

SUSAN E. BENTON

Women Patrons and Mothers in Associations and the New Testament

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
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Susan E. Benton, born 1980; 2010 Master of Divinity (Fuller Theological Seminary); 2017 Master of Theology from Duke Divinity School; 2023 PhD in Religion and New Testament Studies from Baylor University; Lecturer and member of the Ministry Guidance team faculty in Religion at Baylor University.
orcid.org/0009-0004-0006-4861

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To my parents, L. Michelle and Frederick A. Nylander
You were willing to prepare me for anything God would wish, and you have
helped make possible more than I had planned
Love you always

Acknowledgments

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List of Abbreviations

<i>ACO</i>	<i>Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum.</i>
<i>AE</i>	<i>L'Année épigraphique</i> (1888–).
<i>Agora</i>	<i>The Athenian Agora</i> (1953–).
<i>AGRW</i>	Ascough, Richard S., Philip A. Harland, and John S. Kloppenborg, eds. <i>Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook</i> . Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012.
<i>AGRW ID</i>	Identification number of an item (inscription, papyrus or ostrakon) on the <i>AGRW</i> website (using WordPress's assigned post number).
<i>AIO</i>	<i>Attic Inscriptions Online.</i>
<i>Αρχ. Έφ.</i>	<i>Αρχαιολογική Έφημερίς.</i>
<i>BCH</i>	<i>Bulletin de Correspondence Hellenique.</i>
<i>BE</i>	<i>Bulletin Épigraphique</i> (annually in <i>REG</i>).
<i>BGU</i>	<i>Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen (later Staatlichen) Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden.</i> Berlin: Weidmann, 1895–.
<i>CCCA</i>	Vermaseren, Maarten Jozef. <i>Corpus cultus Cybelae Attidisque</i> . EPRO 50. Leiden: Brill, 1977–1989.
<i>GCRE</i>	Oliver, James H. <i>Greek Constitutions of Early Roman Emperors from Inscriptions and Papyri</i> . Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society 178. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1989.
<i>CChSL</i>	<i>Corpus christianorum series Latina.</i>
<i>CEG</i>	Hansen, P. A. <i>Carmina epigraphica graeca</i> . 2 vols. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1983–1989.
<i>CIG</i>	Boeckh, A., ed. <i>Corpus inscriptionum graecarum</i> . 4 vols. Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1828–1877.
<i>CIJ</i>	Frey, J. B., ed. <i>Corpus inscriptionum iudaicarum: Recueil des inscriptions juives qui vont du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. 2 vols.</i> Roma: Pontificio istituto di archeologia cristiana, 1936–1952.
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus inscriptionum latinarum</i> , Consilio et Auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Regiae Borussicae Editum. Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1863– 1974.
<i>CIRB</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Regni Bosporani.</i> Moskau, 1965.
<i>CPJ</i>	Tcherikover, Victor, and Alexander Fuks. <i>Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum</i> . Vol. 3. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957.
<i>Dougga</i>	Khanoussi, Mustapha, and Louis Maurin. <i>Dougga, fragments d'histoire: choix d'inscriptions latines editees, traduites et commentees</i> . Bordeaux and Tunis: Institut national du patrimoine, 2000.
<i>EA</i>	<i>Epigraphica Anatolica.</i>

<i>EDR</i>	<i>Epigraphic Database Roma.</i>
<i>FGrH</i>	Jacoby, F. <i>Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> . Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1923–.
Foucart, 1873.	Foucart, Paul. <i>De collegiis scenicorum artificum apud Graecos</i> . Paris: Klincksieck, 1873.
<i>GE</i>	Montanari, F. <i>The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek</i> . Leiden: Brill, 2015.
<i>GRA</i>	Kloppenborg, John S., Philip A. Harland, and Richard S. Ascough. <i>Greco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations, and Commentary</i> . BZNW. Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2011–.
<i>GVI</i>	Peek, W., ed. <i>Griechische Vers-Inschriften</i> . Vol. 1: <i>Grab-Epigramme</i> . Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1955.
<i>IAlexandriaK</i>	Kayser, François. <i>Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines (non funéraires) d'Alexandrie impériale</i> . Bibliothèque d'étude 108. Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1994.
<i>IAph2007</i>	<i>Inscriptions of Aphrodisias</i> .
<i>IBithynie 2</i>	Mendel, Gustave. "Inscriptions de Bithynie [2]." <i>BCH</i> 25 (1901): 5–92.
<i>IByzantion</i>	Lajtar, Adam. <i>Die Inschriften von Byzantion, Teil 1: Die Inschriften</i> . Bonn: Habelt, 2000.
<i>ICilicie</i>	Dagron, Gilbert, and Dennis Feissel. <i>Inscriptions de Cilicie</i> . Travaux et mémoires du Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance 4. Paris: De Boccard, 1987, 89–91.
<i>I.Corinth 8.3</i>	Kent, John H., ed. <i>Corinth 8, 3. The Inscriptions, 1926–1950</i> . Glückstadt: J. J. Augustin, 1966.
<i>IDacia</i>	Russu, Ioan I., Grigore Florescu, and Constantin C. Petolescu. <i>Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae</i> . 3 vols. <i>Inscriptiones Daciae et Scythiae Minoris Antiquae</i> . Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii socialiste România, 1975–1988.
<i>IDélos</i>	Durrbach, F., ed. <i>Inscriptions de Délos</i> . Paris: Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, 1926–1937.
<i>IDelta</i>	Bernand, A., ed. <i>Le delta égyptien d'après les textes grecs. 1. Les confins libyques</i> . 3 vols. Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire 91. Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1970.
<i>IEgJud</i>	Horbury, William, and David Noy. <i>Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
<i>IEurJud</i>	see <i>JJWE</i> .
<i>IFayum</i>	Bernand, E., ed. <i>Recueil des inscriptions grecques du Fayoum</i> . Leiden: Brill, 1975–1981.
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> .
<i>IGLSkythia</i>	See <i>IHistria</i> , <i>IKallatis</i> , <i>ITomis</i> .
<i>IGR / IGRR</i>	Cagnat, R. L., J. F. Toutain, V. Henry, and G. L. Lafaye, eds. <i>Inscriptiones graecae ad res romanas pertinentes</i> . 4 vols. Paris: E. Leroux, 1911–1927. 1. (nos. 1–1518) ed. R. L. Cagnat, J. F. Toutain, and P. Jouguet (1911); 2. never published; 3. R. Cagnat and G. Lafaye (1906); 4. Asia (nos. 1–1764) ed. G. L. Lafaye (1927).

