

MEETING AT HOME

GRECO-ROMAN ASSOCIATIONS AND PAULINE COMMUNITIES

The association which Šamūmānu established/hosted in his house.
‘Now I have set up our dining area for you;
if I drive you out from my house the fifty silver (shekels) I will pay’.

With these words, a leader of a *marzēah* (“banqueting society”) from Ugarit (CAT 3.9; ca. 1200 BCE)¹ offered a part of his house to an association for its meetings. Apparently the otherwise unknown association had to pay for it. In the following paragraph of the document we learn that the mentioned fifty shekels were later on given by the *marzēah* to Šamūmānu. The nature of the room and its use is not known for certain, but it was most likely destined for communal banquets of the association. Since Šamūmānu was the founder(?) and leader of the *marzēah* he was in control of their meeting place and presumably lived in other parts of the building or in another house². This document from Ugarit is probably the oldest preserved example of an association meeting in a house of one of its members.

Various ways of hosting a *thiasos* (“society”) or *collegium* (“association”) in a house developed in the Mediterranean world, five different forms of which this essay will consider in some detail. This will lead us to a set of questions resulting from the inquiries into the material from clubs and *collegia*. The focus in the third and final part will be on Pauline communities meeting in homes in order to assess their structures and practices.

1. For text and commentary see J.L. McLAUGHLIN, *The Marzēah in the Prophetic Literature: References and Allusions in Light of the Extra-Biblical Evidence* (VTSup, 86), Leiden – Boston, MA – Köln, Brill, 2001, pp. 20-24; L. MIRALLES MACIÁ, *Marzeah y thiasos. Una institución convivial en el Oriente Próximo Antiguo y el Mediterráneo* (‘Ilu. Revista de Ciencias de las Religiones, 20), Madrid, University Complutense, 2007, pp. 64-65; 271-272.

2. This was by no means the only way for a *marzēah* in Ugarit to find a place for its meetings. According to RS 15.70 the “men of the *marzēah* of Šatrana” possessed their own house (McLAUGHLIN, *Marzēah* [n. 1], pp. 15-16), others met in rooms attached to temples.

I. DOMESTIC SPACE FOR GRECO-ROMAN ASSOCIATIONS

1. *Rooms for Associations*a) *The Synagogue at Stobi*

A striking parallel to the *marzēaḥ* from Ugarit can be found in a second or third century CE inscription from Stobi in Macedonia³. Claudius Tiberius Polycharmos, father of the synagogue of the Judeans,

in fulfilment of a vow (donated) the rooms to the holy place and the *triclinium* with the *tetrastoon* from my household funds, not touching the sacred monies at all; but the control and ownership of all the upper rooms is to be held by me, Cl(audius) Tiberius Polycharmos, and my heirs for their remaining life (*IJO* I Mac 1 = *GRA* I 73 = *ASSB* 187, ll. 9-24; my translation).

This much disputed inscription⁴ points to a similar situation as that found in Ugarit, especially with its legal intentions. Several aspects of Polycharmos' statement are particularly relevant for our discussion.

We begin with *patronage and endowments*. The Stobi inscription is just one of several examples of endowments to synagogues and is typical for the funding of Greco-Roman associations. The donation of a building was one way to support an association and generally a characteristic form of Greco-Roman patronage throughout the centuries. One point of discussion concerning the Stobi-Inscription is also debated as regards similar forms of benefaction: Alongside Polycharmos sponsoring the synagogue as a patron, did he also hold an office in the community? In the text he calls himself "father of the synagogue in Stobi" (ll. 4-5: ὁ πατήρ τῆς ἐν Στόβοις συναγωγῆς), "synagogue" here indicating the community, not the building⁵. As regards πατήρ ("father") a clear decision is not so easy: It could imply that Polycharmos had a leading function in the community or it could be just an honorific designation for a generous patron. Parallels from associations show that both meanings were possible⁶, although the

3. On the date see the summarizing argumentation in D. NOY – A. PANAYOTOV – H. BLOEDHORN, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis. I: Eastern Europe* (TSAJ, 101), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2004 (= *IJO* I), pp. 70-71, which represents the current consensus.

4. For a bibliography see J.S. KLOPPENBORG – R.S. ASCOUGH, *Greco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations, and Commentary. I: Attica, Central Greece, Macedonia, Thrace* (BZNT, 181), Berlin – New York, de Gruyter, 2011 (= *GRA* I), p. 345.

5. See also *IJO* I Mac 3 and 4.

6. See esp. P.A. HARLAND, *Familial Dimensions of Group Identity (II): "Mothers" and "Fathers" in Associations and Synagogues of the Greek World*, in *JSJ* 38 (2007) 57-79, p. 61.

use for only honorific purposes was rather seldom. Thus, it would be wise to regard Polycharmos both as an esteemed member of the Judean community in Stobi and also as a functionary⁷. His devotion to Ἰουδαϊσμός (“Judean custom”) could also indicate that he fulfilled certain duties within the Judean community. But he was a rich benefactor too. The house, of which he gave parts to the community, seemed to be rather large, probably “a middle or upper middle class house, possibly even a villa”⁸.

With regard to the *legal situation*, the inscription does not describe the act of donation in a strict sense. Instead it is a clarification of the property situation. The construction of the clause with μέν – δέ makes it sufficiently plain that Polycharmos on the one hand (μέν) gave parts of his house to the community, but on the other hand (δέ) reserved the upper rooms for himself. A later mentioned fine of 250.000 drachmae for violation of these provisions, which is not only incredibly high but should also be paid to the patriarch in Judea, leaves no room for other interpretations of the donation by whomever. This gives rise to some suspicion: Had there been any attempts by the community to acquire more rooms⁹? Or had Polycharmos learned from negative examples of similar donations of rooms? Or, to take a more positive perspective, perhaps the Judean community was growing due to the economic rise of Stobi, so that sooner or later they would need more space¹⁰? And of course: Even being “father of the synagogue” seemed to be no guarantee that his authority would keep people’s hands from the upper floor, so that Polycharmos apparently felt compelled to state the terms and conditions of his endowment in this inscription, especially in “in ensuring his full ownership of the second floor and in preserving it as private property”¹¹.

There is also a clear distinction between *private and non-private space*, since Polycharmos drew a distinct line between his rooms and those of the

7. See *ibid.*, p. 78.

8. W. POEHLMAN, *The Polycharmos Inscription and Synagogue I at Stobi*, in B. ALEKSOVA – J. WISEMAN (eds.), *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi 3*, Titov Veles, Macedonian Review Editions, 1981, 235-248, p. 238.

9. The rebuilding of the synagogue in III/IV CE did not take care of Polycharmos’ specifications, but this could also be due to extinction of his family.

10. The enumeration of the consigned rooms could point to a probable misunderstanding: “The rooms to/for the holy place and the *triclinium* with the *tetrastoa*”. Although this might not have been as exact as one would wish today, local people would have had known which rooms were meant. Unfortunately the excavations of synagogue I in Stobi, in which the column and other plaques had been placed originally, delivered no specific hints on the *triclinium*, the “holy place” and other rooms. Only the *tetrastoa* was perhaps found; see E. HABAS, *The Dedication of Polycharmos from Stobi: Problems of Dating and Interpretation*, in *JQR* 92 (2001) 41-78, p. 49.

11. See esp. HABAS, *Dedication* (n. 10), p. 70.

Judean association¹². Although he presents himself as a devout adherent by pointing to the vow he fulfilled¹³ and his conduct in Ἰουδαϊσμός¹⁴, he reserves the upper part of the house for himself. In the benefactor's perspective there should be a clear distinction between private and public, between household and association. That this was also marked by separate entrances to the two stories, is not stated, but there could have been an outside staircase or one from the *atrium* leading to the upper rooms. It is also possible that Polycharmos had another house, maybe outside of the city, where he spent most of his time. In fact the inscription does not say at all that Polycharmos himself or someone from his family was living in those rooms. He could have used the space for storage or even have rented it out.

Finally, we note that the rooms of the synagogue are attached "to the *holy place*"¹⁵ or destined "for the (or: this) *holy place*"¹⁶, depending on how one translates the dative τῷ ἁγίῳ τόπῳ. Moreover the sentence has no verb¹⁷: If we add προσέθετο "attach", this would imply that there had been an earlier community room in the same or a neighbouring house, so that the Polycharmos' donation was only an enlargement of the synagogue¹⁸. If we add ἐχαρίσατο ("donate"), we could get the impression

12. For the interpretation of οἴκοι as "rooms" or "chambers" rather than "houses" see e.g. *ibid.*, p. 48.

13. The formula is of course typical for donations to gods and/or cultic associations. *IJO* I Mac 3 and 4 mention the same vow and another by Polycharmos.

14. I will not go into details about the discussion on Ἰουδαϊσμός and its meaning in this document from the II/III CE; see e.g. S.J.D. COHEN, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Hellenistic Culture and Society, 31), Berkeley, CA – Los Angeles, CA – London, University of California Press, 1999, *passim* (p. 99 on the Stobi-Inscription); F. AVEMARIE, *Jüdische Diasporagemeinden in der Antike: Ihr Selbstverständnis im Spiegel der Inschriften*, in U.H.J. KÖRTNER (ed.), *Kirche – Christus – Kerygma: Profil und Identität evangelischer Kirche(n)*, Neukirchen-Vluyn, Neukirchener, 2009, 21–61, pp. 30–31; S. MASON, *Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History*, in *JSJ* 38 (2007) 457–512, pp. 477–479 (whose interpretation goes in this case in a wrong direction); S. SCHWARTZ, *How Many Judaism Were There? A Critique of Neusner and Smith on Definition and Mason and Boyarin on Categorization*, in *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 2 (2011) 208–238, pp. 225–227.

