AN EXPERIENCE-CENTERED APPROACH TO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN FOUNDLING NARRATIVES

A Thesis
Presented
to the Faculty of
California State University, Chico

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Anthropology

by
© Tanya Kieselbach 2011
Fall 2011
AN EXPERIENCE-CENTERED APPROACH TO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN FOUNDLING NARRATIVES

A Thesis

by

Tanya Kieselbach

Fall 2011

APPROVED BY THE DEAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND VICE PROVOST FOR RESEARCH:

Eun K. Park, Ph.D.

APPROVED BY THE GRADUATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Georgia Fox, Ph.D.  William Collins, Ph.D., Chair
Graduate Coordinator

Jesse Dizard, Ph.D.
PUBLICATION RIGHTS

No portion of this thesis may be reprinted or reproduced in any manner unacceptable to the usual copyright restrictions without the written permission of the author.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication Rights</th>
<th>iii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Traditional Narratives</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Analytic Approaches to Traditional Narratives</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Methodology</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Infanticide, Exposure, Neglect, and Adoption</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Raised by Wolves?</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Foundling Narratives, Texts, and Literacy in the Eastern Mediterranean</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. The Greco-Roman World</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. Southwest Asia</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. Dynastic Egypt</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI. Conclusions</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References Cited</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

AN EXPERIENCE-CENTERED APPROACH TO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN FOUNDLING NARRATIVES

by

© Tanya Kieselbach 2011

Master of Arts in Anthropology

California State University, Chico

Fall 2011

This thesis examines aspects of the relationship between folklore and social history, specifically the divergences of these narratives, from the primary theoretical perspective of Historical Particularism, as proposed by Franz Boas. The narratives and the socio-historical context explored in this study include foundling narratives and social histories of the Eastern Mediterranean and Southwest Asia.

The research questions asked in this study are these: “are differential social histories at the root of divergences in traditional narratives?” and “can the experience-centered approach to folklore, as developed by David Hufford and William Dewan, be applied to narratives that emerged in antiquity?”

In order to answer these question, the study first compares foundling narratives of ancient Greece and Rome, Southwest Asia, and Dynastic Egypt with their
respective social histories, and then compares the results of the first step in this study with each other.

Agreement between socio-cultural practices and themes expressed in narratives confirms the validity of the narrator’s experiences as a force in the emergence of traditional narratives. Discernable divergences in, both, socio-cultural practices and narratives in a comparison between the three regions involved in this study confirms social history as a factor in the development of divergences of traditional narratives and the appropriateness of Historical Particularism as a theoretical approach to folklore.

An important implication of this study is that it points to the value of folklore as a potential information source on socio-cultural practices and experiences.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Foundling Narratives

Societies of Greco-Roman, southwest Asian, and Egyptian antiquity created many narratives of exposed children: children who were abandoned by their parents, recovered and raised by another family (including animal families), and who often attained great status (or at least notoriety) on account of their unusual abilities and/or insights later in adulthood. Some of the best-known mythical, legendary, or historical heroes of these societies, such as Gilgamesh, Sargon the Great, Horus, Moses, Oedipus, Cyrus the Great, and a number of the children of various Greek and Roman deities, claim such a miraculous story of survival.¹

Significant Differences Between Narratives

These foundling narratives show significant differences in their treatment of the topic: in some narratives, the infants were exposed with great cruelty, but those in other narratives were treated with care and concern for their survival. The mothers were active parents in Egyptian narratives, but in Greco-Roman versions they were completely at the mercy of their fathers or some other male relative. Can these and other variations

¹ Redford lists thirty different stories revolving around this theme (1967: 211-218). Drews wrote that this “kind of story has been a favorite with people of every era and nationality” (1974:388).
in the overlapping narrative traditions be functions of differences in the social histories of Greco-Roman, southwest Asian, and Egyptian antiquity?

**Literary Analysis versus Contextualization of Narratives**

In “*The Literary Motif of the Exposed Child,*” Redford observed that “the social phenomenon which gave rise to the motif is the exposure of infants” (1967:211). This raises general questions about the dynamic between a socio-cultural tradition or practice, and traditional narratives. Do narratives, indeed, reflect the social histories of their narrators? If so, what are the mechanisms by which such practices become integrated into narratives? Belief studies (Hufford 1995) and UFO folklore studies (Dewan 2006) have demonstrated a dialectic between the observations and experiences of narrators, and the development of bodies of folklore. This dialectic offers an explanatory model for the integration of social history into narratives. These observations have not been explored in relation to foundling narratives and their distribution in antiquity.

Literary studies of foundling narratives tend to focus on “lines of descent” and relationships between narratives in the manner of a family tree (Redford 1967; Lewis 1990). The methodology based on a literary approach assumes that dissemination is the shaping force behind these narratives. Franz Boas proposed that dissemination is an important factor in the creation of a body of folklore if contact between narrators can be documented, but that the increasing divergence in narratives concomitant with increasing geographical distance between narrators is due to historical causes (1974:144, 145).

Unlike literary approaches, this research takes a historical particularist perspective on foundling narratives, and foregrounds the narratives’ relationships to their
social histories. The research is a comparative study of three separate regions that will explore the relationships between narratives and their regional socio-historical context. The agreements between the divergences in the narratives and the divergences in the socio-cultural milieu from which they emerged will demonstrate how historical causes affect regional variations of this widespread narrative form.

Research Outline

This research assumes traditional narratives can be approached as productive sources of information about their socio-cultural, geographical, and historical contexts. However, this is not an investigation into the historical accuracies of individual narratives as they relate to events attributed to specific actors and places. Rather it is an inquiry into patterns of socio-cultural practices and their relationship to the narratives. This research will follow two basic strands of evidence. On one hand, narratives are contextualized. Pertinent information regarding the social histories of their regions of origin is outlined. Narratives are evaluated against sociological, ethnographic, archaeological and textual evidence of infanticide and exposure for their descriptions of experiences and observations of their narrators and for cohesion between regional variations of narratives and socio-cultural practices. Second, the narratives are examined in the light of experience-centered approaches to folklore that focus on the encoding of information in narrative form and the dialectic between folklore and narrators.

This research brings anthropological considerations into the analysis of folklore by incorporating analytic approaches that focus on experiences and agendas of narrators, and by contextualizing the narratives in the socio-cultural and historical
circumstances of their regions of emergence. Significant overlap between the narratives and their socio-cultural and historical context would support the hypothesis of the positive relationship between narrators’ experiences and the development of folklore, and would also support the hypothesis of the dynamic between the variations in narratives and their socio-historical contexts.
CHAPTER II

TRADITIONAL NARRATIVES

Categories of Folklore

The narratives discussed in this research fall into several standard folklore categories, such as the 'Myth of Horus,' the 'Epic of Gilgamesh,' or the ‘Sargon Legend.’ This chapter discusses issues associated with differentiating traditional narratives into genres such as myth, legend, epic, saga, and folktale. As Franz Boas (1858-1942) pointed out, the formal distinctions between genres of narratives have led to the separation of related narratives and “unnecessary difficulties” (1914:377). Donald Redford wrote that “the myth-maker and the story-teller are simply drawing on a common pool of devices, a common store of literary motifs” (1967:209). Fortunately, formal distinctions between myth, legend, and folktale are of limited relevance for the purpose of this research because the focus of the research is the relationship between narrative and social history, rather than on formal characteristics of narratives. However, these terms are relevant because they are used by folklore scholars and they have structured folklore research and discourse, and folklore theory. Therefore these formal distinctions need to be clarified ahead of the discussion of theoretical approaches to folklore.
The Motif

This research focuses on narratives that share a specific motif: the motif of the exposed infant, regardless of whether the narrative is commonly classified as legend, folktale, myth, or epic. A “motif” is defined as “the smallest element in a tale having a power to persist in tradition” (Lewis 1980:150).

Legends

Legends are “traditions, whether oral or written, which relate to the fortunes of real people in the past, or which describe events, not necessarily human, that are said to have occurred in real places.” Legends are a blend of fact and fiction, because if they simply described persons and events they would be histories (Frazer 1921:Book I, xxiii-xxix).

Legend is defined as “story (true or invented) handed down from the past, myth; such stories collectively” (Allen 1989:418); and as “A story of life, as of a saint, or a collection of such stories. Any story coming down from the past, esp. one popularly taken as historical though not verifiable; also such stories collectively” (Webster). The Oxford Dictionary defines saga as “a long story of heroic achievement, esp. medieval tale of Scandinavian heroes; series of connected books telling story of family etc.” (Allen 1989:658); Webster defines it as “1. A medieval story, historical or legendary or both, of an Icelandic hero or family. 2. A modern epiclike narrative like an Icelandic saga” (Webster). Epics, in turn, are defined as “1. a long poem narrating adventures or achievements of a heroic figure or nation; book or film based on this. 2. of or like an epic; grand, heroic” (Allen 1989:246); and “adj. 1. Designating, pertaining to, or characteristic
of, a kind of narrative poetry dealing with heroic action and written in elevated style. 2. Heroic in scale or mold; as, epic actions. n. 1. An epic poem; also, an epiclike theme or work of art. 2. [cap] = Old Ionic (Webster). The story of Gilgamesh, for instance, is called “the Epic of Gilgamesh” because of the ‘heroic’ scale of his adventures. The term ‘saga,’ specifically, is more associated with Nordic narratives and does not feature in this research.

Folktales

Folktales are not primarily concerned with ‘serious’ preoccupations; “and their first appeal lies in their narrative interest” (Kirk 1970:37). Value judgments as to what represents a ‘serious’ preoccupation, however, tend to be determined by the social status of the actors in the narratives who are engaged in the preoccupation rather than by explicit criteria. Frazer described folktales as narratives that are basically entertaining pieces of fiction (1921:Book I, xxix-xxx). “Folktales, of course, by definition are fiction” (Dundes 1999:18).

The Oxford Dictionary on fairy tale: “a tale about fairies, incredible story, falsehood” (1989:264). Webster defines the term as follows: “A simple narrative concerning fairies, dwarfs, ogres, magicians, etc., told for the amusement of children; hence, Colloq., a fib.”

Myth

Henri Frankfort (1897-1954) and Henrietta Antonia Frankfort (1896-1982) stated that “it is essential that true myth be distinguished from legend, saga and fairytale:” because myth presents events and actors not with playfulness and fantasy “but with a
compelling authority” (1949:7). Frankfort and Frankfort summarized their definition of myth with the statement that “myth is a form of poetry which transcends poetry in that it proclaims a truth; a form of reasoning which transcends reasoning in that it wants to bring about the truth it proclaims; a form of action, of ritual behavior, which does not find its fulfillment in the act but must proclaim and elaborate a poetic form of truth” (1949:8). In this definition, formal aspects appear to be less relevant than the emotional effect that the narrative has on the listener, in that it creates a sense of a profound truth revealed through the narrative.

The Oxford dictionary defines myth as follows: “traditional narrative usu. involving supernatural or fancied persons, etc. and embodying popular ideas on natural and social phenomena etc; such narratives collectively; imaginary person or thing; widely held but false notions; allegory” (Allen 1989:486). Webster defines myth like this: 1. “A story, the origin of which is forgotten, ostensibly historical but usually such as to explain some practice, belief, institution, or natural phenomenon. Myths are especially associated with religious rites and beliefs.”

**Fluid Boundaries**

Boas further noted that “it is impossible to draw a sharp line between myth and folktales” (1914:377). William Bascom (1912-1981), for example, listed differentiating criteria using the categories ‘belief,’ ‘time,’ ‘place,’ ‘attitude,’ and ‘principal characters,’ and ended up with a list of formal attributes that appears rather contrived and does not facilitate an analysis of these narratives (1984:9). G.S. Kirk (1921-2003) placed myth into a timeless past, as opposed to folktales, which are assumed
to belong in historical time (1970:40). Alan Dundes (1934-2005), however, placed myth into the past and associated it with creation, legend into the future because he felt that these stories continue on, and assigned no time or a place outside of time to folktales. Examples of actors in legends include Washington, Jesus, fairies, goblins, ghosts, and Saints (1984:5, 6), which is interesting because fairies, ghosts, and goblins are also popular actors in lowly folktales. Kirk asserted that actors in folktales carry generic names, whereas actors in myths have specific names (1970:39).

Lori Honko’s “concise” definition of myth fills two thirds of a page and, like Dundes and Bascom, she associated myth with gods, cosmogenesis, and ritual (1984:49). Honko (1932-2002) discussed what criteria identify a myth, but seemed to conflate myths and legends (1984: 45–51); if we hold to the differentiation that myths involve nonhuman actors, and legend form around the core of a historical person, as per Frazer, Kirk and Bascom (Frazer 1921; Bascom 1984:9, 10; Kirk 1984:55). These disagreements illustrate the difficulties in defining these categories. G. S. Kirk wrote “there is no definition of myth, no Platonic form of a myth against which all actual instances can be measured.” Like Boas, he criticized formalistic definitions because they simply isolate characteristics and exclude important material; although this did not prevent him from proposing differentiating criteria. He pointed out that to Plato, the first person on record to use the term ‘myth,’ it meant ‘tales,’ or ‘telling of stories;’ and that this usage of the term myth would be most in accordance with its etymology. Kirk proposed the definition “traditional oral tale” as a safe working definition of myth (1970:7, 8; 1984:55-57).
Undaunted by these difficulties, Frazer asserted that “educated and reflective men can clearly distinguish between myths, legends, and folktales” (1921:Book I, xxxi).

In all fairness, it should be said that these proposed definitions of folklore genres can be successfully applied if they are understood as definitions in the sense of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s ‘family resemblance’ as opposed to an essentialist definition, if only folklorists could agree on the criteria, because this would allow irregularities in the characteristics. However, the methodology behind the definitions in the material studied is not explicit.

In addition to the problem of defining categories as part of an academic or literary analysis of folklore, Dundes pointed out that folkloristic categories of traditional narratives may or may not overlap with the categories developed by the socio-cultural group that the narratives are associated with (1984:5). A formalist analysis or an analysis structured by formal categories is in danger of precluding an analysis that is meaningful in the narrative’s socio-historical and geographical context.

**Hierarchies**

A broad pattern can be discerned in formal categories. Narratives that center on deities and/or heroes and kings, or narratives that stem from a tradition that carries the esteemed label ‘classical,’ are called ‘myths’ or ‘legends,’ and are assigned a comparatively high potential truth value and importance. Narratives whose primary actors are peasants, animals, and women of various social strata - in other words: actors of comparatively low social status and actors lacking legal identity - are considered ‘folktales’ and are assigned little importance and no potential truth-value. The sorting of
tales into the genres myth, legend, and folktale reveals more about the socio-cultural biases and cherished hierarchies of folklorists than that they establish meaningful categories for analysis. Mills’ argument that even gossip and anecdotes may constitute and articulate cosmic order in the way cosmotactic (ordering or shaping the cosmos) myths do opens the boundaries further (1993:174). Gossip as myth is a fundamental form of discourse that ensconces social order (Mills 1993:182). Judgments on ‘serious preoccupation’ provoke questions such as Mills’ question as to who is entitled to be a knower or an expert.

The Bible as Folklore

Ironically, this research investigates those narratives, and those versions of narratives, that have been preserved in writing, although it is presumed that these stories have deep roots in oral traditions. But “because it was written down does not automatically negate its original folkloristic nature” (Dundes 1999:9). The Oxford Dictionary defines folklore as “traditional beliefs etc. of a community; study of these” (Allen 1989:286). This is of particular interest in the case of the narratives that were codified in the Bible, e.g. the story of the foundling Moses because this source is meaningful to many as a historical source and as scripture. “The Bible was in oral tradition before being written down,” and Bible scholars have distinguished between folklore and the Bible by equating folklore exclusively with oral tradition (Dundes 1999:9, 15). By extension of this logic, folklore would have ceased to exist by now; save for a few urban legends in their early stages before being posted online, in writing. The bias towards literacy is also evident in the discussion of the Documentary Hypothesis of
the Old Testament, which proposes multiple authorship based on the assumption of written documents as sources for Bible texts (Dundes 1999:23, 24). However, “once we recognize the Bible as folklore, questions of authorship become less of an issue” (Dundes 1999:115). Based on the existence of several – and often divergent – versions of some biblical narratives, Dundes stated clearly that since both Bible and folklore are characterized by significant numbers of instances of multiple existences and variation, “the Bible is folklore” (Dundes 1999:111).

Since one of the narratives to be analyzed is transmitted via the Exodus narrative in the Bible, this definition is pertinent for its inclusion in the discussion. This definition is also pertinent in regards to G.S.Kirk’s proposed working definition of “traditional oral tale” (1984:55-57) because his definition shows a bias towards oral tradition, and seems to exclude written folklore. Beyond this, the expansion of the content of the term “folklore” is crucial for this study because all of the narratives discussed in this study are known today because of written sources, not from existing continuous oral tradition. Textual sources of narratives are snapshots that enable us to access the rich storytelling traditions of the distant past. The fluidity with which written communication functions today via various internet sites blurs the line between oral and written transmission as gossip, rumors, and urban legends are created, restructured, retold, and disseminated across social networks.

Traditional Narratives

Since this study assumes that traditional narratives in general can be fruitfully investigated for their basis in actual experiences of the narrators, and since the category
‘myth’ has generally been granted relevance for the narrators by folklorists and anthropologists, interpretive methodologies considered in this research are primarily methodologies that have been proposed for the analysis of myth. Because this chapter has demonstrated that the formal distinctions between folklore genres are based on scholars’ concepts of social hierarchy rather than knowledge of origins of the narratives, and because of the premise that all genres of traditional narratives can be meaningfully evaluated in relation to their context, these methodologies will be applied to the more inclusive category of ‘traditional narratives.’

In fact, it appears that the more we situate the narratives in their socio-cultural context, the more formal characteristics lose their relevance. As a working definition for this research, the neutral term “narrative” will be used. This term is understood to include narratives that were in existence before they were codified in written versions as well as narratives that continued to be transformed after written versions were recorded, narratives that are still in the process of being shaped by interpretive voices of narrators, and narratives of recent origin. The terms ‘myth,’ ‘legend,’ or ‘folktale’ may be used in this research as the authors cited in this study use them. It should be understood that the choice of these terms is not relevant for the research and that they are simply used according to the way they appear in the sources.
CHAPTER III

ANALYTIC APPROACHES TO
TRADITIONAL NARRATIVES

Diverse Perspectives

Folklore scholars have approached traditional narratives primarily from a literary perspective. This approach focuses on motifs and motif-based analyses of relationships between narratives (Lewis 1980; Redford 1967). This approach is of limited usefulness in this study because it does not situate the narratives adequately in their socio-historical contexts.

The following discussion of theoretical frameworks will draw primarily on the work of scholars of the folklore genre “myth” because this type of narrative has been studied from the perspective that the narratives can actually be meaningfully explored beyond their entertainment value, and because many of these scholars have contextualized narratives that are commonly referred to as myths in their approaches. Incidentally, most of the narratives in this study are also generally categorized as “myth.” This includes all Greco-Roman stories and the Horus narrative. Definitions of “myth” or other types of narratives are often inseparable from the theoretical approach, and vice-versa. Other narratives discussed in this research are commonly categorized as “legends” or “epics,” which are more circumscribed genres of narratives in that they are considered to have emerged around historical events or persons, and in that they are considered
secular narratives (Bascom 1984:9, 10; Frazer 1921:xxvii-xxix). Category includes the narratives of Gilgamesh, Sargon, Cyrus, and Samurammat. However, these terms are not applied consistently in the literature, which – again – illustrates the fluidity of the genres.

Historic Developments

G. S. Kirk, in his discussion of theoretical approaches to myth, remarked that “general implications of myths” have been “energetically explored” by psychologists, historians, and anthropologists (1984:54). Developments in the analysis of traditional narratives reflect broader concepts in western analytic thought, e.g. evolutionism and the quest for “the original form” of a myth in the 19th century, and questions of structure and function of tales in the 20th century (Dundes 1984:3). A major contribution of anthropology to the study of myth consists of the investigation of these narratives as integral part of their socio-cultural context. Fieldwork conducted by ethnographers such as Franz Boas (1858 -1942) and Bronislaw Malinowski (1884 -1942) greatly expanded our knowledge about traditional narratives, and exemplified a break with the “armchair anthropologists” tradition of Sir J. G. Frazer (1854 - 1941) and Andrew Lang (1844 - 1912) (Dundes 1984:193). The anthropological study of traditional narratives examines these narratives for patterns of socio-cultural practices and beliefs (Dundes 1984:3), which is also the objective of this study. The following is a survey of approaches to the analysis of traditional narratives.

Universalist Theories

Psychological Interpretation. Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) focused his analysis on components of mythology, famously named ‘archetypes.’ These components
are considered universal (Jung 1984:246, 247). Myths, fairy tales, dreams, and psychotic fantasies are matrices in which such components are embedded. The narratives may or may not be intelligible (247). The child motif, according to Jung, is clearly recognizable as a symbol because it “is a wonder child, a divine child, begotten, born, and brought up in quite extraordinary circumstances, and not – this is the point - a human child. Its deeds are as miraculous or monstrous as its nature and physical constitution” (254). To Jung, “the child motif represents the preconscious childhood aspect of collective psyche” (254). Jung’s approach to myth precludes cultural anthropological analysis because archetypes are precultural by definition. Jung based his conclusions regarding the universality of archetypes on data primarily derived from Indo-European traditions, which do not represent a comprehensive account of worldwide narrative traditions; accordingly, conclusions regarding universality cannot be drawn (Dundes 1984:244, 245). Even though some of Jung’s archetypes are very broad, e.g. the mother or the child, there are still culturally mediated roles and therefore subject to construction by socio-cultural dynamics.

While this approach is problematic in its assumptions about universal and precultural symbolism and ethnocentric selection of data, it is still worth mentioning here because it became an influential interpretive method and developed a following outside of psychology; for instance in the metaphysical interpretations of myth by the popular lecturer Joseph Campbell. Psychological approaches to myth are basically reductionist because they evaluate myth as an expression of psychological function.
Myth and Ritual. To Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), myth was a system of representations that expressed the nature, virtues and power of sacred things, as well as their history and relationships with one another (1995:34). Myths are part of religion and magic (1995:39). According to Durkheim, “religious thought comes into contact with reality only to shroud it right away with a thick veil that hides its true forms, this veil being the fabric of fabulous beliefs spun by mythology” (1995:78). Mythology is an essential element of religious life, and “if myth is withdrawn from religion, ritual must also be withdrawn … Indeed the rite is often nothing other than the myth in action” (1995:79). According to Burkert, the discovery that the Babylonian creation Myth – the Enuma Elish – was recited at the Babylonian New Year festival “triggered the Myth and Ritual movement, the exaggerations of which should not obscure the basic facts” (1986:23).

