Beyond Conflicts

Edited by
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Mohr Siebeck

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103

Beyond Conflicts

Cultural and Religious Cohabitations
in Alexandria and Egypt between the 1st
and the 6th Century CE

edited by

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Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Part Two
Ideological Debates as Images of Cultural
and Religious Cohabitations

Part Three
Cults and Practices as Spaces for Encounters and Interactions

Abbreviations*

ACO 2.5	Liberatus Carthaginiensis. *Breviarium causae Nestorianorum et Eutychianorum*. Edited by Eduard Schwartz. Acta Conciliorum Œcumenicorum 2.5. Berlin–Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1936.
ÄHG	Jan Assmann. *Ägyptische Hymnen und Gebete*. Freiburg in der Schweiz–Göttingen: Universitätsverlag–Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999.
BD	The "Book of the Dead."
CC	*Clavis Coptica* (or *Clavis Patrum Copticorum*): http://www.cmcl.it/~cmcl/chiam_clavis.html.
CCL	*Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina*. Turnhout: Brepols, 1953ff.
C.Gloss.Biling.	*Glossaria Bilinguia in Papyris et Membranis Reperta*. Edited by Johannes Kramer. Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen 30. Bonn: R. Habelt, 1983.
CIJ	*Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum: Jewish Inscriptions from the Third Century BC to the Seventh Century AD*. Edited by Jean Baptiste Frey. Vols. 1–2. Rome–Paris: Pontificio Istituto d'archeologia cristiana, 1936–1952; 2nd Edition. New York: Ktav, 1975.
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. Berlin: G. Raimer–W. de Gruyter, 1863ff.
CMCL	*Corpus dei manoscritti letterari copti*: http://www.cmcl.it.
CPJ	*Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*. Edited by Victor Tcherikover, Avigdor Tcherikover, Alexander Fuks. Vols. 1–3. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957–1964.
CSEL	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*. Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1866ff.
CT	*The Egyptian Coffin Texts*. Vols. 1–8. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1935–2006.
Edfou	Maxence de Chalvet marquis de Rochemonteix, Émile Chassinat. *Le temple d'Edfou*. Vols. 1–10. Cairo: IFAO, 1897–1934.
Esna	Serge Sauneron. *Le temple d'Esna*. Vols. 1–6. Cairo: IFAO, 1959–1969.
FGH	*Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Edited by Felix Jacoby. Berlin; Leiden: Weidmann; E.J. Brill, 1923ff.
G[1]	The *Vita prima* of Pachomius (see Armand Veilleux. *Pachomian* koinonia*: The Lives, Rules, and Other Writings of Saint Pachomius and His Disciples*. Vol. 1. Cistercian Studies 45. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1980).
LSJ	Henry G. Liddell, Robert Scott. *A Greek–English Lexicon*. Rev. and Augmented by Henry S. Jones with the Assistance of Roderick McKenzie. With a Revised Supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.

* Ancient works are abbreviated according to the *SBL Handbook of Style* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999). For those not listed here, the reader will find the first mention in extenso. The abbreviations listed here are a selection of the main collections and series cited in this volume. For other abbreviations, especially Greek, Latin, Demotic, Coptic editions, and papyri, ostraca and tablets, please refer to http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/scriptorium/papyrus/texts/clist_papyri.html and http://papyri.info/docs/checklist.

NASB   *New American Standard Bible*: http://www.biblestudytools.com/nas/.

NETS   *New English Translation of the Septuagint*. 2nd Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

NRSV   *New Revised Standard Version*: http://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/.

OF   *Poetae Epici Graeci Testimonia et Fragmenta. II. Orphicorum et Orphicis similium testimonia et fragmenta*. Edited by Alberto Bernabé. Vols. 1–2. München–Leipzig: Saur. Vol. 3. Berlin–New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004–2007.

P.Adler   *The Adler Papyri: The Greek Texts*. London: Milford, 1939.

P.Amh.   *The Amherst Papyri being an Account of the Greek Papyri in the Collection of the Right Hon. Lord Amherst of Hackney, at Didlington Hall, Norfolk*. Vols. 1–2. London–Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1900–1901.

P.Ant.   *The Antinoopolis Papyri*. Vols. 1–3. Egypt Exploration Society, Graeco-Roman Memoirs 28, 37, 47. London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1950–1967.

Pap.Flor.   *Papiri greco–egizi pubblicati dalla R. Accademia dei Lincei*. Vols. 1–3. Supplementi filologico–storici ai monumenti antichi. Milan–Rome: U. Hoepli–Reale Accademia dei Lincei, 1906–1915.

PG   *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Graeca*. Edited by Jacques–Paul Migne. Vols. 1–161. Paris: Bibliothecae Cleri Universae, 1856–1866.

PGM   *Papyri Graecae Magicae*. Edited by Karl Preisendanz. Vols. 1–2. Berlin–Leipzig: Teubner, 1928–1931.

P.Hamb.   *Griechische Papyrusurkunden der Hamburger Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek*. Vols. 1–4. Berlin–Leipzig: Teubner; Hamburg–Bonn–Stuttgart–Leipzig: R. Habelt, 1911–1998.

P.Lond.   *Greek Papyri in the British Museum*. Vols. 1–7. London: British Museum, 1893–1974.

P.Lond.Lit. *Catalogue of the Literary Papyri in the British Museum*. Edited by Herbert J.M. Milne. London: Trustees, 1927.

P.Mon.Epiph. *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes, Part II*. Edited by Walter E. Crum, Hugh G. Evelyn-White. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition, 1926.

P.Oxy.   *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*. Vols. 1–80. London: The Egypt Exploration Fund, 1898–2014.

P.PalauRib. *Papiri documentari greci del fondo Palau-Ribes*. Edited by Sergio Daris. Estudis de papirologia i filologia bíblica 4. Barcelona: Institut de teologia, 1995.

