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# Group Survival in the Ancient Mediterranean

*Rethinking Material Conditions in the  
Landscape of Jews and Christians*

Richard Last and Philip A. Harland

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Portions of Chapter 6 overlap with a previous article by Harland, 'Fund-Raising and Group Values in the Associations', in William E. Arnal et al. (eds), *Scribal Practices and Social Structures among Jesus Adherents: Essays in Honour of John S. Kloppenborg*, BETL, 285 (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), pp. 465–82. We would like to thank Peeters Publishing for permission to reemploy some material from that article.

# Epigraphic and Papyrological Abbreviations

Epigraphic and papyrological abbreviations follow those listed on the 'Associations in the Greco-Roman World' website, under the tab 'How to use this site', available at: <http://www.philipharland.com/greco-roman-associations/?p=12/#abbrev>



# Introduction

This study asks a simple, yet largely unanswered, question regarding collective life in the Hellenistic and Roman eras: how did associations of various kinds, including gatherings devoted to the Israelite god, *survive* as groups? These diverse collectivities, positioned between the family and structures of the city, had no consistent flow of resources from official institutions. They possessed no blueprint for using funds effectively. Each association had to figure out how best to raise, manage and invest available resources in order to cover benefits and fulfil expectations of participants. Some associations could dissolve because they did not do this well. Rather than contemplating such issues, scholars tend to look past the question of group survival and to focus instead on what associations offered members. This has led to interesting findings concerning the benefits these groups offered. But in this study, we argue that the rush to understand why individuals joined associations results in significant blind spots with respect to how ancient associations of various types survived and functioned. In particular, this has often obscured things like differentiation in material circumstances from one group to the next and the central role of collective agency in group sustainability.

We engage in this social historical and comparative enterprise while spanning disciplines that examine groups in the ancient Mediterranean. Our commitment to studying associations without excluding groups devoted to the Israelite god has helped us to better understand both Judean (Jewish) and non-Judean associations. Advantages arise from exploring local, collective life from such a comparative perspective without concern for sometimes artificially drawn disciplinary boundaries. For informal associations, immigrant groups and guilds that dotted the social landscape of the ancient world provide a fresh vantage point on how associations devoted to the Israelite god, including Jesus followers, gained necessary resources to pursue their aims and to meet expectations of participants. Likewise, literature produced by Judeans (Jews) and Jesus adherents (Christians) can occasionally attest to circumstances and practices only hinted at in papyri or inscriptions. Rather than considering such collectivities in isolation, then, this study places gatherings of Judeans and Jesus adherents alongside others within wider social, cultural and economic milieux. However, we do not give a privileged position to these particular minority groups, which appear alongside many other groups in these pages and are only part of a puzzle we hope to solve.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On Judeans and Jesus followers as cultural minority groups, see Harland (2009).

The point of this work is not just to add to the growing body of scholarship on associations or on economic conditions, but rather to use these issues as an opportunity to approach ancient social history from a fresh angle. Our focus on nitty-gritty aspects of material interactions at the local level serves as a means to cut through ideological, mythological, legal and religion-encoded pictures of ancient social life, pictures evoked by scholars but also in some cases by our ancient subjects. Nothing like ostensibly humdrum matters of managing drachmas and parcelling out beer or wine to bring our lofty imaginations of social life back down to earth. From this vantage point, we demonstrate how to thoroughly diffuse into a larger world – rather than merely ‘contextualize’ – groups devoted to the Israelite god, including Jesus adherents. This helps to decentre and differentiate them in ways that do not play into their own hyperbolic, romanticized or otherwise partial rhetoric. We show how these groups, like other associations, were in many respects interwoven into the fabric of daily life in the ancient Mediterranean.

This book also illustrates complexities in generating historical reconstructions of group life. In the process, we provide one possible model for how to deal with inscriptional, papyrological, archaeological and literary forms of evidence together in capturing daily lived realities and relationships. Our attention to material contingencies and seemingly trivial matters of everyday communal life both mitigates scholarly generalizations propagated about social constituencies and reveals a more colourful and varied social landscape.

Overall, we hope this study will resonate with scholars, students and others interested in social, cultural and economic history in the ancient Mediterranean, as we range across a variety of fields that are too often kept separate. Our focus is on Greek-speaking areas of the eastern Mediterranean from the third century BCE to the third century CE, particularly in Greece, Turkey (Asia Minor) and Egypt, although we also have things to say about associations in other regions as well.

## Progression

A brief clarification of the progression of our argument is in order. Beginning with the question of what socioeconomic levels of the population were most represented within many associations, we challenge recent scholarly proposals that those of middling wealth predominated while also rejecting the older view that only the most poor were highly represented (Chapter 1). We argue here that participation within associations was open to many people between the level of subsistence (those living with a minimum level of food, shelter and clothing) and the wealthier segments of the non-elite population in cities and villages. Of course, each group might differ from another, but there are some generalizations that can be made regarding overall trends. We then go on to argue that the survival of associations had less to do with socioeconomic status and more to do with how well groups both adapted to available material means and managed resources, with three scenarios arising from these circumstances: decline, survival and success (Chapter 2).

This sets the stage for considering material circumstances of associations at the point of foundation (Chapter 3). Challenging common scholarly assumptions, we

emphasize the critical importance of collective agency and social interaction in the formation of many such groups more so than individual wealthy founders. And this focus on group cohesion and collective action forms the basis for many other points we establish in subsequent chapters (especially Chapters 6, 7 and 8). The book as a whole proposes that this collective element is the key to understanding group survival in many cases.

A few foundation narratives that have survived emphasize the inevitability of success, which has sometimes misled scholars. Still, a careful reading of some origin narratives reveals hints of financial struggles that many associations would likely have faced from the outset. The moment of establishment was crucial for many groups as it set the stage for sustainability or precarity. Consideration of expenses at start-up then segues into our survey of a range of communal costs faced by groups as they continued beyond the first days and months. These costs included things like arranging a meeting place, honouring local notables and covering the costs of honouring the gods and feasting with friends (Chapter 4).

The question of how associations of various kinds acquired necessary resources for survival then occupies us in several chapters. While contributions from outsiders could be more or less important depending on the group in question, internal sources of income were essential to the sustainability of the majority of groups (Chapter 5). Beyond regular contributions and fines paid by participants, special communal collections were essential in many situations (Chapter 6). Expanding out from a case study of Delos island, we show that communal fund-raising both expressed and reinforced group cohesion in relation to shared aims. Principal among these collective aims for many groups was the maintenance of ancestral customs for deities, who were thought to protect the group and ensure its success. But a concern for economic efficiency is also notable in some instances involving guilds, as with the fishermen at Ephesos.

Both the aims and procedures of fund-raising in associations find counterparts in the practices of at least some gatherings of Judeans and Jesus adherents (Chapter 7). Before its destruction in 70 CE, communal collections in support of the temple in Jerusalem were an important factor in how Judean gatherings, like other associations based on ethnicity, maintained contacts with the homeland and its ancestral customs while expressing a sense of belonging together with others from the same geographical origin. While Paul's collection for the 'poor' in Jerusalem may have owed something to the Israelite practice of regularly sending funds to the homeland, it had a particular purpose for Paul. He sought to ameliorate tensions between his Greek-speaking and primarily non-Judean assemblies and the Judean leadership of the Jesus movement in the homeland. Some of the procedures his assemblies instituted make better sense within the framework of mechanisms within other associations. For many groups, it seems that collective action in raising resources served to express participants' sense of commitment to the group, reinforcing cohesion and ensuring the continuation of customs in honour of the group's patron deity.

Another important sign, and contributing cause, of group cohesion and, therefore, survival were practices related to mutual support (Chapter 8). While some scholars in Jewish Studies and Christian Origins tend to stress the prime importance of mutual aid

among Judeans and Jesus devotees, framing this in culturally specific terms as ‘charity’ or ‘almsgiving’, the practical ways in which members in other associations assisted one another has not been given sufficient attention. There is considerable evidence from Egypt and elsewhere that individual members and the collective as a whole assisted other participants in tough situations and by various means, including material help at crucial moments in life and at death.

## Scholarly context

While we will delve into specific scholarship at relevant points in this study, we need to briefly situate the present work on group survival in the broad sweep of scholarship. Scholarly work in fields which we cover tends either to neglect the subject of group survival or to underestimate the evidence for material conditions that is available, and it is important to ask why. Jonathan Perry, for instance, states that one ‘remarkable, and often-noted, feature of [association] inscriptions . . . is how little economic detail is contained in them.’<sup>2</sup> On closer examination, however, much more is to be gained by carefully evaluating material circumstances of associations from different angles.

Interest in ancient associations first arose in earnest in the mid- to late nineteenth century, at a time when voluntary organizations were on the rise within European and Western societies.<sup>3</sup> Certain scholars, such as Franz Poland (1909), did give considerable attention to the financial basis of Greek associations and even contemplated financial failure due to lack of resources, but few other scholars followed through on these reflections.<sup>4</sup> Instead, much scholarly attention since the pioneering work of Theodor Mommsen (1843) was on the *legal standing* of existing associations within the Roman empire.<sup>5</sup> Mommsen and Jean-Pierre Waltzing (1895–1900) and those who follow them were at least indirectly concerned with the economic status of members, but primarily in order to characterize associations as ‘associations of the poor’ (*collegia tenuiorum*) or ‘funerary associations’ (*collegia funeraticia*), categories that have since proven problematic.<sup>6</sup> This was due, in large part, to a focus on a particular interpretation of a passage in the sixth-century legal collection known as the *Digest* (47.22.1) and on a Roman senatorial decree cited by groups such as the one at Lanuvium (*CIL* XIV 2112). So the evidence for associations was often interpreted from the imperial perspective rather than from below – that is, from the perspective of participants in such associations as reflected in inscriptions.<sup>7</sup> These scholars argued that Roman authorities attempted to stifle the formation of groups generally but allowed the poor specifically

<sup>2</sup> Perry (2011: 503).

<sup>3</sup> For the historiographical context of these early works, see Perry (2006).

<sup>4</sup> Poland (1909: 453–98, especially 495, 498).

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Mommsen (1843), Radin (1910), Carolsfeld (1969 [1933]), De Robertis (1938, 1955, 1971). See the similar observations of Ausbüttel (1982: 11–15).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Schiess (1888). For a detailed historiographical look at Mommsen’s work in this period, see Perry (2006: 23–60).

<sup>7</sup> An exception to this is Liebenam’s work (1890), which was expressly concerned with the perspective of the lower classes to some degree.

to form associations so long as this was aimed at 'religious' purposes and at addressing the economic deprivation that such individual members faced.<sup>8</sup> In particular, from this scholarly perspective, the main purpose of such groups was to offer burial to the most poor who could not otherwise afford it. So there was a focus on the dire economic circumstances of individual members that joined these associations. But little attention was given to the question of how groups maintained themselves materially, or to potential socioeconomic diversity from one group to the next or diversity in the composition of particular associations.

Beyond the focus on legal issues, few substantial studies of associations in the eastern Mediterranean appeared from the 1920s to the 1970s.<sup>9</sup> Then a new interest in social history began to emerge within various historically oriented disciplines, including ancient history and Christian origins. It is in the wake of contributions on 'social relations' by the likes of Ramsay MacMullen (1974) and Géza Alföldy (1985) and on associations in the West specifically by Frank M. Ausbüttel (1982) that scholars are increasingly turning their attention to social dimensions of associative life within ancient society.<sup>10</sup> MacMullen in particular emphasizes that a range of people gathered in guilds not to secure economic protection or leverage in labour disputes, but rather for the purpose of socializing, eating and drinking – with a thin 'religious' or 'funerary' veneer.<sup>11</sup> As Keith Hopkins (1983) puts it, 'perhaps commemoration of the dead was merely an excuse for a good party'.<sup>12</sup> Or, as MacMullen expresses it, 'if piety counted for much, conviviality counted for more'.<sup>13</sup> This is a welcomed turn to the social with a shift away from the supposed destitution of most members. But the emphasis on 'social' dimensions of group life – narrowly conceived – sometimes results in an imbalanced view of the various intertwined purposes that such groups served for their members, including the importance of honours for gods or goddesses.<sup>14</sup> Despite this turn to the social, however, material conditions or economic functions of the associations remained under-explored.

Beginning in the 1990s, the turn to social history did start to lead certain ancient historians to economic matters in important ways, a point we return to in Chapter 6. Particularly significant in this respect is Onno van Nijf's study of guilds in the Greek East, which was published in 1997. Since then, scholars such as Philip F. Venticinque, Matthew Gibbs and Koenraad Verboven have given considerable attention to occupational associations specifically, including their importance for economic relations and socioeconomic status issues.<sup>15</sup> Regionally focused studies also address the importance of associations for local economies, including contributions by Nicholas K.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Bendlin (2011: 232).

<sup>9</sup> Detailed studies such as Ferguson (1944) are an exception to this generalization. Cf. Tod (1932), Boak (1937), Schulz-Falkenthal (1965, 1966).

<sup>10</sup> For more on this, see Perry (2011: 499–515).

<sup>11</sup> MacMullen (1966: 173–8), *ibid.* (1974: 71–87).

<sup>12</sup> Hopkins (1983: 214). Also quoted in Perry (2011: 507). Cf. MacMullen (1974: 71–87, especially 19).

<sup>13</sup> MacMullen (1974: 77, 80). Cf. Nilsson (1957: 64, 147).

<sup>14</sup> See Harland (2013: 47–69) = *ibid.* (2003: 55–88).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Pleket (1983), *ibid.* (1984), van Nijf (1997: 11–23), *ibid.* (2002), Venticinque (2009: 11–16), *ibid.* (2010), Verboven (2011a, and the other essays in that journal issue).

Rauh on Delos and Vincent Gabrielsen on Rhodian societies.<sup>16</sup> Numerous works by Andrew Monson and by Venticinque delve into some socioeconomic dimensions of associations in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt as well.<sup>17</sup> Other studies look at how associations functioned to connect people to broader networks, particularly through patronage or benefaction, as in John Patterson's work on Italy, van Nijf's on the Greek East and Harland's on Asia Minor.<sup>18</sup> Yet group survival itself and the mechanics of how associations managed resources still remain sidelined in many respects. The sustainability of associations is still taken for granted as it was in earlier research that concentrated on legal questions. An exception to this is Jinyu Liu's very recent article which looks at scholarly efforts to employ sociological approaches concerning social capital and trust networks in the study of associations. In the process, she does begin to raise important questions regarding group survival along the lines of what we explore from different angles in this book.<sup>19</sup>

Gatherings devoted to the Israelite god or to both the Israelite god and Jesus are notably absent in most scholarship by classicists or ancient historians reviewed above.<sup>20</sup> As we will soon see, some scholars in Jewish Studies and Christian Origins, like Justin J. Meggitt, Judith Lieu and Pieter van der Horst, continue to discount the relevance of associations to the study of Judeans or Jesus followers altogether, apparently without looking at epigraphic and papyrological evidence for themselves (see Chapter 8). In particular, such scholars put an emphasis on groups of Judeans and Jesus adherents as unique from all others in their concern for members within the group in the form of 'charity' or mutual material aid, a view that we will soon deconstruct. Our own previous interdisciplinary research diverges by placing these groups located at similar levels of society alongside one another in order to better understand different groups and to illuminate the cultural, social and, now, economic landscape of the ancient Mediterranean.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, particularly since 1996, many other scholars of ancient Judean culture and Christian origins mentioned in footnote 22 and discussed in our previous works likewise recognize and, more importantly, demonstrate the value in comparison for understanding diverse social groupings, including those devoted to the Israelite god.<sup>22</sup> Associations as well as gatherings devoted to the Israelite god coexisted in the same social space between the household and the city and needed to find ways to finance themselves within that context. A study about how groups formed and

<sup>16</sup> Rauh (1993), Gabrielsen (1997), *ibid.* (2001).

<sup>17</sup> E.g. Monson (2006), Venticinque (2009, 2010).

<sup>18</sup> Patterson (1992, 1994), van Nijf (1997: 73–128), Harland (2013: 119–40). Cf. Terpstra (2013).

<sup>19</sup> Liu (2016).

<sup>20</sup> An exception would be an ancient historian who thinks that Judeans and Christians are 'something entirely different' (and other associations presumably 'the same' as one another) and who is concerned that any comparison will result in 'denying any special traits to' Judeans (Eckhardt, 2017a: 260; *ibid.*, 2016a: 662; cf. Gruen, 2016). On these misunderstandings of the nature and purpose of comparison, see Smith (1990).

<sup>21</sup> See Last and Harland entries in the Bibliography.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Kloppenborg and Wilson (1996), Richardson (1996), Harland (1999) later published as *ibid.* (2003) = *ibid.* (2013, 2nd edn), Runesson (2001), Ascough (2003), Harland (2009), Hanges (2012), Gillihan (2012), Harland (2014), Kotrosits (2015), Last (2016a).

survived in that social space is enriched by including in its purview gatherings that honoured the Israelite god or both the Israelite god and Jesus.

So rather than hesitating from the comparative enterprise as a few others have, we engage in comparison of contemporaneous and geographically proximate social formations in a sociologically minded way in order to find out what happens, find out what new things we might begin to notice that would have otherwise remained more obscure.<sup>23</sup> The heuristic value of comparison does not rest on our ancient subjects necessarily recognizing the precise sociological or other similarities that draw our attention as scholars and social historians, even though, in fact, certain ancient people do notice overlaps. Nor does analogical comparison amount to an identification of distinctive groups or the obliteration of variety. The historian's concern with specificity need not exclude sociologically informed explorations of other dimensions of ancient economic, social and cultural life. We can explore both the general and the specific. No association was exactly the same as any other. Each and every group was 'distinctive' or 'special' in some way, not just those that happened to devote themselves to the Israelite god, which were, in fact, diverse as well. But comparison of sociologically similar phenomena can still provide new vantage points on numerous distinctive groups. Sometimes a bird's eye view can provide new perspectives.

