

Heritage and Cultural Memory

Cultural Memory: Collective Memory, Social Memory?

HPHE7002 Unravelling Heritage Session 2

Dr Katharina Zinn (Associated Professor in Egyptian
Archaeology and Heritage)
University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Readings

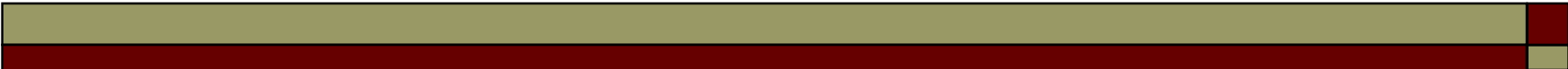
- ❑ Assmann, J; Czaplicka, J. (1995). Collective Memory and Cultural Identity. In: *New German Critique* 65(1995). pp. 125-133 → available online <http://www.jstor.org/stable/488538>
- ❑ Assmann, J. (2008). Communicative and Cultural Memory. In: Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning (Hg.), *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, Berlin, New York 2008, S. 109-118



Assmann, Jan: *The Mind of Egypt: History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs*. New York:

Metropolitan Books, 2002. p. 9.

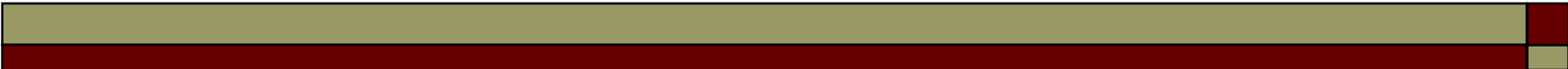
- We are what we remember, which is another way of saying that we are nothing other than the stories we can tell about ourselves and our past.



Popper, Karl Reimund. 1972. *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach*. Oxford,

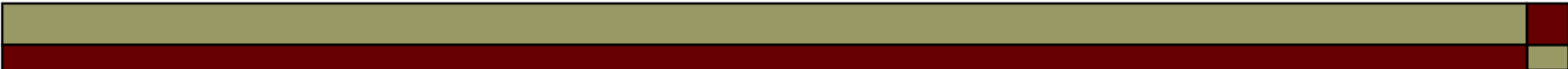
Clarendon Pr. p. 107f.

- *Experiment 1.* All our machines and tools are destroyed, and all our subjective learning, including our subjective knowledge of machines and tools, and how to use them. But libraries and our capacity to learn from them survive. Clearly, after much suffering, our world may get going again.
- *Experiment 2.* As before, machines and tools are destroyed, and our subjective learning, including our subjective knowledge of machines and tools, and how to use them. But this time, all libraries are destroyed also, so that our capacity to learn from books becomes useless.
- (...) In the second case there will be no re-emergence of our civilization for many millennia.



Heritage – memory – cultural memory

- Heritage discussions from different perspectives focussing on transformation and destruction
 - Negative – pragmatic acceptance of its necessity and inevitability
 - Positive – makes way for change and new heritage
- But who leads on this process? – ethical component
 - Culture/nation/society
 - Grassroot movement (communities, groups)
- First step to answer – understand difference between memory and cultural memory

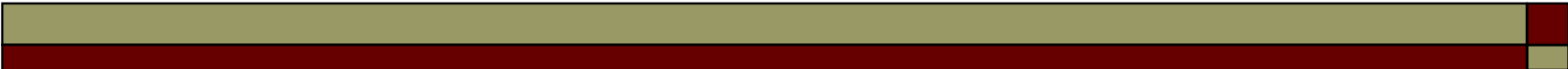


Heritage as communication

- Transmission of
 - ideas
 - values
 - Knowledge
- Constructed through relationships of individuals AND groups
 - Need to know boundaries of timeframes
 - Lived memory or beyond?
 - Past-present-future → what is significant?
 - Definition what constitutes a group
 - Local, ethnic, religious, other?
 - How is (cultural) memory shaped?

What is memory?

- Complex → can be seen from different perspectives
 - Memory directed to the past (Ricoeur 1999)
 - Develops out of active engagement of experiences with the past (Ricoeur 2004) → whose experiences?
 - Memory as performance – engagement with the present (Nora 1989)
- Used ambiguously, especially in social sciences
- Clearer in connection to heritage!!!

