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Préface: anchoring the global into the local. The Phoenician jistory of Herennius Philo of Byblos as an adventure in Postclassicism

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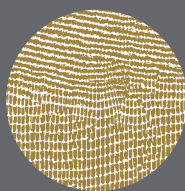
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L'HISTOIRE PHÉNICIENNE DE PHILON DE BYBLOS AU PRISME DU MULTICULTURALISME

MARC DELALONDE

Préface de M.J. Versluys



LE RELIGIONI E LA STORIA

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***L'Histoire Phénicienne* de Philon de Byblos au prisme du multiculturalisme**

Marc Delalonde

Préface de M.J. Versluys

Le religioni e la storia

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Préface

Anchoring the Global into the Local.

The Phoenician History of Herennius Philo of Byblos as an adventure in Postclassicism

The [*Phoinikike Historia*] by Philo of Byblos is certainly not as well-known as it should be amongst classicists and Hellenistic-Roman (cultural) historians. Hopefully, this important new book by Marc Delalonde will alter this state of affairs. By focusing on the cosmopolitan, second-century AD context in which the work was written, Delalonde adds an important new layer to the interpretation of this fascinating text in terms of the interplay between the local and the global. He understands Philo's work as an attempt to inscribe Phoenician culture into a revised global history of the past. Such novel narratives were composed throughout the second century AD Mediterranean and Near East, which makes this exercise quintessentially *Zeitgemäß*. Because of the Greeks and the dominant role of Hellenism, Philo argues, Phoenicia disappeared from the story of human evolution. As this is completely wrong and unjust, Philo maintains, his [*Phoinikike Historia*] is meant to set the record straight once and for all.

Seen from this perspective, Philo is very much part of a socio-cultural trend that is often, albeit perhaps somewhat erroneously, still labelled as the 'Second Sophistic'. We now know, however, that this development was about much more than merely declamation and looking back at an (invented) Greek past¹. Scholars have, for instance, also talked about Phoenician or Celtic "Renaissances" for this period in these terms². We deal, therefore, with what seems to be a much wider socio-cultural phenomenon of looking back at the past and looking beyond one's own culture. I would therefore rather agree with Tim Whitmarsh, and state that Philo represents one of the many, typically Roman imperial-period examples of what he calls *Postclassicism*³. One of this timely book's merits is how it opens up this novel perspective through the use of various concepts from the social sciences that, implicitly or explicitly, draw on Globalisation thinking. It achieves this on the basis of a state-of-the-art overview of the scholarship on Philo of Byblos and his [*Phoinikike Historia*], adding many interesting nuances and observations along the way. Let me therefore first briefly review some of these basic issues at stake (i.e. earlier interpretations of the text; its

1 See the important volume König – Langlands – Uden 2020.

2 Aliquot (2003) draws on coinage as an important source of information to talk about a Phoenician Renaissance. For such Roman period processes of 'inventing tradition' in more general terms, in both the East and the West and thus including Celtic Renaissances, see Boschung – Busch – Versluys 2015.

3 Whitmarsh 2013.

transmission; the author himself as well as the narrative strategies he uses) before returning to the question of what constitutes the interpretative core of the monograph: *L'Histoire Phénicienne* de Philon de Byblos *au prisme du multiculturalisme* (my emphasis).

Although originally from Byblos, an important Phoenician cultural and religious city throughout Antiquity, Philo lived in what had gradually become the center of the Mediterranean, the cosmopolis that was imperial Rome, between (roughly) 50 and 140 AD. His full name as known to us was *Herennius* Philo of Byblos and like all intellectuals of his time in this part of the [oikoumene], he wrote in Greek. We know little about Philo himself; even this name is probably a distinct choice to leave his original, ethnic Phoenician name behind and present himself as a 'Greek' intellectual. His *praenomen* *Herennius* indicates the strong ties of patronage that must have existed between Philo and the consul Herennius Severus, who was well-known for his support of a circle of intellectuals that were all originally from the eastern Mediterranean. What do we know about his functioning in Rome, his work and its impact? Delalonde expertly and cautiously presents us with all the (fragmented) evidence and concludes that Philo was a prolific and polyglot author; that he was well-known for his daring euhemeristic interpretations that tried to understand myths not as allegory, as was usual throughout Antiquity, but as traditional accounts of historical figures and events; that he was a highly regarded *Universalgelehrter* and among the most important intellectuals in Rome in his time; and that he was much interested, as all these scholars were, in the many local pasts that were part of his global world. Philo wrote his final book, apparently, on the emperor Hadrian and his reign.