Despite scholarly advances in the area of comparison since 1996, seldom have economic or material issues been the focus. There are very recent exceptions in contributions by John M. G. Barclay, Bruce W. Longenecker and, more extensively, John S. Kloppenborg, where such issues begin to be addressed, although in an incipient and piecemeal fashion in some respects. So, for instance, Barclay raises the prospects of placing associations alongside groups of Judeans and Jesus followers precisely with respect to better understanding money matters, but space does not allow him to go beyond introducing the issue.<sup>24</sup> Engaging with recent studies by Steve Friesen and others on the socioeconomic level of Jesus adherents, Longenecker's extensive study of Paul and poverty gives some attention to economic dimensions of associative life more generally, and he sometimes looks at important inscriptions pertaining to associations.<sup>25</sup>

In several more detailed comparative studies, Kloppenborg discusses regular membership contributions and rotating funding arrangements for communal meals; he considers attendance and absenteeism as they relate to financing such groups; and he delves into financial mechanisms within associations to shed light on Paul's collection, topics that occupy us in more detail in this study.<sup>26</sup> In this way, work by Kloppenborg and others is beginning to show how inclusion of material from Jesus adherents in the study of associations can help raise new questions about associations and lead to advancements in our knowledge of group life.

Together with a survey article which Harland presented in 2012, Last's own previous book on the Corinthian assembly (a revision of his thesis of 2013) set the stage for the

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Smith (1982, 1990).

<sup>24</sup> Barclay (2006).

<sup>25</sup> Friesen (2004), Barclay (2004), Oakes (2004), Longenecker (2009a, 2010). Cf. Longenecker and Liebengood (2009).

<sup>26</sup> Kloppenborg (2016, on financing meals), *ibid.* (2013, on membership practices), *ibid.* (2017, on collection).

present study in its emphasis on financial matters and the socioeconomic status of membership in Pauline assemblies and associations.<sup>27</sup> That work highlights problems with neglecting economically modest associations, an issue that we explore in more depth now.

More will be said about scholarship on associations at key points as we progress. For now, this will suffice to show that, although some advancements have been made, a wide-ranging, comparative study of material conditions and group sustainability remains to be done.

Our current study is by no means an attempt to explain the ancient economy as a whole, then, but rather to look at material issues as they impact everyday group life and survival. Yet it is still important to say something about scholarly approaches to the ‘economy’ and ‘economics’ before we proceed. These are categories that our historical subjects in the ancient world would not necessarily recognize or separate out from other facets of life, as the compartmentalization of life into the ‘social’, ‘cultural’, ‘religious’, ‘economic’ and ‘political’ is a modern development. This is why Peter Oakes’ recent survey rightly emphasizes Karl Polanyi’s point that all ancient economies were ‘embedded economies.’<sup>28</sup> Focusing on the ancient context, T. F. Carney explains the scholarly concept of ‘economy’ as: ‘that complex of activities and institutions through which a society manages the production and allocating of goods and services, and organizes and maintains its workers ... “The economy” is not just an aggregate of individuals’ actions. Groups, and overall societal interests, are involved.’<sup>29</sup> This is helpful, and economists and economic historians sometimes pare this down, with ‘economics’ referring to the ‘study of the allocation of scarce resources’, and we adopt this economical explanation.<sup>30</sup>

In investigating the flow of scarce resources within particular societies or subgroups within societies, economists often distinguish between macroeconomics and microeconomics. Macroeconomics have to do with the overall structure and performance of the economy as a whole. So, for instance, scholars such as Walter Scheidel, Ian Morris, Richard Saller, Peter Temin and others explore the overall performance of the ancient Roman economy and attempt to make comparisons with other historical economies.<sup>31</sup> In this book, there are times when we need to draw on the findings of such macroeconomic studies: for instance, we employ Scheidel and Steve Friesen’s model of the Roman economy in order to understand the socioeconomic levels of people who belonged to associations (Chapter 1). One might also explore macroeconomic questions regarding the roles that guilds and associations may have played within the overall performance of the ancient economy, but that is not our focus here.

<sup>27</sup> Last (2016a). The 2012 presentation at the Society of New Testament Studies in Leuven, Belgium, was later published as Harland (2015), now translated by Benedikt Eckhardt into German as Harland (2018).

<sup>28</sup> Oakes (2009a: 11–12). Cf. Polanyi (1968).

<sup>29</sup> Carney (1975: 140).

<sup>30</sup> Oakes (2009a: 11–12). Cf. Burkett (2006: 1–16).

<sup>31</sup> Scheidel, Morris and Saller (2007), Scheidel (2012), Temin (2013).



Microeconomics concern the flow of produce and resources within markets at the local level among individuals, groups and organizations.<sup>32</sup> The so-called 'New Institutional Economics' approach often makes contributions in this area by focusing on the role of both formal and informal institutions in the functioning of the economy.<sup>33</sup> While this book does not attempt to engage in an analysis of either macroeconomics or microeconomics in a strict sense, it is true that our study would more readily feed into microeconomic questions. After all, we do focus on material issues and the flow of resources within unofficial groups at a local level and on socioeconomic interactions both among members and between members and outsiders.

While on the topic of economics, it should also be clarified that, despite valuable attempts at quantifying ancient economies (as in Alan Bowman and Andrew Wilson's volume), any study of ancient material conditions is faced with a dearth of data, and this restricts statistical analysis of economic relations, whether at the micro or macro levels.<sup>34</sup> So, although we do deal with numbers when we have them and we also draw on economic models concerned with quantification, we must still face the fact that any study in this area will need to be more qualitative than quantitative. There is a sense in which we are engaged more fully in social history than economic history specifically, although we would not draw sharp lines between the two. Besides, economic questions and the allocation of scarce resources specifically have been at the centre of social history itself since its inception as a subfield of History.<sup>35</sup>

## Defining associations

It is important to clarify what groups will and will not occupy us in this study. We use the term 'unofficial associations' as an etic, analytic and sociological category in reference to certain groupings located socially between the structures of the family and the official structures of the city or village in the eastern Mediterranean. By 'unofficial', we simply mean that such associations were not consistently sustained by resources from civic or imperial institutions and that their membership was not defined primarily in terms of citizenship or in terms of belonging within civic subdivisions. Unofficial associations in this scholarly sense were small, relatively informal and non-compulsory groups with memberships usually ranging between ten and fifty members, but some were larger. Such associations were collectivities whose members met together on a *regular basis* to socialize with one another and to honour both earthly and divine benefactors. These ongoing groups varied in the nature and extent of their organization, so there is no one model regarding leadership or other internal structures. The definition and nature of these groups and their activities have occupied us at length in

<sup>32</sup> Burkett (2006). Cf. Temin (2013: 95–192, regarding microeconomics of markets in the Roman empire).

<sup>33</sup> See the summary discussion by Verboven (2015).

<sup>34</sup> Bowman and Wilson (2009).

<sup>35</sup> Early works by Marxist social historians illustrate this point well: Hobsbawm (1959), Thompson (1964), Hill (1972).

previous studies, where you can read more about associations – and comparison of them – beyond the focus of the present study.<sup>36</sup> We also maintain a website devoted to collecting together and translating relevant ancient sources based on the definition here, where you can read and assess the ancient materials for yourself: <http://www.philipharland.com/greco-roman-associations>.

This category of the unofficial association is a modern scholarly or sociological one aimed at understanding important dimensions of ancient social, cultural and economic landscapes. Sometimes, though not always, groups that scholars have considered under the rubric of ‘associations’ or ‘guilds’ or ‘clubs’ happen to be recognized as analogous collectivities by people in the ancient context, whether participants or civic or imperial authorities.<sup>37</sup> So this etic (outsider or scholarly) category has significant overlaps with ancient, emic (insider) categorizations, even though the value of comparative study does not necessarily depend on ancient observers consistently categorizing groups in a particular way. There are a variety of ancient terms for ‘groups’ that are enveloped within this category, with the more common ones being Greek terms like *koinon*, *synodos*, *thiasos*, *synagōgē*, *politeuma* and *synergasia*, and Latin ones like *collegium* and *corpus*.

Our previous research shows that associations in this sense served a similar set of social and cultural purposes.<sup>38</sup> So it is problematic to categorize them based on some ostensible primary purpose, as some typologies do in speaking of (1) burial associations, (2) religious associations and (3) occupational associations. Rather, it is more appropriate and productive to consider associations in terms of the ancient social networks that help to explain their existence. For decades, sociologists have recognized the importance of pre-existing social ties for understanding the formation and expansion of social groups of various kinds in the modern context, and so it is no surprise that ancient groups would reflect similar social processes.<sup>39</sup> The unofficial groups discussed in this study drew participants from intersecting webs of connections associated with (1) the household, (2) the neighbourhood, (3) the workplace, (4) the sanctuary or temple and (5) common geographical origins or shared ethnic identifications. Groups could, of course, draw membership from several of these overlapping networks, but often a certain set of connections seems more prevalent than others as a source of participants.

Our definition and approach here seeks to set aside certain scholarly approaches of the past, some of which Vaia Touna recently reiterates and critiques.<sup>40</sup> Many of the groups included under this rubric of unofficial associations were in some sense what modern observers working with modern categories might be tempted to label ‘religious’

<sup>36</sup> See, especially, the bibliographies in Last (2013, 2016b and 2016a), Harland (2003) = *ibid.* (2013), *ibid.* (2009, 2014).

<sup>37</sup> The collection of legal perspectives regarding *collegia* and similar collected in the *Digest* (see *AGRW* 43–54) seem to presume the authorities’ development of a broader category under which many types of groups were gathered.

<sup>38</sup> Harland (2013: 45–70) = *ibid.* (2003: 55–88).

<sup>39</sup> Lofland and Stark (1965), Gerlach and Hine (1970), Stark and Bainbridge (1985: 307–24), Welch (1981), Cavendish, Welch and Legee (1998).

<sup>40</sup> Touna (2017).

or 'cultic'. Yet it is problematic to speak of particular groups as 'religious associations' and others as something else (implied 'secular') simply because patron deities or rituals happen to be mentioned in one inscription or document but not in another.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, research since the 2000s within the disciplines of Cultural Studies and Religious Studies (which has yet to fully impact study of the ancient Mediterranean, unfortunately) show how tied to modernity the concept of 'religion' is. Such studies underline how the categories and discourses of 'religion' and the 'religious' (expressly or implicitly juxtaposed with the 'secular') are themselves characteristic of cultural developments since the early modern period, particularly in the wake of the so-called Enlightenment in the 1700s and of nineteenth century colonialism.<sup>42</sup> Our ancient subjects, on the other hand, had no category approaching what a modern means by 'religion', and employment of this particular modern concept can, more often than not, lead us further away from understanding human behaviours in ancient societies, in our view. In fact, the tendency to make a hard distinction between 'religious' associations and other (implied 'secular' or non-religious) associations seems to underlie some objections (discussed earlier) to comparative study. In this book, we therefore choose not to employ the category of 'religion' and the 'religious', since many other less problematic and more appropriate modern descriptive options are available to the scholar interested in explaining individual and group practices and behaviours.<sup>43</sup> There is no need to defend *not* employing a particular modern scholarly category, even if there is a strong scholarly tradition that continues to result in its rampant use with respect to the ancient context in the face of problems (sometimes, although not always, acknowledged) with the category.<sup>44</sup> Employing other carefully chosen scholarly categories may provide a new vantage point on the evidence rather than reproducing anachronisms or missing important dimensions of social or cultural life because of an attachment to particular discourses. The broader concept of 'culture' is itself another modern scholarly category, but one with far less problematic baggage and with continued value in the study of various historical periods, in our view, as William H. Sewell and others also show.<sup>45</sup>

While there are certain affinities between our definition of associations here and the quite broad concept of 'voluntary associations' as it is used in modern studies in sociology and anthropology and in some previous studies of ancient associations,

<sup>41</sup> On scholarly discourses surrounding philosophical groups as 'secular' schools and not 'religious' societies, now see Harland (2019).

<sup>42</sup> Asad (2003), Jakobsen and Pellegrini (2008), Arnal and McCutcheon (2013), Nongbri (2013).

<sup>43</sup> This was also Harland's approach in *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians* (2009).

<sup>44</sup> The frequent employment of the notion of 'embedded religion' is an example of an attempt to recognise problems while still employing the category in the ancient context, for instance (e.g. as in the otherwise helpful book by Beard, North and Price, 1998; see Nongbri, 2008). Unfortunately, many works by Jörg Rüpke, while valuable in giving attention to social dimensions of life in the Roman empire, take the category of 'religion' as self-evident, do not actively engage theoretical issues surrounding use of the category, and seem unaware of recent work within the disciplines of Religious Studies and Cultural Studies regarding the modern origins of the concept. E.g. Rüpke (2007, 2014, 2016), works that are nonetheless helpful in some other respects.

<sup>45</sup> On 'culture' as a useful category in the study of history, see Sewell (1997, 1999) and Bonnell and Hunt (1999).

certain distinctions are important to note.<sup>46</sup> In particular, we need to qualify the ‘voluntary’ or ‘elective’ nature of the groups under examination in this study. There is some truth in the statement that, for many associations in antiquity, people might join or leave of their own volition; still, there were certain factors at work in limiting the ‘voluntary’ nature of participation in associations of particular types, in part because of the social networks that supplied membership. Does it make much sense to speak of a purple-dyer *voluntarily* joining with other purple-dyers, or to imagine that a Judean, Idumean or Phoenician could easily have nothing to do with the local group formed around that common sense of ethnicity, or to assume that an enslaved person within an extended household had a choice in whether she belonged to a group that met within the enslaver’s home? Nonetheless, the groups we are most interested in here were certainly less *involuntary* than the more official civic subdivisions at Athens, or age-based educational organizations of the gymnasia, for instance.

The commonly employed categories of ‘private’ (or related concepts of ‘individualistic’ or ‘personal religion’) vs ‘public’ have often been misleading in the study of social life in the ancient Mediterranean, and these will be avoided in this study of groups that have traditionally been categorized as ‘private.’<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, the unofficial associations that occupy us in this study should be distinguished from other collectivities that, for instance, were consistently and substantially supported by village or civic institutions (e.g. the *polis*, with its Council and People) or imperial authorities. It should be noted that these official civic or imperial frameworks are what certain recent scholars do mean when they employ the term ‘public’ in contrast to ‘private.’ Certain groups that began as unofficial associations could, over time, come to be more fully involved in civic-run activities or come to be more or less financially supported by civic institutions, and it is not always easy to distinguish between groups that were transitioning in this way.

Our definition of unofficial associations consciously distinguishes these rather informal groups from official institutions or subdivisions of cities and provinces (e.g. demes, civic tribes, regional or provincial leagues), from boards of civic functionaries, from boards of priests or priestesses connected with temples and from age-based educational organizations connected with the gymnasia (e.g. boys, youths, young men, elders). It is true that these more official collectivities may have sometimes served similar purposes for their participants as unofficial associations did for theirs. Nicholas F. Jones’ study of ‘public organization’ in southern Greece during the classical era, in which he speaks of *official* civic subdivisions (e.g. demes and phratries) in terms of ‘associations’, demonstrates this point.<sup>48</sup> The present study is not focused on these more official groups and organizations, despite comparable dimensions of some of their

<sup>46</sup> On voluntary associations, see Mishnun (1950), Little (1957), Geertz (1962), Anderson (1971), Kerri (1976), Thomson (1980), Krysan and d’Antonio (1992), Moya (2005). A recent resurgence in the study of ancient groups since the mid-1990s began by using the term ‘voluntary associations’ without much reflection. Cf. Kloppenborg and Wilson (1996), Ascough (1998).

<sup>47</sup> See Harland (2013: 71–94) = *ibid.* (2003: 90–7). Cf. Ustinova (2005). Benedikt Eckhardt (e.g. Eckhardt, 2016b, 2017b, 2018) continues to employ the terminology of ‘private’ associations without much explanation, although I suspect that by this he simply means not ‘state’ run or financed. Similarly, see Gabrielsen and Thomsen (2015).

<sup>48</sup> Jones (1987).

activities. Now that we have a sense of the sorts of groups under investigation, we can turn to material circumstances of associations in the ancient world. For those interested in reading the ancient sources for themselves, which we would encourage, a final note is in order.

### A note on reading ancient sources on the AGRW website and on course usage

The vast majority of ancient sources discussed in this book are now readily available in English translation in the sourcebook *Associations in the Greco-Roman World* (AGRW, Baylor University Press),<sup>49</sup> in the multi-volume and multilingual scholarly work *Greco-Roman Associations* (GRA, De Gruyter),<sup>50</sup> and, even more comprehensively in terms of coverage but not detail, on the 'Associations in the Greco-Roman World' website at: <http://www.philipharland.com/greco-roman-associations/>.

We hope that readers will see this as an opportunity to read the sources for themselves and that professors and students will integrate this book within courses as they read, analyse and discuss the ancient sources together and test proposals made in this book or in other scholarship. Readers will easily find an inscription or papyrus on the website by using the site's search box to type (in quotation marks) the number using the abbreviated form that is cited in this book, e.g.: 'AGRW 231', 'GRA II 121', 'IEph 20', 'PTebt I 118'. The book *Associations, Synagogues and Congregations* (by Harland), which also contains embedded links to sources on the website, is also freely available for download in a second, electronic edition of 2013 at: [http://philipharland.com/publications/Harland 2013 Associations-Synagogues-Congregations.pdf](http://philipharland.com/publications/Harland%202013%20Associations-Synagogues-Congregations.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> Ascough, Harland and Kloppenborg (2012).