15. E.g. *IJO* I 64; A. RUNESSON – D.D. BINDER – B. OLSSON, *The Ancient Synagogue from Its Origins to 200 CE: A Source Book* (Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity, 72), Leiden, Brill, 2008, p. 241. M. HENGEL, *Die Synagogeninschrift von Stobi*, in *Id., Judaica et Hellenistica: Kleine Schriften I* (WUNT, 90), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 1996, 91–130, p. 105, dismisses the possibility that rooms were attached to an already existing building too easily. On the label "holy place" for a synagogue see M. GOODMAN, *Sacred Space in Diaspora Judaism*, in B. ISAAC – A. OPPENHEIMER (eds.), *Studies on the Jewish Diaspora in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods* (Te'uda, 12), Tel-Aviv, Ramot Publishing, 1996, 1–16, p. 8.

16. E.g. HABAS, *Dedication* (n. 10), p. 45; *GRA* I, p. 342.

17. See HABAS, *Dedication* (n. 10), p. 48, for various proposals.

18. This would fit well with the process reconstructed by B.S. BILLINGS, *From House Church to Tenement Church: Domestic Space and the Development of Early Urban Christianity – The Example of Ephesus*, in *JTS* 62 (2011) 541–569, p. 569.

that it was Polycharmos' gift that provided the Judean association with the initial location for their meetings. But even then it is more probable that the synagogue of the Judeans as an association already existed before Polycharmos' endowment.

This inscription leaves us with a lot of questions, which should make us cautious to use it as a model for meetings of associations in a home. It is clear, however, that donations of domestic space did not have to consist of whole houses, but could also comprise a couple of rooms, and that a co-existence of association-rooms and private rooms in the same building was possible. In addition, on the one hand, giving all or parts of the home to the community was a way to acquire or to approve honours, while on the other hand a donation of rooms did not necessarily imply that the donor had the absolute control over the association. Finally, such donations had legal dimensions that could give them the appearance of formal contracts.

b) *The House of Furius Aptus in Ephesos*

A second case of an association meeting in "private" space can be found among the apartments in the terrace houses in Ephesos. In terrace house II, apartment 6, structures very similar to clubhouses were found: In the middle of the second century CE a large banquet hall with an apse, a smaller *triclinium* and two additional rooms were added to an already existing apartment (see AGRW B4). These rooms still show traces of Dionysiac decoration. In the peristyle yard (room 31a) an inscription reads "Dionysos Oreios Bakchios πρὸ πόλεως, his priest Gaios Flavios Furius Aptos" (*IEph* 1267)¹⁹. Furius Aptus was most likely the owner of the house, since the inscription had a prominent place in the centre of the yard and belonged to a now lost statue or bust of him. Aptus' family was very prominent in Ephesos²⁰ and his function as a priest in the Dionysian mysteries fits well with his political position in the city²¹.

19. The cult for Dionysos is reported in this inscription to have taken place πρὸ πόλεως (see also *IEph* 275.1595; Demeter and Dionysos Phleous). If this is translated "before the city" it corresponds to the well-documented worship of Dionysos in groves and gardens. If πρὸ πόλεως means "for the city", this would point to a more public function of the association in Ephesos. On the use of πρὸ πόλεως in other association inscriptions see *GRA* I, p. 384.

20. His son became senator and his ancestors had been *asiarchs*; see E. RATHMAYR, *Das Haus des Ritters C. Flavius Furius Aptus: Beobachtungen zur Einflussnahme von Hausbesitzern an Architektur und Ausstattung in der Wohneinheit 6 des Hanghauses 2 in Ephesos*, in *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 59 (2009) 307-336, pp. 307-311.

21. *IEph* II 502; IV 1099 (1) and (2). He was as *alytarches* responsible for the order during games, but perhaps he had even more important offices in the city, of which we have no information; see RATHMAYR, *Haus* (n. 20), p. 311.

The inscriptions together with the reconstruction of the apartment suggest that Furius Aptus was not only the leader of the Dionysiac association, but acted also as their host²². The apartment, which had its entrance at the main street (“Kuretenstraße”), was dedicated to the cult of Dionysos and Aphrodite. The construction of special installations does not exclude that the owner still used it for his own purposes²³. As a host and likely also leader of the association he was honoured by the members with a statue in the most public place of their rooms, presumably along with a statue of Dionysos.

c) *Mithraic Installations in Ostia*

Another instance of the establishment of dedicated cultic associations in “private” houses are the Mithraic assembly rooms in Ostia. Several of them were established in the basements of residential buildings, which were probably still in use by households²⁴. The two *mithraea* in the Imperial palace of Ostia, one in the Planta Pendis and another one in Pareti Dipinte, were all part of domestic environments. We can therefore assume with moderate certainty that they were provided by patrons, i.e. the Roman Emperor or other owners of those houses. Due to the mythos and ritual of Mithras those shrines were built into hidden and dark places, “shielded from the eyes of outsiders by the position of the entrance”²⁵.

There are a number of conclusions we can draw from this brief overview of the giving of private domestic space to association meetings.

22. Hosting elitist collegia of priests was quite common in Roman tradition; see J. RÜPKE, *Collegia sacerdotum: Religiöse Vereine in der Oberschicht*, in U. EGELHAAF-GAISER – A. SCHÄFER (eds.), *Religiöse Vereine in der römischen Antike* (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum, 13), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2002, 41–67, pp. 54–56. Tacitus mentions groups of *cultores Augusti* convening in *modum collegiorum* (Ann. 1,73).

23. See the discussion by H. THÜR, in Id. – E. RATHMAYR (eds.), *Hanghaus 2 in Ephesos – Die Wohneinheit 6: Baubefund, Ausstattung, Funde, Textband 2* (Forschungen in Ephesos, VIII/9), Wien, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2014, 849–853.

24. See J.T. BAKKER, *Living and Working with the Gods: Studies of Evidence for Private Religion and Its Material Environment in the City of Ostia (100 – 500 AD)* (Dutch Monographs on Ancient History and Archaeology, 12), Amsterdam, Gieben, 1994, pp. 111–112; L.M. WHITE, *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture*. Vol. I: *Building God’s House in the Roman World: Architectural Adaptation among Pagans, Jews and Christians* (HTS 42,1), Valley Forge, PA, Trinity Press International, 1996, p. 48; L.M. WHITE, *The Changing Face of Mithraism at Ostia: Archaeology, Art, and the Urban Landscape*, in D.L. BALCH – A. WEISSENRIEDER (eds.), *Contested Spaces: Houses and Temples in Roman Antiquity and the New Testament* (WUNT, 285), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2012, 435–492, pp. 444, 486–487; D. RHODE, *Zwischen Individuum und Stadtgemeinde: Die Integration von Collegia in Hafenstädten* (Studien zur Alten Geschichte, 15), Mainz, Verlag Antike, 2012, pp. 250–261.

25. BAKKER, *Living* (n. 24), p. 114. Similar installations to block views and accesses were part of the adaptations in Furius Aptus’ house in Ephesos.

First, leaving parts of a house to an association comprised benefits as well as risks for the owner. In most cases the benefactor was the natural leader of the association in his home, at least a distinguished member with a high and honourable status. Yet, ceding parts of a house could involve legal questions and posed the risk of misuse and/or further demands by the association. The association likewise had some benefits, but also considerable disadvantages: First, they were not constrained to finance their own building, though we do not know if they were obliged to fund maintenance and repairs of the rooms provided. Coming together in a still functioning domestic space gave them some “privacy”, maybe also “exclusivity”, which could have been a unique feature in competition with other associations. At the same time, space and the construction or arrangement of rooms were probably not at their disposal. They had to accept the restrictions of the owner and were at his mercy. This could be a disadvantage not only for the communal life but also in comparison to rival *thiasoi* and *collegia*.

2. Transformations of Private Houses into “Clubhouses”

Examples for transformations of residential buildings into “clubhouses” can be found in Dura-Europos and Ephesos²⁶. Within the archaeological remains in Dura-Europos at least four examples of structures from the third century CE have been found which had been transformed from private residences into meeting places for associations²⁷. An association of scribes turned two houses into their clubhouse, a group of devotees to Mithras converted a *domus* into a Mithraeum, Christ-believers built a small church (*domus ecclesiae*), and the association of Judeans their synagogue²⁸. In no case do we have any record that changes to private residences were preceded by an endowment of parts of the house. It is thus probable that these associations simply bought domestic residences out of their funds²⁹.

26. See also P. RICHARDSON, *Building “an Association (Synodos)... and a Place of Their Own”*, in R.N. LONGENECKER (ed.), *Community Formation in the Early Church and in the Church Today*, Peabody, MA, Hendrickson, 2002, 36-56 (also in P. RICHARDSON, *Building Jewish in the Roman East*, Waco, TX, Baylor, 2004, 187-205), for examples from Priene, Delos and Pompeii.

27. See for a comprehensive overview WHITE, *Social Origins* I (n. 24), pp. 42-43.

28. See *ibid.*, pp. 40, 74-77; L.M. WHITE, *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture*. Vol. II: *Texts and Monuments for the Christian domus ecclesiae in Its Environment* (HTS, 42/2), Valley Forge, PA, Trinity Press International, 1997, pp. 261-293.

29. Within these new meeting places some rooms were maybe destined for functionaries, guests, or employees and slaves of the association. The earlier synagogue in Dura seemingly provided “residential dwellings for the community officials” (R. HACHLILI, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Diaspora* [Handbook of Oriental Studies, I/35], Leiden – Boston,

The same is true for the transformation of terrace house I in Ephesos (AGRW B5). In the first century CE a late Hellenistic house with a peristyle yard was converted into a *domus* with about 1400 m² of space. During the late second century this building was redecorated and developed into a magnificent clubhouse, used mainly for great banquets³⁰.

From such examples we can conclude that transforming a whole private house into a clubhouse was an easy way to acquire space for meetings and banquets. In many cases this would have been part of the expansion of an association, maybe sponsored by a benefactor³¹. The transformation process included some kind of reconstruction since domestic architecture did not match the needs of an association – its cultic purposes and communal requirements. Establishing a clubhouse in a former domestic building also meant that the association was closely connected to residential neighbours. A clear distinction between “non-public” and “semi-public” was apparently not necessary³².

