

**Alcman's *Partheneion* and the Near East**

by

Peter John Miller  
B.A., University of Toronto, 2007

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Greek and Roman Studies

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## **Supervisory Committee**

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## Abstract

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Alcman's *Partheneion* has a deserved reputation as an ambiguous and allusive fragment of Greek poetry; it has engendered a great amount of debate regarding every facet of the poem. This thesis investigates the ritual context and the propitiated deity of the *Partheneion* from an inter-cultural perspective. I integrate the relationship which flourished between Greece and the Near East with Alcman's poetry. This approach aims to situate the poem in the larger world of the Eastern Mediterranean and connect it to traditions of female goddesses worshiped in biblical Israel, Phoenicia and ancient Babylon. I also demonstrate that there are connections between the ritual context of Alcman's poetry, sung and danced by a chorus of young women, to similar cults celebrated by cultures throughout the Near East, both contemporaneous as well as more ancient.

## Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Translations and Editions.....	vi
Introduction: A Brief History of 'Alcmanica'.....	1
Chapter 1: Alcman's Date and Birthplace.....	6
Chapter 2: Connections Between Greece and the Near East in the Archaic Period.....	17
Chapter 3: The Identity of the Goddess.....	31
Chapter 4: The Ritual Context.....	53
Conclusion: A Contextual Approach to the <i>Partheneion</i> .....	86
Bibliography.....	90
Appendix I: Text ( <i>PMG</i> 1).....	97
Appendix II: Translation.....	100

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To Carla also, whose persistence, determination and focus are a constant inspiration to me; whose friendship, companionship (even when separated by thousands of miles) and love are indispensable.

And finally, above all, to my parents. Even at such a distance, I know you're always there and nothing is more important to me.

## Translations and Editions

The following standard texts have been consulted for the quotations herein:

- Diggle, J. *Euripidis Fabulae*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.
- Hude, C. *Herodoti Historiae*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963.
- Lindskog, C. and Zeigler, K. *Plutarchi Vitae Parallelae*. Leipzig: BSB B.G. Teubner Verlagsgesellschaft, 1973.
- Lobel, E. and Page, D. *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968.
- Monro, D.B. and Allen, T.W. *Homeri Opera*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966.
- Page, D. *Poetae Melici Graeci*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.

All translations from Greek and Latin are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

All quotations from the Bible are from the *New International Bible* unless otherwise indicated. The source for translations from other languages will be indicated in the accompanying footnote.

## Introduction: A Brief History of 'Alcmanica'

κείται δ' ἠπείροις διδύμαϊς ἔρις εἴθ' ὅ γε Λυδός  
εἴτε Λάκων. πολλὰ μητέρες ὕμνοπόλων.

“Here he lies, a quarrel for two lands:  
whether he was Lydian or Laconian.  
There are many mothers for poets.”

– Antipater of Thessalonica (*Anth. Pal.* 7.18)

“Enough has been written about the *Partheneion*, I shall be told,” so Denys Page begins his landmark study of the *Partheneion*.<sup>1</sup> If at that time, some one hundred years after the discovery of the 'Louvre Papyrus', enough had already been written, then the last fifty-eight years of scholarship have done nothing to stem this tide.

The papyrus fragment containing the *Partheneion*, one hundred lines, some complete, some barely readable, and others completely lost, was discovered in a tomb in the Egyptian desert at Saqqara in 1855. Auguste Mariette, the famous French archaeologist and founder of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, brought the papyrus back to the Louvre, where it remains: it was published thirteen years later. While the papyrus dates to long after Alcman's time (most experts have assigned it to the middle of the first century A.D.), the author of the content is undeniable.<sup>2</sup> Since then, one hundred and fifty years of scholarship have brought forth an enormous volume of work, the erudition of which is matched only by the lack of almost any consensus on even the most minute of the poem's details.

A prime example of the back-and-forth nature of scholarship on the *Partheneion* is the modern argument over the existence, or lack thereof, of rival or semi-choruses in the poem. While Wilamowitz had argued as early as 1897 that there was no direct evidence for the existence of a rival choir, thirty

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<sup>1</sup> Page, D. *The Partheneion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), v.

<sup>2</sup> Page, 1. See also, Campbell, D., *Greek Lyric Poetry II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 361, which notes the host of ancient grammarians who referred to various lines of this poem.

years later Bowra accepted it almost without reservation.<sup>3</sup> Denys Page, a decade or so further on, is not certain of the existence of a rival choir, but nonetheless believes it is “...the only adequate explanation of the evidence available,” an argument which Rosenmeyer found particularly compelling as well.<sup>4</sup> Halporn, while tentatively agreeing with the concept, found the critical methods for the assertion that there was a rival choir disconcerting; barely five years later, Giangrande would simply state, “there is no other choir involved”.<sup>5</sup> Eva Stehle, looking back at a century of scholarship, pronounced that the idea of a rival choir, of which there is no direct evidence, has little support nowadays. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

In *The Partheneion*, Page notes, as have others, that the poem's simplicity for its original audience is equivalent to its obscurity for moderns.<sup>6</sup> Yet, this supposed obscurity has not stopped scholars (Anne Burnett called them 'complaining lovers'), who have spent the latter half of the twentieth century and the opening years of the twenty-first lamenting the allusive and incomprehensible nature of the *Partheneion*, from producing volumes of literature, each of which purports to explain and illuminate the intricate details of the text.<sup>7</sup>

3 Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, U., “Der Chor der Hagesichora,” *Hermes* 32 (1897): 251; Bowra, C.M. *Greek Lyric Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), 63.

4 Page, 56 and Rosenmeyer, T.G., “Alcman's *Partheneion* I Reconsidered,” *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 7 (1966): 321.

5 Halporn, J., “Agido, Hagesichora and the Chorus: Alcman 1.37ff,” in *Antidosis Kraus*, ed. A. Lesky, H. Schwabl (Wien: H. Bohlau, 1972): 130; Giangrande, G., “On Alcman's *Partheneion*,” *Museum Philologum Londinense* 2 (1977): 158.

6 Page, *ibid.* Anne Burnett's eloquent statement sums this up: “In Alcman's *Partheneion* there is no single line, broken or intact, that is without its riddle” (30). See also, more recently, E. Tsitsibakou-Vasalos, “Alcman's *Partheneion* PMG1, 13-15: *Aisa*, *Poros*, and *Apedilos Alka*,” *Materiali e Discussioni per L'Analisi Dei Testi Classica* 30 (1993): 129, who concludes that the poem's concern with light and rejoicing in the removal of darkness is matched by its own vague and allusive nature. Also, A. Peponi, “Initiating the Viewer: Deixis and Visual Perception in Alcman's Lyric Drama,” *Arethusa* 37.2 (2004): 295 who analogizes the poem to an out-of-context note from a message in a bottle, “a communication situation irrevocably inaccessible to us.”

7 Burnett, A., “The Race with the Pleiades,” *Classical Philology* 59.1 (1964): 30. Amongst relatively recent scholarship, the following stand out: Calame, C., *Les Choeurs de Jeunes Filles en Grèce Archaique I and II* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1977) which has influentially argued for the the poem as a rite of passage; also Gentili, B., *Poetry and Its Public in Ancient Greece*. Trans. A. Thomas Cole. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), whose work focused on the integration of Alcman and Sappho as part of the same tradition of *epithalamium* poetry; most recently, Ferrari, G., *Alcman and the Cosmos of Sparta*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), which integrates artwork from pottery fragments into an interpretation of the poem, connecting the 'dance' of the constellations to that of the

In this project, I propose to engage with the *Partheneion* from a new perspective. It is my contention that studies of the poem have been hampered by a lack of a contextual approach by scholars, a myopic perspective which results in an inability, or unwillingness, to place the *Partheneion* in the larger context of the integrated ancient Mediterranean world which we now know to have existed.<sup>8</sup> By the last quarter of the twentieth century, it was clear that the archaic Greek world was heavily influenced by the movement of culture from the ancient Near East. The realization of this in the scholarship on material culture, however, and its recognition in studies on literature, have been of quite a different nature.

Martin West, in *The East Face of Helicon*, points out how commonplace it was in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries to work on the comparative study of Greek and Near Eastern literature.<sup>9</sup> The eminent scholar of Ugaritic, C.H. Gordon, had argued as early as the 1960s for a return to the comparative study of Greece and its ancient Near Eastern neighbours.<sup>10</sup> A brief survey of studies on Greek literature in the 1960s and 1970s, however, will find that although there was work done on the epic and didactic traditions of Homer and Hesiod, comprehensive follow-up work to Gordon was essentially non-existent. It was not until Burkert's ground-breaking work on the Oriental nature of Greek material and literary culture in the late 1970s that the field of comparative Greco-Oriental literature experienced a rebirth. Since West's *The East Face of Helicon*, there has been an increasing occurrence of works dedicated to the comparative investigation of Greek literature. West himself, for example, has continued his work with *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007); Burkert (*Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004) as well as Jan Bremmer

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maidens themselves.

8 Burkert, W., *The Orientalizing Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), is just one of the many works which have broadened the cultural context in which we examine the Greeks.

9 West, M.L., *The East Face of Helicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), *x*

10 Gordon, C.H., *Before the Bible* (London: Collins Press, 1962).

(*Ancient Greek Religion, the Bible and the Ancient Near East*. Leiden: Brill, 2008), has contributed to the increasing realization that the heretofore “hermetically sealed Olympian miracle” must be examined in a larger social and cultural context than before.<sup>11</sup>

I will endeavour in this project to work in the spirit of this renaissance of comparative approaches with respect to the *Partheneion* of Alcman. While Alcman's Oriental allusions have not been completely ignored, nonetheless, no researcher has as yet placed him in the context of the more interconnected world of Greco-Oriental relations.<sup>12</sup> It is my hope that this project will work to bridge this gap, and continue to unseal the partially closed box of the 'Greek miracle'.

In Chapter One, I will deal with one of the essential questions in a survey of Alcman: the birthplace and origin of the poet. While this question has been abandoned by some modern scholars, in the face of an insufficiency of evidence, I believe that an attempt can be made to come to a conclusion regarding Alcman's biography. Moreover, the time-frame of his *floruit* and his purported Oriental heritage have implications when we consider the possible influence of Near Eastern and Levantine literature and religion on Alcman's *Partheneion*.

Next, I will survey the connections which were active between Greece and the Near East during the Archaic period, roughly the time during which Alcman lived and wrote. The existence of such connections in material and intellectual culture, freely admitted during antiquity, has only recently been re-discovered by the Classicists of today. Walter Burkert's landmark *The Orientalizing Revolution* synthesized the evidence for material culture, and began to focus on connections in the literary culture of the Greek world too. Martin West's *The East Face of Helicon* surveyed the preponderance of parallels in the epic tradition, throughout lyric poetry and even down into the tragedies of Aeschylus.<sup>13</sup>

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11 Gordon, 9. See Burkert, 2004, 4, who notes that the inter-cultural perspective appears to be gaining ground.

12 West, 1997, 525 deals very briefly with three instances of Oriental objects in Alcman's poetry.

13 *Ibid.*, viii sets out a part of his intellectual mission. In anticipating complaints that his parallels come from too distant (both in time and space) a place and that he ignores the unique character of Greek literature, he argues that the parallels

A survey of these connections is essential in order to place Alcman in the broader social and cultural context of the ancient Mediterranean.

Chapters Three and Four will examine two of the critical issues which have contributed to the wealth of research on Alcman's *Partheneion*: the identity of the goddess being propitiated and the ritual context of the poem. While these two questions are undeniably linked, I have preferred to attack them separately and examine what positive evidence within the poem can tell us about the deity and the ritual, before moving on to what our current knowledge of the larger social context of Alcman's world can add to the discussion. The issue of situating Alcman in the social milieu of the ancient Mediterranean has been largely ignored by scholars. While the rituals of Sparta, and indeed other Greek rites, have been examined thoroughly, the influences made possible by an inter-connected Mediterranean world have, essentially, been left unexamined.

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he notes are, "...too numerous and too striking to be put down to chance. You cannot argue against the fact that it is raining by pointing out that much of the sky is blue."

## Chapter 1: Alcman's Date and Birthplace

Two of the most salient details of Alcman's life are two of the points of his biography which have been debated, essentially, since antiquity: Alcman's dates as well as his birthplace itself are less than clear from the ancient sources.<sup>1</sup> While they continue to be investigated and researched in the modern era, no clear consensus on the questions has been reached. In this chapter, I do not intend to offer a systematic evaluation of the many different points of view on this matter, nor solve, once and for all, the arguments over these issues. I will cover briefly, however, the ancient evidence for Alcman's date and birthplace, and investigate how these two biographical details can help us begin to examine the issue of Oriental influences in his poetry.

The ancient evidence for Alcman's date comes from two main sources: his entry in the *Suda* and Eusebius's *Chronicle*. While both of these sources offer competing time-frames for his date of birth and *floruit*, they do, at least, agree that Alcman was active during the seventh century. Unfortunately, the specific dates offered imply that one or both of these sources is inaccurate, or, less likely, that Alcman was excessively long-lived.

The *Suda*, a Byzantine encyclopedic work, indicates that Alcman was born during the 27<sup>th</sup> Olympiad (672-668 B.C.): “He was alive in the 27<sup>th</sup> Olympiad, when Ardys, father of Alyattes, was king of Lydia (*Suda* A 1289: ἦν δὲ ἐπὶ τῆς [27th] Ὀλυμπιάδος, βασιλεύοντος Λυδῶν Ἄρδου, τοῦ Ἀλύαπτου πατρός). The second piece of evidence is supposedly a chronological synchronism which indicates that Alcman was born while Ardys was king of Lydia. Unfortunately, this synchronism is an error, and directs our attention immediately to how suspect the evidence of ancient chronological

<sup>1</sup> Schneider, J., “La chronologie d'Alcman,” *Revue des Études Grecques* 98 (1985): 1, notes that even, “les grammairiens anciens hésitaient sur la datation...”

works can be: Ardys, the father of the Lydian king Alyattes, actually reigned some fifteen years after the 27<sup>th</sup> Olympiad, from 652-619 (Hdt. 1.14ff).<sup>2</sup>

There are two other references to Alcman in the *Suda* which possibly provide a *terminus ante quem* for his works. One indicates, without providing any other evidence, that he was the teacher of Arion (*Suda* A 3886), the other that he pre-dates the poet Steisichorus (*Suda* S 1095). While the relative dating cannot be taken completely at face value, this information seems to gel with what the *Suda's* Alcman entry says. Arion, whom Herodotus associates with the sixth century Corinthian despot Periander (Hdt. 1.34), seems to have flourished in the first few decades of the sixth-century. Steisichorus is mentioned in a fragment of the lyric poet Simonides, who himself dates to the latter half of the sixth century, and was definitely alive during the Battle of Thermopylae.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the indication that Alcman pre-dated Steisichorus, while undoubtedly part of the fanciful 40-year gap between peaks which the ancient critics particularly valued, nonetheless seems to fit with what we know of the relative chronology of the poets involved.<sup>4</sup> The *Suda's* indication that Alcman and Arion shared a teacher-student relationship, however, is more than likely fanciful; no other ancient source provides any evidence to support this assertion.<sup>5</sup>

The other source for Alcman's date is Eusebius's *Chronicle*, a fourth-century A.D. encyclopedic text ostensibly covering the whole of antiquity. The entry for the third year of the 30<sup>th</sup> Olympiad (658/657) indicates that Alcman was already famous at this time (Euseb. *Chron.* Ol.30.3: *Alcmeon clarus habetur*).<sup>6</sup> Further on, Eusebius seems to record an alternative tradition when he writes that

2 Campbell, 1988, 337. Mosshammer, A.A., *The Chronicle of Eusebius and Greek Chronographic Tradition* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1979), 224, traces the synchronism between Alcman and Ardys to Apollodorus's lost *Chronicle*, which seems to have linked Alcman's supposed move from Sardis to Sparta with the Cimmerian invasions that followed Ardys's reign. Needless to say, the historicity of such sources is rather suspect.

3 Simonides 564 mentions Steisichorus; 531 is about the 300 Spartans at Thermopylae.

4 Mosshammer, 219. The 40-year 'acme' of a poet seems to have originated with the lost *Chronicle* of Apollodorus and was a convention to separate the lyric poets used by the *Suda* as well as Eusebius.

5 Page, 165, also finds the teacher-student relationship to be of no value.

6 Mosshammer, 218ff, for the alternative spelling *Alcmeon*; it is certain that Eusebius is referring to Alcman.

some consider Alcman famous during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Olympiad (Euseb. *Chron.* Ol. 42.2: *Alcman ut quibusdam videtur agnoscitur*; 609/608).<sup>7</sup> Eusebius's work makes no mention of Alcman's date relative to any other lyric poet, and does not attest to any teaching relationship between Alcman and Arion. While Eusebius's dates may reflect two contradictory traditions, it ought to be noted that these dates are not mutually exclusive, and it is possible that Alcman himself was long-lived, and thus famous during both the Olympiads mentioned.

Aside from the *Suda* and Eusebius, there is no further ancient evidence for the date of Alcman from a narrative source. While these sources were enough for earlier scholars to place Alcman at some point in the seventh century, modern approaches have endeavored to assign more accurately a date for him with the assistance of a fragmentary papyrus commentary from Oxyrhynchus.<sup>8</sup>

P.Oxy 2390 (*PMG* 5), which dates to the second century A.D., contains the remnants of a commentary on some of Alcman's poems. Since the identity of the writer is uncertain, it is difficult to date its original composition, but there is some evidence. The mention of the Augustan grammarians Theon and Tyrannion (fr. 2, col.ii, 4) indicates that the author of the commentary was active after the first decade or so of the Common Era, but aside from this, there is no further evidence to date, or identify, the commentator himself.

The commentary is one of the longest papyrus fragments dealing with Alcman's work and while it focuses mainly on his so-called 'cosmological' poetry, it also discusses some of the people to whom he referred in the context of another *partheneion*. This latter portion, fr.2 col. ii, has been used by some scholars to attempt to date at least this one poem by identifying the people to whom Alcman referred.

With only the most basic of supplements, the poem seems to have named Leotychidas, a king of the Spartans, a girl named Timasimbrotia, and two others, Polydoros and 'Eury', which may represent

<sup>7</sup> Page, 165 notes that Eusebius's use of *quibusdam* is to apply an opinion to a "qualified minority."

<sup>8</sup> As early as Bowra, 16, Alcman was known to have lived in the seventh century, mainly from the ancient tradition.

Eurycrates or Eurycratidas (the papyrus is too severely damaged to be read at this point). The importance of these names for Alcman's date is how we can fit them into what we know of the historical chronology of the dynasties of Sparta's dual kingship: the Agiads and the Eurypontids.

Timasimbrotā, whom the papyrus identifies as παιδῶν ἀρίσταν (“best of the children”; *PMG* 5, fr.2, col. i, 14), and who seems to be the object of the poem's praise, is not referred to in any other extant source. Whose child she is remains uncertain; in fact, this seems to have been the subject of the commentary. Clearly, even with the whole of Alcman's poem in front of him, the answer was not obvious to the commentator. With what we know of the rest of Alcman's corpus, in which girls who seem to be from noble families are mentioned, and since two Spartan kings are mentioned in the passage, most scholars have assumed that Timasimbrotā is the daughter of one of the two kings.<sup>9</sup>

The other names, particularly Polydoros and 'Eury', have received a considerable amount of interest. It seems clear enough that Leotychidas is a reference to a Spartan king of the same name; the quotation provided by the commentary identifies him as such, and other ancient sources agree on this as a name for several Spartan kings of the era during which Alcman flourished. It is the definitive identity of Polydoros and the proper supplementation of 'Eury' which have caused the most consternation for scholars. While both are proper Spartan names and can be, individually, identified with the existing list of Spartan kings, there does not seem to be a way to make them both kings, and related to one another, as the papyrus seems to imply.

According to one interpretation, 'Eury' indicates Eurykrates, the son of another Polydoros, a king of Sparta's Agiad dynasty, who was contemporary of the Eurypontid king, Anaxadridas.<sup>10</sup> In this reading, the Polydoros mentioned in the commentary is an Agiadic son of Eurycrates who did not

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<sup>9</sup> See below, page 75 for Alcman's poetry and its relation to Spartan nobility.

<sup>10</sup> Harvey, F.D., “Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 2390 and Early Spartan History,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 87 (1967): 67.

become king, and who was named after his royal grandfather.<sup>11</sup> Harvey, whose interpretation this is, admits that his assignment of the names to these people is based on an assumption that everyone mentioned in the commentary was a contemporary, an assumption that need not be correct. Moreover, there is no ancient evidence whatsoever for the identification of Polydoros as a non-royal son: Harvey simply decided that the name, so common in the Spartan king-list, could belong to other royal children beyond the direct heir. Despite these assumptions and their potential problems, Harvey's scheme does connect with what we know of early Spartan history from Herodotus, as well as with the remainder of the commentary.

Using these identifications, Harvey dates Alcman to the period of Leotychidas's kingship, the last quarter of the seventh century. He arrives at this date by counting back from the great-grandson of Leotychidas, Ariston, whom Herodotus records was king of Spartan during the reign of Croesus, a reign which can be dated with relative accuracy to the middle of the sixth century (Hdt. 1.67.1). Since Alcman seems to have referred to Leotychidas in the poem as the current 'king of the Lacedaimonians', it seems reasonable to assume that the king was alive when the poem was composed and performed. Taking the roughly thirty-year generational gap which ought to characterize Spartan society, the reign of Leotychidas would have been during the last two decades of the seventh century.<sup>12</sup> While there are inherent problems in a calculation based on so many assumptions, Harvey's work indicates that there does appear to be some truth to one of the ancient traditions of Eusebius, the one assigned to '*quibusdam*' in the *Chronicle*, which places Alcman's *floruit* during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Olympiad.

Martin West's critique, which is the only major alternative to the theory proposed in Harvey's article, while important for what it can tell us of who exactly these personages were, does not in fact

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11 *Ibid.*, 68.

12 *Ibid.*, 69. The Spartans were allowed to have children only when they reached thirty years of age, so this ought to characterize the gaps between generations.

contradict Harvey's conclusion regarding Alcman's date. In the end, West posits two scenarios: that the 'Eury' name referred to in line twenty of the commentary is the son of Leotychidas and identical with a known king of Sparta, or that it is the name of some other non-royal son. The difference between these two possibilities is West's decision not to assume, as Harvey did, that all the names mentioned in the commentary are contemporaneous. Nonetheless, he reaches similar conclusions: West's first hypothesis dates the composition of the poem to as late as 570; his second, to around 620.<sup>13</sup>

Based on this work, Alcman seems to have lived during the late seventh-century, contemporaneous with the great Lesbian poets, Sappho and Alcaeus, and during a time of substantial Oriental penetration into Greece. The record of material culture, as well as some references in literature, indicate that this era was marked by an 'Orientalizing' tendency in Greek art, culture and religion.<sup>14</sup> It is this Oriental aspect, a reflection of which may be Alcman's own, supposed, Lydian heritage, to which I will now turn.

The ancient tradition on Alcman's birthplace is, if anything, more tumultuous and confused than that surrounding his date. While the ancient sources at least agree that Alcman lived during the seventh century, there is no such consensus about his birthplace or social status. The debate as to whether Alcman was originally Spartan, a Lydian slave, or an immigrant from Lydia seems to have begun in antiquity. The *Suda* records the disagreement in the entry on Alcman:

“A Laconian from Messoa; Crates wrongly makes him a Lydian from Sardis [...] There is also another Alcman, one of the lyric poets, who was brought by Messenes. The plural form is Alcmanes.” (*Suda* A 1289)<sup>15</sup>

13 West, M.L., “Alcman and the Spartan Royalty,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 91 (1992): 7.

14 See chapter two, “Connections Between Greece and the Near East in the Archaic Period.”

15 Campbell, 1988, 337 indicates that Crates is presumably the librarian of Pergamum who flourished around 168 B.C. *PMG* 8 indicates that the Lydian origin of Alcman was assumed also by Aristotle. The odd note at the end of the entry concerning the plural form of Alcman may come from a tradition, assigned to Didymus (the first century B.C. Alexandrian scholar), that there were two Alcmanes; a commentary from the second century A.D. dismisses this as nonsense, as do modern critics (P. Oxy. 2802; Campbell, 1988, 359).

There is much else throughout the ancient *testimonia* regarding Alcman's birthplace, evidence that this debate raged from at least the time of the Hellenistic critics. While Calame's statement, that “ce problème insoluble dans l'état actuel de notre documentation,” is understandable, there are still a few words which can be said regarding Alcman's birthplace.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Calame's assertion that Alcman's birthplace is of little interest, “le problème de la patrie d'Alcman est d'ailleurs d'un intérêt très limité,” is far from the truth, especially when we consider that there may be marked Oriental influences in his poetry.<sup>17</sup>

The ancient opinion that Alcman was Lydian seems to have been derived from a single passage of his poetry, preserved by Stephanus of Byzantium (*PMG* 16):<sup>18</sup>

οὐκ ἦς ἀνὴρ ἀγρεῖος οὐ–  
 δὲ σκαίος οὐδὲ †παρὰ σοφοῖ–  
 σιν† οὐδὲ Θεσσαλὸς γένος,  
 Ἐρυσιχαῖος οὐδὲ ποιμὴν,  
 ἀλλὰ Σαρδίων ἀπ' ἀκρᾶν

“He was not a rustic man nor uncouth,  
 not even [amongst wise men],  
 nor of Thessalian descent,  
 nor an Erysichaeon shepherd:  
 but from lofty Sardis.”

