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Claiming a Place in Polis and Empire:
The Significance of Imperial Cults and Connections among Associations, Synagogues and Christian Groups in Roman Asia
(c. 27 BCE-138 CE)

by

Philip A. Harland

A Thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Centre for the Study of Religion
University of Toronto

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Abstract

Claiming a Place in Polis and Empire: The Significance of Imperial Cults and Connections among Associations, Synagogues and Christian Groups in Roman Asia (c. 27 BCE-138 CE)

Ph.D., 1999
Philip A. Harland
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This study is concerned with assessing and comparing the place of small, unofficial social-religious groups, including associations, synagogues and Christian assemblies, within the framework of the polis under Roman rule. More specifically, it focuses on the significance of imperial cults, honours and connections for the external relations and internal life of these groups in the Roman province of Asia, concentrating primarily on the period from Augustus to Hadrian. In the process the study sheds light on Christian literature pertinent to Asia Minor, including 1 Peter, John’s Apocalypse, the Pastoral epistles, Ignatius’ epistles, the Martyrdom of Polycarp, and the Acts of Paul.

The central argument is that associations in Roman Asia, including some Jewish and Christian groups, could in varying ways participate within certain areas of life in the polis under Roman rule, including involvements in imperial cults, honours and connections. Associations were not, as often assumed, subversive groups in consistent tension with polis and empire. Comparing the concrete imperial-related practices of diverse associations with those of diverse Jewish and Christian groups draws attention to both similarities and differences in group-society relations. This aids us in locating these groups within the social and cultural framework of the polis in Roman Asia. Moreover, the manner in which Jewish and Christian groups are often categorized as sects in conflict with society acts as a hindrance to perceiving the more complex spectrum of possibilities in group-society relations. Overall, this study utilizes inscriptive evidence in order to compare actual associations with Jewish and Christian groups, rather than merely theorizing in a vacuum when it comes to understanding the relationships between Jewish and Christian groups and various dimensions of society and culture.
For Teresa, with love
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Introduction

A visit to Roman Ephesos

Travelling through a city of western Asia Minor in Roman times one would encounter an array of monuments, statues, and other structures indicative of the varied dimensions of social and religious life among the populace. Among the messages communicated by this cultural landscape would be the significance of the Roman emperors and officials—and honours for them—within the life of the polis (city), but also within the lives of small local social-religious groups, namely guilds and associations. A brief visit to Ephesos in the second century with an eye for small group life is illustrative of the neglected issues concerning group-society relations that will occupy us throughout this study.

Docking at the harbour of Ephesos, we cannot help but notice the nearby fishery toll-office, where an impressive plaque of blue marble lists the donations by members of an association of fishermen, along with their families. Among those honoured by this construction are the emperor Nero and members of his family, as well as both the Romans and the Ephesians. Looking closer, one discovers an Egyptian goddess watching over and protecting those who engage in business here. The statue of Isis was donated to the workers in the toll-office by a wealthy woman, who dedicated it to Ephesos’ patron deity, Artemis, and to the emperor.

Walking along harbour street towards the theatre, we happen upon a stall near the market reserved for the guild of silversmiths. The author of Acts relates a story when the silversmiths and other craftsmen at Ephesos were involved in a civic disturbance in defense of the city’s patron deity, Artemis. The presence and significance of the silversmiths’ guild at Ephesos becomes clearer as we encounter several monuments during our visit, including epitaphs and honours. Among them is an honorary inscription for an important civic official who was also high-priest of the provincial imperial cult of Asia.
This inscription was erected during the principate of Domitian, when an imposing provincial imperial cult temple was built in the upper section of Ephesos in honour of the "revered gods" (Σεβαστοί), the emperors and members of the imperial family.

If we had made a similar visit to Akmeania, further inland in Asia, we might have noticed two monuments in honour of another prominent person who was also an imperial cult functionary, these ones set up by a local elders' association and a Jewish synagogue respectively. Alongside other benefactors, the synagogue honoured Julia Severa, a wealthy woman of the civic elites who was also high-priestess in the local civic cult of the imperial gods. These Jews were not alone in engaging in such imperial connections or honours, as a plaque displayed within the provincial imperial cult temple at Pergamon would show, this one involving Jews' honours for the emperor Augustus.

Further on in our journey through Ephesos we encounter another monument from about the same time period as the silversmiths' honours. The Demeter-worshippers, it tells us, had written a letter to the governor of Roman Asia. They had requested and received special recognition of a yearly celebration in which they performed "mysteries and sacrifices" not only for their patron deity but also in honour of the revered imperial gods, the emperors.

Unless we happened to be acquainted with local, inconspicuous groups of Christ-worshippers, we would not know that (also in the late-first century) two leaders had written to Christian and Jewish-Christian groups living in Ephesos and elsewhere in Asia Minor. One exhorted them to "honour the emperor" (1 Peter) and the other warned them against the dangers of "worshipping the beast" (John's Apocalypse). Attention to how these contrasting Christian approaches to imperial dimensions of life within the polis compare to the range of concrete practices among other associations may tell us something about the place of diverse Christian groups within society.
Scope and thesis of this study

Our brief visit to Ephesos provides us with glimpses into the social-cultural world of the polis in the Roman province of Asia (western Asia Minor), the same world in which Jewish and Christian groups lived and developed alongside many other associations and guilds. This visit raises subjects that will occupy us throughout this work. The present study is concerned with assessing and comparing the place of small, unofficial social-religious groups, including associations, synagogues and Christian groups, within the framework of the polis under Roman rule. More specifically, it focuses on the significance of imperial cults, honours and connections in the external relations and internal life of these groups. In the process the study sheds light on Christian literature pertinent to Roman Asia Minor, including 1 Peter, John’s Apocalypse, the Pastoral epistles, Ignatius’ epistles, the Martyrdom of Polycarp, and the Acts of Paul. Attention to the role of imperial honours, cults and connections among associations, synagogues and Christian groups reveals something about where these groups fit within society, but it also tells us something about the nature of society, religion and culture in Roman Asia from the time of Augustus to that of Hadrian (27 BCE-138 CE).

The central thesis of this study is that associations in Roman Asia, including some Jewish and Christian groups, could in varying ways participate within certain areas of life in the polis under Roman rule, including involvements in imperial cults, honours and connections. Associations were not, as often assumed, subversive groups in consistent tension with polis and empire. Rather, despite occasional involvements in civic disturbances, there was ongoing positive relations between these groups and society. Comparing the concrete imperial-related practices of diverse associations with those of diverse Jewish and Christian groups draws attention to both similarities and differences in group-society relations. This aids us in locating these diverse groups within the social and cultural framework of the polis in Roman Asia. Moreover, one of the most important contributions of
this study pertains to its utilization of extensive inscriptive evidence in order to compare actual associations with Jewish and Christian groups, rather than merely theorizing in a vacuum when it comes to understanding the relationships between Jewish and Christian groups and various dimensions of society.

Moreover, the manner in which Jewish and Christian groups are often categorized as sects in conflict with society acts as a hindrance to perceiving the more complex spectrum of possibilities in group-society relations. There was a range of perspectives and practices among Jews and Christians with regard to separation from or involvements in various aspects of society, including imperial honours and connections. Virtually all Jews and Christians rejected active participation in cultic honours (involving rituals that placed the emperors in the realm of the gods). But there was variety with regard to involvements in other aspects of civic life, including other non-cultic forms of imperial honours or connections. The author of the Apocalypse, on the one hand, clearly condemned any form of honouring the emperor (the beast in league with Satan in his view), and he also took a sectarian stance in speaking against other social, religious, and economic contacts with imperial aspects of civic life. The Nicolaitan opponents of John, on the other, were more open towards participating within some areas of life within the polis, including communal meals with fellow inhabitants and probably some imperial-related practices. Many other Christians and Jews likewise took a more moderate position with regard to participation in other forms of imperial honours and connections. Inscriptional evidence shows that some Jewish groups did maintain connections with and honour imperial officials and emperors. In contrast to the Apocalypse, the authors of 1 Peter and the Pastoral epistles encouraged the Christians in Asia Minor to honour or pray for the emperor. Attention to these and other imperial-related practices among associations, synagogues and Christian groups tells us something about the various mechanisms involved in these groups claiming a place within polis and empire.
Filling a lacuna in scholarship: Identifying the problem

The need for such a comparative, social-historical study of associations becomes apparent when we look at several areas of scholarship with attention to some of the problems that this study works to resolve. In subsequent chapters I deal more fully with the history of scholarship in the following areas, but for now a brief outline will be useful. Associations or collegia have drawn some attention from scholars since the height of their study around the turn of the twentieth century, which witnessed the production of the foundational studies of Paul Foucart (1873), Wilhelm Liebenam (1890), Erich Ziebarth (1896), Jean-Pierre Waltzing (1895-1900), Franz Poland (1909), and Mariano San Nicolò (1912-13). Until recent years, however, most studies by scholars of ancient history have focussed on the legal situation and organizational characteristics of associations; few have approached these groups with social-historical questions concerning group-society relations in mind, and there is a lack of studies on a local or regional basis. Although associations have also drawn the attention of scholars of early Christianity (especially since the 1970s), few have studied associations on their own terms and none have attempted a comparative, social-historical study of Jewish, Christian and Greco-Roman groups with regard to group-society relations or imperial aspects of society.

Moreover, when it comes to questions of how such groups related to the society and culture of polis and empire, there are widespread assumptions within scholarship

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1 Mommsen (1843) focussed on legislative matters, and several other scholars followed this path as well (Conrat 1873; Gierke 1881; Radin 1910; Carolsfeld 1933; Duff 1938). Foucart (1873) focussed on the internal life and organization of associations, and others have pursued this further (cf. Shiess 1888; Liebenam 1890; Waltzing 1895-1900; Ziebarth 1896; Kornemann 1901; Dill 1904; Müller 1905, 1912a, 1912b; Oehler 1893, 1905; Poland 1909; San Nicolò 1912-13; Calhoun 1913). The period from 1920s to the 1960s was relatively subdued, though several articles and studies discussed associations (cf. Tod 1933; Roberts, Skeat and Nock 1936; Ferguson and Nock 1944; Preaux 1948; Shertl 1949; Nilsson 1957). The renewed interest in social history since the 1960s has been accompanied by attention to associations among scholars of ancient history (cf. MacMullen 1966, 1974b; Schulz-Falkenthal 1966, 1971, 1973; Ausbüttel 1982; Fellmeth 1987, 1990; Fisher 1988a, 1988b; van Nijf 1997).
which presuppose antagonistic relations. Scholars say far less, if anything, of what we encountered in our walk through Ephesos than they do of the occasions when associations became involved in disturbances that sometimes brought controlling actions by civic or imperial authorities. Most common are notions that associations were subversive and that the negative dimensions of group-society relations predominated. G.E.M. de Ste. Croix (1981), for instance, includes associations among the lower class means of social protest, discussing them only in terms of their involvement in civic disturbances and stressing the authorities’ suspicion and control of them (1981:273, 318-20). He says nothing of evidence concerning the participation of these same groups within society, including positive interactions with Roman officials and other members of the elites. We shall see that de Ste. Croix is by no means alone in focussing on negative incidents such as civic disturbances and imperial control to the neglect of other dimensions of group-society relations among associations.

Furthermore, some scholars tend to neglect or downplay the actual significance of the emperors (in a positive way) within the social and religious life of the populace, especially when it comes to assessing imperial cults. M.P. Nilsson (1961:384-94) and G.W. Bowersock (1965:112-21), for instance, characterize imperial cults as solely political phenomena, lacking genuine importance within the lives of the populace in areas like Asia Minor. The present study is indebted to S.R.F. Price’s foundational work, Rituals and power (1984), which marks a turning point in the study of imperial cults in Asia Minor. Price and others, such as Steven Friesen (1993) and Stephen Mitchell (1993:1.100-117), are challenging previous assumptions and beginning to emphasize the significance of the emperors within intertwined social, political and religious aspects of life among all social strata of society.

Still, these scholars have not given special attention to associations in this regard. The evidence of associations will provide a new vantage point from which to consider the
significance of cultic honours for the emperors at the local level. Participation or non-participation in such cultic activities will tell us something about where to locate various groups on the cultural map of polis and empire. It will also serve to correct the picture of associations as primarily subversive or anti-Roman groups.

One of the reasons for the unbalanced picture of associations within ancient society and culture relates to a scholarly focus on literary and legal sources to the neglect of epigraphical evidence. Scholars have not adequately addressed the inscriptions which provide important glimpses into the actual ongoing lives of such groups in specific regions and localities. Attention to this evidence will create a more balanced picture of association-life, allowing us to perceive the ongoing positive engagement of many groups with regard to imperial connections and cults within the polis. Epigraphical evidence regarding local social and religious life will also provide an important comparative framework for considering both Jewish and Christian groups living within these contexts.

This brings us, finally, to a central contribution of the present study. Scholars interested in Jewish and Christian groups or literature of Asia Minor have touched on questions of group-society relations, including attitudes towards imperial dimensions of society. However, when it comes to assessing the place of these groups within society and culture in polis and empire there is a tendency to stress conflicts, tensions and separation to the neglect of other aspects of group-society relations.

Scholars interested in Jewish groups of the diaspora have often viewed these groups as isolated and introverted communities living in a hostile environment. Jewish groups were sects in the sense that they were in a consistent state of tension with surrounding society. Victor Tcherikover (1966 [1959]:29), for instance, emphasizes the exclusivity of Jewish synagogues which ensured their protection from the syncretistic influences of an alien, Greco-Roman environment.

However, recent studies of Jewish groups in Roman Asia Minor specifically are beginning to draw a more complicated picture regarding the relationship between these
groups and the *polis*. A.T. Kraabel (1968, 1978) and Paul R. Trebilco (1991), for example, draw attention to neglected evidence which suggests some degree of interaction between diaspora Jews and their Greek neighbours. These scholars point towards the participation of some Jewish groups within civic life in Roman Asia. They argue that some degree of integration within the *polis* did not necessarily mean the dissolution of the group or the loss of Jewish distinctiveness, and I would suggest a similar scenario for Christian groups.

These scholars emphasize the fact that Jewish groups could in important ways find the *polis* to be a home, but they do not focus on the evidence for Jewish groups' involvements in imperial aspects of civic life specifically, including imperial honours and connections. Attention to these imperial-related activities will tell us more about the place of these groups within society and the empire.

Unfortunately, the revised picture of diaspora Jewish groups' place within the *polis* is not usually taken as a cue for reassessing group-society relations among Christian groups. Recent years have seen a growing interest in the social world of Christian literature pertinent to Asia Minor, including 1 Peter, John's Apocalypse, the Pastoral epistles and Ignatius' epistles. But those who consider the issue of group-society relations are preoccupied with the characterization of Christian groups as sectarian in a sociological sense, stressing separation from and non-participation in most or all areas of civic life. The result has been a concentration on the ways in which Christian groups were in tension with surrounding society to the neglect of evidence concerning how they continued to live within the *polis* and empire.

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John H. Elliott's (1990 [1981]) approach to the social situation and strategy of 1 Peter is in some respects representative of a common sectarian-focussed approach to early Christian groups. Employing a sociological model developed by Bryan R. Wilson, Elliott categorizes Christian groups in the provinces of Asia Minor as sects, suggesting further that 1 Peter's strategy is to further heighten the sectarian stance of these groups. Harry O. Maier (1991:163-68) takes a similar approach to the Christian groups in Asia addressed by Ignatius, emphasizing the “sectarian identity of the Asian churches.” For Elliott, the most important characteristics of these sects are their tensions with and separation from society. He stresses that the typical Christian group in Asia Minor was an exclusive “community set apart from the routine affairs of civic and social life” (Elliott 1990 [1981]:79). In this regard, Elliott's characterization of Christian groups stands in continuity with the traditional portrait of group-society relations among Jewish groups.

There are difficulties with this sort of approach. Elliott correctly emphasizes the distinctive identity of the Christian groups such that they distinguished themselves from surrounding society in many respects and refrained from participation in certain areas of life within the polis, especially cultic life. There were also clearly tensions between Christian groups and society. However, the way in which he applies the sectarian model leads him to oversimplify the complexities of group-society relations and to neglect other evidence which does not so readily fit the sectarian model. Although 1 Peter advocates separation from certain aspects of society and culture, there are other values, conventions and practices of civic life which he apparently does accept or even promote. Challenging Elliott's approach, David L. Balch's recent studies (1981, 1986), for example, point instead to some degree of acculturation evident within 1 Peter. This includes the use and adaptation of commonly accepted Greco-Roman values concerning relationships within the household.

But, more importantly for present purposes, there is 1 Peter's advocacy of respecting and honouring the emperor and others in authority (1 Peter 2:11-17). This is a
potential area of participation in civic life that Elliott does not adequately address due to his focus on sectarianism. Looking at this advice to Christian groups in Asia Minor in light of the concrete practices of many other associations and Jewish groups in the same region may draw a more complicated picture regarding the range of possibilities in group-society relations among Christian groups. This will show that the usual sectarian-focused approach does not do justice to all the evidence.

There are similar difficulties with the way in which some scholars approach John’s Apocalypse and its social context. This is a document which is clearly concerned with issues regarding the relationship between Christians and society and about imperial cults and connections specifically (esp. chs. 13, 17-18). The traditional approach to the Apocalypse views the hostile and sectarian perspective of the author as representative of the actual viewpoints and relations of most Christian groups living in the cities of Roman Asia. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1985), for instance, views the futuristic visions involving enforced worship of the beast and martyrdoms as reflective of actual conditions faced by Christians in Asia during the time of Domitian. The Apocalypse’s invective against Rome and the emperors is a “fitting response” to this social-political situation. Most recipients of this writing would have identified with John’s hostile and sectarian perspective in relation to imperial and other dimensions of society. Most Christians, it is suggested, would have remained removed from participation within imperial honours and connections within civic life. This general understanding of the Apocalypse also finds expression in common assumptions within scholarship concerning a fundamental antagonism between early Christianity and the Roman empire generally, which is often expressed in terms of a conflict between the “cult of Christ” (*Christkult*) and the “cult of Caesar” (*Kaiserkult*) *(cf. Deissmann 1995 [1908]; Richard A. Horsley 1997).*

However, this approach to the Apocalypse and to early Christianity is problematic in some important respects. Recent studies by scholars such as Adela Yarbro Collins
(1984) and Leonard L. Thompson (1990) suggest a more complex relation between rhetoric and reality. The futuristic visions of the Apocalypse do not directly represent the actual conditions in Roman Asia in the time of Domitian. There is a lack of evidence for any extensive, imperial-initiated persecution of Christians for this period. Nor is there evidence that Domitian's principate witnessed an increase or fundamental change in the promotion or significance of imperial cults in Asia Minor.

We need to reassess the relationship between John's Apocalypse, life within the Asian churches, and social and cultural realities within the cities of Asia. This is especially true when it comes to issues concerning imperial cults and their significance for early Christianity. We should no longer assume that the sectarian stance and hostile perspectives of the Apocalypse represent actual group-society relations among most Christian groups. Instead, we need to look at a variety of evidence concerning the actual imperial-related practices of Christian groups in Asia, viewing this in light of the activities of both Jewish synagogues and other associations in the same region. We shall see that there was far more diversity and complexity with regard to group-society relations. Moreover, there was a range of possibilities among Christian and Jewish groups with regard to interaction with, participation in, or separation from particular social and cultural aspects of life within the polis and empire, including imperial honours and connections.

Overall, then, the problem is that many scholars do not pay adequate attention to the concrete and complex ways in which local associations, synagogues and Christian groups related to society. Nor do they sufficiently address or compare the mechanisms involved in these groups finding a place in polis and empire. When scholars do address the subject of group-society relations or imperial dimensions of these relations, quite often there is a focus on issues of tension and sectarianism without sufficient regard for other evidence concerning positive relations. Few have tapped into the vast reservoir of epigraphical and archeological evidence concerning association-life for what it can reveal
about the range of concrete possibilities in group-society relations, including involvements in imperial cults and connections. None have attempted to compare the practices of associations with those of Jewish and Christian groups in this regard. Such a comparison may steer us away from merely theorizing in a vacuum when it comes to assessing group-society relations among Jewish and Christian groups. A variety of resources and methods will assist us in qualifying and rectifying these unbalanced portraits of group-society relations among associations, synagogues and Christian groups in Roman Asia.

**Approach of this study: Methods and sources**

This study finds its home where the disciplines of Christian Origins, Classical Studies, Epigraphy, Jewish Studies, and Religious Studies meet, and its methods and sources reflect this interdisciplinary character. I deal with methodological and theoretical issues at appropriate points throughout this study, but a few preliminary observations are in order.

The overall approach of this study is social-historical, which means several things. First, I am interested in the actual social and religious life of ordinary persons and groups living within a particular region of the Roman empire, the cities of provincial Asia. Social historians approach their subject with an attentiveness to the fact that all within society, not just the rich and powerful, could be significant actors and players within history. Material remains and inscriptional evidence (*realia*) provide an important window through which to view such things.

Second, I am concerned with social relations within ancient society and, more specifically, with issues of group-society relations. This encompasses a variety of issues concerning interactions and relations between groups (associations, synagogues or Christian assemblies) and others within the social structures of society, including the elites. It also encompasses the relation of groups to the varied social and cultural structures, values, practices, and institutions within society.
Another social-historical dimension to this study pertains to the use of methods and insights from the social sciences, which can aid us in better comprehending society and culture. Sociological and anthropological insights will be particularly useful at several points. Sociological studies of social networks, for instance, will shed light on both the formation of associations and on the significance of connections between groups and individuals within society. Anthropological studies of religion and ritual will help to clarify the meaning of cultic honours for the emperors within associations. Social scientific studies of acculturation and assimilation will clarify the complex nature of group-society relations among Jewish and Christian groups in antiquity. But I will also need to address difficulties in how some scholars of early Christianity employ sociological models of sectarianism, for instance.

Throughout the following chapters I address theoretical and methodological issues concerning the use of these social scientific concepts and models, but for now it is worth making a few general observations. It is important to stress from the outset that I employ insights from the social sciences in a heuristic manner. By this I mean that they aid in the formation of questions that help us discover what might otherwise remain unnoticed. They provide an alternative lense through which to observe ancient society and culture, furthering our understanding of phenomena within it. But they certainly do not serve as substitutes for evidence.

Furthermore, my use of these concepts and models remains attentive to the fact that many are developed within modern societies, and that our use of them needs to be cross-culturally sensitive. We need to modify or shape them in ways that avoid anachronistic approaches to studying ancient society. We also need to remain aware of the

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3 For methodological discussions concerning the use of the social sciences in studying antiquity and early Christianity see, for example: Carney 1975; Malina 1981, Best 1983; Richter 1984; Finley 1985; Elliott 1986a, 1993; Osiek 1989; Holmberg 1990; Neyrey 1991; White 1992a-b. For a more general discussion of history and the social sciences see Burke 1992 [1980].
fact that our evidence for social relations in Roman Asia is fragmentary in comparison to the data available to a sociologist studying a modern society, for instance. What we get, at best, is snapshots of social relations at a particular time and place. It is not always clear how (or whether) we can generalize from these snapshots about the moving picture which is social reality. Despite these unfortunate circumstances concerning the nature of our sources, however, social scientific insights do assist us in making better sense of the evidence we do have.

The principal sources for this study are literary, archeological and epigraphical. Although our evidence for association-life is primarily epigraphical, there are some references to these groups in literature, especially pertaining to the involvements of associations in what elite authors considered noteworthy historical incidents (e.g. civic disturbances and control of them). Our evidence for Jewish groups in Roman Asia is also primarily epigraphical, though documents preserved by Josephus and other writings such as the *Sibylline Oracles*, for instance, also give us some useful information. In the case of Christians, our evidence happens to be solely literary, and I discuss the reasons for this lack of material remains concerning early Christianity in chapter seven. Early Christian literature pertinent to Asia Minor, including John’s Apocalypse, 1 Peter, the Pastoral epistles, Ignatius’ epistles, the *Acts of Paul*, and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, will occupy us primarily in the third part of this study.

Archeological and epigraphical sources and methods are fundamental to this study. Buildings, monuments, plaques and other material remains are an essential source of information concerning ancient social and religious life, providing an alternative perspective to that of literary sources produced by the elites. Most of our information about associations, as with local social and religious life generally, comes from extant Greek and Latin texts inscribed in stone for various purposes. These inscriptions include gravestones (epitaphs); decrees or regulations of cities or groups; official decisions and letters of local
magistrates, governors or emperors; and, most ubiquitous, various kinds of monumental honours presented by individuals, groups and civic institutions for benefactors (whether humans or gods) in response to benefits conferred or desired. These could include dedications of altars, plaques, statues and buildings. I provide an overview of our inscriptional evidence for associations in chapter one.

Epigraphical evidence provides a vital window through which to view concrete, and otherwise obscure, facets of social and religious life in antiquity. Though we must always be conscious of how much inscriptions will not tell us,” states Fergus Millar (1983:81), “it is still the case that inscriptions, read in bulk, provide the most direct access which we can have to the life, social structure, thought and values of the ancient world.” Throughout this study I remain attentive to both the strengths and the shortcomings of inscriptional evidence, and I discuss its nature at appropriate points.

Inscriptions from the cities of Asia are accessible through various periodicals and collections, but the most recent and useful multi-volume series used here is Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasiien (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt). It is also worth mentioning the useful series New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity (produced by the Ancient History Documentary Research Centre of Macquarie University), which provides a more popular avenue into the world of inscriptions. Epigraphical abbreviations throughout this study follow, where possible, those outlined in a recent article by G.H.R. Horsley and John A.L. Lee (1994), and I provide an extensive list of these abbreviations preceding the bibliography. All translations of inscriptions throughout this study are mine unless otherwise noted.

The value and significance of realia is certainly not limited to textual elements, though. This study remains attentive to the visual and symbolic messages of archeological

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remains. The building remains of associations that have been uncovered, for instance, communicate something about what these groups did and what they felt was important. Paul Zanker's study of the *Power of images in the age of Augustus* (1988) vividly demonstrates how visual imagery and the pictorial language of monuments, statues, buildings, ceremonies and other objects "reflects a society's inner life and gives insight into people's values and imagination that often cannot be apprehended in literary sources" (Zanker 1988:3). At various points in this study I draw attention to the symbolic significance of monuments and buildings, both regarding the messages which they could communicate and their visual impression on the viewer. Monumentalizing could be a concrete statement regarding the place of an individual, group or community within society and the cosmos.

Having noted the great evidential value of *realia*, it is important to remain aware of the difficulties involved in using such sources. First of all, there is the paucity and partial nature of inscriptional evidence. Only certain types of activities (listed above) were recorded in stone. Added to this is the fact that inscriptions that have been discovered and published represent only a small portion of those that did exist or which may be discovered in the future. There are difficulties, then, in deciding whether a particular piece of evidence is or is not representative of common practices or relations. Moreover, the remains that we do have access to reflect only a small portion of social and religious life in antiquity; they certainly do not provide a complete picture. A second related difficulty is that quite often there is a lack of context for interpreting a particular inscription. Our information for a particular person or group may derive solely from one fragmentary and partially reconstructed inscription, and quite often this may lack indication of date and context. This is why it is necessary to study inscriptions in bulk with attention to regional factors. Studying groups of inscriptions can tell us something about social and religious life that an individual epitaph cannot. Finally, we should not imagine that the problems of
interpretation disappear when we are working with such concrete remains, as though these sources speak to us in an uncomplicated manner.

A final word should be said regarding my approach to realia. In some important respects my method differs from some who have used material remains from the Greco-Roman world to shed light on early Christian history and literature. Colin J. Hemer's (1986) study of the opening letters of John's Apocalypse illustrates a previously common approach to realia. Hemer systematically works through the opening letters of the Apocalypse attempting to correlate references in the literary evidence to the concrete local contexts of the seven cities. Moreover, the Christian literary evidence dictates the selection and interpretation of realia concerning the Greco-Roman world. Realia are often removed from their broader contexts. The literary evidence shapes perceptions and interpretations of the realia.

The approach of this study is very different. This study attempts to approach the realia concerning social and religious phenomena in local contexts on their own terms before turning to questions of how this might shed light on early Christian or Jewish history and literature. Epigraphical and archeological evidence should not be interpreted in light of literary evidence. Rather it should be understood on its own terms, realizing that it can provide alternative and sometimes contradictory views of social reality.

Outline of this study

This study is divided into three main parts, dealing with: associations in Roman Asia (part one); associations and imperial aspects of society (part two); and Jewish and Christian groups in Roman Asia (part three). In part one I address some preliminary issues regarding associations, their internal life and their context, laying the groundwork for parts two and three. Chapter one outlines the extensive inscriptive evidence for associations in Roman Asia, clarifying what phenomena are encompassed by this study.
and providing a clearer definition of associations. I use the term “associations” to refer to small, unofficial and non-compulsory social-religious groups that met on a regular basis, serving a variety of purposes for their members.\(^5\) In the process of outlining the evidence for these groups, I challenge common typologies of associations which sort them based on the purposes they supposedly served. Instead, I suggest that a more useful framework for outlining the evidence from Roman Asia is one that gives attention to the principal sphere of social network connections which formed the basis of an association’s membership. This chapter also discusses various issues concerning the social stratification of membership in associations which will be of continuing relevance in considering the place of these groups within society.

Chapter two then turns to a general outline of the internal life of these groups. The common preliminary division of associations according to primary purpose diverts our attention away from evidence which suggests that associations of various types served inter-connected social, religious and funerary functions for their members. In the process of discussing these intertwined purposes which helped to provide members with a sense of belonging, I challenge a tradition within scholarship which tends to stress the social side of association-life to the neglect of religious dimensions. Moreover, I argue that all types of associations were simultaneously contexts for both feasting with friends and honouring the gods. This is the framework in which we can begin to understand the internal imperial cult practices discussed in chapter four.

Chapter three considers the civic framework and the place of associations within the context of the polis and society. It is quite common for scholars to speak of associations as symptoms of decline, as compensatory phenomena in a period of social, cultural

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\(^5\) This study excludes from primary consideration several types of groups: the semi-official age-based organizations of the gymnasia (παιδες, ἐηθος, νέοι, γερουντες/γερουντας); boards of functionaries officially involved in the ongoing management of civic sanctuaries or institutions; and, guilds of athletes or performers, which often played an ongoing official role in civic festivals and engaged in somewhat exceptional diplomatic relations.
and political degeneration within the polis. Those who hold such views are more inclined to define associations as phenomena over against civic or imperial structures, sometimes speaking of these groups in subversive terms. However, such characterizations of associations' place within society in the Hellenistic and Roman eras are problematic on theoretical grounds. More importantly, they do not adequately deal with the actual evidence for the relationships between associations and the polis in regions such as Roman Asia. After discussing the importance of social networks of benefaction within the cities, I then go on to discuss the extensive primary evidence concerning the participation of associations and their members within overlapping political, social and cultural structures of the polis. Chapters two and three prepare the way for a more specific discussion of imperial cults, honours and connections as they were embedded within the internal life and external relations of associations.

The second main part of this study focuses on associations and imperial aspects of society and culture in Roman Asia. Both chapters four and five provide extensive evidence concerning the positive involvements of associations within society and culture under Roman rule, which forces us to re-evaluate the predominant tension-centred approach of most scholarship. This evidence of group-society relations sheds light on the concrete ways in which these groups claimed and maintained a place for themselves in polis and empire.

Chapter four addresses the significance of the emperors—and cultic honours for these "revered ones" (Sebastoi)—within the internal life of associations. That is, it looks at the participation of these groups within culture under Roman rule. Imperial cults were not, as often suggested, solely political phenomena of little significance for the populace. Imperial cult rituals and mysteries within local associations of various kinds suggest the spontaneous nature of such cultic honours in Roman Asia. They point towards the intertwined social, political and religious significance of imperial cults at all social levels of
Moreover, cultic honours for the emperors were an important component within the lives and identities of many associations. These cultic honours for the imperial gods also tell us something about how associations and their members understood their place within the webs of relations of society and the cosmos. Insights from the social sciences regarding the nature and function of rituals will help to clarify the cosmological significance of the emperors within associations.

Chapter five focuses on the imperial-related external relations of associations, both positive and negative. The occasional involvements of associations in civic disturbances and the negative intervention of imperial officials or emperors should be viewed and re-evaluated in light of extensive evidence regarding ongoing positive relations between associations and imperial officials and emperors. After providing two case studies—one from the perspective of the elites and the other from the perspective of a guild of dyers—I survey the range of evidence from Roman Asia regarding connections between associations and the elites. This includes links with imperial cult functionaries, imperial officials (both equestrian and senatorial) and the emperors and imperial family. Insights from sociology concerning social network analysis will assist us in evaluating the significance of such connections. Moreover, these imperial connections among associations illustrate some of the mechanisms that linked inhabitants to the civic community and the civic community to the Roman imperial power, holding the empire together. I also assess the symbolic significance of monumentalizing in the Greco-Roman world, suggesting that these actions could be claims about one's place within society and the cosmos.

Part three focuses on Jewish and Christian groups that lived alongside these other associations within the cities of Roman Asia. As with the chapters on associations, I focus on re-evaluating the place of diverse Jewish and Christian groups within the social and cultural framework of *polis* and empire.

Chapter six focuses primarily on theoretical and methodological issues concerning the comparison of social-religious groups in antiquity. It is quite common for scholars to
categorize Jewish and Christian groups as “sects” in a sociological sense, stressing their separation from and conflict with surrounding society. But this approach, I argue, does not adequately account for the diversity among these groups and often obscures evidence regarding the complexities of group-society relations. A sectarian-focussed approach does not adequately account for important primary evidence concerning both Jewish and Christian groups in Roman Asia. This includes evidence found in Ignatius’ epistles, the Pastorals, and 1 Peter, for instance. Social scientific studies concerning the complex processes of acculturation, assimilation and dissimilation will provide useful insights regarding the complexities of group-society relations in this regard. Archeological and inscriptional evidence for Jewish groups within the polis in Roman Asia will serve as a case in point, challenging the sectarian portrait and preparing the way for an extensive treatment of other primary evidence regarding Jewish and Christian groups in chapter seven.

Chapter seven then looks at the significance of imperial cults, honours and connections among Jewish and Christian groups. Comparing these groups with regard to imperial aspects of civic life draws attention to areas of both participation and non-participation, furthering our understanding of the complexities of group-society relations. Most importantly, this chapter deals extensively with primary evidence concerning the participation of a significant number of Jewish and Christian groups in imperial honours and connections. Re-reading this evidence regarding Jewish and Christian groups in light of the discussion of associations in earlier chapters suggests that a broadly sectarian understanding of many of these groups is no longer overwhelmingly plausible. Moreover, there was a range of perspectives and practices among Jewish and Christian groups (and individuals or leaders) regarding what degree of participation in imperial and other aspects of civic life was acceptable, from the more open approaches of the Nicolaitans, 1 Peter and the Pastorals to the clearly sectarian approach of John’s Apocalypse.
The second part of this chapter evaluates the significance of Jews’ and Christians’ non-participation in cultic honours for the emperors. There has been a tendency within scholarship to inflate the importance of imperial cults specifically in regard to issues of persecution and group-society relations. The result has been a portrait of early Christianity that sees imperial cults or worship of the emperors as the heart of a conflict between Christianity and Roman society. Virtually all Jews and Christians did avoid active or full participation in cultic honours for the emperors as gods. But attention to the actual nature of imperial cults in Roman Asia—as discussed in chapter four—suggests that this area of non-participation was a potential source of group-society tensions only insofar as imperial cults were part and parcel of social-religious life in the cities more generally. Finally, reading the Apocalypse in light of all of this furthers our comprehension of its addressees and its author's rhetorical strategy. It shows how John perceived and responded to some of the realities of life in the cities and Christian assemblies of Roman Asia.

Overall, this study draws attention to some of the ways in which diverse associations, synagogues and Christian groups found a place for themselves within the polis under Roman rule, despite their individual or distinctive world views and practices in other regards. It also demonstrates the value in studying on their own terms the material remains concerning social and religious realities in local civic contexts. Doing so can provide new perspectives on the social and religious history of various groups and communities in specific localities of the Greco-Roman world. It can also modify or transform our perceptions of early Christian and Jewish history and literature.
Chapter 1
Guilds and associations of Roman Asia:
Definition, typology and composition

Introduction

Reviewing the evidence of association-life from an ancient city like Smyrna one immediately notices numerous gatherings among goldsmiths, porters, initiates of Dionysos and of Demeter, devotees of Caesar, Judeans, Christians, hymn-singers and others. Before considering the place of such groups within the polis (city), it is important to discuss their nature and internal makeup and to provide a framework for understanding the diversity among them. This chapter outlines the evidence for the various types of associations that lived in Roman Asia. It also deals with issues that will be of relevance throughout the study, especially what social strata of the population were represented within such groups. The following chapter focuses on the intertwined purposes associations served for their members. Moreover, the discussion in these chapters elaborates the definition of associations provided in the introduction.

It is quite common for scholars to categorize associations based on their principal purpose or aim, be it religious, funerary or otherwise. But a more useful framework for outlining the evidence from Roman Asia is one which gives attention to the principal sphere of social network connections which formed the basis of an association’s membership and which continued to inform a group’s self-understanding. There were several types of associations based on network connections associated with the household, common ethnic or geographic origins, the neighbourhood, common occupational or commercial activities, and common cult.

Variety was also reflected in the internal composition of membership in associations. Many scholars characterize the majority of associations as socially homogeneous groups, consisting principally of the poorest and most deprived segments of society. But evidence from Roman Asia suggests that association-life often reflected the social spec-
trum of society generally. Composition differed from one group to the next, ranging from homogeneous to heterogeneous membership in terms of social status and other factors.

**Traditional typologies of associations**

Scholars often distinguish between types of associations according to the primary purpose a particular group supposedly served. Erich Ziebarth (1896:3-4), for example, divides associations in the Greek East according to whether they served "economic" advantage or "ideal" purposes, citing Aristotle for support. The former included groups of tax-collectors, merchants and shippers, and the latter other guilds and associations of various kinds, further categorized by the primary "ideal" they served: political, cultic, academic, artistic, occupational, or educational-gymnastic.

Even more widespread is a three-fold typology, again centred on apparent primary purpose: occupational, cultic (collegia sodalicia), and burial (collegia tenuiorum; cf. Waltzing 1895-1900:1.32-56, 114-54; Kornemann 1901:386-403; La Piana 1927:239-44). Jean-Pierre Waltzing, George La Piana and others argue that the majority of associations were of the burial type (collegia tenuiorum), consisting primarily of the poorest social strata of society who could not otherwise afford burial. Waltzing, echoing views of Theodor Mommsen (1843), can state that "many private associations, originally founded in order to honour a divinity, ended up regarding religion as an accessory and the funeral as their principal aim" (1895-1900:1.46 [trans. mine]; cf. La Piana 1927:243, 272).

These views are based, in part, on an assumption that the Roman authorities strictly controlled associations (from the time of Augustus) and that only burial clubs for the poor (collegia tenuiorum) were exempted from such laws.

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6 The passage from Aristotle (Eth.Nic. 8.9.5-6 = 1060a) appears less concerned with the types of associations than with showing that there is a variety of such associations, all of which are part of the larger polis-association (ἡ πολιτικὴ κοινωνία; cf. Tod 1932:70).

7 "Or, il arriva que beaucoup de ces collèges privés, fondés surtout pour adorer une divinité, finirent par regarder la religion comme l'accessoire et les funérailles comme leur but principal."
There are several problems with purpose-centred typologies. Waltzing's typology, especially the category of burial associations, rests upon a questionable reading of legal sources (also see chap. 5). The topic cannot be discussed fully here, but recent studies by Frank M. Ausbüttel (1982:22-23) and John S. Kloppenborg (1996a:20-23) point out the lack of evidence even for the existence of associations devoted solely to burial, the so-called collegia tenuiorum or funeraticia which are so integral to this typology. Furthermore, an a priori sorting of these groups based on purpose can obscure other evidence which suggests that associations of various kinds served similar sets of interconnected social, religious and funerary functions, functions which I discuss more fully in the following chapter (cf. Tod 1932:77; Fisher 1988b:1209). Franz Poland strikes to the heart of the matter when, in criticizing Ziebarth's typology, he states that "every association is in some sense a cult-association" (Poland 1909:5 [trans. mine]; cf. Dill 1956 [1904]:262-63). Evidently, we need a more adequate framework in which to understand the nature and variety of these groups.

Kloppenborg's (1996a) recent work in this area provides a useful starting point. Recognizing the problems with traditional typologies, he suggests that it is more helpful to categorize associations based on the profile of their membership. In his view there were three main sources of membership based on common household connections, shared occupation, and common cult, and all three types of associations served a variety of interrelated purposes. This focus on membership bases, rather than purpose, is fitting for our present aims.

A new framework: Spheres of social network connections

An approach that pays special attention to the role of social networks in group-membership provides a useful framework for considering the range of associations in

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8 "In gewissem Sinne ist jeder Verein ein Kultverein, weil die religiösen Vorstellungen, vor allem die religiösen Feste fast überall von großer Bedeutung sind."
Roman Asia. Sociological studies since the 1960s have increasingly recognized the importance of pre-existing social network connections for understanding the formation and growth of social and religious groups or movements of various kinds, and this chapter is informed by such insights (see Stark and Bainbridge 1985:307-324 for discussion and bibliography). Relationships and interpersonal bonds established through social networks help to explain how persons come to associate with one another in particular group-settings, as well as pointing towards sources for growth in membership.

Familial, ethnic, occupational, cultic and other spheres of social ties help to account for the kinds of groups found in the cities of Roman Asia. These sets of connections certainly overlap, and several can play a role in the membership of a particular association (see fig. 1). Still, it is possible to distinguish five types of associations according to their principal social network basis. There were associations which drew primarily on connections associated with: 1) the household, 2) common ethnic or geographic origins, 3) the neighbourhood, 4) common occupational or commercial activities, and 5) common cult. These social network bases are often inter-related with issues concerning the self-understandings or identities of particular associations. Sometimes network bases also provide clues as to the social stratification of membership.

In outlining the evidence for various types of associations in Asia, I will also be concerned with the social-economic composition of membership and with locating these groups within the social structures of society. In general, the social stratification of society in Roman Asia and the empire can be considered in terms of three general categories: the elites, the sub-elites and the masses (see Hopkins 1998; cf. Garnsey and Saller 1987:107-25; MacMullen 1974b:88-121). The gap between the most powerful and wealthy elites at the top and the lowest among the masses at the bottom was immense, but there was a range of possibilities in wealth, influence and status in between these extremes.
Among the elites were those possessing the wealth and connections necessary to belong to the senatorial or equestrian orders (probably less than 1% of the total population). They filled imperial positions in the provinces and at Rome, and we encounter them more fully as benefactors in subsequent chapters. This group had its counterparts, though on a more modest scale, in the wealthy families of the provincial communities, who usually assumed the more important civic positions, also acting as benefactors within the civic communities. From the mid- to late-first century, a very small number of these provincial families with imperial connections began to attain equestrian and, eventually, senatorial status over generations.

Beneath the elites were what Keith Hopkins has called the sub-elites, who also comprised a small portion of the total population (likely less than 10%). Among them were those of middling wealth and status who usually lived within the larger cities, including some landowners; wealthier merchants; lower civic administrators; army officers; and professionals, such as lawyers, physicians, architects, and philosophers. Some levels of literacy and education were common within this segment of society.

Below the elites and sub-elites lay the majority of the population, the masses (around 90%), including both rural and urban dwellers. Since the Roman economy was primarily agricultural, peasant farmers made up the majority (upwards of 75%) of the total population. Although we occasionally encounter village-dwellers or even associations of farmers in this study, the evidence for the peasantry is generally scant and our primary focus here is on the cities (see MacMullen 1974a and 1974b:1-27; Garnsey 1998:91-182; Mitchell 1993:1.165-97 [on peasants and rural life]). Urbanites of this stratum, on the

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9 Even among the senatorial order only a small percentage, the “senatorial elites” who achieved the consulate, assumed the most important imperial positions and wielded most power (see Alföldy 1976).
10 On the agrarian basis of the Roman economy see Jones 1974; Ste. Croix 1981; Finley 1985a [1973]; Garnsey and Saller 1987 (with extensive bibliography). Also see T. F. Carney's (1975:137-234) methodological discussion of anthropological studies of agrarian economies and their use in the study of the Roman empire. Some scholars tend to underestimate the simultaneous importance of trade, however.
other hand, could be quite diverse, reflecting a spectrum of possibilities in legal standing (free, freed, or slave), occupation, citizenship (civic or Roman), wealth and overall social status. The discussion of occupation-based associations further below will further elucidate the variety of occupations and issues of status within this section of the population.

It is important to place the evidence for the social composition of associations within the broader social structures of society. However, scholars' attempts to do so often result in generalizations which fail to account for some of the distinctions and diversity observed here. Waltzing, Kornemann, La Piana and others, for example, give the impression that the majority of associations ("burial clubs") were socially homogeneous, consisting of the poorest and most deprived social-economic strata of society. Wayne A. Meeks and other scholars of early Christianity likewise generalize about the homogeneous social makeup of associations, contrasting this with the socially inclusive or heterogeneous character of Christian groups. For Meeks this is one of several differences which make associations less than adequate models for comparison with Christian groups, something I challenge more fully in chapter six.

These approaches do not do justice to the range of possibilities regarding the social composition and varieties of associations in Roman Asia. Social status, that is, the position of a person within a given social structure, is a complex phenomenon that is difficult to measure, especially considering the fragmentary nature of our evidence from antiquity. Nonetheless, throughout this chapter I remain alert to several indicators of social status among the members of various associations, including wealth, family background, occupation, legal standing (free, freed, slave), gender, citizenship (civic or imperial), and roles in civic or imperial positions. Recognition of such factors points towards a spectrum of possibilities in the social composition of associations, with variety among types and from one group to the next.
1) Household basis

Household connections or familial relationships seem to account for the membership, existence and identity of a significant number of associations. The family of Agrippinilla, which originally lived in Mytilene on Lesbos and emigrated to Torre Nova in Italy, provides an excellent example of a household-based association exhibiting Asian influence. In about 160 CE, the Dionysiac "initiates" (μύσται) consisting of 402 members (an exceptionally large group) honoured Pompeia Agrippinilla, their priestess, with a statue (IGUR 160; cf. Cumont 1933; Alexander 1933; Nilsson 1952). Achille Vogliano's study (1933) shows that many of the main functionaries come from the families of Agrippinilla and her husband, M. Gavius Squilla Gallicanus, who was consul in 150 CE and proconsul of Asia in 165 CE. The rest of the members, including both men (292) and women (110) of free, freed and servile status, many of whom were originally from Asia Minor, reflect dependents associated with that household (see Scheid 1986; cf. SEG 36 925). This family-centred group has its parallels elsewhere, as is evident in the dedication of an altar by one Lykomedes near Bizye in Thracia "on behalf of his children and his own initiates whom blessed Dionysos saves" (IGBulg 1865). Once such familial associations were formed, however, membership could presumably expand somewhat to include others less directly affiliated with the household through friendship, occupation or other relations within the network connections of individual family members.

An analogous household-focus is apparent in the case of a group in Philadelphia, Asia (ILydiaKP III 18 = Weinreich 1919 = SIG3 985 = LSAM 20 = Barton and Horsley 1981 [with trans.]; early-I BCE). Dionysios received a set of rules regarding the entrance of "men and women, free people and slaves" into his "household" (οίκος) by way of a dream from Zeus (cf. IG X.2 255 = NewDocs I 6 [Thessalonika], regarding cult-foundations and dreams). There was probably a designated room within the household
where the sacrifices and mysteries were to be performed regularly "in accordance with ancestral custom," especially in honour of Agdistis and Zeus. The inscription outlines numerous purity regulations for entrance and closes with a prayer calling on Zeus to be well disposed to Dionysios and his family. Once again, as with the Agrippinilla association, membership in such household-centred groups could be quite heterogeneous, reflecting the spectrum of social status levels of both genders that would naturally be associated with the household.11 Similar situations where members of a particular family either constitute the group itself or play a prominent role in an association from one generation to the next could be cited from various cities or villages in Asia.12

It is significant that such family-based networks played a key role in the formation and expansion of some early Christian groups as well, which in this regard are not dissimilar from this type of association. Poland's statement that the "family plays an important role for the recruitment of membership in numerous associations" also applies to Christian groups (1909:299 [trans. mine]; cf. Filson 1939).13 A pattern of "conversion" and communal gathering portrayed in Acts, but also substantiated elsewhere, is indicative: again and again an entire family of dependents is baptized along with the head of the

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11 There were some family-based associations mainly for men. The testament of Epikteta (c. 210-195 BCE) from Thera makes provisions for the foundation of an "association of male relatives" (κοινωνία ἀνδρέων τῶν συγγενῶν; IG XII.3 436, esp. lines 20ff.). But the inscription also goes on to say that wives and female children still under the man's guardianship could participate as well (lines 94-108; see Wittenburg 1990 [text and trans.]; van Bremen 1996:212-16).

12 See, for example: IStratonikeia 845-46; TAM V 817 (Attalia Agroera, near Thyatira; 165 CE); IPphygR 30-31 (Thiunta village, north of Hierapolis; II CE). A tradition of membership from father to son is evident in the title πατρομούστης (hereditary-initiate) in an association at Smyrna (ISmyrna 731, 732; c. 80-85 CE; cf. IPergammon 374 B II.15-20 and D II.17-22). Several statutes of the lóbacchoi at Athens also assume the entrance of one's son or brother into membership: sons of members paid half the usual entrance fee (IG II.2 1368 = SIG3 1109, esp. II. 39-41, 53-55). Groups of gladiators, often slave-dependents of a particular household, frequently called themselves a familía (see Robert 1971, who collects the inscriptions).

13 "Die Familie spielt aber auch bei zahlreichen anderen Vereinen eine wichtige Rolle für die Rekrutierung der Genossen."
household and the home is subsequently used as a meeting-place.14 This household context continued to influence the lives of many Christian groups in Asia Minor specifically.15 As with the association founded by Dionysios, household origins could be reflected in the relatively heterogeneous makeup of some Christian groups, including masters and slaves, men and women, in their ranks.

It is important to note that many associations of various types, even if they were not primarily family-based in membership or organization, were influenced by the structures and terminology of the household in some way (cf. Nock 1924:105; Dill 1956:280). This observation is perhaps most concretely illustrated in architecture. L. Michael White (1996) shows that there was a pattern among many groups in the Greco-Roman world, whether pagan, Christian or Jewish. Quite often such groups adapted local houses for communal use, frequently depending on the generosity of a wealthy benefactor to supply the house (or rooms therein) or the funds needed to adapt the building. In light of such architectural and corresponding social origins it is not surprising to find heads of households, patrons or benefactors becoming the leaders. In this respect, the organization of many associations, Jewish and Christian groups included, found their origins in the conventions of benefaction and honours in the Greek East.

This leads me to a final point regarding familial aspects of associations. Seemingly unaware of considerable evidence, Meeks' influential study suggests that familial or affectional language--especially terms such as "brother"--was rare within associations or

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14 The God-fearing Roman centurion at Caesarea, Cornelius, is told that Peter brings a message "by which you and your entire household will be saved" (Acts 11:14). At Philippi Lydia the purple-dyer, like the jailer, is baptized together with the members of her whole family, urging Paul and his companions to "come and stay at [her] house" (16:15; cf. Acts 18:8; 1 Cor 1:16). The continuing importance of the household is evident in Paul's references to "the assembly meeting in [their] house" (1 Cor 16:19; Phlm 2; cf. Rom 16:10-16; Col 4:15).
15 For example, 1 Peter speaks of Christians as the "household of God" (1 Pet 4:17; cf. Eph 2:19; Gal 6:10). In the Pastoral epistles, good household management was the key prerequisite of those who wished to manage God's household. Household codes concerning relationships between master and slave, parent and child, husband and wife are also widespread in the Christian literature.
“clubs,” and that the use of such language in Christian groups, on the other hand, illustrates their unique and “sectarian” character. However, familial language and structures are common not just within certain Christian circles, that does exist within associations while assuming that familial language was common within Jewish groups in the Roman era without citing any evidence of such, but also within some other cultic contexts and associations, as I will note below. There is no reason to discount the importance of such language when it does occur within associations while doing the contrary with respect to Christian groups.

I have already discussed examples of associations which were literally family-based or where the household and its structures were influential. Further, it was quite common for a group to express its gratitude towards benefactors or leaders with titles reflecting familial affection. Thus an all-female association of initiates of the Great Mother, Cybele, at Serdica in Thracia referred to its leader as “mother of the tree-bearers,” and similar uses of “mother” (μητέρα) or “father” (πατέρα), as well as “son” (υἱός), are attested within associations of various kinds elsewhere, including a Jewish group at Stobi in Macedonia. One wonders whether some of these “mothers” and “fathers,” if they were to personally address members, might refer to them as “children,” something we find in some Pauline and Johannine Christian groups, for example.

Finally, there are indeed cases where fellow-members of an association, who appear to be unrelated in a literal sense, address one another or name themselves in famil-

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16 Meeks attempts to underplay the few cases he is aware of where such language does occur in associations, suggesting that it was a formality with little significance for the identity and relationships of those involved (Meeks 1983:58-88, 225 n.73; cf. Schneller 1995:16-18).

17 It is interesting that Meeks so readily dismisses evidence of familial language.

18 *Moesia TH* II 101 (c. 200 CE; cf. I 13 [Troesmis], 48 [Tomis]). The name of this association, “sacred δωματίων,” is indicative of Phrygian or Asian influence (cf. TAM V 179, 449, 470a, 483a, 536 [Saitai]; SEG 42 625 [Thessalonica]). For further examples of “father” of the association as a designation for a leader or benefactor see *PontEux* II 437, 445 (Tanais; both early II CE), IV 207, 211 (Panticapaion); *IGLSkythia* I 99 (Histria; 218-22 CE); *SIG* 1111 (Piraeus; 200-211 CE); *IG XIV* 1084 (Rome; 146 CE); *CIL* 694 (Stobi [“father of the synagogue”]; late II-early III CE). On a “son of the friends-of-the-Sebastoi” association see *MagnMai* 119 and Pleket 1958:7-8, no.2. On the use of pater or meter collegii in the West see Poland 1909:371-73 and Waltzing 1895-1900:1.446-449.
ial terms, using the term “brother” (ἀδελφός). Some of our epigraphical evidence comes from Asia Minor. At Halikarnassos priests of a particular cult referred to one another as “brothers” (IGLAM 503; cf. IAsMinLyk I 1). At Lamos in Cilicia several inscriptions pertain to an association of craftsmen from Selge; in one, Rhodios prepares the collective tomb for the members of the association whom he also calls “the brothers” (IKilikia II 193-202, esp. 201). It is quite possible that the “brotherly-loving” shippers near Iasos included members who were not literally brothers (Cousin and Deschamps 1894:21, no. 11). A monument dedicated to god Hypsistos at Sinope in Pontus refers to οἱ ἀδελφοὶ εὐξάμενοι (Doublet 1889:303-04, no. 7), which may very well be an association. Outside of Asia Minor we find an association at Tanais in the Bosporos referring to itself as “the adopted brothers worshipping god Hypsistos” (ἰσοποιητοὶ ἀδελφοὶ σεβόμενοι θεόν ὑψιστον; IPontEux II 449-52, 456; III CE).

Not surprisingly, this sort of brother-language is attested more often in cases of personal address. Most of it comes from Egypt, since only there do we find climates suitable for the survival of personal letters on papyri. Robert W. Daniel (1979) devotes some attention to this practice among association members, discussing two papyri in which leaders of an athletic association refer to several members as “brother” and “friend” (PRyl IV 604 [Antinoopolis?]; PSI III 236 [Oxyrhynchos], both III CE), and another in which an undertaker writes to a fellow-undertaker, addressing him as “brother” (PPetaus 28). In another papyrus from Oxyrhynchos (III CE), a man makes an oath pertaining to mysteries, making mention of both the leader of the group, “father Sarapion,” and his fellow-initiates, the “brothers,” perhaps “mystical brothers” (μυστικὰ ἀδελφοὺς) according to Ulrich Wilcken’s reconstruction (PSI X 1162; cf. Wilcken 1932:257-59). Further examples of similar use could be cited, some from an earlier era.19

19 PParis 5 col. 2.5 (114 BCE; mummy-keepers as “brothers”); IG X.2.1 824 (Thessalonica; see van Nijf 1997:46); OGIS 189 (Philai; either 89 or 57 BCE); PParis 42 = John L. White 1986:72-73, no. 39. Also see Vettius Valens, 4.11.11 (II CE): “I entreat you, most honorable brother of mine, along with those who are initiated…” (ὁρκίζω σε, ἀδελφέ μου τιμῶτατε, καὶ τοὺς μυστιγωγουμένους…). Cf. Nicolo 1912:1.33-34 n.4.; Moulton and Milligan 1952:8-9 (ἀδελφός). On the use of “brother” in connection with the mysteries at
Before going on to ethnic-based associations, it is worth mentioning here another related practice that is attested in connection with associations of Asia Minor: the use of the language of friendship (esp. φίλοι) in reference to fellow-members. There are cases where association-members refer to one another as “friends” in inscriptions, often as a self-designation of the group itself; it appears that this may also have been the practice within some of the Christian groups addressed by the epistles of John, at least (cf. 3 Jn 15).

2) Ethnic or geographic basis

A second basis of association relates to foreigners or persons of a common ethnic background or geographical origin, who frequently expressed their shared identity by joining together regularly. A lively attention to ethnic or geographic origins and identity did not preclude a sense of being accepted and finding a new home within the city or town of residence, however (cf. chap. 3). In Asia we find many Italians or Romans, often representing a mixture of merchants or traders, joining together in societies, for instance. Despite the hostility and even slaughter many Romans had faced during the campaigns of Mithridates VI of Pontus (esp. c. 88 BCE), these groups usually became

Eleusis see Burkert 1987:45, 149, n.77.
20 IGLAM 798 (Kotaion, Aezanatis valley); IASos 116; IMagnMai 321; IDidyma 502 (a Dionysiac group); IMylasa 571-75; TAM V 93 (Saittai; 225 CE); ISmyrna 720; IPontBishM 57 (= SEG 35 1337; Amastris, Pontus); IPrusaOlymp 24 (I CE); Hicks 1891:228-29, no. 5 (Olba, Cilicia); ISminLyk I 69 (Xanthos, Lycia). Cf. IG II.2 1369 (Athens; II CE); IG III 1081, 1089, 1102 (Athens; c. 120s CE; ephebes); IGUR 1169 (Rome).
21 The most common self-designations for such groups are οἱ προγματευόμενοι Ἰώμαιοι, οἱ κατακοινοῦντες Ἰώμαιοι, and negotiares, as well as κοινῆτος/conventus (see Hatzfeld 1919; Broughton 1938:543-54; Magie 1950:162-63, 1051-52, nn. 6-8; cf. Rauh 1993:29-41 on Italians and other associations at Delos in the Republican period). For the province of Asia see IAdramytJ 19, 21; IAssos 14, 19-21, 28; IPhr ygR 474, 511, 533 (Akmoneia and Sebaste); IGR IV 785-94 (Apameia Kelainai); IEph 409, 646, 884, 738, 800, 2058, 3019, 3025; IAssos 90; IGR IV 903-905, 913, 916-19 (Kibyra); SEG 28 953 = NewDocs IV 2 (Kyzikos; HieraπJ 32; IGR IV 860, IPhr ygR 2 (Laodicea); IGR IV 294, 1169 (Pergamon and Attaleia); IGR IV 1644 (Philadelphia); ISmyrna 534; TAM V 924, 1002-1003 (Thyatira); IThrall 77, 80, 83, 145. Cf. IGR III 137, 292 (Isaura and Neocladiopolis, Galatia); IGR IV 965 (Paphos, Cyprus); IBoeotRoesch 24-26 (Thespiae, Boeotia); CIG 1997d (Pella, Macedonia).
well integrated within civic life by the time of the principate, often possessing a relatively prestigious position within civic life in comparison with other guilds or groups. Membership could include Romans or Italians involved in different forms of trade with varying social-economic status; some could assume local citizenship, attain considerable wealth and become well known as benefactors within their city of residence (see Hatzfeld 1919:101-131, 148-174, 297-309; Broughton 1938:544).

Romans were not alone in forming such groups. Many associations on Rhodes, for instance, consisted of persons of common geographic origin, such as the Samothracians, Cretans and Sidonians (*IGR IV* 1114, 1128; *IG II.5* 1335b), or a mixture of immigrants (see Poland 1909:317-21). For many others we simply know the name of their patron deity. Hence two inscriptions from Lindos on Rhodes (c. 10 CE) mention Herakleasts, Asklepiasts, Aphrodisiasts and others alongside the Pergaists, inhabitants from Perge in Pamphylia who, it seems, worshipped their hometown’s patron deity, Artemis Pergaia (*ILindos* 391.31-32, 392a.12-13 and 392b.15-16; cf. *IG XII.1* 454, 784 [dedication to Artemis Pergaia]; cf. MacKay 1990:2059-60). Alexandrians in Asia and elsewhere, like the *oikos* of Alexandrians (probably shippers) at Tomis in Thracia, also formed associations, probably choosing Isis, Sarapis or other Egyptian deities as patrons (*IGLSkythia* II 153; cf. *IG I 392* [Ostia], 446 [Neapolis], 800 [Heraklea-Perinthos, Thracia]).

In light of the tendency of Romans, Pergaians, Alexandrians and others to congregate together, it is not surprising to find Judeans (*Ἰουδαῖοι*) in the cities of Asia forming similar groups, sometimes using terminology common to other associations (e.g. συναγωγή, ὁἶκος, κατοικοῦντες, σύνοδος, ἐταῖροι, ἔθνος; cf. Josephus, *Antiquitates* 14.215-16 [*θίασος*], 235 [*σύνοδος*]). Besides the many epitaphs referring to individual Jews and their families, there is literary, inscriptive and archeological evidence for
groups or synagogues at numerous cities including Ephesos, Hierapolis, Laodicea, Miletos, Pergamon, Philadelphia, Priene, Sardis, Smyrna, Thyatira, and Teos.\(^{22}\)

Although ethnic considerations played the principal role in the formation of these groups, it is worth noting that occupational and neighbourhood networks sometimes help to explain why a particular Jew associated with one synagogue rather than another in cities where several existed. For example, of the eleven attested synagogues at Rome (some of which existed simultaneously), it appears that three derive their name from the district where they lived: the Calcaresians probably from the Lime-burners’ district, the Campesians from the Campus Martius, and the Siburesians from the Subura district. Two others may very well have been founded by Jews initially from cities elsewhere: the Tripolitans from the city of their namesake either in Phoenicia or North Africa, and the “synagogue of Elaia,” perhaps consisting of some members formerly residents or citizens of Elaia in Asia (see Leon 1995 [1960]:135-66). Both neighbourhood and occupational factors played a subsidiary role in the organization of the Jewish population at Alexandria: there were certain streets and districts known for the presence of Jews (cf. Philo, Flaccus 55; CPJ III 454, 468) and some synagogues included sub-groups organized by occupation, including goldsmiths, silversmiths and clothing-workers, according to a passage in Tosefta Sukkah (4.6; cf. Applebaum 1974b:476; Kasher 1985:352-53). We need not assume, however, that all occupation-based associations that had contacts with a Jew or included Jews as members were solely Jewish, as S. Applebaum (1974b:481-83) does; simultaneous affiliations with more than one association was a possibility for Jews and Christians, as well as Gentiles (see chap. 6).

\(^{22}\)See MAMA VI 264 = CIJ 766 (Akmonia; mid-late 1 CE); I Eph 1677 = CIJ 745, I Eph 1676 = CIJ 746; DFSJ 32 (Hyllarima); CIJ 755 (Hypaip; II-III CE); CIJ 775-76 (Hierapolis); CIJ 748 (Miletos; II-III CE); DFSJ 31 (Nysa); CIJ 754 = DFSJ 28 (Philadelphia); CIJ 738 = DFSJ 13 (Phokaia; III CE); CIJ 750, DFSJ 17-27 (Sardis); ISmyrna 295 = CIJ 741 (II CE); ISmyrna 697 = CIJ 742 (c. 124 CE); CIJ 744 = DFSJ 16 (Teos; III CE); CIJ 752 (Thyatira; time of Trajan). Cf. Josephus, Antiquitates 14.213-67; 16.160-73.
It is worth noting that in many cases these Judeans had lived for decades and sometimes centuries at a particular locale, something which should caution us in over-emphasizing their “alien” or “immigrant” status (cf. Josephus, *Antiquitates* 12.147-53 [early settlements]; also see chap. 6). A corollary of such long-term habitation was an additional source of membership: Gentiles with varying degrees of interest or commitment to the synagogue or Jewish customs could affiliate with or join such groups or form associations of their own, as I discuss below (section 5). Familial connections could be a source for some Gentile membership: Levinskaya (1996:231-42) shows that Jewish families (in the Bosporos at least) who manumitted their slaves often did so on the condition that the freed person continue to honour and regularly attend the Jewish prayer-house.

There are some indications of social-economic status among Jewish groups. Although much of the evidence for Jewish civic citizenship in the first two centuries is notoriously complex and ambiguous (cf. Applebaum 1974a; Trebilco 1991:167-85), it seems that individual Jews, at least, could sometimes gain local citizenship (and attain civic office at least after 212 CE [Digest 50.2.3.3]), and we know of cases where Jews were Roman citizens, perhaps including Paul. Our evidence for diaspora Jews suggests a range of professional possibilities similar to those of non-Jews.23 But there were also wealthier Jews or Jewish families, women included, who owned slaves and could afford to provide a local synagogue with a place to meet or the funds to decorate one that existed.24

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23 Attested professions of Jews in the diaspora (from *CIJ*) include: painter (no. 109), butcher (210), teacher (333, 594, 1158c, 1266, 1268, 1269), soldier (79), slave (556, 619e), wine-seller (681b), physician (600, 745), purple-dyer (777), boot-seller (787), silk-manufacturer (873), baker (902, 940), seller of small wares (928), fuller (929), linen-seller (931), and goldsmith (1006). See van der Horst 1991:99-101. The Aphrodisias inscription includes persons of the following occupations among the main membership of the Jewish group: goldsmith, green-grocer, bronze-smith, confectioner, poulterer, rag-dealer (Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987). Philo mentions that Jews in Alexandria were involved in trade as shippers, merchants and artisans (*In Flaccum* 57).

24 For example, a relatively wealthy woman at Phokaia paid for the construction of the meeting-place (*oikos*) of the Jews there (*CIJ 738 = DFSJ 13; III CE); Rufina, the head of the synagogue at Smyrna, built a tomb for her own freedmen and slaves in the second century, making fines for violation payable to the Jewish ethnic-group (*ISmyrna 295 = CIJ 741*). As the studies by Bernadette J. Brooten (1982) and Paul R. Trebilco (1991:104-26) show, women played a more prominent role than previously acknowledged within Jewish groups in Asia Minor, both as benefactors and as leaders.
So far I have discussed ethnic- or geographic-based associations found in the province of Asia. Yet similar associational tendencies were at work among those from Asia Minor who emigrated elsewhere in the empire for business or other reasons (including enslavement, military service, etc.). In the Hellenistic era, for instance, there were associations of Lycians from Kaunos and from Pinara and Pisidians from Termessos living in Syrian Sidon (Macridy 1904:549-56 [πολίτευμα]). Associations of Lycians, Cilicians and Ionians (some of them soldiers) existed in Egypt, some of which find their counterparts in Roman times (SB 6664, 7270 [πολίτευμα]; OGIS 145-48, 157 [κοινόν]; SB 8757 = IGR I 1078 [Lycians in the Roman era]; cf. Lüderitz 1994).

Several groups of this type are known in Rome and other cities of Italy (La Piana 1927). A group of Sardians met regularly at Rome, as did the Ephesian shippers and merchants, for instance (IGUR 85, 86, 87 [Sardians]; IGR I 147 [Ephesian shippers; cf. IGUR 1355, 1491, 1563]). The “corporate body” (πολίτευμα) of Phrygians devoted to the Great Mother (Cybele) at Pompeii (IGR I 458) had its counterparts at Rome, where these associations consisted, in part, of freedmen and slaves of Phrygian background who belonged to the imperial household (but see Cicero, De Senectute 13.45 [Cybele associations for the elites]). The relative position or prestige of such groups likely improved when the officially recognized cult of the Great Mother, originally introduced by the Senate in 204 BCE, was reformed and granted further distinctions under Claudius (see La Piana 1927:289-302).

Asians that emigrated to regions such as Macedonia, Thrace and Italy were especially prone to gather together in the form of the Dionysiac mystery-societies so familiar to them at home (cf. Edson 1948:154-158; Nilsson 1957:50-51). There was a Dionysiac “company (σπειρα) of Asians” both at Dionysopolis and at Montana in Moesia; Marcus

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25 As François Kayser (1994:232-36, no. 74) points out, the form of dating in the inscription reflects Egyptian practice. Either this inscription was initially from Egypt, most likely Alexandria, or this is a group of Phrygians who moved from Alexandria to Pompeii at some point.
supplied the pillars for a “Baccheion of Asians,” dedicating his gift on behalf of the emperors and the civic institutions of Perinthos in Thracia. Several inscriptions from Thessalonica attest to a “thiasos of Asians” there (IG X.2 309, 480; Edson 1938:154-58, no. 1). In such cases it seems that regional identity played a fundamental role in origins and membership, though certainly such a group might also begin to include locals among its numbers (as did many groups of Judeans, for instance) as the social network connections of native Asians expanded in their new home (cf. Edson 1948:154-55).

Contrary to a tradition in scholarship, extra-local links could play a significant role in the lives of some associations, especially those for whom ethnic, civic or regional identity persisted (cf. Ascough 1997a; also see chap. 6). When the civic institutions of Nysa passed a decree honouring their wealthy benefactor, T. Aelius Alkibiades, they were also sure to single out for mention his benefactions to a collegium (κολλαγίμον) of Nysaians living in Rome, who evidently maintained contacts with the wealthy elites and institutions of their homeland (c. 142 CE; Clerc 1885 [side B]; cf. IEph 22 [side A only]). It is significant that Alkibiades was also a patron to both the Roman and Asian branches of the “world-wide” Dionysiac performers, groups which clearly maintained contacts with one another throughout the empire (side A). Similar examples of the continuation of inter-regional contacts could be cited for various other associations, including the settlement (κατοικοντες) of Tyrian merchants at Puteoli who, after about a century of existence, wrote to their homeland for financial assistance in paying their rent (100,000 denarii a year). The city of Tyre responded by asking another group of Tyrian merchants, the one at Rome, to help those at Puteoli (OGIS 595 = IGR 1 421 = CIG 5853; cf. MacMullen 1974b:84-85; La Piana 1927:255-59 [with trans.]; c. 174 CE).

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26 BE (1952) 160-61, no.100 (Dionysopolis); IGBulg 480 (Montana); IGR 1 787 (Heraklea-Perinthos; 196-98 CE); cf. Saucine-Sâveanu 1924:126-144, nos. 1-2 (Callatis, Moesia); IGLSkythia 1 99, 199 (Histria, Moesia); and, IGBulg 1517 (Cillae, Thracia; 241-44 CE; cf. Nilsson 1957:50-51).
3) Neighbourhood or locational basis

Neighbourhood networks form a third basis of membership for associations. Inhabitants of a particular street, district or neighbourhood (sometimes coinciding with occupational background) could act together corporately, sometimes becoming an ongoing group with social and religious purposes comparable to other types of associations. What interests us here are those groups which continued to identify themselves primarily in terms of locational considerations. There are three main terms used by such groups: “settlement” (κατοικοῦντες), “neighbourhood” (γειτονίη, γειτνίασις) and “street” (πλατεία).

Thus at Pergamon a “settlement of the acropolis” set up honorary inscriptions on more than one occasion, once for Nero.27 Round about the same time another group which called itself “the settlement of Paspaeitai street,” including one dyer and perhaps a mixture of other artisans in its number, honoured L. Cuspius Pactumius Rufinus, a Roman consul who was also priest of Zeus Olympios (c. 140-50 CE; IPergamon 393, 424, 434; IGR IV 425; cf. IStratonikeia 536, 539-40). Though location-based groups could include a mixture in terms of occupation or gender, persons living or working in a particular area were more likely to reflect similar social brackets of society.

There were similar “neighbourhood” associations in the Phrygian region. At Sait-tai a neighbourhood honoured a member on his epitaph, and at Orkistos “those from the neighbourhood of the adjacent countryside,” who are also called members of a brotherhood (φρατόρων), set up a votive offering for a god (TAM V 90 [198 CE]; IGR IV 548; cf. IGR III 21 [Kios]). A Christian epitaph from third-century Akmoneia involves another association of this type. Aurelius Aristeas promises “the neighbourhood of those by the

27 Cf. Josephus, Bellum 7.73, who describes the reception of Vespasian at Rome after the fall of Jerusalem, noting that inhabitants made libations and prayed for the emperor, feasting “by tribes, families, and neighbourhoods (γειτνίασις).”
"gateway" provisions for regular banquets if they fulfill their obligation by putting roses on
his wife's grave once a year (IPhrygR 455-57 [the violation formula refers to the
"righteousness of God"]). Although of a later period, this inscription shows that
Christians, like Jews and Gentiles, could follow usual practice in including (neighbour-
hood) associations or guilds among the recipients of funerary foundations. Similar neigh-
bourhood associations are attested in other provinces of Asia Minor, as at Prusa in
Bithynia and Termessos in Pamphylia.28

A discussion of groups whose membership consisted of those associated with a par-
ticular "street" by way of work and/or residence will serve as an appropriate transition to
occupation-based associations. Numerous associations at Phrygian Apameia, for example,
identified themselves by the colonnaded street where they worked. On several occasions
in the mid-second century the civic institutions joined with the settlement of Romans to
honour prominent civic functionaries and priests. In each case one of three different
street-based associations set up the honorary decree "from their own resources": those
from Thermaia street, the artisans from Shoemaker street (τεχνεῖται), and the traders
(ἐργάσται) from Thermaia street (IGR IV 788-91 = IPhrygR 294-96, 299). Similar
street-associations, some of them clearly of an occupational nature, are known at Ephesos,
Mylasa, Saittai and Smyrna in Asia, as well as Sura in Lycia and Canathai in Arabia (IEph
454, 3080; IMylasa 403; TAM V 79-81; ISmyrna 714; IGR III 711-13, 1230; cf. Robert
1937:529-38 [on street-associations]).