<sup>50</sup> Kloppenborg and Ascough (2011) (GRA I), Harland (2014) (GRA II), Kloppenborg (2019) (GRA III).

## Mutual Assistance and Group Cohesion

*We will stand by the man among us who is involved in an unjust legal dispute . . .*<sup>1</sup>

*PCairo II 30605*

### Introduction

Early on, Theodor Mommsen (1843) claimed that associations (*collegia*) served an important function in offering material aid to members, particularly, although not solely, by covering the expense of burial. ‘The treasuries of the guilds,’ Mommsen states, ‘were designed to furnish help to the associates who had need of assistance; they were the ordinary refuges of the orphan and poor, and it was to these treasuries that one left charitable legacies.’<sup>2</sup> More influential than this somewhat Christianizing approach to associations (e.g. the reference to orphans), however, were scholars who strongly challenged the ‘charitable’ function of ‘pagan’ associations. Usually, modern moral or theological investments played a role in such challenges as well: ‘Roman guilds had organized to secure to their members mutual assurance of a decent funeral, but they did not aid them in the needs or reverses of life.’ Furthermore, ‘*they did not even practice purely human benevolence*’.<sup>3</sup> Writing in 1895, Jean-Pierre Waltzing draws a stark contrast between a superior form of ‘charity’, which he finds solely among early Christians, and the insignificant support provided to members of other groups: ‘Christianity had not given the world a superior conception of charity, a charity which not only inspires in men pity for their unfortunate brothers, but obliges them to offer effective aid and to give, themselves, without reserve.’<sup>4</sup> In other words, participants in most associations did not ‘stand by’ their fellow members in times of trouble or need – to refer to a contrary statement in a regulation we quoted at the outset of this chapter. The spread of the Jesus movement through the lower classes, Waltzing suggests, promised the development of mutual aid societies informed by the ‘Christian spirit’.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Translation adapted from Monson (2006: 236).

<sup>2</sup> Mommsen (1843: 91), as cited by Waltzing (1895: 348), an English translation of Waltzing (1895–1900: 1.300–21).

<sup>3</sup> Waltzing (1895: 362, emphasis added).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 348. Cf. Hatch (1881: 35–6): ‘Other associations were charitable; but whereas in them charity was an accident, in the Christian associations it was of the essence.’ On ‘charity’ and Waltzing’s social and political context, see Perry (2006: 85–8).

<sup>5</sup> Waltzing (1895, overall). See Perry (2006: 87).

More than one hundred years later, Waltzing's sentiments (more so than Mommsen's) continue to echo within Classical Studies, Ancient History, Jewish Studies, and Christian Origins scholarship, where it is still not unusual to find an oversimplified contrast between 'pagan' associations and groups devoted to the Israelite god on the subject of mutual support or 'charity'. Justin Meggitt, Judith Lieu and Pieter van der Horst, for instance, sound a lot like Waltzing when they comment on 'pagan' groups and, instead of considering evidence, dismiss these other associations as irrelevant to the study of economic practices and reciprocal aid among Judeans or Jesus adherents.<sup>6</sup> For Meggitt, only groups devoted to Jesus, and not other associations, adopted 'mutualism as a survival strategy'. Meggitt includes the collection by assemblies associated with Paul as a prime example of such mutualism.<sup>7</sup> Despite the difficulties here, it is notable that Meggitt, unlike others such as Bruce Longenecker, gives particular attention to economic interchanges among the lower strata rather than heavily emphasizing wealthier benefactors within groups devoted to Jesus.<sup>8</sup> But the problematic contrast with other associations – without actually investigating the evidence – remains.

Closely related to these tendencies, it is quite common to encounter groups devoted to Jesus – but not other associations – portrayed as tightly knit, cohesive communities of 'brothers' and 'sisters' in a fictive family, whose extensive engagement in mutual aid was central and *unique*. A study of familial terminology within associations shows some of the fault lines in this scholarly trajectory, but so does attention to mutual aid.<sup>9</sup> Longenecker's recent study on treatment of 'the poor' is more nuanced than Waltzing and others in offering qualifications.<sup>10</sup> Yet Longenecker still employs Christian language of 'charity' (primarily in terms of wealthier members assisting those of lower economic status) and tends to posit a lack of 'charitable initiatives' in the 'pagan' world.

The other side of the coin is that some of the scholars who neglect evidence of associations tend to take certain moral exhortations or apologetic claims in literature produced by devotees of the Israelite god (including Jesus adherents) at face value.<sup>11</sup> Sometimes, scholars consider such rhetoric as representative of day-to-day social realities, rather than carefully considering rhetorical settings and functions.

While recent studies of attitudes towards wealth and poverty among Jesus adherents do briefly mention associations or at least do seek to place such attitudes within broader 'Greco-Roman' or Judean cultural contexts, no careful comparative study of mutual material assistance in unofficial group settings in the eastern Mediterranean has been done.<sup>12</sup> So any scholarly generalizations about what 'pagan' groups or associations

<sup>6</sup> Meggitt (1998: 91–2, 170–3), Lieu (2004: 164–9), van der Horst (2016: 119).

<sup>7</sup> Meggitt (1998: 157 and 157–61 generally).

<sup>8</sup> Now see Schellenberg (2018).

<sup>9</sup> On this problem, see Harland (2009: 61–96) = *ibid.* (2005b).

<sup>10</sup> Longenecker (2010: 68–70, 98–9).

<sup>11</sup> For instance, Lieu cites Aristides' *Apology* 15.7–9 (discussed towards the end of our chapter) as though Aristides offers a descriptive statement of social behaviours of mutual support among Jesus adherents rather than a defensive one. This seems contrary to Lieu's own warnings just a few pages later against taking such literary sources at their word. Lieu (2004: 165, 168).

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Holman (2008), Longenecker and Liebgood (2009), Longenecker (2010: 68–70, 98–9), Rhee (2012).

supposedly did would be premature, to say the least. Some works by ancient historians do begin to touch on such matters, including Marie-François Baslez's brief article about 'mutual aid' in associations of Attica and Andrew Monson's, Philip F. Venticinque's and Matthew Gibbs' insightful studies on what Egyptian associations offered their participants.<sup>13</sup>

More than a century after Waltzing, we are in a better position to reconsider mutual material support among members with careful reference to papyri and inscriptions from places like Egypt, Asia Minor and Greece. Few scholars of Christian origins, Jewish Studies or Ancient History today have made themselves familiar with this looming evidence. And so it is time to reassess the issue of mutual aid among participants in associations based on analysis of this evidence. Simultaneously, we need to carefully avoid modern theological or moral judgements that often stand behind discussions about concepts such as 'brotherly love', 'charity' and 'almsgiving', value-loaded Jewish or Christian insider terms. Such terms need to be set aside as unhelpful, at least as analytical or scholarly categories. Scholars' employment of such terms tends to load the deck in favour of the 'uniqueness' of Judeans or Jesus adherents from the outset, when the social historian is better off not loading the deck at all. Instead, here we employ the intentionally neutral terms 'mutual aid', 'mutual assistance' and 'socioeconomic assistance' as synonyms to refer to evidence of *actual practices* or *behaviours* that involve one participant in a group – or a group as a whole – helping another participant in some material way.

There are indications that mutual socioeconomic assistance in this sense was an important principle for at least a substantial portion of associations in the eastern Mediterranean beyond gatherings devoted to the Israelite god. While cultural precedents or ideological explanations (along with insider terminologies) for such behaviours could, of course, vary depending on a specific group's self-understanding or on local cultural norms, a similar range of evidence reflecting *actual practices* is found in a variety of groups. These practices both flow from, and help to explain, the significant ties that formed and held members together, contributing to group sustainability and longevity. We argue that, in this way, mutual aid is intimately related to group cohesion and survival.

## Defining social capital

In considering the implications of social bonding for access to material or non-material resources, we are treading on theoretical ground covered by the sociological concept of 'social capital'. This is a scholarly (etic) concept that pertains to the trust or 'goodwill that is engendered by the fabric of social relations and that can be mobilized to facilitate action.'<sup>14</sup> It has to do with 'actual and potential resources embedded within, available

<sup>13</sup> Baslez (2006), Monson (2006), Venticinque (2010), Gibbs (2011). Garnsey and Saller (1987: 156), sound more like Mommsen than Waltzing: 'Collegia . . . were essentially mutual aid societies formed to meet basic needs of their members.' Anneliese Parkin helpfully surveys Greek and Roman *elite* perspectives on begging and on giving to the poor, but this provides little insight into the view from below (Parkin, 2006). Cf. Hands (1968) and Bolkestein (1939).

<sup>14</sup> Adler and Kwon (2002: 17).



through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit.<sup>15</sup> Such resources are by no means limited to the material, however. Some studies of social capital focus attention on resources accessed by a group through external ties, also known as *bridging* forms of social capital. This is along the lines of what we have witnessed in interactions between an association and an external supporter. Other studies in this area emphasize internal, *bonding* forms of social capital.<sup>16</sup> With bonding forms, social capital primarily dwells within the close internal ties among members of a group, ties that hold members together as a cohesive whole and that foster the pursuit of collective goals.<sup>17</sup> It is primarily this latter, internal dimension of bonding that occupies us in this chapter and that dovetails well with our concern to understand and explain the survival of associations in the ancient Mediterranean.

### Internal benefactions as mutual support

In discussing benefaction, we have already seen that donors could be people from outside of the group. In these circumstances involving bridging forms of social capital, participants reached out into external networks in a way that afforded access to resources, sometimes material. Yet there were also internal benefactors, as when members helped to finance a group's activities. These provide another example of mutual aid as one member engages in behaviour that supports other participants or the group as a whole.

Members of associations could be very much aware that they were competing not only for resources from external supporters but also for voluntary contributions and assistance from fellow associates, as illustrated here by two instances from the Piraeus, port city of Athens, and one instance from Teos in Asia Minor. First, an association devoted to the 'Good goddess' at Athens praised a woman who, in her supervisory role, had contributed twice as much from her own funds than what was drawn from the common fund. This was done for the purpose of covering the cost of sacrifices and other services for the goddess: 'in order that there may be a rivalry among those in the assembly who want to be honour-loving, knowing that whoever displays love of honour will receive appropriate favours . . . it was resolved by the society-members to praise Bakchis' (*SEG* 56:203; third century BCE).<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, a man named Hermaios had served as treasurer (*tamias*) of a group of sacrificing associates of the Mother of the gods for several years leading up to 178 BCE (*GRA* I 35 = *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1327). The membership, which included Athenian citizens, voted to honour him, enumerating his many contributions to the well-being of the group. According to the inscription, not only had Hermaios paid from his own

<sup>15</sup> Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998: 243).

<sup>16</sup> On bonding and bridging forms, see Adler and Kwon (2002).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>18</sup> See Tsirigoti-Drakotou (2006). Now also see Eckhardt (2017c). However, his suggestion that this 'private' group became integrated into a 'civic cult' is less than secure.

resources for the customary sacrifices on some occasions, but he had also paid for a tomb for deceased members at a critical point when the common fund (*koinon*) was empty, ostensibly saving the group from financial ruin. Furthermore, he covered expenses for repairs to the meeting place and also organized for a special collection of contributions (an *eranos*). Particularly important for our point regarding these actions as mutual support – not only for the group as a whole but also for specific individual members with some need – is the language attested here and in other such inscriptions: ‘he has proved himself generous to the sacrificing associates *both collectively and individually* (*koinei . . . kai idiai ekastōi euchrēston auton*), putting himself at the disposal of each’ (lines 6–7).<sup>19</sup> A similar sentiment appears in honours for a priestess within an association at Koloe in Lydia, where Stratonike is commended for behaving ‘in an honour-loving manner towards both the collective (*koineion*) and each member individually during the gathering of the association’ (*ILydiaHM* 96).<sup>20</sup>

A third and final example of this type of mutual assistance comes from Teos in Ionia, on the western coast of Asia Minor. This is a decree that summarizes the lifelong contributions that a particular member, named Kraton son of Zotichos from Kalchedon, had given to his associates in a group devoted to Attalid royalty (the *Attalistsai*). The amounts of Kraton’s contributions are somewhat exceptional, but not his behaviours in supporting the association to which he belonged. Although numerous inscriptions mention Kraton, clarifying that he was a member of both the Ionian Dionysiac performers (as a flute-player) and the Attalists in the first half of the second century, it is the final decree of the Attalists after Kraton’s death (probably between 146 and 133 BCE) that is most pertinent here.<sup>21</sup> In the decree, the Attalists acknowledge Kraton’s service as priest and highlight his success in gaining the group favours and gifts from the Attalid king himself. The decree also refers to Kraton’s final arrangements (a ‘sacred regulation’) before his death, which had been sent to the association by the king himself. The arrangements clearly indicate Kraton was a very wealthy man by the time of his death. These final gifts to his associates included the dedication of a sanctuary for Attalos – an Attaleion – near the theatre (in either Pergamon or Teos), as well as another building near a royal residence.<sup>22</sup> It also entailed a massive endowment worth 10,500 Alexandrian drachmas. This was to produce interest that would pay for sacrifices and meetings. Beyond the money, Kraton supplied enslaved persons and equipment to

<sup>19</sup> On this notion of both collective and individual assistance, see also *AGRW* 16 = *GRA* I 11 (internal secretary of a society at the Piraeus); *OGIS* 737 = *SB* V 8929 (internal priest of Idumean soldiers at Memphis); *AGRW* 287 = *GRA* III 160 = *IDelta* I 446 (external benefactor of farmers at Psenamosis); *AGRW* 298 = *OGIS* 51 (external benefactor of performers at Ptolemais Hermiou); *AGRW* 306 = *IBerenike* 17 (external benefactor of Judeans); *AGRW* 305 = *IBerenike* 18 (external benefactor of Judeans); *AGRW* 181 = *GRA* I 134 = *IMilet* 939 (athlete / external benefactor of linen-weavers).

<sup>20</sup> See also Jones (2008).

<sup>21</sup> *GRA* II 141 = *CIG* 3069 = *OGIS* 326 (final decree); *CIG* 3071 (reverse of same monument with list of items); Boulay (2012: 269, no. 12; mention of Attalists with Kraton; c. 150 BCE); *CIG* 3070 = *OGIS* 325 (fragment of Kraton’s letter to performers; 153/152 BCE); *CIG* 3068 (Dionysiac performers’ honours, before 158 BCE). See comments and bibliography in *GRA* II 141. Cf. Stang (2007: 268–71), Le Guen (2007), Michels (2011).

<sup>22</sup> See Schwarzer (1999: 271–2).

assist the group in its sacrificial and feasting activities.<sup>23</sup> The inscription begins to trail off as the Attalos devotees' honours for their exceptional member, Kraton, are mentioned, but it is clear that a day was established in this participant's honour. The scale of these contributions suggests that we are dealing with a rather wealthy group, with plenty of resources to spare after this donation, if not before. But this is still a further case of a member contributing to the well-being of other members in the group.

So these sorts of behaviours on the part of a participant within an association could well be considered under the rubric of mutual material assistance in many ways: Bakchis, Hermaios and Kraton were helping their associates, both as a group and sometimes individually. Rather than dwell on numerous such cases of members as benefactors of their own group in this sense, this chapter turns instead to other neglected signs that participants within associations could count on material assistance from other members or from the collective as a whole.<sup>24</sup> For reasons that will become clear and may be familiar to you already, our most substantial evidence for such activities happens to come from papyri found in Egypt, particularly at Tebtynis. Nonetheless, there is substantial corroborating evidence from elsewhere.

### Egypt in the Hellenistic era

It is only in very dry climates that papyri survive, and it is on papyri – the impermanent paper-like material of the ancient world – that we are more likely to encounter regulations, loan contracts, letters and other daily transactions relating to economic exchanges. Like other parts of the Mediterranean, concrete *epigraphic* evidence for internal socioeconomic assistance – beyond burial – is scant in Egypt. In fact, such *monumental* evidence regarding mutual aid in associations may even be non-existent for Egypt, as far as we have been able to determine in surveying the inscriptions. This should caution scholars who tend to be over-confident that a lack of widespread evidence (epigraphic or otherwise) reflects a lack of social practice. Nevertheless, documents on Egyptian papyri do offer a fresh vantage point on certain social realities, including the significance of mutual aid for associations in places like the Fayum region, then called the lake district (nome) or district of Arsinoites.

It should be clarified that the majority of published Egyptian papyri (dating from the eighth century BCE to the eighth century CE) comes precisely from this Arsinoites district. This district supplies about 45 per cent of documents at our disposal: 17,519 out of 39,315 published papyri with an identifiable district as find-spot came from Arsinoites when Herbert Verreth produced his study (in August 2009).<sup>25</sup> Of locales in this district, the village of Tebtynis (2,407 papyri), in particular, comes second only to Philadelphia (2,575 papyri) in terms of the *quantity* of published evidence, with each

<sup>23</sup> Fragments on the reverse side list materials for banquets: carpets, linen elbow-cushions, tables, a jar, a jug, a cup, a tray for cups, a lamp, a stool of ebony, a shield and a spear (CIG 3071). See Rigsby (1996).

<sup>24</sup> For further examples, see *GRA* I 11, 13, 15, 24, 25, 32, 33, 35, 36, 39, 48, 73, 83.