Theodore Gaster (1906-1992) considered myth to belong to “the realm of religion and cult” (1984:111). In this context myth represents the ideal, eternal, and transcendental aspect of the myth-ritual totality, whereas ritual represents the immediate, temporal, and punctual aspect (1984:113). He wrote that ”Myth is cosubstantial with Ritual;” and that they are “concomitant” aspects of the same thing (1984:114). The correspondence between the two aspects takes the form of a “parallelism of expression” rather than a straightforward “reproduction” (1984:134). He claims to be able to “reconstruct” four main stages of development of a mythological story. First, the “primitive stage” in which story directly accompanies ritual, then, the “dramatic stage” in which the cultic performance has been “toned down” and the myth serves as a script, the
“liturgical stage” in which the myth still commemorates the ritual but the direct parallelism has been lost, and - finally - the “literary stage” where the myth as become a “mere tale” (1984:125-128). Gaster elevated this presumed relationship between myth and ritual to defining characteristic: “myth is, or once was, used; that tale is, and always was, merely told” (1984:123). Unfortunately, this hypothetical myth-ritual totality and its subsequent breakdown is not sufficiently documented and remains hypothetical.

Raffaele Pettazzoni (1883-1959) addressed the question of truth value in traditional narratives, specifically those classified as ‘myths’ along Bascom's criteria (Dundes 1984:98). Pettazzoni proposes a ‘religious reality of myths’ and that myth belongs to a world that did believe in the gods as they appear in the narratives. Pettazzoni took the myths themselves to be evidence for his conclusion (1984:98, 99). Myth, then, “is true history because it is sacred history” (1984:102). Myths “lose their ‘truth’ and become ‘false stories’ when their world collapses” and gives way to a different structure. Myths and societies eventually lose cohesion, the ”organic relationship” between their “constituent parts” ends, and the fragments of myths become stripped of their religious significance. Without their original matrix, myths become denigrated to entertainment (1984:108-109). While this is an interesting approach to the question of ‘truth value’ in that Pettazzoni redefines the term, it is not helpful to an analysis that is concerned with the relationships between the narratives and a reality external to the narrative because Pettazzoni’s definition of ‘truth value’ basically circumvents questions regarding external references of the narratives. Unlike Castor and Pettazzoni, Robert Parker proposed that “we should consider the history of mythology
not as a decline from myth to non-myth but as a succession of periods of styles” (1986:189); changes in narratives over the course of time do not automatically signal deterioration.

Other authors have also commented on possible mythical levels of reality. Mircea Eliade’s (1907-1986) perception of myth was influenced by myth-ritual theories as well as the universalism of Jung’s ideas. Eliade saw a direct link between myth and contemporary life in that the sacred history of myth could inform present-day conduct. Eliade spoke of “living myth” as being associated with religious practices (1984:137). Eliade proposed that this relationship between myth and ritual could be observed in action in “primitive” societies (1984:138). S. H. Hooke (1874-1968), in his analysis of Southwest Asian mythology, thought along the same lines when he stated that, “in a society where such rituals formed an essential part of the life of the community, the historical truth of the story contained in the myth was irrelevant (1968:12). This is still true today, as evidenced in many discussions on the historicity of the Bible and rituals such as the Eucharist. It is interesting the connection between narrative and ritual goes unnoticed in text associated with one’s own practices. “The gaze” only falls on the “other”… Jan Bremmer commented on connections between myth and ritual in antiquity: “post-Hellenic travelers, such as Pausadias, still recorded the archaic myths connected with the temples they visited, but these tales now had lost completely their erstwhile relevance to the community” (1986:5).

Kirk cautioned that there is not reason to associate the majority of myth with worship or ritual, or that myth emerged from ritual. Myth-ritual theories define myth
narrowly along the lines of their narrow theoretical frameworks; in fact they are glorified definitions. However, they also represent possible interpretive models for some narratives.

The Function of Myth. Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) categorized tales along formal criteria into myths, legends, and folktales; much in the same way as Dundes or Bascom did (1984:203). Malinowski, as a pioneer of what became known as ‘functionalism’ in anthropology, moved from questions about the origins of myth to questions about the functions of myths in their socio-cultural context. Malinowski stated that the “function of myth, briefly, is to strengthen tradition and endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events.” Malinowski saw an intimate connection between the sacred tales of a tribe and a social organization and activities (1984:194, 195). He regarded myth as a direct expression of a primeval reality and as a “pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom” (1984:199). S.H. Hooke supported this approach and stated “the right question to ask about the myth is not, ‘Is it true?’ but ‘What is it intended to do?’” (1968:11). These are compelling questions that can be extended as an explanatory model to the larger and more inclusive category of ‘folklore’ or ‘traditional narratives.’ While Malinowski contextualized narratives, his approach is universalist in that he proposes that myths have one function in all societies.

Myth as Etiological. Th.P. Van Baaren stated that all myths are etiological (1984:222), which is compatible with Frazer’s view of myth as the precursor of science. He proposed that myths bring a superhuman authority into their explanations, that they
are integral parts of religious and other belief systems, and that they enforce these beliefs by virtue of their authority. However, if reality presents an irresolvable contradiction to a myth, the myth - being the party to the conflict with the greatest plasticity - will change to accommodate the new situation. The advent of writing has wrought havoc with this accommodation because it renders the myth inflexible.

According to Van Baaren, exegesis, then, is called upon to make up for this lack of flexibility (1984:223, 224). This point is important for narratives that have been committed to writing but that are still “in use,” e.g. the Exodus narrative. Van Baaren (1912-1989), in keeping with the flexibility found in oral traditions, and saw his interpretive approach in opposition to Durkheim's view of myth as a tool to stabilize and uphold traditions (1984:217, 218).

More Approaches to Myth. Lori Honko summarized a number of approaches to myth. Her list of approaches from antiquity include mythographic interpretations (transmission of traditions), philosophical criticisms that completely rejected myth, criticisms based on early scientific thought, allegorical interpretations, etymological interpretations which find meanings in names and epithets, historical interpretations, and sociological approaches that viewed myth or religious concepts as tools to uphold social organization (1984:44-46). Her list of contemporary approaches includes interpretations of myth as source material for cognitive categories, as forms of symbolic expression, as projections of the subconscious mind, as an adaptation that integrates diverse problems into a cosmology, as a charter of behavior that places current situations and a meaningful relationship with the past, as a legitimation of social institutions, or as markers of social
relevance. Myths may be regarded as reflecting socio-cultural norms, as the outcomes of historical situations, or as a medium for structure (1984:47, 48).

G.S. Kirk considers three developments in the study of myths to be of outstanding importance. First, the realization of the importance of the narratives of tribal societies, as espoused by Frazer, Tylor, and Durkheim; secondly, Freud’s concept of the unconscious and its potential implications for the understanding of myths and dreams; and lastly, the structural approach to myth as proposed by Lévi-Strauss (1970:42). Kirk questions whether the brain works like a binary computer and whether the purpose of all myth is to process contradictions, but he considers the structuralist approach worth considering in interpretations as part of a spectrum of possible methods of analysis (Kirk 1970:78). With his work on myth, Lévi-Strauss introduced an explanatory function that had not previously been voiced. Kirk wrote that “from now on it will always be necessary to consider the possibility that any myth (…) is concerned to provide a model for mediating a contradiction” (1970:83).

Other universalist theories discussed by Kirk include the 19th century nature-myth school, which regards all myth as allegories of natural processes. Myths are etiological as per Andrew Lang, they are chapters of social facts and perceptions as per Malinowski, myths are misunderstood rituals (Jane Harrison after Robertson Smith and James G. Frazer), mechanisms of social order (Radcliffe-Brown after Malinowski), mechanisms to “reinstate the creative past” (Eliade developing Malinowski), or to serve the “restructuring of normal life” (V. W. Turner developing Durkheim and Van Gennep), or “excited responses to special aspects or of the world (Ernst Cassirer) (Kirk 1984:54).
To Ernst Cassirer, myth was not allegorical but tautegorical (Kirk 1970:264). Other such approaches listed by Kirk include the understanding of myth as expressions of unconscious fears and desires as per Freud, or as expression of archetypal patterns of a presumed collective unconscious, as per Jung, myth as “adjustive responses” to anxiety (Kluckhohn after Freud and Durkheim), myth as expressions of an underlying universal structure of mind and society (Levi-Strauss) (Kirk 1984:54). To Kluckhohn, myth and ritual, both, were based in the same psychological need for regularity in emotional and conceptual areas of potential anxiety (Kirk 1970:24).

**Euhemerism and Enlightenment.** J.W. Rogerson discussed yet another approach, called ‘Euhemerism,’ after the 4th century Sicilian Euhemerus. Euhemerism understands gods to be deified historical persons (1984:63). This approach is of interest for my research because it relates elements of narratives to historical bases. It should be pointed out, though, that the historicity of specific persons is not the focus of my research but the patterns of practices of the socio-cultural environment. Rogerson also discussed the Enlightenment view of myth as a lack of rationality, and its opposing view by the Romantic Movement, which regarded myths as an expression of the richest creativity (1984:65). In addition, Rogerson discussed myths as products and reflections and of their socio-cultural environments and political agendas that may become enshrined in traditional narratives (1984:66-68); which overlaps with Raymond Firth’s foregrounding of the narrator’s agenda, and is relevant to the topic of my research.

**An Ancient Form of Philosophy.** H. and H.A. Frankfort considered myth to be a form of speculative thought; which “attempts to explain, to unify, to order
experience” by way of hypotheses (1949:3). They asserted that this mythopoeic form of thought is characteristic of “early man” and constitutes cerebration and volition, which does not always overlap with “our categories of intellectual judgment” (1949:10). Myth is not allegory but “a carefully chosen cloak for abstract thought.” Frankfort and Frankfort considered the imagery of myth inseparable from the thought, and claimed that “myth has not the universality and the lucidity of theoretical statement” (1949:10). By contrast, modern scientific thought differentiates between subjective and objective, and progressively reduces individual phenomena to universal law through its critical analytical procedures (1949:11). Frankfort and Frankfort postulated that the transition from mythopoeic thought to scientific thought represented a fundamental shift in mental development, based on assumptions about symbol equaling referent in mythopoeic thought of past peoples. Such generalizations are difficult to substantiate; and the material they presented in support of their hypothesis in “The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man” is not convincing because their evidence is already peppered with generalizations, e.g. sweeping statements about qualitative changes in Dynastic Egyptian philosophy without consideration of political and economic context (1949:93, 94).

Frankfort and Frankfort’s perspective is informed in the universalist and teleological ideas of their time, which regularly leads to speculations on the qualitative differences between our current ‘civilized’ selves and peoples in the past or in less stratified societies. If humanity had experienced a serious qualitative shift from mythopoeic thought to scientific, we would not have poetry, science fiction, UFOs, and urban legends. Conversely, how would ancients have developed complex irrigation
systems, accounting or weaponry? Frankfort and Frankfort attribute two aspects of the shared cognitive spectrum to two separate populations. This research assumes that no such qualitative shift in cognition occurred, and that – now and then – the creation of traditional narratives was based on the dynamic of experiences and information base, or folklore base, of narrators. Frankfort and Frankfort’s hypothesis of the mythopoeic mind of antiquity is also reminiscent of the Enlightenment view of myth as a lack of rationality, as discussed by Rogerson (1984:65).

Comments on Universalist Theories. Universalist theories are of limited use in this research because this research is primarily interested in how narratives relate to historical specifics. In particular the Jungian approach and its metaphysical off-shoots are not useful here because they assume a precultural basis for the emergence of traditional narratives; a form of precultural language of the subconscious mind. Universalist theories can also be understood as instruments of definition by narrowing the spectrum of what narratives are considered myth, according to respective universalist author. The theory of myth defines the category “myth,” and narratives that fall outside of the defined territory are reclassified as different genres of folklore.

Some universalist theories, such as the myth-ritual approach, the etiological basis for narratives, Euhemerism, or narratives as reinforcement of codes of conduct, may apply to some narratives, but their applicability needs to be evaluated on a case by case basis. Universalist theories of traditional narratives can be brought in to develop answers to questions as to ‘why’ or ‘for what purpose’ a given narrative was created and retold.
However, this research rejects universalist approaches to function and meaning of traditional narratives as explanatory models for all discourse communities.

**Contextualizing Narratives**

**The Comparative Study of Myth.** James G. Frazer (1854-1941) disagreed with perspectives that “would explain the infinite multiplicity and diversity of phenomena by a single simple principle, as if a single clue, like Ariadne’s thread, could guide us to the heart of this labyrinthine universe.” Frazer called universalist approaches a “vice” (1921:Book I, xxvi).

Frazer employed the comparative method of study to mythology. Frazer compiled unprecedented amounts of traditional narratives in order to discover patterns in the material. As a believer in the unilinear evolution of human socio-cultural systems, he used narratives collected from then-called 'savage' societies to explain elements of narratives of so-called 'civilized' societies (Dundes 1984: 72, 73). From Frazer’s cultural evolutionist perspective, myth ultimately developed into science, legend into history, and folktales transformed into romance; illustrating how “crude creations” develop into the “riper products of the human mind” (Frazer 1921: Book 1, xxxi). Although Frazer’s approach is informed by the teleological perspective of his day, it allows for a more differentiated analysis of traditional narratives because it acknowledged diversity in origins and functions of myth.

**Critique of Universalist Approaches.** Kirk considered the universalist preconception that myths have the same type of function and origin in different environments to be a major obstacle to progress in the understanding of myth (1984:54).
He pointed out that myths, or even one myth, may be associated with a number of important functions (1970:83). Bremmer stated that a “myth is an item of shared cultural property, and has no intrinsic or essential meaning” (1986:188).

Kirk critiqued universalist theories by pointing out that their validity can be negated by citing instances of myth that are not in accord with the proposed universalist function or origin. He raised the same concern regarding psychological theories on myths, stating that all of them have so far been falsifiable by counter-instance (1984:54, 55). He went as far as to say that “unitary theories of mythical function are largely a waste of time,” because “there is no single type of myth” (1970:253). He cited the example of the “irrelevance of both wish fulfillment fantasy and adjustive or adaptive responses to the class of origin or emergence myths” to be “just one example of the non-generality of such theories” (1970:262).

Eliade proposed that the totality of a society’s mythology and value systems needed to be considered if one were to evaluate the structure and function of mythical thought in this society, and the totality of myths of a society represents that society’s sacred history (1984:140, 141). This introduces a more contextualized or anthropological approach to traditional narratives; although the association of myth and sacred history still indicates a universalist approach that is primarily a definition.

Ever-Changing Narratives. Raymond Firth (1901-2002) discussed the mutability of traditional narrative. He pointed out that the same myth can be told in a number of different versions, depending on the interests of the narrators, and that myth can change, depending on the interests of the narrators (1984:208, 209). This provides an
important challenge for the analysis of narratives because there may be no “authoritative”
version of a narrative, and because we either have to choose which version or which
elements of the narratives we want to consider in our analysis, or else, consider multiple
versions of a narrative, and what the relationships between the different versions are
based on. Dundes considered “multiple existences” and “variation” to be “the two most
salient characteristics of folklore” (1999:18); and wrote that “because of the factors of
multiple existences and variation no two items of folklore will be identical” (1999:2).
Firth proposed that myth arises as a response to a situation of challenge “where
justification or explanation of event has to be obscured” (1984:216). With this contextual
and diachronic approach, Firth foregrounded the creator or narrator of the tale as an agent
of creativity and change. This is of interest for this research because it foregrounds the
experiences and perspectives of the narrators. This is compatible with the idea of
personal experience and observation as part of the mechanism of folklore formation, as

Many Types of Myths. Kirk proposed a “typology of mythical function” with
three “objective types.” Type one is predominantly entertaining, type two iterative,
operative, and validatory, and type three is explanatory or speculative (1970:254). While
narrative qualities are important for the creation and preservation of all myth, ‘type one’
myths draw their importance and meaning predominantly from these qualities. Iterative,
operative, and validatory myths are likely to be associated with ritual and ceremony.
This category includes charter myths (1970:254, 255). Type three narratives, explanatory
and speculative myths, may overlap with type two myths (1970:257). Kirk seemed to use
the term “myth” here in the general sense of the term “folklore.” His proposed typology seems to be an improvement over the traditional categories of folklore but the distinctions are still unnecessary for research on the exposed child motif.

Function, growth, and origin of myths are interconnected, but “the best one can do is discover how myths seem to have been used in those cultures of the past for which sufficient documentation exists” (Kirk 1970:280). The emergence of a myth in non-literate cultures “can never be documented.” Whether myths started as entertainment and took on other functions later on, as claimed by some scholars, cannot be determined, either; these aspects may have developed side-by-side (Kirk 1970:281). Dislocations and fantastic elements in narratives may have been incorporated as part of a storytelling tradition; or they may have been derived from dreams or religious beliefs (Kirk 1970:283). Kirk suggested that explanatory and operative functions may develop out of narrative functions, and that fantastic elements were erratically and gradually accreted. However, he considered this a provisional model since more insights are needed before the emergence process of myth can be understood (1970:285).

**Literary Study and Contextualization of Traditional Narratives.** Alan Dundes offers many valuable insights into the study of traditional narratives. He supports the analysis of myth in conjunction with an understanding of the narrator’s socio-cultural background. He asked “can a dream be analyzed without a knowledge of the dreamer who dreamt it?” Likewise, a myth should be studied in conjunction with the culture that produced it (1984:273). The myth reflects not only the culture that produced it, but also the time period of its emergence (1984:274). At the same time, oral narratives show
remarkable stability. When changes in a narrative occur, they “tend to cluster around
certain points in time and space.” These changes are minor compared to the overall
stability of myths, and can serve as indicators of cultural change (1984:274).

The same narrative “can be profitably compared using versions from two or
more separate cultures, and the differences in detail may well illustrate significant
differences in culture” (1984:274). The majority of myths are widely distributed, and it is
impossible to ascertain where and when a given myth first appeared (1984:275). A
widely distributed myth should not be analyzed as if it belongs to only one culture. This
is only appropriate in the case of a myth that is unique to one culture; in which case it can
be treated as indicative of characteristics of this group (1984:275). However, a widely
distributed myth can be analyzed as belonging to all societies in which it is told, although
it may assume different roles in different contexts (1984:276). These statements are of
direct interest to this research because the narratives in this research were widely
distributed across time and space.

Although Dundes felt strongly about contextualizing narratives within their
socio-cultural backgrounds, he also believed in the possibility of universal symbolism in
myth because universals give meaning to widespread myths (1984:277). He contended
that human psychology may be able to uncover such universals at some future time

Comments on Contextualizing Narratives. This section includes theoretical
approaches that foreground socio-cultural context and diversity in narratives.
Universalist theories tend to be rejected by the scholars discussed in this section, although

Contextualizing narratives is the foundation of this research on foundling stories, and these authors shared helpful observations on the topic of context. Firth’s emphasis on narrator’s and their agendas is interesting in connection with the hypothesis of the centrality of narrators’ experiences in the creation of folklore (Hufford 1995; Dewan 2006) because it gives an alternate view on ways in which narratives are transformed. Kirk’s thoughts on the emergence of traditional narratives point to some of the difficulties in attempting the reconstruction of the creation of a narrative. In particular Dundes’ remarks on widely distributed myths are of interest for this research because of the wide distribution of the exposed child motif. He stated that different versions of a narrative created by different populations can be productively explored and “may well illustrate significant differences in culture” (1984:274), which is precisely what this research sets out to do.

**Experience-Centered Approaches**

*Multiple Points of View.* Margaret Mills underscores the relationship between experience and ideation, and the introduction of the concept of heterogeneity in the study of folklore by bringing feminist critique to folklore theory. Folklorists have access to accounts of experiences of pain, marginalization, prejudice, essentializing in all forms, and can contribute to an understanding of sociopolitical experience by incorporating performance studies, contextualization, and belief studies into their analysis (1993:185).
Mills wrote that “feminist critique can and must integrate other elements besides gender – such as class, historical period, community, age, occupation, and especially race and ethnicity – in perceiving the partial visions and hegemonic tendencies of such terms as ‘folk’ and ‘folklore,’ not to mention ideas (…) about who can be a folklorist, a knower on our intellectual map” (1993:184, 185). The feminist critique in folklore must correlate discernible experience-based critiques with multiple identities in communities. The folklorist’s task is to demonstrate how communities of ideas are also communities of action (Mills 1993:187). Mills contends that folklorists can contribute to a viable theory of intersubjectivity (1993:184).

Mills argued that even gossip may articulate and constitute cosmic order as much as myth does; and that the folklorist’s task is to find out whose perspective is expressed. The scholarly dichotomy of myth and theory on one hand, and gossip equals mundane on the other, is symptomatic of “high theory’s hearing problem (1993:174, 182). The question is not so much “can the subaltern speak?” but ”can the hegemonic listen?” (1993:174). Silences appear in the analyses in two ways: first in the narratives themselves as they are passed down, secondly in the approach to the analysis (1993:176, 177, 180, 181). Considerations of power relationships and gender are absent in folklore analyses of foundling myths. For our analysis, this means that rather than assuming that the narratives represent their region of origin as if these regions had been inhabited by homogeneous groups we must consider that the narratives may be expressions of specific groups within the regional social networks, and may represent specific interests. The
mere fact that they were chosen to be put in writing at a time of limited literacy is indicative of their allegiance with elite interests.

**Mental Representations, not Histories.** While Robert Parker asserts that one of traditional narratives’ “ancient functions is to provide an account of the past” (1986:189), Sourvinou-Inwood cautions that “myths are not translations of events into mythological language, which scholars can translate back into history; however, the fallaciousness of historical interpretations cannot be proven, either” (1986:216). Myths express, and are structured by, the social and intellectual realities and mental representations of the societies that produced and/or reworked them. Historical elements of narratives are “radically reshaped and adapted, by a process of *bricolage,*” to accommodate schemata of narratives; which in turn express and are shaped by realities and representations (Sourvinon-Inwood 1986:216). Narratives express realities and perceptions, but they also take on a dynamic of their own.

