‘Colony’ and ‘metropolis’ in Philo. Examples of Mimicry and Hybridity in Philo’s writing back from the Empire?

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Philo is often read as one who finds his position in general quite well situated in the diaspora, and as one who exhibits a very positive attitude towards the Roman Empire. At the same time, we also know that the Jewish Diaspora communities of Alexandria of his time underwent severe social troubles, and for some time in the late thirties C.E. even suffered from an anti-Jewish pogrom in the city. Two works of Philo in particular deal with these events: the *Legatio ad Gaium* (*Leg.*), and the *In Flaccum* (*Flacc.*). Here we have Philo’s own descriptions of the events, and to some extent this is how Philo writes back from the Empire. But as far I have been able to discover, no study has so far investigated Philo’s attitudes towards the Roman Empire in light of the more recent perspectives of postcolonialism. Hence there is a need to have a new look at how Philo’s descriptions should be read and interpreted. The present study, being a small and first part of a larger project, will try to carry out just such an anti-imperial and postcolonial reading, focusing especially on Philo’s use of the terms for colony (*ἀγοικία*) and mother-city (*μητρόπολις*).

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1. Philo in the world of Imperialism, Colonialism, Mimicry and Hybridity

The Roman Empire was present everywhere in Philo’s world. It was heard, seen and coped with every day of his life, at home, in the Synagogue and in the streets, in business, law and politics. From the presence of the Roman Prefect and his administration in Alexandria, to the many statues and temples in the city, the Roman Empire was inescapable. F. Segovia, who is one of those who has worked much with postcolonial perspectives in Biblical interpretation, has characterized the reality of empire, that is, imperialism and colonialism, as « an omnipresent, inescapable, and overwhelming reality ».

Philo Judeaeus

Philo himself belonged to a rich and influential family in Alexandria. His brother Alexander Lysimachus was “alabarch”, perhaps an office concerned with administration of the paying of taxes and customs. Josephus says that Alexander « surpassed all his fellow citizens both in ancestry and in wealth » (Ant. 20:100). Thus Philo too probably belonged to the elite segment of the Jewish Alexandrian community. It is also obvious from Philo’s own writings that he had official positions in the city, and his story of the delegation under his leadership to Rome is told in his Legatio. It is not obvious, however, what kind of office he did hold in the city, and for how long. Goodenough emphasizes « that his duties were of a judicial character » but admits that « this cannot be demonstrated ».

Philo was a Jew, but the ‘kind’ or ‘degree’ of Jewishness of his life and work has been variously evaluated. The writings of Philo, furthermore, demonstrate a fairly good knowledge of the Greco-Roman culture prevalent, not least of the


various philosophers and their ideas\(^\text{6}\). The Jewish scholar S. Sandmel says that « In Philo, the Greek philosophical tradition (was) absorbed to the maximum; on the other hand, Philo was as loyal to Judaism as any personality in the age with which we deal, and, indeed as any personality in subsequent times »\(^7\). According to P. Borgen, however, Philo was a Jew on the border of being absorbed by the Greco-Roman culture\(^8\). This, it must be added, was not because Philo compromised his Judaism or merged Hellenism and Judaism, but because of his efforts to conquer the Greco-Roman culture by asserting that all the good to be found therein in fact stemmed from Judaism\(^9\).

It is thus possible to read Philo as a Jew very much acculturated to his Greco-Roman setting. But he was nevertheless despising those who became apostates and did not shrink back from advocating zealotic vigilantism against non-conformers caught in ‘flagrant’ situations of gross subversive deviance (see *Spec. leg.* 1:54-57; 1:315-318; 2:252-254)\(^10\). Philo firmly upheld monotheism, the Torah, Jerusalem, and the Temple as central markers of Jewish identity. He was acculturated to his surroundings, but is not to be considered as an assimilated Jew\(^11\). His point of reference for his own identity is firmly rooted in Jewish ideology (cf. *Migr.* 89-93)\(^12\).

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12. His allegiance to Judaism is further demonstrated by his attitudes toward such social phenomena as family structures and marriage rules. His view of Jewish family life is highly restrictive: women are to be kept at home and protected from disturbing influences (*Spec. leg.* 3:169-174; cf. Pseudo Phocylides 215-216). He condemns the brother-sis-
Philo presents his characters as being very much aware of having a special Law, compared to the laws of other peoples. In _Jos._ 42 he has Joseph declare to the wife of Potiphar « We children of the Hebrews follow laws and customs which are especially our own ». In _Confus._ 141 he describes Israel as « those who live under the best institutions », and repeatedly as living in a « sacred commonwealth » under God. The Jews had one God and one Temple ( _Dec._ 65; cf. _Contra Apion._ 2:164f., 193f). The purpose of their laws was to honor the One God ( _Spec._ leg. 3:165; _Congr._ 98; _Migr._ 131). How then did he cope with the Roman Empire? It is with regard to this question that we suggest that perspectives as mimicry and hybridity, both taken from postcolonial studies, might prove illuminating.

**Greek and Roman Colonization**

Most recent scholarship on these topics emphasize that the colonization in ancient times changed from the Greek to the Roman periods. And there were changes and developments within each of these periods. It is not our duty to dig deep into this history, but only to point out some important structures that might also be of help in interpreting Philo.

