Originalveröffentlichung in: Aleida Assmann, Sebastian Conrad (Hg.), Memory in a Global Age. Discourses, Practices and Trajectories, Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies, New York 2010, S. 121-137

6
Globalization, Universalism, and the Erosion of Cultural Memory

Jan Assmann

I would like to start this text with a definition of concepts. Without any claim to a general theory and simply for the restricted purposes of this chapter, I propose to distinguish between globalization and universalism. Under the term globalization, I understand a process of general dissemination (of merchandise, technologies, news, political influence, religious ideas) across political and cultural boundaries and of the ensuing integration of various, previously isolated zones into one system of interconnections and interdependencies, where all nations, empires, tribes and states cohere in some way or other through political, economic or cultural relations.

Under universalism, on the other hand, I understand the rise of theories, ideas or beliefs with a claim to universal validity. This development is generally associated with Jaspers' concept of Achsenzeit (axial age).[1] Jaspers and his many predecessors and successors held that these universalist theories arose simultaneously around 500 BCE in various parts of the world, from China in the Far East to Southern Italy in the West. I propose to retain the concept of 'axiality', while stripping it of its temporal associations, especially of its links with one particular time period. Spread and contagion lie in the very nature of universalist ideas, and thus it is a small wonder that the spread of some ideas may provoke a general and even epoch-making turn in larger parts of the world. This, however, happened at various moments in human history, in different regions and also in different spheres of intellectual or spiritual life. Universalism, therefore, suggests an intellectual and spiritual phenomenon, globalization; on the other hand, a political, economic and civilizational process (implying material rather than spiritual culture).[2] The two typical universalisms of Western antiquity are monotheism, both in its inclusive (All Gods are One) and exclusive, Biblical form (No other gods!)

on the one hand, and Greek science and philosophy on the other, both implying an emphatic concept of Truth with a claim for universal validity. The two typical forms of political globalization of the Ancient World are internationalism and imperialism.

With regard to memory, for obvious reasons I shall limit myself to cultural memory. Memory theory distinguishes between personal and collective memory; within collective memory, we differentiate between three major aspects which we propose to designate as communicative, cultural and political (A. Assmann 2006, 210–24). Communicative memory is a matter of socialization and communication, like consciousness in general and the acquisition of language; cultural memory is an externalization and objectivation of memory, which is individual and communicative, and evident in symbols such as texts, images, rituals, landmarks and other 'lieux de mémoire'; political memory finally shares its externalized, symbolical character with cultural memory, but is a top-down institution which depends on the political organization that institutes it, whereas cultural memory grows over centuries as an interaction between uncontrolled, self-organizing bottom-up accretion and controlled top-down institutions more or less independent of any particular political organization.

In all its aspects, human memory is related to time and identity. Each form of memory has its specific time-range. In the case of individual memory, this is equivalent to the time-range of an individual consciousness; communicative memory is typically limited to the time span of three interacting generations or 80–100 years; political memory lasts as long as the correspondent political institution, which may be as short as 12 years as in the case of Nazi Germany, or over 200 years as in the case of the French Republic or the US. The typical time-range of cultural memory is 3,000 years, going back, in the West, to Homer and the Biblical authors and, in the East, to the Rgveda, the Buddha and other cultural foundations.[3] We may define human memory as the specific capacity of human beings to bring about a synthesis of time and identity in the form of what may be called 'diachronic identity'. This process of 'chrono-synthesis', by which time is worked into the fabric of identity, is a specifically human faculty because it involves autonoesis; that is, the capacity of recognizing oneself in the past and projecting oneself into the future (Tulving 2002).

The distinction of different forms of memory looks like a structure but it works more as a dynamics, creating tension and transition between the various poles. There is also much overlapping. This holds true especially with respect to the relationship between memory and identity.

We must certainly avoid falling victim to what Amartya Sen has described as the 'identity illusion' (Sen 2006). Individuals possess different identities according to the various groups, communities, belief-systems, political systems and so on to which they belong; their communicative and cultural, that is collective memories are equally multifarious. On all levels, memory is an open system. However, it is not completely open and diffuse; there are always frames that relate memory to specific horizons of time and identity on an individual, a generational, a political and a cultural level. If this relationship is absent, then we are dealing with knowledge rather than memory. Memory is knowledge with an identity-index,[4] it is knowledge about oneself; that is, one's own diachronic identity, be it as an individual or as a member of a family, a generation, a community, a nation or a cultural and religious tradition.

From all of these rather abstract definitions and deliberations, we may derive the insight that memory and globalization work in opposite directions. Memory functions in the direction of identity which, in all of its fuzziness, always implies a notion of difference. Globalization, on the other hand, works in the direction of diffusion, blurring all boundaries and bridging all differences. Since something like global identity cannot exist, the concept of global memory is a paradoxical notion.

As an Egyptologist, I am particularly interested in the historical dimension of this opposition and the tensions that it may have created in the past. Moves towards globalization should have presented severe challenges for the organization of cultural memory. If this is correct, it should, therefore, be interesting to study if and how in the past specific societies reacted to tendencies of globalization by reorganizing their cultural memories. In the following, I would like to briefly and preliminarily outline this dynamics with regard to antiquity.

