

The Double Foundation of Boiotian Thebes^{*}

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SUMMARY: The mythic tradition of the double foundation of Boiotian Thebes presents an anomaly that has not been sufficiently explored. Through analysis of early poetic material, writings of the mythographers, and archaeological evidence, this article argues that the two stories of foundation existed in parallel in the early Greek poetic tradition and represent two distinct contexts of composition, one Mycenaean and the other archaic. Only with prose mythographers and logographers such as Hekataios and Pherekydes were these stories chronologically and genealogically ordered. This ordering represents a permanent change in how the mythic material was and continues to be understood.

THE MYTHIC TRADITION supplies the city of Boiotian Thebes with two seemingly distinct foundations. While this is often observed, it remains an anomaly that has not been sufficiently explained or appreciated.¹ Here I examine this double foundation as it is represented in early Greek literary and mythographic material and as it relates to a monument in the city of Thebes,

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¹ The duality stands unreconciled in the *OCD*³, where one can compare the entry on Amphiön and Zethos (“... they founded and walled seven-gated Thebes”) with that on Kadmos (“legendary ... founder of Boeotian Thebes”). For the standard handbook treatment see for instance Gantz 467, who states “... it seems clear that from some early point in time we have two completely separate foundation myths” but proceeds to follow the chronological version presented by Apollodoros. Hurst offers a discussion of the early and late sources attesting to the building of the walls by Amphiön and Zethos, but only peripherally touches on Kadmos (66).

the Ampheion hill. I argue that the earliest mythographers organized the two foundation stories chronologically, in a fashion foreign to the early poetic tradition. This can be shown in part through an examination of the placement of the Ampheion hill in a play of Aeschylus, and its relationship there to what we know of the actual topography of the city. The shift in the understanding of these two stories that comes with the rise of prose mythography has had a tenacious hold on scholars and critics of myth. I illustrate this again with the Ampheion, which has been interpreted as evidence of Egyptian colonization in Boiotia, an interpretation that relies on the chronological ordering characteristic of the mythographic tradition. I then discuss the nature of the traditional stories of the foundation of Thebes, as material for mythic poetry and as fodder for the mythographic handbook. The two stories represent two narratives of the single act of the city's foundation, created at two separate times and reflecting features of the milieux in which they were composed: on the one hand, that of Mycenaean Greeks, and on the other, of inhabitants of Thebes in the archaic period. To begin, we should consider what the handbooks tell us of the founding of the great city on the Boiotian plain.

EXPLAINING THEBES' DOUBLE FOUNDATION: CHRONOLOGY AND GEOGRAPHY

The tradition is a curious one. Thebes has, on the one hand, a relatively standard foundation narrative attached to it: a conundrum causes recourse to an oracle, and a founding hero, Kadmos, travels from another land to establish the city.² Autochthony is incorporated into this narrative through the genesis of the first Theban citizens from the sown teeth of a dragon. But in addition to the Kadmos story there is also the story of the twins Amphion and Zethos, local Theban heroes (as is attested by a prominent monument, the Ampheion), who, according to legend, built the city's famous walls.

The narrative that combines the two stories is given its most recognizable form by Apollodoros (*Bibliotheca*, Book 3), writing probably in the first century A.D. Kadmos, son of Agenor, from Phoenicia, is given an oracle concerning his sister, Europa, for whom he is searching. The god tells him "not to bother about Europa" (3.4.1³) but rather to follow a cow and to found a city

² Greek colonial foundation narratives follow a relatively set pattern, examined in some detail by Malkin. While the standard foundation narrative pertains mainly to colonies established during the archaic period (Malkin designates 8th to 4th century for his study), not to *metropoleis* themselves, there is considerable blurring of the distinction in the Greek tradition; see Malkin 4, and below.

³ For convenience I use the citation numbers of Frazer's 1921 Loeb edition.

where she sinks to the ground from exhaustion. Kadmos follows the cow until she stops her wanderings at the future site of Thebes. There, having bid his companions to draw water at the spring of Ares, he encounters and slays a dragon. At the advice of Athena, he sows the teeth of the dragon in the earth, from which spring the famous Spartoi, or “sown men.” They fight with each other; the five who survive, along with Kadmos himself, become the progenitors of the race of “Kadmeians” who inhabit Thebes.⁴ Several generations later Amphion and Zethos, twin sons of Zeus, assume the throne in Thebes after a struggle with King Lykos and his wife Dirke, in which the twins rescue their mother Antiope from the tortures of Dirke. They build Thebes’ famous wall after taking control of the city, Zethos using his strength and Amphion his lyre with which he moves the stones to their places (3.5.5).⁵

Apollodoros is not alone in finding a chronological relationship between the two foundations. Pausanias (9.5.6) and Diodoros of Sicily (19.53.4–5) do much the same. Both specifically state that Kadmos founded the Kadmeia, the central acropolis of the city, while the twins fortified the lower city later (in Diodoros, τὸ ἄστυ as opposed to ἡ Καδμεία). That is, both Pausanias and Diodoros take the rationalization a step further than Apollodoros by locating the foundation stories in different spaces, relating their narratives to features of the Theban city as they saw it.⁶ Thus chronology and geography are used to relate the two foundation narratives to each other.

My interest in these later versions is comparative. The diachronically ordered foundation narrative of Apollodoros is a useful beginning, but we must examine the tradition before and during the fifth century B.C., prior to, or at least in the incipient stages of, any of this mythographic material.

THE EARLY STAGES OF THE TRADITION

In Homer, Kadmos is mentioned only once, by the narrator, and as the father of Ino (*Od.* 5.333) not as the founder of Thebes. Instead, Odysseus, in his description of his visit to the underworld, says of Amphion and Zethos (*Od.* 11.263–65),

⁴ Throughout this paper I use the term “Kadmeian” as the ethnonym that denotes an inhabitant of Thebes, “Kadmian” as an adjective in the more general sense “of or pertaining to Kadmos or the Kadmeia.”

⁵ This story, but without mention of Amphion and Zethos, is also recounted by the scholiast to *Il.* 2.494, who claims to give the version of Hellanikos; cf. Gomme 64 with n. 66, and below.

⁶ From the fifth century, Thebes possessed, in addition to the acropolis area that was always identified as the Kadmeia proper, a long circuit of walls encompassing a significant part of the plain below the Kadmeia (see map).

οἱ πρῶτοι Θήβης ἔδος ἔκτισαν ἑπταπύλοιο
 πύργωσάν τ', ἐπεὶ οὐ μὲν ἀπύργωτόν γ' ἐδύναντο
 ναίεμεν εὐρύχορον Θήβην, κρατερῷ περ ἔόντε.