**Experience-Based Beliefs.** David J. Hufford, in his studies of folk beliefs about spirits, proposed that many of these beliefs are reasonably and rationally developed from experience by use if inferences based on observations and experiences (1995:11, 18); experiences that are independent of and occasionally in conflict with prior belief and knowledge. This means that these folk beliefs are empirically grounded, although the empirical grounding and the rationally derived conclusions are no guarantee for the accuracy of the conclusion (1995:18). Hufford calls this approach “experience-centered” (1995:11). His experiential source theory proposes that some folk beliefs are rationally developed from experience (1995:28). This foundation in the experiences of persons
explains the resilience of folk beliefs, even if contradicted by the cultural authority of knowledge specialists in the modern and post-modern world (1995:27).

The choices of interpreting the experiences are influenced by culturally sanctioned attitudes and values (1995:25); and “every observation description is laden with some interpretation” (1995:27). Hufford emphasizes that “cultural documentation must be supplemented by the inquiry into experiences” because socio-cultural processes influence the interpretation and can lead to diverse accounts of experiences (1995:33, 34), and can serve to highlight or suppress experiences (1995:37).

Hufford pointed out that the “interests of folklorists in personal accounts are strongly influenced by literary ideas, and similarity from one account to another is taken as evidence of traditional borrowing” (1995:31). Hufford’s criticism here is that this approach “dismisses all of the teller’s claims, in advance, without the need for evidence” (1995:31). This literary approach also contradicts the approach used to assess the reliability of witnesses, by which agreement between accounts indicates reliability (1995:31). Hufford argues that “folklife scholars have long been aware that folk traditions concerning architecture, food preparation, agricultural practice, botany, the making of textiles and pottery, and so forth, constitute impressive bodies of valid knowledge and experience. This experiential theory of spiritual folk beliefs traditions, including spiritual beliefs, may have more in common with the practice of folklife than with folktales and folksongs” (1995:31). It is interesting that Hufford draws this line between the experiential basis of folk beliefs on one hand and folktales and folksongs on
the other as to their value as potential information sources. Unfortunately, he does not
discuss his reasons for this distinction.

**Experience and Cognitive Processes.** William J. Dewan stated that UFO
narratives constitute an opportunity to observe “a modern dynamic legend in the making,
including the genesis and transformation of legend in popular culture” (2006:185).
Dewan classified these narratives as folklore and proposed an approach of analysis for
the narratives that includes folklore theory, an experience-centered approach, which
asserts that folk beliefs are rationally developed from experiences, and cognitive
anthropology, which examines how cultural schema shape perception and recollection of
experiences. This creates a diachronic perspective of the cultural and historical context
of the emergence, performance, and dissemination of these narratives (2006:184-189,
197, 198).

“Experience, folklore, and cognitive processes have a dynamic relationship”
(2006:196). The narrative of an experience – or memorate – may become retold, and if it
creates enough interest in a discourse community it may become a corner stone of a
folklore tradition; or it may become incorporated into an existing tradition (2006:187).
Experiencers and narrators must contextualize narrative traditions; to this end the local or
more circumscribed traditions must be incorporated into larger traditions of beliefs. In
turn, belief informs memorate, the memorate informs the local body of knowledge, which
“Experience and tradition (…) are ultimately coreliant” (206:194). Dewan’s work
corroborates Hufford’s hypothesis of the centrality of narrators’ personal experiences in the development of folklore.

**Working Backwards in Time.** Elizabeth Wayland Barber and Paul Barber proposed that traditional narratives are based on observations of narrators and served as an information transmission system across time and space. Like Dundes, Barber and Barber found that traditional narratives better insights into these experiences. Events in the narratives reflect actual and relevant experiences that have been encoded in narrative form and modified along the lines of discernible patterns, which they broadly summarized as ‘silence,’ ‘analogy,’ ‘compression,’ and ‘restructuring’ principles (2004:1-5, 9-10, 245-251). Their work reflects much of the work of previous folklorists and presents it in the form of a systematic methodology for analysis. Some of the principles outlined in their work were discussed by Kirk, e.g. the compression mechanisms of a popular hero drawing tales to himself that were originally attributed to other, minor, players (1970:39). The modifications bestowed upon the narratives enabled the transmission of information across considerable stretches of time and space; especially in the absence of literacy or at least widespread literacy (2004:5-13). The main lines of encoding and modification are further differentiated by principles that also follow specific patterns of constructing narratives and serve as catalysts of transformation of the original experience as represented through the narrative. Barber and Barber presented a methodology of deconstructing the narratives by stripping them of the modifications, in order to reach the experience of the narrators or creators of the narratives. Ironically, this quest for historic basis for traditional narratives has prompted
Bible scholars to study folklore; in the hope that if the laws of oral transmission are identified, one could proceed to work back in time and establish which elements of the Bible are historic events (Dundes 1999:12). However, Barber and Barber proposed to use regularities in the encoding and modification of information in the narratives in combination with known archaeological, geological, and historical information in order to work backwards in time and to arrive at experiences and observations of the narrators. Their perspective is in contrast with Kirk’s folklore genesis hypothesis, who assigned primacy to entertainment over information transmission and proposed that fantastic or supernatural elements were erratically accreted, rather than along the lines of patterns of cognition and encoding.

Experience-Centered Narratives: Comments. Hufford’s and Dewan’s observations provide an explanatory model for the mechanisms by which narratives, such as the foundling narratives discussed in this research, develop in their socio-historical contexts: the social histories are indicative of narrators experiences at the aggregate level. If infant exposure, for instance, were a culturally sanctioned practice, then it would follow that parts of the population had personal experiences related to this practice. Another segment of the population would have access to firsthand accounts of personal experiences related to this practice. Since personal experiences vitalize a body of folklore, the prevalence of the practice in a given region would be proportionate to the prevalence of representations of this practice in folklore.
Theoretical Frameworks: Summary

**History.** The early scholars discussed in this chapter understood myth as a phenomenon closely associated with religious and ritual practices (Durkheim, Gaster, Pettazzoni, Eliade), or as indicative of laws that govern universal mental or psychological functions (Jung 1921, Frankfort and Frankfort 1949). Their approaches are universalist and tend to be embedded in a paradigm that situates the narratives in a teleological and unilinear developmental scheme; Euhemerus in the 4th century being an exception to this, perhaps because unilinear development paradigms were not common in his day. Many of these analyses are limited by their circumscribed definitions and usages of the term ‘myth’ and, in fact, tend to be expanded definitions. Later scholars may still be motivated by nomothetic inquiry, but begin to emphasize socio-cultural context of narratives (Malinowski 1984; Rogerson 1984; Dundes 1984), or point to specific functions of narratives (Firth 1984; van Baaren 1984). The most recent authors reject universalism as an approach, but incorporate universalist hypotheses as possible explanatory models to create a theoretical framework that permits more flexibility in the analysis (e.g. Kirk 1984; Mills 1993; Hufford 1995; Dewan 2006; Barber and Barber 2004). It will remain interesting to evaluate the narratives in the light of some of the universalist theories on a case by case basis as potential explanatory models for specific narratives or narrative elements. The approach used in this study combines theoretical frameworks in order to follow the material, rather than attempting to use one approach for a number of different narratives, which have emerged in different contexts and for
different reasons. The goal is to create a conversation – or dialectic – between data and theory (Berger 1999:46).

**Folklore Theory**

Quite correctly, although almost redundantly, Harris M. Berger pointed out that folklore theory is the result of theory building practices, which include reading, writing, reflections, and discussions (1999:33). Interestingly, performing or witnessing performances, or interviewing narrators, or storytelling, are not included in the list of activities, leaving theory building somewhat removed from the narrative practice.

Current research on living and emerging narratives anchors folklore theory by foregrounding narrators, their experiences, and the process involved in the creation of folk narratives (Hufford 1995; Dewan 2006).

The theoretical framework for this research is primarily informed by Dewans’s and Hufford’s experience-centered approach and by Barber and Barber’s work on deconstructing narratives. Dewan’s and Hufford’s research demonstrates that narratives and personal experiences are engaged in a dialectic relationship; which is also implied by Mill’s ultimate denial of folklore categories. Her dissolution of boundaries between folklore categories enables us to better perceive the narratives as the products and shapers of historical and socio-cultural circumstances.

This research will test the role of socio-cultural practices as a demonstrable factor in the emergence of variations in narratives and the applicability of the experience-centered approach to ancient narratives. The exploration of the dynamic between regional variability in foundling narratives and socio-cultural practices will shed light on
these approaches: agreements between variants of the narratives and their regional histories would confirm social history as a factor in the development of divergent narrative versions and support the hypothesis of the experience-centered approach as a mechanism of folklore genesis in antiquity. The absence of agreement between narratives and social histories would discredit both points. This is of interest in the study of folklore in heterogeneous groups because it offers an explanatory model for divergences of narratives in the absence of geographical separation, and the mechanism by which practices are incorporated into folklore.
CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Social History and Folklore

The cornerstone of this research is to identify the specific relationships between foundling narratives of the Eastern Mediterranean antiquity and the social histories of their regions of emergence on the basis in their narrators’ social histories and experiences. This research proposes that these social histories – and by extension the experiences of the narrators of folklore – are reflected in the foundling narratives, and that the social histories are a factor in the divergences of these foundling narratives. Significant agreement between the practices expressed in the narratives and their respective social histories, in combination with regional variability will verify geographical distance as a factor in divergences in narratives (Boas 1914:377), but also document differential socio-cultural practices as a divergence factor. Positive correlation between the narratives and their socio-cultural matrices in combination with the deconstruction of the narratives as per Barber and Barber (2004) will also test the applicability of the experience-centered approach (Hufford 1995; Dewan 2006) to narratives of ancient times because the social history of a people is an aggregate of their socio-cultural practices.

In this research, the foundling narratives of three regions will be compared within the following timeframes: Greco-Roman antiquity (600 BC – 200 AD), Southwest Asia (2500 – 400 BC), and Egypt (3000 – 300 BC). These regions have shown
sufficient cultural cohesiveness to be treated as units of analysis for the purpose of this study. In the case of ancient Greece and Rome, for instance, we can trace the adaptation of Greek narratives, deities, and political processes. In Southwest Asia, peoples shared similar political systems and cosmologies; and in Dynastic Egypt, cultural continuity can be demonstrated over 2500 years in art, writing, religion, political system, and economic activities. This analysis will be done separately for each of these three regions because they represent distinct developments of social, political, economic, and artistic traditions, and the results of each of these analyses will be compared in the last chapter of this study. Although many narratives of Southwest Asia and Egypt predate Greco-Roman narratives, this research will discuss the Greco-Roman narratives first because Greco-Roman narrative elements were grafted onto some of the older narratives from Southwest Asia. This grafting, or process of *bricolage* (Sourvinou-Inwood 1986:216), makes it preferable to discuss Greco-Roman narratives first because, in this way, references to Greco-Roman narrative elements in the chapter on Southwest Asian narratives will be more meaningful. Narratives from Dynastic Egypt will be discussed last because they present an interesting contrast to the narratives in the former chapters and because the discussion of Egyptian narratives will refer back to some Southwest Asian narratives.

The relative invisibility of children in the ancient textual sources such as official records creates challenges for an evaluation for a reconstruction of social history (Boswell 1984:12). Poor survivorship of infant skeletal remains compounds this problem because it may lead to an under-representation of infant remains in the record (Walker 1988:183, 185, 186). However, sufficient information on social histories in these
regions, based on archaeological and textual data, is available for the purpose of this study.

**Transmission of Narratives**

The study will outline the issues related to the transmission of narratives from antiquity into the present time. This research will outline the narratives, outline the social histories in which they emerged, and then situate them in their socio-cultural contexts in order to evaluate the narratives experiential basis.

**Exposure and Animal Parents**

The premise that infant exposure and related methods of ridding oneself of unwanted offspring are part of the human behavior spectrum is discussed in Chapter Five. The notion of child exposure as a culturally sanctioned practice is abhorrent in other cultures and can meet with disbelief and denial, and establishing the validity of this premise is important in that it will confirm the possibility of a relationship between narrative and experiential basis. The animal-parent motif, which appears in several narratives, will be discussed separately in Chapter Six because of the specific issues associated with this motif.

**Divergent Narratives**

As discussed earlier, Boas observed geographical distance between narrators as a factor in the emergence of divergent narratives (1914:377). This research proposes differential socio-cultural practices as the factor behind the divergent foundling narrative versions in the Eastern Mediterranean antiquity. To test this hypothesis, correspondence between narratives and social histories within each region must be demonstrated, as well
as divergence between regions. The narratives must be matched up with the social histories of the societies from which they emerged. This is critical for narratives that underwent a number of significant transformations in antiquity, and for narratives that were re-interpreted by chroniclers from regions outside of their original context, as in the case of reinterpretations of Southwest Asian narratives by Greco-Roman chroniclers. Especially the grafting of motifs is an important process to consider in the analysis because the graft belongs to the society that produced it and is indicative of the background of the narrators that added it to the existing narrative, not the narrators of the original material or the original figure around which the grafted narrative has been developed. As Dundes pointed out, variations in narratives indicate cultural change and differences between cultures (1984:273-276). This will become evident in the discussion of the grafting of Greco-Roman motifs onto Southwest Asian legends.

**Empiricism and Traditional Narratives**

Elizabeth Wayland Barber and Paul Barber’s research assumes that traditional narratives are founded in observations and served as an information transmission system. Events in the narratives reflect actual and relevant experiences that have been encoded along the lines of cognitive patterns, summarized as ‘silence,’ ‘analogy,’ ‘compression,’ and ‘restructuring’ (2004:1-5, 9-10, 245-251). These modifications enabled the transmission of information across considerable stretches of time and space in the absence of literacy or at least widespread literacy (2004:5-13). The main lines of encoding and modification are further differentiated by principles that follow specific lines of constructing narratives and catalysts of transformation of the original experience.
Barber and Barber’s work represents a methodology of ‘stripping’ the modifications off the narratives to reach the experience of the narrators or creators of the narratives. This quest for a historic basis of traditional narratives has prompted Bible scholars to study folklore; in the hope that if the laws of oral transmission are identified, one could proceed to work back in time and establish which elements of the Bible are historic events (Dundes 1999:12); which is ironic because ‘scripture’ tends to be held in higher esteem than lowly folklore. Barber and Barber propose to use regularities in the encoding and transformation of information in order to work backwards in time and to arrive at experiences and observations of the narrators; however, this Barber and Barber point out that external sources for information on the context in which the narratives developed must be consulted to verify conclusions drawn from the narratives. The narratives alone are inadequate as evidence on their own.

Conspicuous overlap between narratives and social histories within regions in combination with discrepancies between regions will confirm differential socio-cultural practices as factors in the divergence of narratives and, by extension, validate the experience-centered approach to folklore as applicable to ancient narratives. The results of this research, therefore, are based on the result of a comparative study.

The combination of different strands of evidence provides the basis of understanding of the material and the genesis of the narratives, and will develop an understanding of the relationships between narrative, social history, and narrator’s experience.
CHAPTER V

INFANTICIDE, EXPOSURE, NEGLECT, AND ADOPTION

An Experiential Basis

Infanticide, exposure, and fatal neglect all represent ways in which parents may rid themselves of unwanted offspring. One of the premises of this research is that infant exposure can be a culturally sanctioned practice; which, in turn, is then reflected in the foundling narratives discussed in this research. The research by Dewan (2006), Hufford (1995), and Barber and Barber (2004) has shown that experiences and recollections on the one hand, and bodies of folklore on the other, reinforce each other, and that folklore is not based on one unusual experience but on a dialectic relationship between folklore and the reinforcement of memorates. For foundling narratives to have an experiential basis, exposure and foundling adoptions must have been part of the socio-cultural context from which these narratives emerged. This premise challenges notions of normative parenting behavior that assume a universally protective attitude of parents toward their offspring. This chapter will discuss the feasibility of this premise because assumptions regarding normative behavior will affect the interpretation of data on social history. It is important for this research that such assumptions are identified as assumptions rather than remain alleged universals of human behavior.

This chapter will also introduce potential reasons for infanticide, exposure and neglect, such as economic hardship, the infant’s health status, the parent’s health, enforcement of codes of conduct on the part of the child’s mother, and low levels of
importance or low status associated with infants. These motives will be integrated into the analysis because their presence or absence in narratives and social histories can further illuminate the relationships between narratives and histories.

Finally, this chapter will discuss general points on infanticide, infant exposure and adoption in antiquity.

**Cultural Relativity**

Normative responses to child death or survival can be completely different from the standards set by Western psychology. Rather than grieving, relatives may be relieved or even elated after an infant dies, especially in the case of a ‘defective’ or ‘weak’ infant. Alto do Cruzeiro mothers, for example, are expected to adjust to the vagaries of life and become indifferent (Scheper-Hughes 1992:425-429). In her discussion of Gregor’s fieldwork with the Mehinaku in the Brazilian Amazon, she cautions against ethnocentric interpretations of the material. Gregor’s own conditioning that babies must be precious to their mothers, prompted him to conclude that statements by the Mehinaku such as “infants are not precious to us” must represent a coping mechanism that protects parents from the inevitable grief that they would experience at the loss of a child. His interpretation is based on the premise of a “universal human imperative that children must be protected and nurtured.” This premise has not been adequately substantiated (Scheper-Hughes1992:432, 433). We have been discussing a number of apparent counter instances, which suggests that parenthood is largely informed by expediency and socio-cultural input. When a Mehinaku states that “children are not
precious to us” we have to consider the possibility that he or she may mean to say just that.

Infants may represent a liminal category, not quite human. “Little critters have no feelings” (Scheper-Hughes 1992:128, 129). In Alto do Cruzeiro, dead infants are referred to as “angels.” “Why pray for angel-babies who have no need for our prayers?” asked an Alto mortuary worker, “It’s their job to pray for us!” (Scheper-Hughes 1992:428). The liminal status of deformed or unwanted infants may also be expressed by referring to them as “crocodile children,” “birds,” or “dolphin babies.” In the case of the Nuer, these “crocodile children” or “birds” are said to “swim” or “fly” away, returning to the elements they belong to (Scheper-Hughes 1992:375). Among Amazon basin tribes, the shape-shifting dolphin is said to be able to seduce humans, which is reminiscent of some of Zeus’ adventures, and offspring of such unions may be set out on a raft to be raised by their father (Slater October 8, 2004). With this, deformed children and the children of women who were pregnant when they should not have been may be disposed of in a way that minimizes shame or disgrace on the part of the parent. The Brazilian Mehinaku consider illegitimate or deformed children “forbidden” and bury them (Scheper-Hughes 1992:376). Irish “changelings” or “fairy children” used to be “helped” on their way back to the spirit realm by burning them in the hearth (Scheper-Hughes 1992:375). The use of euphemisms and the placement of children in liminal categories helps legitimize their killing, exposure, or neglect.
Sociobiology

Sociobiology offers an explanation for infanticide in that primates are biologically predisposed to abandon or kill infants that are not their own. This is to prevent precious resources being diverted from one’s own biological offspring. Since nursing reduces the likelihood of conception, males wanting to reproduce may have a biological incentive to kill nursing infants that are not their biological offspring in order to expedite reproductive success involving the nursing female (Pierotti 1990:1140). According to Zimmer, pre-school age stepchildren in the US are 60 times more likely to be victims of infanticide on the hands of step parents than biological children, although this is not necessarily a conscious attempt to eliminate competition for the mother but rather a lowering of the threshold to violent behavior (1996:84). Pierotti wrote that “children up to the age of five are seven times more likely to be abused, and many times more likely to be killed by a stepparent than by a genetic parent” (1991:1148).

Economic Hardship

Economic hardship may compel parents to abandon or kill their offspring (Lewis 1980:52). Such circumstances may include drought, famine, war, or poverty specific to the socio-economic strata of the family involved. Nancy Schepere-Hughes’ fieldwork in northeast Brazil’s Alto do Cruzeiro slum documents numerous cases of and fatal infant neglect and also infanticide, e.g. “to stop them from crying for milk” (1992:128, 129). Much of Schepere-Hughes extensive study of child death in the Alto do Cruzeiro slum in Northeast Brazil documents severe neglect of infants, which represents a form of abandonment or exposure. The infant may not be exposed outside the home –
which would be unacceptable to local socio-cultural norms – but the infant is abandoned psychologically and in regards to their physical survival needs. I consider this a form of abandonment or infant exposure. An infant’s life may be understood as provisional (Scheper-Hughes 1992:275). Against a background of chronic food and water shortages, mothers make decisions whether a child is worth keeping (1992:342, 343). If a child does not thrive, he or she is said to be wanting to die, and is expected to do so (1992:344). Scheper-Hughes observed that the high infant and child death rate coincided with a delay in attachment to infants (1992:340). Maternal love unfolds as the confidence in the survival of the infant increases (1992:341).

**Enforcement of Family Values**

Socio-cultural norms may demand and rigorously enforce codes of conduct, in particular regarding sexual behavior that can create intense conflict in a parent regarding the birth of a child; and may leave the parent(s) rejected by their community (Slater 2004). The murder or abandonment of a child may be an attempt to cover up the transgression that led to the pregnancy. In particular in the case of single women, the difficulties that arise out of economic pressures and socio-cultural norms may conspire to amplify each other.

Infants that show signs of birth defects or generally fail to thrive may compel parents to abandon them because their decreased chances of survival; hence, these infants are a ‘bad investment’ of resources. In societies with high infant mortality rates it seems reasonable to abandon a feeble infant because the available resources would be better spent on a child that has stronger chances of surviving into adulthood. This issue is
compounded by economic hardship (Scheper-Hughes 1992:342-344). This debate has not ended yet; it was infamously revived with the eugenics movement and the Nazis, and is still a controversial ethical issue in modern medicine (Duff 1982: 43).