In the Ancient World, globalization starts with the emergence of, and the contact between, the super-powers of the Late Bronze Age in the second half of the second millennium BCE (Artzi 1969; 1984). The change in cultural and political outlook, orientation or mentality from previous stages to this new stage of incipient globalization can be most clearly observed with respect to Ancient Egypt. During the Old and Middle Kingdoms, that is, from 3000 until 1500 BCE, the Egyptians quite simply identified their world with the world in general. Egypt is seen as a cosmos, a sphere of order, surrounded by a zone of chaos, inhabited by nomadic tribes that it is important to hold at bay but not to conquer and integrate. The symbolic expression of this attitude is the same as in classical China: a great wall 'built to fence off the nomads' (Koch 1973, 224; 1990). The extra-Egyptian world only appears as part of god's creation

with the beginning of the New Kingdom. At this point, the Egyptians have learned the lesson that their environment is not only formed by nomadic tribes but by empires pretty much like their own: the Hittite empire, the empire of Mitanni, the Baylonian and later also the Assyrian empires, the city states of Syria-Palestine, the Minoan and Mycenean states and colonies, and the Nubian state of Kerma that has developed in their south. Dealing with these states and empires was no longer a matter of exclusion and negation, but of warfare and diplomacy. Egypt had entered the 'age of internationalism', a political network which was coextensive with the world as it was known to and conceived of by its members. This change in political and mental orientation was accompanied by a rise of the first universalist concepts, such as, above all, the idea of a creator who created the whole world in its differentiated variety – including the multiplicity of languages and skin colours – whom the Egyptians identified with the sun. In a hymn which may very well date back to the seventeenth dynasty (around 1600 BCE), thus to the very incipient stages if internationalism, we read:

> Hail, Re, lord of justice,
> whose chapel is hidden, lord of the gods;
> Khepry in his boat,
> at whose command the gods emerge;
> Atum, creator of human beings
> who differentiates them and makes them live
> who distinguishes people by the colour of their skin
> (Pap. Cairo 58038)

In the middle of the thirteenth century, this development culminated in a veritable religious revolution, the instauration of a purely and exclusively monotheistic religion by King Akhenaten which, however, only lasted for 20 years at most.

Amarna, the capital of Akhenaten, was also the site of a most sensational finding: the state archive with the correspondence between the Egyptian court and the other courts of the Ancient World (Moran 1992). Similar archives have been found in Anatolia, Mesopotamia and Syria/Palestine. The language and writing of this correspondence was Babylonian and cuneiform. The Egyptian scribes had to learn Babylonian and the corresponding writing techniques, clay tablets and cuneiform, in order to enable their government to enter the network of internationalism. Babylonian was the lingua franca of the Late Bronze Age, as Aramaic was for the Persian Empire, Greek for the empires of Hellenism and Late

Antiquity, and English is for today's internationalism. Such a lingua franca is the most important implement of globalization. The system of Bronze Age internationalism was characterized by plurality. The states and empires involved strove not towards hegemony, but towards security and control of the commercial routes. Security and control was reached by either subjugation or alliance.

Alliance – the formation of treaties – proved the most important instrument of internationalism. Forming an alliance required mutual recognition of the deities which served as patrons. The treaties which these empires formed with each other and with their vassals had to be sealed by solemn oaths invoking the gods of both parties. The list of these gods conventionally closes the treaty (Canfora et al. 1990). They had to be equal in their function and rank. Intercultural theology became a concern of international law (J. Assmann 1996). Translating gods appears to be a technique for overcoming cultural and political boundaries. Herodotus' description of ancient Egypt illustrates the general principle: peoples, cultures and political systems may be as different as, for example, ancient Egypt, which is represented as the inversion of Greek normality. But when it comes to religion, it is possible to show that even the most exotic and extravagant peoples have a religion and they worship some definite and identifiable gods; thus, a common ground appears on which to build a treaty or other forms of contact and cooperation. The names, iconographies and rites – that is, the cultures – differ, but the gods are the same.

The end of the Bronze Age – corresponding to the end of the second millennium BCE – marks the end of internationalism and the advent of imperialism. The main instrument of globalization was now seen in conquest and political unification. The Assyrians started the list of empires of the new, imperialistic type. They were followed by the Babylonians, the Persians, Alexander the Great and his successors and the Roman Empire. This is the advent of what Eric Voegelin dubbed 'the Ecumenic Age' (Voegelin 1984). In my opinion, however, it appears more correct to include the Late Bronze Age in this concept and to distinguish within it the two phases of internationalism and imperialism.

