

Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?

Identity, Sacred Space, and Universal Knowledge in Philostratus and the Acts of the Apostles

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This article explores the connection between sacred spaces, the cultural and religious identities of their visitors, and ideals of universal knowledge in the early Roman empire. Taking my point of departure in a social-scientific approach to identities as “global *mélanges*” (a concept I will explain below), I will argue that visits to sacred spaces activated aspects of the multi-faceted identities of their visitors that would not, or less easily, be activated elsewhere. These aspects often appeal to an ideal of universal knowledge, as literary works from the early Roman empire could represent sacred spaces as loci of universal wisdom.¹ As a result, these sacred spaces obtained a transformative potential that stimulated their visitors to embrace global wisdom and to construct a glocalised cultural or religious identity for themselves.²

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¹ The observations in this article are relevant, therefore, for the study of encyclopaedism in writings from the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Recent studies on this topic have shown that many writers from these periods presented their works as providing complete knowledge, either on a specific topic or on as many topics as possible. As a result of these universalist claims, encyclopaedic rhetoric could serve useful purposes in contexts of cultural competition. Generally on encyclopaedism see Jason König and Greg Woolf, eds., *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity and the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). For a case study of encyclopaedic rhetoric in Jubilees see Pieter B. Hartog, “Jubilees and Hellenistic Encyclopaedism,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 50 (2019): 1–25. Cf. how Verity Platt speaks of the “encyclopaedic range” of Philostratus’ *Life* (“Virtual Visions: *Phantasia* and the Perception of the Divine in *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*,” in *Philostratus*, ed. Ewen Bowie and Jaś Elsner, *Greek Culture in the Roman World* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 131–54 [131]).

² See John Elsner, “Hagiographic Geography: Travel and Allegory in the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 117 (1997): 22–37. Though Elsner does not make explicit reference to glocalisation terminology, his study of Philostratus’ project persuasively illustrates the interaction between the global and the local which the concept of “glocalisation” seeks to capture. See, e.g., Elsner’s remark that “Philostratus presents us with a living continuation of the sacred culture and

To illustrate this I concentrate on two episodes in travel narratives from the early Roman empire, in which the protagonist visits a sacred space. The first, in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, describes how Apollonius travels to India in order to visit the Brahmins who live on a hill near the city Paraca. In Philostratus' account, the sacredness of this hill is evident from the well it houses, which contains mysterious and powerful water; from its crater, where Indians would visit to purify themselves; and from its plenitude of deity statues (3.14). What is more, Philostratus explicitly labels both the inhabitants of the hill (2.33) and their abode (3.33) as "our sacred house" (τὸν ἱερὸν οἶκον). The second episode I discuss is Paul's visit to the Areopagus in Athens, as described in Acts 17:16–33. Though Acts does not expressly portray the Areopagus as sacred, its association with Mars and the abundant presence of altars and deity statues that triggered Paul's emphasis on the cult in his speech (17:22–23) do appear to allow viewing the Areopagus as a sacred space. Focusing on these two passages, I will explore how Apollonius' visit to the hill of the sages and Paul's visit to the Areopagus tie in with how Philostratus and Luke portray their cultural and/or religious identities.

Identity as "Global Mélange"

As one of the main characteristics of our modern, globalised world several scholars have pointed to the compression of time and space.³ This means that individuals are

identity of ancient Greece through the sacred character of Apollonius who surpasses all holy men past and present, *and whose travels take him, take his Greece, further than any countryman of his has yet journeyed, beyond Achaea, and through the whole empire*" (36; my italics). On the development of glocalisation terminology and its application in the study of the ancient world see Pieter B. Hartog, *Pesher and Hypomnema: A Comparison of Two Commentary Traditions from the Hellenistic-Roman World*, STDJ 121 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 16–28 (with references).

³ The concept of time-space compression was formulated by David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990) and has made a profound impact in the study of geography and space. See, e.g., Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994); Barney Warf, *Time-Space Compression: Historical Geographies* (Oxford: Routledge, 2008). Globalisation theorists adopting the concept include Roland Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity," in *Global Modernities*, ed. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and idem., Theory, Culture & Society (London: Sage, 1995), 25–44; Timothy W. Luke, "Identity, Meaning and Globalization: Detraditionalization in Postmodern Space-Time Compression," in *Detraditionalization: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity*, ed. Paul Heelas, Scott Lash, and Paul Morris (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 109–33;

able to travel ever greater distances in ever smaller amounts of time and that information between individuals can be shared more and more quickly. As a result, individuals and the groups to which they belong become increasingly interconnected. This interconnectedness has an impact on how individuals connect to and construct the spaces in which they find themselves and how they formulate their cultural and religious traditions and identities.

As scholars have increasingly come to realise, such processes of time-space compression are not unique to our modern world. The Roman world in particular has, in the past two decades or so, been intensively and fruitfully studied from a globalisation perspective.⁴ As they united the Mediterranean under their rule and set up a vast network of roads and waterways, the Romans facilitated the transfer of people, goods, and ideas between the various groups that inhabited their empire. As a result of these increases in mobility and intercultural interaction, many cultural expressions in the Roman world assumed a “glocal” shape, in which local tendencies and traditions merged in an ongoing interplay with global ones. These processes of what some have dubbed “glocalisation”⁵ affected the various cults in the Roman era—and the sacred spaces associated with them—as they did other cultural elements: a telling example is the Roman veneration of gods originating from Egypt, such as Isis, which were adopted into the Roman pantheon. As the cult of Isis spread across

George Ritzer and Paul Dean, *Globalization: A Basic Text* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 238–40.

