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Other Diasporas

Immigrants, Ethnic Identities, and Acculturation

Introduction

Judeans (Jews) are by far the most studied of immigrants or resettled ethnic groups in the ancient Mediterranean world. Yet there is growing recognition among scholars that gatherings of Judeans abroad should be placed within the framework of other, less-studied immigrant or cultural minority groups—groups that are also worthy of study in their own rights. Thus Martin Goodman opens a recent anthology by posing the question: How different were Judeans from other peoples in the Greco-Roman world? He briefly posits that “the oddities of the Jews . . . were no greater than that of the many other distinctive ethnic groups, such as Idumaeans, Celts, or Numidians.”¹ Jack Lightstone’s overview of diaspora Judaism assumes that we should approach Judeans as just one among many ethnic groups.² The title of Shaye J. D. Cohen and Ernest Frerichs’s edited volume, *Diasporas in Antiquity* (1993), is promising but does not fully deliver in terms of the study of migrant diasporas beyond that of the Judeans.

Moreover, Goodman and others correctly point to the importance of comparative studies for our understanding of the identities of individual Judeans and Judean groups abroad. Yet research into other ethnically based associations remains to be done before the comparative enterprise can proceed with success. Our inscriptional evidence for Judeans abroad, most recently gathered in collections such as *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe* (3 volumes), *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt*, and *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis* (3 volumes), needs to be placed, in the long run, alongside our materials for other immigrants and associations.³

Moreover, few scholars analyze evidence for other associations of persons from a

1. Goodman 1998, 4.

2. Lightstone 2007, ch. 25.

3. Horbury and Noy 1992; Noy 1993–95; Noy, Panayotov, and Bloedhorn 2004; Noy and Bloedhorn 2004.

common geographical origin, associations whose existence depended on a shared sense of ethnic identity. Some exceptions to this include George La Piana's rather early work of 1927 on "foreigners" in the city of Rome itself, which touches on both Judeans and associations.⁴ Some decades later, L. Ruggini's study (1959) of immigrants from the East in Italy placed Judeans within a comparative perspective, but the article was not concerned with social or cultural questions.⁵ More recently, David Noy's excellent study (2000) delves more fully into the world of immigrants in the city of Rome specifically, and he usefully employs insights from the social sciences to analyze the evidence, particularly regarding individual immigrants.

While these studies provide insights into life among immigrants, especially individuals, in Italy, there still remains much work to do on ethnic *associations* in other parts of the ancient Mediterranean with special attention to issues of acculturation and ethnic identities. Despite the vagaries of epigraphic evidence and the scattered nature of our materials both geographically and chronologically, the social historian can nonetheless begin to observe certain recurring aspects of life among immigrant associations and draw some tentative conclusions regarding processes of acculturation in the world of Judeans and Christians.

Alongside the need for group-focussed studies beyond Italy is a particular problem regarding how some scholars employ issues of migration and the formation of associations within broader theories about the Hellenistic and Roman ages. Until recently, it was quite common for certain scholars to speak of these eras as periods of social, political, and cultural decline, along with the decline of the *polis*, or Greek city-state. Such theories of decline among influential scholars, such as M. P. Nilsson and E. R. Dodds, were sometimes accompanied by portraits of a general atmosphere of widespread rootlessness among populations. This picture of rootless populations was illustrated by, among other things, increases in migration and the supposed negative experiences of immigrants specifically.⁶

To provide a recent example, Robert Turcan speaks of a "troubled and drifting world" in which "uprooted people," particularly immigrants, lived "on the fringes of a disintegrating world" in both the Hellenistic and Roman eras.⁷ Within this framework, Turcan and others oversimplify the picture of associations, including but not limited to ethnically based associations. Such scholars speak of associations primarily as compensatory phenomena which aimed to ameliorate this supposed situation of widespread detachment.⁸

This theory has rightly been criticized.⁹ Peter Brown aptly observes that "many modern accounts of religious evolution of the Roman world place great emphasis on the malaise of life in great cities in Hellenistic and Roman times. Yet the loneliness of the great city and the rapid deculturation of immigrants from traditionalist areas are modern ills: they should not be overworked as explanatory devices for the society we are studying. We can be far from certain that [as Dodds asserts] "such loneliness must have been felt by millions. . . ."¹⁰

4. La Piana 1927, 183–403.

5. Ruggini 1959, 186–308.

6. See the more extensive discussion of scholarship in Harland 2006, 21–35.

7. Turcan 1996 [1989], 16–17.

8. Although not expressing this overall theory, P. M. Fraser (1977, 60) seems to think of associations as functioning to compensate for negative immigrant experiences.

9. See Harland 2006, 21–35.

10. Brown 1978, 2–3, citing Dodds 1965, 137.

As the material discussed in this chapter shows, an image of widespread rootlessness among immigrant and other populations does not fit well with evidence concerning real-life associations, at least in the case of many Syrian and Judean associations.

Despite the meagre nature of the evidence, a number of cases point to the probability that associations based on shared ethnic identity were a further means by which immigrants were in some significant ways firmly planted not only in traditions of the homeland but also, to various degrees, in their societies of settlement. Yet we should not begin by presupposing widespread rootlessness or relative deprivation and then reduce associations to merely compensatory phenomena within some overall theory.

This case study draws attention to evidence regarding both acculturation and continued attachments to the homeland. This chapter serves to counter notions of widespread rootlessness among immigrants while also laying the groundwork for the comparative study of ethnically based associations, including Judean gatherings. This dual purpose can be accomplished by delving into the evidence for associations of immigrants from the eastern coast of the Mediterranean sea—known as the Levant—especially associations consisting of members formerly from Syria, Phoenicia, and Samaria, regions neighbouring Judea or Galilee. Samaritans (who designate themselves “Israelites” on Delos) are included here not because they necessarily share some particular cultic affinity with Phoenicians, but because they too neighboured Judea and because contemporaries sometimes included Samaritan towns either within the Phoenician sphere or within the Judean sphere.

Several useful studies address evidence regarding immigrants from Syria or Phoenicia, especially individual immigrants or families at places such as Delos and Rhodes, as we shall see. Yet none focuses attention on dynamics of acculturation and the maintenance of ethnic identities in *associations* of Syrians or Phoenicians specifically. Rather than merely theorizing about the general experience of immigrant groups, this case study begins to fill a gap in our knowledge by looking at the concrete ways in which particular Syrian associations adapted to their place of settlement while simultaneously maintaining contacts with their place of origin. This provides a fitting framework for comparison with acculturation and identity among Judean groups in the cities of the Mediterranean world.

Insights from the Social Sciences

Some terminological clarifications that build on my discussion in the introduction are in order before proceeding with the discussion of both immigrant associations in this chapter and Judeans at Hierapolis in the next chapter. As I explained in the introduction, “ethnic identity” is used to refer to a group’s shared sense of who they are based on certain experiences and notions of connection deriving from *group members’ perceptions* of common geographical, cultural, and ancestral origins. From the (Tajfelian) social identity theorists’ perspective, ethnic identity is that aspect of the self-concept that derives from belonging to an ethnic or cultural minority group.¹¹ These two ways of understanding the term—pertaining to the collective and to the individual—are not mutually exclusive, and both will inform the discussion at certain points.

11. Cf. Phinney 1990.

Closely related to studies of identity, particularly ethnic identity, are social-scientific studies of migration and acculturation. There are three main concepts from this area of study that may assist in the analysis of immigrants' processes of negotiation in the place of settlement and in our discussion of Judean families at Hierapolis in the next chapter. The approach I take here is informed primarily by the sociological work of Milton Yinger and by the social-psychological work of John W. Berry, among others.¹² Recent studies of Christians and Judeans successfully employ similar theories of assimilation or acculturation, including David Balch's (1986) study of 1 Peter's household code and John M. G. Barclay's study (1996) of Judeans in the diaspora.