28 At Prusa a benefactor set up a relief depicting Cybele seated on a throne as a "promise" of benefaction to
"the neighbourhood"; a similar association at Prusias dedicated monuments to Zeus Soter on more than one
occasion (IPrusaOlym 50; II CE; IPrusiasHyp 63-64; cf. IGR III 50; c. 102-14 CE). A man made fines for
violation of his grave payable to Zeus Solymeus and the civic treasury at Termessos in Pamphylia, but also to
the "sacred neighbourhood" of the goddess Leto (TAM III 765; cf. TAM III 348).
4) Occupational basis

One’s occupation and the networks of relations it entailed were in many ways a determining factor in social-religious affiliations. Membership in an occupation-based association was less than “voluntary” in the sense that, if one was a dyer or merchant, one naturally or by default, so to speak, associated with one’s fellow-workers in the guild of dyers or merchants. Still, it was possible to maintain simultaneous affiliations with or memberships in more than one association at a time (cf. Meiggs 1960:321-22 [examples of dual memberships at Ostia]; Digest 47.22.1.2 [law against such practice dating from the late-II CE]; also see chap. 6). In considering occupation-based associations as a separate category, we must not forget the important role of familial factors here as well. It was common practice in antiquity for sons to follow in their father’s footsteps when it came to profession, so it would not be surprising to find particular families at the forefront of certain guilds from one generation to the next. On the other hand, there were times when one’s professional affiliations created family ties, as when a goldsmith at Laodikeia Combusta (in Galatia) married the daughter of the head-goldsmith (MAMA I 281).

A wide range of these occupational associations existed in the cities and villages of Asia (see appendix 1). We find associations of those who supplied the necessities of life, including bakers, fishers, and farmers, as well as builders and physicians. Clothing producers are well attested throughout Asia, especially in Phrygian towns such as Thyatira, where there were guilds of fullers, leather-cutters, leather-tanners, linen-workers and a group that I give special attention to in chapter five, the dyers. Producers and sellers of other amenities, such as potters, smiths in copper, silver and gold, and merchants and shippers who dealt in various goods likewise formed such groups. Entertainment in the form of festivals was an essential aspect of the social and religious life of all cities in Asia Minor which is reflected in the prominence of guilds of performers and athletes, whose position and prestige relative to many other guilds was quite high, though I do not focus on these particular guilds in the present study.
Social networks associated with occupation and trade could also be a key factor in the formation and ongoing life of some Christian or Jewish groups (cf. Humphries 1998 [on trade networks and the dissemination of Christianity in northern Italy]). I have already noted the existence of Jewish guilds at Alexandria and will have occasion to discuss the presence of Jews and Christians as members of Gentile guilds (i.e. of dual or multiple affiliations) in chapter six. Among scholars, Ronald Hock (1980) stresses most emphatically that workshop-settings were an important social context for early Christian preaching by leaders such as Paul. When he travelled to cities such as Ephesos, Corinth or Thessalonica, it seems, the workshop and linkages associated with occupation played a significant role. Although we should not take Celsus' predominantly lower-class characterization of the Christian movement as a whole at face value, there is truth in his observation, about a century after Paul, that attachments through workshops of wool-workers, shoemakers and clothing-cleaners continued to be a key resource for newcomers to some Christian groups (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.55).

In light of the importance of work-settings, then, it would not be surprising to find that there were some Christian groups whose membership derived primarily from networks associated with occupation or trade. Those at Thessalonica addressed by Paul apparently provide an example of just such an occupationally-based guild of hand-workers. Paul emphasizes his own hand-work in identifying with these particular Christians, even mentioning that he and his companions “worked night and day...while we

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29 Several traditions in Acts reflect this context. At Corinth Paul works together with Priscilla and Aquila, persons who shared his occupation as “tent-makers” (Acts 18:2-3). The “σχολής of Tyrannus” at Ephesos (19:9) may very well be a reference to a guild-hall which Paul used as a venue for spreading his message, as Abraham J. Malherbe suggests (1983 [1977]:89-91). In light of this activity in work-related circles, it is not surprising to find stories of disturbances involving Christians and craftsmen like the silversmiths of Ephesos (19:21-41).

30 Though evidence for occupational associations at Thessalonica has not survived in abundance, we do know of a guild of purple-dyers there who honoured a native of Thyatira (*IG X.2 291; II CE*). Other associations which called themselves “worshippers” or “initiates,” for example, are well attested in the city (see Ascough 1997b).
preached to you the gospel of God”; he had included exhortations to continue working in their occupations when he was with them (1 Thess 2:9, 4:9-12; cf. 2 Thess 3:6-15). In cases where such a Christian group drew its membership primarily from occupational or business networks, the makeup of the group could be more homogeneous both in social-economic level and gender makeup than was the case with some other associations.

This brings me to issues pertaining to the composition of occupational associations more generally. A few words about the social status of craftsmen and traders overall are in order first. The upper class disdain for work of any kind, especially manual labour but also trading or commerce generally, is abundantly clear in literary sources spanning the centuries from Herodotus to Lucian.31 A statement by Plutarch is indicative of views among the literary elites: “[while] we delight in the work, we despise the workman…it does not necessarily follow that, if the work delights you with its graces, the one who wrought it is worthy of your esteem” (Pericles 1.4-2.1, 2 [LCL]).

Similarly, Cicero includes all work involving manual labour among the “vulgar” or “disgraceful” (sordidus) means of livelihood, “for no workshop can have anything liberal about it.” He gives special mention to the vulgarity of “fishmongers, butchers, cooks, poulterers and fishermen.” Other professions, he admits, involved a “higher degree of intelligence,” such as physicians, architects and teachers, and therefore were less undesirable. Still, the true gentleman was supposed to derive his wealth not from trade or manual labour but from “agriculture,” that is, land-ownership (De Officiis 1.150-51; cf. Finley 1985a [1973]:35-61; Joshel 1990:62-69; D’Arms 1981 [on the involvement

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31 Cf. Herodotus, 2.167-68; Xenophon, Oeconomicus 4.1-6.10; Plato, Leges 846d-847a; Aristotle, Oeconomica 1.2.2-3; Lucian, Somnium 9. Whether or not it was appropriate for the philosopher to engage in manual labour was a subject of debate among the Cynic, Stoic and Epicurean philosophers. It seems that Cynics who followed the example of Simon the Shoemaker in pursuing the philosophical life while plying a trade were in the minority, however. See Philodemus, Peri Oikonomias 23 (for the Epicurean view) and contrast this to Pseudo-Socrates, Epistolae 8, 9, 12, 18 (for the Cynic debates). Also see Musonius’ discourse (no. 11) on “what means of livelihood is appropriate for a philosopher?”. But this reflects an idealization of farming life, not necessarily a reflection of Musonius’ actual practice, nor an advocacy of manual labour generally, as Malherbe (1987:20) and Hock (1980:48) wrongly imply.
of senators and equestrians in trade nonetheless). The status of workers of any occupation was extremely low, "vulgar," from the perspective of many among the literary elites (but see Dio Chrysostom, *Orationes* 7.113-17; cf. Brunt 1973).

In spite of this expression of general disdain, however, it seems that workers' understanding of their own occupation and status in relation to the civic community where they lived was often very different. Alison Burford's study stresses that workers and artisans "shared to some extent a positive attitude towards their profession, which gave them all a certain confidence and independence of mind in the face of whatever pressures the rest of society saw fit to bring to bear upon them" (1972:27; cf. Ioshel 1992). Artisans often identify themselves by occupation on epitaphs, sometimes depicting their tools or a workshop scene in relief (see Burford 1972, figs. 3-24, 41, 46-48). The very existence of guilds is a testimony to the identity and pride that characterized workers of many trades such that they would attempt (and succeed, as we will discover in subsequent chapters) to find a place as a group within the *polis*, even maintaining contacts with the civic and provincial elites. The elites' actual benefactions and other positive relations with guilds did not necessarily reflect the disdain expressed in literary sources.

Although craftsmen and traders were primarily among the non-elites segment of society, there was nevertheless a range of possibilities of wealth and status within the strata from which the guilds (and other associations) drew much of their membership. Certain occupations might be considered more desirable or conducive to gaining wealth than others, for example. Shippers or traders, for instance, could hope to attain greater wealth and prestige within the wider community than, say, local tanners whose work involved undesirable odours and fullers whose labour by nature involved the burning of sulphur and urine. In the case of clothing production, the status of those involved in the

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preparation of the more luxurious clothing of the elites, such as the purple-dyers, for instance, might exceed that of the regular clothing workers and dyers involved in the production of daily clothing for locals, though any of these occupations could also include ex-slaves (cf. Pleket 1983:139-40; *NewDocs* II 3 [on the status of purple-dyers]). Silversmiths or goldsmiths who produced the statues that were so necessary for appropriately honouring the gods, as well as the luxury items purchased by the wealthy elites, might hope to attain greater wealth or prestige within the *polis* in comparison with some other occupations, at least in cities such as Ephesos. For example, one silversmith there was on the Artemis sanctuary's board of management (συνεδριαν or συνεργωγη of νεωται), a fairly well-respected civic position at the time often held by members of wealthier families (*IEph* 2212 = *NewDocs* IV 1; I CE; cf. Acts 19:21-41 [on the influence of the silversmiths]). Physicians, who possessed some degree of education, would often be viewed as a step above many other occupations in terms of social status (cf. *NewDocs* II 2; Cohn-Haft 1956; Nutton 1977). There were times when physicians were also granted special immunities by emperors (*GCRE* 38 [74 CE]). Members of the physicians' association at Ephesos, for example, were also civic councillors (*IEph* 946).

Many craftsmen and traders, as citizens of the *polis*, commonly played a role as participants in the civic assemblies (see chap. 3). But there were even a few cases when individuals of particular occupations achieved local prestige and wealth that led to the assumption of other important civic positions. At Thyatira, for instance, there was both a slave-merchant (σωματεμπορος) and a dyer who at one point assumed the relatively important position of market-overseer (ἀγορανόμος; cf. *TAM* V 932, 991; II-III CE). There are also cases of craftsmen, traders or other workers attaining membership in the civic council (βουλη): shippers at both Ephesos and Nikomedia (Bithynia), a member of the purple-dyer's guild at Hierapolis, goldsmiths at Sardis (who are also Jews) and even a baker at Korykos in Cilicia (*IEph* 1487-88; *SEG* 27 828; *IHierapJ* 156; *DFSJ* 22-23;
Still, as Pleket (1983, 1984) suggests, most craftsmen and traders could not boast of great wealth, nor would they be considered among the elites of society.

In light of the discussion thus far, the membership in most occupational associations might be described as relatively homogeneous, consisting primarily of men from a common social-economic bracket. Yet there was a range of wealth and status within this bracket, and there are some other important qualifications which should be made here. Although certainly not widely attested, it is possible that some occupational guilds included women in their number, particularly in the case of occupations for which there is evidence of women's engagement.\(^{33}\) One wonders whether Lydia the purple-dyer from Thyatira or Elpis the purple-dealer at Kos, buried alongside a fellow-worker (CIG 2519), would have affiliated with an association of others who shared their professions. This was the case with two women at Athens in the fourth-century BCE who joined with their fellow clothing-washers in dedicating a monument to the nymphs and all the gods (IG II.2 2934). This being said, the most widely attested links between women and guilds are cases where the woman in question was a wealthy benefactor or the recipient of honours rather than a member.

Another important point which should caution us in assuming that all guilds were homogeneous are cases where a range of wealth and social status is evident in a particular group, despite the members sharing a common profession. The case of the fishermen and fishmongers at Ephesos is instructive (IEph 20 = NewDocs V 5). This association consisted of approximately 100 members (89 are legible) who, together with their families, contributed towards the building and dedication of the fishery toll-office in the mid-first

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\(^{33}\) Unfortunately, and partially due to the nature of inscriptive evidence, we know very little regarding the frequency and nature of women's participation in particular occupations. Hans-Joachim von Drexhage (1992) points out that working women were sometimes labelled by masculine designations, so this makes it even harder to detect the presence of women in a guild, for instance. We do, however, encounter occasional examples of women in particular occupations (cf. van Minnen 1986).
century. The contributors are listed in order of the size of donation ranging from the four columns donated by Publius Hordeonius Lollianus with his wife and children to those who gave five denaria or less. This range of donations evidently represents the spectrum of wealth among the members' families.

There are other indications of heterogeneous membership in this association. Studies by G.H.R. Horsley (1989) and Steven Michael Baugh (1990) demonstrate that the membership included Roman citizens of freed and free status (43-44 members; approximately 50% of the legible names), persons of non-servile status (between 36 and 41 members; about 45%), and several slaves (between 2 and 10 members; 3% or more). The presence of so many members possessing Roman citizenship, some of whom have sufficient wealth to build several columns, should also caution us in assuming that Cicero's view of fishmongers and fishermen as "vulgar" necessarily represents the actual social-economic and citizenship possibilities for such workers. It is more than likely that some other guilds, for which we lack such a list of membership, included such a mix of members of free, freed and servile status with differing levels of wealth (cf. Kampen 1981:31).

5) Cultic basis

 Appropriately honouring gods and goddesses by way of cultic activities in a group-setting was a concern of virtually all types of associations (see the next chapter). Nonetheless, there are associations whose membership appears to derive primarily from social networks connected with a specific cult or sanctuary (that is, from preexisting social contacts within the context of honouring a particular deity), and whose continuing group-identity, both in the view of members and of outsiders, was expressed in terms of devo-
tion to the deity or deities. Here we are concerned not with boards of priestesses or temple-wardens, for instance, officially functioning within a sanctuary on a regular basis, but rather with ongoing groups of what we could call laypersons; yet even these groups of laypersons could sometimes continue to meet within a sanctuary and occasionally participate as a group within the activities of a larger, civic cult.

There was an array of such associations in Asia during the Roman era, including those devoted to Aphrodite, Artemis, Asklepios, Cybele and Attis, and Zeus, as well as angels or heroes, just to name a few. In chapter four I focus on those that chose the emperors or members of the imperial family (Sebostoi) as patron deities. Here I discuss for illustration those devoted to Men, Sabazios, Isis and Sarapis, Demeter and Kore, Dionysos, and the Jewish God.

A brief outline of some of the evidence for groups of this type with attention to the range of possibilities in composition will be useful here. Although the social status and gender makeup of many of these associations is elusive, there are some indications which are worth noting. E.N. Lane’s study of those who dedicated monuments to the god Men in Asia Minor suggests that they were primarily free persons or peasants from a variety of occupations, but a few were slaves; associations dedicated to Men that we do know of in Phrygia were either solely male or a mixture of both men and women. In cases where

34 Because of the partial nature of our evidence, it is sometimes difficult to know whether or not a particular group should be categorized here or under one of the other principal social network bases. That is, it is quite possible that a group devoted to, say, Dionysos or Demeter, who expressed this explicitly in their name, may have drawn their membership primarily from familial or occupational connections, for instance, without leaving us hints (in the surviving inscriptions) as to these origins.

35 In chapter four I focus on those that chose the emperors or members of the imperial family (Sebostoi) as patron deities. Here I discuss for illustration those devoted to Men, Sabazios, Isis and Sarapis, Demeter and Kore, Dionysos, and the Jewish God.

36 For associations of Men worshippers see CMRDM 16-17 (Rhodes), 34 and A3 (Collyda, near Saittai), 53-54 (Maionia, near Saittai), 57 (near Saittai), 87 (Sebaste) and 127 (Tymandos, near Phrygian Apollonia). See Lane 1971-76:3.109-113.
we can discern the membership in associations devoted to Sabazios (a Thracio-Phrygian deity), men predominate, though the Sabaziasts at Teos honour a woman named Eubola on an epitaph. If the poor orthography of monuments for Sabazios is any indication, many worshippers of this god were of lesser economic means and little education.\textsuperscript{37}

Associations devoted to Egyptian deities, especially Isis and Sarapis, are attested in Asia, some of which may well have been initially founded by immigrants and merchants from Egypt.\textsuperscript{38} Apuleius' famous description of a procession in honour of Isis suggests the importance of groups of women in the worship of this goddess (\textit{Metamophoses}, book 11), and it was quite common for priestesses to head these cults more generally. However, as Sharon Kelly Heyob (1975:81-110) warns, we should not exaggerate the role of women, for of the 1099 inscriptions in Ladislav Vidman's catalogue, for example, only 200 or 18.2\% happen to mention women who were priestesses, members of associations or devotees of the goddess. Most of the Isis or Sarapis associations attested in Asia Minor that list their membership consist principally of men, as was the case with the "servants" or "worshippers" (\textit{θεοποιοντες}) at Kyzikos and Magnesia (opposite Sipylos) and with the initiates at Bithynian Prusa. At Magnesia, at least one member was a Roman citizen, and the group at Prusa also included one Roman citizen among the six men who were gathered around their priest, Leonides (two of them apparently relatives, perhaps brothers, of the priest).

\textsuperscript{37} For associations of Sabazios worshippers see CCIS II 28 (Teos), 43 (Ormeleis in Pisidia; 207-208 CE), 46 (Rhodes; c. 100 BCE), 51 (Piræus; c. 100 BCE). The Sabaziasts at Rhodes, for example, worship the god in a "male-clubhouse" (\textit{athlon podia}), and a similar association in the Piræus consisted of 51 men, both Athenian citizens as well as immigrants from Antioch, Miletos, Macedonia, Laodicea and elsewhere. There are only three known female dedicants of monuments for Sabazios in the Roman era (CCIS II 58, 63, 76), none from Asia Minor (cf. Lane 1989:7-8, 45).

\textsuperscript{38} For associations devoted to Isis and/or Sarapis in Asia and Bithynia see SIRIS 285 (Herakleia-Latmos), 295 (= Intril 86; II CE), 307 (= IMagnSip 15; II BCE and II CE), 314 (= IPergamon 338), 318-319 (Kyzikos; I CE), 324 (= IKios 22; I CE), 326 (= IPrusaOlymp 48; II CE); IIPrusaOlymp 1028 (= SEG 28 1585). An association devoted to Anubis (\textit{Synanubiastai}) is attested at Smyrna in the early III BCE (SIRIS 305 = ISmyrNA 765). For temples of Isis or Sarapis and, therefore, possible meeting-places of associations of worshippers see Wild 1984, esp. nos. 9, 12, 21 and 27. Cf. Vidman 1970:66-94, 125-138; Youtie 1948 [banquets of Sarapis].
The mysteries of Demeter and Kore along with associations devoted to these goddesses appear to be quite prevalent in some cities of Asia, especially at Ephesos, Smyrna and Pergamon. Devotees of Demeter the Fruit-bearer (Karpophoros), to whom I return in chapter four, are known at Ephesos and its vicinity from several inscriptions from the first and second centuries (cf. Herrmann 1998 [mysteries of Demeter Karpophoros at Sardis]). This group of Demetriasts appears to have joined ranks with the initiates of Dionysos Phleos sometime in the mid-second century, a combination of mysteries attested elsewhere as well.

Several inscriptions from the vicinity of the sanctuary of Demeter at Pergamon (mostly from the early second century) attest to initiates in the mysteries of the goddess as well as female hymn-singers, and we know of at least one “company” (σπείρα) which included women in its membership. At Smyrna we find a group of initiates of Kore (ISmyrna 726) and a synod of initiates of Demeter Thesmophoros (ISmyrna 653-54, 655). Groups devoted to Demeter could consist of both men and women as leaders and members, and some were solely female. In terms of social status, it seems that they included at least some wealthy members from the civic elites in their number, especially as priests

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39 The mysteries in honour of Kore at Kyzikos appear to have gained official civic status (see CIG 3663, 2666, and Hasluck 1910:210-13). Mysteries of Demeter are also attested in Bithynia at both Nikomedia and Prusias (TAM IV 262; IPrusiasHyp 69). On the initiates at Messenia in Greece see Pausanias, 4.1.6. At Pessinos in Galatia, an association of farmers dedicated a structure to Demeter, perhaps their patron deity (CIG 4082). Two inscriptions from Rome involve an imperial freedman dedicating a monument to the goddess Kore for the association of Sardians, who may have included her as a patron deity (IGUR 86-87).

40 See I Eph 213, 1210, 1270, 1595, 4337; IMagnMai 158 (cf. Strabo 14.1.3; Oster 1990:1671-73). The worship of Demeter had a long history at Ephesos (cf. Herodotus 6.16). One temple, as yet unfound, was built and dedicated to her in about 120 CE (I Eph 1210). At the nearby village of Almourea a wealthy man dedicated the income from his workshops to the mysteries of Demeter, including processions that also included the village’s patron deity, Men (Pleket 1970:61-74, no. 4). On the combination of the mysteries of Dionysos with those of Demeter see IG IX.2 573 and BE (1959) 201, no. 224, both from Larisa in Macedonia.

41 See Hepding 1910:457-59, 476, nos. 40-42 (a female hymn-singer and a male initiate [μύστης]), 63 (the civic board of θεαμοθέτου honours a male initiate); Ippel 1912:286-87, 298-99, nos. 13 (Asklepiake sets up a monument for her own σπείρα), 16 (a male initiate and his daughter, a hymn-singer), 24 (the θεαμοθέτου honour a priestess), 25 (a daughter honours her mother, a priestess of Demeter and Kore).
and priestesses, alongside the more general membership which would probably include a range of possibilities.42

By far the most well-attested associations in Asia are those devoted to Dionysos and his mysteries, so it is worth giving a bit more attention to them (see the list in appendix 2; cf. Nilsson 1957; Henrichs 1978, 1983; Cazanove 1986; Burkert 1987, 1993; Merkelbach 1988). Setting aside groups of performers, we find such associations in many cities and villages, only some of which can be briefly mentioned here. A very important inscription from Magnesia on the Maeander (set up in the mid-second century CE but claiming to preserve an earlier oracle) relates a myth concerning the introduction of Dionysiac associations to that city (MagnMai 215; see Henrichs 1978 [regarding maenadism]). In the mid-third century BCE, so the story goes, a miraculous sign—an image of Dionysos—appeared after a tree was hit by lightning, and the people of Magnesia sent messengers to consult the oracle at Delphi about the meaning of this sign. Apollo’s response was quite clear, calling on the people to dedicate temples to Dionysos and to “come unto Thebes’ holy ground, so that you may receive maenads...who will give to you good rites and customs and will consecrate Bacchic associations (θυάσοντις) in the city.”

This foundation story, whether true or not, was still important to groups of initiates in the Roman era, which, unlike the associations in the story (cf. Henrichs 1978:148 [maenads at Miletos]), included men in their ranks, one of whom set up the present inscription. A similar mixed group of initiates met in a “sacred oikos” (cf. Ierythr 132) in the nearby district of Klindos; it consisted of both male and female leaders and mem-

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42 The apparently wealthy Servilius family was prominent in the leadership of the Ephesian group in the early first century (I Eph 4337), and another (probably wealthy) woman, Juliana from Magnesia, was the priestess around 38-42 CE (MagnMai 158). A Roman citizen named Lucius Pompeius Apollonios was their advocate in the late first century (I Eph 213). There appears to be a close link between Demeter and the pryaneion at Ephesos (cf. I Eph 10), where we find several thanksgiving inscriptions set up for Demeter (alongside Hestia and others) by both male and female members of the civic board of pryaneis (cf. I Eph 1058, 1060, 1067, 1070a, 1071). It is quite possible that some of these pryaneis also had connections with the attested associations, and we have one certain case of such in the mid-second century (Terentia Aeliane; see I Eph 47.19, 720a, and 1595).
bers, including a chief-initiate, two men that are called “foster-father” (ἀτιεξάς), a “nurse” (ὑπότητος) of Dionysos, a hierophant and a priestess (IMagnMai 117; early-II CE).

A similar association of initiates apparently met outside the city-walls of Ephesos. During the reign of Hadrian, M. Antonius Drosos was their superintendent (εὐπερηνής) along with other leaders with Roman citizenship, one of which, T. Claudius Romulus, was also a civic prytanis (IEph 275, 1020, 1601; cf. IEph 293, 434, 1595; Merkelbach 1979). We also catch momentary glimpses of a synod of initiates devoted to Dionysos Breiseus at Smyrna, a group which had its origins in the first century and even maintained some diplomatic contacts with emperors in the mid-second century (ISmyrna 731-32 [c. 80s-90s CE], 600-601 [time of Marcus Aurelius/Lucius Verus], 622 [time of Hadrian], 639). A separate group met under the leadership of a “reveler of the gods” (θεοφανης) in the second or early-third century; these initiates had a series of purity regulations—some reflecting Orphic influence—concerning entrance into their “sanctuary of Bromios” (ISmyrna 728; cf. Nilsson 1957:133-43).

Dionysos Kathegemon (“the Leader”) held a prominent position within cultic life at Pergamon and in some of the cities most directly influenced by it, so it is not a surprise to find abundant evidence for Dionysiac associations there (see appendix 2; cf. von Prott 1902; Ohlemutz 1968 [1940]:90-122; Athanassakis 1977 [Orphic hymns from Asia]). The bacchants who dedicated an altar to king Eumenes in the second century BCE find their successors in the “dancing cowherds” (οἱ χορεύσαντες βουκόλοι) of the Roman era, whose meeting-place is discussed in the next chapter. Around the turn of the first century, the group consisted primarily of men (though at least two women are mentioned as members), some of them Roman citizens (up to 35% of membership).

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43 Of the twenty-three members mentioned in IPergamon 485, five (21.7%) certainly possess Roman citizenship. Of the seventeen members legible in Conze and Schuchardt 1899:179-80, no. 31, one is a woman and six (35.3%) possess Roman citizenship. In no. 32 (revision of IPergamon 486) only one name is legible, a woman.
Flaccus, also belonged to the hymn-singers' association, which sang hymns in honour of the emperors publicly and performed their own internal imperial mysteries (see chap. 4). Lucian makes special reference to the prominence of Bacchic dances by cowherds in Ionia and Pontus, mentioning that those involved could include “men of the best birth and first rank,” as was the case with at least some at Pergamon though certainly not all (De Saltatione 79; cf. Jones 1990).

At Philadelphia, a Pergamene foundation, we find several references to a hierophant of Dionysos Kathegemon (cf. MAMA VI 239 [Akmoneia]; IGUR 157 [Rome], both dedications to this same god). There were at least two associations, one a “company” (σπειρα) with a chief-cowherd at its head (ILydiaB 8) and another the “initiates gathered around Dionysos Kathegemon” (ILydiaKP 1 42; II CE). The latter included a member, also superintendent (ἐπιμελητὴς) of the group, who held local offices including high-priest and auditor (λογιστὴς) of the civic council.

As this brief survey of some of the evidence shows, there was a variety of possibilities in the makeup of Dionysiac groups. Some consisted solely of women, especially groups of maenads, while others in the later Hellenistic and Roman eras began to include a mixture of both men and women or, in some cases, solely men (e.g. the Iobacchoi at Athens). Something I have not yet mentioned, though, is the prominence of children in the Dionysiac mysteries, which corresponds to the prominence of Dionysos' childhood in his myths (cf. Nilsson 1957:106-115; Henrichs 1983:149-50). We know from several epitaphs—a couple from Asia Minor and others from Italy—that both boys and girls as young as seven, ten or seventeen could “speak the rites of Dionysos” or “lead the thiasos in dances” as participants in his mysteries. (see TAM V 477 [Saittai]; CIG 400 [Iconium]; IGUR 1169, 1228 [Rome]; Merkelbach 1971 [Tusculum]; cf. Cole 1993:288-91).

Nilsson's study (1957) of the material concerning the Dionysiac mysteries leads him to conclude that the majority of groups worshipping the god in the Roman era con-
sisted mainly of the wealthy elites. He bases this primarily on his reading of the known monuments of Italy, especially the frescoes of the Villa Item at Pompeii, which would have required considerable expense. He also points to the presence of some wealthy members in groups elsewhere, especially the cowherds of Pergamon and the Iobacchoi at Athens, the latter boasting Herodes Attikos as priest. However, associations of varying social-economic means could count on benefactions from the wealthy elites for the construction, modification or decoration of their meeting-places or other provisions for activities, and these patrons could also assume honorary positions as leaders within an association. The presence of wealth or wealthy members does not necessarily exclude a range of social-economic levels among the other members of the group. As with other associations, there was a spectrum of possibilities from one locality to another, from one group to the next and even within a particular group.

Similar things could be said of groups in Asia centred on cultic concerns associated with the Jewish God. The social and gender makeup of Jewish groups could vary from one city to the next and even among Jewish groups at a particular locale. We have already discussed groups of Judeans or Jews and their social makeup in the discussion of ethnic-based associations, where we found that some could also draw their membership from common occupational connections. Another phenomenon worth mentioning is associations consisting principally of Gentiles who adopted at least some Jewish practices and who worshipped, in some form, the Jewish God. The group of “associates” (ἐταίροι) at Elaiussa in Cilicia (time of Augustus), calling itself the Sabbatists (Σαββατισταί), appears to be an association of non-Jews who adopted Jewish practices related to the Sabbath, after whom their deity, god Sabbatistes, is named (Hicks 1891:233-36, nos. 16-17 = OGIS 573 = LSAM 80; cf. SB 12 [Naukratis, Egypt]; CIJ 752 [Thyatira]; Schulze 1966 [1895]; Tcherikover 1964).

We can now turn to other groups devoted to this God in Asia, especially early Christians assemblies, which included varying proportions of both Jews and Gentiles.
Early Christian literature pertinent to the province of Asia attests to such groups in various cities (and perhaps villages) including Ephesos, Magnesia (on the Maeander), Pergamon, Philadelphia, Sardis, Smyrna, Thyatira, Tralles and the cities of the Lykos valley, Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea. I have already stressed the importance of household, work-related and other network connections for some of these groups, but a few more words are in order regarding their composition before concluding this chapter.

Until recent years, it was quite common for scholars to speak of early Christianity as, in the words of Adolf Deissmann, "a movement of the lower classes" (1995 [1908]:8-9). The notion that most, if not all, early Christian groups drew their membership primarily from the most dispossessed and deprived segments of Greco-Roman society has also taken its toll on some recent studies of Christian literature relevant to Asia. John H. Elliott's study of 1 Peter, for example, assumes that the "vast majority" of its recipients were literally "aliens" from the "working proletariat of the urban and rural areas" of Asia Minor (1990 [1981]:59-100, esp. 70-72). He goes on to portray the social situation of this "proletariat," "the ignorant and exploited masses," in harsh terms, citing a study by Samuel Dickey of 1928. A corollary of these harsh social-economic circumstances and experiences of deprivation, Elliott suggests, was a milieu most conducive to the success of a sectarian movement with an apocalyptic message; I challenge aspects of such notions in part three, especially concerning sectarianism. Such an understanding of Christian groups generally, as well as the nature of conditions in Asia Minor under Roman rule, is inadequate.

Recent years have seen a shift away from this sort of characterization towards an acknowledgement that Christian groups were "more nearly a cross section of society than we have sometimes thought," as Floyd V. Filson (1939:111) observed in 1939. Recent studies by Abraham J. Malherbe, Meeks and others emphasize that although we lack sufficient information to provide detailed profiles of the social level of Christians, the indica-
tions we do get suggest that many groups reflect a mixture of social-economic levels (cf. Judge 1960; Malherbe 1983 [1977]:29-59; Theissen 1982; Meeks 1983:51-73; Holmberg 1990:21-76). Within this mixture Meeks suggests that the “typical Christian” was a “free artisan or trader” (1983:73), though, as I said earlier, there was certainly a range of possibilities in wealth, prestige and status within such segments of society.

Evidence for Christianity in Asia Minor specifically likewise reflects a cross-section of society. The Christians brought before Pliny in the region of Pontus represented “individuals of every age and class, both men and women,” among them some Roman citizens and two female deaconesses, whom the governor interrogated (Epistulae 10.96.4, 8-9). Artisans such as Priscilla and Aquila could be hosts of a church in their house, in this case at Ephesus (1 Cor 16:19; cf. Acts 18:3). In a more general sense, the inclusion of household codes giving advice to both husbands and wives, masters and slaves in 1 Peter, the Pastoral epistles and Ignatius’ epistles implies that some of each were present in the groups addressed. The Pastoral epistles’ guidelines on the selection of leaders reflects the presence of some persons of considerable wealth, and the epistles of Ignatius and of John likewise mention wealthier figures, such as Diotrephes and Polycarp, who assumed leadership within local Christian groups (see Maier 1991:155-56; Mart.Pol. 5.1, 6.1-2; Ign. Pol. 4.3).

Having made these generalizations regarding composition, we must remain aware of the possibilities of regional differences in the makeup of Christian groups from one city to the next in the same region or even from one group to another in a particular locality. While the Christian group at Smyrna in the late-first century may have drawn the greater part of its membership from those of little financial means, for instance, the Christians in nearby Laodicea appear to include a relatively high proportion of those with considerable wealth, probably gained through trade (Rev 2:9; 3:17). Moving out of our region of focus, it seems that the various house-churches at Corinth were divided along social lines,
perhaps with one church being more socially homogeneous than another; the social divisions that accompanied this situation came to the fore when the various groups united for communion (1 Cor 11:17-34). I have already noted the probability that some Christian groups might be better described as more homogeneous, occupational guilds, drawing membership from a similar social-economic level and gender (as at Thessalonica), while others might rest on household connections, reflecting the social spectrum associated with that institution.

**Conclusion**

Many associations that are the subject of the present study drew their membership primarily from the sub-elites and the masses, rather than from the elite segments of the population which could boast of senatorial or equestrian rank or of holding the most important civic positions.44 Still, there were other groups that did include members of the upper strata in their number. The civic and imperial elites were also important with regard to other aspects of association-life, especially as benefactors or leaders (see chaps. 3 and 5). Furthermore, we must also beware of imagining that the non-elite segments of the population were homogeneous, that they were predominantly poor and deprived, for instance; instead, there was a range in levels of wealth and social status within these strata of society, and the membership of many associations reflects this range.

When we considered associations in terms of the principal social networks which informed their membership, here identifying five types, we began to draw a better picture of diversity in composition from one type to the next and sometimes within associations of a common type. An association deriving from networks associated with a particular household could reflect the spectrum of dependents associated with such familial struc-

44 It seems that membership of the elites within the more important civic or provincial boards and institutions, or participation in associations such as the Arval brethren at Rome provided an elite counterpart to the groups that are the focus of this study.
tures, both men and women of free, freed and servile origins. While some geographic-ethnic groups could consist solely of men (sometimes of a common profession), others included both men and women in their number as members or leaders. Location-based associations could consist of a mixture of occupations, depending on the neighbourhood in question. On the one hand, many occupational associations could be somewhat homogeneous, consisting of men of a common level of wealth and status. On the other, there were cases where a particular guild reflected a social spectrum with respect to citizenship, wealth, legal standing and status overall.

Variety, rather than uniformity, is also the case with those groups that appear to be based on social connections associated with a particular cult, some of whose membership could also be drawn from one or several of the other social network bases. While an association devoted to the god Men in a village of Lydia might include both men and women of modest means in its number, another devoted to Dionysos or Sarapis elsewhere might include a member or leader wealthy enough to pay for a new mosaic, perhaps also a Roman citizen or civic functionary. Jewish and Christian groups, too, could differ in composition from one locality to another, some reflecting the social spectrum of society more fully than others.

The present chapter has focussed primarily on Roman Asia, but it is worth briefly noting that other recent studies of the composition of associations elsewhere in the empire come to similar conclusions, despite regional variations and diversity. In studying collegia in the West, Ausbütel (1982:34-48) challenges the common portrait of these groups as consisting of only the poorest in society. Instead, he shows, "the composition of the collegia was just as heterogeneous as that of the plebs," closely reflecting the social struc-
ture of the population in towns generally (1982:37 [trans. mine]). Such issues regarding the range of social strata represented within associations will be of continuing relevance when we assess the involvements of associations in imperial and other aspects of civic life. But first we need to give attention to the internal life of associations and their purposes.

45 "Die Zusammensetzung der collegia war genauso heterogen wie die der plebs." Again: "General läßt sich über die Mitgliederstruktur der Kollegien aussagen, daß sie der jeweiligen Sozialstruktur der Bevölkerung auf dem Lande und in der Stadt entsprach" (1982:40). N. Kampen (1981:31) notes that the names of guild members recorded for Rome, Ostia and other towns in Italy show that "members of the lower social strata tended to band together without regard to legal status differentiation. Slave, libertus, and ingenuus worked in the same trades, banqueted and socialized together, and, living in the same neighborhoods, worshipped and celebrated together."
Chapter 2
The Internal life and purposes of associations:
Honouring the gods, feasting with friends

Introduction

One of the principal shortcomings of many association typologies has been a
tendency to sort these groups based on the supposed primary purpose they served for their
members. This approach diverts our attention away from the fact that, as I argue in this
chapter, all types of associations served a variety of interconnected social, religious and
funerary functions for their members. Overall, these functions helped to provide members
with a sense of belonging.

The present chapter does not attempt to provide a comprehensive discussion of all
activities, nor does it claim that all associations served the same purposes in precisely the
same way. Instead, acknowledging diversity, I provide a broad overview of the internal
life of such groups so that we cannot be misled into believing that the imperial-related
activities I discuss in part two stood in isolation or that they were the only important
aspect of group-life. In fact, we will find that imperial aspects were embedded within the
internal life and external relations of associations. In this sense, the portrait of
association-life here, together with the next chapter on the civic context, provides an
essential framework within which we can begin to understand the place of such groups
within society in Roman Asia.

Visualizing association-life

Several monuments from Mysia (north-western Asia Minor) capture in visual form
the central thesis of this chapter concerning the inter-connected purposes of associations.
On them are reliefs depicting something we rarely encounter in surviving evidence: an
actual picture of the activities of associations and related scenes which communicate to us
something of how these groups understood themselves. One monument from Panormos
near Kyzikos, now in the British Museum, was dedicated to both Zeus Hypsistos and the village by Thallos, a member of an association (see fig. 2; *GIBM IV.2* 1007 = Perdrizet 1899:592-93, no. 1, plate IV = Goodenough 1953-68, vol. 3, fig. 845; cf. Mitropoulou 1990, 1996; van Straten 1993). The relief consists of three parts which reveal the interrelated purposes of the association and the importance of the gods for group-life overall. Immediately beneath the text of the dedication are depicted in a preeminent manner the deities to whom this association granted particularly appropriate honours: Zeus, Artemis and Apollo. Zeus stands in the centre holding a spear in his left hand, and all three hold out the customary libation bowl in their right hands.

Under the beneficent protection of the gods we find on a much smaller scale a depiction of six members of the association reclining to share in a banquet (cf. *CIG* 3699 = Lolling 1884:25-26 [Panormos]). This is a scene not unlike what we might imagine for various guilds and associations, such as the Dionysiac cowherds at Pergamon who met in a hall ideal for banqueting, which I will return to shortly. For other associations, especially those devoted to Sarapis, members might be very much aware of a deity’s presence with them as they made sacrifice and ate the accompanying meal (see below). The fusion of social and religious dimensions of group-life is completed by the lower panel of the relief, depicting the group’s entertainment. On the left a seated man plays a Phrygian double-flute while a woman performs a circular dance, likely in honour of the gods. To her right a man uses sticks or reeds to provide percussion while another man oversees the mixing bowl for the wine (cf. Hasluck 1904:36-37, no. 58 [Kyzikos]).

Other reliefs demonstrate the prominence of sacrifice to the gods and other forms of cultic honours or worship. On one occasion, a *thiasos* at Triglia (near Apamea on the Propontis) consisting of both female and male members honoured Stratonike, a priestess of Mother Cybele and Apollo, by setting up a monument with reliefs in the “synagogue of Zeus” (see fig. 3; *IApamBith 35* = Perdrizet 1899:593, no. 2 = Robert 1949:42, no. 1 =
Like the monument I described above, the upper panel depicts the realm of the gods. But in this case Stratonike is pictured on the same plane approaching an altar with upraised hands in adoration of both Apollo (who stands beside the altar) and Cybele (who remains seated to the right).

Similar gestures of worship appear in another relief from Kyzikos which shows a procession of eight persons, probably members of an association, with upraised hands in adoration of Cybele who is enthroned above them with lions on either side (see fig. 4; CCCA I 289; 1 BCE). Returning to our priestess, Stratonike is accompanied by a girl playing a double-flute and a boy bringing a sheep for sacrifice (cf. *IAPamBith* 33 = Robert 1949:42, no. 2). Beneath the sacrificial scene ten members of the association gather for a banquet, consuming food and drink while they are entertained by flutists, seen on the left. Beside the musicians is a youth carrying a basket towards two others who are managing the mixing bowls for the wine as some souvlaki roasts to the far right.

*Questioning a tradition in scholarship*

This picture of associations eating and drinking as they gather together under the protection or even in the presence of the deities whom they honour regularly, through sacrifice and other cultic honours, is further confirmed by inscriptive and archeological evidence from throughout Roman Asia. One scholarly tradition, which is apparent in the works of M.P. Nilsson, Ramsay MacMullen and Nicholas R.E. Fisher, tends to separate the social from the religious in arguing that most associations were primarily concerned with conviviality and other social concerns, in some sense lacking genuinely religious dimensions. Similar views are evident among scholars who have considered imperial cults in the past (see chap. 4).

The gatherings of almost all associations in the Roman era are more an excuse to have a party than they are a genuine attempt to honour gods, according to Nilsson: "the
Dionysiac mystery associations resemble the other very numerous associations of the Hellenistic and following age, which, under the pretext of honouring some god after whom the association was named, assembled in order to enjoy themselves and to feast” (1957:64; cf. W.S. Ferguson’s 1944:123). For Nilsson, many mysteries performed by groups in the Roman era, including those associated with imperial cults, as we shall see in chapter four, were merely “pseudo-mysteries”. Nilsson is right to compare Dionysiac groups with other associations in that all of them certainly included conviviality among their purposes, but mistaken in downplaying religious dimensions to this degree. Further on, in connection with his upper-class characterization of most Dionysiac groups, Nilsson’s value judgements become even clearer: “These people were not in earnest about religion” (1957:147).

Nilsson does not consider the possibility that in antiquity even social aspects of life, such as banquets, could be infused with religious significance for those who participated. We need not agree with such a view wherein enjoyment of participants is viewed as a tell-tale sign that they were not interested in genuinely honouring the gods. As I discuss shortly, Nilsson and others are sometimes working with problematic conceptions of religion.

Although far less blatant in his views, it is more than a coincidence that MacMullen’s book on Roman social relations (1974b) discusses guilds extensively while his book on Paganism in the Roman empire (1981) gives far less attention to them. In the former he discusses the various purposes of occupational associations, among them the civic role I discuss in the next chapter, but he stresses that it was their social function above all else—“pure comradeship” and feasting—that were important: “if piety counted for much, con-

46 Nilsson stresses that the Dionysiac-Orphic group at Smyrna (ISM Smyrn 728 = LSAM 84) was an exception in maintaining the truly “sacral” character of its meals and activities. The prescriptions in this inscription, he asserts, were designed to combat the widespread “desacralization” of the Dionysiac mysteries which he otherwise assumes (1957:133-43, esp. 135, 139).
viviality counted for more” (1974b:71-87, esp. pp. 77, 80). It is only when he turns to “cult associations” and groups of foreigners that he considers the religious side of life to be of more significance. Yet even his discussion of Mithraic associations is revealing of these tendencies. MacMullen emphasizes the down-to-earth aspects of feasting and friendship as the main objectives of such groups to the neglect of the cosmological significance of their communal meals. He disregards the fact that meals could replicate “in the life of the Mithraic community something originally enacted on the divine plane by the cult’s gods,” as Roger Beck demonstrates (1992:4-5; cf. Burkert 1987:73, 109-11 [in reference to Nilsson]). A similar tradition of scholarship to that of Nilsson and MacMullen is echoed in Fisher’s statement that “although the collegia had religious functions, they were above all concerned with status, solidarity, sociability, and aspects of social security” (1988b:1222-23).

These scholars are correct in acknowledging the social side of association-life. But their corresponding neglect of its religious dimensions, often intertwined with what we might call “social,” is problematic. It appears that they are working with a view of religion which distinguishes it rather sharply from convivial and other aspects of life. Modern, western definitions of religion along the lines of those offered by William James (1902) and Rudolf Otto (1923) focus on the feelings and personal experiences of the individual in relation to the divine as the most important indicators of “genuine” or “true” religion. Some scholars have approached the study of antiquity with similar conceptions. Within this framework, religion is more concerned with solemnity, asceticism and mysticism, rather than conviviality and enjoyment, and the focus is on the individual rather than the group or community, on feelings and attitudes rather than activities and rituals.

The present study takes a more open-ended and cross-culturally sensitive approach to the subject. We need to realize that in employing terms such as “religious” and
“religion” we are dealing with abstractions that allow us to conceptualize our subject, not with objective realities which the groups and persons we are studying would necessarily isolate from other aspects of life. The modern compartmentalization of life into the political, economic, social and religious does not apply to the ancient context, where “religion” was very much embedded within various dimensions of the daily life of individuals, whose identities were inextricably bound up within social-groupings or communities. Within the Greco-Roman context, we are dealing with a world view and way of life centred on the maintenance of fitting relations among human groups, benefactors and the gods within the webs of connections which constituted society and the cosmos. Religion or piety in antiquity had to do with appropriately honouring gods and goddesses in ways that ensured the safety and protection of human communities and their members. Moreover, the forms which such cultic honours could take do not necessarily coincide with modern or western preconceptions of what being religious should mean.

Interwined social, religious and funerary dimensions of association-life

This understanding of religion and of Greco-Roman society and culture specifically will become clearer as we proceed throughout this study. As I argue in this chapter, the cultic, social and burial functions of associations were very much interconnected. There is no reason to question the genuineness of their religious dimensions in the sense that appropriately honouring the gods in a variety of ways was a real concern of virtually all types of groups and their members. Still, different associations could certainly serve each of the following purposes in varying ways.

a) Cultic activities within occupational and other associations

We have already encountered gods and goddesses—and honours for them— in the discussion of various types of associations. The family-based association at Philadelphia
performed mysteries in honour of Zeus, Agdistis and other deities. Phrygians living at Pompeii worshipped Cybele, the Great Mother, and groups of Asians living in Moesia and Macedonia often chose Dionysos as patron. The Roman businessmen at Assos were engaging in typical activities for such groups when they dedicated monuments both to god Augustus’ wife, Livia, the “new Hera,” and to Roma, “the benefactor of the cosmos” (IAssos 19, 20; both early I CE). So was the neighbourhood association at Prusias who dedicated monuments to Saviour Zeus.

Inscriptional evidence, by its very nature, limits the degree to which we should even expect to find rituals and other honours for the gods revealed to us in any detail, if mentioned at all. Inscriptions rarely state what was taken for granted as customary practice. The majority of extant inscriptions pertaining to associations are epitaphs or honorary inscriptions for benefactors (including deities), not cultic guidelines or prescriptions for group-life. Nonetheless, it seems that most, if not all, associations chose particular deities as patrons and included rituals in honour of gods or goddesses among their regular activities. Quite often it is not possible, however, to measure the degree to which religious aspects were important for a particular group in comparison with others. What is clear is that such practices were significant to virtually all associations. I begin with occupational associations since it is with them that religious aspects are most neglected by scholars such as MacMullen.

The dream books of Artemidoros of Daldis (who resided in Ephesos in the second century) supply the social historian with indispensable information regarding social and religious life (cf. Pomeroy 1991), also revealing the genuine importance of gods and goddesses for members of guilds. It is significant that throughout his guidelines on the interpretation of dreams he so frequently associates workers and craftsmen with the gods whom they worshipped (esp. Oneirokritika 2.33-44). He states the following with respect to those who dream about an artisan of a particular trade: “People who have professions that
are associated with particular gods signify the gods who are the patrons of the professions in question” (2.44; trans. by White 1975). It was common knowledge—not only to Artemidoros but also to the social spectrum of persons for whom his dream interpretations were supposed to work—that those of a common occupation frequently devoted themselves to honouring particular deities.

Yet even for artisans themselves, Artemidoros states, “it is more auspicious to see gods who are compatible with the professions of the dreamers than to see gods who are incompatible. For gods who do not assist men in their work are inauspicious” (4.74). This and other “common sense” statements are particularly significant since, especially in this case, he is actually revealing what he perceives to be the self-understanding of the artisans themselves. The gods were a regular part of the landscape of the populace’s dream life as well as waking life, and for workers of many trades appropriately honouring the gods was important (cf. Burford 1972:164-83). The silversmiths of Ephesos who, according to the author of Acts (19:23-41), gathered together a crowd of craftsmen and others in defence of the reputation of Artemis, patron deity of their hometown, would not be exceptional in this regard.

Sometimes we catch glimpses of these concerns to honour the gods working themselves out in the corporate lives of occupation-based associations in Roman Asia and elsewhere, despite the limitations of epigraphical and archeological evidence. Cases of professional guilds honouring the gods by dedicating altars or other monuments to them could be cited from throughout the Roman world.47

Building remains also clearly communicate the importance of religious aspects among the purposes of occupational associations. Though we lack excavated guild-halls in

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47 From Asia see, for example: MAMA IX 49, 66 (a guild of farmers in the Aezanatis valley honour Zeus Bennios and another a guild honours Mother Kouaene); Mordtmann 1885:204-207, no. 30 (merchants at Kyzikos dedicate a monument to Poseidon and Aphrodite Pontia; 1 BCE); IG XII.2 109 (leather-workers at Mytilene set up an image of Aphrodite); ISmyrna 721 (the guild of silversmiths and goldsmiths repair a statue of Athena; 14-37 CE).
Asia specifically, several halls (scholae) used by guilds of builders, shippers, ship-builders, grain-measurers and others have been excavated at Ostia in Italy. Both Russell Meiggs (1960:324-330) and Gustav Hermansen (1981:55-89) point out that the remains of these buildings, which often included both sanctuaries and banqueting facilities, disclose the intertwined religious and social activities of the guilds. The grain-measurers’ building, for instance, included a general meeting room, a courtyard with a well, a latrine, and a temple dedicated to their patron deity, Ceres Augusta (see fig. 5a; Hermansen 1981:65-66 [II-III CE]). Built in the time of Hadrian, the builders’ meeting-place consisted of a central courtyard surrounded by several rooms on all sides: four on the east were dining-rooms with built in couches (triclinia) and one in the southwest corner was the kitchen (see fig. 5b). Most conspicuous, though, was the central room which was immediately encountered on entering the building: the sanctuary where rituals were performed regularly in honour of the guild’s patron deities.

The meeting-place of an ethnic-based guild of an earlier era (II-1 BCE) on the Greek island of Delos is also indicative of the importance of cultic purposes. The buildings of associations of various types have been excavated on Delos, including those of the comedian actors, Israelites (Samaritans), Judeans and Sarapis-devotees (see Bruneau and Ducat 1983:179-185, 206-208, nos. 76, 80; Bruneau 1982; White 1987, 1996:1.37-40, 2.332-42, nos. 70-71; cf. Rauh 1993). There is also inscriptionsal evidence for many other ethnic- or geographic-based associations on the island, including the Tyrian merchants and shippers devoted to Herakles, Tyrian Melkart (cf. IDelos 1519), and various groups of Italians or Romans (see Rauh 1993:29-41). The group which concerns us here is the ethnic-based association of Poseidon-worshippers from Berytos, consisting of a mixture of merchants, shippers and traders (τò κοινòν βερυτίων Ποσειδωνιαστῶν ἐμπόρων καὶ ναυκλήρων καὶ ἕγοδοξέων). This guild met in a residential style building that had been constructed or adapted sometime before 153/2 BCE and was used by the guild until the
building's destruction in 69 BCE (see fig. 6; Bruneau and Ducat 1983:174-79, no. 57; cf. *IDelos* 1520, 1772-1796).

This guild's concern to honour gods and goddesses alongside its other activities is clearly communicated by the remains that have been unearthed. The building consisted of a large peristyle court-yard in the style of a household (F), which the guild dedicated to "the gods of the homeland" (θεοὶ πατρίως; *IDelos* 1774; see the plan in fig. 6). This was the location of various statues and other honorary monuments for benefactors and deities. A well-preserved statue of Aphrodite and Pan, shown in figure seven, was also found within the building. Another smaller court-yard (E) may have been used for commercial activities, and there were several other smaller rooms, some of which were probably used for storage (G-T). One of these rooms (G) may have been used for banquets. An honorary inscription erected by the guild for a Roman benefactor and banker, Marcus Minatius, happens to describe one of the guild's festivals in honour of Poseidon (*IDelos* 1520). This festal gathering under the leadership of the ἀρχιερεία involved a sacrificial procession, offering of an ox, and accompanying meals.

Probably most indicative of the importance of cultic honours offered by the members of this guild is the sanctuary area in the south-western section, which consisted of a pronaos (V) along with several shrines (cf. Picard 1920; Bruneau 1978; Meyer 1988; Bruneau 1991). Although there is some debate concerning the building-history of the shrines, there were at least three (perhaps four) shrines. By the early first century (88 BCE at the latest) one of these shrines (V¹) contained a statue with an inscribed base for Roma, the guild's "benefactor" (*IDelos* 1778); another (V²) was devoted to the patron deity, Poseidon (*IDelos* 2325); and a third (and perhaps fourth) was likely dedicated to some of the other "gods of the homeland" so often mentioned in the inscriptions, probably including Astarte and perhaps Herakles-Melkart (cf. *IDelos* 1774, 1776, 1781, 1783, 1785, 1789). Here the members of the guild could regularly honour the deities who pro-
ected them on a daily basis, ensured their success in business, and contributed to the well-being of their distant homeland. We can imagine similar cultic honours taking place within other guilds and ethnic-based associations about whom we happen to know far less. I will discuss further archeological finds concerning other buildings of associations shortly.

Returning to occupational guilds in Roman Asia, we sometimes get momentary glimpses of what were common, ongoing internal practices in honour of gods and goddesses. Thus on one epitaph from Teira, near Ephesos, a grain-measurer (πρωμετρητής) by profession makes provisions for a guild of workers (δραγάται) to hold a yearly wine-banquet in connection with celebrations in honour of Poseidon, apparently their patron deity (*IEph* 3216; cf. van Nijf 1997:60-61). The well-attested *synedrion* of physicians at Ephesos incidentally reveals in only one of its surviving inscriptions what was central to its ongoing internal life—sacrifice and accompanying ritual feasts—in referring to itself as the “physicians who sacrifice to ancestor Asklepios and to the Sebastoi,” the emperors as gods (*IEph* 719; early II CE).

The importance of sacrifice—the principal rite by which fitting relations were maintained between humans and the gods in antiquity—can be assumed for other occupational associations as well. An association of merchants, probably fishermen, at Kyzikos dedicated a monument to Poseidon and Aphrodite Pontia with a relief depicting a sacrificial scene so familiar to them in their group-life (Mordtmann 1885:204-207, no. 30; 1 BCE). When a guild of builders had doubts about whether they should engage in certain construction work on the theatre at Miletos, they turned to the god Apollo at Didyma for advice (c. 120 CE):48

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48 Wiegend 1904:83 = Buckler 1923:34-36, no. 3 = Fontenrose 1988:193-94, no. 19; cf. Parke 1985:76-79. W.H. Buckler and others (e.g. Ste. Croix 1981:273; MacMullen 1966:176) are stretching things a bit far in interpreting this as an example of an impending or actual “strike,” though. Another association, the friends-of-Dionysos, also consulted the oracle at Didyma (see *IDidyma* 502-503).
Should the builders associated with Epigonos—that is, the contractors for the section of the theatre in which the prophet of the god, the late Ulpianus, was superintendent of works and the architect, Menophilos, assigns the work—fashion and produce the arches and the vaults over the columns or should they consider other work?

The god answered: For good uses of wise building techniques, it is expedient to consult a skillful man for the best suggestions, performing sacrifices to thrice-born Pallas and strong Herakles.

Apollo’s rather vague response regarding their architectural work (suggesting that they consult an expert) is accompanied by a very clear prescription that these craftsmen perform sacrifices to Athena and Herakles (cf. Burford 1972:194-95 [on Athena and the crafts]). Offerings of sacrificial victims, other foods and libations with accompanying banquets were the touchstone of corporate religious piety in the Greco-Roman world and we can assume that they were a regular part of the lives of all types of associations.

Regular festivals and gatherings associated with honouring the gods were a common feature of group-life in other types of associations and could involve a variety of rituals and practices, including mysteries. As Walter Burkert’s (1987) recent study emphasizes, mysteries were not a separate religion to be defined over against the religious life of the city generally. Rather, mysteries could be incorporated within cultic life in various contexts, including associations. Mysteries were integral for entry into some groups, especially those devoted to Dionysos, Demeter and Kore, Isis and Sarapis or others who called themselves “initiates” (μύσται). Partially because of the element of secrecy, very

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49 Buckler thought that the man’s name was Ulpianus Heros, but as Louis Robert (1968:581 n.4) points out, followed by Joseph Fontenrose (1988:194), the name Heros is very uncommon and the term is commonly used in inscriptions of this period to mean “deceased”.

50 Here I am following the reading suggested by Theodor Wiegend and followed by Fontenrose (1988:193; cf. Buck 1955:27), which is a more convincing reconstruction than Buckler’s (ἐνέγκυον[ης]), which he understands as a reference to “native country” (ἡ ἐνέγκυον; see Buckler 1923:34 n.1; cf. Parke 1985:76-77).
little is known concerning these rites, but it seems that revelation of objects considered sacred to a particular god—a phallus in a basket for Dionysos and images of gods in other cases, as we will also find with imperial mysteries (chap. 4)—was an important part of many such rituals that were called mysteries.

For other groups, such as the association meeting in the house of Dionysios at Philadelphia, certain states of morality or purity could be required before participating in ritual activities. In this case members were not to deceive one another or use abortifacients or contraceptives fatal to children, and the statutes also outline some guidelines as to acceptable sexual relations. The list of requirements concludes with a call for obedience, stating that: “the gods will be gracious to those who obey, and always give them all good things, whatever gods give to men whom they love. But should any transgress, they shall hate such people and inflict upon them great punishments” (SIG3 985 = LSAM 20, lines 46-51; trans. by Barton and Horsley 1981:9). The Christians brought before Pliny in Pontus apparently had similar expectations for those participating in their rituals; these Christians, Pliny states, “bind themselves by oath, not for any criminal purpose, but to abstain from theft, robbery, and adultery, to commit no breach of trust and not to deny a deposit when called upon to restore it” (10.96.7 [LCL]; see chap. 7).

Appropriately honouring the gods by way of rituals was taken very seriously by both individuals and groups. In one of the so-called confession inscriptions (Beichtinschriften) of Asia Minor, a man from Blaundos lamentingly tells of frequent and enduring punishment from the god “because he did not want to come and take part in the mystery when he was called…” (MAMA IV 281 = Petzl 1994:126, no. 108; I-II CE [from Dionysopolis]; cf. Ricl 1995 [confession inscriptions]). Although not widely attested, there are even some cases where exclusivism accompanies participation in such rites, as with the worshippers (therapeutai) of Zeus at Sardis who were “not to participate in the mysteries of Sabazios…and of Agdistis and Ma” (ISardH 4 = NewDocs I 3; II CE).
There is evidence for a variety of other religious practices that were also an ongoing feature of life within associations in Asia. Myths of the gods could be an important component within rituals (cf. Burkert 1987:66-88). At Smyrna, for instance, the initiates of Dionysos Bromios included among their activities an exposition of the story of the Titans, probably done by the functionary called the god-revealer (θεοφάνης; ISmyrna 728; II-III CE). The initiates of Demeter thanked two female “theologians” (θεολόγοι) who gave expositions or recited aretalogies (like the one for Isis found at Kyme) on the greatness of the goddesses in question (ISmyrna 653-54; I-II CE; Meyer 1987:172-74).

Among the rituals of the Iobacchoi at Athens, whose meeting-place I discuss below, was the priest’s pronouncement of a sacred discourse (θεολογία). They also engaged in some sort of sacred drama in which members were assigned roles as Dionysos (their patron deity), Kore, Aphrodite and others, re-enacting stories of the gods (IG II.2 1368 = SIG 1109 = LSCG 51, esp. lines 44-46, 64-67, 121-27; cf. Poland 1909:269-70). Here we are dealing with more than simply a group of “drinking-buddies” (Zechkumpane), as Engelbert Drerup (1899:357) misleadingly calls them. I will discuss similar mythical portrayals in connection with imperial cults in chapter four.

Prayers, singing, music and dancing were also among the means by which the membership in associations fittingly honoured the gods. Through prayers, communities, groups and individuals sought concrete favours, guidance or protection from the gods, and the votive offering (εἰχή) was one way of recognizing fulfillment of a request, expressing gratitude for the deities’ benefactions (cf. Versnel 1981). An association that met in a sanctuary of Zeus at Philadelphia in Egypt, for instance, regularly included in its practices a prayer, along with libations and “other customary rites on behalf of the god and lord, the king” (PLond VII 2193 = Roberts, Skeat and Nock 1936; I BCE). Although the nature of our sources means that we rarely have record of an association actually praying corporately (cf. Apuleius, Metamorphoses 11.17, cited in chap. 7), we do possess monu-
ments that were set up in connection with a group’s earlier prayer-request for a favour from a god and the accompanying vow (cf. MAMA IV 230 [Tymandos]; IGR IV 548 [Orkistos]; IPrygDB III 1 [Dorylaion]; TAM V 536-537 [Maonia]; SEG 41 1329 [Karain, Pamphylia]).

Singing and music could be important within various associations (cf. Poland 1926; Quasten 1983). Hymns were an elaborated, sung prayer which also honoured the deities whose help was requested, as J.M. Bremer (1981) points out. Quite common in Asia were the semi-official groups of boys, girls or youths who regularly sang in the context of civic cults and festivals (e.g. LSAM 69 [Stratonikea]; ICarie 132-39, 192-96 [Heraklea-Salbake]; IEph 18d [lines 4-24], 1145). But there were also functionaries associated with the composition or performance of hymns in honour of the gods in connection with both the mysteries of Demeter and of Dionysos at Pergamon, for instance (see Heding 1910:457-59, no.40; Ippel 1912:287, no. 16; IPergamon 485; cf. IEph 275, 973-974; ISmyrna 758). The so-called Orphic hymns, which likely come from western Asia Minor (perhaps Pergamon), make frequent reference to the Dionysiac initiates who sang them (Athanassakis 1977). There were other associations who called themselves “hymn-singers” (ιυμναδειοι), like those devoted to Cybele near Thyatira and to Dionysos at Histria in Moesia (TAM V 955, 962; IGLSkythia I 57, 100, 167, 199, 208, 221). I will return to those who sang hymns in honour of the emperors (Sebastoi) in later chapters.

It is worth mentioning a similar importance for singing within Christian and Jewish groups. After questioning the Christians brought before him in Pontus, Pliny characterizes their gatherings in terms familiar to himself: they “met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately amongst themselves in honour of Christ as if to a god” (Epistulae 10.96.7). Philo’s discussion of the “contemplative life” of the Jewish therapeutai in Egypt likewise provides a similar picture concerning the prominence of singing (alongside prayer, meals and other activities) within worship. His description also alludes to the analogy of Dionysiac mysteries:
After the supper they hold the sacred vigil... They rise up all together and standing in the middle of the refectory (συμφώνως) form themselves first into two choirs, one of men and one of women... Then they sing hymns (ὑμνοῦσι) to God composed of many measures and set to many melodies, sometimes chanting together, sometimes taking up the harmony antiphonally, hands and feet keeping time in accompaniment, and rapt with enthusiasm reproduce sometimes the lyrics of the procession, sometimes of the halt and of the wheeling and counter-wheeling of a chorique dance. Then... having drunk as in the Bacchic rites of the strong wine of God's love they mix and both together become a single choir... [The] end and aim of thoughts, words and choristers alike is piety. Thus they continue till dawn, drunk with this drunkenness in which there is no shame... (De Vita Contemplativa 83-89 [LCL]; cf. Richardson 1993:348-53 [on the building in which these activities took place]).

Philo's mention of ritual dancing in honour of God brings us to another aspect of internal group-practices.

We have already encountered musicians and dancers in the earlier discussion of reliefs depicting the meetings of associations devoted to Cybele, Zeus and others. Lucian's discourse on "the dance" (De Saltatione)--set in the form of a dialogue in which a Cynic, Crato, is convinced of the value of pantomimic dancing by Lycinus--emphasizes the close connection between dancing and worship of the gods, even suggesting that "not a single ancient mystic rite (τελυετήν) can be found that is without dancing" (15). Along with the discussion of dances associated with cults in honour of Zeus, Aphrodite, Orpheus, and others, Lucian has Lycinus note the following in connection with Dionysiac mysteries in Asia Minor:

the Bacchic dance that is especially cultivated in Ionia and in Pontus... has so enthralled the people of those countries that when the appointed time comes round they each and all forget everything else and sit the whole day looking at Titans, corybantes, satyrs and cowherds. Indeed, these parts in the dance are performed by the men of best birth and first rank... with great pride (79 [LCL]; cf. Artemidoros, Oneirokritika 4.39).

The association of "dancing cowherds" at Pergamon was not the only Dionysiac group which honoured the gods and portrayed their myths by way of dance, and we know that dancing could also play a role in the rituals of other associations, such as those devoted to Sarapis (see below).
b) Feasting activities

An element of group-life that is often discussed in connection with social purposes pertains to the eating and drinking that went on at associations' festivals and banquets. But we should be wary of accepting too whole-heartedly the opinions of Jewish or Christian apologists, such as Philo or Tertullian, for instance. Philo spends a good part of his discourse on the Jewish therapeutai near Alexandria contrasting the "mysteries" of their sanctified, ascetic life to the "frenzy and madness" of Greco-Roman banquets and associations (De Vita Contemplativa, esp. 40ff; cf. Seland 1996). According to Philo, most associations, in contrast to Jewish groups, of course, were "founded on no sound principle but on strong liquor, drunkenness, intoxicated violence and their offspring, wantonness" (In Flaccum 136-37 [LCL with adaptations]; cf. De Legatione ad Gaium 312-13). Writing a couple of centuries after Philo, Tertullian clearly has in mind pagan associations when, in defending and promoting the virtues of Christian assemblies, he states that the financial contributions of Christians are "not spent upon banquets nor drinking-parties nor thankless eating-houses," but on helping the poor and ensuring their burial (Apologeticus 39.5-6 [LCL]). Of course, Philo and Tertullian were not alone in describing meetings of others in such negative terms for apologetic or entertainment purposes.

Stories of secretive, nocturnal and uncontrolled banquets involving drunkenness and, at times, somewhat extreme rituals--incestuous sex, ritual murder and cannibalism among them--were the mainstay of mud-slinging and a source of novelistic shock-value among elite authors in antiquity. A novel by Lollianos (of which only fragments survive), for example, depicts an association engaging in ritual infanticide followed by a cannibalistic communal meal and promiscuous sexual activity (Henrichs 1970, 1972). Jack Winkler (1980) discusses such ritual depictions in novels, which sometimes involved villain bandit-associations (cf. Apuleius, Metamorphoses 4.22). Challenging Henrich's
views of Lollianos' novel (which suggested that the story derives from knowledge of actual rituals as practiced by some groups), Winkler argues that it is precisely in *inverting* what was commonly assumed to be normal or acceptable religious practices within associations that these episodes found their shock and entertainment value. One wonders how much of Livy's description of the subversive and secret meetings of the Bacchanalia (39.8-19), involving sexual excesses, murder and other crimes (written in the time of Augustus), corresponds more with such novelistic stereotypes and elite pretensions than with the reality of what happened in 186 BCE (cf. Gruen 1990).

Outsiders' accusations against Christian groups—Thyestan feasts and Oedipan unions, for instance—drew on the same stock-pile of fantastic popular lore, as did many of the "orthodox" attacks against "heretics" (cf. Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.1.14; Tertullian, *Apologeticus* 9.9; Benko 1980:1081-89; Edwards 1992). Yet the reasons for such accusations could be quite different in the case of Christians and Jews, pertaining to their failure to fully participate in local cultic life, especially sacrifice, as we shall see in chapter seven. Moreover, we must refrain from accepting descriptions of wild "impious" meetings of associations, whether Jewish, Christian or other, at face value, as though they realistically describe actual practices among a significant number of the groups in question.

Though there is truth in the observation that eating and drinking were important parts of group-life, and sometimes this might lead to disorderly behaviour in the eyes of some (cf. 1 Cor 11:17-34), we should not reduce the purposes of associations to mere conviviality or exaggerate the uncontrolled nature of meetings. First of all, there was a set of social-religious expectations and values concerning behaviour, sometimes set in stone as statutes, which helped to maintain order during the meetings and banquets of associations. The regulations of the Iobacchoi at Athens and the association devoted to Zeus Hypsistos in Egypt, for instance, both included rules (with accompanying punish-
ments) regarding obedience to the leaders, as well as proscriptions against members causing disturbances or attempting to take the seat of other members during gatherings (IG II.2 1368; PLond VII 2193).

Behavioural norms could also be upheld in quite concrete ways. A dream related by Artemidoros reflects one member's feelings of falling short of the expectations of other association-members, for example. His dream involves a radical violation of unstated rules: "Someone dreamt he lifted up his clothes in front of his fellow-members (συμβωταίς) in an association (φρατρίο) to which he belonged and urinated upon each of them. He was expelled from the association for being unworthy of it. For it is understandable that those who commit such vile deeds would be hated and expelled" (4.44). Apparently his dream reflected his failure to live up to other social or religious standards of the group, which were probably less drastic than the one he dreamt.

The fact that banqueting activities could be infused with varying degrees of religious significance for the participants, being viewed as a means of honouring or communing with the gods, further suggests caution in reducing the purposes of associations as Nilsson and others do. The inseparable nature of the social and religious dimensions of feasting is illustrated in Dio of Prusa's remarks: "What festivity could delight without the presence of the most important thing of all [friendship]? What symposium could please without the good cheer of the guests? What sacrifice is acceptable to the gods without those celebrating the feast?" (Orationes 3.97; trans. by Stowers 1995:298-99). It is important to note that for all associations and guilds sacrifice or libations in honour of the gods accompanied or preceded the banquet. And for some groups food and drink or the meal itself could be an essential element in the myth and ritual of the deity in question. How could a worshipper of Dionysos, for example, appropriately honour or identify with the god of wine without making the consumption of that beverage a central part of his or her activities? Gods such as Sarapis could also be considered present with the association in its festal gatherings, as a passage in Aelius Aristides of Smyrna shows:
And mankind exceptionally makes this god [Sarapis] alone a full partner in their sacrifices, summoning him to the feast and making him both their chief guest and host, so that while different gods contribute to different banquets, he is the universal contributor to all banquets and has the rank of mess president for those who assemble at times for his sake...he is a participant in the libations and is the one who receives the libations, and he goes as a guest to the revel and issues the invitations to the revelers, who under his guidance perform a dance... (Orationes 45.27-28, trans. by Behr 1981).

In one of several invitations to such banquets found in Egypt, Sarapis himself is the host who bids his guests to attend (PKôln 57; cf. NewDocs I 1). Conviviality was not the antithesis of religion--of fittingly honouring the gods--in antiquity, and we need to set aside restrictive conceptions of religion which would suggest otherwise. A brief look at some architectural remains will further illustrate the interconnected social and religious dimensions of association-life.

The earlier discussion of buildings at Ostia and Delos suggested that the remains of buildings could communicate to us in a concrete way purposes of associations which we might not otherwise perceive so vividly from other evidence. Rarely have the remains of actual buildings or banqueting-halls of associations been discovered or identified in Asia, so it is worth giving some attention to one that has: the meeting-hall of the Dionysiac cowherds at Pergamon, the so-called “Podiensaal” or “Hall of Benches” (see figs. 8-9; Radt 1979:321-23, 1988:224-28; cf. Mellink 1979:340-41; Koester 1998). This building, which was excavated and restored in 1978 by Wolfgang Radt, lies in a residential area on the southern slope of the acropolis, almost directly north from the sanctuary of Demeter and nearby a cult-building dedicated to a hero (see fig. 9). The identification of the hall as the cowherds’ meeting-place is virtually certain (see below). The building was set back from the street behind a row of shops with an alley leading to the hall’s courtyard on the south side. At the west end of the courtyard were two running fountains and a small vestibule entering into two small rooms, perhaps small service-rooms or storage areas.
The hall proper was largely symmetrical, measuring 24 metres from west to east and 10 metres from north to south, and it was ideal for the religious and banqueting activities of the cowherds (see photo in fig. 8). For there was a large bench (1 m. high and 2 m. deep), seen in the photo, running alongside all four walls, except at the central entrance on the south and the cult-niche opposite it on the north. Members of the association (up to 70 persons) reclined on the benches with their feet towards the wall and their heads towards the centre of the room, where an altar stood. A small marble slab or shelf ran along the length of the benches, being designed for the banqueters to set down their food and drinks. Excavators found bone-remnants of beef, swine and poultry ground into the floor, some of them the remains of sacrificial victims offered to the god. Under the benches, at regular intervals, are found niches, which probably served as storage areas for cultic implements, as Radt suggests.