<sup>25</sup> See Verreth (2009: 167–87). Cf. Kelly (2011: 20).

of these sites supplying about 6 per cent of all available Egyptian papyri. The Oxyrynchites district comes in a distant second, supplying us with 21 per cent of the total number of published papyri whose district of provenance is known. Next in line, the Hermopolites and Herakleopolites districts each have less than half of what the Oxyrynchites supplies. Not surprisingly, then, it is precisely from the two districts of Arsinoites and Oxyrhynchites that most evidence for mutual aid and loaning practices within associations derives. In light of these circumstances, the fact that this evidence for these practices comes from a limited number of sites should *not* be assumed to mean that such customs were rare or geographically limited. In fact, this more detailed papyrological evidence provides a new perspective on scattered, although significant, epigraphic material that is found elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean, even though regional variations in cultural and associative practices would certainly exist.<sup>26</sup>

Traditions of mutual assistance in Egyptian associations can be traced as far back as the third century BCE, during the Ptolemaic era. Rather than isolated rules, however, the idea of coming to help associates in difficult circumstances was often a guiding principle that informed numerous regulations and customs within associations in the district of Arsinoites, with most evidence coming from the village of Tebtynis. In fact, Monson's study of Demotic regulations draws on Charles Tilly's model of the 'trust network' to argue that these documents were an institutionalization of typical norms of mutuality in such a way that the association served as a more trusted group for its members in comparison with other local social networks.<sup>27</sup>

There is a sense in which these regulations embody principles of social capital in that rules regarding assistance encapsulate in written form the mutual expectations that participants in this small, cohesive social unit held. These expectations included access to material and non-material resources at critical moments in an individual's life and at death. The fact that such regulations were most often passed by vote of all members further underlines how group cohesiveness could facilitate adherents' access to valuable resources, further reinforcing bonds within the group.

There are at least eight somewhat well-preserved association regulations from Tebtynis in Demotic, a late phase of ancient Egyptian.<sup>28</sup> A distinction should be made between official boards of priests and other associations that did not consist entirely of priests but could include priests as members, as Monson clarifies.<sup>29</sup> The latter, more unofficial groups, are pertinent here. Membership in these associations usually ranged from fifteen to thirty persons. Five of the regulations for these associations date between 178 and 145 BCE and pertain to one particular association devoted to the crocodile god, Sobek or Souchos, also regarded as 'lord of Tebtynis'.<sup>30</sup> Three other

<sup>26</sup> On local cultures and associations, see Harland (2014).

<sup>27</sup> Monson (2006).

<sup>28</sup> See Cenival (1972: 46–81, 83–102, 215–36), Monson (2007b), Monson and Arlt (2010), Monson (2013).

<sup>29</sup> See Monson (2007b) and *ibid.* (2007a), challenging a previous view espoused by Cenival (1972). Cf. Monson and Arlt (2010: 118–19).

<sup>30</sup> Five regulations pertaining to one association: *PMilanVoglDemotic* inv. 77–8 (178 BCE); *PCairo* II 30606 = *AGRW* 299 (157 BCE); *PHamburgDemotic* 1 (151 BCE); *PCairo* II 31179 (147 BCE); *PCairo* II 30605 (145 BCE). On these five, see Monson (2007a: 183–7). There are also fragmentary regulations, such as *PStanfordGreenDemotic* 21 = Monson and Arlt (2010).

documents dating to 137 BCE deal with two different groups which were also devoted to this same local deity.<sup>31</sup> There is one quite fragmentary, earlier regulation dating around 250–210 BCE.<sup>32</sup>

Regarding members' treatment of one another, these regulations include negative rules that help to ensure that participants avoid harming one another or harming the unity of the group as a whole. So, for instance, there are prohibitions against insulting others (e.g. *PCairo* II 30606), against fighting with one another or with leaders (e.g. *PPrague*), against stealing from the group,<sup>33</sup> and against going to outside authorities to settle a dispute with an insider (e.g. *PCairo* II 30606). Similar negatively stated rules about members' treatment of one another are found in regulations from later periods and from other parts of the Mediterranean, including the well-known second-century rules of the Bacchic group at Athens and the association at Lanuvium.<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, there are three types of positive stipulations in the Demotic regulations that confirm mutual aid as a fundamental group norm. These show us how goodwill or trust arising from close social ties could be translated into concrete forms of assistance. In these cases, access to such social capital was encapsulated in rules. These three types of assistance are also attested in roughly contemporary Greek papyri from Tebtynis and elsewhere in Egypt, as we will see.

First of all, there are rules on supporting an associate in financial need when one encountered that person in a variety of contexts. One such rule from Tebtynis (dating to 145 BCE) reads as follows: 'The man among us who finds a man among us at the landing place or a similar place saying "Give to me because of my misfortune," and he does not give to him, his fine is 25 deben unless he swears before Sobek saying, "I was unable to give to him"' (*PCairo* II 30605, lines 22–4).<sup>35</sup> The reference to a landing place implies that the fellow member was on the road, as in *PCairo* II 31179 (147 BCE), where the phrase is 'on a road, a landing place, or the like, a boat or a canal'; but this call to offer material support is generalized with reference to similar situations.<sup>36</sup> A deben in weight was the equivalent of 20 drachmas or 5 staters.<sup>37</sup> In bronze coinage, 25 deben would be the equivalent of 500 bronze drachmas, which would be worth about 2.08 silver drachmas in this era (240:1 ratio using Reden's figures for the period 164 BCE–130 BCE). This amount is similar to, although less than, Roman-era fines within Tebtynis regulations such as the regulation of a guild of sheep- or cattle-raisers (?),

<sup>31</sup> *PCairo* II 30618 and 30619 (same group in both of these documents); *PPrague* = Erichsen (1959).

<sup>32</sup> *PTebtnisSuppl* 1578 = Monson (2013).

<sup>33</sup> E.g. Monson and Arlt (2010: 115).

<sup>34</sup> *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1368.73–96, 136–46 (164 CE); *CIL* XIV 2112.25–8 (136 CE). Cf. *SEG* 31:122, lines 5–8; *PLond* VII 2193; *PMich* V 243; Harland (2012: 80–2).

<sup>35</sup> Translation based on Monson (2006: 236), with adaptations arising from comparison with the German translation of Spiegelberg (1908: 23), and the French translation of Cenival (1972: 73–8, 222–5, at 73).

<sup>36</sup> See Monson and Arlt (2010: 119), on *PStanfordGreenDemotic* 21 and *PCairo* II 31179 (147 BCE), where the fine amounts are 10 and 15 deben, respectively. Also see *PCairo* II 30619. Thanks to John S. Kloppenborg for his thoughts on interpreting this passage in light of other Greek papyrological references to disembarkation. For the equivalent Greek term for a landing place (*hê ekbatēria*), see *PTebt* I 33, line 8 (112 BCE) and *PPetrie* III 39, column 2, line 10 (3rd century BCE, also from the Arsinoites).

<sup>37</sup> Maresch (1996: 34).

where the fine for failing to assist a member who was in trouble or for taking legal action against an associate was 8 silver drachmas (*AGRW* 300 = *GRA* III 206 = *PMich* V 243; see Chapter 5).

A second type of mutual aid is attested in numerous regulations that include a special rule for assisting someone who was in legal trouble, imprisoned or held captive. John Bauschatz's study of prisons in Ptolemaic Egypt argues that arrests were more common than previously believed and that imprisonment for debt (either debt to the government or to other individuals) remains most prevalent in the papyrological sources.<sup>38</sup> However, there were a number of other less noticed reasons for being in jail, including minor misdemeanors, theft, assault and disturbing the peace. A somewhat unusual case involves the carpet-weaver in Philadelphia, who somehow had his fellow worker imprisoned due to poor workmanship and less than honest means of weighing finished carpets (*PCairZen* III 59484; third century BCE). Such imprisonments tended to be short (usually days and rarely more than a month), and release would generally follow appearance before an official or payment of debts, if that was the issue. So the following instances where associations anticipate the possibility of imprisonment may well relate to debt, since there is a need for funds, but reasons for arrest are not specified in most cases.

A recurring phrase in regulations of associations was that, when a member was arrested, his fellows should 'stand by him'. For example: 'We will all stand by the man among us who is imprisoned unjustly, and will each give to him up to 50 deben with interest for his legal dispute until they . . . acquit him (?).'<sup>39</sup> Bauschatz documents many claimed cases of arbitrary or 'unjust' imprisonment in the papyrological record. Some sources do reveal improper behaviour on the part of officials who falsely detained people, but it is difficult to know when claims of 'injustice' by an imprisoned person were in some sense accurate.<sup>40</sup> Anyhow, as with the person in financial need, a member was to use his own funds – rather than the common fund – to help a fellow member in this particular association. The amount of 50 deben in bronze coinage would be the equivalent of 4.16 silver drachmas (at 240:1, assuming the date of 130 BCE is secure).

Yet there are variations on this concept of assisting those in legal trouble. Sometimes there is reference to the use of communal money (rather than an individual associate's funds), presumably drawn from the group's treasury, as in the rule cited at the beginning of our chapter: 'We will stand by the man among us who is involved in an unjust legal dispute and will give him the funds that the members of the association have agreed on in order to acquit him.'<sup>41</sup> Another regulation provides further details on the aim of this assistance: 'We will assist the man among us who will be implicated in an unjust legal case and we will give him membership contributions, which those of the association have agreed to give, in order that he is acquitted and the representative of the association

<sup>38</sup> Bauschatz (2007). Cf. Bertrand-Dagenbach (1999). For prisons in the Roman era, see Krause (1996) and Rapske (1994).

<sup>39</sup> *PPrague*, lines 25–6 (137 BCE) = Erichsen (1959) (translated by Monson, 2006: 236). Cf. *PCairo* II 30605, line 18 (145 BCE); *PCairo* II 30619, line 7 (137 BCE); Monson Arlt and (2010) = *PStanfordGreenDem.* 21.

<sup>40</sup> Bauschatz (2007: 9–11, 23–4).

<sup>41</sup> *PCairo* II 30605 (translated by adapted from Monson, 2006: 236).

will assist him and we will raise for him ten rations.<sup>42</sup> The implication here is that the group would financially assist the member until the case was cleared, a principle that is also stated in another regulation (*PCairo* II 30619, line 7, 137 BCE). The reference to providing rations means that participants would ensure that the imprisoned person received food while jailed. This idea of offering assistance to others and feeding those in prison could even extend to those who were imprisoned for a seemingly legitimate reason, in some cases (assuming that there is not a scribal error in the phrasing of another regulation): ‘The representative of the association will stand by the man among us who is *justly* imprisoned . . . we will provide for him (?) . . . ten rations.’<sup>43</sup>

For point of comparison with the above principles of mutual aid, it is worth quoting part of another regulation, not from Tebtynis but from Pisais, also in the Arsinoites district. This pertains to an association devoted to the god Horos and dates to 223 BCE. In that regulation, there is considerable detail regarding the need for assistance in cases of legal trouble or imprisonment, comparable to the Tebtynis regulations we have just discussed:

If one of us finds a member who is involved in a trial and evades his responsibilities to him and offers testimony against him, if the case is proved against him, his fine shall be 4 kite (= 8 drachmas). If one of us is unjustly arrested, without the appeal to the altar of . . . we will ensure that the representative of the ‘house’ levies a ration for him of food that he will receive every day of his imprisonment until the god pardons him (?). We will offer testimony in the trial – all of us – and we will appeal for him, up to the ten days. If we are able to obtain his release, we will obtain his release. If anyone of us is . . . ill (?) . . . or in prison or has taken refuge in the temple of the god, or in a place of supplication, or has been arrested as the object of a pledge during the period mentioned above, we will ensure that the representative of the ‘house’ comes to his assistance; and whoever decided against him will have decided against us.

*GRA* III 188 = *PLilleDemotic* 29, lines 14–17<sup>44</sup>

Overlapping with these first two types of socioeconomic support, five contemporary documents written in Greek confirm that members of guilds in the Ptolemaic period could access resources in the form of loans, whether interest-free or interest-bearing. One Greek papyrus from an unknown location preserves three receipts from individuals who had each received a monetary loan drawn ‘from the common funds’ (*apo tōn koinōn chrēmātōn*) of what was likely a guild or association to which they belonged.<sup>45</sup> These receipts, which date to either 182 or 158 BCE, say nothing about interest, which leaves open the possibility that these were, in fact, interest-free loans. In each case, the document is a statement by the debtor that he has received funds of a certain amount and that he agrees to repay within six months. A loan received by Menestheus is illustrative here:

<sup>42</sup> *PCairo* II 31179, lines 16–17 (147 BCE; translated by Monson and Arlt, 2010: 120, with adaptations).

<sup>43</sup> *PPrague* (137 BCE; translated by Monson, 2006: 236).

<sup>44</sup> Translated by Kloppenborg with adaptations, based on the French of Cenival (1972: 3–10).

<sup>45</sup> *GRA* III 286 = *PTexas* inv. 8 = Martinez and Williams (1997).

Menestheus son of Chares to Herakles, leader of the people (*dēmosiarchēs*, here an internal functionary), greetings. I agree that I have received from the common funds . . . *x* talents and five thousand . . . drachmas of copper, which I will repay you in the month Mesore of the twenty-third year and, if I do not repay, you may seize me without accountability in any way you see fit. Farewell. In the month of Phamenoth . . .<sup>46</sup>

The amounts of the other two monetary loans were 3,093 bronze drachmas (or more) for Asklepiades and 859 bronze drachmas and 3 obols for Xenikos. The ratio of bronze to silver drachmas is thought to have shifted from 60:1 before 180 BCE to 120:1 after that date, so Xenikos' loan would roughly be the equivalent of either 14 or 7 silver drachmas.

A fourth Greek document is most likely from Philadelphia in the Arsinoites district. This is a ledger of debts that had been drawn from the 'common funds' (*[e]pikoina chrēmata*; *PRyl* IV 589, especially lines 84–91; 180 BCE). These funds seem to belong to an association whose members engaged in at least some activities within a gymnasium, as the original editors argue based on the references to oil.<sup>47</sup> Several of the loans are described in terms of the debtors being outsiders (*xenous*, in lines 62–72). But the more substantial ones were made to adherents of the group, who were charged the customary (in Egypt) 24 per cent interest (lines 84–91).

Similar loaning practices are attested on Greek papyri elsewhere, including some from Oxyrhynchos. The clearest case, dating to 99 BCE, is apparently an instruction for the person to repay the loan: 'Let Demetrios repay the 53 talents and . . . *x* thousand drachmas of copper with interest to the lenders or to the . . . treasurer (?) . . . of the association (*tou koi[nou chrēmato]phylaki*)' (*AGRW* 304 = *GRA* III 248 = *PRyl* IV 586, lines 7–12; cf. line 24).<sup>48</sup> Here the interest rate on the loan is, once again, the Egyptian standard of 24 per cent per year. The fact that it is never specified which association was involved suggests that Demetrios was a member of the group; therefore, there was no need to name the corporate lender. Although interest is involved with some of these loans, the practice of lending communal funds at all can still be seen as a way of financially assisting those who belonged to the group. This gave participants in these internal social networks ready access to resources to which they might not otherwise have access and, potentially, in difficult circumstances.

Returning to regulations in Demotic, the third type of rule which embodies the principal of support here pertains to assistance by members at the death of a member: 'We will mourn for the man among us who dies during the period mentioned above, we will give 5 deben (= 100 drachmas) per person for his burial, we will raise ten rations of grief . . . for his household (?) . . ., and we will invite his son, father, or father-in-law to drink with us in order to sooth his heart.'<sup>49</sup> The expectation that participants

<sup>46</sup> Translation by Martinez and Williams (1997).

<sup>47</sup> Turner and Neugebauer (1949: 81–2). Cf. van Minnen (1987: 65–6).

<sup>48</sup> See also *PGrenf* I 31 from Pathyris (101–100 BCE). This is a loan contract, in which Herianoupis and the members of a society (*synthiasitai*) lend money to a man named Nechoutes, who may or may not be a member. In that case, the loan was to be paid in kind (produce, likely barley).

<sup>49</sup> *PPrague* (137 BCE; translated by Monson, 2006: 229, with adaptations). Cf. *PCairo* II 30605.



should assist another member or a member's family in times of mourning also extended to the death of family members.<sup>50</sup> The amount specified here as a contribution for a member's funeral (100 bronze drachmas = 0.416 silver drachmas) is significantly less than the amount that each participant in the same group was expected to bring forward to assist someone in legal troubles (1,000 bronze drachmas = 4.16 silver drachmas). But the latter amount was to be taken as a loan and would, in theory, be repaid. In Chapter 2, we have already encountered two petitions to Ptolemaic authorities (written in Greek) that confirm that associations of various types – in these cases, 'societies' (*thiasoi*) – played a role in helping to pay for the funeral of members in this same era, but that in some rare cases a group might fail to fulfil its obligations.

### Egypt in the Roman era

For the Roman imperial period, two out of three association regulations that have been found at Tebtynis (*PMich V 243–5*) illustrate the continuation of mutual assistance as an underlying principle of group life.<sup>51</sup> These documents show how membership in such groups provided access to resources, both material and non-material. One of the main reasons why the best preserved association contracts happen to come from this one particular village and not from various locales is that these and three other incomplete drafts of contracts by associates (*PMich V 246–8*) come from the official archive of the Tebtynis writing office (*grapheion*). And this Tebtynis archive is, at present, apparently the only substantially preserved village records office archive from all of Egypt, preserving a total of 192 documents from the period 20 BCE–56 CE.<sup>52</sup> The fact that these archived regulations were in official storage means that there was a higher likelihood that they would be preserved together. So these documents are just the tip of the iceberg, it seems. We should not jump to the conclusion that these were anomalies or regionally peculiar in terms of the customs they reflect. Furthermore, even though they were stored in the records office, it is important to emphasize that these Tebtynis regulations were not imposed by some authority. Rather, they were the result of a vote of all members in the association, who would, therefore, be directly invested in maintaining prescriptions and proscriptions.

All three types of social assistance found in the Demotic regulations and in contemporary Greek documents of the Ptolemaic era continue to be attested within two of the three surviving Tebtynis regulations from the reign of Tiberius (14–37 CE; *PMich V 243–5* = *AGRW 300–3*). Two of the contracts end with a series of statements regarding the third main type of mutual aid: the need for each member to participate in, or financially contribute towards, funerary rites when a member passed away. This is a form of mutual support that is very well attested across the ancient Mediterranean.

