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## **Deukalion and Pyrrha: Re-reading the Greek Flood myth**

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**ABSTRACT:** In recent years the most common way to interpret the Greek myth of the Flood has been through a comparative approach in the context of the relationship between Greek and Near Eastern cultures and the influences of the Near East on Greek traditions, literature, religion and myth. My article does not intend to re-examine the conclusions of this research, but, without diminishing the obvious importance of the comparative approach, to focus on the most 'canonical' Greek version of the myth and to highlight some aspects of it which in my view have not been so deeply explored.

**KEY-WORDS:** flood, myth, Deukalion, Pyrrha, human origins

Our evidence of the Flood myth in the Greek sources is very limited and not earlier than Pindar (*Olympian* 9. 62-71), although we have a possible reference in the *Catalogue of Women* (Fr.4 Merkelbach-West<sup>1</sup>). Fragments of the comic poet Epicharmos (from a play possibly entitled *Pyrrha* or *Prometheus* or even *Deukalion*) seem to mention the Flood, but the longest and most complete story is told by Apollodoros<sup>2</sup>. His account starts by presenting Deukalion, son of Prometheus, who married Pyrrha, daughter of Epimetheus and Pandora:

“Prometheus had a son, Deukalion, who ruled the area around Phthia, and married Pyrrha, the daughter of Epimetheus and of Pandora, whom the gods had fashioned as the first woman”.

Other Greek literary sources also allude to the couple Deukalion and Pyrrha as descendants of Prometheus and Pandora, for instance some fragments of the *Catalogue of Women*, a genealogical poem ascribed to Hesiod but transmitted mainly

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<sup>1</sup> Merkelbach, R.- West, M.L. (ed.), *Fragmenta Hesiodica*, Oxford 1967.

<sup>2</sup> *Library of Mythology* I.VII. 2-3.

in texts by various authors whose origin and date is still disputed<sup>3</sup>. Fragments 2,4,5 and 6 (Merkelbach-West)<sup>4</sup> refer to Deukalion, his genealogy and his descendants.

The first noteworthy point which we find in these fragments (in spite of the fact that their text is extremely corrupt) is Deukalion's genealogy: all sources coincide in making him the son of Prometheus, but some fragments refer to Pandora as his mother<sup>5</sup>:

"That Deukalion was the son of Prometheus and Pandora, Hesiod says in the first Book of the *Catalogue*, and that Hellen, from whom descend the Hellenes and Hellas, was the son of Prometheus (or Deukalion) and Pyrrha."<sup>6</sup> whereas others name his mother as Pryneia or one of the Okeanids (Hesione or Clymene):

"Deukalion, in whose time the Flood (*kataklusmos*) happened, was the son of Prometheus; his mother was Klymene, according to the majority, but according to Hesiod Pryneia, according to Akousilaos Hesione the daughter of Okeanos."<sup>7</sup>

Apollodoros agrees with the *Catalogue* in naming Prometheus as Deukalion's father, but does not mention his mother; nor does Hesiod (either in *Theogony* or in *Works and Days*) mention any woman or goddess as Prometheus' wife<sup>8</sup>.

Pyrrha, Deukalion's wife, is a daughter of Epimetheus and Pandora; she is then a cousin of her husband, being the daughter of her father's brother. In any case, the couple Deukalion and Pyrrha seem to be 'doubles' of Prometheus and Pandora in their relationship with the origin of humanity<sup>9</sup>.

The idea of associating Prometheus with Pandora as a couple could emerge from a confusion with his brother Epimetheus, who -in *Works and Days*<sup>10</sup>- made Pandora his wife. It would also be plausible - according to Gantz<sup>11</sup>- that in an older version of this myth Pandora could have been given as wife to Prometheus himself<sup>12</sup>. This would fit better with the idea of punishing directly the god who had dared to deceive Zeus.

The myth of the Flood contains here another way to make Prometheus the benefactor and father of humanity, in this case through his own son, Deukalion, who

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<sup>3</sup> Hunter, R. (ed.), *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women*, Cambridge 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Merkelbach, R.- West, M.L. (ed.), *Fragmenta Hesiodica*, Oxford 1967.

