

**ENCYCLOPEDIA OF  
GODDESSES AND HEROINES**

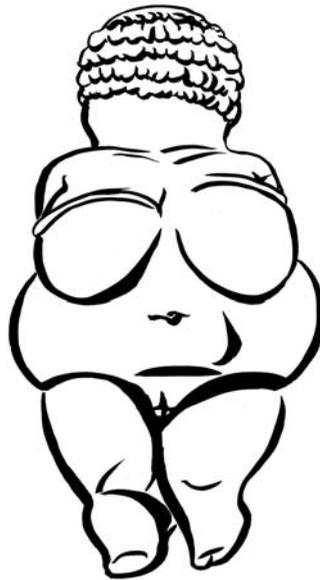
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**Volume I & II**

**PATRICIA MONAGHAN**

 **Greenwood**  
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# Encyclopedia of Goddesses and Heroines



**Venus of Willendorf.** One of the most familiar images of Paleolithic art, the Venus of Willendorf is a diminutive (approximately four inches tall) limestone sculpture of a faceless woman with an ornate hairstyle. Carved some 24,000–26,000 years ago, it was unearthed in 1908 near the village of Willendorf in Lower Austria. It is now part of the collection of the Naturhistorisches Museum in Vienna.

# Encyclopedia of Goddesses and Heroines

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Europe and the Americas

Volume II

*Patricia Monaghan*

**GREENWOOD**

*An Imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC*

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All illustrations by Hrana Janto.

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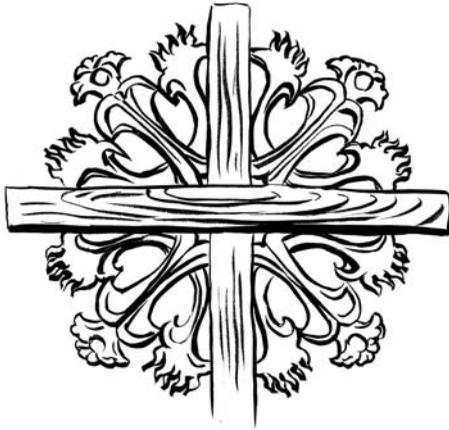
# THE BALTIC

The Baltic region holds importance in goddess studies because of the significance of the feminine in its mythology, and because its pagan culture remained vital into historical times. But, because myths were conveyed orally, few religious texts with defined narratives exist. Comparatively little material is available in English, in part because little scholarship was published abroad during the Soviet years. Folk material, when available, remains mostly in its original languages, Lithuanian and Latvian. Despite these limitations, Baltic goddess myths represent a significant resource for scholars of women's spirituality.

The Baltic peoples share their name with the sea that washes the region's shore. Some 50 million years ago, the forest covering the area sank beneath the sea. Over millennia, salt water petrified the trees into amber, a source of wealth for early Baltic peoples and a significant factor in their mythology. Like amber that preserves ancient insects and seeds, Baltic peoples preserved their myths in songs and rituals. The connection of mythology with an embattled sense of cultural identity resulted in preservation of mythic material, and because Christianity came late to the Baltic, goddesses were not hidden away as "saints," as in other European areas, but were acknowledged as divine into historical times.

The Baltic languages are Indo-European, but a substrata of pre-Indo-European religion can be found that derives from the agriculturalists who occupied the region when, in approximately 2500 BCE, Indo-Europeans arrived. Three languages descend from the language they spoke: Old Prussian, now vanished; and Lithuanian and Latvian. Although these Indo-Europeans brought new rituals and deities to the Baltic, the old religion especially survived in goddesses who shape-shift into animal or bird form.

The Baltic region reaches written history in the work of Roman geographer Tacitus, who in 98 CE wrote of the Aestii who collected amber and worshiped mother goddesses. Little else was recorded for many years. The region remained independent of Rome and, later, of the Holy Roman Empire. Conversion to Christianity was



**Baltic Sun Symbol.** *Sun symbols, representing the sun goddess Saulė, are common in folk sculptures in the Baltic countries of Lithuania and Latvia. They can be seen in other countries as grave ornaments.*

had little say over what happened at remote homesites. The continuity of Baltic paganism was also sustained by its importance in women's daily lives, in which tending the hearth fire and baking bread ritualized women's connection with feminine divinity.

The greatest expressions of this ancient religion are found in folk songs, primarily a women's art form. Often, these songs tell mythic stories or employ mythic images. Women not only composed the songs, but also were responsible for their survival. The first song (*dáino*) collected in 1632 was recorded identically 300 years later. But keeping the *dáinos* in the folk memory was not without danger. In the 16th century, women were burned as witches for singing traditional songs. In 1878, Latvians began collecting the songs with an eye to publication. More than two million verses are now recorded.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a resurgence of interest in Baltic religion led to the formation of Romuva, which follows in the path of the early 20th century nationalist movement Dievturi. In 1995, the Lithuanian government acknowledged Romuva as a legitimate religion. Romuva celebrates festivals at traditional times and offers outreach to scholars and others interested in Baltic traditional religion.

vigorously resisted. Lithuania did not fall under Christian influence until 1413 and even then was only nominally Christian. Until the 18th century, missionaries spoke with frustration of the strength of pagan Baltic culture. Even at the beginning of the 20th century, and despite embracing a devout Christianity, Lithuanians and Latvians performed rituals to goddesses. After Russian occupation in 1940, religious observation of any kind was discouraged, but both Christian and pagan rituals continued to be celebrated secretly, sometimes melding together in the process.

The linking of pagan religion with the desire to retain regional identity encouraged cultural preservation. In addition, the Baltic region remained sparsely settled into contemporary times. Centralized authority

## BALTIC PANTHEON

### **Aspelenie**

Auseklis. *See Ausrinė*

### **Ausrinė**

### **Austēja**

Bangumat *Latvian; water.*

Barbelina. *See Saulės Meita*

Boba *Lithuanian; autumn.*

Breksta. *See Ausrinė*

Celamat *Latvian; roads; protector of travelers.*

Dalia. *See Laimė*

Darzamat *Latvian; gardens.*

Dekla. *See Laimė*  
 Drugnai *Lithuanian; bread baking.*  
 Gabi/e. *See Gabija*  
**Gabija**  
 Gabjauja *Latvian; threshing.*  
 Gausumat *Latvian; laziness.*  
 Gegute *Time.*  
**Giltinė**  
 Jurasmat. *See Juratė*  
**Juratė**  
 Kapumat *Latvian; cemeteries.*  
 Karta. *See Laimė*  
 Krumumat *Latvian; shrubs.*  
 Laima. *See Laimė*  
**Laimė**  
 Lapumat *Latvian; autumn color.*  
 Lasdona *Lithuanian, Latvian; hazel trees.*  
 Laukamat *Latvian; fertility, agriculture.*  
 Lauma. *See Laumė*  
**Laumė**  
 Lietusmat *Latvian; rain.*  
 Lopemat *Latvian; cattle.*  
**Mara**  
 Marha. *See Mara*  
 Mariu Pana “Maiden of sea”; *see Ausrinė*  
 Mat *Latvian; motherhood.*  
 Matergabiae “Mother Fire”; *see Gabija*  
 Mezamat *Latvian; forest.*  
 Miechutele *Lithuanian; woad.*  
 Milda *Love songs.*

Modeina *Lithuanian; forest.*  
 Muza mate. *See Laimė*  
 Pastarite *Latvian; planet Mercury.*  
 Perkuna Tete. *See Saulė*  
 Ponikė “Lady”; **Gabija**  
 Ragaina. *See Ragana*  
**Ragana**  
 Ramuie. *See Gabija*  
 Rijasmat *Latvian; threshing.*  
 Ritaja “One of morning”; *see Auseklis*  
**Saulė**  
**Saulės Meita**  
 Senumat *Latvian; mushrooms.*  
 Smilsumat *Latvian; death.*  
 Sniegamat *Latvian; snow, winter.*  
 Sritis *Lithuanian; color, yarrow.*  
 Sweigsdunka *Lithuanian; sky weaver.*  
 Tirgusmat *Latvian; marketplace.*  
 Udensmat *Latvian; wells, ponds.*  
 Ugnis Mate “Fire mother”; *see Gabija*  
 Ungula “Fiery”; *see Gabija*  
 Upesmat *Latvian; rivers.*  
 Valkyriņe. *See Saulės Meita*  
 Vejamat *Lithuanian, Latvian; wind.*  
**Veliona**  
 Zemes mate “Mother earth”; *See Žemyna*  
**Žemyna**  
 Ziedumat *Latvian; spring.*  
 Zleja. *See Ausrinė*  
 Zvoruna *Lithuanian; forest.*

**Aspelenie** The household spirit (*zaltys*), a small snake that protected the family’s grain from rodents, was the shape-shifted Aspelenie, who ruled the corner of the house behind the stove. (Jurgines)

**Austēja** Bees were the servants of Austēja, who encouraged abundance, including human fertility. She was an energetic housewife who watched over the safety of the farm and its occupants; a weaver whose bees created honeycombs like a weaver making cloth; and a bride who drank mead or honey wine at her wedding. Austēja was invoked at women’s life passages. Her holy day was in August, when bees joined in singing and dancing for Austēja. (Gimbutas 1999; Greimas; Trinkūnas)

**Ausrinē** The morning star goddess lived on a sea-girt island, where she tended magical apples that brought love to those who ate them. She also owned iron cows that gave boiling milk that made anyone who drank it instantly beautiful. Ausrinē's connection to the major Baltic goddess **Saulē** is complex, for the former is sometimes described as the sun's rays and at other times as a separate divinity who formed a trinity of star goddesses with Breksta and Zleja. Similarly, legends vary as to whether Ausrinē was a victim of incest or was the illicit lover of the moon man Mēnulis (see **Saulēs Meita**). An eight-pointed star symbolized the Latvian version of Ausrinē; Auseklis appears occasionally as a male divinity, but more commonly as a goddess. (Dexter; Greimas; Landsbergis and Mills)

**Gabija** To Gabija, woman offered the first loaf from each bread baking, marked with dough ornaments. The last loaf was for the baker; no one else could taste it. Gabija's name refers to "covering," for it was the woman's responsibility to cover the fire each evening, praying that Gabija not wander during the night. Before retiring, the woman also put out water in case Gabija felt like cleansing herself. Gabija needed salt, food, and wood to sustain her. She was insulted by putting refuse into her, or by spitting or urinating on her. In addition to household fires, the ancient Balts had communal sacred fires tended by priestesses called Vaidiutēs; the last Lithuanian sacred fire was extinguished in 1413. (Gimbutas 1963, 1999; Trinkūnas)

**Giltinē** Sister of **Laimē**, black-clad Giltinē either drove a carriage drawn by six black horses, or she was a yellow-clad skeleton carrying a scythe and a bone rattle. She shrouded herself in white when she licked corpses, filling her tongue with poison. White hounds accompanied her, running before her into cemeteries. A shape-shifter, she could disguise herself as a snake or a stick of wood.

Giltinē ruled healing as well as death. If Giltinē appeared at the foot of a bed, the person would recover, but if she stood at the head, death was imminent. She invented the medical profession, although she ruled that doctors could not interfere with her will. (Gimbutas 1989, 1999; Kiskytė)

**Juratē** This mermaid lived in an ocean castle, roofed in seashells, fish scales, and pearls. Spurning the thunder god Perkunas, Juratē took a human fisherman as her lover. But Perkunas chained him to a rock, then killed the goddess. Amber that washes up on the Baltic shores is her palace, slowly crumbling away. Connection of this figure to Jurasmat, invoked by sailors and fisherman, is unclear. (Beliajus)

**Laimē** This fate goddess measured the length and happiness of each person's life. As Muza Mate ("mother of life"), she announced the fate of newborns. As a mother labored, women gathered to offer prayerful support. The birthing mother offered a sash to Laimē because she was a weaving goddess, sometimes described as three goddesses who spin life's strand, measure it, and cut it. Dekla, a Latvian form of Laimē, wept bitterly when forced to witness the birth of a child for whom a tragic life was destined. As Laimē-Dalia, "happy fate," the goddess ruled good luck, but when she took the form

of a cuckoo, her voice warned of misfortune. Humans could gain Laimė's prophetic skill if they found a fern blooming on summer solstice.

Laimė is difficult to distinguish from the sun goddess **Saulė**, also seen as a controller of fate. She appeared in legends of the sun's daughter **Ausrinė**, performing tasks that one would expect of a mother, such as arranging the girl's naming ceremony. Similarly, Laimė and **Laumė** can be difficult to distinguish, for both had similar powers and resided in woman-shaped stones. Because Laimė is described as "above the other gods," she may derive from the pre-Indo-European strata of Baltic culture. Support for this argument derives from the fact that only Laimė and the high god, Dievs, had the power of creation. (Dexter; Gimbutas 1989, 1999; Greimas; Katzenelenbogen; Landberg and Mills; Motz; Rubulis 1970; Trinkūnas)

**Laumė** Sometimes at night, on footbridges or in thickets, a large-breasted woman with long blonde hair appeared, accompanied by a cat. It was best not to laugh, for those who did were changed into animals. Laumė visited homes to judge the industry of their inhabitants. Where people worked hard, she rewarded them with gifts, but she devoured lazy people. She loved hardworking children, whom she took away on spirit-vacations. Generous but easily angered, Laumė might finish the farm work and then, at a wrong word, undo it all and disappear. Sometimes she appeared as a multiple goddess, the Laumės. (Dexter; Gimbutas 1999; Greimas; Kiskytė; Trinkūnas)

**Mara** This goddess may have evolved as a parallel to the Christian high god. The senior Baltic goddess was usually **Saulė**, of whom Mara was a daughter living in the planet Mars. But some Latvian myths describe Mara as a supreme goddess. She may have descended from the livestock goddess Lopemat, but she was also described as the goddess of women's economic contributions.

A force of abundance, she provided nourishment. A proverb says, "God made tables, Mara made bread." Mara was a black cow that represented the fertility of the spring earth; she could also appear as a black insect, a black chicken, or a snake. Until a century ago, fertile black hens and cocks were the first to occupy any new home to bring her power into the house. Mara celebrated her feast on August 15. (Beliajus; Gimbutas 1989, 1999)

**Ragana** From deep in the forest, Ragana stole forth to kidnap human babies. She could not abide salt water, so one could protect a baby by putting it out to sea. She also ate young men after forcing them to have sex with her. Ragana appeared as an elderly woman with long claws and protruding teeth. Accompanied by her totem owl, she could change into a snake or toad; so, to protect oneself, it was wise to carry a toad-shaped amulet. She controlled weather, especially storms that she brewed up with a red wand.

Hunters honored Ragana, offering her their first catch. At stone statues of this goddess, women sacrificed eggs, butter, and hair. Because she opposed **Saulė**, Ragana was celebrated at the winter solstice when the sun's power was weakest. On that day, assemblies of Raganas gathered on mountaintops to comb ice from their long hair. (Gimbutas 1989, 1999; Jaskievicz; Trinkūnas)

**Saulė** The greatest Baltic goddess was the sun mother who ruled birth, when newborns first saw her light, as well as death, when she welcomed souls into her heavenly apple tree. She was married to the moon-man Mėnulis. Their first child was the earth, and their countless other children were the stars. Hardworking Saulė left the house at dawn and drove her chariot until dusk. Mėnulis, however, was carefree, staying home all day and only occasionally driving his moon-chariot.

The light of Saulė's life was her daughter, **Saulės Meita**. Each evening, after she had bathed her horses, Saulė looked for the child. But one evening Saulė found that Mėnulis had raped their daughter. Saulė slashed the moon's face, leaving marks visible today. Then she banished him, so they are no longer seen together in the sky.

Thousands of folk songs describe Saulė as a statuesque matron, richly dressed in golden clothing and a golden shawl, with a gold crown on her streaming golden hair. From her castle behind the hill of heaven, she rode forth in a copper-wheeled chariot, bearing a jug from which she poured out light. After her daily ride, she descended into the ocean and began a darker journey, through the land of the dead, back to the point of dawn.

Saulė was worshiped at dawn when people bowed to the east. She was especially honored on the summer solstice, Ligo, when she rose crowned with a braid of red fern blossoms. At that moment, people dived into east-flowing streams. Women donned braided wreaths and walked through the fields singing. Finally, everyone gathered around bonfires and sang the night away. In 1969, the Soviets forbade celebration of the festival, but it survived and has been recently reestablished.

Another festival, Kaledos, was held when the sun's light was weakest. On the winter solstice, solar images were paraded through the fields to bring fertility and abundance in the next season. People, dressed as animals, danced with the goddess's chariot. An old Baltic myth says that a smith, Kalvis, forged the sun, but that she was stolen from the sky and freed by the stars, which wielded a giant hammer. This myth may echo in the festival.

Perkuna Tete, "mother of thunder," survives in a myth fragment welcoming **Saulė**, after her day's work, with a hot bath. She may have had importance obscured in later times. (Balys; Benjamins; Chase; Landsbergis and Mills; Machal; Motz; Neuland; Rubulis 1970, 1982; Trinkūnas; Ward; Zobarskas)

**Saulės Meita** The daughter of **Saulė** was called a "little sun," possibly indicating a star. Myths describe sun daughters who climbed rose trees into the sky to follow their mother. They spent their days spinning and embroidering, as well as helping Saulė decorate the heavens, although sometimes they begged to be allowed to play rather than working so hard. When they stayed home, they kept the house clean; sometimes they ran off to Germany to play with the young gods. One daughter, commonly called **Ausrinė**, was raped by her father, the moon-man, a story that forms the primary myth of the region.

A pair of twin stars, possibly her brothers, courted Saulės Meita. Such twins appear in other Indo-European myths as companions to the dawn maiden. Their connection may represent an ancient agricultural cult, for the twins took Saulės Meita across the

land on a boat, a common fertility ritual. (Balys; Beliajus; Chase; Katzenelenbogen; Landsbergis and Mills; Neuland; Zobarskas)

**Veliona** Ruler of the ghostly Vėlė, this goddess watched over the dead, especially those who died in battle. Pigs were sacrificed to her in funeral rituals; the oldest family member killed the pig, which was offered to Veliona, who joined the family for the funeral dinner. Spirits of the dead went through a gate and up a hill, where they lived as though on earth, in homes and families. At the festival in October that honored Veliona, bathhouses and drying houses were set aside for ghostly visitors. (Trinkūnas)

**Žemyna** No Baltic person spit upon the soil, cursed it, or hit it, for it was the goddess **Žemyna**. Every celebration began with an invocation and libation to her. Starting with the head of the household, each person thanked the earth, then poured out a ladle of beer. Every spring, a festival celebrated her. Loaves of bread were baked from the last sheaves of the previous harvest, then plowed into the earth. This never happened before the first thunderstorm, which was understood as Žemyna's mate fertilizing her in preparation for a new season of growth.

Even more important was the harvest feast, when a priestess carried 27 pieces of bread to the storehouse, together with a portion of a sacrificed pig. There, she prayed for abundance. Because all life came from her, Žemyna was honored at every birth, when the soil was tenderly kissed, and food offerings were laid in front of stones, tied to tree boughs, or cast into flowing water. (Gimbutas 1989, 1999; Jurgines; Landsbergis and Mills; Trinkūnas)

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# THE CELTIC WORLD

The term “Celt” is deceptively exact, for there was no centralized Celtic culture. Rather, one can find many groups, such as the Belgae, Icini, and Brigantes, who spoke related languages. A Celt was someone who spoke a Celtic language. Beyond that, little can be definitely asserted, especially because no early writings from these people have been found, only writings about them from other Europeans. Defining the role of goddesses in Celtic cultures requires interpretation of texts by their enemies and descendents, graphic art from invaded lands, and isolated objects and buildings.

Celtic languages are part of the Indo-European language family. Today, six Celtic tongues are known: Irish and Scottish, both called Gaelic; Manx, Welsh, Breton, and Cornish. These languages broke off from an original tongue spoken in central Europe nearly 4,000 years ago, when proto-Celts developed the Hallstatt and La Tène cultures. From central Europe, they moved to settle western Europe (continental Celts) and the islands off the coasts (insular Celts).

Little information exists today about pre-Roman Celtic religion, but far more is known about the products of Roman invasion. Soon, many Celtic divinities bore Latin names, sometimes with the original name added as a title. Most sculptures of Celtic goddesses come from areas once under Roman control, but most written documents come from areas outside the domain of Rome. Because these were oral cultures, documentation of myths did not occur until Irish Christian monks wrote down poems and epics of the old gods. But even where myths were not written down, they survived. In the late 19th century, stories were recorded that had been retold orally for centuries. Goddesses connected with specific festivals or with landscape features were especially likely to have been remembered.

What is known of Celtic religion is thus a combination of archaeology, possibly fallible texts, and the oral tradition. From this, we learn of an Otherworld, contiguous with our world, where deities dwell. Rather than a court arranged in a hierarchical order, the divinities were arranged in families, descendents of a goddess whose



**Epona.** *This Gallo-Roman limestone relief depicts the horse goddess Epona. One of only a few goddesses known throughout the Celtic world, Epona was depicted mounted on a horse or embodied as one. Celtic art did not typically depict divinities in human form, but the influence of Roman occupiers led to the creation of art such as this, from the Musée d'Archeologie Nationale in Saint-Germain-en-Laye.*

fecundity made life possible. Sometimes called a “mother goddess,” she was sometimes the ancestor of the human tribe, at other times of the gods themselves. Her name in myths is usually Danu or Anu or Dôn, which has been connected with a hypothesized central European goddess \*Danu, whose name survives in such rivers as the Danube and the Don. Although she was a goddess of the land, the mother goddess also ruled the rivers that watered the soil. Thus, most rivers in Celtic lands are, even today, named for goddesses.

Whether the primacy of goddesses affected the lives of human women is hotly contested. Evidence suggests that Celtic women fought alongside male warriors, that queens led armies into battle, and that women were poets and druids. But some scholars dismiss such evidence as describing occasional extraordinary women. This area is one of the most contentious in contemporary scholarship; some scholars offer evidence of matrilineal succession, while others contend that the Celts were entirely patriarchal. In either case, the myths show strong and vital female figures.

Contemporary American goddess religion often claims Celtic heritage, if only through the use of the four Celtic holidays of Samhain (November 1), Imbolc



**Gundestrup Cauldron.** This unnamed goddess appears on the famous Gundestrup cauldron, found in Denmark and now part of the collection of Copenhagen's National Museum. Although found in Scandinavian territory, the majestic piece appears to be of Celtic origin.

(February 1), Beltane (May 1), and Lughnasa (August 1). In traditional Celtic countries, some revivals of native religions have occurred in recent years, with folk festivals and similar events often including invocations of old gods and/or revivals of old, religiously based folkways. As many Celtic folkways connected to the culture's goddesses were transferred to saints under Christianity, some feminists have also reclaimed some Christian figures and holidays in a quest to revive Celtic spirituality.

## CONTINENTAL CELTIC AND BRETON PANTHEON

### **Abnoba**

### **Adecina**

### **Adsagsona**

Aeracura *Swiss; river.*

Ahé/Ahés. *See Dahut*

Alagabiae. *See Deae Matres*

Alauna *River Alaunus.*

Ancamna *Prosperity; healing.*

### **Andarta**

Arduanna/Arduenna. *See Arduinna*

### **Arduinna**

Ardwinna. *See Arduinna*

### **Artio**

Ataegina. *See Adecina*

Atesmertha *Protection.*

Aufaniae. *See Deae Matres*

Aventa. *See Aveta*

### **Aveta**

Belesama. *See Belisama*

### **Belisama**

Belisma. *See Belisama*

### **Berecynthia**

Berguisa *Crafts.*

Bibracte *Earth.*

Biviae *Two roads crossing.*

**Blondine**

Bricta *Water.*

Bride. *See Bricta*

Brig. *See Bricta*

Brigeaecae. *See Deae Matres*

Brigindo. *See Bricta*

Brigindu. *See Bricta*

Brixia. *See Bricta*

**Brunissen**

Campestres. *See Deae Matres*

Clutoida *Springs, water.*

Comedovae *Healing.*

Communes. *See Deae Matres*

Dahud. *See Dahut*

**Dahut**

**Damona**

**Deae Matres**

Dea Nutrix. *See Deae Matres*

Devona. *See Sirona*

Dirona. *See Sirona*

Domesticae “Hearth-mothers”; *see Deae Matres*

Druantia *Fir trees.*

**Epona**

Gallaicae. *See Deae Matres*

Garmangabis *Motherhood.*

Germaniae. *See Deae Matres*

Griselicae *Healing.*

Icauna *Yonne River.*

**Icovellauna**

**Januaria**

Keben. *See Dahut*

**Korrigans**

Latis *Water, beer.*

Litavis *Earth.*

**Marcassa**

Matres Coccae “Red mothers”; *see Deae Matres*

Matres Domesticae “Domestic mothers”; *see Deae Matres*

Matronae. *See Deae Matres*

Meliot. *See Melusine*

**Melusine**

**Minerva Medica**

Monitucinae. *See Deae Matres*

**Morrigan**

Natosuelta. *See Sequana*

**Nehalennia**

**Nemetona**

Omnium Gentium “Mother of all”; *see Deae Matres*

Ozeganned. *See Korrigans*

Palatina. *See Melusine*

Parcae “Fates”; *see Deae Matres*

Pressina. *See Melusine*

Princis Velandinenn. *See Blondine*

Quadruviae *Four roads crossing.*

Ratis *Protector of hillforts.*

Rigani *Earth; queenship.*

Ritona *Rivers, fords.*

**Rosmerta**

**Sequana**

Sequena. *See Sequana*

**Sirona**

Souconna *River Saône.*

Suleviae. *See Sul*

Tendeiterea. *See Deae Matres*

Tramarinae “From across the sea”; *see Deae Matres*

Triviae *Three roads crossing.*

Tsirona. *See Sirona*

Uroica *Heather.*

Useae. *See Deae Matres*

Velandinenn. *See Blondine*

**Abnoba** The many rivers Avon bear Abnoba’s name. She was also associated with the source of the river Danube (see Irish **Danu**) and ruled the watershed of the Black Forest. Images of Abnoba show a woodland goddess accompanied by stags and hunting dogs. The Romans assimilated this goddess to **Diana**. (MacCulloch 1911; Pennick 2000)

**Adecina** This water goddess was honored in the Celtic region of Spain, near contemporary Castle Túron. Her symbols were the goat and the cypress tree. (Bonney I)

**Adsagsona** The “weaver of spells” and “she who seeks out” (the latter title perhaps referring to her power to find the object of a spell or curse), this goddess was honored in the Aquitaine. She was invoked in approximately 90 CE on a lead tablet found near the town of Larzac, inscribed by women performing a secret ritual. “Behold: the magic of women, their special underworld names, the prophecy of the seer who weaves this magic,” the tablet says, calling upon Adsagdona for a binding spell. The tablet has been interpreted as evidence of women who, under magical names, gathered in secret groups to work with a *vidlua* (oracle or prophetess) to work spells and divination. (Freeman; Koch)

**Andarta** Tutelary goddess of the Voconces, Andarta is believed, on the basis of her name, to be similar to the war goddess Andraste. However, the syllable *art* is found in the name of several Celtic bear-divinities, so Andarta may have been a goddess of wilderness. (MacCulloch 1911)

**Arduinna** The forest of Ardennes, which once covered a vast area of France, Germany, Belgium, and Luxembourg, was named for this goddess of wilderness, conflated in early times to both the Roman **Diana** and the Greek **Artemis**. She patrolled her forest on a wild boar, demanding that any hunters who killed animals leave payment for their catch. Arduinna (“height” or “highland”) was honored with sacrifices of animal meat on festival days. (Green 1986; Herm; MacCulloch 1911)

**Artio** The *art* in her name refers to the bear; the syllable is often found in names of wilderness divinities. Artio was known in Britain and Gaul, while in Switzerland and France, she was called **Andarta**, also known as a goddess of war. In function as well as name, Artio resembles the Greek **Artemis**, also depicted as a bear. Bern, where the goddess’s image was discovered, continues to host a folk ritual in which bears are raised in pits. (Green 1989)

**Aveta** Celtic water goddesses took two major forms: as healers, and as ancestral mothers whose rivers marked the limits of their children’s territory. Aveta combined both aspects, for she was honored at the famous healing spring of Trier in Germany, where her depiction as a nursing mother suggests a tribal ancestress. Small clay figures of women bearing baskets of fruit, accompanied by dogs or babies, were left at the spring in Aveta’s honor. (Green 1986)

**Belisama** Celtic divinities tended to be local, but Belisama (“brightness”) was found both in Britain and on the continent. In the former, she was associated with the river Ribble, which once bore her name (see **Peg O’Neill**). Some see Belisama as a corollary to **Brigit**. (MacCulloch 1911)

**Berecynthia** The early Christian author Gregory of Tours described this goddess being conveyed, covered with white veils, by wagon through the fields each spring or whenever the harvest seemed in jeopardy. Images of Berecynthia were among the “pagan idols” smashed by Martin of Tours, who campaigned against Celtic religion. There may have been another Berecynthia, for a mountain in Anatolia has this name, which was used as a title of **Cybele** (see Southeastern Europe). (MacCulloch 1911)

**Blondine** Folktales often hide ancient goddess myths, as with Blondine, a mysterious and powerful figure. The cursed human named Cado had to find Blondine in order to end his misfortune. No one knew the way to Blondine’s land, but Cado was lucky enough to hear crows discussing the route. Hitching a ride on one, he found Blondine sitting beside a magical well beneath a tree. Cado wooed Blondine away from her magician father, then proved faithless once they had returned to this world, forgetting her after losing the ring that pledged their love. As he was about to marry another woman, Cado was surprised when Blondine arrived, bearing the magical ring. When he put it on his finger, his memory and his love returned. (Luzel)

**Brunissen** Legends of Provence tell of a fairy named “The Brown Queen” who lived in the enchanted forest of Brocéliande. Orphaned and alone, she exhausted herself from weeping; and for seven years, only bird-song could ease her sorrow. Finally, a hero of the Round Table (Jaufré or Giflet) drew Brunissen away from her grief, after which they lived in her palace at Monbrun, “brown mountain.” Motifs in this legend suggest that Brunissen derives from a bird goddess similar to the Welsh **Rhiannon**. (Markale 1986)

**Dahut** Dahut’s father was the Christian king Gradlon, but Dahut was pagan. With the help of the **Korrigans**, Dahut built the city of Ys in the sea, surrounded by immense walls punctuated by sea-gates. Dahut wore the key to these gates around her neck, for opening them would flood the city. Her palace was unimaginably wealthy, because Dahut harnessed dragons that brought her riches from shipwrecks. Other homes rose within Ys’s golden walls, as merchants were attracted to its wealth. But these citizens turned selfish, closing the city against the poor.

The court harbored a dreadful secret. Each night, Dahut offered a mask to a handsome visitor so that he might slip up to her bedroom. But when the man tried to depart, he found the mask grew tighter until it strangled him. Daily, one of Dahut’s servants hauled away a body.

Finally, Dahut met her match. Dancing at a ball with an unknown prince, she heard him call for a tune on the pipes. She found herself whirling faster, unable to stop. The people around her danced wildly. Then her partner, a sea demon, stole the key to the seawalls and opened the gates. As the horrified residents danced, water poured into the city. Gradlon rode to his daughter’s rescue, but when Dahut mounted, his horse refused to move. A monk urged him to leave Dahut behind, so Gradlon pushed her into the turbulent sea. Some tales say Dahut lives on, a mermaid luring men to doom. (*Breton*; Ellis 1988; Guyot; Markale 2000)

**Damona** Damona's name, "divine cow," suggests a goddess of domestic animals. The consort of two gods, she may have been polyandrous. Sites dedicated to her are found in Burgundy; a carving shows her crowned with grain and holding a serpent (see **Sirona**). (Billington and Green)

**Deae Matres** These "Divine Mothers" bear a collective Latin name, their original names having been lost. The Mothers represented the land's fertility. Sculptures show two or three goddesses together, holding sacred objects like sacrificial knives and offering plates. Seated under an archway, they wore round, halolike headdresses. The central goddess stood while the others sat, or she sat while they stood. The connection of these goddesses with **Dea Nutrix** ("nourishing goddess") is unclear. The Mothers were occasionally depicted in the form called pseudo-Venus ("false **Venus**"; see Rome), a single voluptuous woman holding symbols of fertility. (Billington and Green; Buchholtz; MacAnna)

**Epona** Although most Celtic divinities were known only in one place, scores of altars dedicated to Epona and hundreds of statues bearing her name have been discovered across Europe and Britain. This devotion may have resulted from Epona's popularity among Roman legionnaires; she was the only Celtic goddess to be granted a festival (December 18) in the Roman calendar. But no narrative remains about her, nor any evidence of how she was worshiped. It is clear, however, that she was connected with horses, as her name ("mare") and sculptures (astride or surrounded by horses) reveal.

Epona's worship reached into the home. Many small altars have been found, showing a maternal Epona surrounded by foals. She carried an offering plate, sheaves of wheat, or a cornucopia, suggesting a goddess of abundance. She was also associated with the end of life. Sculptures show her with a funerary raven or a dog, holding keys to the Otherworld. (Brown; Buchholtz; Dexter 1980; Green 1989, 1993; Henig; Markale 1997; Ross 1967; Webster)

**Icovellauna** Inscriptions to this goddess were found at Metz and Trier, but her legend and cult are lost. As the first syllable of her name, "Ico," meant "water," she was presumably a water divinity, probably the healing goddess whose octagonal shrine was excavated at the spring of Sablon. Although honored in Germany, her name is Celtic. (Billington and Green)

**Januaria** Her name may derive from the same source as the Roman Janus, god of literal and figurative thresholds. But the goddess shown in the healing shrine in Burgundy, southwestern France, was Celtic in origin. She was depicted playing a pipe, suggesting that musical performance formed part of her ritual. (Billington and Green)

**Korrigans** In Breton folk belief, lustful women—descendants of women druids—lived in the water, seducing men and drowning them. Because of their devotion to pagan ways, the Korrigans were especially interested in seducing priests. Less than two feet tall, light-skinned, and golden-haired, the Korrigans had slender translucent wings. While they could live in any water, they preferred running streams. Some

Breton legends describe the Korrigans as human souls who, because of tragic deaths, were doomed to wander the earth. But more typically, they are seen as nonhuman, with their name used as a synonym for the entire fairy race.

Korrigans were visible less frequently in even-numbered centuries than in odd-numbered ones; they were seen at twilight rather than in the daytime. Some Korrigans guarded buried treasure, while others tickled horses and caused nightmares. They derived pleasure from circle dances within or near megalithic shrines. (Evans-Wentz)

**Marcassa** Breton legend says that Princess Marcassa lived in a distant land, together with a magical bird who could cure all ills. Even though his two strong older brothers disappeared while trying to find Marcassa, the bumbling prince Luduenn (“little cinders”) set off in hopes of helping his king back to health. Soon he learned the truth about his brothers: they gave up their quest so that they could enjoy a wild life far from home. Although they stole Luduenn’s money, he was not deterred. His virtue was rewarded, for he found Marcassa and her magical bird.

Luduenn slipped in to steal the bird, but along the way, he stole a kiss from Marcassa. Miraculously, the kiss made her pregnant. When her son was a year old, the princess set out in search of his father. At his palace, she found that her magical bird had missed her so much he refused to heal the king. But in her presence, the bird sang joyously, and the king was soon well. Soon after, Marcassa and Luduenn were installed as king and queen. (Luzel)

**Melusine** Goddesses demoted to fairies appear occasionally in continental Celtic legend, most notably in the story of Melusine, daughter of the sea sprite Pressina and a human male. As was typical of fairy wives, Pressina put a taboo on her husband: that he never saw her in childbed. But while she was delivering triplets, Pressina’s overeager husband rushed into the room. Pressina disappeared, taking the children with her.

The triplets were Melusine, Meliot, and Palatina. Pressina reared them on a fairy island, beautiful and sterile. Melusine was an angry girl who held her father responsible for every discomfort she felt. When she was a young woman, she left the Otherworld to magically entrap her father and his attendants inside a magic mountain. Far from being grateful, however, Melusine’s mother cursed her. Thereafter, Melusine would always be a snake on Sundays. (Variants of the story say that Pressina was herself part serpent.)

Like her mother, Melusine found love with a human man, Raymond (Raimondin) of Poitou. And, like her mother, she put limitations on her husband: in this case, that he never enter her room on a Sunday. But Raymond could not keep the vow. Melusine disappeared in fury and thereafter haunted his family as a death-warner (see Irish, **Banshees**). (Foubister; Sax; Skeat)

**Minerva Medica** The Romans assimilated the Greek warrior goddess **Athena** to their healer **Minerva**, producing a helmeted goddess concerned with medicine, learning, and crafts. This complex figure was further assimilated to the healing goddesses whom the Romans encountered in Celtic lands, especially water goddesses whose energy was located in the headwaters of rivers and from thermal springs. The Romans called these

goddesses Minerva Medica, the “Minerva of healing.” In most cases, the original Celtic name was lost, as with the goddess carved into a quarry near the River Dee in Chester, where she was depicted with an owl and **Gorgon**’s head, symbols of Athena. But Minerva Vitrix (a Celtic word meaning “victor” or “victorious”) was inscribed on relief carvings of a helmet-crowned female head, while **Belisama**’s name also survives. The most famous Celtic Minerva was **Sul**. (Green 1983; MacAnna)

**Morrigan** The mermaid who haunted the shores off Brittany, seducing sailors to die on her dangerous rocks by singing them sweet songs, descends from an earlier life-and-death sea goddess. Morrigan is especially associated with the Bay of Douaranez, where the pagan princess **Dahut** built her crystal palace and was later killed. Sailors were warned to carry a crucifix or other warding amulet when they sailed past Morrigan’s rocks. Despite the apparent similarity of name, Morrigan has no known connection with the Irish **Mórrígan**. (MacCulloch 1911; Markale 2000)

**Nehalennia** Dozens of monuments and inscriptions to this goddess of the Netherlands have been found, but no myths survive. Although her worship was popular among both Celts and Romans until late imperial times, Nehalennia vanished for more than a millennium. Then, in 1647, a storm hit the island of Walcheren, shifting the dunes to reveal an enormous 2nd- or 3rd-century CE temple to Nehalennia. Unfortunately, 200 years later, the temple was destroyed by fire. Then, on April 4, 1979, a fisherman working the Oosterschelde estuary discovered another shrine to Nehalennia. Since then, almost 100 artifacts have been found in the area.

Nehalennia may have begun as a local ancestral goddess, later worshiped by sea merchants and sailing crews who prayed to her for safety. Much of her iconography is nautical: boats, oars, rudders, shells, fish, dolphins, and sea-monsters. She was typically shown as a strong young woman wearing a cape and a round cap. Usually she was seated, although sometimes she rested her foot on the prow of a ship or hauled a boat by a rope.

Nehalennia was often depicted with a dog, guardian of the dead. On most statues, dogs sit attentively at her feet, ears alert, with kindly expressions on their faces. Nehalennia (the name perhaps meaning “woman who steers”) steered her devotees home to the Otherworld, an island in the western sea. But Nehalennia was also associated with fecundity, depicted with baskets of grain and heaps of fruit.

As goddess of commerce, Nehalennia oversaw grain-filled ships. She may have been invoked for heavy, and thus profitable, harvests. In addition, Nehalennia may have been envisioned as a goddess of the world’s journey through the seasons. (Buchholtz; Green 1995; Hondius-Crone)

**Nemetona** The Celtic word “nemeton” described a shrine or temple. These were not buildings, for the Celts did not worship indoors but in the open, often in a grove of trees. Nemetona’s name has been translated as both “goddess of the shrine” and “she of the sacred grove,” but it is not clear what her role was, for no myth survives. She may have embodied the holiness of sacred spaces, such as the hallowed springs of Bath, where she was honored. (Green 1986; MacCulloch 1911; Squire)

**Rosmerta** The “Great Provider,” Rosmerta was goddess of abundance in northeastern Gaul and the Rhineland. She may have had a healing aspect, for she resided in springs and wells, locations of healing to the Celts. She was depicted holding a cauldron, a purse, or an offering platter. Her myth and rituals are unknown, although it is clear she was popular. Rosmerta and the horse goddess **Epona** were the goddesses most frequently mentioned in continental Celtic inscriptions. (Green 1995; Henig; Powell; Sjoestedt; Webster)

**Sequana** The source of France’s great river, the Seine, was called by the Romans “Fontes Sequanae” (“springs of Sequana”) after the river’s tutelary goddess. A Roman-era shrine at the source, near Dijon, yielded a trove of coins bearing images of the goddess as a crowned woman, arms aloft, mounted in a boat shaped like a duck holding a berry in its beak. While other Celtic goddesses (see **Rhiannon**, **Mórrígan**) were associated with birds, Sequana was the only one who had a waterbird as her emblem. She may have combined the healing qualities of river goddesses with the Otherworldly aspects of the bird goddess. Another Gaulish river goddess, Natosuelta, is similarly depicted with a bird—in her case the raven, symbol of death. As many river divinities in Celtic lands find their way into folklore as devouring spirits (see the British **Peg O’Neill**), this imagery may refer to the danger of drowning. Alternatively, river goddesses may have been viewed as cosmic life-and-death goddesses, directly connected with the afterlife.

Sequana’s healing powers can be recognized from the many bronze and silver models of legs, eyes, breasts, and other body parts that were deposited in the river source. Such offerings usually indicated the organ in need of healing. She may have been a very important goddess, for the Romans did not change her name to a Latin one; all inscriptions use her original name. (Green 1986, 1989; MacAnna)

**Sirona** Inscriptions throughout France invoke this healing goddess, whose name has been translated as “star.” She carried snakes and eggs, suggesting a connection to rebirth and fertility. It is unclear whether this goddess is identical to the similarly named Divona, whose name survives in the river Devon in Britain. (Green 1989; MacAnna; Pennick 2000)

## IRISH AND SCOTTISH PANTHEON

**Achall**

**Achtan**

Áeb. *See Fionualla*

Aedg. *See Fand, Étain*

**Aeval**

Aibell. *See Aeval*

Aibhinn. *See Aeval*

Aideen. *See Étain*

**Aífe**

Aige *Irish; fawn.*

Ailbe. *See Deirdre*

**Ailinn**

**Ailna**

**Áine**

**Airmid**

**Almu**

Ana. *See Anu*

Annie Clare. *See Áine*

**Anu**

Aoibheall. *See Aeval*

Aoibhnait. *See Fand, Étain*

Aoife. *See Aífe*

Assa. *See Nessa*

Aughty. *See Echthge*

**Badb**

Bairrind. *See Cesair*

**Banba**

Banna *Irish; river Bann.*

**Banshees**

Beagfhola. *See Becfhola*

**Bé Chuma**

Bean Nighe. *See Banshees*

Bean sidhe. *See Banshees*

**Béare****Bébinn****Bebo****Becfhola**

Befind. *See Bébinn*

Bera. *See Béare*

**Berba**

Berba. *See Cesair*

Biróg. *See Eíthne*

Birrin. *See Cesair*

Blaí. *See Sadb*

Blaithine. *See Blathnát*

Blanaid. *See Blathnát*

**Bláthnat**

Boabhan sith. *See Banshees*

Boadan. *See Bóand*

**Bóand**

Bo Dhu. *See Bó Find*

**Bó Find**

Bó Finne. *See Bó Find*

Bó Ruadh. *See Bó Find, Bóand*

Bochtóg

Bodb. *See Badb*

Boí. *See Cailleach*

Bouvinda. *See Bó Find*

Bride. *See Brigit*

Brig. *See Brigit*

**Brigit**

Briid. *See Brigit*

**Bronach****Buan****Buanann****Cáer****Cailleach**

Cairenn. *See Mongfhinn*

Cally Berry. *See Cailleach*

**Canola**

Caoineag. *See Banshees*

**Caolainn****Caoránach**

Carley. *See Cailleach*

Carline. *See Cailleach*

**Carman**

Carravogue. *See Garravogue*

**Cathleen ní Houlihan**

Cathubodua. *See Badb*

Ceasg *Scottish; mermaid.*

Centfind. *See Clídna*

**Cesair****Cethlion**

Cethlion *Irish; warrior.*

**Chlaus Haistig**

Cleena. *See Clídna*

**Clídna****Clothra**

Cochrann *Irish; ancestral mother.*

Corann *Irish; earth; warrior.*

Corchen *Irish; snake.*

Corra. *See Caoránach*

**Craebhnat****Créd**

Creevna. *See Craebhnat*

**Crob Derg****Crochan****Danu**

Daoine Sidhe. *See Danu*

**Dealgnaid**

Decca. *See Fionuala*

**Dechtire**

Dectora. *See Dechtire*

Deichtine. *See Dechtire*

**Deirdre**

Delbaeth *Irish; fire.*

Delgnat. *See Dealgnaid*

Deoca. *See Fionuala*

**Derbforgaill**Dianann *Irish; magic.*Digi No Duineach. *See Cailleach*Domnu *Irish; ocean.*Donand. *See Danu*Dornoll *Scottish; warrior.*Dovinia *Irish; earth.*Dreco *Irish; magic.***Dub****Eachtach**Éadaoin. *See Étain***Ébhlíne****Echthge**Edain. *See Étain*Eefa. *See Aífe*Eevell. *See Aeval*Eimher. *See Emer*Éire. *See Ériu*Eirinn. *See Ériu***Éis Énchen****Eithne****Emer**Enya. *See Áine*Erc *Irish; warrior.***Eri****Ériu****Erne**Ernmas. *See Ériu*Ésa. *See Étain***Étain**Étan *Irish; crafts.*Ethlenn. *See Eithne***Fand**Fann. *See Fand*Fea. *See Badb***Fedelm**Feithline. *See Fedelm*Féthnat *Irish; music.*Fial *Irish; river.*Fideal *Scottish; water.*Fidelma. *See Fedelm*Findchóem *Irish; ancestral mother.***Finnabair**Finnen *Irish; mountain.*Finnuala. *See Fionnuala*Finola. *See Fionnuala***Fionnghal nam Fiadh****Fionnuala**Fionnúir. *See Finnabair***Flaith**Flaithius. *See Flaith***Flidais**Fliodhas. *See Flidais***Fódla**Fótla. *See Fódla*Fuamnach. *See Étain***Gablach**Gaine *Irish; mute druid.*Galvia *Irish; river.*Garbhog. *See Garravogue***Garravogue**Gentle Annie *Scottish; weather.*Ghearagáin. *See Garravogue*Gile *Lake.***Glaistig**Glas Gavlen. *See Glas Ghaibhleann***Glas Ghaibhleann**Glas Gownach. *See Glas Ghaibhleann***Gobnait****Gráinne**Grania. *See Gráinne*Grian *Irish; mountain.*Gruagach. *See Glaistig*Hag of Beare. *See Cailleach*Heriu. *See Cesair*Ile *Scottish; earth.*Inghean Bhuidhe *Irish; fire.*Ioua *Scottish; moon.*Irnan *Irish; magic.*Keeronagh. *See Caoránach*Kerhanagh. *See Caoránach*Kesair. *See Cesair*Kesara. *See Cesair*Kethlenda. *See Cethlion*Lair Derg. *See Áine*Lasair *Irish; fire; sun.***Latíaran****Leanan Sidhe**Leborcham. *See Deirdre*Lhianna Shee. *See Leanan Sidhe*

**Líadan****Lí Ban****Lífe**Logia *Irish; river.*Loireag *Scottish; water; spinning.*Lot *Irish; warrior.*Luaths Lurgann *Irish; warrior.*Luideag. *See Glaistig***Macha**Maer *Irish; magic.*Maeve. *See Medb***Mairenn****Máirín Rua**Mal. *See Bronach*Mala Liath. *See Cailleach***Maoinlin**Maol Flidias. *See Flidais*Meave. *See Medb***Medb**Medbh. *See Medb*Mess Buachalla. *See Ésa*Miluchrach. *See Milucra***Milucra****Mis**Mish. *See Mis*Momu *Scottish; wells; hills.***Mongfhinn****Mór****Mórrígan**Morrigna. *See Mórrígan*Mor-Ríoghain. *See Mórrígan***Muilearach**Murgan. *See Lí Ban***Murna**Nar *Irish; earth.***Nás**Neamhan. *See Nemain*Neeve. *See Niamh***Nemain**Nemon. *See Nemain***Nessa****Niamh**Niau. *See Niamh*Nicnevin. *See Cailleach***Nothain****Odras**Onaugh. *See Úna*Oona. *See Úna*Peist. *See Caoránach*Plur na mBan. *See Niamh***Relbeo**Richis *Irish; satire.*Roisín Dubh. *See Cathleen ní Houlihan***Ruad**Saar. *See Sadb*Saba. *See Sadb***Sadb**Sadhbh. *See Sadb***Sampait**Sava. *See Sadb***Scáthách**Scene *Irish; satire.***Scota**Segáis. *See Bóand*Selie. *See Silkie*Selkie. *See Silkie*Shannon. *See Sínann*Shan Van Vocht. *See Cathleen ní Houlihan***Sheela na Gig**Síle na gCíoch. *See Sheela na Gig*Síle na gig. *See Sheela na Gig***Silkie****Sin****Sínann**Sineng. *See Sínann*Skatha. *See Scáthách***Tailte****Téa**Tephi. *See Téa*Tethba *Irish; earth.***Tlachtga****Tuag**Tuirreann. *See Uirne*Uchtdealb. *See Uirne***Uirne****Úna**

**Achall** A princess of the northern province of Ulster, Achall gave her name to the hill of Skreen near Tara, Ireland's seat of royal power, after she died there. The man who killed Achall's beloved brother brought his head back victoriously and, upon seeing it, Achall died of sorrow. (Gwynn vol. 1)

**Achtan** Mothers of heroes often conceive under unusual circumstances, and such was the case for Achtan. The high king Art stopped for a night's rest on the way to a battle where it had been prophesied that he would die. He chose the home of Achtan's father, who added an additional prophecy: that whoever slept with Achtan would have lasting fame. Eagerly, the king went to Achtan's bed, where the couple conceived the hero Cormac. The next day, after arranging fosterage for the child, Art went to die.

Nine months later, Achtan set off toward her child's intended foster home, but she was stopped by a storm. With rain pelting her, Achtan gave birth in the open, then stumbled away to find help. While she was gone, a mother wolf took the baby away to rear as her own. Years later, a robust young man walked out of the forest. It was Achtan's son, now grown. The reunited mother and child traveled to Tara, seat of the high kings, where Cormac took his father's throne and Achtan lived the remainder of her life in regal splendor. (Colum; Wavle and Burke)

**Aeval** Ireland's southwestern province, Munster, was associated with the feminine. Among many fairy queens there, Aeval was the most prominent. Her name appears on natural features throughout County Clare. Ancestral mother or tutelary goddess of the O'Briens, Aeval came to the clan founder, her lover Brian Boru, on the eve of the Battle of Clontarf in 1014, warning that he would not survive the battle. Foreknowledge of death made Brian fearless, and therefore victorious. Afterwards, Aeval served as a **Banshee**, chief of Clare's two dozen banshees. In recent years, local residents claim to have seen her on Inchiquin Lake, warning of disasters. Aeval's most famous literary appearance was in "The Midnight Court," a debate between men and women as to which less satisfied the other. Serving as judge, Aeval found in the women's favor. (Bourke et al.; Dames 1992; Gregory 1905; Lenihan 1991; Logan 1981; Merriam; Ó hógáin 1991)

**Aífe** The name Aífe appears several times in Irish legend. One Aífe trained heroes on her island fortress, which she shared with **Scáthách**, her sister or rival. Meeting the hero Cúchulainn, Aífe challenged him. Despite enormous effort on both sides, neither could best the other. Realizing she had met her equal, Aífe agreed to help Cúchulainn learn martial arts. Although they had shared a bed, Cúchulainn abandoned Aífe to return to **Emer**. Aífe gave Cúchulainn his greatest weapon, the magical Gai Bolga. She also bore his son Connla, later killed by his father.

Another Aífe changed **Fionnuala** and her four brothers into swans who lived for 900 years under her curse. She may be the same figure as the bewitched woman who became a crane and, upon her death, provided feathered skin for a magical bag in which the letters of the alphabet lived. (Bourke et al.; Ellis 1988; Gwynn; Gregory 1905; Herm; Hull; Joyce; Kinsella; MacCulloch 1996; Squire)

**Ailinn** Ailinn, princess of Leinster, fell in love with Baile, prince of Ulster. Because their lands were far apart, they met midway. A malicious fairy told the prince that Ailinn was dead, whereupon he died of grief. Ailinn, hearing the news, fell down dead herself. The lovers were buried together, and on their graves grew trees with entwined branches. From his yew and her apple, poets carved tablets upon which they engraved sad love stories. When the tablets were finished, the king held them near each other. They clapped together and could never be separated. (Bourke et al.; Hull 1898)

**Ailna** When the warrior Fionn mac Cumhaill killed Ailna's husband, she vowed revenge. Shape-shifting into the form of a deer, she appeared before the Fianna to tempt them into a hunt. They took the bait, and the next thing they knew, a druidical mist surrounded them so that they could not see deer or forest. Separated from his band, Fionn fell into Ailna's power. She held him captive in a dungeon for many days until the Fianna found and freed him, killing the grieving Ailna in the process. (Gregory 1905; Joyce)

**Áine** The fairy queen Áine was a folkloric memory of the region's ancestral goddess, **Anu (Danu)**. Her feast was celebrated on midsummer night or summer solstice, when farmers drove their herds up her hill Knockainy, waving burning torches and praying for her protection. She was associated with inspiration and madness, for she owned a stone chair near Lough Gur that attracted the insane. If they sat there, they would either recover their wits or be mad forever. If a sane person sat there three times, the result would be insanity or brilliance.

Áine loved the sea god Manannán mac Lir, sometimes described as her father. Among Áine's mortal lovers was Etar, who died of thwarted love; and Maurice, earl of Desmond, by whom Áine had a son, Gerald. She warned the earl that he must never show surprise at their son's behavior, but when Gerald shrank suddenly, Maurice yelled in fear. Mother and child disappeared, and Gerald now lives in Lough Gur, riding around it every seven years on a white horse. Áine's descendants called themselves Geraldines or Fitzgeralds, claiming sovereignty through connection with the goddess of the land.

In the county of Donegal, another Áine was said to have disappeared to escape a savage father and thereafter spent her time spinning sunbeams. A folk verse from the area has Áine telling discontented wives how to weaken their husbands. Donegal's Áine, like other fairy queens, stole pipers and other musicians to play for her fairy dances.

Finally, a legend in the Fenian Cycle tells of Áine, daughter of a smith, who bore two sons to the hero Fionn mac Cumhaill. Áine and her sister **Milucra** squabbled over who would enjoy the attentions of the hero. Áine spied him first, so Milucra enchanted a lake, then lured Fionn there, claiming she had dropped her golden ring into the water. Fionn swam out to retrieve it. When he returned, his hair had turned silver-white. Áine had sworn never to sleep with a gray-haired man, so Milucra hoped to win him. But Fionn was now stooped with age, much to the consternation of his warriors, who forced Milucra to restore Fionn's youth. His hair stayed silver. (Dames; Evans-

Wentz; Graves; Gregory 1905; Joyce; Logan 1981; MacCulloch 1911; MacNeill; O’Kelly; Rees and Rees; Yeats 1973; Zucchelli)

**Airmid** Airmid was an herbalist, a skill she learned from her father Dian Cécht. When king Nuada lost his arm in battle, Dian Cécht built him a silver prosthesis, while Airmid and her beloved brother Miach made one of flesh. Envious of his children’s talent, Dian Cécht killed Miach. Tending her brother’s grave, Airmid noticed herbs carpeting it and began to pick them. She would have healed all humanity’s ailments, but Dian Cécht destroyed Airmid’s collection. (Cross and Slover; Squire)

**Almu** Each of Ireland’s ancient provinces had a sacred center or capital; that of the eastern province of Leinster was the low, bog-encircled Hill of Allen, where an invisible entrance to the Otherworld opened. Almu, goddess of the hill, was called by poets “all-white,” but is otherwise obscure. (Dames; Gwynn vol. 2; O’Rahilly; Rees and Rees)

**Anu** Anu has no real mythology, although she is named by the early writer Cormac as “mother of the gods of Ireland.” Her name seems to mean “abundance,” perhaps indicating an earth goddess. In addition to being connected or confused with **Danu**, Anu has been seen as identical to **Áine**. Welsh mythology has a shadowy figure named **Ána** or **Anu**, who, after Christianization of the region, became conflated with Saint Anne, grandmother of Jesus, to whom holy wells are dedicated. In Britain, Anu gave her name to a river. **Black Annis** may be another form of this goddess. (MacCulloch 1911; Rhys 1941; MacNeill; Squire; Westropp 2000)

**Badb** Badb (“crow”) appeared as one of three phantom queens, the others being **Mórrígan** and **Macha**. Badb also appeared with Mórrígan, **Medb**, Fea (“hateful”), and **Nemain** (“venomous”), the entire group bearing Badb’s name. Badb screamed over battlefields, inciting soldiers to provide her with human meat, for which she was called “red-mouthed.” She appeared standing with one foot on each side of a stream, washing the bloodied clothing of those who would die. Among continental Celts, the horse-mounted raven Cathubodua may have been ancestral goddess to the Buduogenos, “people of Bodua.” In Britain, Tacitus described black-robed women druids who imitated Badb, screaming to incite warriors during battle. (Dexter 1990; Green 1995; Koch; Ó hógáin 1999)

**Banba** Invading Ireland, the Milesians encountered three goddesses: first Banba, then **Fódla** and **Ériu**. Although the goddesses seem to form a trinity, they may have been unrelated land goddesses. Banba was a magician, against whom the Milesians sang spells. Her emblem was the pig, symbol of prosperity, suggesting a goddess of abundance. (Cross and Slover; Koch; Hull 1906; MacAlister; MacNeill)

**Banshees** Although known in several lands, the banshee (“fairy woman”), was most widely reported in Ireland. There, the banshee’s wail, predicting a coming death,

recalls the ancient practice of wild screaming (“keening”), whereby women mourned the loss of a loved one. Occasionally, the banshee was seen, usually wearing Other-world colors (green or red), but occasionally swathed in somber gray or unearthly white. Sometimes she was seen combing her hair with a golden comb. She could be either a young woman or an aged hag. But her appearance was less notable than her voice, which rang with sorrow as she bemoaned the dead.

Not all families had banshees. Some sources claim that only the oldest families in a region had a banshee. Among those often mentioned are the O’Briens, the Magraths, the Hynes, and the Faheys. Other sources claim that only five families were entitled to banshee attendance: O’Brien, O’Connor, O’Neill, O’Grady, and Kavanagh. Yet another list claims the banshees served the MacCarthys, Magraths, O’Neills, O’Rileys, O’Sullivans, O’Reardons, and O’Flahertys. A commonly stated idea is that no family lacking a “Mac” or “O” in the name (signs of ancient origin) could have a banshee, but many lists defy that rule. Personal names are given to the banshees of some families, such as **Áine** to the O’Briens and **Clídna** to the MacCarthys; in those cases, the banshee is also a clan ancestor. Banshees may have originated as divine tribal mothers.

Whether the banshee could be heard only by the family of the doomed, or by others as well, is disputed. Tales describe multiple banshees wailing at the death of an important person. Sites of great tragedies, such as battles and shipwrecks, may be forever haunted by banshees. While some tales describe the banshee as tied to a specific community, others see her as mobile, able to follow members of an emigrating family. Thus, banshee stories are told in Canada, Australia, and America.

The banshee may have originally been a land goddess who protected the area’s families. The banshee’s narrowing dominion has been traced to the seizure of Irish lands by the English in the 16th and 17th centuries, when the land goddesses lost dominion over property and became linked to families instead. A figure of folklore rather than literature, she does not appear in written documents until after 1600. The banshee was also known in Scotland, where a specialized form, the Caoineag or Keener, was heard to weep over the horrific massacre of Glencoe.

Another specialized banshee, the Bean Nighe (“Washer”), was a woman who died in childbirth and who had left laundry unfinished. From then until the time she would have died of old age, she appeared as a green-cloaked, one-toothed specter washing linens in a stream. Legend has it that if a witness sucked upon one of the Bean Nighe’s long breasts, she would grant any wish. A prophetic figure, the Bean Nighe would answer three questions of any passerby, provided three questions were answered truthfully in turn. The Bean Nighe is a folkloric version of the goddess **Badb**, prophesying death in battle as she washed the bloodied clothing of those doomed to die.

Like others of her kind, the Washer was generally prescient, able to see more in the future than just imminent death. Thus, if one caught a glimpse of her before she noticed, she had to provide a prophecy. But such fortune-telling could be risky, because the Washer could injure an observer, inflicting broken bones by waving her laundry in the air. (Beck; Colum; Croker 1862; Evans-Wentz; Gregory 1970; Lenihan 1987; Logan 1981; MacDougall; McKay 1969; McNeill; Spence 1972; Westropp 2000; Wilde; Yeats 1973)

**Béare** The rocky, far-southwestern peninsula of Béare in Ireland derives its name from this Spanish princess, who was probably originally a goddess of the land. She is often conflated with the **Cailleach** Bhéirre or “hag of Béare,” a goddess of the pre-Celtic people still associated with the area. Her petrified remains can be seen on a roadside on the north of the peninsula.

She had two forms, Büi (yellow one) and Duineach (strong one), although she also appears in a trinity with two other land hags of nearby peninsulas, the Cailleach Bolus and Cailleach Corca Dhuibhne. The same name, and presumably the same character, appears in south County Armagh, where she was said to have taken the hero Fionn mac Cumhaill as a lover. Stones connected with them, found around the countryside, were traditionally whitewashed each spring. (Ellis 1995; MacNeill; Zucchelli)

**Bébinn** Several Irish figures bear this name. One, goddess of birth, was the sister of **Bóand**. Another was a beautiful giant from Maiden’s Land who traveled surrounded by magical birds. She escaped a brutal husband, only to be pursued and killed. (Graves; Gregory 1905; Rolleston)

**Bebo** A tiny fairy, Bebo traveled with her husband to Ulster, which they believed was populated by giants. The diminutive Bebo caught the king’s eye. Despite physical challenges (his phallus was bigger than her body), Bebo became the king’s mistress for a year, until her husband offered a pair of magical shoes to gain her back. (Rolleston)

**Becfhola** One of the few heroines to have a significant text devoted to her, Becfhola is the protagonist of the *Tochmarc Becfhola* (The Wooing of Becfhola). As queen of the sacred hill of Tara, Becfhola (“a small fortune”) represented the sovereignty of the land. So, when she grew unhappy with the king, Diarmait, and fond of the hero Crimthann, the governance of the land was cast in question. Though intent upon an assignation with Crimthann, she met instead the fairy Flann, with whom she had a bliss-filled affair. As time in fairyland passes more speedily than in our world, she was able to resume her throne without anyone realizing she had been absent. (Bourke et al.; Cross and Slover)

**Bé Chuma** A member of the Tuatha Dé Danann (see **Danu**), the beautiful Bé Chuma was renowned for her sexual appetite. She left her powerful husband in the Otherworld for a lover, for which she was banished to the surface world. There she married the high king but fell in love with her stepson, whose wife demanded Bé Chuma’s ostracism. (Cross and Slover; Rees and Rees; MacCulloch 1996)

**Berba** In southeastern Ireland, three rivers irrigate the land; together, they are the “three sisters,” watery embodiments of goddesses. Longest is the Barrow, named for Berba. Her sisters were Eoryus (the Noir) and Suirus (the Suir). The name also appears as an alternative to **Cesair**, the first human resident of Ireland. (Cambrensis)

**Bláthnat** “Little flower” was the daughter of Midir, high king of the Irish fairies. Bláthnat possessed a magic cauldron hitched to three cows that brought abundance wherever she passed, suggesting that she was originally a goddess of abundance. But woman, cauldron, and cows were stolen from the Otherworld by two competing heroes, one of whom held Bláthnat captive. Her legend is similar to the Welsh **Blodeuwedd**, for Bláthnat collaborated with her captor’s enemy to cause his death. (Cross and Slover; MacCulloch 1911)

**Bóand** Bóand’s name means “woman of white cows” or “radiant cow,” yet her myth does not mention cows. She may be related to the goddess of abundance, **Bó Find**, but is best known as a river goddess. The important river Boyne was formed when Bóand visited a forbidden well in search of wisdom. Nine hazel trees that shaded the well bore nuts of wisdom. A salmon swam there, eating nuts and growing immensely wise. When Bóand approached the well, it overflowed and chased her across the land. As she reached the sea, Bóand drowned, leaving behind the river that bears her name.