The entire hall was plastered and painted. The decoration and other objects found there attest to the importance of the patron deity and his myths for the association. Dionysiac scenes--only a small portion of which were still visible when excavated--were painted on the main walls, one section depicting an altar with fire and a thyrsos-rod. A painting with Dionysiac connections was also still visible on the western wall of the cult-niche. This depicted wine leaves and grapes against a red background, along with a man dressed in sacrificial garb and Silenos’ costume. We hear of members with the title “Silenos,” who in myth took care of the child Dionysos, in other inscriptions pertaining to the cowherds at Pergamon (IPergamon 485). Finally, two altars were found in or near the building, one of which depicts a wine cup and garland. These had evidently been damaged in an earlier meeting-place, perhaps by an earthquake, and subsequently reused in this building. Both are set up by Herodes, a chief-cowherd (ἄρχεις βουκόλος) during the reign of Augustus (late-1 BCE), one being dedicated to Dionysos Kathegemon and the other to Caesar Augustus (Radt 1989, with photos [Taf. 91-92]; cf. SEG 29 1264).
Before going on to the funerary purposes of associations, it is worth saying a few words about another building which has been unearthed, this one at Athens in Greece. Wilhelm Dörpfeld's excavations of the late 1880s in an area west of the Athenian acropolis, between the Pnyx and the Areopagos, uncovered the site of an ancient triangular precinct which, although not necessarily the famous Dionysion in the Marshes, as originally thought (Hooker 1960), was probably dedicated to Dionysos (see fig. 10; Dörpfeld 1894 and 1895; cf. Harrison 1906:88-91). Some time in the Roman era (pre-176 CE) the Iobacchoi decided to construct a meeting-place within this ancient sacred space. The building or Baccheion, as it is called (cf. *IDidyma* 502; *ISmyrna* 733; *IGR* I 787), measured about 11 metres wide by 18 metres long, consisting of a large hall with two rows of columns, which divided the structure into a central nave and two aisles. It was here that they gathered for their social-religious activities, some of which I have already mentioned, including the sacred play re-enacting stories of the gods and the priest's sacred discourse.

Several finds were made within the structure which suggest the importance of honouring the gods among those who used the building. At the eastern end of the building, within an apse, was found an altar decorated with Dionysiac motifs, including a sacrificial goat, a satyr and a maenad. A small shrine devoted to Artemis appears to have been located in a room just north of this apse. Also near the Dionysiac altar were various sculptural objects including a head of Dionysos, a statue of Pan, several reliefs depicting Cybele, and statuettes of Aphrodite and of Hekate (Dörpfeld 1894:148). Most interesting here is the inscribed column which was found alongside the altar, including a Dionysiac scene depicting the head of a bull above two panthers on either side of a large drinking vessel (see fig. 11).

This inscribed column, which identifies the building as the Baccheion of the Iobacchoi, happens to be one of the most extensive inscriptions concerning an association of the
Roman era \((IG\ II.2\ 1368 = SIG^3\ 1109 = LSCG\ 51 = \text{Wide}\ 1894 = \text{Maas}\ 1895:14-71 = \text{Drerup}\ 1899; \text{cf.}\ \text{Tod}\ 1932:85-93; \text{Lane}\ \text{Fox}\ 1986:85-88; \text{Schmeller}\ 1995)\). It relates the minutes of a meeting in which the leaders and members of the association decided to have their rules more permanently inscribed in stone. The members' pride and sense of belonging becomes quite evident when they shout: "Long life to the most excellent priest, Herodes! Now you have good fortune! Now we are the best of all Bacchic societies!" Their recently appointed priest, Claudius Herodes, can be identified with the extremely wealthy and influential Claudius Herodes Attikos, and the events recorded in the inscription pertain to a time shortly before his death in 177/78 CE.\(^5\)

The inscription provides information concerning the meetings and rituals of the group and the roles and responsibilities of members and leaders (priest, vice-priest and chief-bacchant). But it also provides specific rules regarding entrance into the group and penalties for violation, which could be enforced by the officer in charge of maintaining order \((\varepsilon\iota\kappa\omicron\sigma\mu\omicron\omicron)\) and his assistants, the "horses" \((\iota\pi\pi\omicron\omicron)\). The group gathered quite frequently, "on the ninth of each month, on the annual festival, on Bacchic holidays and if there is any occasional feast of the god," and, when they did, participants were expected to "speak, act or do some honourable deed" (lines 42-46). Besides the religious practices already mentioned, the group performed customary libations and sacrifices along with accompanying feasts in honour of Dionysos. They also engaged in wine-feasts at the death of a member (lines 159-63).

\(^5\) Initially dated to the third century on palaeographical grounds by S. Wide and E. Drerup, the inscription is now known to come from the second century, pertaining to events before the death of Herodes around 177/78 CE. Susan I. Rotroff (1975) dates the archonship of Arrius Epaphroditos to 175/76 CE (see line 2 of the inscription; cf. \text{IG}\ \text{II.2}\ 1787). Elias Kapetanopoulos (1984:184-87) suggests the possibility that Epaphroditos dates to the period 195-205 CE, but he still associates the actual events recorded in the Iobacchoi's inscription to the time of Herodes Attikos, in the 170s CE.
c) Funerary activities

The connection between the social-religious functions of associations and funerary ones could be quite direct. A passage from Artemidoros illustrates this well:

A man dreamt that his fellow members in an association (φρατρία) to which he belonged suddenly appeared and said to him, 'Receive us as guests and entertain us at dinner.' He replied, 'I do not have the money nor the means to receive you.' Then he sent them away. On the next day, he was in a shipwreck. He faced extreme danger and barely escaped with his life...It is customary for the associates to go to the house of the deceased members and to dine there, and the reception is said to have been given by the deceased because of the honours paid to him by his fellows... (Oneirokritika 5.82; trans. by White 1975).

It was common practice for associations of all kinds to hold similar funerary feasts or wine-banquets in memory of deceased members, including customary burial rituals.

But there were several other practices associated with death and burial which can be briefly mentioned here (cf. Fraser 1977:58-70; van Nijf 1997:31-69). First of all, associations could have regular financial contributions or fees which went towards the cost of the funerary rituals or the actual burial of members. There were numerous epitaphs throughout Asia set up for the deceased by the association he or she belonged to, and at Saittai alone, for instance, there were dozens of epitaphs erected by guilds or associations of "friends" (TAM V 79-93).

Purposes associated with ensuring burial could be of greater or lesser importance depending on the economic circumstances of the members. The regulations of the collegium devoted to Diana and Antinoos at Lanuvium in Italy, for example, devote extensive attention to issues relating to the death and burial of a member, presumably because proper burial was something which the lower-class members might not otherwise have gotten (CIL XIV 2112). Among them are rules regarding procedures for burial if a member happens to die further than twenty miles away from town, as well as a stipulation that if a member commits suicide the right to burial by the association would be forfeited. On the other hand, the rules of the Iobacchoi at Athens—a group consisting of a notable number of wealthier members—say little of the procedures for ensuring actual burial, mention-
ing only the funerary wine-banquet: “If an Iobacchos dies, let there be a wreath up to the cost of 5 drachmae and let a single jar of wine be set before those who attend the funeral. But do not let anyone who was absent from the funeral itself have any of the wine” (IG II.2 1368, lines 159-163). Although from an earlier era in Egypt, it is worth mentioning two papyri in which family members (a sister in one, a brother in another) register a complaint with the king regarding the failure of an association (thiasos) to abide by its own rules in paying for the burial of an association-member (PEnteuxis 20, 21; c. 220 BCE).

Secondly, some associations could have a communal cemetary or collective tomb. This was the case with the guild of flax-workers at Smyrna who received a vault as a donation (ISmyrna 218; cf. IEph 2213). The Selgian craftsmen living at Lamos in Cilicia likewise had their own collective tomb, with each member owning a share which could not be sold to non-members (IKilikiaBM II 190-202; cf. van Nijf 1997:46-49). P.M. Fraser (1977:58-70) discusses the extensive evidence for communal burial plots among associations on the island Rhodes, where burial boundary markers have been found, as is also the case on the island of Kos (IKosPH 155-59).

A third funerary-related issue pertains to individuals or members who either granted a financial donation to an association for specific purposes or made provisions for a group to be among the recipients of fines for violation of the grave. Regarding the former, it was common for associations of various kinds to receive benefactions from a wealthy individual provided that they take care of the grave regularly or commemorate the patron’s death-day (cf. Polybius, 20.6.5-6). Thus at Ephesos associations of Jews, silversmiths, physicians and hemp-workers were assigned responsibility for the upkeep of graves (IEph 1677, 2212, 2304; SEG 43 812). In a Jewish epitaph from Hierapolis (which I will discuss more fully in chapter six) the owners follow common conventions in making provisions for the guilds of purple-dyers and carpet-weavers to crown the grave on certain religious festivals, commemorating the death of the deceased (Ritti 1992-93, revising CIJ 777).
Frequently, associations (along with other groups and civic institutions) were made the recipients of fines for violation (cf. Strubbe 1997). At Kyzikos alone, for example, guilds of marble workers, clothing-cleaners, and porters were named in epitaphs as recipients of any fines incurred for violation of the grave (IKyzikos 97, 211, 291). When Rufina, the head of the synagogue at Smyrna, prepared a common tomb for her household she made the fines for violation payable to the Jewish group, and a copy of the inscription was put into the civic archives (ISmyrna 295 = CIJ 741; III CE). Many Jews and Christians of Asia apparently followed suit in adopting similar funerary-related customs (cf. Strubbe 1994, 1997).

**Conclusion**

The purposes outlined in the present chapter are by no means exhaustive, but they begin to give a general picture of various interrelated dimensions of group-life which we will need to keep in mind as we turn to other aspects of associations in Asia. Evidently, the gatherings of such groups were occasions for ongoing social interaction and conviviality. But, inseparable from this, they were also a place where members could fittingly honour the gods (including emperors, as we shall see) who protected (or punished) them as groups and as individuals or families in daily life, at work or at home. Intertwined social and religious functions continued to the grave as associations honoured members on an epitaph, gathered for a funerary banquet or regularly adorned the grave of a benefactor or member. If one were to enquire what it was that such groups offered their members, then, the answer would be manifold. Certainly, however, through a combination of purposes, associations could offer their members a sense of belonging and identity. When we turn to the external relations of these groups, we will begin to see how group-identity could be expressed within a broader civic and imperial context, less in terms of conflict or opposition than in terms of integration and participation, however.
Associations did provide their members with a sense of belonging, but this does not necessarily mean, as many scholars assume, that such groups were therefore principally a compensation for decline in other social or religious structures of belonging within the *polis*. As the next chapter shows, joining and feeling at home within the association was not necessarily a response to deficiencies elsewhere. Nor was it incompatible with a continuing sense of belonging within the structures of the *polis*, which were part of the larger world of province and empire.
Chapter 3
Associations and the civic context:
Symptoms of decline or participants in vitality?

Introduction

As small groups offering their members a sense of belonging, associations have had a significant role to play within many scholarly theories regarding the nature of civic life and society in the Hellenistic and Roman eras. More specifically, one prominent scholarly tradition explains associations as compensatory phenomena in a period of civic decline. From this perspective, these groups offered a replacement for the attachment that the populace had previously, but no longer, felt in relation to the social, cultural and political structures of the polis. Closely related to this are approaches which focus on the supposed incompatibility or even opposition between most of these groups and civic or imperial structures under Roman rule. Yet such approaches are problematic.

The purpose of this chapter is to consider in broad strokes how we should understand the place of associations within the polis while also providing a framework for discussing civic life in Roman Asia. Challenging common scholarly characterizations of associations as symptoms of decline or as substitutes for membership in the polis, I argue that the actual evidence for associations' relations within civic life in Roman Asia provides a very different picture. Instead of fitting associations into broader theories of decline, which are questionable in themselves, we need to look at the concrete ways in which associations related to the polis and its social, cultural and political structures. Doing so provides a picture of associations as participants in civic vitality alongside other persons, groups and institutions. My discussion here prepares the way for a better understanding of the participation of associations in imperial cults and connections in civic life specifically while also shedding light on the place of such groups within society in the Greek East more generally.

I begin by outlining and challenging common theories regarding the place of associations within the social, cultural and political structures of the polis in the Hellenistic
and Roman eras. This is followed by a section on the civic framework and some developments within civic life in the Roman era, especially regarding social networks of benefaction. Finally, I deal with primary evidence regarding the actual relations between associations and the *polis* in Roman Asia, pointing out three main inter-related realms of participation (political, social, and cultural).

**Associations as symptoms of decline**

**a) Scholarly theories**

The characterization of associations as symptoms of civic decline or as compensations for lack of attachments to the political, social and cultural structures of the *polis* is common in scholarship at least from the time of Erich Ziebarth and it is still repeated today (cf. Ziebarth 1896:191-93; Poland 1909:516; Tod 1932:71-73; Guthrie 1950:265-68; Dill 1956:256; Herrmann, Waszink and Kötting 1978:94; Smith 1978:187). Often associations are fit within a broader theory of decline which emphasizes the “failure” of the *polis* in the fourth century BCE followed by a steady degeneration of political, social and cultural facets of civic life in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. According to Ziebarth, the origins and continued success of associations can be attributed to these radical social changes within the *polis*. Associations were a response to individuals' feelings of detachment. They were a replacement for the sense of belonging formerly felt in relation to the *polis*’ structures.

One particular version of this theory regarding the place of associations within society and culture in the Hellenistic and Roman eras is worth outlining in some detail. It is important to note that not all who suggest that associations were compensations for civic structures would necessarily ascribe to all aspects of this particular characterization of cultural and religious developments. Nonetheless, W.S. Ferguson's overview of the "leading ideas" of the Hellenistic age in the *Cambridge Ancient History* (1928) reflects
widespread views which are evident in the works of influential scholars of Greco-Roman religion including M.P. Nilsson (1964 [1925], 1961), André-Jean Festugière (1972 [1945], 1960), E.R. Dodds (1959:179-206, 236-69) and those who depend on them, such as Peter Green (1990:382-413, 586-601). According to these scholars, the vitality of traditional Greek religion was bound to the effectiveness of the autonomous and democratic polis. With its decline from the fourth to third centuries came the downfall of the polis' religious system, leaving an “empty shell” with little vestige of “genuine religion”; the “ancient gods were tottering,” in Nilsson’s words (see Nilsson 1964 [1925]:260-62, 274-75, 285; cf. Murray 1935:106-108, 158-163; Martin 1987:3). Although individuals continued to participate in the outward ceremonies or rituals of communal religious activities, these scholars claim, their feelings and attitudes were no longer evoked by them.52

In this view the decline of the polis' structures also led to other important trends including the rise of “individualism,” which was the “dominant feature of the age” (Ferguson 1928:4; cf. Nilsson 1964:282-83, 287; Farnell 1912:137, 140-41, 147-50; Guthrie 1950:256, 334). Moreover, as traditional structures of belonging broke down, individuals in the Hellenistic era (unlike the classical era, it is supposed) suffered from a general malaise characterized by feelings of detachment, isolation and uncertainty. Feelings of “loneliness and helplessness in a vast disintegrating world” (Ferguson 1928:35) led them to seek substitutes for the attachments they had previously felt to the polis and its structures (cf. Martin 1987:3, 23, 58). Among these substitutes which filled a social or cultural vacuum were “private” forms of social-religious life, especially associations.

52 Some scholars claim to have some sort of additional knowledge beyond what the evidence of continued participation in traditional forms of religion suggests. Festugière, for example, asserts that the decline of civic religions is an “undeniable fact”. What it comes down to is that this undeniable fact is based on Festugière’s claim to be able to distinguish between the “outer form” of the cults which he admits continued to function largely unchanged (i.e. the only evidence we have), on the one hand, and the “feelings” and “attitudes” of those who participated, on the other, which he asserts were no longer attached to the civic cults, and correspondingly, to the polis (Festugière 1960:37-38; cf. Dodds 1959:243-44; Carcopino 1941:137-44; Green 1990:587; Nilsson 1964 [1925]:295).
One of the most important responses to the feelings of deracination was the rise of what Nilsson and Festugièrë call "private" or "personal" religion. This was a replacement for the outward and in many ways artificial "public" or civic religion. As traditional civic religious structures declined, clubs, associations and mystery societies, which involved the individual's voluntary choice in joining, were the most successful social-religious unit (cf. Festugièrë 1960:40; Dodds 1959:243). This was because they responded to the feelings of helplessness, isolation and uncertainty. They provided a replacement for the sense of belonging and attachment that individuals previously felt towards the civic community and its religious structures.

For present purposes it is also important to note one of the corollaries of similar perspectives which stress associations as symptoms of civic decline or as replacements for attachments to the polis' social, religious or political structures. More recent scholarship which continues to hold some, though not all, of the views outlined above tends to define associations as phenomena over against society, sometimes expressing this in subversive terms. In some respects J.K. Davies' survey of cultural features of the Hellenistic world qualifies aspects of the above outlined theory of decline (he often speaks of "transformation" and "revitalization" instead of "decline," for instance). But he still suggests that several forms of religious life in this period challenged declining traditional civic religion. Among them he includes associations which, he asserts, "ran counter to city-based religion and society" (Davies 1984:318 [italics mine]). In a similar manner, Richard Gordon (1990:240, 245-52) still speaks of the "oriental" religions and private mystery associations as "forms of resistance" against both the civic model of religion and elite culture.

G.E.M. de Ste. Croix emphasizes the political background to the antagonistic relationship between associations and society. In the classical period democracy by means of the assembly (ἐκκλησία) of the people (δῆμος) permitted the real participation of all strata
of the population, giving the lower classes an avenue of political activity and a sense of belonging. But there was a disintegration of democracy in the Hellenistic and Roman eras which led to the detachment of the majority of the population from the structures of the polis (1981:300-26, 518-37). Within this framework, de Ste. Croix considers the activities of guilds and associations (e.g. civic disturbances) among the means of social protest or resistance which compensated for the lower classes' lack of participation in the life of the polis (1981:318-20). From this perspective, associations offered a substitute or alternative structure of belonging and participation to that of the polis and its assembly. One can understand how scholars who hold such views would tend to pay far more attention to the tensions between these groups and society (see chap. 5) to the neglect of the ways in which associations were participants within the polis.

b) Theoretical cautions

There are several difficulties with approaches that see associations as compensatory phenomena in a period of civic decline. The most important problem is that these theories do not adequately address or account for the extensive primary evidence concerning the relationships between associations (and their members) and the polis. I discuss evidence from cities of Roman Asia fully further below. But for now it is important to note some theoretical shortcomings of these views and difficulties with the assumptions involved. There are several overlapping issues involved in these characterizations of associations which are in need of qualification.

First, recent years have seen the beginning of a shift away from the overall paradigm of decline in the study of the polis, which should caution us in simply plugging associations into these questionable theories.53 Thus Louis Robert, whose knowledge of

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the inscriptions of Asia Minor remains unparalleled, states that “the Greek city did not die at Chaironeia, nor under Alexander, nor during the course of the entire Hellenistic epoch” (Robert 1969b:42 [trans. mine]). P.J. Rhodes (1994), Walter Eder (1995), Mogens Herman Hansen (1993, 1994a-b, 1995) and Erich Gruen (1993) question many of the key interpretations of previous scholars concerning the early crisis and decline, reaffirming instead the continued importance and vitality of the polis despite changes and developments (cf. Gauthier 1985, 1993). Regarding Asia Minor specifically, Stephen Mitchell (1993: 1.199) argues that, despite the loss of complete autonomy, the cities continued as effective centres of administration and they “were, in a very positive sense, communities.”

Theories regarding the decline of the polis broadly are often based on a particular and questionable interpretation of two main issues: autonomy and democracy. Hansen’s studies challenge the notion that autonomy was the central ingredient of the polis without which decline was inevitable: every “city-state would of course have preferred to be autonomous, but...a city-state did not lose its identity as a polis by being subjected to another city-state or, for example, to the king of Persia, or Macedon, or a Hellenistic ruler, or Rome” (1993:19; cf. Hansen 1994a, 1995; Brunt 1990:272). Furthermore, some adherents of decline theories over-state the degree to which Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors or officials actively interfered in the affairs of the cities. Fergus Millar (1967, 1977, 1984), G.P. Burton (1975) and P.A. Brunt point instead to the passive and reactive character of Roman rule. Seldom did the emperors or other Roman authorities actively interfere in the affairs of the cities unless public disorders could not be handled locally or action was requested from below (cf. Oliver 1954, refuting Magie 1950:641,

54 La “cité grecque n’est pas morte à Chéronée, ni sous Alexandre, ni dans le cours de toute l’époque hellénistique.” Robert goes on to say that although cities such as Athens and Sparta no longer possessed the same power in international affairs, the internal structures of civic life for most cities remained largely unchanged: “La vie de la cité continue dans le même cadre et avec les même idéaux.”
1504, n.21). As Brunt states, "it was not the practice of the Romans to govern much. The governor had only a small staff, and he did little more than defend his province, ensure the collection of the taxes and decide the most important criminal and civil cases. The local communities were left in the main to run their own affairs" (1990:116-17 [italics mine]).

Another basis of the theory of civic decline which is in need of qualification is the degree to which the typical polis of the Hellenistic and Roman periods represents a degeneration from an earlier form of democracy. Some scholars tend to idealize classical Athenian democracy and allow modern conceptions of democracy to shape the discussion, resulting in a picture of full participation of the people which does not accurately reflect the reality of the situation. Furthermore, as Rhodes (1994:189 n.102) states in reference to de Ste. Croix's theories, "the failure of democracy would not be the same thing as the failure of the polis, and it is not obvious that either occurred." There is evidence that the assembly (ἐκκλησία) of the people (δήμος) could continue to play a significant role in the government of the polis in the Hellenistic and Roman eras, despite the prominence of the wealthy in civic affairs and in the council (βουλή). Gruen (1993:354) points to the surviving attendance records for the Hellenistic era in various cities of Asia Minor and states that, contrary to the cliches in scholarship, "popular participation in the Hellenistic city-states did not consist merely in empty slogans"; rather it involved the participation of citizens in the various legislative and judicial activities alongside honorary ones. Guy MacLean Rogers (1992) and Mitchell (1993:1.201-204) also question the

55 Cf. Saxonhouse 1996:7, 1-29; Bradeen 1975 [1960]:405. One should not over-emphasize the contrasts between the classical and Hellenistic eras. In classical Athens itself it seems that the wealthy, rather than average citizens, were likewise dominant in the important political positions (Rhodes 1994:566, 573; cf. Jones 1940:166-69). Hansen also questions the degree to which we can speak of ancient democracy in terms of the "majority vote of all citizens" (de Ste. Croix 1981:284) when, in fact, the evidence for how many actually could attend the meeting of the assembly in classical Athens suggests otherwise (e.g. the seating capacity of the Pnyx was suitable for only 1/3 to 1/4 of the citizen population in the IV BCE; see Saxonhouse 1996:5-6). 56 Two decrees from Halikarnassos attest the presence of 4000 and 1200 citizens respectively; at Magnesia on the Maeander there are records of 4678, 2113, and 3580 attendees at meetings of the assembly (cf. QuaS 1993:361-62).
commonly stated view that in the Roman era the council completely usurped the role of the people to such an extent that the people possessed very little (if any) real power, being reduced to simply approving the lists of candidates for office (contra A.H.M. Jones 1940:177; Magie 1950:640-41). Further below I discuss primary evidence that members of various associations, including artisans and traders, could be citizens participating in the activities of the civic assemblies. Participation in associations did not necessarily reflect a compensation for lack of political or other participation within civic structures.

A second theoretical caution regarding the view of associations as symptoms of decline concerns the manner in which scholars emplot cultural and religious developments within this framework of decline. One often hears of the degeneration in traditional religious life which accompanied the supposed decline of the polis. S.R.F. Price's study of imperial cults in Asia Minor challenges the "conventional model, which has been applied to both Greek and Roman cults, [that] posits an early apogee followed by a long and continuous decline, until the last embers were extinguished by Christianity" (1984:14).

Recent and not-so-recent studies of civic religious life from that of Johaness Geffcken in 1920 (1978) to those of Ramsay MacMullen (1981) and Robin Lane Fox (1986) interpret the evidence quite differently. Moreover, far from showing signs of deathly illness in the third century BCE, the weight of the evidence demonstrates that Greco-Roman religion--"traditional" and otherwise--thrived at least into the third century CE, even though there were certainly changes and developments and differences from one region to another.

Furthermore, the traditional view of religious decline and the rise of associations sometimes reflects an anachronistic approach which reads history through the lenses of subsequent developments. The civic cults of "paganism" did eventually lose out to the adopted religion of empire, Christianity; thus such cults must have been inadequate in addressing the needs of people and were inevitably declining long before. Any religious
activity during this age of decline which can be interpreted as personal or individualistic religion involving genuine feelings or notions of salvation—that is, as approaching what such scholars understand Christianity to have been (along the lines of a modern Jamesian definition of "genuine" religion)—is viewed as more vital or superior to other traditional forms of religious life. A third theoretical problem relates to the imposition of concepts and models of historical development borrowed from the modern era which are inappropriate in studying the ancient world, including notions of "private" religion and of "individualism". We have already addressed some of the difficulties with applying modern and individualistic notions of religion to antiquity in chapter two, and I will discuss notions of "private" religion again when we turn to imperial cults in the next chapter. Nilsson, Festugière and Dodds also claim to find in the Hellenistic age the rise of "individualism" and corresponding feelings of detachment, loneliness and uncertainty. However, a developed concept of "individualism" (and related concepts of "private" vs. "public") did not emerge until the sixteenth century and only fully developed during the Enlightenment. These concepts are inappropriate for studying pre-modern societies like the Greco-Roman world which was very much collectivistic. The developments which Ferguson, Festugière, Dodds and

57 What seems to underly Festugière's notion of personal or genuine religion, for example, closely resembles William James' definition of religion as "the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine" (James 1963 [1902]:50; cf. Festugière 1954:1-4; Dodds 1959:243 and 1965:2; Nilsson 1961:711-12; Green 1990:588).

58 Many scholars who hold similar views to this stop short of explicitly stating, as G.H. Box (1929:45) does, that "[the mysteries] and the religious brotherhoods which made purity of life a condition of membership are genuine manifestations of the religious spirit, and may be regarded as a real preparation for Christianity."
others claim to find in the ancient world and emphasize most are precisely those which
came with the impact of modern individualism and the Enlightenment: the individual’s
detachment from the larger community, freedom of choice, cultural mobility, critique of

Even without the concept of “individualism” there are difficulties with the social
and religious conditions imagined for this period. Louis Robert, Paul Veyne, Peter Brown
and others question notions of widespread deracination in the Greco-Roman world. As
Brown (1978:2-3) observes,

many modern accounts of religious evolution of the Roman world place great
emphasis on the malaise of life in great cities in Hellenistic and Roman times. Yet the loneliness of the great city and the rapid deculturation of immigrants from traditionalist areas are modern ills: they should not be overworked as explanatory devices for the society we are studying. We can be far from certain that [as Dodds states] ‘such loneliness must have been felt by millions…”

Scholars who view associations as compensatory phenomena responding to such
widespread social, religious or political deracination and malaise do not expressly invoke sociological theories of relative deprivation. Still, the theoretical underpinnings of this explanation of associations in relation to society and culture have affinities with previously widespread assumptions in the social sciences, especially pertaining to deprivation-compensation explanations of group-formation and development. So it is worth concluding this section by attempting to make some sociological sense of the decline-theory of associations in terms of theories of relative deprivation, offering some important qualifications regarding the latter.

Sociologists attempting to explain the emergence of new social or religious groups
or movements of various kinds within society have often suggested that there is a direct
causal relation between pre-existing feelings of deprivation, be they economic, social or

59 See Jonathan Barnes’ (1986:365) comment that “life in Hellenistic Greece was no more upsetting, no more
at the mercy of fickle fortune or malign foes, than it had been in an earlier era.” Paul Veyne (1990 [1976]:41)
states that, “as Louis Robert has taught us, it must not be said that the Hellenistic epoch was the era of indi-
vidualism or of universalism, and that its people felt lost within kingdoms that were too big.”
otherwise, and the formation and success of groups. Quite often scholars have assumed that urban life is inimical to human relations and that the origins of both social and religious movements are to be found in the deprivations which accompany this state of affairs. Individuals feel that there is a discrepancy between their expectations and actuality in relation to what others are perceived to have, what one has previously had or what one expects to have socially, economically or psychologically. Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark’s earlier work reflects commonly held assumptions in suggesting that felt deprivation is a “necessary precondition for the rise of any organized social movement, whether it be religious or secular,” and that the emergent group then acts to “compensate for feelings of deprivation” (Glock and Stark 1965:249; cf. Aberle 1970).

In this view, new religious groups, like associations within the decline-theory, “function to provide individuals with a source of gratification which they cannot find in the society-at-large” (1965:256), and it is this factor that is used to account for the formation or existence of the group, as well as the reasons or motivations for individuals joining.

Considerable criticisms and qualifications regarding this theoretical framework have been offered within social-scientific scholarship since the 1970s, however. Joan Neff Gurney and Kathleen J. Tierney’s (1982:33) survey of research suggests that “the relative deprivation perspective is itself affected by too many serious conceptual, theoretical, and empirical weaknesses to be useful in accounting for the emergence and development of social movements” (cf. Wallis 1975; Beckford 1975:153-59; Berquist 1995; Dawson 1998:73-77). Among the most important problems noted by various scholars are: the circular reasoning involved in looking to what an existing group offers its members in order to work back to what widespread deprivations (e.g. social dislocation within urban life) must have been felt prior to joining; a failure to take into account the variability among individuals’ motivations in joining the same group, for each might interpret his or her prior social conditions and the offerings of a particular group in different ways; a failure
to demonstrate that the proposed relative deprivations were in fact felt by the members of
the group and were a necessary precondition for the group's existence; and a tendency
towards oversimplified propositions of causal relationships between deprivation and the
emergence and growth certain kinds of groups, including a failure to sufficiently account
for the importance of preexisting social networks in group formation and recruitment. As
Beckford also notes, the "question is never asked, How could it be shown that relative
deprivation was not a cause of something?" (1975:158).

My point here is not to deny that associations would provide their members with
things they might not otherwise get in precisely the same way elsewhere, but rather to
suggest that we cannot speak of widespread feelings of economic, religious or social
depprivation (e.g. exploitation, deracination, alienation, loneliness) as the principal factor
or cause of associations as social-religious groups or movements. As Stephen G. Wilson
(1996:14) also observes, it would be "a mistake to suppose that the motive for joining
these groups was always compensatory, making up for something otherwise lacking in
family or political life."

Evidently, theories which have been offered to explain the relations between asso-
ciations and the polis in terms of decline are problematic in several respects. These
theories should be left aside if we hope to gain a better understanding of the nature of
society and culture and the place of social-religious phenomena, such as associations,
within them. Yet the most fundamental problem with the notion that associations were
symptoms of decline and that, in many respects, they were phenomena to be defined over
against the polis and its structures is the primary evidence regarding the actual relations
between such groups and the polis. I fully address the evidence for associations as
participants in civic vitality further below. But first, a few words are in order about the
nature of the polis in Roman Asia, about the civic framework within which associations
found themselves.
The civic framework and social networks of benefaction

There are significant continuities with regard to the political, social and cultural institutions of the *polis* from the classical period into the Hellenistic and Roman eras. Social-cultural institutions remained prominent into the Roman era including theatres, baths, market-places, and stadia. The constitution of cities in Asia Minor founded on the model of the Hellenic *polis* still consisted of the two main bodies of civic authority, the council (βουλή), which usually numbered between two and five hundred members, and the people (δήμος). The people consisted of the citizen body, often divided according to tribes (φυλαί; see Nicholas F. Jones 1987:295-384 [public organization in Asia Minor]). I will discuss the makeup of the citizen body in the next section, where I consider the various forms of participation in civic life among associations and their members.

Yet one of the most significant developments in the structures of the *polis* in the late-Hellenistic and Roman eras pertains to the emergence of a systematic pattern of benefaction ("euergetism") which was dependent upon social networks and was accompanied by a particular, developing cultural world view. By the time the regions of western Asia Minor were incorporated into the Roman province of Asia (c. 133 BCE), this system of benefaction— an elaboration of conventions which characterized Greek society in earlier times— had become a prominent structural element with special relevance to the social system and economic well-being of the *polis* (cf. Veyne 1990 [1976], 1987 [1985]:95-115; Gauthier 1985, 1993; Wallace-Hadrill 1990:150-54; Mitchell 1990:1.210; Sartre 1991:147-166). This system is perhaps best explained in terms of webs of reciprocal relations within social networks marked by a clearly differentiated hierarchy, though the potential for relations was quite fluid at all levels. The most prominent characteristic of these relations within the networks was the exchange of benefits or gifts of numerous kinds (protection, financial contributions for various purposes, legal or other assistance) in
return for appropriate honours. The system was reciprocal in the sense that both the benefactor and the beneficiary (be they gods, individuals, groups or institutions) had something to gain from the exchange, whether tangible or otherwise. It was also self-perpetuating in that a benefaction was followed by fitting honours in return, which would then ensure the probability of further benefactions from the same source in the future, as well as benefactions from others who might seek to outdo competitors in the pursuit of honour (φιλοσυμία).

The nature of fitting honours depended both on the benefits conferred and on the position of the benefactor and the beneficiary within the overall hierarchy of relations. Failure to fittingly honour a benefactor resulted in shame (αισχύνη); as Dio of Prusa suggests, this was on a par with impiety (ασέβεια) towards the gods (cf. Orationes 31.57, 65, 80-81, 157). Correspondingly, failure of the wealthy to appropriately provide such benefactions was a threat to the position and status they strove to maintain within society: in this sense benefaction became a duty or obligation, not simply a voluntary action. The provision of benefactions and granting of honours reaffirmed the relative positions of the benefactor and beneficiary within the social system and hierarchy of the polis and cosmos.

According to this world view, gods and rulers, whose ongoing protection and benefaction ensured the well-being of the civic community and its constituent groups, were at the top of this hierarchy as powers external to the polis. The deities' protection of the polis and its inhabitants, holding off earthquakes, famine and other natural disasters and providing safety, stability and peace, was deserving of the utmost honours, especially cultic ones (cf. Dio, Orationes 38.20 [on natural disasters]). By the Roman era, the rulers' relation to the polis was more often than not considered parallel to that between gods and the polis, and rulers whose beneficence and ensurance of stability was com-
parable to the gods likewise became deserving of cultic honours (see chap. 4). The massive building programs in the cities of Roman Asia which accompanied and followed the establishment of the principate were perhaps the most conspicuous evidence of the beneficence of the distant emperors. The imperial presence marked the architectural landscape of the cities in Asia under Roman rule (see Price 1984:249-74 [catalogue of imperial structures]; cf. Rogers 1991:128-135; Friesen 1993 [Ephesos]).

Yet those scholars who cite cultic honours for rulers as the epitome of the failure of the polis, as a sign of the utter debasement of its ideals and values, fundamentally misunderstand the meaning and function of such honorary activities within society of the time (cf. Friesen 1993; Price 1984). Instead, as I elaborate in chapter four, the incorporation of emperors within the framework of the civic social system and ideological framework actually served to reinforce the ideals, values and structures of the polis, rather than to undermine them (cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1990:152-53; Price 1984; Smith 1987). What this incorporation of the emperors also means is that, as Fergus Millar (1993) stresses, the relation to the emperor was very much a part of what the polis was in Roman times.

The gods and emperors may have been at the top of the networks upon which the system of benefaction rested, but they were certainly not the only important players. Imperial officials in the provinces also held a high position within this hierarchy; the local elites, cities, and groups within the cities were sure to maintain contacts with these powerful figures within social networks (see chap. 5).

Perhaps more important for the everyday life of the average polis, the elites and other inhabitants or groups in the cities were expected to provide various services and benefactions for the well-being of the polis and its inhabitants. Such contributions could

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60 Artemidoros says, "rulers, like gods, also have the power to treat people well or badly" (Oneirokritika 3.13). In his request for help from the emperor in rebuilding Smyrna after the earthquake, Aristides states that "there is no reproach in writing to [the emperor] in the same fashion in which we address the gods" (Orationes 19.5; cf. Dio Chrysostom, Orationes 32.26).
take the form of official civic positions (liturgies or magistracies) which required considerable financial output. But, apart from these official roles, inhabitants could also make benefactions in the form of financial contributions for the establishment of buildings, festivals, statues, and other structures which were often dedicated in honour of the polis, gods or emperors. Benefactions could also take the form of banquets or food distributions in times of famine, as when a wealthy woman named Atalante made such provisions for the inhabitants at Termessos in Pamphylia (TAM III 4, 62). The beneficiaries of such actions were expected to reciprocate with appropriate honours, such as the erection of an inscription of gratitude or another monument or statue in honour of the benefactor. Gratitude for a festival could be shown in less tangible ways; a statement in Petronius sums up the mentality well: "He gave me a spectacle, but I applauded it. We're even: one hand washes the other" (cited in Veyne 1987:113).

This leads to the question of what motivated such contributions, thereby ensuring the stability of this systematic pattern of benefactions. Motivations may have differed from one person to the next and depended on the situation, but three main components stand out in explaining why such benefactions were made. First, there is no reason to discount the role of genuine feelings of civic pride in many such benefactions. Second, honour (τιμή) in and of itself was highly valued, and the pursuit of honour (φιλοτιμία) or civic-mindedness was among the most highly praised virtues. Furthermore, the desire to have one's benefactions or deeds remembered after death, to preserve one's reputation for posterity, also played a role (cf. Woolf 1996:25-27). As Dio of Prusa puts it, "many in time past have even given up their lives just in order that they might get a statue and have their name announced by the herald or receive some other honour and leave a succeeding generation a fair name and remembrance of themselves" (Orationes 31.16 [LCL]).

Funerary foundations involving considerable donations to cities or sub-groups within it for celebrations after one's death were very common in the Greco-Roman era (see Polybius 20.6.5-6; Laum 1964 [1914] passim).
A third motivating factor, however, must not be forgotten: the elites' fear of what might happen if conspicuous donations were not made. There existed a set of values which virtually made such benefactions a duty; failure to meet expectations, especially at critical times, could result in angry mobs seeking revenge against wealthier inhabitants. It was at times of food shortage that the social-economic inequalities between the strata of the population, often lying dormant, could manifest themselves more fully in a visibly conflictual way. The food shortage at Bithynian Prusa in the late-first century led crowds of rioting inhabitants to attempt a siege on the houses of wealthier inhabitants, Dio and his neighbour included, who were thought to be hoarding grain (Orationes 46).

We find a similar situation at Aspendos in Pamphylia during the reign of Tiberius, according to Philostratos' account of the life of Apollonios of Tyana (Vita Apollonii 1.15). The corn-dealers there, who were considered among the wealthy and powerful (δυνατοὶ), were suspected of hoarding grain during a famine. The hungry, rioting crowds directed their anger towards the leading civic magistrate, who sought refuge from their plans to burn him alive by "clinging to the statues of the emperor." Apollonios' letter to the corn-dealers threatened them with punishment from the gods and ultimately convinced them to release their grain for sale on the market. Contributions by the wealthy to the polis and its inhabitants on a regular basis ensured the maintenance of a person's position and prestige within the city, while also staving off the potential for such social conflicts (cf. Mitchell 1990:1.206).

It is not hard to see how both competition and cooperation played an important role within this social system and culture. Competition for preeminence among the elites was matched by competition among the potential recipients of such benefactions. The constituent groups of the polis were in many ways competitors with one another in their attempts to maintain contacts with and receive ongoing support from important persons within social networks. Beneficiaries also had something to gain from publicly advertising
their connections in the form of an honorary inscription: the advantage that such connections accrued to them in their competition for prestige within the civic context. In setting up an honorary inscription an association or guild was not only honouring the benefactor, but also making a claim regarding its place within society, reaffirming its ties within the networks of the polis in a very concrete way (see chap. 5; cf. Woolf 1996:29).

Yet cooperation was also essential to this system. Individual inhabitants of the non-elite social strata—a purple-dyer on her own, for instance—were far less likely, if at all, to gain the attention and benefaction of a wealthy imperial or civic official. But by cooperating together in the form of an association, the united purple-dyers could ensure the possibility of such relations within the social networks of the polis and empire. Within a wider context, a sense of civic pride and identity meant that the inhabitants of the polis as a whole, including constituent groups such as associations and guilds, cooperated together within the larger arena of competition and rivalry with other cities (cf. Dio, Orationes 38-39; Tacitus, Annales 14.17 [see chap. 5]).

**Associations and their members as participants in civic vitality**

Now that we have a better picture of the civic framework in Roman times, we can go on to discuss the actual relations between associations and the polis. Moreover, primary evidence concerning associations and the polis in Roman Asia speaks strongly against the notion that associations were symptoms of civic decline. Many of these small social-religious groups or guilds represent the non-elite social strata of society which so many scholars of the decline-theories see as most removed from civic identity and participation. However, strong feelings of civic pride and identity in relation to the polis or "homeland" (πατρίς) are clearly evident not only among wealthy benefactors or elite
authors, but also among associations and their members. There is substantial evidence for the participation of associations and their members within several areas of civic life, including political structures, networks of benefaction and social-cultural structures.

a) Participation in political life

A brief discussion of citizenship will provide a context for considering the potential participation of members of associations within civic political structures, further challenging the notion that guilds or associations were necessarily substitutes for membership in the polis. Our knowledge of demography and of citizenship specifically is in many respects meager for the cities of Roman Asia, but some general remarks can be made. Officially, only citizens (πολίται) had civic rights as members of the people (δημος), participating in the governance of the polis through the assembly (εκκλησία). Citizenship and considerable wealth were required in order to assume civic offices or membership in the council (βουλή). Citizenship was generally limited to native-born men of non-servile status; women and slaves were excluded. We know very little concerning freedmen, but there are some known cases involving a freedman who achieved citizenship, as well as important civic positions (e.g. C. Julius Zoilus at Aphrodisias; see Reynolds 1982:156-64). A very clear distinction remained between the rural dwellers of the surrounding countryside (χωρα), who were not citizens, and city-dwellers who were.

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61 Aelius Aristides delivered an epideictic speech in praise of his homeland, Smyrna, speaking of the polis as “the very model of a city” which “recommends a love of itself among all mankind” (Orations. 17.8). When Smyrna was heavily damaged by an earthquake, Aristides mourned over the catastrophe which had struck the most beautiful city, the “eye of Asia”; his letter to Marcus Aurelius requesting support for assistance in rebuilding was a success (Orations 18, 19, 20). Dio’s epideictic speech in response to the honours which his homeland of Prusa granted him is full of references to his pride and attachment in relation to the polis (Orations 44). Artemidoros dedicates book three of his dream interpretations to Daldis, his “native land...in gratitude for my upbringing” (Oneirokritika 3.66). Strabo is sure to specify that Amaseia is “my city” and “homeland” and his description is wholly positive (12.3.39, 12.3.15).

62 Most studies of citizenship focus on classical Athens, partially because our evidence is most extensive for that time and place. See, for example, Thomas 1981:47-48; Sinclair 1988:24-34; Whitehead 1991; Hansen 1993b (cf. Aristotle, Poltica 3.1-5). On the Greek East and Asia Minor in Hellenistic and Roman times see, for example, A.H.M. Jones 1940:160-62, 172-73; Magie 1950; Sartre 1991:126-33. Also see the discussion of artisans and traders below.
In some respects, notions of citizenship became somewhat less restricted in the Roman era. It became quite common for a polis to confer citizenship as a means of honouring outsiders, especially distinguished performers and athletes. So there were many instances of persons holding citizenship in more than one polis (cf. IGR IV 160, 162, 1272, 1344, 1419, 1519; TAM II 585; Magie 1950:640, 1503-1504 n.27) and some cases of wealthier individuals with membership on more than one civic council in Roman Asia Minor (cf. IGR IV 1761; MAMA VIII 421.40-45; Pliny, Epistulae 10.14 [on the disuse of a law of Pompey in Bithynia]).

Immigrants or resident foreigners as groups were normally excluded from citizenship. This is why some scholars view membership in ethnic-based associations as, in many respects, a substitute for membership in the polis in the Hellenistic and Roman eras. P.M. Fraser (1977:60), for instance, states the following concerning these associations of foreigners in Hellenistic Rhodes:

with their grandiloquent titles, their own magistrates, priesthoods, assemblies, cults, and social services, they provided foreign residents...with the same type of social environment, the same modes of advancement, and the same opportunities for lavish benefactions, as were provided by the civic organization for Rhodian demesmen, who themselves rarely, if ever, belonged to [associations]. They were, so to speak, a microcosm of the state, and loyalty that they evoked in their members was rewarded with honours similar to those awarded by the state.

There is some truth in the suggestion that ethnic- or geographic-based associations offered their members what was not totally accessible to them within the polis due to lack of citizenship. And it is certainly true that these associations reflect and replicate the conventions and values of the polis context.

Yet several qualifications regarding this view should be made. There were cases when particular resident foreigners, especially wealthier benefactors, were granted citizenship. A decree of the assembly of Aspendos (probably from the early third century BCE) involved the grant of citizenship and membership in the civic tribes to men of various ethnic or geographic origins (see Magie 1950:263, 1135 n.9). We simply do not
know whether or how soon non-elite immigrants acquired citizenship in their polis of residence in the cities of Asia Minor in the Roman era. Furthermore, even non-citizen immigrants could participate within the social and cultural activities of the polis. Ethnic- or geographic-based associations and their members could quite often find their polis of residence to be a home, regardless of whether they were actual citizens participating in the assembly of the people (cf. chap. 1; IGR I 787, 800; ILindos 391-92 [discussed below]). Inscriptional evidence discussed in the sections below concerning other areas of participation by associations of Romans, Judeans and others further confirms this suggestion.

Even more problematic is the suggestion that occupational associations were, in some sense, substitutes for political participation in the polis. That is, that guilds were replacements for active membership in the citizen body and the assembly. A central issue in this regard pertains to whether or not the members of occupational guilds, especially artisans and traders of the lower social strata, were usually citizens that participated in the assemblies of the cities in Roman Asia. Some scholars tend towards the view that many members of guilds were commonly excluded from citizenship and participation in the life of the polis (cf. C.P. Jones 1978:80-81; Finley 1985a [1973]:136-38; Rogers 1991:71-72). C.P. Jones (1978:81), for instance, cites the case of the linen-workers at Tarsos (see below) as representative of the situation in many other cities of the Greco-Roman era: “[the passage in Dio’s speech to the Tarsians] illustrates a less well known feature of Greek city life, the restriction of full citizenship to those of at least moderate wealth [i.e. those who could pay 500 drachmae]…It must have excluded an ordinary artisan from citizenship.” Similarly M.I. Finley (1985a [1973]:136) alludes to the same passage and states that “few could afford the 500-drachma fee required for the acquisition of local citizenship.” The reference to 500 drachmae in Dio’s oration need not be interpreted this

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63 Jones 1978:80-81, 183-84 n.77 does, however, correctly argue against the view that “linen-workers” is a general term for the lower classes here (as suggested by Broughton 1938:844).
way even for Tarsos; more importantly, though, C.P. Jones’ and Finley’s suggestion that the linen-workers’ situation is representative of the circumstances in most cities does not adequately account for Dio’s overall approach to the case (cf. Sartre 1991:128-29; Quaß 1993:355-56; van Nijf 1997:18-20).

In his speech delivered before a gathering of citizens at Tarsos, Dio of Prusa addresses several problems of discord, including divisions between the council and the people and between the association of elders and the youths. He then goes on to another perceived problem involving the exclusion of certain artisans from participation in the *polis*:

> there is a group of no small size which is, as it were, outside the constitution (πολιτείας). And some are accustomed to call them linen-workers (λινουργοὺς), and at times the citizens are irritated by them and assert that they are a useless rabble and responsible for the tumult (στάσεως) and disorder (ταραχῆς) in Tarsos, while at other times they regard them as part of the city (ἐκκλησίας) and hold the opposite opinion of them. Well, if you believe them to be detrimental to you and instigators of insurrection and confusion, you should expel them altogether and not admit them to your popular assemblies; but if on the other hand you regard them as being in some measure citizens, not only because they are resident in Tarsos, but also because in most instances they were born here and know no other city, then surely it is not fitting to dis-enfranchise them or to cut them off from associations with you…‘What then, what do you bid us to do?’ I bid you enroll them all as citizens (πολίτης)—yes, I do—and just as deserving as yourselves, and not to reproach them or cast them off, but rather to regard them as members of your body politic, as in fact they are (*Orationes* 34.21-23 [LCL]).

Dio goes on to point out the irony in the fact that the Tarsians would readily accept outsiders or foreigners as citizens upon payment of a fee of 500 drachmae while excluding from the citizen body some who had actually been born in Tarsos (and whose fathers and forefathers had been as well).

As Maurice Sartre argues, the exclusion of the linen-workers from participation in the citizen body at Tarsos stems from issues other than simply the fact that they were artisans or that they could not afford to pay an entrance fee for citizenship (Sartre 1991:128-29; cf. Quaß 1993:355-56). Most importantly for present purposes, Dio’s overall approach to the exclusion of linen-workers, arguing that they should be included, sug-
gests that it was not normal practice among cities in Roman Asia to exclude artisans or others of similar occupations from participation in the polis, including its assembly. Dio sees this situation as an anomaly caused by the specific troubles and discord at Tarsos. Further on he refers to the fact that even at Tarsos artisans of other occupations—a dyer (βαφέως), leather-worker (σκυτοτόμος) or carpenter (τέκτων), for instance—were not excluded in the same way. We simply do not know why the linen-workers were excluded here, but this passage is far from suggesting that such exclusion was common within the cities of Asia Minor. In contrast to their counterparts at Tarsos, the guild of linen-workers (λινουργοί) at Saittai were apparently included within the citizen body, perhaps even forming one of the tribes (Kolb 1990), as was the case with guilds at Philadelphia (see below).

It seems that (native- and free-born) artisans and those of other occupations did usually possess citizenship and participate in the assemblies in Asia, sometimes playing a significant role (see Quaß 1993:355-65; van Nijf 1997:18-21). This is the situation that Cicero has in mind when, in defending Flaccus, he complains that the political assemblies in Asian cities (like Pergamon and Tralles) were dominated by the mob and the “dregs” of society, by cobblers, belt-makers, craftsmen and shopkeepers (sutores, zonarii, opifices, tabernarii; Pro Flacco 17-19, 52-61). Strabo relates the case of Hybreas at Mylasa, who, although of humble origins, achieved local prestige including the position of market-overseer (ἀγοραστόμος); the growth of his power in the polis is attributed, in part, to his relations with “people of the market” (οἱ ἀγοραίοι), namely, craftsmen and merchants (Strabo 14.2.24).64

Two cases of civic disturbances at Ephesos involving artisans and other workers likewise suggest that these people were citizens of the polis (cf. Mitchell 1993:1.201-

64 The Loeb edition translates this as “speakers in the forum”. However, Louis Robert (followed by van Nijf 1997:21) suggests that the more natural meaning here is “people of the market”.

The author of Acts (19:23-40) describes the spontaneous gathering of silversmiths, craftsmen, and other workers (ἀργυρωκότας, τεχνήτας, ἔργαται) in the theatre at Ephesos as an “assembly” (ἐκλησία; vv. 32, 41), and those who attempt to resolve the problem address the gathering as the “people” (δῆμος; v. 33). Furthermore, the account assumes that such craftsmen were citizens who could instead resolve such grievances within the context of the regular assembly of the people (v. 39; cf. Quaß 1993:358; van Nijf 1997:20-21). The second-century proconsular edict dealing with disturbances caused by bakers in the market-place of Ephesos likewise seems to presume that these bakers were part of the citizen body with some influence on the activities of the people: “sometimes the people (δῆμον) falls into confusion and uproar (ταραχὴν καὶ θηρίβους) because of the gatherings and insolence of the bakers at the market” (IEph 215 = Buckler 1923:30-33, no.1). I will discuss associations’ involvements in such occasional civic disturbances and the potential intervention of civic or imperial officials in chapter five.

Other inscriptional evidence from Roman Asia likewise suggests that male artisans and traders of non-servile status were commonly citizens of their polis. The close cooperation between guilds and civic institutions in granting honours to benefactors (discussed below) also suggests citizenship on the part of guild members. The discussion of the social status of guild membership in chapter one indicated that persons from a range of occupations could be citizens, and that in some exceptional cases an artisan or trader could even achieve local importance as a civic councillor or functionary (see the occupation-based section of chap. 1).

There is further inscriptional evidence which points to the importance of the guilds within the actual civic organization of some cities in Asia. The suggestion of W.M. Ramsay (1895-97:105-106) and A.H.M. Jones (1940:43-44, 162) that the citizen bodies of many cities in Lydia and Phrygia consisted of a “primitive” organization according to guilds, rather than regular tribes, is generally unsubstantiated. Subsequent epigraphical
discoveries have shown that some of the cities formerly suggested as candidates (e.g. Akhnomeia, Smyrna and Hierapolis) were in fact organized according to the usual tribal structure, not guilds (cf. Nicholas F. Jones 1987:358, 381 n.6; Cohen 1995:306-307). However, the case of Philadelphia remains. An inscription from Philadelphia involves honours granted to a benefactor by the homeland, the elders' association and seven “tribes” (φυλαῖ), and one of these tribes is explicitly named as “the sacred tribe of wool-workers” (ἡ ἱερὰ φυλή τῶν ἐριουργῶν; IGR IV 1632 = CIG 3422 = IGLAM 648).

Another inscription from the same city involves a group called “the sacred tribe of leather-tanners (σκυτέων)” (IGLAM 656). Evidently, the members of guilds in Philadelphia, at least, were included as a group among the civic tribes (i.e. they were active citizens). Many other guilds which were not literally civic bodies reflected the vocabulary and activities of the polis, however. This brings me to one final point before going on to other important and neglected areas of associations' involvements in the life of the polis.

It is quite common for scholars discussing the organization and activities of associations to note the fact that associations and guilds mimic civic structures. Jean-Pierre Waltzing, for instance, observes that associations were, in many ways, “une véritable cité dans la cité, une petite patrie dans la grande” (1895-1900:2.184; cf. Foucart 1873:50-51; Dill 1904:269; Herrmann 1975:97; Lane Fox 1986:85). Thus, for example, the internal organization of many associations and guilds mirrors civic organization, with positions of leadership including secretary (γραμματέως), treasurer (ταμίας), president (ἐπιστάτης), and superintendent (ἐπιμελητής; cf. Poland 1909:376-87). The self-designations of some groups also reflect the vocabulary of the polis, such as the associations that called themselves an “assembly” (ἐκκλησία) at Aspendos in Cilicia (IGLAM 1381-1382; cf. Foucart 1873:223-25, no. 43 = CIG 2271 [Delos]). Furthermore, the activities of associations reflect those of civic institutions: passing decrees, granting honours, voting on decisions, electing leaders (cf. IG II.2 1368), and engaging in the conventions of diplomacy (see chap. 5 and 7), for instance.
It is true that participation within associations provided some members of lower social status with opportunities of leadership, for example. And the secretary of the local guild of dyers did not usually come from a social-economic level necessary to become secretary of the polis; but there were even exceptions to this (cf. TAM V 991 [Thyatira]; see fig. 14). Overall, in light of the discussion throughout this chapter, evidence of associations as cities writ small can be understood as a sign of the continuing vitality and influence of the polis, not as a sign that associations were a substitute for declining participation in various areas of civic life. The close connections with and involvements in the political, social and cultural structures of the polis which did exist help to explain how civic structures came to influence association-life so heavily. Belonging within an association and belonging within the polis were by no means mutually exclusive.

b) Participation in social networks of benefaction

Some degree of involvement in the political structures of the polis was by no means the only significant area of participation by members of many guilds and associations. There were other important ways in which associations as groups expressed belonging within and attachment to the polis. Attachments to the civic community could be expressed through involvement in benefactions for or dedications to the polis or homeland. The association of fishermen and fishmongers at Ephesos, for example, representing a range of social-economic levels, built and dedicated the fishery toll-office for the imperial family of Nero, the people of the Romans and the people of the Ephesians (IEph 20; 50s CE; cf. IEph 1501). The guild of silversmiths and goldsmiths at Smyrna expressed both its piety towards the goddess Athena and the civic pride of its members by repairing her statue "for the homeland" (ISmyrna 721; c. 14-37 CE). And the dyers at Hierapolis who set up a statue of "Council" (bouλή) personified evidently identified with the institutions of their polis (SEG 41 1201; c. 100-150 CE). Several civic officials and some groups at
Smyrna, including theologians, an association of hymn-singers and a group of Judeans (see chap. 6), displayed civic-mindedness in joining together to provide financial donations for a project of the polis in the early-second century (I Smyrna 697; c. 124 CE).

Ethnic- or geographic-based associations could also be involved in such honourary activities which indicate attachments to the polis of residence. At Heraklea-Perinthos in Thracia, for instance, a man erected a pillar for the local Baccheion of Asians, dedicating it on behalf of the emperors and, most importantly here, “the sacred council and people of the Perinthians” (IGR I 787; c. 196-98).

Civic inhabitants might also express their identification with the polis by honouring an individual who demonstrated goodwill (eivōn) and acted as “benefactor of the homeland.” Examples of associations participating in this aspect in networks of benefaction could be cited from many cities in Asia. An inscription from Smyrna, for example, involves the sacred synod of performers and initiates of Dionysos Breseus honouring Marcus Aurelius Julianus, a civic crown-bearer, asiarch, temple-warden of the Sebastoi and benefactor, “because of his piety towards the god and his goodwill towards the polis” (I Smyrna 639; mid-late II CE).

What is perhaps even more telling concerning the involvement or participation of associations within these networks of civic life is the cooperation and contacts between such groups and important civic and imperial officials and institutions. There is abundant evidence for associations on their own honouring important civic officials, thereby maintaining connections with powerful citizens, as when the therapeutai of Zeus honoured a “foremost leader of the polis” for his piety towards the deity (I Sard BR 22; c. 100 BCE).

65 Attaleia (near Pergamon; IGR IV 1169: leather-workers); Hierapolis (I Hierap. 40, II-III CE: wool-cleaners); Miletos (SEG 36 1051-55: linen-workers and sack-bearers devoted to Hermes); Temenothyrai (AE [1977], no. 802, late-I CE: clothing cleaners); Thyatira (TAM V 932, 933, 986, 989, 1098: slave-merchants; linen-workers; tanners; dyers; Juliasts); Tralles (I Trall 74, III CE: initiates).

66 Cf. I Eph 425 (c. 81-117 CE): Silversmiths honour T. Claudius Aristion, secretary of the people and imperial high-priest. TAM IV 33 (late I-II CE): Shippers at Nikomedia (Bithynia) honour a leader of the polis and high-priest. TAM V 955 (III CE): Hymn-singers of the Mother of the gods honour a civic magistrate and liturgist.
Associations also maintained important links with Roman imperial officials of equestrian or senatorial rank as I discuss extensively in chapter five. The connections of associations with both local and imperial officials attests to some of the ways these groups cemented their relationship with the *polis*, identifying with its interests.

There are numerous examples of various types of associations collaborating together with civic institutions, especially the council and the people, in honouring eminent citizens or benefactors. This is true of ethnic- or geographic-based associations. Associations of Romans throughout the cities of Asia commonly joined with the council and the people in honouring civic functionaries and benefactors of their *polis* of residence (cf. *IAdramytt* 19, 21; *IPhrygR* 533 [Akmeonia]; *IAssos* 13-14, 19-21, 28; *IGR* IV 785-86, 788-91 [Apameia]; *IIasos* 90; *ITrall* 80). On more than one occasion the council and the people of Lindos (on Rhodes) joined together with various associations, some of which were groups of foreigners (e.g. the Pergaians), to honour the priest of Athena Lindia and Zeus Poleus, protector of the *polis* (*ILindos* 391-92; time of Augustus). When a benefactor built or renovated the temple of Tyche at Hereklea-Perinthos, the council and the people honoured him with a monument; an association of Alexandrians (traders) also played a key role by setting up a statue in his honour (*IGR* I 800). Ethnic- or geographic-based associations could maintain such connections not only with their *polis* of residence but also, of course, with their homeland, as the case of the political institutions of Nysa and the Nysaians at Rome showed (see chap. 1).

Occupational and other associations also joined with political institutions in honouring benefactors. The council and the people at Smyrna, for instance, joined with a synod of initiates in honouring two female theologians for their display of piety towards the goddess (probably Demeter or Kore) in providing their services at a festival (*ISmyrna* 653; I-II CE; cf. *TAM* V 1098 [Thyatira]). At Erythrai, the sacred theatrical synod joined with the "homeland" in honouring Antonia Tyrannis Juliane, the director of games in
honour of Hadrian (*IErythrai* 60; 124 CE; cf. *ITrall* 65; I CE). It was also common for associations to set up honours for a benefactor *on behalf of* the council and the people, often in accordance with a specific provision in a decree or decision of the *polis* (cf. *IEph* 728, 3079 [guilds]; *IGR IV* 788-91 [guilds at Apameia]; *IGR IV* 907 [leather-workers at Kibyra]; Quandt 1913:177 [initiates at Sardis]; *ITrall* 74 [initiates]). At Ephesos, for example, “the council and the people of the first and greatest metropolis of Asia...honoured Publius Vedius Antoninus,” the civic secretary and ambassador to the emperors; “those who are engaged in the taste [i.e. a guild of wine-tasters] put up the statue” (*IEph* 728; 160s CE).

c) Participation in social-cultural life

Attachment to civic institutions and an accompanying sense of civic identity or pride is evinced in various other ways alongside involvement in the civic networks of benefaction. Among the principal social-cultural institutions of the Hellenized *polis* were the market-places, baths, gymnasia, stadia and theatres. Here too there is clear evidence of active participation by associations and their members. The various age-group organizations of boys (*παιδες*) or girls, youths (*εφηβοι*), young men (*νεωτοι*) and elders (*γεροντες*, *γερονσία*) were a very prominent feature of life in the gymnasia (cf. Forbes 1933). Guilds of performers and athletes were also active in the gymnasia, stadia and theatres, competing during the various festivals held in honour of gods or emperors.

Yet ordinary associations and guilds also had a place (often in a literal sense) within these institutions of the *polis*. The stadia at Aphrodisias, Didyma and Saittai, for example, included bench-reservations for guilds and associations of various kinds (*IAphrodSpect* 45; *IDidyma* 50; Kolb 1990). Several latrines at the Vedius bath-gymnasium complex at Ephesos were set aside for groups of bankers, hemp-workers, wool-dealers and linen-weavers, who evidently frequented the place (*IEph* 454; cf. Yegül
1992:217-19 (associations in baths of North Africa). Quite well-known is the Jewish synagogue contained within the bath-gymnasium complex at Sardis in the third century. Various such groups could also have special seats reserved for them in the theatre where the assembly of the people, as well as various theatrical and other performances, took place. The theatre at Miletos included reservations for guilds such as the “emperor-loving goldsmiths” and the “Judeans and god-fearers,” who sat just a few rows from the front, right next to the benches reserved for the “friends of the Augusti” (cf. Kleiner 1970:18-20). The theatre at Aphrodisias included reserved benches for the butchers alongside others (IAphrodSpect 46).

Discussion of social-cultural institutions leads us to another important aspect of the polis and its social-religious life: festivals, processions and related activities in honour of the gods (cf. Price 1984:101-32; Wörle 1988; Mitchell 1990). As we noted earlier, the gods and rulers were an integral part of the webs of relations and hierarchies which characterized the system of benefaction. Festivals were one means by which appropriate honour could be shown to these “godly” benefactors who sat atop the web of networks and protected the polis and its inhabitants. Plutarch, who was quite emphatic about the need for moderation in the pursuit of honour, felt that the best pretext for benefaction was one “connected with the worship of a god [which] leads the people to piety; for at the same time there springs up in the minds of the masses a strong disposition to believe that the deity is great and majestic, when they see the men whom they themselves honour and regard as great so liberally and zealously vying with each other in honouring the divinity” (Moralia 822b [LCL]). The proliferation of associations of athletes and performers in the Hellenistic and, even more so, Roman eras is just one clear indication of the continuing popularity and importance of festivals and the gods and goddesses (including emperors) they honoured.

To cite just one example of a procession from the Roman era, in 104 CE Salutaris made a substantial financial foundation for the polis of Ephesos (IEph 27). The council
and the people decided that the income from the funds would be used for processions that expressed various elements of civic identity. Several groups participated, including the elders, boys, hymn-singers, theologians and functionaries of the Artemision. Most prominent, however, were the youths (ἔφηβοι) who carried images not only of Artemis and the Ionian and Hellenistic founders, but also of the emperors. And, as Rogers argues, the topography of the bi-weekly procession through the polis was an expression of the multifaceted identity of Ephesos, encompassing the Roman imperial family and regime but also reaffirming the Ionian origins and sacred identity of Ephesos as the city of Artemis (see Rogers 1991). The procession began and ended in her sanctuary.

There is evidence for the continuing importance of the gods and goddesses of the civic cults, closely bound up in civic identity and pride, for the members of many associations. The relation between the civic community and the gods was taken seriously, and any threat to this relationship was a grave offence. The Acts account of the silversmiths’ riot at Ephesos (whether documenting an actual event or not) realistically portrays the attachment which inhabitants of a polis, including the membership of guilds, felt for their patron deity (Acts 19:21-41). In this case, silversmiths and other craftsmen were involved in a civic disturbance not as a consequence of opposition to civic structures or of being distanced from civic identity, but rather in defence of them. The more important of the motives Acts mentions relates to the need to appropriately honour the goddess: “there is danger...that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be scorned, and she will be deprived of her majesty that brought all Asia and the world to worship her” (19:27; cf. IEph 24 [c. 160 CE]; cf. Oster 1976).

The official patron of a polis was not the only deity to whom honour was due, however, as we saw in regard to the range of deities honoured within associations of Asia (cf. chap. 1). The foundation and continuation of associations or cults in honour of gods other than the polis’ patron deity could also be bound up in civic identity and well-being.
The myth of the introduction of Dionysiac associations (θυείου) to Magnesia clearly shows this (IMagnMai 215). The inscription relates how, in time past, a miraculous sign had appeared—"an image of Dionysos"—after lightning struck a tree, and the people of Magnesia had sent an embassy to consult the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. The well-being of the Magnesian people, whose patron deity was Artemis Leukophryene, was also dependent upon the proper fulfillment of the wills of other gods, Apollo and Dionysos, who called for the foundation of associations and temples devoted to Dionysos. Those who belonged to a Magnesian Dionysiac association in the Roman era (whose leader set up this monument) evidently felt themselves to be part of the polis and its history.

Conclusion

The inscriptionsal evidence from Asia provides a concrete illustration of the continuing importance of the polis and its structures as a locus of identity, cooperation and competition for members of many associations and guilds, reflecting various social strata of society. These groups were often participants in civic vitality, not symptoms of decline. We should not assume that they were naturally inclined to be in opposition to the polis or its structures.

Moreover, inhabitants who joined together on a regular basis to form associations could find the polis to be a home. They could claim their place within and identify with its interests in a variety of ways, including participation in social networks of benefaction, participation in or direct relations with political organs of the polis or involvement within social and cultural institutions, such as the gymnasia and theatres. The level and nature of participation or identification within the civic context could vary from one group to the next, however. Each group could find its own individual way of living within the polis.
despite commonalities with the ways of other associations. The involvement of associations in imperial facets of civic life, to which I now turn, was one of several factors involved in a group claiming its place within society.
Chapter 4
Internal practices:
Cultic honours for the imperial gods

Introduction

When it comes to assessing the relationship between associations and society, especially its imperial dimensions, scholars often stress tensions and conflicts. One hears far more of involvements in disturbances and strict controlling actions by imperial authorities than of the extensive evidence for associations’ positive involvements in imperial facets of society and culture. This and the following chapter begin to correct the unbalanced picture of association-life entailed in these common scholarly approaches. I do this by looking at evidence concerning: first, the place of the emperors and imperial family within the internal social and religious life of many associations and, second, the involvements of associations in external relations with emperors and imperial-connected individuals and families, both positive and negative.

So as to avoid the pitfalls of previous scholarship, which has seen conflict and control as the starting and focal point of association-life, I leave discussion and re-evaluation of civic disturbances and the intervention Roman authorities to the end of the next chapter. There I put this evidence of occasional negative group-society relations into perspective in light of ongoing positive external relations. Since much of the evidence for negative relations and imperial intervention pertains to Rome or Italy, this order of discussion will also prevent us being side-tracked from the principal focus on association-life in the province of Asia.

Moreover, attention to both cultic honours and participation within social networks of benefaction helps to provide a clearer picture regarding the place of associations within society and culture in Asia Minor. It will also provide a fitting framework within which to compare the participation and non-participation of Jewish and Christian groups in imperial dimensions of civic life in the same region (chap. 7).
The cultural landscape of Roman Asia was permeated by festivals, rituals and temples that encompassed the emperors and imperial family or Sebatoi ("revered ones"), and there are associations that reflect this context in their internal life. The evidence for these small, local social-religious groups throws into question many of the common scholarly views concerning cultic honours for the emperors, or imperial cults. Overall, cultic activities could be a significant and integral part of association-life, telling us something about the self-understanding of such groups and their place within society and the cosmos.

I begin with a case study of one particular association, the worshippers of Demeter at Ephesos, which leads me into a discussion of the approach most scholars have taken to evidence of this type concerning local imperial cults. After a brief discussion of the traditional theoretical framework within which imperial cults are discounted as insignificant (especially in a religious sense), I go on to discuss a range of other neglected evidence which further challenges such scholarly views. This evidence attests to the importance of the Sebatoi, or "imperial gods" as I sometimes call them, within the internal life of many associations in Roman Asia. I then conclude with an evaluation of the significance of such internal ritual activities for understanding both imperial cults and associations' identities.

Case study: the Demetriasts of Ephesos

Unfortunately, we do not usually have sufficient evidence to discuss in any detail the general history of a particular association in a specific locality, let alone the place of the Sebatoi within that history; in most cases we are lucky if we even have two or three extant, though incomplete or fragmentary, inscriptions pertaining to a particular group. So it is significant that in the case of the Demetriasts of Ephesos we at least get momentary glimpses of their history from the beginning of the first to the mid-second century, and that two inscriptions reveal, among other things, the ongoing importance of
the emperors or imperial family within the cultic life of this association (*IEph* 213, 1595, 4337; cf. *IEph* 1210, 1270 [c. 90-110 CE]; *IMagnMai* 158 [c. 38-42 CE]). In conjunction with the range of evidence concerning other associations which I discuss further below, the case of the Demetriasts suggests that the imperial gods could be an important aspect of group-identity and -practice, revealing to us something about how the members of such associations felt about their place within society and the cosmos.

The earliest evidence we have for this group dates to the time of Tiberius, between 19 and 23 CE (*IEph* 4337 = *SEG* IV 515 = Keil 1928:61-66; cf. Oster 1990:1671-73). The inscription, whose beginning is missing, preserves for us a decree of the Demetriasts concerning honours for particular benefactors who were also priests or priestesses. The civic institutions (council and people) of Ephesos had evidently acknowledged the contributions of these same persons towards the *polis*; one of them, probably the man named Bassos, had assumed liturgies associated with the gymnsiarchate and the night-watch, besides being priest of Artemis, patron deity of the Ephesians. In connection with the civic institution’s acknowledgement, the Demetriasts decided that they, too, would grant these persons special honours both for their contributions to the life of the city and for their good-will towards the association specifically, which probably took the form of specific benefactions. They arranged to have images or statues of these benefactors made and set up in a prominent and publicly visible place.

What is especially significant for our present purposes, however, are the imperial cult-related connections associated with the priesthoods of the honorees. Along with the priest of Artemis (Bassos) is mentioned Proklos, who is called priest of the “new Dioskoroi,” the sons of Drusus Caesar (cf. Tacitus, *Annales* 2.84). There was evidently a cult devoted to the twin sons of Drusus Caesar and Livilla identifying them as the sons of Zeus, perhaps alongside other members of the imperial family identified as gods. The third honoree, Servilia Secunda, is referred to as the priestess of “Sebaste Demeter Kar-
pophoros”. Here we have the Demetrians, like other associations we discuss in the next chapter, honouring prominent persons who had assumed priestages associated with cults for the imperial family alongside traditional deities. More importantly for the present chapter, though, is the fact that the Demetriasts themselves identify their own patron deity with a member of the imperial family, Sebaste, most likely Livia Drusilla Augusta (the third wife of Augustus). This suggests that cultic honours for such members of the imperial family were integrated within the traditional practices for Demeter within group-life.

There are further indications that cultic honours for members of the imperial family were an integral and ongoing part of the life and identity of this group at Ephesos. Another important inscription from the time of Domitian confirms this, and it is worthwhile quoting this letter in full (IEph 213 = SIG³ 820 = NewDocs IV 22; c. 88-89 CE):

To Lucius Mestrius Florus, proconsul, from Lucius Pompeius Apollonios of Ephesos. Mysteries and sacrifices are performed each year in Ephesos, lord, to Demeter Karpophoros and Thesmophoros and to the Sebastei gods by initiates with great purity and lawful customs, together with the priestesses. In most years these practices were protected by kings and emperors, as well as the proconsul of the period, as contained in their enclosed letters. Accordingly, as the mysteries are pressing upon us during your time of office, through my agency the ones obligated to accomplish the mysteries necessarily petition you, lord, in order that, acknowledging their rights....