<sup>5</sup> According to Osborne, R. ("Ordering Women in Hesiod's Catalogue" in Hunter, R. (2005), 8-10) the tradition about what exactly the *Catalogue* says about Deukalion and Pandora is confused, but it is safe to assume that a Pandora at least appeared as Deukalion's daughter who had intercourse with Zeus and became the mother of Graikos: "And in the palaces of noble Deukalion, the girl Pandora was joined in love with father Zeus, leader of all the gods, and gave birth to Graikos, staunch in battle." (Fr. 5 M-W).

<sup>6</sup> Fr. 2 M-W.

<sup>7</sup> Fr.4 M-W.

<sup>8</sup> See Bremmer (2008), 106-7; Caduff (1986), 119

<sup>9</sup> Buxton, R., *The Complete World of Greek Mythology*, London 2004, 59.

<sup>10</sup> 84-89.

<sup>11</sup> Gantz, T. (1993), *Early Greek Myth*, London, 164.

<sup>12</sup> For Bremmer ("Pandora or the creation of a Greek Eve" in Bremmer (2008), 32-33) although it is extremely odd that Prometheus and not Epimetheus should take Pandora, the version perhaps reflects an older tradition, as Prometheus is a more important hero.

becomes -as I have just suggested- a sort of 'parallel' or 'double' of Prometheus. Deukalion is a man, a hero who was born from a god, like the other heroes in mythology. He is not fabricated by the gods (unlike Pandora); he is simply a god's son.

Pyrrha, as Pandora's daughter, would be her parallel and 'double' and, as a consequence, might not appear in a very positive light. But, if Pandora in Hesiod has been created by the gods as a punishment and as the cause of all misfortunes for mankind<sup>13</sup>, Pyrrha, by contrast, is a benefactress for having played a part in a new creation of human beings. However, although there is an opposition between them, Pandora herself eventually also becomes benefactress through Pyrrha, that is, through her descendant. Pandora is the 'first wife', but, because of her character as modelled by the gods, she would bequeath the role of 'first wife' to Pyrrha, 'mother' of humanity. If her parents, Epimetheus and Pandora, have brought all misfortunes upon human beings, their daughter, Pyrrha, is the intermediary in the creation of one half of the new humanity: the women. According to Hesiod, women are an evil for men, but in this myth, women are as necessary as men to populate the earth in a natural way.

The fragments of the *Catalogue* also mention a descentance from Deukalion and Pyrrha, although -unlike Apollodoros' version of the myth- they do not mention the humans born from the stones through their intervention, but rather a son born as a result of the sexual union of the couple. This son is the real ancestor of the Hellenic people as his name shows: Hellen. Fragment 2 (M-W) says that from him descends the race of the Hellenes and Hellas. Deukalion and Pyrrha become the parents of the Hellenes. Fragment 9 (M-W) and the following fragments<sup>14</sup> refer to the successive descendants of Hellen and some eponyms of the Hellenic Greek peoples (Doros of the Dorians, Jutho of the Ionians through his son Ion, Creusa's son, Aeolos of the Aeolians). This idea is also mentioned by Apollodoros<sup>15</sup>. The aim of this genealogy is obviously to attribute a mythical ancestor first to the Hellenic people as a whole, and then to its various, component ethnic groups<sup>16</sup>.

Deukalion is presented in the *Catalogue* as a king. Although it is not mentioned explicitly, this can be deduced from the facts that his children are referred to as kings and that there is an allusion to 'the palaces of Deukalion' in Fragment. 5 (M-W). Fragment 6 (M-W) says that those who were born from Deukalion ruled in Thessaly:

"Those who were descended from Deukalion used to rule over Thessaly, as Hekataios and Hesiod say."

<sup>13</sup> *Theogony* 570-593; *Works and Days* 89-99.

<sup>14</sup> Frgs. 10, ff. Merkelbach-West

<sup>15</sup> *Library of Mythology* I. VII. 3-4.

<sup>16</sup> On the Greek tribal groupings and their genealogy see Dowden, K., *The Uses of Greek Mythology*, London (1992), 79-80.

Apollodoros clearly states that Deukalion was the king of the area around Phthia. Herodotos<sup>17</sup> knows Deukalion as king of Phthiotis. It is evident that Deukalion was associated with Thessaly, an area also mentioned by Apollodoros in his account of the Flood<sup>18</sup>.