Ireland’s most famous ancient monument is the Bru na Bóinne, or “palace of Bóand,” a tumulus built nearly 6,000 years ago into which the winter solstice sun annually penetrates. There, Bóand entertained the god Dagda, who lured her away from her earlier consort, Nechtan. To hide their affair, Dagda caused the sun to stand still for nine months so that Bóand could bear their child, the god of poetry, Aongus. In addition to her rulership of the Bru na Bóinne, Bóand was connected with another great Irish monument, the hill of Tara, which is replete with sites named for the cow goddess. Her connection with significant sites puts Bóand in the category of **Brigit** and **Medb** as one of Ireland’s most important goddesses. (Bourke et al.; Cooney; Cross and Slover; Jackson; Gwynn vols. 2, 3; Koch; Logan 1980; Slavin; Squire.)

**Bó Find** In primordial times, when Ireland was barren, this white cow appeared from the western sea with the red cow Bó Ruadh and the black cow Bó Dhu. Each headed in a different direction: Bó Dhu went south, Bó Ruadh north, and Bó Find to the island’s center, where she gave birth to twin calves from whom descended all cattle. Then Bó Find disappeared into a dark cave. (Wilde)

**Brigit** Because of the local nature of Celtic divinities, few were honored across a wide geographical area. But there is evidence of a widely known goddess with a name or title meaning “high one.” In Britain, the Brigantes honored an ancestral goddess, Brigantia. The Gauls honored Brigindo or Brigindu, of whom little is known except that she was invoked to encourage abundant harvests. At a thermal spring in southern France, Brixia was honored.

In Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and the Isle of Man, Brigit appears as a central goddess. Her symbols were cattle, fire, and water, with her holy day occurring on February 1. A member of the Tuatha Dé Danann (see **Danu**), Brigit was daughter of the god of fertility, Dagda, and mother of the hero Rúadán, at whose death she invented keening. She appears in three related forms, as goddess of healing, smithcraft, and poetry. It is unclear whether her worshipers knew three separate goddesses named Brigit, each with her own specific domain, or whether all were aspects of one goddess.

Ritual devotion to Brigit, centered on a sacred fire and on holy wells, continued after the goddess was “converted” to a Christian saint. Documents suggest that a college of priestesses served Saint Brigit. Giraldus Cambrensis reported that nuns in Kildare tended an undying ashless flame, a ritual identical to that offered to **Sul**. Not long after Giraldus made his 1184 report, the fires were dowsed by the clergy. In 1988, the foundation of the ancient temple was rediscovered in Kildare. Not long after, the Brigidine sisters spearheaded an international revival of interest in Saint Brigit.

Both saint and goddess are honored on February 1, the feast of Imbolc, still celebrated in Ireland. The most widespread ritual entails praying at dawn at a holy well. Pilgrims also tie small pieces of cloth to trees nearby. In Kildare, rush crosses are hung on the house to prevent fires. In County Kerry, Biddy Boys dress in white, don straw hats, and go begging; giving to them insured a good harvest. Other traditions include crafting dolls from rushes, laying fabric outdoors for Brigit to walk upon as the sun rises, and jumping through a circle of straw. In Scotland, Imbolc was celebrated by dressing sheaves in women’s clothing and setting a wooden club beside the figure. The next morning, women looked in the ashes for an impression of Brigit’s club.

Brigit may have taken on aspects of a pre-Celtic seasonal goddess. In Scotland, stories relate how the Cailleach kept the goddess, here named Bride, imprisoned in high mountains. Her son fell in love with the girl; at winter’s end, they eloped. The hag chased them across the landscape, causing storms; after she turned to stone, Bride was freed. (Bourke et al.; Brenneman and Brenneman; Carmichael; Condren; Cunliffe; Danaher 1922; Delaney; Cambrensis; Ellis 1995; Koch; Logan 1980; MacAnna; Clancy; MacKinlay; MacNeill; O’Faoláin; Ó hógáin 1985, 1999; Wavle and Burke)

**Bronach** The most famous of Ireland’s scenic wonders is connected to this goddess: “hag’s head” (Ceann na **Cailleach**), the highest of the Cliffs of Moher. Local stories say that Bronach (“sorrowful” or “dismal one”) fell to her death off the cliff in pursuit of a handsome young man. Other tales claim that her profile is visible on the rock face. In August 1317, she appeared to local residents as a hag with gray matted hair, ulcers on her face, immense eyebrows, and watery eyes over a stubbly beard. She announced herself as a member of the Tuatha Dé Danann (people of **Danu**), but the hag goddess or Cailleach from whom she descends is probably pre-Celtic. She was seen in the rocky Burren area of County Clare as recently as 1939. (Westropp 2000)

**Buan** This woman had the power to understand her husband, Mesroeda Mac Dá Thó, even after death, by translating the faint reddening and whitening of his flesh in response to her questions. Thus, Buan learned that her beloved had died from a treacherous attack. She then died from weeping. Thereafter, a hazel tree called Coll Buana grew up from her grave, producing branches used in divination. She may descend from the early goddess **Buanann**. Another Buan was a maiden who, desperate with love for the hero Cúchulainn, threw herself after his chariot and was killed. (Cross and Slover; Gwynn vol. 4; Koch; MacCulloch 1996)

**Buanann** The early Irish glossarist Cormac called Buanann “mother of heroes”; her name has also been translated as “good mother.” But little is known about this goddess

or her offspring. Some early texts contrast her with **Anu**, whose children were gods, suggesting that Buanann was ancestral mother to a human tribe or family. A heroine of this name appears in the Fenian Cycle as a warrior woman who trained the great hero Fionn mac Cumhaill. (MacCulloch 1911)

**Cáer** Cáer appeared in dreams to Aongus, god of poetry, so he set out to find her. When he did, she was dressed as a swan, with 130 golden chains around her long neck. Aongus changed into a swan to join her, and the two flew off into the sky, singing so sweetly that people fell asleep for three days and three nights. (Gantz 1984; Jackson; Markale 2000; Rolleston; Sax; Squire)

**Cailleach** The hag goddess found in Ireland, Scotland, and the Isle of Man was probably not Celtic. She created the world by dropping rocks from her apron or by throwing boulders at a neighbor. Creation stories are typically told of a land's oldest divinity. As settlement in Ireland preceded the Celts by some 4,000 years, the Cailleach may be Ireland's oldest known divinity. Her name ("veiled one") appears on some of the land's most prominent mountains, probably named in antiquity.

In Munster, the "Hag of Beare" formed islands by towing them around with a straw rope until it broke. She was a goddess of abundance, as her personal name **Bóí** ("cow") indicates; cows were symbols of prosperity. She lived on an island where she rode a white, red-eared cow, colors of divine origin. On the rocky Burren, she had several names, including **Bronach**. A blue-faced woman with one eye, the Cailleach had red teeth and matted white hair. She owned a farm and hired workers with the stipulation that none would be paid who could not outwork her. Many a man died of overwork trying to keep the pace she set. Finally, the Cailleach's name is found on a small mountain with a prehistoric cairn directed toward the spring and fall equinoxes. Approximately 40 minutes after sunrise, the sun's rays penetrate the chamber within the cairn, illuminating petroglyphs with solar or stellar referents.

As harvest goddess, her name was given to the last sheaf, which was dressed in women's clothing and kept as a charm for prosperity. She appeared during harvest as a hare. Harvesters sang or shouted as they went about their work, to "drive the Cailleach" hare forth. In Scotland, Carlin was the animating spirit of the harvest; at Samhain, the Carlin sheaf warded off Otherworldly visitors. On the Isle of Man, Caillagh ny Groamagh ("gloomy old woman") gathered twigs for her fire every February 1. If the weather was fine, she gathered enough to extend winter, but if weather kept her indoors, spring came earlier. A similar figure in Britain, **Black Annis**, was connected with weather and seasonal changes.

Such legends connect the Cailleach with agriculture, but some suggest an origin in earlier society. In Scotland, a giant Cailleach lived on the milk of deer. She guarded the wilderness and its animal life, punishing hunters who killed pregnant animals by choking them with their hair. She has also been connected with the goddess of sovereignty (see **Flaith**), especially in myths in which she makes a man king after he kisses her. In legends of Camelot, the Cailleach appeared as the **Loathy Lady** who begged a kiss from handsome men; she also appears under the name of Ragnell, alternately as hag and maiden.

The connection of the Cailleach to the **Sheela na Gig** is unknown, although many Sheela figures are called “cailleach.” The Cailleach who appears in the story of Da Derga’s Hostel, cursing a king who had broken his sacred vows, assumed positions similar to that of the Sheela. In Britain, the squat Grimes Grave Goddess, found in an area of prehistoric flint mines, may represent this hag divinity. Because it is nearly impossible to date rock, the origin of the tiny figure cannot be established. That the Grimes Goddess was deliberately deposited in the mine is argued by offerings found with it. The original name of the figure has been lost, and her meaning can only be a subject of conjecture. (Bourke et al.; Campbell 1973; Danaher 1922; Green 1986; Hyde; Geddes; Kiernan; Long; MacAnna; MacNeill; MacKenzie 1935; McKay 1932; McMahon and Roberts; O’Faoláin; Paton; Rees and Rees; Spence 1972; Zucchelli)

**Canola** This woman of legend invented the harp, the primary emblem of Ireland. Canola, upset over an argument with her lover, left his side to wander the night and fell asleep on the seashore to the sound of strange, sweet music. When she awoke, she discovered that the music came from a natural instrument: the rib bones of a whale with sinew still attached, through which the wind was singing. The discovery inspired her to build the first harp. (MacCulloch 1996)

**Caolainn** A holy well in County Roscommon, in Ireland’s western province of Connaught, was historically said to be efficacious against eye diseases. Its powers come from this saint, probably originally a goddess, who healed herself of a self-inflicted wound. A man admired her beautiful eyes, so Caolainn, intent upon remaining celibate, gouged them out and threw them at him. Then she groped her way to the well, blindly tearing the rushes that grew along its banks and rubbing them into her bleeding eye-sockets. Her eyes miraculously grew back. An almost identical story is told of the goddess **Brigit**, to whom three nearby healing wells are dedicated, suggesting that Caolainn was a localized form of that divinity. (Logan 1980)

**Caoránach** On the important Christian site of Station Island, Saint Patrick fought the serpent Caoránach while both stood submerged in lake waters. Patrick subjugated but did not kill the serpent, who remains alive in Lough Derg. Similar stories are told of other monstrous females and the Christian patriarch. Patrick brought low the stork Corra by throwing his silver bell at her, after which she fell into Lough Corra. This monster goddess may derive from Celtic times, for legends link her with the hero Fionn mac Cumhaill. When the shinbones of Fionn’s dead mother were thrown into Lough Derg, they came alive as Caoránach. (MacNeill)

**Carman** The powerful Carman was a sorceress whose three sons were Darkness, Wickedness, and Violence. Together, they blighted Ireland until the Tuatha Dé Danann (see **Danu**) killed Carman’s sons. The mother was a greater challenge, falling to the powers of the sorceress Be Chille, who restored the land’s fertility and then established a great festival in Carman’s honor. (Gwynn vol. 3; MacNeill)

**Cathleen ní Houlihan** Several folkloric names were applied to the ancient earth goddess who represented the sovereignty of Ireland. Among these were Cathleen ní Houlihan (“Cathleen, daughter of Houlihan,” referring to an unknown father), who walked the roads of Ireland in the guise of an old woman until heroic patriots revealed her as a young girl. As the same story is told of the **Cailleach**, they may be one and the same figure. Another name used for this figure was Dark Rosaleen (in Irish, Roisín Dubh), referring to the darkness of the fertile earth in spring. When she appears as an old woman (who may transform herself into a beautiful young girl, reiterating a motif found in legends of the Cailleach), she is called the Shan Van Vocht, or “the poor old woman.” (Clark)

**Cesair** Cesair, granddaughter of Noah, escaped the Flood together with 50 women and three men. She sailed to Ireland, beyond the Flood’s reach. When they disembarked, Cesair put one man in each of three groups, together with over a dozen women. The women’s demands proved too much for two men, who died of exhaustion. The other, Cesair’s mate Fintan, turned himself into a salmon and fled.

The names of the women who accompanied Cesair represent the world’s ancestral mothers, for they included German (German), Espa (Spanish), Alba (British), and Gothiam (Goth). In addition to her Biblical antecedents, Cessair is described as the daughter of **Banba**, while at other times she is called **Berba** or Heriu, a name similar to **Ériu**. (Cambrensis; Koch; Löffler; MacAlister)

**Cethlion** Irish myth tells of several invasions by supernatural races, one of which was the Fomorians, who may represent an early, non-Celtic people of the island. Cethlion (“crooked-tooth” or “buck-toothed”) was their queen, a prophet-warrior who foresaw her people’s defeat by the tribe of **Danu**, but who nevertheless fought bravely and wounded one of the Danann chieftains. (MacCulloch 1911; Squire)

**Chlaus Haistig** The legends of the warriors called the Fianna include the tale of this witch, who stole sleeping children until she was taken hostage by the hero Fionn mac Cumhaill. The unnamed queen whose children were stolen resembles the Welsh goddess **Rhiannon**, whose own child also mysteriously disappeared. (Kennedy)

**Clídna** The beautiful fairy Clídna lived inside a rocky hill from which she went out on expeditions to kidnap young men. Clídna had affairs with Earl Gerald Fitzgerald and with Caomh, ancestor of the O’Keeffes. She also served as **Banshee** to the MacCarthys, to whom she told the secret of the Blarney Stone. Goddess of the sea as well as the land, Clídna occupied offshore rocks and the ninth wave in every series, said to be larger than the rest. She ruled Tír Tairngire, the Land of Promise in the western ocean. The feckless warrior Ciabhán charmed her. One day, she took him to shore to hunt, but decided to stay on her boat. A wave crashed over, drowning Clídna. (Gregory 1905; Gwynn vol. 3; Logan 1981)

**Clothra** Clothra, sister of **Medb**, **Eithne**, and Mugain (see **Mairenn**), bore her three brothers a son whose body was marked by red stripes, revealing the dividing point

between the parts sired by different fathers. Clothra then mated with her son to produce a hero, Crimthan, born after Clothra was killed by Medb. These incestuous matings suggest an ancestral goddess, as does Clothra's appearance in many mythic genealogies. (MacCulloch 1996)

**Craebhnat** A magnificent ash tree near the town of Doneraile in Munster is dedicated to this fairy or saint. She was sitting under the tree when she heard that she would be required to marry a man she disdained, whereupon she tore out her eyes, hoping to make herself so ugly that her potential groom would turn away. The same story is told of **Brigit**, suggesting that Craebhnat might be a localized form of that goddess. A tree near Craebhnat's was said to possess the magical quality of keeping people afloat, so emigrants took a twig with them for good luck in their journey across the waters. (Logan 1980)

**Créd** Two nipple-shaped cairns cap the breast-shaped hills called the Paps of **Danu** (or **Anu**). There, the fairy queen Créd owned a magnificent palace that no man had entered. Créd challenged suitors to compose a praise-song to her palace without having seen it. Only Cael could meet the challenge, winning Créd's heart and the key to her bower. Because Cael was pledged to fight for his king, Créd crafted a battle-dress covered with spells. Her magic was powerful, but even Créd could not protect Cael from death, whereupon Créd threw herself into her lover's grave.

Another Créd was married to a king but in love with an impoverished Scottish warrior-poet, Cano. Cano pledged they would be together when he regained his wealth. Entrusting her with a stone containing his heart, Cano set off to reclaim his kingdom. In his absence, Créd's stepson revealed her adulterous love and caused a court scandal. Shamed, Créd killed herself, crushing the stone that held her lover's soul; he died shortly thereafter. It is possible the two Créds were originally the same. (Bourke et al.; Ellis 1995; Gregory 1905; Logan 1981; MacNeill; O'Faoláin)

**Crob Derg** Little is known of this goddess, who ruled an area rich with mythic significance. In the province of Munster, on the flanks of the important site called the Paps of **Danu**, bubbles a holy well dedicated to Crob Derg, "red claw." The nearby hillfort called Cahercrowdarrig ("red claw's palace") was the site of a spring ritual in which cattle were driven past the sites for purification. With two other regional goddesses, **Latiaran** and Inghéan Bhuidhe (sometimes **Gobnait**), Crob Derg forms a trinity, for they were called "sisters"; but the other two were Christianized into "saints," while Crob Derg remained a shadowy figure of legend. (MacNeill)

**Crochan** Although she appears in legend as serving-maid to the runaway queen **Étain**, Crochan herself derived from a powerful goddess. The woman, whose name means "vessel" and, in its extended form, "blood-red cup," gave birth in the magical cave of Oweynagat ("cave of the cats") in County Roscommon, beneath the hillfort dedicated to her daughter, the warrior-queen **Medb**. Today, the cave appears only as a damp but impressive stalactite-studded chamber, but Crochan saw it as a beautiful palace and lived there after her daughter moved aboveground. The fact that Medb's rath

and the surrounding impressive city were named Crúachan suggests that Crochan may have originally been goddess of the region. (Gwynn vol. 3)

**Danu** The most famous of Ireland's mythic races was the Tuatha Dé Danann, "people of the goddess Danu," later diminished to "fairies" called the Daoine Sidhe ("Danu's fairy folk"). Though her children's exploits are well known, less is known about Danu herself. Many commentators connect Danu with similarly named Indo-European goddesses, perhaps descended from an original named \*Dánuv ("flowing one") or \*Dan ("knowledge"). Danu may have arrived with the Celts in approximately 400 BCE.

The renowned Paps, two breast-shaped mountains that bear Danu's name, are also called the Paps of **Anu**. The two easily confused goddesses may represent different cultural strata. Some texts call Danu the daughter of the god of abundance. She may be the same as Danann, daughter of the wilderness goddess **Flidais**; or identical to the obscure Donand, known as the mother of three heroes. (Ellis 1995; Graves; MacCulloch 1996; Squire; Westropp 2000)

**Dealgnaid** The invader Partholón set off to conquer Ireland, abandoning his wife Dealgnaid to a handsome servant. While Partholón satisfied his territorial urges, Dealgnaid satisfied her sexual ones. Partholón acknowledged the affair as his fault and begged his wife to return, which she did, becoming an ancestral mother. (Rolleston)

**Dechtire** From the Ulster capital at Emain **Macha**, Dechtire and 50 companions vanished. Years later, a horde of birds appeared, devouring everything. Facing famine, warriors attacked the birds, but to no avail, for they flew faster than horses could gallop. The birds, tied together by silver chains and led by a bird wearing a silver necklace, flew southward. The heroes followed, and two, Bricriu and Fergus, found lodging for the night. The next morning, they found an abandoned child. Brought to court, he grew up to be the hero Cúchulainn, Dechtire's son.

The swan-maiden Dechtire had borne Cúchulainn parthenogenetically. Seeing a worm in a glass of wine, Dechtire recognized the chance to be impregnated with a hero and drank. Other tales say Dechtire was impregnated in bird form by the god Lugh and gave birth by vomiting. (Cross and Slover; Dexter 1990; Hull 1898; Kinsella; Koch; MacCulloch 1996)

**Deirdre** The birth of this tragic heroine coincided with a feast her parents hosted for the king Concobar mac **Nessa**. The king's druid, Cathbad, prophesied that she would be the most beautiful woman ever born and that she would bring down the kingdom. The court demanded the child be killed, but the lustful Concobar took Deirdre from her parents and entrusted her to the wise woman Leborcham. Born a slave, Leborcham had such wit and brilliance that she had become a bard and druid. She was also strong and agile; she could run the length of Ireland and get back in time for dinner. Leborcham grew as devoted to her charge as a mother to her child.

As a young woman, Deirdre saw a raven drink the blood of a calf, spilled upon snow. She confided this vision to Leborcham, who recognized Deirdre's fated partner as Noísiu, king Concobar's nephew, who had raven-black hair, pale skin, and red lips.

After Leborcham arranged for them to meet, they eloped to Scotland with his brothers, where they lived contentedly by hunting and trapping. Deirdre remained beautiful, and soon another king desired her. So the group moved to a barren island, where their life was hard but peaceful.

Concobar sent a deceitful message that he had lost desire for Deirdre but wished to see her safely home. Noísiu was homesick, so despite Deirdre's premonitions, they sailed home, where Noísiu and his brothers were killed and Deirdre put in chains. Reproaching Concobar bitterly, she refused his attempt at seduction. Humiliated, Concobar gave her to one of Noísiu's murderers. As her captor drove Deirdre away, she leaped from his chariot and was killed. Concobar's kingdom fell, because the king's deceit so disgusted the warriors that many left him to fight with his enemy **Medb**. (Bourke et al.; Colum; Cross and Slover; Dillon 1968; Green 1995; Hull 1898; Hull 1906; Jackson; Kinsella; O'Faoláin)

**Derbforgaill** The lustful, shape-shifting Derbforgaill tried to seduce the hero Cúchulainn, but he did not recognize her as a woman in swan form, and so he attempted to kill her for sport. As she fell to earth, Derbforgaill turned back into a woman and Cúchulainn, shocked at the sight, tried to revive her by sucking the stones from her body. This healed her, but it also made the couple blood-kin and thus barred them from mating. Derbforgaill later died at the hands of envious women who had challenged her to a contest to see who could shoot urine the farthest. The big-bladdered Derbforgaill won easily, but was fatally attacked by the losers. (Hull 1898; MacCulloch 1996)

**Dub** It is unclear whether the capital of the Republic of Ireland was named for a land goddess, as is common in Celtic lands; or whether the story of the druid poet Dub was invented to explain the name Dublin, which can mean "pool of Dub" or simply "dark pool." The deep pool in the river Liffey, which flows through the city, was Dub's grave. Hers is a tangled tale of deceit and betrayal: after Dub drowned a woman with whom her husband was consorting, he then killed her with a slingshot as she stood beside the black pool. (Cross and Slover)

**Eachtach** This figure appears only briefly in Irish legend, in a haunting scene wherein she begged for help as her father Diarmait lay dying. Although he had the power to do so, Diarmait's lord, Fionn mac Cumhaill, refused to offer aid, remembering that he had lost Eachtach's mother, the brilliant **Gráinne**, to the dying man. To revenge herself for Fionn's disdainful failure to aid her dying father, Eachtach gathered her brothers into a fighting band and harried Fionn for four years, until he was near death from the constant battles. She did not, however, manage to kill him. (MacCulloch 1996)

**Ébhlinne** A range of low hills on the borders of Counties Tipperary and Limerick bears the name of this goddess, later called a queen of the region. Its central peak, Mát-hair-Shliabh (mother-mountain) was until recent times the site of midsummer festivals in Ébhlinne's honor. Place-poetry describes Ébhlinne as a queen who eloped with her stepson in a love triangle that recalls those involving **Guinevere**, **Iseult**, and **Gráinne**,

all heroines derived from Celtic goddesses of the land's sovereignty. (Gwynn vol. 4; MacNeill)

**Echthge** Little is now known of this goddess of the tribe of **Danu**, called “the awful one” and “the terrible goddess,” except that she killed and ate her children. Such cannibal imagery is often associated with goddesses of the land, which can be abundant or barren. The rolling hills named for her, Sliabh na Echthge (Slieve Aughty, “mountains of Echthge”) in east County Clare, were said to have been a gift to her from her lover. (Gwynn vol. 3; Westropp 2000)

**Éis Énchen** When her sons were killed by the hero-in-training Cúchulainn, Éis Énchen turned herself into a grizzled hag and stalked Cúchulainn. When they met on a narrow path up a mountain, she asked him to step aside. Respecting her age, he did so, hanging by his toes over the abyss beside the path. Éis Énchen stomped on his feet, hoping to send him to his death. But he leapt into the air, spun around, and killed the retributive mother. (Hull 1898)

**Eithne** Several important figures in Irish mythology bear this name, and it is unclear whether they are related. The most significant Eithne was held captive by her father, the giant Balor, because of a prophecy that her child would kill him. Trapped in a tower, Eithne was safely celibate. But a hero disguised himself as a woman and seduced Eithne. The prophecy was fulfilled when their son killed Balor in battle. Eithne, who could live only on cow's milk, may derive from a cow goddess; her name is also given to the goddess **Bóand**. Several minor figures carry this name, among them Eithne Tháebfhota or Long-Sides, sister of **Medb**; and the cannibal Eithne Úathach, who became more beautiful the more children she ate. (Cross and Slover; Gregory 1905; MacNeill; Squire; Wilde)

**Emer** This paragon of womanhood spoke sweetly, possessed wisdom and chastity, and worked magic with her needle. Emer met her match in the manly Cúchulainn, who approached her with witty words, to which she responded just as wittily. Challenged to become a better warrior to earn Emer's hand, Cúchulainn went to Scotland to study under the amazonian **Scáthách** and impregnated **Aífe**, Scáthách's daughter. Thereafter, Cúchulainn had affairs while Emer remained chaste. Only when he fell under the spell of **Fand** did Emer object. The epitome of faithfulness, she died when he did. (Cross and Slover; Ellis 1995; Gantz 1984; Hull 1906; Hull 1898; Koch; Kinsella)

**Eri** One of the divine Tuatha Dé Danann (see **Danu**), Eri bore a child to her brother Elatha without her knowing of their relationship. One day, as she sat by the sea, Eri saw a beautiful, shining boat approach. From the silver boat stepped a golden-haired man, wearing golden jewelry and carrying weapons of shining gold, to whom she made love. After their encounter, her mysterious lover left her with a simple band of gold. The couple's son was Bres, who became king of Ireland. It is unclear whether this figure is the same as the better-known **Ériu**. (Cross and Slover; MacCulloch 1996)

**Ériu** In Irish, Ireland is Éire, “land of Ériu.” The invading Milesians met three goddesses, each on a mountain throne. To **Banba**, **Fódla**, and Ériu in turn, the invaders promised they would give the land her name. Because Ériu offered the greatest riches, her name remains. Little else is known of Ériu, who figures in fragmentary tales as daughter of the obscure goddess Ernmas, mother of the failed king Bres, wife of the otherwise unknown Mac Gréine, lover of the alien prince Elatha, and mistress of the god Lugh. Like other members of her tribe (see **Danu**), she was not immortal and was killed in battle by the Milesians. She was buried beneath the Stone of Divisions on the hill of Uisneach, which reveals the map of Ireland on its cracked face. (Dames 1992; Green 1995; Gregory 1905; MacAlister; Koch; Rolleston; Sheehan)

**Erne** The great lake Erne in Ireland, and the river of the same name, was named for this member of the court of **Medb**. Erne and her attendants were frightened by an unearthly voice echoing from the supernatural cave beneath the palace at Crúachan, Medb’s capital. Bearing Medb’s comb, a symbol of female potency, Erne marched forth with her women towards the lake, in which they all drowned. The motif of a woman drowned in a river or lake typically refers to an ancient goddess of the waterway. (Gwynn vol. 3)

**Ésa** Ésa was the daughter of **Étain**, the queen of Tara who, while pregnant with Ésa, was surprised by her former lover. One kiss and they fled, later tricking the king into bedding Ésa, whom he imagined to be Étain. Some versions of the story say that Ésa went mad because of their incest. She raved about the countryside, for which she gained the name of Mess Buachalla, “the herdsman.” Another story says that Mess Buachalla’s father was Cormac, king of Ulster, who wanted a son and demanded his tiny daughter be killed. But the child was so charming that his warriors hid her with a herdsman, hence her name. She wed the high king, but not before mating with the bird god Nemglan, by whom she conceived King Conaire. (Cross and Slover; Gantz 1984; Gwynn vol. 2; Koch; Rolleston.)

**Étain** When the fairy king Midir brought beautiful Étain home, his first wife Fuamnach turned her into a pool of water, then into a mayfly. For seven years, Étain buzzed about, then fell into a cup, was swallowed by a princess of Ulster, and was reborn with no memory. She wed Ireland’s high king, but Midir came to win her back. First, he disguised himself as the king’s brother, claiming illness that could be cured only by sleeping with Étain. Then, he grew ashamed of his treachery and withdrew from the court. He returned in his own form to challenge Étain’s husband at a game of skill. Each time they played, Midir won. Finally he asked for a kiss from the queen as a prize. The king granted it, Midir won, and he kissed Étain. Her memory flooding back, she rose into the air. As swans, she and Midir flew away.

The king chased them to Crúachan, where Étain’s maid, Crochan, gave birth; her daughter **Medb** is a double of Étain. Étain and Midir fled to his fairy-mound home, where the king caught up with them. Midir cast a spell over 50 women (including Étain’s daughter **Ésa**), so that they looked identical to Étain, then dared the king to find the real Étain. When the king chose their daughter Ésa, Étain remained with Midir.

Several other figures also bear this name. Étain of the Fair Hair is described as a fairy woman who loved a mortal and perished of grief when he was killed. The sea-fairy Étain was sister to the renowned **Clídna**. (Clark; Cross and Slover; Dillon 1968; Evans-Wentz; Gantz 1984; Gregory 1905; Gwynn vol. 2; Hull 1906; Jackson; Kiernan; Koch; MacNeill; O’Faoláin; Squire)

**Fand** Fand, wife of the sea god, was renowned for her dalliance with the mortal hero Cúchulainn. She came to him in a vision on Samhain, after Cúchulainn hunted two birds but failed to bring them down. Suddenly, he sank into a stupor, while Fand and her sister **Lí Ban** drove him into a yearlong delirium. The following Samhain, an Otherworldly messenger called Cúchulainn to Fand’s side. Despite the opposition of **Emer**, Cúchulainn became Fand’s lover.

Though he had dallied before, he always returned to Emer. But this time, Cúchulainn stayed away. Emer went to Fand’s land but withdrew when she saw how tenderly Fand treated Cúchulainn. When Fand realized the depth of Emer’s love, she turned to her own husband, who offered her a cloak to use in forgetting Cúchulainn. Then Emer and Cúchulainn drank a potion that restored their previous happiness. (Cross and Slover; Gantz 1984; Hull 1906; MacCulloch 1996; Markale 2000; O’Faoláin.)

**Fedelm** Although several mythic figures bear this name, the most important is the druid Fedelm of Crúachan, who met **Medb** as she departed to invade Ulster. Mounted in a chariot and fully armed, Fedelm foresaw disaster. Medb, unhappy with Fedelm’s prophecy, decided to interpret it as promising victory. The name Fedelm may derive from a generic term for a woman prophet. Other figures of this name include the warrior Fedelm Noíchrotach (“nine-times beautiful”) or Noíchride (“fresh-hearted”); Fedelm of Munster, celebrated in a fire ritual; and Fedelm, princess of Crúachan, who articulated pagan values to Saint Patrick. (Ellis 1988; Kinsella; Koch; Sharkey; Yeats 1973)

**Finnabair** Daughter of **Medb**, Finnabair arranged a tryst on an island with the hero Fráech. As Fráech was swimming to the isle, a sea monster appeared. Fráech fought off the monster and pledged troth with Finnabair. But they were parted when she was kidnapped and held captive in an Alpine castle, from which Fráech freed her. (Gantz 1984; Jackson; Kinsella; Markale 2000; Rolleston)

**Fionnghal nam Fiadh** Tales of madwomen who seek solace in the wilderness are found both in Ireland and Scotland. In the former, the mad **Mis** was driven insane by seeing her father killed in battle. In Scotland, madness came over Fionnghal when her lover betrayed her out of ambition, leaving her for a wealthy woman. The girl ran screaming into the mountains, where she lived naked until she grew enough hair to look like the deer who nursed her. She lived there for so long that most humans, including her own kinfolk, forgot about her. But her guilty former lover remembered her and sought her through the Highlands.

But it was Fionnghal who found him, tracking him to his campsite and sleeping there until he awoke. He covered her with his cloak and watched until she opened

her eyes to him. Instantly sane again, she spent her last few hours with him, for she was dying when she came to him. Her erstwhile lover carried her body from the mountains and died of sorrow. The two were buried in adjoining graves, from which weeping willows grew, entwining themselves about each other. (Carmichael)

**Fionnuala** King Lir married Áed, daughter of the magician Bodb Derg. Born with her twin brother Aodh, Fionnuala (“white shoulders”) had a happy childhood, until her mother died giving birth to a second set of twins, Fiachra and Conn. Lir then married his wife’s foster sister **Aífe**, who hated the children. Convincing Lir that she was ill, Aífe set off to Bodb Derg’s distant home, accompanied by the children. Along the way, she cursed them to become swans for 900 years.

Although their bodies were feathered, the children had human minds and hearts. They also had human voices, and everyone who heard their plaintive songs was moved with compassion for their plight. When 900 years had nearly ended, princess Decca heard a rumor about singing swans and found them. But at the instant she saw them, the children dropped their feathers and stood upright. In seconds, they aged, then died and turned to dust as the centuries blew through their bodies. (Gantz 1984; Gregory 1905; Joyce; Kennedy 1969; Markale 1986; O’Faoláin; Squire)

**Flaith** Her name means “sovereignty,” and although sometimes personified, Flaith represents a political abstraction. Celtic kings entered into a “marriage” with the goddess, and the success of their reign was judged by how productive the earth was. Should a king fail in his kingly duties, the land withheld food. Flaith, about whom no legends exist, expresses this contract. (Brenneman 1989; Clark; Green 1995)

**Flidais** Flidais, goddess of wild beasts, traveled in a chariot drawn by deer. She had a huge sexual appetite; her consort, Fergus, needed seven human women when Flidais was elsewhere engaged. Her daughters, the fairy queen **Fand** and the obscure but sensual Bé Téite, had temperaments similar to hers. Flidais was also goddess of domestic animals, especially those that gave milk. She owned a magical cow whose milk could supply 30 people daily. (Green 1995; Gwynn vol. 4; MacCulloch 1996)

**Fódla** One of Ireland’s three earth goddesses, Fódla extracted a promise from the invading Milesians that they would name the land for her, but they broke their word and named it for the resplendent **Ériu**. The site where the Milesians met Fódla was Sliabh Felim in County Limerick, or the nearby Mauher Slieve (“mother mountain”), usually dedicated to **Ébhlinne**. (Cross and Slover; Green 1986; Koch)

**Gablach** This gigantic woman was wooed by an equally large Spaniard named Latur. But another man, Fuither, had also set his heart upon her, and he refused to accept her decision to wed Latur. Fuither attacked the wedding party, but Latur met violence with violence, killing several dozen soldiers with a roof beam. Meanwhile, Gablach herself joined the fighting and single-handedly killed Fuither. (Gwynn vol. 3)

**Garravogue** Creator goddesses are often dismembered, their body parts forming land, sea, and sky. In County Meath, this hag broke her communion fast by eating blackberries. She turned into a monster that afflicted the area until Saint Patrick threw his staff at her, breaking her into pieces that became water, earth, and sky. In Sligo, an identically-named witch fell into a river, which thereafter bore her name. As the same story is told of the drowned girl Gile, hag and maiden may have been aspects of the same divine figure. (MacNeill)

**Glaistig** Scottish goddess of the hunt, the Glaistig could smile on hunters, but she would hide her wildlife if they were careless enough to kill a doe. A loud-voiced thin woman with grayish skin and blonde hair, she came near human dwellings with cows but avoided dogs. She was called Luideag, “little shaggy woman,” for she had a mop of shaggy hair. A similar spirit, the Grugach, tended cattle and was honored with libations at stones. (Carmichael; Davidson and Chaudhri; MacGregor; McNeill)

**Glas Ghaibhleann** This goddess, who never appeared in human form, is found in oral rather than written literature. But her widespread importance is clear from the frequency with which her name is found on the Irish landscape, indicating places she passed in mythic time. One milking of this cosmic cow fed multitudes; her rich milk made copious butter. The Glas was connected with rivers, many of which were envisioned to be cow goddesses (see **Bóand**). She appeared with **Brigit**, whose cow filled the abbey’s storehouses with butter. This connection of Glas and Brigit extended to Britain, where she was known as the Dun Cow.

Many legends center on greedy people who wished to steal the Glas for their exclusive enrichment, from whom she invariably escaped. In one story, the Glas was confined in a narrow valley, but she levitated into the sky. Since that time, there has been no free milk in Ireland. Other legends claim that a wicked woman tried to milk the Glas into a sieve, and the great cow disappeared from earth. Another relates how someone tried to milk the Glas into an unfillable hole. When she could not fill the cavity, the cow disappeared.

Galvin, a magical smith, took care of the cow, his enchanted sister. But monstrous king Balor coveted the Glas. A man named Cian guarded the cow while Galvin worked at his forge. When Cian fell asleep, Balor loaded the Glas onto a boat. Cian, threatened with death unless the cow was returned, made his way there and spied Balor’s fair daughter **Eithne**, trapped in a tower because of a prophecy that her child would kill Balor. Cian disguised himself as a woman and sneaked into Eithne’s lodgings, where they conceived the hero Lugh. After his affair with Eithne (a title of **Bóand**), Cian brought the Glas safely back to the smith. (Colum; Curtin 1894; Gregory 1905; Hull 1928; MacNeill; Westropp)

**Gobnait** A Christian shrine in the small town of Balleyvourey in County Cork shows a **Sheela na Gig** whose image has been rubbed smooth in the genital area, which is believed to bring good luck and abundance. The resident spirit of the shrine is said to be Saint Gobnait, a Christianized version of a goddess who formed a trinity with **Crob Derg** (or Lasair) and **Latiaran**. Alternatively, the third sister is said to be not Gobnait

but Inghean Bhuidhe, an obscure figure honored in early spring. Gobnait's feast in early February suggests that she was the first of a triad of seasonal goddesses, for her sisters are also linked to significant dates in the agricultural calendar. Her emblem is the bee, who warned her against approaching danger. (Straffon, Kelly)

**Gráinne** The aging hero Fionn mac Cumhaill staged a footrace, inviting all of Ireland's eligible women to run up Slievenamon ("mountain of the women") with himself as the prize. When the race began, the princess Gráinne took the lead and held it. The wedding was soon held, but before the celebration ended, Gráinne lost interest in her aging husband. Surrounded by his band of warriors, the Fianna, she saw the fair Diarmait.

Diarmait was unwilling to elope with his king's wife, but Gráinne knew he was under a vow never to refuse a woman who came to him neither clothed nor unclothed, neither afoot nor on horseback, neither in daylight nor at dark. She came to him veiled in mountain mist, mounted on a goat, at sunset, and forced him to run away with her. (Some tales say Gráinne drugged the court, including her husband, while she convinced Diarmait to elope.) The couple slept separately, for Diarmait feared Fionn's wrath. Again, Gráinne prevailed, for after a narrow escape from a monster, she mentioned how nice it was that someone found her desirable. Shamed, Diarmait joined Gráinne in her tent.

Fionn tracked the couple, accompanied by his army, but the lovers stayed ahead of him. They never slept two nights in one place or ate a cooked supper; they never slept in a cave with one entrance, nor landed on an island with one approach. Finally, exhausted, they took refuge with the giant Sharvon the Surly, who allowed them to hide in his magical rowan tree. Sharvon warned them to leave the berries alone, but the hungry Gráinne could not resist. Diarmait killed Sharvon, whose dying screams were heard by the pursuing Fionn.

Diarmait and Gráinne hid in the tree, but Fionn suspected their location. He began to play a board game against Diarmait's friend, the bard Oisín. Unable to resist suggesting the next move, Diarmait dropped berries onto the board, revealing himself. So the pursuit began again, until the god of poetry, Aongus, pleaded the lovers' case. The jilted husband gave up his pursuit, and the couple retired to Gráinne's rath.

Fionn had his revenge years later: when Diarmait lay dying from a magical wound and begged Fionn to bring him water, the old man did so, then let it trickle away as the dying Diarmait watched. Gráinne's daughter **Eachtach** begged for her father's life, but Fionn ignored her. (Bourke et al.; Cross and Slover; Colum; Crossley-Holland; Dillon 1968; Gregory 1905; Hull 1906; Joyce; MacCulloch 1911; Slavin; Squire)

**Latiaran** A monument in the tiny town of Cullen in County Cork is dedicated to Latiaran: a standing stone in the shape of a heart, near a holy well dedicated to this holy woman elsewhere unknown. Local legend describes Latiaran as a woman of such modesty that, when she was carrying boulders (or hot coals) in her apron and a blacksmith complimented the shapeliness of her ankles, she dropped her apron. The standing stone fell out of it, wedging itself upright in the ground, and Latiaran disappeared

beneath it. The stone, called Latiaran's Heart, can be seen in a patch of grass near the graveyard in Cullen.

This curious tale hides an ancient goddess converted into a saint, for the motif of rocks falling from the apron is otherwise found in tales of the world-creating **Cail-leach**. That Latiaran was a fire goddess is suggested by the hot coals she carried, as well as the names of her two sisters: Lasair ("flame") and Inghean Bhuidhe ("yellow-haired girl"). Conversely, or additionally, the trinity may have been seasonal divinities, for they each ruled a different part of the growing seasons: Lasair, the first of spring; Inghean Bhuidhe, the beginning of summer; and Latiaran, the harvest time, connected with that season by the local tradition that women should curtsy to Latiaran's Heart as they passed during harvest and by the marking of Latiaran's feast day near the old Celtic festival of Lughnasa. Latiaran Sunday is held on or just before July 25, her feast day. It was the first day for eating potatoes in that region, and the weather was reputed always to be fine.

Latiaran, whose name is found nowhere else but in Cullen, has been interpreted as a corrupted diminutive form (Laisrian) of Lasair. Both may be variants of the great figure of **Brigit**, who, like Latiaran, was said to have carried hot coals, in Brigit's case in the town of Ardagh where she dropped them at "the little church of Lasair." As Brigit was a goddess connected with fire, it is possible that Lasair and Latiaran were originally titles or local names for her. (MacNeill; Ó hógáin 1985)

**Leanan Sidhe** A beautiful Otherworld woman who stole young men for her pleasure, the Leanan Sidhe first appeared in erotic dreams, then in the earthly world to lead the victim away to her fairy palace. There the lovers danced to unforgettable fairy tunes, ate food more delicious than any known on earth, and drank delectable wine that never made one drunk. They made love until the fairy grew tired of the man, whereupon he awakened on earth, where he swiftly declined and died. Should a man live through his return, food had no taste, music no melody. (Briggs 1967; Jackson; Wallace; Wilde)

**Líadan** The legendary poet Líadan was born in the province connected with women and song, Munster. As she matured into her craft, she set off on the traditional "poet's circuit" of the land, walking from place to place composing poetry, always keeping her left shoulder to the sea. On her travels, she met another poet, Cuirithir, who fell in love with talented Líadan. But she refused to interrupt her travels for him, although she invited him to visit her upon her return to County Kerry.

She finished her circuit, but Cuirithir did not come to visit. So Líadan decided that life as a nun would provide her with the economic support that she needed to sustain her art. She soon regretted her decision, finding convent life limiting. Then she heard that Cuirithir had become a priest. Confessing her love for Cuirithir to her own priest, she was surprised to hear him suggest that the appropriate next step was for them to share quarters, sleeping together but not making love. Líadan followed this advice, but the two were tormented by the experience. Cuirithir went into exile, dying soon after, and Líadan then died of grief. The story, although Christian, has many Celtic echoes, including the position of women as poets and the testing of the virtue of the

lovers (also found in the stories of **Gráinne** and **Guinevere**) by having them sleep together without giving in to their passion. (Bourke et al.; O’Faoláin)

**Lí Ban** Her name means “finest of women,” and she was daughter of the king of Tara (and possibly of **Étain**). When someone forgot to put the cover over a sacred well that overflowed to flood the land, Lí Ban’s family was killed. She alone was spared, and thereafter she lived beneath the water in a small bubble, with her lapdog for company. As she watched salmon sport, Lí Ban wished to become one of them. Her wish was granted when she turned into a mermaid. Her dog was changed into an otter.

They lived for 300 years, during which time Christianity arrived. Monks caught the mermaid and baptized her Murgan, “sea-born,” whereupon she died and was declared a saint. This belated conversion hides a water goddess who may be the same as the fairy queen who ruled Mag Mell (“the honeyed plain”) of fairyland. (Bourke et al.; Brenneman 1989; Joyce; Markale 2000)

**Lífe** Transmuted into “Ana Livia” by James Joyce in *Finnegans Wake*, this goddess originally bore the name of her river, the Liffey, or vice versa. Ireland’s place-poetry describes Lífe as a kindly, hardworking peasant woman who died giving birth, after which her husband died of grief. Another story describes Lífe as a woman of the Picts, a non-Celtic group who lived in Ireland and Scotland, who called the river’s plain the most beautiful place she had ever seen, whereupon her husband named the river for her. (Gwynn vol. 2)

**Macha** Three goddesses bear this name; it is unclear if or how they are related. The first was the wife of Nemed, an early settler, in whose honor the first plains were cleared for agriculture. This first Macha died when she foresaw how war would afflict her land. The second and most famous Macha was a woman of the divine tribe of **Danu** who came to live with a farmer, Crunniuc, creating bountiful harvests and becoming pregnant by him. Macha demanded that Crunniuc never brag about her. He followed her rule until, while drunk at court, he boasted that she could outrun the king’s horses.

The king demanded to see this prodigy. Heavily pregnant, Macha begged for mercy, but the king would not listen. So the goddess set off against the king’s team, beating the horses but collapsing at the finish line. The exertion brought on labor, and Macha died giving birth to twins, a girl named Fial and a boy named Fail. As she died, she cursed the men of Ulster to suffer labor pains whenever an enemy threatened the land. The curse figures into the Irish epic the *Táin bó Cuailgne*, in which **Medb** invaded Macha’s land of Ulster.

The third Macha was a warrior whose father made a compact with two other kings, Dithorba and Cimbaeth, to share rulership of the land, each reigning for seven years. When her father died, Macha attempted to take his place, but her co-rulers objected. Macha killed Dithorba in battle. When Dithorba’s sons escaped, she pursued them, disguised as a hag whom they attempted to rape. She overcame them and marched them back to the hill at Emain Macha, where she made them dig the massive earthworks known as Navan Fort in County Armagh (*ard Macha*, “heights of Macha”). The site

includes a large artificial mound, several sacred wells, a racecourse, and other ritual sites, and it figures importantly in myth. Macha's connection with Ulster leads some to argue that she was goddess of the region's sovereignty. Others interpret Macha as a pre-Celtic goddess who survived the arrival of the Celts. (Benigni; Cross and Slover; Dexter 1980; Hull 1898; Gantz 1984; Green 1995; Gwynn vol. 4; Kinsella; Koch; MacNeill; Raftery; Squire)

**Mairenn** This queen was never seen without a golden headdress that the king's other wife, Mugain, suspected hid baldness. So Mugain bribed a jester to pull off Mairenn's headdress. As her headdress tumbled to the ground, Mairenn magically grew a full head of golden hair. Because of her ill will, Mugain was forced to bear a sheep and a salmon before she could give birth to a human child. (MacNeil)

**Máirín Rua** An Irishwoman was visited three times by an old hag, each time while she was pregnant. Twice the woman was kindly, and twice the hag blessed the child, who was born pretty and charming. But the last time, the woman was in a surly mood and cursed the hag, whereupon the hag cursed her back. The child was born with bright red hair and a little beard, and she was named Máirín Rua, Maureen the Red.

She was so ugly that her parents made a household servant out of her, requiring her to wash and clean and to stay out of sight. But the old traveling woman had predicted that if anyone loved Máirín Rua for herself, she would become beautiful. When her father died and left the family destitute, the other girls—spoiled as they were for their prettiness—could not cope with poverty. Each of the girls was sent, in turn, to find her fortune in the world. Each time, the mother asked if she wanted a cake with lots of flour, or her mother's blessing. The first two girls demanded the cake, but Máirín Rua alone asked for the blessing.

After many adventures, the girls found themselves together in a castle, where without Máirín Rua's cleverness, they would have been killed by a giant. When they finally found their way to the king's court, two of the king's sons fell in love with the beautiful sisters, but the third could not love Máirín Rua because of her red beard. He set three tasks for Máirín Rua: to get the giant's magic cloak, his sword of light, and his bag of gold. She did so, and the prince was delighted with her courage. He married Máirín Rua, who thereafter became more beautiful than both her sisters combined. Many motifs in the story recall tales of the **Cailleach**, who grows young when loved (see also British **Loathy Lady**), suggesting that behind this whimsical tale rests an old goddess myth. (Danaher 1967)

**Maoin** When her family demanded she marry a man she did not love, Maoin flew away to a magical rock near Duhallow, County Cork. There, she disappeared, leaving behind her handprint, still visible, to show where she had passed. In another version of the story, a fairy lover stole Maoin from her wedding, taking her to the Otherworld through the rock in question. For centuries, girls visited Maoin's rock on the harvest feast of Lughnasa to deck it with flowers. Maoin may have been an ancestral earth goddess. (MacNeill)



**Medb.** *This terracotta frieze from Italy shows a Celtic woman in battle. Roman sources describe women fighting alongside male soldiers in Celtic armies; in Irish legend, the goddess/queen Medb led her armies into battle, directing the action from her chariot. The piece can be seen in the Museo Civico Archeologico in Bologna.*

**Medb** Although she appears in myth and literature as a queen, Medb was originally goddess of the land's sovereignty. She was first associated with the central region, specifically with the hill of Tara, where she was Medb Lethderg, "Medb Red-Sides," who married nine consecutive kings. She may derive from the same source as **Étain**, as their myths overlap significantly. Medb was born of Étain's handmaiden Crochan, who admired the cave where she gave birth so much that Étain made a present of it. Above it, Medb built her great capital, Crúachan. More than 70 ritual and royal sites of the Celtic Iron Age are still visible, including the hillfort on which kings were inaugurated.

Medb's name means "mead" or "intoxication," which may refer either to the cup she offered the king at his inauguration, the intoxication of battle, or both. Medb was fiery and self-willed, sleeping with whomever she chose and never without "one man in the shadow of another." She kept Ailill mac Mata as consort, but her favored lover was the massively-endowed Fergus. Fergus traveled with her in Medb's cattle raid, which began when Ailill claimed to own more than Medb, a claim that impacted Medb's social status. When she found that Ailill had in his herds a white bull she could not match, Medb set out to find its equal. The only possibility grazed on the lands of King Dáire.

Medb tried to coax Dáire to loan her the bull. But Dáire overheard Medb's warriors boasting that they intended to take the bull no matter what he said. Insulted, Dáire prepared for war. Medb marshaled her armies, taking advantage of the curse that left the province's men defenseless (see **Macha**). Medb set out in an open cart, dressed in royal finery. Ignoring the warning of the prophet **Fedelm**, Medb moved her armies north.

But Medb did not expect Cúchulainn, who single-handedly defended Ulster. While he fought, Medb kidnapped the bull. But the Ulstermen roused to fight off Medb's army, driving them back to her lands. The two bulls also fought, killing each other. Without the white bull, Ailill's possessions matched Medb's, making her again equal to her husband.

Medb met her end on an island sacred to her. There bubbled a well in which Medb bathed each morning, strengthening her power. But her nephew Furbaide Ferbend could not forgive Medb for killing his mother **Clothra**. Although the island was far

from shore, he practiced hurling stones from a slingshot until he was sure of his aim, then flung a ball of dried brains across the water. Medb was buried in the great tumulus of Knocknarea above the town of Sligo. (Bourke et al.; Brenneman 1989; Clark; Colum; Dexter 1990, 1998; Ellis 1995; Green 1995, 1993; Gwynn vol. 4; Hull 1898; Kinsella; MacAnna; MacCulloch 1911; Powell; Rees and Rees; Slavin)

**Milucra** Sister of the lusty goddess **Áine**, Milucra became infatuated with the hero Fionn mac Cumhaill. But her sister had spied the man first, and Milucra knew she would have to outwit Áine to gain possession of the hero. So she enchanted a lake that would turn the hair of any swimmer gray, because Áine had sworn never to sleep with a gray-haired man, then lured Fionn there. Meeting the fair Milucra, who claimed she had dropped her golden ring into the water, Fionn swam out to retrieve it. When he returned, his hair had turned silver-white. But the effects of the magic were stronger than Milucra intended. Fionn was stooped with age, much to the consternation of his band of warriors, the Fianna, who captured Milucra and forced her to undo the magic and restore Fionn's youth. His hair, however, stayed silver. (Gregory 1905; Joyce)

**Mis** When the young woman Mis found her father's body after a battle, she lost her wits and drank his blood. Thereafter, she wandered through the mountains, killing animals for food with her bare hands. Mis lived without human contact until a harper attracted her with music. Coming to his camp, she spoke her first human words since her father's death. Mis went to live with her harper. But he was killed in battle as her father had been. This time, she did not go mad, but became a poet. (Bourke et al.; Ellis 1995; Gwynn vol. 3)

**Mongfhinn** High King Niall was the son of the British princess Cairenn, enslaved by the king of Tara. The king's first wife, Mongfhinn, forced Cairenn to give birth in the open air. Samhain (November 1) was called the Festival of Mongfhinn, for she killed herself that night; women then evoked her. She may have once been an important goddess, for her name includes the divine syllable *fionn*, "light." (Cross and Slover; Koch)

**Mór** Many earth goddesses bear the name Mór ("great one"), including Mór Muman, "great one of Munster." Like other territorial goddesses, Mór was demoted to a mortal woman, one who settled with her husband on a promontory where they lived by scavenging. One day, Mór climbed to the top of the mountain and urinated, forming ravines from the plentitude of her water. Mór's happiness ended when her sons left to become sailors. As she worried over their fate, her temper grew so bad that her husband left her, settling far away. (Curtin 1894; MacNeill; McKay 1969; Rees and Rees)

**Mórrígan** One of Ireland's most important goddesses was a winged shape-shifter called Mórrígan, a member of the divine Tuatha Dé Danann (see **Danu**). She appeared in many forms: a white cow with red ears; a giant woman washing clothing near a battlefield; a crow or raven; an eel; and a gray-red wolf. This shape-shifting connects her with druids, magician-bards who could change appearance at will. Legends show

her in that role, singing songs that brought her people victory, casting oracles, and foretelling the future.

She assumed bird form to swoop over battlefields, devouring bodies. The Mórrígan was associated with the other goddesses of battle, **Badb**, **Nemain**, and **Macha**. Together, they comprise the “three Morrigna”; in some texts, Mórrígan substitutes for one of the other goddesses. The Mórrígan’s appetite for bodies included living ones; she had an immense desire for sex. She had intercourse with a god who came upon her while she was straddling a river and fell upon her lustfully. Desiring a human hero, she ambushed him; when he rejected her, she turned upon him and was injured in their fight. Later, Mórrígan protected the same hero in battle, appearing to him in various guises as he held off an invading army. When he went forth to his death, she attempted, unsuccessfully, to stop him.

Some translate Mórrígan’s name as “Phantom Queen,” others as “Death Queen,” while still others derive it from a presumed early Indo-European goddess \*Rigatona, “great queen.” The derivation of her name from the word for “sea” is generally rejected. Rather, she is a land goddess, for like other goddesses of sovereignty, she appeared as a hag who could transform herself into a young maiden. (Billington and Green; Bourke et al.; Clark; Cross and Slover; Cunliffe; Dexter 1990; Green 1986, 1995; Gregory 1905; Hull 1898; Kinsella; Koch; MacCulloch 1996; Squire)

**Muilearach** A seafaring one-eyed hag with a blue-gray face and sharp protruding teeth was known throughout the Scottish Highlands as well as in the islands of Lewis and Harris and in the southern Hebrides. An ancestral goddess, Muilearach lived underwater, healing people with a pot of balm that could also make the healthy grow ill. She had one fast-moving eye and a full head of gray-and-black hair. As Muireartach, the same figure appears in Ireland as a one-eyed hag who lived with a magical smith beneath the ocean waves and caused shipwrecks in order to plunder their treasure. (Campbell 1862; MacCulloch 1911)

**Murna** Although she makes only brief appearances in Irish mythology, Murna is important as mother of the hero Fionn mac Cumhaill. Kidnapped by Fionn’s father after her father rejected his proposal of marriage, Murna was widowed within nine hours of conceiving her son and brought him up with the help of amazonian aunts. (Cross and Slover; Gregory 1905; Gwynn vol. 2; Rolleston)

**Nás** This obscure Irish goddess had little myth attached to her, but she remains familiar in Ireland today because Naas, a prosperous town near Dublin, bears her name. She died there, and her husband organized a great assembly at the ritual site of Teltown in her honor, an assembly usually said to be in honor of the goddess **Tailte**. (Gwynn vol. 3; MacNeill; Rees and Rees)

**Nemain** The least known of Ireland’s war goddesses, Nemain formed a trinity with **Badb** and Mórrígan. Nemain’s name describes her role as rouser of battle-panic; she drove warriors insane so that they mistook friends for enemies. Like other war goddesses, she appeared as a crow, waiting to eat carrion. Her name connects with the

Celtic word for an outdoor shrine, *nemeton*. She may represent the duty of warriors to protect sacred sites. (Koch; MacAnna; MacCulloch 1911)

**Nessa** Her name was Assa, “gentle one,” when this princess of Ulster first drew the eye of the lustful druid Cathbad. To gain access to the young scholar, Cathbad had her 12 tutors slaughtered. But Assa gathered a company to seek vengeance. She changed her name to Nessa, “ungentle,” and battled anyone who did wrong. But she could not find who had killed her tutors.

Cathbad had not stopped lusting after her. One day, when she was bathing in a pool deep in the woods, the druid assaulted Nessa. Naked and unarmed, the girl saved her life by giving in to Cathbad’s demands. He kept her as a hostage, during which time her son Concobar was conceived. He never bore Cathbad’s name but was instead called mac Nessa (“son of Nessa”). The name was appropriate because Concobar was not Cathbad’s son. Finding two worms in a pail of water, Nessa realized that if she drank them, she would conceive. She did so, and her child was born clutching a worm as proof that Cathbad had no part in his conception. After Cathbad’s death, Nessa married the king of Ulster, who died. Fergus assumed the throne and courted her. She agreed to wed, then tricked Fergus into giving up his throne for her son. (Cross and Slover; Hull 1898; Kinsella; Koch; Rolleston)

**Niamh** The most renowned queen of fairyland, Niamh of the Golden Hair was irresistible to human men. Her favorite was the bard Oisín, son of **Sadb**. They lived happily on her magical island Tír Tairnigiri (“land of promise”) until Oisín, who was homesick, begged to return to Ireland. Niamh loaned him her horse, warning that he must beware of touching the ground. But Oisín fell and, instantly, the years he had lived in fairyland came upon him. He grew old and died, turning to dust and blowing away. Some legends give Niamh a daughter, Plur na mBan, “flower of womanhood.” (Cross and Slover; Graves; Gregory 1905; Joyce; Squire)

**Nothain** Like other madwomen of Irish legend (see **Mis**), Nothain was driven mad by war. She was no innocent bystander, for Nothain was a warrior, well used to the bloodshed of war. But when an attack left most of her family dead, Nothain buckled from the strain. She lost her wits and began wandering the countryside, becoming shaggy and wild. Her father, who had survived the assault, searched for a year before he found her, speechless with grief. After a night spent in his comforting presence, she finally spoke, only to ask if anyone else still lived. Hearing that only her father remained, Nothain died of sorrow. (Gwynn vol. 4)

**Odras** Originally, she may have been the tutelary goddess of the lake that bears her name, but she comes into Irish place-poetry as a bold young girl who challenged the phantom queen **Mórrígan** for possession of a cow. When Mórrígan stole Odras’s cow to mate with her best bull, Odras refused to accept the robbery and traveled to Mórrígan’s magical cave of Oweynagat to demand restitution. Instead, she was turned into a small lake in County Roscommon. (Gwynn vol. 4; MacCulloch 1996)

**Relbeo** This minor character plays a significant role in the mythic invasions of Ireland. The daughter of a Greek king and a practitioner of the druidic arts, she was sent to spy upon the monstrous Fomorians. She became the lover of their king, who confided his battle plans to her. Through Relbeo's efforts, her people, the mythic Nemedians, gained control over Ireland. (Cross and Slover)

**Ruad** In County Sligo, a magnificent waterfall at Asseroe (Ess Ruad), flooded by a hydroelectric project in the mid-20th century, was named for this Otherworldly maiden. She traveled to this world in a bronze boat with tin sails, intending to seduce a human lover. But once in our world, she heard the sound of mermaids singing and, overcome with passion, leapt into the waterfall. (Gwynn vol. 4)

**Sadb** Bewitched by her father's enemy, Sadb was turned into a deer. In this enchantment, she visited the dreams of Fionn mac Cumhaill, who fell in love with her. These dreams were astonishingly lifelike, for she made love with Fionn and soon was pregnant with his child. Her father's enemy discovered that Sadb had learned to contact others through dreams. So the druid cast another spell, trapping Sabd in her doeskin. When her son was born, Sabd could not resist a flick of her tongue over his fine brow. A tuft of deer hair sprang forth, for which the boy was named Oisín, "little fawn." Some legends say that Sadb died of shame after discovering how cruel her lover, Fionn, was in battle. (Almqvist; Gregory 1905; MacCulloch 1996; Rolleston; Squire)

**Sampait** Ireland's place-poetry tells the story of this strong woman who, tending her flocks on day, was assaulted by a nobleman named Crechmael who attempted to rape her. But she trussed him up like a pig for slaughter and killed him by strangling him or smashing his skull. (Gwynn vol. 4)

**Scáthách** On Scotland's Isle of Skye lived Scáthách ("shadowy one"), head of a martial arts academy where she made heroes out of warriors. The exact location of her school was secret, and access was limited to those who could leap across a chasm called the Bridge of the Cliff. Once in Scáthách's domain, the student hero learned secrets such as the thunder-feat, the hero's call, and use of the magical Gae Bolga. Scáthach not only taught her students, but also foretold their futures. But she refused to tell the future of Cúchulainn, for she knew he would have a son by her daughter **Aífe** and kill him. Cúchulainn tried to win ownership of Scáthach's island from her. After days of combat, they sat down and together ate hazelnuts of wisdom, which caused Cúchulainn to realize he could never beat the warrior woman. (Gregory 1905; Hull 1898; Kinsella; MacCulloch 1911, 1996)

**Scota** The people of Ireland were once called "Scoti" or "Scots," a name that followed them to the land previously known as Caledonia, which then became Scotland. This ancestral mother goddess appears in several Irish texts as an early resident of Ireland. In the *Lebor Gabála*, which combines Irish myth with Biblical lore, she was called a Pharaoh's daughter. (Squire)

**Sheela na Gig** Smiling lewdly from rock carvings, the Sheela na Gig's skeletal face rises above huge buttocks, full breasts, bent knees, and a vagina held open by stony hands. The stones have in many cases been incorporated into Christian churches, usually over the entrance, although some are found in castles, mills, and other buildings. Her name has been translated as "hag," as "the holy lady," and as a vulgar word for female genitalia. In a few areas, scrapings were taken from the Sheela's vulva to promote fertility. In other places, touching the Sheela enhanced the likelihood of healthy childbearing (see **Gobnait**).