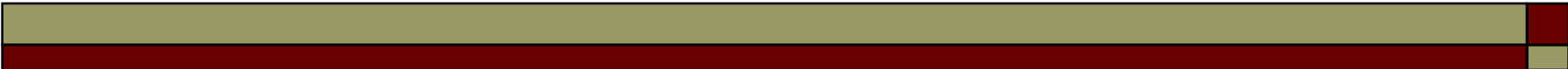


Heritage and (cultural) memory

- ❑ tangible heritage (monuments, sites, objects and museums) strong representations of the knowledge/experience past/present
- ❑ relationship manifold – developed over multiple social experiences
- ❑ experiences have potential to keep **group collective identity** alive through commemorative events or memories
- ❑ (Cultural) memory and heritage strongly linked with heritage being a cultural product(ion) that further develops values and meanings for individuals and groups
 - meanings and values ascribed to heritage + memories (developed from it) become significant symbol for collective identity
 - thus, serve to keep groups and communities together

BUT...

- ❑ When is memory cultural / collective?
- ❑ Cultural memory as DYNAMIC link between past/present/future
- ❑ Beware durability of (cultural) memory and symbolic character → playing a role in construction of identities
- ❑ But also contemporary historical narratives based on mnemonic processes related to formation of new nation states
- ❑ → back to the Theory of Cultural Memory – Jan Assmann / Aleida Assman



“cultural memory” – the concept of *traces*, *messages* and *memories* (after Assmann: The Mind of Egypt: History and Meaning in the Time of Pharaohs)

- ❑ **traces:** archaeological evidence
- ❑ **messages:** meaning of events, ideas or institutions for the contemporaries of the past culture
- ❑ **memories:** how is the past actually remembered

Amenhotep, Son of Hapu

- architect, priest, scribe, public official, held a number of offices under Amenhotep III
- born at end of Thutmose III's reign, in the town of Athribis (north of Cairo)
- father was Hapu, mother Itu
- organizing the labour and supplying the manpower for the Pharaoh's projects (civilian and military)
- Architect: supervised several building projects (A III's mortuary temple at western Thebes)
- After death: reputation grew, was revered as philosopher, healer → worshipped as a god of healing

