



Mansoura University
Faculty of Tourism and Hotels

**FROM CULT ASSOCIATIONS TO MONASTICISM: RELIGIOUS
PRACTICES IN EGYPT FROM PTOLEMAIC TO COPTIC PERIODS**

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in Egypt from Ptolemaic to Coptic periods**

من الجمعيات الدينية إلى الرهبنة: الممارسات الدينية في مصر من العصر البطلمي حتي العصر القبطي

الملخص:

إن توثيق تطور الممارسات الدينية كحركات اجتماعية أمراً مهماً للغاية، وهو منظور علمي جديد. يسعى هذا البحث إلى تحديد العلاقات بين الجمعيات الدينية الكلاسيكية والرهبنة القبطية في مصر، من أجل تقديم رؤية جديدة لتطور الممارسات الدينية في مصر عبر العصور. لذا، فإن أهداف البحث هي: توضيح (الأنواع - المعبودات المكرسه - قوائم العضوية - اللوائح والقوانين) الخاصة بالجمعيات الدينية في مصر البطلمية والرومانية؛ ومناقشة تأثيرها علي ظهور جماعات المسيح المبكرة وحركات الرهبنة القبطية؛ وذلك من خلال تناول العلاقة بين الجمعيات الدينية وكتابات (التعليمات والقوانين) الخاصة بأباء رهبنة الشركة الأوائل. فعلي الرغم من ان مشكلة البحث هي أنه ليس هناك علاقة مباشرة بينهم - من خلال الوثائق والكتابات - إلا أن فرضية البحث تميل إلي أن الجمعيات الدينية الكلاسيكية لعبت دوراً محورياً في ظهور رهبنة الشركة في مصر القبطية. تقع منهجية الدراسة علي مستويين: تحليل المصادر الأولية والثانوية؛ تفسير نصوص البردي في إطار نظري؛ لفهم تطور الممارسات الدينية والجوانب الاجتماعية خلال فترة البحث.

الكلمات الافتتاحية: الجمعيات الدينية - جماعات المسيح المبكرة - الرهبنة القبطية - الممارسات الدينية - مصر البطلمية - مصر القبطية.

FROM CULT ASSOCIATIONS TO MONASTICISM: RELIGIOUS PRACTICES IN EGYPT FROM PTOLEMAIC TO COPTIC PERIODS

ABSTRACT

Documenting the development of religious practices as social movements is very significant, and is a new scientific perspective. This research seeks to set relations between classical cult associations and Coptic Monasticism in Egypt, in order to present a new approach on religious practices development in Egypt through ages. Thus, research objectives are: illustrating the types, dedicated deities, memberships, structures and bylaws of cult associations in Ptolemaic and early Roman Egypt; and discussing the influence of them on early Christ groups and Coptic Monasticism; through, establishing the relationship between cult associations and early Coenobitic Monasticism fathers' instructions and regulations. Despite, research obstacle is no direct relations between them, through epigraphical and papyrological documents, Research hypothesis is that cult associations played a vital role in the appearance of Coenobitic Monasticism during Christian Egypt. Research draws on a two-tiered methodological approach: analyzing of primary sources and secondary; and interpretation of papyrological texts through theoretical frameworks, to realize religious practices and social aspects during Ptolemaic and Coptic Egypt.

KEYWORDS: Cult Associations – Early Christ groups – Coptic Monasticism – Religious practices – Ptolemaic Egypt – Coptic Egypt.

INTRODUCTION

Despite, studying associations and guilds during Græco-Roman periods has been exhaustively and extensively addressed, their influence on forming early Christ groups and monasticism is a modern research perspective, to document religious practices development as social movements during those classical societies. Thus, research objectives are: (1) illustrating the organizations, types, dedicated deities, memberships, structures and bylaws of cult associations in Græco-Roman Egypt, according to epigraphical and papyrological documents survived; (2) discussing the influence of cultic associations on early Judæan and Christ groups in Roman Egypt, with shedding light on

evidence of that outside Egypt; (3) establishing the relationship between cult associations and early Coenobitic Monasticism fathers' instructions and regulations (such as: writings of St. *Pachomius* and St. *Shenoute*). Research Hypothesis is that cult associations during Ptolemaic and early roman Egypt played a vital role in the appearance of Coenobitic Monasticism during Christian Egypt. Nevertheless, research obstacle is the difficulty to find direct relations between cult associations and monasticism in Egypt through papyrological evidences, or with writings of early monastic fathers. Thus, research draws on a two-tiered methodological approach: analyzing of primary sources and secondary of Græco-Roman associations in Egypt; and interpretation of papyrological texts through theoretical frameworks, to realize religious practices during Ptolemaic and Coptic Egypt; and comparing those with the early Coenobitic Monasticism fathers' instructions and regulations.

The *polis*, or town, and the family served as the focal points of life in Greek and Roman cities and towns. Each had its own structure, unique cultic practices, and religious observances, and each gave its members a sense of honour, belonging, and identity. Complex negotiations based on a person's legal statues, gained and attained honour, wealth, and other considerations determined their place in the *polis*. During the 6th century BC in Athens, only the adult male citizens could participate in associations, while women, noncitizens, slaves, and former slaves did not have the right to participate. On the other hand, One's place within the family was dependent on age, gender and various abilities and achievements. One could take far from his/her birth family and own family networks, because of military, slavery, immigrations and commercial activities. So, a large number of private associations, guilds and clubs were founded as an extended family. They were organized around a cult of a deity or hero, an ethnic, a neighborhood, or a common trade or profession. Family-based associations were developed by the time to include slave and free, men and women of a *familia* during the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods.¹

¹ Kloppenborg, J. S. and Ascough, R. S. (2011). Græco -Roman Associations: Texts, Translations, and Commentary, vol. I: Attica, Central Greece, Macedonia, Thrace. *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* (181). Berlin & New York: Walter De Gruyter. p. 1.

Cult associations were documented in Athens during the reign of Solon (early 6th century BC) who allowed them without act against Athenian state legalizations (Gaius, *Digest* 47.22.4).² Throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods, Cultic associations became very prevalent. They were formed in honour of numerous Thracian, Anatolian, Syrian, Judaeon, and Egyptian gods in addition to Zeus, Dionysos, Herakles, Apollo, and other deities and heroes of classical Greece. Such persons joined together to form religious associations after being cut off from their families and places of origin and denied citizenship rights. John S. Kloppenborg and Richard S. Ascough refer that, although, associations evidences (epigraphical and papyrological documents) came from urban sites around Mediterranean, they were not an exclusively urban phenomenon. Cult and professional associations are found in small towns throughout Asia, Macedonia, and Egypt (such as: Tebtynis village in Arsinoite nome).³

On the Greek terms that referring to guilds and associations, John S. Kloppenborg sets that "Associations" is after all evidences not an ancient term at all.⁴ He agrees with Christal Freu⁵ that The presence of such associative terms as: *synodos* (συνδοος); *plethos* (πληθος); *ergasia* (εργασια - συνεργασια); (τεχνη - συντεχνια); *koinon* (κοινων); *thiasos*; *kline*; *synagogue*; *collegium*; *corpus*; *cultores*; *familia*, followed by the plural name of a craft or worshippers is the best indicator that an organization is a guild or association. Kloppenborg goes farther to refer that some those associations did not identify themselves as associations or using new associative terms for distinctive themselves between others; like some early Judaeon or Christ groups.