They first founded the seat of seven-gated Thebe, and fortified it, since they were unable to inhabit wide-open Thebe unfortified, powerful though they were.⁷

This passage may just allow the interpretation that the city was founded already by the time of the twins, as Apollodoros, Pausanias, and Diodoros all assert when they make the twins merely Thebes' fortifiers. But this is not the most natural way to read it. Only the *a priori* knowledge of the Kadmian foundation (such as we can assume in the case of the three authors mentioned) would authorize such a weakening of the meaning of πρῶτοι ... ἔκτισαν. But assuming knowledge of the Kadmian story in the Homeric tradition creates difficulties, as we shall see. It is better to take these lines as an account of the first foundation (πρῶτοι) of Thebes by the twins.⁸

If we turn from poetic material to the early mythographic tradition, we find matters complicated further. Pherekydes of Athens (perhaps following Homer) places the twins' foundation before Kadmos. The scholiast (T) to *Il.* 13.302 quotes Pherekydes (*FGrHist* 3F41d) as holding that Thebes was built (or "walled," τετειχίσθαι) by Amphion and Zethos as a defense against the Phlegyes, and that Kadmos came to Thebes later, in a period when the city was "desolate" (ἔρημον).⁹ With the Athenian mythographer we have the first

⁷ Translations are my own.

⁸ The scholiasts on this passage (on lines 262, 263, and 264) seem to agree when they refer to the version of Pherekydes, who states that Thebes was destroyed at some point between the twins' foundation and a refounding by Kadmos (see next note). Of course these lines are spoken by Odysseus, not the narrator, which may imply that Odysseus is portrayed as *himself* not knowing of the foundation by Kadmos, or perhaps that he sees no reason to include it in his account to the Phaiakians of meeting Antiope in the underworld. But even if Odysseus has the other foundation in mind and keeps it to himself, πρῶτοι grants temporal priority to the Amphion and Zethos story.

⁹ Pherekydes *FGrHist* 3F41d: καὶ Φερεκύδης δὲ ἱστορεῖ περὶ τῶν Φλεγύων· καὶ γὰρ αὐτὰς τὰς Θήβας ὑπ' Ἀμφίωνος καὶ Ζήθου διὰ τοῦτο τετειχίσθαι, διὰ τὸ δέος τῶν Φλεγύων. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα τὰς Θήβας ὑπ' αὐτῶν αἰρεθῆναι Εὐρυμάχου βασιλεύοντος, καὶ ἔρημον γενέσθαι τὴν πόλιν μέχρι τῆς Κάδμου ἀφίξεως. These details, including that of the arrival of Kadmos, are also supplied by the scholiast (Q) on *Od.* 11.262 (see Dindorf). Fowler 2000 does not include the detail of Kadmos' arrival in his text of Pherekydes (41b), which he bases on a scholion (V) to *Od.* 11.264 instead of the scholion to the *Iliad* used by Jacoby or the passage from the Q scholia to *Od.* 11.262. I see no reason, however, to deny the appearance of Kadmos in Pherekydes, since it fits organically with details supplied by both *Odyssey* scholiasts, and is attested explicitly by the Iliadic scholion.

direct association of Kadmos both with Thebes and with the twin-founders Amphion and Zethos. Significantly, it is claimed that Kadmos entered the city some time after its foundation. Pherekydes may be adding the detail of Kadmos to a tradition that, at least in what is attested of it, shows no earlier signs of attempts to reconcile the two stories.¹⁰ But the placement of his addition is at odds with the later tradition, which usually sees a break in the line of Kadmos making way for the wall-building twins.¹¹ That he does this in the opposite order of the later mythographers suggests that the material he is organizing may not yet have been conceived in a diachronic fashion. In fact, the evidence so far considered shows that the two foundations probably existed from an early date in parallel versions, not hierarchized chronologically or genealogically at all, representing two distinct and independent narratives

Fowler's forthcoming commentary is awaited on this point. See also Fowler 41c and 41d on the Phlegyes and the twins.

¹⁰ On the organization of Pherekydes the Athenian's work (who should be distinguished from Pherekydes the Syrian; see especially Fowler 1999, *contra* Toye) see Jacoby *FGrHist* 3, and especially his 1947 study on the identity of the two figures named Pherekydes (25–33 on the Athenian). Other early evidence for the foundation narratives is sparse and often concerns only the figure of Kadmos. Stesichoros in the *Europeia* (see fr. 195 Davies) and perhaps Musaios (if we trust a scholion on Apollonios 3.1177–78b and another on *Il.* 2.494, on which see below in this note) treated a few details of Kadmos' story. Prominent passages in tragedy include Euripides' *Phoinissai* (638–48, 657–75, 818–23), which recount the details of the Kadmean foundation mostly as they are later in Apollodoros, and the lost *Phrixos* (fr. 819 Nauck²), in which Kadmos is identified as a Phoenician. Diodoros (1.23.4) and a scholion on Lycophron by John Tzetzes (on 1206 Scheer: καὶ ὁ Ὠγυγὸς Θηβῶν Αἰγυπτίων ἦν βασιλεὺς ὅθεν Κάδμος ὑπάρχων ἐλθὼν ἐν Ἑλλάδι τὰς ἐπταπύλους ἔκτισε καὶ Ὠγυγίας πύλας ἐκάλεσε πάντα ποιήσας εἰς ὄνομα τῶν Αἰγυπτίων Θηβῶν) identify Kadmos as an Egyptian, on which see below. There was also a relatively detailed account of the foundation of Kadmos by the mythographer and ethnographer Hellanikos, portions of which survive in a Homeric scholion (on *Il.* 2.494, *FGrHist* 4F51), but the extent to which the details are Hellanikan is in doubt, and Amphion and Zethos are nowhere mentioned. For further discussion of the disparate sources see especially Vian 21–34 and Gantz 467–73 (Kadmos) and 483–88 (Amphion and Zethos). Scholars of the ancient Near East have also joined in; the tradition runs from Gordon through Astour and Bernal, all of whom are most interested in the Phoenician or Egyptian pedigree of Kadmos. On this question see also Edwards, who is skeptical of the more traditional isolationist claims of Gomme and Vian (which will be discussed in part below) but is generally sound on the uses of mythological evidence.

