

# Interstate relations : the papyrological evidence

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## VI

DANIELA COLOMO

### INTERSTATE RELATIONS: THE PAPYROLOGICAL EVIDENCE\*

#### 1. Introduction

##### 1.1. *Presentation of the topic*

My contribution explores the role of deliberative oratory in the interstate relations between the Roman Empire and the province of Egypt during the first three centuries of the common era. I focus on the evidence provided by texts preserved on papyrus, but also include some literary sources.

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Note that in the quotations from papyri I have normalised the Greek, i.e. I do not reproduce phonetic spellings. For the sections of papyrus texts quoted according to the editions of *APM*, *CPJ* II, *P.Oxy.*, I reproduce the translations offered in those volumes; for other texts details are given *ad loc.*; other short (not acknowledged) translations are my own. Images of papyri have been reproduced thanks to the courtesy of the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, the British Library (London), the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana (Firenze), the Papyrussammlungen der Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen.

The very fact that papyrus is a (relatively) perishable writing material inevitably narrows down the geographical area under investigation to the Roman province of Egypt: almost only in the dry Egyptian climate could papyri partially survive, while they were mostly destroyed by humidity in the rest of the Empire and even in dampish areas of Egypt itself, like the Delta.<sup>1</sup> The surviving papyri contain reports of embassy hearings, copies of speeches of ambassadors, imperial letters and edicts and a unique group of sub-literary texts, the so-called *Acta Alexandrinorum*, fictionalised accounts of embassies of the Greek Alexandrians to the Roman emperor centring on the conflict between the Greeks and Jews and betraying anti-Roman sentiments. As Kayser acutely observes, the papyrological evidence concerning embassies is qualitatively different from the epigraphic evidence, which illustrates diplomatic relations for the other parts of the Roman Empire.<sup>2</sup> An inscription contains the answer of the Emperor to the plea of an embassy: usually (and obviously) only the positive answers were published, i.e. inscribed on stones, since to engrave and display negative outcomes would have been humiliating. By contrast, the papyrological evidence is based on a plurality of documents which, although often very fragmentary, offer copious information on the embassies themselves and give voice to different points of view.

Embassies from Egypt, mainly from the ‘capital’ Alexandria,<sup>3</sup> could be sent to Rome to congratulate the Emperor on the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. TURNER (2007) 18, 26-27; PARSONS (2007) 41-42.

<sup>2</sup> KAYSER (2003) 439. But note that *P.Oxy.* XLII 3023 seems to provide papyrological evidence for an audience before an Emperor regarding a non-Egyptian city, Antioch; similarly *PSI* XI 1222 may refer to a city outside Egypt; cf. HARKER (2008) 127-130.

<sup>3</sup> However, diplomatic activities concerning other poleis of Egypt are documented: three letters by Gordian III as response to an embassy from Antinoopolis (HOOGENDIJK / VAN MINNEN [1987]); a letter by Nero to a polis of the Fayoum (probably Ptolemais Euergetis) and the so-called 6475 (*SB* XII 11012, AD 55); see HARKER (2008) 208. The 6475 are apparently a group of privileged citizens, probably descendants of ancient colonists.

occasion of his accession to the throne<sup>4</sup> or of the adoption of an heir – and for these purposes they delivered honorific decrees<sup>5</sup> –, but at the same time they aimed to negotiate political and economic issues of crucial importance, like confirmation of privileges granted by the previous Emperor as well as internal conflicts and disputes. At some stage after the audience the Emperor wrote his reply in the form of a letter to be taken back by the envoys,<sup>6</sup> like the famous letter of Emperor Claudius to the Alexandrians, partially surviving on papyrus (*CPJ* II 153; Pl. 6.1).<sup>7</sup> It seems that on most occasions two different embassies left Alexandria for Rome at the same time: on the one hand, an embassy formed by important members of the Alexandrian aristocracy, extremely proud of their Greek origins and culture; on the other hand, an embassy formed by the representatives of the Jewish community (the so-called Jewish *politeuma*), which since the early Ptolemaic period, after having accomplished a process of deep Hellenisation but remaining faithful to its ancestral religion and customs, played an important role in the political and economic development of Alexandria.<sup>8</sup> Such a ‘diplomatic duality’ was the concrete expression not just of a diversified ethnic situation of Alexandria, but of a dramatic conflict between the two communities, which were struggling to protect their political, social and economic interests and privileges. From the very early period of interaction and conflict between Rome and Egypt, the two ethnic groups had assumed an opposite stance: while the Greek Alexandrians had tried to

<sup>4</sup> OLIVER (1989) 2-4. The embassy documented by *SB* XII 11012 (see n. 3) was sent to Nero to congratulate him on his accession and to deliver an honorific decree.

<sup>5</sup> On the delivery of honorific decrees see *P.Oxy.* XXV 2435v, lines 40-41, 44 (embassy to Augustus in AD 12/13); cf. MEN. RHET. 2, 13 (*Presbeutikos*), 424, 1-2 SPENGEL; RUSSELL-WILSON (1981) 180-181, 337.

<sup>6</sup> See MILLAR (2002) 218; cf. OLIVER (1989) 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> Other examples of imperial letters to the Alexandrians are: *P.Oxy.* XLII 3020, fr. 1, col. i (Augustus); *P.Oxy.* XLII 3022 (Trajan).

<sup>8</sup> Embassies attested in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century are listed in KAYSER (2003) 462-464 (envoys attested in the *Acta Alexandrinorum* are also included).



defend their independence, the Jews had offered support to Rome, in particular to Julius Caesar in the *Bellum Alexandrinum* and later to Octavian against Mark Antony.<sup>9</sup>

Thus very often the hearing focused on the dispute between two embassies – Greek Alexandrian envoys on the one hand, a Jewish delegation on the other – and consisted of an ἀντικατάστασις, a confrontation.<sup>10</sup> In other words, the audience became a legal hearing, a trial that from a juridical standpoint presents specific features. The procedure followed in those cases was the so-called *cognitio extra ordinem*, introduced by Augustus for both civil and criminal cases, in first instance or appeal. According to this procedure, the same magistrate could instruct and judge a case on the same day, while during the Republican period the typical procedure, the so-called *per formulas*, consisted of two distinct phases taking place at different times and administered by two different officials (the *praetor* held the first phase, called *in iure*, in which the nature of the case was presented and instructed; then the judge pronounced the final sentence in the second phase, called *in iudicio*). In concrete terms, in the *cognitio* the plaintiff and the defendant could plead and present their witnesses to the judging magistrate on the same day. We can recognise this type of trial in our sources: here the judging magistrate is the Roman Emperor.<sup>11</sup> Interestingly the application of this procedure to the diplomatic sphere implies – at least virtually – a sort of interaction and overlap between deliberative oratory and forensic oratory.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See HARKER (2008) 214 with references to specific historical sources.

<sup>10</sup> The word is a juridical and rhetorical *terminus technicus*; see *DGE s.v.* 2. The term is used by Emperor Claudius in his letter to the Alexandrians (*CPJ* II 153, col. iv 75). In addition, the form ἀντικαταστήσομαι occurs in the *Acta Isidori*, *CPJ* II 156c, col. ii 22.

<sup>11</sup> A detailed analysis of the *cognitio extra ordinem* from a juridical and historical standpoint is to be found in GAMBETTI (2008) 191-194; cf. MILLAR (2002) 218.

<sup>12</sup> Significantly, Philo of Alexandria, reporting on the Jewish embassy to Gaius of which he was the leader in his famous *Legatio ad Gaium* (see below), uses the phrase μεταπεμφθέντες ἀγωνίσασθαι τὸν περὶ πολιτείας ἀγῶνα, “when we were summoned to take part in the contention about our citizenship”

Greek Alexandrian and Jewish ambassadors, thanks to their ‘classical’ education (παιδεία), were well equipped with the same powerful weapon: rhetoric. Thus it is not surprising that in the embassies of both parties we find professional rhetoricians. Some may be even traced back in the imperial prosopography: for example, Paul of Tyre, who offered his service to the Alexandrians,<sup>13</sup> and Sopater of Antioch, who represented the Jews.<sup>14</sup> As we will see in detail later, envoys not only show the technical competences of the art of persuasion, but are also well informed on the political and economic issues at stake, such as civic rights, tax-exemption and internal conflicts. In this respect they can be compared to the competent orator speaking in an assembly portrayed in Arist. *Rhet.* 1359b.<sup>15</sup>

In what follows I will explore the rhetorical strategies implemented by the Alexandrian embassies to Rome on the basis of documentary sources (mainly copies of minutes of hearings), the subliterate corpus of the *Acta Alexandrinorum*, and the literary works of Philo of Alexandria (*Legatio ad Gaium* and *In Flaccum*) and Josephus (*Antiquitates Judaicae* and *Contra Apionem*).

## 1.2. *Historical background*

In 31 BC Egypt ceased to be an independent kingdom and became a Roman province, a conquered territory, governed by

(*Leg.* 349). As GAMBETTI (2009) 215, n. 12 points out, “The verb ἀγωνίσασθαι with the cognitive accusative forms an expression that is regularly found in forensic literature”.

<sup>13</sup> CPJ II 158a (*Acta Pauli et Antonini*); cf. CPJ II 157 (*Acta Hermaisci*) col. i 9-11; HARKER (2008) 86, 125-126.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. CPJ II 157, col. i 15-16; KAYSER (2003) 455.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. CPJ II 150, col. ii 11-14: the necessity to send suitable (ἐπιτηδεύουσ) individuals as ambassadors is emphasised. In *P.Oxy.* XLII 3020, fr. 1, col. ii 3-7 ambassadors divide between themselves the treatment of the issues at stake before the Emperor according to their respective competences (one speaks on the Egyptian situation, another on the Idioslogos [lit. “privy purse/special account”; Roman official in charge of the imperial property], the third on the situation of the polis); this seems to illustrate ‘professional’ team-work.

a representative of the Roman emperor, the prefect, who replaced the Ptolemaic king. Accordingly, Alexandria ceased to be the capital of a kingdom, i.e. the centre of power and political life, and became just the main city of a province of the Roman Empire: in spite of its strategic position (which continued to play an important economic role in particular for the export of granary supplies), it was now relegated to a secondary role. Now the Alexandrian citizenship could be bestowed by the Emperor, not any more by local authorities, and from a juridical standpoint was inferior – but prerequisite – to the Roman citizenship.<sup>16</sup> Octavian, aware of Alexandrians' anti-Roman attitude caused by Roman political intrusion under the Ptolemies,<sup>17</sup> tried to present himself as a friend, even pardoning them for having supported his rival Mark Antony in the civil war, and pretended to treat them as allies rather than as subjects. Under the Romans Alexandrian citizens enjoyed tax-privileges consisting in exemption from the poll-tax (the *laographia*, introduced in 24 BC), and some of them even obtained Roman citizenship. However, there were decisive factors that fed the traditional hostility against Rome: Egypt and Alexandria were in fact conquered territory, and as such subject to the abuse of the corrupt Roman administration. The Greek Alexandrians could not rule themselves in autonomy through their town council, the Boule, which had been abolished probably in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC during the reign of Ptolemy VIII after a riot and never reinstated by Augustus.<sup>18</sup> Given that the Boule was an

<sup>16</sup> Cf. PLIN. *Ep.* 10, 6 and 7.

<sup>17</sup> See KAYSER (2003) 436-437; HARKER (2008) 4.

<sup>18</sup> Basic bibliography on this subject is to be found in HARKER (2008) 5-6. Note that a letter by Augustus to the Alexandrians (*P.Oxy.* XLII 3020, fr. 1, col. i) preserves a form of address to the city that clearly shows that in Alexandria there was no Boule. The Emperor uses the phrase “to the people of the Alexandrians, greetings” (line 3 Ἀλεξανδρείων δῆμῳ χαίρειν) instead of the formula normally used in official documents to address the Greek cities that had a council, “to the magistrates the council and the people, greetings” (ἄρχουσι βουλῇ δῆμῳ, χαίρειν or, in a shorter form without the mention of “the people”, ἄρχουσι βουλῇ, χαίρειν).

essential institution of all Greek cities, the lack of it was a major problem for the identity of the Greek Alexandrians, also because it could not be replaced by the Gerousia (the council of the Elders, with 173 members) and the Gymnasium. These two institutions, recognised and maintained by Octavian, although they ended up assuming a political function in order to compensate for the lack of the Boule, had essentially a social and honorific function – the Gerousia fulfilling representative and religious duties,<sup>19</sup> the Gymnasium being in charge of the organisation of the athletic games and largely involved in the education of the younger generations.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Augustus carried out a drastic military reform, which had dramatic consequences for both the Greek Alexandrians and the Jewish community: he dismantled the Alexandrian garrison. A specific group of Jews, the ones resident in the so-called Delta quarter, were an important part of this garrison. In fact the Delta quarter represents the original Jewish *politeuma*, whose inhabitants, because of their military duties performed from the time of the foundation of Alexandria onwards, had full legal residence rights. The Jews of the Delta quarter formed a group distinct from the Jews that settled in Alexandria at a later stage without obtaining official residence rights. However, with Augustus' military reform, such a distinction faded and the Alexandrian Jews became a single community. Augustus, grateful for their constant support of Rome, recognised the rights they had obtained under the Ptolemies – tax-exemption, access to regular tribunals, lenient forms of punishment applied to Alexandrian citizens *uersus* those reserved for the Egyptians, freedom to observe their customs (ἔθνη) and traditional laws

<sup>19</sup> Cf. BOWMAN-RATHBONE (1992) 115-118, who ascribe administrative and political function to the Gerousia.

<sup>20</sup> On the Gymnasium in the Roman period, see HABERMANN (2015). In particular, on the role of the Gymnasium in cultural life, see KEHOE (2015) 67-73; cf. CRIBIORE (2001) 34-36, who points out that, in spite of their importance in promoting educational and cultural events, there is no evidence to consider Egyptian gymnasia as *stricto sensu* academic institutions in charge of the systematic organisation of education.

(πάτριοι νόμοι) and the Sabbath, dispensation from the worship of the Emperor.<sup>21</sup> But they did not acquire collective citizenship. After the death of the last ethnarch,<sup>22</sup> Augustus created a Gerousia with a political role (ca. 12 AD).<sup>23</sup> As a community they had the duty to keep the riverbanks clean,<sup>24</sup> a public service that during the Ptolemies was performed by the military and reservists. This public duty that they now had to fulfil as a civic community and the exclusion from the Gymnasium were the two basic differences from the Greek Alexandrians. In any case, although their religion forbade them to participate in the civic cults, there is evidence that some Jews received a Greek education and were members of the Gymnasium as Alexandrian citizens, a fact that gave them the possibility to play an active role in political life.<sup>25</sup> The numerous and wealthy Jewish community of Alexandria was dramatically damaged by the strict scrutiny of tax privileges conducted under Tiberius and Gaius, which ended up not recognising residential rights and thus tax exemption, together with the other rights mentioned above, to the Jews inhabiting areas of Alexandria other than the Delta quarter. A decree issued by the prefect Avilius Flaccus, which implemented Emperor Gaius' *mandata*, declared those Jews "foreigners and aliens" (Gr. ξένοι καὶ ἐπήλυδες; Lat. *peregrini et aduenae*).<sup>26</sup> In the first period of his office, Flaccus had tried

<sup>21</sup> See PHILO *Flacc.* 49-50; *Leg.* 154; *CPJ* II 153, col. vi 82-v 88 with comm. *ad loc.*

<sup>22</sup> Head of the Jewish community of Alexandria, with administrative and juridical duties; see RITTER (2015) 106-107.

