

## Cult associations on the northern shore of the Black Sea: three centuries of research

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**Abstract.** *The present article represents a survey of the literature concerning the cult associations from the northern shore of the Black Sea, from the early publications, to the most recent works. The endeavour attempts to draw not only on the evolution of the research, but also to bring up some of the inscriptions which have been edited. The need for such an approach lies in the rich bibliographical publications from the last decades, but also in the rich information they provide, and in the advantage of placing/ and contextualising it in the larger research.*

**Rezumat.** *Articolul de față își propune să examineze literatura privitoare la asociațiile de cult atestate pe litoralul nordic al Mării Negre, de la publicațiile de început, până la cele mai recente lucrări. Inițiativa are ca scop să traseze nu doar evoluția cercetării, ci și să aducă în discuție unele dintre inscripțiile care au fost editate. Necesitatea unei astfel de abordări e dată de bogatele apariții bibliografice din ultimele decade, dar și de conținutul informațional abundent pe care îl pun la dispoziție, precum și de avantajul contextualizării acestora în orizontul mai larg al cercetării.*

**Keywords:** historiography, northern shore of the Black Sea, cult associations.

The private associations<sup>2</sup> have been researched beginning with the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>3</sup> (especially from a juridical perspective), but it is only at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>4</sup> that the topic became more popular, and this due to the publishing of the epigraphic *corpora*. Along with the publishing of the *corpora*, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and at the beginning of the

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<sup>2</sup> The expression „private associations” is used as modern synonym for the ancient terminology (δούμος/ *dumus*, ἐργασία, θίασος, κοινόν, οἶκος, συναγωγή, συνέδριον, σύνοδος, σπεῖρα, τέχνη). The modern terminology used to encompass the ancient realities is versatile itself, besides „private associations”, the researchers use also the term „voluntary associations”, the latter stressing the unconstrained nature of the grouping, while the former define itself in opposition to the public sphere and the *polis*. In the following lines we have opted for the „private associations” due to the fact that the term „voluntary” has a much more contemporary meaning.

<sup>3</sup> HEINECKE 1747.

<sup>4</sup> PLATNER 1809; BOURGUET 1894; HUBERT 1897; 1899; DRERUP 1899; FOUCCART 1864; 1873; LIEBENAM 1890; 1894; MARTIN SAINT-LEON 1899; POLAND 1895; Tournon 1895; WALTZING 1890; 1892; 1895-1900; 1898.

20<sup>th</sup> century, the associative movements were in full development in Europe,<sup>5</sup> therefore the interest for this topic is to be understood also through the social movements of that time. If at the beginning the topic was approached from a more general perspective, in the last decades the research started to narrow down to specific research topics, and to a variety of geographical areas; thus, some works have focused on the associations from a specific geographical area,<sup>6</sup> or they focused on some specific types of associations,<sup>7</sup> while others focused on specific issues related to the topic.<sup>8</sup> Among the works which set the grounds of the research we mention those of Paul Foucart,<sup>9</sup> Erich Ziebarth<sup>10</sup> and Franz Poland,<sup>11</sup> even though the latter was the subject of M. Rostovtzeff critique who considered that „the treatment of the corporations in existing works is wholly inadequate, being merely systematic and not historical”.<sup>12</sup> Since those early researches, the methodology changed, and it was the subject of many interpretations.

While both the associations from the Greek East and the Latin West were the object of research, due to the quality and quantity of information, researchers focused on Athens,<sup>13</sup> Delos,<sup>14</sup> Rhodes,<sup>15</sup> Asia Minor,<sup>16</sup> but also on Rome and the Roman provinces,<sup>17</sup> in an attempt to reconstruct the puzzling associative universe of antiquity. Besides dealing with cult associations, the research also included the professional associations,<sup>18</sup> which did not usually lack a religious component, and which were also highly present in the ancient world.

The number of inscriptions from the area of our present focus is 113,<sup>19</sup> which represents a majority of 48.91% from the overall number of associations attested in the Greek cities of the

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<sup>5</sup> FRÖLICH, HAMON 2013, 15.