The figures first drew attention in the 19th century. The prudery of the era resulted in the figures being misidentified (as a male fool holding his heart open) or misinterpreted (as dirty jokes). In the early 20th century, researchers described the figures as warnings against expressions of women's sexuality. Today, the figures are generally believed pagan, a goddess brought in to churches to co-opt the devotion of her followers. But some scholars date the Sheelas to the 12th century and argue they are Christian. More recently, connections have been drawn with folklore concerning a hag descended from a goddess of the land. Additionally, Celtic sources that describe the evil-warding power of women's genital display suggest a source earlier than the Christian era. Thus, the source and meaning of the Sheela is far from settled.

Several dozen Sheela figures can be seen in situ in Britain and Ireland, while others have been moved to museums. There is evidence that hundreds more once existed and were destroyed, either through prudery or a need to use the stone elsewhere. Whether the Sheela na Gig is a Celtic figure, a remnant of the pre-Celtic past, or an apotropaic sculpture meant to represent a Christian conception of the impurity of the female flesh is debated. The Sheela na Gig has been used in recent times as an image of women's power by feminist artists. (Anderson; Concannon; McMahon and Roberts; Sheehan)

**Silkie** Two figures bear this name in Scotland. One was a household guardian named for her silken clothing. At night, she sneaked into houses and cleaned whatever was left in disorder. If she found nothing to clean, she messed up the rooms. A better-known figure was the seal woman who could be captured and brought into human society. It was imperative to keep her sealskin cloak hidden, for if the Silkie found it, she left behind children and home. The name has been connected to fairy folk called Silly Witches, who may in turn be connected with a harvest goddess, Sele.

On the Orkney Isles, people with webbing between toes or fingers were descendents of Brita (or Ursilla), who grew bored with her human mate and made off with a virile male seal. This is an unusual motif, for typically the ancestral mother was a seal. Brita's children's webbed feet and hands had to be clipped into fingers and toes. In the Hebrides, the descendents of seal women are called MacCondrum and MacPhees; while in Ireland, Coneely, MacNamara, O'Flaherty, and O'Sullivan (and sometimes Lee) indicate descent from seal women. (MacGregor)

**Sín** Although a fairy woman, Sín had the powers of a goddess, for she was able to change water into wine and leaves into pigs, in order to feed battalions of warriors that she conjured from thin air. When king Muirchertach mac Erc killed her family, she appeared to him as a beautiful seductive woman, then drove him mad and killed him,

revealing her identity just before he died. (Bourke et al.; Cross and Slover; Ellis 1988; Markale 2000; Rees and Rees)

**Sínann** The granddaughter of a sea god, Sínann was warned that she should not approach the well wherein wisdom was hidden. But Sínann ignored the prohibition. She caught the salmon of wisdom and, eating its flesh, became the wisest being on earth; or perhaps she merely approached the well. In either case, the well burst out, drowning Sínann as it carried her to sea. Thereafter, the well never returned to its limiting confines. Although often interpreted as a cautionary tale, warning women against seeking wisdom, Sínann’s story can be seen as a creation myth in which she sacrifices herself to provide the land’s fertility. (Gwynn vol. 3; MacCulloch 1911; Rolleston; Squire)

**Tailte** The Irish midsummer games were dedicated to this goddess of the Fir Bolg, a group that may represent the pre-Celtic Irish. She was married to the last king of that race, Eochaid mac Eirc, an ideal ruler during whose reign the land bore abundant crops under fair skies. But when Eochaid was killed, Tailte married a man with a similar name, Eochaid Garbh, from the army that had killed her husband. Tailte traveled to the island’s center and began to clear fields for planting, but died from the exertion. As she died, Tailte asked for a funeral with horse racing and games. Her foster son Lugh established the August festival of Lughnasa, when the Tailtean Games were celebrated. They took place through medieval times. A smaller-scale festival was held through the 19th century. (Cross and Slover; Gwynn vol. 4; Koch; MacNeill; Westropp 1920)

**Téa** Little is known of the goddess who gave her name to the royal hill of Tara, except that its earthen walls were built at her request and that she died there. Called “never unjust,” she was one of Tara’s early queens. Another little-known figure connected with the site was Tephi, a “daughter of Pharaoh” who laid the framework of the first buildings with her staff; she is sometimes considered to be the source of Tara’s name and is said to be buried there. Yet other theories hold that a woman named Temair (“Tara” in Irish) died tragically on the hill. (Gwynn vol. 1; Koch; Rees and Rees; Slavin)

**Tlachtga** Tlachtga was a magician who traveled to Italy to learn to build a flying wheel from Simon Magus. His three sons tracked her to Ireland and raped her on the hill that bears her name. Impregnated with triplets, Tlachtga died on the hill and was buried there. A festival was organized in her honor and held every year thereafter. Now obscure, Tlachtga was once so significant that her hill was the site of the important festival of Samhain. Now called the Hill of Ward, Tlachtga is covered with most impressive earthworks. Although archaeologists have paid little attention to Tlachtga’s hill, it once held great significance. (Gilroy; Gwynn vol. 4; Raftery; Rees and Rees)

**Tuag** In Ireland, drowned young women became the great rivers and lakes of the land (see **Bóand, Sínann, Erne, Lí Ban**). Such was the case with Tuag, who was courted by

the god of the sea. Manannán mac Lir sent his bard into Tuag's palace, to sing her into a dreamless sleep and carry her away. But the bard was a dwarf, and carrying the young woman exhausted him, so he set her down while he rested. The waters of the Bann river rose up and drowned her. Its estuary, Tuag Inber, still bears her name; one of the three great waves of Ireland was said to strike its shores. (Gwynn vol. 4)

**Uirne** A jealous fairy woman, Uchtdealb of the Fair Breast, cast a spell on Uirne, turning her into a dog. She was pregnant when it happened, so her twin boys were born as puppies. The spell dissolved at that point for Uirne, but her children remained dogs. She put them into the care of her brother (or nephew), the hero Fionn mac Cumhaill, and they became his boon companions. (Gregory 1905; Rolleston)

**Úna** The cairn-capped hill of Knockshegowna rises above the fertile plains of County Tipperary. There, beautiful Úna lived in a magnificent palace. Once, annoyed by a drunken piper, Úna turned herself into a calf. With the piper clinging to her back, she ran to the shores of the Shannon River. When the piper appeared undismayed by his calf-assisted flight, Úna returned him to the place from which she had stolen him. (Logan 1981; Squire)



**Sulis.** In the restored Roman Baths in the English town of Bath, visitors can see the golden head of the goddess of the healing springs, unearthed in 1727. Called "Minerva" by the Romans, the goddess was known as Sulis ("sun") by the Celtic people of the area. The springs silted up and were lost for many centuries but now have been fully excavated and receive many visitors annually.

## BRITISH AND MANX PANTHEON

Ablion. *See Albina*

Agrona *British; war.*

Alba. *See Albina*

**Albina**

Andate. *See Andraste*

**Andraste**

**Arnemetia**

Arnometia. *See Arnemetia*

**Belisama**

Berrey Dhone *Manx; mountains.*

Black Agnes. *See Black Annis*

**Black Annis**

**Brigantia**

Brown Berry. *See Berrey Dhone*

Caillagh ny Groamagh *Manx; weather.*

**Coventina**

**Cuda**

Dame Goode Eve. *See Godiva*

**Deae Matres**

**Dea Nutrix**

Dee *British; rivers.*

Dun Cow *British; abundance.*

**Gillian**

Godgifu. *See Godiva*

**Godiva**

Grimes Grave Goddess. *See Albina*

Henwen *British; abundance.*

Jenny Greenteeth. *See Peg O'Nell*

Lady Godiva. *See Godiva*

Maid Marian. *See Marian*

**Marian**

**Natosuelta**

**Peg O'Nell**

Peg Powler. *See Peg O'Nell*

Sabraan *British; earth.*

**Sabrina**

Satiada *British; grief.*

Senua *British; water.*

Sillina *British; sea, sun.*

**Sul**

Sulis. *See Sul*

Triduana *British; maidenhood.*

Verbeia *River Wharfe.*

White Goddess. *See Albina*

**Albina** The Roman author Pliny offers this name as the chief goddess of Britain. The later British historian Holinshed described Albina as a princess who landed on the island with 50 fugitive women who had killed their husbands. (For a similar story, see the Irish **Cesair**.) Albina's name has been translated as "white," which may refer to the chalky soil of southern Britain. It has also been connected to an ancient word for "high" (as in "Alps"). A famous, though controversial, statue may represent Albina. Grimes Grave Goddess, a rotund leering figure carved from white chalk, has been variously interpreted as a British **Sheela na Gig** and as an archaeological fraud.

English poet Robert Graves extrapolated from the Celtic connection of "whiteness" (more accurately, "radiance") and divinity to create the concept of the White Goddess, a triple divinity of love and death whom he found throughout British antiquity and arts. Although it has had impact on popular understanding of goddesses, Graves's theory is more poetic than scholarly. (Bord; Graves)

**Andraste** The battle-queen Boudicca of the Iceni invoked this goddess, "invincibility," before her battle with the Roman legions, then released a hare in Andraste's honor. Although Boudicca failed to drive out the invaders and killed herself rather than submit to rape and torture, she remains a symbol of the island's sovereignty. (Green 1986, 1995; Koch; MacCulloch 1911)

**Arnemetia** The Celtic word *nemeton* meant "sacred place," and this goddess's name has been translated as "in front of the sacred place." Her shrine at Buxton Spa boasts two mineral springs the Romans called *Aquae Arnemetiae*, "waters of Arnemetia." An excavation of her shrine in 1975 brought forth 232 coins and two bronze bracelets. Arnemetia became Saint Anne after Christianization, and her shrine was renamed St. Anne's Well. (Clarke; Green 1986)

**Belisama** Celtic divinities tended to be strictly local, so finding the same goddess name in several sites is notable. Such is the case with Belisama ("brightness" or "shining"), found in both Britain and on the continent. In the former, she was associated with the River Ribble which, according to the Egyptian geographer Ptolemy, once bore her name; a Romano-Celtic statue found there may represent her, while a

murderous folkloric vestige of her is **Peg O’Nell**. On the continent, the Romans renamed her **Minerva Medica**. Some have seen Belisama as a corollary to **Brigit**. (MacCulloch 1911; Spence 1972; Straffon)

**Black Annis** This blue-faced hag crouched in an old pollarded oak growing from a cleft in a rock. Black Annis scratched children to death, then devoured them. Every spring, a dead cat was dragged past Black Annis’s Bower, with a pack of hounds in hot pursuit. Black Annis may have been a weather-witching hag like the **Cailleach**. Whether the origins of Black Annis are Celtic or pre-Celtic is subject to debate. (Campbell 1862; Graves; Spence 1972)

**Brigantia** In Britain, the Brigantes honored an ancestral goddess, Brigantia, whose name hides in the names of the Briant and Brent rivers. She may have been a form of **Brigit**. (Joliffe; Pennick 2000; Squire)

**Coventina** Now hidden in marshes near Hadrian’s Wall, Coventina’s well was once a great healing site. Like other Celtic river goddesses, Coventina ruled the waters and adjacent lands, in her case the Carrawburgh. Sculptures show her as a reclining woman pouring water from an urn. Coventina’s name has also been found in Spain and France, where the titles Augusta (“high”) and Sancta (“holy”) emphasized her importance. (Billington and Green; Green 1995)

**Cuda** A sculpture of this goddess, seated and holding an egg, was found at Daglinworth, near Cirencester, once capital of the Dobunni tribe. Accompanied by three hooded men making offerings to her, Cuda was a goddess of prosperity. (Green 1986)

**Deae Matres** Scholars dispute the cultural source of the multiple goddesses found in the Celtic-Germanic borderlands. These “Divine Mothers” bear a collective Latin name, their original names having been lost. Even in German, they are called by a translation of the Latin name (see Scandinavia, **Matronen**). Many sculptures show two or three goddesses together, seated and holding sacred objects like a sacrificial knife and an offering plate. Although often described as representing the three ages of woman (nubile maiden, fertile mother, aging crone), the Mothers were often depicted as identical, their multiplicity providing a visual intensification or representing collectivity. Seated under an archway, they were depicted wearing round, halolike headdresses. The central goddess was distinguished from the others by standing while they sat, or by sitting while they stood. Variant names of these goddesses are Matres Coccae (British “red-mothers”), Matres Domesticae (British “mothers of the hearth”), Matres Glanicae (from Provence, France); Matronae Aufaniae (from Bonn, Germany), Matronis Assingenehis (from the Rhine Valley), and Matronis Mahlinehis (also from the Rhine Valley). In Britain, one can find similar mother goddesses invoked as Campestrae (“of the fields”), Communes (“living everywhere”), Domesticae (“of the household”), Germaniae (“of the Germans”), **Ollototae**, Omnium Gentium (“of all races”), Parcae (“of fate”), Suleviae (“of the sun”), Tramarinae (“from over the sea”), and Tramarinae Patriae (“from the overseas homeland”).

The connection of the Mothers, who represent the land's fertility, to the singular goddess **Dea Nutrix** ("nourishing goddess") is unclear. The Mothers were occasionally depicted in the form called pseudo-Venus ("false **Venus**; see Rome"), a single voluptuous woman holding symbols of fertility. There is no historical indication of ritual practices connected with these goddesses, who seem to have been absorbed into the Roman religious framework in early imperial times. They were probably ancestral goddesses, rulers of the fruitfulness of humanity as well as that of the earth. (Buchholtz; MacAnna; Straffon)

**Dea Nutrix (Deae Nutrices, plural)** Archaeological excavations in Britain have produced scores of small Roman-era clay statuettes that show a goddess (or three goddesses) holding symbols of earth's fertility and abundance: fruit, eggs, grain, and children. This "nurturing goddess" provided food, both through her own body and through the earth. On the continent, statues of Dea Nutrix have also been found, especially in France and southern Germany, both areas of Celtic influence. Graves and temples are typical locations for these finds, as are sacred springs (including Vichy) into which the images were sacrificially thrown. The connection of this figure with the continental **Deae Matres** is unclear. Both groups are known only by Latin names, their Celtic names having been lost. (Green 1986)

**Gillian** In Britain, this name was associated with mazes of turf, through which spring-time races were run. A young woman was "imprisoned" in the middle of the maze, called a Gillian Bower, then "freed" by a young man. Behind this ritual rests an ancient spring goddess who needed to be released from the grip of winter by heroic human effort. The name Gillian, common in the Middle Ages, came to refer to any flirtatious woman; the word "jilt" derives from her name. (Kraft)

**Godiva** The legend of Lady Godiva incorporates many Celtic mythological motifs. A 12th century woman of Coventry, which celebrated the 900th anniversary of her death in 1967, Godiva was married to Leonfric, Earl of Mercia. While Godiva was renowned for her generosity, Leonfric piled ruinous taxes on his vassals so that peasants starved while the court lived in luxury. Godiva pleaded for mercy and justice, but Leonfric refused her with a joking challenge: if she would ride naked through Coventry, he would lower the taxes. Godiva took up the challenge, asking that townspeople stay indoors and that windows be shrouded with fabric. Only one person ignored her request, and his name, Peeping Tom, lives as a term of approbation. Godiva's bold ride had the desired result. Shamed, Leonfric eased the crippling taxes.

The region around Coventry had been home to the Celtic tribe called the Brigantes, who recognized the horse goddess **Epona**; **Ceridwen** and **Rhiannon** were also connected with white horses. At Southam, a "Godiva festival" took place until the 18th century; it required two seminude women, one wearing white lace and the other black lace, to ride on horseback through the town. The purpose of these festivals was to encourage agricultural abundance. Female nakedness as a Celtic ritual to increase the fertility of the fields is known from classical sources, including the Roman author

Pliny. Thus, the quasi-historical Lady Godiva may have religious antecedents. (Davidson 1978; Graves; MacCulloch 1911; Stephens)

**Marian** The beloved of legendary robber Robin Hood of Sherwood Forest may have descended from an early goddess of fertility and abundance. She appears in significant ways in British folklore, most notably in the Abbot's Bromley festival in early fall. There, "deermen" dance in costumes topped with reindeer horns, while a cross-dressed man called Maid Marian accompanies these fertility images around the town. (Long)

**Natosuelta** Her name points to one interpretation of this goddess's meaning. "Winding river" should be a typical Celtic goddess of the watershed, in her case the river Trent. But images show Natosuelta as a goddess of the household, invoked as "protector of the house." Natosuelta carries a house on a pole, on which a raven (symbol of prosperity) perched; she was depicted holding a cooking pot. She may have represented the prosperity of fertile lands near a river. (Green 1986, 1989; MacAnna)

**Peg O'Nell** Originally, the River Ribble bore the name of **Belisama**. Later folklore created Peg O'Nell, a servant girl who drowned in the river. To punish those who failed to rescue her, Peg returned every seven years on "Peg's Night" to claim a victim, and propitiatory sacrifices of small birds or animals were offered to the river spirit. A similar figure, Jenny Greenteeth, haunted the streams of Lancashire, threatening passersby with death by drowning. Along the river Tees, Peg Powler wandered about on Sundays; those who drowned in the Tees were said to have been "eaten by Peg Powler." All descended from ancient river divinities. (Briggs 1959; MacKinlay)

**Sabrina** Originally the divinity of the Severn River, Sabrina was diminished into the daughter of Estrildis, to whom King Humber took a fancy despite being already married to Princess Gwendolen. Humber hid Estrildis until she bore their child, Sabrina. When his wife's powerful father died, Humber brought forth Estrildis and Sabrina. Gwendolen was furious; her armies went to war against Humber's, and when she won, she demanded that Estrildis and her child be drowned in the Severn. (Spence 1972)



**Mermaid of Zennor.** In a tiny church in the seaside town of Zennor in Cornwall, a mysterious 600-year-old carving of a mermaid can be seen. The mermaid is featured in local legends about a woman of the sea who lured young men to their deaths. The town is named for an otherwise unknown female saint, *Senora*, who also came from the sea.

**Sul** Roman Britain's greatest healing shrine was in Bath, where hot springs still bubble forth at the rate of a million gallons a day. *Aquae Sulis* ("waters of Sul") have been used since Celtic times, possibly earlier. In Roman times, a healing shrine was built there. After the legions were recalled to Rome, the stone baths disappeared under silt deposits. Rediscovered in the 17th century, the baths can be visited again.

Excavations have yielded information about the goddess to which Bath was dedicated. The Romans equated her to **Minerva**, but she never lost her Celtic name. "Sul" means "sun," and the hot waters of her shrine were connected to solar power. As a healing goddess, Sul is connected to **Brigit**, similarly associated with healing wells. Like Brigit, Sul was served by a college of priestesses who tended an eternal flame. Occasionally, Sul appears in the plural, as the *Suleviae*, a name also occasionally given to Brigit; Sul may have been a title of Brigit in Bath. (Green 1986, 1995; MacCulloch 1996)

## WELSH, CORNISH, AND ARTHURIAN PANTHEON

Aranrot. *See* **Arianrhod**

Argante *Arthurian; healing.*

**Arianrhod**

**Asenora**

**Blanchefleur**

**Blodeuwedd**

Bloduwith. *See* **Blodeuwedd**

Braingwen. *See* **Brangien**

**Branwen**

Brenhines-y-Nef *Welsh; sky.*

Bronwen. *See* **Branwen**

**Ceridwen**

Cherry of Zennor. *See* **Asenora**

Chwimbian. *See* **Nimue**

Cigfa. *See* **Rhiannon**

Clarine. *See* **Morgause**

Cordelia. *See* **Creiddylad**

**Creiddylad**

Creirwy. *See* **Ceridwen**

Cunrie. *See* **Loathy Lady**

**Cymidei Cymeinfoll**

Dame du Lac. *See* **Lady of the Lake**

**Dôn**

Dun Cow *Welsh; abundance.*

Egraine. *See* **Igraine**

Eigr. *See* **Igraine**

Eilonwy. *See* **Nevyn**

**Elaine**

**Elen**

Ellyllon. *See* **Elen**

Enid *Womanly virtue.*

Essyllt. *See* **Iseult**

Fflur *Welsh; beauty.*

**Figgy Dowdy**

**Goewin**

**Goleuddydd**

Guenloie. *See* **Guinevere**

**Guinevere**

Gwendolyn. *See* **Gwendydd**

**Gwendydd**

Gwenfrewi *Welsh; healing.*

Gwenhwyvar. *See* **Guinevere**

**Gwragedd Annwn**

**Gwyar**

Gwyllion *Welsh; wilderness.*

Helen. *See* **Elen**

Igerna. *See* **Igraine**

**Igraine**

**Iseult**

Isolde. *See* **Iseult**

Keridwen. *See* **Ceridwen**

Kundrie. *See* **Loathy Lady**

Lady of Shalott. *See* **Elaine**

Lady of the Fountain. *See* **Laudine**

**Lady of the Lake**

**Laudine**

**Loathy Lady**

Luned. *See* *Laudine*

Madgy Figgy. *See* *Figgy Dowdy*

Madron. *See* *Modron*

Maternus. *See* *Modron*

Medhran. *See* *Modron*

**Modron**

Morgain. *See* *Morgan*

**Morgan**

Morganz. *See* *Morgause*.

**Morgause**

Moruein. *See* *Morgan*

Nelferch. *See* *Gwredd Annwn*

**Nevyn****Nimue****Olwen**

Orna. *See* *Morgan*

Orva. *See* *Morgan*

Ragnell. *See* *Loathy Lady*

**Rhiannon**

Rigatona. *See* *Rhiannon*

Senara. *See* *Asenora*

Tamara *Cornish, British; water.*

Vivianne. *See* *Nimue*

Winifred. *See* *Gwenfrewi*

Y Fuwch Frech. *See* *Dun Cow*

Yguerne. *See* *Igraine*

Yr Hen Wräch *Welsh; bogs.*

**Arianrhod** Arianrhod's niece Goewin was footholder to king Math, whose life depended upon his feet resting always in the lap of a virgin. But Goewin's power was lost when Math's nephew raped her. Math made her queen, and the search began for a new footholder.

Arianrhod's brother Gwydion nominated her for the honor. But he had collaborated in the rape of Goewin and only offered her name as a way to hurt Arianrhod. When she stepped over a magical wand to prove her virginity, she gave birth to two unexpected children: Dylan Son-of-Wave, child of the sea, and Llew llaw Gyffes, claimed by Gwydion. The humiliated Arianrhod planned to refuse Llew a name and the right to weapons, two prerogatives of a Welsh mother, but Gwydion tricked her again so that Llew could attain his manhood. The possibility that the children could be parthenogenetic is offered as an argument by for those who define Arianrhod as a goddess. Her name, "Silver Wheel," suggests a moon or sky goddess; she lived surrounded by maidens at Caer Arianrhod, the constellation Corona Borealis ("northern crown"). She may be a goddess of the land, for the ever-fruitful soil is often seen as a parthenogenetic mother. Some read the legend as recording a historical change from matriliney to patriliney, pointing out that Arianrhod's only named ancestor is her mother, **Dôn**, and her son depends upon her to grant him a name. (Gantz 1976; Green 1995; MacCulloch 1996; Rees and Rees; Spence 1972)

**Asenora** In the church in Zennor in Cornwall, a wooden chair boasts a 600-year-old carving of a mermaid. Princess Asenora of Brittany, who founded the church, had been thrown pregnant into the sea in a barrel and drifted to Zennor, where she was honored as Saint Senara. In the same town, a seductive mermaid named Cherry lured the finest singer, Mathew Trewella, from the church to his death at sea. The connection between these similarly named figures is obscure. (Briggs 1959; Straffon)

**Blanchefleur** Rivalen, king of Lyonesse (a lost land, perhaps the Isles of Scilly), was an ally of the neighboring king, Mark of Cornwall. To solidify their friendship, Mark

arranged for Rivalen to marry his sister Blancheffleur at the great castle of Tintagel on the northern Cornish coast. No sooner were they married than Blancheffleur was pregnant; no sooner was she pregnant than Rivalen's land was attacked. The king left Blancheffleur with his most loyal retainer and went to defend his lands. But he never returned, having been killed in an ambush. Blancheffleur, hearing of her loss, gave birth and died. The child of her grief was Tristan, himself fated to love and lose his beloved, his uncle Mark's wife **Iseult**. (Bedier)

**Blodeuwedd** After **Arianrhod** was tricked into giving birth to a son, she withheld from him three maternal gifts: a name, weapons, and a wife. But her trickster brother Gwydion thwarted her, so that Llew Llaw Gyffes had both names and arms. The final gift, manufactured by Gwydion and his magician uncle Math, was a woman made of nine kinds of wildflowers and named Blodeuwedd ("flower-face"). But when a handsome hunter captured Blodeuwedd's heart, she decided to kill Llew, who was protected by magic so that he could only be killed when bathing by the side of a river, under a thatched roof over a cauldron, while standing with one foot on a deer. When she dared him to assume that unlikely posture, her lover killed him. For her part in the plot, Blodeuwedd was turned into an owl. (Gantz 1976; Graves; Green 1995; Jackson)

**Branwen** Branwen was married to an abusive husband who made her into a kitchen slave in Ireland. But she sent a trained crow to her brothers in Wales, and they set off to rescue her, dying in the attempt. Branwen died of sorrow. The epic heroine may hide a goddess, for Branwen has many similarities to the Welsh goddess **Rhiannon**, also exiled and enslaved by her husband's people. An obscure ancestral goddess, Bronwen, may be related to Branwen, though some scholars warn against conflating the two. (Gantz 1976; Green 1995; MacCulloch 1911, 1996; Powell)

**Ceridwen** One of the most important Welsh goddesses was this sorceress, who lived in the middle of a lake with her bald husband Tegid Foel, a beautiful daughter named Creirwy ("light"), and her ugly brother Afagddu ("dark"). Ceridwen had a plan for Afagddu's future, intending to make him a seer. She gathered the necessary herbs and set them to brew for a year and a day.

The brew had to be stirred constantly. When Ceridwen had other tasks, she left the cauldron to her servant boy Gwion, with the warning that he must never taste the brew. But it boiled, and three drops splattered onto Gwion's hand. He popped it into his mouth, and wisdom and power poured into the boy.

Gwion foresaw Ceridwen's reaction and fled. The furious sorceress started after him. Gwion transformed himself into a hare; Ceridwen turned herself into a greyhound. He became a fish, she an otter; he became a bird, she a hawk. When he transformed himself into a grain of wheat, she became a hen and ate him up. Ceridwen, impregnated, bore a boy whom the goddess, still furious, had no intention of nursing. But she could not bear to kill the infant, so she set him adrift on the sea. A nobleman rescued him, and he grew up to be the great poet Taliesin.

Although these tales show Celtic features, Ceridwen may have derived from a pre-Celtic cosmic goddess of the diurnal cycle, as the names of her children suggest. Her

magical cauldron, a symbol of abundance, suggests a goddess of prosperity. (Green 1995; MacCulloch 1996; Matthews; Straffon; Trevelyan)

**Creiddylad** In Wales, a springtime feast was dedicated to this mythic figure, honored with a contest between factions representing contenders for her hand. Such contests between winter and summer are known in other Celtic lands, including Scotland (see **Brigit**) and the Isle of Man. (Gantz 1976; Graves; MacCulloch 1911)

**Cymidei Cymeifoll** This Welsh warrior giantess, whose name meant “big-bellied battler,” gave birth to innumerable armed warriors, one every six weeks. She also owned the cauldron of regeneration (a symbol of the fruitful womb) that is at the center of much of the action of the *Mabinogion*. (Gantz 1976; Rolleston)

**Dôn** While Dôn’s powers are difficult to discern, the stories in which her children appear suggest a period of matriliney. Dôn’s children bore her name; succession to the throne of King Math (Dôn’s brother) passed to his nephew Gwydion, who was in turn succeeded by his sister’s son; her daughter was the virgin-mother **Arianrhod**. (Dexter 1990, 1998; Gantz 1976; MacCulloch 1996; Robbins; Rhys; Spence 1972)

**Elaine** Cursed to remain forever in her room, Elaine, the Lady of Shalott, saw the world through the tapestries she wove. When Lancelot appeared in those tapestries, Elaine fell in love and, undeterred by the curse, set off to Camelot. She died before arriving there, so Lancelot saw only her lovely body. The story, created by Sir Thomas Mallory, derives from the goddess of Scotland’s Clyde River, who possessed a magic mirror in which she watched the world’s activities.

Another Elaine, daughter of the wounded Fisher King, lusted after Lancelot, who refused to sleep with anyone but **Guinevere**. Elaine plied him with liquor until he mistook her for his beloved and conceived with her the fair knight Galahad. Finally, a minor Arthurian figure of this name, half-sister to King Arthur, assisted Arthur by marrying one of his enemies. (Spence 1972)

**Elen** Wales is dotted with churches dedicated to Saint Helen, mother of the Roman emperor Constantine, whom folklore claims was a Welsh princess. Behind the name was a woman whose name (“sprite”) signifies her origin. Several Elens appear in Welsh folklore; it is unclear how they are related. One was an Otherworldly woman, wife of Merlin. Another appeared in the dreams of the hero Maxen. Yet another was a builder of magical highways. (Evans-Wentz; Jones)

**Figgy Dowdy** At Cornwall’s well of Carn Marth, tradition required that dolls be offered to Figgy Dowdy. Most Cornish holy wells are associated with goddesses (see **Modron**), and Figgy Dowdy’s name may mean “reaper goddess.” The witch Madgy Figgy may be a folkloric recollection. Madgy, who scrounged debris from wrecked ships, invoked weather spirits to cause wrecks. Once, she found the body of a Portuguese lady and hid the woman’s jewels in her house. Every night thereafter, a strange light traveled to Madgy’s cottage, and then a stranger followed the light. When he left,

he took the jewels, and Madgy had a fortune in ransom. “One witch knows another, living or dead,” was all she would say. (Hunt)

**Goewin** As foot-holder to King Math of Wales, Goewin had a ceremonially important duty to her people, for if the king’s feet were ever to touch the ground, both he and they would be in danger. Because Goewin’s position required that she be virginal, her power was stripped from her when Math’s nephew raped her. Although the rapist was apprehended, Goewin could not resume her duties, so Math made her queen. Other tales in the source in which we learn of Goewin, the epic *Mabinogion*, contain material known to be mythic, so this figure may be a late version of an early goddess. (Green 1995; Jones)

**Goleuddydd** The legend of this Welsh princess whose name means “Bright Day” appears to disguise an ancient goddess of fertility. She married a prince but was unable to conceive, causing consternation among her people, who worried over the symbolism of a barren couple on the throne. When she finally became pregnant, Goleuddydd went mad and refused to live indoors, raging through the wilderness instead. When her labor came, her senses returned, and she sought the sty of a swineherd to bear her son, the prince Culhwch or “pig” (see **Olwen**). Like **Rhiannon**, the Welsh horse goddess who bore a colt, the character Goleuddydd is a probable disguise for an ancient goddess of fertility. (Jones)

**Guinevere** The Matter of Britain centers on the love triangle between the old king Arthur, his young queen Guinevere, and Lancelot, knight of the Round Table. After their wedding, Guinevere lived with Arthur until the arrival of Lancelot, with whom she fell in love. They attempted to restrain themselves but failed. Their affair spoiled the harmony of the Round Table, whose knights set out on quests including that for the Holy Grail, presumably the chalice from which Jesus drank at his Last Supper, but also an image of the feminine.

Finally, Guinevere could no longer live with Arthur. One Beltane, she arranged to be abducted and, when Lancelot came to her rescue, ran away with him. Arthur recaptured Guinevere and sentenced her to death, but Lancelot rescued her from the flames. Camelot was in ruins, for which Guinevere is often blamed despite the fact that Arthur’s bastard son, Mordred, caused the downfall.

What seems like a courtly romance hides a mythic story about the role of the king as sustainer of the earth goddess and his challenge by another man for that role. Some variants of the Arthurian legends show Guinevere as more active than others. In one, Mordred attempted to carry off Guinevere, emphasizing her role as holder of sovereignty. Scholars argue about how much Arthurian legend derives from Celtic mythology and how much is quasi-historical; as there is virtually no source for her historical existence, Guinevere appears to be the goddess of sovereignty in human form.

In some versions of the legend, Arthur had three wives in turn, each named Guinevere. This further strengthens the identification of this figure with the goddess, as does the meaning of her Welsh name (*gwen*, “white”; *hwyvvar*, “spirit”). Despite being

described as Christian, Guinevere's pagan background is emphasized by the time of her wedding to Arthur, and her departure from him, on the Celtic feast of Beltane. (MacCulloch 1996; Markale 2000; Squire)

**Gwendydd** Gwendydd was the twin sister of the great magician Merlin; she may also, or alternatively, have been his lover or wife. She held all of Merlin's magical secrets, for after he was trapped by **Nimue** inside an enchanted tree, he passed along both his knowledge and his power to Gwendydd. (Ellis 1995)

**Gwragedd Annwn** Women of the Otherworld made notoriously fickle wives, but that was not the case with the Welsh lake-maidens called the Gwragedd Annwn, who were dependable—so long as one never lifted a hand against them. Breaking that taboo resulted in immediate disappearance. A lake maiden named Nelferch set a limit of three mistakes. She lived happily except for her husband's tendency to tap her when he wanted attention. She considered it breaking her rule and, after the third incident, disappeared.

Lake maidens are found in many Celtic lands including Ireland and Scotland, where lakes served as entrances to the Otherworld, and where fairy palaces could be seen from shore, sometimes beneath the lake's water. Lake maidens could shape-shift into birds (usually swans) and could be captured if a man stole an article of clothing—a swanskin robe or comb. The husband had to keep the stolen object hidden, for if the lake-maiden found it, she disappeared. (Crossley-Holland; Rhŷs 1941)

**Gwyar** The story of this ancient Welsh goddess, wife of the god of heaven, is fragmentary. All that is left is the meaning of her name (“gore”); her relationship to king Arthur of Camelot, her brother (at other times, the names given for Arthur's sister are **Morgause** and **Morgan**); and the information that she had two sons—one good, the other bad. (Squire)

**Igraine** The wife of Duke Gorlois of Cornwall, Igraine had several children with him, including two daughters with similar names, **Morgan** and **Morgause**. King Uther Pendragon lusted after Igraine, but she did not respond. So Uther, with the help of Merlin, transformed himself into the likeness of Gorlois and spent a night with Igraine. When she discovered that her husband was dead and she was pregnant with Uther's child, she agreed to marry him. (Ellis 1995)

**Iseult** The greatest myth of Cornwall centered on the love of Iseult for the handsome Tristan. Mark, king of Cornwall, found a strand of golden hair so gorgeous that he fell in love with its owner. He dispatched his nephew Tristan to find her. When he located Iseult in Ireland, Tristan convinced her father that she should marry King Mark.

Fearing a loveless marriage for her daughter, Iseult's mother made an herbal potion that caused boundless love. She gave it to Iseult's maid Brangien with instructions to save it for the wedding night. But on the way to her wedding, Iseult was becalmed in a boat with Tristan. Desperate with thirst, they unwittingly shared the potion, which bound them hopelessly together.

Despite her feelings, Iseult became the bride of Tristan's uncle. Brangien, guilt-stricken over having served the magic potion, took her mistress's place in the honeymoon bed; but eventually, Iseult had to do her wifely duties. Iseult tried to remain faithful but began to meet Tristan in secret. Iseult's suspicious husband tested her purity, forcing her to cross a stream where, were she impure in any way, she would drown. Tristan, disguised as a beggar, helped Iseult across, so the queen was able to say that no man had touched her save her husband and the helpful beggar. Ultimately, the pain of deceit caused the lovers to separate. Tristan married a woman who shared Iseult's name, the Breton princess Iseult of the White Hands, but died of a broken heart; and Iseult lived in sorrow until she too died. (Bedier; Jackson; Markale 2000)

**Lady of the Lake** Feminine figures in Arthurian legends are often difficult to distinguish, as sources differ on their roles and even their names. Thus the mysterious woman who gave the aspiring King Arthur the magical sword called Excalibur is described in early texts as a fairy; in this form, she is compounded or confused with **Nimue**. Later, she was said to be Arthur's magician half-sister **Morgause**, a sorceress who created illusions to keep people from entering her lands. Although she was Arthur's original champion, the Lady of the Lake helped bring down his court at Camelot, for she was the foster mother of Lancelot, who stole the affections of Arthur's queen, **Guinevere**. In some texts, the Lady of the Lake was Lancelot's lover rather than his mother; by him, she conceived the pure knight Galahad. Like a goddess of sovereignty, she took Arthur back to her land at the end of his life. (Evans-Wentz; Squire)

**Laudine** A lengthy Arthurian narrative centers on the mysterious Laudine, who lived within the magical forest of Brocéliande, beside a beautiful pool called Barenton. From that pool, great storms could be stirred and set forth into the world, so Barenton was guarded by Laudine's husband, Esclados le Rous, called the Black Knight. When one of King Arthur's knights attempted to kill Esclados, only to be defeated, he roused the young knight Owein to return and engage the Black Knight in single combat. The tale does not make clear why either man wished to drive the Black Knight from his post.

A maiden named Luned, Laudine's attendant, helped Owein kill the Black Knight and further, to win Laudine's love. For a year, the couple lived happily, but then King Arthur and his knights arrived. Laudine entertained them with a splendid feast, but was heartbroken when they convinced Owein to accompany them on their adventures. Although he pledged to return, in the heat of war and conquest, he forgot. A year passed, then Luned appeared at Camelot to challenge Owein on his betrayal of his promise. Driven mad by the revelation of his perfidy, Owein roved through the forest until a lion befriended him. Luned again appeared, instructing Owein to sprinkle water around the pool at Barenton. This caused great storms to ravish Laudine's land, which Luned claimed could be stopped by the Knight of the Lion (Owein in disguise), if she would help him reconcile with his lady. When Owein was revealed, Laudine kept her promise. The early medieval narrative employs images of the weather goddess, as well

as using the theme of marriage between a man and the goddess of sovereignty. (Jones; Markale 2000)

**Loathy Lady** The Loathy Lady of Arthurian legend, a late form of the goddess of sovereignty, appeared to the pure knight Percival and mocked him because he could not answer the questions of the mysterious Fisher King, and thus lost the sacred Grail. In one tale, she was an enchanted maiden turned into a hag who nonetheless won the heart of the knight Gawain. When they married, she told him that she could be a lovely woman during the day and a hag at night, or the opposite, and asked him which he preferred. When he gave her the power to make the choice herself, she emerged from her enchantment, revealing that women want to make their own decisions. (Hearne)

**Modron** In Cornwall, an important holy well is dedicated to an otherwise unknown “saint” of this name, where healing rituals are still practiced. Trees that surround the well are hung with offerings of cloth and ribbon. In British folk history, Modron is called the mother of King Urien and the god Maponus. (Green 1995; MacCulloch 1911; Squire)

**Morgan** Two Arthurian heroines have names that are frequently confused: the magician Morgan, and the ambitious queen **Morgause**. Both were children of **Igraine** by her first husband and thus were half-sisters to King Arthur. Morgan and Morgause are easy to confuse because not only were both ambitious women, but they may both derive from the same original, perhaps a water goddess.

Morgan, a magician who studied with the great Merlin, was proud and imperious. When a knight jilted her, she created the Perilous Valley, where knights who betrayed their ladies became hopelessly lost. She married a minor king, Urien. While her brother ascended the throne, the envious Morgan brought disaster on Arthur by destroying the scabbard that protected the king in battle. Yet it was to Morgan that Arthur was brought at the end of his life.

Morgan’s mythic background is hinted at by her identification with the mysterious Morgan le Fay (Morgan the Fairy or Fate). Early texts say she was chief of nine sisters who lived on the fertile Fortune Isles. Goddesses with names similar to Morgan’s are found in Ireland (**Mórrígan**, a divinity of death and battle), in Brittany (**Morrigan**, a sea-fairy who kidnaps sailors), and in Wales (Morgans or **Gwragedd Annwn**). (Graves; Loomis 1945, 1956)

**Morgause** King Arthur’s two half-sisters did not make life easy for him. **Morgan** was a magician, Morgause his political enemy. She was also his lover, for through the magician Merlin’s meddling, the two conceived a son, Mordred. Arthur, aware that Mordred would kill him, murdered all children born at the time, but Morgause hid her son by moving far to the north on the sea-swept isles of Orkney, where she married the king. There she taught Mordred to hate Arthur, and there they plotted the downfall of Camelot. (Squire)

**Nevyn** Her name resembles the Irish fairy queen **Niamh**, and their stories similarly deal with love and loss. A mermaid, Nevyn loved a Welshman, Ivan Morgan (Ifan Morgan), to whom she bore two children, a son named Nevydd (Nefyd) and a daughter, Eilonwy. Ivan knew Nevyn was a mermaid, but the couple kept it from their children. Nevydd discovered the secret and killed himself in shame. Eilonwy attempted suicide but was rescued by a merrow (mer-man) prince and lived thereafter with her mother's people. Nevyn came back to land to claim her son's body, then sailed away in a magical boat. (Spence 1972)

**Nimue** Two important figures in the Arthurian material bear this name: the mysterious **Lady of the Lake** and the lover of the magician Merlin, otherwise said to have been Arthur's half-sister **Morgan**. Whether those two were originally the same is unclear. It is also unclear whether Viviane, Merlin's magician-lover, was the same as one or both of the above. Nimue was the daughter of the Roman goddess **Diana** and a human man. As offspring of a woodland divinity, she was raised in the forest, where Merlin first met her. Her first request of him was to teach her to make a tower out of thin air; he did so, not realizing that his life would end when she fashioned one to be his prison. (Ellis 1995; Markale 1997; Squire)

**Olwen** Olwen had streaming yellow hair, a red-gold necklace, and dozens of golden rings. As she walked, white flowers sprang up in her footprints. The romance that centers on Olwen begins when her father Ysbaddaden opposed her marriage to Culhwch, son of the pig goddess **Goleuddydd**. Because Ysbaddaden believed that the match would cause his death, the giant put 13 obstacles in the young man's way. But Culhwch overcame all to gain Olwen's hand. (Green 1995; Jackson; Jones; Williams)

**Rhiannon** The distinction between goddess and heroine can be difficult to establish, especially when myths were written down after the arrival of monotheism. But in the case of Rhiannon, few deny that the heroine was originally a goddess, possibly descended from an ancient Celtic goddess \*Rigatona, "great queen." In Welsh mythology, Rhiannon appears as an Otherworldly woman who raced a white horse around an enchanted spot, where she encountered King Pwyll. He gave chase, but Rhiannon outran him, birds flying around her head. At last, she stopped to reveal that she was seeking him, for his reputation had spread to the Otherworld.

They married, and their first son was born. Shortly after, when the child disappeared, Rhiannon was found with blood on her face. Suspicion was roused that the queen had eaten her son. But Rhiannon was innocent, for when his nurses found the child missing, they smeared dog's blood on the sleeping queen to divert attention from their laxness. Nonetheless convinced of his wife's guilt, the king made Rhiannon into a horse, forcing her to serve as a mount for visitors. She was released after it was revealed that her son had been stolen by a spectral figure and raised by a nearby herdsman.

After Pwyll's death, Rhiannon remarried, but the kingdom turned barren when her son Pryderi assumed the throne. Rhiannon and her new husband, Manawydan, joined Pryderi and his wife Cigfa in scraping a living from the increasingly empty land.

Finally they moved to a distant city where they eked out a living as artisans. Their talents led them to incur the wrath of local craftsmen. Fearing for their safety, the family returned to the wilderness of Dyfed, where Rhiannon and her son disappeared. Manawydan discovered that a former suitor of Rhiannon had stolen them. After a suitable accord was reached, Rhiannon and Pryderi were returned to this world. Several scholars connect Rhiannon with the goddess of sovereignty, for her presence in Dyfed made the land abundant, while her absence made it barren. (Benigni; Dexter 1990; Graves; Green 1993, 1995; Hemming; Jones; MacCulloch 1911; Ross 1967)

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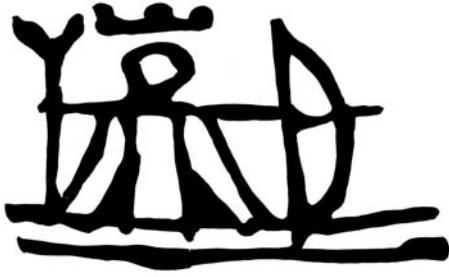
# FINNO-UGRIC CULTURES

Spread across north central Europe and western Russia are five related Finno-Ugric languages: Ugrian (Hungarians/Magyars, Mansi, and Khanty); Baltic Finn (Estonians, Finns, Livonians, and Karelians); Saami (Lapps); Finno-Permian (Zerians and Udmurts); and western Finn (Mari and Mordvin). Throughout the region, Finno-Ugric speakers established relationships with indigenous people, creating mythologies with considerable variation. Hungarians share folkways with central European neighbors rather than with distant linguistic cousins among the reindeer-herding Saami. Similarly, myths and rituals from nearby cultures left their mark, so that Estonian religion has much in common with that of nearby Lithuania. This conflation makes it difficult for scholars to sort out what was purely Finno-Ugric from what has been absorbed from other influences.

Two religious traditions, however, seem to have been shared: shamanism, and a bear-hunting ritual. Shamanism was probably the primary Finno-Ugric religion, for words related to the practice reach back into the earliest linguistic strata. Finno-Ugric shamanism described a world of many levels, from underworld to upper world, accessed by magicians who traveled while apparently in deep sleep. Such practitioners were spirit-chosen and initiated through an arduous psychic process. Throughout Finno-Ugric cultures, women played prominent roles in shamanic practice.

The circumpolar bear cult derives from a belief that the animal was a dangerous ancestor. Despite this, the bear was occasionally sacrificed at a communion feast. Evidence of cave bear hunts has been found in central Europe as early as the Paleolithic, so this ritual and totemic belief system may have lasted for millennia. Among the Khanty and the Mari, who held onto the practice until the early 20th century, the practices died out only recently.

The Finno-Ugric people rarely appear in early historical texts. Tacitus refers briefly to Finns, but no early writings record Finno-Ugric mythology, which was conveyed orally. Then, in the mid-19th century, folklorist Elias Lönnrot collected tales and songs



**Juks-Akka.** Drums used by shamans among the Saami are painted with figures representing important divinities. One of these is *Juks-Akka*, the “old lady of the bow” who in more recent times has been known as “the old lady of the gun.” She represents protection for newborns as well as successful hunting.

tales and songs were recorded, but many others were lost.

The original power of Finno-Ugric goddesses is difficult to ascertain, although the earth goddess had an unquestionably important religious role. Soviet researchers posit an ancient matriarchal society underlying the later-developing patriarchy. The fact that a creator goddess existed in many Finno-Ugric cultures offers support for this interpretation, typically rejected by European and American researchers. Finno-Ugric myths described the earth as feminine, and the feminine was never associated with evil. Indeed, there was no specific concept of “evil” among these peoples, who found their moral imperative in propitiating nature’s powers and attending to nature’s laws.

In some remote and rural regions of the subarctic, indigenous Finno-Ugric religions are still practiced, in some cases through synthesis with Christianity, in some other cases as part of traditional lifestyles. In Finland, a recent resurgence of interest in traditional religion has led to the establishment of a pagan network based in urban Helsinki. Outside the region, some interest has been shown in Finno-Ugric shamanic traditions; but overall, the indigenous religions are little known internationally.

## FINNO-UGRIC PANTHEON

### **Aino**

Ajatar *Finnish; disease.*

### **Akanidi**

Akko. *See Rauni*

### **Ańge-patáj**

### **Annikki**

Antero *Finnish; ocean.*

### **Aufruvva**

### **Azer-Ava**

Ban-Ava *Mordvin; outhouse.*

### **Barbmo-Akka**

### **Beiwe**

Beiwe-neid. *See Beiwe*

Boldogasszony. *See Xatel-Ekwa*

Boshur Khan. *See Boszorkány*

### **Boszorkány**

### **Büt aba**

Cuvto-Ava. *See Azer-Ava*

Dames Hirip, Jenö, Rapson, Vénétur. *See*

### **Firtos**

that he wove into a chronological narrative. The 50 verses of Lönnrot’s second edition, published in 1849, make up the *Kalevala*, the major source for Finnish mythology. Not long after, Estonian scholars F. R. Faellmann and Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald compiled a similar work, called the *Kalevipoeg*, describing the pantheon of their homeland.

As with other Europeans, the Finno-Ugric peoples experienced a mixed impact from Christianization. While some rituals and rites were sustained by being transferred to saints, persecution or erasure was more common. Similarly, literacy brought some boons, but more losses. A few old

**Enech**

Etelätär *Finnish; wind.*

**Firtos****Ganîs**

Gidne. *See Ganîs*

Gudiri-Mumu. *See Šundi-Mumi*

Haapanneitty *Finnish; aspen.*

Haltia. *See Holdja*

Helena. *See Firtos*

**Holdja****Hongas**

Hungatar *Finnish; pine trees.*

**Iden-Kuva****Illinti Kota**

Ilmatar. *See Luonnotar*

**Ismo****Jabmiakka**

Joli-Tarem *Vogul; earth.*

Juks-Akka. *See Madder-Aka*

**Jumala**

Jurt-Azer-Ava. *See Azer-Ava*

Jutta. *See Linda*

**Kalma**

Kaltés. *See Jumala*

Kankahattaret *Finnish; weaving.*

Katejatar *Finnish; pine-tree.*

**Keča Aba****Kiputyttö**

Kissasszony. *See Szépasszony*

Kivutar. *See Kiputyttö*

Koskenneiti *Finnish; waterfall.*

Kuutar *Finnish; moon.*

**Kyllikki**

Kyöde jielle *Saami; household.*

**Linda****Loddis-Edne****Louhi**

Lule Lapp Kani. *See Ganîs*

**Luonnotar****Luot-Hozjit**

Mā-āmliw *Vogul; earth.*

Maan-Eno. *See Rauni*

**Madder-Akka****Ma-Emma**

Marcos. *See Firtos*

**Marjatta**

Marumemm *Estonian; storm.*

Mastor-Ava. *See Azer-Ava*

Melatar *Finnish; helm.*

**Mere-Ama**

Mereneiu. *See Näkinein*

**Metsannetsyt**

Metsapiigad *Estonian; forest.*

Meureit *Estonian; meadows.*

**Mielikki**

Mier-Iema. *See Mere-Ama*

Mika. *See Firtos*

**Mjer-jema**

Monjatar *Finnish; pine tree.*

Mor-Ava. *See Azer-Ava*

Mu-kilšin-Mumi. *See Šundi-Mumi*

Mu-Köldōs' in *Urdmut; earth mother.*

Muziem-Mumi. *See Šundi-Mumi*

**Näkinein**

Nar-Azer-Ava. *See Azer-Ava*

Niski-Ava. *See Azer-Ava*

Norov-Ava. *See Azer-Ava*

Nyírfa Kisasszony. *See 'Aníge-pat'aj*

Olt. *See Firtos*

Os Keca Aba. *See Keča Aba*

Osmotar *Finnish; beer.*

Otsuved-Azer-Ava. *See Azer-Ava*

**Ovda****Päivätär**

Penitar *Finnish; dogs.*

Pihlajatar *Finnish; rowan tree.*

Pilaytar *Finnish; mountain-ash.*

Pite Lapp Kine. *See Ganîs*

**Pohjan-Akka**

Pohjolan Neiti. *See Lahja*

**Port-Kuva****Puges****Rana Neida****Rauni**

Ravdna. *See Rauni*

Roonikka. *See Rauni*

Rota. *See Jabmiakka*

Salme. *See Linda*

Sar-Akka. *See Madder-Akka*

Satka *Finnish; sea.*

Si *Mordvin*; *sun*.

Simasuu *Finnish*; *wilderness*.

Sinettaret *Finnish*; *dye plants*.

Siura. *See Linda*

Sukkamieli *Finnish*; *love*.

**Šundi-Mumi**

Suonetar *Finnish*; *veins*.

Suветar *Finnish*; *south-wind, summer*.

**Szépasszony**

Tahetar *Finnish*; *stars*.

Tartod. *See Firtos*

Tellervo *Finnish*; *cattle protector*.

Terhenetar *Finnish*; *fog*.

Tiuulikki *Finnish*; *animals*.

Tol-Ava. *See Azer-Ava*

Tuametar *Finnish*; *alder-tree*.

Tuletar *Finnish*; *wind*.

**Tündér Ilona**

**Tuonetar**

Tuuleema *Estonian*; *wind*.

Uks-Akka. *See Madder-Aka*

Undutar *Finnish*; *fog*.

**Vad-leány**

Vagneg-imi. *See Puges*

Vammatar *Finnish*; *illness*.

Varma-Ava. *See Azer-Ava*

Ved-Ava. *See Azer-Ava*

Veden Emo. *See Vellamo*

Vedenhaltia *Finnish*; *water*.

Vedenneito. *See Näkinein*

Veenein. *See Näkinein*

**Vellamo**

Vete-Ema. *See Mere-Ama*

Vir-Ava. *See Azer-Ava*

Vir-Azer-Ava. *See Azer-Ava*

**Vitsa-Kuva**

**Xatel-Ekwa**

Xoli-Kaltēs. *See Xatel-Ekwa*

Xotsadam *Ostyak*; *shamanism*.

Yabme-Akka. *See Jabmiakka*

**Aino** The firstborn son of **Luonnotar** was the poet Väinämöinen. In his dotage, he was offered the hand of young Aino. No one had asked Aino what she wanted, and she did not want to marry the old and unattractive Väinämöinen. She dressed herself in her mother's wedding garments, then walked away. Stripping off her beautiful clothes and jewels, she walked into the waters of the dead river Tuonela. Väinämöinen tried to reclaim her, but she had turned into a mermaid-salmon. The ballad that tells her story is called *Vellamon neidon onkiminen*, "Fishing for the Daughter of **Vellamo**," goddess of the seas, suggesting that Aino was herself divine. (Comparetti; Lönnrot 1988)

**Akanidi** The Saami sun maiden noticed that some people smiled when she rose, but some looked downcast. Akanidi decided to help them become merrier and came to earth, disguising herself as the only daughter of an elderly couple who lived alone. There, she grew into a lovely young maiden who, when her earthly parents took her to meet other people, charmed them with her songs and dances. She offered them beautiful polished stones and taught them crafts to fill their lives with beauty. But the people fought over her gifts until they set upon Akanidi to kill her. Rather than dying, she sang a lovely song and floated up to the sky, never to descend again. (Riordan)

**Ańge-patáj** This Mordvin tree goddess may have been related to a Hungarian goddess celebrated on December 6, when people crafted bundles of birch twigs called Nyírfa Kisasszony ("Miss Birch"). Among the Lapps, the newly dead were beaten with birch

twigs to protect them in their passage. *Ańge-patáj*'s name means "mother goddess"; she ruled maternity and fecundity. (Hoppál and Pentikäinen)

**Annikki** Sometimes described as goddess of nightmares, Annikki was the sister of the doomed hero Kullervo. Separated as children, they met as adults and had a sexual encounter, after which they discovered that they were siblings. Both killed themselves in shame. (Abercromby vols. 1 and 2; Lönnrot 1969, 1988)

**Aufruvva** At appropriate seasons, this Saami mermaid gathered schools of fish and herded them into the mouths of rivers, then led them upstream to spawning grounds. As the people's diet depended upon seasonally replenished fish, Aufruvva can be seen as a goddess of abundance. Her lower body was that of a fish, but she had a woman's head and torso, with long beautiful hair that she loved to comb while sitting on rocks in mid-ocean. (Holmberg)

**Azer-Ava** To the Mordvins, the rain-bringing sky goddess made the earth ready to bear fruit. As goddess of the ocean, she sent fish into the nets of fisherfolk. Azer-Ava's name, "great mistress," appeared as part of many other goddesses' names. Jurt-Azer-Ava was goddess of the home; Ban-Ava, ruler of the outhouse. Norov-Ava (corn mistress), Paksa-ava (field mother), and Nar-Azer-Ava (meadow spirit) were all invoked for good harvests.

Beyond the settlements were Mor-Ava, sea mother; Varma-Ava, wind woman; and Tol-Ava, spirit of fire. Haughty Cuvto-Ava, tree woman, punished anyone who needlessly broke tree branches, by striking them with withering disease. Vir-Azer-Ava, forest mother, assumed a different shape for each part of the forest; hunters prayed to her for luck. Especially significant were Mastor-Ava, earth mother; and the women's goddess, Niski-Ava. Mastor-Ava ruled the earth and all its dwellers; at agricultural holidays, the community offered sacrifices to her. Women worshiped Niski-Ava in the privacy of their homes. (Holmberg; Honko et al.)

**Barbmo-Akka** This Saami goddess controlled the migratory paths of birds, whose arrival and departure marked the coming of spring and fall in western Lapland. (Holmberg)

**Beiwe** With her daughter Beiwe-Neid, this Saami goddess traveled through the sky in an enclosure of reindeer antlers. In the Arctic spring, she brought forth plants so that reindeer could prosper and reproduce. At each solstice, her worshipers sacrificed white female animals, the meat of which was threaded on a stick, then bent into rings and tied with bright ribbons. When Beiwe was invoked, a special prayer was said for the insane, for her winter absence caused madness.

On the day winter ended, the Saami smeared their doors with butter so Beiwe could be strengthened. On the summer solstice, "sun rings," formed from twists of leafy branches, were hung about. On the same day, buttery "sun porridge" was eaten as prayers were offered that Beiwe would "pour her merciful rays over the reindeer, and everything else."

Many Saami folk songs describe the sun goddess and her children. The sun goddess had a daughter, from whom descended a heroic race called the Children of Day, who survive as fairies. These Children included the Kalla-parnek, “famous ones of old,” who today are stars but who once lived on earth where they tamed reindeer and invented snowshoes.

The sun’s daughter, under the name Njavvis-ene, was widowed when her husband was murdered. The same tragedy afflicted Attjis-ene, daughter of the moon. Both women were pregnant and could not hunt or fish, so they captured reindeer and tamed them to provide milk. For this reason, Saami tradition requires that women be given the larger share of reindeer herds.

Like the sun, Njavvis-ene was round and fair, but Attjis-ene was dark and thin. Njavvis-ene had a son; Attjis-ene, a daughter. While picking berries, Njavvis-ene agreed that the one who could pick the fastest would take the boy to raise. Attjis-ene stuffed her basket with moss and added a few berries on top, then claimed the prize. When the boy had grown, he came to visit his playmate, Attjis-ene’s daughter, and was surprised when Njavvis-ene called him “son.” The sun’s daughter told how he had been taken through treachery.

Angered, the boy went home and killed Attjis-ene who, as she died, transformed her reindeer into frogs, toads, and beetles. Other stories say that Attjis-ene escaped to become the wife of the north wind, bearing a son who went to live with the moon, his grandfather, where he can be seen today. Yet other tales said Attjis-ene was transformed into a beetle for her sins.

The kindly Njavvis-ene lived for a long time and, upon her death, was laid on a bed of *njavvi* (long reindeer hairs) and interred in a mountain that bears her name. Although her body had died, her spirit lived on as an invisible but beautiful reindeer herder. (Billson; Itkonen; Karsten; Lundmark; Paper)

**Boszorkány** When bad Hungarian fairies (see **Firtos**) had daughters, those children were Boszorkány, witches who looked like old women, frogs, black cats, or horses. To discover witches, one dyed the first egg of a black hen, then took it to church on Easter Sunday. This caused witches to turn somersaults to escape the egg’s powers. Accusations of witchcraft may have been used, as in other regions, for social control over women. (Jones and Kropf)

**Büt aba** The Cheremis water mother lived in both fresh and salt water. If drought struck, Büt aba was called upon. Gathering on a riverbank, people threw water at each other. Then a sacrificial meal was made of a black animal, whose bones were thrown into the river. In springtime, Büt aba stirred up springs so their water tasted muddy, but offerings of barley calmed her down. Fishermen devoted to Büt aba were careful not to pray too loudly, making the goddess aware of how many fish they were taking. Brides sacrificed to her when leaving their mother’s homes; coins or beads thrown in water brought Büt aba’s blessing and protection. (Sebeok and Ingemann)

**Enech** This Hungarian goddess appeared to two hunters as a doe. She led them through unknown regions until they came to the land of the Scythians, where she

disappeared. In some stories, the young men then married two sisters; in others, the hunters themselves are descended from a doe named Enech. (Róheim)

**Firtos** Queen of the good Hungarian fairies, Firtos may be a diminished goddess. A castle, where she lived with her human lover, bears her name. His horse fell as they were mounting the hill beyond the castle and remains petrified. Firtos's opposite was Tartod, queen of the bad fairies. Both good and bad fairies influenced humans through magic, which they worked through words and curses, although folktales also endow them with wands of diamond, whips of copper, and milk that makes the countenance beautiful.

Fairies lived on the tops of mountains. Twenty-three castles in eastern Europe were once fairy palaces, including one built by magical cats and birds. Occasionally, fairies lived in caves like the one called Almás, from which a cold wind blew forth, causing sickness until it was blocked with shirts. On other occasions, they lived in subterranean palaces of gold and crystal. The gloom of Dame Rapson's underground castle was lightened by balls of diamonds hung from chains of gold, which reflected light on the treasure heaped there.

When fairies fell in love with humans, their love was fatal to both. Dame Rapson warned her daughter Irma about men, but the girl fell in love with the handsome Zelemir. When the lovers fell to their deaths together, Rapson found them and died of a broken heart. The sun petrified another tragic fairy, the beautiful Helena, when she was returning home from an assignation. A rock is all that is left of her.

Fairy women led carefree lives, dancing and doing needlework. A mountain is named for Tarkö; the rivers that run from it are named for her daughters Olt and Marcos. Other Hungarian fairies were Mika, a warrior who served Attila the Hun; Dame Jenö, petrified for saying insulting things about the Christian god; Dame Vénétur, who defied that deity and was turned into a stone frog; and Dame Hirip, whose sons kidnapped human girls. (Jones and Kropf)

**Ganís** The long-haired, long-tailed forest woman of the western Saami was similar to **Luot-Hozjit**. She watched reindeer herds in summer, when they were in wild pasture, so that they did not separate and become lost. Occasionally, she seduced young Saami men, but there is no record of her having half-human children. (Holmberg)

**Holdja** The Estonian house goddess lived in the roof beam, bringing good luck to anyone who greeted her upon entering. Holdja called down curses on a family who destroyed her home to move to a new one. The only way to assure her goodwill was to bring a log from the old house to the new fireplace. Holdja moved in as soon as three logs were crossed and the fire lit. Among Baltic Finns, the goddess was called Haltia ("ruler") or Varjohaltia ("shadow ruler") and predicted the future. (Holmberg)

**Hongas** In the circumpolar bear-hunting ritual, this goddess guarded bears but occasionally let one be sacrificed. Her name ("fir-mistress") may refer to the practice of placing a sacrificed bear's skull on a fir tree. Its body was then brought into the village

and feted with beer and a ritual marriage with a member of the human community, a girl or boy, depending on the bear's sex. (Honko et al.)

