rüpke's introductory article on Roman Religion and the Religion of Empire, in which he points out that the development of religious structures is not as dependent on political developments as usually characterised. Indeed, he claims that religion "might itself be an area for experiment and a medium for the creation of new structures" in the Roman empire, an observation that can be adapted to the development of voluntary associations in cities such as Athens, as I will show in chapter two.³²

With regard to my thesis this brief survey can perhaps be summarised as follows: on the one hand, scholars with an interest in legal and institutional history argue that voluntary associations were formations of people based on older concepts of institutions, since they were forced to find categories to fit these groups into.³³ Furthermore, the formation of such groups was often driven by the intention to seek legality or to appear as legally acknowledged. On the other hand, scholars interested in the religious side of the Ancient world have acknowledged significant changes in the history of religion at least from the second century BC onwards. These changes are caused by a series of events, a historical process, which leads towards a movement of population and new co-existences. These co-

³⁰ North/Price 2011, Introduction, p. 2.

³¹ North/Price 2011, Introduction, p. 3.

³² Rüpke, Jörg 2011. Roman Religion and the Religion of Empire. Some Reflections on Method, in: John A. North/Simon R. F. Price (edd.) *The Religious History of the Roman Empire. Pagans, Jews and Christians*, pp. 9-36:30. In addition, the editors describe the perception that, contrary to the claims of Cumont and his contemporaries that religious tradition and ritual practices of the first three centuries AD were declining, they were instead "persistent" and even "creative". Furthermore, they add the observation that if one can speak of a single pagan religion at all that would be the result of a long-standing process which can be found in antiquity exclusively in Christian writings, North/Price 2011, Introduction, p. 3.

³³ The authorities of the cities in which they mostly lived and worshipped were forced to find categories for them at the same time.

existences were created by the cosmopolitan atmosphere of some areas in big Hellenistic cities – typically ports – which had higher than average concentrations of newcomers. Here I have in mind not only the new neighbourhoods created by merchants and other travellers, but also the new military bases that were established in the course of the struggles among the Hellenistic kingdoms and which brought soldiers from all over the Mediterranean to Greece and Asia Minor. They again require and produce new patterns of religious behaviour and practices. One aspect of this change is the acceptance and popularity of elective cults as opposed to civic cults. Among the elective cults one can find voluntary associations of every description.

1.4 Materials, methods, structure

This study cannot be an exhaustive one, simply owing to the nature and quantity of the evidence. However, the aim is to make use of as many different and relevant archaeological sites and inscriptions as possible. In order to adopt a sensible framework and to use as much information as possible, the evidence will be of a rather unambiguous nature. In practice this means that the material should clearly give evidence that the main purpose of a voluntary association's gathering is to worship a deity in any form. This should be provided in the inscriptions by a rather clear terminology or in a combination of epigraphic and archaeological evidence.³⁴

The areas that I will investigate are mostly the mainland of Greece and the islands, as well as some places on the west coast of Asia Minor. The Greek colonies in the West and in the Black Sea region will not be part of the study. The topographical scope is delimited by the finding places with both inscriptions and archaeological remains. However, some places, namely Athens and Delos, will be analysed in more detail, owing to a concentration of evidence and their specific position in the course of the developments which shape the environment within which voluntary associations appeared.

Other places, such as Rhodes, Smyrna, Pergamum and Ephesus, offer clear evidence of the lively development of voluntary associations at different points in time. They will be considered when appropriate throughout the thesis. These places, however, were less suitable

³⁴ I cannot investigate the many banqueting halls that have been suggested as meeting places of voluntary associations on a merely archaeological basis. The discussion of their suggested purpose alone would be worth a whole dissertation.

to provide individual case-studies. On the one hand, this is due to a lack of archaeological findings, as for example in Rhodes. Even though the evidence suggests a broad range of active voluntary associations mainly in the two centuries BC, hardly any archaeological evidence can be allocated to these groups.³⁵ On the other hand, the evidence may be restricted to one specific cult and one limited and rather short period of time in which the evidence appears, as for example in Pergamum, Ephesus and Smyrna.³⁶ Most evidence from regions other than Athens and the Aegean dates from the Roman period and does not highlight the period in which voluntary associations developed in the first instance but can be rather seen as products of the Roman occupation.

The process through which voluntary associations were most visible and probably most popular peaked in the Roman west in the second and third centuries AD. Its beginnings, however, can be confirmed by the earliest documents from Classical Greece. Owing to the epigraphic habit, an enormous numerical rise of epigraphic evidence is noticeable from the fourth century BC onwards, peaking about a century later. The first three centuries BC are not only crucial in terms of significant political changes in the Greek mainland and Asia Minor, but also concerning the social and religious history, as demonstrated throughout the thesis. Under the Roman authorities, however, the numerical size, the spread and the character of the evidence for voluntary associations appears quite different from that from the centuries BC. More inscriptions can now be found in the cities of Asia Minor. Accordingly the chronological limitations are from around 300 BC until AD 200, yet specifically focussing on locally important periods. Within that period one can recognise the start and peak of the new phenomenon of voluntary associations in Greece. The time after AD 200 is characterised in Greece by a scarcity of evidence and in the West by the growth of Christian groups which deserve a whole study of their own.

The thesis consists of two case-studies, followed by a chapter on the architecture of voluntary associations, a chapter on the sociology of the cults, namely on the people who founded, and attended the associations, followed by a final chapter on the institutions by which voluntary

³⁵ Gabrielsen suggests a total number of about two hundred different groups in that time, Gabrielsen, Vincent 2001. The Rhodian associations and economic activity, in: Archibald, Zosia. H. (ed. i.a.) *Hellenistic Economies*, London/New York, pp. 215-244: 216.

³⁶ In Pergamum one can identify mainly Dionysian groups and among those most evidence refers to a group of Dionysian *boukoloi*. Dionysian groups of the Roman period and mostly from the second century AD are also predominant in Ephesus (*IEph* 275, 1595, 293, 1250. *IEph* 1601 and 1602 are interpreted as referring to a Dionysian association as well). In Smyrna the same phenomenon occurs although voluntary associations of Dionysus appear here most often as mystes together with the Dionysian *technites* (*ISmyrna* 652, 731, 732, 639). Most inscriptions date from the first two centuries AD.

associations were inspired, maintained and their activities restricted. The first case-study, chapter two, deals with the archaeological and epigraphic evidence that was found in the city of Athens and the Piraeus. The third chapter is a case-study in which the remains from Delos are analysed. By investigating the material evidence of the two places in chronological order I hope to find out more about the conditions that led to the genesis and development of voluntary associations within each society, whether long-standing or newly flourishing. These locally bound investigations provide the basis for the comparative perspective on various cults, a key aspect of the thesis.

The reason why I chose to approach the topic by conducting two case studies lies in the advantages that case studies offer when it comes to observing a whole community. Case studies of poleis allow the observation of various cults at the same time in their context instead of extracting one particular cult or sanctuary from its environment. These locally bound investigations provide the basis for a comparison of various cults, a key aspect of this thesis. Choosing Athens as one case study proves valuable insofar as it looks back upon rather a long history of important institutions which are well documented in the epigraphic records. Delos on the other hand might not be as important when it comes to long-standing political institutions (apart from the sanctuary of Apollo of course) but it offers much archaeological and epigraphic evidence highlighting a short but very important history of a city flourishing enormously in the first three centuries BC. This contrast in the history of the development of both cities highlights the different circumstances within which voluntary associations were established leading to different interpretations of the concept.

In the fourth chapter I will investigate the architectural remains of voluntary associations. By analysing the archaeological structures that voluntary associations have left behind and that can be identified as such, I will try to reconstruct the way in which they were part of the community. Furthermore I hope to find out whether similar types of groups used the same architectural language. I will investigate whether the worshipping groups around newly-introduced deities used the same architectural forms as they did at their place of origin or whether they invented new ones, or borrowed forms and materials from each new environment. The analysis of the archaeological remains can answer questions such as whether the groups' meeting places were located in the main square or rather in proximity to a sanctuary, in a private or public context, with an exoteric or esoteric connotation.

Chapter five is an investigation and analysis of the people who initiated, supported, maintained and joined voluntary associations. Questions about social class, origin and gender of founders, ordinary members and sacred staff are approached by analysing the epigraphic evidence. The purpose of this chapter is to answer the questions that remain after the analysis of the archaeological remains.

The aim of the sixth chapter is to investigate the theories about voluntary associations in scholarship and to align them with the results presented in the thesis.

1.5 Leading ideas

In this thesis I will argue three basic points.

First I will argue that there is far more diversity among each group worshipping both newly-introduced deities and rather traditional ones. This diversity is very much dependent on the local preconditions of each environment in which the voluntary association was established, rather than on an original idea spread throughout the ‘communities’, even though the nomenclature is often similar.

Secondly I will argue that newly-introduced cults were assimilated into their new environments at an enormous pace, and most often by means of voluntary associations. They assimilate by developing these main characteristics. They most often adapt superficially to each new environment in terms of its architectural and epigraphic habit. Indeed they reflect their environment in terms of its legal and institutional preconditions. But although they soon look like most other local cults they differ from the inside. In fact, they offer new ritual practices and new interpretations of older forms, such as mysteries. It is this unique selling point which makes them so popular in their new environments.

The third argument concerns a wider outlook of the phenomenon by contrasting it with the Roman west. The difference between the appearance of voluntary associations in Hellenistic Greece and the Roman West is that in Rome they needed a certain amount of exoticism, probably in order to attract prospective worshippers. In Greece on the other hand, one cannot find the same amount of aggressiveness and “superficial” exoticism. Voluntary associations and newly-introduced deities in Greece were a novelty in themselves and therefore attracted attention without advertising. This might also provide one explanation of the difficulties in

finding any material traces of certain voluntary associations in Greece, such as Jewish and early Christian groups, of whose existence we are otherwise informed.

2. Athens – a case study

This chapter investigates the question of whether, how, and at what point voluntary associations had a visible impact on urban space in Greece using the example of Athens and its harbour Piraeus. By analysing the epigraphic and archaeological evidence from Athens and the Piraeus I shall draw a general picture of the emergence of the most prominent cults that developed voluntary associations in Athens and Piraeus in the late Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods.

Athens cannot simply be seen as one of the newly mushrooming Hellenistic cities such as Delos which shall be considered in the next chapter. Nevertheless, it underwent significant changes during the Hellenistic period. One change was the increased prominence of voluntary associations in the epigraphic evidence which seems to have risen suddenly at the end of the Classical period and the beginning of the Hellenistic era (350-300 BC). This phenomenon goes hand in hand with the general rise in epigraphic evidence. This is of particular importance because, given the paucity of surviving physical remains in the area of the modern city, this case-study is necessarily mainly based on inscriptions. In order to display the development in the epigraphic habit, I have included two graphs in the appendix. Graph A shows the situation in Athens and Attica from the eighth century BC until the fourth century AD³⁷ and graph B illustrates the comparative material for this study, namely inscriptions that clearly mention voluntary associations over the same period of time. If one compares the graphs it becomes clear that the numbers of inscriptions which have come down to us from voluntary associations are only a very small fraction of the totality of inscriptions from Athens. If it is at all reasonable to make assumptions on the basis of these small numbers, we can deduce that the epigraphic evidence recording the activity of voluntary associations follows the general trends of the epigraphic habit, although the epigraphic activity peaks in the third rather than the fourth century BC.³⁸ However, the fact that only a single inscription has come down to us from before the fourth century raises questions such as whether these new groups were new creations or were in fact transformed versions of older religious organisations. Examples of voluntary associations in the literary evidence before the

³⁷ Hedrick, Charles W. 1999. Democracy and the Athenian Epigraphical habit, in: *Hesperia* 68, pp. 387-439:392.

³⁸ Rhodes could observe “exceptional activity in religious matters” in the last quarter of the fourth century Rhodes, Peter J. 2009. State and religion in Athenian inscriptions, *Greece and Rome* 56, pp. 1-13:9. This could be an indicator that the inscriptions concerning religious matters were most numerous slightly later than the general trend. However, one must not forget that for this study only 125 of approximately 20.000 inscriptions from Athens and Attica (Hedrick 1999, p. 390) were taken into account.

fourth century are rare and do not lead any further. The question has to remain open but will be considered later on in this chapter

A second question on which this chapter will focus is the way in which voluntary associations changed over the course of time. Is it that they simply changed their practices according to the norms of a given time or were changes driven by innovation in their religious practices and ideas concerning the “religious” content? In other words: were these changes of form or content? Were newly-introduced cults using the existing patterns of civic cults – were members of Attic *orgeones* of Heroes the same who later joined the *orgeones* of Bendis and the Syrian Aphrodite? To what extent can one speak of a continuation of older forms of organisation and to what extent is it a totally new phenomenon, or does one have to expect both: old features used in a new way and thereby creating something new? Is there a political level which can be discerned in outward appearance and public representation of the groups and the transformation according to each period, and how much did the *ekklesia* intervene in the running of these groups?

Finally, a third set of questions will be raised concerning the archaeological evidence that appears in the study. Even though Athens is a special place in the Greek world during the fifth century, its archaeological evidence is – partly due to the city’s modern growth – not well-preserved. It might therefore not be as representative as the evidence found in other places. However, the structures that have survived will be analysed in terms of their location within the city, and their probable size and equipment of their interior. Other possible questions include whether the groups were visible in the centre of the city or just on the outskirts, and whether they possessed independent establishments or were dependent on sanctuaries. How much space was used by the groups and in what way? Did individuals offer their houses as meeting places or were buildings constructed that were exclusively dedicated to the gatherings and ritual action of specific groups?

Scholars who deal with the religious history of Athens tend not to pay too much attention on voluntary associations. Robert Parker mentions them in the introduction to his “Polytheism and Society in Athens” but does not otherwise deal with them.³⁹ Other scholars, however, such as Jon Mikalson in his book “Religion in Hellenistic Athens”, devote more

³⁹ Parker mentions them in one sentence in his introduction together with hereditary groups as “societies of *orgeones* of a hero, *thiasoi* of Herakles and the like.” Parker, Robert 2005. *Polytheism and society in Athens*, Oxford, p. 23.

space to the topic.⁴⁰ Mikalson, however, uses the evidence mainly to support his more general classification of the Athenian cults into “foreign” and “traditional”. He builds his argument around a division between the groups in Athens and Piraeus into “exclusive groups of citizens located in the city centre”⁴¹ and “small and weak (...) foreign *koina*” that were restricted to Piraeus and did not have any citizens.⁴² New approaches to the more general idea of a *polis*-religion, thoroughly discussed by Sourvinou-Inwood in 2000,⁴³ were recently published by Julia Kindt. These scholars address the topic of placing voluntary associations in a religious system of an individual *polis*.⁴⁴ Only a few other researchers, however, dedicated their entire theses to the topic, most notably Ilias Arnaoutoglou (2003) and Paulin Ismard (2011), which certainly suggests that there is enough evidence to analyse.

Arnaoutoglou, who wrote probably the most thorough study of the legal situation of voluntary associations in Athens in recent years, compiled a total of one hundred and seventy-five inscriptions on voluntary associations from Athens and Attica dating from the fifth century BC until the third century AD. My study is based on one-hundred and twenty-six of these inscriptions, all of which mention either a specific deity or a particular sanctuary. The inscriptions were found not only in the centre of Athens but also in Piraeus and Attica. On the following pages I will summarise their distribution and will mainly focus on certain fruitful discoveries from the city centres of Athens and Piraeus. Evidence from Attica is listed in the tables but will not be considered further.

⁴⁰ Mikalson, Jon 1998. *Religion in Hellenistic Athens*, Berkeley/London, pp. 139-155.

⁴¹ Mikalson 1998, 152-153. He does not mention that there is no attestation for a citizen-only membership of the *orgeones* but argues the opposite.

⁴² Mikalson 1998, p. 154.

⁴³ Sourvinou-Inwood, Christiane 2000 a. What is Polis-religion? in: Richard Buxton (ed.) *Oxford readings in Greek religion*, Oxford, pp. 13-37, first published in: Oswyn Murray and Simon R. F. Price (edd.) *The Greek city from Homer to Alexander*, Oxford 1990, pp. 295-322 and Sourvinou-Inwood, Christiane 2000 b, Further aspects of Polis-religion, in: Richard Buxton (ed.) *Oxford readings in Greek religion*, Oxford, pp. 38-55, first published in: *AION (Arch)* 10, 1988, pp. 259-274.

⁴⁴ However since voluntary associations in my view cannot be seen as part of the *polis* religion as it stands, but on the contrary offer an alternative that grew up as a new phenomenon much later on, I will not discuss this topic any further. Kindt only discusses the problems that occur when dealing with privately initiated worship or associations and *polis* religion, see Kindt, Julia 2009. Polis Religion – a critical appreciation, in: Nissen, Cécile (ed.) *Entre Asclépios et Hippocrate: Etude des cultes guerisseurs et des medecins en Carie* (Kernos suppl. 22) pp. 9-34:28-29.

2.1 Early evidence

The earliest epigraphic evidence for the use of the words *thiasos* and *thiasotai* to describe a group of people in general shows that the term was widespread in Greece⁴⁵ and in Athens from the fifth century BC onwards.⁴⁶

Only one fifth-century inscription found in Piraeus can be connected with a religious *thiasos*.⁴⁷ One can find *thiasoi* and *thiasotai* in the Athenian literature from the fifth century BC onwards in most literary genres and generally used to describe a group of people. In the fourth century, especially in the speeches of Demosthenes, the terms are used to describe the noisy groups worshipping mostly Thracian and other, “foreign” gods, though Demosthenes might be exaggerating in order to make his point.⁴⁸ However, we may observe a general trend from the fifth century from the use of the term to describe any kind of social group towards a more specific usage in the fourth century to describe cultic groups.⁴⁹

2.2 The fourth century BC

The use of the term *thiasos* to denote voluntary associations can still be found in inscriptions from the fourth century BC. Whether this new visibility results from a general increase in the use of epigraphy as a means of communication and representation, or whether it indicates a change in the habit of voluntary associations is unclear.⁵⁰ Sixteen fourth-century inscriptions of this kind have been found in Athens.⁵¹ Seven were found in Piraeus.⁵²

⁴⁵ E. g. Rhodes = *Lindos II* 580, Aegina = *SEG* 36.305, and Sicily = *SEG* 35.1009 already in the sixth and fifth centuries BC.

⁴⁶ E. g. *IG II²* 1177.

⁴⁷ In connection with Herakles, *IG I³* 1016, *SEG* 10:330.

⁴⁸ However, since the term had to make sense to his audience, he may well have chosen simply to describe it in terms that people were familiar with.

⁴⁹ For a more detailed analysis of the use of *thiasos* in literature see Arnaoutoglou 2003, pp. 60–66.

⁵⁰ Arnaoutoglou suggests that during the fifth century BC voluntary associations changed their habit from gathering at local shrines and sanctuaries in rural Attica to finding assembly places in the urbanised areas of Athens and Piraeus p. 28.

⁵¹ If not indicated otherwise, all inscriptions are published in *IG II²* and can be dated BC: 1) 1249, Acropolis, decree cult association of unknown type, first half fourth century, 2) 1525, Amyneion, *orgeones* of Amynos, Asklepios and Dexion, second half of fourth century, 3) 1253 Amyneion, honorary decree *orgeones* of Amynos, Asklepios, Dexion second half of fourth century, 4) 1259 Amyneion, honorary decree 331/12, 5) 1599 *orgeones* association 340–320, 6) 2343 *koinon thiasoton*, twelve members, priest of Herakles, first half of fourth century, inscribed in *trapeze*, 7) 2345, list of names organised in six groups and word *thiasos*, first half of fourth century probably *thiasoi* of phratries, 8) 2348, catalogue *thiasotai*, second half of fourth century, 9) 2349, catalogue *thiasotai*, fourth century, 10) 2499, lease of the temple of Egretes by an *orgeones* association for ten years, two-hundred drachma per annum 306/5, 11) 2501, lifelong lease of temple of Hypodektes by *koinon orgeonon* fifty drachmas per annum second half fourth century, 12) 2936, dedication of *thiasotai*, list of five names, second half fourth century, 13) 2939, dedication to Athena *Ergane* at the occasion of a crowning by a group of *thiasotai*

From this it appears that *orgeones* were, alongside the *thiasoi/thiasotai*, the dominant form of voluntary association in the fourth century in Athens and Piraeus.

The find spots of most Athenian inscriptions are not known or else are vaguely described as ‘Athens’ or ‘Piraeus’. This causes difficulties when trying to draw a map of the distribution of voluntary associations within the city. However, the cases where more information is available indicate that most inscriptions were found in the very centre of the city, namely between the Agora and the Acropolis. This is true in the case of a voluntary association, namely the *orgeones* of Amyntos, Asklepios and Dexion. Three inscriptions belonging to this specific group were found in situ at the slope of the Acropolis between Pnyx and Areopagus in the heart of Athens.⁵³ Moreover, the architectural structure within which some of the inscriptions were found could be identified as the groups’ sanctuary and assembly place.

The Amyneion, a walled precinct of two hundred and fifty square metres was situated in an area in which several houses of the classical period have been excavated.⁵⁴ Within the precinct the excavators found a well, supplied by a large aqueduct constructed in the sixth century BC.⁵⁵ The entrance at the north end of the west side was marked in Roman times by two columns.⁵⁶ A marble sacrificial table; bases for votives and reliefs displaying certain body parts which are typical for healing shrines; and a marble table for offerings were found within the area. No building was found in the precinct and apparently the only roofed area was a simple shelter or hall with wooden columns.⁵⁷ All this is nothing specifically “orgeonic”. The precinct including its inventory does not differ from other contemporary sanctuaries in neither its equipment nor design.

second half of fourth century, 14) 2942, Acropolis, honorary decree by *Artemisiastai*, 345, 15) *SEG* 12.100, 30-35, Agora, claim of an *orgeones* associations on some property that was confiscated and sold, 367/6, 16) *SEG* 24.203, lease of garden of the *orgeones* (of the hero-doctor?) for thirty years, twenty drachmas per annum, 333/2.

⁵² 1) *IG* II² 1255 *orgeones* of Bendis? Decree, honouring several officials for their duties 337/6, 2) 1256, *orgeones* of Bendis, honorary decree, 329/8, 3) 1261 A-C, three decrees of a *koinon ton thiasoton*, probably of Aphrodite, 302/1-300/299, 4) 1262, honorary decree of *koinon thiasoton* of Tynabos, 301/300, 5) 1263, decree of *thiasotai* for an official, 300/299, 6) 1277 fragmentary regulation of *koinon thiasoton* 325-275, 7) 1361, decree of the *orgeones* of Bendis, 330/324/3.

⁵³ For the location see map in image C, appendix. The inscriptions are: *IG* II² 1252, 1253 and 1259, they refer to the group, *IG* II² 4385–4387, 4422, 4424, 4435, 4457, 4365 were also found within the sanctuary. All inscriptions date to the middle and second half of the fourth century BC.

⁵⁴ See image D, appendix. Graham, James W. 1974. Houses of classical Athens, in: *Phoenix* 28, pp. 45-54: 47

⁵⁵ Wycherly, Richard E. 1970, Smaller shrines in Ancient Athens, in: *Phoenix* 24, pp. 283-295: 292

⁵⁶ Travlos, John 1971. *Bildlexikon zur Topographie des antiken Athen*, Tübingen, p. 76.

⁵⁷ Travlos 1971, p. 76.

The history of this specific group of *orgeones* reaches well back into the sixth century BC. Initially the group had worshipped Aminos, a healing deity like Asklepios, and extended their cult in the fifth century BC by including the latter.⁵⁸ In connection with Asklepios the hero Dexion, who is said to have played his part in the “reception” of Asklepios in Athens and Eleusis,⁵⁹ was integrated and retained his own shrine.⁶⁰ The inscriptions indicate that at least some of the members were fairly wealthy, since they donated several gold crowns, of which one was worth five-hundred drachmas.⁶¹ Whereas Ferguson categorised the members of this association as “respectable Athenians (...) of the propertied class”⁶² Jones suggests “rather a more diverse membership dependent upon the largess of a few generous benefactors”⁶³. His prosopographic investigations of the nine persons known from the decrees show that only three are known from other places and of these three only one can be referred to in the way suggested by Ferguson as respectable and propertied.⁶⁴

One can however summarise that the *orgeones* of Aminos, Asklepios and Dexion were a fairly long-standing religious group which in the fourth century BC entertained two shrines of which at least one was located in the centre of Athens. The known precinct was surrounded by houses yet only one-hundred metres away from the political heart of the city namely the Pnyx, the Agora and the Areopagus.

A series of inscriptions from Athens, all (except for one)⁶⁵ dating back to the second half of the fourth century, deal with property interests in connection with voluntary associations. One of these inscriptions was found at the foot of the hill of the Nymphs close to the Amyneion. It provides very detailed conditions concerning the lease of a sacred precinct owned by the *orgeones* of the hero Echelos.⁶⁶ The precinct was let over a period of ten years for two-hundred drachmas per year which had to be paid in two instalments every six months.⁶⁷ In addition, the tenant named Diognetos had to open and prepare the *hieron* for the annual meeting of the group in September (*Boedromion*). On this occasion he had to

⁵⁸ Ferguson, William S. 1944. The Attic *Orgeones*, in: *HThR* 37, 1944, pp. 61-140:87.

⁵⁹ Mikalson 1998, 146.

⁶⁰ *IG II²* 1252, l. 11 indicates that the group met annually at two sanctuaries, the one to Aminos and Asklepios and the one to Dexion.

⁶¹ *IG II²* 1252 individuals thanked for their performance (ll. 4-5) and mention of gold crown worth five-hundred drachmas, 1253 gold crown, 1259 similar awards.

⁶² Ferguson 1944, p. 87.

⁶³ Jones, Nicholas F. 1999. *The associations of Classical Athens*, Oxford, p. 256.

⁶⁴ Jones 1999, p. 255.

⁶⁵ *SEG* 12.100 was set up 367/6 BC.

⁶⁶ *IG II²* 2499, 306/5 BC.

⁶⁷ Ll. 4-5 and ll. 20-24. In addition to the right to furnish the *hieron* and the dwellings that belonged to it (ll. 5-6), the tenant was supposed to take care of the trees in the precinct and to replace them when they died (ll. 15-18), and he had to whitewash the walls of the house when necessary (ll. 7-8).

provide cooking facilities, benches and tables for two *triclinia*.⁶⁸ We learn from the contract that the *orgeones* met at least once a year in order to hold a banquet together in honour of a certain hero in a precinct that belonged to the group, and that was very probably in the area of the city centre where the contract was found.⁶⁹ The practice of inscribing such detailed leasing-contracts for sanctuaries is not unique.⁷⁰

A similar but less distinctive inscription carrying a leasing-contract was found in the western part of the city.⁷¹ The lifelong lease of the premises to an unknown person was charged at a rent of fifty drachmas per annum. In return the *temenos* including *hieron* and *oikia* had to be kept as such, and the precinct had to be prepared for the annual meeting of the *orgeones* in the middle of Boedromion including the unveiling and oiling of the cult-image.⁷²

Yet another inscription containing a contract concerning property owned by an *orgeones*-group reveals that this group charged twenty drachmas per annum for the lease of the garden to a certain Thrasybolos of Alopeke for a period of thirty years.⁷³

Most of the other inscriptions which name voluntary associations only reveal the names of members in the form of lists; of accounts of honours granted to members of the group; of dedications to deities, and sometimes offered even less information than this.

Before turning to the finds from Piraeus I would like to stress that none of the small number of names mentioned in the decrees of the *orgeones* indicates the membership of non-Athenians.⁷⁴ At the same time there is no proof of the opposite. There is no sign that representatives of the *polis* were involved in these groups in an official capacity.⁷⁵ The second observation to be made concerns the contents of the inscription. Such detailed contracts that concern the lease of “privately” owned sanctuaries and the duties of the tenant regarding the organisation of the annual main sacrifices first appear during this period.⁷⁶ But for other voluntary associations such preparations were undertaken by officials of the organisation (see for example the *orgeones* of Bendis). It remains unclear whether the *orgeones* used their sacred precinct outside the festivals mentioned in the lease.⁷⁷ To sum up, one might say that the *orgeones* were not particularly concerned with matters of

⁶⁸ Ll. 27-30.

⁶⁹ On this specific contract in comparison to other, similar contracts not belonging to *orgeones* see Horster, Marietta 2004. *Landbesitz griechischer Heiligtümer in archaischer und klassischer Zeit*, Berlin, pp.182-183.

⁷⁰ See LSCG 14 (=IG I³ 84), Athens 418/7 BC, decree for the sanctuary of Kodros, Néleus and Basilè.

⁷¹ Ferguson 1944, p. 81, IG II² 2501, second half of fourth century BC.

⁷² Ll. 6-9.

⁷³ SEG 24.203, 333/2 BC.

⁷⁴ Mikalson 1998, p. 152.

⁷⁵ Jones 1999, p. 256.

⁷⁶ Rhodes 2009, p. 8.

⁷⁷ But it does not seem likely, since the dwellings were occupied and had to be prepared for the feasts.

representation either via their property or via their epigraphic record. And yet they decided to describe the contract in stone. No names of members or officials appear in the inscriptions. Only the location of the sanctuary so close to the political centre of Athens might be seen as a representative feature. It seems, however, as if the group existed in order to worship together and the lease of the precinct was rather a means of keeping it up since no priests or other officials in charge for the sanctuary are mentioned, as is usually the case for other voluntary associations. If one compares the groups' methods of representation in the fourth century in Athens, it seems as if they used the same general contemporary habits, such as the detailed (at least as it seems to us) contract. Such contracts engraved in stone are typical for the time from the end of the fifth century onwards and mirror practices in the surrounding society.⁷⁸ The same is true for their use of sanctuaries: even though they owned them as individual citizens, they ran them very much in the same way as the state ran theirs. This can be seen in the way in which the sanctuaries are arranged and equipped.

Probably the most important series of inscriptions from the fourth century BC Piraeus concerns the *orgeones* of Bendis. Bendis was a goddess of Thracian origin who appeared in Athens in the fifth century BC. Three inscriptions can be linked to these specific and much discussed groups.⁷⁹ The three inscriptions mention two different groups of *orgeones* of Bendis. One of them consisted exclusively of citizens, the other of citizens and "others", namely Thracians of unknown description.⁸⁰ All three decrees refer to a group of citizens which, according to the epigraphic record, was established prior to the mixed group.⁸¹ The cult of Bendis was officially recognised in Athens in 429 BC, and incorporated in the *polis*-cult. A temple of Bendis in Athens was mentioned first in 404/03 BC.⁸² Little is known about the actual organisation of the *orgeones* of the goddess and only a little information is provided by the three inscriptions. However, we learn about an annual membership fee of two drachmae to cover the costs of the sacrifice on the occasion of the annual public Bendideia; about the inclusion of new members;⁸³ and about honours given to officials;⁸⁴ but nothing

⁷⁸ Rhodes 2009, p. 8

⁷⁹ *IG II²* 1255, 337/6 BC; *IG II²* 1256, 329/8 BC; *IG II²* 1361, 330/324/3 BC.

⁸⁰ On the identification of the citizen and Thracian *orgeones* of Bendis see for example Ferguson 1944, 98-100; Mikalson 1998, p. 145; Jones 1999, 257; Planeaux, Christopher 2000. The date of Bendis' Entry into Attica, in: *The Classical Journal*, 96, pp. 165-192:187-189; Arnaoutoglou 2003, 57-60.

⁸¹ Although there might have been a group of Thracians before that simply without leaving any evidence.

⁸² Planeaux 2000, 169.

⁸³ A certain tendency of the *orgeones* association to expand at this stage can be seen in *IG II²* 1361, ll. 20-23 on the matters of the procedure to include new members see translation Arnaoutoglou 2003: "so that *orgeones* of the temple may be as many as possible, anybody who wishes to join shall be allowed to participate in the temple, having paid the sum of [...] drachmas and his name shall be inscribed on a stele, and those inscribed are to be scrutinised by the *orgeones*".

more than the mention of a temple in which certain festivities take place and nothing about a shrine or private sanctuary of the group. However, some differences between the groups of Athenian *orgeones* and the “Thracian” version from Piraeus can be seen at that time. Beside the fact that non-Athenians were members of the “Thracian” group it also seems as if the group was far more organised and better staffed⁸⁵ – and very probably larger than the Athenian ones.⁸⁶

A tripartite honorary decree of *thiasotai* connected with Aphrodite *Ourania* that dates to the last years of the fourth century was found in Piraeus.⁸⁷ Three further inscriptions were found and each mentions a *koinon thiasoton*⁸⁸ or *thiasotai*.⁸⁹ They date back to the threshold of the fourth to the third century BC.

2.3 The third century

The third century BC offers the most epigraphic evidence on the activity of voluntary associations. Twenty-six inscriptions from Athens⁹⁰ and twelve inscriptions from Piraeus⁹¹

⁸⁴ *IG* II² 1255.

⁸⁵ The Athenian *orgeones* “employed” only a *hestiator* (see e. g. *SEG* 21.530, l. 12), a host without any further description.

⁸⁶ More information on the *orgeones* of Bendis is provided in later decrees from the third century BC and will be considered further below.

⁸⁷ *IG* II² 1261.

⁸⁸ *IG* II² 1262, 301/300 BC; *IG* II² 1277, 325-275 BC.

⁸⁹ *IG* II² 1263, 300/299 BC.

⁹⁰ If not indicated otherwise all dates are BC 1) *SEG* 48.130, Kerameikos, third century, honorary decree for *epimeletria* of Agathe Thea 2) *Ag.* 16, 130, Agora, 300, decree of an *orgeones*? association, 3) *Ag.* 16, *SEG* 21.530, Areopagus, first half third century, decree ordering the re-inscription of the regulations, new rules on sacrifices and share of meat are introduced by *orgeones* of Echelos, 4) *Ag.* 16, 202, Agora, 227/6, honorary decree of certain Nikomachos, for his children and his children’s aid to the group of *thiasotai*?, 5) *Ag.* 16, 231, *SEG* 21, 533, Agora, ca. 215, a *thiasos* honours an individual, 6) *Ag.* 16, 235, Agora, 212/11, honorary decree of *orgeones* (of Mother of Gods?) for a priestess who fulfilled her duties, 7) *IG* II² 1277, Pnyx, 272/1, decree of *thiasotai* honouring several officials, 8) 1278, Athens?, 272/1, Decree of *thiasotai*? honouring several officials, 9) *IG* II² 1289, Athens, 255-235, decision of arbitrators on a property dispute of *orgeones*, selling or hypothecating the property is forbidden, only lease possible, 10) *IG* II² 1292, Athens, 215/14, honorary decree of *serapiastai* for officials, e.g. *proeranistria* Nikippe, 11) *IG* II² 1294, Athens, mid-third century, fragmentary document, *orgeones* and Zeus are mentioned, 12) *IG* II² 1297, Athens near Dipylon gate, *thiasotai* group, honorary decree for an individual benefactor, the *archeranistes*, who convened the worshippers, list of names thirty-eight men and twenty-one women, 13) *IG* II² 1298, Athens, 244/3 group of *thiasotai* association honouring officials, and regulation to a) inscribe names of priests and priestesses and other officials, and b) names of new members who have to pay a portion to the fund (*eranos*), fragmentary list of names, 14) *IG* II² 1318, Athens?, 221/11, *thiasotai* group honouring officials, fragmentary, 15) *IG* II² 1319, Athens?, 229-203, fragmentary decree of *thiasotai* association with *archeranistes*, 16) *IG* II² 2346, Athens?, first half third century, catalogue of *thiasotai*?, 17) *IG* II² 2352, first half third century, Athens, catalogue of *thiasotai*? 18) *IG* II² 2353, Acropolis, ca. 215, catalogue of 11 *asklepiastai*?, 19) *SEG* 18.3, Asklepieion, 212/11-174/3, honorary decree of *asklepiastai* (*koinon*) for an individual, 20) *IG* II² 2947, Athens, 212, *orgeones* honour an individual from Maroneia, 21) *IG* II² 4985, Athens?, third century dedication of *thiasosto Homoia*, 22) *SEG* 22.123, Bate, third

contain information on various voluntary associations. The exact findspots of the inscriptions from Athens are known for eight of them and can be located roughly in the area around the Acropolis, whereas most of the rest were found at the Agora. In the following section I will concentrate on those instances where either the findspot or the content of the inscription is most informative. Whereas exactly half of the inscriptions from fourth-century Athens mention *orgeones*, a decline in the use of the term can be observed in the third century. Fewer than a third of the inscriptions from Athens mention *orgeones*.⁹²

Four interesting inscriptions dating from the early third century⁹³ were found in the Athenian sanctuary of Herakles, Pankrates and Palaimon by the river Ilissos.⁹⁴ This sanctuary consisted of an open air-court that was cut out of the pre-existing rock as well as natural steps that might have served as seats. In Robert Parker's opinion there is no "humbler emplacement for the gods".⁹⁵ According to the datable findings, among which were fifty-eight votive reliefs, the sanctuary was mainly in use from the fifth century until the middle of the third century BC. Most of the votive-reliefs can be dated to the time of Lykourgos and the decade between three hundred and thirty and three hundred and twenty BC.⁹⁶ Two of the four

century, fragmentary decree of *orgeones* group, 23) *SEG* 41.82, Athens, 300-280, unpublished decree of *eranistai* group of Herakles Pankrates, 24) *SEG* 41.83, Athens, 280, unpublished decree of *thiasotai* association of Herakles Pankrates, 25) *SEG* 41.171, Athens, 300/299, dedication of a stele to Herakles Pankrates, by officials of an *eranistai* group, 26) *Hesp.* 16 (1947), 63/1, Agora, fragmentary dedication of *thiasotai*, nine names preserved.

⁹¹ If not indicated otherwise all inscriptions are published in *IG II²* and date to the centuries BC 1) 1271, Piraeus, 199/8, decree of *thiasotai* association honouring an individual for helping to rebuild the temple, connection with Zeus Labraundos, 2) 1273 A-B, Piraeus, 281/80, two decrees of a *thiasotai* association honouring two individuals, according to Mikalson (p.146) connected with mother of gods, 3) 1282, Piraeus, 262/1, decree of *thiasotai?* association honouring those with *epimeletes* Aphrodeisios for additional building work at the temple of Ammon, 4) 1283, Piraeus, 269/68, decree of *orgeones* of Bendis, regulating the procession from Athens to Piraeus, 5) 1284 A-B, Piraeus, A=first half third century, B=242-239, two honorary decrees of Bendis *orgeones*, 6) 1301, 220/19, fragmentary decree of *thiasotai?* Association, 7) 1314, 213/2, honorary decree of *orgeones* of Mother of gods for priestess, 8) 1315, Piraeus, 211/10, honorary decree of *orgeones* of Mother of the Gods for priestess, 9) 1316, Piraeus, 272/1, honorary decree *orgeones* of Mother of the Gods, for priestess and husband, using both terms, *thiasotai* and *orgeones*, 10) 2351, first half third century, Piraeus, catalogue of *thiasotai?* 11) 2943, Piraeus, third century, dedication to *thiasotai* of unknown deity honouring an individual, 12) 1275, Piraeus, third century, fragmentary regulation of *thiasotai* group regulating attendance of members appearance at funerals, mutual help and injustice caused to the members.

⁹² Seven out of twenty-five.

⁹³ 300-280 BC.

⁹⁴ For the location see image C, appendix.

⁹⁵ Parker 2005, p. 419.

⁹⁶ I do not agree that the discovery of one piece, an anatomical relief which dates back to the second century AD can give full proof of the continuous use of the sanctuary over six-hundred years as suggested in: Touchette Lori-Ann 1994. The Shrine of Pankrates, in: *CR* 49, 1999, pp. 519-520 and Touchette, Lori-Ann 1999. Rev. of E. Vikela, Die Weihreliefs aus dem Athener Pankrates-Heiligtum am Ilissos, *MDAI (A)* Beiheft 16, and Evgenia Vikela, *Ιλισσός (Τοι ερότου Παγκράτη) Ηεν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογική Εταιρεία*, <http://www.archetai.gr/site/content.php?artid=31>, accessed 15.04.2010.

unpublished inscriptions are dedicated to Pankrates by an *eranistai* association.⁹⁷ The third inscription is a decree by a non-citizen *thiasotai* association of Herakles Pankrates.⁹⁸ Even though the inscription does not reveal much information about the group, it is very likely that the *thiasotai* were mainly located here. In what way the *eranistai* were connected to the cult remains unclear. A fourth fragmentary inscription lists nine members of an *orgeones* association of unknown description.⁹⁹ The inscription is not dated but it is very likely that it stems from the same period as most of the findings. That would make it the first *orgeones* inscription from Athens to list members. Whether and how the sanctuary was used by the different groups must remain unclear, since a more detailed excavation report has yet to be published.¹⁰⁰ The rich equipment of the sanctuary, however, shows that it was well-attended for a short period of time. It was probably an ideal place to meet even though it was not immediately in the centre of the city.¹⁰¹

One of the few decrees of *orgeones* in this period dates back to the early third century BC. It provides information on two groups of *orgeones*, one of which can be located near the property of a certain Kalliphanes, the other one assembled around the hero Echelos.¹⁰² They met at least once a year in order to sacrifice together to the hero Echelos and the Heroines. The decree consists of two parts. The older part from the third century refers to an even older text which can be dated to the middle of the fifth century, according to Ferguson.¹⁰³ The younger part gives information about the *orgeones*' common sacred precinct for reunions and a place for sacrifices which included an altar. Furthermore, the inscription decrees that the names of the debtors including the capital debt and interest are written on a stele which had to be put up in the sanctuary "beside the altar".¹⁰⁴ It remains unclear where exactly the sanctuary was located. The older part contains very detailed regulations for the groups' joint sacrifice in *Hekatombaion*. The rules are mainly concerned with the sacrifice to the heroines and the hero

⁹⁷ *SEG* 41.82, Athens, 300-280 BC; *SEG* 41.171, Athens, 300/299 BC.

⁹⁸ *SEG* 41.83, Athens, 280, Parker 2005, p. 419, n. 13 on non-citizens.

⁹⁹ *SEG* 41.84, Athens.

¹⁰⁰ The sanctuary was found during an emergency excavation in the 1950ies, thus only a few notes are available: Μηλιάδης, Ιωάννης 1954. Ανασκαφή παρά την κοίτην του Ιλισού, in: *IIAE* (1953) pp. 47-60, *IIAE* (1954) pp. 41-49 and *Έργον* (1954) pp. 3-5.

¹⁰¹ Travlos pointed out the similarities between the sanctuary with the triad around the hero Amyntos since both sanctuaries were supposed to have provided healing power, p. 278.

¹⁰² *SEG* 21.530, Areopagus, first half third century, Ferguson nr.1, pp. 73-81; Jones 251-254; Meritt, Benjamin D. 1942. Greek inscriptions, in: *Hesperia* 11, 282-287.

¹⁰³ Ll. 1-12, Ferguson 1944, 76.

¹⁰⁴ Ll. 5-8.

and, even more importantly, with the fair distribution of meat among the *orgeones*.¹⁰⁵ This is probably the most informative decree issued by a group of Athenian *orgeones*. Despite its length and precision, one learns only that the members of the group attended the sacrifices with their families. No names or places are mentioned. But what does it tell us about their appearances and their recognition in town? Compared to the *orgeones*-groups of the same century located in Piraeus which have put their officials and benefactors on display, the group around Echelos does not seem to be very interested in these forms of representation, but rather mainly concerned about the proper organisation of and participation in the sacrifice.

The second decree to contain information about the property of an *orgeones* association of an unnamed goddess in the third century BC¹⁰⁶ was found in Athens.¹⁰⁷ The inscription records an investigation before private Athenian arbitrators in which two *orgeones* associations of the same goddess quarrelled over some “common” property. The sensible decision of the arbitrators was inscribed in the stele: a) the property, as it were, was claimed as belonging to the goddess;¹⁰⁸ b) it could not be sold or hypothecated¹⁰⁹ and c) the revenues made from the property, probably by farming, were to be “consumed” in common sacrifices on behalf of the goddess by the *orgeones*¹¹⁰ under the custody of the priest.¹¹¹ Whether the respective precinct was located in the city or in the surrounding area is not revealed. The mention of revenues from the ground could either point to the size of the precinct and agricultural use or to some sort of lease to a private person, something that is known from other orgeonic decrees. This case, however, differs from all the other decrees insofar as the ownership of the property, which is normally clearly assigned to the *orgeones*, is here in question.

Only one clearly identifiable decree from a group of *asklepiastai* that was formed to worship the healing-deity Asklepios was found in the Asklepieion on the south slope of the Athenian Agora.¹¹² It provides evidence for the activity of this group in the sanctuary during

¹⁰⁵ From the regulation we learn that the *orgeones* very probably consisted of adult males but that their sons, women and daughters, as well as one female attendant, were eligible for a share of meat. It seems as if the groups were of a rather limited size, since they needed only one table (l. 15) and shared a piglet on the first and an adult pig on the second day of their sacrifice (ll. 14-16).

¹⁰⁶ 255-233 BC.

¹⁰⁷ *IG* II², 1289; with more recent supplements *ZPE* 138, 2002, 125-128.

¹⁰⁸ Ll. 5-6.

¹⁰⁹ Ll. 6-7.

¹¹⁰ It remains unclear which group is meant but it refers probably to both groups together.

¹¹¹ Ll. 7-9.

¹¹² *SEG* 18.33. For the location see image C, appendix.

the third or second century BC.¹¹³ The honorary inscription which can be dated to the years 212/11-174/3 BC contains a decision to inscribe the names of the association's members in a stele of stone and to set it up in the sanctuary.¹¹⁴ This trend to inscribe the names of members, and therefore to be much more public about them, seems to be a new element in Athens and probably implies a need to create an exclusivity which had not been there before. In addition it is worth mentioning that a group of *orgeones* of Asklepios was attending a local sanctuary at south Attica (Keratea) in approximately the same period.¹¹⁵

I am not going to investigate the contents of the remaining nineteen inscriptions in detail. But it is possible to summarize them and to indicate the most important tendencies. As indicated for the *asklepiastai*, the new tendency to list both officials and members becomes a strong feature of the third-century inscriptions. The inscriptions were set up in order to honour certain officials, to list the members of the group, or often to do both. The lists and honours show that most groups were not restricted to male members but that women could even have important administrative functions.¹¹⁶ Names of the groups or deities are rather rare, even though a certain habit of repeating the groups' names seems to have existed at this time.¹¹⁷ Little information on the actual sanctuaries or meeting places has been passed on to us. However, the few known examples indicate that the groups were to be found in and around the centre of the city and that their affairs were dealt with in public. Individual rules and regulations, lists of members and debtors, priests and priestesses were displayed in public. It seems as if there was a shift from well-organised but rather anonymous groups mostly labelled as "*orgeones*", bound to a specific private precinct, towards more publicly visible voluntary associations of more variety and flexibility, who conducted their rituals in and around public sanctuaries. These "new" *orgeones*, it seems, were especially active in Piraeus. I shall return to this consideration in the final conclusion of this chapter; before that, however, I would like to introduce the evidence from Piraeus.

¹¹³ A second inscription from the third century BC which contains a list of eleven names found on the Acropolis (*IG II² 2353*) was suggested to be related with the same group. Since the word "*asklepiastai*" is completely supplemented and its addition not really clear to me I would rather set this piece of evidence aside.

¹¹⁴ *LI*, 17-18.

¹¹⁵ *IG II² 2355*, second half third century BC.

¹¹⁶ As members: *IG II² 1297*, Athens near Dipylon gate, 236/5 BC, *thiasotai* association, list of names including thirty-eight men and twenty-one women; as head of group: *IG II² 1292*, Athens, 215/14 BC, honorary decree of *serapiastai* for officials among which is the *proeranistria* Nikippe, a unique office so far. On the office and the decree in general see Dow, Sterling 1937. The Egyptian cults in Athens, in: *HTHR* 30, 183-232:188-197. Finally as priestesses *IG II² 1298*, Athens, 244/3 *thiasotai* association honouring officials, and regulation to also inscribe names of priests and priestesses and other officials beside other things.

¹¹⁷ The name of the *serapiastai* appears five times in their decree.

A small number of *orgeones* dominated the voluntary associations of Piraeus during third century BC. While two of them can be classified under the category “*orgeones* of Bendis”, the other group, devoted to the Mother of the Gods, appears here for the first time in the epigraphic record. The first decree of the *orgeones* of Bendis found in Piraeus actually refers to legislation for the people from Thrace in Athens.¹¹⁸ It contains instructions provided by the oracle of Dodona according to which the Thracians were now allowed to set up a temple on Attic soil.¹¹⁹ Further on, the text mentions two groups, of which one prepares a procession from Athens to Piraeus. The course of the procession is planned meticulously. The first stop of the procession is in a *Nymphaion* in which a purification ritual seems to be taking place.¹²⁰ The *epimeletai* in charge would then equip the participants with banqueting crowns and they would dine together in the sanctuary of the goddess. The second inscription, an honorary decree, consists of two individually dated parts.¹²¹ Neither text offers any information about the association's meeting place, but they do mention a sanctuary in which the stele has to be set up.¹²²

Much ink has been spilled on questions concerning the differentiation of Thracian and citizen *orgeones* and their first appearance in the city. It might be enough to say that scholars agreed that both inscriptions from Piraeus were set up by the “Thracian” *orgeones*.¹²³ To make matters even more complicated, at the same time yet another group of worshippers of Bendis, this time a group of *thiasotai*, was active on Salamis, an island near Athens in the Saronic Gulf, about two kilometres away from Piraeus.¹²⁴

Ferguson in his detailed analysis of the Attic *orgeones* presents them as divided into two “classes”. Class A includes *orgeones* in the sense of groups organised around heroes, class B includes those *orgeones* assembled around “higher deities, mostly of foreign origin”.¹²⁵ Leaving aside the issue of anachronism, the categorisation does not make much sense to me, especially since his collection of Class-B *orgeones* consists of just four groups, of which one is not very foreign at all.¹²⁶ All in all the evidence is too scarce to justify such a ruling. I would rather suggest a development in the use of the term from a purely Attic fifth

¹¹⁸ *IG* II² 1283.

¹¹⁹ Ll. 4-5. On the pre-existing sanctuary in Athens see Ferguson 1944, p. 97.

¹²⁰ Ll. 18-19.

¹²¹ 1284 A-B, Piraeus, A = first half third century, B = 242-239.

¹²² Ll. 15-18, 32-35.

¹²³ Arnaoutoglou quite rightly questions the „Thracianness“ of the so-called Thracians and shows through onomastic investigation that only one person can still be identified as Thracian, p. 60.

¹²⁴ *IG* II² 1317, 272/1 BC, *IG* II² 1317 B, 249/8 BC.

¹²⁵ Ferguson 1944, p.73.

¹²⁶ *Orgeones* of Bendis, Mother of the Gods, Haghe Aphrodite and Dionysus.

century terminology for a specific religious group to a rather widely framed use of the term which – as far as the epigraphic record tells us – appeared only twice in the first half of the first century¹²⁷ and finally died out in Roman times. This was happening hand in hand with an actual transformation of the inner structure of *orgeones*. Coming back to the example of the *orgeones* of Bendis it must remain unclear whether the term was used to describe the cultic groups of Bendis from the beginning,¹²⁸ whether it was adopted as soon as Athenian citizens joined the groups, or as soon as foreigners became citizens.

A clear shift in the naming practice of one specific association can be observed in the example of the well documented cult of the Great Mother in Piraeus.¹²⁹ The oldest decree of this *orgeones*-association was found in Piraeus.¹³⁰ The inscription dates from 272/1 BC, and uses both terms. Above and underneath the main text a priestess and her husband are honoured beside a crown within which the term *thiasotai* appears. In the main text, however, the group appears as *orgeones*. About ten years earlier the Metroon in Piraeus had been first occupied by a group of “foreign” *thiasotai* worshipping the Mother of Gods which might have become part of the later groups, now named *orgeones*.¹³¹ Two inscriptions of these *orgeones* from the third century BC were found in the precinct on the peninsula of Akte at Piraeus. Both were honorary decrees for a priestess.¹³² Athenian citizens identified by their demotics made up the majority of those names.¹³³ Furthermore two metics and several people with Greek names but without any further specification are named.

This set of inscriptions was found in a precinct that might have included a house before it was taken over by the group.¹³⁴ It is not entirely clear whether the *orgeones* joined the *thiasotai* which had occupied the precinct before or whether the *thiasotai* transformed into *orgeones*. Ferguson argued that the *orgeones* of the Mother of the Gods were adapted to

¹²⁷ *IG II² 1337*, (*orgeones* of hagne Aphrodite, 97/6 BC) and *IG II² 1334* (*orgeones* of the Mother of the Gods, 70 BC).

¹²⁸ As suggested by Planeaux 2000, p. 188.

¹²⁹ See e. g. *IG II² 1316*.

¹³⁰ *IG II² 1316*. The Mother of the Gods, a deity reminiscent of a Phrygian mother-deity, appeared in Greece in Archaic times and was commonly worshipped by the fifth and fourth centuries BC. The Athenian sanctuary of the goddess, the Metroon, was built in the fifth century BC on the slope of the Acropolis and served as state archive.

¹³¹ *IG II² 1273*, 281/0 BC.

¹³² *IG II² 1314*, 213/2 BC and *IG II² 1315*, 211/10 BC.

¹³³ Roller 1999, Lynn. *In search of God the Mother. The cult of Anatolian Cybele*, Berkeley p. 219, n. 133 counts 37 names.

¹³⁴ Another, smaller shrine of the Mother of the Gods was found in Moschatou and was probably part of a residential house. Whether it was used by a private group of worshippers as suggested must remain unclear, see Papachristodoulou, Ioannou C.1973. Ἀγαλμακαίναός Κυβέληςεν Μοσχάτω Αττικής, in: *Αρχαιολογική εφημερίς* 112, pp. 189-217:202-209.

the standards and habits of their environment, according to the example of the *orgeones* of Bendis.¹³⁵ However, there is no evidence to support this thesis.¹³⁶

The excavation of the precinct within which the inscriptions were found was undertaken by the “corps d’occupation français du Pirée” in 1855 and has never been published systematically.¹³⁷ At least we know that the *thiasotai* and *orgeones* of the Mother of Gods in the third century BC attended a private meeting place in Piraeus in a *temenos*¹³⁸, within which a *naos*¹³⁹ could be found. The precinct was in use and dedicated to the Mother of Gods until the second century AD,¹⁴⁰ though it might not have been attended by the *orgeones/thiasotai* any more by that point in time – their last inscription dates back to the first century BC.¹⁴¹

The group of *orgeones* honouring the Mother of the Gods seems to have used the term *orgeones*, customised for their own needs and different from the Athenian *orgeones*, or say from the *orgeones* of Amarynthos, Asklepios and Dexion. Members and officials came from different backgrounds, women played a much more important role than we know of from other orgeonic groups, and the concept of anonymity, which characterises the inscriptions that have come down to us from the Athenian *orgeones*, is far from evident. The *orgeones* of the Mother of Gods named their officials and honoured them. It seems as if the term *orgeones* in this case was a better, probably more official-sounding choice, made in order to underline the group’s standing in society. The members had in common with the Athenian *orgeones*-groups that they ran their own sanctuary. Hence, in this case they staffed it with their own people. The sanctuary was located in a fairly prominent position on the Piraean peninsula.

The harbour of Piraeus was developed by the Athenians as their new sea-harbour in the fifth century BC. Soon after its construction, however, Piraeus became the most important settlement on Attica apart from the city centre of Athens itself.¹⁴² Of course such a newly established area welcomed new inhabitants, in the first instance probably those who dealt

¹³⁵ Ferguson 1944, p. 109.

¹³⁶ Ferguson is convinced that the foreign group of *thiasotai* was more or less replaced by Athenian *orgeones*, which had to include some of the foreign *thiasotai* among its number as part of the deal to take over the property, p. 109. Furthermore he states that membership in a *thiasos* would be seen as “social let-down to Athenians” and the few foreigners that had been accepted were “zealous workers” who had a “sense of privilege”. None of this can be supported by the evidence and it seems odd that Ferguson does not consider the possibility of integration in Piraeus at the end of the third century BC.

¹³⁷ List of finds in Robert 1936, Louis. Inscriptions du Louvre, in: *BCH* 60, pp. 206-207.

¹³⁸ *IG* II² 1316.

¹³⁹ *IG* II² 1315.

¹⁴⁰ *IG* II² 4814, second-third century AD.

¹⁴¹ *IG* II² 1334, ca. 70 BC.

