Hellenisation, Empire and Globalisation: Lessons from Antiquity

Edited by
Luther H. Martin – Panayotis Pachis

Vanias Publications
Hellenisation, empire, and globalisation: Lessons from Antiquity
Hellenisation, empire, and globalisation: Lessons from Antiquity

Acts of the Panel held during the 3rd Congress of the European Association for the Study of Religion, Bergen, Norway, 8-10 May 2003

Edited by Luther H. Martin – Panayotis Pachis

Vanias Publications
Thessaloniki 2004

Technical care: Dimitris Xygalatas

Copyright © Vanias Publications 2004
Armenopoulou 26, 54635 Thessaloniki
Tel. 2310218963
Pesmatzoglou 5, Athens
Tel. 2103211097

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted by any means, without the written permission of the publisher.
Hellenisation, Empire, and Globalisation: Lessons from Antiquity

Acts of the Panel held during the 3rd Congress of the European Association for the Study of Religion, Bergen, Norway, 8-10 May 2003

Edited by
Luther H. Martin – Panayotis Pachis

Vanias Publications
Thessaloniki 2004
Contents

Contributors - 7 -
Abbreviations - 11 -
Foreword - 13 -

PART ONE: ARTICLES

Buddhism, Manichaeism, Markets and Empires - 21 -
*Gustavo Benavides*

The globalisation and localisation of Religion: From Hellenism to Late Antiquity. Assessing a category in the History of Religions. - 41 -
*Giulia Sfameni Gasparro*

Globalization and Religion in the Roman Empire - 85 -
*Ingvild Salid Gilhus*

What constitutes globalization for religion? Hallmarks from Antiquity: Late Antiquity Egypt - 101 -
*Gary Lease*

The Very Idea of Globalization: The Case of Hellenistic Empire - 123 -
*Luther H. Martin*

The City-god —an Expression for Localization - 140 -
*Erika Meyer-Dietrich*

“Manufacturing Religion” in the Hellenistic Age: The Case of Isis-Demeter Cult - 163 -
*Panayotis Pachis*

Magia e Culti orientali III - 209 -
*Ennio Sanzi*
Contents

PART TWO: RESPONSES

Giulia Sfameni Gasparro - 237 -
Einar Thomassen - 246 -

Bibliography - 257 -
Index of Authors - 313 -
Index of Subjects - 315 -
Contributors

Gustavo Benavides teaches in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Villanova University, Villanova, Pennsylvania, USA. His areas of research are Buddhism, the theory of religion and the history of the study of religion. He is editor of Numen.

Giulia Sfameni Gasparro is professor of History of Religions at the University of Messina, Vice-President of the Italian Association for the History of Religions, President of the EASR from 2000, and Member of the Vatican Committee for Historical Sciences from 1999. Her field of research are the religious phenomena of the classical world and of Late Antiquity (mystery cults, both Greek and Oriental: Soteriology and Mystic Aspects in the Cult of Cybele and Attis [Leiden 1985]; Misteri e culti mistici di Demetra [Roma 1986]), Prophecy and Magic, Hermeticism, Gnosticism and Manichaeism. Her most recent publications are Oracoli Profeti Sibille. Rivelazione e salvezza nel mondo antico (Roma 2002); Themes and Problems of the History of Religions in Contemporary Europe, Proceedings of the International Seminar Messina, 30-31 March 2001, (ed.) (Cosenza 2002); Misteri e Teologie. Per la storia dei culti mistici e misterici nel mondo antico (Cosenza 2003).

Ingvild Sælid Gilhus is professor of History of Religion at the University of Bergen, Norway. She is the author of Laughing Gods, Weeping Virgins (Routledge 1997), and numerous articles about Gnosticism and the history of religion.

Gary Lease is Dean of Humanities and Professor of History of Consciousness at University of California, Santa Cruz. He is currently pursuing research in the history of religious thought in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Germany as well as in that of the
Mediterranean world in late antiquity. In addition to a number of articles in these fields, his most recent book is "Odd Fellows" in the Politics of Religion: Modernism, National Socialism, and German Judaism (Berlin 1995).