While Stephanus quotes these lines as part of his entry on the city of Erysiche, earlier commentators apparently used them, even though the speaker is the third person, to prove Alcman's Lydian heritage. A fragmentary papyrus commentary from the end of the first century A.D. indicates that both Crates (the second-century B.C. librarian of Pergamum quoted in the *Suda's* entry) and

16 Calame, C., “Alcman laconien/sarde à n'en plus finir,” *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 20 (1975): 228. See too, Page, 167.

17 *Ibid.*, 228; so too, Page, 169: “the whole inquiry is of the slightest importance...”

18 Hutchinson, G.O., *Greek Lyric Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 74ff for example; Campbell, 1988, 409.

Aristotle were “deceived” by this passage into believing in Alcman's Lydian origin (*PMG* 13a: ὁ τε Ἄριστοτέλης καὶ σύμψηφοι ἀπατηθέντες “ἀνὴρ ἀγρείος οὐδε”).<sup>19</sup> As Page points out, while this passage seems to definitively assign him a Lydian heritage, there must have been some reason for confusion about his origin, since the ancient commentators, even with access to his entire corpus, could not agree.<sup>20</sup> For example, some encomiums from the *Palatine Anthology* are certain of his Lydian heritage (e.g. *Anth. Pal.* 7.19, 7.709), while other commentators definitively link him with Sparta, going so far as to name his father: “Alcman is greatly distinguished amongst the Lydians; but his father is Damas and he is from Sparta, with a Dorian song” (e.g. *PMG* 6: Ἄλκμᾶν ἐν Λυδοῖσι μέγα πρέπει· ἀλλὰ Δάμαντος ἔστι καὶ ἐκ Σπάρτης, Δωρίδος ἀρμονίης).

It is possible that something else of Alcman's origin might be learned through his name. While Ἄλκμᾶν is the expected Doric form of an Ionian name such as Ἄλκμέων, in one fragment Alcman refers to himself as Ἄλκμάων (*PMG* 95: ἀϊκλον Ἄλκμάων ἀρμόξατο). Bowra points out that this looks like he was making a version of his name which “...might pass muster at Sparta.”<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, without further context, it is impossible to determine whether Ἄλκμάων was simply a variant for metrical reasons, or indeed even another character within the confines of the poem.

Aside from the divisive opinions derived from the tradition of the ancient grammarians, further evidence has come to light in modern times, once again in the form of papyrus remains from Oxyrhynchus. P.Oxy 2506 (*PMG* Test. 9), the remains of a commentary on the life of Alcman, provides some interesting information, although in a somewhat confused state.

At one point (v.25ff), the papyrus seems to indicate that the Lydian historian Xanthus did not mention Alcman, and that “he omitted nothing of (Lydian) history deemed of any importance”

19 See *PMG* 13a for critical apparatus.

20 Page, 168.

21 Bowra, 18.

(Ἄλκμαν οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄλ- | -λο τῶν ἐν [Λυδοῖς] παραλέλοι- | -πεν οὐδὲν κατὰ μικρὸν | ἀξίων λόγου γεγεννημέ- | -νων).<sup>22</sup> From this, the commentary appears to take the view that Alcman was Spartan. Immediately thereafter (29ff), however, the scholar expresses his lack of surprise at the fact that the Spartans would place Alcman in charge of their choruses, even though he was a Lydian (ἐστι οὐδὲ | ὡς Λακεδαιμόνιοι τότε | ἐπέστησαν Λυδὸν ὄντα | διδάσκαλον τῶν θυγατέ- | -ρων καὶ ἐφήβων πατρίοις | χοροῖς). Unfortunately, the remainder of the papyrus is so damaged as to make further analysis of the argument impossible.

At the very least, the tradition of Alcman's Lydian birth, as well as the Oriental allusions and references in his extant poetry, point to a familiarity with the East. The breeds of horses mentioned in the *Partheneion* (v.50ff), for example, are from remarkably distant places; their origins are far outside of the Peloponnese. The 'Enetic' horse seems to refer to a Paphlagonian racehorse which some scholars have connected to the Eastern origin of the myth of Pelops.<sup>23</sup> The 'Kolaxian' horse seems to indicate a Scythian breed, possibly connected to royalty, far from Alcman's Spartan home.<sup>24</sup> Aristeas's *Arimaspea*, which some scholars have taken to be the source for Alcman's information on the Kolaxian horse, has less of an obvious connection with Spartan history and legend.<sup>25</sup> The *Arimaspea* of Aristeas, a poem supposedly about the legendary 'Arimaspeans' of the far North, which has been essentially lost, has been dated, with much uncertainty, to the seventh century. Alcman's reference to the 'Rhiplean Mountains' (*PMG* 90) has been used to try and connect him to Aristeas's work, or other works of traveller's tales which seem to have been popular during the seventh and sixth centuries.<sup>26</sup>

22 Commentators have postulated that Λυδοῖς ought to be added after ἐν in 26, mainly by the context of the document which is discussing Alcman's place in Lydian history. See *PMG* 10a.

23 Devereux, G., "The Enetic Horse of Alcman's *Partheneion*," *Hermes* 94 (1966): 132ff. He postulates that Alcman have derived his knowledge of the breed from myths surrounding Pelops, an important figure in Spartan history, though such an assertion is merely speculative.

24 Devereux, G., "The Kolaxian Horse of Alcman's *Partheneion*," *The Classical Quarterly* 15.2 (1965): 183.

25 *Ibid.*

26 Bowra, 27.

Regardless of the source, for the reference to these horses to be relevant, it would be essential that the breeds be known, at least by reputation, to the audiences of the poem.<sup>27</sup> This may reflect a more international aspect to animal husbandry, or perhaps the appearance of peoples and animals from beyond the Greek world at the Panhellenic athletic festivals (in chariot races, for instance).

Alcman also mentions a Lydian *mitra*, a headband which was popular in Sappho's Lesbos (Sapph. 98). Purple dye, connected with the Phoenician city of Tyre, plays a role in the *Partheneion* as well (v.64-65).<sup>28</sup> Both of these rather exotic items must have been familiar enough to singers and to the audience of the poem to have had some sort of meaning.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, in the last section of the poem extant for modern readers, Hagesichora is compared to a swan on the river Xanthos, another allusion to Lydia (v. 100). These references, marked instances of Oriental motifs in Alcman's poetry, seem to indicate the influence that the East in general had on Greece and Sparta. In this sense, Alcman may simply be more evidence for the 'Orientalization' of Greece, and specifically Sparta, during the seventh century.

The Eastern influence on Alcman's poetry may have come from Phoenician sailors in Laconia's harbours, or perhaps, in accordance with one of the ancient traditions, Alcman himself travelled from the East and settled in Sparta (one of Homer's 'well-loved bards', *Od.* 17.383-385).<sup>30</sup> His knowledge of foreign lands and peoples, for example, was such that a work was written in antiquity called *On Place Names in Alcman* (*PMG* 151, 153; apparently by Cornelius Alexander, the first century B.C. Roman scholar). Another ancient writer, Aelius Aristides, provides a humorous note which impresses upon us

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27 Page, 90.

28 West, M.L., "Alcmanica," *Classical Quarterly* 15.2 (1965), 193.

29 Page, 169 argues that a Lydian *mitra* and other Oriental items mentioned in the poem provide nothing other than assurance that the Alcman, "...like the Lesbians later, looked up to Sardis as the centre of fashion and refinement." Yet, the inclusion of foreign items, the reference to exotic horse-breeds, and people from far-flung places, must be of some importance, especially in the context of a ritual poem such as Alcman's.

30 The routes of transmission from East to West will be dealt with in some depth in chapter two.

the wide knowledge of foreign people and places that Alcman possessed: “Elsewhere, boasting among how many people he is held in high regard, he reports so many and such types of races that even now the wretched school-teachers are striving to find where on earth they are” (*PMG* 148).

Whether Lydian or Spartan, however, the marked Oriental influences in Alcman's language as well as the fact that his *floruit* coincides with the late seventh century, a time of great Oriental penetration and influence on Greece, direct us to a closer examination, not only of the interaction between Greece and the East at this time, but more specifically, of the influences of the East on the ritual and cult context of his most famous poem, the *Partheneion*.

## Chapter 2: Connections Between Greece and the Near East in the Archaic Period

The connections between Alcman's poetry and the literature and religion of the Near East form a part of a larger pattern of inter-cultural contact in the Mediterranean basin. What was contemporaneous with Alcman represents the latest in a long tradition of contact between Greece and the civilizations of the Levant and Mesopotamia. A brief survey of the evidence for connections and cultural interchange between Greece and the Near East is essential to the study of such connections in Alcman's poetry.

While the 'international' nature of inter-cultural relations during the Bronze Age undoubtedly contributed to the transmission of cultural knowledge, I will focus on the interaction between Greece and the Levant in the 'Orientalizing' and Archaic periods; the time immediately prior to and during Alcman's *floruit*.<sup>1</sup> As well, I will examine some of the examples of the impact of the East on Greek literature prior to Alcman's time: specifically, the epic tradition, epitomized by the *Iliad*, and the didactic tradition of Hesiod.

The great amount of 'Orientalizing' objects found in Greek sanctuaries and temples from the 9<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries onwards attests to the influence of the East on the material culture of Greece.<sup>2</sup> While some of the iconography of the East no doubt reached Greece through intermediaries such as the Lydians or other close-by, so-called 'Hellenizing' cultures, much of this material culture was probably transmitted by the sailors *par excellence* of the Early Iron Age, the Phoenicians. During the late

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- 1 Morris, S., *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 101ff. The late Bronze Age was an era of lasting intellectual and social change amongst the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean. Undoubtedly, some of the Oriental aspects of later Greek literature and art are ultimately derived from borrowings during the time before the collapse of Mycenaean civilization and the general upheavals which characterize the end of the Bronze Age.
  - 2 Burkert, 1992, 15-18. During the eighth century, motifs from Oriental art increasingly start to appear in Greek representational style and artifacts of Oriental provenance begin to appear in the burgeoning Greek sanctuaries.

Geometric period, there is evidence of a growing presence of Phoenician merchants in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>3</sup> At Cyprus, a bastion of Greek speakers near the Levant, Phoenician settlement can be dated to the 850s.<sup>4</sup> On Crete too, Kommos on the south coast shows evidence of a Phoenician presence during a similar time period.<sup>5</sup>

Such a presence seems to be demonstrated by the appearance of Phoenician traders, sailors and slavers in, for example, the Homeric poems (e.g. *Il.* 23.740-745; *Od.* 15.473ff).<sup>6</sup> Both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which were probably more or less fixed in the form familiar to us by the 8<sup>th</sup> century, tend to reflect the customs and *mores* of that era. The appearance of the Phoenicians in both poems may indicate that they were a familiar part of the culture of early Archaic Greece.

In the *Odyssey*, Homer delineates the four types of people in demand across the ancient world: seers, healers, craftsman and poets (cf. *Od.* 17.383-385).<sup>7</sup> The material evidence from the ancient Near East compels us to consider mercenaries in addition to these four. These people of different social backgrounds and wealth, many of whom would have been involved in a back-and-forth exchange with the East, may be one of the ways in which new ideas from foreign lands could have reached the shores of the Aegean.

There is evidence to suggest that from early in the Archaic Period, around the time to which scholars assign the Homeric texts, the Greeks were making in-roads into the Levant as mercenaries.

3 *Ibid.*, 11; West, 1997, 8-9.

4 Burkert, 11.

5 Hall, J. *Hellenicity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 93: A small eighth-century building on Kommos may have been a Levantine shrine; a considerable amount of Phoenician pottery sherds have been found dating to before and during the building's existence. Raaflaub, K. "Archaic Greek Aristocrats as Carriers of Cultural Interaction," in *Commerce and Monetary Systems in the Ancient World* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2004), 197 points to the likelihood that clusters of Phoenicians settlers established *enoikismo*i, trading posts, in southern Greece and Crete; he especially notes Kommos.

6 During the funeral games for Patroklos, the silver bowl from Sidon is valued in part because of the distance that the Phoenicians had carried it. Eumaeus's story of Phoenician slave-trading in the *Odyssey* demonstrates one type of Phoenician expedition into the Aegean; other references to Phoenicians as the men 'famed for ships' (*Od.* 15.415) along with archaeological evidence make a strong case for Greco-Phoenician contacts throughout the eighth century.

7 Burkert, 1992, 6 structures the entirety of *The Orientalizing Revolution* around this passage, and what it can tell us about the different routes for the transmission of Eastern knowledge into Greece.

During the 8th century, Greeks, called *Iawani*, first begin to appear in Near Eastern sources: the *Iawani* are recognized as especially tough fighters by the chroniclers of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III (*Nimrud Letter 69*: “The 'Ionians' have appeared | They have battled at the city of Samsimuruna”).<sup>8</sup> *Iawani*, etymologically connected to 'Ionians', probably reflect an ethnic group larger than what contemporary historians would consider Greek.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the pervasive presence of this group in Near Eastern sources indicates at least some familiarity on the part of Near Eastern cultures with Greeks during this era.

Greeks continued to penetrate the Near East and begin to be mentioned as warriors in early seventh century Egypt: “Apries armed his guards and marched to Egypt; he had as his bodyguard Karians and Ionians” (Hdt. 2.163: ὁ Απρίης ὤπλιζε τοὺς ἐπικούρους καὶ ἤλαυνε ἐπὶ τοὺς Αἰγυπτίους. εἶχε δὲ περὶ ἑωυτὸν Κάριας τε καὶ Ἴωνας ἄνδρας). Greek mercenaries are also attested in Lydia in the early part of the seventh century, as well as fighting under Assyrian employ as early the 680s.<sup>10</sup> Inscriptions suggests that some unfortunate Greek soldiers made their way to the interior of the Assyrian empire as prisoners-of-war (*Bull Inscription*, 4.59-61: “Sailors – Tyrians | Sidonians and 'Ionians' – the conquests of my hand, I distributed in them | They descended the midst of the river Tigris, with them, for lightening to Opis”).<sup>11</sup> There also appears to have been a great deal of interaction between some Greeks and the hegemonic power of eighth-century Phrygia; Assyrian sources of the time note several battles in which Greeks and Phrygians make up the enemy forces.<sup>12</sup>

8 Rollinger, R. “The Ancient Greeks and the Impact of the Ancient Near East. Textual Evidence and Historical Perspective (ca. 750-600 B.C.),” in *Mythology and Mythologies* (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001), 237 dates this letter to around 730. Translation is Rollinger's.

9 *Ibid.*, 235.

10 Raaflaub, 2004, 208.

11 Rollinger, 243; Translation from Smith, G., *History of Sennacherib* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1878), 91.

12 Lanfranchi, G.B. “The Ideological and Political Impact of the Neo-Assyrian Imperial Expansion on the Greek World in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Centuries B.C.,” in *The Heirs of Assyria* (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2000), 19-20 connects this supposed Greco-Phrygian cooperation to legends about Midas and his marriage to a daughter of Agamemnon.

Mercenary service during this time, as with much of antiquity, would have meant supplying one's own arms. While it would not have been exclusive to the elite, there is no doubt that it is the elite who would have been able to most easily afford weapons and armour. Assuming that some of these mercenaries, from families of high social background, returned home, the possibility is great that they brought home knowledge of the Near Eastern civilization to which they had been exposed.<sup>13</sup>

While the contact epitomized by the movement of craftsman and bards to which the *Odyssey* refers may be relatively recent, long-distance trading relationships amongst the cultures of the Mediterranean basin existed since at least Neolithic times.<sup>14</sup> By the early Archaic period, a vibrant East-West trade had for millennia involved various raw materials found in only a few sites in the Mediterranean, yet vital for crafts production across the whole region (e.g. silver, copper, *lapis lazuli*). While this trade diminished with the fall of the bureaucratic kingdoms of the Bronze Age, it did not cease.

Archaic literature, such as Homer, gives us some idea of what these international mercantile relationships might have looked like in the eighth century B.C. Odysseus's lie about being a Cretan pirate (*Od.* 14.199ff) may reflect a blurring of the boundaries between merchants and pirates. Herodotus too is explicit that the beginnings of the Trojan War can be traced to the Greeks and Asians plundering wives and other material goods from each other (*Hdt.* 1.4). At the highest political levels, trade and merchant settlements were supported: Assyrian sources of the time indicate that international trade and trading settlements were encouraged by Sargon II.<sup>15</sup> Needless to say, the likelihood of cultural interaction between traders and the natives beside whom they lived would be great indeed.

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13 Raaflaub, 2004, 210 notes the power that the words of an elite mercenary might have had: "What a hoplite mercenary or general coming back from foreign service had to tell would have been taken seriously – much more seriously, at any rate, than the tales of a common trader."

14 West, 1997, 4. For example, trade in obsidian ranged across the Aegean by the seventh millennium B.C., and by the third millennium, precious metals trade reached from Spain to India.

15 Lanfranchi, 20.

Beyond simply an exchange of knowledge, interaction between elites from Greece and the East may have initiated the sort of relationships which continued to characterize the upper-class members of society into Classical times. For example, there is evidence for a great range of relationships between elite Greek families and those of Persia during and after the Persian Wars.<sup>16</sup> Throughout much of Greek history, the social link between Greek aristocrats and their peers in other societies was as or more important than the cultural link with their social inferiors at home.<sup>17</sup> These relationships may have been fostered as early as the 'Orientalizing period,' in the emerging sanctuaries of Delphi and Olympia.<sup>18</sup> The Lesbian poets and Alcman both seem to allude to these relationships with their delight in the luxury elements associated with the the East, especially Lydia. Garments of expensive materials, hair worn long and elaborately decorated, gold jewelry, Lydian *mitrai*, “a veritable catalogue” of which is described in the *Partheneion* (v.64-70), point to contacts between aristocrats and the assumption, by elite Greeks, of Eastern objects as symbols of status.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, we have only to remember that Herodotus himself recalls a tradition of foreign elites at Delphi during the Archaic period and before in the stories of Midas, Gyges and Croesus (Hdt. 1.13: Midas was the first foreigner to dedicate at Delphi; Gyges the second; 1.47: Croesus sends envoys to Delphis, Dodona, etc.).<sup>20</sup> Even in Homer, there are indications that the bonds of *xenia* transcend so-called 'ethnic' barriers (e.g. *Il.* 6.215: Diomedes and Glaucón).

These connections between aristocrats in Greece and those of other cultures introduce another

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16 To take just two examples: Themistokles' escape to Persia and his supposed competency in the Persian language is attested in Thucydides (1.138.1); Agesilaus, while not recorded as having a linguistic familiarity with Persian, is certainly at ease talking to Persian satraps and establishing family ties with them (*Xen. Hel.* 4.1.39).

17 Hall, J., 2002, 103. *Xenia* was an exclusively elite practice; at this level of society, even into Classical times, there is little evidence for the supposed dichotomy between 'Greek' and 'Barbarian'. The horizontal connections between elites of various ethnicities seem to have been more cohesive than any vertical connection within one ethnic group.

18 Raaflaub, 2004, 198, non-Greeks and Greeks met at these sanctuaries in the Archaic period. Hall, J., 2002, 95 points out the 'international' nature of sanctuaries at Perachora and Samos as well.

19 Kurke, L., “The Politics of *habrosune*,” *Classical Antiquity* 11.1 (1992): 93, 97.

20 Lanfranchi, 19-20.

question which pertains to 'international' relations in the 'Orientalizing' and Archaic periods: to what extent did the Greeks of the Archaic period consider themselves 'Greek' in a collective sense? It is a truism that there is no name for the Greeks, collectively, in Homer; moreover, a common 'Greek' identity seems to be a product of the Persian Wars. Modern archaeology has defined several separate socio-cultural zones in archaic Greece, zones defined by, for example, their distinct housing technology and burial customs.<sup>21</sup> Distinctions of this sort might plausibly be called the identifiers of different ethnicities; certainly they point to a lack of homogeneity amongst Archaic Greeks. The famous description which Herodotus puts into the mouths of the Athenians, that Greeks share a language, sanctuaries and kindred blood may have been true in his day, but the post-Persian Wars' dichotomy between 'Greek' on the one hand, and 'Barbarian' on the other, which helped to create a unified 'Hellenic' culture, was probably not true earlier (Hdt. 8.144).<sup>22</sup>

If it is difficult to apply modern conceptions of national identity and ethnicity to Greeks of the Classical period, in the Archaic period, applying such concepts is nearly impossible.<sup>23</sup> For example, while the modern basis for ethnicity is heavily linked to a common language, it is not even clear to what extent a common language existed in archaic Greece.<sup>24</sup> Recent work has suggested that there may not have been a great degree of intelligibility amongst the various dialects of Greek even in the Classical period (see Thuc. 3.94 for example).<sup>25</sup> In the archaic world, less cosmopolitan, less integrated and less defined by the umbrella ethnic descriptor 'Hellene, the dialects might have been even more

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21 Morris, I., "Archaeology and Archaic Greek History," in *Archaic Greece: New Approaches and New Evidence*, ed. Nick Fisher and Hans van Wees (London: Duckworth Press, 1998), 72ff.

22 Rollinger, 235.

23 Hall, J., "Culture or Cultures? Hellenism in the Late Sixth Century," in *The Cultures Within Ancient Greek Culture*, ed. C. Dougherty and L. Kurke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 31.

24 Rollinger, 236 states this well: "One should bear this point in mind because it reminds us that our modern conception, influenced by the emergence of the national state since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the linguistically based definition of peoples as well defined entities in the course of history, is to say the least precarious."

25 Thucydides hints at a lack of intelligibility amongst the Greek dialects during a description of the different sections of the Aetolian population.

divergent. In addition, it is not clear to what extent the 'shared cult' of Herodotus's time existed. In ancient Sparta, for example, older and more localized deities persisted far into historical times.<sup>26</sup> Greeks of the Archaic age may have considered those from outside of their *polis*, whose language and religion were quite different from their own, just as different as those from what we would term another ethnicity.

In a more fractured and culturally divergent Greece than scholarship has previously assumed, the influx of Near Eastern motifs in art, literature and culture can be understood more clearly. There is no reason to assume that a Greek from Laconia in the seventh century would consider an Athenian or a Theban to be anymore kindred than a Phoenician or Assyrian. Moreover, in comparison to their own Greek neighbours, Phoenicians, Assyrians and other Near Eastern peoples represented a vastly more wealthy and ancient culture. It may not be a coincidence that it is just as contacts with the East become more interconnected than before that the Greeks form a desire to know their own past, to write down their own epic history in the same way as had been done in the Near East for millennia.<sup>27</sup>

The introduction of the ability to write poetry and other historical texts, the introduction of the alphabet to Greece, was a defining event. Unlike a motif on pottery, or the basic design of a temple, the adoption of the alphabet presupposes a close and detailed learning process. Herodotus, who describes the alphabet as *phoinikes*, 'Phoenician things,' suggests such a teaching and learning process between the Phoenicians and the Ionians: “At this time, most of the Greeks who lived around them were Ionians, who learned the letters by the teaching of the Phoenicians” (Hdt. 5.58: περιόικεον δέ σφεας τὰ πολλὰ τῶν χῶρων τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον Ἑλλήνων Ἴωνες· οἱ παραλαβόντες διδαχῆ παρὰ τῶν Φοινίκων τὰ γράμματα). The identical order of the letters in the Greek alphabet to the Semitic

26 Hall, J., 2002, 116; Burkert, W. *Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 120.

27 Rollinger, 256. While the idea that the impetus to create epic came from encounters with the more ancient civilizations of the Near East is Rollinger's alone, it is telling that the Homeric epics come about in a time of greatly increased, much more intimate, connections with the East.

posits an introduction of the traditional learning method of letters from a Semitic teacher to a Greek student.<sup>28</sup> The letters, proper words in Semitic languages, are meaningless gibberish in Greek, yet their form and general shape was retained. Moreover, the very instruments of alphabetic writing point to this type of teaching as well: the folding wax tablet used for quick message, *deltos*, has the same name as the Semitic. Both *deltos*, the tablet, and *delta*, the fourth letter, display the same shift in vowel from their respective Semitic counterparts: “...the *deltos* in Greece is as old as the Greek alphabet.”<sup>29</sup>

The transmission of the alphabet from teacher to student presupposes intimate contact between the two. While it is impossible for us to know whether this transfer of knowledge happened in Greece, amidst a colony of Phoenician traders, or in the Levant, in a similar settlement of Greeks, the process must have recurred time and time again.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, such a teaching process implies that bilingualism was not unheard of amongst archaic Greeks and their Semitic counterparts.<sup>31</sup> These linguistic connections would have been necessary for trade and mercenary service; the alphabet's implied apprenticeship merely provides another piece of evidence for such knowledge.

In the Semitic East, as would happen later to authors such as Homer and Virgil, classic texts were often used as educational materials.<sup>32</sup> While the demise of Phoenician literature (due to it having been written, for the most part, on perishable materials) has robbed us of the intermediate step

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28 Burkert, 1992, 29.

29 *Ibid.*, 30.

30 Morris, 1992, 115. Powell, B.B., *Homer and the Origin of the Greek Alphabet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 11 contends that the alphabet was an invention of a single man; he adduces comparisons from what we know of other adaptations of alphabets: the invention of Gothic script, Cyrillic, etc. While these are compelling arguments, the variety of early Greek scripts and the ancient evidence of continuous alphabetic re-invention (D.S. 5.57.5) argues to the contrary.