The *Phoenician History*, evidently part of a much larger oeuvre that is now lost, originally consisted of eight or nine books. However, we only have excerpts of the first books at our disposal. Moreover, of these only fragments have been preserved through the much later, 4th-century AD author Eusebius of Caesarea, who used Philo for his distinct own reasons. Already the 3rd century AD Neoplatonist scholar Porphyry of Tyros mentions Philo's *Phoenician History*. Both these authors tell us that for his [*Phoinikike Historia*] Philo based himself on Hellenistic sources. The content of the work is highly original: it concerns a rationalized mythology that tells us about the origins of Phoenicia and the birth of civilization. This narrative, or so Philo claims, would originally have been composed by a Phoenician sage named Sanchouniathon. Philo begins his *History* by claiming that he translated into Greek this old Phoenician document by Sanchouniathon, who lived in the period of the Trojan War and would himself have been taught by Taautos, a divine figure whom the Egyptians would later make into Toth. This genealogy serves to identify the Phoenician tradition as foundational for the story of human evolution, being even older than Egyptian civilization⁴. As source material, therefore, the [*Phoinikike Historia*] presents us with something of a palimpsest of the history of the entire ancient world: from its earliest beginnings in a mythical (Bronze Age) past with Egyptian connections, via Sanchouniathon (who, sometime in the beginning of the first millennium BC, would have documented this pre-history), all the way to the Hellenistic sources that (would have) used Sanchouniathon

4 "In the beginning there was Phoenicia", Philo wants to convince his readers.

and (were said to) form the basis of the *Phoenician History*, and eventually to Philo himself compiling his work in the second century AD. And yet, we only know about all this from excerpts written in Late Antiquity.

The indeed constructed and artificial character of the palimpsest we have here, created in that cosmopolitan second century AD, should allude us to the fact that mnemohistory ought to play an important role in its interpretation. Such a mnemohistorical approach, as most prominently developed for our field by Jan Assmann, does not investigate the past to reconstruct what really happened, but rather enquires how the past was *remembered*⁵. A mnemohistorical approach, therefore, regards historical sources in the first place as codifications of memory and asks the questions: *who* remembers the past, *when*, *why*, *for whom*, and *by what means*? Philo and his *Phoenician History* have been expertly studied before; though, until recent decades, mainly in historical terms. It was thought to be one of the few sources, albeit indirect, that could enable a reconstruction of Phoenician literature and mythology that are otherwise lost. Delalonde is wise to follow in the footsteps of his recent predecessors, like Albert Baumgarten, Sergio Ribichini and his mentor Corinne Bonnet, and to start from mnemohistory in order to try and understand what Philo's project entailed.

This does not imply, of course, that the efforts of earlier scholars are no longer worth contemplating, as Delalonde does expertly in his Introduction. They indeed make for fascinating *Forschungsgeschichte*. Josephus Justus Scaliger (1540-1609), the famous French scholar who, I should add, would spend the last 16 years of his career at the University of Leiden, thought that Sanchouniathon never existed and that what Philo wrote was all invented. In his *Scienza Nuova* from 1725, Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) tried to be more understanding and thought of Sanchouniathon as a historical figure and a kind of dragoman between Jewish and Greek cultures in the middle of the first millennium BC. This idea of the historicity of Sanchouniathon was underlined by Ernest Renan (1823-1892) who nonetheless dated his text to the Seleucid period. Throughout this period there were many skeptics; especially German scholars took a critical position. They thought that there had never been a Sanchouniathon nor something like a treatise on Phoenician history from that early period. Then, in the 1920s, the tablets from Ugarit (Ras Shamra) were discovered. Their content shows an overlap with information provided by Philo, suggesting that the common mythological tradition Philo attests to was already in place at the end of the second millennium BC. Later finds of other tablets, in Anatolia, concerning the myth of Koumarbi, equally show traces of this mythological tradition and, together with references to Hesiod's *Theogony*, made scholars propose to date the historical figure of Sanchouniathon to the 6th century BC. In his 1974 essay, however, James Barr (1924-2006) reinaugurated the ideas of the skeptical school and concluded that there might have been ancient Semitic predecessors to Philo, but that the [*Phoinikike Historia*] is thoroughly Hellenistic in character. Asking attention for Philo's context as well as that of Eusebius of Caesarea, as compilers of various earlier traditions, Lucio Troiani, in

5 Dealing with the mnemohistory of Egypt and including all the relevant previous bibliography, Assmann – Ebeling 2020 provide a recent and succinct summary of the theory.

his 1974 monograph, is equally skeptical of the existence of Sanchouniathon as historical figure. In that same period, Giovanni Brizzi is probably the first to draw the ecumenical cultural context of the second century AD into the picture. It seems that it is only from this moment onwards that, in various guises, the mnemohistorical approach slowly gets the attention it deserves; a process that is assisted by the publication of important new text commentaries like that from Albert I. Baumgarten⁶. The strand of interpretation that now comes into being is characterized as “contextual” by Delalonde. These scholars argue that Sanchouniathon had never existed as such, but that Philo’s sources represent a *mélange* of ancient Semitic (indigenous) and Hellenistic (universal) influences⁷.