⁴ On the application of globalisation theories in the study of the Roman world see Martin Pitts and Miguel John Versluys, “Globalisation and the Roman World: Perspectives and Opportunities,” in *Globalisation and the Roman World: World History, Connectivity and Material Culture*, ed. eidem (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 3–31. In addition to the contributions in this volume see Robert Witcher, “Globalisation and Roman Imperialism: Perspectives on Identities in Roman Italy,” in *The Emergence of State Identities in Italy in the First Millennium BC*, ed. Edward Herring and Kathryn Lomas (London: Accordia Research Institute, 2000), 213–25; Richard Hingley, *Globalizing Roman Culture: Unity, Diversity and Empire* (London: Routledge, 2005); Andrew Gardner, “Thinking about Roman Imperialism: Postcolonialism, Globalisation and Beyond?” *Britannia* 44 (2013): 1–25; Miguel John Versluys, “Understanding Objects in Motion: An Archaeological Dialogue on Romanization,” *Archaeological Dialogues* 21 (2014): 1–20; Tamar Hodos, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Globalization and Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 2017).

⁵ Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992); idem, “Glocalization”; also Erik Swyndegouw, “Neither Global nor Local: ‘Glocalization’ and the Politics of Scale,” in *Spaces of Globalization: Reasserting the Power of the Local*, ed. Kevin R. Cox (New York: Guilford Press, 1997), 137–66.

the empire and yet was not detached completely from its Egyptian roots, it developed into a glocalised Roman-Egyptian cult.⁶

But glocalisation should not be taken merely as an interplay between two traditions—one global, the other local. In most cases, a range of global and local tendencies is at play in determining the shape and presentation of a given cultural expression. Focusing on the construction of cultural identities in particular, Jan Nederveen Pieterse attributes this complex interplay between global and local tendencies in the formation of identities to an “*increase in the available modes of organization*: transnational, international, macro-regional, national, microregional, municipal, local.”⁷ This “increase in the available modes of organization” leads to the establishment of new connections on various levels and the construction of multiple and multi-levelled identities. In Nederveen Pieterse’s words:

Multiple identities and the decentering of the social subject are grounded in the ability of individuals to avail themselves of several organizational options at the same time. Thus globalization is the framework for the diversification and amplification of “sources of the self.”⁸

Most important for my purposes are Nederveen Pieterse’s notions of “the decentering of the social subject” and the “diversification of ‘sources of the self’.” Whilst these terms run the risk of remaining somewhat abstract, Nederveen Pieterse offers a helpful illustration of how they play out in practice:

An English Princess (Princess Diana) with an Egyptian boyfriend, uses a Norwegian mobile telephone, crashes in a French tunnel in a German car with a Dutch engine, driven by a Belgian driver, who was high on Scottish whiskey, followed closely by Italian Paparazzi,

⁶ See, e.g., Miguel John Versluys, “Isis Capitolina and the Egyptian cults in late Republican Rome,” in *Isis en Occident: Actes du IIème Colloque international sur les études isiaques, Lyon III 16-17 mai 2002*, ed. Laurent Bricault, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 151 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 421–88.

⁷ *Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 71–72 (italics original).

⁸ *Globalization and Culture*, 74.

on Japanese motorcycles, treated by an American doctor, assisted by Filipino para-medical staff, using Brazilian medicines, dies!⁹

The gist of this example is that it challenges the categorisation of Princess Diana as quintessentially “English.” In view of Nederveen Pieterse’s theory, she can instead be understood as a social subject decentred from its particularly English context and assuming a more diversified shape as it incorporates a wide range of different sources or traditions. The result is a “global mélange”: an intricate and multi-levelled identity of which particular aspects can be activated in particular circumstances. The reason why we would normally think of Princess Diana as an English lady, therefore, is not that she was unequivocally English, but rather that the circumstances surrounding her would in most instances activate and bring about her Englishness.

In my analysis of Philostratus and Luke, the concepts of the decentring of the social subject and the diversification of sources of the self work together to challenge scholarly classifications of Philostratus’ Apollonius as quintessentially “Greek” and Luke’s Paul as straightforwardly “Christian”¹⁰: as a result of the processes outlined by Nederveen Pieterse and the complexity of cultural identity-formation in the Roman world, I intend to show that Apollonius’ Greekness can be emphasised within a specific context (i.e., Apollonius’ visit to the Brahmins), but is at the same time challenged and incorporated in a larger, glocalised identity that is promoted in the *Life of Apollonius* as a whole. Similarly, Luke portrays Paul’s cultural/religious identity in a thoroughly glocalised way by making Paul’s self-identification depend on the specific context in which Paul finds himself.

⁹ *Globalization and Culture*, 150 (n. 15).