<sup>6</sup> ROHDE 2012; ZAVOYKINA 2013a.

<sup>7</sup> JACCOTTET 2003; KOESTER 1999; PETZL, SCHWETHEIM 2006; VÉLISSAROPOULOS 1980; etc.

<sup>8</sup> HARLAND 1996; 2000; 2003; 2007; 2012; 2015; VAN NIJF 1997; 2003; etc.

<sup>9</sup> FOU CART 1864; FOU CART 1873a; FOU CART 1873b.

<sup>10</sup> ZIEBARTH 1896; ZIEBARTH 1907.

<sup>11</sup> POLAND 1895; POLAND 1909; POLAND 1911.

<sup>12</sup> ROSTOV TZEFF 1957, 619, n. 43.

<sup>13</sup> ARNAOUTOGLU 1998; 2003; 2011; 2015; BASLEZ 1996; 2004; CALHOUN 1964; ELTER 1916; FERGUSON 1944; GEAGAN 1972; ISMARD 2010; JONES 1999; LE GUEN 2007; LEIWO 1997; STEINHAEUER 2014; THOMSEN 2014; TOD 1906-1907; etc.

<sup>14</sup> BASLEZ 2013; BRUNEAU 1978; HASENOHR 2001; MCLEAN 1996; 1999; MEYER 1988; PICARD 1920; TRÜMPER 2006; 2011; etc.

<sup>15</sup> ENGELMANN 1970; GABRIELSEN 1994; WESCHER 1864.

<sup>16</sup> THOMAS 1994; KOESTER 1999; HARLAND 2000; 2014; 2015; DITTMANN-SCHÖNE 2001; ARNAOUTOGLU 2002; 2016; PETZL, SCHWETHEIM 2006.

<sup>17</sup> HEINECKE 1747; PLATNER 1809; LIEBENAM 1890; WALTZING 1895-1900; MOMMSEN 1843; 1850; 1907; TORRI 1938; 1941; DE ROBERTIS 1955; 1973; AUSSBÜTTEL 1982; MACMULLEN 1974; ALFÖLDY 1958; 1966; PERRY 2001; 2006; 2011; TRAN 2001; 2006; 2011; 2012; DONDIN-PAYRE, TRAN 2012.

<sup>18</sup> MARTIN SAINT-LEON 1899; CALDERINI 1934; VAN NIJF 1997; MENNELLA, APICELLA 2000; DITTMANN-SCHÖNE 2001; ZIMMERMANN 2002; DIOSONO 2007; LIU 2009; VERBOVEN 2011.

<sup>19</sup> The article does not include the Judean associations.

Black Sea.<sup>20</sup> Out of these 113 inscriptions there are only two professional association attested,<sup>21</sup> the rest being cult associations.<sup>22</sup> From a chronological perspective, only Olbia provides evidence of associations coming from the Classical period,<sup>23</sup> while from Pantikapaion<sup>24</sup> and Tanais<sup>25</sup> we have attestations from the Hellenistic period, but it is in the Roman period that we observe an associative bloom.

Besides the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries monographic works which address in a unifying manner the associations from all the Greek world, we have only a few articles which try to synthesize the information on the associations of the northern Black Sea.<sup>26</sup> Most of the information derives from newly published inscriptions<sup>27</sup> related to associations, which the editors contextualise. Among these early works, there was a position which considered that the associations from the Bosphorus were part of the same association,<sup>28</sup> fact which lacks clarity and truthfulness when one is confronted with the inscriptions. Understanding the associative phenomenon in its complexity, and placing it in a geographical and chronological context came later, especially in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, after the publishing of IOSPE I<sup>2</sup><sup>29</sup> and CIRB.<sup>30</sup>

Both the works which fall under the category of early works, and those which fall under the category of more recent works tend to cover especially information regarding the widely disputed cult of Theos Hypsistos, along with the characteristic of the divinity.<sup>31</sup> When addressing the issues of Theos Hypsistos and the associations devoted to him, one of the reference points is the monograph of Yulia Ustinova.<sup>32</sup> The book is a study of religion in the

<sup>20</sup> PÁZSINT 2018.

