

THE MARZEAH OF THE EAST AND THE COLLEGIA OF THE WEST: INSCRIPTIONS, ASSOCIATIONS AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN ROME AND ITS EASTERN PROVINCES

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Epigraphic and literary sources attest to the burgeoning of private associations in the western Mediterranean during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The Greek word *koinon* and the Latin *collegium* designate these variegated guilds which convened regularly and sponsored feasting, drinking, cultic, funerary, and sometimes, commemorative functions. Both ancient and modern scholars have struggled unsuccessfully to account for the etiology of these organizations and the reason for their sudden appearance in the western Mediterranean in the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C.E. Additional evidence for a similarly enigmatic organization, the *marzeah*, derives from points in the eastern Mediterranean. Inscriptions from Ugarit, Persian Elephantine, Palmyra and Phoenician port cities describe this as an elite organization which also sponsored feasting, drinking, cultic, funerary, and commemorative activities. The obscurity of most references to the organization have prevented scholars of ancient West Asia from fully understanding the institution's role in eastern Mediterranean society. In this paper, I suggest that a comparative examination of the *collegium* and the *marzeah* may illuminate the origins and practices of each organization. I argue, furthermore, that the resemblance between the two institutions is not accidental: a relationship may exist between the dynamics of trade, the proliferation of the West-Asian *marzeah* in the port cities of the Mediterranean and the development of the Greco-Roman *collegia*¹.

Traditional investigations of the *collegia* and *marzeah* have arrived at impasses. Both ancient and modern scholars have struggled with limited resources to account for the origins of the *collegium*. Plutarch attributed its mysterious origins to the invention of the legendary King Numa, while modern scholars have vaguely suggested psychological possibilities for the institutions' evolutions. The Roman elite's disdain for *collegia* frames their literary and legal discussions of the institutions and further impedes the accuracy of modern scholars' understandings of them². In conjunction, discussions of the *marzeah* continue to reproduce the finite pool of evidence which documents it; the sparseness of relevant epigraphic evidence has limited the progress of scholarship on the institution³. Literary texts' negative cast on the *marzeah* further curtails accurate understandings of its activities⁴. Not only does this study suggest possible connections between these two types of associations, but encourages an approach which challenges previous limitations: information about each institution may prove instructive for a better understanding of the other.

An implementation of more realistic models of trade and cultural dynamics permits this broader understanding of the development of the two institutions. By the third and second centuries

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1. Carter, J. has argued for comparable links between the Cretan elite's involvement with symposia and *thiasoi* and the *marzeah*'s transmission into the west by the Phoenicians, in CARTER, J., "Thiasos and Marzeah", LANGDON, S. (ed.), *New Light on A Dark Age: Exploring the Culture of Geometric Greece*, Columbia 1997, 72-112. Though her argument is superficially related, she specifically emphasizes earlier periods, the elite quality of the *marzeah*, and artistic links between the representations of the two institutions.

2. Celebrated laws and senatorial consults passed in Rome, such as the *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus* in 186 B.C.E. further vilified these organizations and obscures their actual social, rather than necessarily political functions (s.c. *ILLRP* 511; cf. Livy 39.18.7-39.19.1 describes the process of the law's formation.

3. For discussion, see MCLAUGHLIN, J., *The marzeah in prophetic literature: references and illusions in light of biblical evidence*, Leiden 2001.

4. Relevant and pejorative references in the Hebrew Bible are found in *Amos* 6:4-7 and *Jeremiah* 16:5-9.

C.E., the dynamics of Mediterranean trade had engendered a pervasive intermingling of West Asian, Hellenistic and Greco-Roman peoples. Epigraphic and archaeological records attest to the sharing of language, customs, gods and oaths which inevitably accompanied these transactions of goods; I suggest that human institutions and associations follow similar patterns of exchange. A review of these associations' characteristics, the provenances of their commemorative inscriptions and the mechanics of ancient trade, reframes understandings of the communication of cultural frameworks.

TAXONOMY, METHOD AND LIMITATIONS OF ANALYSIS

Diverse problems inevitably beset such comparative analysis. First, variations in the origins, terminology and language of inscriptions challenge cross-linguistic comparison of organizations of similar type. An institution could be present within a range of areas, in which people use different words, in different languages, to describe the same type of institution. Unlike Semitic texts, in which roots of words resemble one another, Greek and Latin words for the same concepts are dissimilar⁵. An analysis of a spectrum of Greco-Roman associations thus requires a degree of linguistic flexibility, as inscriptions from the Roman east, as well as the west, tend to use Greek and Latin words of varied range. Inscriptions may mark similar associations diversely: the same association could be described as a *collegium* in Latin, or as a *koinon*, *thiasos*, *ergos*, or *eterê* in Greek. I cannot exclude from consideration these institutions based on the language in which they are rendered: this analysis invites the comparison of institutions' traits, rather than their nomenclature⁶.

Second, within one language, the same name might designate organizations of distinct genre. For example, Latin literary and epigraphic texts designate different types of organizations as "col-

legia". Two principal types of *collegia* existed in Rome: the first consisted of "official Roman sacerdotal colleges and sacred sodalites", and the second, of "private associations"⁷. The distinction between them is not as anachronistic as it may seem, as it is circumscribed within Roman law itself⁸. This paper will only address the type of *collegia* which accords with John Kloppenborg's designation of "private" and voluntary associations (*ibid.*17)⁹. All associations discussed here will be of similar genre, scope and definition.

This analysis focuses on associations broadly, as the category must be expansive enough to accommodate comparison. I resist the impulse to distinguish groups according to their "social", "religious", "political", "communal," and "professional" functions, and to use such categories as bases to differentiate correspondingly distinct organization types; such divisions frequently obfuscate approaches to these groups. In Ugarit, a man's "social" affiliation remained inextricably related to his family's lineage. In Rome, likewise, a man's profession probably would determine both his son's profession and the patron deity to whom he and his son paid homage. In both Ugaritic and Roman societies, therefore, "family" gatherings might be identical to "political", or "professional", or "religious" ones. What holds true for people also holds true for collectives. As such, I will not sustain categories for institutions which isolate one prominent feature toward the exclusion of others. Rather, I will attempt to identify and compare the range organizations' activities. This approach may seem rather impressionistic, but the paucity of evidence for these ancient institutions requires it. Though the classifications I have chosen for this analysis, such as "patronage", "administration", and "activities", are also artificial, they use the epigraphic vocabulary to frame the practices sustained by the organizations.

Limitations

Limitations of preservation, quantity, origin and languages of the ancient evidence itself yield

5. This does not present as much of a problem for the ancient Near Eastern evidence: references to the *marzeah* are indicated by the uniform vocal root *MRZH* in Ugaritic, Akkadian, Alphabetic, Aramaic and Biblical texts. Language variations present greater problems within the western Mediterranean evidence.

6. The first group, "official colleges", are civic organizations whose internal workings are to be dictated by the state. See argument of RICHARDSON, P., "Early Synagogues as Collegia in the Diaspora and Palestine", KLOPPENBORG, J.; WILSON, S. (edd.), *Voluntary Associations in the Greco-Roman World*, New York 1996, 94.

7. KLOPPENBORG, J., "Collegia and *Thiasoi*: Issues in function taxonomy and membership", KLOPPENBORG; WILSON (edd.), *Voluntary Associations...*, o.c., 17.

8. This paper addresses only those private associations which Roman civic law might treat as an individual in the form of a corporation. For discussion, also see COTTER, W., "The Collegia and Roman Law: State restrictions on voluntary associations, 64 B.C.E.-200 C.E.:", KLOPPENBORG; WILSON (edd.), *Voluntary Associations...*, o.c., 75.

9. KLOPPENBORG, o.c., 17.

additional problems in this analysis. These limitations must be approached as historical contingencies, but not as *data*; accidents of preservation effect interpretation, yet need not limit the possibilities of analysis.

First, problems of status and situation of inscriptions intrinsically limit this approach. Evidence for the *marzeah* is sparse. The elite — those wealthy enough to commission a mason to engrave the stone, or to have received a scribal education — provide the only extant references to the institution¹⁰. Though this smallest percentage of the West Asian society preserves evidence for the association, I conclude only that evidence for the organization was limited to the elite, *not* that the organization itself was necessarily limited to the participation of the elite¹¹. Evidence for the less-elite *collegia* far outnumbers that of the *marzeah*, but presents a similar problem: most of Greco-Roman evidence is also epigraphic and largely commissioned by the wealthier members of the organizations¹². The more detailed accounts of *collegia* are therefore framed in the terms of its wealthier members, while inscriptions from the poorer *collegia* are not as descriptive. Inscriptions attest to the non-elite's inclusion in *collegia*, but rarely detail the extent of their involvement. Evidence for the *collegia* is similarly incomplete in its reflection of demographic realities.

The occasions for inscriptions' implementation, too, limit understandings of the organizations' functions. Inscriptions were selectively and deliberately commissioned for specific occasions: texts often relate to donations, exceptional activities and groups' calendars: such records cannot assist understandings of the role of the *marzeah* or *collegium* in the daily lives of their members¹³.

10. Though J. Bodel discusses the problems endemic to the use of Latin and Greek epigraphy for the study of ancient history, similar issues plague the study of Semitic inscriptions; BODEL, J., "Epigraphy and the ancient historian", BODEL, J. (ed.), *Epigraphic evidence: ancient history from inscriptions*, London 2001, 46.

11. The least moneyed and largest portion the population provides us with little evidence for its relation to the *marzeah*. I resist the conclusion, as do others, that all *marzeah* were institutions of the elite (cf. CARTER, *o.c.*, 112). Contingences of preservation cannot be considered as definitive proof that the poor could not have convened *marzeah* of their own.

12. See CALABI LIMENTANI, I., *Epigrafia Latina*, Milano 1983, 1-16.

13. As Roman historian J. Patterson aptly identifies: "the major problem involved in studying the poor in antiquity being the shortage of detailed evidence, except where the lives of the poor impinged on the concerns of the wealthy". See PATTERSON, J., "Patronage, *collegia* and burial in Imperial Rome", BASSETT, S. (ed.), *Death in Towns: Urban Responses to the Dying*

Such problems in investigating the *marzeah* and the *collegium* are endemic to any epigraphic study, yet awareness of their limitations engenders their more cautious and responsible comparison.