In the _Greek world_, colonization changed very much from archaic times to the classical times and the heights of Hellenism, but some aspects remained. Scholars emphasize that colonization was not for trading purposes. That is a modern concept. But in the main the great Greek colonizing movement was caused by overpopulation and desire for land. Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that there were no states or nations at this time, no centers, but a lot of independent cities, so-called city-states, many of them having a lot of small colonies. In the archaic period, most colonies were founded by cities that made a decision to send out a group of colonists to settle elsewhere. These colonies were from the outset politically independent, « but maintained cultural and particularly religious ties with the metropolis »._16_ A city, which was itself a colony, could also be a mother-city to its own colonies, thus being part of a wider network of cities and colonies. It belongs, however, to the picture of ancient Greek colonization, that Greek overseas settlements became increasingly imperialistic, increasingly colonialistic, in the modern sense of the word._17_ During the Hellenistic era the...

_13. See Spec. leg. 1:51; 4:55, 100; _Vita Mosis_ 2:211._


_15. A. J. Graham, _Colony and Mother City in Ancient Greece_, Ares Publishers, Chicago, 1983, p. 5._


_17. Wilson, _Greek and Roman Colonization, op. cit._, p. 51.
nature of political structures thus changed, and colonies were integrated into and within the kingdoms. These tendencies were enlarged in the Roman times.

The history of the Roman colonization comprises a long history too, from Rome’s conquest of Italy to far out in the life of the Roman Empire. In early times, the purposes of colonization was a part of a military strategy of securing the power of Rome, later it was more a means of relieving poverty at Rome by allowing redistribution of land, a way of increasing Roman manpower, to finally again it was used by the emperors in their need to secure the empire, especially in the far-away provinces and at the borders. Thus at the time of the empire the colonies where overwhelmingly of a military character. As such, these colonies also had several cultural purposes and impacts. According to E. T. Salmon, « the avowed aim of these imperial colonies was to provide discharged legionaries with farms and thereby integrate them into the civilian life of the Empire ». Furthermore, as they were peopled with former soldiers who received Roman citizenship, the colonies also became cultural important as promoters of Roman influence such as the Latin language and the imperial cult; and they familiarized the natives with Roman customs and institutions. But Salmon also emphasizes their continuing strategic role for the emperors: « the ex-legionaries, or in some cases ex-praetorians, peopling the colonies were guardians of the Empire in whose armed forces they had so long served, and they could help the standing army either to repel invaders from without or to repress insurgents from within ». Accordingly, at the time of Philo the military nature of the colonies could not be denied, neither could their imperialistic nature.

Jewish Settlements in the Egyptian Diaspora

At the time of Philo, there had been Jews in the Diaspora in general, and in Egypt and Alexandria in particular for a long time. There is no fixed date from

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which we can say the history of the Jewish Egyptian Diaspora started, but there are some pivotal events in the history of Israel that certainly provides points of departure. Central points here are the times when the land was occupied and parts of the people had to go into exile: the first main deportation found place in 722/721 BCE, when the northern kingdom was occupied; then in 586 BCE King Nebuchadnezzar deported peoples of Judea to Babylonia. During these times, according to the Book of Jeremiah (43-44), some Jews also fled to Egypt. Later on, several Jews became exiled by various kings and warlords. Many became slaves and was transported to Egypt, but many also worked as soldiers. The Jews arriving in Egypt « settled all over Egypt, in the towns and in the country. Although living in Egypt, their ties with Jerusalem and Palestine remained strong and communication was made the easier by the fact that for about 100 years (301-198 B.C.) Palestine was one of the Ptolemies’ foreign possessions ».

No doubt up through the centuries many Jews left Palestine because of several other reasons too, like trade opportunities, work emigration, or just because they wanted to leave their homeland for some more adventurous reasons. Hence some were settled there by force, others came with hopes of prosperity and better lives. Philo himself says the number of Jews in Egypt amounted to 1 million (Flacc. 43), what is probably an exaggeration. As to location in Alexandria, he says that there were five quarters in Alexandria, named after the first letters of the alphabet: « Two of these are called Jewish because most of the Jews inhabit them » (Flacc. 55).

Interpretative relevance of Postcolonialism, Mimicry and Hybridity

With the introduction of postcolonial perspectives in the research of, e.g., the works and views of Philo, a variety of vocabulary is also introduced. First, one should distinguish between imperialism and colonialism. Imperialism « is an ideological concept which upholds the legitimacy of the economic and military control » of someone over some others. Colonialism, on the other hand, represents a special form of imperialism and denotes usually the establishment of a settlement of a group of people in a new location. In a way one might say that ‘colonization’ in its traditional way is now over; on the other hand there are still various forms of imperialism at work in the world at large.

There is also a certain ambiguity in the use of the label ‘post(-)colonialism’, whether it is hyphenated or not. My own use of this term is here influenced

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27. See here Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, Post-Colonial Studies, op. cit., p. 6-36.
by R. S. Sugirtharajah\textsuperscript{28}. He pinpoints that postcolonialism is a methodological category, and as a critical practice has two aspects attached to it: « First, to analyze the diverse strategies by which the colonizers constructed images of the colonized; and second, to study how the colonized themselves made use of and went beyond many of those strategies in order to articulate their identity, self-worth and empowerment »\textsuperscript{29}. When studying Philo in postcolonial perspectives, my focus is on the latter; on how he was writing back from the empire. Hence I use the unhyphenated version of the term ‘postcolonialism’ « as signifying a reactive resistance discourse of the colonized who critically interrogate dominant knowledge systems in order to recover the past… »\textsuperscript{30}. In some ways, and in many contexts, ‘postcolonialism’ can be substituted by ‘anti-imperialism’ as a better term\textsuperscript{31}. As was commented on above, ‘colonialism’ changed its nature from the Hellenistic times and during the time of the Romans; hence postcolonialism and anti-imperialism are here used rather interchangeably.