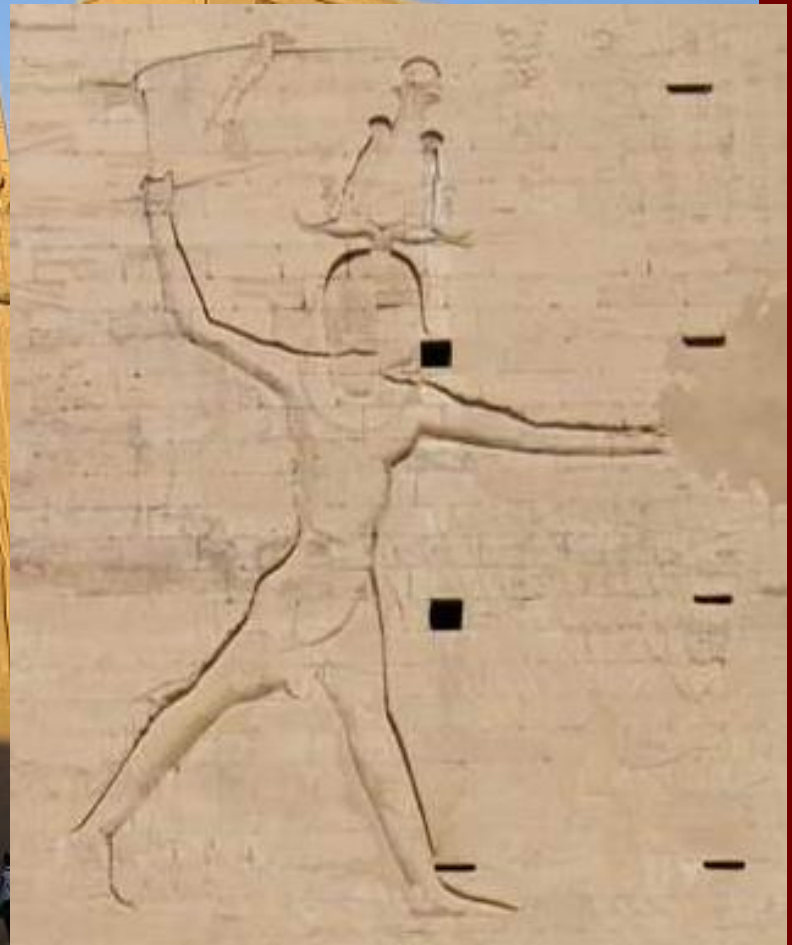


Narmer Palette (31st century BC), found in Hierakonpolis, now Egyptian Museum



