

Ethnic *Koina* and *Politeumata* in Ptolemaic Egypt

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1. Introduction

The publication, by James Cowey and Klaus Maresch, of the documents of the Jewish *politeuma* in the nome metropolis of Heracleopolis in Middle Egypt, dating from the second century BCE in 2001 (P.Polit. Iud.),¹ most certainly marked an important turning point in the ongoing debate on the extent of autonomy Jewish communities enjoyed in classical antiquity in general and notably in Ptolemaic Egypt.² But it has also reopened the discussion among scholars about the role which ethnic based organisations like ethnic *koina* and *politeumata* played for the integration, autonomy or (to say the least) self-administration of foreign ethnic groups like (but not only) the Jews in the countries where they resided. In particular in Ptolemaic Egypt and in possessions of the Ptolemies outside Egypt.³ The ‘challenge’ the papyri of Heracleopolis represent was just recently illustrated by a long article published by Bradley Ritter in 2011 in which the author tries to reinterpret the *politeuma* of Heracleopolis in opposition to (as far as I see) the unanimous scholarly

1. The citations of papyrus editions and other papyrological works follow the ‘Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri Ostraca and Tablets’ easily accessible in the WWW under the following link: <http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/scriptorium/papyrus/texts/clist.html>. I wish to express my warm thanks to Vincent Gabrielsen for his friendly invitation to participate in this volume and for his enduring patience during the long time I prepared this article.

2. There is no room here to outline this scholarly debate for useful overviews concerning Egypt see Kasher 1985; P.Polit. Iud. p. 3-9; Honigman 2003. Arzt-Grabner 2012.

3. For a most recent recapitulation of the problem of ethnic minorities in Hellenistic Egypt, see Thompson 2011.

perception in which this institution was perceived ever since the publication of the texts more than ten years ago. The present article therefore considers itself not only as a discussion of Ritter's assumptions but also as a reassessment of the role of ethnic *koina* and *politeumata* in Ptolemaic Egypt and the way in which these two institutions might have interrelated.

2. The politeuma of the Jews in Heracleopolis

Let us begin first with the Jewish *politeuma* in Heracleopolis. Its full official designation appears in P.Polit. Iud. 8, a petition of a Jew named Theodotos concerning an unrepaid loan which he gave to a Jewish woman. The petition is addressed τοῖς ἄρχουσι τὸ λζ (ἔτος) τοῦ ἐν Ἡρακλέους πόλει πολιτεύ[μ]ατος τῶν Ἰουδαίων – 'To the archons of the *politeuma* of the Jews in Heracleopolis who are in office in the 37th year' (i.e. of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II = 134/133 BCE).⁴ We learn by this, that the *politeuma* was a community of Jews, which was located in Heracleopolis and headed by officials, who were according to the institutional model of the Greek polis called *archontes* and functioned for a period of one year.⁵ In the other petitions in P. Polit. Iud. shorter variants of the address formula appear. Some of them are simply addressed 'to the archons' (τοῖς ἄρχουσι)⁶ or (alternatively) 'to the archons of the year so-and-so' (τοῖς τὸ [year number] (ἔτος) ἄρχουσι).⁷ In others there figure as addressees 'the *politarches* and the *politeuma*' (e.g. Ἀλεξάνδρῳ πολιτάρχῃ καὶ τῷ

4. P.Polit. Iud. 8,4-5. For the year numbers in the P.Polit. Iud. documents which (since there appears a 37th and 38th year) quite probably were all written in the reign of Ptolemy VIII between 144/143-133/132 BCE cf. the remarks of the editors in the introduction (P.Polit. Iud. p. 2).

5. Naming magistrates according to political institutions and their serving for a limited period was of course also the case for magistrates of private associations, for Ptolemaic Egypt see e.g. P.Tebt. III.2 894, an account of a private club where there is mentioned the governing body of this association called ἀρχή consisting of a committee of six (or about six) persons, who served for the period of one year (see Fragment 1 verso l. 54 and the remarks of the editors in their introduction).

6. See P.Polit. Iud. 4,2; 7,1; 11,1.

7. See P.Polit. Iud. 3,1; 5,1; 6,1; 9,1; 10,1; 12,1; 13,1; 14,1.

πολιτεύματι)⁸, the latter meaning in an abstract form the council of archons – the exact size of which we do not know – which was presided over by an official bearing the title of *politarches*, who presumably also functioned for a period of one year⁹ and somehow played a role of a *primus inter pares* within the collective body of leading officials of the *politeuma*.

The petitions of P.Polit. Iud. reveal quite far reaching legal and executive competences of the Jewish *politeuma* in Heracleopolis which indicate a formal administrative authority¹⁰ and therefore clearly prove that such associations could indeed play an important official (i.e. administrative and political) role which was denied by many scholars before the papyri from Heracleopolis became known.¹¹ Most of the petitions concern complaints and legal disputes about private contracts (leases¹² loans,¹³ labor¹⁴ and sale¹⁵ contracts etc.) by means of which the petitioners seek to initiate legal action against the other party which they accused of having violated the agreement; that is to say: the accused person should be summoned by the authorities of the *politeuma*, who were then to arrange

8. P.Polit. Iud. 1,1-2 and 2,1-2 (135 BCE).

9. According to P.Polit. Iud. 17, which was written in Tybi year 27 (i.e. 26 January-24 February 143 BCE), a certain Euphranor functioned at this time as *politarches*, whereas the Straton who is mentioned in P.Polit. Iud. 18 (written around Toth year 29 = 28 September-27 October 142 BCE) as leading official of the *politeuma* and is unofficially called κρητής most probably also held the office of *politarches* (see P.Polit. Iud. p. 138).

10. The competences of the Jewish *politeuma* of Heracleopolis in my opinion therefore clearly extend beyond the scope of those of the functionaries of private associations, even if one admits that the Demotic rules of certain religious associations in Ptolemaic Egypt suggest that they could also mediate legal disputes of their members (see P.Assoc. passim).

11. See e.g. Bowman and Rathbone 1992: 109: ‘... there was no need for status groups with communal privileges and duties (sc. in Ptolemaic Egypt). Although “associations” called *politeumata* and *koina* are found in the towns and villages, they were religious and cultural groupings, capable of attracting the patronage of powerful individuals but with no official role’.

12. P.Polit. Iud. 12.

13. P.Polit. Iud. 8.

14. P.Polit. Iud. 9.

15. P.Polit. Iud. 5; 11.

for oral proceedings. But there is also an accusation of *hubris*,¹⁶ and we learn moreover that the officials of the *politeuma* could conduct investigations of unexplained deaths¹⁷, and even had the right to arrest certain wrongdoers, even though we are not told the reason for the imprisonment of the relevant individuals.¹⁸

Most of the petitioners call themselves Ἰουδαῖοι and in most cases their opponents are Jews as well. But among the latter there are also people of non-Jewish origin who are called ‘those from the harbour’ (οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄρμου). This means that the *politeuma* of the Jews in Heracleopolis could in certain cases also settle legal disputes between a Jewish complainant and a non-Jewish opponent and obviously had some competence over the harbour area of the town, a fact that may be due to the probable military origin of the *politeuma* to which we will refer again a bit later. In some cases the petitioner designates himself as ‘one of the people of the *politeuma*’ (τῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ πολιτεύματος) as does Andronikos who submitted the petition P.Polit. Iud. 1, in which he complains about a certain Nikarchos (an ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄρμου), who has publicly insulted him ‘in the presence of some other people, both members of the *politeuma* and people of another tribe’’ (παρόντων τινῶν καὶ πολιτῶν καὶ ἀλλοφύλων).¹⁹ The ἀπὸ τοῦ πολιτεύματος should be the actual members of the Jewish *politeuma* in Heracleopolis and as such they could also be called πολῖται being full members of a political body like the citizens of a Greek polis.²⁰ Thereby they obviously sought to stress the separation from all other people not being members of the *politeuma*, the ἀλλόφυλοι, which in this context

16. P.Polit. Iud. 1.

17. P.Polit. Iud. 6.

18. P.Polit. Iud. 2 is a petition to the *politarches* and the *politeuma* by a Jew who asks for being released from prison while P.Polit. Iud. 17 is a piece of correspondence between officials of the *politeuma* ordering that certain imprisoned people of the village of Tebetnoi should be released.