**Iden-Kuva** This harvest goddess of the Cheremis haunted the threshing area in early morning to ensure all was in order. She was shy, however, and fled if approached. Harvest ceremonies were dedicated to her. (Holmberg)

**Illinti Kota** The Selkup “grandmother of life” lived in an iron house beside a vast birch tree from whose roots human souls emerged. A great river arose there, too, from which everything sacred or beneficent flowed, including waterbirds who returned to earth each spring from a sojourn with the goddess. (Hoppál and Pentikäinen)

**Ismo** The Finnish wind goddess threw foam on burns to cure them. She is among the “daughters of air,” who also included Sumutar, portly daughter of mists, and Suonetar, a weaver who used veins for thread. All air-daughters specialized in the healing arts. (Abercromby vol. 1)

**Jabmiakka** In the chaotic underworld of Jabmiaimo, everyone lived as they did on earth, but in a new, youthful body. Hellish Rotaimo, ruled by the eponymous goddess Rota, derives from Christian beliefs and was not originally part of Saami religion. From Jabmiaimo, Jabmiakka (“old woman of the dead”) demanded black cats be buried alive to appease her ill temper. She also required that beer be served at funerals. Saami shamans traveled to her in trance, for only she could release souls. (Alhbäck; Bäckman and Hultkrantz; Karsten)

**Jumala** The sun goddess of the Zyrians, Jumala was worshiped until recently. She had been known for many centuries; 9th-century Vikings unsuccessfully searched for her solid-gold image. In 1549, a German nobleman found a golden goddess in a Ugrian shrine consisting of three figures enclosing each other, the inmost of which spoke in clanging bell tones. Golden offerings were hung in trees by worshipers, and when enough was accumulated, a new outer figure was forged. Shortly thereafter, the English ambassador to Russia tried to steal the image but could not find it. Jumala has remained hidden, although as late as 1967, treasure hunters were informed that Jumala was still honored. Jumala's image may have given rise to the Matrioshka dolls that have been popular for at least 200 years.

The vision of the sun as feminine is typical of Finno-Ugric cultures. The Voguls called her Kaltés or Sorńi and considered her the wife of the sky. The Voguls depicted her as ruling both sun and moon. The birch was her sacred tree, the hare or goose her sacred animal; she ruled childbirth. She lived with her brother, the world-master. Together, they revived their dead parents by raising them from the seas with the aid of beetles. This goddess was connected with the cuckoo, for seven golden cuckoos lived in a birch tree behind her house. (Michael; Honko et al.; Hoppál 2000; Hubbs; Róheim; Sadovszky and Hoppál)

**Kalma** The Finnish death goddess, Kalma's name means "corpse odor" or "grave." Cemeteries are called *kalmisto* after her. Whether or not this figure existed mythologically, or was created from a common noun of feminine gender, is not established. (Abercromby vols. 1 and 2)

**Keča Aba** The Russian Cheremis worshiped the "sun mother" by bowing to the east each morning. Early documents suggest she was their primary divinity, a goddess who bestowed good health and to whom sun-shaped pancakes were offered. In historic times, large festivals were held in a sacred grove in which horses were sacrificed if they signified their desire to die by shuddering at a certain ritual moment. (Sebeok and Ingemann)

**Kiputyttö** The pockmarked Finnish goddess of pain was one of the daughters of the underworld god Tuoni. She lived on a mountain where she ground pain out of rock. Her name meant "pain maiden," but she was not a virgin, for she had nine children, all of whom were diseases that included pox, gout, and other discomforts. The unnamed "small daughter of Tuoni" who appears throughout the *Kalevala* may be Kiputyttö. (Lönnrot 1988)

**Kyllikki** When the Finnish hero Lemminkäinen sought a wife, he chose the blossom-maiden Kyllikki. She had turned all down all suitors because she preferred the beauty of her land to anything men could offer. So Lemminkäinen abducted her and held her until she agreed to be his wife, extracting from him a promise that he would never go to war. She, in return, promised to stop going to parties. But Kyllikki grew bored with housework and slipped away for some fun, which Lemminkäinen used as an excuse to go back to the war he loved. She has been interpreted as a double goddess with **Mielikki**. (Abercromby vol. 1; Bonser; Lönnrot 1988)

**Linda** This "sleek maid" was born miraculously, with her sister Salme, from eggs: Linda from a grouse egg, Salme from a hen's egg. A lonely Estonian widow found both eggs and, placing them next to her skin, hatched them and raised the girls. When the sun, the moon, and a star came courting, Salme rejected the sun and moon, but the star won her heart. So the moon then courted Linda, who rejected him because of his fickleness. The sun came next, but Linda rejected him because he left the earth cold in winter. Other suitors came: Water, Wind, and the prince of the land, all of whom Linda found reasons to reject. Finally a man came astride a splendid stallion, and Linda's heart was captured. The girls both left their widowed mother to join their new husbands. Linda later appears as the mother of heroes, suggesting a divine origin, as does the creation of a lake from her tears and her eventual transformation into stone. She is described as a bird goddess, sister to Jutta and Siura, also bird-women. (Kruetzwald; March)

**Loddis-Edne** This protective goddess of the western Saami controlled the nesting instincts of birds, which brought them back annually to the Arctic, where they provided sustenance for the winter-weary people. (Holmberg)

**Louhi** The fierce Finnish winter queen Louhi was the antagonist of the culture hero Väinämöinen. The gap-toothed dame had magical powers and great strength, but Väinämöinen was wily enough to outwit her. He stole her treasured *sampo*, the magic mill that brought prosperity. When she realized the theft, Louhi raised a storm and called down her son to freeze the sea. But all she managed to do was shatter the *sampo*. Väinämöinen escaped with the fragments still powerful enough to bring abundance and wealth.

Louhi's other great adventure was to steal the sun maiden **Päivätär** from the sky. Again, the hero won, this time with the assistance of the smith Ilmarinen, his brother. The conflict between Louhi and the sons of **Luonnatar** has been interpreted as a mythic recollection of a change—from a period when women had greater social standing, to one in which women were more confined within their families. (Abercromby vols. 1 and 2; Lönnrot 1969, 1988)

**Luonnatar** The “daughter of nature” floated in the sky for serene ages until she grew lonely and threw herself into the ocean, whereupon she floated for seven centuries, growing pregnant although still a virgin. One day, as Luonnatar rested near the water's turbulent surface, a duck appeared. Luonnatar's knee broke the water's surface, so the duck built a nest there and laid eggs. After three days, Luonnatar twitched involuntarily. The eggs fell and were transformed into the universe: lower part into earth, upper part into sky, yolk into sun, white into moon. Luonnatar took a hand in the emerging creation, forming islands and peninsulas, and building the earth.

A goddess of birth similar to **Azer-Ava**, Luonnatar was occasionally seen as a triple goddess. She had three sons, all culture-heroes (Väinämöinen, Lemminkäinen, and Ilmarinen, representing poetry, magic, and smithcraft, respectively). She was sometimes dual-sexed, with her alternative name, Ilmater, sometimes described as her masculine name. When part of a goddess-trinity, Luonnatar is connected with Udutar and Terhetär, sisters who live together sifting mist through a sieve to cause disease. In some traditions, Luonnatar gave birth to the world's first woman, Kave, who in turn gave birth to humanity; yet at times, Kave is used as a title of Luonnatar. Her connection to the dual goddesses Suvetar, daughter of summer, and Etelätär, daughter of the wind, is unclear, although both are invoked with titles resembling those of Luonnatar. (Abercromby vols. 1 and 2; Bonser; Comparetti; Holmberg; Lönnrot 1988)

**Luot-Hozjit** The Saami reindeer virgin, who lived on a lichen-covered mountain and guarded herds during grazing season, looked like a girl covered in reindeer fur. Prayers were offered to her in spring, when herds were let out to graze, and in autumn, when they returned. (Holmberg)

**Madder-Akka** This Saami goddess had three daughters: Sar-Akka, Juks-akka, and Uks-Akka, a trinity of fate goddesses. While Madder-Akka controlled general fertility, her daughters were directly involved with human reproduction. The goddesses lived beneath the earth's surface or along the Milky Way that connects earth and heaven. Birds migrated along that starry pathway, which led human souls between the worlds.

Sar-Akka opened the womb. As magical assistance, wood was chopped outside the birthing tent. The new mother drank brandy in Sar-Akka's honor before giving birth; afterward, her first meal was of porridge in which three sticks had been cooked. Whether one found the white one (good luck), the black one (death), or the cleft one (success) revealed how Sar-Akka saw the child's future. Among the Swedish Saami, Sar-Akka was the supreme deity and creator of the world. She was painted, together with her mother and sisters, on Saami drums.

Juks-Akka ("old lady of the bow") was also honored in the post-birth ceremony. If the newborn were a boy, she assured him successful hunting, provided a tiny bow was placed in the porridge. The third sister ("old lady of the door"), Uks-Akka, received the newborn into the world of light. Uks-Akka lived just beneath the tent's entry, from which she blessed and protected anyone leaving home. (Alhbäck; Bäckman; Billson; Hoppál and Pentikäinen; Itkonen; Karsten; Ränk)

**Ma-Emma** The Estonian earth mother was honored wherever a tree stood alone in a meadow or where a pile of stones marked the foundation of an old house. Because Ma-Emma controlled fertility, humans depended on her and offered milk, butter, and wool in thanksgiving. Envisioned as a young woman in spring, she had to be fed manure in order to bear. When plowing, it was important not to strike the earth and injure her.

At Ma-Emma's midsummer feast, fires celebrated her fruitfulness. Animals were herded into the sacrificial smoke. Flowers and grasses, carried through the smoke by children, were fed to the cattle. The evening ended when the village's most distinguished woman led processions around the fire, then placed food on the earth. The earth goddess appears under an almost identical name, Maan Emä, among other Finns. (Comparetti; Paulson 1971)

**Marjatta** This maiden ate a red lingonberry that impregnated her. Cast out by her parents for her pregnancy, she bore a beautiful son in a manger, for she had no other place to give birth. Due to the stigma of his birth, the boy was unable to find anyone to christen him, but he found a friend in the poet god Väinämöinen, who predicted he would create a new world. The Christian references are clear, but the story may have roots in a pre-Christian original. (Lönnrot 1988)

**Mere-Ama** The Finn and Saami water goddess represented the ocean, but she also resided in streams and brooks that resembled her silver-streaked hair. When a bride moved into a new home, she made acquaintance with the area's "water mother" by offering bread and cheese at the nearest stream. The bride then sprinkled herself with water. Those married in winter, when Mere-Ama was frozen, gathered after the ice broke. All who participated were blessed with healthy children, for Mere-Ama controlled human reproduction. Mere-Ama ruled all creatures of the sea, both fish and mammal. To woo her good nature, humans poured liquor into the sea. Many fish would then bite, for Mere-Ama loved brandy. (Honko et al.)

**Metsannetsyt** In western Finland, this forest woman exposed herself to passing men. If they took her in their arms, they would find themselves embracing a tree stump. She lived in uncultivated land, where she could be helpful or harmful depending upon how humans treated her. (Holmberg; Lofstedt)

**Mielikki** Mielikki (“darling”) was the Finnish goddess of forests and the hunt, as well as the protector of animals. Her favorite animal was the bear; when she found orphaned cubs, she nurtured them into adulthood. She was also associated with the rituals of the circumpolar bear cult. The many tender terms for Mielikki (“good mistress”) suggest that the speakers saw the goddess as needing to be cajoled. Mielikki may be the same as Tellervo, the forest-mistress. She may also be a more kindly form of the hunters’ goddess **Kyllikki**. An alternative name for her, or a separate figure, was Hiiletär (“charcoal woman”), who provided fuel for cooking meat. Other associated figures, or titles of Mielikki, are **Hongas** (“fir-mistress”), a hollow-backed woman; Simater (“virgin honey woman”), who wore a silver belt; Nyrkitär, the dejected; and Elina, who snared rabbits.

Mielikki was the wife of the forest god, Tapio, whose daughters were numerous and well known: Tellervo, who wore gold and silver clothing; Lumikki, who kept white-furred animals safe; Ristikko, whose animals had a white cross on their breasts; Päis-täry, the weasel goddess; Vitsäri, the game-driver; the tree goddesses Tuometer (cherry), Pihlajatar (rowan), and Katajatar (juniper); and Tiuilikki, the wind goddess. Their daughters-in-law were Mikitar, the listening fox; Huijutar and Siiliki, the wasp goddesses; and Kärehetar, who brought foxes to hunters. (Abercromby vols. 1 and 2; Bonser; Lönnrot 1988)

**Mjer-jema** The Livonians of Latvia and Estonia honored the sea-mother Mjer-jema. When launching a new boat, the owner poured a glass of liquor into the water for Mjer-jema. She also received sacrifices on the first fishing trip each year, to bring good fortune and to keep away bad weather. Mjer-jema was the mother of the Mjer-titard, the “sea daughters,” who appear as mermaids (see **Näkinein**) in folktales. (Paulson 1971)

**Näkinein** The heavy-breasted water spirit of the Estonians, like the Finnish **Aufruvva**, could be seen combing her long splendid hair as she sat on a rock in the ocean. A beautiful siren, she was not threatening (see the Greek **Sirens**), but rather a force of abundance and herder of the cattle of the deep, the fish and sea mammals. (Holmberg; Paulson 1965)

**Ovda** Among the Russian Finns, this forest spirit looked like a woman with backward feet. She had long breasts that she threw over her shoulders when she ran. Her home was deep in the forest or in rock-caves where, when annoyed with humans, she caused whirlwinds that spun them around until they died. When threatened by her, people tried to touch the small hole under her left arm, which paralyzed her. (Holmberg)

**Päivätär** The spinning sun virgin Päivätär wove daylight from a rainbow arch. She held a weaver's batten, a heddle, and a golden shuttle. The cloth she wove was gold, while her moon-sister's was silver. **Louhi** captured and hid her, and the metal sun-image that replaced her proved unsatisfactory. So the poet Väinämöinen set out to free the sun. He went to Ilmarinen, the smith, and ordered a three-tined hoe, a dozen ice picks, and many keys. Louhi, seeing activity at the forge, disguised herself as a bird and flew over to spy. When she saw that it would be impossible to win over the determined heroes, she set the sun free. (Lönnrot 1988)

**Pohjan-Akka** This Saami goddess was mistress of Pohjan ("northern home"), where anyone who died a violent death lived forever, wearing blood-drenched garments. Witches could visit Pohjan in their living bodies, but no one else could find the place. A gloomy river flowed through Pohjan, torn by white-water rapids; after crossing the rapids, the dead passed through a dark gate into Pohjan-Akka's world. (Holmberg)

**Port-Kuva** The Cheremis said the house goddess Port-Kuva ("house woman") was invisible to human eyes unless disaster was near. Because she controlled such events, causing household accidents when people insulted her, anyone who saw her could repair the breach before ill befell them. Sacrifices of black animals were helpful. Bread and pancakes also sufficed, if placed under the floorboards. Boards creaking during the night meant the house goddess was walking about, checking her domain. Should families fail to keep a clean household, she departed, whereupon the house developed roof leaks and other problems. (Holmberg; Sebeok and Ingemann)

**Puges** The Ostian and Vogul goddess of heaven decided who would conceive and what the child's sex would be; she created the new soul, which she rocked until birth. She may have been the same as Vagneg-imi, "old woman of seven cradles," who carried a long pole on which hung threads representing lives. Her knots determined the length of people's lives. (Holmberg)

**Rana Neida** Among the southern Saami, this springtime goddess turned south-facing hills green early in the season, giving winter-starved reindeer fresh growth on which to graze. To gain her favor, the Saami rested a spinning wheel against her altar and covered it with blood. (Dioszegi; Holmberg)

**Rauni** The Finnish thunder goddess Rauni was incarnated in the rowan tree, whose red berries were sacred to her. She brought plant life to the earth's face by having intercourse with the thunder god; she was honored with reindeer sacrifices. (Ahlbäck; Holmberg)

**Šundi-Mumi** The Wotjakian and Votyak "Sun Mother" was connected with the fertility of fields, as was Gudiri-Mumu, the thunderstorm-mother, and the earth goddess Mu-kilšin-Mumi, "mother earth-creator." Sacrifices to the earth were appropriate only during the summer, because during the winter, she slept. The earth goddess favored sacrifices of animals with dark skin, the color of rich soil. (Paulson 1965)

**Szépásszony** Whether flatteringly called Szépásszony (“fair lady”) or Kissásszony (“fair maid”), this Hungarian fairy was a figure of fright. She danced with her companions in open areas, leaving raised circles of grass behind. She may have descended from an ancient weather divinity. Her connection with the sky is suggested by such terms for the Milky Way as “linen of Szépásszony” and “fairy way.” Like other fairy women, she stole handsome men away. (Dömötör; Pocs)

**Tündér Ilona** The Ugrians, including the Hungarians, said that the sun was an egg that Tündér Ilona, taking the shape of a swan, laid in the sky. This figure may be the same as the fairy queen Helena (see **Firtos**), for Ilona is a Hungarian version of that name; the first part of Tündér Ilona’s name refers to a supernatural woman with the power to make things invisible. She is prominent in Transylvanian folktales. (Róheim)

**Tuonetar** The Finnish queen of death lived in darkness near a black-watered river. It was possible to reach Tuonela, Tuonetar’s country, by hiking seven days through underbrush, seven through woodlands, and seven through dense forest. Finally, the traveler reached the banks of the river where Tuonetar’s daughters laundered their dark robes. Few survived contact with these goddesses of disease. If one reached the death queen, Tuonetar offered a brew of frogs and worms; drinking it made return to the land of life impossible. (Comparetti; Lönnrot 1988)

**Vad-leány** The “forest girl” of the Hungarians lived in wild country, where she ran from hunters unless they wore fine boots. If caught, she mourned until she reunited with her baby son, but she could be convinced to leave the child with humans to be reared. Vad-leány often seduced men; rustling leaves was the sound of the forest-girl and her human lovers. (Dömötör)

**Vellamo** The Finnish “mother of the water” guided fish into the nets of the hungry. Vellamo was ancient, her worship having been recorded almost 2,000 years ago. She had many daughters, the sea’s waves, who tended cattle and raised crops on the ocean’s floor. Fishermen who needed help locating shoals of fish invoked another goddess, Juoleheter. (Abercromby vol. 1; Lönnrot 1988; Honko et al.)

**Vitsa-Kuva** The Cheremis “cattleyard lady” appeared every night among the flocks, a white-dressed lady who caused animals to mate if she liked their owner, thus increasing the family wealth. Woe to the person to whom Vitsa-Kuva took a dislike: she would drive the cattle through the fields all day until, unable to stop long enough to eat, they fell down dead. (Holmberg)

**Xatel-Ekwa** The Hungarian sun goddess rode through the sky mounted simultaneously on three horses. Her daughter Xoli-Kalteš, the dawn, was a hot-blooded young woman who baked men who came to court her. When Xatel-Ekwa found this occurring, she rescued the young men. Among the Hungarians, both moon and sun were female. (Buday; Hoppál 2000; Róheim)

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# GREECE

The lasting influence of Greek mythology stems from the region's early development of literacy. By the 7th century BCE, the Greeks recorded their myths in epic, lyric, and dramatic poetry, and these are still read today. But literature can hide as well as reveal. What appears a highly structured pantheon, with careful lines of descent among divinities, was originally a complex group of tales from various ethnic groups and eras. Among those myths were those that contradicted or subverted Greek visions of appropriate womanly behavior.

The question of the status of women in ancient Greece is similarly complex. By the historical period, Greek women lived a restricted life, but the goddesses they worshiped showed impressive power, perhaps because they were vestiges of earlier cultures. Archaeology suggests that goddesses figured more significantly in the religion of Crete and its mainland colony, Mycenae, than in Greece after invasion by patriarchal Indo-Europeans. The wealthy Cretan culture flourished around 1600 BCE, only to be destroyed in 1200 BCE, probably by earthquakes and volcanic explosions. Before its destruction, this Minoan culture gave prominence to goddesses. Minoan art shows bare-breasted women worshipping naked goddesses. Cretan myths emphasize a mother goddess, but also show vulnerable maiden goddesses.

During the height of Cretan power, a proto-Indo-European group settled on the mainland, where they adopted Minoan culture. These Mycenaean Greeks left inscriptions to Hera, Artemis, and Athena, showing that classical divinities had roots in the earlier culture. Mycenaean appear in the epics of Homer, recorded around 800 BCE, but referring to events of at least 500 years earlier. Helen, Clytemnestra, and other strong female characters existed in the oral tradition before appearing in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

The Indo-Europeans, who based both family and religion on father figures, arrived in waves over many centuries. Under the Dorians in 1200 BCE, Mycenaean cities were destroyed and their religious sites sacked. The next 400 years show little cultural



**Cretan Snake Goddess.** Many copies of this figure have been found on the island of Crete, with one of the most stunning examples now located in the Heraklion Archaeological Museum there. Scholars debate whether the image shows a goddess or a priestess performing a ritual.

development. But earlier religions did not disappear, for the invaders' gods were "married" to indigenous earth goddesses. Thus, the thunderer Zeus married the important goddess Hera, as well as raping or seducing innumerable other divine women.

Around 800 BCE, classical Greece emerged with a developed religion and a carefully organized pantheon of divinities that included these earlier goddesses. For the next 200 years, Greek cities held sway over the Mediterranean. Athens, Sparta, Argos, and Thebes were similar in the status afforded to women. Greek women were cloistered in households and rarely interacted with men outside their immediate families. Slave women, both Greek and foreign, had few rights and lived lives of dangerous vulnerability. The exceptions were *hetaerae*, highly educated courtesans who provided entertainment and stimulation for powerful men.

Despite these limitations, Greek women had a place in religious life. In Athens, women offered rituals that showcased their economic contribution through home industries such as weaving. Because the division of “secular” from “spiritual” was not sharp, women holding positions of religious power may have had some secular power as well. The question of the status of Greek women, including their religious rites and duties, is a subject of scholarly debate.

Later, goddesses from other lands migrated with their worshipers. In some cases, room was made for newcomers in the pantheon; such was the case with Aphrodite, an immigrant from the eastern Mediterranean. But other goddesses were too distant from patriarchal values to be welcomed into the divine order. Thus Cybele, great mother of the Thracians to the north, was never accepted into Mount Olympus, though she was honored as Meter, “mother.”

As in many lands, ancient Greek religion was not entirely wiped out with the coming of Christianity. Until the early 20th century, superstitions derived from the older religion were practiced, and place-names reveal old sites of worship. In recent times, revival of Greek paganism has been attempted. In Greece, which by law supports the Greek Orthodox Church, such worship is illegal. In the United States, Hellenic revival paganism, a reconstructed religion, has adherents. Finally, Greek goddesses are invoked in Wiccan rituals, despite the fact that the Wiccan religion claims descent from western European paganism.

## GREEK PANTHEON

Ablabaiæ. *See Eumenides*

Abrya. *See Nymphs*

Acantha. *See Nymphs*

Achamantis. *See Danae*

Acheloides. *See Sirens*

**Achlys**

Acidalia. *See Aphrodite*

Acme. *See Horae*

**Adamanthea**

Adicia. *See Dike*

**Admete**

Adrastea. *See Adamanthea*

Aeaea. *See Circe*

**Aedon**

**Aega**

Aegia. *See Aega*

Aegle. *See Nymphs*

Aegophagos. *See Hera*

Aella. *See Amazons*

Aello. *See Harpies*

Aellopos. *See Iris*

**Aethilla**

**Aethra**

Aetole *Javelin-thrower. See Artemis*

Agave. *See Maenads*

Agirope. *See Eurydice*

Aglaia. *See Charites*

Aglaope. *See Sirens*

**Aglauros**

Agoraea *Protector of assemblies; see Athena, Artemis*

Agraulids. *See Agraulos*

Agrotera *Huntress; see Artemis*

**Aidos**

Ainippe. *See Amazons*

Aithuia *Diver bird; see Athena*

**Alcestis**

**Alcippe**

**Alcmene**

Alcyone. *See Halcyone*

Alecto. *See Erinyes*

Alektro. *See Erinyes*

Alexandra. *See* **Cassandra**

Algea. *See* **Ate**

Alicibie. *See* **Amazons**

**Amalthea**

**Amazons**

Ambologera *Delayer of age; see*

*Aphrodite*

Ambrosia. *See* **Nymphs**

**Amphitrite**

**Amymone**

Anadyomene *Rising from waves; see*

*Aphrodite*

Anaea. *See* **Anaitis**

Anagke *Ananke.*

**Ananke**

Anatole. *See* **Horae**

**Anaxarete**

**Andromanche**

**Andromeda**

Andromena. *See* **Andromeda**

Aneitis. *See* **Anaitis**

Anemotis *Subduer of winds; see* **Athena**

Anesidora *Sending forth gifts; see*

*Demeter, Pandora*

Antianara. *See* **Amazons**

**Antigone**

Antiope. *See* **Amazons**

**Aotis**

Aphaia. *See* **Athena**

**Aphrodite**

**Arachne**

Areia *Warlike; see* **Aphrodite, Athena**

**Arete**

Arge. *See* **Maenads**

**Ariadne**

Aridella. *See* **Ariadne**

Arktos. *See* **Callisto**

Arsinoe. *See* **Anaxarete**

**Artemis**

Asia. *See* **Athena**

Assesia. *See* **Athena**

Astateia. *See* **Artemis**

**Asteria**

**Astraea**

Astraia. *See* **Astraea**

**Atalanta**

**Ate**

Athana Lindia. *See* **Lindia**

**Athena**

Athene. *See* **Athena**

Atlantides. *See* **Hesperides**

Atropos. *See* **Moirae**

Auiocersa. *See* **Anieros**

Aura. *See* **Maenads**

Autonoe. *See* **Maenads**

Auxo. *See* **Charites**

Axiocersa. *See* **Auiocersa**

Axiopoenois *Avenger; see* **Athena**

Azesia. *See* **Demeter, Persephone**

Bacchantes. *See* **Maenads**

Base. *See* **Athena**

Bassarae. *See* **Maenads**

**Baubo**

**Baucis**

**Bia**

Boulaia *Counselor. See* **Athena**

Brauronia. *See* **Artemis, Callisto**

Brimo. *See* **Demeter, Rhea, Hecate, Persephone**

**Britomartis**

**Brizo**

**Byblis**

**Caenis**

Calliope. *See* **Musae**

Callipygos *Beautiful buttocks; see*  
*Aphrodite*

Callirrhoe. *See* **Hera**

Calliste. *See* **Callisto**

**Callisto**

Callithyia. *See* **Hera**

**Calypso**

**Campe**

Carpo. *See* **Horae**

**Carya**

Caryatids. *See* **Carya**

Caryatis. *See* **Carya**

**Cassandra**

Cassiopeia. *See* **Andromeda**

Castalia. *See* **Musae**

Celaeno. *See* **Harpies**

Cer. *See Ker*

**Cerberus**

**Ceto**

Chalasiope. *See Medea*

Chalinitis. *See Athena*

Charmaine Soil; *see Demeter*

Chaos Abyss.

**Charilla**

Charis. *See Charites*

**Charites**

Charmel. *See Britomartis*

**Charybdis**

**Chelone**

Chelone *Turtle*.

Chera. *See Hera*

**Chimera**

Chitone. *See Artemis*

Chloe. *See Demeter*

Chloris. *See Niobe*

Chthonia *Earthly*; *see Hecate, Nyx*

Chysothenius. *See Iphigenia*

**Circe**

Cleodoxa. *See Niobe*

Cleodora. *See Danae*

Cleta. *See Charites*

Clio. *See Musae*

Clotho. *See Moirae*

Clymene. *See Nymphs*

**Clytemnestra**

Clytie. *See Nymphs*

Cora *Kore*.

Coronides. *See Koronides*

**Coronis**

Creta. *See Pasiphae*

Crete. *See Pasiphae*

Crocale. *See Artemis*

Cydippe. *See Hera*

**Cynosura**

Cynthia. *See Artemis*

Cypris. *See Aphrodite*

**Cyrene**

Cythereia. *See Aphrodite*

Da. *See Gaia*

Damatres. *See Demeter*

**Damia**

**Danae**

Danaids. *See Danae*

**Daphne**

Deino. *See Graeae*

**Dejanira**

Delia. *See Artemis*

Delphine. *See Python*

**Demeter**

Dendritis. *See Helen*

Derceto. *See Ceto*

Despoina *Maiden*.

Dice. *See Dike*

Dictynna. *See Britomartis*

**Dike**

**Dione**

Dirae. *See Erinyes*

Dirphya. *See Hera*

Doris *Ocean*.

Dryads. *See Nymphs*

**Dryope**

**Ececheira**

Echenais. *See Nymphs*

**Echidna**

**Echo**

Eidothea. *See Idothea*

Eidyia. *See Ipsia*

Eileithuia. *See Hera*

**Eileithyia**

**Eireisone**

**Eirene**

**Electra**

**Eleos**

Elias. *See Oeno*

Elionia *See Eileithyia*

Elphis *Hope*.

Enodia. *See Hecate*

Enyo. *See Graeae*

**Eos**

Epaine *Awesome*; *see Persephone*

Ephesia. *See Artemis*

Epicaste. *See Jocasta*

Erato. *See Musae*

Ergane *Worker*; *see Athena*

**Erigone**

**Erinyes**

Erioboa. *See Amazons*

**Eris**

Erycina. *See Aphrodite*

Erysiptolis *City protector; see Athena*

Erytheis. *See Hesperides*

Eudora. *See Nymphs*

Eumenides. *See Erinyes*

Eunomia. *See Horae*

Euphrosyne. *See Charites*

**Europa**

Euryale. *See Gorgons*

Eurycleia *Abundance.*

**Eurydice**

**Eurynome**

Euterpe. *See Musae*

Eutychia *Happiness.*

Fates. *See Moirae*

Furiae/Furies. *See Erinyes*

Gaea. *See Gaia*

**Gaia**

**Galatea**

Ganymeda. *See Hebe*

Ge. *See Gaia*

Gello. *See Lamia*

**Glauce**

Glaukopsis *Owl-eyed; see Athena*

**Gorgons**

Graces. *See Charites*

**Graeae**

Gratia. *See Charites*

**Hagne**

**Hairo**

**Halcyone**

Halia. *See Leucothea*

**Harmonia**

**Harpies**

**Hebe**

Hecaerge *Hitting from a distance; see Artemis, Aphrodite*

**Hecate**

Hecuba. *See Cassandra*

**Hegemone**

Heimarmene *Fate.*

Hekate. *See Hecate*

**Helen**

Helene. *See Helen*

**Heliades**

**Helle**

Hemera. *See Eos, Nyx*

Hemithea. *See Leucothea*

**Hera**

Hermione. *See Helen*

**Hero**

Herophile. *See Lamia*

Herse. *See Aglauros*

**Hesperides**

**Hestia**

Hetaira *Courtesan; see Aphrodite*

Hiera. *See Amazons*

Himeropa. *See Sirens*

Himeros. *See Aphrodite*

Hippia. *See Demeter*

**Hippodamia**

Hippolyte. *See Amazons*

**Hipta**

**Horae**

Horae. *See Charites*

Horephoros *Good weather; see Demeter*

**Hydra**

**Hygieia**

**Hypermnestra**

Hypsipyle. *See Lemna*

Iambe. *See Baubo*

Iaso. *See Hygieia*

Ida. *See Rhea, Meter*

**Idothea**

Idothea *Sea.*

Ilithyia. *See Eileithyia*

Imbrasia. *See Hera*

**Ino**

**Invidia**

**Io**

Iole. *See Dejanira*

**Iphigenia**

Iphinoë. *See Lycippe*

**Ipsia**

Irene. *See Eirene*

**Iris**

Ismene. *See Antigone*

Iynx. *See Echo*

**Jocasta**

Kakia *Vice*.

Kalliste. *See Callisto*

Kapheira. *See Leucothea*

Karpophoros. *See Lindia*

**Ker**

Keres. *See Ker*

Kidaria *Mask*; *see Demeter*

Kirke. *See Circe*

Kleio. *See Musae*

Klete. *See Charites*

Klotho. *See Moirae*

Kore *Maiden*; *see Persephone*

**Koronides**

Korythalia. *See Artemis*

Lachesis. *See Moirae*

**Lamia****Lampetia**

Laosoos *Rouser*; *see Athena, Eris*

Latona. *See Leto*

**Leda****Lemna**

Lenae. *See Maenads*

Lernaea. *See Demeter*

**Lethe****Leto**

Leucippe. *See Maenads*

Leucosia. *See Sirens*

**Leucothea**

Ligeia. *See Sirens*

Limnades. *See Nymphs*

**Lindia****Litae**

Lotis. *See Nymphs*

Lousia. *See Demeter*

Lyceia *Wolfish*; *see Artemis*

**Lycippe**

Lygodesma. *See Artemis*

Lysippe. *See Amazons*

Lyssa. *See Maenads*

**Macaria**

Macris. *See Maenads*

**Maenads****Maia**

Majesta. *See Maia*

Maniae. *See Erinyes*

**Manto**

Marigo. *See Demeter*

Marpe. *See Amazons*

**Marpessa**

Mechanites *Inventor*; *see Athena, Aphrodite*

**Medea****Medusa****Megara**

Meilichia *Underworld*.

Melete. *See Musae*

Meliae. *See Nymphs*

**Melissa**

Melite. *See Meta*

Melpomene. *See Musae*

**Menalippe**

Mene. *See Selene*

Menippe. *See Koronides*

**Mentha**

Mentha *Mint*.

**Meta**

Metaneira. *See Demeter*

**Meter**

Methe. *See Maenads*

Metioche. *See Koronides*

**Metis**

Metlitos *Sweet*; *see Persephone*

Minithya. *See Thalestris*

Minta. *See Mentha*

Mise. *See Baubo*

Mneme. *See Musae*

**Mnemosyne**

Moirra. *See Moirae*

**Moirae**

Mormo. *See Lamia*

Mousae. *See Musae*

**Musae**

Myrine *Swift*; *see Amazons*

**Myrmex****Myrrha**

Myrrha *Myrtle tree*.

Naiads. *See Nymphs*

**Nemesis****Nephele**

Neptunis. *See Artemis*

Nereids. *See Nymphs*

Nicippe. *See Demeter*

**Nike**

**Niobe**

Nox. *See Nyx*

Nymphenome. *See Hera*

**Nymphs**

**Nyx**

Oceanids. *See Nymphs*

Ocypete. *See Harpies*

**Oeno**

Oiorpata. *See Amazons*

Omphale. *See Amazons*

Onga. *See Athena*

Ophthalmitis *Good seer; see Athena*

Oreads. *See Nymphs*

**Oreithya**

Orthia *Causing erections; see Aphrodite, Artemis*

Orthosia. *See Artemis*

**Ossa**

Otrere. *See Amazons*

Padrita. *See Aphrodite*

Paeonia *Healer; see Athena*

Pais *Girl; see Persephone, Hera*

Palagia *Ocean; see Aphrodite*

**Pallas**

Panacea. *See Hygieia*

Pandemos. *See Aphrodite*

**Pandora**

Pandrosos. *See Agraulos*

Panope. *See Nymphs*

Panopea. *See Nymphs*

Pantariste. *See Amazons*

Paphia. *See Aphrodite*

Paphos. *See Aphrodite*

Parthenia. *See Athena, Hera*

Parthenope. *See Sirens*

Pasikrateia. *See Persephone, Artemis*

**Pasiphae**

Pasithea. *See Nymphs, Charites*

Pedrite. *See Aphrodite*

Peisinoe. *See Sirens*

**Peitho**

Pemphredo. *See Graeae*

**Penelope**

Penthesilea. *See Amazons*

Pepromene *Individual destiny.*

**Pero**

Perone *Pero.*

**Perse**

**Persephone**

**Phaedra**

Phaenna. *See Charites*

Pharmacides *Sorcerer and herbalist.*

Pheraia *Moon.*

Philia. *See Aphrodite*

Phillippis. *See Amazons*

Philomela. *See Philomena*

**Philomena**

Phlea *Fruitful; see Demeter*

Phoebe. *See Selene*

Phosphoros *Light-bringer; see Artemis, Eos, Hecate*

Phratria *Lawgiver; see Athena*

Phyrne. *See Hecate*

**Physis**

Phytia. *See Leto*

Pitho. *See Peitho*

Pitys. *See Nymphs*

Plataia. *See Hera*

**Pleiades**

Pleias. *See Maia*

Plutos *Richness; see Persephone*

Podarge. *See Harpies*

Poine. *See Nemesis*

Poldare. *See Harpies*

Polias *City guardian; see Athena*

**Polycaste**

Polyhymnia. *See Musae*

Pontia. *See Aphrodite*

Porne *Titillator; see Aphrodite*

Posidaeia. *See Mnasa*

**Potnia**

Potniae. *See Erinyes*

**Praxidice**

Procne. *See Philomena*

**Procris**

Progne. *See Philomena*

Promachos *Champion; see Athena*

Pronoea *Forethought; see Athena*

Protogenia. *See Pyrrha*

Prothoe. *See Amazons*

**Pyrrha**

**Pythia**

**Python**

Rhamnubia. *See Nemesis*

**Rhea**

**Rhode**

Salmachis. *See*

Salpinx *Trumpet; see Athena*

**Satyria**

**Scylla**

Selena. *See Selene*

**Selene**

**Semele**

Semnae. *See Erinyes*

**Sirens**

Smilax *Flower.*

**Spes**

**Sphinx**

Sthenno. *See Gorgons*

**Styx**

Syrinx. *See Nymphs*

Tartara *Earth.*

Taurice. *See Artemis*

Teleia. *See Hera*

Telphassa *Light.*

Telphusa. *See Nymphs*

Terpsichore. *See Musae*

**Tethys**

**Thalassa**

Thalath. *See Thalassa*

Thalestris. *See Amazons*

Thalia. *See Musae, Charites*

Thallo. *See Horae*

**Thea**

Theira. *See Thea*

Thelchtereia. *See Sirens*

**Themis**

Thermodosa. *See Amazons*

Thesmia. *See Demeter, Persephone*

Thesmophoros *Wealth-bringer; see Demeter, Persephone*

**Thetis**

Thia. *See Thea.*

Thyiades. *See Maenads*

Thyone. *See Semele*

Tisiphone. *See Erinyes*

Tomyris. *See Amazons*

Trivia *Three; see Hecate*

Upis. *See Artemis*

Ursa Major. *See Callisto*

Zosteria *Girded for battle; see Athena*

Zygia. *See Hera*

**Achlys** Pale and thin, with long fingernails, bloody cheeks, and dusty shoulders, Achlys wept constantly while her teeth chattered loudly. The shield of **Hera's** warrior, Heracles, depicted her, as a warning to his opponents of the misery he could cause. (Smith vol. 1)

**Adamanthea** This obscure figure nonetheless holds an important place in Greek mythology, for Zeus could not have become the preeminent Greek god without the help of the **Nymph** or princess Adamanthea. His father Chronos intended to swallow the infant god, as he had swallowed Zeus's earlier-born siblings. But earth mother **Rhea** hid the infant in Crete, in the care of Adamanthea. Chronos ruled earth, heavens, and sea; he could see anything that existed in his realm. But the infant god's new nurse was clever. Adamanthea hung a cradle from a tree and there—suspended between earth, sea, and sky—Zeus was invisible to his destructive father. In other versions of

the story, the nurse of Zeus is named **Aega**, Ida, Adrastea, Neda, Helice, or **Cynosura**. The relation of this figure to the goat **Amalthea** is unclear. (Smith vol. 1)

**Admete** This priestess of **Hera** stole the image of the goddess from her home in Argos and carried it to the island of Samos. When the Argives tried to steal their statue back, the ship carrying it would not move, so the thieves abandoned it on the shore. There the Samians found Hera's image, purified it through bathing, and moved it into their temple, after which they held an annual festival in honor of these events, in which the statue was tied to a tree so that it could not be moved. Stories like this often recall the transmission of a goddess cult from one area to another; and indeed, Hera is found in both Samos and Argos, although it is unclear which was the original site of worship. The ritual describes the annual spring rite in which Hera was bathed and tied to the sacred lugal tree in order to transfer her regenerated power to the vegetal world. The name of the priestess, "untamed," connects her with unbroken young horses, symbols of fecundity. (O'Brien 1993)

**Aedon** The queen of ancient Thebes plotted to murder the eldest son of her sister and rival, the fertile queen **Niobe**, but accidentally killed her own child. Stricken by remorse and grief, Aedon attempted suicide and was transformed into the first nightingale, a bird that haunts the night with its mournful cry. Such tales of transformations of humans into animals and birds may derive from a period when totemic ancestry was acknowledged or may derive from "just-so" stories of how animals came to have certain characteristics.

Another myth says that Aedon was such a happy wife that she became the object of the jealous **Hera's** ire, perhaps because she boasted of her happiness. The goddess sent **Eris** to destroy Aedon's marriage. Aedon was lured into suggesting a contest to her husband: the first one to finish the projects they were working on (he a carved chair, she a piece of embroidery) would win a female slave. She won the contest but lost her husband, because he dressed her sister Chelidonis as a slave, raped her, threatened her with death should she reveal her identity, and gave her as the promised prize to Aedon. When Chelidonis, believing herself alone, bemoaned her fate, Aedon overheard her and was horrified at what she learned. The sisters then killed Aedon's son and served the flesh to him for dinner and then escaped to their father's home. When the husband came looking for her, Aedon's family covered him with honey and exposed him to ants, but she took pity on him. As she was about to rescue him, Zeus turned the whole family into birds. Aedon became a nightingale, and Chelidonis a swallow. For a similar tale, see **Philomena**. (Graves vol. 2; Homer 1996)

**Aega** Like her sisters **Circe** and **Pasiphae**, this daughter of the sun was hypnotically beautiful, so beautiful that when the earthborn giants, the Titans, attacked the gods of Olympus, the earth mother **Gaia** placed Aega in a cave to hide her shimmering loveliness. It is probable that behind these Greek legends lies a myth in which the three sisters were connected with the sun, for Pasiphae means "she who shines for all," while Circe means "circle." The name also appears as one of the **Nymphs** who nursed the god Zeus, slaughtered so that her skin might become a shield to protect the baby

god, while Aega herself was transported to the sky either as a star or as the constellation Capella. Again, solar imagery is involved, for the name of Aega's sister was given as Helice, "sunny." (Graves vol. 1; Smith vol. 1)

**Aethilla** After the Greeks defeated Troy, they captured the city's women with the intention of keeping them as sexual slaves. The Trojan princess Aethilla refused to live in slavery. When the ship of her captor Protesilaus stopped for supplies, Aethilla organized a mutiny. While their captors were onshore, the princess and her companions set fire to the ship, stranding the Greeks and permitting the captives to escape. They founded the historical town of Scione. (Smith vol. 1)

**Aethra** This princess of Troezen was betrothed to the hero Bellerophon, who tamed **Medusa's** son, the winged horse Pegasus. But he was mysteriously banished before they could marry. Inspired by a dream, Aethra traveled to the island of Sphaeria, where she was visited by the ocean god Poseidon. She changed the island's name to Hieria and built a temple to **Athena Apaturia** ("the lying one"), to whom brides offered their girdles. Aethra became the mother of the hero Theseus, whose father may have been Poseidon. She then became a slave of **Helen**, with whom she was spirited away to Troy. Her sons were killed in the conflict and, although freed upon the Greek victory, she killed herself in sorrow for her children's deaths. Aethra's story brings together many important goddesses in a confusing narrative. That she was so consistently connected to Poseidon, the original husband of the earth goddess (see **Demeter, Gaia**) suggests she may have originally been a divinity of some power.

Another Aethra was the mother of the Athenian king Theseus, whose father Aegeus had been given advice by the oracle at Delphi (see **Pythia**) about the best way to bear heroic children. The Pythia warned Aegeus not to "loose the jutting neck of the wine-skin . . . until you have come once again to the city of Athens." Aegeus interpreted this as an instruction not to have intercourse with any woman until he had returned home. But the oracle spoke in riddles. Pittheus of Troezen offered Aegeus an alternative interpretation of the oracle: that he should sleep with Aethra, Pittheus's daughter. Aegeus left Aethra immediately after impregnating her, hiding tokens of his identity under a stone with instructions that the child, upon reaching manhood, should claim them and follow his father to the court. After her service in bearing the hero, this Aethra disappears from legend. (Plutarch 1960; Smith vol. 1)

**Aglauros** Before **Athena** ruled Athens, a trinity of earth goddesses named Aglauros, Herse, and Pandrosos represented the bonds of society. Later, Athena joined them in a complex myth. Athena entrusted the sisters with a box and gave them a warning not to open it. When the curious girls nevertheless peeked, they discovered Athena's snake son, Erechtheus (sometimes said to have been the child of Aglauros). Variants of the myth say that Aglauros and Herse were driven insane; or that Aglauros was turned into a stone; or that Aglauros threw herself from the Acropolis. Into classical times, girls of noble families served Athena in her temple on the Acropolis and assisted with a secret rite in honor of Aglauros and her sisters. (Kerényi 1978; Larson 1995; Ovid 1958; Reeder)

**Aidos** One of the primary attendants of the love goddess **Aphrodite** was the minor goddess Aidos, “modesty.” The daughter of **Nyx**, she had huge dark wings to cover the secrets of lovers. She accompanied Aphrodite everywhere, for love thrives most when accompanied by self-respect. Aidos has also been called the goddess of shame, although the Greeks distinguished the proper modesty of Aidos from a sense of disgrace, described by another word. (Sanford)

**Alcestis** The Greeks’ image of a loyal wife was Alcestis, who died for her husband when he committed sacrilege. She was the daughter of a tyrannical father, Pelias, who refused to let her marry unless a suitor came in a chariot drawn by a lion and a wild boar linked together. The king Admetus did so, with the help of the sun god Apollo, but he forgot to offer thanksgiving sacrifices to the god’s sister, **Artemis**. No one else would agree to die for the king, so Alcestis offered her own life. But the queen of the dead, **Persephone**, refused to accept her in Hades and sent her back to life. It is unclear whether Alcestis joined her sisters in murdering their father Pelias after being bewitched by **Medea**. (Euripides *Alcestis*)

**Alcippe** The rape of this daughter of **Aglauros** occasioned the first murder trial. Alcippe (“mighty mare”) was assaulted by a son of Poseidon, god of oceans, whereupon her father, the war god Ares, killed the offender. Called by the gods to account for his actions, Ares was acquitted once he made the facts clear. As Poseidon also raped the goddess **Demeter** while they were both in the shape of horses, this may be an altered version of that story. (Apollodorus; Graves vol. 1; Kerényi 1978; Pausanias)

**Alcmene** While her husband was away at war, Alcmene was surprised to find him at her doorstep one night. But it was not her husband, but Zeus, who lusted after her. Their tryst lasted three nights but seemed shorter, because Zeus asked the sun god to lengthen the night in order to better his enjoyment. Zeus left Alcmene unknowingly pregnant with divine seed. When her husband returned, she expressed delight in the time they had spent together, leaving him baffled and jealous. He consulted an oracle and learned the truth, then never slept with her again for fear of divine jealousy. Her son was the hero Heracles. Alcmene, although described as a mortal woman, may be a goddess. (Euripides *Heracleidae*, *Hippolytus*; Graves vol. 2; Larson 1995; Motz)

**Amalthea** This magical nanny goat provided such copious milk that the baby god Zeus never went hungry. When he grew up, Zeus turned one of Amalthea’s horns into the cornucopia. After providing for humankind, the goat rose into heaven, where she became the constellation Capricorn. She may be the same as the **Nymph** Adamanthea, who hid Zeus from his destructive father. (Smith vol. 1)

**Amazons** One of the most powerful female images to emerge from Greek culture is that of the one-breasted warrior woman, the Amazon, who spurned men except for the occasional night needed to produce daughters; sons were either exposed or given to their fathers. To the Greeks, Amazons were mighty warriors, bearing ivy-shaped shields and double-bladed axes as they marched under their war queen. Under their

peace queen, the Amazons supplied all their own needs and produced coveted artwork. From 1000 to 600 BCE, the Greeks believed their Amazon enemies controlled the shores of the Black Sea.

Did the Amazons exist? Some theorists contend that because northern tribeswomen fought alongside their men, their presence was extrapolated into an entire kingdom. Others argue that the Amazons were projections of the Greek male mind, fearful of what might happen if subjected women were free to do as they pleased.

Many sources claim that the word Amazon means “breastless.” Supposedly, Amazons amputated their right breasts, the better to draw the bow. But Greek art never depicts mutilated women. Rather, artists showed Amazons with two intact breasts, one bared. The false etymology may have arisen to promote the idea of Amazons as unwomanly.

Legends about Amazons connect them with mythic heroes such as Heracles who, for murdering his children, was sentenced to perform 12 virtually impossible tasks, one of which was to bring back the Amazon’s golden belt of queenship. With a huge force, Heracles sailed to the land of women and marched to the palace, surrounded by armed Amazons. Far from resisting, Queen Hippolyta offered him the belt in peace, and her bed with it.

Rumor flew that Hippolyta was under attack, and the Amazons counterattacked. It ended poorly for the Amazons, who were no match for the superhuman Heracles. They were forced to surrender their leaders Melanippe and Antiope, and beautiful Hippolyta lay dead. Antiope was carried back to Athens in chains and given to King Theseus. She became either Theseus’s concubine or his legal wife and bore him a son, Hippolytus, named after Hippolyta. But Theseus tired of Antiope. This outraged the Amazons, who attacked Athens, penetrating right to the sacred hill, the Acropolis. There, the battle reached an awful pitch, with Antiope dying still captive and many other Amazons losing their lives in the heroic but futile effort. The defeated women retreated, and the trail home was lined with their shield-shaped gravestones.

Many authors related this famous legend, with variant details. Hippolyta may have wished to follow Amazonian convention by assuring that Heracles was strong enough to father sturdy children, and the Amazon warriors mistook their wrestling match for an attack. She may have died in that first attack, or she may have led the Amazon raid to free Antiope. Theseus, who sometimes substitutes for Heracles in myth, may have been her captor. Some tales say that there were three queens, the third being Melanippe, who was either held captive in Athens or led the rescue force. Finally, a queen named Oreithyia appears in some versions, merging sometimes with Hippolyta, sometimes with Antiope. Clearly, the story of the attempt to gain the Amazon’s symbol of sovereignty, and their attempt to gain it back, held a powerful place in the Greek mind.

Stories of Amazons distinguish them from the typical Greek woman. Amazons mated with whomever they wished. One Amazon queen, Thalestris, selected only kings and princes for sexual duty. She had borne several children when she cast eyes on Alexander of Macedon and invited him to fertilize her, an offer he took as a compliment. The Libyan Amazon queen Omphale purchased attractive male concubines because she knew no man could equal a queen. When the hero Heracles came up for sale, Omphale bought him and dressed him in transparent purple dresses.

Amazonian feats in battle were more often described than those of the bedroom. Hiera, a famous Mysian general, fought in the Trojan War. Lysippe, the first to use cavalry, used her brass-bowed warriors to expand her empire throughout Asia Minor. After Lysippe was killed, her Amazons conquered Thrace and Syria under the leadership of Marpesia. The army marched through Ephesus, finally reaching the Aegean Sea.

Myrine subdued Atlantis with 30,000 mounted women warriors supported by 3,000 infantrywomen, armed with bows and protected by snakeskin armor. Myrine executed the Atlantean men and enslaved the women and children. Then she established a city in her name and signed a truce with the Atlantean women to protect them against the fierce neighboring **Gorgons**. When the Amazons relaxed, the Atlanteans concluded a secret alliance with the Gorgons and overthrew the women warriors.

Myrine escaped and conquered Lesbos, Samothrace, and Lemnos. Caught in a storm, she sacrificed to **Artemis** and was spared, thereafter setting up shrines in the goddess's honor. She died in battle in Thrace, when an alliance of kings invaded Asia Minor; she gave her name to the city of Myrina, as did Amazons who founded Ephesus, Smyrna, and Kyme.

Perhaps the most famous Amazon was Penthesilea, who went to Troy accompanied by a troop that, although outnumbered, nearly turned the tide of battle. Penthesilea engaged the Greek hero Achilles in single combat. The contest was close, but Penthesilea was overcome and killed. Achilles, tearing off her helmet to see his worthy opponent, was surprised to find she was a woman, then raped her corpse and killed a comrade who suggested that this was unnatural.

Some Amazon legends may be based in fact. One historical queen was Scythian Tomyris. When Cyrus the Great invaded her country, Tomyris attempted to negotiate a truce. He refused; she sent her son against the invader, who took him prisoner; the young prince committed suicide in shame. In retaliation, Tomyris destroyed Cyrus's army and captured the king. She killed him, then tossed his severed head into a vat of blood, instructing him to drink his fill.

Some sources say the Amazon's ancestral goddess was Otrere, also a title of distinction for women leaders. The mother of famous Amazon queens, Otrere was a daughter of the war god Ares or his wife. More typically, the Amazonian goddess was Artemis. Legend says that queen Lysippe built temples to Artemis with the spoils of her victories. Hippo, with queens Marpesia and Lampado, inaugurated the worship of Artemis at Ephesus. They set up a wooden image of Artemis and performed a shield dance, stamping the ground rhythmically and shaking quivers as pipes played a warlike melody.

Archaeologists have found evidence suggesting mounted nomadic warriors in the region where the Greeks placed the Amazons. Rich graves have revealed remains of women buried with symbols of both religion and the battlefield. Vestiges of the women's garments, which have been well preserved despite their antiquity, are strikingly similar to garments shown on Amazons in Greek art. (Davis-Kimball; Bennet; Hawley and Levick; Blundell and Williamson; Lefkowitz; Cameron and Kuhrt; Homer 1951; Ovid 1995; Plutarch 1960; Sobol; Suhr 1953)

**Amphitrite** Amphitrite was a sea goddess whom the invading Greeks “married” to their god Poseidon, demoting her to a **Nymph**. Amphitrite fled to the Atlas Mountains; but later, coaxed into marriage, she bore several children, among them the island goddess Rhode. When Poseidon began an affair with **Scylla**, Amphitrite turned her into a sea monster. (Hesiod; Smith vol. 1)

**Amymone** When she went to fetch water for her father during a drought, Amymone encountered a fine stag. She drew her bow and shot at it, but missed and hit a sleeping satyr. Furious, the satyr leapt upon the girl, who was rescued by the sea god Poseidon, who then raped her. In another version of the story, Amymone fell asleep from exhaustion while attempting to find water in the drought-stricken land, whereupon she was set upon by a satyr and rescued by Poseidon, who threw his trident at the goat-man but missed, embedding the tool in a rock. After the god had raped Amymone, he demanded she withdraw his trident from the rock and, as she did, water rushed out. The spring was thereafter called by the name of the ravished maiden, who had a son by Poseidon. She is sometimes said to be one of the Danaid sisters (see **Danae**). (Downen; Graves vol. 2; Smith vol. 1)

**Ananke** Plato called her the mother of the **Moirae** (Fates). Ananke was the personification of the abstraction *necessity*, the force of destiny perceived in most cultures as female. There was no countermanding Ananke’s will, for she ruled all nature and culture. Yet she was also associated with healing, for when a person attends to the demands of necessity, good health follows. (Sanford)

**Anaxarete** Iphis, a commoner, loved this stonyhearted princess of Cyprus. But she ridiculed him and his affection until, in a fit of depression, he hanged himself at her door. She laughed even then, and for this, **Aphrodite** turned Anaxarete to stone. The statue that was once the girl was displayed for centuries in the temple of Aphrodite at Salamis, where the goddess was called Prospiciens. (Smith vol. 1)

**Andromache** Widow of the Trojan hero Hector, Andromache was enslaved by the Greek warrior Neoptolemus. This was especially bitter for Andromache, for Neoptolemus had killed her infant son. She was soon pregnant again and gave birth to another son. Despite this bond, Neoptolemus married the daughter of Menelaus and **Helen**, Hermione, who hated her rival and plotted her death. Andromache was saved by the timely intervention of Peleus, her husband’s grandfather, and Hermione left the country with her cousin Orestes (see **Electra**), to whom she had been engaged as a child and whom she still loved. (Euripides *Andromache*)

**Andromeda** The Ethiopian queen Cassiopeia bragged too often of her beauty. In punishment, Poseidon, proud of his own daughters (see **Nymphs**), sent a monster to ravage her land. To calm the god, Cassiopeia exposed her daughter Andromeda on a barren rock, from which the Greek hero Perseus rescued her. They lived together until her death, when **Athena** placed Andromeda among the stars as a constellation; her mother

became the star-cluster called Cassiopeia's chair. (Garber and Vickers; Ovid 1958; Smith vol. 1)

**Antigone** The loyal daughter of Oedipus of Thebes followed her blinded father into exile and was present at his death. Returning to Thebes, she discovered her two brothers had been killed in a revolt against their uncle Creon. Creon forbade anyone to bury the rebels, but Antigone knew that unless Polynices's body was returned to earth's womb, her brother could not be reborn. She risked death to spread dust over the corpse. Caught, Antigone was buried alive. (Sophocles *Antigone*; Cameron and Kuhrt)

**Aotis** An early dawn or sun goddess, she rode through the sky in a chariot drawn by white steeds. She may be a form of the goddess **Helen**; she was honored as a spirit of fertility. (Larson 1995; Lonsdale)

**Aphrodite** This goddess of sexuality united bodies in passion, rather than families and property in marriage. She was "the Golden," not just because she wore gold jewelry, but because under her influence lovers saw each other suffused with radiance. Whether the classical goddess descends from the Old European or proto-Indo-European strata is unclear; in the first case, Aphrodite could derive from a bird-headed nude goddess, while in the second case, she could descend from water **Nymphs** and sun maidens. But part of Aphrodite's heritage was unquestionably eastern Mediterranean. Scholars claim Aphrodite to be a Greek incarnation of the goddesses of sex, **Inanna** and **Ishtar** (see Eastern Mediterranean). The story of her birth from the sea and arrival at the island of Cyprus traces the route of the sea traders who brought her to the mainland.

The story of Aphrodite's birth is filled with sexual symbolism. At the dawn of time, the children of the old heaven god Uranus castrated him and his penis, falling into the ocean, ejaculated. The foam gathered itself into long-haired Aphrodite riding a mussel shell. She shook seawater from her locks, its drops turning into pearls at her feet. She floated to Cyprus, where the **Horae** greeted her and became her companions. (An alternative story describes Aphrodite as daughter of the sea Titan **Dione** and the sky god Zeus, a tale that provides an Olympian heritage to this imported goddess. An obscure variant offers **Eurynome** as Aphrodite's mother.)

Aphrodite had innumerable lovers. Although her husband was Hephaestus, the crippled god of smithcraft, Aphrodite spread her favors liberally among divine and mortal males. Her most famous affairs were with Ares and Adonis. All heaven knew of the assignations between Aphrodite and Ares, god of war, except Hephaestus, who remained ignorant until someone tattled. Furious at Aphrodite's unfaithfulness, the cuckold fashioned a mesh of gold in which he caught the lovers. Ares and Aphrodite were the laughingstock of heaven, naked and damp, their limbs entangled in each other's and in the golden web.

As for Adonis, Aphrodite fell in love with his youthful beauty and hid him in a chest that she gave to **Persephone** for safekeeping. The queen of the underworld, peeking inside, was smitten with desire and refused to give Adonis back. Zeus ruled that Adonis could live one-third of each year by himself, one-third with Persephone, and the remaining one-third with Aphrodite. Each year, Adonis was killed while hunting a

wild boar. In his honor, Greek women celebrated the Adonia, filling pots with fast-growing leafy plants, then weeping for the brevity of life.

Aphrodite not only had affairs herself, she promoted them among others. When the sculptor Pygmalion began to sleep with a statue he had carved of the goddess, Aphrodite made him fall in love with it. Later, she pitied his lovesickness, and the statue came alive as **Galatea**.

Perhaps most famous of Aphrodite's myths is recorded in the *Iliad*. Aphrodite started the Trojan War because she desired **Ate**'s golden apple, tossed as a challenge at the wedding of **Thetis**. She kidnapped the world's most beautiful woman, **Helen**, to use as a bribe in a contest with **Hera** and **Athena**. Helen was married to king Menelaus, and war between Greece and Troy was the result.

Although unconcerned with motherhood, Aphrodite had several offspring, most having allegorical meaning, as when Aphrodite (sexuality) mates with Dionysus (wine) to produce Priapus (permanent erection). She was the mother of Phobos, Demos, and Harmonia (fear, population, harmony) by her lover Ares. Most significant was Eros, who appears as a small sprite in statues of the goddess.

Aphrodite's attributes and symbols show her nature as love goddess. She was equipped with arrows or darts to pierce hearts and with chains to bind lovers together. She had a magic belt that made everyone desire the wearer; Hera borrowed it to capture the interest of the wandering Zeus. Her sacred plants were myrtle, rose, apple, and poppy; her birds, the goose, swan, dove, and sparrow; her animals, tortoise and ram. All had symbolic connections with the act of love—or actual ones, as there is some evidence that aphrodisiacal powers were ascribed to some. (Athanasakis; Barber; Farnell vol. 2; Flemberg; Friedrich; Grigson; Hesiod; Kerényi 1979; Keuls; Lawson; Lefkowitz and Fant; Ovid 1958; Pomeroy; Säflund; Sanford; Sourvinou-Inwood 1978; Suhr 1969)

**Arachne** This princess of Lydia challenged **Athena** to a weaving contest. Trying to embarrass the goddess into making a mistake, Arachne wove the Greek gods in indelicate poses, while Athena wove pictures of humans being punished for challenging the gods. When Athena saw that Arachne's weaving was superior, she shredded the woman's cloth. Arachne hanged herself in shame. Cutting the weaver down, the goddess transformed her into the first spider (arachnid). (Barber; Ovid 1958)

**Arete** The Greek goddess of justice, teacher of the hero Heracles, was a personified abstraction with no real myth. The name was also that of the mother of Nausicaa, the princess who welcomed Odysseus near the end of his journey. Nausicaa instructed the shipwrecked soldier to sue for protection to Arete, not to her father Alcinous. The poet explains this as respectful of Arete's wisdom, but it probably indicates that the queen held power in her own right. (Dexter; Perandotto and Sullivan; Graves vol. 1)

**Ariadne** In her original Minoan form as goddess of the underworld and of germination, only women worshiped Ariadne; she has been connected with girls' initiation rituals. When the Greeks arrived, they demoted the goddess to a princess, the daughter of

**Pasiphae** (or the otherwise unknown Creta) and Minos of Crete. Trapped by Minos in a labyrinth with the monstrous Minotaur, Theseus survived because of a spool of thread that Ariadne (infatuated because of a wound from **Aphrodite**) slipped to him. As he wandered, Theseus unspooled the thread, so that he always knew what corridors he had already walked.

