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Cosmogonic Fragment of Alcman
(Oxyrhynchus Papyri XXIV)

Noriko Yasumura

Since a papyrus commentary on Alcman was published in 1957,[1] controversial arguments have been raised about it. The cosmological account of the fragment, including the name of Thetis as a demiurge or an organiser, was regarded as 'a news of a poems in which Alcman physiologised,'[2] or 'a new different area of Alcman's poetry has been revealed by a new papyrus.'[3] The fragment is thought to be written in the 2nd century AD, and the commentator uses, as is unanimously admitted, Aristotelian terms such as ὕλη, ἀρχή, and τέλος. With only a few lemmata, the most difficult problem is to evaluate how much of Alcman's own idea is reflected in this cosmology.

The interpretation of this commentary is controversial. It has been regarded, on the one hand, as the explanation of Alcman's own cosmology, more or less[4]; but on the other hand, it is viewed as the commentator's personal opinion about Alcman's passage, and the real meaning of Alcman 'may well have been very different from the representation of the fragment.'[5] Or, lastly, it is supposed that it is not the cosmology at all, but an allegorical interpretation of the myth of Alcman's poem.[6] According to G.W. Most, the commentator proposes his own interpretation on Alcman's non-cosmological mythological

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[1] Lobel *et al.* ed., *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* XXIV (1957), no. 2390 fr. 2, 52-5; later edition: Page ed., *Poetae Melici Graeci* (1962) fr.5.2; Calame, *Alcman* (1983) 81.

[2] West (1963) 154.

[3] Segal (1985) 179.

[4] Bowra (1961) 25-6; Barrett (1961) 689; West (1963) 154-56; West (1967) 1-15; Penwill (1974) 15; Detienne and Vernant (1978) ch.5; Segal (1985) 179.

[5] Page (1959) 23.

[6] Most (1987) 11.

song, which would be about the marriage of Thetis and Peleus.[7] He tries to reconstruct the original poem of Alcman, in which, he guesses, the resistance of Thetis was exaggerated and the fearlessness of Peleus rewarded.[8] In spite of his close discussion, the important words in the commentary like πόρος, τεκμώρ and especially Thetis, as an organiser, do not seem to fit well into his interpretation.

The commentator says that Alcman is talking about nature and tries to set forth 'our own opinions' about it: this suggests that the original poem of Alcman may have been difficult, and the commentator's predecessors might have claimed contradictory opinions.

ἐν δ]ὲ ταύ-
τηι τῆι ω[ιδῆι 'Αλ]κμὰν φυσιολο(γεῖ) ἐ]κθη-
σ[ό]μεθα δὲ [τὰ δ]οκοῦντα ἡ[μῖν μ]ετὰ τὰς
τῶν λοιπῶ[ν πεί]ρας.   (Col. ii, 25-28)[9]

As Lobel points out, the commentator was evidently writing for readers who had the poem to hand, and his commentary is therefore hardly likely to have been wholesale fabrication.[10] However, it does not necessarily mean that Alcman wrote a cosmological poem or related a systematic cosmology. Careful treatment of the commentary is needed, and some characteristics of commentaries of that age must be taken into account.

The most striking feature of the commentary is that Thetis is mentioned as an organiser. The main part of the fragment is as follows:

εἶτα [γενέ-
σθαι τινά φησιν τὸν κατασκευά[ζοντα
πάντα, εἶτα γενέσθαι [πό]ρον, τοῦ [δὲ πό-
ρου παρελθόντος ἐπακολουθῆ[σαι] τέ-
κμωρ· καὶ (ἔστιν) ὁ μ(ὲν) πόρος οἷον ἀρχή, τὸ δὲ τέ-

[7] Most (1987) 11-16.

[8] Most (1987) 12.

[9] According to Calame's recent edition: Calame(1983) 104-7.

[10] Lobel (1957) 55.