- IGUR* Moretti, L. *Inscriptiones graecae urbis romae*. 4 vols. Studi Pubblicati dall'Istituto Italiano per la Storia Antica 17, 22, 28, 47. Rome: Istituto Italiano per la Storia Antica, 1968.
- IHistria* Pippidi, D. M. *Inscriptiones Scythiae Minoris graecae et latinae: Volumen primum. Inscriptiones Histriae et Vicinae. Inscriptiones Daciae et Scythiae Minoris Antiquae*. Bucharest: Academia Scientiarum Socialum et Politicarum Dacoromana, 1983.
- IJO* *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004. 1. David Noy, Alexander Panayotov, and Hanswulf Bloedhorn. Eastern Europe. *TSAJ* 101 (2004); 2. Walter Ameling, *Kleinasien*. *TSAJ* 99 (2004); 3. David Noy and Hanswulf Bloedhorn. *Syria and Cyprus*. *TSAJ* 102 (2004).
- IKallatis* Avram, Alexander. *Inscriptiones Scythiae Minoris graecae et latinae: Volumen tertium. Callatis et territorium*. *Inscriptiones Daciae et Scythiae Minoris Antiquae*. Bucharest, Paris: Editura Enciclopedica, De Boccard, 2000.
- IKosM* Maiuri, A., ed. *Nuova silloge epigrafica di Rodi e Cos*. Florence: Le Monnier, 1925.
- ILS* Dessau, Hermann. *Inscriptiones latinae selectae*. 3 vols. Berlin: Weidmann, 1892–1916. Repr. Dublin: Weidmann, 1974; repr. Chicago: Ares, 1979.
- ILydiaKP* Keil, J., and A. von Premerstein, eds. *Bericht über eine Reise in Lydien und der südlichen Aiolis*. Vienna: Alfred Hölder, 1910. 2. *Bericht über eine zweite Reise in Lydien*. Vienna: Alfred Hölder, 1911. 3. *Bericht über eine dritte Reise in Lydien und den angrenzenden Gebieten Ioniens*. Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, 53, 54, 57. Vienna: Alfred Hölder, 1914.
- ILydiaM* Malay, Hasan. *Reserches in Lydia, Mysia and Aiolis*. Denkschriften der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, 279. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999.
- ILydiaP* 1, 3 Petzl, Georg. "Neue Inschriften Aus Lydien (1)." *EA* 26 (1996): 1–29; Petzl, Georg. "Neue Inschriften Aus Lydien (3)." *EA* 30 (1998): 19–46.
- IMagnMai* Kern, Otto. *Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Maeander*. Königliche Museen zu Berlin. Berlin: Spemann, 1900.
- IMylasa* Blümel, Wolfgang. *Die Inschriften von Mylasa*. IGSK 35. Bonn: Habelt, 1987.
- InscrIt* *Inscriptiones Italiae*. Rome: La Libreria dello stato, 1931–.
- IPArk* Thür, Gerhad, and Taeuber, Hans. *Prozessrechtliche Inschriften der griechischen Poleis: Arkadien (IPArk)*. Sitzungsberichte / Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1994.
- IPerge* Sahin, Sencer. *Die Inschriften von Perge*. 2 vols. IGSK 54, 61. Bonn: Habelt, 1999.
- IPriene* Hiller von Gaertringen, Friedrich F., ed. *Die Inschriften von Priene*. Königliche Museen zu Berlin. Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1906.