P.Ryl.   *Catalogue of the Greek and Latin Papyri in the John Rylands Library*. Vols. 1–4. Manchester–London–New York: The University Press–Longmans, 1911–1952.

PLRE   *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*. Edited by Arnold H. Martin Jones, John R. Martindale, John Morris. Vols. 1–3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971–1992.

Pn   Ranke, Hermann. *Die ägyptischen Personennamen*. Vols. 1–3. Glückstadt: J.J. Augustin, 1935–1977.

PO   *Patrologia Orientalis*. Vols. 1–53. Paris: Firmin–Didot; Leuven: Brepols, 1904–2015.

PSI   *Papiri greci e latini*. Vols. 1–16. Florence: Pubblicazioni della Società italiana per la ricerca dei papiri greci e latini in Egitto, 1917–2013.

PT   *Die Altaegyptischen Pyramidentexte. Pyramidentexte nach den Papierabdrucken und Photographien des Berliner Museums*. Vols. 1–2. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1908–1910.

RIC	*Roman Imperial Coniage*. Vols. 1–10. London: Spink, 1923–1994.
RICIS	Bricault, Laurent. *Recueil des inscriptions concernant les cultes isiaques*. Mémoires de l'académie des inscriptions et belles–lettres 31. Paris: De Boccard, 2005.
SB	*Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Aegypten*. Vols. 1–28. Berlin–Leipzig: W. de Gruyter; Heidelberg: Im Selbstverlag des Verfassers; Straßburg: K.J. Trübner; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1913–2013.
SBo	Recension of the *Life of Pachomius* represented by the Bo, Av, S⁴, S⁵, S⁶, S⁷, etc. (Compiled and Translated by Armand Veilleux. *Pachomian Koinoinia. The Lives, Rules, and Other Writings of St. Pachomius and His Disciples*. Vol. 1. Cistercian Studies 45. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1980).
SEG	*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*. Amsterdam: Lugduni Batavorum; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1923ff.
SHA	*Scriptores Historiae Augustae (Historia Augusta)*. Edited by David Magie. Vols. 1–3. Loeb Classical Library 139, 140, 263. London–New York: W. Heinemann–G.P. Putnam Sons: 1922–1932.
SIG	Dittenberger, Wilhelm. *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*. 3rd Edition. Vols. 1–4. Leipzig: Hirzelium, 1915–1924.
TB	Talmud of Babylon.
TJ	Talmud of Jerusalem.
TLG	*Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*: http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu.
TM	Trismegistos Database: http://www.trismegistos.org/index2.php.
Urk. 4	Sethe, Kurt. *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie. Historisch-biographische Urkunden*. Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1906–1909.
Urk. 8	Sethe, Kurt. *Thebanische Tempelinschriften aus griechisch-römischer Zeit*. Edited by Otto Firchow. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1957.
XS	Shenoute's *Canon 5* (see *Sinuthii Archimandritae: Vita et opera omnia*. Edited by Johannes Leipoldt. Vol. 3. Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 73, Scriptores Coptici 5. Paris: Imprimérie nationale, 1913).
Wb	*Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*. Vols. 1–6. Edited by Adolf Erman, Hermann Grapow. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1957.

Introduction: Cultural and Religious Cohabitations in Alexandria and Egypt between the 1st and the 6th Cent. CE

Luca Arcari

1. Methodological issues

As the title of the project mentioned supra shows, this research focuses on the construction of space and time in the transmission of religious identities between the 1st and the 6th cent. CE, through the analysis of literary, archaeological and epigraphic data. As a result, this book aims to foster the cultural impact of a new heuristic model, whereby socio-religious identities in the ancient world are no longer analysed through the commonly utilised system of polarisation. The main aim of the book stems from the need to overcome the theological model of cultural polarisations. Such a model often fuelled misperceptions regarding collective identities in the ancient world. It imposed on the ancient world ideas and ideologies alien to antiquity and rather belonging to the contexts of European nationalisms.

One of the inputs for this research project, as well as for the book, has been the four-year project coordinated by N. Belayche and J.-D. Dubois between 2006 and 2009 (EPHE).[1] Reacting against the more traditional approach towards crisis and conflict, they analysed some specific cases of cohabitation between different cultural systems and religions within the Greek and the Roman worlds. This book, the first of a series, expands Belayche-Dubois' perspective, by applying it to broader case-studies and sources, through the well-known category of "Middle-Ground."[2] In so doing, this volume organically and

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[1] See Belayche, Dubois 2011. See also Massa 2014.

[2] On this category, see White 2010. Studying the region around the Great Lakes (especially the area between Lake Erie and the Ohio river) between 1650 and 1815 (defined by French as *pays d'en haut*), White underlines that the concept of middle-ground emerges as both a place and a style of cultural interaction. For the application of the concept of "middle-ground" to a specific ancient cultural context, see Bonnet 2015. Framing "Greek" and "Phoenician" as monolithic categories that obscure the cultural pluralism of Phoenicia's urban areas and rural hinterlands, "Bonnet captures such intricacies by communicating the nature of Phoenicia's 'paysages religieux,' the landscapes or spaces in which Phoenicians created lived religious realities through their social and cultural practices, and her primary analytical frames are the negotiations of 'the Middle Ground,' the entanglements of *métissage*, and anthropological

extensively examines the specific middle-land of Alexandria and Egypt. Such a geo-cultural breadth inevitably calls for cooperation with experts in various fields, relating to different historical periods as well as various linguistic contexts. By doing so, we intend to overcome both chronological and academic barriers, allowing all sources to interact productively.

The pivotal idea of the book is the relevance of the spatial and chronological dimensions in the construction and transmission of collective identities. More generally, we aim to investigate the heterogeneous and contextual nature of social groups who coagulate themselves around the very commonly discussed, yet still useful notion of the "sacred."[3] Opposing the idea that advocates the existence of a "prototypical" identity, the book focuses on assimilation processes and/or osmoses, as well as on competition dynamics and/or phenomena, in a specific regional area and in a diachronic perspective.

