

Hecate

Hecate is the Goddess of Magic, Witchcraft, the Underworld, Earth, Sea and Heaven. Several sources mention that She guides the dead to the underworld like Hermes does. But Her parentage is somewhat strange.

Although many mythology books mentions Hecate being the daughter of the Titans Perses & Asteria or Perses & Persaios, another text mentions Hecate being the daughter of Nyx, the Goddess of the Night whom even Zeus has respect for. Hecate has many names and epithets like Hecate Brimô, Hecate Sôteira or Aidônaia. These names and epithets show us how the people perceived her. Although mostly frightened by Her, She does have the role of being the guardian and savior. Unlike Hades, Hecate did have a cult in Athens and Samothrace and in other places as well. She was particularly honored on the first and last day of the Athenian calendar (if not mistaken) Hecate is a guide and a guardian. She protects those who call upon her, especially from murder, magic, theft, the dangers of childbirth and the hardships of life on the road. She is also a mediating figure, who intercedes on our behalf with the Gods. Hecate is a too complicated goddess to summarize in one text let alone in several books. Hecate's genealogy tells us that she is related to Apollo and Artemis who were called Hekatos and Hekate. These names link Hecate with Apollo and Artemis but her family links her to with Apollo and Artemis. Hecate is considered the cousin of Apollo and Artemis. Her mother, Asteria is the sister of Leto who in turn is the mother of Apollo and Artemis. Both Goddesses are daughters of the titan couple Koios and Phoebe, if Hesiod is right in his account. Other accounts suggest that Hecate is the daughter of Nyx. Hesiod was also the one who wanted to distinguish Hecate from Artemis by referring to her as monogenes, "an only child." As Krattais She is said to be the mother of Skylla by Phorkyss (Argonautica 4.827). Tales were told of Her love affairs with the gods of the sea with Triton in particular. On the other hand Hecate was said to be the mistress of the Underworld and every night led around a swarm of ghosts, accompanied by the barking of dogs. Kerényi states that she was even called Bitch and She-wolf. By Aetes She is said to be the mother of Circe/ Kirke, Medea and Aigialeus (Diodorus Siculus 4.45.1). As Prothyraia, She is a goddess who helped women in childbed or sometimes cruelly oppressed them. She is said to be seen at meeting places of crossroads. Women who would take us into the field of Witchcraft invoked her. It is even said that Her cult once came from Asia Minor. She does have many epithets and even Zeus let Her alone since She didn't interfere with the Titanomachy by not choosing sides. Since the Hellens didn't have any kind of dogma, there might be names and epithets out there waiting to be discovered. Every family, individual, city and community had their own vision on Hecate. In Roman times She (Hecate) was identified with Trivia. Trivia never really had any cult in Roman times. She (Hecate) along with Pluto/ Dis Pater were called upon for binding spells and etc... They were feared not because they were evil but out of fear for dying. In Latin texts and in the Latin, Roman defixiones, Hecate appears as Hecate not as Trivia which could mean that Hecate wasn't just assimilated in Trivia but overshadowed Trivia as well as Hecate. Graves says that She came originally from Egypt as being the goddess of midwifery and that this slowly faded away and merged into her chthonic aspect but he seems to confuse Her with Isis. Gumbustas even has evidence of the existence of her cult in the Balkans during the Neolithic. She was supposedly be a pre- Olympian deity. But than again Graves even says that Medousa

was once a deity whose cult was overrun by the Aryans and that she even had her own calendar. Hecate's appearance in the Cultus Cereris of Sicily differs from that at Eleusis, and there is also the very different Locrian cultus of Persephatta. The triple goddess in Sicily is Demeter, Persephone and Aphrodite, although Hecate is sometimes found in place of Aphrodite. There is plenty to say about Graves' mistakes but what is troubling is that her epithet of Triformos (three ways) is literally seen as 3 goddesses as one. It is the most common worship by Wiccans who worship Hecate as Hecate Triformos. Wiccans tend to see Hecate as the maiden of this triple goddess where Demeter is the old woman and Persephone or Kore as the maiden. From what I can tell, this is a modern conception and not an ancient one. And it seems that this vision seem to dominate.