The first important concept is *cultural assimilation*, or *acculturation*, which refers to cultural interchanges and processes of boundary negotiation associated with encounters between two different groups (or individual members of two groups) with distinctive cultural traits.¹³ Acculturation can involve the selection, adoption, and adaptation of a variety of cultural elements including language, values, and other cultural conventions that compose the lifestyle and worldview of a particular cultural group. This process is selective and transformative, with some cultural elements being adopted and adapted and other elements being rejected.¹⁴

It is important to emphasize that in my theoretical framework here acculturation can progress significantly without the disintegration of a group's boundaries in relation to a larger cultural entity. Cultural adaptation is often a twofold process entailing the "maintenance of cultural integrity as well as the movement to become an integral part of a larger societal framework," as Berry puts it.¹⁵ Another related concept is "biculturalism," which is used by Berry and others to refer to a dynamic process involving the individual's participation in both the minority culture and the majority culture.¹⁶ A fully "biculture" individual would be a person who is both highly *enculturated* into the minority group culture and highly acculturated to the majority culture. In the study of modern diasporas (a subfield of migration studies), a similar term is "hybridity," which implies the combination of ethnic or other identities in a particular individual or group. As Stuart Hall puts it, the "diaspora experience . . . is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*."¹⁷

A second main concept is *structural assimilation*, which in Yinger's use refers to degrees of social integration or participation within informal social networks (e.g., neighbourhoods, associations) or formal structures (e.g., political, legal, social, or economic institutions) of a given host society.¹⁸ It is important to note the importance of evaluating different types of social interactions and their implications regarding levels of assimilation. Thus, for instance, a case of intermarriage between individuals of two different cultural groups

12. Berry 1980; Berry 1997, 5–34; Yinger 1981, 249–64; Phinney 1990; Marger 1991, 117–20; Yinger 1994.

13. Cf. Yinger 1981, 249.

14. Cf. Barnett 1954, 973–1002.

15. Berry 1980, 13.

16. Birman 1994.

17. Hall, as cited and discussed in Brubaker 2005, 6.

18. Yinger 1981, 254; cf. Marger 1991, 118; Elise 1995, 275.

would correspond to higher degrees of assimilation than would occasional contacts with someone of a different cultural group within social networks. The difficulty is that there is rarely sufficient evidence from antiquity to assess things such as intermarriage among two different cultural groups or the consistency of contacts between certain people or groups. We do, however, gain occasional glimpses into social interactions, such as contacts between benefactors and beneficiaries, which we need to consider carefully in order to assess what cultural weight we can attach to a particular case of networking.

Third, concepts such as *dissimilation* and *cultural maintenance* provide balance to assessments of social and cultural interchanges between cultural groups, emphasizing variety in outcomes.¹⁹ Milton Gordon (1964) and other assimilationist scholars of previous generations have been rightly criticized for assuming that “all groups are willing to drop their own cultures and take on that of the core,” as Sharon Elise points out.²⁰ I would suggest that such problematic approaches were more in line with societies that, politically, maintained a “melting-pot” view (e.g., the United States) rather than a “mosaic” view (e.g., Canada) of migration and cultural diversity. In a study of recent trends in immigration and history writing, Ewa Morawska states the following:

The assimilation paradigm in its classical version has been abandoned on account of its excessive simplicity, and the “ethnicity-forever” approach that replaced it [in the 1970s] is also passing away. The sociology and historiography of immigration may now be on their way toward formulating a more encompassing conceptual framework for the interpretation of adaptation . . . that would integrate both the assimilation and ethnicization processes.²¹

Regarding ancient cases, Jane Webster’s study (2001) of problems with previous approaches to “Romanization” (a specific form of acculturation to Roman ways) makes similar observations concerning the need for a balanced approach that pays attention to the *blending* of cultural values and practices.²² This is a balance I attempt to accomplish in my analysis of ancient ethnic associations and cultural minority groups in this chapter and following chapters.

Recent theories of assimilation and acculturation carefully avoid the tendency to assume complete assimilation or the disappearance of group boundaries as the inevitable outcome. Instead, there is an emphasis on varieties in levels of assimilation, as well as attention to certain processes that work to counter assimilation in particular ways and at various points in a certain group’s (or individual’s) history.²³ Individual members of a cultural minority group (such as Syrians, Judeans, and Christians) are, in an ongoing way, being *enculturated* into the particular ways of that group while also interacting with the majority culture outside of that group.

Yinger, in particular, uses the term “dissimilation” to refer to the way in which

19. Brettell and Hollifield (eds.) 2000.

20. Elise 1995, 277.

21. Morawska 1990, 218.

22. She adapts the concept of “Creolization” as a replacement for “Romanization.”

23. Cf. Brettell and Hollifield 2000.

particular minority or ethnic groups make conscious efforts to reassert and strengthen specific group-society differences: “powerful assimilative forces are matched by renewed attention to socio-cultural differences.”²⁴ Moreover, he states:

In spite of identity shifts and high rates of intermarriage in some settings and extensive acculturation and integration in almost all settings, some subcultural group lines will remain sharp and some individuals will think first of their ethnic group when they appraise their own identities.²⁵

As Jean S. Phinney’s survey of literature (from 1972–1990) also notes, Berry and others view this as a two-dimensional process involving both the culture of the minority group and the culture of the majority, with four main combinations in outcome: (1) strong identification with both groups, which entails integration or biculturalism; (2) an exclusive identification with the majority culture, which entails assimilation; (3) identification with only the minority group, which entails separation; and, (4) identification with neither group, which entails marginality.²⁶ Berry explains the first option, “integration,” which entails the “maintenance of cultural integrity as well as the movement to become an integral part of a larger societal framework.”²⁷

Associations of Immigrants from the Levant

Because of the partial and circumstantial nature of archeological evidence for Syrian and other groups in antiquity, we do not have full access to the same sorts of data as the modern social scientist. Nonetheless, the following discussion of Syrian associations assesses particular historical cases by forming and addressing questions regarding the following indicators of acculturation, structural assimilation, and cultural maintenance: expressions of ethnic identities and ties to the homeland; linguistic practices; rituals, including the gods honoured; other social or cultural conventions or practices (indicative of some level of acculturation and/or cultural maintenance); and, social interactions or network connections with individuals, groups, or institutions (indicative of some level of structural assimilation in the society of settlement or continued attachments to the homeland).

The approach here is to look at specific historical cases on a geographical and chronological basis while also asking broader questions regarding the extent and nature of connections between particular Syrian groups, on the one hand, and individuals, groups, institutions, and cultural traditions, on the other. This will allow observations regarding the historical specifics of particular cases while also drawing attention to common factors and patterns that are observable from one Syrian group to another at different locales and in different periods.

Gathering together in an ongoing association to honour the god(s) and to socialize

24. Yinger 1981, 257; see pp. 257–61.

25. Yinger 1981, 261.

26. See Phinney 1990, 501–2.

27. Berry 1980, 13; cf. Berry 1997.



Figure 11. Monument from Delos dedicated “to Apollo and the Italian gods” by the Italian Hermaists, Apolloniasts, and Poseidoniasts, now in the British Museum (GIBM IV 963 = IDelosChoix 157; 74 BCE)

with friends was a tendency shared by migrants from various parts of the Mediterranean. Some should be mentioned before turning to Syrians specifically. On the island of Delos alone, for instance, there were communities of Italians, Samaritans, Judeans, Egyptians, and both Tyrians and Berytians from Syria, amidst others in the Hellenistic era.²⁸ The monument in figure 11, for instance, involves three different associations of Italian merchants—Hermes-, Apollo-, and Poseidon-devotees—who list their twelve leaders and dedicate the monument “to Apollo and the Italian gods” in the so-called Italian marketplace (GIBM IV 963 = IDelosChoix 157; 74 BCE). On the island of Rhodes there were associations of immigrants from Herakleia in Pontus, from Perge in Pamphylia, and from nearby Crete.²⁹ Particularly visible in Asia Minor were the many associations or “settlements” (κατοικοῦντες) of Roman and Italian businessmen at places like Ephesos, Kibyra, Assos, and Apameia.³⁰

Those who emigrated from Asia Minor also gathered together in associations based on common geographic origins. There are inscriptions attesting to Milesians settled on Amor-gos island and inhabitants from Pontic Herakleia in Scythia.³¹ Among the many groups of settlers from Asia Minor at Rome were the *collegium* of Nysaians, the guild of Ephesian

28. Cf. Bruneau 1970, 457–96, 585–630.

29. IG XII.1 158 (cf. IG XII.1 963; IGLSkythia III 72); ILindos 391 and 392 (time of Augustus); IGR IV 1128 (time of Augustus).