Let us now turn to the repercussions which these changes had for the organization of cultural memory. In Babylonia, the change is most conspicuous. I am thinking here of the development known as the 'Kassite canonization' of the Babylonian literary heritage which started in the seventeenth century and which achieved the status of a 'classical' tradition (Arnold 2004, 69ff.). A new scribal elite emerged in these centuries to which later generations of scribes in the first millennium BCE tried to

trace back their pedigrees. The Kassite canonization meant a far-reaching reorganization of Baylonian cultural memory. The various oral and literary traditions were brought into line with standard versions and they were explicitly defended against any further alterations. The entire culture now acquired a strongly past-oriented attitude. These retro-oriented tendencies were intensified enormously during the transition from internationalism to imperialism in the Neo-Assyrian Empire of the ninth through seventh centuries. The canonization, philological cultivation and interpretation of the literary heritage continued, Assurbanipal's palace library at Niniveh was the first comprehensive national library of the Ancient World and Assurbanipal himself boasted of his philological competence, for example of being able to read inscriptions from 'before the flood' (Maul 2001, 119). Above all, however, Assyrian culture became marked by an extreme archaism. The time of the Sargonid kings, in the twenty-third and twenty-second centuries BCE, was promoted to the rank of a normative past, a Golden Age, the model of everything important and valuable, and Mesopotamian society turned into a 'digging society' which tried to attain the canonized models of material and textual culture wherever possible (Jonker 1995). This archaizing and antiquarian outlook also gave rise to works of historiography. The past began to matter enormously for the Mesopotamian mind. These observations can be generally applied to the Ancient World. Several centuries after the end of the Bronze Age, we can observe in various parts the rise of literary attempts to elevate Bronze Age traditions to the status of a 'normative past': the Homeric Epic in Greece, the Exodus traditions in Israel, the Gilgamesh Epic in Mesopotamia and the canonization of 'The Book of the Dead' in Egypt.

The question is, however, whether this reorganization of cultural memory and this general reorientation towards the past should be seen as an accompaniment to, or rather as a reaction against imperial globalization. There is an unmistakable spirit of competition and cultural pride at work that presupposes the idea of a global cultural market where it is important to obtain first place. Therefore, I view this reorganization of memory as an epiphenomenon rather than as a counter-phenomenon of globalization.

In Egypt, we can observe pretty much the same cultural changes, although these occur some centuries later. The canonization of the literary heritage and the conception of the 'classics' occurred under the Ramesside kings in the thirteenth and twelfth centuries (J. Assmann 1985/1; 1985/2), and archaism, the imitation of ancient models, began in the most conspicuous manner in the eighth through sixth centuries (J. Assmann 1996,

Chapter 5). If it is plausible to connect the Ramesside canonization with a similar concept of cultural pride, it is absolutely inevitable that the pronounced archaism of the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth dynasty should be interpreted in terms of an anxiety of forgetting, reacting against the destructions wrought upon the Egyptian culture by four Assyrian conquests, which must have been experienced as a catastrophe or even as a kind of trauma. Here, the reorientation towards the past may very well be interpreted as a first counter-movement against imperial globalization.

However, the Assyrian conquests consisted in sheer destruction and pillorying without any aspirations to cultural and civilizational generalization. They were not accompanied by any universalist ideas. This situation only changed with the Greeks. The Hellenization of the Ancient World actually started long before Hellenism proper; it began in the West with the dispersion of Greek colonies all over the Mediterranean, from Northern Spain to Naucratis in Egypt, and in the East by very intense ties with the Persian Empire. Greeks were everywhere; they worked as artists and craftsmen at Persepolis, at the Persian court, and they travelled as intellectuals all over the Ancient World (Hartog 1996). Hellenization meant above all the diffusion of civilizational achievements such as the gymnasion, educational programmes and democratic institutions, and of universalist concepts such as science, mathematics, logic, metaphysics and enlightenment. This combination of political unification and intellectual universalism is the hallmark of what Eric Voegelin called 'The Ecumenic Age'.

Hellenization had two faces. On the one hand, it referred to the diffusion of Greek language, ideas and customs all over the Ancient World; on the other hand, it appeared to be more of a construction of a 'common culture', suggesting a similar change in Greece as in the other cultures. Flavius Josephus did not speak of 'Greek' but of 'common culture', *ho koinos bios*, as the goal of Jewish assimilation or reform in the Hellenistic age. In antiquity, imperialism never implied assimilation; that is, the imposition of the laws and manners of the dominant civilization onto the subjugated societies. The principle of imperialism had always been to rule the dependent countries according to their own laws and rules. For this purpose, however, the traditional customs had to be codified, given the status of laws and enforced by the local and imperial authorities. Customs had to acquire legal status in order to become instruments of rule.[5] This was the policy of the Persians in Egypt and Judaea which was continued by the Greek and Roman rulers and which only changed with the adoption of Christianity as state-religion. Problems arose when these local rules precluded the observation of loyalty rules such as bowing