Hecate appears among Romans but not necessarily within what could be considered the Religio Romana. There are counterparts to Greek Hecate among some Oscan tribes, such as with the Sabellian Ceres the Avenger. There is a connection made between Hecate and Orcus. Ennius, really a Greek source, says that Orcus is Dis Pater, and compares Him to Pluto, and you do find Hecate and Orcus together in the defixiones. But these would still be magical practices, on the fringe of the Religio Romana, and adoption of what would be regarded as a foreign deity to Rome, if not foreign to Rome's population. That is why I question that Hecate might be adopted into the Religio Romana without Her magical aspect.

Primary cult center and worship:

Her primary cult center lies in Lagina, Miletus, Argos, Eleusis and Aigina. She was also honored in Athens and on the island of Samothrace. Her cult was pretty much spread over whole of Hellas. But Her cult centers was in the cities I mentioned above. Strabo mentions that the Kouretes were the Korybantēs and probably ministers of Hecate. Strabo says that on the morning of the new moon a sacrifice was made to Hecate. On the most common elements in the worship of Dionysos, Hecate, Apollo and the Mousai, Strabo says that these were branch bearing, choral dancing and initiations. In Ephesos in Asia Minor there was a chapel build by Thrason. Also in Asia Minor in a settlement of the Macedonians called Stratonikeia, there was a temple of Hecate that drew great festal assemblies each year according to Strabo. In Pausanias 2.11.5-8 "In the portico [of the temple of Askepios at Titane, Sikyonia] are dedicated images of Dionysos and Hecate, with Aphrodite, the Mater Theon, and Tykhe. These are wooden." It was in the same temple that according to Pausanias, the priest conducted secret rites to Hecate at four pits, taming the fierceness of the blasts and is said to chant as well the charmes of Medea. At Argos is a temple of Hecate, and the image is a work of Skopas. This one is of stone, while the bronze images opposite, also of Hecate, were made respectively by Polykleiotos and his brother Naukydes. Of all the gods, the Aiginetans worship most Hecate, in whose honour every year they celebrate mystic rites which, they say, Orpheus the Thracian established among them. Within the enclosure is a temple; its wooden image is the work of Myron, and it has one face and one body. It was Alkamenēs, in my opinion, who first made three images of Hecate attached to one another, a figure called by the Athenians Epipurgidia (on the Tower); it stands beside the temple of Nike Apteron. Pausanias also tell us that no other Greeks than the Spartan youths sacrifice puppies as do the Kolophonians who sacrifices black puppy, a black bitch to Enodio (the Wayside Goddess) Both these sacrifices are appointed to take place at night. Aristophanes described to us that there were altars or chapels dedicated to Hecate which were placed at the entrance of the homes and where three roads cross, which was called Hekataion. Lycophon tell us that on the Island of Samthrace, the cave of Zerynthos, dogs were slain. He described to us that Hekuba was a attendant of Hecate, he calls Hecate the maiden

daughter of Perseos, Brimo Trimorphos (Three- Formed), and calls Zerynthia (Hekate) Queen of Strymon who was the goddess of Pherai. Virgil tells us that Hecate's name (and not Trivia) was howled by night at the city crossroads in his book the Aeneid line 4.609. "Grottoes of the Kabeiroi and Korybantian cliffs [on the island of Samothrake]; ...the revelling companies of my mother's [Elektra queen of the island of Samothrake] Hekate with their torches in the night." –Dionysiaca 4.184

"Zerynthos [on the island of Samothrake] of the unresting Korybantes, the foundation of renowned Perseis [Hekate], where the rocks are thronged with torchbearing mystics of the Maid." –Dionysiaca 13.400

"[The Kabeiros] Alkon grasped a fiery bolt in one hand, and swung about a festal torch of Hekate from his own country [Hekate and the Kabeiroi were both gods of the Samothrakian Mysteries]." –Dionysiaca 29.213

During the Roman Empire, it was forbidding for anyone to carry out unlawful nocturnal rites to bind, to curse or to cast a spell. However it didn't mentioned that it was forbidding to carry out rites in order to protect crops from natural disasters, homes from evil, etc... The punishment of committing these kind of unlawful rites was crucifixion or thrown to the beasts. It comes from the jurist Paulus, dating from 200 CE. Most of the time Hekate is called upon to avenge wrongs. This is shown in the Latin defixionis. Rites carried out by practitioners of the Religio Romano will more likely be associated with the Manes. But it has nothing to do neither with her chthonic aspect nor as a goddess of the Religio Romano. To the Religio Romano she is a foreign deity adopted by the Romans. In the Chaldean Oracles she is worshiped as a cosmic goddess, giver of life, the receptacle of the life-giving Fire, who gives birth to the Synoches. Neither aspect seems to fit into what is found in Greek myth. Which can be interpreted as that this Hekate is different from the Hellenic and Roman Hekate. To the Hellenes, Hekate was a Goddess associated with death (underworld), the terror of the night and the dark side of the moon and the night, and so many other things. Although her magical aspect stood more in the light than the others, most aspects of Hekate was considered equal to another. After all, all these different aspects and names, only shows different sides of their Goddess, and how the people see Her. She was adapted in the Religio Romano, I think mostly for her magical aspect.