He escaped, but Theseus abandoned Ariadne on the island of Naxos where the god of wine, Dionysus, discovered her. She became the leader of the Dionysian women, the **Maenads**, before dying in childbirth. Another myth says that pregnant Ariadne suffered from seasickness, so Theseus left her ashore at Cyprus, where she died. Returning for her, Theseus was stricken with grief and established sacrifices to Ariadne as Aphrodite. Finally, a curious legend says there were two Ariadnes; one married Dionysus in Naxos, while the other was abandoned by Theseus. To the first, a joyous festival was dedicated, while to the latter, a ceremony of lamentation was offered. After her death, Ariadne was raised to heaven and given the name of Aridella. (Cantarella; Friedrich; Homer 1951; Lyons; Ovid 1995; Plutarch 1960; Sanford; Willetts)

**Artemis** Two images of Artemis appear in ancient art. In one, she is a lithe maiden, running through the woodland with her company of **Nymphs**. In the other, she is a massive maternal woman, her chest covered with symbols of fecundity. Both figures are called Artemis, and despite their apparent dissimilarity, both are connected to birth and fertility.

As the virgin moon goddess, Artemis roamed the forest, protecting all of its creatures. An invisible game warden, she killed anyone who hunted pregnant beasts or newborns. She not only controlled death, but ruled reproduction as well. She was the elder twin of the sun god Apollo and midwife at his birth (see **Leto**). She was the recipient of prayers from mothers in labor, who found comfort in the belief that she nursed them as she did other animals.

Despite her connection with childbirth, Artemis was virginal, avoiding any connection with men. Any man who offended her met death at her hand. When Orion boasted that he was better at discus throwing than the athletic Artemis, she killed him for the offense; variant legends say his crime was raping her maiden Opis, a name that appears as one of her titles. Other myths say Orion was Artemis's hunting partner before he attempted to rape her, whereupon she killed him. Yet another myth claims that the virgin goddess returned Orion's love and planned to marry him, but the jealous Apollo challenged his sister to hit a moving spot in the sea, which was Orion's head. At his death, Orion became a constellation.

As ruler of virginity, Artemis was the goddess to whom girls were dedicated. From the age of nine to their marriage, girls were under her protection. At her temple at Brauron, girls dressed in yellow shifts and danced like bears in front of Artemis's statue. As her name references the syllable for "bear," and as the girls were called *arktoi* ("bears"), this dance connected the living girls with the wildwood goddess. The sanctuary of Artemis in Brauron was established in approximately 1300 BCE and was active through classical times. Nearby was the tomb of **Iphigenia**, who served Artemis after the goddess saved her from the sacrificial knife.

The nymph of the greenwood has many similarities to Artemis's other most-famous form: Artemis Multimammia ("many-breasted"), also known as Ephesia from her temple at Ephesus, one of the wonders of the ancient world. There, a massive statue of Artemis still stands. Rising from a legless base into a huge torso ringed with breasts, then up to a head surmounted by the turret crown, the Artemis of Ephesus originally had a stag on either side and hawks on each hand. Lions, bulls, and **Sphinxes** decorated the sides, as well as bees and winged women. She wore a flower wreath, a zodiac necklace, and a lunar hairpiece. For at least 800 years, the statue stood in Artemis's shrine. Hundreds of miniatures of the great image were created by potters and sculptors; found throughout the ancient world, they were probably sold as sacred souvenirs.

This form of Artemis may have been a local divinity who took on the name of the important Greek goddess. The myth of the goddess's birth on Delos was transported to a grove named Ortygia near the city, where on the spring birthday of the goddess, the mysteries of Artemis were celebrated. The olive tree under which her mother Leto rested was pointed out, as well as the mountain where armored boys stood, clashing their armor to distract **Hera** while the goddess was born. In honor of those boyish guardians, young men of Ephesus held feasts in which they competed with each other in showing the most lavish hospitality.

The image of Artemis of Ephesus is not easy to interpret. What were the protuberances on her chest? Breasts? Eggs? Honeycombs? The genitals of cattle? Those of castrated men? All have been offered as possibilities, and any of them could be correct. Most scholars today refute the theory that the swellings represent breasts, for no nipples are present. The suggestion of honeycombs is supported by the name of Artemis's priestesses: Melissae, "bees." Artemis of Ephesus also bore a title of "beekeeper," and Ephesus has been translated as "place of bees." But the possibility that the goddess wore a necklace of scrota cannot be discounted, for her priests were castrated men.

Although the worship of Artemis died out almost two millennia ago, Greek folklore speaks of the "queen of the mountains" who lives in the forest, surrounded by her maiden troupe. Distinguishable from her cohort by her greater height and more radiantly white skin, she is a dangerous creature who killed those who trespassed upon her haunts. (Athanasakis; Blundell and Williamson; Cameron and Kuhrt; Connelly; Cook; Dexter; Dowden;



**Bee Goddess.** *The bee stands as an emblem of goddesses in many lands. In this depiction of a golden plaque in the collection of the British Museum, the goddess has the head of a woman but the body of a bee, known throughout human history for its importance in pollinating food crops and thus as an image of abundance.*

Elderkin; Farnell vol. 2; A. Fontenrose; Friedrich; Larson 1997; Lawson; Lefkowitz and Fant; Lonsdale; Lyons; Macurdy; Manning; Nilsson; Ovid 1958; Pantel vol. 1; Smith vol. 2; Sourvinou-Inwood 1988; Walbank)

**Asteria** Asteria assisted her sister **Leto** in escaping the curse of **Hera** that she could not give birth where sunlight reached. Asteria turned herself into the underwater island of Delos, where Leto gave birth to **Artemis** and Apollo. Afterward, no woman was allowed to give birth on the island, nor was anyone permitted to die there. Pregnant women from Delos traveled to nearby Rheneia to give birth. Other stories say that Asteria, assaulted by Zeus, transformed herself into a quail. Asteria may represent a local goddess whose worship was suppressed; she was the mother of **Hecate**. (Smith vol. 1)

**Astraea** The daughter of **Themis**, Astraea lived on earth during a peaceful primal age. But as humankind grew more violent, the gods retreated to the heavens. Astraea was the last to leave, but finally she abandoned the earth to become a star. (Smith vol. 1)

**Atalanta** Two divine women of this name, one from Arcadia and the other from Boeotia, have a similar myth. Atalanta's father, disappointed at the birth of a daughter, left her to die. But the baby survived, suckled by a bear. She grew up to become a centaur-killing heroine, the match of any man in Greece. Her father decided to claim fatherhood of the famous warrior and so claimed the right to choose Atalanta's husband. But she refused to marry any man she could outrun and demanded the right to kill anyone who lost to her.

Many lost their lives racing for her hand. Finally, Meilanion begged **Aphrodite** to help him win Atalanta. The goddess gave him three golden apples to fling down before the speeding woman. Atalanta stopped to scoop them out of the dust, losing her advantage in the race. Won by guile, Atalanta nevertheless wed happily. But she and her lover neglected to make proper marital sacrifices, and the couple was punished by being transformed into the lions who drew **Cybele**'s chariot (see Southeastern Europe). (Ovid 1958)

**Ate** Daughter of **Eris** and often confused with her, Ate was goddess of folly, moral blindness, and infatuation. She was associated with the Greek concept of *hubris*, meaning to set oneself against the natural order. Ate represented reckless disregard of consequences. Banished from Olympus for mischief-making, Ate moved in among humans, who could not escape her. She never touched earth, preferring to walk on the heads of men.

In Ate's most famous myth, she marked a golden apple with the words "To the Fairest" and threw it into a banquet of the gods. **Athena**, **Hera** and **Aphrodite** claimed the prize, so a contest was arranged. Each offered a bribe to Paris, the judge: Athena offered wisdom, Hera offered power, and Aphrodite offered the world's most beautiful woman, **Helen**. The Trojan War was the result.

Ate was sometimes considered a servant of Aphrodite, who used her to stir up trouble between lovers. She also appeared as a variant of **Nemesis**. Today, many of Ate's

attributes have been assigned to her mother, especially the famous golden apple. (Hesiod; Sanford)

**Athena** At the founding of Athens, the sea god Poseidon tried to win control of the city over Athena. Because she would not agree, the townspeople were asked to vote. The men voted for the god, the women for the goddess. Because there was one more voter on the women's side, Athena won the day. An alternative story says the Olympian deities judged the dispute. They ruled that because Athena had planted the first olive tree, whereas Poseidon only offered the changeful sea, the goddess was better qualified than the god.

The men bitterly agreed to accept the goddess, but they levied three heavy requirements on the women: that they should forgo being called citizens, that they should no longer vote, and that their children should be called by their fathers' rather than by their mothers' names. Afterward, they claimed that Athena was a motherless goddess who sprang full-grown from the head of Zeus (see **Metis**). This Athena voted on the side of the new patriarchal order against the earlier system of mother right.

Another version of Athena's birth says she was the daughter of Pallas, a winged giant. When he tried to rape her, Athena killed him and tanned his skin to make a shield; she cut off his wings to fasten to her feet. A similar myth says that Hephaestus, the smith god, threatened Athena's virginity. When he tried to rape her, he ejaculated upon her leg. The semen fell upon the all-fertile **Gaia**, who bore a half-serpent boy named Erechtheus. Athena gave the boy to **Aglauros** and her sisters to guard, which led to tragedy when the girls peeked inside the box that held the monster child. Horrified, Aglauros threw herself to her death from the Acropolis, where Athena's temple stood.

Hephaestus had no reptile ancestors, so Athena must have provided the serpent blood. **Medusa**, whose snaky visage Athena wore on her goatskin cloak, suggests the connection. Athena appears as the snake-haired **Gorgon's** fiercest opponent, first changing her from a maiden into a monster, then sending Perseus to decapitate her. But Athena placed Medusa's head on her chest, so that the two goddesses' faces are always seen together. Similarly, the massive snake that reared beside her statue in the Parthenon, her temple on the Acropolis, suggests that the snake was a primary symbol of the virgin goddess.

Athena was originally a Minoan or Mycenaean household goddess, possibly related to the bare-breasted Cretan figures seen holding snakes. This original Athena represented the family bond, symbolized by the serpent that protected the family's food supply against rodents. As household goddess, Athena ruled the implements of domestic crafts: the spindle, the pot, and the loom. By extrapolation, she was the guardian of the ruler's home, goddess of the palace; by further extrapolation, she was the symbol of the community itself.

When Minoan civilization declined, Athena was not lost. A maiden warrior goddess, **Pallas**, arrived with the Indo-Europeans. This figure was bonded to that of the indigenous tribal symbol to form Pallas Athena. Other goddesses, originally distinct, were assimilated to Athena, as was the Cretan Aphaia, a maiden goddess captured by pirates near Crete who swam to safety.

Athena's rituals recalled her origins. Each year at midsummer, Athens' greatest festival, the Panathenaia, was celebrated. The event began months in advance, as four women wove a new yellow-and-purple *peplos* for the life-sized statue of Athena. The *peplos* took nine months to weave because it pictured the war between gods and Titans, when Athena saved her city from destruction. When the festival began, Athena's image was taken from her temple and borne down to the sea. There, she was carefully washed and decked in the new robe. Young men accompanied the procession, but when the time came to wash the statue, only women were permitted. The ritual reveals Athena as a woman's deity, mistress of household industry. (Athanasakis; Barber; Bernal; Dexter; Downing; Hall; Hesiod; Homer 1996; Kerényi 1979; Keuls; Loraux; Motz; Nilsson 1961; Pantel vol. 1)

**Baubo** Baubo ("belly") was the sister of Iambe ("abuse"), and a similar story is told of both, in which the weeping **Demeter**, searching for the lost **Persephone**, sat down by a well. Baubo came to draw water and tried to console Demeter by offering a cup of wine. The goddess refused, asking for water mixed with barley meal and pennyroyal. Baubo continued to offer sympathy, which Demeter steadfastly refused. So Baubo lifted her skirts and exposed her vulva. Demeter's sorrow was broken by a smile; the sterile earth stirred, and Persephone returned.

That such a minor character should have such power over the great Demeter had led some to propose that Baubo is a form of **Hecate**, who plays significant roles in Demeter's legend. Baubo's part in the Demetrian mysteries was reenacted at a bridge between Athens and Eleusis, where participants engaged in ribald speech before moving on to the more serene ceremonies.

Although some sources describe Iambe and Baubo as identical, others separate them. The lame Iambe, daughter of the wilderness god Pan and the **Nymph Echo**, was the originator of the irregular or "limping" iambic rhythm used in Greek satiric poetry. Iambe is connected more with words than behavior, the latter being Baubo's preserve.

Ancient writers rarely provide a history for Baubo, but a myth from Asia Minor said that Baubo had a single daughter, Mise. She, like her mother, was oblong. Both had the power of shape-shifting, with the toad their preferred form. Baubo was rarely depicted in Greece, with possible exceptions being statuettes that show a woman from the waist down, with a face on her belly. There is dispute as to whether these images are appropriately named for Baubo. (Friedrich; Lubell; Motz; Olender)

**Baucis** Once a woman and man, Baucis and Philemon, lived together so long that they became inseparable. While the gods Zeus and Hermes were wandering the earth, they stopped at Baucis and Philemon's poor hut and begged a meal. The impoverished couple served what food they had. In recognition of the old couple's kindness, the gods granted a single wish. The pair did not hesitate: they wished never to be parted. Their hut changed into a temple, where they served the gods for years. One day, as they stood outdoors, their feet took root, and Baucis and Philemon lived on as intertwined linden trees. (Larson 1995; Ovid 1958)

**Bia** A warrior maiden, her name means “force.” Daughter of the underworld goddess **Styx**, Bia bound the Titan Prometheus to a rocky crag when he was condemned to perpetual torment for stealing heavenly fire for humanity. (Graves vol. 1; Smith vol. 3)

**Britomartis** Britomartis, possibly the greatest goddess of Minoan Crete, has been all but lost. Little is known of her except how she was traditionally depicted: a young, lithe, and strong hunter, carrying arrows. The goddess **Artemis** was said to have loved the Cretan maiden and mourned her death. Artemis was endowed with Britomartis’s image as a **Nymph**, which remained the traditional depiction of her for 2,000 years.

King Minos of Crete, intent on rape, chased Britomartis for nine months through the forested island. She finally escaped by flinging herself off a high cliff into the ocean. There, she got caught in the fishnets that she had invented as a gift to humanity. After this, the goddess was called Dictynna (“netted one”). Some sources say the goddess was Britomartis in the eastern end of the island, Dictynna in the west. Others suggest that Britomartis was Dictynna’s daughter. (Elderkin; Larson 2001; Smith vol. 3; Willetts)

**Brizo** This goddess, worshiped on Delos, was a prophet who specialized in the interpretation of dreams. She was also a goddess of the sea, invoked to protect ships and their crews, and honored with images of boats. It was considered bad luck to offer her fish as a sacrifice. (Graves vol 2; Smith vol. 1)

**Byblis** One of a pair of twins, she fell in love with her brother Caunus. Both beautiful beings, and grandchildren of the sun, they grew up together as intimate companions. But as she reached womanhood, Byblis’s love changed. She became jealous of other girls and fantasized about her brother. When she finally revealed her love to him, he refused her, horrified, and moved far away. Byblis, tormented and ashamed, was transformed into a constantly weeping fountain. (Ovid 1958; Sourvinou-Inwood 2005)

**Caenis** Caenis, raped by the sea god Poseidon, appealed to Olympus for revenge: transform her, she begged, into an invulnerable man so that she might murder the sex that had injured her. Her wish was granted, and she became a hero named Caeneus, unstoppable on the battlefield. When she died a heroic death, she resumed her female body and original name, and enjoyed a hero’s welcome in the afterlife. (Smith vol. 1; Ovid 1958)

**Callisto** Originating in Arcadia, this goddess appeared as a lithe hunter, racing bare-foot through the woods. In animal form, she was the powerful and protective mother bear. When worshipers of **Artemis** arrived in the area, the similarity of the goddesses gave rise to the legend that Callisto was a **Nymph**, treasured by Artemis but accidentally killed by her. Saddened, Artemis took on the Nymph’s name, becoming Artemis Calliste (“Artemis the fairest”).

Other versions of the story describe Callisto as a Nymph who attracted Zeus. He disguised himself as Artemis and, seducing Callisto, recovered his male form in time to rape her. Zeus turned Callisto into a bear so that the jealous **Hera** would not know

of her rival. But Hera arranged to have Artemis kill the girl while hunting. In her years as a bear, Callisto bore a son, Arcas; Zeus transformed the pair into stars. Another story says Artemis, bathing with Callisto, noticed her pregnancy and transformed her into a bear. She was transported to the sky where she became the constellation of the Great Bear. (Borgeaud 1988; Dowden; Johnson; Larson 2001; Ovid 1958, 1996; Smith vol. 1)

**Calypso** The daughter of **Tethys**, Calypso lived on the island of Ogygia, where the wandering Greek king Odysseus was shipwrecked. Calypso offered Odysseus immortality if he would sleep with her. Odysseus took advantage of Calypso's offer, but after seven years, he abandoned his disconsolate lover. Calypso occupies an intermediate status between goddess and **Nymph**, both terms being used to describe her. (Cantarrella; Friedrich; Hesiod; Homer 1996; Larson 2001; Schein)

**Campe** This huge female dragon guarded the Cyclops, a monster child of **Gaia**, in its prison beneath her surface, deep in her stony womb. She was killed by Zeus in order to free the monster to fight against the gods of the earlier generation, the Titans. (Graves vol 1; Smith vol. 1)

**Carya** In southern Laconia, early residents worshiped trees, in which their goddesses were embodied (see **Helen**). The invading Greeks assimilated most tree divinities into **Artemis**, but the names of individual goddesses remained in legend. This was true of Carya, who was transformed into a walnut tree. Artemis reported on the transformation and was awarded the title of Caryatis ("she of the walnut tree"). She was worshiped under this title in ceremonies where girls danced in her honor. These dances included statuesque poses that inspired the architectural motif called Caryatids. (Smith vol. 1)

**Cassandra** The most beautiful of the 12 daughters of Hecuba, Cassandra was doomed from the start, for her mother had a dream while pregnant that she would give birth to a burning log. Although Hecuba had the child exposed, Cassandra survived to become a priestess who caught the eye of Apollo. He promised to grant any wish if she would sleep with him. Cassandra demanded the power of prophecy; Apollo granted her wish. But once she had what she wanted, Cassandra refused the god's advances. Apollo wet Cassandra's lips with his tongue and disappeared.

After that kiss, Cassandra was cursed. Everything she prophesied was true but was received as falsehood. People ignored her when she warned her brother Paris not to go to Greece; they did not believe that there were armed soldiers in the wooden horse; they ridiculed Cassandra for saying Troy would lose the war. When Troy lost, Cassandra was taken captive by the Greek king Agamemnon and was murdered with him. She was finally respected after death. In Laconia, she was worshiped as the goddess Alexandra. (Aeschylus *Oresteia*; Euripides *Electra*, *Hecuba*, *The Trojan Women*)

**Cerberus** A hybrid of lioness, lynx, and sow, Cerberus stood at the entry to Hades, challenging anyone passing to the Otherworld. She is sometimes described as a male

dog born to the monstrous **Echidna**. Those who passed her could never return the way they had come. (Smith vol. 1)

**Ceto** This vague figure in Greek mythology was the Syrian fish mother Derceto (see **Atargatis**, Eastern Mediterranean). She gave birth to fabulous daughters: the three **Graeae**, born with gray hair and with but one eye and one tooth among them; the snake-haired **Gorgons**; the serpent **Echidna**; and the seductive wind demons, the **Sirens**. (Hesiod)

**Charilla** When the oracle town of Delphi was parching under a terrible drought, a little girl came to the king to beg for food. Thoughtlessly, the king struck Charilla in the face, so she hanged herself in shame. Later, the oracle told the king that he should have been kind to the supplicant, and that Delphi must offer propitiatory sacrifices to Charilla's spirit every nine years. Such heroine cults often hide an early goddess. (Harrison 1962; Larson 1995; Sourvinou-Inwood 2005)

**Charites** The most common English name for these three goddesses, the Graces, comes from the Latin *Graciae*. In Greek, these divinities were called Charites, from a word meaning "to give freely" (cf. "charity"). They ruled movement, manners, and love, the last shared with **Aphrodite**, whose companions they were. The goddesses were Thalia, Aglaia, and Euphrosyne. In early Athens, there were two Charites, Auxo and Hegemone. In Laconia, they were Cleta and Phaenna. In Rome, there was a single Gratia, the double of Aphrodite and, like that goddess, the mate of the smith god Hephaestus.

The Charites represented the delight in living that produces art, dance, music, and love. They were connected with natural beauty, as the force that caused plants to bud and blossom; their touch caused fruit to ripen. They were older than Aphrodite, whom they met as she rose from the sea; they provided her garments and arranged her hair. The Greeks said that the first cup of wine at a banquet was theirs; the second belonged to the lustful Aphrodite, while the argumentative **Ate** ruled the third. (Farnell vol. 5; Friedrich; Sanford)

**Charybdis** This monster daughter of **Gaia** tried to eat one of the heavenly oxen. Zeus tossed her into the sea, where her voracious nature did not change, for she endlessly swallowed the sea and vomited it up. She became a whirlpool off the Italian coast, near where **Scylla** trapped sailors. (Homer 1996; Smith vol. 3)

**Chelone** This **Nymph** ridiculed the marriage of Zeus and **Hera** and was changed into a speechless turtle (*chelon*) in punishment. Another version of the story says that Chelone stayed home from the wedding and was punished when Hera appeared and threw her, house and all, into the river. (Smith vol. 1)

**Chimera** Part goat, part lion, and part dragon, this Greek monster endangered the land of Lycia. She was the daughter of an equally monstrous mother, **Echidna**. Probably

she was originally a volcano goddess, for there was a volcano of her name in the country she terrorized. (Hesiod; Ovid 1958)

**Circe** Daughter of the sun and sister of Cretan queen **Pasiphae**, this illustrious witch gained the rulership of Colchis by marrying its prince. Then she killed him so that she could rule alone. When Circe's subjects discovered her crime, they rose against her. The enchantress fled, escaping on her father's rays to the island of Aea, a name sometimes used to refer to her.

There, Circe lived in a stone house, tended by lions and wolves. She entertained herself by crafting magic potions that she tried on humans shipwrecked in her vicinity. When Odysseus was shipwrecked on Aea, she turned his men into swine. The king escaped her spells, but he could not escape her charms, and fathered two sons by Circe. (Cohen; Friedrich; Hesiod; Homer 1996; Kerényi 1979; Larson 2001; Marinatos; Ovid 1958; Reeder; Schein)

**Clytemnestra** Leda was raped by, or willingly mated with, a huge swan, the disguised Zeus. Shortly afterward, she had intercourse with her husband, the king of Sparta. Nine months later Leda laid two eggs. One hatched to reveal the immortal **Helen** and her brother Pollux. The other produced the mortal Clytemnestra and her brother Castor.

As she grew, Clytemnestra was overshadowed by her immortally beautiful half-sister. Helen became ruler of the city, raising her consort Menelaus to the throne, while Clytemnestra became part of a foreign family by marrying Helen's brother-in-law, Agamemnon of Mycenae. They had three children: two daughters, **Iphigenia** and **Electra**, and a son, Orestes.

Then Agamemnon was called to Troy to regain Helen—and with her, the crown of Sparta—for his brother. At the town of Aulis on the Aegean coast, the navy was stalled by ill winds because Agamemnon had insulted **Artemis** by killing a deer improperly. The brothers needed a human sacrifice, so they sent for Iphigenia, pretending that she would become the hero Achilles's bride. Then they put Iphigenia to death. The sacrifice pleased the wind deities, and the Greeks sailed on for Troy.

Back in Mycenae, Clytemnestra planned vengeance. She took as consort Agamemnon's cousin, Aegisthus. When Agamemnon returned, he brought with him the doomed prophet **Cassandra**, who fruitlessly warned of danger. Clytemnestra and Aegisthus murdered both king and captive. But the queen herself met a violent death, for her children avenged their father's death. (Aeschylus *Oresteia*; Euripides *Electra*, *Orestes*)

**Coronis** The **Nymph** Coronis (“crown”) played a significant role as the mother of the healing god, Asclepius. Another maiden of this name was turned into a crow by the virginal **Athena** when the rapacious ocean god Poseidon, intent upon rape, pursued Coronis. (Ovid 1958; Smith vol. 1)

**Cynosura** The Cretan goddess Cynosura leaves us her name in *cynosure*, a word that means “center of attraction” and recalls the navigational uses of her constellation, Ursa Minor or the Little Dipper (which some say was the transformed body of the

Nymph **Callisto**). Some legends call her the nurse of the Greek god Zeus. (Smith vol. 1)

**Cyrene** When Apollo saw this Amazonian woman tear a lion apart with her bare hands, he grew so excited that he did not rape her (see **Daphne, Dryope**), but decided to marry her. He took her to Libya, which he gave her as a bridal gift. Her name was given to a spring where young women bathed before their wedding ceremonies. Cyrene became the mother of the hero Bellerophon, who tamed **Medusa's** horse son Pegasus. (Bonney; Lefkowitz)

**Damia** An alternative form of the corn goddess **Demeter**, Damia was paired with a daughter named Auxesia (later used as a title of **Persephone**). In a famous story, a famine struck the city of Epidaurus. It was prophesied that it would continue until statues of the goddesses were carved of Athenian olive wood. The Athenians gave their neighbors the wood, but afterward demanded heavy tribute, including a regular sacrifice to **Athena** and her snake son Erectheus. During a rebellion, the Epidaurians stopped payment of the tribute; the Athenians invaded, intent on carrying home the goddess's statues. When they would not move, a battle followed. A messenger carrying tidings to Athens of the sacrilege to Damia and Auxesia was murdered by angry Athenian women, and the men of Athens then stripped the women of their few remaining rights. In a story in Pausanias, the two goddesses, called "maidens" of Crete, came to Troezen and were killed by stoning. The murder may have been accidental, but the people of the town thereafter paid tribute to them as divine by creating a festival called Lithobolia. (Larson 1995; Smith vol. 1)

**Danae** Danae, a woman of Argos confined to a tower so she could not conceive, was raped by the god Zeus, who came through the window disguised as a shower of gold. Danae bore the hero Perseus. Another myth tells of 50 Danaid sisters married to 50 princes; their father demanded that the brides decapitate the grooms on the wedding night. Forty-nine sisters followed orders, but the oldest, Hypermnestra, spared her mate and conceived by him the ruling dynasty of Argos. An alternative legend said the Danaids were threatened with rape by their fiancés, the 50 sons of their uncle Aegyptus, and fled with their father to Argos, where marriage was forced upon them.

Homer refers to the Greek armies as composed of Argives and Danaoi, but whereas the first term clearly refers to the city of Argos, the second term is unclear and may represent a tribal name. The Danaids originated as water goddesses of Argos; Hypermnestra gave her name to a fountain. If the Danaids were connected with Danae, which is unclear, she could be an Argive ancestor goddess. (Aeschylus *Suppliants*; Dowden; Holland; Homer 1951; Smith vol. 1)

**Daphne** A priestess of **Gaia**, this **Nymph** led secret women's rituals to celebrate earth's fertility. But the mortal Leucippus penetrated their rituals in female disguise. When Apollo suggested the women conduct their rituals nude, Leucippus was killed for his sacrilege. But when the sun god accosted Daphne, she refused him. Apollo grew violent, and Gaia transformed Daphne into a laurel tree, whose leaves Apollo

thereafter wore as a symbol of inspiration. Some sources say this figure is the same as the prophetic **Manto**. (Dowden; O’Flaherty; Ovid 1958; Smith vol. 1)

**Dejanira** Heracles had affairs before and during his first marriage, which ended when he killed his wife Megaera. Despite this, the warrior Dejanira married him and bore him several children. But Heracles brought a mistress into Dejanira’s home, a woman named Iole, whom he enslaved during a military campaign. Dejanira wove a splendid garment and soaked it in what she thought was an infallible charm for the return of love: blood and semen from a dying centaur killed by Heracles. But the centaur had revenge in his heart when he confided the secret potion to Dejanira. His blood burned so terribly that Heracles pleaded to the gods for death. The remorseful Dejanira committed suicide. (Ovid 1958; Sophocles *The Trachiniae*)

**Demeter** Demeter’s daughter **Persephone** disappeared while picking wildflowers, and Demeter could find her nowhere. The weeping goddess searched for days, stopping neither to eat nor to drink. As she mourned, the goddess withdrew her energy from plants, which wilted and shriveled. She wandered until she came to Eleusis, where she became nursemaid for Queen Metaneira. Demeter tried to make prince Demophon immortal by smoking him like a log, but the queen pulled him from the fire and demanded an explanation from Demeter, whose divinity was thus revealed. The awed rulers built her a temple, and Demeter stayed on in Eleusis, often weeping by a well.

One day, the queen’s daughter **Baubo** saw the sad goddess and tried to comfort her. Demeter refused her consoling words and so, to make the goddess smile, Baubo exposed her vulva. Demeter chuckled, the first laughter the earth had heard in many months. Shortly afterward, when Persephone was restored, spring bloomed again. In gratitude for the hospitality of the Eleusinians, Demeter taught them the arts of agriculture and based her rites there.

At Demeter’s eight-day festival, the *mystai* imitated the goddess as she sought her daughter. They became Demeter Erinyes (“angry”), furious at her loss; then they acted the happy role of Demeter Lousia (“kindly one”), the mother transformed by reunion. The festival was celebrated annually from approximately 760 BCE until suppressed by the Christian emperor Theodosius in 389 CE, but the site may have been used as early as 1450 BCE for rituals of harvest. During the classical period, Eleusis was a vast temple complex where thousands attended the Mysteries. Men and women participated as equals. Slaves were welcomed, as were children.

The rites were held every Boedromion (late September/early October); but in the fourth year, they were especially lavish. The general public participated in processions and sacrifices on the first five days: Aghyrmos, when the Mysteries were called to order; Elasis, when initiates purified themselves in the ocean; a third day of sacrifices; Epidauria, the day of purification; and Pompe, the day of the procession to Eleusis from Athens, with celebrants bearing images of Demeter and Persephone.

From nightfall on the fifth day, only initiates could participate in the Teletai (“completion”). Over many centuries, only a few people ever broke the rule of secrecy. The soldier Alkibiades did imitations of the rituals while drunk, with the result that his property was confiscated. Diagoras the Melian and Andokides were condemned to

death for talking about the rituals but escaped. Two youths who wandered into the ceremonies were put to death. Pausanias planned to write about the Mysteries, but was warned by a dream not to do so; he paid attention and wrote instead about what could be “lawfully told.” Theories abound about what happened at Eleusis (pig sacrifice, the revelation of a stalk of wheat, ceremonial drinking) but they are only theories. The secrets of Demeter’s rituals died with her initiates.

Other rituals to Demeter were similarly secret, although unlike the Eleusinian Mysteries, they were limited to women. The Lesser Mysteries were held in springtime on a riverbank in Athens. These were sometimes called “Persephone’s Mysteries,” as compared to the Greater Mysteries that were dedicated to Demeter. Women may have danced in the goddess’s honor; a pageant embodying the myth of Persephone may have been performed. As with other Greek religious events, sacrifices were no doubt offered.

Aristophanes described how a man spied upon the Thesmophoria, where he discovered that they spent all their time talking about men. But the annual autumn ceremony in honor of Demeter Thesmophoros (“law-giver”) was actually dedicated to the public good. The rites, believed to date to pre-Olympian times, were celebrated when wheat was planted to overwinter. The festival had three parts. On the first day, women climbed to the shrine of Demeter. Building a small village of huts, they spent the night in ritual abuse and joking. On the second day, the women purified themselves; they may have eaten pomegranates, sacred to Persephone. After a torch-lit procession on the third day, priestesses descended into a snake-filled cave where offerings had been left. The decayed pig meat, pinecones, and phallus-shaped cakes were brought to the surface, possibly to be used as a fertilizer.

These festivals of Demeter emphasize her connection with the earth’s vegetative cycle as well as her relationship with her daughter. Although usually her maternal aspect was foregrounded, Demeter was occasionally described as sexually active; she had intercourse in the fields with her consort Iasion to bless Harmonia’s marriage. Demeter’s connection to plants is made clear in the tale of cruel prince Erysichthon, who decided to build a banquet hall on the site of the goddess’s sacred grove. When he sent men to kill her trees, Demeter appeared in the form of her priestess, Nicippe, warning of danger. Erysichthon scorned her, whereupon she cursed him with insatiable hunger.

Demeter’s name is often translated as “earth mother.” The second part of the word inarguably means “mother.” The first part, however, translates into “cereal” as well as “earth.” If her name was originally “Damater,” deriving from words for “earth mother,” the goddess would be another form of **Gaia**, also called *Ge*. As such, she appears mated to Poseidon, “the husband of *Da*”; his more usual mate is **Medusa**. The possible identity of Demeter and Medusa is supported by the worship, in Arcadia, of Demeter Hippias, or “horse-headed” Demeter. There, pursued by Poseidon, Demeter changed shape several times. When she became a mare and he a stallion, Poseidon caught Demeter, engendering the marvelous horse Arion and the young goddess Despoina, “mistress,” sometimes called **Artemis**. Yet Hesiod claims that the father of Persephone was Poseidon’s brother, the sky father Zeus, and there is also some question as to the name and paternity of Demeter’s daughter.

Folklore is replete with survivals of Demeter, who was converted into the male “Saint Demetrius,” patron of agriculture and marriage. At Eleusis, she remained until 1801 as “Saint Demetra,” unknown except in that location. An ancient statue of Demeter was decked in flowers, with prayers for a good harvest. Two Englishmen stole the statue, which now rests in mutilated form in Cambridge. (Aristophanes *Thesmophoriazusea*; Athanassakis; Brumfield; Callimachus; Dexter; Farnell vol. 3; Gimbutas 1982; Friedrich; Hawley and Levick; Hesiod; Keller; Keuls; Lawson; Lubell; Meyer; Motz; Mylonas; Nilsson 1961; O’Flaherty; Richardson; Schieffer; Suter; Versnel; Willetts; White)

**Dike** Personification of justice, Dike was also the sister of the goddesses of peace (**Eirene**) and good order (**Eunomia**). One of the **Horae**, Dike encouraged rewarding good and punishing evil. She screamed in pain if a judge violated the law. Dike was depicted bearing a sword with which she cut through injustice and untruth. Her assistant was Poena, goddess of retribution; her opposite was Adicia, injustice; Hesychia, tranquility, was her daughter. (Athanassakis; Sanford; Smith vol. 1)

**Dione** Dione’s name means “bright sky,” suggesting an early goddess of light, despite her classical connotations of fecundating moisture. She was either a Titan, daughter of the sea goddess **Tethys** (thus a **Nymph**), or a child of the primal couple, **Gaia** and **Uranus**. Impregnated by Zeus, Dione gave birth to **Aphrodite**, otherwise described as the child of the amputated phallus of Uranus. As Aphrodite is an imported divinity, this parentage was forged in order to connect the arriving goddess with the existing pantheon.

As divinity of moisture and fertility, Dione was associated with childbirth. She assisted in the difficult birth of **Artemis** and Apollo from their mother **Leto**. She was oracular, original owner of the famous oracle at Dodona. There, the rustling of a beech tree answered questions on personal (never state or religious) matters; three aged priestesses interpreted the tree’s words. (Aeschylus *Oresteia*; Hadzsits; Hesiod; Homer 1951; Smith vol. 1)

**Dryope** Several Greek minor goddesses bore this name. One was a water **Nymph** who, infatuated with a mortal man, lured him into her embrace and drowned him. Another was a Nymph from wild Arcadia who gave birth to that late addition to the Greek pantheon, the lascivious Pan. An unfortunate Nymph named Dryope was raped by the sun god and turned into a poplar tree. Finally, the princess Dryope was the playmate of the Hamadryads, tree Nymphs who were her religious instructors. As she played with them, Apollo transformed himself into a turtle to gain access to her body. Charmed by the turtle, Dryope took it on her lap, where it changed into a snake and raped her. She survived the attack and married a human, but the Hamadryads took her away to become one of them. No man was permitted to enter the woodland temple devoted to her. Dryope may have been originally more than a Nymph, possibly a water divinity or tree goddess. (Graves; Smith vol. 1)

**Ececheira** The Greek personification of armistice or truce, this goddess appeared at the shrine of Zeus in Olympia, because during the Olympic games, all hostilities were forbidden. (Smith vol. 2)

**Echidna** This monstrous serpent mated with her brother Typhon to produce the raging Nemean lion, the dangerous **Scylla**, the many-headed **Hydra**, the ferocious Chimera, and the **Sphinx**. Hesiod suggests that Echidna's mother was the snake-haired **Medusa**, whose children were presumably conceived with the god Poseidon. A final option was that she was the daughter of **Styx**. Like many monsters, she may be a demonized form of an early goddess whose worship was suppressed. She has been connected to **Hera**, sometimes described as Typhon's mother. (Hesiod; O'Brien 1993; Smith vol. 2)

**Echo** A **Nymph**, Echo became an attendant to **Hera**, but Zeus liked to tell Echo tales of his philandering. To prevent her strained marriage from becoming the laughingstock of heaven, Hera struck Echo mute. Then Zeus restored her speech, but she could only repeat what she heard. She became the lover of the wilderness god Pan, by whom she had two daughters, Iambe and Iynx. She fell in love with the pretty mortal Narcissus, but the vain young man would not sleep with her. In retribution, Narcissus was condemned to fall in love with his image in a forest pool. He pined away, becoming a flower. There is no evidence of religious rituals attending upon Echo, although Porticoes of Echo were found in Greek buildings, where sound repeated itself as much as seven times. (Borgeaud 1988; Ovid 1958; Smith vol. 2)

**Eileithyia** This virginal Cretan birth goddess was later assimilated to **Artemis**. Eileithyia could curse a birthing mother by crossing her knees; until she unfolded her body, the woman's child remained unborn. Dogs and horses were her symbols; the sacrifice of a dog assured that Eileithyia would sit with uncrossed knees during birth. Occasionally there were said to be multiple birth goddesses, the Eileithyiae, who were daughters of **Hera** in her role as protector of marriage. (Athanasakis; Downing; Friedrich; Motz; Willetts)

**Eireisone** The female personification of a Greek ritual object, Eireisone was a branch of olive wood, twined with wool and hung with fruits, carried in festivals by children with two living parents. Goddesses can be created in many ways: sometimes as personifications of natural forces, sometimes as rulers of specific passage-points in a woman's life, sometimes as the spiritual essence of a season or of a significant geographical point. Occasionally, as in the case of Eireisone, an object of ritual becomes imbued with feminine force and identity, but there is often no myth attached to the name. (Larson 1995)

**Eirene** The Greek goddess of peace, Eirene was worshiped with bloodless sacrifices at Athens, where the god of wealth shared an altar with her. This connection of peace with prosperity is also indicated by Greek coins that show Eirene as crowned with ears of corn. Other coins show her engaged in the unsurprising activity of destroying armaments. Another of Eirene's shrines stood near the temple of **Hestia**, goddess of the

hearth, connecting peace and the comforts of home. Other symbols of Eirene were the cornucopia and the olive branch. Some sources named Eirene as one of the **Horae**. When the Romans adopted her, they called her Pax. (Smith vol. 2)

**Electra** The daughter of **Clytemnestra** plotted murder in revenge for her mother's murder of her father Agamemnon, which in turn was inspired by Agamemnon's murder of Electra's sister **Iphigenia**. This character was, most scholars agree, a literary contrivance, a mouthpiece for authors who wished to support the diminishment of women's power. No rituals or prayers were connected with her. (Aeschylus *Oresteia*; Euripides *Electra*; Sophocles *Electra*; Smith vol. 2)

**Eleos** The goddess of mercy (also translated as "pity" and "clemency") had only one altar, in the marketplace, or *agora*, in the center of Athens. There, anyone who wished to gain the assistance of the city-state had to worship before requesting an alliance. Like **Dike**, Eleos was a personification rather than an actual goddess. She was honored only in Athens, where she was offered cut hair and cast-off garments. (Thompson; Smith vol. 2)

**Eos** The lovely winged Eos, the dawn goddess, drove a chariot hitched to four swift steeds; she changed at midday into Hemera, and later into the sunset goddess Hesperide. Eos had many lovers, often kidnapping men she fancied. One was the gigantic Orion who, because of his constant mistreatment of his wife Merope, was blinded by Merope's father and by the wine god Dionysus. To restore his sight, Orion had to bathe his face in Eos's rays. She not only restored Orion's sight but stole him away. Orion did not remedy his violent ways and was removed to the stars for an offense against **Artemis**. Another mortal lover was Tithonus, for whom Eos begged immortality, forgetting to request eternal youth. As Tithonus wizened, Eos fled his bed, then turned Tithonus into a cricket.

Among Eos's children were the strong west wind Zepheros, the bracing north wind Boreas, the rain-bringing south wind Notos, and Eurus, the east wind. Her other children were stars that illuminate the earth in her absence. (Athanasakis; Boedeker; Friedrich; Hesiod)

**Erigone** The usual story of the Greek queen **Clytemnestra** says that she lost one daughter, **Iphigenia**, to her husband's callous plotting, while the other, **Electra**, turned against her mother and plotted her murder. But other versions of the story exist in which Clytemnestra had another daughter, this one with her lover Aegisthus. Named Erigone, she remained faithful to the queen, her mother. In this version of the story, it was Erigone who brought her half-brother Orestes to trial for Clytemnestra's murder. When he was acquitted, Erigone hanged herself rather than live in a world that forgave matricide. She may have had a child by her half-brother; she may also have been threatened with death at his hands, after which her goddess, **Artemis**, spirited her away to a temple where she served as priestess. Like that of **Jocasta** and her son Oedipus, this entire story is replete with relationships that suggest an early matrilineal society giving way to a patrilineal one. (Graves; Smith vol. 2)

**Erinyes** Embodiments of vengeance, the Erinyes were three immortal black maidens with serpent hair and eyes from which poisonous blood dripped. Clad in gray, bearing brass-studded whips, baying and barking, they roamed the world in pursuit of those who broke the laws of kinship. Untiring, they flew without wings and dropped down without warning upon guilty people. Their breath could kill, but they also dismembered people with their claws. Born from the blood of Uranus where it touched **Gaia**, the implacable goddesses could not be stayed by sacrifice or tears when the blood of kin was shed, especially kin on the maternal side. Those hoping to avert their gaze from minor misdeeds would offer black sheep and honeyed water, white doves, and narcissus flowers.

The three Erinyes were Alecto (“unresting”), Tisiphone (“avenger”), and Megaera (“grudge”). As a trinity, they were the Semnae (“kindly ones”) although they were just rather than gentle; as the Dirae, they were “curses” personified. As Maniae or Furiae, they were the “mad ones.” Most often, they were Erinyes, “strong ones.”

The playwright Aeschylus removed their special concern for maternal kinship. At the end of his trilogy on the family of **Clytemnestra**, the first trial by jury was held, with **Athena** presiding. At stake was whether the Erinyes should punish Orestes for killing his mother. Athena cast the deciding vote, letting Orestes go free because mothers served only as incubators for male-deposited offspring. The Erinyes threatened to ravage the land in retaliation, but Athena consoled them with promises of sacrifices. Finally, reconciled to the new order and renamed Eumenides, the goddesses agreed to exercise their calling only at the behest of Olympian divinities.

The helpful Eumenides were originally distinct. The “kindly ones” were goddesses of the underworld who pushed edible plants through the ground. By extension, the Eumenides ruled human reproduction. Their sacred cave on the Acropolis ultimately became the preserve of the Erinyes. There, a court met in darkness to discuss matters of state. In darkness, too, the rituals of these goddesses were held at low-lying altars, celebrated by purple-robed worshipers bearing torches. (Aeschylus *Oresteia*; Athanasakis; Farnell vol. 5; Hesiod; Sanford)

**Eris** The embodiment of folly and mischief, Eris was the mother of **Ate**, whose apple of discord was the cause of the Trojan War. Although in classical literature, the golden apple belongs to Eris’s daughter, it has become associated with Eris as a force of disorder and sexual pandemonium. Eris was the daughter of **Nyx**, mate of the war god Ares, and mother of a horde of woes named Pontus (sorrow), Lethe (forgetfulness), Limus (hunger), Algaea (pain), and Ate. The Romans adopted Eris and called her Discordia. (Hall; Sanford)

**Europa** The “wide-eyed one” after whom the subcontinent of Europe is named was originally Cretan. Europa owned a magic spear that never missed its target and a monstrous brass warrior that protected her island while she rode the sky on the lunar bull. The Greeks rewrote Europa’s legend so that she became a Phoenician princess; the bull was Zeus, who spied the lovely woman bathing with her handmaids. Aroused, he transformed himself into a bull whose unusual tameness lured Europa into climbing

on his back. Then he leaped into the water and carried her to Crete to rape her. Abandoned there, she bore three famous kings: Minos, Sarpedon, and Rhadamanthus.

Some scholars suggest a Near Eastern origin for Cretan culture and religion, pointing out that Europa resembles **Asherah** and her bull-consort El (see Eastern Mediterranean). The connection of Europa and the bull recalls the myth of **Pasiphae**, so some scholars argue they are the same. Others point out that there was a cult of **Demeter** Europa near Thebes, thus connecting these two goddesses of fertility. (Andrews; Ovid 1958; Willetts)

**Eurydice** Many Greek heroines bear this name. One was a husband-killing Danaid (see **Danae**), another the historical mother of Philip of Macedon. The most famous Eurydice was spouse of the singer Orpheus, son of one of the **Musae**. When she died, he followed her to the kingdom of **Persephone**, begging for Eurydice's release in a song that moved the heart of the queen of death. Granted his wish, Orpheus was instructed not to look behind as he led his lover to the light. But he could not restrain himself and, looking back, saw the shade of Eurydice disappearing forever. A final Eurydice was an underworld serpent goddess to whom human males were sacrificed; whether this goddess and Orpheus's beloved were connected is unclear. (Ovid 1958)

**Eurynome** The most ancient Greek goddess rose naked from primordial chaos and danced to divide light from darkness, sea from sky. The whirling Eurynome created a wind that grew lustful toward her. Turning to face it, she grasped the wind in her hands, rolled it into a serpent, and named it Ophion. Eurynome had intercourse with the wind serpent and, transforming herself into a dove, laid the universal egg from which creation hatched. Installing herself on Mount Olympus, Eurynome looked down complacently upon the earth. But Ophion bragged that he had been responsible for everything. Eurynome kicked out his teeth and threw him into an underworld dungeon.

A later goddess of this name was ruler of the sea, part of a trinity with **Tethys** and **Thetis**. This Eurynome was mother of the **Charites**. Her name was a title of **Artemis** at her temple in Arcadian Phigalea, difficult to reach and open only once a year. If pilgrims reached the sanctuary, they found a statue of a snake-tailed woman tied with golden chains. (Homer 1951; Smith vol. 2)

**Gaia** Her name means "earth"; "geology" and "geography" are derived from her alternative name, Ge. Gaia was the first to emerge from formless chaos, a primordial soup that was neither hot nor cold, neither dark nor light, and neither hard nor soft. After an immeasurable span, chaos settled into the form of Gaia. The goddess had parthenogenetic powers, able to produce life without a mate. She gave birth to mountains, seas, rivers, and living beings. Then Gaia felt desire. To satisfy it, she bore Uranus, the heavens. Their nightly mating caused Gaia to bear beings both marvelous and monstrous, including the Titans who included **Themis**, **Mnemosyne**, and Chronos (time).

Gaia hid these new children away from the jealous Uranus, in the folds of mountains and the depths of oceans. When Gaia could bear her burden no longer, she created a new element: hard adamant. From it she fashioned a jagged-toothed sickle, which she gave to Chronos, who hid himself as night approached.

Out of darkness, Chronos sprang. He grasped Uranus's genitals and sawed them off. Blood rained down on the fertile earth, so fertile that children sprang up instantly: the **Erinyes**, the giants, and the Meliae (see **Nymphs**). The genitals, thrown out to sea, created the goddess of love, **Aphrodite**. Even after Uranus was killed, Gaia continued to have children. Orion was born when the ocean god Poseidon, in company with the thunder god Zeus and the messenger Hermes, masturbated on an ox hide and buried it in the soil, thus impregnating the goddess with their mingled seed. Gaia gave birth after nine months, and the boy's foster father pretended that it had been through urination that the gods had conceived him.

Many scholars describe her as a pre-Olympian divinity minimally absorbed into later pantheons. Little is known of Gaia's rituals. Barley and honey cakes were placed at sacred caves at ritually determined times. At such fissures, gifted people read Gaia's will, for she inspired oracles at Delphi, Dodona, and elsewhere. Her rulership of fertility may have forged this connection, for farmers always wish to know the future of their crops. (Athanasakis; Farnell vol. 3; Hesiod; Motz; Thompson)

**Galatea** There are three figures by this name, one of whom was a water **Nymph** possibly invented by Ovid, who said Galatea's lover was crushed by a huge rock; she transformed his body into a stream. A second Galatea was a human woman whose husband demanded that she kill any infant girls. She could not, and raised her daughter as a boy named Leucippus. When the girl had grown, the desperate mother feared for her life. Galatea took her daughter to a temple of **Leto**, where she begged for permanent transformation. Leto granted the prayer, the girl was turned into a boy, and a festival was established in celebration.

The most familiar Galatea was the creation of Pygmalion, who carved an ivory statue of **Aphrodite**, with which he used to sleep. Such unnatural love was distasteful to the goddess, so Aphrodite cursed Pygmalion by constantly increasing his desire for the ivory statue until, driven to despair, Pygmalion threw himself upon Aphrodite's mercy. The goddess breathed life into the statue, which came alive as Galatea. The lovers produced a child, a daughter whom they named Paphos after one of Aphrodite's shrines. (Ovid 1958)

**Glauce** Glauce, princess of Corinth, wed the unreliable Jason. But Jason already had a wife, **Medea**, who vengefully bewitched a wedding garment which, when Glauce tried it on, burned her to death. The fountain into which she threw herself, seeking to douse the flames, was visible in classical Corinth.

A secondary name given to Glauce is Kreusa, also the name of the daughter of **Athena's** serpent son Erechtheus (see **Aglauros**). Kreusa bore a son to Apollo but, ashamed that she was unwed, exposed the child. Apollo took him to the oracle at Delphi (see **Pythia**), and when Kreusa came years later to plead for children, Apollo had the oracle tell the king a lie: that Ion was his child by a **Maenad** in a long-forgotten night of pleasure. Thus, Ion attained the throne of Athens, which Apollo revealed was his by matrilineal right, as Kreusa's son. (Euripides *Medea*, *Ion*; Clauss and Johnston; Reeder; Winkler and Zeitlin)

**Gorgons** These three sisters had golden wings and lovely faces. But their scaly skin was lizard-like, and their hair was hissing serpents. The Gorgons had boar's tusks and brass fingers, and their gaze was so powerful that a single glance petrified the onlooker. They existed from earliest times, beyond the sea, at the end of night. Their triplet sisters, the **Graeae**, guarded the path to them. All were children of the fish goddess **Ceto**.

Although Gorgons usually were depicted as multiple, occasionally a single monster appeared, named Gorgo. When there were three Gorgons, two were described as immortal—Sthenno and Euryale. They were less prominent in Greek legend than their mortal sister **Medusa**; but as a group, they continued to appear in Greek folklore until recent times as half-fish women who haunted Black Sea resorts on Saturday nights. If a man wished to gain a Gorgon's affection, he would wait until she asked, "Is King Alexander living?" which he answered in the affirmative, whereupon the Gorgon would become wholly human. (Garber and Vickers; Homer 1951; Lawson; Lubell)

**Graeae** The three sisters of the **Gorgons** lived at the world's edge, guarding the path to their sisters' sanctuary. The Graeae were beautiful, although they were gray-haired from birth. They were also deformed, having only one eye and one tooth among them. Their names were Pemphredo, the beautifully clothed one; Enyo, who always dressed in yellow; and Deino, the terrible. (Hesiod)

**Hagne** The obscure goddess Hagne ("pure one") is known from few ancient sources. The traveler to sacred sites, Pausanias, described an ancient sanctuary in Messenia, in the southwestern Peloponnesus, that was the center of a mystery religion almost as revered as that of **Demeter** at Eleusis. At a tree-shaded spring, the goddess Hagne was honored together with other goddesses and with the gods Apollo and Hermes. He interpreted the goddess to be a form of **Persephone**, but as the sacred spring also bore the name of Hagne, this goddess may have originally been a **Nymph** of the pure spring water. In Syria, the name Hagne was used of **Atargatis** (see Eastern Mediterranean).

The religion is also described in the Andanian Rule, a record of regulations regarding the rituals that have been dated to 92–91 BCE. The Rule does not describe any of the secret rituals, instead focusing on financial accountability for the expensive public events. However, the rituals are hinted at in regulations that cover tents, a sacred meal, processions, and sacrifices. Women were required to wear a white felt cap and Egyptian-style tunic with strips not more than a half-finger in width; "first initiates" were required to wear a tiara. Regulations regarding "women who must be dressed in the manner of the gods" suggest that selected women enacted the roles of divinities in the procession or ritual. The procession itself included musicians and "chests containing the sacred things" used for the mysteries. The fountain named Hagna appears to have been the site of the sacrifice, which included animals as well as other offerings. (Meyer; Pausanias)

**Hairo** On the island of Chios, Orion desired the maiden Hairo, but before she could wed, her father Oinopion required the hero to rid the land of wild beasts. Growing

impatient, Orion raped Hairo, and in retaliation, Oinopion blinded him. A similar story is told of the **Nymph** Merope. (Argenti)

**Halcyone** The daughter of the wind god Aeolus, Halcyone married Ceyx, son of the morning star. Because they were so happy, Halcyone recklessly asked her husband to call her **Hera**, while she referred to him as Zeus. This raised the ire of the real Hera and Zeus, who brought about a storm while Ceyx was at sea. Halcyone, warned by a dream, stood watch by the seashore and caught Ceyx's body as it washed to shore. Transported by grief, Halcyone drowned herself, but then she and her dead mate magically revived, transformed into kingfishers. So kindly did the Greek divinities look on this loyal love that they blessed the couple. Now, when the kingfisher is ready to lay its eggs near the winter solstice, a calm descends on the sea until they hatch, called by the ancient name of the loving mortal—the “halcyon days.” (Ovid 1958)

**Harmonia** The “uniter“ was the daughter of love (**Aphrodite**) and war (Ares), and from her, the legendary **Amazons** claimed descent. Harmonia was also said to have founded the dynasty of Thebes and to have borne famous Dionysian women **Semele**, mother of the god; and the **Maenads** Agave and Autonoe, as well as their sister Ino. At Harmonia's marriage to king Cadmus, all the Olympians bore magical gifts, including a famous necklace bestowed by Aphrodite that gave irresistible sexuality to its wearer. **Athena** gave Harmonia a golden robe that endowed the wearer with dignity; during the ceremony, **Demeter** made love with her consort Iasion in her fields, to assure their productivity. (Graves vol. 1)

**Harpies** Originally, they were death goddesses who snatched away the living as sea-birds or whirlwinds. Later, they became three fair-haired winged maidens, daughters of **Gaia**. They had the pale faces of beautiful starving women, the bodies of vultures, sharp claws, and bears' ears. Many names were given to them, most commonly Aello, Celaeno, and Ocypete. They captured murderers, who were punished by the **Erinyes**. (Harrison 1955; Hesiod)

**Hebe** Under the name Ganymeda, this maiden goddess refreshed the divinities with the ambrosia and nectar of immortal youth. The incarnation of all that is fresh, she could renew youth magically. The spring goddess, the image of her mother **Hera**, was married to Hera's champion, Heracles, and bore him two sons.

The goddess later split in two, her name and position applied to Ganymede, a mortal boy elevated to heaven to replace her, while her other attributes remained in Greek mythology as Hebe. Greek legend recorded an excuse for replacing the goddess with a deified mortal: clumsy Hebe had embarrassed the divine assembly by exposing her genitals during a fall. The Romans called her Juventas, “youth.” (O'Brien 1993)

**Hecate** When the moon was new, Hecate walked the roads carrying a blazing torch and accompanied by sacred dogs. She gathered offerings left by her devotees wherever three roads crossed. Hecate could look three ways because she had three heads: a

serpent, a horse, and a dog. Fearsome as she might appear, Hecate was also beloved, dressed in a golden cloak and frolicking with deer.

Hecate's origins are unclear. She may have been Thracian (possibly once named Enodia) and moved south with other gods, or she may have emerged from east central Asia. Her family heritage was never described, nor did she have any children. Hecate was the most solitary of Greek divinities.

Whatever Hecate's origin, her myth soon joined that of **Demeter**, for she appears at significant points in the story of the abduction of **Persephone**. She was even evoked as Persephone, perhaps because ghosts accompanied Hecate, and Persephone was goddess of the dead. Hecate was also called **Baubo**, the bawdy joker who plays an important role in Demeter's myth. Connections among these goddesses are not fully understood.

The antiquity of Hecate's worship was recognized by the Greeks, who granted to Hecate a power shared with Zeus, that of giving or withholding anything she wished. Hecate's worship continued into classical times. While Hecate walked the night, her worshippers gathered to eat "Hecate suppers," at which secrets of sorcery were shared. When supper was over, the leftovers were placed outdoors as offerings to Hecate and her hounds.

Public sacrifices offered the goddess honey, black female lambs, dogs, and sometimes slaves. As queen of night and the dark moon, Hecate controlled frightening hordes of ghosts. Greek women evoked Hecate for protection from her hosts whenever they left the house and put her threefold image at their doors. (Athanasakis; Dexter; Farnell vol. 2; Hawley and Levick; Hesiod; Motz; Rabinowitz)

**Hegemone** An ancient goddess of the soil whose name survives in a word for sovereignty, Hegemone disappeared so early that no record has been found of her independent worship. Her name became attached to **Artemis**, to the horse goddess Despoina, and to the **Charites**. In this last identity, she was honored with her sister Auxo, their names signifying "increase" and "mastery." Her ancient importance survived in the Athenian ritual whereby new citizens took oaths of citizenship in her name. (Kerényi 1979)

**Helen** Before the Dorians invaded the Peloponnesus, the goddess Helen bore the title of Dendritis ("she of the trees"). A vegetation deity, she was depicted with two husbands, the Dioscuri, later her brothers Castor and Pollux. All were born of an egg laid by the mother goddess **Leda**.

Helen had several famous sanctuaries. In Rhamnus, she was worshiped as the daughter of **Nemesis**; at Argos, in the temple of **Eileithyia**. In Sparta, young women were dedicated to her upon reaching the age of matrimony. Helen was honored in a shrine of trees, where figurines of her were hung; the same tradition was found on Rhodes. Finally, at Helen's temple at Therapnai, figurines tie Helen to the Spartan **Artemis Orthia**, a title also borne by Aphrodite.

The most familiar Helen figured in the epic struggle of Greeks against Trojans. There are several stories of her birth. Her mother **Leda** attracted the eye of the lustful Zeus, who raped her while wearing the shape of a swan. (When Helen was described as

the daughter of Nemesis, her conception also followed rape by Zeus.) Leda slept with her mortal husband shortly before or after this assault, conceiving again and giving birth to twin boys, as well to Helen's mortal sister, **Clytemnestra**.

Like her mother, Helen was raped. She was a girl when the elderly Athenian king Theseus assaulted her. Later, Helen took Menelaus as spouse, granting him the right to her city's throne. They had one daughter, Hermione, about whom little legend accrues. When Helen left Menelaus for the Trojan shepherd Paris, Menelaus lost his throne as well as his wife. He chased Helen to Troy and fought for 10 years to win her back. But she outlived him, acquiring two more husbands, Deiphobos and the hero of the Trojan War, Achilles.

A persistent tradition says Helen could not be removed from her land. Only a ghost accompanied Paris to Troy, and the famous war was fought over a specter. Another story says that Paris managed to steal Helen, but he was shipwrecked by strong winds in Egypt, where the pharaoh detained Helen. The Greeks waged their war only to find out that Helen had never been in the city. (Aeschylus *Oresteia*; Euripides *Helen*, *Orestes*; Butterworth; Friedrich; Homer 1951; Lyons; Meagher; Plutarch 1960)

**Heliades** The daughters of the sun god and the goddess **Rhode** (or of the otherwise unknown goddess Neaira), these goddesses cried amber tears at the death of their beloved brother Phaeton, who stole their father's chariot and drove it too close to the solar globe. They were transformed into poplar trees, notable for the way their leaves glimmer in sunlight. Yet they also continued to serve their sun father, harnessing his horses every morning and guarding his sacred cattle. Thus, they may be related to such Indo-European dawn maidens as **Eos**, the Roman **Aurora**, and the Baltic **Saules Meita**. Homer thought there were only two daughters of Helios and Rhode, Lampetia (Lampetie), and Phatusa or Phaethusa (the feminine gendered form of the name of her famous brother, Phaeton). As both names mean "illuminator," they may have originally been solar divinities rather than simply descendents of the sun. Other sources offer the names Aegilae (Aigle or Aegle, "light") and Lamethusa. Some names of the Heliades overlap with those given the star goddesses called the **Hesperides**, which suggests confusion of these collective goddesses. (Kerényi 1979; Ovid 1958)

**Helle** King Athamas of Boeotia and the cloud queen **Nephele** had two children, Phrixus and Helle. But the king turned his attentions to **Ino**, who conspired against Nephele's children by urging the women of the kingdom to induce a famine. Someone had to be sacrificed to restore the earth's fertility, and Ino bribed an oracle to demand Nephele's children. But a golden-winged ram took the children away on his back. Helle grew dizzy and fell into the narrow strait that separates Europe and Asia, called the Hellespont in her honor. Her brother arrived safely in Colchis and sacrificed the ram, whose golden fleece figured in the legend of the sorceress **Medea**. (Smith vol. 2)

**Hera** The name of the cow-eyed sky queen Hera, which means "Our Lady" and may have been a title, is connected to the name of the seasonal goddesses, the **Horae**. Whether the Greek goddess descended from the unnamed Mycenaean figure called

“Hera” by archaeologists is unclear, although many trace the Greek goddess to that source.

Magnificent of form and feature, Hera passed through three life stages. First, she was **Hebe** or Parthenia, symbol of the budding earth and of maidenhood. Next, she was revealed as the mature woman, Nymphenomene or Teleia; she was the earth in summer, the woman in the prime of life. Finally, she grew into Theira, the dying autumn earth and the mature solitary woman. As goddess of birth and death, of spring and autumn, Hera held the emblems, respectively, of a cuckoo and a pomegranate.

In honor of Hera’s three phases, the Greeks celebrated a competitive athletic festival. Every four years, women came to Hera’s town of Argos for 160-yard races, running in three age groups to honor the goddess’s three stages. Three winners each received olive crowns and a share of a sacrificed cow, as well as gaining the right to leave a statuette of herself in Hera’s shrine.

Another festival marked Hera’s annual revival. Celebrants carried the goddess’s statue to the spring of Kanathes, to cleanse the winter from her. A pool fed by the sacred spring can still be visited. Her primary festival, the Hekatombaia, was a new-year celebration that included rituals similar to those found on the island of Samos, where the goddess’s statue was ceremonially tied to a sacred tree. The “roping” ritual, indicating the transference of the goddess’s power into the tree, became a symbol of her “binding” in marriage to Zeus.

Originally, Hera had no consort. When the Indo-European tribes arrived, Hera’s religion was too strong to destroy, so a marriage was forged between the two predominant divinities. Even as late as Homer, Zeus was called “Hera’s spouse.” From this marriage, classical Hera emerged, a jealous wife who hounded the unfaithful husband whom she never wanted to marry. She was one of a long line of mates of Zeus, who had previously had children with **Metis**, **Eurynome**, **Demeter**, **Mnemosyne**, and **Leto**. To gain access to her, Zeus transformed himself into a cuckoo and flew bedraggled into her lap. Taking pity on the bird, Hera was astonished when it turned into Zeus, who raped her.