² *Digest* (47.22.4) is the best known Greek normative text on associations survives in the commentary of Gaius (130-180 AD), a famous Roman jurist of the second half of the second century AD. The rule is ascribed to the archetypal figure among Greek legislators, Solon of Athens. For more about (*Digest*. 47.22.4) and other comparative Roman codes, see: Arnaoutoglou, I. N. (2016). The Greek text of D. 47.22.4 (Gai 4 ad legem duodecim tabularum) reconsidered. *Legal Roots* (5): 87-120.

³ Kloppenborg, J. S. and Ascough, R. S. *Græco -Roman Associations*, p. 2-3.

⁴ Kloppenborg, J. S. (2020). *Græco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations, and Commentary*, vol. III: Ptolemaic and early Roman Egypt. *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* (246). Berlin & Boston: Walter De Gruyter. p. 5.

⁵ Freu, C. (2012). L'identité sociale des membres des collèges professionnels égyptiens, dans M. Dondin-Payre et N. Tran (éd.), *'Collegia'. Le phénomène associatif dans l'Occident romain*, Ausonius, Bordeaux, 229-246.

Cult Associations in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt

Although, there is an acceptance between scholars that the private associations were Hellenistic phenomena (emerging from the socio-political development of the Greek *polis*), further studies of Demotic documents show that the idea of private associations back to the ancient Egyptian period during the 19th dynasty of New Kingdom at Dier el-Madina.⁶ Mario Paganini refers that there are no safe criteria between ancient Egyptian private associations and Greek ones, while he sets a table of Greek and Egyptian associations' features as differences and similarities between them.⁷ He concludes that there were many features between them: regulations; dedications and decrees; voting principles; appointments of leaders; members were both male and female; gathered together in meetings; performed cultic duties; indoors and outdoors meetings; brought sacrifices, libations and contributions within duly recorded accounts and lists; and funerary behaviors of payments of indemnity.

Cult associations are foremost families and feel themselves such. Their head called "*pater*" and their members are brothers in the worshipping of the deity. They had a property of a common burial place. This idea is less common for Greek associations than Roman *Cultors*. Their significant came from their vital role in evolution of new religious ideas. A papyrus (BGU. 6.1211)⁸ back to the reign of King Ptolemy IV "Philopator", is an evidence for new religious practices of Dionysos in Alexandria, which is an edict issued by Philopator for the regulation of private Dionysos cult.⁹ Kloppenborg classifies associations into two different categories: private voluntary associations and the official Roman sacerdotal colleges and sacred sodalities. Legal and social differences are made between the two categories. The senate passed an act creating the sacerdotal colleges and

⁶ Paganini, M. C. D. (2017). "Greek and Egyptian Associations in Egypt: Fact or Fiction?" In: *Hellenism and the Local Communities of the Eastern Mediterranean: 400 BCE-250 CE*, edited by B. Chrubasik and D. King, p. 133-134.

⁷ Paganini, *Greek and Egyptian Associations in Egypt*, Table 7.1, p. 143.

⁸ (BGU. 6. 1211 = SB III, 7266 = *Sel.Pap.* II, 208 = *C.Ord.Ptol* 29). For more about (BGU. 6.1211) see: Zuntz, G. (1963). Once More: The So-Called "Edict of Philopator on the Dionysiac Mysteries" (BGU 1211). *Hermes*, 91 (2): 228-239; <https://papyri.info/ddbdp/bgu;6;1211>, (22 June 2023).

⁹ Nock, A. (1924). The Historical Importance of Cult-Associations. *The Classical Review*, 38 (5-6), p. 105.

sacred sodalities, which frequently held significant authority and responsibility within the legislative and executive branches of government. They also recruited members from the elite. Private groups, on the other hand, did not serve as official agents of the government; their presence was tolerated rather than promoted; and the majority of its members were from the non-elite, such as freedmen, slaves, *peregrine* (one from abroad), and resident immigrants.¹⁰ On taxonomy of voluntary associations, Kloppenborg sets that there are to distinguish three sub-types: Funerary collegia (*collegia tenuiorum*), Religious clubs (*collegia sodalicia*) and Professional or occupational associations. He refers that one can at least distinguish between cultic and professional associations. Even while these distinctions appear reasonable, a closer look reveals that they frequently lack clarity and use deceptive language. Most, if not all, of the linkages may be considered "religious" in the sense that piety was deeply ingrained in other facets of ancient civilization.¹¹ While, some persons of similar trade occupation associated around an appropriate deity. (*P. Lond.* VII. 2193)¹² is a document of the bylaws of a guild of Zeus Hypsistos "Zeus the Highest" in Philadelphia (Fayum region, Egypt), 69-58 BC. It is included appointment of a leader for one year, arranging one banquet monthly, regular prays, pouring libations and performing the other customary rites.

Papyrological documents reveal the producing of many associations' bylaws in Egypt. They frequently reflect the *yearly* revisions of these bylaws of the associations that have to be submitted to the neighborhood *grapheion*. Usually, lists of members are appended to these bylaws,

¹⁰ Kloppenborg, J. S. (1996). *Collegia and Thiasoi: Issues in Function, Taxonomy and Membership.* In: Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World, (ed.) John S. Kloppenborg & Stephen G. Wilson. London; New York: Routledge, p. 16.

¹¹ Kloppenborg, J. S. *Collegia and Thiasoi*, p. 18.

¹² *P. Lond.* VII. 2193 = (*P. Lond.* 2710) = *SB.* V. 7835. <https://papyri.info/ddbdp/sb;5;7835>, (22 June 2023). Papyrus (25.3 x 18 cm), cut from a roll, with a join running down the centre, now in the British Museum (inv. 2710). This is thought to be a copy or the first draft of a document, final copies of which would be placed in the association's archive in the temple and perhaps inscribed on a monument. For text, translation and commentary, see: Kloppenborg, J. S. *Graeco -Roman Associations III*, (No. 199), pp. 198-206; On the online database project of list of sources included in three volumes of Graeco -Roman associations around Mediterranean (<https://philipharland.com/Graeco-roman-associations/295-regulations-of-an-association-of-zeus-hypsistos/>), (22 June 2023, 8:00 p.m).

presumably to keep track of who approved the bylaws, who may be held accountable for adhering to the group's rules, and who was eligible to receive benefits from the association. These bylaws are frequently written with the idea that they only apply for one year, which is why they must be renewed every year.¹³ A case of one Demotic cult association of Soknebtunis at Tebtunis in Fayoum¹⁴, has five yearly copies of its bylaws over a course of 34 years. The earliest papyrus (*P.Mil.Vogl. dem. inv. 77-78*) date back to (178 BC.), while the latest one (*P.Cair. 30605*) date back to (145 BC.).¹⁵ All of them have appended lists of members with lists of dues and fines paid or payable. Each one is dated to a certain year and the prelude indicates that these rules are in effect for that year.