- IPrusaOlymp* Corsten, T., ed. *Die Inschriften von Prusa ad Olymum*. IGSK 39–40. Bonn: Habelt, 1991–1993.
- IRhodJ* Jacopi, Giulio. “Nuove epigrafi dalle sporadi meridionali,” *Clara Rhodos* 2 (1932): 165–256.
- IRhodPC* Pugliese Carratelli, Giovanni. “Per la storia delle associazioni in Rodi antica.” *Annuario della Regia Scuola Archeologica di Atene* 1–2 (new series) (1939–1940): 147–200.
- IRPCadiz* González, Julián. *Inscripciones Romanas de la Provincia de Cadiz*. Cadiz: Diputación de Cádiz, 1982.
- ISelge* Nollé, Johannes, and Friedel Schindler. *Die Inschriften von Selge*. IGSK 37. Bonn: Habelt, 1991.
- ISide* Nollé, Johannes. *Side im Altertum*. 2 vols. IGSK 43. Bonn: Habelt, 1993.
- ISM 2* Stoian, Iorgu. *Inscriptiile din Scythia Minor II*. Tomis și teritoriul său. Bucarest: Academia de științe sociale și politice, 1987.
- ISmyrna* Petzl, Georg, ed. *Die Inschriften von Smyrna*. IGSK 23–24 / 1–2. Bonn: Habelt, 1982–1990. 1. 1982; 2.1. 1987; 2.2. 1990.
- IThraceD* Dumont, Albert. “Inscriptions et monuments figurés de la Thrace.” In *Mélanges d’archéologie et d’épigraphie*, 307–581. Paris: E. Thorin, 1892.
- ITomis* Stoian, Iorgu. *Inscriptiones Scythiae Minoris graecae et latinae: Volumen II. Tomis et territorium*. Inscriptiones Daciae et Scythiae Minoris Antiquae. Bucharest: Academiei Scientiarum Socialum et Politicarum Dacoromana, 1987.
- JIWE* Noy, David. *Jewish Inscriptions from Western Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993–95. (Sometimes also listed as *IEurJud*, especially by P. Harland.)
- JHS* *Journal of Hellenic Studies*.
- JRA* *Journal of Roman Archaeology*.
- JRS* *Journal of Roman Studies*.
- Łajtar 1992 Łajtar, Adam. “Ein Zweiter Beleg für δοῦμος in Thessalonike.” *ZPE* 94 (1992): 211–12.
- LSCG* Sokolowski, Franciszek. *Lois sacrées des cités grecques. Ecole française d’Athènes*. Travaux et mémoires 11. Paris: De Boccard, 1962.
- LSCGSup* Sokolowski, Franciszek. *Lois sacrées des cités grecques: supplément. Ecole française d’Athènes*. Travaux et mémoires 18. Paris: De Boccard, 1969.
- MAMA* Calder, W. M., E. Herzfeld, S. Guyer, and C. W. M. Cox, eds. *Monumenta Asiae Minoris antiqua*. 10 vols. American Society for Archaeological Research in Asia Minor. Publications 1–10. London: Manchester University Press, 1928–1993.
- NewDocs 1–4* Horsley, G. H. R. *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*. North Ryde, Australia: Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, Macquarie University, 1981–1989.
- OGIS* Dittenberger, Wilhelm, ed. *Orientis graeci inscriptiones selectae. Supplementum Sylloge inscriptionum graecarum*. 2 vols. Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1903–1905. Repr. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1970.

PHI	Packard Humanities Institute numbers for Greek inscriptions. The Greek texts are available online at: http://epigraphy.packhum.org/inscriptions/ . Accessed February 3, 2023.
PIR ¹	Klebs, Elimar, Paul de Rohden, and Hermann Dessau. <i>Prosopographia imperii romani</i> . 1 st ed. Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1897–8.
PIR ²	Groag, E., A. Stein, and L. Petersen. <i>Prosopographia imperii romani</i> . 2 nd ed. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1933–.
PMich 2	Boak, A. E. R. <i>Papyri from Tebtunis. Part 1</i> . University of Michigan Studies, Humanistic Series 24. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1933.
PMich 5	Husselman, E. M., A. E. R. Boak, and W. F. Edgerton, eds. <i>Papyri from Tebtunis. Part 2</i> . University of Michigan Studies, Humanistic Series 29. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1944.
POxy	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> . Published by the Egypt Exploration Society in Graeco-Roman Memoirs. London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1898–present.
PRyl	Johnson, J. M., V. Martin, A. S. Hunt, C. H. Roberts, and E. G. Turner. <i>Catalogue of the Greek Papyri in the John Rylands Library, Manchester</i> . Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1911–1952.
PTebt	Grenfell, Bernard P., Arthur S. Hunt, Edgar J. Goodspeed, J. G. Smyly, and C. C. Edgar. <i>The Tebtunis Papyri</i> . University of California Publications, Graeco-Roman Archaeology. London: Henry Frowde, 1902.
PSI 10	<i>Papiri greci e latini</i> . 10 (Nos. 1097–1181). Florence: Pubblicazioni della Società Italiana per la ricerca dei papiri greci e latini in Egitto, 1932.
Merkelbach & Stauber 1:	Merkelbach, R., and J. Stauber, eds. <i>Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten</i> . 1. <i>Die Westküste Kleinasien von Knidos bis Ilion</i> . Stuttgart: Teubner, 1998.
RICIS	Bricault, Laurent. <i>Recueil des inscriptions concernant les cultes isiaques</i> . 2 vols. Mémoires de l'académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres 31. Paris: Diffusion De Boccard, 2005.
SB	Preisigke, F., and F. Bilabel, et al., eds. <i>Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten</i> . Strassburg: K. J. Trubner; Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1915–.
SEG	<i>Supplementum epigraphicum graecum</i> . Leiden: Brill, 1923–.
SIG ²	Dittenberger, Wilhelm, ed. <i>Sylloge inscriptionum graecarum</i> . 2 nd ed. 3 vols. Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1898–1901.
SIG ³	Dittenberger, Wilhelm, ed. <i>Sylloge inscriptionum graecarum</i> . 3 rd ed. 4 vols. Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1915–1924.
SIRIS	Vidman, Ladislaus, ed. <i>Sylloge inscriptionum religionis Isiacae et Sarapiacae</i> . RGVI 28. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969.
REG	<i>Revue des études grecques</i> . 1888–2021.
TM	Trismegistos numbers for papyri. These numbers can be used at http://www.papyri.info/# or http://www.trismegistos.org . Accessed June 19, 2023.
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i> .