In the Greco-Roman Alexandria, the Jews could choose between various strategies in relation to how to preserve their own identity. But in many – if not most – cases they would have to choose between to adapt or to adopt. We have noted above that Philo was acculturated, but he was not assimilated. Acculturation involves some degrees of adaptation to the prevalent culture; assimilation is a much more comprehensive behavior, representing to a much larger degree not only an adaptation, but also an adoption of local and prevalent cultural aspects in order to be as integrated in the relevant society as possible\textsuperscript{32}. In much postcolonial literature the terms ‘mimicry’ and ‘hybridity’ are used to signify some of the processes at stake here. ‘Mimicry’ is a term originally used in biology. It can denote the resemblance of one organism to another that gives the mimicking organism some advantage or protection from predators. Or in some other situations it is of advantage to a predator to resemble its prey; hence the phrase « a wolf in sheep’s clothing » is an apt description\textsuperscript{33}. In postcolonial or ‘anti-imperial’ studies its understanding is highly influenced by the use set forth by Homi K. Bhabha. According to Bhabha\textsuperscript{34}, « colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence […] Mimicry

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{29} Sugirtharajah, « Charting the Aftermath », \textit{op. cit.}, p. 7.
\bibitem{30} Sugirtharajah, « Charting the Aftermath », \textit{op. cit.}, p. 8.
\bibitem{32} This is much too brief, but it may suffice in the present context. For a further discussion of this terminology and the social processes involved, see Seland, « Conduct yourselves », \textit{op. cit.}
\bibitem{33} See more on this in Britannica Online Encyclopedia: http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/383252/mimicry.
\bibitem{34} H. K. Bhabha, \textit{The Location of Culture}, Routledge, London, 1994 [reprint 2004], p. 122.
\end{thebibliography}
emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal ». To some extent the colonizer might encourage the colonized subjects to mimic the colonizer, but it might also evolve as a strategy on the side of the colonized in order to survive or even to conquer the culture of the colonizer by enlarging on common aspects. But it is often emphasized that « by adopting the colonizer’s cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values, the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits. Rather the result is a ‘blurred copy’ of the colonizer that can be quite threatening »35. It is here that the concept of ‘hybridity’ enters. Hybridity denotes the new transcultural forms that may develop in the meeting of the colonizer and colonized, especially as the one mimics the other. It may take many forms, linguistic, cultural, political, racial etc.36 Hybridity, furthermore, has also proved itself valuable in understanding Diaspora contexts37. Hence, we suggest that in our study of Philo’s use of ‘colony’ and ‘mother-city’ both mimicry and hybridity are important concepts for understanding his writing back from the Empire.

2. Philo writing back from the Empire

The expression ‘Philo writing back from the Empire’ is influenced by the book of Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, The Empire Writes Back38. Much postcolonial literature have focused on how the peoples and life in the colonies have been depicted, described and evaluated in literature written from the center, from the imperial point of view; Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin try to broaden the horizon by focusing on how the empire wrote back, that is how writers in and from the colonies wrote. According to the view of these authors, which has not escaped criticism39, one might distinguish between three groups or stages of postcolonial literature: the « literate elite whose primary identification is with the colonizing power »40. In our context, one might think about the Roman leaders as Cicero, Pliny and Tacitus as belonging to these elites. Second, there is the literature produced under imperial license, or by « ‘natives’ and ‘outcasts’ who have entered a privileged class endowed with values and time to write from their perspective »41. Here one might – with some qualifications – think about the Jewish historian Josephus who, though being a Jew, was brought to Rome by the (upcoming) Emperor and enjoyed the privileged life of being a member of the elite at the imperial center, writing historical works trying to explain to the Romans what had really happened in Palestine before and during

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the great war of 66-70 CE\(^4\). Then lastly, we might have those being colonized, and writing from the oppressed and colonized perspective. In my opinion, but again with some qualifications, we should read Philo from this perspective; at least this is the perspective I would like to apply in my reading of his use of ‘colony’ and ‘mother-city’ in his *In Flaccum* and his *Legatio*.

In these two works, I find Philo writing back from the Empire. The question of the addressees of these writings is debated, but it is most probable that we here have Philo writing not only for his fellow-Jews, but maybe even more for the Roman authorities.

Reading Philo as one writing back from and against the Empire is not a new procedure, though the postcolonial perspective and terminology is novel. Reading Philo as an opponent of the Romans, and as one writing against the Romans both openly and in coded form, was the thesis of E. R. Goodenough, most emphatically set forth in his *The Politics of Philo Judaeus*\(^4\). Here he argues that Philo was at the same time both a privileged citizen and an alien. He belonged to the elite segments of the Jewish communities in Alexandria, but at the same time he was an alien, not having access to the same privileges as the Roman citizens. And Philo was not a loving admirer of the Roman authorities: « he loved the Romans no more than the skipper of a tiny boat loves the hurricane »\(^4\). Hence, in such a situation, Goodenough argues, any opponent of the Romans had to be careful in what he said about the Roman authorities, and if he was to mention them at all, he might preferably have to do it cryptically or rhetorically (cf. *Somn.* 2:82-91)\(^4\). Hence Goodenough suggests that Philo deals with politics in three ways: politics direct, as in *In Flaccum* and *Legatio*; politics in code, as in *De Somniis* (especially *Somn.* 1:219-225; 2:61-64, 78-91 and 2:116-133); and politics by innuendo, that is, by negative, indirect allusion (*On Joseph*).