<sup>21</sup> *θέασος ναυκλήρων* which is probably attested by 11 inscriptions: SEG 29 707; CIRB 1230 = IGR I 912 = IOSPE IV 433; CIRB 1134; SEG 36 700; CIRB 1129 = IosPE IV 434; CIRB 1135; CIRB 1130; CIRB 1131; CIRB 1119 = SEG 36 700note; SEG 36 705; SEG 3 607 = IGR I 893 = CIRB 77 + CIRB 1136, *Κοινὸν ναυτικῶν*: Solomonik 1984, 87, n. 436 = SEG 38 749.8.

<sup>22</sup> *Ἀδελφοὶ εὐχόμενοι, Ἰσποηγοὶ (ἀδελφοὶ σεβόμενοι, Ἰσποηγοὶ ἀδελφοὶ σεβόμενοι, Θεασεῖται, Θιασεῖται, Θιασίται, Θιεσεῖται, Θέασος, Θίασος, Θίεσος, Θίεσος ἀδελφῶν, Κοινόν, Κοινὸν τῶν θιασιτῶν, Μύστα, Νεομηνιασταί, Ὀρφικοί, Σπεῖρα, Συνοδεῖται, Σύνδοξ.*

<sup>23</sup> IGDolbia 96a, b, c, d; IGDolbia 94abc = SEG 28 659–661; IGDolbia 92 = SEG 50 699.1

<sup>24</sup> CIRB 75 = IosPE II 19; CIRB 263 = IosPE IV 293; SEG 2 482

<sup>25</sup> IVANTCHIK 2008, 94 – 95, n. 1 = AVRAM 2015, 122, n.1 = SEG 58 782; IVANTCHIK 2008, 96 – 100, n. 2 = AVRAM 2015, 123 n. 2 = SEG 58 783; IVANTCHIK 2008, 100–103, n. 3 = AVRAM 2015, 123, n. 3 = SEG 58 784.

<sup>26</sup> POMIALOVKI 1888; NOVOSADSKI 1928.

<sup>27</sup> VON STERN 1900; 1902; MARTI 1904.

<sup>28</sup> KOLOBOVA 1933, 75 *apud* USTINOVA 1999, 199.

<sup>29</sup> LATYSHEV 1885; 1890; 1901; 1916.

<sup>30</sup> STRUVE *et al.*, 1965.

<sup>31</sup> Theos Hypsistos and its cult will not be addressed in this article. The object of our focus will be only the associations devoted to him.

<sup>32</sup> USTINOVA 1999. Before publishing this monograph, Ustinova wrote also an MA thesis on the private associations in classical Athens (under the supervision of Frolov): USTINOVA 1984, and a PhD thesis on the private cult associations from both Greece and the Black Sea Littoral (under the supervision of Andreyev): USTINOVA 1988. Unfortunately, we could not access them

complex Bosphoran Kingdom, where local and Greek religions intertwine. In this setting, the author focuses only partially on cult associations, as manifestations of the cult of Theos Hypsistos. Among others, her contribution concerning the study of associations consists in suggesting that despite the fact that in Tanais there were associations with different names which existed simultaneously, they were part of the same type of organisation, which explains the occurrence of some individuals in associations which bear four different names.<sup>33</sup> The author also tried to provide an outlook on the internal hierarchy of the associations and their particularities, the order of acquiring it, as well as the observation that no officials were demoted.<sup>34</sup> Regarding the number of members, Ustinova sees in the integration of the male citizens in the associations devoted to Theos Hypsistos the Iranian tradition of warrior societies, since the associations might have „served as military divisions of the city”,<sup>35</sup> which might be also seen in their care for fitness as pointed by the offices of *γυμνασίαρχος* and *νεανισκάρχης*.<sup>36</sup> The familial language used to name several offices among the associations of the northern Black Sea have been discussed besides Ustinova also by Avram,<sup>37</sup> Harland,<sup>38</sup> and Pázsint;<sup>39</sup> two of the offices (*μάτηρ*, and *πατήρ*) are seemingly honorific positions, and together with the appellative *ἄδελφός*, they seem to bring a certain degree of familiarity among the members. At Tanais, the inscriptions differentiate between *ἄδελφοί* and *εἰσποιητοὶ ἄδελφοὶ σεβόμενοι*, which is to be explained, according to Zhebelyov, through the prior existence of family members inside the association.<sup>40</sup>