1.1. Constructing collective "identities"

In a very well-documented essay, based entirely on the *fundamenta* of the recent sociological research concerning collective identities and/or groups, James C. Miller observes:

Forged within the multifaceted forces of social interaction, collectivities come in a bewildering variety of configurations. They may form for any number of reasons, they may be made up of people whose adherence to the group varies depending on a further host of factors, and they are shaped by the particulars of time and place. This many-layered, contextual nature of social groupings makes collective identity a difficult matter to study and define.[4]

Starting from similar methodological assumptions, this book portrays group-identity and processes of construction/formation of collective identities on the basis of three key components:
a) collective identity as perception of similarities and differences;
b) collective identity as it is perceived through time and space;
c) collective identity as a social process.

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views on culture articulated foremost by Marshall Sahlins and fellow travelers" (Andrade 2015). In the study of very complex phenomena of cultural and religious interaction, it is important to invoke, as Bonnet clearly does, other terms that have gained traction in classical studies, anthropology, various fields of history, and even the natural sciences, including, *bricolage*, "hybridity," "modernity," "new deal," "subversive submission," *simplexité*, and "more is different." On the category of *métissage*, see the inputs developed, among the others, by Kandé 1999, Sahlins 1981 and Stoler 2002.

   [3] When I use terms like "religion" and/or "sacred," here I allude to discourses as commonplace rhetorics, authenticity narratives, social and/or individual practices or legitimating tales/ myths which function in the creation, maintenance, and contestation of specific social formations. For the scholarly debate, see Anttonen 1996; for a cognitive approach to the "sacred," see Anttonen 2000.

   [4] James Miller 2010a: 12. See also Miller 2010b.

Concerning a), the essays included in the volume seem to emphasise that collective identities are connected with perceptions of similarity and difference between groups of people. In Miller's words, collective identities entail

a sense of "we are us, they are not us, and we are not them." Without a sense of commonality, collective identity could not exist. At the same time, similarity cannot occur apart from difference; to say "we are alike" necessarily entails the idea that others are unlike us. This sense of similarity and differences arises as a result of social interaction. Through the give and take inherent in social engagement, similarities and differences become the stuff defining the "boundaries" between groups, those factors that enable those involved on both sides of the divide to distinguish who "we" are as opposed to "them."[5]

Concerning b), all the essays seem to underline that

describing communal identity as emerging out of social interaction does not mean that identity is spontaneous, as if it arises or exists only in the moment. A critical component of collective identity is the perception that it persists through time.[6]

Two factors contribute to this perception of continuity: communal narratives and the "routinisation" or institutionalisation of identity. Within the perceived history of a group, or within a history reinvented and perceived by the living group as an ongoing past, collective identity is grounded on a physical or imagined space. Therefore, identity emerges as the effect of what people have introduced and/or invented in the past. Specific identity markers – from particular language usages, ways of conceiving and seeing the world, to rituals or everyday practices – become routine.[7]

As Miller brilliantly states:

Such patterns of behaviour turn into "the way things are done." Once recognized as such, we can say they are "routinized" or "institutionalized" within a group.[8]

Concerning c), the essays in the book emphasise how difficult it is to conceive of collective identities as reified or substantial. Identities are thus cultural constructions, subject to constant negotiation or re-negotiation.

As people bring perceptions of group identity with them into social interaction, this "identity" must be produced and reproduced in each new situation. In the process, identity becomes redefined, if only slightly, for every fresh set of circumstances. Identities, therefore, are enacted or embodied perceptions of similarities and differences within a given social situation. In effect, group members must ask themselves at every turn, "What does it look like to be one of 'us' within this situation?". Answering that question is a complex task. It depends on which aspects of identity come into question in the specific situation, how negotiable these facets or identities are, the social positions of the various parties involved, the number and

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[5] James Miller 2010a: 12–13.

[6] James Miller 2010a: 13–14.

[7] On similar questions, see Esler 2003: 20.

[8] James Miller 2010a: 14.

degree of differences between groups, and so on. What features of identity are called upon in a particular situation can determine how vigorously and in what manner that aspect of identity becomes enacted.[9]

1.2. Identifying religious groups in antiquity

As a starting point, contributors were asked to follow preliminary criteria aimed to identify specific communal contexts:

– expressions by which a specific membership is defined (ethnic paradigms of self-definition, "brothers," "sons of ...," followers and/or disciples of…, etc.);

– ideological structurings by which a particular membership is defined (a shared system of behavior[s], shared variations in a behavior system as a source for the formation of particular in-group identities, worldviews, etc.);

– practices and behavioral norms by which a particular collective membership is defined (shared practices, ways of life by which a specific group distinguishes itself as regards a cultural macro-system, etc.).

Concepts such as "group," "groupality," "groupness," are not taken for granted, but critically assessed. Sociologist Roger Brubaker, in his work on ethnicity, nationalism and race, usefully reconsiders the concept of "group," starting from a critique to "groupism." He questions the

tendency to treat ethnic groups, nations and races as substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed.[10]

Brubaker's insights can be applied to the study of ancient religious groups, often characterised by a sort of automatism, as if, to quote Brubaker,

they were internally homogeneous, externally bounded groups, even unitary collective actors with common purposes.[11]

While similar insights appear as a convenient *vade mecum* in the analysis of ancient texts and conflicts, their indiscriminate usage seems to generate more problems than they intend to solve. Among the issues raised by Brubaker, the tendency to treat groups as abstract entities and individual actors is the most prominent.[12] As for the collectivities discussed in the book, when people involved in cohabitations or conflicts stigmatise a particular group, they turn it into an "abstract entity," in order to strengthen the impact of their ideological and rhetorical agenda.[13] Following Brubaker, it is important to focus on the "relational, processual, dynamic, eventful and disaggregated" elements concerning the people discussed in the book, without analysing groups on the basis

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[9] James Miller 2010a: 15.