**Luther H. Martin** is Professor of Religion at the University of Vermont. He is the author of *Hellenistic Religions* (1987) and of numerous articles in this area of his historical specialization. He has also published widely in the field of theory and method in the study of religion, most recently co-editing *Theorizing Religions Past: Archaeology, History, and Cognition* (2004). He also co-edits a monograph series on "The Cognitive Science of Religion" (AltaMira Press).

**Erika Meyer-Dietrich** has a doctoral degree in the history of religions at the University of Uppsala. Her main areas of research are Egyptian religion, ritual studies, and ecology of religion. Her work on these subjects includes her doctoral thesis, *Nechet und Nil. Ein ägyptischer Frauenarg des Mittleren Reiches aus religionsökologischer Sicht* (2001), and several articles.

Address: Department of the History of Religions, Faculty of Theology, Uppsala University, P.O. Box 1604, S-751 46, Uppsala Sweden.

**Panayotis Pachis** Panayotis Pachis is Associate Professor of Religion at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. His research focuses on the religions and the cults of the Graeco-Roman era and the Method and Theory in the Study of Religions. He has published a number of articles and books related to the above themes.

**Ennio Sanzi** (Roma 1965), under the guidance of Ugo Bianchi, studied History of Religions at University of Rome “La Sapienza”, graduating in 1991 with the thesis *Giove di Dolice. Dimensione sociale di organizzazione cultuale*. In 1997 he received his PhD degree with the thesis,
Soteriologia, escatologia e cosmologia nel culto di Mithra, di Iside e Osiride, e di Iuppiter Dolichenus. Osservazioni storico-comparative, prepared under the guidance of Ugo Bianchi and Giulia Sfameni Gasparro. He has published *Misteri Soteriologia Dualismo. Ricerche storico-religiose* (Roma 1995), *I culti orientali nell'Impero romano. Un'antologia di fonti* (Cosenza 2003), and several articles on the religious phenomena of the Second Hellenism under the title *Oriental Cults and Magic*. He is currently teaching at the University of Messina and is working on Coptic sources for the fields of research mentioned above.
Abbreviations

ActAntHung  Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae
AJPH  American Journal of Philology
AM  Atheneische Mitteilungen
AnalBoll  Analecta Bollandiana
Anc.Soc  Ancient Society
ANRW  Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt, ed. H. Temporini – W. Haase, Berlin-New York, 1972-
APF  J. Davies, Athenian Propertied Families 600-300 B.C., Oxford 1971
BCH  Bulletin Correspondence Hellenique
BHC  Bulletin Correspondence Hellenique
BIFA O  Bulletin de l’Institut Archeologie Orientale
BSAA  Annual of the British Scool of Athens
CLA  Classical Antiquity
CE  Chronique d’Égypte
CJ  Classical Journal
DictHistGéogrEcclés  Dictionnaire d’histoire et de géographie ecclésiastique
DOP  Dumbarton Oaks Papers
EPRO  Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l’Empire Romain, ed. M.J. Vermaseren
GRBS  Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies
HSCPh  Harvard Studies of Classical Philology
HThR  Harvard Theological Review
ID  Inscriptiones Deliae
IG  Inscriptiones Graecae
JHS  Journal of Historic Studies
JRS  Journal of Roman Studies
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIMC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEFRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTSR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RealAntChrist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RGRW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RGVV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SecCent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIRIS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foreword