κμωρ οἱονεὶ τέλος. τῆς Θέτιδος γενο-
μένης ἀρχὴ καὶ τέ[λ]ο[ς ταῦτα πάντων ἐ-
γένε[τ]ο· καὶ τὰ μὲν πάντα [ὁμο]ίαν ἔχει
τὴν φύσιν τῆι τοῦ χαλκοῦ ὕληι, ἡ δὲ
Θέτις τ[ῆι] τοῦ τεχνίτου, ὁ δὲ πόρος καὶ τὸ τέ-
κμωρ τῆι ἀρχῆι καὶ τῶι τέλει.   (Col. iii, 10-20)

Alcman's commentator claims that the original condition of the world is
unformed matter and Thetis gives form to this matter; then come Poros and
Tecmor, which are explained as the aspects of the activity of Thetis, appearing
as two ordering principles, and they are the beginning and the end of her work;
as is the bronze-maker to the unworked bronze, so is Thetis to matter
undifferentiated into light and darkness.[11] The main concern of the
commentator seems to explain the key words in Alcman's poem: πόρος,
πρέσγυς, τρίτον σκότος, and also τέκμωρ, the first three of which are
included in the lemmata. Since the commentator does not give the explanation
of Alcman's Doric dialect of πρέσβυς, Most suggests, the commentary is
intended for advanced students.[12]

Among those who think that the commentary reflects accurately
Alcman's own cosmogony, some suggest the affinity of his ideas with
Orphism,[13] and others with Pythagoreanism.[14] M.L.West suggests similarities
with *Enuma Elis* as well, where the goddess Tiâmat, dwelling in the sea, plays a
decisive part in the creation of a world.[15] It is tempting to recognise Semitic
influence upon Alcman's cosmology, especially when one thinks of the
archaeological evidence for Eastern contacts at Sparta in the 7th century BC.
The shrine of Artemis Orthia contained numerous votive offerings including
imports from Egypt and Near East: for example the carved oriental ivory and

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[11] Following the commentary of Lobel (1957) 55, and the translation of Page (1959) 20.

[12] Most (1987) 17.

[13] Detienne and Vernant (1978) 156-7); Penwill (1974) 24.

[14] For example West (1967) 14-5.

[15] West (1967) 6.

bone was found in company with Laconian I and II pottery, and those objects were offered in late 8th and 7th centuries.[16] However, some questions arise about West's argument: if Eastern influences are so strong upon this poem, why are such traces not so conspicuous in his other poems? Also, if he was ever interested in cosmology, why cannot we find even a glimpse of his cosmology in his other poems?[17]

To consider the relation between text and commentary in that age, the study of other examples is indispensable. We have a cosmological picture very similar to Alcman's commentary in the scholion on *Iliad* 1. 399 :

Δία γάρ φησι τὴν ἄκρατον θερμασίαν, τὴν καὶ τοῦ ζῆν καὶ τοῦ εἶναι ἡμᾶς αἰτίαν, Ποσειδῶνα τὸ ὕδωρ, Ἥραν τὸν ἀέρα, Ἀθηνᾶν τὴν γῆν, Βριάρεων τὸν ἥλιον (πάντων γὰρ τῶν ἄστρων φωτεινότατός ἐστι), Θέτιν δὲ τὴν θέσιν καὶ φύσιν τοῦ παντός. Τοῦ ἡλίου τοίνυν ἀφισταμένου ἐπὶ τὰ μεσημβρινά, ψύξεως γινομένης ἐν τοῖς καθ' ἡμᾶς μέρεσι, συμβαίνει τὸν ἀέρα, φύσιν ἔχοντα μεταβάλλειν εἰς ὕδωρ, τότε μάλιστα ἐξυγραίνεσθαι πλέον καὶ δυσχείμερον γίνεσθαι. Ποσειδῶνα οὖν καὶ Ἥραν καὶ Ἀθηνᾶν διὰ τοῦτο βουλομένοις συνδῆσαι τὸν Δία φησίν, ἐμφαίνων, ὡς ἔφην, τὴν χειμερινὴν κατάστασιν, ἐν ᾗ συμβαίνει τὸ ψυχρὸν ἐπικρατέστερον εἶναι τοῦ θερμοῦ. ἀλλ' ἡ Θέτις ἀνάγουσα τὸν ἥλιον ἐπὶ τὰ βόρεια φαίνεται ὥσπερ βοηθοῦσα τῷ Διί. εἰκότως δὲ ἑκατόγχειρον τοῦτόν φησιν, ὅτι πάντα τρέφει καὶ αὔξει καὶ φύει, καθάπερ πολλαῖς ὁμοῦ χερσὶν ἐργαζόμενος. οὗ πατρὸς δὲ ἀμείνων, τοῦ Διός· Ἀπόλλωνα γάρ φησι τὸν ἥλιον. (Sch. bT ad *Il.* 1.399, 36-50)

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[16] Dawkins (1929) 203, 239ff.