This way of thinking also constitutes the context for the present book. Its central research problem is “(-) comment le monde dans lequel vit Philon a pu donner naissance à une oeuvre aux ambitions plurielles et complexes”. Delalonde understands that world as fundamentally characterized by processes of code-switching (“*jeu des identités*”) as well as a continuous “*métissage culturel*”. Through this perspective, Delalonde is well aware of the fact that performativity is key to a work that uses its sources as a legitimizing “*chaîne d’autorité*”. He rightly supposes that Philo must have used older Phoenician sources at his disposal for the composition of his [*Phoinikike Historia*] and argues that, in order to provide this information with more credibility, he calls these sources “Sanchouniathon”. In this way, Philo is able to present them as being very old as well as ethnically Phoenician—and therefore as venerable, authentic and to be trusted. On a different level, moreover, “Sanchouniathon” also serves as something of an aetiology for Philo as euhemerist author. “Sanchouniathon” already did what Philo does now: designing a rational system out of mythology. As such “Sanchouniathon” serves to legitimize Philo’s euhemerist innovation, as the principle of aetiology much more often does⁸. In various respects, therefore, the idea of “anchoring” seems to have been crucial to Philo and his project. Anchoring can be defined as the dynamic process by which individuals or relevant social groups connect what they perceive as new to what they consider to be familiar. Anchoring serves to maintain a sense of orientation, identification and continuity in the world⁹. The fact that Philo needed the instrument of anchoring so badly is probably both: a sign of the times as well as an illustration of the innovative and contested character of the [*Phoinikike Historia*]. The indeed very important euhemeristic ambition of Philo’s work is well explored and explained in this book. Through his [*Phoinikike Historia*], Philo critiques the allegorical way of thinking that was so common in Antiquity. This, without doubt, was one of the main reasons why scholars like Eusebius of Caesarea were interested in his text, in the first place. Philo has even been called a rationalist. Delalonde provides us with a balanced

6 In his analysis, Baumgarten is trying to disentangle the different strands of tradition (both chronological and geographical) that come together; and reasons in terms of both classicism and orientalism to explain what we have with Philo, which he ultimately sees as one man’s interpretation of his native tradition in the light of contemporary thought.

7 See the bibliography of this book for references to the various scholars and their works as mentioned in this section.

8 See Klooster – Wessels 2021.

9 Definitions after Sluiter 2017.

account of Philo's euhemerism, rightly arguing, I think, that his rationalism does not imply a negation of the divine nature of the gods and understanding it almost as an attempt at historicization: Philo rejects myths as historical truths, not the gods themselves.

The reasons behind this and other narrative strategies are compellingly explored in Part III, that already moves towards its central interpretative concept "*au prisme du multiculturalisme*" as it will be tackled in Part IV. Understanding the concept of *interpretatio* as a hermeneutic strategy to conceptualize the relation between two cultures, and underlining its personal and experimental character, Delalonde shows how this process is able to change a god from a mono-cultural into a trans-cultural phenomenon. From this perspective, the *interpretatio* becomes a central *locus* for cosmopolitanism or, in other words, an experiment in transcultural contingency in which each *interpretatio* creates its own, new multicultural reality. *Interpretatio*, therefore, has many variants and its outcome also depends on the aspect of the divinity that the *interpretatio* focuses on; its function, its nature or its (divine) characteristics. Divinities can be equated because of their place in their respective pantheon (like Zeus-Oromasdes) or because of their function within that system (like Melqart-Heracles). Such functional affinity can equally be used in a complementary way, as Philo does when he adds to Astarte the prerogatives of Aphrodite, stretching out, as it were, the original characteristics of the goddess. Other forms of *interpretatio* concern the translation of a divine name or even its literal transcription and the function these are given within the new context of creation. *Interpretatio* is thus a process of appropriation of something from the outside. This comes with ethnocentric anxiety, as the arrival of the Other always does¹⁰, but at the same time it leads to all kinds of novel experiments and innovations¹¹. Through yet another remarkable punctuation of connectivity characterizing the first millennium BC, this kind of bricolage seems to explode in the Hellenistic period. Following his mentor Corinne Bonnet and her now classic book on Hellenistic Phoenicia¹², Delalonde proposes to regard this context as a Middle Ground where, therefore, several audiences had to be addressed at the same time. In his 2011 monograph on ethnography and Empire in the Roman West, Greg Woolf already coined the phrase "Telling tales on the Middle Ground" to arrive at similar multilayered and multicultural interpretations¹³. One could equally say, perhaps, that Philo is telling tales on (and about) the Middle Ground in the Roman East. Be that as it may, Woolf's *Tales of the Barbarians* forms an important companion piece to go with this volume if what we are interested in is indeed the wider socio-cultural phenomenon of "looking back" that characterizes the Roman imperial era. Concerning Philo, Delalonde distinguishes between a Phoenician public and a Greco-Roman public, in this respect. For the first the [*Phoinikike Historia*] would serve to revive their collective identity, "magnifier la Phénicie" (88), in particular through Philo's claim that the Greeks had pur-