<sup>23</sup> PHILO *Flacc.* 74.

<sup>24</sup> JOS. *C. Ap.* 2, 64.

<sup>25</sup> See HARKER (2008) 218-220 on literary and documentary sources; cf. RITTER (2015) 89-100. GAMBETTI (2009) 42, holds a different view, arguing that Alexandrian Jews had no interest in entering the Gymnasium and acquiring full Alexandrian citizenship, because this would have implied active participation in the civic cults against their religious customs.

<sup>26</sup> PHILO *Flacc.* 54; see GAMBETTI (2009) 172-192. According to JOS. *AJ* 14, 187, they possessed documents related to their civic rights in private archives, but could not use them legally because they lacked Roman ratification; cf. GAMBETTI (2009) 232.

to take control of the conflict between Greek Alexandrians and Jews by abolishing the Alexandrian clubs, mobilised by the demagogue Isidorus,<sup>27</sup> and thus apparently siding with the Jews. Later, however, after his administration caused complaints, he allied himself with the Greek Alexandrians led by Isidorus against the Jews in exchange for protection from possible revenge from Gaius because of his ‘implications’ in the prosecution of members of his family under Tiberius. The conflict escalated in a major bloody riot in AD 38. The explosion of violence was provoked by the presence in the city of Agrippa I, king of Judaea and Gaius’ *amicus*, who paraded a flamboyant band of bodyguards. The Greek Alexandrians started a violent attack against the Jews,<sup>28</sup> officially on the ground that they refused to perform the imperial cult proclaimed by Gaius, who planned to install ‘sacred’ images of himself in temples and in the meeting houses (synagogues) of the Jews. The Jews were confined to the Delta quarter and could be attacked without legal protection if found outside it. A number of synagogues were desecrated through the installation of images of the Emperor and many others were burned. Thirty-eight members of the Jewish Gerousia were publically scourged, tortured, hung and crucified during a Greek festival. Finally the violence was stopped by Roman military intervention.<sup>29</sup>

In September of the same year Flaccus was accused of corruption, arrested and taken to Rome, tried by Gaius early in AD 39, found guilty and condemned to exile and finally executed.

<sup>27</sup> On the possible role of Isidorus as Gaius’ *amicus* and thus member of the imperial *consilium* on the basis of the evidence provided by *P.Giss.Lit.* 4, 7, see GAMBETTI (2009) 125-127; cf. RODRIGUEZ (2010b) 594. On Isidorus expatriating and member of an embassy to Tiberius in order to complain about Flaccus’ alleged anti-Alexandrian policy, see GAMBETTI (2009) 102-104, 109-110.

<sup>28</sup> The conflict between Jews and Greeks is indicated as πόλεμος, “war”, in sources of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent.: *P.Aberd.* 117, fr. 2, line 2; *BKT* IX 115, col. i 7; *CPJ* II 153, line 74; *CPJ* II 158a, col. vi 16-17; *P.Giss.Lit.* 4, 7, col. iii 31-32; *P.Oxy.* XXII 2339, col. i 8-9.

<sup>29</sup> For a full account of the riot see PHILO *Leg.* 120-130; *Flacc.* 29-96; cf. RITTER (2015) 132-140.



After Flaccus' arrest two rival embassies sailed to Rome: the Jewish envoys were guided by Philo of Alexandria, who reported on it in the *Legatio ad Gaium* and also in the *In Flaccum*,<sup>30</sup> while the Greek Alexandrians were led by the famous poet<sup>31</sup> and Homeric scholar Apion.<sup>32</sup> They obtained a proper hearing in Rome only after Gaius' return from Germany (after 31 August, AD 40): according to Philo, the outcome for the Jews was disastrous, although the Emperor apparently did not issue any official final decision.<sup>33</sup> On 24 January, AD 41 Gaius was assassinated; in February the Jews rioted at the breaking of the news and two new embassies were sent by both parties to Rome to congratulate the new Emperor Claudius on the accession. He assumed a more neutral stance than his predecessor concerning the Greek Alexandrians-Jews conflict, as his ruling, the famous letter to the Alexandrians, shows:<sup>34</sup> he ordered them to stop the fighting and decided not to investigate the responsibility for the violence from both sides, restored the legal, social and religious privileges of the Jews abolished by Gaius,<sup>35</sup> but strictly prohibited their entry to the Gymnasium and their participation in the athletic games, i.e. their attempt to obtain full Alexandrian citizenship;<sup>36</sup> finally, he did not comply with the request of the

<sup>30</sup> See RITTER (2015) 140-142.

<sup>31</sup> See *P.Oxy.* LXXIX 5202, *Copy of an Honorific Inscription for the Poetic Victor Apion*.

<sup>32</sup> That Apion was the leader is said by *JOS. AJ* 18, 257-259. On the debate about the date of the departure of the two rival embassies see HARKER (2008) 14. I consider the embassy most likely to have departed in the winter of AD 38/39.

<sup>33</sup> See RITTER (2015) 141.

<sup>34</sup> *CPJ* 153: see here in particular comm. on line 88, regarding the reference to an imperial edict issued before the letter; cf. RITTER (2015) 147-151.

<sup>35</sup> GAMBETTI (2009) 222-225 argues that he could not change Gaius' decision from a legal standpoint, because it was *res iudicata* and in fact he restored rights of residence and tax exemption only to the Jews of the Delta quarter; cf. *ibid.* 215, 247.

<sup>36</sup> Note that this interpretation is based on the text καὶ Ἰουδαίοις δὲ | ἄντικρυς κελεύω... μὴδὲ ἐπισπαίειν (iotacistic spelling for ἐπ-εισ-παίειν) | γυμνασιαρχικοῖς ἢ κοσμητικοῖς ἄγῳσι, "and to the Jews, on the other hand, I order... not to intrude themselves into the games presided over by the *gymnasiarchoi* and the *kosmetai*" (col. v 88-93). GAMBETTI (2009) 225-226 offers a different

Greek Alexandrians to re-establish the Boule. At the same time he executed two Alexandrian notables, Isidorus (see above) and Lampon,<sup>37</sup> probably because of wrongdoing and political intrigues under Caligula and/or for their role in the persecution of the Jews in the riots.<sup>38</sup> This execution will make the two notables the prototypes of Alexandrian national heroes, symbol of the heroic resistance against the tyranny of Rome, giving birth to a new literary genre, the *Acta Alexandrinorum*. They will be the models for the Greek Alexandrian ambassadors featuring in the *Acta* under future emperors.

In the following decades the tension between Greeks and Jews continued. Two more Jewish revolts took place in Egypt, in AD 66 and 115-117<sup>39</sup> respectively. In both cases the Romans supported the Greek Alexandrians against the Jews in the first phase, but subsequently tried to stop the continuation of violence from the Greek party. The Emperor Septimius Severus, who visited Egypt in AD 199/200, gave the Alexandrians permission to re-establish the Boule, granting at the same time a city council to all Egyptian metropoleis, a fact that

interpretation of the passage. In particular, at col. v 92 she accepts the alternative reading ἐπισπαίρειν in the sense of “to disturb”, instead of ἐπισπαίειν, “to intrude”, and argues that Claudius is just warning the Jews not to take revenge for the events of AD 38-41 by disturbing the athletic games, on the assumption that the Jews did not aim to participate in the games and thus to enter the Gymnasium, i.e. to acquire full Alexandrian citizenship; cf. n. 25. I have examined the original papyrus and concluded that ἐπισπαίειν is a more satisfactory reading from a palaeographical standpoint (there is not enough space for a rho after the diphthong alpha-iota). Moreover, the actual meaning of the alternative reading ἐπισπαίρειν in this context is problematic, since the verb is very rare and attested in the sense of “to palpitate, to be in alarm”; cf. *CPJ* II 153, comm. on lines 92-93; BRINGMANN (2004) 332, n. 47; HARKER (2008) 186; RITTER (2015) 145 with n. 42.

<sup>37</sup> Lampon, who prosecuted Flaccus in AD 39, had been involved in lawsuits that caused his bankruptcy and then forced to be a Gymnasiarch by Flaccus; in Rome he was office recorder and took bribes to alter the records. Interestingly PHILO (*Flacc.* 20, 131) qualifies him with a rare word taken from DEM. 18, 209, γραμματοκύφων, “porer over records”; see RODRIGUEZ (2010a) 26 with n. 122.

<sup>38</sup> See PHILO *Flacc.* 18-21, 135-145; cf. HARKER (2008) 15-18.

<sup>39</sup> See *P.Mil.Vogl.* II 47, prefectoral edict ordering the end of violence; HARKER (2008) 58-59, 198.



meant the dramatic loss of hegemony for Alexandria. Under him and later under Caracalla Jews were allowed to hold offices and to remain faithful to their faith. The issue of their right to acquire Alexandrian citizenship finally lost relevance when the inhabitants of the Empire were all declared Roman citizens by the *Constitutio Antoniniana* (AD 212). The reign of Caracalla, plagued by explosions of violence and harsh repressions (especially of a riot organised by tradesmen in Alexandria), fed anti-Roman attitudes and contributed to the popularity of the *Acta Alexandrinorum*.<sup>40</sup>

## 2. Cursory presentation of the sources and methodological remarks

In introducing the topic, I have distinguished two basic types of sources: on the one hand, the sources preserved on papyrus, including documents concerning political and diplomatic relations between Rome and Egypt, and the corpus of the *Acta Alexandrinorum*; on the other hand, literary and historical sources transmitted through the mediaeval and Renaissance manuscripts, *in primis* the works of Philo of Alexandria and Josephus.

First of all I should stress an important feature typical for papyrological sources in general: the extreme fragmentary state of the texts and the chance nature of the papyrus findings through archaeological excavations from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, which dramatically affect the range of the documents and thus the type and the amount of evidence they provide. As said above, we have a very limited amount of papyri from the area of Alexandria because of the humid natural environment of the Delta: a limited number could survive only because they had been sent or brought to other areas of Egypt. Documents and papyri

<sup>40</sup> A detailed account of the Severan period is to be found in HARKER (2008) 130-140.

of the *Acta Alexandrinorum* come from the Egyptian *chora*, from cities like Oxyrhynchus, Hermopolis Magna, and Panopolis, as well as villages of the Arsinoite like Karanis, Tebtunis and Philadelphia.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, the aftermath of the papyrological discoveries has to be taken into consideration: unfortunately, not all papyri have remained in the public domain, but a great amount of material ended up (and still ends up) in private hands through the black market and still in our time escapes close scholarly investigation. Besides, even public papyri collections around the world contain thousands of still unpublished fragments, many of which have not been precisely classified yet. In addition to this, we have to take into consideration the selection of the material operated by the transmission.

Among the sources preserved on papyrus the so-called *Acta Alexandrinorum* need a brief introduction. These texts, composed by unknown authors at different times,<sup>42</sup> consist of a basic narrative structure framing long sections of dialogue; in other words they follow the format of official minutes (*acta*)<sup>43</sup> of court proceedings recording direct speeches of accuser and defendant. The protagonists are members of the Greek Alexandrian aristocracy and a Roman Emperor. The situation represented is stereotypical and the story features ‘stock characters’: an embassy of Greek aristocrats travels from Alexandria to Rome to plead to the Emperor their patriotic cause; the Emperor reacts with hostility to their requests and often appears to support their enemies, the Alexandrian Jews, who

<sup>41</sup> Cf. HARKER (2008) 2.

<sup>42</sup> On the issue of authorship see LUISELLI (2016) 292-293.

<sup>43</sup> The label *Acta Alexandrinorum* – the official minutes of the Alexandrians – is in fact a ‘modern’ label inspired by the typical format of these texts. Accordingly, individual texts have been given a ‘modern’ title containing the genitive of the protagonist(s) of the case: *Acta Isidori*, *Acta Appiani*, *Acta Pauli et Antonini*, *Acta Hermaisci*, etc. HARKER (2008) 7-8 offers a concise and useful survey of modern scholarship. Chris RODRIGUEZ is preparing a comprehensive re-edition of the *Acta Alexandrinorum*, equipped with translation and commentary, to be published as a Supplement of the *JJP*.

are represented as conniving and manipulative. In most cases the official hearing consists of a trial following the *cognitio extra ordinem* procedure. The two parties often exchange insults; often the Emperor, portrayed as a villain, is explicitly accused of being of low birth and having no culture. Finally, some of the Greek Alexandrians are condemned to death and led to execution like heroes and martyrs.<sup>44</sup> But note that *P. Giss. Lit.* 4, 7 should be singled out as the only known case where the Emperor supports the Greek Alexandrians against the Jews (see below).

The basic situation and essential story line are based on historical facts, and thus most protagonists are historical personages. In other words, the authors of these texts must have used official documents kept in public archives or copies of such documents.<sup>45</sup> However, all these texts are the result of a process of manipulation and fictionalisation of the historical data, a fictionalisation implemented through a strong ideological bias of anti-Roman propaganda,<sup>46</sup> so that this type of literature – or better sub-literature – may be classified as ‘political pamphlets’ that circulated outside official channels.<sup>47</sup> In this respect one has to take into consideration that the literary reworking often took place in the decades following the events ‘reported/represented’ there and in any case copies were made much later (see below). The complex mixture of history, fiction, ideological bias and rhetorical amplification typical for the *Acta Alexandrinorum* is clearly shown by the following instructive examples. (In what follows for the sake of clarity I briefly summarise the content of individual items.)

<sup>44</sup> See HARKER (2008) 1. Because of their similarity with the Christian martyr acts these texts have alternatively been labelled as *Acts of the Pagan Martyrs* (see BAUER [1901] 29–47).

<sup>45</sup> On the taking of minutes, public records and archives see HARKER (2008) 99–112. On the issue of the use and reworking of official documents, see below.

<sup>46</sup> HARKER (2008) 173, 175–176.

<sup>47</sup> On the issue of circulation and transmission, see LUISELLI (2016): in particular, note the possibility that this type of texts could be read and copied as entertainment literature (*ibid.* 304–307).