The theme of the Flood seems to appear only in Fragment 4 (M-W) of the *Catalogue*:

"Deukalion, in whose time the Flood (?) happened..."

using Deukalion to locate the event chronologically, but without any implication that he was a survivor of the Flood or that he had a role in the origin of a new humanity<sup>19</sup>. But it is in Pindar<sup>20</sup> that we find for the first time a fuller and more detailed account of this myth, connecting it with the mythical past of the little city of Opous and Protogeneia, a daughter of Deukalion and Pyrrha, in a song composed for the Opountian wrestler Epharmostus, winner at Olympia. In it Pindar focusses on Zeus' will, the settlement of Deukalion and Pyrrha after the Flood and the new human race from stones<sup>21</sup>.

"Lend your tongue to Protogeneia's town, where Zeus of the flashing thunderbolt decreed that Pyrrha and Deukalion should come down from Parnassos and set their first home. Without wedlock they made a single race of a generation of stones: they were called People."

The myth of the Flood is not a myth about the 'original' origin of human beings because it presupposes a pre-existent humankind which was annihilated. Apollodoros connects this myth with the myth of the Five Races (when he mentions that Zeus wanted to eliminate the Bronze Race), told by Hesiod in *Works and Days*<sup>22</sup> and which refers to a succession of races of humans, each created by the gods and later exterminated by them and replaced by another one. Following Apollodoros' text then, Zeus sent the Flood to destroy the Bronze Race, although we do not know exactly why. According to Hesiod the men of the Bronze Race were extinguished without any act of punishment on the part of Zeus, but only because of their own violence:

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<sup>17</sup> 1.56.3.

<sup>18</sup> For Bremmer (2008), 33-34 the myth of Pandora probably originated in Thessaly, reflecting the significance of the area in seventh century Greece. Consequently Thessaly was an area where not only the story of the Flood originated but also the myth of the creation of the first woman.

<sup>19</sup> West, M.L., *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women* believes that the Flood did not occur in the *Catalogue*, but is a later importation from the East. However, Merkelbach, R. ("Las papyrus d'Hésiode et la géographie mythologique de la Grèce", *Chronique d'Égypte* 85 (1968), 144) assumes that the Flood did occur in the poem. See also Strauss Clay, J. "The beginning and end of the *Catalogue*" in R. Hunter (2005), 28-29.

<sup>20</sup> *Ol.* 9. 62-7

<sup>21</sup> D'Alessio, A. in "Pindar, Bacchylides and Hesiodic genealogical poetry" in Hunter (2005), 220-221 remarks that it is a story which highlights the positive involvement of Zeus.

<sup>22</sup> 106-201. See Sourvinou-Inwood, C. "The Hesiodic Myth of the Five Races" in Palagia, O. (ed.), *Greek Offerings. Essays in Greek Art in honour of John Boardman*, Oxford (1997), 1-21; 13-15.

"They were laid low by their own hands, and they went to chill Hades' house of decay leaving no names: mighty though they were, dark death got them, and they left the bright sunlight."<sup>23</sup>

Pindar does not refer either to the reason for the Flood or to how it started. In Greek tradition then the Flood is sent by Zeus, the god who normally sends punishments -such as that of Prometheus- and who is the god of lightning, thunder and rain. However, there is no reference to a convincing reason to make Zeus desire to destroy the first humanity. There is one reference in Greek myth to the idea that the gods wanted to destroy human beings because they are too numerous, and it is a myth to explain the Trojan War<sup>24</sup>.

Whatever the reason for the punishment, the Flood myth is a story of destruction: the heavy and constant rain is destructive, as opposed to the idea which we find in several cultures -such as Egypt- that the flood of a river -the Nile- fertilises the earth; this kind of regular inundation is thus beneficial and not destructive. However, the Flood myth, in spite of its emphasis on destruction, finally becomes a myth of generation: a new origin of new human beings.

Deukalion builds an ark, a sort of chest, as a boat. The Greek word is *larnax*, also used in other myths in which a person is thrown to the sea, for instance, in the story of Danae and Perseus<sup>25</sup>. The Greek account does not mention the building of the ark, nor the detail (as in the *Book of Genesis*) about taking animals into it to assure the survival of the different species. Lucian<sup>26</sup> offers a version of the story of Deukalion and Pyrrha in which there are animals in the ark, but this version does not seem to belong to earlier Greek tradition, being probably directly inspired by the Biblical narrative. Greek myth does not seem particularly interested in the origin and destiny of non-human animals on earth. The principal exception to this generalisation would of course be myths of metamorphosis<sup>27</sup>. By contrast, Ovid offers a version in which the time after the Flood was the moment when some new animals were born<sup>28</sup>.