10 Kristeva 1991.

11 As Delalonde succinctly concludes: "Dans la « fabrique du polythéisme » on bricole donc beaucoup" (p. 141).

12 Bonnet 2015.

13 Woolf 2011.

posefully obscured the Phoenician beginnings of their own tradition¹⁴. For the Greco-Roman public, which is aptly described with the characterization “une résonance ‘mondiale’”, the *Phoenician History* serves as a reminder that what is cherished so much, in that world, as “Greek”, be it in terms of [paideia] or otherwise, in fact is ... Phoenician! Hellenism, that binding glue of what Delalonde calls, with Paul Veyne, *L'Empire Gréco-Romain*¹⁵, would ultimately be Phoenician in origin and character.

Delalonde even sees this message as being specifically directed towards the Roman context on which Philo depended. A consul like Philo's patron Herennius Severus could read the [*Phoinikike Historia*] as a plea to provide, via the successes of Hellenism, a place for Phoenicia in Rome's version of World History and (consequently) its identity; something that would certainly have elevated the status of (some) Phoenicians living in Rome and the Roman Empire. At the same time this argument could equally be understood, especially in the second century AD, as a critique of Rome's uncritical embracement of all things Greek—although Delalonde does not consider this to have been Philo's aim. The key passage here are fragments 40 and 41 and Delalonde's translation (184) is therefore worth quoting in full:

Les Grecs [...] se sont d'abord appropriés la plus grande partie [des récits], puis l'ont diversement mise en scène dans des tragédies avec encore plus d'ornements, [...]. À partir de ce moment, Hésiode et les célèbres poètes cycliques ont façonné leurs propres théogonies, gigantomachies, titanomachies et [mythes] de castration; et ils ont été égarés, de sorte qu'ils vainquirent la vérité. Ayant grandi avec leurs imitations et les ayant entendues durant de nombreux siècles, nos oreilles conservent comme un dépôt cette fiction poétique qu'elles ont reçue – ainsi que je l'ai dit en commençant -, et qui, aidée par le temps, s'est transformée en un barrage difficile à franchir, de sorte que la vérité semble radotage, et l'altération du récit la vérité.

In Part IV of the book, entitled “Le jeu des identités chez Philon de Byblos: entre global et local” questions of cultural identity and “in betweenness” move center stage definitively¹⁶. “Quelle est (-) la nature de l'ethnocentrisme philonien ?” Delalonde asks head-on. To answer that question, he investigates Philo's various cultural affiliations, intelligently and in a variety of ways. By selecting the pairing local-global for the title of his Chapter and his methodology, the author aligns himself with Globalisation thinking, which has become popular within ancient studies over the last decade¹⁷. He does so indirectly, not by referring to the by now rich theoretical debate, but rather by profiting from its outcome, a strategy used by more authors recently¹⁸. Globalisation theory is now ever more widely used as a

14 As Delalonde summarizes Philo's message to his Phoenician audience: “les Grecs ont altéré notre vérité”.

15 Veyne 2005.

16 For the concept of “in betweenness” in the Hellenistic-Roman era see Versluys 2017.

17 Pitts – Versluys 2015 for an overview. For recent evaluations of this development with full (recent) bibliography see Pitts 2021 and Versluys 2021.