31 Burkert, 1992, 22. Again, contrast this to Powell, 2, who writes: “...no Greek seems ever to have mastered earlier writings.” Considering the availability of evidence to the contrary in the ancient sources (see above, note 14) as well as the common sense notion that bi-, or multilingualism would have been necessary for trade, such an assertion is difficult to maintain.

32 *Ibid.*, 95: “A Greek desirous of education might well have been exposed to precisely these sections of 'classical' eastern literature...” Burkert, noting that many of the Near Eastern comparisons he brings forth are from the beginnings of texts, analogizes modern readers of Latin who might know *arma virumque cano* from their schooldays, but no more of the *Aeneid*.

necessary to prove this supposition, it seems likely that they, just as the Sumerians, Babylonians and later Greeks, would have used their own literature as a way to teach basic literacy.<sup>33</sup> An exposure to Eastern myths, legends and religious rituals through the 'school curriculum' may be an example of one of the ways by which Eastern knowledge could have been transmitted back to Greece.

Sparta, the home of Alcman, is replete with material evidence for Near Eastern influence and seems to be a site which is particularly associated with the world of the Near East. Eighth-and seventh-century Sparta was not the austere and bleak society envisioned by Athenian intellectuals of the fifth century (or Western scholars of the 19th); it was a vibrant cultural capital endowed with architectural, material and literary achievements.<sup>34</sup> The Greeks believed, possibly from the example of Alcman, that Sparta was the home of choral lyric poetry; the Doric dialect used in choral lyric all the way into the Classical age reflects this Laconian heritage.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, Sparta was a site whose connections to the Levant and the Near East were recognized in antiquity. The military prowess of Sparta was easily discovered by Croesus in the middle of the sixth century (Hdt. 1.56). Herodotus also remembers Sparta as one of the sources of conflict between the East and Greece thanks to the theft of Helen (Hdt. 1.3). Beyond this legendary aspect, it is telling that Herodotus couches his narrative in historical terms, and notes the appearance of a Phoenician trading ship in a Laconian harbour carrying Egyptian and Assyrian goods as nothing out of the ordinary (Hdt. 1.2).<sup>36</sup> In addition, there is literary and archaeological evidence for the establishment

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33 *Ibid.*, 32.

34 Burn, 180.

35 Segal, C., "Archaic Choral Lyric," in *Cambridge Guide to Classical Literature*, ed. P.E. Easterling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 166 notes that the Doric dialect became conventional for choral lyric. Alcman writes mainly in Laconian, but the fragmentary nature of his corpus and the rest of our evidence for Laconian literary dialects makes it difficult to ascertain the complete range of differences between Doric and Laconian.

36 Burn, A.R., *The Lyric Age of Greece* (London: Robert Cunningham and Sons Ltd., 1960), 181 notes Alcman's knowledge of far-flung geography; perhaps visits by foreign ships from the distant corners of the world contributed to this knowledge.

of a Phoenician religious site on the nearby island of Kythera in the eighth century (Hdt. 1.105.3).<sup>37</sup>

Modern scholarship has tended to agree with Herodotus's assessment. Phoenician ships may have been plying their trade in Laconian harbours since the Bronze Age; deposits of copper, lead, silver, gold and other precious and useful metals would have drawn traders.<sup>38</sup> The presence of extensive 'Orientalizing' deposits in the important sanctuary of Artemis Orthia, the foundation of which dates to the early Archaic period, points to Eastern influences on the religion and cult of Archaic Sparta.<sup>39</sup>

Some have argued for further Spartan connections with the East. Martin Bernal derives the name 'Sparta' from an Egyptian word for 'section' or 'division'.<sup>40</sup> He links this name to a slew of Egyptian-derived Laconian terminology, from the *lochos* (Spartan military division), to the messes of young men, *phiditia*.<sup>41</sup> While Bernal's connections are not as conclusive as he argues, his ideas are suggestive that Sparta, the closest of the mainland Greek states to Egypt and the West Semitic cultures, shows evidence of extensive influence and interaction with these Eastern regions.<sup>42</sup>

Beyond material culture, there is extensive evidence for the direct influence of Mesopotamian, Anatolian and Levantine myths and literature on the literature of the Archaic period. Both the *Iliad*, and Hesiod's *Works & Days* and *Theogony* display pronounced Near Eastern motifs which have been noted by scholars.

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37 Cartledge, P., *Sparta and Lakonia: A Regional History 1300-362 B.C.* (London: Routledge, 1979), 122.

38 Morris, 1992, 131 argues that the Phoenicians held a 'poly-metallic' interest in the Aegean. Many different metals valued by ancient traders and craftsmen are found in Laconia; it would have been a natural target for Phoenician traders, and may have long been a part of an East-West trade in metals.

39 Carter, J.B., "The Masks of Orthia," *American Journal of Archaeology* 91.3 (1987): 365, 374ff; see also chapter 3 "The Identity of the Goddess of the *Partheneion*."

40 Bernal, M., *Black Athena Volume III* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 513 notes that there has been no reasonable Indo-European etymology for Sparta; the ancients' explanation that Sparta is derived from *\*sper*, to sow, has been rejected by modern scholars.

41 *Ibid.*, 533, these are two of several words in which Bernal finds Semitic, or specifically, Egyptian roots.

42 I do not have the space here to get into the vast sea of scholarly debate on *Black Athena*. Suffice to say, Bernal has his critics, but his thorough work cannot be entirely discredited, and in my view simply serves to add to the preponderance of evidence for Greco-Semitic connections in the Archaic age and before.

The description of the division of the world among Zeus, Poseidon and Hades at *Il.* 15.187-193, a division of heaven, the seas and the underworld, is an oddity in epic poetry. Plato, for example, sees in this passage the beginnings of natural philosophy (Pl. *Cra.* 402b).<sup>43</sup> The sortition story is within the portion of the *Iliad* called the 'Deception of Zeus', a section which has been noted as peculiar by Homeric scholars; some have gone so far as to say that this section reflects a written composition.<sup>44</sup> The more orthodox account of Hesiod which relates the origin of Zeus's rule does not mention any selection by lot: Zeus simply conquers the heavens by subterfuge and force and rewards the gods who sided with him (Hecate, for example, Hes. *Th.* 410ff; Obriareus, Cottus and Gyes, 643ff).

Beyond the Greek world, however, the passage shows a marked similarity to a division of powers in a mythic narrative from the East, the Akkadian epic *Atrahasis*.<sup>45</sup> *Atrahasis* is a description of the beginning of the world, the origin of mankind and the great flood, which has been found in fragments dating from the seventeenth century all the way down to texts found in Ugarit, a period of over one thousand years. In *Atrahasis*, there is a division of the cosmos into three parts: heaven, earth and sea. While the three different areas of authority are different in the Mesopotamian narrative, nevertheless, "the basic structure of both texts is astonishingly similar".<sup>46</sup> Both suggest a partition of the cosmos into three distinct units; both assign these units to the three highest gods of the pantheon; in both, the division is made by the drawing of lots. What makes these analogies even more compelling is the uniqueness of this division story in Greek mythology.

In contrast to the solitary mention of this story in Greek sources, the division of the world narrated in *Atrahasis* is a crucial part of the Mesopotamian narrative and may have even had ritual

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43 Plato connects Homer's account of Oceanus and Tethys to the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus.

44 Burkert, 1992, 91 notes that this theory has not been accepted by most scholars. Regardless of the exact nature of this passage's composition, the *Dios Apate* is undeniably peculiar in comparison to the rest of the *Iliad*.

45 *Ibid.*, 95; West, 1997, 110 notes further similarities to another Sumerian poem, *Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Nether World*.

46 Burkert, 1992, 90.

significance.<sup>47</sup> It is not difficult to imagine this narrative being related to Greek observers at a religious festival or religious cult in an *enoikismos* somewhere in the Levant.

Aside from the sortition episode, the deception speech of Hera describes another unique cosmogonic hypothesis: Hera says that she will go to the origin of the gods, Oceanus, and the mother of the gods, Tethys (*Il.* 14.201: Ὠκεανόν τε, θεῶν γένεσιν, καὶ μητέρα Τηθύν). In contrast to Hesiod's description of the creation of the cosmos, this reference to Oceanus and Tethys as a 'primordial couple' is decidedly strange. As with the sortition story, there is an Eastern antecedent for Hera's cosmogonic allusion: the Babylonian creation epic, *Eneuma Elish*. The Babylonians conjectured that the cosmos began with a coupling between Apsu and Tiamat, Semitic equivalents to Oceanus and Tethys. The name, Tiamat, Akkadian *taw(a)tu*, is “an exact transcription” of Tethys.<sup>48</sup>

The case for Near Eastern influences on Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days* are, if anything, more persuasive.<sup>49</sup> Hesiod's *Theogony*, which came to be recognized by the Greeks as the definitive explanation of the ordering of the cosmos, is, at its heart, a succession story.<sup>50</sup> One god after another defeats his parent and takes control of the cosmos (Kronos overcomes Ouranos, Zeus overcomes Kronos); this continued succession is only stopped by the consumption of the potential child of Metis by Zeus, and her reconfiguration as Athena (*Hes. Th.* 890ff).

The succession myth, the core of Hesiod's *Theogony*, is not unique to Greek literature. The *Song of Kumarbi*, a fragmentary Hittite cosmogony, reflects in substantial portions the succession myth of Hesiod. Both begin with a sky god in command of the universe (Anu, Ouranos); each of these gods'

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47 West, 1997, 110. The drawing of lots in the myth reflects actual drawing of lots to allocate shares of estates, shares of income and “...to establish a sequence among persons of equal status that would be acceptable, as divinely ordained, to all participants.”

48 Burkert, 1992, 93.

49 West, 1997, 276, begins his discussion of Near Eastern influences in hexameter poetry because “...Hesiod is the one Greek poet in whose work the presence of substantial oriental elements is already generally admitted.”

50 West, M., *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 203, notes that after it became well-known, the *Theogony* of Hesiod had no serious rivals.

genitals is cut off by his attacker. From the genitals of each god, in both stories, further deities are born. The second god in the succession, in the Hittite myth a harvest god, is Kronos in the Greek telling. While Kronos's mythic background is not certain, he may also reflect an Greek harvest god.<sup>51</sup> Even more similarly, each of these deities swallows other gods and is tricked by the substitution of a stone for his eventual attacker. The final god in both the Hittite and Greek stories is a power associated with storms and lightning (Tessub and Zeus); each finalizes his rule and ceases the repetition of the succession myth.

Hesiod's *Works and Days* is also heavily reflective of Near Eastern practices and literature.<sup>52</sup> The genre to which it belongs, known in the East as 'wisdom literature', is widely attested.<sup>53</sup> For one hundred lines near the beginning of the poem, Hesiod relates the The 'Myth of Ages', a narrative of the history of the world. This legend also reflects the influences of various Eastern sources. It has long been recognized that Hesiod's scheme of five races (Gold, Silver, Bronze, Heroic, Iron) must be a modification of a more obvious scheme of four metallic races; it seems certain that the Greek epic tradition of demi-god heroes immediately prior to the current race demanded their insertion into what had been a four-race narrative.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, the Greek epic version of the past did not imagine such a demarcation among the various ages of the world. The descendants of heroes lived on in the kings of the present day; Hesiod's story is completely at odds with any other view of the past in Greek poetry, epic or otherwise.<sup>55</sup>

In Eastern sources, however, the equation of metals with gods is known from Babylon, and

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51 West, 1997, 280.

52 West, M., *Hesiod: Works & Days* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 3ff notes similarities to Near Eastern wisdom literatures from Sumeria, Babylon and Egypt.

53 Walcot, P., *Hesiod and the Near East* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1966), 86. Egypt provides us with the best examples of 'wisdom literature'. There are substantial remains of Babylonian wisdom literature: see the book of the same name, Lambert, W.G., *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960); the Old Testament reflects such traditions in *Proverbs*, for example.

54 West, 1997, 312.

55 West, 1978, 176.

more specifically, the equation of metals with ages of the world is found in the Iranian *Avesta* and the Hebrew *Book of Daniel*. The Iranian story sees past historical epochs as branches of a tree: gold, silver, steel and iron ore. In the *Book of Daniel*, Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a similar division of history, envisioned as a statue made of gold, silver, brass, iron and an iron\clay mixture.<sup>56</sup>

It is clear from this brief survey that the Greeks and the peoples of the Near East were in close, possibly frequent, contact in the era immediately before as well as contemporaneous with Alcman. Near Eastern material culture greatly influenced Greek culture; Near Eastern literary motifs, and indeed the influence of 'classic' works, seem to be present in the songs of Alcman's poetic predecessors. The Sparta of Alcman's day, open to Eastern travellers and sending forth people as merchants and mercenaries, would have been more accustomed to foreign ideas and customs than has previously been supposed. In such an environment, it is likely that Alcman had plenty of opportunities to engage with Near Eastern customs, whether they were brought back from the East by Spartan aristocrats, travellers or mercenaries, or brought to Sparta by Phoenician traders operating out of a nearby *enoikismos*.

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56 *Ibid.*, 176.

## Chapter 3: The Identity of the Goddess

One of the main mysteries of the *Partheneion* is one of the most basic elements of the poem: the goddess to whom the work is dedicated. As myriad commentators have made clear, such a basic question was undoubtedly transparent to the original audience of the poem, yet modern analysis can barely begin without a variety of sometimes unfounded assumptions about the goddess who is being propitiated. Investigations of this nature have formed the basis of many articles on the poem's content, yet even after a century of investigation, no analysis has been accepted by a consensus of modern scholars.

One fruitful area of research which has not been investigated fully is an analysis of the identity of the deity in light of what we know of Sparta's intimate connections with the Eastern world.<sup>1</sup> It is my goal in this chapter to integrate the Eastern connections of Sparta in the Archaic period with the ongoing modern debate over the deity's identification. While this investigation may not provide a conclusive answer, it is my hope that it will convincingly suggest that the nuances of meaning in Alcman's poetry, sometimes vague to modern scholars, can be explained by a broader contextual approach to the history of Greek literature. To begin, I will examine the evidence from within the poem itself, followed by a brief survey of the main proposed goddesses of the *Partheneion*.

In the text, there is very little to indicate the goddess's identity. The three main pieces of evidence which have been adduced from within the poem are the epithet, *Aotis* (v.87: Ἀώτι), the dedicated object, φᾶρος (v.61), and a word with a particularly troublesome history, ὀρθρίαι (v.61).

*Aotis* appears in the poem in connection with a desire of the chorus of girls, “and I wish more

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter two, “Connections Between Greece and the Near East in the Archaic Period”.

than anything to praise *Aotis*” (v.87ff: ἐγὼν δὲ τᾶι μὲν Ἄωτι μάλιστα | Φανδάνην ἐρῶ). The most likely interpretation, and one that has been picked up by commentators since the poem was re-discovered, is that *Aotis* is the name of the cult recipient of the poem. While such an argument rings true, there are unfortunately no further instances of this figure in extant Greek literature, and the *scholia* attached to the poem are silent regarding this line.<sup>2</sup> Etymologically, *Aotis* seems to be derived from the Doric form of the word for the Dawn (Ἄως) with an attached locative suffix.<sup>3</sup> An appropriate translation of the epithet might be, 'dwelling at the Dawn' or perhaps 'dwelling in the East'.<sup>4</sup>

The second piece of direct evidence is v.61: “ us, who bear a *faros*” (τὰ Πελιάδες γὰρ ἄμιν | ὀρθρία φᾶρος φερούσαις). While φᾶρος is most commonly, outside of the context of the *Partheneion*, translated as 'cloak', I have left it untranslated for the time being to reflect its rather confused history in the interpretation of this poem. From antiquity, some scholars have thought that φᾶρος in this context ought to be translated as 'plough'. This translation arises mainly from a scholiast's opinion, and is buttressed because the difference between the two translations is simply a matter of acute versus circumflex accent. The Spartan scholar Sosiphanes, to whom this opinion has been traditionally attributed, seems to have been of the mindset that a plough was the appropriate item for the girls to have carried, and that the word simply had a different meaning for Alcman than its standard meaning throughout Greek poetry. In the rest of archaic poetry, for example, φᾶρος is always related to cloth, whether a mantle, robe, or simply a large sheet (e.g. *Od.* 5.258; *Il.* 18.353; Hes. *Op.* 198, etc.). Furthermore, while a plough is not outside the bounds of possibility as an offering to a goddess, a robe is much more in keeping with standard Greek practice, both ritual and literary, attested in both Classical Athens, Olympia and, in poetry, at Homeric Troy (e.g. *Il.* 6.86ff). In other words,

2 Campbell, D., *Greek Lyric Poetry* (Toronto: St. Martin's Press, 1967), 210.

3 Page, 74; Campbell, 1967, 210; Calame, C., *Alcman* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1983), 343.

4 Page, 74 and Cyrino, M., “The Identity of the Deity of Alcman's *Partheneion*,” *Classical Journal* 100.1 (2004): 27, while disagreeing on who the goddess is, agree on the translation and etymology of *Aos*.

Sosiphanes' translation is something novel from both a linguistic and religious point of view.

In an attempt to ascertain the meaning of φᾶρος, many scholars have taken the ancient criticism at face value, noting that Sosiphanes would have had a good reason to assert such an odd translation; moreover, since he had the whole of the poem in front of him, modern scholarship ought to take him at his word.<sup>5</sup> This way of thinking, however, is not entirely without its pitfalls. We know next to nothing about the critic who wrote the correction, except that he may have been the same Sosiphanes mentioned in the *scholia* to *Il.* 9.453, a critic whose correction there has been lambasted by modern readers.<sup>6</sup> The fact that Sosiphanes' remark has been recorded at all in the commentary may imply that his interpretation was a break with tradition.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the word ἄροτρον, written above φᾶρος on the papyrus, has been crossed out; such a correction implies that the value of the word was already a hotly debated topic in antiquity.

J.M. Priestly, whose recent article counters many of the traditional arguments for the translation 'plough', points out that the text itself may prorogue any attempt to assign this meaning. He notes, for example, that the context in which φᾶρος occurs is part of a metaphor comparing the item to the stars (v.62ff: νύκτα δι' ἀμβροσίαν ἄτε σήριον | ἄστρον).<sup>8</sup> He adduces examples for similar comparisons between a robe and the stars from the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (86-90), a fragment of Aeschylus (*TGF* fr.216) and both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (*Il.* 6.294-95; *Od.* 15.107-108).<sup>9</sup> Clearly, robe is the most obvious of translations for φᾶρος within the tradition of archaic poetry. Furthermore, it is difficult to

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5 Page, 79: "Those who contradict the Alexandrian tradition in this place have not even the excuse that it presents a difficulty to our understanding." This dogmatic approach fails to appreciate that we have *no* evidence for ploughs as offerings during maiden's rites, *no* evidence for the translation of φᾶρος as a plough in the entirety of ancient literature and *no* evidence, beyond the scholiast, for this supposedly peculiar usage of Alcman's.

6 Priestly, J.M., "The *pharos* of Alcman's *Partheneion* 1," *Mnemosyne* 60 (2007): 177.

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*, 181.

9 Note that the example from the *Iliad* is the same as that in which a robe is used as a cult offering to the gods. That is, robes seem to have been compared to stars in the description of at least one, previous, ritual offering.

ignore the vast amount of data, both archaic and Classical, for robes as ritual offerings.<sup>10</sup> Particular to Sparta, items suggestive of textiles have been found in the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia.<sup>11</sup> That Sospihanes, writing some four hundred years after Alcman, thought otherwise should not be taken as proof positive of his translation. His temporal distance from the ritual and literary world of Alcman, as well as his own, possibly dubious, credentials, should suggest to modern scholars that his commentary ought to be read with a highly critical eye.

The third piece of evidence proposed to identify the goddess is troublesome: the word ὄρθρίαι. In isolation, this appears to be the dative singular or nominative plural of the word ὄρθριος, meaning “dawn, daybreak.” In the latter interpretation, ὄρθρίαι would be an adjective modifying Πελήαδες in the previous line, qualifying the Πελήαδες as the type of doves or stars which appear in the time immediately before dawn.<sup>12</sup>

Following the *scholia* (*scholia* A, v.60ff), as well as our knowledge of the epithets of important Spartan deities, many scholars have interpreted ὄρθρίαι as an epithet of Artemis: Artemis Orthia, a deity attested in Sparta during the Roman period. In this interpretation, the epithet is in the dative singular to show for whom the chorus bears a φᾶρος. The *scholia* is quite explicit on this point: “Aristophanes\Aristarchus (reads) 'to Orthia'” (*scholia* A, v.60ff). Aside from a phonetic similarity between the extant word in the poem and the epithet of Artemis, this fragment of ancient scholarship is the basis for the connection between Artemis Orthia and the *Partheneion*.<sup>13</sup>

10 Carter, 1988, 92-93 comes to the same conclusion. She draws a comparison between the robe as a symbol of marriage in Sumerian sacred marriage rites and its use in Alcman's poem.

11 Dawkins, R.M., *The Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1924), 148, 188, notes figurines of Orthia wearing chitons, and relief sculptures of cloaked and robed female figures.

12 Ferrari, 71, takes this position in her recent work on the *Partheneion*.

13 As Page, 82 says, without the *scholia*, “...there is little if anything that actually suggests Orthia (or Artemis) as the goddess in question.” Page, 76ff also delineates the grammatical possibilities and concludes that the correct reading is dative, referring to some sort of goddess; in other words he too sees an epithet of a deity in this word. He does, however, admit that proponents of the nominative plural or temporal dative cannot be conclusively disproved. Davison, J., *From Archilochus to Pindar* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968), 154ff comes to a very similar conclusion as Page, but his reasoning is more spurious: he declares that to read *orthriai* as a nominative plural is

These meager pieces of evidence are all that exist within the poem itself for the identification of the goddess. As a result, differing interpretations for the deity have been one of the most fertile grounds for modern scholars. It is my contention that a strong case can be built around Orthia, a Spartan cult deity, as the goddess of the poem. Before I return to Orthia and her connections to the aforementioned Artemis Orthia, however, I will briefly survey three of the goddesses who have been proposed in her stead: Helen, Aphrodite and Phoebe.

There is a large amount of material evidence which indicates that Helen received cult offerings in Sparta. She was associated with the plane-tree and a part of her rites seems to have included young girls anointing a grove and hanging garlands in her honour.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, her connection with puberty and marriage is well attested in literary and mythical sources.<sup>15</sup> Although Greek religion includes several goddesses who represent this stage of transition from girlhood to womanhood, Calame, who posits Helen as the goddess as a part of his argument for an interpretation of the *Partheneion* as a rite of passage, argues that the untamed sexual allure of a *parthenos* is best represented by Helen. He argues that Artemis is a goddess of girls in their youth, a protector of children; such a goddess would not make sense in a ritual which transitions the participants to adulthood.<sup>16</sup>

The relationship between the literary Helen of myth and the Helen of real cult activity, however, is uncertain.<sup>17</sup> Some literary evidence, such as Theocritus, has been used to fill in the gaps in our

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“foreign to Alcman's style.” As Page, 76 reads, “...we had better admit at once that we know next to nothing about Alcman's style...”; critics who choose to rely on such a fallacious foundation cannot hope to build a critical and reasoned argument. Unfortunately, critics following Page such as Campbell, 1967, 206 have continued to maintain this unhelpful line of reasoning: “[*orthriai*]...sits uneasily...besides, the dative *Orthriai* fits more tidily...”

14 West, M. *Immortal Helen* (London: Bedford College, University of London, 1975), 5.

15 *Ibid.*, 6 notes the connection between a virginal Helen and her abduction by Theseus. Theseus, of course, is involved in the abduction or attempted abduction of various other young women, Persephone and Ariadne amongst them. See too, Clader, L.L., *Helen: The Evolution from Divine to Heroic in Greek Epic Tradition* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 71 who argues that Helen's propensity for being seized and raped belies her earlier role as a fertility goddess.

16 Calame, C., 1977, 122, notes that Helen, in her iterations as Helen Plantanistas and Helen at Therapnai, is the precise goddess who best represents the passage from childhood, the acquisition of beauty, and the arrival at adulthood.

17 West, 1975, 6 believes that Helen, an old nature goddess (one of the primordial deities worshiped into historical times by the Spartans), came to be remembered simply as a beautiful, sometimes virginal, woman. The remains of her cult, then, perhaps have little to nothing to do with her place as a central element in the Trojan War story.

knowledge about the historical cult. For example, he describes a footrace between Helen and the other 'anointed maidens' of Sparta near the Eurotas river (Theoc. 18.22ff). This literary recollection has been understood by modern scholars as a mythic *aition* for the foot-races held in honour of Helen Plantanistas. Some students of Alcman have interpreted the horse-race metaphor of the *Partheneion* as a reflection of these real ritual activities (v.58ff).<sup>18</sup> While it is probable that the image of a horse-race is part of the metaphor of beauty, and that a real race might be suggested by the very specific terminology which Alcman uses, the main hierarchy being delineated seems to be beauty, not speed. The comparison of girls to horses is completely at home in archaic poetry, and while the image of a race might aid in the establishment of the relative beauty of the girls, it need not be a marker for an actual ritual foot-race.<sup>19</sup>

The rest of the evidence for Helen's involvement in the ritual context of the *Partheneion* is similarly slight. The text of the poem does not mention Helen explicitly, nor do any of the other surviving fragments of Alcman. While the condition of Alcman's corpus is such that one cannot positively deny any appearance by Helen, as yet there is no textual evidence to link Helen to any of Alcman's poetry. Furthermore, the strong dawn imagery of the *Partheneion* is almost completely unconnected with Helen. The only evidence which Calame provides are mirrors from Etruscan sanctuaries, quite distant in both time and space from Alcman's Sparta.<sup>20</sup>

The only way to read Helen as the deity is to ignore the complete dearth of epigraphic

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18 Calame, 1977, 126; Calame, 2001, 193-195.