Besides the publications of Ustinova, and some publications of other researchers,<sup>41</sup> the works of N.V. Zavoykina<sup>42</sup> complete the outlook on the associations coming from the Bosphorus. The author's interest has culminated in a monograph, which covers the topic from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.<sup>43</sup> The main contribution of her book represents the interpretation of the associations in relation to the monarchy.<sup>44</sup> The work is structured in two parts, the first is a geographical epigraphic interpretation,<sup>45</sup> while the second approaches the topic from the relation with the monarchical power.<sup>46</sup> The annexes include an epigraphic

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<sup>33</sup> USTINOVA 1999, 188.

<sup>34</sup> USTINOVA 1999, 188–189.

<sup>35</sup> USTINOVA 1999, 185, citing SHKORPIL 1908, 43–44 and BLAVATSKIY 1964, 213–214.

<sup>36</sup> USTINOVA 1999, 200.

<sup>37</sup> AVRAM 2015, 122–135.

<sup>38</sup> HARLAND 2005, 491–513; HARLAND 2007, 57–79.

<sup>39</sup> PÁZSINT 2018, 79–90.

<sup>40</sup> ZHEBELYOV 1940, 47–49.

<sup>41</sup> KALASHNIK 1972; SAPRKYKIN, CHEVELYOV 1996; YAILENKO 2002; SAPRKYKIN 2009.

<sup>42</sup> ZAVOYKINA 2003; 2004; 2007; GABELKO, ZAVOYKINA, SHAVYRINA 2006.

<sup>43</sup> ZAVOYKINA 2013a.

<sup>44</sup> The relation between the associations and the king Sauromates II is also addressed by SAPRKYKIN 2009, 328–347.

<sup>45</sup> ZAVOYKINA 2013a, 25–132.

<sup>46</sup> ZAVOYKINA 2013a, 133–230.

*corpus* with the corresponding texts, some reinterpreted in a disputed manner,<sup>47</sup> and a complete list of the citizens of Tanais (570).<sup>48</sup> The key points of her book are: a) the categorisation of associations in religious associations, associations based on age, associations based on comradeship, and professional associations; b) the interpretation of associations as keepers and promoters of the *polis*' values. Besides her works which are synthesized in the volume, most publications which discuss aspects regarding the associations are publications of new inscriptions, which contextualize the topic.

Another important contribution is the publication signed by R.S. Ascough, P.A. Harland, and John S. Kloppenborg, who gathered a corpus of inscriptions, papyri and literary references on the private associations from the „Greco–Roman” world, the sourcebook being geographically structured. For the Bosporan Kingdom the evidence brought forward is rather scanty, comprising only ten inscriptions, and lacking any comments on the informational content, but providing bibliographical reference for each inscription. P.A. Harland<sup>49</sup> continued the series by publishing another volume of inscriptions, this time coming only from the northern shore of the Black Sea and Asia Minor and pertaining to the associations, and this time providing commentaries to the inscriptions, as well as a comprehensive bibliographical list. Neither this time did the author include all the inscriptions, only five were from the north while the rest were from Asia Minor. Even so, the volume is a useful research tool, which provides the grounds for anyone interested in this subject. Complementary to the volume is also the web page ‘Associations in the Greco-Roman World (AGRW)’<sup>50</sup>, administered by the same scholar, and which comprises not only the inscriptions which were already published in the volumes, but also those which were not, being frequently updated. The usefulness of the page consists in gathering in a single space the thematic inscriptions, with the corresponding bibliography as well as in the existence of research filters, and specific sections, which allow the user to browse based on a variety of items. Both approaches provide a valuable input to the research, being a point of reference for anyone who is interested in discovering the world of private associations.