Models of Cultural and Economic "Exchange"

The *marzeah* and *collegium* span wide temporal and geographic ranges and possess other permutations worth exploring. To limit this analysis, therefore, I have chosen not to review Babylonian rabbinic discussions of the *marzeah*, or accounts of the private associations specific to Athens of the 6th and 5th centuries¹⁴. Although these are closely related to this discussion, I will use this paper to concentrate on the West Asian epigraphic evidence for the *marzeah* and the broader Roman and Greco-Roman institution of the *collegium*.

Traditional scholarship of epigraphy as well as literature and history, divides according to individuals' philological proficiencies: scholars of Greek, Latin and Semitic languages rarely address overlapping sociological and historical issues.¹⁵ Such divided proficiencies have yielded equally separate social histories and models of trade. Such schisms are both anachronistic and detrimental to ancient history; presumed divisions between Greco-Roman and West Asian culture encourage scholars' separate analyses of *collegia*, *marzeah* and other cultural institutions in the ancient Mediterranean.

More realistic models of culture, however, highlight the possibilities of examining each type of association in light of the other. Trade required specific contingencies of communication, oath taking and physical exchange of goods¹⁶. Such processes of linguistic, cultic and economic exchange were layered, dialectical and varied.

and the Dead, 100-1600, London, New York 1992, 18. Nonetheless, lack of evidence for involvement of those with higher status probably indicates the lower status of the institution in Roman and Greco-Roman society. A few literary works by Plutarch, Josephus, Philo refer to these groups, but do so in mostly disparaging terms.

14. The discussions of the *marzeah* in Rabbinic texts of the *Mishnah* and *Talmud* have a distinct pejorative valence and result from idiosyncratic literary traditions. Additionally, the classical Athenian, rather than generally Greco-Roman, institutions appear to result from distinct policies and purposes than do the "voluntary" associations within other parts of the Mediterranean.

15. PARCA, M., "Local Languages and Native Cultures", BODEL, (ed.), *Epigraphic evidence...*, *o.c.*, 57.

16. RIVES, J., "Civic and religious life", BODEL, (ed.), *Epigraphic evidence...*, *o.c.*, 130-133.

These processes can rarely be described as linear interactions in which an identified and finite “A” impacts or changes an identified “B”. Rather, they engender complex exchanges of cultural, as well as economic information, as demonstrated by the diversity of cults and practices adopted throughout ports in the western Mediterranean. Though I do not have the space to treat these processes fully, the presumption of such cultural dynamics undergirds this analysis. I presume that ancients engaged in fluid and complex cultural environments which facilitated the transmission of ideas and practices, as well as of goods. Such an understanding prohibits the traditional assumptions about the intrinsic separation of the Greek, Latin and Semitic speaking cultural spheres in the Mediterranean.

COLLEGIA

The earliest epigraphic evidence for Roman *collegia* derives from Greco-Roman port cities in the Mediterranean from the 3rd-2nd centuries B.C.E. Manifestations of these groups vary throughout Magna Graecia and Rome, but certain of their features, such as their organizational hierarchies, membership policies, places of meeting and practices remain remarkably consistent throughout place and time.

Patronage of Collegia

One of the most prominent characteristics of a *collegium* is its patronage. Many *collegia* were formed in honor of deities like Diana (ILS 7300), Apollo (ILS 7299) and Mercury (ILS 7291), while some convened in honor of heroes such as of Hercules (ILS 7301, 7306, 7325). Others simultaneously revered gods and heroes (ILS 7301; 7213).¹⁷

Collegia were frequently named after the patron deity related to the occupation of most of its members¹⁸. One inscription from 97 CE

17. The *collegium* of Diana and Hercules (ILS 7301) and of Aesclepius and Hygeia (ILS 7213) exemplify this pattern.

18. There is a strong tradition within the study of *collegia*, to differential between “types”, then to describe the overlapping functions of these “types”. This scholarly tradition appears to originate with Mommsen’s definitive work, (1843, 87-91) and continues, with revision, through KLOPPENBORG, *o.c.*, 17, who states: “It is useful in discussing Roman private associations to distinguish three types: funerary *collegia*, religious clubs, and professional associations”. Although he admits that there is some overlap in function between them, he still maintains such divisions of “types” rather than “names” in his analysis.

describes a woodcutter’s guild (*collegium dendrophorum*) which bore the name of Silvanus, the patron god of woodworking and woodworkers. In another instance, an association known as the Beirut Poseidonasts, those from Beirut who honored Poseidon, consisted of shippers, receivers, and wholesale merchants, who periodically commissioned inscriptions on Delos (ID 1520, 1774, 1778)¹⁹. The Poseidonasts’ dependence on the temperament of the sea similarly determined their choice of the sea god as patron.

Other *collegia* chose patrons in accordance with the contingencies of the group’s formation. Some would be named after a person or family who founded the organization (ILS 7334, 7339, 7218); human patrons might be chosen for their initial convocation of the *collegium*, and / or for donating a considerable amount of money to it (Kloppenborg, *o.c.*, 18). Alternately, *collegia* bore the name of the emperors whose reigns coincided with the colleges’ founding, or after their designated places of meeting (Kloppenborg, *o.c.*, 24)²⁰.

Membership

Both literary and epigraphic evidence indicate that *collegium* membership was frequently dictated by its members’ occupations. In an unusually positive literary reference to *collegia*, Plutarch emphasizes how their professional aspect was integral to their mythical invention by King Numa — he attributes to Numa the eradication of regional differences within Rome by the creation of these professional guilds²¹. Inscriptions repeatedly emphasize this tendency (eg. ILS 7213, 4966, 4965; ID

19. ID 1520 dates to 153/2 B.C.E., ID 1774 to c.110 B.C.E. and ID 1778 to after 88 B.C.E.

20. ILS 7344 reads, “To the hands of the Gods, from the *collegium* of Agrippa”, (Dis / Manibus / collegio / Agrippa).

21. PLUTARCH, *Numa* 17, xvii, Loeb Transl., 365-366: Numa, therefore, aware that hard substances which will not readily mingle may be crushed and pulverized, and then more easily mix and mingle with each other — owing to the smallness of particles, determined to divide the entire body of the people into a greater number of divisions, and so, by merging it in other distinctions, to obliterate the original and great distinction, which would be lost among the lesser ones. He distributed them, accordingly, by arts and trades, into musicians, goldsmiths, carpenters, dyers, leatherworkers, carriers, braziers, and potters. The remaining trades he grouped together, and made one body out of all who belonged to them. He also appointed social gatherings and public assemblies and rites of worship befitting each body. And thus, at last, he banished from the city the practice of speaking and thinking of some citizens as Sabines ...his division resulted in a harmonious blending of them all together...”.

1520 and 1788): guilds for musicians (*ILS* 4966), flautists (*ILS* 4965), smiths, dyers, fisherman, ivory workers and lemon sellers (*ILS* 7213) were attested in Rome. Texts do not indicate whether such organizations excluded those of different professions and origins. Membership in a *collegium*, rather, might be partially dictated by geography: the proximity of one's home to the *collegium's* meeting place might determine one's affiliation²².

Guidelines for *collegium* membership varied and often included people of diverse occupation, status and gender. Inscriptions affirm that *collegia* were open to people of varied status within the Roman territories, such as Roman men, women, freedmen, slaves and foreigners. In his four-volume work on *collegia*, *Étude Historique sur Les Corporations Professionnelles Chez Les Romains*, J. P. Waltzing provides a catalogue of inscriptions from the Roman Republic and Empire, in which slaves are listed as full members of the organizations²³. A passage from Justinian's *Digest* affirms the legality of slaves' involvement with *collegia* (47.22.3.2), while an inscription from Lanuvium describes the obligations of slaves within the organization (*ILS* 7212)²⁴.

Women are also mentioned as members of *collegia*. Waltzing provides a corresponding list of female members and donors within *collegia*: one *Junio Cissonia Aphrodita* served as a faithful member of the *collegium* of the *Mediolanii*, while the will of Cetrana Severina recorded a posthumous donation to her *collegium dendrophorum*²⁵. Another text describes the *collegium's* "patroni" as well as "patronae" — male as well as female patrons, while a separate inscription from Rome describes a great "patroness" ("patronae suae optima") of a *collegium* (Wilken 38; *ILS* 6179).

22. The Beirut Poseidonasts surely spent a large amount of time away from the *collegium's* locus.

23. WALTZING, J.P., *Étude historique sur les corporations professionnelles chez les Romains*, Paris 1887-1900, IV, 230.

24. "It is legal for slaves to be admitted to a *collegium* of the indigent, with the consent of their owners" ("servos quoque licet in collegio tenuiorum recipi volentibus dominis") *Digesta* 47. 22. 3. 2, translation KLOPPENBORG, *o.c.*, 28. Such evidence and permission for slaves to be included in a private organization is unusual within Roman law. The Lanuvium text reads: "It was voted further that if a slave member of this society dies, and his master or mistress unreasonably refuses to relinquish his body for burial, and he has not left written instructions, a token funeral ceremony will be held... It was voted that if any slave member of this society becomes free, he is required to donate an amphora of good wine"; translation from WILKEN, R., *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, Yale 1984, 38.

Administration and Internal Hierarchy

The organizational hierarchies of the *collegia* reflect the varied economic status of its members. The infrastructure of the organization, furthermore, mirrored that of the surrounding civic and non-civic institutions. For example, a *collegium* might award the title of "senator" or "patron" to a person who donated more resources than did the "plebs", or the most humble of the group.

Names attributed to officials also vary according to the *collegium's* location, and with the discrepant civic structures normative within particular Roman territories. In some Greek inscriptions from Roman territories, such as an Athenian inscription for a private association of Dionysus, a secretary (*grammateus*) and leader (*archon*) are named (*SIG* III, 1099). In another corresponding inscription from Sidon, dated to 47 B.C.E., the *koinon* named after its professional activities ascribes to its official the title of "the leader of the cutlers" (*archontos machairopoion*)²⁶.

Even the format of inscriptions reflect differentiation of members' status; lists of colleges' "senators" and "patrons" are often inscribed in separate columns from those with lower status (*ILS* 6174, 6175, 7225, 7226, 7227, 7228). Between the status of the patrons and the plebs were the "questores collegii" and the "decuriones" (*ILS* 7225, 7227), while the conferring of intermediate titles for fathers and mothers of *collegia* ("patres" and "matres") also appear in inscriptions (*ILS* 7213). Like the other titles within the context of a *collegium*, the latter titles seem to be honorific, rather than entirely kinship-based; the reason for a title's award varied. Ultimately, however, it remains difficult to determine the reasons for a college's according one title over another to its members²⁷.