The person selected to survive was singled out in advance and advised to build the ark. In Apollodoros' account Deukalion and Pyrrha are chosen, but not for being a model of morality. It is only through Prometheus' intervention that they are saved from the Flood. Prometheus appears as advisor of Deukalion and operates in favour of his son and humanity. Prometheus, the cunning rival of Zeus, who in Hesiod<sup>29</sup> challenged the father of the gods and attracted his anger and his punishment to

<sup>23</sup> *Works and Days* 153-155

<sup>24</sup> *Cypria* 1. See West, M.L. (1997), 489. It can be argued that the same motif is present in Fragment 204 (M-W) of the *Catalogue of Women*, see Bremmer (2008), 105.

<sup>25</sup> In Simonides, Frg. 543 *PMG*; Apollodoros, *Library of Mythology* II. 2-4. Such a *larnax* is represented on images of Danae with the baby Perseus, for instance, on an Attic red-figure lekythos (*LIMC* I, *Danae* 53) or on an Attic red-figured hydria (*LIMC* I, *Danae* 42). Although we have no images of Deukalion's ark, we may presume that the Greeks conceived it to be of similar shape and big enough to contain the couple Deukalion and Pyrrha.

<sup>26</sup> *The Syrian Goddess*, 12, ff

<sup>27</sup> For instance the myth of Arachne, changed into a spider, or the myth of Tereus, Prochne and Philomela, metamorphosed into birds.

<sup>28</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1. 416-17.

<sup>29</sup> *Theogony* 535, ff.; *Works and Days* 47, ff.

himself and to the whole of humankind, seems to act against Zeus' wishes in this myth too. And, once more, as a benefactor of humanity, Prometheus saves a man -or, better, a couple- to assure a descendance. In this case Zeus does not seem to get angry with this particular decision of Prometheus, or – perhaps - in this case Prometheus had his approval.

In the Greek version of the myth it is clear that it is not a universal Flood which destroyed all humankind, as other traditions assert, but a *local* Flood. And it is important to notice that Apollodoros refers to other survivors besides Deukalion and Pyrrha:

"Zeus poured an abundance of rain from heaven to flood the greater part of Greece, causing all human beings to be destroyed, apart from those few who took refuge in the lofty mountains nearby."<sup>30</sup>

According to other sources there were other heroes who survived the Flood, like Dardanos<sup>31</sup>. Consequently it is not the whole human race which disappeared, but rather the majority of people who inhabited Greece at that particular moment. This is a contradiction with the idea that it was the Bronze Race, which -according to Apollodoros- suffered the Flood and was completely wiped out. We also find in Apollodoros an allusion to a particular geographical area:

"It was then that the mountains of Thessaly drew apart and all the lands outside the Isthmus and the Peloponnese were submerged."<sup>32</sup>

Again there is a reference to Thessaly, Deukalion's kingdom. Other versions of this theme -for instance in Nonnos<sup>33</sup>- agree in considering Thessaly as the central point where the Flood occurred. However, a variant in Aristotle<sup>34</sup> says that the Flood was in the area around Dodona and the river Acheloois. In any case, the Flood did not affect the whole of humanity, but only a part.

Apollodoros says that Deukalion was carried across the sea for nine days and nine nights until he arrived at Mount Parnassos, where he disembarked when the rain stopped<sup>35</sup>.

The place where the ark stopped is –as recorded already in Pindar- Mount Parnassos, above Delphi. The summits of mountains were usually related to the gods, to Zeus in many cases. Moreover, mountains were in general considered by the Greeks as the first place inhabited by the human race<sup>36</sup>. If we go back to the version which connects the Flood with Dodona, this could be an attempt to associate this

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<sup>30</sup> *Library of Mythology* I. VII. 2-3.

<sup>31</sup> In Nonnos, *Dionisiaca* III. 200-219; Plato, *Sch.Ti.* 22a (See Caduff (1986) 51-52 and 133-142).

<sup>32</sup> *Library of Mythology* I. VII. 2-3.

<sup>33</sup> *Dionisiaca* III, 205-215.

<sup>34</sup> *Meteorologica* 352 e35.