**Mental-Emotional Instability in Parents**

Mental health issues on the part of the parent or both parents can lead to the murder or abandonment of children because of it may limit the parents’ capacity to care for their offspring. Social pathology of this type does not appear to have an adaptive explanation according to Pierotti (1991:1140); although one could speculate that in these cases infanticide may prevent the perpetuation of behavioral health problems that have a hereditary component. Aberrant behavior in parents may also be the result of drug use; we know that beer and wine making was a thriving business in the ancient world, and other drugs such as opiates may also be potential culprits (Homan 2002; Krikorian 1975). Post-partum depression may be a problem that can lead to uncontrollable behavior in new mothers. Without family or community support a new parent suffering from post-partum depression may harm the infant (Appleby and Dickens 1993).

**Politics**

Political oppression or intrigue within the ruling elite may also act as a motivating force in the murder or abandonment of children, as reflected in the narrative of Horus, Moses, Cyrus, and some Greco-Roman narratives. The histories of intrigue and murder of royal houses around the world give ample evidence for this motivation for murder.
The murderous intrigues at the Byzantine court were legendary. In the eighth century AD, for instance, Irene, the widow of Byzantine emperor Leo IV, blinded and deposed her son, emperor Constantine VI, in order to gain greater influence at court (Baynes and Moss 1962:16, 106, 107). Children are not safe from their parents when it comes to the struggle for political power. From 802 to 867 AD, following Irene’s death, “a number of ferocious palace murders punctuated the continual series of revolts” (Baynes and Moss 1962:18). The Macedonian period at the Byzantine court, too, was a violent time, where assassinations, palace intrigues, and conspiracies were rife. Emperor Nicophous Phocab, who ruled 963 to 969 AD, was “brutally murdered in the palace” by his wife and his general John Tzimisces, who subsequently ascended to the throne (Baynes and Moss 1962:19, 22-23). Baynes and Moss wrote “[t]he precarious tenure of a Byzantine ruler [was] menaced from without by hostile armies on every frontier and from within by the fierce competition of powerful nobles, ambitious for the throne” (1962:24).

The tragedies of the heirs of Alexander the Great are other sordid examples of the struggle for power. At his death in 323 BC, Alexander left two sons from two Persian women and one half-brother in line for kingship. Out of these, Herakles, his son with Barsine, was illegitimate and still a young boy, his son with his lawful wife, Roxane, was not yet born, and his half-brother, Philip III (also referred to as Philip Arrhidaeus or Arrhidaeus), was mentally disabled (Kincaid 1980:11). Roxane gave birth to Alexander IV, and the council of generals appointed him and Philip III joint kings, with two generals as joint regents (Kincaid 11-12). Carney wrote “[o]ne wonders whether any of the generals assembled in Babylon believed that Roxane’s son would live long enough to
reign in his own right (1995:580). Philip III was married to Eurydice, a young girl who quickly began to instigate against the generals (Kincaid 1980:17). In 317 BC, the faction around general Polysperchon executed Philip III and forced Eurydice to commit suicide (Kincaid 1980:19). In response, in 316 BC, the faction around general Cassander imprisoned Roxane and the young Alexander IV. In 311 or 310 BC, Cassander executed Roxane and Alexander. In response to this, Polysperchon proclaimed Barsine’s son Herakles successor to Alexander and rightful king; but has Herakles murdered two years later because Herakles’ illegitimacy prevents him from developing a popular following (Carney 1996:580; Kincaid 1980: 19, 26). Alexander’s sons were doomed because each general wanted to claim the throne for himself (Carney 1996:578). In societies where kingship is hereditary and lineage is of utmost importance for political success the disposal of infants for reasons of succession becomes a plausible scenario for abandonment.

**Female Infanticide**

Sex-selective infanticide and exposure was a significant factor in ancient Greece and Rome. It seems to be encouraged by inheritance and dowry customs, but does not appear in all societies that include these types of biases in their inheritance or marriage customs. Female infanticide is still practiced today. Estimates in studies from the early 1990s range from 60 million to 100 million or 11% ‘missing’ females in parts of Asia and Africa. In India, the skewed sex ratio actually continued to fall into the 21st century (Mayer 1999:323). Lai’s study on demographics in China showed that the sex ratio at birth deviated from the normal ratio and that mortality of female infants exceeded
the mortality of male infants as a consequence of strong son preference (2005:323, 324). Today, sex-selective abortion rather than exposure has become the means of choice by which the sex ratio at birth is manipulated (Attané 2006:757).

**Infanticide, Exposure, and Adoption in Antiquity**

In antiquity, adoptions were motivated by a number of factors, ranging from compassion to complete self-interest. Benefits for adoptive parents included the acquisition of an heir who could perpetuate the family line and perform the appropriate rites after his parents’ death. Another benefit was the acquisition of the cheap labor that an adoptive child could provide; especially in poor households that were unable to afford slaves or servants. A son was expected to provide for his parents in their old age, and to ensure an appropriate burial at their death. Adoption was also a convenient method to legitimate extramarital offspring, and to ensure their rights to an inheritance and a proper place in society. Humanitarian considerations might come into play particularly at foundling adoptions, where the foundling would otherwise “suffer a cruel fate” (Lewis 1980:51, 52).

Boswell examined the medieval practice of ‘*oblatio*’ – the custom of donating children to monasteries – along with the exposure of children in the ancient world (1984); and perhaps his research on *oblatio*, by which children are delivered to a new home, had led him to a more optimistic interpretation of infant exposure. It is also possible that even within a given region practices varied along urban and rural lines (W J M 1899:124). The practices of infanticide, fatal neglect, and exposure may be understood as a continuum rather than separate issues, and any of these practices aspect may be
associated with differential contextualization, attitudes, and value judgments in different societies. In the ancient world, as today, children were exposed for many reasons (Lewis 1980:266). Sadly, the exposure of infants generally means death to the infant, stories of adoptions and feral children notwithstanding (Lewis 1980:51, 52).

Summary

While the practice of infanticide or exposure appears callous and cruel from the perspective of a culture that places high value on preserving the lives of children, in the context of societies that has high infant mortality rates, few or no contraceptives, and are subjected to hardships and shortages due to war or environmental fluctuations (drought and the resulting food shortages being the most common hazard in the eastern Mediterranean), this practice becomes more understandable as a function of expediency.

As Lewis pointed out, “children available for adoption tend to come from broken homes and backgrounds of extreme poverty and illegitimacy (1980:52); and that it “seems logical” that in antiquity “most exposures must have involved members of the lower classes for economic and social reasons (1980:266, 267). The assignment of children to a liminal category as an emotional defense mechanism also makes sense in this context. However, the Mehinaku example challenges this assumption and opens up the question as to how relative concepts of parenting may potentially be. In relation to the premise of the feasibility of infant exposure as a culturally sanctioned practice, this data demonstrates that infanticide and exposure are part of the human behavior spectrum, and an experiential basis for foundling narratives is a feasible option. Since the exposure of
children tended to result in their demise, exposure of children and infanticide are treated as a continuum in this paper.
CHAPTER VI

RAISED BY WOLVES?

The Animal Parent Motif

Several of the narratives under investigation include animal parent elements. The motif of an abandoned child being nurtured by wild animals has a certain romantic air to it and narratives of feral children continue to surface in books, articles, and online. These reports include stories of feral children allegedly kept alive by wild animals, family dogs or other domestic animals, but also rescued children that were found not associated with animal or human parents.

These foundlings are often severely malnourished and riddled with parasites; and few of them survive into adulthood after their rescue (Hutton and Van den Brand de Cleverskerk 1940:10, 16-19). Preetap Chumon, who may have been nursed and kept alive by the family dog, died soon after his rescue in the local welfare center in Thailand at age two. Kamala and Amala, allegedly raised by wolves in India, died in childhood (Ward). A Chilean boy, Axel Rivas, is said to have been parented by a pack of dogs. After he was named and placed in an orphanage, he escaped repeatedly and returned to his dog family. He has not been seen since his last escape (Ward).

Feral children are said to identify with their animal families and adopt animal gestures and “language.” Running on all fours, for instance, has been observed in feral children from Bamberg, Hesse, Ireland (Lane 1976:34), and India (Hutton and Van den
Brand de Cleverskerk 1940:10, 12, 16-19; Squires 1927:13-15). Oxama Malaua, Ukraine, and others that were raised by the family dog, ran on all fours and barked at people. An approximately two-year-old boy, who may have been brought up by chimps in Nigeria, was found and named “Bello.” Even after six years in the orphanage he “would still leap about in a chimp-like fashion, make chimpanzee-like noises, and clapped his cupped hands over his head repeatedly” (Ward). Lucas, raised by baboons from infancy to about age 12, was able to learn English reasonably well (Foley 1940:130).

Taken at face value, the stories of feral children suggest that foundlings do not tend to be in any condition to move up to any position of leadership after they are returned to the human community, as claimed in many of the traditional narratives under investigation in this paper. It is quite astonishing that the children were nursed rather than eaten.

An Alternative Explanation

Carroll questions the authenticity of the alleged animal parent stories (1984:65, 68). He investigated a number of these cases and concludes that a closer look at each “true story” revealed that not one eyewitness account of the children in direct association with an animal or a group of animals existed (1984:68). Carroll proposes an alternate, and very compelling, analysis of the animal parent reports. A comparison of the sex ratio of 33 alleged animal raised children – 18% female and 82% male – shows a remarkable similarity with the sex ratio of autistic children: 19% female and 81% male. The behaviors exhibited by the alleged animal parented children and their lack of
improvement over time are in line with the autistic behavior spectrum. The sex ratio among these alleged feral children becomes even more significant when we consider that female children are far more likely to be abandoned than male children, and that the survivorship of female infants is greater than the survivorship of male infants. The sex ratio of males to females in feral children, however, is actually reversed (Carroll 1984:67). Carroll develops his argument further by illustrating how the belief in animal foster parents perpetuates itself: a nine-year-old boy was found in a railcar in a train station. Exhibiting the usual behavior characteristics of feral or autistic children, observers concluded that he had been raised by wolves, even though no wolves or traces of wolves were detected (1984:79). Carroll makes a strong case for the hypothesis that the alleged feral children were abandoned on account of their disability, and subsequently “misdiagnosed” as having been raised by animals (Carroll 1984:67, 80). Carroll’s argument also corroborates Dewan’s observations on folklore genesis by which an observation lays the foundation for a memorate which is informed by an existing, or possibly new construct of context or explanatory model. An abandoned child presenting with abnormal behavior is discovered in an area in which wolves have been sighted, or in a closed yard in which other animals have also been penned in. This observation is contextualized by knowledge of inter-species adoptions or by knowledge of animal parent folklore. Through retelling of such memorates and the addition of new ones, a body of folklore is developed and strengthened that may become so compelling that it is invoked to contextualize observations even if there is not external indication of the presence of animals that could function as adoptive parents.
Movie Construct

The animal parent element in the foundling narratives is indicative of an explanatory device Barber and Barber refer to as “movie construct,” whereby observers fill in gaps of knowledge with information they are already familiar with, even if only through hearsay, and in such a way that appears reasonable at the time (2004:30-33, 246). In this case, a logical sequence would have developed as follows: a child is found in an uninhabited place, the child’s behavior resembles animal behavior more than the social norm; therefore, the child must have been raised by animals other than *Homo sapiens*, who ostensibly behave in socially sanctioned ways. An explanatory model is thus constructed based on limited but available data.

Genie, Victor of Aveyron, and Kaspar Hauser

The most thoroughly documented cases – Genie, Victor of Aveyron, and Kaspar Hauser – were clearly not associated with animal foster parents. In the case of Genie, discovered in 1970 near Los Angeles at age 13 after having spent her entire life locked up and tied up, the evaluations of her condition had the experts divided as to whether she was already developmentally disabled before the abuse started or whether she became disabled as a result of the abuse (Secrets of the Wild Child 1997). Victor of Aveyron, a young boy who had been observed to roam naked in the woods around Aveyron, was first captured in 1798. After escapes and recaptures he was finally confined to an orphanage (Yousef 2001:246). He was described as a “mute, malnourished, convulsive child” and his tutors declared him unable to learn speech or socially acceptable conduct (Yousef 2001:248, 255). He was most likely the survivor of
a botched infanticide, as evidenced by a 41mm long scar across his throat (Yousef 2001:252). Kaspar Hauser, a 19th century case, was confined in a dungeon until about 16 years of age. He did not make much progress in the development of speech and socially acceptable behavior, either, but was murdered only a year after his recovery (Mellen 1926:309).

The same question applies: was their behavior abnormal before they were abandoned, or did they begin to behave abnormally as a result of the neglect? Documentation of feral children only begins with their discovery, and therefore after the fact; and in most cases the documentation is unsatisfactory.

Regional Interpretations of Foundling Narratives

None of the exposed infants in our narratives from antiquity exhibited the sort of unusual or ‘animal like’ behavior hat more contemporary animal parent stories report; and the reintroduction into human society was successful, even culminated in ascent to highest political office; quite unlike the foundlings that have been reported in recent history, which are clearly unfit for leadership roles, regardless of whether they are autistic or because they have not been properly socialized in early childhood. Since abnormal behavior of the infant was not reported in the old narratives, the introduction of the animal parent was unnecessary as an explanatory model for such behavior; however, it may still have served as a ‘movie construct’ developed to explain the survival of the infant in Greco-Roman narratives. This absence of reporting of abnormal behavior in foundlings may be a function of the prevalence of infant expose, by which even perfectly healthy children were discarded and occasionally recovered.
The late introduction of the animal parent motif into Mesopotamian narratives by Greco-Roman sources indicates that the motif itself was important enough to the narrators, writers, and their audiences to be merged with the existing narratives. Presumably, it increased the entertainment value of the narrative. It may have also added an extra air of mystery and divine protection and intervention to the survival of the infant and appeal to cosmological concepts of narrators and audiences, thereby increasing authority and status of the foundling in question. It cannot be a reflection of experiences or explanatory models in Mesopotamian narratives or it would have been included in the older versions of these narratives. It represents a grafting of a motif onto an existing narrative by Greco-Roman writers for a Greco-Roman audience. The animal parent element will be stripped from the narratives in this study because it represents an explanatory device or literary device (Barber and Barber 2004:28, 29, 246). This motif is useful for this study in that it highlights the typical Greco-Roman narrative form of the foundling story, and thereby identifies a regional type of the foundling narrative theme. This motif may still be explored as to whether the type of animal in the narrative relates to the fauna typical for the geographic region in antiquity, which may lead to experiences and observations of narrators.
CHAPTER VII

FOUNDLING NARRATIVES, TEXTS, AND LITERACY IN
THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

An Old Tradition

The literary motif of the abandoned infant who was saved by extraordinary circumstances and who returns to the human community and often ascends to high rank, can be found in a number of stories of eastern Mediterranean, Egyptian and Southwest Asian antiquity. Hooke called this type of narrative a “prestige myth” (1968:14). According to Redford, the oldest known stories in this region of the hero abandoned in infancy date back to the second millennium B.C., and include the offspring of the Hurrian Sungod and an unidentified heifer, the Akkadian ruler Sargon the Great, the Assyrian queen Samurammat, and also possibly the offspring of Antiope and Zeus in Greece, depending on the etymological interpretation of one of their offspring’s name (1967:227, 228). The Delta Cycle, containing birth narratives of the Egyptian God Horus, traces its beginnings to the Pyramid Texts, around 2500 BC (Clark 1978:17-188).

Actors in these narratives include deities, humans, or animals as biological parents, humans or animals as foster parents, and humans – almost exclusively males – as the rescued foundlings. According to Redford, “those examples in which gods and goddesses play a part belong to an advanced stage in the humanization of the pantheon,” rather than serve as an indication of a narrative’s great antiquity relative to narratives that
feature only human actors (1967:224). By contrast, Barber and Barber propose that deities represent a development in the encoding of information in narrative form that increasingly elevates important actors (2004:145, 250). Scholars have interpreted the exposure motif itself in various ways: as a form of initiation, as punishment for (future) parricide, or—perhaps most convincingly—as a narrative ploy that throws the elevated status of the hero into even greater relief (Bremmer 1986:44).

**Diffusion**

Questions regarding possible relationships between the stories are intriguing but difficult to answer, in part due to limited archaeological and textual records. “‘Parallels’ have haunted the study of folklore from the start; theories of migration or of multiple spontaneous generation still confront one another” (Burkert 1986:10). The migrations of populations, trade, travel, and ongoing cultural exchange between the populations that had entertained these narratives would have provided the means of diffusion of the motif from one region to another (Hooke 1968:17). Itinerant priests and magi contributed to the dissemination of narratives from East to West (Burkert 1986:24). Kirk summarizes the interconnectedness of the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean as follows:

The Near East and western Asia in the third and second millennium B.C. (and that is roughly the period under discussion) were a cauldron of customs and ideas that passed from Mesopotamia to Egypt and occasionally back again, to Syria and Asia Minor and into the Aegean, to Cyprus and Crete and the Greek mainland. Semitic tribes absorbed concepts from Indo-Iranian ones and vice versa. Indo-European-speaking Hittites derived their theology from the non-Indo-European Hurrians, the Semitic Akkadians from the non-Semitic Sumerians. The Aegean peoples were in contact during the second millennium with Trojans and Hittites in Asia Minor, with Egypt through casual trade and mercenaries, with the Levant through Cyprus and trading posts in Syria and Palestine. The main fountain-head
of culture and beliefs was certainly Mesopotamia. Even Egypt was affected, especially in the third millennium B.C., although she rapidly developed her own highly idiosyncratic civilization. The existence of this great culture area, maintained by military, commercial and political diffusion and spreading into the eastern Mediterranean itself, means that the appearance in different places of vaguely similar or very general ideas … does not necessarily indicate the direct influence of one particular region on another… .(1974:255)

While Egypt was relatively isolated “by natural boundaries, Mesopotamian influence spread towards both the Mediterranean and the Indus at quite an early date” (Burkert 1986:13). This exchange created a considerable diffusion of texts and intellectual achievements.

Two main time periods featured particularly intensive contact between Greece and Southwest Asia: the late Bronze Age, 14th and 13th centuries BC, and the 8th and 7th centuries BC when Phoenicians and Greeks set out to exploit as much of the Mediterranean as possible, after the Assyrians crippled the Syrian, Palestinian, Egyptian and Late Hittite states (Burkert 1986:13, 14). The Hittite, Ugaritic, and Hurrian peoples of Asia Minor and Northern Mesopotamia were in contact with Hurrian influence on ritual and mythology (Burkert 1986:21); another communication circuit included Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite, and West Semitic texts (Burkert 1986:22). Still, Redford argues that the motif of the abandoned infant originated in Mesopotamia, based on the antiquity of the Sargon legend (1967:227). At this time, it is not possible to “isolate specific occasions or single routes of transfer” for the many narratives that circulated in these regions (Burkert 1986:29).

Burkert painted a vivid picture of the literary history of the Eastern Mediterranean and Southwest Asian antiquity:
Fertile archives are provided by the continuing literature of Egypt and Mesopotamia, or come from Syrian Ugarit-Ras Shamra and from Anatolian Hattusa-Boğazköy. Bronze Age traditions end abruptly in both places, as in Greece, at about 1200 BC. After the ‘Dark Ages’ there emerge, in addition to some relics of Hittite traditions in Southern Anatolia, a lively and varied urban civilization in Syria and Palestine, which can claim the decisive invention of the ‘Phoenician’ script, and also the ‘miracle of Greece’, which asserts its status through the poetry of Homer and Hesiod. This contribution was to endure, whereas, of the Syrian-Palestinian literature, only the Hebrew Bible was to survive later catastrophes. … Sumero-Akkadian and Egyptian sources are rich but geographically distant from those of Greece; Old Testament texts are of a very peculiar type. There remain the fragmentary tablets from Bronze Age Hattusa and Ugarit; the Phoenician and Aramaic literature from Iron Age Syria … has vanished completely, as has the Phrygian and Lydian literature of Anatolia, if indeed it ever existed. (1986:13)

This description illustrates some of the randomness in the survivorship, recovery, and resulting availability of textual materials. Burkert wrote “what is left, thus is an chance selection” (1986:13). This ancient body of narratives known to us today is – in a sense – comparable to a network of archaeological sites, we may want to consider mechanisms of site formation. Mills touched on this topic by introducing power relationships as factors in the establishment of narratives but in the case of narratives of great antiquity we need to consider how we have acquired knowledge of them, and how the process of preservation and recovery of these narratives may have influenced our interpretations. Our knowledge of these narratives is based on textual evidence in the form of clay tablets, papyri, and inscriptions on stelae and walls; supported by archaeological evidence in the form of painted images, reliefs, artifacts, and sculpture. All these were elite provinces in the ancient world. Our record is clearly skewed towards the interests of a tiny minority of literate persons of great privilege. This is compounded by the greater survivorship of elite material culture due to the greater durability of
materials used in architecture and artifacts of the upper classes. Schiffer rightly asked “How does a cultural system produce archaeological remains?” (1972:156). As a result of site formation processes, the archaeological record is transformed and distorted (Schiffer 1983:677). The vagaries of archaeological recovery further limit the selection from an already narrow pool of information; adding an element of random selection to the equation, especially on account of looting and the ideological and economical dynamics surrounding early excavation. Artifacts were excavated to expand collections, and not to serve as documentation of past human behavior and social systems (Lamberg-Karlovsky and Sabloff 1995:25; Trigger 2007 90). The fragile evidence of underprivileged sectors is quickly lost.

Chronologies

Another issue that is problematic for the analysis of a body of literature is the discrepancies in the advent of writing in different regions. Writing appeared first in Sumer around 3100BC (Teeple 2006:22), then Egypt, later in Greece. This creates a bias towards Mesopotamia in evaluations of the antiquity of narratives and the possible relationships between them. Kirk, for instance spoke of the extensive influence of Mesopotamian myth on Greek myth (1970:84, 132), but we have no way of distinguishing whether the Mesopotamian narratives are older or whether they simply were committed to writing earlier on. The same question could be raised regarding scripts that have not been deciphered.

Not only texts and narration were means of transmitting stories. Iconography in the form of pictures or sculpture had played a role in the propagation and also fixation
of narratives, although this is not always available, either. Mycenaean art, for instance, did not feature myth-related iconography but around 700 BC it appeared in Greek art and soon became a prominent feature; following precedents in Mesopotamian and Egyptian art. Unfortunately, iconography carries its own difficulties regarding its use as an information source for traditional narratives in that an image does not carry the explicit references that texts provide by use of proper names, and in that a narrative comprises a sequence of actions. An image tends to depict only one action, and “the production of a sequence of pictures to illustrate one tale is a rare and special development” (Burkert 1986:25).