Shamed by the violation, the goddess agreed to restore her dignity through marriage. Two daughters were born, **Hebe** and Eileithuia, and a son, the war god Ares. When Zeus had children without mothers (see **Athena**), Hera gave birth parthenogenetically to the smith god Hephaestus. Then Hera wearied of her husband’s ceaseless pursuit of other goddesses and organized a heavenly revolt. The Olympians tied Zeus to his bed and mocked him. Zeus took his revenge by stringing Hera from the sky, her wrists tied to golden bracelets, her ankles weighted by anvils.

Despite the misery of her own marriage, Hera was honored as patron of both marriage and the birth of children. The latter role echoes her original position as goddess of fertility, Hera Lecherna, goddess of childbed. Figures of nursing women were offered to her, and her milk, sprayed across the sky, formed the Milky Way. Anyone who drank Hera’s milk was endowed with superhuman strength and agility. As milk-giver, Hera was connected with the cow. She was called Boôpis Potnia Hêrê, “ox-eyed Lady Hera,” and she frequently turned those she persecuted into cows (see **Io**).

Several legends describe Hera’s priestesses, who bore the title of Callirrhoe at the Heraion in Argos. Each priestess had to commit to memory the names of all her

forebears. Some lists still exist, and the stories of some individuals are recorded. Cydippe had two sons to whom she was devoted. She prayed to Hera to grant them what was best for mortals. That night, they died in their sleep. In Corinth, **Medea** was priestess of Hera under her title of Akraia; an initiatory ritual for adolescents may have been centered there. (Athanassakis; Avagianou; Blundell and Williamson; Clauss and Johnston; Dexter; Friedrich; Gimbutas 1989; Harrison 1962; Hesiod; Kerényi 1975; Keuls; Motz; O'Brien 1993; Pantel vol. 1; Watson)

**Hero** A priestess of **Aphrodite** at Sestos, Hero took Leander as a lover. Each night, he swam across the waters that separated them, guided by the lighthouse on her shore. Then he swam back at dawn. One night, Leander dove into stormy waters and was lost when the storm blew out the lighthouse flame. Hero joined him in death. (Smith vol. 2)

**Hesperides** At the edge of night lived the evening stars, sweet-singing daughters of **Nyx** or of **Ceto**. Occasionally, they were said to be children of the mountain god Atlas, from which they draw their alternative name of Atlantides. They guarded a golden-fruited apple tree that **Gaia** gave to **Hera** as a wedding gift. Some sources describe three Hesperides named Aegle, Hespere, and Erytheis; sometimes there were four named Aegle, Erytheia, Hestia, and Arethusa. Rarely, a reference to seven Hesperides can be found. Sometimes these guardian goddesses were said to be like winged demons like **Harpies**, at other times beautiful singers like **Sirens**. Most commonly, they were called **Nymphs**. (Larson 2001; Smith vols. 1 and 2)

**Hestia** Hestia took no human form; only two statues existed, both lost, and no coins show her image. But she was ever-present, for Hestia was the hearth's fire. She symbolized family unity and, by extension, she embodied the social contract. At the ever-burning public hearth, Hestia was called Prytantis. There, first fruits, water, oil, and wine were dedicated to her, and year-old cows were sacrificed to her. She also received the first part of sacrifices offered to other gods, for as purifying fire, she could not be ignored. In the home, daily sacrifices to Hestia were offered, for the hearth was not only a place for cooking and a source of heat, but a religious center as well.

Hestia was first of the Olympians, born from **Rhea** and her consort Chronos. Her antiquity is attested by the Greek proverb "Start with Hestia," meaning "Begin things at the beginning." In all her shrines, Hestia offered sanctuary to anyone needing protection for any reason; her temples were locations for reception of foreign dignitaries.

Hestia invented architecture and built the first house. A home was not considered established until a woman brought fire from her mother's hearth to light her own. In the same way, Greek colonists brought fire from the mother city's public hearth to assure the cohesion of their new communities. Should a hearth fire go out, it could not be relit from earthly fire, but had to be ignited from the sun. (Athanassakis; Farnell vol. 5; Nilsson 1961; Smith vol. 2)

**Hippodamia** A number of minor characters in Greek mythology bear this name ("horse tamer"), which has been connected with a goddess of pre-Olympian times honored in secret rites by women. The various Hippodamias included the daughter of

the Pleiade Sterope (see **Nymphs**); the sister of the man-woman **Caenis**; and the woman Briseis, slave concubine to the hero Achilles.

The most prominent Hippodamia was ancestral mother of the fated house of Atreus (see **Dione**), the daughter of King Oenomaus, who kept her unwed by engaging in a horse race with each suitor. Because the king's horses were mares sired by the wind, he always won. But when Pelops fell in love with Hippodamia, the young man borrowed a chariot with powerful horses from the ocean god Poseidon. To further assure his victory, he bribed Oenomaus's charioteer, offering him a night with Hippodamia to throw the race, but then killed him when he came to claim his sexual prize.

After Pelops's horrible death, Hippodamia married Autonomous, bearing four sons and one daughter from that union. When her sons were devoured by wild mares, despite Hippodamia's attempt to stop the assault, the gods turned the grieving mother into a crested lark, because she had put on a helmet to defend her children. (O'Flaherty; Smith vol. 2)

**Hipta** Once a widely known goddess of Asian origin, Hipta is now obscure except for reference in the Orphic Hymns that date to an indeterminate period between 600 BCE and 400 CE. In these sources, Hipta is called the nurse of the wine god Dionysus, taking part in his rituals as a **Maenad**. (Athanasakis)

**Horae** Also called the "hours" or the "seasons," this collective of goddesses appeared in various groupings. Sometimes there were two: Thallo (spring) and Carpo (autumn). Sometimes there were three: Eunomia (lawful order), **Dike** (justice), and **Eirene** (peace). A few authors even provide lists of 10 or 11 Horae. Whatever their number, they were goddesses of natural order and the seasons. By extrapolation they ruled the order of human society. Few legends were told of them, although they made appearances in myths of other goddesses. Thallo was **Persephone**'s companion. The Horae brought clothing to **Aphrodite** and a floral garland to **Pandora**. They danced with the **Charites**; annually, they opened heaven's gates so that **Hera** could escape to solitude. They appeared more often in visual than in narrative art; the image of three dancing maidens has remained common in sculpture for more than 2,000 years. (Athanasakis; Smith vol. 2)

**Hydra** This monster guarded the entrance to the underworld at Lerna, her many heads hissing at any mortal who tried to enter. If one head were chopped off, another took its place. The dangerous swamp of Lerna was also a sanctuary where murderers could purify themselves of spilled blood, giving rise to the Greek saying, "a Lerna of evils." Hydra's blood was so poisonous that, touched by it, the immortal centaur Chiron begged to die to escape its torture. (Graves; Harrison; Hesiod)

**Hygieia** The goddess of health, Hygieia was either the wife or daughter of the god of healing, Asclepius; her mother was **Peitho**, goddess of persuasive speech, suggesting that the Greeks saw a connection between love and health, for Peitho served **Aphrodite**. Her sister was a little-known goddess of healing, Iaso; her relationship to Panacea ("all-healing") is unclear. Statuary shows Hygieia as a mild-looking young woman

feeding a snake from a cup. Her worship dates to the 7th century BCE, with her great center at Epidaurus dating to 300 years later. There, the goddess appeared in dreams, wearing the guise of a snake. (Athanasakis; Smith vol. 2)

**Hypermnestra** The oldest of the Danaid sisters (see **Danae**), she was worshiped in Argos as the founder of its royal dynasty. It is theorized that she was originally not a Danaid, but a water goddess. She did not join her husband-murdering sisters but spared her mate, which was used as evidence of divine sanction for the Argive monarchy. The love goddess **Aphrodite** offered her support for Hypermnestra, saying that her actions proved the centrality of love in human life. Some sources call Hypermnestra a priestess of **Hera**, the most important goddess of Argos. (Aeschylus *The Suppliants*; O'Brien 1993)

**Idothea** A minor Greek sea goddess, she was the daughter of the multiformed sea god Proteus. A favorite of sailors, she was so disrespectful of her father that she revealed Proteus's weather tricks to humans. She played an important part in the story of the Trojan War, for she provided information to the victorious Menelaus, the abandoned husband of **Helen**, about how to trap her father and learn the best sea route home. (Smith vol. 2)

**Ino** Daughter of the goddess of gentility, **Harmonia**, Ino was an early goddess of agricultural rites to whom sacrifices were offered in a magical attempt to make rain fall as freely as blood on the soil. When later tribes brought their own divinities to Ino's realm, the religious conflict was recorded in the legend that Ino was a rival of the king's wife, **Nephele**. Ino brought on a famine to show her strength, then bribed messengers to bring back a false oracle demanding the sacrifice of Nephele's children (see **Helle**). **Hera** then cursed Ino, who was transformed into **Leucothea** ("white goddess").

Although the king fled to another land with Ino's remaining children and remarried a woman named Themisto, his love for Ino did not die. Some myths say that she did not die, either. Her husband, hearing that she lived, set off in pursuit. Themisto planned to kill Ino's children, but the slave assigned to do the deed (Ino in disguise) substituted Themisto's children. When Themisto realized she had slaughtered her own offspring rather than her rival's, she hung herself. (Farnell 1916; Lyons; Ovid 1958.)

**Invidia** The Greek personification of envy, she was daughter of the goddess of forgetfulness, **Styx**; the word "invidious" is derived from her name. (Smith vol. 2)

**Io** The first king of Argos was a river god who voted against Poseidon and for **Hera** when the two divinities contested ownership of the city. To punish the Argives for refusing him, Poseidon cursed Argos with dry summer streams. But the Argives were unconcerned. The king's daughter led them in rainmaking dances, in which priestesses mimicked cattle driven mad by gadflies in the scorching heat. Early tablets from Argos show that a princess named Io, also called Callirhoe or Callithyia, headed the college of Hera's priestesses there.

Then came the Zeus-worshipping tribes. The indigenous cow goddess found her legend grafted onto that of the sky god: Hera, jealous of Zeus's love for her priestess Io, accused him of infidelity. To hide his transgression, Zeus transformed Io into a heifer, but Hera was not taken in. She asked for the cow, and Zeus could hardly refuse. Hera tied Io to a tree, setting the 100-eyed Argos to guard her. On order of Zeus, Hermes freed the heifer and killed the Argos, whose many eyes Hera placed into the tail of the peacock; she then sent a gadfly to torment Io. Io wandered the world until she found rest in Egypt.

Given that Hera originated in Argos, where she was called the "cow-eyed," this myth doubles the cow imagery, suggesting that Io was an aspect of Hera, not merely her priestess. But whereas Hera's worship spread through the Peloponnesus, Io's worship remained isolated in Argos. (Aeschylus *Suppliants*; Dowden; O'Brien 1993; Ovid 1958)

**Iphigenia** The daughter of **Clytemnestra**, she was sacrificed by her father to bring favorable winds for the voyage to Troy in pursuit of her aunt, **Helen**. Some sources say that **Artemis** saved the girl from sacrifice, replacing Iphigenia with a stag and wafting the girl off to Asia Minor to become her priestess. There, after his trial for matricide, Iphigenia's brother Orestes came to steal the goddess's statue, which an oracle said would relieve his tortured conscience. Iphigenia discovered her brother and assisted him in moving the statue.

Some sources say Iphigenia was transformed into a goddess called Orthia or Brauronia, both titles of Artemis. Others claim she became **Hecate**. Finally, there is evidence that Iphigenia was originally an independent goddess demoted to a heroine; she is known in some texts as Artemis Iphigenia. (Dowden; Euripides *Electra*, *Iphigenia in Taurus*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*; Manning)

**Ipsia** Who was the mother of the great witch **Medea**? Although she plays little role in the tragic story of the woman who risks all for love, ancient authors give several names for Medea's mother, including Ipsia and Idyia. Most commonly, Medea's mother was said to be a human queen. But in some cases, the goddess **Hecate** was said to have given birth not only to Medea, whom she trained in the magical arts, but to her sacrificed brother Absyrtus. (Kerényi 1979)

**Iris** The winged rainbow goddess slept under **Hera**'s bed when not delivering messages. When Hera slept with Zeus, it was Iris who prepared their bed. She was one of the few Olympians who could journey to the underworld, where she fetched water for oaths; for this reason, she was called a form of **Hecate**. (Aristophanes *The Birds*)

**Jocasta** When seers predicted that the child of Laius and Jocasta would kill his father and marry his mother, the horrified parents exposed him on a mountainside. But the boy, Oedipus, was found, saved, and brought up by another royal family. When he learned the prediction, he ran away to spare his presumed father and mother. Meeting a man at a crossroads, he killed him, not knowing that it was Laius, his real father.

Near Thebes, he vanquished the monstrous **Sphinx** who held the region hostage. Hailed as a hero, Oedipus married the queen, again without knowing that she had given him birth. But the land was struck by a blight caused by the incestuous conception of children, including the noble **Antigone**. When she discovered the truth, Jocasta killed herself, whereupon Oedipus blinded himself and left the city. Jocasta's brother, Creon, then took the throne. In some variants, Jocasta does not kill herself but divides the throne between her two sons by Oedipus; this is suggestive of matrilineal inheritance, as is much of this story. (Euripides *Phoenician Women*; Sophocles *Oedipus the King*)

**Ker** This goddess of death, daughter of **Nyx** and sister of the **Moirae**, appeared as a black carrion bird hovering over corpses. The name was also used of any malevolent ghost. In the plural, Keres, she symbolized the many forms that death can take. No one can escape Ker, but gods sometimes hid favorites from her. Occasionally Ker was called a goddess of vengeance. (Smith vol. 1)

**Koronides** Two sisters, Metioche and Menippe, were born to the hunter Orion, who was killed by the virgin goddess **Artemis** for attempting to rape her. They lived in Boeotia, where **Athena** trained them in weaving and **Aphrodite** gave them beautiful manners. But then a plague threatened, and oracles proclaimed that all would die unless two maidens offered themselves as a sacrifices. The girls did so, killing themselves with their shuttles. As they died, the gods raised them into the heavens as comets. (A. Fontenrose)

**Lamia** Children were frightened with stories about Lamia, a mortal woman who bore Zeus several children. When the jealous **Hera** destroyed all her offspring except **Scylla**, Lamia went crazy with grief and began stealing other women's children to suck their blood. Originally this half-snake figure may have been a form of the Cretan snake goddess, honored at rituals similar to those of **Demeter** at Eleusis. Lamia existed in Greek folklore until recent times, continuing her career as a frightening specter. (Argenti; Lawson)

**Lampetia** The sun's daughter, Lampetia, was his chief herdsman as well, guarding his fabulous cattle. The *Odyssey* tells how the Greeks arrived on the island of Trinacria (modern Sicily), where this goddess and her sister Phathusa lived. King Odysseus warned his men not to touch the sacred cattle, but a few disobeyed. The immortal cattle suffered greatly: the hides walked around by themselves; the spitted flesh groaned over the fires. Lampetia reported the sacrilege to her father, who sent a punishing storm to destroy the Greek boats. Only Odysseus was saved from the sun god's anger; he was washed ashore on the island of **Calypso**. (Homer 1996; Ovid 1958)

**Leda** Originally she may have been Lada ("woman"); she may be connected to the similarly named **Leto**. Zeus, in the form of a swan, raped Leda. The same night, Leda slept with her husband, and later laid an egg. Out hatched two sets of twins, male and female, mortal and immortal, the mortal children fathered by her husband, the immortal ones by Zeus. The mortal twins were **Clytemnestra** and Pollux; the immortal ones,

**Helen** and Castor. Leda was then was raised to heaven, where she became known as **Nemesis**.

Variants say that Zeus raped Nemesis herself. She fled from him, changing shape as she ran, but finally overpowered in the body of a bird, Nemesis laid an egg that the woman Leda found and cared for. Another tale says Zeus tricked Nemesis by disguising himself as a swan, then raping her. The egg that resulted was laid between Leda's legs so that she was the foster mother of the four children. (Smith vol. 2)

**Lemna** The little island of Lemnos is in the far north of the Aegean Sea, near the mythic land of the **Amazons**. The people of Lemnos had direct connections to those women warriors, for they claimed descent from Myrine, one of the greatest Amazon queens. Their own goddess bore the name of their island, Lemna.

The women of Lemnos were so confident of their beauty that they neglected proper sacrifices to the goddess of desire, **Aphrodite**. In punishment, she put a curse on them that was appropriate to their neglect. They were stricken with a terrible odor that made them sexually repulsive. The men of the island began consorting with slave women, conceiving children upon their concubines. In revenge, the proud Lemnian women killed the men. They also killed the slave women and the children born of the illicit unions.

Only their queen, Hypsipyle, broke the women's covenant by hiding her father from death. Later, the Greek hero Jason and his Argonaut companions stopped at the island. To repopulate their land, the women had intercourse with the strangers, Hypsipyle choosing Jason himself. It was said that the women, realizing that their murders had changed their society utterly, thereafter called the children by their fathers' names, rather than by their own. The story offers a strong warning against women asserting rights of matrilineal succession. (Canteralla; Friedrich)

**Lethe** The Greek goddess of oblivion was the daughter of the matron of disorder, **Eris**. The underworld river through which the dead pass, and which causes them to forget their lives on this earth, is named for her. Some myths call Lethe the mother of Dionysus—the god of wine, whose heritage would explain the reason for drunken forgetfulness. (Hesiod; Smith vol. 2)

**Leto** Classical myth said that she was a paramour of Zeus who bore Apollo and **Artemis**, despite the persecutions of **Hera**. But she existed before Zeus appeared. Leto may have been part of the substratum of Greek religion shared with Hera; she was known in Crete, under the name of Phytia. She has been connected to both **Leda** and to the goddess of vengeance, **Nemesis**. Or Leto may have been an imported goddess, perhaps **Al-Lat** (see Eastern Mediterranean).

She was the daughter of the moon goddess **Selene** and sister of **Asteria**, who saved her by becoming the sunken island Delos, on which Leto safely gave birth. Leto was called “gentlest of all Olympus,” but her gentleness did not protect Leto from rape, for the mortal Tityus assaulted her and was executed for the crime by Apollo. In the story of **Niobe**, she grew angry because that queen boasted of her progeny. (Hesiod; Homer 1951; Keuls; Lyons; Meagher; Motz; Willetts)

**Leucothea** “White goddess” is a term given to several goddesses and heroines, including the cow goddess **Ino**, who was honored by seagoing people as an indicator of the sea’s fertility, but also as an oracular being. Under the name Leucothea, this goddess was honored as a primary divinity in the oracular shrine of Didyma. On Rhodes, she was originally Halia (“sea woman”), nurse to the baby ocean god Poseidon together with the heroine Kapheira. On Tenedos, she was called Hemithea, while in other areas, that name was jointly held by a group of goddesses. (Lyons)

**Lindia** The goddess of the city of Lindos was worshiped from 1500 BCE until she became assimilated into **Athena**. Lindia embodied the abundance of harvest, as well as the culture that a stable food supply sustains. An uncut plank represented Lindia’s torso and limbs; a sculpted head rose above, crowned with the walls of her city, while across her unshaped breast were strung necklace garlands. Lindia is a form of the goddess called *Karpophoros*, “lady of the beasts,” a goddess identified with wild places and animals. (Friedrich; Zuntz)

**Litae** Innumerable sweet-natured goddesses, they represented penitential prayers that, light as the Litae’s frail bodies, wafted to Olympus to be answered. These goddesses accompanied **Ate**, goddess of discord, as she created difficulties on earth, offering to help those whose minds she had confused. The word “litigate”—to plead one’s case—is derived from their name, as well as the religious term “litany.” (Sanford)

**Lycippe** With her sisters, Iphinoë and Iphianassa, she was a daughter of the early hero Proitos (from which they are called the Proitids). Because she made fun of a statue of the goddess **Hera**, she was stricken with an itching disease that caused her to go mad and wander around, mooing like a cow. The name of the third sister is also used of the sacrificed heroine **Iphigenia**. (Dowden)

**Macaria** The “blessed one” was the only daughter of the champion Heracles and the warrior woman **Dejanira**. During a siege of Athens, an oracle announced that the city would be overrun by its enemies unless a child of Heracles should die. To save her home, Macaria committed suicide. A spring was named in Macaria’s honor. (Euripides *The Heracleidae*; Graves vol 2; Smith vol. 2)

**Maenads** A religion of ecstatic worship overtook Greece in the 8th century BCE, peaking in the 5th century. What was this religion of madwomen? Was it transcendent or pathological? How much was real, how much was the imagining of men aroused or terrified at the prospect of women celebrating in religious ecstasy? Where did the religion come from?

Myth says that the Maenads (“mad ones”) or Bacchantes (“followers of Bacchus”) worshiped the wine god Dionysus, also called Bacchus or “rowdy one.” A latecomer to the Olympian pantheon, he was born of Zeus and **Semele**. (Alternative stories say he was conceived by **Demeter**, **Persephone**, **Iris**, **Io**, **Lethe**, or **Dione**, or by a human woman, either **Amalthea** or **Arge**.) When **Hera** made Semele doubt her lover’s identity, the woman asked to see Zeus in all his godly brilliance. She was blasted apart

by its power, but the divine fetus was saved, and Dionysus was born from Zeus's thigh. Hidden from other gods, Dionysus grew to young manhood nursed by **Nymphs**, princesses, or the goddesses Persephone or **Rhea**. Some sources say that he spent his childhood disguised as a girl, spoon-fed on honey by Macris, daughter of his aunt Autonoe.

When grown, he drove women mad. Portraits of Dionysus's followers show them tattooed with a fawn on their upper arm, dressed in wild-animal skins and bearing ivy-wreathed staffs of fennel (*thyrsos*). Hundreds of Greek paintings show Maenads running through wilderness, heads flung back and hair unbound. They killed with bare hands and drank warm blood. They set their hair afire and remained uninjured. Weapons did not harm them, nor could armies disperse them.

Only women participated in this religion. The Maenads included both married and unmarried women of all ages past girlhood. Those who did not participate honored those who did. One group of Maenads, caught in a war and unable to return home, stumbled into the town of Amphisa and fell asleep in the middle of the town. When they awoke, the town's matrons stood ringed about them, silently holding hands.

Because the Maenads never revealed their rites beyond their circles, there is no way to know what the Dionysian Mysteries entailed. From early times, however, ignorance did not discourage speculation. Most of what is reported about the Maenads is imagined. Some myths describe the dreadful results of opposing their religion. In Thrace, King Lycurgus captured and imprisoned some Maenads. Dionysus cursed him so that Lycurgus mistook his own son for a vine and pruned him to death. When the king did not repent, the Maenads made the land barren until his people offered Lycurgus to be torn apart.

Men were unwelcome at Maenad gatherings and were punished severely for intruding, as the story of Agave's son, king Pentheus of Thebes, reveals. Daughter of **Harmonia**, Agave—Semele's sister and Dionysus's aunt—joined the Bacchic women. But her son was repulsed by his mother's religion. Climbing a tall pine near the ritual site, he tried to spy on them. The Maenads dragged him from the tree and tore him to shreds as though he were a wild animal, with Agave leading the attack. Then the women bore his bloody remains back to Thebes, Agave bearing his severed head aloft.

Several other tales describe Maenads who killed their children in Dionysian frenzy. Aura, a maiden who followed **Artemis**, attracted the lust of Dionysus. True to her vow of chastity, she spurned him. So the god turned to **Aphrodite**, and it was not long before Aura became a Maenad and mother of Dionysus's twin sons. But Artemis had not forgotten Aura and, to punish her, drove her mad. In the intoxication of ritual, Aura killed and ate one of her children. Then, despairing, she drowned herself.

While in Aura's tale, Artemis caused her madness, more commonly Dionysus himself drove women insane. **Lycippe** jeered at a group of Maenads, in punishment for which she was stricken mad and ripped her sons to pieces. Her sisters Aristippe and Alkithoe suffered a similar fate when, refusing to leave their looms, they saw weavings come alive with vines and ivy, whereupon the women ran raving into the woodlands, killing children as they went and finally being transformed into birds.

Many names of Maenads are recorded. Thyia was the first Maenad; Charopeia and Phasyleia led the women in dance, as did Terpsichore (see **Musae**). Methe became so

divinely inspired that she was deified. Chalcomede was protected by Dionysus when a warrior attempted to rape her; when he could not protect Coronis, Dionysus drove her rapist mad so that he committed suicide.

Although the religion of the Maenads died out in Greece before Euripides wrote about them in 400 BCE, there is evidence that Dionysian rituals were celebrated in Greek-influenced areas of Italy into the Common Era. From the 3rd century BCE, annual women-only festivals called bacchanalia were held on the Aventine Hill on March 16 and 17. Later, the rites were opened to men and held more frequently, until suppressed by the Senate in 186 BCE. Nonetheless, as the Villa of Mysteries at Pompeii suggests, the rites may have continued in secret after being outlawed. (Cameron and Kuhrt; Dodds; Euripides *Bacchae*; Evans; Farnell vol. 5; Harrison 1962; Hedreen; Henrichs; Keuls; Kraemer; Lyons; Meyer; Ovid 1958; Pantel; Sanford; Sourvinou-Inwood 2005; Whallon; Young)

**Maia** The name of a springtime month is derived from this goddess who appeared in both Greek and Roman legend. In Greece, she was “grandmother,” “midwife,” or “wise one” (variant meanings of her name). Originally goddess of the night sky, later the oldest of the **Pleiades**, Maia survives in name only, for all of her myth is lost except for the mention of her as mother of the phallic god Hermes, after an assignation with the sky god Zeus. The Romans identified the Greek Maia with their fire goddess of the same name who, with **Flora** and **Feronia**, ruled the forces of growth and warmth, including sexual heat. (Graves vol. 1; Smith vol. 2)

**Manto** Prophetic words are called *mantic* speech after the name of this Greek heroine, daughter of the seer Tiresias and herself a gifted prophet. A Theban woman, she was captured by the people of Argos, who, impressed with her gifts, carried her off to become oracle at Delphi. She may be the same figure as the priestess called **Daphne**. Several minor characters bear this name in Greek mythology, including a daughter of Heracles who gave her name to the Italian town of Mantua. All were said to be prophets. (Graves vol. 1; Smith vol. 2)

**Marpessa** When the immortal Apollo tried to rape her, Marpessa appealed to Zeus for aid. He gave her a choice of mates: god or man. Marpessa chose the mortal Idas rather than her assailant. In another version of the tale, her father Euenus, in an attempt to keep the girl from marriage, required that suitors run a chariot race, with losers being beheaded. Idas borrowed a winged chariot from his father, the ocean god Poseidon, and carried away Marpessa, only to find Apollo claiming the bride. But Marpessa, knowing the fickleness of gods in love with mortals, chose Idas as her groom. (O’Flaherty)

**Medea** Without the aid of the “cunning one,” Jason would have been unable to obtain the golden fleece from the kingdom of Colchis. He exploited the knowledge of the princess Medea, who was adept in herbal lore and magic, trained by **Hecate** herself. Urged on by her sister Chalaiope, Medea led the Greeks to the well-guarded treasure.

Then she sailed with Jason on the Argo, bringing her brother Absyrtus so that, when capture seemed likely, she could kill him and cast him piecemeal overboard. The people of Colchis, stopping to catch body parts, let the Greeks escape. Other versions of the story say that Jason, not Medea, killed Absyrtus.

When the Argo reached Greece, Medea found she could not hold the wandering attentions of Jason. Although Medea had borne children, he married again, this time the princess **Glauce**. Medea killed Glauce with a poisoned gift, a robe dipped in dragon's blood. She then killed her children by Jason, mounted her serpent chariot, and flew away.

Jason fared badly, wandering homeless through Greece until he slumped beneath his old ship, the Argo. A piece of rotting hulk detached itself and brained him. Medea did better. Flying to Athens, she married King Aegeus. But she grew jealous of the attention he lavished on his son Theseus. So Medea flew home to Asia, where the Persian people were called the Medes in her honor. She restored her father to the throne and lived happily thereafter, continuing her magical practices.

Zeus tried to seduce her, but she refused him, knowing how great Hera's anger could be. Zeus raped other women, but Medea was too powerful, so he left her alone. So great a sorceress did not need to pass through death's portals; she went straight to the Elysian Fields, where she became a goddess, worshiped in Italy as the snake divinity **Angitia** (see Rome). (Barber; Clauss and Johnston; Euripides *Medea*; Kerényi 1979; Ovid 1958; Reeder; Watson)

**Medusa** Medusa was pre-Olympian, with most of her legend dating from the 8th to 7th centuries BCE. Her name means "queen," a title often used of the primary female divinity. But by historical times, she had been converted into the daughter of **Ceto**, who took Poseidon as a lover. Once, the pair made love in a shrine of **Athena**. The offended goddess turned Medusa into a snake-haired **Gorgon**, later engineering Medusa's murder by sending Perseus to decapitate her. He had to be specially equipped, because Medusa's glance turned living beings to stone. So Perseus carried a mirror. Looking into it, he saw Medusa's reflection and struck off her head.

As she died, Medusa gave birth. From her neck sprang the winged horse Pegasus and the hero Chrysaor. Drops of blood fell on the desert, engendering snakes. The Gorgon's remaining blood was caught in vials. A single droplet from the left side raised the dead, and the same amount from the right killed instantly. A lock of her hair was given to Heracles, who hid it in an urn; it caused armies to be seized with inexplicable panic.

Behind this eerie figure is an early goddess, possibly similar to **Demeter**, who also mated with Poseidon. Her connection with **Athena** also bears consideration, for once Medusa's head left her winged shoulders, it was mounted on the virgin goddess's goat-skin robe. The connection may be even stronger, for a *pithos* from 700 BCE shows a winged, enthroned goddess sitting calmly while another winged figure, helmeted and armed with spear, leaps from her head. Medusa and Athena, far from being opposites, appear intertwined. (Apollodorus; Burkert; J. Fontenrose; Friedrich; Frothingham; Garber and Vickers; Gimbutas 1989; Goodison; Hesiod; Howe; Kerényi 1978; Nilsson 1932; Ovid 1958; Persson; Siebers; Tyrell)

**Megara** The first wife of the hero Heracles was Megara, niece of queen **Jocasta** of Thebes. She had been held captive by a usurper, Lycus, but was rescued by Heracles, who then unaccountably went mad and murdered her as well as their children. (Euripides *Heracles*.)

**Melissa** Although several women in myth bear this name, which means “bee,” it is best attested as the title of priestesses of the earth goddess **Demeter** in Eleusis and of the many-breasted **Artemis** of Ephesus. Originally a name for bee **Nymphs**, the name was used of priestesses in general because they lived in female groups. The most significant figure of this name was a Cretan princess who learned to collect honey to feed the infant Zeus; when he grew into a supreme god, Zeus turned his nurse Melissa into a bee. Artemis bore this title when she served as a midwife. (Cook; Elderkin; Smith vol. 2)

**Menalippe** Because she could so accurately predict the future, the Greek gods hated this daughter of centaurs. So they sent the wind god Aeolus to rape her, then transformed her into a horse, the mare Ocyrrhoe. Another version of the story describes Melanippe (a version of the same name) as Aeolus’s daughter who, to hide her affair with the sea god Poseidon, exposed the twin sons she bore. But a wild cow raised them, and when the peasants mistook the children for miraculous cattle, they were delivered to the king. Melanippe was told to prepare them for sacrifice, for such a prodigy was certainly meant for the gods. She tried to save them, but that only drew attention to her. Her secret exposed, Melanippe was imprisoned and her children killed. See also **Amazons**. (Warmington)

**Mentha** The spirit of the mint plant was the beloved of the Greek underworld ruler; she may have been an aspect of Hades’s other wife, **Persephone**. (Friedrich)

**Meta** In Greek legend, she was the daughter of the mortal Erysichthon, whom **Demeter** afflicted with insatiable hunger. The sea god Poseidon, who desired Meta, offered her the power of metamorphosis in return for sexual favors. She concurred, and when her father discovered her new talent for shape-shifting, he afterward sold her in animal form at market, spent the money for food, then sold her again when she returned. (Larson 1995)

**Meter** The name of this goddess (“mother”) survives in that of **Demeter**. Statues of Meter were half-carved: on the top was a stately maternal figure, while the lower half remained uncut. Hers was a mystery religion, involving initiation, about which little is now known. In the Metroon (“mother-temple”), Meter was honored in rituals that employed percussive instruments to create ecstatic union with the divine. Meter was often conflated with **Rhea**. (Borgeaud 2004; Farnell vol. 3; Munn; Mylonas; Pantel; Roller; Vassileva)

**Metis** “Prudent counsel” was a Titan, daughter of **Tethys**. When Zeus arrived in her territory, Metis became his first “wife.” Afraid of being surpassed by his offspring,

Zeus devoured his pregnant spouse and gave birth to her daughter **Athena** through his head. This legend is a pastiche consistent only in its attempt to disguise the early religion, for art that shows Athena being born from a goddess's head exists, calling into question the father-birth story. (Hesiod; Kerényi 1978)

**Mnemosyne** The daughter of earth and sky, she was “memory” personified. She was the mother of the nine **Musae**, whom she conceived in nine days of continual intercourse with Zeus. Another, similar figure named Mneme (“memory”) was both the mother of the Musae and a member of the group. (Athanasakiss)

**Moirae** In Homeric times, there was one “fate,” Moira. Later there were Fates of birth and of death, or for good and evil fortunes. Finally, there are three Fates: Clotho (“spinner”), who spun the thread of life; Lachesis (“measurer”), who allotted the circumstances of each life; and Atropos (“inevitable”), who snipped life's thread. The Fates controlled all aspects of a person's inheritance, from birth order to health to talent.

Usually, they were said to be daughters of **Nyx**, but some myths say that they sprang from the womb of **Themis**. Among the most ancient goddesses, they never lost their authority, for even the powerful Zeus could not countermand them. Only once were they gainsaid: Apollo got them drunk in an attempt to save a friend's life, and they agreed to cut another person's thread.

Superstitions about haunted locations where the Fates lived were found until the early 20th century. Caves were believed to be their domains, and offerings of cake, herbs, and honey were left for them. The Fates would then permit the seeker foreknowledge of their future husband or children. This connects them with **Aphrodite**, sometimes called the oldest of the Moirae. (Athanasakiss; Barber; Dexter; Lawson; Motz; Sanford)

**Musae** The daughters of **Mnemosyne**, the Muses were born near Mount Olympus in a place they later made a dancing ground. There, they were raised by the hunter Crotus, who was transported after death into the sky as Sagittarius. Usually, there were nine Musae: Clio, ruler of history, depicted with an open scroll or a chest of books; Euterpe, the flute-playing lyric Muse; the festive Thalia, who wore the comic mask and wreaths of ivy; Melpomene, who wore vine leaves and the mask of tragedy; Terpsichore, who carried a lyre and ruled choral song as well as dance; Erato, ruler of erotic poetry and nurse of Pan; Polyhymnia, whose name means “many hymns,” and who inspired them; Urania, globe-bearing Muse of astronomy; and Calliope, ruler of epic poetry, shown with tablet and pencil.

Sometimes there were fewer than nine Musae. Three were symbolic: Melete (“practicing”), Mneme (“remembering”), and Aoide (“singing”). When there was only one Muse, she could be called by any of the names of the nine. The group had many alternative names, derived from places sacred to them. They were called Castalides for a spring called Castilia on Mount Parnassus; a minor goddess lived there and endowed people with inspiration, from which Parnassus remains a symbol of



**Muses.** *The goddesses of art, the Muses, are often depicted dancing. In this composition, the dancers are Terpsichore, who ruled choral song; Euterpe, the lyric muse; Urania, muse of astronomy; and Erato, muse of erotic poetry.*

achievement in the arts. (Apollonius of Rhodes; Athanassakis; Farnell vol. 5; Hesiod; Ovid 1958)

**Myrmex** The warrior **Athena** fell in love with this woman because of her skill with the loom, her hardworking nature, and her gracious piety. But then Myrmex began to boast that she had invented the plow, although Athena had been the real inventor. Athena, furious, turned the girl into an ant. The story was connected with the tribal group called the Myrmidons in Thessaly, north of Attica, where it was said that the people were all transmogrified ants. (Smith vol. 2)

**Myrrha** The goddess of the myrtle tree (sacred to **Aphrodite**) lured her father into a secretive affair, by which she conceived the beautiful boy Adonis. Changed into a tree, Myrrha gave birth to her son. The word for myrtle was a pun on female genitals, especially the clitoris, and this goddess's son was said to be skilled in giving his lover Aphrodite orgasms. (Keuls)

**Nemesis** In her earliest form, Nemesis was one of a pair of goddesses worshiped in the city of Rhamnus, the other being **Themis**. The winged Nemesis held images of prosperity: an apple tree, an offering plate, a crown. She tormented those who broke the social rules that Themis represented. Although sometimes described as one of the **Erinyes**, Nemesis had broader powers as the force of justice. She was goddess of balance, meting out difficulties to those for whom life was too easy, but offering relief to those who suffered. She was served by Poine, goddess of punishment.

When Zeus arrived in Greece, he pursued Nemesis, intent on raping her. The goddess changed shape, but the god transformed himself as well. Finally, he overpowered her in bird form, and she laid an egg that hatched into **Helen**. (Farnell vol. 2; Lloyd-Morgan; Sanford; Smith vol. 2)

**Nephele** Originally a Semitic goddess whose name means "cloud," she came into Greek mythology as the wife of a Theban king and mother of **Helle**. Due to her

celestial nature, she became identified with **Hera**. The arrogant Ixion mistook her for Hera; intent upon raping the sky queen, he raped Nephelē instead. From that mating, the half-horse Centaurs were born. (Plutarch 1988)

**Nike** The daughter of **Styx** and the sister of **Bia** (“strength”), Nike was honored throughout Greece, especially at Athens, where as a companion of **Athena**, Nike was “winged victory.” (Athanasakis; Hesiod; Mark et al.)

**Niobe** Early myth called her the mother of humanity; her daughters, the Meliae or ash-tree **Nymphs**, produced humanity. Some say Niobe’s children were without number, while others say she had two daughters, Chloris and Cleodoxa. Later Greek legend called her a queen who bragged of the number of her children and mocked **Leto** for having only two. **Artemis** and Apollo avenged their mother by slaughtering Niobe’s children. Only her daughter survived, to become one of Greece’s great beauties; originally called Meliboea, she was renamed Chloris because she grew pale at the tragedy she witnessed. Overcome by grief, Niobe wept so long that the gods transformed her into a stone from which a fountain sprang.

Although most authors describe her as a human queen, there is evidence that Niobe was an early goddess; anyone who looked upon her children’s bodies was turned to stone, an image that connects her with the **Gorgon, Medusa**. The image of Niobe in mourning resembles that of **Demeter** grieving the loss of her daughter **Persephone**. (Friedrich; Homer 1951; Kerényi 1979; Ovid 1958)

**Nymphs** Nature spirits took the form of feminine groups representing the essential forces the Greeks perceived in rocks, trees, and streams. There are no parallel groups of male divine figures. All collective nature spirits were feminine to the Greeks. Though called Olympians, the Nymphs lived on earth as beautiful naked women with long green hair. Not officially recognized as goddesses, the Nymphs were nonetheless honored with sacrifices of meat, milk, and oil; wine was never offered to them, although they raised the wine god, Dionysus, son of **Semele**. The Nymphs were especially attached to **Artemis**, sometimes considered the chief Nymph.

Their name has connotations of sexuality, for it was used of nubile women as well as nature spirits. A woman was “nymph” as a bride, and the term occasionally refers to human heroines, when their sexual agency is emphasized. But most often, Nymphs were non-mortal women, though not necessarily immortal ones.

Nymphs fell into several categories. Most were connected with running water, either as daughters of water gods or as water divinities themselves. Nymph names often include the syllables *naīs* or *rhoê*, both referencing running water. As water divinities, the Nymphs were associated with healing rituals that took place around springs and other water sources.

The most numerous of the watery Nymphs were the Oceanids, the 3,000 daughters of Oceanus and **Tethys**; most other Nymphs were said to be daughters of the sky god Zeus. Early Nymphs, the Oceanids, were later replaced by another group, the Nereids, but play an important mythic role as companions of **Persephone**. Some have described the Nereids as divinities of the Mediterranean, while the Oceanids lived in the Atlantic.

Others consider the Nereids river goddesses, who bore names for the rivers they occupied. The 50 daughters of the sea goddess Doris and the god Nereus, the Nereids were famous for their oracular powers; they predicted shipwrecks or averted them. The Nereid Panopea helped sailors in danger of death; if they prayed to her, she calmed the ocean. Clymene gave birth to the sun's children, the Heliades. Finally, the mother of the hero Achilles, **Thetis**, was a Nereid.

Ponds, lakes, and other still waters were homes to Naiads, another form of water Nymph. Naiads were not so long-lived as oceanic Nereids, but lived longer than tree women or Dryads. As long as streams and rivers embodying them did not go dry, freshwater Naiads lived. Among the Naiads were the **Musae**, who lived in flowing springs; they bestowed oracular powers and artistic eloquence. Some Naiads were healers, but the Limnades were dangerous, haunting lakes, marshes, and swamps. They sang to passing strangers, luring them to a watery death, or called out desperately as though they were drowning, luring passersby into mire.

The water Nymph Telphusa had prophetic powers, but the water of her fountain was so cold that it killed anyone who drank it. Some legends say that the famous seer Tiresias died trying to sip Telphusa's water. When Apollo was seeking a place for his oracle, he first selected Telphusa's renowned spring. But she persuaded him to look elsewhere, directing him to **Gaia's** Delphi, where the Nymph knew Apollo would have to fight **Python** for control. Aganippe inspired those who drank of her well at the foot of Mount Helicon, for which reason the Musae, were called the Aganippicles; they may be a multiplied form of her.

Although some scholars argue that the term "nymph" can only refer to elementals of water, other collective goddesses are called Nymphs. Star Nymphs were called Hyades, or **Pleiades**. Unlike most groups of Nymphs, the Hyades were limited in number. Often these Nymphs are connected with the constellation of the "seven sisters."

On land, Nymphs embodied both animate and inanimate nature. The Limoniades lived in open meadows and entertained themselves by dancing with flowers. Rocks and mountains were the domain of the Oreads, sweet-singing pale women whose thin robes were woven in caves on fine looms visible only to the second-sighted. To honor the Oreads, the Greeks anointed rocks, hung belts on rocks, and left offerings in caves.

Among the Nymphs of animate nature, the Dryads, or Hamadryads, were best known. Every tree had a Dryad, who lived as long as the tree that embodied her. Sometimes a Dryad punished a mortal for breaking her branches. Accidental death in a forest was blamed on Dryad revenge. Dryads were especially active in early August, when trees could not be cut. Nymphs associated with vegetation include the reed-Nymph Syrinx, the lily Leiriope, and Rhodos of the roses, as well as the groups Ionides (violets) and Pterides (ferns).

Gaia conceived the ash-tree nymphs called Meliae; they were mothers of humankind, for people rose from the earth at their roots. In the singular, Melia was daughter of the ocean god and mother of the half-horse Centaurs. Bee Nymphs were called Melissae, a word also used of colleges of priestesses. Because Nymphs were typically endowed with prophecy, the term Melissa was sometimes used to designate a soothsayer. The original **Melissa** was a Nymph who discovered the use of honey.

A final category of Nymph was the inhabitant of a specific important place, of which Amnisiades (of the river Amnistis), Nysiades (of Nysia), Dodonides (of Dodona), and Lemniae (of Lemna) are examples. Sometimes, rather than Nymphs being named for locations, the opposite occurred; Phigalia was a Dryad for whom a town was named. At the sanctuary of Elis, a group of Nymphs called the Acmenes were honored at an altar surrounded by shrines to other gods. They may have been the *genii loci* (spirits of place).

In addition to collective myths, some myths describe Nymphs individually. A predominant theme is the attempted rape of a woman who turns into a Nymph. Such stories include that of **Daphne**, turned into a tree to escape Apollo. Lotis, in a similar tale, was pursued by Priapus, who was intent on rape. The Nymph called out to mother earth, who transformed her into the first lotus tree. The Nymph Syrinx escaped from the woodland god Pan by changing herself into a reedy marsh. Pan cut down the reeds and made himself a pipe, afterward called by the Nymph's name.

Pitys also inspired Pan's obsession. He pursued her until she changed into a pine, thereafter sacred to him. Another story says that Pan was her lover, but that the wind god Boreas desired her. When she rejected him, he blew her off a cliff. As she was hanging there, Gaia took pity on her and transformed her into a weathered pine tree that weeps sap when the wind touches it.

In some cases, a god's love was returned. Apollo loved Acantha, who loved him back. At her death, she was transformed into a sun-loving herb. Clytie, too, fell in love with the sun. Transformed into a sunflower, she follows his movement across the sky.

When Nymphs fell in love with humans, suffering usually resulted. Abrya fell in love with the shepherd Selemnus. She took on a human body to seduce him, then lost interest and returned to her spring. But Selemnus could not forget. He pined away until **Aphrodite** turned him into a river so that he could share Abrya's element. He was still sorrowful, so Aphrodite endowed his waters with the power to remove the sting of failed love.

The Nymph Echenais fell in love with the mortal Daphnis and made him promise sexual fidelity to her. But he got drunk with a priestess and made love to her. Echenais blinded him so that he would never be tempted by another woman's beauty. Another Nymph, Salmachis, was so feminine that any male who drank her waters became female. One day, the son of Hermes and Aphrodite chanced by Salmachis's fountain. The Nymph reached to embrace him, but he drowned in her waters. Salmacis pleaded with the Olympians to unite them forever; they became the first hermaphrodite.

Belief in the elemental powers of Nymphs remained common in Greece until recently, when mountain, river, woodland, and ocean Nymphs were depicted as amoral and possibly threatening to humanity. Precautions were necessary to protect self and property against the likely thefts caused by Nymphs. The Nymphs were referred to with the kind of circumlocutions also found in ancient times. Such terms as "the ladies," "the kindly ones," and "the maidens" were used to distract them from mischief. (Argenti; Athanassakis; Barrington; Borgeaud 1988; Friedrich; Larson 1997, 2001; Lawson; Kerényi 1979; Ovid 1958; Smith vol. 2; Sourvinou-Inwood 2005)

**Nyx** The pre-Olympian creation myth says that Nyx (“night”), the first daughter of unruly Chaos, gave birth to the first male, Erebus, and mated with him to produce the **Nymphs** called the **Hesperides**. But she did not stop there, spewing out dreadful creatures like Age and Death and Fate. Many demonic Greek characters, such as the infrequently mentioned spirit of madness, Lyssa, were described as “daughters of night.”

Yet one daughter was bright rather than dark. Hemera shared a home with her mother beyond the horizon in Tartarus. Twice each day, Hemera and Nyx passed at the brass gates of the other world, waving from their chariots as one went home and the other mounted the sky. (Athanassakis; Cameron and Kuhrt; Hesiod)

**Oeno** Oeno (“wine”) was a granddaughter of Dionysus, the sister of Spermo (“wheat”) and Elias (“olive oil”). Their grandfather gave them the power to change water to wine, grass into wheat, and berries into olives. They lived peacefully until the Greeks arrived. Oeno and her sisters helped them with their special powers, but the Greeks fell upon the women, thinking to imprison them. Dionysus turned them into doves so they could escape. (Smith vol. 1)

**Oreithyia** The daughter of Erechtheus, the snaky son of the otherwise virgin goddess **Athena**, with the woman Praxithea, Oreithyia was dancing by the river Ilissus one day when the north wind, Boreas, snatched her up and carried her away to Sarpedon’s rock in Thrace. There, he called up a dark cloud to hide his crime and raped her. From this crime, two daughters, Cleopatra and Chione, were conceived, as were the winged Argonauts, Calaïs and Zetes, who accompanied the hero Jason in his raid on the territory of **Medea**. The boys were beautiful as they flew, their ankle-feathers shining as their black hair flew about them in the wind. (Apollonius of Rhodes)

**Ossa** The last-born daughter of **Gaia** or of the minor goddess **Spes**, Ossa was feathered and fleet-footed. She ran through the earth bearing rumors, some of them disguised messages from the gods. (Smith vol. 3)

**Pallas** This pre-Olympian goddess survived in a story that she was **Athena**’s friend. Wrestling with the goddess, Pallas almost bested her. Zeus could not bear to see his daughter defeated, so he tricked Pallas into looking away at a crucial instant, and Athena accidentally killed her, whereupon the goddess took her friend’s name as her own. Pallas’s name also became part of that of the “palladium,” the image of Athena that kept the city safe.

Troy also had a statue of Pallas that Athena carved after killing her friend; thus she became the patron of sculptors and artisans. The statue stood in Olympus until, feeling it watch him while he raped a **Nymph**, Zeus threw it to earth. Troy would not have fallen to the Greeks had not Odysseus stolen the palladium, after which the city’s defenses were insufficient. (Hall; Kerényi 1978)

**Pandora** Originally she was the earth, the “all-giver,” ceaselessly producing food; the name may have been a title of **Gaia**. She was also called Anesidora (“sender-forth of

gifts”), a title she shared with **Demeter**; in this identity, Pandora was shown as a gigantic woman rising from the earth while little men opened her way with hammer blows.

Later, she became the one who brought sorrow to earth. Zeus formed her, and **Athena** taught her crafts. **Aphrodite** gave her beauty; the **Charites** decked her with beautiful jewelry. Gifted with all talents, Pandora was given a box and instructed never to open it. When she did so, the ills that afflict humanity escaped to run rampant through the world. Only the hope goddess **Spes** remained in the box to comfort us. (Friedrich; Hawley and Levick; Hesiod; Lubell; Meagher; O’Brien 1983; Reeder)

**Pasiphae** This Cretan goddess mated with a magical bull who rose from the sea. Later, the Greeks called her a queen, daughter of the goddess Creta. Her sister was **Circe**; her niece, **Medea**. Pasiphae, conceiving an unnatural passion for a bull, had the architect Dedalus build a wooden cow. Hidden within it, she conceived the bull-man, the Minotaur; her other children were **Ariadne** and **Phaedra**. (Euripides *Hippolytus*; Ovid 1958)

**Peitho** This minor goddess, whose name means “winning eloquence,” ruled seduction and the persuasive tricks of love. Some sources call Peitho the daughter of the lustful **Aphrodite** and the tricky Hermes, although she was also said to have met Aphrodite when the love goddess arrived from the sea. Other myths call her the daughter of **Ate**; with Eros (love), she gave birth to the health goddess **Hygieia**. In another myth, the Greeks said that Penia, goddess of poverty, was the daughter of Poros (expediency), who was conceived on the birthday of Aphrodite (sex). She may have originally been a demonic goddess whose “persuasion” included whips and goads. Yet other records use this name as a title of Aphrodite herself. The Romans called her Suada. (Sanford)

**Penelope** The most familiar female figure of the Trojan War other than beautiful **Helen** was Penelope, weaving by day and unwinding her work each night. Behind the faithful wife looms a goddess with the power of life and death. Spinning and weaving symbolize woman’s power to create life, so Penelope’s endless reweaving indicates her status as a creatrix. Penelope’s original character was hinted at in myth. Stories claim that during Odysseus’s absence his wife was far from faithful; Penelope brought forth the wild woodland god, Pan, fathered by all her suitors at once. After the happy reunion, Odysseus was banished again and returned to be killed, unrecognized, by his son by **Circe**; Penelope married Circe’s son while her own married Circe. (Arthur; Cohen; Heitman; Homer 1996; Schein; Homer 1951; Katz; Kerényi 1979; Winkler)

**Pero** She was the granddaughter of the weeping **Niobe**, daughter of her only surviving daughter, the pale, grief-stricken beauty Chloris. A great beauty of Greek legend, she bore a title of a pre-Olympian moon goddess, of whom Pero may be a vestigial form. Another Pero was a wife of the sea god, Poseidon. (Smith vol. 3)

**Perse** “Light-bearer” or “destroyer,” she was the early Greek moon goddess, wife of the sun and daughter of the ocean. Her daughters were the Cretan goddess **Pasiphae** and the famous witch **Circe**; she may have later developed into the death queen **Persephone**. Her name is connected to that of the solar hero Perseus, which suggests that she may have had an original identity as a light goddess. (Kerényi 1979)

**Persephone** One day **Demeter**’s beloved daughter was picking flowers with her maiden companions when the underworld god Hades appeared. The god carried Persephone through a crack in the earth, which closed after them. Hearing her daughter’s cries, Demeter sought her, but no trace remained. Demeter went into mourning, broken only when the gods demanded the return of Persephone on the condition that she had not eaten anything in Hades’s realm. Hades quickly pressed a pomegranate seed into Persephone’s mouth. So the goddess was condemned to spend one-third of the year below ground, while the rest of the time she enjoyed the company of her mother on earth.

While Persephone was with her, Demeter brought forth blossom and fruit. While Persephone was absent, the earth wilted and died. This annual cycle was celebrated at the town of Eleusis in solemn mysteries that the Greeks said made humans ready to face death, revealing the beautiful Persephone who waited for them.

Some scholars suggest that Persephone was originally the queen of death, and that Demeter’s daughter was originally Kore (“maiden”). As Greek theology assimilated various figures into fewer but more complex ones, these two goddesses were joined in one occasionally self-contradicting narrative. Such a theory explains variants of Persephone’s story, like one that shows the goddess sitting in a cave, guarded by snakes and weaving the world on a loom. Zeus came to her as a snake and had intercourse with her; she gave birth to the wine god Dionysus. The occasional connection of Persephone with **Aphrodite** suggests an association with women’s affairs (marriage and family) rather than with death. As with other important Greek myths, multiple and sometimes contradictory interpretations are possible.

Persephone and her mother Demeter were honored in Greek colonies, especially those on the island of Sicily, where major temples to the goddesses can still be seen. The most sacred location is Lake Pergusa, where swans nested amid ever-blooming flowers. There, the maiden goddess first descended to Hades, and a major religious center celebrated her in ancient times. (Athanasakis; Evans; Hesiod; Nilsson 1961; Hawley and Levick; Ovid 1958; Sourvinou-Inwood 1978; Suter; Zuntz)

**Phaedra** After Theseus abandoned **Ariadne**, he married his deserted mistress’s sister, Phaedra. She soon became infatuated with Hippolytus, Theseus’s son by another abandoned mistress, the **Amazon** Hippolyta. When her stepson refused her, Phaedra cursed him so that he was dragged to death by magical sea-dwelling horses. This Phaedra seems a literary creation based on a Cretan goddess, of whom only the name survives. (Euripides *Hippolytus*; Watson)

**Philomena** Philomena’s sister Procne was married to King Tereus. He raped Philomena and, to keep her from reporting the crime, cut out her tongue. But Philomena

wove a tapestry picturing the brutal act, which she sent to her sister. The women cut up Tereus's son and served the child for dinner. During the meal, Philomena brought in the boy's head and flung it upon the table. At that point they were transformed into birds: Philomena into the first nightingale; Procne, into a swallow; Tereus, into a hawk; and the boy Itylus, into a sandpiper. (Barber; Ovid 1958)

**Physis** Although more an allegorical figure than a goddess, Physis (“nature” or “matter”) appears in the Orphic Hymns as a celestial maternal goddess who was born without a father, although no mother is mentioned, either. She served as the animator of the whole world. (Athanasakis)

**Pleiades** The seven daughters of the **Nymph** Pleione, the Pleiades were born in wild Arcadia and followed the goddess **Artemis** until they were turned into the stars that bear their name, the “seven sisters.” Individually, their names were Alcyone, Calaeno, Electra, **Maia**, Merope, Sterope (or Asterope), and Taygete—almost all names also borne by early Greek goddesses, which suggests that the legend linking them has been lost. One legend says that the hunter Orion, aroused by the sight of Pleione and her daughters, pursued them intent upon rape. After five years of relentless pursuit, the women were transformed into stars, as was Orion; they still chase each other about the sky.

Another version of the story of how they came to be stars said that they were old women who took care of the newly born wine god Dionysus (see **Maenads**), for which they were rewarded by being made young again and sent to the sky. The distinction between these star sisters and the Nymphs called the Hyades is unclear.

The rising of the Pleiades in the spring and their disappearance in the fall marked the beginning and end of the sailing season, for the stars are seasonal in the temperate zones. Of the seven starry sisters, one of them is virtually invisible to the naked eye; she was called the shy sister, or lost Pleiad. Several reasons were given for her near-invisibility, and several different names applied to the star. Sometimes she was **Electra**, shrouded as she wept for the loss of Troy. At other times, she was Merope, wife of the criminal king Sisyphus who stewed his children and was sentenced to eternal punishment; in embarrassment and shame, his star wife faded from human sight. The name Merope was also used of a victim of rape; Orion, her assailant, was blinded by Merope's father in retaliation after he broke into Merope's bedroom drunk, and assaulted her. (Graves vol. 1)

**Polycaste** The sister of the great Greek architect Daedalus, she bore a son who, as he grew up, was found to be even more brilliantly inventive than his uncle. Seeing the boy as a threat to his reputation, Daedalus murdered him; the grieving mother flew away, transformed by sorrow into a bird. When Daedalus's son died by his own carelessness and pride, Polycaste was there, chattering in derision as Daedalus dug the grave. This name is also given as the mother of **Penelope**. (Smith vol. 3)

**Potnia** The Cretan goddess Potnia (“lady”) was depicted as a winged woman with birds perched on her hands, holding snakes in her outstretched hands, or standing

between two rampant horses or other heraldic beasts. She has been connected with the later goddesses **Demeter**, who took the form of a horse to mate with the sea god Poseidon, and **Medusa**, another partner of Poseidon who gave birth to the magical horse Pegasus. She ruled the cosmos, both land and oceans, and symbolized the life force. As Potnia Theron, “lady of the beasts,” she was parallel to such divinities as **Athena** and **Artemis**. (Cantarella; Schieffer)

**Praxidice** A three-faced bodiless head symbolized this goddess of vengeance and enterprise, who punished evil actions and rewarded the good. She was honored by **Helena’s** husband Menelaus when he had successfully returned with her from Troy, not far from the sanctuary that her lover Paris had dedicated to the love goddess **Aphrodite**. As a triple goddess, Praxidice was honored especially in northern Boeotia, where her three aspects were named Alalcomenia, Thelxinoea, and Aulis. While other goddesses received as sacrifice the bodies of animals, Praxidice was offered only the heads. Sometimes this name appears as a title of **Persephone**. (Smith vol. 3)

**Procris** Princess of Athens, she married a man named Cephalus. But Procris’s husband soon drew the eye of the lustful dawn goddess **Eos**, who spirited him away. But Cephalus, true to Procris, refused to sleep with the beautiful dawn maiden. Eos, disgusted, returned the man to earth, first changing his appearance completely. When Cephalus entered his home, he seemed a handsome stranger, and Procris, infatuated, welcomed him into her bed. When Cephalus resumed his own shape, Procris, horrified to be caught in infidelity, fled the palace.

In the forest, she joined a band of women, servants of the virginal goddess **Artemis**. Later reconciled with her mate, Procris grew jealous and began to spy on Cephalus. Eos, to avenge Cephalus’s rejection, had the man mistake Procris for an animal and kill her. (Graves vol. 1)

**Pyrrha** Far back in time, the violence of Bronze Age people provoked the Olympian divinities to drown the whole race, saving only one honorable couple: Deucalion and Pyrrha, daughter of **Pandora**, who escaped death by floating nine days and nine nights in a wooden box. When the flood receded, the couple found themselves on the sacred mountain Parnassus, beside a temple of **Themis**. There, they offered sacrifice for their salvation and, granted one wish, asked that the earth be repopulated.

They received an answer: As they descended to the flood-wet valley, they should cast the bones of their mother behind them. Pyrrha penetrated the riddle. Picking up stones, she walked downhill. Deucalion joined her, throwing stones over his shoulder. Behind them sprang up the “stone age” people, men from stones cast by Deucalion, women from Pyrrha’s. Protagenia, “firstborn” daughter of Pyrrha, was the ancestor of many Greek tribes. (Ovid 1958)

**Pythia** A woman had to have seen 50 years before she could be called by this name that designated the Oracle of Delphi. Pythia had to be married, in deference to the shrine’s original owner, **Gaia** or **Hera**, for only later was Delphi dedicated to Apollo.

The destruction of the goddess cult at Delphi was described in the “Homeric Hymn to Pythian Apollo,” in which the sun god battled a female monster (see **Python**) to establish his oracle in the sacred spot.

Pythia’s duties were as follows: on the seventh of each moon, she underwent ritual purification. Then, seated on a three-legged stool, she chewed bay leaves and breathed in fumes that rose from a chasm. Finally, she spoke complicated, often enigmatic, prophecies, which were interpreted by her male attendants. Seekers, who could ask questions only once each year, had to be ritually purified beforehand. (Connelly; Sophocles *Oedipus the King*; Young).

**Python** This great snake nested near the flower-filled spring of Delphi. Some legends said that Apollo killed her when he took over the famous oracular spring. Others said that Python was the name of the snake’s dead mate, while she was called Delphyne (“womb”). They claimed that Delphyne continued to live at Delphi, where women could prophesy (see **Pythia**). (O’Brien 1993; Smith vols. 1 and 3; Young)

**Rhea** This Titan gave birth to the Olympian gods after being raped by her husband, Chronos, who had murdered his father Uranus. With Chronos, she had several children, including **Hestia**, **Demeter**, and **Hera**. Chronos ate his children as they were born, until Rhea offered him a stone wrapped in swaddling, pretending that it was the newborn Zeus. Chronos gobbled it up, but then began having severe pains. (The stone was kept in the oracular sanctuary of Delphi; see **Python**.) Chronos vomited up his children, who made war on him. The war between the gods and the Titans led to the displacement of the latter, who disappear from mythology at that point.

Most scholars read the tale as a narrative of religious change, with the gods of immigrants taking over from earlier divinities. It is thus not surprising to learn that Rhea is Cretan. In pre-Olympian times, Rhea was embodied in mountains. She was depicted as a stately woman surrounded by worshipful animals and small, subservient human males. Her religion was celebrated in musical processions of pipes and cymbals. The blazing torch, the brass drum, and the double ax were her symbols. (Apollonius of Rhodes; Athanassakis; Friedrich; Hesiod; Roller)

**Rhode** A vague figure in late Greek mythology, she was the daughter of the sea queen **Amphitrite** or of the goddess of love, **Aphrodite**. She was the mother of the **Heliades**, who were turned into poplar trees for excessive mourning for their dead brother, Phaeton, who drove the chariot of the sun recklessly and fell to earth from it. A woman named Rhode was also one of the husband-killing Danaids (see **Danae**).