¹⁰ My point here reacts to a tendency amongst some New Testament scholars to reads Acts as describing the road to victory of Christianity in the Roman Empire. In addition to the fact that “Christianity” is an anachronistic term in the time Acts was written, my argument is that the book does not testify to a unified, well-delineated cultural/religious identity of its protagonists (whether we call it “Jewish,” “Christian,” or something different), but rather shows that the central message of Acts is ever newly formulated in new circumstances. The result is a glocalised identity, where followers of ‘the way’ constitute a global whole whilst upholding their local customs and traditions.

Apollonius among the Brahmins

Apollonius' journey to India occupies books 2 and 3 in the *Life of Apollonius* and can be considered a key episode in Philostratus' biography. In his portrayal of India, Philostratus displays a remarkable blend of exoticism and familiarity. In *Life of Apollonius* 2,¹¹ Apollonius crosses the Indus river only to find reliefs in a temple in the Indian city Taxila (now in Pakistan) that depict the acts of Alexander the Great and Poros, king of India. Philostratus adds that Poros was a faithful satrap of Alexander and so claims Taxila for the sphere of influence of the Hellenistic kings (2.20–21¹²). He goes on to liken the city to Athens (2.23) and writes that Taxila housed a Helios temple with golden statues of Alexander and Poros in it (2.24). What is more, king Phraotes of Taxila turns out to speak perfect Greek, practices sports “in the Greek way” (τὸν Ἑλληνικὸν τρόπον; 2.27), and offers a meal in the shape of a Greek symposium (2.27–28).¹³ Yet the source for his wisdom does not lie in the Greek world, and Phraotes makes this quite clear: he apologises for having been born a barbarian (2.27), criticises the laws of the Greeks, and sings the praise of the Indian rather than the Greek approach to philosophy (2.29). Instead, Phraotes attributes his knowledge of the Greek language and Greek customs to the wise men (σοφοί) who live across the Hyphasis river—i.e., the Brahmins Apollonius was travelling to visit (2.31–32).

In book 3, Apollonius crosses the river Hyphasis to reach his final destination in India. This is a symbolic move, as the Hyphasis famously represented the Eastern border of Alexander's empire.¹⁴ Crossing it, Apollonius leaves the Greek world

¹¹ On Apollonius' journey to India see Christopher P. Jones, “Apollonius of Tyana's Passage to India,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 42 (2001): 185–99.

¹² References in this section are to Philostratus' *Life*. Translations follow C.P. Jones (LCL).

¹³ On the symposium as a trope in Philostratus' *Life* and the Acts of Thomas see Kendra Eshleman, “Indian Travel and Cultural Self-Location in the *Life of Apollonius* and the *Acts of Thomas*,” in *Journeys in the Roman East: Imagined and Real*, ed. Maren R. Niehoff, Culture, Religion, and Politics in the Greco-Roman World 1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 183–201 (185–88).

¹⁴ See Arrian, *Anabasis* 5.28.1–29.1 on how Alexander's troop mutinied at the Hyphasis, forcing their commander to withdraw. See also 2.43, which describes a bronze stele near the Hyphasis, which is inscribed with the text: “Alexander stopped here” (Ἀλέξανδρος ἐνταῦθα ἔστη).

On the symbolism of Apollonius' crossing the Hyphasis see Roshan Abraham, “The Geography of Culture in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*,” *The Classical Journal* 109 (2014):

behind. And yet Philostratus' India remains strange and familiar at the same time. To begin with, all inhabitants of Paraca speak Greek, just like the king in Taxila (3.12). The hill on which the Brahmins live is said to resemble the Acropolis (3.13) and is replete with statues of all kinds of gods (including Greek ones), which are venerated "with Greek rites" (Ἑλληνικοῖς ἤθεσι; 3.14). The Indian sages speak Greek, and their leader Iarchas even surpasses Apollonius in his formulations (3.36). Finally, Philostratus draws a comparison between the hill of the Brahmins and Delphi: in 3.14 he applies the term "navel" (ὀμφαλός)—which was widely regarded as a reference to Delphi—to the Brahmins' living place,¹⁵ in 3.10 he remarks that the king of India consults the wise men "like those who send to a god for advice," and in 3.43 he compares Iarchas' predictions to those of Delphia and Dodona. From these references it appears as if we are back in Greece¹⁶—and yet we are not quite. For Philostratus, India remains an exotic and distant country. In 3.11–12, for instance, Philostratus' mention of the fact that the inhabitants of Paraca all speak Greek is contextualised within a description of exotic features of these same inhabitants:

[T]hey saw a young man running towards them, blacker than any Indian, but with a crescent-shaped mark gleaming on his forehead.... The Indian also carried a golden anchor, they say, which is a customary symbol of messengers in India since it "secures" everything. He ran up to Apollonius and greeted him in Greek, which was not in itself surprising since everybody in the village talked Greek.

Just as Phraotes, the Paracans and the Brahmins may speak Greek, but refuse to be identified as Greeks and reject Greek wisdom. When, for instance, Apollonius assumes that Iarchas, the head of the Brahmins, "would think self-knowledge

465–80 (469–70); T.J.G. Whitmarsh, "Philostratus," in *Space in Ancient Greek Literature*, ed. Irene J.F. de Jong, Mnemosyne Supplements 339 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 463–79 (464).

