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**Kadmeians, Thebans, and the Foundation of Thebes in Early Greek Epic**

The mythic tradition supplies the city of Boiotian Thebes with two seemingly distinct foundations, one by Kadmos and one by the twins Amphion and Zethos. While this is often observed, it remains an anomaly that has not been sufficiently explained or appreciated. This paper examines representations of the foundation and the inhabitants of the Boiotian city in the early Greek epic tradition. The two foundations are present in the Homeric (and possibly Hesiodic) poems, but in different ways – only one of the two, that of Amphion and Zethos, appears in narrative form. I argue, based on a lexical analysis of the vocabulary used to describe the city and its inhabitants along with a comparison of the two stories with other Greek foundation narratives, that the representation of these foundations in the epic tradition reflects two distinct contexts of composition, one Mycenaean and one archaic.

Kadmos is mentioned only once in the Homeric poems, solely as the father of Ino, not as the founder of Thebes (*Odyssey* 5.333). Instead, the Amphion and Zethos narrative is the primary story of Theban foundation (*Odyssey* 11.260-265, especially 263). Hesiod's *Eoiai*, however, shows that the tradition of a foundation by Kadmos may have existed early enough to be included in oral epic. There, Kadmos was most likely separated from Amphion and Zethos by several generations (see West 1985, 83), but the foundation stories were not placed in direct relation to each other, if Kadmos was present at all.

Collectives or ethnonyms based on the *kadm-* root (i.e. *Kadmeioi* or *Kadmeiônes*) are found in the early epics much more frequently than the singular personal name "Kadmos." This, coupled with Kadmos' absence as founder in Homer, suggests that his name represents a personalized linguistic construction signifying ethnic identity. The name "Thebans" (*Thêbaioi*), on the other hand, is an adjectival formation from the toponym Thêbai (occasionally *Thêbê* in Homer). It is found more frequently in Homer and Hesiod as a place-name than in its adjectival, or ethnic, form. In addition, unlike the *kadm-* root, *thêb-*, whether used in a locative or as the root of an ethnic adjective, has a Mycenaean pedigree (see most recently the tablets from Thebes published by Aravantinos, Godart, and Sacconi 2001, which show the locative *te-qa-i*, TH Ft 140.1).

Thus while the Homeric and Hesiodic terminology conveys the ethnicity of the inhabitants of Thebes ("Kadmeians") – perhaps referring, as does the Semitic root *qdm* from which the term derives, to people from the east (see West 1997, 449) – their city name (Thebes or Thebe) has precedent in Mycenaean toponyms. The distinction can be taken further: in the mythic tradition, Zethos marries Thebe, connecting the Mycenaean toponym to the story of the twins' foundation. Their story also reflects a well-documented Indo-European motif of foundations by twins. On the other hand, the story of Kadmos, with its strong parallels with archaic-style foundation narratives, such as reliance on an *oikistês* and on the oracle at Delphi, seems a later narrative construction. It was either avoided by the Homeric tradition as it survives, or perhaps was not yet fully articulated when the texts of the poems we have were codified.