It is unclear whether Rhode is the same as the similarly named Rhodos, goddess of the island named for her, Rhodes. A sea **Nymph**, she became the consort of the sun god Apollo after he missed the meeting at which the Olympian gods divided up the world’s lands among themselves. But Rhodes was underwater at the time, and it emerged just in time for the tardy Apollo to claim it. Because Rhode lived in the sea that had covered the island, she became Apollo’s consort there. (Kerényi 1979; Smith vol. 3)

**Satyria** A goddess known from the Greek colonial area of Italy, Magna Graecia, Satyria is associated with a promontory on the coast near Taranto, occupied in the Bronze Age and named Satyrion after her. Artifacts from the 4th century BCE honor Satyria, daughter of the Cretan king Minos and wife of the sea god Poseidon. Whether a sacred spring at the site was devoted to Satyria is unknown. (Edlund)

**Scylla** Once this legendary Greek monster, daughter of **Lamia** or **Echidna**, was so beautiful that she roused the jealousy of **Amphitrite** (or **Circe**, or **Hecate**), who poisoned her bath with magic herbs. When Scylla rose from the water, she had 12 feet ending in dogs' heads with six mouths each, each mouth with three sets of teeth. The embittered Scylla stationed herself on the seacoast, where she ate sailors. But she hated her life so much that she flung herself into the sea between Italy and Sicily and was transformed into a rock that continued to devour sailors. No one could safely pass the petrified woman unless Hecate permitted it. Scylla's companion was the transformed bulimic **Charybdis**, who daily gulped the sea and vomited it out; she was the personification of a dangerous whirlpool. "To pass between Scylla and Charybdis" means to pass safely through between two treacherous enemies.

Another figure in Greek legend has the same name; some scholars believe them the same. She was the daughter of King Nisus, who had a magical golden hair in the middle of his head that protected him from harm. But his daughter, infatuated with king Minos, betrayed her father by pulling out the golden hair and presenting it to Minos. The Cretan king spurned Scylla, and she committed suicide. Upon death, she was transformed into a lark, and her father into a hawk. (Cohen; Homer 1996; Ovid 1958; Smith vol. 3)

**Selene** This early moon goddess was the daughter of **Thea** and the spouse or sister of the sun, Helios. Winged and crowned with a crescent, Selene drove the lunar chariot across the night sky, whose goddesses **Leto** and **Hecate** were her daughters. Two white horses drew her chariot, and she herself had long white wings and wore a crown of light. When she was not visible, Selene was in Asia Minor, visiting her human lover Endymion, for whom she had won the prize of eternal life and youth. He slept perpetually, even when his eyes were open, but he sired 50 daughters upon her. She also had three children by Zeus. The wilderness god Pan seduced Selene, using a beautiful white fleece to lure her to his woodland home. (Hesiod; Smith vol. 3)

**Semele** The daughter of Harmonia and the granddaughter of **Aphrodite**, Semele was a mortal in late Greek legend, where she appears as the mother of the wine god Dionysus. But her name came from Asia Minor, where it meant "subterranean," and Dionysus's mother was in some myths called the queen of death. Semele had been worshiped as a goddess before the introduction of Dionysus to Greece; she may have represented the earth in its darkly fruitful form.

Dionysus, born first of **Persephone**, was killed in infancy. His father Zeus made a broth of the baby's heart and brought it to Semele, who became pregnant by drinking it. But Semele recklessly asked Zeus to appear before her in Olympian glory. When he appeared in a flash of lightning, she was burned to cinders. Zeus grabbed the fetus,

sewed it into his thigh, and gave surgical birth to the child later. Other versions of the story say that Dionysus was conceived normally, within the womb of Semele. But when **Hera** discovered her husband's dalliance, she disguised herself as an old woman and lured Semele into the incautious request that destroyed her.

Yet another version tells of how Semele, pregnant and unwed, was cast out of her home by her father Cadmus. Placed into a chest and thrown out to sea, the mother and child floated away until they reached the Laconian coast. When the chest was opened, Semele was found dead, but her son lived. Semele's sister **Ino** brought up Dionysus from that point. Their other sisters, Agave and Autonoe (see **Maenads**), became among the first followers of the wine god.

The wine god never freed himself from the influence of his mother. He descended to death's realm to reclaim her, bringing her back to Olympus and installing her as the foremost of his Maenads, under the title Thyone. Thus Semele, who started as a goddess and was demoted to mortality, was restored to divinity. (Athanassakis; Evans; Larson 1995; Lyons; Ovid 1995; Sanford; Smith vols. 1 and 3; Ovid 1958.)

**Sirens** Today, these sweet singers are pictured as feminine; but in early Greece, the Sirens were both male and female bird-bodied prophets. Above their egg-shaped bodies rose beautiful human heads; the breasts and faces of women were added only days later to the Sirens' feathered bodies. They were variously said to be daughters of the Pleiad, Sterope (see **Pleiades**); of the Muse of dance, Terpsichore (see **Musae**) or of the Muse of epic poetry, Calliope; or of **Gaia**.

The Sirens served **Persephone**, having earned their wings when they helped her mother search for her. But they lost their wings when **Hera** tricked them into challenging the Musae to a singing contest. Beautiful as the Sirens' song was, it was no match for the goddesses of art. As servants of Persephone, they brought her souls by singing sweetly to passing ships; the enchanted sailors were smashed on the rocks. They tried this on Odysseus. The wandering king had, upon the advice of the magician **Circe**, stuffed the ears of his crew with wax, so that they passed by safely. He sang louder than they did and, ashamed, the Sirens killed themselves and were transformed into treacherous rocks.

The Sirens are easy to confuse with **Harpies**, but Sirens represent death's sweet call, while their vulture-like sisters signify terrifying death. A related collective, the Celedones, were magical singers, although there is no evidence that hearing them was fatal. (Cohen; Garber and Vickers; Homer 1996; Schein; Smith vol. 3)

**Spes** An early Cretan goddess called Elphis in Greece, she was the one force left in the box of **Pandora** after evil escaped into the world. Spes was ruler of the underworld and of death's cousin, sleep. Her plant was the poppy; she represented hope. (Marshall)

**Sphinx** She started life in Egypt, where the lion-bodied monster with a bearded male head represented royalty. But in Greece, the figure became Phix, daughter of **Echidna**. She was a **Maenad** who grew so wild that she became monstrous: snake, lion, and winged woman combined. She lay waste to the region around Thebes, strangling

travelers if they could not answer a mysterious riddle the **Musae** had taught her: What walks on four legs in the morning, two at noon, and three in the evening? Finally Oedipus answered: Human beings, who crawl as children, walk upright as adults, and rely upon canes in old age. Her reason for existence destroyed, the Sphinx killed herself.

Some Greek myths suggest that the Sphinx, like the **Gorgons**, may have been a collective of monstrous goddesses who lived throughout the Peloponnesus and Asia Minor as well as in Italy and Sicily. They appeared as guardian figures, in pairs at doorways and gates, so they may have had an apotropaic function similar to the head of **Medusa**. (Regier)

**Styx** Between the land of the living and that of the dead wound the seven tributaries of the river Styx, whose goddess bore the same name. Styx prevented the living from crossing into **Persephone's** realm without undergoing death's torments. The eldest and strongest daughter of **Tethys**, Styx was sometimes counted among the **Nymphs**. She was the mother of **Nike** and **Bia**; some sources call her Persephone's mother. Even among the Olympians, an oath taken on her name was inviolable; anyone who broke such an oath was deprived of **Hebe's** ambrosia. When an immortal caused strife in Olympus, Zeus sent **Iris** for water from Styx, which caused the offender to become paralyzed for a year. (Hesiod; Smith vol. 3)

**Tethys** This ancient sea goddess was part of a trinity of world-creators with **Nyx** and **Gaia**. In some sources, she is Gaia's mother; but the ages eroded Tethys's power, until classical Greek mythology contained little information about her. She ceased giving birth after having 6,000 children. Half were sons, half were the **Nymphs** called Oceanids. (Hesiod; Homer 1951)

**Thalassa** In one Greek account of creation, she was the mother of all, possibly the same goddess as **Tethys**. Later, she was said to be the fish mother, creator of sea life. Some find in her a personification of the Mediterranean Sea, others an image of all the world's oceans. (Homer 1951; Smith vol. 3)

**Thea** The pre-Olympian goddess of light, mother of dawn and the luminaries, Thea bore a name that meant "goddess." Although this hints at earlier eminence, nothing is known of Thea but the list of her children: Helios, **Selene**, and **Eos**. (Hesiod; Kerényi 1979)

**Themis** The "steadfast one," daughter of **Gaia**, represented the social contract. A halloved goddess in early times, Themis later became an abstract personality. Evidence of her original precedence is clear, for no Olympian gathering could take place unless she called it, and no divinity could lift the cup of nectar before she had drunk. In the language of her people, *themis* was a common as well as a proper noun, the former indicating the power of convention. As the personification of social cohesion, Themis carried a pair of scales; as the fruitful earth, she held the cornucopia. She was mother of the **Horae** and the **Moirae**. Themis ruled prophecy, sharing with Gaia the famous Delphic Oracle. For her worship, she demanded group dancing. She was the first to

whom temples were built, for before her, there was no human community to offer worship. (Athanassakis; Harrison 1962; Hesiod; Ovid 1958; Sanford)

**Thetis** Reading late Greek mythology, one would believe this goddess was merely the mother of the hero Achilles. But clues in her legend suggest that she was originally much more important. The daughter of **Tethys** and sister to the sea **Nymphs**, Thetis was a goddess of womanhood, raised by **Hera**. Thetis nursed two gods associated with women's rites: the appealingly dissolute Dionysus and the crippled artisan Hephaestus.

Thetis was gifted with the oceanic power of shape-changing. When the Olympians, fearing the prophecy that she would bear a son greater than his father, condemned Thetis to marry a mortal, she resisted by changing herself into monsters and microorganisms. But Peleus, her husband-to-be, held fast until she resumed human form. At Thetis's wedding, **Ate** tossed her famous apple into the crowd, which resulted in the Trojan War and the death of Thetis's mortal son, Achilles. After Achilles's death, Thetis abandoned Peleus, who until that time had remained young through her immortal powers; he immediately aged and died. (Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound*; Hesiod; Ovid 1958)

## FURTHER READING

### *Dramatic Literature*

Aeschylus: *Oresteia*, *Prometheus Bound*, *Suppliants*

Aristophanes: *Thesmophoriazusa*

Euripides: *Alcestis*, *Andromache*, *Bacchae*, *Electra*, *Hecuba*, *Helen*, *The Heraclidae*, *Hippolytus*, *Ion*, *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, *Medea*, *Orestes*, *The Phoenician Women*, *The Trojan Women*

Sophocles: *Antigone*, *Electra*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Oedipus the King*, *The Trachiniae*

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# ROME

Roman women did not enjoy significant political or cultural power. They were not permitted citizenship rights, while Roman literature includes notably misogynistic statements. Yet Roman citizens claimed to descend from a goddess, the city's divine trinity included two goddesses but only one god, and its symbol of cultural unity was an ever-burning flame in a goddess's temple. The power of Roman goddesses may derive from earlier cultures.

Prior to Rome's rise, Italy was home to the Etruscans, better known by their Latin name, Etrusci, whose culture may have been the source of Roman goddesses' power. Etruscan women had greater freedom than elsewhere in the ancient Mediterranean, as evidenced by descriptions of ambitious Etruscan queens in the sixth century BCE. But after the beginning of the Roman republic, Etruscan culture declined. A century later, emperor Claudius compiled an Etruscan dictionary; but it was lost, and with it, a window into Etruscan life. The language has not yet been deciphered.

During the long period of the Roman Empire (23 BCE–476 CE), religion served important state and community functions. Attendance at festivals, marking of lunar progressions, and participation in family cults were part of every citizen's life. The aim of Roman religion was communal bonding, not union with a divine force or salvation of one's soul. Within that framework, women were worshipers but not priests, except in a few all-women's rites and in the important religion of the hearth goddess Vesta.

In addition to Roman civic religion, non-Roman mystery cults were practiced openly, so those who sought personal satisfaction through religion could select such practices. As the empire expanded, it absorbed competing cultures by renaming local divinities with Roman names. Many tribal divinities, including Scandinavian and Celtic, were hidden under the names "Jupiter" or "Minerva." Other divinities



**Diana.** The famous “Diana of Versailles” in the Louvre was carved from marble during the 1st–2nd century CE and given by Pope Paul IV to king Henry II in 1556. It represents the Roman goddess Diana as a huntress, an identity that she acquired from the similar Greek goddess Artemis.

were imported into Rome itself, with distinctive Roman forms emerging. Rome also adopted some Greek divinities so enthusiastically that their own indigenous deities were altered to fit the Greek model, an unusual development in an imperial culture.

Roman power declined from the 2nd through the 4th century, as Celtic and Gothic armies attacked. When Rome fell, the Church centered in the “eternal city” sustained the empire’s centralizing and hierarchical ideology. Rome’s deities also survived, hidden within festival dates and cult locations. The Wiccan path called Strega (“witchcraft”) derives from Roman and other Italic pagan traditions, often transmitted via Catholicism. Strega practitioners often claim an unbroken lineage of pagan worship. Such claims are difficult to prove, but as with other Catholic lands, female saints and the Virgin Mary took over shrines and iconography of earlier goddesses.

## ROMAN AND ITALIC PANTHEON

Abundita *Agricultural abundance.*

**Acca Larentia**

Aegeria. *See Egeria*

**Aetna**

**Albunea** *Fountain; prophecy.*

Alemona *Guardian of fetus.*

Ancharia. *See Angerona*

**Angerona**

**Angitia**

**Anna Perenna**

Annona *Food supply.*

Antevorta. *See Camenae*

**Aradia**

**Arethusa**

Aricia. *See Diana*

**Aurora**

Aventina. *See Diana*

Averna. *See Proserpina*

Barbata. *See Venus*

**Befana**

**Bellona**

**Bona Dea**

Bubona *Protector of cattle.*

Caca. *See Vesta*

Calva. *See Venus*

**Camenae**

Candelifera *Midwifery.*

Carmenta. *See Camenae*

Carminae. *See Camenae*

**Carna**

Casmenae. *See Camenae*

**Ceres**

Clementia *Clemency.*

Cloacina *Sewers.*

Conciliatrix. *See Juno*

**Concordia**

Consivia. *See Ops*

Copia *Abundance.*

Credulitas *Error.*

Cybele. *See Magna Mater*

Damatre, Damatres *Mothers.*

Damia. *See Bona Dea*

**Dea Dia**

**Dea Syria**

**Diana**

**Dido**

Disciplina *Discipline.*

Discordia *Greek Eris*

**Egeria**

Enyo *Chaos.*

Ephiana. *See Befana*

Fatua. *See Bona Dea*

Fauna. *See Bona Dea*

**Febris**

Felicitas *Prosperity.*

Felix. *See Venus*

**Feronia**

Fessonia *Strength for travelers.*

**Fides**

**Flora**

Fluusa. *See Flora*

Fons. *See Camenae*

Fornax. *See Vesta*

Fors. *See Fortuna.*

**Fortuna**

Fulgora *Lightning.*

**Furrina**

Genetrix. *See Venus*

Herentas. *See Venus*

Herodias. *See Aradia*

**Hybla**

Ilia. *See Rhea Silvia*

Indulgentia *Granting of favors.*

Inferna. *See Proserpina, Juno*

**Isis**

Italia. *See Tellus*

Iuno. *See Juno*

**Juno**

Juturna *Healing.*

Juventas *Youth.*

**Lara**

Larunda. *See Lara*

Laverna *Thieves and impostors.*

La Vecchia di Natali. *See Befana*

Libentina. *See Venus*

**Libera**

Liberalitas *Generosity.*

**Libertas**

**Libitina**

Lima, Limentia *Protects threshold.*

**Lucina**

**Luna**

**Lupa**

Luperca. *See Lupa*

Ma-Bellona. *See Bellona*

**Magna Mater**

**Maia**

Majesta. *See Maia*

Mana. *See Mania*

Mana Geneta *Birth.*

**Mania**

Marcia *Agriculture.*

**Marica**

Mater Larum. *See Mania*

**Mater Matuta**

Mater Turritia. *See Magna Mater*

Matuta. *See Mater Matuta*

Meditrina *Medicine.*

Mellona, Mellonia, Mellonis *Bees*.

Menerua. *See Minerva*

### **Mens**

Mens *Mind*.

Messia *Agriculture*.

### **Minerva**

Morta *Death*.

Murcia *Inactivity*.

Muta. *See Lara*

Nascio *Birth*.

Necessitas *Destiny*.

Nemorensis. *See Diana*

Nerio *War*.

Nicostrata. *See Carmenta*

Noctiluca. *See Luna*

### **Ops**

### **Orbona**

### **Pales**

Pallor *Fear*.

### **Patana**

Pavor *Fear*.

Pax. *See Concordia*

Perrephatta. *See Proserpina*

Pietas *Duty*.

### **Pomona**

Postvorta. *See Camenae*

Potina *Weaving, drinking*.

Praestitia *Excellence*.

Primigenia. *See Fortuna*

Prorsa. *See Camenae*

### **Proserpina**

Proserpine. *See Proserpina*

Providentia *Forethought*.

### **Psyche**

Pudicitia. *See Fortuna*.

Putra *Tree-pruning*.

### **Qu(i)es**

Regina. *See Juno*

### **Rehtia**

Reitia. *See Rehtia*

### **Rhea Silvia**

Rhome. *See Roma*

### **Roma**

Rucina. *See Ops*

Rumina. *See Lupa*

### **Salacia**

Salus *Health*.

Saturnia. *See Juno*

Sentia *Heightened feelings*.

### **Sibyl**

### **Silvanae**

Silvanae *Woodlands*.

Silvia. *See Rhea Silvia*

Strenua *Strength*.

Strina. *See Befana*

Susuri *Rumor*.

Tacita. *See Lara*

Telete *Mystery religions*.

### **Tellus**

Tempestates *Winds and storm*.

Terra Mater. *See Tellus*

Tifatina. *See Diana*

Timores *Terror*.

Titania *Moon*.

Trivia. *See Diana*

Tursa *Terror*.

Tutela. *See Ops*

Tutilina *Stored harvest*.

Tyche. *See Fortuna*

Vacuna. *See Victoria*

Valetudo *Health*.

Venilia *Coastal waters and winds*.

### **Venus**

Vergilia *Pleiades*.

Veritas *Truth*.

Verticordia *Chastity*.

### **Vesta**

Vesuna Erinia. *See Vesta*

### **Victoria**

Victrix. *See Venus*

Virginia *Politics*.

Viriplaca. *See Juno*

Virtus *Courage*.

Volumna *Willpower*.

Voluptas. *See Angerona*

Voluptia. *See Angerona*

**Acca Larentia** Because **Rhea Silvia** could not raise her twin sons Romulus and Remus, the boys were exposed to the elements. Faustulus, a shepherd, brought them to his wife Acca Larentia, who raised them. This legend does not contradict one in which the boys were reared by the she-wolf **Lupa**, for Acca Larentia worked as a prostitute, called in Roman slang a “wolf.”

Another myth says that Acca Larentia spent the night with Hercules when a client lost her in a wager. As she departed, the demigod told Acca Larentia that the first man she met would pay her. That man was the wealthy Tarutilus, who lived with Acca Larentia until his death, when she inherited his property. Some legends say Acca Larentia provided for the citizens of Rome by giving her foster son, Romulus, enough wealth to make the city prosper. Others say that she created an endowment for the people, who celebrated her generosity every December 23 in the Larentalia. Acca Larentia’s position as the city’s ancestral mother is further suggested by the similarity of her name to that of the Lares (see **Lara**). (Balsdon; Beard 1989; Edlund 1987; Krapp 1942; Staples; Warmington)

**Aetna** The largest volcano in Italy, three times the size of Vesuvius, Mount Etna bears the name of this goddess. But she figures more prominently in Greek than in Roman legend because Sicily, where the mountain is located, was one of Greece’s most important colonies. Aetna was said to be a daughter of Greek **Gaia** and the heaven-god Uranus, turned into a volcano after the fire-breathing god Typhon was buried under her. The mountain is significant in the story of **Ceres** and her daughter **Proserpina** (Greek **Demeter** and **Persephone**), for it was from Aetna that the maiden goddess was kidnapped. The goddess’s consort, the smith-god Vulcan, hid thunderbolts under Aetna, which caused a constant dull roaring, after Aetna arbitrated a dispute between him and corn mother Demeter. Alternative legends say an imprisoned giant caused the noises that warned residents of impending eruptions. (Ovid 1958; Smith vol. 1)

**Albunea** A prophetic fountain spirit (see **Camenaes**, **Egeria**), Albunea was honored at a shrine near the Tiber River. Her temple can still be seen at Tivoli. Called the tenth **Sibyl**, she was depicted holding a book. (Smith vol. 1)

**Angerona** On Angerona’s winter solstice feast, sunlight began to increase after a six-month decline. Angerona’s festival was not held within her own temple, but in the nearby temple of Voluptia (“pleasure”), where Angerona’s statue stood, mouth bandaged and finger to lips. Because Angerona healed angina (pains in the heart) as well as heartbreaking sorrow, her association with Voluptia may indicate that the two were aspects of each other. Angerona was also connected with **Dea Dia**. (Altheim; Dumézil; Richardson)

**Angitia** The early Italian goddess Angitia ruled healing and witchcraft. Renowned for her verbal and herbal charms, Angitia had special power over snakebite as attested by her name, which refers to killing snakes through enchantment. In her temples, live snakes were draped like scarves around the goddess’s statue by worshipers in need of a remedy against snake poisoning. Angitia has been identified with the Greek **Medea**,

who fled to Italy in her dragon-chariot, but the Romans also connected her with **Bona Dea**. A few ancient authors considered her the same as the Greek sorceress **Circe**. Angitia was particularly honored in the area around Lake Fucinus, still famous today as the home of witches. In the village of Cucullo, residents ritually collect snakes as they emerge from hibernation and use them in processions and dances during the Serpari Festival on the first Thursday in May. (Fourbister; Jayne)

**Anna Perenna** The origin of this goddess has long been a subject of conjecture. One myth says that this sister of **Dido** (see Eastern Mediterranean) went to Rome to seek the faithless Aeneas. When Aeneas's wife grew jealous, Anna Perenna ran away, transforming herself into a river. Another legend describes Anna as an old woman who, when Roman revolutionaries were besieged, conveyed enough food to them that they survived the siege. Current scholarship suggests that Anna Perenna descended from an Etruscan goddess of reproduction. Each year at her March 15 festival, rowdiness and promiscuity were expected. The spring date of the festival and its nature suggest that Anna Perenna was goddess of the fruitful earth, who responded to the reproductive activities of human beings by bringing forth edibles. (Hall; Ovid 1995)

**Aradia** In 1899, American occultist Charles G. Leland published *Gospel of the Witches*, purporting to describe the Tuscan goddess Aradia. Leland contended that a woman, "Maddalena," gave him a handwritten book, then disappeared. From the start, many doubted the book's authenticity. Given Leland's research in Italic folklore, the Gospel could be an accurate account of folk religion, but the likelihood of its being an ancient manual of worship seems slight.

Leland describes Aradia as the daughter of **Diana**, born of a liaison with her brother Lucifer, the Christian devil. (Such syncretic descent does not rule out Aradia as representative of a goddess tradition; storytellers may have substituted Lucifer for an older divinity.) According to Leland, when war broke out on earth, Aradia was taught the secrets of witchcraft to bring order and peace. She then taught these secrets to her followers, the witches. (Hutton; Leland 1990)

**Arethusa** Arethusa lived with the retinue of **Diana** until one day when, hot from the hunt, she threw herself into a cool stream. That stream was the disguised god Alpheus, which Arethusa realized too late. The stream rose up behind her as she ran away. A fog melted Arethusa into a pool, into which the river god poured himself. Diana saved her, changing Arethusa into a waterfall so that she could flow away from Alpheus. The Romans considered Arethusa the spirit of pastoral poetry. (Ovid 1958)

**Aurora** The dawn goddess Aurora was a lusty lover who enjoyed the favors of many men. Her legend duplicates that of the Greek **Eos**, after whom she was patterned. (Ovid 1958)

**Befana** A figure of Italian seasonal legend, Befana was the "lady of twelfth night," when the solstice period ends and the sun resumes its movement towards spring. Her name is a contraction of the alternative name for this figure, Epiphiana ("epiphany"),

the Christian name of the January 7 feast day. She is also called “La Vecchia di Natali” (the Christmas Old Woman) and “Strina” (witch). In Italy, an image of an old woman was constructed of old clothes stuffed with food and hung outside on Befana’s day or burned ceremonially after the treats were devoured by neighbors. (Miles)

**Bellona** Bellona ruled conflict, diplomatic as well as military, and the Latin word for war (*bellum*) derives from her name. War was declared when a priest hurled Bellona’s ceremonial spear. To ritually conclude war, the Senate met in the temple of this serpent-haired goddess, who bore a bloody lash. As Roman divinities assimilated those of conquered lands, Bellona combined with **Ninmah** (see Eastern Mediterranean), to symbolize both territorial sovereignty and armed conflict. Several shrines in Rome were dedicated to her, including a grove where priests called *fanatici* conducted self-mutilating rituals. (Lloyd-Morgan; Ogilvie; Ovid 1995; Richardson; Vermaseren)

**Bona Dea** Every December, women met at the home of a prominent woman for the rites of Bona Dea (“good goddess”). Slave women celebrated with their mistresses, prostitutes with matrons, for all women were equal in the goddess’s eyes. The rituals were secret, but it appears that the women drank wine and offered sacrifice under the guidance of the Vestals (see **Vesta**). Texts suggest that music and dancing were part of the celebration. This led to accusations of debauchery, which seem unsupported.

Myth says that after a battle with a giant, Hercules wandered about, desperately thirsty. Stumbling into a band of women praying to Bona Dea, Hercules demanded water. But they refused because of a ritual requirement. Infuriated, Hercules banished women from his rituals, while Bona Dea’s rites were barred to men. Another legend claims Bona Dea’s father Faunus attempted to rape her. When she resisted, he beat her, then tried to get her drunk. Finally he transformed himself into a snake and raped her, whereupon Bona Dea withdrew from male company forever.

One of Rome’s greatest scandals occurred in 63 BCE, when Publius Clodius, disguised in women’s clothing, invaded the rites. He was discovered and prosecuted, the crime causing considerable political upheaval. The invader kept secret the rites he had witnessed, as did Bona Dea’s rightful worshipers.

Although Bona Dea’s primary rituals were held in private homes, she also had temples, most prominently on the Aventine Hill. There, a priestess called by the Damiatrix celebrated rituals and tended snakes. Healers administered herbal remedies; men were permitted to receive ministrations, but could not enter the temple itself. (Beard et al. 1998; Berry; Brouwer; Cantarella; Richardson; Staples; Versnel; Woodard)

**Camēnae** Goddesses of springs and rivers, the Camēnae (“foretellers”) were prophets and forces of inspiration. Their festival, the Fontinalia, was celebrated on October 13 by the tossing of good-luck wreaths into wells. A spring of especially clear water rose in a wooded area on the Caelian Hill, reputedly the home of these goddesses. Later, the spring came under the control of the Vestals (see **Vesta**), who drew water from it each day.

Several Camēnae had individual identities. Expectant mothers invoked Antevorta (“forward-looking”) to learn the outcome of their pregnancies. During labor, they

called out to Postvorta (“backward-looking”) to remove the dangers of breech birth. Finally, Carmenta had a temple at the Porta Carmentalis, where her festival was held January 11–15. Goddess of prophecy and midwifery, Carmenta may have been the original from whom the multiple goddess derives, for she was an early divinity to whom a priestly brotherhood was dedicated. (Courtney; Edlund 1987; Perowne; Richardson; Ovid 1995)

**Carna** On June 1 (the Calends of June), Rome celebrated the feast of Calendae Fabariae, offering the goddess Carna a soup of beans and bacon in gratitude for good health. Sometimes described as a goddess of food assimilation, Carna can be more accurately called a personification of the physical processes of survival. Her simple shrine, the Sacrum Dea Carna, was located on the Caelian Hill. That she was not known outside Rome suggests a local indigenous goddess. (Richardson; Smith vol. 1)

**Ceres** The Greek myth of **Demeter** influenced that of Ceres, an early goddess whose power was not limited to the “cereal” plants that carry her name. She was celebrated each April 19 in the Cerealia, when foxes with burning sticks tied to their tails were set loose. Some scholars believe the ritual protected growing crops from disease, while others believe that it assured bountiful harvests by increasing sunshine. Her second festival was held in August, when women celebrated secret rituals in honor of Ceres’s funereal aspect.

Ceres was one of the two ultimate sources of human society, the other being **Tellus**, the earth. Ceres shared a temple with **Flora**, although the two goddesses were opposed because married women honored Ceres, who blessed their wedding ceremonies, while



**Ceres.** In the Museo Nazionale Romano of Rome, visitors can see this ancient (2nd century BCE–2nd century CE) carving of Ceres, the grain goddess, rising from the earth bearing food-plants. Ceres was celebrated with several festivals each year, linked to the agricultural cycle.

Flora was goddess of prostitutes. Ceres was also associated with the goddess of sexuality, **Libera**. (Berger; Berry 1994; Dumézil; Ogilvie; Ovid 1958, 1995; Scheid; Spaeth)

**Concordia** Her name, the basis of the word “concord,” conveys the harmony she embodied. Roman art showed Concordia as a heavyset matron holding a cornucopia and an olive branch. Concordia’s feast was April 30, when **Salus**, goddess of health, was also honored. (Axtell; Galinsky; Richardson; Smith vol. 1)

**Dea Dia** One of Rome’s great religious fraternities, the 180-member Arval Brotherhood, served this goddess of light, of whom little is known despite extensive documentation of her cult. Her four-day spring festival involved feasting and anointing of the goddess’s image, after which pigs and a cow were sacrificed in her sacred grove. Libations of sweet wine were poured and chariot races held. An Etruscan origin for the goddess has been suggested by identification of this goddess with **Acca Larentia**. (Feeney; Scheid; Woodard)

**Dea Syria** Lucian parodied a religious cult devoted to an imported goddess, **Atargatis** (see Eastern Mediterranean). Like many such imported religions, the rites that arrived with the Syrian Goddess were different from Rome’s solemn civic rituals and, in some cases, distasteful to Romans. Nonetheless, such cults expanded in influence during imperial times. (Benko; Lucian)

**Diana** Diana’s original identity has been all but lost in her identification with the Greek **Artemis**. Queen of the sky, Diana was worshiped out of doors. She ruled the moment of birth, connected with the ladybug goddess **Lucina** (a name that, like Diana’s, refers to “light”). Clay figures shaped like women in a birth-giving squat were offered to her as “opener of wombs.” Few native myths describe Diana. The story of Athamas, who killed his son while in a fit of madness brought on by Diana, was transposed from Greek to Roman. Thus, to understand Diana, one must look to ritual.

Her most significant temple was on the lake of Nemi, where she was worshiped with **Egeria** and the woodland god Virbius. There, in the forest of Aricia, runaway slaves competed for mistletoe, the “Golden Bough” that gave them a chance to become the king of the wood. As Diana’s priest, this king ultimately died at a successful rival’s hands—one of the few roles men could play in Diana’s worship.

On Diana’s festival, August 15, Roman women journeyed by torchlight to Aricia to offer thanks for Diana’s help and to implore her continuing aid. Their companion hunting dogs were leashed so as not to disturb wild creatures. Later, Diana’s worship moved to the Aventine Hill, where women flocked for ritual hair-washing and invocations for safe childbirth. Another ancient sanctuary of Diana was on Tifanta, whose temple dates to the 6th century BCE; there, Diana Tifantina was honored as a solitary spirit of woodlands and springs. Finally, as Diana Trivia, Diana ruled crossroads, especially those where three roads met.

The connection of Diana with her supposed daughter **Aradia** is unclear. Victorian folklorist Charles Leland named Diana as mother of this otherwise unknown goddess of witchcraft. From this source, and from the image of the goddess and her companion

nymphs, contemporary all-women's Wiccan groups label themselves Dianic. (Blagg; Courtney; Dexter; Edlund 1987; Frazer; Horace; Ovid 1958; Richardson)

**Dido** Although a Carthaginian goddess or ancestral heroine (see Eastern Mediterranean), Dido makes a significant appearance in Roman legend as the lover of Aeneas, the refugee from the Trojan War who settled in Italy and became an ancestral figure to the Romans. Dido found the godlike Aeneas irresistible and killed herself when he betrayed her. (Feeney; Virgil)

**Egeria** Goddess of wisdom, Egeria shared a shrine with **Diana** at Nemi, and with **Vesta**, whose priestesses drew ritual water from her spring; she is one of the **Camēnae**. Roman myth shows Egeria as a semidivine water nymph enamored of a king to whom she taught earth-worshiping rites; she pronounced the first laws of Rome. Later, pregnant women prayed to Egeria for easy delivery; she foretold each newborn's future. (Beard 1989; Blagg; Smith vol. 1)

**Febris** Febris ("fever") represented malaria, with its recurrent and often lifelong chills and fever. Two associated goddesses ruled this recurrence: Dea Tertiana, goddess of fever that returns every third day; and Dea Quartana, goddess of fever that returns every fourth day. In Febris's temples, amulets against malaria were manufactured. (Fox; Richardson)

**Feronia** This solitary goddess made her simple home in woodlands. She may be a vestigial Etruscan goddess who maintained her identity after Roman conquest, for her major sanctuaries were in Etruscan territory. At her festivals on the Ides of November, agricultural fairs were held and first fruits offered, freedom was bestowed on any slave who sat on a stone in her temple, and men walked barefoot across coals to the cheering of crowds. In Tuscan folklore, Feronia appeared as a "strega-foletta," a witch-spirit who begged alms of passersby. If given insufficient offering, she leveled curses. (Altheim; Edlund 1987; Leland 1963; Smith vol. 2)

**Fides** Once dismissed as a mere abstraction, "good faith" was an ancient divinity who personified the basis of human community. She guarded integrity in dealings between individuals and groups. Depicted as an old woman wearing an olive wreath and carrying a basket of fruit, Fides brought peace and prosperity. Each October 1, Rome's three major priests sacrificed at her sanctuary, their right hands wrapped in white cloth. (Axtell; Dumézil; Richardson; Smith vol. 2; Woodard)

**Flora** Goddess of flowers and prostitutes, Flora was linked with **Ceres**. Despite the valorization of the matron, who offered the only way Roman men could have citizen children, and of **Vesta**'s virgins upon whose propriety the state depended, prostitutes played an important role in the city's mythology (see **Acca Larentia**, **Lupa**). Such women offered sacrifice in the Floralia, held from April 28 to May 3, when beans, lupines, and obscene medallions were scattered through the street, and inebriated

celebrants enacted skits full of references to sexual activity. (Berger; Ogilvie; Ovid 1995; Richardson; Showerman; Staples.)

**Fortuna** The goddess of destiny was depicted as a blind woman holding a rudder (because she blindly steered a course for each life) and a cornucopia (because she could bring wealth). No mere “Lady Luck,” she was the energy that drove men and women to reproduce themselves, an irresistible Fors (“force,” her later Latin name). Fortuna was the deity who permitted fertilization. Thus, she was worshiped both by women desiring pregnancy and by farmers seeking bumper crops.

Later, she grew into the monumental figure of Tyche, who ruled the destiny of the community. But Fortune retained her earlier function as Fortuna Virilis, the goddess who made women irresistible to men, celebrated in a regular invasion of men’s public baths by luck-seeking Roman women. She was also invoked by newly married women, who dedicated their virgin garments to her. She was served by Spes (hope) and **Fides** (faithfulness). Fortuna ultimately became a power of chance, and as such was honored by soldiers preoccupied with the fortunes of war. She was divided into Bona Fortuna (“good luck”) and Mala Fortuna (“bad luck”). (Axtell; Billington; Dexter; Feeney; Harrison; Horace; Lazarus; Ovid 1995; Patch; Richardson; Woodard)

**Furrina** The prominence of this Italian (possibly Etruscan) goddess is obvious from the fact that, although by Cicero’s time no one knew what Furrina represented, one of the 12 Roman priesthoods (*flamines*) was dedicated to her. Her feast, the Furrinalia or Fornalia, was celebrated on July 25 at her sacred grove on the Tiber’s southern bank. She may have originally been a multiple goddess, attested by dedications at her shrine. (Altheim; Perowne; Richardson)

**Hybla** The name of the early earth goddess of the island of Sicily is not recorded, but given the number of places called Hybla, this has been interpreted as her name. Hybla has been connected with the gigantic goddess of the neighboring islands of Malta and Gozo, whose name similarly has been lost. (Zuntz)

**Isis** Of Rome’s imported goddesses, the Egyptian **Isis** was the most widely celebrated, although she never joined the official pantheon. In Egypt, she was connected with rivers and seas; but in Rome, Isis became a goddess of land and grain, like **Ceres**.

Isis was not welcomed in early years. In 59 BCE, her temples were destroyed because of political turmoil; in 53 BCE, the Senate ordered any remaining or rebuilt temples destroyed. A few years later, the religion was attacked again; but in 48–47 BCE, when Julius Caesar made an alliance with Cleopatra, the incarnation of Isis, the tides of her religion changed.

Unlike native Roman religion, the Isis cult gave women the opportunity to serve as ritual celebrants; Isis as *panthea pantocrator* (“all goddess all-ruler”) provided an image of female equality. Isis’s most important appearance in Roman literature was in Lucius Apellius’s *The Golden Ass*, wherein she was adored as “mother of all living nature, mistress of all the elements.” Her iconography was later transferred to the

Christian **Mary** (see Eastern Mediterranean). (Apuleius; Dexter; Donalson; Richardson; Scheid; Tyldesley; Young; Witt.)

**Juno** A temple devoted to Juno on the Mons Cispius, whose sacred trees were planted before Rome was built, suggests that Juno was older than the city. Similarly, the cult of Juno on the Capitoline Hill appears to antedate Rome. What Juno represented to her original worshipers is difficult to determine. Attempts to translate her name's meaning have been inconclusive, but it appears related to "light," an interpretation supported by the titles **Lucina** ("light") and Caelistis ("sky"). For this reason, and because she was honored on new moons, Juno has been interpreted as a moon goddess. But Juno has also been connected with the gate god Janus, both representing passage from one state to another; she may have originally been called Jana.

To the Romans, each man had a "genius," the spirit that made him alive and sexually active. Similarly, each woman had her "juno," an enlivening force of femaleness. Her many feast days included each woman's birthday and the birthday of every moon. Juno's most significant festivals were the Lupercalia on February 15, the Matronalia on March 1, the feast of Juno Meta on June 1, the Nonae Caprotinae on July 7, and the feast of Juno Regina on September 1. At Matronalia, married women demanded money from their husbands to offer to Juno, while at the unrestrained Nonae Caprotinae, girls staged mock fights. Most important was Lupercalia, when nearly naked young men ran around the Palatine Hill, bearing goatskin flails with which they struck passing women. This ritual served two purposes: to keep away wolves (*lupi*), and to ensure fertility.

Juno may have descended from an Etruscan original (see **Uni**). Like the Greek **Hera**, Juno represented the phases of a woman's life. When the Greek sky and Roman goddesses merged, Juno's consort Jove became a philanderer, while Juno was transformed into a jealous wife. Juno's separate mythology was lost, except for the tale that, impregnated by a flower, she bore the war god Mars. While Hera's most famous child was the champion who bore her name, Heracles, Juno was said to be the evil stepmother of the parallel Roman figure Hercules.

But in civic cult, Juno appeared as the city's savior. Her major shrine was shared with Minerva and Jupiter, on the Capitoline Hill. She had other temples, including that of Juno Moneta, "the Warner." There, in 390 BCE, her sacred geese warned the city of invading Gauls. Another time, when an earthquake threatened, Juno's own voice alerted the city. In that temple, the mint cast the empire's coinage, so this title forms the base of the English word "money."

A vestige of Juno's worship remains, for brides still marry in the month that bears her name. As mother of the city, Juno concerned herself with the welfare of the entire "family" of Rome as Martialis, the warrior; Regina, the queen; Caelistis, sky-queen; Caprotina, fertility; and Saturnia, goddess of winter celebrations. Some of these names were titles of Juno that later became separate goddesses; some were minor goddesses absorbed into the great Juno. (Bremmer and Horsfall; Dexter; Dumézil; Horace; Meadows and Williams; Nash; Ovid 1958; Perowne; Rabinowitz; Richardson; Shields; Staples; Virgil; Warmington; Watson; Ziolkowski)

**Lara** Roman sources mention this goddess as “mother of the dead,” sometimes identified with **Acca Larentia**. Alternatively, she may be the personified leader of the ancestral spirits called the Lares (the plural of her name), or a form of **Mania**. She was called Tacita or Muta after the philandering Jove stopped her mouth so that she could not reveal his escapes to **Juno**. She was invoked in magic to stop the mouths of detractors, in which women tied mouths of dead fish so that gossips would suffer the same fate. (Ovid 1995; Taylor; Smith vol. 2)

**Libera** With **Ceres** and the god Liber, this goddess composed a triad of agricultural divinities worshiped at the Liberalia on March 17. To celebrate the return of vegetation, Libera’s ivy-decked elderly priestesses served fried honey pancakes. Romans offered a bit to the goddess and devoured the rest. Libera, with Liber, represented the female and male seed, respectively. (Dumézil; Fantham; Staples)

**Libertas** This goddess of liberty, depicted as a matron wearing a laurel wreath, was worshiped in three temples in Rome. In one, criminal records were kept, hostages held, and censors did their censorious deeds; later, it was used as a public archive. (Smith vol. 2)

**Libitina** Whenever a Roman died, the bereaved went to the temple of Libitina, from which all the necessities for a funeral could be purchased or rented. Lists of the dead were kept within the temple, where offerings in their honor were accepted by the *libitinarii* (undertakers). An ancient divinity of the region, Libitina may have originally been a queen of the dead whose cult slowly withered away, while her necessary functions remained active. (Richardson; Smith vol. 2)

**Lucina** The ladybug was the emblem of this goddess, later merged with **Juno** and **Diana**, and even later converted to Christianity as “St. Lucy.” The early Italic Lucina was a goddess of light and therefore of childbirth. She was celebrated in September and December, when her holidays were enforced by the superstition that any work done on those days would be undone before the next dawn. Although her name is used of other goddesses, Lucina’s antiquity is evidenced by the legend that she was worshiped before the city was founded. (Shields)

**Luna** It is unclear whether Luna was originally divine, or whether she was a poetic personification elevated to divinity. Diana was often described as riding in the lunar chariot, especially after her assimilation to the Greek Artemis; but Luna and her companion Sol, the sun god, appear in literature and epigrams. They were, however, not revered in cult and had no festival dedicated to them. Luna was more honored than Sol, for while they shared a tiny temple, she had three other temples. (Smith vol. 2)

**Lupa** Although Rome officially honored wives and virgins, Roman myth is filled with laudable figures of sexually active, unmarried women. One was the foster mother of Rome’s founders, Romulus and Remus. The she-wolf Lupa nursed them at a fig tree sacred to an otherwise unknown goddess, Rumina. Because “lupa” was slang for

“prostitute,” and other legends name **Acca Larentia** as the twins’ foster mother, these figures are difficult to distinguish from each other. The Lupercalia on February 15 was named for the cave beneath the Palatine in which Lupa lived (after which she is sometimes called Luperca), but that festival is dedicated to **Juno**; the connection between the goddesses is unclear. (Balsdon; Ovid 1995; Smith vol. 2; Staples)

**Magna Mater** In 204 BCE, Rome was at war with Carthage, whose brilliant general Hannibal was advancing. The possibility of defeat led to an increase in fearful religiosity, with sacrifices and auguries constantly offered. Rituals from other lands, previously considered impious and fiercely suppressed, became acceptable. Because some Roman nobility claimed descent from Trojans, adoption of a goddess from that area was considered a way to reverse the tides of fortune. An obscure prophecy in the Books of the **Sibyl** suggested that if the Magna Mater (“great mother,” the Roman term for **Cybele**; see Southeast European) moved from her home in Phrygia, Rome would be spared.

A delegation traveled to King Attalus, who was hesitant to let the goddess go, but she shook the ground until the king agreed. So the meteorite in which Magna Mater descended to earth was loaded onto a ship. In Rome, the boat stalled, and a diviner announced that only a pure noblewoman could move it. Claudia Quinta, who had been wrongly accused of adultery, cleared her name by pulling the boat into the city.

Magna Mater took up residence in the temple of **Victoria**, while her own temple was built on the important Palatine Hill. She kept her promise: Hannibal was turned away. And she showered even greater benefits on her adopted city, for farmers saw their yields increase tenfold in the next harvest.

Despite their salvation, Rome never entirely embraced the rites of Magna Mater, although individual Romans became passionate devotees. Her ceremonies focused on springtime, beginning with the triumphal entry of the goddess’s young lover Attis, symbolized by a pine tree, into the city; a day of mourning for his death followed; finally, a festival celebrated the new growing season.

Roman authorities sporadically banned another Cybeline ritual, the self-castration of the *galli*, priests of Magna Mater. This horrified the Romans, who killed slaves for participating in the rites. Less mutilating rituals also existed. In the Taurobolium, the devotee stood in a pit beneath a bull whose slaughter drenched the worshiper with blood.

With the rise of Christianity, some rites and symbols of Magna Mater were transferred to the figure of **Mary** (see Eastern Mediterranean); Cybele’s main temple became the still-used Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore. Magna Mater’s worship was especially persecuted after Constantine, together with the rites of **Isis** and **Tanit** (see Eastern Mediterranean). With the burning in the late 4th century of the Sibylline books, the long history of the Magna Mater in Rome came to a close. (Benko; Berger; Bremmer and Horsfall; Courtney; Dexter; Godwen; Meyer; Moore; Näsström; Ovid 1995; Roscoe; Richardson; Rives; Roller; Showerman; Vermaseren; Young)

**Maia** The Romans identified Greek **Maia** with an Italic fire goddess who, with **Flora** and **Feronia**, ruled growth and warmth, including sexual heat; she has been connected

with **Mania**, who was similarly honored at crossroads. Maia's festival was held on May 1. (Ogilvie; Taylor)

**Mania** Her name survives as a word used to describe an obsession, a reminder of how her children, the ghostly Lares or Manes, returned after death to drive the living insane. Mania's children were penned up in Rome's center, in a stone-capped well uncovered several times annually. On those nights, woolen effigies known as Manias were hung on doorposts in the hopes that ghosts would be fooled into leaving the living alone. At festivals of the obscure **Dea Dia**, Mania was honored with the sacrifice of two sheep; after a ritual dinner, the dishes were never used again. Mania may have been Etruscan in origin; she has been connected variously with **Maia**, **Lara**, and **Acca Larentia**. (Altheim; Ovid 1995; Taylor; Woodard)

**Marica** This obscure goddess was honored at a sacred grove, into which any object taken could never be removed. Various Roman authors speculated that she was a form of **Diana** or **Venus**; as wife of the nature god Faunus, she was called Fauna. Her name has been connected to the ocean, although the word has also been linked with "marsh." Her shrine was on an island, where it is believed the earliest worshipers (7th century BCE) honored the goddess at a simple altar. Later, a simple temple was built of brick and timber. It was still in use in 207 BCE, when it was struck by lightning. The temple apparently survived, although its prestige declined until it was reconsecrated to **Isis**. (Salzer)

**Mater Matuta** Although Rome had a dawn goddess, **Aurora**, similar to the lustful figure found in other Indo-European cultures, there was a more matronly goddess of dawn as well. Mater Matuta, "mother dawn," was worshiped in a touching ceremony on July 11, when women held their sisters' children in their arms and begged the goddess's blessings on them. At the same rite, the Matralia, the women drove from the temple a slave woman who symbolized night. Mater Matuta shared her temple at the foot of the Capitoline Hill with **Fortuna**, goddess of good fortune. Her name is sometimes used as a title of **Juno**, but it is not clear whether she was originally the same goddess. As she was associated with the summer solstice period, she may be seen as the opposite of **Angerona**, goddess of the winter solstice. (Dumézil; Fox; Lucretius; Puhvel; Richardson; Smith vol. 2)

**Mens** This figure was a personification of "mind," the meaning of her name. She was honored in a temple on the Capitoline Hill, where people prayed that they would act justly. Another important temple was found in southern Italy, in Paestum. Her festival was June 8. (Axtell)

**Minerva** Like many Roman divinities, Minerva's original identity became submerged when Rome adapted Greek myths. Minerva was subsumed under the aegis of the goddess of Athens, whose colonies in Sicily included the rich city of Syracuse. Minerva became, like **Athena**, a goddess of handicrafts, intellect, and war. Her name

derives from a root meaning “mind,” so Minerva can be described as the intellect incarnate in female form.

Where she began is a matter of conjecture. Etruscan and Italic deities of handicrafts and war, respectively, may have merged. Minerva was ancient, dated to the reign of Numa (715–673 BCE), an Etruscan. Her worship was significant enough that she became part of the city’s major trinity, the Capitoline Triad, with **Juno** and Jupiter, with a temple near the Forum.

Although in early days Minerva had no festival, later Romans celebrated her from March 19 to 23 during the Quinquatrus, the artisans’ holiday that was also a festival of purification. The “goddess of a thousand works” was pleased to see scholars and schoolmasters join with those who labored with their hands. In the provinces, this goddess became Minerva Medici when Celtic and Germanic goddesses were assimilated to Roman ones; ethnic “Minervas” were typically water goddesses connected with healing. (Dumézil; Ovid 1958, 1995; Perowne; Richardson)

**Ops** An ancient goddess, Ops bore several titles: Consivia, sower; Patella, stimulator of wheat; Rucina, promoter of harvest; and Tutilina, protector of harvests. Her name survives in “opulent.” Worshiped at harvest festivals on August 25 (the Ops Consiva) and December 19 (the Ops Opalia, when she was honored as consort of Saturn, god of the winter solstice), she protected newborn children and the shoots of springtime plants. Ops had a temple on the Capitoline Hill, but she was also honored by large straw-covered flat stones displayed as part of harvest celebrations. She was conflated with **Rhea** (see Greece). **Vesta** (usually a celibate goddess) was called Ops’s mother and **Ceres** her sister. (Axtell; Fox; Gimbutas 1989; Richardson; Smith vol. 3; Warmington)

**Orbona** This goddess had a poignant function: parents offered sacrifice to her if they lost a child to death. These sacrifices were not intended for the soul of the deceased, but for the safety of remaining children or for the conception of additional ones. Parents of ill children also prayed to Orbona. (Richardson; Smith vol. 3)

**Pales** For many years, scholars called Pales a god, but recent scholarship confirms that this deity of cattle was a goddess. She may have been not one goddess but two, respectively controlling small and large cattle. At the Parilia on April 21, stock-keeping farmers purified animals by driving them between blazing fires; they asked Pales to forgive unintended slights against nature, such as burning the wrong dead tree. The apologetic ceremony ensured that animals would bear healthy offspring. Pales was an ancient divinity whose name was given to one of Rome’s most important hills, the Palatine. (Ovid 1995; Perowne; Richardson; Smith vol. 3)

**Patana** A Tuscan folktale centers on a maiden of this name, who may derive from the Roman agricultural goddess of the same name. That goddess also appears in diminutive form as Patelena (the seed-opener) and Patellana (the sprouter). Patana’s story begins when she was held captive in a tower by her witch stepmother. A prince accidentally broke the stepmother’s pitcher, and she cursed him that he would never find

love until he found Patana. The girl was carefully hidden away, so despite traveling the world, the prince could find no rest. At last, when the prince offered food to a starving old man, the man rewarded him with the information of Patana's location.

The prince and Patana fell in love instantly. The pair escaped, Patana bringing only a comb, knife, and fork, each of which she used when the pursuing witch threatened them. The fork became a church, and Patana pretended to be the sacristan; the comb became a garden, and Patana pretended to be the gardener; and finally, the knife became a shining lake, and Patana and the prince became fish within it. But though the witch was thwarted in recapturing Patana, she put a curse on the prince that, should his mother ever kiss him, he would instantly forget Patana.

When he returned home for their wedding, he avoided his mother's eager embrace, but she came to him while he slept and kissed him. The witch's curse came true. The prince forgot Patana and arranged to marry another. But Patana sent two fish as a wedding gift and, his memory restored, the prince married Patana. (Leland 1963)

**Pomona** Every spring, the Romans honored **Flora**; every fall, they honored the goddess of fruit, Pomona. Although she had no festival, Pomona was endowed with one of the 12 *flamines*, or high priests, and with a shrine called the Pomonal. Courted by several male fertility gods, including wild Pan, ever-erect Priapus, and debauched Silenus, Pomona refused them all. Then the agricultural god Vertumnus came courting, disguised as an old woman. He won Pomona's confidence and finally her love before revealing his true sex. (Johnson; Ogilvie; Ovid 1958; Perowne)

**Proserpina** The Greek myth of **Demeter** and **Persephone** was so popular in the colony of Sicily that several nearby sites were claimed as locations of the tragic story of rape and loss. Over time, **Ceres** was conflated with Demeter, and although originally the Roman goddess had no daughter, one was found. Proserpina was originally unconnected to Ceres, whose companions were **Libera** and her consort Liber, but she was a maiden goddess of agriculture and fit into the imported narrative.

Rome's agricultural goddesses each ruled a moment in plant life, Proserpina serving as nursemaid to tender shoots. Whether she was a originally goddess of death is unclear; but by classical times, she bore the titles Averna (from the river of the underworld) and Inferna (for the underworld). Sicilians called her "The Savior" and used ancient statues of Proserpina with Ceres for many centuries in place of those of Jesus with **Mary**. Bouquets of wildflowers and sheaves of grain were placed before their altar according to the season. (Beard et al.; Ovid 1958, 1995; Nash)

**Psyche** Although her name is Greek, the literary allegory about this heroine was Roman. Psyche ("soul") was a beautiful princess, so beautiful that **Venus** grew envious of her. The goddess instructed Amor ("love," also called Cupid) to punish Psyche by making her fall in love with someone inappropriate, but Amor stole Psyche away to be his secret bride. Psyche spent her days alone, making love each night in darkness with a husband she never saw. For a while, she lived happily enough. But fearful curiosity drove Psyche to bring a lamp into the bedroom. Hardly had Psyche

seen the winged body of her lover than oil fell from her lamp, awakening him. Amor, angry at her broken promise, flew away.

Psyche set out to find her beloved. This brought her to a temple of Venus, who charged the girl with near-impossible tasks: sorting overnight a roomful of seeds; catching the sun-sheep's fleece; traveling to the underworld to ask **Proserpina** for magical beauty ointment. Intent on regaining Amor, Psyche overcame these obstacles. But as Psyche returned with Proserpina's ointment, vanity overtook her. When she opened the box, Psyche fell into a swoon and might have died, but Amor persuaded the Olympian divinities that she had struggled enough. She ascended to heaven and was reunited with her lover, bearing two children named Love and Delight. (Apuleius)

**Ques** The goddess of quiet (a word derived from her name) was honored by the people of pre-Roman Latium and, later, in Rome as well, although the cult was unofficial. She is sometimes paired with the goddess Murcia, who ruled inactivity. (Allen; Axtel)

**Rehtia** At a temple near Padua, a temple to this birth goddess has been dated to the 6th–4th century BCE. Votive offerings included incantations for safe delivery and pleas for healing, presumably from childbirth-induced illnesses. Rehtia was invoked as *vrota* (“turner”) in instances in which a child was positioned for breech birth. In Rehtia's temple, nails have been unearthed, which has suggested a tie to Etruscan **Nortia**. (Gimbutas 2001; Whatmough)

**Rhea Silvia** Princess Rhea Silvia was kidnapped by a usurping uncle and dedicated to **Vesta** to assure that her royal line would not survive. Any Vestal who broke her vows was buried alive, but Rhea Silvia became pregnant, through dream-intercourse with Mars, by secretly sleeping with or being raped by the god, or by being impregnated by fire while she slept.

Given the circumstances, Rhea Silvia was not punished. Her children were not so fortunate, for Rhea Silvia was commanded by her uncle to drown them. Instead, she made an alliance with Tiberinus, god of the Tiber River, who carried the children in a box downstream to safety. Upon landing, the babies were nursed by a she-wolf whom some say was Rhea Silvia herself. Others call her **Acca Larentia**, whose other name was **Lupa**, “wolf,” an animal sacred to Mars. Some argue that all names refer to the same divinity or ancestral mother. (Balsdon; Bremmer and Horsfall; Harrison; Krapp 1942; Ovid 1995; Staples; Warmington)

**Roma** Roma was born after the rise of the empire, less a goddess than an image of Roman power. She was honored in a huge temple, designed by the emperor Hadrian, that she shared with **Venus**, alleged ancestor of the land's rulers. She had little myth but was called the daughter of Mars, god of war. The earliest version of the goddess appears in the story that Rhome, a Trojan refugee, convinced the women with her to burn their men's ships, forcing them to settle on the Tiber. She married Latinus, a local man descended from **Circe** (see Greek) and Odysseus; other versions of the story say she wed Aeneas, Romulus, or Remus, each an important figure in the city's history. (Beard et al.; Mellor; Richardson)

**Salacia** The word “salacious” derives from her name, although there was nothing particularly lurid about Salacia. She ruled the deep salt waters of the sea, while the goddess Venilia was in charge of the shallow coastal waters. (Smith vol. 3)

**Salus** This goddess of “health” (the meaning of her name) was a deified abstraction in Roman times, but Salus may have originally been a goddess of the Italic people. She was frequently invoked in prayer and ritual, often with the goddess of harmony, Concordia. In rural areas, she was connected with Spes and Diana. (Axtell)

**Sibyl** From the 6th century BCE onward, a cave at Cumae was a site of prophecy, for an old woman called the Sibyl received divine inspiration there. She wrote her prophecies on beech leaves and put them at the cave’s mouth. The enigmatic verses of the “Sibylline Leaves” were then bound into books. The Sibyl brought nine volumes to the Etruscan king Tarquin II, offering them to him at an outrageous price. He scoffed, so she burned three volumes, offering the remaining six at a higher price. Again he refused. Again she burned three volumes, again raising the price. Finally, he purchased the Sibylline prophecies.

On momentous occasions, the Senate consulted the Sibylline volumes. Some were destroyed by fire in 83 BCE, but the rest survived until 405 CE, when they disappeared in another fire. The people of Rome searched the world unsuccessfully for replacement prophecies. The Sibyl herself had vanished. So the way was clear for production of pseudo-Sibylline prophecies, composed from fragments found at various prophetic sites. The safety of these new Sibylline books was supposed to ensure the safety of Rome; when the rebel Stilicho destroyed them in the early 5th century, riots broke out as fearful people imagined the end of their world.

The Sibyl originally gained her powers by attracting the attention of Apollo, who offered her anything if she would spend a single night with him. She asked for as many years of life as grains of sand she could squeeze into her hand. The sun god granted her wish, but Sibyl still refused his advances. She slowly shriveled into a frail undying body, so tiny that she fit into a jar. Her container was hung from a tree where she hung, croaking occasional oracles, while children would stand beneath her urn and tease, “Sibyl, Sibyl, what do you wish?” To which she would faintly reply, “I wish to die.” (Feeney; Showerman; Virgil; Young)

**Silvanae** Like the Greek **Nymphs**, these semidivine maidens frolicked in woodland and other natural areas, usually accompanied by their father, the nature-god Silvanus. Iconographically, they are depicted in a line, bearing tree branches, shells, wreaths, or other natural objects. They have been linked to the Scandinavian multiple goddesses, the **Matronen**. (Dorcey)

**Tellus** “Mother Earth” was honored each April 15 at the Fordicidia, when a pregnant cow was sacrificed and its unborn calf burned. The Romans felt that the earth, pregnant in spring with sprouting plants, appreciated such sacrifice. Tellus’s companion was **Ceres**; both controlled not only vegetative reproduction but also humanity’s increase, and so they were invoked and honored at weddings. One swore oaths upon this

goddess, for the all-seeing earth witnessed anyone who broke a promise. To swear by Tellus, one pointed fingers downward while speaking. Finally, Tellus, to whom bodies were returned at death, was associated with the underworld. Due to her connection to the soil of Italy, this goddess was sometimes called Italia. (Berger; Dumézil; Fox; Galinsky; Ovid 1995; Richardson; Strong)

**Venus** Her name is used in “vain” and “veneration” and “venereal.” But familiar as her name might be, few today could distinguish the Roman goddess of strawberries and kitchen gardens from the Greek **Aphrodite**. With the assimilation of Roman to Greek divinities, the fragile identity of this goddess was lost. The original Venus ruled charm and beauty, herbs, and cypress trees. Wherever a large stone rested near a tall tree, virgin priests and priestesses erected an altar to Venus for bloodless sacrifices. In her early Italic form, when she may have been called Herentas, Venus was goddess of youthful love; her name derives from a root for “loveliness” and “intercourse.”

In late classical times, the name Venus was given to a figure otherwise called *Barbata*, “The Bearded,” a divinity in female attire with obvious facial hair. The statues may represent festivals in which cross-dressing was required, or they may represent an androgynous deity; they do not seem connected to the ancient Italic divinity. Some scholars have interpreted the “beard” as rays descending from the star Venus, but others have pointed out that androgynous divinities appear in many cultures. Finally, the figure may simply represent women of ethnic groups with facial hair.

Another title, *Calva* (“bald”), was given to Venus in memory of the selfless action of Roman women during a siege. When the soldiers began to fail, matrons cut their hair and wove it into bowstrings. In their honor, women cut a lock of hair on their wedding day and sacrificed it at the temple of Venus Calva. An alternative story says that an epidemic struck Rome, causing women’s hair to fall out. When the epidemic passed and their locks grew back, Rome’s women offered thanksgiving to Venus. She is associated with peacefulness under the name of Pax or **Concordia**. (Dexter; Feeney; Galinsky; Horace; Ovid 1995; Richardson; Staples; Warmington)

**Vesta** An early Italic version of this goddess may have been *Vesuna* *Erinia*, a motherly hearth goddess. But the classical figure of Vesta, whose fire was tended by a college of six virgin priestesses, derives from the pan-Indo-European hearth goddess who represented the social bond. Vesta was fire, and fire was Vesta. In later days, when she was pictured on coins, her form was veiled.

Vesta was honored in Rome’s only circular temple, where her sacred fire burned and, every March 1, was doused and then relit. The goddess’s other sacred day was June 9, when barefoot Roman matrons offered food baked on their hearths, and the Vestals sacrificed salt cakes baked on Vesta’s fire. After eight days, the Vestals closed the temple, cleaned it thoroughly, and reopened for the year. The Vestals consecrated and blessed new buildings within the city. They were present at every sacrifice offered, for only they could prepare the *mola salsa*, “salted flour,” used to mark sacrificial victims.

Ritual chastity was demanded of the Vestals, for their purity magically protected the city. In Rome’s earliest years, the Vestals were probably of royal lineage, and their

dedication controlled their reproductive lives. Later, Vestals could be drawn from any noble family, but they had to serve out their fertile years in the temple. Despite their virginity, the Vestals dressed as matrons and performed for the city the same rituals that a *materfamilias* (“mother of the family”) performed for individual households. In return for chastity and ritual obligations, a Vestal had more rights than was typical of Roman women.

Unlike her virgin priestesses, Vesta was honored as a mother, and a phallus-shaped effigy was revered in her temple into imperial times. That and the tradition of rekindling the Vestal fires by rubbing wood together indicate that Vesta was a goddess of generation, symbol of the continual renewal of family and state. While Vesta was the only Roman goddess to lack a consort, she was linked to the ever-tumescent god Priapus. The connection between Vesta and the ever-virgin, ever-fertile earth was emphasized by the alternative name for her priestesses: **Tellus Mater**, “mother earth.”

It was an ill omen for the public fire to go out. Similarly, it was a fearful omen if a Vestal was discovered to have a lover. Such a spoiled virgin was killed in a specific ritual; although there were laws against executing anyone within the city’s walls, the Vestal was provided with a small amount of food and water, then entombed alive. Priests celebrated sacrifice upon the altar that was quickly erected above the dying Vestal’s tomb, eradicating evidence of her punishment.