19. P.Polit. Iud. 1,16-18.

20. Because of the usage of this terminology I would consider it a bit too premature when D. Thompson most recently characterized the Jewish *politeuma* in Heracleopolis as a ‘corporate structure which, though it enjoyed the name of *politeuma*, was not in fact a political structure in our sense’ (Thompson 2011, 110). Though, it may not have been one in ‘our sense’, it seems to me, that the Jewish *politeuma* could very well be perceived as ‘political’ by its contemporaries.

of course also bears the connotation of ‘non-Jew’.²¹ The other petitioners, however, who figure in the P.Polit. Iud. documents and are simply styled as Ἰουδαῖοι are Jews residing either in Heracleopolis or in the Heracleopolite nome, but could also address the officials of the *politeuma* if they sought legal action against another Jew. Maybe because they (at least the ones who resided in the nome metropolis itself) were associated in some way with the *politeuma* (as were the συμπολιτευόμενοι of the ethnic *koina* of the Ptolemaic mercenary troops in Cyprus)²² or they simply were subordinate to the authority of the *politeuma*.

That the territorial competence of the Jewish *politeuma* extended beyond the area of the city of Heracleopolis is proved by petitions to the *politeuma* by Jews residing in villages of the Heracleopolite nome²³ as well as by correspondence between the officials of the *politeuma* in Heracleopolis and Jewish elders (*presbyteroi*) of certain villages of the Heracleopolite nome.²⁴ These documents show that these Jewish village *presbyteroi* (who were obviously allowed to conduct proceedings in legal disputes between Jews on the village level) after having acted as a sort of court of first instance could bring certain cases before the *politeuma*. Village Jews on the other hand could appeal to the *politeuma* officials in Heracleopolis as to a higher level of jurisdiction after already having had a first hearing of their case before the Jewish village *presbyteroi*. The authority of the *politeuma* of the Jews in Heracleopolis could even be appealed to by Jews from outside the Heracleopolite nome as is attested by P.Polit. Iud. 8 (already cited above) which is a petition of a Jew residing in the neighbouring Oxyrhynchite nome to the archons of the Jewish *politeuma* in Heracleopolis.

As Aryeh Kasher in his review essay on the P.Polit. Iud. already has pointed out, the documents of the *politeuma* of the Jews in Heracleopolis fully confirm the perceptions of the character of such ethnic *politeumata* held among scholars before the papyri from Hera-

21. See also the commentary of the editors on P.Polit. Iud. 1,17-18.

22. On these see section III below.

23. P.Polit. Iud. 9.

24. P.Polit. Iud. 18-20.

cleopolis became known²⁵ and for which the concise definition by Smallwood may serve as an instructive example: ‘A politeuma was a recognized and formally constituted corporation of aliens enjoying the right of domicile in a foreign city and forming a separate, semi-autonomous civic body, a city within a city; it had its own constitution and administered its own internal affairs as an ethnic unit through officials distinct from and independent of those from the host city.’²⁶ In addition to that, the Heracleopolitan papyri provide clearcut proof for the previously much debated question whether or not Jewish *politeumata* existed in Ptolemaic Egypt and that we in fact have to trust the information given in the so called ‘Letter of Aristeas’ about the existence of a Jewish *politeuma* in Ptolemaic Alexandria at the time when the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (the so called Septuaginta) was composed; a source that was hitherto dismissed by many scholars as legendary fairy tale.²⁷ Further, the documents in P.Polit. Iud. also dispelled the doubts that the Jewish garrison and settlement in Leontopolis in the Nile Delta

25. Kasher 2002.

26. Smallwood 2001: 225-226.

27. Aristeas (ed. Wendland) 308-311: Τελείωσιν δὲ ὅτε ἔλαβε, συναγαγὼν ὁ Δημήτριος τὸ πλῆθος τῶν Ἰουδαίων εἰς τὸν τόπον. οὗ καὶ τὰ τῆς ἑρμηνείας ἐτελέεσθη, παρανέγνω ἅσι, παρόντων καὶ τῶν διερμηνευσάντων, οἵτινες μεγάλης ἀποδοχῆς καὶ παρὰ τοῦ πλῆθους ἔτυχον, ὡς ἂν μεγάλων ἀγαθῶν παραίτιοι γεγονότες. ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ τὸν Δημήτριον ἀποδεξάμενοι παρεκάλεσαν μεταδοῦναι τοῖς ἡγούμενοις αὐτῶν μεταγράψαντα τὸν πάντα νόμον. καθὼς δὲ ἀνεγνώσθη τὰ τεύχη, στάντες οἱ ἱερεῖς καὶ τῶν ἑρμηνέων οἱ πρεσβύτεροι καὶ τῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ πολιτεύματος οἱ τε ἡγούμενοι τοῦ πλῆθους εἶπον· ἵεπει καλῶς καὶ ὁσίως διηρμήνευται καὶ κατὰ πᾶν ἠκριβωμένως, καλῶς ἐστίν, ἵνα διαμένη ταῦθ' οὕτως ἔχοντα καὶ μὴ γένηται μηδεμία διασκευή. ‘When the work was completed, Demetrius (i.e. Demetrius of Phaleron) collected together the Jewish population in the place where the translation had been made, and read it over to all, in the presence of the translators, who met with a great reception also from the people, because of the great benefits which they had conferred upon them. They bestowed warm praise upon Demetrius, too, and urged him to have the whole law transcribed and present a copy to their leaders. After the books had been read, the priests and the elders of the translators and the Jewish community (*hoi apo tou politeumatatos*) and the leaders of the people stood up and said, that since so excellent and sacred and accurate a translation had been made, it was only right that it should remain as it was and no alteration should be made in it.’ The similarities between the Jewish *politeumata* of Alexandria and Heracleopolis are e.g. stressed by Honigman 2003.

founded by Onias III or (more probably) Onias IV was in fact a *politeuma* as was presumed by some scholars in particular because of a metrical burial inscription most probably originating from this site for a Jew named Abramos of whom is said that he had functioned as *politarches*.²⁸

The judicial competences of the Jewish *politeuma* in Heracleopolis are apparently modeled according to those of the regular administrative officials which were defined by the famous legal historian Hans-Julius Wolff as the Ptolemaic ‘Beamtenjustiz’ (designating jurisdiction exercised by single administrative officials as opposed to that of the regular law courts).²⁹ Thus the prerogatives of the *politeuma* could (potentially) interfere with the administrative and judicial competences of the Ptolemaic officials and therefore had to be integrated in the existing scheme of the local administration. Hence the establishment of a *politeuma* as that of the Jews in Heracleopolis is to be considered as inconceivable without the formal authorization through a privilege of the king.³⁰ Against this background the Jewish *politeuma* in Heracleopolis obviously was not just a private association of certain individuals with a common ethnic origin, but rather a public institution of the Ptolemaic government and part of the local administrative level of the Heracleopolite nome. As such it stands in my opinion not only de facto but also de iure closer to a political community and thereby to the sphere of the state than to that of a private association.

28. Horbury and Noy 39 (= CPJ 1530A,5-7): ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀρχὴ | πανδήμῳ ἐθνικῇ ἐστέφει· ἐν σοφίᾳ | δισσῶν γὰρ τε τόπων πολιτάρχων αὐτὸς ἐτείμῳ. The inscription (which unfortunately cannot be dated accurately) shows that there must have existed more than one Jewish *politeuma* in Lower Egypt, see also Honigsmann 2003, 65-66; for a recent study on the temple of Onias and the Jews of Leontopolis see Capponi 2007.