Certain titles seem to be conferred entirely in relation to a person's function within the *collegium's* activities. One epitaph ascribes a title to the official scribe of a college ("d.m. / Flavi / Aug. lib. Myrtili / Ianuariani / scribae / collegi / magni": *ILS* 7349). In addition, those individuals who preside over specific meetings or feasts of the associa-

25. WALTZING, *o.c.*, IV, 253, n. 113, 117. Cetrana Severina's name (n. 117) is not of definitive Roman context.

26. See WALTZING, *oc.*, III, 22, n. 2.

27. It is worth emphasizing here that those who possessed the more exalted titles within the *collegium* probably did not possess such titles in the outside community. Subsequent references to status, therefore, principally designate *collegium* status, rather than broader social status.

tion are described as a “magister collegii” (eg. ILS 7215a). The existence of such hierarchies within *collegia* remains consistent despite regional variations in terminologies.

Economic Organization

Donations to the *collegia* fall into two different categories. The most common kind was obligatory: periodically, people were required to pay membership dues, which usually consisted of a combination of money, food, such as bread, fish and wine (ILS 7212, 7213; 7276). One of the most famous inscriptions about a *collegium*, that of Diana and Antinoos, from 186 C.E. in Lanuvium (ILS 7212), specifies such economic policies in its bylaws: It was voted unanimously that whoever desires to enter this society shall pay an initiation fee of 100 sesterces and an amphora of good wine, and shall pay monthly dues of 5 copper coins. It was voted further that if anyone has not paid his dues for six consecutive months and the common lot of mankind befalls him, his claim to burial shall not be considered, even if he has provided for it in his will...²⁸.

The administration of the *collegium* expected all members to pay dues to the organization. If someone did not pay, he would be punished by the *collegium* and might forfeit many of the benefits which he had previously paid to receive (ILS 7212).

Officials and wealthier members of the *collegia* generally donated a greater proportion of funds to the organizations. For example, in the college of Diana and Antinoos, one who had been designated as “magister” of the college was required to contribute more to the common fund than regular members and to donate entire feasts. Even if *magistri* failed to meet their obligations, a system of checks prevented anyone from missing dinner: the malfeasant official was required to contribute additional money to the treasury and donate subsequent meals in recompense. Provisions were maintained, regardless, so that no one missed dinner²⁹.

28. Translation from WILKEN, *o.c.*, 37.

29. “It was voted further that any *magister*, in the year when it is his turn in the membership list to provide dinner, fails to comply and provide a dinner, he shall pay 30 sesterces into the treasury (*arcae*); the man following him on the list shall be required to give the dinner, and he [the delinquent] shall be required to reciprocate when it is the latter’s turn” (ILS 7212); translation, WILKEN, *o.c.*, 38.

A second type of donation was voluntary: this type appears to have enhanced the collegiate status of the person making the donation. Sometimes monetary contributions were made in honor of family members or in honor of the piety of a relative (ILS 7220)³⁰. The more elevated titles, such as “patron” were often awarded to those who contributed more money in this manner. Inscriptions to commemorate such donations visibly and permanently conferred additional honor to the donor.

The Diana and Antinoos inscription emphasizes that all donations are added to a communal treasury, or “*arca*”. Obligatory and voluntary donations and supplements from penalties all contributed to this common store. Such communal treasuries were characteristic of most *collegia* and were designated diversely as *arca commune*, *arca collegii*, *ark(a) reip(ublicae) collegii*, *arca communis*, *ratio publica*, *arca publica* and *Respublica collegii*; such funds were even protected as communal by Roman law (*Digest* III.41.1.vi)³¹.

Donations could also be made by augmenting the college’s real estate or improving its facilities. At times, members of a *collegium* would choose to commission artwork or building in honor of a generous patron or a founder of a *collegium*. ILS 7332 describes how one of the “*decuriones*” in a college erected an altar in honor of his *collegium*’s patron god³². Sometimes a patron of a college would commission a statue or a temple to be built, or would fund the decoration of the façade of a temple³³. The donation of cultic objects also would be added to the holdings of the *collegium*, and enhanced the organization’s preexisting ownership of lands, vineyards, and houses.

Meeting Places

Collegia convened in diverse locations. Some inscriptions indicate that members of *collegia* may have assembled at shrines or cult centers of their patron god; patrons of *collegia* may have even built

30. An inscription from Parma during the Roman Republic, describes one such voluntary donor, a “*Q. Iulio G. f. P. / Herculano Tauro*”, who made a voluntary donation (*honorato immuni*) of grain (to the common store) in honor of his father (ILS 7268).

31. WALIZING, *o.c.*, I, 430. See JUSTINIAN’S *Digest*: III, 41, 1, 1. VI 32. *deis manibus / M. Fulvii M. L. / Leiti / aram pecunia sua / decuriones domuus (sic) / Patroni eius* (ILS 7332).

33. WALIZING, *o.c.*, I, 471, see WALIZING, *o.c.*, VI, 1936, XIV 285, VI 103.

shrines to their patron gods for this purpose. One inscription from Ostia serves as receipt for “an order of the corporation which allocates money for the building of a temple” for convocation³⁴. Another attests to the *collegium* of Aesclepius and Hygeia’s assembly in a building of the “sacred Titus” (ILS 7213)³⁵.

Other inscriptions indicate that members of *collegia* frequently met in designated houses; inscribed receipts indicate that members of *collegia* built such houses for the use of the entire association. These receipts often decorated the buildings constructed for the *collegium*’s meetings³⁶ and identify the donor of the money in stock formulae (eg. “*Titulus monumenti positus ex col(lata) p(ecunia) colegi fabr. Coloniae Carnuti*”)³⁷. Waltzing provides a catalogue of inscriptions from domestic architecture, which designate buildings as meeting places of family *collegia*. In these cases, the *collegia* usually bear the names of its founding family, as with “the house of the Rubeniorii” (“*Domus Rubeniorum*”) and that “of the Horatians” (“*Horatorium*”)³⁸.

More detailed inscriptions specifically describe a “tetrastyle” as the place of its meeting. A tetrastyle could refer to a small temple or shrine³⁹. The Lanuvium inscription (ILS 7212) describes how members of the *collegium* of Diana and Antinoos established their policies when convening in the “tetrastyle” of Antinoos. Another Roman inscription dating to the first centuries C.E. mentions a “tetrastyle” as the place where the *collegium* transacts business and takes part in feasting (“*qui ad tetrastylum epulati*”; ILS 7214).

Meeting places for *collegia* clearly varied and included temples, houses and tetrastyles. The consistency of the meeting place, rather than the nature of the meeting place, appears to have been their most important feature.

Activities of *collegia*

Though patronage membership, internal hierarchies, economic organization and fixed meeting places appear as consistent features of *collegia*, few sources detail the practices of these organizations. Discussions of *collegia*’s activities therefore rely on select and more detailed inscriptions. Such texts furnish samples of the range of practices of certain *collegia*, but cannot represent the variety of practices all organizations sustained.

Some texts describe groups’ administrative proceedings. The Lanuvium inscription provides rare evidence for holding a type of business meeting, as it describes the punishment for a member who disrupts one, “It was voted further that if any member desires to make any complaint or bring up any business, he is to bring it up at a business meeting, so that we may banquet in peace and good cheer on festive days”⁴⁰. The text further elucidates that the *collegium*’s policies were determined by votes taken at meetings (ILS 7212). This organization emphasizes the distinctions between days of business and celebration: penalties were implemented to deter members from discussing business on days established for feasting and joy (*ibid*).

The most common activities associated with *collegia* involve food. Certain feasting occasions appear to have precipitated the *collegia*’s meeting. Popular holidays, and periodic celebrations such as the birthday of the emperor, appear to have impelled many of the *collegia* to convene (ILS 7214)⁴¹. *Collegia* also assembled to celebrate days of particular importance to the organization, such as birthdays of its members, its patron deities and the birthday of the *collegium* itself. The Lanuvium inscription describes the following calendar of dinners: “March 8, birthday of Caesennia... his father; November 27, birth of Antinous; August 13, birthday of Diana and of the society; August 20, birthday of Caesennius Silvanus, his brother; ... birthday of Cornelia Procula, his mother; December 14, birthday of Caesennius Rufus, patron of the municipality” (ILS 7212). Such calendars of meetings and feasts reflect days of importance to the individual organizations.

34. *Ordo corporatorum qui pecuniam ad ampliand. Templum contuler*, WALTZING, o.c., IV, 646-8.

35. *quod gestum est in templo divorum in aede divi Titi conventu pleno*, (ILS 7213).

36. Stock phrases for this include “*qui ad id emendum contulerunt*” and “*qui in hoc monumentum contulerunt*”.

37. WALTZING, o.c., IV, 648.

38. A *collegium* of Minerva met in the house of its patron member “(*domus / Petroni Victorini*)” (ILS 7218). WALTZING, o.c., IV, 179, no. 44 and 27.

39. See BIERS, W.R., *The Archaeology of Greece*, Cornell 1987, 188-202.

40. *Item placuit, si quis quid queri aut referre volet, in conventu referat, ut quieti e[st] / hilares diebus sollempnibus epulemur*, in WILKEN, o.c., 38.

41. ILS 7214 describes a feast to commemorate the birthday of the emperor Hadrian: *Item placere uit cena rec(ta) III idus Aug. die imperi / (Hadriani Aug.)...*

The Lanuvium inscription also provides additional guidelines for the feasting proceedings for the celebration of the birthdays of Diana and Antinoos. On those days, designated patrons were responsible for supplying oil for members of the *collegium*. Members were to bathe in the public baths and anoint themselves with the oil provided before the commencement of the feast⁴².