Did these cult associations have a fiscal or social role? Kloppenborg argues that the *raison d' être* for associations was mainly social rather than fiscal. He based on papyri and inscriptions discovered at Fayoum provide plenty of evidence for religious associations that were specifically organized around regular meals but whose primary purpose was not clearly financial and participated in a variety of types of sociality. (*I.Prose. I.49 / 5 BC*) is a decree honoring a priest and president of an association; (*SB. III. 6319 / 99-30 BC*) of a cultic association in Magdola, Fayoum; (*P.Lond. VII. 2193 / 69-58 BC*) is a bylaw of an association of Zeus Hypsistos at Philadelphia; (*P.Mich. V. 246 / 43-49 AD*) is contribution to a *synodos* of Harpocrates at Tebtynis; (*SB. XVI. 12511 / II AD*) is an invitation to a banquet of Sarapis; (*P.Mich. VIII. 511 / early III AD*) is recruitment to the cult of Sarapis. It is also notable that these cult associations participated in and organized the funerals of their members, and many were organized around regular communal

¹³ Kloppenborg, J. S. *Græco -Roman Associations III*, p. 3.

¹⁴ For more about the bylaws of Soknebtunis association, see: Monson, A. (2012). "Rules of an Association of Soknebtunis". In: *Papyrological texts in honor of Roger S. Bagnall*. (edited by): Rodney Ast, Hélène Cuvigny, Todd M. Hickey, and Julia Lougovaya. *American Studies in Papyrology* 53: 209-214. Durham, North Carolina: The American Society of Papyrologists.

¹⁵ The five versions of the bylaws of the association of Soknebtunis at Tebtynis are: (*P.Mil.Vogl.*, 178 BC); (*P.Cair. 30606*, 157 BC); (*P.Hamb. frag.*, 151 BC); (*P.Cair. 31179*, 147 BC); (*P.Cair. 30605*, 145 BC). For a comparison between them, see: Kloppenborg, J. S. *Græco -Roman Associations III*, p. 147-151.

dining and sometimes religious activities.¹⁶ (*P.Oxy.* XXXI. 2592 / 75-199 AD) is an invitation to a cultic banquet.

A person's decision to join an association was very significant to their sense of equivalence and safety in a "network of trust," where they could rely on their peers for moral guidance and support.¹⁷ Additionally, a sense of "belonging" is crucial in metropolitan environments where social forgetfulness and identity loss are constant dangers. Also, membership in a cult association brought with it the "social capital" and honor of getting banquets with the deity.¹⁸ In a case of invitation to cultic dinners of Sarapis (*P.Mich.* VIII. 511 / early III AD), Ptolemaios informs his father that he has chosen to serve as the *agoranomos* for a cult dinner in Sarapis' honour and the advantages of joining to this cult association of god Sarapis. He concluded the letter with a sentence that (οὐ δύναται τῷ κυρίῳ Σαράπιδι. ἄλλη) "for a person, it is impossible to refuse our lord Sarapis".¹⁹

Associations did not cancel the role of the families, but they may offer what were beyond the family affairs, duties and responsibilities. Philip F. Venticinque refers that some papyri of associations' memberships included some relatives of the same family.²⁰ As well as acting rules for attending banquets and meetings, associations' members specify a monthly fees, perhaps to assist cover those and other costs. Many evidences reveal that association' charters address private family affairs and intertwined it with associations affairs. Such as: new child birth, marriage, purchasing property, or burials were celebrated or mourned by

¹⁶ Kloppenborg, J. S. *Græco -Roman Associations III*, p. 13.

¹⁷ Monson, A. (2006). The Ethics and Economics of Ptolemaic Religious Associations. *Ancient Society* (36): 221–238.

¹⁸ Kloppenborg, J. S. *Græco -Roman Associations III*, p. 14.

¹⁹ For the Greek text of (*P.Mich.* VIII 511 = GRA III 240 = Papyri.info TM 30511 = AGRW 25332) and its translation, see: <https://philipharland.com/Græco-roman-associations/letter-regarding-fees-for-a-banquet-for-sarapis-200-250-ce/>; <https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.mich;8:511> (21 July 2023, 10:16 am). For further comment on this papyrus, see: Kloppenborg, J. S. *Græco -Roman Associations III*, p. 350-353.

²⁰ A membership list of an association in Tebtunis (*P.Mich.* 5. 243) is signed by 17 ones, 9 of them seemed to come from 4 families. Also, (*P.Mich.* 5. 244) from Tebtunis, included 24 members, 11 of them come from 5 families, and seem to be sets of brothers. Further, (*BGU* VII. 1615, A.D 84) signed by 6 pair of fathers and sons. For more see: Venticinque, P. F. (2010). Family Affairs: Guild Regulations and Family Relationships in Roman Egypt. *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* (50): p. 278-279.

the all as whole. According to (*P.Mich.* 5. 243) of Tebtunis, the association imposed fines of four drachmas for one "not shaven" upon a member's death, as well as four more drachmas for failing to attend the burial, totaling 33% of the monthly guild fee.²¹ Venticinque sets that offering funerals for association' members, does not have to reflect a lack of dependence on one's relatives or community, as has been frequently implied. But regarding occupational guilds and associations, the matter may have more than social services between the members, it could have more economic responsibilities for the professional itself, the new belongings, the dealing with the state through taxes upon that professional and sometimes with the state affairs, as Christel Freu mentions.²²

It is worth noting that there is no direct relation between cult centers and cult associations. Structured connections involve not only the requisite numbers, but also the growing realization that a certain group of individuals is not like the typical cult, particularly in public. Isiac religious associations employ not just the conventional polis-centered model of organization, but also the available "wave-length" of the associative continuum: individuals pooling their resources to execute a specific, tangible gesture to the gods.²³

In order to understand the social position of the associations into the *polis*, John S. Kloppenborg argues that however, evidences are sparse for many locations and periods, it is an obvious fact that associations imitated the organizational structure, language, and the activities of the

²¹ Although, it is not the same other fins, such as penalty of prosecuting a fellow member (8 *drachmas*) or for intrigue (60 *drachmas*), this amount was same for absence of a meeting in the polis. For the full text of (*P.Mich.* 5. 243) and its English translation, see: Venticinque, P. F. *Family Affairs: Guild Regulations and Family Relationships*, p. 280-282; For online ed. (*P.Mich.*5.243 =HGV *P.Mich.* 5 243 =Trismegistos 12084) see: <https://papyri.info/hgv/12084> (27 May, 2024, 11:30 p.m).

