

Dionysius of Halicarnassus and the Use of Sources on Early Rome

Dionysius of Halicarnassus' early books have frequently been mined for comparanda for the narrative of early Roman history in Livy and other Roman authors, and his citation of sources is most often examined as a tool for discovering the original sources of stories in other authors. This paper evaluates Dionysius' citation of sources when reporting stories from the regal period for which multiple versions are known as a deliberate compositional choice. Focusing on the life of Romulus, a figure associated with both strongly positive and strongly negative stories, I examine the places in Dionysius' narrative where source citations are inserted and the stories that he explicitly attributes to others. Several well-known episodes from Rome's early history apparently have two or more conflicting versions in circulation by the end of the first century BCE, including the conception of Romulus and Remus, the murder of Remus, and the death of Romulus. These alternate versions serve many different functions: they may provide both rationalizing and mythological explanations, paint one character as either negative or positive, or shift the responsibility from one character to another. This paper demonstrates that where these alternate accounts appear in the *Roman Antiquities*, Dionysius' source citations become more extensive and specific. I argue that Dionysius' use of source citations is more than coincidental: Dionysius cites his sources in a defensive manner, carefully associating negative stories with other sources and providing multiple sources in places where he admits that the conflicting stories exist. Finally, I consider whether this defensive stance can be tied to Dionysius' status as an outsider in Augustan Rome, a Greek apparently writing mainly for Greek audiences. The potential problems of a Greek author criticizing Roman founding figures are thus displaced onto Dionysius' source material by means of explicit source citations, removing his responsibility for direct criticism.