3. Associations and Families

A different form of housing an association is the establishment of a “family-club” or *collegium domesticum*³³. We have several examples from all over the Mediterranean and through the centuries for such a practice.

MA – Köln, Brill, 1998, p. 45). See generally C.H. KRAELING, *The Synagogue* (Excavations at Dura-Europos, VIII/1), New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1956, pp. 26-33. This is also considered with regard to upper rooms in the clubhouse of Dionysiasts in Pergamon; H. SCHWARZER, *Vereinslokale im hellenistischen und römischen Pergamon*, in EGELHAAF-GAISER – SCHÄFER (eds.), *Religiöse Vereine in der römischen Antike* (n. 22), 221-260, p. 234; H. SCHWARZER, *Die Bukoloi in Pergamon: Ein dionysischer Kultverein im Spiegel der archäologischen und epigraphischen Zeugnisse*, in *Hephaistos* 24 (2006) 153-167, p. 154.

30. If the first *domus* was not yet a clubhouse but only later converted into one, which is also probable, we have here one case for a similar procedure as we find in Dura-Europos.

31. *OGIS* 326 (= *CIG* 3069; Teos, 146-133 BCE) is a posthumous honorary inscription for Kraton of Chalkedon, who donated the Attaleion and a house to the association of Attalists (II. 20-23).

32. This is also demonstrated by archaeological findings; see e.g. A. WALLACE-HADRILL, *Domus and Insulae in Rome: Families and Housefuls*, in D.L. BALCH – C. OSIEK (eds.), *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, Eerdmans, 2003, 3-18, who shows this for an *insula* in Rome.

33. J.S. KLOPPENBORG, *Greco-Roman Thiasoi, the Ekklēsia at Corinth, and Conflict Management*, in R. CAMERON – M.P. MILLER (eds.), *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians* (SBL Early Christianity and Its Literature, 5), Atlanta, GA, Society of Biblical Literature, 2011, 187-218, calls it “one of the major subtypes of association” (p. 193), naming an association of the household of Scribonia Caesaris (*CIL* VI 26032), the household *collegium* of Sergia Paullina, the Agripinilla inscription, and the association of Dionysios (p. 193 n. 18).

a) *The Collegium in Sergia Paullina's House*

In the early seventies of the twentieth century Marta Sordi pointed to several inscriptions mentioning a *collegium quod est in domo Sergiae Paullinae* ("association in the house of Sergia Paullina"; Rome, II CE)³⁴. Sordi argued that this collegium was in fact a house church, since Sergia Paullina was a member of the same family as the proconsul on Cyprus, whom Paul and Barnabas encountered during their first missionary journey (Acts 13,7-12)³⁵. As compelling as these considerations were, Sordi's speculations were rejected, and with good reason³⁶. There are no hints of a Christian disposition of this *collegium*, which instead had a clear pagan character.

This *collegium* and similar ones³⁷ provide us with significant information for our exploration of associations connected to homes and families. The *collegium* was attached to the household of Sergia Paullina. The formula for its designation is a striking parallel to the Pauline title of the community in Priscilla's and Aquila's house: ἡ κατ' οἶκον αὐτῶν ἐκκλησία ("the church in their house"; Rom 16,5)³⁸. Similar expressions are documented for other *collegia domestica*, too³⁹. The association consisted of members of the household, freedpersons, and slaves. The aristocratic master or mistress and her closer family were not members⁴⁰.

34. See esp. *CIL* VI 10260-10264, *CIL* IX 9148f. All inscriptions with pictures are accessible in the articles by M. BONFIOLI – S. PANCIERA: *Della cristianità del collegium quod est in domo Sergiae Paullinae*, in *Rendiconti* 44 (1971-1972) 185-201; In domo Sergiae Paullinae, *Nota Aggiuntiva*, in *Rendiconti* 45 (1972-1973) 133-138.

35. See e.g. M. SORDI, *The Christians and the Roman Empire*, London, Routledge 1994, pp. 185-186.

36. See e.g. P. LAMPE, *Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten* (WUNT, II/18), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 21989, p. 313 n. 42; WHITE, *Social Origins* I (n. 24), p. 47; É. REBILLARD, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity* (Cornell Studies in Classical Philology, 59), Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2009, pp. 42-43.

37. In Lydia (Saïttai area) a κολλήγιον φαιμιλίας of C. Julius Quadratus remembered the son of two slaves or freedpeople, who were apparently members of the family association (*TAM* V 71; 140/141 CE). See also the list of *collegia* in J.-P. WALTZING, *Étude historique sur les corporations professionnelles chez les Romains depuis les origines jusqu'à la chute de l'Empire d'Occident*, 4 vols., Louvain, Peeters, 1895-1900, I: pp. 263-264; IV: pp. 153-176. Many of these *collegia* were part of the Imperial household, but there is also a considerable number of epitaphs from family associations of other households. For a treatment of *collegia* providing burials in a *columbarium* see K. HASEGAWA, *The Familia Urbana during the Early Empire: A Study of Columbaria Inscriptions* (British Archaeological Reports International Series, 1440), Oxford, Archaeopress, 2005, pp. 81-88.

38. See e.g. W. LIEBENAM, *Zur Geschichte und Organisation des römischen Vereinswesens: Drei Untersuchungen*, Leipzig, Teubner, 1890, p. 272 n. 4.

39. See e.g. *CIL* VI 404: *collegium sanctissimum, quod constitit in praedis Larci Macedonis*; *CIL* XIII 1747: *collegium larum in domo Juliana*; BONFIOLI – PANCIERA, *Collegium* (n. 34), p. 196.

40. See HASEGAWA, *Familia Urbana* (n. 37), p. 83.

The inscriptions refer to a communal burial place of the *collegium*, a *columbarium*, which was especially important for members of lower classes⁴¹, since the ashes of the élites were not placed in such establishments. The *collegium domesticum* was thus primarily a way to organize a decent funeral for freedpersons, slaves and their children⁴². Apart from the standard reference “to the divine spirits” (*Dis Manibus*) the inscriptions of the *collegium* in Sergia Paullina’s house provide no clue to a specific religious orientation. Communal meals or other activities are not mentioned either, although cannot be excluded⁴³. The major contribution of Sergia Paullina was apparently to allow freedpersons and slaves, male and female, to gather as an association. Perhaps she provided them with a room for their meetings, too⁴⁴. Whether she or her ancestors also donated the *columbarium* is unclear, but probable⁴⁵. Members of such communities of slaves and freedpeople were bound together by their connection with this household and the wish for a decent funeral and commemoration. They were not out of the control of their master or mistress, who granted “a limited degree of solidarity and autonomy of slaves and freedmen ... a shared life between themselves, which did not involve aristocratic masters”⁴⁶.

41. See *ibid.*, pp. 84-86.

42. On the importance of *collegia* for burials see e.g. J.R. PATTERSON, *Patronage, collegia and Burial in Imperial Rome*, in S. BASSETT (ed.), *Death in Towns: Urban Responses to the Dying and the Dead, 100-1600*, Leicester – London – New York, University Press, 1992, 15-27; H. SIGISMUND-NIELSEN, *Clubs and Associations, Roman*, in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome I*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, 234-237, p. 235. This does not mean that burials were the only concern of these *collegia*; see J.S. KLOPPENBORG, *Collegia and Thiasoi: Issues in Function, Taxonomy and Membership*, in ID. – S.G. WILSON (eds.), *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, London, Routledge 1996, 16-30, pp. 20-23.

43. WHITE, *Social Origins I* (n. 24), p. 47, regards this *collegium* as an example how “diverse forms of private religious activity were able to adopt and adapt domestic architecture for cultic and social functions”. In this particular case this goes in my opinion far beyond the evidence. There is albeit one instance in the *columbarium* of the Abucii mentioning the donation of benches and tables, apparently for banquets (*CIL VI 8117*); see HASEGAWA, *Familia Urbana* (n. 37), p. 85.

44. I do not think that this was a permanent donation. It is more probable that the *collegium* received the possibility to meet in the atrium or another place in the house only occasionally.

45. See e.g. HASEGAWA, *Familia Urbana* (n. 37), pp. 86-88; S. SCHRUMPF, *Bestattung und Bestattungswesen im Römischen Reich: Ablauf, soziale Dimension und ökonomische Bedeutung der Totenfürsorge im lateinischen Westen*, Bonn, V&R unipress, 2006, pp. 146-147.

46. HASEGAWA, *Familia Urbana* (n. 37), p. 88.

b) *Agrippinilla and the Dionysiasts in Torre Nova*

A large crowd of Dionysiac initiates (*mystes*), who formed an association in Torre Nova (Italy) about 160-165 CE⁴⁷, was closely connected to the *familiae* of M. Gavius Squilla Gallicanus and his wife Pompeia Agrippinilla⁴⁸, who were honoured in a lengthy inscription (*IGUR* I 160)⁴⁹. McLean points to the family as the organizational model of this association⁵⁰. The leading functionaries were all members of the two families of Gavii and Pompeii, combined by marriage. The remaining people – 389 persons – came from the families, the household (freedpeople and slaves), the circle of friends and business associates. Greek names refer to the status of freedpeople or slaves, not to a Greek or Asian origin⁵¹. Additionally, about a quarter of the members were women, some of them holding high offices. This fits well with the structure of other Dionysiac associations⁵².