1. *Acta Isidori* (Pl. 6.2),<sup>48</sup> which is the archetype of the entire corpus of the *Acta Alexandrinorum*,<sup>49</sup> and, from a legal standpoint, the first known example of the *cognitio extra ordinem*,<sup>50</sup> concerns the status of the Alexandrian Jews under Gaius and Claudius, and portrays the famous trial of Isidorus. Isidorus accuses Agrippa I, *amicus* (φίλος) of Emperor Claudius,<sup>51</sup> of impiety (ἄσέβεια) on the basis of the Jewish refusal of the imperial cult. King Agrippa is present at the trial. Claudius accuses Isidorus of having ruined his friends, among whom were Theon and Naevius Macro; he justifies himself by saying that he was following Gaius' orders, and puts himself at his service. The situation degenerates into an open confrontation between Claudius and Isidorus with exchanges of insults.<sup>52</sup> Finally, Isidorus is condemned evidently for *crimen maiestatis*. On the one hand, the historicity of the trial in this form can be doubted, since there is no independent evidence for it and also it is very unlikely that an exchange of insults between the Emperor and the ambassador took place; on the other hand, Isidorus is a historical figure and was executed together with another Alexandrian ambassador, Lampon, probably because of their involvement in political intrigues under Caligula (see above). Moreover, the senators mentioned can be identified with historical figures.<sup>53</sup> The number of historical inaccuracies is not surprising: Isidorus'

<sup>48</sup> *CPJ* II 156a-d; RODRIGUEZ (2010a) re-edits the entire text (adding *P.Oxy.* XLII 3021 as part of it) with translation, commentary and historical interpretation.

<sup>49</sup> For this definition see RODRIGUEZ (2010a) 2.

<sup>50</sup> See RODRIGUEZ (2010a) 2.

<sup>51</sup> Φίλος is to be understood in a juridical sense: Agrippa and Claudius had been brought up together (see *JOS. AJ* 18, 165) and their mothers – Berenike and Antonia Minor – were very close friends (*ibid.* 18, 143; 156; 165); cf. RODRIGUEZ (2010a) 19.

<sup>52</sup> I am accepting here a dramatic date of the trial of AD 41, supported by the historical context and prosopographical details. An alternative possibility is AD 52/53: in that case the Jewish King present at the trial should be Agrippa II, son of Agrippa I (since Agrippa I died in AD 44). For a general discussion and a survey of the scholarly debate, see *APM* IV 118-133; HARKER (2008) 23-24; RODRIGUEZ (2010a) 16-21.

<sup>53</sup> See RODRIGUEZ (2010a) 18.

alleged responsibility for the death of Macro is chronologically impossible; similarly the accusation of having ruined Theon<sup>54</sup> is problematic, since in other *Acta Alexandrinorum* Theon appears as ambassador together with Balbillus,<sup>55</sup> and Appian associates him with Isidorus himself and Lampon as the Alexandrian envoys executed by Claudius.<sup>56</sup> Finally, it is not historically proven that Isidorus held the office of gymnasiarch, although this is emphasised in the *Acta*.<sup>57</sup>

2. *Acta Hermaisci* (Pl. 6.3),<sup>58</sup> containing a hearing of two embassies – Jewish and Greek – before Trajan, presumably on an episode of violence,<sup>59</sup> offers a sort of caricature of the Emperor.<sup>60</sup> He is portrayed as prejudiced in favour of the Jews (under the influence of his wife Plotina),<sup>61</sup> and definitely hostile to the Greek Alexandrians.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, the accusation by ambassador Hermaiscus that Trajan's privy council is full of impious Jews, although reflecting the historical presence of the Jewish element in Roman public life,<sup>63</sup> is certainly exaggerated. But the most striking section of this text is the description of a supernatural event: the bust of Serapis brought by the Greek Alexandrians as protection<sup>64</sup> suddenly starts to sweat, provoking agitation among the Roman crowd.

<sup>54</sup> *CPJ* II 156b, col. i 13-14; 156a, col. i 19.

<sup>55</sup> He is to be identified with Tiberius Claudius Balbillus, the leader of the embassy sent to Claudius in AD 41, who became prefect of Egypt under Nero; see HARKER (2008) 20.

<sup>56</sup> See *BKT* IX 64 and *CPJ* II 159b, col. iv 5-7; cf. HARKER (2008) 45.

<sup>57</sup> See HARKER (2008) 44 and RODRIGUEZ (2010a) 24-25 with n. 116.

<sup>58</sup> *CPJ* II 157.

<sup>59</sup> It is not possible to specify the historical episode of violence between Greeks and Jews in Alexandria that may have inspired this text.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *APM* VIII, p. 162.

<sup>61</sup> There is no historical evidence for Plotina's alleged Jewish sympathies; see *APM* VIII, pp. 162-163.

<sup>62</sup> On the contrary Dio Chrysostom in his *Alexandrian Oration* (32, 95) states that Trajan bestowed care (ἐπιμέλεια) upon the Alexandrians with concrete signs, the gift of fountains and monumental gateways.

<sup>63</sup> See *APM* VIII, pp. 168-172.

<sup>64</sup> Because of the fragmentary state of the text we are not told what the Jewish ambassadors brought as counterpart to symbolise the protection of their god:



3. In the *Acta Appiani*<sup>65</sup> the brave gymnasiarch Appian<sup>66</sup> apparently accuses Commodus of illicit speculation in the trade of Egyptian wheat, a fact that may reflect the historical institution of the *Classis Commodiana* for the transportation of corn. In spite of the rhetorical amplification, the insults against the Emperor – dishonest and uneducated, brigand-leader<sup>67</sup> – together with the ‘disturbing’ scenario – the corpse of another victim of the monstrous tyrant lying on the floor and being seen and addressed by Appian, as he is led to execution – effectively give a ‘realistic’ glimpse of Commodus’ ‘reign of terror’. The text clearly shows a high degree of literary elaboration and differs from the minutes of proceedings in the sense that narrative parts are more developed at the expense of direct speeches.

4. A rather interesting case is *P.Giss.Lit.* 4, 7 (Pl. 6.4),<sup>68</sup> which contains references to an embassy to a previous Emperor (Tiberius), a record of the hearing of the Alexandrians and the so-called accusers of the Alexandrians – to be identified with the Jews – before Caligula, and scanty remains of a letter of Caligula to the Alexandrians.<sup>69</sup> The Greek ambassadors, thanks to the defence of their representative Areios, managed to persuade Caligula to issue a ruling in their favour at the end of a trial conducted according to the *cognitio extra ordinem*. Interestingly, from a juridical standpoint we have here an *exceptio peremptoria*, through which plaintiff and defendant change role completely: the plaintiff is accused of being a foreigner, not a legal citizen of Alexandria, and of claiming illegally the civic

since their religion did not allow the representation of Jahweh, it is likely that instead they carried a scroll of the Torah (see *APM* VIII, col. i 18, comm. at pp. 174-175).

<sup>65</sup> *CPJ* II 159.

<sup>66</sup> Why Appian is condemned to death is unclear because of the fragmentary state of the piece.

<sup>67</sup> τύραννος (*CPJ* II 159b, col. ii 5), σοὶ ... ἔγκειται ... ἀφιλοκαγαθία ἀπαιδία (col. ii 11-13), λήσταρχος (col. iv 8).

<sup>68</sup> See HARKER (2008) 35-37; new interpretation in GAMBETTI (2008) and (2009) 87-136; see also RODRIGUEZ (2010b) 594 and RITTER (2015) 179-181.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *APM* X (*Acta Athenodori*), fr. 1, col. ii 28-49, preserving remains of an imperial letter by Trajan inserted in the text.

status of Alexandrian resident, in other words of seizing unregistered civic rights,<sup>70</sup> and finally is condemned to death by burning.<sup>71</sup> This text is the only case within the corpus of the *Acta Alexandrinorum* in which the Emperor favours the Greek Alexandrians against their enemies, apparently the Jews. The text may really reflect a historical conflict related to the problems of residential rights and citizenships, although it cannot be taken as an actual copy of a genuine record, in spite of Gambetti's well-constructed arguments.<sup>72</sup> The signs of literary reworking are very clear: it may be the result of the amalgamation of different historical embassies; the chronology of the events is rather unlikely and the names of individuals involved seem to have been made up to fit perfectly the situation (Eulalos, featuring as the leader of the Alexandrians, is clearly a speaking name, while Areios is a homonym of Augustus' tutor).<sup>73</sup> Moreover, we would expect a copy of a genuine document to be almost contemporary with the events reported in it, but the script of this text cannot be earlier than the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> century.

As in the case of *P. Giss. Lit.* 4, 7, the copies of *Acta* are usually much later than the dramatic date: in several *Acta* there are fragments of different versions or *recensiones*, often slightly overlapping, but showing divergences.<sup>74</sup> This fact provides an indisputable proof of the manipulation and fictionalisation of

<sup>70</sup> GAMBETTI (2009) 116, 127-128 rightly connects this issue with a document, *BGU* IV 1140 = *CPJ* II 151, from the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, a petition of an Alexandrian Jew, Helenos, to the Roman prefect Gaius Turranius, where the definition of his status would determine the exemption from the poll-tax; cf. HARKER (2008) 217-218; RITTER (2015) 86-88, 284-285.

<sup>71</sup> The type of punishment clearly suggests that the claim of illegal residence rights is considered a *crimen maiestatis*; see GAMBETTI (2009) 119-125.

<sup>72</sup> See n. 68. She identifies Gaius' ruling contained in this papyrus with the 'historical' Emperor's *mandatum* that the prefect Flaccus implemented with a decree. In any case, she has certainly the merit to have drawn attention to the historical significance of this text, especially with regard to the plausible identification of the accusers of the Alexandrians with the Jews, although they are not explicitly mentioned in the extant text.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. RODRIGUEZ (2010b) 594.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. LUISELLI (2016) 294-295.

the historical events and characters typical for the genre. The *Acta Isidori* offers an instructive example:<sup>75</sup> the so-called *recensio* C presents a more historical approach to the case, since Isidorus speaks about a concrete juridical and fiscal situation, the poll-tax and the privileges of Greek Alexandrians *versus* Jews and Egyptians (see below). Usually the *Acta* papyri are not library copies, but rather informally produced exemplars with the aim of sparing writing material, so that some have been copied on the back of papyri previously used for documentary texts (whose legal validity had expired), very often written in rather informal scripts,<sup>76</sup> and containing mistakes and phonetic spellings. They share this feature with copies of 'genuine' documents (see below).

In spite of their disputable historical reliability, it is of crucial importance to examine situations, statements and figures of the *Acta Alexandrinorum*, because they illustrate political 'propaganda', and thus reveal a precise mindset and attitude towards Roman power and the strategies that could be applied to deal with it (at least 'virtually'), and at the same time an 'ideal' representation of ethnic and cultural identity.

Similarly unreliable are the polemical and apologetic writings of Philo of Alexandria and Josephus. Although leader of the Jewish embassy to Gaius in AD 38, in his *Legatio* Philo does not provide an objective, accurate and detailed report.<sup>77</sup> On the contrary, he is affected by his *Weltanschauung* and his ideological bias aiming to discern in the persecution of the Jews the signs of divine intervention.<sup>78</sup> Josephus, who wrote a

<sup>75</sup> Cf. HARKER (2008) 39-41.

<sup>76</sup> On bibliological and palaeographical aspects see HARKER (2008) 187-192, 195-196; LUISELLI (2016).

<sup>77</sup> On the genesis, character and textual history of the *Legatio* see HARKER (2008) 10-11, GAMBETTI (2009) 13-17. RITTER (2015) offers a comprehensive *status quaestionis* (pp. 12-20) and general conclusions on Philo's historical reliability (pp. 280-282).

<sup>78</sup> Note that there are discrepancies between the *Legatio ad Gaium* and Philo's other work related to the events of AD 38, *In Flaccum*. These could be due to political reasons related to historical changes, since they were written at two different moments; cf. GAMBETTI (2009) 16, 250-252.



generation later,<sup>79</sup> in spite of his declared intention of reporting documents *uerbatim*,<sup>80</sup> clearly manipulated historical data and official texts. A very instructive example is his version of Claudius' ruling in AD 41: he definitely confected a pro-Jewish attitude by the Emperor (*AJ* 19, 279-285),<sup>81</sup> which can be proved rather improbable through the comparison with Claudius' letter to the Alexandrians (*CPJ* II 153).<sup>82</sup>

I would like to say some words on the 'purely' documentary sources. In principle, one would be inclined to consider them as absolutely objective and historically reliable. However, we have to take into account that what we can use today is the result of a process of selection in the production of copies of originals. An instructive example is *CPJ* II 153, the papyrus that transmits Claudius' letter to the Alexandrians. What we have does not seem to be a *uerbatim* copy of the original letter, but rather an excerpted version of it, carelessly written<sup>83</sup> on the back<sup>84</sup> of a tax register belonging to the archive of the tax officer Nemesion,

<sup>79</sup> On ideological aspects, the historical reliability and readership of his work see RITTER (2015) 20-46, 124-125, 130, 280-282.

<sup>80</sup> *JOS. AJ* 14, 188; 266.

<sup>81</sup> See OLIVER (1989) 581-583, App. 4.

<sup>82</sup> HARKER (2008) 26-29; GAMBETTI (2009) 230-235. On the contrary, RITTER (2015) 140-156, even allowing for exaggerations, considers the edict as historically reliable and not necessarily in contradiction with Claudius' letter. Moreover, the possibility that Josephus was using a document forged by a Jew apologist is to be taken into consideration (cf. *ibid.* 147).

<sup>83</sup> Note that the hand is practised, but there are numerous misspellings. Very probably the text was composed in Latin and then translated into Greek; see BELL (1924) 2-4, *CPJ* II 153, introd. pp. 37-38.

<sup>84</sup> Other copies of official documents written on recycled material, in informal scripts and containing spelling mistakes, are: *SB* XII 11012, the already mentioned letter of Nero to the 6475, written on the back of a school text in a semi-literary hand with some cursive features; *P. Oxy.* XLII 3022, the above-mentioned letter to Trajan, written in a crude hand on the back of a badly damaged private letter. Besides, *P. Oxy.* XXV 2435 is an opistholograph (i.e. a roll written on both sides for the same purpose) probably copied by a single careless hand, containing a record of Germanicus' speech to the Alexandrians in AD 19 on the recto (cf. n. 122), and the minutes of a hearing before Augustus which took place in AD 12/13 on the verso (cf. n. 5). It is probably a private copy of documents related to contemporary events, possibly meant for limited circulation as a political pamphlet.

from the village of Philadelphia in the Arsinoite. For example, the text lists only the Greek Alexandrian ambassadors, omitting the Jewish envoys, although in the text Claudius addresses the Jews directly, a fact that may reveal a particular interest in the Greek Alexandrians and possibly hostility towards the Jews.<sup>85</sup>

Moreover, a rather interesting text is *CPJ* II 150 (= *PSIX* 1160; Pl. 6.5), which preserves a copy of the record of a hearing before an Emperor, precisely the speech of the spokesman of the Alexandrians pleading for the re-establishment of the Boule in the city. For this reason the document is very often referred to in the scholarship as the 'Boule-Papyrus'. Although Musurillo included it in his corpus of the *APM* as the very first item of the collection, I do not consider this papyrus as a fictionalised semi-literary text belonging to the *Acta Alexandrinorum*, but rather the copy of a 'genuine' document (possibly an abbreviated version).<sup>86</sup> The mention of the poll-tax in the text gives us as a *terminus post quem* the year 24/23 BC, which is the first attestation of the *laographia*. A textual element strongly supports the identification of the Emperor with Augustus: the occurrence of the simple  $\text{Καῖσαρ}$  (col. ii 21), which in official documents is used only for Caesar and Octavian.<sup>87</sup> Some scholars, however, argue for an identification with Gaius or Claudius on the basis of historical considerations.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>85</sup> A detailed analysis is to be found in HARKER (2008) 25-26; cf. RODRIGUEZ (2010a) 31, n. 162; for other examples of non-*uerbatim* copies of documents see HARKER (2008) 57-59.