Opportunities for the diffusion of foundling narratives abounded in this interconnected part of the world. As Boas pointed out, the diffusion of a narrative is the principal factor in its distribution if contact between the narrators is documented (1974:145), and this may account for the wide distribution of the foundling motif. However, this research will focus on the variations in the narratives and explore the agreement between diverging narrative versions and the social histories of the narrators in order to account for the variations.
CHAPTER VIII

THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

Greek Folklore

The development of Greek mythology was affected by “historicizing legend, cult and ritual, the vicissitudes of oral tradition, conscious literary elaboration and refinement: all played their part in shaping stories whose initial impetus, imaginative or practical, lies concealed in the shadows of the past” (Kirk 1970:172, 173). “One of the striking characteristics of Greek mythology as a whole is the way in which it retained that life-giving mutability long after the introduction of writing” (Bremmer 1986:188). Regarding this mutability of Greek narratives, Bremmer finds “development in the tradition but no breaks” (1986:189). Sourvinou-Inwood asserted that “many Greek myths express important perceptions of the society that generated them” (1986:215). Kirk warned against the ethnocentric and incorrect assumption that Greek myths form a pattern that is representative of all other myths (1984:54).

“It is extremely difficult to determine the age of the average Greek myth. Many tales were recorded relatively late, and therefore we cannot ascertain the precise date of their origin” (Bremmer 1986:1). G.S. Kirk wrote that the main Greek myths were formed before “the spread of general literacy” in the 7th century, and that these myths have Asiatic and Egyptian parallels (1984:53). The expression “general literacy” may be an overstatement.
Homer in the 8th century BC marked the transition from oral tradition into the beginnings of Western literary history. Homer assimilated narratives reaching back into the late Bronze Age with events surrounding the Trojan war, narratives attached to heroes alleged to be predating the Trojan war, and narratives of deities and their interferences in the affairs of mortal, attributed to the Mycenean Age (1580-1120 BC) (Kirk 1974:95-97). Homer “is and was the prime literary source” of narratives of deities and their involvements with each other and with mortals in Greece (Kirk 1974:97). “The greatest of heroes were children of a god or goddess” (Kirk 1974:272); and – as we shall see – were often children that were abandoned in infancy.

As discussed in Chapter Five, the animal parent motif is a typically classical Greek narrative device, and this tradition was subsequently blended into Roman and Southwest Asian narratives. Southwest Asian narratives do not contain this motive until the time of classical Greece (Carroll1984:74, 75). The animal parent motif is a late introduction into the southwest Asian foundling narratives by Greco-Roman authors; foundling myths existed in Southwest Asia without an animal motif prior to this motif’s introduction.

Cameron observed that the foundling theme appeared not only in mythology but in a variety of literary genres in Greco-Roman antiquity: oral narratives, tragedy, comedy, and rhetoric. This commonly employed plot was not contrived as far as the practice of abandonment was concerned, which was rooted in actual customs and experiences; but it was often embellished by the recognition and reunification of
biological parents and children (1932:105). The story of Oedipus is a particularly tragic example of the reunification plot.

**Examples of Narratives: Greco-Roman Antiquity**

*Oedipus*. Several versions of the Oedipus narrative were in existence by the 5th century (Bremmer 1986:43). According to tradition, Oedipus was rejected by his father, Laius, after the oracle at Delphi informed Laius that any child born to his wife Iocaste would grow up to murder him. The Delphic Oracle could not have been introduced into the narrative until the 8th century because the Delphic Oracle rose to fame around this time (Bremmer 1986:43).

As soon as Oedipus was born, Laius snatched him, crippled his feet with a nail and bound them together, and exposed him on Mount Cithaeron. A Corinthian shepherd found the infant, adopted him, and named him ‘Oedipus’ – ‘swell foot’ – because of his crippled feet (Graves 1979:9-14). The shepherds bring Oedipus to King Polybus’ court. King Polybus’s wife’s name changes from version to version; it may be Merope, Medusa, Periboia, or Antiochis. Bremmer suspects that this is a way of keeping a well-worn story fresh (1986:45). In another version of Oedipus’ abandonment and adoption, Laius locks the infant in a chest which is then lowered into the sea (presumably the Mediterranean Sea) from aboard a ship. A roundabout way of ridding oneself of an infant, but the floating chest is a popular motif in Greco-Roman foundling narratives. The chest drifts to Sicyon, where Queen Periboea finds it and rescues Oedipus while her laundry women are busy at work. Queen Periboea retires into a thicket and feigns labor pains, cleverly
deceiving her laundry women. She only reveals the true circumstances to husband, Polybus, and Oedipus is thus legitimized as their son and heir.

After Oedipus reached adulthood, the Delphic oracle informs him that he is going to murder his father and marry his mother. In order to protect his adoptive parents, who he believes to be his biological parents, Oedipus decides not to return to them. Instead of returning home he sets for Thebes. On his way to Thebes, he encounters his biological father, Laius, but the two men fail to recognize each other. Oedipus killed Laius in an ensuing altercation. When Oedipus reaches Thebes, he outwits the Sphinx who had been terrorizing the city. The grateful Thebans crown Oedipus, and Oedipus marries the recently widowed Iocaste, his biological mother. Following these transgressions, Thebes becomes haunted by plagues. The seer Teiresias announces the sordid truth about Odipus, which is corroborated by Oedipus’ adoptive mother. Iocaste hangs herself. Oedipus blinds himself in one version of the narrative, he continues to rule Thebes in another, and he is expelled from Thebes in yet another version (Graves 1979:9-14).

The element of the Corinthian shepherd on Mt. Cithaeron is “an interesting glimpse into the sparsely documented activities of Greek herdsmen,” and illustrates transhumance in Greek antiquity by which herds were moved into the mountains during the summer months and into the valleys during winter (Bremmer 1986:43). Bremmer explains that the motif of the queen involved in her laundry predates the Classical Age, when the enclosure of elite women became much too restrictive to permit such activities (1986:43). The mutilation of the foundling’s feet is not included in the ‘chest and sea’
version of the narrative (Bremmer 1986:44). In either version of the narrative, the place of abandonment is outside the boundaries of the human community, or – in a structuralist interpretation – juxtaposed to it (Bremmer 1986:44). This appears to be common to all the foundling narratives in this study.

Amphion and Zethos. The story of the children of Antiope and Zeus appears to be the oldest in a string of paternity cases involving Zeus, which tend to involve the abandonment of the offspring. In this story, Antiope flees from her enraged father and finds protection with the king of Sicyon. Her uncle Lycos murders the king and takes her back in chains to her father. On the way, Lycos exposes the twins, Amphion and Zethos, in the mountain wilderness of Mount Kithairon near Eleutherai. The twins are rescued and adopted by a shepherd and later reunited with Antiope (Redford 1967:213). Hermes instructed them in various arts. Amphion became a bard skilled with the lyre and Zethos became a cattle herder. This story may have ancient west-Semitic roots, but this hypothesis is based only on the derivation of one of the twins’ names, ‘Zethos’ (Redford 227).

Perseus. An oracle predicts to Acrisius that his daughter Danae will bear a son who will eventually kill him. Therefore, he shuts his daughter away in a cell of bronze. Zeus, however, is able to enter the cell in the form of a shower of gold and fathers a child with Acrisius’ daughter. Acrisius shuts his daughter and her son, the upcoming hero Perseus, into a chest and throws the chest into the sea. When the chest gets washed up on the island Seriphus both are rescued, according to Apollodorus and Hyginus, and Perseus is adopted by a shepherd (Kirk 1970:181; Redford 1967:216).
Perseus eventually kills Acrisius, accidentally, with a discus; but he is probably better known for – quite intentionally – killing the fearsome Medusa by cutting her head off. Perseus and Andromeda found the Perseid Dynasty and become the eponymous ancestors of the Persians (Kirk 1970:181).

**Telephus.** An oracle predicts to the king of Tegea, Aleos, that his sons will be killed by his daughter Auge’s descendants. Aleos makes her a priestess and condemns her to chastity. Zeus puts an end to her chastity and she gives birth to Telephus (Redford 1967:216). In one version, Auge escapes and exposes Telephus in the wilderness of Parthenion, where he is kept alive by a deer and rescued by a shepherd. In other versions, Aleos has mother and son put in a chest and thrown into the sea. The chest is washed up at the mouth of the Mysian River, where Teuthras finds it. He marries the mother and adopts the infant (Redford 1967:216). In any event, Telephus eventually ends up at Tegeas court and kills his uncles in an argument (Fromhold-Treu 1934:326; Redford 1967:216). Kirk calls the plotline of the father who attempts to destroy his child or grandchild for fear that the child will wind up killing him a “well-worn theme” (1970:183).

**Aeolus and Boetus.** Poseidon rapes Melanippe, who subsequently gives birth to the twins Aeolus and Boetus. The mother is blinded and imprisoned to punish her for her inappropriate conduct, and the twins are exposed in the wilderness. A cow feeds the babies until they are rescued and raised by a shepherd (Redford 1967:213).
Hippothoon. Hippothoon, the child of Alope and Poseidon, is exposed in the wilderness and his mother killed by her father. A mare nurses the baby until shepherds discover and adopt him (Redford 1967:213).

Romulus and Remus. Romulus (c.771-c.717 BC) and Remus (c.711-c.753 BC), the twin sons of the priestess Rhea Sylvia and her rapist, the god of war, Mars, were the founders of legend of Rome. Rheas father Amelius kills her and orders the death of the twins by drowning. The trough in which the babies are placed floats away on the Tiber and becomes lodged at the base of a tree. Here a wolf discovers the twins and nurses them. Eventually, one of the king’s herdsmen discovers them and cares for them (Redford 1967:217).

Summary. Greco-Roman narratives show frequent employment of the animal parent motif, which has been discussed in Chapter Five and identified as an explanatory construct. This motif will be stripped from the narratives. However, the choice of animal can still be evaluated as an indicator of the fauna familiar to the narrators. In most narratives, the motivating factors for the exposure of children are their illegitimacy, with the murder or extreme punishment of the child’s mother on account of alleged ‘immoral conduct’ as a further consequence. Rape is a frequent motif and cause for pregnancies in these stories, and usually perpetrated by deities. The Oedipus narrative is unusual here because his parents are properly married to one another, although, as in some of the other narratives, he is doomed on account of prophesy.
Exposure. The high rate of infanticide in ancient Greece and Rome is well documented: one well in Athens (Agora) contained approximately 450 infant skeletons; the vast majority of them neonates (Little 1999:284). These high numbers corroborate the textual evidence for infanticide as a culturally sanctioned practice, not a manifestation of rare aberrant behavior. It is interesting that in ancient Greece children were not considered part of the family until they were officially inducted by way of a ritual called ‘decate’ ten days after their birth. This gave the family an opportunity to inspect the child and form an opinion on its survival chances; if it passed it was accepted and the family would then invest valuable resource into raising it (Patterson 1974:105).

Infanticide remained legal in Rome until AD 374. The male head of household had the sole right to reject any infant born to him; the mother had no recourse in this decision. Unwanted babies were simply abandoned on a refuse heap (Tyldeslay 1995:69). The concept of *pater familias* was an important legal concept in ancient Rome, and designated not necessarily fatherhood but legal authority over children, wife, slaves or other workers in the household, and the family’s property. The male head of household did not have to be a father; a prepubescent boy, for example, could be designated *pater familias* (Saller 1999:184).

While textual and archaeological evidence for infanticide in ancient Greece and Rome is convincing, opinions vary as to how closely infant exposure and infanticide were related and whether the same social functions and motives applied (Boswell 1984). Historic evidence suggests that Romans practiced infanticide for three main reasons:
when the child was deformed, to limit family size, or if the child was an unwanted girl (Kamp 2001:21). Patterson wrote that Greek terminology regarding exposure and infanticide suggests that these two practices were considered separate entities, legally, morally, and in their effects on the children (1974:106, 107). Boswell considered the abandonment of children an alternative to infanticide that served as an opportunity for social mobility and a better home for the children. He wrote that the overwhelming expectation of the part of the parents was that the infant would be rescued and cared for. To support this view, Boswell quoted textual sources of Greek and Roman antiquity that show examples of foster parents writing about their love for their foster children. Boswell, however, also quoted sources which claimed that the fate of these children tended to look bleak and that they usually ended up exploited as slaves or in the sex trade, or a combination of both (1984:13, 14). Gibbs wrote that in ancient Greece “war, piracy, and the raising of abandoned children were the major sources of slaves in the first century C.E.” (1986:301). Harris confirms these populations as sources for slaves, and also adds other source populations for Roman slaves (1999:62). The practice of adopting foundlings as slaves was a mechanism by which freeborn populations were converted into slaves (Harris 1999:74).

Gould was also unconvinced of the upward mobility of abandoned children and claimed that exposure and infanticide belonged together. He placed female infanticide and exposure in ancient Greece and Rome at 10% of birth (in Patterson 1974:108). This, combined with the characteristic of the narratives on exposed children that with one exception only male children were saved and raised, underscores the
possibility that exposure of female infants mainly meant ‘female infanticide.’ It also underscores the gender-based status differentials. Cameron quoted the letter of Hilarion to his wife, in which Hilarion instructed his wife to discard the expected newborn if it happened to be female. This constitutes explicit textual evidence of the practice of female infanticide (1932:106). Even if girls were welcome, the mother needed to become pregnant again, soon, and produce male heirs who would perpetuate the family cults and care for the parents (Pomeroy 2007:16).

**Gender.** The level of brutality towards women stands out in these stories and suggests a long history of honor killings. This would be an interesting topic for a future study. Iocaste’s suicide was an extension of the rule that women who have in some way dishonored the family must die in order to atone for the transgression. Silence and seclusion were expected of a respectable woman in Athens (Pomeroy 2007:10, 11). Although the lives of Greek and Roman women differed in their degree of circumscription and seclusion (Pomeroy 2007:68), self-control, especially in the form of chastity was “the preeminent virtue sought in women” (Pomeroy 2007:11, 17).

A Roman woman married without *manus* (into the hand – or power – of her husband) retained some protection by her kin (Pomeroy 2007:121). “Augustine observed that the faces of many women were scarred as a result of being beaten by their husbands” (Pomeroy 2007:121). Even for upper class women, domestic violence was a dire threat (Pomeroy 2007:12); as evidenced by some high-profile cases: Regilla (killed by her husband Herodes or his henchman, by a kick or kicks to the abdomen), Poppea (killed by her husband Nero by kicks in the abdomen), Melissa (killed by her husband Periander).
All these women were pregnant at the time of their murder (Pomeroy 2007:121, 122). While a husband was not actually allowed to kill his wife without first consulting with her kinsmen, actual murder cases were treated very leniently, especially if any suspicion of inappropriate behavior fell on the wife. The demise of the unborn child was not considered an offence because it was the father’s property (Pomeroy 2007:121). “In Rome, most homicides occurred within the family” (Pomeroy 2007:132). The legal concept of *patria potestas* was a life-and-death power and rendered fathers immune from their children’s testimony in court (Pomeroy 2007:131).

**Discussion: Greco-Roman Antiquity**

The social history of ancient Greece and Rome gives ample evidence of widespread infant exposure, infanticide, and misogyny, which is matched by their social histories.

**Infant Exposure.** Infant exposure and foundling adoptions are well-documented in Greco-Roman history, and narratives of foundlings were abundant in this part of the world. Animal husbandry was a major economic activity in ancient Greece and Rome. In a society that practiced infant exposure and that involved transhumance as an economic activity of much of its population it is feasible that shepherds occasionally came across random abandoned infants on their rounds. Outside of such specific scenarios, the prevalence of the practice indicates that large segments of the population had some type of involvement in exposure and foundling adoption, whether they had exposed a child, adopted a foundling, or whether they had once been a foundling, in which case they would have most likely ended up a slave. According to Hufford and
Dewan, the experiences associated with the phenomenon strengthen the body of folklore that is associated with the experiences. In this case, we have a strong development of folklore associated with foundlings matched with ample evidence of infant exposure and foundling adoptions. This supports the hypothesis of a positive relationship of personal experience and folklore.

**Gender and Greco-Roman Narratives.** The narratives are extremely misogynistic in their abuse and violence towards women, which finds a corollary in the documentation of domestic violence and legal concepts that illustrate the domination of women by men in Greco-Roman social history.

The experience-centered approach to folklore indicates that the killing or other brutal punishment of the foundling’s mother can be indicative of a long history of honor killings because folklore is fueled by experiences of narrators. However, this has to be confirmed in the social histories of the societies involved, and the data is not available at this time. Although the Oedipus narrative differs from the other narratives in many ways, Iocaste’s suicide is an expression of the same structural violence because a woman in her situation would be required to die in order to neutralize the shame to the family. Her incestuous and parricidal son, on the other hand, continues on as regent in some versions of the narrative.

With their cruel treatment of women and the infant exposure as part of the course of action taken to erase the blemish on the family’s reputation, Greco-Roman narratives one could make a case for an interpretation of the narratives as charters of conventions and as cautionary tales, especially considering the narrator’s identities and
their perspectives. The narrators in these cases are the literate segments of the population, almost exclusively men, who transmitted these stories to us in writing and who made the determination what material was fit to be recorded. These were not societies from which one should expect an egalitarian perspective on social life, moral norms, and child rearing.

Gods and Class Conflict. In the majority of these narratives, deities are involved as fathers of the soon-to-be-abandoned offspring. Assuming that no actual supernatural beings were part of the experience of narrators, an alternate explanation has been proposed by Barber and Barber. According to these scholars, the deity motif can be indicative of two phenomena: the deification of the elite of this society or it may be used in this context as an explanatory device to justify why a daughter of the house could have become pregnant in spite of the precautions taken by her male relative(s) (Barber and Barber 2004:144, 145). According to Barber and Barber, the increasing status of actors in narratives and the explanatory construct are common pattern in the transformation of narratives over the course of time. The “upgrading” of actors in narratives may involve a transition from commoners to royalty or from royalty to deity; or any such equivalent (Barber and Barber 2004:145). Frazer finds the human origin of Greek deities “probable” (1921:Book I, xxvi, xxvii).

The transformation of transgressions by the elite against persons of lower status also conforms to a principle in the development of narratives by which an observation or experience is expressed through an analogy (Barber and Barber 2004:3, 34, 40, 166, 183, 246). The transgressions of deities against mortals can indicate class
conflict, but this remains speculative unless it can be corroborated with indications from the political and social history of the region.

The narratives include several examples of twin births: Romulus and Remus, Amphion and Zethus, Aeolus and Boetus. Deities may generally have served as an explanatory device for twin births.

**Agreement of Narratives and Practices.** Greek and Roman narratives reflect prevalence of infant exposure that appears in the archaeological and textual data. In a society that practiced infant exposure on a regular basis, persons would have first hand knowledge of this practice; either as parents who exposed their child or children, or having come across exposed infants, or having been a foundling, or at least they would have heard of the first-hand experiences of others. Since the narrators’ experiences vitalize folklore (Hufford 1995; Dewan 2006), the prevalence of the practice explains the prevalence of the motif in the narratives. Having stated this, with the exception of the Oedipus narrative, the narratives follow well-worn schemata. Hufford pointed out that narratives can be similar because they are copies of one another or because they are based on similar experiences (1995:31). The social history of Greco-Roman antiquity suggests that the foundling narratives had a broad basis in the experience repertoire of the population but that the expression in narrative form was strongly determined by literary schemata. This restriction in the expression of the theme was probably also a function of the selection process by which some narratives were committed to writing.

While it is unfortunate that some interpretive elements remain speculative, such as class conflict and honor killings, one can argue, using the experience-centered
hypothesis to folklore, that these elements in narratives indicate topics for further research into the social history of these societies.
CHAPTER IX

SOUTHWEST ASIA

The Setting

The landscapes that were home to the southwest Asian foundling narratives include Mesopotamia and the Levant. Coastal mountains divide the Levant into two climate zones: the Mediterranean coast and the arid interior. Mesopotamia is defined by the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers and the peripheral foothills, where domestication and farming first flourished (Moore: 2000:45). Cuneiform writing emerged in southern Mesopotamia, Sumer, around 3100 BC; preceded by clay tokens and the first written symbols around 3400 BC in Sumer and pictographic temple accounts in northern Mesopotamia around 3250 BC (Pollock 1999:2, 5; Teeple 2006:22). This early emergence of writing brought us snapshots of folklore whose written versions date back as far as the third millennium BC (Gaster 1952:43).

Northern Mesopotamian Folklore

The Hurrians, who may have originated from the Caucasus and subsequently settled in northern Mesopotamia around 2500 BC, entertained “elaborate tales about legendary figures” (Kirk 1970:179). Some Hurrian myths are known to us from Hittite (Asia Minor) sources (Kirk 1970:214). The narrative of the offspring of an affair between the Hurrian Sungod and an unknown heifer was preserved on Hittite clay tablets from Boğazköy, and dates back to at least the 13th century BC (Lewis 1980:156; 199).
Much to the heifer’s disappointment, the offspring turned out to be anthropomorphic. Embarrassed by her bipedal offspring, she tries to kill him but the child’s father intervenes. The boy is cared for by birds in an undisclosed location in the wilderness. The Sungod provides nourishment for the infant and sends a servant out to place the child by a stream where a fisherman finds him. The fisherman’s wife noisily fakes labor pains to legitimize the foundling, and the neighbors – believing the infant to be the couple’s offspring – come and bring presents for the new parents. Unfortunately, the rest of the story of lost (Gaster 1952:164-167; Lewis 1980:156, 157; Redford 1967:211, 212).