Feasting could also mark the commemoration of the college's deceased members, or the deceased relatives of its members. After members of *collegia* died, they still might possess power over the *collegium's* calendar of feasts and observances. One 3rd century C.E. funerary inscription from Rome addresses a man's college in the vocative ("*collegē*") and commands the organization to perform certain commemorative acts for him after his death and instructs that "you should perform a sacrifice on solemn days (holidays), on my birthday of the 11th of March...". In addition, it orders that roses be placed on the graves of his deceased parents (*ILS* 7267; cf. *ILS* 7213). The text even concludes with an entrenchment clause: it warns that if the *collegium* does not heed his instructions, its members would be forced to contribute double the funeral expenses' worth into the public standing grain store⁴³. The tone and provisions of such inscriptions suggest the urgent requirements of the deceased, while the penalties for those who ignore its instructions illustrate the importance of commemorative rituals for individuals and their families⁴⁴. Such perpetual remembrance of a college's members appears to be a valued feature.

Additional texts affirm the relationship between a *collegium's* commemorative, feasting, and sacrificial practices. *ILS* 7213 describes the performance of an annual sacrifice in terms usually used for meat sacrifice⁴⁵, though the feasting appears to have included other activities. After consuming the donated wine, bread, and other grain products, members of the *collegia* then par-

42. *et diebus natalibus Dianae et Aninoi oleum collegio in balineo publico po[nat, antequam] epulentur.*

43. A similar inscription from Ravenna follows the same formula - a man determines that the *collegium* should place roses on the tomb of his father and hold a feast there annually to commemorate his father's death. If members of the *collegium* neglect this observance, they must pay to the common grain store (*ILS* 7235).

44. The evidence renders it difficult to determine the reason for this desire; perhaps one could speculate that ceremonies to remember the dead confer a limited type of honor and immortality to the deceased.

45. DITTENBERGER, *SIG* III, 1099 also suggests that the *collegium* enacted meat sacrifice at regular intervals.

ticipated in sacrificial practices and consumption at designated feasts.⁴⁶

Above commemorating the deaths of its members, *collegia* were responsible for organizing its members' funerals. Some scholars argue that members of the family worked together with the *collegia* to ensure their relatives' burial (Patterson 23). To this end, the Lanuvium inscription details how the *collegium* could have cooperated with the family of the deceased to provide burial: It was voted further that upon the decease of a paid-up member of our body there will be due to him from the treasury 300 sesterces, from which sum will be deducted a funeral fee of 50 sesterces to be distributed at the pyre [among those attending]; the obsequies, furthermore, will be performed on foot. It was voted further that if a member dies farther than twenty miles from town and the society is notified, three men chosen from our body will be required to render an accounting in good faith to the membership, and if they are found guilty of any fraud they shall pay a quadruple fine; they will be given money for the funeral expenses, and in addition a round-trip travel allowance of 20 sesterces each. But if a member dies farther from town and notification is impossible, then his funeral expenses, less emoluments and funeral fee, may be claimed from this society, in accordance with the by-laws of the society, by the man who buries him, if he attests by an affidavit signed with the seals of seven Roman citizens, he gives security against anyone's claiming a further sum... It was voted further that if any member takes his own life for any reason whatever, his claim to burial [by the society] shall not be considered⁴⁷.

In recompense for years of annual payments to the *collegium*, its members would be assured proper burials. The detailed provisions for an out-of-town death, in addition to special stipulations for the burial of a slave of an uncooperative master who was also a member of the *collegium*, underscore its thorough approach to dealing with members' funerals. Rituals of the funeral appear to have included a pyre, and the performance of "obsequies" in honor of the deceased. Moreover,

46. Donations of new wine, grain, and bread (*ILS* 7213, 7214, 7268, 7276) to the communal store indicate their consumption during the *collegium's* feast - otherwise such donations may have gone bad. *ILS* 7213 makes this connection, but also describes the activities which occurred at feasts. For a discussion of the function of such sacrifices, see PARKER, R., "Pleasing thighs: reciprocity in Greek religion", GILL, C. (ed.), *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece*, Oxford 1998, 105-125.

47. Translation WILKEN, *o.c.*, 38.

the policy of doling out of money at funerals, in the manner of modern “door prizes”, assured that people would attend the entirety of a funeral and would complete the desired funerary rites. An inscription contemporaneous to the Lanuvium inscription, similarly describes practices to assure attendants at one’s funeral by bribery (“*eis, qui pres/entes fuerunt, rationem reddedis*” (ILS 7215a). These regulations underscore the *collegia*’s role in assuring commemoration for their members.

The college might be responsible for the place of burial, in addition to the funeral, entombment and commemoration of its deceased. John Kloppenborg describes how, “in some instances, the *collegium* owned a burial plot and members who were in good standing could be buried there by the permission of the club’s decurion”⁴⁸. This function was an important one. As there was little room for burial within Rome, the poor presumably held great worry for the expense and enactment of their funeral and commemoration⁴⁹.

Not all inscriptions describe a college’s role in the burial of its members. For this reason, some historians classify those which mention funerary activities as “burial societies”, or “*collegia tenuiorum*”. Such designations are probably erroneous; some inscriptions indicate that burial practices were important aspects of many *collegia* but in addition to other meetings, feasts, commemorative meals and sacrifices, which simultaneously occurred at the *collegia*’s convocations. Many *collegia*, not just those which could afford to inscribe its full policies on stone, performed commemorative and funerary functions in addition to a range of other functions for its members⁵⁰.

Development of *collegia*

Epigraphic and literary sources indicate the presence of *collegia* in Rome, Italy and the provinces, during the Roman Republic and Empire. Unfortunately, sources give no indication of their inception, or how they evolved. Plutarch’s attribution of their origin to the ingenuity of a legendary Roman King, reinforces the impression that Romans could not account for the organiza-

tions’ etiology. Modern Roman historians grapple with similar ambiguities, yet their attempts to identify the sources of *collegia* invariably metamorphose from arguments about etiology into arguments about psychology. In the late 19th century, Waltzing argued that *collegia* fulfilled the emotional needs of society’s lower classes: [They] were placed always at the bottom of the political and social ladder; they saw in the association the only means to escape their isolation and weakness, to acquire some little consideration and even a little influence, finally to create for themselves in the society, in the city, and honorable place... Religion, taking care of funerals, the desire to be stronger, to defend their interest, to elevate themselves above the common herd, the desire to fraternize and to make their difficult existence more pleasant — such were the diverse sources of that powerful need of association which worked in the popular class⁵¹.

Such explanations remain surprisingly current in modern scholarship. More recently, John Kloppenborg has proffered related reasons for the growth of *collegia* in the Hellenistic world and the world of Roman Magna Graecia: The reasons for the growth of such associations are not especially difficult to grasp. The ties that bound a citizen to the *polis* were weakened by the relative ease of travel and by the diminished influence that local inhabitants had over their own affairs. Significant dislocations of persons resulted from the establishment of trading conventicles in foreign territories, from the slave markets and from the Roman practice of settling veterans in cities near the frontiers. Each of these forces separated individuals and groups from their *patria*e and created the need for social arrangements that would replace the older structures of the family, the deme, the tribe and the polis. It might be said that voluntary associations compensated for the demise of the importance of the *polis* by imitating civic structures. The association afforded each member a say in who joined the group and how the group was run, fellowship and conviviality, and perhaps the opportunity to become an officer or a magistrate — in short, to participate in a *cursus honorum* to which he or she could never aspire outside of the association” (17/18).

Most historians who attempt explanations of the origins of the *collegia* use approaches comparable to Waltzing’s and Kloppenborg’s. People admittedly possessed a variety of psychological

48. KLOPPENBORG, *o.c.*, 24 and ff. 54: Cf. *CIL* VI, 7297, 7303 (58 C.E.), 7304, 7379, 7387 (first century Rome) and *CIL*, 8744 (Rome, 126 C.E).

49. PATTERSON, *o.c.*, 17; also TOYNBEE, J.M.C., *Death and burial in the Roman world*, London 1971.

50. KLOPPENBORG, *o.c.*, 24.

51. WALTZING, *o.c.*, I, 332, translation from WILKEN, *o.c.*, 40.

motivations for joining the groups, especially within the political turmoil of Rome and the surrounding regions from the 3rd centuries B.C.E. to the 3rd centuries C.E. Neither Waltzing, nor Kloppenbergh, nor other scholars, however, account for the role of these types of political and cultural shifts in the development of *collegia*. Did *collegia* spring up spontaneously? Were there any broader antecedents to them? And why do their earliest attestations emerge in international port cities? A closer examination of *marzeah* may illuminate such questions.

THE MARZEAH

Evidence for the *marzeah* ranges over 3000 years throughout West Asia⁵². Despite the variety of its evidence and geographic diversity, certain of its traits remain consistent.

Patronage and affiliation

One of the most prevalent associations with the *marzeah* is that of divine, human, and local sponsorship. The earliest records for the *marzeah* consistently demonstrate its affiliation with deities. Records from Ras Shamra, dating to approximately 1500 to 1000 B.C.E., use the construction: “the *marzeah* of...” to designate the patron deity of a *marzeah*; Ugaritic texts mention “the *marzeah* of El” (RS 24.252) and that of Istar (PRU II.18.01.6), while a later Akkadian text refers to a *marzeah* of the god Satran (RS 15.70)⁵³. A fourth century B.C.E. Phoenician inscription on a Bronze dedicatory bowl similarly describes a *marzeah* in the tutelage of a deity: “2 cups we offer to the *marzeah* of Samas”⁵⁴, while a 1st century C.E. Nabatean inscription from ‘Avdat, which possibly adorned a libation altar, may refer to a divinized ruler’s patronage of ‘the *marzeah* of Dushara god of Gaia”⁵⁵. The latter example also

raises the possibility of anointing a divinized human as the *marzeah*’s patron god. Though many *marzeah* possess divine patrons, the reasons for the exact choice of patron deity remains obscure.

Reasons are clearer for attributing the *marzeah* to human patrons or places. One *marzeah* was named after a certain Samumanu, because it was “the *marzeah*/ which Samumanu established...” (RS 1957.702)⁵⁶. Here, the *marzeah* Samumanu established bears his name, though the text does not explain the occasion for the *marzeah*’s founding⁵⁷. Other texts affiliate the *marzeah* with specific geographic locations. For example, those founded in the towns of Suksi and Ari bear the towns’ names (PRU IV.18.01).

References to the *marzeah* prohibit scholars’ estimations of the proportion of *marzeah* which belonged to deities, people, or localities. Divisions between these categories, however, frequently blurred in West Asian culture; deceased humans could have been deified posthumously and the ancient understanding of “town” was closely connected to the persons or groups who controlled the region⁵⁸.