[10] Brubaker 2002: 164. See also Lundhaug's essay in this volume.

[11] Brubaker 2002: 164.

[12] Brubaker 2002: 165.

[13] See Brubaker 2002: 166; see also Bourdieu 1991b: 220–221.

of our classifying categories, but rather on their being "contextually fluctuating conceptual variables."[14]

Another methodological *caveat* concerns the more general concept of "identity," a *basso continuo* for all the discussions concerning groups, groupality and/or groupness in the ancient world. As Emiliano R. Urciuoli has recently pointed out,[15] it seems more fruitful to analyse the concept of "identity" by combining at least five different perspectives: identity as history (in the sense of story-telling), as asceticism (in the etymological sense of the word "askesis," as a performance involving the dialectical process of reduction and amplification of the represented self), as camouflage (or mimetic negation of some stereotypes generally acknowledged as part of a specific perceived identity), as norm (as a process of re-negotiation of "dominant traits" assumed as norms in and for specific hegemonic contexts), and as success (in Bourdieu's terms, the preservation of the "political capital" involved in every identity representation and/or self-definition).[16] All these perspectives contribute to a more accurate definition of the "quantitative" dimension of identity, meant as a dialectic relationship between collectivities and individual[17] actors who live, share and define themselves in a specific historical and cultural context. As Richard Jenkins has brilliantly summarised,

With respect to identification, the individually unique and the collectively shared can be understood as similar in important respects; the individual and the collective are routinely entangled with each other; individual and collective identifications only come into being within interaction; the processes by which each is produced and reproduced are analogous; the theorization of identification must therefore accommodate the individual and the collective in equal measure. The most significant contrast between individual and collective identification in this model may be that the former emphasizes difference and the latter similarity. This is only a matter of their respective *emphases*.[18]

2. Religious and cultural cohabitations in Egypt and Alexandria (1st–6th cent. CE)

Since the publication of Fraser's masterpiece dedicated entirely to Ptolemaic Alexandria,[19] and often following his methodological assumptions, scholarly debates on Alexandria and Egypt in antiquity have agreed on the coexistence,

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[14] Brubaker 2002: 167–168.

[15] Urciuoli 2015.

[16] See Bourdieu 1991a.

[17] For a refreshing new approach to ancient religious individualities, see Rüpke 2013; Rüpke, Spickermann 2012.

[18] Jenkins 1996: 38.

[19] See Fraser 1972.

in this area, of different social and religious groups.[20] For many decades, a portion of scholars was more interested in conflicts. Such an approach found its justification in a series of historical events regarded as emblematic, first of all the *pogrom* under Caligolas (38 CE), by which the broader modern perception of the cultural interactions in the area was often influenced. The presence of the "library" of Nag Hammadi, considered as an expression of a group that privileged its own communal life and apparently rejected any contact with the cultural and political centre of the region, has also confirmed the image of Egypt as a theatre of conflicts and tensions, culminating in the definitive, officially regulated, establishment of the "Great Church."

In line with this, Guy G. Stroumsa has underlined the existence of the "scholarly myth" of the "multiculturalism" of Alexandria "the Great." According to Stroumsa, this myth entails the double claim of both pacific coexistence of different religious and cultural groups, and significant exchanges and mutual relationships or influences. Stroumsa obviously acknowledges that Alexandria, since its (more or less artificial) creation *ex nihilo*, has been a melting-pot of various cultures and religions.[21] In ancient Alexandria coexistence was far from peaceful, and some groups lived in constant tension, but one cannot fail to consider that culture[22] was often viewed as a pole of attraction for people interested in reaching high social positions. Also, culture acted as a *passe-partout* in spreading particular claims of authority or specific (re-)inventions of tradition.[23] Stroumsa stresses an element that is crucial:

> Now that we speak of the global village rather than of multicultural cities, we know that co-cohabitation of cultural or religious communities, even when mutually fruitful, never entailed true *convivencia*. Throughout history, men and women belonging to different cultural and religious groups have shown a great ability to hate one another intensely, while at the same time learning to communicate and exchange cultural patterns. This discrepancy, in a sense, seems to be at once a riddle and a motor of history. Multiculturalism, if it entails both smooth cultural exchanges and irenic social relations, may well be a myth. But it is one of those powerful myths by which intense, generous, and gifted individuals, throughout the centuries, have been able to dream of a higher reality.[24]

This statement seems to imply that cohabitation represents a sort of living historical process determined by contextual political, social and cultural dynam-

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[20] In the scholarly debate on the topic such a coexistence is a sort of "must:" e.g., see Bonnet, Payen 2014; Bowersock 1996; Bowman 1996: 203–233; Frankfurter 1998; 2000; Haas 1996; Watts 2006: 143–256.

[21] See Stroumsa 2003.

[22] Following Cultural Studies, I use "culture" here in its very broad sense, including patterns of consumption goods and leisure activities as determined by relations of production, which led them to focus on class relations and the organisation of production. See Bennett 2010.

[23] For the concept of "(re-)invention of tradition," see Hobsbawm, Ranger 2012.

[24] Stroumsa 2003: 29.

ics, always "fabricated" under a specific hegemony.[25] It is no exaggeration to state that Ptolemaic rulers have created, in the leading centre of the reign and, *per riflesso*, in other parts of Egypt, a cultural whole existing among other systems of consolidation and administration, under which people who "produced" culture were "forced" to operate.[26] Such a system was mostly preserved under the Roman domination and, to a lesser extent, even in the very complex phase of "Episcopal" governments.[27] To summarise, in the case of ancient Alexandria