¹⁴² Roy, Jim 2002. The threat from the Piraeus, in: Paul Cartledge/Paul Millett/Sitta von Reden (edd.) *Kosmos: Essays in Order, Conflict and Community in Classical Athens*, Cambridge, pp. 191-202:191.

with the shipping-business itself. Traders and merchants from various parts of the Mediterranean, from Caria, Cyprus, Egypt, Phoenicia, Phrygia and Thrace, just to mention a few, came to Piraeus.¹⁴³ The *orgeones* of the Mother of the Gods can probably be seen as open and flexible voluntary associations, a joint-venture of foreigners, metics and citizens, with certain links to more ancient groups provided especially by their name, and located in the heart of the economically most interesting and most quickly developing part of Attica in the third century BC. The ability to change and the variety of members might partly explain their success over the centuries.

The remaining six inscriptions from third-century Piraeus do not add much useful additional information. They mostly name *thiasotai* without connection to a deity or place. One inscription in which an individual male appears who held an office in a religious group, however, is worth mentioning. The man is honoured for his help with some building work on the temple of Ammon.¹⁴⁴ The group's character is ambiguous – it is not clear whether it was in fact devoted to the Egyptian Ammon.

2.4 The second century

Voluntary associations in Athens in the second century can be traced back through seven inscriptions.¹⁴⁵ Eight have come down to us from Piraeus.¹⁴⁶

The Athenian evidence does not reveal much about the various groups. We still have evidence for one group of *orgeones* (of Aphrodite) and *thiasotai* but with no further details. In addition a *synodos* of an unknown kind is mentioned as well as various groups of which

¹⁴³ Garland, Robert 2001², *The Piraeus from the fifth to the first century BC*, London, p. 101.

¹⁴⁴ IG II² 1282, Piraeus, 262/1 BC Mikalson 1998, p. 146 investigates this inscription more fully but in my view reads too much into this one inscription of the organisation in order to create a better basis for his argument on the predominance of foreign *thiasoi* in the Piraeus in comparison with Athens.

¹⁴⁵ 1) Ag. 16, 330, Agora, first half first century BC, honorary decree of *thiasotai*?, 2) AM 66, 1941, 228/4, Athens, 138/7 BC, decree of *orgeones* group of Aphrodite for an individual for his aid in repairing temple, 3) IG II² 1323, Athens, 194/3 BC, decree of *thiasotai* group honouring treasurer and secretary, 4) IG II² 1333, Acropolis, 130-117 BC, fragmentary honorary decree of group of some description for their *epimeletai*, *tamias*, *grammateus* (twice), 5) IG II² , 2358, Chalandri, middle of second century B. C, list of members of association with priest and *archeranistes*, 6) Kerameikos 3, 130/29-117/6 BC, *synodos* moved by individual, 7) SEG 21.633, Agora, dedication of a *koinon eraniston* to a hero, list of 10 names.

¹⁴⁶ 1) IG II² 1324, Piraeus, 190 BC, honorary decree of *orgeones* of Bendis for an official who conducted the pompe and repaired the sanctuary, 2) IG II² 1325, Piraeus, 185/4 BC, decree of *orgeones* association also called *dionysiastai* list of 15 members and beginning of second decree, 3) IG II² 1326, Piraeus, 176/5 BC, decree of *dionysiastai orgeones*, honouring a dead (priest?) and making his son life-long priest of the group, 4) IG II² 1327, Piraeus, decree of *orgeones* of Mother of Gods honouring treasurer and others, 5) IG II² 1328 A-B, Piraeus, A = 183-2/B = 175/4 BC, A = regulation of decoration during feasts, auxiliary religious personnel B= honorary decree for a female *zakoros*, has privileges for lifetime, 6) IG II² 1329, Piraeus, 175/4 BC, decree of an *orgeones* group honouring an individual, 7) IG II² 1335, Piraeus, 101/0 BC, list of 52 *eranistai* set up by *sabaziastai* with *hierous*, *grammateus*, treasurer and *epimeletes*, 8) IG II² 2948, Piraeus, 190 BC, poem with invocation of Dionysus found in connection with *dionysiastai* from IG II² 1325.

only their officials appear in the epigraphic evidence. None of the inscriptions indicates a specific location of the group within the city of Athens. The list of finding places is, as in the third century, headed by the Agora followed by the surrounding areas up to the wider area generally described as “Athens”.

More information is provided by the evidence from Piraeus. As in the fourth and third century, the *orgeones* of Bendis are still represented, although for the last time.¹⁴⁷ The honorary decree of the group is dedicated to an official who had conducted the procession and repaired the sanctuary.

At the same time yet another new form of *orgeones*-groups appears in the epigraphic evidence. Three inscriptions that were found in the same precinct can be linked to the *orgeones* of Dionysus which are referred to at the same time as *dionysiastai* in two inscriptions.¹⁴⁸ The group seems to have been a rich and fairly exclusive association. It consisted of at least fifteen members, mainly organised around one family. The most important person of that family was, it seems, a very rich individual named Dionysios from Marathon.¹⁴⁹ An interesting feature of this group in this context is its nomenclature. On the one hand the group’s name emphasizes the connection to a specific deity. On the other hand the members clearly want to be seen as *orgeones* of some description. Whether this has to do with a particular “snobbishness” as Ferguson suggested, or whether it actually draws a connection between the old Attic *orgeones* and their special relation to heroes, must remain open to debate.¹⁵⁰ In fact, the practice of heroising deceased members is well attested in this group’s inscriptions, exemplified by the benefactor Dionysius. He appeared in the older decree as a member of the *orgeones*, and in an additional inscription as benefactor and poet¹⁵¹, was then heroised after his death¹⁵² – an act of gratitude for his generous deeds listed in the same document.¹⁵³

Concerning the use of the term *orgeones* one can observe a certain trend towards a rather “loose” handling of the term, a development that could already be observed in the case

¹⁴⁷ *IG II²* 1324, Piraeus, 190 BC.

¹⁴⁸ A) *IG II²* 1325, 185/4 BC; B) *IG II²* 1326 176/5 BC.

¹⁴⁹ The list of members appears in *IG II²* 1325, ll. 3-17, obviously led by Dionysius. On the special position of the family and Dionysius within the group see Jaccottet, Anne-Françoise 2003. *Choisir Dionysos. Les associations dionysiaques ou la face cachée du dionysisme*, Vol. I: Text; II: Documents, Zürich, Jaccottet 2003-1, p. 25 and Jaccottet 2003-2, p. 168.

¹⁵⁰ Ferguson 1944, p. 118.

¹⁵¹ *IG II²* 2948, 185-175 BC

¹⁵² B) Ll. 24-26.

¹⁵³ This, however, is not enough honour. The same document makes his son, Agathokles, life-long priest of the group, ll. 33-36.

of the *orgeones* of the Mother of Gods,¹⁵⁴ or in fact even in the naming of the *orgeones* of Bendis. It seems as if the term, once established by the Athenian authorities, was now used simply to describe a religious group, rather than a restricted group of citizens as suggested for the fifth century.¹⁵⁵

However, what makes the Dionysiac set of inscriptions even more interesting is the fact that they were found during an emergency excavation in 1884 in a precinct that looked very much like a luxurious Hellenistic house. The inscriptions were set up in the corner of a stoa at the foot of a stairway leading into the house.¹⁵⁶ According to the inscriptions, the group attended a *naos* where they could set up their stelae,¹⁵⁷ a place for reunions and the common meal,¹⁵⁸ and a place for dishes and sacrificial objects.¹⁵⁹ All of these places seem to have been of a private nature, especially since a sanctuary proper is mentioned as well.¹⁶⁰ Whether or not the house can be identified as a private meeting place of the group cannot be proved or disproved. The fact that the inscriptions were found in such a prominent place at the threshold of the building is, however, tempting and suggests the idea of connecting the house with the group's meeting place.

The evidence provided by the group of *orgeones* of Dionysus marks a further development in the history of voluntary associations. Now it seems to be possible to use the term *orgeones* to describe a specific group centred around one deity and a certain person that happens to become heroised after death. The group's first man and future hero was not only represented in public by his benefactions on display at the public temple of Dionysus, but also by the group's gratitude, expressed in the inscriptions, set up on the street in front of a house, which may (even) have belonged to him.

Three more inscriptions from Piraeus can be related to two orgeonic associations. I will start with a decree belonging to the already introduced *orgeones* of the Mother of Gods in which several officials are honoured.¹⁶¹ A second inscription of the same group is split into

¹⁵⁴ Also interesting is the connection between the *orgeones* of the Mother of Gods and the *dionysiastai*: a certain Simon of Poros was very probably at the same time a member of the *dionysiastai* (A) 1325, l. 10 and of the *orgeones* of the Mother of the Gods, *IG II² 1327*, l. 32 as *epimeletes* and *IG II² 1328*.

¹⁵⁵ Ferguson admits that this group which did not belong to the Piraeic deme therefore „lacked political, religious and social affiliations”, p. 117.

¹⁵⁶ Jaccottet 2003-2, pp.164-166 has tried carefully to interpret the small pieces of the puzzle that came down to us.

¹⁵⁷ A) L. 31; B) L. 50.

¹⁵⁸ A) L. 26; B) Ll. 13-16.

¹⁵⁹ A) Ll. 25-26; B) ll. 13-16.

¹⁶⁰ B) L. 47.

¹⁶¹ *IG II² 1327*, 187/7 BC.

two parts¹⁶² of which the earlier and older contains a regulation about decoration during festivals and the organisation of auxiliary religious personnel. The more recent and later part is simply an honorary decree for a female *zakoros*, to whom privileges are granted for life.

The second orgeonic group from Piraeus cannot be linked to any of the known associations or a deity. This group left an honorary decree in which an individual is honoured.¹⁶³ The inscription provides no information, beyond allowing us to include another piece of evidence for an orgeonic group in Piraeus.

Finally, at the end of the century we can get hold of a list of fifty-two *eranistai* that was set up by *sabaziastai* and certain officials among which one finds a *hiereus*, a *grammateus*, a treasurer and an *epimeletes*.¹⁶⁴ The *sabaziastai* gathered around the god Sabazios, a deity believed to originate from a Phrygian or Phoenician god. Sabazios was often equated with Dionysus, probably due to the orgiastic character attributed to his cult. Groups of *sabaziastai* were not just found in Greece, but, were also popular at a later date in the Roman Empire.

The second century marks a period of change in both the distribution of evidence and the kind of evidence. Not only does Piraeus suddenly offer more evidence on the matter, but the most genuinely Athenian form of religious association, the *orgeones* seem to have been moved to Piraeus and transformed accordingly.

2.5 The first century BC

Very little evidence about religious associations in Athens has come down to us from the first century BC, only four inscriptions.¹⁶⁵ One of the inscriptions mentions *orgeones*, the other ones seem to belong to groups formed as a collection of individuals, and as such had endings in *-stai* as well as one *synodos*. The inscription referring to the group of *Heroistai* which was found on the Acropolis contains a regulation concerning the participation in sacrifices and the appropriate payments for them.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² IG II² 1328 A-B, A = 183-2/B = 175/4 BC.

¹⁶³ IG II² 1329, 175/4 BC.

¹⁶⁴ IG II² 1335, 101/0 BC.

¹⁶⁵ 1) Ag. 16, 245, Agora, c. 100 BC unclear fragmentary decree of *orgeones*, 2) IG II² 1339, Acropolis, 57/6 BC regulation of *heroistai* for those wanting to participate in the sacrifice, 3) IG II² 1343, Athens, 37/6 BC, *soteriastai* honour individual for benefactions to the group 4) IG II² 4707, Athens, first century BC, dedication to Zeus Naios and *synodos* by individual.

¹⁶⁶ IG II² 1339.

The two inscriptions that were found in the Piraeus were both inscribed by *orgeones* associations.¹⁶⁷ One of the inscriptions contains information about the *orgeones* of the Syrian Aphrodite, a Syrian mother-deity normally known as Atargatis and in this specific case syncretised with Aphrodite.¹⁶⁸ The group was led by a priestess. The priestess, whose father was from Corinth¹⁶⁹, was honoured for the fulfilment of her duties. It strikes one as quite unexpected to find the Syrian Aphrodite first discovered so late in a Greek harbour city and then only represented by one inscription.¹⁷⁰ This, however, might be partly due to the nature of the evidence, since for instance there is no proof of an Isis-cult in Piraeus between its official acceptance in the fourth century and before the second century AD.¹⁷¹ However, if one follows the development of the use of the term *orgeones* once more, one can find it again in a totally new and non-Athenian surrounding.

In the second decree of an unknown group of *orgeones* yet another priestess is honoured for her performance.

2.6 Early Roman Athens

One single inscription from first century AD Athens has come down to us, – a short and fragmentary dedicatory inscription by a group of *therapeutai*.¹⁷²

During the second century AD, it seems that group activity in Athens and Attica experienced a revival after the low point in the first century AD, which went hand in hand with the economic and political decline of the cities.¹⁷³ Five inscriptions can be counted for the city and the immediate surroundings,¹⁷⁴ although none for Piraeus. Whereas two

¹⁶⁷ *IG II² 1337*, 97/6 BC, Piraeus, decree of *orgeones* association of the Syrian Aphrodite honouring a female individual 2) *IG II² 1334*, Piraeus, 71/70 BC, decree of *orgeones* association honouring a priestess.

¹⁶⁸ Hörig, Monika 1984. *Dea Syria-Atargatis*, in: *ANRW II*, 17.3, Berlin/New York, cc. 1536-1581:1567.

¹⁶⁹ *IG II² 1337*, ll. 5-6.

¹⁷⁰ This seems especially unusual if one compares it with the situation in Delos, where the Syrian goddess and her worshippers are well-represented from the second century onwards.

¹⁷¹ *IG II² 337*, Piraeus, 333/2 BC (ll. 42-43) and *IG II² 4692*, second century AD.

¹⁷² *SEG 21.776*, Athens, first century AD. It is however not entirely clear that the *therapeutai* of Asklepios were a voluntary association of worshippers comparable to others. Rather it seems that the term *therapeutai* of Asklepios describes patients who undergo a temporary stay in sanctuaries for the purpose of medical treatment. The Athenian inscription does not reveal anything more than the name of the group and the beginning of two names of individuals and cannot contribute to a solution.

¹⁷³ The Roman interest in Greek religion and the restoration of “Classical” sanctuaries, such as Eleusis, Delphi and Olympia increased from the first century BC and reached a peak under Augustus. His policy, however, was rather targeted at particular sanctuaries of panhellenic significance and the phenomenon has been described most recently by Antony Spawforth as a “selective cultic renaissance” in which voluntary associations played no part, Spawforth, Antony J. S. 2012. *Greece and the Augustan Cultural Revolution*, Cambridge, p. 141.

¹⁷⁴ *SEG 32.232* can be dated only to the imperial period. Since the *Paianistai* however, appear in the second century AD and later at other places, positioned the inscription among the ones from the second century AD.

inscriptions refer to *paianistai* – a list of members and a boundary stone for a sanctuary –¹⁷⁵ two different inscriptions found slightly outside the city centre contain regulations on internal matters of a group of *herakliastai* and a group of *eranistai*.¹⁷⁶ Yet another inscription of the second century AD was found in the very heart of Athens on the west slope of the Acropolis which contains a regulation of the internal affairs of a group called *iobakchoi*.¹⁷⁷ I would like to have a closer look at the finding place of the inscription of the *iobakchoi*, which was located within the group's private sanctuary. The sanctuary was excavated at the end of the nineteenth century. It is located on the main road exactly between the Agora and theatre of Dionysus and surrounded by residential buildings.¹⁷⁸ The rectangular main room of the building was split into two aisles which were orientated towards an apse. The apse contained an altar and the famous inscription.¹⁷⁹ In this impressively detailed inscription the *iobakchoi* claim to be the first of all *Baccheia* (l. 26) which probably points to a situation of competition. Indeed, the newly elected priest of the group seems to have been no less than Herodes Atticus himself,¹⁸⁰ probably the most famous euergete of Imperial Athens.

The third-century-*orgeones* of Aminos, Asklepios and Dexion BC and the second-century-AD-*iobakchoi* did not have much more in common than being in the same neighbourhood. I will not compare the two groups in detail, since their active lives were about sixteen generations apart. But the meticulously stipulated rules, taking all possibilities that might or might not happen, in an almost juridical way, into account,¹⁸¹ stands in stark contrast to the regulations set up by the *orgeones* in the third century and might be a good example of the differences between and aims of voluntary associations and the changes in both the social and the political systems in Athens from the Hellenistic period to high Imperial times. The shift of priorities in the content of the groups' meetings and the language used in the decrees are significant.

Two inscriptions from Piraeus can be dated back to the first decades of the third century AD. The first inscription names yet another *orgeones* association of a Syrian female deity, this

¹⁷⁵ IG II² 2481, Athens, second century AD, list of *paianistai*, SEG 32.232, *hiera odos*, Imperial, boundary stone of temple of *paianistai*.

¹⁷⁶ SEG 31.22, Liopesi, AD 121/122; *Nomos* of *eranistai*: IG II² 1369, Liopesi, second half second century AD.

¹⁷⁷ IG II² 1368, Athens, AD 178, regulation of *iobakchoi* on various issues, admission, discipline, offices, duties.

¹⁷⁸ For the location see image C, appendix.

¹⁷⁹ See image E, appendix. For further details on the building see chapter five. In most decrees of voluntary associations, "beside the altar" is described as the correct place to set up the rules.

¹⁸⁰ On the identification of Herodes Atticus see Ebel, Eva 2004. *Die Attraktivität frühchristlicher Gemeinden am Beispiel der Gemeinde von Korinth*, Tübingen, p. 104.

¹⁸¹ The rules may owe their legalistic character to the influence of Roman religious habits at this point of time.

time of the goddess Belela.¹⁸² In addition to mentioning the goddess and some members, a list of priestesses is included. The second inscription which dates from only a few years later was set up by a group of *paianistai* of *Mounichiou Asklepiou*.¹⁸³

2. 7 Conclusion

The city of Athens from its early days onwards sheltered voluntary associations of various kinds. And whereas it seems as though the city hosted the groups at the beginning, the groups became over time a mirror image of the city itself in the form of small communities offering places to a variety of people. In fact, the groups became part of the public life; whether as part of public festivals in the form of processions as the *orgeones* of Bendis, or as part of the architectural composition, with meeting places within the city or, probably and most often via inscriptions at public places, between the Agora and the Areopagus and in public sanctuaries. At the same time each association kept its unique character, its own feasts while some even established their own precincts. All features necessary for a successful alternative to the already existing range of groups that was there before, provided by the *polis* religion, was now offered on a smaller, perhaps more intimate and unusual scale.¹⁸⁴ It is precisely this ambiguity that makes these associations so interesting and yet at the same time so difficult to study.

From the fourth century onwards one can observe not only an increase in the epigraphic evidence, but also it seems as though voluntary associations of various kinds were being built around cults that were newly introduced between about fifty to one hundred years earlier.¹⁸⁵ It seems as if the groups were at first formed of and for Athenian citizens: *orgeones*, it seems, were indeed a home grown institution, but one that proved adaptable and useful when groups of foreigners worshipped together in Athens, and in a third phase those groups – originally created by metics but using Athenian forms – drew in Athenians. In addition they represented a general increase in religious choice in Athens and Piraeus over time, an increase which is in the first instance expressed through the appearance of voluntary associations. These new choices were made possible through the adoption and transformation of older forms that had been part of Athenian religion for a long time, and in particular by using most successfully the concept and/or term of the *orgeones*-groups. The *orgeones*,

¹⁸² *IG II²* 2361, Piraeus, AD 200-211.

¹⁸³ *IG II²* 2963, Piraeus, AD 212/13.

¹⁸⁴ Similarly Parker, Robert 2011. *On Greek Religion*, Ithaca, New York, p. 59.

¹⁸⁵ See the examples of Mother of Gods and Bendis, Sabazios.

originally formed around Attic hero-cults that were often of a highly local character, apparently offered the most successful model for building voluntary associations in Athens and Piraeus. For many of the other groups, however, it is fairly difficult to draw a picture with any degree of certainty, since most of them appear in inscriptions only once and are impossible to follow over time. With regards to the Roman city of Athens, the *iobakchoi* from the south-slope of the Acropolis are a representative example. Their internal organisation seems to have been completely institutionalised. Although the inscription includes detailed clauses concerning administrative procedures such as financial contributions, behaviour during meetings and membership, it does not really offer us much information about the cultic rituals held by the group. In this instance, they differed significantly from the earlier Athenian groups of *orgeones*, which, according to their inscriptions, were mainly concerned with the annual sacrifice. On the other hand they did not use their own precinct as much as the *iobakchoi*, which met regularly and at least once a month. It seems as if a shift in the social dimension of voluntary associations happened over time. Whereas the early groups offered an exclusive gathering for a specific annual festival, the later ones offered a fair mixture of socialising and religious acts.

The archaeological evidence for Athens and Piraeus is, in fact, rather modest: only a few buildings could be attested to voluntary associations. A brief comparison with cities such as Delos, which offer a richer archaeological situation in terms of preservation and post-antique use, shows that voluntary associations that were attested in the epigraphic evidence were most likely to have owned at least one meeting-place. Those meeting places were often attached to sanctuaries or established in former private houses. A similar situation might have occurred in Athens or at least in Piraeus, which, as a younger foundation, might have offered more space and flexibility in its centre. However, although not many buildings have been definitely connected with these groups, many inscriptions mention various sorts of buildings. Those buildings that could actually be located were found to be in prominent positions both in Athens and in Piraeus, recognisable in their own right as group buildings and integrated into the cities. This was in fact already a characteristic of the earlier *orgeones*. These *orgeones* were not restricted to the margins of the city, but on the contrary were and remained very active in the centre of the city throughout the fourth and third centuries BC. The evidence from Piraeus showed that this part of the city was effected by the same development, only a little later. If, as I suggested earlier, one sees Piraeus as a newly established area that was booming in the fourth century, and where the neat boundaries of citizen society were transgressed and things were tolerated that would not be tolerated

elsewhere, as for example in the centre of Athens, this may explain two phenomena. We can understand firstly why a new development of religious groups such as the *orgeones* of the Mother of the Gods and the *dionysiastai* was possible. And secondly why these groups were so popular among people from various places in the Mediterranean. Yet each association was unique and, it seems, differed individually from the old concept of the Athenian *orgeones*.

3. Delos, a case study

The exceptional archaeological and epigraphic material from Delos makes it an ideal case study for the emergence of voluntary associations, and it also offers an instructive contrast to the situation in Athens. Delos was only partly independent. Various political forces, particularly the Athenians, tried to gain control over the island and more specifically the panhellenic Apollo sanctuary at various points in history.¹⁸⁶ In the years 314-166 BC, Delos became part of a league of islanders and through their first leading figure, Ptolemy I, Egyptian influence was guaranteed. The island gained more and more importance as a trade centre for wood and cereals which led to the growth of sanctuaries especially from the second century BC onwards.¹⁸⁷ In this period the main progress of Delos towards urban development took place. Following the third Macedonian War, Delos was handed over to Athenian magistrates by the Roman Senate. The native inhabitants were expelled in 166 BC for supporting the Antigonids.¹⁸⁸ One result of its resettlement was that Delos became a centre for the slave trade in the eastern Mediterranean. Otherwise, the period of the Athenian “guardianship” - which covered the period between 166-88 BC - was characterised by a remarkable increase in population, leading to the enlargement of the residential quarters and the harbour as well as a stimulus to the building of sanctuaries. Along with the new traders, wealth was brought into the city. This new wealth became visible in the form of newly erected, prestigious buildings in the city centre often funded by competing Italian and near Eastern private bankers who had quickly established their new businesses.¹⁸⁹ Furthermore, a growth in the number of professional associations can be identified, as now active on Delos. They erected splendid meeting places in the heart of the city and appear in numerous inscriptions. In 88 BC Delos was devastated and sacked by the troops of Mithridates. In 84

¹⁸⁶ Athenian claims concerning control of the sanctuary were realised, according to Thucydides, through the first “purification” of the island, followed by a second one in 426 BC, Thuc. III, 104.

¹⁸⁷ On the discussion of the harbour’s origin and its extension in the Hellenistic period see Duchêne, Hervé/Fraisse, Philippe. *Le Paysage portuaire de la Délos antique. Recherches sur les installations maritimes, commerciales et urbaines du littoral délien* (Exploration Archéologique de Délos XXXIX) Paris 2001, pp. 53-55.

¹⁸⁸ Rauh, Nicholas 1993. *The Sacred Bonds of Commerce. Religion, economy and Trade society at Hellenistic Roman Delos, 166-87 BC*, Amsterdam, pp.1-3.

¹⁸⁹ See for example Rauh 1993. The new wealth becomes manifest especially in the new buildings of the ‘Agora des Italiens’, see Trümper, Monika 2008. *Die 'Agora des Italiens' in Delos: Baugeschichte, Architektur, Ausstattung und Funktion einer späthellenistischen Porticus-Anlage*, Leidorf; Trümper, Monika 2002. Das Sanktuarium des “Établissement des Poseidoniastes de Bérytos” in Delos. Zur Baugeschichte eines griechischen Vereinsheiligtums, in: *BCH* 126, pp. 265-330; Trümper, Monika 2006. Negotiating Religious and Ethnic Identity: The Case of Clubhouses in late Hellenistic Delos in: Inge Nielsen (ed.) *Zwischen Kult und Gesellschaft: Kosmopolitische Zentren des antiken Mittelmeerraumes als Aktionsraum von Kultvereinen und Religionsgemeinschaften* (Hephaistos Themenband 24) Augsburg, pp. 113-140; *GD* 2005, p. 43. See also as a particular case the discussion of Philostratos of Ascalon in chapter five.

BC the victorious Sulla handed the island over to the Athenians once again, but it was robbed and plundered soon afterwards in 69 BC by pirates allied with Mithridates.¹⁹⁰ Delos never recovered from these incidents.¹⁹¹

Unlike Athens, hardly anything is known about the Delian constitution or any of its other political institutions. It is clear, however, that the Delian settlement existed as an autonomous society but accepted a foreign authority in charge of the main sanctuary for a long time before and after their independence. Inscriptions tell us about an average population of 1200 male citizens in the period between 314-167 BC that were subdivided after the Athenian model into *trittyes* and *phratries* and some thousand free-born people.¹⁹² It also had an *ekklesia* and a *boule*,¹⁹³ very probably shaped after the Athenian model.

Most information about both the religious and political administration is contained in the inventory lists from sanctuaries. These offer an endless source of bureaucratic evidence that was introduced by the Athenians in the early fourth century and continued with only slight modifications into the period of independence.¹⁹⁴ It is remarkable that the lists were careful and accurate when Delos was under Athenian control whereas those lists that date back to the years of independence tend to be slightly more anarchic in character, changing every year in “format and will”.¹⁹⁵

3. 1 Voluntary associations worshipping the Egyptian gods

The voluntary associations that gathered to worship Serapis, Isis and Anubis are well attested on Delos. Associations are mentioned in various inscriptions that can be linked with all three sanctuaries. These three sanctuaries, all referred to as Serapeia, were erected close to each other in the same residential area. What was probably the oldest one, Serapeion A,¹⁹⁶ was built immediately next to the reservoir of the river Inopos, an elaborate location which guaranteed a good supply of water. It was accessible from the street up a stairway of fourteen

¹⁹⁰ *GD* 2005, pp. 42-43.

¹⁹¹ Pausanias describes Delos in the time of the early Roman Empire: “Delos, once the common market of Greece, has no Delian inhabitant but only the men sent by the Athenians to guard the sanctuary” Paus. 8.33.2.

¹⁹² *GD* 2005, p. 38.

¹⁹³ *Ekklesia* and *boule* were identified as *GD* 47 and *GD* 21.

¹⁹⁴ Hamilton, Richard 2000. *Treasure Map – A guide to the Delian inventories*, Ann Arbor, p. vii.

¹⁹⁵ Hamilton 2000, p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ See image F, appendix for a plan of the sanctuary. The walled complex of 19, 5 x 15, 5 m consists of three rooms and a small podium-temple (building A in the image).

steps. One room that was part of the sanctuary, namely room E, indicates that this building was used as an assembly place for voluntary associations.¹⁹⁷

More information about the actual sanctuary, its purpose and use are provided by an inscribed column, dating back to the end of the third/beginning of the second centuries BC. The inscription gives an account of the sanctuary's foundation in two separate parts. These two parts differed in both their style and their contents.¹⁹⁸ According to the inscribed text the sanctuary was individually founded by an Egyptian named Apollonios who originally came from Memphis at the beginning of the third century BC. Apollonios was an Egyptian priest who came to Delos of his own accord and brought a statuette of Serapis with him. He then installed a small chapel in his own house.¹⁹⁹ At a later date the third priest of the dynasty,²⁰⁰ the grand-grandson of Apollonios, founded the actual Serapeion after the god appeared to him in a dream and instructed him to do so. He also erected a dining hall in the Egyptian tradition, as requested by the deity.²⁰¹ The remains of the Serapeion are still visible today and room E accords well with the dining hall that Apollonios III had supposedly built.

The second Serapeion in which one can find traces of voluntary associations is the so-called Serapeion B which was erected at the end of the third century. It was built on a terrace of mountain slope on rocky and steep ground.²⁰² Inscriptions suggest that the sanctuary was, at least initially, run by one person. The sanctuary could be reached by a steep stairway of twenty-six steps along a narrow corridor that led up from a shopping-street that was on a much lower level. The building is less well-preserved than Serapeion A and the northern side fell apart over time. In front of the main sanctuary a row of benches was found,²⁰³ that separated one part of the sanctuary's paved courtyard, around which the rooms were arranged. Apart from several possible utility rooms, the sanctuary hosted a small podium-temple with three chapel-like sub-divisions.²⁰⁴ The temple probably accommodated the

¹⁹⁷ Although no inscriptions were found in the room itself, the architecture, the inscribed furniture as well as other inscriptions that were found nearby strongly suggest such an interpretation, see image G, appendix. The room itself, its findings and the sanctuary are discussed more thoroughly in chapter five.

¹⁹⁸ The fact that the column does not show any decorative elements, which is rather unusual for Greece after the Classical period, could underline its informative and serious character as well as indicating its importance and the longer tradition of the sanctuary within the competition of three Serapeia.

¹⁹⁹ Hamilton suggests that the sanctuary became public in later times according to the records of the inventory lists of the Serapeion, Hamilton 2000, p. 196. However, Hamilton does mention the existence of the sanctuaries, but does not distinguish between them within his listings and interpretations which make his work less useful than it might be.

²⁰⁰ The Egyptian priesthood was a hereditary office.

²⁰¹ Ll. 63-65.

²⁰² According to the inventory lists this sanctuary was in use from 202-88 BC. For the architecture see image H, appendix.

²⁰³ H in image H, appendix.

²⁰⁴ For the temple see A, for the three chapels see G in image H appendix.

worship of the three Egyptian deities Isis, Serapis and Anubis, hence the trichotomy. On a slightly higher level another room was built, namely room B. According to the excavator, it was added in later times.²⁰⁵ It has been suggested that room B might have served as an assembly-room for one or more associations since it can be connected to various inscriptions which name several groups, as we shall see further on.

The third and last of the Delian Serapeia, Serapeion C has the most public character.²⁰⁶ It outclasses the two other Serapeia in size and complexity and it cannot be directly connected to any particular voluntary association.²⁰⁷ Nevertheless, one item among the many objects that were found in this rather large complex stands out, namely an interesting image of a banqueting scene. The scene is carved as a relief and shows a reclining male and sitting female person.²⁰⁸ At the same time the relief carries a votive inscription to Isis. The two figures have been identified as Isis and Serapis participating in the common meal with the community of worshippers.²⁰⁹ The Egyptian habit of dining with the god(s) and erecting an additional building in order to do so was explicitly described in the long narration of the establishment of Serapeion A.²¹⁰ Such a room, as seen for instance in Serapeion A and perhaps even in Serapeion B, might have been located in one of the rooms that were part of the large complex. However, the building is badly preserved and none of the rooms could be clearly identified as a banqueting hall.²¹¹

The number of sanctuaries dedicated to the Egyptian deities on Delos suggests that their worship was very important to a number of people. During the “Athenian period”, namely the time after 166 BC, Serapeion C provided the most extensive treasury on the island

²⁰⁵ For the room see B, image H, appendix. Roussel, Pierre 1915/16. *Les cultes égyptiens à Délos du IIIe au Ier siècle av. J.-C.*, p. 36.

²⁰⁶ *GD* 100, image I, appendix. Roussel suggests that this sanctuary was founded privately as a smaller complex in the north and was enlarged and made public over time. Roussel 1916/15, p. 69.

²⁰⁷ The sanctuary can be located directly beside the sanctuary of the Syrian gods to the south on a terrace surmounting the upper Inopos-reservoir. It is divided in two parts. The southern part consists of a trapezoid plain of about ninety metres in length that includes an alley (D, image I, appendix) leading to a temple (C, image I, appendix) and a northern part consisting of a courtyard (F, image I, appendix) filled with altars and votive-objects and surrounded by buildings of which one is a podium-temple (G, image I, appendix). In many cases it must remain unclear which of the buildings of the complex can be identified as one of the edifices mentioned in the inscriptions that have come down to us. Some parts, however, have been identified and related to inscriptions. A metroon, for example, that was often mentioned in inscriptions (see Bruneau, Philippe 1970. *Recherches sur les cultes de Délos à l'époque hellénistique et à l'époque impériale*, Paris, pp. 431-435) has been identified in the northern part of the complex. And indeed, the Doric temple of Isis (mentioned in *ID* 2041) has been located in this part of the sanctuary (I, see image I, appendix). It still contained the cult-statue of the goddess.

²⁰⁸ Bruneau 1970 p. 465.

²⁰⁹ Vatin, Claude 1968. La stèle funéraire de Byzance N° 41, in: *BCH* 92, pp. 220-225:225.

²¹⁰ *IG* XI 4 1299, ll. 63-65.

²¹¹ General questions concerning the banqueting habit and the banqueting in this specific sanctuary will be analysed in Chapter five.

only surpassed by the treasury of the sanctuary of Apollo.²¹² We may assume that the cultic activity increased with the blossoming economic situation of the island and a certain Athenian interest in the administration of temples and sanctuaries. The inventory lists clearly show that the Athenian authorities tried to get involved in the cultic events when they acquired the island. Yet it is possible to discern a rather lively environment behind the establishment of the voluntary associations, especially when considering the epigraphic and archaeological evidence from Serapeion A and B. This environment was certainly dependent on the effective power vacuum of much of the period, leading to a freer opportunity for religious innovation than was offered by other cities whose authorities were more directly involved in and concerned with the organisation of an imposed *polis* religion. The inscriptions display the eminent importance of commensality and social gatherings among the worshippers of the Egyptian deities.²¹³ Traditionally the Egyptian gods themselves invited the worshippers to the *kline*, the common meal that was financed by the initiator.²¹⁴ Many such invitations have been found in Egypt²¹⁵ but probably owing to the nature of the material, mostly papyrus, wood- or wax-tablets, no such evidence has come down to us from Greece. Nevertheless, the epigraphic evidence from Serapeion B offers valuable clues as to who the actual groups were and how many of them were meeting in the environment of the Serapeia. At least six different voluntary associations can be identified in the inscriptions. One can find groups called *therapeutai*,²¹⁶ *melanephoroi*,²¹⁷ *serapiastai*,²¹⁸ *dekadistai kai dekatistriai*,²¹⁹

²¹² Unfortunately the author denies us the information about which of the three sanctuaries he takes into account but we may assume that he speaks about Serapeion C, which he also names as the place for the storage of the non-precious dedicatory objects. The precious ones (that were according to the inventory lists extraordinarily precious) were stored in the Artemision, probably for security-reasons, and are listed separately from the Serapeion's. The doors of the Isis-temple were stored in the Thesmophorion. Hamilton 2000, pp. 196-197.

²¹³ This importance can be underlined by the fact that the words in the inscription are mainly used in the context of the common meal amongst Egyptian worshippers to describe the meal itself and the particular ranges of honour within the seating-hierarchy. Poland 1909, p. 152 and P. 261 „[...] aber auch die Kollegien von Ägyptern im Auslande (legten) Wert auf üppige Festmahle“.

²¹⁴ Kleibl, Kathrin 2006. Kultgemeinschaften in Heiligtümern Gräco-Ägyptischer Götter in der Hellenistischen und Römischen Zeit, in: Inge Nielsen (ed.) *Zwischen Kult und Gesellschaft: Kosmopolitische Zentren des antiken Mittelmeerraumes als Aktionsraum von Kultvereinen und Religionsgemeinschaften* (Hephaistos Themenband 24) Augsburg, pp. 79-92:83.

²¹⁵ On the *kline* of Sarapis and the evidence provided by the Oxyrhynchus-papyri see chapter 5. On this specific case see Engelmann, Helmut 1975. *The Delian Aretalogy of Sarapis* (EPRO 44) Leiden, pp 43-44.

²¹⁶ If not indicated otherwise all inscriptions in this footnote date BC and are published in *RICIS*: 202/0121 (end of third), 202/0135 (first half second century), 202/0161 (before 240/39), 202/0162 (before 166), [202/0206-07 lists of *therapeutai*? (95/94)], 202/0210 (95/94 ?), 202/0269 (119/18 or little later), 202/0281 (shortly after 116/15), 202/0282 (115/4), 202/0303 (112/1), 202/0322 (105/4), 202/0351 (94/93), 202/0352 (93/2), 202/0384 (after 166), 202/0421 (shortly after 166), 202/0422 (between 166-157), 202/0423 (157/6), 202/0424 (156/5), 202/0428 (145/4).

²¹⁷ *RICIS* 202/0135 (first half second century BC), 202/0257 (124/3 BC), 202/0260 (123/2 BC), 202/0269 (119/18 BC or little later), 202/0281 (shortly after 116/15 BC), 202/0282 (115/4 BC), 202/0322 (105/4 B C), 202/0351 (94/93 BC), 202/0352 (93/2 BC).

*eranistai*²²⁰ and a *koinon* of *enatistai*.²²¹ Although the actual formation of the groups and the ethnic origin of the members are the subject of the next chapter, the groups will be introduced briefly here.²²² The focus of each individual group and their activities as well as their character and appearance, however, will be examined briefly.

We know only a little about the formation of the *therapeutai*. The term *therapeutai* appears in the context of worshippers of various deities and mainly in connection with Asklepios. Whether or not the term *therapeutai/tes* generally described one particular and organised voluntary association or whether it describes the worshippers of the deity in question rather more generally is still debated. I would argue that no common agreement existed about the meaning of the term and that it could be used on different occasions with slightly different senses. In the case of the *therapeutai* of the Egyptian deities there are two reasons to believe they were an organised voluntary association: firstly they appear as specifically attached to the private Serapeion A,²²³ and secondly they appear on the same inscription with the same status as other voluntary associations and more precisely as *koinon* of *therapeutai*,²²⁴ a term commonly used to qualify individuals rather generally as members,²²⁵ and a practice known from other voluntary associations of Serapis.²²⁶

The term *melanephoroi*, the black-dressed, probably described those who played a specific role during ritual performances and sacrifices. It cannot be connected with Egyptian roots and this specification seems to be a Greek development.²²⁷ But even in Greece only one other example of a group with the same name can be found.²²⁸ It seems as if the *melanephoroi* were especially popular on Delos.²²⁹

²¹⁸ *RICIS* 202/0135; *IG XI* 4 1226, (first half second century BC), 202/0421 (shortly after 166 BC), 202/0422 (between 166-157 BC), 202/0424 (156/5 BC).

²¹⁹ *RICIS* 202/0139; *IG XI* 4 1227 (before 166 BC) The *dekadistai* met, according to their name, every ten days, always on the first day of the decade, see comment in *RICIS*-I, p. 210.

²²⁰ *RICIS* 202/0134; *IG XI* 4 1223 (196 BC).

²²¹ *RICIS* 202/0140; *IG XI* 4 1228 (before 166 BC) and *RICIS* 202/0141; *IG XI* 1229 (before 166 BC).

²²² For a thorough analysis of the interaction between the groups see Steinhauer, Julietta 2011. Die Kultgemeinschaften der ägyptischen Gottheiten in Griechenland, in: Markus Öhler (ed.) *Aposteldekret und antikes Vereinswesen*, Tübingen, pp. 185-205:190-193.

²²³ *RICIS* 202/0116, end of third beginning of second century BC.

²²⁴ *RICIS* 202/0135, first half of second century BC.

²²⁵ *RICIS* 202/0303, 112/1 BC.

²²⁶ Apart from the Delian *therapeutai* other groups of *therapeutai/tes* of Sarapis are known from Maroneia *RICIS* 114/0201, 2. century BC and *RICIS* 114/0203, 1. century BC, from Demetrias *RICIS* 112/0702, second century BC, from Kyzikos *RICIS* 301/0401, first century BC?, from Pergamum dedication of individual with *therapeutai* *RICIS* 301/1203, 1.-2, centuries AD, from Magnesia ad Sipylum, list of *therapeutai*, *RICIS* 303/0301, 1.-2. centuries BC.

²²⁷ Steinhauer 2011, pp. 3-4, 8, 16.

²²⁸ Euboeia, *RICIS* 104/0103. They were also known in imperial Rome: *RICIS* 501/0184 and *RICIS* 501/0184.

²²⁹ *Melanephoroi* appear as groups or as single persons in 21 inscriptions on Delos.

The term *serapiastai* was a rather common term to describe a voluntary association around the god Sarapis and it was mainly used in the Aegean world.²³⁰

The *dekatistai* and *enatistai* were groups whose nomenclature contained the most important information about them, namely the date of their regular meetings on the tenth and the ninth day of the month respectively. Both groups were presided over by an individual. A *synagogos* was in charge of the *dekatistai* and *dekatistriai*, whereas the *enatistai* were organised by an *archethiasites*, which may be best translated as president of the *thiasos*. The idea of a group formed around monthly meetings on a specific day is known from voluntary associations in Egypt and might be inspired by them.²³¹ Two more groups of *dekatistai*, one of which is a combined group of *enatistai* and *dekatistai*, are known from Prusa and Olympum in Bithynia and from Cos.²³² Whether or not those groups were identical to the one on Delos remains mere speculation since we do not know anything about their religious or social activities.²³³ Groups of *eranistai* whose members probably paid a certain amount of money into a fund (*eranos*) out of which further activities were paid and which assembled around one specific deity are well-known from other places in Greece and Asia Minor and especially from Athens.

The variety of voluntary associations associated with the Egyptian deities on Delos is extraordinary. The epigraphic evidence suggests a fair amount of interaction between the groups concerning their members and common dedications. Multiple membership in the associations was common and votives were often erected together by several groups. A logical conclusion would be to suggest that the groups, who met, as indicated by the *enatistai* and *dekatistai* at least partly on different days, were sharing one or more meeting places.

3.2 Voluntary associations worshipping at the “sanctuary of the Syrian gods”

The architecture of the so-called sanctuary of the Syrian deities that was dedicated to Atargatis and Hadad will be introduced and analysed in chapter five. Here I will only give a brief summary of the situation and have a closer look at the worshipping community that appears in the inscriptions. The sanctuary was founded on the initiative of an individual in the

²³⁰ A detailed analysis of the groups of *serapiastai* and their spread in the Aegean and Asia Minor is provided in chapter 4.

²³¹ For a more detailed analysis see Bricault's comment in *RICIS* p. 210

²³² A joined group of *enatistai* and *dekatistai* presided over by an individual is known from Cos *RICIS* 204/1002, first century BC, *dekatistai* on their own from Prusa ad Olympum *RICIS* 308/0401, mid-second century AD.

²³³ Bricault suggests that group were identical see *RICIS* p. 407 and p. 471.

first half of the second century.²³⁴ The most unusual features of the sanctuary are its cultic theatre and a series of nine dining rooms, *exedras*, a tradition known from other Semitic cults.²³⁵ The dining rooms served certain groups of worshippers, namely a *koinon ton thiasiton syrion*²³⁶ and a group of *therapeutai* of the Syrian deities who appear in many inscriptions. Similar to the case of the *therapeutai* of the Egyptian deities, the nature and meaning of the term *therapeutai* has been much discussed.²³⁷ As in the case of the Egyptian deities I would argue that the *therapeutai* were particular groups of worshippers for several reasons. In the first instance they appear as *koinon* of *therapeutai* which points to their identity as a group and secondly they were presided over or united by a specific person.²³⁸

The *thiasotai* were the earlier groups around the Syrian deities since they appear in the inscriptions only before the period of Athenian control. The *therapeutai* can be seen as a very successful phenomenon of the time after 166 BC.

3.3 The sanctuaries of the “oriental deities” on Mount Kynthos and the sanctuary of Zeus Kynthion and Athena Kynthian – meeting places for voluntary associations?

A large group of sanctuaries of the so-called oriental type can be located on Mount Kynthos, the “peak” of Delos. They mainly consisted of open courtyards oriented eastwards and were equipped with benches and *hestiateria*, hearths. Only some of the deities worshipped in these sanctuaries can be identified through inscriptions. The majority of the sanctuaries, more precisely thirteen of them, are simply designated as sanctuaries B to N.²³⁹ I am not going to investigate each sanctuary. Instead I would like to take a closer look at the sanctuary of the gods of Ascalon that was erected in the first century BC and which may be taken as representative of the whole group. This small sanctuary on the slope of Mount Kynthos, mainly formed as a court which opened up to the east,²⁴⁰ was erected by Philostratos from

²³⁴ Between 128/7 and 112/1 BC, GD 2005, p.274.

²³⁵ For the whole sanctuary see images J and K, for the *exedras* see image L, appendix.

²³⁶ *RICIS* 202/0194, Will, Ernest/Schmid, Martin. *Le sanctuaire de la déesse Syrienne* (Exploration Archéologique de Délos XXXV) Paris 1985, p. 139 and *ID* 2225.

²³⁷ For a summary of the arguments and a thorough discussion of the issue see, Marie Françoise 1977. *Recherches sur les conditions de pénétration et de diffusion des religions orientales à Délos*, Paris, pp. 192-195.

²³⁸ See e. g. *ID* 1417, *IG* XI 4 1224, 1225, 1290 (συμβαλόμενοι τῶν θεραπευτῶν).

²³⁹ The excavation report was published by Plassart, André 1928. *Les sanctuaires et les cultes du mont Cynthe* (Exploration archéologique de Délos XI) Paris. For the sanctuaries see map M, appendix.

²⁴⁰ See image N, appendix. The sanctuary measured 8.00 x 4.60 m in total.

Ascalon, a well-known banker of Phoenician origin.²⁴¹ It is difficult to be sure whether this sanctuary actually served a particular private group that was technically open to everyone or whether it was rather a privately erected monument that served, if at all, a handful of people from the same city in order that they could worship their specific gods, or perhaps even one particular family.²⁴² It has been argued most recently that this particular sanctuary and the other sanctuaries of ‘Oriental style’ on Mount Kynthos served voluntary associations as meeting places.²⁴³ And indeed, two features, namely the *triclinium*-style shape of the sanctuaries that were equipped with benches and the *hestiateria*, are clearly reminiscent of other meeting places of voluntary associations.

Owing to the mostly anonymous character of the sanctuaries there is not much more to be said about them.²⁴⁴ In those cases where one can identify the deity that was worshipped in a given sanctuary they seem to be of Semitic or Phrygo-Mysian origin, and some of these deities are only attested here. Various dedications by people mainly of Near Eastern backgrounds have been found in the context of these sanctuaries, even though none of them can be clearly allocated to one specific building.²⁴⁵ One of those dedications to the “first gods”, the Θεοὶ Πρῶτοι mentions tables and a kitchen to prepare and consume the sacrificed meat in the oriental manner, with a common banquet for all worshippers, all hinting at assembly rooms for voluntary associations.²⁴⁶ Yet this observation cannot be supported by any epigraphic evidence. Rather it seems as if the sanctuaries were erected as one-off dedications by wealthy immigrants to their native gods after their arrival, but were not maintained and organised as actively as other sanctuaries. Especially the case of Philostratos, who was famous for his benefactions, hints at this. Not only did he dedicate a double portico and an exedra on the *agora des Italiens* in the city centre of Delos,²⁴⁷ but he had also become

²⁴¹ *ID* 1720-21 dedications found in sanctuary to Poseidon of Ascalon and *ID* 1719 by his wife and children to the Palestinian Astarte (all date around 100 BC). On Philostratos see: Leiwo, Martti 1989, Philostratos of Ascalon, his bank, his connections and Naples in 130-90 BC, in: *Athenaeum* 67, pp. 575-584.

²⁴² Fourteen people from Ascalon could be recognised on Delos, Leiwo 1989, p. 578.

²⁴³ Inge Nielsen, Religious Associations on Delos and their relations to Delian society, conference paper held at the conference “Private Associations and the Public Sphere in the Ancient World” in Copenhagen in 2010.

²⁴⁴ In addition to the thirteen sanctuaries dedicated to unknown deities, one could identify one sanctuary as erected to the gods of/ruling over Iamneia (*ID* 2308-9), one to a heavenly Zeus (*ID* 1723) and one to a certain Theos Hypsistos, probably a Baal, *GD* 2005, p. 287.

²⁴⁵ A Roman has been identified as well; for a detailed list of dedications and dedicators see Bruneau 1970, pp. 476-7 and Will/Schmid 1985, p. 118.

²⁴⁶ *ID* 2310, on the Θεοὶ Πρῶτοι see Bruneau 1970, pp. 476-7, *GD*, p. 289.

²⁴⁷ *ID* 2529, he dedicated the monument to the Athenians and Romans: ll. 18-19: “who (Philostratos) erected for the inhabitants of Rome and for the descendants of Cecrops (Athenians) a double porticus”.

a citizen of Naples between 106/5 and 98/7 BC.²⁴⁸ It might well have been the case that he regularly worshipped his native deities here, probably accompanied by his family and friends. But it does not seem as if he had set up an actual group, or, if so, no evidence has come down to us.²⁴⁹ Another indication that this sanctuary might have served as a place of occasional worship rather than as a meeting place of a voluntary association might be seen in the fact that thirteen other very similar sanctuaries were erected on Mount Kynthos. All of these sanctuaries had their main features in common: they were of the same type as described in the sanctuary for the gods from Ascalon, they seem each to have been erected by individuals either for the gods of their hometowns, or for other local or unidentifiable non-Greek deities that are only known from this particular site on Delos,²⁵⁰ and they were all erected on the same mountain top.²⁵¹ Within three of the sanctuaries sacred regulations were found which forbade the worshippers from sacrificing goats, a regulation that probably originates from a Phoenician practice.²⁵² However, as mentioned before, none of the inscriptions refers to any form of voluntary association, neither with Greek nor Near Eastern vocabulary. To sum up: the archaeological remains of the sanctuaries strongly suggest that they were places for voluntary associations to meet and dine together. The epigraphic evidence, however, does not allow any such conclusions. Furthermore and owing to the fact that it was a common habit in Near Eastern cults to dine together, it is not surprising that the sanctuaries offered places to prepare meals and to dine.

Let us now turn to one last sanctuary on mount Kynthos, namely the sanctuary of Zeus Kynthios and Athena Kynthia.²⁵³ The sanctuary seems to have nothing in common with the ‘oriental-style’ sanctuaries. Apart from differences of shape and size, it is worth

²⁴⁸ *ID* 1724, 98/97 BC: “To Philostratos, son of Philostratos, citizen of Naples, who previously was called a citizen of Ascalon, banker on Delos. Publius, Gaius and Gnaeus Egnatii sons of Quintus, to their benefactor. Dedicated to Apollo. Made by Lysippus, son of Lysippus from Heraclea“ (transl. after Leiwo 1989).

²⁴⁹ He might as well have been involved in the worship of the Syrian deities through a Syrian who also addressed him as a friend: the very Midas who dedicated an exedra at the sanctuary of the Syrian gods and appears among the *therapeutai* of Hagne Aphrodite: *ID* 2234, 2253, 2254. Further inscriptions by him or to him were: *ID* 1717, 1719 (Agora des Italiens), 1719 dedications to Astarte, 1723 dedication by his nephew to Zeus Kynthios and Athena Kynthia. Honorary inscriptions for him by the Romans: *ID* 1722, 1724.

²⁵⁰ Bruneau 1970, pp. 476-479.

²⁵¹ Erecting hill-top sanctuaries was a common habit in Syria-Palestine since the mountains stood between heaven and earth (see e. g. the example of the Bel-Hamon sanctuary on top of the Jebel Muntar, in: Kaizer, Ted 2002. *The religious life of Palmyra*, Stuttgart pp. 108-115 and more generally Teixidor, Xavier 1979. *The Pantheon of Palmyra*, Leiden, p. 16 ff. But even in Greece one can find hill-top sanctuaries at various places, not least here on Delos on the same mountain, namely the sanctuary of Zeus Kynthios and Athena Kynthia.

²⁵² *ID* 2308 (dedication to the gods of Iamneia), *SEG* 23:507 (part of *ID* 1720), *ID* 2305 (to heavenly Astarte Aphrodite by Damon of Ascalon). On the identification of the regulations see Marcadé, Jean 1949. La pseudo-signature de Nikandros d’Andros, à Délos, in: *BCH* 73, pp. 152-57.

²⁵³ Nr. 105 in image M, appendix.

mentioning that it had a much longer history: whereas the building of the other sanctuaries can mostly be dated to the first century BC, the earliest structures of this sanctuary date back to the Archaic period.²⁵⁴ The sanctuary of Zeus Kynthos was run over a fairly long period of time and by specific and organised sacred staff whereas the sanctuaries of the oriental type were, as far as we can tell, only used for one generation, if for that long.²⁵⁵ More importantly, however, the sanctuary of Zeus Kynthos was equipped in such a way that it could well have served as a meeting place for voluntary associations, namely with dining- and meeting-facilities. One *oikos* was furnished with fourteen *klinai* by a certain Patrokles in 250 BC.²⁵⁶ Two *oikoi* of the sanctuary were equipped with twelve additional *klinai*, at the beginning of the Athenian period.²⁵⁷ If one looks at the epigraphic evidence, it clearly suggests that sacred meals were held there from the middle of the third century until the first century BC. This information is supported by the archaeological structures, namely the *oikoi* within which the benches were placed and dinners held.²⁵⁸ The sanctuary was enlarged in the period following the beginning of the Athenian occupation, and the epigraphic evidence increased at this time.²⁵⁹ Even though the number of inscriptions that are related to the sanctuary is rather high, and sometimes quite specific,²⁶⁰ none of the individual items mentions voluntary associations, members, initiates or specific staff that could be related to them.

The examples of the sanctuaries on mount Kynthos have shown that in some cases the archaeological evidence suggests the activity of voluntary associations quite strongly. According to the epigraphic findings, however, one must doubt the existence of any such organisations and rather think of cults with a specific tradition or habit that might overlap with the activities of voluntary associations but that cannot be interpreted as such.

3.4 Voluntary associations to be linked with the ‘Synagogue’ (GD 80)

The archaeological structure of the so-called synagogue on Delos has been a much discussed topic ever since its excavation at the beginning of the twentieth century. Both the

²⁵⁴ Bruneau 1970, p. 225.

²⁵⁵ Bruneau 1970, pp. 226-227.

²⁵⁶ *IG XI 2 287 A*, l. 115.

²⁵⁷ After 166 BC, *ID 1403*, Bruneau 1970, p. 229.

²⁵⁸ At least one *oikos* clearly contained a hearth, Bruneau 1970, p. 225.

²⁵⁹ After 166 BC, Bruneau 1970, p. 225.

²⁶⁰ A regulation on certain things to be observed by the worshippers requests that one should not carry a key nor iron ring, no belt, no shoes, no weapons and no wallet when entering the sanctuary but that one should be dressed in white clothes and abstain from meat and sexual intercourse in advance, *ID 2529* and *LSAM 1962*, nr. 59, p. 113.

debate and the actual building will be discussed in chapter five, so I will only point out specific features and the inscriptions that can perhaps be related to the complex. The actual building does not have an unusual shape.²⁶¹ It consists of a rectangular complex with several rooms of which some smaller ones have been identified as utility rooms.²⁶² A large room that was later split into two compartments and equipped with benches, probably served for the common meal.²⁶³ Scholars disagree about the initial use of the complex. It has been interpreted as both a regular house and as a synagogue from the beginning.²⁶⁴ The first structure of the six building phases that can be observed here dates back to before 88 BC.²⁶⁵

Four inscriptions were found in the building and led to its interpretation as the first synagogue in the Greek Diaspora.²⁶⁶ Whether a fifth inscription belonged to the same group of worshippers remains unclear. In two inscriptions that were dedicated by Samaritans, the latter describe themselves as “Israelites of Delos”. Furthermore they mention Mount Garizim to which they dedicated their sacrifices. The inscriptions were found ninety metres to the north of the “synagogue” at the seashore.²⁶⁷ It is possible that they were originally placed in the premises of the ‘synagogue’ as suggested by Bruneau and Trümper.²⁶⁸ This is, however, far from certain and must not be necessarily seen as proof of a common meeting place for Jews and Samaritans. Yet another inscription apparently connected to a Jewish or Samaritan background was found in a private house.²⁶⁹

²⁶¹ See image O, appendix.

