

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Annamária-Izabella Pazsint, *Private Association in the Pontic Greek Cities (6th century BC-3rd century AD)*, Peeters, Leuven - Paris - Bristol CT, 2022, 387 p.**

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The present work is based on the doctoral thesis of the author Annamária-Izabella Pazsint, translated and revised after the defence which took place in 2019, and represents a comprehensive study on the phenomenon of private associations in the Pontic cities from the 6th century BC to the 3rd century AD. It is a social history and prosopographic study, providing essential information on the development of associations from their emergence in this geographic area until their decline in the 3rd century AD. A. I. Pazsint employs a multidisciplinary approach, using archaeological, epigraphic, and literary evidence to conduct network analyses of interconnected members from various associations.

The work, comprising 387 pages, is structured into six chapters, along with an introduction, conclusions, glossary of terms, appendices, figures, and illustrations. The appendices contain two extensive catalogues: one listing all epigraphic sources used in the study, and another listing all association members present in the inscriptions, 1983 individuals in total. The figures and illustrations include a thematic map, a table showing the geographical distribution of terminology, statistical graphs on the geographical distribution of inscriptions and associations, the chronological distribution of inscriptions, their types based on the city, and the types of materials used.

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Annamária-Izabella Pázsint begins the work with an introduction that provides an overview of the research history up to the present, followed by the objectives she aims to achieve through this study.

The first chapter, “Terminology”, focuses on the variety of ancient and modern terminology used to name or represent associations in the Greek cities along the shores of the Black Sea, illustrating the specific semantic and lexical diversity within this geographic context. Complementing this chapter is the glossary at the end of the work, which includes definitions of terms designating associations, their members, or specific functions within them (priestly, secular, or roles related to games or competitions).

The second chapter, as indicated by its title, “Overview of the Sources”, provides a quantitative analysis of the vast array of sources examined in the author’s doctoral thesis. This chapter outlines the geographical and chronological distribution of inscriptions and associations, with the aim of identifying the evolution and flourishing of the phenomenon, which, in some cases, occurred under the Pax Romana. The primary sources are epigraphic, totalling 205, with 108 from the northern Black Sea region, followed by 90 from the western shores, and finally, 7 from the south. Additionally, literary and iconographic sources are presented. A few sentences outline the differences between associations and their members from one region to another, though these aspects are more fully developed in subsequent chapters.

In the next three chapters, the author provides a coherent narrative on the multitude of information related to the phenomenon of associations, examining each shore of the Black Sea individually, moving from local realities to regional contexts. Each chapter addresses a region, further divided city by city, with the aim of highlighting local attributes that contribute to a comprehensive view of associative life in Pontus. Where possible, the author clearly outlines the particularities of each association.

Thus, in the third chapter, “Private Associations on the Southern Shore of the Black Sea”, the author presents the forms that the associative phenomenon takes in the cities on the southern shore of the Black Sea, where it is weakly represented by a small amount of epigraphic material (7 inscriptions) from Amisus, Sinope, and Amastris. These inscriptions document different types of associations, mostly confined to a brief time frame, namely the 2nd–3rd centuries AD. However, in this area, the limited amount of archaeological research is a factor in the scarcity of materials. The

seven inscriptions are of mixed types: two are dedications, one is of unknown nature, one is honorary, and the rest are funerary.

The fourth chapter, *Private Associations on the Western Shore of the Black Sea*, is much more abundant than the previous one and describes the associations on the western shore, where both archaeological and epigraphic materials are plentiful (90 inscriptions). Most associations (70) are attested in Apollonia Pontica, Odessos, Dionysopolis, Bizone, Callatis, Tomis, and Histria. In this area, associations emerged early, in the 4th century BC, with a significant flourishing during the Roman era, ending in the 3rd century AD. Here, the cosmopolitan nature of the associations is evident, with mentions of origin as a criterion for integration (e.g., Οἶκος τῶν Ἀλεξανδρέων in Tomis, Σύνοδος Ἡρακλεωτῶν in Callatis), which is to be expected in major urban centers. In some cases, there is evidence of the secular continuity of certain associations, such as Ταυρεσταί in Histria, which maintained its activity from the 2nd century BC to the 2nd century AD. Some associations were centered around popular deities like Cybele, Demeter, Dionysos, and Poseidon, as well as lesser-known ones like Hecate, Isis, and Anahita. Associations devoted to the imperial cult or specific professions are also present.

The fifth chapter, *“Private Associations on the Northern Shore of the Black Sea”*, traces the development of associative life on the northern shore of the Black Sea, which has the most abundant epigraphic material (108 inscriptions and 37 associations) with items from Olbia, Chersonesos, Theodosia, Cimmericum, Panticapaeum, Myrmecium, Tanais, Phanagoria, Hermonassa, and Gorgippia. Here, the associative phenomenon developed according to the distinct needs of each polis: in a major port city like Gorgippia, associations oriented toward navigation arose (Θέασος ναυκλήρων), while in other poleis, inscriptions reveal that membership in certain associations offered deceased individuals the guarantee of modest funerary monuments (e.g., in Phanagoria: Θίασος περὶ ἱερέα τὸν δεῖνα). Meanwhile, in places like Tanais, there were associations dedicated to Theos Hypsistos (for example, Σύνοδος ἡ περὶ Θεὸν Ὑψιστον).

The final chapter, titled *“Parallel Lives”*, aims to explore the similarities and differences among the associations discussed in the previous chapters, focusing on members (their social and legal status, the involvement of women, children, and young people), the functioning of associations (associative offices, imitation of polis practices, finances, longevity and local

role, and local particularities of occupational associations). The chapter then continues with the identification of Pontic individuals (Ποντικοί) who are epigraphically attested in associations outside Pontic cities. Lastly, the author provides an overview of the decline of the associative phenomenon.

In conclusion, two main trajectories are outlined: one suggesting that the associative phenomenon in the private sphere of Pontic cities has a fragmented character influenced by the political, social, and economic evolution of the region, and the other indicating that this phenomenon played a marginal role compared to other regions of the Greek world.

This work results from research focused in two directions: first, to create a monograph of this geographic area by collecting all accessible epigraphic material and compiling a corpus, and second, to develop a database from the epigraphic information and use it for social network analysis. Thus, the methodology used in this study combines both traditional methods and modern approaches from other research fields. In this sense, Annamária-Izabella Pázsint's work represents a remarkable contribution to the study of private associations in Pontus, offering well-documented new perspectives on a social and cultural phenomenon that was marginal in this geographic area. The detailed analysis of the epigraphic material, combined with modern methodologies and an organized structure, provides a comprehensive and complex view of the internal dynamics of these associations, thus achieving the objectives stated in the introduction.