²² Freu, C. (2012). "L'identité sociale des membres des collèges professionnels égyptiens (I^{er}-VI^e s. p.C.)". In *Collegia. Le phénomène associative dans l'Occident romain*, (ed.) Monique Dondin-Payre and Nicolas Tran, 229-265. Bordeaux: Ausonius and Paris: De Boccard.

²³ Arnaoutoglou, I. (2018). "Isiastai Sarapiastai: Isiac Cult Associations in the Eastern Mediterranean". In *Individuals and Materials in the Græco -Roman Cults of Isis: Agents, Images and Practices*, Vol. 1. (ed.) Valentino Gasparini and Richard Veymiers, 248-282, Leiden & Boston: Brill.

cities in which they were found. The *Agora* and the *Forum* of the Græco-Roman cities filled with a large variety of rosters; lists of public almsgivers, public debtors, betrayers, new granted citizens, deserters, war casualties, magistrates, senators and lists of civic officials, *etc.* were found. Most of these lists were only for elite citizens and only for men; however associations included women, slaves and foreigners as well. May be, they want to appear as part of the life in the *polis*. Also, some associations (*P.Lond.* VII 2193.17, Philadelphia, 69–58 BCE); (*P.Mich.* V 243.7–8, Tebtynis, 14–37 CE) adopted a judicial role in members conflict matters, prohibiting them from using public courts to file complaints and fining those who charged or libeled members. Kloppenborg refers that it is may be for prevent the conflicts before they would break up associations, and for claiming quasi-civic autonomy, including those associations that were not formally addressed. The idea that associations are "free spaces" leads to the integration of the sub-élite into the polis, which is maybe the most widely proposed use for associations. Hence, it provided means of bridging differences in legal status and ethnic identity when participating in a shared cult. Associations resembled an integrated mini-polis. Naturally, the sociality of associations did not completely eliminate legal divisions, social hierarchies, or establish an explicitly egalitarian environment, even though it did cross social borders.²⁴

It is clear from what mentioned above that it was a great honor for a one to join in an association. Aurelius Leonides, a Christian officer in Oxyrhynchus in 4th century AD, was a member in two occupational guilds and cult association. He has connections to flax merchant's guilds and may be to early created Christ assemblies. May, this social intersectionality creates a space for expansion of Christianity.²⁵

Early Christ' groups and Græco-Roman Associations

There has been a growing interest over the last 25 years in how the Græco-Roman associations' data might aid researchers in comprehending how early Christ groups evolved in the first and second century. Over the

²⁴ Kloppenborg, J. S. (2017). "Associations, Christ Groups, and Their Place in the Polis." *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft (ZNW)* 108(1), pp. 4-18.

²⁵ Kloppenborg, J.S. (2019). *Christ's associations. Connecting and belonging in the ancient city*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), p. 319; Abdou, I. M. (2021). "A List of Payments for Rent and Tax", *Classical Papers* 18(18): 25-39.

course of the previous decades, the use of the associations as a model for studying early Christ's assemblies has moved from skepticism to growing acceptance, with the assumption being made that the associations are "good to think with" when examining early Christianity.

John S. Kloppenborg' contributions in this scope are great and be in forefront of these studies.²⁶ Upon a funded research project from 2012-2017 named "*Early Christ-groups as Graeco-Roman Associations*", he generated many studies.²⁷ His book: "*Christ's associations. Connecting and belonging in the ancient city*" is an important guide for all interests in this field.²⁸ Also, Kloppenborg students' research team have many contributions related to this area. Richard S. Ascough is the prominence one of them. Ascough's Ph.D. dissertation (in 1997) was about the formation the early Christian communities in Philippi and Thessalonica.²⁹

²⁶ Among Kloppenborg' publications about the relationship between early Christ groups and Graeco -Roman associations are: Kloppenborg, J.S. (2017). "Associations, Christ Groups, and Their Place in the Polis". *ZNW* 108 (1):1-56; Kloppenborg, J.S. (2013). "Membership Practices in Pauline Christ groups," *Early Christianity* 4(2): 183–215; Kloppenborg, J.S. (2016). "Civic Identity in Early Christ Groups." In *Jewish and Christian Communal Identities in the Roman World*, ed. Yair Furstenburg. Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 94, 87-115. Leiden: E.J. Brill; Kloppenborg, J.S. (2021). "The Didache and the Apostolic Constitutions in the Context of Association Rules". *Texts in Context: Essays on Dating and Conceptualizing Christian Writings from the Second and Third Centuries*. Ed. by Joseph Verheyen, Jens Schröter, and Tobias Nicklas. BETL 319, 73–96. Leuven: Peeters; Kloppenborg, J.S. (2018). "Pauline Communities and Graeco-Roman Associations." In *Receptions of Paul in Early Christianity: The Person of Paul and His Writings Through the Eyes of His Early Interpreters*, ed. Jens Schröter, Simon Buttica, and Andreas Dettwiler. BZNW 324, 215–247. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. Also, there are many papers related to this scope submitted in many conferences proceedings.

²⁷ For more see the Curriculum Vitae (CV) of John S. Kloppenborg published on his page on the website of (department for the study of Religion – Faculty of Arts and Science – University of Toronto) retrieved from: <https://www.religion.utoronto.ca/people/directories/all-faculty/john-kloppenborg-frsc> (20 June, 2024 – 7:00 p.m).

²⁸ Kloppenborg, J. S. "*Christ's associations. Connecting and belonging in the ancient city*".