²⁶² ID 2333.

²⁶³ Room A, see chapter five.

²⁶⁴ Interpretation as a house: White, Michael L. 1990. *The social origins of Christian Architecture. Vol. I Building God's house in the Roman world: Architectural Adaptation among Pagans, Jews and Christians; Vol. II texts and Monuments for the Christian Domus Ecclesiae in its Environment*, New York, pp. 66-67, as a synagogue: Trümper, Monika 2004. The oldest original Synagogue building in the Diaspora. The Delos Synagogue reconsidered, in: *Hesperia* 73, 2004, pp. 513-598:593.

²⁶⁵ Trümper 2004, p. 514

²⁶⁶ ID 2328, found in room B, first century BC: Λυσίμαχος /ὕπερ ἑαυτοῦ /Θεῶ Ὑψίστω /χαριστήριον; 2330, found on a bench in room A, first century BC: Λαοδίκη Θεῶι /Ὑψίστωι σωθεῖ-/σα ταῖς ὑφ' αὐτο-/ῦ θαραπήαις,/εὐχὴν; 2331, marble base, found in room A, first or second century AD:

Ζωσῶς/Παρίος/Θεῶ/Ὑψίστω/εὐχὴν; 2332, found on a bench in room A, later than first century BC: Ὑψίς-/τω εὐ-/χὴν M-/αρκία.

²⁶⁷ SEG 32:810 (250-175 BC): [οἱ ἐν Δήλῳ]/Ἰσραηλιταὶ οἱ ἀπαρχόμενοι εἰς ἱερὸν ἅγιον Ἀρ-/γαριζεῖν ἐτίμησαν vac. Μένιππον/Ἀρτεμιδώρου Ἡρά-/κλειον αὐτὸν καὶ τοὺς ἐγγόνους αὐτοῦ κατασκευ-/άσαντα καὶ ἀναθέντα ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων ἐπὶ προσευχῆ τοῦ /θε[οῦ] TON[– – – – –]/ΟΛΟΝΚΑΙΤΟ[– c.6–8 – καὶ ἐστεφάνωσαν] χρυσῶ στε[φά]-/νω καὶ [– – – – – / – – – – –]/KA – –/T – –. And SEG 32:809 (150-50 BC): οἱ ἐν Δήλῳ Ἰσραελεῖται οἱ ἀ-/παρχόμενοι εἰς ἱερὸν Ἀργα-/ριζεῖν στεφανοῦσιν χρυσῶ/στεφάνῳ Σαραπίωνα Ἰάσο-/νος Κνώσιον εὐεργεσίας/ἔνεκεν τῆς εἰς ἑαυτοὺς.

²⁶⁸ Bruneau 1982 Philippe 1982. Les Israélites de Délos et la Juiverie Délienne, in : *BCH* 106, pp. 465-504 :486-489.

²⁶⁹ ID 2329 and Trümper 2004, pp. 570-71.

In view of the evidence of Jewish worship in the Diaspora, however, one quickly realises that the distinction between religion and ethnicity is difficult to draw because references to Jewish religious activity are often intertwined with or blurred by references to Jewish ethnicity. Unlike other Semitic settlers who clearly established religious buildings and buildings serving social purposes,²⁷⁰ no such distinctions can be made in the case of the early Jewish settlers. There are, however, many parallels between Jewish migration resulting in the creation of voluntary associations and the migrations of Egyptians, Syrians and others which happens to have followed similar patterns when abroad and which clearly shows on Delos. Nevertheless it is only on Delos that we find both inscriptions pointing to Jewish settlers, and a building which might be connected to them before the centuries AD.

One feature of Jewish religion, namely Jewish “praying places”, the so-called *proseuchai*, later *synagoge*²⁷¹ is, however identifiable.²⁷² But a clear-cut definition of early “synagogues” in the diaspora escapes us.²⁷³ In fact we know very little about the how diaspora communities used *proseuchai* and *synagoges*. Erich Gruen makes various suggestions on the purposes and appearances of early Jewish meeting places.²⁷⁴ Among the

²⁷⁰ See e. g. the example of the *Poseidoniasts* from Berytos on Delos who were involved in both, religious and political activities, located in different premises. This case will be dealt with more thoroughly in the next paragraph.

²⁷¹ The term *proseuche* was slowly replaced in the Diaspora by the term *synagogue* during Roman times.

²⁷² *Proseuchai* are attested in the epigraphic records in Egypt from the third century BC onwards ὑπὲρ βασιλέως/Πτολεμαίου καὶ/βασιλίσσης/Βερενίκης ἀδελ-/φῆς καὶ γυναικὸς καὶ/τῶν τέκνων/τὴν προσευχὴν/οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι. *CIJ* II 1440, 246-222 BC From Schedia, near Alexandria. Under Ptolemy III Euergetes or Euergetes I, these “houses of prayer” were granted the status of sanctuaries, *asylos*, in Egypt, βασιλίσσης καὶ βασι-/λέως προσταξάντων/ἀντὶ τῆς προανακει-/μένης περὶ τῆς ἀναθέσε-/5 ως τῆς προσευχῆς πλα-/κὸς ἢ ὑπογεγραμμένη/ἐπιγραφήτω/βασιλεὺς Πτολεμαῖος Εὐ-/εργέτης τὴν προσευχὴν/10 ἄσυλον. *CIJ* II 1449.

²⁷³ Some scholars argue that from the very beginnings onwards, the *proseuche* or *synagoge* provided a place where Jewish people could meet for a “service of the word”, see: Williams, Margaret 1998. *The Jews among the Greeks and Romans, A Diasporan Sourcebook*, Baltimore, p. 33 and Hegermann, Harald 1989. The Diaspora in the Hellenistic age, in: William. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein (edd.) *The Cambridge History of Judaism* 2, Cambridge pp. 115-166:152. However, it remains unclear, however, what exactly this “service of the word” included and how it was organised. Scholars have suggested that the institutions, namely the *proseuche* or *synagoge*, had been developed to meet the needs of the Jewish people abroad, mainly to hold specifically Jewish festivals such as the new moon and the Sabbath.²⁷³ However, no other evidence than Philo’s report from Alexandria exists about the contents of an early Jewish Diaspora-Sabbath held in a “prayer-house”, Philo, *Spec.*, 2. 62. More general evidence for the holding of the Sabbath in Greece is only provided in the Acts of Apostles in connection with Paul’s travels See e. g. Acts 17.1-3. Other cities in the Acts that are said to have had synagogues are Athens, Philippi, Thessalonica, Beroia and Corinth. Generally one can find most evidence for *synagoge* and the *proseuche* in Greece in Acts: 16.13, 16.16, 17.1, 17.10, 17.17, 18.4, 18.7.18.8, 18.17. For the general spread of the Jewish people in Greece and beyond see Philo Leg. Gai. 281 and I Mac. 15.23 among which were some of the places analysed in this thesis, namely the islands of Delos, Rhodes and Cos.

²⁷⁴ “A synagogue was a structure in which or an institution through which Jews could engage in communal activity that helped to define or express a collective identity. This does not imply that these institutions had similar features, personnel, or functions across the Mediterranean world. Nor does it preclude changes in structure, activities, or even objectives in the course of decades and centuries” Gruen, Erich S. 2004. *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans*, Harvard University Press p.119.

tasks carried out by the various institutions, he includes educational services,²⁷⁵ worshipping facilities, places to pray, meeting places, places for commensality, celebrating festivals, storing of records and sacred funds et cetera.²⁷⁶ He acknowledges that not all these features were part of each *synagoge* but that the offerings varied from place to place.²⁷⁷ The key problem when it comes to an understanding and identification of early Diaspora communities seems to lie in the fact that we cannot fill the gap between the local practices left behind by the Jews in Palestine, such as sacrifices at the temple and a specialised priesthood and the actual utopian practices of the Jews abroad.²⁷⁸

Coming back to Delos we must conclude that the building of the so-called *synagoge* was a meeting place for an association of some kind. It could have been an early Jewish Diaspora ‘synagogue’ since it offered a meeting place for people, it contained a water-reservoir, probably a kitchen and a banqueting hall: but it could equally well have hosted any other group. Whether the groups can actually be addressed as Jewish must remain unclear. One can say with certainty, however, that a group of worshippers of Theos Hypsistos met here, at least for a while.²⁷⁹ In addition one can identify a group of Samaritans which sacrificed to Mount Garizim. These two groups might be part of a wider phenomenon that can be observed throughout the Greek world from now on. During the last centuries BC we can discern the formation of certain groups, some of them being actual Jews in the Diaspora others being groups that were now adopting Jewish thoughts or expressions and reproducing them. These people appear in the epigraphic evidence as the worshippers of Theos Hypsistos, the “highest god”, the *theosebeis*, the “Godfearers” and as Samaritan groups.

It is a rather difficult task to interpret the precise connections or differences between the worshippers of Theos Hypsistos, the Godfearers and the Jews from the epigraphic evidence.²⁸⁰ However, it is very likely that in the Hellenistic period and beyond, the term

²⁷⁵ According to Gruen they served as places of teachings of the Torah and the prophets as well as teachings of ancestral history.

²⁷⁶ Gruen 2004, p. 119.

²⁷⁷ Gruen 2004, p. 119.

²⁷⁸ Utopian in the sense of Jonathan Smith’s idea of Locative and Utopian cults, wherein the Utopian cults would be understood as the “diasporic” ones, namely the Jewish groups and, as I would phrase it, cults of “newly-introduced deities”, and the Locative ones, among which would probably be the individual local cult. On the model of locative and utopian cults see Smith, Jonathan Z. 1971. Native cults in the Hellenistic Period, in: *HR* 11, pp 236-249:236-238 and more explicitly Smith, Jonathan Z. 1978. *Map is not territory*, Chicago, introduction pp. IX-XVI:XII-XV.

²⁷⁹ The inscriptions dedicated to Theos Hypsistos date from the first century BC to the first or second century AD.

²⁸⁰ According to Stephen Mitchell, who dedicated an entire project to the phenomenon, the first two groups were identical. In his view, the Jewish communities served “as a powerful role model” for the groups calling themselves worshippers of Theos Hypsistos and *theosebeis*. As a result they acquired many Jewish characteristics but never fully converted to Judaism and thus remained part of the non-Jewish world. Whereas

Theos Hypsistos was used by some non-Jewish groups.²⁸¹ It might be safest to conclude that the term was open for interpretation and that there existed no clear-cut definition of Theos Hypsistos, nor of his position, nor of his attributes.²⁸²

How either group was organised on Delos and whether they were open to everyone or only to their compatriots cannot be decided. Both groups, however, can be related to one specific meeting place: the worshippers of Theos Hypsistos to an archaeological structure, namely the so-called synagogue; and the Samaritans to their own *proseuche* of the god.²⁸³ Whether the latter refers to a community of worshippers or to an actual archaeological structure and perhaps even to the building just discussed remains an open question.²⁸⁴

the latter claim is certainly right, I cannot agree with Mitchell's much challenged idea of a genuine cult of Theos Hypsistos with its own agenda and creed that spread all over the Greek and Roman world and whose worshippers called themselves *theosebeis* because they wanted to be seen as a group separate from the Jewish groups. In the first instance one has to consider that the formula "Theos Hypsistos" was used by Jews and non-Jews equally. The term appeared most prominently in the Septuagint as a rather general Greek translation of the Jewish god. It is surely not surprising to find the term in a Jewish context. But it is neither surprising to find it in the non-Jewish world. As argued above, one must expect that besides the Jewish people, other groups were interested in the Septuagint and the Jewish religion at the same time. In addition, the term was never exclusive to the Jewish or "Hypsistrian" parlance, but it appeared in connection with various deities. On the debate see Mitchell, Stephen 1999. The cult of Theos Hypsistos between Pagans, Jews and Christians, in: Polymnia Athanassiadi/Michael Frede (edd.) *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, pp. 81-148:127. In his latest article on the topic from 2010 Mitchell defends his view against various critics, Mitchell, Stephen 2010. Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos, in: Mitchell, Stephen/Van Nuffelen, Peter (edd.) *One God: Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire*, pp.167-208:190-192.

²⁸¹ The epigraphic evidence which comprises most of the evidence for this deity suggests a broad range of names that were added to the main term Hypsistos, probably indicating different interpretations and forms of various deities which might have been but were not necessarily influenced by the Jewish idea of one highest god. Nevertheless, it might have been an inspiration for non-Jews to follow up ideas that came with this "newly-worshipped" Jewish deity and to establish groups worshipping a Theos Hypsistos without a clear image, open for interpretation on the one hand but probably imitating Jewish rites. By using the term Hypsistos they could create a certain uniqueness for their specific deity that was at least valid within each worshipping group. Most inscriptions suggest that unlike the people strictly following the Jewish religion worshipping an individual Theos Hypsistos did not require worshippers to reject other gods. This becomes even clearer when taking into account that besides Theos Hypsistos a female form, namely Thea Hypsiste, can be found in inscriptions, in one case a clearly locally bound version of a female deity.

²⁸² If, as I believe, there was no widespread cult of a specified Theos Hypsistos, Mitchell's second argument concerning the *theosebeis* becomes redundant. Still, it might be necessary to briefly describe these groups here. The fact that the *theosebeis* often turn up in the context of Jewish groups seems to point in the direction that they were closer to the Jewish religion than the worshippers of Theos Hypsistos. They seem to have attended Jewish *synagoges* and to have made donations to the latter. Nevertheless they can be separated from "actual" Jews and are treated as a different group, at least at Aphrodisias. Some of the *theosebeis* appear to have been what Mitchell initially suggested in relation to the worshippers of Theos Hypsistos: namely groups of non-Jewish worshippers who actually believed in the same god and followed the same rules as their Jewish neighbours. However, the term turns out to be at least as manifold as the term Theos Hypsistos due to its unspecific nature and widespread use. Williams suggested the following: "the word, besides functioning as a terminus technicus for a Gentile synagogue-associate, can also be used simply as an epithet for any pious/godfearing person, be s/he pagan, Jewish or Christian." This statement seems to make the point very clearly: whenever *theosebeis* appear in an inscription, only the context allows any further interpretation – similar to the inscriptions that mention a Theos Hypsistos.

²⁸³ *SEG* 32:810, Ll. 4-6.

²⁸⁴ On the use of the term *proseuche* and the discussion of Samaritan groups see chapter five.

3.5 Other voluntary associations – the example of the *Posidoniasts* from Berytos

Groups that also met for religious purposes, worshipping various gods but whose main criterion of membership was common profession and sometimes common provenance, are highly noticeable among the groups of ancient Delos. As mentioned before, one can find large amounts of evidence left behind by these associations in epigraphic form, especially in the sanctuaries of the Egyptian and the Syrian gods. To get an idea both of how close those groups were to those groups of only religious character, and yet at the same time how different in so many ways, I will introduce as an example one of the professional groups from Delos, namely the *posidoniasts* from Berytos and their “clubhouse”.²⁸⁵

In the very centre of a Delian residential area to the north of the sacred lake lies the assembly-building of the *posidoniasts*.²⁸⁶ The rather large structure measured one thousand five hundred square metres and provided many rooms serving both the cultic and the social activities of its members. However, the outward appearance of the building was distinctively styled in a Greek way and clearly different from the Delian house-type.²⁸⁷ Two courtyards²⁸⁸ were decorated with sculptures and these were probably supposed to remind the visitor of an agora or sanctuary.²⁸⁹

The quantity of the epigraphic evidence that can be associated with the group is outstanding. Thirty-three inscriptions in Greek all dating back to a period of about sixty years have come down to us.²⁹⁰ They suggest that the inner structure of the association was modelled after the Athenian political and religious institutions with certain hierarchies and offices that were regularly elected.²⁹¹ The words *koinon*, *synodos* and *thiasitai* appear in the inscriptions, describing their form of association. An *archethiasites* was elected annually as head of the group. Little is known about the members of the group but we can estimate their number by looking at the meeting facilities which provide space for sixty-eight to ninety-six persons.²⁹² The group expressed its loyalty towards Athens by the act of crowning the

²⁸⁵ This term is used by Trümper 2006 in her recent work on the assembly-building of the *posidoniasts*.

²⁸⁶ See image P, appendix.

²⁸⁷ Trümper 2006, p. 122.

²⁸⁸ X and F.

²⁸⁹ Courtyard X could have served as a common assembly place since it could host the whole group of members. Room E, accessible through three doors, served as banqueting hall beside room Z which provided even more decorative elements. The identification of the third of the larger rooms is rather difficult and must remain unclear. Room Q provided a latrine.

²⁹⁰ The inscriptions date between 153/152 and 149/148 BC and 90 BC.

²⁹¹ Trümper 2006, p. 115.

²⁹² Trümper 2006, p. 116.

Athenian demos in their cultic acts. Around 130 BC the same confirmation of loyalty was celebrated towards Rome, represented by the goddess Roma.²⁹³

The inscriptions do not contain much information about the religious life of the association. But the archaeological remains show that one (perhaps oriental) form of Poseidon, the eponymous god held the first position in the divine hierarchy of importance followed by the goddess Astarte-Aphrodite. One can summarise the situation as follows: the group was a Hellenised Phoenician association, cultivating good relations with the important political forces of Athens and Rome. Trümper suggests that the worship of the Athenian and Roman cults was clearly visible in the clubhouse and that the group invited authorities and politicians from Athens and Rome to join their festivities.²⁹⁴

The remarkable political interest of the group clearly divides it from the groups of worshippers that met in and around the sanctuaries and meeting places described before. The desire to attract people's attention is clearly displayed in the choice of the location, namely the very city-centre, and the shape and size of the building, both features that differed strongly from the buildings of the voluntary associations that were associated with merely worshipping a deity.

The strong Athenian or Greek self-representation of the members and the few remarks which still hint at the groups' Phoenician roots might highlight once more the professional ambitions of the members rather than their religious cult or origin.

3.6 The institutionalisation of the Delian sanctuaries

So who was in charge of the sanctuaries? The short analysis of several buildings in this chapter indicated that the common meal was of serious importance for the various groups on Delos. It was organised, it seems, through individual initiative rather than by the civic authorities. It therefore kept its "private" or "exclusive" character even if attached to a sanctuary, as can be seen in the example of the Egyptian sanctuaries and the sanctuary of the Syrian deities.²⁹⁵ On the whole, however, it is impossible to find one particular authority in charge of the sanctuaries that are the subject of this study.²⁹⁶ One might even say that such

²⁹³ Trümper 2006, p. 116.

²⁹⁴ Trümper 2006, p. 117.

²⁹⁵ For the two older Serapeia (A and B) one might suggest an individual entrepreneur. With regards to the sanctuary of the Syrian deities, it appears as if the community of worshippers "sub-divided" itself in several groups, either organised by priests or by individuals without any sacred office, as in the case of Midas. The inscriptions mention names of different groups of worshippers supporting the sanctuary with as *euergetes* and they indicate that at least two of the exedras were erected by individuals.

²⁹⁶ And even for the sanctuary of Apollo the often suggested existence of *amphyktiones* cannot be proven.

civic authorities as there were made no move – at first – to prevent new sanctuaries being created by immigrant groups, nor to control or regulate them. The Serapeia seem to have been founded by wealthy individual worshippers, perhaps leaders in their own communities, and later developed in a more institutionalised direction. We can witness this institutionalisation of one of the three sanctuaries by consulting the inscribed column that indicates the presence of a certain authority in charge of the “holy space”. But the inscription suggests that the Serapeion B was chosen rather by accident than design: “But then some evil men possessed by envy were thrown into a raving madness, two of whom summoned your servant (Apollonios II, son of the founder) to court with an unsubstantiated indictment and they produced an evil law prescribing either what the lawbreaker must suffer or what fine he would have to pay in compensation.”²⁹⁷ The aretalogical text, unfortunately does not inform us about the reasons for which Apollonios was sued but its aretalogical character leaves much room for speculation. I am not going to discuss the case any further, since others have done so quite thoroughly.²⁹⁸ It is, however, worthwhile pointing out that this document provides us with evidence that some sort of legal action occurred in the process of becoming an institutionalised sanctuary. Within the short space of three generations the legal permission had been granted that turned the place from being a small shrine in a private house to an institutionalized sanctuary.

The people in charge of Serapeion C compiled inventories but stored the goods in other sanctuaries. This might indicate that there was at least a degree of co-operation with the Athenian authorities in later times: after 155 BC the lists of goods were recorded in Athenian measurements²⁹⁹ and the officials in charge were Athenians.³⁰⁰ It seems as if the Athenian authorities now, in the second phase of the occupation, controlled or tried to control these newly-introduced cults³⁰¹ much more than they had done during their first period of power.

One can identify a shift in religious freedom or responsibilities on Delos within the course of time that is clearly linked to the political administration of the island, namely

²⁹⁷ *IG XI 4 1299*, cc. 66-68, transl. by Mc Lean, Bradley H. 1996. The place of cult in voluntary associations and churches on Delos, in: John S. Kloppenborg/Stephen G. Wilson (edd.) *Voluntary associations in the Graeco-Roman world*, London/New York, pp. 186-225: 207.

²⁹⁸ The various theories are put together by Siard, Hélène 1998. La crypte du Sarapieion A de Délos et le procès d'Apollônios, in: *BCH* 122, pp. 469-486:478-481.

²⁹⁹ Athenian dates with Delian equivalents.

³⁰⁰ Hamilton 2000, p. 247. Only three inventory lists dating back to the time before 155 BC, from 183 BC (*IG XI 1307*) and two dating soon after that time (*IG XI 1308* and *IG XI 1309*) are preserved. See also Roussel 1915/16, pp. 209-211.

³⁰¹ The same happened with the Samothrakeion and the sanctuary of Zeus Kynthos.

during the period of Athenian control.³⁰² In this period the formerly self-established Egyptian cults became domesticated by the Athenian authorities as they were before in the official pantheon.³⁰³ The same happened to the *Samothrakeion* and the *Kyntheion*. The sanctuary of the Syrian gods does not appear in the lists. This is an interesting fact given its size and popularity amongst the inhabitants of Delos. It might indicate the rather individually organised character of the sanctuary and its worshipping groups. According to the epigraphic evidence the sanctuary's administration lay in the hands of an annually elected priest.³⁰⁴ He was supported by other cultic personnel.³⁰⁵

To sum up: The only sanctuary in Delos that actually was under permanent official control was the main sanctuary of Apollo. This sanctuary reflected the interests of the particular authority in charge.

3. 7 Conclusion

One main characteristic of the history of Delos is its rapid changes. It is hard to observe a particular Delian "development" over a long period of time. The island was often under the control of different authorities and influenced by various governing bodies. The same might be said of the Delian inhabitants. As far as we know the Delian settlement was formed by a stream of new inhabitants coming from various places. The inscriptions that belong to the Egyptian sanctuaries indicate that the number of worshippers of Greek origin or from Hellenised areas increased rapidly towards the time of 166 BC. The establishment of the cult on the island in the third century BC was in Egyptian hands. The priest in charge was from Memphis. Around 166 BC the ethnic backgrounds of the worshippers were totally varied even though the Egyptian worshippers outnumbered the others. The epigraphic evidence dating to the time after 166 BC adds worshippers from Syria and Arabia and shows a preponderance of Egyptians. Now, as a new addition one can also find Italians as part of the majority population.³⁰⁶

The epigraphic evidence that can be connected to the sanctuary of the Syrian gods testifies to the activities of worshippers from Hierapolis in the early period, namely in the second half of the second century BC. Most evidence from that period can be related to the

³⁰² 166-88/69 BC.

³⁰³ This might be even underlined by the „Delian Aretalogy of Sarapis“ mentioned before.

³⁰⁴ The first inscription to name one dates back to 128/7 BC, *ID* 2226.

³⁰⁵ The *kleidouchos* and *cannephore* that we know from other cults as well and an annually elected *zакoros* (of whose duties we know not much) all belonging to the administrative, Will/Schmid 1985, p. 143.

³⁰⁶ Roussel 1915/16, p. 281 lists all worshippers of which we know the origin by epigraphic evidence – here one can find people from all over the Greek motherland and the islands, Italy, Egypt, Cyprus and Asia Minor.

priests in charge and their families. Only one priest could be identified whose name suggests an Aramaic origin.³⁰⁷ In most cases the names that appear consisted of both a Greek and a Semitic part, a common practice in the Hellenised areas of Syria. The members of the *therapeutes* that can be found in more than one dedicatory inscription were mostly people from Antioch and Laodicea in Syria and rarely from other Syrian cities. The other worshippers mostly originate from all over Asia Minor,³⁰⁸ Egypt³⁰⁹ and southern Italy.³¹⁰ Here, as seen before amongst the worshippers of the Egyptian gods in the later periods, the Italian involvement was significant compared to that of other worshippers. Only one inscription gives proof of an Athenian dedication to the sanctuary.³¹¹

The priests named in the inscriptions belonging to the sanctuary of the Samothracian gods, dating from 162/1-102/1, all have Greek names and mostly come from Attica.³¹²

It seems as if one thing that all the sanctuaries discussed in this chapter have in common was that their worshipping community – as far as evidence is available – became wider in the course of time. Probably the most reliable evidence is given by the dedicatory inscriptions of the worshippers themselves.³¹³ Here we learn that at least the foundation myth is often related to a person from the country of origin, as we saw in the case of the Syrian and Egyptian sanctuaries. We may assume an initiative in the first instance of people with ethnic relations to the cult. But very soon those cults were celebrated by people from various origins. The Jewish and Samaritan communities perhaps consisted of people with a Jewish-Pagan background. One can see that for these groups the ethnic origin plays an important role and probably more than in any other voluntary association at that time on Delos.³¹⁴

The broad picture is that of cults that were originally founded by people of a particular background and that established very quickly – probably like the groups of immigrants themselves – and over time became more diverse. One can find the same voluntary associations worshipping different deities. The *therapeutes* on Delos worshipped the Syrian and Egyptian gods at the same time and people from Italy worshipped gods from Syria and

³⁰⁷ Will/Schmid 1985, p. 140.

³⁰⁸ Miletus, Ephesus, Cnidus, Nicea.

³⁰⁹ Mostly from Alexandria.

³¹⁰ Will/Schmid 1985, p. 140.

³¹¹ *ID* 2220.

³¹² Bruneau 1970, p. 397 lists them chronologically and gives the references.

³¹³ The fact that with the second period of Athenian control from 166 BC onwards more transparency and insights in the sanctuaries and their structure was provided must be seen of course as a biased advantage. On the one hand more information is provided – on the other hand this information is probably very selective. The sanctuary of the Samothracian gods seems to be in the hands of priests from central Greece but we have no clue if that was the case beforehand.

³¹⁴ This is underlined by the Samaritan inscriptions where they are naming themselves “Israelites of Delos”, see Bruneau 1982.

Egypt. Furthermore it seems as if the ethnic background played an important role for most immigrants immediately after they arrived. Despite the course of time they still remembered their origin, worshipped their gods, and in some cases even erected small sanctuaries. The actual worship, however seems to have happened in communities with others from all over the populated world and in supposedly rather Hellenised form. A strong Athenian presence after 166 BC can be discerned among the worshippers and administrative staff which is probably due to the fact that the Athenians took over the administrative positions and the controlling institutions.

None of the buildings presented in this study provides construction-elements or materials that were especially brought to Delos. Only a few discoveries, usually in sanctuaries of the Egyptian deities, were of foreign origin. This habit of keeping Egyptian features in the sanctuaries in Greece is rather common, and not specifically Delian. Beside the fact that all buildings under discussion were mainly built of the local *gneiss*, with bits of granite and marble for particular parts, they do not have much in common. Even the banqueting rooms that were provided in most of the sanctuaries differed. While the exedras of the sanctuary of the Syrian gods were equipped with bricked benches along various walls of many small rooms, differing in form and size, room E in Serapeion A and rooms A and B of the synagogue were dominant in size, compared to the other rooms of either sanctuary, and featured marble benches on each side.

The architecture of the sanctuary of the Syrian gods was outstanding. It reminds us more of Hellenistic terrace-sanctuaries than of anything else. Serapeion C with its alley and water-constructions fits into the image of Egyptian sanctuaries.³¹⁵ The two small Serapeia do not fit into a certain category but have their very own character. The synagogue and the assembly-place of the *posidoniasts* may have most in common, due to their fairly quadrangular and unspecific design.

One observation, however, needs to be added before ending this chapter. The overall image is that there was a good deal of communication between the several institutions, whether mainly religious or professional. The *posidoniasts* were involved in the worship of the Syrian and Egyptian gods. The famous Philostratos was friends with Midas, who again was involved in the activity of the *therapeutes* and various other individuals can be linked with several groups.³¹⁶ One inscription even indicates a degree of co-operation in the building

³¹⁵ It has even been suggested that it was built after the model of the grand Serapeion of Alexandria.

³¹⁶ See chapter four.

process of two different sanctuaries in which voluntary associations are involved.³¹⁷ Apart from that, one may not see a direct connection in the architecture of the buildings but one might suppose a lively interaction between the groups. The “synagogue” was probably shared by two groups as well, namely the worshippers of Hypsistos and the Samaritans worshipping Garizim.

A situation as diverse as the Delian one, offering space for a wide range of religious cults and voluntary associations so early in time, appears to us to be a rather outstanding example of religious groups in the *polis*. But we must not forget that it is the exceptional state of preservation of buildings and inscriptions as a whole which gives us such an insight into the Delian situation. Whether other places once hosted a similar society escapes us. In fact it must remain unclear whether Delos was the exception rather than the rule.

³¹⁷ *RICIS* 202/0194, see also chapter five and Steinhauer 2011, p. 200.

4. The people: personnel and participants

The following chapter addresses the question of who was involved in voluntary associations. I shall investigate the origin of people who were involved in these groups as initiators, officers and participants on the basis of the epigraphic evidence.

First, I shall analyse whether or not voluntary associations served non-Greeks and metics as a first step in a new environment, such as a given city. The concept of the voluntary association was, I will suggest, adaptable to any environment. It could be applied to any deity, whether one that was newly-introduced or one that had been traditionally worshipped. Nor was the voluntary association bound to any predetermined classification for its members: rules or regulations concerning membership could be customised individually. An important issue will be the “newly-worshipped” gods, by which I mean those deities not mentioned in Homer and Hesiod but which start to appear in the epigraphic record from the fifth and fourth centuries onwards, such as Bendis, Isis and the Mother of the Gods, and which finally become the subject of cult associations from the third century BC onwards. Those cults were supposedly brought to Greece by immigrants and worshipped, at least from the fourth century, by the latter; but were joined by citizens soon afterwards.³¹⁸ Therefore I will further consider whether the inhabitants of the cities took advantage of the cults of newly worshipped gods in order to construct a new type of group around these deities, or whether an existing idea of voluntary associations was applied to a newly-introduced deity.

In the first part of this chapter I shall analyse a set of questions in relation to groups devoted to newly worshipped deities, taking as a case-study the Egyptian deities. In the second part, I shall analyse briefly the activity of non-Greek or metic benefactors in voluntary associations, as attested by honorary decrees. In the third part, I will look at voluntary associations that gathered around the deities that had been longer established in the Greek world, using the example of the worshippers of Dionysus. The fourth and final part is devoted to the questions of when and where certain voluntary associations were first attested, and why they appeared in particular places, times and patterns.

Before starting the investigation some general problems concerning the evidence for this chapter need to be mentioned. The distribution of inscriptions differs substantially from place to place and over the course of time. One must admit that the evidence for voluntary associations appears to be rather scarce and only occasionally permits more general

³¹⁸ See the example of Bendis in Athens.

conclusions to be drawn. Yet some examples are unusually informative, although over time new complexities emerge about this category of material. These complexities might be best illustrated by a second century BC inscription from Philadelphia in Lydia. The inscription concerns a certain Dionysios, who invites people into his own house, *oikos*, to take part in common cultic activities such as purification, expiation and probably mysteries.³¹⁹ He addresses the participants not by name but in a very general sense, as men and women, freedmen and slaves.³²⁰ The text as a whole is mainly concerned with the rules that must be obeyed by all participants and which apply throughout to men, women, freedmen and slaves. The stele itself played an important role in the associations' gatherings: at the monthly meetings of the association each member had to touch it and swear by the gods mentioned in it to obey the listed regulations.³²¹ The only names that appear, apart from the deities worshipped,³²² are on the one hand the name of the head of the group, Dionysios, who was probably at the same time the group's founder and initiator, and on the other hand the name of the "mistress of the house", Agdistis.³²³ Because of the unusually moralising and normative character of the regulations and its focus on purification rituals, as well as its resemblance to early house-churches, this inscription has been much discussed by both classical scholars and theologians with an interest in the New Testament.³²⁴ To pursue the main questions in this chapter, however, I would like to focus on the general character of the text and the way in which participants are addressed. It seems at first sight that anyone was allowed to become a member of the group and to take part in the cult and the mysteries, as long as the prescribed rules were followed. Given that most inscriptions appear as if one of their main purposes in being set up was to represent certain groups of people explicitly in public³²⁵ or to underline the hierarchy among the members of the group, the fact that this particular inscription is framed in such a broad sense concerning its addressees seems in

³¹⁹ The word "mysteries" does not appear in the inscription but the corrupt part was supplemented by Weinreich for the edition of *SIG III*³ 985 and has been followed ever since. The inscription was not found in situ but as part of a wall of a church and it is lost today.

³²⁰ Ll. 5-6.

³²¹ Ll. 54-60.

³²² The association worshipped various deities among which were Zeus, Hestia, Plutos, Arete and Hygieia, to name only a few (ll. 6-11).

³²³ L. 51.

³²⁴ See e. g. Weinreich, Otto 1919. *Stiftung und Kultsatzung eines Privatvereins in Philadelpheia in Lydien*, *SHAW. PH*, X/16, Heidelberg; Nock, Arthur D. 1964. *Early gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic backgrounds*, New York/London, p. 20 ff.; Berger, Karl/Colpe, Carsten (edd.). *Religionsgeschichtliches Textbuch zum Neuen Testament* (TNT 1) Göttingen/Zürich 1987, Nr. 513; Ebel 2004, pp. 154-158 and 228-232.

³²⁵ This topic, namely voluntary associations setting up inscriptions in public, will be discussed in chapter five.

many ways unusual.³²⁶ However, one might assume that this inscription was once erected in Dionysios' house and not, as often was the case with voluntary associations, in a public place. If erected in a private house, a selection of members was probably made at the entrance, which was almost certainly not open to everyone. One might wonder then if the inscription from Philadelphia is an exception only because it was carved in *stone* rather than on a papyrus or parchment and that is the reason why it has come down to us. Its mainly practical contents stand in stark contrast to the often representative purpose of inscriptions as “a form of popular self-fashioning” for the individuals attested, for example as was a habit among members of private professional associations in the East.³²⁷ Even though this inscription does not appear to contain much detailed information about members and personnel it does provide important information that otherwise is rather rarely found. It reveals that this voluntary association's activities were mainly focused on specific cultic activities and regulations that were part of the ritual. Moreover it provides the name of the perhaps the most important person of the group, the one responsible for the group's foundation. This brings us back to the initial question of this chapter: we know that apart from the voluntary associations in Athens, which perhaps derived initially from groups organised under the auspices of the state, voluntary associations seem to have been initiated in the first instance by an individual. With that in mind, I shall focus on those individuals, paying particular attention to the question of who was responsible for the foundation of a voluntary association in the first phase, namely the initiatory phase of voluntary associations? Once established, voluntary associations needed to be maintained. This part of the process may best be described as a “second phase”. In terms of this second phase it is perhaps most important to install reliable individuals to take care of the group. From this emerges the question of who took part in voluntary associations over the course of time, and who was involved in its administration.

³²⁶ Since the inscription does not mention any of the keywords that normally describe voluntary associations, it must remain unclear whether one can speak of a specific voluntary association at all. Even though all the criteria that describe a voluntary association (such as a specific main deity, ritual acts, a place to meet, fixed monthly and annual feasts) are listed, nothing really indicates that, apart from the “simple” participation in the cultic rituals, a fixed membership could be achieved. Owing to the fact that alongside men and women, freedmen and slaves are mentioned, some scholars have suggested that the inscription was concerned with an internal cult, i.e. a house-cult. Whatever the character of the group might have been, it becomes clear that strict regulations concerning sexual behaviour in connection with cultic activities played the most important role for the worshipping group. The person who set up the inscription was not concerned with organisational issues other than requiring adherence to the rules, regular sacrifices and the threat of punishment in case the rules were ignored by anyone.

³²⁷ Van Nijf 1997, p. 28.

While the inscription from Philadelphia implies that all constellations of people were able to form a voluntary association, I assume that this was not true for all groups.

Finally, I will investigate at what time and in what places particular kinds of voluntary associations are attested. I will explore whether there are explanations for any kind of pattern, and if so, what form the patterns might take.

4.1 Non-Greek and metic initiators, participants and people in charge: the case of the Egyptian deities

The question of the foundation of a voluntary association in Hellenistic Greece and Asia Minor seems to be closely linked to the interests of a particular individual or a specific group.³²⁸ At first glance, one might assume that the act of establishing such a group was likely to be connected to a priestly office or to a position as a benefactor. The evaluation of the epigraphic remains, however, shows that very little evidence has come down to us that identifies an individual as an initiator of a specific group.³²⁹ It seems in fact as if a founding act by a specific person was not as noteworthy as the recording of the actual activity of contemporary benefactors and/or priests. Even though the first phase in which the foundation took place is not recorded, in most cases a second, often better attested phase of “maintenance” followed, as illustrated in my opening example from Philadelphia. I will consider which people held what sort of position in the groups of the Egyptian deities in that second phase. Were they the same as the founders, were they locals, or were they specialists from abroad?

In the next section, I will take a closer look at the internal structure and raise questions about the origins and initiation of the associations. I will start with the example of the *Serapiastai* and other groups that worshipped the Egyptian deities.³³⁰

The *Serapiastai*, or more precisely the groups worshipping Serapis who thereby reveal his name in their nomenclature, held a special position among the “Egyptian” groups since they were spread all over Attica and the Aegean from the third century BC until the first century AD.³³¹ These groups were devoted to the worship of Serapis, whose cult is said to

³²⁸ For possible state involvement in early Athenian groups see the chapter on Athens.

³²⁹ As the cases of Piraeus and Delos have shown: Delos, Apollodoros, *RICIS* 202/0101/*IG* XI 4 1299; Piraeus, Dionysios, *IG* II² 1325.

³³⁰ I will include the groups from Delos only for comparative reasons, since they have been discussed already in chapter three.

³³¹ *Serapiastai* can be found at ten different places in Greece: 1. Rhannus ca. 220 BC (*RICIS* 101/0502, *SEG* 41.47), 2. Athens 215/214 BC (*RICIS* 101/0201, *IG* II² 1292), 3. Delos first half second century BC (*RICIS* 202/0135, *IG* XI 4 1226), 4. Thasos second century BC (*RICIS* 201/0101, *IG* XII Suppl. 365), 5. Kea (Ioulis)

have been created as a Hellenised form of the Egyptian god Osiris-Apis in Memphis as a tool for the political interests of the Ptolemaic kings, though this hypothesis is still the subject of debate.³³² However, those groups which worshipped Serapis often worshipped other Egyptian deities such as Isis and Anubis at the same time.

The earliest worshippers of Serapis and the other Egyptian deities were likely to be connected to people originating from Egypt, as is suggested by the case of the Serapis-priest in the Serapeion on Delos discussed in the previous chapter. Whether one can find other Egyptians among the initiators, members and priests or officers of the groups of *serapiastai* at different places in Greece will be examined in the next section through the analysis of the names of the people and personnel that appear in selected inscriptions.

A second century BC inscription from Thasos is the first subject of interest. This stele, erected by a group of *serapiastai*, focuses on the special treatment of a particular official.³³³ The inscription was erected chiefly in order to record the special honours granted to the eponymous officer and does not actually give much information about the organisation of the lower ranking participants of the group. According to the record, the holder of the eponymy was placed on a “sacred bench”, and was equipped with a white *strophion*, a hair-band.³³⁴ At each assembly of the group he was crowned with the eponymous crown.³³⁵ His name would also appear on top of every administrative decree until he died.³³⁶ During banquets he was awarded the same voting rights as the priest and the secretary, under the rules written down in the *nomoi*.³³⁷

The office of the *eponymos* was, it seems, merely a representative one: no involvement in the administration or in the cultic organisation was required. The holder of the eponymy, however, had to pay for the honours granted with the office. In three instalments over the period of three years,³³⁸ the sum of ninety-six drachma had to be paid.³³⁹ The decree

third-second centuries BC (*RICIS* 202/0801, *IG* XII 5 606), 6. Methymna (Lesbos) end of Hellenistic era (*RICIS* 205/0401, *IG* XII 2 511) 7. Rhodes second century BC (*RICIS* 204/0105, *IG* XII 1 162) 8. Kamiros (Rhodes) 1. century BC (*RICIS* 204/0217, *IG* XII 1 701) 9. Lindos various inscriptions, e.g.: 121 BC (*RICIS* 204/0338), 10. Kardamina (Cos) first century AD. (*RICIS* 204/1101) and 11. in Asia Minor, Limyra, Hellenistic era, *RICIS* 306/0601, otherwise unpublished where a *thiasos* of *Serapiastai* is named.

³³² See e. g. Youtie, Herbert Chayyim 1948. The kline of Serapis in: *HthR* 41, 1948, pp. 9-29, pp. 9-10; Stambaugh, John E. 1972. *Serapis under the early Ptolemies* (EPRO 25) Leiden; Malaise, Michel 2000. Le problème de l'hellénisation d'Isis, in: Laurent Bricault (ed.) *De Memphis à Rome. Actes du Ier colloque international sur les études Isiaques, Poitiers- Futuroscope*, 8-10 avril 1999, Leiden /Boston, pp. 1-19.

³³³ *IG* XII Suppl. 365.

³³⁴ Ll. 8-9.

³³⁵ Ll. 10-12.

³³⁶ Ll. 13-17.

³³⁷ Ll. 17-20. On the generalising usage of the term *kothon*, a specific drinking vessel, to describe the banquet, see Seyrig, Henri 1927. Quatre cultes de Thasos. Les dieux égyptiens, *BCH* 51, pp. 219-233:227

³³⁸ Ll. 23-24.

is signed by the *Serapiastai*, of whom five appear individually by name but without additional specification, as well as the eponymous officer, Hypsikles himself. No further information, let alone the aforementioned *nomoi*, of the group has come down to us that could help to clarify the internal structures beneath the top layer. None of the people named in the inscription can be described as non-Greek. The names are all Greek and given with patronyms. The honours received by Hypsikles do not differ from other honours granted to benefactors by sanctuaries or voluntary associations. The evidence does not link the group directly with an Egyptian foundation, nor did it include Egyptian or other non-Greek members. So on first sight it seems as if the group was an all-Greek enterprise. However, we cannot know whether Egyptians adopted Greek names and therefore elude us in the epigraphic record. Also, nothing indicates that we are dealing with the first attestation of the cult. It is likely that the inscription only records the second phase of the group. The foundation might have happened much earlier.

A slightly earlier inscription of *serapiastai* from Athens, or more precisely from the Piraeus, makes an initially similar impression. In addition to a certain Athenian notion observable in the habit used for naming the offices,³⁴⁰ the hierarchy within the group is similarly displayed. Unlike the Thasian inscription, however, which was only concerned with the honours for the *eponymos* and simply mentions a priest and a secretary generally, the Athenian inscription was set up in order to honour particular office-holders, probably for past benefactions. One main difference between the two groups seems to be that a woman was set up ahead of the male officers in the hierarchy: a *proeranistria*, probably a president,³⁴¹ headed the list before the *tamias*, treasurer, the *grammateus*, secretary, and an *epimeletes*. The names of the officers are followed by the category *Serapiastai*, under which an uncertain number of names appear. The office of the *proeranistria* can probably be best compared to the office of the *eponymos* from Thasos, a mainly nominal office without actual involvement in the organisational process that was granted to benefactors or, as in the case of Thasos, even created for them. However, one must bear in mind that this is the only mention of a woman in Athens as being head of a similar group without holding the office of a priestess. Both members and officers had, as far as one can tell from the remaining names, Greek or at least Hellenised backgrounds. No demotics or patronymics appear, which makes it

³³⁹ L. 38.

³⁴⁰ According to Dow, 1937 p. 191, the *hieropoioi*, the *tamias* and the *grammateus* appear mainly within voluntary associations at Athens (or as I have argued in places with Athenian influence, such as Delos and Rhamnous).

³⁴¹ The title can probably be compared to that of the *archeranistes* which is normally given to the head of an association, see also Dow 1937, p. 194.

impossible to actually decide whether the people were citizens, metics, or strangers.³⁴² However, if one considers the rather Greek or more precisely Athenian organisation of the group with regard to its officers, apart from the *proeranistria*, one might think of a rather developed, second phase formation of the group, appropriating a newly-introduced deity as a local point around which to build a new social circle. Still, as in the case of the Thasian group, it is very possible that an initial Egyptian foundation is not attested in the inscriptions and that Hellenised Egyptians or Greeks with Egyptian experience were among the members.

A third inscription to mention a group of *Serapiastai* stems from Rhamnus, not far from Athens.³⁴³ In this honorary decree several people are honoured. They were most probably members of the group of *Serapiastai* and were involved in the construction of a temple of Isis and Serapis. None of the people mentioned in the decree holds an office, but all of them appear with demotic and/or patronymic names. Whether other people such as metics or non-Greeks were part of the group but were just not mentioned in this particular inscription cannot be determined. However, the hierarchy among the citizens is not clear, since the inscription, as an honorary decree, is set up principally to praise the main benefactor, Apollodoros. Nevertheless, a certain hierarchy was very probably linked to financial matters since officials were often urged to contribute financially to the group (in disproportionate amounts compared to the other members), as other decrees have shown. No link to non-Greek origins for either the members or the officers can be established. Rather the opposite is the case: the *Serapiastai* from Rhamnus were, it seems, an exclusive organisation of citizens, labelled with the name of an Egyptian deity. Yet, as mentioned above, we can never be sure about the actual origin of the members, and the initial foundation of a group might have happened much earlier than the first extant attestation.

A certain Epameinon is honoured by a *thiasos* of *serapiastai* in Ioulis on the island of Kea for his generosity towards the group.³⁴⁴ The inscription does not reveal whether or not he was a member of the group or simply supported it financially. However, the latter is likely since we know that this person's father used to be an officer who served under the Ptolemies.³⁴⁵ Not much help is provided by the information that Epameinon is being honoured with a crown which will be announced at the *Isideia*, since it sounds as if this was a

³⁴² Pace Dow, who argues that the *Serapiastai* were non-citizens, otherwise they would have been labelled as either *orgeones* or by the addition of the demotics. As argued in the chapter on Athens, however, one can observe that the labelling practice of voluntary associations in Athens becomes unpredictable in the third century, as the example of the *orgeones* of the Mother of the Gods has shown.

³⁴³ Ca. 220 BC, *RICIS* 101/0502, *SEG* 41.47.

³⁴⁴ *RICIS* 202/0801, *IG* XII 5 606.

³⁴⁵ See comment *RICIS* p. 350.

festival held by the worshippers of Isis in public and not as a private event.³⁴⁶ The *serapiastai* appear as a *koinon* in the inscription and no other names beside the benefactor's are mentioned. Whether Epameinon's ancestors were at some point Egyptians cannot be determined.

Apart from a simple proof of existence, hardly any evidence containing information about the *serapiastai* on the island of Cos has come down to us.³⁴⁷ Yet we know of other groups that gathered around the Egyptian deities from this island. Among these is, for example, the second century BC *synodos* of the *osiriastai*, unique in its choice of name, counting in all eighteen male members, all of whom were supposedly citizens.³⁴⁸ At least they appear with patronyms. Some of the members were relatives. Others were Doric and probably of Greek origin.³⁴⁹ The commentators of *RICIS* suggest without further explanation that in general the associations on Cos consisted of metics and slaves rather than of citizens.³⁵⁰ If that proposition proves right it would put the *osiriastai* in a special position as a form of group, probably chosen consciously by citizens rather than by metics or slaves. This assumption, however, is just speculation and will not be analysed further at this point.

Another group of worshippers of the Egyptian deities, in this case mainly worshipping Anubis, was located at Smyrna.³⁵¹ The *synanoubiastai* had erected a stele at the beginning of the third century BC, in which they honour the empress Stratonike, wife of Antiochos I.³⁵² Apart from the name of the empress and the group, twenty-eight names and patronyms of male individuals are engraved on this. The inscription is partly corrupted and has room for more names. Only one person, probably the leader or a benefactor who did not belong to the group, can be set apart from the *synanoubiastai*. Like most of the participants, this person carries a Greek name. Two of the people, a certain Artemidoros Horos and his brother Hermias might have been Hellenised Egyptians,³⁵³ according to their patronym. In addition

³⁴⁶ As was the case with Hypsikles, the eponymous officer at Thasos.

³⁴⁷ *RICIS* 204/1101, Cardamina first century AD names *Serapiastai*. A second, unpublished inscription might carry the name of one of the officers, a gymnasiarch, see comment *RICIS* p. 409.

³⁴⁸ *RICIS* 204/1001, Cos city. On the suggested citizenship of the members see comment in *RICIS* p. 406.

³⁴⁹ Dorios and Apollonios, both l. 3; sons of Dorios and Apollonios l. 6 and Isidotos, l. 2, sons of Apollonios Besnakes, Demetrios 1994/1995. Οι αιγυπτιακές θεότητες στη Ρόδο και την Κω από τους ελληνιστικούς χρόνους μέχρι και τη Ρωμαϊοκρατία, in: *Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον* 49, pp. 43-74:57.

³⁵⁰ *RICIS* p. 406.

³⁵¹ *RICIS* 304/0203, *CIG* II 3234.

³⁵² *RICIS* p. 430 on the identification.

³⁵³ Ll. 8 and 14.

one can find two sons of Babylonians among the members³⁵⁴ and another couple of Greeks with familial relations, a father and a son.³⁵⁵

The groups of (*e*)*isiastai* which can be found mainly in Rhodes, only appear with their group name. Individual leaders, priests or members are never mentioned.³⁵⁶

In summary, the members of groups of *serapiastai* and of the other Egyptian deities were organised, as far as one can tell, like similar associations. To put it plainly, voluntary associations who worshipped Egyptian deities were in fact similar to voluntary associations that were devoted to more traditional deities with respect to their hierarchy of leading offices and members. This is at least suggested by the epigraphic evidence and perhaps intended by the association. The other members, however, only appear as one group without further specification; or, if otherwise is the case (with respect to leading offices and members), no evidence has survived that could prove it. Nevertheless, it looks as though it was possible for members without other qualifications, such as priestly ones, to buy themselves into the top of the group and to “lend” their names. Benefactions did of course play an important role among these groups, as the examples from Kea and Rhamnus have shown.

Apart from the two probably Hellenised Egyptians among the *synanoubiastai*, none of the inscriptions provides direct or clear onomastic proof of an Egyptian among the members. The two sons of Babylonians who were part of the *synanoubiastai* from Smyrna are exceptional since no other non-Greeks can be detected among the members of all other groups. In addition, it should be noted that the only inscription which clearly indicates an origin, by adding demotics, shows that all members were citizens of a Greek city. No non-Greeks or metics appear. This evidence does not prove that no foreigners formed part of these associations. Only a few inscriptions reveal the names of their members, whereas all groups of *serapiastai* from Rhodes for example simply appear by the group’s name – no individual name or other specification was found.

The case of the benefactor on Kea who can be linked to the Ptolemaic army might indicate another pattern of the spread of *serapiastai*: through the influence of the Ptolemaic army in which people from all over the Mediterranean served and among which were Greeks as well as many others. This case will be considered later in this chapter.

³⁵⁴ Ll. 16 and 19.

³⁵⁵ Ll. 17 and 18.

³⁵⁶ Rhodes: first century BC, *RICIS* 204/0107/*IG* XII 1 165. and first century BC, *RICIS* 204/0106/*IG* XII 1 157. Lindos, 10 BC: *RICIS* 204/0340-42/*ILindos* 391-392 b. Cos first century BC, *RICIS* 204/1003/*ICos* V 278. Roman, *RICIS* 204/1008, stone marking the border of the cemetery of a *thiasos* of *isiastai*.

Another way to look at it may be that not all groups were able or willing to set up inscriptions in stone. This seems to be especially the case concerning the first generation of worshippers, who hardly ever become visible in the epigraphic evidence, perhaps owing to the fact that the assimilation of newly introduced cults at the individual level happened fairly rapidly. Nevertheless, regarding the evidence that has come down to us, it seems that at least in a second phase the groups were mostly maintained by Greeks and Greek citizens. And it seems as though people were not prevented from putting names indicating their non-Greek origin on their list, should they have wanted to do so. This is indicated by the inscription of the *synanoubiastai*, which proves membership of non-Greeks. However, the practice of naming one's origin in inscriptions seems to have existed and might have even been normal. It might have been a way of making a personal statement in Hellenistic times, probably as a second or third generation immigrant who had already succeeded in attracting funds and local members in the new environment. The people we find in the evidence, I would suggest, are high-achieving, wealthy individuals and successful examples of both cult initiations and voluntary associations. They were surely greatly outnumbered by ephemeral cults that have left no trace or evidence of individual members.

Closely linked to the Serapeia on Delos,³⁵⁷ six different voluntary associations were formed around the Egyptian deities, as introduced in chapter three. At least seventeen inscriptions record the activities of *therapeutai*.³⁵⁸ *Melanephoroi* “the ones dressed in black“, are attested as a group at least nine times,³⁵⁹ single members at least fourteen times.³⁶⁰ With one exception, all inscriptions can be dated to the period from the first half of the second century until the early nineties BC. Quantitatively less evidence has come down to us from the other groups. In fact four inscriptions prove the existence of the *Serapiastai*,³⁶¹ one

³⁵⁷ For details see the chapter on Delos.

³⁵⁸ All inscriptions in this footnote are published in *RICIS*: 202/0121 (end of third century BC), 202/0135 (first half second century BC), 202/0161 (before 240/39 BC), 202/0162 (before 166 BC), [202/0206-07 lists of *therapeutai*? (95/94 BC)], 202/0210 (95/94 ?), 202/0269 (119/18 BC or little later), 202/0281 (shortly after 116/15 BC), 202/0282 (115/4 BC), 202/0303 (112/1 BC), 202/0322 (105/4 B. C), 202/0351 (94/93 BC), 202/0352 (93/2 BC), 202/0384 (after 166 BC), 202/0421 (shortly after 166 BC), 202/0422 (between 166-157 BC), 202/0423 (157/6 BC), 202/0424 (156/5 BC), 202/0428 (145/4 BC).

³⁵⁹ All inscriptions in this footnote are published in *RICIS*: 202/0135 (first half second century BC), 202/0257 (124/3 BC), 202/0260 (123/2 BC), 202/0269 (119/18 BC or little later), 202/0281 (shortly after 116/15 BC), 202/0282 (115/4 BC), 202/0322 (105/4 BC), 202/0351 (94/93 BC), 202/0352 (93/2 BC).

³⁶⁰ All inscriptions in this footnote are published in *RICIS*: 202/0183 (vor 166 v. Chr), 202/0184, 202/0140-41 (both before 166 BC), 202/0183-84 (both before 166 BC), 202/0229 ? (149/8 ?), 202/0297-98 (both 112/1 BC), 202/0301-02 (both 112/1), 202/0342-43 (both 95/4 ?), 202/0422 (between 166-157 BC), 202/0423 (157/6 BC), 202/0424 (156/5 BC), 202/0428 (145/4 BC).