Chapter 1

Benefactors, Associations, and Women In Early Christ Groups

Scholarship in recent decades on the role of women in leadership in antiquity has explored how women were involved in the patronage systems integral to Hellenistic and Imperial social life.¹ Emily Hemelrijk has examined the roles of women as benefactors in both public and private capacities, focusing on Latin epigraphic evidence from Roman Italy.² Riet van Bremen's work from the 1990s highlights cases where women's participation in civic life is apparent in inscriptional evidence in Asia Minor and Greece, even as she argues that women's roles were tied to traditional benefactions by their wealthy families.³ Katherine Bain's materialist feminist analysis of evidence in Asia Minor underscores the complicated reality: the women attested in inscriptions as benefactors often served to reinforce the socio-economic status quo, even as they themselves may have been positioned to excel in leadership roles.⁴ Yet even with the variations noted in these conclusions, there is an overall theme that fits with the conclusions in other areas of biblical research. An emerging consensus in interdisciplinary New Testament studies suggests that earlier research, anchored primarily in literary evidence, underestimated the range of ancient women's activities.⁵

¹ "Hellenistic and Roman" periods denote the 3rd century BCE to the 3rd century CE.

² Emily A. Hemelrijk, "City Patronesses in the Roman Empire," *Historia* 53.2 (2004): 209–45; Hemelrijk, "Patronesses and 'Mothers' of Roman Collegia," *CIAnt* 27.1 (2008): 115–62; Hemelrijk, "Fictive Motherhood and Female Authority in Roman Cities," *Eugesta* 2 (2012) 201–20; Hemelrijk, "Female Munificence in the Cities of the Latin West," in *Women and the Roman City in the Latin West*, ed. Emily Hemelrijk and Greg Woolf (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 65–84; Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives, Public Personae: Women and Civic Life in the Roman West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

³ Riet Van Bremen, *The Limits of Participation: Women and Civic Life in the Greek East in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1996); Riet Van Bremen, "A Family from Sillyon," *ZPE* 104 (1994): 43–56.

⁴ Katherine Bain, *Women's Socioeconomic Status and Religious Leadership in Asia Minor in the First Two Centuries C.E.*, Emerging Scholars (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 20.

⁵ Suzanne Dixon, *Reading Roman Women: Sources, Genres, and Real Life* (London: Duckworth, 2001). Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

To date, however, there has not been a thorough, interdisciplinary project that fully engages Greco-Roman inscriptions to inform scholarly discussion about women's benefaction and leadership in early Christian gatherings. Advancements have been made in classical studies, material analysis of Greco-Roman society, and in archaeological research that have the potential to enrich dialogue in New Testament research, enlivening conversation about early Christian women and their euergetism. It is not always apparent from early Christian texts – canonical and non-canonical – what activities were involved for men and women who participated in Christ groups, and secondary scholarship has often focused on *whether or not* women were benefactors and leaders rather than *what they did* in those capacities.⁶ Greco-Roman associations and the attested actions of associational leaders provide comparanda to illuminate the work of such group leaders, and specifically the possibilities available to women.

My project proposes that associational inscriptions demonstrate specific leadership functions that women might have exercised in early Christ groups, ranging from material provision and general oversight (supporting the hypotheses of scholarship) to defining the terms of membership and conditions for group participation. I argue that the distinct title, “mother of the association” introduces a useful category for imagining women's roles in early Christ groups, conceptualizing “mothers” and “patrons” as figures distinct in associational title, in social rank, in recruitment process, and in role.⁷ As a portion of the women attested as benefactors in the ancient Mediterranean, patrons and mothers show us two ways that ancient women were able to engage in voluntary associations and allow us to explore how their involvement shaped their groups. These distinct roles, in turn, provide frameworks for better imagining the involvement of the women who led and guided the Pauline ἐκκλησία, moving forward interdisciplinary scholarship engaging epigraphy and material culture to better understand the New Testament and its world.

1.1 Situating Inscriptional Analysis of Women Benefactors in the Field of New Testament Studies

New Testament scholarship has made great strides in explicating the nature of early Christian ἐκκλησία, especially as reflected in the Pauline writings with regard to Phoebe, Junia, Prisca, and others. My research takes up one

⁶ To introduce a groundbreaking work on how associational research can inform discussion of early Christian assemblies, a list of what is not known is offered by John S. Kloppenborg, *Christ's Associations. Connecting and Belonging in the Ancient City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 3–4.