Concerning the addressees of *In Flaccum*, Goodenough argues that it was written for a Gentile audience after the death of Gaius, and possibly for the new prefect in Alexandria\(^6\). *Legatio*, on the other hand, he surmises was written after the accession of Claudius, and for a presentation to just that emperor\(^7\). Be that as it may, it seems obvious to most readers that these important political works of Philo are written for both Jews and Gentiles, possibly even including the Roman authorities. Hence, they represent and present Philo’s writing back from the Empire.

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Many scholars are of the opinion that Goodenough overstates his case, but the issue of hidden agendas in Philo’s ways of writing back has also gained some supporters. David M. Hay discusses Philo’s politics and exegesis in his treatise *On Dreams*, and finds that Philo here offers both overt political allegory (Somn. 1:219-225; 2:78-91 and 2:115-133), and some allegory within Allegory (Somn. 2:42-64; 2:283-299). Hence he concludes that “part of Philo’s purpose in *De Somniis* was to present answers to some of the political problems which he and his fellow Jews were facing.” Furthermore, the Danish scholar Per Bilde, in investigating *In Flaccum* and *Legatio*, concludes that he finds a “threatening tone” in these works, and that Goodenough is right in interpreting them as hidden warnings to the Roman elite: if the traditional positive politics of the Romans were changed into a negative one, such a change would call forth an armed Jewish resistance that would represent severe difficulties for Rome.

**Apoikia and Metropolis in Recent Philonic Research**

Before discussing the anti-imperial aspects of Philo’s use of ‘colony’ and ‘metropolis’, a brief look at some positions in recent research concerning these issues is in order. I regret not having been able to get my hands on the study of Carlier, but will focus on Kasher, Scott, Niehoff, and Pearce.

A. Kasher argues that Philo did not consider the Jews of Alexandria to be citizens of the Alexandrian *polis*, but to have a political entity of their own, a
The existence of such a politeuma is a view that is denied by some scholars today, but it both had and still has several followers and strong support. Hence, according to Kasher’s reading, Philo’s descriptions of the Alexandrian struggle for their rights are not to be read as a struggle for citizenship in the polis, but for the rights of their politeuma. Philo seems to have considered Alexandria as his city, because his co-nationals had lived there for generations. Furthermore, Philo stated that the Jews had settled in the cities of the Diaspora as immigrants, and their settlements were ‘colonies’ (apoikiai), having Jerusalem as their metropolis. In using such terms, Philo was trying to describe the status of the Jews in terms familiar to Greek readers: « Consequently he presented them as ordinary immigrants who laid the foundation for a ‘colony’ which according to its organization and rights was an independent body »

Kasher sees this substantiated also by Mos. 2:232; Flacc. 46-47 and Leg. 281-282. Thus from Philo’s point of view the Jewish “colony” deserved “equal status” with other “colonies”, cf. Conf. 77-78. Kasher thus concludes: « Alexandria could be considered a “homeland” only in the political sense, for it was a place in which a Jewish “colony” – organized as a separate ethnic union with a recognized political and legal status (politeuma) – had been established. Jerusalem is their mother city, not Alexandria »

J. M. Scott deals with the terms of ‘mother-city’ and ‘colony’ in the context of investigating Philo’s view on the restoration of Israel. In dealing with In Flaccum 45-46 and Legatio 281-283, Scott emphasizes that Philo’s view of the Diaspora as colonization is a positive view, even though the colonization as such is a result of overpopulation. The aspect of ‘overpopulation’ is a kind of Greek ‘topos’ in dealing with colonization, a view that was also in vogue in Egypt. But Philo also pinpoints that the Jewish Diaspora is a way of colonizing the whole world: « Philo wants to show that, contrary to Egyptian tradition, the nation of the Jews is not merely an Egyptian colony which settled “between Arab and Syria”. Rather, the Jewish nation is the one that is colonizing the world (including Egypt!) and vying


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for supremacy »59. Similarly concerning Jerusalem: as mother-city, Jerusalem is thus the center not only of world Judaism, but of the whole world. However, at the same time, according to Scott, one must not forget that there is evidence that Philo also considered the Diaspora as a negative situation to be overcome in the future. Scott points to the fact that when Philo speaks of the Jewish settlements as ἀποικίαι, one must recall that in the Septuagint this term usually translates the Hebrew גַלְגָל (Gelgal), which refer to the Babylonian exile60.

M. Niehoff61 does not consider the In Flaccum and the Legatio to have been written for the Romans at all; on the contrary, they were written for the Jews of Alexandria. Criticism had arisen over the failure in Rome of the delegation headed by Philo, and another delegation with other ideas of how to solve the problems had been established. Philo wrote for the educated upper classes who did not yet favor the more radical course of these other Jewish parties62. Furthermore, his emphasis on Jerusalem as mother-city was, according to Niehoff, « not originally part of Philo’s myth of origins »63. The references in the In Flaccum and Legatio were a relatively late development. It was not used as an argument against the Romans, but as an argument to the Jews to see their local problems in a wider framework, namely the plans of the emperor to erect a statue in the Temple. Hence it was a construction on the side of Philo to strengthen Alexandrian Jews in their attitudes to Jerusalem. Niehoff’s exposition is thus very much in opposition to that of Goodenough: the In Flaccum and Legatio were not intended for a Roman audience, they did not contain hidden attacks on the Romans, but were defending Philo’s pro-Roman politics64.