29. Wolff 1962, 113-193; see also P.Polit. Iud. p. 13-15.

30. See also Smallwood 2001, 225: ‘It (sc. the *politeuma*) had to be officially authorized by the local ruler or civic body, presumably by a written charter setting out its rights and constitution, though no example of such a document survives.’

3. Ritter's thesis: A *politeuma* not of the Jews but as the 'civic body' of Heracleopolis?

The perception of the Jewish *politeuma* of Heracleopolis as it is outlined above was first established by the editors of the P.Polit. Iud. and became since then widely accepted among scholars in the past ten years. Most recently, however, Bradley Ritter challenged this view in a long article³¹ by arguing that the *politeuma* in the papyri from Heracleopolis was not actually that of the Jews but rather the 'civic body of Heracleopolis'.³² Its president was according to Ritter the *politarches*. The *archontes*, however, who also figure as addressees of the petitions in P.Polit. Iud., were to be the leaders not of the *politeuma* but of the Jews, whose jurisdiction is nevertheless supposed to have been extended 'somewhat beyond the Jewish community proper'³³ and was even a jurisdiction 'over' the *politeuma* as the supposed 'civic body' of the nome metropolis of Heracleopolis.³⁴ This seems a provocative in light of the address in P.Polit. Iud. 8,4-5 which very clearly states that the archons represent the *politeuma* of the Jews: τοῖς ἀρχουσι τὸ λζ (ἔτος) τοῦ ἐν Ἡρακλέους πόλει πολιτεῦ[μα]τος τῶν Ἰουδαίων, which was translated by the editors: 'An die Archonten des Politeuma der Juden in Heracleopolis, die im Jahr 37 im Amt sind.'³⁵ Since even Ritter admits that 'this interpretation is at first sight unexceptionable'³⁶ he has first of all to invalidate the argument for the identification of the Jewish *politeuma* drawn by the editors from this translation of the phrase and all the other scholars hitherto dealing with the subject and has to find a convincing different translation of the address in P.Polit. Iud. 8. Ritters whole argumentation stands and falls with the success of this endeavour, and

31. Ritter 2011.

32. Ritter 2011, 10 and passim.

33. Ritter 2011, 12.

34. Ritter 2011, 12: 'if the politeuma is in fact the civic body of Heracleopolis, then Theodotos (i.e. the petitioner in P.Polit. Iud. 8) is pointing to the Jewish archons' jurisdiction over it.'

35. P.Polit. Iud. p. 102; see also Kruse 2006, 168.

36. Ritter 2011, 11.

– to anticipate the results of what follows – it falls; and this failure is inescapable.

Ritter states that the translation of Cowey and Maresch ‘minimizes or even ignores the apparently close connection made in the original between the politeuma and Heracleopolis. Accordingly, they posit a direct connection between the Jews and Heracleopolis (‘die Juden in Heracleopolis’) which is not made in the original text’.³⁷ This statement is simply not true, because the editors do exactly what Ritter blames them for having ignored, that is to say: they fully take account of the fact that the *politeuma* is closely connected with Heracleopolis by translating correctly ‘Politeuma der Juden in Heracleopolis’. The German ‘in’ in this translation most certainly refers to the fact that the *politeuma* is located ἐν Ἡρακλέους πόλει as the Greek text clearly states and it obviously does not refer to the Jews as residents of Heracleopolis as Ritter assumes. Ritter’s interpretation might be due to an insufficient understanding of the German translation and for him it might have been perhaps clearer if Cowey and Maresch would have translated: ‘das in Heracleopolis befindliche Politeuma der Juden.’ But this would of course be a rather inelegant and awkward German.

After this first misconception the second one follows immediately, since Ritter continues: ‘Instead, I would suggest that the phrase be translated ‘to the archons of the Jews, of the politeuma in Heracleopolis, for the year 37’. Any translation should retain the basic syntactic structure of the original text, and Heracleopolis is to be associated primarily with the *politeuma*, not with the Jews’.³⁸ The last statement is presumably due to Ritter’s peculiar understanding of the German translation of the editors – superfluously decorated with an unjustified advice (apparently addressing the editors), as to how to deal adequately with ancient texts. Moreover, this advice falls back on the advisor himself, since Ritter’s translation in fact does not retain ‘the basic syntactic structure of the text’ as he falsely claims it would do. Quite contrary to this claim Ritter’s translation evidently destroys the syntactic structure of the Greek phrase by

37. Ritter 2011, II.

38. Ritter 2011, II.

establishing an artificial block in the grammatical relations when he puts τοῖς ἄρχουσι at the beginning of the phrase together with τῶν Ἰουδαίων at the end of the sentence and at the same time assuming that this (supposed) grammatical dependency is separated in the middle by τοῦ ἐν Ἡρακλέους πόλει πολιτεύματος. Ritter obviously presumes that the hierarchic positions of the single syntactic elements of the address of P.Polit. Iud. 8 are arbitrarily interchangeable. By this disregard of the rules of the Greek language Ritter changes the clear hierarchy in the grammatical relations of the phrase, i.e. the petition is addressed (1) to the archons who are in office in the year 37 (τοῖς ἄρχουσι τὸ λζ (ἔτος)), who are (2) those of the *politeuma* located in Heracleopolis (τοῦ ἐν Ἡρακλέους πόλει πολιτεύματος) which is (3) an association of the Jews (τῶν Ἰουδαίων). There can be no doubt that the second genitive clause (τῶν Ἰουδαίων) is grammatically dependent from the first genitive clause (τοῦ ἐν Ἡρακλέους πόλει πολιτεύματος) which in turn of course depends on τοῖς ἄρχουσι, thereby allowing only one possible sensible translation of the phrase: ‘To the archons of the *politeuma* of the Jews in Heracleopolis.’

Since, as I have shown, Ritter fails to offer a satisfactory alternative translation of P.Polit. Iud. 8,4-5 (which is impossible anyway), all his other arguments on the (supposed) ‘body’ (*politeuma*) of Heracleopolis, its (supposed) *politarches* and their relation with the (supposed) leaders of the Jews (the archons) fail as well. There is therefore no need here to discuss them in greater detail. At the end of this section I nevertheless just briefly want to raise three more fundamental objections against Ritter’s thesis. Objections which I think would remain valid, even if one were to follow his erroneous interpretation of the address formula of P.Polit. Iud. 8.

(1) In a longer part of his article Ritter tries to deny that the *politarches* and the archons both belonged to the *politeuma* by hinting at the fact that they do not appear together in the address of any petition in the P.Polit. Iud.³⁹ Instead these petitions are addressed either to the archons or to the *politarches* and the *politeuma* together. This led Ritter to assume that the *politeuma* and the *politarches* have to be distinguished as a different body from the Jews and their archons. As

39. Ritter 2011, 29-33.

an additional backup for this assumption Ritter points out that the texts which involve the *politarches* and the *politeuma* concern other topics (e.g. an accusation of *hybris* or the imprisonment of wrongdoers) than the petitions directed to the archons, which are only related to the violation of private contracts. In Ritter's opinion this suggests that the *politeuma* was not responsible for Jewish affairs but had much broader executive competences and has therefore to be identified with the 'civic body of Heracleopolis', while the Jewish archons could only deal with the matters of private law and legal disputes involving Jews. In a hitherto unedited papyrus in the collection of the Bayrische Staatsbibliothek in Munich, however, there is preserved a petition of a Jew from a Heracleopolitan village which is addressed 'To the *politarches* Straton and the archons' (Στράτωνι πολιτάρχῃ καὶ τοῖς ἄρχουσι).⁴⁰ This provides a clear-cut proof that both the *politarches* and the *archontes* together were the leading officials of the *politeuma* and that also the *politarches* was concerned with Jewish affairs. The Munich papyrus equally proves (as was already pointed out above), that the different address formulas of the petitions in P.Polit. Iud. (archons alone or *politarches* and the *politeuma* together) are merely variants of style which are due to the taste of the individual writers but does not imply that we have to deal with two different institutions. The Munich papyrus instead just offers a third variation (i.e. an address to the *politarches* and the archons) and Ritter's statement that 'our only evidence, then, that links the Jewish archons and the *politeuma* is ultimately ambiguous'⁴¹ is therefore to be considered as completely unfounded.