¹¹ On competing ancient chronologies of Kadmos see especially Edwards 163–74.

of the single *act* of the city's foundation.¹² Pherekydes, along with mythographers like him, would thus be responsible for the chronological ordering of the two stories.¹³

If we turn now to Aeschylus, we shall see that a Theban monument, and its location within the play *Seven against Thebes*, can provide further insight into the nature of the early poetic tradition of the Theban foundation. In Aeschylus, the two narrative instantiations are placed in relation to each other spatially, not chronologically; synchronically, not diachronically.

AESCHYLUS, THE AMPHEION, AND THE WALLS OF THEBES

Understanding the relationship of the Ampheion, a large mound associated with Amphion and Zethus since ancient times, to the two narratives of Theban foundation in Aeschylus demands an examination of the association of the monument with the gates of the city, especially the (fictional, I will argue) "Northern" gates.

The Ampheion hill sits just north of the area of Thebes known as the Kadmeia (see map).¹⁴ The Kadmeia itself consists of a rising but relatively low plateau between two valleys, constituting a central area of the city; it has been continuously inhabited since prehistoric times. There is still much to be learned about the whereabouts of the earliest fortifications around the Kadmeia, but it is clear that this part of the city was walled some time in the Middle or Late Helladic periods, and perhaps even had two concentric cir-

¹² I take the term *act* from the excellent study by Neschke-Hentschke, in which she defines the concept of the *acte identifiant* as an act that comprises the traditional material of "myth" (such as "Oidipous kills his father") as opposed to the connected details that create a particular narrative out of it. She writes (55): "Le mythe a été, de tous temps, une *représentation* de personnages traditionnels qui confère une nouvelle interprétation aux *actes* qui les identifient. Or, la tradition n'est ni une répétition ni une adaptation extérieure ni une déformation du récit original. La tradition se présente comme une succession de créations de l'acte identifiant qui est interprété par des récits." In the case of the foundation of Thebes, we have two narratives created from the same "identifying act," the founding of the city.

¹³ In this case it is possible that they did so with the same goal in mind: to explain away the seeming inconsistency of $\pi\rho\omega\tau\omicron\iota$ in *Od.* 11.263, quoted above. We may be coming close to the truth if we think of Pherekydes functioning as an early commentator on the *Odyssey* passage.

¹⁴ For a compilation of references (early and late) to the monument's location see Schachter 28–29.

cuits by the Late Helladic period.¹⁵ To judge from the available archaeological evidence as well as the natural contours of the land, it seems clear that the Ampheion was not included within these early walls. The mound was explored in the 19th century, partially excavated in the early 20th century by Keramopoulos, and examined more thoroughly in the 1960s and 1970s by Spyropoulos and others.¹⁶ It consists of several layers of heaped stone (most likely of the Early Helladic II period) and a top conical layer of baked brick containing a cist tomb, probably of Middle or Late Helladic date.¹⁷ By the fifth century, Thebes had gained another circuit of walls encompassing an area extending far beyond the Kadmeia, especially to the north and west. These walls joined the Kadmeia's fortifications probably only on the south (see map). They were built in the very late sixth or fifth century¹⁸ and were certainly destroyed in 335 by Alexander. These walls included the Ampheion within them, along with a significant area of what must have been cultivated land.¹⁹

The Ampheion contains one of numerous pre-Mycenaean and Mycenaean tombs in the escarpments surrounding the Kadmeia.²⁰ It is at least as old as

¹⁵ Archaeological evidence for the different circuits of walls is sparse and interpreted variously. It seems clear that there was at least one circuit of walls by the LH period. See especially Symeonoglou 1985: 19–38, who presents the theory of two concentric walls, one MH and one LH.

¹⁶ The first systematic exploration and comprehensive publication was undertaken by Keramopoulos. He treats the Ampheion, both archaeologically and in relation to some of the same literary passages discussed here, on 383–86. Pharaklas and Spyropoulos were responsible for excavating the hill in the 60s and 70s; one of Spyropoulos' preliminary publications (1972) will be the focus of discussion below. The full excavation report (Spyropoulos 1981) contains detailed discussions of the excavations along with much interpretation of the finds. In this publication he expands on and in so doing adds some nuance to the Egyptian hypothesis presented in 1972 (on which see below), especially in the final three chapters (102–40).

¹⁷ See Symeonoglou 1985: 273–74 (site 121), Spyropoulos 1972: 20, and for more detail, Spyropoulos 1981: 72–102. The date of the latest ostrakon in the tomb itself is LH III.

¹⁸ Proposed dates range from 506 (Keramopoulos 296–98) to 446 or shortly thereafter (Symeonoglou 1985: 120–22).

¹⁹ Even if by the classical period the Kadmeia walls encompassed the area known as "Hypothebai," just to the north of the Kadmeia proper but still south of the hill (as Symeonoglou 1985: 117 and Keramopoulos 253–57 and 266–98, as cited by Symeonoglou, assert), they would not have reached the Ampheion. Symeonoglou 1985: 60–63 identifies the area of Hypothebai (the name first appears in the catalogue of ships, *Il.* 2.505) as the low-lying area directly to the north of the Kadmeia proper but south of the Ampheion.

²⁰ See Symeonoglou 1985: 52–56, who counts at least 79 tombs "in the published record" from the LH period (52). The Ampheion, however, is unique in construction, since, as Symeonoglou notes, all other tombs in Thebes from this period are of the chamber type.

the earliest walls around the Kadmeia, and in fact probably predates the earliest stone walls, perhaps by as much as half a millennium.²¹ There is reason to believe that the hill was identified as the tomb of the twin founders of the city as early as the fifth century, and probably earlier. In the first century A.D. Pausanias reports this, relying on local guides whose information probably reflects a Theban tradition. But we do not rely solely on these unnamed sources. Xenophon refers to “the Ampheion” at *HG* 5.4.8 in describing some military movements around the city in 379/8 B.C. From his narrative it is clear that the monument so named is near, but not within, the Kadmeia; it is therefore likely to be the mound under consideration. The tomb is located with even greater precision, or apparent precision, in Aeschylus’ *Seven against Thebes*, where the scout describes to Eteokles the position of the Arkadian Parthenopaïos (526–28):

τὸν δὲ πέμπτον αὖ λέγω,
πέμπτησι προσταχθέντα Βορραΐαις πύλαις,
τύμβον κατ’ αὐτὸν Διογενοῦς Ἀμφίονος.²²

I speak now of the fifth man, stationed at the fifth, the Borraiai (or “northern”) gates, by the very tomb of Amphion, born of Zeus.