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[25] According to Antonio Gramsci's statements. See Gramsci 1971: 7–8; 9–10 and the recent assesment by Grelle 2017. For a recent application of Gramsci's concept of hegemony to the Hellenistic period, see Portier-Young 2011: 3–45. It is important to underline that Egyptian papyri written in both Greek and demotic testify that the supposedly widespread "Hellenisation" of the Eastern Mediterranean – firstly prompted by Gustav Droysen to designate "Hellenistic period" – has undoubtedly been overestimated: on this topic, see Rotroff 1997 and Hall 2002 (especially 221–222). When we refer to Greek (more precisely to "Atheno-concentric") *paideia*, we deals with both elites and groups of individuals who adopts (also countering) Greek hegemonic culture in order to define themselves in the same elitarian context or in cultural contexts more or less connected to the hegemonic social "platform." In this regard, it is important also to recall that postcolonial studies and related fields of research pay great attention to the problem of hegemony as well as to its intrinsic ambivalence. The concept of cultural hybridity as introduced by Homi Bhabha (1994) is only understandable in the context of the ambivalence of hegemony and power. Whereas in the past ethnicity was a central category in the study of ancient and modern colonisations, postcolonial criticism emphasises the role of ethnicity as one category among others to define power relations. Inspired by the work of Antonio Gramsci, postcolonial authors started to shift the perspective towards cultural hegemony and subalternity.

[26] The affirmation of Coptic language in the history of late antique Egyptian Christianity emerges in the same context of Greek cultural hegemony. On this question, see the *status quaestionis* by Camplani 2015a.

[27] The reign of Septimius Severus (146–211 CE) seems to mark an important turning point in the history of late antique Egypt. The most relevant change consists in what modern scholars define "municipalisation" (see Capponi 2010: 191; Bagnall 2003: 56 and 78), i.e. the introduction of *boulai*, "the Greek equivalent of Roman municipal senates, both in Alexandria and in the capitals of the Egyptian districts. The process affected the administration of the cities, which were now governed by an assembly of liturgical councillors (that is, selected on the basis of their wealth), who were responsible for the collection of taxes" (Capponi 2010: 191). Diocletian (244–311 CE) completes this process of "municipalisation," subdividing Egypt initially in two, later three, four or even more provinces, which partly reflect regional identities. After 381 CE, an Augustal Prefect is placed in overall charge of the Egyptian provinces. This more or less late and quite slow affirmation of municipality seems to explain the specificity of Ecclesiastical structures of government in late antique Egypt, as observed by Alberto Camplani: "In primo luogo merita almeno una breve considerazione la storia sociale e politica. Solo piuttosto tardi (III sec.) i centri urbani egiziani hanno acquisito lo statuto municipale, ciò che ha prodotto *élites* locali dotate di uno scarso senso dei princìpi dell'autonomia cittadina, a differenza di quanto avveniva, ad esempio, in Siria. Tale stato di cose si è riflesso anche nella struttura ecclesiastica lungo la Valle del Nilo, che ha lasciato agire, senza frapporre gravi ostacoli, la forza centripeta della megalopoli, portando alla formazione di un

and Egypt, domination and hegemony provide conditions and materials for the emergence of cultural and/or religious cohabitations.

2.1. A regional approach in light of the integration between different sources

That there were various ways of interaction between different groups in the Grae-co-Roman Egypt cannot be doubted, as a number of regional studies have further reinforced.[28] Yet, the scale and nature of the interaction requires further research, in which an effective integration between various sources should play a central role. Exploring interactively the variety of documentary material is the main aim of this book. As Peter Parsons, among others, has recently re-affirmed, Egypt emerges as a great exception in the study of ancient history, for it provides scholars with the possibility of relying on a great number and variety of documents.[29] In socio-cultural terms, such a possibility corroborates the image of Egypt as a pervasive hegemonic system under which people, even when different languages and textual practices surface, produce culture in a more or less autonomous way.

2.1.1. "Pervasive" cultural centres

In spite of the great gap in sources and traditions, Alexandrian cultural institutions (the Bibliotheca/Museum, the Serapeum, as well as the gymnasium) are often represented as the most famous scholarly centres in antiquity. Beyond the celebrative intentions of the sources available to us, it is important to keep in mind the following elements:
– the strong influence of Aristotelian tradition (for example, the succeeding integration of both Artistotelian and Platonic assumptions) for the definition of *paideia* and its hegemonic programs in the history of both Alexandrian and Egyptian cultures of Hellenistic-Roman periods;[30]

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corpo episcopale apparentemente debole e omologabile alle direttrici della sede alessandri-na. E tuttavia le élites cristiane locali, sebbene in ritardo, si sono formate e si sono evolute, lasciando tracce inequivocabili della loro presenza" (Camplani 2006: 400–401).

[28] Recent bibliography on such a regional approach emerges as a *mare magnum*. E.g., see Bagnall 2006; Frankfurter 1998, 2000; Riggs 2012: 317–489; other references and critical discussion in Gwynn 2010: esp. 32; 46–47. For the Jewish presence in Hellenistic-Roman Egypt, see the seminal works by John J. Collins 2000; Gruen 1998; 2002: 54–83; Momigliano 1990: 74–96. For the different forms of Egyptian Christianity, see Blaudeau 2006; Camplani 2013 and 2015b; Griggs 2000; Parsons 2007: 181–200; Pearson 2004; Simonetti 1997; Wipszycka 2015. For the Christian documents from Oxyrhynchus, see the recent work by Blumell, Wayment 2015.

[29] See the recent presentation by Parsons 2007.

[30] Concerning the Museum, Niehoff 2011: 18 underlines how it assumed the role of "the leading centre of Homeric scholarship in the Hellenistic world: developing Aristotelian models, it boasted of the largest library at the time as well as the famous Museum, which has rightly been identified as a type of university." For the history of Alexandrian library, see the

- the development of a "typical" Alexandrian exegesis concerning ancient texts variously modelled on the principles of the leading cultural centres of Alexandria and the formation of textual communities influenced by such an exegetical activity;
- different levels of adhesion/opposition to such a cultural hegemony, and divergences between Alexandria and the *chora*, as well as between the leading centre of the reign and other cities in Egypt.