(2) Throughout his article Ritter never provides a satisfactory explanation as to how we should imagine the relationship between his supposed 'civic body of Heracleopolis' (*politeuma*) on the one hand and the Jewish archons on the other. Ritter also has to postulate such a relation because one cannot deny the obvious fact that even by accepting his interpretation of the address in P.Polit. Iud. 8, this same address clearly establishes a close connection between the

40. Pap. Graec. Mon. 287+293; this papyrus will to be edited by the present author in P.Münch. IV (forthcoming).

41. Ritter 2011, 17.

archons and the *politeuma*, because the archons are designated as τοῦ ἐν Ἡρακλέους πόλει πολιτεύματος. There is an apparent contradiction in Ritter's interpretation that the archons of the Jews should be somehow connected with the *politeuma*, but the *politeuma* should not be that of the Jews. A contradiction the author does not seem fully aware of. Are we to assume that the archons are at the same time leaders of the Jewish community and members of the 'civic body of Heracleopolis'? This Ritter does not say explicitly but rather he gets himself tangled up in contradictions when he characterizes the address of P.Polit. Iud. 8 as a 'reference to archons of the *politeuma* (the civic body of Heracleopolis), who were at once further described as archons of the Jews'.⁴² Now the confusion is complete: What is meant by designating the archons as those 'of the *politeuma*' who were 'further described as archons of the Jews'? Does 'further described' mean that the archons belonged to the *politeuma* or not? Their designation as 'archons of the *politeuma*' by Ritter seems to imply that. But how could they on the other hand simultaneously be 'archons of the Jews', who 'were there to govern local Jews'?⁴³ Moreover, the address of P.Polit. Iud. 8 according to Ritter points 'to the Jewish archons jurisdiction over [the *politeuma*]',⁴⁴ while at the same time they should have formed 'a Jewish board of archons with a distinct jurisdiction over Jews, but one officially recognized also by the local population'.⁴⁵ What is this supposed to mean? How could Jewish archons have exercised 'a jurisdiction over' a 'civic body' (*politeuma*) of Heracleopolis and at the same time have a 'distinct jurisdiction over Jews'? And why should non-Jewish residents of Heracleopolis and members of its civic body (supposedly named *politeuma*) have accepted such a jurisdiction over themselves by Jewish archons? According to Ritter the *politeuma* played a very important administrative role, since 'the authority of the *politeuma* and its politarches extended fairly widely throughout the nome'.⁴⁶

42. Ritter 2011, 13.

43. Ritter 2011, 13.

44. Ritter 2011, 12 (see also *ibid.* 13).

45. Ritter 2011, 13.

46. Ritter 2011, 13.

If this would have been the case, one wonders, what the officials of the local administration would have said to all this, under whose authority (most notably that of the nome strategus) the Heracleopolite nome was placed.

(3) The third objection concerns Ritter's assumption that there actually existed a 'civic body of Heracleopolis' called *politeuma* in second-century BCE Egypt. It is an assumption that in my opinion seems to be due to a certain unfamiliarity with the political and administrative institutions of Ptolemaic Egypt. First of all the fact has to be stressed that we have no other evidence for the existence of such a supposed 'civic body' in any nome metropolis of Ptolemaic Egypt, whether in Heracleopolis or elsewhere in the Egyptian *chora*. One may, of course, take refuge in the standard excuse of the accidental preservation of our source material. But would it not seem somehow strange that we do not hear of any other such 'civic body' (called *politeuma*) of the residents of an Egyptian nome metropolis for three centuries? And would it not be even more strange (if one considers the sizeable amount of administrative correspondence in our evidence), that our sources should remain totally silent of any bureaucratic interaction between such a supposed 'civic body' or at least its leaders and the very well documented administrative officials of the local bureaucracy and their day to day routine? Moreover, if one takes into account that the *politeuma* as the 'civic body of Heracleopolis' according to Ritter should have played an important role in the local administration and is characterized by him as an 'important association with the governmental apparatus of the nome capital'⁴⁷ What Ritter seems to assume here is the existence of a political body of at least a privileged part of the residents of Heracleopolis headed by a leader bearing the title of *politarches* and with administrative and judicial competences in the town itself and the nome. This would imply that the nome *metropoleis* as early as in the second century BCE had certain rights in administering their own affairs. But such a 'civic body' designated as *politeuma* is not heard of in any of our extant sources and most probably did not exist in any nome metropolis of the Egyptian *chora* in Ptolemaic Egypt.

47. Ritter, 2011, 13.

The reason for this is that these towns clearly lacked the status of self-governing political communities of citizens, because they were not *poleis* in the legal and constitutional sense of the word. That *-polis* was indeed a component of the (Greek) names of most of these Egyptian nome *metropoleis*, of course means nothing in terms of their legal status.⁴⁸

It had to wait until the Roman takeover of Egypt before such competences of local self-administration slowly developed in the Egyptian nome *metropoleis* because the Romans instigated a process of ‘municipalization’, first through the introduction of municipal honorary offices (*archai*) in the first and second century CE and the accompanying formation and separation of a municipal elite in the nome metropolis. This process then culminated in the formal introduction of town councils (*boulai*) under the Severan emperors in the early third century CE which raised the nome *metropoleis* of the Egyptian *chora* to equal status with the other Greek *poleis* in the Roman East. In the Ptolemaic period, however, only the capital Alexandria and the cities of Naukratis in the Nile Delta and Ptolemais Hermiou in Upper Egypt were *poleis* in the legal sense of the word and enjoyed the right of self-administration. The nome *metropoleis* of the *chora*, however (though they certainly formed administrative, religious and cultural centres), which Dorothy Thompson so aptly described as ‘non-political *poleis*’,⁴⁹ were placed under the administration and jurisdiction of the centralized bureaucracy of the country, which at the local level was first and foremost represented by the nome strategus and his staff.

Quite contrary to the existence of ‘civic bodies’ in the nome *metropoleis* supposed by Ritter there are indeed attestations of ethnic based *politeumata* in Ptolemaic Egypt. They were known long before the publication of the P.Polit. Iud. such as the *politeuma* of the Idu-maeans in Memphis or that of the Cretans in the Arsinoite nome

48. Nevertheless, Ritter (2011, 28) assumes the opposite by stating: ‘Heracleopolis status as a polis was real, and in this case the integration of the word polis into the very name of the city is not coincidental. However limited its governmental machinery, it was a polis.’

49. Thompson 2011, 103.

(Fayum). One could also mention in this context the *politeuma* of the Jews of the town of Berenike in neighbouring Kyrenaika which (though not attested before the reign of Augustus) most probably was established already under the Ptolemies. We will deal further with these and other associations of ethnic communities in Egypt and the Ptolemaic realm presently. So far their mere existence in the Ptolemaic period in my opinion makes the assumption that also the *politeuma* in second century BCE Heracleopolis was such an ethnic based community (i.e. of Jews) much more probable than its identification with a imaginary ‘civic body of Heracleopolis’ made by Ritter.

