methodological framework that is honest about its limitations, and can add a great deal to the study of the spread of ideas and change in the ancient world where a sufficient body of evidence exists for examination. It fails, however, to reveal why some cults appeal to networks, and others do not. Why, for example, was Jupiter Dolichenus adopted by Roman military officers and not some other cult? Although Collar makes no claim to answer this question, she does not diminish its importance, as she ambitiously proposes to do.

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Religious Associations in the Post-Classical Polis by Julietta Steinhauser is published in Franz Steiner Verlag’s series Potsdamer Altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge edited by Pedro Barceló, Peter Riemer, Jörg Rüpke and John Scheid. This series publishes an international assortment of dissertations, monographs, and edited volumes on a range of topics in Greek and Roman religion. This book contributes to the renewed scholarly interest in the networks of small collectives in the ancient Mediterranean world. Often referred to as “associations.” These collectives include guilds, professional groups, neighbourhood-based associations, and cult groups among other variations, that left a substantial amount of material evidence by way of honorific inscriptions, epitaphs, regulations, and membership lists. The main thrust of Steinhauser’s work is signalled in the title; she attempts to argue that “religious” associations became a distinct category, “a novel religious form” (15), with respect to the other kinds of associations, such as professional associations, in the urban context of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. Focussing on a the delimited but archaeologically rich sites of Athens, Delos, and later, Rhodes, Steinhauser examines the main evidence for each site and argues that 1) there is more diversity than previously assumed in associations that venerated the same deity 2) associations of new deities were integrated in to the polis at an incredible rate and 3) these associations attracted members by assimilating to civic norms rather than exuding “exoticism” or “aggressiveness” (25).

The introduction provides a general description of the phenomenon of Greek associations and Roman collegia and a brief argument for demarcating “religious” associations as a distinct subset of such groups. Steinhauser defines religious associations as “groups of people who voluntarily gather regularly, at a specific place to worship a common choice of deity” (16). These types of groups were derivative of “elective” cults which developed in opposition to civic ones (22-3). Delos and Athens are chosen as cases studies because of the rich evidence available and because they have contrasting conditions under which associations developed and flourished in each city.

The second and third chapter provide summaries of the some of the different kinds of associations in Athens and Delos. Steinhauser covers many of the well-known associations including the orgeones, eranistai, and iobakkhoi in Athens and the therapeutai, dekatistai, and serapiastai of Delos. From these association-laden sites, she argues for an increasing diversity of groups during the Hellenistic era, primarily with respect to the variety of deities which are used as groups names. This diversification occurred, according to Steinhauser, as associations shift from focussing on civic sacrificial festivals to
Moving on from these geographical sites, Steinhauer spends the fourth chapter considering the case of associations devoted to Egyptian deities that spread to all areas of the Mediterranean outside of Egypt during the Hellenistic era. The focus here is on ascertaining whether these associations are populated and spread by Egyptians moving to other areas of the Mediterranean or by Greeks living in those areas already. She argues that the membership of these groups is almost entirely Greek and their spread may be linked to increased trade and military movement.

The fifth chapter and sixth chapter address more thematic issues, namely the architecture and civic context of these associations. Chapter five gives some brief observations on the archaeological remains of these groups, the buildings they constructed and burial sites they maintained. The variety in the ways associations used and constructed space reveals no general “association” architectural patterns, although a few groups maintained their own styles, such as devotees of Mithras and Dionysiac associations (138). The sixth chapter focuses on the relationship between associations and the official institutions of the Greek polis. Steinhauer notes, as many other scholars have, how associations adopted the language, organizational structures and honorific practices of the official civic institutions. She argues that instead of being merely appropriated, associations changed the meaning of civic language in order to make their “form of worship” understandable to others, “these terms and offices embodied a particular sense of stability and perhaps even legality that was attractive to people, especially when coming into a new environment” (164).

Steinhauer’s work is in some ways an argument to return to the views of past scholarship in the early twentieth century that made a strong distinction between types of associations, such as Franz Poland and Edwin Hatch. Yet even the more recent work of John Kloppenborg and Philip Harland, who spend a considerable amount of thought to the typology of associations, recognizes that cultic practice spread throughout professional, trade, occupational, neighbourhood, as well as kinship-based associations. Steinhauer’s argument that we should see groups based on “religious” affiliation as distinct phenomenon among these other groups is too heavily indebted to the terminology used by the groups and she needs more substantial evidence and justification to convince. The structure of the book is perhaps more suited for an introduction to associations in the Hellenistic world rather than a sustained argument explaining “religious” associations as a phenomenon. A few sections suffered from a lack of interaction with significant scholarship, for example, any discussion of Dionysiac associations needs to involve the substantial work of Sophia Aneziri and Brigitte Le Guen. Examining the evidence of associations in Egypt, rather than merely those associated with Egyptian deities outside of Egypt, could also allow for a fuller argument regarding finances and architectural space. Overall the book is written in an accessible manner without being overly mired in technical detail and provides entry in to some of the significant contemporary scholarly discussions about associations. It could be suitable for use in an undergraduate class except that the expensive price for the paperback may exclude it from consideration for such a purpose.

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