The locations and names of the traditional seven gates of Thebes have constituted a problem for archaeologists and philologists for over a century. This is not the place to enter a detailed discussion of all seven (or, in fact, all ten or so).²³ Here, we may focus on one: the Borraiai gates, near which the scout locates the tomb of Amphion. I believe that the name Borraiai, whether

²¹ The Kadmeia itself has evidence of a significant Mycenaean settlement: there are two phases of a large palace, in which have been found quantities of cylinder seals and other Mycenaean artifacts. From the Ampheion and other tombs, the walls, and the central palace we have a picture of the city during the Mycenaean period: fortifications, palace, and burials-*cum*-monuments. On the cylinder seals and other Mycenaean finds in Thebes see Symeonoglou 1973 and 1985: 39–59, which treat mostly the palace (“House of Kadmos”) on the Kadmeia and cult sites. Many of the Linear B tablets found in the palace site have been published in Spyropoulos, Chadwick, and Melena. Recently publication of new tablets, found in the early 1990s, has been initiated in Aravantinos, Godart, and Sacconi.

²² Text is West 1990.

²³ There are at least ten traditional names for the seven gates (culled from Aesch. *Sept.*, Eur. *Phoen.*, Paus., Apollod., and Stat. *Theb.*), if we omit the lists of Nonnos and Hyginus, which would add around ten more. For a good overview of the material in its complexity see Schober; for a recent discussion on the literary problem of the gates and their locations see Berman.

used as a proper name by the scout or not, is a name created by Aeschylus for his play, and does not denote an actual name of real gates from any period.²⁴ The name is certainly significant, however—perhaps for our purposes even more so if it is invented. Aeschylus locates Parthenopaios' attack to the north of the Kadmeia by placing the hero at a gate he calls "northern." In the play the Ampheion is set either outside these gates or close to them.²⁵ While this may seem obvious, we should remember that in the time of Aeschylus, the classical fortifications in Thebes encompassed an area that included the Ampheion.²⁶ In addition, there is no archaeological evidence that gates ever stood directly to the north of the Kadmeia, in a position either looking out directly towards the Ampheion hill or just north of it.²⁷ In *Seven against Thebes*, I suggest, Aeschylus has created for his own purposes a feature of Theban topography (the Borraiai gates) that would not have been observable to him

²⁴ See discussion in Berman 88–90 and 94–96. Even if the name is capitalized in the text (as many editors choose to have it), and was meant to be perceived as a proper name by both Eteokles and the audience, it can still be an Aeschylean fabrication, not the name of an actual gate. This type of fabrication is paralleled in the pseudo-cult name of Apollo ἑβδομαγέτας in line 800 of the same play. The *hapax* ἑβδομαγέτας was probably coined by Aeschylus by association, perhaps both with the god's title ἑβδομαγένης, explained as referring to his being born on the seventh day of the month, and with compound epithets such as νυμφηγέτης and μοιραγέτης. See Hutchinson ad loc. On this type of fabrication, a typically Aeschylean touch, see also Berman 91 and 95.

²⁵ Though κατά (528) implies close proximity but does not of itself require the meaning "outside," the events of the play support this reading. The prepositional phrase is more natural modifying the participle προσταχθέντα ("the fifth man ... stationed at ... by the tomb of ...") than specifically describing the position of the gates ("... by the Borraiai gates [which are] near the tomb of ..."). If the first is right, the tomb must be conceived of as outside the gates, since the scout describes the position of the Argive hero, who must himself be outside the walls. If the second interpretation is right, we can say only that the tomb is near the gates, either just inside or just outside; this spatial conjunction itself is sufficient to distance the monument from "Kadmian" features of the city.

²⁶ Symeonoglou 1985: 115 (fig. 3.6). His sites 71 and 253, both remains of fortifications, show that the walls extended well north of the Ampheion in the classical period.

²⁷ Prehistoric period: Symeonoglou 1985: 26–31, esp. fig. 2.5; classical period: Symeonoglou 1985: 117–22, esp. fig. 3.7 and site 52, where there is a Frankish tower but no evidence for a gate. Following Keramopoulos, Symeonoglou posits a single north-facing gate in the settlement of Hypothēbai, but no remains have been found (60–63). If the "Borraiai" gates ever existed, they will have become a monument after the play of Aeschylus made them so.

or his contemporaries.²⁸ The dramatist, by means of a strategic fabrication, thus sets the Ampheion in a space closely associated with the walls of the city as he draws them.

The action of the *Seven against Thebes* takes place within the citadel of Thebes, most probably within a palace that must be imagined to be inside the sacred center of the city, the Kadmeia. This is implicit in the first two words of the play, spoken by Eteokles, the competent leader of the city, which establish the importance of the founder Kadmos to the city: Κάδμου πολῖται, χρὴ λέγειν τὰ καίρια “Kadmos’ citizens, one must speak what is appropriate” (1). The citadel that Eteokles and his citizens inhabit is immediately identifiable as the foundation of Kadmos, and must be located on the Kadmeia.

But the story of Amphion and Zethos is of course present as well, through the invocation of the Ampheion, the monument named for one of the twins. By invoking this monument Aeschylus alludes to an aspect of the Theban tradition integral to his story: the legend of the builders of the very walls stormed by the army of the Seven. A gate in the walls near the monument to the twins allows the playwright to join the twins’ monument with the ultimate manifestation of their heroic accomplishments, the walls of Thebes. But the placement of the Ampheion near the Borraiai gates also allows Aeschylus to acknowledge both versions of the city’s foundation (by the twins and by Kadmos), while keeping details of the two stories spatially separate. The Ampheion is near, and probably outside, the walls (clearly to the north of the Kadmeia, as both visible topography and the gate name “Borraiai” attest), while the Kadmeia is inside the walls, at the city’s center.

Aeschylus’ treatment of the double foundation may be contrasted with that of the mythographers, who order the stories chronologically (though not always with the same results, as was discussed above). The spatial association may be functionally equivalent to the chronological and genealogical ordering of mythic stories by mythographers, but the ordering achieved by Aeschylus is of a different kind; the physical instantiations of the two foundations stand literally side by side in space and time. Instead of contradicting one another, the two stories, in Aeschylus’ play, are complementary.²⁹

²⁸ Or, if observable, was so under a different name. The fact that the name Borraiai does not remain as a gate name in other traditional lists points to this (either wholesale or denominative) fabrication.

²⁹ For the importance of the narrative context surrounding the telling of traditional stories and the distinction between the mythographers and the earlier poetic tradition in this respect see esp. Detienne, Calame 1991 and 2003: 1–34. The distinction is explored further below.