19 Many scholars have interpreted this metaphor correctly. For example, Page, 81: "Young girls are so often compared to fillies in ancient literature that no special explanation need be sought for the metaphors and similes of this kind in the *Partheneion*." Robbins, E., "Alcman's Partheneion: Legend and Choral Ceremony," *Classical Quarterly*, 44.1 (1994): 9, "The point of comparison is in fact given, and it is beauty, not speed."

20 Calame 1977, 124. Helen was undoubtedly a goddess in Sparta (Burkert 1985, 205), but the tenuous connections which Calame postulates between Italy and Greece serve only to note how problematic this identification is. Clader, 63, notes ancient etymologies which derived Helen from both 'moon' and 'torch'. Such etymologies, however, have no further ancient pedigree beyond Hesychius, who probably dates from the fifth century A.D. Clader also concludes that these etymologies are, on the whole, fanciful.

evidence from Sparta connecting Helen to the cult-titles within the poem. Secondly, the commentary of the *scholia*, dubious as it may be, does not mention Helen with respect to any of the surviving fragments of Alcman. While this, in and of itself, cannot be taken as hard evidence against Helen, it certainly makes the case for her candidacy as the addressed deity even more unlikely. Furthermore, one of the main pieces of evidence for the involvement of Helen in the poem stems from a too literal reading of one of the metaphors of beauty which Alcman employs. The onus is on those who would insist upon Helen's relevancy to provide more concrete evidence for her. As yet, they have not.

Whereas Calame saw the seductive power of Aphrodite in the *Partheneion* and simply transposed it to Helen, other scholars have argued the case for Aphrodite herself as the goddess of the poem. Gentili, for example, contends that the poem was performed in the late morning, during the rising of Venus. He argues that this time-frame and the connection of Venus to Aphrodite (not attested until Hellenistic times) is crucial to the interpretation of the poem, and thus positive proof for the identification of Aphrodite as the propitiated goddess.<sup>21</sup> Gentili's connection of the *Partheneion* to Aphrodite complements his theory that the ritual use of Alcman's poetry was as a pre-wedding rite for girls who were part of a circle reminiscent of Sappho's.<sup>22</sup>

Other scholars have discounted the proposed ritual setting of Gentili, but have continued to make a case for Aphrodite's role in the poem. Cyrino, just as Calame, connects the *Partheneion* to rites of passage. She identifies both the time of dawn, as well as a dawn goddess, as particularly appropriate for girls entering puberty; a symbolic rebirth, and an entrance into the world of adults.<sup>23</sup> The connection with Artemis which has been posited by ancient and modern scholars is, according to

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21 Gentili, 75 quotes a commentary to the *Phaenomena* of Aratus, a Hellenistic poet and philosopher. Unfortunately, Gentili is unable to show any more ancient evidence for this identification. While we may be so indoctrinated with the identification of the planet Venus with this goddess, this may not have been the case in archaic Greece. In any event, we have no evidence for this fact prior to the late fourth century B.C.

22 *Ibid.*

23 Cyrino, 27.

Cyrino, inappropriate: the girls in the poem are distant from childhood and the associated protection of Artemis.<sup>24</sup>

The poem's emphasis on the physical qualities of the girls also connects with the emphasis that archaic poetry puts on the physical qualities of Aphrodite; beauty and physical accoutrements are certainly central to the *Partheneion*.<sup>25</sup> Brightness, astral qualities, swiftness and horse-imagery, qualities which are attributed to Aphrodite in the archaic world, are evident throughout the poem (v.40; v.58; v.59; v.60). The troublesome passage regarding the *Peleiades*, one of the passages which has been a source of debate since antiquity, is cleverly explained as a double allusion to both the star cluster (Aphrodite's astral qualities) and doves (Aphrodite's relationship with birds).<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the analogy of Hagesichora to gold (v.53-54), and silver (v.55) and Agido to the sun (v.40) may be allusions to Aphrodite's association with precious metals and the stars (e.g. Sapph. 33.1: ἀἴθ' ἔγω, χρυσοστέφαν' Ἀφροδίτα; *h. Ven.* 9: πολυχρύσου Ἀφροδίτης).

Perhaps the best evidence put forward for Aphrodite as the goddess of the *Partheneion* is that, along with the mysterious *Aotis*, she is the only goddess mentioned by name in the poem (v. 16-17). While her name is in the so-called 'mythic' section of the text, scholars have recently sought to identify a unity of theme in the *Partheneion* and have found useful correlations between what can be reconstructed of the legend and the choral section.<sup>27</sup> To Cyrino, the appearance of Aphrodite in the beginning connects her intrinsically with the remainder of the poem and provides clear evidence of her

24 *Ibid.*, 28. Cyrino's explanation of Artemis' unsuitability is anything but lucid. Later, at 30, Cyrino herself acknowledges that there is very little evidence to link Aphrodite with girls' choruses of any type.

25 As mentioned previously, deixis and self-referential actions are crucially important in the *Partheneion*. These actions seem to associate the piece with a performance of girls before an audience of prospective suitors. That this proves Aphrodite as the object of the cult, however, is anything but conclusive.

26 Aphrodite's link to small birds can be seen in, for example, Sapph. 1.10.

27 Robbins, E., "Alcman's *Partheneion*: Legend and Choral Ceremony," *Classical Quarterly* 44.1 (1994): 8, for example, notes the difficulty of this task due to the fragmentary nature of the legendary section, but nevertheless concludes that it is, "...a worthwhile undertaking to try to consider the possible interdependence of the two sections of the poem."

as the deity.<sup>28</sup>

While these connections are intriguing and may indicate that the goddess to whom the poem is dedicated ought to be one that can also be linked to beauty, swiftness and astral qualities, this does little to add to the specificity of any hypothesis, as most goddesses can be connected with these characteristics. Furthermore, the evidence for Aphrodite's presence in the ritual activities of the community at Sparta is slight; for the ritual activities of young women in particular, essentially non-existent.

Although the *Partheneion* displays a unity of theme from the mythic narrative of the first forty lines through the choral section, the evidence for a unity of content between the two is less certain. Aphrodite does indeed appear in the first twenty lines, but the fragmentary nature of the poem's beginning makes it difficult to ascertain why; the consensus opinion of modern scholarship has tended to take the line as a "Greek commonplace".<sup>29</sup> The gnomic aspect of Aphrodite's appearance seems to negate its use as a proof for the ritual aspect of the poem, and Aphrodite's place therein.

The last suggestion for the goddess of the *Partheneion* is Phoebe, a rather minor figure in Greek myth and ritual. The evidence for her presence is intriguing, though scant, and the sole scholar to investigate this possibility admits as much.<sup>30</sup> There are scraps of papyrus which seem to be from a commentary on Alcman and the *Partheneion* noting a festival called the '*Phoebaea*' in connection with the poem (*PMG* 5, fr. 1c). While tantalizing, there is no context for the word and no festival with such a name is attested in any other ancient source.

Polydeuces, the first legible words on our papyrus of the poem, provides another possible connection to Phoebe and Hilaeira, the daughters of Leucippis. According to Pindar (*N.* 10) and

28 Cyrino, 32. See Page, 31ff, however, who places Aphrodite solely within the the legendary section of the poem; he does not see her appearance as of any relevance to the content of the ritual.

29 West, 1997, 524

30 Garvie, A.F., "A Note on the Deity of Alcman's *Partheneion*", *Classical Quarterly* 15.2 (1965): 186.

Theocritus (20.137ff), the Dioscuri stole the women on their wedding day, precipitating a conflict between them and the putative bridegrooms, Lynceus and Idas, sons of King Aphaetus of Messene. In the *Partheneion*, the conflict in the opening narrative also seems to be over some sort of illicit marriage; in this case a conflict between the sons of Hippocoön and Castor and Polydeuces. According to later sources, the two rivals were ἀντιμνηστεύοντες, 'rivals in love' (Clem.Al., *Protr.* 36). The source of this rivalry is not made explicit in any of the ancient sources, but if it were the Leucippides, already known to be potential mates of the Dioscuri, there would be grounds for the connection with Phoebe.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, such a connection remains purely speculative.

Finally, it is also possible that Phoebe herself may have a connection to the Dawn goddess marked by the name *Aotis*: in later myth, her father Leucippis is identified with Helios, making Phoebe a daughter of the sun.<sup>32</sup> That said, even if this identification is correct, there is no evidence for it prior to Hellenistic times.

Garvie's note, while not necessarily proving the case for Phoebe, provides us with a reminder that there are a myriad of cult recipients and festivals about which we know nothing. Furthermore, though some scholars are insistent on taking ancient opinions at face value, it ought to be noted that the scholiasts say nothing about the 'Phoebaea', whatever it is, nor do they mention the possible connection with Leucippides. While modern commentators have produced somewhat viable rationales for the involvement of Helen or Aphrodite, the ancient commentators to whom we have access are silent regarding them. Our knowledge of ancient criticism is so vague, and the physical sources themselves so fragmentary, that to rely on them exclusively is an enterprise fraught with difficulties. Moreover, the distance, both temporally and geographically, which separates Hellenistic critics from Alcman, and seventh-century Sparta, must be taken into consideration.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> The evidence for this identification is rather slight; see Burnett, 33.

Finally, we can return to the goddess who was identified as the cult recipient in antiquity, and is often associated with the poem according to modern scholarship, Artemis. There is much to commend Artemis as the proper goddess for this occasion: her cults are often associated with young girls, the stories of Artemis in myth often have her associated with choruses.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, and particularly Spartan in detail, is the enigmatic ὄρθρίαι in v.61 for which the scholiast's reading of 'to *Orthia*' provides additional support for this interpretation. While the evidence from the *scholia* may seem conclusive, ancient critics have been unreliable in many other aspects of Alcman's oeuvre.<sup>34</sup> If the evidence in the *scholia* comes from Aristophanes or Aristarchus, that would place it in the second or third century B.C. In this time, the cult of Artemis Orthia was one of the most prominent and famous of Spartan cults.<sup>35</sup> Ancient scholars, perhaps moved by the popularity of this goddess, might have easily assumed the existence of Artemis Orthia behind a word which sounded so similar.

An analysis of the metrical scheme of the poem also seems to disallow the possibility of replacing ὄρθρίαι with Ὀρθρίαι. Alcman's scansion requires that the second syllable of ὄρθρίαι, in any restoration, must remain short.<sup>36</sup> The epigraphic evidence from the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia, however, is completely at odds with this. It shows that in Alcman's time, the spelling of the cult goddess was invariably tri-syllabic; the second syllable was long in any of the orthographic variants

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33 Burkert, 1985, 151 has extensive bibliography on the connections between Artemis and maidens. Calame, 2001, 91 deals with the stories in myth which connect Artemis and choruses of young girls. Davison, 154-155 provides a convenient summary of some of the early views.

34 Or, at least, inconclusive. The widely divergent opinions of ancient critics' regarding Alcman's birthplace speak to this effect.

35 Our evidence for the prominence of the cult of Artemis Orthia in Hellenistic times comes from Pausanias's account of Sparta. While this account is several centuries beyond the time of Aristophanes or Aristarchus, there is no closer evidence for cult activity in Sparta.

36 Page, 23. The *Partheneion* is broken down into fourteen line stanzas. The twelfth and thirteenth line form a couplet in trochaic dimeter, a line made up of four trochees. The second syllable in the line must be scanned short in order for the metre to be maintained; in the line as it appears on the papyrus this is no problem (-i- being short). However, if the seventh century version of Orthia, *ortheia\orthai* were to emend the text, the middle syllable would be long (-ei- or -ai-). This is the impossibility of metre to which Page refers.

attested.<sup>37</sup> It is impossible to change the spelling of ὀρθρία to any of the contemporary variants and maintain a semblance of proper metre in the poem; if a goddess is to be found in this word, it ought to be found in the word as it exists on the papyrus.<sup>38</sup>

Even with this formidable metrical problem, some have continued to argue for the existence of Artemis Orthia in this passage. Both Page and Davison conclude similarly that the onus is on those who would postulate a different goddess to prove their case; they both maintain that *Orthria* could simply be an alternative or archaic cult title for Orthia.<sup>39</sup> With our knowledge of archaic Spartan religion being so minimal, they prefer to fit an existing cult to a new title rather than create a wholly new goddess.

Page connects Ἄωτι and ὀρθρία to the cult of Artemis Orthia through an examination of her putative domain. The literary testimony suggests a connection between Orthia and human fertility. In later antiquity, at least, she played an important role in the puberty rites of young men (*X. Lac. Con.* 2.9).<sup>40</sup> She was also related in mythic accounts to dancing women, specifically *parthenoi* (*Plu. Thes.* 31.2). Pausanias describes her temple and that of the childbirth goddess, Eileithya, as very close, which may suggest a relationship between the two (*Paus.* 3.17.1) Moreover, an alternative name for Orthia was *Lygodesma*, 'willow-bound', relating her to the *agnus castus* tree and its associations with female sexuality and the natural world (*Paus.* 3.16.11).<sup>41</sup>

The relation between Orthia and puberty and fertility has been borne out by excavations at her

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37 Dawkins, 296, 300, 301, etc.

38 Davison, 156ff refuses to concede this point. He cites a "...well known principle of Greek metrics..." to show the possibility of reading *-ei-* and *-ai-* diphthongs as short. As he himself admits, the evidence for such shortenings is extremely fragmentary and limited; furthermore, the only example Davison can cite is some six hundreds years after Alcman's own time. Page, 77ff considers this point as well, but the only evidence he can find is from outside of Alcman's fragments; he concludes that the evidence is clearly against taking the diphthong as short.

39 Davison, 156; Page, 72-73; Campbell, 206 also agrees, but he simply agrees with the *scholia* without attempting to explain the discrepancy with regards to orthography and metre.

40 Xenophon explains that part of the training of Spartan boys during the *agoge* was to steal cheese from the altar of Artemis Orthia. Later, the self-flagellation of *ephebes* formed a crucial component of Artemis Orthia's worship.

41 See below, page 47-48.

sanctuary as well. Votive offerings depicting women during childbirth as well as figurines with explicitly marked genitals (both male and female) have been found in abundance.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the large amount of animal figurines and statuettes found in the shrine may indicate Orthia's intimate connection with the fertility of nature as well. Page further argues that, although the identification of Artemis and the moon is not recorded until many centuries after Alcman, the connection between the two must have been part of cult for some time.<sup>43</sup> While there is nothing in the epigraphic or literary tradition to suggest this, it does seem reasonable to presume that no complete identification of one goddess with another would take place without the presence of a deep-seated connection. If Artemis Orthia can be connected with the moon, an epithet such as *Aotis*, placing her in the east, would make sense: during a dawn ritual in spring, the moon would be visible in the eastern sky just before sunrise. As Page also goes on to say, the connection between the moon and the rhythm of birth and growth is connected to human biology; a connection which would naturally be made between a goddess of fertility and the moon itself.<sup>44</sup>

The major, and irreconcilable, problem with this line of reasoning is that the cult of Artemis Orthia *per se* did not exist in archaic Sparta. Until well into Roman times the epigraphic evidence from the shrine indicates that the goddess worshiped was Orthia, separate from a conflation with Artemis.<sup>45</sup> Ancient critics, working in a time when Artemis and Orthia had long been connected throughout most of mainland Greece, would have been hard-pressed to make the necessary distinction between the two. By the first century A.D., Artemis Orthia is known from sites in Attica, Argos, Boeotia and Byzantium amongst others. In all of these sites, the existence of the combined deity is attested from the fifth century onwards.

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42 For childbirth votives, see Dawkins, 56; for the male and female figurines, see Dawkins 156.

43 Page, 74.

44 *Ibid.*, 75.

45 Carter, 1987, 356.

In Laconia in general, and in Alcman's poetry specifically, there is a tendency to identify divinities otherwise unknown or extinct in the rest of mainland Greece. Archaic Sparta seems to have been a place where the Olympian consensus of the rest of Greece took much longer to take hold and overrun the diverse and varied local cults. Alcman's reference to *Poros* and *Aisa* (v.13-14) as the eldest of the gods is a good example of this, as is the supposedly central role played by Thetis in his cosmogony (*PMG* 5, fr.2, col. iii). It is only in Sparta, home of 'primordial entities', that the division between Artemis and Orthia is maintained well into the first century A.D.<sup>46</sup> This distinction between the later goddess, Artemis Orthia, and the deity peculiar to Sparta, Orthia, is of great importance to our understanding of the *Partheneion*, yet it has been overlooked by virtually all modern analyses of the poem.

While we know little about the nature of ritual activities with respect to Orthia in archaic Sparta, there are indications that an examination of her nature in the wider context of the archaic Mediterranean could be valuable. We know, for example, that Sparta was a cosmopolitan place in the eighth and seventh centuries; just like most of Greece, the Spartans were engaged in an appropriation of Oriental intellectual and material culture.<sup>47</sup> It is also certain that this appropriation did not stop at the profane, but also included religious and cult objects.

Excavations of the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia have uncovered a shrine which was founded in the eighth or seventh century and which exhibits an amazing assortment of objects influenced by Oriental material culture.<sup>48</sup> Some of these are characteristic of the period (votive figurines and

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46 Page, 40 is explicit on this point: "On the coast of Laconia these immemorial powers yielded very slowly to greater powers." See also Carter, 1987, 375 (note 102).

47 See above, chapter two, "Connections Between Greece and the Near East in the Archaic Period".

48 Carter, 1987, 374 reports J. Boardman's review of the sanctuary's date: he concludes that the original excavation reports were in error, and that the sanctuary was founded in the eighth century, rather than the earlier estimate of the tenth century B.C.

ivories), while others almost unique to Sparta (masks).<sup>49</sup> Almost all are 'Orientalizing' in style, or are objects of actual Oriental provenance.

The lowest archaeological strata of her sanctuary contain an incredible quantity of masks, which have been shown to have few Greek parallels. In fact, the other ritual masks found in Greece and sites settled by Greeks seem to have been influenced by the ones found at the shrine of Orthia.<sup>50</sup> Ritual masks of this sort, however, have a lineage which stretches across the Mediterranean to the Levant, and even further into the civilizations of Mesopotamia. J.B. Carter, in her seminal article on the topic, connects the masks with Mesopotamian and Canaanite religious tradition dating back to some of the earliest periods of Near Eastern civilization; she argues that this tradition of masks continued amongst the Phoenicians well into the first millennium B.C.<sup>51</sup> Carter's hypothesis is that the masks were used in a sacred marriage ritual at Sparta involving Orthia. Seeing as sacred marriage is one of the main rituals connected with female goddesses in the Near East, especially those with whom Orthia seems associated, such a supposition, though without any evidence, may have some validity.<sup>52</sup>

From this connection between the masks, as well as the correlation between the foundation date of the sanctuary with the height of Laconian-Phoenician contacts, Carter argues convincingly that Orthia was imported to Greece, in historical times, by Phoenician traders.<sup>53</sup> Whether the sanctuary site was itself founded by Phoenicians she leaves ambiguous, but evidence of Phoenician involvement on the Greek mainland from other sources make this a possibility which cannot be discarded.<sup>54</sup>

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49 *Ibid.*, 359. Masks are almost unknown from Greek sanctuaries aside from Orthia. Some examples appear in Tarentum and Thera, both colonies of Sparta, and in Samos, a close trading partner. Even so, the volume of masks in Orthia far outweighs those from the other three sites combined.

50 *Ibid.*

51 *Ibid.*, 360-366 covers the lineage for the 'grimacing mask' type going back to third millennium Ur and the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

52 Carter, 1988, 96. See chapter four, "The Ritual Context", for my view on the context of the poem and its possible relation to sacred marriages.

53 Carter, 1987, 378.

54 Morris, S., 101 notes the draw that the metals of Cythera would have had for the early Minoans and later Phoenicians. See Morris, 130ff for Phoenicians in Laconia.

Along with the masks, the etymology of the name Orthia can be connected to a goddess and cult object of Levantine lineage. In ancient Greek sources, the only accounts with an explanation of Orthia's name are later than the archaic period, not Spartan, and far from convincing (Paus. 3.16.7; scholiast on Pindar *Ol.* 3.54).<sup>55</sup> Rather, they each seem to report a story which was invented to explain an already practiced ritual or belief.<sup>56</sup> To find a more convincing explanation for Orthia's name, it is necessary to look to the sanctuaries of the East, where her cult seems to have originated.

In the sanctuaries of the Levant in which masks played a part in ritual, the goddess in question is either Tanit (a Phoenician goddess associated with fertility and often depicted as the consort of Baal) or Astarte (a West Semitic goddess associated with sexual desire and lust). Carter connects another goddess in addition to these two: Asherah.<sup>57</sup> Although Asherah does not appear in the inscriptions of the aforementioned sanctuaries, she does appear in literary texts from both ancient Israel and Ugarit as the consort of Baal, a position held by Astarte and Tanit as well. Furthermore, she is endowed with similar attributes to both Tanit and Astarte. It appears that these three goddesses, so similar to us from the meager surviving evidence, were also conflated amongst the Levantine populations of the time. As early as the Ugaritic period, the three were connected in textual sources; they maintained their individual focuses (whether fertility, sex, etc.) but their attributes, epithets and consorts were virtually identical.<sup>58</sup> In fact, also as early as the Ugaritic period, the three could be worshiped together.

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55 Though see below, page 47-48, regarding the reference in Pausanias's account to the *agnus castus* tree.

56 Carter, 1987, 375. There is agreement among the ancients about the connection between Orthia and *orthos*. Pausanias' story is that her cult statue was found standing in a thicket, held upright by bushes and branches. The scholiast on Pindar connects her name to guiding people safely. Carter notes that Pausanias' story is clearly an attempt at explaining circumstances which already existed; the scholiast's metaphorical use of her name may well have some validity, but surely the metaphorical meaning would derive from the goddess, not vice versa.

57 *Ibid.*, 370-376 reviews sites from Canaan, Cyprus and Phoenicia. In each of these sanctuaries, masks appear in conjunction with pictorial representations or inscriptions referencing Tanit or Astarte.

58 *Ibid.*, 378. In contrast, Olyan, S.M., *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1988), 10ff argues that the apparent conflation of Astarte with Asherah as seen in the Old Testament is a pro-Yahwehist propaganda. While this conflation may be in part due to political and religious reasons, it is difficult to imagine that there was no popular tradition of such a syncretism.

How does this connect to Orthia? According to Carter, the correlation with Orthia runs deeper than just the masks, though the Tanit-Asherah-Astarte trinity and Orthia share this ritual phenomenon. The name Orthia itself may in fact be connected to the name of the cult object. The Phoenicians who introduced this deity would have referred to the goddess and her cult object as one and the same. The Spartans, inheriting the cult, may have taken over this tradition, referring to the goddess and her cult image by the same term, *orthia*.<sup>59</sup> It may be telling that Pausanias, in one of his versions of the establishment of the Artemis Orthia cult, indicates that the wooden image sacred to her came from “Tauric” lands (Paus. 3.16.9); that is, the barbarian East.

In the Old Testament, Asherah appears as the proper name of a goddess, sometimes as the consort of Baal, as well as a noun indicating an erect piece of wood or a tree consecrated and placed near an altar (e.g. *2 Kings* 17:16-17 in association with Baal; *2 Kings* 21:3,7 in the Jerusalem temple).<sup>60</sup> With the demise of Canaanite culture, the Phoenicians kept up this practice, and *asherim* continue to be associated with altars and shrines of the three aforementioned goddesses well into the seventh century.<sup>61</sup> While no wooden *asherim* has survived, pictorial representations indicate that an erect piece of wood was connected to the worship of each of these three deities.

The connection between the goddess of the *Partheneion* and a wooden cult object may also be reflected in one of the myths surrounding her name. While much of Pausanias's account can be discarded as an *aition* for the cult after the fact, it is curious to note that he indicates that Orthia's cult statue was once found amidst a clump of *agnus castus* trees, the aforementioned willows which gave Orthia her alternative name, *Lygodesma* (Paus. 3.16.11). The trees kept the statue upright and thus

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59 Carter, 1987, 378.

60 As Olyan, 9, points out, the *asherah* is a complex symbol in the Old Testament; sometimes connected with Baal, but sometimes a part of traditional Hebrew worship. Finally, she is sometimes depicted as the consort of Yahweh himself.

61 Carter, 1987, 377; see *1 Kings* 16:31-33, Ahab adopts Phoenician religious practices which include the erection of an *asherah*.

resulted in her name, derived from ὄρθιος. According to a late source, this type of tree was supposedly linked with the sexual life of women: Aelian says that the leaves aided in the lessening of a woman's sexual desire and also helped during menstruation and lactation (Ael. *NA* 9.26).<sup>62</sup> While somewhat anecdotal, these strong connections between a tree and the goddess Orthia connect quite well with the Levantine imagery and literary sources.