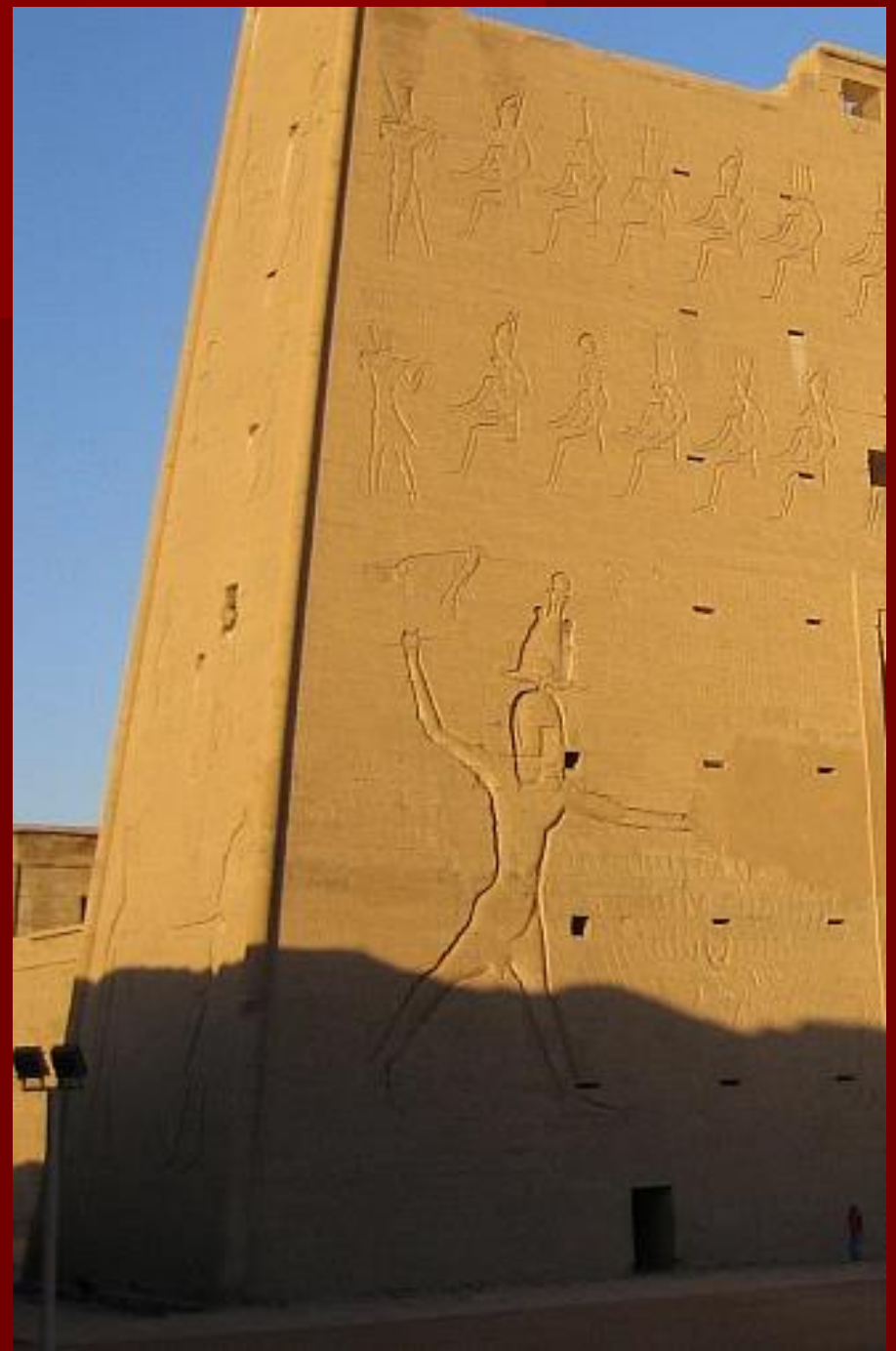
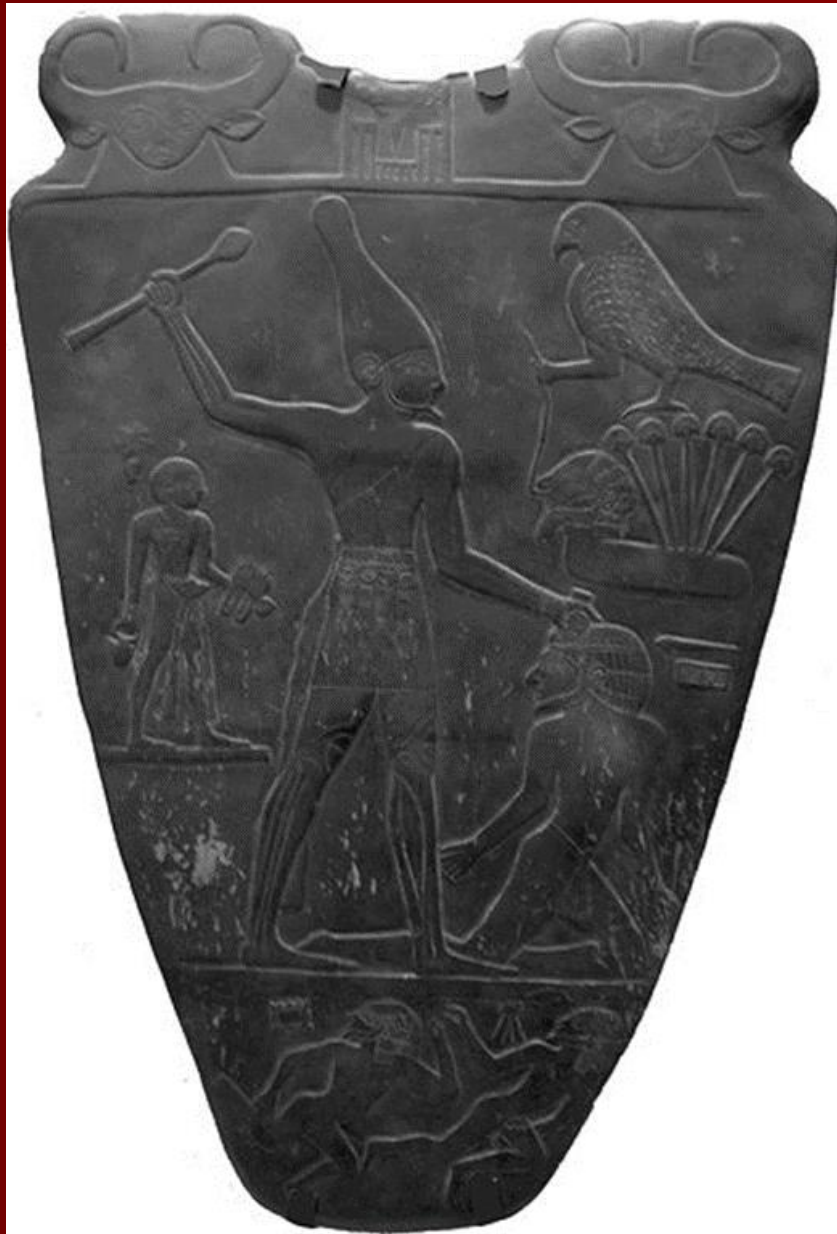
Ptolemy XII Auletes (112 BC—51 BC) – smiting the enemies