In the next chapter I discuss other examples of associations engaging in such diplomatic...
relations with Roman officials, in this case the proconsul, in order to further their own interests. They are not gaining permission, as though they would otherwise be unable to engage in their celebration, but rather seeking the prestige which further acknowledgement by important officials could give to them. As G.H.R. Horsley also points out, the manner in which the association’s representative addresses the proconsul and emphasizes the precedents for such recognition—even including copies of previous correspondence—would make it hard for the official to deny what they wanted (see NewDocs IV 22). After all, there was a long history of prestige attributed by kings, emperors and proconsuls long before Florus arrived on the scene during the time of Domitian.

Further to our present focus, the manner in which this history is cited suggests that the cultic honours for the imperial gods were not something new added to simply appease a Roman official, but rather a continuation of the sort of cultic practices hinted at in the inscription from the time of Tiberius. This group included “sacrifices and mysteries” not only dedicated to Demeter but also to the Sebastei gods in one of its most important yearly celebrations, and there is no clear distinction made in the inscription between the godly recipients of these cultic honours. The Sebastei found themselves alongside the likes of Demeter in the realm of the gods. The offering of sacrifices “to” (not just “on behalf of”) the emperors as gods alongside other deities, as we shall see further below, was not at all limited to this particular association. Where such sacrifices were made to these gods we can assume that the customary banquets involving the consumption of sacrificial food would follow.

Also significant here is the incorporation of the imperial gods within the ritual life or mysteries of this group. Alongside the central ritual of sacrifice, mysteries were among the most respected and revered cultic acts of piety in the Greco-Roman world; few human actions so effectively maintained fitting relations between the realm of humans and that of the gods, ensuring benefaction and protection for the individual, group or community in
question. Unfortunately, the inscription does not give us any information concerning the actual content of these mysteries, so we are left wondering what exactly was entailed in the rituals. This lacuna in our knowledge about the precise nature of the mysteries and related rituals, though never completely filled, will diminish somewhat when we turn to other evidence for imperial mysteries further below. Contrary to what many scholars who adhere to the traditional paradigm of imperial cult would be inclined to assert, this example of imperial mysteries and sacrifices is not simply an isolated exception, but rather indicative of similar practices that were important within the internal social-religious life of other associations too, at least in Roman Asia.

**Questioning traditional views within scholarship**

When the influential scholar A.D. Nock encounters this evidence for the Demetriasts he discounts it, stating that it “is hardly likely that the Emperor or the Empress identified with Demeter figures in the mysteries... The promoters of a secret rite were perhaps eager to avoid any suspicion of cloaking disloyalty under secrecy” (1970a [1930]:248). M.P. Nilsson, another adherent of the traditional view of imperial cults, briefly considers the evidence for rituals such as imperial mysteries within small-group settings, but he readily categorizes them as politically-motivated cliches or “pseudo-mysteries” (1959; cf. Nilsson 1961:370-71). Writing before both Nock and Nilsson, Franz Poland’s summary statement regarding associations generally does not come as a surprise in light of the commonly held assumptions within scholarship: “the cult of the emperors appears relatively seldom [within associations] and, where it does occur, has little independent meaning” (1909:234-35 [trans. mine]). Moreover, he asserts, such cultic activities had little significance for an association’s “self-understanding” (1909:532).

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68 "Auch sonst erscheint der Kaiserkult zunächst verhältnismäßig selten und, wo er auftritt, hat er wenig selbständige Bedeutung."
Before going on to a fresh consideration of the evidence for associations specifically, it is worth saying a few words regarding this common view of imperial cults generally. The central conviction of the traditional view is that imperial cults were not well integrated within religious life but rather different in kind from other cultic forms in the Greco-Roman world. Such scholars as Nock, Nilsson, G.W. Bowersock, and Paul Veyne emphasize that imperial cults were political, not religious, public, not private.69 According to Nilsson (1948:178), imperial cult “lacked all genuine religious content.” The cult’s “meaning lay far more in state and social realms, where it served both to express loyalty to the rule of Rome and the emperor and to satisfy the ambition of the leading families” (Nilsson 1961:385 [trans. mine]; cf. Bowersock 1965:115 and 1983; Ste. Croix 1981:394-95).70 Moreover, imperial rituals were merely ceremony, “a purely mechanical exercise” which failed to evoke the feelings or emotions of the individuals who participated (Fishwick 1978:1252-53; cf. Veyne 1990 [1976]:315). No one actually believed that the emperors were gods, and this is reflected in the lack of any “private” forms of religious life, such as votive offerings and mysteries (cf. Nock 1935:481; Bowersock 1973:180, 206; Veyne 1990 [1976]:307; Fishwick 1978:1251-53).

Underestimating the social and religious significance of imperial cults for the populace is partially the result of the imposition of modern viewpoints and assumptions onto ancient evidence. First, for example, the traditional view reflects modern distinctions between politics and religion. As I noted in chapter two, however, such compartmentalizations of life do not apply to the ancient context, where the social, religious, economic and political were intricately inter-connected and often inseparable. S.R.F.

70 "Seine religiöse Bedeutung war nicht groß, mit einer Ausnahme, auf die wir zum Schluß zurückkommen; seine Bedeutung lag vielmehr auf staatlichem und sozialem Gebiete, wo er dazu diente, die Loyalität gegen das herrschende Rom und den Kaiser zur bezeugen und den Ehrgeiz der leitenden Familien zu befriedigen."
Price's important study (1984) challenges this common politics vs. religion distinction, providing instead a vivid portrait of the intertwined social, political and religious significance of imperial cults for various social strata of society in Asia Minor.

Second, it is quite common in modern contexts to measure religiosity, as do William James (1963 [1902]:50) and Rudolf Otto (1923), in terms of the individual's emotions or feelings, and this tendency to emphasize the "personal" or "private" nature of religion sometimes extends to scholars' assessments of ancient religion (cf. chap. 3; Festugière 1954:1-4; Dodds 1959:243 and 1965:2; Nilsson 1961:711-12; Green 1990:588). However, this is an inadequate approach to the study of religion in antiquity. Though there were certainly some cases when religious feelings were very strongly felt and expressed by individuals in antiquity (cf. Apuleius, Metamorphoses, book 11), piety and religiosity were often more concerned with the performance of cultic honours within group or community settings in order to maintain fitting relations between communities and the gods rather than with the inner feelings of the individual. This does not make such activity any less "genuinely" religious within that context. Even so, there is neglected evidence that imperial cults were important within contexts that many of these scholars would consider "private," including associations.71

The traditional view which emphasizes a fundamental difference between cults for emperors and those for other gods is not without opponents. H.W. Pleket (1965), Fergus

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71 Cf. Price 1984:117-21. Also note the following: At least one votive offering, perhaps indicative of the existence of others, was found (in the 1950s) at Claudiopolis in Asia Minor: Sosthenes sets up a structure in fulfillment of a vow (εὐχή) to the "new god, Antinoos," the favourite of Hadrian, to whom he had prayed and from whom he received his request (I Klaudiop 56; cf. Robert 1980:133). On prayers to the emperors see Aristides, Orations 26 and ISardBR 8.13-14 (cf. Price 1984:232-33). Versnel (1981:36-37) points out that the term ἔνδειξις, "one whose nature is to hear," which is often associated with prayer, could be attributed to emperors. Another indication of the importance of the emperors within the everyday life of the populace pertains to statues. As with the sacred places and statues of other gods, individuals could take refuge in times of trouble at the statues of emperors (see the discussion of the riot at Aspendos in chap. 3) and there are examples of persons leaving petitions at the feet of imperial statues (cf. POxy 2130 [267 CE]; Corpus Papyrorum Raineri I 20 [c. 250 CE]; PLond inv. no. 1589 [295 CE]; also see Alexander 1967:31-32, who cites several other examples and discusses this in connection with the Christian practice of worshipping at Jesus' feet). For the involvement of households in royal sacrifices and other "private" dimensions of ruler cult in Hellenistic times at Ilion and in Egypt see Robert 1966c.
Millar (1973:146-48, 163-64) and others criticize the general tendency within scholarship to overemphasize the political and neglect religious and other aspects of imperial cults (cf. Robert 1960c:321-24; Will 1960; Hopkins 1978; Momigliano 1987a). Overall, Millar’s impression is that imperial cults were not fundamentally different from other cults, but rather “fully and extensively integrated into the local cults of the provinces, with the consequence that the Emperors were the object of the same cult-acts as the other gods” (1973:164 [italics mine]). “Unless we deny the name ‘religion’ to all pagan cults,” he states, “our evidence compels us to grant it also to the Imperial cult” (1973:148). This parallelism in cultic forms also has implications for our understanding of the world views of those who participated, as I elaborate further below. As J.R. Fears (1988:1011) puts it, “cult and ritual [associated with rulers or emperors] give no indication that the figure so worshipped was regarded as in any way distinct from what a modern commentator might deign to consider ‘real gods’.” Moreover, the evidence for imperial cults within associations and elsewhere suggests that in practice the Sebastei could indeed function as gods within the structures and hierarchies of society and the cosmos, within the world views of participants.

Recent research on imperial cults in Asia Minor specifically likewise provides an alternative understanding to that of the traditional view. Studies by Price (1984), Steven J. Friesen (1993) and Stephen Mitchell (1993:1.100-117) point to the integration of imperial cults within civic life in the region, with political, social and religious significance for all social strata of the population.

R.R.R. Smith’s recent work on the symbolic significance of the reliefs of the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias will serve as a fitting conclusion to this section before returning to associations (Smith 1987 cf. Reynolds 1981, 1986, 1996). The Sebasteion complex at Aphrodisias was dedicated to “Aphrodite, the Sebastei gods and the people” (Reynolds 1981:318, no. 2). It was built from donations by two prominent families during the Julio-
Claudian era and discovered by K.T. Erim in 1979. It consisted of a monumental western gate which led to a walkway. The walkway was flanked by 3-storey porticoes on the north and south leading up to the temple proper (as yet unexcavated) at the far east (see the photo and sketch in fig. 12). The second and third levels of the porticoes on both sides contained relief panels (eighty of which have survived) depicting peoples conquered by the Romans, Greek mythological scenes, the gods and, integrated within this visual framework, emperors and members of the imperial family. As Smith argues, the pictorial imagery of the structure communicates a "relatively uncomplex equation of gods and emperors," something that is also stated more explicitly in the dedication of the northern portico to the "Olympian Sebastoi gods." The emperors "are added to the old gods, not as successors or replacements, but as a new branch of the Olympian pantheon" (Smith 1987:136). The visual message of the Sebasteion tells of the incorporation of the emperors as gods within the religion, history and culture of the Greek East, something that is not in keeping with what many adherents of the traditional paradigm espouse.

**Associations and cultic honours for the Sebastoi**

Although Smith, Price, Friesen and others present compelling evidence with respect to the varied significance of imperial cults, they do not devote special attention to the evidence of associations specifically. The case of associations in Roman Asia may provide us with a convincing illustration of the integration of the emperors and imperial cults within political, social and religious dimensions of the populace's life on a local level. In the process this will shed more light on both the nature of imperial cults and the self-understanding of associations.

As with information regarding the internal life of associations generally, our evidence for the place of the emperors within this life is far from comprehensive. The

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72 Price (1984:50 n.122, 85, 88, 90, 105, 118, 190-91) does note the importance of associations in connection with imperial cults from time to time.
epigraphical remains we do have represent only a small proportion of the associations that did exist. For many whose existence we are aware of we simply know nothing concerning the specifics of their internal social and religious life, let alone imperial dimensions of this life. Often it is only incidentally that a group happens to mention such things in an inscription, since they were simply taken for granted as part of daily life. So, as with any historical reconstruction from epigraphical (or archeological or literary) sources, we need to reconstruct a probable picture largely, though not solely, from incidental scraps suggestive of a broader tapestry.

Despite these limitations of our sources, however, there is considerable evidence of imperial cult-related activities from various cities of Roman Asia concerning associations of different types, associations which reflect the social spectrum of that society. The nature and extent of the practices we encounter in these various settings suggest that a similar range of practices probably took place within other associations about whom we happen to know far less. Overall, cultic honours for the imperial gods (Sebastoi) could be a significant component in the internal life of numerous associations, suggesting something to us about the self-understanding or identity of these groups, about how they understood their place within the context of polis, empire and cosmos. Contrary to the traditional view, such practices were not merely expressions of political loyalty, but rather religious expressions in the same sense one could speak of religious expressions towards the traditional gods, all of which were intertwined within social, political and other dimensions of life in the polis.

a) Official settings

Some associations could participate in official civic or provincial celebrations and festivals in honour of emperors, but such participation was primarily limited to the official
organizations of the gymnasia and associations of performers or athletes. The procession established in connection with the Salutaris foundation at Ephesos is illustrative. This involved various groups, including the hymn-singers, the elders' association (γεροντία) and official boards connected with the Artemision; but by far the most important participants were the youths (ephebes) who carried images not only of Artemis and the Ionian and Hellenistic founders of Ephesos, but also of the emperors and imperial family (IEph 27; Rogers 1991). During the principate of Claudius, the responsibility of singing honours to the members of the imperial household at Ephesos' civic celebrations, which had previously been performed by an association of hymn-singers there, was handed over to the youths (ephebes; IEph 18d.4-24; cf. IEph 1145). We also have Josephus' reference to an official celebration of mysteries in honour of Caligula at Rome for which a choir of boys was brought in from Asia to sing (Josephus, Antiquitates 19.30, 104; cf. van Unnik 1979).

Various branches of performers or athletes in Asia and elsewhere, which adopted the emperors as patron deities alongside other gods (esp. Dionysos or Herakles), frequently participated in festivals and contests in honour of the emperors. A decree of the world-wide Dionysiac performers found at Ankyra, for instance, involves this group thanking a benefactor for his contributions to the "mystery" (μυστηρίων), supplying funds for the performers' competition in a "mystical contest" (μυστικός άγών) involving sacred plays in honour of both Dionysos and Hadrian, the "new Dionysos" (IAankyraBosch 128 = SEG VI 59, esp. lines 10-11, 20-25; see Buckler and Keil 1926; cf. IAankyraBosch 127, 129-30). By nature of their occupation, performers and athletes (which are not the focus of this study) were exceptional in the degree and frequency of participation in such official settings, however.

73 Turning to an example from another region of an earlier period, Kallixenos of Rhodes describes the grand procession at Alexandria in Egypt (c. 285-76 BCE) involving a combination of cultic honours for both Dionysos and the king. Various associations including youths, Dionysiac performers and "many different thiasoi" participated (FGrH 627 F2; cf. Rice 1983).
Nonetheless, there were some other associations which could on occasion participate in provincial or civic imperial cult celebrations in Asia specifically. I am thinking, in particular, of associations called “hymn-singers” (ὑμνώσαι), such as those at Pergamon (cf. Poland 1926). Hymn-singers dedicated to the imperial gods are attested in several places in Asia including: Ephesos, where there appears to have been more than one group using this self-designation, one being connected with a temple of Hadrian; and Smyrna, where there appear to be two groups by this name, one a subgroup of the elders’ association (γερουσία) and the other calling itself “the fellow hymn-singers of god Hadrian,” a group which continued long after that emperor’s time. Unlike associations of performers and athletes, however, it seems that these groups were not usually professionals.

We know of the group at Pergamon from several inscriptions of the first and early-second centuries. By the beginning of the second century, at least, the membership consisted primarily if not solely of Roman citizens, some of whom were from among the wealthy elites (IPergamon 374). There is earlier evidence from the time of Claudius concerning the Pergamene and other hymn-singers (IEph 3801 = SEG IV 641 = IGR IV 1608c; cf. IEph 18d.4-24 [c. 44 CE]; Keil 1908; Buckler 1935). The first part of the inscription reveals that the hymn-singers had previously received a letter from Claudius

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74 IEph 645 (Artemision; III CE), 742 (Hadrian), 921 (Hadrian), 3247 (Artemis; time of Philip the Arab). It is not certain whether individual hymn-singers identified in Kuretes’ or priests’ lists from the times of Tiberius (IEph 1004) and Commodus (IEph 1061, 1600) belong to one of the other known associations of hymn-singers or whether these were simply functionaries assigned the title within other cultic contexts. Also unknown is which association we are dealing with in IEph 18d, which certainly did sing hymns to the emperors before the time of Claudius (see notes below).

75 ISmyrna 595 (c. 200 CE), 644 (elders), 697 (c. 124 CE), 758. Cf. Rogers 1991:55, 76. For devotees of other gods calling themselves “hymn-singers” see chap. 2. We also know of hymn-singers at Akmoneia (IGR IV 657) and Didyma (IDidyma 50), though in these cases we know nothing of their patron deities or practices. There was an association at Nikopolis in Moesia which called itself the “friends-of-the-Sebastoi hymn-singers,” or, alternatively, “presbyter hymn-singers” (IGBulg 666-68; cf. IGBulg 15ter [Dionysopolis]).

76 T. Claudius Procilius, for example, was a member who had been a galatarch at Ankyra; a civic tribe there honoured him as benefactor (IAnkyraBoslch 142 = OGIS 542 = IGR III 194). His father, T. Claudius Bocchus, from the equestrian order, had served as a tribune in the army; he was also a high-priest and sebastophant in the provincial imperial cult of Galatia, as well as being a member in an elite-association called the “sacrificial priests” (ἱερουργοὶ) at Ankyra (IAnkyraBoslch 98).
himself acknowledging the decree which they had sent to him, probably honouring the imperial household (only the beginning is legible). They, like other groups discussed in the next chapter, decided to monumentalize this instance of contact with an emperor.

More importantly here, the second part of the monument preserves a document concerning a provincial celebration held at the temple of god Augustus and goddess Roma at Pergamon. It is a resolution of the provincial assembly of Asia thanking the hymn-singers for their participation in the celebration of the emperor’s birthday:

Since it is proper to offer a visible exhibition of piety and of every intention befitting the sacred to the revered (Sebustos) household each year, the hymn-singers from all Asia, coming together in Pergamon for the most sacred birthday of god Augustus (Sebostos) Tiberius Caesar, accomplish a magnificent work for the glory of the association, hymning the revered household, accomplishing sacrifices to the Sebastoi gods, leading festivals and banquets...

It seems that on some important occasions associations of hymn-singers from various cities of Asia, perhaps including those we hear of at Ephesos and Smyrna, joined together with the more prominent group at Pergamon to honour the Sebastoi gods at official celebrations; the provincial civic communities, who bore the cost involved, appreciated the hymn-singers’ piety in this regard.77

77 In connection with his attempt to correct abuses in the management of the Artemision at Ephesos and other related financial matters around 44 CE, the proconsul Paullus Fabius Persicus refers to a group of hymn-singers at Ephesos. They had received funds to perform during civic imperial cult celebrations. He agrees with the decision of the civic council of Ephesos that the ephebes would be a more appropriate, and less expensive, replacement for the liturgy. The proconsul was careful to re-acknowledge the special position of the Pergamon group, however (iEph 18d.4-24). This same inscription reveals that the cost of the Pergamene hymn-singers’ services at the provincial celebration was borne by the provincial communities since the time of Augustus.
b) Group settings

By far the majority of evidence for the participation of associations in imperial-cult related activities pertains to internal group-life, though certainly these groups were, in part, reflecting the civic and provincial context when they engaged in these activities. These cultic honours for the imperial gods were embedded within the range of social and religious activities discussed in chapter two.

The names of some associations suggest that members of the imperial household could be chosen as patron deities of a group, being recipients of regular cultic honours (cf. Pleket 1958:4-10; Price 1984:118; Robert 1960b:220-28). We have numerous examples from throughout Asia: the “friends-of-Agrippa” (φιλαγριται) association at Smyrna (ISmyrna 331); the “friends-of-the-Sebastoi” (φιλοσεβάστων) at Pergamon (IPergamonAsklep 84); the “friends-of-Caesar brotherhood” (φράτραων φιλοκσαρέων) at Ilion (Pleket 1958:4, no. 4); and the Tiberians (Τιβερείων) at Didyma, who had benches reserved for them in the stadium alongside other individuals and groups, including hymn-singers (IDidyma 50.1a.65).79

But we also encounter similar groups outside the walls of the polis: the Caesarists (κασαρισται) in a village near Smyrna (Mostenai) honoured a man for his contributions to the association (κοινόν) in connection with its sacrifices for the Sebastoi and accompanying banquets (ILydiaB 6 = IGR IV 1348; cf. IEph 3817, from the village of

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78 There was a similar group devoted to Marcus Agrippa at Sparta, called the Agrippiasts (IG VI 374; IXanthos 24 [cult of Agrippa]), and we shall have something more to say of the Jewish synagogue of “Agrippesians” at Rome in chapter seven.

79 Pleket (1958:4-10) suggests that the donors of the imperial cult temple for Caligula at Miletos probably also consisted of an association calling themselves the φιλοσεβαστοι (Didyma 148). See also IMagnMai 119, which refers to a benefactor as “the son of the friends-of-the-Sebastoi (ὁ γιος τῶν φιλοσεβαστῶν), probably an association. Moving out of our region of focus, we find a “company” called the Trajanians at Portu near Rome (IGR I 385). Other associations included the descriptive term φιλοσεβαστοι when they decided on a name for the group (cf. IEph 293 [initiates]; ITrall 77, 93, 145 [young men]; IGBulg 667-668 [hymn-singers at Nikopolis in Moesia Inferior). Such groups have comparable predecessors in Hellenistic times as well, such as the association of Analistai, devoted to the Attalid rulers, which met near the theatre at Teos in the mid-second century BCE (OGIS 325-26; cf. OGIS 130 [Setis, Egypt; c. 143-42 BCE]; IG XII/3 443).
Azoulenon). In these cases we are clearly seeing the importance of the emperors, and cults for them, in the self-understanding of the groups in question.

There are indications that occupational and ethnic-geographic associations engaged in similar cultic honours for the imperial gods. Dio Cassius, for example, refers to the fact that groups of Romans resident in Ephesos and in Nikaia granted cultic honours to both Roma and Julius Caesar in connection with the sanctuaries established for these deities around 29 BCE (51.20.6-7; cf. IEph 409, 3019; MAMA VI 177 [Phrygian Apameia; all statues of imperial figures dedicated by associations of Romans]). Later on the guild of shippers at Nikomedia in Bithynia dedicated its sanctuary (témevoç) to Vespasian, indicative of rituals in honour of that emperor (TAM IV 22; 70-71 CE).

Unfortunately, remains of guild-halls in Asia Minor have seldom been found or identified, but those that have been discovered elsewhere suggest a similar picture regarding the importance of the emperors within group-life. The meeting-place of the merchants and shippers from Berytos, discussed in chapter two, contained a sanctuary with a shrine for goddess Roma, set up “on account of her goodwill towards the association and the homeland” (IDelos 1778; II BCE; see fig. 6). Certainly this group returned her goodwill with the appropriate cultic honours, especially sacrifice. Several of the guild-halls at Ostia in Italy contained portrait heads, busts, and statues of members of the imperial household, and Russell Meiggs (1960:325-27) concludes that “some form of imperial cult [was] common to all guilds.” I would suggest that we can imagine a similar integration of the emperors within the religious life of other occupational or ethnic-geographic associations, and we do in fact encounter more direct evidence in Asia that includes guilds.

The religious activities of other associations which we do encounter more fully suggest a parallelism between cultic honours addressed to the traditional gods and those addressed to the Sebastoi. I have already mentioned the performance of sacrifice, the most important cultic honour in antiquity, within associations. Sacrifices or other forms
of offerings for the gods inevitably involved a complex of other ritual actions including prayers, hymns, libations, burning of incense and, of course, the accompanying meal.

Recent studies regarding the meaning and function of sacrifice, which often employ insights from the social sciences, emphasize two main elements or functions of sacrifice within the ancient Greek context (cf. Burkert 1985 [1977]: 54-75; Detienne and Vernant 1989 [1979]; Price 1984: 207-233; Zaidman and Pantel 1992: 27-45; Bowie 1995; Stowers 1995). On the one hand, sacrifice was a setting in which the bonds of human community were expressed and reinforced, revealing the nature of social relations and hierarchies within society. On the other, sacrifice was a means of communication or relation with the gods in order to solicit or maintain protection and avoid punishment for the group or community; it was a symbolic expression of a world view concerning the nature of the cosmos and fitting relations within it. In other words, sacrifice, like other forms of ritual, encompassed a set of symbols which communicated, among other things, a certain understanding of relations between humans within the group or community and between human groups and the gods. The incorporation of the emperors within the Greek system of sacrifice, therefore, tells us something about both group-identity and the place of the imperial gods within the world view of the members of associations, issues which I further elaborate with regard to ritual more generally in the next section of this chapter.

There is considerable evidence for the importance of sacrifice in connection with the imperial gods within association-life. In the next chapter I discuss several instances of altars dedicated to the Sebastoi or a particular member of the imperial family in connection with associations (cf. IGR IV 603 [near Aizanoi]; I Eph 1506; Radt 1989 [Pergamon]; AE (1984) 250, no. 855 [Hierapolis]; IMylasa 403 [neighbourhood association; cf. Robert 1937: 537]). The hymn-singers at Pergamon, whose internal activities definitely involved various rituals for the emperors including sacrifices, dedicated an altar to Hadrian, "Olympios, saviour and founder" (IPergamon 374). These dedications of altars are indica-
tive of the inclusion of the imperial gods in at least sacrifice and perhaps other rituals of the groups in question. It is not far to imagine that associations who dedicated other structures to the "Sebastoi gods," such as the guild of merchants at Thyatira (TAM V 862), would also engage in sacrifices or other cultic rituals to these same gods within their internal life as well.

But there is also more direct evidence that sacrifices were made to the imperial deities alongside other gods (or alone) within associations. We have already encountered the practices of the Demetriants at Ephesos. Another inscription from Ephesos (IEph 719), this one involving an occupational association, reveals the customary practices of the group in referring to the "physicians who sacrifice to the ancestor Asklepios and to the Sebastoi" ([οἱ θύωντες τῷ προσαφορῷ Ἀσκληπιῶ καὶ τοῖς Σεβαστοῖς ιατροῖς). Compare also an earlier reconstructed inscription which mentions a freedman dedicating money to a synod, perhaps Roman businessmen, "in order to perform the sacrifice to Roma and the goddess" (ἐπιτελεσθε[είσαν τῇ Ρώμῃ καὶ] τῇ θεῶ θυσίαν; Engelmann 1990:93-94, revising I Eph 859a; c. 27 BCE).

These inscriptions pertaining to sacrifice are particularly relevant in regard to one of Price's claims. Price argues that, in general, sacrifices were consciously made "on behalf of" the emperors rather than "to" the emperors (using the dative), and that the majority of the evidence from Asia Minor reflects a conscious effort to use the former terminology (Price 1984:207-33; cf. Nock 1970a [1930]). This argument, coupled with other claims regarding imperial statues, is fundamental to his overall suggestion that in ritual practice the emperors were not equated with the gods but, rather, ontologically located "at the focal point between human and the divine" (Price 1984:233). 80

80 Price's other suggestion (1984:146-56; cf. Nock 1970a [1930]), that when imperial images appeared in temples of other traditional gods they were always subordinate, is also problematic, since even traditional gods did not share fully in the temples of other gods. Hence, both of Price's reasons for suggesting that the emperors were not perceived as divine (as true gods) but rather as somewhere between human and divine are less than convincing (cf. Friesen 1993:73-75).
The above inscriptions involving local associations, as well as the evidence for the Demetriasts and the hymn-singers discussed earlier (both of which use the dative of sacrifice), are examples where no such distinction is made. As Friesen (1993:149) states, “there is quite a bit of evidence from Asia and not cited by Price that equates the gods and the emperors in a sacrificial context. In fact, the vast majority of evidence does not distinguish gods from emperors.” Once again, it is important to stress that the emperors could function as gods within ritual practice and religious life at the local level in Roman Asia.

One further point should be made regarding sacrifice before going on to outline some other cultic forms attested within group-life. As we saw in chapter two, it was customary for a communal meal or feast to follow sacrifices in which some of the foods offered to the gods would be consumed by the members of the association. In light of the evidence for sacrifices to the Sebostoi gods, we can see that imperial aspects were embedded within this facet of group-life as well. The banquets of associations were the most common small-group contexts where a person living and working in Ephesos, Pergamon or Thyatira would encounter on a regular basis sacrificial food that had been offered to the gods (τὰ ἱερὰ ἱεραταί), including the imperial gods. This observation will become particularly relevant when, in chapter seven, we consider specific Christian leaders’ accusations against other Christians in the cities of Asia, precisely concerning the issue of eating food offered to idols (τὰ εἴδωλοι θυταί).

There was a range of other possibilities in the ritual practices of associations, some of which we can discuss in connection with mysteries in honour of the imperial gods (cf. Robert 1960c:321-24; Pleket 1965, Price 1984:190-91, Harland 1996:328-33, Herrmann 1996:340-41). These imperial mysteries deserve particular attention since scholars such as Nock and Nilsson are especially concerned with downplaying their significance in order to argue that imperial cults were not genuinely religious.

A few paragraphs of background will be useful before looking at the internal imperial mysteries of associations. Sometimes mysteries—like some of those associated
with other gods—could be performed within civic or provincial cult contexts (cf. *IG XII/2 205* [mysteries for Tiberius at Mytilene on Lesbos]). For instance, there were mysteries in connection with cults of Antinoos, the “beloved” teenage companion of Hadrian, at various locations in the empire (cf. Robert 1980:132-38; Lambert 1984).

Antinoos apparently died of accidental drowning in the Nile in 130 CE. There were various interpretations of this incident among ancient historians, from those who suggested that the act was a voluntary ritual sacrifice on Antinoos’ part to those who interpreted this as suicide (see Cassius Dio 69.2.2-3; Lambert 1984:128-42). Hadrian was devastated by the loss of his “beloved,” who was subsequently granted cultic honours as a god in several contexts. The “Hadrianic association” (probably performers) honoured Antinoos as “the new god Hermes” (*IG XIV 978a*), for instance, and a hymn found at Kurion on Cyprus praises Antinoos as Adonis (Lebek 1973). Mysteries for Antinoos are attested at various places throughout the empire. Pausanias refers to a shrine for Antinoos at Mantinea in Greece, where inscriptions also attest to a cult for “god Antinoos” (Pausanias, 8.9.7-8; *IG V.2 312, 281*). The cult involved various celebrations, sacrifices and games, as well as mystic rites of initiation (*τελετή*), and Pausanias mentions that similar rituals were practiced elsewhere. This is something confirmed by Origen’s reference to rituals, including mysteries, which continued to be practiced in honour of Antinoos at the city named after him, Antinoopolis in Egypt (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.36). Quite well-known is the association (*collegium*) devoted to both Diana and Antinoos at Lanuvium in Italy, which met in the temple of Antinoos to engage in banquets and religious activities, though there is no explicit mention of mysteries in this case (*CIL XIV 2112; 136 CE*). Finally, we have epigraphical evidence from Antinoos’ home town of Bithynian Claudiopolis, where a votive offering for the “new god, Antinoos” has been discovered, and where a chief-initiate appears to have led mysteries in this god’s honour, perhaps involving a continuing association of initiates (*IKlaudiop 7* [bronze medallion
Comparable mysteries were practiced in honour of other imperial gods in some of the civic and provincial cults of Asia Minor as well. In the inscriptions of Asia, Bithynia and Galatia, for example, we come across functionaries of both civic and provincial cults called sebastophants, that is, revealers of the Sebustoi in imperial mysteries; this is a functionary that we also find in non-official cults or mysteries as well, as I discuss further below. Evidence of this kind from civic and provincial cults shows how, in some regards, associations that engaged in imperial mysteries also reflected the polis context. Through participating in similar practices in a small-group setting the members of an association could feel a sense of belonging not only within the group, but also within this broader civic or imperial framework. But to say that associations’ practices were, in part, a reflection of their surroundings is not to undermine the significance of these rituals for participants in the group-setting.

Further background information, which will provide a useful transition to our discussion of imperial mysteries within associations, comes from Egyptian papyrological evidence. One papyrus fragment from Antinoopolis, perhaps from a novel, makes reference to royal mysteries in Egypt from an earlier period: “Triptolemus..., not for you have I now performed initiation; neither Kore abducted did I see nor Demeter in her grief, but kings in their victory.” (PAntinoopolis I 18; late-II CE; trans. by Burkert 1993:269; cf. Nilsson 1960 [1957]). Reference to royal mysteries, this time in connection with Dionysiac mysteries, also appears in an honorary poem for the king by Euphronios, which refers to celebrants in the mysteries of “new Dionysos,” that is, Ptolemy IV (Burkert

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81 For sebastophants in Asia see: IGR IV 522 (Dorylaion); IGR IV 643 (Akmonia), IEph 2037, 2061, 2063 (early-II CE); IsardBR 62 (an association honours a sebastophant and hierophant of the mysteries); IGR IV 1410 (Smyrna). In Bithynia and Galatia sebastophants were often officials in the provincial imperial cult: IPrusiatHyp 17, 46, 47 (Bithynia); IGR III 22 (Kios, Bithynia); CCCA I 59-60 (Pessinos, Galatia); IGR III 162, 173, 194, 204 (Ankyra, Galatia).
J. Tondriau (1946) traces the history of a continuing connection between Dionysiac mysteries and the royal court, including evidence for a *thiasos* within the court during the reigns of Ptolemy IV Philopater (221-203 BCE), Ptolemy XII Auletes (80-51 BCE) and Cleopatra and Mark Antony (42-20 BCE; cf. Plutarch, *Antonius* 24 [Mark Antony as Dionysos at Ephesos]). It is quite possible that similar royal rituals and mysteries took place within the known associations devoted to Egyptian rulers, such as the associations of *Basilistai* at Thera (*IG* XII.3 443) and at Setis (*OGIS* 130; II BCE), and the *Eupatoristai* at Delos (*OGIS* 367). More importantly for our present purposes, though, is the fact that we have various references to mystic rites, akin to the traditional mysteries of Demeter, Kore, Dionysos and others, associated with Hellenistic royalty, foreshadowing the sorts of practices we encounter during the Roman era.

Another papyrus fragment found at Oxyrhynchos brings us into the Roman era and provides an interesting link between Egypt and Asia Minor in regard to imperial mysteries. The papyrus, which dates to the third century of our era, preserves part of a novel in which a character condemns what he sees as the imitation of Demeter's Eleusinian mysteries in the performance of mysteries to magnify "Caesar" in Egypt. The critic attributes the origins of such rites to Bithynia in Asia Minor: "It was not we who originally invented those rites, which is to our credit, but it was a Nikaian who was the first to institute them...let the rites be his, and let them be performed among his people alone...unless we wish to commit sacrilege against Caesar himself, as we should commit sacrilege against Demeter also, if we performed to her here the ritual used there; for she is unwilling to allow any rites of that sort..." (*POxy* 1612 [with trans.]; cf. Deubner 1919:8-11). The critic seems concerned with impiety against both Caesar and Demeter, but we know too little to assess precisely why he objects to these rituals. Nonetheless, this papyrus further demonstrates that mysteries were performed in honour of rulers or emperors in regions of the Greek East such as Egypt and Asia Minor, and that they could closely mirror the mysteries in honour of deities such as Demeter.
Now that we have some background to the practice of royal and imperial mysteries we can turn to the practices of associations in Asia. We have already discussed at some length the mysteries of the Demetriasts at Ephesos, who, similar to those critiqued by the character in the novel, integrated the emperors within mysteries of Demeter. Yet there were comparable practices within other groups as well, which suggest that imperial mysteries were not uncommon within associations, though probably not as widespread as were sacrificial rituals for the Sebostoi.

The imperial gods could be incorporated within the rituals and mysteries of Dionysiac associations. We find Hellenistic precedents for the importance of ruler cults for these groups in Asia Minor as well. In one inscription from Pergammon, for instance, "the bacchants of the god to whom you call 'euoi!' [i.e. Dionysos]" dedicate an altar "to King Eumenes, god, saviour and benefactor" (von Prout and Kolbe 1902:94-95, no.86; 197-159 BCE). The civic cult and mysteries of Dionysos Kathegemon, "the Leader," at Pergamon had a history of close connections with the royal Attalid family and ruler cult (cf. von Prout 1902; Ohlemutz 1968 [1940]:90-122; Burkert 1993:264-68). There is also evidence of close connections between the association of Dionysiac performers centred at Teos, the cult of Kathegemon at Pergamon, and Attalid rulers (see von Prout 1902; Allen 1983:145-58). In light of this context, it would not be far-fetched to suggest the continuing importance of similar cultic honours involving the Sebostoi alongside Dionysos within the association of cowherds in Roman Pergamon, though this is not directly attested (cf. von Prout 1902:182-86). We do know that at least one member of the hymn-singers, a group whose imperial rituals are clear, was also a member of the cowherds (L. Aninius Flaccus; IPergamon 374 A 11).

There are other indications of the integration of imperial gods within the mysteries of Dionysiac and other groups. According to a fragmentary inscription from the time of Commodus found at Ephesos, for instance, mysteries were performed there in honour of
Dionysos, Zeus Panhellenios and Hephaistos (*IEph* 1600 = *GIJM* 600 = Merkelbach 1979:155-56, no. 4). More importantly, it seems that those who led the mysteries--most likely the Dionysiac initiates we encounter in other inscriptions--also included the emperor, identified as “new Dionysos” (line 46), in the mysteries and sacrifices (cf. *IEph* 293 [Commodus as “new Dionysos”]). Hicks even suggests the possibility that the list of participants and priests along with names of deities may indicate that the festival involved the impersonation of the gods (including imperial personages) in some sort of dramatic play--similar to those of the Iobacchoi at Athens and the performers at Ankyra--though this is not certain (cf. Nilsson 1957:61).

Some other evidence is worth mentioning. Peter Herrmann points out the possibility that a quite heavily reconstructed inscription from Sardis, which refers to a sebastophant and hierophant of the mysteries (*σ[βαστοφάντην καὶ τῶν μυστήριων ἱεροφάντην*) in connection with an association, may well pertain to imperial mysteries within that group (Herrmann 1996:340-41 on *SardBR* 62; II CE). Although we do not find reference to the imperial gods in the evidence we have for groups devoted to Isis or Sarapis in Asia, it is noteworthy that the “company” (τάξις) of *Paianistai* at Rome (probably consisting of members originally from the Greek East) chose both Sarapis and the *Sebastoi* gods as its patrons, suggesting rituals for the imperial gods as a normal aspect of this group’s life (*IG* XIV 1084; 146 CE).

Unfortunately, due to the nature of the evidence, mysteries and other related practices of the Demetriasts, Dionysiac initiates and others are only mentioned in passing, telling us little of the actual details of what was involved. But one monument from Pergamon may help to clarify some of what was involved in the various internal cultic honours for the imperial gods, serving as an appropriate conclusion to this section.

Besides their occasional participation in singing within civic or provincial celebrations, the association of hymn-singers at Pergamon engaged in imperial mysteries and
sacrifices internally. One monument, which was dedicated to Hadrian, contains an inscription that outlines the provision of food and wine for the group’s calendar of meetings, including the celebrations of the birthday of Augustus and the mysteries which lasted several days (IPergamon 374, B lines 10, 16). The celebrations and mysteries included sacrifices to Augustus and Roma (D line 14) and accompanying banquets, as well as the use of sacrificial cakes, incense and, notably, lamps for the Sebastes, probably an image of Augustus (B line 18-19). Further on “images of the Sebasti” (C line 13) are mentioned again which, as Pleket also suggests, were a significant component of this group’s mysteries. Apparently images of Augustus or other imperial gods were revealed in the lamplight by the equivalent of the hierophant in the Eleusinian mysteries: that is, by a sebastophant, a functionary we have encountered several times already. This scenario concerning the nature of imperial mysteries also coincides with the case of a Dionysiac association (στείρος) in Thracia, for instance, where there were functionaries responsible for lamps and several sebastophants alongside other titles associated with Dionysiac mysteries (IGBulg 1517; Cillae, 241-44 CE). It is quite possible that the mysteries of the Demetriasts at Ephesos, or of other associations, included similar rituals to those of the hymn-singers.

Pleket (1965:346) concludes from his study of imperial mysteries that Nilsson’s use of the term “pseudo-mysteries” to refer to such rites is unwarranted since “the mysteries at Pergamum as far as their rites are concerned were true copies of the traditional mysteries; both include hymns, glorification..., showing of the image” (cf. Price 1984:191). Nilsson’s assertions that these imperial mysteries, like other cultic activities associated with the emperors, were merely “a public demonstration of loyalty” and were “really devoid of any mystical content” (Nilsson 1961:370 [trans. mine]), is based less
on evidence than on his own presuppositions and overall paradigm, discussed earlier, with regard to the nature of imperial cults generally.

**Insights from the social sciences:**
*The significance of imperial rituals within associations*

The traditional view which underestimates the importance of the emperors within the social-religious life of the populace corresponds to a particular theoretical trajectory in the modern study of religion, a trajectory that favours the personal feelings of the individual over communal actions or rituals (e.g. sacrifice) in defining what it accepts as meaningful religion. From this perspective corporate ceremonies or rituals are often merely outward or mechanical actions ("empty shells") with little significance to the essence of religion. As Mary Douglas (1973:19-39) points out, this modern tendency to devalue ritual as synonymous with meaningless and mechanical forms of religion has its roots, in part, in the anti-ritualist tradition of the Reformation. But this theoretical framework does not do justice to the function and meaning of ritual actions, including "political" rituals, by which I mean rituals closely associated with power relations within society.

A brief discussion of some of the insights of sociologists and anthropologists concerning the meaning and function of ritual will help to clarify the significance of imperial cults in antiquity, including rituals within associations. Here I use the term "ritual," as do many others in this field, to refer to "symbolic behaviour that is socially standardized and repetitive," as "action wrapped in a web of symbolism" (Kertzer 1988:9; cf. Douglas 1973:26-27; Geertz 1973:112-14).

At a time when many scholars of religion understood religion primarily in terms of the psychological realm, the emotional states or feelings of individuals, Emile Durkheim (1965 [1912]), although not lacking in some psychological explanations (e.g. effervescence), stressed the social functions of religion and of rituals specifically. Although we
need not accept Durkheim's identification of God with society itself, his insights into ritual in terms of its function or role in bringing together individuals into a collectivity, thereby strengthening group identity and the attachment of individuals to the group and society, are useful. These insights have had a considerable impact on subsequent developments in the study of religion and ritual in the social sciences.

Turning to more recent developments in the study of ritual, Clifford Geertz's influential studies of religion from an anthropological perspective provide useful insights here. Geertz is in many ways representative of a now common approach to the study of culture, and religion within it, which understands religion as a cultural system of symbols or inherited conceptions, analogous to language, which communicates meanings (Geertz 1973:87-141; cf. Vernant's similar view of Greek religion, cited in Zaidman and Pantel 1992:22-23). A symbol in this sense is "any object, act, event, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception—the conception is the symbol's meaning" (1973:91).

As a system of symbols, religion acts to coordinate and maintain both the ethos, or way of life, and the world view of a particular group, community or society: "Religious symbols formulate a basic congruence between a particular style of life and a specific (if, most often, implicit) metaphysic, and in so doing sustain each with the borrowed authority of the other" (1973:90).\(^3\)

According to Geertz, ritual plays a very important role in sustaining the interplay between social experience and world view, or notions of the overall cosmic framework. As concrete actions performed in the realm of lived reality, rituals reinforce the apparent truth of the world view: "For it is in ritual...that this conviction that religious conceptions are veridical and that religious directives are sound is somehow generated. It is in some

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83 The set of symbols we call religion, Geertz stresses, is both a model of and model for reality (1973:93). The notion that religion is a model of reality corresponds, in some respects, to functionalist approaches which look at religion in terms of how it reflects and functions within the social realities or structures of society. In other words, religion is in many ways shaped by social structures. But religion is also a model for reality. Its pattern of symbols helps to shape or change lived, social reality.
sort of ceremonial form...that the moods and motivations [ethos] which sacred symbols induce in men [and women] and the general conceptions of the order of existence [world view] which they formulate for men [and women] meet and reinforce one another. In a ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turn out to be the same world" (1973:112). Ritual, then, plays an important role in reinforcing a set of conceptions and symbols concerning the order of the cosmos and society. Another related point which should be made is that ritual actions can be concrete expressions or even performances of what people think of the world and their place within it. As Catherine Bell (1997:xi) puts it, “the fundamental efficacy of ritual activity lies in its ability to have people embody assumptions about their place in a larger order of things.”

Some of these insights have been applied in studies of rituals associated with power and politics, something worth discussing since our present focus is on imperial cults, which are often dismissed as meaningless political ceremonies. Social scientific and cross-cultural studies in this area show that even those public rites and ceremonies that we as moderns categorize as “political” can have meaningful and even cosmological significance (cf. Cannadine and Price 1987; Kertzer 1988). It is in Geertz’s cross-cultural study of royal rituals in Elizabethan England, 14th century Java, and 19th century Morrocco, for example, that he speaks of “the inherent sacredness of sovereign power” (Geertz 1977:151). He goes on to argue that it is royal ceremonies (rituals) “that mark the center as center and give what goes on there its aura of being not merely important, but in some odd fashion connected with the way the world is built. The gravity of high politics and the solemnity of high worship spring from liker impulses than might first appear” (1977:152-53 [italics mine]).

Other instructive generalizations come from Maurice Bloch’s anthropological case study of the royal bath ceremony in 19th century Madagascar, in which he proposes a dual
understanding of royal rituals: on the one hand, royal rituals function to legitimate authority by “making royal power an essential aspect of a cosmic social and emotional order”; and on the other, the effectiveness of this function is rooted in how royal rituals employ symbolism from the rituals of the everyday life of ordinary people (Bloch 1987, esp. pp. 294-97). As Bell (1997:135) states:

Political rituals display symbols and organize symbolic action in ways that attempt to demonstrate that the values and forms of social organization to which the ritual testifies are neither arbitrary nor temporary but follow naturally from the way the world is organized. For this reason, ritual has long been considered more effective than coercive force in securing people’s assent to a particular order.

Price’s study of imperial cult rituals in Roman Asia Minor specifically reflects insights similar to those I have just outlined. He rejects the conventional approach of many scholars of Greco-Roman religion who have focussed on the mental states of individuals. Instead, he approaches imperial rituals as a “way of conceptualizing the world,” as part of a “system whose structure defines the position of the emperor” (1984:7-11).84 This system involving imperial rituals, he suggests, was important for all levels of society and functioned in various ways:

Using their traditional symbolic system [inhabitants of Asia Minor] represented the emperor to themselves in the familiar terms of divine power. The imperial cult, like the cults of the traditional gods, created a relationship of power between subject and ruler. It also enhanced the dominance of local elites over the populace, of cities over other cities, and of Greek over indigenous cultures. That is, the cult was a major part of the web of power that formed the fabric of society (1984:248).

The broadly-based nature of Price’s insightful analysis of imperial cults did not allow him to focus attention on the significance of rituals within small-group settings or associations, however.

In light of recent studies of the nature, function and meaning of ritual, we can better understand imperial rituals within associations. Contrary to what Poland and others

84 As I discussed earlier, I do not agree with Price’s specific understanding of the position of the emperor as located somewhere between humans and the divine.
suggest, we need to realize that the imperial gods were an important and integrated com-
ponent within the self-understanding or identity of many associations, groups which reflect
various social strata of society. The performance of sacrifice, mysteries or other rituals
for emperors in the group-setting was not simply an outward and meaningless statement of
political loyalty, but rather a symbolic expression of a world view held in common by
those participating. This world view encompassed interconnected social, religious and
political dimensions. Within this cosmic framework or conception of reality the Sebastoi
were placed at the height of power alongside other gods in a realm separate from, though
in interaction with, humans and human groups. Concrete ritual actions not only expressed
this conception of reality but also reinforced the participants' sense that this conception
corresponded to the way things actually were in real life.

As we have observed, imperial rituals were closely bound up in and reflect the
system of symbols associated with cults for the gods more generally. As Bloch's insights
also suggest, this close link between symbols within imperial rituals and those of the
everyday life of persons living within cities in Roman Asia suggests the meaningfulness of
both for the participants; this helps to explain the effectiveness of the former for legiti-
mating the existing structures of power or authority. Yet it is important to stress the
grass-roots or spontaneous nature of these honours and ritual actions; they served to legiti-
mate the authority and ideology of Roman rule within a framework not incompatible with
many aspects of the developing ideology or world view of the polis and its inhabitants (cf.
chap. 3). It seems that there was not always a need for Roman authorities to systemati-
cally propagate or enforce an ideology which legitimated their position of power within
the Greek East; they simply had to take advantage of and encourage aspects of a develop-
ing ideological or symbolic framework that already existed.

Rituals within associations functioned and expressed cultural meaning in a variety
of ways. The understanding of the cosmos--encompassing the emperors--which was
expressed in ritual strengthened the sense of belonging within the group. Yet it simultaneously made a statement regarding the place of that group or community--its sense of belonging--within the societal and cosmic order of things. It said something of how the members of such a group regarded their relation to the most important figures of power in the Greco-Roman world. The group played a part--an important one in its own view, and perhaps in the view of others in the civic context--in the overall maintenance of fitting relations within the webs of connections that linked individuals (elites and non-elites), groups, civic or provincial communities, imperial officials, and the gods. In doing so, an association was also reflecting, often unconsciously, many features of cultural life in the *polis* context.

**Conclusion**

Overall, the evidence from Asia suggests that cultic honours for the imperial gods, which paralleled the sacrifices, mysteries and other rituals directed at traditional deities, were a significant component within numerous associations. These rituals expressed and reinforced the world views of the populace from various social strata of society in Roman Asia. There is no reason evident in the inscriptions themselves to suggest that these rituals were any less meaningful, mystic or religious than those connected with worship of the traditional gods in that context. Furthermore, insights regarding the function and meaning of ritual should steer us even further away from many of the common assumptions held by scholars of imperial cults in the past.

Together with external relations and monumental honours, which I discuss next, cultic honours were one means by which such groups engaged in what was considered by their contemporaries as fitting relations with those at the pinnacle of the networks and
hierarchies of society and the cosmos. The imperial-related external relations and internal activities of these groups tell of their tendency towards integration within society and evince one of several factors involved in their finding a home within the *polis*.
Introduction

When Trajan received a letter from Pliny, then governor of Bithynia and Pontus, requesting that an association (collegium) be formed to fight fires at Nikomedia, the emperor cautioned that “we must remember that it is societies like these which have been responsible for the political disturbances in your province, particularly its towns. If people assemble for a common purpose, whatever name we give them and for whatever reason, they soon turn into a political club (hetaerae)” (Epistulae 10.34 [LCL]). The impression one might get from reading this passage in Pliny’s correspondence, Livy’s account of the senate’s suppression of Dionysiac associations in republican Rome (written in the Augustan era), or most of modern scholarship, for that matter, is that there was a strong suspicion among the elites regarding associations, which often led to strict controlling action, and that the reality of relations between such groups and imperial officials in the day-to-day life of a Roman province like Asia would reflect this. One would not expect, in light of such views, that Roman officials like Pliny or other members of the civic and imperial elites would want anything to do with such apparently subversive groups, let alone maintaining connections with or acting on behalf of, say, a Dionysiac association at Pergamon or a lower-class guild of clothing dyers at Thyatira. Yet this impression is quite misleading.

When we turn from the scant literary references regarding elite views of these groups to look at the actual ongoing relations which could exist between the elites--Roman officials and governors included--and associations of various kinds in Roman Asia, a very different picture emerges. This picture involves a fair degree of positive relations and beneficent behaviour which scholars have not sufficiently recognized in the past. Associations and the social spectrum of inhabitants who belonged to them were very much
involved in the webs of relations which characterized civic life and linked the *polis* to empire. In many respects, we can speak of the overall integration of many associations within society rather than an ongoing opposition to it.

The involvement of associations in imperial aspects of the honorific system further attests to some of the ways in which these groups cemented their relationship with the *polis*, identifying with its interests. Attention to the significance of connections between associations and the elites in social networks, using insights from the social sciences, will help us to better understand the place of these groups within society and its social structures. Furthermore, participation in monumental honours for the emperors or imperial family specifically also communicates something about how such groups understood and expressed their own conception of where they fit within society and the cosmos.

I begin with a brief outline of some important insights from the social sciences regarding social network analysis which will be of relevance throughout the chapter. I then present two specific case studies, one from above, focussing on a prominent family of Asia Minor, and the other from below, looking at similar connections within networks from the perspective of a guild dyers at Thyatira. This prepares the way for a more topical discussion of the range of associations’ relations with those who assumed imperial-related positions both locally and provincially. I then focus on monumental honours for the emperors or imperial family and the symbolic significance of monumentalizing in the Greco-Roman world. Finally, I conclude by putting into perspective the often over-emphasized evidence for the negative intervention of Roman officials in association-life.

*Insights from the social sciences: Social network analysis*

The *metaphorical* use of “networks” to speak of the webs of social relations which exist among individuals and groups within a social system or society is a common one.

Yet since the mid-1950s social scientists have come to use the term “social network” as an
analytical concept or tool for studying specific phenomena within society (cf. Mitchell
1969, 1973, 1974; Whitten and Wolfe 1973; Boissevain and Mitchell 1973; Boissevain
1974; Price 1981; Wellman 1983; Wasserman and Faust 1994). The social anthropologist
J. Clyde Mitchell (1969:2) defines the social network “as a specific set of linkages among
a defined set of persons [or groups], with the additional property that the characteristics of
these linkages as a whole may be used to interpret the social behaviour of the persons [or
groups] involved.” Several insights of the social sciences regarding the patterns of ties
which make up a social network serve as helpful exploratory tools for finding what might
otherwise remain unnoticed. Recent work by scholars such as L. Michael White (1992a-
b), John K. Chow (1992) and Harold Remus (1996) suggest the value in employing such
tools in the study of antiquity and early Christianity. Moreover, these insights may help
us to better understand the nature and significance of the interactions between associations
and benefactors within the social structures of the polis and empire, providing us with a
firm basis upon which to establish the place of these groups within society.

Mitchell identifies two main dimensions to the analysis of social networks, the latter
being more important for the present study. First, there are the morphological dimen-
sions which pertain to the overall shape of the web of ties within a particular social
network, something which is very difficult to assess owing to the fragmentary nature of
ancient evidence. Second, there are interactional dimensions which pertain to the nature
of the links themselves; these are “crucial in understanding the social behaviour” (Mitchell
1969:20). Among the interactional dimensions are: content, pertaining to the purpose for
which a particular link has come into being, be it economic assistance, kinship, religious
or occupational purposes; directedness, regarding the direction of the flow of interaction,
be it reciprocal or otherwise; durability, relating to whether the ties are temporary or
ongoing; and, intensity, regarding the “degree to which individuals are prepared to honour
obligations, or feel free to exercise the rights implied in their link to some other person”
(Mitchell 1969:27). All of these dimensions play a role in shaping the social behaviours and interactions of the actors.

The sociologist Barry Wellman (1983) discusses several principles—evident in the work of many network analysts—which are of importance to the following discussion of associations. First, ties in a social network are often asymmetrically reciprocal, involving the exchange of resources which may be material or intangible (e.g. honour, being liked). Thus although the members of a bakers’ guild differ greatly in status from the wealthy civic or imperial official, relations between the two involve an exchange of resources: money and the prestige of links with a member of the elites for the association, and both honour and (non-financial) forms of support, bringing advantage in competition with other members of the elites, for the official.

Second, ties link network members indirectly as well as directly; that is, links within a network should be understood within the context of larger network structures. Connections between an association and a Roman proconsul or imperial cult high-priest, for example, involve a link between the local social networks (in which the association is a clear participant) and larger networks that link the polis to province and empire. Third, links connect clusters of relations as well as individuals. The link of an individual member of an association with someone outside the group, a member of the local elites, for example, links other members of the association (a cluster of relations that makes a social network) to that same member of the elites, who is also part of a cluster of relations within other, perhaps broader, social networks.

Finally, networks structure collaboration and competition to secure scarce resources (whether material or otherwise). This principle is particularly apt for our present discussion: associations themselves are groups based, in part, on particular spheres of social network connections (see chap. 1), allowing collaboration among members to secure resources, such as benefaction from the elites. On the other hand, associations may
compete with one another for access to the limited resource of benefactors within broader social networks. Correspondingly, the wealthy elites may compete with one another for the prestige and honour, as well as non-financial forms of support, which accompanied patronage of various groups and institutions in the civic context. We will begin to see how these various characteristics of networks worked themselves out in the reality of association-life presently.

Two case studies: Views from above and below

Riet van Bremen’s recent study of women in Asia Minor stresses the importance of the family context for understanding many facets of civic life, including elite behaviour: “to fulfill all one’s civic duties loyally and, if possible, splendidly, and to be seen to do so from generation to generation, was one of the crucially important ideologies that shaped the self-image of Greek civic elites” (van Bremen 1996:46). Family traditions of beneficent excellence, whether to the polis or its constituent groups, reflect a competitive ethos which shaped relations between elite families and influenced behaviour among members of particular families from one generation to the next. Associations could be among the beneficiaries of such family traditions, maintaining important links with the provincial imperial elites.

The case of a certain Julian family of Asia Minor is illustrative. These were descendents of Galatian and Attalid royalty who entered into imperial service as equestrians and then senators as early as the late-first century. Most of the family tree connections outlined in figure 13 are certain, a few are probable. Members of this fam-

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85 For the basis of this partial family tree see especially, IGR III 173-75 (= AnkyraBosch 105, 156-57), Halfmann 1979 (passim) and White 1998:366-371. C. Julius Severus at Ankyra is known to be an ανεψιός (often meaning cousin) of C.A.A. Julius Quadratus of Pergamon, and C. Julius Severus’ brother was definitely a man named Julius Amytianus (IGR III 173 = OGIS 544). Follet (1976:133) convincingly argues for the probability that this is the same Julius Amytianus that we find at Tralles (below), if not a relative in some other way. Scholars are in general agreement that Julia Severa is most likely a relative of C. Julius Severus of Ankyra, and therefore of the others, though we lack an inscription that states it explicitly. The Attalid and Galatian royal ancestry includes Attalos II, Deiotaros, and Amyntas (IGR III 173). On the methods and nature of prosopography see, for instance, Birley 1953; Boer 1969; Carney 1973; Graham 1974.
ily habitually included associations as recipients of their benefactions. Julia Severa was a prominent figure in Akmoneia in the mid-first century, acting as director of contests (ἄγγωνθέτης) and high-priestess in the local temple of the “Sebastoi gods”. She was a benefactor not only to the local elders’ organization (γερουσία) but also to the group of Jews, for whom she supplied a meeting-place (MAMA VI 263, 264; PIR² I 701/SOTIR 5a; also see fig. 16). A generation or so later, several others who may have been freedmen associated with Severa’s family renovated the building by decorating the ceiling and walls and adding shutters to the windows. I shall have much more to say about the participation of Jewish groups in such facets of civic life in chapter seven.

Severa’s relative, C. Antius Aulus Julius Quadratus, was a prominent Pergamene and senator who assumed the consulate in 94 and 105 CE. He held numerous provincial offices in the Greek East, including legate in Asia, Bithynia-Pontus, Lycia-Pamphylia and Syria, and proconsul of Asia in 109-110 CE (PIR² I 507/SOTIR 17). Quadratus’ mother, Julia Tyche, was also a prominent figure at Pergamon, being both “queen” of the precincts of goddess Roma and priestess of Demeter (Ippel 1912:298-301, no. 24). It is worth mentioning that Quadratus was a member in the elite-association of Arval Brethren at Rome from about 72 CE. Numerous cities honoured him for his services and benefactions including Laodikeia in Syria, Ephesos in Asia, Side in Pamphylia and, of course, his home town of Pergamon (IEph 614, 1538; ISide 57; IPergamon 436-51). But he was also the benefactor of local associations at home including the synod of young men (νέου) and, on more than one occasion, the Dionysiac dancing cowherds (IPergamon 440; Conze and Schuchhardt 1899:179-80, nos. 31-32; also see fig. 16). The cowherds (whom I discussed previously) came into contact with him directly when he was priest of Dionysos Kathegemon. Another relative, Julius Amyntianus, probably Quadratus’ cousin, was a member in the Panhellenion institution of Athens, but also the priest of Isis and Sarapis at
Tralles for a time, for which the initiates of these Greco-Egyptian deities honoured him with a monument (ITrall 86; post-131 CE; see PIR² I 147; Follet 1976:133).

Considering some of the interactional dimensions of these links in social networks between members of this family and associations of various kinds can help us to better understand the nature of such connections. First of all, the content or purposes of all these instances of interaction—"the meanings which the persons in the network attribute to their relationships" (Mitchell 1969:20)—are similar, though not necessarily identical. Furthermore, the directedness of all links are reciprocal, though certainly not equal. Both Julia Severa and the Jews at Akmoneia, for instance, would clearly understand the link in terms of a benefactor-beneficiary relationship: the exchange of tangible financial aid (donation of a meeting-place) in return for the far less tangible, though extremely valuable, return of honours.

The purposes of the links between both Quadratus and Amyntianus on the one hand and associations at Pergamon and Tralles on the other likewise pertain to benefaction and honours, but there is a religious element to the content of these links. Both men are priests of the deities to whom the associations are devoted, and this would have been a key factor in ensuring benefaction in the first place. The service of these men as priests—thereby bringing about fitting honours for the gods in question—would on its own warrant reciprocation from the associations, so the content of the link is not limited to a financial component.

Owing to the partial nature of inscriptive evidence, it is difficult to assess the durability of links between a certain person and a given association. Though if Quadratus' relations with the cowherds is any indication, there was often potential for ongoing links over time. In such cases, the social pressures on both the elites to make further benefactions and on the association to respond with appropriate honours (i.e. the intensity of the link) would be quite considerable, influencing the behaviours of all the participants.
involved. Failure of an association to respond to a benefaction with clearly visible honours in return would be disastrous in its hopes of maintaining links for financial or other reasons with this or any other wealthy person. An element of competition among associations, groups and institutions in securing the benefaction of the elites helped to maintain this asymmetrically reciprocal system of honours. From this elite family's perspective, such links with local associations were part of a larger set of connections with various institutions, groups and individuals within the context of polis and province. These helped to ensure the family reputation of beneficence in competition with other elites, securing family-members' high position and degree of honour within Asian society.

What happens to be missing from the realia which have survived regarding this Julian family is relations with occupational associations. There is plenty of evidence that guilds also maintained similar ongoing links with members of prominent families. The case of the guild of dyers at Thyatira provides us with the view from below at a particular locality, revealing the ongoing interactions which helped to cement a particular group's position within the networks which linked polis to province and empire.

We get momentary glimpses of these ongoing links at several points in the group's history. This history can be partially reconstructed from ten extant inscriptions (many pertaining to the same guild), five of which involve imperial connections (TAM V 935, 945, 965, 972, 978, 980, 989, 991, 1029, 1081). Figure 14 provides an illustration of the various connections that existed between the dyers and others over the span of about two centuries. Around the year 50 CE the dyers set up an honorary monument for Claudia Ammion, a priestess of the Sebastoi (probably a civic cult) and high-priestess of the polis who had also been director of contests "in a brilliant and extravagant manner with purity and modesty" (TAM V 972; see Buckler 1913:299-300 [on her priesthoods]). Claudia belonged to a wealthy family in Thyatira; her brother, Andronikos, was a civic president (πρυτανεύς) and priest of Roma (see the family tree in fig. 15). Her kinsman, C. Julius
Lepidus (probably a cousin once removed) was a high-priest in the provincial imperial cult like his father (see ISardBR 8.99), and he had been a benefactor of an athletic club which met in the third gymnasium a couple of decades earlier (TAM V 968; c. 25 CE).86 Claudia’s husband, T. Claudius Antyllos, was honoured by another gymnastic group, the “partners” which met in the same gymnasium; he had supplied them with oil (TAM V 975; c. 50 CE).

Around the turn of the century in Thyatira we find the dyers honouring T. Claudius Sokrates, the founder of several civic building projects and director of contests. He had held a prestigious position as high-priest of Asia in the provincial imperial temple at Pergamon (TAM V 978; before 113 CE). The dyers were by no means the only occupational association at the time seeking the support of such imperial-affiliated citizens: at about the same time the leather-cutters were honouring another man, T. Flavius Alexandros, the curator of the association (conventus) of Romans and Thyatira’s ambassador to Rome (TAM V 1002).

Connections with local associations continued in the Sokrates family. The guild of dyers also honoured his son Sakerdotianos, a high-priest of the Sebastoi who had displayed “love of honour since he was a boy” towards the polis, conducting himself “in accordance with his ancestors’ love of glory” (TAM V 980; c. 120-30 CE; cf. TAM V 979 [also priest of Dionysos Kathegemon]). Yet the dyers’ allegiance was not limited to a particular family, for at about the same time the guild joined with civic institutions of Thyatira in honouring Makedonos, the police-chief (eipouarxos) and market-overseer (ágoranómoç; TAM V 989). We find the dyers honouring other persons in prominent civic positions of Thyatira in the following decades, including two that are also members

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86 A few generations later, a descendant of this man, T. Julius Lepidus, also a high-priest of Asia, was honoured by the people of Sardis for various benefactions, including his donation of a structure for the merchants in the slave-market (see BE [1997] 568-69, no. 516). The same man was honoured by the organization of youths (ephebes), whose inscription mentions that he was also secretary of the provincial assembly of Asia (ISardBR 46; c. 96 CE).
or leaders of the guild (cf. *TAM* V 945 [time of Septimius Severus], 965 [c. 160-70 CE], 991).

We get a final glimpse of imperial connections when about 213 CE the dyers honour T. Antonius Claudius Alfenus Arignotus, a military commander of the equestrian order who reached the office of procurator (*TAM* V 935; *PIR*² A 821). He had been prefect and then tribune of several cohorts in his career, taking him to numerous areas of the empire including Alexandria, Trajanopolis in Cilicia and Kyzikos, where he had also served as a temple-warden. Arignotus had also been priest of Thyatira’s patron deity, Apollo Tyrimnos, not to mention temple-warden of the *Sebustos*. The inscription is sure to point out that his father and grandfather were high-priests of Asia in the provincial imperial cult.

As with the links between members of the Julian family and associations, the *content* of the connections between the dyers and various members of elites in imperial-related positions pertains primarily to benefactor-beneficiary (or patron-client) relations, and it is reciprocal in *directedness*. As an ongoing group formed from occupational social network connections, the dyers were able to secure access to limited resources of financial assistance from the elites, furthering their own interests in competition with other associations, groups and individuals within Thyatira. Thus economic assistance and honours in return is once again a key purpose of a particular link. I will discuss some other purposes or tangible benefits that associations might gain from connections with imperial officials in the next section.

But something I have not yet emphasized enough are some of the less tangible or symbolic purposes of, or reasons for, such links from the perspective of a local association such as the dyers. An association’s maintenance of ongoing relations with the elites, some of whom also had important imperial ties, was not only the source of financial assistance, but also a means by which an association could increase its own feeling of importance.
within the *polis*. Associations set up an honorary monument or statue for a benefactor not only because such was required of them by the social conventions of benefaction, but also because advertising their own connections with highly respected individuals or families within the civic context was a way of claiming their place within society, something I return to further below.

Overall, then, these various links tell us something about how the dyers found a place for themselves within the networks and hierarchies of the *polis*. Since imperial aspects were embedded within civic life in Asia, imperial connections were a very important component in the external relations of associations, directly or indirectly connecting them with the social, religious and political structures of *polis*, province and empire. This point will become clearer as we consider the range of evidence for the interactions of other associations with imperial-related officials and, further on, with emperors.

*The range and forms of participation in networks*

The picture of associations interacting with persons in a variety of imperial-related positions, which is indicative of webs of relations maintaining the social structures and hierarchies of society, is not at all limited to the cases I have just outlined. There is a range of evidence for many associations (reflecting the social spectrum discussed in chapter one) interacting with the elites, from those who assumed high-priesthoods in civic or provincial imperial cults to those of the equestrian and senatorial orders. Figure 16 provides an illustration of the range of connections, discussed here, between associations and persons at various levels within the civic and provincial elites. Monumental honorary activities extended to the emperors and their families as well, as I show in the next section.

Associations could have connections with officials associated with imperial cult temples. Most cities and towns of Asia included local temples or shrines devoted to the
imperial family with accompanying priesthoods or other offices taken on by the wealthier families. These temples, such as the Sebasteion of Aphrodisias which I discussed in the previous chapter, were usually built under local initiative using funds donated by prominent families, and they were quite separate from those founded in connection with the provincial assembly of Asia. Associations could honour officials connected with these local cults, as the case of Julia Severa demonstrated.

There are further examples from elsewhere. In the first years of the common era, for instance, the civic institutions of Iassos joined together with both the age-groups of young men (νεόι) and elders (γερουσία) and the Roman businessmen to honour the priest of a local cult devoted to Agrippa Postumus (son of Augustus and Julia; Ilasos 90). Associations of Hermes-, Aphrodite- and Dionysos-worshippers on the island of Nisyros (south of Kos) crowned Gnomagoras, a civic magistrate and "priest of the Sebastoi in Nisyros" who had also made various benefactions to the polis and its inhabitants (IGR IV 1110; see fig. 16). There are similar connections attested with initiates at Tralles and a guild of linen-workers at Thyatira (ITrall 74; TAM V 933). But this practice was certainly not limited to the province of Asia as shown by inscriptions involving leather-workers at Termessos in Pamphylia, Roman businessmen at Isaura in Galatia and dyers at Sagalassos in Lycia (IGR III 114, 292, 360).

More prestigious than the local priesthoods in imperial cults were those organized and founded in connection with the provincial assembly of Asia. The earliest of these cults was dedicated to Augustus and Roma at Pergamon by 27 BCE, being founded on the initiative of the provincial communities with recognition from Rome, as was customary. By the end of the first century of the principate there were similar temples at Smyrna (founded under Tiberius) and Ephesos (founded under Domitian; cf. Dio Cassius 51.20.6; Tacitus, Annales 4.37, 3.66-69; Price 1984; Friesen 1993). We have encountered provincial celebrations associated with these cults in connection with hymn-singers in the previous chapter.
Once again, it was not uncommon for associations to maintain contacts with these provincial high-priests or -priestesses. The silversmiths at Ephesos, for example, honoured T. Claudius Aristion, who was a high-priest of the imperial cult in the time of Domitian, but also the secretary of the Ephesian people (IEph 425 + 636 [with corrections]; cf. PIR² C 788; Pliny, Epistulae 6.31). Similarly, at Pessinos (near the border of Galatia and Asia) we find a group of initiates in the mysteries of Cybele honouring on more than one occasion wealthy men who were high-priests of the Galatian assembly and sebastophants (revealers of the Sebastei in imperial mysteries), but also priests of either of Cybele or Attis (CCC I 59, 60; late-I CE; see fig. 16).

An inscription from Thyatira involving C. Julius Xenon is worthy of some discussion here. It reveals that a hero-cult had been founded in honour of Xenon after his death in view of his many contributions to Thyatira and the province during his life, and it seems that his time as high-priest in the provincial imperial cult at Pergamon was a key factor (cf. IEph 3334; Price 1984:49-50 [hero-cults and associations]). Putting Thyatira on the provincial and imperial map in such an exceptional manner made this man deserving of heroic honours after his passing. The association devoted to him, the Juliasts, set up a monument which clearly praised his roles as both benefactor and high-priest of Caesar Augustus and goddess Roma, stating that “he has done the greatest things for all Asia, being saviour, benefactor and founder in every way and father of the fatherland, first among the Hellenes” (TAM V 1098; early-I CE). Most often, however, associations maintained relations with those imperial-related officials who had not yet departed from the scene.

A monument from Akmoneia of the early-second century involving a high-priest serves as a fitting transition to a discussion of association’s contacts with those of the equestrian order. It reads as follows: “To good fortune. The guild of clothing-cleaners erected this monument for T. Flavius Montanus, son of Hiero of the tribe of Quirina,
prefect of the craftsmen, high-priest of Asia for the Asian assembly's temple in Ephesos, sebastophant (revealor of the *Sebastoi*), and director of contests for life" (Ramsay 1967 [1941]:33, correcting *IGR* IV 643; cf. *IEph* 2037, 2061, 2063; Kearsley 1988:43-46). As his prefecture suggests, Montanus was of the equestrian order and we also know that he belonged to a prominent family centred at Kibyra. Montanus' sister, Flavia Lycia, married into a family with a long history of high-priesthoods in the provincial imperial cult (see Kearsley 1988). Her father-in-law, T. Claudius Polemo, was a well-known rhetor and asiarch of the equestrian order, and another guild, the leather-workers at Kibyra, honoured this man in connection with a decree of the civic institutions (*IGR* IV 907; cf. *IGR* IV 883, 909; *PIR*² C 963).

Other associations in Asia, especially occupation-based groups, could maintain similar contacts with imperial officials of the equestrian order, including army officials, legates and procurators. We have already encountered links with several equestrian officials in connection with the dyers at Thyatira, but there are other cases as well. The guild of clothing-cleaners in first-century Temenothyrai, for instance, honoured as founder and friend of the homeland L. Egnatius Quartus, an equestrian military commander who had been prefect of a cohort and of wings, as well as tribune of a legion (*AE* [1977] 227-28, no. 802 = *SEG* 6 167; late-I CE). As assistants to the proconsul, the procurator (ἐξίτρωτος) of provincial Asia was an important official, and we find both the physicians at Ephesos (*IEph* 719; early-II CE) and the purple-dyers at Hierapolis (*IHierap* J 42 = *IGR* IV 816) honouring a procurator.