Gaster retells the story in full, whereby the Sungod-and-Heifer incident and the resulting foundling are embedded in a more extensive narrative; although he cautions that the foundling narrative and the surrounding narrative are actually two independent stories that were at some point merged into one (1952:159-169).^2^  

Narratives of Sumer and Akkad

The best known Mesopotamian foundling narratives include the birth legends of Gilgamesh and Sargon; both from the southern Mesopotamian regions of Sumer, named after its ‘first people’, the Sumerians, and the central Mesopotamian regions of Akkad. Sumerian, a language of undetermined family association, persisted as the language of the educated and literate classes long after Sumer had ceded political ascendancy to the Semitic-speaking peoples of Akkad and Babylon. However, since Semitic-speaking peoples had also inhabited Sumer since the early 3rd millennium B.C., it

^2^ The cow, calf, and bull were important myth motifs in Southwest Asian and Egyptian antiquity, and were associated with solar deities and kingship (Gaster 1952:169; Roberts 1997:32). A well-known example is the Golden Calf, the God of the Canaanites, that so irritated Moses when he returned from Mount Sinai.
is unproductive to distinguish a Sumerian from an Akkadian culture. Most of the recovered myths in Sumerian were committed to writing around 1700 B.C., but were considered to be based on narratives that were already in circulation about 2300 B.C. Minstrels were driving forces in the development of Sumerian myths. Surviving 2\textsuperscript{nd} millennium myths from Old Babylon were primarily recovered from Neo-Assyrian tablets of Ashurbanipal’s library at 7\textsuperscript{th} century Nineveh; where Akkadian versions of these narratives survived (Kirk 1970:85-87). Since Sumerian culture predates Kirk’s dates, the Sumerian narratives may originate much earlier.

**Gilgamesh.** Gilgamesh stories have been transmitted in Sumerian and Akkadian translations. The Akkadian translations show “a marked alteration of emphasis and detail” that may be “the result of conscious literary effort” on the part of the scribes, and therefore unrelated to oral tradition (Kirk 1970:87). The epic of Gilgamesh, a hero myth of sorts, is an agglomeration of originally independent narratives (Kirk 1974:213).

By the 2\textsuperscript{nd} millennium, the Gilgamesh tradition was widely distributed (Kirk 1974:256). The five short Sumerian poems about Gilgamesh contain some of the themes that were later elaborated in the Akkadian epic version (Kirk 1970:120, 133; Mitchell 2004:4). The origin of the epic is tentatively placed around 2000 BC according to Kirk (1970:134) or 2100 BC according to Mitchell (2004:5) and Trigger (2003:604). Gaster stated more broadly that a cycle of Gilgamesh narratives and scenes of the epic on cylinder seals date to the 3\textsuperscript{rd} millennium BC (1952:43). The Old Babylonian version, written in Akkadian (of which Babylonian is a dialect), dates to around 1700BC (Mitchell 2004:6). Around 1200 BC, a scholar named Sîn-lēqi unninni edited and elaborated on the
Old Babylonian version. He created what scholars today call the “standard version.” Sîn-lēqi unninni added a prologue and other elements to the narrative (Mitchell 2004:6). Most of this material was recovered at Ashurbanipal’s library at Nineveh (McCall 1990:38). Accounts of Gilgamesh’s exploits were still copied and edited in the 7th century BC for this library (Kirk 1970:134).

In keeping with his view that Mesopotamian myths served as models for Greek myths, Kirk wrote that the Epic of Gilgamesh “should be read and studied by every devotee of Greek culture” (1970:133). It certainly compares favorably in terms of glorifying violence and misogyny.

Gilgamesh, an Early Dynastic II Uruk king of around 2800-2600 BC (British Museum) appears in the Sumerian kinglist as the 5th king of the dynasty of Erech; the 2nd dynasty after the Flood (Hooke 1968:36). “The Sumerian king-list assigns him a reign of 126 years” and reports that Gilgamesh’s father was a high priest of a district of Uruk (McCall 1990:38). According to one birth legend, Gilgamesh’s mother is a goddess (Kirk 1970:135; 1974:256), the goddess Ninsun. King Lugalbanda is said to be his father (McCall 1990:38). Ninsun in the role of Gilgamesh’s mother is an addition in the Assyrian version (Kirk 1970:137). In spite of his alleged semi-divine origin, Gilgamesh is consistently treated as a king, not a deity in the narrative (Kirk 1970:9); and he is “irretrievably human” (Kirk 1970:135). In the epic, Gilgamesh is actually described as 2/3 divine and 1/3 human (Kirk 1970:138); a maneuver that clearly contradicts our current understanding of genetic inheritance.
According to Aelian, Gilgamesh’s grandfather Senacherib, the king of Babylon, receives a prophecy that his grandson will take the kingdom away from him. Senacherib confines his daughter and forbids any contact with men. However, she becomes pregnant in spite of the precautions and gives birth to a baby boy. The soldiers, fearing Senacherib’s wrath, throw the child over a parapet or a cliff and he is snatched up by an eagle and gently deposited in a garden (1959:XII-21). The gardener adopts him, and Gilgamesh grows up to fulfill the prophecy (Aelian 1959:XII-21).\(^3\)

**Sargon.** “With the possible exception of Gilgamesh, Sargon of Akkad dominated the literary tradition of Mesopotamia as no other historical figure before or after” (Lewis 1980:109). The birth of Sargon the Great, or Sargon of Akkad (2334 -2279 B.C.) become the ruler of what was arguably the world's first empire (Drews 1974:389). According to legend, his mother – allegedly a priestess – placed the infant and a reed basket and cast him out onto the Euphrates. His father was unknown. Sargon was subsequently found and adopted by a water drawer or a gardener, and became a gardener himself (Drews 1974:389; Redford 1967:244; Westenholz 1983:330).

Sargon first appears on a Sumerian fragment from Uruk, TRS 73 (Cooper and Heimpel 1983:67). It is dated to the Old Babylonian period, which covers the early second millennium (Westenholz 1983:328; Lewis 1980:94). The narrative, as it appears on this fragment, is in agreement with historical information sources, such as the Sumerian King List and the Weidner Chronicle, in that Sargon began his political career at the court of Urababa, King of Kish (Cooper and Heimpel 1983:69). The Sumerian

---

\(^3\) Senacherib was actually an 8\(^{th}\) century Assyrian king, which would make it quite difficult for Gilgamesh to be descended from him almost 2000 years earlier.
King List describes Sargon’s father or adoptive father – the text is unclear – as a gardener (Lewis 1980:54, 134). Many other elements in the narrative are unlikely to be historical. It is interesting that the TRS 73 source lists the name of Sargon’s father, La’ibum; which contradicts the legend of abandonment and rescue in the later Akkadian version (Cooper and Heimpel 1983:69, 76, 78).

The Akkadian foundling narrative is contained in a conglomerate text that begins in an autobiographical form. This composite text is preserved in three Neo-Assyrian pieces (Westenholz 1983:330). Several other fragments with Sargon’s military and political exploits exist; and “there are almost as many tales as there are tablets.” This literature is extremely fluid and the lack of textual stability is confusing; especially when contrasted with Sumerian literature (Westenholz 1983:328-331). “While the Sumerian literary tradition in Old Babylonian times was basically a written one, most of the contemporary Akkadian literary texts should be regarded as either exercise compositions made once and for all by the student on the basis of the ancient stories, or adaptations by the scribes of the stories for some contemporary purpose, all based on an essentially oral tradition” (Westenholz 1983:331). The texts containing the foundling narrative, K3401, K4470, and K7249, were written in the standard Babylonian dialect in Neo-Assyrian script (Lewis 1980:11, 22). Another text, BM47449, is written in Neo-Babylonian script (Lewis 1980:180). This is the translation as per Lewis:

(1) Sargon, strong king, king of Agade, am I.
(2) My mother was a high priestess, my father I do not know.
(3) My paternal kin inhabit the mountain region.
(4) My city (of birth) is Azupiranu, which lies on the bank of the Euphrates.
(5) My mother, a high priestess, conceived me, in secret she bore me.
(6) She placed me in a reed basket, with bitumen she caulked my hatch.
(7) She abandoned me to the river from which I could not escape.
(8) The river carried me along, to Aqqi, the water drawer, when immersing his bucket lifted me up.
(9) Aqqi, the water drawer, raised me as his adopted son.
(10) Aqqi, the water drawer set me to his garden work.
(12) During my garden work, Ištar loved me (so that)
(13) Fifty-five years I ruled as king. (1980:24, 25)

Based on the use of the royal epithet sarrudannu (strong king), the terminus post quem for Sargon’s foundling narrative is 2039, 240 years after Sargon’s rule. This epithet is first documented in 2039, during the 8th regnal year of Amar-Sin of the Third Dynasty of Ur. The terminus ante quem is set by the presence of texts in the library of Assurbanipal (668-627) (Lewis 1980:98, 273); as in the case of the Gilgamesh narratives.

Beyond this narrative’s place in folklore, the legend may have been composed for specific political purposes; e.g. to honor a namesake king or to identify an ursurper with “the greatest king in Mesopotamian history” whose own ascent to power was irregular. This would apply to two Assyrian kings in particular; both named after Sargon of Akkad, and one of them – Sargon II – may have ascended to the throne without any legal claim and wanted to underscore his claim to kingship (Lewis 1980:103). The birth legend also contains references that may be strategically placed, such as Sargon’s role as a gardener. This may well be an allusion to the Goddess Innana, who was associated with gardens and date palms; and who allegedly had a great liking for orchard workers (Lewis 1980:109). Since the original Sumerian narrative lists Sargon’s father and does not include any foundling theme, the foundling legend is a later development.

Cyrus. Greek, Babylonian, and Old Persian texts contain information on Cyrus, some of which involves Cyrus’ birth legend. Frey differentiated between “the
‘external’ history of the Persians and their rulers” from Babylonian and Old Persian texts, and “the ‘internal’ history of the Achaeminid royal family from Greek sources. The Babylonian chronicle of Nabonidus recorded that in the 6th year of Nabonidus’ reign (550-549 BC), Astayages, ruler of the Medes, marched against Cyrus, ruler of Anshan, the capital of Elam. Greek sources confirm this. (1963:74). In another Akkadian text, Cyrus asserts that he was the son of Cambyses, the ruler of Anshan, and the grandson of Cyrus, also ruler of Anshan. The genealogy of Xerxes confirms the royal descent of Cyrus (Frye 1963:75).

According to legend, Cyrus the Great, king of Persia and founder of the Archaeminid empire of 539 BC, was cast out in infancy for fear that he may supplant the reigning king, which, of course, he eventually did (Redford 1967:215). Herodotus (c. 484-420 BC) is best known for his history of the Persian Wars (Teeple 2006:539). In the Cyrus’ story as told by Herodotus, Astyages, the ruler of Medes, is disturbed by a bad dream and fears that another Mede might dethrone him. As a precaution, he gives his – apparently nameless – daughter to Cambyses, the Persian ruler, in marriage. After Cyrus is born of this marriage, another dream causes Astyages to fear again that Cyrus would overthrow him. Astyages orders his chief advisor to kill Cyrus, but this man gives the infant to a shepherd couple who just had a stillborn baby. The couple substitute Cyrus for the stillborn baby. Astyages discovers Cyrus when Cyrus is about 10 years old, but his Magi, Zoroastrian priests, re-interpret his dream, and Astyages sends Cyrus back to his biological parents in Persis. As an adult, Cyrus revolts, defeats Astyages in battle, and takes him captive (Frye 1963:75, 76). In a slightly different version, also reported by
Herodotus, King Astyages, Cyrus grandfather, ordered the infant to be removed from his parents and abandoned in the wilderness; however, Cyrus was discovered by a shepherd who recently lost a child and who raised Cyrus as his own (Drews 1974:389).

Another version of Cyrus’ origins claims that Cyrus was the offspring of a bandit and a shepherdess, with no affiliation with Astyages. Cyrus, as a young boy driven by poverty, gives himself up for adoption to a royal attendant at the court of the Medes. He manages to secure a menial position at Astyages’ court and there begins his political career. He incites a revolt against Astyages and defeats the Medes in battle. This version, told by Cetesias and preserved by Nicolas of Damascus and the Byzantine patriarch Photius, is probably a good example of a politically motivated narrative: Cetesias was a court physician of Artaxerxes II, who was embroiled in a political struggle with Cyrus’ descendant (Drews 1974:389; Frye 1963:76, 77). It would clearly have been in Cetesius’ interest to discredit the younger Cyrus, who was his employer’s political opponent. Xenophon, a historian at the younger Cyrus’ court, asserted that Cyrus the Elder was the offspring of the Persian ruler Cambyses and Astyages’ daughter Mandane. Regarding Cyrus’ historical identity, Frye concluded that “Cyrus really was an Achaeminid prince who revolted against the Median king by the aid of the Medes themselves, for there are several indications that Astyages was cruel and disliked by his subjects” (1963:76, 77). Frye observed that Cyrus’ birth legend is the first in a series of ‘dynasty founder’ stories in Persian history. The story of Ardashir, first of the Sassanians, is similar to that of Cyrus, for Ardashir had to be of royal stock yet had to undergo hardship, raised in secret by shepherds. Ardashir also had connections with the Parthian court as Cyrus with the Median; he also revolts and secures the rule. The motif of the founder of a dynasty being raised by
shepherds or poor people becomes a part of the charisma of Persian royalty. (1963:76)

Drews proposed that the Sargon story was transferred to Cyrus by the late 5th century BC (1974:390); although the resemblances are limited and spread out across different versions. In Herodotus, the similarity consists of the abandonment as an infant, in Nicolas of Damascus the resemblance is found in the occupation as a gardener.

Samurammat. Another story revolves around the offspring of the Goddess Derceto and an unidentified Homo sapiens. The Syrian goddess Derceto, whose cult center was at Ashkalon, offended Aphrodite. Aphrodite cursed her with an uncontrollable desire for this person. The affair leaves Derceto pregnant with a daughter. She experiences a change of heart, kills her lover and abandons the child in the hills of Palestine. Derceto throws herself into the large deep lake near Ashkalon, and is transformed into a creature part fish and part woman. Meanwhile, the baby is fed by doves, who keep her warm and bring her milk and pieces of cheese that they steal from local herdsmen. When the herdsmen eventually investigate the pilferings, they discover a one-year-old child, which they turn over to the royal cowherd Simmas. Simmas is childless, adopts the baby and names her Samurammat. Years pass, and Onnes, the governor of Syria, falls in love with her and marries her. Samurammat – also referred to as Semiramis – demonstrates outstanding military abilities, and King Ninus falls in love with Samurammat. He demands her from Onnes; which places Onnes in an impossible situation. Onnes commits suicide, and Samurammat becomes the Queen of Assyria (Lewis 1980:160, 161; Redford 1967:212; Siculus II:4-10). Diodorus Siculus, the original source for Samurammat’s birth legend and fabulous accomplishments, was a
Sicilian Greek who lived and wrote in the 1st century BC. He goes into great length to
describe Samurammat’s staggering deeds. He ascribes most of Babylon’s monumental
architecture to her reign; as well as the conquests of Media, Bactria, Libya, Ethiopia,
Egypt, and parts of India, and claims that she rerouted the Euphrates for her architectural
plans (Siculus I:ix,x; II:10-26).

It is probable that the narrative, or the part of the narrative involving Derceto’s
immersion and transformation, recounted the emergence of a fertility deity (Redford
1967:212). Samurammat may in fact have been a historical person, born into an elite
family in Babylon, and eventually transformed her into a legend of abandonment and
miraculous rise to power by the Aramean population (Drews 1974:388). She is the only
female infant among the 30 individuals that Redford lists as examples of foundlings

Social History: Southwest Asia

**Exposure and Foundling Adoptions.** “Typically, foundlings were exposed in
places of danger;” as indicated by expressions such as *ina pi kalbi* “at the mouth of the
dog,” *ina pi aribi* “at the mouth of the raven,” or they might be found *ina burti* “in a
well” (Lewis 1980:53). Oppenheim’s discussion of the Neo-Babylonian (612–539 BC)
personal name “Sa-pi-kalbi” – “snatched from the mouth of the dog(s) – combined with
the expression “*ana pi kalbi nasagu*” – “to throw to the mouth of the dog(s) – describing

---

4 It should be noted that Diodorus Siculus should not be considered a reliable historical
source, and that most of the astounding architectural accomplishments are usually
attributed to Nebuchadnezzar. Siculus also appears to take liberties with the geographical
features and distances in this narrative. As Dundes pointed out, “[t]raditional narratives
have to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis in regards to their historical relevance”
(1999:10.11).
the disposing of unwanted children suggests that the exposure of children was anything but safe for the children in question, and that abandonment and infanticide practices may have had a long history in Mesopotamia (1943:36, 37). “Sa-pi-kalbi” may have been a common name for a foundling (1943:36). Oppenheim discusses a text that describes the abandonment of an infant (“ana pi kalbi nasaqu,” or “placed before the mouth of the dogs”) and the subsequent recovery of the infant (“Sa-pi-kalbi,” or “taken from the mouth of the dogs”), and concludes that the personal name “Sa-pi-kalbi” was likely to refer to this type of adoption rather than saving an infant from dogs as part of a random accident because this expression is regularly found in the literature (1943:37). Lewis argues that this expression refers to an adoption ritual, not exposure (1980:55); although one might question why this expression would have been chosen for such a ritual if it was unrelated to any experiences of danger to the foundling (unless it was meant to be humorous).

With the rise of militarism and intensification of armed conflicts between Mesopotamian polities, “the pauperization of farmers and their increasing dependency on loans in order to survive periods of famine” led to debt slavery; as a result of which children were sold for “adoption” or given up for dept pledges (Lerner 1986:247). Adoption practices and procedures in Mesopotamia varied considerably according to region and time period. However, three main types of adoption can be identified: (1) Adoption as a contract between biological parents and adoptive parents. This involved a written contract which specified the rights and obligations of the child and any other agreements associated with the arrangement. (2) Adoptions without a written contract. It
is assumed that the terms of the adoptions in this case were determined by local law and custom. (3) Foundling adoptions, which were unilaterally instituted by the adopter and which were subject to local law and custom (Lewis 1980:50).

**Gender.** Family life and gender roles also suggest possible scenarios for the abandonment of infants. Both women and men owned and transferred property, e.g. houses or fields; although women sellers were more often described by their names only or by their names and relationship to men, rather than by title (Pollock 1999:122). During the Sumerian Ur III period, for example, elite women were often the sole overseers of large estates, which included slaves, canal maintenance duties, and the production of goods for export (Wright 2008:254). Women held political and religious offices, bought and sold land, and accumulated wealth. In some cases, the wife’s personal wealth was larger than her husband’s (Wright 2008:264). Affiliations with high-ranking women carried equal authority with those of high-ranking men (Wright 2008:265).

Trigger is more cautious in his description and explained that “some women from well-to-do families owned and bought property, engaged in business, and testified at hearings” (2007:173). Trigger wrote that “daughters did not inherit property” and that “women were legally subject to their husbands, who were designated as their owners” (2007:172). The lower rungs of the Mesopotamian socioeconomic spectrum presented a harsh picture, particularly for women. An assessment of compensations received by textile workers, records of deaths and illnesses, and descriptions of personnel at the weaving houses showed that poor women shared their marginalized status with prisoners
of war, slaves, and children (Wright 2008:270, 273). Trigger cautions that the women “at the bottom of Mesopotamia and society provided an object lesson that to be secure and respected, a woman needed a father, husband, brother, or son who was willing and able to protect her and defend her interests” (2007:174). Women without families and protectors engaged in prostitution and witchcraft, ran taverns, and literally lived on the margins of society: many such women made their living in isolated places near the city walls. They were considered examples of unacceptable female lifestyle and were brutally treated (Trigger 2007:174). “By the middle of the second millennium B.C., prostitution was well established as a likely occupation for the daughters of the poor.” For some, this may have represented the only available alternative to enslavement. (Lerner 1986:247). These scenarios make illegitimate births and exposure of infants and infanticide by women of lower socioeconomic strata quite plausible.

The seclusion of royal women seems to have begun during the Ur III period (2140-1945 BC) (Fagan 1979:xvii; Trigger 2003:173). Upper class women performed public functions, primarily religious offices. Kings sometimes appointed daughters to be the high priestess of deities (Lerner 1986:239; Trigger 2003:173). These women were expected to remain celibate (Trigger 2003:173); although they may have participated in sacred marriage rituals (Lewis 1980:38-40). Many of them adopted children to care for them as they grew old because they were not allowed to have children of their own (Lerner 1986:241). Priestesses had to carefully guard their reputation. Hammurabi’s law code, for instance, called for the death penalty for a priestess who was seen in an ‘ale house;’ presumably an ‘ale house’ was a place with a sordid reputation (Lerner
Women of less elevated social standing worked for the temples in less prestigious functions, e.g. as sex workers. Associations of sex workers at Innana’s temples included women who had left their husbands and women who had joined the association as children (Trigger 2003:173) or slaves (Lerner 1986:244). “Priests may also have encouraged or permitted the exploitation of slave women and the lower-classes of temple servants as commercial prostitutes to enrich the temple (Lerner 1986:244). Lower ranking temple servants were often employed as wet-nurses by wealthy families outside of the temple context. This suggests that it was common for these women to have children out of wedlock (Lerner 1986:242). The hierarchy inside the temple reflected the hierarchy on the outside.

The funerary record of the Middle Euphrates Valley shows a diverse picture of status and social identities. Flexibility in the social organization of this area during the 3rd millennium BC may have been linked to the persistence of pastoralism in this region (Bolger 2008:238, 239). Political entities were usually small-scale polities, and centralized territorial states were the exception and usually short-lived (Pollock 1999:220). Even within one area, the Euphrates-Tigris region, family organization, status, and gender roles formed a complex and diverse web (Bolger 2008:238). State rule was more centralized and women’s roles more strictly circumscribed in Egypt, whereas Mesopotamian societies showed more evidence of social diversity and flexibility (Bolger 2008:238, 239). Bolger wrote that, overall, the emergence of centralized bureaucracies coincided with the diminishing of the status of women (Bolger 2008:238, 239).
Discussion: Southwest Asian Narratives

Bricolage: Gilgamesh and Cyrus. Sourvinou-Inwood observed that historical elements of narratives may be “radically reshaped and adapted, by a process of *bricolage*” in order to accommodate schemata of narratives (1986:216). The foundling narratives of Gilgamesh and Cyrus illustrate this process. In both instances, a typically Greco-Roman motif was grafted onto a pre-existing Southwest Asian legend by Greco-Roman narrators; completely reshaping the birth narrative

Sumerian and Babylonian sources of Gilgamesh’s birth and childhood do not include any animal involvement, in accordance with Carroll’s findings that the animal motif is a later introduction by Greco-Roman influences (1984:74). Aelian, writing in 2nd century AD for a Roman audience, includes this motif (1959:I-xi). As in other Greco-Roman narratives, this version shows the plot of the despotic head of household, the confined daughter, and even the animal-parent involvement. Aelian himself points out the similarity with the narrative of Acrisius and his daughter Danae. The exposure narrative of Gilgamesh is not of Mesopotamian origin, and cannot be included in a study of foundling narratives and social history in Southwest Asia. It is a motif that has been attached to a legendary or historical figure, and that caters to Aelian’s audience: 2nd century Romans. It does, however, confirm the popularity of the motif and plot within Roman discourse community. It is interesting that in this narrative the mother of the rejected baby does not suffer brutal punishment, unlike the mothers in the Greco-Roman narrative complex. This shows a concession to the Mesopotamian socio-cultural environment that respected elite women (Aelian 1959:I-xi) and illustrates how a graft,
while changing the original narrative, is itself transformed during this process on account of variant social history.