18 Note how Chaniotis 2019 (*Eine Globalgeschichte des Hellenismus*), for instance, in fact takes Globalisation as its point of departure, though equally without reference to the theoretical debate.

heuristic tool to investigate the complex connectivity that characterised the Roman era. As such, it is helping to look beyond Roman and Native’ and to creatively discuss what we mean when we say that something is ‘Roman’¹⁹. Especially for scholars interested in the effects of the complex connectivity that characterizes the Roman world, Globalisation provides a valuable tool to think with. Globalisation is about the interaction between the local, regional and global, and how this continuous entanglement shapes societies and history. As a manifestation in society, therefore, Globalisation is always *glocalization* and inherently about simultaneous homogenisation and diversification. This is important to underline: “The global is not in and of itself counterposed to the local. Rather, what is often referred to as the local is essentially included within the global”²⁰. Francophone scholars of the ancient world have two terms at their disposal for what in English is called Globalisation: “mondialisation” and “globalisation”. They mostly use the first concept as that is tied up with debates on Globalisation and culture that are relevant for ancient studies in the first place²¹. This is, in his phrasing, also what Delalonde most often does and what, for instance, also Yves Roman opted for by calling his recent overview of Roman history written from a Globalisation perspective an “Histoire d’une première mondialisation”²². Globalisation theory provides insight into how individuals are able to operate on different (local, regional and global) scales simultaneously and thus leads to a more complex, polycentric conceptualization of the “Roman” empire. This also becomes clear when we consider eight ‘hallmarks’ of Globalisation as they were defined by Justin Jennings in his *Globalizations and the ancient world* from 2011. These are: 1. time-space compression, 2. deterritorialization, 3. standardization, 4. unevenness, 5. homogenization, 6. cultural heterogeneity, 7. re-embedding of local culture and 8. vulnerability²³. Reading Delalonde on Philo allows you to see that the *Phoenician History*, in fact, testifies to all of these characteristics, with the 7th hallmark, the re-embedding of local culture, as perhaps the most particularly relevant. With this term, Jennings refers to the anthropological and historical fact that when your world becomes more global there simultaneously is a need to better define and understand your own local position as it is articulated by that global world. In those circumstances local traditions are often re-embedded, with processes of invention, partly or even wholly, always playing an important role²⁴. This is what Delalonde alludes to, I think, when he characterizes the [*Phoinikike Historia*] as “(-) une réponse à un besoin profond de l’époque (189)” —which it indeed is.

Delalonde extensively debates this era, and Philo’s mental universe, from such a perspective. Because of this rich discussion, it is hoped that this book will play an important

19 Already Woolf 1997; see extensively Versluys 2014.

20 As already Robertson 1995, 32.

21 Cf. Ghorra-Gobin 2017.

22 Roman 2016.

23 Jennings 2011, 30-31. These are also the criteria used by Hodos 2020 in her recent and illuminating interpretation of the Mediterranean Iron Age as a globalising world.

24 See Boschung – Busch – Versluys 2015.

role in the continuing debate on the so-called Second Sophistic²⁵. In doing so, he departs from Elias Bickerman's brilliant and still fundamental essay on the *Origines Gentium*, which argues that Greek historians like Herodotos were engaged in a project of rectifying what they called the "Barbarian account" of history and to substitute it with (what they called) 'scientific' hypotheses. The point is that, in both cases, the beginnings of everything that was non-Greek was integrated into a system of Greek "pre-history" and thus Hellenised²⁶. As a result, the history of (what these Greek authors considered to be) Humanity was re-written from a Greek perspective; a problem that we still struggle with today. Research in the wake of Bickerman has illustrated that, in Antiquity, many competing narratives existed, with also Egyptians, Lydians, Babylonians, Jews and many others trying to prove that, in fact, *they* were the ones deserving the title *origines gentium*. These were important projects invested with a lot of contemporary meaning and socio-cultural capital, as evident from, for instance, Hellenistic-period authors like Manetho and Berossus, who probably wrote their alternative world histories from a Greek and a Babylonian perspective, respectively, for Ptolemaic and Seleucid kings who were in need of such narratives²⁷. It is logical to assume that also attempts at a canonisation of Phoenician history were undertaken in this period, with the same intention. Although these have not been preserved, we know that Philo was not the first to write a [*Phoinikika*] and we have already seen that he most probably used earlier, Hellenistic sources. This tradition continued in the Roman era with authors like Flavius Josephus²⁸ and would later be eagerly used by Christian writers in order to discredit Paganism. This long tradition of critique on Hellenism, therefore, is the context in which Philo has to be understood. Delalonde is right, I think, in proposing that it was Philo's intention to propose a truly "pan-Phoenician" theory, with his strategy being similar to that of many Hellenistic authors. Still, in terms of Globalisation and its impact there seems to be a (gradual) difference between these two periods in this respect. Authors like Manetho and Berossus were engaged in constructing something of a common cultural horizon in historical and intellectual terms now that their world had gradually become global. The local and regional were their main point of departure; the global had to be constructed. They were, therefore, anchoring the local (and regional) into the global. The Roman Empire, however, should be understood as the outcome of this process and therefore represents something of a next phase in terms of Globalisation and its impact. The common cultural horizon of the Hellenistic [*oikoumene*] had been in place and developing for centuries now and become a point of departure. Authors like Flavius Josephus and Philo, therefore, were anchoring the global into the (regional and) local. It is remarkable that, probably as a result of all this, the