<sup>86</sup> From a bibliological standpoint it is worth noting that it belongs to a *tomos synkollesimos* (lit. volume of pieces glued together, i.e. roll composed by gluing together copies of different official documents) kept in a public archive: the puzzling letters –  $\overline{\mu} \overline{\alpha} \overline{\beta}$  – occurring in the upper margin may represent the number of the *tomos* (roll) and *kollema* (individual glued piece/document), i.e. roll no. 40 and document no. 22. The informal semi-cursive script confirms that it is a copy and not the original, which very probably was written in a formal chancery hand; see MESSERI (1998) 189.

<sup>87</sup> See *CPJ* II 150, comm. *ad loc.*; MONTEVECCHI (1970) 9, n. 1 = MONTEVECCHI (1998) 87, n. 3; MESSERI (1998) 187-189.

<sup>88</sup> See *APM* I, pp. 84-90; *CPJ* II 150, introd., pp. 26-27; HARKER (2008) 28-30. In particular, those scholars point out the parallels between the plea of the Boule-Papyrus and the responses of Claudius' letter to the Alexandrians.

### 3. Ambassadors in action

The background of an embassy – i.e. the physical and chronological space in which an embassy hearing takes place – is definitely different from that of an assembly. On the one hand, the assembly is a public event of a democratic form of government and as such takes place in a public space usually according to a predetermined and reliable schedule. On the other hand, the embassy hearing always has a ‘private’ dimension: it is confined to the Emperor and his restricted entourage, and takes place in a more ‘intimate’ venue – often imperial gardens<sup>89</sup> –, with location and timing completely depending on the Emperor’s agenda and timetable and thus very often unpredictable.<sup>90</sup> ‘Genuine’ documents and the (semi-)fictional *Acta Alexandrinorum* clearly illustrate this aspect. The restricted audience admitted to the hearing consists of the *consilium* of senators and Emperors’ *amici*;<sup>91</sup> *matronae* are sometimes

Note that no palaeographical argument can be decisive to assign the document to the reign of Augustus or that of Gaius or Claudius because the span of time is too short for distinctive changes in the evolution of writing to take place. In any case, even assuming that the copy was made during Gaius’ or Claudius’ reign, the content does not necessarily refer to those periods, since the papyrus could be a later copy of a document of Augustus’ reign (cf. *CPJ* II 150, p. 27); cf. RITTER (2015) 179.

<sup>89</sup> On the custom of receiving embassies in gardens, see MILLAR (1992) 23–24. In *CPJ* II 156a, col. ii 5 = 156b, col. i 1, Isidorus’ trial takes place in imperial gardens too, but the name is partially in a lacuna and has been supplied in different ways; see KAYSER (2003) 458, n. 92; HARKER (2008) 23–24; RODRIGUEZ (2010a) 16–17. The Jewish envoys guided by Philo and the Greek Alexandrian ambassadors are received by Caligula in the Gardens of Maecenas and Lamia (cf. below, p. 232). Besides, note that in AD 13 Augustus received an embassy in the Library of temple of Apollo (this temple was one of the traditional meeting places of the Senate; see *P.Oxy.* XXV 2435v, lines 31–32). In *P.Giss.Lit.* 4, 7, col. ii 8 the fact that the ambassadors to Tiberius are welcomed by a *cubicularius* suggests that the venue is a private location; see KAYSER (2003) 457.

<sup>90</sup> In this respect, the enormous difficulties experienced by the Jewish ambassadors in AD 39/40 in obtaining a hearing before the ‘crazy’ Caligula, vividly recorded by Philo, represent an extreme case; see below.

<sup>91</sup> See *P.Oxy.* XXV 2435v, lines 34–40; *CPJ* II 156a, col. ii 5–7 = 156b, col. i 1–3; *APM* X, fr. 2, col. ii, 61–63. On *consilium* see *APM* X, p. 202–204; MILLAR (1992) 119–122; HARKER (2008) 92–93; GAMBETTI (2009) 126–127 with further bibliography.

present.<sup>92</sup> Members of the imperial entourage could potentially influence the ruling of the Emperor. For example, Philo reports that the rival Alexandrian embassy to Gaius bribed the influential chamberlain Helicon to gain the favour of the Emperor.<sup>93</sup> In the *Acta Hermaisci* Trajan appears under the influence of his wife Plotina.<sup>94</sup>

In this respect the scenario of the *Acta Appiani* represents an anomaly. The author somehow modifies the ‘non-public’ character of the *cognitio extra ordinem* by constructing a dramatic dimension, pathetically charged, where the condemned Appian, led to execution, calls on the Roman people to come and see what is happening to him: “... he cried out in the middle of Rome: ‘Come up, Romans, and see an Alexandrian gymnasiarch and ambassador, one without parallel in history, led to execution!’”.<sup>95</sup> In the dynamic of the text his appeal works effectively: immediately the *euocatus*<sup>96</sup> informs the Emperor that the people are complaining about the execution of Appian, so that Commodus gives orders to bring him back.<sup>97</sup>

Any embassy, at the very moment of sailing to Rome, could not even predict where and when exactly a hearing in front of the Emperor could be obtained. For example, the Jewish embassy led by Philo, which sailed to Rome after the arrest of the prefect Flaccus, at the same time as a Greek rival embassy, was greeted very briefly by Caligula at the entrance of Agrippina’s Gardens;<sup>98</sup> then the envoys followed the Emperor to Puteoli,<sup>99</sup> where he was spending time in his country houses,

<sup>92</sup> *CPJ* II 156a, col. ii 7-8, 156b, col. i 3.

<sup>93</sup> PHILO *Leg.* 172-173; on the contrary, the Jewish envoys prefer to write a letter conveying their message while they are waiting for an audience (*Leg.* 178-179).

<sup>94</sup> See above, n. 61.

<sup>95</sup> *CPJ* II 159b, col. iii 7-11: ... ἀνεβόησεν [μ]έσης Ῥώμης· συνδράμετε, Ῥωμ[α]ῖοι· θεωρήσατε ἕνα ἀπ’ αἰῶνος ἀπαγόμενον γυμνασίαρχον καὶ πρεσβευτὴν Ἀλεξανδρέων. The translation of *CPJ* has been slightly adapted. The phrase [μ]έσης Ῥώμης (line 8) probably indicates the forum. Cf. p. 239 with n. 139.

<sup>96</sup> Veteran serving as a special officer.

<sup>97</sup> *CPJ* II 159b, col. iii 11-col. iv 2.

<sup>98</sup> PHILO *Leg.* 181.

<sup>99</sup> PHILO *Leg.* 185.

and finally obtained a full hearing, opposite the rival Greek embassy, not before September AD 40 (after Gaius' return from Germany) in Rome, i.e. two years later,<sup>100</sup> in the Gardens of Maecenas and Lamia. There, according to Philo's account in *Legatio ad Gaium*, the Emperor was inspecting his estate and behaved in a very erratic and dismissive way, without paying consistent attention to the negotiations, so that Philo compares the role of the Jewish ambassadors to that of actors mocked in a mime.<sup>101</sup> Even if this may be a caricature of a 'crazy' Emperor, it is easy to imagine to what extent it could be difficult for an embassy to communicate with the Emperor. A hint in this direction is provided by a documentary text: some decades before, around 10 BC, a Greek Alexandrian embassy made the effort to reach Augustus in Gaul to inform him about the city's recent grievances, as mentioned in a letter by the Emperor to the Alexandrians.<sup>102</sup> Similarly, roughly a century later, in AD 98, an Alexandrian embassy must have reached the newly acclaimed Emperor Trajan in Germany, the reply to which is partially surviving in *P.Oxy.* XLII 3022.<sup>103</sup>

At the very beginning of a hearing, before coming to concrete and urgent matters concerning the city, it was of crucial importance for the envoys to gain benevolence and clemency from the Emperor.<sup>104</sup> Thus the attempt of Greek Alexandrians and Jews to present themselves as loyal and devoted subjects appears to be a customary 'diplomatic ritual' and for this reason often resorts to formulaic wording. To begin with, the Emperor

<sup>100</sup> See n. 32. Note that the reason for such a delay could have been Gaius' plan to visit Alexandria and deliver his ruling in person there; see PHILO *Leg.* 172, 250, 338; SUET. *Calig.* 49, 2; cf. the hypothetically planned visit by Augustus to Alexandria possibly (but not necessarily) mentioned in the 'Boule-Papyrus' (see below, n. 166). I should specify that there are different reconstructions of the chronology of the embassies to Gaius; see GAMBETTI (2009) 256-259, 266-267, 269-272.

<sup>101</sup> PHILO *Leg.* 351, 359, 365-366, 368.

<sup>102</sup> *P.Oxy.* XLII 3020, fr. i, col. i; cf. n. 106.

<sup>103</sup> See HARKER (2008) 50-51.

<sup>104</sup> See MEN. RHET. 2, 13, 423, 7-11 SPENGLER; RUSSELL-WILSON (1981) 180-181, 337.

has to be addressed in the appropriate way: Alexandrian ambassadors featuring in documentary sources address Augustus as “Lord”,<sup>105</sup> “Caesar, invincible hero”;<sup>106</sup> among the envoys of the *Acta*, Areios greets Caligula with the phrase “you are the god of the Universe and the master of the city”;<sup>107</sup> Isidorus (or Lampon?), probably with irony, addresses Claudius as “Olympian Caesar”.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, the Jewish envoys led by Philo address Gaius as “August Emperor”<sup>109</sup> and “Lord Gaius”.<sup>110</sup>

The ‘crazy’ Caligula, of course, obsessed with the idea of his divine nature, represents an extreme case. Philo critically observes the attitude of the rival envoys and implicitly classifies it as flattery: as the Emperor appears the Greek Alexandrians burst into acclamations, address him with all ritual epithets of the gods, and even use body language through gesticulating and dancing;<sup>111</sup> later they laugh artificially to please the Emperor, who – they think – is trying to be witty.<sup>112</sup> By contrast, the attitude of the Jewish delegation is dignified, respectful and deferential: they simply bow before Gaius.<sup>113</sup>

As subjects, ambassadors present themselves as suppliants before the Emperor. So the *rhetor* Timoxenus before Augustus:

<sup>105</sup> δέσπο[τα, *CPJ* II 150, col. ii 20. This form of address is also used by King Agrippa in the petition to Caligula concerning the desecration of Jewish temples; see PHILO *Leg.* 276, 290; cf. also 171 and DICKEY (2001), esp. 3-5.

<sup>106</sup> Καῖσαρ ἀνίκητε ἥρωες, *P.Oxy.* LXII 3020, fr. 1, col. ii 1.

<sup>107</sup> σὺ εἶ ὁ τ[ο]ῦ κόσμου | θεὸς καὶ τῆς πόλεως ἐκράτη[σας, *P.Giss.Lit.* 4, 7, col. ii 35-iii 1.

<sup>108</sup> Ὀλύμπιε Καῖ[σαρ], *CPJ* II 156b, col. i 25-26 (cf. 17 “my Lord Caesar”, κύριέ μου Καῖσαρ). The editors note *ad loc.* that this epithet is very unusual for a Roman Emperor before Hadrian and probably is a mocking allusion to the famous Olympian Pericles (cf. AR. *Ach.* 530, Περικλέης οὐλύμπιος; see *APM* IV, pp. 132-133).

<sup>109</sup> Σεβαστὸς Αὐτοκράτωρ, PHILO *Leg.* 352; cf. 309, 322.

<sup>110</sup> κύριε Γάιε, *Leg.* 356; see DICKEY (2001), esp. 6-7 and cf. here nn. 105, 108.

<sup>111</sup> PHILO *Leg.* 354-355. The body language of the Alexandrians must have included the προσκύνησις (*Leg.* 116), an attitude that Aristotle considers as “barbarian” (*Rhet.* 1361a).

<sup>112</sup> PHILO *Leg.* 361.

<sup>113</sup> PHILO *Leg.* 352.



“In appearance we are here as your suppliants; but in truth [our city] with full enthusiasm is paying worship to your most sacred [Fortune] ...”.<sup>114</sup> In the *Acta* Isidorus says to Claudius: “My Lord Caesar, I beseech you to listen to my account of my native city’s sufferings”.<sup>115</sup>

Roman Emperors, in the same line of diplomatic etiquette, acknowledge the expression of loyalty and assure their benevolence. A rather instructive example is this section of Claudius’ letter to the Alexandrians:<sup>116</sup>

“... [subj. twelve Alexandrian ambassadors individually named], your ambassadors, presented me with the decree and spoke at length about the city, directing my attention to your goodwill towards us, which, you may be sure, has long been stored in my memory, since it comes from your natural reverence towards the Emperors, as I know from many instances, and particularly from your devotion to my own family, which we have returned. Of this, to pass over other instances and mention the latest, the best witness is my brother, Germanicus Caesar, who addressed you in the most sincere language.”<sup>117</sup>

<sup>114</sup> λόγῳ γὰρ ἡμεῖς | [ἵκετε] ὑσάντες πάρεσμεν τὸ δ’ ἀληθὲς | [ἡ πόλις] ἀπάσῃ σπουδῇ τὴν σὴν ἱερωτάτην | [τύχην] προσκυνήσασα τυγχάνει, *P.Oxy.* XXV 2435v, lines 58-61. Lines 59-61 contain a clearly corrupted text (το δ αληθος | [.....] α πασι α σπουδην την συνιερωτατην | [τυχην] προσκυνησασαν ετυγχανει[ν]) and therefore I have printed it according to the emended version suggested by the *ed. pr.* in comm.

<sup>115</sup> κύριέ μου Καῖσαρ, τῶν γονά[των σου δέομαι] | ἀκοῦσαί μου τὰ πονοῦν[τα τῇ πατρίδι], *CPJ* II 156a, col. ii 10-11; cf. 156b, col. i 6-8. In addition, note that in *P.Giss.Lit.* 4, 7, col. ii 4-6 S. STEPHENS (*P.Yale* II 107, comm. *ad loc.*, p. 94) has tentatively supplemented <ἰ>κεσίοις (“of or for suppliants”, in the dative case plural); see GAMBETTI (2009) 106-107 with n. 39.

<sup>116</sup> On the role of εὐσέβεια (piety) in the relationship between Emperor and subjects, see DÖRNER (2014) 242-243.

<sup>117</sup> *CPJ* II 153, col. ii 20-27: ... οἱ πρέσβεις ὑμῶν, ἀναδόντες μοι τὸ ψήφισμα πολλὰ περὶ | τῆς πόλεως διεξῆλθον, ὑπαγόμενοί μοι δῆλον πρὸς τὴν εἰς ἡμᾶς | εὐνοίαν, ἣν ἐκ πολλῶν χρόνων, εὖ ἴστε, παρ’ ἐμοὶ τεταμιευμένην | εἴχετε, φύσει μὲν εὐσεβεῖς περὶ τοὺς Σεβαστοὺς ὑπάρχοντες, ὥς | ἐκ πολλῶν μοι γέγονε γνώριμον, ἐξαιρέτως δὲ περὶ τὸν ἐμὸν | οἶκον καὶ σπουδάζαντες καὶ σπουδασθέντες, ὧν ἵνα τὸ τελευ[ταῖον] εἶπω παρεῖς τὰ ἄλλα μέγιστός ἐστιν μάρτυς οὐμὸς ἀδελφός | Γερμανικὸς Καῖσαρ γνησιωτέrais ὑμᾶς φωναῖς προσαγορεύσας. On the interpretation of the passage see ŁUKASZEWICZ (1998). In lines 26-27 Claudius mentions the triumphal welcome given to Germanicus in Alexandria during his

In spite of the use of *topoi* and formulaic language, which can be paralleled in other documents,<sup>118</sup> the mention of his late brother assumes a sort of personal and even emotional nuance.

