

CAPInv. 627: U-NEA-018

I. LOCATION

i. Geographical area	The Near East and Beyond
ii. Region	Syria
iii. Site	Palmyra

II. NAME

i. Association with unknown name	U-NEA-018
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III. DATE

i. Date(s)	1 - 50 AD
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IV. NAME AND TERMINOLOGY

iii. Descriptive terms	□ □ □ <i>m̄rz</i> □□ ,
Note	<i>m̄rz</i> □ : PAT 0991, ll. 4 and 16 (restored; it is preceded by <i>gbr</i> ’, "man" (thus the reference is to a member of the group).

V. SOURCES

i. Source(s)	PAT 0991 (AD 1-50)
i.a. Source type(s)	Epigraphic source(s)
i.b. Document(s) typology & language/script	Aramaic sacred Law
i.c. Physical format(s)	Three fragments of hard limestone.
ii. Source(s) provenance	Re-used in a wall in the age of Justinian, near the north side of the temple of Baalshamin.

VI. BUILT AND VISUAL SPACE

ii. References to buildings/objects	<p><i>'drwn'</i>. This word is normally understood as a transliteration of the Greek ἀνδρῶν <i>andron</i>, but Mesopotamian origins have also been suggested (on the problem, see Teixidor 1981: 311; Kaizer 2002: 223-5; Brock 2005: 12). In this inscription, reference is made to taking an oath in the <i>'drwn'</i> (l. 11), and to drinking in the <i>'drwn'</i> (l. 14); this seems to suggest a building, maybe a banqueting hall.</p> <p><i>bt b[l'str]</i>. No one shall steal from the "house of B[elastor]" (l. 12); this may refer to the temple of Bel (if Belastor is in fact another, older name for Bel), but it could also be used metaphorically. Maybe this is even the name of the association?</p> <p><i>b[y]t bl</i>. A distribution of food "at the house of Bel" is regulated in l. 15. Again, this may refer to the temple of Bel, in which case it might be equivalent to the house of Belastor.</p>
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VII. ORGANIZATION

ii. Leadership	<p><i>kmry' dy bl'str wb 'l[šmn]</i>, "the priests of Belastor and Baalshamin" (l. 2).</p> <p>Due to the insecurity regarding the nature of this group, it is unclear if these are really officials of an association. They might also be priests of a sanctuary (of Baalshamin?). Teixidor 1981: 312 assumes that the priests were spiritual guides in charge of the discipline, while the membership would consist of lay people. But the other extreme is at least as probable: on analogy with the priests of Bel, this could be a priestly college that has certain rules for in-group behaviour; it could then not be regarded as a private association. The main problem is that the connection between l. 2 (where the priests are mentioned) and l. 3-4 ("the members of the <i>mrz</i>"') is unclear due to the fragmentary state of the inscription. Are the members really mentioned "after a reference to the priests" in l. 2 (McLaughlin 2001: 52), or are all members priests?</p>
iii. Members	<p>Single members of the group are referred to as <i>gbr'</i> 'man'.</p>
iv. Officials Known practice of appointment	<p><i>dy yhw' '□ yd 'l dh[š]</i> (l. 9), "he who will be elected over the treasury" (cf. l. 6 <i>ldhb'</i>, "to the treasury").</p> <p>We know that magistrates were elected by vote, but the procedure is unknown.</p>
vi. Laws and rules	<p>Regulations on banquets that also involve the election of a chief-sacrificer have fragmentarily been preserved in ll. 4-6.</p> <p>Ll. 8-9 deal with voting procedures.</p> <p>In ll. 19, Teixidor 1981: 312 sees a reference to "him who makes a journey", and deduces from this reading a regulation on absence comparable to Greek associations. This reading does not seem to have been accepted (McLaughlin 2001 and Kaizer 2002 refuse to give an interpretation of this very fragmentary line).</p>
viii. Obligations	<p>L. 11 mentions fines to be paid, apparently in case of a broken oath. L. 13 also mentions fines to be paid, possibly in relation to the regulation in l. 12 against stealing.</p>
ix. Privileges	<p>Distributions (from sacrifices?) are mentioned in l. 15-16.</p>

VIII. PROPERTY AND POSSESSIONS

i. Treasury/Funds	<p><i>dy yhw' '□ yd 'l dh[š]</i> (l. 9), "he who will be elected over the treasury" (cf. l. 6 <i>ldhb'</i>, "to the treasury").</p>
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IX. MEMBERSHIP

ii. Gender	Men
Note	The inscription consistently uses <i>gbr'</i> , "man", to refer to a member. Teixidor (p. 312) is possibly correct in taking this usage at face value.

X. ACTIVITIES

iii. Worship	The activities mentioned in the text points to the worship of Belastor and Baalshamin by the group.
Deities worshipped	Belastor and Baalshamin

XII. NOTES

iii. Bibliography	<p>Brock, S.P. (2005), 'Greek and Latin Words in Palmyrene Inscriptions: A Comparison with Syriac', in: Cussini, E. (ed.), <i>A Journey to Palmyra. Collected Essays to Remember Delbert R. Hillers</i>, Leiden: 11-25.</p> <p>Kaizer, T. (2002), <i>The Religious Life of Palmyra. A Study of the Social Patterns of Worship in the Roman Period</i>. Stuttgart (168-9).</p> <p>McLaughlin, J.L. (2001), <i>The marzēa□ in the Prophetic Literature. References and Allusions in Light of the Extra-Biblical Evidence</i>. Leiden/Boston (51-3).</p> <p>Teixidor, J. (1981), 'Le thiase de Bêlastor et de Beelshamên d'après une inscription récemment découverte à Palmyre', <i>CRAI</i>: 306-14.</p>
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XIII. EVALUATION

i. Private association	Possible
Note	<p>This is either a priestly college or an association of worshippers that was dominated by priests. The difference is a huge one, and the fragmentary state of this important text - possibly the only "statute" of an association preserved from the Near East - is deplorable.</p> <p>Against an optimistic view that in some way or other detaches the reference to the priests in l. 2 from the general characterization of the group, one may point to the distributions "in the house of Bel"; word division is then insecure, but what follows is <i>bny 't'qb kmry[']</i>, "Bene Ate'aqab, the priests". The reference may be to a tribe and (its?) priests, who had certain obligations in the temple of Bel.</p> <p>Still, the regulations seem compatible with what is known about associations from elsewhere. Even if the group in question was a priestly college rather than a private association (which cannot be proven), it remains an important witness to the reception of the association-model in Syria.</p>