<sup>35</sup> *Library of Mythology* I. VII. 2-3. The number nine has Homeric resonances, for instance in *Iliad* 1. 53 and in *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 47 (see Caduff (1986), 100).

<sup>36</sup> See Buxton, R., *Imaginary Greece*, Cambridge 1994, 90.

myth with two sacred places, both the location of an oracle, and both very important from the religious point of view: one sacred to Apollo, the other to Zeus. Such a place would be then the settlement of the first post-diluvian Greeks. The fact that one version featured Delphi and one Dodona could show a kind of religious competition between the two centres of cult. In any case the version which refers to Delphi would be -as we can deduce from our sources- the more widespread version. For Bremmer<sup>37</sup>, the Greeks would have selected simply the highest mountain of the region.

The motif of a bird (a dove, a swallow or a raven) sent after the rain appears in most non-Greek versions of the Flood myth, but not in the Greek version, a fact which is obvious as there were no animals in the Greek ark. However, interestingly, the motif of a bird sent out is recorded in the Greek myth of Jason and the Argonauts. Jason is advised by Phineus to send out a dove before crossing the Clashing Rocks, in order to anticipate the ship's destiny by seeing what happened to the dove<sup>38</sup>. Moreover, two birds sent by Zeus from the two edges of the world met in Delphi to mark the place which corresponded to the centre of the world (the *omphalos*)<sup>39</sup>. This suggests an idea similar to the one in the myth of the Flood although absent in the Greek version of this myth: the birds marked the place of the oracle, a place which will be the settlement of the first post-diluvian humans.

In Apollodoros when Deukalion disembarked, he prepared a sacrifice to Zeus Phyxios, an appellation of Zeus which refers to escape from a danger. The sacrifice was a gesture of thanksgiving for having been saved and it recognised the gods' intervention in the disaster; it is Zeus, the cause of the Flood, who has to be placated now. Zeus became benevolent and sent Hermes to offer Deukalion the possibility of asking for what he wanted. Rudhardt<sup>40</sup> highlights the relationship between Prometheus and Deukalion regarding the institution of sacrifice, in the idea that it would be Deukalion and not Prometheus who had officially established the sacrifice to the gods as an act of thanksgiving after the Flood<sup>41</sup>. In this respect we can see again a particular parallel between Prometheus and Deukalion. The mention of Zeus Phyxios seems to allude again to the relationship of this myth with Thessaly, as this epithet was especially important in that area, as we can see in the myth of Jason and the Argonauts<sup>42</sup>.

Deukalion replied to Zeus that he wanted people, and Zeus accepted. Only the Greek version of this myth -unlike the Near Eastern- refers to the subject of men born from stones, which appears in Pindar, Apollodoros and Ovid<sup>43</sup>. In all Greek variants the existence of human beings emerged from a decision of Deukalion himself, who

<sup>37</sup> Bremmer (2008), 112 does not agree with Caduff (1986), 77-78 who sees the notion of a cosmic mountain in the Greek tradition.

<sup>38</sup> Apollonios, *Argonautica* 2, 550-573.

<sup>39</sup> Pindar, fr. 54; Strabo 9. 3.6; Epimenides, fr. 43.

<sup>40</sup> "Les mythes grecs relatifs à l'instauration du sacrifice: les rôles corrélatifs de Prométhée et de son fils Deucalion", *MH* 27 (1970), 1-15.

<sup>41</sup> See also Caduff (1986) 217-224.

<sup>42</sup> Apollonios, *Argonautika* IV, 119.

<sup>43</sup> Pindar, *Ol.* 9. 62-67; Apollodoros, *Library of Mythology* I. VII. 2-3; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 380-415.

felt lonely when he found an empty and inhospitable world after the Flood and wanted to have some company. His wishes were accomplished and when he threw stones onto the earth men were generated, and at the same time from the stones thrown by Pyrrha women were born:

" On the orders of Zeus, he picked up stones and threw them over his head; and the stones that Deukalion threw became men, and those that Pyrrha threw became women."<sup>44</sup>