Religion:

A ancient and popular Goddess who according to Hesiodos is the daughter of Titanes' Perses and Asteria, a sister of Leto. She is described by Hesiodos as bringing many blessings of wealth, victory, wisdom, and good luck for hunters and sailors amongst others. She is unique in that as a Titanes, she was allowed to keep her powers under the rule of Zeus. She is mostly associated however with being both a keeper of the keys to the Underworld and an attendant to the Underworld Queen, Persephone. At night she is often wandering with the souls of the deceased and her approach being signaled by the howling of dogs. She is associated with the practice of magic and was invoked by Medeia in Euripides' play and by Simaitha in the second Idyll of Theokritos. She is worshipped at crossroads where "suppers" are left out in her honour as a purification rite. In statue form, Hekate is represented usually in a triple form known as Hekate Triformis, which watches over the 3 roads. At the crossroads where suppers were left in honor of Hekate, there was always a Hekataion, a altar or chapel to the Goddess. Reviewing some Latin defixiones, there isn't any reference to Hecate. The only mention of Her in a context that might be regarded as Religio Romana is Ovid's mention of an offering made to Her at crossroads. Roman defixiones are not as elaborate as some of the Greek ones. This one is interesting, from Caerleon, Wales near the camp of the Legio Secunda Augusta, dating to the first or second century CE: "Domna Nemesis, do tibi et galliculas, qui tulit non redimat

ni vita sanguinei sui" or in English, "Lady Nemesis, I give you this cloak and these shoes. May the person who has worn them not redeem them except with his own life and blood." A common type of curse, dedicating stolen property to a god or goddess, which they are then left to collect. This one is interesting in calling upon Nemesis, as She is not usually found in Greek defixiones. Other Roman defixiones, where deities are mentioned, usually dedicate their victims to Proserpina, and less so to Pluto. But the most common actually call upon the spirits of the dead in whose tomb these curse tablets were placed. Pliny N.H. 29.14.4 mentions the sacrifice of black puppies to Hecate, "Catalus lactentes adeo puros existimabant ad cibum ut etiam placandis numinibus hostiarum vice uterentur his. Genitae Manae catulo res divina sit et incoenis deum etiamum ponitur catulira."

Ovid Metamorphoses 7.21 on Medea sacrificing to Hecate

Apollonius of Rhodes Argonautica 4.1635-90 on Medea and Hecate.

Diodorus IV: 45 on Medea as Hecate's own.

Porphyry has Hecate say "Build a shrine and deck it with wild laurel boughs, set there in my image which adore with fervent orison, and in thy sleep I will stand before you." Form a statue of well-planed wood by mystic formula. Smear the figure with rue, and then with a paste of myrrh, storax, frankincense and lizard's tail, connected when the moon is but a sickle. When the moon is full, vow your solemn vows in the words, " Come, infernal, terrestrial, and heavenly Proserpina, goddess of the broad roadways, of crossroads, you who quest to and fro at night, torch in your left hand, a sword in your right hand, enemy of day, friend and lover of darkness, you who does rejoice when the bitches howl and warm blood is spilled, you who are walking amid the phantoms and in the place of tombs, Queen of the Manes and of the Summanes, you whose thirst is blood, you who does strike chill fear into mortal heart, Gorgo, Mormo, Bombo, Moon of a thousand forms, cast a propitious eye upon our sacrifice." (Hippolytus "Philosophumena")

Using a pottery shard, on which an offering of grain, beans, honey and oil is placed, the sacrifice is made to Hecate at a crossroads three days before a full moon (also on the priedi Kalends Februalis). then when Luna's "horns joined in their circle to flood earth and sky, in silver splendor, loose cloaked and barefoot, hair fallen over naked breasts and shoulders, Medea stepped abroad in silent midnight...three times she raised her arms to the stars and sky. And three times wheeled about and three times splashed her hair with moonlit water (in a running stream)...three times she scream, then fell upon her knees to pray, "O Night, Night, Night! whose darkness holds all mysteries in shade, O flame-lit stars, whose golden rays with Luna floating near are like the fires of day, O Hecate, who knows untold desires that work our will, and are the mistress of our secret spells..." (Ovid)

Parentage:

Hecate is said to be the daughter of Nyx, which is mentioned, in Greek Lyric IV Bacchylides Frag 1B. In the Homeric hymns, Lycophron and in the Argonautica, it is mentioned that Perses and Persaios are the parents, but the Theogony by Hesiod mentions Perses and Asteria as the parents of Hecate.