LOGOGRAPHERS, MYTHOGRAPHERS, MYTHOLOGISTS, AND A PYRAMID

So far we have examined the early literary evidence for the two foundation narratives. On the one hand there is Kadmos, the *oikistês*, who has traveled from afar to found a city under the authority of the Delphic god. On the other, the twins Amphion and Zethos, sons of Zeus and Antiope, local heroes, set walls around Thebes to fortify it against attackers, thus creating the characteristic feature associated with the city for centuries. In the early poetic tradition the narratives are kept separate in a variety of ways, while Pherekydes begins the project, carried further by later mythographers, of combining the stories into a single narrative entity. In what remains I show that the two stories are two sides of the same coin: the foundation of a city as narrated by a “more indigenous” Mycenaean Greek population, and as narrated by inhabitants in a later period, who seem to have had contact with cultures to the east of Greece. I begin with a more detailed look at the causes and consequences of the combined narrative.

Hekataios of Miletos, the earliest Greek mythographer on record, wrote the following in the introduction to his *Genealogiai* perhaps around 500 B.C.:³⁰

τάδε γράφω, ὥς μοι δοκεῖ ἀληθέα εἶναι· οἱ γὰρ Ἑλλήνων λόγοι πολλοί
τε καὶ γελοῖοι, ὥς ἐμοὶ φαίνονται, εἰσίν.³¹

I write what I think is true, for the stories of the Greeks appear to me to be many and laughable.

The efforts of Hekataios, Pherekydes, and other early logographers and prose genealogists continued a long process of cataloguing and organizing traditional stories, most of a local nature. The advent of prose as a means of rational exposition went hand in hand with this development. The Milesian Hekataios, as is apparent even from the short fragment above, was concerned with creating a system of λόγοι that made sense to him, writing for a public that was increasingly interested in rational explanations of their cultural and physical world.³² As λόγοι (and μῦθοι; the term is not used in the modern

³⁰ His date comes from Herodotos (5.36, 124–26), who describes his role in planning the Ionian revolt of 500–494 B.C.

³¹ *FGrHist* 1F1a, Fowler 2000 Hecataeus 1.

³² That the logographic genealogical tradition in prose differs, at least in methods of evaluation of material, from the epic genealogies upon which they must, in part, be based, was observed convincingly by Gomme in an article that is still challenged by those wishing to connect Kadmos to the east in a palpable way (on which see below). He writes of the prose logographic tradition (71), “It must be remembered that the Cyclic epic and the Hesiodic poems were in all probability extant at a time far later than the majority of

sense of “myths,” at least consistently, until Heyne in the 18th century³³) began to be removed from their original contexts of enunciation and were placed into handbooks by logographers and mythographers (again, the modern distinction seems to come later than the terminology), the narratives lost the information most important to understanding how, and why, they were produced. We do not know how, or even whether, Hekataios treated the foundation of Thebes. Perhaps his answer to the problem of competing stories would have been similar to that of Pherekydes, who, as we saw, placed the story of Amphion and Zethos before the reign of Kadmos. The narratives must, in the hands of a mythographer-genealogist, relate directly to each other, in addition to the act of foundation itself and the audience for which they are being retold. Most later mythographers and some universal historians (including Diodoros³⁴) chose to place Kadmos first, as the original founder of the city of Thebes, and Amphion and Zethos as distant claimants to the throne who build the city’s walls. In such treatments the two foundation narratives of Thebes are considered part of the *same narrative*, instead of two distinct narratives, each with its own message (though perhaps a similar origin).

This shift in categorization concurrent with the rise of genealogy and especially prose logography/mythography represents the beginning of a permanent change in the understanding of early Greek mythic discourse. If the mythographers went to great lengths to rationalize and systematize the mass of stories that had come down to them through various media, their product, the mythological handbook, has become an indispensable tool for the modern critic of “myth.” One now tends to use classical “myth” as a store-

the writers from whom come our fragments of the Catalogues and of the Logographi; and it is entirely improbable that trustworthy authorities, like Pausanias or the Scholiasts on Apollonius or Euripides’ *Phoenissae*, who quote Hesiod when they wish to, should quote Hellanicus or Pherecydes as an authority for a story or a detail, if those authors were only writing down in prose the accounts already found in the Epic,” and later (242), “It is clear, I think, that the main object of the chief writers of this class was not reproducing local records of epic legends in prose, but re-arrangement (which would of itself imply much correction) and, above all, criticism.” I would add that where epic (Hesiodic) genealogy is unconcerned with the occasional inconsistency created by the method, exposition in non-fictional prose is, by nature, occupied with eradicating such γελοῖα.

³³ Calame 2003: 5 discusses Heyne’s role in creating the modern term “myth.”

³⁴ On the genre of universal history and the combined synchronic/diachronic narrative technique it employs see Wheeler. His discussion of the genre and Diodoros’ κατὰ γένος style of narration might suggest that the early Greek mythographers, in this case, at least, are in fact engaged in writing narrative that qualifies as “historical.” See especially 178 and 189.

house of corroborative evidence for literary parallels or for bits of detail that fill in our understanding of artistic representations, architectural features, or archaeological material. As a preliminary critique of this practice, let us return to the Ampheion, this time seen from the perspective of a relatively recent theory concerning its presence and composition, to examine how interpretations of this monument can be influenced by the mythographic tradition.

In 1971 a more systematic excavation and exploration of the hill than had been undertaken previously was completed. The findings were reported by Spyropoulos in 1972 and summarized by Michaud in the same year.³⁵ Spyropoulos discovered that the Ampheion consists, in fact, of a series of stepped layers, the lowest of rock, and the uppermost of baked brick; the hill is, in fact, a man-made stepped structure.³⁶ The uppermost section of brick houses the cist tomb itself, which had been robbed already in antiquity, to judge from the state of materials within it. Ceramic finds seem to date the structure to the Early Helladic II period (middle of the third millennium B.C.),³⁷ while finds from within the tomb chamber are a bit later, dating from the Middle Helladic period (early second millennium) down to the Mycenaean period (Late Helladic III, 14th to 12th centuries B.C.). We have, in effect, a man-made hill that looks suspiciously like a pyramid, built perhaps between 2500 and 1500 B.C. It was probably revered as a monumental tomb by the Mycenaeans who inhabited Thebes towards the end of the second millennium.

Spyropoulos compared this data with historical and literary evidence. He noted that the period in which the Ampheion was built is roughly that of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt (2055–1650), when Egyptian Thebes gained pre-eminence as the capital of Egypt for the first time, and that the tomb chamber of the Ampheion resembles an Egyptian *mastaba* tomb.³⁸ He also observed other technological advances in Boiotia in this period, especially the drain-

³⁵ Michaud; Spyropoulos 1972; full excavation report in Spyropoulos 1981.