¹⁵ For *omphalos* as a reference to Delphi see, e.g., Euripides, *Medea* 666; Pindar, *Pythian* 6.3–4. In the Hellenistic and Roman period, the term was often used in contexts of cultural competition; cf., e.g., how the book of Jubilees applies it to Mount Zion (8:19) and see Philip S. Alexander, "Jerusalem as the *Omphalos* of the World: On the History of a Geographical Concept," *Judaism* 46 (1997): 147–58.

¹⁶ Even if this Greece is located at the end of the known world. On centre and periphery in Philostratus see Abraham, "Geography of Culture."

something hard to achieve” just as the Greeks do (3.18), Iarchas responds that self-knowledge is, instead, the basis of the wisdom of the Indian sages. Moreover, Iarchas engages in cultural competition by comparing his own former body, which he identifies with the Indian king Ganges, to that of Achilles. The comparison turns out favourable for Iarchas/Ganges as he, unlike the Greek hero, founded cities rather than destroying them—and, as Iarchas adds, “there is nobody who thinks sacking cities is more glorious than building them” (3.20). In short, true wisdom is Indian wisdom—even if that wisdom unmistakably exhibits traits of Greek knowledge.¹⁷

This ambiguous characterisation of India and its inhabitants reflects a broader issue: the wisdom of the Indians is not merely Indian wisdom, but incorporates the knowledge of other peoples. The cult of the Brahmins, for instance, is an intricate assemblage of Greek, Egyptian, and Indian gods (3.14). And in 3.20, Iarchas informs Apollonius that the Ethiopians used to live in India and so presents the wisdom of the Indian sages as the basis for that of the Ethiopians. The repeated references to the Indians “living on the earth and not on it, walled without walls, owning nothing and owning everything” (3.15) or being gods (3.18) and their wisdom as showing those who obtain it “a path through heaven” (3.51) also emphasises that the wisdom of the Indians encompasses the entire earth and goes beyond it. Thus, the Indians in Philostratus’ account assume a glocal shape: they remain Indians, but not straightforwardly so: their wisdom, and hence their cultural affiliations, transcend clear ethnic denominators such as “Indian” or “Greek,” as the Indians incorporate all kinds of knowledge in a global *mélange*. On this perspective, it is not surprising that the Indian sages are familiar with the best Greek wisdom has on offer, and yet do not identify their knowledge as Greek *per se*. Their ability to speak Greek, for instance, is less a sign of their Greek character than of their universal, or glocalised, wisdom.¹⁸

¹⁷ Cf. Whitmarsh’ remark that “the *narration* of space [in *Life*] is filtered through the archival resources of the Greek literary tradition.... [T]here is a recurrent ethnocentrism in the description of non-Greek spaces, which requires that the narrator should measure exotic features and architecture against criteria drawn from, if not always Greece itself, then the world familiar to the Greeks” (“Philostratus,” 468).

¹⁸ This is evident from the passage in 3.26–33, where Apollonius can talk to the king of Paraca only with the help of a translator. Apparently this king, whom Philostratus denounces as having no

This glocalised portrayal of India contrasts somewhat with how Philostratus characterises Apollonius in *Life* 3. During his stay with the Brahmins, Apollonius is repeatedly portrayed as a “Greek” who espouses Greek knowledge. When arriving in Paraca, Apollonius is greeted in Greek by an inhabitant of the city and takes the language this Indian uses to reflect his Pythagorean inclinations; as a result, he follows his guide joyfully, expecting to acquire profounder *Greek* wisdom from the Indian wise men than he had ever found elsewhere. As soon as Apollonius enters into conversation with Iarchas and the other Brahmins, however, it becomes clear that the wisdom of the Indian sages is not Greek wisdom: Iarchas refutes the Greek claim that self-knowledge is difficult, telling Apollonius instead that “We know everything because we begin by knowing ourselves. None of us would embark on this kind of philosophy without first knowing himself” (3.18). Similarly, Iarchas criticizes Greek views of righteousness (3.25)¹⁹ and speaks ill of the Greek fascination with heroes recorded in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. As we have just seen, Iarchas, taking Achilles as a prime example of the Greek heroes, sings the praise of the Indian king Ganges, who founded rather than destroyed cities (3.20). To drive his point home, Iarchas points Apollonius to an Indian young man who has every ability to become a good philosopher, and “yet with these gifts he is an enemy of philosophy” (3.22). The reason is that he is an incarnation of Palamedes, one of the Greek heroes that fought against Troy and the one who cunningly forced Odysseus to join the Greek expedition against Troy, who found his death after Odysseus took revenge and is famously absent from the *Iliad*. For that reason, says Iarchas, “his two greatest enemies are Odysseus and Homer... The wisdom he had brought him no advantage, he got no praise from Homer ... and he fell victim to Odysseus despite having done him no wrong. So he is an enemy of philosophy and bewails his ill-treatment” (3.22). With this example, Iarchas shows how two embodiments of Greek wisdom—Odysseus as a

philosophical inclination, did not speak Greek, whereas (most of) the other individuals Apollonius encounters on his journeys do.