Membership

Sources consistently describe the *marzeah* as a collective, though criteria for membership selection or participation are obscure. Ugaritic texts list members of royal families as members of the *marzeah*, while texts of the Hebrew Bible describe *marzeah* members as the wealthy elite (Amos 6:4). Tessera reliefs from Palmyra, Syria, appear to depict priests participating in the *marzeah*. Corresponding tessera inscriptions confirm the priests’ involvement with the organizations⁵⁹: one text describes a person’s “leadership of the *marzeah* of

Rabel II. Though “Gaia” is not a deity indigenous to West Asia, it appears to be the Greek onomastic equivalent of a Nabataean deity.

56. P. Miller indicates that “Samumanu” (*smmn*) is a common name in Ugaritic [e.g., UT 1047:11; 1102:18; 1060A:12] and Akkadian texts [PRU III, 148 and 158]. Translation, MILLER, *o.c.*, 39.

57. As a later Nabatean from Petra inscription indicates, we must not understand the categories of “human” and “deity” to be necessarily distinct. I include this example because it attributes a *marzeah* to human origins, but I do not necessarily exclude it from the category of “patronage of a deity”.

58. See review of Nabatean inscription of “Obadas” in PORTEN, *o.c.*, 181.

59. These tesserae date to the 1st through 3rd centuries, C.E. See INGOLDT, H., *Recueil des Tesserres de Palmyre*, Paris 1955, 5, no. 27-35.

52. MCLAUGHLIN, *o.c.*, 24.

53. See MILLER, P.D., “The MRZH Text”, FISHER, L.R. (ed.), *The Claremont Ras Shamra Tablets*, Rome 1971, 44-45, and PRU II.

54. Translation of AVIGAD, N.; GREENFIELD, J.C., “A Bronze Phiale with a Phoenician Dedicatory inscription”, *IEJ* 32, 1982, 118-128. Avigad and Greenfield use Phoenician numismatic and archeological comparanda to date this bowl to 350-332 B.C.E. The patron god of this *marzeah*, is a deity attested in the Ugaritic Pantheon [PRU, 258], who appears to have been worshipped in Emessa, Heliopolis, Dura Europos, Edessa and Palmyra (128).

55. PORTEN, B., *Archives from Elephantine: life of an ancient Jewish military colony*, Berkeley 1968, 182; see also MILLER, *o.c.*, 46: The inscription is dated to the eighteenth (? 98 C.E.) year of

the priests of Bel⁶⁰ while another bilingual Palmyrene and Greek text, honors a high priest of a Greco-Semitic god, Shalma b. Maliku, who was designated in the Greek part, 'high priest and sy[mposia]rch of the priests of the great god Zeus Bel'⁶¹. Though these texts identify the royal, wealthy and priestly classes as belonging to the *marzeah*, a resulting conclusion that only the elite classes could participate in such institutions would be misleading: inscriptions and texts from this culture only document the lives of the elite who could afford such commemoration⁶².

In certain instances, group membership might relate to kinship: some texts mention the "men and their sons (or children)" of the *marzeah* (RS 15.70; 15.88). The use of the objective suffix (*y*), which describes *their* sons, indicates a possibility that those described may actually be the offspring of the male members of the *marzeah*. Whether these sons (or children) were necessarily grown is unclear. Though these texts use the term to refer to the actual sons of the members of the *marzeah*, other texts do not. Could *bny marzeah* also be a metaphorical term to describe membership to the *marzeah*? Does membership in a *marzeah* create a sort of family structure, in which those who are subservient to the *rb* are considered to be his *bny*? Or does it reflect a preexisting family structure, in which the "*rb*" is analogous to the male head of household? Such questions are prompted by contemporary views of kinship, but highlight possible variations in the *marzeah*'s infrastructure.

Such inscriptions also raise questions about the gender of those involved with the *marzeah*. In Northwest Semitic languages such as Ugaritic, the plural word for sons, *bny*, can also be translated as "children". Were girls, as well as boys, allowed into the *marzeah*? Were older women allowed to participate? The most conservative conclusion is that membership to the *marzeah*, at the very least, included elite males variously linked by kinship. Philological ambiguities, however, caution against concluding that participation in these organizations was limited to those of male gender⁶³.

60. PORTEN, *o.c.*, 182.

61. The second text explicitly dates itself to Nisan, 514 (203 C.E.); cf. PORTEN, *o.c.*, 182.

62. No texts overtly describe the exclusion of the lower classes from such organizations.

63. Some scholars speculate that female involvement with food rites would not have been unusual within the context of the ancient Near East. They argue that there was a Babylonian practice of taking meals at the "a sirtu" or "house shrine", from which women were not excluded. Evidence for this practice,

Internal hierarchy and administration

Texts consistently attest to the internal hierarchies among the *marzeah*. Most designate leaders of the *marzeah* as *rb marzeah*⁶⁴, or "master" or "head" of the *marzeah* (KAI 60, RS 1957.702). These inscriptions neither elucidate who was eligible to be a '*rb*', nor clarify how a person could earn such a title; in some cases, the award of the title might result from the proportion of funds a person donates to the organization or its holdings (KAI 60.2-6). The reverse inscription of RS 1957.702 supports this possibility: Samumanu, who is a *rb marzeah*, both established the *marzeah* in his house and holds some sort of economic control of the organization⁶⁵. In other cases, the title might have been conferred to those *marzeah* members who were wealthier and of more elevated reputation. The reverse inscription of a later Palmyrene tessera supports this possibility (Ingholdt no. 27)⁶⁶.

Third century C.E. Semitic inscriptions from Palmyra suggest the possibility of a more varied infrastructure for the *marzeah*. One of these begins "on the occasion of the leadership of the *marzeah* (by) Yarhai Agrippa". The text finishes by blessing Yarhai's sons and others, who include "Agilo the scribe; Zabbai who was in charge of the cooking; Yarhibola the cupbearer and all the other assistants"⁶⁷. The phrasing of the inscription prevents a precise correlation between Yarhai Agrippa's actions, the terminating list of officials and the

however, is more speculative. See VAN DER TOORN, K., *From Her Cradle to the Grave: The role of religion in the life of the Israelite and the Babylonian woman*, Sheffield 1994, 33.

64. MILLER, *o.c.*, 44-45.

65. MILLER, *o.c.*, 37-38: "And Samumanu/ is chief. Let not arise/ a man of the *marzeah*/ and say to/ Samumanu: "give me money, a shekel, which is in your possession" (*w-s m { } m n / rb . al . ydd/ mt . mrzh/ w y r g m . l / s m m n . tn . / ksp . t q l d ' m n k*).

66. INGHOLT, *o.c.*, n. 27, reads: "Hairan Atenouri Salmai, head of the *marzeah*: HYRN 'TNWRY / SLMY RB MRZH".

67. Porten dates this text to Tishri, 555 (243 C.E.). If the scribe were the only person named at the end of such a decree, we might be able to assume that the portion that begins with "Agilo" was part of a standard postscript for legal documents, which often named the scribe or witnesses (cf. RS 15.70, 15.118, 15.88). Yet this doesn't seem to be the case here, because the offices of the people listed, from the cook to the cupbearer to other assistants, do not appear to be essential to the publication of a legal decree. Furthermore, if these were conventional servants, they might not be worthy of mention in a stone inscription. PORTEN, *o.c.*, 182. See also editio princeps, INGHOLDT, H., "Un nouveau thiase à Palmyrè", *Syria* 7 1926, 128 ff. See in addition, CANTINEAU, J., "Textes palmyreniennes provenant de la fouille du temple de Bèl", *Syria* 12, 1931, 117 ff: "*brbnwt mrzhwt hâwdn*), 199 f (...*mrzhwth*...)".

assignment of roles within the *marzeah*. It is difficult to imagine, however, what other ways these lists of names would be related to the inscription other than to describe their functions within the organization⁶⁸. At the very least, the inscription suggests a broader and more complex assignment of roles within the *marzeah*, which fall between its leader and conventional members.

Specific terms also designate the majority of members of the *marzeah*. In some instances, members of the *marzeah* were called *mt mrzh* (RS 1957.702)⁶⁹, while different sources describe members of the *marzeah* as *r'pm marzeah* (cf. Carter, *o.c.*, 77)⁷⁰. In Ugaritic and Palmyrene texts, members of the *marzeah* were called "*bny mrzh*"⁷¹ and in some of the Nabatean inscriptions from 'Avdat, members of the *marzeah* are also called "*bny mrzh*"⁷².

Economic Organization

Some texts describe obligatory and voluntary donations to the *marzeah*. An earlier Akkadian text from Ugarit (RS 14.16) describes a required participatory fee of 1000 shekels⁷³. Other Aramaic texts speak of a general transaction of money involved with the *marzeah*⁷⁴. Though the types of donations

vary, the requirement of some form of payment was required for *marzeah* membership; inscriptions consistently indicate that some *marzeah* required donations of its members⁷⁵. The fate of the donated money is uncertain: perhaps the money went directly to the pocket of the '*rb marzeah*,' or, perhaps there was a common fund into which all donations were placed.

Whatever the fate of the donated money, the organization itself appears to have held common ownership of lands or vineyards. The obverse inscription of RS 1957.702 describes the land belonging to the *marzeah*, while RS 18.01 emphasizes the *marzeah*'s ownership of a particular vineyard⁷⁶. This text also restricts access and use of the lands to the *marzeah* members — people who are not members of that *marzeah* are even forbidden to trespass on the lands on which the vineyards were situated. There is no indication of whether the *rb marzeah* himself, or the common *marzeah* fund, procured or assumed these lands. Regardless of how they were acquired, these holdings were shared by the *marzeah*'s members.

Meeting Places

Individual texts describe the *marzeah*'s communal ownership of a specific house of meeting, called the *bt marzeah* (*bt mrzh*). Some describe patrons' contributions of domestic spaces for the meeting of the group⁷⁷. RS 1957.702 clearly describes "the *marzeah*" which Samumanu estab-

68. The context of the inscription is Yarhai's leadership of the *marzeah*, and the attribution of the titles of scribe, cook and assistants, seem to be conferred within that setting.

69. MILLER, *o.c.*, 39.

70. L'HEUREUX, C. "The Ugaritic and Biblical Rephaim", *Harvard Theological Review* 67, 1974, 270-271. The term *r'pm marzeah* presents its own complications to scholars of Northwest Semitic texts. L'Heureux and others postulate that this term connotes a type of ancestor cult; cf. LEWIS, T., *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, Atlanta 1991, 81 ff.