### **Close-up look on some inscriptions**

Not many new inscriptions have been published in the last years regarding cult associations, therefore in the following lines we will address those inscriptions which either bring important contributions to the topic, or they bring interpretations of already published inscriptions, or inscriptions which bring a wider perspective on the informational content.

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<sup>47</sup> ZAVOYKINA 2013a, 252–267.

<sup>48</sup> ZAVOYKINA 2013a, 268–285.

<sup>49</sup> HARLAND 2015.

<sup>50</sup> Associations in the Greco-Roman World (AGRW) — [philipharland.com/greco-roman-associations](http://philipharland.com/greco-roman-associations).

The evidence from Tanais is rich, attesting a significant number of associations and the most numerous members.<sup>51</sup> Among the published inscriptions from Tanais we have three which were initially published by Askold Ivantchik,<sup>52</sup> and then republished by Alexandru Avram.<sup>53</sup> The main contribution has been the dating of the inscriptions to the Hellenistic period, important aspect since the epigraphic evidence up to then pointed only to a Roman period dating. At the same time, the identification of the worshipped divinity is also an important aspect: as opposed to Ivantchik, the editor of the inscription who believes that the divinity might be Theos Hypsistos, or the river God Tanais, Avram brings forward another possible divinity: Dionysos. However, the interpretation is not certain since up to this day we have no attestations of associations devoted to Dionysos in the cities north of the Black Sea, and this neither in the Hellenistic, nor in the Roman times. The fragmentary state of the inscription made the latter author ponder on the character of the association, which he believes might have even been public, not private. The inscription is important also due to the fact that it mentions the position of *νεωκόρος* inside associations, which is uncommon, especially in the Hellenistic age.<sup>54</sup> This series of inscriptions also possibly show that the position of *ἑλληναρχης* dated from the Hellenistic period, and not from the Roman period.<sup>55</sup>

Professional associations are also attested in Gorgippia and Chersonesos Taurike, but the example coming from Gorgippia illustrates for sure an association (*θέασος ναυκλήρων*) which had also a religious component, and which is very well represented. Based on the already existing *alba*, Saprykin<sup>56</sup> assigned the text of an inscription published in 1986 to a *θέασος ναυκλήρων*, completing the outlook on this type of association. The presence of a professional association at Gorgippia is not surprising considering the importance of the wheat trade for the city. The choice of Poseidon as patron of the association is to be understood in connection with the profession they practice: being a *ναύκληρος* implied sea-related dangers, which could be appeased by worshipping the god of the sea. In the Bosporan Kingdom, Poseidon was an important divinity not only due to the economic activities carried out through the help of the sea, but also due to the fact that the kings saw themselves as related to the god.<sup>57</sup> Interesting in this case is the mentioning of several officials as members of the association (the governor

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<sup>51</sup> As proposed by USTINOVA 1999, 185, there are four attested designations for the associations: 1) ἡ σύνοδος ἡ περὶ θεὸν ὕψιστον καὶ ἱερέα [---]καὶ [---]: CIRB 1278, CIRB 1279, CIRB 1280, CIRB 1282; 2) ἡ σύνοδος ἡ περὶ ἱερέα [---]καὶ [---]: CIRB 1260, CIRB 1262, CIRB 1263, CIRB 1264, CIRB 1277, CIRB 1287, CIRB 1288; 3) εἰσποιητοὶ ἀδελφοὶ σεβόμενοι θεὸν ὕψιστον περὶ πρεσβύτερον: CIRB 1281, 1283, 285, 1286; 3) θί[ησος τῶν] ἀδελφῶν]: CIRB 1284.

<sup>52</sup> IVANTCHIK 2008, 93–107.