Remarkably, almost all names are *cognomina* or *praenomina*. In the early imperial period, *cognomen* became more important than *praenomen*, and the slaves were called by just one name, which was regularly Greek. Such use of names points to a distinctive domestic character of the cult association⁵³. The stele, with its ten columns of names, was probably

47. See for that date J. SCHEID, *Le Thiase du Metropolitan Museum (IGUR I,160)*, in *L'association Dionysiaque dans les sociétés anciennes* (Collection de l'École Française de Rome, 89), Rome, École Française, 1986, 275-290, p. 288. For a somewhat later dating see G. ALFÖLDY, *Gallicanus noster*, in *Städte, Eliten und Gesellschaft in der Gallia Cisalpina: Epigraphisch-historische Untersuchungen* (Heidelberger althistorische Beiträge und epigraphische Studien, 30), Stuttgart, Franz Steiner, 1999, 159-196, p. 179. B.H. MCLEAN, *The Agrippinilla Inscription: Religious Associations and Early Church Formation*, in Id. (ed.), *Origins and Method: Towards a New Understanding of Judaism and Christianity. Essays in Honour of John C. Hurd* (JSNTSup, 86), Sheffield, JSOT, 1993, 239-270, p. 239, dates it to 150 CE.

48. The association had been founded by M. Pompeius Macrinus, who is named Heros (I,1) and was either the leading priest (see ALFÖLDY, *Gallicanus* [n. 47], p. 174) or – more probably – already deceased (SCHEID, *Le Thiase* [n. 47], pp. 280-281); see also A.-F. JACCOTTET, *Choisir Dionysos: Les associations dionysiaques ou la face cachée du dionysisme*. Vol. I: *Texte*, Kilchberg, Akanthus, 2003, pp. 45-51.

49. MCLEAN's reconstruction differs from the one in *IGUR* 160; see *SEG* 43 (1993) 660. The Agrippinilla Inscription was published in 1933: A. VOGLIANO, *La grande iscrizione Bacchia del Metropolitan Museum*, in *American Journal of Archaeology* 37 (1933) 215-231; see also F. CUMONT, *La grande inscription Bacchique du Metropolitan Museum*, *ibid.*, 232-263. The most recent treatment of this inscription is JACCOTTET, *Choisir* I (n. 48), pp. 30-53.

50. MCLEAN, *Agrippinilla* (n. 47), pp. 247-249.

51. SCHEID, *Le Thiase* (n. 47), p. 288.

52. MCLEAN, *Agrippinilla* (n. 47), pp. 264-265.

53. The only two exceptions of this rule (III,18; X,10) support the conclusion that the cognomen of everybody else was either *Gavius* or *Pompeius*; see ALFÖLDY, *Gallicanus* (n. 47), p. 177 n. 67; JACCOTTET, *Choisir* I (n. 48), p. 37. M. EBNER, *Die Stadt als Lebensraum*

erected on a suburban estate of the *Gavii Gallicani*⁵⁴. In any case, this association was not open to the general public but restricted to those people with a connection to the household of Gallicanus and Agrippinilla. That said, since the list of names comprises 402 people in total⁵⁵ they did not meet in the house itself but took part in a Dionysiac procession on one of the estates, led by the inner circle of the family⁵⁶. This must have had some effect on local spectators and demonstrated the power of these families.

Typical for a household-based association is the participation of men and women, free people and slaves. In these associations offices seemed to be open for members of lower classes, although there were certainly some restrictions. The leading positions (priests and priestesses) were held by members of the families⁵⁷. How others acquired functions is not clear, but it was not likely by vote but by appointment at the hands of the *paterfamilias* Gallicanus⁵⁸. Receiving the office of a torch-bearer, cowherd or

der ersten Christen: Das Urchristentum in seiner Umwelt I (Grundrisse zum Neuen Testament, 1/1), Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012, p. 199, interprets the use of *cognomina* as a hint to an aristocratic descent of those members.

54. See VOGLIANO, *Iscrizione* (n. 49), pp. 217-218; ALFÖLDY, *Gallicanus* (n. 47), p. 173. One of the offices is that of a guardian of the sacred grave (col. 9 l. 38), which also points to the performance of the cult in the open air. A gathering of more than 400 people in the house would have been rather difficult.

55. Perhaps there were even more members, if McLEAN's assumption (*Agrippinilla* [n. 47], p. 262) that some women will not have been able to co-finance the statue and inscription is correct.

56. The list with its various groups probably points to the order during the procession; see already CUMONT, *Inscription* (n. 49), p. 233. The Villa of Mysteries in Pompeii with its Dionysiac frescoes gives an impression of the character of such processions; see, for example, J.R. CLARKE, *The Houses of Roman Italy 100 B.C. – A.D. 250: Ritual, Space, and Decoration*, Berkeley, CA – Los Angeles, CA – London, University of California Press, 1991, pp. 94-111.

57. See e.g. ALFÖLDY, *Gallicanus* (n. 47), p. 176; also H.-J. KLAUCK, *Hausgemeinde und Hauskirche im frühen Christentum* (SBS, 103), Stuttgart, Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1981, p. 91; H. CANKIK, *Haus, Schule, Gemeinde: Zur Organisation von "fremder Religion" in Rom (1.-3. Jh. n. Chr.)*, in H. CANKIK-LINDEMAIER (ed.), *Römische Religion im Kontext: Kulturelle Bedingungen religiöser Diskurse. Gesammelte Aufsätze I*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2008, 134-152, p. 139; JACCOTTET, *Choisir I* (n. 48), p. 41. Likewise it is not excluded that some members of orders below senatorial rank had higher cultic offices; see ALFÖLDY, *Gallicanus* (n. 47), pp. 176-177.

58. M. Gavius Squilla Gallicanus was *consul ordinarius* in 150 CE, Proconsul of Asia (ca. 165 CE), and member of the *consilium* of Marcus Aurelius (ca. 177 CE). Pompeia Agrippinilla's brother was probably M. Pompeius Macrinus Theophanes (*cos. ord.* in 164 CE); see on that and different reconstructions ALFÖLDY, *Gallicanus* (n. 47), pp. 173-178. McLEAN, *Agrippinilla* (n. 47), p. 239 (followed by EBNER, *Stadt* [n. 53], p. 199), confuses M. Gaius Squilla Gallicanus, whose roots were in Verona, with the origin of Agrippinilla's ancestors from Lesbos. Thus, it is not probable that the Dionysos-cult of this household was imported from Lesbos and a way to integrate people from Asia Minor into Roman society (*pace* EBNER, *Stadt*, p. 200).

acolyte (“liturgical assistant”) may have functioned as acknowledgement of services or as response to a favour. The hierarchy of the house was reduplicated in the association⁵⁹, but was partly watered down by several promotions⁶⁰. Such household based organizations could be used to bind freedpeople, slaves, and other associates to the family⁶¹.

c) *Dionysios and His Association in Philadelphia*

Probably the most famous example of an association in a family home or closely connected to a household is that of Dionysios in Philadelphia (*LSAM* 20 = *SIG*³ 985; Lydia; II/I BCE). The lengthy and elaborate inscription informs us, on the one hand, about the establishment of an association and its dedication to several gods and, on the other hand, about the rules for its members and their vows. Dionysios, an otherwise unknown man from Philadelphia, narrates that he received the ordinances for this association from Zeus Eumenes in his sleep (l. 3 καθ’ ὕπνον). As the owner of the house (l. 5), the patron and leader of the community, he provides access (l. 3 πρόσδοον [reconstructed]) to “men and women, free people and slaves” (ἀνδράσι καὶ γυναῖξιν ἐλευθέροις καὶ οἰκέταις ll. 5-6.15-16). Whereas in the beginning Dionysios speaks of his own house (l. 5), in the following it is sufficient to call it “this house” (ll. 16.23.32.52). In my view, the meaning of οἶκος in the inscription is typical for Greek usage: It means both “household” and “building”⁶².

It is not helpful to separate these two meanings since ancient readers as well as Dionysios himself implied both. On the one hand, Dionysios provides access to a building. In accordance with non-public religiosity in homes one would think primarily of a courtyard with cultic installations⁶³, but it is also possible that a special room was used for the worship of at least fifteen gods. On the other hand, people gathering in Dionysios’

59. It may have been displayed also in the order of names for one office; see ALFÖLDY, *Gallicanus* (n. 47), pp. 177-178.

60. See also S.J. CHESTER, *Conversion at Corinth: Perspectives on Conversion in Paul's Theology and the Corinthian Church*, London – New York, T & T Clark, 2003, p. 239.

61. See KLOPPENBORG, *Collegia* (n. 42), p. 23.

62. It does not mean “shrine” in this context; see S.C. BARTON – G.H.R. HORSLEY, *A Hellenistic Cult Group and the New Testament Churches*, in *JAC* 24 (1981) 7-41, p. 15. I also do not believe that οἶκος is used in the sense of “guild, association” (so *ibid.*, pp. 15-16), which is rather seldom (see e.g. *ITomis* 60; G. MENDEL, *Inscriptions de Bithynie*, in *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 25 [1901] 5-92, no. 184; F. POLAND, *Geschichte des griechischen Vereinswesens*, Leipzig, Teubner, 1909, p. 114).

63. See S.K. STOWERS, *A Cult from Philadelphia: Oikos Religion or Cultic Association?*, in A.J. MALHERBE (ed.), *The Early Church in Its Context* (NovTSup, 90), Leiden – Boston, MA – Köln, Brill, 1998, 287-301, p. 293.

house became, to some extent, a part of his household or were incorporated into it: They submit to the household-code, which he, as the owner and appointee by Zeus, established. The egalitarian composition of the association – “men and women, free people, and slaves” – reproduces the groups in the household⁶⁴. But – and this is certainly the case especially in household-based associations – the participation is open to people from both sexes and different status groups⁶⁵. The formula “giving access into his house” indicates that people coming from the outside are permitted to become part of the worshipping group⁶⁶. What we find here is an expansion of domestic worship to communal non-public worship, the expansion of a household to a household-based association⁶⁷. All authority in this constellation is exclusively concentrated on the master (κύριος) of the house, Dionysios, who is commissioned by Zeus. The head of the household provides and controls⁶⁸.

In sum, we find that associations based on households had some peculiar features. They were comprised of men and women, although status differences could be retained. It depended on the purpose of the association and the intentions of its founders. The same may be said concerning the openness of such associations: Some seemed to be restricted to the members of the house, especially *collegia* with a concern for burials; others were probably open to appropriate outsiders. Household-based associations could also be part of the public display of a family and in some cases this may have been their main concern.