71. MILLER, *o.c.*, 46. As previously addressed, it is difficult to distinguish between "literal" and "metaphorical" uses of these terms. After all, there may well be overlap between the literal and metaphorical terms of kinship for members of the *marzeah*.

72. LEWIS, *o.c.*, 91. See also NEGEV, A., "Nabatean Inscriptions from 'Avdat (Oboda)", *IEJ* 11, 1961, 127-138, pls. 30-31; *IEJ* 13, 1963, 113-117, pls. 17-18. In addition, NAVEH, J., "Some notes on Nabatean Inscriptions from 'Avdat", *IEJ* 17, 1967, 187-189.

73. LEWIS, *o.c.*, 81 notes, "Ch. Virolleaud [Six Textes de Ras Shamra prevenant de la XIV^e campagne, (1950), *Syria* 28, 1951, 177] made the mistake of equating 1 lim with 1,000 shekels and was followed uncritically by MILLER, *o.c.*, 44), BRYAN, D.B., *Texts relating to the Marzeah*, PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1973, 147, 2080, and GREENFIELD, J.C., "The Marzeah as a Social institution" 452, who each emphasized what a large sum this was (suggesting economic importance of the *marzeah* corporation)! Rather, 1 lim is equivalent to 1000 shekels (cf. CAD L, 197 s.v. *limu* B) which, it is granted, was still a large amount of money".

74. An Aramaic Ostrakon "has been transcribed to read: 'To Haggai. I spoke to Ashian about the money for the *marzeah*. So he replied to me, namely to Ito, 'Now I will give it to Haggai or

Igdal'. Speak to him that he should give it to you". PORTEN, *o.c.*, 179-180. Over the years, there has been a degree of controversy over the transcription and meaning of this inscription. In his editio princeps, A.H. SAYCE published the inscription in "An Aramaic Ostrakon from Elephantine", *PSBA* 31, 1909, 154 f., reads "I have enquired of Haggai our *q-m-r* about the price of the *myrre* 3 a(rdebs), thus he has said to me, saying: ...Now I will give a portion to Haggai, if there is plenty: speak to Haggai and he will give it to you". The translation above, also followed by Porten, was published by LIDZIBARSKI, M., *Ephemeris* III, 199 ff.

75. Miller uses the text of this ostrakon to interpret a portion of the RS 1957.702 text. He asserts that the reverse inscription refers to a membership fee, as it reads, "And Samumanu/is chief [*rabbu*]. Let not arise/a man of the *marzeah*/and say to Samumanu: 'Give me money, a shekel, which is in your possession./ Two shekels will he pay. / Witness: Ithraspu/son of 'Udrnn / and Abdinu / son of Sigilda". MILLER, *o.c.*, 37-39 describes this text as being of standard Ugaritic legal form.

76. The French translation of RS 18.01 reads: "A dater d'aujourd'hui/quant aux terres de ligne arborescente/d'Istar hourrite/sises dans Suki, (on a etabli)/la terre de vigne/d'Istar hourrite/(est repartie) entre les *marzi'u*/de Ari/et/les *marzi'u*/de Siyannu / l'un a l'egard de l'autre/ne transgressera pas/Sceau de Padiya./roi de Siyannu (*PRU* IV, 230).

77. MILLER, *o.c.*, 37.

lished/in his house/ Now I have provided a store-room/for you; and if I drive/you out/from my house fifty (shekels) of silver/I will pay"⁷⁸. Additional Akkadian contracts from Ugarit illustrate the use of "private houses" as *bt mrzh*⁷⁹.

Other texts indicate the permanence of the *marzeah*'s holdings. One King Niqmepa, son of Niqmepa, donated a *bt marzeah* "to these *marzeah* (people) and to their sons, for always. No one will take it from their hands" (RS 15.88)⁸⁰. Another Ugaritic inscription outlines how the permanence of a *marzeah*'s house is so important that even if a representative of the king seizes the *bt marzeah*, he is obligated to replace it! (RS 15.70)⁸¹ There is little indication of why such permanence is necessary, but it is reiterated as an important aspect of its meeting place.

At times, texts use the word *marzeah* to describe a specific type of architecture rather than the activities which occur inside that building. One unpublished inscription from which dates to the end of the seventh century B.C.E. serves as a "deed of removal", (*spr mrhq*) and explicitly demonstrates this usage of the word. According to T. Lewis, the text invokes a deity or deities (*'lhn*) to assure to an individual named Gera' that "the *marzeah* and the millstones and the house belong to you (*lk hmrzh whrhyn whbyt*)"⁸². In this instance, Lewis equates this reference to the *marzeah* with that of a *bt marzeah*; this interpretation appears plausible, as the word *marzeah* is listed in apposition to other architectural structures, such as a millstone and a house.

Few texts describe the duration of the organizations' meetings. Some inscriptions, however, describe a *marzeah* in temporal terms. A Phoenician inscription from Piraeus describes one

78. This text does not explicitly describe a *bt marzeah*, but Miller's assessment seems reasonable that: "Samumanu is putting up his house or some part of it to be a *bt mrzh*". MILLER, *o.c.*, 38.

79. MILLER, *o.c.*, 38.

80. My translation from the French, *Ephemeris* III, 88.

81. "A dater d'aujourd'hui / devant Ammistamru, fils de Niqmepa / roi d'Ugarit, l'Intendant a a pris/ la maison des marze'u de Satrana / et a donne la maison de Ibramuzi / [comm]e (?) leur maison / La maison de Ibramuzi / Est liee a l'Intendant / Et la maison de Ibramuzi/Est liee au marze'u / De Satrana et a leur fils / Dans l'avenir, personne / Ne prendra/La maison de Ibramzi / Des mains des marze'u / De Satrana / Et des mains de leurs fils, / Pour toujours!/ Sceau de Ammitamru, fils de Niqmepa/Roi d'Ugarit." This French translation of the alphabetic text, mentions the house and the *marzeah* itself five times.

82. LEWIS, *o.c.*, 89.

marzeah celebration which lasts four days, as it commemorates "...the fourth day of the *marzeah* in the fourteenth year of the people of Sidon" (KAI 60.1)⁸³. This inscription marks a special convocation of the *marzeah*, at which time "the Sidonian colony voted to bestow a crown upon Shembaal, 'chief of the community who is over (in charge of) the temple and over the building of the temple court"⁸⁴. Here, the *marzeah* is described in terms of a limited festival⁸⁵. Later tesserae from Palmyra describe the *marzeah* and the extent to which it lasted in comparable ways⁸⁶. Although these inscriptions do not allocate common amounts of time for the *marzeah*, they both indicate that the word can be used to designate the duration of the group's convocation.

Activities of the *marzeah*

Few texts explain why and when the meetings of the *marzeah* occurred except for the extraordinary circumstances which merited their inscription. For example, some texts commemorate exceptional events, such as a *rb*'s donation to the local temple (KAI 60), or a member's erection of a particular building on the *marzeah*'s behalf (RS 15.88).

Death, commemorative, and funerary activities are more conventionally associated with the *marzeah*'s convocation. The earliest evidence for

83. Translation: PORTEN, *o.c.*, 181. See also, MILLER, *o.c.*, 46. COOKE, C., *Textbook of North-Semitic inscriptions: Moabite, Hebrew, Phoenician, Aramaic, Nabataean, Palmyrene, Jewish*, Oxford 1903, 95, dates this text to the first century B.C.E. BASLEZ, M.; BRIQUEL-CHATONNET, F., "Un exemple d'intégration phénicienne au monde Grec: les Sidoniens au Pirée à la fin du IV^e siècle", ACQUARO, E.; BARTOLONI, P., et al. (ed.), *Atti del II Congresso Internazionale di studi fenici e punici, Roma, 9-14 Novembre 1987 (Collezione di studi fenici 30)*, Roma 1991, I, 229 and TEIXIDOR, J., "L'assemblée législative en Phénicie d'après les inscriptions", *Syria* 57, 1980, 457-60, posit different dates for the inscription from the 4th-3rd centuries B.C.E. For discussion, see MCLAUGHLIN, *o.c.*, 43, n. 136.

84. PORTEN, *o.c.*, 181. Porten continues: "An inscription in Phoenician, with two lines of Greek, was erected in the temple to commemorate the event".

85. References to the "fourteenth year of the people of Sidon", is obscure. Porten designates the Piraeus as being a "Sidonian colony", see PORTEN, *o.c.*, 181. It is unclear whether this is the amount of time the Sidonians have held official control over the Greek port of Piraeus, or whether it designates the length of time the *marzeah* has been designated as an organization. Mention is made of the presumed leader of the organization, Shembaal.

86. One text describes the name of the *rb marzeah*, then the extent of time the *marzeah* is to last: "*mrzh b'tik wty'm' ywm 5, 'marzeah of B'eltek and Taima, day 5*". MILLER, *o.c.*, 46.

the *marzeah* in Ugaritica V.I contains obscure references to death. The texts describe the *marzeah* as a place where the excessive inebriation of the god El renders him so drunk that he loses bodily control and collapses, like one dead: "El sits ... El settles into his bacchanal [*marzeah*]. / El drinks wine till sated, vintage till inebriated / El staggers to his house / Stumbles in to his court... / ...He slips in his dung and urine / El collapses like one dead / El like those who descend to Earth"⁸⁷. The actual connection between such drunkenness and death remains elusive. Although El is a god, and presumably cannot die, this passage suggests possible associations between excessive drunkenness and death. Was El emulating the dead in his lack of consciousness? Was he commemorating the dead in convening his *marzeah*? The sense of this passage again evades the modern reader.

A later Nabatean inscription from Petra is restored to "remembered be Obaidu b. Waqihel and his companions, the *marzeah* of Obadas the god"⁸⁸. The text does not clarify whether convocation of the *marzeah* is connected to the recent death of Obadas and his companions, or whether it simply commemorates anniversaries of its members' deaths during its regular meetings. This inscription does have clear commemorative implications⁸⁹, though such activities, unlike funerary

87. CAT 1.114, lines 14-18, 20-22, my emphasis and alternative reading of line 15. Translation, LEWIS, T., "El's Divine Feast," PARKER, S. (ed.), *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, Atlanta 1997, 195.