<sup>53</sup> AVRAM 2015, 122–135.

<sup>54</sup> IVANTCHIK 2008, 95.

<sup>55</sup> IVANTCHIK 2008, 97.

<sup>56</sup> SAPRYKIN 1986, 62–75.

<sup>57</sup> USTINOVA 1999, 122; ZAVOYKINA 2014, 331 citing CIRB 53 = IosPE II 41; CIRB 1048 = IosPE II 358 = SEG 50 694.

of Gorgippia was the *συναγωγός*, and the manager of the royal land was the *ιερεύς*), with other members of the elite as members,<sup>58</sup> such as commanders and administrators.

Besides Tanais, and Gorgippia, Pantikapaion also attests a great number of associations and members. As opposed to Tanais, the inscriptions from Pantikapaion concerning associations are mostly funerary, only two being votive.<sup>59</sup> It is here that we find a spectacular inscription found in 1894, published a few decades later,<sup>60</sup> and recently reassessed:<sup>61</sup> the inscription records a posthumous honorific text inscribed on a golden frontlet of a crown. The crown was offered to Ἰούλιος Καλλισθένης, who was a *παραφιλάγαθος* inside an unknown type of association.<sup>62</sup> Besides occupying this private office, the character was possibly also part of the military personnel, and, most importantly, he was, according to the editor, a respected member of Pantikapaion's elite, being part of a Hellenized Sarmatian family.<sup>63</sup> The publishing of the inscription is significant because it provides one more example of the variety of social statuses among the members of associations, and in this particular case we see that despite being an important member of the society, the individual did not have the most important position inside the association, being however honoured with a *διὰ βίου* position. Therefore, Ἰούλιος Καλλισθένης joins in social standing other members such as Δάφνος son of Ψυχαρίων,<sup>64</sup> and Ἰούλιος son of Σαμβίων,<sup>65</sup> both occupying a position inside the royal administration. The inscription is also valuable for its information on the internal hierarchy, which lacks the uniformity of Tanais' associations.<sup>66</sup>

Three inscriptions which are not part of the epigraphic *corpus* of Phanagoreia are worth mentioning: one was written on a reused monument, which at first was used as a building inscription belonging to the temple of Herakles, and later on used as a funerary inscription of an individual named Πάλος, who was a member of an association grouped around a priest Δάδας, son of Καλλίων.<sup>67</sup> The inscription *per se* does not bring much information on the characteristics of the associations (the editors assume the mention of a *σύνδοξ*), but it brings out some rarer aspects, such as the existence of the position *ιερομάστωρ* which is attested twice at Phanagoreia,<sup>68</sup> and which might be regarded as the person in charge of performing the sacrifices.<sup>69</sup> From an onomastic perspective, almost all of the personal names are Greek,

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<sup>58</sup> ZAVOYKINA 2014, 331.

<sup>59</sup> CIRB 75; CIRB 76.

<sup>60</sup> SHKORPIL 1908, 43; MATSULEVITCH 1941, 61.

<sup>61</sup> ZAVOYKINA 2013b.

<sup>62</sup> MATSULEVITCH 1941, 61–80; ZAVOYKINA 2003a, 120–137.

<sup>63</sup> MATSULEVITCH 1941, 71–79.

<sup>64</sup> CIRB 78.

<sup>65</sup> CIRB 98.

<sup>66</sup> USTINOVA 1999, 196.

<sup>67</sup> YAILENKO 2002, 229–242.

<sup>68</sup> CIRB 1016 (3<sup>rd</sup> century AD): spelled as *ἱερομάστωρ*, and CIRB 988 (4<sup>th</sup> century AD), and once at Hermonassa CIRB 1054.