The hegemonic *paideia* highlighted the superiority of the Greek-speaking groups of the cities over the Egyptian-speaking peasants of the villages; it connected cultural products to elites outside Egypt, i.e. the educated groups of the Greek East and of the Latin West – whose cultural products were founded on Greek models. Hegemonic *paideia* assumed a pivotal role also in the counter-discourses and in the different forms of resistance to hegemonic culture. Articulating and promulgating counter-discourses implied competing re-uses and relocations of discursive elements ascribable to the same hegemonic *paideia*.

2.1.2. Local reinventions of tradition

Summarising Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony, Timothy Mitchell underlines its dimension of

Non-violent form(s) of control exercised through the whole range of dominant cultural institutions and social practices, from schooling, museums, and political parties to religious practice, architectural forms, and the mass media.[31]

In the ancient world, hegemony was often a violent form of physical coercion exercised through enslavement, policing actions, murders, torture, etc.; but it also assumed the aspect of more subtle forms of control conveyed through cultural institutions, systems of patronage and social network as well as the structured practices of everyday life. This is the case with the Ptolemaic power in Egypt. The same control system was assumed, re-oriented but mostly preserved by the Romans. While Mitchell has highlighted mechanisms of hegemony, Daniel Miller has emphasised its "cosmological" dimension:[32] hegemony often emerges as a normative and universal pattern entirely based on assumptions constructed (or invented) as traditional and, as a consequence, monolithic. Hegemony deliberately obliterates what is particular and contingent, assuming a specific "tradition" as the unique way in both perceiving the world and mapping the universe (and the place of men in it). "Tradition" separates inside from out-

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seminal work by Canfora 1990. For more recent critical discussions on the topic see, among the others, MacLeod 2000 and Berti, Costa 2010. On the relationships between the Greek version(s) of the Bible and the Alexandrian Library, see Nina L. Collins 2000.

[31] Mitchell 1990: 553.

[32] Daniel Miller 1989: 64.66.

side, normal from aberrant; its logic legitimises claims about truth and authority. Pierre Bourdieu has named such an invisible logic *doxa*, "the sum total of the theses tacitly posited on the hither side of all inquiry."[33]

The many reinventions of "tradition" relocated and re-negotiated in the cultural context of Hellenistic-Roman Egypt are all perceived as non-arbitrary, as products of a self-evident and natural order, which goes unquestioned. The aspirations of agents live in the system of orientation created by hegemony under which they cohabit all together.[34] Experiences of forced or intensive cultural contact open up possibilities for mutual re-negotiations of different traditions, not only in naming and thinking what was previously unnamed and unthinkable, but also in re-thinking and re-defining what was rejected by the *élite* in order to react to hegemony with counter-discourses that articulate new parameters under the hegemonic forms of cultural activity. In a hegemonic context, marginal (or constructed as marginal) social actors are forced to dress counter-discourses often condemned by dominant elites with acceptable robes. In turn, this re-negotiation may be perceived as a "shift" from the "true tradition" by the other marginal (or constructed as marginal) actors, who share the same cultural space with the "new" deviants.

2.2. The limits of the "traditional" taxonomies

With the term "groups," here meaning those collective entities traditionally defined according to ethnic paradigms (for example, Egyptians and Greeks) and cultural models ("pagans," "Jews," "Christians," "Gnostics"). Upon a close examination of available sources, a use of such categories is not always justified, especially in the context of Alexandria and Egypt, where interactions cut across areas of actual social, cultural and religious cohabitations. As many recent scholars have observed, in a variety of cases sources show that our usual categories in classifying ancient "religious" groups, deriving from ancient Christian apologists (i.e. labels as "Jewish," "Christian" and "Greek-Hellenistic," or "pagan" if we still want to use this term), cannot fully and realistically represent the ancient world.[35] Following a very authoritative tradition of studies, a tendency towards a "taxonomic" analysis of Alexandrian sources is still well-attested in many publications and academic debates. Such a choice seems in part to find its justification in the *mare magnum* of the documentation coming out from the region.

All of the book's essays, despite a certain terminological "fluctuation," connected to the authors' different "schools of thought," aim at analysing cultural elements testifying to interactions between neighboring groups that share ac-

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[33] Bourdieu 1977: 168.

[34] Further arguments in Bourdieu 1977: 166.

[35] For a critical discussion on this topic, see Nicklas 2012.

tual and symbolic spaces. Thanks to a methodological approach that considers religious groups as *loci* of cohabitation, rather than emphasising ideological and/or theological polarisations, cultural products, ideologies, and worldviews shared in public or private religious spaces assume their actual dimension of counter-discourses, implicitly or explicitly connected to a contextual hegemonic system.

In this framework, structures of power take on the appearance of something ideal, transcendent, and metaphysical, and counter-discourses emerge as competitive creations that share, and often re-use, the same hegemonic constructions in order to create a space for action.

3. Structure and contents of the book

First and foremost, this book aims to focus on distinct aspects concerning the implicit value of the documents analysed (*Use, [Re-]Invention and [Re-]Definition of Discursive Practices*): for example, uses of specific literary forms and/or specific terminology, reformulations of traditional *topoi*, reinventions of appellatives and *formulae* that also characterise contexts represented and/or considered as "other" in order to construct a viable representation of the self. The essays included also pay close attention to cases of re-negotiated identities, in which the "other" appears to be re-constructed in terms of conflict, with the aim of defining specific in-group identities (*Ideological Debates as Images of Cultural and Religious Cohabitations*). The book intends to analyse the construction of conflicts as instrument of both internal and external self-definitions, rather than mirror of real and/or well-documented social contrasts. As many scholars have observed, the traditional historiographical paradigm that has been producing literary and ideological profiles especially of Jewish and Christian ancient authors and groups, has carved through its endeavor a perspective by which the history of religious dynamics in antiquity is represented by a process of evolving debates and ideological conflicts on "orthodoxy" matters. The third part (*Cults and Practices as Spaces for Encounters and Interactions*) aims to attempt instead to identify and describe the multifarious religious practices for Alexandrian groups documented in sources.