<sup>50</sup> E.g. *PCairo 30606* = *AGRW 299* = *GRA II 191* (158 BCE).

<sup>51</sup> On these associations at Tebtynis, see also Boak (1937: 217–18), Préaux (1948), Schnöckel (2006 [1956]), Venticinque (2010: 282–4), Alston (2002: 207–12).

<sup>52</sup> We are grateful to Ben Kelly, York University, who clarified important information regarding patterns of survival with respect to the papyri (cf. Kelly, 2011: 43–4). On this archive, see Boak (1923), Husselman (1970), Beek (2013).

The first two types of financial assistance need more attention here. The most pertinent document belongs to a guild of fifteen members whose precise occupation has been lost, but these may be raisers of sheep or cattle based on references to livestock (*AGRW* 300 = *GRA* III 206 = *PMich* V 243; 14–37 CE).<sup>53</sup> The front of this document is pictured in Figure 8.1. This regulation suggests the importance of members having a positive disposition towards other members, providing help when needs arose and, corresponding to this, avoiding conflict.<sup>54</sup> For instance, ‘if a member ignores someone who is in distress and does not assist in helping him out of his trouble, he shall pay 8 drachmas.’ Furthermore, ‘if a member prosecutes or calumniates another member, he shall be fined 8 drachmas.’ Several Demotic regulations of the Ptolemaic era likewise clarify that disputes were to be settled internally and that adherents were not to bring complaints about other members before officials outside of the group.<sup>55</sup> There are cases from other regions in which an association similarly stipulates that participants were not to take disputes to external authorities or courts, as with Bacchic devotees at Athens and with any adherents in assemblies at Corinth who may have listened to Paul’s advice.<sup>56</sup> These other situations may reflect a similar concern to foster positive relations among adherents and to protect the reputation of the association.

Furthermore, in the sheep-raisers’ (?) guild at Tebtynis, ‘If a member commits intrigue against, or corrupts the home of another member, he shall pay sixty drachmas.’ Notice the inflation of the fine here (60 drachmas compared to 8 drachmas), which indicates a heightened importance for this violation. The reference to avoiding intrigue and corruption of other’s homes at Tebtynis could be compared to the prohibition of stealing another man’s woman in the regulation of an association of Zeus Hypsistos at Philadelphia (*PLond* VII 2193 = *AGRW* 295; 69–58 BCE). It also has some affinities with a regulation for a domestic association from another Philadelphia – the one in Lydia (*AGRW* 121 = *GRA* II 117 = *TAM* V 1539; c. 100 BCE). The Lydian regulation from Asia Minor outlines several other prohibitions that were aimed at people avoiding harm to other participants, and any who were aware of such plans to harm others were to expose the guilty parties. Although these stipulations in Lydia are in the negative, speaking against inappropriate treatment of other participants, the general framework in which they are presented – the need for participants to show ‘goodwill towards this house’ – points towards an underlying guiding principle of mutuality and cohesiveness.

In the sheep-raisers’ (?) guild at Tebtynis, there were also provisions for paying bail if a member had been arrested.<sup>57</sup> The member was to reimburse the association within a month: ‘If a member has been arrested for a private matter, they (i.e. associates) shall stand surety for him for up to 100 silver drachmas for thirty days, during which time he shall release the men from their pledge’ (*PMich* V 243, line 9). The second document

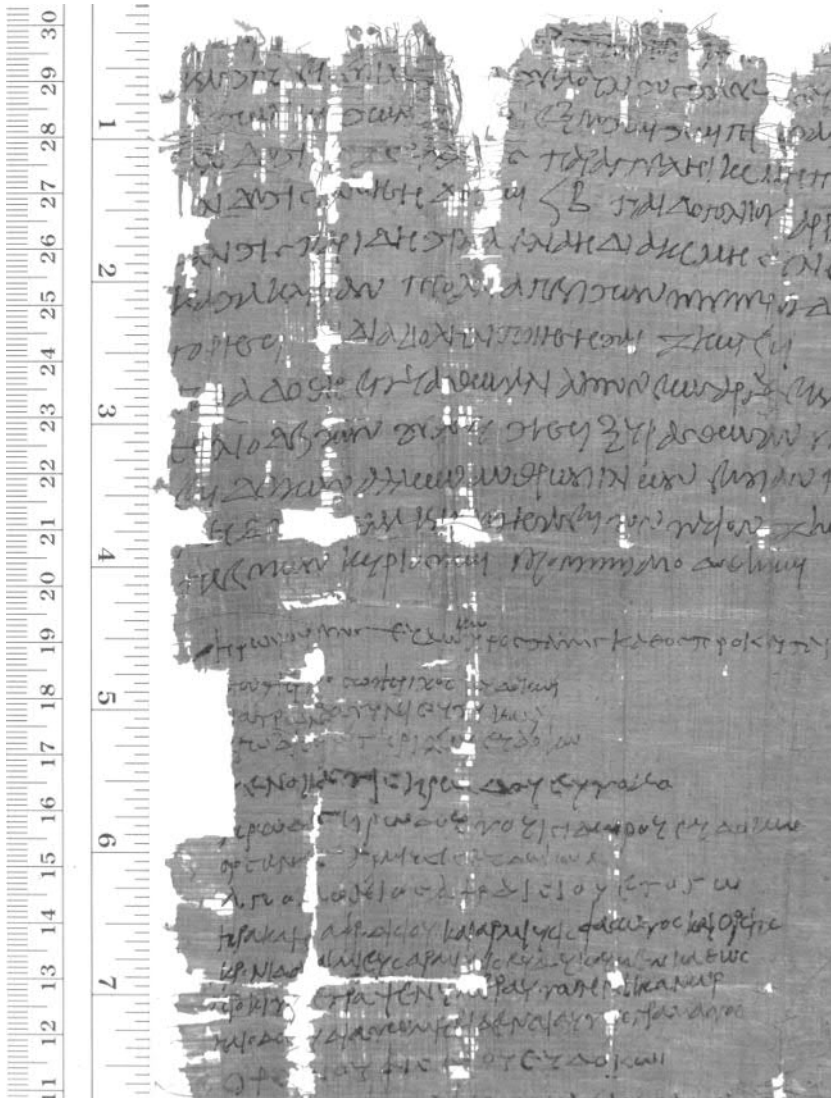
<sup>53</sup> The identification as sheep- or cattle-raisers is based on reference to these animals in line 5. Such livestock raisers are attested at Tebtynis: see *PMich* II 123 front [r.] III, line 40 and VIII, line 26. Cf. *GRA* III 235 = *PHamb* I 34, from Euhemeria.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1275, from the Piraeus in Attica (c. 325–275 BCE); *PLond* VII 2193, from Philadelphia in the Arsinoites district (69–58 BCE).

<sup>55</sup> Monson (2013: 212).

<sup>56</sup> *AGRW* 7 = *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1368, lines 90–5; 1 Corinthians 6:1–11.

<sup>57</sup> On bail, see Bauschatz (2007: 21–2).



**Figure 8.1** Regulation of the sheep-raisers' (?) guild (PMich V 243, APIS inv. 720, front [r.]). Courtesy of the Papyrology Collection, Graduate Library, University of Michigan, used under a Creative Commons licence.

from Tebtynis – the regulation of the 24 tenant farmers (?) who claim some sort of exemption (*apolytismoi*) – similarly makes provisions for helping a member who was arrested. Yet, in this case, the period for repayment was doubled: 'If any of the undersigned men is arrested, the association will stand surety for him up to the amount of 100 silver drachmas for a period of sixty days' (AGRW 301 = GRA III 212 = PMich

V 244, lines 9–11; 43 CE). Once again, it should be remembered that imprisonment for debt is among the most attested reasons for arrest in other Egyptian sources, but these regulations are more wide-reaching in that they do not specify what legal offences would result in help.

The fact that procedures like those at Tebtynis were practised elsewhere in the district is confirmed by another papyrus from the time of the emperor Tiberius, this one from the village of Euhemeria, also located in the district of Arsinoites (*GRA* III 205 = *PRyl* II 94).<sup>58</sup> In this case, detainment was not necessarily the result of debts. The document is a letter from the leader (*hēgoumenos*) and the secretary (*grammateus*) of the weavers (*gerdoi*) to a village official (*exēgētēs*). The leaders of the guild put themselves forward as sureties, offering bail for the release of five imprisoned members of the guild. These five members were faced with (now) unknown charges brought forward by what was likely a wool-worker (*eriourgos*). In acting as sureties, the leaders of the guild would be responsible to guarantee the appearance of these weavers when the case was heard before village authorities. Since records of persons providing surety or bail would often be made on perishable materials (such as papyri), we rarely witness this outside of Egypt. Nonetheless, there are hints of this in Attica, as we shall see, and there is the senatorial decree dealing with Bacchic groups in Italy in the early second century BCE which seems to specifically forbid members of such groups from either giving or taking surety (*fidem inter se dare*; *ILLRP* 511, lines 10–14; 186 BCE).<sup>59</sup> Wim Broekaert discusses the likelihood that Roman merchants and shippers commonly looked to their fellow members in the association for surety, loans and other economic assistance.<sup>60</sup> Unfortunately, epigraphic evidence from Italy and the West (like the epigraphic evidence from Egypt itself) does not supply any further clear cases of such practices, as far as we have been able to determine at this point.<sup>61</sup>

Beyond the offer of surety, other papyri confirm the related practice of offering adherents loans in the Roman imperial period. This is a topic that we address at some length below in connection with so-called ‘friendly loans’ (*eranoi*) in Greece and on Aegean islands. An early first-century Egyptian instance involves an association in Alexandria financially assisting a member who faced economic difficulties.<sup>62</sup> The papyrus is a record of a decision by a synod devoted to god Augustus concerning a member and imperial enslaved person named Syntrophos (dating to 6 CE). Syntrophos owed 120 silver drachmas to another enslaved person of Caesar whose name is now missing. The common consent of the membership was that the synod’s priest (*Iucundus*), who was evidently also the treasurer in charge of the group’s communal fund, should provide Syntrophos with a loan of 120 drachmas, including interest in order to pay his debt. The member was then expected to repay the synod (lines 12–16). This is a clear use of the group’s common funds to supply a loan to a member in need,

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Venticinque (2010: 283).

<sup>59</sup> See Rauh (1993: 251–87, especially 254).

<sup>60</sup> Broekaert (2011: 236–42).

<sup>61</sup> Jinyu Liu and Jonathan Scott Perry both helpfully responded to inquiries, indicating that they could not think of any further cases of an association or its members offering sureties or loans in Italy or in western parts of the Mediterranean generally.

<sup>62</sup> *AGRW* 281 = *GRA* III 168 = *BGU* IV 1137 = Brashear (1993).

although it seems that interest was involved (if *atokos* is to be interpreted as ‘including interest’ or ‘interest built in’ in Egyptian papyri, rather than ‘interest-free’).<sup>63</sup>

### The eastern Mediterranean

A situation of mutual support among members of groups is not peculiar to Egypt, as we have already begun to see. Internal bonds among associates facilitated access to resources of different kinds, and the precise manifestations of support could vary from one region to another and from one group to the next. As with the Egyptian evidence, principles of reciprocal assistance begin with our earliest evidence for such groups in southern Greece (Attica) and on Aegean islands, and continue on into the Roman imperial era. The notable parallels in the types of assistance that members were expected to give to one another suggest that cultural traditions found in Egypt are not peculiar. Instead, there are considerable overlaps in communal principles that were at work within groups in various villages or Greek cities. Internal bonds provided individuals access to material or non-material resources they might not otherwise have accessed so readily.

As we will soon see, evidence for such socioeconomic customs in Greece and the Aegean, although more fragmentary, begins about a century or more *earlier* than in Egypt, beginning in the mid-fourth century. A partially preserved monumental record of members’ obligations in a society (*thiasōtai*) at the Piraeus (c. 325–275 BCE), for instance, clarifies that members were expected to attend funerals of members’ families. Furthermore, the practice of providing communal funds for the funeral of members is attested in a roughly contemporary document from Attica (*IG II<sup>2</sup> 1278 = GRA I 17; 272 BCE*).

There are indications that this was part of a general principle of mutual aid, comparable to the situation in Egypt. For the same Piraeus regulation subsequently stipulates that participants should help one another in cases of difficulties: ‘if a member should be wronged, they (i.e. the society-members) and all the friends (i.e. perhaps another level of participants) shall come to his assistance, so that everyone might know that we show piety to the gods and to our friends. To those who do these things, may many blessings come upon them, their descendants, and their ancestors’ (*IG II<sup>2</sup> 1275 = GRA I 8 = AGRW*, lines 7–12). We know from the Attic orators that small groups of friends or ‘clubs’ (*hetaireiai*) in the late-fifth and fourth centuries BCE could assist members in legal cases, sometimes by raising money or by testifying on behalf of a fellow member, as George Miller Calhoun discusses at some length.<sup>64</sup> So the association at the Piraeus may well have in mind assistance in legal or other troubles along these lines. It is noteworthy that mutual assistance in this association is also connected with *piety*, and deities are imagined to reward positive interrelations among members in the

<sup>63</sup> On this, see Pestman (1971), Modrzejewski (1997: 118), Reden (2007: 159–61).

<sup>64</sup> Calhoun (1913: 40–96). Note, however, that some of the legal examples that Calhoun assembles do not expressly involve *hetaireiai*. Cf. Jones (1999: 223–7).

group, which is a rarely attested concept in inscriptions.<sup>65</sup> Further on, the document clarifies that these rules were to be ratified and enforced by adherents themselves. Participants were to report any transgressions and to determine any penalty for violation (lines 12–17).

We have already witnessed associations providing loans when we dealt with income from endowments and communal funds (Chapter 5) and when we surveyed mutual aid in Egypt (in this chapter), and further valuable evidence is forthcoming from Attica and islands of the Aegean. The practice of associations offering loans sometimes has important implications for mutual aid, particularly in cases when it is a member or participant who would have access to such loans from the association to which he or she belonged. In this way, members could receive material assistance in difficult circumstances from those beyond their own family, and the expectation that one's association might offer such financial help would also reinforce bonds among participants.

These loaning practices need to be understood within the context of other cultural and socioeconomic practices of the Hellenistic era, particularly practices associated with the Greek term *eranos*, that is, the 'collection', 'contribution' or 'friendly loan'.<sup>66</sup> This Greek term, which also came to be used as a designation for an ongoing 'contribution-society' (*eranos*) to which one made contributions, was also used to refer to 'contributions' to a common meal and continued to be used in this way as well.<sup>67</sup>

Beginning in the fourth century BCE in Attica, this Greek term (*eranos*) was commonly used in reference to a specific type of 'loan' (sometimes, although not necessarily, interest-free). This type of loan was either (1) solicited by a person in need from various connections, usually friends (*philoï*) and neighbours (*geitones*); or, (2) generated by a group (*koinon*) of 'lenders' or 'contributors' (as we translate the Greek term *eranistai* here).<sup>68</sup> Such loans were aimed at supporting a borrower's specific needs in emergency situations, situations such as difficulties in paying fines, taxes, dowries, expenses incurred through civic service roles and costs associated with manumission from slavery.<sup>69</sup> As Paul Millett clarifies, these loaning practices emerged, in part, out of the common belief that people should practice significant levels of reciprocity, assisting and being assisted by immediate neighbours (e.g. those on one's street, or members of one's deme or subdivision).<sup>70</sup> In this view, neighbours and friends held an intermediate position between the household and the civic community. We would suggest this is an intermediate social position similar to that held by more permanent unofficial associations in the Hellenistic and Roman eras, many of which were, in fact, formed from network ties in neighbourhoods.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Kloppenborg in the comments to *GRA* I 8; Longenecker (2010: 98–9).

<sup>66</sup> On such loans and security-markers, see Fine (1951), Finley (1951: especially 100–6), Vondeling (1961), Maier (1969), Harris (1988), Millett (1991), Harris (1993), Rauh (1993: 251–87), Harrill (1998: 167–70), Arnaoutoglou (2003: 66, 69–87, 122–3), Faraguna (2012). On women and loaning practices, see Harris (1992) and Harris and Tuite (2000).

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Hesiod, *Works and Days* 722–3; Homer, *Odyssey* 1.226; 11.415; Plato, *Laws* 11.915E.

<sup>68</sup> See Millett (1991: 153–9). On the two types, see Thomsen (2015).

<sup>69</sup> See Rauh (1993: 263–9), Harrill (1998: 167–2), Faraguna (2012: 138).

<sup>70</sup> Millett (1991: 139–53).

Despite informal dimensions of these loans and signs of flexibility in paying back the loan, there could still be some pressure laid to bear in ensuring repayment, so the 'friendly' aspect needs some qualification.<sup>71</sup> Mechanisms to ensure repayment are evident in the fact that a formerly enslaved person who had been manumitted but failed to repay a friendly loan could potentially face re-enslavement, as indicated in some Delphic manumissions (c. 200 BCE–70 CE).<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, and more importantly here, a considerable source of information for such loans are boundary or mortgage stones (*horoi*) that were used as records of securities offered in return for such loans, mortgage stones which we have already encountered in the discussion of income (Chapter 5).<sup>73</sup> In Attica and on some Aegean islands, these mortgage stones date mainly from the mid-fourth BCE to the second century BCE, after which the means of documenting mortgages apparently shifted away from boundary stones.