³⁶¹ All inscriptions in this footnote are published in *RICIS*: 202/0135 (first half second century BC), 202/0421 (shortly after 166 BC), 202/0422 (between 166-157 BC), 202/0424 (156/5 BC).

inscription mentions the *koinon ton dekadiston* and *dekadistrion*,³⁶² another one the *eranistai*³⁶³ and finally we learn about a *koinon ton enatiston* from two different inscriptions.³⁶⁴ The last three groups seem to have been somehow linked with each other, and shall therefore be treated together. The *koinon ton dekadiston*, consisting of nine men and two women, was led by the *synagogos* named Ariston. His origin is not further specified but one can find him at the same time among the members of the *koinon ton enatiston*,³⁶⁵ a group consisting of twenty-four male individuals. The same “double-membership” can be applied to a certain Apollodoros.³⁶⁶ This habit of being involved with or being part of several groups seems to have been normal among these groups.³⁶⁷

What about the attested origins of ordinary members or adherents of these cults? Most of the members and officers are mentioned simply by their first name. However, some origins can be traced. Among the *dekadistai* and *dekadistriai* we find a member originating from Mylasa in Asia Minor³⁶⁸ and another one named Glaukias from the island of Amorgos.³⁶⁹ Dionysios, the *archithiasites* of the *koinon* of the *enatistai* originally came from Cassandreia, Macedonia.³⁷⁰ The name Baliton might suggest Phoenician or Punic roots.³⁷¹

The remaining three groups appear together in one inscription from the first half of the second century BC, though each group is represented on its own column.³⁷² All three groups, two of which are listed as *koina* whereas the *serapiastai* appear as *thiasos*, honour the same person, a priest called Kineas who was supposedly a Delian.³⁷³ It would be interesting to know why the groups chose different nomenclatures in order to specify their group. However, so far no clear identification of either term can be made. Since they only appear in long

³⁶² *RICIS* 202/0139 (before 166 BC) The *dekadistai* met, according to their name, every ten days, always on the first day of the decade, see comment in *RICIS*-I, p. 210.

³⁶³ *RICIS* 202/0134 (196 BC).

³⁶⁴ *RICIS* 202/0140 (before 166 BC) and *RICIS* 202/0141 (before 166 BC).

³⁶⁵ *RICIS* 202/0140.

³⁶⁶ See *RICIS*-I, comment p. 210. Apollodoros is mentioned in *RICIS* 202/0139 (196 BC) and *RICIS* 202/0134 (before 166 BC).

³⁶⁷ This is especially true for the members of the *koinon* of *enatistai* from 202/0140. Here we find a different Apollonios (l. 9) and a certain Aischrion who are equally members of the *eranistai* of *RICIS* 202/0134. The list also contains another Apollonios, a *grammateus* of the *koinon ton thiasiton* who is further specified as *melanephoros*.

³⁶⁸ Menippos is the son of Iatrokles from Mylasa who made a dedication to the Egyptian deities: *RICIS* 202/0143 (before 166 BC).

³⁶⁹ Laukais from Amorgos.

³⁷⁰ *RICIS* 202/0140, l. 3 and *RICIS* 202/0141 l. 3.

³⁷¹ L. 11, for the name see comment *RICIS* p. 211.

³⁷² *RICIS* 202/0135.

³⁷³ *RICIS* comment p. 209

inventory lists in the later years, the *serapiastai* stay rather anonymous with only one identifiable person attachable to them, the *synagogos* Menneas.³⁷⁴

Prior to the Athenian occupation the *therapeutai* stay almost as anonymous as the *Serapiastai*. They can be found in two dedicatory inscriptions without any further specification.³⁷⁵ One inscription, however, offers some insights. This dedicatory inscription to Nike from the end of the third century BC was set up by a priest named Apollonios and “those of the *therapeutai* who paid their due” and was found in Serapeion A.³⁷⁶ Bricault suggests that the priest mentioned in this decree is no less than the much-discussed Apollonios, whose grandfather was responsible for the introduction of the cult and who fought a court-case against the people from Delos, when he wanted to erect a Serapeion, as discussed in chapter three.³⁷⁷ According to Bricault, this decree to Nike was set up after Apollonios succeeded in court and after he built his Serapeion (A).

A single *melanephoros*, named Ktesippos and originally from Chios represents the *melanephoroi* of the period before the Athenian occupation.³⁷⁸ Nevertheless, he also appears very prominently in inscriptions of a later date, namely in inventory inscriptions. In those inscriptions, where he is recorded as having dedicated several gifts to the gods, mainly little figurines, he appears as *melanephoros*.³⁷⁹

Most of the other dedications that were set up by the *therapeutai* and *melanephoroi* or that mention them date from within a time frame of about twenty years,³⁸⁰ entirely contained within the period of Athenian occupation. A set of five inscriptions that were either dedicated by or to the *melanephoroi* and *therapeutai* dates from this period. All people mentioned in the texts, most of whom are priests, are citizens from various Attic demes. The formulae of the dedications are more or less the same, always to the Athenian and Roman people and in one case even to Mithridates as well.³⁸¹ Apart from that, the *therapeutai* appear several times in the inventory lists of the sanctuaries of the Egyptian deities as *koinon ton therapeuton*, often

³⁷⁴ All inscriptions in this footnote are published in *RICIS*: 202/0421 (soon after 166 BC, l. 64) -, 22 (between 166 and 157 BC, l. 57) and -24 (156/55 BC, l. 88), together with *therapeutai* and twice also *melanephoroi*.

³⁷⁵ *RICIS* 202/0162 (before 166 BC). *RICIS* 202/0161 (shortly before 240/239 BC).

³⁷⁶ *RICIS* 202/0120.

³⁷⁷ See *RICIS* 202/0101 and chapter on Delos.

³⁷⁸ *RICIS* 202/0183 (vor 166 v. Chr.). *RICIS* 202/0184.

³⁷⁹ All inscriptions in this footnote are published in *RICIS*: 202/0423 (ll. 18, 25), -0424 (face B. Col. I, ll. 17, 18, 26), 0428 (face A. 1, l. 8/9), -0433 (face A. 1, ll. 18, 24). Alongside Ktesippos, another *melanephoros* named Apollonios of unknown origin appears in the inventory lists: 202/0421 (165-157/6 BC, coll. II, 1, l. 70), -0422 (166-157/6 BC, fr. a. 1, l. 60).

³⁸⁰ From 115/14-93/92 BC.

³⁸¹ All inscriptions in this footnote are published in *RICIS*: 202/0269, -0281, -0282, -0322, -0351, -0352 (93/92 BC to Athenians, Romans and Mithridates).

under the conduct of a named priest and often at various times in each inscription, each time with a different priest.³⁸²

The *melanephoroi* had set up two dedicatory inscriptions on their own, in both of which they honour people from Attic demes.³⁸³ Similar to the case of the *melanephoros* Ktesippos, other *melanephoroi* are mentioned among whom one can find some names indicating the individual's origin. A certain Theophilos from Antioch, *melanephoros*, proved himself very generous towards the Egyptian deities by dedicating the painting of walls and offering other equipment and furniture, probably for Serapeion C, where the stele was found.³⁸⁴ Yet another *melanephoros* from Antioch, Aristion, made a dedication in his own and in his family's name.³⁸⁵ Demetrios from Alexandria showed his generosity towards the gods by offering altars, tiles, sphinxes and a clock to the gods in his and his family's name.³⁸⁶ The inscription mentions a father and a daughter from Athens, who were priest and *kanephoros* at the same time. Yet another *melanephoros* from abroad can be counted among the worshippers, a certain Paris, son of Nikarchos from Seleukis.³⁸⁷ None of the non-Greeks that can be identified as such held an administrative or cultic position. The priests and *kanephoroi* mentioned in the decrees were all citizens from Attica. It seems as if those Athenians were leading the group of the *melanephoroi* as priests and *kanephoroi*, yet none of them appears as "simple" *melanephoros*. This observation goes hand in hand with a second one: apart from the *serapiastai*, none of the groups of worshippers make any more appearances during the Athenian occupation. And whereas we find non-Greeks and Delians as leaders and ordinary members of those early groups,³⁸⁸ it seems as if not only the variety of groups shrank noticeably, but also the variety of origins among the leading figures.

Since the evidence from Delos far outweighs the other evidence, it is worthwhile offering some provisional conclusions. The inscriptions from Delos show on the one hand that the cult of the Egyptian deities was introduced by an Egyptian and apparently maintained by him until the Athenians took control of the island including the sanctuaries. Voluntary associations, on the other hand, seem to have been likewise active both before and after the Athenian occupation, even though it seems as if only three variations of groups were

³⁸² *RICIS* 202/0521-24 and 0428.

³⁸³ *RICIS* 202/0257,- 0256.

³⁸⁴ *RICIS* 202/0297.

³⁸⁵ *RICIS* 101/0302.

³⁸⁶ *RICIS* 202/0342,-43 (copy).

³⁸⁷ *RICIS* 202/0301. The same Paris had erected another inscription: *RICIS* 202/0272.

³⁸⁸ See e. g. Kineas, a Delian priest worshipped by the *therapeutai*, *serapiastai* and *melanephoroi* in *RICIS* 202/0135 and Dionysios from Kassandreia, the president of the *enatistai* (*RICIS* 202/0140, l. 3).

supported by the Athenians. It might have been the case that the people who were attending one of the groups that existed before the Athenian occupation joined the *therapeutai* or *melanephoroi* afterwards, though there is no proof of that. After the Athenian occupation, non-Greeks and metics only appear as *melanephoroi*, and only one individual from Egypt can be recognised.³⁸⁹ On the one hand, the *melanephoroi* seem to have represented non-Greeks and metics, though the groups were – as far as one can tell – led by Athenians. The *therapeutai* on the other hand remain almost completely anonymous. Only one person appears with his name, although without any information about his origins.³⁹⁰ As discussed in chapter three, it would be very tempting to categorise the *therapeutai* as “simple” worshippers, using a general term to describe all those who gave dedications to the gods. Yet they clearly appear side by side with the other organised groups explicitly as a *koinon ton therapeuton*.³⁹¹

The case of the priest Apollodoros from Memphis cannot be connected with one specific group, but it is very likely that he was at least partly involved with one, since he offered benches for the cult-community to dine together at the *kline* of Serapis.³⁹²

Apart from the example of Delos, no direct connection between the *serapiastai* or other associations and Egyptian settlers could be found in the inscriptions so far, and even for Delos it is difficult to prove. With regard to the evidence from Rhamnus, it even seems as if the term was used to label a group of citizens rather than of foreigners. However, one should bear in mind that not all of the groups manifested themselves in detail in *stone*. Overall one can observe two tendencies: in some places where voluntary associations gathered around the Egyptian deities, their cults had been introduced earlier and can be attested for the first time about one hundred or two hundred years earlier. This can be seen most prominently in the example of Athens. On the other hand, as the example of Delos shows, one can also find both phenomena occurring more recently.³⁹³ Each situation can probably be interpreted differently in terms of their participants. In Athens, over the course of time the newly-worshipped deities had often been officially recognised and accepted by the city and were then chosen to form the centre of a voluntary association. On Delos things were different: at least before the

³⁸⁹ *RICIS* 202/0302, Demetrios from Alexandria.

³⁹⁰ Ploution, *RICIS* 202/0303.

³⁹¹ *RICIS* 202/0135.

³⁹² See the chapter on Delos.

³⁹³ Even though one could argue that the cult of the Egyptian deities is attested about three generations earlier, this would assume that one has decided to trust the claim made by Apollodoros that his great-grandfather initially introduced the cult.

Athenian takeover, the island seems to have been a fairly anarchic place in terms of the growth of both the city itself and the sanctuaries.³⁹⁴

4.2 Origins and originality of the Egyptian cults

Important questions arise when we look at voluntary associations worshipping newly-introduced deities which came to Greece with their own agenda. What was specific and original about their approach and did they keep it up once they arrived in Greece? We know, for instance, that from their first appearance in Greece certain peculiarities characterized the cult of the Egyptian deities and never disappeared. Among those was the daily opening and closing of the temple at fixed times, the rituals which included the usage of water of the Nile,³⁹⁵ and the specific knowledge of the priest contained in the hieroglyphs which were probably “unreadable” by the common Greek worshipper. This leads to the rather important question whether unfamiliar rituals indicate immigrant presence in particular cults or voluntary association. Or more precisely: did these cults require an immigrant presence to perform specific rituals? The next section explores these questions.

Concerning the formation of voluntary associations, we know about two forms taken over from Egyptian habits. The first one was the establishment of groups of people which met on a specific name-giving day. The second one was the *kline* of Serapis. Even though the latter is only rarely recorded in the epigraphic evidence in connection with voluntary associations,³⁹⁶ we may assume that specific rituals, or probably their “exotic” character, as well as certain dates linked with the deities, played an important role in the groups’ calendar.³⁹⁷

The case of the *Serapiastai* in Athens that was discussed earlier in this chapter, illustrates their ambiguity.³⁹⁸ We learn from the inscription that the group adapted existing features of regulations from other long-standing locally established traditions and cults. At the same time one can assume a certain loyalty to particular “original” traits that we know of from other places of worship of the Egyptian deities. Here it seems to be very important to differentiate between what was adopted, and what was consciously preserved. The cult of

³⁹⁴ This is clear from the sanctuaries to various deities from the terrace of strangers all the way up to mount Kynthos.

³⁹⁵ See most recently Kleibl, Kathrin 2009. *Iseion. Raumgestaltung und Kultpraxis in den Heiligtümern gräco-ägyptischer Götter im Mittelmeerraum*, Darmstadt, pp. 131-135.

³⁹⁶ For Delos *RICIS* 202/9191, end of third century BC and probably *RICIS* 202/0134, 196 BC. In Roman times from Thessaloniki *RICIS* 113/0575, third century AD.

³⁹⁷ Certain festivals, such as the *Ploiaphesia*, the opening festival of the shipping season in March were only introduced as a by-product of the newly-worshipped deities.

³⁹⁸ *RICIS* 101/0201 215/214 BC

Serapis had, admittedly, undergone a phase of reshaping to suit Greek norms before being imported to Greece. This seems to have been the first important step, since the specific inscription that informs us about their existence sounds like most other Athenian documents: not only are the administrative staff completely “Atticised”³⁹⁹ but the honours granted to the benefactors, namely the crowning with a crown of leaves and ribbons, are a common habit in Greece. The only unique element to be found in this inscription is, as mentioned earlier, the fact that the group is presided over by a woman.⁴⁰⁰ If one looks, however, for specifically Egyptian features one cannot find them – at least not in the inscription. Since we do not know where the group met, whether at the temple of the Egyptian deities or in their own premises, we cannot say whether or not they performed any rituals that actually were or were believed to be Egyptian in origin. But for the same reason we cannot rule it out completely either.⁴⁰¹ One also has to bear in mind that the inscriptions were erected for a certain audience, and were often publicly displayed. It seems to have been the habit that only the administrative regulations appear on these pieces of evidence, as other similar documents of groups, specifically in Athens, have shown.⁴⁰² Rather than informing the audience about issues or regulations concerning the actual ritual or practices, the administrative side of a group appeared in public, evoking an impression of legality to the reader. Besides, records within which specific cult practices or regulations of voluntary associations appear are very scarce in general, and in the case of the Egyptian deities in Greece non-existent. While the evidence for all the groups called *Serapiastai*, whether on Thasos, in Rhamnous, or on Rhodes,⁴⁰³ would support the observatation of a rather Greek-oriented administrative face being displayed to the outside world, other groups that were formed to honour the Egyptian deities show more specifically Egyptian features. Among these were the groups that can be found on Delos which met on a specific day in order to honour the deities with a meal.⁴⁰⁴ Here, closely linked to the establishment of several new Egyptian sanctuaries, an Egyptian tradition was established in the new environment, but in an apparently private context.

³⁹⁹ The people in charge of the group were all named after the usual Athenian clergy and magistrates consisting of a *tamias* (treasurer), *grammateus* (secretary), *epimeletes* and *hieropoioi*.

⁴⁰⁰ However, a similar case of a women presiding over a group not as *eranistria* but as *archeranistria* has come down to us in the form of a decree from Acharnai dating back to 50 BC. The document which lists the members and officials of an *eranistai*-group was published in *AJA* 64, 1960, p. 269.

⁴⁰¹ The *serapiastai* of Rhamnous for example dedicated a sanctuary to Isis and Serapis and to the city and their co-citizens but probably also for their own use. How far this mostly “Atticised” group (see the chapter about people) followed original Egyptian rituals remains unclear. The temple of Isis and Sarapis at Rhamnous has not been found yet.

⁴⁰² See chapter three, Athens.

⁴⁰³ On the various groups of *serapiastai* see chapter four.

⁴⁰⁴ For the *dekadistai* and *enatistai* see chapters three and four. For a case in Athens see *IG II²* 2701.

It has turned out to be a rather difficult task to find actual Egyptians among the members, benefactors, or initiators of voluntary associations devoted to the Egyptian deities. The epigraphic evidence contains very little information about individuals that could be seen as a link between Egyptian traditions and newly-established groups on Greek soil.⁴⁰⁵ However, this need not mean that there were no Egyptians involved. One should not forget that most Egyptians who came to Greece in Hellenistic times and specifically in the second and first centuries BC came from cities such as Alexandria, which had been “Greek” or Hellenised for more than one hundred years. Their names might have been Greek for several generations, and no means of distinction would be given in the onomastic record.⁴⁰⁶

Nevertheless, some magistrates and naming practices that we find among the groups honouring Egyptian deities may be linked to or allude to Egyptian roots or habits, namely the *hypostoloi*, “the ones dressing the cult-image”,⁴⁰⁷ which appear for instance in the form of a *koinon* in Eretria⁴⁰⁸ and Demetrias (Thessaly),⁴⁰⁹ and as a group in Amphipolis (Thrace).⁴¹⁰ Some scholars have suggested that the *hypostoloi* were specialists involved in the Egyptian habit of the daily cleansing and cladding of the cult statue.⁴¹¹ Another direction was taken by Veligianni who deduces the word from the Greek verb ὑποστέλλεσθαι which can be translated as “not saying something” or “keeping something secretly”.⁴¹² Taking that into account, she concludes that the word *hypostoloi* was used to denote an organised group of

⁴⁰⁵ For the results see chapter four.

⁴⁰⁶ Perhaps one might also expect the practice of double-naming, by which an Egyptian would adopt a Greek name but also in some instances keep his Egyptian name. This is known from Roman Egypt, where people used both of their names, for example on many decrees written on papyri.

⁴⁰⁷ On the connection between the *hypostoloi* and the cult of the Egyptian deities in Greece see Veligianni, Chrissoula 1986. *Hypostoloi* und Trierarchos auf einer neuen Inschrift aus Amphipolis, in *ZPE* 62, pp. 241-246:242. Whether the word *hypostoloi* derives, as sometimes suggested, from the words *stolistes* known in Greece and Egypt and *archistolistes*, which describes the clerical office of a person responsible for the daily toilet of the cult statue and which is almost exclusively known from Egypt, is discussed in Veligianni 1986 pp. 243-245. On the *hypostoloi* and their unclear function in the cult see further: Kleibl 2004, p. 80; Vidman, Ladislav 1970. *Isis und Serapis bei den Griechen und Römern. Epigraphische Studien zur Verbreitung und zu den Trägern des ägyptischen Kultes*, Berlin p. 62 and 73; and Dunand, Françoise 1973. *Le culte d'Isis dans le bassin oriental de la méditerranée* (EPRO 76, 3. vols.) Leiden, II, p. 25. The results of newer investigations into the term are presented by Malaise, Michele 2007. *Les hypostoles. Un titre isiaque, sa signification et sa traduction iconographique*, in: *CE* 82, pp. 302-322, who offers an etymological interpretation (p. 305) as well as an iconographical approach (pp. 309-316).

⁴⁰⁸ *RICIS* 104/0103, beginning of the second century BC.

⁴⁰⁹ *RICIS* 112/0703 and 112/0707, 117 BC.

⁴¹⁰ *RICIS* 113/0908, 67-6 BC.

⁴¹¹ See e. g. Dunand 1973 (2), p. 47 and Hölbl, Günther 1994. *Geschichte des Ptolemäerreiches*, Darmstadt, pp. 92-92

⁴¹² Bagnall, Roger 1976. *The administration of Ptolemaic possessions outside Egypt*, Leiden 1978, pp. 49-51. Most recently on the etymology of the word see Malaise 2007.

⁴¹² Veligianni 1986, p. 245.

worshippers of the Egyptian deities with deeper knowledge of the sacred secrets.⁴¹³ A third interpretation has been offered most recently by Michel Malaise, who argues that the word describes the actual clothes of the cult staff. Malaise adopts the idea originally proposed by Bruneau that the word *hypostolos* refers to “les porteurs d’un vêtement qui ne couvre pas la partie supérieure du tronc”.⁴¹⁴ Furthermore he tracks these special clothes iconographically in images taken from archaeological structures,⁴¹⁵ connects the specific garment to an Egyptian piece of clothing⁴¹⁶ and finally concludes that the *hypostoloi*, in order to emphasize their dignity, chose to wear a fashion inspired by the original Egyptian clergy.⁴¹⁷ Whichever solution one prefers, one can see that both interpretations are based on one central assumption which is important for our question: all versions understand the word as one which describes a group of worshippers or people exclusively attached to the cult of the Egyptian deities. Nevertheless none of the three inscriptions which inform us about the groups of *hypostoloi* gives away their specific character.⁴¹⁸ The decree from Demetrias was of a rather visible nature. It was addressed to the priest of Serapis who was officially appointed by the *polis*. The decree was supposed to be set up in the best visible place of the Serapeion. One might guess that being part of such a group was an attractive achievement. It might be comparable to a much later case, namely Lucius’ membership in the *collegium* of *pastophores* in Rome at the end of the protagonist’s “spiritual” journey, described in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹³ Veligianni 1986, p. 245.

⁴¹⁴ Malaise 2007, 307.

⁴¹⁵ Malaise 2007, pp. 309-316.

⁴¹⁶ Malaise 2007, pp. 316-318.

⁴¹⁷ Malaise 2007, p. 321.

⁴¹⁸ The opposite is the case: the fairly detailed inscription from Demetrias (*RICIS* 112/0703) can be described as a honorary decree using the usual formulae in which the *koinon* of *hypostoloi* honours Kriton, a priest and benefactor, for his generosity towards the group with the usual honours such as a golden crown and a portrait, the crowning should take place at every meeting of the group and for as long as Kriton lived (ll. 18-24).

⁴¹⁹ On the role of the *pastophores* in the cult of Isis see Kleibl 2009, p. 159; Merkelbach, Reinhold 2001². *Isis Regina – Zeus Sarapis. Die griechisch-ägyptische Religion nach den Quellen dargestellt*, München, p.124; Dunand 1973 (vol. 2), pp. 157-158.

4.3 Egyptian foundations of sanctuaries?

In the period slightly prior to the date of the inscriptions of the *serapiastai* and similar groups, namely before the third and second centuries BC, we find that some cult-foundations known to us were set up by Egyptians. The Iseion in Eretria which dates to the end of the fourth and beginning of the third century BC, was founded by a group of people who called themselves Egyptians.⁴²⁰ No evidence for the activity of *serapiastai* was found in Eretria, but there was evidence of other groups worshipping the Egyptian deities. Two different groups can be connected to the Egyptian deities and the Iseion, namely a *koinon* of *melanephoroi*, “the ones dressed in black“, and of the *hypostoloi*, both active in the third century BC. Part of the group included a person who had the role of priest. The institution of the priesthood might go back to an initially Egyptian initiative,⁴²¹ and a *zakeros*, a “temple-warden”.⁴²² No list of names allows further insight into the constellation of the members. Nevertheless it is noteworthy that the term *melanephoroi* only appears in Greece, as stated in chapter three, and cannot be linked to any Egyptian tradition.⁴²³ The other group of people that becomes manifest in the inscriptions are called *nauarchs*. Their character, however, is not entirely unambiguous. On the contrary, it is very doubtful whether they can be seen as an association in their own right or whether they were simply involved as one-off participants in the *Ploiaphesia*, the opening celebration of the shipping season under the aegis of Isis. Nevertheless, the evidence, which consists of lists that probably name the participants, provides information about the people’s origin.⁴²⁴ The lists show that rather late, namely from the first century BC onwards, both inhabitants from Eretria and Italians as well as members of Roman families known from other places on Euboeia, as well as slaves and freedmen, appear in the inscriptions.⁴²⁵ Only one Egyptian name, however, can be clearly identified.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁰ The inscription that was engraved on a stone that seems to have been the lintel of the temple-door says Αἰγύπτιοι Ἴσιδι, *RICIS* 104/0101. On the date of the inscription in connection with the sanctuary see Bruneau, Philippe 1975. *Le sanctuaire et le culte des divinités égyptiennes à Érètrie* (EPRO 45) Leiden, pp. 17, 105 and 115.

⁴²¹ *RICIS* 104/0103.

⁴²² On the term *zakeros*, replaced in the course of time by the *neokoros*, see Estienne, Sylvia 2005. Clergé des cultes égyptiens, *ThesCRA V*, 100-102:100.

⁴²³ See chapter three and Kleibl 2004, p. 81.

⁴²⁴ *RICIS* 104/0109, names 94 people, both women and men; in a second inscription male and female *nauarchs* are honoured *RICIS* 104/0111. On the *nauarchs* see also Bruneau 1975 pp. 137-141.

⁴²⁵ See e. g. the family of the Corneli, whose member Markos Kornelios appears on an inscription from Chalkis (*IG XII*, 9, 916). Among the Greek names the patronym Paranomos appears, which can be found very often in Eretria, on this see Bruneau 1975, pp. 106-107 and 81-83.

⁴²⁶ *RICIS* 104/0104, l. 20: Αἰγύπτιος Διονυσίου. The name appears on a list that cannot be linked directly to any of the groups but which was found within the sanctuary and is likely to belong to one of the groups.

In Athens or more specifically in the Piraeus, a sanctuary of Isis had been erected by Egyptians in the fourth century BC, as we learn from a much cited inscription.⁴²⁷ The *serapiastai* of Nikippe, however, cannot be connected to it.

The Delian case of Apollonios, the self-proclaimed grandchild of the priest from Memphis who introduced the cult two generations before, had to fight in court for his right to build a new, proper Serapeion. His case might give an idea of how private foundations were dealt with during the first half of the Hellenistic period about which we are normally not informed.⁴²⁸

Another early Greek sanctuary of Egyptian deities, the “Sarapeion” in Thessalonica, was in use for as long as five hundred years.⁴²⁹ It has been suggested that this sanctuary was just as likely to have been founded by an individual from Egypt, most probably an Egyptian priest, following the example from Delos.⁴³⁰ No proof, however, for such an Egyptian foundation has been offered

4.4 Priests and specialists from Egypt

The original “Egyptian” seems to have had a special role in the cults of Isis, Serapis, Anubis and other Egyptian deities, at least in some places. In the city of Priene in about 200 BC, a public decree was passed in which the rule was laid down that it was necessary for the priest to find an Egyptian who knew how to perform the sacrifice properly.⁴³¹ At approximately the same time, namely the second century BC, in nearby Magnesia at the Meander, a priesthood of Serapis was sold with all its rights and duties.⁴³² These two inscriptions seem to point in two different directions: in Priene a specialist originating from Egypt was required by a sacred law, whereas in Magnesia the priesthood was sold and probably did not require any special knowledge or ability apart from financial security.⁴³³

⁴²⁷ *IG* II²337, Piraeus, 333/2 BC (ll. 42-43).

⁴²⁸ On the discussion see Siard 1998, pp. 477-483, who suggests that Apollodoros had in the first instance to go to court in order to claim access to the necessary water supply, since drinking water was so scarce on Delos, rather than for legal reasons concerning religious space.

⁴²⁹ Steimle, Christopher 2006. Das Heiligtum der ägyptischen Götter in Thessaloniki und die Vereine in seinem Umfeld, in: *Religions orientales – culti misterici*, Corinne Bonnet/Jörg Rüpke/Paolo Scarpi edd., pp. 27-38:27.

⁴³⁰ Voutiras, Emmanuel 2005. Sanctuaire privé – culte public? Le cas du Sarapieion de Thessalonique, in: Dasen, Véronique/Piérart, Marcel (edd.) *Ιδία και δημοσία/Les cadres "privés" et "publics" de la religion grecque antique* (Kernos suppl., 15) Liège, pp. 273-288: 279.

⁴³¹ *RICIS* 304/0802, ll. 20-23: “The priest also provides the Egyptian who performs the sacrifice in a skilful way; nobody other than the priest is allowed to offer sacrifice to the goddess in an unskilful way”, transl. by Dignas, Beate 2008. Greek priests of Sarapis? in: Beate Dignas/Kai Trampedach (edd.) *Practitioners of the divine. Greek priests and religious officials from Homer to Heliodorus*, London, pp. 73-88: 83.

⁴³² *RICIS* 304/0701.

⁴³³ Although we do not know whether or not a specialist was required to assist this priest.

Chaniotis in his study on priests as religious experts excludes the priests of the Egyptian deities on the grounds that they were a supposedly “separate phenomenon”.⁴³⁴ Nevertheless, the examples of the priests of Serapis that are known to us have shown that the opposite is the case: as soon as one can identify a priest of Serapis, he has usually been Hellenised or becomes Hellenised very soon.⁴³⁵ The first generation hardly ever appears. Religious specialists, as required in the case of Magnesia, are known to Greek and “Egyptian” cults and the habit of winning a mostly annual priesthood by purchase, or a lifelong one due to familial inheritance, are well-known practices all over Greece.⁴³⁶ Only in the very few cases where an expert of Egyptian origin is required does it seem as if a certain uniqueness concerning the regulation of the sacrifice or the ritual can be observed.⁴³⁷ It does not become clear, however, to what extent this is true for the priest himself: even in the case of Priene, the priest needed an expert from Egypt and it is at no point mentioned that the priest himself had to be Egyptian or specially educated. Apart from that it seems to be impossible to draw any general conclusions on that matter. After the survey of the evidence it looks as if the way in which one cult of Serapis was acted out or designed was often a local decision that was taken by certain individuals involved in the cult.

Nevertheless a specific and sometimes “Egyptian” character, if only by choosing to worship an Egyptian deity, could be a means used by voluntary associations perhaps to attract non-Egyptian members but also to keep actual Egyptians interested.⁴³⁸ Especially in the case of those groups which continued the Egyptian tradition of meeting on a specific day, sometimes in order to hold the *kline* of the gods, it may also be these very traditions which attracted non-Egyptians. Some groups might have adopted Egyptian features, names or habits out of mere curiosity or political allegiance. Others might have been interested in some specific characteristics of the deities. The latter can best be illustrated by the example of the

⁴³⁴ Chaniotis, Angelos 2008. Priests as Ritual Experts in the Greek world, in: Beate Dignas/Kai Trampedach (edd.) *Practitioners of the divine. Greek priests and religious officials from Homer to Heliodorus*, London, pp.17-34:20.

⁴³⁵ I am thinking of the example of Delos where the Egyptian priest appears in the records as a member of the family that had been living on Delos for four generations. The priesthood of Serapis is then soon after taken over by Greeks, mostly Athenians in line with the Athenian control over Delos.

⁴³⁶ Chaniotis 2008, pp. 17, 19, 21.

⁴³⁷ This becomes visible with the example of the sacred law of Priene in which, according to Dignas p. 83, terminology is used that is connected with Egypt, l. 29 (κατεχομένοις ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ).

⁴³⁸ On the maintenance of the Egyptian features in the cult of Isis and the Egyptian deities outside Egypt in Roman times see the collection of conference-papers edited in 2005: Bricault, Laurent/Versluys, Jon/Meyboom, Peter G. P. (edd.) 2005. *Nile into Tiber. Egypt in the Roman world, Proceedings of the third conference of Isis studies* (RGRW 159) Leiden

therapeutes, which are thought to be linked to the healing nature of the Egyptian deities and mainly Serapis, very much like the *therapeutes* of Asklepios.

One may conclude that it is very likely that certain rituals that originated in Egypt were continued or adopted by the initiators of voluntary associations that were newly established in Greece. Yet those rituals and the accompanying offices were transformed or sometimes even newly invented in Greece, albeit in many cases based on Egyptian examples. That way attractiveness was created on two levels: by traditional Egyptian features that were important for diaspora Egyptians, and at the same time interesting and to some extent even exotic features for Greeks. On a second level, voluntary associations used traditional Greek ways of public representation and appearance that could be an advantage for newly immigrated people and for traditional Greeks themselves.

4.5 Groups worshipping other newly-introduced gods

What about the cults of other newly-worshipped deities? Even though the rather general thesis that there are groups mainly consisting of non-Greeks did not turn out to be valid in relation to the Egyptian deities, this section shall consider the constitution of voluntary associations that gathered around other newly worshipped deities, such as Sabazios and Kybele,⁴³⁹ as well as the Syrian deities and the Jewish god using the same questions with which the Egyptian deities were approached before: namely whether the groups around those deities a) consisted of non-Greeks and metics at all and b) were used by non-Greeks and metics to immigrate and interact with citizens.

One of the earliest among these groups that can be traced in the epigraphic records is the group of Thracian *orgeones* of Bendis in late Classical Athens. This group had been officially granted the right to build a temple and to perform their festival by the city of Athens. They followed their own rituals such as the horse-back torch race which is described as foreign to the Athenians and innate to the Thracian cult.⁴⁴⁰ At the same time they honoured their officials in the Athenian way by granting them a crown and ivy leaves and they adopted a most Athenian term to describe their form of group, *orgeones*. Whether they chose the name themselves or whether they were labelled as such by the Athenians who were reminded of their own tradition of *orgeones* must remain unresolved. The case of the Thracian

⁴³⁹ Even though the origin of Kybele is uncertain and it remains far from clear whether she was truly a foreign deity, especially since her appearance differs from place to place, she seems to have been seen as a foreign deity. At least one can state that all literary sources from the sixth century BC onwards describe her as Phrygian, Vassileva, Maya 2001. Further considerations on the cult of Kybele, in: *Anatolian studies* 51, pp. 51-63:51.

⁴⁴⁰ *IG II²* 1283, ll. 9-11 (according to the customs of the Thracians and the law of the *polis*).

orgeones of Bendis shows, on the one hand, that the establishment of the groups of Bendis was in the first instance a necessary step for the Thracians to perform a specific ritual. The fact that the Athenian citizens seem to have liked and adapted the idea by founding their own group of Bendis-*orgeones* shows, on the other hand, two things. Firstly, that the citizens were aware of their choice of the deities to worship and that it was in addition to, not instead of, their rather traditional ones; and secondly the institutional form in which the new deity was worshipped. Yet, however many and detailed are the inscriptions concerning the associations around Bendis that have come down to us, none of them mentions names which can identify the actual participants' origins.

A group of *sabaziastai* was active in the Piraeus around the time of 102/101 BC.⁴⁴¹ The group apparently met in a sanctuary at Piraeus which had perhaps been used by worshippers of Sabazios before,⁴⁴² though the evidence is scarce.⁴⁴³ However, the inscription from 102/101 BC consists principally of a list of members and reveals information concerning their origin. We learn from the text that a certain Zenon from Antioch was the *tamias*, the priest of the group, whereas the offices of the *epimeletes* and the secretary were held by an individual called Dorotheos from the *deme* of Oa.⁴⁴⁴ Fifty-three male names appear altogether, of which thirty-seven can be identified as names of Athenians. Apart from the Athenians one can find two people from Antioch,⁴⁴⁵ two from Laodicea⁴⁴⁶ and three from Miletus.⁴⁴⁷ Other individuals were originally from other places in Greece or Magna Graecia such as Heraclea,⁴⁴⁸ Macedon,⁴⁴⁹ and Apameia.⁴⁵⁰ Even though the group was led by a non-Greek priest, the majority of the members were Athenians. No rules or patterns can be identified which could be applied to identify the origin of the members or that can be specifically connected with the deity. It remains unclear why the group chose Sabazios as the

⁴⁴¹ *IG II²* 1335, see also the chapter on Athens.

⁴⁴² *Hieron*, l. 7.

⁴⁴³ A second inscription (*IG II²*, 2932) from 342/1 BC engraved in a statue base and mentioning *hieropoioi* was found at the same spot. *Hieropoioi*, however do not appear in *IG II²* 1335, neither do *sabaziastai* or Sabazios in *IG II²* 2923. Besides, a time-span of more than two-hundred years separates the two inscriptions which are datable through the archons which are named in each document. The group might have simply found a former sanctuary and reused it as a private meeting place to hold assemblies and sacrifices. A connection between the two inscriptions was suggested by Mikalson 1998, pp. 278-79 and Lane, Eugene N. 1985. *Corpus Cultus Iovis Sabazii II* (EPRO 100) Leiden, ns. 51 and 52, pp. 24-26. In addition Lane refers to a judgement of Sterling Dow, who claimed that the inscription was used earlier in the late fourth century BC and later re-engraved by the *sabaziastai* p. 24.

⁴⁴⁴ Ll. 9-10 and ll. 11-13.

⁴⁴⁵ L. 9, *tamias* and l. 32.

⁴⁴⁶ Ll. 30 and 31.

⁴⁴⁷ Ll. 16, 23, 61.

⁴⁴⁸ L. 39.

⁴⁴⁹ L. 36.

⁴⁵⁰ L. 55.

deity that they mainly worshipped. It is likely, however that the god's closeness to Dionysus on the one hand but his otherness on the other hand were a crucial factor: owing to his character, Dionysus was a popular focus for voluntary associations, but at the same time he also had a fixed place in the religious landscape of Athens in relation to festivals and sanctuaries. Nevertheless, it seems as if Sabazios offered an alternative to Dionysus, probably manifested in the ritual or other cultic context which we cannot identify. Why would they otherwise choose Sabazios at all, one might ask, and not Dionysus, who was a much more common subject of worship? According to Mikalson such groups in which non-Greeks, metics and citizens were members side by side appeared in Athens only around the time of the *sabaziastai*, namely at the turn of the second to the first century BC.⁴⁵¹ This is not exactly true, as we shall see in the case of the *orgeones* of the Mother of the Gods. More importantly, however, the leading office within the group of *sabaziastai* was occupied by a non-Greek without any direct link to the deity or any specialism such as religious skills, as far as one can tell. Only the second position in the hierarchy of offices was held by a person from Attica.⁴⁵²

Some groups can be found that gathered around the Mother of the Gods: three inscriptions from Triglia⁴⁵³ refer to a *thiasos* of Zeus, Apollo and Cybele.⁴⁵⁴ The inscriptions date back to the middle and end of the first century BC.⁴⁵⁵ The association apparently consisted of two groups: the *thiasitai* who primarily worshipped Zeus and whose priests are exclusively male, and the *thiasitai* and *thiasitides*, men and women worshipping Apollo and Kybele. Priestesses of the goddess were accordingly female. Membership of the group that worshipped Apollo was open to both sexes. One inscription shows Cybele and Apollo in a sacrificial scene underneath which a group of worshippers is depicted reclining at a meal.⁴⁵⁶ Except for a priestess and a priest, who both carry Greek names, no other names are mentioned. The most striking evidence for groups worshipping the Mother of the Gods in Greece has been found in Piraeus. The groups have already been introduced in chapter two, so here I shall offer only a brief reminder and mainly focus on the people that were engaged in the groups. The groups appear for the first time at the end of the third century BC.⁴⁵⁷ At the

⁴⁵¹ Mikalson 1998, p. 279.

⁴⁵² Nevertheless, one probably has to bear in mind that the group also held a fund, an *eranos* which was contributed to by the members (ll. 5-6) and which paid for probably the most important activity, the commensality.

⁴⁵³ Triglia belonged to the territory of Byzantion.

⁴⁵⁴ *IApameia* 33-35, pp. 50-56.

⁴⁵⁵ *IApameia*, p. 55.

⁴⁵⁶ *IApameia* 35, photo p. 52.

⁴⁵⁷ For more information on the groups see case-study Athens.

beginning in 281/80 BC one can identify a group of *thiasotai* that was led by metics.⁴⁵⁸ Ten years later an inscription was found at the same spot carrying a text in which a group called itself at one and the same time *thiasotai* and *koinon ton orgeonon*⁴⁵⁹ and which now apparently consisted mainly of citizens. Either way, since both inscriptions only name certain officers and their wives, it is impossible to estimate the actual origin of the remaining members. If one follows the idea of an amalgamation of both groups, one can observe at the end of the third century a joint group of worshippers of the Mother of the Gods appearing for the first time under the description *orgeones*. This new nomenclature can be traced for about a century.⁴⁶⁰ Each of the inscriptions that were found names a citizen in charge, but among the *epimeletai* of the group from 178/77,⁴⁶¹ a metic could also be identified.⁴⁶²

To sum up, from the outside the association of both groups looks like an annexation of the earlier non-citizen *thiasotai* by some citizen-*orgeones* who took over the idea and probably included some of the former members. The offices were also taken over by citizens. With regards to the integration of non-Greeks and metics, one may say that both groups profit from the situation: the strangers could mingle with citizens, the citizens were able to worship some supposedly newly-introduced deity and to acquire important positions within the groups which might have been unavailable to them in their old *orgeones*-groups. However, apart from the well-documented case in Piraeus, Kybele seems not to have been a very attractive subject to build a group around. Only in Roman times and mainly in the western parts of the Empire is it possible to identify an enormous increase in specialised groups which were built around the cult of Magna Mater, a deity if not identical, at least influenced by the idea of Kybele. These groups were mainly the *dendrophoroi*, *kanephoroi* and probably the *hastiferi*.⁴⁶³ Poland has tried to argue that the *dendrophoroi*, which he describes as being in

⁴⁵⁸ *IG II²* 1273, 281/280 or 265/264 BC, the priest Kephalion from Herakleia (Pontika?) ll. 28-29 and Soterichos from Troezen (Peloponnese) l. 10.

⁴⁵⁹ *IG II²* 1316, 272/71 BC.

⁴⁶⁰ *IG II²* 1314, 213/2 BC and *IG II²* 1315, 211/10 BC, *IG II²* 1328 A-B, Piraeus, A= 183-2/B= 175/4 BC.

⁴⁶¹ *IG II²* 1327.

⁴⁶² Ismard argues that Ergasion, l. 33, was a metic rather than a slave as suggested by Mikalson 1998 p. 143 and Parker 2006 p. 192, since the name appears in the Lexicon of Greek personal names as either citizen or metic. He also argues that the idea of a slave in the position of an *epimeletes* is rather strange, whereas a metic might have been in a position to afford such an office. Ismard 2008, p. 379, n. 94.

⁴⁶³ The most impressive example of the interaction between the cult of the Great Mother and the voluntary associations comes from Ostia: here one can find not only the *dendrophoroi* and *hastiferi* but also *cannephoroi* [*cannephoroi?*], yet another group that supposedly was involved in the worship of the Great Mother. The most striking fact is that inscriptions and meeting places of all the groups were found in one common complex around the "Campus of Magna Mater" (Regio IV, Insula I). *Dendrophoroi* were in a socially higher position in terms of their members – as indicated by the epigraphic evidence – whereas the group of the *hastiferi* rather consisted of

between two types, on the one hand a guild and on the other hand a cult-association, were originally in their Greek version more of a voluntary association than a guild.⁴⁶⁴ As support for his argument he uses an inscription from Tomis which lists some members and cult personnel. In fact, only two inscriptions referring to *dendrophoroi* were found in places occupied by Greeks, one in Tomis and another one from Sofia. Both inscriptions are datable to the second century AD and both groups are very likely to have been only established during high Imperial times.⁴⁶⁵ The actual origin of the *dendrophoroi*⁴⁶⁶ and the reason for their success can neither be related to nor explained by the Greek forms of voluntary associations that assembled around the Great Mother. In places such as the Piraeus, where her cult was successful for a long time in privately organised groups, no evidence indicates that, say, *dendrophoroi* were established during the Imperial period.

An inscription from the Dodecanese island of Astipalaia, dating from the end of the third century and the beginning of the second century BC, can be seen as the first evidence in Greece of a *koinon* of *thiasotai* built around a Syrian deity, in this case Atargatis.⁴⁶⁷ Two priests are mentioned with patronyms, of whom one seems to have been a Syrian or in some way connected to Syria.⁴⁶⁸ The group appears to have been already fairly Hellenised and had adapted Greek formulae in publicising decisions.⁴⁶⁹

Delos was an important area for the emergence of groups that gathered around the Syrian deities in Greece. Although the groups were introduced in chapter three, it is worth focussing more closely on her worshippers, who were organised initially as *koina* of Syrian *thiasotes*⁴⁷⁰ and then as *therapeutes*. While the first of these two inscriptions mentions two names but does not give any insight concerning the origin of the people involved, only providing a meeting date on the twentieth day, the second inscription reveals more. Here a certain Dionysios is mentioned, the *synagogeus* of the group who, according to the inscription, came originally from Alexandria. His position is, however, not further specified.

liberti and slaves, Bollmann, Beate 1998. *Römische Vereinshäuser : Untersuchungen zu den Scholae der römischen Berufs-, Kult- und Augustalen-Kollegien in Italien*, Mainz, p. 323.

⁴⁶⁴ Poland 1909, p. 43.

⁴⁶⁵ *SEG* 27.399, Tomis (AD 199-201) and *IGBulg* IV 1925 (after AD 117).

⁴⁶⁶ If one assumes that they were established before the re-organisation of the cult by the emperor Claudius, see Fishwick, Duncan 1967. The *cannophori* and the March festival of Magna Mater, in: *TaPhA*, 97, pp. 193-202:194.

⁴⁶⁷ *IG* XII 3 178 third/second century BC.

⁴⁶⁸ L. 2.

⁴⁶⁹ On another formula in the inscription that is paralleled by a formulation found in Baalbek, see Baslez, Marie-Françoise 2005. Les notables entre eux. Recherches sur les associations d'Athènes à l'époque romaine, in: Simone Follet (ed.) *L'hellénisme d'époque romaine : nouveaux documents, nouvelles approches : actes du colloque international à la mémoire de Louis Robert, Paris, 7-8 juillet 2000*, Paris, pp. 105-120.

⁴⁷⁰ The first inscription is *ID* 2225. The second inscription appeared initially in the first half of the second century BC before the Athenian rule. *RICIS* 202/0194; Will/Schmid 1985, p. 139.

A prosopographic approach to the devotees that can be found in the inscriptions of the sanctuary more generally shows that the identifiable people that can be linked with the Syrian deities often originated from Semitic backgrounds, indicated by their names having a Semitic and a Greek part.⁴⁷¹ Among those, two main groups with common origin can be identified, seven individuals originating from Antioch and six from Laodicea. Others came from places in Phoenicia and Palestine, Asia Minor, Greece and southern Italy.⁴⁷² We may assume that some of these other worshippers were also engaged in these groups or were even members of such groups, nonetheless no lists which could prove the involvement of particular people has come down to us. Among the *therapeutai* of the Syrian goddess, which only appear with that nomenclature under Roman rule, one can recognise a similar variety of origins,⁴⁷³ though no particular rule can be applied to identify a specific pattern of membership. However, Athenians, metics and non-Greeks from various places seem to have been part of the groups at the same time and one can certainly speak of a space of integration for immigrants from all over Greece and the near East and probably even immigrants from Athens.⁴⁷⁴ Women also took part in the groups and appear regularly in the inscriptions. A closer look at one of the main inscriptions will give a better idea of the composition of the *therapeutai*. A good example is provided by an inscription which carried a list of *therapeutai* from 108/07 BC and which was set up in the theatre of Hagne Aphrodite. The text on the stele contains well over one hundred and twenty names of members and officers of various origins, status and gender.⁴⁷⁵ Women either appear as wives or daughters or in some instances with their full names.⁴⁷⁶ Some people that are inscribed here, such as the *archizapphos* Philippos, can be found in one or more other inscriptions.⁴⁷⁷ To what extent this unique position of the *archizapphos* was a translation of a Syrian office into the Greek world, as suggested by

⁴⁷¹ Will/Schmid 1985, p. 140.

⁴⁷² Will/Schmid 1985, p. 140.

⁴⁷³ The *therapeutai* of the Syrian deity appear in (at least) nineteen inscriptions which all approximately date to a period within the same twenty years (if not indicated otherwise, all inscriptions in this footnote are published in *ID*): 2222 (110/9 BC), 2224 (105/4 BC), 2227 (118/17 BC), 2229 (112/1 B. C), 2230 (110/9 BC), 2231 (110/9 BC), 2234 (106/5 BC), 2237(100/99 BC), 2240 (96/5 BC), 2241 (?), 2250 (107/6 BC), 2251-2252 (each 108/7 and 106/5 BC), 2253 (106/05 BC), 2277 (?), 2531 (?), 2626 (113/12 BC ?), 2628 (108/7 BC), *SEG* 35:887 (108/7 BC).

⁴⁷⁴ See e. g. *ID* 2224 with Artemidoros from Antioch and Artemidoros Isidoros from Miletus and Philoxenos from Sounion or *ID* 2253 with Philostros from Ascalon and Midas from Heraklea in Lucania.

⁴⁷⁵ *ID* 2628.

⁴⁷⁶ Bruneau 1970, p. 471; Will/Schmid 1985 p. 141 talk rather generally about the inscriptions of the worshippers of the Syrian deities that: “les femmes de leur côté occupent une place relativement importante dans les inscriptions”.

⁴⁷⁷ Philippos appears in *ID* 2253 and *ID* 2274 both times in his function as *archezapphos*.

Baslez, must remain open;⁴⁷⁸ nevertheless one should recognise that this lifetime-office was a position innate to the worshippers of the Syrian gods on Delos.

To return to the actual *therapeutai* it is worth noticing that by no means all of the dedicators to the Syrian deities appear in the inscriptions of this specific group; many of them can be found independently in individual dedicatory inscriptions.⁴⁷⁹ In the inscriptions of the *therapeutai* one can observe a much stronger Athenian presence than in the other inscriptions of worshippers. This might be due to or at least connected to a possible “reformation” of the groups after the Athenian occupation. While one of the groups which appear before 166 BC was led by a *synagogeus* from Alexandria, subsequent personnel were non-Egyptian and the term does not appear again. A similar tendency can be identified concerning the priests of the Syrian deities: whereas the earliest evidence that mentions priests of the cult of the Syrian deities shows that they were from Hierapolis, one can only find Athenians from 112/11 BC onwards.⁴⁸⁰ Finally, we must confess that we have no specific evidence about the organisation of the *therapeutai* or their cultic activities, not even an indication of their meetings, as had been the case with the *thiasotai* of the same deity. One can only surmise that certain people from all over the Mediterranean, initially led by a *synagogeus* from Alexandria, but with an Athenian predominance, gathered under the label of the *therapeutai* and commonly worshipped the Syrian deities.

A totally different picture emerges in Athens itself: only two groups of worshippers of two different Syrian deities are attested by one inscription each, both found in the Piraeus. Between each inscription lies a period of three hundred years. The earlier inscription from the first century BC was set up by a group of *orgeones* of the Syrian Aphrodite which was led by a Corinthian priestess.⁴⁸¹ No other participants are recorded in the text and no further information is contained in the inscription. The second inscription dates to the years AD 200-211 and attests another *synodos* of *orgeones* of worshippers of the Syrian goddess Belela.⁴⁸² The inscription lists the members and priests of the group, and separately lists seventeen

⁴⁷⁸ Baslez 1977, p. 238.

⁴⁷⁹ Will/Schmid 1985 argue that the worshippers were generally called *therapeutai* in the inscriptions. This however, seems implausible to me since only some of the dedications are labelled as such and in connection with different people who might even wish to appear all together in one inscription (*ID* 2628). Nevertheless one might speak of a development/enlargement of the voluntary associations from the time before and after the Athenian occupation. This might have led to the re-naming or new establishment of voluntary associations around the Syrian deities.

⁴⁸⁰ Will/Schmid 1985, p. 140.

⁴⁸¹ *IG* II² 1337, 97/6 BC, see also the chapter on Athens.

⁴⁸² *IG* II² 2361.

priestesses. The *pater* of the group was a citizen⁴⁸³ as were, as far as one can tell, most of the other individuals. At least, no non-Greeks appear except for sporadic Roman names, although this might not mean much any more by the third century AD.

On the island of Nisyros, in Imperial times, another group of Syrian worshippers came together as *aphrodisiastai*.⁴⁸⁴ The group was involved with the Imperial cult. No further information about the members has come down to us. As for the worshippers of the various Syrian deities, no common pattern or language could be discovered. In fact the evidence suggests that most of the people that participated were not only Greek speakers but often even held Greek citizenship and most of them made use of or are known by Greek names. To identify actual Syrians with certainty is, as mentioned before, a rather difficult task.

The Samaritans on Delos who describe themselves as Israelites and who met in their own meeting place, the *proseuche*, honoured in their inscriptions two people who were of Greek origin but foreigners on Delos. One of them was named Sarapion, son of Iason and he came from Knossos.⁴⁸⁵ The second person mentioned was Menippos, the son of Artemidoros from Herakleia.⁴⁸⁶ In this case no one who appears in the inscription is a local person. Yet, one might ask, who was local on Delos in this period? We must perhaps assume that a non-Greek and metic presence was not necessarily the exception, but maybe the rule. The unusual aspect of this inscription may lie in the fact that the Israelites who sacrifice to the god of Mount Garizim, and who appear at least to some extent as a voluntary association which meets in their own premises, honour two metics from other places in Greece. It is rather unlikely that the two men from Crete and most likely from the Peloponnese or Magna Graecia shared the Israelites' object of worship, since it was a rather locally linked deity. Nevertheless, the chance that they were involved in the cult cannot be excluded, especially since Delos seems to have been the place to become involved with the cults of newly-worshipped and exotic deities. However, the inscription suggests that, at least on Delos, people from all over interacted with each other without the intervention of locals. This phenomenon is recognisable from Piraeus but there it was the exception. Apart from the scarcity of specific symbols in the early Diaspora, not many inscriptions have survived which

⁴⁸³ From Piraeus (l. 16).

⁴⁸⁴ *IG* XII³ 104.

⁴⁸⁵ *SEG* 32:809, 150-50 BC: οἱ ἐν Δήλῳ Ἰσραελεῖται οἱ ἀ-/παρχόμενοι εἰς ἱερὸν Ἀργα-/ριζεῖν στεφανοῦσιν χρυσῶ/στεφάνῳ Σαραπίωνα Ἰάσο-/νος Κνώσιον εὐεργεσίας/ένεκεν τῆς εἰς ἑαυτούς.

⁴⁸⁶ *SEG* 32:810, 250-175 BC: [οἱ ἐν Δήλῳ]/Ἰσραηλίται οἱ ἀπαρχόμενοι εἰς ἱερὸν ἄγιον Ἀρ-/γαριζεῖν ἐτίμησαν vac. Μένιππον/Ἀρτεμιδώρου Ἡρά-/κλειον αὐτὸν καὶ τοὺς ἐγγόνους αὐτοῦ κατασκευ-/άσαντα καὶ ἀναθέντα ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων ἐπὶ προσευχῇ τοῦ /θε[οῦ] ΤΟΝ[– – – – –] /ΟΛΟΝΚΑΙΤΟ[– c.6–8 – καὶ ἐστεφάνωσαν] χρυσῶ στε[φά]-/νω καὶ [– – – – – / – – – – –]/ΚΑ – –/Τ – – .

indicate that people of Jewish origin established voluntary associations in Greece. Yet there is information about these communities in the literary evidence, unlike all other voluntary associations which hardly ever appear in literature.⁴⁸⁷ However, as for the worshippers of the other newly-introduced deities one should perhaps bear in mind the possibility that Jewish settlers who came to Greece were already Hellenised, perhaps from cities like Alexandria.⁴⁸⁸ Furthermore and similar to the Egyptian deities, Hebrew was only rarely used for religious purposes such as talismanic or evocative purposes and if so, then mostly in later times.⁴⁸⁹ So far we have not been able to detect a common and unique language, nor symbols, architectural forms, or a common ritualistic tradition among the newly-introduced deities in Greece.