Moreover, the connection between goddesses and tree worship seems to be a well-established part of Greek cult as well.<sup>63</sup> Athena's ancient statue on the Acropolis was wooden, and her relation to the olive tree is well-established at Athens. At Olympia, Hera was worshiped in the form of a *daidala*, a statue hewn roughly from a tree trunk.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, Hera's worship in this manner was accompanied by the presentation of a robe to the cult image, as well as races and choral singing amongst pubescent girls.<sup>65</sup> Strikingly, the *parthenoi*, who performed these rituals, were separated into distinct age-classes as well (Paus. 5.16.2). During Hera's festival at Plataia, a carved wooden *daidala* selected to represent a bride was clothed and celebrated during the *hieros gamos* rites.<sup>66</sup> The difference between these deities and Orthia, of course, is their existence in Greece (evidenced by the Linear "B" tablets) prior to the early Iron Age. While it is difficult to date the introduction of cult practices, there may be evidence that the 'Orientalizing' period engendered wholesale changes in the way the Greeks worshiped their gods. The application of Eastern rituals to existing deities may go hand-in-hand with the introduction of new deities such as Orthia.<sup>67</sup>

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62 The ancient sources on the *agnus castus* tree were brought to my attention by Calame, 2001, 163. However, there, as everywhere in his treatment of the *Partheneion*, Calame does not investigate the Levantine and Near Eastern connections which the tree, and Pausanias's story, imply.

63 Though, West (1997, 33ff) makes a case that the worship of all upright wooden images is an example of 'cross-cultural' interaction.

64 Burkert, 1985, 135.

65 *Ibid.*, 133.

66 Clark, I. "The *gamos* of Hera: myth and ritual," in *The Sacred and The Feminine in Ancient Greece*, ed. Susan Blundell and Margaret Williamson (London: Routledge Press, 1998), 23.

67 It is important to recall that Orthia is, during the early Iron Age, a *new* deity, whose import to Greece may be a historical fact.

If the Orthia of Sparta's archaic cult is in fact a Levantine goddess associated with, amongst others, West Semitic Astarte and Canaanite Asherah, some of the problematic passages of the *Partheneion* can potentially be resolved. As is clear from the survey of previous scholarship above, a strong case can be made that the poem is dedicated to Aphrodite or to Artemis. I contend, however, that the goddess to whom the poem is dedicated is Orthia herself, in her archaic form, the form contemporaneous with Alcman. Not only is it anachronistic to assign Artemis Orthia as the goddess of the poem, but this identification also fails to answer the questions raised by Cyrino and Gentili in their investigation of Aphrodite as the *Partheneion's* appropriate deity. Conversely, assigning Aphrodite as the deity is, as has been shown above, difficult, as her cult in Greece, and specifically at Sparta, is never associated with choral performance, and her connection to *parthenoi* is tenuous at best.

It is my argument that Orthia, a Phoenician deity imported to Greece in the eighth century can help to illuminate our knowledge of the *Partheneion*. The fact that Orthia combines the qualities and characteristics of two of the previously proposed deities, Artemis and Aphrodite, clarifies many of the details of Alcman's poem. The attributes of these goddesses, fertility and sexual desire respectively, are themselves found in the attributes of the Levantine goddesses from whose lineage Orthia is derived. The Tanit-Asherah-Astarte trinity combines the birth, growth and fertility aspects connected with the Artemis Orthia cult, with the sexual desire and beauty imagery in the poem which seem connected to Aphrodite in her role as an agent of sexual generation.

As to the troublesome word, *orthriai*, which the tradition of ancient scholarship uses as evidence of Artemis Orthia's role in the poem, there are two clear possibilities. The first is that it is a nominative plural which modifies the meaning of τὰ Πεληϊάδες (v.60). Such an adjective helps to define more clearly the type of birds or stars the Πεληϊάδες are; the type which are found in the time just before Dawn, the time of the ceremony. Alternatively, ὀρθρία, just as *Aotis*, is another epithet for

which we have no further attested evidence. Both epithets are connected to a specific time of day, and help to delineate one of the times during which the goddess of the poem was particularly powerful, or when it was particularly suitable to propitiate her. The main point to be understood, however, is while Orthia undoubtedly has a later connection with Artemis, perhaps as early as the Hellenistic period, the two goddesses were independent during Alcman's time. With the available evidence, it is not possible to determine how we are to understand ὄρθρίαι in Alcman's *Partheneion*, nevertheless it seems that its phonetic similarity to Orthia's name has acted as something of a 'red herring', leading scholars to assume a connection with Artemis where no such contemporaneous connection actually existed.

The *Partheneion*'s clear concern with the physical beauty and sexual allure of the young women has previously been explained as a homo-erotic element. As Eva Stehle points out, however, choral lyric is in general concerned with the demonstration of lessons to the community, and the display of the choral singers' ability; when it comes to maidens' choruses, it is only natural that the physical aspects of the singers are emphasized as well.<sup>68</sup> This sort of emphasis is understandable if the goddess whose festival the girls are celebrating embodies the power of sexual allure generally personified in Aphrodite. Orthia's connection with Mesopotamian and Levantine love goddesses such as Astarte and Ishtar provides her this characteristic. It is certainly reasonable to assume that the *parthenoi* celebrating the rites of a goddess intimately connected with erotic powers would be characterized by their sexual attributes (e.g., v.64-76).

The 'solar and astral qualities' of the *Partheneion*, its concern with light and dawn imagery, have also been used to connect Aphrodite to the poem, as the anthropomorphized version of the morning and evening star. This connection with the coming day is emphasized in the epithet which is applied to the goddess of the poem, *Aotis*. While there is no textual evidence to support a connection between this

68 Stehle, E., *Performance and Gender in Ancient Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 32-33. See chapter four, "The Ritual Context", for more on the function of display in the poem.

mysterious *Aotis* and any other Greek divinity, it is possible to connect Orthia, through her West Semitic lineage, to goddesses associated with dawn.<sup>69</sup> Although extant texts do not connect Astarte, in particular, with stars, she is frequently identified with the Mesopotamian Ishtar/Inanna. Both of these important Mesopotamian deities had been connected intimately with Venus for thousands of years.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, there is evidence that important religious festivals, celebrating the goddess in a role as harbinger of both day and night, were celebrated under the new moon.<sup>71</sup> Extant texts and hymns are replete with metaphors and similes which characterize Inanna and Ishtar as stars, or golden, shining objects; one in particular calls her a flaming torch which reveals the day.<sup>72</sup>

Asherah (*Athirat* in Ugaritic), in her guise as one of the two queens of the gods in Ugaritic myth is also strongly associated with solar qualities. In some stories she is the wife of the chief god El, and mother of the the twins, Dawn and Dusk. Sometimes this maternal connection is eschewed in favour of her own role as the goddess of the dawn, *Athirat-Shapsh*.<sup>73</sup> Clearly, the trinity of these three goddesses, Tanit-Asherah-Astarte, is intimately connected with dawn and solar imagery across cultures and through the centuries; such a connection helps to explain the heretofore mysterious epithet, *Aotis*.

Finally, the offering of a robe to the goddess, so conspicuously mentioned in the *Partheneion*, and a part of Greek rituals involving female goddesses, may also have resonance with respect to Asherah. The Old Testament clearly identifies 'woven coverings' as one of the offerings which women made for the goddess (2 *Kings* 23:7: "He also tore down the quarters...which were in the temple of the Lord and where the women did weaving for Asherah"). Furthermore, the very festival being celebrated

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69 Cyrino, 36.

70 Frankfort, H., "State Festivals in Egypt and Mesopotamia," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 15.1 (1952): 4, Leick, G., "Sexuality and Religion in Mesopotamia," *Religion Compass*, 2.2 (2008): 127.

71 Jacobsen, T., *The Treasures of Darkness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 138.

72 In general: *Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (ETCSL)* 4.07.02 1: "Lady of all the divine powers, resplendent light..."; Specifically referencing Istar in combination with the planet Venus: *ETCSL* 4.07.04 1-8: "As you rise in the morning sky like a flame visible from afar, and at your bright appearance in the evening sky...". For more, see Leick, G., *Sex and Eroticism in Mesopotamian Literature* (London: Routledge, 1994), 57.

73 Wyatt, N., *Religious Texts from Ugarit* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 46 (see note 39).

in the *Partheneion*, a *pannychis*, may have Near Eastern resonances with respect to these goddesses as well.<sup>74</sup> While our knowledge of Mesopotamian and Levantine festivals beyond the state-sanctioned ones is scarce, there is a night-time cult of some sort alluded to in some narrative poetry; wisdom literature also mentions specific rituals to be performed at night.<sup>75</sup>

The identity of the goddess of the *Partheneion* has troubled scholars since the publication of the 'Louvre Papyrus' in 1863. While I do not hold out hope that my discussion will be the final word on the topic, I do contend that an examination of the Near Eastern lineage of Orthia illuminates some previously tangled knots in the interpretation of the deity of the poem. Most previous scholarship has attempted to ascertain the deity solely through an examination of Greek sources, but it has failed to integrate the larger context of archaic Spartan culture. Sparta, and the Greek world in general, had close and continuous relations with the Near East in the archaic period, and these connections must be taken into account in any analysis of the literary artifacts of that period. In a land such as Laconia, where entities long discarded in the rest of the Greek world lived on, the appearance of a Phoenician-derived goddess in a ritual poem may in fact be less surprising than in any other region.

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74 Clay, D., "Alcman's *Partheneion*," *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 39 (1991): 52ff.

75 *The Building of Ningirsu's Temple* (ETCSL 2.1.7: 353-364). In *The Farmer's Instructions* (ETCSL 5.6.3: 107-109) a night-time ritual to do with grain is associated with harvest-time.

## Chapter 4: The Ritual Context

The ritual context for the performance of Alcman's *Partheneion*, just like the deity of the poem, has been a debated topic since the discovery of the 'Louvre Papyrus'. Many theories have been offered, but no clear consensus has been formed about the nature of the cult being celebrated. Claude Calame's landmark *Les Choeurs de Jeunes Filles en Grèce Archaique* provided the foundation for examining the *Partheneion* as an initiatory poem, a *rite de passage*.<sup>1</sup> While Calame's argument has been accepted by some, the basis of the evidence for his discussion of Alcman tends to be derived from Alcman himself; the circularity of the argument, while convincing, nonetheless demands more evidence in order for it to be sustained.

Another point of view has been the criticism of Eva Stehle, who has focused on the performance context of Alcman's poetry, as well as other early choral lyric. Stehle argues that the poem seems to indicate that it was performed in front of a mixed-gender audience; she contends that the preparation of a poem and dance, and the hours of necessary practice, would make no sense without an audience in front of whom it could be presented.<sup>2</sup> An audience of that sort would preclude the aspects which Calame claims are part of the *rite de passage*: the similarity of the performers and the exclusion of the initiatory group from the community.<sup>3</sup> Although the performance context aspect of Stehle's critique is extremely valuable, she is unable to account for aspects of the *Partheneion* which seem to indicate that it reflects an initiation rite. The crux of current analyses of the poem's accompanying ritual, then, are these two elements: the aspects which seem to indicate an initiation rite

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1 See Calame, 1977, especially 45-47.

2 See Stehle, 1997, specifically, 31.

3 Calame, 2001, 22; see below, note 55.

and those which reflect the public nature of the performance of the poem. An exhaustive analysis of extant Greek sources, including the fragmentary remains of Alcman's other poems, has not provided evidence for a consensus viewpoint on this topic.

Since Alcman is our earliest choral lyric writer, comparative evidence pre-dating him from within the Greek tradition is lacking. Rites which focus on young women, however, appear in Near Eastern sources such as the Old Testament and the Mesopotamian "Bridal Songs". The rituals of these cultures, one contemporaneous with Alcman, the other much older, provide comparative examples, and a possible source for the rites associated with the *Partheneion*. The recognized connections of archaic Sparta with the Levant and Mesopotamia support such a comparative investigation. While maidens' rituals and their accompanying literature are not as prevalent in the Near East as in Classical Greece, nonetheless traces remain which seem to show a connection between rites of adolescence and a focus on the display of young women, the same convergence which has been noted with respect to Alcman. Since I have proposed that the goddess being propitiated in the poem is Eastern in origin, a close examination of the Near Eastern sources may help to elucidate some of the remaining interpretive problems.

Just as in archaic Greece, rituals for young women across the Near Eastern world focused on dancing. Dance and young women are linked in Sumeria, Assyria, and ancient Israel.<sup>4</sup> In the Old Testament, the book of *Judges* (21:19-22) details a tradition of girls dancing: the 'daughters of Shiloh'. During an annual feast of the Lord, the girls went down to the vineyards and danced.<sup>5</sup> This vintage

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4 Gabbay, U., "Dance and Textual Sources from Ancient Mesopotamia," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66.3 (2003): 104; Ilan, T., "Dance and Gender in Ancient Jewish Sources," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66.3 (2003): 135-136.

5 Martin, J.D., *The Book of Judges: A Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 224ff contends that this is a leftover from Canaanite religion, and most likely marks a significant event in the agricultural year. Ackerman, S., *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen: Women in Judges and Biblical Israel* (New York: Doubleday Press, 1998), 254: "...the yearly fall festival celebrating the harvest of the grapes and the pressing of the new wine."; Ackerman, 259, this festival may also be alluded to in *1 Samuel* 1:1-20. Clearly, the consensus view is that we are to understand this legend as a reference to a permanent ritual event in the ancient Israelite calendar.

festival, while based in autumn, seems to provide compelling evidence for women's ritual and music in ancient Israel which are akin to those associated with the *Partheneion*. A further allusion to the role of women in the vintage festival is in *Jeremiah* (31:13: "Then maidens will dance and be glad"). In fact, while dancing and singing can be performed by either male or female performers in the Bible, it is evident from Hannah's song in *1 Samuel* (2:1-10), also performed at a vineyard celebration, that women were specifically noted as appropriate for such festivals linked to the fertility of nature.<sup>6</sup>

During the vineyard dance in *Judges*, the girls are seized and raped by the Benjaminites; a sort of Sabine rape.<sup>7</sup> In the course of *Judges*, this rape serves to provide the Benjaminites with wives, and while characterized as savage, is nonetheless acceptable.<sup>8</sup> Besides the obvious Roman parallel, this legend is also reminiscent of the foundation myth for rites involving women in Greece: the cult of Artemis Limnatis, for example, also centres on a wilderness ritual of young women and its interruption by seizure and rape (Paus. 4.4.2). At the festival of another Laconian version of Artemis, Artemis Karyatis, *parthenoi* celebrating the rites are attacked by men (Paus. 4.4.2).<sup>9</sup> The tradition of young women being seized and raped is prevalent in many other stories from Greek myth, for example Persephone and Aphrodite respectively (*h. Cer.* 18-20; *h. Ven.* 121-122).<sup>10</sup> In each instance the women involved are pubescent, possibly of marriageable age, but not yet married.<sup>11</sup>

The rabbinical tradition records another ritual involving young Israelite women. On the 15th of

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6 Ackerman, 260ff. The main point of Ackerman's chapter is to stress the femininity of the vintage festival; the expected behaviour of women at this festival is dance and song.

7 Snaith, N.H., "The Song of Songs: The Dances of the Virgins," *The American Journal of Semitic Languages* 50.3 (1934): 137; Gaster, T.H., *Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 444ff adduces a host of examples from comparative mythology to promote his view that this as a fertility rite; Ilan 135 notes that this is reminiscent of wine and fertility celebrations common to the ancient Mediterranean.

8 Ackerman, 256-257.

9 Cole, S.G., "Domesticating Artemis," in *The Sacred and the Feminine in Ancient Greece*, ed. Susan Blundell and Margaret Williamson (London: Routledge Press, 1998), 28.

10 While the story of Aphrodite in the hymn is a falsehood, nonetheless, she represents herself as a maiden who was seized and carried away.

11 Gaster 445; Boling, R.G., *The Anchor Bible: Judges* (New York: Doubleday Press, 1975), 294. Ackerman 267ff notes the parallels between the *Judges* story and those of Greece.

the month of *Av*, in the late spring, the maidens of the community would go out to dance in public, and call to the those present, “Young men, look and observe well whom you are about to choose as a spouse” (*Taanit* 4:8).<sup>12</sup> The salient features of this ritual, performed by virgins for the purpose of being viewed by young men as part of an exchange of women and related to fertility, have a striking similarity to the *Partheneion*.

These Israelite rituals focus on virgins, separated from the community, yet still on display for young men. The separation element appears to be crucial to these rites, which might explain the selection of the vineyard as a location for these rites, a natural liminal site between nature and civilization. In Greek rites associated with choruses, wilderness plays a similar liminal role: the sanctuary of the aforementioned Artemis Karyatis, located far from the city; also the sanctuary of Artemis Brauron in Attica, similarly located far from the city.<sup>13</sup>

The focus on dancing is crucial to an understanding of the connections with Alcman's *partheneia*. The link between young women and dancing, so essential to Greek rites, is equally as important for the Hebrews. The highly gendered role of dancing is encoded in the language itself, the Hebrew root *hwl*. This root is exclusively used for female dances in the Old Testament; another, *rqd*, is used only for men. In several instances the dancing of women is described exclusively using *hwl*, e.g. *Exodus* 15:20, *Judges* 11:34, *Song of Songs* 7:1.<sup>14</sup> The description of the *Av* ritual in the *Mishnah* is also described with this specific, gendered term, *hwlt*. The root *hwl* also indicates the type of dancing which was inherently feminine: circle dancing.<sup>15</sup> Sexuality and dancing seem to have gone hand in

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12 The translation is from Ilan, 135.

13 Ackerman, 271.

14 Ilan, 135 brought this to my attention; the roots are strictly gendered in the ancient Hebrew sources. In the story of the daughters of Shiloh (*Judges* 21:20), the girls dance (*lhwl*) the dances (*bmhwt*); a repetition of the gendering of the act inherent in the language.

15 Ackerman, 274 notes the similarity of the verb used to describe the dance of *Judges* 21:21 and 23 to that used to describe a woman's writhing during labour. This may be a further indication that this root is specifically circumscribed for women.

hand, as well as the relationship between maidens and circular forms of dance. In Greek choral rites too, probably including the *Partheneion*, circular dancing was the canonical form for women.<sup>16</sup>

Another story in the book of *Judges* preserves evidence for maidens' rituals in ancient Israel. In the story of Jephthah and his daughter, we are told of a custom whereby the daughters of Israel celebrated the daughter of Jephthah (*Judges* 11:40). She had come out to greet her father upon his return from war (*Judges* 11:34: "...who should come out to meet him but his daughter, dancing to the sound of tambourines"), but as Jephthah had previously sworn to Yahweh that he would give to the Lord whatever greeted him upon his return, thus he was bound by his oath to deliver his daughter.<sup>17</sup> Instead of immediately killing the girl, however, there follows the strange story whereby Jephthah's daughter convinces her father to allow her to live in the wilderness for months as a *betula*, a young woman (*Judges* 11:37: "'But grant me this one request,' she said, 'Give me two months to roam the hills and weep with my friends, because I will never marry [*betula*]"). Taking into account the ritual exposition which follows, it is difficult to not read this story as the etiology of a wilderness rite for maidens.<sup>18</sup>

The age of the daughter is also delineated clearly in the story. As Peggy Day notes, scholars are increasingly becoming aware that *betulim*, generally translated 'virginity', does not necessarily indicate a lack of sexual activity, but rather an age-group to which a girl belongs. Specifically, this age-group appears to be analogous to the range covered by the Greek *parthenos*.<sup>19</sup> The narrative seems to describe the etiology of a rite whereby girls were purposely separated from the community and when

16 Calame, 2001, 34-35.

17 Martin, 145 emphasizes the femininity of the instruments which she leaves the house playing, "They were used primarily for cult dances and processions, almost exclusively by women." This is yet another indication that there are significant female religious rites in the background of the Old Testament. Gaster, 430 notes, among others, the parallels in Classical mythology to Idomeneus's return from Troy, and Maeander's return to his home in Phrygia; in both instances a similar vow is made and the child of the hero dies.

18 Martin, 146 is cautious, but concludes that this passage must be read as evidence of a ritual, possibly pre-marital, connected with fertility and the upcoming nuptial arrangements.

19 Day, P., 59: "It is somewhat akin to the English term 'adolescent', although *betula* refers specifically to females."

they returned they were treated as adult women. Whether they were virgins or not at the time may be immaterial to the ceremony.<sup>20</sup>

Noteworthy also is the uniqueness of this story. It is one of the only instances in the Old Testament of a foundation legend for a ritual designed to commemorate human activities. Most of the ritual events in the biblical tradition are centred around acts by Yahweh on behalf of Israel (e.g. Passover, Shavuot) and those focused on human activities tend to come late in the tradition, such as Hanukkah (2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.). The stories in the book of *Judges*, probably dating to the late Bronze age, were compiled during the seventh and sixth centuries; the story of Jephthah's daughter is possibly the earliest ritual event commemorating the actions of a human being. More incredibly, it commemorates the actions of a woman.<sup>21</sup>

Another text associated with the rituals of maidens in ancient Israel is the *Song of Songs*. While the *Song* is not unambiguously a ritual text in its current state, it appears to be at least partially derived from ritual sources.<sup>22</sup> Some scholars postulate a connection between the *Song of Songs* and earlier Sumerian-Akkadian hymns which focused on adolescent rites for girls.<sup>23</sup> Even if this were not the case, the background of the poem is undeniably pre-marital:<sup>24</sup> the male and female characters are clearly adolescents, and it appears that the girl who is the focus of the poem, unmarried and young, is a virgin.<sup>25</sup> Sometimes, she is surrounded by a band of woman who appear to be her age-mates, the

20 Day, P., 60. Ackerman 272 connects this bewailing of virginity to Greek lyric, specifically Sappho 114.

21 Ackerman, 111. For the dating of *Judges*, see Boling, *xxi* and 29-38.

22 Murphy, R.E., *The Song of Songs* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 38-57, details part of the long history of the interpretations of the *Song*. Modern scholars generally fall into two camps: one believes that the poem has a ritual background, the other that it was purely erotic entertainment. I do not intend here to advance an opinion, only to say that the possibility exists that allusions to other rituals would be present in either case; the *Song's* preoccupation with virginity metaphors seem to suggest a ritual background, but they may be borrowed phrases from other sources which have been lost to us.

23 Carter, 1988, 91.

24 Boling, 210 rejects the solely etiological point of view, though he freely admits that there are parallels to tragic sacrifice of a hero's son or daughter throughout comparative folklore. Some of these are the etiologies for ritual, so it may be that the absence of evidence in this case does not rule out a similar possibility.

25 Snaith, 133. Compare with Pope, 512, however, who translates this as a "my perfect one" and dispenses with any positive evidence for her virginal status. Nonetheless, it seems certain that the girl, whose unmarried state is

'Daughters of Jerusalem'. This group acts as an 'on-stage audience' or chorus, praising the girl and also helping to advise her on a course of action; they are distinctly differentiated from the girl who is the focus of the song's praise.<sup>26</sup> Of note also is the fact that the main girl is from the upper classes; in 7:2 she is referred to as the daughter of a prince or nobleman.

Throughout the *Song*, the time-frame shifts from season to season. There are spring motifs present in many portions, which may reflect one of the seasons of its ritual use.<sup>27</sup> 2:8-2:17 begins with a famous description of fertility and growth, and throughout the course of the poem the setting is often spring. Even within the conservative rabbinical tradition the description of spring at 2:8 has been seen as a metaphor for a woman's coming of age (*Niddah* 47a). This metaphorical use of spring as an analogy for a female pubescence is used at length throughout the poem.

The blossoming of different fruits has also been read, convincingly, as a metaphor for the stages of a woman's life. The appearance of figs on the trees (2:13), a fruit frequently analogized to female sexuality, must be taken as evidence of the relevance of pubescence to the content of the poem.<sup>28</sup> The fig's connection with sexual awakening permeates the Hebrew Bible; the tree of knowledge in *Genesis* may also have been a fig tree (*Genesis* 3:7: "Then the eyes of them both were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig-leaves together and made coverings for themselves").<sup>29</sup>

In 6:1 to 6:12, spring, ripe fruits and blossoming flowers continue to be used as erotic metaphors for pubescence. The girl goes to a valley to check on the blossoming vegetation (6:11);

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emphasized, is a virgin.

- 26 Murphy, 84 notes that the Daughters acts as a foil for the woman's own reflections; furthermore, they are differentiated explicitly from the woman in 2:2, "As a lily among the thorns, so is my friend among women [literally 'the daughters']." See below, page 75, for the parallel differentiation of Hagesichora from the maidens of the *Partheneion*.
- 27 Snaith, 131.
- 28 Pope, M.H., *The Anchor Bible: The Song of Songs* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977), 397, describes the the stages of a fig ripening and their likening to the stages of a woman's maturity: an unripe fig (a child), a green fig (a maiden), a ripe fig (a woman).
- 29 *Ibid.*, 398, paraphrases both secular and rabbinical traditions with respect to this point. Also note the correlation between the probable time of the *Partheneion*'s ritual and the ripening of the fig, see West, 1978, 253.

earlier the woman's beloved is browsing through a garden and picking flowers (6:2). The garden as a metaphor for the female body is well known in the ancient Near East.<sup>30</sup> The erotic metaphors continue: at 6:11 she admires the blossoming pomegranates, a fruit whose sexual connotations are well known in Classical myth as well (e.g. *h. Cer.* 373). The girl also visits a walnut grove, another fruit whose connections to sexuality are well known throughout the ancient world. The nut is a symbol of love, and more specifically a symbol of the female genitalia, in Near Eastern sources.<sup>31</sup> It is also associated with young women in the Classical world: for example, both the epithet of the Spartan cult deity Artemis Karyatis and her nymphs, the Karyatids, are derived from the Greek word for nut, *karya*.<sup>32</sup> The Karyatids are a collective group of maidens; Artemis Karyatis, the object of a festival involving maidens' choral dancing (Paus. 3.10.7).<sup>33</sup>

The metaphorical use of nature also extends to the use of young animals as a comparison to the body of a young maiden. 7:4 compares the breasts of the Shulamite to young animals (7:3: “Your breasts are like two fawns, | Twins of a gazelle”); this comparison to young animals seems to clarify that the girl is in the throes of puberty, not a child, nor a child-bearing woman.<sup>34</sup> Later, at 7:9, in another metaphor for her pubescence, the girl herself is analogized to a palm tree; her genitalia and breasts become, figuratively, apples and grape clusters respectively.<sup>35</sup> The analogy of the palm tree to a maiden is also known from Greek literature (*Od.* 6.162ff): Odysseus specifically likens Nausicaa to a

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30 Leick, 1994, 53 notes the commonality of the garden as both a locale for amorous encounters and as an analogy for the female genitalia. Murphy, 78, in reference to the *Song*, “Central to the poem of admiration...is comparison of the woman to a luxuriant 'garden' that produces choice fruits and spices.”