⁷ For this thesis, see Hemelrijk, “Patronesses and ‘Mothers.’”

comparative avenue that looks at differing types of social organization in antiquity. Since Wayne Meeks's foundational work, *The First Urban Christians*, discussion has ensued about whether early Christian groups are best compared to ancient households, synagogues, voluntary associations, philosophical and rhetorical schools, or the ancient *demos*.⁸ Meeks initially voiced four reservations about comparing associations: Pauline groups were exclusive in their piety, heterogeneous in status and gender, did not draw from the same terminology as associations, and were less geographically bound. Subsequent scholarship addresses these questions further. For instance, Richard Ascough demonstrates translocal connections between groups, and a recent paper by Josiah Hall further shows the accuracy of this assessment. Similarly, Ascough establishes that Meeks's distinctions were overdrawn and presents evidence for variations in social standing and gender in associations.⁹

Some scholars still object to the comparative use of Greco-Roman associations in relation to early Christian assemblies,¹⁰ but the field has proceeded to demonstrate their value when read alongside the New Testament.¹¹ As John Kloppenborg ably demonstrates, Greco-Roman associations – whether cultic, occupational, or household *collegia* – are useful heuristic tools for focused comparisons to early Christ groups.¹² Associations facilitate insight particular-

⁸ All of these possibilities except the *demos* are identified in Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). The first edition was published in 1983. For a model of the ideal *demos*, see Anna C. Miller, *Corinthian Democracy: Democratic Discourse in 1 Corinthians*, PTMS 220 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015). See also L. L. Welborn, "How 'Democratic' Was the Pauline *Ekklesia*? An Assessment with Special Reference to the Christ Groups of Roman Corinth," *NTS* 65.3 (2019): 289–309. An additional category, "alternative society," is proposed by Richard A. Horsley, "Paul's Assembly in Corinth: An Alternative Society," in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen, HTS 53 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Divinity School, 2005), 371–95.

⁹ Richard S. Ascough, "Translocal Relationships Among Voluntary Associations and Early Christianity," *J ECS* 5.2 (1997): 223–41; Josiah D. Hall, "Translocal Relationships among Associations and Christ Groups, Revisited," *ZNW* 113.2 (2022): 231–60; Richard S. Ascough, "What Are They Now Saying about Christ Groups and Associations?," *CBR* 13.2 (2015): 207–44.

¹⁰ Stanley K. Stowers, "A Cult from Philadelphia: Oikos Religion or Cultic Association?," in *The Early Church in Its Context*, ed. James W. Thompson, Frederick W. Norris, and Abraham J. Malherbe, NovT Supp 90 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 287–301; Stanley K. Stowers, "Does Pauline Christianity Resemble a Hellenistic Philosophy?," in *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians*, ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller, ECL 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 219–43.

¹¹ Edward Adams, "First Century Models for Paul's Churches: Selected Scholarly Developments Since Meeks," in *After the First Urban Christians: The Social-Scientific Study of Pauline Christianity Twenty-Five Years Later*, ed. Todd D. Still and David G. Horrell (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 60–78.

¹² Kloppenborg, *Christ's Associations*, 5–8.

ly into ancient organizational patterns, as Edward Adams indicates in his argument for many kinds of ancient Christ-group meeting places in the second and third centuries.¹³ Philip Harland models regional associational research and argues that some early contemporaries recognized Christian groups as associations.¹⁴ Valeriy Alikin links communal meals as a shared cultural expression between associations and early Christian gatherings.¹⁵

The impact of patronage on associations and Christ groups is also receiving further attention, inspiring additional debates, and showing the complexity of Christian interaction with ancient society. James Harrison argues that Pauline assemblies departed from the conventions of associations by regarding Christ rather than human patrons as their benefactor.¹⁶ Alicia Batten counters that associations (especially cultic ones) were cultivating the type of practical morality that reinforced Greco-Roman cultural values and ritual expressions of piety.¹⁷ Jinyu Liu describes the way in which associations more generally may have sometimes functioned related to members' occupations by receiving and overseeing distribution of funds for use in local economies.¹⁸ Recently, Philip Harland and Richard Last discuss the necessities for survival and success among associations, showing among other things that the financial essentiality

¹³ Edward Adams, *The Earliest Christian Meeting Places: Almost Exclusively Houses?*, LNTS 450 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013).

¹⁴ Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); and Philip A. Harland, *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians: Associations, Judeans, and Cultural Minorities* (New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 25–46, respectively. For ongoing objections to the latter point, see Benedikt Eckhardt, “Who Thought That Early Christians Formed Associations?,” *Mnemosyne* 71.2 (2018): 298–314; Erich S. Gruen, “Synagogues and Voluntary Associations as Institutional Models: A Response to Richard Ascough and Ralph Korner,” *JJMJS* 3 (2016): 125–31. But see also John Scheid, “Community and Community: Reflections on Some Ambiguities Based on the Thiasoi of Roman Egypt,” in *The Religious History of the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians*, ed. John A. North and Simon R. F. Price, Oxford Readings in Classical Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 366–82.

¹⁵ Valeriy A. Alikin, *The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering*, VC Supp. 102 (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Valeriy A. Alikin, “Women as Leaders in the Gatherings of Early Christian Communities: A Sociohistorical Analysis,” in *Stones, Bones, and the Sacred*, ed. Alan H. Cadwallader, Essays on Material Culture and Ancient Religion in Honor of Dennis E. Smith (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 221–40.