As said above, embassies delivered honorific decrees to Emperors, aiming to express in a concrete way their loyalty as subjects. The Greek Alexandrians were accustomed to offer divine honours, construction of temples dedicated to the imperial cult and nomination of a high priest. An interesting source in this respect is again a section of Claudius' letter to the Alexandrians, where he accepts the statues, but firmly refuses divine prerogatives,<sup>119</sup> following the Roman traditional ideology embraced by Augustus<sup>120</sup> and his successors with the exception of Caligula:<sup>121</sup> "... But the establishment of a high-priest and temples of myself I decline, not wishing to be offensive to my contemporaries and in the belief that temples and the like have been set apart in all ages for the gods alone".<sup>122</sup>

Roughly fifteen years later, Nero reacts with similar attitude in his letter to a Greek polis and the 6475,<sup>123</sup> using the same

visit in AD 19; cf. n. 122 and *Discussion* p. 257. On this occasion Germanicus addressed the Alexandrian crowd in the Greek language; see comm. in *CPJ* 153 on line 27.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. *P.Oxy.* XLII 3022, Trajan's letter to the Alexandrians, similar in tone and formulaic wording; see OLIVER (1989) 136-139, no. 46; HARKER (2008) 50-51.

<sup>119</sup> *CPJ* II 153, col. ii 28-col. iii 51.

<sup>120</sup> On Augustus and imperial cult, see DÖRNER (2014), esp. 19-25, 136-145, 151-180, 202-213, 280-284, 370, 404-429, 461-463.

<sup>121</sup> On Caligula and imperial cult, see DÖRNER (2014), esp. 289-296, 298, 353-356, 360-361, 431-444.

<sup>122</sup> *CPJ* II 153, col. iii 48-51: ... ἀρχιερέα δ' ἐμὸν καὶ ναῶν κατασκευὰς | παραιτοῦμαι, οὔτε φορτικὸς τοῖς κατ' ἐμαυτὸν ἀνθρώποις | βουλόμενος εἶναι τὰ ἱερὰ δὲ καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα μόνοις τοῖς θεοῖς | ἐξάίρετα ὑπὸ τοῦ παντός αἰῶνος ἀποδε-  
δόσθαι κρίν[ω]ν. A very similar formulation is to be found in another letter by Claudius addressed to the Thasians and preserved in an inscription, *IG* XII 8 = *SEG* 39.910 (AD 42), lines 5-7. For other parallels, see OLIVER (1989) 15. On Claudius and imperial cult, see DÖRNER (2014), esp. 219-241, 266-273, 314-318, 444. A comparable attitude towards divine honours is shown by Gaius' father Germanicus, who made a private visit to Egypt and Alexandria in AD 19, where he was proclaimed god and addressed as *imperator*; see *P.Oxy.* XXV 2435r, *SB* I 3924. On the significance of Germanicus' visit, see DÖRNER (2014) 384-389.

<sup>123</sup> *SB* XII 11012, col. i 1-6.



type of formulaic language: “... of the remaining two honours (that you offer), I refused the temple in my honour, because it is just that such an honour is given by men to the gods only”.<sup>124</sup>

Ethnic and cultural pride is an essential aspect of the way ambassadors ‘construct’ their image: both Greek Alexandrians and Jews present themselves as members of an élite, definitely separated from the uncivilised Egyptian masses. The Greek Alexandrians define themselves as Hellenes, as a nation (ἔθνος) that embodies a superior culture, re-enacting the Greek traditional bipolarity Hellenes/barbaroi in the dichotomy Greeks/Egyptians – i.e. allegedly non-Hellenised Egyptians – and/or Greeks/Jews, in spite of the historical fact that the Jews of Egypt were deeply Hellenised.<sup>125</sup> The Alexandrian spokesman of the embassy of the famous ‘Boule-Papyrus’ tells Augustus that the non-Hellenes – evidently Egyptians and Jews<sup>126</sup> – are uncultured and uneducated (ἄθροεπτοι καὶ ἀνάγωγοι γεγονότες ἄνθρωποι) and risk contaminating (μολύνειν) the Alexandrian *politeuma*.<sup>127</sup> Isidorus ranks the Jews at the same level as the Egyptians: “They are not of the same nature as the Alexandrians, but live rather after the fashion of the Egyptians”.<sup>128</sup>

The idealistic reference to their ties with the Greek motherland comes out as ‘natural’ in the *Acta Athenodori*: Alexandria is ruled by the same laws as Athens, which are the best in the

<sup>124</sup> ... ἐ]χ δὲ τῶν ἀπολειπομέ[ν]ων | δύο, τὸν τε ναόν μου παρητή|σάμην, διὰ τὸ θεοῖς μόνοις τὰν τὴν τιμὴν ὑπ’ ἀν[θ]ρ[ώ]πων δικαίως ἀπονέ|[με]σθαι [...]. Cf. the detailed analysis by MONTEVECCHI (1970) 11-31 = MONTEVECCHI (1998) 89-109. Note that in line 2 the papyrus has σου (genitive of the personal pronoun of the second person singular), clearly a mechanical mistake that has been corrected with the required form of the pronoun of the first person. On Nero and imperial cult, see DÖRNER (2014), esp. 255-257, 444-454.

<sup>125</sup> It is worth noting that some very fragmentary texts have been included in the category of *dubia uel incerta* of the *Acta Alexandrinorum* by HARKER (2008) 222, 223 on the basis of the occurrence of key words – Hellenism and Alexandria, Greek birth – that may refer to this topos: *P.Harr.* II 173, lines 11-12; *P.Bour.* 7.

<sup>126</sup> But note that in the text the two groups are not explicitly mentioned.

<sup>127</sup> *CPJ* II 150, col. ii 6.

<sup>128</sup> *CPJ* II 156c, col. ii 25-27: οὐκ εἰσιν Ἀλ[εξανδρεῦσιν] | ὁμοιοπαθεῖς, τρόπῳ δὲ Αἰγυπτ[ί]ων ὁμοῖοι].

world because of their balanced mixture of justice and clemency.<sup>129</sup>

Significantly, the ambassador-martyr Appian, in his micro-synkrisis<sup>130</sup> between the cruel Commodus and his father Marcus Aurelius, portrays the latter as the ideal Hellenised ruler, a philosopher and thus a noble emperor:<sup>131</sup>

“... Your father, the divine Antoninus, was fit to be emperor. For, look you, first of all he was a philosopher; secondly, he was not avaricious, thirdly, he was good. But you have precisely the opposite qualities; you are tyrannical, dishonest, ignorant!”<sup>132</sup>

The Greek institution that symbolises and at the same time gives concrete reality to their ethnical and cultural status as Hellenes is the Gymnasium, which is largely involved in the education of the younger generations and thus preserves the Greek παιδεία, i.e. the culture of highly educated people, their

<sup>129</sup> *APM* X, fr. 1, col. i 12-18: Caesar: “Is it true that the Athenians have the same laws as the Alexandrians?” Athenodorus: “It is; and they are stronger than all other laws, having a happy admixture of clemency.” (Καῖσαρ· | τοῖς γὰρ αὐτοῖς νόμοις χρῶ(ν)|ται Ἀθηναῖοι καὶ Ἀλεξ(ν)|δρεῖς; Ἀθηνόδωρος· πᾶν|[των] γὰρ νόμων ἰσχυρότε|[ροι ὅ]ντες τὴν εὐκρασίαν(ν) | [τῆς] φιλανθρωπίας ἔχουσι(ν).) The statement is in itself emblematic. At the same time, in the context of the *Acta Athenodori* it has a specific function: it is used as a justification for the fact that the Alexandrians plead their cause – the release of Greek Alexandrians detained in Rome – through an Athenian embassy, probably trying to exploit the favour demonstrated to Athens by Hadrian, the ‘philhellene’ Emperor. These observations are based on the interpretation of this text according to which the embassy is Athenian and the Emperor involved is Hadrian, which I am accepting here; on different views see *APM* VII, pp. 196-198.

<sup>130</sup> I am using the word σύγκρισις, comparison (Lat. *comparatio*), as a rhetorical *terminus technicus* indicating a specific exercise belonging to the category of the *Progymnasmata*, i.e. the exercises of the first stage of the rhetorical training in the Graeco-Roman world. For other examples of the use of typical progymnastic techniques that can be detected in the *Acta Alexandrinorum*, see Index C in *APM*, s.v. progymnastic writers (p. 298).

<sup>131</sup> *CPJ* II 159b, col. ii 7-13; the translation of *CPJ* has been slightly adapted.

<sup>132</sup> ... τῷ γὰρ θεῷ | Ἀντωνίνῳ [τ]ῷ π[ατ]ρί σου ἔπρεπε | αὐτοκρατορεῦν. ἄκουε, τὸ μὲν | πρῶτον ἡ[ν] φιλόσοφος, τὸ δεύτερον | ἀφιλάργυρος, τ[ὸ] τρίτον φιλάγαθος· σοὶ | τούτων τὰ ἐναντία ἔγκειται, τυραν|νία ἀφιλοκαγαθία ἀπαιδία. Note that ἀπαιδία (line 13) is an alternative form of ἀπαιδευσία; see *APM* XI, p. 215, comm. on line 13.

*humanitas*. Expression of this ethnic and cultural pride, which can be summarised in the key word εὐγένεια, nobility of birth/race,<sup>133</sup> emerges in the violent confrontation of several trial scenes of the *Acta*. Paradigmatically Isidorus reacts to Claudius' insult – “son of a (slave) girl-musician” – by proudly stating his status of freeborn man and gymnasiarch of the glorious city of Alexandria, and retaliating with an equally powerful insult, “cast-off son of the Jewess Salome”.<sup>134</sup> Similarly in the name of the same values Appian appeals against the Emperor:<sup>135</sup>

Appian: “By your *genius* I am neither mad nor have I lost my sense of shame. I am making an appeal **on behalf of my noble rank and my privileges**”.

The Emperor: “How so?”

Appian: “**As one of noble rank and a gymnasiarch**”.

The Emperor: “Do you suggest that I am not of noble rank?”

Appian: “That I know not; I am merely appealing **on behalf of my own nobility and privileges**”.<sup>136</sup>

This attitude is also reflected in the body language and external appearance of ambassadors described in the *Acta*. Isidorus is

<sup>133</sup> *CPJ* II 159b, col. iv 15-col. v 8; cf. ARIST. *Rhet.* 1360b. Note that the occurrence in *CPJ* II 159b, col. iii 3 means “*insignia* of noble rank”.

<sup>134</sup> *CPJ* II 156d, col. iii 7-12: “Claudius Caesar: ‘Isidorus, you are really the son of a girl-musician.’ Isidorus: ‘I am neither a slave nor a girl-musician’s son, but gymnasiarch of the glorious city of Alexandria. But you are the cast-off son of the Jewess Salome!’” Κλαύδιος Καῖσαρ· ἀσφαλῶς | [ἐ]χ' μουσικῆς εἴ, Ἰσίδωρε. Ἰσίδωρος· | [ἐ]γὼ μὲν οὐκ εἰμι δοῦλος οὐδὲ μουσικῆς | [υἱ]ός, ἀλλὰ διασήμεου πόλεως [Α]λεξαν[δρ]εί[ας] γυμνασίαρχος. σὺ δὲ ἐκ Σαλώμη[ς] | [τ]ῆς Ἰουδα[ίας] υἱός [ἀπό]βλητος. See *APM* IV, pp. 128-130, RODRIGUEZ (2010a) 22-23; RITTER (2015) 155-156. The ‘vulgarity’ of these insults is comparable to Ἰουδαῖος τριωβολεῖος, “a two-penny Jew”, uttered by Isidorus against King Agrippa (*CPJ* II 156b, col. i 18; see comm. *ad loc.*; cf. HARKER [2008] 44; RODRIGUEZ [2010a] 10, 39).

<sup>135</sup> *CPJ* II 159b, col. iv 13-col. v 8.

<sup>136</sup> Ἀππιανός· νῆ τὴν σὴν τύχην οὔτε μαίνομαι οὔτε ἀπονενόημαι, ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ τῆς ἑμαυτοῦ εὐγενείας καὶ τῶν ἐ[μοὶ προσηκόντων] | ἀπαγγέλλω. αὐτοκράτωρ· πῶς; | Ἀππιανός· ὥς εὐγ[ενὴς καὶ γυμνασί]αρχος. αὐτοκράτωρ· φῆς οὖν ὅτι ἡμεῖς | ἀγενεῖς ἐσμεν; [Ἀππιανός· τοῦτο μὲν] | οὐκ ο[ἶ]δα· ἐγὼ [ὑπὲρ τῆς ἑμαυτοῦ] | εὐγενείας καὶ τῶν [ἐμοὶ προσηκόντων] ἀπαγγέλλω. See MERKELBACH (1994).

being taken away to execution in the robes of a gymnasiarch.<sup>137</sup> The gymnasiarch Appian obtains from Commodus permission to be led to execution with the symbols of his noble office, the headband and the white shoes. The description is detailed and dramatic:<sup>138</sup>

“Appian (then) took his head-band and put it on his head and, putting his white shoes on his feet, he cried out in the middle of Rome: ‘Come up, Romans, and see an Alexandrian gymnasiarch and ambassador, one without parallel in history, led to execution!’”<sup>139</sup>

The pride of being a Hellene and of noble birth is intrinsically part of the patriotic attitude, the love for the fatherland (πατρίς)

<sup>137</sup> *CPJ* II 156b, col. ii 46-47: ἀπα|γόμενον ἐν σχ[ήματι γυμνασιαρχικῷ]. In respect to body language a rather fragmentary sequence in col. ii 35-37 – [ὁ] | ῥήτωρ τῇ δεξι[ᾳ...] | τὸ ἱμάτιον ἔρρι[ψεν...] | καὶ εἶπεν, κτλ. – is particularly interesting: it seems to suggest a gesture of despair or protest. According to *APM* IV, comm. on lines 35ff, p. 137, perhaps Isidorus’ advocate tore his *himation* and threw himself upon the ground before the Emperor, as happens in similar situations found in novels (e.g. *CHARITON* 5, 2, 4; *HELIOD. Aeth.* 6, 8). Thus the following supplement has been suggested: καὶ τότε ὁ] | ῥήτωρ, τῇ δεξι[ᾳ περιρρη-ζόμενος...] | τὸ ἱμάτιον, ἔρρι[ψεν ἑαυτὸν χάμαι] | καὶ εἶπεν, κτλ. Cf. RODRIGUEZ (2010a) 11. However, *CPJ* II 156b, comm. on line 36 questions the presence of a professional *rhetor* assisting Isidorus, since Isidorus plays the role of the prosecutor, unless “[...] we suggest that in the course of the trial he was formally charged with having caused the death of Claudius’ friends and was now himself in need of a professional advocate”. In other words, the subject of the sentence can be Isidorus, who then would be qualified as a *rhetor*; cf. HARKER (2008) 188-189. Note that MAGNANI’s (2009) 150 observation – “Isidoro assume una posizione da retore greco raccogliendo con la destra parte del suo mantello” – does not reflect the actual Greek text.