²⁹ This dissertation is published partly in: Ascough, R.S. (1998). *What are They Saying about the Formation of Pauline Churches?* New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press. And in: Ascough, R.S. (2003). *Paul's Macedonian Associations: The Social Context of Philippians and Thessalonians*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament (WUNT) II. 161. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

In 2022, Richard S. Ascough edited essay collections of *“Early Christ Groups and Græco-Roman Associations: Organizational Models and Social Practices”*, which is very significant in connection between early Christ groups and Græco -Roman associations.³⁰

By comparing and contrasting evidences of Græco-Roman associations and early Christ groups; Richard S. Ascough refers that it is clear that the latter would have been identified as, and identified themselves as, a particular manifestation of the same phenomenon. Other scholars have demonstrated a particular interest in comprehending the social organization of associations, and a growing number of them contend that associations might provide a framework for comprehending early Christian and Jewish assemblies. Most research to date has concentrated on connecting the information from the study of associations with information from New Testament canonical texts, such Paul's writings. In light of links, further research has examined Jewish and Christian communities in greater detail.³¹

Numerous similarities and differences between Christ groups and Græco -Roman associations have been highlighted by research, especially – though not exclusively – the Pauline Christ groups. The vocabulary and practices of associations bear similarities of early Christian texts found in the New Testament and other Christian writings. The focus is on shared property and friendship, and fictive kinship terminology like "father" and "brother" is used extensively. It is evident that many Christ groups had hierarchical leadership structures, notably from the second century onward, even if the literatures advocate equality and shared duties. Christ groups were seen to be dependent on donations and to have met mostly in private homes, while on occasion they were also visible in public areas. Christ groups had many organizational and structural characteristics with associations, including as ceremonial meals and other cult practices and regulations. Though legally forbidden, they were mostly accepted as unimportant (with a few isolated outliers), and by the second century and later, they even identified as associations on their own. By more research,

³⁰ Ascough, R.S. (2022). *Early Christ Groups and Græco -Roman Associations: Organizational Models and Social Practices*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books (Wipf & Stock).

³¹ Ascough, R.S. "Early Christ Groups and Græco -Roman Associations", p. 3-5.

it is confirmed by early Christ groups' founders from the second century onwards.³²

Most of these modern studies of relating Græco -Roman associations with Early Christ groups adopted early *Pauline' associations* which created under the name of St. Paul, outside Egypt, in Philippians and Thessalonians. Following this comprehensive model studies, we seek to address the relationship between the Græco-Roman associations and a new Christian movement "*Coptic Coenobitic and Pachomian Monasticism*" that spread especially in Coptic Egypt and from it to the world as a new phenomenon.

Coptic Monasticism

Approaching a new hypothesis perspective beside the other numerous theories to explore the origins of Coptic monasticism³³, is one of the main aims of this research. Despite that Monasticism adopted asceticism and a person must leave his own family and the world, the early monastic fathers affirmed the family life among the monks inside the same congregation, especially the Coenobitic and Pachomian monasteries. According to the English translation of *the life of saint Pachomius*, Armand Veilleux states that unlike the Basilian fraternities in Cappadocia, which appear to have benefited from being more family-sized, the enormous Pachomian monasteries in Egypt were much more like a family. Based on the position of the father "*pater*" in (*Pachomian Koinonia*), who binding the congregation together, and had the grace of fatherhood to the leaders of every house and monastery.³⁴ Simply, the values of family life were affirmed rather than the radical asceticism, as Constance Powell Chin sets.³⁵

³² Ascough, R.S. "*Early Christ Groups and Græco -Roman Associations*", p. 6.

³³ The other different theories of explaining the origins of Coptic monasticism relate it with the Therapeutic life of the Alexandrian Jewish ascetics of Philo in the 1st century AD; also, with the recluses practices of god Sarapis in ancient religions; further, with the Gnostic Manichaeism missions that came to Egypt from the third century AD. For more see: Guillaumont, A. (1991). "*Egyptian Monasticism*", In: *The Coptic encyclopedia* (5), (editor in chief) Aziz Suryal Atiya, 1661-1664, Macmillan.

³⁴ *Pachomian Koinonia I: the life of saint Pachomius and his disciples*. (1980). trans. with intro. by Armand Veilleux, Cistercian Studies Series (45), Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications Inc., p. xi.

³⁵ Chin, C. P. (2012). *Geography and Social Structure of Monasteries: Cultural Diffusion or Convergent Evolution?* (MA degree), San José State University, p. 107.

According to *Shenoute' Canons* (saint Shenoute the archimandrite of Atripe writings)³⁶, Bentley Layton refers that any person who entered the Federation had to abandon the framework of their previous non-monastic existence and enter this new and meticulously planned structure. In which, all basic needs were now met by new sources. Things that were formerly supplied by the family and the community were now supplied by the monastery. And they were now supplied in a completely new way: every item the monastery offered had a brand-new set of set norms attached to it (of roles, attitudes, physical performances, nomenclature, etc.). Monastic resocialization, that also known as world replacement, is essentially the replacement of the old civilian patterns with these new ones.³⁷

All the monastics are "brothers" in the Pachomian Cenobitism. They must follow the regulations and roles, *catechesis*, instruction on the Holy Scriptures. In the *Koinonia*, every housemaster shall give these instructions to his house' brothers twice a week, on the fast days. And every local monastery superior give it three times a week, on Saturday evening and twice on Sunday. While, during some special meetings like the festival of "Passover" at Phbow or another general gathering of all the brothers at Mesro at the end of the year, the head of the monastic community give other regulations. Among these yearly instructions that happened at Mesro, was the declaration of the new appointments.³⁸ Further, affirming the "monastic brotherhood", according to Shenoute' Canon (9): "*People in these abodes (topos) who forget to come or to bury whoever die are not worthy to be called brother*".³⁹ Additionally, by the time the phenomenon of (*Adelphopoiesis*) which means "brother-making" appeared in the Cenobitic monasticism. Claudia Rapp refers that

³⁶ For more about Shenoute the archimandrite of Atripe, see: Timbie, J. (2015). "*Shenoute of Atripe*", in: *The Wiley Blackwell companion to patristics*, (ed.) by Ken Parry, 184-196. Wiley Blackwell.

³⁷ Layton, B. (2014). *The Canons of our Fathers: Monastic Rules of Shenoute*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 77.

³⁸ *Pachomian Koinonia III: Instructions, Letters, and other Writings of saint Pachomius and his disciples*, (1982), trans. by Armand Veilleux, Cistercian Studies Series (47), Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications Inc.

³⁹ *Shenoute' Canon 9*. 356. Codex BV 99 = GB-BL 3580 f. 44r. See: Layton, B. *The Canons of our Fathers*, p. 240-241.

in Cenobitic communities there is an opportunity for two monks or three (two brothers and one disciple) could live together⁴⁰, and could sharing spiritual capital and the same tomb.⁴¹

Coptic monasticism accepts both men and women, as well. Everyone want to follow the Christ can join to monastic life, whatever who are.⁴² Upon the Christ' call to "follow him" and "be perfect" (Matt 19:21), the response is the fundamental concept in monasticism.⁴³ While women did not represent in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, they were appeared obviously in Coptic monasticism life, from the beginning.⁴⁴ According to the *Bohairic and first Greek Life of St. Pachomius*, he built a monastery for women after the visit of his sister "Mary" to him, in which many other women joined her. Further, by the time, there are two female communities as part of "*Pachomian Koinonia*".⁴⁵ Also, there is a cloistered women's cenobium (*nunnery*) in *St. Shenoute white monastery* in Sohag, located about 3 Km. south of the central monastery, at the village of Atripe.⁴⁶ Additionally, St. Dimyanah founded a female monastic community near to the modern city of Damietta, around the end of the 3rd century and the beginning of the 4th century AD. This small monastic community (around 40 nuns) was funded by Dimyanah's father, "Marcus" who was the governor of the district. Lois M. Farag refers that there were many other female monasteries which established and sponsored by rich Christians. But by the time, they were disappeared because of funding dried up or the founder died. The Egyptian monastic

⁴⁰ Rapp, C. (2016). *Brother-Making in Late Antiquity and Byzantium: Monks, Laymen and Christian Ritual*. Oxford University Press, p. 97-98.