30. See, for instance, Hatzfeld 1919; Müller and Hasenohr 2002.

31. Milesians: IG XII.7 395–410 (second-third cent. CE). Herakleians: IGLSkythia III 72 = SEG 24 (1974), no. 1037 (second cent. CE).

shippers and merchants, and a group of Sardians, to name just a few.³² Other associations proudly identified cultural attachments to Asia Minor by labeling themselves a “society” or “company” (*thiasos* or *speira*) of “Asians,” as with a number of groups in Macedonia, Thracia, Moesia, and Dacia.³³

Turning to settlers in Syria itself, at Sidon there were associations of soldiers formed based on common geographic origins, including the “corporate bodies” of Kaunians, Termessians, and Pinarians.³⁴ The formation of such associations based on common geographic origins is itself an important sign of identification with one’s homeland and its cultural ways, as well as an indicator of cultural maintenance and the expression of ethnic identities in the society of settlement.

Evidence for Phoenician or Syrian associations abroad in particular is quite considerable in comparison with other settlers that formed associations based on geographic origins or ethnic identity.³⁵ Although the inscriptions and buildings associated with these Syrian associations provide only momentary glimpses into issues of identity and acculturation, there are common threads running through the surviving materials. There are indications of both identification with the cultural life of the homeland and notable contacts within local social and cultural life in the place of settlement in a number of cases. These contacts can be interpreted in terms of some degree of integration, even though the chronological and geographical distribution of the evidence makes it difficult to determine what degree. We simply do not have sufficient evidence of Syrian immigrants from one time and place to permit a thick description of a particular group’s levels of cultural and structural assimilation. What we do have is evidence from various locales over time which can nonetheless provide indications regarding recurring trends among Syrian immigrants.

Attica and the Piraeus in the Hellenistic Era

Some of the earliest evidence for associations of Syrians or Phoenicians comes from the Piraeus, port city to Athens. There we find worship of numerous foreign deities, as well as the establishment of associations based on common geographical origins and a shared sense of ethnic identity, including Egyptians, Carians, Phrygians, and Thracians.³⁶ Figure 12 depicts a group of athletic youths approaching the goddess Bendis, the patron deity of Thracians settled in the Piraeus. Evidence for Athenian control over the entrance of foreign cults is particularly strong for the fifth and fourth centuries, when “foreigners” were

32. Clerc 1885, 124–31, side B, lines 35–45 (the other side of this monument contains *IEph* 22), on which also see Lüderitz 1994, 194–95, with trans. in note 36; *IGUR* 26 and 86. Also see La Piana 1927, 183–403 and Noy 2000.

33. *IG X.2* 309, 480 (second-third cent. CE); *IPerinthos* 56 = *IGR I* 787 (196–198 CE); *BE* 65 (1952), 160, no. 100 (Dionysopolis); *IGBulg* 480 (Montana; second cent. CE). See Edson 1948, 154–58, who discusses numerous cases.

34. Macridy 1904 = Mendel 1912–14, vol. 1 nos. 102–8.

35. On associations or brotherhoods (esp. *hbr* and *mrzh*) in Phoenicia or Syria itself, see Teixidor 1964, 77–82; Eissfeldt 1968, 285–95, 264–70; Milik 1972, 141–281; Teixidor 1977, 6. Walter Ameling (1990, 189–99) lists a number of cases involving diaspora Syrian associations.

36. Garland 1987, 107–9, and pp. 101–38 generally. On associations and foreigners at Athens in the Hellenistic period, see Parker 1996, 333–42; Vestergaard 2000, 81–109.



Figure 12. Marble relief of Bendis, goddess of the Thracians, along with several athletic youths; relief now in the British Museum (ca. 400–375 BCE)

required to submit a formal request for permission to establish a sanctuary for their patron deities. As Robert Garland points out, however, it seems that by the late fourth century this control had lessened, as none of the cults established in the following era makes mention of such a special privilege.³⁷

Alongside these groups in the Piraeus are Phoenicians, who are attested as early as the third century BCE in two bilingual inscriptions.³⁸ One is an epitaph erected for a deceased daughter by a chief-priest of the god Nergal, an Assyrian deity that had been imported into Sidon at an early stage.³⁹ The more important inscription here includes, in Greek, honours and crowns granted by an “association (κοινόν) of Sidonians” for a fellow Sidonian (*IG II² 2946*).⁴⁰ Above this is a more extensive Phoenician inscription that dates to the third century BCE. In it, Greek-style honours are granted to one Shama’baal, president of the group in charge of the temple. The inscription happens to mention the funds belonging to “god Baal of Sidon,” likely the patron deity of the association. The title Baal, “Lord,” could of course apply to a number of Canaanite or Phoenician deities. Yet here it most likely refers

37. Garland 1987, 107–109.

38. For Phoenician inscriptions from Cyprus and Greece generally, see *CIS I* 10–96, 114–21. Two later inscriptions attest to the existence of a “priestess of the Syrian deity” at the Piraeus (*IG II² 1337*, 2361; 95/94 BCE and third cent. CE). The former involves honours offered by an association.

39. See Garland 1987, 237, no. 100; Eiselen 1907, 130.

40. Most recently republished and discussed by Ameling 1990.

to the god Eshmun, who was particularly prominent at Sidon and associated with Astarte, who possessed primary place as patron deity of that city.⁴¹ Regarding Sidonians in Attica, there is an earlier honorary inscription from Athens itself in which the Athenian people honour Apollonides, a Sidonian, on the request of a group of merchants and shippers (*IG II²* 343; ca. 332/331 BCE).⁴²

These early cases involving those identified as Sidonian in Attica demonstrate dynamics of identity and acculturation at play. On the one hand, there is the continued use of Phoenician language and the worship of Sidon's native deity. On the other, there are indications of adaptation to local, Greek cultural practices, most notably the use of Greek and the engagement in Greek-style honorary activities (either of which may also have begun before migration with the Hellenization of Syria under the Seleucids beginning in the third century BCE). The fact that a presumably wealthy Sidonian at nearby Athens was honoured not only by a group of merchants but also by the civic institution of the people of Athens shows that such wealthy Syrian immigrants could maintain important links with civic institutions in at least an occasional manner. Shortly, I discuss other cases in which Syrian associations maintained relations either with institutions in the society of settlement, pointing towards some degree of structural assimilation, or with the institutions of the homeland, suggesting areas of cultural maintenance.

Islands of the Aegean, Including Delos, in the Hellenistic Era

Individual immigrants from Syria gathered together in associations on numerous Greek islands of the Aegean, particularly on islands with an importance for shipping and trade networks. Many Phoenicians are attested on the island of Cos, for instance. A fourth century BCE inscription in both Greek and Phoenician involves the identification of the Phoenician goddess Astarte (Ashtoreth) with Aphrodite.⁴³ And there was at least one "society" (θῖσος) in the first century BCE with a Syrian connection worshipping Astarte and Zeus Soter, likely identified with a Lord such as Baal Shamem ("Lord of Heaven").⁴⁴ Although worshipped throughout Syria and beyond, Astarte was particularly prominent at Sidon and Tyre.⁴⁵

41. Cf. Lucian *Syr. D.*, 4. The suggestion that Astarte held prominent position in relation to Eshmun is based on the practice of Sidonian kings, who called themselves priests of Astarte rather than of Eshmun (see Eiselen 1907, 127–128).

42. Individual Syrians (both men and women) in Athens and Attica:

Berytians: *IG II²* 1008, 1011, 1960, 8407, 8408, 9484

Sidonians: *IG II²* 960, 1043, 2314, 2316, 8358, 8388, 10265–86; *CIS* 115, 116, 119.

Tyrians: *IG II²* 342, 3147, 4540, 4698, 10468–73, 11415.

Sidonian settlements or communities are also attested elsewhere in the Hellenistic era, including Judea and Idumea in the second century BCE. See Isaac 1991, 132–44; Josephus *Ant.* 12.258–264a; *OGIS* 593.