This overall cultural and socioeconomic milieu means there were precedents in place for a group of friends collecting funds together for a friend or acquaintance, and so such notions of mutual assistance naturally came to play a role in a variety of social settings, including ongoing associations. In fact, building on the arguments of Johannes Vondeling, other scholars, including Ilias Arnaoutoglou, Michele Faraguna and, now, Christian Thomsen, put forward a new and convincing understanding of the situation. These scholars argue that many references to an 'association of contributors' (*koinon eranistōn*) on security stones and on entries on the so-called freedperson's bowls from Attica represent more *permanent* associations engaged in offering loans. Previously, such groups had been characterized as *temporary* affiliations in an influential study by Moses Finley that was followed by Millett and others.<sup>74</sup> Finley proposed this due to his belief that there was a century-long chronological gap between the earliest security stones referring to people offering a friendly loan (c. 350 BCE, in his view) and the emergence of permanent associations of 'contributors' (after c. 250 BCE, in his view).<sup>75</sup> Closely related to this notion of timing is the common but questionable assumption that unofficial associations only began to emerge as a direct consequence of the supposed decline of the Greek city-state (*polis*) and its social structures after the time of Alexander the Great (died 322 BCE).<sup>76</sup>

<sup>71</sup> On informality, see Plato, *Laws* 11.915E as discussed in *GRA* I 19 and by Arnaoutoglou (2003: 74–8).

<sup>72</sup> E.g. *SGDI* 1791, lines 11–12; *SGDI* 1804, lines 3–4; *SGDI* 1878, lines 12–13; *SGDI* 2317, lines 8–11. See Harrill (1998: 168–70), Kamen (2014: 293–5). Cf. *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1553–78, *IG* VII 3376 (from Chaironeia in Boiotia).

<sup>73</sup> On the *horoi*, loans and security generally, see Fine (1951), Finley (1951), Biscardi (1983), Harris (1993).

<sup>74</sup> Vondeling (1961: 126–32), Arnaoutoglou (2003: 70–87), Faraguna (2012), Thomsen (2015). For the security stones, see Finley (1951: nos 8, 30, 31, 32, 40, 42, 44, 70, 71, 110, 112, 113, 114, 31A, 114A; *SEG* 32:1982. For translations of the bowl inscriptions, see Meyer (2009), who proposes that these do not have to do with manumissions but rather with payments by metics. The usual formula on the bowls is: 'Person's-name, living in district, having escaped Person's-name, a bowl weighing 100.'

<sup>75</sup> Finley (1951: 100–6, especially 101 with n. 60). Cf. Jones (1999: 307–8). On problems with theories of decline and associations, see Harland (2013: 71–94) = *ibid.* (2003: 89–114).

<sup>76</sup> Nicholas Jones' (1999: especially 123–50, 307–10) treatment of the relationship between official, descent-based civic structures or associations of the classical era and the emergence of unofficial (or 'voluntary') associations is far more sophisticated than those that precede it. But he still seems to give considerable credence to the notion that Alexander the Great set in motion an overall decline (rather than evolution) of the *polis*.

Now Thomsen's thorough study confirms how little time there is between our earliest evidence for friendly loans and our earliest evidence for permanent, non-descent-based associations. As Thomsen notes, the early existence of such ongoing (rather than temporary) associations of 'contributors' (*eranistai*) that also engaged in activities such as meals and honours for deities is, in fact, clearly indicated in an important passage in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* 1160a19–20, which likely dates between 334 and 322 BCE: 'Some associations (*koinōniōn*) seem to be formed on the basis of enjoyment (*hēdonē*), such as society-members (*thiasōtai*) and contributors (*eranistai*).'<sup>77</sup> Roughly contemporary with Aristotle are two Attic dedications to deities (one to Zeus Philios and the other to another deity) from the final decades of the fourth century by groups of 'contributors' (*eranistai*), which likewise seem to be ongoing groups rather than temporary formations (*IG II*<sup>2</sup> 2935 and 2940). Thomsen argues that virtually all groups (*koina*) of contributors (*eranistai*) on the Attic mortgage stones (22 cases) and on lists of bowls dedicated either by manumitted persons or by prosecutors in trials related to 'registered foreigners' or metics (17 cases from the 330s–320s BCE), were likely permanent associations engaged in offering loans to associates and others, alongside other ongoing commensal and ritual activities.

A boundary marker from Arkesine on Amorgos island dating around 300 BCE provides an early example of an organized group where the language of contributors and friendly loans is present. This case also offers more details regarding procedures and so is worth presenting in full here:

Boundary marker (*horos*) of the properties which are in . . . and of the houses and gardens of Xenokles situated in Phylincheia and of the registered securities. These were mortgaged with the consent of his wife Eratokrate and her guardian (*kyrios*), Broukion; to the contribution-society (*eranos*); to Aristagoras the leader of the contribution-society (*archeranos*); and, to his wife Echenike (?) . . . , as the surety for which he recorded Xenokles in the matter of the friendly loan (*eranos*), which Aristagoras had collected in accordance with the law of the contributors (*kata ton nomon tōn e[ranis]tōn*).

*IG XII*,7 58<sup>78</sup>

As Thomsen points out, this inscription employs the Greek term *eranos* both in reference to the ongoing group itself – the 'contribution-society', as we translate the term – and in reference to the fund that was raised to offer as a 'friendly loan'.<sup>79</sup>

Returning to Athens itself, there is a decree from the early third century BCE by sacrificing associates who participated in two different associations, one devoted to the hero Echelos and the other to the heroines (*AGRW* 1 = *GRA* I 14 = *Agora* 16:161).<sup>80</sup> The resolution refers to moneys owed by members to the associations. While it may be

<sup>77</sup> Thomsen also points to two groups of contributors around 300 BCE: *SEG* 41:171 and *IG II*<sup>2</sup> 1265.

<sup>78</sup> Based on Thomsen's recent reading of the stone (2015: 169–70). Cf. *SEG* 29:36, c. 350 BCE; *IG II*<sup>2</sup> 2721.

<sup>79</sup> Thomsen (2015: 168–9).

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Ferguson (1944: 76–9).



that some of the funds owed were for regular participation payments, the reference to principal and interest suggests strongly that loans were regularly made to participants and there had been some shortcomings in repayment:

In order that the partnership (*koinōnia*) in the sacrifices be maintained for all time for the association (*koinon*) that is near Kalliphanes' property and that of the hero Echelos, it was resolved to inscribe the names of those who owe anything to the partnership – both the principal and the interest, as much as each owes – on a monument and set it up by the altar in the temple, and to inscribe the ancient decrees on the monument.

So the practice of ongoing associations offering loans or so-called friendly loans is firmly established and began much earlier than Finley and others imagine. Fourteen of the associations of contributors on the mortgage stones designate themselves by the person they are with, using the prepositions 'with' (*meta*) or 'around' (*peri*): e.g. 'contributors who are with Aristophon of Eiresides district'. This is a further sign of an ongoing group as this phrasing is common among ongoing associations with some degree of permanency, as we discussed in Chapter 3.<sup>81</sup> A corollary of this overall situation is that other associations using the self-designation 'contributors' (*eranistai*) outside of Attica – as at Hyllarima, Kos, Rhodian Peraia and the island of Rhodes itself – may also have engaged in collections for the purpose of lending, even though we happen to lack specific instances in the surviving inscriptions.<sup>82</sup>

Some associations of contributors attested on the security stones in Attica refer to the collected fund itself (using the Greek term *eranos*). Around 250 BCE, an 'association of contributors' (*to koinon tōn eranistōn*, lines 15–16, 20) devoted to Zeus and Herakles mentions a 'fund' (*eranos*, line 7) which, distinguishable from another 'common fund' (*[to a]rgyriōn t[o] koino[n]*, line 4), had been appropriately managed by the group's treasurer (*tamias*; *GRA* 19 = *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1291; cf. *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1298).

Arnaoutoglou argues that there may be a reference to a collection for a friendly loan by worshippers of the Thracian deity Sabazios in the Piraeus in 100 BCE (*GRA* I 43 = *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1335).<sup>83</sup> In this inscription, the group is designated 'the Sabazios-devotees', and yet the resolution was to have the names of 'the contributors' (*eranistai*) inscribed on the monument. The implication is that 'the contributors' on this inscription was not a self-designation for the group but rather a term for those who contributed to a specific collection: 'The Sabazios-devotees resolved to inscribe the names of the contributors (*eranistai*) on a monument and to erect it in the temple' (lines 4–5). It is noteworthy that the fifty-one contributors (all men) who belonged to the association consisted of a mixture of citizens and immigrants with 'registered foreigner' (*metic*) status, including those from Antioch (two), Miletos (three), Laodikeia (one), Macedonia (two), Herakleia (one), Maroneia in Thrace (one), Aigina island (one) and Apameia (one). There was at

<sup>81</sup> Thomsen (2015: 166–7).

<sup>82</sup> E.g. *IHyllarimaMcCabe* 18; *IKosS* EV 278; *IG* XII.1 155, from the town of Rhodes; *IRhodB* 12 and 155, from the Rhodian Peraia in Caria. See Gabrielsen (2001).

<sup>83</sup> Arnaoutoglou (2003: 86). Cf. *GRA* I 47 = *SEG* 54:235, from Epáno Liosia (mid-1st BCE).

least one enslaved person of the People and others without mention of place of origin or Athenian subdivision, which points to servile origins (enslaved persons or formerly enslaved persons).<sup>84</sup> In this case, it is possible to imagine these enslaved persons employing a friendly loan for manumission.

Advancing to the Roman imperial era, there is an important case of loans as a matter of course within an association that chose Herakles as patron at Liopesi in Attica (*GRA I 50 = SEG 31:122; c. 100 CE*).<sup>85</sup> The difficulty here is that it is not stated whether the loans were for insiders or for outsiders, but Antony E. Raubitschek and others argue that members were likely in mind.<sup>86</sup> There is no mention of interest here, so either these were interest-free friendly loans or typical interest charges were taken for granted. This group designated itself both a ‘synod’ and a ‘contribution-society’ (*eranos*). The leader of this group devoted to Herakles was called ‘head of the contribution-society’ (*archenanistēs*).

The evidence for loaning practices here is direct. In specifying procedures in the management of endowments, the regulation states: ‘Let the head of the contribution-society choose three people – whomever he wants – from the synod to assist him in loaning out the endowment ([[*eis to synege*]]*danisai tēn enthēkēn*).’<sup>87</sup> So a team of three members was formed to manage such loans. A second reference to the loans this group offered to its members or to others comes further on: ‘The dues must be brought to the treasurer so that loans can be made (*is tas egdosis*). Whoever does not pay shall be fined a double amount. Whoever does not pay at all shall be expelled from the contribution-society (*exeranos*).’<sup>88</sup>

Moving to Greek cities in Asia Minor, another piece of evidence provides clarity regarding the commonality of associations in this region, too, functioning to financially assist members using corporate funds, potentially including loans. This despite the fact that we happen to lack references to *interest-free* loans in the inscriptions of Asia Minor, as far as we have been able to establish (for interest-bearing loans, see *IMagnMai* 117 and the discussion in Chapter 5). Among Pliny the Younger’s dealings with associations during his time (*c. 112 CE*) as specially appointed legate in the province of Bithynia-Pontus is his response to a request from people at Amisos.<sup>89</sup> Pliny’s letter to the emperor Trajan suggests that Roman authorities, like others, recognized the important role of associations in providing members with access to resources in times of need, even though these same authorities could also be suspicious of people gathering together. Pliny first writes to Trajan regarding a petition from inhabitants at Amisos regarding the formation of ‘contribution-societies’ (*eranos*), with Pliny employing the plural

<sup>84</sup> See the discussion by Kloppenborg in *GRA I 43*.

<sup>85</sup> See also Raubitschek (1981), Lupu (2005: 181–2).

<sup>86</sup> Raubitschek (1981: 96) takes it for granted that these loans were for members, even if there was interest.

<sup>87</sup> The root of the verb used here, *daneizō*, was regularly used in reference to lending out funds, as we have translated here (see LSJ).

<sup>88</sup> Taking *ekdosis* as a reference to lending here, as do Raubitschek and John S. Kloppenborg (notes to *GRA I 50*), seems to fit the overall context better than Lupu’s (2005) suggestion that ‘contracts’ for supplies are in mind (still, Lupu does nonetheless agree that loans are involved in lines 34–5).

<sup>89</sup> On associations, see Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 10.33–4, 92–3, 96 = *AGRW* L40. Cf. Harland (2013: 153–5) = *ibid.* (2003: 169–73).

of the Greek term (even though writing in Latin) that is so familiar to us now (*Letters* 10.92).

Even more significant is Trajan's response, which clarifies that both he and Pliny took it for granted that one of the most notable aims of such groups was to support members in material ways: 'If the citizens of Amisos ... are allowed by their own laws ... to form a contribution-society (*eranum*), there is no reason why we should interfere, especially if the collections (*collatione*) are not used for riotous and unlawful assemblies, but to support the needs of people in the lower strata' (*sed ad sustinendam tenuiorum inopiam utuntur*; *Letters* 10.93). Financially assisting members by means of loans, meals or burials is likely in mind here with these contributions or collections. Yet, there is nothing in this correspondence that would suggest the support was limited to burial, as often assumed by scholars working with the problematic category of 'burial clubs' for the poor (see Chapter 1). Trajan then suggests that in other cities without these privileges such contribution-societies should not be formed due to the potential for disturbances.<sup>90</sup>

So, although evidence from cities in Greece and Asia Minor provides only momentary and suggestive glimpses (although more than *epigraphic* evidence from Egypt), there are clear signs that the principle of mutual aid was at work in groups here, as in parts of Egypt. Still, there are further noteworthy inscriptions to consider regarding the involvement of associations in the third main type of assistance for members: burial- or memorial-related support.

Despite a dearth of evidence for groups whose *principal* purpose was burial, it is still true that funerary functions played a more or less significant role within associations all over the Mediterranean, including Italy, Greece (both Attica and Boiotia), Asia Minor, the Bosporan region and, as we have already seen, Egypt.<sup>91</sup> A few more words are in order, then, concerning mutual aid in connection with burial, a topic we have encountered piecemeal in the discussion of papyri from Egypt, inscriptions from Attica and group expenditures in Chapter 4.

Early on, members of 'societies' (*thiasoi*) in Attica, for instance, were expected to attend the funeral of fellow members. By the third century BCE at least, some societies had their treasurers pay out a benefit (*taphikon*) to assist in the cost of funerary customs, something that we also witnessed in Ptolemaic Egypt.<sup>92</sup> There were also many instances in Greek or Hellenized cities of Boiotia, Asia Minor, the Bosporan region and Syria when associations of various kinds collected together funds to erect an *individual* memorial for a deceased member, including graves erected by guilds, fellow initiates in mysteries, societies and ethnic-based associations of soldiers.<sup>93</sup> So, for example, worshippers of Dionysos at Tanagra in Boiotia buried Galatas in the third century BCE, the archers devoted to two goddesses buried Euklides in the second, and the butchers

<sup>90</sup> Harland (2013: 141–56) = *ibid.* (2003: 161–76).

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* (2009: 134–6), *ibid.* (2014: 410–17), Bendlin (2011) on the West.

<sup>92</sup> E.g. *GRA* I 8 = *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1275 (325–275 BCE); *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1277 (in the comments to *GRA* I 15); *GRA* I 17 = *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1278.2 (272 BCE); *GRA* I 30 = *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1323.10–11 (194 BCE).

<sup>93</sup> See Harland (2014: 410–17) in connection with *GRA* II 150; Macridy (1904) = *AGRW* 271–4 (groups of soldiers at Sidon); *AGRW* 257 (a group of transporters at Askalon).

buried Hippomachos in the second or first.<sup>94</sup> At Pantikapaion in the Bosporan region there were numerous individual tombs set up by fellow members of the society. One of them happens to highlight the familial terminology that was commonly used within the association that set up the memorial: ‘Those gathered around the priest, Valeris son of Neikostratos, and the father (*patēr*) of the synod, Kallistos the second, and the rest of the members of the synod honoured their own brother (*adelphos*), Symphoros son of Philippos’ (*AGRW* 88 = *IBosp* 104; 200–250 CE).<sup>95</sup> So burial was part of a larger pattern of group cohesion.

What is less well attested, but still important to note in connection with mutual aid, is that certain associations in some regions might also purchase or receive their own *collective* tomb or communal burial plot reserved for members of the group.<sup>96</sup> It is difficult to generalize, but in some cases, this practice may reflect the lower socioeconomic status of members, suggesting those who may not have been as readily able to afford an individual family grave. This may have been the case with the bed-builders at Ephesos (*IEph* 2213) and the guild of flax workers at Smyrna (*ISmyrna* 218) who both had communal tombs. There also seem to be regional cultural traditions at work, as communal burial is very well attested in southern Asia Minor and on Aegean islands off the south-western coast of Asia Minor, particularly on Kos and Rhodes.<sup>97</sup> It is less well attested elsewhere.

Rhodian material is illustrative here, particularly as there are signs of corporate collections for burial purposes, combining our interests in mutual material assistance and funerary support. In Chapter 6, we already discussed the association of immigrants and Rhodians who, around 185 BCE, raised a fund (*eranos*) to purchase a place for a common grave (*SEG* 39:737).<sup>98</sup> Two other Rhodian documents from the second century BCE provide further insight into such communal burial. These show that an association devoted to Aphrodite and led by Zenon of Selge owned burial plots (*taphiai*; *IRhodPC* 18 = *SEG* 3:674).<sup>99</sup> Here there was concern to give all contributing members (*eranistai*) of the group equal access to burial on this land. Another inscription from Rhodes has such contributors promising funds to restore their communal memorials that had been damaged during an earthquake (*IG* XII,1 9). So communal burial is one further instance of mutual aid that is found in connection with at least some groups in certain regions. For many other groups, the association provided funerary support in less fundamental, although significant, ways, such as gathering for a drink to remember a deceased fellow or erecting an individual gravestone.