¹⁶ James R. Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace in Its Graeco-Roman Context*, WUNT II 172 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

¹⁷ Alicia Batten, “The Moral World of Greco-Roman Associations,” *SR* 36.1 (2007): 135–51.

¹⁸ Jinyu Liu, “The Economy of Endowments: The Case of the Roman Collegia,” in *Pistoi Dia Tèn Technèn. Bankers, Loans and Archives in the Ancient World. Studies in Honour of Raymond Bogaert*, ed. K. Verboven, K. Vandorpe, and V. Chankowski, *Studia Hellenistica* 44 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007), 231–56.

of patrons to group survival may have been exaggerated, with much necessary funding arising from dues and mutual support from members.¹⁹

Nonetheless, patrons were important to the prosperity of many groups, and sometimes to their structure and life. A significant feature of women's civic and associational participation appears to have been the role their benefactions played in facilitating chances for them to lead. This was not true *only* for women, since men's patronage was also linked to their ability to secure civic and associational influence, but it was true *especially* for women, to whom influential positions were less accessible. There are several theories regarding why women's benefactory activity coincided with their increasing civic and associational participation in the Hellenistic and Roman eras, but increases clearly occurred, beginning in the third century BCE in the Greek East and rising further through the first and second centuries CE.²⁰ Hemelrijk identifies an uptick in women benefactors in Latin inscriptions in the West beginning in the second century BCE and rising markedly by the second century CE.²¹

Current biblical scholarship increasingly makes connections between epigraphic evidence on women and the New Testament. Carolyn Osiek and Margaret MacDonald (with Janet Tulloch) place material culture in conversation with women in early Christian literature.²² They follow Bernadette Brooten in countering a presupposition that men's ancient leadership roles were functional, women's merely honorary.²³ Osiek, MacDonald, and later Susan Hylen work instead from the interpretive position that women in "house churches" oversaw groups in the same ways that men exercised oversight.²⁴ An approach shared by Ute Eisen, this method examines women as the subjects – the acting

¹⁹ Philip A. Harland and Richard Last, *Group Survival in the Ancient Mediterranean: Rethinking Material Conditions in the Landscape of Jews and Christians* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 99–118. They add to the arguments put forward initially in John S. Kloppenborg, "Precedence at the Communal Meal in Corinth," *NovT* 58.2 (2016): 167–203. Further discussion on the subject can also be found in John S. Kloppenborg, "The Meals of Christ Groups in Comparative Perspective," in *Greco-Roman Associations, Deities, and Early Christianity*, ed. Bruce W. Longenecker (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2022), 121–37.

²⁰ See Van Bremen, *The Limits of Participation*. On theories, 3–5. For timing, 298–300.

²¹ Hemelrijk, "Female Munificence," 70. See also Emily A. Hemelrijk, *Women and Society in the Roman World: A Sourcebook of Inscriptions from the Roman West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

²² Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006). With a similar approach and topical format, see also Lynn H. Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians: Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).

²³ Bernadette Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue*, BJS 36 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2020).

²⁴ Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place*. Susan E. Hylen, *Women in the New Testament World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

agents – in their own lives, rather than people who are primarily acted upon by others.²⁵ Following in the path laid by feminist exegesis and of women's history, scholars seek to recover and articulate the stories of women who are represented in the Bible and in historical artifacts, respectively.²⁶ Such work parallels developments in the study of Roman history, where the agency and activity of women are being explored using the kind of re-imagining that this study will engage.²⁷

In saying the Bible and historical artifacts “represent” women's activity and agency, I am nodding to the argument of feminist historians of religion that evidence from inscriptions is not an entirely reliable link to ancient reality. Inscriptions are honorific elements that lift up what their creators want them to present to the public or private audience who will view them. They are not neutral objects, nor are they comparable to modern historians' notes about events.²⁸ My own view, however, is that the inscriptions in the ensuing study are still the best evidence that we have about women's activities in the ancient world.

Additional methods have also helped to amplify what can be said about the women in early Christianity. Antionette Clark Wire develops a feminist rhetorical framework for reading Paul's Corinthian interlocutors, emphasizing the agency of the Corinthian women and their devotion to Christ as Paul seeks to

²⁵ Ute E. Eisen, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity: Epigraphical and Literary Studies* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 2.

²⁶ One example of fictionally reconstructing a plausible, common woman in ancient Ephesus can be seen in Holly Beers, *A Week in the Life of a Greco-Roman Woman, A Week in the Life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019).

²⁷ A major contribution to this work is Sarah Levin-Richardson, *The Brothel of Pompeii: Sex, Class, and Gender at the Margins of Roman Society*, 1st ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019). The second portion of the book uses the products of research to imagine the experiences of people who were involved with the brothel. A recent collection of essays engaging this process can be found in Brenda Longfellow and Molly Swetnam-Burland, eds., *Women's Lives, Women's Voices: Roman Material Culture and Female Agency in the Bay of Naples* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021). Their goal is to explore the unrecorded elements of ancient women's lives: “This volume focuses on the silences, and its goal is to consider how women from a range of social backgrounds engaged with the local community through families, businesses, and religious activity, and how they expressed their identities in the funerary realm.” Brenda Longfellow and Molly Swetnam-Burland, “Introduction,” in *Women's Lives, Women's Voices*, 2.