As we have observed in the first part of this introduction, collective identity involves a perception of similarity and difference between one group of people and another. This sense of similarity and difference arises as a result of social interaction. Similarities and differences become the stuff defining the "boundaries" between groups, those factors that enable those involved on both sides of the divide to distinguish who "we" are as opposed to "them." According to such a perspective, in the fourth part of the book (*"Open" and "Closed" Groups*) an intriguing topic in the analysis of ancient religious groups according to a socio-historical perspective is discussed.

The book's analysis of group dialectics and/or interactions in ancient Alexandria and Egypt also intends to redefine questions connected to the construction of authority in philosophical-religious schools (fifth part: *The Construction of Authority in Philosophical and Religious Schools*). By starting the already mentioned recent studies,[36] it is possible to provide focused corrections of some antiquity scholarship that tends to over-emphasise the collective aspect of ancient cultic practice. For the most part, according to differing methodologies of analysis, papers included in this section shed light upon the individualities of exceptional people, either ancient authors or "fictional" persons of some renown.

The first part of the book is opened by Tobias Nicklas' essay, "Jewish, Christian, Pagan? The *Apocalypse of Peter* as a Witness of Early 2nd-Cent. Christianity in Alexandria." Nicklas concludes that the *Apocalypse of Peter* seems to add an important piece to a puzzle lacking in many aspects: it served as evidence for a group of Christ followers who on one hand appear to have been isolated from important strands of the earliest Christianity, while on the other were interested in the figure of the apostle Peter. They developed the idea of a heavenly Christ who will return triumphant with his cross at the end of the days. They believed in a powerful God who as the world's creator has dominion to resurrect the dead and whose justice will be used to punish every sinner, but mostly those who do not worship him, in places of eternal torture, while his elect are assured a place in Christ's everlasting kingdom. While the *Apocalypse of Peter* does not make clear whether it sees "Judaism" already as an entity separate of "Christianity" or a group in opposition to the community of Christ-followers and though indebted in many ways to Jewish ideas, the label "Jewish-Christianity" (with its many associations regarding Torah practice and lower Christology) according to Nicklas' analysis appears problematic, especially if we have to be aware that this "Judaism" differs greatly from what we find in writings of communities like the Nazoraeans or Ebionites; it is a Judaism that is able to integrate many elements of the diasporic world of which it is part of.

In Philippe Matthey's essay, entitled "The Once and Future King of Egypt: Egyptian Messianism and the Construction of the *Alexander Romance*," it emerges how "typical" Egyptian elements, together with the Egyptian pseudo-prophetic texts, have often been interpreted as the result of native, "nationalist" reactions against foreign invasions, a form of Egyptian "propaganda." In this article, however, its author proposes to go beyond the potentially anachronistic categories of "nationalism" and "propaganda," and to demonstrate that the legend connecting Alexander to Nectanebo might not be the result of an explicit political and propagandist agenda, but might instead have organically emerged from the cross-cultural interactions of narratives and counter-narratives within the frame of a Late Egyptian historical theology de-

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[36] See Rüpke 2013; Rüpke, Spickermann 2012.

manding piety of pharaohs and adherence to the precepts of divine law (*Ma'at* or *Hp*), a category very near to the one expressed in Jewish "Deuteronomist" books.

In his paper entitled "Demonology between Celsus and Origen: A Theoretical Model of Religious Cohabitation?," Antonio Sena starts from the Alexandrian formation of Origen according to Eusebius, characterised by teaching classical subjects, biblical formation, deep contacts with "Gnostics" and "pagans." In Sena's analysis, this is the cultural network in which polemics about demonology appear to be rooted in *Contra Celsum*. Sena's article aims at identify various levels of the polemics in the 5th and 8th books of *Contra Celsum* and at identifying the diversity of values that Celsus' ideas could have had in the 2nd cent., when the platonic philosopher wrote his *Alethes logos*, and in the middle of the 3rd cent., when Origen wrote his confutation of Celsus' work.

Daniele Tripaldi ("Basilides and the 'Egyptian Wisdom:' Some Remarks on a Peculiar Heresiological Notice [Ps.-Hipp. *Haer*. 7.20–27]") aims at shedding new light on a very neglected text, tracing his possible sources and comparing it with other images we have of Basilides, of his literary production, as well as of his teachings. The analysis deploys through four subsequent stages: first of all, as it needs to be done for any quotation, whether it be long or short, Tripaldi makes the attempt to understand Ps.-Hippolytus notice on Basilides within the redactional context in which it is embedded. Next he re-locates it in the overall frame of Basilides' and his followers' teachings as we know them from Clement of Alexandria. In a third step, Tripaldi takes "Hippolytus" at his word as he charges his "Basilides" with a full-blown *paideia* in Egyptian lore, searching for Egyptian and Graeco-Egyptian sources for possible parallels to the ancient text. Special attention is paid to an "Orphic" cosmogony recorded in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homiliae* and to a few passages from the 1st book of Diodorus of Sicily's *Bibliotheca historica*, a Greek compendium on Egypt and Egyptian gods and traditions of the second half of the 1st cent. BCE. The cross-comparison carried out by Tripaldi is at first conducted on a strictly formal, structural and lexical basis. This structured analysis then leads him to his fourth point, re-assessing the relationship between this heresiological report and the notices on Naassenes, Perates and Sethians in the 5th book of *Refutatio*. Finally, by way of conclusion, Tripaldi explores the possibility that such a wide-ranging exegetical activity intended as an integral part, a basis and a plead for a "Christian" worldview in a multi-religious culture may in fact stem from the *Exegetika* on Parchor the Prophet attributed to Basilides' son, Isidore, or from a literary enterprise of the like. As such, the profile emerges of an Alexandrian Christian intellectual milieu striving to combine theogony, cosmogony and *Heilsgeschichte*, Greek philosophical teachings and "barbarian wisdom," Hebrew scriptures and older traditions of earlier groups of Jesus' followers, in a degree of complexity reflecting the socio-cultural diversity of a realistic historical complex urban environment.