<sup>138</sup> *CPJ* II 159b, col. iii 5-11.

<sup>139</sup> Ἀππιανὸς λαβὼν τὸ στρόφιον | ἐπὶ τῆς κεφα[λ]ῆς ἔθηκεν, καὶ τὸ | φαικάσ- [ιο]ν ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας θεὶς ἀνε|βόησεν [μ]έσης Ῥώμης· συνδράμε|τε, Ῥωμ[α]ῖοι· θεωρήσατε ἕνα ἀπ’ αἰῶ|νος ἀπαγόμε[νο]ν γυμνασίαρχον καὶ | πρεσβευτὴν Ἀλε-ξανδρέων. The translation of *CPJ* has been slightly adapted. Cf. p. 231 with n. 95. The phrase in lines 9-10 ἕνα ἀπ’ αἰῶ|νος has to be understood in a superlative sense as “unprecedented/without comparison”. It occurs in *DIO CASS.* 63, 20, 5, at the end of the acclamation of the Roman crowd welcoming Nero back from Greece: Ὀλυμπιονῆκα οὐᾶ... ὥς εἰς περιουσίαν, εἰς ἀπ’ αἰῶνος; see *DGE s.v.* εἰς, 2.e. and comm. in *APM*, XI, pp. 216-217, *CJP* II 159b, col. iii 9ff. and cf. HARKER (2008) 193-194. I would like to thank Angelos Chaniotis for his advice on this specific point.

Alexandria. If, on the one hand, this is the noble cause for which ambassadors are ready to accept their martyrdom in the *Acta Alexandrinorum*, on the other hand a documentary source, the famous ‘Boule-Papyrus’, mentions service to the fatherland (ἡ τῆς πατρίδος ὑπηρεσία) as a fundamental duty to be performed by the citizen of noble rank (εὐγενής) in a more realistic and pragmatic context. In the actual wording the emphasis is on the social control implemented by the community, represented by the Boule, in order to prevent citizens from avoiding such a duty.<sup>140</sup>

The self-assertion of the Greek Alexandrian ambassadors is strictly linked to the demonisation of their Jewish rivals by what seems to be a commonplace: the Jews are labelled as a plague on mankind.<sup>141</sup> Isidorus’ statement in the *Acta* – “I accuse them of attempting to stir up the entire world”<sup>142</sup> – recalls the official stance of Claudius in his letter to the Alexandrians, within a threatening warning to the Jews to comply with his order: “If they disobey, I shall proceed against them in every way as fomenting a common plague for the whole world”.<sup>143</sup>

In the *Acta* the Jews are defined “impious Jews” (ἀνόσιοι Ἰουδαῖοι),<sup>144</sup> actually a ‘documentary’ phrase occurring in two official letters concerning the Jewish revolt of AD 115-117.<sup>145</sup>

<sup>140</sup> *CPJ* II 150, col. ii 13-14: “... so that no ‘one who is suitable’ would escape the service to his fatherland” (... μῆτε εὐθετός τις | ὧν φεύγει τὴν τῆς πατρίδος ὑπηρεσίαν). Interestingly *APM* I, p. 91 comments: “A suggestion that serving on an embassy was already being considered almost as a liturgy”, i.e. an undesired financial burden, since they had to undertake to go on the embassy at their own expense (liturgy as a *terminus technicus* indicates a temporary compulsory public service owed to state).

<sup>141</sup> Cf. *Acts of Apostles* 17, 6; 24, 5.

<sup>142</sup> *CPJ* II 156c, col. ii 22-24: ἐγὼ [αὐτοῖς] | [ὅτι καὶ] ὅλην τὴν οἰκουμένην [ἐπιχειροῦσιν] | [ταράσσειν].

<sup>143</sup> *CPJ* II 153, 98-100: εἰ δὲ μή, πάντα | τρόπον αὐτοὺς ἐπεξελεύσομαι καθάπερ κοινήν | τινὰ τῆς οἰκουμένης νόσον ἐξεγείροντας.

<sup>144</sup> *CPJ* II 157, col. iii 42-43 (if, as the editors argue *ad loc.*, this is an official qualification of the Jews after the revolt of AD 115-117, we have a *terminus post quem* for the dating of the composition of the *Acta Hermaisci*); *CPJ* II 158a, col. vi 14 (cf. *ibid.* col. ii 13).

<sup>145</sup> *CPJ* II 438, lines 4 and 443, col. ii 4-5; both documents come from Hermopolis.

The Greek Alexandrians, so inclined to give divine honours to the Roman Emperors, present the Jews as prone to impiety (ἄσεβεια) and thus to betrayal.<sup>146</sup> Philo and his fellow ambassadors, accused of impiety by the ‘infamous’ Isidorus before Caligula, tactfully try to prove their loyalty to the Emperor in a form of *pietas* compatible with their religious customs:<sup>147</sup> *de facto* they have offered sacrifices on behalf of the Emperor three times, at his accession, when he was very ill and on the occasion of the expedition in Germany. This argument has its strength, although Gaius reacts to it in a dismissive way, stressing the difference between sacrificing to the Emperor as god and sacrificing on behalf of the Emperor.<sup>148</sup>

Interestingly, Jews share the same racial and cultural prejudices as Greek Alexandrians towards the (allegedly non-Hellenised) Egyptians. For example, Philo portrays the Egyptians of Gaius’ entourage, led by the ‘infamous’ Helicon, as “a seed bed of evil in whose souls both the venom and the temper of the native crocodiles and asps were reproduced”.<sup>149</sup>

Within the sphere of ‘Realpolitik’ and economic structures, the (alleged) Greek Alexandrian superiority over both Jews and Egyptians is based on a concrete economic factor: their privileged fiscal status, i.e. the exemption from the *laographia*. This

<sup>146</sup> Cf. JOS. *C. Ap.* 2, 65; on the Jews’ attitude towards the imperial cult, see RITTER (2015) 45, 169-171, 174-176. The charge of impiety against the Jews seems to occur in the fragmentary *P.Oxy.* XLII 3021, minutes of a hearing of two embassies from the 1<sup>st</sup> century (the Emperor is not named), col. i 14-16: ]ν ἀλλὰ τῆς τῶν θεῶν | ]. ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς αὐτῶν | ] κατεμπατοῦνται, “but ... of the gods ... in their temples ... are trampled ...”; cf. HARKER (2008) 30-31, GAMBETTI (2009) 218-220, 229. Note that RITTER (2015) 142-143, 153, nn. 64 and 65, 287 considers *P.Oxy.* XLII 3021 *tout court* as documentary evidence for an Alexandrian embassy to Claudius.

<sup>147</sup> On Philo’s attitude towards imperial cult, see DÖRNER (2014) 353-363.

<sup>148</sup> PHILO *Leg.* 355-357: very likely these sacrifices had been carried out in Jerusalem. This implies that here Philo is referring to the Jewish nation in general, not specifically to the Alexandrian Jews; see RITTER (2015) 105 with n. 103.

<sup>149</sup> PHILO *Leg.* 166: πονηρὰ σπέρματα, κροκοδείλων καὶ ἀσπίδων τῶν ἐγχωρίων ἀναμεμαγμένοι τὸν ἰὸν ὁμοῦ καὶ θυμὸν ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς (translation by F.H. COLSON, Loeb edition, vol. X [1962]); cf. *ibid.* 205; see RODRIGUEZ (2010a) 36-37; on the general issue see RITTER (2015) 172-174.



represents a powerful argument in the *Acta Isidori*, in the confrontation between Isidorus and King Agrippa.<sup>150</sup> Isidorus says: “[subj. the Jews] are not of the same nature as the Alexandrians, but live rather after the fashion of the Egyptians. Are they not on a level with those who pay the poll-tax?”<sup>151</sup> Here it is worth noting that the alleged fact of the payment of the poll-tax by the Jews ‘naturally’ comes out of his mouth in the form of a rhetorical question. Agrippa promptly replies in an attempt at resorting to historical evidence: “The Egyptians had their taxes levied on them by their rulers... But no one has imposed tributes on the Jews”.<sup>152</sup>

As we have seen, the fiscal status is *de facto* determined by the membership of the Gymnasium: thus this institution has an essential function at the economic level and, at the same time, accomplishes a basic cultural function in preserving the Greek παιδεία. The Greek Alexandrians’ preoccupation with protecting their own privileges is particularly visible – historically and thus rhetorically – in their attempt to reinforce their autonomy through the re-establishment of the Boule. At the same time, the Boule, like the Gymnasium – as a basic institution of ‘the’ Greek polis – is an essential element of their identity as Hellenes. ‘Genuine’ documents suggest that this must have been a core issue in diplomatic activities: as such it can be traced back to the Augustan period in the above-mentioned ‘Boule-Papyrus’. The ambassador recorded in these minutes manages to provide a well-crafted application of expediency (τὸ συμφέρον):<sup>153</sup>

“I submit, then, that the Boule will see to it that none of those who are liable to enrolment for the poll-tax diminish the revenue by being listed in the public records along with the *epheboi*

<sup>150</sup> *CPJ* II 156c, col. ii 25-30.

<sup>151</sup> οὐκ εἰσιν Ἀλ[εξανδρεῦσιν] | ὁμοιοπαθεῖς, τρόπον δὲ Αἰγυπτ[ίων ὁμοῖοι.] | οὐκ εἰσι ἴσοι τοῖς φόρον τελ[οῦσι];

<sup>152</sup> [Αἰ]γ[υπτ]ίοις ἔστησαν φόρους [ο]ἱ ἄρχ[οντες] | [...].[...]ν· τοῦτοις δὲ οὐδεὶς. See HARKER (2008) 217; GAMBETTI (2009) 61-62; RODRIGUEZ (2010b) 594-595; RITTER (2015) 88-89, 150, n. 58, 173 with n. 135, 181 n. 153 (occurrence of the word ὁμοιοπαθεῖς in *Acts of Apostles* 14, 15), 183.

<sup>153</sup> ARIST. *Rhet.* 1358b.

for each year; and it will take care that the pure citizen body of Alexandria is not corrupted by men who are uncultured and uneducated. And if anyone be unreasonably burdened by taxes exacted by the *Idioslogos* or by any other tax-agent who may be oppressing the people, the Boule, in assembly before **your Prefect**, might lend support to the weak and prevent the income that could be preserved **for you** from being plundered by anyone at all, simply through lack of a remedy. Again, if there should be need to send an embassy **to you**, the Boule might elect those who are suitable, so that no one ignoble might make the journey and no one who is capable might avoid this service to his fatherland.”<sup>154</sup>

He convincingly presents the function of the Boule of preventing the illegitimate appropriation of citizen rights – by ineligible individuals, clearly Egyptians and Jews – through the membership of the Gymnasium, which means obtaining exemption from the poll-tax at the expense of the Roman treasury. At the same time the Boule would prevent corruption among tax collectors, and would select suitable and dignified ambassadors to be sent to Rome. The *rhetor* is particularly careful to avoid conveying the impression that the Boule would grant independence from Rome, stressing that it would meet before the Roman prefect. His attempt to convey the idea that the Emperor will have the absolute control of the situation can also be observed at the stylistic level: he employs a sort of *polypoton*, consisting in the repetition of the personal pronoun of the second person

<sup>154</sup> *CPJ* II 150, col. ii 1-14: φημὶ γὰρ ταύτην φρ[ο]ντισεῖν ἵνα | μή τι τῶν μελ-  
λόντων τινὲς λαογραφεῖσθαι, τοῖς κατ’ ἔτος ἐφήβοις | συνεγγραφόμενοι ἐπὶ τὴν  
δημοσίαν γρα[φ]ήν, τὴν | πρόσδοτον | ἐλασσῶσι καὶ τὸ πολίτευμα τῶν Ἀλεξαν-  
δρείων κα[θ]’ ἄρῳ ὑπάρχον ἄθρεπτοι καὶ ἀνάγωγοι γεγονότες ἄνθρωποι μολύ-  
νωσι· εἰ δέ | τις κατα[βαρ]βαροῖτο παρὰ λόγον πραττόμενος ἢ ὑπὸ Ἰδί[ο]υ |  
Λόγου ἢ | τινος πράκτορος ἀνθρώπου· εἰ δὲ διασείοντος, συνερχομένη ἡ βουλὴ **πρὸς**  
**τὸν σὸν ἐπίτροπον** συνεπισχύη τοῖς ἀσθ[ε]νοῦσι, καὶ μή | δι’ ἐρημίαν βοηθείας  
**τὰ σοὶ τηρεῖσθαι δυνάμενα** ὑπὸ τῶν τυχόντων | ἀνθρώπων διαφορηθῇ. ἔτι δέ,  
εἰ δέοιτο **πρεσβείαν πρὸς σέ** πέμ[πειν], αὕτη προχειρίζεται τοὺς ἐπιτηδείους,  
καὶ [μήτε ἀσε]μνός τις ἐκπορεύσεται [μήτε εὐθετός τις] | μήτε εἰ[ς] εὐθετός τις |  
ὣν φεύγη τὴν τῆς πατρίδος ὑπηρεσίαν. The translation of *CPJ* has been slightly  
adapted. On the reading κα[θ]’ ἄρῳ (line 5) see PINTAUDI (2011-2012) 159.



singular and the related possessive adjective (printed in bold in the text).

The re-establishment of the Boule is still a ‘hot’ issue some decades later, in the aftermath of the riots of AD 38-41. A section from Claudius’ letter to the Alexandrians reveals that the arguments formulated by those ambassadors are similarly based on expediency.<sup>155</sup>

“About the Boule, what your custom was under the old kings, I cannot say, but that you did not have one under the emperors before me, you are well aware. Since this is a new matter now laid before me for the first time and **it is uncertain whether it will profit the city and my affairs**, I have written to Aemilius Rectus<sup>156</sup> to examine the question and report to me whether the Boule should be established, and, if it should, what form it should take.”<sup>157</sup>

From lines 69-70 we may infer that the ambassadors have stressed the utility of the city council both for the Alexandrian subjects and for the Roman rulers. In addition to this, another argument must have been based on alleged historical evidence, the existence of the Boule during the Ptolemaic period.<sup>158</sup>

And what about the rhetorical tactics of Jewish ambassadors? The same document, Claudius’ letter, is very instructive in this respect:<sup>159</sup>

“Even now, therefore, **I conjure the Alexandrians** to behave gently and kindly towards the Jews who have inhabited the same city from many years, and not to dishonour any of their customs in their worship of their god, but to allow them to keep their

<sup>155</sup> *CPJ* II 153, col. iv 66-72. The translation of *CPJ* has been slightly adapted.