before the statue of the emperor. Bowing before a statue does not mean assimilation; it is only a gesture of loyalty. Assimilation, therefore, was never a political issue but only a cultural option. Refusing the required gesture of loyalty, however, was interpreted as an act of rebellion, leading, perhaps already under the Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, for the first time in history, to bloody persecution (Hengel 1988, 532ff.). In this situation, the most important of these customs, such as circumcision, abstaining from pork and keeping the Shabbat, acquired what is called 'a status confessionis'; that is, they required risking severe punishment and even death rather than ceding. This situation, which had no parallel in other parts of the Ancient World, led to a separation of culture and religion. A new boundary was erected, unheard of in former times. You may assimilate into Hellenic or 'common' culture, but it is impossible to assimilate into Jewish religion. This new concept of religion can only be entered through conversion, and even conversion is only open to those who belong to the 'seed of Abraham'. The opposite of conversion is apostasy, an equally new concept. This new concept of religion meant a redefinition of identity as well as of memory. In spite of its insistence on ethnic definition ('Abraham'), Judaism nevertheless became (along with Buddhism) the model for all later world religions whose principle is their trans-ethnic and transnational character. World religions are book religions, and the Jews are the paradigmatic 'people of the book' (Halbertal 1997). The Jewish canon is a clear case of a reaction and opposition to the pressures of globalization when the hegemonic regime viewed the observance of these particular laws as an act of rebellion.

The years of persecution, when, according to the somewhat biased account in 1 Maccabees, ancient imperialism turned into a kind of nationalism ('one nation, one culture'), showing its genocidal or rather, to use Pierre Clastres' term, 'ethnocidal' face (Clastres 1977, 9)[6] for the first time, were also the years when the Book of Daniel was composed (165 BCE). This biblical book uses two visions to design a concept of world history as a sequence of four world-empires, starting with the Babylonians, followed by the Medes, the Persians, and the Empire of Alexander as it became divided among his successors. Later, when the references to the events under Antiochus Epiphanes were no longer understood, the Fourth Empire became identified with the Romans, and since Daniel predicted the end of the world after the demise of the Fourth Empire, there was a strong interest in extending the Roman Empire as long as possible. This led the strange construction of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation to last until 1806 (A. Assmann 1999; K. Koch 1997; Delgado et al. 2003). Even if the representation of the events of 165 BCE

in 1 Maccabees is highly dubious in that the alleged persecution of the Jewish religion contradicts all principles of political reason as practised at that time (Weitzman 2004), it is highly significant that the Jewish concepts of apocalypticism and of martyrdom emerge in the same historical situation in the context of Greek imperialism and coincide in the books of Daniel and Maccabees.

There was, however, also another form of reaction to Hellenism which is exemplified, in the Jewish case, by the *Septuagint*, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. The *Septuagint* is equally typical of cultural trends in the Ancient World that react to globalism as is the Hebrew canon. Greek language served two very different, perhaps even oppositional functions. On the one hand, its enormous eloquence and attractivity meant that it represented a highly seductive power of assimilation; that is, of cultural forgetting. Greek was not only a lingua franca, but it was also the vehicle of universal ideas and a superior lifestyle. On the other hand, however, Greek was exactly this: a lingua franca; that is, a medium rather than a message (Bowersock 1990). It provided a common language in which local traditions and religions could be expressed in a voice that was much more eloquent, flexible and articulate than their own. It allowed local traditions to become internationally visible. During more or less the same time as the composition of the *Septuagint*, the Chaldaean Berossos wrote his *Babyloniaka*, the Egyptian Manetho his *Aigyptiaka* and the Phoenician Philo of Byblos his Phoenician History. All of these codifications of cultural and historical traditions pursue the same dual goal: to rescue local traditions that were deemed endangered from oblivion, and to make them visible on the international stage of Graeco-Oriental literature. The boom of this literature continued well into Late Antiquity with Flavius Josephus, Horapollon, Nonnos and many others. The culture of Late Antiquity owed at least as much to Indigenous influences as to the Greek heritage, and the Greek universe of language, thought, mythology and imagery became less an alternative or even an antithesis to local traditions than a new way of giving voice to them. Hellenism, in other words, not only provided a common language, it also helped to discover a common world and a 'cosmopolitan' consciousness. It required or offered double membership: firstly to a native and secondly to a general culture. It did not mean the dissolution and loss of the one in favour of the other. The general culture – *ho koinos bios* – feeds on local cultures.

The 'ecumenic age', therefore, confronts us with two options which are neatly opposed to each other. We may call them 'fundamentalism' and 'syncretism'. The fundamentalist option operates by codifying and

canonizing a sanctified tradition. Mary Douglas has referred to this option as one of 'enclave cultures' (Douglas 1993). The ecumenic age was prolific in producing cultural enclaves that could also be characterized as 'textual communities', because they typically used a canon of highly normative literature as their 'fundament' (Stock 1983). The codification of memory served as a fortification of identity which had to be kept 'pure'. Instead of fundamentalism, we could also speak of purism or even Puritanism. In spite of, and perhaps even in opposition to, the flourishing Graeco-Egyptian syncretism, we even encounter fundamentalist tendencies in Egypt. If we follow Herodotus, who visited Egypt in the middle of the fifth century, Egyptian culture had already taken a fundamentalist turn under Persian rule: 'They keep the ancestral laws and add none other. [...] They avoid the use of Greek customs, and generally speaking the customs of all other men'.[7] The temples became enclaves of ancient Egyptian religion. Here, rituals were performed according to age-old scripts in the classical language that had by now become a dead language, a kind of clerical Latin; the temples were decorated to become containers of ancient ritual knowledge, inscribed from floor to ceiling, along walls, columns and doorways; and whole libraries were cut into stone to ensure the preservation, presence and efficiency of the ancient rituals beyond the imminent demise of Egyptian culture. It was an attempt to rescue not only the textual but even the ritual tradition from oblivion, and to ensure an identity based on ritual rather than textual continuity by means of transcodification into stone (J. Assmann 1992).