⁴⁸⁷ Most information about the formation of the early Jewish Diaspora communities comes from literary and epigraphic evidence. The “internal” Jewish texts which appear from the first century BC onwards and which comprise the main corpus of information on the early Jewish Diaspora are of a rather ahistorical nature and need to be handled with care. Other authors, such as Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus might provide more reliable information and are among the most fruitful sources. The literary evidence most quoted by scholars for information about the location of early Jewish Diaspora settlements are however the Acts of the Apostles and the letters to the Jews in the Diaspora in 2 Maccabees. The Pauline corpus contains perhaps the information that is chronologically closest to the period about the location of early Diasporas. According to these sources, the Jewish people migrated to almost every important place in the Hellenistic world, setting up synagogues as a “prime signal of Jewish existence”. Even though the Jewish people appear in Greek literature before the third century BC, these early authors were more concerned with an ethnographic interest in wisdom and knowledge of the Jewish people rather than with their actual history, Gabba, Emilio 1989. The growth of Anti-Judaism or the Greek attitude towards the Jews, in: *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Cambridge*, pp. 614-656:623. In Greek literature after the third century BC, the treatment of Jewish history always correlates with Egypt and the conflicts between Jews and Egyptians in Egypt and specifically in Alexandria. The focus on this city was mainly due to the Greeks who dwelt in the city in the aftermath of Alexander’s war and their local rivalry with the Jews, Gabba 1989, pp. 630-635. In the time after the third century BC Greek literates were no more concerned with the Jewish people and their simultaneously growing Diaspora than they had been before: from the second century BC onwards Greek historiographers such as Polybius “had much more serious problems to handle”, so that “the Greeks carried on in complete ignorance of the Jews and their history”, Gabba 1989, p. 641. See also: Rajak, Tessa/Noy, David 1993. *Archisynagogoi: Office, Title and social status in the Greco-Jewish synagogue*, in: *JRS* 83, pp. 75-93:77. On the supposed Diasporan Historiography in general see Schwartz, Daniel R. 1999. From the Maccabees to Masada: On Diasporan Historiography in of the Second Temple Period, in: Aharon Oppenheimer (ed.) *Jüdische Geschichte der Hellenistisch-Römischen Zeit. Vom alten zum neuen Schürer*, München, pp. 29-40.

⁴⁸⁸ See also previous note for the situation in Alexandria. More generally it is worth noting that the Jewish identity was not preserved by the use of a common language, as one can claim for the Greeks outside their original homeland. It seems that Hebrew was hardly ever used at all in the Diaspora. Seth Schwartz describes the phenomenon as “linguistic assimilation” of the Jews in the Diaspora, which he compares to the modern immigrants to America who lost their ancestral language within two generations. Hebrew was only preserved artificially by the curators of the law, Schwartz, Seth 2001. *Imperialism and Jewish Society 200 BCE to 640 CE*, Princeton, pp. 38-39. It was only preserved by the curators of law.

⁴⁸⁹ In fact, Hebrew was even abandoned as a main language in Palestine during the Hellenistic era. Schwartz 1995, 12-13.

This of course applies only to the visible evidence. Other traditions, such as obeying the Law, are difficult or even impossible to detect. At the same time a new opportunity arose for non-Jewish groups to get a glimpse of these “foreign” religious ideas. Perhaps specific texts were produced individually for some of the early Greek Diaspora communities. Although there is no proof as to the actual performance one can imagine that these texts have been read together, or by a single leading person, as is known from later Jewish groups. This habit was also quickly adopted by Christian groups. Nevertheless, we may assume that from the third and second centuries BC, all Jewish communities in Greece and Asia Minor in theory at least the possibility of living independently but according to the very same Jewish laws and regulations: Whether they still understood Hebrew or not, owing to the translation of the Jewish scriptures, as long as there was one literate person among them they had access to the writings. However, unlike the Egyptian deities which appear deliberately to have retained certain Egyptian elements which required a specialist, such as specific rituals described earlier in this chapter and the use of hieroglyphs, such means of establishing the distinctiveness of each group become important to the Jewish Diaspora communities only later in Roman times.

4.6 Non-Greeks and metics honoured by voluntary associations

An inscription from Rhodes that was erected by a *koinon* of *sabaziastai* in approximately 100 BC was found in a graveyard within a collection of tombs.⁴⁹⁰ In the text a certain Ariston from Syracuse is honoured for his benefactions towards the *koinon* of *sabaziastai*. This honorary decree was presumably erected by his fellow- members⁴⁹¹ and describes the usual honorary procedure. Ariston will be crowned and proclaimed by the officers in charge at each funeral-feast.⁴⁹² He is also given an honorary office during the annual meetings in an *andron*. This particular building might be identified as a banqueting hall close to the graveyard, but that cannot be said with certainty.⁴⁹³ The group, it seems, was much concerned with burial rites.⁴⁹⁴ Apart from Ariston, the benefactor, no other members are named in the inscription. Interestingly enough, though, is the fact that he was from Syracuse. Kontorini, who published the inscription for the first time, suggests that the

⁴⁹⁰ SEG 33, 639 and Kontorini, Vassa 1983. *Inscriptions inédites relatives à l'histoire et aux cultes de Rhodes du Ile au Ier s. av. J.-C.*, nr. 8 p. 72.

⁴⁹¹ L. 12.

⁴⁹² Ll. 10-14.

⁴⁹³ On the building see chapter five.

⁴⁹⁴ Although this might have just been one part of the group's activities which became visible to us in the form of their graveyard.

benefactor was a resident of Rhodes town who had once immigrated from Syracuse, though she does not give any reasons for her assumption. Since no other information is included in the inscription, any further investigation would be mere speculation. It seems very likely that a non-Greek or metic joined a group that gathered around a newly worshipped deity and whose main interest concerns the burial and memory of its members, given that the non-Greek or metic was separated from his family who would otherwise organise the burial.

The inscription, however, seems to be peculiar in two respects: on the one hand from a chronological perspective and on the other hand from a contextual one. Such groups that specialised in burial or that had a strong interest in the burial of members are elsewhere mostly known from Roman times onwards, as for example shown by a *horos* inscription of a *thiasos* of *isiastai* from Cos, which clearly marks the border of the group's burial ground.⁴⁹⁵ It is also a feature particularly attested for groups of craftsmen and traders of a certain status.⁴⁹⁶

It appears that the development of groups or associations in Hellenistic times took a more individual form on Rhodes than in other places. For example, at no other place in the Greek world is it possible to identify so many different groups, both religious and professional or military. On Rhodes these groups appear often side-by-side in the same inscriptions over a certain period of time.

Returning to the inscription of the *sabaziastai*, it remains to say that the case of Ariston from Syracuse was not unique on Rhodes. To what extent variation in terms of group-affiliation and engagement was possible can probably best be illustrated by the example of a person called Dionysodoros from Alexandria. Dionysodoros lived in Rhodes around the time of the end of the second/beginning of the first centuries BC. In a long decree of one hundred and twenty-two lines, Dionysodoros was honoured most generously by four different groups, among which were three *eranos*-groups and a group of *dionysiastai*.⁴⁹⁷ The latter honoured him for a second time on another occasion.⁴⁹⁸ He held the leading office as *archeranistes* in the group of *paianistai* for eighteen years⁴⁹⁹ and of the *haliadai* and *haliastai* for twenty-three years.⁵⁰⁰ The honours that had been granted to Dionysodoros in his lifetime

⁴⁹⁵ *RICIS* 204/1008, Cos, Roman times

⁴⁹⁶ See van Nijf 1997 pp. 31-69, for Rhodes especially p. 43.

⁴⁹⁷ *IG XII* 1 155.

⁴⁹⁸ *MDAI(A)* 25, 1900, p. 108.

⁴⁹⁹ *Fragm. B (III)* l. 83.

⁵⁰⁰ *Fragm. C (IV)* ll. 107-108. On the identification of the several groups and the connected offices see Gabrielsen, Vincent 1994. The Rhodian associations honouring Dionysodoros from Alexandria, in: *Classica et Mediaevalia* 45, pp. 137-160:142.

and which were inscribed on the funerary altar after his death consisted of an accumulation of standard honours including several crowns and proclamations. Nevertheless nothing indicates any involvement of the individual in cultic activity or more specifically in the group of the *dionysiastai*. The inscription is in fact very similar to the one dedicated to Ariston from Syracuse and dates from around the same time. In one case a non-Greek and in the other a metic is honoured by a voluntary association, whereas only in the case of Ariston did the group gather around a newly worshipped deity that had nothing whatsoever to do with Ariston's Sicilian background. A second common feature is the fact that each benefactor was honoured at the burial-feast, the *taphos*, and it is clear that each individual could be buried by either group.⁵⁰¹ The honours for Dionysodoros were very generous, while Ariston's booty seems rather meagre. This might be owing to the long duration of Dionysodoros' commitment to the various clubs and, let us not forget, owing to their number. We must assume then that Dionysodoros had been fairly wealthy during the period of at least thirty-five years of his engagement in order to keep up his membership and honorific offers.⁵⁰² One might also assume that both Ariston and Dionysodoros expected the groups to survive their own deaths since they were responsible for the care of the grave and the commemoration.

Regarding the inscriptions of voluntary associations on Rhodes, a trend can be discerned which might be seen as groundbreaking. This concerns the funerary activities of both religious and professional associations. Burying members becomes an important feature of many associations in Roman times.⁵⁰³ On Rhodes one can identify two-hundred different associations in the second and first centuries BC through the epigraphic evidence.⁵⁰⁴ Most of them were of a commercial or professional nature, but voluntary associations can also be found. These were mostly bacchic or "Egyptian" cult associations that often appeared alongside other associations in the same honorific decrees. Jaccottet suggested a particular system of associations in Rhodes.⁵⁰⁵ The fact that the cult-associations were part of this system makes it difficult to distinguish between the groups. Some differences, however, are

⁵⁰¹ For Dionysodoros see section D (I), ll. 66-88. In the case of Dionysodoros it remains unclear to which of the groups he belonged and thus by which group he would be buried.

⁵⁰² Jaccottet 2003-II, p. 260.

⁵⁰³ Although the phenomenon, despite being very prominent in Rhodes, was not a purely local one. A similar case of a *thiasotai* association which included burial regulations in their decrees, including the attendance at fellow-members funerals were/was found in the Piraeus as early as 325-275 BC *IG II 1262, SEG 21.534*. The Athenian *iobakchoi* of the second century AD, discussed in chapters two and five, were very explicit about their burial activities and the obligation to attend the deceased members' funeral as well. For the Roman West from the second century BC onwards see Rebillard, Éric 2009. *The care of the dead in late antiquity*, Cornell University/Ithaca, pp. 17-18.

⁵⁰⁴ Gabrielsen 2001, p. 216.

⁵⁰⁵ See e. g. Jaccottet 2003-II, p. 263.

very clearly visible. Whereas the *koina* that possessed naval or military subsections are recognisable by their name,⁵⁰⁶ we can find the cultic associations that just name the deity without any further indication about either internal organisation or activities. The nature of the purely honorific inscriptions on which those cultic groups appear does not provide any further insights. We learn practically nothing about the organisation of the groups. Some of the groups appear to have been of a rather short-lived nature, such as those gathered around an individual officer or particular military unit that was stationed on Rhodes only for a limited period of time. Others, however, and especially those which promised burial care for the deceased, appear to have been established for a longer lasting period.

Since the island was an important meeting point for international traders, we may conclude that it was most likely to be the place where the hypothesis of fairly wealthy non-Greeks and metics attending or initiating voluntary associations in order to become part of a new society or even to build a new social cosmos in a foreign environment has some truth or weight. Fraser, whose thorough study of the grave monuments on Rhodes also dealt with the burial habits of voluntary associations and other associations found that with two exceptions, all honorary inscriptions of *koina* from Rhodes that came down to us were made to foreigners.⁵⁰⁷ This is surely due to the fact that certain kinds of benefactions and the titles that correspond to them were the province of non-citizens. Furthermore one can discern a specific willingness of non-locals to engage in any form of group activity on Rhodes, whether religious, military or other professional type.⁵⁰⁸ The mushrooming of professional and voluntary associations on Hellenistic Rhodes will be considered again in chapter six.

Other places such as Athens offer less useful evidence, especially concerning the identification of the groups. The Athenian evidence points to various voluntary associations, namely unidentifiable groups of *thiasotai* and *orgeones* in which mostly people from other Greek cities, probably metics, are honoured. I will only name a few examples here. One set of inscriptions in which individuals from Olynthos, Troezen and Herakleia are honoured dates back to as late as the fourth and third centuries BC.⁵⁰⁹ In a slightly earlier inscription which

⁵⁰⁶ These include the references to their section: (*syn*)*strateuomenoi* for crews of naval vessels, *syskanoi* (soldiers sharing a tent or barrack), *mesoneoi* (rowers on warships) and *dekas*, (part of a naval crew that is commanded by a *dekatarchos*), Gabrielsen 2001, p. 222.

⁵⁰⁷ Fraser, Peter M. 1977. *Rhodian funerary monuments*, Oxford, p. 64.

⁵⁰⁸ For more information on Rhodes and its *fenomeno associativo* see chapter 6.

⁵⁰⁹ *IG II²* 1263, 300/299 BC with Demetrios, son of Sosandros from Olynth, *IG II²* 1271, 299/8 BC with Menis, son of Mnesithos from Herakleia, *IG II²* 1273 A-B, 281/80 BC, with Soterichos from Troezen and Kephalion from Herakleia (*thiasotai* probably linked to Mother of Gods), *IG II²* 2947, 212 BC, *orgeones* honour Asklaon, son of Asklaon from Maroneia.

was mentioned earlier in this chapter a Corinthian priestess is honoured for her duties by a group of *orgeones* of the Syrian Aphrodite.⁵¹⁰

4.7 Non-Greeks and metics in voluntary associations of “Greek” deities

So far, I have argued that non-Greeks and metics of various provenance could be part of voluntary associations of newly worshipped deities, whether or not they shared the same origin, and that non-Greeks and metics were honoured by groups that gathered around both newly-worshipped and other deities. What about non-Greeks and metics in groups focused on or devoted to more traditional Greek deities? Should we expect groups of such deities to be a place of integration and socialisation for people coming from outside into new environments? In order to get as complete a picture as possible, these questions shall be mainly considered on the basis of the evidence linked to groups that gathered around Dionysus for the simple reason that those groups are very well attested and chronologically and topographically widespread.⁵¹¹

In the city of Pergamum there are two different tendencies concerning the groups of Dionysian worshippers who are attested here from Hellenistic times until the Roman Imperial period.⁵¹² The first development concerns the members of one specific cultic group, namely the Dionysian *boukoloï* whose main activity seems to have started with the Roman occupation in the year twenty-seven BC.⁵¹³ This rather local association⁵¹⁴ appears in eight inscriptions up until the time of Hadrian. The name might refer to a taumorphic Dionysus attested in other places.⁵¹⁵ Little is known about the foundation of the association. The inscriptions were found in three places: partly in their own meeting place, the so-called Podiensaal; partly at the theatre, connected with the temple of Dionysus, and in the agora.

⁵¹⁰ *IG* II² 1337, 97/6 BC.

⁵¹¹ Voluntary associations of Dionysus-worshippers seem to have been the most successful in the history of voluntary associations since they are attested from Archaic times until late Antiquity all over Greece and the Roman Empire.

⁵¹² The earliest inscription to name a Dionysian group of worshippers and more precisely the *bakchoi* dates back to the reign of Eumenes II, Jaccottet 2003-II, Nr. 91, p. 171.

⁵¹³ An inscription that dates back to around 27 BC, Jaccottet 2003-II, Nr. 92, p. 172, was found in the building with the *Podiensaal*, a Hellenistic house with peristyle, which was excavated in 1975, and which was used as a banqueting hall by a Dionysian group (see the chapter on architecture/Pergamum and Schwarzer, Holger 2008. *Das Gebäude mit dem Podiensaal in der Stadtgrabung von Pergamon: Studien zu sakralen Banketträumen mit Liegepodien in der Antike* [Altortümer von Pergamon XV, 4] Berlin/New York). Even though the inscription's date lies in the second half of the first century BC, Schwarzer, 2008, referring to the archaeological evidence, suggests that the building already belonged to the association during its first construction phase (second half of the second century BC) p. 79.

⁵¹⁴ Dionysian *boukoloï* only appear sporadically in inscriptions other than those of Pergamum, e. g. in the famous inscriptions of Agrippinilla from Torre Nova, *IGUR* 160, Jaccottet 2003-II Nr. 188, p. 302 and twice in Ephesus, *IEph* 1602 a-q and *IEph* 1268.

⁵¹⁵ On the discussion of the name *boukoloï* see Jaccottet 2003-II, pp. 182-192 and Schwarzer 2008, pp. 95-97.

One learns from the inscriptions that women and men took part in the activities and that both had administrative duties.⁵¹⁶ The names of the association's members, however, from the very beginnings of the group's activity up to and including the later pieces of evidence, reveal a development that means that the origin of its members can be traced: whereas initially one can recognise a predominance of Greek names,⁵¹⁷ the number of Romans among the members increased demonstrably over time.⁵¹⁸ The usual interpretation is that the Dionysian groups and especially the *boukoloï* consisted of fairly important members, mostly of the Roman nobility. Nevertheless, one can think about the situation also from a different perspective. The Romans were, as others, in the first instance strangers, coming from Italy to Asia Minor.⁵¹⁹ Coming to a new environment they were using the voluntary associations that gathered around Dionysus as a first port-of-call in a new society.

The second tendency concerning ethnicity and the Dionysian groups at Pergamum is related to two inscriptions, probably both from the first century AD.⁵²⁰ The two inscriptions inform us about a *speira* of the *midapedeitai* and are contemporary to the inscriptions of the *boukoloï*.⁵²¹ It has been argued that the group's name indicated the origin of the worshippers, which is identified with a city in Phrygia and which again suggests the Phrygian origin of its members.⁵²² Yet no onomastic or prosopographic evidence to confirm this interpretation exists. Others have suggested that the name can be related to a local village or a specific part of town.⁵²³ Whether or not this association was established by inhabitants of a suburb of Pergamum cannot be determined. However, it seems as if the Dionysian associations were used to help people to find a new place in a new society and probably for other people to sustain an existing one.

A rather early example from Miletus from 276/75 BC, in which the prices for sacrifices and initiations into the Bacchic mysteries are regulated, shows how open the groups and/or the cult was in early Hellenistic times: the priestess in charge of the *thiasos* offers her

⁵¹⁶ After AD 106 Jaccottet 2003-II, Nr. 98, pp. 180-181 and in Nr. 96, p. 178 a priestess is honoured by an *archiboukolos* (end of first century AD).

⁵¹⁷ Although it remains unclear where those people actually came from.

⁵¹⁸ Christian Habicht observed that the Romanisation of the nobility of Pergamum happened between Augustus and Hadrian. Accordingly in the early Imperial period only five members out of nineteen were Roman citizens. Under Trajan, however, ten out of seventeen members held Roman citizenship. See comment in *IvP* III, (AvP VIII, 3) p. 163 and inscriptions Jaccottet 2003-II, nr. 94, pp. 176-177 and 98, pp. 180-181.

⁵¹⁹ Among those was also the important benefactor and proconsul of Asia Minor, Aulus Iulius Quadratus: Jaccottet 2003-II, ns. 98-99, pp. 180-183.

⁵²⁰ Jaccottet 2003-II, ns. 100-101, pp. 190-191.

⁵²¹ *IvP* II 319 and 320.

⁵²² Jaccottet 2003-II, p. 191.

⁵²³ Schwarzer 2008, p. 95.

service to people from the city, the region and the islands.⁵²⁴ In later times, namely in the second and third centuries AD, and mainly in the north-eastern parts of Greece and beyond,⁵²⁵ a specific form of Dionysian group appeared which named themselves “Asian”. Such groups are mentioned in five inscriptions that were found independently in different places.⁵²⁶ Jaccottet argues that the groups were “une specification dionysiaque, créée pour le besoin de certains groupes bacchiques qui trouvaient dans cette designation, originellement géographique, leur identité propre et à laquelle il se sont identifiés.”⁵²⁷ What kind of needs these were is not further specified. The origins of the members, however, cannot have been the reason to choose the terminology, since the few hints that are given by certain names rather point in a different direction or to local roots.⁵²⁸ The origin of the cult on the other hand might have played a role alongside certain ancestral relations. Both possibilities, however, remain mere speculation.

Yet another trend can be noticed in the eastern part of Asia Minor. Here, we find Dionysian associations which carried the name of a certain village or part of a town where they were located,⁵²⁹ perhaps a local habit to ensure public recognition.⁵³⁰ However, no information about the individual members has been passed on to us.

Only one inscription set up by a Dionysian group contained a name that can clearly be linked with an ethnic origin differing from the place at which the inscription was found: in a second century BC inscription from Thera, a *synodos* of *bakkistai* honours an individual named Ladamos from Alexandria.⁵³¹ He was, however, not only honoured by the group, but his wife and offspring were also *thiasites*.⁵³² It has been argued that Ladamos had not only been an Egyptian officer, but that the whole group consisted of Egyptian soldiers stationed at Thera.⁵³³ Whether this was the case must remain unclear. The fact, however, that women and children were part of the group does not seem to indicate a group composed solely of

⁵²⁴ On the inscription see Jaccottet 2003-II, nr. 150, pp. 251-52,

⁵²⁵ Namely Macedonia, Thrace, Dacia.

⁵²⁶ All in Jaccottet 2003-2: Nr. 20, p. 53 Thessalonica, *IG X 2 1 309*, end of second century AD, “Asian *thiasos*”; Nr. 37, p. 77, Perinthos, AD 196-198 “Bakcheion of Asians”; Nr. 53, p. 107, Dionysopolis (Black Sea) AD 222-235 “Ancient Asian *speira*”; Nr. 70, p. 141, Municipium Montanesium (Mihailovgrad, Bulgaria) AD 141, “Asian *speira*”; Nr. 71, p. 142, *CIL III*, 870, Napoca (Cluj), AD 235 “names of Asians” (*speira*). The last inscription does not mention the deity. Edson, Charles 1948. The cults of Thessalonica (Macedonia III), in: *HthR* 41, pp. 153-204:156-157 argues convincingly by looking at the specifically Dionysian term *speira* mentioned in the inscription that the group must be connected with Dionysus.

⁵²⁷ Jaccottet 2003-II, p. 109.

⁵²⁸ In Thessalonica one can find a person called Macedon, in Napoca a Germanus.

⁵²⁹ Jaccottet 2003-II, ns. 77, 79-80.

⁵³⁰ Jaccottet 2003-II, p. 155

⁵³¹ The inscription dates to 160-146 BC Jaccottet 2003-2, pp. 276-277.

⁵³² Ll. 21-23.

⁵³³ Argument in Hiller von Gaertringen 1903, presented by Jaccottet 2003-II, p. 278.

soldiers. Besides, to my knowledge it would be a unique example. It seems as if the Dionysian groups which became very important in the time of the Roman rule did not really serve as a haven for non-Greeks and metics, (except possibly for Romans), to enter a new society, but rather the groups were a way to claim certain ethnic or local origin, as the examples of the “Asian” groups and the locally connected groups with the names of villages have shown.⁵³⁴

4.8 Are there patterns in the topographic and chronological distribution of certain voluntary associations?

With the exception of the Dionysian groups, which can be found over almost all Greece and especially in Asia Minor, as well as in many parts of the Roman Empire, at least at some point in time, hardly any comparable structures can be found for other voluntary associations.⁵³⁵ Reasons for the popularity of Dionysus as a god to be worshipped in small, more or less organised groups might lie in the ritual that came with his worship and is certainly due to the “mystic” elements provided.⁵³⁶ But whereas the Dionysian groups proved rather a fruitless source of information for helping address the main questions of this chapter, one set of inscriptions of groups around a non-Greek deity allows us to think of a specific pattern for another “type” of group, namely the *serapiastai*. Unlike the other groups that appear only once or with a local specification, the “simple” *serapiastai* appear as such in too many inscriptions to be left without explanation.

As a first approach to explaining the popularity and distribution of *serapiastai*, I will have a look at the dependencies between the rather general worship of Serapis and the *serapiastai*. Epigraphic dedications to Serapis can be found all over Attica, northern Greece and on almost all the islands of the Cyclades. On Delos, where the worship of the Egyptian deities is best attested, the cult of Serapis was supposedly introduced in the early third century,⁵³⁷ two generations before the actual attestation of the cult and one hundred years before the first record of *serapiastai*. One may have to assume that this pattern is the most likely one. At

⁵³⁴ One example from Athens shows a group that worshipped not Dionysos but an innately Greek deity: a *synodos* of Herakles, the much worshipped Hero, which counted among its members five citizens, two strangers from Antioch, and one slave – the status of six other members remains unclear *SEG* 36.228, 159/58 BC. On the discussion about the origins of the members see Ismard p. 380 and n. 95.

⁵³⁵ Jaccottet 2003-II collects seventy-seven inscriptions indicating voluntary associations that worshipped Dionysus from Africa to Italy, the Greek mainland going north to Dacia and the black Sea region and many parts of Asia Minor, pp. 10-12.

⁵³⁶ The inscriptions mirror clearly that the “mystic” character of the cult was one main attraction: the denomination of mystics appear in more than forty-four inscriptions of Dionysian *thiasoi*, referring in most cases to the members of the groups.

⁵³⁷ Actually attested in inscriptions at the end of third and beginning of second century BC.

least, a similar chronology occurs on Cos,⁵³⁸ Lesbos,⁵³⁹ and Rhodes.⁵⁴⁰ On Cos, however, the *serapiastai* seem to have been established rather late, since other groups around Egyptian deities had been founded much earlier.⁵⁴¹ In Rhamnus the *serapiastai* and the first epigraphic dedication to Serapis go hand in hand at the end of the third century BC.⁵⁴² In Athens, they appear almost contemporarily to the first other attested dedication to the god, namely about twenty years earlier.⁵⁴³ As for Kea, the *serapiastai* are the only mention of the cult at all; the same is true in the case of Limyra. Only in one case, on Thasos, does the evidence for the worship date later than the attestation of the *serapiastai*: here the worship of Serapis outside the group of *serapiastai* is only recorded in the centuries AD.⁵⁴⁴ Accordingly one can say that in most cases the cult existed before the groups appeared. The two cases in which *serapiastai* are mentioned without attestation of any cult of Serapis stand out. I will return to this later in this chapter but for now I will briefly survey the “counter-examples”, namely those places with densely attested cult-activity but no mention of *Serapiastai*. I start with Thessalonica. Here, in the context of the so-called Serapeion, seventy inscriptions were found which are dedicated to the Egyptian deities.⁵⁴⁵ However, not a single inscription mentions either *serapiastai* or other groups around Egyptian deities. The only group of worshippers attested in the “Sarapeion” is an association of mystics of Dionysos *gongylos*.⁵⁴⁶

The second example where a significant amount of worship of the Egyptian deities is attested in one place is Corinth. Corinth, however, which supposedly hosted between two and four Serapis sanctuaries,⁵⁴⁷ and which was temporarily occupied by Ptolemy I Soter, does not

⁵³⁸ Here the *Serapiastai* are attested in the first century AD (*RICIS* 204/1101) and where Serapis is mentioned already in the first century BC (*RICIS* 204/1002. This is contemporary to other *osiriastai*)

⁵³⁹ The first mention of Serapis on Lesbos that has come down to us supposedly dates to the third century BC. about two-hundred years before the *Serapiastai* appear, *RICIS* 205/0301.

⁵⁴⁰ *RICIS* 204/0201 (*first Serapiastai*). For Rhodes, attestations of the worship of Serapis can be found from the middle of the third century BC onwards, about eighty years before the first *Serapiastai* are mentioned. *RICIS* 204/0215.

⁵⁴¹ For Cos it is worth bearing in mind that on both occasions, before the first attestation of Serapis and contemporary with it, several groups were built around the Egyptian deities. Not only are *osiriastai* attested in the second century BC, but also *eisiastai*, *enatistai* and *dekatistai* in the first century BC: in order of appearance in the text: *RICIS* 204/1001, 1002, 1003. *Isiastai* are still to be found in the Roman period (204/1008).

⁵⁴² *RICIS* 101/0501 and 101/0502.

⁵⁴³ *RICIS* 101/0201 (215/14 BC), 101/0202 (shortly after 200 BC).

⁵⁴⁴ *RICIS* 201/0101, *Serapiastai*, second century BC, dedication to Serapis *RICIS* 201/0102, second-third centuries BC.

⁵⁴⁵ Steimle 2008, p. 79.

⁵⁴⁶ *SEG* 30:622/*IG* X,2, 1 259

⁵⁴⁷ Bookidis, Nancy 2003. The sanctuaries of Corinth, in: Bookidis, Nancy (ed. i. a.) *Corinth, the centenary 1896-1996* (vol. 20), Athens, p. 257 and n. 86, who suggests that four sanctuaries of the Egyptian deities were located at Corinth, although others argued for only two sanctuaries.

provide any inscription mentioning *Serapiastai* and generally seems to have a scarcity of inscriptions concerning the Egyptian deities.⁵⁴⁸

In a series of manumission decrees from Chaironeia, Serapis is the predominant deity, mentioned in more than ninety inscriptions, all dating to the first half of the second century BC.⁵⁴⁹ After the series of the Hellenistic period, no later inscriptions to Serapis were found at Chaironeia. However, even though Serapis is very well represented in these specific inscriptions, and was supposedly very successful in Boetia in Hellenistic times,⁵⁵⁰ no attestation of a voluntary association built around him has come down to us. It seems as if other reasons must be found for his popularity as a deity in whose name manumissions were made.

Another aspect that is always considered when dealing with Serapis concerns the influence of the Ptolemaic kings, and in particular the Ptolemaic army, on the creation and spread of his cult.⁵⁵¹ In the case of Kea, where no cult of Serapis can be attested other than by the existence of *serapiastai*, there is clearly a connection between the place and the Ptolemaic army. Not only was Kea the third most important base of the Ptolemies in the Aegean,⁵⁵² but it is very likely that the person honoured in the decree of the *serapiastai* was involved in it.⁵⁵³ The inscription probably dates to as early as the third century and might prove a direct connection with the group of *serapiastai* and the actual Ptolemaic presence. For Rhodes, we may also assume a connection between the Ptolemaic army and the worship of Egyptian deities, given that the Rhodians supported the Ptolemaic army at times.⁵⁵⁴ One may generally assume a short but intense period of Ptolemaic influence on many Aegean islands because of their engagement as leaders of the league of islanders for about thirty years.⁵⁵⁵

A different situation arises when it comes to Delos. Even though the island can be seen as a depositary for all sorts of decrees and dedications concerning the league of

⁵⁴⁸ Corinth only provides two inscriptions dedicated to Serapis, *RICIS* 102/0101-2.

⁵⁴⁹ *RICIS* 105/0801-0893, all seem to date around 172 BC.

⁵⁵⁰ On the successful Hellenistic Serapis in Boeotia see Schachter, Albert 2005. Egyptian cults and local elites at Boeotia, in: Bricault, Laurent/Versluys, Jon/Meyboom, Peter G. P. (edd.) *Nile into Tiber. Egypt in the Roman world, Proceedings of the third conference of Isis studies* (RGR 159) Leiden, pp. 364-392: 388.

⁵⁵¹ On the influence on the creation of Serapis by the Ptolemaic kings, see Stambaugh 1972, pp. 93-98, on the spread see pp.98-102 and Hölbl 1994, pp. 92-92

⁵⁵² Bagnall, Roger 1976. *The administration of Ptolemaic possessions outside Egypt*, Leiden, p. 141.

⁵⁵³ *RICIS* 202/0801, *IG* XII 5 606.

⁵⁵⁴ Bagnall 1976, pp. 98-99. Rhodes, however, always stayed independent. An interesting Hellenistic inscription from Rhodes is relevant to this context. A certain Dionysios from Iasos (Caria) set up a pharaonic statue with a base inscribed in Demotics. The royal statue was dedicated to Osiris-Hapi and Isis. Dionysios, who was very probably employed and paid by the Ptolemies, *RICIS* 204/0111, see comment p. 380, was apparently not too concerned by the cult of Serapis, but rather dedicated the statue to the god of the rising Nile, Hapi in connection with Osiris.

⁵⁵⁵ Bagnall, 1977, 139.

islanders, no Delians were involved in its administration.⁵⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the epigraphic evidence records the direct connections of Delians who were somehow involved with the Ptolemies, and under whose protectorate the island came at times. The placement of officials as resident at Delos is not recorded at any time.⁵⁵⁷ Even though the cult of Serapis was very probably introduced during the time of the direct involvement of the Ptolemies in the third century BC, the *serapiastai* are recorded only one hundred years later. A direct line can be drawn between the *serapiastai* of the Hellenistic era at Limyra and the Ptolemaic possessions, since Limyra used to belong to the Ptolemies until it was conquered by Antiochus III in 197 BC.⁵⁵⁸

Both the idea of building voluntary associations around Serapis and their name *serapiastai* seem to have been developed in the Aegean, partly influenced by the spread of the Ptolemaic army and certainly by Egyptian travellers. However, the military is not as closely linked to the spread of the groups as, for example, is suggested in the case of the worshippers of Mithras. The islands of Crete and Cyprus, for example, which were highly influenced by the Ptolemies at all periods of the Hellenistic age, do not provide any findings directly related to *serapiastai* or similar groups.

The question remains why the people chose Serapis, a newly worshipped deity, as the subject of their devotion. As seen before, especially in the cases of Athens and Delos, one reason may have been that the creation of a new group using old patterns may have offered the opportunity for a new identity to both foreigners and Greeks. However, people could have chosen a long established, reliable deity. Choosing Serapis must be linked to the deity itself. It is clear that the name of the deity was important and hence it formed the basis for the name of the associations. Apart from that, no "special features" of Serapis which could have particularly interested a voluntary association are known from the *serapiastai* themselves. The habit of dining together after or during a sacrifice, or the dinner as a sacrificial event, the so-called *kline* of Serapis, which is often mentioned as one reason for the popularity of the cult can be ruled out; similar rituals are known from many other cults. In fact, they can probably be seen as an essential ritual of almost every cult in the ancient world. Similar patterns throughout the different groups of *serapiastai* are hard to find. The inscriptions do not specify the groups or separate them from others – there is no common link. The only similarity lies in fact in the name. It is, however, not unlikely that exactly the

⁵⁵⁶ Bagnall 1977, p. 152.

⁵⁵⁷ Bagnall 1977, p. 156.

⁵⁵⁸ Bagnall 1977, p. 108.

fact that these groups were newly established offered their members a specific freedom to create an organised form of worship just as they wished. Another factor which has certainly contributed to their popularity, namely specific new rituals, escapes the modern observer. As far as most voluntary associations are concerned we are not informed about anything that happened during their meetings, apart from honorary activities which belong to the usual activities rather than the unusual.

4.9 Conclusion

None of the inscriptions discussed above contains nearly as much information on rules or rituals of each specific group as the Philadelphia inscription that was mentioned in the introduction. In most cases we cannot tell whether or not slaves, freedmen and women were permitted to join the group – we can only guess by searching for names indicated in the inscriptions. In a number of fortunate cases we have membership lists. After researching the actual members of the associations it becomes even clearer that the Philadelphia inscription is exceptional. In most other cases different information has come down to us.

With regard to the chronology, it seems to be very important to make one observation: most groups were already established at the time of the oldest extant inscription. In fact we know very little about the individual foundations, whether established by Greeks connected to Egypt or by Egyptians who migrated to Greece. The first generations seem to be lost or simply not transmitted in most cases. However, as pointed out earlier, we can see that the assimilation of cults and groups happened very quickly.

From the second century however, the records attest an almost entirely Greek membership. This at least is suggested by the names that appear in the inscriptions, for the unnamed we can only guess at. The second observation is that one most often finds citizens appearing in the inscription, and while others can be found at the same time, this is rarer. The obvious demonstration of individuals' citizenship, however, can also be explained by the general habit of displaying citizenship in inscriptions, as had been very popular, especially in classical Athens.

The deities to whom cult associations were devoted were often newly worshipped ones. Apart from Dionysus, whose *thiasoi* probably served as model to build other voluntary associations,⁵⁵⁹ rather few groups were formed around deities that were selected from the

⁵⁵⁹ This is at least suggested by their long-standing tradition and the term *thiasos* itself which was also used by many other voluntary associations.

traditional pantheon. The popularity of certain cults, such as Egyptian, Thracian and Anatolian ones, is a general phenomenon that arose during the Hellenistic period. Even though those deities were normally worshipped publicly from the fifth century onwards, it seems as if the rather small groups founded on an individual's initiative were important transporters of and supporters for these cults. Whether this has to do with their introduction by foreign individuals or Greeks with foreign "experience" remains unclear for the moment, as does the question concerning the reasons for Greeks choosing a non-Greek deity to be worshipped in a small circle.

When it comes to the division of personal and public spaces, both concepts were intertwined. For instance the Dionysian *boukoloi* in Pergamum of Roman times offered both a rather intimate and exclusive possibility for the selected members to get together in their "Podiensaal". But at the same time they celebrated the public festivals, as inscribed in the religious calendar of the city. It has even been suggested that they gave public performances during those official celebrations.⁵⁶⁰ Other inscriptions underline the proximity that sometimes even seems to mean a co-operation between the groups and the city. This is well illustrated by the example of a priestess of Dionysus from Miletus who is in charge of both the public cult and the "private" *thiasos* of the god and who arranges the gathering of the two.⁵⁶¹

Specific voluntary associations, such as the *serapiastai* can be linked to the spread of the Ptolemaian army. In the case of the Dionysian groups one may suspect that the mystic ritualistic elements that seem to have been taken over by the individual groups had a magnetic effect. I would suggest that something similar, namely a new or different ritual, was the feature that attracted groups around the Egyptian deities and other elective cults. The reasons for the establishment and especially the maintenance of Jewish groups in Greece and Asia Minor cannot be found in the epigraphic or archaeological evidence but there appear to be manifold examples. One aspect, however, remains similar to that detected for the other groups, in new rituals that the Jewish groups developed in the Diaspora, and not least in the translation of the Hebrew bible into Greek, the Septuagint. In what way and for which purposes the translation was undertaken is a much discussed topic which I will not explore further at this point.⁵⁶² In view of the questions I am asking in this thesis, it may be enough to

⁵⁶⁰ Jaccottet 2003-2, p. 188.

⁵⁶¹ *LSAM* no. 48, Jaccottet 2003-II, no. 150, 276/275 BC.

⁵⁶² The ancient "historical" explanation for the translation of the Septuagint is mentioned first in the letter of Aristeeus. The story is set in Alexandria during the reign of King Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 BC). According to the author a certain Demetrius, librarian at the famous library at Alexandria, wished to possess an

look at the benefits that people in the Diaspora gained from the translation. The actual process of translation is said to have taken place in the third and second centuries BC, slightly earlier than most pieces of evidence for early Jewish communities in Greece and Asia Minor, but at the same time as the appearance of other voluntary associations around newly-introduced deities as for example the Egyptian and Syrian groups.⁵⁶³

One observation recurred at various points throughout this chapter and is of particular importance in terms of the thesis as a whole. In the epigraphic evidence we seem to be only picking up information about already established voluntary associations in their second or even third stage, often after Greeks or very wealthy people have become involved in the associations. Presumably there were many more similar foundations that were established initially. Yet these foundations were less successful and failed in the longer term for several reasons. What has come down to us, however, is evidence about only the successful ones which survived the initial years, perhaps even the first generation.

example of the Jewish bible in the Greek language since the king lacked a “complete library” (10-11). The king agreed and sent a letter to the Jewish High priest in Jerusalem in order to get a reliable original version of the text (35-40). The High priest granted permission and the “Jewish laws” were translated by 72 scholars (elders 47-50). A short overview of the account and the process of the translation is given by Klijn, Albertus F. J. 1965. Review of R. V. G. Tasker 'The Greek New Testament' *New Testament Studies* 11, pp. 184-185 and a more detailed version by Moshe, Simon-Shoshan 2007. The Tasks of the Translators: The Rabbis, the Septuagint, and the Cultural Politics of Translation, in: *Prooftexts* 27, pp. 1-39. The debate about the reliability of the story and questions about which parts of the story come closest to the actual events surrounding the translation and the particular influence of this Jewish scripture on the Jews in the Diaspora, the cooperation of the king, his possible intentions and attitude towards the Jews are still the subject of discussion see e. g.: Gruen, Erich S. 2008. The letter of Aristeas and the Cultural Context of the Septuagint, in: Martin Karrer/Wolfgang Kraus (edd.) *Die Septuaginta – Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten* (WUNT I 219) Tübingen, pp. 134-156, in the same volume see Rajak, Tessa 2009. Translating the Septuagint for Ptolemy's library: Myth and history, pp. 176-193, and finally with a monograph Rajak, Tessa 2009. *Translation and Survival: The Greek Bible of the Ancient Jewish Diaspora*, Oxford/New York.

⁵⁶³ Being able to read the “Jewish bible” outside the temple and the homeland was certainly an important gain for the Jewish migrants. Now, not only were they able to maintain their traditional rules and rituals but were probably also in a position to modify and interpret them according to the circumstances of each Diaspora group, a feature that other voluntary associations never developed.

5. Architecture and Archaeology

In this chapter I shall focus on the architectural remains of voluntary associations that have come down to us. Those remains are probably best subsumed under the category “meeting places” of voluntary associations. These meeting places should ideally offer space to sit and dine together, to follow performances including dance and song, to celebrate rituals, and most importantly to sacrifice together. The identification of meeting places is a rather difficult task since we cannot apply any rule as to where such places were located and what they might have looked like. This leads to the initial questions of this chapter, which deal with the appearance of such meeting-places. I will examine whether there was a common architectural pattern which could be applied to each building. Further questions concern the location of meeting places and more precisely in which part of a city, village or sanctuary we can expect to find the archaeological remains that were once used by voluntary associations. The question of identification is closely linked to the epigraphic evidence. As we shall see, only a very few buildings can be assigned to voluntary associations where we don’t have any supporting epigraphic indication from the same context.

In the second part of this chapter, I will investigate novel features and developments that might be traceable in the architectural remains. Was it the case that voluntary associations needed to introduce new architectural structures for their purposes? Did different voluntary associations create different sorts of meeting places? Did groups follow already existing patterns in building or did they adapt structures? That is to say, for example, were the Egyptians or Syrians inspired by the temples or dining places of their countries of origin and the “Greeks” by the “Greek” ones?

In order to provide some structure for this chapter, I will introduce the following categories when discussing the archaeological remains of meeting places that were used or erected by voluntary associations and where they can be located. This will be helpful in understanding where one can find those spaces and what they might have looked like. The main evidence which reflects the architectural representation is comprised of the buildings and the archaeological remains themselves. Buildings, when identified, can be roughly classified into the following four categories: 1. Non-specific spaces in temples and sanctuaries generally (e. g. courtyards, entry-areas), 2. Funerary places, 3. Dining halls attached to temples, 4. Independent assembly places. These types of buildings or, in some cases, environments will be analysed in this chapter.

5.1 Epigraphic evidence of architectural structures

Almost all inscriptions which contain rules of voluntary associations mention a place where the stele in which the text is inscribed should be erected. Apart from the positioning of the stele, often in a room mentioned in the text, the place itself is hardly ever identifiable since the inscriptions are mostly found out of their context. However, it is worthwhile looking at the names and terms of buildings used in the epigraphy since they may reveal the original location of the inscriptions.

Many extant decrees of the voluntary associations discussed in the preceding chapters end with the same formula, namely that the decisions shall be engraved on a *stèle* and set up in most cases in an unspecific sanctuary.⁵⁶⁴ The term for the building is in most cases *hieron tou theou*. Other names, such as *naos* and *temenos* appear as well, but they are rather exceptional. In some cases the name of the deity to whom the sanctuary is devoted appears as well.⁵⁶⁵ Some inscriptions give an exact position as to where to place the stele, such as “at the entrance of the sanctuary”,⁵⁶⁶ “in front of the sanctuary”,⁵⁶⁷ “beside the altar, there where it is best seen”⁵⁶⁸ or even “beside the statue of the god”.⁵⁶⁹ However, even within the evidence of one group, terminology is not applied consistently: within a period of fifty years, the *orgeones* of the Mother of the Gods from the Piraeus that were mentioned in chapter two call their sanctuary *metroon*,⁵⁷⁰ *temenos*,⁵⁷¹ *naos*⁵⁷² and *hieron*.⁵⁷³ The few cases in which an inscription was found in an actual private meeting place do not reveal any additional information.

A similar observation can be made when looking at other epigraphic and literary sources. It seems as if the term *temenos* remained somehow specific, insofar as it has always marked the sacred earth within the boundary of a sanctuary, including its buildings.⁵⁷⁴ We do not, however, know exactly what was put in a *temenos*. Apparently the term was applied to different structures in different places. Nevertheless, its core meaning is to demarcate a

⁵⁶⁴ ἀναγράψαι δὲ τὸδε τὸ ψήφισμα ἐν στήλει λιθίνῃ ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τοῦ θεοῦ.

⁵⁶⁵ See e. g. *IG II² 1255* and *1259*, *orgeones* of Bendis “in the temple of Bendis”, *IG II² 1252*, *orgeones* of Dexion, Amynos and Asklepios “in the sanctuary of Dexion and of Amynos and Asklepios” and more.

⁵⁶⁶ *SEG 49.61*.

⁵⁶⁷ *SEG 22.122*.

⁵⁶⁸ Jaccottet 2003-2, Nr. 60, p. 125.

⁵⁶⁹ *IG II² 2501*.

⁵⁷⁰ *IG II² 1327*.

⁵⁷¹ *IG II² 1314*.

⁵⁷² *IG II² 1315*.

⁵⁷³ *IG II² 1328* and *1329*.

⁵⁷⁴ Patera, Ioanna 2010. Espace et structures cultuels du sanctuaire grec: la construction du vocabulaire, in: *RHR 227*, pp. 535-551:544-547.

specific space from the surrounding area by naming it sacred. It establishes the boundaries of a holy space. The application of the terms *naos* and *hieron* is not much clearer, they are basically used to describe “structures” whereas *temenos* is always used to describe a specific space.⁵⁷⁵

Other words which might be connected with meeting places of voluntary associations also occur in the context of Jews and Samaritans. Some inscriptions indicate the buildings themselves by using either the term *proseuche* or *synagogue*. However, an additional problem occurs when dealing with these two terms, since they were used for both buildings and the associations themselves, in some cases even at the same time. Identification of particular Jewish buildings is made even more difficult by the fact that the term *synagoge* was also used by Greeks to describe non-Jewish groups, among which were several “Pagan” cult associations.⁵⁷⁶ However, a specific pattern can be detected, at least over the course of time: in the earlier testimonies from Greece and Asia Minor in which both terms appear at the same time, it seems that the word *proseuche* was used to describe the building, whereas the *synagoge* is understood as the community of Jewish people in one specific place.⁵⁷⁷ From the first century AD onwards, the word *synagoge* appears more often as a description of the actual building. However, even then the indication is not clear and both terms can appear in one single inscription but with two different meanings.⁵⁷⁸ One cannot rely on one specific term to describe what we might understand as “synagogue”.⁵⁷⁹ Indeed, the epigraphic evidence has revealed that Jewish groups in Greece and Asia Minor also used other Greek terms to describe their buildings or parts of them, such as *pronaos*, *oikos*, and *peribolos*.⁵⁸⁰ Erich Gruen concludes: “synagogues, it seems, shunned standardisation”; no “uniform pattern prevailed across the Mediterranean”,⁵⁸¹ and they differed in name, looks and personnel.

Close inspection of each situation, however, reveals that to the ancient worshipper a taxonomy of the kind sought by the modern observer was not necessary, since the

⁵⁷⁵ “*Hieron* peut par ailleurs désigner un temple et apparaître comme un synonyme de *naos*” and “*naos* and *hieron* peuvent apparaître comme interchangeables” Patera 2012, pp. 546 and 547.

⁵⁷⁶ The same can be observed concerning the terminology of sacred officials, especially of voluntary associations see e.g. *archisynagogos*, a term often used to describe the president of a cultic association, Williams 1998, p. 44.

⁵⁷⁷ The cases in which the two words appear together become clear in this series of manumission-decrees from the area of the Black Sea near the Bosphorus: Williams II. 14, AD 81 and VII. 10, 1. century AD; *CIRB* 72, late 1.-mid 2. century AD; *CIRB* 73, AD 100-150, all inscriptions were found in Panticapaeum (Bosphorus); Phanagoria (Bosphorus) *SEG* 43.510, AD 51.

⁵⁷⁸ Berenike (Cyrenaica) *SEG* 17.823, l. 3 as community and l. 5 as building.

⁵⁷⁹ Namely a meeting place of a voluntary association built by Jewish people, mainly erected for the worship of their god.

⁵⁸⁰ See e. g. *IG* V 2 295, l. 4 *pronaos* and *IK* yme 45 ll.2-3 *oikos* and *peribolos*.

⁵⁸¹ Gruen 2004, p. 113.

inscriptions were erected in a context which revealed its dependencies: since the inscriptions were set up in certain places in temples, public places, particular meeting places and sanctuaries they needed no further explanation, neither to the worshipper who set it up nor to the visitor who read the text. Only the modern observer is deprived of this particular link, since hardly any epigraphic evidence has been found in situ.

In the end we cannot be at all certain about the actual appearance of any kind of building from the definition alone. None of the terms discussed gives a real indication of the architectural features that characterized these buildings.

5. 2 Funerary places

“If, however, a Iobacchos dies, he shall receive a crown worth up to five drachma and those who join the funeral shall receive a jar of wine but those who do not attend the funeral will be excluded from the wine.” IG IP 1368, ll. 159-163

Belonging to a voluntary association could bring advantages in terms of the care for the deceased, such as an organised burial, grave-care and honours after death.⁵⁸² In some places one could even claim a definite place in a specific graveyard owned by the particular group. One reason for the place of burial care within voluntary associations might have been that the tradition of burial care, which had once been the concern of an individual’s family, changed over time. Responsibilities were handed over to other institutions, since people were often separated from their families because they lived abroad and had started a new life in a different city or country. An example of such an arrangement can be seen in an inscription from the second century BC. Here a certain Zenon of Selge was involved in the buying and establishing of a burial ground for his *koinon* in the city of Rhodes.⁵⁸³ Rhodes seems to have been the place where this habit was most well-established among foreigners. The epigraphic evidence shows that the benefactors that appeared on the actual gravestones, which were erected by many groups in Rhodes, whether religious or not, were almost entirely foreigners.⁵⁸⁴

The habit of burial care and establishing graveyards for one's own people seems to have been one feature that was linked both to the newly-introduced deities and to the *thiasoi* of Dionysos alike. This is an interesting fact since it shows that it was not only foreigners who were interested in burial care organised by a third party. Rather it seems to indicate a

⁵⁸² For a detailed description of the immense honours a member could receive after death see Fraser 1977, p.62.

⁵⁸³ SEG 3.674.

⁵⁸⁴ See Fraser 1977, p. 64, with two exceptions.

generally increasing trend in which this particular practice is transferred from initially being a family responsibility, a task clearly covered by the *oikos* in Classical times, to an externally organised one. This shift is highlighted by the fact that subsequently other groups appear to have adopted the habit as well, especially on Rhodes.⁵⁸⁵ Soon afterwards, the practice was taken up by professional associations.

5. 2. 1 Inscriptions and grave complexes of newly-introduced deities

A graveyard in the possession of a voluntary association has been found on the outskirts of the town of Rhodes. An inscription indicating that this place belonged to a voluntary association was discovered in 1963 in a graveyard at the south-east necropolis in the area of Kyzil-Tepe.⁵⁸⁶ Several tombs were cut directly into the rock and contained urns and vases. Some of these *loculi* were built into the wall. The complex was in use from the fourth until the first centuries BC.⁵⁸⁷ The inscription is contemporary to the last phase of use and indicates that this place was the common graveyard of the *koinon* of *sabaziastai*.⁵⁸⁸ Besides the honouring of Ariston from Syracuse,⁵⁸⁹ an *andron* in which an annual feast was held is mentioned in the text.⁵⁹⁰ Such an *andron* was found in a building consisting of several rooms in the west-necropolis, not far away from the grave-complex of the *sabaziastai*. This *andron*, however, cannot be connected with certainty to one specific group, but it is possible that it served the *sabaziastai* or a similar group for meetings such as the annual one described in the inscription above. The *andron* itself, a rectangular room equipped with benches on three sides, offered space for a group to meet and dine together.⁵⁹¹ Apart from the publication of a first brief report of the excavator, no further research concerning this building has been undertaken, as far as I am aware.

On the island of Cos, a *horos* inscription was set up by a *thiasos* of *isiastai* in Roman times, as mentioned in the preceding chapter.⁵⁹² The inscription marks the borders of the burial ground which belonged to the group.⁵⁹³

⁵⁸⁵ See examples in: Fraser 1977, p. 59. According to Fraser, the Rhodians even established an otherwise unknown word to identify these places (τάφια), p. 61.

⁵⁸⁶ *SEG* 33, 639 and Kontorini 1983, p. 72.

⁵⁸⁷ Kontorini 1983, p. 72.

⁵⁸⁸ Kontorini 1983, p. 73.

⁵⁸⁹ On the discussion of Ariston see chapter four.

⁵⁹⁰ L. 16.

⁵⁹¹ On the building see Kontorini 1983 p. 76 and Gabrielsen 2001, p. 235.

⁵⁹² *RICIS* 204/1008.

⁵⁹³ The habit of erecting a meeting place in a necropolis attached to a common graveyard is also attested for associations in the Roman west in later times as for example from Puteoli, see Steuernagel, Dirk 1999. Vereins-, Stadt- und Staatskult im kaiserzeitlichen Puteoli, in: *RM* 106, 1999, pp. 149-187:157.

Although Jewish groups adapted certain Greek or local burial habits,⁵⁹⁴ no evidence suggests graveyards that belonged to a particular Jewish group. Individual Jews, however, might have bought or rented plots in cemeteries for the burial of their families.⁵⁹⁵

5. 2. 2 Inscriptions and graveyards of Dionysian groups

Various inscriptions suggest that Dionysian groups took care of the burial of their members. In some cases, as seen in the inscription of the *iobakchoi* at the beginning of this section, the group donated a crown to the deceased on the occasion of the funeral.⁵⁹⁶ Some inscriptions indicate that the person was actually buried by the group or the group erected the grave monument for him.⁵⁹⁷ Other gravestones name the deceased as having been part of the group,⁵⁹⁸ whereas in still other cases the deceased passes on a certain amount of money to the group in order to ensure the care of his grave after his passing away.⁵⁹⁹ Even though most of the inscriptions do not directly claim that they were set up in a specific funerary place, one may assume that at least in some cases that people were buried in privately-owned graveyards which were specifically for the deceased members, as indicated by particular inscriptions, as we shall see. The earliest case of a burial ground of *bakkai* was not found in Greece but in Magna Graecia, namely in Cumae, and dates back to the fifth century BC.⁶⁰⁰ However other inscriptions, such as one in the form of a *horos*-stone attached to a graveyard of a *thiasos* of *bakkiastai* from Cos, proves that the practice existed in Greece as well.⁶⁰¹ Not far from Cos, namely in Rhodes, a similar situation occurs – though in this case the findings are of an archaeological nature only, and no inscription was found to identify the place. A late Hellenistic rectangular courtyard-like complex of 8 x 16 metres in size, decorated on three sides with life-sized figures cut from the rock, has been discovered in the so-called Karkonero-necropolis in the eastern part of the city.⁶⁰² The figures show Dionysian motifs such as the god himself accompanied by a panther and equipped with a *kantharos* and *thyrsos*

⁵⁹⁴ Williams 1998, pp. 125-126.

⁵⁹⁵ See e. g. Williams nr. V. 68.

⁵⁹⁶ Jaccottet 2003-II, Nr. 5. Both Athens, both second Century AD.

⁵⁹⁷ Jaccottet 2003-II, Nr. 8, 3rd century BC, Nr. 9, 2nd-1st centuries BC Tanagra (Boetia). Jaccottet 2003-2, Nr. 89, Poimaneion (Troad); Jaccottet 2003-II, Nr. 124, end of Hellenistic era, Smyrna.

⁵⁹⁸ Jaccottet 2003-2, Nr. 23, AD 171-172, Lete (Lagina, Macedonia).

⁵⁹⁹ Jaccottet 2003-2, Nr. 28, first half of the third century BC area of Philippi (Macedonia).

⁶⁰⁰ SEG 4.92: οὐ θέμις ἐν-/τοῦθα κεῖσθ-/αι ἰ μὲ τὸν βε-/βαχχευμέ-/5 νον. “None has the right to be buried here save the initiated of Dionysos” (transl. after Fraser 1977, p. 59).

⁶⁰¹ Jaccottet 2003-II, nr. 155 Cos. *Horos*-inscriptions of other groups such as the *isiastai* were found on Cos as well.