Similarly, the foundling narrative of Cyrus is a later development found in Greek sources and reflecting Greek sentiments: as in the Greek narratives of Acrisius’ and Aleos’ families, the king fears that his daughter’s descendants will dethrone him, and the grandchild is exposed to prevent this. As in the Gilgamesh narrative, the birth legend conveys more information about the culture that grafted it onto a legendary figure than about the culture that this legendary figure is associated with. As in the Gilgamesh narrative, we find concessions to a less misogynistic environment social environment, at least at the top: the daughter and mother does not have to suffer the brutal punishments as in the Greco-Roman narratives; at least, the narrative does not tell. This confirms the influence of social history on the development of foundling narratives.

**Sargon’s Mom.** The Akkadian birth legend of Sargon states that “My mother was an ēntu-priestess, my father I did not know. My uncle inhabits the mountains. My city (of birth) was Azupirāna, which lies on the bank of the Euphrates” (Cooper and Heimpel 1983:78).

The social history associated with priestess is interesting here because of Sargon’s claim of being the offspring of one of Innana’s priestesses. Women with prestigious religious offices were required to remain celibate; as opposed to the women at the lower rungs of the temple hierarchy, who were the prostitutes affiliated with Innana’s temples (Trigger 2007:173).
The *entu*-priestess represented the highest religious office a female could hold, and was almost guaranteed to be a daughter of the reigning king (Lerner 1986:239). As Lewis stated, “Sargon’s statement that his mother was an *enetu*, despite her indiscretion, served to establish his claim to high birth” (1980:38). As seen in Wright’s comments above, affiliation with high-ranking females conveyed real political power, and would have legitimized Sargon’s claim to power. If Sargon’s mother was affiliated with Innana’s temple, he could have been the product of a transgression involving a priestess - which is what he claimed - or the product of regular business proceedings of a sex worker at the temple but it would have been in Sargon’s interest to claim affiliation with a true priestess of high status, rather than with a lowly temple sex worker. In theory, Sargon could have been the child of any woman whose status did not allow her to have children, or to raise her children. Most likely, Sargon’s birth legend serves to establish a connection with royal blood because high-ranking priestesses were elite women. The practice of abandoning infants and the mandate of celibacy for priestesses made the story plausible, although, historical information contradicts Sargon’s foundling narrative.

In any case, Sargon maintained his devotion to Innana throughout his reign, possibly intentionally so in order to underscore his connection to the deity and enhance his claim as a divinely ordained ruler. In order to consolidate the political hegemony over Sumer and/or in keeping with tradition, Sargon appointed his daughter Enheduanna high priestess – or *entu* – of Ur (Lewis 1980:40); an interesting connection to the birth legend because history cast Sargon’s daughter Enheduanna in the role that, according to legend, her grandmother occupied.
**Samurammat.** Samurammat’s unusual narrative attests to the privileged status of elite women in Mesopotamia: her mother had the power to kill her lover and get away with it, and her daughter rose to the top levels of political power. As in the case of Gilgamesh and Cyrus, her birth legend is Greek in origin; in fact, it appears that the entire narrative about Samurammat is a Greek graft onto a legendary or possibly historical figure. Again, the departure from the Greek and Roman narratives is evident: the mother is an independent agent in the narrative, and Samurammat a powerful queen. Since Diodorus Siculus is the only source for this narrative, the story may have served as an explanatory device (Barber and Barber 2004) for some of the architectural marvels in Mesopotamia.

**Divinely Ordained.** Political motives appear in southwest Asian narratives in Samurammat’s and Sargon’s claims to close affiliation with the divine realm. The same is true for the original versions of Gilgamesh’s descent. In a socio-political environment in which leadership claims were strengthened or even determined by divine endorsement, a birth legend involving the endorsement or even direct descent from a deity would cement such a claim (Trigger 2007:76); and may have been cultivated by the individual him-or herself.

**Different Concepts.** While the origins of the legend of Gilgamesh predate the Greco-Roman influence in Southwest Asia, and even the conception of Greece or Rome, the foundling motif in this narrative is a later Greco-Roman graft (Aelian, second century AD) onto the pre-existing narrative. Samurammat is only represented in Greco-Roman sources (Siculus, first century BC). The foundling narrative of Cyrus is only represented
in a Greco-Roman source (Herodotus, fifth century BC). Therefore, the birth narratives of Gilgamesh, Cyrus, and Samurammat represent primarily Greco-Roman culture, not Southwest Asian, although the specific interpretation of this Greco-Roman graft has been modified during its introduction into Southwest Asian legends in that its expression has become less misogynistic.

Dundes pointed out that changes in narratives “tend to cluster around certain points in time a space” and can serve as indicators of cultural change (1984:274). The Achaeminids, founded by Cyrus, rapidly conquered Mesopotamia and Asia Minor, and tried to conquer Greece. It is no surprise that the Greeks and Romans would be weaving stories about Cyrus. The changes in the narrative of Gilgamesh, and the development of the Samurammat narrative took place after Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) invaded and conquered Southwest Asia; creating an unprecedented degree of exchange between the two regions, Greece and Southwest Asia and introducing Hellenic culture into Southwest Asia (Teeple 2006:462). The bricolage of Greco-Roman and Southwest Asian influences in these narratives reflects the consequences of these political events. This grafting also confirms the snowball effect pointed out by Barber and Barber, by which increasing amounts of narrative material becomes attached to the legendary persona. “Once the stories around somebody (e.g. a hero) achieve sufficient mass, that thing (or whatever) attracts yet other stories to him/her/itself” (2004:248).

The birth narratives of Sargon and the narrative of the offspring of the Sungod-and-heifer incident, however, are of Southwest Asian origin. The research confirms that infant exposure was practiced in Mesopotamia, which correlates to the
narratives, but what is interesting in these two narratives is that the mother is the active parent, making decisions about the child’s future. This is a significant departure from the Greco-Roman narrative and conforms to the information we have about the status and power of elite women in Mesopotamia. In both of these narratives, Sargon’s mother as well as the unidentified heifer, the mother makes the decision and rejects the child; although, one can argue that en enu priestess would not have many options.

The practice of infanticide in southwest Asian antiquity is not as well documented as in the Greco-Roman world but we find evidence in the name ‘sa-pi-kalbi’ and a possible scenario in the extreme marginalization of impoverished women. It is, therefore, theoretically possible that gardeners, water drawers, or other agricultural workers occasionally came across abandoned children, or that persons exposed children in such environments. Note that in the Mesopotamian narratives the persons who rescued the infants are more likely to be involved in agriculture rather than animal husbandry, as in Greek and Roman narratives. We find the predominant economic activities reflected in Southwest Asian narratives, as well. In this way, personal experiences would be able to fuel a body of folklore associated with foundlings.

As in the Greco-Roman narratives, we find significant overlap between narratives and social history. While Southwest Asian narratives and social history reflect the practice of enfant exposure, the narratives and social history of this region show gender concepts that differ strongly from Greco-Roman concepts. Here, women are actively making decisions about their offspring, even if they might make decisions under strong pressure. Even the Greek grafts onto Southwest Asian legends show an
adjustment to Southwest Asian values in that these grafted narratives do not include brutal punishments of the mothers, as in the Greco-Roman world. This demonstrates the adaptation of divergent narratives to the customs and practices of different societies.
CHAPTER X

DYNASTIC EGYPT

The Gift of the Nile

The “New Kingdom [1550-1069 BC (Shaw 2000:481)] and later Egypt enjoyed an unbroken linguistic and cultural unity with its past, accessible through rich and intelligible textual and iconographic records.” In fact, “ancient precepts and beliefs were deliberately sought out as guides for current policies and behaviour.” This conservativism was sustained by the continuities in the environment, which did not experience major fluctuations in climate and maintained the same flora and fauna throughout Egypt’s history (Trigger et al. 1985:189), which allowed an equally continuous agricultural tradition to remain successful (Clark 1978:25). Egypt’s narratives reflect its relative isolation.

Kirk wrote

The special circumstances of Egypt as a country – its vast length and the resulting difficulty of communication between upper and lower Egypt, its total dependence on the Nile for fertility and the special social consequences that this produced, not to speak of its isolation from other cultures – encouraged the formation of a quite unique civilization. Among its most striking characteristics were early literacy (from about 3000 B.C. on) and an extraordinary domination by king and priesthood. All these resulted in a highly organized ritualistic religion and a very curious and circumscribed mythology. It is here, if anywhere, that the connection of myth and ritual can be found at its strongest; and here, if anywhere, that it is least likely to be exemplary for other cultures (1970:207).
Manniche places the use of a “sophisticated system of writing” in Dynastic Egypt to the early 3rd millennium BC (1991:11).

“The “cheerful eschatology, the lack of heroes (except for pure folktale or legendary characters in definitely literary compositions), the absence of myths reflecting social preoccupations, the ubiquity of rituals, the aggregation of gods of fundamentally divergent types (sun-disks, moral qualities, crocodiles…) – those things set the Egyptian myths quite apart from the much later Greek” (Kirk 1970:209). Two foundling narratives (of sorts) come out of Egypt.

**Horus**

The basic plot unfolds as follows: Osiris, the benevolent ruler of all of Egypt, governed the land by the power of his song (Hart 1986:102; 1990:30). His wicked brother Seth murders him (Hart 1986:93). Seth claims kingship over Egypt (Hart 1990:30). Isis employs her considerable magical powers to revive Osiris (Frazer 1940:366) to conceive a child by him (Hart 1986:102; 1990:32). Osiris goes on to rule as king on the Underworld (Frazer 1940:366). Isis takes refuge in the papyrus swamp (Frazer 1940:363, 364), and gives birth to their offspring, Horus, at Khemmis in the Nile Delta. Horus threatens Seth’s claim to kingship, and Isis hides the infant Horus in the papyrus marshes to protect him from his sinister murderous uncle (Hart 1986:88, 102; Hart 1990:34; Tyldesley 1996:58). Horus grows up to defeat Seth in a long series of struggles, and claims his father’s throne.

A number of versions of Horus’ birth narrative emerged over the course of Egypt’s long history. Multiple versions of a narrative are, according to Dundes, a
characteristic of folklore (1999:111). These and other narratives referring to the circumstances under which Horus was born and raised, may be referred to as the Delta Cycle. “As early as the Fifth Dynasty [2495-2345 BC (Shaw 2002:480)] various legends had grown up around the little child” (Clark 1978:186).

**Old Kingdom.** The oldest version of these narratives can be found in the Pyramid Texts of about 2500BC (Clark 1978:17, 37). Horus’ father, Osiris, is murdered by his brother (Horus’ uncle) Seth; and Osiris is mourned by his wife, Isis, who is also his sister, and his sister, Nephthys, who is also Seth’s wife (Clark 1978:110-113). Seth tears Osiris’ body to pieces and scatters them. Isis and Nephthys collect the remains and join them; creating the original mummy (Clark 1978:105). Isis gives birth to her and Osiris’ son, Horus, in the Nile delta swamps. According to Pyramid Text § 1375, Horus is watched over by marsh-nymphs, Nephthys, and other deities such as Sekhat-Hor, Neith, and Selkis when Isis hides him in the marshes (Clark 1978:187, 188). The Pyramid Texts feature two trials: one trial in which Seth is arraigned for the murder of Osiris and one in which the Gods must decide whether kingship will go to Seth or to Horus (Clark 1978:116).

In the Memphite Theology, a sophisticated body of texts on cosmology and religious belief also dates back to the Old Kingdom. According to this collection of texts, Horus was born before his father’s demise. Horus calls to Isis and Nephthys to save Osiris from drowning. The death by drowning is an alternate plot in the narrative (Clark 1978:60, 61, 104).
First Intermediate Period. The Old Kingdom collapsed around 2250BC. The ensuing First Intermediate Period was a time of political and social upheaval. No longer able to manifest their desire for eternal life with the help of large funeral estates, pyramids, and mastaba tombs, the elite class commissioned large wooden coffins that were painted to represent the important parts of the extravagant tombs of the past kingdom. The inner surfaces of these coffins were inscribed with updated versions of traditional funerary texts (Clark 1978:17, 68, 124, 125). These texts were copied from many sources and edited to suit the funerary purpose (Clark 1978:129). The Coffin Texts, too, speak of the murder of Osiris, the mourning of Isis and Nephthys, and the gathering of the scattered remains of Osiris’ body. Horus is born in secrecy. Horus, the Falcon God, sends a messenger falcon to his father in the Underworld (Clark 1978:125-127). In an alternate Coffin Text version, Horus is born as a falcon and immediately upon his birth takes flight, promising to avenge his father’s murder (Clark 1978:213-216).

New Kingdom. In a New Kingdom (1580-1320 BC) text, Isis searches for her dead brother and husband in the form of a falcon. When she finds him, she shades and fans him with her wings, and manages to revive him sufficiently to conceive a child by him. This child, Horus, is then born in the swamps of the Nile delta, where mother and child remain in hiding for fear of Seth (Clark 1978:106).

Plutarch. Plutarch’s versions of the narrative, composed in the second century AD, also tells of Osiris’ murder at the hand of his brother Seth. In one of Plutarch’s narratives, Osiris is locked into a chest and thrown into the Nile near Memphis. In
keeping with old timber trade routes, this version takes the murdered Osiris to Lebanon, where he is washed up at Byblos in Syria. However, Plutarch also presents a version in which Seth dismembers Osiris and distributes the pieces all over Egypt. Isis finds all of Osiris’ pieces except for one (Clark 1978:103-105; Hart 1986:93, 166). Eventually, Horus emerges from his hiding place in the delta and overthrows the usurper Seth (Clark 1978:106).

According to Clark, an unspecified “late source” reports that Seth enslaved Isis in a spinning mill, from where another deity, Thoth, helps her escape. She then takes refuge in the marshes and gives birth to Horus (1978:186). Two large fragments of this narrative survived from the first millennium BC – perhaps the “late source” that Clark referred to earlier – tell this story (Clark 1978:188-194).

Multiple Versions. Most Egyptian narratives “do not exist in the form of continuous accounts” but have been reconstructed “from prolific but fragmentary allusions in funerary formulas” (Kirk 1970:207). The circumstances of Horus’ birth were part of a mutable and often contradictory mosaic of narratives. The narrative of Isis, Osiris, Horus, and Seth may incorporate two narratives that reach back in time to the Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts, the stories of the antagonism of Osiris and Seth and of Horus and Seth (Griffiths 1960:vii; Hart 1986:195). According to Griffiths, Hathor, an older deity than Isis, was the original mother of Horus. Her role was later absorbed by Isis, along with many others of Hathor’s attributes. Hathor and Horus are depicted as far back as the Narmer Palette (Griffiths 1960:13), which dates to about 2900 B.C. and marks the beginning of Dynastic Egypt (Manley 1996:23).
In addition, the narrative of Isis hiding the infant Horus in the papyrus swamp of the Delta may lean on the story of Wedjoyet, the papyrus-goddess, and her child Nefertem (Griffiths 1960:15). Wedjoyet is the Serpent Goddess of Buto, a location in the western Nile delta (Bosse-Griffiths 1973:101; Griffiths 1961:113). In keeping with the local natural environment, Wedjoyet is also referred to as “The Green One” of Lower Egypt (Roberts 1997:42). In another version, Buto, the goddess of the north and “the ‘great mother’ of Horus,” hides Horus (Frazer 1940:364; Griffiths 1961). Buto is also the location where, according to some texts, Isis gives birth to Horus and hides him (Clark 1978:194).

Egyptians used the narrative of Isis and Horus as metaphoric reality. Isis’ protection of Horus from danger became a frequent referent in Egyptian magical texts, in which Isis’ protection is invoked in various cases of illness affecting children (Hart 1986:103). With the help of this story, sympathetic magic was invoked (Barber and Barber 2004:97-102, 248). Horus’ story was cited in a 1st century AD Demotic papyrus as an example of how apparent misfortune can be reversed (Hart 1986:88).

Moses

The story of Moses, along with other early Hebrew narratives, appears in writing in the seventh century B.C. (Finkelstein 2001:50). While the narrative of Moses’ birth and upbringing takes place in Egypt, it is not referred to in Egyptian texts. This story is contained in the Exodus segment of the Pentateuch, also referred to as the Torah or the Five Books of Moses. The Pentateuch, in turn, is part of the Old Testament. The Pentateuch is “the result of a complex editorial process” involving four main sources:
Yahwist, Elohist, Priestly, and Deuteronomy. These were combined “by scribal “redactors,” whose literary traces (called by some “R” passages) consisted of transitional sentences and editorial asides” (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001:12). This process accounts for the existence of multiple versions of narratives, which, as Dundes pointed out, are characteristic of folklore (1999:111). The Exodus narrative is comprised of Yahwist, Elohist, and Priestly writings. Some scholars argue that this material emerged 1000-586 BC (united monarchy and kingdoms of Judah and Israel), others argue a timeframe of 6th and 5th centuries (Babylonian exile), or for as late as the 4th–2nd centuries BC (Hellenistic period) (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001:13).

What’s in a Name? According to Finkelstein and Silberman, the name “Moses” is derived from the Hebrew root “to draw out,” as in “draw out of the water” (2001:50). According to Shanks, the name “Moses” is derived from the Egyptian verb “to give birth,” which is a common and element in Egyptian names, e.g. “Ramses” (1999:51). Along these lines, Magnusson and Propp also consider the name to be a “suffix to be found in many Egyptian names, and means ‘son of’, as in Ramesses (‘son of Ra’) or Thuthmosis (‘son of Thoth’)” (Magnusson 1977:58; Propp 1999:152, 153).

Moses’ Birth Legend. According to the Exodus narrative (1:15-2:11), Moses was set out onto the water in a reed basket because the Egyptian ruler had decreed the murder of all male Hebrew infants. Ostensibly, the reasoning behind this decision was that the females would eventually be given to other slaves as wives. The practice of killing the males and confiscating the females was on occasion implemented by the Israelites themselves (among many others). Had the Pharaoh simply ordered genocide,
he would have lost part of his workforce. Male Hebrew infants were supposed to be thrown into the Nile to drown (Propp 1999:141-143, 146). Moses was set out on the Nile in a waterproofed basket in order to protect him from this fate. His sister (according to the Priestly source) or kinswoman (Elohim source) Miriam watched over him as the Pharaoh’s daughter spotted the basket and ordered her servants to fetch it. When she saw the infant, she recognized him as a Hebrew boy but took pity on him and decided to keep him. Miriam approaches and offers to find a wet-nurse for the baby. In this way, Moses’ biological mother is hired as his nurse while he is raised as the Princesses son (Lewis 1980:152, 153; Redford 1967:218). The princess names him ”Moses.” By naming him, the princess acts as Moses’ de facto mother (Propp 1999:152). According to the Elohim-source, all babies are rescued, while in the Yahwist-version only Moses is saved. In later traditions, the Pharaoh’s decree expires after Moses’ birth (Propp 1999:145).

An alternate version from the Babylonian Talmud (Sotah 12a-13b, compiled 3rd century AD), maintains this basic story but adds embellishments; e.g. the Princess’ hands magically lengthens so she can reach across the water and rescue the baby, and that the infant refused to nurse from an Egyptian woman, and so his biological mother had to be brought in to feed him (Lewis 1980:153).

**Historicity of Biblical Narratives.** The topic of the historicity of the Bible has sparked much controversy. In spite of the efforts of many archaeologists, archaeological evidence for a historical basis for the story of the infant Moses is not forthcoming. And in spite of the abundance of Egyptian textual material, no references to specific aspects of the Moses narrative or the Exodus have been found (Dever 2003:12, 13). Slavery, for
instance, was an institution in the ancient world, including Egypt, but the nature of slave ownership in Egypt was “essentially paternalistic;” and slave owners could be Egyptians or foreign-born immigrants (Trigger et al. 1985:315). Laughlin stated that, “Archaeological discoveries have made it crystal clear that the Bible is not a book of inerrant history and certainly not of inerrant science. Rather, they have reinforced the conclusions reached by literary studies that the Bible is a book reflecting theological sensitivities (2000:15). Although “suggesting that the most famous stories of the Bible did not happen as the Bible records them is far from implying that ancient Israel had no genuine history,” many narratives that are commonly taken for history – such as the Exodus – “are, rather, creative expressions of a powerful religious reform movement” (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001:23).