Thomas J. Kraus' essay ("Demosthenes and [Late] Ancient Miniature Books from Egypt: Reflections on a Category, Physical Features, Purpose and Use")

starts from the analysis of a private letter from the second half of the 5th cent. CE (P.Berol. 21849 = SB 12.11084 = C.Pap.Hengstl 91), where a certain Victor writes to a certain Theognostus to return a book he borrowed in Hermopolis. Victor adds the title and the name of the author of this book (the commentary on the orator Demosthenes by Alexander Claudius) and three more titles (Menander's "Art," the "Methods," and the "Eulogies"). The first book is attributed as τὸ βιβλίον, i.e., with a diminutive form; and this may lead to miniature books from (late) antiquity, their physical features, usages, contents, and, above all, purposes. Both sender and addressee are Christians. Furthermore, the whole text and the terms used for the two people in the papyrus letter suggest that Victor was a lawyer and an orator as well. On the basis of the fragments discussed, Kraus analyses how books looked like in late antique Egypt, as well as the reception and the transmission of one of the principal protagonists in the reinvention of a "Classic" *paideia* in such a regional area, i.e. Demosthenes.

Within the wider theme of cultural and religious cohabitations in Alexandria and in Egypt in the first six centuries CE, Paola Buzi ("Remains of Gnomic Anthologies and Pagan Wisdom Literature in the Coptic Tradition") focuses on the aspect of appropriation and re-use of traditional literary forms in specific (micro-)cultural contexts, and in particular on the re-definition and the re-location of gnomic literature, aiming to demonstrate that this cultural phenomenon was not limited to the schools, but had a strong influence also on the production of the Coptic literature, proving therefore a wide and vivid linguistic and literary interaction among various ethnic and cultural groups. As is well known, the *Menandri monostichoi* or *Menandri sententiae* are collections of one-verse sayings and moral precepts, ordered according to the first letter, that started to circulate, in Greek, from at least the 3rd cent. CE, under the name of Menander, although only a few of them may be directly referred to the authorship of the comedy writer. Their contents, in fact, draw material in almost equal proportion from both Greek philosophy, tragedy and comedy as well as the Old Testament. The second example that Buzi takes into consideration is represented by the very *Sexti sententiae*, a collection of 451 maxims traditionally attributed to the Pythagorean philosopher Quintus Sextus, formed mainly in the 2nd cent. CE in Greek. Whatever the reason maybe that the copyist of NHC XII decided to include the *Sexti sententiae* in the manuscript, it is clear that they were perceived as appropriate for that context (the Nag Hammadi version of the *Sexti sententiae* is, for the moment, the only extant Coptic witness). The third example that Buzi considers is represented by a fragmentary miscellaneous codex from the White Monastery of Shenoute (MONB.BE), dated to the 10th–11th cent. and containing *excerpta*, preserving a text defined as *Dicta philosophorum*. Buzi includes it in this analysis, despite the fact that it apparently exceeds the chronological limits of the book, because it is clear that it makes use of older textual material. Despite the undeniable classical origin of these types of gnomic collections, very likely they were not perceived any longer as "pagan," but rather as another

expression of the appreciated genre of the *apophthegmata*: edifying sayings and precepts, whose function was essentially that of providing an ethic and behavioural model to monastic, as well as non-monastic, communities.

The second part of the book is opened by Bernard Pouderon's essay ("'Jewish,' 'Christian' and 'Gnostic' Groups in Alexandria during the 2nd Cent.: Between Approval and Expulsion"). Pouderon initially points out that "Jewish," "Christian," and "Gnostic" groups (according to a highly debated terminology) in 2nd-cent. Alexandria have been so often studied that there seems very little to be discovered on similar questions. However, his analysis turns on the mutual relationships between these various groups, in order to know both the way they perceived each other and how they saw and defined themselves. Pouderon analyses various "monotheistic" (or perhaps also "ditheistic") groups in Alexandria, as well as the relationships between these communities. What emerged from Pouderon's study is that Early Christianity in Alexandria was at first Jewish-Christian, before it rejected its Jewish roots – rejection of the worship and the observance of the Law, but not of the Scriptures, appropriated by means of exegesis, either typological or allegorical, nor of this history, the Hebrews being looked as forefathers according to God. Pouderon stresses also that Early Christianity in Alexandria was at first varied and tolerant, so that the Gnostic trend was not rejected at once, and finally that Judaism, once distinguished from Christianity, was more harshly rejected than the philosophical theism, because it was judged less dangerous.

Adele Monaci Castagno's essay ("Messengers from Heaven: Divine Men and God's Men in the Alexandrian Platonism [2nd–4th Cent.]") observes that between the 2nd and the 4th cent., the divine man was a subject of great interest in the debate among the learned Christ's followers and between the various philosophical schools. In Celsus' *Alethes logos*, the person of Jesus was understood and challenged on the basis of the Graeco-Roman traditions concerning the divine men. Celsus criticised the incoherence of Jesus's followers, who worshipped him as a God and, on the contrary, refused any such cult of men like Pythagoras, Orpheus, and Asclepius (whom Celsus considered much more deserving of such worshipping). Moreover, in Monaci Castagno's analysis this debate must be placed within the framework of the intensive use of the *bios* of the philosopher, which growingly assumed religious contours in the competition and propaganda of philosophical schools, and as conveyance of a heroic ideal of perfection capable of fostering and strengthening consensus. Monaci Castagno stresses that there are many studies on this interlacement of discursive interests and practices that go throughout the different groups of the learned late ancient society. She deals with an aspect that has been on a lesser level: the importance of the divine men in the confrontation among the different groups that drove the most learned persons to rethink their presence in the world as a philosophical issue, that is, how these exceptional men could be understood on the basis of an anthropological and cosmological model that