Other Greek myths tell about earthborn humans: we know that Erichthonios was born from earth after it had been impregnated with Hephaistos' semen, and the *Spartoi* were born from the teeth of the dragon killed by Kadmos which were sown in the ground (*spartoi* means Sown Men). These are all prodigious and unnatural births, and in the case of the stones of the myth of the Flood, it was a real transformation, a metamorphosis of those inanimate stones which became human beings when they fell upon earth, apparently in a kind of spontaneous way, without the intervention of a fertilizing element, as in the other cases. On the other hand it is worth noting the differentiation between the men 'created' by Deukalion and the women 'created' simultaneously by Pyrrha. Apollodoros' account also refers to the fact that the stones were thrown 'back' (over his head, as the text says). We also find this idea in other myths, for instance -according to Hesiod-, Ouranos' genitals were thrown backwards by Cronos<sup>45</sup> and the drops of blood which fell to earth generated the Erinyes, the Giants and the Meliai Nymphs; later, when the genitals fell into the sea, the goddess Aphrodite came into being<sup>46</sup>. Buxton<sup>47</sup> points out that what is behind is sacred and mysterious and not human. Analogous examples can be found in the story of Orpheus and Eurydice and in the biblical story of Lot: what is behind is taboo, is forbidden to look at, but also when something is too terrible or too astonishing to be looked at. The birth of this new humanity belonged to what is beyond the limits of human understanding<sup>48</sup>, and, although it happened through human hands –the action of Deukalion and Pyrrha- it is still in the realm of the divine and the strange.

It is worth adding that the version offered by Ovid<sup>49</sup> introduces a slightly different ending: after the Flood Deukalion and Pyrrha, the only survivors, founded a temple and prayed to the goddess Themis. Her oracle told them to throw the bones of their mother over their shoulders. This astonishing oracle, which at first was not comprehensible- was finally interpreted by Deukalion himself in the sense that the bones of Mother Earth were the stones<sup>50</sup>. What comes afterwards in Ovid's account is similar to the story in Apollodoros.

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<sup>44</sup> *Library of Mythology* I. VII. 2-3.

<sup>45</sup> *Theogony* 180-3. For Bremmer (2008) 124-125 the custom of not looking back is clearly connected with the act of separation.

<sup>46</sup> *Theogony* 188, ff.

<sup>47</sup> Buxton (1994) 103.

<sup>48</sup> The idea behind these cases is perhaps that the event of creation is too impressive to be seen (Bremmer (2008) 124-125).

<sup>49</sup> *Metamorphoses* I. 125-415.

<sup>50</sup> *Metamorphoses* I, 390-394.



The end of Apollodoros' account refers to the relationship between two words: λαῖας and λαός:

“That was how people came to be called *laoi*, by metaphor from the word *laas*, a stone.”<sup>51</sup>

At this point the myth becomes aetiological<sup>52</sup>. It offers an explanation for the Greek word λαός, as if since Deukalion, the word to designate 'people' came from the word which meant “stone” and λαός would recall the origin of human beings from stones. In Greek these words do not actually come from the same root, since λαός comes from a form λαφος as it is documented in Mycenaean and in some compounds which appear in dialectal inscriptions from the 7th and 6th century B.C.

The idea that the Greeks -at least *some* Greeks- believed in the historicity of the Flood can be confirmed by several facts told by Pausanias. One is that in Athens, in the temple of Zeus, a crack in the earth was said to be the place through which the water ran away after the Flood and that into that crack the ritual was practised of throwing honey cakes<sup>53</sup>. A second is that the ancient city of Delphi was inundated by the rain in the time of the Flood<sup>54</sup>. A third is that during the Anthesteria in Athens in the public rite of the Hydrophoria water was carried for the dead who had been killed in the Flood<sup>55</sup>.

The Flood myth is always a myth of re-creation, that is, a secondary creation which followed the destruction of humanity produced by the first creation. In spite of the fact that we have to suppose an influence on the Greek tradition of the Mesopotamian and Hebrew sources, there are elements in the Greek version which are genuinely Greek<sup>56</sup>, for instance, the absence of the animals in the ark, the intervention of Prometheus, the men born from the stones and the origin of the name for 'people'. Other elements (the chest, the sacrifice, the mountain) -although originating in the Near East- might have been adapted according to the Greek tradition.

If we are to try to estimate a date for the arrival of this myth in Greece, maybe the 6<sup>th</sup> century (where many scholars place the *Catalogue of Women*) might not be wide of the mark. It would be plausible to think that the confusion between the words λαός and λαῖας would not have been possible -as we know now through the findings of modern linguistics- before the loss of *digamma* between vowels, which has disappeared already in most of the first epigraphic alphabetic texts (7th-6th). As I have already mentioned we are certain that the word λαός “people” had in origin an intervowel digamma as we can see in mycenaean *ra-wa-ke-ta* (λαφαγητας "the one who

<sup>51</sup> *Library of Mythology* I. VII. 2-3.