43. See Bonnet 1996, 87–88.

44. *IKos* 165a (Tyrian), 194 (Sidonian) 341 (Tyrian); *IKosSegre* ED 54 (Tyrian), EV 150 (Phoenician). *IRhodM* 496; see Bonnet 1988, 378.

45. Bonnet 1996, 30–44.

An association of Syrians is also attested on Syme island (east of Cos and north of Rhodes). This honorary inscription of the late first century BCE involves honours for an Idumean “resident foreigner” (μετοίκος), who had been a benefactor of several associations and neighbourhoods. Among these groups was an association of Syrians devoted to Adonis, Aphrodite, and Asklepios (*IG XII.3 6*).⁴⁶ Here again there is involvement by an expatriot from the Levant (from Idumea) within local networks. Yet in this case there are even clearer signs of multiple connections in the place of settlement, involving links with other immigrants (Syrians) and with native populations (the districts).

There are higher concentrations of evidence regarding immigrant groups at locales with the highest strategic importance for trade routes, including the island of Delos. The majority of our evidence here comes from the second century BCE, especially the period when Delos was under direct rule by Athens (166–88 BCE) and came to be considered a free port by the ascendant Roman power.⁴⁷

There has been a notable amount of research on immigrants settled on Delos in the Hellenistic period, particularly individual immigrants, Italians, merchants, and bankers.⁴⁸ Philippe Bruneau’s extensive study examines the cults of Delos generally, including those devoted to “foreign” deities.⁴⁹ Marie-Françoise Baslez’s article begins to scratch the surface of our present concern by arguing that ethnically based associations were mechanisms by which eastern immigrants maintained attachments to their own traditions while also integrating into a new society. Yet Baslez’s study is quite general and is primarily focused on issues of organization and on distinguishing associations of “oriental” foreigners from the more typical Greek associations.⁵⁰ Here I begin with associations of Phoenicians or Syrians of the second century before turning to Samaritans.

Beyond the numerous individual expatriots from Syria attested on Delos, there is significant evidence for Syrian or Phoenician cults and associations.⁵¹ One monument involves a dedication by three men to “Heracles and Hauronas, the gods who dwell in Jamnia,” on behalf of their brothers, relatives, and “the citizens with them.”⁵² These are Phoenician Jamnians who had ongoing contact with one another (perhaps in an association) in

46. Literary evidence points to the prominence of the cult of Adonis just outside of Berytos at Aphaca. Lucian mentions the rites of Adonis in connection with “Aphrodite” at Byblos, for instance, so it is possible that these Syrians on Syme island have some connection to either Berytos or Byblos. Teixidor 1977, 35; Lucian *Syr. D.*, 6.

47. Cf. Binder 1999, 297.

48. E.g., Bruneau 1970, 585–620; Rauh 1993; Le Dinahet 1997a, 617–66; Le Dinahet 1997b, 325–36; Le Dinahet 2001, 103–23; Müller and Hasenohr 2002. The evidence for Italian or Roman immigrant associations includes *IDelos* 1730–71; *IDelosChoix* 86, 95–98, 105, 107, 116, 131, 138, 144–45, 157, 164.

49. Bruneau 1970, 457–96.

50. Baslez 1988, 147.

51. Individual Syrians on Delos:

Berytians: *IDelos* 2034, 2182, 2593, 2598, 2599, 2633

Sidonians: *IDelos* 1925, 2091a–b, 2100, 2101, 2314, 2396, 2549, 2598, 2612, 2879

Tyrians: *IDelos* 1925, 1937, 2005, 2130, 2366, 2598, 2599, 2612, 2616; *IG XI.4 777*.

52. *IDelos* 2308; cf. 2309. See Isaac 1991, 139; Bruneau 1970, 475.

connection with the sanctuary of these deities on Delos.⁵³ The gods in question can be identified with the Canaanite or Phoenician deities Melqart (here Herakles) and Hauron (also transliterated Horon).⁵⁴ A similar Phoenician connection is evident in dedications by a banker from Ascalon for the “Ascalonian Poseidon” and for the “Palestinian Heavenly Astarte” (around 100 BCE).⁵⁵

A number of inscriptions from the final decades of the second century BCE attest to a cult of Syrian deities on Delos centered around the worship of a goddess called variously the “Pure Goddess” (Ἀγνή θεά), “Pure Aphrodite,” “Pure Aphrodite, the Syrian Goddess,” or “Atargatis, Pure Goddess.”⁵⁶ This is the same Atargatis that I discussed in connection with processions in chapter 2. Several of these monuments indicate there was a board of functionaries or “therapeutists” (θεραπευταί) connected with this cult of Syrian deities, and that the cult was led by a priest and priestess.

Some of these priests and priestesses were from Syrian Hierapolis (Bambyke) itself, home of the famous temple of Atargatis as described by Lucian of Samosata.⁵⁷ Some though not all of the inscriptions dedicated to this goddess involve expatriots from Syrian towns, including Laodicea, Antioch, and Hierapolis.⁵⁸ Among these dedications are those to the deities Atargatis and Hadad, who also seem to have been coupled at the sanctuary of Hierapolis in the homeland. A number of these same inscriptions add a third honoree, “Asklepios,” who is likely to be identified with Eshmun, according to H. Seyrig.⁵⁹

More importantly with respect to associations, in one inscription there is mention of the “society members” (θιασίται) of the “Pure Goddess” under the direction of a “synagogue leader” (συναγωγηγέυς). A subsequent discovery of another inscription, which likely relates to the same group, now clarifies that this was an ethnic group called “the association of Syrian society members (τὸ κοινὸν τῶν θιασιτῶ[ν] | τῶν Σύρων).”⁶⁰ It is worth noting that a similar society of the “ancestral gods” (τῶι κοινῶι τοῦ θιάσου τῶν πατρίω[ν]) devoted to Phoenician deities, including Atargatis, existed on the island of Astypalaia in the third or second century BCE (IG XII.3 178). Syrians abroad continued to carefully honour the deities of their native land, and they did so, in part, by forming associations.

Further materials from Delos pertain to Tyrians and, more extensively, Berytians from

53. Because of the mixed population of Jamnia, the site is sometimes described as a Phoenician city (Philo of Byblos) and sometimes as a Judean or Palestinian city (see Isaac 1991, 138).

54. Bruneau 1970, 475; Isaac 1991, 139–40. On the god Hauron, see Albright 1936, 1–12; Albright 1941, 7–12.

55. *IDelos* 1719–21; cf. *IDelos* 2305; Bruneau 1970, 474.

56. On this cult, see *IDelos* 2220–2304; Siebert 1968, 359–74; Bruneau 1970, 466–73. For dedicators who label her the “Syrian goddess” or identify the Pure Goddess as Atargatis see, for instance, *IDelos* 2245, 2251, 2252, 2275 (all ca. 100 BCE), 2294, 2299, 2300.

57. E.g., *IDelos* 2257, 2258, 2283.

58. Syrian expatriots are from Antioch (*IDelos* 2224, 2263, 2285), Hierapolis (nos. 2226, 2261), and Laodicea (nos. 2259, 2262, 2264, 2270). Among the other dedicants are an Alexandrian (no. 2225), an Athenian (nos. 2251–52), a man from Marathon (no. 2245), and several Romans (nos. 2255, 2266, 2269).

59. *IDelos* 2224, 2248, 2261, 2264; Lucian *Syr. D.* See Seyrig 1960, 246–47; Bruneau 1970, 470–71.

60. For the inscription with commentary, see Siebert 1968.

Phoenicia. In both cases, it is the economic importance of Delos that brought these immigrants. The “synod of Tyrian merchants and shippers” at Delos is known from just one inscription, dating to 153/152 BCE (*IDelos* 1519 = *IDelosChoix* 85).⁶¹ The inscription recounts the outcome of a particular assembly (ἐκκλησία) of the members of the association, who are also called “society members” (θιασῖται). This group honoured a fellow member, named Patron, who had shown his goodwill by leading an embassy to Athens, which at this point controlled Delos. The embassy had been successful in gaining permission for the group to build its own sanctuary for “Herakles.”