<sup>156</sup> The prefect of Egypt appointed after Caligula’s death.

<sup>157</sup> *περὶ δὲ τῆς βουλῆς ὅ τι μὲν ποτε σύνηθες | ὑμῖν ἐπὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων βασιλέων οὐκ ἔχω λέγειν, ὅτι δὲ ἐπὶ τῶν | πρὸ ἐμοῦ Σεβαστῶν οὐκ εἴχετε σαφῶς οἶδατε. καινοῦ δὲ | πράγματος νῦν πρῶτον καταβαλλομένου ὅπερ ἄδηλον εἰ συνοίσει τῇ πόλει καὶ τοῖς ἐμοῖς πράγμασι* ἔγραψα Αἰμιλίῳ Ῥήκτῳ | διασκέψασθαι καὶ δηλωσαί μοι εἴτε καὶ συνίστασθαι τὴν ἀρχὴν δεῖ, | τὸν τε τρόπον, εἴπερ ἄρα συνάγειν δέοι, καθ’ ὃν γενήσεται τοῦτο.

<sup>158</sup> Col. iv 67 ἐπὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων βασιλέων, “under the old kings”.

<sup>159</sup> *CPJ* II 153, col. iv 82-col. v 98.

own ways, as they did in the time of the god Augustus and as I too, having heard both sides, have confirmed. **The Jews**, on the other hand, **I order** not to aim at more than they have previously had and not in future to send two embassies as if they lived in two cities, a thing which has never been done before, and **not to intrude themselves into the games presided over by the *gymnasiarchoi* and the *kosmetai*, since they enjoy what is their own, and in a city which is not their own they possess an abundance of all good things.** Nor are they to bring or invite Jews coming from Syria or Egypt, or I shall be forced to conceive graver suspicions.”<sup>160</sup>

From this section we can infer that the Jewish embassy had claimed the recognition of the right to live according to their customs, abolished by Caligula, and supported this claim with historical evidence, namely with the previous confirmation of that right by Augustus. In addition to this, they had very probably claimed political rights: this could be confirmed by Claudius’ threatening order to stop any attempt to participate in the athletic games at the Gymnasium, rounded off by the statement that they enjoy many good things in a city “that is not their own”.<sup>161</sup> Could they have crafted/confected an argument based on allegedly sound historical evidence to support their claim to

<sup>160</sup> διόπερ ἔτι καὶ νῦν διαμαρτύρομαι ἵνα Ἀλεξανδρεῖς μὲν | πραέως καὶ φιλανθρώπως προσφέρωνται Ἰουδαίοις τοῖς | τὴν αὐτὴν πόλιν ἐκ πολλῶν χρόνων οἰκοῦσι | καὶ μηδὲν τῶν πρὸς θρησκείαν αὐτοῖς νενομισμένων | τοῦ θεοῦ λυμαίνωνται, ἀλλὰ ἑῶσιν αὐτοὺς τοῖς ἔθεσιν | χρῆσθαι οἷς καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ θεοῦ Σεβαστοῦ, ἅπερ καὶ ἐγὼ | διακούσας ἀμφοτέρων ἐβεβαίωσα. καὶ Ἰουδαίοις δὲ | ἄντικρυς κελεύω μηδὲν πλείω ὧν πρότερον | ἔσχον περιεργάζεσθαι μηδὲ ὥσπερ ἐν δυσὶ πόλεσιν κα|τοικοῦντας δύο πρεσβείας ἐκπέμπειν τοῦ λοιποῦ, | ὃ μὴ πρότερόν ποτε ἐπράχθη, μηδὲ ἐπεισπαίειν | γυμνασιαρχικοῖς ἢ κοσμη-  
τικοῖς ἀγῶσι, | καρπουμένους μὲν τὰ οἰκεία ἀπολα(ύ)οντας δὲ | ἐν ἄλλοτρίᾳ πόλει περιουσίας ἀφθόνων ἀγαθῶν, | μηδὲ ἐπάγεσθαι ἢ προσείεσθαι ἀπὸ Συρίας ἢ Αἰγύπτου | καταπλέοντας Ἰουδαίους, ἐξ οὗ μείζονας ὑπονοίας | ἀναγκασθήσομαι λαμβάνειν. Cf. p. 218-219 with n. 36. On the problematic interpretation of the two embassies mentioned in col. v 91, see CPJ II 153, comm. on lines 90-91, HARKER (2008) 26; GAMBETTI (2009) 224-225 with n. 38; DÖRNER (2014) 363-364 with n. 1541; RITTER (2015) 146-147.

<sup>161</sup> This claim may be traced in *P.Oxy.* XLII 3021, col. i 12-13: ] προόντα τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις | ].α νῦν ἐστέρηνται (“... preexisting for the Jews ... now deprived ...”); cf. HARKER (2008) 30-31; GAMBETTI (2009) 218-220.

political rights? A positive answer may be traced in Josephus' version of Claudius' ruling of AD 41:<sup>162</sup>

"Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, of tribunician power, speaks. Having from the first known that **the Jews in Alexandria called Alexandrians were fellow colonisers from the earliest times jointly with the Alexandrians and received equal civic rights from the kings**, as is manifest from the documents in their possession and from the edicts; and that **after Alexandria was made subject of our empire by Augustus their rights were preserved by the prefects** sent from time to time and that these rights have never been disputed; moreover that at the time when Aquila<sup>163</sup> was at Alexandria, on the death of the ethnarch of the Jews, Augustus did not prevent the continued appointment of ethnarchs, desiring that the several subject nations should abide by their own customs and not be compelled to violate the religion of their fathers; and learning that the Alexandrians rose up in insurrection against the Jews in the midst of the time of Gaius Caesar, who through his great folly and madness humiliated the Jews because they refused to transgress the religion of their fathers by addressing him as a god: I desire that none of their rights should be lost to the Jews on account of the madness of Gaius, but their former privileges also be preserved to them; and I enjoin upon both parties to take the greatest precaution to prevent any disturbance arising after the posting of my edict."<sup>164</sup>

<sup>162</sup> Jos. *AJ* 19, 280-285.

<sup>163</sup> C. Julius Aquila, prefect of Egypt in AD 10/11.

<sup>164</sup> Τιβέριος Κλαύδιος Καῖσαρ Σεβαστὸς Γερμανικὸς (281) δημαρχικῆς ἐξουσίας λέγει. ἐπιγνοὺς ἀνέκαθεν τοὺς ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ Ἰουδαίους Ἀλεξανδρεῖς λεγομένους συγκατοικισθέντας τοῖς πρώτοις εὐθὺ καίροις Ἀλεξανδρεῦσι καὶ ἴσης πολιτείας παρὰ τῶν βασιλέων τετευχότας, καθὼς φανερόν ἐγένετο ἐκ τῶν γραμμάτων (282) τῶν παρ' αὐτοῖς καὶ τῶν διαταγμάτων, καὶ μετὰ τὸ τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ ἡγεμονίᾳ Ἀλεξανδρείαν ὑπὸ τοῦ Σεβαστοῦ ὑποταχθῆναι πεφυλάχθαι αὐτοῖς τὰ δίκαια ὑπὸ τῶν πεμφθέντων ἐπαρχῶν κατὰ διαφόρους χρόνους μηδεμίαν τε ἀμφισβήτησιν περὶ τούτων γενομένην (283) τῶν δικαίων αὐτοῖς, ἅμα καὶ καθ' ὃν καιρὸν Ἀκύλας ἦν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ τελευτήσαντος τοῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐθνάρχου τὸν Σεβαστὸν μὴ κεκωλυκέναι ἐθνάρχας γίνεσθαι βουλόμενον ὑποτετάχθαι ἐκάστους ἐμμένοντας τοῖς ἰδίους ἔθουσιν καὶ μὴ παραβαίνειν ἀναγκαζο(284)μένους τὴν πάτριον θρησκείαν, Ἀλεξανδρεῖς δὲ ἐπαρθῆναι κατὰ τῶν παρ' αὐτοῖς Ἰουδαίων ἐπὶ τῶν Γαίου Καίσαρος χρόνων τοῦ διὰ τὴν πολλὴν ἀπόνοιαν καὶ παραφροσύνην, ὅτι μὴ παραβῆναι ἠθέλησεν τὸ Ἰουδαίων ἔθνος τὴν πάτριον θρησκείαν καὶ θεὸν

Like their Greek Alexandrian rivals, the Jews may have tried to put forward historical evidence based on their political role under the Ptolemies and the Jewish ancestral role as co-founders of Alexandria, if not the possession of documents and edicts proving these rights mentioned by Josephus.<sup>165</sup>

The two documentary sources that we have exploited above to reconstruct the rhetorical strategies of embassies – the ‘Boule-Papyrus’ and Claudius’ letter to the Alexandrians – may also give a glimpse of the answer of the Roman authorities in ‘Realpolitik’ *versus* the resort to brute force and thus condemnation to death of the ambassadors in the *Acta Alexandrinorum*. It is particularly interesting to examine in some detail the response to the issue of the re-instatement of the Boule. The ‘Boule-Papyrus’ records only a laconic reply by Augustus, who vaguely promises to consider the matter: *περὶ τούτων διαλήμψομαι*, “I shall come to a decision”, where *διαλήμψομαι* is a ‘non-committal’ verb.<sup>166</sup> Fortunately, Claudius’ reaction was recorded at greater

(285) προσαγορεύειν αὐτόν, ταπεινώσαντος αὐτούς· βούλομαι μὴδὲν διὰ τὴν Γαίτου παραφροσύνην τῶν δικαίων τῷ Ἰουδαίῳ ἔθναι παραπεπτωκένοι, φυλάσσεσθαι δ’ αὐτοῖς καὶ τὰ πρότερον δικαιώματα ἐμμένουσι τοῖς ἰδίοις ἔθεσιν, ἀμφοτέροις τε διακελεύομαι τοῖς μέρεσι πλείστην ποιήσασθαι πρόνοιαν, ὅπως μηδεμία ταραχὴ γένηται μετὰ τὸ προτεθῆναι μου τὸ διάταγμα. Translation by HARKER (2008) 26-27.

<sup>165</sup> As we have seen above (p. 228), Josephus has manipulated the outcome of Claudius’ ruling through his pro-Jewish bias and/or by using a forged document: however, his text can reflect actual political claims that in reality were not fulfilled, as shown by Claudius’ letter to the Alexandrians.

<sup>166</sup> I borrow this effective definition from *APM* I, pp. 91-92, comm. on 21ff. In the papyrus (col. ii 22-23), after this phrase there is a lacuna and then the phrase *εἰς Ἀλεξάνδρειαν*. The *ed. pr.* considers the possibility that Augustus postponed his decision to a planned visit to Alexandria, which never took place and thus suggests the following supplement: *περὶ τούτων διαλήμψομαι ἐπειδὴν πρῶτον* | *εἰς Ἀλεξάνδρειαν ἐπανέλθω*. We know that Augustus visited the East in 20/19 BC and possibly planned a visit to Alexandria: thus the embassy of the ‘Boule-Papyrus’ could have been sent to the Emperor while he was staying in a town of the East, not necessarily to Rome (cf. *CPJ* II 150, comm. on lines 22-23). However, as pointed out in *APM*, *loc. cit.*, alternative supplements can be considered, e.g. *περὶ τούτων διαλήμψομαι καὶ ἀπόκριμα πέμψω* | *εἰς Ἀλεξάνδρειαν* ..., “I shall come to a decision and will send my (written) answer to Alexandria” or, as recorded in *BL* VI 185, *περὶ τούτων διαλήμψομαι καὶ τῷ*

length: like Augustus, he commits himself to consider the matter, ordering an investigation by the prefect, but at the same time he clearly dismisses the argument based on historical evidence – the existence of the Boule under the Ptolemies – as irrelevant. He brings back the issue to the level of ‘contemporary’ – i.e. ‘Roman’ – history, where he finds no traces of the institution of the Boule.<sup>167</sup> Overall, the tone of these imperial responses seems to follow a diplomatic etiquette towards the subjects, confirming their definitely secondary role in the process of decision-making.

Speaking of subjects, it is interesting to detect in the wording of Claudius’ letter a different attitude towards the two different groups of subjects, Greek Alexandrians and Alexandrian Jews. Although the order of stopping the violence against each other in the aftermath of the riots of AD 38-41 is drastically imposed on both groups, in addressing the Alexandrians he uses the more ‘polite’ verb διαμαρτύρομαι (“I conjure”), while the more direct and ‘rude’ κελεύω (“I order”) is reserved for the Jews.<sup>168</sup> Moreover, as we have seen above, the commonplace of the Jews as a plague on mankind echoes in Claudius’ threatening admonition to them.

Curiously, even the ‘crazy’ Caligula is able to follow a sort of diplomatic etiquette, although in a rather clumsy way, in his dismissal of the Jewish ambassadors led by Philo as unworthy people just because of their refusal to recognise his divinity, a dismissal that displays a mixture of contempt and a sort of pity.<sup>169</sup>

ἐπιτρόπῳ] | εἰς Ἀλεξάνδρειαν γράψω ἵνα “I shall come to a decision and will write to the prefect in Alexandria, so that ...”. Cf. HARKER (2008) 185.

<sup>167</sup> Col. iv 67-68: “but that you did not have one [*scil.* Boule] under the emperors before me, you are well aware” (ὅτι δὲ ἐπὶ τῶν | πρὸ ἐμοῦ Σεβαστῶν οὐκ εἴχετε σαφῶς οἶδατε).

<sup>168</sup> Cf. *CPJ* II 153, comm. on col. iv 82. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that the verbal choice goes back to the epitomator of our copy of the letter and is due to a pro-Alexandrian attitude (see above, pp. 244-245).

<sup>169</sup> PHILO *Leg.* 367: “they seem to me to be people unfortunate rather than wicked and to be foolish in refusing to believe that I have got the nature of a god” (οὐ πονηροὶ μᾶλλον ἢ δυστυχεῖς εἶναι μοι δοκοῦσιν ἄνθρωποι καὶ ἀνόητοι μὴ πιστεύοντες, ὅτι θεοῦ κεκλήρωμαι φύσιν). Interestingly, Philo represents

From the violent verbal confrontation between ambassadors and Emperors of the *Acta Alexandrinorum*, freedom of speech (παρρησία) emerges as a fundamental Greek value.<sup>170</sup> Although it seems very unlikely that such exchanges of insults really took place,<sup>171</sup> one may ask whether outspokenness was tolerated in embassy hearings. I would be inclined to give a positive answer, since there is a piece of evidence provided by a ‘genuine’ document, not from Egypt this time, but from Syria. It is the well-known Dmeir inscription, containing the (abridged) minutes of a hearing before Caracalla in AD 216,<sup>172</sup> in which one of the two advocates debating the case questions the legitimacy of Caracalla even hearing it, provoking the Emperor’s irritated reaction, which finally reduces the advocate to silence.<sup>173</sup> In addition, *PSI* XI 1222, apparently a rhetorical exercise containing a speech by an advocate<sup>174</sup> in defence of a colleague and former ambassador, Didymus, before an unnamed Emperor, mentions the freedom of speech admitted by the Emperor himself.<sup>175</sup>

Gaius’ mild reaction as the result of God’s merciful intervention: he and his fellows, facing the complete failure of their diplomatic mission, were expecting to be condemned to death by the Emperor (*Leg.* 366).