The option of syncretism, on the other hand, may be best illustrated by the Graeco-Egyptian goddess Isis, who tended to identify with and to absorb virtually all of the other goddesses, not only of Egypt but of all known countries and religions in the Ancient World. The eleventh and last book of the *Metamorphoses* by Apuleius of Madaurus, written in the time of Marcus Aurelius, opens with a beautiful and highly significant scene that gives a vivid impression of the syncretistic tendencies of the Graeco-Egyptian Isis religion. Lucius, a young man, who has been transformed into an ass after carelessly dabbling in magic, awakens on the shore of the Mediterranean as the full moon rises from the sea. Books 1 to 10 had told of his trials and misfortunes, and Apuleius' Latin text seems to closely follow his Greek original. But the tone changes in the eleventh book, moving from the colourful and sometimes burlesque style of a picaresque novel into what A.D. Nock characterized as 'the high-water mark of the piety which grew out of the mystery religions'

(Nock 1933, 138). A new chapter is opened and a new hope rises with the moon which is addressed by Lucius as follows:

> O Queen of Heaven – whether thou art Ceres, the primal and bountiful mother of crops [...]; or whether thou art heavenly Venus who [...] art worshiped in the shrine of Paphos; or the sister of Phoebus who [...] art now adored in the temples of Ephesus; or whether as Proserpina [...] thou art propitiated with differing rites – whoever thou art [...], by whatever name (nomine) or ceremony (ritu) or face (facie) thou art rightly called, help me now in the depth of my trouble.
>
> (Griffiths 1975, 70f., 114ff.)

Lucius addresses a nameless power which he feels immanent in and revealed by using four names that come to his mind: Ceres (Demeter), Venus (Aphrodite), Diana (Artemis) and Proserpina (Persephone). The goddess answers him in a dream, presenting herself in a similar way:

> Lo, I am with you, Lucius, moved by your prayers, I who am the mother of the universe, the mistress of all the elements, the first offspring of time, the highest of deities, the queen of the dead, foremost of heavenly beings, the single form that fuses all gods and goddesses; I who order by my will the starry heights of heaven, the health giving breezes of the sea, and the awful silences of those in the underworld: my single godhead is adored by the whole world in varied forms, in differing rites and with many diverse names.
>
> Thus the Phrygians [...] call me Pessinuntia [...]; the Athenians [...] call me Cecropeian Minerva; the Cyprians [...] call me Paphian Venus, the [...] Cretans Dictynna, the [...] Sicilians Ortygian Proserpine; to the Eleusinians I am Ceres [...], to others Juno, to others Bellona and Hecate and Rhamnusia. But the Ethiopians [...] together with the Africans and the Egyptians who excel by having the original doctrine honor me with my distinctive rites and give me my true name of Queen Isis.

The goddess presents herself as a truly global deity who 'fuses all gods and goddesses'. All divine names are hers. Aside from all of these infinite names, she also has a 'true name' (verum nomen) which only remained in use among the nations with the most ancient and authentic traditions: the Egyptians and their southern neighbours (her temple at Philae is situated on the southern frontier of Egypt, thus belonging both to Egypt and

to Nubia or 'Ethiopia'. The existence of a 'true' name, however, does not turn the other names into 'false' ones. There is no antagonism between the Egyptian worship of Isis based on the 'true name' and the worship of the same goddess by various nations using their conventional names for her. All worship one and the same deity and it is this natural or cosmic identity beyond all cultural differences that counts.

The tradition of invoking Isis using the names under which she is worshipped in the various nations of the Earth was widespread in the context of the Greco-Roman Isis-religion. There are several Isis-texts from Egypt that address the goddess in this way. The earliest is a hymn which Isidorus of Narmuthis had engraved on pillars in the temple of Thermuthis at Medinet Madi (first century BCE).[8]

> All mortals who live on the boundless earth,
> Thracians, Greeks and Barbarians,
> Express your fair name, a name greatly honored among all,
> (But) each speaks in his own language, in his own land.
> The Syrians call You: Astarte, Artemis, Nanaia,
> The Lycian tribes call you: Leto, the lady.
> The Thracians also name you as Mother of the gods,
> And the Greeks (call you) Hera of the Great Throne, Aphrodite,
> Hestia the goodly, Rhea and Demeter.
> But the Egyptians call thee Thiouis[9] (because they know) That you,
> being one, are all other goddesses invoked by the races of men.[10]