The connections of associations could even extend to the senatorial order, that extremely small segment of society which by far possessed the most power and influence. In the first years of the common era, for example, the people of Assos joined together with the association of Roman businessmen to honour Augustus' grandson, Gaius, who was also consul (*IAssos* 13; 1 BCE-4 CE). On several occasions neighbourhood-
associations at Pergamon set up an inscription for L. Cuspius Pactumeius Rufinus (\textit{PIR}^2 C 1637), a senator who was consul in 142 CE, priest of Zeus Olympios at Pergamon and also a member of the elite-association of Arval Brethren at Rome, as was Quadratus decades earlier (\textit{IPergamon} 424, 434; \textit{OGIS} 491). At Ephesos we find an association of businessmen honouring a praetor of the Roman people and legate of Caesar (\textit{IEph} 738; I CE) and another group of merchants joining with the civic institutions to honour a senator of the famous Vedius family (\textit{IEph} 3079; II CE; cf. \textit{IEph} 727-28, 3075). Both the tanners and a gymnastic organization at Thyatira honoured as benefactor of the homeland a man of consular rank, M. Gnaius Licinius Rufinus (\textit{TAM} V 986-87; \textit{PIR}^2 L 236; Robert 1948).

As we have already seen in the case of Quadratus and the Dionysiac cowherds, patronage connections could even extend to the highest and most influential Roman provincial official, the proconsul (\textit{ἀνωθοπατος}) of Asia, a position taken on only by senators who had reached the consulship. One inscription from Ephesos of the mid-first century reads as follows: "The merchants (\textit{ἐμπορος}) who are engaged in business in Ephesos set this up for their saviour and benefactor, the proconsul, Gaius Pompeius Longinus Gallus, son of Publius" (\textit{AE} [1968] 153, no. 485; cf. \textit{IEph} 800 [Gallus was consul in 49 CE; cf. Magie 1950:1421 n.72]). A few years earlier, the merchants of the slave-market at Ephesos had set up a similar monument for their patron, C. Sallustius Crispus Passienus, who was proconsul in 42-43 CE (\textit{IEph} 3025; \textit{PIR}^1 P 109; cf. \textit{SEG} 34 1094 [silversmiths at Ephesos honour the proconsul Valerius Festus]). In part 3 we shall see that some groups of Jews in Asia also maintained important contacts with imperial officials of the equestrian and senatorial orders, sometimes following usual custom among associations in setting up monuments in their honour.

Now that we have some idea of the range of evidence concerning the possibilities for connections between associations and Roman officials at various levels, a few more words on the significance and nature of the links are in order. Besides the symbolic sig-
nificance of monumental honours (on which I elaborate below) there were also other more concrete aspects to these relations within social networks. We have already seen the most basic content of many of these links, namely a patron-client or benefactor-beneficiary relationship involving the exchange of economic assistance for appropriate honours. Such reciprocal yet asymmetrical exchanges helped to ensure the maintenance of hierarchies within the social structures of society.

However, there is some evidence from Asia specifically and Asia Minor generally that gives us hints as to some of the other non-financial, though tangible, purposes or benefits of such links from the perspective of associations. These benefits help to explain why these connections existed, alongside other factors, of course. At the local level, for example, a guild’s connections with a market-overseer or another official responsible for the distribution of shops could have very tangible benefits: assignment of a shop in a preferable location (e.g. *IEph* 444-45, 2076-81; III CE; cf. Knibbe 1985).

Positive links with influential members of the elites could be a potential source of other forms of support, including legal and other assistance for an association (cf. van Nijf 1997:82-100). We know from several papyri of Egypt that associations or guilds might require a legal advocate for a variety of reasons: one case involves the fullers and dyers of Tebtunis hiring a lawyer to protest over-taxation by an official; and another involves the linen-merchants attempting to gain a higher price from the city of Oxyrhynchus for their provision of supplies for the making of vestments (*PTebt* I 287; 161-69 CE; *POxy* XII 1414; 270-75 CE).

There are several instances in Asia Minor which apparently involve an association honouring a prominent member of the elites who most likely did or potentially would act as such an advocate for the group, furthering its interests in legal or other contexts. Thus the coppersmiths at Nikaia in Bithynia honoured T. Flavius, asiarch, high-priest, property assessor, and “just advocate” (π[ρ]ονγαρον δικαίον; *INikaia* II.1 addend. 73*; I-II CE).
Similarly a neighbourhood association at Prusias set up a monument in the early second century for its benefactor and avenger or legal representative (ἐγίσκος) “because of everything he had done,” probably relating to his success in a legal case on the association’s behalf (IGR III 50; between 102-114 CE). On more than one occasion a guild of porters devoted to Demeter at Tarsos honoured a patron, one a Roman consul, who had evidently been their helpful advocate (σύνδεκος) in some matters (IGR III 883; SEG 27 947; II-III CE; cf. Robert 1949b and 1977:88).

The maintenance of positive relations with Roman officials possessing considerable power and influence, such as a proconsul, might also come in handy in furthering particular aims of an association. We have encountered the Ephesian Demeter-worshippers in the previous chapter, who repeatedly sought and gained recognition of their rites from Roman officials, and I discuss diplomatic practices of Asian Jews in chapter seven. A history of positive relations and even diplomatic ties with such officials would certainly help a group in attaining what they wanted in the future as well. It is fitting to conclude this section with another interesting inscription from Kyme which illustrates the potential non-financial, though tangible, content of links between officials and associations.

A few words of background to the inscription are in order before going on to see how the legal power and influence of the proconsul were solicited by a local Dionysiac association of Kyme (Pleket 1958:49-66, no. 57 = SEG 18 555 = Sherk 1969:313-320, no.61 = IKyme 17; cf. Atkinson 1960; Oliver 1963; Millar 1977:317-18). The wars that preceded the victory of Augustus at Actium and the heavy taxation levied by Brutus, Cassius and Antony were quite devastating economically to the cities of western Asia Minor (Magie 1950:418-40). One consequence of these circumstances was that sacred places and other properties in the cities were sometimes sold to individuals for their commercial value. It seems that as the circumstances in Asia stabilized after 31 BCE, partially by way of imperial aid, the Asian cities became aware of just how many sacred places or other
properties had passed into individual possession, as Robert K. Sherk suggests. In the hopes of restoring these properties to the ownership of the gods or cities in question, cities in Asia, perhaps collectively, registered a complaint and sought a ruling from the Roman authorities, likely the senate. The official response to these requests from below was a ruling in 27 BCE by Augustus and Marcus Agrippa, then consuls, to the effect that sacred objects and places were not to be sold or given to any individuals; furthermore, any such transactions that had taken place in the past were to be reversed by the governor’s restoring them to the possession of the god or city in question. A Greek translation of this document is preserved along with a proconsular letter in Latin ruling on a particular case.

This brings us to the situation at Kyme specifically, where one such sacred place, previously used by an association of worshippers (thiaseitai) of Dionysos (Liber Pater), had passed into the possession of a man named Lysias. The circumstances which led to this transaction, as H.W. Pleket (1958:56-57) argues, most likely involved the Dionysiac association’s seeking a loan from Lysias (cf. Atkinson 1960:250-51). Securing loans with immovable property, this time a temple, was common practice (cf. Strabo, 13.3.5, also regarding Kyme). Apparently the association failed to pay the loan on time and Lysias refused to accept late payment, retaining the temple.

Finally we come to the association’s interactions with the Roman proconsul of Asia as administrator of justice, which brought a decision in its favour. This provides an excellent example of some of the more tangible benefits that could come to an association by way of positive contacts with Roman officials in high places. Yet in this case we do not know for sure whether positive relations existed beforehand or whether honours for the official followed (but we can certainly imagine such). The association sent a member, Apollonides, as its ambassador to the proconsul in order to present the group’s request “to restore the sacred objects to the god, as Augustus Caesar has ordered, after having paid the price written on the temple of Liber Pater [i.e. Dionysos] by Lysias” (trans. by Pleket
Evidently, the association had heard of the official decision made by Augustus and Agrippa (probably within a year or two of its proclamation) and appealed to its provisions before the most powerful Roman official of the province.

L. Vinicius' favourable response in the case came in the form of a letter to the civic magistrates of Kyme, ordering that they look into the matter and, if the association's claims were correct, to ensure that Lysias received payment and handed over the sacred place into the possession of the god, Dionysos (see Pleket 1958:61-62 and Sherk 1969:319-20 on the identity of the proconsul, probably [L.] Vinicius, consul suffect in 33 BCE). The members of the association, but likely others in Kyme also, once again had access to the place where they met to honour the god. Not surprisingly, they (or the city itself) had both Augustus' order and the proconsul's letter engraved on a monument which was set up at the temple in question for all to see. They were more than willing to follow the suggestion of the proconsul by inscribing the following: "Restored by Imperator Caesar, Augustus, son of the deified Julius." This brings us to the emperors and imperial family.

Monumental honours for emperors and the imperial family

The connections of associations could extend—at least in the view of the groups themselves—to some of the most important beneficent figures of power within the empire and cosmos, the emperors and members of the imperial household. It was common convention for individuals, groups, institutions and cities to honour the emperors or imperial family by dedicating monuments, statues, altars and buildings to them within social networks at the civic level, and various types of associations in the cities of Asia took part in these honours. The evidence regarding associations that has survived for Asia includes dedications to specific emperors including Augustus (27 BCE-14 CE), Claudius (41-54 CE), Nero (54-68 CE), Vespasian (69-79 CE), Domitian (81-96 CE), Trajan (98-117 CE).
CE), Hadrian (117-138 CE), Antoninus Pius (138-61 CE), Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus (161-69 CE), Commodus (176-92 CE) and Caracalla (198-217 CE), but also dedications to the more generic category of the Sebastoi or Augusti (i.e. "revered ones"), something that I discussed more fully in connection with cultic honours in the previous chapter. Here I focus primarily on monumental honours and their significance for understanding the place of associations within society. I concentrate primarily on surviving evidence from the well-excavated site of Ephesos, making reference to similar material attested elsewhere in Asia which suggests that the associations of Ephesos were not an exception in regard to this facet of association-life.

Associations could be on the receiving end of benefactions that were dedicated to the emperors alongside other institutions and gods. In the mid-second century, a wealthy woman named Kominia Junia dedicated a statue of Isis to Artemis, the Ephesian polis, Antoninus Pius, and the workers in the fishery toll-office (IEph 1503 [138-61 CE]; cf. I Eph 586 [II CE]; IGR I 787 [196-98 CE; Perinthos in Thracia]). A few decades later in the city of Rome we find M. Ulpius Domesticus, a famous athlete and leader of an athletic association, erecting statues dedicated to Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius and to a society of Ephesian shippers and merchants (I GUR 26). Altars could also be dedicated to the emperors in connection with an association. The altar at Ephesos which was dedicated "to the Sebastoi gods and the initiates" by Sarapion and his family (IEph 1506) has its counterpart at Hierapolis, involving a "sacred thiasos" (AE [1984] 250, no. 855; cf. IGR IV 468 [Pergamon; c. 215 CE]; Ierythrai 132; mid-II CE).

87 Domesticus, a Roman citizen, could also boast of citizenship at Ephesos, Antinoopolis and Athens (IG V.1 669 [Sparta]); he was the high-priest and ambassador to the emperors for the athletic association devoted to Herakles (see I GUR 235-238; IEph 1089; cf. West 1990). The first two of these inscriptions (also see GC R E 86, 128), which Domesticus himself dedicated, refer to Hadrian's and Antoninus Pius' grant or reconfirmation of a place for the association to meet in Rome among other privileges. As William C. West points out, it seems that the original headquarters of the athletic association was in Asia, most likely at Ephesos (cf. IEph 1084, 1089, 1098).
Similar practices can be found outside the walls of the polis in the villages of the countryside. The village of Azoulenon, near Ephesos, honoured the “joyful-celebration association” (τὴν συμβίωσιν τῶν Εὐημερίων) by dedicating a structure to both the ancestral gods and the Sebastoi gods (IEph 3817; see Robert 1937:65-66). The devotees of Zeus Bennios in a village near Aizanoi dedicated their altar on behalf of emperor Trajan (IGR IV 603; see Drew-Bear and Naour 1990:1988-90), which brings me to more active group-involvement in such honorary activities.

Associations were not only among the recipients of benefactions dedicated to the emperors, they were also active initiators of monumental honours. The group (conventus) of Roman businessmen at Ephesos which set up two monuments (probably statues) for Claudius (IEph 409, 3019) was reflecting common practices among other associations of this type, as inscriptions from Assos (IAssos 19 [Livia, Augustus’ wife, as the “new Hera”]), Sebaste (IPhrygR 474, 511 [Domitian]), Akmoneia (MAMA VI 177 [Vespasian]), Apameia (MAMA VI 183) and Pergamon show (Conze and Schuchhardt 1899:173, no. 16 [time of Augustus]). But the practice was certainly not limited to these groups of Romans or Italians.

When the association of fishermen and fishmongers built the fishery toll-office near the harbour at Ephesos (mentioned above), they dedicated it to Nero, his mother, his wife, the Roman people and the Ephesian people (IEph 20; 54-59 CE; cf. IPergammon 394 [neighbourhood-association honours Nero]). The practice of dedicating buildings and meeting-places to the emperors is well-attested elsewhere, too. At Thyatira, a group of merchants dedicated their work-shops to the Sebastoi gods (TAM V 862), and the Nikomedian shippers in Bithynia dedicated their sanctuary and meeting-place to Vespasian (TAM IV 22; cf. ILydiaKP III 19, from Philadelphia, late-II CE).

Years later at Ephesos we find another association dedicating a monument both to its patron deity, Dionysos, and to Trajan (IEph 3329). Here the emperor himself is
referred to as a Dionysiac thiasos-member (θιάσωρης), an honorary member of the association, though it is doubtful whether the emperor was aware of this honour (cf. OGIS 735 [a royal official and his wife as honorary thiasotai at Thera]). Apparently this association liked to think that it had a particularly close connection with Trajan, whose comments to Pliny opened this chapter. Other inscriptions from Ephesos involving Dionysiac initiates honouring Hadrian and Commodus, for instance, likewise show the importance of monumental honours for the emperors, not to mention cultic ones (see chap. 4; IEph 275 [119 CE], 293).

A similar thing could be said of Dionysiac associations elsewhere. The synod of initiates of Dionysos Breiseus at Smyrna praisingly addressed Hadrian as "Olympios, saviour and founder" in one of its inscriptions (ISmyrna 622; c. 129-31 CE; cf. Radt 1989 [Pergamon]). This group is deserving of some more attention in connection with issues pertaining to more direct, diplomatic relations with the emperors.

The links implied in the monumental honours discussed thus far are primarily indirect. Often the association involved was far more aware of its "connections" than were the emperors named as recipients of the honours. This differs from what we found in the case of other Roman imperial officials and cultic functionaries, who were usually very much aware of the honours set up for them, often in return for very specific benefactions, services or actions of support. However, there were some occasions when imperial-related honours might be communicated to the emperor himself by way of the regular means of diplomacy, the sending of an embassy to the emperor who might then reply with a rescript or letter (cf. Millar 1977). Diplomatic practices similar to those of cities and leagues were more common among associations of athletes and performers,\footnote{Cf. Millar 1977:456-463. For example, the branch of the world-wide Dionysiac performers centred in Asia sent copies of their honorary inscription for T. Aelius Alkibiades to the emperor (IEph 22). An athletic association devoted to Herakles from Egypt sent embassies to Claudius on more than one occasion, first honouring him with a golden crown in connection with his British victory and then sending decrees regarding its participation in a festival in his honour (put on by the kings of both Pontus and Commagene; 40s CE). In both cases Claudius responded with letters granting special privileges, which Vespasian later reaffirmed when they once again sent an embassy; the association was sure to preserve copies of such momentous relations with...} which are...
not our present focus, but there were occasions when other associations, including Jewish
groups (see chap. 7), might engage in similar diplomatic conventions involving more
direct relations with emperors.

The synod of Dionysiac initiates at Smyrna which I mentioned above provides an
eexample of a group maintaining ongoing diplomatic ties with emperors. One inscription
preserves letters of response from both Marcus Aurelius and Antoninus Pius (ISmyrna 600
But the former letter involves the future emperor Marcus Aurelius, then consul for the
second time (c. 158 CE), responding to the initiates who had sent a copy of their honorary
decree by way of the proconsul, T. Statilius Maximus. Aurelius’ response to the decree,
which pertained to the association’s celebration at the birth of his son, acknowledges the
good-will of the initiates even though his son had since died. That these diplomatic con-
tacts continued when Aurelius was emperor with Lucius Verus is shown in a fragmentary
letter from these emperors to the same group around 161-63 CE, perhaps in response to
further honours (ISmyrna 601 = GCRE 168).

The few associations that maintained such direct diplomatic relations with the
emperors themselves were very sure to advertise these connections. Yet in many cases
associations honoured the emperors without expectation of such direct acknowledgement
by way of correspondence with the honoree. This might lead us to ask what exactly was
going on when associations set up a monument involving honours for the emperors or
imperial family?

emperors (GCRE 27-28, 37 = PLond 1178).
The symbolic significance of monumentalizing: Claiming a place within society and the cosmos

Acts of monumentalizing also had symbolic significance, which further demonstrates the importance of the emperors within the social and religious life of associations. Since Ramsay MacMullen’s article on the “epigraphic habit” in 1982, some scholars are turning their attention towards explaining the nature and significance of the epigraphic phenomenon and the visual messages of statues and other monuments for what they can tell us about society and the behaviour of actors within it, whether they be communities, groups, or individuals (cf. MacMullen 1982, 1986; Millar 1983; Meyer 1990; Woolf 1996; Smith 1998). A discussion of the purposes and meanings of monumentalizing will help to clarify the nature of associations’ relations with emperors, but also aspects of the honorary activities for other imperial officials and functionaries discussed earlier.

Greg Woolf’s (1996) recent work on “epigraphic culture” provides a useful starting point with respect to the significance of monumentalizing, though his theory regarding the social settings that led to the predominance of the epigraphic habit is problematic. Woolf looks at the uses and significance of monumental inscriptions, arguing that they can be viewed as statements regarding the place of individuals and groups within society. But he then attempts to link the popularity of monumentalizing with supposed widespread feelings of social dislocation and anxiety which coincided with the “rise of individualism,” depending on common scholarly assumptions which I have challenged in chapter three. Nevertheless, his observations on the meaning of acts of monumentalizing, seeing them as “claims about the world” (1996:27), are very insightful and applicable to situations involving associations.

According to Woolf (1996:29), “the primary function of monuments in the early Empire was as devices with which to assert the place of individuals [communities or other collectivities] within society.” Those who set up a monument were in a very concrete manner, literally set in stone, attempting to symbolically preserve a particular set of rela-
tions and connections within society and the cosmos for passers-by to observe: the visual and textual components of epigraphy "provided a device by which individuals [or groups] could write their public identities into history, by fixing in permanent form their achievements and their relations with gods, with men, with the Empire, and with the city" (1996:39). The location of the monument could also be an important factor: most desired for visibility would be the most frequented and prestigious structures, such as theatres, market-places and civic or provincial temples. Monumentalizing, then, was one way in which groups, such as associations, could express where they fit not only within society as we would understand it, but also within the broader cosmic framework, briefly outlined in chapter three, that existed within the world-view of persons living in that society.

Closely related to this is the sense of belonging within society and the cosmos which these assertions of place could provide for those involved in setting up an inscription, altar, statue or other monument. By participating in such honorary activities set in stone, MacMullen (1982:246) states, people "felt themselves members of a special civilization." But more importantly with regard to the cosmic framework, Mary Beard (1991:37) points out that writing in the form of monuments symbolically "played a central role in defining the nature of human relations with the divine, and indeed the nature of pagan deities themselves." An altar, building, or other inscribed monument could be a statement of one's "position in relation to a deity [or deities]" (1991:48). Such monumental writing in honour of the gods, Beard argues, was also an expression of membership within broader cultic contexts or religious communities.

In light of all this, we can begin to see the symbolic meaning of associations' honours for and connections with both the emperors and other imperial-connected individuals and families. First, a few words about some of the cosmological issues peculiar to the emperors. Among the honorary inscriptions of Asia, there were cases where an association's monumental dedication explicitly spoke of the emperors or imperial family in
terms of their position within the cosmos as the Sebastsoi gods. Monuments and dedications were among those forms of honours that ensured the proper maintenance of relations among persons at various levels within society, but also between humans and the realm of the gods, ensuring the security, protection, and well-being of the civic community and its constituent groups. By participating in this aspect of life, associations were making claims regarding their own role in the upkeep of fitting relations within the cosmos, contributing towards the well-being of the larger civic community in which they belonged. Yet such monuments for the Sebastsoi gods could also be an indirect assertion of belonging within broader cultic contexts, within imperial cults at both the civic and provincial levels. In this connection, the relations with imperial cult functionaries likewise tell of how some associations could express in a concrete way their feelings of belonging within these specific cultic contexts.

Monumental honours for the emperors also involved other more down-to-earth claims regarding an association's place within society. A monument erected by a group set in stone for all to see the group's connections, whether real or imagined, at a particular point in time, advertising that group's role within the nexus of relations that linked inhabitants to the polis and the polis to province and empire. In this sense, it did not matter whether or not a particular emperor was aware that a guild of merchants at Thyatira dedicated its building to his family or that the head of a Dionysiac association at Pergamon set up an altar in his honour. What was more important was the association's own feelings of importance within society, and the perceptions that others in the civic context might begin to have regarding that group's status or prestige within the polis.

We have already discussed the more literal links between associations and other imperial-related officials or functionaries along with the various non-symbolic characteristics of these links. Yet some similar points regarding the symbolic significance of monuments could be said in these cases, too. The dyers or Dionysiac cowherds, for
instance, literally maintained contacts with benefactors of the equestrian or senatorial order. But expressing these contacts in the form of a monument ensured that the prestige and social propriety implied by these momentous occasions would not be forgotten. It made a clear assertion regarding the association's active participation within the webs of social-political relations and hierarchies of the *polis* under Roman rule.

*Putting negative official intervention in perspective*

Talk of the integration of many associations within the structures of society in Roman Asia, no matter how important and neglected by scholars in the past, must not lead us to believe that society was free from social conflicts and civic disturbances, disturbances in which associations or guilds--reflecting the social spectrum of society--could occasionally become involved. By its very nature, epigraphical evidence often (though not always) tends to preserve for posterity the positive dimensions of social relations, so we need to remain aware of negative dimensions as well.

But there has been a tendency for scholars to give priority to literary or legal evidence, especially those few passages involving Roman officials' negative control of associations, while neglecting the sort of epigraphical evidence for association-life which I have discussed in this and the previous chapter.89 For this reason, the impression one might wrongly get from reading scholarship in this area is that conflicts, disturbances and imperial control were the be-all-and-end-all of association-life generally. Assumptions that Roman officials strictly controlled associations throughout the empire--that their relations with such groups were primarily, if not solely negative--can be found throughout scholarship unfamiliar with or uninterested in the ongoing positive relations I have just

89 The secondary literature on control of associations and legal questions is vast, and cannot be dealt with fully here. See, for example, Liebenam 1890; Waltzing 1895-1900; Kornemann 1901; Radin 1910; Carolsfeld 1969 (1933); Duff 1938; Cotter 1996. For a discussion of how legal questions have (often detrimentally) dominated the study of associations see Ausbüttel 1982:11-16.

This widespread characterization of associations in terms of conflict with society also finds expression among scholars of Christianity in Asia Minor. Paul J. Achtemeier, for instance, although correctly looking to associations for understanding the social context of Christianity, oversimplifies his portrait of associations in stating that they were a "constant problem to the governing authorities" and "were subject to official scrutiny" (Achtemeier 1996:25-26; cf. Renan 1869 [1866]:278-89; Reicke 1951; Balch 1981:65-80; Stanley 1996:120; contrast Judge 1960:43). Achtemeier, like other scholars, says little or nothing of evidence concerning positive dimensions of group-society relations.

Contrary to the assumptions of many scholars, however, disturbances involving associations which led to the intervention of Roman officials were occasional, pertaining to the particularities of time and place. They fell far short of comprehensive control or strict enforcement of legislation. When such disturbances involving associations did occur, they would usually be handled locally, which is in keeping with the character of Roman rule more generally. Rarely would Roman imperial officials in a well-pacified province need to become directly involved in negative relations with, or controlling actions against, local associations.

Moreover, occasional disturbances involving associations and imperial control must be viewed in light of the evidence I have outlined throughout this and the previous chapter concerning associations' positive participation in networks of benefaction and the general desire to secure a place within the polis and empire. Sporadic incidents requiring resolution were a natural outcome of living within an agonistic society (see chap. 3), and we should not speak of associations as anti-Roman or subversive sects because of their occasional involvement in such incidents. Nor would Jewish and Christian groups, as associations, at least, be automatically considered subversive or sectarian in this sense, as
is often wrongly assumed. The following discussion of incidents in Italy and Asia Minor will illustrate this point and further clarify the nature of Roman authorities’ negative relations with associations, concluding with the Pliny correspondence mentioned in the introduction.

a) Rome and Italy

Most of the evidence for the occasional control of associations (collegia) by Roman authorities relates to Rome and nearby regions of Italy. Even then, it pertains to broader concerns regarding the maintenance of public order or other political issues, not the ongoing legal control of associations per se by Roman officials. Earlier I mentioned Livy’s account of the infamous Bacchanalia affair of 186 BCE, which involved a senatorial decree (which has survived) forbidding the meetings of Dionysiac associations in Rome and the surrounding towns of Italy unless special permission was received (Livy 39.8-19; ILLRP 511). The scholarly literature on the passage is vast, and space does not permit a full discussion here (see North 1979; Rousselle 1982; Gruen 1990:34-78; Walsh 1996). Suffice it to say that various factors, other than the control of associations as such, seem to have been at play in leading the senate to take action in controlling these groups: among them the attempt to extend the political authority of the senate in Italy and issues regarding a foreign cult’s in-roads into the Roman aristocracy. Erich Gruen (whose reduction of the incident to the political need not be fully accepted) points out “how extraordinary and exceptional…the features of this episode [are] in Roman cultural and institutional history” (1990:39).

There is evidence for the political involvement of associations in the late-republican era. It is important to keep in mind the political background of many these earliest examples of Roman officials’ involvements with associations, as well as the motivations and biases of those who happen to report these involvements to us. The last
century of the republic was a particularly volatile age with regard to politics at Rome as various senators strove to secure political power over against others, and there were times when the support of collegia was solicited by various politicians. Thus when Cicero and C. Antonius narrowly beat Cataline in elections for consulship (64 BCE) the senate was sure to pass a decree abolishing “all guilds which appeared to conflict with public interest,” namely, any that supported Cataline and other political opponents of the new consuls (Asconius, In Pisonem 7; cf. Cicero, In Pisonem 9; Post reditum in Senatu 33).

Several years later, the tribune Clodius together with consuls of the time allowed or even encouraged the political use of collegia once again, probably because it was to their own advantage at the time (Cicero, In Pisonem 8-9; Pro Sestio 33-34). Cicero condemns this action by Clodius, equating the collegia in question with bands of brigands; but this contrasts strongly to Cicero’s own attitudes towards those collegia that happened to support him instead. Thus, in a speech after his return from exile, Cicero positively states that there “is no collegium in this city...that did not pass resolutions in the most generous terms supporting not only my restoration, but my dignity” (De Domu suo 74; cf. Quintus Cicero, Commentariolum Petitionis 8.29-30).

Similar motivations appear to underlie Julius Caesar’s dissolution of “all collegia except those of ancient foundation” while securing his power in 47-46 BCE (Suetonius, Iulius 42; cf. Josephus, Antiquitates 14.213-16). As Linderski argues, this action involved the dissolution of particular groups viewed as a threat to Caesar’s maintenance of power in Rome. It did not involve a law which henceforth ensured the strict control of associations throughout the empire, as de Robertis and others assume (Linderski 1995; cf. Yavetz 1983 [1979]:86, 94-95).

Evidently, associations could come into contact with Roman officials within the political arena at the capital, especially in the closing decades of the republic. But whether such involvement was considered subversive, requiring some negative interven-
tion, was in the eyes of the beholder and subject to the political climate of the time. In this case, as in others, we cannot say that most Roman officials were opposed to associations in general. Similar things could be said of the principate.

The actions of Octavian, soon to be Augustus, in the late 30s BCE are worth some discussion here. According to Suetonius, Octavian made special efforts to eliminate the many "anti-social practices that endangered public order" in Italy which were a "legacy of the civil wars," especially brigandage (Divus Augustus 32). Suetonius relates that gangs of brigands roamed the countryside and:

numerous leagues (factiones), too, were formed for the commission of crimes of every kind, assuming the title of some new association (titulo collegi novi). Therefore to put a stop to brigandage, he stationed guards of soldiers wherever it seemed advisable, inspected the workhouses, and disbanded all associations (collegia), except such as were of long standing and formed for legitimate purposes" (32.1-2 [LCL, with adaptations]).

Scholars who follow Waltzing interpret this passage as a reference to the institution of an actual law, the lex Julia of Augustus. This law, they assert, made it necessary for associations in Rome, Italy and even the provinces to gain official permission from the Roman senate in order to exist, and this continued to influence control of associations for the next two centuries (Waltzing 1895-1900:1.115-16; cf. La Piana 1927:239-45). The senatorial decree found in some inscriptions of Italy in the second century (cf. CIL XIV 2112 [c. 136 CE]), in this view, was simply a reiteration of a system of control over such groups that had been in effect since the time of Augustus, even in the provinces.

However, this interpretation rests on slim evidence and certainly reads far too much into the passage in Suetonius (cf. Radin 1910:91-94). The passage seems rather to indicate that Octavian, like others in the republican period, was concerned primarily with controlling brigandage and, particularly, so-called "associations" (collegia): they were, in fact, gangs of brigands with ties to local men of power, engaging in activities subversive to Octavian's attempts to establish stability in the vicinity of Rome at this turbulent time. A comparison with Appian's account of the same period further suggests that brigandage
is the main issue in this case (Appian, *Bella Civilia* 5.132; see Shaw 1984:33-34). There is nothing in the passages in Suetonius or Appian which implies that Octavian was initiating some comprehensive law which involved control of ordinary guilds and associations in Italy, let alone the empire, hence forward.

Another very specific disturbance that came to involve Roman authorities occurred during the principate of Nero, when a fight broke out between inhabitants from Nuceria and those of Pompeii during a gladiatorial show at Pompeii (Tacitus, *Annales* 14.17). Tacitus' account shows that some associations (collegia) played a key role in instigating the inter-city battle, which was clearly a manifestation, albeit violent, of the civic pride of those involved. The scene is depicted in a wall-painting from Pompeii, shown in figure 17, in which various sets of spectators are shown battling one another in and around the amphitheatre. A graffito engraved by a patriotic Pompeian in connection with this incident depicts a gladiator bearing the palm of victory with the caption: “Men of the Campania region, you were destroyed by us in the same victory with the Nucerians” (Tanzer 1939:72-74, fig. 38).

This violent incident, which was clearly out of the control of the civic authorities, was considerable enough to warrant a special investigation on Nero's instruction. According to Tacitus, the senate's investigation resulted in a ban against gladiator shows at Pompeii for ten years, the dissolution of the associations involved, and exile for the sponsor of the show and those who instigated the disorder. Once again, it is within the context of maintaining public order (as the Roman authorities understood it) that specific associations encountered such controlling action. In the main, associations in the cities of Italy, as elsewhere, would not face such negative relations on a day to day basis. Rather, negative intervention occurred only when associations were caught up in broader disorderly incidents or civic disturbances that were not adequately dealt with locally. Incidents like this one do not reflect consistently enforced control of associations as such by Roman authorities in Rome or Italy, let alone the provinces.
The legal sources assembled in the sixth-century collection called the *Digest* provide further evidence concerning the Roman authorities and associations, especially with regard to Italy. There are two main sections pertaining to *collegia* (3.4.1-10; 47.22.1-4). Although we cannot fully discuss the history of this legislation, it is important to make a few observations here, particularly concerning the nature and dates of the documents and the extent of their application (or lack thereof). One difficulty that should be noted at the outset is that it is not clear to what degree the laws collected in the time of Justinian (VI CE) reflect the actual application of laws controlling associations in earlier years.

Furthermore, even the documents and laws which have been preserved are somewhat ambiguous concerning Roman policy on associations, in some respects hinting at the need for a considerable degree of control and in others reflecting greater freedom of association. The much-cited passage attributed to Marcian, a jurist of the early-third century of our era, states the following:

By the decrees of the emperors, the governors of provinces are directed to forbid the organization of corporate associations, and not even to permit soldiers to form them in camps. The more indigent soldiers, however, are allowed to put their pay every month into a common fund, provided they assemble only once during that time, for fear that under a pretext of this kind they may organize an unlawful society, which the Divine (Septimius) Severus stated in a rescript should not be tolerated, not only at Rome, but also in Italy and the provinces (trans. by Scott 1973 [1932]).

Scholars often cite this passage as proof that there was a law controlling associations in Italy and the provinces, assuming that this reference to a source of the early-third century is indicative of the actual existence and enforcement of laws in earlier years, even as early as the time of Augustus (see the earlier discussion of the passage in Suetonius). At least two points suggest that this should not be interpreted in such a general manner: on the one hand, the primary concern is clearly with the army and, on the other, the time of Severus (193-211 CE), not the first or second centuries, is viewed as a turning point in state control of associations. The development of compulsory membership in the occupa-
tional guilds, for instance, began following the time of Severus (cf. Kornemann 1901:442-80; Radin 1910:134-35).

Furthermore, scholars who discuss this passage often neglect what immediately follows (cf. Cotter 1996:86-87): “To assemble for religious purposes is, however, not forbidden if, by doing so, no act is committed against the decree of the senate by which unlawful societies are prohibited.” It is not clear which decree is being referred to here, though it may be a reference to the senatorial decree which is cited in some inscriptions from Italy, such as that at Lanuvium (CIL XIV 2112; c. 136 CE). But even the association at Lanuvium which cites the decree clearly does not feel it needs to follow its prescriptions strictly: the group meets more often than once a month and for purposes other than just burial or cult. More importantly, this neglected passage from Digest suggests that the Roman policy towards associations with a religious character was relatively indifferent; they, too, alongside those organized for burial, were permitted to exist.

Other aspects of the documents in Digest further suggest some degree of freedom of association, suggesting that Roman policy tolerated the existence of such groups without interfering in their lives. One document attributed to Gaius (early-second century), for instance, cites the Greek law of Solon (VI BCE) as a precedent, assuming that associations exist and are “authorized to make whatever contracts they may desire with one another, provided they do nothing in violation of the public law” (47.22.4). Whether or not the decrees or precedents which did exist, such as those in the Digest, were actually employed is another question altogether. A discussion of Asia Minor will clarify the limited nature of imperial authorities’ intervention in association-life in the provinces.
b) The provinces of Asia Minor

Evidence for intervention of Roman officials in the association-life of the provinces was occasional, pertaining to the particularities of time and place and falling far short of comprehensive control (cf. Philo, In Flaccum 4-5 [Flaccus in Egypt]). When it comes to the province of Asia itself, we have absolutely no evidence of Roman officials dissolving such groups or applying laws regarding associations. Instead we have civic disturbances which illustrate quite well the occasional nature of the negative intervention of Roman officials in connection with associations.

The Acts account of a disturbance (ταρξιος) at Ephesus, whether a reminiscence of an actual historical event or not (and I would agree with scholars who suggest it is), vividly captures the nature of civic disturbances and how they were dealt with by civic or imperial authorities (Acts 19:21-41). Apparently in response to Paul’s preaching that gods made with hands were not gods at all, the prominent guild of silversmiths at Ephesos, which is well-attested in inscriptions, gathered together a crowd of craftsmen and others in defence of the city’s patron deity, chanting “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians” for hours in the theatre (cf. IEph 425, 547, 585, 586, 636, 2212, 2441; New-Docs IV 1 [silversmiths at Ephesos]). As with the involvement of associations in the disturbance at Pompeii under Nero, it is civic pride (defence of the polis’ patron deity) which played a key role in instigating the incident.

This incident did not invoke negative Roman intervention. Instead it was settled by the civic authorities, in this case the secretary (γραμματευς). But the secretary’s
speech to the crowd does warn of the potential involvement of Roman officials if the usual institutional procedures were not pursued to resolve disputes: "If... Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against any one, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls; let them bring charges against one another. But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly (ἐν τῇ ἐννόμῳ ἐκκλησίᾳ). For we are in danger of being charged with rioting (στάσεως) today, there being no cause that we can give to justify this commotion" (19:38-40). It was only when a disturbance reached such riotous levels and, even then, only when local, civic mechanisms failed to solve the problem, that there was potential for a Roman proconsul to intervene, provided that he was not busy elsewhere on the assize-circuit.

We do know of another occasion at Ephesos when the proconsul actually did come to intervene in the form of an edict: the disturbances (στάσεως) involving the bakers in the second century (IEph 215; cf. Buckler 1923:30-33; Libanius, Oratio 1.205-210 [bakers at Antioch, 382 CE]). Unlike the silversmiths’ riot, in this case the civic officials at Ephesos had been unable to deal with the disturbances caused by the bakers in the market-place, who were not producing the necessary bread for reasons we do not know (which should caution us in calling this a “strike” as Buckler does). As a result, control of the situation was turned over to the proconsul, apparently on the initiative of the civic council (as the inclusion of a now fragmentary civic decree also suggests). The proconsul responded with an edict attempting to put an end to the “disorder and tumults” (ταραχῆ καὶ θρόμβους) caused by the bakers in such a way, he stressed, that the welfare of the city was put first and the essential production of food continued. The bakers were not punished, nor dissolved as a guild, but instead warned not to continue such factious meetings or disturbances (with the threat of future punishment). The issue as to whether associations were permitted to exist does not appear at all in the proconsul’s edict. The document does not refer to any previous precedents which would suggest that such disturbances were con-
sistently prominent in Asia or that laws controlling associations as such were regularly
enforced by Roman officials there.

Of the incidents concerning associations in other provinces of Asia Minor, the most
well-known are those involving Pliny as legate or governor of the province of Bithynia
and Pontus during the time of Trajan (c. 110-11 CE; cf. Sherwin-White 1966; Wilken
1984:1-30). Pliny refers to associations at a few points in his letters. First, I opened the
present chapter with Trajan’s negative reply to Pliny regarding the formation of an associ-
ation of firemen at Nikomedia in Bithynia (Epistulae 10.33-34). Second, Pliny refers to
the free city of Amisos’ petition to form “benefit-societies” (époque; 10.93-94). But in
this case Trajan’s response acknowledges Amisos’ status of freedom which allowed them
to do what was forbidden in other cities, provided that the groups were “not used for
riotous and unlawful assemblies, but to relieve cases of hardship among the poor
(tenuiorum).” Finally, when Christians were brought before Pliny in Pontus (perhaps at
Amisos or Amastris), he told Trajan that these groups had obeyed his earlier edict pertain-
ing to political societies (hetaeriae; 10.96). Several scholars suggest that the edict which
Pliny had passed encompassed some sort of restrictions on association (though we do not
know any details), restrictions which probably coincided with some of the mandates given
to him by Trajan.

Contrary to a common assumption in scholarship, the evidence from Pliny
certainly falls short of allowing us to suggest a consistently enforced “imperial policy”
regarding associations in the provinces generally. There are at least two things that we
need to remember when reading about these incidents involving associations in Bithynia-
Pontus. Both should caution us in taking this situation as normative for other provinces or
times, or as necessarily reflective of the actual reality of association-life even in this
province.

First, the situation in Bithynia and Pontus around the beginning of the second
century was exceptional in some respects. Trajan’s appointment of Pliny as legate with
consular power, giving him a "special mission," was an exceptional one aimed at rectifying previous maladministration of the province, local political factionalism, and financial mismanagement of the cities (*Epistulae* 10.18, 32; cf. Magie 1950:593-605; Jones 1978). We know that Roman proconsuls preceding this period had been accused of maladministration (Julius Bassus, proconsul c. 101 CE, and Varenus Rufus, c. 105 CE; see Jones 1978:101-103). Furthermore, inter-city rivalry and internal political factionalism was seen to be exceptionally bad at the time in the region. Dio Chrysostom refers to problems relating to parties supporting one prominent person over against others; he also notes that there were times when politically-motivated gatherings (*étaupaieía*) played a role in these partisan politics and factions within the cities (*Orationes* 45.8, 10; see Jones 1978:95-103). Most importantly, despite general prosperity at the time, the financial management of the cities was perceived to be in utter disarray, which directly affected many building projects. There was a "need for many reforms," as Trajan states, and he wanted Pliny to take exceptional measures in order to correct the situation (cf. *Epistulae* 10.18, 32). In this specific case, a specially appointed legate’s intervention in aspects of life in the cities, associations among them, might exceed the norm.

Within this broader picture of a special mission to correct regional problems, we can better understand why it is that Trajan’s instructions to Pliny include, among other things, a caution against the potential contribution associations could make towards political factionalism. This situation-specific nature of Trajan’s advice to Pliny comes out clearly even in the case of the Nikomedia fire incident. Trajan mentions that it is the specific problems in the cities of the province at the time which necessitate Pliny’s disallowing what was not uncommon elsewhere (at least in the West): the formation of a group of craftsmen (*collegium fabrorum*) to also act as a voluntary fire brigade. Despite Trajan’s concerns, however, there are even exceptions to this general tendency to disallow associations in this province: a city with free status, such as Amisos, was to do as it
pleased as long as no major disorders or political problems would result. Concern to control associations would not be as prominent in other provinces at the time and perhaps even in the same province at times when the Roman authorities’ perception of disorder and mismanagement was not as prevalent. But we must also remember that the emperor’s or governor’s wishes, even at these exceptional times, were not necessarily consonant with day-to-day lived reality in many cities and towns.

The second thing to remember when considering the potential control of associations, then, relates to broader issues concerning the nature of Roman rule (cf. chap. 3). There was a gap between the wishes of an emperor and the theoretical power of a governor, on the one hand, and the reality of life in hundreds of cities, on the other. However powerful a governor such as Pliny was in theory and however much Trajan wished to correct the specific problems in a particular area, there were, as G.P. Burton (1993:25) states, “severe constraints on the effective exercise of their responsibilities by provincial governors and other elite officials.” As Keith Hopkins (1980:121) plausibly estimates, in the second century there would have been approximately one Roman equestrian or senatorial administrator for every 350,000-400,000 persons. Added to this is the vast territory overseen by a sole Roman governor along with his small staff (procurators, legates or others): in Asia, for example, there were at least 300 constituent civic communities under a governor’s jurisdiction, and a similar though lesser number would apply to Bithynia and Pontus. Finally, duties relating to the collection of taxes, the administration of justice (the assize-circuit), and the overall maintenance of public order would more than occupy the governor and his assistants, leaving little room for ongoing strictly enforced control over all the cities and their populations. By virtue of the nature of Roman rule, control “could only be sporadic and discontinuous, and variable from district to district” (Burton 1975:105). This also applies to the control of associations.

Furthermore, it is important to note that we are seeing things through the eyes of Pliny, who is concerned to give the impression of success, suggesting that he is
thoroughly controlling the situations in the cities of the province as per Trajan’s request. One wonders, for instance, whether Pliny projects onto the Christians a clear awareness and strict obedience to his earlier edict in order to impress upon Trajan the effectiveness of Pliny’s actions in gaining the obedience of provincials. We are also hearing far more of situations in which Pliny is “reforming” successfully in the province, not of all the situations he is unaware of or unable to address.

In light of all this, it is likely that the average guild of coppersmiths or association of Dionysiac worshippers in Bithynia or Pontus, as elsewhere in the provinces, could go on meeting together relatively unnoticed by Roman authorities as they had before Trajan assigned Pliny to the province in about 110 CE. As P.W. Duff (1942:130) states: “when the tradesmen and artisans of the little towns met to dine and honour their patrons, human and divine, they did not worry much about spies who might carry tales to the authorities.” Though the partial nature of our epigraphical evidence from Bithynia and Pontus certainly does not provide us with a complete picture, there were associations of various kinds, both before and after Pliny, meeting in numerous cities including Amastris, Apameia, Kios, Nikaia, Nikomedia, and Prusa (cf. *IBithMendel* II 184 [shippers at Amastris]; *IApamBith* 33-35 [thiasitai], 103 [initiates], 116; *IKios* 20-22 [thiasitai]; INikaia II.1 73* [coppersmiths]; *TAM* IV 22, 33 [shippers at Nikomedia]; *IBithMendel* I 3 [initiates at Prusa]; *IPrusaOlymp* 48, 1028 [initiates], 1036 [sack-weavers]; all I-II CE).

**Conclusion**

Although negative intervention by Roman officials could occur on occasion within the broader context of civic disturbances, these incidents were not broadly representative of the ongoing external relations between associations and the elites, which would usually involve positive relations. In general, associations were not anti-Roman or subversive groups, let alone sects in tension with society generally. For some associations we simply
do not have sufficient evidence to discern whether, or to what extent, there was involvement in imperial facets of social networks, so we must be cautious in assuming that all associations were involved in precisely the same way or to the same degree. Rather, it seems that there was a spectrum of possibilities for participation within these areas of civic life.

But the bulk of the epigraphical evidence that we do have from Roman Asia (which has been largely neglected by scholars) suggests that participation within social networks involving links with and honours for both imperial officials and the emperors was a normal part of group-life for many associations and guilds in the first two centuries. This evidence for positive relations speaks of the tendency towards the integration of associations (representing the social spectrum) within the polis and helps to explain how the social structures and hierarchies of society were maintained under Roman rule. Involvement in imperial dimensions of the polis was one of the ways in which an association could claim a place for itself within society and the cosmos. In the next part we shall consider and compare the nature of diverse Jewish and Christian groups’ participation, or lack thereof, in various imperial and other dimensions of civic life, discerning what this might tell us about their place, alongside other associations, within society in Roman Asia.
Chapter 6
Group-society relations and the comparison of social-religious groups in antiquity

*Introduction*

Scholars with a social-historical interest in Christian or Jewish groups within the Greco-Roman world have increasingly recognized the value in studying other groups, associations or guilds in that same setting. Wayne A. Meeks, for example, is among those who acknowledge similarities between Jewish and Christian groups on the one hand and associations on the other, drawing attention to the fact that both were small, voluntary groups which gathered together for communal meals and religious rituals on a regular basis (Meeks 1983:35, 77-78). To an outsider, a Jewish or Christian group could initially appear to be just another association, *thiasos, synodos or collegium* within the *polis*.

Yet for Meeks and others, although there are similarities between such groups at first glance, there are fundamental differences between them which make associations less than satisfactory analogies for comparison, particularly regarding group-society relations. Most importantly here, both Jewish and Christian groups were utterly exclusive of other loyalties and they were "sects" in a sociological sense of the word, whereas most associations were not. Other scholars who focus on the Apocalypse, 1 Peter or other literature pertinent to Christianity in Asia Minor, including John H. Elliott (1990 [1981]), Harry O. Maier (1991) and Margaret Y. MacDonald (1988), also characterize Christian groups in general as largely sectarian, often stressing their separation from most, if not all, facets of society and emphasizing the conflictual side of group-society relations.

This particular depiction of Christianity or diaspora Judaism as a largely uniform set of exclusive and sectarian groups serves to obscure rather than explain other evidence which suggests a more complicated scenario for group-society relations. I only begin to address some of this primary evidence in this chapter, especially with regard to synagogues, but also in connection with 1 Peter, the Pastoral epistles and Ignatius’
epistles. I reserve a full discussion of inscriptional and literary evidence in connection with the case study of Jewish and Christian groups in the next chapter. Insights from the social sciences regarding the complex processes of acculturation and assimilation may suggest more fruitful approaches to such issues of group-society relations.

Some recent studies of the diaspora are beginning to draw a more complicated picture of how Jewish groups fit within the *polis* in areas such as Roman Asia. Moreover, inscriptional and archeological evidence concerning Jewish groups which I discuss sheds light on various areas of participation in civic life, such that a sectarian reading of these groups is not adequate. This should also lead us to question previous depictions of Christian groups as well, which were often implicitly or explicitly based on the sectarian portrait of Jewish groups. Moreover, there is also a growing recognition among some scholars that social groupings in the ancient context, especially associations, can serve as helpful comparative analogies for understanding some of the dynamics of group-society relations among both Jewish and Christian groups. Although the present chapter addresses some important primary evidence, especially in regard to Jewish groups and the *polis*, its main purpose is to set the stage for a more extensive study of primary evidence from inscriptions and literature concerning both Jewish and Christian groups in the next chapter. This evidence makes a sectarian reading of many of these groups implausible.

The present chapter, then, deals with some of the more theoretical and methodological issues concerning both comparison of social-religious groups in antiquity and group-society relations specifically. I begin with a brief survey of certain trajectories in scholarship concerning the comparison of Christian or Jewish groups and associations: one more promising about the value of comparison and the other serving as an obstacle to fruitful comparative study of social-religious groups in antiquity. Moreover, I argue that insights from the social sciences regarding the nature of acculturation, rather than studies of sectarianism, may better inform us regarding the range of possibilities in group-society
relations. After discussing some evidence from Ignatius' epistles, the Pastoral epistles and 1 Peter, I proceed to a case study of primary evidence concerning Jewish groups and the *polis* in Roman Asia. The portrait of diverse Jewish groups, together with analogies from other associations, should also inform our understanding of the possibilities for group-society relations among many Christian groups. Finally, I discuss the nature and purpose of comparison, preparing the way for a specific comparative case study in the next chapter focussing on the extensive primary evidence for both Jewish and Christian groups.

**Associations and early Christianity: Trajectories in scholarship**

Though scholars since Mommsen noted the importance of associations for understanding legal issues concerning early Christianity, it was the work of both Georg Heinrici and Edwin Hatch around the end of the nineteenth century that laid the foundation--upon which no structure was built for almost a century--for the comparison of Christian groups and associations (cf. Kloppenborg 1993a). Georg Heinrici, who focussed on issues of the internal organization of Pauline communities, proposed that associations (more so than Jewish synagogues) should be considered as "historical analogies" to Christian groups (Heinrici, 1881:509 and 1876, 1877; cf. Wilson 1927:120-35). Apparently unaware of Heinrici's work, Hatch made a similar proposition regarding the comparability of organizational structures. But what interests me far more here are some of his methodological concerns and their implications for social-historical approaches and comparison (Hatch 1909 [1880]).

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92 The literature in this area cannot be fully discussed here except to say that three main themes have dominated discussion of Christianity and Judaism with respect to associations: the relation (or lack thereof) of ideas associated with the mysteries to concepts and practices within Christianity (Reitzenstein 1978 [1910]:76-81; see Smith 1990 for the history of scholarship); the internal organization of the group (see the discussion of Heinrici and Hatch below); and the relevance of imperial policy and laws concerning *collegia* for understanding the legal position of Christian or Jewish groups (Renan 1869 [1866]:262-74; Ramsay 1901; Keating 1901:180-201; Hardy 1910 [1906]:128-49; La Piana 1927; Guterman 1951:130-56; Reicke 1951). As we noted in an earlier chapter, the legal focus has dominated discussion of associations more generally.
Hatch is emphatic about the need for scholars to approach the study of early Christianity not with apologetic preconceptions regarding its uniqueness and, hence, incomparability, but rather with the same set of historical methods that one would employ in studying any phenomena within that same society: “the facts of ecclesiastical history do not differ in kind from the facts of civic history” (1909 [1880]:2, cf. pp. 13-20). Hatch emphasizes the need to approach the early Christian groups “as organizations in the midst of human society” (1909 [1880]:32), paying close attention to the “relations of the early Churches to the social strain in the midst of which they grew” (1909 [1880]:54).

A corollary of this approach is a concern to employ comparative methods in the study of social structures and organizations in the Greco-Roman world, and Hatch gives special attention to comparing associations and Christian groups in regard to leadership structures. However, both Hatch and Heinrici faced harsh criticisms from other scholars (often with apologetic overtones), the majority of whom emphasized Christianity’s insulation from Greco-Roman influence and stressed the Jewish synagogue instead as the formative influence with regard to organization.93 Quite often, it seems, most critics of comparison (and sometimes even Heinrici and Hatch) had in mind questions of influence or borrowing, of genealogy, rather than analogy. The comparative program implied by the works of Heinrici and Hatch gained little or no attention or elaboration within scholarship in the decades that followed.

93 Cf. Linton 1932:42-45; Malherbe 1983 [1977]:86-91; Kloppenborg 1993a. C. Holsten’s theological concerns are quite evident when he accuses Heinrici of suggesting that Paul’s organization of his communities actually “die Lebensformen einer Kultgenossenschaft der Dämonen (1 Kor. 10,20) benutze” (see Heinrici 1881:507). Johannes Weiss (1910:xxiii-xxiv) questioned Heinrici’s suggestion that there was a conscious borrowing from associations in Paul’s organization of communities. Several articles in the Expositor of 1887, by scholars such as W. Sanday and C. Gore, were likewise devoted to debating the nature of the ministry in Pauline communities as proposed by Hatch and others (cf. Gore 1936 [1886]:26-30). In 1889, Adolf Harnack (1889:419) could write “dass die Berücksichtigung der Organisation der heidnischen Genossenschaften nur geringe oder gar keine Aufklärung gebracht hat.” A few years later W.M. Ramsay (1901:98) acknowledged the importance of collegia for understanding the state’s view of Christianity but (evidently alluding to the proposal of Heinrici and Hatch) was careful to state that “no reconciliation was possible at that time between Christian principles and present social forms… But…I must also confess that a strong inclination attracts me to the side of those who were trying…to combine Christian spirit with the existing institutions of society and civilization.”
Hatch’s focus on understanding Christian groups in relation to the social groups and structures of surrounding society is, in some respects, a precursor to E.A. Judge’s work on *The Social Pattern of the Christian Groups in the First Century* (1960), whose social-historical approach and attention to associations, unfortunately, also went largely unheeded for some time. What interests us most here are Judge’s observations regarding Christian and Jewish groups’ place within and relations to the social structures and institutions of society, including those of the *polis*, household and association. He emphasizes that Christianity did not live in a vacuum, isolated from the rest of Greco-Roman society; rather, once established in the *polis* of the Roman empire, the Christian group “belongs inevitably, as a social phenomenon, to the Hellenistic republics [i.e. *poleis*]. Its thinking and behaviour naturally reflect the social institutions of these states” (1960:14; cf. Winter 1994). Within the civic context, Judge suggests, associations provide a very useful analogy to both Christian and Jewish groups, despite the differences and peculiarities of these groups. In fact, he writes, “they were not distinguished in the public’s mind from the general run of unofficial associations,” nor would they be “unwilling to be thought of as forming an association of the usual kind” (1960:44, 45; cf. Wilken 1980:100).

The implications of Judge’s preliminary observations with regard to the fruitfulness of comparison are echoed several years later when Malherbe optimistically states: if “we

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94 Judge’s approach to the study of Christian groups within society foreshadows two related developments within scholarship in more recent years: the recent burgeoning of social history in the field, and the emergence of a sub-field of study in which the methods and sources of ancient history (epigraphy, archeology, etc.) are fully integrated with the study of Jewish and Christian history and literature in the Greco-Roman period. Judge spent most of his teaching life in universities of Australia. The continuation of similar approaches owes much to Australian scholarship, whose contribution in this area can be viewed most concretely in *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* (a project begun in 1976 by G.H.R. Horsley in connection with the Ancient History Documentary Research Centre at Macquarie University).

95 Judge does accept two commonly stated differences between Christian groups and associations concerning: the international links and broader social constituency of Christian groups (see the discussion further below in connection with Meeks). But, unlike Meeks and others, he does not think that this seriously qualifies other similarities with associations which, generally, make them useful to compare.
are interested in social relations...and in analogies rather than genealogical relationships, the material [regarding associations] may help to clarify some aspects of both the informal relationships within the church as well as the church's relationship to the larger society" (1983 [1977]:89 [italics mine]; cf. Kloppenborg 1993a:230).

Numerous useful studies have emerged in the last two decades that have pursued this to some degree, but the focus has been primarily on internal life or other issues rather than group-society relations, as is evident in the works listed in the footnote.96 Building on the insight that Christian and Jewish groups might be viewed as associations, the following chapter pursues a comparative study of certain aspects of group-society relations within the context of civic life. It explores in detail how the evidence for associations' participation in imperial cults and connections sheds light on the activities of both Christian and Jewish groups in Roman Asia in a way that makes a sectarian reading of these groups problematic. Part of the reason for a dearth in comparative studies regarding group-society relations pertains to another trajectory or tradition within recent scholarship.

As I noted earlier, Meeks and other scholars contend that, overall, associations do not serve as very useful models of or analogies for comparison with Christian or Jewish groups. This contention rests on several supposed key differences between the groups which, in the view of these scholars, far outweigh any similarities which would warrant deeper or more extensive comparison: (1) Christian groups were far more inclusive or

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96 Studies of early Christianity that make substantial reference to associations or guilds focus on topics such as: the social context of missionary activity (Hock 1980); the organization, hierarchy and leadership structures of Christian groups (Countryman 1977; Barton and Horsley 1981; Maier 1991; Schmeller 1995; Kloppenborg 1996b); the influence of household structures on organization and internal life (Klaueck 1981; White 1996; Maier 1991:15-28); the architecture of buildings or meeting-places (White 1996); internal social and religious activities, especially communal meals (Smith 1980; Barton and Horsley 1981; Klaueck 1982:40-165); outsiders' perceptions and the self-understanding of Christian groups (Wilken 1972, 1980, 1984); the linguistic field of the New Testament (Danker 1982; Ascough 1996); and, specific New Testament passages or documents including Paul's Corinthian, Thessalonian and Philippian correspondence (Malherbe 1987; Kloppenborg 1993b; Schmeller 1995; Ascough 1997b). Similar studies with respect to Jewish groups include those on: internal regulations and organization (Weinfeld 1986); the financial management of synagogues (Bonz 1993); and the architecture of synagogue buildings (Kraabel 1987; White 1987, 1996; Richardson 1996). Also see the studies by various scholars in Wilson and Kloppenborg 1996.
heterogeneous in terms of social composition, while associations were more homogeneous;
(2) Christian groups did not use the same terminology for the group or its organization
and leadership structures; (3) associations were a "self-contained local phenomenon,"
lacking the sort of extra-local linkages which the churches possessed; and, most impor-
tantly for the present study, (4) Christian groups, like Jewish ones, were fundamentally
exclusivistic or sectarian while associations were not (Meeks 1983:78-80; cf. Lane Fox

Before fully addressing the last issue concerning sectarianism, it is important to
note some of the problems with Meeks' approach to the other points. The main meth-
odological problem with Meeks' approach is that in assessing the usefulness of comparison
he adopts a uniform picture of Christian groups (based primarily on social data from
Corinth) which is contrasted to an artificially uniform picture of associations (based on
something other than an extensive knowledge of the diverse primary evidence for these
groups), and these two artificial pictures turn out not to coincide. But these pictures do
not actually reflect the more complex and diverse realities concerning both Christian (or
Jewish) groups and associations. Furthermore, Meeks' understandings of each of the sup-
posed fundamental differences are questionable, particularly since the evidence for
associations--which is varied and deserving of study on its own terms--has not received the
kind of attention which the evidence for Christian groups has. A few scholars more
familiar with the inscriptive evidence have begun to challenge or qualify key aspects of
each of these main points (cf. Kloppenborg 1993a; Ascough 1997a).

First of all, Meeks oversimplifies issues concerning the social composition of
social-religious groups in antiquity. As we saw in chapter 1, the evidence for the com-
position of associations and guilds, like that for Christian groups, is varied and diverse;
both types of groups could draw their membership from similar social network connec-
tions and could range from being relatively homogeneous (e.g. many occupational associa-
tions and the Christian hand-workers at Thessalonica) to more heterogeneous or socially inclusive (e.g. the association of fishermen at Ephesos, many household or cultic-based associations and the Christian groups at Corinth; cf. Kloppenborg 1993a:234-36). Moreover, many groups could include wealthier persons or benefactors as leaders or members, which leads me to the next point.

Second, Christian and Jewish groups shared in common with associations many organizational or structural characteristics. Each could be heavily influenced both by the structures of the household and by the common conventions of benefaction and honours in the Greek East, conventions which often meant that the wealthier benefactors naturally became leaders of the group (cf. Klauck 1981; White 1996; Maier 1991; Rajak and Noy 1993). Furthermore, as Kloppenborg also points out regarding the specifics of leadership positions, there "is no a priori reason to assume that there was uniformity among the Pauline churches, any more than one should assume a uniform organizational structure in associations. On the contrary, titles were highly variable, local particularities abound, and in many instances we have no indication of how officers were designated" (1993a:232).

Contrary to what Meeks implies, there are in fact considerable cross-overs in the varied terminology employed by different guilds, associations, and both Jewish and Christian groups.97

Third, as Richard S. Ascough's (1997a) recent study clearly shows, Meeks exaggerates the extra-local character of Christian groups and underestimates the possibilities for such linkages among associations (cf. Harland 1996:327-28 n. 33). We have

97 Thus, for example: self-designations used by Jewish groups in Asia are also used by other associations, including "synagogue" (συναγωγή), "household" (οἶκος), "settlement" (κοσμόωντες), "synod" (σύνοδος), and "associates" (ἐταῖροι). There are at least some associations in Asia Minor that refer to themselves as an "assembly" (ἐκκλησία; cf. IGLAM 1381-82 from Aspendos, Pamphylia; Foucart 1873:223-25, no. 43 = CIG 2271). Despite the variety in leadership structures among both associations and Christian groups, there are also cross-overs in titles such as ἐπίσκοπος, διάκονος, and συνοιτίστης (cf. Kloppenborg 1993a:231-34). Both types of groups could use familial language in reference to leaders or benefactors, as well as fellow-members (see chap. 1).
already encountered extra-local linkages in connection with ethnic-geographic and other associations in chapter 1. Yet the difficulties with Meeks’ approach to the question of comparing Christian groups with other models in the environment is not limited to these few substantive points; in this chapter’s conclusions I return to some of the broader theoretical misconceptions concerning the nature and purpose of comparison. For now I address the fourth assertion of difference.

*The portrayal of Christian and Jewish groups as “sects”*

a) Meeks on exclusivity and sectarianism

Most pertinent to the issue of group-society relations is Meeks’ claim that, like Jewish groups, “Christian groups were exclusive and totalistic in a way that no club nor even any pagan cultic association was.” While he admits that “the boundaries of the Pauline groups were somewhat more open than those of some other early Christian circles” (i.e. “gates” in community boundaries), he nonetheless stresses that all Pauline groups involved a “thoroughgoing resocialization, in which the sect was intended to become virtually the primary group for its members, supplanting all other loyalties” (Meeks 1983:35-39, 77-80, 85 [italics mine]).

In this respect, Meeks suggests, the Christian groups were much like the Jewish synagogues of the time, which were also fundamentally different from other associations in regard to their exclusivism and separation (Meeks cites Smallwood 1981:123, 133-34 in this connection). Meeks disregards considerable evidence regarding Jewish groups at locations such as Sardis, Miletos and Aphrodisias, where there are clearly significant contacts or relations between Jews and non-Jews within the civic context (see the next section). Instead, Meeks is concerned to emphasize the isolation of both Jewish and Christian groups from the Greco-Roman environment, asserting their uniqueness and incomparability to other groups.
Meeks' portrayal of Christian groups as exclusive and sectarian and associations as entirely lacking in exclusivity is problematic. Although many associations were not exclusive, some could have exclusivistic aspects. An inscription from Sardis (late-first or early-second century), for example, re-inscribes a regulation of an earlier era stipulating that the *therapeutai* of Zeus are "not to participate in the mysteries of Sabazios...[or] of Agdistis and Ma" (Robert 1975 = *CCCA* I 456 = *NewDocs* I 3, lines 9-11; cf. *ISardBR* 22 [c. 100 BCE]; *ISardH* 3 [I-II CE]). Among the statutes of the association devoted to Zeus Hypsistos in Philadelphia, Egypt is a prohibition against "leaving the brotherhood (φράτρας) of the president for another" (*PLond* VII 2193 = Roberts, Skeat and Nock 1936:40-42, line 14).

More problematic, though, is Meeks' assumption that all or most Christian groups or their members were exclusivistic in a comprehensive sense. In the case of the Christians at Corinth, for instance, he categorizes relatively open boundaries including participation in legal institutions (i.e. courts) and in social groupings or banqueting contexts as the exception rather than the rule, and even here he stresses that the Christian group there was a "sect" nonetheless (referring to Bryan R. Wilson's work, discussed below). In the service of maintaining his focus on sectarianism, Meeks obscures the more varied nature of the evidence for Pauline and other groups: while Paul praises the Thessalonian Christians for turning from idols to God (1 Thess 1:9-10), for example, Paul knows and does not disapprove of the practice among the Corinthians who know that "an idol has no real existence" and join with their fellow civic inhabitants at communal meals in some contexts, including an "idol's-temple" (1 Cor 8-10; see 9:19-23). Peter D. Gooch (1993:1-26) discusses some of the building remains of banqueting facilities associated with Asklepios and Demeter at Corinth, which may be among the contexts which Paul has in mind. Paul warns against the dangers of idolatry (10:1-22); but he also refers to the fact that some of the Corinthian Christians were invited to dinners by outsiders and
that it would be acceptable in such cases to eat whatever food was put before them as long as it did not offend others (10:27-28).

The evidence of Paul’s letter to Corinth suggests the strong possibility that some Christians were maintaining dual (or multiple) affiliations or memberships within social groupings other than just the Christian assemblies. The language that Paul uses, speaking of outsiders actively inviting these Christians (εἰ τις καλεῖ ὑμᾶς... [10:27]), is reminiscent of the language of many actual invitations on papyri to dinners held in homes and temples, sometimes in connection with associations (cf. Youtie 1948; Gilliam 1976; NewDocs I 1; POxy 110, 523, 1484, 1755, 2592, 3693, 4339). In one of these the god Sarapis himself calls on recipients of the invitation to attend: “The god calls you to a banquet being held in the Thoereion tomorrow from the ninth hour” (καλεῖ σε ὁ θεὸς εἰς κλεῖνην γείνο(μένην) ἐν τῷ θορείῳ αὐριον ἀπὸ ὥρ(ας) ὥ'; PKduin 57; trans. from NewDocs I 1). It seems likely that some among the Christians at Corinth were considered to be full members of other associations, such that they would receive actual invitations to the dinners held by fellow-members in homes or temples. This evidence for dual affiliations or “loyalties” (to use Meeks’ term) on the part of Christians does not fit with a sectarian understanding of such groups and should not be passed off as an exception. Further on I discuss more indications of Jews’ and Christians’ participation in or affiliations with associations and guilds in Roman Asia specifically.

b) Sectarian depictions of groups addressed by the Apocalypse

Similar sectarian-focussed depictions of Christianity are evident among scholars who focus on literature pertinent to Roman Asia. I begin by discussing scholarly approaches to the Apocalypse, dealing with some issues of persecution, before going on to 1 Peter, Ignatius and the Pastorals.

The traditional view of the Apocalypse is that the author’s references to the death of Christians in the futuristic visions (e.g. 6:9-11; 12:11, 14:13; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24) are in
fact references to the actual, current situation faced by most Christians involving a substantial and official persecution under Domitian, who forced inhabitants to worship him as "lord and god" (cf. Beckwith 1967 [1919]; Charles 1920; Hemer 1986:86-87; Schüssler Fiorenza 1985:192-97). Following the proponents of a substantial Domitianic persecution, most recently Paul Keresztes (1979:257-72) and Marta Sordi (1986:43-54), Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, for example, argues that the author's invective against Rome and the emperors is a "fitting response" to this social-political situation. That is, many of the recipients of the Apocalypse were faced with a real threat of martyrdom if they did not worship Domitian and would have identified with the Apocalypse's hostile and strongly sectarian viewpoint (Schüssler Fiorenza 1985:6-8, 181-203). That is, most of the Christian groups addressed by the Apocalypse were sectarian in their relation to society.

Such an understanding of the Apocalypse and, by implication, of the social situation of most Christian groups in Roman Asia suffers from several difficulties. The problems to be discussed relate to: 1) whether there was an official and substantial Domitianic persecution (along with the related issue of Domitian's character); 2) how we should characterize persecution in Asia Minor more generally; and 3) does the Apocalypse's sectarian stance mean that we can categorize most Christian groups in Asia as sects in the sense that their relationship with society and empire was consistently in tension.

On the first point, it is worth briefly discussing the evidence often cited as support for an official and substantial Domitianic persecution, focussing primarily on evidence for Asia Minor. The earliest direct reference to Domitian that concerns some negative relation to Christianity is Melito of Sardis' comment, preserved by Eusebius: "The only

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98 David A. deSilva (1991:186) takes a similar approach to the Apocalypse, claiming that it was a "word aimed right on target" to the needs of the "sects" it addresses, and he, like other scholars I discuss below, makes use of Wilson's sect-typology.

99 J.B. Lightfoot (1889-90:104-115) collected a variety of material which he considered to be evidence for the persecution of Christians by Domitian, which was followed by many subsequent commentators (cf. Wilson 1993).
emperors who were ever persuaded by malicious men to slander our teaching were Nero and Domitian, and from them arose the lie, and the unreasonable custom of falsely accusing Christians" (Historia Ecclesiastica 4.26.9; cf. 3.17-20; Tertullian, Apologeticus 5.4, both apparently depending on Melito). Other evidence from Asia Minor does not refer to Domitian at all. The futuristic visions of the Apocalypse (dated to Domitian’s time by Irenaeus) make frequent references to the “blood of the saints” and the slaughter of Christians, which John closely associates with the beasts in league with Satan, namely emperors and/or imperial officials (6:9-11; 12:11; 14:13; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 11:3-13). In the case of Christians in Pontus (c. 110 CE), Pliny the Younger states that some of the accused “said that they had ceased to be Christians two or more years previously, and some of them even twenty years ago” (Epistulae 10.96.6). The figure of about twenty years coincides with the time when a Domitianic persecution would have occurred (if it did) and these, therefore, may have been apostates resulting from official persecution.

This evidence from Asia Minor falls short of suggesting an official persecution by Domitian or his officials, however. Melito’s apologetic comment does not expressly refer to persecution at all. Rather it tries to suggest that only widely disliked emperors, Nero and Domitian, held negative attitudes towards Christian teaching (cf. Aune 1997:lxvi). As T.D. Barnes (1971:150) points out all “other authors who depict Domitian as a persecutor derive their information either directly or indirectly from Melito.” The visions of the Apocalypse are explicitly set in the future and do not name Domitian. We cannot assume a direct relation between futuristic rhetoric and contemporary reality, as the discussion in the next chapter clarifies. Finally, the apostates mentioned by Pliny could have been but were not necessarily the outcome of an official persecution, and, in fact, this seems unlikely. Pliny’s lack of familiarity with how to approach prosecutions against Christians suggests that he, at least, did not know of an earlier, official persecution of Christians on which to base his actions (see the more extensive discussion of Pliny’s letter
in the next chapter). This is particularly significant in view of the fact that much of Pliny’s career during the principate of Domitian was spent at Rome (as quaestor conveying messages from Domitian to the senate, then as tribune of the people and then as praetor [cf. Sherwin-White 1966:72-82; Wilken 1984:4-5]). No doubt he would have known of official actions taken by Domitian against Christians, either at Rome or in the provinces, if they had occurred.

Those who hold that there was a substantial Domitianic persecution also cite evidence from Rome as support. The letter of the Roman Christians to the church at Corinth, written in the 90s CE, refers to “sudden and repeated misfortunes and calamities which have befallen us (τὰς αἰφνιδίους καὶ ἐπαλήλους γενομένας ἡμῖν συμφορᾶς καὶ περιπτώσεις),” which can be interpreted as a reference to official persecution (1 Clement 1.1). However, there is no explicit reference either to Domitian or to persecutions by authorities, and this passage could refer to any number of troubles affecting the churches. Furthermore, the authors use similar language (ἐπις, στάσεις, διωγμός, πόλεμος) to describe the main problem at Corinth, which is not official “persecution” from outside, but rather the internal rebellion of youths against the elders (3.1-3).

There are two other incidents worth mentioning that involve Domitian. First, Dio Cassius (and subsequently Eusebius) relates the episode concerning Domitian’s execution of Flavius Clemens (nephew of Domitian) and the exile of Clemens’ niece, Domitilla, on charges of “atheism” (67.13.1-3). Dio does not explicitly link this with Christianity, but Eusebius does (3.18.4).¹⁰⁰ Whether Christians or Jews, the fact remains that Clemens and Domitilla were among the senatorial elites and even members of the imperial family, which puts their case in a realm other than official persecution of ordinary Christians in

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¹⁰⁰ Even if Domitilla or Clemens were not Christians, they were Jews; this indicates Domitian’s hostile attitude towards and persecution of Jews, which would naturally entail a similar approach to Christians, according to the traditional view. Further evidence of this hostility is shown in Domitian’s strict enforcement of the Jewish tax, which Suetonius discusses (Domitianus 12)
the provinces. Second, Eusebius also records the “ancient story” which he derives from Hegesippus (c. 150 CE; 3.19-20). Domitian “gave orders for the execution of those of the family of David” and this included relatives of Christ (grandsons of Judas “who is said to have been the brother...of the Saviour”). These peasants from Palestine, so the story goes, were brought before Domitian and interrogated, after which Domitian released them and “decreed an end to the persecution” (3.20.1-4). As Barnes also points out, various elements of the episode are less than believable and the story explicitly attempts to draw a parallel with the story of Herod and the birth Jesus: “Domitian...,like Herod, was afraid of the coming of the Christ” (3.20.1). Overall, then, these bits of evidence do not add up to an official and substantial persecution by Domitian of Christians in Asia Minor.