What is particularly significant with respect to the expression of ethnic identity here is the patron deity of this association, which suggests important connections with the homeland of Tyre. The merchants’ identification of their god Herakles as “founder of the homeland” (ἀρχηγοῦ δὲ τῆς πατρίδος) in line 15 has particular importance here. Corinne Bonnet’s study shows the consistency with which Tyrian nationals abroad identified their native deity, Melqart, with Herakles specifically.⁶² Primary in this characterization was the notion that the god Melqart was the founder of cities, so the epithet “the founder” (ἀρχηγέτης) often accompanies the identification of Melqart with Herakles. For instance, about the same time these Tyrians on Delos inscribed their honours, two brothers from Tyre who had settled on the Sicilian island of Malta erected a bilingual dedication for “Melqart, Lord of Tyre” (in Phoenician), who is translated as “Herakles the Founder” (in Greek).⁶³ As Aaron Jed Brody’s study shows, both Melqart and a Semitic god identified with “Poseidon” were among the favourite patron deities of Phoenician and Punic sailors and merchants for centuries.⁶⁴ The Tyrians on Delos who founded this sanctuary also make mention of a festival in honour of a “Poseidon” (line 40), which brings us to settlers originally from Berytos (Beirut) who were devoted to a “Poseidon.”

Evidence for immigrants from Berytos settled on Delos is more substantial than the evidence for Tyrians, including numerous inscriptions. Most of these were found in excavations of the meeting place of the association (*IDelos* 1520, 1772–96, 2325). This group called itself the association (κοινόν) of “Poseidon-worshipping merchants, shippers, and receivers from Berytos.” Like the Tyrian guild, this group was active around the middle of the second century BCE. A number of honorary and dedicatory monuments show the continuing importance of the gods of Berytos for these compatriots, as the inscriptions refer to the “ancestral gods” (πατριοί; *IDelos* 1783, 1785, 1789). The most prevalent native deities on coins from the city of Berytos itself are the deities Poseidon (a Hellenized expression for a Phoenician sea god) and both Eshmun and Astarte (also prevalent at Sidon), so these are among the possibilities for this guild’s patron deities.⁶⁵ Among the monuments erected by the Berytians on Delos for such gods is the dedication of a meeting place (οἶκος) with “oracles for the ancestral gods” (*IDelos* 1774).

Alongside this sense of cultic attachment to the homeland are indications of adaptation

61. A fourth century dedication from Delos involves “sacred shippers” from Tyre, however (*IDelos* 50).

62. Bonnet 1988; cf. Millar 1993, 264–65; Freyne 2001, 185–88.

63. *IG* XIV 600. See Freyne 2001, 185–86; cf. Herodotus *Histories* 2.44.

64. Brody 1998, 22–26, 33–37.

65. On the Phoenician cult of Poseidon see Teixidor 1977, 42–46.

to the cultural landscape of the new home, at least in terms of relations with the powers-that-be and involvements within social networks. On the one hand, there are two inscriptions that concern relations with Athens and its institutions. In one, the association erects a monument “for the people of the Athenians on account of the virtue and goodwill which the people continues to show towards the association” (*IDelos* 1777). Another involves the association’s honours for a benefactor named Demokles, likely an Athenian citizen. The monument includes a series of crowns captioned by either “the association” or “the Athenian people” (*IDelos* 1780).

On the other hand, there are signs of interaction with the Italian or Roman mercantile and cultural presence on Delos. Thus, the most extensive inscription pertaining to this Berytian association involves honours for a Roman banker named Marcus Minatius, son of Sextus, around 153 BCE (*IDelos* 1520). Minatius is praised by the association for his contributions in connection with both his financing of the completion of the headquarters and his offering of a special sacrifice and banquets for members. In return, members of the association offer several forms of honour, including the erection of a statue of Minatius in the meeting place and the establishment of special honorary occasions on which to renew their crowning of this benefactor, including a procession with a sacrificial ox. Furthermore, this Roman Minatius himself attends meetings and festivals of the Berytians, along with his own guests. This suggests close connections between these Syrian immigrants and an important Roman merchant on Delos. Some decades later, in about 90 BCE, the same association honoured a Roman benefactor, Gnaeus Octavius son of Gnaeus, a praetorian provincial governor (*IDelos* 1782).

Perhaps even more important for present purposes is the integration of the goddess Roma (personified Rome) alongside the ancestral gods of Berytos within the cultural life of this group (*IDelos* 1778, 1779). Quite striking is the statue base on which Roma is praised for her positive relations not only with the guild but also with Berytos, the homeland (*IDelos* 1778, lines 1–4). Archeologists excavating the remains of the meeting place have identified three or four shrines in the northwestern section, and there is agreement among scholars that, alongside shrines for Phoenician deities such as Poseidon and Astarte, Roma was assigned a shrine and became integrated within the ritual life of this group, at least by the first half of the first century BCE.⁶⁶

Materials from other parts of the Mediterranean in other periods suggest that, as an immigrant group, the Berytians are not completely unusual in terms of maintaining connections with civic institutions and Roman figures or traditions. In this sense, these indications of assimilation may be indicative of what was going on in other Syrian groups in connection with whom we happen to lack this number of inscriptions.

It is the number and consistency of contacts that stands out in the Berytian case and there are difficulties in assessing to what degree this level of interaction is peculiar or representative. Certain aspects of the Berytians’ interactions are characteristic of Delos in the mid-second century, when various individuals and groups vied with one another in seeking some level of recognition in relation to both Athenian and Roman institutions or authori-

66. On the building history see Picard 1920, 263–311; Bruneau 1970, 622–30; Bruneau 1978, 160–90; Meyer 1988, 203–20; Bruneau 1991, 377–88; McLean 1996, 196–205 (who summarizes earlier discussions); Trümper 2002, 265–330.

ties. It should also be noted that the evidence from Delos involves Syrian *merchants* in an economically important centre of the Aegean. These higher levels of involvement in the society of settlement may or may not be consonant with what went on in certain other Syrian associations in this or other locales or periods.

Delos also provides roughly contemporary evidence for another group of expatriots from the Levant, namely “Israelites” or Samaritans, who may or may not have been involved in trade. These inscriptions are particularly important since, to this point, they represent our only evidence for associations of Samaritans in the Hellenistic or early Roman eras. Individual Samaritans are attested in inscriptions from elsewhere, of course, including a Samaritan man who was buried on Rhodes (*IJO* II 11) and several others at Athens or the Piraeus (*IJO* I Ach 35, 36, 37). And there is an interesting case involving a “Samaritan” listed as a member of an ethnically mixed group in the Piraeus, probably a “society” ([οἱ θιασῶ]τα[1]; *IJO* I Ach 41; fourth or third cent. BCE).

As to the ethnic identities of those labeled “Samaritans,” Josephus claims that some Samaritans might identify themselves using the ethnic descriptor of “Sidonians,” suggesting a Phoenician connection for some of the population settled in Samaria. However, Josephus also goes on to claim that Samaritans associated with the sanctuary on Mount Gerizim would go so far as to actively identify their god with a Hellenistic deity (Zeus Hellenios; Josephus *Ant.* 12.258–64). Yet a comparable passage in 2 *Maccabees* points towards Samaritan hesitancy on precisely such matters, referring to the Samaritans’ *refusal* to dedicate their temple on Gerizim to Zeus Xenios (“Protector of Strangers”), along with the Judean refusal to dedicate the Jerusalem temple to Olympian Zeus.⁶⁷ So it is difficult to assess what these “Israelites” on Delos would think of themselves in relation to Phoenicians and the cultural landscape of contemporary Hellenistic Syria. What is clear is the continuing attachment to the rites practiced at Gerizim.