⁶⁰² Guldager Bilde, Pia 1999. Dionysos among tombs: Aspects of Rhodian tomb culture in the Hellenistic period, in: Vincent Gabrielsen (ed. i. a.) *Hellenistic Rhodes: Politics, culture, and society*, Aarhus 1999, pp. 227-246:229.

a *diaulos*-player, a satyr and a young man pouring wine from a wine-skin into a crater, and finally a maenad. Yet another horse-riding male-figure is shown which could be interpreted either as *Pappasilenos* or as a drunken Hephaistos on his return to Olympus.⁶⁰³

Several scholars have suggested that this place had served as an assembly and burial-place of a Dionysian *koinon*.⁶⁰⁴ This would be neither far-fetched nor exceptional in Rhodes. The epigraphic evidence shows that other *koina* owned places in necropoleis to meet and bury their members, as seen before in the example of the *sabaziastai*.⁶⁰⁵ Various places were equipped with *klinai* and/or *loculi*. One of these is even referred to as a *temenos* in an inscription found in the complex.⁶⁰⁶ However, since the area has never been excavated, a correct interpretation of the complex is very difficult. Neither *loculi* nor *klinai* nor inscriptions which could give an answer to our questions have been found. The main figure of the scene, which is interpreted as Dionysos, is presented in patterns of a cult-statue, separated from the other scenes in a single niche. The composition of the frieze with its narrow edges and broadening towards the middle remind the viewer of a temple pediment. Whether or not this place can be interpreted as a meeting- and burial place of a voluntary association will only be solved in the course of further excavations.

One remark about the burial customs of the Dionysian groups seems inevitable. If one considers the issue of burial and care for the afterlife among Dionysian groups, one cannot omit the “orphic gold tablets” that were found in graves mostly in Magna Graecia but also on Crete, in Macedonia and Thessaly as well as in Achaia.⁶⁰⁷ I do not intend to analyse this phenomenon any further, which was apparently performed by different groups with a clear idea of an afterlife linked to one specific side of Dionysos, since we do not know anything about the actual constellations or activities of these groups. It is, however, worth noticing that in some areas, for example in Thessaly, these groups were closely connected to a Dionysian eschatology and clearly derive from a bacchic context.⁶⁰⁸ But therein lies a major key difference between the two areas: a marked graveyard of a Dionysian group which often included the placement of a stele on a tomb to present the membership and religious affinity

⁶⁰³ Guldager Bilde 1999, p. 237.

⁶⁰⁴ Guldager Bilde 1999, p. 239.

⁶⁰⁵ Gabrielsen, Vincent 1997. *The naval aristocracy of Hellenistic Rhodes*, Aarhus, p. 123.

⁶⁰⁶ Guldager Bilde 1999, p. 228.

⁶⁰⁷ Bernabé, Alberto/Jiménez san Cristóbal, Ana Isabel 2008. *Instructions for the Netherworld: the Orphic Gold Tablets* (RGRW 162) Leiden/Boston, p. 3.

⁶⁰⁸ Torjussen, Stian Sundell 2008. *Metamorphoses of myths: A study of the „Orphic“ gold tablets and the Derveni papyrus*, PhD-Dissertation, University of Tromsø, Faculty of Humanities, pp. 56-61.

of the deceased to a secular audience stands in contrast to a gold tablet that was given to the deceased during the burial and would never be seen again until excavated.

This section has highlighted an important aspect that was sometimes part of voluntary associations, namely that some groups took charge of the burial of some or all of their members. They also created burial grounds for their exclusive use. These burial grounds were in some cases equipped with further buildings used by associations for their commemorative meetings within the precinct of the graveyard. These buildings were sometimes shaped in the form of dining places. Yet we cannot link the buildings directly to specific groups. Perhaps they were shared by various groups and for any occasion that had to do with burial care.

More important, however, seems to be the fact that an essential part of people's personal and family life, namely the care not only for the funeral but often also for the annual maintenance of the commemoration of one person, was given over to a voluntary association rather than to the *oikos*. This development indicates two things. On the one hand we can discern a merging of responsibility from household to voluntary association or perhaps a merging of the two. On the other hand we can get an idea of the importance a voluntary association might have had in the individual's life and beyond. It is, however, interesting that hardly any graveyards of groups with a strong ethnic identity were found. No Syrian or Jewish Diaspora graveyards from Hellenistic Greece have been unearthed so far and no inscriptions have been found which might point to them. This again leads to one possible conclusion, namely that people, whether from abroad or local, identified themselves with a particular association but what they had in common was only the worship of the one and same deity. On this basis, it seems, they built an atmosphere of trust and loyalty.

5.3 Voluntary associations in temples and sanctuaries

It has been frequently suggested that the most common meeting place for voluntary associations were found within the precincts of sanctuaries that were supported and controlled by the civic authorities and accessible to everyone.⁶⁰⁹ These sanctuaries were at least at some point involved in the *polis* religion: the deities worshipped in them either became part of the *polis* or were controlled by the *polis* through the placement of religious authorities.

⁶⁰⁹ Most recently: Nielsen, Inge 2006. Vorbilder für Räumlichkeiten der religiösen Vereine hellenistischer und römischer Zeit, in: Inge Nielsen (ed.) *Zwischen Kult und Gesellschaft: Kosmopolitische Zentren des antiken Mittelmeerraumes als Aktionsraum von Kultvereinen und Religionsgemeinschaften* (Hephaistos Themenband 24) Augsburg, pp. 31-46:35.

Many inscriptions referring to various groups were set up in sanctuaries and may well indicate that these groups were at least occasional visitors to these sites.⁶¹⁰ Courtyards and entrance areas of the sanctuaries have been suggested as meeting places, as well as additional rooms, the existence of which could not be easily explained otherwise.

From an epigraphic point of view, it is often unclear what is actually meant when an inscription names a specific sanctuary if that inscription was not found *in situ* at the sanctuary itself. We know for example that the *orgeones* of Bendis agreed to set up their decree in the *hieron* of Bendis. This is true for both the “Thracian” *orgeones* of Bendis and the “Athenian” version of the latter.⁶¹¹ The *orgeones* of the Mother of Gods set up equivalent inscriptions in their own sanctuary.⁶¹² However, it has been suggested that in both cases the buildings were owned by each group, and used only for serving their own purposes.⁶¹³ This interpretation coincides with the cases of other groups of *orgeones* which had their own premises.⁶¹⁴ But because neither of the inscriptions of the *orgeones* of Bendis was actually found *in situ*, we can only guess that the sanctuary was erected by the group for its sole use and not with the support of the civic institutions.

In many places we do not know whether or at what point a sanctuary is controlled by civic authorities; at what point one can speak of a sanctuary open to everyone; or of when premises were reserved for and owned by a specific group. An interesting case which highlights these questions occurs on Delos in the case of Serapeion A and the Egyptian priest Apollonios which has already been discussed in parts of chapters three and four. I will only briefly refer to it in this archaeological context. Serapeion A contained a dining room similar to other Greek sanctuaries.⁶¹⁵ One could reach this room through the last three steps of the main stairway. All four walls of this rather large room⁶¹⁶ were equipped with marble benches to recline on.⁶¹⁷ Some of the benches provided name- or votive-inscriptions. One of the benches carried an engraved gaming board. These inscriptions contain important information: firstly, the members of the associations must have met here regularly, hence the inscribed names; secondly, the room served a religious purpose, as suggested by the votive

⁶¹⁰ See e.g. the *asklepiastai* who set up an inscription in the asklepieion in Athens, *SEG* 18.33, 212/11-174/3 BC. The *dionysiastai* from the Piraeus want their decree to be “placed beside the temple of the god” *SEG* 22.122.

⁶¹¹ Thracian *orgeones*: *IG* II² 1283 (261/60 BC?). Civic *orgeones*: *IG* II² 1255 (337-36 BC).

⁶¹² *IG* II² 1327 178/7 BC.

⁶¹³ Ferguson 1947, pp. 102 and 108.

⁶¹⁴ On the *Metreon* and the ownership of sanctuaries by groups see the chapter on Athens.

⁶¹⁵ Image F, appendix.

⁶¹⁶ The room measures about forty square metres.

⁶¹⁷ Roussel compares the room’s shape and its furnishing convincingly to the banqueting hall (room 6) in the Iseum in Pompeii: Roussel 1915/16, nr. 2, p. 84 f.; *IG* XI 4 1216-1222; White 1990, pp. 35f.

inscriptions; and thirdly, the people who met here did so in order to socialise, as indicated by the engraved gaming board. Over the course of time, the purpose of the room changed. Originally it belonged to the neighbouring complex and was only later integrated into the sanctuary, about the time of the erection of the temple probably at the end of the third century BC.⁶¹⁸ Yet only a few inscriptions were found in the building in comparison to the other Serapeia. However, from those which were actually discovered *in situ*, we learn that the room was used on various occasions. It was generally used for the holding of the *kline* of Serapis and other social events, as described in chapter three.⁶¹⁹

Most inscriptions which refer to voluntary associations around the Egyptian deities were found within Serapeion B.⁶²⁰ In all one can count six different groups which appear to have been contemporaneous to each other.⁶²¹ However, no specific room for meetings or commensality was found in the precinct. Nevertheless, it has been argued that the sanctuary offered various places for people to meet and sit together.⁶²² Rows of benches were erected in the courtyard and in front of the temples.⁶²³ If we consider the variety of associations and their activity in dedicating votive offerings at Serapeion B, one can perhaps say that other places apart from room E in Serapeion A served as meeting places. Some of the dedicatory inscriptions of Serapeion B were engraved on benches which were set up in the entrance-area of the sanctuary, as mentioned earlier.⁶²⁴ According to one inscription, one group of worshippers, apparently linked with the sanctuary, namely the *eranistai*, dedicated a set of dining benches. It is unclear, however, where those dining benches were actually placed.⁶²⁵ One can probably imagine that the whole sanctuary served occasionally as a meeting place, although it seems more likely that they had their regular meetings in a place specifically constructed for the purpose, such as the dining hall E attached to Serapeion A.⁶²⁶ I would suggest that the groups dedicated their inscriptions in a sanctuary open to everyone, since its priests and treasures appear in the Athenian inventory lists, for reasons of display and self-representation: more people would attend this sanctuary and would recognise the inscriptions and dedications made by the group or by individuals, showing their benefactions for the good

⁶¹⁸ Before the erection of the temple it might have been a cult room for Serapis.

⁶¹⁹ *RICIS* 202/0140, l. 10.

⁶²⁰ Image H, appendix.

⁶²¹ For further details see chapter four.

⁶²² Kleibl 2006, pp. 83-84.

⁶²³ A similar situation occurs in Eretria, where such long benches were installed in the Iseum. See Steinhauer 2011, p. 187.

⁶²⁴ *RICIS* 202/0142; *IG* XI 4 1243. *RICIS* 202/0143; *IG* XI 4 1240. *RICIS* 202/0144-45; *IG* XI 4 1268-69 (all before 166 BC).

⁶²⁵ Kleibl 2006, p. 84, suggested room B as dining room.

⁶²⁶ Steinhauer 2011, p. 189.

of the sanctuary. A group of first-century *demetriastai* from Ephesus even decided to erect images of their benefactors in a place convenient for the *demosion*.⁶²⁷ Although the exact meaning of *demosion* is not entirely clear in this context, it was surely a more publicly accessible place.⁶²⁸

The case of the *boukoloi* in Pergamum shows that both practices were important. They erected some inscriptions within their own premises, among which is included a honorary decree to the priestess of Athena *polias*,⁶²⁹ and at the same time there were honorary decrees to members and participants in certain performances in the Agora, the theatre and the public temple of Dionysos.⁶³⁰

An inscription of the *asklepiastai* was found in the sanctuary of Asklepios on the southern slope of the Acropolis in Athens.⁶³¹ The sanctuary was clearly not erected only to serve this particular association. It did not provide any meeting or dining facilities for the group of *asklepiastai* and was maintained by the civic institutions. Yet the *asklepiastai* dedicated their inscriptions here.

Three inscriptions from at least two different voluntary associations were found within the precinct of the sanctuary of Herakles Pankrates at the Ilissos in Athens.⁶³² Like the Asklepieion, this sanctuary was, although frequented by many associations, not built specifically as a meeting-place for voluntary associations. It was open to any worshipper, as the inscriptions suggest. Whether the groups had other, private precincts within which they could hold their meetings cannot be said.

Many more inscriptions were found in similar situations. These few examples should only serve to highlight how little one can actually say about the participation of voluntary associations in sanctuaries under the administration of the *polis*. What makes it even harder to reconstruct the activities of voluntary associations at sanctuaries that were not their own is the fact that the evidence does not provide sufficient answers. The epigraphic evidence that appears in sanctuaries frequented by various worshippers and entertained by the civic institutions consisted in most cases of honorary decrees with little information, or sometimes

⁶²⁷ *SEG* 4, 515; *IEph* 4331, ll. 20-23: κατασκευ-/ασθῆναι δὲ αὐτῶν εἰκόνας γραπτ-/άς· τεθήσονται δὲ ἐν τῷ εὐθέτῳ τό-/πῳ ἐν τῷ δημοσίῳ ἔχουσαι.

⁶²⁸ Suys, Véronique 2005. Les associations culturelles dans la cité aux époques hellénistique et impériale, in: Dasen, Véronique/Piérart, Marcel (edd.) *Ἰδία καὶ δημοσία/Les cadres "privés" et "publics" de la religion grecque antique* (Kernos suppl. 15) pp. 203-218 and “à l’époque hellénistique le phénomène associative est surtout perceptible à Athènes, Délos, Rhodes” p. 205.

⁶²⁹ *IvP* II, 488.

⁶³⁰ *IvP* II 487, 486 A-B, 485.

⁶³¹ *SEG* 18.33, 212/11-174/3 BC.

⁶³² For more details see chapter two, Athens.

of lists of people that took part in specific occasions. What exactly happened during their meetings at the sanctuaries and what kind of meetings, rituals or performances could be held in such places remains unknown. One cannot say whether the groups regularly participated corporately in the sacrifices conducted by the *polis* or whether they only occasionally visited them independently from each other in order, for instance, to sacrifice, set up an inscription, or to receive their share of the sacrificial meat. Even if voluntary associations occasionally met at state-run and publicly accessible sanctuaries, was not one of the reasons for people to come together as a specific voluntary association in order to sacrifice, meet, and dine exclusively in a private, and therefore selective, atmosphere? The next section will address these questions.

5.4 Dining halls attached to temples

The archaeological evidence within Greek sanctuaries shows that the opportunity for dining in an environment that, while private, was still attached to the temple was provided from Archaic times onwards. In some official sanctuaries, kitchens as well as dining rooms for commensality were provided. In many cases, however, it is unclear who actually dined in these facilities. As seen in the previous paragraph one cannot know for sure how voluntary associations were related to particular sanctuaries within which the relevant inscriptions were found, that is, whether the groups were regular guests at certain sanctuaries or whether they simply dedicated an inscription occasionally.

In the following section I will introduce two important examples of sanctuaries that provided dining facilities. One of these sanctuaries was dedicated to a deity that might count as a “traditional” Greek deity, the second sanctuary was dedicated to a “newly-worshipped” deity.

5.4.1 The sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth

The sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth was equipped with a large number of dining rooms, possibly up to fifty-two different ones in all.⁶³³ They were built within a period from the sixth century BC until Hellenistic times.⁶³⁴ The shape of the rooms was dependent on the topographical situation: those dining rooms which were built to the east of the main stairway on the lower terrace and to its south, were built on steeper slopes and therefore had less space for expansion.⁶³⁵ However, the rooms were built systematically in rows, a habit that was maintained until Hellenistic times.⁶³⁶ One main difference between the dining halls at the Demeter sanctuary in Corinth and those of other sanctuaries is the large number of very small, self-contained units. This is on a different scale compared to dining halls such as the “Gymnasium” at Epidaurus, within which as many as two hundred and fifty people could dine at the same time. This is not to say that the concept of smaller-sized dining rooms was in itself unusual but it is the sheer number which makes Corinth such an outstanding example.⁶³⁷

At Corinth, the building of dining halls began in the sixth century BC as small houses, or rather one-room units with eating facilities but without integrated kitchens started to appear, although one building is identifiable as a kitchen on its own. It might have served initially as a general facility.⁶³⁸ The houses were connected by a common roof. From the second half of the fifth century they were equipped with service rooms. By the fourth century all rooms would eventually be equipped with facilities.⁶³⁹ The building materials used in the dining rooms were equivalent to those used for the houses in the city of Corinth. The roofs were built according to the Corinthian system. Each building had a door which either opened towards the main stairway or faced downhill.⁶⁴⁰ Five buildings were equipped with exterior benches. No windows could be found, and those walls which were high enough to have a window showed no indication of having one.

⁶³³ See image Q, appendix.

⁶³⁴ It is, however, impossible to say how many rooms were in use at one specific period of time, Bookidis, Nancy 1990. *Ritual Dining in the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth: Some Questions*, in: O. Murray (ed.) *Symptica. A Symposium on the Symposium*, Oxford, pp. 86-94:86 and 90. For the exact dates of each room see Bookidis, Nancy/Stroud, Ronald S. (edd.) *The sanctuary of Demeter and Kore. Topography and architecture* (Corinth XVIII, part III) Athens/Princeton 1997, table 1, p. 413.

⁶³⁵ Bookidis/Stroud 1997, p. 393.

⁶³⁶ See image Q, appendix.

⁶³⁷ Other similar dining facilities were found at the Asklepieion at Troizen and at Brauron, where nine dining rooms served approximately eleven people each, Bookidis/Stroud 1997, p. 393.

⁶³⁸ Bookidis/Stroud 1997, p. 394.

⁶³⁹ Bookidis/Stroud 1997, p. 394.

⁶⁴⁰ Bookidis/Stroud 1997, p. 395.

The actual dining rooms are very consistent with respect to their proportions and furnishings from the sixth century until the sanctuary fell out of use in 146 BC. Most of the rooms were slightly rectangular, a little longer than they were wide.⁶⁴¹ Each room, however, had its own peculiarities in terms of equipment, such as varying niches and basins.⁶⁴²

No chronological development in terms of size or structure can be observed from the Archaic period until Hellenistic times.⁶⁴³ Unlike other places which were often furnished with carved stone benches or stone slabs projecting from the wall to support boards or removable wooden furniture, all dining rooms in the sanctuary of Demeter at Corinth were equipped with previously installed couches made of stone and earth. The choice of stone, clay and lime-cement changes over time but the principle stays the same.⁶⁴⁴ Each bench was separated from the next by an armrest that was formed out of a line of stone on top of the couch.⁶⁴⁵ Some of the benches were so small that modern excavators have named them half-couches. They suggest that these couches were reserved for the person directing the course of the meal or children, who held a special position in the cult.⁶⁴⁶ The couches served five to nine people per room.⁶⁴⁷

Many of the rooms were equipped with different niches, probably to hold a lamp or a small statue, but only one of them had a central hearth in the middle, a provision normally seen only in dining rooms.⁶⁴⁸ The different rooms had various other features, such as holes or basins, closets and so forth.⁶⁴⁹

In the sixth and fifth centuries only sixteen rooms were equipped with additional bathing rooms with drainage systems. By the end of the fourth century bathing and drainage systems had become a normal feature of every room. Cleanliness and purification were important elements in Greek cults.⁶⁵⁰ However, the provision of bathing facilities in every room was very unusual.⁶⁵¹ The bathrooms did not provide any latrines.

⁶⁴¹ They usually measured between 3.60 and 4.60 metres per side, while a few examples measured as much as five metres. All in all the rooms were between 17 and 22m² in size, Bookidis/Stroud 1997, p. 396.

⁶⁴² Bookidis 1990, p.90.

⁶⁴³ Bookidis/Stroud 1997, p. 397.

⁶⁴⁴ Bookidis/Stroud 1997, p. 398.

⁶⁴⁵ The size of the benches varied from room to room and were between 0.75 and 0.85m in height and between 0.65 and 1.15m in width, with some exceptions. For precise measurements of each couch see tables 2 and 3 pp. 414-415 in Bookidis/Stroud 1997

⁶⁴⁶ Bookidis/Stroud 1997, p. 399.

⁶⁴⁷ Bookidis 1990, p. 88.

⁶⁴⁸ Bookidis/Stroud 1997, p. 401.

⁶⁴⁹ For further description see Bookidis/Stroud 1997, pp. 401-402

⁶⁵⁰ Bookidis/Stroud 1997, pp. 402-403.

⁶⁵¹ Bookidis/Stroud 1997, p. 405.

Beside the dining rooms, at least eight sitting rooms were part of the sanctuary, each equipped with smaller benches without armrests.

Only a few kitchens, namely six in number, are well preserved. Within the kitchens the excavators found open hearths either on the floor or a little raised up, but not much equipment apart from that.⁶⁵² An analysis of a sacrificial pit revealed that pigs were the most common sacrificial animals and these were probably boiled or stewed rather than roasted.⁶⁵³ Pottery shapes that were found in the dining rooms were often signed with initials or surnames, sometimes accompanied by dedications to the goddesses.⁶⁵⁴

Several suggestions have been made concerning the use of the dining halls, since their number and consistency are unique in the Greek world. One commonly held view is that families used the facilities when they stayed overnight at festival times. Others have even suggested that families had built these houses privately for their own use⁶⁵⁵ or that they were leased privately during festival periods.⁶⁵⁶ However, we know practically nothing from the epigraphic evidence about the buildings or their possible ownership. The excavators have suggested that the dining rooms served to divide a large number of worshippers into smaller, more intimate groups.⁶⁵⁷

The large number of votive offerings, the size of the sanctuary itself, and the increasing number of dining halls, indicate that the rooms served a purpose closely linked to the public festival and its ceremonies. Corinth, however, remains an exception since no other sanctuary of the two goddesses bears any resemblance to it.⁶⁵⁸ The votive offerings indicate a high level of attendance by women, but men and children seem to have been among the worshippers as well.⁶⁵⁹

Not a single inscription mentions a voluntary association dedicated to the two goddesses in Corinth. This might be due to the general scarcity of inscriptions concerning the cult of the two goddesses.⁶⁶⁰ I would argue, however, that it is more likely that no such group

⁶⁵² Bookidis/Stroud 1997, p. 407.

⁶⁵³ The cooking-ware that was found *in situ* comprised mostly casseroles and stew-pots, Bookidis 1990, p. 92.

⁶⁵⁴ Bookidis 1990, p. 92.

⁶⁵⁵ Bergquist, Birgitta 1990. Symptotic Space: A Functional Aspect of Greek Dining-Rooms, in: Oswyn Murray (ed.) *Symptotica. A Symposium on the Symposion*, Oxford, pp. 37-65:44.

⁶⁵⁶ Bookidis 1990, p. 93.

⁶⁵⁷ Bookidis/Stroud 1997, p. 412.

⁶⁵⁸ Bookidis 1990, p. 86.

⁶⁵⁹ Bookidis 1990, pp. 90-91.

⁶⁶⁰ Bookidis 1990, p. 87.

was active in this area and that one must assume a specific local custom, a ritual that included the common meal in smaller groups on specific occasions.

The value of this example, even though no clear link can be made between voluntary associations and the dining halls, is to give an impressive example of a common habit that was practised as early as the sixth century BC and that was, it seems, adopted by voluntary associations. It also gives a clear sense of the alternative ritual practice offered by the civic institutions as a part of the *polis* religion, similar in one important aspect to that provided by voluntary associations.

5.4.2 The sanctuary of the Syrian deities on Delos

The sanctuary of the Syrian gods on the “terrace of the foreign deities” in the Inopos region on Delos was a complex accumulation of diverse buildings among which we can find several dining halls which seem to have been used by several voluntary associations over the course of time. The buildings were devoted to the worship of the initially Syrian goddess Atargatis and her companion Hadad. The sanctuary was built with the permission of the Athenian authorities, which took over its organisation and offices soon after its erection.⁶⁶¹ The most remarkable and eye-catching element of the oblong, extended complex is the theatre, which is probably one of the most ancient examples of its kind that still exists.⁶⁶² The southern part of the sanctuary consisted of a court that was enclosed by several quadrangular rooms which could be entered by a stairway and an attached corridor. The southern courtyard was connected to the rest of the sanctuary through the *propylées de la court*. The northern part mainly consisted of several rooms, most of which were of similar size and structure. Some of them probably served as shops. One could enter this part by passing through the northern *propylaia*, the counterpart of the *propylées de la court* in the south. The northern and southern parts of the complex were connected through a grand portico which extended to an exedra in its centre, which again was located exactly opposite the orchestra of the sacred theatre. A large courtyard, probably better described as a terrace, filled the space between the exedra of Midas and the theatre, which itself hosted a cistern. In addition to the theatre and the portico, other rooms were attached to the courtyard.

⁶⁶¹ After five Syrian priests from Hierapolis, the offices were manned by Athenian staff. See Hörig, Monika 1984. *Dea Syria – Atargatis*, in: *ANRW* II, 17, 3, pp. 1537-1581:1569.

⁶⁶² See images J and K, appendix. The origin and genesis of that kind of building are further discussed in: Will/Schmid 1984, pp. 111-113.

The function of some of the rooms is unknown, especially of those surrounding the southern courtyard. Nevertheless, nine of the rooms belonging to the sanctuary can be identified as so-called *exedras*. These “*exedras*” – the imprecise term describing this kind of banqueting room occurs in the dedicatory inscriptions uniquely found in Delos⁶⁶³ – were all of the same type but differed in shape and size. They were all quadrangular or rectangular and provided bricked benches of eighty centimetres breadth either on all three sides or only on the long sides in the shape of *bi-* and *triclinia*.⁶⁶⁴ Two rooms, however, namely the *exedra* of Midas⁶⁶⁵ and the large *exedra* behind the theatre, were empty. Initially all rooms had been empty. The benches were only installed later as an addition. However, the shape of the rooms and the perfect fit of the benches suggest that the rooms had always served as dining rooms but were initially equipped with removable, probably wooden furniture that was later replaced by the bricked benches.⁶⁶⁶ From this account one can identify rooms eight and nine as banqueting halls as well.⁶⁶⁷ The bricked benches of the other rooms were accessible via small staircases. The hard surfaces of the bricks may have been covered with mats and cushions during feasts.

If these nine rooms served as banqueting rooms for members of the worshipping communities, one would expect access to cooking facilities and water supply. Water supply was certainly provided by the cistern at the north end of the terrace. The west wall of the *exedra* of Midas provided a door to another room that could have served as a room to prepare food in. The other *exedras* were probably supplied with food that was prepared in the neighbouring rooms.⁶⁶⁸ Similar banqueting rooms are well known from other “oriental” sanctuaries.⁶⁶⁹

According to the inscriptions, which are often datable by the names of civic magistrates, the main building-period of the sanctuary was in the last decades of the second century and in the first decade of the first century BC.⁶⁷⁰

The archaeological remains show that some sort of commensality took place at the sanctuary of the Syrian deities. Each *exedra* offered dining facilities for approximately seven

⁶⁶³ In Greek inscriptions the habit of using vague terms in order to describe banqueting rooms is very common, Will/Schmid 1985, p. 116 and ns. 1 and 2.

⁶⁶⁴ See image L, appendix.

⁶⁶⁵ Nr. 8 in image L.

⁶⁶⁶ Will/Schmid 1985, p. 118.

⁶⁶⁷ They were presumably similarly furnished with removable benches, as seen earlier. Will/Schmid 1985, p. 116.

⁶⁶⁸ *Exedras* 3, 4, 8 and even 6 had direct access through doors to other rooms.

⁶⁶⁹ Will/Schmid 1985, p. 117.

⁶⁷⁰ Will/Schmid 1985 offer a list of all inscriptions found within the sanctuary and their dates, p. 118.

or eight people, similar to the dining rooms of the Demeter sanctuary in Corinth. The theatre, however, offered seats for six- to seven-hundred people, a size that hints at the popularity of the sanctuary. This observation does not come as a surprise, since the inscriptions of Delos suggest a large Syrian population on the island around the time of the second and first centuries BC. Furthermore, the sanctuary was visited by Greek and Italian worshippers alike.⁶⁷¹ We may also assume that people visited only for special occasions and for performances held in the theatre without being involved regularly in the actual worship.

Since the size and number of the dining rooms suggests that not all of the worshippers were able to dine in them at the same time, we can assume that they were built for specific groups rather than for a big audience. It seems very likely that some groups took part in the official ceremonies but met separately afterwards or at other times. How these groups were composed, organised and initiated or even connected to the buildings of the sanctuary remains unclear. The only information we have is that the construction of two of the exedras, numbers one and eight, was financed by individuals.⁶⁷² Apart from that, none of the rooms can be connected to a specific group.

As discussed in chapters three and four, however, one can learn from the inscriptions that various voluntary associations gathered around the Syrian deities.⁶⁷³ A pair of inscriptions from the time before the Athenian occupation which refer to a *thiasos* of the Syrian deities clarifies some issues with the construction of the neighbouring temple of Serapis. It is at one and the same time a building and dedicatory inscription in the name of the *thiasotes* who apparently had built something from an *oikos* of Serapis, probably at the side of the sanctuary of Serapis. Even though we do not know what was built out of the *oikos*, it seems as if the group was taking part in the construction of certain buildings. Baslez argues that the *oikos* was the actual assembly place for groups of worshippers from the Near East, a specific kind of meeting place introduced to Delos by the latter.⁶⁷⁴ However, since the term *oikos* only indicates a certain form of habitation-building, a non-essential element of the sanctuary,⁶⁷⁵ one might suppose that either one of the unspecified rooms or an exedra was meant, but cannot say for sure that an assembly place was in fact named.

⁶⁷¹ See chapter four.

⁶⁷² Will/Schmid 1985, p. 142.

⁶⁷³ For the *thiasotai* see *RICIS* 202/0194, Will/Schmid 1985, p. 139 and *ID* 2225: Διονύσιος Ἐρμογένου Ἀ[λεξανδρεὺς] /ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ τὸ ἄγαλμα [καὶ τὸ θυμὶ]-/ατήριον καὶ τὴν λιβανοτίδα, ἀ[πὸ τῶν? θι]-/ασιτῶν Ἀγνῆς Θεοῦ οὗς συνήγα[γε]. For details of the groups and their members see chapter four.

⁶⁷⁴ Baslez 1977, p. 261.

⁶⁷⁵ Non-essential in the sense of an additional building within the *temenos* beside *naos* and *hieron*, see Patera 2011, pp. 545 and 547.

The second type of association appears in various inscriptions from Roman times as *therapeutes*.⁶⁷⁶ According to the contents of the inscriptions, it seems as if the *therapeutes* were equally involved in construction works in the precinct of the Syrian goddess.⁶⁷⁷ Furthermore one can assume that Midas, who dedicated the exedra, later named after him by the excavators, was a member of the *therapeutes* since he appears in one of their inscriptions.⁶⁷⁸ From these observations one can conclude that at least the exedra of Midas served as a meeting and dining-place for the *therapeutes*.

Apart from that, neither group can be allocated to a specific building in the complex. They surely took part in the construction and made use of the sanctuary and its various elements. But other groups might have also dined in the facilities: priests, other staff, probably even foreign visitors and families.

It seems as if the variety of dining halls attached to sanctuaries in general offered the possibility for various groups to dine, whether as associations or as other groups of worshippers such as families. But the facilities did not offer the atmosphere of a private structure that exclusively served one specific group and its purposes. Additionally those rooms did not offer the facilities that were necessary for cultic rituals. No statue bases, altars or similar equipment were found in the rooms. Apart from that, the rooms were too small to perform sacred plays or dances. These observations lead to the hypothesis that the groups on the one hand joined the public sacrifice since they could not hold anything similar in the rooms, but on the other hand used the rooms for commensality in order to create a specific exclusivity which differentiated them from the other worshippers. This exclusivity was underlined by the fact that with the erection of the exedras and the specific dining couches, worshippers introduced a new way of reclining to Greece, since the benches which were common at places in the Near East such as Dura Europos and Palmyra and which differed in terms of their shape and size from the Greek dining couches were the first of their kind in Greece.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁶ The *therapeutes* of the Syrian deity appear in (at least) nineteen inscriptions (unless indicated otherwise, all inscriptions in this footnote are published in *ID*): 2222 (110/9 BC), 2224 (105/4 BC), 2227 (118/17 BC), 2229 (112/1 B. C), 2230 (110/9 BC), 2231 (110/9 BC), 2234 (106/5 BC), 2237(100/99 BC), 2240 (96/5 BC), 2241 (?), 2250 (107/6 BC), 2251-2252 (each 108/7 and 106/5 BC), 2253 (106/05 BC), 2277 (?), 2531 (?), 2626 (113/12 BC ?), 2628 (108/7 BC), *SEG* 35.887 (108/7 BC)

⁶⁷⁷ *ID* 2224 dedication of pylon, *ID* 2237, dedication of *naos* and doorway.

⁶⁷⁸ *ID* 2253. Named among *therapeutes* *ID* 2234.

⁶⁷⁹ Will/Schmid 1985, p. 119. However, the benches were also inspired by Greek habits, due to their disproportionate height which clearly goes back to a Greek custom.

5. 5 Independent assembly places

A third form of facilities used as meeting rooms for voluntary associations were private buildings that appeared to be independent from sanctuaries. Those buildings were often attached to or part of private houses. It is very likely that the inhabitant of the house was somehow involved in the group, in some cases even possibly as the founder of the group,⁶⁸⁰ or as the holder of an important office. This third form of facility is, when attached to a private house, often not clearly identifiable in the archaeological records, since many of such places have much in common with the regular *andron* in Greek houses and, respectively, the *triclinium* in Roman ones. If no inscriptions, paintings, or ritual equipment appears within the area where they were found, the chances of identifying such buildings are very low. This case certainly applies to specific groups, such as the early Christians. Early Christian house churches as known from Dura Europos and those mentioned by Paul in Corinth are completely invisible in the archaeological records of Greece.⁶⁸¹ The letters of Paul, however, suggest that in the first century AD several smaller communities already existed in Corinth which regularly met at one person's house.⁶⁸² This house must have offered the right facilities to host several smaller groups.

However, some very clear examples of independent assembly places of voluntary associations have come down to us and shall be analysed in the next part of the chapter.

5. 5. 1 Voluntary associations that worshipped traditional Greek deities: The Dionysian groups

The building with the *Podiensaal* in the city centre of Pergamum was originally erected in Hellenistic times.⁶⁸³ The peristyle house, which was excavated in 1975, can be counted among the few best preserved and clearly identifiable buildings of voluntary associations that have come down to us.⁶⁸⁴ On first sight, the building does not differ from other contemporary residential houses in Pergamum. However, according to the inscriptions that were found in

⁶⁸⁰ See inscription from Philadelphia *SIG III*³ 985 at the beginning of chapter four.

⁶⁸¹ The early Christian house church in Dura Europos dates back to AD 240 and represents the earliest clearly identifiable archaeological evidence of a Christian meeting place. On the interpretation of the wall-paintings in the *domus ecclesiae* and its position between other similar buildings of different cult-groups see Elsner, Jaś 2001. Cultural Resistance and the Visual Image: The case of Dura Europos, in: *CPh* 96, pp. 269-304:280-281.

⁶⁸² 1Cor 11, 20; 14, 23.

⁶⁸³ Images T and U, appendix.

⁶⁸⁴ Schwarzer 2008, p. 79.

the building, it served at least from 27 BC until the third century AD as an assembly place for the cult-association of the Dionysian *boukoloï* that was introduced in chapter four.⁶⁸⁵

The building with the *Podiensaal* consisted of various rooms distributed across two levels. For the time before the year AD 17, one can reconstruct about thirteen main rooms that were grouped around a paved courtyard,⁶⁸⁶ and three cisterns provided the building with water. After an earthquake in AD 17, the house was rebuilt on a more moderate scale: the eastern wing was removed in favour of a larger courtyard.⁶⁸⁷ In the third and fourth construction periods⁶⁸⁸ and in subsequent years the courtyard, later equipped with a fountain, might have been used for cultic rituals. The northern wing lost its upper floor. Its main room was divided into a cult- and a banqueting area. These were then reunited and equipped with bricked *klinai* in the next period of construction.

Several traces of fire on the floor of this particular dining-room indicate that food was cooked in the room during the banquet.⁶⁸⁹ The banqueting hall had been enlarged in the middle of the third century, probably as a result of an increased number of members. The benches of the former P-shaped *triclinium*, which were equipped with a board to rest the dishes on, were enlarged insofar as they now lined all four walls of the room, apart from the entrance area. The benches now offered space for up to seventy banqueters.⁶⁹⁰ But this was not the only change that can be observed: over the course of time the group's cultic habits changed. Now, two niches were installed in the podia which might have served for cultic equipment or cult statues. The main cultic niche was replaced by an altar on a separate podium. The excavator suggests that rooms two, three, and four were used for rituals from the third period onwards. The complete restoration of the southern wing, which consisted of the kitchen that supplied the banqueting hall and was now equipped with small shops, may indicate that the group needed to rent out the shops.⁶⁹¹ Wall-paintings from the sixth building period⁶⁹² depict Dionysian topics particularly in the banqueting hall itself. Beside wine-leaves and a *thyrsos* which decorated the main walls, a cultic niche was decorated with a *Silenos*.⁶⁹³

⁶⁸⁵ An inscription that dates back to the years around 27 BC was found in the building and mentions Dionysos *kathegemon* and an *archeboukolos*, Jaccottet 2003-II, Nr. 92, p. 172. Schwarzer, 2008 suggests that the building belonged to the association already in its first construction phase (second half of the second century BC) p. 79.

⁶⁸⁶ Normal houses had eleven to twelve rooms, Schwarzer 2008, p. 79.

⁶⁸⁷ This, however, seems to have been a trend since other buildings were similarly reconstructed at this time, Schwarzer 2008, p. 80.

⁶⁸⁸ The periods shortly before and after the earthquake.

⁶⁸⁹ Schwarzer 2008, p. 81.

⁶⁹⁰ Schwarzer 2008, p. 81.

⁶⁹¹ Schwarzer 2008, p. 81.

⁶⁹² First half of the third century AD.

⁶⁹³ Schwarzer 2008, p. 83.

However, even though Dionysos appears prominently in the inscriptions, no specifically Dionysian pattern can be seen among the small findings made within the *Podiensaal*. Two of the four altars that were found in the building were dedicated to Dionysos and Augustus by an *archiboukolos* named Herodes.⁶⁹⁴ Other findings, mostly small sculptures, were dedications to Aphrodite, Meleager and Attis as well as to a Hero. Smaller terracotta figurines depicting Artemis, Tyche, Herakles, Pan, Attis, Serapis, Dionysos and an ithyphallic grotesque were found, each as single versions of each of these. Votive statues to Aphrodite were found four times and to her son Eros eight times. The most popular deity, however, seems to have been Kybele who was depicted eleven times.⁶⁹⁵ These objects were deposited in a cistern in the first century AD among other more ambiguous figurines.

Beside these rather cultic findings, more practical objects such as pottery, pans and pots were found in the various foundations of the building. In addition to the dishes, the excavator even unearthed food leftovers which were mingled with the layers of the floor. According to the analysis of these leftovers,⁶⁹⁶ the banqueters ate mainly lamb, goat and pork, as well as beef. On rare occasions, they had game, poultry and fish on their menu and sometimes even snails and seashells.

The *Podiensaal*, it seems, served as an all-purpose building for the members of the group. Here they could meet, dine together, watch performances which included dancing and singing and hold cultic ceremonies. This last is indicated by the altar and the sacristy.

The house of C. Flavius Aptus, a member of a well-known and wealthy family from Ephesus,⁶⁹⁷ seems to have been a place for meetings and celebrations of the private worshippers of Dionysos *Bakchios pro poleos*.⁶⁹⁸ Not only is the owner of the house named as a priest of this particular Dionysos, but his house and the archaeological findings within were full of references to the cult of Dionysos.⁶⁹⁹ The inscription which identified him as the priest was part of a fountain, erected on the south side of the courtyard. It was immediately

⁶⁹⁴ Jaccottet 2003-II, ns. 92 and 94, pp. 172-173.

⁶⁹⁵ Schwarzer 2008, p. 84.

⁶⁹⁶ The analysis was undertaken by Angela von den Driesch as part of Schwarzer 2008, pp. 309-313.

⁶⁹⁷ He appears in six further honorary inscriptions, and his father and grandfather in nine inscriptions. See also the comment at Jaccottet 2003, p. 230.

⁶⁹⁸ *IEph* 1267.

⁶⁹⁹ See comment in *IEph* IV, p. 152. For a more detailed description of the interior see Schäfer, Alfred 2007. *Dionysische Gruppen als ein städtisches Phänomen der römischen Kaiserzeit*, in: Jörg Rüpke (ed.), *Gruppenreligionen im römischen Reich*, pp. 161-180:171. But his house also included cultic artefacts that are related to other cults. Strelan, Rick 1996. *Paul, Artemis and the Jews in Ephesus*, Berlin/New York, p.115.

visible to visitors after entering the complex.⁷⁰⁰ Apart from that, a splendid “*Marmorsaal*”, a hall of marble,⁷⁰¹ was built and was in use by the time of C. Flavius Aptus’ ownership in the mid-second century AD. A little later, he undertook further construction works. He rearranged the former “library” as a representative hall.⁷⁰² The room itself, a *basilica privata*, probably served as a meeting place for the community of worshippers. The walls of a second room in the west of the Atrium were decorated with wall-paintings of Dionysian character such as a *thiasos* of the followers of the wine-god and probably the wedding of Dionysos and Ariadne.⁷⁰³ This room seems to have served as an additional meeting- and dining-room of the community.

The house of Flavius Aptus outclassed most of the normal living houses in Ephesus.⁷⁰⁴ It makes sense to understand the owner of the house as the rich patron who had the financial means to support the group and offer facilities. However, this case shows that in the end one cannot decide whether it was actually a specific voluntary association that met within these premises or whether it was rather, for example, the owner's priestly colleagues or aristocratic friends who liked to dine in a Dionysian atmosphere. This was nothing unusual, since many dining rooms were decorated with Dionysian motifs. And as much as it looks like a private meeting place for a voluntary association, the question remains open until an epigraphic indication appears.

A third non-public sanctuary that can surely be assigned to a voluntary association is the so-called Hall of the Mysts. This building was found in the second half of the nineteenth century on the northwestern slope of the acropolis on the Greek island of Melos. Inscriptions have identified the building as a meeting place of a bacchic group. The highly decorated banqueting hall was equipped with podia to recline on.⁷⁰⁵ At the back of the podia, marble columns were installed. Two of them were decorated with a relief showing the tyche of Melos with the Plutos-child and Athena accompanied by one of the actual mysts, namely Alexander, the *ktistes* of the association. The floor was paved with a mosaic which displayed ornamental and Dionysiac motifs in five parts. It was surrounded by a series of *kantharoi*. Both the mosaic and the entire complex are dated to the third century AD. A boy's head, the

⁷⁰⁰ Jaccottet 2003-II, Nr. 134.

⁷⁰¹ See image V, appendix, Room 31.

⁷⁰² Room 31 b/c. See also Thür, Hilke 2007. Eine Einführung zum Hanghaus 2 in Ephesos, *Forum Archaeologiae - Zeitschrift für klassische Archäologie* 44 /IX, (<http://farch.net>).

⁷⁰³ Schäfer 2007, p. 171.

⁷⁰⁴ Schäfer 2007, p. 171

⁷⁰⁵ The measurements of the hall are 23 x 8.32 metres in size.

bust of a benefactress, Aurelia Eupousia, and a herm of the hierophant of the mysts, M. Marios Trophimos, were found in the building.⁷⁰⁶

A fourth example is the assembly place of the *iobakkhoi* in Athens. Since the building and its location in the very centre of Athens have already been described in chapter two, I mention it here only as one of the clearly identified buildings which were owned and used by one specific voluntary association. The precinct mainly consisted of a dining hall that was aligned towards a sacrificial altar and it was equipped with equipment from a ritual context, such as smaller altars and votive offerings.⁷⁰⁷

In this section I have developed two arguments central to my thesis: on the one hand it became clear that some associations, especially those associated with Dionysiac cult, erected dining facilities in both obvious and rather intimate places, yet in a clearly identifiable manner. They were decorated with bacchic ornaments in the form of wall-paintings, mosaics and reliefs. On the other hand, however, the groups differed completely from each other, with regard to their ritualistic activities and their idea of Dionysus' characteristics. The *boukoloï* in Pergamon for instance, highlighted the taumorphic side of the god. They were much concerned with theatrical and musical performances, including dressing-up and singing. The Melian group offered mystic elements, perhaps inspired by the Eleusinian mysteries, hence including a hierophant and mysts. This group clearly refers to another side of Dionysus which was involved with mystic elements and thoughts of the afterlife. The *iobakkhoi* in Athens were much involved with social gatherings such as commensality as well as burial-care. The *iobakkhoi* appear to have highlighted Dionysus' nature as a wine-god. That is to say, even though these groups worshipped Dionysus and used similar iconographic and architectural features, they differed widely in terms of the ritualistic activity and the character of the deity itself. This variety could also be found as a local phenomenon in one and the same *polis*. It is perhaps best illustrated by the voluntary associations of Dionysian worshippers in Thessaloniki in Roman times. Here one can discern various different voluntary associations

⁷⁰⁶ Schwarzer 2008, pp. 130-131.

⁷⁰⁷ For a more detailed analysis of the archaeology see Schäfer, Alfred 2002. Raumnutzung und Raumwahrnehmung im Vereinslokal der Iobakchen von Athen, in: Ulrike Egelhaaf-Gaiser/Alfred Schäfer (edd.), *Religiöse Vereine in der römischen Antike* (STAC13) Tübingen, pp. 173-220

of the god. Most of them were devoted to one particular aspect of Dionysus, such as fertility, certain perceptions of the afterlife, and the origin of the worshippers.⁷⁰⁸

5. 5. 2 Voluntary associations that worshipped newly-introduced deities: The example of the “synagogue” on Delos

In 1912 a French archaeologist excavated a building in the so called “*quartier du stade*” on the eastern coast of the island. The building was interpreted as a synagogue. This led to much discussion about its original purpose, since its construction date would make it the oldest synagogue in the Diaspora. The next person to deal with the topic more closely was Philipp Bruneau. In his “*Guide de Délos*” from 1965, he clearly named the building a synagogue, an assembly-place for the Jewish community at Delos. Only some years later in his thesis on the cults of Delos did he address the question again, coming to a similar conclusion, as he would do again some years later in yet another article.⁷⁰⁹ Most recently, in 2004, Monika Trümper took another look at this much-discussed building.⁷¹⁰ After her investigation on Delos she argued that the building was in fact planned and used as a Synagogue from its very beginnings.⁷¹¹ I shall discuss whether or not this was actually the case in the next section. If one looks for comparable examples in order to classify the Delian building, one must come to the conclusion that no such evidence exists in Greece. Some scholars have argued that the invention of the *synagoge*, then *proseuche*, as a specific architectural structure within which Jewish people in the Diaspora could gather for religious purposes took place in Egypt in the third century BC.⁷¹² This hypothesis is mainly supported by the mention of *proseuchai* in inscriptions and papyri. The only actual archaeological structure that can be clearly connected with Jews and/or Samaritans in the Greek Diaspora before the end of the second century AD⁷¹³ is in fact this very building on Delos.⁷¹⁴ This building was erected in a relatively

⁷⁰⁸ Nigdelis, Pantelis M., 2010. Voluntary Associations in Roman Thessalonike: In Search of Identity and Support in a Cosmopolitan Society, in: Laura Nasrallah/Charalambos Bakirtzis/Steven J. Friesen, *From Roman to early Christian Thessalonike*. Studies in Religion and Archaeology (Harvard Theological studies 64) Cambridge, Massachusetts, pp. 13-43:14-16.

⁷⁰⁹ GD, p 129, Bruneau 1970, pp. 486-491, Bruneau 1982.

⁷¹⁰ The synagogue at Delos has been subject of much discussion over the past decades see e. g.: Plassart, André 1914. La synagogue juive de Délos, in: *RBibl* 23, pp. 523-534 (the excavator) Bruneau 1970, Bruneau 1982, White 1987, Michael, The Delos synagogue revisited, in *HThR* 80, pp. 133-160 and finally Trümper 2004.

⁷¹¹ I shall not go further into the discussion of the several interpretations of the building but I shall rather rely on Trümper’s detailed analysis and thus resulting argument. On the Samaritans see Trümper 2004, pp. 593-594.

⁷¹² A brief summary can be found in: Hachlili, Rachel 1998. *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology* (HO 1) Leiden, p. 16.

⁷¹³ In the case of the synagogue on Aegina it is unclear whether it served as a synagogue as early as the second century, as often suggested. The only clearly identifiable structure dates back to the fourth century AD. The same applies to the “synagogue” at Priene, a former Hellenistic house which was at some point turned into a synagogue, see: Runesson, Anders/Binder, Donald D./Olsson, Birger (edd.). *The Ancient Synagogue from its*

unexplored area of Delos on the “other” side of the island, namely on the seashore opposite to the main sanctuary of Apollo and the city centre. The immediate neighbourhood of the building has not been excavated yet but it seems as if the “synagogue” became part of a larger insula over the course of time.⁷¹⁵ The building, which was reconstructed about six times, was first erected before 88 BC.⁷¹⁶

The outward dimensions of the rectangular complex measured 28.30 x 30.70 metres (see image 5, appendix). In the first phase, the building was erected as a free-standing edifice with a large hall. A water reservoir and three thresholds with marble doorsteps can be dated to this first phase.⁷¹⁷ In a second phase, as part of a general extension to the south, more walls were erected which divided the building into several rooms.⁷¹⁸ For both the first and the second phases, the appearance of the eastern part of the complex remains unclear. In phase three, shortly after 88 BC, the main change was the renovation of the eastern wall with marble stucco. This was not only a “cosmetic” decision, but was probably a necessary step to stabilise the wall after the Mithridatic invasion. Beside some minor renovations of the south and east walls, the building was extended to the east during the fourth phase. The main progress in the fifth phase⁷¹⁹ can be seen in the division of the large hall into two rooms by a wall that was built down the middle. A sixth phase saw only a few changes and can be dated to the period of the abandonment.

From an architectural point of view, the complex does not feature any specific or unusual elements that would indicate a building much different from others on Delos. Its apparently unusual orientation towards the east could be explained by the fact that the shore and a little harbour were located on this side.

This structure, however, including its findings, does not reveal anything about the activities that might have taken place inside it, apart from one clearly recognisable feature: namely the meeting and dining facilities. None of the few artefacts that were found within the walls of the complex can be identified as specifically Jewish or Samaritan.⁷²⁰ The only indication for a Jewish and/or Samaritan assembly place lies if at all in the epigraphic

Origins to 200 C. E. (Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 72) Leiden/New York 2007, Aegina no. 89, p.118; Priene no. 112, p. 143.

⁷¹⁴ For details see chapter five.

⁷¹⁵ Trümper 2004, p. 541.

⁷¹⁶ This early date makes this building the oldest Synagogue in the Diaspora and Palestine that is archaeologically traceable, Trümper 2004, p. 514.

⁷¹⁷ Trümper 2004, p. 557

⁷¹⁸ Trümper 2004, p. 562

⁷¹⁹ After 69 BC.

⁷²⁰ Trümper 2004, pp. 573-574.

evidence. Briefly put, this evidence consists of four short votive inscriptions that were found within the complex, all of which are addressed to a Theos Hypsistos.⁷²¹ Whether a fifth inscription belonged to the same group of worshippers remains unclear. Two of the votives date to the first century BC.⁷²² Whether the edifice was planned and used as a synagogue from the beginning onwards, as Trümper argues,⁷²³ or whether it was initially erected as a private house, as White believes,⁷²⁴ cannot be decided, as Trümper admits herself. The fact that the building was oriented towards the east, that it included a large banqueting hall and water reservoir, and its location was out of town do not seem to be indicating a synagogue as clearly as Trümper suggests.⁷²⁵

Evidence from later synagogues suggests that dining rooms had become a common feature of the building-type.⁷²⁶ However, such dining rooms were, as we have seen in the earlier parts of this chapter, a common feature of many voluntary associations and nothing specifically Jewish. If one looks for images that can be clearly related exclusively to Jewish groups one finds that these were only used in later synagogues and on the tombstones of late antiquity.⁷²⁷ In earlier times, Jews often used the same symbols that were used by non-Jewish worshippers; symbols that belonged to a common decorative language at the time.⁷²⁸ The latter was certainly the case on Delos where decorative elements such as palm-leaves and rosettas were found on the “Jewish” inscriptions, on a throne from the theatre as well as on rather non-specific incense burners of a kind that were used all over Delos, in both temples and private houses. They could be Jewish but they could just as easily be pagan.⁷²⁹ Whether the Jews in the Diaspora gave those symbols their own meaning,⁷³⁰ chose them for fashionable reasons or to follow the mainstream in their localities is subject to interpretation. I do not intend to join in the ongoing debate about the meaning of Jewish and “Pagan”-

⁷²¹ ID 2328: Λυσίμαχος /ὕπερ ἑαυτοῦ /Θεῶν Ὑψίστων /χαριστήριον.; 2330: Λαοδίκη Θεῶν Ὑψίστων σωθεῖ-/σα ταῖς ὑφ' αὐτο-ῦ θαραπήαις,/εὐχήν; ID 2331: Ζωσῆς/Παρίος/Θεῶν Ὑψίστων/εὐχήν; ID 2332 Ὑψίς-/τω εὐ-/χήν Μ-/αρκία.

⁷²² ID 2333. For further details of the inscriptions see chapter 3.

⁷²³ Trümper 2004, p. 514.

⁷²⁴ White 1990, pp. 66-67.

⁷²⁵ Trümper 2004, p. 592. On the contrary, she stresses herself that the water reservoir “is not considered to have been a *miqveh*” as supposed by others, and that the large hall of GD 80 “has convincing parallels in the large assembly rooms of buildings that served for the meetings of associations, such as the *Établissement des Poseidoniastes*” on the island, Trümper 2004, pp. 578 and 560.

⁷²⁶ Hachlili 1998, p. 29, table II. 1, and in the epigraphic evidence see e. g. *CIJ* I² 694, Stobi (Macedonia) late third century AD mentions a *triclinium* as part of the building.

⁷²⁷ Hachlili 1998, p. 311.

⁷²⁸ Among those were rather geometric and floral patterns such as rosettes and vines.

⁷²⁹ The throne was perhaps removed from the theatre and set up in the synagogue only much later, Trümper 2004, pp. 573-574 and pp. 585-586.

⁷³⁰ As suggested by various scholars and expressed by Smith, Morton 1967. Goodenough’s *Jewish Symbols* in retrospect, in: *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86, pp. 53-68:61.

Jewish symbols as I regard that discussion as beyond the scope of this thesis.⁷³¹ It is worthwhile, however, remarking that apart from a few inscriptions, not much evidence and more specifically not much sacred evidence from the period before Imperial times has come down to us that could help identify Jewish voluntary associations.⁷³²

Despite Trümper's thorough analysis of the structures I am not convinced by her theory that the building was planned as a synagogue. Instead, I suggest referring to the whole complex as an assembly building of one or more voluntary associations – one among the many examples to be found on the island but not as a specifically shaped Diaspora-synagogue. The architecture, I would argue, does not in itself differ from other, similar assembly-buildings. Furthermore one needs to bear in mind that no such thing as a specific shape for early Diaspora-synagogues existed at that point in time. Any form of assembly-building that could be used for ceremonial and social purposes would be within the scope of how an ancient synagogue might have looked. If anything it is the inscriptions which indicate that the building was used by a group of worshippers. These worshippers refer to their deity as Theos Hypsistos, a phrase occasionally used by Diaspora Jews and Samaritans among others. The building can therefore be described as an assembly-place for one or more voluntary associations that might have had a Jewish and Samaritan background. Apart from the specifically Jewish festivals and regular rituals that might have taken place in the

⁷³¹ The discussion on “Jewish Art” and whether it existed at all in antiquity is likely to be as old as any archaeological research. A turning point was reached, however, with the discovery of the synagogue at Dura Europos in the 1930s which has now enabled scholars to picture the category “Jewish Art”, although at the same time new problems arose concerning questions of distinction between and meaning of Pagan, Jewish and Christian symbols in the Ancient world. Later on, probably the most influential contribution to the debate was the monumental work on Jewish symbols in the Greek and Roman world, published in twelve volumes by Erwin Goodenough in the 1950s-60s. Goodenough, Erwin 1954-1965. *Jewish symbols in the Greco-Roman period* (12 vols.) New York re-published in 1992. The publication not only generated an enormous number of reviews in response to each volume, especially vols. 7-8 on the use of Pagan symbols in Jewish art (see most famously Nock, Arthur D. 1960. Review of: Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, vols. 7-8: Pagan Symbols in Judaism by Erwin R. Goodenough, 1954-1965, New York, in: *Gnomon* 32. pp. 728-736 and Thielen, Mary F. 1963. Jewish symbols and “Normative Judaism”, in: *AAR* 32, pp. 361-363) but it also inspired the research on the use of “Pagan” symbols by Jewish people, see e. g. Neusner, Jacob 1963. Jewish use of Pagan symbols after 70 C. E., in: *The Journal of Religion* 43, pp. 285-294. From the beginnings onwards the discussion was inspired by the paintings in the synagogue of Dura Europos and by the circles around this building and this discussion continues into the present day, see most recently: Stern, Karen B. 2010, Mapping Devotion in Roman Dura Europos: A Reconsideration of the Synagogue Ceiling, in: *AJA* 114, pp. 473-504.

