

BOOK REVIEW

Foundation Myths in Ancient Societies: Dialogues and Discourses. Edited by NAOÍSE MACSWEENEY. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2015. Pp. viii + 233. Hardcover, \$69.95. ISBN 978-0-8122-4642-1.

Naíse MacSweeney has assembled a collection of essays structured around “foundation discourses,” or “all the foundation myths relating to a particular city, state, or group of people in circulation at a given time” (3). What the discourses for any given group are and how they are communicated form the basis for the essays. As such, the emphasis is on variations of foundation myths and how those variants intersect, diverge, and engage with one another. Although the volume aims simply to “provide evidence of the potential that exploring discourses can provide,” this understates the achievement of the essays, which show the complexity of identity formation in the ancient world.

The volume contains seven chapters plus an introduction by the editor and an epilogue by Robin Osborne.¹ All the essays provide valuable insights into identity in antiquity; given the restrictions on space, I will highlight three essays that represent the strengths of the volume, particularly those that demonstrate the benefits of setting literary and material evidence in conversation.

Lieve Donnellan’s contribution (chapter 2) focuses on colonial foundations with specific reference to Sicilian Naxos. The chapter is structured around differentiating between local views and external views of their foundation and identity—local views (represented in coinage and archaeological remains) emphasize cults that were important for local political and military alliances, while external views (literary) ignore cult and emphasize the colonial relationship to the metropolis. According to Donnellan, these variations in foundation stories should not be understood as conflicting facts to be resolved into a single true version, but should be read as nexus of divergent interests and concerns of the parties that deployed each foundation story. In this instance, the foundation discourses helps the scholar understand better the dynamics in which foundation stories func-

¹ The inclusion of an epilogue or response is similar to E. Amalgor and J. Skinner (2013) *Ancient Ethnography*, Boomsbury Press (response by Emma Dench); it seems to reflect a new trend in how edited volumes of this sort are structured.

tioned and the ways in which identity was a constant negotiation that functioned simultaneously on multiple levels.²

Daniel Ogden's examination of the Agathos Daimon and the founding of Alexandria (chapter 5) shows how the foundation myth of Alexandria sits in dialogue with both older Greek foundation stories of beast slayers and with the Egyptian traditions surrounding the god Sais. According to Ogden, the foundation myth of Alexandria that has Alexander slay Agathos Daimon in order to found the city impacted the foundation stories created also for Antioch and Seleucia in Pieria by Seleucus, which link the founding of these cities by Seleucus to earlier slayings of the serpent river, Orontes, with Zeus' slaying of Typhon, and Perseus reenacting that slaying in a later adventure. The Alexandrian foundation story is also later adopted by the Christian community to "install a figure of Christian interest at the heart of the foundation of Alexandria" (142). Ogden works deftly with sources ranging from Plutarch and the *Alexander Romance* to comedies and to vase images and reliefs. He demonstrates how the various groups within and without Alexandria came to insert themselves over time into the foundation stories of the city through the myth of Agathos Daimon.

Alfred Hirt's contribution (chapter 7) tackles foundation myths of Roman Tyre, which viewed itself as "part of the Greek world in the Roman Empire" (191), a complex layering of identities from Phoenician to Greek and to Roman, from distinguished "other" to shared identity. Hirt focuses on coinage and representations on coinage of mythical foundations represented on the reverses after recognition of Tyre as a colonial city and metropolis under Septimius Severus (198 CE). Prior to this change in status, the city emphasized its Greek polis-institutions; later, in addition to highlighting colonial status, the city began connecting itself to Greek and Roman foundations of other cities, embracing its status as a metropolis--as the source for Dido and Carthage and Kadmos and Thebes--and emphasizing its Greekness through images of Europa (images introduced in the mid-3rd century). Some coinage, however, embraced their Phoenician "otherness." Hirt leads us through the layers of identities the coinage supposes, providing a thought-provoking chapter that encourages further exploration of the Greek East in the Roman principate.

The volume coheres well and all the chapters are well-written. The errata are few and insignificant. I would have liked to have seen the language of Irad Mal-

² An approach similar to that deployed by J. Skinner in (2012) *The Invention of Ethnography*, Oxford University Press, chapter 4, esp.

kin's categories (chapter 1) of foundation myths woven throughout the other contributions. Malkin's chapter serves to theoretically underpin the volume (intentionally or not), and it provides an important nuance to how foundation narratives are understood. Had his ideas been interwoven within the subsequent chapters, it would have provided further cohesion and enrichment to an already fruitful volume. Hopefully, future scholars will take up the challenge offered by this volume to think more holistically about foundation stories and consider the dialogue of variations not as an inconvenience to linearity, but instead as an opportunity for greater understanding of how identities were and are negotiated.

REBECCA FUTO KENNEDY

Denison University, rfutokenedy@gmail.com