[17] Most (1987) 3-4 points out that, if Alcman had related his cosmology, later philosophers, especially Aristotle, would have mentioned it, since he cites and discusses Stesichorus, Sappho, and Alcaeus.

Because he says that Zeus is pure (unmixed) heat which is the cause of our living and being, Poseidon is water, Hera air, Athena the earth, Briareos the sun (for he is the brightest of all the stars), Thetis the arrangement and nature of all things. When the sun is put away toward the south and it becomes cold in our area, then it happens the air changes its nature into water, and at this time especially it becomes more humid and stormy. So, for this reason, Poseidon, Hera and Athena, he says, want to bind Zeus, indicating the stormy condition in which, as it was said, coldness is stronger than warmness. However, Thetis, taking the sun to the North, appears as helping Zeus. Suitably he says it is hundred-hand, for it nourishes, increases and grows all things, working with many hands together. He is mightier than his father, Zeus, since he says Apollon is the sun.

Here, Thetis is θέσις καὶ φύσις τοῦ παντός, the arrangement, and nature of all things, apparently because of the supposed etymological association of her name with τίθημι.[18] A parallel example is seen in a scholion to Lycophron 22, where Thetis is called αἰτία εὐθεσίας, the cause of good arrangement. The etymological relation between Thetis and τίθημι is thus a common notion among the scholiasts, and from this analogy, the idea of Thetis as an organiser of cosmos might emerge. If so, our commentator also might have picked up the idea not from the original poem of Alcman but from the popular association of his own age, and used it in his commentary.

After identifying the gods with the elements of nature, the scholiast interprets the binding of Zeus as natural phenomena in stormy weather: becoming cold means the defeat of Zeus, since he is 'pure fire'. The accounts are contradictory in several points: (1) Briareos is the sun in l.38, but later in ll.49-50, Apollo is identified with the sun; (2) l.45 says that Briareos (the sun) is mightier than Zeus (heat), but this does not seem true; (3) if Apollo is the sun, it

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[18] H. Lloyd-Jones *ap*. Bowra (1961) 26 n.1 suggests this connection in the explanation of Alcman's cosmology.

cannot be the reason why Briareos is mightier than Zeus;[19] (4) the change in the phenomenon is caused by sun's going away, but this factor is totally neglected in the allegorical explanation. The scholiast is not interested in literature at all, but apparently more interested in explaining why and how stormy weather comes about. It is obvious that the scholiast's main concern is to explain natural phenomena, using the Homer as a kind of a school textbook of physics.

If we did not have the text of the *Iliad*, but only this commentary by the scholiast, it would be quite difficult to imagine the actual content of Homer's narrative. It might be possible, perhaps, to guess what kind of myth is involved from the proper names of the gods, and in this case it would be possible to think of the story of Thetis' saving Zeus, but still the details would be unknown.

Cornutus, the 1ˢᵗ century AD Stoic philosopher, is another example. He is about a century earlier than the papyrus of Alcman's commentator, and he proposes his cosmological explanation of the same passage of the *Iliad* (1. 399-400) in his *Theologiae Graeciae Compendium* 17.[20] After citing the text of the *Iliad*, his exegesis goes as follows:

ὅπερ ἐγένετο, εἰ τὸ ὑγρὸν ἐπεκράτησε καὶ ἐξυδατώθη πάντα ἢ τὸ πῦρ καὶ ἐξεπυρώθη, ἢ ὁ ἀήρ. ἡ δὲ κατὰ τρόπον διαθεῖσα πάντα Θέτις τὸν ἑκατόγχειρα Βριάρεων ἀντέταξε τοῖς εἰρημένοις θεοῖς, καθ' ὃν ἴσως διανέμονται πανταχόσε αἱ ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἀναθυμιάσεις, ὡς διὰ πολλῶν χειρῶν τῆς εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἀριθμοὺς διαιρέσεως γινομένης· (p. 27, 9-15)

...What happened is that the moisture prevailed and all the things were changed into water, or the fire prevailed and everything turned into fire, so was air. Thetis, arranging everything as it should be, set hundred-handed Briareos against the gods mentioned above, in the way which perhaps vapours are distributed everywhere from the earth, since division into all the numbers happens through many hands.

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[19] Wilamowitz emended Διός into Ἀπόλλωνος, but still it does not make sense.

[20] Lang ed. (1881) 26-31.