⁴¹ Rapp, C. "Brother-Making in Late Antiquity", p. 148-156.

⁴² De Gruchy, J. W. (2023). *This Monastic Moment: the War of the Spirit and the Rule of Love*. (2nd edition). The Lutterworth Press.

⁴³ Farag, L. M. (2014). Monasticism: Living Scripture and Theological Orthodoxy, in: *The Coptic Christian Heritage: History, Faith and Culture*. (ed.) by Lois M. Farag. London & New York: Routledge, p. 116-117; Gabra, G. (2002). *Coptic Monasteries: Egypt's Monastic Art and Architecture*. The American University in Cairo Press, p. 9-10.

⁴⁴ Schentuleit, M. (2019). "Gender Issues: Women to the Fore", in: *A Companion to Græco-Roman and Late Antique Egypt*, (ed.) by Katelijjn Vandorpe. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., p. 360.

⁴⁵ *V.Pach. Bo. 27 = Bohairic Life of Pachomius 27*. See: *Pachomian Koinonia I*, by Armand Veilleux, p. 49-50; *V.Pach. G¹. 32 = First greek life of Pachmoius 32*. See: *Pachomian Koinonia I*, by Armand Veilleux, p. 318-319; Sadek, S. (2012). The daily life in the Coptic Monasteries: Analytical Study. *CGUAA* 15 (1): 274-297.

⁴⁶ Layton, B. *The Canons of our Fathers*, p. 12.

"*Politeia*" (way of life), attracted thousands of men and women, as well.⁴⁷ According to *Historia Monachorum* (The lives of the Desert Fathers), there are twenty thousands of women ascetics in Oxyrhynchus during the fourth century AD.⁴⁸ However, this number is in debate and exaggeration, it is a clear reference for the existence of female monastics in early Coptic monasticism.⁴⁹

The oath that ascetics signed upon joining the monastic community applied the uniformity that characterized life in the Cenobium in many respects. The Cenobitic monastic day was organized around a set of required activities, including a shared meal or meals and a set number of daily gatherings for meditation and maybe handwork. All monastics had the same amount of food provided to them, the same clothes on, the same furniture and equipment in their cells, and neither money nor any personal belongings. In Pachomian cenobia, monks wore uniforms with badges stitched on them to indicate which house they belonged to. Orders down the chain of command were specific to the job for the day.⁵⁰

A cenobium's administrative hierarchy was set up like a pyramid, with the supreme father at the summit. In *Pachomian Koinonia*, the head father and a sub-father appoint the local superiors of every monastery. Each monastery had its own father and its sub-father as well. Every monastery included many houses, which had a leader and about 40 monastics, who specialized in a one profession like bakers, farmers, carpenters, weavers, *etc.*⁵¹ While, according to saint *Shenoute's Canons*, St. Shenoute of Atrip developed a more complex pyramidal command structure for his whole monastic federation, with many administrative titles, appointments and job descriptions. It seems to be an organizational

⁴⁷ Farag, L. M. *Monasticism*, p. 122-123.

⁴⁸ Cain, A. (2016). *The Greek Historia Monachorum in Aegypt: Monastic Hagiography in the Late Fourth Century*. Oxford Early Christian Studies. Oxford University Press, p. 218.

⁴⁹ For more discussion about the number of nuns at Oxyrhynchus according to *Historia Monachorum*, see: Luijendijk, A. (2015). "Twenty Thousand Nuns": The Domestic Virgins of Oxyrhynchus. *Christianity and Monasticism in Middle Egypt: Al-Minya and Asyut*, (ed.) by Gawdat Gabra and Hany N. Takla, 57-67, The American University in Cairo Press.

⁵⁰ Layton, B. *The Canons of our Fathers*, 7-8.

⁵¹ Veilleux, A. (1991). "*Pachomian Monasticism*", in: *The Coptic encyclopedia* (5), (editor in chief) Aziz Suryal Atiya, 1664-1666, Macmillan.

structure with distinction of ranks and extensive hierarchy.⁵² Generally, each resident had a rank, and although they differed slightly throughout Cenobitic systems, the ranks in the line of command had official titles and distinct job descriptions. Insofar as it was feasible, the chain of command functioned as a control system, reporting information up the line on each monk's behavior and spiritual state. Punishments for serious violations might include demotion or physical punishment, and, in certain cases, expulsion.

Finally, did monasteries have social roles in society? However, it seems that monasteries are isolated federations, and it is forbidden for monastics to contact their own families and blood relatives inside the same congregation without permission from the supreme father⁵³, early monastic fathers allowed help to the surrounding communities and provided all social and health cares for them, especially in risky times. Andrew T. Crislip sets that Coptic monasteries offered social, medical and health care services for monastics and non-monastics as well. In many varied counts, Coptic monasteries provided care for poor, strangers, orphans, lepers, elderly and the sick for ascetics and the around community as well.⁵⁴ Archeological, literary, and documentary evidences clear that there were hospitals in Coptic monasteries, especially Cenobitic. Those monastic hospitals (or infirmaries) offered health care, food and shelter for the needy and poor around them. Monastic hospitals were occupied by professional health workforce, that make it thought to be healing places in people's point of view. These hospitals were independent buildings from the whole monastery but inside the same enclosure monastery wall, with a complex administrative system, according to early monastic fathers' regulations and rules. May this easy its services to the public.⁵⁵

⁵² For more about St. Shenoute's administrative system and its ranks, see: Layton, B. *The Canons of our Fathers*, 61-68.

⁵³ For more about St. *Shenoute's Canons* that arranged the relationship between monastics and their own families and blood relatives, see: Layton, B. *The Canons of our Fathers*, 55-56.

⁵⁴ Crislip, A. T. (2008). *From Monastery to Hospital: Christian Monasticism & the transformation of Health care in Late Antiquity*, (4th edition), Ann Arbor: University of Michigan press, 133-137.