25 For which see most recently König – Langlands – Uden 2020.

26 Bickerman 1952.

27 As Delalonde explains (203, 206): "Depuis l'époque hellénistique, c'est à une véritable bataille pour l'appropriation des origines de la civilisation hellénique que se livrent les auteurs" while their strategies "(-) consistait à montrer que les Grecs avaient emprunté leur matériaux culturels aux peuples orientaux, mais que, par ignorance, ils l'avaient mal compris".

28 Delalonde recalls how he writes, in his *Contre Apion* I, 15 that the Greeks tell "les mêmes faits de façon contradictoire" (193).

term Barbarian seems to have lost all of its negative connotations and even its overtones of Otherness by the second century AD.

Two important tensions seem to have remained, however. The first one pertains to the tradition of Hellenism itself, through which authors like Philo expressed themselves (note his very refined use of the Greek language for instance) while “fighting” it at the same time²⁹. The second tension pertains to the context of the Roman Empire, which had embraced the Greek version of World History and now had to provide room for alternative perspectives that necessarily had the risk of becoming entangled with (the resurgence of) ethnic and cultural identities on the ground³⁰. But we should not regard all of this in terms of strict dichotomies³¹. The work of what I consider to be the most important scholar on Globalisation and culture, Arjun Appadurai, has illustrated extensively that, in societies characterised by intense, complex connectivity, such dichotomies indeed do not exist. The local is created through the particular confluence of many strands of global composition³². As much as the global, therefore, the local is a work in (continuous) progress. *The local, in other words, is local because of its concentration of many globalizations*. This is how I would understand locality in the Roman Empire: as the continuous negotiation between local, regional and global—a process that is never without its frictions. This is exactly what Delalonde alludes to when drawing on the notion of ‘performance’ in trying to understand what local culture is, while concluding: “Philon ne s’identifie donc totalement ni à la culture grecque ni à la culture romaine, ni même à la culture phénicienne, mais il se rattache par divers biais à chacune” (230). Had not already, somewhere in the first century BC, the poet Meleager of Gadara (c. 140-70 BC) rhetorically exclaimed: “If I am from Syria: so what?”³³?

Delalonde explores various definitions to try and understand Philo and his project more specifically and talks about “processus complexe d’acculturation” (232) as well as “acculturation sans identification” (224) before concluding that “son identité culturelle est multiple” (232). This is undoubtedly true, although I wonder whether acculturation is really the best way to explore these issues. This concept ultimately has to fall back on the existence of distinct ethnic and cultural containers, while, as Delalonde has shown so well, the situation is so much more complex in this case. Instead of acculturation and its idea of inter-cultural connectivity, therefore, it might be more fruitful to move towards Globalisation and its idea of intra-cultural connectivity³⁴. With Philo, we are not so much studying a dialectic between cultures in historical terms, I would argue, but rather a debate, within

29 As Delalonde writes (221): “Dans son oeuvre, Philon développe une théorie pan-phénicienne sur le modèle des pan-théories qui fleurissent après la conquête d’Alexandre. Il la construisait sur le rejet de l’hellénisme, qui constitue pourtant l’essence de sa *paideia*.”

30 As Delalonde writes (213): “(-) cultiver une certaine distinction phénicienne dans le grand Empire multiculturel.”

31 As Delalonde rightly warns us (224): “Il ne faudrait donc pas penser trop vite en termes binaires: hellénisation ou résistance à l’hellénisme.” This is why the notion of “resistance”, as it used to be *en vogue* in studies of the ‘Second Sophistic’, is often misconceived.