At the same time, however, Niehoff emphasizes that Philo’s « construction of Jerusalem as Mother-city », implied further Classical Greek features of colonization65, and also Roman dimensions. In fact, she can say that Philo « modeled the role of Jerusalem on the position of Rome in the Empire », and that loyalty to Jerusalem would provide them with « the same kind of identity as Roman citizenship », an identity that would « transcend the boundaries of a specific state and create a sense of world-wide community »66. Strangely enough, she does not see any anti-Roman sentiments in such a program.

In her article on Jerusalem as ‘Mother-city’ in the writings of Philo of Alexandria67, S. Pearce discusses with both Kasher and Niehoff. In general, Pearce does not support the interpretation of mother-city in Philo as claiming

64. See especially Niehoff, Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture, op. cit., p. 39-40.
67. Pearce, « Jerusalem as ‘Mother-City’ in the writings of Philo of Alexandria », op. cit.
the centrality of Jerusalem over and against other homelands for the Jews. Against Kasher, she argues that his arguments that the Jews of Alexandria did not want citizenship in that city, but only the rights of their Alexandrian politeuma do not fit the evidence. The little evidence there is supports more a struggle for citizenship. Furthermore, the evidence for a Jewish politeuma in Alexandria is meager. Neither does she find that Niehoff is correct in suggesting that the image of Jerusalem as mother-city was constructed in order to enhance the loyalty of the Jews in Alexandria to Palestine and Jerusalem. The Greek colonies did not have that strong feeling of attachments to their mother-city as seems to underlay such arguments.

On the other hand, Pearce argues, the image of mother-city does not focus so much on Jerusalem as mother-city as such as on the Jewish settlements in the Diaspora as ‘colonies.’ And this perspective and emphasis Philo has found in the Greek Bible. Mother-city is not much used in the Septuagint, but Jerusalem is depicted as mother, and ἀπολικία is much more frequent. Hence Pearce great emphasis is that the Jewish Scriptures is the great point of Philo’s reference and source: « Philo’s primary influence here is not Greek descriptions of colonization, but the language of the translators of the Greek Bible »68. From this it follows that, within such a framework, ‘colonies’ go together with ‘mother-cities’: « The identification of the mother-city with Jerusalem is derived from Scripture since the Golah, or in Greek-Jewish terms the ἀπολικία, derives from that city. It is primarily in Scripture that we should look for the origins of Philo’s reference to Jerusalem as μητρόπολις: the starting point, however, for this conceptualization is in the designation of communities outside Judaea as ἀπολικεῖοι »69. Pearce finds no tension between the notion of Jerusalem as mother-city and Alexandria as home. But some questions remain though; for instance why do these terms show up primarily in In Flaccum and in Legatio, and what is the purpose of Philo of using them just in these works? The lack of answers to such questions is a major drawback in her study.

Philo was an expositor of Scripture, and while In Flaccum and Legatio are not expository works as such, they are nevertheless representations of history interpreted in light of the ideology set forth in his other works; or as Borgen has characterized them: « Writings in which Pentateuchal material is applied to socio-religious factors in the Jewish community »70. Hence by studying terms used by Philo, one should also draw upon his version of Scripture, the Septuagint.

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68. Pearce, « Jerusalem as ‘Mother-City’ in the writings of Philo of Alexandria », op. cit., p. 33.
69. Pearce, « Jerusalem as ‘Mother-City’ in the writings of Philo of Alexandria », op. cit., p. 34.

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'Αποικία and μετρόπολις in the Septuagint and Philo’s works, except In Flaccum and Legatio

Even if we suspend for a moment a reading of the two historical works of Philo, we will find that he uses these terms several times, and in several of his works. A quick overview will also reveal that he can present expositions of several topics by help of these terms. Two main meanings dominate in his works: the one is that of ‘migration’ as such; the other is that of ‘being sent out as a colony’. In the latter group the verb στέλλω is important, as that is often used together with ἀποικία in other works, signifying the sending out of colonies.

But here a brief look at the Septuagint (LXX) should be relevant, as it was the Bible of Philo’s time. The term ἀποικία is used 31 times in the Septuagint; most of these are in the Book of Jeremiah and in Ezra. The first is dealing with the exile, and the Greek word ἀποικία is most often here used as a translation of the Hebrew פָּלַח or its derivatives, denoting the ‘exile’ period or conditions of the Jews. In the Book of Ezra, all 8 occurrences deal with those having returned from the exile in Babilonia, cf. Neh. 7:6. It is thus an important word for describing the Jewish exile, and most often translated as ‘exile’ in modern translations. It is not however used together with μετρόπολις.