64. See *ibid.*, p. 294.

65. See, for example, BARTON – HORSLEY, *Hellenistic Cult Group* (n. 62), pp. 16-17; P.A. HARLAND, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society*, Minneapolis, MN Fortress, 2003, p. 31; pace STOWERS, *Cult* (n. 63), p. 301. Simultaneously certain distinctions between slaves and free people are retained; see on that e.g. K. NEUTEL, *Slaves Included? Sexual Regulations and Slave Participation in Two Ancient Religious Groups*, in S. HODKINSON – D. GEARY (eds.), *Slaves, Cults and Religions*, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2012, 133-148, pp. 136-139.

66. EBNER, *Stadt* (n. 53), p. 221, offers the quite speculative interpretation that Dionysios wanted to adapt the previous veneration of Agdistis to Greco-Roman religiosity in order to save his domestic cult by adding the Greco-Roman gods to the oriental Agdistis.

67. STOWERS therefore rightly emphasised the distinctive household-character of this community, which is clearly recognisable by some of the gods: Zeus and Hestia (II. 6-7), the Agathos Daimon (I. 10) and Agdistis, who is called “the very holy guardian and mistress of this house” (φύλακα καὶ οἰκοδέσποιναν τοῦδε τοῦ οἴκου, I. 52). The first three – Zeus being the most important one – are household gods, the more oriental Agdistis the patroness of the house.

68. This is also the case in Hellenistic associations for the heroes of a family: Epikteta (IG XII,3 330; Thera, late III/II BCE), Diomedon (SIG³ 1106; Kos, late IV-early III BCE) and Poseidonius (SIG³ 1044; Halikarnassos, early III BCE). These family-associations met probably not at home but in a heroön.

4. *Establishing a New Cult in a Domestic Context*

It is quite reasonable that foreigners who wanted to maintain their ancestral cults fulfilled their religious duties in their homes. Even slaves were most likely allowed to worship a small figurine of their patron deity. If several people of the same origin and religious interest got together they probably formed an association, e.g. a synagogue of Judeans, a *koinon* ("association") of Berytians or a *societas* ("society") of Greek hymn singers⁶⁹. Travel and tourism were other ways to spread cults to another place. Famous places with impressive temples could be centres for the dissemination of their affiliated cults.

Two prominent cases of establishing a foreign cult in a household will be discussed in the following paragraph: the founding of Sarapieion A on Delos (*IG* XI,4 1299) and the installation of the Sarapis and Isis-cult in Opus near Thessaloniki (*IG* X/2.1 255). That both texts come from groups associated with Sarapis should not come as a surprise: The cults for the Egyptian gods were spread all over the Greco-Roman world since early Hellenistic times and gained public recognition in many places.

a) *Delos: Transfer, Establishment, and Defence of the Sarapis Cult*

The story about the transfer of the Sarapis cult to Delos, the founding of a temple and subsequent legal affairs is described in a long inscription, which was found by Pierre Roussel in 1912 in the remains of Sarapieion A (*IG* XI,4 1299 = *RICIS* 202/0101)⁷⁰. In fact the story is told twice, once by Apollonios II, son of Demetrios and grandson of Apollonios I (ll. 1-28), and a second time by Maiistas, who composed a hymn on Sarapis in hexameters (ll. 29-94).

In brief outline, both accounts narrate the following: The first Apollonios, an Egyptian from the priestly class, came from Egypt to Delos. He brought with him a statue of Sarapis and continued the cultic practices. After his death, his son Demetrios carried on with the services for the

69. See on associations organized according to ethnic or geographical descent M. ÖHLER, *Ethnos und Identität: Landsmannschaftliche Vereinigungen, Synagogen und christliche Gemeinden*, in A. LYKKE – F.T. SCHIPPER (eds.), *Kult und Macht* (WUNT, II/319), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2011, 221-248.

70. I use the most recent edition of the text and a translation by I.S. MOYER, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 282-286. Translations can also be found e.g. in F.W. DANKER, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field*, St. Louis, MO, Clayton, 1982, pp. 186-188; B.H. MCLEAN, *The Place of Cult in Voluntary Associations and Christian Churches on Delos*, in KLOPPENBORG – WILSON (eds.), *Voluntary Associations* (n. 42), 186-225, pp. 206-208.

god. When he died he was honoured with a statue in the sanctuary. This had already been revealed to him in a dream during his lifetime. His son Apollonios II, who made the inscription according to “the god’s decree”, received an oracle from Sarapis that he should build a sanctuary. The place was indicated by the deity himself and the temple was constructed within six months. After that, Apollonios II had to appear in court, but he received, again in a dream, the assurance that everything would work out well. Accordingly, his adversaries were silenced by the god, and so the case was won.

Many details of the story will not be discussed here since they do not pertain to our topic, so we will concentrate on a few key points. First, the inscription was found in Sarapieion A, which is usually regarded as the first of three temples for the Egyptian gods on Delos. Sarapieion B, which seemed to be the most important sanctuary for several cult-associations⁷¹, and Sarapieion C, which was the largest of the three temples and an impressive building, stood in the vicinity of the rather small temple A. The usually assumed sequence of buildings is A – B – C, dating Sarapieion A to the turn of the second century BCE⁷². This was recently challenged by Ian Moyer, who opts convincingly for the possibility that the foundation of Sarapieion A of Apollonios II was perceived as a challenge by the other already existing sanctuaries of Sarapion and their supporters⁷³. We will see below how this would affect our interpretation of Apollonios’ story.

The main point of the text is not the establishment of the cult, the construction of the sanctuary, or the praise of Sarapis. What Apollonios II really wanted to emphasise was that he, as well as his father and grandfather, were from an Egyptian priestly class and always had a close connection to the deity⁷⁴. Accordingly, the inscription starts with the formula “according to the God’s command” (κατὰ πρόσταγμα τοῦ θεοῦ;

71. On cult associations for Sarapis see K. KLEIBL, *Kultgemeinschaften in Heiligtümern Gräco-Ägyptischer Götter in der hellenistischen und römischen Zeit*, in *Hephaistos* 24 (2006) 79-92; J. STEINHÄUER, *Die Kultgemeinschaften der ägyptischen Gottheiten in Griechenland*, in M. ÖHLER (ed.), *Aposteldekret und antikes Vereinswesen* (WUNT, 280), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2011, 185-205.

72. See e.g. H. ENGELMANN, *Die Delische Sarapisaretalogie* (Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie, 15), Meisenheim am Glan, Anton Hain, 1964, p. 23. B. DIGNAS, *Greek Priests of Sarapis?*, in EAD. – K. TRAMPEDACH (eds.), *Practitioners of the Divine: Greek Priests and Religious Officials from Homer to Heliodorus* (Hellenic Studies, 30), Washington, DC – Cambridge, Center for Hellenic Studies, 2008, 73-88, p. 75, dates it to 280-200 BCE; McLEAN, *Place* (n. 70), p. 205: c. 220 BCE.

73. MOYER, *Egypt* (n. 70), pp. 195-205: “It is entirely possible that they were founded at about the same time, or in an order different from that conventionally assumed” (p. 196).

74. See *ibid.*, pp. 161-164.

Il. 1-2), which is quite usual in documents of Sarapists⁷⁵. Later, it relates three appearances of Sarapis in dreams: One to Demetrios (Il. 45-46) and two to Apollonios II (Il. 13-18.25-26.49-59.76-80). Those dreams functioned not only as a means of communication between Sarapis and the priests but also as an authorization of everything that went on during the three generations: From the transfer of the cult statue from Memphis to Delos by Apollonios I to the vindication of the temple by Apollonios II⁷⁶.

The establishment of the sanctuary had a prologue of two generations. When Apollonios I came to Delos he continued the worship in his apartment. The inscription mentions “rented lodgings” (μισθωτοῖ Il. 15-16), apparently two or more rooms used for the worship of Sarapis and perhaps also other deities. It was a decidedly domestic cult, and its first adherents were probably members of Apollonios’ household. Within the hymnic reiteration of the story (l. 39) the poet speaks of a house (μελᾶθρον) in which Apollonios I had performed the rituals for Sarapis. When Apollonios II had received the instructions for the purchase of the place for the sanctuary and started to build it, the inscription states (Il. 63-65):

Temple and fragrant altars and sanctuary easily
grew, and in the hall all the seats and couches
for the god-summoned feasts were completed⁷⁷.

The poet uses again the word μελᾶθρον to denote the hall, which was the place for communal banquets of the adherents. And indeed a dining hall was found within Sarapieion A (room E), which previously had been part of a domestic insula⁷⁸. It is probable that this had been part of the household of Apollonios’ family. It was later incorporated into the sanctuary as a dining hall. This is even more probable since the inscription does not speak of the construction of the banquet room but only of its equipment⁷⁹.

75. *Ibid.*, pp. 166-168.

76. See DIGNAS, *Priests* (n. 72), pp. 81-82; MOYER, *Egypt* (n. 70), p. 202: “Sarapieion A was the only sanctuary to maintain a hereditary priesthood in accordance with principles derived from Egyptian tradition”.

77. ῥηϊδίως καὶ νεῖδς ἀέξετο καὶ θυόεντες | βωμοὶ καὶ τέμενος, τετέλεστο δὲ πάντα μελᾶθραι | ἔδρανά τε κλισμοὶ τε θεοκλήτους ἐπὶ δαίτας.

78. See WHITE, *Social Origins I* (n. 24), pp. 36-37; MCLEAN, *Place* (n. 70), p. 211; KLEIBL, *Kultgemeinschaften* (n. 71), p. 84; STEINHAEUER, *Kultgemeinschaften* (n. 71), p. 190.