This erroneous identification is also fostered by the fact that Ritter not only seem to be not very familiar with the administration of Ptolemaic Egypt in particular, but also with the political institutions of the Greek and Hellenistic world in general. Throughout his article there can be observed in my view an insufficient differentiation between the use of the term *polis* in the simple meaning of ‘town’ and *polis* as the technical and legal term for a self administrating city-state or local unit of a state, which the Egyptian nome *metropoleis* certainly were not. This imprecise and inconsistent handling of the ancient legal, administrative and political terminology is presumably also responsible for Ritter’s questionable thesis that the *politeuma* in Heracleopolis is the ‘civic body’ of the nome metropolis of Heracleopolis. Thereby Ritter quite obviously does not take into account that the collective denomination of a citizen body (or its institutions) in the Greek world is always made according to the pattern ‘city (or council and people) of (e.g.) the Athenians’. The people are the institution. That is to say: a *politeuma* of the citizens of an existing town most certainly would not be styled as a *politeuma* ‘in’ that same town.

According to Ritter’s assumption one would therefore rather expect a denominaton like ‘the *politeuma* of the Heracleopolitans’ (πολίτευμα τῶν Ἡρακλεοπολίτων), but not ‘the *politeuma* in Heracleopolis’ as it is designated in the address of P.Polit. Iud. 8: τὸ ἐν Ἡρακλέους πόλει πολίτευμα (sc. τῶν Ἰουδαίων). In other words: designating a *politeuma* by merely pointing to the location of the *politeuma* (as Ritter obviously assumes was done in P.Polit. Iud. 8), but not

saying who the people are who actually constitute the *politeuma* does not make much sense in terms of ancient political, constitutional or legal terminology.

But naming its location and the people who in fact are the *politeuma* as is certainly the case in P.Polit. Iud. 8 renders perfect sense if one wants to designate a body consisting of people sharing a common foreign ethnic origin and residing (or are hosted) in an already existing community and thereby forming somehow ‘a city in the city’. Thus the *politeuma* in Heracleopolis was that of the Jews residing there and therefore it was described as τὸ ἐν Ἡρακλέους πόλει πολίτευμα τῶν Ἰουδαίων.⁵⁰

4. Ethnic *politeumata* in Egypt

Although Ritter in my opinion clearly fails to disprove the existence of a Jewish *politeuma* in Heracleopolis, he is no doubt right in pointing to the fact that the papyrus documents in P.Polit. Iud. reveal unprecedented judicial and executive competences of such an association which were hitherto not heard of in the known sources which attest ethnic *politeumata* in Egypt.⁵¹ The *politeuma* of the Idumaeans of Memphis for example is only known through an honorary decree (designated as *psephisma*) which is preserved in an inscription from 112-111 BCE.⁵² This decree by which a prominent Ptolemaic official named Dorion was honoured was passed in a meeting of the *politeuma* together with other Idumaeans residing in Memphis and apparently associated with it, which took place in the sanctuary of the ‘Upper Apollonieion’.⁵³ Dorion who is functioning as *strategus* and priest of the Idumaeans guards (ιερεὺς τοῦ πλῆθους τῶν μαχαροφόρων) is honoured for his financial aid in the embellishment

50. In a very similar way the *politeuma* of the Jews of Berenike in Kyrenaika is described as τὸ πολίτευμα τῶν ἐν Βερενίκη Ἰουδαίων in two inscriptions (Lüderitz 1983, no. 70 and 71).

51. Ritter 2011, 10: ‘... the supposed Jewish politeuma of Heracleopolis is more extensive in scope than any other such institution for which we have evidence.’

52. I.Prose 25 (=OGIS II 737).

53. I.Prose 25.1-4: ἐπὶ συναγωγῆς | τῆς γενηθείσης ἐν τῷ ἄνω Ἀπολλ[ω]νιεῖοι τοῦ πολιτεύματος καὶ τῶν | ἀπὸ τῆς πόλεως Ἰδουμαίων.

of the said sanctuary and therefore should at certain sacrificial events receive a palm branch and his name is to be included in the sacred hymns which are sung on such occasions. Quite similarly the only hitherto attested activity of the *politeuma* of the Jews of Berenike in Kyrenaika are two honorary decrees for two of its benefactors recorded in two inscriptions from the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius.⁵⁴ The *politeuma* of the Cilicians in Krokodilopolis (the capital of the Arsinoite nome) and that of the Boeotians in the nome metropolis of Xoïs in the Nile Delta are merely attested through second-century BCE dedicatory inscriptions which mention them as either addressee or donor of the dedication.⁵⁵ A *politeuma* of Phrygians in Alexandria is known through a dedication to Zeus Phrygios by a former priest of this association dating from the year 3 BCE.⁵⁶ Also in Alexandria there is attested a *politeuma* of soldiers (for whom no ethnic origin is given) which was headed by a *prostates* and set up a dedication to Zeus Soter and Hera Teleia in 112/11 or 76/75 BCE.⁵⁷

Another fragmentary Alexandrian inscription provides evidence for a *politeuma* of Lycians located there.⁵⁸ The text is the beginning of a copy from the minutes (*hypomnematismoi*) of the *procurator* of the Idios Logos concerning the decision in a legal dispute between the *politeuma* and a scribe of a *komogrammateus* over the supervision of graves or burial places (*mnematophylakia*) belonging to the *politeuma*. The inscription was presumably set up because the final decision of the official was one in favour of the *politeuma*. Although the text dates from the reign of the Roman emperor Hadrian the *politeuma*

54. Lüderitz 1983, no. 70 (9/8 or 7/6 BCE) and 71 (24/25 CE).

55. I.Fay(ο)um 15 (= SB IV 7270) (Medinet el-Fayum, 125-100 BCE): Dedication of a pylon to Zeus, Athena and to 'the politeuma of the Cilicians' (καὶ τοῖς πολιτεύματι τῶν Κιλίκων, ll. 5-6); SEG 2:871 (Xoïs, ca. 165 BCE): Dedication on behalf of (ὑπέρ) Ptolemy VI and Cleopatra II to Zeus and other gods by the Boeotian Kaphisodoros, *archisomatophylax* and strategus of the Xoite nome and 'priest of the politeuma' (ἱερεὺς τοῦ πολιτεύματος, i.e. of the Boeotians) and his two sons Metrophanes and Ptolemaios καὶ οἱ ἐπισυνηγμένοι ἐν Ἐόει Βοιωτοῖ [καὶ] οἱ σ[υ]μ[πο]λιτευόμενοι (ll. 11-13).

56. I.Alex.Ptol 74 (= OGIS II 658 = IGRR I 458 = SB V 7875): ἱερατεύσας τοῦ πολιτεύματος τῶν Φρυγῶν.

57. SEG 20:499,3-7: τὸ πολιτεῦμα | τῶν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ φερομένων στρατιῶν τῶν ὄν προστάτης (there follow the name of the *prostates* and that of a *grammateus*).

58. I.Alex.Ptol 24 (= I.Prose 61 = IGR I 1078 = SEG 2:848; 124 CE).

very probably existed already in the Ptolemaic period since the Romans had no need or motive to allow new foundations of such ethnic *politeumata* which under their rule had lost their original political and military functions and were reduced to the status of private associations.

Since it is true that these inscriptions do not give the slightest hint, that these *politeumata* had functions or competences similar to those which possessed the Jewish *politeuma* of Heracleopolis, they cannot, however, serve as evidence for the opposite, either, because inscriptions are set up with the intention to eternalize people and their achievements while the petitions and the other documents in the P.Polit. Iud. are the accidental leftovers of a bureaucratic day to day business and administrative routine, normally not destined to be cut in stone. But this incomparableness of our source material of course leaves us with a methodological problem if one wants to evaluate the role other *politeumata* than that of the Jews of Heracleopolis played in the social and political life of Ptolemaic Egypt.