In Philo’s works, this is quite different. The noun ἀποικία, which in its various forms are used 43 times by Philo, is never used in the same way as in the Septuagint, that is as a word for the Jewish ‘exile’. But in his works it is used in dealing with at least the following other four topics: when Abraham is leaving his home and home country / homecity and going into Canaan, he is said to migrate to Canaan; when the people of Israel travels from Egypt to Canaan, they too are described as migrating; then, when Philo describes the proselytes, they too are described as having performed a crossing over from one setting to another, from one country to another; and then we have his descriptions of the souls coming into the bodies of men, staying there for a while and then returning. The wise men’s souls as descending are compared to that of sending colonies from heaven, but they are not described as such: Conf. 77-78 is interesting also for our reading of Philo’s understanding of the more political connotations of these terms:

[...] all whom Moses calls wise are represented as sojourners (παροικοῦντες). Their souls are never colonists leaving heaven for a new home (στέλλονται

73. This is what one would have expected concerning the Bible translations, as modern Bibles are translated from the Hebrew text. But the translation ‘exile’ is also used in the most recent English translation of the Septuagint; see A. Pietersma and B. J. Wright (eds.), A New English Translation of the Septuagint, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007.
74. See Abr. 66.68.72.77.85; Heres. 98.
75. See Mos. 1:71.163.170.195.222.233.236.239.255.256; Cong. 84; Spec. 2:146.150.158.
76. See Spec. 4:178; Virt. 102.219; Praem. 16-17.
Their way is to visit earthly nature as men who travel abroad to see and learn. So when they have stayed awhile in their bodies, and beheld through them all that sense and mortality has to shew, they make their way back to the place from where they set out at the first. To them the heavenly region, where their citizenship lies, is their native land (πατρίδα μεν τόν ούρανον χώρον εν ὑποδημάνται); the earthly region in which they became sojourners is a foreign country. For surely, when men found a colony, the land which receives them becomes their native land instead of the mother city (τοῖς μεν γὰρ ἀποκικιαῖς στειλαμένοις αὐτί τῆς μητροπόλεως ἢ ὑποδημάνυν δῆπος πατρίς), but to the traveller abroad the land which sent him forth is still the mother to whom also he yearns for to return.

In this text Philo is presenting and preserving a difference between one who travels in order to visit and learn, and one who is sent out as a colonist: the latter has a more relaxed relation to his homeland, his mother-city, and considers his new place of residence to be his homeland, his πατρίς. These are distinctions we also meet in In Flaccum and Legatio. Hence, in the works of Philo the idea is not that of exile, but the much more positive one of migration and of settlements or colonies.

The term μητρόπολις, on the other hand, is found only 7 times in the Septuagint, but there is no specific Hebrew terms underlying its use. Furthermore, in several occasions the use of μητρόπολις in the Septuagint has no equivalent in the Hebrew text, and is thus to be considered as an expansion or interpretation of that text (Josh. 10:2; 15:13; 21:11; Esther 9:19; Isa. 1:26). In Josh. 10:2, e.g., the Hebrew text says « like one of the royal cities » while the Septuagint has μητρόπολις. Hence in several cases a congruent translation might be ‘capital city’. This is probably also the explanation for the fact that it is never used together with ἀποκικία.

This term, μητρόπολις, is rare in the works of Philo too, as it is prevalent in only 10 text segments. The term is often lexicalized as ‘capital city’, and this seems also to be the denotation of most of the cases in Philo: according to Flacc. 46, it would seem that Jerusalem is the capital city of the Jews because their holy temple is located there. This is, however, nowhere explicitly stated by Philo, but a probable inference (Leg. 203.294.305.334). On other cities as mother-cities in the meaning of capital city, see Somn. 1:41. The Logos can be described as the most excellent mother-city (Fug. 94), and finally the soul has its mother-city (Somn. 1:181). The most relevant passage for us is again Conf. 77-78 in which ‘colony’ and ‘mother-city’ are combined. Hence we now turn to Philo’s use in In Flaccum 46 and Legatio 281-282.

'Colony' and 'mother-city' in In Flaccum and Legatio as cases of mimicry and hybridity

At this point it might be relevant to quote the pertinent passages from Philo (Flacc. 46; Legatio 281-282; Loeb transl.):

For so populous are the Jews that no one country can hold them, and therefore they settle in very many of the most prosperous countries in Europe.
and Asia [...], and while they hold the Holy City where stands the sacred Temple of the most high God to be their mother city (μητρόπολις), yet those which are theirs by inheritance from their fathers, grandfathers and ancestors even farther back, are in each case accounted by them to be their fatherland (πατρίδα) in which they were born and reared, while to some of them they have come at the time of their foundation as immigrants (i.e., colonists) (πόλισιν ἀποικίαις) to the satisfaction of the founders.

As for the holy city, I must say what befits me to say. While she, as I have said, is my native city (ἐμῇ μὲν ἐστίν πατρίς) she is also the mother city (μητρόπολις) not of one country Judaea but of most of the others in virtue of the colonies (διὰ τὰς ἀποικίας) sent out at diverse times to the neighbouring lands Egypt, Phoenicia, the part of Syria called the Hollow and the rest as well as the lands lying far apart [...]. And not only are the mainlands full of Jewish colonies (τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἀποικιῶν) but also the most highly esteemed of the islands Euboea, Cyprus, Crete...

The historical and literary contexts of these two works of Philo are similar, but not identical. In his In Flaccum Philo has just told about Flaccus' deteriorating rule vis-a-vis the Jews (1-24), reaching a climax when Herod Agrippa arrived in the city, and the enemies of the Jews were even erecting statues of the emperor in the synagogues of the Jews (25-40). Then follows the important passage of 45-53 in which Philo ponders the danger such riots would represent if they spread to other parts of the Empire where the Jews also were to be found: « For so populous are the Jews that no one country can hold them » (46); the Jews are holding Jerusalem as their mother-city, even though they have stayed in other parts of the empire for a long time.