Migrations. The archaeological sequences in Palestine show a shift from Canaanite to Israelite culture at the end of the Bronze Age, around 1250-1150 BC. This time would mark the beginning of dominance of Israelite groups in Canaan, and can provide a potential timeframe for events in the Exodus narrative; with Ramesses II the reigning Pharaoh at the time (Dever 2003:8-9). The “basic situation in the Exodus saga – the phenomenon of immigrants coming down to Egypt from Canaan and settling in the eastern border regions of the delta – is abundantly verified in the archaeological finds and historical texts. From earliest recorded times throughout antiquity, Egypt beckoned as a place of shelter and security for the people of Canaan at times when drought, famine, or warfare made life unbearable” (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001:52, 53). This dynamic between the two regions was primarily a function of two factors: climate, and differential
political organization and stability. While Canaan depended on variable winter rainfall for agricultural production, Egypt’s crops were watered by the somewhat more dependable Nile inundations. While Egypt also experienced droughts, it rarely experienced outright famine since its political cohesiveness provided the necessary stability to create an infra-structure that stored food for lean times. Hence, the ongoing migrations of Asiatics into the eastern Nile Delta, an area that was larger and more fertile in antiquity than it is today (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001:53). The communities of Semitic peoples that migrated from Canaan into the Nile delta achieved different levels of success; from lives as landless laborers to traders in search of better economic opportunities. “The demographic patterns along the eastern delta – of Asiatic people immigrating to Egypt to be conscripted to forced work in the delta – are not restricted to the Bronze Age. Rather, they reflect the age-old rhythms in the region, including later centuries in the Iron Age, closer to the time when the Exodus narrative was put into writing” (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001:54). Hillel (2006) and Shanks (1999) propose that the Exodus narrative is a greatly exaggerated snapshot of a phase in an ongoing process of migrations between the Levant and the Eastern Delta. This overlaps with what Barber and Barber call the “eponemous hero syndrome,” by which the ongoing experiences of groups of persons become attributed to a hero who eventually personifies these experiences (2004:126-127).

There is no record of any of the Exodus narrative in Egyptian chronicles, either; which is not surprising because “Egyptian chronicles were more interested in royal affairs than in social questions,” and a “group of Semitic immigrants and their escape
from the work-gangs would hardly engage their attention” (Magnusson 1977:59). There is, however, a 3rd century story by the Egyptian historian Manetho which “tells of a gang of Asiatic lepers and plague-bearers who had once been expelled from Egypt by force and driven back to Palestine where they founded Jerusalem” (Magnusson 1977:60). Propp speculates that if there is a historic basis for Moses’ birth narrative, it may be related to the customs of Canaanite princes being raised as “pampered hostages” at the Egyptian court. A historical Moses could have been such a “pampered hostage,” which would help explain his Egyptian name, and his influence at the Egyptian court and with his own ethnic group (1999:158, 159).

Parallels

The similarity of Moses’ story with the narrative of Isis and Horus has sparked much discussion. Griffith argued that the narrative of Moses does not lean on the Horus narrative because the motif of a child being protected from harm is such a common motif (1960:96). However, Griffith did not cite more such examples. Redford argued that the parallels in the Horus and Moses birth legends – the papyrus basket, the marshy hiding place, the danger to the infant, and the protective female relative – originated in the Greco-Roman period, and that they represent Semitic and Greco-Roman influence that were incorporated into older narratives (1967:223). However, the Horus narrative is actually much older than Redford claims; it goes back as far as the Pyramid Texts, as per Clark (1978:17, 37, 110-113, 187, 188).

In another interpretation, Rendsberg considers the Moses narrative a subversion of the Horus narrative in which Moses assumed the role of Horus, the God of
Kingship, and the Pharaoh became identified with the role of the evil Seth (2007). In both narratives the mother is the active parent, protecting the infant. Both mothers construct small vessels in which they set the infant afloat in the marches of the Nile Delta, and in both narratives another female relative watches over the infant. In neither case is the infant actually abandoned, which distinguishes these two narratives from all other exposed infant narratives (Rendsberg 2007).

Some scholars argue fervently for the “family tree association” with the Sargon legend (Redford 1967:218-224). Parallels to the Sargon narrative exist, also: Moses and Sargon – according to their legends – were both descended from women who were not allowed to raise them, both infants were set afloat in a waterproofed basket on the river that defined their respective regions of birth (Propp 1999:155). It rather seems that all three narratives show parallels.

Social History: Dynastic Egypt

**Exposure.** Egyptian historical and archaeological material does not indicate that infanticide was practiced and accepted. Tyldesley wrote that “to produce a large and healthy brood of children was every Egyptian’s dream, and babies were regarded as one of life’s richest blessings (1995:67). While boys were favored over girls, this preference was never as extreme as in the other societies discussed; especially in comparison with Greece and Rome. Tyldesley did not make general statements about infanticide in general but she stated that female infanticide was never a sanctioned tradition in Dynastic Egypt (1995:69). Adoption of orphaned children was common (Tyldesley 1995:71). Tyldesley quotes a story in which a fatherless boy is taunted by his classmates but
maintains that the children of single mothers did not experience discrimination or specific hardship (1995:62). Although the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, considering the wealth of textual material that has been recovered and translated, including texts on marriage and personal conduct, it is unlikely that infanticide as a sanctioned practice would have taken place without any trace.

*Gender.* In Egypt, women fared better than in other regions in antiquity, although they were still “regarded as secondary to men.” The male head of household owned the family home; and men generally owned more property than women and were buried with more and more valuable grave goods. Women were less frequently represented in tomb decorations and were often represented on a smaller scale than their husbands. Kingship descended from father to son. At the same time, elite women were depicted more frequently in Dynastic Egypt than in any other early civilization. Average Egyptian women were able to inherit, administer, buy, or sell land, goods, and slaves in their own names. They were able to sign their own marriage contracts, adopt heirs, and make their own wills. They continued to own property after marriage, and could divorce their husbands on account of adultery, impotence, or general mistreatment. They were able to initiate lawsuits against others, including their own children or husbands; and served as witness in court hearings. Widows were entitled to two-thirds of their late husband’s property, whereas the children were only entitled to one third. A married woman, however, was able to bequeath her own property to whomever she wished. “Egyptian men were supposed to love their wives and mothers and treat them well,” and the wife was referred to as the “mistress of the house” (Trigger 2001:184, 185).
Egyptian society stressed individual achievement (Trigger 2003:189).

Egyptian women participated in actively in the economy as market traders. Women of low socio-economic status worked as weavers, singers, dancers, musicians, midwives, and as professional mourners. “Both married and unmarried women appear to have earned income as prostitutes” (Trigger 2003:186).

Discussion: Foundling Narratives in Egypt

Significant Divergences. The narratives originating in Egypt are radically different from those of Greco-Roman antiquity and Southwest Asia in that the infants are actually not abandoned but hidden for their protection. Propp wrote about the Moses narrative that the “pathos of abandonment is minimal. The child is not set adrift on the Nile, to be menaced by crocodiles or to float out to sea. Rather, he rests securely in the shallows, his sister standing sentry” (1999:158). The Horus narrative should not even be classified as a foundling story because the surviving parent continued to protect and nourish the child; which is also true for the Moses narrative but the Moses narrative also includes the foundling adoption, and therefore qualifies as a foundling narrative. The narratives associated with Egypt are not about discarded children but about infants who were hidden in the wetlands for their own protection, and who were at all times under the watchful eyes of a female relative, either the mother or the infant’s sister, or other sympathetic associate of the mother. This is consistent with the absence of evidence for infanticide in Dynastic Egypt. This also reflects the comparatively active role that women played in Egyptian society. In Greco-Roman narratives, the mothers were completely at the mercy of their male relatives and their decisions, whereas in Egyptian
narratives the mothers take successful steps to protect their offspring. Again, the research indicates an agreement between the narratives and the social history of the region, which lends support to the hypothesis of social history as a catalyst for divergence in foundling narratives. In the absence of infanticide or exposure in Dynastic Egypt, narratives of infant exposure would not be vitalized by experiences of the practice, such as finding an exposed child, exposing a child, or having been a foundling. This lack of exposure narratives lends support to the applicability of Dewan’s and Hufford’s experience centered-approach to ancient narratives.

The Moses birth narrative is another example of how, in the process of *bricolage*, traditions are merged. The exposed child motif, which was part of the Asian immigrant group’s repertoire, is transformed by the customs of the host country. The similarities between the Moses narrative and the Sargon narrative – both Semitic stories – and the similarities with the Horus narrative are both apparent in Moses’ birth legend. This correlation between narratives and social histories confirms the influence of social history on traditional narratives.

Gods and Intertribal Warfare. The narrative of the conflict of Horus and Seth, in which the Horus birth legend is embedded, “mirrors the process by which the earliest nation-state in human history achieved unity.” The actors in the narratives represented “no doubt local chieftains” (Griffiths 1960:146). The details of this historical process sparked much debate, based on differing interpretations of available textual and archaeological evidence; and interpretations vary wildly: Lower Egypt under Horus conquers Upper Egypt under Seth, an internal strife of Upper Egypt, or Upper Egypt
under Horus & Seth conquers Lower Egypt, and other scenarios. The cults of these figures reach back into Naqada I and II, 4000 – 3200 BC (Shaw 2002:476), which leaves plenty of room for speculation (Griffiths 1960:130-146). However, the general interpretation of the ‘Horus and Seth’ narrative as reflecting a pre-historic conflict is consistent with the pattern of deification of persons over time, as pointed out by Barber and Barber (2004:145).

The Delta. Both narratives contain references to the swampy environment of the Nile Delta. “The source of life in Egypt is the river Nile, and the cycle of the seasons, in ancient times, was dictated by the rise and fall of its waters” (Manley 1996:18).

Before recorded history, the Red Sea, and the Bitter Lakes and Crocodile Lake to the north were connected due to the greater extension of the Red Sea. The shrinking and increasing shallowness of the Red Sea is a function of the uplift in this area due to plate tectonics (Hoyt 1912:115, 117). The Nile “split into as many as seven branches and created a vastly larger area of well-watered land. The easternmost branch extended into what is now the marshy, salty swamps of the Suez Canal area into a green fertile, densely inhabited land” (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001:53). In a land so dominated by a river and wetlands, it is not surprising that the inhabitants should produce narratives in which this landscape is reflected.
CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSIONS

Regional Divergences in Narratives

The foundling narratives of ancient Greece, Rome, Southwest Asia, and Egypt show regionally distinctive features. The research indicates that regional variations of the narratives reflect differential socio-cultural practices and attitudes towards infanticide, exposure, family, parenting, and gender roles. The narratives reflect the social histories of their regions of origin. These findings lend support to the hypothesis that divergences in narratives are a function of regional variations in social history. We can discern a spectrum that ranges from prevalent infant exposure and extreme misogyny in Greco-Roman antiquity to expressions of protective parenting and comparatively egalitarian perspectives on gender in Dynastic Egypt. Southwest Asian peoples practiced infant exposure but respected elite women. These characteristics are represented in the narratives and their respective social histories, both. The influence of social history on the divergences of narratives does not invalidate the hypothesis of geographical distance as a driving factor in the divergences of narratives but it rather explains how, in what ways, the narratives differ.

The results of the bricolage process as seen in the narratives of Gilgamesh, Moses, and Cyrus, show the mechanism of dissemination in the distribution of narratives as well as the influence of historical factors on the divergence of narratives, as observed
by Boas (1974:145). The processes of independent emergence, dissemination, and 
bricolage are all traceable in this composite picture of foundling narratives across the 
large region investigated in this research.

Infant Exposure

Evidence for infant exposure abounds for ancient Greece and Rome. In 
Greco-Roman narratives, as in the birth legends of Cyrus, Samurammat, and Gilgamesh, 
which are introductions of Greco-Roman narrative elements into Southwest Asian 
legends, the intent of the exposure was to eliminate the offending offspring. The old 
Mesopotamian and Egyptian narratives of Sargon, Horus, and Moses show the mother’s 
concern for the survival of the infant. In the foundling narratives originating in Dynastic 
Egypt the infants are protected, not abandoned. Egypt does not have a documented 
history of infanticide or exposure. The narratives reflect differential concepts of 
parenthood and attitudes towards offspring, which underscores the constructed nature of 
parenting.

Functions of narratives of abandoned children include the sanctioning and 
justifying of these practices. The narratives may also serve as a way of processing or 
commemorating these experiences, on the part of the biological or adoptive parent as well 
as the surviving foundlings. Propp stated that in “societies practicing exposure and 
adoption, childhood fears of abandonment, and suspicions (or hopes) of being a 
foundling, would be widespread. Tales of adoption would be particularly fascinating. 
Listeners would identify with the endangered infant, who embodies their primal fears and
fantasies… and parents would also emphasize with the infant’s terrified mother and
father” (1999:57).

Since exposure was practiced in the ancient Greco-Roman and southwest
Asian regions and since the early Mesopotamian and Greco-Roman narratives show
marked differences, foundling narratives could have arisen independently in various parts
of this region. At the same time, populations were interconnected through trade, warfare,
and migrations; and so foundling narratives could have originated in a particular area and
subsequently be exported to other regions. This research has shown that foundling
narratives were grafted onto existing narratives and that narratives acquire new
components in order to accommodate local experiences.

Gender and Family

These differential attitudes toward infant exposure coincide with differential
attitudes towards women. Trigger wrote that “despite their general subordination to men
and evidence of the widespread resistance to such subordination in both family and
society in general, the position of women varied significantly from one civilization to
another” (2003:188). Trigger continues: “women in early civilizations do not appear to
have been as disadvantaged as they became in some later civilizations, such as those of
Greece and Rome” (2003:190). This extreme status differential is abundantly reflected in
the violence of Greco-Roman narratives and stands in stark contrast with the treatment of
women in Egyptian and Southwest Asian narratives.
Exposure and Poverty

It is interesting that not one of the motives for exposure presented in these stories include economic reasons, although it is a well-documented motivation for fatal neglect (Scheper-Hughes 1992), infanticide and infant exposure (Lewis 1980:52). In particular Mesopotamian societies with their marked marginalization of poor women and women without male protectors would be a prime background for the abandonment of infants for economic reasons. Lewis stated that “[i]t seems logical to assume that most exposures must have involved members of the lower classes for economic and social reasons” (1980:266, 267).

If Barber and Barber are correct in their hypothesis of the ‘silence principle’ by which commonplace information is not encoded in oral narratives (2004:16-27), then economic reasons may have been such a commonplace motivation for infant exposure that was not worth a story. In this context it is also interesting that Scheper-Hughes found an intense denial of hunger and hardship in her research in Alto do Cruzeiro (1992). Also, as discussed in chapter VII, the archaeological record is skewed towards the material culture of the privileged classes because of the greater production of material culture on their behalf and because of the greater durability of materials used for the production of goods for elites. The archaeological record is what has transmitted these ancient narratives to the present time. Exclusively oral narrative traditions would have little chance of surviving across the long periods of time that have elapsed since these foundling narratives’ creations, especially considering the dramatic socio-cultural changes that were introduced by Christianity and modernity in Greece and Rome, and
Islam in Southwest Asia and Egypt. Therefore, the absence of the problem of poverty as a motivation for exposure in the narratives is also a function of the transmission of these narratives by the ruling elites, who were – after all – the ones with the resources to preserve and transmit their stories across time, and who were more concerned with succession and lineage than with the mundane issues of being able to feed their offspring. Mills also raises the issue of ‘silences,’ whereby silences are created by omissions in the original narratives as well as in the analysis of the narratives (1993:171-181). One might ask whether countless narratives of exposed infants from poor families existed, but without the means of preserving them in writing, they simply vanished. This silence is compellingly explained by socio-economic differentials and the ways in which they affect the transmission of narratives.

Why Are Foundlings Associated with Elite Status?

Barber & Barber proposed that traditional narratives convey important information in ways that are memorable and interesting (2004:1-11). All narratives discussed here feature foundlings and families of elite status &/or divine origin. “The motif of the infant cast away at birth has been applied to gods, kings, and culture heroes. The popularity of the theme, attested by numerous occurrences in the traditions of cultures, ancient and modern, is largely explained by an intrinsic curiosity in the origins of those who rise above the crowd” (Lewis 1980:149). While I would be cautious about making any statements about “intrinsic” factors, perhaps the old foundling narratives do have an element of ‘People Magazine’ entertainment to them in that they both present gossip – which may be completely fictional – about the rich and famous.
Lewis’ statement conforms to the analytical device of the explanatory model after Barber and Barber by which the cause of an observed event is clarified to the narrator. In the case of Samurammat and Gilgamesh, we have a semi-divine descent, Sargon was beloved by Ishtar and descended from a priestess, Horus was protected by Isis, Moses had Yahweh on his side, and the unfortunate Greco-Roman foundlings had deities for a father. These claims may also reflect the need to legitimize leadership.

The Experience-Centered Narrative

Although Kirk stated that the emergence of narratives can never be documented in a non-literate culture (1970:281), the research indicates that the narratives do serve to process, communicate, and store relevant information about the past, confirming Barber and Barber’s findings.

Since Hufford and Dewan have demonstrated that dialectic between narrators’ experiences and folklore, and since this study has shown that the narratives discussed reflect the social matrices of their emergence, this research suggests that the experience-centered approach is a valid perspective for the study of ancient narratives. This is further supported by the correlation between the level of prevalence of foundling narratives and the practice of infant exposure. Greco-Roman antiquity showed the highest prevalence of infant exposure and was most prolific in creating foundling narratives. Since the prevalence of a practice implies a greater number of persons having first hand experience with this practice, and since folklore is vitalized and expanded by the narrators’ experiences of the topic of the narratives, it is hardly surprising that strong prevalence of practice and of narratives of the practice coincide.
The narratives express experiences and incorporate the perspectives of the creators and narrators of these stories. The findings of this research demonstrate that ancient narratives can be productively explored regarding information on social history and the experiences of their narrators.

Lastly, variations of the narratives reflect different geographical regions: Sargon and Moses were left to float on the Euphrates and the Nile, respectively, and the regions of their births were defined by these rivers; by contrast, Sammuramat and the twins Zethus and Ampheon were abandoned in mountains, and Cyrus was exposed in the forest. These elements reflect features of the natural environment of the regions in which the stories were developed. References to the environment in which the infants were abandoned (or hidden) lend themselves to a structural analysis because these environments were almost invariably natural landscapes, and therefore beyond the boundaries of settlements and cultivated land; the one exception is the Gilgamesh birth narrative. This is in contrast to archaeological evidence that indicates infants were more often unceremoniously discarded on a refuse heap (Tyldesley 1995:69).

Some questions that appear in the analysis of these narratives cannot be answered in this research, such as whether the foundling narratives known to us today reflect a body of lore that was exclusively created and perpetuated by the elite that preserved them in writing, or whether honor killings were as prevalent in Greco-Roman antiquity as the narratives suggest. However, these would be fascinating topics for future studies that can further explore the relationship between folklore and social history. Because the experience-centered approach does not dismiss traditional narratives as
fiction, this analysis of folklore can open doors to events and practices that would otherwise go unnoticed.
REFERENCES CITED

Aelian

Allee, John George, ed.

Allen, R. E., ed.

Appleby, Lois, and Chris Dickens

Attané, Isabelle

Barber, Elizabeth Wayland, and Paul T. Barber

Bascom, William


Boas, Franz

Bolger, Diane

Bosse-Griffiths, Kate
Boswell, John Eastburn

Bremmer, Jan

British Museum

Burkert, Walter

Cameron, A.

Carney, Elizabeth Donnelly.

Carroll, Michael P.

Childs, Brevard S.

Clark, Robert Thomas Rundle

Cooper, Jerrold S., and Wolfgang Heimpel.

Dever, William
2003  Who were the Early Israelites? Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Dewan, William J.

Drews, Robert

Duff, Raymond S. Paul, Marlys Bridge, Richard H. Feen, William A. Silverman, Ann Oakley

Dundes, Alan


Eliade, Mircea


Finkelstein, Israel, and Neil Asher Silberman


Firth, Raymond


Frankfort, Henri, and H. A. Frankfort


Frazer, James G.


Frommhold-Treu, M.


Frye, Richard Nelson.


Gaster, Theodore


Gibbs, John G., and Lois H. Feldman


Golden, Mark


Graves, Robert


Griffiths, J. Gwyn

1960  The Conflict of Horus and Seth. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.


Harris, W. V.


Hart, George
Hillel, Daniel
Holley, N. M.
Homan, Michael M.
2002   Beer Production by Throwing Bread into Water: a New Interpretation of Qoh.
Honko, Lori
       Berkeley: University of California Press.
Hooke, S. H.
Hoyt, Sarah F.
       119.
Hufford, David J.
1995   Beings Without Bodies: An Experience-Centered Theory of the Belief in
       Logan, Utah: Utah State University.
Hutton, J. H.
Jung, Carl Gustav
       Berkeley: University of California Press.
Kamp, Kathryn A.
2001   Where have all the Children Gone? – The Archaeology of Childhood. Journal
       of Archaeological Method and Theory 8(1):1-34.
Kincaid, C. A.
Kirk, G.S.
1970   Myth: Its Meaning and Function in Ancient and other Cultures. Berkeley:
       University of California Press.
       of California Press.
Krikorian, Abraham D.
1975   Were the Opium Poppy and Opium known in the Ancient Near East? Journal of
       the History of Biology 8(1):95-114.
Lai Dejian
2005   Sex Ratio at Birth and Infant Mortality Rate in China: An Empirical Study.
       Social Indicators Research 70(3):313-326.
Lamberg-Karlovsky, C. C. and Jeremy A. Sabloff.

Lane, Harlan

Laughlin, John C. H.

Lerner, Gerda.

Lewis, Brian.

Little, Lisa M.

Magnusson, Magnus.

Malinowski, Bronislaw

Manley, Bill

Manniche, Lise

Mayer, Peter

McCall, Henrietta

Mellen, Ida M.

Mills, Margaret

Mitchell, Stephen.

Moore, A. M. T., G. C. Hillman, and A. J. Legge

Oppenheim, Leo A.
Parker, Robert.
Patterson, Cynthia
Pettazzoni, Raffaele
Pierotti, Raymond
Pollock, Susan
Pomeroy, Sarah
Propp, William H. C.
Redford, Donald
Rendsburg, Gary A.
Roberts, Allison
Rogerson, J. W.
Saller, Richard P.
Schepers-Hughes, Nancy
Schiffer, Michael B.
Secret of the Wild Child.
Shanks, Herschel
Shaw, Jan ed.
Siculus, Diodorus
Slater, Candace
Sourvinon-Inwood, Christiane.
Squires, Paul C.
Teeple, John B.
2006 Timelines of World History. London: DK.
Trigger, Bruce
Trigger, Bruce, and B. J. Kemp, D. O’Connor, A. B. Lloyd.
Tyldesley, Joyce
1994 Hatchepsut, the Female Pharaoh. NY: Viking.
Van Baaren, Th.P.
W J M
Ward, Andrew
Walker, Phillip, and John R. Johnson, Patricia M. Lambert.
Westenholz, Joan Goodnick
Wright, Rita P.
Yousef, Nancy

Zimmer, Carl