Cornutus is not interested in identifying gods with the natural elements, as is the scholiast, but he similarly explains the function of Briareos as the phenomenon of vapour's distribution in the air. Thetis is the one who arranges all the things as they should be, apparently from the etymological association with the verb διαqιvθημι. Cornutus is especially fond of this type of analogy,[21] and his interpretation is again contradictory, as Stoic allegorising usually is.[22]

For Cornutus, myths should be read as cosmology, not fictions. In the next paragraph, he writes:

Δεῖ δὲ μὴ συγχεῖν τοὺς μύθους μηδ' ἐξ ἑτέρου τὰ
ὀνόματα ἐφ' ἕτερον μεταφέρειν μηδ', εἴ τι προσεπλά-
σθη ταῖς παραδεδομέναις κατ' αὐτοὺς γενεαλογίαις
ὑπὸ τῶν μὴ συνιέντων ἃ αἰνίττονται, κεχρημένων δ'
αὐτοῖς ὡς καὶ τοῖς πλάσμασιν, ἀλόγως τίθεσθαι.

One should not confuse the myth, nor transfer the names from one to the other, nor arrange them unreasonably, if something has been invented in addition to the transmitted genealogies according to their own ideas, by those who do not understand what these allude to, but deal them as if they are fictions. (p.27, 19 – p.28, 2)

He criticises the poets, because they, without knowing what myths really allude to [sc. cosmology], arbitrarily use them for their own composition. New invention, refinement, and elaboration of myths by poets are all denied, and he thinks myths should not be thought as fictions, but as cosmology.

From these examples (the scholion and Cornutus), two points become clear: (1) there was a tradition of interpreting mythological texts by using cosmological terms and notions; (2) in such cosmological exegeses, when they

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[21] Many examples can be given even only in the ch.17: Ἀιγαίων is associated with ἀεὶ γαίων, Χάος with χύσεως, and Ἔρεβος with ἐρέφεσθαι.

[22] Lesky (1966) 674, 876.

interpret the story of rescuing Zeus, Thetis is explained as the one who arranges or organises everything, because Thetis' deed in that story significantly fits for the etymological analogy with τίθημι. Therefore our commentator, too, seems to explain Alcman's mythological poem by the cosmological ideas and terms.[23]

The next problem is to consider what kind of myth Alcman dealt with. The commentary would have been accepted as a reliable general guide to the concept of the poem. Accordingly, even if its outlook is quite different from the original composition, some hint of the myth should be found in the exegesis. The details would be unknown, but it would be possible at least to identify what sort of myth of Thetis was narrated, just as, from the scholion and Cornutus, the story of Thetis' saving Zeus can be imagined. Then, we have to go back to the commentary on Alcman.

One of the important words of the commentary, Poros, is understood to refer to some abstract significance as 'way of contriving'[24], 'device'[25], ' a way of getting out of difficulties',[26] or 'contrivance to set things on the way of differentiation';[27] but alternative, more concrete interpretation is offered, 'passage' or 'way through'.[28] Poros is called πρέσγυς, as in the *Louvre Partheneion* v.14, where Poros is called eldest of the gods.[29] In close relation to Poros, an archaic word, Aisa, is used also in the *Louvre Partheneion*, and Page remarks that both may have signified to Alcman and his audience much the same as Moira; personification of the Allotment, the Power of predestination.[30]

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[23] It should be also noted that Pindar's *schol.* ad *N.*4.101b admits that the essence of Thetis is fiery, when Pindar narrates Thetis' transformation into πῦρ παγκρατές (*N.*4.62).

[24] Lobel (1957) 55; Page (1959) 20; Barrett (1961) 689.

[25] Bowra (1961) 41.

[26] Detienne and Vernant (1978) 148, 161.

[27] Page (1959) 20.

[28] Penwill (1974) 20 claims that it is after Euripides that πόρος is used as 'device', with an abstract sense.

[29] By the restoration of Page (1951) 34:   ] γεραιτάτοι.

[30] Page (1951) 36-7.

For another important word, Tecmor, roughly three kinds of interpretation are offered: (1) 'boundary or end'[31]; (2) 'principle of differentiation'[32] ; (3) determination power which presides over world order.'[33] The interpretation of the words naturally depends on how one reads the texts. If Tecmor means the limit or boundary or end, Poros and Tecmor might be explained as something to do with navigation. West, partialy followed by Detienne and Vernant, suggests that Poros is a word for the sea or water, not for land, like εὐρύπορος in *Il* .15.381 or πόρους ἁλός in *Od.* 12.259, and Tekmor is like a guiding star for navigation.[34]

There are two possible myths in the *Iliad*, seemingly suited to these terms, one is the story of Thetis' rescuing Dionysus and Hephaestus, relating to water cosmology, and the other is that of her rescuing of and supplication to Zeus.

