

BOOK REVIEW

Poseidon and the Sea: Myth, Cult and Daily Life. Edited by SETH D. PEVNICK. London: D Giles Ltd., 2014. Pp. 199. Hardcover, \$49.95. ISBN 978-1-907804-30-4.

A large scale Roman statue of Poseidon (or Neptune) accompanied by a dolphin and dated to the first century AD is the primary inspiration for *Poseidon and the Sea: Myth, Culture and Daily Life*. Poseidon's complex, multi-faceted personality is evidenced by prolific imagery demonstrated in various artistic mediums and uncovered throughout the ancient Mediterranean region. These vast examples of iconography are explored in the catalogue and the accompanying exhibition, which appeared in 2014 at the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, Nebraska and the Tampa Museum of Art in Florida.

Utilizing the marble sculpture of Poseidon (or Neptune) as a centerpiece, Seth Pevnick, editor and curator of the exhibition, skillfully constructs a cohesive narrative by assembling related ancient artifacts from the Tampa Museum of Art. Other relevant objects related to sea life and Poseidon from museums and private collections from throughout the world are assembled as examples that give meaning and unity to the great god of the deep. The combination of coins, painted pottery, glass, mosaics and metal objects from antiquity are expertly brought together in the catalogue to illustrate the great complexity of this ancient, sometimes mysterious, god.

After an introductory preface, Pevnick's first chapter is rich with historical and mythological information regarding the various domains intertwined and overseen by Poseidon. The powerful god is recognized in the ancient Mediterranean world not only for his dominance over the sea, but also for the protection from earthquakes and other natural disasters on land. Pevnick cites ancient literary sources linking Poseidon also with horses, bulls, hippocamps and other fantastic sea creatures.

The chapter includes evaluations and interpretations of mythological imagery and marine life found on examples of Greek ceramic painted pottery. Details on this subject alone provide important information for the general public as well as scholars of ancient classical history. Exquisite artifacts and related references are beautifully photographed and found throughout the book. A complete

list of objects is organized with curatorial notations and located in the Exhibition Checklist section of the text. A Map of the Ancient Mediterranean World and Glossary are also included in the volume, both are helpful guides while navigating the exhibition or for further study.

Subsequent essays are included from notable experts not only to enumerate the multiple realms of Poseidon on both land and sea but also to emphasize that the imagery of this deity was ubiquitous in the ancient Mediterranean region. Angeliki Kokkinou, head of the Archaeologists/Hosts of the Department of Learning at the Acropolis Museum, Athens, Greece details how prevalent religion and the cult of Poseidon was throughout mainland Greece, the islands and where ever the Greeks established colonies. Much of what is known about Poseidon today has been derived from archaeological discoveries that include examples of votive offerings and dedications at important temples dedicated to the ancient god. Examples of these types of offerings such as bronze marine influenced figurines, fish shaped votives and handheld statuettes of Poseidon are found in the exhibition and in the catalogue.

Nancy T. de Grummond, contributes to the catalogue by attempting to unravel the complex associations found between Neptune, Nethuns and their relationship to Poseidon. Roman, Etruscan and Greek objects from antiquity are evaluated to further comprehend the importance of cult worship and the iconography that was ever present in the images from the time of the Roman Empire and in ancient Greece.

Pevnick selects items from the Tampa collection along with carefully selected essays to support his thesis that the mighty god of the sea was at the epicenter of nearly all aspects of the ancient Mediterranean world. Thus, essays regarding ancient seafaring and even fish sauce production also appear in the volume. Such discussions illuminate the use of everyday objects included in the exhibition and demonstrate the centrality of Poseidon and the sea to classical Greek and Roman culture.

A fascinating 'case study' of a colossal bronze trident by Jeffrey Maish focuses describes the object in detail along with scientific analysis of the ancient bronze-work construction and repairs. This section of the book provides variety to the catalogue and would be a useful example for anyone planning to design an exhibition catalog.

The Bibliography is extensive and is an excellent source of information for students pursuing future research or additional reading options for the general public interested in the diverse realms of influence associated with the great god

Poseidon. The Illustrated Chronology section of the book seemed unnecessary, but may prove helpful to anyone completely unfamiliar with the topic of classical antiquity. The catalogue complements the exhibition and illustrates the pervasiveness of the god of the sea across the ancient world.

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