Not in an inscription, but in a papyrus document from Tebtynis in the Arsinoite nome there appears a *politeuma* of Cretans.⁵⁹ This unfortunately very fragmentary papyrus is a piece of official correspondence written about 145 BCE and concerning the transfer of a military settler (κάτοικος) of the cavalry named Asklepiades to the fifth hipparchy. In this procedure two officials named Sosos and Aigyptios designated as ‘appointed by the *politeuma* of the Cretans’ (προχειρισθέντες ὑπὸ τοῦ πολιτεύματος τῶν Κρητῶν)⁶⁰ were involved, though this was clearly not their main function because the latter must have been mentioned in the lacuna in ll. 9-10 of the papyrus. Because of the fragmentary state of the document the exact nature of this involvement remains unclear, but it was quite probably due to the fact that the removal of Asklepiades to the fifth hipparchy came along with his admission to the *politeuma* of the Cretans.⁶¹

The information for the *politeuma* of the Cretans in Krokodilopolis like those for that of the Idumaeans in Memphis and the Boeoti-

59. P.Tebt. I 32 (= W.Chr. 448; cf. BL I 423; VIII 489; XI 270).

60. P.Tebt. I 32,9 cf. l. 17.

61. See also Schubart 1910, 64-65.

ans in Xoïs or the *politeuma* of the Jews in Leontopolis clearly points to a military background for the establishment of these and presumably the other ethnic *politeumata* in Ptolemaic Egypt as well as in Ptolemaic possessions outside Egypt (as perhaps in Sidon in Phoenicia).⁶² That also the origin of the *politeuma* of the Jews in Heracleopolis was military in essence is suggested by the fact that (as has been already noted above) the authority and judicial competences of this *politeuma* obviously were not restricted to Jewish residents of Heracleopolis and the Heracleopolite nome but also extended over legal disputes between Jews and residents of the harbour area, a distance of some 1.5 km to the west of the town on the bank of the Bahr Yussuf (as the Arabs called the western branch of the Nile in Middle Egypt). This can be explained best by assuming that not only a great number of Jews were residing in the harbour area of Heracleopolis,⁶³ but also that the *politeuma* of the Jews was linked in some way to the remarkable military activities that took place in Heracleopolis and the Heracleopolite around the middle of the second century BCE. About this time the Heracleopolite was developed into some form of military stronghold with a fortress (*phrourion*) both in the metropolis itself and in its harbour – where there was even stationed a *trihemiolia* i.e. a type of a smaller warship – and with several minor *phrouria* across the countryside of the nome.⁶⁴ A dossier of papyrus documents informs us about the activity of the (presumed) first commander (*phrourarchos*) of the harbour-fortress named Dioskurides,⁶⁵ and these documents prove that not only the military but also the civilian residents of the harbour area

62. In this town there are attested *politeumata* of Pisidians, Caunians and Pinarensians who set up burial inscriptions (see Ruppel 1926, 311) for deceased soldiers who were members of the relevant *politeuma* and as such (like the members of the Jewish *politeuma* in Heracleopolis) called *politai*. But it is to be admitted that it is not sure that these funerary stelae indeed date to the period of Ptolemaic control over this city which lasted till the end of the third century BCE, and a date to the following Seleucid dominion cannot therefore be excluded (see also below n. 85).

63. See P.Polit. Iud. p. 12.

64. For the military activities in the Heracleopolite nome around the middle of the second century BCE and their interpretation see Kruse 2011.

65. P.Phrur. Diosk.

of Heracleopolis were placed under the authority of the *phourarchos*.

We cannot of course be sure at present if the Jewish *politeuma* in Heracleopolis was established at the same time as the *phourion* in the harbour area of the town, but this assumption would gain some probability if one presumed that the largest part of the garrison of the harbour fortress indeed consisted of Jews.⁶⁶ Maybe the *phourarchos* and the *politeuma* of Jews exercised some sort of joint authority over the harbour and its inhabitants though we presently cannot determine exactly how both of them were related to one another. That Jews in general played an important role in the Ptolemaic military, and especially in the time of the dynastic conflict between the royal siblings Ptolemy VI, Cleopatra II and Ptolemy VIII around the middle of the second century BCE is evident from literary sources (in particular Flavius Josephus) as well as from several papyrus documents.

The evidence for the Idumaeans in Memphis that we have discussed above, suggests that not all people sharing this ethnic origin and residing in Memphis belonged to the *politeuma*, but that with the actual members of the latter (consisting of the Idumaeen guards designated as the *πλήθος τῶν μαχαροφόρων*) there were associated *οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς πόλεως Ἰδουμαῖοι* – ‘the Idumaeans of the town (i.e. Memphis)’. These Idumaeans are to be identified, as Dorothy Thompson very convincingly has argued,⁶⁷ with the civilian members of the Idumaeen community of Memphis like e.g. the relatives of the soldiers, and such civilians were very probably also the *συμπολιτευόμενοι* as were those which are described as the associates of the *politeuma* of the Boeotians in Xoïs and of some ethnic *koina* of Ptolemaic mercenary troops in Cyprus (with which we will deal again a bit later). This would mean that the membership in an ethnic *politeuma* would normally be restricted to soldiers of a common ethnic origin garrisoned in a specific locality (and perhaps their male offspring) while the civilians of the same origin were only associated with such a (military) *politeuma*. Though it would be perhaps not wholly implausible, that to the group of such *sympoliteuomenoi* there could also be

66. See Kruse 2011, 261.

67. Thompson 1984, 1072-1073.

admitted certain civilians who did not share the ethnic origin of the members of the *politeuma* but were willing to accept its authority, as e.g. merchants and other civilians residing in the same area as the *politeuma* members and the other *sympoliteumenoí*.⁶⁸ Such a group of explicitly designated associates of the *politeuma* is indeed not attested for the *politeuma* of the Jews in Heracleopolis. But I think that a certain division in actual *politeuma* members and other people in some way associated with it can be detected there as well, since also in Heracleopolis the actual members of the Jewish *politeuma*, who were designated as ‘those of the *politeuma*’ (οἱ ἐκ τοῦ πολιτεύματος) or just as ‘citizens’ (πολίται), are separated from other Jews; who did not bear this designation, but by petitioning its officials they obviously acknowledged the authority of the *politeuma*.

Although, then, according to the argument above, it seems highly probable that the *politeuma* of the Jews in Heracleopolis had a military origin, are we thus to presume that also the other known ethnic *politeumata* in Ptolemaic Egypt and beyond (i.e. in areas under Ptolemaic rule), for which such a military background is either evident or can be plausibly assumed, had such far reaching administrative and legal competences as are attested in the papyri from Heracleopolis? The fact that such prerogatives are unprecedented in the case of the other *politeumata*, is no proof that these associations actually did not possess them because our papyrological source material for the Jewish *politeuma* in Heracleopolis and the epigraphic evidence for the other *politeumata* are incomparable, as we have already pointed out. And even dismissing this incomparability and supposing that only the *politeuma* in Heracleopolis had such competences would leave us with the problem of explaining why only the Heracleopolitan Jews should have possessed such special prerogatives by means of which their *politeuma* actually appears as a vital part of the local administration, while the other *politeumata* could

68. This was indeed already proposed by W. Dittenberger (in his commentary on *OGIS* I 143) for the συμπολιτεύόμενοι who are mentioned together with the *koinon* of Thracians and that of Ionians in Cyprus (see also below): *Sine dubio ei mercenarii, qui origine ad nullam ex eis gentibus pertinebant, quae concilia sua habebant in exercitu Cyprio, tamen alicui ex illis sodalitatibus se aggregabant. Hi sunt οἱ συμπολιτεύόμενοι.*

merely pass honorary decrees and deal with their internal religious and cultic affairs. One could therefore argue that the opposite assumption is equally justifiable, that is to say: since the Jewish *politeuma* in Heracleopolis as well as the other ethnic *politeumata* in Egypt was of military origin, all these associations should have possessed (in principle) the same competences of self-administration. Otherwise, we would have to assume that there existed different types of *politeumata* and the Jews (all of them or only those in Heracleopolis?) were allowed to establish *politeumata* with considerably wider competences than those which enjoyed the other military ethnic associations of this kind.