32 Appadurai 2006 and 2010; see Versluys 2021 for how this applies to the Roman period.

33 Cf. Höschele 2013.

34 An idea explored extensively in Versluys 2017.

the same cultural *ambiente*, about cultures in mnemohistorical terms, with Philo as a global intellectual who feels comfortable in moving across local, regional and global, Empire-wide levels simultaneously³⁵. Above I have drawn a similar distinction by characterizing Hellenistic authors like Manetho and Berossus as attempting to anchor the local (and regional) into the global while authors like Flavius Josephus and Philo try to anchor the global into the local (and regional). The local is local with Philo, therefore, because of its concentration of many globalisations. Although in different terms, this is what also Delalonde concludes (235) by interpreting the [*Phoinikike Historia*] as a *synergy*:

“Pour créer son rationalisme, réécrire la mythologie phénicienne, Philon se sert du système de représentation de la mythologie grecque, à savoir l’allégorie, qu’il détruit pour reconstruire sa propre version de l’histoire. Cette démarche repose sur de nombreux choix narratifs, lesquels ont très exactement pour fonction de connecter les cultures.” (-)
 “À travers la stratégie qu’on a appelée “synthétique”, Philon rassemble les vieilles traditions phéniciennes et les actualise au moyen d’outils herméneutiques grecs.”

For instance, Phoenicia and Egypt are brought together in this particular way. Philo is capitalising on the aura of Egypt as the most ancient and venerable civilisation, in order to make Phoenicia part of that connotation³⁶. Greece is brought into play through Hellenism of course. As Delalonde concludes (236): “Philon, en somme, emprunte, un peu aux Égyptiens et beaucoup aux Grecs, des outils lui permettant de construire une nouvelle identité culturelle phénicienne. Véritable médiateur des cultures, Philon cherche à les faire dialoguer dans l’horizon culturel de l’Empire romain”.

The term “ethnic” is therefore to be handled with great care, also in this context. As recently argued again by Josephine Quinn, historically the Phoenicians never existed as a coherent, ethnic group³⁷. In the second century AD, however, Philo nevertheless tried to create such an identity. This underlines once again to what great extent we deal with *mnemohistory*, not history. There (probably) never *was* a collective Phoenician memory; this is what Philo, through his work, tried to fabricate, perhaps even for the very first time. To make that claim in the strongest way possible, he calls his socio-cultural project a *History* [*Historia*], again an example of anchoring. Through this cry for authority and authenticity, we therefore deal here, in fact, with “histoire-fiction” with Philo giving us “(-) une identité phénicienne en phase de reconstruction, de redefinition, de ‘renaissance’” (240). This “bricolage identitaire” may have been, in hindsight, the most important moment in the creation and definition of Phoenician identity in Antiquity—as modern scholars often took these kinds of texts at face value as history, instead of understanding them in terms of mnemohis-

35 As Delalonde phrases it (239-240): “Les différents niveaux de conscience identitaire s’organisent selon des jeux d’échelles propres à cette époque, celle d’un Empire multiculturel. De manière schématique, on peut affirmer que l’identité de Philon est gréco-romaine à l’échelle de l’Empire, phénicienne à l’échelle provinciale et giblite à l’échelle locale”. Indeed, he is all three simultaneously.

36 As succinctly expressed in *PE* I, 9, 29: “Les plus anciens des Barbares, singulièrement les Phéniciens et les Égyptiens, [...]”.

37 Quinn 2018.

tory. Philo thus can be seen as another adventure in Postclassicism, in the sense that he presents us with a reorientation on the past as that had been canonised in the Augustan period.

The real battle over who owned the history of Humanity had been fought in the Hellenistic period³⁸. Mapping culture and defining cultural identity through a redefinition of cultural memory becomes a hotly debated topic, as a result. To the above-mentioned Manetho and Berossus we could add the Jewish priests compiling the Torah, as the canonisation of the history of the land Israel, as well as contemporary authors like Megasthenes, who wrote a history of India for the Seleucids, and other examples of the “ethnographic” literature from this period. All these were dealing with the same intellectual project of anchoring the local into the global: providing what was becoming the global present with a global past and map out their own, local and regional place within that global space. This profound *Umwandlung* of cultural memory results into what has been called a global cultural horizon towards the period around 200 BC³⁹. These Hellenistic developments, then, attest to the impact of the discovery of global unity and diversity as that had slowly been intensifying from the middle of the first millennium BC onwards⁴⁰. As already indicated above, it is important to realise that additions to this debate from the Roman era, like Philo’s [*Phoinikike Historia*], while part of the same discussion, represent another distinct threshold and are secondary contributions: the die *had* been cast; a tradition that was treated as “classical” *had* been canonized through the Roman Empire. This is why Philo represents an adventure in Postclassicism and is, in fact, anchoring the global into the local. Philo is drawing on an argument that had already been lost long before. But that is not to say that Philo was unsuccessful. Even canonisations like “the Classical” are always works in progress; while looking stable and unchangeable, they are in fact unstable and changeable⁴¹. One could also turn the argument on its head and argue that all the second century AD “Renaissances” were, in fact, successful, in that they managed to broaden the Roman idea of the Classical and contemporary understandings of the development of World History. Philo is trying to anchor his global present through the (re)construction of a local past, as all Roman-period, second-century AD “Renaissances” seem to be an exercise in embedding global diversity or, what Globalisation scholar Jan Nederveen Pieterse calls “coming home to the global”⁴². This is, I would argue, how we should ultimately try and understand Philo’s ethnocentrism and “locality”: as an attempt to come home to the global.