79. The adaption of a domestic building for the establishment of an Iseion is assumed for Eretria on the island of Euboea; see STEINHAEUER, *Kultgemeinschaften* (n. 71), pp. 187-188. On the synagogue in Delos see the overview in RUNESSON – BINDER – OLSSON, *Synagogue* (n. 15), pp. 123-134. Pace WHITE, *Social Origins II* (n. 28), pp. 336-337, the original building of the Delian synagogue was not a domestic residence but a public hall.

Although the inscription is primarily concerned with the priestly family of Apollonios II, a community of worshippers is mentioned in some instances⁸⁰. In lines 42-43 we read about worshippers honouring Demetrios, the father of Apollonios II. They are called *Therapeutes* which was a common designation for Sarapists⁸¹. A contemporary dedication to Nike from the priest Apollonios II and “the collecting ones of the Therapeutes” (καὶ οἱ συμβαλλόμενοι τῶν θεραπειτῶν), found in Sarapieion A (IG XI,4 1290 = *RICIS* 202/0121), mentions a group of worshippers who provided the funding for a statue of Nike. What we can learn from these documents is that there was a more or less organized group of worshippers in Sarapieion A at least at the time of Apollonios II. In later times (about 180 BCE) it even had a treasurer and an offering receptacle (*thesaurus*)⁸². The sanctuary, however, had not been financed by the group of worshippers but by their leader Apollonios II, which is more common (see ll. 60-61). It was he who was afterwards sued by some adversaries (ll. 24-25.68).

The cult of Sarapis, controlled by the family of Apollonios, was apparently not open for public attendance or destined to attract a larger audience. The inscription itself was intended for the in-group, not for outsiders. It assured them of the legitimate cult and rituals performed by their leading priest. Hence the cult was a “private” initiative and became only gradually more public with the establishment of the temple⁸³. According to Moyer’s interpretation this was considered a threat by other cult-groups devoted to Sarapis. In this confrontation the leading priest not only won the juridical conflict, he regarded it as necessary to proclaim the unique advantage of Sarapieion A and its cultic association. The Egyptian heritage and authenticity of the rituals was guaranteed by his priestly lineage and constant contact with the god.

Under the *rule of Athens*, which began in 166 BCE, the Sarapis-cult on Delos had grown so popular that the Athenian government assumed

80. There are several groups mentioned in inscriptions from Sarapieion B (see DIGNAS, *Priests* [n. 72], p. 77).

81. IG XI,4 1217 = *RICIS* 202/0115 mentions a *synodos of Therapeutes*. See McLEAN, *Place* (n. 70), p. 223 n. 108 for other instances of this designation on the island of Delos; also STEINHAUER, *Kultgemeinschaften* (n. 71), pp. 190-191; P.A. HARLAND, <http://philipharland.com/greco-roman-associations/dedication-of-an-offering-receptacle-in-the-sarapis-sanctuary-late-iii-ii-bce/>. POLAND, *Vereinswesen* (n. 62), pp. 35-36, considered the designation not as a title for an association but more generally as describing religious worshippers.

82. IG XI,4 1247 = *RICIS* 202/0124; see DIGNAS, *Priests* (n. 72), p. 76.

83. A similar development from private worship to an official cult may have been the case at other places (e.g., Demetrias, Makra Kome); see M. BOMMAS, *Heiligtum und Mysterium: Griechenland und seine ägyptischen Gottheiten* (Zaberns Bildbände zur Archäologie), Mainz, Zabern, 2005, p. 69.

control over the Sarapis-cult on Delos. This was another threat for Sarapieion A (*RICIS* 202/0195): Demetrios II, most likely son of Apollonios II, faced hostility from other Delians and the Athenian prefect⁸⁴. This is recorded in an inscription in which he recounts his victory. Against accusations that he restricted the cult to his own private benefit he appealed to the Roman senate and received a *senatus consultum*. Demetrios II was allowed to keep his temple open and continue with the rituals for Sarapis⁸⁵. Hence the group of worshippers was in an ongoing competition with the much bigger and state controlled Sarapieion C.

To sum up: The cult of Sarapis was established in the household of Apollonios, the Egyptian priest, and was never open to public attendance. It remained within the exclusive limits of a “private” cult association even when the sanctuary had been built. It is thus conceivable that the worshipping community existed already at the time when it was still a domestic cult. The restrictions had, on the one hand, religious reasons: Only an Egyptian priest could perform the rites in a correct way. On the other hand, Apollonios and his descendants were able to control the cult and the small group of Therapeutes adhering to it⁸⁶.

b) *The Spread of the Egyptian Cult to Opus*

An inscription from Thessaloniki provides another example for the establishment of the cult for the Egyptian gods in a domestic environment⁸⁷. The inscription dates to the first century CE but reinscribes an earlier text from the third or second century BCE. It recounts the following story: Xenainetos, a citizen of Opus, which is located in the eastern part of Lokris in Greece, had a dream in the temple (ἐν οἴκῳ l. 3) of Sarapis in Thessaloniki⁸⁸. In this dream Sarapis told him that he should talk to Eurynomos, another resident of Opus. Eurynomos, who was a political opponent of Xenainetos, should receive (ὑποδέξασθαι l. 5) Sarapis and

84. See MOYER, *Egypt* (n. 70), pp. 204-205.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 205: “The descendants of Apollonios continued to tend their private sanctuary and maintain their priestly position as a matter of heritage”.

86. The benches in the dining hall offer seating for a maximum of 32 people, but see R.S. ASCOUGH’s contribution in this volume (pp. 547-565) for a number of 22-24 people.

87. The primary edition in *JG X/2.1* 255 = *RICIS* 113/0536 differs from the reconstruction by F. SOKOLOWSKI, *Propagation of the Cult of Sarapis and Isis in Greece*, in *GRBS* 15 (1974) 441-448, pp. 441-445, which was adopted in S. LLEWELYN – G.R.H. HORSLEY (eds.), *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* I, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1997, p. 6 and *GRA* I 77.

88. This is the most plausible explanation. More sceptical is C. STEIMLE, *Religion im römischen Thessaloniki: Sakraltopographie, Kult und Gesellschaft* 168 v.Chr. – 324 n. Chr. (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum, 47), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2008, p. 123.

Isis. This was also documented in a letter which Xenainetos found under his pillow⁸⁹. The crucial passage for our question reads as follows (Il. 17-22):

He (i.e., Eurynomos) received Sarapis and Isis. And after he provided hospitality in the house of Sosinike, she received them into the household gods. Sosinike offered the sacrifices for a certain time. And after her death Eunosta, the granddaughter of Sosibios, when she received the office, administered the mysteries of the gods among those also not initiated into the sacred rites.

The reception of the gods by Eurynomos, executed by Sosinike as an incorporation of Sarapis and Isis into her family's domestic worship, was the first step of the installation of the cult in Opus⁹⁰. Since more persons were involved, the circle of people worshipping Sarapis and Isis was wider than Sosinike's household: Eurynomos, who "converted" to the Sarapis cult⁹¹, Xenainetos, and probably some members of their families and households partook in the rituals. The house of Sosinike thus became the place for the worshipping of Sarapis and Isis in Opus and simultaneously the place for an association of worshippers. How "private" this was is not certain⁹². After the death of Sosinike a certain Eunosta performed the rituals⁹³. In this context the inscription mentions people who were "not initiated" (ἀμετό[χ]ους). Can this be perceived as an open house policy in order to generate more believers? Or does this not rather indicate that the cult was still performed in a "private" house, even though not all members of the household were initiated? This would imply that only at a later date did the cult become public in the sense of its own sanctuary.

89. On letters from heaven see J. SCHNEIDER, *Brief*, in *RAC* 2 (1954) 564-585, pp. 572-573, pointing to examples from 1500 BCE (Egypt) to the IV CE (Tiberianus); SOKOLOWSKI, *Propagation* (n. 87), p. 443.

90. The spread of the cult for the Egyptian gods from Thessaloniki to other places is well attested for Herakleia Lynku at the Via Egnatia and Stobi in the North; see M. BOMMAS, *Neue Heimat in der Fremde: Isis in Makedonien*, in *Antike Welt* 31 (2000) 617-624, p. 620; BOMMAS, *Heiligtum* (n. 83), p. 90. On relations between associations dedicated to the Egyptian gods see R.S. ASCOUGH, *Paul's Macedonian Associations: The Social Context of Philippians and 1 Thessalonians* (WUNT, II/161), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2003, pp. 95-98.

91. See R. MERKELBACH, *Zwei Texte aus dem Sarapeum zu Thessalonike*, in *ZPE* 10 (1973) 45-54, p. 54.

92. KLOPPENBORG – ASCOUGH point to "smaller, private associations devoted to Sarapis and/or Isis", which were certainly important for the spread of the cult (*GRA* I, p. 361).

93. Was the cult transferred to another house? Was Eunosta a relative of Sosinike or was the leadership taken over by someone not from the family? The inscription is too fragmentary to answer these questions.

The story from Delos and that from Opus provide two instances of the installation of a communal cult in a domestic setting. It seems that establishing the worship of a deity in a foreign environment was easily achieved when it began within a household. At the same time, there is a grey area between a distinctive domestic character of a cult and a more public form of communal worship by members and non-members of a household, comparable to an association. The formation of a household-based association could be intended already at the beginning (as in the case of Opus) or happen as a later development (as on Delos).

5. *Associations Changing Their Locations*

Richard Last and Sarah Rollens recently published a document that provides insight into another form of organizing accommodation for an association⁹⁴. *P.Tebt* III/2 894 from Tebtunis (114 BCE) is an account of financial records, rendering expenses (for meals, decorations, rituals, etc.), benefactions and fees. Within this document some references to members provide us with information that the rather modest association met in their houses/workshops: For example, fr. 1,r,3 l. 28 reads ἐν Ἀρμύσι[-ca.?-], referring thus to a meeting in Harmisius' place⁹⁵. This reference suggests the association had no place of their own, like many others in the Greco-Roman world. Instead of renting rooms in inns or at temples, which was perhaps too expensive, they got together in homes of members. How this was executed remains obscure: Did the association have a fixed order or did it rely on the generosity of some?