Edfu



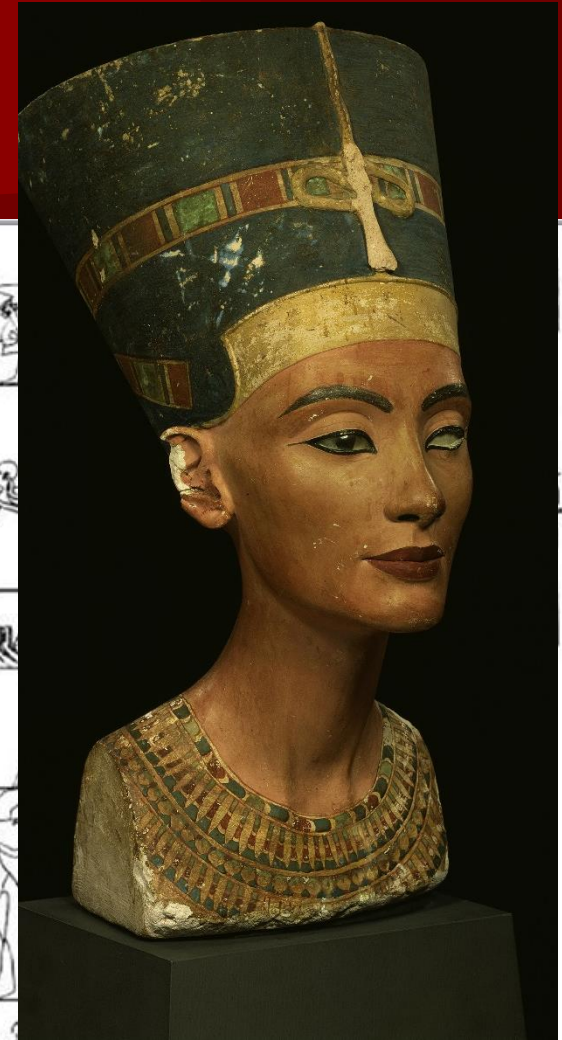
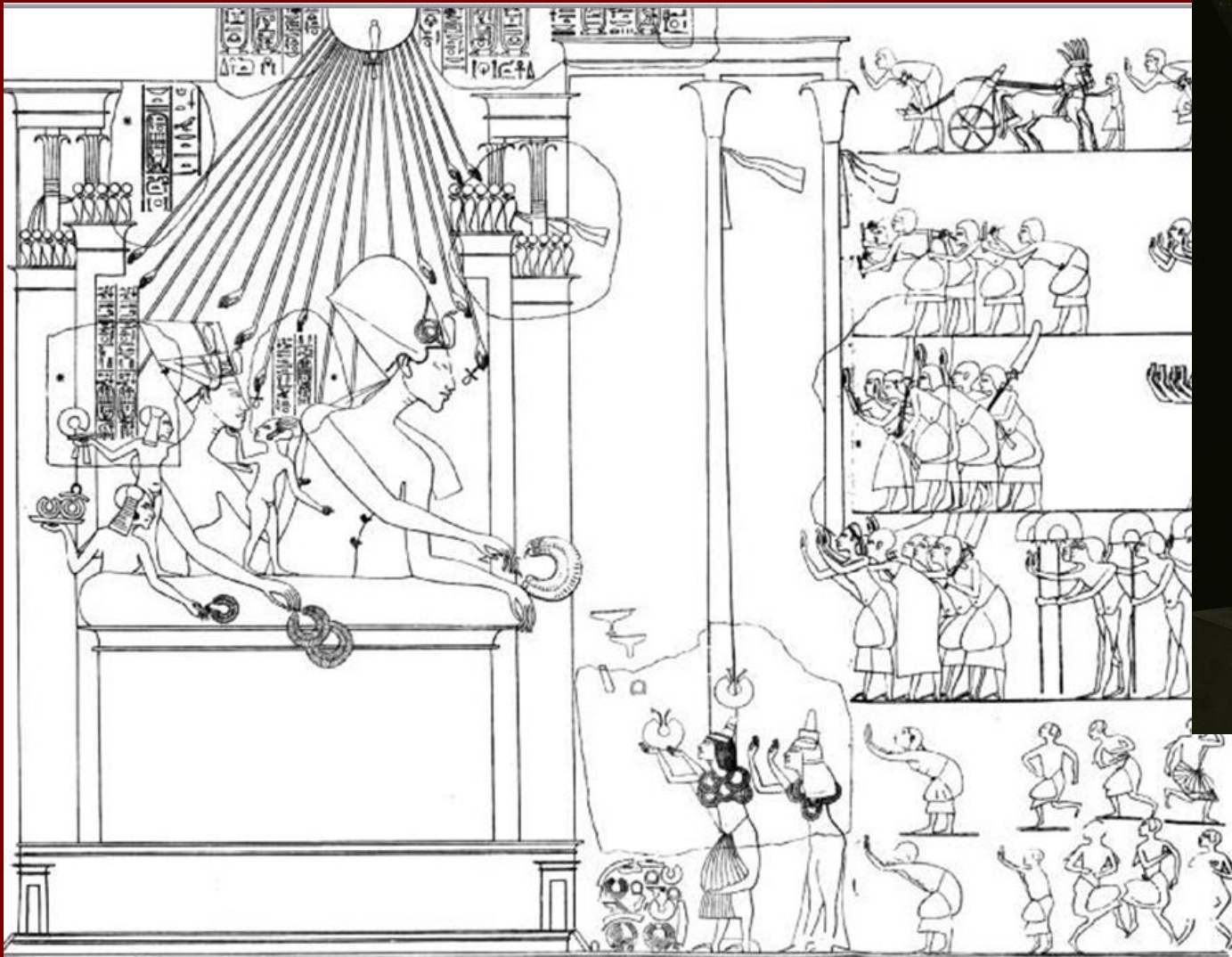
South façade Esna: Roman emperor Titus (AD 79-81) smites his enemies in the classic pharaonic pose. IMAGE: Guy de la Bédoyère