Samaritans on Delos are attested in only two inscriptions of the late third or second century BCE. These monuments were found about one hundred meters away from the structure identified as the meeting place of a group of Judeans or Samaritans (GD 80).⁶⁸ As in the case of the Tyrians and Berytians on Delos, the Samaritan inscriptions indicate attachments to the cultic life of the homeland. In fact, the group of Samaritans here had incorporated this sense of ethnic and cultic identification within the title of the group itself. The self-designation of the group appears roughly the same in both inscriptions despite the time separation (of between twenty-five and one hundred years) between them, namely, “the Israelites of Delos who contribute to sacred Mount Gerizim” (οἱ ἐν Δήλῳ Ἰσραελεῖται οἱ ἀ|παρχόμενοι εἰς ἱερὸν Ἀργα|ριζείν). Here attachments to the religious life of Samaria are expressed not only through mention of the holy site. Connections to the homeland are also indicated in the fact that, at least at some point, the group seems to have financially

67. 2 *Macc* 6:2. See Isaac 1991, 136–38, 143 n. 45 and Binder 1999, 471. On problems with the anti-Samaritan bias of our sources (including the crucial 2 Kings 17), see Grabbe 1992, 502–7. Grabbe concludes that the Samaritans continued a “conservative Yahwistic cult” and “there is no more evidence of a pagan origin to Samaritan worship than there is to Jewish worship” (Grabbe 1992, 506).

68. Bruneau 1982, 465–504 = *SEG* 37 (1987), no. 809–10 = *NewDocs* VIII 12a-b. See Trümper 2004, 513–98, who likewise leaves open the possibility of Judean or Samaritan identification (cf. Runesson 2001, 185–87). The early presence of Judeans on Delos is suggested by literary evidence: 1 *Macc* 15:15–23; Josephus *Ant.* 14.231–32.

supported the ritual activities at Mount Gerizim in a manner comparable to diaspora Judeans' support of the temple in Jerusalem.⁶⁹

The earlier of the two inscriptions (which dates about 250–175 BCE) involves the Israelites honouring one Menippos from Herakleia—along with his descendants—for his contributions to the group (*NewDocs* VIII 12b = *IJO* I Ach 66). The fact that Menippos had arranged to build and dedicate a “prayer house” (προσευχή) “in fulfillment of a vow to God” suggests that he too was a devotee of the God worshipped at Gerizim. This draws attention to the complicated and multiple nature of identities. Either Menippos was a gentile who had come to worship the Israelites' God or he was a Samaritan who migrated first to Herakleia before coming to Delos (either to settle or to visit), likely for business purposes. If the latter, then depending on circumstances Menippos might be identified by others—or identify himself—as a Herakleian,⁷⁰ a Delian, a Samaritan, or some combination of these identities, as here. I return to the importance of such multiple identities in chapters 6 and 7.

The later honorary inscription (which dates about 150–128 BCE, or possibly as late as 50 BCE) involves the Israelites' crowning Sarapion, son of Jason, from Knossos (*NewDocs* VIII 12a = *IJO* I Ach 67). This man had made some unspecified benefactions to the group. Here there is no indication that this immigrant from the island of Crete is himself a devotee of the God of the Israelites.

Syrian Immigrants in the Roman Empire

In certain ways, the cultural patterns I have been outlining with regard to some Syrian associations in the Hellenistic era continue into Roman times, although we lack substantial evidence for any one locale comparable to Hellenistic Delos. Syrian settlers from Spain in the West to Greek islands in the East still continued to form associations in their place of settlement as a way of expressing their shared sense of ethnic identity.

In some cases we primarily know of the existence of Syrian associations of the Roman era without having any further significant information regarding how they understood their identities. A fragmentary Greek inscription from Malaca (Malaga) in Spain, for instance, mentions merely a “patron and president of the association of Syrians” (*IG* XIV 2540 = *IGR* I 26).⁷¹ So we need to remain aware of the partial and circumstantial nature of epigraphic evidence and to take care in recognizing the tentative nature of any generalizations that can be made regarding levels of assimilation among Syrian immigrant groups.

Still, other monuments of the Roman era do provide further glimpses of involvements within local networks of benefaction. On the Aegean island of Nisyros (located between the islands of Cos and Rhodes), an association of Syrians devoted to “Aphrodite” is among several associations that honoured a prominent citizen of Nisyros (*IG* XII.3 104 = *IGR* IV

69. Cf. Binder 1999, 473–74. The Samaritan temple was destroyed in 128 BCE (Josephus *Ant.* 13.254–56), but rites likely continued afterwards nonetheless.

70. Among the candidates is the island of Herakleia, south of Delos.

71. Hübner's reconstruction suggests the possibility that this is an “association of Syrians an[d] Asians” (see Ameling 1990, 196).

1110). Gnomagoras was not only a soldier in the Roman army but also a civic magistrate, priest of the civic cult of the emperors, and benefactor of the gymnasium. The inscription specifically points out that he supplied oil not only for citizens but also for settlers (τοῖς κατοικοῦσι) and resident foreigners (τοῖς παρεπιδαμεῦσιν). He is praised for how pleasant he has been “towards all of the associations (τοῖς κοινείοις) which are in Nisyros,” including the Syrians.

Such evidence of prominent native citizens engaging in at least occasional positive relations with Syrian immigrant associations, which is also attested at various locales in the Hellenistic era, suggests the real-life reception of “foreigners” could go beyond the sort of ethnic stereotypes and derogatory attitudes found in some contemporary literary sources. Benjamin Isaac’s survey of xenophobia in Greek and Roman literature shows that “Phoenicians” were often stereotyped as intelligent (in connection with success in trade) but cruel. Those designated “Syrians,” along with others of the East, were sometimes viewed as degenerate, servile, or effeminate.⁷² We do need to be careful about assuming that negative stereotypes in the literature were somehow normative or consistent in day-to-day life at particular locales.⁷³ Furthermore, ethnic labeling of oneself or others does “not automatically entail tension between the ethnic groups,” as Koen Goudriaan’s study of ethnic groups in Greco-Roman Egypt points out.⁷⁴ Despite the need for caution in assessing the social implications of such stereotypes in the literature, I return in the next section to the relevance of such stereotypes for the maintenance and development of ethnic identities.

Turning to Syrians settled in Italy in the Roman imperial era, there are two significant pieces of information pertaining to a group of Tyrians at Puteoli, port city of Rome. First, a fragmentary inscription dating to 79 CE reveals that some Tyrians transferred to Puteoli a statue of their native Phoenician deity, here called “Sareptan Helios” (Sarepta was a town between Sidon and Tyre; *OGIS* 594 = *IGR I* 420).

A second, better-preserved monument from about a century later provides a rare glance at some concrete attachments between these immigrant Phoenicians and their homeland of Tyre, “metropolis of Phoenicia” (*OGIS* 595 = *IGR I* 421; 174 CE).⁷⁵ The inscription consists of a letter carried by an emissary from the “settlement” of Tyrians at Puteoli (οἱ ἐν Ποτιόλοις κατοικοῦντες) to civic institutions of Tyre concerning the maintenance of the group’s “station” or headquarters. The association of traders characterizes the situation thus:

This station has long been cared for by the Tyrian settlement in Puteoli, who were many and wealthy, but now our number has dwindled to a few, and in paying for sacrifices and the rites of our ancestral gods (τῶν πατρίων ἡμῶν θεῶν) that are established for worship here in temples, we do not have the means to furnish the rent on the station, 250 denarii per year, especially since the payments for the bull

72. Isaac 2004, 324–51.

73. Isaac focuses almost solely on discriminatory ideas rather than the actual treatment of foreigners, but he does acknowledge this limitation of the work (Isaac 2004, 2, 6–7).

74. Goudriaan 1992, 76.

75. See Sosin 1999, 275–85. For earlier discussions, see La Piana 1927, 254–58; D’Arms 1974, 105; Teixidor 1979.

sacrifice at the games at Puteoli are charged to us in addition. We entreat, therefore, that you provide for the lasting permanence of the station.⁷⁶

As with many of the Syrian associations of the Hellenistic era, concerns to honour the gods of the homeland stand out here at Puteoli, albeit in regard to the expenses involved in maintaining these cults.

The Tyrian settlement had recently fallen on hard times and, as a result of various other expenses, were apparently unable to pay the yearly fee they owed to maintain possession of their headquarters. Integral to the argument of the emissary as presented in the letter were claims of close connections with the homeland and shared social, economic, and cultural interests among compatriots. The request of this group of immigrants was not uncontested, however.