<sup>69</sup> GABELKO, ZAVOYKINA, SHAVYRINA 2006, 342.

however with one being Scythian (Πάλος). Published a few years later was another inscription which was considered by the editors,<sup>70</sup> as registering the existence of a cult association<sup>71</sup> (gathered around a certain Ὀμψάλακος) with lower social status members (slaves, freedmen); assumption based on the lack of patronymics and on the quality of the text, and of the monument.<sup>72</sup> The third inscriptions was published in 2016,<sup>73</sup> and just as the latter inscription it has some linguistic particularities, it is a very succinct epitaph which records only two types of positions (*ιερεύς, φιλάγαθος*) and it points to the existence inside the associations of both locals and Greeks, and of citizens and non-citizens.<sup>74</sup> Overall, the number of inscriptions coming from Phanagoreia is small (7), therefore the publishing of these two inscriptions is fundamental in reconstructing parts of the associative phenomenon in this city. These two inscriptions point that the juridical status of the individuals in the associations could be heterogenic, if the first attests the membership of citizens,<sup>75</sup> the second attests the presence of possible slaves or freedmen, while the third points to citizens and non-citizens. In what concerns the internal structure, we have in Phanagoreia a more uncommon position, that of *ιερομάστωρ*, which is recorded only here and in its surrounding area.

At Olbia even though the associations are attested from an early time, the finds are limited to only five inscriptions. One of the inscriptions<sup>76</sup> which was discussed by Jeanne and Louis Robert,<sup>77</sup> and more recently by Vladimir F. Stolba,<sup>78</sup> gets our attention due to its uniqueness; it attests an association which records members coming from two families: seven of the members are the sons of Λεωκράτης, while other four individuals are relatives (son and grandsons) of Λεωπρέπης.<sup>79</sup> The evidence comes from a fourth century statue dedicated to Zeus Soter, while the associations seem to worship a local hero named Heuresibios, who is said to have liberated Olbia from a tyrant.<sup>80</sup> The family members are priests among the *θίασος*, but they probably did not occupy the position simultaneously.<sup>81</sup> The presence of family members among associations is not uncommon, rather it is a defining characteristic of the associative phenomenon in the Greek cities of the Black Sea.

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<sup>70</sup> GABELKO, ZAVOYKINA, SHAVYRINA 2006, 334–344.

<sup>71</sup> GABELKO, ZAVOYKINA, SHAVYRINA 2006, 337.

<sup>72</sup> GABELKO, ZAVOYKINA, SHAVYRINA 2006, 338–340.

<sup>73</sup> VOROSHILOVA, ZAVOYKINA 2016, 24–33.

<sup>74</sup> VOROSHILOVA, ZAVOYKINA 2016, 32.

<sup>75</sup> GABELKO, ZAVOYKINA, SHAVYRINA 2006, 343.

<sup>76</sup> IGDolbia 11 = IOLbia 71 = SEG 18 304.

<sup>77</sup> ROBERT, ROBERT 1959, 216, n. 270.

<sup>78</sup> STOLBA 2013, 293–302.

<sup>79</sup> STOLBA 2013, 293–302. See the *stemma* of these two families at page 299.

<sup>80</sup> STOLBA 2013, 299.

<sup>81</sup> STOLBA 2013, 300.



From Myrmekion (or Pantikapaion) there is a sole fragmentary inscription,<sup>82</sup> which sets light on the positions inside associations and their reflection of the Greek *modus vivendi*; a *νεανισκάρχης* is mentioned, and its attestation supports along with the position of *γυμνασίαρχος* the idea according to which some of the Bosporan associations tried to maintain the Greek culture and traditions through the physical education of the youth.<sup>83</sup> These positions are more common in the inscriptions from Tanais than Pantikapaion due to the fact that the latter are funerary inscriptions.<sup>84</sup>

Among the few inscriptions from Sudak there is one edited by Saprykin and Baranov,<sup>85</sup> which according to the SEG editors register a list of members of an association.<sup>86</sup> The inscription is rather fragmentary, and even though the first editors proposed a possible reconstruction of the text, they excluded the possibility of it recording an association. The personal names which appear are frequently attested among the members of private associations from the area, but at the same time these personal names (Πάπας,<sup>87</sup> Φαρνάκης,<sup>88</sup> Φαρνακίων<sup>89</sup>) are common for the geographical space under focus, just as the editors sustain themselves.<sup>90</sup> Consequently, we take the same position as the editors, being reluctant to the interpretation provided in the SEG.