Perhaps these meetings in homes were altogether occasional invitations by well-off members as a kind of benefaction, whereas at the same time the association had a stable place elsewhere where they met. Such an example is seen in a dream recounted by Artemidor where a man is commanded by his fellow association members "Receive us as guests and provide us dinner" (*Oneirocritica* 5,82), which he declines for financial reasons. Although expressed in different terms, this is basically the same as the situation in the association in Tebtunis.

94. R. LAST – S.E. ROLLENS, *Accounting Practices in P.Tebt. III/2 894 and Pauline Groups*, in *Early Christianity* 5/4 (2014) 1-35.

95. See also fr. 2,r,1 l. 7: ἐν Μενοίτου, fr. 2,v,2 l. 45: ἐν τοῖς Ἀρπαλος, fr. 9,v,2 l. 15: ἐν Λυσανίου. Also mentioned ξένοι are not hosts but guests of the association (fr. 4,r l. 8; 5,v,2 l. 16). Another possibility mentioned is the renting of a room (fr. 10,r l. 4).

II. AN INTERIM CONCLUSION: ADVANTAGES AND RISKS OF USING DOMESTIC SPACE

If we consider these five possibilities for associations utilizing domestic space, we should ask, which of them would best match the specific situation of any given group, whether pagan, Judean or Christian. Did they rent rooms in residential buildings or did they transform a private house into a clubhouse? Was the group founded within a household or attached to it only occasionally? Was membership restricted to insiders of the household or was the incorporation of the association in domestic space only the first step on a way to establish a public cult?

All five possibilities imply specific patterns, benefits, and problems for either the owner of the house or the association. In those cases in which rooms were rented or donated, legal problems could arise. Also the distinction between non-public and semi-public space had to be drawn clearly. What also became apparent is that in those cases the owner of the building seemed to play a leading role in the association. If the clubhouse had been a former domestic building converted by the association, it can be asked if the former owner or his descendants had a prominent position in the community.

An association closely tied to a household – a *collegium domesticum* or a community of household-members and associates – had some peculiar features: Men and women and sometimes also free people and slaves had basically the same status, although with some specific restrictions. In the case that membership was open to outsiders, this would have opened up the boundaries of the household to the public, which were of course less strict in antiquity than in modern times. If the head of the household was a member of the association, he acted as benefactor, patron, and leading functionary. It might also be that the association functioned as a means to bind household members closer to the house and/or to demonstrate the strength of the household to outsiders. The presence of insiders of the household, who were not members of the association, was another possible challenge. Concerning the building itself, it became clear that facilities for meetings and banquets, but also for cultic proceedings, had to be provided by the head of the household. This most likely meant a multiple use of rooms like yards, *triclinia*, and other spaces.

The special case of cults implemented in households as a basis for their later popularization is especially intriguing. Along with the points mentioned for household-based associations, it is clear that the owner also acted as a host to the deity and its venerated.

III. PAULINE COMMUNITIES AS HOUSEHOLD-BASED ASSOCIATIONS?

Considering these results of our interpretations of the Greco-Roman material we can come to some preliminary thoughts about the domestic setting of Pauline communities. That Christ-believers in the first century used houses of their members as one possible location for their meetings is something like an *opinio communis* in New Testament scholarship. However, the monopoly of the thesis of “almost exclusively houses” as meeting places of Christ-believers has been rightly corrected in recent years⁹⁶. The textual evidence for an οἶκος as place of the ἐκκλησία is quite slim indeed: Rom 16,3-5 and 1 Cor 16,19 mention the community in the house of Prisca and Aquilla in Rome or in Ephesos. The formula ἡ κατ’ οἶκον ἐκκλησία (“the church in the house of”) supplemented by a personal pronoun is also found in the greeting of Philemon’s house-church (Phlm 2)⁹⁷. In Deutero-Pauline literature the phrase appears in Col 4,15 (the house-church in Nympha’s home) and in a variant in Acts 2,46; 5,42⁹⁸. A distributive meaning of κατὰ is rather unlikely; the preposition might best be understood as local. Moreover it is not at all secure that the reference to an οἶκος means a “house” in a narrower sense, because it could also be used for any kind of dwelling. We should therefore be cautious in finding too many references to house-churches in early Christian literature: Christ-believers could gather also in workshops, rented rooms, open space and so on. Nonetheless, meeting in a domestic environment was one way for Christ-believers to convene.

If we consider the five possible ways of associations meeting in domestic space considered above we can say with some certainty that neither the first nor the second form matches the New Testament evidence. We have no evidence that early Christ-believers rented or ceded rooms to the community⁹⁹.

96. See esp. E. ADAMS, *The Earliest Christian Meeting Places: Almost Exclusively Houses?* (LNTS, 450), London, Bloomsbury, 2013. The standard hypothesis is formulated by D.E. SMITH, *Hospitality, the House Church, and Early Christian Identity*, in M. KLINGHARDT – H. TAUSSIG (eds.), *Mahl und religiöse Identität im frühen Christentum* (TANZ, 56), Tübingen, Francke, 2012, 103-117, p. 103: “In the Pauline epistles, the house church is the default location for Christian gatherings”.

97. This later instance may be a sign that it was not only – if ever – Paul’s idea to install a community in the home of one or more members, since Colossae was – at least according to Colossians – not a genuine Pauline foundation.

98. See also Acts 20,20 (κατ’ οἴκου) and the mentions of houses in Acts 1,13; 2,2; 8,3; 9,11; 10,1-2; 11,12; 12,12-17; 16,15.40; 18,1-3.7-8; 20,7-12. For evidence from the II/III CE see *Martyrium Iustini et sociorum* 3; *Acts Paul* 3,5-7. 9; *Acts Pet.* 13-22; *Ps.-Clem., Recogn.* 4,2.6-7; 6,15; 8,36-38; see ADAMS, *Meeting Places* (n. 96), pp. 68-80.

99. The most probable case for a rented lodging might be the σχολή of Tyrannos (Acts 19,9); see on the state of discussion about this reference ADAMS, *Meeting Places* (n. 96), pp. 65-66.

The transformation of private residences into churches was a development that took place long after Paul during the late second and third centuries¹⁰⁰. Other possibilities match the evidence in Pauline literature better: Early communities of Christ-believers are comparable to associations closely tied to households, especially to those providing a home for cultic purposes, be it for local or foreign cults. This makes certain characteristics of Pauline communities quite understandable.

1. *Egalitarian Character*

“There is neither Judean nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female” (Gal 3,28; see also 1 Cor 12,13; Col 3,11) seems to reflect the core statement of equality in Pauline texts. Since it is stated twice it seems to be part of various communities’ practice too. In light of our findings it is not really surprising that Paul uses this saying. Having the household as its base implied a certain degree of equality in associations. This is not only the case in the association of Dionysios from Philadelphia but also in the instance of the worship of Sarapis and Isis in Opus, where the first leader was a woman, although the cult had been transferred to Opus by two men. We can also assume that a *collegium domesticum* reduced the importance of gender differentiation, and apparently this was also the same in the Dionysiac association in Torre Nova. Additionally, later developments show that when churches had such a standing in society they had enough money to finance their own buildings, it was accompanied by a policy that introduced restrictions on women as leaders. The more public the association of Christ-believers became, the more important were distinctions of gender and status, a trend already documented in the Pastorals¹⁰¹.

2. *Outsiders Inside the House*

Opening the home for an association could imply that the head of the household was in danger of losing control over who entered his house. In documents of associations this is not considered regularly, although

100. For later examples from apologetic and apocryphal literature see KLAUCK, *Hausgemeinde* (n. 57), pp. 69-77; WHITE, *Social Origins II* (n. 28), *passim*.

101. Paul of course did not only adjust himself to a social development, but it was theological insight going hand in hand with experience. His admonition to Philemon that he should treat Onesimos as a brother shows that it could also be the other way round: In Philemon’s household based *ekklesia*, status differences were not automatically overcome through belief in Christ. Paul’s intervention aimed to change this.

Dionysios of Philadelphia devotes most of his inscription to this problem; only those behaving in conformity with his rules were allowed to enter his house. We can be quite sure that the same maxim was valid in other associations, too.

Was the host of an association of Christ-believers obliged to accept almost everybody as a brother or sister? Actually, this seems to have been the case in most instances. A confession of faith and the ritual of baptism were probably all that was required in order to become a member of the community, regardless of the hosts' opinion. And even the decision about exclusion or reintegration of transgressors of communal rules was made by the assembly, not by the head of the household where they met (see e.g. 2 Cor 2,5-11). Generally, we can observe the following: Paul did not explicitly authorize hosts as community leaders and he never gives Aquila and Priscilla or Philemon any direct advice about how they should control the ἐκκλησία¹⁰². They might have acted as leading persons in analogy to hosts of associations (see below), but Paul sees no need to address them as such.

One additional aspect is worth noting: Accepting suspicious foreigners or people with low public respect at a communal meeting and banquet could be the cause for trouble with neighbours and fellow citizens of the *polis* ("city"). One might think of the treatment of Jason in Thessalonike (Acts 17,5-8): Although it is not explicitly stated that Jason hosted the whole community (and not only Paul and Silas), it is quite conceivable that an accusation of *stasis* ("riot") or un-Roman behaviour would reflect primarily on the host of the community.

3. Outsiders Attending the Assembly

Many associations entertained guests at their meetings¹⁰³, but especially those meeting at home had to face the fact that non-members were present in the house. Family-members and house-slaves who were not initiated were likely to watch proceedings of the meetings. The presence of people not involved was a rather natural thing, especially if the cult was incorporated into the religious practices of a household, as in the case of the worship of Sarapis and Isis in Opus.

102. This is different e.g. in the third Letter of John, if Diotrephes was indeed the head of the household, in which the Johannine community regularly met.

103. See e.g. *IDelos* 1520; *OGIS* 51; *PTebt* III/2 894. That this was probably a common practice is shown by corresponding prohibitions (*LSAM* 80, ll.23-24).