Offspring:

By Phorkys, She became mother of Skylla because Apollonius identifies Krattais with Hecate in his work: the Argonautica.

Diodorus Siculus says in his work that Hecate is the mother of Medea, Aigialeus and Kirke by Aeetes.

Symbols:

Her symbols are Torches, Keys, ropes and knives.

Her sacred animals:

Her sacred animals are dogs, owls, frogs and snakes.

Sacrifices:

The kind of sacrifices she receives are: yew, cypress, hazel, black poplar, willow, black dogs, black bulls, black lambs, myrrh, civet, camphor, aloe, menstrual blood, red mullet, bread, eggs, cheese, honey.

Her festivals:

- She had several festivals. Hecatesia, that was celebrated on several dates. New Moon was also a time to celebrate Hekate. According to others, on August the 16th, Hekate has a festival, which was meant to appease her. Those who didn't participate in it were said to be punished. For the Europeans who read this, the month is first, than the day. Also

Ways to honor her:

Study magic and prophecy, particularly theurgy, as she is the patron of that art. Go for walks at night, or among strange places. Aid fellow travelers and strangers, especially if they have dogs. (Or are wild dogs!) Appreciate the weird and uncanny.

Hekate's epithets are:

- 1) Aidônaia (Lady of Hades)
- 2) Kourotrophe (Nurse of the Young)
- 3) Enodiô´ (Wayside Goddess)
- 4) Brimô (The Angry/Terrifying One)
- 5) Trimorphos (Three-formed)
- 6) Zerynthia (Lady of Zerynthos)
- 7) Persêis (Daughter of Perses)
- 8) Antania (Enemy of Mankind)
- 9) Enodiô (Of the Roads)
- 10) Kleidouchos (Keeper of the Keys)
- 11) Khthonia (Underworld)
- 12) Krataiis (Strong One)
- 13) Kurotrophos (Protector of Children)
- 14) Monogenes (Only Child)
- 15) Phosphoros (The Light-Bringer)
- 16) Propylaia (The Guardian)
- 17) Sôteira (Saviour)
- 18) Trevia/Trivia (Of 3 Ways)
- 19) Tricephalus/Tricephalos (Three- Headed)

Hekate means, " She who Work her will" and can be written as Hekata, Hekatê, Hecate. She is like Hades a deity with many names.

Orphic Hymns:

Hecate the Beauteous, you I invoke:

You, of roads and crossways,

Of heaven, of earth, and sea as well.

You, the saffron-clad, among the tombs,

Dancing with dead souls the Bacchic rite.

You, daughter of Perses, lover of desolation,

Taking joy in deer and dogs, in the night.

You, terrible Queen! Devourer of beasts!

Ungirded, possessed of form unapproachable!

You, bull-huntress, universal sovereign Empress:

You mountain-roaming guide, and bride, and nursemaid,

I entreat, O Maiden, your presence at these sacred rites,

With grace to the Oxherd and a joyful heart eternal.

Translated by Shawn Eyer

Orphic hymn to Hekate

*Queen of blackest night,
we honor you.*

*Hekate, mother of magik,
at moonlit crossroads
you befriend the hopeless.*

*Torch held high
you walk beside Demeter
searching for Persephone.*

*You work from afar,
weaving spells of water
earth and sky you catch
every eye in a fatal trance.*

*Persian Artemis,
invincible huntress,
you hold freedom's key.*

*You rule over heaven,
earth and the sea.
You give wealth
and domestic blessings.*

*Each night drawn by bulls of mist
you shine light across the sky.
Full of your fire
crazed stags rattle antlers.*

*Ghosts and hounds follow you.
You are the black puppy
and the black she lamb.
We offer you eggs and fish.*

*Healer and guide,
give us pure desires.
Accept our love and bless us,
inspire awe in the dark.*

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