A final related point cited by scholars of the traditional view is that a substantial persecution fits well with our overall knowledge of Domitian’s character. Our principal sources (Pliny the Younger, Tacitus and Suetonius) unanimously emphasize the savage and tyrannical nature of Domitian’s actions, including murders of senators and pretentious demands to be honoured as “lord and god” (dominus et deus; cf. Suetonius, Domitianus 13.2; Dio Cassius 67.4.7; 67.13.4; Pliny, Panegyricus 33.4; 52.6). These references to Domitian being addressed as “lord and god,” for example, are often interpreted as a sign that Domitian actually promoted the imperial cult throughout the empire (including Asia Minor) in a way that differed from his predecessors.

However, recent studies of Domitian’s principate suggest that the picture of a savage and mad tyrant is not accurate. Portrayals of Domitian after his death and damnatio by friends of a new emperor are less than reliable measures of Domitian’s actual principate. Pat Southern (1997) and Brian W. Jones (1992) point to the unreliability of the primary sources which harshly condemn Domitian and draw a very different picture
regarding his principate (cf. Thompson 1990:95-115). H.W. Pleket (1961) argues that a strained relationship between Domitian and the senate (not Domitian’s character) underlies much of the hostility expressed by senatorial authors like Pliny, Suetonius and Tacitus. Domitian’s supposed murders of innocent senators were in fact the result of trials for treason involving senators that had actively conspired against him (1961:299). Furthermore, the suggestion that Domitian’s supposed demands to be called “lord and god” meant that he also went out of his way to promote imperial cults in the provinces is unfounded (cf. Southern 1997:45-46). There is, in fact, no clear evidence of a significant change in imperial cults in Asia Minor at this time. A new provincial temple was built at Ephesos, but (as was customary) this was on the initiative of the provincial assembly, not the emperor (see Friesen 1993). The notion that imperial cult activity in a province like Asia was dependent upon active promotion by particular emperors reveals an inadequate understanding of the actual spontaneous nature of cultic honours for the emperors (see chaps. 4 and 7, the latter in reference to the Apocalypse).

Returning to the issue of persecution, G.E.M. de Ste. Croix (1963) and Barnes (1968, 1971:143-63) show that there is a lack of evidence for any Roman-initiated, official persecution of Christians in Asia Minor and the empire generally not only in the time of Domitian but also in the first two centuries (cf. Thompson 1990:95-115; Yarbro Collins 1984:70-75; Wilson 1993:587-605; Aune 1997:lxiv-lxix). Pliny’s correspondence with Trajan regarding the Christians in Pontus (c. 110 CE) and Hadrian’s rescript a decade or so later (c. 123 CE) with respect to Asia show that there were indeed occasions when some inhabitants of the cities might bring charges against Christians before Roman officials (see the discussion in the next chapter). But nothing suggests any active persecu-

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101 It is worth noting that, in spite of his otherwise condemning portrait, even Suetonius states the following about Domitian’s rule over the provinces: “He took such care to exercise restraint over the city officials and the governors of the provinces, that at no time were they more honest or just, whereas after his time we have seen many of them charged with all manner of offences” (Domitianus 8.2 [LCL]).
tion of Christians by Pliny or other Roman officials or emperors before him in the provinces, or any precedents to follow in the matter. The relatively passive-reactive nature of Roman rule, as discussed in earlier chapters, also speaks against an active or consistent role by Roman officials in persecutions of or prosecutions against Christians.

This brings me to my second point pertaining to the actual nature of persecution in Asia Minor, which is further elaborated in the next chapter. Persecution of Christians in the first two centuries in Asia Minor is better characterized as local and sporadic (cf. van Unnik 1980d [1954]:95-96; Elliott 1990 [1981]:78-82; Thompson 1990; Achtemeier 1996:33-36). Persecution pertained to various levels of social harassment and verbal abuse by some civic inhabitants which could occasionally lead to physical abuse or martyrdom, especially when general social-economic conditions were at their worst (e.g. famines, epidemics, natural disasters). Conditions faced by Christians could vary from one city to the next and change over time. There are few references in Christian literature from Asia to actual Christians who were martyred, which should further caution us in assuming that martyrdoms such as those envisioned (for the future) in the Apocalypse, the incident involving Pliny the Younger or the martyrdom of Polycarp in the 160s CE were extremely common (see chap. 7). The Apocalypse refers to Antipas as “my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you” (2:13), but we know nothing concerning the circumstances surrounding his death. Ignatius, who is himself a prisoner on his way to Rome to face death (he hopes), does not refer to any other Christians facing similar arrest or persecution, let alone martyrdom, in his letters to the Christian assemblies in Asia in the early second century (c. 108-110 CE).

The evidence of 1 Peter is particularly significant concerning the nature of persecution, especially since it pertains to Christian groups in Asia Minor from about the same time period as the Apocalypse. 1 Peter’s characterization of the situation faced by Christians differs considerably from the martyrdoms of the Apocalypse’s futuristic visions.
The Christian addressees are faced with “suffering” primarily in the form of verbal abuse: they are spoken against, blasphemed, reviled and falsely called “wrongdoers” (2:12; 3:9, 15-17; 4:3-5; 5:9). The reasons for this suffering stemmed from the Christians’ failure to participate in social and religious life in the same way they had before: the Gentiles “are surprised that you do not now join them in the same wild profligacy, and they abuse you” (4:4). According to this author, this same sort of “suffering” was faced by the “brotherhood throughout the world” (5:9).

This brings me, finally, to the third point, which pertains the issue of whether or not the Christian groups addressed by the Apocalypse were necessarily as sectarian as John was (at least in relation to empire). Evidently, the Apocalypse’s description of mass slaughter of Christians in the futuristic visions does not (nor does it claim to) represent the actual conditions faced by most Christians living in Roman Asia. The emperor and Roman officials were not engaged in systematic persecution of Christians in Asia Minor. We should be cautious, therefore, in assuming that John’s sectarian stances regarding the relationship between the Christian assemblies and empire are representative of those of most other Christians, at least based on issues pertaining to persecution. Considerable primary evidence from Asia (discussed in the next chapter) concerning the participation of Jewish and Christian groups in imperial honours and connections within civic life, for instance, would strongly suggest otherwise. While some Christian groups may have been more inclined towards the sectarian stances of the Apocalypse, many others clearly were not. It seems that one of John’s purposes is to convince others to see, as he did, the problems with Roman imperial power and its social, economic and religious manifestations in the cities of Asia (see chap. 7). I discuss primary evidence of the non-sectarian tendencies

102 Past events such as Nero’s brutal execution of Christians in Rome following the fire (Tacitus, Annales 15.44) and perhaps the Judean war of 69-70 CE, for instance, may inform or serve as models for some of John’s description of the future (cf. Bauckham 1993:441-50).
among some of the Christians addressed by the Apocalypse, especially the Nicolaitans, in the next chapter.

c) Sectarian depictions of other Christian groups in Asia

Some scholars who generally accept the revised understanding of the nature of persecution nonetheless argue for a sectarian understanding of Christianity in Asia Minor on other grounds, often employing Bryan R. Wilson's sociological typology. Wilson's sect typology, which substantially modifies the church-sect typologies of Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch, was first developed out of his studies of divergent Christian religious movements in western cultural contexts, but he later broadened its use for cross-cultural study of developing countries in *Magic and the Millennium* (1973; cf. Wilson 1959, 1967, 1970, 1990). According to Wilson, a sect is a "deviant" religious movement primarily characterized by tension with society and he suggests there are seven main types based on their "response to the world" and a corresponding soteriological perspective. Most importantly for present purposes is the "conversionist" type of sect, for whom the world and those in it are corrupt and can only be changed through the "supernaturally wrought transformation of the self" which takes place through an "emotional transformation conversion experience" (Wilson 1973:22-23, cited by Elliott 1990 [1981]:76). The modern, individualistic character of Wilson's model is quite evident here.

Elliott broadly categorizes Christian groups in Asia Minor as conversionist sects in this sense, stressing the fundamental separation and conflict between such groups and the society in which they lived. In reference to 1 Peter, Elliott states that the "sectarian features of the movement [in Palestine] continued to characterize the Christian communities

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103 The six other types are: revolutionist (salvation through the supernaturally wrought destruction and transformation of the world); introversionist (salvation through withdrawal from the evil world); manipulationist (salvation through application of the proper means or methods); thaumaturgical (salvation through magic); reformist (salvation through reform of the world); utopian (salvation through the application of divinely given principles).
of Asia Minor and *determine the nature of their interaction with society*” (1990 [1981]:74 [italics mine]; cf. Elliott 1986a). Like the diaspora Jewish group, the Christian community “drew firm social and religious boundaries between its members and all ‘outsiders’” (1990 [1981]:79). The recipients of 1 Peter, who were literally aliens of the lower-classes faced with dire social-economic conditions (according to Elliott), had terminated all previous familial, social and religious ties or loyalties in order to form “a community set apart and disengaged from the routine affairs of civic and social life” (1990 [1981]:79). 1 Peter’s social strategy in addressing these sectarian groups, Elliott stresses, was to emphasize the identity of the Christians as the elect of God and the suffering which they faced in order to further *heighten* their separation from all aspects of the Greco-Roman context (1990 [1981]:107, 148; cf. Achtemeier 1996:52-55).

Other scholars take a similar approach. Maier, for instance, also employs Wilson’s typology in order to stress that the Christian groups addressed by Ignatius had a strong sense of separation from society, speaking of the “sectarian identity of the Asian churches.” From their perspective, he suggests, Ignatius “would have appeared as an embodiment of separation from the world” (Maier 1991:163-68). Maier, like Elliott, is correct to point out the distinctive beliefs, practices and self-understandings of the Christian groups (e.g. notions of election), but his overemphasis on separation from society in a very broad sense, failing to distinguish the various aspects of life in the polis encompassed by his use of the term “society,” does not do justice to the intricacies of everyday life in the cities of Roman Asia. In a similar manner, MacDonald categorizes many of the Pauline communities as conversionist type sects. She still refers to those addressed by the Pastorals as a sect, even though she admits that there is a lack of any evi-

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104 The lower-class portrait of early Christianity has been challenged by many scholars (see chap. 1). Though there were indeed conflicts and problems that arose due to social-economic differences within society, Elliott’s portrait of such conditions under Roman rule is overly negative (1990 [1981]:70-73; contrast Thompson 1990:146-67). This seems to be motivated by his desire to have the conditions in Asia Minor match those described by Wilson as conducive to the emergence of sects.
dence of "world-rejection" which may suggest "a movement away from the sect-type toward the church-type" (MacDonald 1988:163-66).

**d) Problems with sectarian-focussed approaches**

There are several difficulties with these sectarian-focussed approaches to the social history of early Christianity or Judaism, only some of which can be discussed here. The most fundamental problem is that they do not adequately account for primary evidence indicative of more complex possibilities in group-society relations. Nor do they fully acknowledge the diversity among Jewish and Christian groups. Moreover, evidence from Ignatius' epistles, the Pastoral epistles, 1 Peter and the Apocalypse discussed in this and the next chapter shows the difficulties in speaking of all Christian groups in Asia Minor as sects. The case study of imperial honours and connections in the next chapter provides an extensive discussion of evidence that does not fit the common portrayal of Jewish and Christian groups as sects. In a section further below I address other inscriptive and archeological evidence from Roman Asia concerning the participation of Jewish groups within various areas of life in the *polis*.

Before addressing this primary evidence more fully, a general discussion of the difficulties with these scholarly approaches is in order (for theoretical discussions see White 1988; Holmberg 1990:77-117; Barton 1993). The term "sect" has come to be used in a variety of ways and there is little reason to question its applicability to many early Christian groups in the general sense that they were "divergent" cultural groups or "minority religious movements within the context of [other] dominant religious traditions" (Wilson 1973:11). What I question here is not whether such groups were in important ways "deviant" or distinctive in relation to many cultural norms in the Greco-Roman world, nor whether they were in tension with aspects of society (or, better put, particular dimensions of civic life), both of which are true.
The problem is not necessarily with sect typologies as such. Rather it is with how scholars such as Elliott have applied them, over-emphasizing exclusivity, separation and tensions with "society" in a broad sense while obscuring other primary evidence concerning specific and more complex dimensions of group-society relations, such as the imperial-related activities I discuss in the next chapter. Elliott’s application of the model dictates what evidence is considered in the first place. For instance, only after he categorizes the Christian groups as sects does he consider the evidence for 1 Peter’s apparently positive view of Roman authorities and of the "secular model" of the household, which are then taken as secondary. Elliott’s application of the sociological model suffers from a problem also identified by some sociologists: James A. Beckford, for example, points out how the application of church-sect typologies often involves categorizations based on limited contrasting dualities or oppositions--protest or accommodation, exclusivity or inclusivity--which fail to do justice to the subtleties of social realities, and he even calls for a moratorium on the use of church-sect typologies (Beckford 1973:94-104; cf. Eister 1967; Knudsen, Earle and Shriver 1978 for other critiques).

In contrast to those who take a sectarian-focussed approach, some scholars interpret literary evidence for Christianity in Asia Minor quite differently and draw a more complicated picture of group-society relations. Here I provide an overview of some of these other studies, briefly giving some concrete illustrations from primary evidence, including Ignatius’ epistles, the Pastoral epistles and 1 Peter. This type of evidence suggests that the sectarian model is less than adequate in dealing with all the evidence for all Christian groups in Roman Asia.

Unlike Maier, Bruce J. Malina (1978) and William R. Schoedel (1980) both suggest that Ignatius’ letters reveal a positive outlook with respect to the place of Christians within civic life, despite distinctive Christian identities and world views. Schoedel can even state that Ignatius “has the popular culture of the Greek city in his bones” (cited by
Malina (1978:87) uses Mary Douglas' idea that the relation of spirit and matter, mind and body, are "symbolic statements about the relation of society and the individual." He argues that Ignatius' use of binates—flesh-spirit, material help—suggests that spirit works through matter (corresponding to his anti-docetism) and that the individual is subordinate to society, finding his or her freedom within its forms (cf. Ign. Eph 5.1; 7.2; 8.2; 10.3; Magn. 1.1; 13.1; Trall. 12.1; Smyrn. 3.3; 12.2; 13.2).

Ignatius' letters deserve some attention here since they will not be dealt with extensively in the next chapter. Several types of evidence from Ignatius are indicative of the sort of material obscured by the common sectarian reading. First of all, despite the clear distinction between the church (spirit) and the world (flesh), there are various indicators of noteworthy positive relations with outsiders in the Ignatian material, both on the part of Ignatius and on the part of the Asian Christians. The principal conflicts faced by the Christian assemblies in Asia were internal (docetics and judaizers), not external, in Ignatius' view. In those few passages when outsiders are discussed, the attitude is quite positive. Ignatius points out praiseingly that the bishop at Tralles commands great respect not only within the Christian assembly, but also among "godless" outsiders (Trall. 3.2). It is in this same letter that Ignatius shows further concerns with the image of the Christians in the view of outsiders: "Let none of you have a grudge against his neighbour. Give no occasion to the Gentiles, in order that the congregation of God may not be blasphemed for a few foolish persons" (Trall. 8.2 [LCL]; cf. 1 Peter 2:12; Polycarp, Phil. 10.2-3). When Ignatius encourages the Christian assembly at Ephesos to

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105 But also see the critique of Schoedel's interpretation of imperial-related issues in the next chapter.

106 This despite the fact that Ignatius also emphasizes other respects in which there is a clear contrast between Christians and "the world," which come to the fore especially in the letter to the Romans (2.2; 3.3; 6.2; 7; cf. Magn. 5 [two coinages, of God and of the world]). But quite often Ignatius seems to have in mind physical existence or the flesh (especially his own life which he expects to lose), wealth, and other such material things when he uses the term "the world" in such a negative way, usually not outsiders.
pray for outsiders, he even employs familial language in calling on Christians to treat these outsiders as "brothers" (Eph. 10.1-3). One wonders how Meeks (1983:85-88) would deal with this language of belonging that extends outside the boundaries of the Christian group. For in the case of the use of this language within Pauline Christian groups he suggests that by "this kind of [familial] talk members are taught to conceive of only two classes of humanity: the sect and the outsiders" (Meeks 1983:86). Something more complicated than this is going on in the case of Ignatius.

Secondly, there are other signs of Ignatius' own knowledge of or openness to certain aspects of society and culture within the polis, suggesting that he did not consider himself to be, as Maier (1991:168) thought, the "embodiment of separation from the world." In addressing the Ephesian Christian assembly, Ignatius uses positively the well-attested local analogy of an association of initiates, calling the Christians συμμύσται ("fellow-initiates") of Paul; and at several other points he draws on the imagery of the mysteries to speak of Christian belief and practice (Eph 12.2; 19.1; Magn. 9.1; Trall. 2.3; cf. IEph 213, 1506, 1595; IMagnMai 117, 215; ISmyrna 330, 601, 622, 655; ITrall 74, 86, 168). In the same letter Ignatius draws on the imagery of a sacred procession, so familiar to those living in a city like Ephesos, to speak of the Christians: "So you are all processionists (σύνοδοι)--God-bearing, temple-bearing, Christ-bearing, bearers of holy things (θεοφόροι καὶ ναοφόροι, χριστοφόροι, ἄγιοφόροι)--adorned in every respect with the commandments of Jesus Christ" (Eph. 9.2 [trans. mine]; cf. IEph 276, 991 [συνέδριον τῶν χρυσοφόρων]; IEph 293, 1250 [οἱ σακεφόροι μῦσται of Dionysos]; IEph 546 [τόπος εἰκονοφόρων χρυσοφόρων]; IHierapJ 153 [σμειαφόροι]). Further echoes of religious life in the polis can be noted. Ignatius picks the analogy of pagan sacrifice to speak of his forthcoming martyrdom (Rom. 2.2) and more than once he uses the analogy of choral singing (Eph. 4; Phil. 1.2). Ignatius expects his readers to identify well with such images taken from local cultural life. Overall, this type of material is suggestive of viewpoints
which see the Asian Christian assemblies as, in some important respects, part of, not utterly separate from, the social and cultural framework of the polis. They find their place within the polis and can express their identity in terms taken from this cultural context, despite their own distinctive identities in other regards.

There are similar indications of the more complicated nature of group-society relations among Christian groups of Asia in the Pastoral epistles, which further suggests the inadequacy of applying the sect model. Labelling the Pastoral epistles “bourgeois” (bürgerlich) (à la Dibelius) is problematic in the least. But the characteristics of the letters that led scholars to come up with the label do indeed suggest a Christian leadership- or community-approach in Roman Asia which in some respects accepted and/or transformed some Hellenistic values of “good citizenship” and other conventions of civic life.107

Evidence from the Pastoral epistles should caution us in assuming that all Christian groups in Asia were sects with a high degree of tension with outsiders and in opposition to all social or cultural values of the polis. I discuss passages relating to imperial-related issues extensively in the next chapter (1 Tim 2:1-2; Titus 3:1-2), but it is worth at least noting some other evidence here. As with Ignatius, the author of the Pastoral epistles clearly emphasizes the distinct status of believers as “the elect” with a “holy calling” (cf. Titus 1:1; 2 Tim 1:9-10; 2:10) and he contrasts this with their pre-Christian status (Titus 2:12; 3:3-8). Yet, as in Ignatius’ epistles, the principal threat or conflict which the author perceives comes from those “unbelieving” opponents or false teachers within the church.

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107 See Dibelius 1931 (cf. Conzelmann’s more recent edition of the commentary); Spicq 1969. For further discussion see Kidd 1990 (cf. MacDonald 1988:160-202) and the discussion of the Pastorals in the next chapter. Aspects of Dibelius’ influential view are based in part on notions that earliest Christianity was initially a “religion of the poor” that only in later years, as in the Pastorals, included wealthier members who brought with them Hellenistic values concerning wealth and good citizenship. This, together with the value-laden assessment of the Pastorals’ viewpoint as a negative sign of accommodation to worldly ways and a fall from an ethically superior earlier Christianity is also problematic; this also corresponds to value judgements concerning a shift from a superior eschatological earliest Christianity to an inferior ecclesiastical, catholic form of existence from the second century. Others who refer to the Pastorals as bourgeois or middle-class, such as Spicq, do not see the acceptance of some Hellenistic values or ethics in the Pastorals as a negative development, however; in fact, Spicq suggests, it was in significant ways in continuity with Paul himself (see Kidd 1990).
(cf. 1 Tim 1:3-11; 5:13-16; 6:3-7; 2 Tim 4:3-4; Titus 1:13-15), not from outsiders.

There is, in fact, a continuing concern on the part of the author with the perception of the Christian groups in the eyes of outsiders.

The Pastor's advice regarding proper behaviour among Christians of varying status within the church reflects both his prevalent concern for the view of outsiders and his acceptance of certain values of Greco-Roman culture. The requirements for assuming leadership in the Christian assembly, "the household of God" (1 Tim 3:15), present values concerning the household which would be shared with outsiders:

Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable...He must manage his household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way; for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church?...Moreover he must be well thought of by outsiders, or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the slanderer (1 Tim 3:2-7).

Christian slaves are also to behave in ways that are pleasing to non-Christian masters:

"Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honor (πιστεύετε), so that the name of God and the teaching may not be defamed" (1 Tim 6:1; cf. Titus 2:9-10). Young women, too, should live in a way that is acceptable to outsiders:

"So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, rule their households, and give the enemy no occasion to revile us" (1 Tim 5:14). They should be trained "to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind, and submissive to their husbands, that the word of God may not be discredited" (Titus 2:3-5). These are cultural values that were widely accepted within the context of the polis. Overall, the Pastoral epistles' approach to the role of women, which is limited primarily to the household, also reflects a concern with the perception of outsiders. Alternative trajectories in early Christianity in Asia Minor, such as those evident in the Acts of Paul, suggest a far more prominent role for women; but they also show that subversion of cultural values concerning marriage and the household could be among the accusations that outsiders made against Christians (cf. Acts of Paul 3; Origen, Contra Celsum 3.55; MacDonald 1983:59-
Greco-Roman cultural values concerning proper relations within the household are also evident in 1 Peter. In contrast to Elliott’s sectarian-focused approach, other scholars draw a very different picture regarding the social strategy and situation of 1 Peter. Writing about thirty years before Elliott, W.C. van Unnik (1980d [1954]:101) states this about the social strategy of 1 Peter: “In every respect the relation with fellow-men is central, not retreat from the world, but a life in the given conditions.”108 Similarly, Leonhard Goppelt observes that the attempt to gain a place for Christians within Hellenistic society “shapes the theology of 1 Peter in a decisive way” (Goppelt 1993 [1978]:161, 154-61; cf. Goppelt 1982 [1976]; Winter 1994:11-40). David L. Balch’s studies (1981, 1986) challenge Elliott’s portrait of the social situation and strategy of 1 Peter, arguing instead that the household code, at least, represents some degree of acculturation in order to lessen group-society tensions.

In some respects the author of 1 Peter advocates the adoption or continuation of some Hellenistic values and practices. This includes those pertaining to “good works” (or benefaction) and honours for authorities, which I discuss extensively in the next chapter. The household code as a whole (1 Peter 2:11-3:7) suggests a concern with the positive view of outsiders and promotes the adoption of some Greco-Roman cultural values within Christian groups. Yet 1 Peter’s advocacy of certain cultural values and practices did not mean that he suggested an openness to all other aspects of that same society or culture, least of all the “futile ways inherited from your fathers” (1:18), that is, a lifestyle of “passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry” (4:3; cf. van Unnik 1969).

Evidently, the manner in which the sect typologies are often applied to early Christianity does not adequately account for all the evidence. Further primary evidence

108 Despite the fact that van Unnik wrote several important articles on 1 Peter, Elliott virtually ignores his works, mentioning him only in two footnotes without discussion (1990 [1981]:93, 160).
concerning Jewish groups' participation within the polis will be discussed shortly, and the following chapter assembles considerable evidence suggesting that the common sectarian readings of most Jewish and Christian groups in Asia Minor are not plausible in many cases. But first, it is worth tapping into some other insights from the social-sciences—besides the popular church-sect typologies—which may help us to recognize the complexities of group-society relations. Balch’s study of the household code in 1 Peter points out the value of studies of acculturation, for instance: “Instead of the assumption that ‘all Gentile modes of behaviour’ are sinful, anthropologists studying acculturation emphasize that there is a ‘selection’ by the receiving culture among cultural traits of the donor culture. Some foreign traits are accepted and/or adapted; others are rejected” (Balch 1986:86).

**Insights from the social sciences: Assimilation and acculturation**

A brief theoretical discussion of anthropological and sociological insights concerning the processes associated with assimilation and acculturation or culture contact will be useful here. As we shall see further below, although these theories are developed primarily (though not solely) in connection with ethno-cultural groups of the modern era, the insights they provide can provide suggestive and fruitful approaches to better understand our evidence for group-society relations among both Jewish ethnic groups and Christian groups (or their members) in antiquity. J. Milton Yinger’s study (1981:249) defines assimilation as “a process of boundary reduction that can occur when members of

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109 The following paragraphs depend primarily on the following anthropological and sociological studies: Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits 1936; Barnett, Broom, Siegal, Vogt and Watson 1954; Herskovits 1958; Berry 1980; Yinger 1981; Kim and Gudykunst 1988; Marger 1991:116-30; Elise 1995. I am indebted to Balch (1986) for sparking my interest in the subject; others have recently employed notions of assimilation or acculturation in studies of Christianity or Judaism in antiquity (cf. Barclay 1995 and 1996; Snyder 1998). The processes of assimilation and acculturation are to be clearly distinguished from common value-laden terms such as “accommodation”; the former are not concerned with evaluating whether specific developments are “good” or “bad”. 
two or more societies or of smaller cultural groups meet.” But he also stresses that assimilation need not lead to loss of boundaries between a group and society, or of group identity; instead, “assimilation can range from the smallest beginnings of interaction and cultural exchange to the thorough fusion of the groups” (1981:249; cf. Berry 1980:13).

Scholars often distinguish between sub-processes of assimilation, the most important here being (1) cultural assimilation, or acculturation, and (2) structural assimilation (cf. Yinger 1981; Marger 1991:116-29).110 Firstly, acculturation refers to “the phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield, Linton and Herskovits 1936:149). Acculturation can involve the selection, adoption and adaptation of a variety of cultural traits including language, dress, religion and other cultural conventions, beliefs and values which make up the way of life and world view of particular cultural groups. Anthropologists and sociologists emphasize the selective and transformative character of intercultural transmission: “the patterns and values of the receiving culture seem to function as selective screens in a manner that results in the enthusiastic acceptance of some elements, the firm rejection of other elements”; furthermore, “the elements which are transmitted undergo transformations” in the process (Barnett, Broom, Siegel, Vogt and Watson 1954 [italics mine]). At both the individual and group levels acculturation need not be substitutive, replacing a set of cultural traits or radically changing a world view, but rather additive, allowing for the continuation of a particular individual’s or group’s identity and cultural framework despite acculturation (Yinger 1981:252).

Again, acculturation can progress a very long way without the disintegration of a group’s boundaries or existence in relation to a larger societal or cultural entity. John W.

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110 The other two sub-processes are psychological assimilation (identification) and biological assimilation (amalgamation; i.e. inter-marriage).
Berry emphasizes that there are various forms of adaptation in cases of culture contact, some of which can involve a two-fold process that entails the "maintenance of cultural integrity as well as the movement to become an integral part of a larger societal framework" (1980:13). Similarly, it is also important, as Yinger points out, to remain aware of the processes of dissimilation which can occur at particular points in a group’s history. That is, certain levels of acculturation or assimilation in the case of a particular cultural group can also be accompanied by conscious efforts to re-assert and strengthen specific intra-societal differences: “powerful assimilative forces are matched by renewed attention to socio-cultural differences” (Yinger 1981:257, 257-61).

The second main sub-process of assimilation of interest to us here is structural assimilation, which can be discussed in terms of both primary (or informal) and secondary (or formal) levels. At the primary level, individual members of a given ethnic group can interact with persons from other cultural groups by way of personal social network connections. Scholars often cite as examples linkages with or memberships in neighbourhoods, clubs and associations, involving members other than those of the primary cultural group (cf. Yinger 1981:254; Marger 1991:118; Elise 1995:275). This will become relevant when we come to consider Jewish or Christian individual’s dual or multiple memberships or interactions within other institutions and sub-groups of society, including occupational associations. The occupational connections of Christians and Jews are especially important in this regard, for as Yinger (1981:254) points out incorporation within occupational networks “almost certainly leads to at least some acculturation, identification [i.e. psychological identification with occupation or fellow-workers], and amalgamation [e.g. inter-marriage].”

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111 Berry suggests a three-phase course characteristic of acculturation: contact between two groups with differing cultural values and practices; conflict in cases where there is some degree of resistance to the other cultural forms; and adaptation which can take a variety of forms. Among the forms of adaptation are rejection, which involves withdrawal from society (more akin to sectarianism), and integration, as quoted above.
The secondary level of structural assimilation involves members of a particular cultural or ethnic group becoming more evident and participatory in the formal political, legal, social or economic institutions of society. Total assimilation at this level would entail equal access to power and privilege within the major societal institutions, but, again, there are a range of possibilities in the nature and degree of these secondary relations.

Now that we have some idea of the nature and complexity of the processes of assimilation and acculturation, it is important to make a few clarifications regarding how they might help us to understand the evidence for group-society relations among Jews and Christians within the larger social-cultural matrix of the Greco-Roman world. First of all, it is important to realize that in many cases we are dealing with at least a two-way cultural exchange, both sides of which involve individual and group levels. On the one hand, Gentiles were among those constituting the membership of many Christian groups, and even some Jewish groups, in Asia Minor. These Gentiles were, as are all individuals, culture-carriers who brought with them a set of cultural traits pertaining to a particular way of life and world view; and their cultural heritage and social world were profoundly shaped by and, at least at some point, consonant with those of surrounding culture.

Though many Christian groups were not ethnic groups in the same sense that Jewish groups were, we can indeed think of them as groups with, in some respects, a distinctive cultural complex derived in part from the Jewish world view and ethos. In this cultural respect, both Christian and Jewish groups (along with some other ethnic-based associations such as Samaritans) differed from many other associations that one might join in the civic context. A Gentile's experience in associating with individual Jews or Christians and subsequently in joining a Jewish or Christian group, then, would entail a process of culture contact or acculturation. The person would go through a process of

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112 This is precisely why 1 Peter's characterization of the recipients as exiles of the diaspora (1:1-2) might work, despite the fact that the audience appears to be primarily Gentile (e.g. 4:3-5). It is also worth noting that he expresses their distinctiveness in ethnic terms (cf. 2:9-10).
enculturation into the specific cultural complex of a particular Jewish or Christian group; this would entail a selective process of rejection, adoption and adaptation of specific social and cultural elements by the Gentile member (both of her own Greco-Roman cultural heritage and of the newly joined group). But this would also entail the potential social-cultural modification of specific elements of the group as well, especially as more Gentiles joined and interacted with fellow-members.

Presumably, though, the enculturation of a new Gentile member would vary from one person to the next and would not necessarily involve complete assimilation, so to speak, to a particular group's social-cultural matrix. In other words, a Gentile would not utterly reject all facets of the Greco-Roman social world: a person might not cut off all previous connections and affiliations within social networks (including occupational ones) in the polis, for instance, even though membership in a such a "deviant" or minority cultural group could influence, to varying degrees, transformations in the nature of such contacts. My point is that we should not be surprised to find a certain degree of agreement in some of the social and cultural values and practices between members of the Christian groups and other inhabitants within the civic context, despite the differences which would, perhaps increasingly, develop between a given Gentile-member and a Gentile-non-member; these differences would be particularly present with respect to changes in the positions of God, the gods and others (including emperors as we shall find in the next chapter) in the cosmological framework or world view of the member, which could also have significant impacts on behaviour and practices. These circumstances concerning entrance of Gentile members would also influence the dynamics of cultural or structural assimilation (or dissimilation) of the group in relation to society, which brings me to the second dimension of the two-way process.

On the other hand, as groups with a particular cultural complex, Jewish and Christian assemblies living alongside other associations within the structures of the polis
would also be affected in varying ways by contacts with the social and cultural institutions, conventions, practices and values of surrounding society. Such groups could also adopt, adapt and develop ways of finding a place within civic society akin to the ways of other social-religious groups in that setting, as we will begin to see in the next chapter. It seems that many of the Jewish groups we find in Roman Asia had been living there for extended periods of time, sometimes even centuries, and this would play a role in the nature of culture contact or acculturation. For as Martin N. Marger (1991:127) points out, this temporal factor is often an important variable: "the more recent a group's entry into the society, the more resistance there is [both on the part of the group and of society] to its assimilation"; a corollary of this is that groups "with alien ways are seen differently after they have lived in the society for several generations."

The group-society relations of both Jewish groups and Christian groups whose membership drew on networks associated with Jewish ethnic connections, then, would be affected by such factors. Christian groups whose membership was substantially Jewish would differ in the nature and extent of acculturation from those which consisted principally of Gentiles. But both kinds of groups in the cities of the Greek East could acculturate (or not acculturate) in various ways. It is important to stress again that processes associated with acculturation and assimilation do not necessarily lead to complete assimilation, if by this we mean the dissolution of group boundaries or loss of a distinctive cultural identity. Certain levels of assimilation and the continuation of strong group-identity (including processes of dissimilation) are not mutually exclusive.

The main point of this section has been to suggest that a complex scenario akin to acculturation, assimilation and dissimilation (rather than the overly simplistic separationist focus of sectarian typologies) should be imagined for various Jewish and Christian groups (or individuals) within the polis of the Greek East: while particular groups (or individual members or leaders) might firmly reject certain aspects of the values, symbols, conven-
tions and institutions of surrounding culture and society, they might also maintain, accept or adapt others, without necessarily undermining or losing their own distinctive ethos, world view or group-identity. There would be a range of possibilities for group-society (or individual-society) relations. Some Jewish and Christian groups could more closely approximate than others the sort of relations we find between other associations and specific aspects of larger society. This is something we shall see presently in regard to the evidence for many Jewish groups in Asia and, more specifically, with respect to both Jewish and Christian groups in the next chapter concerning imperial facets of civic life.

A revised view of Jewish groups in the diaspora

Until recently, it was common for scholars to depict Jewish groups of the diaspora as isolated and introverted communities living in a hostile environment, largely alien to the institutions, conventions and values of the social and cultural matrix of the civic context. This exclusiveness ensured their identity over against “syncretism,” serving as a “barrier against the influence of the alien environment,” as Victor Tcherikover puts it (Tcherikover 1966 [1959]:29; cf. Smallwood 1981:123. Also see Trebilco 1991:186, 263 nn.1-3). This depiction of Jewish groups as sectarian in relation to society has continued to influence depictions of Christian groups in the same setting, including those of Meeks and Elliott.

However, recent studies are beginning to challenge this view. Instead, the emergent picture shows a diversity of Jewish groups many of which could be at home as participants in the polis despite their distinctive self-understandings and identities (cf. Kraabel 1968; Blanchetière 1974, 1984; Rajak 1985; Trebilco 1991:167-85; Cohen 1993; Gruen 1998). Thus, John J. Collins (1983:129) states that “the dominant tendency of Diaspora Jewry was to live as loyal subjects of their gentile masters and participate in the culture and society as fully as possible within the constraints of their religious tradition.”
Paul R. Trebilco’s study of Jews in Asia Minor specifically finds that “the Hellenistic polis accommodated considerable diversity of population without demanding uniformity,” and that “a degree of integration did not mean the abandonment of an active attention to Jewish tradition or of Jewish distinctiveness” (1991:187).

Along similar lines, John M.G. Barclay’s study of Jews in the diaspora and in Asia specifically proposes a range of possibilities in levels of assimilation. There could be high assimilation among Jewish individuals like Niketas at Iasos, who in the second century BCE made financial contributions to a Dionysiac festival (CIJ 749; cf. CIJ 82 [Oropos, Greece]); medium assimilation among many Jews in Asia who were quite well integrated within civic life but maintained their distinctive group-identity; and low assimilation among others, especially at times and places where conflicts with outsiders were more prevalent (Barclay 1996:259-81, 320-35). These revised understandings of the relation between many Jewish groups and the polis (along with evidence concerning other associations) provide analogies for how we should view the spectrum of possibilities for group-society relations among Christian groups in the cities of Roman Asia, I would argue.

Participation of Jews in civic life is attested in several ways, some of which seriously undermine scholars’ contentions that most Jewish groups, like Christian ones, were fundamentally sectarian or utterly exclusive in terms of membership, “supplanting all other loyalties,” as Meek puts it. There is clear evidence from Roman Asia (especially epigraphical evidence) that being a member in a Jewish group did not mean the dissolution of all participation in some of the conventions, institutions and constituent groups of the polis. There were times when some Jewish groups’ practices and relations were akin to those we find among some other associations. I reserve further discussion of Christian evidence specifically to the next chapter.

Here I focus as much as possible on the first two centuries but wander into the third where helpful, briefly discussing as examples three main features or areas of partici-
pation in civic life: social-cultural institutions, social networks of benefaction and other sub-groups, including guilds or associations. The following chapter discusses at length another area of potential participation in or rejection of conventions of society by both Jewish and Christian groups, focusing on imperial dimensions of civic life. Evidence along these lines attests to some of the dynamics of cultural and structural assimilation among Jewish groups or individuals, but it does not tell of the disappearance of boundaries between group and society, nor of the disintegration of the specific identities, world views and cultural practices of these groups and their members.

First of all, like many other associations (or their members), Jews could be present as participants within the central social-cultural institutions of the polis. The theatre was among the cultural and political focal points of the polis, since this is where various celebrations and performances were held and where the assembly of the people met. At the theatre of Miletos there was reserved seating for the “Jews and god-fearers” alongside other guilds such as the “emperor-loving goldsmiths” (Kleiner 1970:18-20; II CE). Some Jews could also participate in the activities of the gymnasium, even forming age-group associations or joining those that already existed. Thus we find: a reserved place for the association of Judean youths (Ἰουδαίων νεωτέρων) at Hypaipa (between Ephesos and Sardis); Jews among the young-men’s organization (ephebes) at Iasos; and Jews (or perhaps Christians) as members of the local elders’ associations at Eumeneia, all dating to the second or third centuries (CIJ 755; Robert 1946:100-101; Robert 1960:436-39; cf. Lüderitz 1983:11-21, nos. 6-7 [Jewish names among the ephebes at Cyrene in Cyrenaica (late I BCE-early I CE)]. Such evidence may also suggest citizenship in the polis. I shall have more to say of Jewish connections with other associations and guilds under the third point below.

Secondly, some Jewish groups actively participated within civic networks of benefaction in a manner comparable to other associations, which could also involve inter-
action with the principal civic institutions. A lengthy inscription from Smyrna in the reign of Hadrian, for example, lists the donations to the *polis* by several individuals and groups including an imperial cult high-priest, theologians, hymn-singers, and *οἱ ποτὲ Ἰουδαῖοι* (*ISmyrna 697 = CII 742 = IGR IV 1431 = CIG 3148*). The precise meaning of the latter phrase is uncertain, since it is otherwise unattested. But the traditional interpretation of this phrase in religious terms as "the former Jews," namely apostate Jews that had repudiated their faith, is unconvincing. A lengthy inscription recording various benefactions to the *polis* would be an unlikely place to make a public statement of apostasy, and there are no other attested epigraphical parallels to this. The announcement of one's former religious status not only as an individual but as a group would also be peculiar; the clear proclamation of one's geographical origins (with its obvious accompanying religio-cultural implications), however, is common in inscriptions. Moreover, it seems more plausible that the term *Ἰουδαῖοι* should be understood in a geographical sense: this refers to "the former Judeans" (an immigrant association of Judeans). Even though it is clear that *Ἰουδαῖοι* had geographical (alongside cultural) connotations to the ancient hearer, the difficulty here is that we have no other parallels to this specific usage of *ποτὲ* in the known cases of ethnic- or geographic-based associations of foreigners spe-

113 Traditionally (following Jean-Baptiste Frey in *CII* 742), it has been understood as "former Jews" in the sense of apostates: "Jews who had acquired Greek citizenship at the price of repudiating their Jewish allegiance" (Feldman 1993:83, citing Smallwood 1981:507). Those who understand it as such cite no other inscriptive evidence for this interpretation. Moreover, it seems that broader assumptions concerning whether or not Jews could actually participate in such ways within the *polis* without losing their Jewish identity play a significant role in the decision to interpret the phrase as apostasy. A.T. Kraabel, who is followed by others, challenges this translation and suggests the possibility that the term means "people formerly of Judea" (cf. Lane Fox 1988:481; Trebilco 1991:175; *ISmyrna 697* [notes to line 20]). He does not cite inscriptive evidence to back up this use of the term *ποτὲ* specifically to refer to a group of immigrants, however. But he bases this interpretation on the fact that this type of monument erected in connection with benefactions from various groups to the *polis* would be an unlikely place to make a public renunciation of faith. This is a helpful point to make, but it is not decisive. Ross S. Kraemer (1989) builds on Kraabel's suggestion and pursues further evidence which suggests the term *Ἰουδαῖοι* could indeed be used as a geographical indicator. Recently, Margaret H. Williams (1997:251-52) contests Kraabel's suggestion, arguing that conspicuous Jewish apostasy did occur and "foreign residents are never described as 'formerly of such and such a region.'" However, she makes no positive arguments concerning how we should translate this phrase in the inscription (apparently resorting to the unfounded apostasy theory).
cifically. It is important to point out, however, that there is no consistently employed form of self-designation by such groups in Asia anyways, such that we cannot speak of deviations. Often groups simply designate themselves “the Alexandrians,” “the Phrygians,” “the settlement of Romans,” “the association of Asians,” “the Samothracians” without any further clarification or use of a preposition, for instance (see chap. 1). Even without this uncertain (though probable) case of Judeans at Smyrna, there is plenty other evidence concerning Jewish participation in the life of the polis.

There is evidence of similar interaction within networks between a Jewish group and civic institutions at Sardis. In a decree from an earlier era recorded by Josephus, the civic institutions of Sardis provide the Jewish group (which is elsewhere called a σωρια ος) with a place to meet (Antiquitates 14.259-61 [c. 49 BCE]). By the third century, the Jewish synagogue in Sardis was contained within the bath-gymnasium, right next door to the imperial cult hall of the complex (but the doorway was blocked), and some Jews were members of the civic council (Seager 1972:425-35; ISardRobert 13, 14). We shall encounter further evidence of Jewish groups’ involvement within social networks in the next chapter, as well as similar (though neglected) evidence concerning the engagement of some Christian individuals and groups in civic conventions of benefaction.

Such evidence of positive relations or linkages does not, of course, preclude incidents when Jewish groups’ relations with civic inhabitants or institutions or even Roman officials was rocky, especially in the unstable closing years of the republic (cf. Josephus, Antiquitates 14.213-16 [Parion in the Troad]; 14.244-46 [Miletos]; cf. Stanley 1996, though he over-emphasizes anti-Roman sentiment among Gentiles in the cities of Asia Minor). Yet, though sporadic conflicts could certainly arise in later years, the more stable conditions in Asia which followed the establishment of the pax Romana would lessen some

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114 Other associations could use rooms in the gymnasium as a meeting-place, as the latrines reserved for guilds of bankers, hemp-workers, wool-dealers and linen-weavers at the Vedius bath-gymnasium at Ephesos suggest (IEph 454).
of the pressures and tensions between Jewish groups and other inhabitants of the cities (cf. Barclay 1996:279-81).

Thirdly, despite the partial nature of epigraphical evidence, there are indications that members of Jewish groups could continue to maintain important connections—for social, business or other purposes—with individuals and groups in the polis, including affiliations with other associations. As I noted in chapter one, the evidence we do have for the occupational status of Jews (as with Christians) represents an array of occupational activity comparable to the known guilds, and the fact that occupations are mentioned at all on Jewish grave and other inscriptions suggests that this was an important component in their identities (cf. Horst 1991:99-101; Cohen 1993:10; Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987:116-23). So it is not too surprising (despite neglect of the subject in scholarship) to find indications that Jews could also belong to or affiliate with their fellow-workers within occupational networks and associations. Julius was the chief-physician at Ephesos, and hence leader of the synedron of physicians, but he had the Jewish group there take care of his family grave (IEph 1677 = CIJ 745). Julius may have been a Jew, but he may also have been a non-Jewish patron of the Jewish group. In a later era we find Moses' namesake as the head of the goldsmiths' guild at Korykos in Cilicia (CIJ 793; perhaps early Byzantine times; cf. Williams 1994).

Though moving out of the geographical bounds of the present paper, evidence in Philo indicates that Jews in first-century Alexandria were commonly involved in trade as shippers, merchants and artisans (Philo, In Flaccum 57). More importantly, Torrey Seland's recent study shows that some Jews also joined local guilds or associations in the cities; Philo "does not strictly and totally forbid participation, but he is very critical of the associations, and skeptical of joining them" (Seland 1996:110; see De Ebrietate 20-26; Legatione ad Gaium 3.155-59). Turning west, two inscriptions from Ostia seem to suggest that a Christian there was also the member in the shippers' guild (c. 192 CE); it is
worth noting that Marcion from Sinope in Pontus was himself a ship-captain a couple of generations earlier (Lane Fox 1986:295; Tertullian, De Praescriptione haereticorum 30.1-2; Euseb., Historia Ecclesiastica 5.13.1). In light of these indications, it would be reasonable to suggest that similar dual affiliations or memberships could exist among other Jews and Christians, and, as we shall see in the next chapter, this may help us to understanding some of the practices among certain Christians addressed by the Apocalypse.

A discussion of another recently re-edited inscription from Hierapolis in the Lykos valley pertaining to such dual (or multiple) affiliations will serve as an appropriate conclusion to this section (Ritti 1992-93 = AE (1994) 510, no. 1660; cf. IPhyrgR 411 = IHierapJ 342 = CIJ 777, all based on the earlier, incomplete reading of the stone). It dates to the late-second or early-third century of our era (probably c. 190-220 CE), but it is illustrative of the sorts of connections that could exist between Jews (or Christians) and guilds at other times and places. It is worth quoting it in full, for it also reveals other aspects of cultural and structural assimilation:

This grave and the burial ground beneath it together with the surrounding place belong to Publius Aelius Glykon Zeuxianos Aelianus and to Aurelia Amia, daughter of Amianos Seleukos. In it he will bury himself, his wife and his children, but no one else is permitted to be buried here. He left behind 200 denaria for the grave-crowning ceremony to the most holy presidency (proedria) of the purple-dyers, so that it would produce from the interest enough for each to take a share on the sixth day of the month during the festival of Unleavened Bread (i.e. Passover). Likewise he also left behind 150 denaria for the grave-crowning ceremony to the synedrion of carpet-weavers, so that the revenues from the interest should
The inscription reveals that Glykon, a Roman citizen, has prepared a grave for himself and his wife and children. As most commentators agree, Glykon’s request that a customary grave-ceremony be held on two of the most important Jewish holidays, Passover and Pentecost (alongside the third, non-Jewish, festival of the Roman New Year), clearly points to his family’s identity as practicing Jews (or perhaps God-fearers/proselytes). In light of this clear Jewish identity, it is reasonable to assume that this family also affiliated with the Jewish group or synagogue, which is otherwise attested in inscriptions from Hierapolis around this period; but unlike some other Jews there, this family chose to include local guilds, not the Jewish association, in these funerary provisions (contrast IHierapJ 212 = CIJ 775; IHierapJ 69 = CIJ 776).115

What interests us most here are this Jew’s interactions with occupational associations at Hierapolis. Glykon clearly makes financial provisions for both the purple-dyers and the carpet-weavers to regularly execute the grave-ceremonies. Most of the debate concerning the inscription centres on the nature or identity of these guilds and their composition: whether they were (1) solely Jewish, (2) solely “pagan” or Gentile or (3) a mixture of both. Erich Ziebarth (1896:129) was among the first to simply assume and assert that these two guilds were solely Jewish in membership, and other scholars have followed suit (cf. Ramsay 1902:98-101; Applebaum 1974b:480).116 In contrast, Walther Judeich

115 Williams contests Leon’s assumption that synagogue membership dictated burial practices among Jews; instead, Jews could adopt many local burial practices (see SEG 44 828), including (in this case) the involvement of guilds in funerary-related provisions.
116 In Ramsay’s view it would be “impossible” and even “unnatural” to suppose that a Jew would bequeath money to pagan guilds which engaged in worship of pagan deities; unlike others, he adds the possibility that the guild in question is Christian if it is not Jewish (1902:98-100).
holds the view that Glykon was simply following common custom in asking a guild with whom he had business or other contacts to take care of the grave-ceremony; that is, the guilds were not Jewish, but Gentile, as were most other known guilds in Hierapolis (Humann, Cichorius, and Judeich 1898:46, 51, 174). The new Schürer does not engage the issue but states that “the members of the guilds must also have been influenced by Judaism,” implying that they were Gentile sympathizers or God-fearers (Schürer 1973-1987:3.27). Most recently, Trebilco (1991:178-79) addresses these possibilities and adds another, namely that the guilds included a mixture of both Jews and Gentiles (cf. Seager and Kraabel 1983:181), but he is hesitant to take a stand on which possibilities seem most or least plausible.

Though we cannot be absolutely sure, I would suggest that the first option is quite unlikely, the second is plausible and the third is preferable. My argument is based on the consonance of this view with other epigraphical evidence from Hierapolis; it is also most compatible with the evidence for the involvement of Jews in occupational networks (as discussed above) and with other signs of assimilation in the Glykon inscription. First of all, our evidence for guilds in Hierapolis and for the purple-dyers specifically speaks against the solely-Jewish hypothesis. The Glykon inscription does not make any indication that these guilds were distinctively Jewish, nor that they stood out from other such groups in Hierapolis. More importantly, seven other second- and third-century inscriptions concerning the same guild of purple-dyers suggest that, rather than being distinctively Jewish, this guild consisted principally of Gentiles and was viewed as a typical guild.\textsuperscript{117} (Unfortunately, we have no other evidence for the carpet-weavers). So,

\textsuperscript{117} Thus, for example, this guild of purple-dyers was included among the recipients of other funerary foundations (alongside guilds of copper-smiths, nail-workers and cattle-dealers) by persons who show absolutely no sign of Jewish connections (\textit{HierapJ} 133, 227 [c. 190-250 CE]; \textit{HierapPenn} 23). On occasions when the purple-dyers honoured imperial officials (a functionary of the provincial imperial cult and a procurator) there is, once again, no indication that they were distinctively Jewish guilds (\textit{HierapJ} 41-42); it is certainly possible, however, that they included Jews in their number when such honorary activities took place, something clearly in agreement with the evidence I discuss in the next chapter. Nor does the grave inscription of another prominent purple-dyer, also a member in the civic council around Glykon’s time, give any indication of Jewish connections (\textit{HierapJ} 156; cf. \textit{HierapPenn} 37 [grave of a purple-seller]).
although we cannot necessarily assume that the purple-dyers were solely Gentile, we do know that they were not solely Jewish during the era of the Glykon inscription, contrary to the assumptions of Ziebarth, W.M. Ramsay and S. Applebaum.

In light of this, there are two possibilities regarding the composition of the guilds. Either way we have evidence not only of the participation and integration of Jews in civic life but also of Jews’ affiliations with or even memberships in the local occupational associations of Hierapolis. On the one hand, if the guild was composed of Gentiles, we have a Jew following the usual burial customs of non-Jews in Hierapolis (and Asia generally) by including guilds in funerary provisions (see SEG 44 828 and earlier note). If this is the case, the reason for Glykon’s asking these guilds (instead of other groups) to perform the grave rituals would presumably relate to the fact that he had contacts with purple-dyers and carpet-weavers in the context of business or commercial networks, perhaps as a regular customer or benefactor of the groups. On the other hand, what seems even more plausible is that, although consisting principally of Gentiles, at Glykon’s time these two guilds included Jewish individuals (or perhaps Gentile God-fearers/proselytes) who happened to be purple-dyers or carpet-weavers. Suggesting the presence of Jews (or God-fearers) in the guilds would have the added advantage of better accounting for Glykon’s request that apparently “pagan” guilds perform the customary grave-ceremony on Jewish holidays, and we know that Jews (and Christians like Lydia the purple-dyer) sometimes did engage in clothing and other related occupations (cf. CIJ 787, 873, 929, 931; Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987; Acts 16:14-15; 18:2-3). If this is the case, his reasons for choosing these guilds (rather than others) would include a combination of factors: commercial contacts with both Jews and Gentiles and ethno-cultural affiliations with fellow-Jews in Hierapolis.

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118 It is unlikely, though possible, that Glykon is himself a member in one of the guilds in question; however, he does not identify his occupation, and there are numerous other comparable inscriptions from Hierapolis and Asia involving non-guild-members calling on the funerary-related services of a guild.
Both Glykon and the Jews that belonged to these guilds illustrate the potential for dual or multiple memberships in and affiliations with sub-groups within society, one of the factors involved in the process of informal structural assimilation. This understanding of the inscription also fits well with the fact that Glykon and his wife, like other Jews in Roman Asia who maintained a distinctive sense of Jewish identity, show other signs of some cultural and structural assimilation: acculturation to local funerary practices including the form of the epitaph and the grave-crowning ceremony; concern with celebration of the Roman New Year (see Ritti 1992-93:58) alongside the more traditional Jewish festivals; and the structural assimilation implied in the provisions for depositing a copy of the inscription in the civic archives, indicative of the legal procedures to be followed within civic institutions should anyone violate what was stipulated on the epitaph (cf. Strubbe 1994, 1997).

Evidently, Jewish groups and their members could be integrated within civic life in numerous ways, and this could involve memberships in or affiliations with sub-groups within the polis, including occupational associations. This sort of evidence throws into question many scholars’ over-emphasis on conflictual relations and on the exclusivity of membership in Jewish and (by implication) Christian groups, but it does not necessarily involve a lack of some distinctive cultural characteristics on the part of Jews or Christians in relation to society at large, nor the disintegration of group-boundaries. Further information concerning various degrees of selective participation by both Jews and Christians with respect to some specific social, cultural and other facets of the polis will come to the fore in the following chapter. But before we turn to a comparison of Jewish, Christian and other associations in regard to imperial facets of civic life, it is important to conclude with a discussion of the nature and purposes of comparison.
Conclusion

As we saw earlier, when Meeks sets about looking for models or analogies in the Greco-Roman *polis* with which to compare Christian groups, including the household, association, philosophical school and Jewish synagogue, he finds that although the synagogue provides the "nearest and most natural model," "none of these categories quite fits," including the association (Meeks 1983:80, 74). In each case he suggests that the differences between Christian groups and a given model outweigh the similarities in a way that makes further comparison less than fruitful; one begins to get the impression that Meeks views Christian groups not only as distinctive but as unique in the sense that they are incomparable. We also found that many of the supposed substantive differences which Meeks perceives, when investigated further, needed considerable qualification or rejection altogether.

Meeks assumes, often without the same sort of conscious preliminary assessment of differences and similarities, that the sociological model of the "sect" does serve as a useful model of comparison in relation to Christian groups. But, not surprisingly, this model is used in a way that stresses those features of Christian groups which set them apart as separate from their environment, further affirming the uniqueness and incomparability of Christian (but also Jewish) groups. These two features of the approach—one concerning the incomparability of ancient models and the other concerning sectarianism—may be partially understood in terms of a broader scholarly tradition (sometimes with apologetic overtones) which avoids comparison because of a concern to insulate Christianity, but also Judaism, from the possibility of "influences" or "borrowings" from the Greco-Roman environment.

In *Drudgery Divine* (1990), Jonathan Z. Smith traces this scholarly tradition as it manifests itself in discussions of the mysteries and early Christianity (cf. Gasparro
Several of his main observations are worth mentioning here, since they also apply to the question at hand: the Christian evidence has detrimentally shaped scholars' approaches to the collection and assessment of evidence for the mysteries; issues of genealogy (e.g. "borrowings," "influences") rather than analogy have predominated in studies of Christianity in relation to Greco-Roman religions; Judaism (with its accepted influences) has often been used as a device to insulate Christianity from the influences of the Greco-Roman environment; and Greco-Roman religions are often spoken of as, in a broad sense, the "same," while Christianity is viewed as "different" or "unique," and hence incomparable. More significant for the present study, however, are some of Smith's and other scholars' theoretical observations concerning more useful approaches to comparison.

The genealogical approach to the question of comparison misunderstands the nature, purpose and value of analogical comparison as I employ it in the present study. The purpose of comparison (as with the use of social-scientific models and insights, for that matter) is to further our understanding of specific phenomena or issues which are of historical interest to us. As both Smith and Fitz John Porter Poole point out, similarity and difference are not given, they are not always present in the phenomena observed, as implied or falsely assumed in the genealogical or "borrowing" approach; rather they are the result of mental operations in the mind of the scholar, who juxtaposes both perceptions of similarity and difference in order to further understanding. The observation that Christian groups, although similar, are also in many respects distinctive and different from associations (emphasized so much by Meeks) is not at all a deterrent to comparison, it is part of what makes comparison fruitful: "Comparison requires the postulation of dif-

119 For theoretical discussions of comparison in the humanities and social sciences which have informed the present discussion see: Eggan 1954 (anthropology); Sjoberg 1955 (social sciences); Smith 1982, 1990; Poole 1986 (anthropology). Also see Kloppenborg 1993a regarding associations specifically.
ference as the grounds of its being interesting...and a methodical manipulation of dif-
ference, a playing across the 'gap' in the service of some useful end" (Smith 1982:35
[italics mine]). As Poole (1986:417) puts it, difference “makes a comparative analysis
interesting; similarity makes it possible.”

Comparison furthers our understanding and our ability to explain by providing a
new vantage point from which to view particular phenomena or issues. This re-visioning
aspect is well stated by Smith (1990:52):

comparison does not necessarily tell us how things ‘are’ (the far from latent
presupposition that lies behind the notion of the ‘genealogical’ with its quest for
‘real’ historical connections); like models and metaphors, comparison tells us
how things might be conceived, how they might be ‘re-described’...A com-
parison is a disciplined exaggeration in the service of knowledge. It lifts out
and strongly marks certain features within difference as being of possible
intellectual significance, expressed in the rhetoric of their being ‘like’ in some
stipulated fashion. Comparison provides the means by which we ‘revision’
phenomena as our data in order to solve our theoretical problems.

It is this approach to comparison which informs the case study in the following chapter,
where I engage in a regionally-focussed comparison of associations of various kinds with
Jewish and Christian groups concerning imperial aspects of civic life.

The appropriateness of comparing such social-religious groups has become
increasingly apparent in the preceding chapters. There are significant similarities apparent
between associations and both Christian and Jewish groups at various levels, which is not
surprising considering the fact that both lived and developed within similar civic settings:
both were small, non-compulsory groups that could draw their membership from several
possible social network connections within the polis; both could be either relatively
homogeneous or heterogeneous with regard to social and gender composition; both
engaged in regular meetings that involved a variety of interconnected social, religious and
other purposes, one group differing from the next in the specifics of activities; both
depended in various ways upon commonly accepted social conventions such as benefaction
for financial support (e.g. a meeting-place) and the development of leadership structures; and both could engage in at least some degree of external contacts, both positive and negative, with other individuals, benefactors, groups or institutions in the civic context.

Perhaps most striking is the fact that in antiquity Christian, Jewish and Greco-Roman authors alike did compare the groups, whether positively or negatively. Despite their peculiarities, both Jewish and Christian groups could be viewed by contemporaries as associations in the usual sense, and there are clear indications that these groups could also understand themselves as such. None of this is meant to underplay the diversity among both associations and Jewish or Christian groups, each of which could develop its own individual self-understanding. Nor is this meant to ignore the culturally distinctive elements of the world views, values, practices and identities of both Jewish and Christian groups (as well as some other associations) which, in some ways, distinguished them from others.

Having said all this, it is important to reiterate that comparison is appropriate and useful if the actual process of doing so furthers our understanding of the phenomena under

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120 Among Greco-Roman authors, for example, Pliny understands the Christians brought before him in Pontus as members of an association of Christ-devotees in referring to their obedience to his edict concerning hetaerai or collegia meetings (Epistulae 10.97.7-8); Lucian characterizes Peregrinus of Parion in Asia as both thiasos-leader (θιασόρχης) and synagogue-leader (ἑνωγωγητὶς) of the Christians in Palestine, referring to Christianity as a “new initiation rite” (νικαὶ τοῦτον τελείω) (Peregrinus 11); Celsus refers to the followers of Jesus as a group of thiasos-members (θιασώτας), and he attempts to criticize Christianity as an obscure and secret association (κωμωνία) based on, among other things, their failure to set up altars, images and temples to the gods (Origen, Contra Celsum 3.23; 8.17; cf. 1.1). In the edicts presented by Josephus, Jewish groups at Parion are included under the rubric of θιασος and at Sardis the Jews are called a σύνοδος (Antiquitates 14.215-16, 235; cf. Philo, Legatio ad Gaium 312, 316). Much of Philo’s discourse on the contemplative life is spent comparing and contrasting the superior beliefs, ascetic practices and “mysteries” of the Jewish association of therapeutai to the supposed drunken confusion of other Greco-Roman associations and banquets (De Vita Contemplativa; cf. Specialibus Legibus 2.145-46; Legatio ad Gaium 312-13; Seland 1996:114-17). Elsewhere Philo refers to Moses as a hierophant who initiated Jews into the mysteries (De Virtutibus 33.178). Ignatius uses a local analogy in referring to the Christians at Ephesos as “fellow-initiates” (συμμάχοις) of Paul (Ign., Eph. 12.2; cf. 19.1). Tertullian attempts to defend Christianity as a superior association (factivo, corpus) in relation to other such groups (Apologeticus 38-39). Eusebius speaks of the Christian churches as “our θιασός” (Historia Ecclesiastica 10.1.8). Earlier I noted that both associations and Jewish or Christian groups could use the same group self-designations.
investigation. As we shall see, attention to both similarities and differences among associations (Jewish and Christian groups included) provides new perspectives and furthers our understanding of the numerous and individual ways in which small social-religious groups and their members found a place for themselves (or failed to do so) within the social and cultural landscape of the *polis* under Roman rule.
Chapter 7
Honouring the emperor or assailing the beast:
New perspectives on Jewish and Christian groups of Asia
and the Apocalypse of John

Introduction

The discussion of associations in the first two parts of this study showed that
groups of various types maintained relations with the polis and that imperial cults and con-
nections played a significant role within this context. Moreover, diverse associations
could be integrated in varying ways and to different degrees within the polis and empire.
The previous chapter showed that Christian and Jewish groups are comparable to associa-
tions in some significant respects. Furthermore, that chapter also threw some doubt onto
the common wholesale categorization of Jewish and Christian groups in Roman Asia as
sects that were separated from virtually all aspects of life within the polis. Instead, I sug-
gested a more complex scenario for group-society relations entailing a range of pos-
sibilities with regard to participation in or separation from particular social and cultural
facets of the polis under Roman rule. The case of Jewish groups in Roman Asia showed
that some synagogues, like associations, were participants within certain areas of life in
polis.

The purpose of this chapter is to re-assess the evidence regarding imperial honours
and connections among both Jewish and Christian groups through a comparison with the
pattern outlined in the case of associations. This roots us in the realities of life for actual
groups in Roman Asia, rather than merely theorizing in a vacuum concerning group-
society relations. In significant respects, I argue, this pattern fits reasonably well the evi-
dence for some Jewish and Christian groups in a way that suggests that a sectarian reading
of these groups is no longer plausible. This comparative case study allows us to see both
similarities and differences among associations and Jewish and Christian groups, pointing
to areas of both participation and non-participation. It also draws attention to a range of
possibilities in group-society relations among diverse Jewish and Christian groups within
the same geographical region. There were, as we shall see, different grades of participation in these areas of society.

Some Jewish and Christian groups, like associations, could be involved in conventions of civic life relating to honours for emperors and imperial representatives, participating within relations that linked the *polis* to province and empire. Furthermore, the emperors were significant for the internal life of some Jewish and Christian groups (e.g. prayer). This is a trajectory of Christianity evidenced in 1 Peter, the Pastoral epistles and Polycarp, for instance. Certain Christians could also find themselves in other social contexts where imperial cult rituals (e.g. sacrifice) were performed and where communal meals involving consumption of idol-food occurred (e.g. guilds), as was the case with the Nicolaitan opponents of the Apocalypse. Others such as the author of the Apocalypse, however, disagreed with such moderate positions with regard to participation within imperial and other aspects of society. Instead, he promoted strict sectarian boundaries and a much lower participation-level in the life of the *polis*.

But, unlike some associations, virtually all Jews and Christians, at least as groups, refrained from full participation in cultic honours for the *Sebastoi*, by which I mean active involvement in ritual activities (such as sacrifice or mysteries) which entailed acknowledgment of the emperors as gods. This had implications regarding group-society relations and tensions, but we should not exaggerate the importance of non-participation in imperial cults specifically, since these cults were embedded within social and religious life in the *polis*. The significance of non-participation in imperial cults for our comprehension of group-society relations should be understood within the broader context of Jews’ and Christians’ “atheism,” their failure to honour any gods other than their own. Attention to

\[121\] There were various types of honours, some of which could be granted to either humans or gods: monuments, plaques or other dedications could be set up in honour of both human benefactors and deities, for instance (see chap. 5). However, certain types of honours, namely cultic honours or rituals (especially sacrifice), were reserved for the gods or heroes only (see chap. 4).
these areas of both involvement and avoidance furthers our understanding of how some Jewish and Christian groups found a place for themselves within the social-cultural matrix of the polis under Roman rule. It also clarifies the ways in which they simultaneously maintained their distinctive identities.

This comparison of group practices provides a context in which to reassess specific aspects of the Apocalypse of John. Clearly, John disapproves of Christians participating in social, religious and economic practices of civic life, especially its imperial dimensions. He advocates a sectarian perspective, drawing sharp boundaries between the Christian groups and society. Yet this is only one side of a conversation, for a significant number of Jews and Christians in the cities of Asia, it seems, were more open towards participating in some aspects of the polis. This participation included commonplace activities such as honours for the emperors (wherein the status of the emperors as gods was not clearly acknowledged) and affiliations with fellow-workers in occupational associations. The evidence discussed throughout this study sheds light on John’s strategy, his views of imperial cults and his Christian opponents.

Outline of the chapter

A brief outline of the chapter will clarify how the argument unfolds. The first section is devoted primarily to outlining evidence concerning Jewish and Christian participation in civic life. This challenges the common sectarian reading of these groups. After briefly discussing attitudes towards the Roman empire in Jewish apocalyptic and oracular literature, which will also provide background to John’s Apocalypse, I go on to some evidence from Josephus and Philo regarding actual Jewish practices in the diaspora. This prepares the way for an extensive discussion of primary evidence regarding the imperial-related practices of some Jewish and Christian groups in Roman Asia, making reference to the concrete analogies offered by the evidence concerning associations. I give attention to
the participation of Jewish and Christian groups in practices such as prayers or honours for the emperor, the erection of monuments in the emperor’s honour, contacts with imperial officials, and other related conventions of the *polis*. Scholars who take a sectarian-focused approach to early Christianity or diaspora Judaism do not adequately deal with such evidence. The discussion of Jewish inscriptive and literary evidence and Christian literary evidence pertaining to Asia Minor, including 1 Peter and the Pastorals, sets up what we can call the moderate position regarding participation in imperial-related practices within society. I also briefly place this moderate position (and its implications for actual practice) within the broader context of early Christianity with reference to Paul’s letter to the Romans, *1 Clement* and Luke-Acts. This is the political posture against which we can begin to understand the alternate stance and strategy of John’s Apocalypse in the final section of the chapter.

Before going on to the Apocalypse, though, I address the nature and significance of Jews’ and Christians’ non-participation in cultic honours for the imperial gods, or imperial cults. This entails further discussion regarding the nature of persecution in Asia Minor. This, too, will set the stage for the discussion of the Apocalypse. This section on non-participation in imperial cults contributes to the overall thesis of this study by clarifying and re-evaluating the actual significance of imperial cults for understanding group-society relations and tensions. There is a tendency for scholars to exaggerate the importance of imperial cults with respect to the persecutions. In this regard, it is common for some scholars to assume that hostilities towards empire as evidenced in John’s Apocalypse were naturally widespread since imperial cults were at the centre of conflict. However, I argue that imperial cults were an issue for group-society tensions only insofar as they were part and parcel of social and religious life in the *polis*. Failure to honour the imperial gods should be understood in relation to the broader issue of Jews’ and Christians’ “atheism”. This was at the root of popular dislike among some inhabitants which could
occasionally lead to more significant incidents of persecution, some of which reached the attention of Roman officials. I discuss three main incidents illustrating the actual nature of persecution and the significance of imperial cults: the Pliny incident in Pontus, the rescript of Hadrian concerning Christians in Asia and the martyrdom of Polycarp.

The final section of this chapter re-considers three related aspects of the Apocalypse in light of the evidence discussed in this and the preceding chapters. First, John’s strategy and his anti-imperial stance can be better understood in opposition to the moderate position evident in the Paul-Acts-1 Peter-Pastorals-Polycarp-Melito trajectory of Christianity. John is, in part, reacting to actual practices and realities among Christian groups living within the cities of Asia. But John perceives these realities in a different way than other Christians and Jews, viewing Roman imperialism as an evil force with which there should be no involvement. He calls on Christians to change the patterns of their participation within the polis. John’s sectarian stance is a minority one, but, as I point out, this does not necessarily mean that the Apocalypse is the product of a “paranoid mind”. For there are recognizable reasons for his holding his views of empire. Secondly, John’s focus on the problem of imperial cults specifically arises less from their prominence in actual conflicts between Christians and society than it does from his attempt to point out the blasphemous character of imperial rule. Imperial cults take on such a prominent role in the Apocalypse as part of John’s attempt to convince Christians of his particular view of empire. Finally, the evidence discussed throughout the study sheds light on the opponents, whose level of participation in occupational, imperial and other aspects of life in the polis was among the main reasons for John’s opposition to them. These opponents provide further evidence for the participation of some Christian groups in the life of the polis under Roman rule.
Jewish literature, the Roman empire and group-practice

In light of the diversity within Judaism in the Greco-Roman era, regional differences, and temporal developments, it is not surprising to find varying viewpoints with regard to the Romans and their empire within Jewish literature (cf. Bruce 1978; Alexander 1991). The most harsh criticisms of Rome and its rulers come to the fore precisely in writings which are, by nature of genre, concerned with political powers, national calamities and their relation to the unfolding of God’s cosmological plan, especially apocalyptic and oracular writings.

But the relation between rhetoric and the reality of Jewish group-life is not easy to discern (cf. Momigliano 1987b:141; Goodman 1991:222-24). In the biblical commentaries associated with the Qumran community, for instance, we find references to the Romans (Kittîm) both as recipients of God’s vengeance and as tools by which God brings about his eschatological plan (cf. 4QpNah 1-2; 4QpIsa 7-10; 1QpPs 9; 1 QpHab 2-4, 6). But as George J. Brooke’s study cautions, the “image of empire” that emerges is most often controlled by the motifs of scripture, telling us more about methods of biblical interpretation than it does of actual events or perceptions of the Romans or their empire among these Palestinian Jews specifically (Brooke 1991:159).

Understandably, the Romans’ destruction of the temple in Jerusalem was among the focal points of expressions of hostility in literature. Both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch relate the second destruction of the temple (70 CE) in the code of the first (586 BCE), presenting the destruction as God’s punishment for Israel’s disobedience in which ruling powers (Babylon/Rome) are functionaries in bringing about God’s ultimate plan (cf. 4 Ezra 11.39; Kirschner 1985; Collins 1998 [1984]:194-232). Within this framework we find 4 Ezra nonetheless harshly condemning the Roman empire in a manner comparable to John’s Apocalypse: “you will surely disappear, you eagle, and your terrifying wings, and your most evil little wings, and your malicious heads, and your most evil talons, and your...
whole worthless body, so that the whole earth, freed from your violence, may be refreshed and relieved, and may hope for the judgement and mercy of him who made it” (11.45-46; cf. 2 Baruch 36-40; Sib. Or. 5.398-413). Further on the same author denounces Asia (Asia Minor), along with Egypt and Syria, for its affiliations with Babylon/Rome: “And you, O Asia, who share in the glamour of Babylon and the glory of her person—woe to you, miserable wretch! For you have made yourself like her; you have decked out your daughters in harlotry to please and glory in your lovers, who have always lusted after you. You have imitated that hateful harlot in all her deeds and devices” (15.46-49). It is unlikely that we would find the (probably Palestinian) Jewish circles in which such literature was produced or widely accepted devoting time to honouring the Roman emperors, but we cannot generalize from this regarding the actual practice of Jewish groups at other times and places.

Similar rhetoric against the Roman empire appears within oracles attributed to the Jewish Sibyl, some of which actually refer to Asia Minor specifically. In particular, one oracle incorporated within the third book, whose initial context of circulation may very well have been Roman Asia (see Bauckham 1991:86-90), focuses on economic exploitation in railing against the Roman imperial presence in Asia:

However much wealth Rome received from tribute-bearing Asia, Asia will receive three times that much again from Rome and will repay her deadly arrogance to her. Whatever number from Asia served the house of Italians, twenty times that number of Italians will be serfs in Asia...O luxurious golden offspring of Latium, Rome, virgin, often drunken with your weddings with many suitors (Sib. Or. 3.350-57).