¹⁹ Erkki Koskeniemi’s remark that righteousness is “dealt with in III 24–25 and VI 21” (“The Philostratean Apollonius as a Teacher,” in *Theios Sophistes: Essays on Flavius Philostratus’ Vita Apollonii*, ed. Kristoffel Demoen and Danny Praet, *Mnemosyne Supplements* 305 [Leiden: Brill, 2009], 321–34 [333]) obscures the fact that Iarchas *criticises* the Greek point of view.

symbol of Greek cunning and the *Iliad* as a basis for Greek education and cultural memory²⁰—can, in fact, hinder those with a talent for philosophy from acquiring wisdom.

This portrayal of Apollonius as a Greek fits in with his presentation in the first chapters of the *Life* as a perfect embodiment of philosophy and Greekness, who surpasses even his teacher Pythagoras (1.2) and is repeatedly called a “divine man” (θεῖος ἀνὴρ).²¹ Yet it seems that in *Life* 2 and 3, Philostratus depicts Apollonius as a Greek only to criticize Greek wisdom, contrasting it with the universal knowledge of the Indians.²² Staying with the Brahmins, Apollonius undergoes a transformation

²⁰ On which see Henri I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. George Lamb (London: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 162–63; Willem J. Verdenius, *Homer, the Educator of the Greeks*, MKNWL 33/5 (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1970); Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds*, Cambridge Classical Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; repr. 2000); Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 194–97.

²¹ See *Life* 2.17 (“a man who was a Greek and divine”), 2.40.

²² Cf. Janet Downie, “Palamedes and the Wisdom of India in Philostratus’ *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*,” *Museion* 13 (2016): 65–83, who argues convincingly that “one of the central concerns of the *Life of Apollonius* [is]: what is the nature and value of Hellenism in a cosmopolitan, imperial world?” and writes: “Apollonius’ encounter with Palamedes in India situates Greek *paideia* in the context of a wider geography of wisdom and exposes it to critique. In the story of Palamedes’ tumulus, Philostratus explores the possibility of revising Hellenic cultural memory” (both quotations from the summary at 65). For Downie, Philostratus’ reference to Palamedes in 3.22 offers a critique of Greek cultural memory, shaped to a large extent by the *Iliad*, and invites Philostratus to adopt a more cosmopolitan outlook—which he does when he restores the cult of Palamedes in *Life* 4.

Downie’s reading of *Life* contrasts with that of scholars who hold that in his representation of India Philostratus defends rather than criticises Greek wisdom. As one example of this view see Roshan Abraham, “Magic and Religious Authority in Philostratus’ *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2009), 34; available online at <https://repository.upenn.edu/dissertations/AAI3363239/> (last accessed 20 December, 2018): “Apollonius becomes an arch-Hellenist during his stay in Paraca, where Greek culture is preserved, unaltered and undefiled by the realities of the Roman Empire.... Philostratus transforms the Indian land into a Greek utopia both temporally, by harkening to the culture and religion of the Hellenistic past, and spatially, through his descriptions of the land and the city itself.” Similarly also Koskeniemi, “The Philostratean Apollonius.”

It seems to me that the very categories “Greek” and “Indian” are being problematised in Philostratus’ *Life*. So even if we conclude that Philostratus promotes “Greek culture,” this culture assumes a notably cosmopolitan shape and incorporates the wisdom of many other groups besides the Greeks. I also take this to be the import of the statement “to a wise man Greece is everywhere, and he will not consider or believe any place to be deserted or uncivilized” (1.35). Cf. Adam Kemezis’s observation on the paradoxical nature of Philostratus’ Hellenic wisdom: “For all their remoteness ..., it is in these locales that Apollonius will encounter the wisdom of the Indians, which he embraces as the truest and, paradoxically, the most Hellenic” (*Greek Narratives of the Roman Empire under the Severans: Cassius Dio, Philostratus and Herodian* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014], 169). Cf. also Jaap-Jan Flinterman’s observation that Greekness, for Philostratus, “more or less

from a Greek to a more cosmopolitan sage.²³ This transformation begins with Iarchas telling that Apollonius's Greek wisdom is worthwhile, but still lacking (3.16):

In amazement Apollonius asked [Iarchas] how he knew, and he replied, "You have come with a part of this wisdom, but not of all" ("καὶ σὺ μέτοχος," ἔφη, "τῆς σοφίας ταύτης ἤκεις, ἀλλ' οὐπω πάσης"). "Will you let me learn it all, then?" ("διδάξῃ σὺν με," ἔφη, "τὴν σοφίαν πᾶσαν;") Apollonius asked. "Unstintingly," Iarchas replied.

An allusion to this conversation occurs in 3.50, where Philostratus writes that Apollonius only leaves the Brahmins after having acquired "all their doctrines, both avowed and secret" (λόγους φανερούς τε καὶ ἀπορρήτους πάντας).²⁴ In the letter that accompanies the camels Apollonius sends back to Iarchas (3.51), Apollonius testifies again to his transformation by stressing the universal appeal of the wisdom of the Indians ("you also shared your special wisdom with me, and showed me a path through heaven") and implying the difference between this universal wisdom and Greek knowledge ("I will recall all this to the Greeks"). In the remainder of the *Life*, Apollonius represents this ideal of glocalised wisdom, in which the traditions of various peoples interact.²⁵ In 4.16, for instance, Apollonius tells his followers how he

coincides with wisdom or a philosophical frame of mind" and hence "is neither exclusively nor primarily a racial category, but a moral and cultural one" (*Power, Paideia & Pythagoreanism: Greek Identity, Conceptions or the Relationship between Philosophers and Monarchs and Political Ideals in Philostratus' Life of Apollonius* [Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1995], 91).