<sup>94</sup> Dionysos devotees: *AGRW* 31 = *GRA* I 57 = *IG* VII 686; archers: *GRA* I 59 = *SEG* 26:614; cf. *SEG* 32:487. Butchers: Marchand (2015: 258, no. 5; new reading of *IG* VII 687). See *AGRW* 31, Marchand (2015), and Roesch (1982: 119–202), on associations in Tanagra and Boiotia.

<sup>95</sup> On this brother language, see Harland (2009: 63–81).

<sup>96</sup> See *ibid.* (2014: 410–17).

<sup>97</sup> *ICiliciaBM* II 190–202; *TAM* II 223. See the comments on *GRA* I 150. For Rhodian territories, see Fraser (1977: 58–70), van Nijf (1997: 48–9). For Kos, see the plots belonging to Hermaists (*IKosS* EF 78), Apolloniasts (*IKosS* EF 201, 214), Anubiasts (*IKosS* EF 458), Bacchiasts (*IKosM* 492), Atheniasts (*IKosS* EF 399–400), Homonoists (*IKosB* 285), Isiasts (*IKosM* 493) (cf. *IG* XII,2 271, for fullers on Mytilene).

<sup>98</sup> Kontorini (1989: 73–85, no. 10) = *SEG* 39:737. Cf. Gabrielsen (2001: 229–30), Faraguna (2012: 144).

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Fraser (1977: 60–1).

## Judeans settled in Egypt

Literature from the Hellenistic or Roman eras provides a window into elite Judean perspectives on giving to ‘the poor, the widow and the orphan’ to some degree, but this is not much help in assessing actual practices of mutual aid within group settings in the diaspora.<sup>100</sup> In the story about Tobit’s time in Assyria, for instance, Tobit’s advice to his son includes the following:

For all those who practice righteousness, practice pity (*eleēmosynēn*) from your possessions and do not let your eye hold a grudge when you practice pity. Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor, and the face of God will not be turned away from you. If you have many possessions, practice pity from them in proportion. If you have few, do not be afraid to practice this in relation to the little you have. For you will be storing up a good deposit for yourself for an urgent day. For pity saves you from death and prevents you from going into the darkness. For pity is a good gift for all who practice it in front of the most high.

Tobit 4:7–16, translated by Harland

The scrolls found at Qumran likewise give somewhat extensive glimpses into attitudes towards wealth and principles of mutual aid pertaining to a somewhat peculiar Judean group in the homeland itself. Some scholars helpfully explore issues of wealth in the Dead Sea scrolls and others engage in careful comparative studies that bring in the evidence of associations with respect to communal regulation.<sup>101</sup> But, once again, our focus in this study is on practices within Judean associations alongside others in the diaspora, not the homeland. In the previous chapter, we have already surveyed some evidence for mutual aid in connection with the poor as reflected in rabbinic literature, looking at two different practices that may have been practised in the diaspora.

For Egypt, in particular, so far there is virtually *no epigraphic evidence* for mutual material aid among members of Judean groups, at least based on our survey of William Horbury and David Noy’s *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt*.<sup>102</sup> So we have to rely on papyri or other sources of information to see how members in these diaspora groups accessed such resources through internal social connections. A further implication for studying non-Judean associations is that a lack of *inscriptional* references to such issues should not be taken as an indication that socioeconomic assistance was not important within a particular set of groups. Our sources are often very specific and simply do not provide a balanced view of the moving picture that is social life.

Evidence for Judeans in Egypt providing loans to other Judeans comes from the district of Arsinoites beginning in the Ptolemaic era. Three papyri indicate mutual

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Tobit 4:7–16; 12:8–10; Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.207, 211–14, 283. On Josephus’ and Philo’s views on wealth and giving, see Peterman (1997: 42–9), Schmidt (1983), Downing (1985).

<sup>101</sup> See, for example, the discussions and bibliographies of Murphy (2002, on wealth) and Gillihan (2012, on comparison with associations). Cf. Weinfeld (1986).

<sup>102</sup> Horbury and Noy (1992).

material support among members of an association in the likely event that the Judean creditor and the Judean debtor in each case attended the same Judean prayer-house or belonged to the same ethnic association or 'corporate body' (*politeuma*) of Judeans (*CPJ* I 20, 23, 24). It is important to note that we have yet to find reference to such a 'corporate body' of Judeans or a 'prayer-house' (*proseuchē*) at Tebtynis specifically. Nonetheless, an inscription and several papyri spanning our period do show the existence of such meeting places for Judean groups elsewhere in the district of Arsinoites. Also, it was common for those in the military or descendants of soldiers to form associations based on common ethnicity in various parts of this district.<sup>103</sup> So it is reasonable to propose that there would be an association of Judeans at Tebtynis or at Krokodilopolis, and that the Judeans attested in the three documents below may have interacted with one another as ongoing participants in gatherings of the ethnic association.

Although we cannot be certain that the following loan agreements always entailed members of the same association, then, this papyrological evidence is suggestive of such. If not, then it at least attests to those of a common ethnic identification financially supporting one another. Some of this is also roughly contemporary with the Demotic association regulations and Greek papyri from Egypt that involved adherents of an association financially assisting or providing loans to assist members.

To our knowledge, the earliest Judean case is from Tebtynis. This documents in just a few sentences a loan between Mousaios son of Simon, who is identified as a Judean descending from military settlers, and Lasaites, who is likewise identified in this way (*CPJ* I 20 = *PTebt* III 815; 228–221 BCE). The amount is 108 bronze drachmas at an interest rate of 2 drachmas per month (i.e. the typical 24 per cent). The Pentateuch's prohibitions regarding interest on loans were evidently either unnoticed or interpreted as irrelevant in this context (see Ex 22:24; Lev 25:35–7; Deut 23:20–1; cf. Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.208).

Another more extensive record of a loan is made between Judean descendants of military settlers, in this case at Krokodilopolis, also in the Arsinoites district (*CPJ* I 23 = *PTebt* 817; 182 BCE). We know that settlers engaged in the military (or descendants of such) did form 'corporate bodies' (*politeumata*) at this locale, too (e.g. Cilicians in *IFayum* 15 = *SB* IV 7270; 125–100 BCE), and it would not be a far stretch to imagine Judeans here belonging to a similar group. This time, the deed of loan goes into details regarding Sostratos' offer of his house as security to borrow the sum of two talents and 3,000 bronze drachmas (= 15,000 bronze drachmas total), 'including interest' (if *atokos* is to be interpreted as 'including interest' in papyri, rather than 'interest-free' as the editors of *CPJ* had assumed).<sup>104</sup> This was about the equivalent of 250 silver drachmas at the ratio of 60:1, and the amount was to be paid within the year. Otherwise the creditor, Apollonios, would be entitled to seize the property offered as security.

<sup>103</sup> E.g. *IJudEgypt* 117 = *CPJ* III 1532A (246–221 BCE); *CPJ* I 129.5–6 (218 BCE); *CPJ* I 134.29 (c. 100 BCE); *CPJ* I 432.58 (113 CE). A corporate body of Cretans is attested at Tebtynis (*PTebt* I 32), a similar group of Idumeans at Memphis (*OGIS* 737), and another of Cilicians at Krokodilopolis (*IFayum* 15 = *SB* IV 7270). Cf. *PTebt* III 700, lines 38–40 on *politeumata* generally.

<sup>104</sup> On this terminology of interest, see Pestman (1971).

A third document, which is pictured in Figure 8.2, has Judeans at Tebtynis both as creditor and debtor, but, in this case, it seems clear that the two men were also business partners involved in the same occupation. Yet no merchant guild or Judean gathering is mentioned. The witnesses to the contract are also identified as Judeans, potentially belonging to the same group devoted to the Israelite god at a village called Trikomia. Judas son of Josepos, a descendant of military settlers, arranged a loan for Agathokles son of Ptolemy, a Judean belonging to a detachment of the Ptolemaic army (*CPJ* I 24 = *PTebt* III 818; 174 BCE).<sup>105</sup> The contract clarifies that Agathokles had previously received a loan of 5 talents (= 30,000 bronze drachmas) from Judas 'as an advance towards a retail trade business in partnership (*eis probolēn koinēs ergasias meatbolikēs*)' (lines 17–18). This amounts to about 250 silver drachmas at the 120:1 ratio common in this era. It seems that only 17,500 bronze drachmas had actually been used, and so the remaining 12,500 was to be returned to Judas. The new contract arranged to give Agathokles an additional year to repay the 2 talents (= 12,000 bronze drachmas) and 500 bronze drachmas at the standard 24 per cent interest rate. The debt would be increased by half if not paid within the year, again typical for this part of Egypt. Although these were by no means interest-free loans, these three cases nonetheless point to members of the same ethnic group gaining access to material resources from other adherents of the Israelite god and, potentially, affiliates of the same prayer-houses or gatherings.

The instances of mutual aid we have observed among Egyptian associations and the Hellenistic practice of gathering together a friendly loan shed light on some cases of manumission that involve associations of those devoted to the Israelite god.<sup>106</sup> It is important at least to note imperial rulings summarized in the *Digest* which presume that a partnership (*corpus*) or association (*collegium*), like a city, could corporately own and manumit enslaved persons, at least by the time of Ulpian (c. 170–223 CE; *AGRW* L49 = *Digest* 2.4.10.4). This presumes that manumission by an association was quite common, and we have already seen instances from Attica in an earlier era. There is, in fact, at least one very clear (although late) instance of enslaved Judeans being manumitted using resources from the common fund of a Judean 'gathering' (*synagōgē*). This late-third-century CE papyrus comes from Oxyrhynchos, south of the Arsinoites district (*GRA* III 276 = *POxy* IX 1205 = *CPJ* III 473; 291 CE). Although the deed is quite heavily damaged on the left side, some important features of the legal action are discernible: two siblings (belonging to a family of Aurelii), who were related to a village official (*exēgētēs*) and are *not* identified as Judeans, manumit (*eleutherōsis*) and release (*apōlysis*) their house-born enslaved person (*oikogenē doulēn*), who was named Paramone (literally, 'Possessed'), as well as her two (or three) young children (ages 4 and 10). Most importantly for us here, the apparently large amount for the manumission of these three enslaved persons – 14 talents (= 84,000 drachmas), perhaps at a time of fivefold inflation – was paid 'by the gathering of the Judeans' (*para tēs syna[g]ōgēs tōn*

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Modrzejewski (1997: 115–20).

<sup>106</sup> Harrill (1998).



**Figure 8.2** Loan agreement involving Josepos and Agathokles (*PTebt* III 818). Courtesy of the Center for the Tebtunis Papyri, University of California, Berkeley.

*Ioudaiōn*, line 7).<sup>107</sup> It is not clear whether these communal funds were drawn from the normal resources in the group's treasury or whether a special collection or friendly loan was raised for the occasion, as in some cases of manumission in Attica.

Unlike this Oxyrhynchos case, none of the Judean manumission inscriptions from the Bosporan region (southern Russia) directly refers to the use of communal funds to

<sup>107</sup> Alfred Wassink's (1991) evaluation of inflation and prices in the third century proposes a fivefold decrease in the value of the denarius from 215–293 CE, which, if correct, would explain this large figure. For somewhat different evaluations of inflation, see Rathbone et al. (2009: 323), Scheidel (2010: 428), Jones (1953). On Judeans at Oxyrhynchos, see also *POxy* II 335.



pay for manumission. But there the Judeans were the enslavers, not the enslaved (see *GRA* II 95 for a full discussion). It may well be that raising a fund to assist friends or fellow immigrants in gaining manumission was more widely practised by Judean associations, but our sources do not allow us to be confident in this regard. Generally speaking, as far as we have been able to determine, the surviving materials for Judean or other immigrant associations do not happen to supply further glimpses into this or other practices of mutual material assistance, beyond provisions associated with burial.

## Groups of Jesus adherents

Recognizable evidence for groups dedicated to both the Israelite god and Jesus in the first two centuries is almost entirely literary. So we have virtually no distinguishable epigraphic, papyrological or archaeological sources pertaining to social activities and mutual assistance among members of these groups for the first two centuries. To put it another way, if material evidence was all we had, we would have to admit that there was far more evidence for mutual aid (or ‘charity’ if you prefer) among some ‘pagan’ associations than there was for groups focused on Jesus. Yet we do have literary evidence, evidence of a kind that is almost entirely absent for other types of associations. For instance, *letters* by leaders of an association to its members are few and far between in the first two centuries beyond groups of philosophers and associations devoted to the Israelite god or Jesus.<sup>108</sup>

There are significant references to mutual assistance in the literary sources, including assistance that overlaps with some of the practices we have witnessed within other associations.<sup>109</sup> Unfortunately for the social historian interested in cultural practices and social interactions, this literary evidence is prescriptive or reactionary, coming from the perspective of a particular literate individual, rather than the group as whole (unlike collectively established association regulations). This literature is *prescriptive* in advocating certain behaviours among adherents. Yet, unlike the prescriptive association regulations that specify fines and take a sort of legal force within the group, for instance, it is difficult to assess how important or how well implemented such prescriptions by a literate individual were in social interactions. Or the literature is *reactionary* in defending adherents of Jesus against the negative perceptions or accusations of ‘crimes’ by some outsiders – accusations of human sacrifice, cannibalism and incest among the more dramatic ones. Neither type of source is particularly helpful for the historian who aims to reconstruct a likely scenario regarding social practices among participants in the groups in question. Although the negative stereotypes that draw on ethnographic discourses are likely based on ignorance (rather than misunderstanding, as previously

<sup>108</sup> Do, however, see *AGRW* 289 = *PMich* IX 575, from Karanis in Egypt (see Chapter 5) and *GRA* III 215 = *PLips* II 131, from first-century Tebtynis (letter opening only).

<sup>109</sup> The focus here is on practices rather than ideological explanations or justifications offered by ancient authors regarding such behaviours. For recent studies of ideological factors surrounding Judean concepts of ‘almsgiving’ or ‘charity’, see, among others, Garrison (1993), Meeks (1993), Finn (2006), Hays (2009), Downs (2011), Gray (2011).

believed), the characterizations show that devotees of Jesus, like some Judeans, could be viewed as morally base and uncivilized in their practices, rather than as paragons of virtue or mutualism.<sup>110</sup> The retorsion argument of many apologetic writers was precisely to turn these accusations on the accusers, with those outside the group being portrayed in similarly negative terms (e.g. Minucius Felix, *Octavius*). Similarly, those with one style of following Jesus could sling accusations of unethical or abhorrent behaviours against those with another style. Yet the social historian needs to refrain both from taking sides in rhetorical battles and from uncritically adopting the moralizing perspectives of our historical subjects.

Having made these preliminary comments, we can move on to the point that both prescriptive and apologetic literary sources by educated followers of Jesus in the first two centuries clearly present the *ideal* of mutual aid as central to group self-understanding. It is difficult to measure the degree to which this ideal was reflected in social practice, however, and repetition of the prescriptions suggests that behaviours did not line up with the ideal. The author of *2 Clement*, for instance, worries about perceptions by outsiders: 'When they see that we not only do not love those who hate us, but do not even love those who love us, they mock us and the name ["Christian"] is slandered' (*2 Clement* 13.4).

Still, there are numerous positive calls for mutual aid of various sorts in these literary sources. Building on teachings attributed to Jesus – which themselves were based upon Israelite and second temple Judean tradition (see especially, Ex 22:20–36) – these literate authors sought, in part, to encourage people to help fellow adherents in material ways. These teachings included the call to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Matt 22:39 // Leviticus 19:18); to 'give to every one who begs from you' (Lk 6:30 // Tobit 4:7, 16; 12:8–10); to 'love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return' (Lk 6:35 // Ex 22:24; Lev 25:35–7; Deut 23:20–1); and, to feed the hungry and visit the imprisoned (Matt 25:34–6). In some early ethical teaching (and contemporary Judean parenesis), the concern of the Pentateuch, Israelite prophets and writings (as well as Ancient Near Eastern literature, generally) for 'the widow', 'the orphan' and 'the poor' are echoed as well.<sup>111</sup> This particular emphasis on these three subgroups as worthy of special assistance is, then, specific to some Israelite or Judean cultural traditions and these traditions were inherited by certain followers of Jesus. Orphans and widows do not appear as a focus of attention in any sources relating to non-Judean associations, but nor do they appear as a focus of attention in the authentic letters of Paul, for instance.

It should be clarified that this chapter is *not* concentrated on rhetorical tendencies, attitudes or ideologies about 'the poor' or about wealth, which have been the focus of many useful studies.<sup>112</sup> The focus here is rather on signs that members of a group engaged in *practices and behaviours* to materially support other participants in the same group, including but not limited to poor members. Here we can only be selective

<sup>110</sup> On the ethnographic cultural context of such accusations, see Harland (2009: 161–81).

<sup>111</sup> On the relation between prescriptions and social practice among the Israelites or Judeans, see Sneed (1999), Schmidt (1983), Downing (1985), Peterman (1997: 42–9). Cf. *Sirach* 35.14–26.

<sup>112</sup> E.g. González (1990), Holman (2008), Longenecker and Liebengood (2009), Rhee (2012).

in sketching out some examples of calls to mutual aid with material implications, observing the difficulties in moving from rhetoric to social interactions.

The letters of Paul are, of course, filled with moral exhortations aimed at promoting certain behaviours among members of these groups, and there are clear signs that mutual assistance plays a role. Building on Denise Kimber Buell's study, Ryan Schellenberg's recent work helpfully engages the question of whether Paul's admonitions to materially help others are aimed primarily at wealthier members who are to help less well-off members in the form of 'charity' or 'almsgiving' (as Longenecker tends to assume) or whether Paul anticipates those with lesser means sharing with one another.<sup>113</sup> Schellenberg stresses mutualism or sharing among those of somewhat equal means as the principal focus of the exhortations. In the previous chapter, we have already explored the collection of money in Pauline assemblies to send to 'the poor' in Jerusalem, which may or may not be a reference to those who were literally poor in a material sense. Paul gives the impression of success in actually raising the funds for this collection among assemblies in at least Macedonia and Attica.