The context of the text segment from Legatio is part of the story about what happened when Agrippa, upon visiting Rome, got to know that the emperor, Gaius Caligula, intended to erect a statue of himself in the Jerusalem temple. Agrippa fell immediately ill, and when recovering a bit, he wrote a letter (Leg. 276-329) to the emperor from which the quotation above is taken. The function of his mentioning and labelling the Jewish settlements 'colonies' seems to be to emphasize their interrelationship with each other and with Jerusalem, and by thus stating the warning that if the Emperor would grant peace to Jerusalem, it would also profit many other cities of his empire. While this is here put in the mouth of Agrippa in what must be considered a fictive letter77, it certainly represents the opinion of Philo78.

When reading the In Flaccum and Legatio, one should first of all keep in mind that we are here dealing with two works of quite a different nature compared to the rest of Philo's works. These are not expositions of some texts or aspects of the Pentateuchal Law, but his way of writing what we might call historical representations of central events in the life of Philo and his Alexandria, evaluated in light of Pentateuchal values. Furthermore, as there seems to be a wide agreement that his expository works were written with both Jews and non-Jews in mind, and

his allegorical works more for his initiated Jewish readers⁷⁹, the two historical works were most probably written not only for the Jews, but possibly even more for the non-Jewish authorities, as the successor of the prefect Flaccus in Alexandria and the Roman imperial authorities⁸⁰. Hence, as we have suggested above, we read these works as Philo writing back from the Empire. We are here meeting Philo as a Jewish politician, and should read him as such.

Several scholars state that in using the terminology of ἀπολικία and μητρόπολις, Philo is using the language of the Septuagint, which again are influenced by the ancient Greek colonization⁸¹. But both of these issues should not be overplayed. Pearce, on her side, argues that Philo evidently uses the terminology of the Septuagint, but not that of the Greek colonies⁸². It should probably not be denied, however, that in using the term of ἀπολικία, the Septuagint translators were to some extent influenced by the colonization processes they knew, that is, the Greek, as this is a typical colonization term. In this way they probably also to some extent changed the view of the Diaspora situation, from deportation to emigration. Pearce’s argument that Philo is influenced by the Septuagint, but not that of the Greek colonization is not convincing. The combination of ἀπολικία and μητρόπολις is not to be found in the Septuagint, but is a central combination in descriptions of Greek colonization. This fact points to some influence from colonization language. Hence Philo is probably influenced by the Septuagint language; it was, after all, his Holy Scriptures. But by his combination of these terms in In Flaccum and Legatio, it also seems that he strengthens and emphasizes the colonial aspects of these terms.

Niehoff’s view⁸³ that these two works are only written for the Jews, and not at all for the Romans, is a rare view. Furthermore, her view that Philo is constructing a novel view by posing Jerusalem as the mother-city is probably not tenable either, as Jerusalem had at that time been the central city for Jews in ages.

Amir on his side⁸⁴ seems to overplay the influence on Philo from Greek colonization. He states that Philo’s expressions do not quite fit the political reality of his times, as at that time the colonies were not sent out from the cities, but from and by the state (« vom römischen Imperium »). One of the aspects that, in addition to the mere terminology of ἀπολικία and μητρόπολις, are taken as evidence for the influence of the Greek colonization language, is the argument of Philo that the Jewish colonies were sent out because the Jews were such a populous nation that no country alone could hold them (Flacc. 46). But this is a

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⁷⁹. For a discussion concerning these issues, see, e.g., Borgen, « Philo of Alexandria », op. cit.
⁸⁰. See here the discussion in P. W. van der Horst, Philo’s Flaccus, op. cit., p. 15-16.
⁸². Pearce, « Jerusalem as ‘Mother-City’ in the writings of Philo of Alexandria », op. cit., p. 33.

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common emphasis in Philo’s works and Kiefer is probably right in reading it as an expression of the promises of God to Abraham (Gen. 12:2; Congr. 3; Spec. leg. 1:7 etc.),\(^85\): « Die Ausbreitung der Diaspora ist für Philo letztlich also die Erfüllung biblischer Verheissung ». But there is another factor that has not been taken enough into consideration here, and that is the simple fact that Philo is writing neither in Hebrew, nor in Latin, but in Greek. Hence, when he wanted to describe the Jewish Diaspora as a kind of colonization process, he had to use the Greek terminology. And the Greek terminology had per definition to represent the language of Greek colonization. This is such a simple fact that it seems never to have been paid any attention too. The consequences of this are that the pinpointing of Amir\(^86\), stating that the descriptions of Philo do not match the social realities of the colonization of his time, is rendered rather meaningless. Philo is here mimicking the colonization processes, both Roman and Greek. His Greek language should not lead us to consider Greek colonization as his social and conceptual background alone. Niehoff points unknowingly her finger to this aspect of mimicry when she states that « Philo […] implied an unmistakably Roman dimension in his notion of mother-city. This is most visible in his emphasis on the universal distribution of the Jewish colonists »\(^87\).