²³ I do not discuss the visit of the king of Paraca here (see 3.26–33). During this visit, Iarchas presents Apollonius as a Greek (3.28), but in this case Apollonius' Greekness is a sign of his wisdom in comparison to the folly of the visiting king (cf. 3.23: "And Iarchas replied: 'Let [the king] come, for he too will go away all the better for making the acquaintance of a man of Hellas'."). The point of the story seems to be that due to his Greek wisdom Apollonius surpasses the king; yet it is not yet full wisdom as the Indians possess it.

²⁴ Translation slightly adapted. LCL has "all sorts of lore both profane and mysterious," but in my impression the point is that Apollonius makes all the knowledge of the Indians his own rather than that he is confronted with a wide variety of knowledge. Cf. the Dutch translation by Simone Mooij-Valk, *Philostratus: Het leven van Apollonius van Tyana* (Amsterdam: Athenaeum—Polak & Van Gennip, 2013): "[H]ij maakte zich alle wijsheid eigen, openbare en geheime" (135).

²⁵ As Eshleman aptly notes: "These claims anchor Apollonius's authority for the rest of the work: his unique blend of Greek paideia with esoteric Indian wisdom equips him to correct the teachings, customs, and religious practices of everyone else he encounters, whether Greek, Roman, or barbarian" ("Indian Travel," 186). See also Elsner, "Hagiographic Geography," 29–30 (and cf. more broadly 28–32): "Philostratus uses the travels reflection of Apollonius' spiritual progress. Here the very range of ethnographic topoi experienced by the sage suggests the depth and universality of wisdom which he is

used Indian prayers to approach Achilles.²⁶ And in 4.7, Apollonius compares Pheidias' statue of Zeus and Homer's depiction of the Greek god in order to praise the wisdom of travellers that acquaint themselves with the wisdom of many cultures:

Seeing how eagerly the Smyrneans pursued every kind of knowledge, he encouraged them and added to their eagerness. They must put more pride in themselves, he told them, than in the appearance of their city; even if it was the most beautiful beneath the sun, with the sea at its command and always supplied with a west wind, still it had a pleasanter crown in its true men than in its colonnades, pictures, and excess of gold. Buildings stayed in one place, never seen anywhere except in the part of the world where they were, while good men were seen everywhere and spoken of everywhere, and they made the city of their origin larger in proportion to the number of them that could travel the world. Cities as beautiful as this one, he said, were like the statue of Zeus made by Phidias at Olympia. It was seated where the artist wished, whereas good men went everywhere, and were no different from Homer's Zeus, who in his many forms is a more marvelous creation of Homer than the ivory Zeus, for this Zeus was visible on earth, while the other could be sensed in every corner of the universe.

In Philostratus' account, therefore, the sacred space that houses the Indian sages acquires a transformative potential. It is on this hill that Apollonius encounters the zenith of wisdom and learns about the partiality of the Greek wisdom with which he had been familiar. As a result, he transforms from a Greek to a glocalised sage, whose wisdom encompasses and incorporates that of other cultures. What is more, Philostratus' depiction of these events seeks to instil a similar glocalised ideal in his

mastered and with which he is equipped to teach.... While the journey to India takes Apollonius to self-knowledge and full philosophic maturity, the trip to Egypt ... is the occasion for his demonstration of mastery."

²⁶ Downie, "Palamedes and the Wisdom of India" describes the implications of this reference to Indian customs: "The encounter with Achilles that leads to the restoration of Palamedes' cult site, then, depends upon the wisdom that Apollonius has gained from his encounter with the Indian sages. His conversation with the revenant hero follows (and parodies) the pattern of traditional Greek *Homerkritik*, in which Palamedes' absence was a long established *topos*. However, in his description of his ritual actions at Achilles' tumulus, Apollonius makes it clear that he engages with the heroes not simply according to the forms of Greek culture but also with a broader view: his perspective on the Greek tradition has changed since his visit to India" (80).

readers. As Janet Downie has observed, Philostratus' portrayals of Apollonius' journeys invite his readers "at every turn to weigh Apollonius' claims to wisdom against those of his interlocutors."²⁷ By so doing, the episode reviewed here invites Philostratus' readers to undergo a transformation similar to that of Apollonius and to embrace a glocalised ideal of wisdom.

Paul at the Areopagus

As we turn to Luke's portrayal of Paul in Acts 17:16–34, we find a similar dynamics at play. Here, however, it is not the visitor to a sacred space who learns of its global appeal from those who live there. Rather the reverse: when visiting the Areopagus, Paul points out its global appeal to the Athenians. Presenting his message in glocalised terms, Paul encourages his Epicurean and Stoic interlocutors to accept what he proclaims.