⁷³² This seems to be unusual insofar as the non-Jewish environment has seen a large production of items marked as and related to sacred rituals and traditions. One might argue that one reason why so little evidence for Jewish religious activity has come down to us lies in the idea that the Jews in the Diaspora were not as committed to sacrifice and more precisely to animal sacrifice. More recent studies have been able to show, however, that there was no decline in animal sacrifice in the second temple period until AD 70, see Petropolou, Maria-Zoe 2008. *Animal sacrifice in Ancient Greek Religion, Judaism and Christianity, 100 B. C-AD 200*, Cambridge.

buildings and which are invisible to us today, the functions of the early “synagogues” were congruent with “pagan” sanctuaries and assembly places of voluntary associations. And even here one must consider that other “pagan” voluntary associations were as much bound by their specific religious calendars and dietary rules as Jewish groups.⁷³³

5.5.3 Voluntary associations worshipping Mithras

In this final section on the archaeological remains of voluntary associations that worshipped newly-introduced deities I would like to deal with the architectural remains of groups around Mithras. These groups of worshippers can only be seen in the evidence from the first century AD onwards.⁷³⁴ Even though the amount of evidence proving the activity of these groups in Greece and Asia Minor is very limited, it is useful to look at their concept and structures, not at least in order to do justice to their great success in parts of the Roman Empire. Mithraic groups can be seen as mainly religious congregations of people who met in order to worship above all one specific deity. The main differences, however, between these apparently new groups and the older versions are: a) their suggested exclusiveness to male members in contrast to most of the associations introduced in the preceding chapters,⁷³⁵ b) their rather late appearance, and c) their connection to one highly distinctive building type and iconography, a unique phenomenon in the Roman world.⁷³⁶ Among the one hundred and thirty-five Mithraea which have been found in the Roman Empire so far,⁷³⁷ there was, as far as we know, no temple with public access, as mentioned earlier. Each of the Mithraea belonged to individual groups of worshippers. As with most ancient cults the actual rituals performed by the Mithraic worshippers are rather difficult to reconstruct, especially owing to

⁷³³ On dietary rules and festivals marking specific days or events in the calendar year in the Egyptian cults see e.g. Kleibl 2009, pp. 162 and 139-142. Even circumcision was a practice not exclusively restricted to the Jewish people. Egyptians and other people from the Near East seem to have practiced circumcision in the earliest days (see e. g. Hdt. Hist. II, 104.1-3) even though one can actually find a difference in the realisation of the practice and describe it as specifically Jewish, Sasson, Jack 1966. Circumcision in the Ancient Near East, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84, pp. 473-476:474. However in Hellenistic times circumcision was a practice continued mainly by the Jewish people and Egyptian priests.

⁷³⁴ The ongoing discussion about the origin of the Mithraic religion might be summarised briefly in two main hypotheses. The first of these argues that the cult was derived from Iranian elements which then were modified in the west; the second, that the cult was entirely created in the west. A further investigation of the matter would take us too far at this point from the focus of this thesis, but a good overview of the debate is given in Gordon, *From East to West*, forthcoming.

⁷³⁵ Gordon, Richard 2011. Ritual and hierarchy in the Mysteries of Mithras, in: John A. North/Simon R. F. Price (edd.) *The Religious History of the Roman Empire. Pagans, Jews and Christians*, Oxford, pp. 325-365:356.

⁷³⁶ Klöckner, Anja 2011. Mithras und das Mahl der Männer. Götterbild, Ritual und sakraler Raum in einem römischen «Mysterienkult», in: Ulrike Egelhaaf-Gaiser/Dennis Pausch/Meike Rühl (edd.) *Kulturen der Antike. Transdisziplinäres Arbeiten in den Altertumswissenschaften*, Berlin, pp. 200-225:207.

⁷³⁶ Klöckner 2011, p. 203.

⁷³⁷ Klöckner 2011, p. 203.

the “lack of reliable literary sources”.⁷³⁸ However, since the architectural structures are so clearly identifiable and in some cases very well preserved, one can gain much from observing the Mithraic groups’ archaeological remains.

The earliest datable evidence referring to architectural structures of groups around Mithras was found in the Western provinces, but single early finds were made in Phrygia and Judaea.⁷³⁹ All pieces which provide evidence of the activities of worshippers date from no earlier than AD 80-120. Unlike other temples and sanctuaries, which were often built to be seen and recognised by pedestrians, the buildings of the worshipping groups around Mithras were erected in rather unremarkable places and often in cave-like rooms which in many cases belonged to other buildings.⁷⁴⁰ The esoteric character of the associations illustrated by the architecture is mirrored in their epigraphic behaviour. This is made particularly clear by the fact that in comparison to the rich architectural remains, rather few pieces of epigraphic evidence have come down to us which provide information about the internal organisation of the groups or honours granted to benefactors. If such inscriptions are detected, they were often found in connection with a Mithraeum rather than in the public space, as seen to be the case for most of the other voluntary associations.⁷⁴¹

The architecture of the Mithraea, however, allows us to draw certain conclusions. The oblong rectangular shape of the buildings which were equipped with benches to accommodate the worshippers clearly serves one main purpose, the common meal.⁷⁴² Most Mithraea offered space for about twenty to fifty people, a size which was apparently most suitable for the groups’ activities. Looking at the evidence from Ostia, it seems to have been common to establish an entirely new Mithraeum rather than letting the groups expand beyond

⁷³⁸ Alvar, Jaime 2008. *Romanising Oriental Gods: Myth, salvation and ethics in the cult of Cybele, Isis and Mithras* (RGRW 165) Leiden, p. 344.

⁷³⁹ Beck, Roger 1998. The Mysteries of Mithras: A New account of their Genesis, in *JRS* 88, pp. 115-128:118-119.

⁷⁴⁰ Klöckner 2011, 206.

⁷⁴¹ As far as we can tell from the snapshots provided by the evidence, however, the contents were similar to those found for voluntary associations. The few inscriptions which were found and which actually contain some information show the typical over-representation of the major administrative offices, in this case of the pater (Gordon 2011, p. 7) a characteristic of epigraphy in general and very common to inscriptions left behind by voluntary associations, as we saw in chapters three and four. The groups of worshippers of Mithras seem to have been focused rather internally and inwards towards their particular group and they seem to have refrained from public feasts and processions (Klöckner 2011, p. 215) an element of much importance to most other cults in general and to many voluntary associations.

⁷⁴² But it was not only the shape of the room and its equipment with dining furniture which made the Mithraeum a combination of temple and dining hall, but also the development of myth in which the key element is the slaughtering of the sacrificial bull by Mithras. This development peaks in the form of a certain kind of reversible relief distinct to the cult which was „invented precisely in order to stress performatively the connection between this element of the myth (the meal of Sol and Mithras after the sacrifice of the bull) and the practice of the communal eating.”, Gordon 2011, Richard, *From East to West*.

these numbers.⁷⁴³ Beyond the broadly similar structure of all Mithraea, some cases have displayed a specific interior decoration which sheds light on the fact that at least in some groups a specific hierarchy among the members was part of the group's organisation.⁷⁴⁴ The images display symbols from both the actual fauna and mythological background.

One cannot say that rules and regulations concerning membership, initiation, rituals and grades applied to every Mithraic group in the Roman empire.⁷⁴⁵ To me it seems unlikely. We could see in the case of the bacchic groups that they appear somewhat similar in the architectural remains, yet they were internally very different as soon as we look below the surface. So far, no general rules which apply to the Mithraic groups, can be established beyond architectural resemblance. Viewed from a developmental perspective, however, this similarity is rather logical and consequential and not even new: as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, rectangular banqueting rooms were used from Archaic times onwards for the purpose of sacrificial dining, and were often attached to a temple. Commensality seems to have been an essential part of the Mithraic rituals which were held in these rectangular rooms, as for instance in public places or in the open air, and apparently required no more features. A similar development can be discerned from the architectural remains of the bacchic groups. The *bakkheion*, an edifice that mainly served the purposes of voluntary associations around Dionysos, has been suggested as a building type in itself, characterised by its dominant dining rooms which appear to have served above all for a group's commensality.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴³ Klöckner 2011, p. 206.

⁷⁴⁴ The most prominent examples were found in Ostia and Rome, among which were a floor mosaic displaying the supposed seven-fold grades of the Mithraic worshippers and the paintings on the right hand wall in the Mithraeum underneath St Prisca on the Aventine. On these specific decorations as confirmation of the grade-system among the members of Mithraic groups supported by the finding of various graffiti in the Mithraeum of Dura Europos, see most recently Gordon 2011, pp. 328-330.

⁷⁴⁴ How far ordinary membership and "grade" were related among the various cult groups cannot be said with certainty, but most recently Richard Gordon has suggested that a key element of the cult from its beginnings onwards was "the idea of repeated, and indeed progressive initiation" and that this "successive initiation provided a structure for each Mithraist's membership of the group", Gordon 2011, p. 350. These grades, however, are rather rarely represented in the scarce epigraphic evidence.

⁷⁴⁵ The evidence of Mithraic groups is very unevenly scattered throughout the Roman Empire. Whereas most of the architectural remains were found in the Western provinces and the Danube region, most epigraphic evidence mentioning the grade of the members stems from Rome and Italy, Gordon 2011, p. 329.

⁷⁴⁶ Schäfer, Alfred 2011. Überlegungen zur Votivreligion am Beispiel ritueller Deponierungen in Gruben, in: Ulrike Egelhaaf-Gaiser/Dennis Pausch/Meike Rühl (edd.) *Kulturen der Antike. Transdisziplinäres Arbeiten in den Altertumswissenschaften*, Berlin pp. 278-308, compares *bakcheia* from Apulum, Sarmizegetusa, Athens, Melos, Cosa and Carnuntum pp. 293-295.

5. 6 Voluntary associations and public space

One area in which we can expect to observe the activities of some of the voluntary associations under discussion in this study is in their use of public space, broadly interpreted. This public space in the cities could be used or sometimes even taken over by voluntary associations, for example during festivals, such as by the followers of Dionysos during the Great Dionysia in Athens or the Isis-followers during the opening procession of the shipping season. Public space in the countryside was used as part of a specific tradition, for example the bacchic rituals in the mountains. Even though hardly any archaeological evidence for such activities has come down to us we might expect these to have been a substantial part of the programme of voluntary associations.

Evidence for both possibilities can be found in the epigraphic records from Magnesia ad Meandrum. An inscription suggests that Dionysian mysts were not only active in the city⁷⁴⁷ but also owned a specific place for the burial of their members.⁷⁴⁸ Another “historical” inscription which was originally erected in Hellenistic times and copied during the reign of Hadrian informs the reader about the mythical introduction of three Dionysian *thiasoi* by maenads from Thebes.⁷⁴⁹ According to the inscription the maenads introduced the people from Magnesia into the *orgia* and bacchic rites from Thebes of which one part was presumably the excursion εἰς ὄρος, into the mountains.⁷⁵⁰ These activities will have taken place out in the open air. To perform the rituals, those places were supposedly equipped with ephemeral elements found in the natural world, such as wooden benches and huts made of greenery. They are, unfortunately, not traceable in the archaeological records. However, actual evidence of Dionysian groups in public spaces can be found in the very centre of Magnesia. Among the so-called *topos*-inscriptions which indicated the right place for the positioning of the various groups during public festivals and processions, we can find the “friends of Dionysos” beside women and youths.⁷⁵¹

⁷⁴⁷ *IMagn* 215b, Hadrianic, Mysts dedicate an Altar to Dionysos.

⁷⁴⁸ Jaccottet 2003-II, 147, *IMagn* 117, beginning of second century AD. The inscription names certain rules concerning the burial rites but also offers hints in another direction: it seems as if these mysts performed specific dramatic rituals that were based on the Dionysian myths.

⁷⁴⁹ *IMagn* 215. On the dates and the historicity of the document see Henrichs, Albert 1978. Greek Maenadism from Olympias to Messalina, in: *HSPH* 82, pp. 121-160:126-130. The inscription is clearly referring to Euripides' *Bacchae*.

⁷⁵⁰ Eur. *Bacc.* 116. The same expression appears in an inscription from Miletus from 276/275 BC in which the priestess leads the *thiasos* into the mountains, Jaccottet 2003-II, 150.

⁷⁵¹ Bingöl, Orhan 2006. Magnesia, in: *Stadtgrabung und Stadtforschung im westlichen Kleinasien* (BYZAS 3) 215-226:225.

In nearby Smyrna one can find groups of Dionysian mysts appearing in the epigraphic evidence side by side with the professional Dionysian *technites*.⁷⁵² This corporation suggests that the mysts were involved in public festivals and very probably public dramatic performances, since the *technites* were a guild of professional actors in Smyrna.⁷⁵³

Similar patterns to those seen in the case of the Dionysian groups can be observed in other cults, for example in the cults of the Egyptian deities. During the *Ploiaphesia*, the opening festival of the shipping season which was held under the supervision of Isis, particular voluntary associations will have taken part, as described in Apuleius *Metamorphoses*.⁷⁵⁴ Groups of nauarchs involved in the festival are known from inscriptions found at the Iseion in Eretria, as mentioned in chapter four.⁷⁵⁵ The famous *pompe* of the *orgeones* of Bendis was a spectacle that many people joined in and watched.

All in all one must conclude that the archaeological record can only identify a very few traces left by voluntary associations. Yet they appear to have been very involved in public life in many different places in ancient Greece and Asia Minor, whether side by side with other worshippers in festivals, or on their own out in the open air of the natural world as an important part of their ritual. Annual festivals offered the opportunity for certain groups to become prominent at some points of the year. This provided a very efficient way of gaining public recognition and of being in the spotlight, at least for a short period of time. Perhaps some associations were only involved in these outdoor activities and had no general meeting place at all. This solution appears very likely if one considers for instance the numerical proportion of inscriptions indicating the existence of voluntary associations and the actual number of archaeological finds that have come down to us. One must also assume that not all groups existed long enough to collect enough money to establish a building, especially at times and places when euergetism was not as important as it would become over the course of time, or that the members were simply not wealthy enough. These groups, perhaps associations, occasionally rented specific rooms for their meetings but did not focus as much on, say, regular commensality but more on participation in festivals and rituals held outdoors.

⁷⁵² Jaccottet 2003-II, ns. 115-117 /*ISmyrna* 652, 731, 732 (1.century BC) and Jaccottet 2003-II, nr. 121/*ISmyrna* 639 (second half second century BC).

⁷⁵³ On the unusual corporation see Jaccottet 2003-II pp. 216-217 who suggests that the *technites* became part of the mysts over the course of time because the mysts were responsible and had the means for the ritual performances.

⁷⁵⁴ Apul. Met. XI, 8-12.

⁷⁵⁵ *RICIS* 104/0109; *RICIS* 104/0111, first century BC For further discussion of the festival at Eretria see Steinhauer 2010, p. 200.

5.7 Conclusion

It seems as if the common graveyard is a feature that comes with traditional deities and newly-worshipped deities alike, and especially with Dionysian groups.⁷⁵⁶ The “new burial care” seems to have been established especially in cosmopolitan places, such as merchant cities where people from all over the Mediterranean lived and eventually died still separated from their families, who might have otherwise taken over responsibility for the burial.

Public sanctuaries offered space for the meetings of voluntary associations whose inscriptions were often erected here. Some sanctuaries provided the space that was necessary to host a group in a courtyard or similar. However, it seems unlikely that the choice of a public sanctuary for internal meetings was the preferred one. I would suggest that this option was used mainly by groups who did not have another possibility, for the simple reason that such a choice would immediately eliminate the main reason for getting together, the exclusiveness. I am convinced that the private atmosphere of the groups was one fundamental advantage. Meetings in a public sanctuary might have taken place occasionally but were not a regular institution.

Concerning the dining halls attached to sanctuaries, one can only suppose that they were used by specific voluntary associations rather than by random groups of worshippers, as suggested for Corinth. In most cases no inscription mentions a particular group. Furthermore, we cannot obtain copies of any letting contracts or similar agreements concerning property which belonged to the sanctuary.⁷⁵⁷ In the case of Athens, it becomes clear that rather the opposite was the case: groups rented out their property to others. We can say, perhaps, that in Greece, the aim of voluntary associations was to organise themselves. If possible, they did this in a rather private and independent framework which becomes manifest especially in Roman times in the example of the Dionysian group and their buildings, although the old Athenian *orgeones* already owned their own meeting-places.

If one looks at the list of sanctuaries with meeting facilities for voluntary associations or buildings erected for the mere purpose of serving voluntary associations, it becomes clear

⁷⁵⁶ This result may be slightly blurred by the larger amount of evidence concerning the Dionysian groups.

⁷⁵⁷ The opposite was the case in the Near East. Here it seems as if it was not unusual among voluntary associations to rent a place within a sanctuary for a certain time to celebrate together. In the Near East most voluntary associations seem to have owned or rented buildings attached to temples rather than private places, Buchmann 2006 Buchmann, Julian 2006. Räumlichkeiten für Bankette und Versammlungen in ausgewählten Heiligtümern in Dura-Europos, in: Inge Nielsen (ed.) *Zwischen Kult und Gesellschaft: Kosmopolitische Zentren des antiken Mittelmeerraumes als Aktionsraum von Kultvereinen und Religionsgemeinschaften* (Hephaistos Themenband 24) Augsburg, pp. 93-100:94-95.

that hardly any general patterns are to be observed, neither concerning the choice of the deity nor the form of the building, with the exception of Dionysian and Mithraic groups. These two are also the only groups which developed a specific sort of private sanctuary, dining and meeting hall and place for ritual performances all in the one building.

The majority of the admittedly few clearly identifiable buildings of voluntary associations were located within cities or their immediate surroundings. Some of the meeting places were found within funerary districts of cities and seem to have been used regularly and not only on the occasion of a member's death. Those precincts can be found from Hellenistic times until the Roman era. The habit of dining in *tri-* and *biclinia* within graveyards was widely adapted in Roman times by professional *collegia*.⁷⁵⁸

With regard to the allocation of buildings erected by voluntary associations in a wider context, say, in a city, one cannot detect any particular patterns innate to the character or kind of group or deity worshipped. It seems as if the only discoverable regularity lies in the fact that groups around newly-introduced deities often appear in the newer parts of each city, probably owing to the pre-existing building conditions. For the groups that worshipped newly-introduced deities we must also assume that they used structures that were perhaps not archaeologically distinctive and are therefore difficult to identify. The supposedly private *Metroon* of the *orgeones* of the Mother of the Gods was located in Hellenistic times in the mushrooming port of Piraeus rather than in the city centre of Athens, even though the "main" *Metroon* which gave protected space for the archives of Athens was located beside the Acropolis. A similar situation occurred on Delos, where the worshippers of the Egyptian and Syrian deities met in buildings which were set up in newly established and growing areas. Another example might be the meeting place of the worshippers of Theos Hypsistos, which was erected in a newly established and indeed only very recent area. Whether these locations were chosen consciously, for practical reasons or without any such intention at all cannot be decided. It is striking, however, that the meeting places of the oriental merchants such as the *poseidonians* of Berytos and others were located in the very centre of the city, where they all adopted purely Greek forms,⁷⁵⁹ whereas their private sanctuaries, all shaped the oriental way, were located outside the city, on mount Kynthos. Frankly speaking, one must conclude that

⁷⁵⁸ Stehmeier, Sarah R. 2006. Gemeinschaft über den Tod hinaus. Grabtriklinien als Festplätze römisch-kaiserzeitlicher *collegia*, in: Inge Nielsen (ed.) *Zwischen Kult und Gesellschaft: Kosmopolitische Zentren des antiken Mittelmeerraumes als Aktionsraum von Kultvereinen und Religionsgemeinschaften* (Hephaistos Themenband 24) Augsburg, pp. 215-223.

⁷⁵⁹ See Trümper 2006 p. 122.

no specific patterns can be observed apart from local specifications probably due to pre-existing conditions.

Apart from the professional groups, city centres seem to have been reserved for the groups devoted to rather traditional and local deities and heroes. This at least is true of Hellenistic Athens. In Roman times, Dionysian groups appear in city-centres. Whether Pergamum, Athens, Melos or Ephesus, their dining halls can be located in the very centre of each city.

The analysis of the architectural remains coincides with most of the observations made in earlier chapters. Thinking about the chronological aspects one can observe that during the Hellenistic age more groups become visible. The case of the many Egyptian cult-groups on Delos in the two centuries BC coincides exactly with the general popularity of the groups worshipping the Egyptian deities that could be observed in chapter four.

Parallels can be drawn between the rather “conservative” way in which Dionysian groups built their meeting halls, simple *andra/triclinia* and the composition of the members who were mostly Greeks of various descriptions. Furthermore we could recognise local peculiarities and formations as seen before in the case study of Athens, where the voluntary associations devoted to newly-worshipped deities took over traditional local names and habits, namely of the *orgeones*-associations. On Delos, however newly imported dining habits from Palmyra, Hierapolis and later Dura-Europos became widespread.

Similar patterns applicable to any building erected by voluntary associations can be discerned in the form of dining halls. But since the dining hall in itself is a main criterion for identifying and classifying meeting places of voluntary associations, this observation does not come as a surprise and might obscure our view of the actual variety involved. Other patterns, however, could not be identified. The architecture was as varied as the groups, often dominated by the pre-existing structure and materials. With regard to the buildings erected by particular kinds of groups, devoted to the same deity, certain similarities reveal themselves. In particular, in the case of Roman-era Dionysian groups and to an even greater extent for the Mithraic groups, particular structures predominated, namely the oblong dining hall equipped with benches, itself well known in Greek architecture from Archaic times onwards. These groups adopted a pre-existing model and customised it for their own purposes. This adoption perhaps bore a close resemblance to the groups’ adaptation of pre-existing terminology and nomenclature that we have seen especially in Athens. When it comes to non-Greek influences in the architectural layout, one can observe that especially at places like Delos the earlier examples do show traces of the deities’ origin, yet they were merged with clearly local

features. Over the course of time, however, these traces appear to fade. No specific patterns could be highlighted regarding the location of buildings within a city. In Athens some groups were prominently housed in the city centre, both in the Hellenistic and Roman period. Others appear in the newly-erected parts of the Piraeus and very likely can be linked to the general development of the city. A similar picture is to be seen on Delos. What we do not know, however, is to what extent voluntary associations met at places that simply escape us, either for reasons linked to modern observers' ignorance or the poor state of preservation of many sites.

6. Voluntary associations and civic institutions

My aim in this chapter is to investigate several questions relating to the processes by which voluntary associations became established as parts of Greek *poleis*. In particular, I shall analyse the relationship of voluntary associations with pre-existing civic institutions, a topic that has been widely discussed in modern scholarship.⁷⁶⁰ Much of the discussion has so far revolved around the legal, economic and social characteristics of the voluntary associations as these are revealed by the epigraphic evidence that has come down to us. In this chapter I shall approach the topic from a different angle, focusing on the ritualistic and innovative side of voluntary associations.

In order to develop as complete a picture as possible of the ritualistic and innovative aspects of voluntary associations, I will compare the epigraphic evidence from three *poleis* which differed from one another in terms of their location, the character of the evidence, their history, and their chronological peaks, namely Athens, Delos and Rhodes each of which provides sufficient evidence to study voluntary associations in Greek *poleis* in depth.⁷⁶¹ Because not only the quantity but also the character of the evidence, as well as the amount of research undertaken on each of the three cities, are very different, each part of this chapter will be slightly differently from the other two in terms of particular topics and length. The common focus will, however, be on the following questions concerning the institutionalisation of voluntary associations in each city: namely, whether (1) one can actually speak of voluntary associations as completely new institutions, or whether (2) one must think of them as older institutions that were introduced externally into each *polis* by, say, immigrants or whether (3) to think of them as existing and perhaps ancient institutions that were adopted and put to new uses for the individual purposes of the groups, or whether (4) perhaps to see the associations as some variation on or combination of each option.

I hope to be able to show that the institutional character that is revealed when these voluntary associations are looked at through the medium of epigraphy represents only one aspect of these groups. This institutional aspect, I will argue, was not as important for the understanding of voluntary associations as has sometimes been claimed by scholars during

⁷⁶⁰ See e. g. for Athens Jones 1999, Planeaux 2000, Arnaoutoglou 2003, Ismard 2010. For Asia Minor see: Van Nijf 1997, Gabrielsen 2001, Gabrielsen 2008 (Rhodes).

⁷⁶¹ This seems to be widely acknowledged, see e. g. Suys 2005: “à l’époque hellénistique le phénomène associative est surtout perceptible à Athènes, Délos, Rhodes” p. 203.

the last two centuries. In fact, the institutional character does not reveal much about the actual activities of the groups but rather underlines our modern obsession with taxonomy; indeed, perhaps it even prevents the modern observer from seeing what mattered most to contemporaries.

6.1 Athens

The case study of Athens presented in chapter two revealed a history of voluntary associations from the end of the fifth and the beginning of the fourth centuries BC onwards. The groups had perhaps existed before this, but they only became visible to the modern observer as the epigraphic habit took hold.⁷⁶² Over the course of time these voluntary associations, which were initially termed *orgeones* and *thiasoi*, adopted not only the language of the *polis* but also appear to have taken up elements of the organisational structure as well as the honorary practices which can be found in similar inscriptions belonging to other civic institutions. These institutions included the phyles, phratries, ephebies as well as civic sanctuaries.

According to the *communis opinio*, cult-associations in Athens were influenced by the structures of the *polis* itself. Gabrielsen claims for example that all associations “copied [the *polis*-model] almost wholesale” and in Arnaoutoglou’s view “The conceptual horizon of the Athenians, which was reproduced on every occasion, was that of the *polis*”.⁷⁶³ A similar view is predominant when it comes to the Roman *collegia*.⁷⁶⁴ It is true that when we consider the epigraphic record, voluntary associations appear to have adapted the language and terminology of the *polis* in naming their officers in line with some of the older religious and political institutions found in Athens.⁷⁶⁵ The general tendency among the groups was, as seen in the inscriptions throughout this thesis, to name their offices after the existing administrative roles in the sanctuaries provided by the *polis*, and to follow similar models for the elections to these offices, as for example in the annual election of administrative staff by

⁷⁶² The *Amyneion*, the meeting place of the *orgeones* of Amynos, Dexion and Asklepios, was erected in the sixth century BC

⁷⁶³ See e. g. Gabrielsen, Vincent 2008. Brotherhoods of faith and providence: The non-public associations of the Greek world, in: Irad Malkin/Christie Constantakopoulou/Katerina Panagopoulou (edd.) *Greek and Roman Networks in the Mediterranean*, London, pp. 176-203:181-183, quote from p. 182. One of Arnaoutoglou’s main claims in his thesis is that “the close connection between the organisation of the city and that of an association reveals that the pattern of political activities and organisation in Athens influenced decisively that of cult associations, quote from Arnaoutoglou 2003, p. 141.

⁷⁶⁴ Patterson writes: “the activities of the *collegia* can be seen to parallel on a smaller scale those of the civic community”, p. 256 Patterson John R. 2006. *Landscapes and cities. Rural Settlement and Civic Transformation in early Imperial Italy*, Oxford

⁷⁶⁵ The epigraphic evidence of voluntary associations contains e.g. *grammateis*, *hieropoioi*, *epimeletai*.

lot.⁷⁶⁶ However, this information on its own does not substantially contribute to our knowledge of voluntary associations, let alone help us to explain their increasing popularity. Rather one must ask what does the use of pre-existing administrative titles tell us about these groups. Indeed, one will find various terms “borrowed” from civic institutions and frequently used by voluntary associations. I shall argue that in fact these terms were not used in a strict sense and that their appropriation involved significant changes to their meaning within the voluntary associations. Among the terms which are used to actually describe the associations’ offices are for example the *epimeletai* who, when part of a voluntary association, could be responsible for various jobs. They tended to be generally in charge of the affairs of the deity and the group.⁷⁶⁷ However, they were also responsible for the supervision of repairs at the temple and at the same time they were assigned, among other things, to supervise the procession of the deity.⁷⁶⁸ The *grammateis*, that is, the secretaries, of the voluntary associations were, as their name suggests, responsible for the supervision of the inscription of decrees. The *tamiai* were normally responsible for the administration of all financial matters and the *hieropoioi* supervised the procession and the distribution of the sacrificial meat. If one looks more closely, however, one will find that when it comes to voluntary associations the offices were not actually as defined as the names might suggest. *Hieropoioi* and *epimeletai* could equally well supervise processions. The *grammateus* could well help out with the financial administration of a group and supervise construction works, just as the *epimeletai* did.⁷⁶⁹ In the end one can say that yes, voluntary associations used terms suggested by civic institutions, but they also customised them according to their needs.⁷⁷⁰

One side effect of the fact that voluntary associations all adopted more or less the same terminology from civic institutions was that the differentiation between the particular voluntary associations appears to be blurred for the modern observer. This might be due, on the one hand, to the wish of each group’s leading functionaries to make their actions comprehensible in terms that everyone understood, and on the other hand to our interest in

⁷⁶⁶ For example Arnaoutoglou's observations concerning the issuing of decrees and statutes by the groups are that they were “similar but not identical to that of the *polis*”. On the act of dealing with officials he claims that “they were appointing their officials following the same methods and distinctions (as the *polis*)”, Arnaoutoglou 2003, p. 141.

⁷⁶⁷ See e. g. *IG II²* 1256, ll. 4-6.

⁷⁶⁸ See *IG II²* 1324, ll. 2-10.

⁷⁶⁹ See *IG II²* 1329, ll.6-19.

⁷⁷⁰ For a further analysis of the variety of terms and offices to be found in voluntary associations see Kloppenborg, John S. 1996. *Collegia and thiasoi. Issues in function, taxonomy and membership*, in: John S. Kloppenborg/Stephen G. Wilson (edd.) *Voluntary associations in the Graeco-Roman world*, London/New York, pp. 16-30:26.

taxonomising ancient religion. I argued in the introduction that the definition and understanding of cult associations or voluntary associations is a difficult task and the necessity to offer definitions might itself be questioned. Yet if one wants to understand the phenomenon itself, one needs to think about differentiation in terms of alternatives; not least because one reason to establish a voluntary association was to offer an alternative to the existing *polis* religion. By organising a voluntary association, one could introduce new rituals and deities instead of choosing one of the existing options that were provided by the city.

Adapting existing terms and institutional models, however, does not necessarily imply a conscious will to copy a pre-existing ideal form predetermined by the city. It might only reflect the Athenian official terminology that is often used for a variety of occasions. In other words, there might have been no alternative language and institutional model worth copying. Yet this solution does not appear to be a very attractive one. On the contrary, using existing language could be seen as a deliberate choice to present novelty in terms that were non-threatening and familiar to everyone. Furthermore, pre-existing structures were used as well as language. Certain activities were adopted as well, such as procedures by which benefactors were honoured, money was raised and administrative staff were elected.

However, acknowledging the fact firstly, that voluntary associations used certain procedures and secondly that they drew on the terminology that was mainly used in their civic surroundings does not help us much in understanding the way in which voluntary associations functioned and the individuals who were actually involved in them. Also it does not help us in understanding why particular parts of the terminology, titles and offices were taken up and others not. At this point it is worth looking at the people who actually established voluntary associations to try and find out why they chose the terminology which has come down to us in the epigraphic evidence.

The notion of a voluntary association offered the opportunity for foreigners and others to initiate a particular group for themselves.⁷⁷¹ It is true that some of the inscriptions of voluntary associations formed by foreigners actually suggest that certain structures of the associations, mainly in terms of their administrative and cultic officials, were formed on the model of the magistrates and sacred offices known from public sanctuaries in the *polis*. This might have happened for two reasons. Firstly, it appears very sensible to adopt and adapt successful structures that seem to have been in use for a long time. And secondly, one needs to consider the fact that non-Greeks in particular were eager to use Greek terminology and

⁷⁷¹ Foreigners “set up their cult associations in Hellenistic Athens following the organizational model of the Athenian state”, Arnaoutoglou 2003, p. 144.

phrasing to label their cultic and administrative offices. Immigrants did not arrive with cults that had no institutions. But they needed to adapt to a common language which meant that these institutions then became easy for everyone to identify. In these cases, immigrant groups might have chosen the first institutional forms which sounded appropriate and familiar and which fitted into the new environment. In doing so, they were able to signal openness to their new environment. It seems as if representing an association and its constituent parts in terms of pre-existing institutions was the easiest way to become established and was also a basis of communication, even if not all terms were as clearly defined, as the modern observer would wish, and were customised around each group.

The rise of the voluntary association within Greek *poleis* is more generally dated to Hellenistic times, and mainly to the first two centuries BC. But in Athens it is already attested in the fourth and third centuries.⁷⁷² This seems to be owing to the nature of the epigraphic habit in Athens over the course of time. Also, it might only partly reflect the actual situation. Only in the second century BC, however, can one discern significant changes in the naming practice of voluntary associations. Whereas the term *thiasos*, used as a rather general label for any kind of group, dominated the world of associations in the fifth and fourth centuries BC, its usage decreases now. In contrast, the old term *orgeones* was used regularly until the end of the first century BC. In the second half of the third century BC new terms describing voluntary associations appear. Among these new terms one can find most prominently the term *synogos*.⁷⁷³ This change in terminology might hint at a specialisation of the groups' activities as reflected in the change of vocabulary, which again has been linked to a possible take-over of tasks formerly fulfilled by civic groups, which themselves now changed.⁷⁷⁴ Whether these developments were immediately dependent on the reorganisation of the traditional Athenian organisations, or whether we should imagine a slow process conditioned by various influences of which one was the changes in the organisational structures of Athens, cannot be said for certain.⁷⁷⁵ A shift in the carrying out of particular tasks, such as

⁷⁷² Ismard 2008, p. 375.

⁷⁷³ Ismard 2008, pp. 377-378.

⁷⁷⁴ Ismard 2008, p. 375.

⁷⁷⁵ However, it might well be an independent development which can only partly be linked to political developments. Similarly Jörg Rüpke about Roman Religion. He claims that "religion does not necessarily have to play second fiddle to political developments, but might itself be an area for experiment and a medium for the creation of new structures" in the Roman empire, an observation that can be adapted to the development of voluntary associations in cities such as Athens, as I have argued in chapter two, Rüpke, Jörg 2011. Roman Religion and the Religion of Empire. Some Reflections on Method, in: John A. North 2011/Simon R. F. Price (edd.) *The Religious History of the Roman Empire. Pagans, Jews and Christians*, Oxford, pp. 9-36:30.

burial-care from household to voluntary associations is evident at the latest from the second century BC onwards. In Piraeus, for example, the *orgeones* of the Mother of the Gods provided memorial care for the deceased and their burial.⁷⁷⁶

However, one crucial yet often neglected factor which led to the re-structuring of the classical *polis* can be seen in the influence of immigrants from all over Greece and the Mediterranean. Even though Classical Athens already had many metics among its inhabitants, and also institutions which took care of their concerns, it seems as if during the Hellenistic period more people from the new Hellenistic kingdoms were immigrating to mainland Greece. The voluntary associations included groups which consisted of both citizens and metics, among them non-Greeks.⁷⁷⁷ One can also find mixed groups appearing over the course of time. This phenomenon occurs throughout the various associations and is not restricted to or bound by one specific kind of group. Over the course of time, and especially from the second century onwards, more metics, and among them non-Greeks, can be identified in the inscriptions.⁷⁷⁸ However, if one considers that in many cases the names of the first generations of settlers or initiators of cults and voluntary associations were not engraved in stone, or have simply not been found and therefore escape us, it is almost impossible to know when metics and especially non-Greeks got involved. I suggest that the actual beginnings of this phenomenon coincide with the establishment of the Hellenistic empires at the end of the fourth and beginning of the third century BC⁷⁷⁹ rather than only in the second and first centuries BC, as is suggested by the epigraphic evidence.

Another distinctive phenomenon when dealing with voluntary associations in Athens is the fact that more widely from the third century onwards, one can recognise a remarkable increase in the names listed on inscriptions, and that is also reflected in the documents related to voluntary associations. This habit of listing names was perhaps inspired by the great organisations such as demes and phratries, for which one can find catalogues displaying a multitude of members.⁷⁸⁰ However, owing to the rather fragmentary nature of most inscriptions, it is in many cases difficult to decide whether or not they name the actual members of one particular longer-standing voluntary association, or whether they only display the names of people who took part on one specific occasion or even in the raising of an *eranos* out of non-religious motivation. One must also take into account that not only does

⁷⁷⁶ *IG II²* 1327, 178/77 BC

⁷⁷⁷ See chapter two. Similar observations were made by Ismard 2008, p. 381. Accordingly one can find “associations” consisting of citizens and, as he phrases it, “strangers” from the second century onwards.

⁷⁷⁸ Ismard 2008, p. 381-382 and n. 107.

⁷⁷⁹ See e. g. chapter four and the evidence from Delos.

⁷⁸⁰ See *IG II²* 2344 and *IG II²* 2345, providing two *demes*-catalogues and Ismard p. 384.

the number of names on the lists expand, but so too do the actual pieces of evidence, as one would expect according to the epigraphic trend: for most of the early (and contemporary) voluntary associations, one cannot make any assumption about their actual size, since it is in most cases only the officials, and often only the person being honoured, who appear in the text. To give an example: with regard to the *orgeones* of Bendis in Athens and the Piraeus, it has been suggested that they consisted of large numbers of members even though none appear in the inscriptions.⁷⁸¹ Also, no architectural remains have been found that would support the argument. This assumption has been made on the basis of some rather scarce information about the organisation and administrative structure that is available from the epigraphic evidence and which lacks any information about actual members. Concerning the apparently fashionable engraving of names in stone, it remains to be seen whether it was a newly established desire to display one's name in an inscription in order to publicly display either piety, generosity, or affiliation,⁷⁸² or was just a simple fashion of copying other groups, as has been suggested by Ismard.⁷⁸³

If one tries to place voluntary associations in the *polis* somewhere among the other ways of getting together in exclusive groups, whether as groups of ephebes, as groups of people with common occupations such as craftsmen and artists, or even as political groups, one needs, perhaps, to look at what they offered in addition to these other groups and not simply at how they were similar to these other groups. It seems as if at some point people who worshipped together felt the need to organise themselves beyond the idea of the initial, but as it seems rather loose, *thiasoi* of archaic times. Furthermore, one must not underestimate the new influences which evoked a re-assessment of the ritual tradition. New influences might relate to the introduction of new deities such as the Egyptian gods: their worship required different rituals which involved, say, the water of the Nile, the reading of hieroglyphic texts, and a prohibition on the wearing of woollen clothes. Other new influences were connected with the worship of more traditional deities such as Dionysos whose worshippers now included new rituals such as mystic ones in their voluntary associations. Neither kind of novelty fitted well with the options provided by the *polis* religion. Bringing something new to an already established field, however, was best solved by not disturbing

⁷⁸¹ See e. g. Ferguson 1944, pp. 99-104.

⁷⁸² This need to display one's name cannot only be seen in individual dedicatory inscriptions, inscriptions of groups of any kind or in grave inscriptions but also in the very long and detailed inventory inscriptions from public sanctuaries, i. e. from Delos, which seem to point in the same direction.

⁷⁸³ Ismard p. 384.

traditions or conservative minds. By using a terminology borrowed from another area that could be easily understood by everyone living in the *polis*, the foundations were laid for success. Choosing a voluntary association to worship a deity in a way which differed from traditional ritual practices was, I would suggest, the main motivation in establishing such a group and defines their place in the Athenian *polis*. Also one can discern that, aside from the earlier *orgeones*, not many inscriptions of voluntary associations mention local deities. No voluntary association was for example devoted to Athena Polias.

When considering how far the Athenian voluntary associations were related to and evolved from pre-existing institutions, one can speak of new possibilities leading to developments for which older structures provided a model. In other words, the concept or at least the nomenclature of the Athenian *orgeones* was taken up by newly-established groups and customised for their own purposes. Furthermore, newly-founded voluntary associations used the common language of other institutions such as civic temples and associations. On the one hand this might have been the case because not much alternative material was available. On the other hand, people perhaps chose these models out of mere convenience. The reasons for the use of these models and the way in which they were used, however, are not as simple and necessarily as one-sided as is often argued, namely driven by prestigious, political or convivial motivation.⁷⁸⁴ Rather the adoption of these models might be seen as creative and varied and certainly reflects the new awareness of choice. Using a pre-existing terminology and administrative structures in order to create a new social form, namely a voluntary association, proved over time to be very successful. It can be seen as a means of communication tacitly agreed upon by citizens and metics and Greeks and non-Greeks.

The desire of non-citizens legally to establish a religious cult in the new environment can be traced in the Athenian records to the fourth century BC⁷⁸⁵, and independently of the establishment of voluntary associations. These queries about setting up a temple for a deity that was not yet worshipped in Athens were quite specific and aimed at particular deities; people did not try to introduce “their” god under the name of another or with another god’s features: Bendis was introduced as Bendis with her very own cult as opposed to, say, Artemis-Bendis. The request of the Egyptians was clearly stated as a temple for Isis and not Demeter, even though Herodotus had suggested their equation long before. Making these equations in literature and iconography seems to have been a way of explaining the unknown

⁷⁸⁴ Aranoutoglou, Ismard and Jones come to similar conclusions.

⁷⁸⁵ The request of the Egyptians concerning their right to build a temple to Isis just as the Syrians had done before, and the case of the Thracians who introduced Bendis, are probably the most famous examples.

rather than replacing it. These examples showed that from the Classical period onwards new ritual practices and new forms of worshipping elected deities appeared throughout Athens. Their establishment was most easily facilitated by voluntary associations, of citizens and metics, women, slaves, non-Greeks and Greeks alike, who supported the elected cult in the form of an association. However important such voluntary associations might have been for the establishment of a newly-introduced deity, at the same time it is important to remember that such associations were certainly not exclusive to non-traditional deities.

6. 2 Delos

Alongside Athens, only a few places remain which allow a similarly detailed insight into pre-existing religious structures. Closest to Athens in terms of its administration and inhabitation is Delos, owing to its long periods of Athenian domination beginning with the occupation of the sanctuary of Apollo. Little is known about the constitution of the city of Delos in the Hellenistic period. In fact, no ancient source gives a thorough account of it. However the epigraphic evidence shows that, just as in Athens, the male citizens were divided into groups, in the Delian case into four *phylai* that were each divided into three trittyes and phratries. The Delians possessed an *ekklesiasterion* and a *boule*. Their magistrates, whether in charge of legal, political or sacred issues, appear to have been similar to the Athenian versions, and this is reflected in the designation of the offices. This similarity is certainly owing to the fact that during the time of the Athenian occupation the official sacred roles were fulfilled by Athenian officers and the sanctuaries were in Athenian hands. Inventory lists were kept in the Athenian style or manner. However, the religious tradition on Delos is older than the Athenian occupation. Over the course of time Delos does not seem to have developed specific groups or associations that were in charge of particular sacred duties, such as was the case of the *orgeones* in Athens, or associations that simply worshipped the same deity in an exclusive group. This was probably because Delos was smaller in size when compared to Athens. Only one inscription, found on Mykonos, suggests that a group of worshippers had established a *thiasos* in order to worship Dionysus.⁷⁸⁶ The political division into subgroups which was applied on Delos in the Athenian manner seems to have had no effect on the “private” group-building habit of the Delians either. Nevertheless on Delos one can find some initially small voluntary associations that become visible in the third and second centuries

⁷⁸⁶ *ID* 1522, beginning of second century BC.

BC. In the first instance these groups were simply established on a religious basis.⁷⁸⁷ Later on, other groups appeared with a professional focus such as the *poseidoniastai* from Berytos. However, none of the early groups seems to have been influenced much by the first Athenian voluntary associations, even though the Athenian occupation did have an effect on them over the course of time. In fact, the groups' appearance changed during the second Athenian domination, around 166 BC, insofar as the diversity of the groups, at least concerning their naming practice, decreased remarkably and more Athenians became involved in the groups: for example, only two of the initial six voluntary associations that had worshipped the Egyptian deities were found after 166 BC, namely the *melanephoroi* and the *therapeutai*. Yet these two groups were represented in a much larger number of inscriptions by the time of the Athenian occupation.

Compared to Athens the evidence suggests increasing numbers of voluntary associations on Delos slightly later, namely at the end of the third and the beginning of the second centuries BC. Whereas the Athenian *orgeones* can be traced from the second half of the fourth century BC, the earliest evidence from Delos dates to the end of the third century BC. Within this Delian development, the voluntary associations which appear in the third and second century BC, namely those that worshipped the Egyptian and Syrian deities, seem to have been the initial form of association on the island. They were followed by associations built on the basis of common occupation and were mainly established in the first century BC and whereas the latter became well-established institutions in their own right, run by rich merchants and bankers who positioned themselves in the very centre of the commercial city, and who tried to be actively involved in the island's politics,⁷⁸⁸ the voluntary associations seem to have stayed close to or even in the precincts of the sanctuaries and in the residential areas. As far as one can tell from the epigraphic evidence, some terms were borrowed from the Athenian or perhaps general Greek linguistic corpus, such as the *grammateis* and *archithiasitai*.⁷⁸⁹

The variety of terms used by voluntary associations on Delos to describe themselves almost exceeds the Athenian evidence. The nomenclature ranged from rather general terms such as *koinon*, *synodos*⁷⁹⁰ or *thiasos*,⁷⁹¹ to very specific ones such as *melanephoroi* or

⁷⁸⁷ See chapters three and four.

⁷⁸⁸ On the cult of the Athenian Demos and the goddess Roma within the precinct of the *posidoniasts* of Berytos and their involvement in the daily politics of the island, see chapter three.

⁷⁸⁹ An *archethiasitos* of the *enatistai* is mentioned for example in *RICIS* 202/0140, ll. 14-15, and *RICIS* 202/0140, l. 2. The *grammateus* of the same group appears in *RICIS* 202/0140 ll. 24-25.

⁷⁹⁰ A *synodos* of *therapeutai* names an eponymous *epimeletes* at the end of the third/beginning of the second century BC, *RICIS* 202/0115-6.

enatistai,⁷⁹² for which one can hardly find counterparts in the Greek world. In addition, the term *therapeutes* was much in use on Delos for various kinds of voluntary associations, mostly among the worshippers of the Egyptian and Syrian deities alike. In Athens *therapeutes* only appear in connection with Asklepios.

The fact that so little is known about the actual structure of the voluntary associations on Delos, which are otherwise fairly well represented in the epigraphic evidence, makes it difficult to undertake a more detailed comparison. It seems, however, that there was a different emphasis on the public appearance of the groups and its members, since they were not so much concerned about rules and regulations. This might be because unlike Athens, the city of Delos did not look back on a long and fairly stable tradition of rules and regulations through which the people in charge of the legal system tried to maintain control. In addition one can observe that the number of people involved in the groups went hand in hand with the Athenian occupation and the restructuring of the Delian voluntary associations that can be observed afterward the occupation, rather than with the Athenian chronology.⁷⁹³ That is to say, that the Delian groups appear later, namely only at the end of the third century BC whereas in Athens one can discern for example groups of *orgeones* at an earlier stage, namely at the end of the fourth century BC.

As mentioned earlier, a direct link between the pre-existing civic structures and the voluntary associations on Delos cannot be made. To answer the initial question concerning the appearance of voluntary associations and their relationship to civic institutions, one must say that on Delos the terminology used by the associations to describe themselves in the inscriptions before the Athenian occupation in 166 BC either 1) refers to the origin of the deity (*enatistai*, *dekadistai*, *serapiastai*) or 2) is rather general Greek terminology (*thiasos*, *koinon*, *synodos*), or 3) was perhaps customised locally (*melanephoroi*). This last statement seems to describe the situation on Delos best, namely a locally grown landscape of voluntary associations which is characterised by diversity. One can conclude that on Delos voluntary associations were firstly, an amalgamation of elements brought to the island by foreigners, as for example the groups meeting on a specific day in the month in honour of Serapis, rather than the adoption of general Greek habits; and were secondly new creations, namely the *melanephoroi*, who appear to have been very successful and can be traced back over a long

⁷⁹¹ For *koinon* and *thiasos* see e. g. *RICIS* 202/0135, first half second century BC.

⁷⁹² For the *melanephoroi* see e. g. *RICIS* 202/0135. For the *enatistai* see *RICIS* 202/0140-41, before 166 BC.

⁷⁹³ The long lists of names which can presumably be related to the *therapeutes* only appear in the first century BC. In the preceding century, there are rather small lists of people belonging to the various groups. Furthermore, it is striking that the variety of small groups disappears under Athenian rule and was replaced by a rather unilateral organisation in the form of large groups of *therapeutai* and occasionally *melanephoroi*.

period of time. None of the groups, as far as the evidence suggests, relied on pre-existing structures. Whether there were none or whether they simply escape us, cannot be said with any certainty.

6.3 Rhodes

Another place which has a rather rich epigraphic documentation of voluntary associations but hardly any archaeological evidence is Hellenistic Rhodes. In the period from the third century BC until the second century most of the evidence through which these groups are known is epigraphic. The evidence suggests that the heyday of voluntary associations on Rhodes was in the second and first centuries BC. At the same time, the evidence is characterised by the scarcity of information concerning the activities and structures of individual voluntary associations. In only a few cases do the inscriptions allow for a glimpse into particular associations' structures and composition. The majority of voluntary associations on Rhodes only appear once in an inscription at a particular time and often only contain information about their name which proves their existence at a certain point in time. This situation does not allow for a thorough analysis of the naming practice of the administrative staff and its dependence on pre-existing forms.

On Rhodes, many voluntary associations labelled themselves in a similar way to the Athenian groups. They appear as *eranoi*-groups or *eranistai*, as *koina*, or as groups with the name of each chosen deity ending in *-stai* (e. g. *serapiastai*) or a local specification (e. g. *samothrakistai*). However, unlike some of the Athenian associations which used an all Athenian term to describe themselves, namely the *orgeones*, and unlike the Delian groups which at least initially appear to have used names that clearly referred to one particular deity and/or one particular aspect of the cult of a deity, such as for instance the *dekatistai* and *melanephoroi*, no such specifications can be discerned on Rhodes. The Rhodian groups appear with names such as *dionysiastai*, *serapiastai* and *isiastai* which are also used by voluntary associations in other places in Greece. Among the Rhodian voluntary associations one can find in the same period of time groups with a professional, personal and religious focus which were characterised by local peculiarities.

The Rhodian evidence was mainly characterised by two major differences from Delos and Athens. Firstly, and unlike the early Delian and Athenian associations, the majority of the Rhodian associations had a strong economic flavour and were mostly put together by

merchants, often from abroad, who decided to stay in Rhodes at least long enough to join or found a specific group, a habit established on Delos only during the second stage of the development of voluntary associations. What is more, Rhodian groups were shaped by the city's military importance as a large naval base, that is to say various groups were established by one person, namely the naval commander. Secondly, one can discern another local variation on Rhodes, namely that the focus in the epigraphic evidence of many voluntary associations was on the fact that they were established around one particular person. It is entirely possible that similar characteristics apply to other places. Voluntary associations in Athens and on Delos were equally often founded by one person. However, the inscriptions suggest that the focus of the non-Rhodian groups was rather towards the outside and on the deity itself. The Rhodian groups give the impression in their inscriptions that they were all about the actual founder, his family and friends who were competing against each other, rather than participating, say, in civic processions. Whether this was actually the case with any of the other voluntary associations in Athens or Delos and only becomes explicit in the evidence from Rhodes cannot be determined. To indicate the dependency of a group upon a particular person, by putting the founder's and/or benefactor's name in the group's name, became a widespread habit in Rhodes. In doing so, the groups underlined the importance of the founder and benefactor. At the same time they also created an affiliation of group and founder/benefactor that might become extinct with a person's death and may indicate a rather short-lived character for certain groups. This is well illustrated in the example of Nikasion, the founder of a voluntary association that will be introduced later on in this chapter.

The character of the Rhodian evidence, namely mostly inscriptions which only mention a voluntary association by name but without further information, let alone with any archaeological remains, makes it at first sight a rather difficult task to spot the groups of worshippers that got together for merely religious purposes. If one looks more closely at the naming practices, however, one will find that the differences are clear. Among the many specialised groups one can also find *sabaziastai*, *serapiastai*, *isiastai* and *dionysiastai*. Yet there is hardly any evidence and especially no archaeological remains that contain information on either the rituals or the focus of these groups.

The political situation on Rhodes differed from both the Athenian and the Delian cases. At the end of the fifth century (about 150 years before the heyday of voluntary associations on the island), the autonomous cities of Rhodes, Kamiros and Lindos underwent a process of synoecism to form the Rhodian state. They were then reorganised and sub-divided into three

phylai, which again were split into an unknown number of demes.⁷⁹⁴ And whereas the *phylai* were divided according to territorial criteria, one cannot say for sure which criteria applied to the further sub-divisions.⁷⁹⁵ If one looks at the Rhodian situation from a more general point of view and in comparison with the Athenian voluntary associations, one will find that the most recent scholarly work on voluntary associations on Rhodes follows the same ideas. This *communis opinio* concerning the explanations and interpretations for the establishment and spread of the groups in a way very similar to the Athenian situation was described at the beginning of this chapter. Accordingly the “*koina* were faithful imitations of the *polis*” and “they offered an opportunity for people who were excluded from the political community”.⁷⁹⁶ This political-constitutional structure of the groups was apparently maintained by the local elites and the military and naval subdivisions which appear in the groups’ names.⁷⁹⁷ Furthermore it has been argued that these associations served foreigners as “useful substitutes for the basic organisations they had left behind them – such as family, *deme* or tribe.”⁷⁹⁸ Accordingly, the new groups were based on friendship between people of differing social status and were “negotiated and defined through feasting, commensality, the punctilious observance of rites and the provision of mutual assistance.”⁷⁹⁹ These theories are, however, mainly based on just a few inscriptions which contain more detailed information, such as a first-century-BC inscription which shows that voluntary associations were sometimes constructed upon the local, pre-existing structure of the city of Rhodes. The association of “*Asklepiastai Nikasionoi Olympiastai*” was named after their founder Nikasion and his wife Olympeis. Nikasion, who involved his whole family in the group, arranged the membership according to the Rhodian three-*phylai* system, each *phyle* being named after a member of his family including himself, and headed by a *phylarchos* and *grammateus*.⁸⁰⁰ The three *phylai*, namely the members of the group, would compete against each other in agonistic games, similarly to the games held by the three Rhodian *phylai*, Ialysia, Kameiris and Lindia. The people involved in the group were mostly his family members and colleagues from the seafaring community and Rhodes who enjoyed competing with each other in theatrical and

⁷⁹⁴ Jones, Nicholas F. 1987. *Public organizations in Ancient Greece: a documentary study*, Philadelphia, p. 243.

⁷⁹⁵ Jones 1987, pp. 246-248.

⁷⁹⁶ Gabrielsen 2001, p. 217.

⁷⁹⁷ Gabrielsen 2001, pp. 221-223.

⁷⁹⁸ Gabrielsen 2001, p. 217.

⁷⁹⁹ He finally links the explanation of the phenomenon to the famous Aristotelian quote from the Nicomachean Ethics (Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1160a, 20-22) namely that *thiasotai* and *eranistai* were formed to perform a common sacrifice and for social intercourse. Accordingly, the vast growth of the groups in Hellenistic times is linked to the decline of the democratic *polis* and the change in the status of citizenship. Gabrielsen 2001, p. 217.

⁸⁰⁰ *IG XII 1 127*.

musical games.⁸⁰¹ Nikasion's group was not only a strong social network for non-Rhodians, Rhodians and those in between, but it was also a group of business-partners, since they commonly owned several vineyards.⁸⁰² However, whether the group survived the death of its founder and his wife for longer than, say, the next generation is doubtful. At the same time one must admit that this is only one inscription among many. It probably does not permit us to draw general conclusions about all the voluntary associations on Rhodes. When looking at the actual inscriptions of voluntary associations with a clear focus on their religious content, at least according to their name, one cannot find any allusions towards these political institutions or names deriving from them.