Meetings of Christ-believers were also frequented or – more probably – watched by outsiders. In 1 Cor 14,23-24 Paul points out that an outsider (ἰδιώτης) or unbeliever (ἄπιστος) coming into the assembly would be astonished by the whole ἐκκλησία singing in the spirit or addressed by the prophets. This could of course be applied to guests invited by members who should be evangelized. But it is very likely that, in the context of the household, cultic, ritual and communal practices were watched by non-believers – namely, passers-by, uninvited visitors¹⁰⁴, and members of the household still worshipping the traditional deities¹⁰⁵; the possibilities are manifold¹⁰⁶.

4. Benefactor, Patron and Leading Functionary

Acting as a host for an association was a special form of benefaction. Honour and thankfulness followed naturally. Together with this, the host and probably also other members of his household played an important role *for* the association as well as *in* the association.

The host was most likely the one representing the community within the wider environment. Paul's wording reflects this representative nature of the host, naming the communities after Priscilla and Aquila (1 Cor 16,19; Rom 16,5) or Philemon (Phlm 2)¹⁰⁷. Similarly, the *collegia domestica* were named after their hosts and the leading figures of former household associations, like Apollonios on Delos, represented the cultic community in court.

The host was especially important for the internal affairs of an association: Polycharmos, father of the synagogue; Apollonios or Agripinilla, both leading priests; Sosinike and Eunosta, leading priestesses of Sarapis and Isis as heads of the household; and of course Dionysios, host, law-maker, and exemplary member in one person. Along with the principal

104. See D.L. BALCH, *Roman Domestic Art and Early House Churches* (WUNT, 228), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2008, p. 43, who correctly points out that the differentiation between private and public in the Greco-Roman world was different from modern, Western standards.

105. The assumption that every member of a household had to follow the same gods as the *paterfamilias* cannot withstand the reality of domestic religiosity, which was much more diverse; *pace* R.W. GEHRING, *Hausgemeinde und Mission: Die Bedeutung antiker Häuser und Hausgemeinschaften – von Jesus bis Paulus* (Bibelwissenschaftliche Monographien, 9), Gießen – Basel, Brunnen, 2000, p. 485. Early Christian texts (Phlm; 1 Cor 7; Tertullian, *Ux.* 2.5.1) as well as material remains show that passages like Plutarch, *Mor.* 170D – a woman has to adopt the religious duties of her husband – are extreme positions.

106. The same would be true if meetings took place in workshops or gardens.

107. One could add Gaius (Rom 16,23) to this list if it is possible to understand him as host of Paul and the Corinthian community (and not as their guest).

right to determine every matter concerning his family and his house, the head of the household was entitled to do the same regarding the affairs of the association as long as they assembled in his home. Other functionaries and special circumstances could have watered this down. Paul's letter to Philemon is an example of actions in such conditions when he interferes in the relationship of Philemon and Onesimus. The apostle does not restrict his advice to Philemon only; the letter is instead addressed to the ἐκκλησία in Philemon's house (Phlm 2). But in general we can fairly assume that as long as a community was in the house of one member, this had direct influence on the power structure in such a community.

One additional factor comes into play here: Quite often the host was also the founder or at least one of the founders of an association. Again Dionysios from Philadelphia is a representative case, but we can also think of the establishment of the Sarapis cult on Delos, and perhaps also of the Mithraea in Ostia. In such cases the founder was also the host, a pattern we do not really find in the Pauline letters, because it is usually assumed that Paul himself, as a travelling missionary, never provided space for the ἐκκλησία.

There might be one exception, however, which, in the light of other texts, could be read as an indication of Paul's hospitality. The author of Luke-Acts thought that this was possible when he narrates that during his two-year-stay in Rome Paul "was welcoming all who came to him" (ἀπεδέχετο πάντας τοὺς εἰσπορευομένους πρὸς αὐτόν; Acts 28,30). This could be a reference to a community in Paul's apartment (μίσθωμα)¹⁰⁸, quite like the small group of worshippers of Sarapis coming together in the μισθωτοῖ or μελᾶθρον on Delos (*JG* XI,4 1299 ll. 15-16.39). In my view, it makes quite good sense to think not only of local Christ-believers as hosts for communities but to imagine Paul himself providing a place for a small but growing ἐκκλησία¹⁰⁹.

108. See LAMPE, *Die Stadtrömischen Christen* (n. 36), p. 64-65. On communities of Christ-believers in apartments and *insulae* see R. JEWETT, *Tenement Churches and Communal Meals in the Early Church: The Implications of a Form-Critical Analysis of 2 Thessalonians 3:10*, in *Biblical Research* 38 (1993) 23-43; BILLINGS, *House Church* (n. 18).

109. This would also fit well with Paul's representation as a self-sustaining teacher in 1 Thess. The differentiation from Cynic philosophers and other wandering teachers was not limited to daily needs but included Paul's and his fellow's accommodation. Another possible reference could be Gal 1,2 where Paul refers to "all the brothers" as co-authors of his letter. This is commonly interpreted as Paul's attempt to strengthen his position in the conflict with teachers in Galatia, but is it entirely impossible to assume that Paul was speaking not only of (fictive) co-authors but also (or primarily) of an assembly of Christ-believers coming together in his apartment or workshop in Ephesus?

5. *Providing Space and Facilities*

I do not want to go into details on the debate about which kind of accommodations Christ-believers could have used for their meetings¹¹⁰. In my view it is not possible to do more than speculate. We simply do not know if, for example, Stephanas was an owner of a villa¹¹¹ or a tenant of a workshop with a small living space¹¹². Examples from the world of associations seem to indicate that villas were the typical form of accommodation in a domestic context (e.g., Polycharmos, Furius Aptus, Dionysios, Agripinilla), but this may be due to the medium of the evidence: Inscriptions need a stable place to be set up, which of course was not the case with a rented apartment. Additionally, the production of a plaque cost some money and was not affordable for every association. However, it is explicitly stated that the Sarapis cult on Delos started in rented rooms (μισθωτοῖ). Likewise, we do not know in which kind of accommodation the worship in Opus began, since the mentioned οἰκία could mean everything from an apartment to a large peristyle house.

Only a few members of a Pauline community were wealthy enough that they were able to accommodate a considerable number of people in their home. This was also dependent on the form of meeting and communal meal: If they strived for a real banquet with couches and tables¹¹³, the group had to be either small or the place large enough to accommodate the community¹¹⁴. A meeting in a workshop or tenement was probably not destined for a banquet but for a more modest meal with people sitting on chairs or mats¹¹⁵. This is all the more probable for new groups:

110. See for important caveats in this respect D.N. SCHOWALTER, *Seeking Shelter in Roman Corinth: Archaeology and the Placement of Paul's Communities*, in S.J. FRIESEN – D.N. SCHOWALTER – J.C. WALTERS (eds.), *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society* (NovTSup, 134), Leiden – Boston, MA, Brill, 2010, 327-341; ADAMS, *Meeting Places* (n. 96), *passim*.

111. The hypothesis of the Corinthian community coming together in a villa was promoted by J. MURPHY-O'CONNOR, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology*, 3rd rev. ed., Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 2002, pp. 178-182.

112. See on that esp. D. HORRELL, *Domestic Space and Christian Meetings at Corinth: Imagining New Contexts and the Buildings East of the Theatre*, in *NTS* 50 (2004) 349-369.

113. Reclining is evidenced in, for example, Mark 2,15; Luke 7,36.37.49; 11,37, however, not explicitly in Paul.

114. The Corinthian shortcomings during meals were, in this case, probably caused by the architectural structure and the limitation of space: Only a few were able to lay on a couch, not everybody was able to catch every part of the meeting. The growth of the community did not go together with its spatial structures; see recently K. VÖSSING, *Das "Herrenmahl" und 1 Cor. 11 im Kontext antiker Gemeinschaftsmähler*, in *JAC* 54 (2011) 41-72.

115. See esp. 1 Cor 14,30; A. WEISSENRIEDER, *Contested Space in 1 Corinthians 11:17-33 and 14:30: Sitting or Reclining in Ancient Houses, in Associations and in the*

They had no facilities at all and perhaps had to start with a rather modest beginning. In this pattern a change of location in analogy with the association in Tebtunis is quite probable.

6. *Hosting the Cult*

A favourite location to establish the cult of a foreign deity was the house. Immigrants brought their deities with them and performed corresponding cultic practices in a domestic setting. If others wanted to partake in these cults they could do so as guests, thereby constituting a small and informal association. Establishing a community with functionaries and rules was, in most cases, the step out of the domestic realm into the public, but some communities, together with their hosts, tried to keep the cult in the privacy of a home. In the case of the Sarapis cult on Delos this seemed to be the case in the first place and only afterwards was it extended to a wider public.

Christ-believers in household-churches acted quite similarly: They incorporated the worship of Christ into their domestic religiosity, albeit banning every other cult¹¹⁶. Some of them assembled an ἐκκλησία, providing space not only for people but also for rituals, banquets, and teaching. This was part of the establishment of a community, which was at that time not strong enough to acquire special rooms, let alone houses. Apart from this argument, a theological one might be relevant. It is quite possible that Christ-believers during the first century CE didn't even think about acquiring a stable location at all. While reckoning on Christ's imminent return, an acquisition of a building would not have made much sense. In this regard assembling the ἐκκλησία in the home of one member was a logical choice. This was certainly not an innovation created by Christ-believers, let alone by Paul. It was an easy way to start a new cult, it had its benefits and challenges, and it was abandoned when it was no longer needed.

Markus ÖHLER

Space of ekklēsia, in D.L. BALCH – A. WEISSENRIEDER (eds.), *Contested Spaces: Houses and Temples in Roman Antiquity and the New Testament* (WUNT, 285), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2012, 59-107.

116. See M. ÖHLER, *Das ganze Haus: Antike Alltagsreligiosität und die Apostelgeschichte*, in ZNW 102 (2011) 201-234.