Scholars usually link this oracle with particular anti-Roman campaigns or propaganda of the first century BCE, most notably that of Mithridates VI (early-1 BCE) or, if an Egyptian context is preferred, that of Cleopatra against Octavian (see Collins 1974:57-64). John J. Collins suggests that it should also be interpreted in light of broader, non-Jewish traditions concerning world history as the conflict between East and West, traditions we find expressed in writings such as the oracle of Hystaspes (Lactantius, Divinae...
Institutiones 7.15.11; Collins 1974:58-59). Yet similar sentiments regarding Roman imperial extortion of Asia and other regions continue to be echoed in other Jewish sibylline oracles as well, some of them written in light of the destruction of the temple in 70 CE (cf. *Sib. Or.* 4.145-50 [c. 80 CE]; 5.155-78 [c. 80-131 CE]; 8.68-130 [c. 175 CE]). On the other hand, later oracles of the Jewish Sibyl actually demonstrate positive attitudes towards Rome and its emperors (*Sib. Or.* 11-13 [III CE]).

For several reasons, there are difficulties in extracting general attitudes or practices of Jewish groups with respect to the Roman empire or emperors from such literature, especially regarding the diaspora (cf. Momigliano 1987b; Goodman 1991:222-24). First, by nature of genre, sibylline oracles (whether Jewish or not) and apocalyptic writings are concerned with prophetic doom and, especially, with critique of political powers or nations generally. The Romans, though at the top of the list, are by no means the only ruling power or nation railed against within the Jewish sibylline oracles or apocalyptic literature of the Roman era. Secondly, these writings were quite frequently occasion-specific, reacting to specific circumstances or cataclysmic events and placing them within a broader cosmic or eschatological framework characterized by dualistic conflict, utilizing imagery and language from earlier Hebrew prophetic literature. Third, as Lester L. Grabbe and others caution, we should not so readily assume that an apocalyptic writing necessarily reflects an actual millennial movement or apocalyptic community.122 The relationship between apocalyptic literature and social realities could be far more complex, as we shall also find with John’s Apocalypse. Moreover, in light of the evidence which I am about to discuss, we are better off taking the anti-Roman rhetoric of this literature as representing one end of a range of perspectives which may or may not have been replicated in the actual ongoing practices of some Jewish groups in the diaspora.

There is, however, other evidence concerning the actual activities of Jewish groups in the diaspora which provides helpful background to the situation in Roman Asia. Despite their apologetic purposes and somewhat philo-Roman tendencies, Josephus and Philo provide evidence of diaspora Jewish attitudes and practices in the first century.\(^\text{123}\) Both suggest that granting special honours to emperors and members of the imperial family was common among many Jewish groups in the Roman empire, though this clearly and understandably stopped short of cultic honours or the dedication of images or statues, which would be considered idolatry or "fornication" by virtually all Jews (cf. Wis 14).

Thus when Josephus responds to Apion of Alexandria's accusations concerning the failure of the Jews to "erect statues (imagines) of the emperors," he points out that this stemmed not from intentions to foster sedition or dishonour these figures, but from obedience to the Jewish God's law forbidding the making of images of any kind.\(^\text{124}\) Furthermore, Josephus suggests, Jews did in fact grant other distinctive honours for emperors and members of the imperial family, among them the sacrifices performed in the temple at Jerusalem on behalf of the rulers, which ceased preceding the outbreak of the war (Contra Apionem 2.68-78; cf. Bellum 2.195-98, 409-16).

In important respects we should not assume that the social-political situations of Jews in Alexandria or Egypt are representative of situations in areas like Asia Minor. Most notably the conflicts between Egyptians, Greeks and Jews that undergird the disturbances during and following the time of Gaius Caligula reflect a historical situation specific to Egypt. Alexandria was in some respects a focal-point of anti-Jewish feelings

\(^{123}\) On Philo's views concerning both the empire and specific Roman emperors or officials, both positive and negative, see Delling 1972 (Philo's encomium for Augustus); Barracough 1984. On Josephus' view of empire, which was not always wholly positive, see Stern 1987. On Josephus as Roman citizen see Goodman 1994.

\(^{124}\) Cf. Tacitus, Annales 5.5: "Jewish worship is vindicated by its antiquity, but their other customs are perverse and disgusting...They do not believe in making images of God, because God cannot be represented in material form, and they do not even permit statues of any kind to stand in their cities, not statues of their kings or the emperors..." (cited in Benko 1980:1064).
and actions, as well as anti-Roman sentiment, in a way that other regions were not. Nonetheless, there are some ways in which Judaism in Alexandria does evince common diaspora practices. Most importantly here, in discussing the riots of 38 CE, Philo refers to the fact that it was common for Jewish synagogues to follow the convention of setting up honorary monuments for emperors. He mentions several different forms which the honours could take including “shields, golden crowns, plaques and inscriptions” (ἄστιδων καὶ στεφάνων ἐπιχρύσων καὶ στηλῶν καὶ ἐπιγραφῶν), but not images (Legatio ad Gaium 133).

Furthermore, before both the Alexandrian riots and Gaius’ attempt to set up his image in Jerusalem (c. 40-41 CE), Jewish groups of Alexandria had followed their usual custom in passing a decree granting honours (τιμῶν) to Gaius specifically, most likely in connection with his accession in 37 CE. But word of the Jews’ decree, which was supposed to be delivered to the emperor by Flaccus, the Roman prefect, was suppressed (according to Philo) until the visit by king Agrippa I just before the riots. Agrippa praised the Jews for their “piety toward the house of our benefactors” (εὐσεβεῖν εἰς τὸν εὐεργετὴν οἶκον) and promised to relay the message to Gaius (In Flaccum 97-104).

Moreover, Philo contrasts the demonstrative Jewish respect for imperial authorities to the dishonour shown by the Alexandrians involved in the riots. Ironically, he suggests, these Alexandrians (including associations under the patronage of Isodoros) were dishonouring imperial figures by tearing down the Jews’ monumental honours and, at the

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125 Cf. Schäfer 1997; Barclay 1996:72-81. On anti-Roman sentiment see the so-called “Acts of the Alexandrian (or Pagan) martyrs” (Musurillo 1979 [1954]), which includes the “martyrdom” of Isodoros, one of those Alexandrian Greeks who was a key player in the anti-Jewish riots under Gaius.
126 On the probable role of some associations in these incidents see In Flaccum 135-45 (cf. Bergmann and Hoffmann 1987:27-31, who speak of them as “anti-Semitic clubs”). For inscriptions regarding associations at Alexandria see Kayser 1994 (nos. 46, 65, 70, 90-101). Unfortunately, the surviving evidence is quite minimal for such groups at Alexandria; there are no extant monuments in honour of emperors, for example, which is also the case with Jewish groups from the area. There was, however, an association at Alexandria called the “Sebaste synodos” which was devoted to Caesar, son of god, Zeus Eleutherios (see Brashear 1993 [5 BCE]; cf. BGU IV 1137).
same time, falsely claiming to honour the emperor by setting up statues (eikóneς) of Gaius in the synagogues, thereby deeply offending Jews and dishonouring God (Legatio ad Gaium 132-40; cf. In Flaccum 51-52). Philo imagines what rationally-thinking Jews might have said to their attackers:

You have failed to see that you are not adding to but taking from the honour given to our masters (τοὺς κυρίους τιμὴν), and you do not understand that everywhere in the world the piety of the Jews towards the revered household (τῆς εἰς τὸν Σεβαστὸν ὅικον ὁσιότητος) clearly has its basis in the prayer-houses, and if these are destroyed no place, no method is left to us for paying this honour (In Flaccum 49 [LCL, with adaptations]).

Due to the accidental nature of archeological finds, we simply do not have any concrete examples of these Jewish honorary monuments and dedications for the emperors from Roman Alexandria specifically. But epigraphical finds from elsewhere in Egypt show that Jewish prayer-houses, like the meeting-places of other associations, were frequently dedicated on behalf of current rulers in the Hellenistic era (e.g. IEgJud 13 [37 BCE], 24 [140-116 BCE], 27-28 [II-I BCE], 125 [47-31 BCE]). Philo’s comments confirm that similar monumental practices, comparable to those of associations we have discussed, continued under Roman rule as well. That Josephus’ and Philo’s statements regarding Jewish practice in the diaspora are not merely apologetic, or totally removed from reality within some circles, we shall see presently with respect to the situation in Roman Asia.

**Participation: Honouring emperors and officials**

**a) Jewish groups of Asia**

In chapter five we found that granting special honours for the emperors or other imperial officials in the form of inscriptions, dedications or other monuments was com-

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127 Such open conflicts pertaining to the Jews’ lack of participation in imperial cults specifically were primarily limited to exceptional periods, such as the reign of Caligula. There were even plans to set up his statue in the Jerusalem temple, perhaps as retribution for the acts of Jews in Jannia who had previously torn down imperial statues (Josephus, Bellum 2.184-203; Antiquitates 18.261-309; Philo, Legatio ad Gaium 184-338; see Grabbe 1992:401-405).
mon convention among associations in Roman Asia. Such concrete honours were one of the means by which these groups staked a claim, I argued, within the civic context, making a statement regarding their place within the networks and hierarchies of polis, empire and cosmos. There is evidence that some groups of Jews in Asia, like associations, could participate in similar civic conventions associated with both the emperors and other imperial-connected individuals. These links suggest that Jewish groups were in some ways participants within civic life and could be among those associations and communities that helped to cement relations between polis and empire.

With regard to concrete forms of honouring the emperors, a decree of Augustus preserved by Josephus will serve as a point of departure for our discussion of Jewish groups in Asia. In keeping with Josephus’ apologetic purposes in presenting many other documents, this decree confirms the rights of Jews in Asia “to follow their own customs,” including the transportation of sacred funds to Jerusalem and Sabbath observance (Antiquitates 16.162-165 [c. 12 BCE]; cf. Philo, Legatio ad Gaium 311-13). But more importantly for our present purposes, Augustus happens to refer to an earlier “decree which was offered by [the Jews of Asia] in my honour concerning the piety (εὐσεβείας) which I show to all men, and on behalf of Gaius Marcius Censorinus” (16.165). Apparently one or more Jewish groups in Asia had followed common custom among communities, groups and associations by passing an honorary decree for the emperor, as well as a Roman official. Word of the decree was subsequently forwarded to Augustus himself. Augustus orders that copies of both his own and the Jews’ honorary decree be set up in a prominent spot in the imperial cult temple of the provincial assembly of Asia, which was located at Pergamon.128

128 The reference to the assembly of Asia ἐν Ὀργυῳ is a corruption in the Greek text, but Scaliger’s emendation, reading ἐν Ἀγρυῳ (which is followed by LCL), does not work historically. The Latin text of Josephus omits the phrase.
There are several points worth discussing in connection with this incident that shed light on the nature of Jewish groups’ potential involvements in civic conventions and practices associated with the emperors. First, besides their act of honouring the emperor by way of a decree (probably setting up an inscription in a meeting-place), these Jews in Asia involved themselves in common conventions of diplomacy by subsequently communicating word of the decree directly to Augustus. As we saw in the case of the Dionysiac initiates at Smyrna, who sent word of their celebrations at the birth of a son within the imperial family, associations could sometimes forward such honours directly to the recipients by way of an embassy or ambassador and could receive a letter or rescript in return (ISmyrna 600-601). Similarly, the hymn-singers of Pergamon had sent a copy of their honorary decree to emperor Claudius; only the opening of his positive letter of response survives (IEph 3801.15-20). Sometimes a provincial governor or some other important ruling official who had direct contacts with the emperor could be asked to convey the message, as was the case when the Jews of Alexandria decreed honours for Gaius.

Yet communicating honours was just one part of a larger set of diplomatic practices in which Jewish groups, like some other associations, could be involved. In some respects these groups were replicating the activities of civic and provincial communities. Millar’s study of the Emperor in the Roman world (1977) clearly demonstrates the request-response nature of Roman rule and the importance of such diplomatic ties in maintaining links between the central imperial power and communities and groups in the provinces. This was part of the glue which held the empire together, and associations could be participants in it.

Quite often, links with an emperor or some other imperial official were a means of furthering the interests of the group or community in question, gaining favours or benefactions in return. These could include special recognition of communal customs or a favourable judgement in a particular case or dispute. Connections with powerful persons
could have quite concrete benefits for the groups or associations involved, then. Thus we found that the Demetriasts of Ephesos, like Jewish groups in Asia, had on numerous occasions successfully gained special recognition of their religious practices both from emperors and proconsuls, and they publicized this in the form of a monument (IEph 213 [under Domitian]). Such diplomatic activities were also of key importance for the settlement of disputes and judicial administration under Roman rule. The Dionysiac worshippers at Kyme who sent an ambassador to the Roman proconsul did so in the hopes of gaining a favourable decision in a case regarding the re-acquisition of their meeting-place (IKyme 17 [under Augustus and Agrippa]).

It is within this context of diplomatic practices among communities and associations under Roman rule, I would suggest, that we can partially understand the activities of Jewish groups in Asia and the favourable decisions they sometimes gained as a result, some of which we find in Josephus’ Antiquities.129 Josephus records several occasions when Roman authorities (emperors, consuls, proconsuls and others) granted Jewish groups in cities such as Ephesos, Sardis, and Miletos various privileges, including exemption from military service, freedom to practice native customs, and freedom to transport the temple-tax to Jerusalem. Thus, according to one document, when the proconsul Jullus Antonius was at Ephesos (c. 9-6 BCE), an embassy of Jews requested that he re-acknowledge the earlier privileges of Augustus and Agrippa that permitted them to deliver the temple-tax and “to live and act in accordance with their ancestral customs without interference” (Antiquitates 16.172-73). Josephus explicitly states his apologetic purposes

129 Antiquitates 16.185-267 (time of Julius Caesar, c. 49-43 BCE), 16.160-78 (time of Augustus and Agrippa) and 14.301-23. There are three kinds of materials preserved by Josephus: decrees of the senate or emperors; decrees of cities; rescripts replying to letters directed to provincial governors. Recent critical study of the documents suggests that although they are presented in an apologetic context (i.e. they are selective) and there are problems with specific documents as they stand, generally they are not forgeries and often they do indeed reflect actual historical incidents and relations (see Rajak 1984; cf. Barclay 1996:262-64). “The names of officials appear to be the principal casualties of the transmission and to have a strong propensity to confusion and corruption” (Rajak 1984:111). For a less accepting view of the documents see Moehring 1975.
in presenting such documents: to show the Romans' benefactions to the Jews in the hopes that the Greek inhabitants would follow suit in not hindering the Jews from following their customs (*Antiquitates* 14.186-89, 265-67; 16.174-78), and he includes some examples when cities did indeed follow this pattern (e.g. *Antiquitates* 14.56-61 [Halikarnassos and Sardis]). Overall the documents in Josephus are not forgeries, but we need to realize that, in keeping with his apologetic purposes, Josephus tends towards generalizing or universalizing what were originally more modest or limited actions and statements (cf. Barclay 1996:262-63).

In contrast to the perspective presented here, the traditional scholarly approach to these documents in Josephus and to Roman “policy” concerning diaspora Judaism more generally has been dominated by a legalistic focus. Jean Juster’s discussion of the documents as juridical sources, depicting the actions of Roman authorities as a series of legal proclamations along the lines of a “Jewish Magna Carta,” reflects common approaches among other scholars (Juster 1914:1.217, 132-58; cf. Rabello 1980). Thus E. Mary Smallwood speaks of the actions of Roman authorities after Julius Caesar as “comprehensive permanent legislation giving positive rights to legalize the practice of Judaism in all its aspects” (Smallwood 1981 [1976]:128). This was a “charter of Jewish rights” which made Judaism a “legal religion” (*religio licita*), unlike the many other supposedly illicit religious groups or associations throughout the empire. Like those scholars who look at the occasional interventions of Roman authorities in the life of associations and interpret them in terms of the establishment and enforcement of permanent legislation, some scholars have taken a similar approach to Roman-Jewish relations of the diaspora. The Jewish Magna Carta theory also depends, in part, on another assumption within scholarship that needs considerable qualification: the notion that Jews *needed* special Roman legal protection because the relationship between Jewish groups and their *polis* of residence was by nature conflictual in an ongoing and consistent manner, something I have begun to qualify here and in the previous chapter.
As Tessa Rajak and others argue, the traditional approach to Roman “policy” regarding diaspora Judaism is inadequate (Rajak 1984; cf. Trebilco 1991:8-12). The privileges found in the decrees which Josephus records do not represent some sort of legally defined Magna Carta protecting the Jews, nor an acknowledgement of their official status as a legally recognized religion (religio licita), but rather ad hoc responses to requests or complaints which were characteristic of Roman rule. The benefits granted were part of the exchanges involved in conventions of friendship and patronage, part of the benefactor-beneficiary relationships in which, as I have pointed out, many other associations of Asia were also participants. As such, they were, in Rajak’s words, “things of the moment” (1984:116) with an impermanence which required the continued activity of Jewish groups in gaining from Roman officials re-confirmation of earlier acknowledgments and benefits.

Returning to the Asian Jews’ honorary decree for Augustus, a second point worthy of note concerns the placement of the monument. The Jews gained something other than

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130 As Millar (1973:145) points out, the notion that “each cult in the Empire was either a religio licita or a religio illicita” is not supported by any ancient source.

131 That the benefits or acknowledgements gained by the Jewish groups were not totally exceptional, but rather part of the common processes by which groups and communities gained such favours, should caution us in arguing that the benefits granted to the Jews were a “deeply resented” focal point of conflicts with other inhabitants in the cities (cf. Feldman 1993:93-94). Christopher D. Stanley, for example, imagines that, even by the time of Julius Caesar, anti-Roman hostility was prominent in the cities of Asia Minor. The inhabitants resented the interference of Roman authorities in their civic affairs, and private “clubs and associations became the forum of choice for anti-aristocratic and anti-Roman sentiment in the cities” (1996:120). While these associations were strictly controlled or disallowed by the authorities (something I challenged in earlier chapters), the Jewish groups, in contrast, were granted special privileges (cf. Feldman 1993:93). He then argues that “the very legal protections that the Jews had earlier received from the Romans set them apart from other immigrant groups as a focal point for anti-Roman hostility” (1996:122-23). In other words, Stanley seems to think that the Romans’ diplomatic ties with and benefactions to Jewish groups (in the form of acknowledgement of their rights to perform their own customs) were utterly different than those pertaining to other groups or associations, which is not the case.

132 A similar picture concerning Roman “policy” on diaspora Jews emerges from Leonard Victor Rutgers’s study of more negative relations: namely, expulsions of Jews from Rome. He argues that the Romans were neither tolerant, nor intolerant towards Jews in the diaspora. Rather, in keeping with the nature of Roman rule, “Rome’s ‘Jewish policy’ remained in essence a collection of ad hoc measures with often limited effectiveness in both space and time” (Rutgers 1998:114). Such measures were more often than not simply a by-product of Roman administrative approaches concerning the maintenance of order or involvement in the conventions of diplomacy.
just recognition of their honours for the emperor and their right to perform their religious customs from this action. If we can understand monumentalizing as, in part, an expression of a group’s place within society, as I have argued in chapter five, then this particularly public placement of the Jews honorary decree within the imperial cult temple of Asia is significant. This tells us something both about how the Jewish groups in question might have been perceived by those who frequented the temple and about the feelings of prestige and importance that the Jews might have felt as a result. Certainly, the Jews’ honorary decree for an emperor and imperial official could be interpreted by those who saw it as an indication that Jewish groups, like other associations, were participants within customary civic and imperial practices. They, like other associations such as the hymn-singers at Pergamon (IEph 3801, part 2), had granted appropriate honours to very important benefactors of the provincial communities and this was recognized within the context of a provincial institution. In this sense, the Jews could be viewed as participants in maintaining the connections between Rome and the province which ensured the well-being and prosperity of the Asian communities.

There would be prestige for the Jews associated with this placement of a monument in such an important place, then, but there is another side to this that pertains to the competitive cultural framework. Other communities, groups and associations would certainly seek to gain imperial recognition of their practices and to have their monuments set up in such a desirable location, but not all could hope to achieve this. In some respects, Jewish groups could be competitors alongside other associations for visibility or prestige not only at the local civic level but also within the broader provincial context. Presumably, there were times when this competitive element could be a source of tensions with other competing communities or groups.

Before going on to discuss Jewish connections with other Roman officials, like Censorinus, it is important to note that the honours granted to emperors specifically find
parallels among other Jewish groups as well, even though chances of the survival of such evidence concerning such relatively insignificant groups (numerically speaking in terms of the overall population) is minimal. It is possible that there was a Jewish honorary monument set up for an emperor at Sardis. Sardis dedicated its new gymnasium round about the time of Lucius Verus’ visit in 166 CE, erecting a statue of the young co-emperor (Yegül 1986: 169, no. 2 [text and trans.]). If I. Rabinowitz’s interpretation of a fragment of a larger Hebrew inscription is correct, reading “BEROS” (the inscription is not yet published), it seems possible that the Jewish group at Sardis had also set up another inscription (perhaps in both Hebrew and Greek) commemorating Verus’ visit at about the same time; if so, then the plaque was preserved and then reused when the Jewish group acquired a space within the bath-gymnasium complex in the third century (see Hanfmann 1967:25; Seager and Kraabel 1983:171, 179, 282 n.25; Trebilco 1991:44, 176. Rabinowitz also notes physical evidence that the fragment had been cut from a larger plaque).

Like their counterparts in Asia and in Alexandria, it seems that some Jewish groups at Rome and Ostia likewise visibly demonstrated their respect for or ties with imperial authorities or emperors. One synagogue at Rome called itself the “Augustesians” in honour of their patron, Augustus, and another named itself the “Agrippesians,” reminiscent of the “friends-of-Agrippa” association we have already encountered at Smyrna (CIJ 365, 425, 503, 284, 301, 338, 368, 416, 496; cf. Richardson 1998; Leon 1995 [1960]:140-42). An inscription from the synagogue at Ostia (a port city of Rome) involves a benefactor, Mindius Faustus, dedicating a structure and a Torah “ark” for the Jewish group. What is especially noteworthy here is the dedication’s use of a customary Latin invocation: *Pro salute Augusti*, “For the well-being of the emperor” (*IEurJud* I 13; cf. White 1998b:53-57; probably II CE). The formula, which would not be traditionally expected in connection with Jews, is used in a similar way in building dedications by Mithraic associations at both Ostia and Rome (*CIMRM* 273, 510). L. Michael White
(1998b:57) aptly states that imperial ties such as these “would inevitably link Jewish residents of Rome or Ostia directly to the non-Jewish population in important social and economic ways.”

We have already encountered considerable evidence that associations of various kinds could also proclaim honours for or maintain positive links with important figures besides the emperors themselves, including Roman provincial officials of senatorial or equestrian status. Returning to the Asian Jews' honorary decree, the second honouree, C. Marcius Censorinus, was an important imperial official of the senatorial order with considerable experience in the Greek East. Among his services in Asia Minor, Censorinus was a legate of Augustus at Sinope in Bithynia-Pontus, probably in the wake of a Bosporan rebellion around 13-12 BCE (Bowersock 1964:208-209). Several years after attaining the consulate at Rome in 8 BCE, he became proconsul of the province of Asia, perhaps in 2 or 3 CE, at which time he died (Velleius 2.102.1). Censorinus’ popularity among other inhabitants of Asia Minor, besides the Jews, is suggested both by a Pergamene honorary decree for him and by the cult (including games) established in honour of this “saviour and benefactor” at Mylasa, which happens to represent the latest evidence we have from the Greek East concerning cults for Roman governors (IPergamon 422; SEG II 549; Sahin and Engelmann 1979; cf. Bowersock 1965:150-51; Price 1984:42-43, 46-47). Like other associations that maintained such positive contacts with provincial officials, the Jewish groups' early ties with Censorinus (probably beginning

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133 See PIR¹ M 163; Miltner 1930; Atkinson 1958:320, 326; Zeitlin 1964-65; Bowersock 1964, 1965:18-19; Sherk 1980:1036-37; cf. IPergamon 292 = OGIS 466; IMilet 255. There is some debate as to the dates of Censorinus' official positions. The decree of Augustus most likely dates to 12 BCE (according to the Latin version of Josephus). Atkinson (followed by Sherk) suggests that the reference in Velleius (2.102.1) may mean that Censorinus was governor of Syria or Galatia when he died in 2-3 CE; she suggests that Censorinus was in fact a praetorian proconsul of Asia at the time of Augustus' edict (12 BCE), before being consul in 8 BCE. However, Bowersock convincingly cautions against this view and suggests the following general chronology which is followed here: legate at Sinope (13-12 BCE; this inscription was not known by Atkinson), consul (8 BCE), proconsul of Asia (2-3 CE).
around or before 12 BCE) could in subsequent years be translated into other favours or benefactions.

Although we happen to lack further concrete examples of honorary monuments set up by Jewish groups for provincial officials in Asia specifically, we do encounter similar evidence elsewhere, as at Berenike (Berenice) in Cyrenaica. Three inscriptions have been found relating to Jewish groups at Berenike, each of them suggesting some degree of integration of the Jews with their Greek neighbours, as Joyce Reynolds also points out. The inscription which interests us most here concerns a monument erected by a Jewish group, probably around 24 CE, in honour of a Roman provincial official named Marcus Tittius, son of Sextus, of the Aemilia tribe (Reynolds 1977:244-45, no. 17 = Roux and Roux 1949 = SEG XVI 931 = IGR I 1024; cf. Bowsky 1987). The Jewish group, like other associations we have encountered, called itself a πολιτευμα, and it was led by several archons, one of whom possessed Roman citizenship. The inscription reads as follows:

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134 On Judaism in Cyrenaica, including the later “diaspora revolt” of 115-16 CE, see Applebaum 1979 and Barclay 1996:231-42. Also see Josephus, Bellum 7.437-53 (regarding an uprising there in the aftermath of the Jewish war).

135 Reynolds 1977:242-47, nos. 16 [55 CE], 17 [c. 24 CE], 18 [c. 9-6 BCE] = Luderitz 1983:148-58, nos 70-72; cf. Applebaum 1979:160-67. The earliest inscriptions (c. 9-6 BCE and 24 CE) are honorary decrees passed by the Jewish politeuma for D. Valerius Dionysius and Marcus Tittius respectively (both discussed below). A third inscription dates to the time of Nero (55 CE), containing a decision of a Jewish group (though not necessarily the same one), this time called “the synagogue of Jews in Berenike,” to inscribe the names of donors who contributed to the renovation of a building.

136 If the date stated in the inscription is calculated based on the Cyrenaican era (rather than the Actian era) then this would be 41 BCE. The significance of the inscription for our present purposes does not fully depend upon dating; nonetheless, the presence of a Roman citizen within the Jewish group at the time of this inscription suggests that 24 CE should be preferred. Martha W. Baldwin Bowsky (1987:504-505) points out that the methods for dating inscriptions at Berenike vary, and that there are even further dating systems besides these two possibilities. She suggests a date of 14/13 BCE partially based on issues pertaining to the reference to the feast of tabernacles. This remains uncertain, however.

137 On πολιτευμα as a general term referring to an unofficial “association” see Zuckerman 1985/88 (contra A. Kasher) and Luderitz 1994, who refute the traditional interpretation which assumes that such groups were officially recognized, semi-autonomous civic bodies (cf. Smallwood 1981 [1976]:225).
In the fifty-fifth year, on the twenty-fifth of Phaoph, at the assembly of the feast of tabernacles, during the archonships of Kleandros son of Stratonikos, Euphranor son of Ariston, Sosigenes son of Sosippus, Andromachos son of Andromachos, Marcus Laelius Onasion son of Apollonios, Philonides son of Hagemon, Autokles son of Zenon, Sonikos son of Theodotos, Josepos son of Straton:

Whereas Marcus Tittius son of Sextus, member of the Aimilia tribe, an excellent man has, since he arrived in the province over public affairs, performed his governorship over these affairs in a good and humane manner and has always displayed a calm disposition in his behaviour; and, whereas he has shown himself to be non-burdensome not only in these affairs but also with the citizens who meet with him individually, and, furthermore, in performing his governorship in a useful way for the Judeans of our polieuma, both individually and as a group, he never fails to live up to his own noble rank.

For these reasons the archons and the polieuma of Judeans in Berenike decided to praise him, to crown him by name at each gathering and new-moon with a crown of olive-branches and ribbon, and to have the archons engrave the decree on a plaque of Parian stone which is to be set up in the most prominent place in the amphitheatre. All pebbles white (results of the vote).

The language of the inscription is most compatible with the suggestion that Tittius was proconsul of Cyrenaica and Crete, but the provincial positions of quaestor or

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138 Hugh J. Mason points out that προστασία in this inscription is the equivalent of the Latin praesidatus provinciae and he interprets this as a reference to the proconsul (Mason 1974: 81). The term ἐπαρχεῖα, translated by Lüderitz with the more general term “prefecture,” is frequently used as a technical equivalent for the Latin provincia, which is how Roux and Roux translate it (see Mason 1974:45, 135-36; Roux and Roux 1949:284).
proconsular legate are not out of the question (cf. Reynolds 1977:245; Bowsky 1987:498-501). So Tittius was probably of the senatorial order but possibly an equestrian. If the name is misspelled here with an extra “t,” and the honorand is in fact a son or grandson of Sextus Titius, a quaestor to Antony in 43 BCE, then it is even more likely that Marcus would have reached the senatorial order by this generation (cf. Münzer 1937).

The Jewish association’s decree, which was passed during its celebration of the feast of tabernacles, is saturated with the conventional honorary language of benefaction. It also shows the group’s common concern for the well-being of the civic community more generally. They praise Tittius as an excellent man and administrator who had exercised his governorship over the province’s public affairs in a humane manner, benefiting the Judeans, both as a group and as individuals, but also other citizens of Berenike. In response to his beneficent behaviour, the leaders and members of the Jewish association voted that he be commended and granted an honorary crown at each monthly gathering of the group.

Furthermore, the decree was to be inscribed on a plaque and set up in a prominent spot within the “amphitheatre” (ἀμφιθέατρον). Several years earlier (c. 8-6 BCE) the same Jewish group had placed another monument in the “amphitheatre,” honouring the Roman citizen D. Valerius Dionysius (likely a member) for plastering and painting the structure or a room therein (Reynolds 1977:245-47, no. 18 = NewDocs IV 111). Regardless of where the monuments were erected--in the Jews’ meeting-place or in the civic amphitheatre--here we have a Jewish group clearly participating in common civic conventions of honours in return for benefactions, maintaining links with a Roman provincial official, most likely a proconsul.

139 The suggestion that Dionysius is a member is based on the fact that the politeuma of Judeans releases this benefactor from liturgies, presumably those within the group since the politeuma would not be in a position to release him from civic liturgies (Reynolds 1977:247).
But there has been some debate as to whether "amphitheatre" is a non-technical designation of the Jewish group's meeting-place or whether it is in fact a reference to an actual civic structure. Those who argue against the possibility of it being a civic structure, such as Gert Lüderitz, base their assessment on the unlikelihood that the floors of a civic amphitheatre would have been plastered, and that it would be "improbable that the Jewish politeuma had a right to put up inscriptions in a public place" (Lüderitz 1994:213; cf. Applebaum 1979:161, 164-67). S. Applebaum (1979:165) questions the possibility that a Jewish group would have frequented such a building, also expressing an important assumption behind the view: "it is hardly to be imagined that the community (however assimilated to Greek habits) would have met to pray in a building contaminated by gentile idolatry."

There is much evidence, however, to challenge Lüderitz's view as the following discussion will indicate. Monumentalizing, in fact, did not make any sense unless at least some degree of public visibility was expected, and associations would naturally seek, though not always receive, permission to set up a monument in or near more significant civic or provincial structures. Furthermore, as the evidence for Jews in the theatre at Miletos and in the bath-gymnasium complex at Sardis suggests, it would not be odd to imagine the Jews of Berenike at least seeking a place in some sense within a social-cultural institution of the polis, possibly even attending as a group. Both monuments in the amphitheatre, although set up by the Jewish association, also make very clear references to the civic inhabitants of Berenike as mutual beneficiaries of Dionysius' and Tittius' actions. Like Reynolds, I believe we should be more inclined to the view that this structure is in fact what its name suggests: a civic amphitheatre (Reynolds 1977:247; cf. Zuckerman 1985/88:179; NewDocs IV 111). If so, this makes quite a statement regarding the integration of this Jewish group within the polis. The monument clearly communicated the Jews' contribution to the life of the polis, indicating the group's important role in maintaining
fitting relations within the webs of power which ensured the well-being of civic communities under Roman rule. Such participation in social networks is further confirmed on a more local basis within Roman Asia specifically.

When we looked at the evidence for associations, we found that contacts with imperial-connected individuals were certainly not limited to emperors or provincial officials like Censorinus or Tittius, but also involved connections with other cultic functionaries or members of the local civic elites. Thus at Akmoneia, for instance, we found the guild of clothing-cleaners honouring T. Flavius Montanus, a member of the local elite who had assumed the high-priesthood at the Ephesian temple for the imperial gods for a time (IGR IV 643). Such local elite families were an important link between the polis and both province and empire. Solicitation and offer of support from a patron did not necessarily mean that she or he was a member or adherent of the cult or group supported. "In parts of Phrygia, Judaism had a high religious profile, and we need not be surprised to see this echoed in social contacts and mutual esteem" (Rajak and Noy 1993:88; cf. Sheppard 1979; Trebilco 1991). The case of Julia Severa at Akmoneia is illustrative.

We have encountered Julia Severa in our earlier discussion of elite family traditions of beneficence which encompassed various groups of the polis, including associations (see chap. 5). Severa was a member of a prominent family, descended from Galatian royalty, which came to play a key role within the webs of imperial power in Asia Minor. Together with her Italian husband, L. Servenius Capito, she had a son, L. Servenius Cornutus, who became a senator under Nero, assuming positions including quaestor in the province of Cyprus and legate of the proconsul of Asia around 73-77 CE (SOTIR 5). Two of her kinsmen (perhaps second or third cousins), C.A.A. Julius Quadratus of Pergamon and C. Julius Severus of Ankyra, were members of the consular order who also assumed the office of proconsul of Asia at one point in their careers (109-110 CE and 152-53 CE respectively; see PIR² 1 507/SOTIR 17 and PIR² 1 573/SOTIR 62).
Julia Severa herself was a prominent benefactor and civic leader within Akmoneia in the decades of the mid- to late-first century, but she was not a Jew, as some had suggested (e.g. Ramsay 1895-1900:639, 650-51, 673; see Trebilco 1991:57-60). On one occasion, the local elders' association honoured her with a monument, also mentioning her role as high-priestess and director of games for the local cult devoted to the Sebastoi gods (*MAMA VI* 263; cf. *MAMA VI* 153* = *IGR IV* 656; Ramsay 1895-1900:649 [coins from the time of Nero]). An inscription from the late-first or early-second century (which represents our earliest epigraphical attestation of a synagogue in Asia) reveals that the Jews of Akmoneia also apparently had ties with this influential woman who was an imperial cult high-priestess at one point (*MAMA VI* 264 = *CIJ* 766 = White 1996:307-10, no. 65):

The meeting-place, which was built by Julia Severa, was renovated by P. Tyrreion Klados, *archisynagogos* for life, Lucius son of Lucius, also *archisynagogos*, and Publius Zotikos, archon, from their own resources and from the common deposit. They decorated the walls and ceiling, made the windows secure and took care of all the rest of the decoration. The synagogue honoured them with a golden shield because of their virtuous disposition, goodwill and diligence in relation to the synagogue

Severa had apparently shown her beneficence by contributing the building in which the Jewish group met sometime around the period 60-80 CE (cf. Luke 7:1-5, regarding the story of a Roman centurion who built a synagogue for the Jews at Capernaum). Along with others who later renovated the building, Severa was honoured by the Jewish group with a golden shield and this monumental inscription. This association with a high-
priestess is not the only sign of linkages with the local elites in this inscription. It seems likely that P. Tyrronius Klados, the head of the synagogue, was associated with the Tyrronius family, perhaps as a relative, freedman or client (cf. White 1996:309-10 n.48), and the suggestion that he, too, is not even Jewish is within the realm of possibility in light of typical values and practices among associations. Members of the Tyrronius family held important civic positions at Akmeia; in fact, C. Tyrronius Rapon served alongside Severa at one point, most likely as civic high-priest (MAMA VI 265 = IGR IV 654; c. 70-80 CE). Like other associations, Jewish groups could be among the competitors for benefactions from influential figures within the civic and provincial context.

b) Christian groups of Asia

Unfortunately, unlike Jewish groups for whom we have some epigraphical remains, concrete material evidence of Christian group-life in Roman Asia is wanting concerning our period of focus (up to the time of Hadrian). The lack of surviving realia concerning Christian participation in imperial facets of civic life specifically is relatively unsurprising in light of the generally partial nature of survival and discovery and the fact that Christians were such a numerically insignificant portion of the population in our period of focus (cf. Hopkins 1998). The case of the Jews at Alexandria in the first century (considered a central locus of the Jewish diaspora population) is illustrative: although we know that Jewish groups in Alexandria did conventionally erect honorary inscriptions and monuments for imperial figures, none have in fact survived. Even when

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140 The title attributed to Klados and Lucius may be honorary rather than functional if the recent study by T. Rajak and D. Noy (1993:88-89) is correct: “For...nothing by way of Judaism or Jewish knowledge need have been required to be a satisfactory archisynagogos, beyond the capacity to display benevolent concern for the group.” “It is conceivable...that you did not have to be Jewish to be an archisynagogos.” Even in this regard the Jewish groups may be reflecting conventions shared by other associations, in which those who held important group titles were frequently wealthy benefactors and not necessarily members.

141 In fact, material evidence for Christianity in Asia Minor (including epitaphs) does not even come into the picture until the mid- to late-second century, partially due to the fact that Christians shared much in common with surrounding culture and would not necessarily stand out (cf. Snyder 1985).
we turn to literary evidence of Christianity in Asia, it is unfortunate that some authors
simply did not have occasion to refer to the emperors or to common Christian attitudes
and practices in regard to imperial facets of civic life. For example, there are no clear
references to such things in Ephesians, Colossians, the epistles of John and (in spite of
attempts to read anti-imperial attitudes into them) the epistles of Ignatius.142

Despite these shortcomings, there is, nevertheless, important and neglected literary
evidence that Christian groups in Asia Minor could in significant ways also participate in
certain imperial facets of civic life. Some did so in a manner comparable to the involve-
ments of other associations and Jewish groups. This participation was one of the means
by which Christian groups, like both associations and Jewish groups, could find a place
for themselves within the social-cultural framework of the polis and empire, despite their
peculiarities and distinctiveness. But as with many Jewish groups or individual Jews, this
participation stopped short of full and active participation in cultic honours specifically,
something I return to in the next section concerning aspects of non-participation and their
significance. The distinction between cultic and non-cultic forms of honours for the
emperors was an important one within many Jewish and Christian circles, even though the
distinction would be blurry or indistinguishable for many other inhabitants in the cities of
Asia. Yet not all Jews or Christians would necessarily consider the same activities within
their definition of active participation in cultic honours or "idolatry," as we will see when
we turn to the Apocalypse and its opponents.

142 The Johannine epistles are primarily concerned with internal issues and problems in the house-churches.
References to "rulers," "powers" and "authorities" in both Ephesians and Colossians seem to relate to angelic
or cosmic beings (e.g. Eph 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10, 15; cf. Arnold 1992 [1989] and 1996 [1995]). Ignatius
complains of mistreatment by the soldiers ("leopards") who escort him to Rome (Romans 5.1), alludes to the
"visible and invisible" "rulers" who will also be subject to judgement (Smyrn. 6.1), and speaks of the two
coinages of God and of "the world" (Magn. 5.2). But scholars such as William R. Schoedel and Allen Brent
(discussed below in connection with the Acts of Paul) stretch things too far in reading into Ignatius (and the
Asian churches) strong anti-Roman attitudes or references to imperial cults. Schoedel wrongly imagines that
the Asian cities "felt alienated from the mainstream of Roman society," being a haven for anti-imperial atti-
Our earlier chapters speak against this depiction of attitudes towards empire within the Asian cities in the
early-second century.
In contrast to the perspective of the Apocalypse, many Christian leaders in Asia, including the author of the Pastorals, the author of 1 Peter, Polycarp of Smyrna, and Melito of Sardis held a relatively positive view of empire or encouraged their followers to adopt the common conventions of praying for and/or honouring civic or imperial officials and emperors. A brief discussion of Melito and Polycarp will set the stage for a fuller discussion of 1 Peter and the Pastorals.

Although not dealing with actual Christian practice per se, Melito of Sardis’ positive view of empire and Christianity’s place within it reflects a particular trajectory of Christianity in Roman Asia. In writing his apology to Marcus Aurelius, Melito states the following in a somewhat exaggerated manner (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.26.7-9 [LCL]):

[Christianity’s] full flower came among your nation in the great reign of your ancestor Augustus, and became an omen of good to your empire, for from that time the power of the Romans became great and splendid. You are now his happy successor... Your ancestors nourished it together with the other cults, and the greatest proof that our doctrine flourished for good along with the empire in its noble beginning is the fact that it met no evil in the reign of Augustus, but on the contrary everything splendid and glorious according to the wishes of everyone. The only emperors who were ever persuaded by malicious men to slander our teaching were Nero and Domitian, and from them arose the lie, and the unreasonable custom of falsely accusing Christians.

Although written in an apologetic context, speaking against the mistreatment of Christians in Asia, Melito evidently believes that empire and Christianity are not incompatible and he even suggests that the success of empire is dependent upon Christianity. Such views could work themselves out in the actual practices of Christian groups in Asia, as we shall see. When faced with martyrdom, Polycarp of Smyrna, for instance, makes reference to the common Christian teaching “to render honour (τιμήτω), as is meet, if it does not hurt us, to princes and authorities appointed by God”; he also exhorts the Christians at Philippi to pray for the emperors and other authorities (*Mart. Pol.* 10.2; *Phil.* 12.3). This trajectory of Christianity is also clearly evident in writings from an earlier era.
Moreover, as the following discussion of the Pastorals and 1 Peter illustrates, for many Christian groups in Asia around the turn of the century participation in at least some imperial-related activities within the *polis* was considered normal. In this respect, there are important analogies between Christian groups and other associations in the same civic contexts.

Scholars are in general agreement that the Pastoral epistles represent one important strand of Christianity in western Asia Minor, perhaps centred at Ephesos, in the late-first or early-second century. Among the principal aims of these letters, written in Paul's name, are concern for "sound teaching" over against "godless and silly myths" and the proper management of both Christian households and the Christian assembly, the "household of God" (3:15). In the process, the attitudes, values and practices advocated by the Pastorals reflect considerable cross-overs with Greco-Roman values and conceptions of good citizenship, as scholars since Dibelius suggest. Furthermore, as in 1 Peter, there is a clear concern with the appearance of the Christian assemblies in the eyes of other civic inhabitants: the Pastorals are, in some respects, an attempt to find a place for these Christian assemblies within society (cf. chap. 6).

In this connection, positive viewpoints and practices pertaining to Roman emperors and other authorities play a significant role in the Pastorals' vision of Christian group-life. The evidence we have discussed with regard to imperial-related practices of associations, both internal and external, provides a context for this. The author of 1 Timothy gives a prominent position to the following exhortation: "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings (δεήσεις προσευχὰς ἐντεύξεις εὐχαριστίας) be made on behalf of all people, for emperors and all who are in high positions (ὑπὲρ βασιλέων καὶ τῶν τῶν ἐν ὑπεροχῇ ὄντων), that we may lead a quite and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way" (1 Tim 2:1-2). Again, in the letter to Titus we find a less specific admonition for leaders to remind Christians "to be submissive
to rulers and authorities (ἀρχοίς ἐξουσίαις ὑποτάσσεσθαι),” along with other guidelines as to fitting behaviour in relation to others (Titus 3:1-2).

Although these passages reflect traditional material common within the Greco-Roman world and present within Paul’s letters themselves (Rom 13; cf. Dibelius and Conzelmann 1972:36-39), they nonetheless show this author’s concern for and knowledge of actual practices within the Christian groups in the cities of Asia concerning emperors and other officials. They suggest that emperors and other authorities were singled out as deserving of special respect, and that this was expressed within the ongoing cultic life of the group, in this case within the context of prayers. Tertullian also makes reference to this common Christian practice of “praying for the emperors, and for the whole estate of the empire and the interests of Rome” (Apologeticus 32.1; cf. 30.4-5). The letter of the Roman Christians to the Corinthians (c. 90 CE) provides an example of just how such a prayer might go, calling for Christians’ obedience “to rulers and governors (ἀρχοντα καὶ ἡγουμένων)” who are put in a position of power by God and asking for the “health, peace, and concord” of the empire (I Clement 60.4-61.3). As in 1 Peter, the Pastoral epistles’ reference to actual concrete behaviours on the part of Christians with regard to imperial or other figures of authority is closely linked with how the author imagines Christians will “lead a quiet and peaceable life” within the polis.

We do indeed find such prayers and similar rituals as common practices within the cities of Asia and elsewhere, sometimes in connection with associations.143 Although not relating to Asia Minor, a passage in Apuleius’ novel actually provides us with a glimpse of just such a group ritual performed at a gathering of Isis-initiates: “[a cultic functionary]

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143 In a first-century inscription from Philadelphia, for example, a man thanks the “great god Sabathikos” for answering his earlier prayer for Roman citizenship, and then prays for the continued increase of both the imperial Julian household and the association (oikos) of which he was evidently a member (TAM V 225 = ILydiaKP II 224; late I BCE-early I CE; cf. Pliny, Epistulae 10.13, 100). The sacred law regarding a civic festival associated with Demeter and the prytyaneion at Ephesus included a prescription “to pray on behalf of the sacred senate and the people of Rome and the people of Ephesos” (I Eph 10.15-17 = NewDocs IV 25 [in the text of the notes]; III CE).
went up into a high pulpit and read out of a book blessings upon 'the mighty emperor, upon the senate, upon the equestrian order, and upon the whole people of Rome, and upon all sailors and all ships who owe obedience to our empire' (Metamorphoses 11.17; trans. by Graves 1990, with adaptations). The fact that the Christian groups addressed by the Pastorals could share such practices in common with other associations also suggests similarities in world views: the emperors and imperial officials were very important and powerful figures within the cosmic order of things, deserving of distinctive attention and positive expressions of good will within the social and religious life of the group.

Before going on to the evidence of 1 Peter, a few words are in order about what is often considered an alternative trajectory of Christianity in Asia Minor to be contrasted to that of the Pastorals specifically. In some respects, the traditions preserved within the second-century apocryphal Acts of Paul reflect alternative perspectives and practices concerning various aspects of society, especially marriage and the household, but also imperial dimensions of society. However, Dennis Ronald MacDonald (1983:66, 40-42) overstates the contrast with the Pastorals in proposing that the Acts of Paul “bristles with anti-Roman hostility” and exudes the conflict between the cult of Christ and that of Caesar. MacDonald is not alone in this tendency to read into Christian sources references to imperial cults or to exaggerate anti-Roman sentiments, as Allen Brent’s recent study of Ignatius and the imperial cult (1998) and Richard A. Horsley’s book on Paul and empire (1997) further illustrate (see the section on Christianity and imperial cults below).

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144 In light of the evidence discussed in earlier chapters, we need not agree with Balch (1981:72) when he states that this “prayer corresponds to a desire to reassure a suspicious Roman society of the loyalty of the cult to the state.” The practical implications of such activities could be far more local, pertaining to how such a group fit within the city.

145 Here I depend on the translation by Elliott 1993. It seems as though MacDonald is, in part, reading into this document the sentiments of the Apocalypse (see the section on Christianity and imperial cults below).
further below). Unlike the Apocalypse, imperial cults specifically do not, in fact, play a role in any stories in the Acts of Paul and, if the Armenian version of Thecla's removal of Alexander's crown (which refers to a "figure of Caesar") is taken as secondary, there are no references to these cults at all. Furthermore, as in the Acts of the Apostles, the portrayal of other imperial officials is neutral or relatively positive, even in the story of Paul's martyrdom.

It is in this same martyrdom story, though, that traditions reflecting tensions between Christianity and the imperial power in connection with Nero specifically come to the fore. Along with others from the imperial household who came to hear Paul speaking in a rented barn outside of Rome, Nero's cup-bearer, Patroclus, had come and, in an Eutychos-like manner, had fallen from a window, died and subsequently been raised (11.1; cf. Acts 20:9). When asked by Nero who made him alive, Patroclus answers that it was "Christ Jesus, king of the ages" who, it is added, "destroys all kingdoms under heaven" and for whom Patroclus is a "soldier". Indignant at the existence of this alternative army of Christ, Nero issues his "edict that all Christians and soldiers of Christ that

146 According to Brent, Ignatius directly "confronts Roman power" and the notion of the procession to martyrdom is "set over against [Imperial cult]" (1998:31), but no clear evidence is cited. Brent's ability to find imperial cult where it does not exist is primarily based on a method which begins with Ignatius' language and looks for parallels in the imperial cult specifically, rather than within cultic life more generally. Richard A. Horsley manages to find in 1 Corinthians "Paul's adamant opposition to Roman imperial society" and he characterizes Christianity more broadly as an "anti-imperial movement" (1997:242, 1). Paul preached an "anti-imperial gospel" and "much of his key language would have evoked echoes of the imperial cult and ideology" (1997:140). Some exegetical acrobatics are then necessary in interpreting Romans 13. Compare also Bruce W. Winter's unconvincing attempt to see imperial cults as an important factor in Paul's letter to the Galatians (1994:123-43). I challenge the assumptions involved in this pervasive notion of a specific clash between the "cult of Caesar" and the "cult of Christ" in a section below.

147 Neither J.K. Elliott (1993) nor Schnellemelcher (1992) consider the variation of the Armenian text worthy of inclusion in their translations, in contrast to the emphasis which MacDonald puts upon it.

148 The author has the Roman proconsul, Castellius, gladly listen to Paul's speech "about the holy works of Christ" (3.20), and this official weeps and admires Thecla's power when faced with death (3.22), ultimately releasing her (3.38). Despite Nero's harsh actions against the Christians, Longus the prefect and Cestus the centurion, along with other members of Nero's household, become converts to Christianity (11.1-7). On the Acts of the Apostles and empire see further below and Walaskay 1983; Robbins 1991; Edwards 1991.

149 The Pastoral epistles use the analogy of being a "good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 2:3), but along with the analogy of the athlete and not in a subversive or anti-imperial manner (cf. Ignatius, Poly. 6; 1 Clem. 37).
were found should be executed" (11.2-3). It is only later in the story that Paul’s anti-imperial speech before Nero is softened somewhat when he states that the Christian “soldiers” “fight not, as you suppose, for a king who is from the earth but for one who is from heaven” (11.4; cf. Eusebius, Historia Ecclesiastica 20 [Hegesippus on Christians before Domitian]). Although the apparent link with Nero’s slaughter of Christians following the fire at Rome (cf. Tacitus, Annales 15.43-44; Rordorf 1982) should caution us in assuming that this story is a general statement regarding perceptions of and practices in relation to all emperors or imperial power, it does contain some anti-imperial attitudes that can be contrasted to those advocated by the Pastorals and 1 Peter.

Written in the form of a diaspora letter to the provinces of Asia Minor sometime in the closing decades of the first century, 1 Peter is of particular relevance to our understanding of Christian groups in regions like Asia, Bithynia and Pontus and to the issue of imperial practices specifically. The social situation of the letter has been partially addressed in the previous chapter and I will have more to say about it in the next section concerning the Pliny correspondence. For now it is important to point out that the addressees were primarily Gentile converts that had turned from their previous life of “idolatry” to become, in the author’s words, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (1:13-2:11). As a result, they faced “suffering” in the form of social harassment and verbal abuse from fellow inhabitants, which was similar to that faced by the “brotherhood throughout the world” (1:14-19; 4:3-5; 5:9). The author wrote to these “exiles” (παρεσιδημοι) or “aliens” (παροικοι) in order to comfort, encourage and exhort them to continue in their new lives as the elect people of God, members of his “household”.150 There are apocalyptic elements in the letter with respect to the expecta-

150 Elliott suggests that 1 Peter uses the term “resident aliens” in a literal sense; this then plays a key role in Elliott’s depiction of Christians in Asia Minor in terms of social and economic deprivation, which serves as a partial foundation for categorizing Christian groups there as sects (1990 [1980]: 21-58, 77-78). However, it seems far more likely that such terms are not literal but metaphorical; they derive in large part from the genre of 1 Peter as a diaspora letter addressed to the exiles (cf. Chin 1991; Feldmeier 1992:203-210; Winter 1994:16-17; Diogn. 5).
tion of Christ's return, and the author is emphatic about the distinctive identity of the Christians who are in some respects living as "exiles in the diaspora". Still, at the same time, 1 Peter is clearly concerned with the practicalities of how Christian individuals and groups were to live within society alongside others in the polis or village, limiting tensions as much as possible.

One of the more important sections of 1 Peter contains a series of practical guidelines regarding how these Christians were to "maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may see your good works (τῶν καλῶν εργών) and glorify God on the day of visitation" (2:12). This is where imperial-related issues immediately come into the picture:

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human creature (υποτάγητε πάσην ἀνθρωπίνην κτίσιν), whether it be to the emperor as supreme (βασιλεύως ὡς ὑπερέχοντι), or to governors (ηγεμόνοις) as sent by him to punish those who do wrong (κακοποιοῦντες) and to praise those who do good (ἐπαινών ἃ ἀγαθοποιοῦντες). For it is God's will that by doing good (ἀγαθοποιοῦντες) you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men....Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor (τὸν βασιλέα τιμᾶτε)" (2:13-17 [RSV, with adaptations]).

As in the Pastoral epistles, 1 Peter is here reflecting a clearly positive view regarding the position of the emperor and other imperial officials within God's ordained order of existence. Both of these authors are also reflecting widespread Greco-Roman traditions concerning respect for authorities along the lines of what we also find in literature concerning Christianity in other regions, as I discuss below. Nonetheless, as with the Pastorals, these are not just empty words or merely a "stock phrase taken over from some current formula of instruction in civic duty" (Beare 1958:117), but rather practical exhortations with direct implications regarding the concrete behaviours of Christian groups and their members.

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151 The closing allusion to the author's location in "Babylon" (5:13) is most likely a reference to Rome, but it does not have the sort of strongly negative or apocalyptic connotations which we find in John's Apocalypse. The use of "Babylon" coincides here with the genre of the diaspora letter (cf. Michaels 1988:310-11). We need not agree with Davids (1990:203) or other commentators who interpret this as an acknowledgement that the Roman "government is the capital of evil."
First Peter explicitly encourages Christians to “honour the emperor” and to engage in activities that may be perceived by rulers and other outsiders as good and worthy of praise (2:11-17). He apparently maintains a distinction, however, between honours, on the one hand, and cultic rituals, on the other, the latter being idolatry in his view (cf. 1:14-19; 4:3-5). This exhortation for Christians to honour the emperor has not been sufficiently explained or contextualized by scholars, who often speak as though 1 Peter is merely referring to inner attitudes rather than actual behaviours (cf. Beare 1958:113-19; Goppelt 1993 [1978]:189-90; Michaels 1988:121-132). Such vague interpretations do not seem compatible with the context of the passage regarding the call for Christians to do “good works” in the eyes of outsiders, among them being subject to and honouring the emperor (2:12). As Bruce J. Malina and others are beginning to show, the ancient Mediterranean personality was a dyadic one embedded within social groupings; what mattered most was what, concretely, others perceived one to be doing, not what one thought internally, though certainly one’s actions might reflect inner attitudes (Malina 1981:51-93).

Moreover, the honour for the emperor 1 Peter proposes seems to have a more concrete basis which finds analogies in some of the practices of other associations and Jewish groups within the polis. The fact that the author links his suggestions with lessening tensions with outsiders suggests that it is actual demonstrations of honour for the emperors that are encompassed by his exhortation. The possibilities for such honours were well illustrated above, including setting up an honorary inscription, dedicating a structure or building, and engaging in rituals or prayers that encompassed the emperor in the setting of group-worship. This concrete understanding of the exhortation fits well with what scholars such as W.C. van Unnik, David L. Balch, and Bruce W. Winter observe concerning the author’s social strategy: the author exhorts Christians to adopt and/or adapt some civic values and practices, including “good works” or benefaction and good
household management, which will receive “praise” from outsiders and authorities while also lessening group-society tensions. As we saw clearly in the case of both associations and Jewish groups, participation in such honorary activities was indeed commonly viewed among the “good works” that helped to maintain fitting relations within the social and cosmic order of things.

The evidence of the Pastorals, 1 Peter, Melito, Polycarp and others represents a particular trajectory of Christianity in Asia Minor which reflects what we could call a “moderate stance” with regard to positive attitudes towards empire and at least some participation in certain imperial dimensions of society. This posture stands in contrast to the perspective of John’s Apocalypse. Although the focus of this study is on Roman Asia, it is important to at least note the wider context of similar traditions within Christianity more broadly. Attitudes towards empire or the emperor, whether positive or negative, are noticeably absent from most of Paul’s letters. So it is worth quoting the famous passage from Paul’s letter to the Christians in Rome which does deal explicitly with such issues (13:1-7 [RSV, with adaptations]):

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities (ἐξουσίας ἐπερεχούσας ὑποτασσέωθω). For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his praise (τὸ ἀγαθὸν ποιεῖ, καὶ ἔξεις ἐπαίνον ἐξ αὐτῆς), for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid for he does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be subject, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities

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152 van Unnik 1980d [1954]:91-92; Balch 1981, 1986; Winter 1994:11-40. Unfortunately, few have picked up on van Unnik’s suggestions (but cf. Goppelt 1993[1978]:182-190). Beare sees here a reference to actual benefaction, but he simply asserts that “few Christians can have entertained any great hope of winning such public distinction...it seems likely that the words are a stock phrase taken over from some current formula of instruction in civic duty” (1958:117). Michaels (1988:126) lightly passes off the suggestion of “civic virtue” or concrete action and takes “good works” as a (vague) reference to “doing the will of God.”  
153 As James D.G. Dunn (1988:758-59) argues, rather than being merely an alien insertion into Paul’s letter, this passage continues the practical guidelines regarding relationships with others that immediately precedes it in 12:9-21.
are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect (φόβον) to whom respect is due, honour (τιμήν) to whom honour is due.

This is not the place to engage in a full exegesis of this passage. It is sufficient here to note that, as with 1 Peter, this passage clearly suggests that the attitude and actions of Christians towards emperors and others in authority was to demonstrate respect and honour. As Justin Martyr's discussion of a similar tradition shows, Jesus' teaching to give "to the emperor the things that are the emperor's and to God the things that are God's" could be invoked as support for similar calls to respect authorities and pay taxes (Justin Martyr, Apol. 1.17; Matt 22:15-22; cf. Mk 12:13-17; Lk 20:20-25). We see a similar political posture reflected again when the Christians at Rome write to those at Corinth, encouraging them to pray for the well-being of the empire and its rulers (1 Clement 60.4-61.3; cf. Tertullian, Apologeticus 30.4-5; 32.1).

Finally, there is Luke-Acts' portrayal of earliest Christianity in a way that posits its valid place within, not opposition to, the Roman empire (cf. Walaskay 1983; Robbins 1991; Edwards 1991, 1996). The presumed symbiotic relationship between Christianity and empire which was so strongly stated by Melito also finds more indirect expression within Luke-Acts. The author often portrays Roman officials in a neutral or positive light. The Roman centurion at Capernaum (Lk 7:1-10; cf. Acts 10) had, like Julia Severa at Akmoneia, built a synagogue for the local Jews: "for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us" (v. 5). When he sends for Jesus to heal his slave, the centurion clearly acknowledges how his power within Roman imperial structures parallels Jesus' own authority; Jesus expresses amazement at the centurion's faith (vv. 6-10). The author also frequently emphasizes the status of Paul as Roman citizen and relates incidents concerning Paul's positive contacts with Roman officials. When Paul and Silas are accused of advocating "customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or practice" at the Roman colony of Philippi, it turns out that the accusers have engaged in unlaw-
ful activity by beating and imprisoning Roman citizens (Acts 16:19-40). The proconsul of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus, summons Paul and Barnabas “to hear the word of God,” and he ultimately believes (Acts 13:7-12). The proconsul of Achaia, Gallio, questions the validity of bringing accusations against Paul before him, since there is no evidence that Roman laws have been broken (18:12-17). It is evidence such as this that leads Vernon K. Robbins (1991:202) to argue that Luke-Acts reflects “a narrative map grounded in an ideology that supported Christians who were building alliances with local leaders throughout the eastern Roman empire.” The prominence of this trajectory of early Christianity both in Asia Minor and elsewhere will be especially relevant when we come to consider the alternative stances towards empire and imperial facets of civic life reflected in John’s Apocalypse in the final section of this chapter.

Returning to our main focus on actual group-practice, the participation of some Jewish and Christian groups in imperial facets of civic life in Roman Asia demonstrates one of the ways in which they could claim place within society, tending towards some degree of integration along with other associations in that context. This illustrates one aspect of group-society relations which is not adequately addressed by those who propose a sectarian reading of Christian groups in Asia Minor. These group-practices suggest that, like their fellow civic inhabitants, many Jews and Christians viewed the emperors as important figures within the cosmic order of things, figures deserving of special respect and honours. However, unlike others, both Jews and Christians clearly did not place the emperor alongside God, which leads us to the issue of cultic honours for the imperial gods, or imperial cults.

**Non-participation: Cultic honours for the imperial gods**

The evidence I have discussed thus far points to neglected positive dimensions of group-society relations among Jewish and Christian groups in Roman Asia, drawing atten-
tion to some of the apparent similarities between these groups and other associations in the same context. This neglected evidence throws into doubt the common sectarian readings of many Jewish and Christian groups. Such readings do not adequately address this potential for some participation in the social and cultural conventions of civic life under Roman rule. But we must not forget to consider the nature of negative dimensions of group-society relations and some of the differences between associations and Jewish or Christian groups, especially with regard to the present focus on imperial-related issues.

The discussion thus far shows that there were grades of participation in imperial-related practices within the context of the polis. While Christians and Jews might pray for the emperors or dedicate a monument or building on their behalf, they did not engage in cultic honours or rituals that entailed acknowledgement of the emperors as gods. Specific Jews or Christians such as the author of the Apocalypse might reject any of these sorts of imperial-related activities, as we shall see. But other associations in the cities of Asia did actively participate in all of these activities, including cultic honours. Most Jews and Christians, both as groups and as individuals, avoided participation in rituals that entailed acknowledgment of the emperors as gods. We need to ask what was the nature and significance of this difference in participation? Within what context can this avoidance of imperial cults be understood? Was this lack of participation in imperial cults a central factor in tensions between Jewish or Christian groups and society (inhabitants, authorities)? Would it be perceived as disloyalty to empire and punished as such?

The purpose of this section is to consider this apparent difference between associations and both Jewish and Christian groups, namely, non-participation in cultic honours for the emperors as gods. In re-assessing this subject, I argue that scholars have often overplayed the individual significance of imperial cults for early Christianity specifically without recognizing the broader framework within which these cults were embedded. Imperial cults were an issue for group-society tensions only insofar as they were part and
parcel of social and religious life generally. Addressing this issue will require a brief survey and critique of traditional views concerning the significance of imperial cults for Judaism and Christianity, employing some of our findings from chapter four. I then go on to discuss three episodes in Asia Minor that illustrate the modest importance of imperial cults in the persecution of Christians.

This section also provides a context in which to further consider the sporadic nature of persecution in Asia Minor and the reasons for it. I argue that disloyalty to empire (which is often seen as corresponding to non-participation in imperial cults) was neither the basis of persecutions against Christians by inhabitants, nor the reason for convictions on those few occasions when such things reached the attention of the Roman authorities. The roots of antagonism or sporadic persecution lay rather in broader issues regarding Christians' (and Jews') "atheism" which had other social implications within the civic context. When local dislike among some inhabitants brought Christians before Roman officials, it was not disloyalty but simply the fact of being Christians ("the name") that was sufficient for conviction. But, overall, we should not exaggerate this potential source of tensions or the frequency of such persecutions, as though Christians were in a constant state of conflict with others in their daily lives.

This section contributes to the overall thesis of this study in that it furthers our understanding of the complexities involved in Christians and Jews finding a place within the social and cultural framework of polis and empire. It also seriously qualifies the common notion that imperial cults in themselves were a central factor in group-society tensions. This section, along with the preceding ones, also prepares the way for a re-examination of some aspects of John's Apocalypse and the variety of Christian groups it addresses.
a) How significant were imperial cults for Judaism and Christianity?

Scholars tend to overplay the significance of imperial cults or worship of the emperors--distinguished from social and religious life generally--in connection with diaspora Judaism and, even more so, early Christianity. According to E. Mary Smallwood, whose views are frequently repeated, the charter of Jewish rights granted by the Romans made Judaism a legally recognized religion (*religio licita*) and this "automatically" included "the Jews' exemption from participation in the imperial cult," an exemption which was "established universally" (1981 [1976]:137, 147; cf. Applebaum 1974a:458; Hemer 1986:8-10; Thompson 1990:144; Winter 1994:124-43; Kraybill 1996:192-95). This meant that Jews, unlike others, could not be "forced" to participate in cultic honours for the emperors, though an emperor such as Gaius might temporarily waver from Roman policy (1981 [1976]:244-45, 344-45, 348, 379-81). A corollary of this view is that as Christianity became increasingly recognized as separate from Judaism in the decades around the turn of the century, it no longer enjoyed protection and was susceptible to the "enforcement" of imperial cults.

Flowing from this line of thought is the common emphasis on the centrality of imperial cults *per se* for our understanding of Christian groups' relations to society, particularly with regard to persecutions. Thus we find frequent references within scholarship to the antagonism or "clash" between the cult of Christ and the cult of Caesar, the latter being singled out from Greco-Roman religious life generally (cf. Deissmann 1995 [1908]:338-78; Cuss 1974:35; also see my discussion of MacDonald, Brent and Richard A. Horsley earlier in this chapter). Donald L. Jones (1980:1023), for instance, can begin his paper on Christianity and the imperial cult with the statement that: "From the perspective of early Christianity, the worst abuse in the Roman Empire was the imperial cult." Paul Keresztes (1979:271) claims that "Christianity was engaged in a death battle with Imperial Rome." An important basis of this view is the assumption that we can take the
hostile viewpoints and futuristic scenarios of John’s Apocalypse as representative of the real situations and perspectives of most Christians, or even as a reliable commentary on the nature of imperial cults.

Along with such views comes a common, but highly questionable, depiction of imperial cults. One often reads of how emperor worship (particularly though not solely under emperors like Domitian) was “enforced” by Roman emperors and officials or that there was considerable “pressure” or “demands” on Christians in their daily lives to conform to the obligatory practices of imperial cults specifically (cf. Cuss 1974; Schüssler Fiorenza 1985:192-99; Hemer 1986:7-12; Winter 1994:124-43; Kraybill 1996; Slater 1998; Beale 1999:5-15, 712-14). Moreover, Rome took an active role in promoting such cults in the provinces and failure to participate could be taken as the equivalent of political disloyalty or treason, especially since imperial cults were merely political. Imperial cults stood out as a central factor leading to the persecution of Christians both by the inhabitants in the cities and by the imperial regime itself, especially in the time of Domitian when Christians were faced with death if they did not participate in such cults and acknowledge him as “lord and god.” In the previous chapter I discussed the problems with a Domitianic persecution and the highly questionable portrait of Domitian after his damnatio (cf. Southern 1997:45-46, 114-18; Pleket 1961). But for now it is important to note some of the problematic assumptions concerning imperial cults which inform this view.

This traditional view regarding the significance of imperial cults for Judaism and Christianity falters on several inter-related points, addressed in chapter four, concerning the actual character of imperial cults in Asia Minor. Although imperial cults were among the issues facing Christians and diaspora Jews these cults were not in and of themselves a key issue behind group-society tensions, nor a pivotal causal factor in the persecution of Christians (cf. de Ste. Croix 1963:10; Millar 1973; Price 1984:15, 220-22). First of all, we found that cultic honours for the emperors were not an imposed feature of cultural life
in Roman Asia, but rather a natural outgrowth and spontaneous response on the part of civic communities and inhabitants in relation to imperial power. The local, grass-roots nature of such cultic honours, which was well-illustrated in our study of associations, suggests that there was no need for Roman emperors to take an active stance in "enforcing" imperial cults. Most emperors and Roman officials were not concerned whether the living emperor was worshipped so long as they were shown respect and honour (in whatever form) indicative of a situation in which order and peace could be maintained in the provinces. In fact, quite often these cultic honours exceeded what the emperors themselves would expect or desire, at least in the case of emperors who wanted to keep in line with some Republican and Augustan traditions (cf. Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 52).

Secondly, in contrast to a popular tradition within scholarship, we found that imperial cults in Roman Asia were not in fact solely political phenomena devoid of religious dimensions. If imperial cults were indeed merely political then we could understand the Christians' failure to participate as the equivalent of political disloyalty or treason. It is this problematic approach which underlies the common assumption that failure to participate in imperial cults was central to the persecution of Christians. But G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, Fergus Millar and others show the inadequacies of such political explanations of the persecutions, which had more to do with broader though interconnected religious and social issues. That is, persecution often pertained to the failure of Christians to participate in cultic activities to honour the gods, and this had implications regarding the nature and extent of social contacts with others in the civic context.

Thirdly, far from being totally distinct phenomena in the eyes of most inhabitants in Asia, imperial cults were thoroughly integrated or embedded within social-religious life

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154 Nevertheless, emperors might certainly take advantage of the honours that were offered as an effective means of maintaining the unity of empire (cf. Hopkins 1978)

155 However, de Ste. Croix, unlike Millar, nonetheless holds the view that imperial cults were merely political (see chap. 4).
at various levels of civic and provincial society. We found that groups and communities reflecting various social strata integrated the emperors and imperial power within their cultural framework. The forms of cultic honours addressed to the imperial gods were not fundamentally different from those offered to traditional deities. This integration is a key to understanding the actual significance of the imperial cults for both Judaism and Christianity.

The imperial cults and the gods they honoured were an issue for group-society relations only insofar as they were part and parcel of social-religious life in the cities. Failure to fully participate in appropriately honouring the gods (imperial deities included) in cultic contexts was among the principal sources of negative attitudes towards both Jews and Christians among some civic inhabitants. Dislike could manifest itself in various forms of verbal abuse or social harassment, as well as less frequent riotous or violent incidents. For within the world views of many inhabitants in Asia, including the members of many guilds and associations, ritual activities were among the most appropriate ways of honouring the gods (including the imperial gods) who protected them. These appropriate honours helped to maintain fitting relations within the cosmos, thereby ensuring the safety and well-being of the civic community and its inhabitants. Jewish and Christian non-participation in cultic honours for the gods ("atheism") could be perceived as lack of concern for others ("misanthropy") and, potentially, as a cause of those natural disasters and other circumstances by which the gods punished individuals, groups and communities that failed to give them their due (cf. Tertullian, *Apologeticus* 40.1-5). This is why we find inhabitants of western Asia Minor protesting that "if the Jews were to be their fellows, they should worship the Ionians' gods" (Josephus, *Antiquitates* 12.126; c. 16-13 BCE; cf. *Contra Apionem* 2.65-67; Apollonios Molon of Rhodes in Stern 1976:1.148-56). This issue which is broader than, though inclusive of, imperial cults is also a key to understanding occasional outbreaks of persecution against Christians in Asia Minor.
b) Three cases: Pliny, Hadrian and Polycarp

Three particular incidents discussed here will help to clarify both the modest role of imperial cults and the actual nature of persecution in Asia Minor: the trials of Christians by Pliny in Pontus (c. 110 CE), Hadrian’s rescript to the proconsul of Asia concerning accusations against Christians (c. 123 CE), and the martyrdom of Polycarp at Smyrna (c. 160s CE). These episodes show that the reasons for accusations by inhabitants and convictions by Roman authorities are to be sought somewhere other than in the realm of disloyalty to empire or failure to participate in imperial cults specifically. Christians were not, in effect, martyred for refusing to worship the emperor.

The reasons for Christians being accused in the first place by inhabitants and the reasons for convictions by authorities were often different. The occasional accusations by some inhabitants were rooted in dislike of Christians’ failure to fully participate in cultic life (their “atheism”), which could be perceived as a threat to the well-being of the civic community. Still, other economic issues, for instance, could also play a role. The reasons for Roman officials’ convictions of Christians brought before them, although not always clear, seem to pertain primarily to the maintenance of order and the prevention of further disturbances: Christians could be perceived as trouble-causers and officials felt a need to satisfy the crowds. Disloyalty to empire was not a central issue. Imperial cult rituals along with rituals for other gods were brought in by Roman officials only as a test to determine whether or not someone was indeed a Christian, not to establish loyalty.