The peg for Paul's exposition is the altar devoted to an unknown god, which Paul encountered in Athens (17:23²⁸). Praising this altar as a sign of the Athenians' religiosity (17:22), Paul claims that the unknown god the Athenians revere is, in fact, the God of the Judaeans, who "now ... commands all people everywhere to repent" (τὰ νῦν παραγγέλλει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πάντας πανταχοῦ μετανοεῖν) and will judge the entire world (οἰκουμένη) through Jesus (17:31).²⁹ In his speech Paul adopts a universal tone, incorporating the local aspects of his arguments (his god being the God of the Judaeans who revealed himself in Jesus Christ) with claims about all of humankind. In so doing, he appropriates Greek and Stoic traditions. To begin with, Paul famously quotes the fifth line of Aratus' *Phaenomena* (17:28) to argue that God is the source of all life on earth. The Aratus quotation puts Paul's earlier comments on the omnipresent God of the Judaeans in perspective: by claiming that the god Paul proclaims is "the God who made the world and everything in it" (ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας

²⁷ "Palamedes and the Wisdom of India," 72.

²⁸ References in this section are to the book of Acts. Translations follow the ESV.

²⁹ On the "unknown god" see Pieter W. van der Horst, "The Altar of the 'Unknown God' in Athens (Acts 17.23) and the Cults of 'Unknown Gods' in the Graeco-Roman World," in *Hellenism—Judaism—Christianity: Essays on Their Interaction* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994), 165–202 (with references).

τὸν κόσμον καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ; 17:24) and “made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth” (ἐποίησέν τε ἐξ ἑνὸς πᾶν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων κατοικεῖν ἐπὶ παντὸς προσώπου τῆς γῆς; 17:26) and by subsequently quoting Aratus, Luke subtly equates the Judaeian God with Zeus as Aratus describes him. Moreover, when he speaks about the final judgement in 17:31, Paul’s use of *oikoumene* is reminiscent of the cosmopolitan ideals propagated by Stoics in the Roman period.³⁰ Paul’s twist is that he portrays the inhabitants of this *oikoumene* as originating from one God—that of the Judaeans—who will judge the *oikoumene* at his time.

By incorporating Greek and Stoic knowledge in his message, Luke’s Paul provides his interlocutors with a message similar to the one Iarchas delivered to Apollonius: you are indeed wise, but your wisdom remains lacking. Paul’s message, like Iarchas’, presents glocalised knowledge, which incorporates the claims of various groups.³¹ Thus, instead of a “new teaching” (ἡ καινὴ αὐτὴ ... διδασχὴ), “strange things” (ξενίζοντα ... τινα), or “foreign divinities” (ξένων δαίμονίων),³² Paul presents the Athenians with knowledge that surpasses their Greek wisdom by being more universal. The purpose of Paul’s speech is similar to that of Iarchas’ conversations with Apollonius: the Athenians are called to transform their particular Greek convictions and integrate them within the global message Paul presents.³³

³⁰ On the intellectual background of Paul’s speech see David L. Balch, “The Areopagus Speech: An Appeal to the Stoic Historian Posidonius against Later Stoics and the Epicureans,” in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, ed. David L. Balch, Everett Ferguson, and Wayne A. Meeks (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 52–79; J. Daryl Charles, “Engaging the (Neo)Pagan Mind: Paul’s Encounter with Athenian Culture as a Model for Cultural Apologetics (Acts 17:16–34),” *Trinity Journal* 16 (1995): 47–62 (54–60); Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 430–32.

³¹ I pay less attention to the Judaeian elements in the message Luke’s Paul proclaims at the Areopagus. These find expression not just in what Paul says about the God he proclaims, but also in how he says it. On intertextual connections between the Areopagus episode and the Jewish Scriptures see Kenneth D. Litwak, “Israel’s Prophets Meet Athens’ Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22–31,” *Biblica* 85 (2004): 199–216.

³² 17:18–19.

³³ Cf. Pervo’s comment that “Luke is edging toward a concept of *praeparatio evangelica*.... In his terms, this means that gentile history and religion are, at least to a degree, parts of the prehistory of Christianity, as was the history of Israel. Both Jews and gentiles must grasp this truth and acknowledge that the glories of their pasts were but prelude” (*Acts*, 437).

The glocal outlook of Acts 17 corresponds with the remainder of the book of Acts.³⁴ The universal scope of the book is evident already in 1:8, where Jesus tells his disciples: “[Y]ou will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (ἕως ἑσχάτου τῆς γῆς).” The reference to the “end of the earth” may carry a double entendre: it refers both to the global scope of the message of the risen Christ and to the end of time which Luke expected in the near future.³⁵ Yet this universal ideal does not negate local customs. The story of Pentecost already demonstrates this: rather than all learning to speak in the same language, Judeans from various regions all hear the same universal message in their local language (2:1–13). This glocal perspective pervades the book of Acts: in each place where the message is proclaimed, Luke’s Paul finds words fitting to the occasion, sometimes stressing his Judean ancestry (e.g., Acts 21:37–40), sometimes calling attention to his Roman citizenship (e.g., Acts 22:22–29), sometimes (as in Acts 17) presenting Paul in the guise of a Greek philosopher.³⁶ By so doing, Acts presents Paul as an individual at home at the crossroads of cultures,³⁷ and his message as glocalised wisdom that incorporates Judean, Roman, Greek, and presumably other traditions into a universal whole.