²⁸ For more on this critical perspective of women's history, see Rosemary Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse*, Thinking Gender (New York: Routledge, 1993). See also Carrie Duncan, “Inscribing Authority: Female Title Bearers in Jewish Inscriptions,” *Religions (Basel, Switzerland)* 3.1 (2012): 37–49; Elizabeth A. Clark, “Early Christian Women: Sources and Interpretation,” in *That Gentle Strength: Historical Perspectives on Women in Christianity* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 19–35; Elizabeth A. Castelli, “Gender, Theory, and The Rise of Christianity: A Response to Rodney Stark,” *J ECS* 6.2 (1998): 227–57.

persuade them.²⁹ Ross Shepard Kraemer advances a nuanced perspective that links changing women's roles in ancient culture to changes among early Christians – and later, resurging constraints for both.³⁰ Laura Nasrallah focuses on archaeology with a feminist materialist approach to consider the reception of Pauline writings among marginalized early believers.³¹

In addition, monographs and collections utilize inscriptional evidence to create a multidimensional understanding of ancient life in specific regions important to biblical interpretation. *The First Urban Churches* volumes work at fleshing out the cities of Paul's letters.³² Lilian Portefaix theorizes a group of women as the intended audience for Philippians (and also Luke-Acts).³³ Jorunn Økland assembles information about sanctuaries and ritual spaces in Corinth, arguing that Paul constrains women's worship in 1 Cor 11–14 based on construction of sanctuaries as male spaces.³⁴ Jill Marshall considers curse tablets and temple artifacts to reconstruct Corinthian contexts for women's prophetic speech, advocating for casuistic guidance to the women, with consequent inconsistencies in Paul's advice.³⁵ Elif Karaman reexamines the Ephesian social

²⁹ Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990). Cf. Joseph A. Marchal, ed., *After the Corinthian Women Prophets*, 1st ed., SemeiaSt 97 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021).

³⁰ Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). In her later work, she questions the reliability of women's influence as depicted in texts that construct gender and religious ideas. See Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Unreliable Witnesses. Religion, Gender, and History in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

³¹ Laura Salah Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

³² James R. Harrison and L. L. Welborn, eds., *The First Urban Churches 1: Methodological Foundations* (Williston: SBL Press, 2015); James R. Harrison and L. L. Welborn, eds., *The First Urban Churches 2: Roman Corinth* (Williston: SBL Press, 2016); James R. Harrison and Laurence Welborn, eds., *The First Urban Churches 3: Ephesus*, WGRWSup 9 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018); James R. Harrison and L. L. Welborn, eds., *The First Urban Churches 4: Roman Philippi*, WGRWSup 13 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018); James R. Harrison and L. L. Welborn, eds., *The First Urban Churches 5: Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea*, WGRWSup 16 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019); James R. Harrison and L. L. Welborn, *The First Urban Churches 6: Rome and Ostia*, WGRWSup 18 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021).

³³ Lilian Portefaix, *Sisters Rejoice: Paul's Letter to the Philippians and Luke-Acts as Seen by First-Century Philippian Women*, ConBNT 20 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1988).

³⁴ Jorunn Økland, *Women in Their Place: Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space*, LNTS (London: Bloomsbury, 2005).

³⁵ Jill E. Marshall, *Women Praying and Prophesying in Corinth: Gender and Inspired Speech in First Corinthians*, WUNT II 448 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

contexts for women, concluding that their experiences in early Christ groups were similar to women's Greco-Roman rituals in Ephesus.³⁶

Still, for named women in the early Christian texts, the functions and activities of benefactors and leaders in Christ groups remain obscure. Did they usually furnish a meeting venue? Did they provide a common meal? Were there rules for membership, and did benefactors help create them? Did benefactors often give endowments, and if so, what were their planned uses? Were there penalties if plans were changed against benefactors' wishes? Were gifts given to members at specified times, or were other financial supports available? Did the early Christ groups provide monuments, as other associations did? Did the benefactors receive any honorific commemoration, publicly or privately? On all these questions, early Christian texts and evidence sources are generally silent. Bain proposes that wealthy widows in Asia Minor were able to be benefactors and leaders because gendered expectations were modified by their (post)-marital status and wealth.³⁷ The way women functioned in those leadership roles remains to be more fully explored. Alikin begins to probe the possibilities by proposing that women conducted communal meals and presided over symposia in home churches just as inscriptional evidence shows them doing in community associations.³⁸ A full-length treatment is warranted to explore the complexities – and the amount of evidence – about women's benefactions across the Roman Empire and bring that to bear on dialogue about women leaders in the Pauline ἐκκλησίαι.

1.2 Women Patrons and Mothers as Comparanda

My project augments existing scholarship by examining inscriptional evidence for ancient women's benefactions to better understand what roles, responsibilities, and activities are associated with their beneficence. I test and apply the thesis put forward by Emily Hemelrijk that a distinction exists between the two specific roles available to women in associations and cities – patron and “mother.” Hemelrijk argues that in the Latin West, associations and municipalities recruited women *patrons* from among the Roman elite, often with formal coopting processes and a private patron's plaque, but those patrons did not participate in the organizations; *mothers* were recruited from among the wealthy *non*-elite, exhibited their cooptation records in the meeting place of the associations rather than privately, and participated in associations

³⁶ Elif Hilal Karaman, *Ephesian Women in Greco-Roman and Early Christian Perspective*, WUNT II 474 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018).