Whether the group of Nikasion is an example that illustrates the variety of the types of associations one may meet at this place and at that time, or whether his group was an exception, cannot be said, since hardly any inscriptions provide as many details as this one. However, not only does his association clearly have the character of a business-alliance of family and friends, but Nikasion also took the opportunity to show that he understood and perhaps even liked the system. He adopted the administrative terms and structure, even if he applied them in a different way, thereby suiting his personal ideas. Furthermore, the use of Rhodian civic terminology and administrative structure gave him the basis for communicating the hierarchy he wanted to establish among the members that consisted of both citizens and non-citizens. How far the group was concerned with Asklepios is unclear, since there is no mention of any religious interest or ritual in the epigraphic evidence.

To sum up one can say that some voluntary associations applied the language and general organisation provided by the constitutional structures of the Rhodian state in order to create their own group in a rather strict sense. For the majority of associations, however, one cannot say how they were structured and to what extent they were modelled on pre-existing structures. It seems as if no older forms of religious associations or names were re-applied to new establishments. *Sabaziastai*, *serapiastai*, *isiastai* and *dionysiastai* are general terms which can be found in Greece and Asia Minor in the first three centuries BC and the first and second century AD. Strictly speaking, the inscriptions of the Rhodian voluntary associations with their simple religious focus do not allow for an analysis of their structure and particular local variations, since they mostly appear with their name only, as mentioned earlier. As a result, one can hardly draw any connections between these groups and particular people. Yet, there are a few exceptions: For example the case of Ariston from Syracuse who was

⁸⁰¹ Jones 1987, p. 244.

⁸⁰² Pugliese Caratelli 1939-40, p. 150, nr. 5; Gabrielsen 2001, p. 232.

honoured by a group of *sabaziastai*.⁸⁰³ Another example is that of Dionysodoros from Alexandria. Dionysodoros was involved in at least three groups. One of them was of a local, Rhodian character namely the *haliadai* and *haliastai*, one, the *paianistai*, was constructed as an *eranistai*-group, and one was of a religious character, namely the *dionysiastai*.⁸⁰⁴ Dionysodoros consciously chose to be part of each of these three groups presumably because they provided him with different contents. This assumption seems to contradict a theory concerning voluntary associations on Rhodes that was offered by Vincent Gabrielsen. Gabrielsen argues that the organisation of the Rhodian voluntary associations and their members was in the hands of those people who “ran the state”, the local aristocracy, which was mainly involved in the “Rhodian *fenomeno associativo*”.⁸⁰⁵ He also argues that there was an atmosphere of competition among the large number of groups, the various benefactors and the kinds of benefactions, and that this is manifest in the epigraphic evidence.⁸⁰⁶ His theory might apply to those voluntary associations that were concerned with professional or military tasks. Voluntary associations of worshippers, however, cannot be linked to either politicians or local aristocrats in the inscriptions. Yet Gabrielsen argues that all groups were only brought together for professional reasons by the local aristocracy.⁸⁰⁷ Accordingly, voluntary associations of worshippers should - in theory - not exist. As mentioned earlier, one has to admit that in the case of Rhodes, it is a difficult task to differentiate between the groups in the same way as is possible in other places. Voluntary associations often appear only once and only with their name in dedicatory or honorary inscriptions. Most of them seem, at least according to their names, to be involved in either economic or military activities and were often established as a network of “colleagues”, whether in the army, as merchants or both. However, the fact that the associations’ names often proclaim the occupation or specification of each group’s members, makes those groups stand out which have been established mainly for the purpose of worshipping a specific deity. One would have to question the meaning of *serapiastai*, *isiastai* and *dionysiastai* in an apparently competitive environment that was dictated by the aristocracy of Rhodes. Clearly, there must have been more to these mainly religious groups than just the name. Whether it was the actual focus on specific cults and rituals that were not provided for by the Rhodian civic religion, the fact that women could be

⁸⁰³ *SEG* 33.639. See also chapter four.

⁸⁰⁴ A similar case is known from Camiros *RICIS* 204/0216.

⁸⁰⁵ Gabrielsen 2001, p. 226.

⁸⁰⁶ It seems as if people sought not only to found groups or appear as benefactors in the epigraphic evidence, but to be involved in as many groups as possible, see examples in Gabrielsen 2001, p. 227.

⁸⁰⁷ Gabrielsen 1997, p. 123, points out that women and men both free and not free, foreigners and citizens could become members.

involved, or whether it was the mere fact that some people who were not involved in any of the occupations represented by the merchant or military associations felt that they had to be involved in a group, cannot be determined. Perhaps one has to expect that most groups served various purposes at the same time. Yet their focus was different in each case.

The island of Rhodes with its many associations has not only shown the variety of ways in which the concept of the voluntary association could be applied in the Greek Hellenistic world, but it has also shown how multi-faceted such groups could be in one and the same place. Not only were there groups consisting of members of the army or those involved in a common business activity, but also groups with strong features of family and household associations.⁸⁰⁸ Last but not least, one can perhaps identify groups that appear to be mainly occupied with religious content, consisting of worshippers of a specific deity. Those groups seem to be subsumed, as it were, in the middle of all the other associations which often even contained the name of a deity in their title. Some of the associations appear to have copied certain pre-existing structures of either a political or religious nature. How far the associations were actually concerned with either of the topics is far from clear.

In the case of Rhodes, it is difficult to identify groups of worshippers organised in the form of a voluntary association before the second century BC. Only with the general rise of voluntary associations on the island, can one identify such groups that were devoted to particular deities only. It remains unclear whether voluntary associations with a religious focus were active on Rhodes before the establishment of professional and military groups took hold. This is all the more interesting when compared to the Delian evidence. Not only was Delos involved in the sea-trade during Hellenistic times at a similar level to Rhodes, but it also attracted the same people. However, chronological differences between the two places occur, especially after the first century BC, when the activity of the Rhodian voluntary associations flourished, whereas no such activities can be discerned on Delos after 88 BC. But regardless of their common features, the development of the phenomenon was clearly a different one. Whereas Delos

⁸⁰⁸ Although Gabrielsen 2008 argues differently. In his opinion groups were rather similar: he claims that all groups were organised “with long-term perspective in mind”. Also, “all associations, for instance, had equipped themselves with a ‘constitution’, *nomoi*” and “a civic bureaucracy”, p. 182. The title of his article already suggests his view on women in associations, namely that there were none (although he suggested women as members earlier, see Gabrielsen 1997, p. 123). Yet, certain groups such as religious ones and those organised around household certainly included women, a fact most recently emphasized by Faraone, Christopher 2009. Household Religion in Ancient Greece, in: John Bodet/Saul Olyan (edd.) *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity*, Oxford, pp. 210–228: 223.

“produced” in the first instance various and initially small voluntary associations dedicated to a few deities, often linked to private and public sanctuaries, and only later on developed certain professional associations in the form of a few large groups, many of the Rhodian groups rather look like small private gatherings that were occasionally involved in one or the other cult but were mainly concerned with the issues of their founder and members. And whereas the Egyptians, Syrians and perhaps even the Jews on Delos were mostly concerned with establishing their cult which included a sanctuary and a worshipping group, the foreigners on Rhodes, it seems, were mainly occupied with their businesses.⁸⁰⁹

If one now turns to the initial questions about the emergence of voluntary associations in Greek *poleis* and their relationship to the pre-existing local institutions, one must conclude that for Rhodes no direct link can be made between pre-existing civic and voluntary associations. It appears that the associations mushroomed in Rhodes at a specific time, namely in the second and first centuries BC, rather than as parts of a longer-standing process and developments, as seen in Athens.

Unlike in Athens, however, at least some Rhodian associations were devoted to the worship of the patron deity of the city. In Lindos, Athena appears as patron deity for many groups. These groups, however, appear only in the second and first centuries BC. Also they are rarely exclusively devoted to the goddess and it seems as if they did not derive from a traditional habit, but were established contemporaneously to most other groups.⁸¹⁰ More generally one can say that foreigners on Rhodes, however, were focused more on the pre-existing institutional structures, their economic well-being and less on their original cults, as say on Delos.

Furthermore, although some Rhodian associations were modelled on the basis of the civic institutions, this was done in a rather creative way, customised around a group’s specific needs and ideas and not, as it were, purely to imitate the state. The political interest in the associations of Rhodes was driven by the groups’ economic potential and the opportunity to create networks similar to the professional associations of Delos. Among the large variety of groups on Rhodes one can also find associations with a focus on merely religious issues, it seems. They were sometimes even frequented by people who were involved in various other groups. One of the important features provided by these religious groups appears to have been the burial care they provided for their members.

⁸⁰⁹ See examples of foreigners forming groups on Rhodes in Gabrielsen 2001, pp. 232-236.

⁸¹⁰ See e.g. *IG XII 1* 36 159 and 161, all first century BC.

6.4 Conclusion

If one now compares the situation in all three *poleis* one will find rather significant differences. Only in Athens can one draw a direct connection between pre-existing constitutional structures and voluntary associations of worshippers in the form of the *orgeones*. Over time, however, and more precisely in the second century BC, the concept is transferred to other groups and/or perhaps customised according to their own ideas, as for example by the *orgeones* of the Mother of the Gods in Piraeus. Neither the Delian nor the Rhodian voluntary associations can be directly linked to specific pre-existing civic or social groups. Indeed, whereas some of the Delian groups appear to have been established in the first instance according to the habits of each deity's origin, as for example the *dekatistai* and *enatistai*, or on a completely new basis, such as the *melanephoroi*, the names of the Rhodian groups indicate no local or original specification. Rather, it seems as if voluntary associations of worshippers on Rhodes were established at the same time as such groups with a focus on a military or professional occupation. These associations of worshippers often used names that can be found for other groups in Greece and Asia Minor and which, apart from those groups worshipping Athena Lindia, often lacked individual or specifically Rhodian characteristics.

On Rhodes, it seems as if no pre-existing constitutional or cultic structures were used as a basis for voluntary associations of worshippers. Only professional, household or military groups appear to have occasionally used such structures to organise their groups, but in a sense that clearly differed from the original model. For Rhodes one can perhaps say that voluntary associations were completely new institutions to the city of Rhodes, at least as suggested by the epigraphic evidence. A similar situation occurred on Delos where no pre-existing local constitutional structures that would later be adopted by groups of worshippers could be discerned. Also, no voluntary associations appear on Delos before the end of the third century BC. Some of the Delian groups, however, developed a unique character or introduced concepts from their country of origin. For Delos I would suggest that voluntary associations were indeed new to the island when they were first established in the third and second century BC. Their creation, however, was not dependent on pre-existing political or cultic structures, but rather on traditions and habits that were brought to the island by immigrants. Furthermore, the island apparently offered an atmosphere within which rather unusual names and forms of groups could be created, at least until the time of the Athenian occupation. A different picture can be drawn for Athens itself. Here, groups of worshippers

of specific deities had a long-standing tradition which becomes manifest in the form of the *orgeones*. The concept of voluntary associations certainly developed strongly from the initial *orgeones* groups of the fifth and fourth centuries BC and was clearly influenced by other factors. Yet one can say that voluntary associations in Athens were created on the basis of a pre-existing structure and were later customised and shaped according to general contemporary trends and the desire of each group and time.

The main similarities which can be identified in voluntary associations of worshippers in all three places are, it seems, threefold. They lie firstly in the use of a related language when it comes to the naming of administrative and cultic staff. This is almost certainly due to the fact that all three places are situated in the Greek-speaking world which by now was very well connected. Secondly, one can discern in all three places a religious aspect to establishing these groups. This religious aspect cannot be explained away by proposing social or economic reasons, as suggested repeatedly in earlier research. The third similarity concerns the nature of the epigraphic evidence. If one looks at the inscriptions on their own, one will find that they hardly ever reveal much about the individual association. Still, they indicate quite clearly that no group was like another, or at least that they claimed a sense of otherness for themselves. That is to say that even if groups do often look to us as if they were very similar, it clearly mattered to the members which group they belonged to. And yet it seems as if the founders and staff of voluntary associations often only engraved such information in stone that was comprehensible to a broader audience rather than for the individual members of each group. This leads to the view that many groups appear at first sight to be quite similar to each other: *koina* could be found in Athens, Delos and Rhodes alike. The same is true for groups of *serapiastai*. This alleged similarity, however, only served the purpose of achieving a common understanding and paved the way for communication between the members and the staff of the association, immigrants and locals, the *polis* and the voluntary associations. It does not, however, in any way relate to a particular character or set of characteristics of an association. It merely indicates successful and accepted groups which publicly displayed their existence in a *polis*.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the origins and spread of voluntary associations of worshippers with a specific focus on the archaeology and epigraphy of the Greek cities of the Aegean world. Voluntary associations served as a means of creating and establishing an individual religious identity in a way that had not existed before and that was suitable for both the individual person and the *polis* they lived in. I therefore investigated voluntary associations in Greece and Asia Minor from the end of the fourth century BC until the second century AD. I focused particularly on voluntary associations of newly-introduced deities, such as Isis and Serapis, Bendis, the Syrian deities and the Jewish god. At the same time I included associations worshipping Dionysus, who was the most popular of the more traditional deities to be worshipped in the form of voluntary associations. Owing to the lack of archaeological and epigraphic evidence for them in this period I excluded Christian voluntary associations from this study. I also focused on particular cities, namely Athens, Delos and Rhodes, which provide us with the most archaeological and/or epigraphic evidence.

In my introduction I set out to argue that among the worshipping associations of both newly-introduced and more traditional deities one would expect to find diversity as a main characteristic, even if the nomenclature of many associations might suggest similarity. I would show that the individual character of voluntary associations depended as much on the pre-existing structures of the new environment, as it did on the character of the deity, the people involved, and the introduction of unknown, untypical, or new rituals. The popularity of the voluntary associations can be explained by exactly these unique selling points rather than by a general idea common to all groups such as argued by Cumont. Secondly, voluntary associations helped to establish cults of newly-introduced deities in their new environments. I argued in chapters two, three, and six that this was achieved in two main ways: a) by using the pre-existing terminology, and b) by introducing new rituals and creating new spaces of worship that soon became attractive to citizens and non-citizens alike. The third hypothesis in the introduction concerned the differences between the Greek voluntary associations and the Roman groups in terms of their appearance, foundation and their legal status. I said I would argue that the Roman situation differed clearly from the Greek one, in that voluntary associations of newly-introduced deities in Greece rather tried to signal openness and similarity to the existing forms and even used the oldest available terms, whereas the Roman

groups seemed to embody the opposite: exoticism and otherness and even esoteric elements, as in the case of the worshippers of Mithras.

In the first case study in this thesis I argued that voluntary associations were an essential part of Athenian religious life from the fourth century BC until the second century AD. But whereas the groups of Classical Athens were initially formed by Athenian citizens, often under the term *orgeones*, the voluntary associations of the Hellenistic period were established by both non-Athenians and also non-Greeks. The concept of *orgeones* – and the use of that term to describe it - proved to be very successful. It was adopted and adapted by these groups and remained in use until as late as the third century AD. Other terms such as *thiasos*, *koinon* and *synodos* were also used by voluntary associations, but each of them just for a certain period in time. Furthermore I argued that the focus on ritual and sociability in the groups changed over time. The *orgeones* of Amarynthos, Dexion and Asklepios met annually in their own precinct and were very much concerned with their annual feast. The *orgeones* of Bendis seem most concerned with their annual *pompe* through the city. The *iobakchoi* of the second century AD, who owned a precinct in the very centre of the city, met at least once a month without focusing on one specific cultic feast. It seems as if the voluntary associations offered a fair mixture of sociability and religious rituals. However similar these groups might have appeared from the inscriptions they set up, each had its own individual features, they were differently structured, and they focused on different things. The few archaeological remains that we have allow us to assume that successful voluntary associations erected their own meeting places according to their own needs. They were located in the very centre of Athens from early Classical times onwards as well as in the Piraeus during Hellenistic times. I finally suggested that new forms of voluntary associations of worshippers were established, especially in the Piraeus, where the circumstances were different from Athens. The Piraeus was only established as Athens' main harbour in the late Classical and early Hellenistic period. It attracted new immigrants and seems to have been the first place for people to create voluntary associations in a way that was not provided for by the Athenian *polis* religion.

The situation on Delos differed from the Athenian one, as I showed in the second case study. For a start it was characterised by rapid changes. The evidence suggests the activity of voluntary associations from the end of the third century until 88 BC, that is approximately over a period of one-hundred and twenty years compared to six-hundred years of the Athenian *orgeones*. Within that short period of time, the Delians were controlled by various

authorities but most prominently by Athens. In contrast to Athens, Delos provided much more evidence, both archaeologically and, in particular cases such as the Egyptian deities, epigraphically too. This is owing to the special conditions of the material's survival rather than the actual quantity of material. This variety of evidence may help to explain the complex and differentiated image of Delian voluntary associations that emerged from my examination of the evidence from the island. Accordingly, I argued that voluntary associations on Delos did not develop from pre-existing groups but were characterised by the variety of the origins of the people who founded them. Rituals performed in the groups, and the regulations and names of each group, were much more varied than the evidence suggested for Athens. Worshippers from Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Arabia founded voluntary associations on Delos, especially during the period of independence, according to their own ideas. Some of the groups used names that were known from various other places in Greece, others created new names and perhaps forms of groups which only occurred on Delos and only rarely anywhere else. The Athenian occupation becomes visible mostly because after 166 BC voluntary associations appear to be less varied. Yet the groups which survive appear to be much larger than ever before. The epigraphic evidence suggests that the voluntary associations on Delos were characterised by considerable variety. I made a similar observation concerning the archaeological evidence. Worshippers from various places erected sanctuaries and shrines to rather unknown gods: as many as thirteen sanctuaries dedicated to a variety of deities, many of which are either unidentified or appear only once in the Greek world, were found in a small area around the peak of mount Kynthos. One assembly place of a voluntary association has been identified by various scholars as a synagogue. Whether or not the building was erected as such cannot be decided, but the epigraphic evidence suggests that at least one voluntary association was dedicated to Theos Hypsistos. The dining facilities of the building and the precinct itself suggest a rather large group of worshippers. Beside the fact that most assembly-places of voluntary associations provided facilities for commensality, they did not have much else in common. Rather, there appears to have been a mixture of Delian building techniques and material combined with "foreign" influences in the layout of the buildings. These influences become especially visible when looking at the sanctuary of the Syrian deities, with the theatre and large number of dining rooms immediately attached to it. The dining rooms themselves, however, represent a compromise between Greek and oriental dining habits. Similarly, all three Serapeia provided water-crypts or Nilometers so that the worshipping community could perform rituals involving the water of the Nile. Only on Delos is it possible to get a reasonably full picture of the architecture of these structures.

At present it is not possible to say whether this exotic architectural style was a local peculiarity or whether it was more generalised. Furthermore I argued that voluntary associations of the Egyptian and Syrian deities soon became attractive to Delians, Greeks and Italians alike.

In chapter four I looked at the actual people who were involved in the foundation, establishment and maintenance of voluntary associations. I was confronted with the fact that once we can identify voluntary associations in the epigraphic evidence, we must assume that we are dealing with an already successfully established group. That is to say that we have only very little evidence that permits conclusions to be drawn about the actual act of foundation, let alone about the identity of individual founders. The first generation seems to be lost in most cases. From the second century BC onwards, the epigraphic evidence suggests that mainly Greeks were involved in voluntary associations, whether dedicated to newly-introduced or more traditional deities. This evidence also suggests that most of these Greeks were citizens of the host communities: I could discern only a few non-citizens. Whether this was actually the case or whether it should rather be explained by the general tendency to display citizenship could not be answered.

Furthermore I found out that some deities were more popular among voluntary associations, such as Dionysus and the Egyptian deities, a fact that can be explained by the introduction of new deities, new rituals and different approaches to worship, or in the case of the *serapiastai*, by the spread of the Ptolemaic army. These popular groups often appear with the same or similar names at various places. I argued, however, that the similarity in the nomenclature does not necessarily mean that these groups were the same in terms of structure and members. I also observed a certain increase in the evidence of voluntary associations worshipping newly-introduced deities. This might be partially explained by the fact that the concept of the voluntary association enabled immigrants to establish the worship of their original deity more easily in a new environment. Yet one can also observe a more general interest in newly-introduced deities and new rituals in the Hellenistic period.

The fifth chapter concerned the archaeological remains. These structures showed that one of the important tasks of voluntary associations in the Hellenistic period was burial care for their members. Many voluntary associations offered space for a burial and sometimes even provided annual memorial care that seems to have taken place in a dining hall near the graveyards. Other meeting places included public sanctuaries, dining halls attached to public

temples, places in nature and the public space of a city. But a private dining hall or meeting place, I have argued, was the location of preference since it not only provided individually structured places to accommodate each group's needs, but it also evoked a sense of exclusivity. These meeting-places were often located in the centre of the city, either as a specially customised part of a normal house or as individually built premises. Yet, only a few actual meeting places could be identified, owing to the fact that at least the buildings built by worshippers of more traditional deities often had a rather non-specific architectural character. This might be due to the general conditions of archaeological preservation in Athens and Rhodes. Delos is exceptional in two ways, firstly because a lot of wealth passed through it initially as a major sanctuary and then its role as a major commercial centre. Secondly, after its heyday, Delos was to all intents and purposes abandoned and never again inhabited as a city. On the basis of the evidence from Delos I argued that associations worshipping newly-introduced deities constructed buildings in a different way from the local practices, but rather according to their original habits. The location of the meeting places also depended on the kind of group as well as the city itself. That is to say that the older associations of traditional deities and those that were rather wealthy could be found in the city centres, whereas the associations worshipping newly introduced deities tended to build their premises in the newer areas of the cities, and often in residential areas.

In Chapter six I argued that the idea that particular kinds of voluntary association were closely modelled on the political institutions of the host *polis* needs to be understood in a more nuanced way. This thesis was chiefly based upon the assumption that most voluntary associations used the pre-existing terminology, and in some cases the organisational structures, of civic institutions. This, however, does not mean that they were actually trying to copy these. Rather, they used this particular language to be able to communicate easily, and in the case of non-Greeks also to signal openness towards the new environment. I also argued that these groups were much more diverse than has sometimes been appreciated, and that that diversity has been masked by the adoption of a set of broadly similar epigraphic conventions. It became clear that the archaeological evidence helps a great deal in identifying the diversity which is most often not visible in the epigraphic evidence. The limits of the epigraphic material are at their starkest in places such as Rhodes, where hardly any archaeological structures were excavated. As part of this chapter I compared the relationship between voluntary associations and the civic institutions of three *poleis*, namely Athens, Delos and Rhodes, and I came to the conclusion that only in Athens can one find voluntary associations

that were derived from an associative model that had been established earlier by the civic authorities.

The picture that emerged from my detailed investigations shows considerable variety from one *polis* to another. Nevertheless some general conclusions did emerge. I believe that this thesis has made two important contributions. The first contribution concerns the image of voluntary associations that is presented in most secondary literature, namely that they are presented as a particular “phenomenon”, the *fenomeno associativo* that occurs in various places. In this thesis I have argued, however, that these groups were so diverse that it seems as though it did not even occur to a person living in, say, ancient Athens to think of these groups as a set. This is at least until the second century AD, when writings such as Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* were produced which suggest a different understanding of the matter.

The second contribution concerns the concept of the voluntary association and its popularity. The fundamental point seems to be that the concept of the voluntary association appears to have been useful for a wide range of social enterprises over a long period of time, with various foci, some of which may have been religious. The most common explanation for their success seems to be that they served as substitutes for a variety of gaps in a person’s life: “as social organisations they [voluntary associations] took up the slack between the individual and the state, providing fictive families for those uprooted from clan or family and fictive polities for those excluded from political power.”⁸¹¹ The political part is especially seen as an important source of attraction by Wilson: “As a polis writ small, the collegium provided a social setting in which persons who normally could never aspire to participation in the *cursus honorum* of the city and state could give and receive honors, enjoy the ascribed status that came with being a *quinquennalis* or *mater*, have a feeling of control over at least the destiny of the collegium, and enjoy regular banquets.”⁸¹² A similar position is held, at least to some extent, by Patterson, who claims that the main concerns of *collegia* were: “the support of individuals and contributions to public life: in particular banqueting, funeral provision, and participation in acts of patronage and reciprocation.”⁸¹³ Arnaoutoglou’s view is more varied in that he writes that: “The associative phenomenon is not fully explained by ‘euergetism’ alone, nor by the concept of ‘ritual conviviality’, nor as an associative context for the

⁸¹¹ Kloppenborg/Wilson 1996, introduction p. 13.

⁸¹² Kloppenborg 1996, pp. 26-27.

⁸¹³ Patterson 2006, p. 254.

foreigners.”⁸¹⁴ Rather, “Associations were multi-functional units of people (...) in which each of the above mentioned features played a role (...) which rendered possible the slow, but smooth, integration into a new cultural context.”⁸¹⁵ I doubt that people actually became part of a voluntary association because they gained satisfaction from mimicking offices that were part of civic institutions. Rather, these terms and offices embodied a particular sense of stability and perhaps even legality that was attractive to people, especially when coming into a new environment. Furthermore it seems, that people used these pre-existing structures to communicate with a broad range of people without attracting too much attention to the possible novelty of the group(s). However, although some of the explanations given above seem to be at least partly valid they do not provide an entirely satisfactory answer on their own. The emphasis on the common meal as an important reason to build a group appears to highlight something that was already available anyway and that is perhaps one of the most ancient of all human rituals (i.e. dining together). Furthermore it was not necessary to be part of a voluntary association in order to participate in say a banquet or a public procession in honour of a deity. These features were also but by no means exclusively provided by voluntary associations.

It seems to me that the main reason for the popularity of the voluntary association among worshippers is that it enabled people to practise their religion and their rituals in the way they wanted to and to worship any deity, without having to choose from a fixed set of options. In other words, by installing a voluntary association, worshippers found a way to practice new religious rituals and cults that were not part of the pre-existing religious landscape, but without threatening the latter. From the viewpoint of the *polis*-authorities, voluntary associations provided a means of incorporating a range of different groups that could not be allocated to any of the pre-existing groups. In fact, voluntary associations were a mediating institution between the *polis* and the individual.

⁸¹⁴ Arnaoutoglou 2003, p. 155.

⁸¹⁵ Arnaoutoglou 2003, p. 155.

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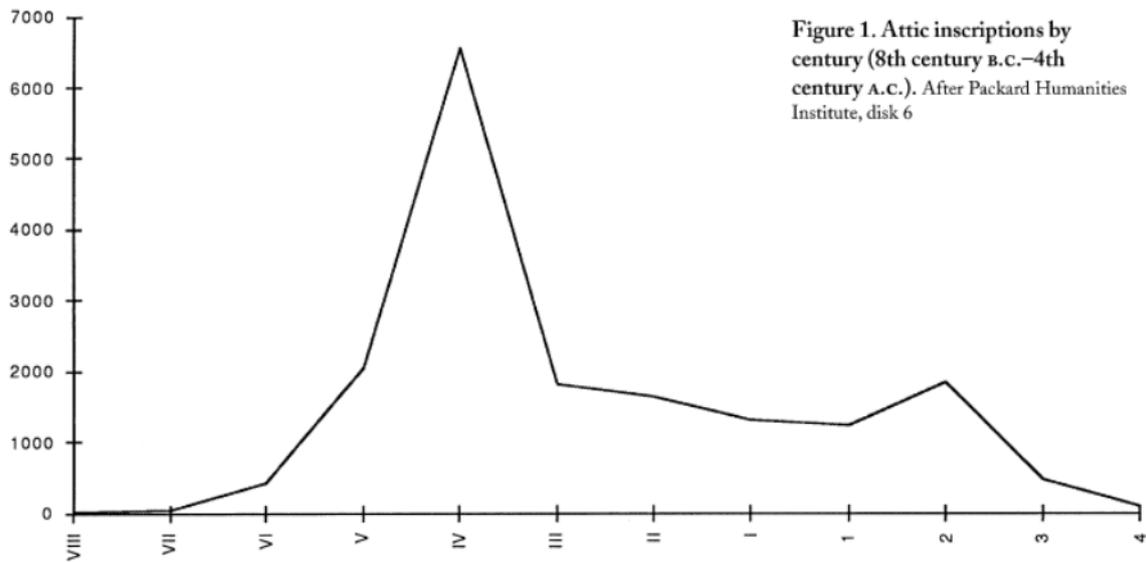
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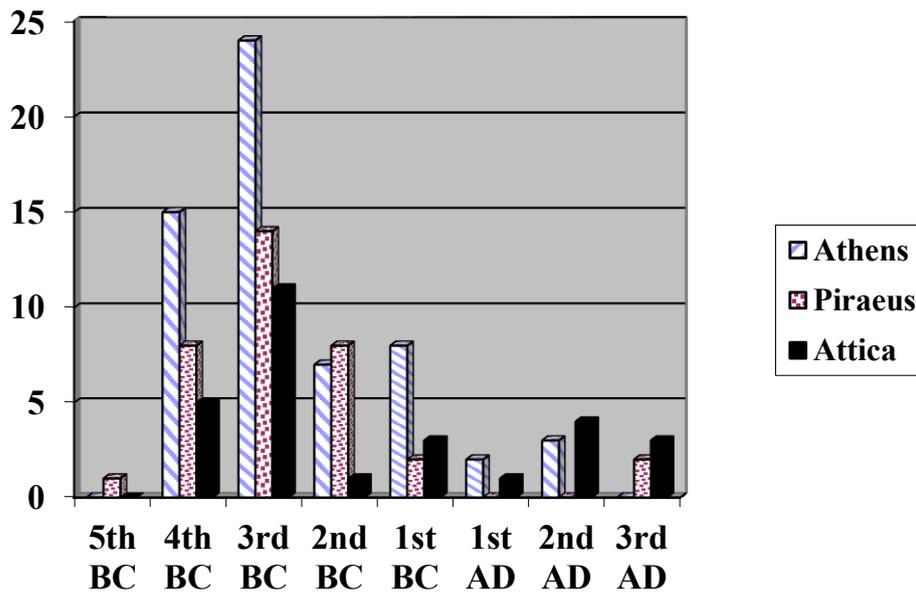
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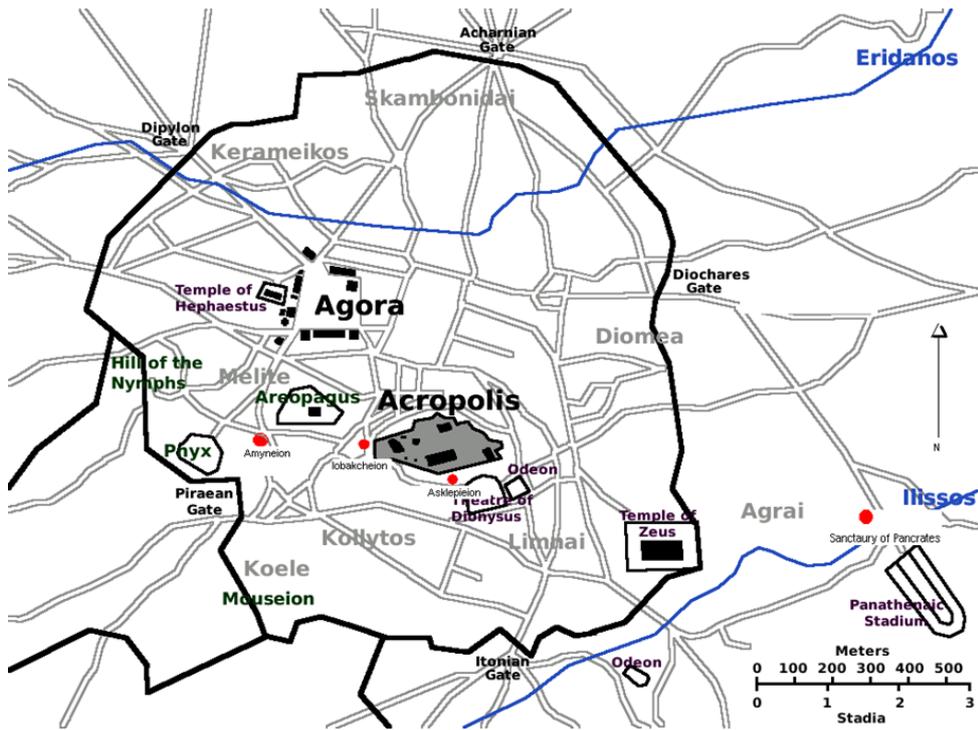
9. Appendix



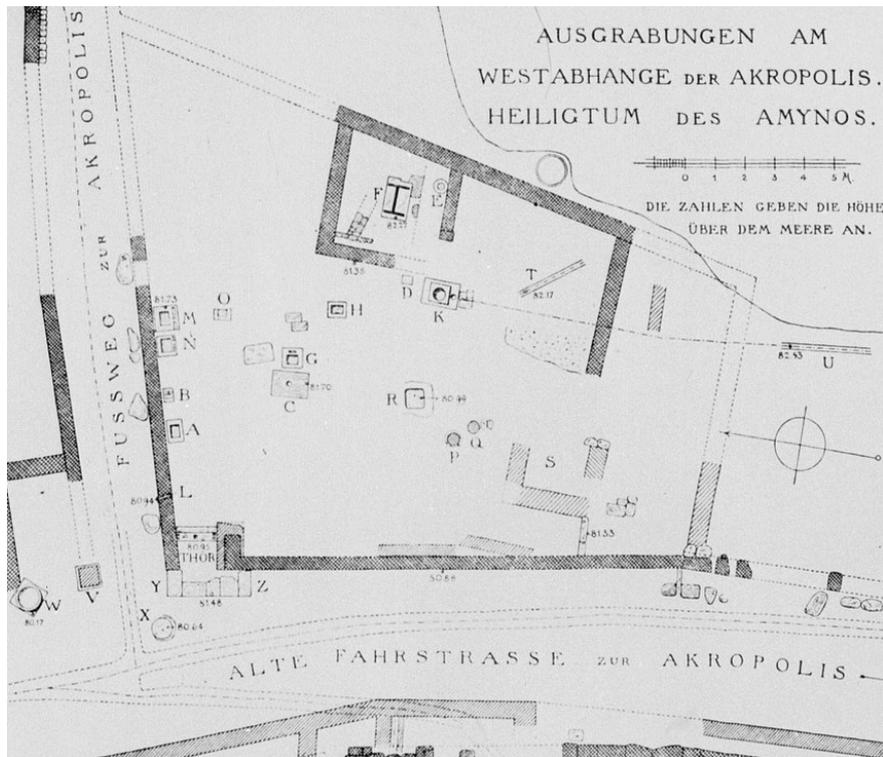
A) Roman numerals indicate the centuries B. C., Arabic numerals the centuries A. D. (after Hedrick 1999)



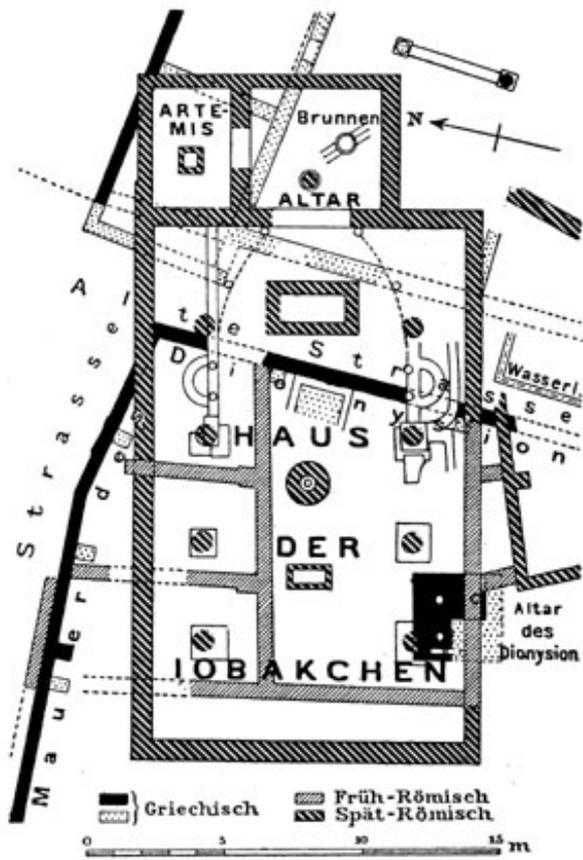
B) Comparative epigraphic material from Athens in this thesis



C) Map of city centre of Athens



D) Amyneion in Athens (after Dörpfeld 1985)



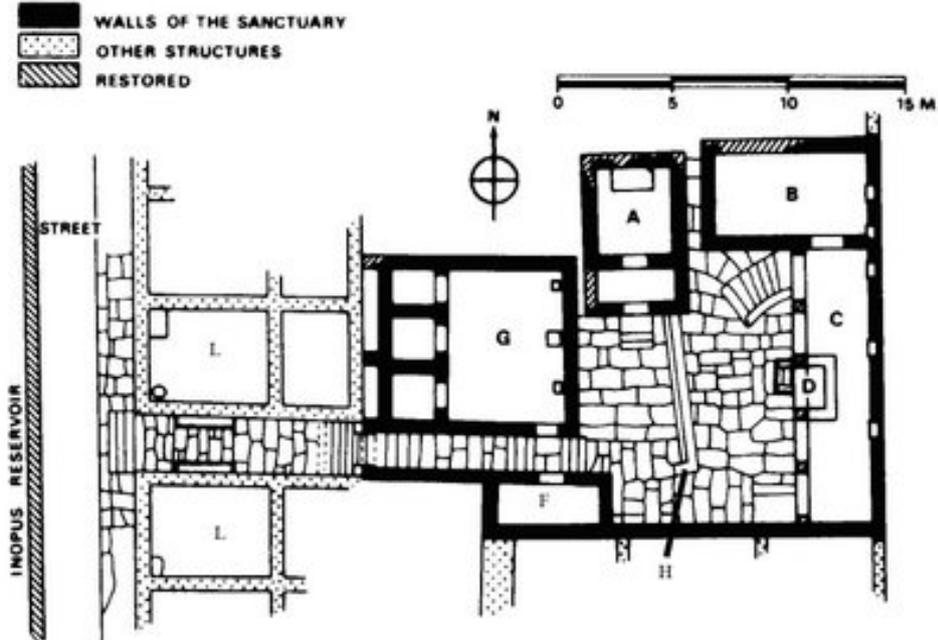
E) Iobakkeion, Athens (after Dörpfeld 1894)



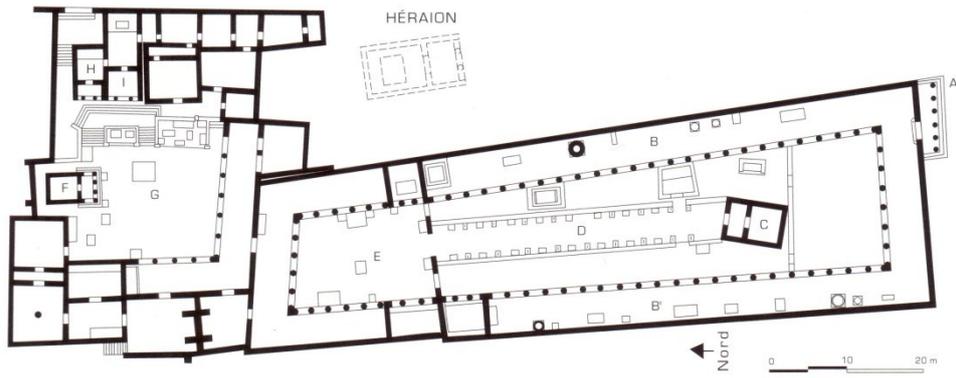
F) Serapeion A



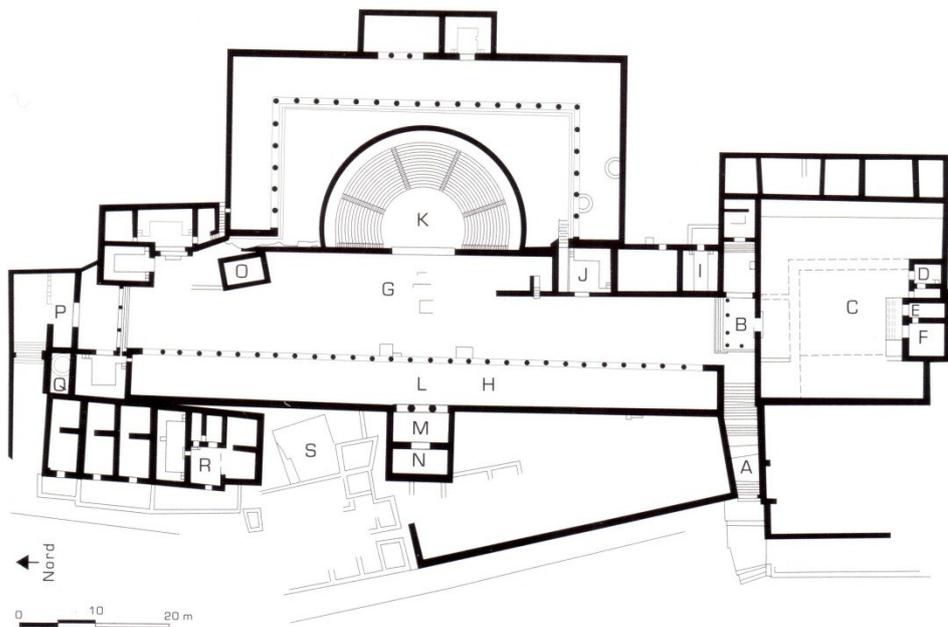
G) Serapeion A, room E viewed from the street (Photo by K. Kleibl.)



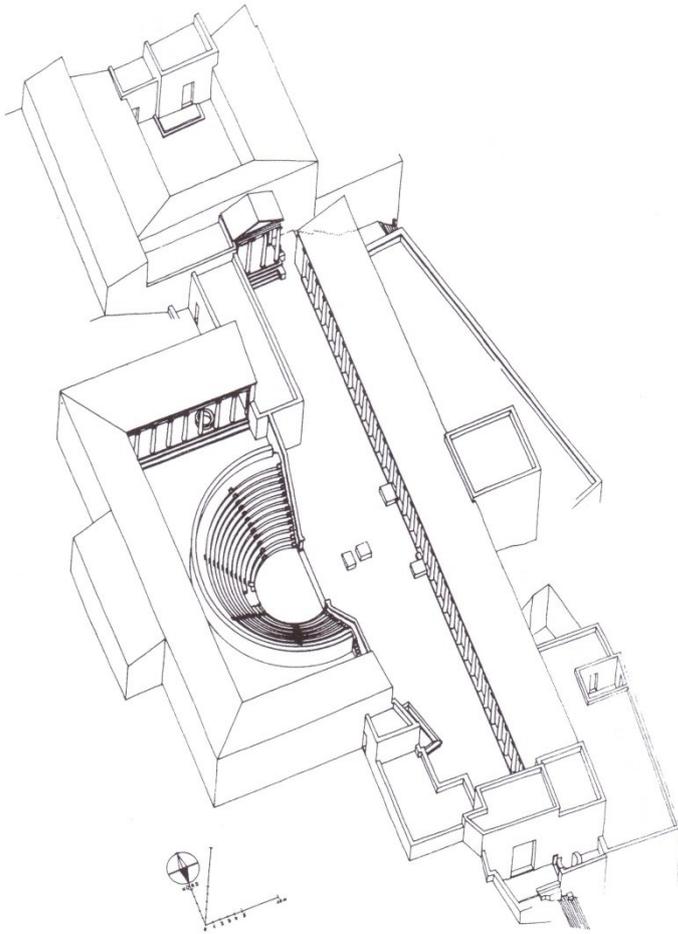
H) Serapeion B (after Roussel 1915/16)



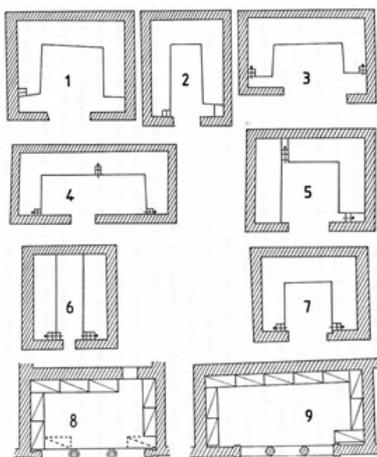
I) Serapeion C (after GD 2005)



J) Sanctuary of the Syrian deities, plan (after GD 2005)



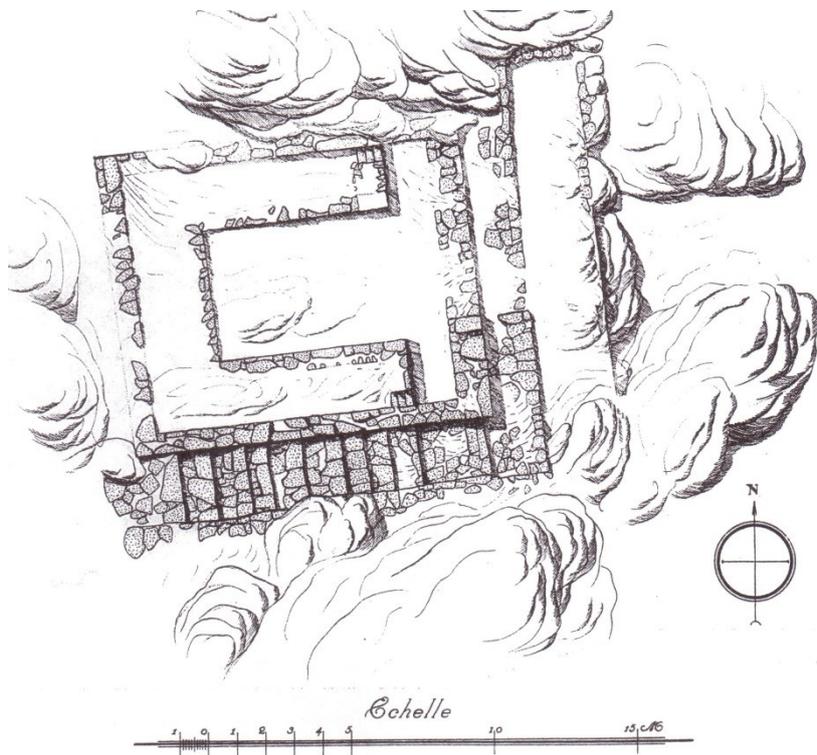
K) Sanctuary of the Syrian deities, reconstruction, after (GD 2005)



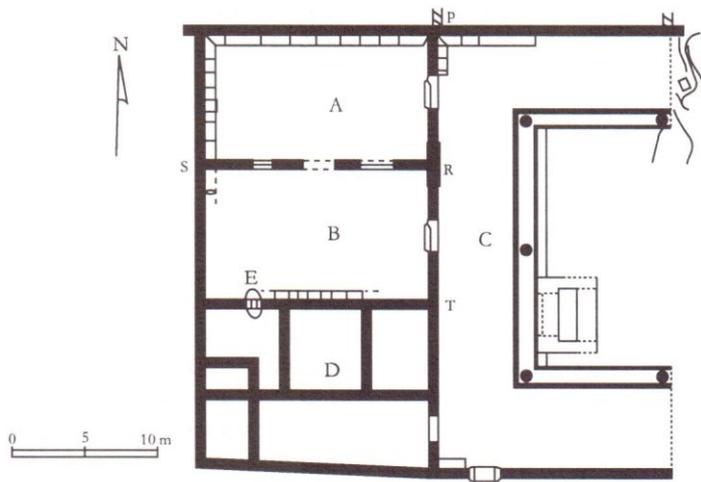
L) Exedras in the sanctuary of the Syrian deities (after Will/Schmid 1985)



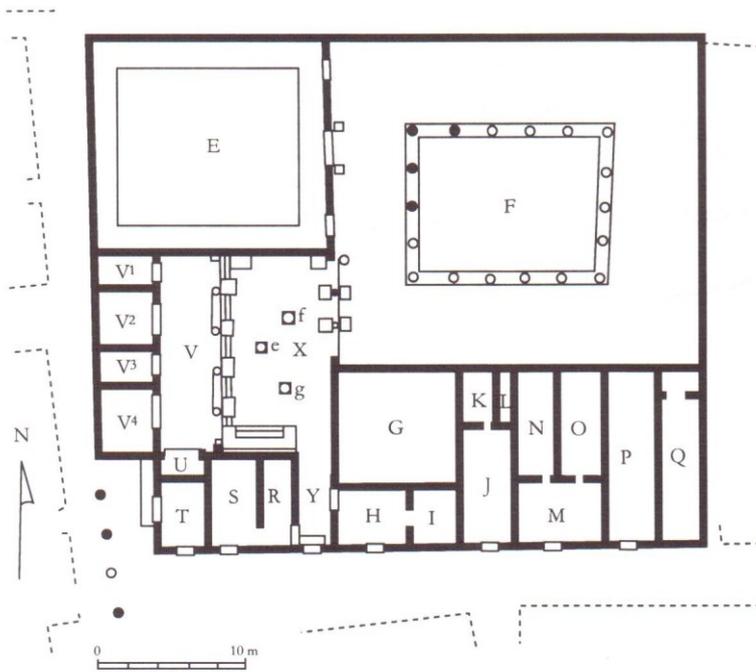
M) The sanctuaries on mount Kynthos (after Plassart 1928)



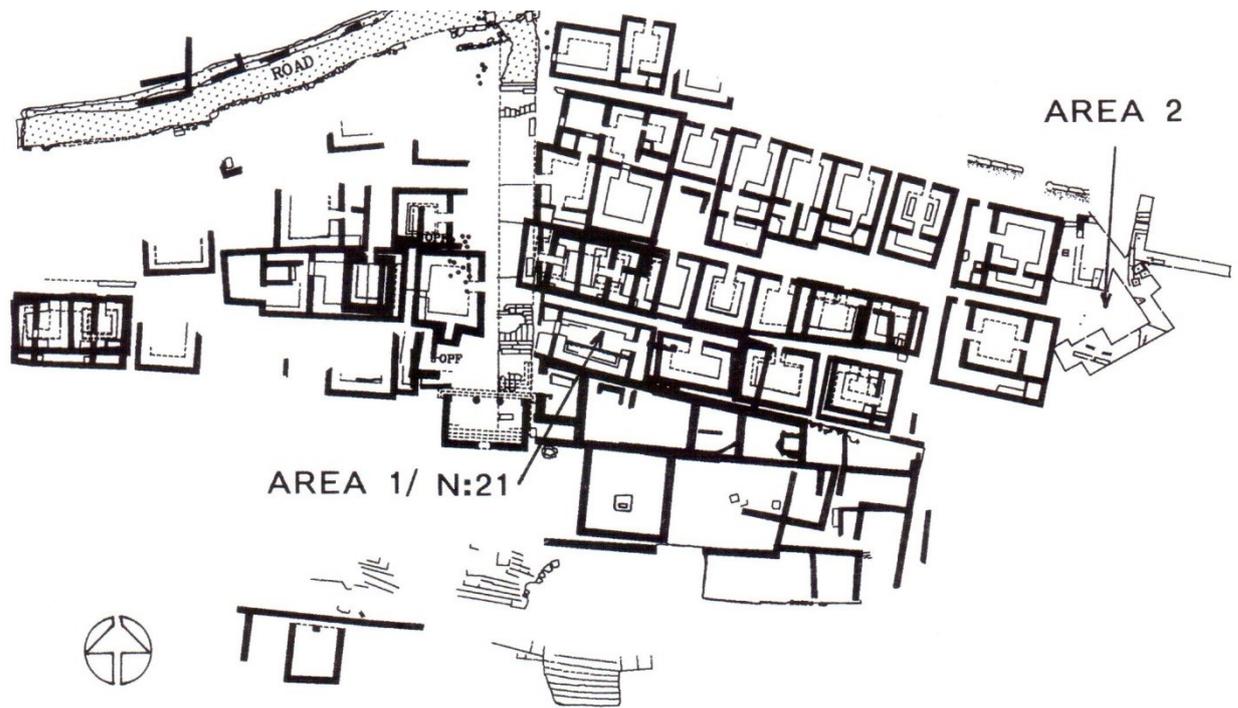
N) Sanctuary of the gods of Ascalon (after Plassart 1928)



O) Synagogue complex after (Mc Lean 1996)



P) Meeting-place of the *poseidoniasts* after (McLean 1996)



Q) Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, Corinth (after Bookidis 1990)



R) Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, Corinth, 3-D-reconstruction (from http://3dgroup.cs.uri.edu/ancient_corinth.html accessed 18.05.12)

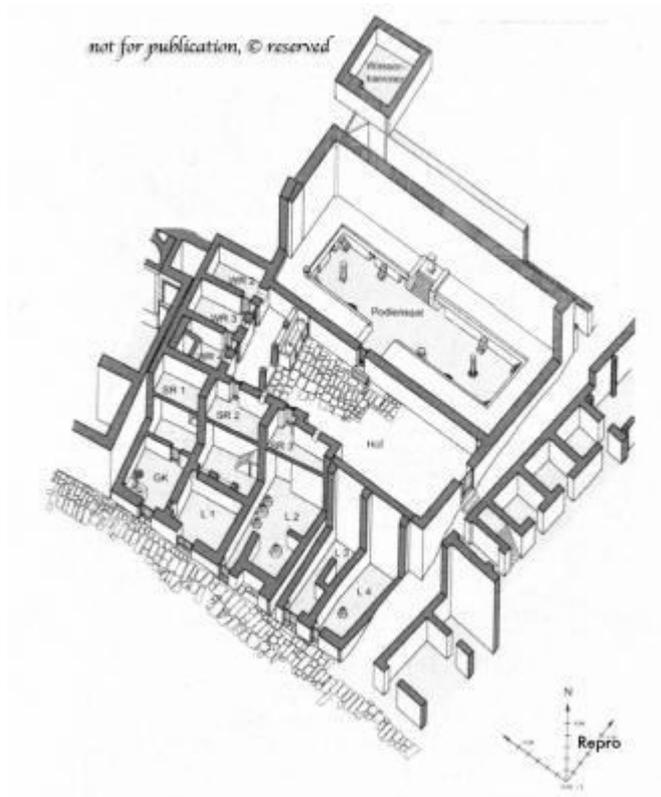


Figure 3.3 Building L-M: 28, from the west.

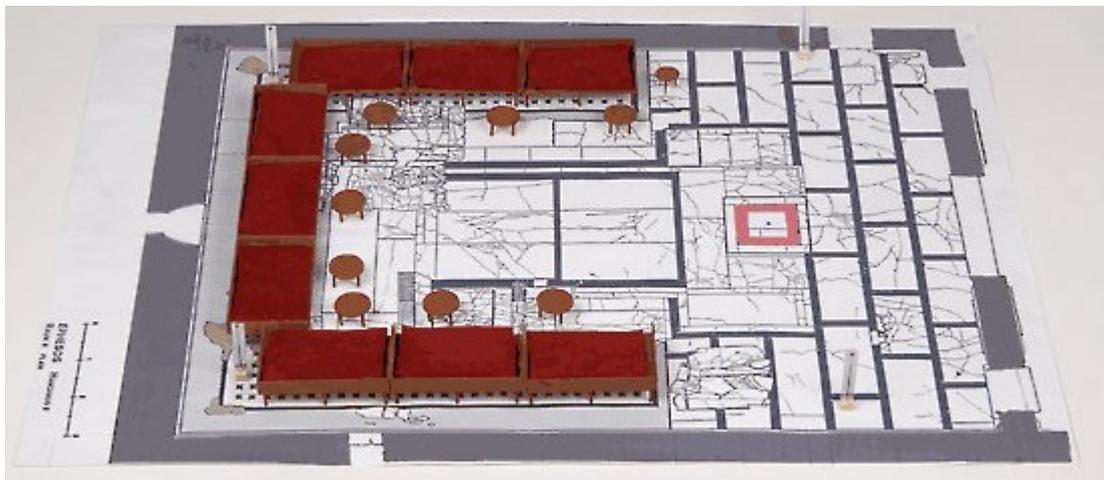
S) Corinth, Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: dining room L-M:28 from west (after Bookidis 1993)



T) *Podiensaal* in Pergamon, Photograph by Peter Pilhofer



U) Podiensaal in Pergamum, after last construction phase (drawing from Arachne.de)



V) Reconstruction of the furnished marble room of Hanghaus 2, Wohneinheit 6 in Ephesus (after Stökl 1999)

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Ich erkläre hiermit ehrenwörtlich, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit ohne unzulässige Hilfe Dritter und ohne Benutzung anderer als der angegebenen Hilfsmittel angefertigt habe; die aus fremden Quellen direkt oder indirekt übernommenen Gedanken sind als solche kenntlich gemacht.

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