In sum, Paul’s presentation of the message of Christ at the Areopagus reflects the circumstances in which Paul speaks and addresses his audience in terms familiar to them. Incorporating Greek knowledge within a universal argument, Paul seeks to confront the Stoics and Epicureans with the partiality of their knowledge: their views

³⁴ On Acts’ universalistic agenda see Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle, PA: Paternoster, 1998), 68–76 and *passim* (also *ad* 17:16–34); also Daniel Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the ‘Acts of the Apostles’*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 121 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004 [French original 1999]), 231–56.

³⁵ On the central position of 1:8 within the narrative structure of Acts see Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 49, 93. Note that for Marguerat Acts provides an open ending: “Rome did not coincide with the ἑσχάτον τῆς γῆς (the end of the earth) of Acts 1. 813 and the programme of the resurrected Jesus was not accomplished at 28. 31” (208).

³⁶ On Luke’s Socratic presentation of Paul in the Areopagus episode see Eckhard Plümacher, *Lukas als hellenistischer Schriftsteller: Studien zur Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), 19; Dean Zweck, “The Exordium of the Areopagus Speech, Acts 17.22, 23,” *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989): 94–103 (103): “[Paul] is portrayed in a Socratic role.”

³⁷ Cf. Kathy Ehrensperger, *Paul at the Crossroads of Cultures: Theologizing in the Space Between*, Library of New Testament Studies 456 (London: T&T Clark, 2013).

may contain much wisdom, but are not complete unless these Stoics and Epicureans embrace Paul's global message. Just as the hill near Paraca described by Philostratus, therefore, the Areopagus in Luke's account becomes a place of transformation from wisdom attached to a local cultural identity to a globalised and universal kind of wisdom that is the basis of a cultural identity as a global *mélange*, as it incorporates a wide range of local traditions. Yet whereas in Philostratus' story the visitor—i.e., Apollonius—undergoes the transformation, in Acts it is those who are at home at the Areopagus whom Paul encourages to be transformed—though seemingly with little success, as only some of his listeners (τινὲς δὲ ἄνδρες; 17:34) embraced his message.

Conclusion

Apollonius' visit to the Indian sages near Paraca and Paul's visit to and speech on the Areopagus turn sacred spaces into loci of transformation. What is at stake is the scope of knowledge to which these spaces give access; and, by implication, the cultural and religious identities of their visitors and inhabitants. When he arrives in India, Apollonius is depicted as a Greek and in conversations with the Indian sages he consistently represents and defends the Greek point of view. Yet as he is exposed to the globalised wisdom of the Indians—which includes many Greek elements, but is never explicitly referred to as “Greek”—Apollonius' own knowledge takes on a more universal shape. Thus, Philostratus' Apollonius embodies a cosmopolitan, rather than a straightforwardly Greek, ideal. In Acts 17, Paul challenges the particularly Greek knowledge of the Stoics and Epicureans by presenting them with the message of Christ in global terms. This message of Christ, Paul makes clear, incorporates Greek statements about their gods (Aratus) as well as the Stoic cosmopolitan ideal and integrates these within Judaeon views on God. By so presenting his case, Paul aims to bring about a transformation amongst his hearers and convince them to accept his message.

The results of this study and the theoretical framework it adopts challenges the distinction between “Judaeon,” “Christian,” “Greek,” and other groups and the

apologetic readings that imply such distinctions.³⁸ For Luke's Paul, Stoic philosophy and the message of Christ are compatible within the framework of a globalised body of knowledge. The point here is not that by integrating some aspects of Greek philosophy Paul wishes to show its lack of validity in favour of "Christianity,"³⁹ but rather that the message of Christ as Luke's Paul formulates it is a multi-layered and context-dependent global *mélange* that takes up elements from a wide range of other traditions in the Roman empire without implying that these other traditions have now become invalid—even if they have now been revealed to provide only partial wisdom—with the advent of Christianity.

³⁸ For another challenge of apologetic readings of Philostratus, though from a different angle, see Kemezis, *Greek Narratives of the Roman Empire under the Severans*, 160–64.

³⁹ This is sometimes the tenor in studies that take the Areopagus episode as a blueprint for missionary endeavours. See, e.g., Dean Flemming, "Contextualizing the Gospel in Athens: Paul's Areopagus Address as a Paradigm for Missionary Communication," *Missiology* 30 (2002): 199–214. My problem with this approach is that it implies a fixed "gospel" which must be "contextualised." I would argue that Acts presents us with a gospel that includes certain local claims (e.g., Jesus' resurrection), but is at the same time of a thoroughly translocal and context-dependent nature. Hence, the gospel and its context merge: every formulation of the gospel is a contextualised one. Cf. Loveday Alexander's conclusion that "wherever we can get behind these later models [of the church], we see the first-century church as much more fluid, more open to local variation, and harder to configure in terms of an overarching global or regional structure" ("Mapping Early Christianity: Acts and the Shape of Early Church History," *Interpretation* 57 [2001]: 163–73 [172]). Alexander quotes Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 139 with agreement; see also more recently Joshua W. Jipp, "Paul's Areopagus Speech of Acts 17:16–34 as Both Critique and Propaganda," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131 (2012): 567–88.