31 Pope, 577.

32 Pope, *ibid.* Larson, J., “Handmaidens of Artemis?” *Classical Journal* 92.3 (1997): 253, translates Artemis Karyatis as “Artemis of the Nut-Tree”.

33 Calame, 150.

34 Pope, 470. The youthfulness of the animals is a reference to the 'youthful freshness and small size' of the breasts. Such a description belies the fact that the girl in question is pubescent; Pope further notes the use of small breasts on cult figurines of Inana/Ishtar to represent her as a virgin.

35 *Ibid.*, 633ff sees here a connection to Classical deities: “It may be noted that the multiple breasts of the representations of Artemis of Ephesus look very much like a cluster of large dates...”

palm tree after having compared her to girls dancing and to Artemis (*Od.* 6.153ff). This analogy may have a further meaning in the Near East as an allusion to the attributes of the love goddess, Ishtar.<sup>36</sup>

The *Song* connects maidens, spring and dancing throughout as well. Spring is connected with dancing early on in the poem (2:12: “Flowers appear on the earth | the season of singing has come”). 7:1 begins with an imperative to dance (“Leap, Leap, O Shulammit; | leap, leap, that we may gaze on you”).<sup>37</sup> As with the previously mentioned ritual instances of dancing, the focus on the importance of the woman being displayed is stressed.<sup>38</sup>

The evidence for rituals relating to the rites of young women in the rest of ancient Mesopotamia is more slight than that of ancient Israel. The ancient Mesopotamians were aware of the different stages of a woman's life: lists from the later Assyrian period show the breast-feeding baby, the weaned child, toddler, adolescent, adult and old age. The Sumerian word *ki-sikil*, often translated maiden, covers the same semantic range as the Greek *parthenos*: from the onset of puberty to the consummation of marriage.<sup>39</sup> Our extant sources, however, do not focus on women's rituals.<sup>40</sup> Instead, evidence for the rites of young women must be sought in the mythical narratives of the gods.

Some extant Mesopotamian mythical narratives do, for example, connect dancing and maidens. In the story of *Nergal and Ereshkigal*, the queen of the underworld, Ereshkigal, hearkens back to her

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36 *Ibid.*, 633.

37 *Ibid.*, 596ff. I have followed both Pope's translation and placement of this line; the *New International Bible* translates “Come back, come back.” Nevertheless, the Hebrew is ambiguous as to what type of motion is being urged here. The name *Shulamite* may be related to a ritual background of the song. There are conflicting interpretations of its etymology, but it may be a cult title of some vague Hebrew or Ugaritic war deity. While this would strengthen the case for the ritual background of the *Song*, the evidence is not convincing for this identification; as Pope, 600 says, “It is manifest that the final word has not been written on the term *šūlammit*.”

38 In the song, the dance of the *Shulamite* is called, mysteriously, the 'dance of the two camps.' Pope 601ff notes that there may be a connection between this dance and ritual activities in honour of Ishtar, in her capacity as a war goddess. Pope brings forth evidence for the type of dance from Akkadian, Ugaritic and Egyptian sources, but as with the name of the dancer, no firm conclusions can be made.

39 Leick, 1994, 65.

40 Stol, M., “Private Life in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. J. Sasson (New York: Scribner, 1995), 487. Another hymn is even more specific with respect to the stages of a woman's life: “I am daughter, I am bride, I am spouse, I am housekeeper.”

youth and the dancing which she did as a young girl (5.1ff: “Since I was a young girl, | I have not known the play of maidens, | nor have I known the frolic of little girls.”).<sup>41</sup> This source also illustrates the semantic range of the Sumerian verb 'to play' which can cover a series of activities, including dancing; the Greek *paizein* covers much the same range.<sup>42</sup>

The connection between young women and dancing is also made clear in 'sacred marriage' texts, one of the most important of extant sources for Mesopotamian ritual. Inana is characterized in these texts as a maiden, prior to the consummation of her marriage with Dumuzi. Moreover, the central elements of Alcman's poetry, chorus singing and performance ritual for a god, are central to the Mesopotamian ritual as well.<sup>43</sup> In one hymn, in order to hide the evidence of her tryst with Dumuzi, the two concoct a lie which she will tell her mother (*ETCSL* 4.08.08.13-22: “My girlfriend was dancing with me in the square. She ran around playfully with me, banging the drum. She sang sweet songs for me...”). While this is presented in the narrative as a falsehood, it may be evidence for the likely and believable activities of maidens in ancient Mesopotamia.<sup>44</sup>

The connection between dancing and adolescence is made even clearer in a Sumerian hymn to Ishtar (*ETCSL* 4.08.3.42-48: “See now, our breasts stand out; see how hair has grown on our genitals, signifying my progress to the embrace of a man!”).<sup>45</sup> This text clearly indicates that dancing can be an accompaniment to the onset of physical puberty. The existence of social rituals to accompany this rite,

41 Translation from: Foster, B. *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (Bethesda: CDL Press, 2005), 520.

42 Rosenmeyer, P., “Girls at Play in Early Greek Poetry,” *American Journal of Philology* (2004): 163, notes Alcman's use of the full range of this verb in *PMG* 58.1-2: “It is not Aphrodite, but wild Eros who *plays* like a child.” She stresses, 177, the double meaning inherent in the term, “It is always both innocent and suggestive, meaning different things to different people”; Gabbay, 103 notes very much the same thing when he connects the verb for play with 'to dance,' an inherently sexualized activity.

43 Carter, 1988, 91 makes a case for finding a connection between Alcman's *Partheneion* and the Mesopotamian texts. She postulates that Phoenician contacts with Sparta may have provided a route for the transmission of these texts.

44 Gabbay 104.

45 Carter, 1988, 91 also connects this poem to Alcman though she does not analogize the focus on dancing and sexuality which is exhibited by both Greek and Mesopotamian sources. She points out that the pre-occupation with pointing out and praising the sexual elements of Inana's body may be compared to v.70-77 in the *Partheneion* which emphasize sexually alluring elements of the chorus-girls.

while not evident conclusively in extant Mesopotamian texts, nonetheless is alluded to in other hymns and narratives involving Inana. While the folk traditions of the real population would undoubtedly be different than the narratives of a goddess, it may still be possible to glimpse the real rites which likely underpin the legendary stories.<sup>46</sup>

The so-called 'Bridal Songs', hymns to Inana which deal with the preliminaries to her wedding, provide us with one of the only sources for rites relating to adolescence and betrothal. These texts do not fit into the tradition of 'sacred marriage' in which Inana generally plays a role, and do not actually feature the marriage itself, but rather the period between the onset of puberty and the wedding. Inana is referred to exclusively as a *ki-sikil* in these works; the focus is on the period of transition when the girl becomes a sexual object. While their subject is a goddess, in thematic range, they are similar to extant Greek *partheneia* such as Alcman's which focus on unmarried girls.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the 'Bridal Songs' are quite overtly not concerned with the elements of a marriage ritual: integration of the bride into a new household, in-laws, children do not play a role in the story. The concern is solely with the same stage of life as represented by the Greek *parthenos*.<sup>48</sup> Some have postulated that their role is to deal with the anxiety felt by the bride.<sup>49</sup>

The 'Bridal Songs' focus on the highest echelons of society. The main character, a goddess, is not the only evidence which suggests an analogy with an elite woman; the dress and jewelry of the woman are also a primary concern; such items would most naturally belong to women of a higher

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46 Leick, 1994, 67 notes that we can learn something from the doings of a goddess, even if we have to be careful with how we interpret the evidence: "...the poetic texts nevertheless formulate cultural ideals, even if they do not conform with prevalent social mores."

47 Carter, 1988, 96, believes that Alcman's *Partheneion* is a sacred marriage rite, and uses the 'Bridal Songs' as evidence for this. The songs, however, are not sacred marriage hymns, but reflect the anxieties of a young woman prior to her marriage.

48 Leick, 1994, 67, discusses her use of the appellation 'Bridal Songs,' rather than 'Wedding Songs.' The songs do not mention any of the particulars of the mysterious Mesopotamian wedding ceremony. Rather, they focus on the personal feelings of the woman in the song.

49 *Ibid.*, 68. Ackerman 274 concludes similarly for ancient Israel and Greece: "...the duality of celebration and lamentation inherent in the Greek marriage hymns is also an intrinsic part of Israel's vintage song genre."

social strata. As with the Hebrew evidence, this may indicate that the main participants in such rituals were royalty, or at least attached to the upper social echelons.

The content of the poems, as with the *Song of Songs*, is replete with metaphors associated with female adolescence. The process of puberty is analogized to the preparation of the sheets which will make up the marriage bed; a detailed narrative describes how the bleached and woven sheets, ready for the intimate activities of man and wife, are made from freshly picked, green flax (*ETCSL* 4.08.01). The poem stresses the various emotional states of the young woman who is faced with her impending movement to the adult world: impatience, flirtatiousness, curiosity, etc. Such a collection of emotions compares well with those expressed by the girls in Alcman's *Partheneion*.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, large sheets seem to have played a role in the rituals for Greek goddesses, such as Hera. The φᾶρος, the robe so central to the *Partheneion*'s ritual aspect, might have been just such a sheet.<sup>51</sup>

There may also be a trace of young women's rites in the hymns which describe the relationship between Inana and her brother, the god Utu. Utu may represent a specific role which the brother of a young woman had in the decisions regarding her marriage. While our knowledge of ancient Mesopotamian betrothal processes is scant, it appears that the eldest brother may have been responsible for finding a suitable husband for his sister.<sup>52</sup> In one hymn, the two go to the 'Mountain of Cedars', expressly described as far from the city and deep within the wilderness (*ETCSL* 4.32.f.24-30: "...to the mountains of herbs, to the mountains of cedars, to the mountains; to the mountains of cedars, the mountains of cypresses...to the distant source of rolling rivers, to the mountains."). Inana explicitly declares herself a virgin (*ETCSL* 4.32.f.35-38: "I am unfamiliar with womanly matters...") and asks Utu

50 Leick, 1994, 89. Clark, C., "The Gendering of Body in Alcman's *Partheneion* 1: Narrative, Sex and Social Order in Archaic Sparta," *Helios* 23.2 (1986): 146.

51 Carter, 1988, 93 points out, "...a *faros* can be any large piece of cloth, including a wide cloak or bedspread."

52 Leick, 1994, 80-89. She analogizes to modern Turkey, where the father plays almost no role in the wedding ceremony, and it is the brother who can advise the parents on his sister's potential marriage partners. Something similar may be at play here.

to take her to the mountain, where she will eat the plants that grow in this mysterious, otherworldly place. After they have returned from the mountain, Inana is to be deposited with her in-laws. It seems that, having traveled to the wilderness a virgin, she returns ready to take on her nuptial duties as a wife (*ETCSL* 4.32.f.44-49: “Escort me to my mother-in-law...Escort me to my sister-in-law.”). While it must be cautioned that this text deals with the activities of deities, it may be a reflection or etiology of an actual rite of passage for young women.<sup>53</sup>

The texts and ritual evidence from Mesopotamia and the Levant connect many of the ideas which are evident in extant Greek sources such as Alcman's *Partheneion*. The link between dancing and young women is important in each culture; specifically, the focus on women in the age-range of the Greek *parthenos* and their connection to dancing and display. In the Near Eastern sources, there is an awareness of the types of age-groups in which the Greeks were also interested: Sumerian *ki-sikil* and Hebrew *betula* cover the same range as *parthenos*. Poems such as the *Song of Songs* and hymns to Inana emphasize the praise of the subject of the songs as well.

In Greek mythical and literary sources, groups of maidens, composed of participants of the same gender and age, are frequently present: the Muses, Nymphs and Danaides are just a few of many possible examples. The Pleiades, so prominently mentioned in Alcman's *Partheneion*, were, in some traditions, maidens in a chorus.<sup>54</sup> The term used in Greek to characterize them, *helikes*, specifies the similarity of the participants in these groups to one another.<sup>55</sup> The age of the girls involved in these groups, both mythic and real, are similar to those of the Near Eastern sources: girls past puberty but as

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53 *Ibid.*, 85, describes this as a rite of passage. Leick believes that Utu, in his role as a guide for travellers, is escorting Inana on some sort of ritual. As she says, the temporary absence from her normal surroundings and instruction in matters pertaining to a new stage in life appear to play a part in this narrative; these are exactly the sorts of things one expects to find in a rite of passage.

54 Clay, 61.

55 Calame, 2001, 27 notes evidence from Pi. *P.* 3.17ff; Ar. *Th.* 1029ff; Eur. *IT* 1143ff. Most importantly, a fragment of Alcman uses the term (*PMG* 10b) to describe the girls who appear to be dancing and singing a *Partheneion*. Further, in archaic poetry the term is used to describe creatures of the same age class, e.g. *Od.* 18.373ff.

yet unmarried. A *parthenos* is notorious in Greek literature as an untamed sexual being, a stark contrast to the ages before and after adolescence: the first, strictly asexual (children) and the next, tamed sexuality (married woman).<sup>56</sup> The participants in the *Partheneion*'s ritual seem to reflect these mythic examples: the song's performers are clearly a group of young women; the use of feminine grammatical forms and female names throughout confirms this (e.g. v.41: feminine pronoun; v.44: feminine adjective; v.45: feminine pronoun; v.70ff: Nanno, Areta, Sulakis, Klesisera, Astaphis, Philulla, Damareta, Wianthemis). Moreover, that they themselves are *parthenoi* seems even more certain based on their own self-representation (v.85ff: ἐγὼν μὲν αὐτὰ | παρσένος μάταν ἀπὸ θράνω λέλακα).

The internal evidence of the poem, while not as forthright when it comes to the age of the performers, is nevertheless conclusive. The main evidence for the performers' age is external to the poem, not part of the oral society of archaic Greece and quite late: the term *partheneia*. This 'genre' is first mentioned in Aristophanes' *Birds* (917ff).<sup>57</sup> There, it refers to choral songs which praise the city and are sung by young women. The term *partheneia* is not encountered again until it is a part of the Alexandrian tradition of scholarship. The Alexandrians used it to refer either to songs sung by young girls or for young girls.<sup>58</sup> A fragmentary commentary on Alcman from the Hellenistic period associates *partheneia* with him when it refers to one of his rivals as a “craftsman of maidens' songs” (*PMG* 13a, 9ff: ἀντίφαριν Λάκωνι τε— | —κτονα παρθενίων σοφῶν Ἄλκμᾶ— | —νι).<sup>59</sup> Another commentary on the life of Alcman alludes to the age of the performers of his songs; it says that the Spartans were accustomed to put a foreigner in charge of traditional choruses of their “daughters and young men”

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56 Clark, C., 145, notes that Greek men felt female sexuality was problematic; a young woman was not 'tamed' until married. See also Carson, A., “Putting Her in Her Place: Woman, Dirt and Desire,” in *Before Sexuality*, ed. D. Halperin, J. Winkler and F. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 143, marriage is the means for Greek men to tame the dangerous *eros* of women.

57 Calame, 1977, 149.

58 *Ibid.*, 153.

59 Campbell, 1988, 342 conjectures that this rival is Pindar.

(PMG 10a, 30ff).<sup>60</sup>

Aside from this direct evidence, there are traces, both literary and material, of many cults in Sparta which mention girls dancing for various deities, usually different permutations of the goddess Artemis. Pausanias tells us of a *heorte* for Artemis Limnai which was performed by young women, although chorus singing is not attested (Paus. 4.4.2).<sup>61</sup> As noted above, Artemis Karyatis, was celebrated by the dance and song of young women, specifically *parthenoi* (Paus. 3.10.7ff).<sup>62</sup> Athenaeus provides an ancient account of the *Hyacinthia*, where songs were performed, and the whole community came for the spectacle (Ath. 4.17.139c-f).<sup>63</sup> There is also the late evidence of Plutarch that Helen herself was kidnapped from the temple of Artemis Orthia while dancing as a young woman (Plu. *Thes.* 31).

Metaphors used in the *Partheneion* also allude to the age of the participants; the Greeks believed that a *parthenos* was akin to a wild animal, dangerous and unpredictable.<sup>64</sup> The poem twice analogizes the girls to horses (v.47; v.58ff). While this is a common metaphor for beauty in archaic poetry, it has a double meaning; a relation between the taming of a wild horse and the control of a young women through marriage is well attested in other archaic literature (e.g. Anacr. 417).<sup>65</sup>

Another metaphor, v.54, refers to Hagesichora's hair as 'pure' (v.54: χρυσὸς ὡς ἀκήρατος). While signaling the unmatched beauty of Hagesichora's golden hair, such a description also alludes to her chaste state. In other occurrences in Greek literature, ἀκήρατος is used it to refer to a girl who has

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60 See chapter one regarding the possible foreign origin of Alcman.

61 This forms part of Pausanias's account of the beginning of the Messenian War. The sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis was shared by the Lacedaimonians and Messenians and was located on the frontier between their territory. While the maidens of Sparta (*parthenous*) were going to celebrate the festival they were attacked and raped by the Messenians. We are left uncertain of the specifics of the festival in archaic times, but young women were certainly involved.

62 Calame, 2001, 150. Another case of a group of maidens who dance in chorus with a collective name, *Karyatides*.

63 Rosenmeyer, T.G., 1966, 333.

64 See above, note 5; also Carson 144: "The presexual or asexual female in Greek thought is part of the wilderness, an untamed animal who, given a choice, prefers the wild life of Artemis, roaming the woods..."

65 Ingalls, W.B., "Ritual Performance as Training for Daughters in Archaic Greece," *Phoenix* 54 (2000): 10 notes that the taming of an animal and the marriage of an adolescent girl is a common metaphor.

not yet had sexual intercourse (Eur. *Tr.* 675; Pl. *Lg.* 640d); it is also used in metaphors for virginity such as Eur. *Hipp.* 73-74 which calls a meadow ἀκηράτου λειμῶνος, untouched by the scythe. Both of these meanings are inherent in Alcman's use of ἀκήρατος; they provide more evidence that the singers of the poem are *parthenoi*, virgin girls.

The poem's concentration on the beauty of the participants is also crucial to its interpretation and provides another point of contact with the Near Eastern sources. At v.43ff, v.70ff, v.100ff the emphasis is on the physical characteristics of the girls in the choir: they are rare horses, their hair is emphasized for its beauty, they are 'god-like', and analogized to beautiful animals. The emphasis on their physical characteristics speaks to their suitability as potential mates for the men of the community. A late source, Plutarch, affirms this notion when he writes that the young women of Sparta “danced and sang with young men being present and watching” (Plu. *Lyc.* 14.3: εἴθισε τῶν κόρων τὰς κόρας γυμνάς τε πομπεύειν καὶ πρὸς ἱεροῖς τισιν ὀρχεῖσθαι καὶ ᾄδειν, τῶν νέων παρόντων καὶ θεωμένων). The importance of being watched by young men is reflected in the multitude of compliments and praise which the chorus of girls lay upon both Hagesichora and Agido.

Eva Stehle has argued that far from simply praising the young women in the poem, Alcman's *Partheneion* serves a public function by demonstrating the sublimation of the power of a woman to the patriarchal society in which she lives. Throughout the poem, she points out places where the girls depreciate their own value in favour of someone else. First, this depreciation is active between Hagesichora and the remainder of the chorus; Hagesichora is praised, in part, by the negative feelings of the chorus towards their own abilities and power.<sup>66</sup> Stehle further contends that in the last few lines of the extant portion of the poem, Hagesichora herself is devalued so as to remove any power which might have been left with a woman. She reads the analogy of Hagesichora to the Sirens as a negative

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66 Stehle, 77.

comparison. Instead of the positive implications of being associated with goddesses, she focuses on the fact that the simile is couched in negative terminology. She also sees the comparison of Hagesichora to the ten other girls as inherently negative; the poet implicitly denies her adult status. Finally, Stehle argues that the analogy of Hagesichora to a swan is inherently negative, as she is limited to comparisons of physical form, not of real power.<sup>67</sup>

While the gender-oriented messages in the *Partheneion* must be acknowledged, an argument for the debasement of Hagesichora is less than convincing. The final portion of the poem, in contrast to what Stehle interprets, continues the theme of praise which has followed Hagesichora since her first appearance in the *Partheneion*.<sup>68</sup> The praise of Hagesichora, one of the primary themes of the *Partheneion*, brings to mind the fact that praise of a central participant was a key element of both the *Song of Songs* and as well as the Mesopotamian literature which I have reviewed above.

A comparison of Hagesichora to the Sirens, goddesses blessed with perfect voices, must be seen as powerful.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, the Sirens in Alcman may not be the dealers of death which they are in the *Odyssey*.<sup>70</sup> In another fragment, Alcman refers to a Muse as a “clear-voiced Siren” (*PMG* 30: ἄ Μῶσα κέκλαγ’ ἄ λίγηα Σηρήν). The ‘child of Porkus’, mentioned in v.19, may be no other than one of the Sirens.<sup>71</sup> The fact that the chorus is careful to note that she is not quite as good as the Sirens is not a debasement of Hagesichora, but an example of the importance of avoiding hubris towards the gods.

The comparison of Hagesichora to the other ten girls, far from being a negative comparison, is further praise of the chorus-leader. While it is girls of her own age to whom Hagesichora is compared, this does not devalue the praise. Indeed, the comparison in question is perfectly rational within the

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67 *Ibid.*, 78.

68 As Page, 45 points out, the praise of Hagesichora is one of the principal themes of the poem; “...of capital importance: that the penultimate and antepenultimate stanzas end in praise of Hagesichora.”

69 Clark, C., 167, notes that the Sirens are the epitome of feminine musical skill.

70 Too, 26.

71 Calame, 1977, 62. For the identification of ‘Porkus’ as a Laconian equivalent to Φόρκος, see Page, 39.

context of the poem. The previous stanzas (v.60ff) have established a *faux*-competition between Hagesichora and Agido and the rest of the chorus. The comparison of Hagesichora to the rest of the chorus merely continues this positive comparison. Moreover, the comparison of one voice to ten may be an allusion to the epic connotations of the number ten: “I could not tell the multitude of them nor name them, not if I had ten tongues and ten mouths” (*Il.* 2.489ff: πληθὺν δ’ οὐκ ἄν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ’ ὀνομήνω, | οὐδ’ εἴ μοι δέκα μὲν γλῶσσαι, δέκα δὲ στόματ’ ἔειν); if this is so, the allusion which compares Hagesichora to the narrator of the *Iliad* must be read as extremely positive.<sup>72</sup>

As to the swan analogy, the assumption from a modern reader would be that a comparison of a chorus-leader to a swan is a positive analogy; Stehle is hard-pressed to prove her point that it should be taken otherwise. Her main contention is that since the swan is a creature of beauty, the comparison robs any power from Hagesichora by forcing an analogy which focuses solely on the aesthetic quality of her speech.<sup>73</sup> While it is true that the swan is a symbol of beauty, the aesthetic quality of the bird is not the only metaphorical association. Swans are compared to assembling armies (*Il.* 2.459ff: τῶν δ’ ὡς τ’ ὀρνίθων πετεηνῶν ἔθενα πολλὰ | χηνῶν ἢ γεράνων ἢ κύκνων δουλιχοδείρων) and are described as singing ritual hymns (*h. Hymn* 21.1); later, in tragedy, swans are noted as especially musical (*Eur. El.* 150ff: οἶα δέ τις κύκνος ἀχέτας | ποταμίσις παρὰ χεύμασιν | πατέρα φίλτατον καλεῖ) and as servants of the Muses (*Eur. IT* 1104ff). The connotations associated with a swan's voice are not only beauty, but power and authority as well; such allusions are certainly not out of place in a song praising the leader of a chorus.

The public role of the women's performance seems to have been part of the exchange of *parthenoi* and the sublimation of their uncontrolled sexuality.<sup>74</sup> Choral performances are an instance

72 Robbins, 10.

73 Stehle, 78. The analogy to a swan lauds her voice “...as beautiful by means of a simile that confines it to aesthetic power.”