Joshua D. Sosin's analysis of the partially preserved minutes of the civic assembly at Tyre shows how one Philokles may have been attempting a hostile takeover or simply dissolution of the Puteolian station in favour of the station of Tyrians at Rome itself, which is also mentioned in the minutes.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the Tyrian settlers' erection of this monument shows that the council and people of Tyre sided not with Philokles but with the Tyrians of Puteoli. Tyre itself, it seems, took on the cost of maintaining the station at Puteoli, as Sosin argues.⁷⁸ Despite debate at home, then, and despite the potential for competition among associations of immigrants from the same homeland, Tyre itself supported the well-being of its citizens abroad, whose attachments to the homeland could be expressed in various ways. The Tyrians' varied identifications with their homeland and its cultural ways suggests that ethnic identity continued to play a key role in internal identifications and in how this group related to others within the society of settlement.

Ethnic Stereotypes and Identity among Cultural Minority Groups

Earlier I noted that evidence for positive social relations between Syrian immigrants and others within the cities—indicative of some level of integration—should caution us against overestimating the impact of negative stereotypes about such cultural minorities, stereotypes that are reflected in literary sources produced by the elites. As usual, the relationship between literary images or rhetoric and social realities as reflected in archeological evidence is a complicated one which is difficult to evaluate, and we should not assume the priority of literary perspectives.

Although we need to avoid exaggerating such negative perceptions, it is nonetheless important here to discuss the significance of such stereotypes when they were expressed and their functions in relation to issues of identity. This is particularly important in relation to issues of dissimilation and cultural maintenance as I explained those concepts earlier. This discussion would apply not only to stereotyping in relation to Syrian ethnic

76. Trans. Sosin 1999, 278, with adaptations.

77. Sosin 1999, 283.

78. Sosin 1999, 281–84.

groups, of course, but also in relation to other cultural minority groups, including Judeans and followers of Jesus. I return to social categorization and stereotypes in chapter 8, which provides a more extensive discussion of accusations of human sacrifice, cannibalism, and sexual impropriety against Judeans and Christians. As many social-identity theorists note, the perceptions of outsiders and processes of labeling do play at least some role in how cultural minority groups or their members define and redefine themselves in relation to other groups.⁷⁹

Here I discuss two important articles on stereotypes and identity, both of which are informed by Henri Tajfel's (1978, 1981, 1982) social identity theory. One, by Louk Hagendoorn (1993), focusses on the functions of stereotypes for the groups doing the evaluation. The other, by Richard Jenkins (1994), draws attention to the role of external categorization (such as that reflected in stereotypes) in processes of identity reformulation for the groups being negatively evaluated by stereotypes.

Hagendoorn explains the function of ethnic stereotypes in terms of their importance for the social identity of the group that is doing the evaluation. Stereotypes are oversimplified sets or configurations of characteristics attributed to members of a particular out-group (outside group) by an in-group (insiders). They involve "generalized knowledge about social categories and thereby implicitly evaluate these categories."⁸⁰ Overall, Hagendoorn argues that "[stereotypes] not only evolve from, but also preserve the values of, the in-group by differentiating the in-group from negatively evaluated out-groups."⁸¹

Hagendoorn's perspective helpfully integrates anthropological, sociological, and social psychological approaches to social or ethnic categorization and negative stereotypes (such as those associated with prejudice, ethnocentrism, and racism). He explains that in anthropology stereotypes are often explained in terms of *cultural misunderstanding*.⁸² Members of an in-group evaluate an outside group's customs and activities using insider values and ways of interpreting cultural meaning. When there are differences in practices and in the modes of cultural interpretation between the groups, misunderstandings in the form of stereotypes result. As Hagendoorn points out, although this accurately explains some elements of ethnic categorization and stereotypes, it needs to be supplemented by other theoretical perspectives.

In sociology, negative stereotypes associated with racism are often viewed as *justifications* for "existing differences in influence, power and wealth between the ethnic majority and the minorities."⁸³ In other words, a Syrian living in Athens may be characterized negatively by certain Athenian citizens in part because this helps to ensure the superior position of those Athenians in maintaining positions of influence.

A third perspective is offered by social psychology. Hagendoorn draws on social-identity theory as developed by Tajfel to explain that stereotypes are a result of the "search for a favourable self-categorization."⁸⁴ Stereotypes serve the "cognitive function" of storing

79. Cf. Nazroo and Karlsen 2003, 903–4.

80. Hagendoorn 1993, 33.

81. Hagendoorn 1993, 34.

82. Hagendoorn 1993, 27–28.

83. Hagendoorn 1993, 31.

84. Hagendoorn 1993, 36.

knowledge and experience in a particular configuration in order to facilitate further social categorization. As such stereotypes are developed and called upon, they serve a “value preservation” function for the in-group (e.g., a Roman author’s social group) by implicitly evaluating the characteristics of out-groups (e.g., Syrians, Judeans, Christians, “barbarians”) using the values and identity of the in-group as the measuring stick. The entire process takes place in such a way that the superiority of the in-group’s (e.g., Romans’) cultural values and customs are evaluated as superior, those of the out-group (e.g., Syrians or others) as in some way inferior. In other words, the process of categorizing or labelling others (outsiders or the out-group) is, in fact, a process of internal self-definition.

Furthermore, categorizations of various out-groups take place in a hierarchical manner with different out-groups being ranked, so to speak, in relation to the in-group, which maintains the superior position. Hagendoorn emphasizes the importance of these “ethnic hierarchies” that are indicated by social categorizations of ethnic out-groups.

Jenkins’s study furthers our understanding of the impact of such stereotypes on the social identity of the negatively evaluated group, in our case the Syrians or Phoenicians. Building on the insights of Fredrik Barth (1969), Jenkins emphasizes the “transactional nature of ethnicity” and points to two main kinds of transactions. First of all, there are processes of internal self-definition whereby members of a group communicate to one another and to outsiders their own sense of who they are.⁸⁵ Second, there are external definitions which involve outsiders’ social categorizations of the cultural minority group or its members. These external definitions are often pejorative and can entail negative stereotypes, for the reasons already outlined by Hagendoorn. It is worth noting that there are affinities between this twofold, transactional way of explaining identity and Gregory Stone’s (1962) concepts of “identity announcements” (a person’s communication of who they are) and “identity placements” (categorizations by others) as more recently employed in studying situational identities among immigrants.⁸⁶ Jenkins explains this twofold dynamic in this way:

whereas social groups define themselves, their name(s), their nature(s) and their boundary(s), social categories are identified, defined and delineated by others. Most social collectivities can be characterized as, to some extent, defined in both ways. Each side of the dichotomy is implicated in the other and social identity is the outcome of the conjunction of processes of internal *and* external definition.⁸⁷

Cultural minorities or ethnic groups, or their individual members, such as the Syrians, Samaritans, Judeans, and Christians discussed in this study, may handle external categorizations in a variety of ways. Yet in virtually all cases the external stereotypes play some role in internal self-definition, according to Jenkins and others.

Jenkins explains this process with the concept of “internalization,” as “the categorized group is exposed to the terms in which another group defines it and assimilates that cat-

85. Jenkins 1994, 198–99.

86. See, for instance, Ajrouch and Kusow 2007.

87. Jenkins 1994, 201.

egorization, in whole or in part, into its own identity.”⁸⁸ This process of internalization may range from the acceptance of outsiders’ categorizations insofar as those categories happen to fit the internal self-definition of the group, to open rejection or resistance to the external definitions. However, even in cases of resistance, Jenkins emphasizes, “the very act of defying categorization, of striving for an autonomy of self-identification, is . . . an effect of being categorized in the first place. The rejected external definition *is* internalized, but paradoxically, as the focus of denial.”⁸⁹

I would suggest that similar processes of group identity were at work among immigrant associations in antiquity. These insights regarding social and ethnic identity provide a framework for understanding the potential role of stereotypes regarding Syrians, Phoenicians, Judeans, Jesus-followers, and others. Although Isaac’s study of “racism” in antiquity does not fully engage the sort of social-scientific theories outlined here, his discussion of Lucian of Samosata’s reactions to stereotypes concerning Syrians is useful for our purposes, particularly since the inscriptions do not supply us with clear evidence of how the stereotypes shaped certain aspects of group self-definition in Syrian associations.⁹⁰

In particular, Isaac points to several passages where Lucian is responding in some way to the stereotypes of outsiders in an ambivalent manner. Here there are clear signs of what Jenkins calls internalization, a process that I discussed in connection with Philo and Josephus in chapter 1 and to which I return in connection with Judeans and Christians in chapter 8. On several occasions, Lucian makes reference to his own identity as a Syrian—a Greek-speaking Syrian, in this case, but a “Syrian” from Samosata nonetheless. Often he adopts the perspective of the (Greek or Roman) outsider who would categorize such a person as a “barbarian” based on perceptions of ethnic identity.