<sup>170</sup> In the *Acta Athenodori*, in a very fragmentary passage, the poignant word θρασυτολμία, “arrogance”, occurs (*APM* X, col. ii 34). On this topic see CROOK (1955) 142-147 and RODRIGUEZ (2010a) 39-40.

<sup>171</sup> Common sense suggests that it is even more unlikely that if uttered they could have been recorded in official minutes. This represents of course a further proof that the *Acta Alexandrinorum* cannot be ‘genuine’ documents.

<sup>172</sup> *SEG* XVII 759.

<sup>173</sup> See details and bibliography in HARKER (2008) 106. The relevance of this piece of evidence for my argument is not diminished if we interpret the case as a ‘rhetorical entertainment’ staged by Caracalla, as WILLIAMS (1974) suggests.

<sup>174</sup> This papyrus, found at Oxyrhynchus and written in an informal literary script of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century with noticeable cursive features, was classified by the editor *princeps* as a documentary text on the basis of the alleged lack of rhetorical sophistication. HARKER (2008) 129 suggests that it belongs to “a literature similar to the *Acta Alexandrinorum* developed in other cities”; see also KÖRTE (1939) 115-116.

<sup>175</sup> Fr. 1, col. i 22-25: “and when he stood before you in trials where you were acting in the capacity of judge, often he spoke even against your views (lit. against you) and enjoyed the freedom of speech that you allow to all speakers” (... καὶ παρέστη δικάζοντί σοι πολλά|κίς καὶ ἐφθέγγετο ἐπὶ σοῦ καὶ ἀπέ|λαυσε νῆς ἀπασι μεταδίδως τοῖς | λέγουσι πα[ρ]ρησίας ...).



#### 4. Final remarks

I hope to have shown how rhetoric may have shaped the interstate relations between Rome and Egypt, i.e. Alexandria, during the imperial period. The sources that I have exploited are often in a frustratingly fragmentary state and thus I have 'freely' associated, compared and combined pieces and even fragments of evidence which are at first sight rather heterogeneous, although thematically connected. On the one hand, 'genuine' documents from the sphere of 'Realpolitik' have given a glimpse of the 'real' rhetoric, which focuses on concrete issues (the Boule, tax-exemption, eligibility to the Gymnasium). On the other hand, the (semi)-fictional and polemical *Acta Alexandrinorum* have revealed the 'literary' dimension of rhetoric – emotionally and ideologically charged – within a process of ideal self-representation, in other words what could be called the 'rhetorisation' of 'real' rhetoric. Moreover, I have tentatively supplied 'gaps' with information extracted from literary sources, which I have used with caution because of their ideological bias.

I conclude with some provisional remarks. Both in the historical reality and in the fiction of the *Acta Alexandrinorum* rhetoric plays a vital role for both Greek Alexandrians and Jewish ambassadors. *De facto* rhetoric is an essential part of the Greek *paideia*, and *sensu lato* tends to identify with it because it is *par excellence* the way of articulated expression of the *paideia* itself. In the 'Realpolitik' the rhetoric used by Alexandrian embassies intrinsically cannot influence to a considerable extent the decision-making process of the Roman authorities simply because it is the rhetoric of the subjects. However, it is the instrument to defend and protect the Greek identity, its fundamental values and basic cultural institutions together with the economic structure behind it, which grants fiscal privileges. Using the same Greek rhetoric Jewish ambassadors too try to defend their rights and privileges before the Roman rulers, although they cannot identify completely with the Greek *paideia*.

The literary rhetoric of the *Acta Alexandrinorum* constructs a heroic, ideal self-representation of ambassadors *uersus* the tyrannical Roman ruler and as such represents a form of intellectual power and superiority *uersus* the political power. The Roman tyrant is unable to confront and defeat his adversaries with the strength of the argumentation, i.e. at the level of rhetoric. In his lack of *paideia* he can only resort to brute force and order their physical elimination: the Alexandrian ambassadors end up being executed, but by going through the martyrdom they resist and survive at the intellectual level thanks to their rhetorical discourse, which is the medium of their Hellenic *paideia*. It is only at this level that they can obtain an ultimate moral victory over their political oppressor.

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## DISCUSSION

*A. Chaniotis:* παρρησία, outspokenness, was one of the virtues for which statesmen were praised in the late Hellenistic and Imperial period. Your analysis of the speeches of the Alexandrian leaders in the imperial court in Rome gives us an instructive demonstration of what the Greeks probably understood under παρρησία.

*D. Colomo:* Yes, the exchange of insults between Emperor and ambassadors is clearly a literary exaggeration. The word παρρησία is explicitly mentioned only in *PSI* XI 1222, which appears to be a subliterate text, probably a rhetorical exercise, where the (unnamed) Emperor is praised for allowing freedom of speech to every speaker.<sup>1</sup>

*M. Edwards:* The martyrdom could mean that the stories of ambassadors challenging or swearing at the emperor were not real, but part of the myth behind the martyrdom?

*C. Kremmydas:* Thank you very much for your well-documented analysis of the papyrological sources. I have a couple of questions relating to Claudius' letter to the Alexandrians. Since *CPJ* II 153 is clearly a copy, what are its possible uses that might explain the need to copy it in the 1<sup>st</sup> century? Was it being used as a model for letter-writing in the education system?

*D. Colomo:* We have here a more complicated situation: the papyrus is a private copy of the original document, written in

<sup>1</sup> See p. 249.

a careless cursive script on a recycled papyrus roll (the other side was used for a tax register), and containing grammatical and spelling mistakes (which I have corrected in my contribution). To be precise it is an epitomised copy, as shown by the fact that only the Greek ambassadors are individually named, while the Jewish envoys are omitted. This fact may reveal an exclusive interest in Greek Alexandrian history and perhaps even an anti-Jewish ideological bias. In relation to the latter possibility, we cannot rule out that the epitomator may have altered and manipulated the original text. For example, note that Claudius uses on the one hand the more deferential verb διαμαρτύρομαι (“I conjure”) in addressing the Greek Alexandrians, on the other the ‘rude’ κελεύω (“I order”) in addressing the Jews:<sup>2</sup> this verbal choice may go back to the epitomator rather than Claudius himself.

On your second question, no, Claudius’ letter, in the form in which we have it – a *non uerbatim* epitomised copy –, reveals an interest in politics, precisely in the relations between Alexandria and Rome, and could have been used by some authors of the *Acta Alexandrinorum*. In any case I would exclude a direct use in rhetorical education.

*M. Edwards:* This reminds me of the mistakes made as a result of phonetic spelling by the copyist of a manuscript of the Attic orators, B (Laurentianus Plut. IV, 11) in Florence.

*D. Colomo:* With regard to the accuracy of copies, we may consider how copies of official documents were produced (the majority were used in legal cases and in trials, as illustrated by petitions and reports of proceedings). The papyrological evidence points to two types of copies: copies made by professional scribes employed at the state archives, and personal copies made by private individuals, who had access to

<sup>2</sup> See p. 248.



those archives.<sup>3</sup> Among these private individuals there must have been not highly educated people, who produced copies with grammatical errors and phonetic spellings.

*A. Chaniotis:* These texts are interesting for a study of how the composers of texts, orators and historians alike, consciously selected words, in order to arouse emotion – in this case indignation and contempt. I mention, for example, the use of the word ἄνθρωπος in a contemptuous sense, and the use of a vocabulary of impurity (μολύνω), disease (νόσος) and violence. E.g. καταβάρησις is a very rare word, as I happen to know because its only one attestation in an inscription is in Aphrodisias. It is used in the testament of Attalos Adrastos in connection with the violence of the mob (ὀχλική καταβάρησις; *MAMA* VIII 413b).

One also observes the selection of words, such as φροντιεῖν and δι' ἐρημίαν βοηθείας, that remind the emperor of his duty to protect those who have suffered injustice. That a petitioner underscores his helplessness in order to motivate the addressee of his plea is a well attested strategy of persuasion, found not only in petitions but also in magic (e.g. in a curse tablet from Pella, *SEG* XLIII 434: ἐρήμα) and in the Athenian hymn to Demetrios Poliorketes (Athenaios VI 253 D-F: κοῦκ ἔχω μάχεσθαι).

Finally, a small remark on Claudius' response regarding the *Boule* in Alexandria. His refusal to consider what was practised under the Ptolemaic dynasty (ἐπὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων βασιλέων) corresponds to the Roman attitude towards territorial claims in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. The Roman senate asked arbitrators not to determine what was the original status of a territory but who occupied it at the moment the claimants first concluded a treaty with Rome (S.L. Ager, *Interstate Arbitrations in the Greek*

<sup>3</sup> See HARKER (2008) 57-59, 101-102; COLOMO (2015) 114 = COLOMO, D. (2015), "22. Kopie eines Protokolls einer Gerichtsverhandlung", in G. BASTIANINI / N. GONIS / S. RUSSO (eds.), *Charisterion per Revel A. Coles. Trenta testi letterari e documentari dall'Egitto (P.Coles)* (Florence), 109-117.

*World* [Berkeley, 1996], nos. 120 and 156). Claudius bases his decision on the state of things under his predecessors (ἐπὶ τῶν πρὸ ἐμοῦ Σεβαστῶν), that is, when Egypt became part of the Roman Empire.

*D. Colomo:* I would like to point out that *P.Oxy.* XXV 2435r, containing a record of Germanicus' speech to the Alexandrians including the crowd's exclamations, appears to be a 'genuine' record on the basis of the content and formulation of the speech, which clearly sounds like an impromptu performance (in some passages he is clearly trying to gain time by referring at length to the hardships of travelling and listing members of his family from whom he is now separated). In particular, the crowd's exclamations recorded as uttered in unison realistically reflect customary popular interruptions 'directed' by cheer-leaders.<sup>4</sup>

*L. Pernot:* Comme déjà dans les communications de J.-L. Ferrary et de A. Chanotis, on voit ici que les ambassades sont à la fois délibératives et judiciaires, le judiciaire étant même dominant dans certains cas.

*P. Ducrey:* Les ambassadeurs d'Alexandrie eurent-ils vraiment à attendre deux ans avant d'être reçus par l'empereur? C'est à peine imaginable!

*D. Colomo:* Yes, indeed: but in such a long time<sup>5</sup> embassies could certainly try to influence the Emperor and gain his favours through members of his entourage. For example, Philo records that the Alexandrian envoys bribed the powerful and

<sup>4</sup> See comm. in *editio princeps* on line 4.

<sup>5</sup> It is worth specifying that there is no agreement among scholars on the precise chronology of the Jewish and Greek Alexandrian embassies to Gaius, since there is not enough evidence to reach any certainty; see GAMBETTI (2009) 256-259, 266-267, 269-272. In any case, what clearly emerges is that the envoys had to wait a very long time.

depraved chamberlain, the Egyptian Helicon, with money and promises of honours, exploiting him as a sort of *proxenos*. This fact caused distress and anxiety among the Jewish envoys.<sup>6</sup>

*M. Edwards:* The Athenians were kept waiting on their famous embassy to Philip.

*D. Colomo:* The Jewish envoys guided by Philo actually followed Caligula on a trip to Campania, where he was visiting his various country houses,<sup>7</sup> but all in vain: they obtained the audience much later in the Gardens of Maecenas and Lamia, near Rome. The hearing was extremely humiliating because the Emperor at the same time was inspecting his estate and giving instructions for building renovations, and thus often was not paying attention to what the ambassadors were saying.<sup>8</sup> We know another case in which an embassy had to reach the Emperor far away from Rome: in 10 BC Alexandrian envoys reached Augustus in Gaul (according to *P.Oxy.* XLII 3020, a 'genuine' document).

*M. Edwards:* The emperor's decisions are affected by a Roman law mentality?

*M. Kraus:* Bei all diesen Dokumenten eines inneralexandrinischen Konflikts zwischen Juden und Griechen fragt man sich: Wieviel davon ist überhaupt deliberative Rede? Gehören solche Gesandtschaftsadressen noch zum deliberativen Genre oder eher zur forensischen Beredsamkeit oder gar – zumindest in ihren aggressivsten Partien – zur epideiktischen Rede? Wieviel davon ist realistisch, was ist reine Fiktion? Die extreme *παρρησία* gegenüber den Kaisern scheint in einem merkwürdigen Kontrast zu stehen zu den Auftritten griechischer Gesandter

<sup>6</sup> PHILO *Leg.* 172-178.

<sup>7</sup> PHILO *Leg.* 185.

<sup>8</sup> PHILO *Leg.* 351, 365-366; cf. p. 232.

vor dem republikanischen Senat, von denen Jean-Louis Ferrary berichtete. Ferner: Im kaiserzeitlichen Verfahren der *cognitio extra ordinem* agiert der Kaiser oft gewissermassen gleichzeitig als Ankläger und Richter, was die klassische rhetorische Rollenverteilung sprengt.

*D. Colomo:* In the *Acta Alexandrinorum* certainly forensic rhetoric prevails, because the hearing before the Emperor follows the *cognitio extra ordinem*. The exchange of insults may be classified as epideictic rhetoric, revealing clear traces of progymnastic practice in terms of *psogos* and *synkrisis*.<sup>9</sup> However, in the case of the Boule-Papyrus (*PSI X 1160*), a 'genuine' document, we can appreciate the deliberative rhetoric in the speaker's attempt to influence Roman decision-making.

*L. Pernot:* On pourrait employer à ce propos, comme dénomination plus large que les stricts genres rhétoriques, l'expression 'rhétorique politique'.

*M. Kraus:* Ich hatte mich das auch schon mehrfach gefragt; die Bezeichnung ist aus moderner Sicht sicherlich griffiger, aber für die antike Perspektive ist der Begriff zu weit; in der *Rhetorik an Alexander* (1, 1421b7) etwa umfassen die πολιτικοὶ λόγοι (im Sinne von „Bürgerreden“) alle drei klassischen Redegenera, insofern sie öffentliche Reden im Gegensatz zu privaten Diskussionen betreffen.

Der Rhetor Nikolaos von Myra (5. Jahrhundert) versucht in seinem Progymnasmata-Handbuch als erster, die einzelnen Progymnasmata bestimmten Redegenera (ebenso wie bestimmten Redeteilen) zuzuordnen. Dabei gelingt ihm freilich nur selten eine wirklich eindeutige Zuordnung (Näheres dazu in meinem Beitrag).

<sup>9</sup> See p. 237, n. 130.

*D. Colomo:* The genre of *synkrisis*?

*M. Kraus:* Die *synkrisis* als Progymnasma ist eng verzahnt mit den Übungen in Lob und Tadel: Jedes *enkomion* und jeder *psogos* enthält eine *synkrisis*, aber umgekehrt auch jede *synkrisis* Elemente von Lob und Tadel. Für Nikolaos gehört sie daher wie Lob und Tadel zwar primär zum epideiktischen Genre, kann aber auch in deliberativer Rede effizient eingesetzt werden (Nicol. *Prog.* 62, 8-15 Felten).