74 Carson, 144. Also *X. Oec.* 3.7-10 analogizes the bride to a wild animal tamed with time.

when *parthenoi* are shown to their prospective mates in the community at large.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, part of the legendary section of the poem, fragmentary for us, seems to discuss the importance of finding a suitable bride (v. 16ff). As one commentator has noted, such advice implies that the girls singing the song are themselves good brides.<sup>76</sup> The importance of this aspect to choral performance is demonstrated by the poem's emphasis on the charms, both physical and otherwise, which will serve to make the young women into good wives.<sup>77</sup>

The context of the performance emphasizes the importance of the rhetorical questions asked in v.50 and 56. The girls describe the physical charms of Hagesichora and then proceed to demand that the audience can not possibly misunderstand them (v.50: ἦ οὐκ ὀρήϊς;).<sup>78</sup> Next, the girls again vainly bewail their situation (v.56: διαφάδαν τί τοι λέγω;) before continuing to praise both Hagesichora and Agido together (v.60-63). These direct appeals to the audience emphasize the complimentary phrases which follow. Surely the audience to whom the beauty of the girls needs to be emphasized would likely be that of young men, their potential husbands, rather than their fellow female age-mates.<sup>79</sup>

Bruno Gentili has argued that the praise of Hagesichora is evidence of the homo-erotic relationships at work in the poem between the girls. According to Gentili, such a relationship is evidence for the exclusively female performance context of the ritual. In v.73, for example, Gentili understands Agido as the subject of the line; she is the one who will not “go to Ainesimbrotas's house” (v.73: οὐδ' ἔς Αἰνησιμβρότας ἐνθοῖσα φασεῖς); she has formulated an erotic bond with

Hagesichora.<sup>80</sup> The 'lovely peace' mentioned near the end of the extant fragment apparently reference

75 Calame, 2001, 262. Initiation in Greece was not immediately followed by marriage, so that the public forum which a choral performance gave was crucial to the system of exchange of women.

76 Stehle, 87 notes this implicit contrast.

77 Calame, 2001, 262.

78 Peponi, 300.

79 Peponi, *ibid.*, notes the importance of the audience to whom these questions are addressed as an 'indispensable factor in the performance.'

80 Gentili, 74ff thinks that the second person addressee in v.73 is Agido. Gentili goes on to argue that this statement alone is proof enough to see an erotic bond between the two girls. This is based on his own preconceived notion that

the calming effect that Hagesichora has on Agido, who until this time has been, essentially, tortured by love.

Gentili's argument is based on the parallels between the language of eroticism in Sappho and Alcman, which he uses to demonstrate that Alcman's poetry accompanies a rite of initiation into a *thiasos*, a community of young women.<sup>81</sup> Such an interpretation has little to no positive evidence to support it, but Gentili nonetheless postulates the existence of a 'Sapphic-like' circle to accompany the recital of Alcman's poem. Evidence solely from a similarity of language, such as Gentili adduces, does not preclude a multitude of more likely explanations. As Barbara Fowler makes clear, archaic poets, across many decades and from varied geographic origins, were concerned with many of the same topics.<sup>82</sup> Metaphors involving horses in, for example, Alcman and Stesichorus, need not force us to make a connection between the two, other than that they were part of the same 'aesthetic movement' in archaic poetry.

In addition, Gentili himself earlier points out that similarities between Sappho and Homer, or Alcman and Homer, are due to the availability of a common 'substrata' of poetic material.<sup>83</sup> The existence of this sort of 'common well' of phrases and ideas amongst archaic poets may be factual, and may represent the legacy of Mycenaean tradition in the Iron Age. When analyzing the relationship between the language of Sappho and Alcman, however, Gentili neglects his own proposition, and takes any parallel between the two poets as concrete evidence for their shared ritual relationship.

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Ainesimbrotia is a "person of authority and importance, a confidante to whom the girls turn in revealing their desires and their feelings of love" (Gentili, 73). He offers no evidence for this interpretation of Ainesimbrotia's role in the poem. Page, 65ff understands Ainesimbrotia to be a servant of the public religion of Sparta, a trainer of the choir. West, 1965, 199ff thinks this is absurd, and correlates Ainesimbrotia with love magic. West may be, on the whole, correct; it is nonsensical that one would go to the house of a professional choir-trainer and ask that one of her students fall in love with her.

81 Gentili, 76. The only evidence Gentili brings forth for this are references from Himerius, a fourth-century A.D. writer, who mentions a ceremony of initiation in Sappho's poetry. There is nothing within Alcman or the tradition of ancient commentary surrounding him to support such a notion.

82 Fowler, 119.

83 Gentili, 60 explains away Homeric parallels because of the shared 'Mycenean *koine*' of Aeolic and Ionic forms.

Another key aspect of ancient choral lyric, and another argument against performance within an exclusively female group, is the importance of the educational aspect of choruses.<sup>84</sup> While the *Partheneion* itself is the only archaic piece of evidence for this role, later authors ascribe choruses an educational role which Alcman's poetry seems to accurately model.<sup>85</sup> In a society without an institutional education system such as our own, recitation of myth and history helps to pass along the stories associated with a particular place, as well as norms of behaviour; the latter is specifically emphasized in the gnomic element so prevalent in choral poetry.<sup>86</sup> These stories serve to reinforce the existing social order, in combination with the organization of the chorus itself. Within the chorus group, the members reflect the inequality inherent in the hierarchical nature of their society. Both hierarchical order by birth, and differentiated roles by gender, are reflected in the songs and organization of the chorus.<sup>87</sup> The very ability to participate in the leadership of the chorus may in fact have been restricted to the upper classes.<sup>88</sup> In addition, through separation and differentiation of roles in the choruses of each gender, choral performance helps to emphasize and instill the appropriate roles of each gender.<sup>89</sup>

In the fragmentary opening of the poem (the so-called 'legendary section'), it is clear that the

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- 84 Stelhe, 27 notes Plato's appreciation of the connection between choruses and education. Stehle, 38-39, also specifically addresses the educational aspect of the 'legendary narrative' of the *Partheneion*.
- 85 Clark, C., 144. There is a definitive link between *paideia* and *partheneia*; ritual performances by choruses indoctrinated both performers and audience with the city's customs and history.
- 86 Lonsdale, S.H., *Dance and Ritual Play in Greek Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 5. Choral lyric serves, in part, to retell divine and heroic stories from the past which are paradigms for contemporary behavior. Stehle, 31, notes that choral performance is public communication; the message contained within the poem must be *à propos* for all members of the community audience.
- 87 Calame, 2001, 72ff. The *choregos* in myth is set apart from her chorus, e.g. Apollo and the Muses, Artemis and the Nymphs. See also, Ferrari, 17, who correctly points out that, "Although it is performed by maidens, the *Partheneion* is not about maidens but about *kosmos*, both in the sense of political order -the constitution of the state- and in that of the order of the universe." While her view that the poem has *nothing* to do with young women may be a little off the mark, the stress that the poem puts on order and hierarchy is crucial to our reading.
- 88 *Ibid.*, 219-222. Also, see below, page 75.
- 89 *Ibid.*, 14. Initiation rites in a tribal community tend to reflect the role which each gender plays in the adult world. Men's rites are concerned with forces external to the community, since their post-initiation roles as leader, warriors and hunters will be focused on the outside. Women's, on the other hand, tend to be focused internally, since their roles in reproduction, child-rearing and education look inward on their own community.

myth referred to is that of the Hippocoöntidae versus Hercules. According to our extant sources for this myth, Heracles was already at odds with Hippocoön because of the latter's refusal to purify him for the murder of Iphitus (Paus. 3.15.3ff).<sup>90</sup> The immediate cause of the war, however, was the death of Oeneus at the hands of the sons of Hippocoön.<sup>91</sup> After Heracles dispatched the sons and Hippocoön himself, he gave the Spartan throne to Tyndareus, who may have assisted him in the battle.

The relationship between the well-known version related in Pausanias and that of Alcman is uncertain, mainly due to the fragmentary nature of the *Partheneion*. It seems clear, however, that Alcman assigned a larger role to the Tyndaridae, Castor and Polydeuces; the latter is the first clear word in the papyrus of the *Partheneion*. Euphorion, a third century Greek grammarian, notes that the Hippocoöntidae were rival suitors of Castor and Polydeuces.<sup>92</sup> Alcman's version may have related a legend of a battle over potential brides, rather than the murder of a friend of Heracles.<sup>93</sup> Further evidence for this may be found in the moral which concludes the first legendary section that abjures men to “nor attempt to marry lady Aphrodite” (v.16: μηδὲ πηρήτω γαμῆν τὰν Ἀφροδίταν). Such a moral seems to imply that mortals ought to be happy with mortals as their spouses; a battle between the human Hippocoöntidae and the deified Tyndaridae would seem to reflect something of this point.<sup>94</sup> The importance of the Tyndaridae to the foundation of Spartan civic and religious life may also be a reason for their inclusion in the mythic section.<sup>95</sup>

90 Further ancient sources which generally agree with Pausanias' account: Apollod. 2.7.4f, 3.10.5; Str. 10.461; D.S. 4.33.5.

91 Page, 26.

92 *Ibid.*, 32.

93 *Ibid.*, 32-33.

94 Too, Y.L., “Alcman's *Partheneion*: the Maidens Dance the City,” *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 56 (1997): 11. The fate of the Hippocoöntidae is to die, because they compete against individuals whose ultimate place is in heaven, the Tyndaridae. Too also notes the consistently problematic nature of mortals and deities marrying, *cf. h. Ven.* 218ff for example.

95 Burkert, 1985, 212 notes the special relationship that the Spartan kings had with the Tyndaridae. One of the two kings stayed at home while the other marched to war; one of Castor or Polydeuces was thought to accompany the king to war and the other to stay at home. Burkert also notes that rites to the Tyndaridae may have been connected with rites of passage for boys (214). Too, 10 also notes the importance of the myth for Spartan history. In a sense it explains the origins of the current regime and in doing so acts to reinforce that regime. Ferrari, 27, further points out that the myth

The content of the *Partheneion* also reflects the existence of a social hierarchy between the *choregos* and the other members of the chorus. Mythic examples of a *choregos* who is set apart by her beauty and splendor abound: Artemis and her Nymphs, Aphrodite and the Graces, Helen and her companions. In the poem, Hagesichora is called 'illustrious' (v.44: ἄ κλεννὰ χοραγὸς); she is the chief horse amongst lowly herds (v.46-47); it is thanks to her that the girls gain relief (v.90: ἐξ Ἀγησιχόρας); she is analogized to the helmsman which one ought to obey (v.94ff: τῶι κυβερνάται δὲ χρῆ | κῆν νᾶϊ μάλιστ' ἀκούην); her singing voice is compared to that of goddesses (v.96ff: ἄ δὲ τᾶν Σηρηνίδων | ἀοιδότερα μὲν οὐχι | σιὰ γάρ).<sup>96</sup> The helmsman analogy is especially telling, since the analogy of the city to the "ship at sea" was well established in archaic poetry.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, in other archaic Greek poetry (e.g. *Od.* 6.109, with respect to Nausicaa: ὥς ἣ γ' ἀμφιπόλοισι μετέπρεπε παρθένος ἀδμῆς) as well as Eastern literature (e.g. *Song of Songs* 2:1: "Like a lily among thorns | is my darling among the maidens"), a young woman's beauty and her relative superiority to her age-mates is made clear by how much she is distinguished amongst them.

A fragmentary commentary on another of Alcman's poems suggests that the position of *choregos* may have been intimately connected with the royal dynasties of the city.<sup>98</sup> Timasimbrotā, the subject of the commentary, is described as the "best of his children" (*PMG* 5, fr.2, col. i, 14: παιδῶν ἀρίστῶν). It appears that the person in question is King Leotychides, a seventh century Eurypontiad king of Sparta. The genealogical connections are not certain, as the commentary is heavily fragmentary

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of Hippocoön may reflect a rationalization of combat between two claimants to the Spartan throne; an etiology of sorts for the unique system of dual kingship used at Sparta.

96 Calame, 1977, 68 notes the similarity of this description of Hagesichora with that of Agamemnon as an ox preeminent in the herd (*Il.* 2.480ff). An epic allusion such as this, comparing her to a king, is definite indicator of the social distinction which exists between her and the rest of the chorus.

97 Anacreon 6 and 73, for example.

98 West, M.L., "Alcmanica," *Classical Quarterly* 15.2 (1965): 191. I have discussed the implications of this for Alcman's date above, in chapter 1. Calame, 2001, 221 suggests that Timasimbrotā may have been a *choregos* herself. The fragment is too corrupt to decide anything about this issue with certainty, however.

and has produced various interpretations, but it is clear that Timaisimbrotia is either the king's daughter or granddaughter.<sup>99</sup> While there is nothing so direct in the *Partheneion*, the suggestive names of the two leading girls may imply their connection to the ruling class of Sparta. As has been noted by many commentators, Hagesichora appears to mean 'chorus-leader' and Agido may be derived from a 'leading word', such as ἄγω.<sup>100</sup> While most scholars since Page have dismissed the idea that these 'speaking names' are ritual titles, there is nothing which strictly forbids this from the text.<sup>101</sup> It is difficult to believe that, if the names of the girls involved were historical persons, and that the poem reflects a single historical event, that the Spartans would continue to use this song for ritual purposes for centuries (as Plu. *Lyc.* 28.5 leads us to believe), not to mention preserve a copy of it.<sup>102</sup> If, however, the main ritual roles were hereditary, then the speaking names may simply be passed from generation to generation and would have retained their relevance. Moreover, if the leading roles were restricted to nobility, the similarity of Agido and the Spartan *Agides* royal family may not be coincidental.<sup>103</sup> As we have seen above, the Israelite and Mesopotamian sources make this distinction as well: the ability to participate actively in adolescent rites seems to be linked to noble birth.

Aside from the distinction made between the *choregos* and the remainder of the chorus, there is also a distinction evident in the person of Agido.<sup>104</sup> While she is differentiated from the other members of the chorus, she clearly maintains an inferiority when it comes to Hagesichora. Her importance is delineated near the beginning of the 'choral' section of the poem; she is compared to the sun and

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99 See chapter one.

100 Page, 45 amongst others has noted the suggestive names.

101 *Ibid.*, 64 suggests simply that the convergence of the names and their special meaning is simply coincidence. He does tentatively suggest hereditary names belonging to certain families. Robbins, 8, notes that the names may be intentionally derived from words meaning 'to lead', yet he does not pursue this question. Ferrari, 81ff, believes quite strongly that these are the names of personae which were assumed by the maidens within the drama of the poem.

102 The appearance of an Astymelousa in *PMG3*, another 'speaking name' ('concern of the city'), lends credence to the thought that these names must be hereditary or ritualized. See Herrington, J., *Poetry into Drama* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 55.

103 Calame, 1977, 140ff.

104 Page, 46: "Agido is a kind of Chief Assistant to Hagesichora, a Second-in-Command."

described as 'calling the sun as a witness' (v.39ff: ἐγὼν δ' αἰδέω | Ἄγιδὼ τὸ φῶς· ὀρώ | ζ' ὥτ' ἄλλιον). Later, Agido is second only to Hagesichora with respect to beauty (v.58: ἄ δὲ δευτέρα πεδ' Ἄγιδὼ τὸ σεῖδος).<sup>105</sup> Finally, near the end of the extant portion of the poem, Agido and Hagesichora are again referenced as distinct from the rest of the girls (v. 79ff: Ἀγησιχόρα πάρ' αὐτεῖ, | Ἄγιδοῖ δ' ἴκταρ μένει | θωστήριά τ' ἄμ' ἐπαινέι).<sup>106</sup> In this last example, both Hagesichora and Agido express 'commendation' regarding the chorus's festival. This suggests some sort of supervisory role. While such a role fits Hagesichora as the *choregos*, it is not so obvious why this supervisory role suits Agido; there must be some sort of social distinction between her and the rest of the chorus-members which befits this position.

The special role assigned to Hagesichora and Agido is also emphasized by their characterization as ταὶ Πεληάδες (v. 60). While there has been significant discussion about the identity of the Πεληάδες throughout the history of interpretation of the *Partheneion*, there seems to be no reason to disregard the opinion of the ancient commentary which understood the two girls as 'doves' (*Scholia* "B" v.60ff).<sup>107</sup> While we may be meant to read an allusion to the stars as well, the important part of the characterization is the differentiation of the two with respect to the rest of the chorus. According to the text of the poem, the Πεληάδες 'fight' (v.63: μάχονται) with the rest of the chorus who bear a φᾶρος.<sup>108</sup> The language is competitive, but the former belief that there was a rival chorus is

105 These lines have been called one of the key *crucis* of the entire poem. Scholarly opinion has been divided as to whether or not these lines are stating that Hagesichora is less beautiful than Agido. As Page, 51 points out, however, to understand that meaning is to ignore the *men...de* clause which covers v.57-58. Page correctly identified this meaning over fifty years ago (22), and the consensus of scholars has come back into agreement with him.

106 I follow the suggestion of Page, see critical apparatus, *PMG* 1.

107 Robbins, 9.

108 *Ibid.*, 9 argues for accepting the ancient opinion. Page, 52ff, is against accepting the ancient commentary; his main contention being that there is no one against whom Hagesichora and Agido 'fight.' As Halporn, 131, and others have pointed out, *machontai* refers to the struggle between the two girls and the remainder of the chorus. Halporn continues this train of thought to prove a homo-erotic context for the two girls, which is unnecessary. The idea that the two girls, alone, can compete with a whole choir is simply further proof of their special nature; a nature which may have been a part of their social status outside the poem, and which has been emphasized since v.37. This thought is continued in v.98ff when Hagesichora herself can sing as well as the whole choir.

unnecessary.<sup>109</sup> The use of μάχονται seems to be simply hyperbole, to emphasize the degree of difference between Hagesichora and Agido and the other chorus girls; a difference which has been emphasized only a few lines earlier (v.50ff).<sup>110</sup>

One of Alcman's contemporaries, Sappho, couples martial language with erotic: “And you (Aphrodite), be my ally again” (Sapph. 1.27ff: σὺ δ’ αὖτα | σύμμαχος ἔσσο). Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* also has a similar instance of the use of martial language to describe the acts of maidens: “And I stood in the dances | when even | as a maiden, during the pleasing marriages, | I whirled, near the dear feet | of my mother, in the troupe of my age-mates, | in a contest of charms” (E. *IT*: 1143-1147: χοροῖς δ’ ἔσταίην, ὅθι καὶ | παρθένος, εὐδοκίμων γάμων, | παρὰ πόδ’ εἰλίσσουσα φίλας | ματρὸς ἡλίκων θιάσους, | χαρίτων εἰς ἀμίλλας). While the word used in this text, ἀμίλλα, is not as strictly confined to the language of war as μάχονται, nevertheless, it is used in some archaic literature to describe contests which were usually the province of men (chariot races, for example, P. *O*.5.6).<sup>111</sup> Perhaps more important for the language of the *Partheneion* is the fact that the martial language appears next to what seems to be a Homeric allusion (v.62; see *Il.* 2.57; 10.41, etc.); this may be an instance of Alcman using the language of epic to add an element of mock-seriousness to the occasion.<sup>112</sup>

The physical characteristics of the ritual, while mostly beyond our knowledge, can be sketched briefly. The time of day, place, and season of performance may help to elucidate the broader ritual

109 See Page, 52ff, who championed the idea of a rival chorus. Even he, however, admits that there is no evidence for this interpretation within the text. The girls have already been compared to different animals throughout the poem; there is no need to imagine that characterizing them as doves/stars is out of the ordinary.

110 Robbins, 9. Giangrande, 156, also notes that *machontai* can be used for contests of a nature other than war; athletic and musical for example.

111 Ferrari, 80, brought this to my attention, and while I think it is intriguing evidence, it is not as conclusive as she wishes. The translation in Ferrari extends the meaning of ἀμίλλα to war, rendering, “that war of loveliness”. While perhaps adding weight to the argument, this translation seems to go beyond the regular uses of ἀμίλλα.

112 Segal, C., “Sirius and the Pleiades in Alcman's Louvre *Partheneion*,” *Mnemosyne* 36 (1983): 270. Perhaps the first instance of the use of epic allusion for parody.

context as well as provide another point of contact with the aforementioned Near Eastern rituals and texts. The girls note the appearance of stars and the night in a simile (v.63) as well as birds associated with darkness (v.86ff: παρσένος μάταν ἀπὸ θράνω λέλαια | γλαύξ). ὀρθρία (v.61) is another possible reference to the time immediately before dawn. Moreover, the poem is littered with references to light, the sun and dawn (v.39ff; v.41ff; v.87ff). The occasion of the poem seems to be a *pannychis*, a night festival that concludes with dawn.<sup>113</sup> The suitability of dawn for a festival of initiation and transformation seems clear enough, and the poem provides us with more evidence for such a setting.

το φῶς (v.39) has usually been translated as “And so I sing the light of Agido...” Some scholars, however, have sought to assign a more concrete meaning to this word: a torch.<sup>114</sup> φῶς is used in Euripides' *Trojan Women* when Cassandra takes up a torch to illuminate her wedding procession (Eur. *Tr.* 308-310); in the *Odyssey* too, the word can be used figuratively for a torch (*Od.* 19.24). Another fragment of Alcman speaks of a festival that illuminates a mountain, πολύφανος 'with many torches' (*PMG* 56, 2); the only use of this compound in Greek literature. If this *hapax legomenon* can be taken as evidence of ritual practice, it seems certain that some of the poetry of Alcman was part of a night-time ritual.

The poem's insistence on seeing and being seen may be understood better in the context of a ritual centred around the coming of the sun.<sup>115</sup> The transition from night to day, implicit in the rising sun, is reflected in the demand from the chorus that they be watched; in the moments before the dawn vague shapes become distinguishable and people and movements come into focus. It is at this time that the chorus demands that the audience view what has already been described as bright, obvious and

113 Clay, 53 and Segal, 264. Larson, 253, notes that the cult of Artemis Alpheus was celebrated with a *pannychis*, and the mythological foundation story also includes rape.

114 Clay, 54.

115 Peponi, 296.

easily seen (v.40, v.45, v.50).<sup>116</sup> Only under the close scrutiny of the eyes of the audience would the girls come into view again, as the emergent sunlight makes the maidens defined, they complete their song and finish their rite. It is possible that the auditory and visual environment is an element of an initiation: just as the emerging sunlight brings the performers into focus, they demand that the visual perception of the audience be focused on them. The audience has previously seen them illuminated by moonlight or torches, but now they see them again, for the first time, illuminated by the rising sun.<sup>117</sup>

In the context of such a ritual, the light metaphors which abound throughout the poem take on an added significance. The “calling the Sun to witness” of Agido in v.42ff would indicate her part in awaiting the dawn.<sup>118</sup> If φῶς is to be understood as a torch, then Agido is perhaps signaling to the Sun as if to force the dawn to come earlier. Furthermore, v.77, “it is Hagesichora who wears me out” (ἀλλ’ Ἀγησιχόρα με τείρει) may refer to the chorus-leader's role in exhausting the performers with a performance which lasts the whole night.<sup>119</sup> Such an explanation removes the erotic framework which Calame and Gentili saw in this phrase and brings a more natural understanding to τείρει than has previously been supposed.<sup>120</sup>

External to the poem, there is ancient evidence for night-time rituals in Sparta: the

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- 116 *Ibid.*, 308 is the only author to point this out, but it is well worth consideration. If the poem is a *pannychis*, as seems certain, the environment of the ritual must be taken into account in any interpretation. Surely such an important poem would be not organized and composed without any thought for the visual and auditory setting in which it would be performed.
- 117 *Ibid.*, 308. The girls' transition is represented by this; the eyes of the viewing audience watch them dance through the night and change from torch-lit to vague shapes, to illuminated by the rising sun. Peponi's discussion on the importance of viewing and being seen in an understanding of the *Partheneion* was crucial to my understanding of this point.
- 118 Clay, 56. Agido's torch also provides the light which allows the audience to see the beauty of the chorus-leader. The combination of directing the sight of the audience through vocabulary and mimetic activity is discussed at length in Peponi.
- 119 Clay, 58: “Hagesichora has led them to the end of their dance during a night festival with its song, offerings, prayers and competitions before an audience that had gathered to celebrate the rites of Orthia.” Also, note that the text of v.77 is debated. Some editors (Campbell, 1988, for example) read τηρεῖ and translate, “Hagesichora guards me”.
- 120 Calame, 1983, 339ff brings forth examples from Hesiod (*Fr.* 298) and Anacreon (347) to demonstrate “un sens érotique.” Neither of these delineates the sense of the word as being *always* erotic. The Hesiodic fragment is erotic because the subject of *teirei* is *Eros*. Other uses in archaic poetry demonstrate that *teirei* has a more general sense of 'distressing' or 'weakening'; (e.g. *Il.* 4.315; 13.217).

aforementioned *Hyacinthia* may be one which was not restricted to women and involved nocturnal rites (Eur. *Hel.* 1465-70). The particulars of the festival, while vague, involved dancing and singing by both women and men.<sup>121</sup> Rituals to Dionysus also seem to have included night-time rites; the ancient sources find nothing out of the ordinary about these rites.<sup>122</sup> Alcman's *Partheneion* may have been the ritual text for one amongst a large group of nocturnal festivals.