One might of course defend such a view by supposing a certain *Sonderstellung* of the Jews among the other foreign ethnics in Ptolemaic Egypt, because the Jews could be considered as ‘special’ not only on account of being foreigners, but also on account of their monotheistic religion and of their specific laws ultimately originating from this religion. It certainly goes without saying that the papyrus documents from the Jewish *politeuma* in Heracleopolis confront us with a very deeply Hellenized Jewish population, whose members of course spoke perfect Greek, used in their contracts the formulas of Greek law and reverted to specific Jewish legal customs only in very particular cases, as in the application of Jewish matrimonial law, a fact revealed in the petition about the breaking of an engagement in P.Polit. Iud. 6. Robert Kugler, however, has just recently demonstrated very convincingly that also in other petitions in the P.Polit. Iud. there might possibly be identified certain elements of ‘Judean legal reasoning’ gleaming through the Greek legal terminology.⁶⁹

Taking this altogether one might therefore argue that the Jews considered such legal competences with which their *politeuma* in Heracleopolis was provided as a suitable means for the preservation of their ethnic identity. On the other hand, one could suppose that the other foreign ethnic groups in Ptolemaic Egypt (Cilicians, Phrygians, Cretans or whatever) shared more or less comparable legal and religious ideas and practices, which were common in the Hel-

69. See Kugler 2010; 2011; 2014.

lenistic world by that time. Therefore, they could be presumed to have felt a lesser need for such far-reaching competences as those enjoyed by the Jewish *politeuma* in Heracleopolis. Consequently, they may have been more inclined to accept the normal jurisdiction of the Ptolemaic officials than exercising it by themselves, even though they could have done so, provided that it was theoretically possible for all *politeumata* to exercise such prerogatives as those possessed by the *politeuma* of the Jews in Heracleopolis. But all these assumptions could equally be altogether erroneous, and the Jews of Heracleopolis could have just been rewarded by the Ptolemaic king for their important role in the military establishment at that time, and perhaps in particular for their support to one (or two?) of the Ptolemaic siblings, who were currently fighting against one another, by granting the Jews a *politeuma* equipped with wider competences. Until further evidence comes to light – especially for the activity and competences of ethnic *politeumata* other than that of the Jews of Heracleopolis, and as long as the latter remains the only *politeuma* for which such far-reaching competences are attested, such assumptions remain speculative.

5. Ethnic *koina* in Cyprus and ethnic *politeumata* in Egypt: One and the same or two distinct institutions?

Besides the above discussed ethnic *politeumata* there existed in the Ptolemaic realm associations of foreign ethnics which are designated as *koina*. With one exception (to be dealt with presently), all these *koina* figure as associations of the foreign mercenary troops stationed in Cyprus, by far the longest lasting possession of the Ptolemaic dynasty outside Egypt.⁷⁰ All of these *koina* are known from inscriptions (dating from the second half of the second century BCE) they themselves had set up in honor of the Ptolemaic governor of the island or members of his family. Such an association is usually and uniformly described as ‘*koinon* of the [there follows the name of the ethnic group] stationed on the island [or: in Cyprus]’, as for example in the case of the *koinon* of the Ionians designated as *κοινὸν τῶν ἐν*

70. On the military organisation of Ptolemaic Cyprus see also Bagnall 1976, 49-57.

τῆι νήσῳι τασσομένων Ἴώνων.⁷¹ In addition to the Ionians such a *koinon* is attested for ‘the Achaeans and the other Greeks’,⁷² the Cilicians⁷³, the Cretans⁷⁴, the Lycians⁷⁵ and the Thracians⁷⁶, while for one such *koinon* the name of the ethnic group is not preserved anymore.⁷⁷

Together with the *koinon* of the Ionians and that of the Thracians there is mention of people associated with it and designated as *sym-politeuomenoi* (κοινὸν τῶν ΝΝ καὶ τῶν συμπολιτευομένων).⁷⁸ Quite similarly such associates appear alongside the *politeuma* of the Boetians in the Egyptian nome metropolis of Xoïs in the Nile Delta which we have mentioned earlier.⁷⁹ It seems, that these associations consisted on the one hand of a *koinon* in the narrower sense of the word, the members of which being the active soldiers sharing the same ethnic origin, while on the other hand certain other people (presumably civilians) were associated with them.

Dorothy Thompson has argued in her above-mentioned article on the Idumaeen *politeuma* in Memphis, published in 1984, that the ethnic *koina* of the mercenary garrisons of Cyprus are more or less to be put on the same level as the *politeumata* in Egypt, a case which had

71. Mitford 1961, 31,84 (= OGIS I 145 = SEG 13:579; Palaiaphos, 123-118 BCE): κοινὸν τῶν ἐν τῆι νήσῳι τασσομένων Ἴώνων καὶ τῶν συνπολιτευομένων.

72. OGIS I 151 (= IvO 301; Olympia, 158-146 BCE): οἱ ἐν Κύπρῳ[ι] στρατεούμε[ν]οι Ἀχαιοὶ κ[α]ὶ οἱ ἄλλοι Ἑλληνας.

73. Mitford 1961, 31,83 (= OGIS I 157 = SEG 13:578; Palaiaphos, 123-118 BCE): κοινὸν τῶν ἐν τῆι νήσῳι τασσομένων Κιλίκων; see also Mitford 1961, 34,91 (= OGIS I 148 = SEG 38:584; 114-107 BCE).

74. Pouilloux, Roesch and Marcillet-Jaubert 1987, 76 (= SEG 30:1640 = OGIS I 153; cf. SEG 37:1394; Salamis, 146-116 BCE): κοινὸν τῶν ἐν τῆι νήσῳι τασσομένων Κρητῶν.

75. Mitford 1961, 30,80 (= OGIS I 162 = SEG 13:580; Palaiaphos, 123-118 BCE): κοινὸν τῶν ἐν τῆι νήσῳι τασσομένων Λυκίων; see also Mitford 1961, 29,76 (= OGIS I 147 = SEG 13:575; Palaiaphos, 127-124 BCE); Mitford 1961, 27,73 (= SEG 20:203; Palaiaphos, 142-131 BCE); Mitford 1961, 29,77 (= OGIS I 146; Palaiaphos, 131-127 BCE); Mitford 1961, 30,79 (= SEG 13:577; Palaiaphos, 123-118 BCE); Mitford 1961, 30,81 (= SEG 13:583; Palaiaphos, 123-118 BCE).

76. Pouilloux, Roesch and Marcillet-Jaubert 1987, 80 (= OGIS I 143 = SEG 13:554; Salamis, ca. 116 BCE): κοινὸν τῶν ἐν Κύπρῳ τασσομένων Θραικῶν καὶ τῶν συμπολιτευομένων.

77. SEG 13:573 (Nea Paphos, shortly after 127 BCE).

78. See above nn. 69 and 74.

79. See above section III.

been already made in 1924 by Ernst Kornemann in his Pauly-Wissowa article on κοινόν, where he argues (by pointing at the συμπολιτεύόμενοι of the *koina* in Cyprus) that the appearance of the designation *koinon* alongside the designation *politeuma* would prove that such ethnic associations had a status somehow in the middle between a private association and a civic body: ‘Wie die Bezeichnung κ(οινόν) neben πολιτεύμα beweist, handelt es sich hier ... um ein Mittelding zwischen Verein und Stadtgemeinde, rechtlich dem Verein, faktisch der Stadtgemeinde näher stehend ...’.⁸⁰ Though a similarity clearly exists between the *politeumata* in Egypt and the ethnic *koina* found in Cyprus,⁸¹ one could ask – provided that ethnic *koina* and *politeumata* should have had indeed the same legal status – why at the same time and in the same state two different names for the same thing should have been used.