³⁶ Spyropoulos 1972: 16–22; Spyropoulos 1981: *passim* for full details.

³⁷ See West 1997: xxvi for recent comment on Aegean Helladic dating from a Hellenist's perspective. His placement of EH II is slightly later than that of Spyropoulos.

³⁸ Spyropoulos 1972: 20, 25–26. Egyptian Thebes (Egyptian Waset, modern Luxor), called ἐκατόμυλοι at *Il.* 9.383, was already a prominent upper Egyptian city by the period of the Old Kingdom (2686–2181) but became the capital during parts of the eleventh dynasty (the beginning of the Middle Kingdom) and retained this role in the New Kingdom (1550–1069). See Redford s.v. *Thebes*. For the *mastaba* type tomb structures see Shaw and Nicholson s.v. *mastaba*. In such tombs, however, the burial chamber would usually be within the pyramid, not atop it (an observation for which I owe thanks to John Buckler and Don Redford).

ing of lake Kopais.³⁹ Armed with the handbooks and notations of scholiasts, he then concluded that the legend of Kadmos must represent the settlement of central Greece by Egyptians, who brought their technology (especially their hydraulic expertise) with them.⁴⁰ The Ampheion itself, a striking example of an Egyptian pyramid in the heart of mainland Greece, would then be a physical expression of this historic migration, and a striking expression of the truth behind a version of one of the foundation stories of Thebes: Kadmos, coming from the city in Egypt with a hundred gates, founds the new citadel with its legendary seven. The argument was taken up and expanded by Martin Bernal, especially in the second volume of his *Black Athena*.⁴¹

Spyropoulos' neat explanation, however, treats the foundation of Thebes as a single narrative entity, and thus has much in common with the mythographers' chronological ordering of the foundations discussed above. It pays little attention to how these stories were conceived and how they interacted with each other in the early poetic tradition. For Spyropoulos (as for the mythographers) Amphion and Zethos are part of the narrative of Kadmos' act of foundation: the builders of Thebes' walls were memorialized in a tomb built by the Kadmeians, transplanted Egyptians. In fact, Spyropoulos takes his conflation further than this. He goes on to state that Amphion and Zethos may have been contemporaries of Kadmos, perhaps even his assistants.⁴²

³⁹ Spyropoulos 1972: 22–24. The draining of the lake, which had a surface area of around 200,000 square meters, was a huge undertaking, probably completed in the second millennium B.C. It has traditionally been thought to be the work of people who migrated to Greece from the north.

⁴⁰ The most important pieces of literary evidence are Diod. 1.23.4 and a scholion to Lycophron 1206 (both mentioned above, n. 10). The scholiast identifies Kadmos as a king of Egyptian Thebes and a builder of gates. For another discussion of the Egyptian origins of Kadmos (and a skeptical conclusion on their validity) see Levin.

⁴¹ Bernal (1991: 128–33, 497–501, also 17) is inclined to accept the suggestion of Spyropoulos, but he seems more convinced by the evidence for irrigational development in the area of Lake Kopais than by the presence of what he calls a “pyramid” (128). Spyropoulos' hypothesis is but a small piece in Bernal's larger argument, which leads him to assert that an Egyptian suzerainty in the third millennium in Boiotia is “quite possible” (152).

⁴² Spyropoulos 1972: 25. Bernal, on the other hand, accepts the two stories, but would have that of Amphion and Zethos reflect the Egyptian phase of colonization of Boiotia in the period of the Middle Kingdom (roughly contemporary with the construction of the Ampheion). This seems unlikely, especially considering the linguistic evidence to the contrary (most importantly the name of the city and the singular Thebe, wife of Zethos, words that appear to be Greek and have Mycenaean precedent; see below), and still relies on a conjunction of the two foundation stories, since only the Kadmos story has an Egyptian element in the literary tradition.

This all may in fact be correct; there are no sure proofs when considering this type of material. Spyropoulos brings to bear much evidence for Egyptian cult in Thebes, including, above all, a shrine to Zeus Ammon, which housed, according to Pausanias, an image dedicated by Pindar.⁴³ There is certainly much in the mythographic tradition associating the two cities, and some connecting Kadmos with Egypt. But this evidence in its entirety (including the archaeological record, at least insofar as it is represented by its interpretation through the years) is colored by the genealogical and mythographic tradition and the conflation of narratives that is its stock in trade. Seen from the standpoint of the early Greek tradition, Spyropoulos' theory engages in a physical conflation of two distinct narratives, based on the mythographers' earlier chronological ordering of them. He maps the two stories literally and physically on top of each other in an effort to explain a physical feature of the landscape of Thebes. In doing so, he erases the boundary between these two stories that Aeschylus, for example, delineates so well.⁴⁴

THE TWO FOUNDATIONS OF THEBES

"... every new logos in Thebes proves in one way or another to be yet another version of the *arkhaios* logos."⁴⁵

Froma Zeitlin wrote these words in 1990 in defining the space of Thebes on the Athenian stage as a place of extreme "Otherness," a place where identities are confounded and confused. For Zeitlin, Thebes is a city where time moves in a circular pattern, not a linear one. We have already seen that the two foundation stories are separated in a variety of ways in the early poetic tradition, only to be conflated in a prose tradition interested in linear and rationalized narrative progression. In what follows, through a closer look at a few salient details of the language of these narratives, we shall see that as Thebes is represented through its foundations, mythic time again seems to repeat itself. The narratives of foundation, though they show affinities with different compositional contexts (one Mycenaean, one archaic), each offer a representation of the same event.

Let us look for a moment at the traditional names of the inhabitants of the Boiotian city. They are often called Kadmeians in Homer and early epic,

⁴³ Spyropoulos 1972: 25; Paus. 9.16.1.

⁴⁴ The reliance on a "mythographic" understanding of these traditional narratives in turn opens the door for arguments such as Bernal's, which can be inattentive to the contexts surrounding the production and consumption of the stories they use as evidence.