Window of appearance
reward scene – Tomb of
Ay, Amarna

Bust of Nefertiti, Berlin
ÄM21300



The Aftermath

- During Dynasty 19, Amarna Age was expunged from memory
- Amarna kings (save Horemheb) removed from king-lists and other records

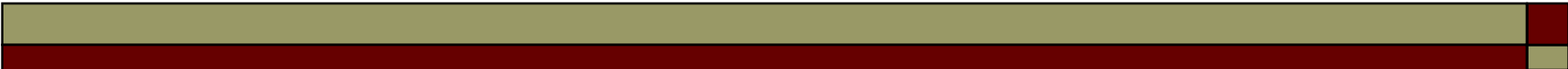




Restoration Stela of Tutankhamun

Now when His Majesty appeared as king, the temples of the gods and goddesses, starting from Elephantine [as far as] the Delta marshes . . . were fallen into decay, their shrines had fallen into ruin, having become mounds overgrown with [...] -plants. Their sanctuaries were as if they had never been, their halls were a trodden path.

The land was in confusion, the gods forsook this land. If an army was sent to Asia to widen the boundaries of Egypt, it met with no success at all. If one prayed to a god to ask things of him, he did not come at all.



“cultural memory” – the concept of *traces*, *messages* and *memories* (after Assmann: The Mind of Egypt: History and Meaning in the Time of Pharaohs)

□ Clear difference between:

- **traces:** archaeological evidence
- **messages:** meaning of events, ideas or institutions for the contemporaries of the past culture
- **memories:** how is the past actually remembered

Memory

- Memory = enables us to form an awareness of selfhood (identity): both on
 - personal and
 - collective level
- Identity = related to time
 - human self is a "diachronic identity," built "of the stuff of time" (Luckmann)
- synthesis of time and identity = effectuated by memory

Time – Identity - Memory

Level	Time	Identity	Memory
inner (neuro-mental)	inner, subjective time	inner self	individual memory
social	social time	social self, person as carrier of social roles	communicative memory
cultural	historical, mythical, cultural time	cultural identity	cultural memory

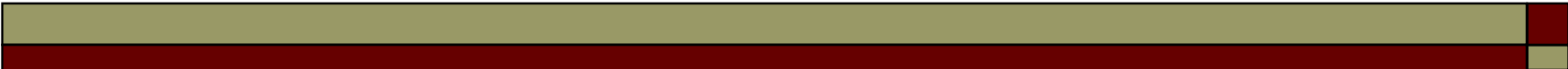


Memory: Halbwachs, Freud and Jung

- ❑ depends, like consciousness in general, on socialization and communication
- ❑ can be analyzed as a function of our social life (Maurice Halbwachs: *Les cadres sociaux*; *La memoire collective*).
- ❑ enables us to live in groups and communities
- ❑ living in groups and communities enables us to build a memory
- ❑ psychoanalysts (Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung) developed theories of collective memory, but adhered to first (inner + personal level): collective memory not in the dynamics of social life but in unconscious depths of human psyche

Memory: Warburton

- ❑ Aby Warburg (art historian): "social memory" → third, the *cultural level*
- ❑ = first one who treated images (as cultural objectifications) as carriers of memory
- ❑ studied the "afterlife" (*Nachleben*) of classical antiquity in Western culture (called "Mnemosyne" = ancient Greek term for memory, the mother of the nine Muses)
- ❑ specialized in what he called *Bildgedächtnis* (*iconic memory*), but reception history as form of (cultural) memory could be applied to every other domain of symbolic forms (Gombrich)