Another text is provided by a papyrus from Oxyrhynchos. It contains a long hymn to Isis starting with a very long, though badly fragmented, list of names and places (Grenfell and Hunt 1915; van Groningen 1921; Nock 1933, 150ff.). There we read:

> at Aphroditopolis one-[...], in the house of Hephaestus [...] chmuenis; who at [...]ophis art called Bubastis, [...]; at Letopolis Magna one, [...]; at Aphroditopolis in the Prosopite nome fleet-commanding, many-shaped Aphrodite; at the Delta giver of favors ... at Nithine in the Gynaecopolite nome, Aphrodite; at Paphremis, Isis, queen, Hestia, mistress of every country; ... in the Saite nome, Victorious Athena, ...; in Sais, Hera, queen, full grown; in Iseum, Isis; in Sebennytos, intelligence, ruler, Hera, holy; in Hermupolis, Aphrodite, queen, holy; ... in Apis, Sophia; in Leuke Akte, Aphrodite, Mouchis, Eseremphis; at Cynopolis in the Busirite nome, Praxidike; at Busiris, Good Fortune (Tyche agathe); ... at Tanis, gracious in form, Hera [...] etc.

After a long list correlating Egyptian towns with names of Isis, the text continues by naming places outside Egypt, such as Arabia, where she is 'great goddess'; she is 'Leto' in Lycia; 'sage, freedom' in Myra; 'dispeller of attack, discoverer' in Cnidus; 'Isis' in Cyrene; 'Dictynnis' in Crete; 'Themis' in Chalcedon; 'warlike' in Rome; 'of threefold nature' in the Cyclades; 'young' on Patmos; 'hallowed, divine, gentle' in Paphos; 'marching' on Chios; 'observer' in Salamis; 'all-bounteous' on Cyprus and so forth. It also includes foreign names: 'Atargatis' in Bamyce, 'Maia' among the Indians and 'Astarte' in Sidon. The list is closed by a striking formula: 'the beautiful essence of all the gods' (theôn hapánton tò kalòn zôon).

The imperialism and internationalism of globalization in antiquity finds its most explicit expression in the Graeco-Egyptian Isis religion. Both fundamentalism and syncretism react to the assimilatory trend of globalization by a kind of rearmament of cultural memory. The dialectic dynamics of globalization not only provoke waves of forgetting, they also initiate a boom of memory. Memory, to return to my point of departure, is a matter of identity and difference, and thus it is the opposite of globalization. Both forms of memory, however, imply an element if not of globalization, then of universalism: the fundamentalist option in the form of world religion, the syncretistic option in the form of world literature. Aside from the *Golden Ass* or *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, there is a wealth of novellas and romances that are related to the world of the mysteries of Isis, and there are other religious movements that were equally prolific in literary text production.

However, the type of religion that won the day and which we have come to classify as 'world religion' was the one that represents the character of a 'textual community' in that it implies the formation of a sacred canon: Judaism and the *Tanakh*, Christianity and the Christian Bible, Islam and the Koran, Buddhism and the Pali-Canon, Jainism and the Jaina-Canon, Sikh religion and the *Adi Granth*, Daoism, Confucianism and so on with their respective canons down to the Mormons and the *Book of Mormon*. There is not one world religion that does not base itself on a canon of holy writ. This strong alliance between religions of this new type and the formation of canons and commentaries illustrates once again the connection between memory and identity. The canon replaces the traditional frames of cultural memory such as ethnos, homeland, polity and ritual. The transition from the ethnically and culturally determined religions of the Ancient World to the new type of transcultural and transnational world religion meant a totally new construction of identity and a complete reorganization of cultural memory.[11] The canon, in a way, functioned as a new transethnical homeland and as

a new transcultural formation and education. The canon became the defining generator or principle of identity; in itself, however, it is a special, sanctified form of cultural memory. World religions combine the two opposite tendencies: the centripetal tendency of memory and the centrifugal tendency of universalism. In their memory aspect, they erect boundaries by basing themselves on strong concepts of revealed truth; in their universalist aspect they aspire – as 'world' religions – to global recognition and observance.