But she also points to some other aspects that function as Philo’s mimicry of the Romans in his descriptions: Philo’s association of Jerusalem with the ends of the earth might be read as echoing the Roman identification of Urbs with Orbis; likewise, Philo’s speaking in the Legatio of Jewish donations to Jerusalem might be read as such mimicry. Hence Philo thus « modelled the role of Jerusalem on the position of Rome in the Empire »\(^88\). Niehoff does not, however, use the model of mimicry in describing these aspects. To her they rather represent Philo’s descriptions of Jerusalem in order to make the Jews to consider Jerusalem as their primary city of identity.

However, her view of Philo’s intended readership as being his fellow Jews only, instead of also finding these readers among the Romans, is problematic, to say the least. Furthermore, she considers these views of Philo on ἀτοκία and μητρόπολις to be a late development in his thinking. But this is contradicted by his use of these concepts in Conf. 77-78 and Mos. 2:232. Philo’s more extended uses of these terms in In Flaccum and Legatio are not evidence of a late development, but of an altered situation and an altered intended readership. It is the political issues that are at stake in these two volumes that make Philo describe the Jewish settlements in the various cities and countries in these ways.

If we here read Philo as writing back form the Empire, we see a Philo who in these ways mimics the Roman Empire in his descriptions of the Jewish settlements by calling them ἀτοκία and describing Jerusalem as their μητρόπολις. Mimicry is never focusing on complete identity, but on similarities. Hence all claims that Philo’s use of terms like ἀτοκία and μητρόπολις is anachronistic or out of touch.

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87. Niehoff, Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture, op. cit., p. 36.
88. Niehoff, Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture, op. cit., p. 36-37.
with the historical realities of his times, are off the target both because he is writing in Greek, the lingua franca of his time, and because of his mimicking purposes. Furthermore, as mimicking does not denote identity, the result is often some sort of hybridity. Read in light of the Roman colonizing activities of Philo’s days, Philo’s descriptions of the Jewish settlements as colonizing might very well look like a hybrid description to a Roman reader.

Hence, there is a kind of double message from Philo to the readers. First, *In Flaccum* about the issue that the tumults that had been established against the Jews in Alexandria might spread to other cities in the Mediterranean world, because the Jews were to be found everywhere (*Flacc.* 46). In *Legatio*, the danger of Jewish riots is more clearly focused, as establishing a statue of the Emperor in the *metropolis* of the Jews might result in uproar all over the empire, for the Jews had their colonies everywhere. Hence the warnings are clear enough, but the underlying self understanding of Philo is associated with his view of the Jewish settlements as being considered a kind of colonies sent out from Jerusalem up through the decades and centuries. In this there is a mimicry of both Greek and Roman colonization. The Romans might smile at the hybridity involved in Philo’s characterizations. But to Philo they were real enough.

We don’t know if any Roman person in any official position of authority ever read any of Philo’s works. Our arguments do not depend upon some real Roman first readers’ experiences of these texts, but upon the possible intentions on the side of Philo in writing them. As a writer, writing back from the Empire, he tried to defend his Jewish people and their presence in the Roman empire by describing them in these terms. And at the same time, he also sent a message of warning to the Roman Empire; if the Jewish people were disturbed too much in their monotheism, it might very well result in upheavals all over the Roman Empire. Because the Jewish colonists were everywhere. An informed reader might very well have considered this way of writing a bold adventure, and a dangerous one. And so it surely was.

### 3. Conclusions

The perspectives of postcolonial readings have been popular in literary studies for some time now, and are being increasingly used in Biblical and Classical studies. In the studies of Diaspora Judaism, however, and in studies of Philo of Alexandria in particular, they are virtually absent. In the present study we have tried to focus on some terms in the most political writings of Philo, the *In Flaccum* and the *Legatio ad Gaium*.

These two books, which are probably not only the most political, but also among the latest of Philo’s many works, are considered to have been written not

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89. Cf. here his eschatology, in which the Jews are to be gathered from the various parts of the world: *Praem.* 162-172; see further P. Borgen, « ‘There Shall Come Forth a Man’: Reflections on Messianic Ideas in Philo », in J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah*, Augsburg & Fortress, Minneapolis, 1992, p. 341-361, probably the best presentation of Philo’s eschatology.
only for a Jewish readership, but also for non-Jews, possibly even for Roman persons of authority. In this we are inclined to follow E. R. Goodenough's view of the intended readers. While not subscribing to all parts of his view of Philo as a politician, in these two late works of Philo, we meet him as a politician.

The terms concerning 'colony' (ἀποικία) and 'mother-city' (μητρόπολις) are found in several of Philo's works. Conceptually they belong to the language of Greek colonization. Important for our understanding of Philo is that he could find these terms in his Greek translations of the Hebrew Scriptures, in what we have come to call the Septuagint. In these writings, however, they have more a role in the semantic field of 'migration', while in Philo they more regain their meaning of 'mother-city' and 'colonies'/'colonizing' as he uses the related verb στελλαῖν in combination with ἀποικία.

In our reading of the two passages of In Flaccum 46 and Legatio 281-281, we suggested that there are elements of mimicry and hybridity in Philo’s use of these terms. Philo uses them to describe the Jewish Diaspora communities in the Roman empire. As part of Philo's writing back from the Empire, they are important for his conceptualization; read in light of the Roman colonization activities they might very well have looked somewhat hybrid. But that is often the result of mimicry in a context of colonization. The colonized try to copy the colonizers, but the results, intended or not, are often mimicry and hybridity.

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