⁴⁵ Zeitlin 154. Her article on Thebes as a setting for dramatic action on the Athenian stage is also seminal to an understanding of the role of the city in traditional narratives off stage. Her discussion of "circular time" is on pp. 152–53.

almost surely receiving their name from the Semitic root *qdm* seen in Ugaritic in words referring to the east, and in the Hebrew *qēdem* meaning either “east” or related to words meaning “ancient, of old.”⁴⁶ In Greek the name Kadmos is most likely a singularized and personalized form based upon the ethnonyms *Καδμεῖοι* or *Καδμεῖωνες*, which as collectives or ethnic adjectives are found in the early Greek tradition much more frequently than the singular personal name.⁴⁷ One may compare the Hebrew plural *qadmonim*, which occurs earlier in the book of Job and other Semitic texts.⁴⁸ And of course there are Kadmeians in Homer, but no Kadmos as founder of Thebes there. This suggests that the singular name is not that of a historical figure, but instead represents a personalized linguistic construct signifying ethnic identity. In addition, there is no evidence of the name (singular or plural) in the Mycenaean texts.⁴⁹ The linguistic evidence seems to reflect a connection at some relatively early but post-Mycenaean date between the inhabitants of Thebes and peoples from the east, but we cannot look beyond the narrative of the Kadmian foundation for clues as to when, or how, that interaction or integration occurred. The name “Thebans” (*Θηβαῖοι*), on the other hand, is an adjectival formation from the place-name *Θῆβαι* (occasionally *Θῆβη* in Homer). It is found more frequently in Homer and Hesiod as a place-name than in its adjectival, or ethnic, form.⁵⁰ In addition, unlike the *Καδμ-* root, *Θηβ-*, whether used in

⁴⁶ West 1997: 449. See also Bernal 1991: 497–501, who himself cites Astour 147–52. Vian 156 associates the root with the form *κέκασμαι* (perfect of *καίνυμι*) but even this does not preclude a Semitic origin.

⁴⁷ Searches of the *TLG* show forms of the plural as an ethnic appellation occurring eight times in Homer, the singular proper name once. In Hesiod, the plural adjective appears twice (once in the *Scutum*), as does the singular proper name (both in *Theogony*); there are also three instances of forms of *Καδμηίς*, two of which clearly mean “daughter of Kadmos,” and should thus be associated with the proper name of the founding hero, and one functioning as an ethnic adjective modifying the word “land.”

⁴⁸ West 1997: 449; Astour 152–59.

⁴⁹ I owe this information to John Buckler, who informs me that according to Aravantinos the name “Kadmos” has not appeared in any Mycenaean tablets from Thebes to date.

⁵⁰ In Homer there are 17 instances of words with the *Θηβ-* root as the proper name of the Boiotian city, only six of the adjectival ethnic form (all in the genitive, describing Teiresias), and one Thebaïos, father of Eniopheus. The root also appears in Homer in the names of the famous Egyptian city and of a town in the Troad, birthplace of Andromache. Hesiod has three instances of the Boiotian city’s proper name (seven counting the *Scutum*), along with the epithet of Herakles *Θηβαγενέος*, and, most significantly, none of the ethnic adjective from this root. This evidence shows that the adjectival form of the *Καδμ-* root is more likely to refer to inhabitants of Thebes than a form of the root *Θηβ-*, especially in Hesiod, who may be representing a Boiotian tradition more directly than the Panhellenic Homeric poems do.

a locative or as the root of an ethnic adjective, has a Mycenaean pedigree.⁵¹ Its etymology is obscure, but the origin of the name seems to lie in Indo-European rather than Semitic or Egyptian roots.⁵²

The two names, one clearly based on a Semitic root and the other with a Mycenaean pedigree and probable Indo-European origin, may reflect the two traditions concerning the Boiotian city represented in the mythic narratives. The term “Kadmeians” seems closely associated with a population, and is found in its earliest forms almost exclusively in the plural; “Thebes/Theban,” on the other hand, based on the name of the place itself, has older roots as a place-name in central Greece.⁵³

The two narratives of the foundation of Thebes, as they stand in the early poetic tradition up to and including Aeschylus, appear to be accounts of the same act created at two different times. We hear in one version a reflection of contact or even integration with people from the east (Καδμεῖοι): people from afar are given sanction by a god, overcome obstacles, and found a city on a sacred spot far from their homeland.⁵⁴ The founder-hero, Kadmos, gains his name from the collective ethnicity of this people. But we also have the act of foundation told from what appears to be a more indigenous perspective, about a place (Θήβαι) whose name has much roots on the Greek mainland.

⁵¹ Before the new tablets were made available in Aravantinos, Godart, and Sacconi, the place-name was inferred from the form *te-qa-de* (MY X 508; TH Wu 51.b, 65.b, 96.b; -qa- represents the labiovelar *gw* = *β* in Greek), which appears to show the name of the city with the allative suffix */-de/*. See Bartonek (41 and *passim*), who has no doubt that the word is I-E in origin. Cf. also Mycenaean *te-qa-ja* (KN Ep 359), a feminine adjective that probably means “Theban woman,” and the masculine proper name or adjective *auto-te-qa-jo* (TH Ug 4). The new Mycenaean tablets from Pelopidas Street in Thebes have the unambiguous form *te-qa-i* (TH Ft 140.1), a locative of the name of the city, on a tablet with other locative place names, making the identification secure (see esp. the commentary of Aravantinos, Godart, and Sacconi, 263–64).

⁵² Bartonek 45 writes that the Mycenaean name has “no real parallel in the Egyptian or Semitic phonology.” Though Bernal 1991: 498 calls the name “probably Afroasiatic,” there are no good parallels in Orel and Stolbova. Chantraine s.v. Θήβαι reports “pas d’étymologie,” and Frisk s.v. Θήβαι cites Kretschmer, following Meyer, who suggests the Italic *teba* (“hill”) as a parallel, along with Carian τῶβα. On the Italic form *teba* see Varro *R.* 3.1.6, the ultimate source of the Italic interpretation (he writes that it is found *in Sabinis*), and Conway 1: 358.

⁵³ A similar pattern can be identified in the language of tragedies treating Thebes. See Sommerstein 432–36, who discusses the trend and suggests (435) that Aeschylus avoids the name of the city in the *Seven* for “artistic reasons having to do with the particular play.”

⁵⁴ In the process, incorporating another tried-and-true feature of many Greek foundations, autochthony (via the sown dragon’s teeth), as a means for becoming established in their new locale.

Amphion and Zethos, local heroes, born from Zeus, fortify the city against a foreign host. Traditionally Amphion marries Niobe, and Zethos Thebe, attaching the “Hellenic” aspects of the city’s early tradition to this story, not to that of Kadmos. The place-name, with its Mycenaean pedigree, is married into this tradition, making it, at the least, “more indigenous” than the story of Kadmos.