At the bottom of the sea, Thetis rescues Dionysus (6.130-7) and Hephaistus (18.394-8) from their crises. When Lycurgus chased Dionysus, he asked for protection to Thetis instead of Zeus: he could have gone up to Olympus. Why in the sea, why Thetis? Behind this story, some myth must have existed in which Thetis operates as a primordial sea-goddess. The only link of Thetis with Dionysus of which we know is the golden urn (23. 92), given by Dionysus, in which Achilles wishes his bones to be put in with those of Patroclus.[35]

The link between Thetis and Hephaistus seems more significant. Thetis protects him at sea when Hera threw him out of heaven, and it is there that he learns his smithies. Then he creates the shield of Achilles at her request,

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[31] Lobel (1957) 55; Page (1959) 20; Bowra (1961) 26.

[32] West (1963) 155-6; but West (1967) 2 suggests 'boundary mark or sign', followed by Detienne and Vernant (1978) 154-5, who discuss the link with the later astronomical notion.

[33] Penwill (1974) 24 also points out that Tecmor here is practically identical with Aisa.

[34] West (1967) 3, n.3; Detienne and Vernant (1978) 151-2.

[35] Slatkin (1991) 45, n.31 rightly discusses about the urn in relation to Achilles' mortality. However, the verse might not be genuine.

depicting the beautiful picture of the cosmos, which is all surrounded by 'great strength of Ocean's stream'.

'Εν μὲν γαῖαν ἔτευξ', ἐν δ' οὐρανόν, ἐν δὲ θάλασσαν,
ἠέλιόν τ' ἀκάμαντα σελήνην τε πλήθουσαν,
ἐν δὲ τὰ τείρεα πάντα, τά τ' οὐρανὸς ἐστεφάνωται,
Πληϊάδας θ' 'Υάδας τε τό τε σθένος 'Ωρίωνος
"Αρκτον θ', ἥν καὶ "Αμαξαν ἐπίκλησιν καλέουσιν,
ἥ τ' αὐτοῦ στρέφεται καί τ' 'Ωρίωνα δοκεύει,
οἴη δ' ἄμμορός ἐστι λοετρῶν 'Ωκεανοῖο.   (*Iliad* 18. 483-9)

'Εν δὲ τίθει ποταμοῖο μέγα σθένος 'Ωκεανοῖο
ἄντυγα πὰρ πυμάτην σάκεος πύκα ποιητοῖο.   (*Iliad* 18. 607-8)

These accounts might be called a water cosmology, narrated not in philosophical terms, but in poetic diction, marvellously fitted into the epic story. As Zeus is the god of Heaven, the water cosmology might be another type of cosmic notion in the *Iliad*. Thetis' story of protecting Dionysus and Hephaestus might imply that she organises the sea as a primordial power in that marine cosmology.

From these examples it would be possible to conjecture that Alcman might have related the myth of Thetis who exercises her power as a primordial sea goddess, introducing also the cosmological myth of water, as Homer did. At Alcman's time, cosmological speculation was popular not only in Ionia but also in Mainland Greece,[36] and it would be possible for Alcman to have the idea of the world to begin as a simple element of Water, as in Thales.[37] Besides, the primitive divinities appear to be the most prominent in Alcman. For him the Muse is also a cosmic power, being a daughter of the Sky and of the earth (fr. 67 Page), not of Zeus and Memory as in Hesiod (*Theog.* 916). Likewise, Ino is praised as σαλασσυμέδοισα, Queen of the Ocean (fr. 50b Page). Accordingly it

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[36] Kirk, Raven and Schofield (1983[1957]) 49.

[37] West (1967) 3.

is no wonder if Alcman celebrates Thetis as an organiser in his imaginative cosmos.

Another possibility is that Alcman might have made a song about Thetis' supplication to Zeus. The strongest evidence for this is the commentator's word of Tekmor. Tekmor means 'to bring things to their final shape', or 'to accomplish the aim', or 'sign' as discussed before. Thetis pleads with Zeus, and although he was unwilling to agree at first, she finally accomplishes her aim with her indomitable resolve. Above all, when Zeus gives his assent to her request with nod, it is the $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\iota\sigma\tau o\nu$ $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\mu\omega\rho$ (1. 525-6). Poros is also very fitted to be associated with Thetis. In the meaning of 'getting out of difficulties', Thetis finds how to solve the serious problem of Achilles by supplicating Zeus. Thetis decisively affected the will of Zeus, using her power to create a new development in the whole story of the epic.