⁵⁵ For more about the roles, administrative systems, regulations and services of monastic cenobitic hospitals during Coptic period, see: Yassin, K. A. (2021). *Health*

It is worth to mention that, during famines and war times, St. Shenoute's monasteries opened the gates to public whom received food, accommodation, health and medical care until the end of this starvations or war times. Then they back to their homes peacefully, as a genuine example of great social activities within the society.⁵⁶ Additionally, Caroline Schroeder refers that early Coptic monasteries were not (anti-social and anti-cultural); on the contrary, by tending to provide health care services for public children, they served to support the social, culture, and family reproduction of late antique society.⁵⁷

On more social political comprehension of Coptic monasticism, monastics were allowed to participate in decision-making and in sometime to convert the mainstream of Coptic Christianity, through democratic processes regarding membership and leadership.⁵⁸ St. Athanasius, one of the most venerated individuals in Egypt, is known throughout the Christian history for having defended Nicene Orthodoxy.⁵⁹ Coptic monasticism characterized the Egyptian identity in many times, and affected on Coptic Egyptian Christianity as well.

CONCLUSION

Cult associations and monasticism are two distinct concepts, but they can be related in certain historical, social and cultural contexts. Maybe, the second generation of Coptic monasticism like St. Pachomius and St. Shenoute, influenced by some classical ideas of Græco -Roman cult associations, to create the new ideal model of Cenobitic monasticism in Egypt. The following table demonstrates the similarities and differences between Cult associations and Cenobatic monasticism, as following:

Care Services in Byzantine Egypt. (PhD thesis). Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, University of Sadat City, 65-99.

⁵⁶ Farag, F. R. (1964). *Sociological and Moral Studies in the Field of Coptic Monasticism*. Lieden: E. J. Brill, 37.

⁵⁷ Schroeder, C. T. (2011). "Monastic Family Values: The Healing of Children in Late Antique Egypt". *Coptica* (10): 21-28; Schroeder, C. T. (2021). *Children and Family in Late Antique Egyptian Monasticism*. Cambridge University Press.

⁵⁸ Sundberg, M. (2020). "The politics of monastic life: opportunities for exit and voice in a voluntary total institution". *European Journal of Sociology*, 61(1): 103–127.

⁵⁹ Bantu, V. L. (2015). *Egyptian Ethnic Identity Development in Anti-Chalcedonian Coptic Literature*. (PhD thesis), The Catholic University of America, 252.

Table. 1. Comparison between Cult associations and Cenobatic monasticism.⁶⁰

	Cult Associations	Cenobatic Monasticism	
Similarities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Adopting concepts of family in formation.</u> • The head of them called: • All members called: • Property management: • Burial place: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -They are foremost families and feel themselves such. • Their head called "<i>pater</i>" the father. • All members are brothers. • They had properties under the name the deity. Helped them for the association expenses. • Some associations had a common burial place for them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -All the necessities of families offered inside the community, however, they leave their own families and the world. • There is a supervisor over the community called father. • All members are brothers. • There are properties of the monastery under the supervision of the head father. • Sometimes, there is a same burial place for some of them.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State authority over them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Private cult associations did not serve as official agents of the government; their presence was tolerated rather than promoted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Monasteries had independence from the state authority. Then after Christianity freedom, they had social-political activities parallel to the state.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Members' gender and identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Members were both male and female. Members were from the non-elite, such as freedmen, slaves, <i>peregrine</i> (one from abroad), and resident immigrants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Members were both male and female, but there is separated community for every gender, with regulations that limited relations between them.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizational structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Associations imitated the organizational structure, language, and the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Cenobatic Monasteries have an organizational structure with distinction

⁶⁰ This table developed by the researchers upon data included in this research.

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		activities of the cities in which they were found.	of ranks and extensive hierarchy.
	- Regulations and bylaws.	-Cult associations' bylaws renewed annually with the list of members attached, and submitted to the neighborhood <i>grapheion</i> .	-Early monastic fathers, like <i>Shenoute</i> and <i>Pachmious</i> , established rules and regulations that developed over the decades.
	- Gathering meetings.	-Evidences refer to regular meetings for cultic meals and banquets.	-They gathered for communal prayer on Saturdays and Sundays
	- General meetings.	-Evidences refer also to general meetings for appointments and dedications.	-All of them gathered together during the "Passover festival" at Phbow and general meeting at Mesro in the end of the year. During those meeting, appointments and regulations declared.
	- Duties and responsibilities.	-Attending funerals of their members, cultic banquets, and religious activities.	-All monastics have a craft inside the community to enough necessities, such as; bakers; carpenters, <i>etc.</i>
	- Equality and safety	-It provides a network of trust, belonging, equivalence and safety for moral guidance and support.	-All monastics had the same amount of food provided to them, the same clothes on, the same furniture and equipment in their cells, and neither money nor any personal belongings.
Differences	- Canceling their own families' affairs.	-It didn't cancel the role of families, but it was a shelter to whom didn't have families.	-There are no relations to their own families or relatives in the same community, without exception from the supreme father or superior.
	- Groups' size.	-Evidences set the minimum number to (15) and the maximum number to (30) under one name.	-Cenobitic monastic communities have thousands of monastics, who increase over decades.
	- Offering Social roles.	-Usually, they offer social roles for community	-During famines and war times, monasteries

	building around them.	offered food, medical and health care and accommodation to the public.
- Place centralization	-There is no place centralization between a cult association formation and the cult center of the dedicated deities.	-.

While cult associations and monasticism have different focuses and objectives, there have been instances where they intersected or influenced each other. By the time, cult associations emerged within monastic communities or monasteries as a means to promote specific forms of worship or to cater to the spiritual needs of the wider community. These associations could provide a more accessible and inclusive approach to religious practice outside the confines of monastic life.

Further research studies are needed for illustrating the intersections between cult associations and monasticism in Egyptian community through ages. It could be intricate and multifaceted, as both involve communal religious practices, devotion, and spiritual pursuits. The ways in which they could intersect; shared spiritual practices, devotional focus, community building, diverse spiritual paths and influence on monastic tradition. Overall, it highlights the dynamic and diverse nature of religious life within monastic communities.

In summary, while cult associations and monasticism are distinct concepts, they can intersect in certain historical, social and cultural contexts, with cult associations emerging within monastic communities or monasteries to provide alternative forms of worship and communal religious experiences. However, it's important to note that the specifics of these relationships can vary greatly depending on the time period, religious tradition, and cultural context being considered.

APPENDIX

Epigraphical evidences and papyrological documents reveal the existence of many cultic associations during Ptolemaic and early Roman Egypt (**Appx. 1**). Those cultic associations were related to many deities, such as; Anubis; Isis (Isis Esenechebis - Isis Snonais); Serapis; Harpokrates; Nechthpharaus; Osiris; Sobek; Aphrodite; Apollo; Dioscuri; Heracles; Hermes; Pan; Zeus Hzpsistos; Soknebtynis.