The beginning of the 1990s marked the end of bipolarism between the two superpowers but also the beginnings of a "globalization" that apparently is becoming a dominant feature of contemporary geopolitical reality. This phenomenon may be seen within the framework of U.S. president George H. W. Bush's declaration at the beginning of the so-called "Gulf War" of a "New Order of Things." Of course, we should bear in mind, according to the conclusions of those who study the problem of "globalization," that this phenomenon is directly related to the imposition of a political and economic hegemony under the auspices of the world's remaining superpower. Proponents of this trend aim for the creation of a "whole" as an ideal framework for the propagation of democracy, transparency, free market and open communication at the expense of the "part" which represents to them disharmony and a constant threat to world peace. This goal leads to numerous debates with oppositional groups, as well as to a series of counteractions, often with violent results. Within this context, we publish the proceedings of a panel on "Hellenization, Empire and Globalization: Lessons from Antiquity," which we organized for the IIIrd Congress of the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR), held at Bergen, Norway, 8-10 May, 2003, on the general theme "The Globalization and the Localization of Religion". The title of the panel derives from a comparison between two different eras, the Hellenistic Age, and the contemporary world. Since globalization is a contemporary phenomenon, we must, of course, draw a clear line between a pre-modern and a post-modern society. Besides, the use of the term "modern" for a period of a pre-industrial society (as in this case the Hellenistic society) seems, according to sociological approaches, inappropriate. However, our comparison could be considered more interesting if we think of it in terms of "multiple modernities", in order "to free oneself in a self-conscious manner from the tyranny of place, of community, of tradition". This con-
sideration allows us to advance a mutatis mutandis reevaluation of the Hellenistic period as a “modern era” in which phenomena similar to those of our own time appear. Of course, to avoid any misunderstandings, we should always maintain a clear understanding of the differences that characterize the past in relation to the present.

The Hellenistic era was a period of transition, increasing knowledge of the natural environment, and cosmological redefinition. In this context, we can observe constant transformations in the way people thought, characterized by the legitimization of new forms of power and the development of ecumenism and cosmopolitanism. The latter was a multidimensional civil system related to specific changes in the socio-political structure of the ancient Greek city-state. As a political system, it was a product of Stoic and Cynic philosophy that succeeded the politics of racial isolation. For a Hellenized citizen of the East, there was no difference between Greek and non-Greek. The only thing that mattered was a common Greek culture. The ideal of brotherhood was yet another feature of this era, and Alexander particularly promoted it. His personal concern was the creation of a state of ecumenical proportions, where all people would be able equally to co-exist. What Alexander had dreamed of and finally achieved, although for but a short time, was finally sanctioned by the establishment of the Roman Peace (pax romana) imposed by the Roman Empire under Octavian Augustus. This reality was, of course, the subjugation of the entire Mediterranean area by Roman politico-military authority under which the local seemed to be subsumed to (and to disappear under) the pressures of the Roman superpower. Anything that challenged this homomorphy vanished or, in the best case, was put upon and questioned.

The historical reality of empire drastically affected the thought and expression of the people of this time. Aelius Aristides (Ῥώμης ἐγκώμιον, 61) provides us with a clear image of the new political reality, stating that the entire empire now looked like one city. Notions such as those of peace “Εἰρήνη” and concord “Ομόνοια” were emphasized even more than before. This fact contributed to the personification of abstract concepts, which has as its main goal the attainment of the ideal political situation. Nevertheless, Augus-
tus’ overall program of reform aimed at the realization of a new society with emphasis on traditional values (mos maiorum). The emperor was the sovereign conveyor of such trends that prevailed within the Roman Empire.

The sovereignty of the ruler found its perfect expression in the Hellenistic emperor cult. The completion of the conquest of the Hellenistic East by Octavian provided strong support for the prevalence of a regime that was based on one man’s authority. The worship of the emperor became an integral part of state authority and organization. The tactics of deification continued also during the reign of later emperors and was further reinforced during the Tetrarchy. We are, after all, in the age of despotism, when tributes in honor of the emperor significantly increase. He became the sole recipient of divine honors and of all related cultic activities. In this way, the emperor came to embody absolute authority.

The authority of the emperor contributed to the association of philanthropy with the highest expression of authority, the prevalence of which was already present from the beginning of the imperial age. State care was considered the exclusive privilege of the emperor who thus became the protector of the Roman people and provided for lawful order and harmony in the state. The emperor was considered, therefore, the highest and sole patron, not only of the city but of the entire empire.

Rome’s economic life was based, even during the imperial ages, mainly on agriculture, a fact that played a definitive role in the formation of the overall Roman way of thinking. In pre-industrial societies, agricultural self-sufficiency is the best warranty for economic wealth. The demand of the Roman population upon a limited supply of grain increased after the military expansion of the Roman state. The population of the capital and of the other cities of that time, characterized as “urban-consumers”, was always dependent upon the annual surplus production of the empire’s rural areas (e.g., Egypt and Sicily).