Evidence for the season associated with the *Partheneion* is more scarce than for the time of day, yet there is some evidence within the poem that allows us tentatively to assign a time-frame. The mention of the Πεληϊάδες in v.60, even if the explicit comparison is to doves, alludes to the appearance of the stars during the course of the poem's recital. The Pleiades were intimately connected with the time of both sowing and harvest in archaic poetry (Hes. *Op.* 383).<sup>123</sup> According to Hesiod, it was when the Pleiades were rising just before dawn that they were most important to agriculture; such a rising correlates to a date of mid-May.<sup>124</sup> Notably, this is the time of the season associated with the birth of much new life. Figs, already noted in the Israelite and Mesopotamian literature as an appropriate fruit with which to compare young women, are particularly appropriate to this time of year. West, for instance, notes the association of ripening figs with the rising Pleiades.<sup>125</sup> It is also notable that in later times, the Pleiades were explicitly connected to chorus-girls and adolescent rites.<sup>126</sup> The other star mentioned in the poem, Sirius, is also related to spring by Hesiod as are its associations with feminine sexuality and licentiousness (Hes. *Op.* 582-596).<sup>127</sup>

121 Dillon, 214. Calame, 2001, 174-185.

122 Clay, 55 note 21 discusses the ancient evidence for nocturnal rites to Dionysus, amongst others

123 West, 1978, 254ff notes the special significance of the Pleiades for agriculture the world over. Also, Segal, 272.

124 West, 1978, 255: "Calculation yields for Hesiod's latitude in 700 B.C. the date 11 May."

125 *Ibid.*, 253.

126 Clay, 61 points to this item, noted in the *Scholium Ad Theocritum* XXIII 25. In Hesiod and lyric writers the *Pleiades* are not expressly connected to adolescent rites, but they are always young women, the daughters of Atlas (Hes. *Fr.* 169; Simon. 555).

127 Segal, 272 also notes that Alcaeus, contemporaneous to Alcman, seems to have known this association of femininity and Sirius too: "now women are at their most polluted but men are delicate, Sirius parches the head and knees" (347a 4ff: υἱὸν δὲ γυναῖκες μιαιώταται | λέπτοι δ' ἄνδρες, ἐπεὶ κεφάλαν καὶ γόνα Σείριος | ἄσδει)

The relationship between fertility and the spring may also aid in specifying the seasonal time-frame of the *Partheneion*.<sup>128</sup> While there is no further concrete evidence within the poem, evidence for spring rites associated with women is relatively abundant in Greek religion. The *Anthesteria*, a spring festival at Athens appears to be a sort of 'sacred marriage' cult; the Great Dionysia is another Athenian festival directly connected with spring, and probably associated with fertility.<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, as I have already argued above, the goddess for whom this ritual was being performed, Orthia, is associated with the spring.<sup>130</sup> The rites and texts in the Near East which have an affinity to Alcman make heavy use of an association between spring and the adolescence of a young woman. The fertility connotations which surround Orthia in both her sanctuary, and in her connections to female fertility goddesses of the Near East, also seem to suggest a time of year associated with growth and re-birth.

The sheer number of parallels between Alcman's *Partheneion* and the remains of similar maidens' ritual in the Levant and Mesopotamia direct us to the fact that dancing, pubescence and the display of young women are intimately connected phenomena. Just as with the *Partheneion*, ancient Near Eastern maidens' rituals are focused on the display of dancing young women. The various stories from the book of *Judges*, as well as the 15th of *Av* ritual, make it explicit that one of the most important aspects of a maidens' dance is the audience to whom it is presented. Even in a text such as the *Song of Songs*, the ritual uses of which are not well-preserved, passages connect the importance of performance and audience with respect to woman's dance and song.

Alcman's poem is, as Stehle points out, full of other instances where the audience is brought into play. The chorus's rhetorical questions at v.50 and 56 act to focus the viewpoint of the audience onto specific performers at the same time as the song of the chorus delineates the praiseworthy,

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128 Cyrino, 36.

129 Burkert, 1985, 237-239.

130 See chapter 3, "The Identity of the Goddess".

physical qualities of these performers. Mesopotamian poetry related to young women is no different. The hymn to Ishtar quoted above begins by demanding that the eyes of those listening be focused on her.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, this demand specifies the places the audience should look: the praiseworthy, physical characteristics which make the speaker a desirable wife and lover.

Beyond simply the factor of audience, however, both Alcman's *Partheneion* and the Near Eastern texts examined are expressly concerned with an age-group which may be accurately described by the Greek term *parthenos*. In addition, central to all these texts is the transitional state of the young women whose dancing is watched with such ardor. One of the main *crucis* with regards to the interpretation of the *Partheneion*'s ritual has been the confluence of the importance of performance and a male audience with the separative element expected in a rite of passage. Calame sought to remove the *Partheneion* to a female-only setting, but this fails to explain the importance of the audience. Moreover, Calame's argument, while thorough, uses Alcman to explain Alcman. The circularity of such an argument begs for more evidence with which to sustain it. Stehle, on the other hand, dismisses the transitional element, but in doing so she disregards the key importance to the *Partheneion* of age-groups and movement from an asexual to sexual world.

Stehle argues that the focus on the physical qualities of the chorus and chorus leader are part of a process by which any power they maintain as performers is removed from them and that such a removal is necessary due to the patriarchal confines of Greek culture. This removal of power, combined with the public nature of the performance, is held by Stehle as proof positive that the poem is not a celebration of initiation.<sup>132</sup> Reinforcement of the existing social order, however, is a major

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131 *ETCSL* 4.08.03; see above, page 62.

132 Stehle, 87ff argues against a rite of passage because she does not believe that the chorus direct their addresses to themselves, "a ritualized expression by *parthenoi* of desire for their chorus leader." She also says that there is no direct evidence for a system of initiation in Sparta for young women (88). Calame, 2001, 204-205 partially reconstructs the initiation cycle of young girls at Sparta. There is ancient evidence for initiation rites as part of the celebrations of Artemis Limnatis, Artemis Karyatis and Orthia; the *Hyacinthia* too seems to be concerned with

component of rites of passage. Any initiation rite concerns itself with maintaining the existing power structures; removal of power from women and its redirection towards men is perfectly suitable in the culture of archaic Greece.

It is my contention that the Near Eastern evidence provides an opportunity to reconcile these views: the importance of display shown in the *Partheneion*, the stories of the book of *Judges* and the hymn to Ishtar can be combined with the overwhelming evidence that all of these texts seem to involve rituals of transition for young women.

Moreover, since the goddess worshiped in the *Partheneion* may have been Eastern in origin, possibly brought to Sparta by Phoenicians in the seventh century, the fact that such a poem would not fit into the ritual straitjacket imposed upon it by Hellenocentric commentators is not surprising in the least. While Alcman's poetry may be part of a tradition of girls' choruses (so attested in epic, e.g. *Il.* 18.590-605; *Od.* 6.157), the possibility exists that his contribution is something nontraditional and unique. This contention is strengthened considerably by the evidence presented above: that the *Partheneion* is an example of the combination of the elements of display, central to Greek choral lyric, with the rites of passage for maidens; that this combination can be seen in Near Eastern sources both contemporaneous with Alcman, as well as from many centuries prior.

The Near Eastern poetry and that of Alcman focus on the importance of dancing to these rites of passage. The collective nature of the girls is stressed, as is their unique age-group, the liminal stage between asexual children and the contained sexuality of a married woman. Moreover, Alcman, and the anonymous Near Eastern poets and chroniclers, note the importance of the element of sight in the rites of passage for these women; they are to be seen and to focus the attention of the audience on their attributes. The actors in these rituals appear to be sub-categorized even further: in Alcman and in the

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initiation rites, for both women and men.

Mesopotamian evidence the girls who are actively participating appear to be exclusively from the upper echelon of society.

These sources all derive their allusions and analogies of the female body from similar spheres. The focus on the fecundity of spring and fruits is of central importance in the Israelite songs, as is the analogy of young women to young animals. Alcman also uses this latter metaphor, and the importance of spring may be recognized by the likelihood that the *Partheneion*'s performance took place during a night-long festival in mid-May.

The impetus behind the poems of Israel, Mesopotamia and those of Alcman appears to be the same: to aid in the display and eventual exchange of women who are on the verge of adulthood and to rationalize to the bride-to-be the movement from the world of children to that of adults. Such a rationalization may take the form of sadness at giving up the ways of children or may be palliative, an attempt to allay the fears which would accompany growing up for a woman in these patrilocal societies.

In short, the ritual and psychological significance of the *Partheneion* and the Near Eastern texts is the same. While it may be impossible to posit direct links of transmission or diffusion of such important social rituals, it cannot be denied that the combination of transitional rite and the importance of performance and display across these cultures suggests strongly that connections were alive at some point. In order to better understand the ritual context of the *Partheneion*, the oldest piece of Greek choral poetry in existence, it is crucial to look beyond the borders of the Greek world, to the world which provided a cultural model for Greece during the 'Orientalizing Period'.

## Conclusion: A Contextual Approach to the *Partheneion*

“Culture is not a plant sprouting from its seed in isolation; it is a continuous process of learning guided by curiosity along with practical needs and interests. It grows especially through a willingness to learn from what is 'other', what is strange and foreign.”

– Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution*.<sup>1</sup>

In this project, I have suggested that Alcman, the earliest choral lyric writer extant, ought to be examined not strictly as a representative of Greek literary history, but also as a representative of the ongoing inter-cultural exchange in the Eastern Mediterranean *koine* of the Archaic period.<sup>2</sup> The Oriental aspects of Alcman's *Partheneion*, demonstrated herein to be varied and many, prompt a recognition of the influential role that Oriental culture has played, not only in the material culture of Greece, but in some of its literary and religious artifacts as well. Oriental influences have been recognized as pervasive in Homer and Hesiod, the oldest examples of literature from the Greek world, yet heretofore the Oriental aspect of literature outside of the epic and didactic genres has been briefly mentioned, or denied altogether.<sup>3</sup> This gap in the history of Oriental influences on Greek literature is what I have worked to fill, if only in a small way, with this project: a close examination of the role of such influences in Alcman's *Partheneion*.

Throughout this work, I have endeavoured to focus attention on the similarity of ritual and

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1 Burkert, 1992, 129.

2 The phrase is borrowed from Walter Burkert's *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis* (Burkert, 2004, 124), in which he argues that mission of the Classics in our multi-cultural world is less to stress the special character of Greek culture and more to “...spell out the results of interaction and dialogue in a continuing eastern Mediterranean *koine*.”

3 West, 1997, briefly sketches Oriental aspects of Greek poetry after epic, but he is, by his own admission, largely concerned with epic. Brief attempts have been made to examine Greek poetry beyond Homer and Hesiod, yet scholars have continued to postulate an anachronistic dichotomy between Greeks and 'Barbarians'.

custom, the deities and even poetic metaphors, which connect the *Partheneion* to the East. These connections postulate an ancient world of greater cultural interaction, and indeed greater multiculturalism, than we normally assign to antiquity.

In Chapter One, I have shown that Alcman's biography almost demands that he be examined in the context of Greco-Near Eastern relations. While uncertainty may remain about his Lydian heritage, the existence of that tradition and the overt instances of Oriental motifs, allusions and terminology in his poetry are striking. Alcman's knowledge of places and peoples geographically distant from his home allude to the ubiquitous presence of traders, merchants and mercenaries who must have filled the harbours and streets of ancient Sparta. Moreover, the time period in which Alcman was born and flourished, the late seventh and early sixth century, was a time of great Oriental penetration into the Greek world; in Sparta in particular, there seems to have been extensive contact with the East. As such, it ought to be recognized that the potential for the influence of the Orient on Alcman, whether he was a native Anatolian or not, was extremely great.

Following from the temporal and spatial situation of Alcman, in Chapter Two, I sketched out, briefly, the world of the early Archaic period. Throughout this period, in nearly every sphere of cultural activity, the influence of the Orient is pervasive. Greeks and Phoenicians seem to have been in constant contact, both economic and religious; so too Greeks and Assyrians, and Greeks and Egyptians in mercenary ranks through the Eastern Mediterranean. The cultural exchange seems to have gone beyond material culture, in which there are marked appearances of Oriental motifs in the Archaic period, and reached into the intellectual world of Greek poetry. Both Homer and Hesiod show the undeniable influence of the Orient, comparisons and parallels can be drawn from texts both thousands of years old as well as those contemporaneous to the Archaic period; the influences seem to stretch across the breadth of genre, culture and language.

My last two chapters focused on two of the 'great debates' of scholarship on the *Partheneion*: the identity of the goddess and the context of the ritual. For the former, following the seminal work of Jane Carter, I have made a case that the identity of the goddess of the *Partheneion* need not be found only in Hellenic sources but, considering the aforementioned degree of Oriental penetration and influence on Greece during this period, also in those of the Orient.<sup>4</sup> I have argued that the deities which have been proposed, Helen, Aphrodite, Phoebe and Artemis, all have problems which seem to preclude each of them as the appropriate deity. In this respect, I have worked to extend the work of Carter, who argued in her article, "The Masks of Orthia", that Spartan Orthia ought to be connected to Mesopotamian and Levantine fertility goddesses. I have integrated J.M. Priestly's recent research on the meaning of the φᾶρος (v.61), which convincingly argues against the traditional translation. This evidence points to an association with female goddesses, worshiped as roughly hewed wooden statues, and venerated by the giving of robes, sheets or broad swaths of cloth. Furthermore, I have suggested that the existence of the aspects of Helen and Aphrodite, identified by Calame, Gentili and Cyrino, also point to Orthia's Oriental heritage, as a syncretism which includes aspects of the Mesopotamian love goddess *par excellence*, Inana.

The focus of Chapter Four, the ritual context of Alcman's *Partheneion*, has also been a constant source of debate for scholars throughout the history of work on the text. In this chapter, taking my start from the contrasting points of view offered by Calame, who claims that the *Partheneion* is a rite of passage and by Stehle, whose work focuses on the public aspect of the performance, I have looked to the East for examples and antecedents which could integrate these two approaches. I have suggested that across the ancient Mediterranean, in other Greek cults (such as Artemis Limnatis, Artemis Karyatis), in the rituals alluded to in *Judges* and *The Song of Songs*, and in the extant remains of

<sup>4</sup> Carter's 1987, "Masks of Orthia" guided my thinking in this respect. She remains the only author to have integrated the masks found in the sanctuary of Orthia with the contemporaneous poetry of Alcman.

Sumerian pre-marital cult, the elements of a rite of passage and the focus on display and public performance are combined. Indeed, across the ancient world, dancing and the display of young women are central elements for rituals the context of which seems entirely compatible with that of Alcman's *Partheneion*: the focus on praise of the subject of the poem (e.g. Hagesichora and Agido), the aristocratic background of the main participants, the age-group of the women performing the song. All of these elements point to connections and parallels from cultures both contemporaneous to, and distant from, Alcman's Sparta. They show the long history of young women's rites to which the *Partheneion* seems to have belonged, a history which stretches from the Peloponnese, to ancient Israel and Anatolia, and even to the cult hymns and pre-marital practices of the Sumerians.

This study, which has endeavoured to link the world of archaic Sparta with cultures from across the Eastern Mediterranean, has suggested, I hope, that a narrow perspective on the allusive and fragmented corpus of Alcman can only serve to deny the clarity of meaning which modern critics strive to achieve. The more integrated ancient world which we now know existed, a world which permitted and encouraged merchant colonies, *enoikismoι*, a world of pervasive and continuous influence moving East and West between Greeks and their Oriental neighbours, and elites who borrowed the language and culture of the hierarchies of the East, must be included in an approach to Greek literature of this time. This approach can only serve to increase our understanding of the vague and allusive qualities of the *Partheneion*, and perhaps bring some relief to its multitude of 'complaining lovers.'

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## Appendix I: Text (PMG 1)

I have followed Denys Page's text from *Poetae Graecae Melici*, except where noted. A *coronis* in the margin indicates that the poem ended four lines after the last legible word.

- (1) ] Πωλυδεύκης·  
 οὐκ ἐγὼ]ν Λύκαισον ἐν καμουῖσιν ἀλέγω  
 Ἐνα]ρσφόρον τε καὶ Σέβρον ποδώκη  
 ]ν τε τὸν βιατὰν
- (5) ]. τε τὸν κορυστὰν  
 Εὐτείχη] τε Φάνακτά τ' Ἄρηιον  
 ]ά τ' ἔξοχον ἡμισίων·  
 ]ν τὸν ἀγρόταν  
 ]μέγαν Εὐρυτόν τε
- (10) ]πώρω κλόνον  
 ]. τε τὼς ἀρίστως  
 ]παρήσομες  
 ]αρ Αἴσα παντῶν  
 ]γεραιτάτοι
- (15) ἀπ]έδιλος ἀλκὰ  
 μή τις ἀνθ]ρώπων ἐς ὠρανὸν ποτήσθω  
 μηδὲ πη]ρήτω γαμῆν τὰν Ἀφροδίταν  
 F]άν[α]σσαν ἢ τιν'  
 ] ἢ παῖδα Πόρκω
- (20) Χά]ριτες δὲ Διὸς δ[ό]μον  
 ]σιν ἐρογλεφάροι·  
 ]τάτοι  
 ]τα δαίμων  
 ]ι φίλοις
- (25) ]ωκε δῶρα  
 ]γαρέον  
 ]ώλεσ' ἦβα  
 ]ρονον  
 ]. ταίας
- (30) ]έβα· τῶν δ' ἄλλος ἰῶι

]μαρμάρωι μυλάκρωι  
 ]. εν Ἀΐδας  
 ]αυτοῖ  
 ]ἵπον· ἄλαστα δὲ

- (35) Φέργα πάσον κακὰ μῆσαμένοι·  
 ἔστι τις σιῶν τίσις·  
 ὁ δ' ὄλβιος, ὅστις ἔυφρων  
 ἀμέραν [δι]απλέκει  
 ἀκλαυτος· ἐγὼν δ' αἰίδω
- (40) Ἀγιδῶς τὸ φῶς· ὄρω  
 Ἔ' ὡτ' ἄλιον, ὄνπερ ἅμιν  
 Ἀγιδῶ μαρτύρεται  
 φαίνην· ἐμὲ δ' οὔτ' ἐπαινῆν  
 οὔτε μωμήσθαι νιν ἄ κλεννὰ χοραγὸς
- (45) οὐδ' ἀμῶς ἐῆι· δοκεῖ γὰρ ἡμεν αὐτὰ  
 ἐκπρεπῆς τῶς ὡπερ αἴτις  
 ἐν βοτοῖς στάσειεν ἵππον  
 παγὸν ἀεθλοφόρον καναχάποδα  
 τῶν ὑποπετριδίων ὀνείρων·
- (50) ἦ οὐκ ὀρήις; ὁ μὲν κέλης  
 Ἐνεκτικός· ἄ δὲ χαίτα  
 τὰς ἐμᾶς ἀνεψιάς  
 Ἀγησιχόρας ἐπανθεῖ  
 χρυσὸς [ῶ]ς ἀκήρατος·
- (55) τό τ' ἀργύριον πρόσωπον,  
 διαφάδαν τί τοι λέγω;  
 Ἀγησιχορά μὲν αὐτὰ·  
 ἄ δὲ δευτέρα πεδ' Ἀγιδῶ τὸ Φεῖδος  
 ἵππος Ἰβηνῶι Κολαξαῖος δραμήται·
- (60) ταὶ Πεληάδες γὰρ ἅμιν  
 ὀρθρίαι φᾶρος φεροίσαις  
 νύκτα δι' ἀμβροσίαν ἄτε σήριον  
 ἄστρον ἀηρομέναι μάχονται·  
 οὔτε γὰρ τι πορφύρας
- (65) τόσσοι κόροι ὡστ' ἀμύναι,  
 οὔτε ποικίλοι δράκων  
 παγχρύσιος, οὐδὲ μίτρα  
 Λυδία, νεανίδων  
 ἱανογ[λ]εφάρων ἄγαλμα,

- (70) οὐδὲ ταὶ Ναννώσ κόμαι,  
 ἀλλ' οὐ[δ'] Ἀρέτα σιειδῆς,  
 οὐδὲ Σύλακίς τε καὶ Κλησισηῖρα,  
 οὐδ' ἔς Αἰνησιμβρ[ό]τας ἐνθοῖσα φασεῖς·  
 Ἀσταφίς [τ]έ μοι γένοιτο
- (75) καὶ ποτιγλέποι Φίλυλλα  
 Δαμαρ[έ]τα τ' ἔρατά τε Φιανθεμῖς·  
 ἀλλ' Ἀγησιχόρα με τείρει.  
 οὐ γὰρ ἄ κ[α]λλίσφυρος  
 Ἀγησιχ[ό]ρ[α] πάρ' αὐτεῖ,
- (80) Ἀγιδοῖ [δ' ἴκτ]αρ μένει<sup>1</sup>  
 θωστήρ[ιά τ'] ἄμ' ἐπαινεῖ.  
 ἀλλὰ τᾶν [...]... σιοὶ  
 δέξασθε· [σι]ῶν γὰρ ἄνα  
 καὶ τέλος· [χο]ροστάτις,
- (85) Φείποιμί κ', [ἐ]γὼν μὲν αὐτὰ  
 παρσένος μάταν ἀπὸ θράνω λέλακα  
 γλαύξ· ἐγὼ[ν] δὲ ταῖ μεν Ἀώτι μάλιστα  
 Φανδάνην ἐρώ· πόνων γὰρ  
 ἄμιν ἰάτωρ ἔγεντο·
- (90) ἐξ Ἀγησιχόρ[ας] δὲ νεάνιδες  
 ἱρήνας ἔρατ[ᾶ]ς ἐπέβαν·  
 τῶ]ι τε γὰρ σηραφόρωι  
 ..]τῶς εδ.....  
 τ[ῶι] κυβερνάται δὲ χρῆ
- (95) κ[ῆ]ν νᾶι μάλιστα ἄκούην·  
 ἄ δὲ τᾶν Σηρην[ί]δων  
 ἄοιδοτέρα μ[έν] οὐχί,  
 σιαὶ γὰρ, ἀντ[ί] δ' ἔνδεκα  
 παίδων δεκ[ᾶς] ὡς ἀείδ]ει·<sup>2</sup>
- (100) φθέγγεται δ' [ἄρ'] ὦ[τ' ἐπὶ] Ξάνθω ῥοαῖσι  
 κύκνος· ἄ δ' ἐπιμέρωι ξανθᾶι κομίσκαι

1 Page offers “[δὲ π]αρμένει *vel* [δ' ἴκτ]αρ μένει *veri sim*”. I prefer the latter; either way the sense is the same. It must be noted, however, as Calame points out (1983, 341) that in extant texts ἴκταρ is never complemented by a dative.

2 Here I have followed the texts of Stehle (75) and Robbins (10), replacing ἄδ' with ὡς. The form in Page, itself an emendation by Wilamowitz, implies a simile involving the chorus; surely this is not in keeping with the stanza's praise of Hagesichora.

## Appendix II: Translation

The following is my own translation, to which I have referred throughout this project. I have followed Page's scheme for stanzas of the poem (Page, 1951, 21ff).

Polydeukes [...] I do not count Lycaithos amongst the dead [...] both Enarsphoros and swift-footed Sebros [...] and the violent [...] and the helmeted one and Euteiches and Lord Ares [...] distinguished amongst the heroes.

[...] and the wild [...] great Eurytos [...] the throng [...] the finest [...] we will pass over [...] Fate (and Poros?)<sup>14</sup> [...] oldest of all [...] a shoe-less defense;<sup>15</sup> let no man fly to heaven, nor attempt to marry lady Aphrodite or another [...] or a child of Porkos [...] the Graces, eyes filled with love (go) to the house of Zeus.

[...] god [...] to dear ones [...] gave gifts [...] youth destroyed [...] throne [...] one of them [...] with a marble millstone [...] in Hades [...] but unforgettably they suffered, having planned evil things.

And there is a vengeance of the gods; and he is fortunate, who happily and unwept finishes the web of his days. I sing Agido's torch; I see her like the sun, which she calls to shine on us as witness. And our illustrious chorus-leader forbids me, nevertheless, to praise or find fault with Agido. For she herself (the chorus-leader) seems to stand out, just as if one placed a horse amongst the herds, a sturdy one, prize-bearing, with thunderous hooves, those in the dreams dreamed under rocks.

But don't you see? The courser is Enetic; and the hair of my cousin Hagesichora blooms like

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14 Page, 1951, 33ff, notes that the attached commentary refers to a 'Poros' in this line; "it is generally assumed that it should be restored to 14, just before γεραϊτάτοι".

15 Tsitsibakou-Vasalos, 150, explains the adjective ἀπέδιλος throughout her article as a synonym for "exposed and unprotected, whence vulnerable".

pure gold; her face is silver. But why is it I say this so openly? This here is Hagesichora herself, and a second girl, behind Agido in beauty, will run like a Kolaxian horse to an Ibenian. For those morning doves, rising like Sirius during this divine night, fight us, who bear a cloak as an offering.

Nor is there any amount of purple that will help us, nor a delicate serpent bracelet, all gold, nor a Lydian head-band, a blessed thing to dark-eyed young girls. Nor the hair of Nanno, not even god-like Arete, and not either Sulakis nor Klesiseira; nor, when you go to Ainesimbrotos's house will you say, "Let Astaphis be there for me. Let Philulla gaze at me, and Damareta and beautiful Wianthemis." But it is Hagesichora who wears me out.

For of course, fair-ankled Hagesichora is here, near to Agido, and she praises our festival. But gods, receive (their prayers); for the beginning and the end comes from the gods. And chorus-leader, would that I might speak, I, a maiden, vainly screeching from the rafters like an owl; and I wish more than anything to praise Aotis, for she is a healer of our toils. But, because of Hagesichora, we girls walk through lovely peace;

For akin to a trace-horse [...] and it is necessary in a ship, more than anything, to listen to the captain. But she is not a better singer than the Sirens, for they are goddesses. But she sings like ten voices in place of eleven, and she sings like a swan upon the streams of the Xanthus. But with lovely yellow hair [...]