88. PORTEN, *o.c.*, 181.

89. Also see discussion in PORTEN, *o.c.*, 181. The Biblical text of Jeremiah (16:4-9) also supports a connection between the *marzeah* and commemorative practices, as well as with those usually associated with recent death in Israelite tradition. Although some of the activities listed are difficult for modern scholars to interpret, this description of the commemorative activities of the *marzeah* remains particularly rich: "5 Because YHWH says in this way: Do not come to the *Bet Marzeah* and do not go to lament and do not show sympathy to them, because I have turned my peace from this people, oracle of YHWH, the (my) covenant-love and compassion (motherly feeling). / 6 The great ones and the small ones will die in this land. They will not be buried no one will mourn for them and there will not be cutting of oneself and (men) will not make themselves bald for them. / 7 They will not break bread for them to give comfort to the dead (one) and let them not give to them the cup of consolation to drink for their father and mother (s) / 8 and to the *Bet Marzeah* do not come to sit with them to eat and drink / 9 Because thus spoke YHWH of Hosts, God of Israel, Behold I will banish from this place before your eyes the sound of joy and the sound of happiness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride;" translation mine. The context for this passage is YHWH's removal of his covenant-love and compassion for the Israelites (vv.5). Participation in the *marzeah* is included with other practices which are established parts of the mourning process. The author,

ones, need not immediately follow the death of a person. The ancients could have associated such commemorative activities with *marzeah*'s periodic meetings (Pope, *o.c.*, 76)⁹⁰.

In the Hebrew Bible, a *bt marzeah* is mentioned in the context of rituals which are performed immediately following a death, such as the tearing of hair and clothes and wailing (cf. *Jer* 16:9; *Micah* 2:4, etc.)⁹¹. *Jeremiah*'s author describes the additional custom of "breaking of bread", with the mourners - an idiom which frequently refers to the eating of bread specifically or the eating of food which is not meat⁹². The act of sitting, which is characteristic of the *marzeah*, is also a component of mourning practice and was customary in Israelite funerary contexts⁹³. The text's mention of drinking (probably

therefore, does not present the *bt marzeah* as unusual or undesirable within Israelite society; just as the conventional aspects of mourning are halted because of YHWH's anger with the Israelites' actions, so too is participation in the *marzeah* also halted. We may be able to use the practices listed, therefore, in verses 5-8, to assist us in our investigation of activities which occur within the context of the *marzeah*.

90. Although I disagree with authors such as Lewis and Miller, who distinguish sharply between feasting and commemorative functions, I use the division here in order to express ranges of known functions for the *marzeah*. Marvin POPE closely associates the *marzeah* with commemorative activities. In his article on the "The Cult of the Dead at Ugarit", Pope states, "Despite unfounded scepticism in some quarters, there is scant reason to doubt that the West Semitic *Marzeah* was a feast for and with the departed ancestors, corresponding to Mesopotamian *kispu*". This claim, to be attacked sharply by others, such as Lewis, proved to be very controversial and appears to have prompted many angry rebuttals and counterarguments. The evidence does, however, suggest that there is enough of an associations between the *marzeah* and the commemoration of dead to support much of Pope's argument. POPE, M., "The Cult of the Dead at Ugarit", *Ugarit in Retrospect*, Yale 1974, 176.

91. See BROWN, F.; DRIVER, S.R.; BRIGGS, C.A., *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, Massachusetts 1996, 624; henceforth *BDB*.

92. REED, S., "Bread", *Anchor Bible Dictionary* I, 1992, 777: "Biblical texts do not present an extensive treatment of bread. Aspects related to the production and eating of bread were so commonplace that writers did not go into much detail about them". For this reason, it is difficult to find comparable associations with bread. Here is what ABD lists (778) "The term 'bread' can refer to food in general... Bread offerings are sometimes designated as food for God (*Lev* 21:6). While some texts indicate that God does not need food for sustenance (50:12-13), sacrificial rites are partly modeled around activities associated with a meal". i.e. the eating of bread is a common component of meals. "To show his displeasure, God could send 'bread of adversity' (*Isa* 30:20) or 'bread of tears' (*Ps.* 80:5). Tears (*Ps.* 42:4) or ashes (*Ps.* 102:10=102:9, english) are the figurative bread of those who mourn. At some point during mourning rights, others encouraged the mourners to break their fast and eat (*I Sam* 28:22; *2 Sam* 3:35). This food was called the 'bread of mourners' (*Hos.* 9:4)". This section also lists how bread was probably a component of the temple offering, which was eaten by priests.

93. It is customary for "comforters", and those mourning to sit on the ground. See *BDB* 442. Also, cf. *Isa.* 60:1, where the

wine) from the “cup of consolation” and the playing of music (16: 9)⁹⁴ also accord with funerary, rather than commemorative practices, mentioned in other biblical texts. Within the *bt marzeah*, it is possible that ancient Israelites enacted mourning practices to commemorate a recent or past death⁹⁵. Upon this basis, however, we cannot conclude that the author associates the *marzeah* with recent death or burial; practices of mourning in Iron Age West Asia are just as elusive as the *marzeah* itself⁹⁶.

In the context of arguing that not all *marzeah* have commemorative connotations, scholars often cite another text of the Hebrew Bible from Book of Amos (*Amos* 6:4-7)⁹⁷. The author of Amos describes decadent practices within the *marzeah*,

author exhorts the audience to “rise, rise”, from mourning - this again establishes non-rising, or sitting, as an act of mourning.

94. This reference, again, could refer to the reversal of “natural” order: the author ascribes the sounds appropriate for weddings to a situation of commemoration or death.

95. The discussion of consoling the parents of the dead adds another dimension to this discussion (*Jeremiah* 16:7). How are we to interpret such a statement? Does this statement address the actual consolation of the living parents of the dead? If so, the passage could represent the reversal of natural order, whereby the children die before the parents. Or, is it possible that the passage alludes to the importance of a child’s commemoration of his/her parents? Could one “comfort” one’s parents through the commemorating their death? If a person charged with commemorative duties should die, there may be no one else to eat and drink in the name of his parents. In this case, food may play a role in the remembering of the deceased and perpetuation of the family name. In conventional situations, it seems that people come to the *bt marzeah* to sit with the mourners and to eat and drink, or that the house itself has some such connotations (vv. 8).

96. Excavations at Ras Shamra have uncovered “intramural tombs” which are attached to houses. Although these tombs have separate entrances than those of the conventional, four-room houses, it is possible that the understanding of the *marzeah* as an architectural entity could have something to do with the proximity of funerary structures. See CALLOT, O., *Une Maison à Ougarit: Étude d’Architecture Domestique, Ras Shamra-Ougarit I*, Paris 1983, 1-30. Residents of Ancient Israel also seem to have used the “four-room house” architecture, such as the excavations at Hazor have demonstrated, but they do not have attached funerary architecture. Biblical discussions of the contaminating properties of corpses, in addition to archaeological evidence for burial places which are distinct from the domestic sphere (such as in caves), indicate that corresponding associations between domestic and “funerary” structure probably did not exist within ancient Israelite culture. For more detailed descriptions of Israelite domestic and burial architecture, see MAZAR, A., *Archaeology... o.c.*, New York 1990.

97. The text of *Amos* 6:4-7 reads: “(Woe for) The ones who lie down upon beds of ivory /And those who sprawl upon their divans and/eat cuttings of the flock and calves out of the stall / 5 Who play paltry things upon the mouth of the harp / Like David they invent for themselves instruments of song. / 6 The ones drinking from bowls of wine and/who anoint with choice oils and are *unaffected* by the fracture of Joseph. / 7 Therefore now they will be the first to be in exile [go into exile at the head of the exile] and the revelry of sprawlers will

whereby people of unspecified gender sprawl on ivory couches, eat and drink too much⁹⁸. The list of foods consumed which include newly mixed wine (vv. 6) and the flesh of young animals (vv. 4), underscore the extravagance of the feast⁹⁹. As this passage is a polemical one, the decadence of the feast is deliberately emphasized: less decadent foods may have been consumed within comparable contexts¹⁰⁰. This colorful description definitively adds eating practices and sacrifice to the list of possible activities performed in the context of *marzeah*¹⁰¹.

This biblical account also describes other activities which may associate with the *marzeah*’s meeting¹⁰². The first results from Amos’ description of musical instruments, which were played carelessly. There is a Biblical tradition of understanding musicians as belonging to a guild, but it is unclear whether Amos could be referring to a particular type of musical association holding the *marzeah*, or whether music was commonly present at these meetings¹⁰³. The irreverent sounds of the musicians also evoke the verse in *Jeremiah* which describes the calling voices in the same context (*Jeremiah* 16:5;9).

Another item in *Amos*’ description is the “anointing” with choice oils. Andersen suggests

depart”. Translation mine. I suggest that though this text provides a thorough description of the feasting activities of the *marzeah*, but such feasting could be a component of commemorative practices.

98. See ANDERSEN, F.I.; FREEDMAN, D.N., *Amos, Anchor Bible Commentary*, New York 1989, 544-550.

99. ANDERSEN; FREEDMAN, *o.c.*, 563. Andersen also notes that in ancient Israelite society, “meat was rarely eaten in ordinary life, and for most people it was available only on the most important cultic and sacramental occasions”.

100. An emendation to the *Jeremiah* text (16:6) describes the eating of bread, in addition to the consumption of wine, at the *marzeah*.

101. The author also emphasizes the role of reclining upon couches, so luxurious as to be composed of ivory and possibly of Phoenician origin. In Andersen’s *Amos* commentary, he expresses confusion over “whether the beds are for sleeping in after the party or for reclining during it” and regards the scene as revelry in response to stimuli, which should prompt mourning. For archaeological comparanda, see discussion of the Samaria Ivories, in MAZAR, *Archaeology... o.c.*, 502-505. Also see ANDERSEN; FREEDMAN, *o.c.*, 562.

102. It is possible, however, that such activities emulate the actions or positions of the dead (*cf. Ugaritica* V.I). The root of the word for to lie down (*shv*) is also a component of the idiom for “to die”. The couches on which the revellers lie in *Amos*, “*mta*”, is also the same word for the funeral bier. It is possible that the combined use of these words would have carried connotations of commemorative, or funerary, activity.