Looking at these three accounts, Alcman's commentary, a Scholion to *Iliad* 1.399-400, and Cornutus' exegesis of the same verses of the *Iliad*, it is striking that all have in common the explanation of Thetis as the organiser of everything. This etymological analogy of Thetis with $\tau\acute{\iota}\theta\eta\mu\iota$ is apparently based on her actual role in the *Iliad*. She is an organiser firstly as she rescues Zeus, solving the cosmological crisis; and secondly she appeals Zeus, solving the problem of Achilles to cause the first significant movement in the plot of the whole epic.

Such a mighty deity might well be called as an organiser or a demiurge of the world.[38] Although there is nothing for certain, it seems quite likely that Alcman's original composition was about Thetis, who solves the crisis and organises everything. Alcman's Thetis might be even mightier than Homeric Thetis, since he would have had the resources of mythology, which might have included a lot more myth about Thetis than the *Iliad* offers. He could have had, for example, the epic cycle, which might have preserved traditions older than

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[38] The most difficult phrase in lemmata, $\mathring{\alpha}\mu\alpha\rho$ $\tau\epsilon$ $\kappa\alpha\grave{\iota}$ $\sigma\epsilon\lambda\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha$ $\tau\rho\acute{\iota}\tau o\nu$ $\sigma\kappa o\tau\acute{o}\nu$, has to be left unexplained. Bowra (1961) 26, n.3 suggests that these words may be an abbreviated version of Alcman's actual words.

the final version of the *Iliad*, even if written down later than the *Iliad*. [39] No wonder, accordingly, if Alcman was well acquainted with the myth that Thetis' potentiality for bearing a son greater than his father threatened the entire divine order. The detail is unknown, but it is safe to say that Alcman composed a poem celebrating Thetis' cosmic and theogonic power.

To sum up: The stories related to Thetis, suprisingly, tend to be viewed as spurious or problematic. Since antiquity, the authenticity of story of her saving Zeus has disputed. [40] As both ancient and modern commentators have had the greatest difficulty in explaining the various details of the story, M.M. Willcock even proposed that 'the problems disappear if we accept that the whole thing may be sheer invention.'[41] M.W. Edwards also says that 'the poet may have actually invented a myth in order to provide a deity who is seeking a favour with a previous favour to trade upon as a quid pro quo.'[42] The story of Hera's raising of Thetis is also looked as invention, as was discussed earlier. Such interpretation is, more or less, caused by our lack of knowledge of mythology. It should be noted that, in archaic period, poets must have exploited stories from the pool of the enormous amount of myths, which are mostly unknown to us.

We do not know much about Alcman, either, who is roughly about a century later than the *Iliad*. Even in his most important surviving work, *Louvre Partheneion*, for example, the occasion of the song is uncertain. This is because of our ignorance of the goddess and her cult; she might have been a great figure. Similarly, although we do not know many details of the myth of Thetis, and this lack of knowledge easily leads to the idea that Thetis is a minor figure of little history and background of its own, she may have been a great goddess.

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[39] Seaford (1994) 154.

[40] Zenodotus athetised 1.396-406 because of their mythological difficulties. Cf. Kirk (1985) ad loc.

[41] Willcock (1964) 143.

[42] Edwards (1987) 67.

The fragmentary stories about Thetis in the *Iliad* seem to be traces of her traditional and archaic myth. All of them seem to imply the power which she must have had: from the story of saving Dionysus and Hephaistus, one might imagine a primordial sea goddess; from the link with Briareos, the story of saving Zeus, and that upbringing by Hera, a goddess of cosmic potential. These stories must have been inherited, and of course repeatedly innovated; as M. L. Lang remarks, 'the innovation is not a one-time operation but rather a function of re-creation, and this kind of reverberation between past and present, heaven and earth, with mutual attraction exemplifies the organic unity of the *Iliad*'s complex structure.'[43] Through these processes, the figure of Thetis would have been altered, but at a deeper, hidden level, she was always a goddess of significant potentiality. In that sense, the insight of the later commentators might have been quite right in interpreting her as an organiser of all things.

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