38 In the words of Arnaldo Momigliano 1971, 7: “But in the third and second centuries BC trends of thought emerged which reduced the distance between Greeks and non-Greeks. Non-Greeks exploited to an unprecedented extent the opportunity of telling the Greeks in the Greek language something about their own history and religious traditions. That meant that Jews, Romans, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Babylonians and even the Indians (Asoka’s edicts) entered Greek literature with contributions of their own (-)”.

39 As phrased by Assmann 2018, 291: “(-) seit dem 3. Jahrhundert v. Chr. entstand in der hellenistischen Antike ein Referenzraum und Verstehungshorizont, innerhalb dessen die großen Texte zugänglich, verständlich und verbindlich blieben. Das setzt eine spezifische Organisation des kulturellen Gedächtnissen voraus, die neben Schrift die Verbindung von Kanonisierung und Exegese erfordert”.

40 See the first Chapters of Stuurman 2017.

41 I deal with the process of canonisation extensively in Versluys, in the press.

42 Nederveen-Pieterse 2021.

Roman canonisation shows the reliance, in terms of identity formation, on sources that stem from outside the Self and are mainly “Greek”. Rémi Brague, when talking about the cultural formation of post-Roman Europe, calls such a reliance Europe’s “secondarity”⁴³. It seems that, after an initial formulation in the Augustan period, Rome’s “secondarity” needed reformulation, a better grounding perhaps, several generations later. Although such a reformulation is, of course, an ongoing process, it seems that we can distinguish several important thresholds. Think, for instance, of the distinctly Flavian initiative to make Egypt now also officially part of Roman history⁴⁴. This process would culminate under the reign of emperor Hadrian, when, in many of its different guises, the Barbarian wisdom that the Classical tradition had so long been able to keep at bay becomes fully and publicly part of Roman traditions at last⁴⁵. It is probably not without reason that, at the end of his life, Philo dedicated a book to Hadrian and his reign. He must have been pleased to see that the alien wisdom that had so long been neglected now finally seemed to move towards the more central place it deserved. The [*Phoinikike Historia*] by Philo of Byblos certainly helped in making that development possible—and this book goes a long way in helping us to understand why⁴⁶.

Miguel John Versluys

43 Brague 1992.

44 Versluys – Bülow-Clausen – Capriotti Vittozzi 2018.

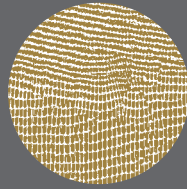
45 See, for instance, Versluys 2012.

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LE RELIGIONI E LA STORIA

Plus d'un millénaire après l'apogée des royaumes phéniciens, Philon de Byblos écrit une *Histoire Phénicienne*, dont le contenu ne nous est parvenu que par fragments à travers l'œuvre d'Eusèbe de Césarée. Quel sens donner à une telle entreprise ? Quels messages Philon cherche-t-il à transmettre, comment et à qui ? Cet ouvrage propose une nouvelle lecture de l'*Histoire Phénicienne* au prisme du multiculturalisme, en étudiant l'œuvre dans son environnement pour appréhender le projet intellectuel de l'auteur. On y remonte la chaîne de transmission de l'œuvre ; on évalue les biais dus à Eusèbe ; on cerne la personnalité de Philon qui ancre son récit dans un passé historique et mythique. L'analyse interroge la pensée de Philon, sa conception rationaliste du divin et son obsession de la vérité. Elle met en lumière des stratégies narratives qui donnent à la Phénicie la première place dans la course aux origines, loin devant la Grèce. Marc Delalonde voit, dans l'*Histoire Phénicienne*, l'architecture d'une identité culturelle phénicienne, pensée par Philon comme un levier d'autoidentification permettant de se démarquer au sein d'un Empire multiculturel.

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