Thompson held that in Cyprus the military ethnic communities were named *koina* rather than *politeumata*, ‘thereby avoiding confusion with *politeumata* of the more traditional type on the island’.⁸² Though Thompson does not name these ‘*politeumata* of the more traditional type’, presumably the author refers to the political communities (*poleis* etc.) which already existed before the Ptolemaic rule over the island. One wonders, however, how and in what way these preexisting indigenous political bodies could have been ‘confused’ with newly founded *politeumata* consisting of foreign mercenary soldiers from outside Cyprus.

That there indeed existed a difference between ethnic *koina* and *politeumata* was however argued by Walter Ruppel, who in a long article, which was published already in 1926, but since then somehow has fallen into oblivion, meticulously analyzed the history and usage of the term *politeuma*. Ruppel considered the *koina* of the mercenary soldiers in Cyprus as military clubs (‘Militärvereine’) whereas he defined the *politeumata* as associations under public law (‘öffentlich-rechtliche Körperschaften’) and identified them as military divisions (‘Regimenter’). The latter view cannot of course be main-

80. RE Suppl. IV (1924) 914-941 s.v. Κοινόν, *ibid.* 916-917.

81. See also Honigman 2003, 64-65.

82. Thompson 1984, 1073-1074.

tained anymore in the light of the documents from the Jewish *politeuma* in Heracleopolis.⁸³ But I think that precisely because of these documents, as well as because of the prerogatives enjoyed by the *politeuma* they attest, the assumption that ethnic *koina* and *politeumata* were associations of different character has gained more probability. I would therefore propose that, compared to a *politeuma*, a *koinon* had an inferior position and that the privilege granted to an ethnic group of soldiers to organize itself as a *politeuma* is to be considered as an important enhancement of status. This enhancement of status would mainly have consisted in the delegation of such legal competences and executive prerogatives, which was endowed upon the Jewish *politeuma* in Heracleopolis. Maybe we can detect the scant traces of the promotion of an ethnic *koinon* to a *politeuma* by the fact that in Alexandria there is attested between 186 and 180 BCE a *koinon* of Lycians (so far the only evidence for such an ethnic *koinon* in Egypt) setting up a statue with an honorary inscription for a Ptolemaic official,⁸⁴ while in 124 CE an association of Lycians in Alexandria is designated as *politeuma*.⁸⁵ Provided that (as was already noted above) the foundation of this *politeuma* goes back to the Ptolemaic period, it could be assumed, that an already existing *koinon* of Lycians was promoted to a *politeuma*.

Since these competences made such an ethnic association organised as a *politeuma* a political body which could exercise official functions on the level of local administration, one could presume that this may have been the reason for avoiding the establishment of such associations in Cyprus, because these would have rivalled the existing pre-Ptolemaic political communities on the island (which were allowed to retain their rights of self-administration under Ptolemaic rule) and could therefore have become a potential danger for the social and political peace between the indigenous population and the Ptolemaic garrison. In the Egyptian *chora*, however,

83. Already Schubart 1910, 64-65 had, however, with regard to the *politeuma* of the Cretans in Krokodilopolis (see above section III), made a distinction between the military detachment itself and its 'politischen Verband' or 'politischer Organisation' (i.e. the *politeuma*).

84. *SEG* 27:1029 (= *OGIS* I 99 = *SB* V 8274).

85. *I. Alex. Ptol* 24 (= *I. Prose* 61 = *IGRR* I 1078 = *SEG* 2:848; see also above section III).

where such traditional political communities (as e.g. the Greek *poleis*) were practically non-existent, this danger could have been considered as much less important. It is true, though, that in the territory of Alexandria there must have existed quite a number of *politeumata*,⁸⁶ but as a multicultural community and royal residence of the Ptolemies this city was a very special case anyway.

One has to admit, however, that the points raised above of course do not provide clearcut proof that ethnic *koina* and *politeumata* were different institutions and one has (as is so often the case in our disciplines) to hope for further evidence to answer this question with more certainty. I would think, though, that in the light of the Heracleopolitan *politeuma*-papyri the argument that there really existed some differences between ethnic based *koina* and *politeumata* after all has gained some plausibility; unless one is inclined to consider the Jewish *politeuma* of Heracleopolis as a curious and unique special case among all other known *politeumata*.

6. Conclusions

It seems that most ethnic *koina* and *politeumata* in Ptolemaic Egypt and in the possessions of the Ptolemies outside Egypt are not attested until the second century BCE.⁸⁷ At least the growth of their number appears to gain a certain momentum in this period in particular from the middle of the second century onwards, when the ethnic *koina* of the mercenary troops in Cyprus and the *politeuma* of

86. This is not only illustrated by the Alexandrian *politeumata* mentioned above (see section III), but also through P.Tebt. III.1 700,38 ss. (cf. BL V 147; IX 358; Tebtynis, 124 BCE), where there is cited a royal decree concerning the property of several types of associations in Alexandria. Explicitly mentioned are *gymnasia*, *synodoi* and *politeumata*, and since the text is very fragmentary there must have been mentioned at least one more (perhaps *koina*?). Because of the fragmentary state of the papyrus however the matter of these regulations, which otherwise would be presumably quite illuminating for the legal status of such associations, remains largely obscure.

87. A possible exception were possibly the *politeumata* attested for Sidon, if the relevant inscriptions should indeed date to the period until the end of the third/beginning of the second century BCE, during which the Ptolemies ruled over the town, and not to the succeeding Seleucid period (see also above section III). Although, as far as I know, ethnic *politeumata* are hitherto unattested in the Seleucid kingdom.

the Jews in Heracleopolis are established. This could be explained by the tough times the Ptolemies were facing in this period in which the dynasty encountered a crisis of its legitimacy because of their final defeat in the numerous wars against their Seleucid archenemy which deprived the Ptolemies of Syria-Phoenicia (Koile Syria), the revolts of its indigenous Egyptian subjects, the internal dynastic strife between the Ptolemaic siblings and, last but not least, the loss of freedom for an independent foreign policy in the eastern Mediterranean as a result of the Roman hegemony.

In these hard times the Ptolemies could quite possibly have perceived themselves as being forced to make a certain offer to the foreign ethnic groups which constituted an important pillar of their military organisation to ensure their future support.⁸⁸ That is to say, an offer for a greater autonomy by at least granting them the right to organise themselves as a *koinon* or even as a *politeuma*; thereby strengthening their ethnic identity and (especially in the latter case) allowing them to form political bodies of ‘citizens’ with considerable legal and executive prerogatives, not only destined to administer the internal affairs of their own community, but also allowing them to play an official role on the local level of administration. At the same time the organisation of the foreign ethnics as *politeumata* clearly emphasized (not only on an institutional level, but on other levels, too) a separation from the vast majority of the indigenous Egyptian subjects of the Ptolemaic rulers and could thus have reinforced in the eyes of these ‘Greek’ (i.e. long since Hellenised) ethnic communities a certain feeling of superiority over the Egyptians. In Egypt they were called *Hellenes* (‘Greeks’) and among them also the Hellenised Jews are clearly to be counted.⁸⁹ The second century saw a great number of Jews migrating to Egypt because of the internal religious quarrel in Israel between supporters of a greater Hellenisation of the Jewish cult and their orthodox opponents (and of course the fatal interference in these matters by the Seleucid king). They were also invited by the friendly attitude which Ptolemy VI

88. See also Thompson 2011, 110.

89. For a recent study on the conception of the ethnic designation ‘Greek’ in Ptolemaic Egypt see Thompson 2001.

showed towards their people, for whom the favouring of the Jews might of course have been also a strategic political option directed against the Seleucids. For these Jews then, of whom a great number joined the Ptolemaic army, the offer of *politeumata* might have been particularly attractive. The political aims of establishing the ethnic *politeumata* in Ptolemaic Egypt may thus be described in a somehow paradox way as integration by separation and privilege.

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