Notes

1 For the most recent assessment of the axial age debate, see Arnason et al. (2005).
2 This distinction between globalization and universalism corresponds *grosso modo* to Garth Fowden's distinction between 'political universalism, which is shorthand for "political, military, and economic universalism" and cultural universalism, which stands for "cultural and especially religious universalism", religions being understood to be a constituent part of the wider concept of culture', see Fowden (1993, 6f.).
3 In a short poem in his *West-Östlicher Divan*, Goethe defines the time range of 3,000 years as the norm of cultural memory: 'Wer nicht von 3000 Jahren/ Sich weiss Rechenschaft zu geben/Bleib im Leben unerfahren/Mag von Tag zu Tage leben'.
4 This identity index, which turns historical knowledge into a form of memory, is admirably expressed in Goethe's phrase 'sich weiss Rechenschaft zu geben' (to give oneself an account of); Huizinga's famous definition of history as 'the intellectual form in which a society gives itself account of its past' uses the same phrase, approaching history through memory, see Huyzinga (1936, 9).
5 Hans G. Kippenberg defines this procedure as a general principle of imperialistic politics: 'Wenn Kolonisatoren aus den von ihnen eroberten Territorien ein Imperium machen wollen, dann müssen sie sich zu Beschützern oder geradezu zu Erfindern der Traditionen der unterworfenen Ethnien machen' (If colonists want to turn the conquered territories into an empire, they have to protect or even to invent the traditions of the peoples subdued; Kippenberg (1986, 51) with reference to Grevemeyer (1981, 16–46; Leclerc 1973). See also Frei and Koch (1984) and Kratz (1991, 161ff., 225ff.).
6 By 'ethnocide', Clastres understands the destruction of cultural identity, by 'genocide' the physical annihilation of a nation, class or race. I owe this reference to Aleida Assmann.
7 Herodotus 2.29 and 91. See Bowersock (1990, 55f.) and Fowden (1986, 15).
8 In that ancient cult place of the Egyptian goddess of harvest, Renenutet or (Th)Ermutis, King Ptolemy Soter II built a temple to Isis-Thermutis.
9 Thiouis = eg. t3 w^{c}t Copt. tioui 'the one', see Vogliano (1936, 34). Cf. Hebrew æchad as a divine name, see Gordon (1970).
10 Vanderlip (1972, 18f.), Bernand (1969, 632ff.), Totti (1985), Dunand (1973) and Drijvers (1962).

11 This even applies to Judaism which has kept its ethnical definition ('the seed of Abraham') up to the present day. The extension of the designation of 'Israel' to the southern kingdom of Judah represented a first step in the direction of transnational generalization, and it is probably only in reaction to Christianity that Judaism did not further pursue this line.

Bibliography

Arnason, Johan P., Eisenstadt, Shmuel N. and Wittrock, Björn (eds) (2005), *Axial Civilizations and World History*. Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture 4 (Leiden/Cologne: Brill).

Arnold, Bill T. (2004), *Who Were the Babylonians?* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature – Archaeology and Biblical Studies 10).

Artzi, Peter (1969), 'The Birth of the Middle East', in: *Proceedings of the 5th World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes), 120–4.

Artzi, Peter (1984), 'Ideas and Practices of International Co-existence in the 3rd mill. BCE', in: *Bar Ilan Studies in History* 2, 25–39.

Assmann, Aleida (1999), *Zeit und Tradition. Kulturelle Strategien der Dauer* (Köln/Wien: Böhlau).

Assmann, Aleida (2006), 'Memory, Individual and Collective', in: Robert E. Goodin and Charles Tilly (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 210–24.

Assmann, Jan (1985/1), 'Gibt es eine Klassik in der ägyptischen Literaturgeschichte?', in: *XXII. Deutscher Orientalistentag, Suppl. Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 35–52.

Assmann, Jan (1985/2), 'Die Entdeckung der Vergangenheit. Innovation und Restauration in der ägyptischen Literaturgeschichte', in: Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Ulla Link-Heer (eds), *Epochenschwellen und Epochenstrukturen im Diskurs der Literatur- und Sprachhistorie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp), 484–99; reprinted in: Jan Assmann, *Stein und Zeit. Mensch und Gesellschaft im Alten Ägypten* (München: W. Fink), 303–13.

Assmann, Jan (1992), 'Der Tempel der ägyptischen Spätzeit als Kanonisierung kultureller Identität', in: Jürgen Osing and E. Kolding Nielsen (eds), *The Heritage of Ancient Egypt*, Studies in Honor of Erik Iversen, The Carsten Niebuhr Institute of Ancient Near Eastern Studies 13 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press), 9–25.

Assmann, Jan (1996), *Ägypten: Eine Sinngeschichte* (München: Hanser); pocket book edition (1999), (Frankfort: Fischer); Engl. trans. Andrew Jenkins (2003), *The Mind of Egypt. History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs* (Cambridge/MA: Harvard University Press).

Assmann, Jan (1996), 'Translating Gods. Religion as a Factor of Cultural (In)Translatability', in: Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (eds), *Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 25–36.

Bernand, Etienne (1969), *Inscriptions métriques de l'Égypte gréco-romaine* (Paris: Belles Lettres), no. 175.

Bowersock, Glenn W. (1990), *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Canfora, Luciano, Liverani, Marco and Zaccagnini, Carlo (eds) (1990), *I Trattati nel Mondo Antico: Forma, Ideologia, Funzione* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider).

Clastres, Pierre (1977), *Archéologie de la violence: La guerre dans les sociétés primitives* (Paris: l'Aube); Engl. trans. Jeanine Herrman (1994), *Archaeology of Violence* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).

Delgado, Mariano, Koch, Klaus and Marsch, Edgar (eds) (2003), *Europa, Tausendjähriges Reich und Neue Welt: Zwei Jahrtausende Geschichte und Utopie in der Rezeption des Danielbuches* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer).

Douglas, Mary (1993), 'In the Wilderness: The Doctrine of Defilement in the Book of Numbers', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* 158 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press).