In one particularly noteworthy passage Lucian not only shows an adoption of the external stereotypes (though perhaps tongue in cheek), he also evinces what Hagendoorn calls “ethnic hierarchies” or rankings of ethnic groups. Lucian does this when he compares his own identity as a Syrian “barbarian” to the royal philosopher Anarchasis as a Scythian “barbarian”: “Well, my own situation is like that of Anacharsis—and please do not resent my likening myself to a man of regal stature, for he too was a barbarian, and no one could say that we Syrians are inferior to Scythians. It isn’t on grounds of royalty that I compare my situation with his, but rather because we are both barbarians” (*Scythian 9*; cf. *Fisherman 19*).⁹¹ The phrase “no one could say that we Syrians are inferior to Scythians” indicates Lucian’s perception of widely held notions of ethnic hierarchies within the social categorizations of his Greek and Roman elite readers. Comments by ancient ethnographers such as Herodotus confirm a strongly negative portrayal of Scythian and adjacent peoples.⁹² Syrians and Scythians are both barbarians, from Lucian’s perspective, but there are inferior and less inferior barbarians. Once again it is the in-group (in this case the Greek or Roman perspective internalized by Lucian) that categorizes various ethnic groups using internal

88. Jenkins 1994, 216.

89. Jenkins 1994, 217.

90. Isaac 2004, 341–45.

91. Trans. Harmon 1913–67 (LCL).

92. See, for instance, the discussion of Scythians in Hartog 1988 [1980] and in Dudko 2001–2002.

values and perceptions as the measuring stick of what is inferior or superior. To some extent, a higher ranking on the ethnic hierarchy for a particular ethnic group is a result of a perception of greater similarities between the in-group's (e.g., Greek-speaking elite Greeks' and Romans') values and those of that other ethnic group (e.g., Syrians) in comparison with still other ethnic groups (e.g., Scythians).

Elsewhere Lucian reflects knowledge of the more specific stereotypes of Phoenicians or Syrians as successful in trade, yet through underhanded means (*Ignorant Book-Collector* 19–20). Here again it seems that Lucian has internalized stereotypes about Syrians as lacking in morals. He does not openly oppose or resist the stereotypes. Still, the overall satirical context here and elsewhere may, as Isaac notes, suggest a more subtle attempt to “parody normal attitudes” rather than accepting them fully as a self-identification.⁹³ Whether assimilating or resisting, as Jenkins clarifies, some internalization of external categories is often at work in the process of self-identification. Similar dynamics may have been at work among associations of Syrians settled elsewhere in the ancient Mediterranean. This would play a role in the maintenance and development of ethnic identities alongside other areas involving acculturation.

Conclusion

This preliminary investigation into processes of identity construction and assimilation among ethnic associations from just one region of the eastern Mediterranean begins to reveal certain recurring patterns. This is the case despite diversity among specific groups from the Levant and the difficulties associated with assessing materials from such a wide geographical and chronological span. Recurring evidence for involvements in the society of settlement and continued attachments to the homeland speak against notions of a general atmosphere of detachment and rootlessness among immigrant populations in the Hellenistic and Roman eras, at least in a number of cases involving Syrian or Phoenician ethnic groups.

Despite status as “foreigners” and the potential for ethnic stereotypes to influence outsiders’ perceptions, it seems that members of these Syrian groups would in certain circumstances identify themselves first and foremost as Syrians, Phoenicians, Sidonians, Tyrians, or Berytians. The multiple, flexible, and circumstantial nature of identities means that this expression of ethnic distinctiveness was by no means incompatible with the creation or maintenance of social ties in the society of settlement. These Syrians could also belong within or interact with other subgroups of that society, such as neighbourhoods, districts, and other guilds or associations.

Although worship of the gods of the homeland within these associations is evident virtually across the board, this could also be accompanied by identifications with, and acculturation to, indigenous, Greek, or Roman deities and customs. Conversely, non-Syrians could come to honour Phoenician deities alongside settlers. This situation was illustrated by non-Syrians attending the sanctuary of the Pure Syrian Goddess on Delos

93. Isaac 2004, 343.

and by the presence of the Roman Minatius and his guests at gatherings of the Berytian association.

Alongside cultural maintenance and acculturation, involvements in social networks in the society of settlement indicate areas of structural assimilation, both informal and formal. Syrian associations' links with local non-Syrian benefactors and, in some cases, with civic institutions or authorities could position a particular group closer to the heart of certain webs of power in the Greek city. Often the meagre state of the evidence does not allow evaluation of differing degrees of engagement from one Syrian group to another. This is further complicated by the fact that a number of cases surveyed here involve Syrian mercantile groups in important economic centres at particular points in time. These cases may or may not be indicative of what was going on in other Syrian associations.

Associations of Syrians and other ethnic groups are worthy of study in their own right. Yet these groups also offer models for comparison with other ethnic groups, including gatherings of Judeans as evidenced by inscriptions. The past few decades have witnessed a considerable shift in approaches to the study of the Judean diaspora. This is particularly the case with respect to questions of how Judeans related to the cultural contexts in which they found themselves. Moreover, this has been a scholarly shift away from characterizing life in the diaspora as a choice between strongly maintaining ethnic identity through separation, on the one hand, and accommodating completely to the surrounding culture, on the other. Instead, recent work by Paul R. Trebilco (1991), John M. G. Barclay (1996), Erich Gruen (1998), Shaye J. D. Cohen (1999), Tessa Rajak (2002), and others stresses variety among Judean gatherings. These scholars also draw attention to the complexities involved in Judeans both maintaining a sense of being Judean (or Jewish) and finding a home for themselves in specific locales throughout the Mediterranean world.

The Syrian associations offer analogies for comparison with Judean gatherings, particularly regarding patterns of cultural maintenance and assimilation. Thus, in both cases there is a consistent concern with honouring the god(s) of the homeland alongside involvements within both formal and informal social networks and structures in the place of settlement, as I discuss at some length in connection with Judeans in the next chapter.⁹⁴ Flowing from this, there is also considerable evidence that many Syrian and Judean groups adopted local cultural conventions associated with honours and benefaction.⁹⁵

Judeans and, it seems, Samaritans do stand out from other immigrants from the Levant insofar as cultural maintenance often entailed attention to just one God and this usually excluded identifications of that God with deities honoured by others.⁹⁶ Yet this should not be exaggerated to the point of neglecting comparison, for there are also variations among particular Syrian associations and particular Judean groups in the specifics of how a given group engaged in honouring its benefactors, both divine and human.

94. Trebilco 1991; Rajak 2002; Harland 2003a, 213–38.

95. See Harland 2003a, 213–38.

96. Javier Teixidor's notion of the rise of the "supreme god" and "a trend towards monotheism" in Near Eastern and Syrian religion in the Greco-Roman era remains largely unsubstantiated and is not borne out in the case of Syrian or Phoenician associations abroad, it seems. See Teixidor 1977, esp. pp. 13–17; Teixidor 1979.

This preliminary case study suggests that further investigations into immigrant associations of various sorts may provide a more complete picture of where diverse gatherings of Judeans fit on the landscape of cultural minorities in the ancient Mediterranean world. Such comparative investigations may allow us to assess the ways in which particular ethnic associations were involved in the social and cultural traditions of their homelands and of their societies of settlement. Now I turn to a case study of Judeans at Hierapolis in Asia Minor, which further fleshes out some of these dynamics of identity and acculturation.