The reason for discussing these incidents of the second century before addressing John’s Apocalypse, written in the late-first century, is that they set the stage for a re-

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156 See the discussion of accusers in the Pliny case, some of whom were perhaps traders in sacrificial meat. Acts attributes some economic motives (preservation of business) to the silversmiths who instigate a riot at Ephesos (19:24-27). Melito alludes to similar economic factors when he discusses incidents of persecution in Asia in the time of Marcus Aurelius, stating that “shameless informers and lovers of other people’s property have taken advantage of the decrees [about which we know virtually nothing], and pillage us openly, harrying night and day those who have done nothing wrong” (in Eusebius, Historia Ecclesiastica 4.26.5).
assessment of his critique of imperial cults or worship of the beast. This is especially important because the Apocalypse's emphasis on imperial cults has often been taken as a general indication that these cults (more so than others) were a central factor in a confrontation between Christianity and Roman society. On to the first episode.

In governing the province of Bithynia and Pontus as a specially appointed legate in the years around 110-112 CE, Pliny regularly consulted the emperor, Trajan, regarding his approach to the problems in this region. We have already come across some of this correspondence in connection with associations (see chap. 5). While visiting the coastal region of Pontus (c. 112 CE), perhaps at Amisos or Amastris, Pliny wrote to Trajan regarding accusations (one of them anonymous) against so-called Christians "of every age and class, both men and women" that were being brought to trial by local inhabitants of the region (Epistulae 10.96-97 [LCL]).

The actual reasons for the accusations in Pontus are not clearly stated. But it seems most likely that, as in the martyrdom of Polycarp, it is the Christians' failure to honour the gods or participate in cultic life ("atheism"), not imperial cults specifically, that is a key issue in the perception of the accusers. But this central factor seems to have interconnected social, religious and economic dimensions in this case. That it is the accusers' dislike of Christians because they do not fully participate in social-religious life generally is suggested by Pliny's allusion to rumours concerning the Christians' "crimes" (flagitia), which he ultimately finds to be untrue (e.g. "food of an ordinary and harmless kind" [96.7-8]). It is worth mentioning that Tacitus alludes to rumours of a similar kind when he suggests that Nero chose to blame the fire on the Christians at Rome.

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158 Henrichs thinks that it is Pliny who initially suspected the Christians of "crimes" (1970:21), but it seems more likely, especially in light of the following discussion, that it was the accusers who raised such issues. Nor do I think that Pliny necessarily has in mind the crimes associated with the Bacchanalian affair of 186 BCE specifically (contra Grant 1948; Wilken 1984:16-17; see Sherwin-White 1966:692).
because they were “hated for their crimes (flagitia)” (Annales 15.44). The alleged crimes in the Pliny case may well have been similar to those attributed to Christians in later years, such as those aimed at the Christians at Lugdunum in Gaul who were accused of engaging in “Thyestan feasts” (Eusebius, Historia Ecclesiastica 5.1; cf. Henrichs 1970:19-20; Wilken 1984:17-21).

As M.J. Edwards argues, rumours along the lines of human sacrifice and cannibalism apparently derive not from a misinterpretation of what Christians did (e.g. a distortion of the Lord’s supper or attribution of Gnostic practices to all Christians) but from what Christians (and their Jewish counterparts) did not do.\footnote{Edwards 1992; cf. McGowan 1994. Also see the stories of Christians’ practice of ritual infanticide and other rituals in Minucius Felix, whose source is probably M. Cornelius Fronto (Benko 1980:1081-83). On accusations of ritual murder in connection with Judaism see Josephus, Contra Apionem 2.89-102; Bickerman 1980 [1927]; Schäfer 1997.} They did not participate in sacrifice to the gods, the central cultic rite of antiquity. This failure to honour the gods together with its implications regarding disregard for fellow human beings or anti-social behaviour could lead some outsiders to fill in the gap with alternative, stereotyped rituals, such as human sacrifice or infanticide. This general situation underlying the accusations before Pliny, but not necessarily actual court trials, seems to coincide with what we find in 1 Peter, where the Christian addressees are faced with verbal abuse (καταλαλεῖν, βλασφημεῖν, ὠνειδίζειν) and viewed by others as wrongdoers (κακοποιοί) primarily due to the fact that they no longer engage fully in cultic life or, as the author puts it, “lawless idolatry” (see 2:12; 4:3-5, 14-16).

Another clue as to the accusers and potential religio-economic motivations comes towards the end of Pliny’s letter. In an exaggerated fashion, he refers to increased activity in the sale of sacrificial meat and in the attendance at temples “which had been almost entirely deserted for a long time.” As A.N. Sherwin-White (1966:709) notes, this seems to imply a connection between the accusations against Christians and the sale of sacrificial
meat, perhaps alluding to the fact that some merchants or temple functionaries were among the main accusers in these cases (cf. Henrichs 1970:21; Wilken 1984:15; Acts 19).

Now that we have some idea of the background leading to the accusations before Pliny we can go on to look at the modest place of imperial cults in the trials and the actual nature of these incidents. Pliny’s letter begins with the following statement regarding his unfamiliarity with what procedure to follow in the case of Christians:

I have never been present at an examination of Christians. Consequently, I do not know the nature of the extent of the punishments usually meted out to them, nor the grounds for starting an investigation and how far it should be pressed. Nor am I at all sure...whether it is the mere name of Christian which is punishable, even if innocent of crime, or rather the crimes associated with the name (10.96.2).

Pliny clearly states that he had not been present at an examination of Christians at any time before these incidents, and this is probably because so few, if any, such trials had been held previously in Asia Minor (cf. Downing 1988). Considering the fact that Pliny spent most of his career at Rome as quaestor (c. 90 CE), tribune of the people (c. 92 CE), praetor (c. 93 CE), and consul (100 CE), before being sent to the province as legate (c. 110 CE; see Sherwin-White 1966:72-82), it is also very unlikely that any substantial, official trials of Christians took place at Rome in this period, namely, during and following the principate of Domitian.

Lacking any precedents to follow, Pliny took a different course depending on the response of the accused, and convicted based not on crimes (flagitia) but simply on whether one was a Christian (nomen), even though he expressed some doubt on the matter. First of all, those “stubborn” and “obstinate” persons who were asked repeatedly and admitted to being Christians were either led off to execution or, if Roman citizens, sent to Rome for trial, without any need for a test involving the gods.

The second category were those who denied the charge and the third were those who had been, but were no longer, Christians. In these cases, rituals associated with images of the gods, but also of emperors, became the test simply to determine whether or
not one was really a Christian. Those who denied being Christians, Pliny states, "repeated after me a formula of invocation to the gods and had made offerings of wine and incense to your statue (which I had ordered to be brought into the court for this purpose along with the images of the gods), and furthermore had reviled the name of Christ: none of which things, I understand, any genuine Christian can be induced to do" (10.96.5). At no point is the issue of political disloyalty brought up, and imperial cult rituals appear, not as the reason why the Christians were accused by inhabitants or condemned by the Roman official, but simply as a test along with rituals addressed to the gods more generally. Trajan's response approves of testing whether the accused is a Christian by simply having him or her offer "prayers to our gods" (10.97). But he also cautions that Christians "must not be hunted" down and that anonymous accusations must not be permitted, sentiments similar to those repeated in Hadrian's rescript about ten years later (c. 123 CE).

Hadrian's letter to the proconsul of Asia concerning accusations against Christians was recorded by Justin Martyr and subsequently copied and translated into Greek by Eusebius (Apol. 1.68; Historia Ecclesiastica. 4.9.1-3; cf. Barnes 1968:37 and 1971:154; Bickerman 1968; Benko 1980:1079-81). This rescript is not nearly as informative regarding the nature of accusations, the procedure of trials, and the role (if any) of imperial cult rituals as is the Pliny correspondence, but it is worth at least quoting it here in order to make a few observations:

Hadrian to Fundanus. I have received a letter addressed to me by your illustrious predecessor, Serenus Granianus, and his report, I think, ought not to be passed over in silence, lest innocent people be molested and an opportunity for hostile action be given to malicious accusers. If the provincials plainly wish to support this petition of theirs against the Christians by bringing some definite charge against them before the court, let them confine themselves to this action and refrain from mere appeals and outcries. For it is much more than just that, if anyone wishes to bring an accusation, you should examine the allegations. If then anyone accuses them and proves that they are doing anything unlawful, you must impose a penalty in accordance with the gravity of the crime; but if anyone brings such accusations simply by way of blackmail, you must sentence
him to a more severe penalty in proportion to his wickedness (trans. by Bruce 1971:429).

Once again, in this case it is clear that it was on the initiative of inhabitants in the province that accusations were brought against Christians. The letter gives no details as to why these inhabitants had petitioned the proconsul of Asia (Granianus), but it is plausible to suggest that similar factors to those involving Christians in Pontus and Polycarp at Smyrna were at work. Like Pliny, Granianus wrote the emperor to ask his opinion on how to deal with the accusations. By the time Hadrian responded, Granianus had been succeeded by Fundanus, who is the addressee. Hadrian's concern is not with protecting Christians per se, but with ensuring proper legal procedure: accusations lacking sufficient evidence are not to be accepted and persons bringing false accusations are to be punished. Christians found guilty of doing something unlawful are still to be punished, but little more is said with respect to whether it is for the name or for crimes that Christians are to be punished. Hadrian says nothing that would suggest that disloyalty to empire or failure to engage in the imperial cults were the principal issue here, though.

This brings me to a third episode indicative of the nature of persecution and the modest role of imperial cults: the martyrdom of Polycarp at Smyrna (under Antoninus Pius or Marcus Aurelius; c. 155-67 CE). Many aspects of the story of Polycarp's martyrdom--preserved as a letter from the Christian assembly at Smyrna to that in Philomelion in Phrygia--can cautiously be taken as historical, keeping in mind its author(s)' imposition onto Polycarp's situation of the pattern of Christ's arrest and trial, including a prominent role for "the Jews" (see Schoedel 1993:349-58).

The occasional nature of this persecution is clearly indicated when the senders of the letter state that Polycarp "put an end to the persecution by his martyrdom as though

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160 Bickerman (1968:300-312) suggests the possibility that the initial accusation against the Christians in this case may have been brought to the proconsul by the provincial assembly of Asia, representing the civic communities as a whole. But this is uncertain.
adding the seal” (1.1 [LCL]). In fact, to the time of Polycarp (about a hundred years after the beginnings of Christianity in Roman Asia and seventy or so years after the writing of the Apocalypse), there were only a total of twelve Christian martyrs from Smyrna and Philadelphia, including those killed during this particular outburst (19.1; cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.8). As with the Pliny incident, the prime instigators of the persecution are not civic or imperial officials, but inhabitants.

The account does not reveal the precise circumstances which transformed dislike of Christians into mob violence in this case, but recent natural disasters sent by the gods as punishment may have played a role.\(^{161}\) The account does clearly indicate one of the most important motivating factors for the crowds’ actions: the Christians did not join others in honouring the gods, they were “atheists” (3.2; 9.2; cf. Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5 = Musurillo 1972:64-65 [charges of “atheism” (ἁθεὸν) and “impiety” (ἁσεβές) at Lugdunum, c. 177 CE]). This factor is most clearly evident when, at a climactic point after the hearing before the proconsul and Polycarp’s proclamation that he was indeed a Christian, the crowds: “cried out with uncontrollable wrath and a loud shout: ‘This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, the destroyer of our gods, who teaches many neither to offer sacrifice nor to worship (μη θυειν μηδὲ προσκυνεῖν)” (12.2).\(^{162}\)

As in the Pliny incident, imperial cult practices come into the picture only as a test by the authorities, though they are certainly more evident in this account than they are in

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\(^{161}\) For a discussion of the plagues and famines in Asia Minor in the 160s CE see Magie 1950:663, 1533-34 nn.8-9; Gilliam 1961. There was a failure of harvests and ensuing famine around this time. Furthermore, the Roman troops returning from the victory over the Parthians brought with them a disease which resulted in epidemics in several regions, including Asia. Several oracular responses from Karian Apollo to cities of Asia pertain to a “deadly plague” which may well relate to this same time period (see Parke 1985:150-54). Apollo’s response to Hierapolis states that “you are not alone in being injured by the destructive miseries of a deadly plague, but many are the cities and peoples which are grieved at the wrathful displeasures of the gods” (trans. by Parke 1985:153-54). Apollo then prescribes the cultic acts which should be performed in order to avert the wrath of the gods and goddesses. Similar events could also spark off persecution of the Christians, who failed to honour these same deities.

\(^{162}\) The account’s inclusion of the Jews in this shout, which seems quite out of place historically, is most likely due to anti-Jewish feeling of the author(s) and the desire to maintain the parallelism with the trial of Jesus.
Pliny's letter. After following the demand of the crowds to arrest Polycarp, the civic police-chief (ἐἰρήναρχος), Herod, and his father attempt to persuade the bishop saying, "what harm is it to say, 'Caesar is lord (κύριος κοινωνίας),' and to make an offering, and so forth, and to be saved?" (8.2). Again, when Polycarp is brought to the stadium, the Roman proconsul attempts to persuade him to perform a more specific test as to whether he was a Christian or not, and thereby save his life: "Swear by the genius (τῷ ὑπνῷ) of Caesar, repent, say: 'Away with the atheists'" and "revile Christ" (9.2-3). The practice of taking an oath on the genius of the emperor became a common practice, especially by the time of Antoninus Pius.

It becomes quite clear that the purpose of the test of swearing on the genius of Caesar, which is also accompanied in the narrative by accusations of "atheism," is simply to confirm that the accused is a Christian, not to assert treason as the basis of the outcome. Thus when Polycarp gets fed up with the officials' offers he states: "If you vainly suppose that I will swear by the genius of Caesar, as you say, and pretend that you are ignorant who I am, listen plainly: I am a Christian" (10.1). It is after this clear identification and final refusal that the proconsul tells Polycarp to persuade the people to change their minds. The bishop actually makes reference to the usual Christian approach to Roman officials: "You I should have held worthy of discussion, for we have been taught to render honour (τῷ ὑπνῷ) in a fitting manner, if it does not harm us, to officials (ὁ χοίρος) and authorities (ἐκ οὐσίας) who are appointed by God" (10.2 [LCL, with adaptations]; cf. Polycarp, Phil. 12.3). Moreover, as in the cases held by Pliny, it is simply the fact of being a

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163 Of the earliest martyr acts, imperial cult practices play the most evident role in that of Polycarp, albeit still a modest one. When, in the account of their martyrdoms, Karpos, Papylos and Agathonike are brought before the proconsul at Pergamon (c. 161-69 CE), there is no reference to imperial cult rituals specifically, simply a command to "Sacrifice to the gods and do not play the fool" (Musurillo 1972:23-29). The accusations and trials at Lugdunum do not involve imperial cults.

164 Such oaths were considered unacceptable by most Christians for two apparent reasons: Jesus' teaching against taking oaths and, of course, the cultic implications associated with the emperor's genius (see Grant 1970:15-17; cf. Origen, Contra Celsum 8.65).
Christian that is enough for a negative verdict, not an accusation of treason or disloyalty (cf. de Ste. Croix 1963; Bickerman 1968:294-95; Grant 1970). Imperial cult practices are brought in only as a test and they are neither the cause nor the basis of prosecution.

Evidently, failure to honour the gods (including imperial gods) who ensured the well-being of the cities set Jews and Christians apart in some ways from other inhabitants, including the members of other associations. On occasion differences along these lines together with other specific circumstances increased the potential for disturbances or persecutions, which might result in intervention by civic and, less often, imperial authorities who were concerned with the maintenance of order. However, we should not overplay these occasional conflicts, imagining that all Jews or Christians were in a constant state of tension or conflict with their fellow civic inhabitants in everyday life. In many respects, Jews and Christians in Asia Minor could live and work peaceably alongside others in the civic context despite their distinctive practices and world views. Recognizing the potential for tensions stemming from non-participation in cultic life should not blind us to the ongoing participation of many Jews and Christians (both as individuals and as groups) in other aspects of civic life. Attention to such participation can help us to understand some of the ways in which these diverse Jewish and Christian groups were at home within the polis, despite their peculiarities and distinctiveness.

New perspectives on aspects of John's Apocalypse

The evidence I have discussed in this study provides a new vantage point from which to view and understand several aspects of the Apocalypse and the situation it addresses concerning John's strategy, imperial cults and the opponents. Before going on to address these three issues, it is important to briefly outline evidence from the Apocalypse which demonstrates just how pervasive anti-imperial sentiment is in this writing. For it is over against this particular stance that we can begin to map out the range of
other Jewish and Christians perspectives and practices as discussed earlier, including those of 1 Peter and the Pastorals. The Apocalypse provides a very different picture regarding Christian stances towards empire to those we have already discussed, and this would have implications regarding actual practices.

Although the implied contrast between honouring and worshipping God and the Lamb and honouring Satan and the beast is an element throughout the work, the main anti-imperial viewpoints come to the fore in chapters 13 and 17-18. John relates futuristic visions which presuppose antagonism between Christians and an evil empire. As in the Jewish oracular and apocalyptic literature discussed earlier, there are religious, military and economic aspects to the anti-imperialism of the Apocalypse.

Chapter 13 focuses on the interconnected religious and military pretensions of Rome. John characterizes the Roman emperor or imperial power as a beast rising from the sea with seven heads, and this beast derives its authority from the great red dragon, the Devil or Satan himself (ch. 12). In light of the reference to the mortal wound previously suffered by the beast (13:3) and the references to his death and subsequent return (17:8-11), which I discuss below, John probably has the resurrected Nero in mind here. The beast utters “haughty and blasphemous words” and it makes “war on the saints”: “And authority was given it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation, and all who dwell on the earth will worship it, every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain” (13:5, 7-8 [RSV]).

A second beast, this one from the earth, “exercizes all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast” (13:12). Using miraculous signs, it deceives the inhabitants into worshipping the beast and causes “those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain” (13:15). The beast also marks everyone with its number, without which it is impossible to buy or sell. Ultimately, “if any one worships the beast and its image...he also shall drink the wine of
God’s wrath...and he shall be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb” (14:9-10). The Roman empire and its leaders are portrayed as hostile to Christianity and vice versa.

In chapters 17-18, John’s condemnation of the Roman empire turns to related economic aspects. Here John brings in the image of “Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of earth’s abominations,” perhaps a play on the goddess Roma, who rides upon the first beast. This is the great harlot, the city of Rome, whose attire in purple, scarlet, gold and jewels speaks of great wealth (17:4). She is “drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses of Jesus” (17:6). John then goes on to portray the forthcoming fall of Babylon/Rome, relating the angel’s condemnation of those who associated with this harlot: “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!...for all nations have drunk the wine of her impure passion, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich with the wealth of her wantonness” (18:2-3). Another voice within the vision calls from heaven “Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities” (18:4-5). John then goes on to portray the great mourning of those kings, merchants and others who associated with the Roman imperial power. This sketches out the main anti-imperial elements of the Apocalypse.

a) Rhetorical situation and strategy

The findings of this study help to put the Apocalypse’s strongly sectarian stance and especially its anti-imperial dimensions in proper perspective as a minority opinion within a spectrum of other viewpoints among Jewish and Christian circles in the cities of Asia (cf. Thompson 1990:120, 132, 186-97; Friesen 1995a:250). Using the imagery of harlots and beasts, John, like some Jewish authors of his time, draws on the Hebrew prophetic tradition to criticize the social, political, economic and religious manifestations
of the Roman imperial presence in the cities (cf. Isa 13, 34; Jer 51; Ezek 26-27; also see the earlier discussion of the Jewish *Sibylline Oracles* and apocalyptic literature). For him, contacts with or honours for emperors and imperial representatives in any form are intertwined and utterly opposed to honouring and worshipping God and the Lamb: hence involvement in such things is "fornication" or idolatry in its most blatant form (cf. Rev 4.11; 5.12-13; 7.11-12; 13.4-8; 14.7; 14.9-11; 20.4-6; 22.8-9). Yet John’s hostile perspective and its practical implications for the actual lives of the groups it addresses is only one side of a conversation.

To clarify the rhetorical situation of the Apocalypse it is important to ask who were the general recipients of the Apocalypse and at whom was this anti-imperial "propaganda" aimed? Certainly there was variety in the situations of Christians in the assemblies of Asia. But overall it seems that the Christian groups drew their membership from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds, some of the Gentiles also being previously associated with Jewish synagogues. Many Gentiles and Jews might have been or still were members in other sub-groups, guilds or synagogues within the civic context.

When we remember this, the evidence discussed earlier with regard to the typical imperial-related activities of many such groups takes on added significance. For in many, perhaps most, of these groups honouring the emperors or other officials in some form was a normal and acceptable part of group-life, and this included cultic honours and related commensal activities in the case of associations. We found that some Jewish groups in Asia and elsewhere engaged in monumental honours for emperors, as well as participating within social networks of benefaction that by nature entailed affiliations with imperial-connected individuals. Likewise within other Christian circles in Asia Minor honouring

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165 Extensive evidence from the Apocalypse is lacking, but the prominence of issues concerning the eating of food sacrificed to idols in the letters suggests that a good number of the Christian opponents, at least, were Gentiles. Considering the presence of Jews in many of the cities addressed by the Apocalypse and the presence of some within Christian groups in Asia (according to other literature e.g. Priscilla and Aquila) there is a strong likelihood that there were Jews among the Christian assemblies addressed by John (himself apparently a Jew; see chap. 1 on the makeup of Christian groups in Asia).
the emperors in a non-cultic sense was not only acceptable, it was advocated, as we saw with 1 Peter and the Pastorals. Some degree of participation in this aspect of group-practice in the cities of Asia was one way in which such Christian and Jewish groups could resemble other associations within the \textit{polis}, thereby helping to lessen tensions between group and society.

There are some similarities between the world views evident in these Jewish and Christian circles and the world view of the Apocalypse, but there is a more significant difference. John shares in common with others a rejection of active participation in cultic honours for the gods, including imperial gods (i.e. rituals that entailed acknowledgement of the emperors as gods), which most Jews and Christians also considered "idolatry". However, John’s definition of idolatry or "fornication" expands to include many activities that others would not necessarily view as such (see the discussion of the opponents below). The distinction evident among many Jews and Christians between non-cultic forms of honour, on the one hand, and conscious or active participation in imperial cults, on the other, is not at all recognized or accepted by John. For many Jews and Christians the emperor held a very prominent and, most often, positive position within the cosmic order of things, deserving of honour and respect; in John’s symbolic universe the emperor’s position was also quite high, but at the height of evil. These differences in practices and world views also correspond to varying notions on where and how strongly the lines between group and society were to be drawn, and they help to elucidate John’s rhetorical strategy.

Scholars are increasingly recognizing the functional characteristics of apocalyptic literature and the deliberative character of John’s rhetoric specifically.\footnote{On the deliberative character of the Apocalypse see deSilva 1998 (cf. Collins 1984; Thompson 1990). On the functional aspects of apocalyptic literature see John J. Collins 1998 [1984]:41-42; Aune 1987:23-31 and 1997:lxvii-lxxii. In her introduction to \textit{Semeia} 36, Adela Yarbro Collins (1986a:7) presents the following emendation to the definition of "apocalypse" offered in \textit{Semeia} 14: an apocalypse is "intended to interpret present, earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority."}
Christian assemblies and using an apocalyptic, visionary framework, John seeks to persuade others to adopt or reject particular viewpoints and practices in the present, not only in the letters but also throughout the work. Among John’s purposes was to convince his recipients that it was his more radical perspective involving separation from various aspects of civic life and complete avoidance of honouring imperial figures which should be followed, not the normative practice within many associations and Jewish and Christian groups. John tries to convince his readers that what at first appears to be normal practice is in fact, at a more profound, cosmic level, an utterly unacceptable compromise with evil. He does so by expounding a symbolic universe in which any form of honours for the emperors and even any social, economic or religious affiliation with imperial aspects of society were inextricably bound up in the evils of Satan (cf. Thompson 1990; Collins 1984:111). John also makes practical exhortations to the Christians in Asia concerning withdrawal from such contacts (cf. Klauck 1992:176-80; Harrington 1993:178-79). Thus we find the angel’s concrete call for Christians to remove themselves from contact with Rome, the harlot, echoing Jeremiah’s exhortation to the Israelites in Babylon (Jer 51:6, 45; cf. Isa 48:20; 52:11): “Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities” (18:4).

Practically speaking, John’s call to withdrawal from Babylon means that Christians living in the cities of Asia should distance themselves from any direct or indirect support for an evil empire whose demise is near. This includes the rejection of any practices, including honours or prayers for the emperor, which were quite common within many Christian groups in Asia Minor, as reflected in 1 Peter, the Pastorals and others. It means the rejection of the politically moderate position that characterized a more prominent trajectory of Christianity. It also has implications regarding Christian participation in economic life in the cities, as I discuss below (section c). While many Christians in Asia
Minor did not perceive a problem with such participation in imperial aspects of civic life, John did, and it seems that his was a minority opinion.

But to say that John's is a minority opinion within Christianity is not to say that his views of empire, though extreme, are totally unfounded or without reason, nor to say that the Apocalypse is necessarily the product of a "paranoid mind". When we consider the actual reasons why John condemns the empire it becomes clearer how participation in imperial dimensions of civic life by Christian groups (that is, association-like behaviour) could be viewed as a threat. John, like some other Jewish authors discussed earlier (e.g. *Sibylline Oracles*), chooses to focus on the negative characteristics of imperialism and criticizes the empire based on inter-related military, economic and religious factors. These factors, although selective, do have some basis in the reality of Roman rule.

Several reasons for John's negative posture in relation to the Roman empire are discernible. Although not explicitly stated in the Apocalypse, it is the power of Rome which recently manifested itself in the slaughter of Christians following the fire at Rome and in the destruction of God's temple at Jerusalem. In John's visions, it is the military might of Rome and its apparent indestructability that misleads people into treating Rome and its emperors as though they are deserving of honours on a par with God himself:

"Men worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying 'Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it'" (13:4). It is this power that allows Rome, the harlot, to hold sway over all the kings of the earth and to profit economically from its exploitation of the provinces, even with the help of provincials who are portrayed as unaware of this overall system of exploitation (ch. 17-18; cf. *Sib. Or*. 3.350-57 [cited above]). In light of the exploitative, abusive and blasphemous actions of the Roman power which were often disguised (according to John), the practice of Christians honouring the emperor could be viewed as unconscious participation in an evil system. It is the potential for deception of Christians that John is worried about.
They are in danger of buying into a false imperial ideology. Moreover, Christians living within a context where inhabitants regularly honoured the emperors as gods and where the benefits of imperialism were praised could be misled into accepting similar ways of perceiving and acting. The potential threat to Christian groups, then, is that they would become indistinguishable from others who were deceived by the false pretentions of the Roman imperial power in the cities of Roman Asia.

In this sense it is possible to see association-like behaviour among Christian groups as a problem, as did John, but many others did not. Other Christians and Christian leaders living in Asia Minor and elsewhere did not focus on these same factors regarding imperialism. Instead, they sought to find ways in which Christians could claim a place for themselves within polis and empire without engaging in cultic honours for the emperors as gods.

b) Imperial cults: Rhetoric and reality

In the process of persuading his readers that they need to remove themselves from such involvements in civic life, John also speaks, in chapter 13, of “worshipping the beast” or its image (eikón) (drawing much of his imagery from the book of Daniel). According to John’s vision of the future, the great red dragon, Satan, gave the first beast from the sea “his power and his throne and great authority” and people “worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?’” (13:1-4 [RSV]). The second beast, who is also a “false-prophet,” promoted the worship of the first beast, causing “those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain” and marking those who did with the number of the beast, which was required to engage in buying and selling (13:11-18). Those who worship the beast and receive the mark, John emphasizes, will ultimately “drink the wine of God’s wrath,” being tormented forever (14:9-11); those who refuse to do so and face death will have their names written in the book of life.
Scholars most often recognize John's depiction of the beasts as some kind of allusion to worship of the emperor or imperial cults. But scholars differ on how they would evaluate the relation between rhetoric and reality, between John's apocalyptic imagery here and the actual nature of imperial cults in Roman Asia and their importance with respect to the contemporary situation of Christians. But in light of what we found earlier, the traditional approach which gives priority to the Apocalypse and reads imperial cults and persecution in light of the book is not plausible, even for the time of Domitian. Furthermore, the influences of scripture on the details of John's futuristic scenarios, especially episodes such as Nebuchadnezzar's command that all should "fall down and worship the gold statue" or else be "thrown into a furnace of blazing fire" (Dan 3), should also caution us in assuming a direct relation between what John describes in chapter 13 and the actual nature and importance of imperial cults or persecution as faced by Christians in Asia.\(^\text{167}\) I have discussed the actual nature of persecution and the modest role of imperial cults in them in a previous section.

Instead of asking what chapter 13 of the Apocalypse tells us about imperial cults, then, we need to ask: in light of what we know about imperial cults and the actual persecution of Christians, how does John's futuristic, apocalyptic scenario relate to them? There are indeed some respects in which aspects of the imperial cult or other historical events around John's time did inform his depiction of the future (cf. Bauckham 1993:445-48). In some ways, John's cult of the beast may be modelled on aspects of the imperial cult. The first beast is the emperor. It seems probable, though, that John has the myth of Nero returned from the dead (\textit{redivivus}) in mind when he speaks of the first beast. This

\(^{167}\) John's focus on the emperor's demands to be worshipped as a god together with the religio-economic critique of empire in chs. 17-18 also derives, in part, from parallels with Ezekiel's religio-economic critique of Tyre, whose prince boasts: "I am a god; I sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas" (chs. 26-28, esp. 28:1-10). On John's economic critique and Hebrew scripture see Bauckham 1991 and Provan 1996. The latter challenges Bauckham's views, but perhaps overstates the distance between Roman realities of trade and John's description in ch. 18.
suggestion is based, in part, on the reference to the beast’s “mortal wound” which was healed (13:3) and, more importantly, the interpretation of phrases in 17:9-11: “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to perdition...This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain only a little while. As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to perdition.”

This is not the place to engage in a full discussion concerning the identification of the heads with specific emperors, nor to discuss related passages in chapter 13 (including the meaning of the number 666; see Court 1979:122-53; Bauckham 1993:384-452; Beale 1999:872-75). Here it is sufficient to point out that the phrases italicized above would suggest that John has in mind the widespread myth that the emperor Nero would return from the dead. Considering the futuristic element in the depiction of the first beast, John may or may not have a particular contemporary figure in mind when he speaks of the second beast. But since the second beast “exercises all the authority of the first beast” and plays a key role in promoting the worship of the image of the first beast (13:12-18), some scholars suggest that John may have in mind some provincial figure associated with imperial cults, such as the provincial imperial cult high-priests or the provincial assembly of Asia (cf. Price 1984:197; Friesen 1996). But these identifications are not certain.

There are further possible connections between John’s rhetoric and contemporary realities. John’s allusions to the attractiveness of worshipping the emperor (e.g. 13:4) do

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reflect the nature of imperial cults as a spontaneous response on the part of civic inhabitants to the power of the emperor and Rome. But he also imagines that worship of the emperor will be enforced in the future with the threat of death. Regarding the latter, it is possible though not certain that John was familiar with the test which some Christians brought to trial faced (cf. Downing 1988:119; Klauck 1992:161-63), namely, ritual acts in honour of the emperor alongside other gods. But, if so, John has clearly elaborated the role of imperial cults specifically, for we found that these cults played only a modest role in actual persecutions up to and beyond the time of Trajan, and there is, in fact, no evidence of such tests before Pliny’s time. The worship-or-die aspect of John’s portrait may well have been influenced by biblical sources, as I noted above (esp. Dan 3). Regarding John’s depiction of the slaughter of Christians, Nero’s brutal execution of Christians following the fire at Rome may also have been fresh in John’s memory, but the mass slaughter envisioned in the book certainly does not (nor does it claim to) reflect the nature of persecution in Asia Minor in the late-first century. If John was in fact writing after the Romans’ destruction of Jerusalem, we can better understand why he, like the authors of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, might tend to portray the Roman imperial power taking brutal actions against God’s people.

Despite these possible connections between rhetoric and reality, we need to realize that the Apocalypse is not, nor does it claim to be, a historical commentary on the actual situation in Roman Asia, nor is it a response to imperial cults of the time specifically.

Recent work by scholars such as Adela Yarbro Collins and Leonard L. Thompson make similar observations.169 Rather, it is an apocalyptic portrayal of the forthcoming final

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169 Collins (1984:73, 69-77, 104) considers imperial cults as an “incidental matter” “from the pagan point of view” and with respect to the real situation of Christians; but she does so, in part, based on a questionable characterization of these cults as non-genuine “flattery”. Thompson, who is more attuned to the actual nature of imperial cults in Roman Asia, points out that not much would have changed with regard to these cults during the reign of Domitian and that, therefore, the imperial cults play only a limited role with regard to the Christians in Asia (cf. Thompson 1990:158-64). But he accepts Price’s view, questioned in chapter four, that the “emperor in the imperial cult was subordinated to the gods” and that the imperial gods were consequently not the recipients of the same cultic acts as other gods (1990:164).
confrontation between the forces of good (God, the Lamb, those in the book of life) and the forces of evil (Satan, the beast, those who worship the beast) whose purpose is, in part, to persuade Christians in the seven cities of Asia to take certain oppositional stances towards society in the present, especially its imperial dimensions. This does not mean that the Apocalypse was a product of a paranoid mind, for as I discussed earlier there are several reasons why John chooses to portray the futuristic confrontation of Christianity and empire in this manner. Writing in an apocalyptic tradition which we discussed in an earlier section, John employs common biblical imagery used in criticism of ruling powers, placing the Roman imperial power, with its claims to be god,\textsuperscript{170} on the side of evil in the final eschatological battle. Within this framework, involvement in imperial facets of civic life, which John epitomizes as worshipping the beast (ch. 13) or fornicating with the harlot (chs. 17-18), is among the most dangerous forms of idolatry. Idolatry and fornication are also prominent themes in the opening letters.

c) The opponents of the letters

A third, more specific way in which the evidence discussed throughout this study sheds light on the Apocalypse concerns the opponents. Once again drawing on biblical language and imagery, John accuses the Nicolaitans and the followers of "Jezebel" and "Balaam" of eating idol-food and of committing "fornication" (πορνεύσατε), a traditional metaphorical reference to involvement in specific aspects of society.\textsuperscript{171} These opponents

\textsuperscript{170} The theme of ruling powers and their leaders claiming to be equal to a god is also common within the biblical sources familiar to John (e.g. Ezek 28 [the prince of Tyre who claims "I am a god; I sit in the seat of gods"]) and within other Jewish apocalyptic writings (e.g. Sib. Or. 5.34, 140 [the returning Nero claims to be a god], 162-79 [Rome makes the divine claim that "I alone am"]).

are noteworthy at Ephesos, but their influence on the churches is most threatening, in John’s view, at Pergamon and Thyatira. As several scholars note, the activities of these opponents most likely included imperial dimensions, which is further indicated in the prominence of anti-imperial themes throughout the rest of the book, often with parallels in imagery and language to the sections concerned with the opponents. But what, concretely, were these opponents doing and in what contexts were they engaging in what John considers idolatry?

The largely neglected epigraphical evidence concerning guilds and associations in the seven cities provides some concrete answers to this in two interrelated ways. First, as I have already suggested, the analogy of associations suggests a range of typical activities and practices, including honours for and dedications to the emperors, in which small groups in the civic setting did engage, including Jewish and Christian groups. Honouring the emperors was a norm which John clearly opposes. But it seems quite possible that John singles out the opponents for special castigation because their “fornication,” that is, their participation in such aspects of society (among other things which I discuss shortly), was more pronounced or explicit than in other Christian or Jewish circles. Perhaps “Jezebel,” as a leader and/or benefactor of a Nicolaitan group, was a woman of relatively high standing in Thyatira (possibly a Julia Severa-type figure) who took honouring the emperors and other imperial representatives, as well as full participation in the economic life of the city, as appropriate activities for members of the Christian groups with whom she affiliated. It is also worth mentioning the possibility that John’s references to the “synagogue of Satan” at Smyrna and at Philadelphia (Rev 2:9; 3:9) may pertain to similar

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172 Collins 1985:213-15; Schüssler Fiorenza 1985:195-97; Hemer 1986:83-94; Klauck 1992; Kraybill 1996:16 and throughout. Adela Yarbro Collins (1985:214), for example, suggests that the Nicolaitans “were advocating Christian participation in the imperial cult.” However, it is not necessarily the participation of Christians in imperial cults specifically, but rather the involvement in specific aspects of the polis, including honours for the emperors and participation in guilds (where imperial cult activities could take place), which may stand behind the issue.
involvements within the civic context on the part of these groups (perhaps, but not necessarily, Jewish), but there is not enough evidence to work with in this case.

Second, one of the opponents’ compromises with society (according to John’s accusations) concerns eating idol-food (εἰδωλοθυτόνα). As Paul’s letter to the Corinthian Christians indicates, a person might encounter idol-food or sacrificial meat in a number of settings in cities of the Greco-Roman world, from the market-place, to temple dining-halls, to the private dinners held in the home of a friend (cf. Gooch 1993). But perhaps the most prominent and widespread social contexts for banquets involving the consumption of food which had been sacrificed to the gods or emperors in Asia were the communal meals of associations and guilds, an issue which I have touched on in chapter four.

We have seen that occupational and other associations were a prominent and widespread aspect of life throughout Asia. In cities like Thyatira we found guilds of merchants, coppersmiths, bakers, linen-workers, dyers, clothing-cleaners, tanners and leather-workers, among others. Furthermore, being a member in such guilds was less than “voluntary” in the sense that, if one was a dyer or merchant, one naturally belonged to or associated with one’s fellow-workers in the guild of dyers or merchants. One’s occupation was in many ways a determining factor in social and economic affiliations. Both Jews and Christians engaged in occupations reflecting the spectrum of known guilds, and we have encountered cases of dual membership in the previous chapter. There is a sense in which we should be surprised if a person were to sever all such contacts with fellow-workers once affiliated with another group such as the Christians or the local synagogue. For removing oneself would sever the network connections necessary for business activity, thereby threatening one’s means of livelihood. Paul himself, who seems to have con-

173 As in the Apocalypse, the issue of eating idol-food seems to have been a significant issue of debate in early Christianity concerning acceptable or unacceptable relations between group and society (see Acts 15; 21:25; Didache 6.3; cf. Borgen 1988; Brunt 1985; Aune 1997:191-94). As Mary Douglas has taught us, boundaries between the physical body and things in the external world are often symbolic of boundaries between society and the group.
considered his occupation as a craftsman an important component in his identity, found the workshop or guild-hall a key setting for his missionary activity (see chap. 1; cf. Hock 1980; Malherbe 1983 [1977]:89-90).

In light of this, it is plausible to suggest that some of the opponents were continuing in their occupational affiliations and sustaining memberships in other local guilds. There these Christians would encounter sacrificial food which had been offered to the gods (including imperial gods), as well as other common group practices such as honours for emperors and imperial officials. Several scholars, following the lead of W.M. Ramsay, also make the suggestion that some of these Christians were participating within local guilds, especially at Thyatira. Still, these scholars do not fully discuss the extensive epigraphical evidence outlined throughout this study concerning imperial and other dimensions of association-life specifically.

The suggestion that John is objecting, in part, to Christians participating in guilds and in commercial networks associated with the imperial presence corresponds well with other economic dimensions of the book. We find John criticizing the Laodicean Christians who are wealthy, probably due to involvement in mercantile activities: “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot...For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked” (3.15-18). John also links involvement in trade with worship of the beast in his futuristic

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174 My suggestions do not rest on the interpretation of καλής in 2:22. But besides its reference to a “sick-bed,” it may also allude to the commensal context and social world of associations connected with the opponents' activities (cf. Ramsay 1901:103-105). For the term was often used to refer to the “couch” on which one reclined to eat at banquets and sometimes as a metonymy of the “banquet” (cf. POxy 110, 1484, 1755, 3693, 4339; NewDocs I 1) or of an “association” (cf. IG X.2 192 from Thessalonica; Philo, In Flaccum 136-37).

portrayal of society: only those who have the mark of the beast, that is, those who associate with Rome or "worship the beast," will be able to "buy and sell" (13:16-18).

Perhaps most telling is John's depiction of those merchants (ἐμποροι), shippers (ναύται καὶ ὁσιὶ τὴν θάλασσαν ἐργάζονται) and craftsmen (τεχνίται) who "fornicate" with the harlot, Babylon/Rome, and mourn at her ultimate demise (ch. 18). John writes:

The merchants...who gained wealth from her will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud, 'Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, bedecked with gold, with jewels, and with pearls! In one hour all this wealth has been laid waste'. And all the shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, 'What city was like the great city?' And they threw dust on their heads, as they wept and mourned..." (18:15-19 [RSV]).

Moreover, as both Richard Bauckham (1991:84) and J. Nelson Kraybill (1996:100-101) suggest, it seems likely that these merchants included at least some Christians in their number. Groups of merchants and shippers, both Italian and otherwise, played a prominent role in the local economic life of the cities in Asia, also actively participating in honours for emperors and officials within civic networks. Thus, for example, in the mid-first century the "merchants (ἐμποροι) who are engaged in business in Ephesos" set up a monument in honour of "their saviour and benefactor, the proconsul, Gaius Pompeius Longinus Gallus, son of Publius" (AE [1968] 153, no. 485 [alternate reading of I Eph 800]; cf. IGR IV 860 [businessmen join with the people of Laodicea to honour a civic official and ambassador to Rome]; IPhrygR 2 [Roman businessmen at Laodicea]).

John calls on Christians to distance themselves from such aspects of civic life, but it is not always clear what practically speaking John expected Christians living in the cities of Asia to do. He certainly wanted them to avoid sacrificial food that had been offered to imperial and other gods within any social context, including the communal meals of guilds. He also would want them to avoid the guilds altogether since imperial rituals and other idolatrous practices took place in them. This would require that Christians limit social and business contacts with fellow-workers and other merchants and traders. He also
certainly did not approve of involvement in the production and trade of goods which contributed, in his view, to the well-being of an evil empire whose ultimate demise was imminent. But how did John expect Christians to make a living? Were they to live in isolation from others? What occupations were acceptable? How would a local Christian merchant or dyer continue in his or her occupation without maintaining at least some friendly contacts with both fellow-workers and with wealthier customers or patrons? How was one to totally avoid any contacts with an imperialism that was embedded within virtually all dimensions of the *polis*? The Apocalypse does not provide clear answers to such questions, and we are left wondering.

The Christian opponents of John who participated in such contexts and practices were not likely to view their own behaviours as unsuitable compromise or idolatry, as did John, but rather as a necessary part of living and working within the *polis*. Perhaps one of the Nicolaitans or followers of “Jezebel” might have offered, if questioned, an (ideological) justification of such participation in the communal meals of associations in a manner similar to those of the Corinthian Christians who knew that “an idol has no real existence” and that “there is no God but one” (1 Cor 8:4; cf. Schüessler Fiorenza 1985:117-20; Räisänen 1995:1633-37). Perhaps, however, the average Nicolaitan Christian would not have understood the question, since participation in such social and economic contexts had been and apparently continued to be a normal and not insignificant part of their lives. Total separation and exclusivity in relation to all such facets of civic life would not have entered their minds. But John, whose radically apocalyptic outlook steeped in the Jewish prophetic tradition led him to perceive things differently, tried to convince them otherwise. Between the views and practices of John and the Nicolaitans lies a spectrum of possibilities regarding interaction with, involvement in, or separation from imperial, occupational and other aspects of society.
Conclusion

As the present case study shows, an oversimplified categorization of Jewish or Christian groups as sects in the modern sociological sense does less to explain and illuminate some dimensions of group-society relations than does a comparison with other models or social groupings from the ancient context, chief among them associations and guilds. A comparison of imperial-related aspects of group-life in Roman Asia specifically, with attention to both similarities and differences, furthered our understanding in several respects. Some Jewish and Christian groups did involve themselves in imperial-related honorary activities that are paralleled within many associations, including monumental or other special honours for both emperors and imperial officials. In some respects Jews and Christians could also incorporate the emperors or imperial authorities within the internal cultic life of the group, at least in the form of prayers for these figures. Such similarities draw attention to one of the neglected ways in which these groups, like other associations, found a place for themselves within the social-cultural framework of the polis, thereby also lessening the potential for tensions between the group and society. This crossover in practice also suggests at least some commonalities in the relative position of the emperors within the world views of some Jews, Christians and other civic inhabitants.

Yet there was also a range of opinions on the matter within Jewish or Christian circles, reflecting differing notions on where and how starkly the lines between group and society were to be drawn. In contrast to many others, the Apocalypse clearly opposed any form of honouring the emperor (the "beast" in his view) or affiliating with the imperial presence. He sought to persuade others who were more involved in imperial and other dimensions of civic life to adopt his more radical and sectarian stance.

Unlike other associations, participation in imperial facets of civic life among most if not all Jews and Christians stopped short of conscious or active involvement in cultic honours addressed to the emperors as gods. This notwithstanding the fact that some
Christians or Jews could find themselves within social contexts, such as associations, where such cultic honours did take place and where sacrificial food was consumed in the context of communal meals. Yet the failure to engage in imperial cult activities should be understood within the broader context of Christians’ and Jews’ avoidance of full participation in cultic honours for the gods generally, since cultic honours for the imperial gods were embedded within the broader religious life of the *polis* in Roman Asia.

Following from the latter point is the fact that imperial cults in and of themselves were not a principal causal factor or focal point of occasional conflicts between civic inhabitants and either Jews or Christians, nor of the sporadic persecution of Christians specifically. Instead, the principal source of tensions between these groups and others in the civic context most often pertained to Jewish and Christian “atheistic” practices and world views. For failure to fittingly honour the gods and goddesses (including the *Sebastoi*) who protected or punished could have grave implications for the well-being of the civic community and could, therefore, appear as disregard for fellow-inhabitants. But acknowledgement of this potential source of tensions should not lead us to exaggerate its effects on the everyday lives of Jews and Christians in Asia, who could in many respects live and work peaceably alongside others within the civic context and, as groups, participate in some aspects of life in the *polis* under Roman rule.
Conclusion
Prospects for the comparative study of associations, synagogues and Christian groups in the Roman empire

The present work made several contributions in areas relating to the study of social and religious life among associations, synagogues, and Christian groups in antiquity, also pointing in new directions for further research. Here I do not reiterate all the conclusions offered in the previous chapters, but rather broadly sketch out prospects for the future in light of the contributions of this study.

This study barely scratched the surface of the abundant concrete material evidence (realia) available concerning social and religious history in Roman Asia, let alone other regions. Despite the partial nature and other shortcomings of such evidence, it provides glimpses into the everyday lives of persons, groups and communities of specific localities in a way that other evidence does not. But realia should not be merely used as a supplement to what we can know of the realities of ancient life from (often elite-produced) legal or literary sources, whether Greco-Roman, Jewish or Christian. Rather, it should be studied in its own right, providing an alternative window through which to view life which can actually change our understanding of society and religion within it. Thus, for instance, our assessment of the relation between Roman imperialism and associations in the provinces radically changed when we looked at the ongoing lives of these groups from the perspective of epigraphical and archeological remains.

When it comes to the use of realia in the study of Christianity and Judaism or their "background," gone should be the days of picking and choosing bits of evidence from the Greco-Roman world based on questions dictated by Christian or Jewish literary evidence. We need to approach the study of phenomena in the Greco-Roman world on their own terms with attention to regional factors, placing evidence within as broad a context as possible; only then should we turn to the question of how this might shed light on Christianity or Judaism. Studied on their own terms, the glimpses of life we view by way of inscrip-
tions and other material remains can significantly modify or even transform our understanding of the Jewish and Christian groups that lived and developed within civic and provincial communities in the Roman empire.

This study made a modest contribution in this realm by looking at associations within civic communities in a specific region of the Roman empire, the province of Asia. Moreover, associations are deserving of study in their own right as social-religious phenomena within the Greco-Roman world. Here I have nowhere near exhausted the evidence for social, religious and other dimensions of association-life in Roman Asia, let alone other regions of the empire, which will more than repay additional scholarly attention in the future. Attention to group-society and other social-historical issues will help us to plot these groups within the broader contexts of polis, province and empire.

Concentrating on imperial dimensions of association-life specifically allowed me to elucidate one aspect of the lives of associations, challenging the tension-centred approaches of many scholars. Associations' external relations within social networks and internal social-religious activities both suggest that the emperors and other imperial aspects were important and integrated elements within group-life in the cities of Roman Asia. Participation in monumental or cultic honours associated with imperial-connected figures was among the means by which associations could tend towards integration within society (polis, province and empire), also staking a claim regarding their place within the cosmos as they understood it. Most associations were not, as often assumed, subversive or anti-Roman groups.

Attention to these groups which reflect various strata of the population illuminated broader issues concerning religion, culture and society in Roman Asia. Some scholars approach the study of antiquity with inadequate and, often, modernizing definitions of religion in terms of the personal feelings of the individual, leading them to discount the significance of various phenomena, including imperial cults. More theoretical work con-
cerning how we should approach the study of religion in antiquity may provide more adequate concepts and categories. Contrary to common scholarly depictions, the evidence of imperial rituals within associations suggested the genuine importance of the imperial gods within social and religious life at the local level. Far from being solely political with no religious significance for the populace, imperial cults and the gods they honoured were thoroughly integrated at various levels within society in Roman Asia, encompassing political, social and religious dimensions. Further regional studies of both imperial cults and associations will allow us to better evaluate what is or is not distinctive about Roman Asia, or specific localities within it, in this regard.

Moreover, attention to local associations helped to elucidate the nature of Roman imperial rule. By virtue of its passive-reactive approach, Roman rule was dependent upon its ongoing relations with provincial communities and inhabitants. We have begun to see some of the ways in which civic inhabitants and groups, including Jewish and Christian groups, were part of the webs of relations which linked the polis to province and empire. We have gained a glimpse into some of the mechanisms which perpetuated Roman imperialism in society of the time, but much more remains to be done.

Finally, this study helped us to comprehend the place of diverse Jewish and Christian groups within society in Roman Asia, also shedding further light on Christian literature pertinent to the region. Challenging a widespread, tension-centred approach which categorizes both Jewish and Christian groups as sects in a hostile environment, I suggested a more complex scenario for group-society relations, drawing on social scientific insights regarding acculturation, assimilation and dissimilation. Further case studies regarding group-society relations are needed. The present case study regarding imperial facets of civic life specifically found that associations provided instructive analogies or models of comparison with both Jewish and Christian groups regarding certain aspects of group-society relations. This comparison employing inscriptional evidence
rooted this study firmly in the social and cultural realities of life in the world of *polis* and empire, preventing us from merely theorizing in a vacuum regarding Jewish and Christian groups.

The results of this comparison drew further attention to the problems with the sectarian reading of all Jewish and Christian groups. There was a range of attitudes and practices among Jews and Christians with respect to imperial and other dimensions of the *polis*, reflecting variant opinions on where and how starkly the line between group and society was to be drawn. Further regional and comparative studies along these lines may help us not only to better understand Jewish and Christian groups and literature, but also to plot various groups and communities (Greco-Roman, Jewish and Christian) on the social-cultural map of the Roman empire.
Figures
Figure 1. Spheres of social network connections: Bases of affiliation and association
Figure 2. Monument from Panormos (now in the British Museum) depicting Apollo, Zeus and Artemis (top), banqueting association (middle), and musicians, a dancer and a wine-server (bottom) (*GIBM* IV 1007).

Source: Goodenough 1953, vol. 3, fig. 845.
Figure 3. Monument from Triglia depicting the priestess Stratonike approaching Cybele and Apollo for sacrifice, the gathering of the association, and musicians, a dancer and wine-servers below (IAPamBiih 35).
Source: Pfuhl and Möbius 1977-9, Tafelband 2, Tafel 332.
Figure 4. Monument from Kyzikos depicting Cybele seated on a throne with lions on either side and a procession of eight devotees below approaching with right hands raised in adoration.

Source: Hasluck 1910:217, fig. 19.
Figure 5. Building plans of the a) grain-measurers’ guild and the b) builders’ guild at Ostia, Italy.
Source: Hermansen 1981:65, fig. 14; 63, fig. 12.
Figure 6. Meeting-place of the Poseidoniasts, the merchants and shippers from Berytos at Delos, including shrines (V, VI) for Roma, Poseidon and "gods of the homeland."
Source: Bruneau and Ducat 1983:175, fig. 46.

Figure 7. Statue of Aphrodite and Pan from the meeting-place of the Poseidoniasts at Delos.
Source: Bruneau and Ducat 1983:176, fig. 47.
Figure 8. Photo of the Dionysiac cowherds' meeting-hall (Hall of Benches) at Pergamon, looking east.

Figure 9. Map of the residential area north of the sanctuary of Demeter at Pergamon, including the Hall of Benches and Heroon.
Source: Filgigis and Radt 1986, Tafel 58.
Figure 10. Plan of the Baccheion at Athens, meeting-place of the Iobacchoi.
Source: Judeich 1931:291.

Figure 11. Inscribed column containing the statutes of the Iobacchoi.
Source: Harrison 1906:90, fig. 25.
Figure 12. Photo and sketch of the Sebasteion porticoes at Aphrodisias, looking west from the temple towards the main gate.
Source: Smith 1987:94 and pl. III.
Figure 13. Julian family tree (based on PIR² 1 507 and FOS, fig. 69)
(* = known connections with associations)
Figure 14. Some connections of the guild of dyers at Thyatira.
Figure 15. Claudia Ammion’s family tree (based on TAM V 934).
(* = known connections with associations or youth organizations)
Senatorial:

Dionysiac cowherds ——— C.A.A. Julius Quadratus (proconsul of Asia) ——— young men's association

Equestrian:

Guild of clothing-cleaners ——— T. Flavius Montanus (prefect, high-priest of Asia at Ephesos)

Decurial (see fig. 14)

Provincial imperial cult priesthoods:

Name unknown (high-priest of Galatia, sebastophant, equestrian) ——— Tiberius Claudius (high-priest, sebastophant) ——— Initiates of Kybele

Civic imperial cult priesthoods:

Jewish synagogue ——— Julia Severa (high-priestess of the Sebastoi) ——— Elders' association

Hermes-worshippers ——— Gnomagoras (priest of the Sebastoi) ——— Aphrodite-worshippers

Dionysos-worshippers

Figure 16. Range of associations' connections with the elites.
Figure 17. Painting from a house in Pompeii depicting the riot of 59 CE, with spectators fighting one another in and around the amphitheatre.
Source: Rizzo 1929, Tav. CXCVIII.
Appendix 1
Occupation-based associations in some cities of Roman Asia

Ephesos

bankers:  
IEph 454

building related
bed-builders:  
IEph 2213
carpenters/builder/sawyers:  
IEph 2115, 3075
clothing related
clothing-sellers:  IEph 3063
hemp-workers:  IEph 454
linen-weavers:  IEph 454, 2446, 3803
wool-dealers:  IEph 454, 727, 3803

entertainment/festival related
athletes (Herakles):  IEph 1084, 1087, 1088, 1089, 1098, 1122
gladiators:  IEph 3055, 3070, IGladiateurs 200, 201, 202, 204-208
performers (Dionysiac):  IEph 22

food related:
bakers:  IEph 215 (cf. IEph 553)
wine-tasters:  IEph 728; SEG 35 1109-10

fishery related:  IEph 20, 1503

horse-dealers:  IEph 551 (?)

measurers:  IEph 3216

merchants and traders:  IEph 800, 3079

physicians:  IEph 719, 1161-67, 2304, 4101a-b

potters:  IEph 2402
smiths
silversmiths:  IEph 425, 457, 585, 586, 2212, 2441

workers:  IEph 3216

Hierapolis (and Laodicea)

building related:
nail-workers:  IHierapJ 133
carpet-weavers:  IHierapJ 342
clothing related:
clothing-cleaners:  IPhrygR 8 (Laodicea)
dyers:  IHierapJ 50; SEG 41 1201
linen-dealers:  IHierapPenn 45
purple-dyers:  IHierapJ 41, 42, 133, 195, 227, 342
wool-cleaners:  IHierapJ 40

entertainment related:
athletes:  IHierapJ 36
farmers:  IHierapPenn 25
smiths
coppersmiths:  IHierapJ 133
water-millers:  IHierapPenn 7

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Magnesia on the Maeander

building related:
  assistant builders: IMagnMai 239
entertainment/festival
  flutists and acrobats: IMagnMai 237

Pergamon (and Attaleia)

clothing related:
  dyers: IGR IV 425 (?)
  leather-cutters: IGR IV 1169 (Attaleia)

Philadelphia

clothing related:
  leather-tanners: IGLAM 656
  wool-workers: IGR IV 1632

Saittai

building related
  carpenters: ISaitt 28

clothing related
  clothing-cleaners (fullers): TAM V 86; ISaitt 26
  felt-makers: ISaitt 31
  leather-workers: TAM V 79, 80, 81; ISaitt 25
  linen-workers: TAM V 82, 83, 84; ISaitt 30; SEG 40 1088
  wool-workers: TAM V 85; ISaitt 32

Smyrna

businessmen: ISmyrna 642 (bankers?)

clothing related
  hemp-workers: ISmyrna 218 (?)

entertainment related
  athletes: ISmyrna 217, 709
  gladiators: IGladiateurs 225, 240, 241
  performers (Dionysiac): ISmyrna 598, 599, 639

fishery related
  fishermen: ISmyrna 715; LSAM 17 (?)

smiths
  goldsmiths: ISmyrna 721
  silversmiths: ISmyrna 721

Thyatira

businessmen: TAM V 862

clothing related
  clothing-cleaners (fullers): SEG 40 1045
  dyers: TAM V 935, 945, 965, 972, 978, 980, 989, 991, 1029, 1081
leather-cutters: TAM V 1002; SEG 41 1033
leather-tanners: TAM V 986
linen-workers: TAM V 1019, 933

entertainment/festival related
  athletes: TAM V 977, 984, 1097
  performers: TAM V 1033

food related
  bakers: TAM V 966
potters: TAM V 914
slave-merchants: TAM V 932
smiths
  coppersmiths: TAM V 936

Tralles

clothing related
  linen-weavers: ITralles 79

entertainment related
  performers (Dionysiac): ITralles 50, 65
  athletes: ITralles 105, 109; Robert 1937:412-13, no. 3

stone-cutters: IGLAM 1666c
workers: ITralles 162
Appendix 2
Dionysiac associations

Translation key:
\( \beta \alpha \kappa \chi \rho \alpha \) “bacchants”
\( \beta \sigma \omega \kappa \delta \alpha \) “cowherds”
\( \mu \upsilon \upsilon \sigma \tau \alpha \) “initiates”
\( \pi \rho \sigma \omicron \beta \omicron \upsilon \tau \rho \omicron \) “presbyters”
\( \sigma \kappa \epsilon \iota \alpha \) “company”
\( \upsilon \mu \nu \omega \delta \) “hymn-singers”

Asia

Akmeonia:
*MA*MA VI 239 (initiates of the sacred *thiasos* of Dionysos Kathegemon).

Dorylaion, Nakoleia and surrounding villages:
*IPhrygDB* III 1 (initiates); *IPhrygHaspels* 144 (initiates of Zeus Dionysos); *IPhrygHaspels* 139 (initiates of Zeus Dionysos).

Ephesos:
*IEph* 275 (c. 119 CE; initiates), 293 (c. 180-192 CE; initiates), 434 (Baccheion), 1595 (initiates of Dionysos Phleos), 1600 (late II CE; mysteries), 1601 (initiates), 1602 (initiates?).

Erythrai:
*IErythrai* 132 (c. 139-161 CE; priest of Dionysos and a “sacred oikos”), 222 (III CE; company of *Brachyleitai*).

Halikarnassos:
Cole 1993:293 (bacchants).

Knidos:
*IKnid* 160 (c. 350-250 BCE; bacchants).

Kos:
*IRhodM* 492 (I BCE-I CE; *thiasos* of *Bacchistai*).

Kyme:
*IKyme* 17 (c. 27-26 BCE; *thiasotai*), 30 (thiasotai).

Kyzikos:
*CIG* 3679 (Bacchic bankers [?]).

Magnesia on the Maiander:
*IMagnMai* 117 (early-II CE) (initiates and a “sacred oikos”), 215 (mid-II CE; *thiasoi*).

Miletos and Didyma:
Henrichs 1978:148 (Miletos; III-II BCE; female bacchants); *IDidyma* 502 (friends-of-Dionysos, Baccheion).

Pergamon:
*IPergamon* 222 (cowherds? of Dionysos Kathegemon) *IPergamon* 319-20 (company), 485-488 (I-early II CE; cowherds); *MDAI*(A) 24 (1899) 179, no.31 (c. 108-109 CE; dancing cowherds); *MDAI*(A) 27 (1902) 94-95, no. 86 (c. 197-159 BCE; bacchants of the *eustatic* god) *SEG* 29 1264 (late Hellenistic era; chief-cowherd of Dionysos Kathegemon; cf. Radt 1988:222-28 [meeting place of the cowherds].

Philadelphia and vicinity:
*ILydiaKP* I 42 (II CE; initiates of Kathegemon Dionysos); *ILydiaB* 8 (company of Kathegemon Dionysos); *IManisa* 375 = *TAM* V 297 (Kula; 255/66 CE; relief depicting a bacchant).

Rhodes:
*IG* XII.1 155 (I BCE; *koinon* of Dionysiastai); *ILindos* 449 (c. 100 CE; mysteries of Bacchos Dionysos)
Saitai and vicinity:
*TAM V* 91 (167 CE; *Dionysistai?*), 92 (168 CE; synod of young men); 127 (249/50 CE; relief depicting a bacchant), 477 (17 year-old fellow-initiate; 240 CE).

Sebaste:
*IPhrygANRW* 12 (initiates of Dionysos Kathegemon).

Smyrna:
*ISmyrna* 600-601 (157-58 CE and 161-63 CE; synod of Breiseus Dionysos), 622 (c. 129-31 CE; initiates of Breiseus Dionysos), 639 (mid-late II CE; sacred synod of the performers and initiates of Dionysos Breseus), 728 (II-III CE; Dionysiac-Orphic cult regulation for the initiates in the sanctuary of Bromios), 729 (c. 247-49 CE; Breisean initiates), 730 (II CE; dedication in connection with "Dionysos before the city"), 731 (c. 80-83 CE; synod of initiates), 732 (late I CE or mid II CE; initiates), 733 (II-III CE; Baccheion), 734 (initiates); *ISmyrna* (add.), vol. 3, p. 352, no. III (late Hellenistic era; *Dionysistai*).

Teos:
*I GLAM* 106 (initiates of Setaneios god Dionysos).

Thera Island:
*OGIS* 735 (c. 150 BCE; *koinon of Bacchistai*).

Thyatira and vicinity:
*TAM V* 744 (Julia Gordos; hierophant in the mysteries of Dionysos), 817 (Attaleia Agroeira; 165 CE; narthex-bearing company), 822 (198 CE; narthex-bearing company).

**Other provinces of Asia Minor**

Amastris (Bithynia-Pontus):
*SEG* 35 1327 = Jones 1990:53-63; 155 CE (epitaph of a 30 year-old athlete who had led the rites of Dionysos).

Chalcedon (Bithynia-Pontus):
Cole 1984:37 (epitaph of a man who danced with the children and at the symposia holding the nectar of Bromios).

Daskyleion (Bithynia-Pontus):
*I BithMendeI* I 20 (epitaph mentioning *thiasoi* and the initiates of Dionysos Bromios).

Iconium (Galatia):
*CIG* 4000 (attendants of Dionysos).

Seleucia on the Calycadnos (Cilicia):
*IKilikiaHW* 183 (initiates).

Termessos (Pamphylia/Pisidia):
*TAM* III 922 (rites of Bacchus and, perhaps, initiates).

**Dacia and Moesia**

Callatis area:
*Dacia* 1 (1924) 126-44, nos. 1-2 (c. 30-50 CE; *thiasotai* with "foreign Dionysia");
*SEG* 27 384 (1 CE [reign of Tiberius]; *thiasotai*).

Dionysopolis area:
*IGBulg* 22bis (241-44 CE; initiates?); *BE* (1952) 160-61, no.100 (company of Asians).

Histria:
*IGLSkythia* I 99 (218-22 CE; company of *Dionysiastai* presbyters), 100 (hymn-singing presbyters of Dionysos), 167 (161-211 CE; hymn-singing presbyters of...
Dionysos), 199 (company of Dionysiastai): 208 (hymn-singers of Dionysos), 221 (hymn-singers of Dionysos).

Tomis:  
*IGL Skythia II* 120 (Bacchic thiasos).

**Thracia**

Apollonia:  
*IGBulg* 401 (initiates and/or cowherds).

Bizye area:  
*IGBulg* 1864 (fellow-initiates), 1865 (Baccheion, initiates).

Byzantion:  
*SEG* 18 279-84 (initiates of Dionysos Kallon); *SEG* 28 562 (early II CE; thiasotai of Dionysos Parabolos [perhaps fishermen]).

Cillae:  
*IGBulg* 1517 (241-44 CE; company), 1518 (company).

Heraklea-Perinthos:  
*IGR* I 787 (196-98 CE; Baccheion of Asians).

**Greece and Macedonia**

Athens:  
*CIG* 956 (thiasotai); *IG* II.2 1368 (c. 177 CE; lobacchoi, Baccheion).

Cenchreae:  
*IG IV* 207 (cowherd).

Megara:  
*CIG* 1059 (ancient Baccheion).

Philippi area:  
*IMakedD* 920 (Podgora; initiates)

Physkos:  
*LSCG* 181 (II CE; koinon, cowherds, maenads)

Thasos:  
*IG XII.8* 387 (Baccheion).

Thessalonica:  
*IG X.2* 259 (I CE; initiates, oikos), 260 (III CE; initiates, thiasos), 261 (II-III CE; oikos), 503 (132 CE; priest of Dionysos), 506 (209 CE; thiasoi of Dionysos).

**Italy**

Rome and vicinity:  
*IGUR* 156 (sacred company), 157 (hierophant of Kathegemon Dionysos), 160 (Torre Nova; 160 CE; initiates), 1169 (seven year-old male priest and initiate of the mysteries of Dionysos Kathegemon, initiates, friends), 1228 (seven year old male participant in the "orgia for Dionysos"); Merkelbach 1971 (Tusculum; ten year old female dance-leader of the thiasos).
Abbreviations

All journal abbreviations in the bibliography follow the conventions of either L’Année philologique or The Journal of Biblical literature.

Epigraphical, papyrological and prosopographical abbreviations
(* = epigraphical abbreviations absent or deviating from Horsley and Lee 1994)

AE = Cagnat, Merlin, Gagé 1888-
BE = Haussoullier, Reinach, Roussel 1888-
CCCA = Vermaseren 1987
CCIS = Vermaseren and Lane 1983-9*
CIG = Boeckh 1828-77
CIJ = Frey 1936-52
CMRM = Lane 1971-76
CPJ = Tcherikover and Fuks 1957-64
DFSJ = Lifshitz 1967*
GCRE = Oliver 1989*
GIBM = Hicks, Newton, and Hirschfeld 1874-1916*
IAdramytt = Stauber 1996*
IAlexandriaK = Kayser 1994*
IAlexTroas = Rïel 1997*
IAmyzon = Robert and Robert 1983
IANatChr = Johnson 1994*
IApamBith = Corsten 1987
IAPharodArchive = Reynolds 1982
IAPharodSpect = Rouehé 1993
IAsMinBH = Brixhe and Hodot 1988
IAsMinChr = Grégoire 1968 [1922]
IAsMinLyk I = Benndorf and Niemann 1884
IAsMinLyk II = Petersen and Luschan 1889
IAsMinSW = Heberdey and Kalinka 1897
IAsMinVers = Peek 1980
IASoss = Merkelbach 1976
IBithDörner I = Dörner 1941
IBithDörner II = Dörner 1952
IBithMendel = Mendel 1900, 1901
IBoitotRoesch = Roesch 1982*
IBubon = Schindler 1972
ICarie = Robert and Robert 1954*
IDelos = Roussel and Launey 1937
IDidyma = Rehm 1958
IEgJud = Horbury and Noy 1992
IEgPortes = Bernand 1984*
IErythrai = Engelmann, Merkelbach 1972-4
IEurJud = Noy 1993-5*
IFayum = Bernand 1975-81
IGBulg = Mihailov 1958-70
IGLSkythia = Pippidi and Russu 1983-
IGLSyria = Sartre 1982
IGR = Cagnat, Toutain, Jovgvet 1906-1927*
IGUR = Moretti 1968-91
IHadrianoi = Schwertheim 1987
\textit{IHerakleaPont} = Jonnes and Ameling 1994*
\textit{IHierap} = Judeich 1898
\textit{IHierapPenn} = Pennacchietti 1966-7*
\textit{IHierapRitti} = Ritti 1985*
\textit{Iiasos} = Blümel 1985
\textit{IIlion} = Frisch 1975
\textit{IKalchedon} = Merkelbach 1980
\textit{IKilikiaBM} = Bean and Mitford 1965, 1970
\textit{IKilikiaDF} = Dagron and Feissel 1987
\textit{IKilikiaHW} = Heberdey and Wilhelm 1894
\textit{IKios} = Corsten 1985-
\textit{IKlaudiop} = Becker-Bertau 1986
\textit{IKnidos} = Blümel 1992
\textit{IKosPH} = Hicks and Paton 1891
\textit{IKyme} = Engelmann 1976
\textit{IKyprSalamMN} = Mitford and Nicolaou 1974
\textit{IKyzikos} = Schwertheim 1980-
\textit{ILabraunda} = Crampa 1969, 1972
\textit{ILaadikeia} = Robert 1969a
\textit{ILindos} = Blinkenberg 1941
\textit{ILydiaH} = Herrmann 1962
\textit{ILydiaKP} I = Keil and Premerstein 1910
\textit{ILydiaKP} II = Keil and Premerstein 1911
\textit{ILydiaKP} III = Keil and Premerstein 1914
\textit{ILykaoniaLp} = Laminger-Pascher 1992
\textit{ILykaoniaLP} = Laminger-Pascher 1984
\textit{IMagnMai} = Kern 1900
\textit{IMagnSip} = Ihnken 1978
\textit{IManisa} = Malay 1994*
\textit{IMilet} = Wiegend, Kawerau, Rehm 1889-1997
\textit{IMoesiaTH} = Tacheva-Hitova 1983*
\textit{IMylasa} = Blümel 1987-88
\textit{INikaia} = Sahin 1979-87
\textit{IPamphylia} = Lanckoronski, Niemann and Petersen 1890-92*
\textit{IPergamon} = Fränkel 1890-5
\textit{IPergamonAsklep} = Habicht 1969*
\textit{PFOS} = Raepsaet-Charlier 1987
\textit{IPhilae} = Bernand 1969
\textit{IPhrygANRW} = Drew-Bear and Naour 1990*
\textit{IPhrygDB} = Drew-Bear 1978
\textit{IPhrygHaspels} = Haspels 1971
\textit{IPhrygR} = Ramsay 1895-7*
\textit{PIR}1 = Klebs, Rohden and Dessau 1897-98
\textit{PIR}2 = Groag, Stein, Petersen 1933-
\textit{IPontBithM} = Marek 1993*
\textit{IPontEux} = Latyschev 1965 [1890-1901]
\textit{IPriene} = Gaertringen 1906
\textit{IPrusaOlymp} = Corsten 1991
\textit{IPrusiasHyp} = Ameling 1985
\textit{IRhodBlümel} = Blümel 1991*
\textit{IRhodBresson} = Bresson 1991*
\textit{ISaittai} = Petzl 1978, 1979*
\[ ISardBR = \text{Buckler and Robinson 1932} \]
\[ ISardGauthier = \text{Gauthier 1989} \]
\[ ISardH = \text{Herrmann 1996*} \]
\[ ISardRobert = \text{Robert 1964} \]
\[ ISelge = \text{Nollé and Schindler 1991} \]
\[ ISideBean = \text{Bean 1965} \]
\[ ISide = \text{Nollé 1993} \]
\[ ISmyna = \text{Petzl 1982-90} \]
\[ IStratonikeia = \text{Sahin 1982-90} \]
\[ IThyatiraB = \text{Buckler 1913*} \]
\[ ITralles = \text{Poljakov 1989} \]
\[ ITyriaion = \text{Naour 1980} \]
\[ LGS = \text{Prott and Ziehen 1988 [1896-1906]*} \]
\[ LSAM = \text{Sokolowski 1955} \]
\[ LSCG = \text{Sokolowski 1962} \]
\[ LSCGSuppl = \text{Sokolowski 1969} \]
\[ MAMA = \text{Keil, Wilhelm, Buckler 1928-} \]
\[ NewDocs = \text{Horsley 1981-} \]
\[ OGIS = \text{Dittenberger 1903-1905} \]
\[ PAnt = \text{Roberts, Barns and Zilliacus 1950-67} \]
\[ PLond = \text{Kenyon, Bell, Skeat 1893-1974} \]
\[ POxy = \text{Egypt Exploration Fund 1898-} \]
\[ PParis = \text{Letronne, Brunet de Presle and Egger 1865} \]
\[ PPetraus = \text{Hagedorn, Hagedorn, Youtie 1969} \]
\[ PPyrl = \text{Johnson, Martin, Hunt 1911-52} \]
\[ PSI = \text{Vitelli, Norsa, 1912-79} \]
\[ PTebtunis = \text{Grenfell, Hunt, Goodspeed 1902-76} \]
\[ RIG = \text{Michel 1976 [1900]*} \]
\[ SB = \text{Preisigke, Bilabel, Kießling 1915-} \]
\[ SEG = \text{Roussel, Salav, Tod 1923-} \]
\[ SIRIS = \text{Vidman 1969} \]
\[ SOTIR = \text{Halfmann 1979} \]
\[ SIG = \text{Dittenberger 1915-24} \]
\[ TAM = \text{Kalinka, Heberdey, Dörner, 1920-} \]
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