As follows, the inscriptions brought under discussion confirm the rooting of the professional and cult associations in the Greek cities situated on the northern shore of the Black Sea, most of them coming from the Bosporan Kingdom, and with an exception most are attested in the Roman period. The associations from this area cannot be analysed as a whole since due to the particularities of each cities, they revealed characteristics of their own, especially regarding the type of association developed, their internal structure, as well as the juridical status of the members. As we can see most of the discussion has been focused on classifying the associations, and on trying to understand their connectivity, as well as their different internal structure. Naturally, the intricate nature of the cult and of the divinities worshipped by the members of the associations was also an important part of the discourse.

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<sup>82</sup> CIRB 870 = IosPE II 58.

<sup>83</sup> SAPRYKIN, CHEVELYOV 1996, 161–167.

<sup>84</sup> SAPRYKIN, CHEVELYOV 1996, 163–164.

<sup>85</sup> SAPRYKIN, BARANOV 1995, 137–140; SAPRYKIN, BARANOV 1997, 249–258.

<sup>86</sup> SEG 45 1017.

<sup>87</sup> 69 hits in the clas-igpn2.classics.ox.ac.uk database.

<sup>88</sup> 142 hits in the clas-igpn2.classics.ox.ac.uk database.

<sup>89</sup> 55 hits in the clas-igpn2.classics.ox.ac.uk database.

<sup>90</sup> SAPRYKIN, BARANOV 1997, 251–252.

### **Contextualisation in the wider research on cult associations**

From an epigraphic perspective one can see that compared to other geographical areas, such as Asia Minor, or the western Roman Provinces, the professional associations are a much lighter presence. As the literature points out, the cult associations from this area are of a wide variety, including among its members not only citizens, but also non-citizens,<sup>91</sup> and possibly slaves or freedmen, which is a feature characteristic for the associations from the other areas as well. Overall, following the contribution brought by all researchers, we now know that cult associations from the northern littoral of the Black Sea implied exclusive male membership, being associations mostly devoted to Theos Hypsistos (one of the two most important divinities in the Bosphoran Kingdom),<sup>92</sup> but also to divinities such as Aphrodite, Zeus and Hera Soteres, and lastly Poseidon. The associations in Tanais have some particularities which differentiate them from the ones in the rest of the Greek world, not to mention to those of the Roman west. First of all, they seem to be all dedicated to Theos Hypsistos, and they appear to comprise all free male among its members;<sup>93</sup> another distinctive aspect being the internal hierarchy, which includes positions that are not to be found elsewhere, not even in the other cities of the Bosphoran Kingdom. Specific for these associations is also the connection to the monarchy, which is visible not only through the dedications made in their honour, but also through the joining of some royal courtiers inside associations.

### **Conclusion**

The research of cult associations has received greater attention in the last decades, and it focused on a wider variety of topics than in the early days. The associations coming from the northern shore of the Black Sea are mostly cultic, but the economic and geographic coordinates of the area have led also to the existence of some professional associations. Most of the early works focus on distinguishing the character of the worshipped divinity, but the most recent ones try to tackle various aspects regarding the associations, such as the reason of their creation, the internal structure, the characters involved and their connection to the monarchy. Despite of the publishing of disparate works, which are generally based on the information around new inscriptions, the area has been thoroughly researched, and its characteristics and particularities have been brought to light, revealing a series of similarities with the associations from the western and southern coast (i.e. the heterogenic social and juridical composition of the members, the interaction with the elite), but also dissimilarities which are influenced by the political and social evolution of the area.

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<sup>91</sup> For Pantikapaion see ZAVOYKINA 2013a, 73–75.

<sup>92</sup> USTINOVA 1999, 184.

<sup>93</sup> USTINOVA 1999, 184.

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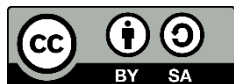
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