³⁷ Bain, *Women's Socioeconomic Status*, 97–135.

³⁸ Alikin, “Women as Leaders,” 221–40.

alongside other members.³⁹ Mothers likely instigated organization or reorganization of associations, according to Liu's findings.⁴⁰ My research proposes comparing women benefactors whose roles instigated changes in structure and practice to women in early Christ groups.⁴¹ By comparing women⁴² benefactors' functions and honors in detail (and to civic contexts), my project makes the following contributions to scholarship: 1) it gathers scholarship on women patrons and mothers for an updated inventory of Latin and Greek inscriptions and papyri; 2) it treats the inscriptions as touchstones for culturally embedded experiences and relationships; 3) it compares the roles of patrons and mothers to determine whether Hemelrijk's thesis fits with evidence from the Greek East; 4) it identifies ranges of activity associated with each role; and 5) it applies the above data to named women in early Christ groups to propose defined behaviors that can be regarded as within the range of their likely activities.

1.3 Methodology

The comparative method involved in my project uses a contemporary, etic framework (associational research) to identify and classify titles, roles, and activities attributed to women in ancient inscriptions from the Hellenistic and imperial periods (third century BCE to third century CE). By emphasizing inscriptional evidence as a counterbalance for literary evidence, such work also follows the method of attempting to uncover a "people's history,"⁴³ and more specifically women's history⁴⁴ of the early Christian communities attested in New Testament literature. Responding to ongoing discussions of agency in historical scholarship, I proceed with an assumption of exercised agency, reading

³⁹ Hemelrijk, "Patronesses and 'Mothers.'" Pages 153–56 on patrons; 126–27 on mothers.

⁴⁰ Liu, "Economy of Endowments."

⁴¹ See Susan E. Benton, "Women Benefactors and Early Christ Groups," in *Greco-Roman Associations, Deities, and Early Christianity*, ed. Bruce W. Longenecker (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2022), 155–69.

⁴² I use "women" as opposed to "female" to underscore the humanity of the people in question. As feminist writers have pointed out, other animals are also called females; only a human is a woman, and feminist scholarship underscores women's full humanity. For a concise discussion, see Mary Norris, "Female Trouble: The Debate Over 'Woman' as an Adjective," *The New Yorker*, 30 May 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/commas-queen/female-trouble-the-debate-over-woman-as-an-adjective>. Accessed Dec. 22, 2022.

⁴³ See, e.g., Denis R. Janz, "Foreword," in *People's History of Christianity: From the Early Church to the Reformation*, ed. Denis R. Janz (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), xii–xv.

⁴⁴ See n28. In addition, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation*, Twentieth Century Religious Thought 1: Christianity (Boston: Beacon, 1992).

as broadly “true” the evidence that women acted in the ancient world when opportunities were available.⁴⁵

In the scholarly examination of historical actions attributed to women, interpreters sometimes ask whether their actions were fully due to their own agency or whether there might be men in their lives whose initiatives shaped the actions then credited to the woman – in this study, the benefactor. But such possibilities apply not only with women benefactors, but men also. The inscriptions do not give a view to negotiations that might have transpired before the final agreement was reached nor note how each idea came to be. If an inscription’s ascription of agency to a woman is to be doubted because it credits planning to a woman without pointing to how the conclusions came about, any other ascription of agency to any benefactor could be doubted on the same grounds. The suggestion provides no new information, nor grounds upon which any further confirmation could be secured. The fact that women’s agency was not always fostered in ancient society is no reason to believe that it was not genuine when it is described. It is possible to read women’s agency as part of a complex social environment.⁴⁶ My assumption is that women were likely to exercise agency when they had the opportunity, and that they are then represented as doing so. Given the many ways that inscriptions do ascribe agency to women benefactors, as will be seen throughout this study, the assumption of women’s agency when described is a reasonable historical position, part of the work of feminist historiography and exegesis.⁴⁷

1.4 Outline of the Book

My current research has two dimensions. First, in chapters two and three, I tabulate inscriptional data about women patrons and mothers in associational

⁴⁵ Modeled by Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*. Also by Eisen, *Women Officeholders*.

⁴⁶ See comments about the complexity of women’s agency and subjection (in a study on Roman priestesses) by Meghan J. DiLuzio, *A Place at the Altar: Priestesses in Republican Rome* (Princeton: University Press, 2016), 9–10 and n62. As she notes: “The social dynamics of women’s subordination and agency go beyond deciding between one side of a binary choice. Agency takes place within social constraints particular to one’s time and culture.”

⁴⁷ This approach is key to the recovery of women’s perspectives in Biblical narratives: see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, 10th ann. ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1994); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1984). For an outline of the goals and implications of women’s history, see Joan Kelly, “The Social Relation of the Sexes. Methodological Implications of Women’s History,” in *Women, History & Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly*, Women in Culture and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 1–18; Arlette Farge, “Methods and Effects of Women’s History,” in *Writing Women’s History*, ed. Michelle Perrot (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

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