Appx. 1. Cult associations sources during Ptolemaic and early Roman Egypt.⁶¹

Source	Subject	Nome	Date	Type
IGRRI. 1095	Statue of a founder and president of an assembly	Kanopos	29-28 B.C	Inscription
SB I. 639	Dedication of a statue of Herakles and Harpokrates	Alexandria	25 B.C	Inscription
I. Alex.imp.65	Dedication by an apollonian association	Alexandria	22 AD.	Inscription
I. Alex.imp.92	Dedication by the president of an association	Alexandria	I AD.	Inscription
I. Alex. Ptol. 41; CAPIInv. 150.	Dedication of a statue by members of the <i>synod</i> of Aphrodite Lamres.	Alexandria.	II century BC.	Inscription
P.Lille.dem.29	Bylaws of the association of the temple of Horus	Pisais	223 B.C	Papyrus
I. Fayum III. 171; SB 5.8133; SEG 8.544.	Dedication to Anubis on behalf of a synod.	Narmouthis, (Medinet Madi)	1 st century A.D.?	Inscription
I. Fayum II 121	Restoration of a cultic space	Theadelphia	7 Apr 93 C.E	Inscription
I. Fayum III	Dedication of an	Narmouthis	I-II C.E	Inscription

⁶¹ This table is developed by the researchers after basing on information in: Kloppenborg, J. S. *Græco -Roman Associations III: Ptolemaic and early Roman Egypt*; Kallimani, V. (2021). *Religious Associations in Ptolemaic Egypt: The Evidence in the Greek Language* (Θρησκευτικά Σωματεία στην Πτολεμαϊκή Αίγυπτο: Οι μαρτυρίες από την ελληνική γλώσσα). National and Kapodistrian University of Athens/ Martin-Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg; (**CAPIInv.**) = Copenhagen Association Project Inventory, <https://ancientassociations.ku.dk/>; (**AGRW**) = Associations in the Græco -Roman World, <https://philipharland.com/Græco-roman-associations/>.

172	association to Apollo			
I. Fayoum III 201	Meeting place for an association of former Ephebes	Arsinoites	95 B.C	Inscription
I. Fayoum 204; CAPIInv. 66; AGRW 2894.	Dedication to Isis Esenchebis.	Arsinoites, (Fayoum).	68 BC.	Inscription
I. Fayoum 205; CAPIInv. 68; AGRW 15317.	Dedication to Isis Snonais.	Arsinoites, Soknopaiou Nesos.	51 BC.	Inscription
SB 20.14728; C.Jud.Syr.Eg. 1; CAPIInv. 825.	Letter to inform of the selection of a <i>prostates</i> of god Nechthpharaus Associations.	Pathyris.	103 BC.	Papyrus
I. Fayoum II 119; CAPIInv. 64.	Dedication on behalf of the synod of youths from the Osireion.	Arsinoites, Theadelphia.	I-II century BC.	Inscription
P.Mich VIII 511	Recruitment to the cult of Serapis	Karanis	III AD.	Papyrus
P.Tebt. I.119; CAPIInv. 725.	Account of expenditures mentioning a synod possibly of Serapis.	Arsinoites, Kerkeosiris.	105-101 BC.	Papyrus
SB III 6319; CAPIInv. 777.	Account of dues and instructions of Sobek association.	Arsinoites, Magdola.	I-II century BC.	Papyrus
P.Cair. II. 30606; P.Tebt. Suppl. 1578	Bylaws of a Demotic association of Soknebtynis	Tebtynis	27 Aug - 25 Sep 158/157 B.C	Papyrus
P.Mich V 244	Bylaws of an association of ΑΠΟΛΥΣΙΜΟΙ	Tebtynis	26 Aug 43 AD.	Papyrus
I. Hermoupolis 5; CAPIInv. 194	Dedication from the synod of <i>xenoi</i> Apolloniatai, Inscription.	Hermoupolis Magna.	79/8 BC.	Inscription
BGU XIV 2371	Fragment of bylaws	Herakleopolis	1 B.C	Papyrus
P.Oxy.XXXI 2592	Invitation to a cultic banquet	Oxyrhynchus	75-199 C.E	Papyrus
OGIS 97; CAPIInv. 160.	Dedication to Serapis, Isis and Anubis.	Gynaikopolites, Taposiris Parva	205-181 BC.	Inscription

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I. Mus. Varsovie 44; CAPIInv. 606.	Dedication to the royal couple (Ptolemy and Berenike) and Dioscuri.	unknown location.	246-221 BC.	Inscription
SB 5. 7578; CAPIInv. 790, AGRW 20942.	Receipt of rent for god Dioscuri association.	Elephantine.	I century BC.	Ostrakon
P.Lond IV 11	Account of a cult association of the dioskuroi	Bakchias	203, 231 or 236 AD.	Papyrus
I.Philae 11; CAPIInv. 53.	Dedication from the synod of Heracles.	Elephantine, Philae.	172 BC.	Inscription
O.Joach.1; CAPIInv. 644; AGRW 20906.	Record of production of bird mummies of Hermes association.	Elephantine, Omboi.	79 BC.	Ostrakon
SB III 6184; CAPIInv. 155; AGRW 15267.	Dedication to Thriphis, Kolanthes and Pan association.	Thinites, Ptolemais Hermiou.	137 BC.	Inscription
P.Lond. VII 2193; CAPIInv. 654, AGRW 2922.	Bylaws of the association of Zeus Hzpsistos.	Arsinoites, Philadelphieia.	69-58 BC.	Papyrus
OGIS 130; CAPIInv. 51.	Dedication of the synod of Basilistai.	Elephantine, Setis.	152 - 145 BC.	Inscription
OGIS 111; CAPIInv. 48.	Dedication from the synod that assembles at the temple of Setis.	Elephantine, Setis.	152-145 BC.	Inscription
chr.wilck.110A; CAPIInv. 639.	Vow between members of an association.	Thebes.	110 BC.	Papyrus
P. Enteux 21; CAPIInv. 766; AGRW 2897.	Complaint concerning the payment of funeral fee.	Arsinoetis, Kerkethoeris.	218 BC.	Papyrus
SB III 7182; CAPIInv. 856.	Account of a slave Association.	Philadelphia.	I-II century BC.	Papyrus
P.Grenf. 1.31; CAPIInv. 767.	Repayment of loan to a <i>thiasos</i> .	Pathyris.	101/100 BC.	Papyrus
I. Delta I 1036	Dedication of dining room to royal couple from a <i>thiasos</i> .	Momemphis.	209-204 BC.	Inscription

Sources are arranged from the north to south of Egypt that refers to the wide spread of cult associations at every *polis* in Græco -Roman Egypt. They date back the period from the third century BC to the second century AD. Most of sources are inscriptions as dedications by the associations under the name of a deity. While papyri documents are very significance to reflect a day by day working of these cultic associations. Papyri record the associations' bylaws and membership's lists with periodically dues and payments of fines in cases of violations. Also, Ostrakon evidences are existed to reveal some daily process of these cult associations.

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