Drijvers, Hendrik J.W.M. (1962), 'De hymnen van Medinet Madi en de hellenistische Isisreligie', *Vox Theologica* 32, 139–50.

Dunand, Françoise (1973), 'Le syncrétisme isiaque à la fin de l'époque hellénistique', in: Françoise Dunand and Pierre Levêque (eds), *Les syncrétismes dans les religions grecque et romaine*, Colloque de Strasbourg, Bibliothèque des Centres d'Études supérieures spécialisés (Paris: PUF), 79–93.

Fowden, Garth (1986), *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Fowden, Garth (1993), *Empire and Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Frei, Peter and Koch, Klaus (1984), *Reichsidee und Reichsorganisation im Perserreich*, OBO 55 (Fribourg: Fribourg University Press).

Gordon, Cyrus H. (1970), 'His name is "One"', *JNES* 29, 198–9.

Grenfell, Bernard P. and Hunt, Arthur S. (1915), *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri XI* (London: Eg. Expl. Soc.), 196–202.

Grevemeyer, Jan Heeren (ed.) (1981), *Traditionale Gesellschaften und europäischer Kolonialismus* (Frankfurt: Syndikat).

Griffiths, John Gwyn (1975), *Apuleius of Madauros: The Isis-Book* (Metamorphoses, Book XI) Etudes Préliminaires des Religions Orientales 39 (Leiden: Brill).

Halbertal, Moshe (1997), *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, and Authority* (Cambridge/MA: Harvard University Press).

Hartog, François (1996), *Mémoire d'Ulysse. Récits sur la frontière en Grèce ancienne* (Paris: Gallimard).

Hengel, Martin (1988), *Judentum und Hellenismus. Studien ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Situation Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2.Jh. v. Chr.* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck).

Huyzinga, Johan (1936), 'A Definition of History', in: Herbert James Paton and Raymond Klibanski (eds), *History and Philosophy.* Essays presented to E. Cassirer (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1–10.

Jonker, Gerdien (1995), *The Topography of Remembrance: The Dead, Tradition and Collective Memory in Mesopotamia* (Leiden/New York/Cologne: Brill).

Kippenberg, Hans Gerhard (1986), 'Die jüdischen Überlieferungen als patrioi nomoi', in: Richard Faber and Renate Schlesier (eds) (1986), *Die Restauration der Götter: Antike Religion und Neo-Paganismus* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann), 45–60.

Koch, Klaus (1997), *Europa, Rom und der Kaiser vor dem Hintergrund von zwei Jahrtausenden Rezeption des Buches Daniel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht).

Koch, Roland (1990), 'Die Erzählung des Sinuhe', *Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca* 17 (Brussels: Fondation Reine Elisabeth).

Kratz, Reinhard G. (1991), *Translatio imperii. Untersuchungen zu den aramäischen Daniel-Erzählungen und ihrem theologie-geschichtlichen Umfeld.* Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 63 (Neukirchen/Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag).

Leclerc, Gérard (1973), *Anthropologie und Kolonialismus* (München: Hanser); French original (1972) *Anthropologie et colonialisme: essai sur l'histoire de l'africanisme* (Paris: Fayard).

Lichtheim, Miriam (1973), *Ancient Egyptian Literature I, The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley University Press).

Maul, Stefan (2001), 'Altertum in Mesopotamien', in: Dieter Kuhn and Helga Stahl (eds), *Die Gegenwart des Altertums. Formen und Funktionen des Altertumsbezugs in den Hochkulturen der Alten Welt* (Heidelberg: Ed. Forum), 117–24.

Moran, William (1992), *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press).

Nock, Arthur D. (1933), *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Pap. Cairo 58038, in: Maria Michela Luiselli (ed.), *Der Amunshymnus des P. Boulaq 17* (P. Kairo CG 58038), Wiesbaden 2004 (Kleine ägyptische Texte 14), 11f., 60–5.

Sen, Amartya (2006), *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York: W. W. Norton).

Stock, Brian (1983), 'Textual Communities', in: Brian Stock (ed.), *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 88–240.

Totti, Maria (1985), *Ausgewählte Texte der Isis-Serapis-Religion.* Subsidia Epigrapha XII (Hildesheim/New York: G. Olms).

Tulving, Endel (2002), 'Episodic Memory: From Mind to Brain', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 1–25.

Vanderlip, Vera F. (1972), *The Four Greek Hymns of Isidorus and the Cult of Isis: American Studies in Papyrology XII* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert).

van Groningen, Bernhard Abraham (1921), *De papyro Oxyrhynchita 1380* (Diss. U Groningen)

Voegelin, Eric (1984), *Order and History IV: The Ecumenic Age* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press).

Vogliano, Achille (1936), *Primo Rapporto degli scavi condotti dalla Missione archeologica d' Egitto della R. universita di Milano nella zona di Madinet Madi* (Milano: Ed. Cisalpino).

Weitzman, Steven (2004), 'Plotting Antiochus's Persecution', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123/2, 219–34.