Memory: Thomas Mann

- ❑ adapted reception history as form of (cultural + social) memory in his four Joseph novels (1933-1943)
- ❑ most advanced attempt to reconstruct a specific cultural memory (here that of people living in Palestine and Egypt in LBA)
- ❑ But also to conjure up European cultural memory + Jewish foundations in times of Antisemitism (J. Assmann, *Thomas Mann*)
- ❑ Neither Warburg nor Mann used term "cultural memory"

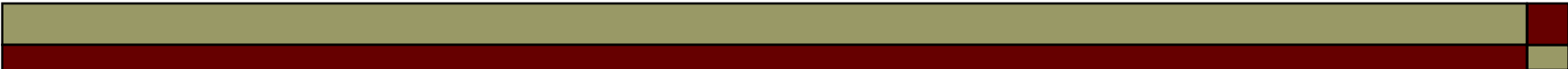


Cultural Memory

- ❑ concept = explicitly developed only during the last twenty years
- ❑ since then seen connection between time, identity, and memory in their three dimensions of the personal, the social, and the cultural!
- ❑ term "communicative memory" introduced in order to delineate the difference between Halbwachs' concept of "collective memory" + our understanding of "cultural memory" (A. Assmann)
- ❑ difference between communicative and cultural memory expresses itself also in the social dimension, in the structure of participation

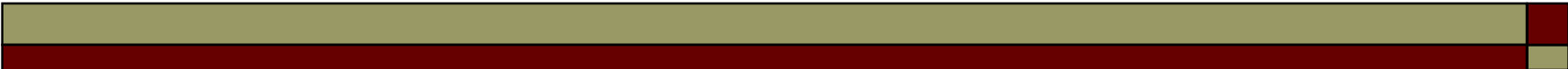
Cultural Memory - definition

- ❑ **Cultural memory is a form of collective memory, which is shared by a number of people; conveys to these people a collective (cultural) identity.**
- ❑ Halbwachs, however, the inventor of the term "collective memory," kept concept of collective memory apart from traditions, transmissions, and transferences
- ❑ these = subsumed under the term "cultural memory"
- ❑ Preserves Halbwachs's distinction by breaking up his concept of collective memory into "communicative" and "cultural memory," but by including of cultural sphere (excluded by him) in the study of memory



Cultural Memory - definition

- ❑ Cultural memory is not replacing Halbwachs' idea of "collective memory" with "cultural memory"
- ❑ but distinguish between both forms as two different modi memorandi, ways of remembering



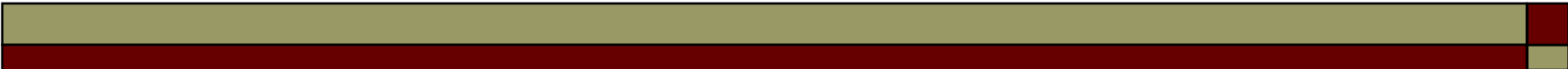
Cultural memory – (communicative) memory

communicative memory

- diffuse transmission of memories in everyday life through orality
- limited to the recent past - characterized by a short term (80 to 110 years = 3-4 generations)
- evokes personal and autobiographical memories
- informal character → often does not require expertise on the part of those who transmit it

cultural memory

- referring to objectified/ institutionalized memories → can be stored, transferred, reincorporated throughout generations
- Symbolic heritage (tangible and intangible) embodied in texts, rites, monuments, objects, celebrations, (sacred) scriptures, media as mnemonic triggers
- initiate meanings associated with what has happened
- Often connected with mythical origin
- Often requires initiation to ways of transmission



Heritage and cultural memory

- ❑ connections between cultural memory and identity → build a narrative picture of the past → develop an image and an identity for ourselves
- ❑ cultural memory preserves the symbolic institutionalized heritage to which individuals resort to build their own identities and to affirm themselves as part of a group
- ❑ act of remembering involves normative aspects (follow the rules)
- ❑ cultural memory as collective unifying force → often considered a hazard by totalitarian regimes
- ❑ Past as belief in future → places of memory
- ❑ National memory, often built on traumatic episodes