103. MATTHEWS, V., “Music and Musical Instruments”, *ABD* 4, New York 1992, 933.

that this might be a convention of party preparation¹⁰⁴, though such an interpretation appears strange within this context. In Biblical literature, oil is affiliated with excess and luxury (*Ezekiel* 16:13, *Proverbs* 21:17)¹⁰⁵, but is also associated with anointing leaders of the community, such as royalty (*I Samuel* 10:1, *I Kings* 9:1-3), priests and even sanctified altar utensils (*Exodus* 30:24, 25:6, *Leviticus* 8:2, 10, 12). The accompanying reference to the revelers' role in leading the exile ("Ros Golim", vv.7), combined with this description of anointing with oil, might make indirect reference to the choice or nomination of a *rb marzeah*¹⁰⁶.

The feasting and reclining practices for the *marzeah* do not appear to be unique to the biblical text of *Amos*: the Palmyrene tesserae visually depict some of *Amos*' words. Upon them, reliefs depict priests reclining on couches and under vines; these images are often accompanied by inscriptions including the root *MR'ZH*¹⁰⁷. Connections between the reclining priests, *symposium* feasting conduct, and the *marzeah* are emphasized by the images of priests wearing crowns, or holding sceptres¹⁰⁸. These images are helpful in attempting to determine ancient practice and serve to confirm the plausibility of some of *Amos*' descriptions.

Members of the *marzeah* also appear to have partaken in activities for the good of the group: some appear to have commissioned buildings or artwork for the community. The Piraeus inscription describes how the convocation of the *marzeah* honors the community's leader who had contributed to the building of a temple (*KAI* 60.1). Likewise, two Persian period inscriptions from Palmyra indicate cultic dedications of the *marzeah*'s members. One was found upon an altar and reads: "In the month of Shebat, year 340 (29 C.E.), these [members (*bny*)] of the *marzeah* [made <*bdw*>] this altar to Aglibol and Malakbel [their] god[s]"¹⁰⁹. Names of the nine contributors to the

altar are also listed¹¹⁰. A similar passage was inscribed upon a statue of "Zebida by his daughter and another person in Nisan 429 (118 C.E.) on the occasion of Zebida's "leadership of the *marzeah* of the priests of Bel" (*brbnwt mrzhwth dy kmry bl*)¹¹¹. Associates of the *marzeah* erected monuments and items of cultic importance and received recognition for their euergetism.

Variations among descriptions of the *marzeah* are anticipated, as the institution ranged over thousands of years in diverse locations. Many of the institutions' attributes, however, remain consistent throughout time and place. Certain of such traits include the involvement of groups of people of discrepant status, use of an infrastructure which differentiates between the status of its members, dues collection on the organization's behalf, the use of a common and consistent meeting place, and ownership of common lands. Funerary rites, commemorations of the dead, sacrificing, feasting, drinking, music-playing, anointing with oil, and euergetism are all activities also associated with this group's meetings. The diachronic persistence of the organization underscores its pervasiveness in West Asian culture.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE MARZEAH AND COLLEGIA?

The Roman *collegium* and the West Asian *marzeah* bear comparison: both are private associations, which convened regularly in the name of a deity, patron, or geographic location. Each possessed internal hierarchies and used different titles to distinguish between its leaders, members, and their corresponding roles. Both organizations met in a specified houses or architecture, required dues, and also invited voluntary gifts of money, wine, or bread. Meetings may have included communal meals, drinking, sacrifice and commemoration of the dead. Organizations may have served funerary functions for its members. The practices of each of these groups incurred the criticism of outsiders in their respective societies. Are the similarities between the *collegia* and *marzeah* coincidental? Could these types of institutions have emerged concurrently and entirely independently from distinct areas of the Mediterranean? Such suggestions appear to be improbable. The realities

104. ANDERSEN; FREEDMAN, *o.c.*, 562

105. *BDB* 1032

106. A third association of anointing with oil, is that of mourning practices. A passage from *Isaiah* makes explicit this connection as it describes how Isaiah has been charged to comfort the mourners in Zion, and to provide for them "a garland instead of ashes / the oil of happiness instead of mourning" (*Isa.* 61:3). The author of *Amos*' discussion of "anointing", may refer to such commemorative "oil of mourning".

107. See INGOLDT, *o.c.*, esp. n. 27-35, 401.

108. INGOLDT, *o.c.*, n. 29, 35 and 34. Also, see *Isaiah* 61:3 in the passage above. In this way, I interpret such images differently than does CARTER, *o.c.*

109. The restoration and the situation of the inscription are ascribed by PORTEN, *o.c.*, 182.

110. PORTEN, *o.c.*, 182. I have not seen any photographs of the stone, and so I cannot assess the probability of such a restoration.

111. PORTEN, *o.c.*, 182.

of trade, combined with the translations within specific bilingual inscriptions, indicate an inexorable relationship between associations of the east and those of the west. The trade of the Phoenicians rendered such connections possible.

Phoenicians

Beginning in the 9th or 8th centuries B.C.E., the Phoenician trading empire served as a cultural catalyst throughout the Mediterranean. The Phoenicians incurred the widespread adaptation of the alphabet in the western Mediterranean¹¹² and were responsible for disseminating prototypes of artistic decoration and pottery styles¹¹³. One could argue that the foreign adoption of letter forms and objects are much easier and more accurate to trace than the assimilation of inchoate social practices. The exchange of cultural institutions, however, necessarily accompanies that of material culture.

Ancient writers themselves describe how the Phoenicians' methods of trade and their extended stays in their places of port required prolonged cultural interactions with foreign populations: despite their maritime expertise, the Phoenicians could not travel ceaselessly, but had to establish trading colonies and grow their food supplies. In his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides describes how Phoenicians resided continuously in Sicily for the purpose of trade¹¹⁴. Likewise, when Herodotus details the Phoenician circumnavigation of Africa, he describes how Phoenicians needed to remain at each port for prolonged periods: he recounts how the Egyptian king Neco sent out a Phoenician crew who: "sailed from the

Red Sea into the southern ocean, and every autumn put in where they were on the Libyan coast, sowed a patch of ground, and waited for next year's harvest. Then, having got in their grain, they put to sea again, and after two full years... returned to Egypt"¹¹⁵. Despite historians' tendencies to exaggerate, their accounts necessarily reflect ancient realities: ancient, as well as modern ships depend on seasonal winds, which are infrequently favorable for travel. The lengths of sea journeys, furthermore, required immense amounts of food, which had to be bought, or grown, at intervals. These needs required extended habitation in foreign lands.

Just as foreigners adopted the Phoenician alphabet and artistic styles, so too could they have assumed cultural institutions transmitted by the Phoenicians. Independent evidence for Phoenician participation in the *marzeah* ranges from the 5th centuries B.C.E. to the 3rd century C.E. and has been discovered in areas which range from Phoenician Tyre, Sidon and Byblos, to Piraeus, Delos and Sicily. In the 3rd century B.C.E., the earliest evidence for Greco-Roman associations begins to emerge in western port cities. If Phoenician traders actually dwelled in foreign lands for six-month intervals, and possessed enough time to establish organizations of *collegia* on Delos and of *marzeah* in Piraeus, they presumably could have effected local populations' exposure to their cultural institutions in the port towns of Rome and Roman Magna Graecia. Yet, how plausible is such a scenario? Might these Phoenicians, who participated in both Greco-Roman and West Asian cultural milieus, have understood connections between the Greek *koinon*, Latin *collegium* and the West Asian *marzeah*?

The Piraeus inscription from Greece provides definitive evidence for such a possibility. This bilingual text includes an extensive description, in Phoenician, of the proceedings of a *marzeah* which took place in the Piraeus (KAI 60). The brief Greek text on the bottom summarizes that in the Phoenician above - it describes a "*koinon*" which had recently taken place in the Piraeus. The Phoenicians themselves used one Greek word (*koinon*) to translate its equivalent in Phoenician (*marzeah*). Could the *koinon*, or *collegium*, be a Greco-Roman translation of the Semitic word and concept of the *marzeah*? Or, might these institu-

112. SMITH, R., "Trade and Commerce", *ABD* 6, New York 1992, 625. RENFREW, C.; BAHN, P., *Archaeology: Theories, Method and Practice*, London 1991, 420-460.

113. According to HARDEN, D., *The Phoenicians*, London 1971: "We find, too, a further difficulty in Cyprus and to a less extent in Phoenicia. Early Greek art imbibed much oriental influence from the eighth century onwards. In this movement the Phoenicians and their art played a prominent part. Now here, again, was a two-way traffic. Many centuries earlier, in Mycenaean times, Greek things and Greeks themselves came to the Levant coast and to Cyprus, and it is difficult thereafter to sort out the Phoenician from the Greco-Phoenician, especially in realms of art" 60. Merged styles of pottery are sometimes the easiest way to demonstrate the artistic confluences which result from trade: HARDEN describes how in the 5th and 6th centuries B.C.E., the cultural exchange between Greece and Phoenicia altered the art of both cultures, finally to the point that they both became indistinguishable (*ibid.*). Also see AUBET, M., *The Phoenicians and the west: politics, colonies, trade*, Cambridge 2001; GRAS, M., *L'univers phénicien*, Paris 1989.

114. THUCYDIDES, *Peloponnesian War*, VI.2

115. HERODOTUS, *Histories* IV.45, trans. SELINCOURT, *Herodotus: The Histories*, Middlesex 1942, 83.

tions have grown nearly indistinguishable at this point?

The post-Alexandrian world was a very different place than it had been previously; although colonization and trade had precipitated the exchange of artifacts and ideas for centuries, Alexander's conquests induced much more rapid and pervasive cultural transformations within Greco-Roman and West Asian cultural spheres. During the first three centuries B.C.E. and C.E., it appears that Hellenistic, Roman and eastern cultures had mingled to such a degree that the customs of each blended with those of the other. Associations serve as one example of this phenomenon: these institutions serve as microcosms of larger processes of cultural exchange. Our

records for the *marzeah* and *collegia* are admittedly incomplete. Yet, if the *marzeah* could have influenced the development of Greco-Roman *collegia*, and the *collegia* might have eventually reshaped manifestations of the *marzeah*, scholars should begin to rethink how they envision these institutions. Neither the *marzeah*, nor the *collegium*, in this case, ought to be examined in isolated cultural contexts: scholars might use known information about one institution to question undocumented aspects of the other. Such a method of inquiry removes both the *marzeah* and the *collegium* from static positions in the epigraphic record and raises the possibility that both the *marzeah* and *collegia* could be a far richer institutions than scholars have previously assumed.