<sup>52</sup> This idea is already in Pindar (*Ol.* 9. 62-71).

<sup>53</sup> Pausanias *Description of Greece* I. XVIII. 7

<sup>54</sup> Pausanias *Description of Greece* X. VI. 1-5

<sup>55</sup> Pausanias *Description of Greece* I. XVIII. 7. See, for instance, Simon, E. (1983), *Festivals of Attica*, The University of Wisconsin Press.

<sup>56</sup> As Bremmer (2008, 116) affirms the Greeks were open to foreign influence but they were never slavish followers.

leads people") and later in dialectal inscriptions: Λαροπολεμος (*GDI* 3151), Φιολαφος (*GDI* 3132)<sup>57</sup> and the word λᾶας "stone" had no digamma but -s- as it is demonstrated in Mycenaean: *ra-e-ja* (λαχεια "of stone"), and in Homer (*Iliad* 24. 611). However, the Greeks habitually made etymological connections between words which for our modern linguistic interpretation are far from been connected<sup>58</sup>, so the point about the digamma can hardly be decisive in dating this myth.

The Flood myth seems to be unknown to pre-6<sup>th</sup> century authors. Hesiod does not mention it at all in his cosmogony or his Myth of the Races. The only relationship of this myth with the cosmogony and the origins of the world is the fact that Deukalion and Pyrrha are genealogically connected with Prometheus and Pandora.

I shall end with two observations:

First, the Flood Myth is in the Greek context actually rather unimportant. If we consider that -in general- iconographical documents are a valuable resource for the study of Greek myths, whether they support or differ from the literary material, in the case of the Flood, the complete absence of Greek iconographical representations in the archaic and classical periods shows the low interest and diffusion of this theme. None of its episodes, characters and elements (the ark, Deukalion and Pyrrha, the men and women born of stones) seem to have inspired Greek artists. We know of examples of mythical characters throwing stones represented on different objects (vases, coins, etc.), for instance, Talos throwing stones at people in Crete on a silver coin from Crete (ca. 430-300 BC)<sup>59</sup>, Perseus throwing stones to the *ketos* to liberate Andromeda on a Corinthian amphora (second quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC)<sup>60</sup>. It does not seem to present any particular difficulty for artists to represent the significant moment of Deukalion and Pyrrha throwing stones, as we have it depicted later in a 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD relief from Ostia<sup>61</sup>, obviously inspired by Ovid's account of the myth. Perhaps a good reason for this lack of interest lies in the relative lack of importance of flooding in real Greek life compared, for instance, with the areas of the Nile, the Tigris and the Euphrates.

Second, this is a very 'local' myth in contrast to non-Greek versions which refer to the Flood as a *universal* disaster. This fact fits well with the 'regional' aspect which in general characterizes Greek mythology (more interested in the origin of the Thebans or the Arkadians than in the origin of humankind), although it is contradictory with the role of Deukalion and Pyrrha as ancestors of a new humanity. But, after all, contradiction between different versions of a myth is hardly uncharacteristic of Greek mythology. We can suppose the existence of two different traditions mixed up in this myth: one related to the origin of a particular human ethnic group, a prodigious origin, such as the origin of other human groups in myth: the *Spartoi*, the *Myrmidons*, an origin which makes them real "autochthonoi", born from

<sup>57</sup> Collitz, H; Bechtel, F., et alii, *Sammlung der griechischen Dialekt-Inschriften*, I-IV, Göttingen 1884-1915 (Liechtestein 1973-83).

<sup>58</sup> See, for instance, Sedley, D., "The Etymologies in Plato's *Cratylus*" *JHS* 118 (1998), 145-156.

<sup>59</sup> *LIMC* VII, "Talos I", 1.

<sup>60</sup> *LIMC* I, "Andromeda I", 1.

<sup>61</sup> *LIMC*, III "Deukalion", 1.

stones and belonging to the earth where they were born; the other related to Deukalion and Pyrrha as survivors of the Flood, and generating descendants in a natural way. Those descendants will be the ancestors of the Hellenic race and its tribes<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> See Strauss Clay, J. "The beginning and end of the *Catalogue*" in Hunter (2005), 28.

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