A turn towards trade gradually began to dominate the economic life of the Romans during the last years of the Republic. This situation continued during the imperial age as trade became even more important for the Empire’s economic life, though without
undermining the importance of domestic agricultural production. The growth of trade created the ideal situation for the higher classes to become involved in such transactions, as well as with the promotion of a "controlled trade" that further reinforced their economic power.

The introduction of a common currency for the whole environment of the vast state was an innovation compared to past practices based on the archaic custom of product exchange. The common currency, together with the common Hellenistic language (koiné), the unity of space, and the prevalence of the Roman peace contributed to a significant increase in trade. The civil conflicts, the constant destructive wars against the Oriental rulers and the danger of piracy were now bad memories of the past. The citizens of the vast state could now move with almost no danger from one end of the Roman Empire to the other. The Roman roads that interconnected the various parts of the empire, from East to West, supported the mobility of this time. Thus, a wide network was created for the unimpeded wandering of merchants, slaves, wise men, as well as teachers of foreign cults from the East, that continuously circulated throughout the entire empire, with Rome most often being their final destination. The various caravan cities at the state's eastern provinces were now sustained by trading between the world of the East and the West. Roman and mainly foreign ships continuously carried their valuable cargo to the ports of Italy. Ships of large capacity were built to carry the large quantities of goods, especially grain, to the various parts of the empire.

Augustus' objective was to turn the empire into a unified socio-political system. His empire created a new context for the free circulation of various groups, goods, as well as religious and cultural ideas from one part of the empire to another. The immense and unified space of the Roman Empire followed the polymerism of the Hellenistic kingdoms. This unity became even more amplified in 212 A.D. when all the inhabitants of the vast Roman state were granted the right of Roman citizenship. As most citizens at the time dwelt at the periphery of the state, the notion of "citizen", in its traditional meaning and the traditional Roman ethos, became, however, weakened.
During this period, various cohesive factors that reinforced the uniformity of the empire became further strengthened. Among those, the Greek language played a crucial role in the establishment of a unified cultural construction. The Hellenistic koine became, already from the beginning of the Hellenistic period, the lingua franca for arts and letters, as well as for trade. People of several ethnicities adopted it as their communicational tool within the ecumene, and its use is an evidence of people’s increasing participation in common social goals. The environment of the urban centers of this period is the space where linguistic uniformity was further emphasized. The ruling classes promoted it and attempted to impose it in a range of ways. It was the basis on which Greeks were differentiated from the natives, even at the ends of the Hellenistic East, while latter it became the most appropriate tool for their encounter. Those who refused to adopt it remained at the margins of the dominant socio-political and spiritual reality. In time, and particularly during the so-called “Second Sophistry,” its indisputable value as a means of communication was continuously emphasized as people moved from place to place.

The spirit of empire did not leave religion unaffected. During this period, many cults of eastern origin spread. All the above-mentioned factors contributed to their rapid proliferation. Most of the new cults that made their appearance during this period were influenced by the Greek way of thought and, as a result, took on a new syncretistic form. The employment of beliefs related to the traditional contributed to the creation of ideal conditions for their acceptance. Thus there emerged new terminologies and symbols, which are used as a communicational basis among the inhabitants of the vast ecumene. The political uniformity that was imposed with the creation of the Empire was directly related to the phenomenon of religious uniformity, especially during late antiquity. In this case, we can witness a gradual differentiation of religious thought, starting from the polytheism of local communities, through the henotheism of the early imperial ages, to the monotheism of late antiquity. This fact creates a radical juxtaposition between multiformity and uniformity, between the local element and the ecumenical ideal of this period.
We would like to thank the organizers of the IIIrd Congress of the EASR for including this panel in the program and for their hospitality in Bergen, Norway, site of the congress. And, we would like to thank the international group of scholars who contributed to these panels, especially Prof. G. Sfamani Gasparro (University of Messina, Italy and President of the EASR,) and Prof. E. Thomassen (University of Bergen, Norway) for their valuable comments on all of the papers. We are pleased to publish these papers in this volume, with the hope that they will contribute to continuing research on Graeco-Roman religions specifically and to further considerations of what might be learned for the present from history generally. Last but not least, we wish to thank Mr. Dimitris Xygalatas for his editorial work on this volume.

Luther H. Martin – Panayotis Pachis

November 2004