“More indigenous” needs explanation. While the narratives derive from a single act of foundation, it would seem that the story of Amphion and Zethos does, in fact, reflect an older Greek tradition.⁵⁵ It is the version found in Homer, and appears linguistically to be the “indigenous” foundation. Pherekydes places it earlier than the story of Kadmos, as well. But there are also other reasons to draw this conclusion. Twin-foundations are common in the Indo-European mythic tradition from an early date. The foundation of Rome by the twins Remus and Romulus (one of two Roman foundation narratives, in fact) offers a parallel to the foundation by Amphion and Zethos.⁵⁶ And of course the Indo-European connection is strengthened by the linguistic evidence from the Linear B tablets, especially the newest finds from Thebes.

The narrative of the “Kadmian” foundation, on the other hand, shows great affinity with foundation narratives of colonies prevalent in the archaic and classical periods, such as those of Kyrene on the north coast of Africa or Naxos in Sicily, especially in its reliance on an *oikistês* and on the intervention of the Delphic oracle.⁵⁷ While Thebes is not, of course, so late a foundation, it has been noted that such narratives were sometimes treated anachronistically in the Greek tradition, and were applied to foundations even of *metropoleis*.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ This contradicts the conclusions made from the linguistic evidence by Bernal. Bernal’s own taxonomy of traditions of colonization (1987: 84), however, implies (though only in a loosely thematic way) the chronology proposed here.

⁵⁶ The Indo-European tradition of foundational twins is well documented; see the work of Puhvel, Ward, and on Remus and Romulus, the study of Wiseman, which has an especially valuable introduction.

⁵⁷ Kyrene was founded in the latter half of the 7th century. Naxos, founded in 734, was the earliest colony in Sicily. On Kyrene see Malkin, especially 60–69, and Calame 2003 *passim*; on Naxos, on which there is much less literary material, but whose foundation narrative shows some of the same traits as that of Kyrene (and of Thebes as founded by Kadmos), see Malkin 19 on Apollo *Arkhegetês*, 175–76 on cultic space in the colony, and 256–57 on the founder-hero Thoukles.

⁵⁸ Malkin 4, “Whereas modern historians, unlike ancient Greeks, use the criterion of the *polis* to distinguish between Greek colonization which took place from the 8th to the 4th century and settlements from preceding periods, Greeks in the classical period seem to have conceived of the latter in terms of the former and applied the terminology of the *apoikia* (‘colony’) to foundations in general.”

The story of Kadmos, then, appears to be more a product of the cultural milieu associated with the boom in colonization that took place in the archaic period.

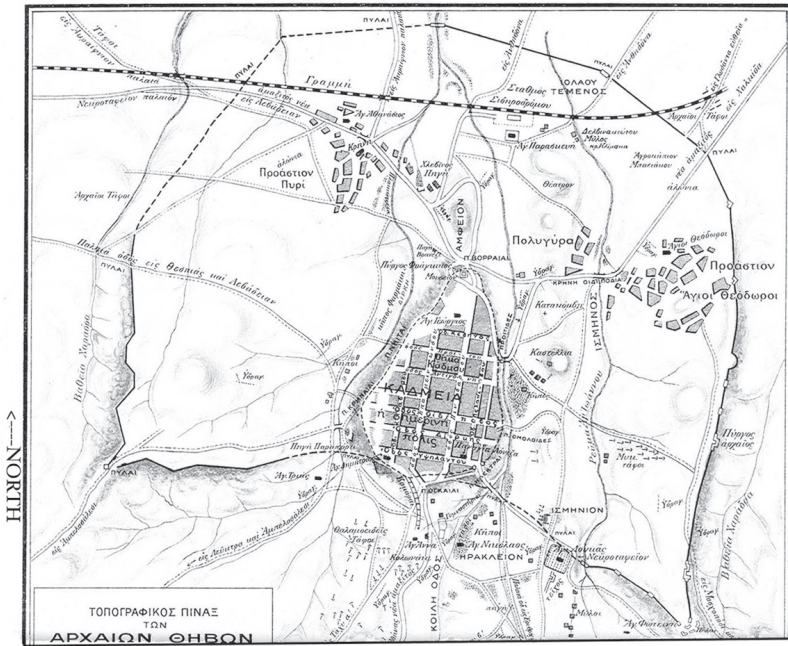
When all the evidence is taken together, it makes some sense to conclude that the “Theban” twin-foundation represents an Indo-European motif that has older roots in central Greece than the archaic-style foundation narrative of Kadmos and the Kadmeians.⁵⁹ The literary tradition thus contains a double narrative of the city’s foundation that reflects two quite different cultural settings, Mycenaean and archaic, in different ways. They are, in a sense, two narrative perspectives, composed at two different times, on the same event.

These narratives are able to coexist in the early Greek poetic tradition, without contradiction, because the traditional material they recount is not itself a diachronic entity. It is the *act* of foundation alone.⁶⁰ Since Homeric poetry lacks the Kadmian story of foundation, it perhaps most accurately reflects the earliest tradition of the city’s founding.⁶¹ Aeschylus, in *Seven against Thebes*, can refer to both stories by placing them in different spaces in the Thebes he constructs on stage because they represent different aspects of the city and its defense as he wishes to portray them. As the city is founded and refounded over time by narratives with reference to new cultural exigencies, the poetic tradition incorporates, rather than edits, the multiple versions of foundation. But the earliest prose genealogists and mythographers extract the two stories from their contexts and relate them to one another in different ways. Perhaps at the point when a Hekataios or Pherekydes considers how traditional acts relate to *each other* and expounds the idea in connected prose, we witness the glimmer in the eye heralding the birth of modern “mythology.”

⁵⁹ There is, of course, a prominent Indo-European motif incorporated into the Kadmos story: the killing of the dragon (see Watkins, esp. 357–413 on Greek material). The presence of an I-E motif in the Kadmos story need not be indicative of an earlier stage of narrative production, but the absence from the twins’ story of narrative features that can be associated with a later cultural context (that is, the archaic-style foundation) strongly suggests the chronological precedence of the Amphion and Zethos story.

⁶⁰ See again Neschke-Hentschke, and above.

⁶¹ An archaic-era composition of the Kadmian story, as proposed here, does not preclude its inclusion in the Homeric poems, of course. Perhaps its absence, then, can be counted as a conservative feature in the poems’ composition (though it may, of course, mean only that there was no good opportunity for the details to be included).



Map 1. Thebes, according to Keramopoulos 1917. The map shows a ring of walls around the Kadmeia along with the wider circuit of classical fortifications. Note that Keramopoulos includes gates labeled “Borraiai” (Π. ΒΟΡΡΑΙΑΙ) to the north of the Kadmeia, south of the Ampheion hill, though there is no evidence other than the play *Seven against Thebes* attesting to gates at that location.

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