As to the question of whether adherents addressed by the letters actually engaged in the other mutually supportive behaviours Paul advocates, it is difficult to determine. For there are both signs of divergence from Paul's way (as with contingents at Corinth) and apparently enthusiastic adoption of his advice on certain issues (as at Thessalonica and Philippi). Paul's characterization of the situation at Corinth leaves the impression that mutual enmity and rivalries were at times more prevalent than mutual support in some circles, particularly among some of the 'noble' (*eugenēs*) adherents at Corinth.<sup>114</sup> Paul raises concerns about his recipients taking disputes to civic authorities in Corinth. He advises that disagreements among members should be handled internally, which is a concern we have witnessed in connection with other associations (1 Cor 6:1–11). The communal meals at Corinth are, in Paul's view, another place where divisions rather than mutuality prevails, as 'each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk' (1 Cor 11:21). This rings of concerns over taking one another's place and engaging in disputes at banquets of other associations as witnessed in regulations.

Other Pauline letters give the impression that some adherents were more in line with Paul's advice about how to assist and treat one another. Paul's moral exhortations in what is likely his earliest letter (c. 50 CE) are focused, as often, on sexual restraint (1 Thess 4:1–8). But there is the call to continue to 'love one another' (4:9) and the frequent use of fictive familial language ('brothers') seemingly to underline that point. There is a lack of any clear prescriptions pertaining to material assistance among members at Thessalonica (based on 1 Thess), however. Paul's letter to the group at Philippi centres on praising the recipients as a concrete model of material aid in financially supporting Paul's own teaching activities, providing gifts or benefactions on several occasions. Yet, here, very little is said regarding similar practices between members. Finally, Paul's letter to Rome once again elicits the metaphor of the body to express the mutuality that

<sup>113</sup> Schellenberg (2018). Cf. Buell (2008).

<sup>114</sup> See, for instance, Marshall (1987), Chow (1992), Clarke (1993).

he hoped would exist, although with few specific instructions, perhaps due in part to the fact that Paul did not know this group as well as others (Rom 12:4–5; cf. 1 Cor 12:12–31). So Paul's letters do provide a window into both the ideal (Paul's promotion of what he considered mutual support) and the real (certain contingents at odds with one another or at odds with Paul himself) within groups in the mid-first century.

Since we have often been dealing with regulations, it might be appropriate to turn to signs of mutual material assistance within our earliest surviving regulation used by Jesus adherents, the *Didache* or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. This writing, which likely dates to the first half of the second century and originates in Syria, begins by echoing back precisely such prescriptive teachings attributed to Jesus as those mentioned earlier (those presented in some of the biographies or 'gospels' of Jesus). In particular, the regulation emphasizes the need to give without expecting in return, but also adds a warning against any member receiving when not in need (*Didache* 1.1–6; cf. 15.4). The author (or authors) returns again to the issue of giving to other adherents or partners (*koinōnoi*), stating that: 'you shall not turn away from someone in need, but shall share everything with your brother, and not claim that anything is your own' (*Didache* 4.8).<sup>115</sup> Buell's study of this and other similar passages draws attention to the fact that this is not necessarily envisioned as a case of 'charity' in the sense of a wealthier person helping a poorer member, but rather a case of mutual support among those in less secure material circumstances. She thinks this is focused on those 'at or near subsistence'.<sup>116</sup> In particular, the broader context of the *Didache* passage suggests it is those engaged in manual labour – those who acquire resources through working with their hands (*dia tōn cheirōn*) – that are the target of the prescription (*Didache* 4.5–6). Similarly, the *Shepherd of Hermas* (*Similitudes* 5.3.6) pictures a scenario in which a follower of Jesus engaged in fasting (on bread and water) would save the money usually used for other food in that same period in order to offer it to a widow, orphan or someone else who was 'falling behind' in material needs. This, too, implies that the giver would not usually have excess funds to support other members and would only possess modest material means.

There is a counterbalance to the *Didache's* call to give, however, in the warning about adherents from elsewhere who accept material assistance while travelling: 'If the one who comes is merely passing through, assist him as much as you can. But he must not stay with you for more than two or, if necessary, three days. However, if he wishes to settle among you and is a craftsman, let him work for his living' (*Didache* 12.1–3; cf. *Didascalica Apostolorum* 17). So there are limits attached to the call for socioeconomic aid in some cases.

In this regulation, there are no references to the group's potential role in burial. Nor are there any references to loaning practices (interest-free or interest-bearing) among members which, potentially, could have been founded upon sayings attributed to Jesus mentioned earlier (e.g. Lk 6:32–5), if known to the author of the *Didache*.<sup>117</sup> While the *Didache* does not deal with helping those in prison, the later *Didascalica* (third century CE),

<sup>115</sup> Cf. *Epistle of Barnabas* 19.9–12; 2 *Clement* 16.1–4; *Sirach* 4.31; Downs (2011).

<sup>116</sup> Buell (2008). Cf. Schellenberg (2018).

<sup>117</sup> Later guilds consisting of Christians continued to offer members loans: e.g. *PStrass* IV 287, from the sixth century CE. Cf. Fikhman (1994: 37).

which builds on the *Didache* in other respects and also pertains to Syria, does provide instructions to leaders (overseers) to assist members who were imprisoned unjustly (*Didascalia apostolorum* 19). There are also guidelines for helping widows and orphans in that later work (*Didascalia apostolorum* 17–18). In both of these regulatory documents, the calls for action are aimed at assisting the poor and others within the group, not outsiders.

Similar to Paul in certain respects, Ignatius of Antioch's letters (written around 110 CE) are filled with the call to harmony among members of the groups he addresses. But this is harmony of a particular sort under the authority of a threefold hierarchical structure of 'overseer' (bishop), 'elders' (presbyters) and 'servants' (deacons). Furthermore, this is concord united against certain alternate or 'evil' teachings, particularly teachings among those who adopt a certain approach to Judean scriptures (at Philadelphia) and those who say that Jesus only *appeared* to suffer or have a full fleshly existence (at Smyrna). In fact, there are very few passages in Ignatius' letters to the assemblies in Asia aimed at advocating material support among members. This may be due, in part, to the fact that Ignatius is far more concerned that his recipients reject those who espouse 'evil' teachings and accompanying practices.

Among his complaints about those who hold alternate opinions (*hoi heterodoxountoi*) – probably those who downplay Jesus' fleshly existence and suffering, in this case – is that such people do not engage in mutual assistance of fellow members. Ignatius (knowingly or unknowingly) echoes the Israelite prophetic tradition: 'They have no concern for love, none for the widow, none for the orphan, none for the oppressed, none for the prisoner or the one released, none for the hungry or thirsty' (*Smyrna* 6.2).<sup>118</sup> Here, Ignatius is listing what he does expect of his recipients, and it is worth noticing that practical help (or 'love', to use his terms) for those who had been imprisoned is included. This practice of accusing alternative groups devoted to Jesus with failure to engage in ethical behaviour, particularly mutual aid, becomes somewhat standard in the literature and, of course, cannot be taken at face value.<sup>119</sup> With respect to Ignatius' reference to captives, we have seen that regulations of associations in Egypt in particular emphasize the need to help fellow members imprisoned due to debt or other issues, and at least one inscription from Attica echoed such expectations.

Among the purposes of friendly loans in Attica and at Delphi was to raise funds to assist an enslaved person seeking manumission. We have seen similar collective action by a Judean association at Oxyrhynchos. Ignatius' letter to Polycarp, the overseer of a group at Smyrna, is among the earliest pieces of evidence that deal directly with the issue of using *communal funds* to support certain members of groups devoted to Jesus. The focus in this passage is on widows, on the one hand, and enslaved persons seeking manumission, on the other (*Polycarp* 4.1, 3):

<sup>118</sup> Cf. *Polycarp* 4.1, on widows; 1 John 3:17; *Shepherd of Hermas* 38.10.

<sup>119</sup> See Harland (2009: 178–9). Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 26.3–5; *Gospel of Judas* 39.12–23.

Do not let the widows be neglected. After the Lord, you be their guardian. Let nothing happen without your decree . . . Do not treat slaves, whether male or female, arrogantly, but neither let them be full of themselves. Instead, let them serve even more for the glory of god, that they may obtain from god a better freedom. *They should not desire to be set free using the common fund*, so that they may not be discovered to be slaves of desire (*mē eratōsan apo tou koinou eleutherousthai, hina mē douloi eurethōsin epithymias*).

This passage has been explored at length in an insightful study by Albert Harrill, which need not be rehearsed here, except to address some relevant issues.<sup>120</sup>

We have already explained the importance of the friendly loan or collection raised by an association, sometimes to help someone in dire straits. In certain cases, the funds gathered in such a financial collection could be used to manumit someone who was enslaved. Regardless of the reasons for Ignatius doing so (some of which Harrill attempts to reconstruct), what is clear is that Ignatius is here *forbidding* the use of communal money to sponsor the manumission of enslaved persons who were participants in the group. In this sense, it seems he is going against the grain of expectations of mutual aid by members in some other associations and within assemblies devoted to Jesus at Smyrna. Still, in Ignatius' view, such communal funds *were* supposed to be used to support widows, a view shared by the author of the Pastoral epistles in cases where a 'real' widow did not have family members to financially support her (1 Tim 5:3–16); however, like Ignatius' concern that communal funds not be 'misused', the author of 1 Timothy stresses the primary importance of family members (5:8, 16) in financially supporting (at least younger) widows so that they would not be a financial burden on the assembly.<sup>121</sup> So there are restrictions on the use of communal funds to assist participants in both cases. Ignatius himself denies one form of socioeconomic assistance while affirming another, but the reasons for this variation are less than clear, in our view.

Nonetheless, the fact that Ignatius speaks directly against a specific practice implies that, on some occasions and in some groups devoted to Jesus, resources from the common fund or a specific collection were, in fact, being used for this purpose in keeping with local cultural custom. With respect to enslaved people in such groups of Jesus adherents, more commonly attested than this practice of manumission is the call for the enslavers 'to persuade [slaves] to become Christians, and when they have done so to call them "brothers" without distinction', as in Aristides' *Apology* (15, echoing Paul's letter to Philemon in some respects).

The apologetic literature provides further references to the sorts of social capital that was accessible to members of these associations devoted to Jesus. Petitions (real or fictive) to emperors by authors such as Aristides (c. 117–138 CE) and Justin Martyr (c. 155 CE) were often concerned to refute rumours of improper behaviours among adherents, the most extreme ones being the accusations of human sacrifice, cannibalism and incest directly addressed by Justin (cf. *Letter of the Churches of Lyons*; Minucius

<sup>120</sup> Harrill (1993) = *ibid.* (1998).

<sup>121</sup> On which, see, most recently, LaFosse (2011).

Felix, *Octavius*). The response was to assert positive models of behaviour as the norm, with the implication being that outsiders would see such behaviour as in some sense positive or at least *normal* on local Greek standards (cf. 1 Peter 2:11–3:22). Both Aristides and Justin echo passages in the Judean scriptures in claiming that groups devoted to Jesus would regularly offer financial aid to certain adherents, including widows, orphans, the poor and ‘strangers’ from other communities (Aristides, *Apology* 15; Justin, *First Apology* 67). Both also suggest that captives or the imprisoned would likewise receive help (cf. *1 Clement* 55:2).

Justin clarifies what he sees as the common procedure for raising funds to support these people in difficult circumstances. On the main day of meeting, Sunday,

those who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks appropriate. What is collected is deposited with the president (*to syllegomenon para tō proestōti apotithetai*). He supports the orphans and widows; those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in need; those who are in bonds; and, the foreigners travelling among us. In general, he takes care of all who are in need.

*First Apology* 67.6–7

This pictures members regularly – weekly – engaging in collections with the money being deposited in a common fund or treasury maintained by a functionary, who was responsible for redistribution to members in need. Although expressing the ideal in grander terms, it is also worth mentioning that the author of Luke-Acts claims that the earliest followers of Jesus in Jerusalem formed a common fund which was used to support any who had need (see also Chapter 3). Yet this is portrayed as a pooling of resources and possessions in a context where everything ‘was held in common’ (Acts 4:32–5).<sup>122</sup>

For associations in Egypt, we have seen that there was a concern to assist members who had been imprisoned. As Carolyn Osiek’s study shows, the call for adherents of Jesus to rescue or give aid to captives or prisoners, in particular, is commonly attested in the literature.<sup>123</sup> This call may, at times, be closely connected to Israelite traditions on the positive treatment of captives and the enslaved (Lev 25:42, 55; Deut 15:15). There is some confirmation that the moral exhortations were, at times, heeded. Paul’s more incidental references to receiving assistance to meet his needs while in prison are suggestive (e.g. Phil 3:19–30).

Yet, perhaps the most solid evidence in confirming actual practice among Jesus adherents in helping those captive or imprisoned comes from an outsider, Lucian of Samosata (*Peregrinus* 11–13). Lucian’s satire has the Cynic philosopher Peregrinus, during his time as prophet and leader of the ‘Christians’, being helped while in prison. The adherents are pictured leaving ‘nothing undone in the effort to rescue him’. According to Lucian, adherents brought meals to him in prison and others came to him from cities of Asia with expenses drawn ‘from the common fund’ (*apo tou koinou*) of their society. Supplying meals was among the expectations of associates assisting others in prison in the Demotic regulations discussed earlier.

<sup>122</sup> On the relation between this rhetoric and reality, see Sterling (1994; contrast Bartchy, 1991).

<sup>123</sup> Osiek (1981). E.g. Matthew 25:36, 39, 43; Hebrews 13:3 and 10:34; *1 Clement* 55.2 and 59.4; Ignatius, *Smyrnaeans* 6.2; *Shepherd of Hermas* 8.10.

Defenders of those devoted to Jesus, such as Aristides and Tertullian, also claim that these groups provided burial for those who could not readily pay for a proper funeral. Aristides writes that: ‘whenever one of their poor passes from the world, each one of them according to his ability gives heed to him and carefully sees to his burial’ (*Apology* 15; cf. Tertullian, *Scapula* 4). When arguing that the Christian association (*secta, factio*) should be considered legitimate and, in fact, beneficial rather than harmful, Tertullian points out that this association had a ‘treasury’ (*arca*). This was a treasury where monthly – rather than weekly, as in Justin’s scenario – voluntary donations were gathered as ‘deposits of piety’ (*Apology* 39.5–6; trans. LCL):

Even if there is a treasury (*arcae*) of some sort, it does not collect money paid in entrance fees (*honoraria*), as if conscientiousness (*religio*) could be bought. Once a month, everyone brings some modest amount – or whenever he wants, and only if he wants and if he is able. For nobody is forced to do this, and it is voluntary. You might call them the deposits of piety. In fact, these funds are not spent on banquets, drinking, or unpleasant taverns, but on feeding and burying the poor, on boys and girls who do not have parents, on aged domestic slaves, on shipwrecked persons, and on any who are in the mines, on islands, or in prisons, provided that they are in such places for the sake of god’s sect (*secta*).

The description here makes it very clear that this is indeed a picture of mutual aid among fellow adherents (‘brothers’, as Tertullian goes on to say). This is not a vision of adherents helping outsiders, it should be clarified.

Burying the poor was an important part of this situation. Our earliest examples of memorial tombs for followers of Jesus suggest that, like other associations, the common funds of assemblies could at times be used to pay for a memorial or casket for a member or leader. One of the earliest tombs identifiable as belonging to a Jesus adherent, dating to about 200–210 CE, comes from Temenothyrai in Lydia. This involves the use of ‘the Lord’s fund’ (*ek tou kyriakou*) to supply a well-decorated memorial for an overseer (*episkopos*), although we could suppose that, in theory, he may have been a ‘poor’ one.<sup>124</sup> In many other cases, adherents of these groups, like others in the ancient Mediterranean, followed the pattern of burial by family rather than by association. Nonetheless, associates in many groups could still offer moral support by attending the funeral, by holding a feast in the deceased’s honour, or by coming to the site on subsequent occasions to remember the dead and care for the grave.

## Conclusion

As with many things in ancient history, we only have partial access to practices of mutual material assistance within some associations, Judean gatherings and groups devoted to Jesus. Certain types of evidence, such as the papyri, provide more detailed information for certain associations, while epigraphy supplements the picture for

<sup>124</sup> Tabbernee (1997: no. 3).



places outside of Egypt. For those groups devoted to the Israelite god, we often need to rely largely on literary exhortations or on representations of ideal behaviours, although these sources, too, provide insight into the possibilities. While the papyri sometimes shed light on socioeconomic interactions among members of Egyptian associations, it is difficult to evaluate the relation between prescriptive exhortations or reactive apologetics in literature, on the one hand, and day-to-day social conditions, on the other. And yet the momentary glimpses into social life these limited materials offer do begin to indicate that mutual assistance was an important principle at work within a significant number of groups, whether devoted to the Israelite god or not.

There were three types of activities pertaining to socioeconomic assistance that we first witnessed in the Demotic regulations of Ptolemaic Egypt: providing funds or loans to fellow adherents in need; coming to a member's aid when that member faced legal or other difficult situations, including imprisonment; and, attending or ensuring an appropriate funeral or burial after death. These three echoed back in materials from subsequent centuries and from other parts of the Greek-speaking eastern Mediterranean, even though the evidence is, unfortunately, partial. These three areas of mutual assistance show how closely knit social ties could provide access to social capital in the ancient context, contributing to the longevity of certain associations.