On at least two occasions, Vestals seem to have been sacrificed for political reasons, when matters of state were blamed on their alleged misconduct. Yet the foundation of Rome itself could be traced to the pregnancy of a Vestal, for **Rhea Silvia** was impregnated against her will and conceived the twin boys who founded Rome. This myth reinforces the tension between Rome’s denial of the Vestals’ sexuality and reliance upon it for the city’s existence.

Interpretations of the roles and significance of the Vestals reveal as much about the interpreters as about the Vestals themselves. At various times, they have been seen as an intellectual elite, as self-denying nuns, and most recently as paradoxically primitive yet cultivated priestesses. The power of the Vestals’ image is perhaps most clearly seen in the multiplicity of interpretations offered. (Beard 1980; Beard et al.; Cantarella; Dumézil; Feeney; Goux; Nash; Ovid 1995; Pantel vol. 1; Perowne; Richardson; Staples; Wildfang; Young)

**Victoria** At Victoria’s temple on the Palatine Hill, the great stone of **Cybele** rested until a new temple was built to house it. Except for mentions of her temple as the location for celebrations of successfully concluded wars, there is little evidence that Victoria was honored through cult or ritual. Thus, she may have been more a deified abstraction than a goddess, although she may derive from the early Sabine agricultural goddess Vacuna. (Axtell; Grant; Richardson)

## ETRUSCAN PANTHEON

**Acca Larentia**  
Achununa. See *Lasa*

Agenoria Arouses action.  
Alpan. See *Lasa*

Arradora *Good witch.*

Artimi. *See Artume*

**Artume**

Artume *Night, wilderness.*

Bella Marta *Light.*

Carmen *Spells, magic.*

Catha *Sun, dawn.*

Cautha *Sun, dawn.*

Cel ati *Earth mother.*

Cloacina *Sewers, marital sex.*

Culsu. *See Vanths*

Cupra. *See Turan*

Ethausva *Childbirth.*

Evan. *See Lasa*

Fana *Wildlife, fertility.*

**Feronia**

Furina *Darkness; theft.*

Giunone *Childbirth.*

Horta *Agriculture.*

**Impusa della Morte**

Lalal *Moon.*

**Lasa**

Losna *Moon; ocean.*

Lucna *Moon; ocean.*

Manea *Ghosts.*

**Menrva**

Menrva *Mind.*

Mlukukh *Love.*

Munthukh *Health.*

Murcida *Inaction.*

**Nortia**

Pertunda *Sexual pleasure.*

**Phersipnei**

Rescial. *See Lasa*

Salena *Night-terrors.*

Semla *Earth.*

Sipna *Mirror.*

Strenia *Strength.*

Talena *Night-terrors.*

Tana *Star.*

Tesana *Dawn.*

Thalna *Childbirth.*

Thana *Dawn.*

Thesan *Dawn.*

**Turan**

Umbia *Shadows, secrets.*

**Uni**

**Vanths**

Vitumnus *First movement of fetus.*

**Acca Larentia** A figure of this name appears in both Etruscan and Roman mythology (see above); her survival into Roman times suggests a significant deity whose worship was not easily eliminated. Her title of “Lady Mother” may indicate a maternal or ancestral goddess. (Staples)

**Artume** Goddess of night, the moon, and death, and of nature, forests, and fertility, Artume appears to be an early adoption of the Greek figure **Artemis**. (Pallottino)

**Feronia** This goddess’s worship lasted into Roman times, suggesting a deity with a strong cult following who was absorbed rather than being eliminated. Her sanctuary north of Rome dates to the 6th century BCE. Merchants spread Feronia’s cult; trading may have been part of her temple’s activity. A statue of a striding woman may represent the goddess. (Edlund 1987)

**Impusa della Morte** The mythical Tuscan sorceress of this name may derive from the Greek **Empusa**. She was a witch so evil that she refused to share her massive wealth even with relatives. She hid everything so that, when she died, her secrets and her gold died with her. (Leland 1963)

**Lasa** This word may be the name of a specific divinity, a title, or a generic word for “goddess.” Lasa may have been multiple, for one can find references to “the Lasas.” Lasa comforted her worshipers in time of need; she may have been goddess of death and the underworld. She may have also been connected with love, for the love goddess called Alpan was invoked as Lasa; she appears in Tuscan folklore as a beautiful flying woman who loved flowers. (Leland 1963)

**Menrva** Counterpart to the Greek **Athena** and the Roman **Minerva**, Menrva ruled wisdom and war, art and commerce, and educational endeavors. Like Athena, Menrva was said to have been born from the head of her father, in this case Tinia. With Tinia and the important goddess **Uni**, Menrva formed a divine trinity. (Dumézil)

**Nortia** To the Etruscans, who believed in preordained life spans, Nortia was the force of destiny. In her temple, a nail was pounded into the wall at the close of each year. The witch called Norcia in Tuscan folklore may derive from Nortia; she protected truffles by hiding them from hunters. In that region, truffles are called “nails,” which may connect the witch with the ancient goddess. (Leland 1963; von Vacano)

**Phersipnai** Queen of the dead, this goddess was depicted on sarcophagi with her husband Aita, king of the underworld. Her name appears to derive from the Greek **Persephone**, suggesting influence from that culture. (Zuntz)

**Turan** Although Etruscans spoke a non-Indo-European language, one of their primary goddesses bore a name related to Greek *tyrannos*, “ruler.” Turan was a divinity of sex and dominance depicted as a young girl with wings. The **Lasas** served her; she may have been the same goddess as Lasa. She survived into Italian folklore as Turanna, the “good fairy” of peace and love and beauty. (Leland 1963; von Vacano)

**Uni** Uni was the supreme Etruscan goddess, hurling thunderbolts when angered and, when happy, making childbirth easy. Her major sanctuaries were at the port city of Pyrgi, where she was offered silver and gold by her worshipers, and at Perugia. She may have been the basis of **Juno**. (Dumézil; Edlund 1987; Pallottino)



**Uni.** *Although little is known of the religion of the Etruscans who lived in Italy before the Romans, their expressive art indicates a now-lost but rich theology and mythology. This image of a goddess holding a pomegranate is believed to represent Uni, the major goddess; the piece is part of the collection of the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard.*

**Vanths** The most famous of the Vanths was Culsu, serpent goddess of the underworld. The Etruscans pictured death spirits as numberless hunters in short skirts and high boots, carrying torches or snakes, waiting to accompany each soul past the grave. As a single divinity, Culsu (or Vanth) alerted humans to death's arrival, for her eye-covered wings saw everything that happened in this world or the underworld. (Briquel)

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# SCANDINAVIA

From the Rhineland to the North Sea, from subarctic peninsulas to coastal lowlands, a culture called “Norse” (a language term), “Scandinavian” (a regional reference), or “Germanic/Teutonic” (an ethnic identity) held sway. Powerful goddesses exist in the region from earliest times. In the prehistoric era, petroglyphs showed chariots and sun-wheels, later associated with goddesses. With the arrival of Indo-European tribes around 2000 BCE, new divinities took precedence, with tales of wars between frost giants and gods expressing the conflict between worshipers of different divinities.

The result of the collision of cultures was a double pantheon. Ancient divinities survived as the shamanic Vanir, while the new gods appeared as power-hungry Æsir. Dual pantheons appear in other Indo-European cultures as well, leading some scholars to contend that this is always evidence of another prior culture, while others believe it is part of the Indo-European worldview. In addition to two divine clans, there are adopted gods. The Scandinavian and Germanic peoples lived in close association with Celts, Finno-Ugrics, and Balts, whose myths and rituals had influence. Vikings brought back Irish motifs; classical figures resulted from trade with Mediterranean peoples. Thus, the figures in this section show evidence of continual connection and conflict.

Scandinavian myths were conveyed orally, so written records must be weighed against possible biases. The earliest writer, Tacitus, wrote to enlighten invading generals; later, Christian writers recorded myths, possibly consciously or unconsciously distorting them. Despite such challenges, Scandinavian mythology offers memorable goddess figures whose stories appear in Scandinavia’s mythico-historical literature. The Poetic Edda dates from approximately the 10th century; Icelandic scholar Snorri Sturluson compiled a prose version in the 12th century. Both were transcribed after Christianization. The original Norse word for “god” was neuter, but under Christian influence, it was changed to masculine. Thus, it is difficult to know how true these texts were to original oral sources.



**Valkyrie.** *Valkyries were Scandinavian battle maidens who flew down to bring heroic warriors to the eternal mead hall at Valhalla. This image of a Valkyrie is from the National Historical Museum in Stockholm.*

Beside the Eddas, another important written source was the *Historica Danica* (“History of the Danes”) by Saxo Grammaticus, written in Latin in approximately 1100 CE. Although colored by myth, Saxo’s work was accepted as historically accurate for many centuries. Several quasi-mythic women figures in Saxo’s work may derive from ancient goddesses.

In addition to transcribed poetry and epics, Germanic and Scandinavian myth survived as folktales. In the 19th century, folklorists Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm wrote down stories from family and friends of Wilhelm’s wife, Dortchen, especially the brilliant young Maria Hassenpflug. Retold for a hundred generations, often by women, the stories included suppressed goddess material that can be compared with written records, folk tradition, and archaeological findings.

Although traditional Norse religion was extirpated with the coming of Christianity, some rituals and beliefs remained, occasionally disguised as Christian rites. Since the 19th century, reconstructed Norse paganism has gone by the name of Asatru. Norse reconstructionism began in the 19th century under the influence of romantic nationalism. Asatru had significant impact in Europe, especially through Nazis who used images from Norse tradition; this version of Asatru has continuing influence among some white-supremacist groups in the United States. A more liberal form of Asatru was publicly recognized as a religion in Iceland in 1973, but other Scandinavian heathen reconstruction movements lack official recognition. Adherents in the United States may practice the *seidr* ritual that sustains the tradition of women’s prophecy.

## SCANDINAVIAN PANTHEON

Abundia. *See Fulla*

Abunditia. *See Fulla*

Aertha. *See Hertha*

Ahrenkonigin *Austrian; harvest.*

**Alaisiagae**

**Alfild**

Alfsol. *See Sól*

Algæc-wif. *See Brimwylf*

Amma. *See Edda*

Angboda. *See Angrboda*

Angerboda. *See Angrboda*

Angerbotha. *See Angrboda*

Angeyja *Scandinavian; water.*

Angrboda. *See Angrboda*

**Angrboda**

Angrbotha. *See Angrboda*

Askefruer *Danish; spirits of ash trees.*

Aslaug. *See Brynhild*

Asynjr *Scandinavian; goddess or giant.*

Audbumbla. *See Audhumbla*

**Audhumbla**

Audhumia. *See Audhumbla*

Audumla. *See Audhumbla*

Auhumbla. *See Audhumbla*

Auðumla. *See Audhumbla*

Authumumbla. *See Audhumbla*

Baduhenna *Frisian; war.*

Bel *Anglo-Saxon; cow.*

Bensozia. *See Fulla*

Berchta. *See Perchta*

Bertha. *See Perchta*

**Bestla**

Bestla *Primeval mother.*

**Beyla**

Beyla *Bees; yeast.*

**Bil**

**Böovildir**

**Brimwylf**

Brunhilda. *See Brynhild*

Brünnehilde. *See Brynhild*

**Brynhild**

Brynhilda. *See Brynhild*

Brynhildir. *See Brynhild*

Búkolla *Iceland; cow; poetry.*

**Buschfrauen**

Buschgrossmutter. *See Buschfrauen*

**Cinderella**

Dame Habonde. *See Fulla*

Dea Gamangabis. *See Matronen*

Dís. *See Dísir*

E(o)stra/e. *See Ostara*

Eastre. *See Ostara*

**Edda**

Eir. *See Frigg*

Elle *Scandinavian; old age.*

**Elliser**

**Embla**

Embla *Primal woman.*

**Erce**

Estre. *See Ostara*

Fangge *Scandinavian; forests.*

**Fengi**

Fenya. *See Fengi*

Ferahta. *See Perchta*

Firgunia. *See Hertha*

Fjörgynn. *See Frigg, Hertha, Jord*

Frau Faste. *See Perchta*

Frau Freen, Fricke. *See Frigg*

Frau Frîe. *See Holle*

Frau Ha/erke. *See Hertha*

Frau Holda. *See Holle*

Freia. *See Freyja*

Freya. *See Freyja*

**Freyja**

**Frigg**

Frigg(j)a. *See Frigg*

Friia. *See Freyja*

Frika. *See Frigg*

Frith. *See Modgud*

Froya. *See Freyja*

Fru Gaude, Gode, Wode. *See Holle*

**Fulla**

Fylgakona. *See Fylgja*

Fylgia/or. *See Fylgja*

**Fylgja**

Fylgjakona. *See Fylgja*

Fylgjur. *See Fylgja*

Gabiae. *See Matronen*

Gamangabis. *See Matronen*

Gefion. *See Gefjion*

**Gefjion**

Gefjo/un. *See Gefjion*

Gefn. *See Freyja*

**Gerd**

Gerðr. *See Gerd*

Gersemi. *See Freyja*

**Gná**

**Gollveig**

Gonlod. *See Gunnlod*

Grendel's Mother. *See Brimwylf*

Grimhild. *See Kriemhild*

Grith *Scandinavian; giantess.*

Groa *Scandinavian; sorcery; housekeeping.*

Grundwyrgen. *See Brimwylf*

Gudrun . *See Kriemhild*

Guðrún. *See Kriemhild*

Gullveig. *See Gollveig*

Gundrun. *See* **Kriemhild**

Gunlad. *See* **Gunnlod**

**Gunnlod**

Gunlöð. *See* **Gunnlod**

Habonde. *See* **Fulla**

Habondia. *See* **Fulla**

Habondicia. *See* **Fulla**

Haminga. *See* **Fylgja**

Hariasa *Germanic; war.*

Harimela *Germanic; war.*

**Hedrun**

Heid. *See* **Gollveig**

Heiðrún. *See* **Hedrun**

Heith. *See* **Voluspa**

Heithrún. *See* **Hedrun**

**Hel**

**Hertha**

**Hervor**

**Hilde**

Hlin. *See* **Frigg**

Hlodyn. *See* **Hertha**

Hludana. *See* **Hertha**

Hlyn. *See* **Frigg**

Hnos(sa). *See* **Freyja**

Holda. *See* **Holle**

Holla. *See* **Holle**

**Holle**

Horn. *See* **Freyja**

Hrede. *See* **Rheda**

Hretha. *See* **Rheda**

**Huldra**

Huldre. *See* **Huldra**

Hurstrga *Germanic; forest.*

Hurstvaheni *Germanic; forest.*

**Hyrrokin**

Iárnvidia. *See* **Angrboda**

Iarnvithja *Scandinavian; female trolls.*

Ides. *See* **Brimwylf**

Idisi. *See* **Dís**

Idun. *See* **Idunn**

Iduna. *See* **Idunn**

**Idunn**

Iðunn. *See* **Idunn**

Iörð. *See* **Jord**

Iord *Jord.*

Ithun(n). *See* **Idunn**

Itisi. *See* **Dís**

Jarnvids. *See* **Angrboda**

Járnviðjur. *See* **Angrboda**

**Jord**

Jörd. *See* **Jord**

Jörðr. *See* **Jord**

Jorth. *See* **Jord**

Källråden. *See* **Nixies**

Kornjunfer *Germanic; corn.*

**Kriemhild**

Kudrun. *See* **Kriemhild**

Kyn-Fylgja. *See* **Fylgja**

Lofn *Scandinavian; return of love.*

Luzie. *See* **Holle**

Mardol. *See* **Freyja**

Matres. *See* **Matronen**

Matronae. *See* **Matronen**

**Matronen**

Mengi *Fengi.*

**Menglod**

Merewif Mihtig. *See* **Brimwylf**

**Modgud**

Modgud. *See* **Hel**

Mother Gothel. *See* **Rapunzel**

Mother Holl. *See* **Holle**

Mothir. *See* **Edda**

**Mrizala**

**Nana**

**Nerthus**

Nirdu. *See* **Hertha**

Nixen. *See* **Nixies**

**Nixies**

Nornir. *See* **Norns**

**Norns**

**Nótt**

Oddibjord. *See* **Voluspa**

Oettar-Fylgja. *See* **Fylgja**

**Ostara**

Percht. *See* **Perchta**

**Perchta**

**Ran**

**Rapunzel**

Ravdna *Rauni.*

Red Riding-Hood. *See* **Rotkäppchen**

**Rheda**Rheda *Spring*.**Rind**Rinda(r). *See Rind***Rotkäppchen**Rupfa. *See Holle***Saga**Satia. *See Fulla*Scathi. *See Skadi*Schneewittchen. *See Sneewitcchen*Sessrymner. *See Freyja***Shield Maidens**Sibille. *See Weisse Frauen***Sif****Sigrdrífa**Sigrid. *See Buschfrauen*Sigurdriфта. *See Sigrdrífa*Sigyn *Loyal wife*.Sjofn. *See Frigg*Sjojungru *Scandinavian; sea*.**Sjörå****Skadi**Skadi. *See Skadi*Skogsfruen. *See Buschfrauen*Skogsnuftvar. *See Buschfrauen*Skogsrå. *See Buschfrauen*Skögul. *See Valkyries*Skuld. *See Norns***Sneewitcchen**Snotra *Scandinavian; wisdom*.Snow-White. *See Sneewitcchen***Sól**Spakona/ur. *See Voluspa*Stampa. *See Holle*Sunna/u. *See Sól*Swan Maidens. *See Shield Maidens***Syn**Syn *Gatekeeper of heaven*.Sýr. *See Freyja*Syr. *See Freyja*Talar-Disir. *See Dísir*Talle-Maja. *See Buschfrauen*Thora *Scandinavian; ancestral mother*.Thordis *Scandinavian; healer*.**Thorgerd**Tremsemutter *Germanic; harvest*.Trollkaringen. *See Buschfrauen*Ullda. *See Huldra*Uote. *See Brynhild*Urd. *See Norns*Urðr. *See Norns***Ursula**Ursula *Germanic; moon*.Urth. *See Norns*Vaetter-maidens. *See Valkyries*Vala. *See Norns***Valkyries**Valkyrjr. *See Valkyries*Valkyrjur. *See Valkyries*Valnad. *See Fylgja*Vanabruder. *See Freyja*Vanadis. *See Freyja*Var. *See Vár***Vár**Vardogr. *See Fylgja*Veleda *Germanic; prophetess*.Verdandi. *See Norns*Verðandi. *See Norns*Volla. *See Fulla***Voluspa**Volva. *See Voluspa*Vör *Scandinavian; wisdom*.Waldmichen. *See Freyja*Wave Maidens. *See Ran*Weisse Frauen *Germanic; forest*.Werre *Germanic; spinning*.Wilden Wip. *See Buschfrauen*Wisen Wif. *See Nixies*Witte Juffern. *See Buschfrauen*

**Alaisiagae** Two goddesses of war were known from an inscription on Hadrian's Wall in England: "the two Alaisiagae, Bede and Fimmilene." They may be the same as known elsewhere as Baudihillie and Friagabi, which may mean "ruler of battle" and

“giver of freedom,” respectively. They may have been local versions of the more widely known **Valkyries**, or separate deities whose myths and rituals have been lost. (Davidson 1964)

**Alfhild** Alfhild dressed as a man to avoid being married to King Alf. Her father attempted to help, putting Alfhild in a room surrounded by snakes, but Alf fought through them. Alfhild then considered marrying him, but her mother taunted her for her sudden reversal until the girl decided to become a pirate. She soon was notorious for her courage. When Alfhild attacked Alf’s ship, they fought nearly to the death before she agreed to mate with him. (Jesch; Hollander; Larrington)

**Angrboda** The “one who bodes harm” was a giant mother of fearsome children: Jormungander, the Midgard Serpent who surrounded the earth; Fenrisulfr, the Fenris Wolf who would eat the world; and **Hel**, queen of the Otherworld. Angrboda may be the same as troll-wife Iárnvidia, “iron-wood woman.” She has also been identified as **Gollveig**. (Hollander; Saxo; Thorpe)

**Audhumbla** In primeval times, frost spread across the north, while the south was a land of constant fire. Between them stretched chaos. The interaction of heat and cold gave birth to the cow Audhumbla and the man Ymr. Audhumbla was sustained by the ice, which she converted into milk on which Ymr fed. One day, a hard spot appeared in the ice. Audhumbla licked the ice, freeing Bur, grandfather of the god Odin. (Davidson 1998; Larrington; Saxo)

**Bestla** The primordial creatures of this earth were, according to Snorri Sturluson, both female. First came the cow **Audhumbla**. The frost giant Bestla followed, her name indicating that she was created from a linden tree. She was mother of the great god Odin, but otherwise little in terms of legend described her. Her relation to Embla, the elm-tree woman also named as earth’s primordial mother, is unclear. (Dumézil; *Poetic Edda II*; Sturluson)

**Beyla** This minor goddess had domain over the fermentation of alcoholic beverages. She is called “the one who kneads,” so she may be connected as well with the action of yeast in bread; however, that term has also been understood as describing the action of milking cows. More significantly, she is connected with bees and thus, with the intoxicating beverage made from their honey, mead. Indeed, her name may be a diminutive formed from the Old Icelandic word for “bee,” pronounced much as the English word is today. (Dumézil)

**Bil** One morning, Bil was sent to fetch mead with her brother Hjuki. When the moon-man saw them, he enslaved them. Today, their pail and pole can be seen on the moon’s face. This legend may have given rise to the children’s chant “Jack and Jill.” (Saxo)

**Böovildr** In the Eddic poem *Völundarkvioa* and the Old English poem *Deor*, a tale is told of this maiden raped by the prince of the elves. Prince Völundr lost his wife Alvítr

(“the all-wise”; see **Shield Maidens**) when she left him to resume life as a swan. Pining for her, he began to make beautiful golden jewelry, intending them as gifts in case she returned. But an evil human king captured Völundr and, crippling him so that he could not escape, imprisoned him with a forge on an island. When the king’s sons came to jeer, Völundr killed them and used their carcasses for ornaments.

Not knowing of the elf’s murderous anger, Böovíldr brought him a broken ring to mend. He did so, then plied her with beer until she passed out, after which he raped her. This empowered him to escape through flight, although he was kind enough to his victim to demand her father promise not to kill her because she had been violated. (Larrington)

**Brimwylf** Beowulf came to the Danish court, where Brimwylf’s son Grendel besieged the people. Killing first the son and then the grieving mother, Beowulf was hailed as a hero but met a woeful end. Grendel’s mother bore many names: Brimwylf, “lake-wolf”; Merewif Mihtig, “mighty mere-woman”; Grundwyrge, “ocean monster”; Algæc-wif, “woman-monster”; Ides, “lady.” Brimwylf’s original stature as goddess of the hunt can be detected in her ability to give birth parthenogenetically, in her association with the wilderness, and in her superhuman strength. (Davidson 1998; Heaney)

**Brynhild** Odin cursed Brynhild to sleep behind a ring of fire. The hero Sigurd penetrated the fiery ring, pledging himself in return for Brynhild’s magical secrets. Then Sigurd wandered south, into the realm of the powerful sorceress Grimhild. Foreseeing Sigurd’s heroic future, Grimhild wanted him for her daughter Gudrun, so she drugged Sigurd to make him forget his promise. Sigurd and Gudrun were wed, after which Grimhild set herself to acquire Brynhild for her son, Gunnar. But Gunnar could not cross the fiery barrier to the Valkyrie. So Sigurd magically exchanged identities with Gunnar and passed safely through. There, he slept three nights with Brynhild, marrying her in Gunnar’s body. Sigurd resumed his usual appearance, but the interlude restored his memory, leaving him miserable with Gudrun.

When the jealous Gudrun told Brynhild the truth of her marriage, Brynhild grew embittered. Gudrun urged Gunnar to kill Sigurd. Out of love for Sigurd, Brynhild stabbed herself in the heart. The lovers were burned on the same pyre. Married by force to Atli, who lusted for Sigurd’s wealth, Gudrun killed their children and him, then burned their castle down around them.

In Germanic tales, virtually the same story is told of **Kriemhild**. Recited orally since before the medieval period, the tale was lost for centuries until it was found in manuscript in 1755, after which it became popular with Romantic nationalists, including Richard Wagner. The connection of the story with Norse mythology is unsettled. Kriemhild’s story parallels that of Gudrun, with a few differences. Her mother, Uta, was not evil; her husband was Siegfried, and her brother, Gunther; Siegfried assisted Gunther in winning Brynhild by invisibly aiding him in battle with her; Siegfried helped Gunther to rape Brynhild (and possibly raped her himself); and Kriemhild provided information that led to Siegfried’s death. (Anderson and Swenson; Gildersleeve; Hollander; *Kudrun*; *Nibelungenlied*; Saxo)

**Buschfrauen** Germany's forest women lived alone in the woods, seeking human mates but disappearing after lovemaking, never sharing their magical knowledge. These "bush women" were short, golden-haired, and shaggy-skinned, with pendant breasts and hollow backs. They lived in hollow trees, where they enforced three rules: never use caraway in baking bread (spirits cannot eat it), never peel bark off trees (it hurts the tree), and never tell one's dreams. They also preferred that dumplings not be counted while cooking.

The Buschfrauen's queen, the Buschgrossmutter, was a white-haired elf with mossy feet attended by Moosfräulein (moss-maidens). She was pursued by a devilish hunter who left her alone if she sat on a fallen tree marked with three crosses; those who wished her aid blazed trees with that mark. When the Buschfrauen were pleased, they revealed secrets of herbal healing, made plants grow with their dancing, and gave away endless balls of yarn.

In Scandinavia, this figure appeared as Skogsrå, an old tattered woman who gave luck to hunters or led them astray. The Skogsfruen (plural) were sweet-voiced creatures who herded woodland animals and knit socks. Before any animal was hunted, the Skogsfruen had to be contacted for assurance that the prey was not their pet. If well treated, the Skogsfruen directed hunters to available animals. If treated badly, they were dangerous. Until the 17th century, warrants listed "involvement with Skog-nufva" as a cause of death. Occasionally called Trollkaringen ("troll hag"), the Skogsrå sometimes had personal names such as Sigrid or Talle-Maja ("pine Mary"). (Davidson 1998; Kvideland and Sehmsdorf; Lindow; Lofstedt; Thorpe)

**Cinderella** The Grimm brothers collected a story about an orphaned girl enslaved by her evil stepmother and stepsisters, a story also told by French writer Charles Perrault. This does not mean that the story does not derive from mythic sources, but it is unclear whether the figure of Cinderella ("cinder-elf") was originally Germanic or Slavic. In variant versions of the story, Cinderella lived naked in a cave or at the bottom of a well, wore a coat of cat's skins or golden chimes, or wore shoes of the sun. The tale has been connected to that of the orphaned **Vasilisa** (see Slavic), whose mother helped her from the spirit realm. Or Cinderella may have been a **Shield Maiden**, her feather cloak transformed into a glass slipper. (Bottigheimer; Grimm 1987)

**Dísir** Originally a deified woman ancestor, this term came to mean any Scandinavian goddess. The Dísir were fate goddesses worshiped in midwinter services called *dísa-blót*. With much drinking and storytelling, a family honored these goddesses of heredity. The Dísir have been linked to fertility goddesses (**Matronen**) as well as with **Freyja**, known as Vanadís ("goddess of the Dísir"). (Hollander; Jochens; Näsström 1995)

**Edda** Her name, "great grandmother," also describes the compilations of Scandinavian mythology, although whether the two uses of the word are connected is a contested scholarly area. Edda was the first woman to produce offspring; she gave birth to the race of Thralls, "enthralled" to service as food producers. Next came Amma ("grandmother"), who gave birth to the Churls, who conducted business and trades.

Finally came Mothir, who gave birth to Jarls, who hunted, fought, and attended school. (*Poetic Edda II*)

**Elliser** The “elf-wife” left a circle of dew on the grass where she danced. Usually invisible to human eyes, she could be seen on sunny days. This distinguishes her from other Scandinavian fairy folk, who were killed by sunlight. Tiny and pretty, with a soft musical voice, she occasionally fell in love with human men and, to meet them, traveled on a sunbeam. She may be the same as the Skogsrå (see **Buschfrauen**). (Thorpe)

**Embla** The world’s first woman was created from the wood of the elm tree. Her consort was the first man, Ask, created from the ash, after the god Odin found two logs on a beach and breathed life into them. The pair has been called the “Adam and Eve” (See Eastern Mediterranean) of the Norse. Some argue that their tale suggests an ancient totemic relationship between humans and trees. How this figure connects with the linden-tree primal woman named **Bestla** is unclear. (Dumezil; *Poetic Edda II*)

**Erce** Mentions of this Anglo-Saxon goddess are few but significant. The second Merseberg Charm invokes her as “Mother of Earth . . . mother of men.” Erce has been connected with the plow and oxen found on Scandinavian rock art. (Davidson 1998; Näsström 1995)

**Fengi** Once, in the days of king Frodi, the giant Fengi and her sister Mengi turned a giant millstone that magically produced peace and plenty. The greedy king let them rest only as long as it took them to sing a song. One night, exhausted, they sang a charm that caused Frodi’s death at the hand of the sea king, Mysing. But Mysing set the giants to work again, this time grinding salt. They ground so much that the sea filled up with it. (Anderson and Swenson; Hollander; Saxo)

**Freyja** Beautiful Freyja wore a feathered cloak and a magical amber necklace (Brísigamen) as she rode through the sky in a cat-drawn chariot. Or she rode on the back of the huge gold-bristled boar Hildisvín, who may have been her brother, the fertility god Freyr. Freyja’s home in Vanaheim was located on Fólkvangar (“people’s plain”). Her vast palace was called Sessrúmnir (“rich in seats”). She needed such a huge palace to hold hordes of dead warriors, for as leader of the **Valkyries**, she had first choice of souls on every battlefield.

Freyja was also goddess of love and sexuality, taking lovers among the gods, including the trickster Loki, who mated with her in the form of a flea. She spent a night with each of four dwarves to convince them to make her the most beautiful necklace ever seen. Yet she was not available to anyone; when giants courted her, she spurned them.

Although Freyja’s favorite lover was Freyr, she had a husband named Odr, with whom she had a daughter, Hnossa or Gersemi, youthful goddess of infatuation. When Odr left home, Freyja shed tears of amber. Then she followed, assuming various names as she sought him: Mardol, Horn, and Gefn. But always she was “lady ruler,” the meaning of her primary name, to which the German word “frau” is related.

As she followed Odr, Freyja caused the leaves to fall. She was thus connected not only with human sexuality, but also with the reproductive powers of plants and animals, for which she was called *Sessrymner*, “large-wombed.” She may be related to the goddess whom Tacitus called **Nerthus**, for she was honored with a ritual progress through the land in a wagon.

Freyja introduced the trance ritual called *seidr* to the divinities. Shamanism was the religion of early Scandinavians, but Freyja was a newcomer, so her trance-magic connects the cultures. As leader of the Vanir, Freyja was called *Vanabruder* (“lover of the Vanir”) and *Vanadis* (“goddess of the Vanir.”) The similarity between Freyja and **Anat** (see Eastern Mediterranean) may be a result of her religion moving north with her worshipers.

Many goddesses associated with Freyja may have originally been separate. **Gefjion** led unmarried dead girls to Freyja’s hall. The **Shield Maiden** *Gondul* retrieved famous kings from the battlefield. The golden-haired *Syr* was a minor divinity of love whose name means “sow” or “protectress.” Finally, **Fulla** had long unbound hair, symbolic of sexuality and of wheat.

Freyja survived in folklore as *Waldmichen*, “wood nymph,” living in a grotto where visitors could see the souls of unborn babies. She owned a mill where she ground old men and women young again. Her servants were rabbits, two of whom held the train of her cloak while others lit her way with candles. (Berger; Davidson 1998; Dumézil; Enright; Grundy; Hollander; Jesch; Larrington; Mundal; Näsström 1996, 1995; Saxo)

**Frigg** The White Lady of Midsummer, the flaxen-haired Frigg ruled heavenly Asgard, home of the *Æsir*. A quiet, wise goddess, dressed in the plumage of hawks and falcons, Frigg lived in *Fensalir* (“sea-hall”), surrounded by goddesses that represented aspects of femininity: healing *Eir*, wise *Saga*, virginal *Gefjion*, and secretive **Fulla** (also associated with **Freyja**). A favored servant was *Sjöfn*, who stirred infatuation in human hearts. Frigg’s messenger was the fleet **Gná**, whose magical horse traversed the world in a flash; *Hlin* defended Frigg’s favorite humans. As a goddess of the domestic arts who also ruled the celestial sphere, Frigg sat in the sky spinning. Her spinning wheel *Friggerock* is the constellation Orion’s Belt.

Frigg loved her son *Baldr* so much that she made all earthly creatures promise they would never harm him. But she neglected to ask the apparently harmless mistletoe, which proved fatal to her son. Because he was so thoroughly protected, the gods used to throw darts at *Baldr*, laughing as their weapons glanced off. But envious *Loki*, disguised as an old woman, asked Frigg if anything could hurt *Baldr*. Frigg admitted that she had not bothered with the mistletoe deep in the woods.

*Loki* took off like a shot. He cut the mistletoe and formed a sharp arrow that he placed in the hand of the blind god *Hoder*. With *Hoder*’s arm guided by *Loki*, the arrow found its way, and *Baldr* dropped dead. He went to the realm of *Hel*, accompanied by his wife *Nana*, who died of heartbreak. Frigg convinced every creature on earth to weep for *Baldr*’s return. All did, save a female giant—*Loki* in disguise. Thus, Frigg lost *Baldr*, who could not be freed from death’s grip until a son of **Rind** matured into a hero.

Because of the similarity of this story to tales from the eastern Mediterranean, scholars propose that the story migrated from its original home. Baldr may derive from the dying-and-reviving god Attis, son of **Cybele** (see Southeastern Europe). His marriage to Nana (an otherwise unknown goddess whose name is identical to that of Attis's mother) suggests a non-Norse origin.

Sometimes Frigg was confused with Freyja; they may be descended from the same figure. But there are differences. Freyja was primary among the Vanir, while Frigg was queen over the Æsir. While Freyja had many lovers, Frigg was loyal to her consort Odin. And while Freyja's mother was not known, Frigg's was the earth goddess Fjörgynn, whose name was sometimes used as a title for Frigg. Despite these differences, abundant similarities suggest the relationship between the goddesses has yet to be clarified.

The folkloric character Frau Fricke (Frick or Freen) is a late form of this goddess, a spinner who demands women cease spinning whenever she travels through the land during the winter solstice. This figure is more commonly known as Frau **Holle**. (Davidson 1969; Enright; Grundy; Hollander; Jesch; Näsström 1995; Saxo)

**Fulla** Fulla, a symbol of earth's abundance, was associated with both **Freyja** and **Frigg**. She was adopted under a Romanized version of her name (Abundia or Habondia) into medieval literature as a symbol of residual paganism. Her white-garbed spirit women brought good luck. An associated minor goddess, Satia ("satiation") or Bensozia, may have been an invention of churchmen. (Hollander; Näsström 1995; Thorpe)

**Fylgja** In Iceland, a family's guardian spirit was called by this name, sometimes translated as "fetch." Unlike the **Dísir**, whom they otherwise resemble, the Fylgjakona (plural) were never worshiped. The Fylgjakona rarely appeared to human sight, but when they did, misfortune followed. The word *fylgia* means "caul," and a child born with a caul on the head was considered both lucky and second-sighted. After Christianization, the Fylgja was depicted as an angel. (Ellis 1968; Jochens; Kvideland and Sehmsdorf; Larrington; Simpson; Strömbäck)

**Gefjion** It is difficult to know whether two Gefjions were originally the same. One, a giant trickster, was promised as much land as four oxen could plow in a day, so she conceived four ox-shaped sons. When they had grown, Gefjion brought them to Sweden, plowed off part of it and dragged it south, forming Denmark. The other Gefjion sold her hymen for a jewel, but miraculously retained her virginity. All women who died as maidens passed into Gefjion's possession to live thereafter with **Freyja** or **Frigg**; she has been called an aspect of both. Although she knew the fates of all humans, she kept silent. Gefjion may have been a Danish earth goddess, her name detectable in the English word "gift." (Battaglia; Davidson 1998; *Heimskringla*; Mundal; *Poetic Edda II*; Saxo; Thorpe)

**Gerd** A goddess of light, Gerd lived in a house ringed by fire. The daughter of a frost giant and a human male, Gerd attracted the eye of the fertility god Freyr. He wooed her

first with golden apples, then with threats. A runic spell finally won Gerd, who traveled to Asgard to live with Freyr. Some interpreters, tracing Gerd's name to a word for "field," see an allegory of the springtime earth ready to produce fruit under the god of fertility's influence, but still living in the grip of winter. (Davidson 1969, 1998; Larington; *Poetic Edda II*; Saxo; Motz 1981)

**Gná** Riding her horse Hofvarpnir (Hoof-Tosser), this goddess was the messenger of heaven, and especially of Asgard's queen **Frigg**. A wind deity, Gná's name was used as a synonym for "woman" in Scandinavian poetry. She was also goddess of abundance (see also **Fulla**). (Näsström; Sturluson)

**Gollveig** Many scholars have attempted to explain why this mighty witch entered Asgard demanding vengeance, why she was killed three times but still lived, and why she possessed the power of the Vanir. Some see her as a symbol of the corruption of wealth, interpreting her name as "drunkenness of gold." Others say that Gollveig embodied a historical combat. Among the latter are those who see Gollveig as a disguise for **Freyja**, who also possessed a golden necklace and the power of prophecy. (DuBois; Dumézil; *Poetic Edda II*)

**Gunnlod** Ruler of poetry, Gunnlod was the owner of a cauldron of mead that endowed anyone who drank it with eloquence. The god Odin attempted to gain poetic power through trickery, coming to the hall of Gunnlod's father, the giant Suttungr, in disguise because the Norse gods were such bitter enemies of giants. Gunnlod sat on a throne of gold, from which she dispensed mead to Odin. He seduced her and, while she was sleeping, drank all three vats of mead and shape-shifted into a bird to escape. Gunnlod's father pursued Odin back to the land of the gods, changing himself into an eagle, but the gods saw him coming and lit fires that killed him. (Larrington)

**Hedrun** This magical goat lived in Valhalla, the hall of heroes where the **Valkyries** brought those slain in battle. Every day Hedrun nibbled needles from a pine tree, possibly the tree that held up the world. She gave intoxicating mead so copiously that the heroes spent every day getting drunk. Odin, Valhalla's owner, lived solely on Hedrun's mead. (Ellis; Hollander; Saxo)

**Hel** The goddess who gave her name to the Christian place of eternal punishment ruled a misty underworld of miserable dullness. Her name means the "one who covers up" because she hid those who died of disease or old age in her nine-circled home, while the **Valkyries** carried off those who died heroically to the heavenly halls of **Freyja** or Odin. The black-and-white Hel, daughter of **Angrboda**, rode to earth to fold the dying in her horrible arms. Then they traveled past the strange guardian maiden, Modgud. In Helheim, Hel's palace had walls of worms and human bones. She ate with utensils called Famine from the plate Hunger, while her slaves Gagnläti and Ganglöt (senility and dotage) served her. (Ellis; Hollander; Saxo; Thorpe)

**Hertha** No legends survive of the Germanic goddess from whose name come the English words for “earth” and “hearth.” She was worshiped into historic times, when plows were carried in Christian processions in her honor. Medieval witches invoked Hertha as their special patron, as they did **Fulla** under her name **Habundia**. It is unclear whether **Hlodyn** was a title of Hertha or a distinct goddess. (Thorpe)

**Hervor** One of the few Scandinavian heroines to whom a saga—the *Hervarar Saga*—was devoted, Hervor (“Warder of Hosts”) was a **Shield Maiden**. Needing a magical sword for her campaigns, Hervor dared to enter the rocky grave of her father and uncles. There, battling their violent spirits, she claimed her prize. Her name appears as one of the **Valkyries** as well. (Durrenberger and Durrenberger)

**Hilde** When her father declared war on her lover, the **Shield Maiden** Hilde fought on the latter side. Every night, she performed magic to raise up dead warriors, so her fight would go on until Ragnarök. Hilde also appears in the cycle of tales devoted to her daughter Gudrun. Her name appears on lists of **Valkyries**. (*Kudrun*)

**Holle** In German, Austrian, and Swiss folktales, she appears as a witch, but like her sister **Perchta**, Holle was originally a weather goddess. Sunshine streamed when she combed her hair, snow covered the earth when she shook a feather comforter, and rain fell when she threw away laundry water. She appeared each noon to bathe in a fountain from which children were born. She lived in a cave in the mountain or, disguised as a frog, in a well. When she left home, she rode the wind in a wagon. Once, when she broke a linchpin, a man helped her, later finding wood shavings from the repairs had turned to gold.

Holle was especially associated with textile crafts. On the winter solstice, she checked the quality of each woman’s work and offered rewards or punishment. A good spinner woke to find a single priceless golden thread, but sloppy ones found their work tangled, their spinning wheels shattered or burnt. Between December 25 and January 6, the “12 days of Christmas,” Holle traveled the world in her wagon. No rotary actions were allowed, sleighs were used instead of wagons, and all meal-grinding had to cease.

As Frau Gôde, the goddess rode in a wagon drawn by dogs, looking for open doors and sending a dog inside when she found one. This dog barked for a year and could not be driven away; if killed, it turned into a stone that became a whining dog every night. The next year, the beleaguered residents could relieve themselves of the unwanted pet by firmly closing the door as Frau Gôde drove by.

Some church fathers called Holle the goddess of witches, to whose rituals women flew on animals. This belief, however, was not generally borne out by folklore, which considered Holle a goddess of weather. But, as witches were believed to work weather-magic, the connection may have been forged in the monks’ minds. A version of this figure related to **Frigga** appears as Frau Fricke or Freen. (Davidson 1998; Gimbutas; Grimm vol. 1; List; Motz 1984; Thorpe)

**Huldra** Queen of the Germanic fairies, Huldra looked like a beautiful woman from the front, but from the back, she was hollow and long-tailed. She lived with her people, the

Huldrafolk, in remote mountains, where they danced and made mournful music. One hunter overheard girls saying that he would never kill an animal because he was unclean, so he washed his face and brought down an elk. Other stories say the Huldrafolk helped hunters by telling them what rituals they needed. (Davidson 1998; Kvideland and Sehmsdorf; Simpson)

**Hyrrokin** The death ship of Baldr, beloved son of the earth goddess **Frigg**, could not travel to the underworld because it was so weighted with the goddess's grief. So the giant woman Hyrrokin ("withered by fire"), the strongest of a mighty race, was brought to heaven to throw her weight against the ship. She arrived riding a wolf, using snakes for a bridle, and performed the gloomy task of launching Baldr into the afterlife. (Davidson 1998)

**Idunn** The Norse divinities were not immortal; they relied on Idunn's apples to survive. But once, the trickster Loki let Idunn fall into the hands of the gods' enemies, the giants of Jotunheim. When the divinities began to age, they demanded that Loki return Idunn to them. Loki flew to Jotunheim, turned Idunn into a walnut, and carried her safely home. Idunn's consort was Bragi, god of poets. (Davidson 1969; Hollander; Saxo)

**Jord** Goddess of the primordial world, daughter of **Nótt**, the earth goddess Jord was worshiped on high mountains, where she mated with the sky. It is sometimes difficult to know when this goddess is intended and when the referent is the planet Earth. (Hollander; Saxo)

**Kriemhild** The mythic heroine known as Gudrun in Norse legend bears this name in the Germanic versions of the story of the Nibelungen. Recited orally since before the medieval period, the tale was lost for centuries. In 1755, the story was rediscovered in manuscript form, and it soon found popularity with Richard Wagner and other Romantic nationalists. Its connection with Norse mythology has been argued both positively and negatively.

Although most of Krimhild's story parallels that of Gudrun, there are a few mostly insignificant differences: her mother Uta was not as evil as Grimhild; her husband was Siegfried rather than Sigurd; Kriemhild's brother was Gunther rather than Gunnar; Siegfried assisted Gunther in winning Brynhild by invisibly aiding him in battle with her; Siegfried helped Gunther to rape Brynhild (and possibly raped her himself, while invisible); and Kriemhild provided information that led to Siegfried's death, either treacherously or ignorantly. The battle and rape motifs make the Germanic version considerably more misogynistic than the Norse. (*Nibelungenlied*; *Poetic Edda I*)

**Matronen** Throughout Romanized Germany, images of "the Mothers" have been found, usually depicted as a trinity. They are typically interpreted as goddesses of the earth's abundance (see **Nerthus**, **Fulla**). Some scholars argue that they were Celtic or Italian, imported during Roman occupation; most images have been found in the Rhineland, where legions were stationed. These goddesses may have been honored



**Matronen.** Throughout the German areas once occupied by Roman legions, images of collective goddesses called Matronen (“the mothers”) are found, like this one now in the Rheinisches Landesmuseum in Bonn.

in celebrations called Modranight, “mothers’ night.” Vestiges of this trinity can be found in groupings of saints (“Jungfrauen” or “young women”) who appear in threes. (Davidson 1964)

**Menglod** The “sun-bright maiden” Menglod appears in legend surrounded by a wall of flame from which a hero must rescue her. This peculiar entrapment was a frequent hazard to ancient Norse heroines, suggesting a connection between women and fire also found in the story of **Brynhild**. Menglod’s serving women were Bjort, Hlif, and Hlifthrasa. She may be a form of the goddess **Freyja**, who bears this as one of her many names. (Näsström)

**Modgud** This maiden, whose name means “fierce battle,” guarded the path to the underworld realm of the death goddess **Hel**. To reach her, the newly dead had to cross Hell-Ways, the yawning caverns surrounding the World Tree Yggdrasil, at whose roots Hel lived. Spanning the abysses where the roaring River Göll (Gjöll) flowed was a gold-paved bridge. There, with her maidservant Frith, Modgud stood watch, challenging all who came her way. (Davidson 1998)

**Mrizala** Heroine of a German folktale, Mrizala was a lovely young woman but very, very fussy. She refused young men in her village until she had no one left to refuse.

When her mother said she was fated to die a spinster, Mrizala said, “I wish Death would come and marry me!” Immediately, a young man knocked at the door. He seemed pleasant enough, so Mrizala did not believe that he was Death. As she spent time in the young man’s company, she grew to regret her impulsive wish. But suddenly he left, and she cautiously followed him to the church, where she saw him roast and eat a baby. She knew that Death had, indeed, come for her.

The next day her suitor asked her what she had seen in the church at night and she denied seeing anything. That day, her father died. He asked again; again she denied seeing him. Her mother died, and he asked again, and she denied again. And then Mrizala herself died, taken by her bridegroom.

From her grave, a beautiful rose grew up. One day, a passing prince passing ordered it plucked for his hat. But thereafter, he had no appetite for food or drink, and each night dreamed of a lovely young woman. A scholar was called who told the family that the curse could be broken only if the prince would capture Mrizala at midnight and keep her in his arms. That night, the prince kept watch as the rose, promptly at midnight, turned into Mrizala. He captured her, held her tight, and won her back from Death.

But her first husband did not let go easily, for as she was nursing her first baby, he reappeared with the same question. She gave the same answer, so he strangled her newborn. Then he said he would take her princely husband, and then Mrizala screamed out the truth, that she had seen Death roasting and eating children. Satisfied, Death gave her a golden ring as a memento and left her until her full life’s span had been completed. (Ranke)

**Nana** This goddess plays little part in Germanic mythology except to grieve the needless death of her husband, the beautiful god Baldr. In this, she strongly resembles the Sumerian **Inanna** (see Eastern Mediterranean), who similarly mourned a lost love, as did neighboring Egyptian **Isis** (see Africa). Such parallels have led many scholars to suggest connections between Scandinavian and Mediterranean myths, probably brought about through trade. (*Poetic Edda II*; Sturluson)

**Nerthus** Tacitus said that the Germanic tribes’ primary divinity was the earth goddess Nerthus, honored in an island sanctuary where her image sat until her priest divined her desire to move among her people. She then began a solemn procession, drawn by oxen from tribe to tribe. Weapons were locked away until the journey was completed. Festivities accompanied her, and doors were opened in hospitality. Finally, when the priest discerned that the goddess was tired of human company, the procession started back to Nerthus’s island. In a hidden lake, slaves bathed the goddess and her chariot, then were offered to her in death. Some argue that Nerthus was a god, but the ritual of carrying a deity around the fields was more typically associated with goddesses. Others say that Nerthus was another Scandinavian goddess, possibly **Freyja**. While the ritual was clearly described, scholars debate its ultimate cultural source. (Berger; Hollander; Tacitus)

**Nixies** Germanic and Swedish folklore describe prophetic water spirits. Like the rivers they inhabited, the Nixies were changeable in nature: sometimes they were charming

and peaceful, sitting in the sun to comb their long flaxen hair; sometimes they were fierce and hungry, drowning people for food. They assumed human form to go to market, appearing as long-breasted young women who looked human but who, beneath their dresses, had fishtails.

Mortal men fell in love with Nixies, wasting away because of their beauty. Sometimes a Nixie agreed to marry a human, always making him vow never to ask her origin. Excellent dancers, they danced with human men, but should one steal her glove, it meant the Nixie's death. The next day, her river would be red with her blood. If they appeared at a wedding, it was good luck. If they appeared at a birth, they could either aid or thwart the process. (Thorpe)

**Norns** The vast tree Yggdrasil rose from the world of **Hel** to pass through Midgard (Middle Earth) where humans lived, as well as the giants' land of Jotenheim and the dwarves' home Nidavellir, finally reaching the heavenly worlds of Ásgard (home of the Æsir), Álfheim (home of the elves), and Vanaheim (home of the Vanir). At Yggdrasil's foot lived three sisters, the Norns. Each day they drew water and, mixing it with gravel, sprinkled Yggdrasil. From their privileged position, the Norns saw the future. Not even the gods could undo what they predicted.

Sometimes there was one all-powerful Norn; sometimes there were two; occasionally the Norns were innumerable, one for each person. But the most common depiction was of three sisters. The oldest sister was Urd, whose name becomes "weird," derived from a word meaning "to become." Norn of the past, Urd gave her name to the well (Urtharbrunnr) from which her sisters drew water. Verdandi ("becoming") was Norn of the present, and the youngest sister, Skuld (from *skula*, "shall"), ruled the future. A powerful sorceress and queen of the elves, Skuld carried the scrolls of fortune. (*Anglo-Saxon and Norse Poems*; Bauschatz; Davidson 1998; Jochens; *Poetic Edda II*; Saxo)

**Nótt** The primeval goddess Nótt ("night") gave birth to earth (**Jord**) and light. She was dark-skinned and born of the race of giants. Her family consisted of her father, her consort, and her son Aud. But she also took a second consort, by whom she conceived Jord. She rode forth each evening in a chariot drawn by her horse Hrimfaxi ("frosty mane"), from whose foaming mouth dew fell. (Hollander; Saxo; Thorpe)

**Ostara** The Germanic spring's goddess was celebrated in the fourth month of the year, called Eostremonat or Ostaramanoth after her. In Anglo-Saxon, her name became Estre or Eastre. She was honored among the Germanic people with painted eggs. Some scholars believe that Ostara is a back-formation from the month's name rather than an actual goddess. (Bede)

**Perchta** An "elf woman" of folklore hides an old goddess of weather and the winter solstice. She was generally described in negative terms, unlike her beloved sister **Holle**. Perchta could not tolerate laziness. She inspected distaffs and spinning wheels, looking for wasted bits of wool. If she found them, she tore open the spinner's stomach and stuffed the remnants into the cavity. But Perchta herself was sloppy, with long,

white matted hair and tattered clothes. Her face was wrinkled, her eyes lively. Her favorite time of year was the 12 days of Christmas, which culminated in Perchta's Day, when everyone ate pancakes of meal and milk in her honor. Bits were left for Perchta, who came secretly to enjoy them; if anyone spied on her, he was blinded for the year.

Despite her untidy appearance, Perchta seduced young men and carried them off to the mountains (especially the Venusberg, named for the Roman **Venus**); they were never heard from again. This distinction between Perchta and Holle is unclear, for the kindly Holle was also described as a seductress. (Davidson 1998; Grimm vol. 1; Gimbutas; List; Motz 1984; Rumpf et al.; Thorpe)

**Ran** Sea goddess and queen of the drowned, Ran could hold a ship steady with one hand while with the other, she netted sailors. Because Ran permitted the drowned to attend their own funerals, anyone seen at his own wake was assumed to be in Ran's keeping. Because Ran loved gold, Scandinavian sailors kept gold coins in their pockets, in case they went "faring to Ran."

The waves ("claws of Ran" or "wave maidens") were Ran's daughters and, like their mother, mermaids. These girls could help or hinder a sailor, pushing a ship forward faster or slowing passage. With her daughters, Ran made herself visible during the cold, dark winter, when she splashed close to her worshipers' campfires. She may derive from the mythology of the nearby Finns. (*Anglo-Saxon and Norse Poems*; Guerber; Hollander; Thorpe; Turville-Petre)

**Rapunzel** "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair!" the prince called from beneath the tower where this maiden was held prisoner by the witch Mother Gothel. Then he would climb to her bed on the thick plaits of her long hair. Like other Germanic fairy tales, this story probably derives from ancient myth. (Grimm 1987)

**Rheda** The Venerable Bede, writing of the Anglo-Saxons, mentions Rheda as one of their goddesses, but no trace of her name is found among their Germanic cousins on the continent. Little is known of her except that the month of March, Hrethmonath (Rhedmonath), bore her name in that land. Presumably she was a spring goddess, to whom sacrifices were offered during March. (Bede)

**Rind** Only a child of Rind could avenge the death of the god Baldr (see **Frigg**). Odin traveled to her court disguised as a soldier to convince her to help, but Rind rebuffed him. The next year, Odin came disguised as a smith, but the result was the same. A third time, Odin came in disguise as a young courtier. Rind again refused his advances. Finally Odin disguised himself as a maiden healer and drew Rind's eye. When she fell sick of a strange malady, Odin cured her, and when they slept together, Rind conceived the hero Vali. (Davidson 1969; Hollander; Larrington)

**Rotkäppchen** Like many Germanic folktales, the story of the little girl who went to grandmother's house, wearing her red cape and cap, only to get eaten by a wolf is

replete with archetypal feminine imagery. Although collected by the Grimm brothers, the story appears in the collection of French folklore by Charles Perrault. While commonly described as Germanic, its source is unknown. (Grimm 1987)

**Saga** In the Scandinavian pantheon, the all-knowing Saga came second, after Frigg, in order of precedence. Saga lived at Sökkvabekk (Sinking Beach), a waterfall of cool waves where she offered her guests drinks in golden cups. Her name was applied to the epic heroic tales of her people; words related to her name mean “narrative.” (Hollander; Saxo; Thorpe)

**Shield Maidens** Scandinavian warrior women could be either divine (see **Brynhild**, **Valkyries**) or human (**Alfhild**, **Hilde**). Typically their stories and images concentrate on their prowess in battle, but they also showed a softer side. Sometimes they shed their feather cloaks to dance. Human men could capture such women by stealing a feather cloak and keeping it hidden. No matter how happily she lived with the man or how many children they had, a Shield Maiden who found her cloak flew away. Sometimes, these women wore their souls on golden chains around their necks that, if removed, meant their death. (Davidson 1998; *Poetic Edda II*)

**Sif** The beautiful grain goddess, renowned for her long golden hair, lived with the thunder-wielding Thor. When the trickster Loki cut off Sif’s hair, Thor made him travel to the lands of the dwarfs to bring back those master artisans. The dwarfs made hair of spun gold that, attached to Sif’s head, grew like the original. (Davidson 1969; Hollander)

**Sigrdrífa** Wisest of the **Valkyries**, the **Shield Maiden** Sigrdrífa once stole from battle a hero to whom Odin had promised victory. In punishment, Odin stung her with sleep thorns, after which Sigrdrífa sank into a trance, never to awaken until a fearless man claimed her. When the hero Sigurd found a mountain lit by fire, he saw in the center Sigrdrífa, fully armored. Riding into the flames, he cut her armor from her, for it had grown into her flesh as she slept. Then he awakened the Shield Maiden and asked her to teach him wisdom. Sigrdrífa spoke at length with the hero, telling him magic runes and the ways of sorcery. Finally, she sank back into sleep. She is often conflated with the Valkyrie **Brynhild**. (*Poetic Edda II*)

**Sjörå** Although sometimes found in male form, this sea spirit was typically female. Left alone or offered gifts, the Sjörå was helpful, warning of storms and pointing out rich fishing areas. But if angered, she caused death by drowning. The Sjörå could be magically “bound” by circling her pond with consecrated soil. This imprisoned her and, desperate, she offered fish in return for freedom. (Lindow)

**Skadi** The goddess for whom Scandinavia was named lived on snow-covered mountains, where her favorite occupations were skiing and snowshoeing. But when the gods caused the death of her father, Skadi traveled to Asgard, intent upon vengeance. Even

alone, she was more than a match for the gods, and they were forced to sue for peace. Skadi demanded two things: that they make her laugh, and that she be allowed to choose a mate from among them. The trickster Loki met the first condition by tying his testicles to a goat. It was a contest of screeching, until the rope snapped, and Loki landed on Skadi's knee. She laughed.

Next, the gods lined up. Skadi's eyes were masked, for she intended to select her mate by feeling his legs. When she had found the strongest—thinking them the legs of the beautiful Baldr—she flung off her mask and was disappointed to discover that she had picked the sea god Njord. She moved to the god's ocean home, where she was miserable. The couple moved to Skadi's mountain palace, but the water god was as unhappy there as Skadi had been in the water. So they agreed to separate, and Skadi took up with Ullr, god of skis.

Honored especially in Norway, Skadi may have derived from the pantheon of the Saami people there. Her appearance as a hunter connects her with the woodland women called **Buschfrauen** in German. (Davidson 1998; *Heimskringla*; Hollander; Saxo)

**Sneewitcchen** Two German folktales collected by the Grimm brothers include characters named Snow-White. One, Sneewitcchen (“snow witch”), with her sister Rose-Red, saved a bear from freezing and later helped a dwarf whose beard was frozen into a lake. When the bear later met the dwarf, he killed the dwarf and was transformed into a prince. The other Snow-White was condemned to death by her evil stepmother but survived with the assistance of a group of dwarves. The presence in the tales of the magical dwarves suggests a descent from Scandinavian mythology. (Grimm 1987)

**Sól** The Scandinavians saw the sun as a spinning girl who lived on earth, where she was so beautiful that her father, Mundilfari, named her after the sun. Such presumption annoyed the gods. They took Sól to heaven, where she rode the chariot of day. Pulling her were divine horses, *Árvak* (“early waker”) and *Alsvið* (“all-strong”); under their harnesses were bags of cooling winds. Sól also carried the shield *Svalin* (“cool”), which protected the earth. Her consort was a human, *Glen*.

Sól was not immortal, for like other Scandinavian gods, she was doomed to die at Ragnarök. She was chased through the sky by the Fenris-wolf, offspring of **Angrboda**, who on the last day would catch her and devour her. Before her raced another wolf, *Hati*, who chased her brother, the moon. Just before being swallowed up, Sól would give birth, and this daughter would take her mother's place in the new sky. (*Poetic Edda II*; Saxo.)

**Syn** The goddess gatekeeper of heaven was named Syn (“denial”) because she denied entry to anyone she judged unworthy. Because she was all-seeing and perfectly just, Syn was the goddess on whom oaths were sworn. She was also invoked in lawsuits so that justice would prevail. (Sturluson; Thorpe)

**Thorgerd** Originally a human woman, Thorgerd Holgabrud was deified because of her unprecedented skill in divinity and sorcery. She and her sister *Irpa* were the special

goddesses of Icelandic nobleman Jarl Haakon, who built them a temple and who became king of Norway with Thorgerd's help.

Thorgerd was a mighty warrior, charged with protecting Haakon's people. If they were attacked, she sprang to life, arrows flying from each finger, each arrow killing a man. Because she had power over natural forces necessary for her people's happiness, she was invoked for luck in fishing and farming. Her worship was among the last vestiges of the ancient religion, remaining vital into Christian times. The Christians, denouncing her, called her Thorgerd Holga-Troll, although she had no troll blood in her. She may be a form of the goddess **Gerd**. (Davidson 1969, 1998; *Poetic Edda II*)

**Ursula** The Germanic moon goddess was honored on her feast day, October 21. Later, Christians in the same area adopted her as a saint, calling the old lunar feast St. Ursula's Day and describing her as the chief among 11,000 murdered virgins. She was reputedly a woman of Cornwall who, betrothed against her will to a German prince, assembled companions in maidenhood but, upon traveling to her marriage, encountered Huns who killed them all. The date of this event is set in legend as October 31, 237, or perhaps 451. But lists of martyrs through the 10th century do not mention Ursula, although the virgin sacrifice crops up now and again, with as many as a dozen given credit for martyrdom. By the 11th century, however, the number of virgins takes a staggering leap upward, with a text in 1112 giving Ursula's story complete with vows of celibacy and demands for thousands of handmaidens. The excavation of an ancient, crowded cemetery in Cologne at the time may have given rise to the story.

Ursula's name suggests a connection with the bear (Latin, *ursus*). Despite the Roman background to her name, the goddess may derive from a Finno-Ugric source. Or she may be connected with the weather-witching Germanic figure **Holle**. (Baring-Gould)

**Valkyries** The helmeted battle maid who flew her supernatural horse over war's carnage is a familiar Scandinavian image. These maidens were also forces of fate. Before battles started, the Valkyries wove the web of war, raising a warp of spears and weighting it with human heads, running a red weft through the spears, and using arrows as shuttles. In this bloody tapestry, they read the fates of warriors. When they had determined the battle's outcome, the Valkyries flew to take the slain. Many writers describe the Valkyries as servants of Odin, retrieving his selected heroes. But some tales showed the Valkyries opposing Odin's will, selecting their own favorites and teaching magic to heroes they intended to save. The question of whom the Valkyries served is made more complex when the goddess **Freyja** is called their chief.

The Valkyries did not always ride horses. Sometimes they appeared on wolves or disguised themselves as ravens. At times the Valkyries appeared like **Shield Maidens** in swan disguise, in which form they occasionally mated with human men. Several stories describe Valkyries who married the same hero lifetime after lifetime. Such was the case with Svava, a battle-maiden reborn as the princess Sigrun, who married a man named Helgi in several incarnations.

There were two kinds of Valkyries: divine ones, of whom there were nine, or nine times nine; and the half-mortal Vaetter-maidens, visible as humans to the second-sighted, while the average eye saw only the aurora borealis illuminating the field of battle. Among the host of Valkyries, some had individual names and stories. Battle-maiden names include Helde (“Brilliant”), Hlathguth (“Necklace-adorned Warrior-maiden”), Olrun (“Rune-reader”), Skeyh (“Axe-time”), Baudihillie (“rule of battle”), Friagabi (“offering freedom”), Gunnr (“battle”), and Göndul (“handling the magic wand”); others are Guth, Geirskögul, Hjörðprimul, Ljod, Rota, Svipul, Snngríðr, and Valkyrjr.

Of the Valkyries with specific duties and stories, 11 are known to be designated to carry the magical mead of the nanny goat Hedrun to the heroes in Váhholl: Göll, Hildr (“combat”), Skeggjöld, and Trúðr; as well as Geirönul (Geirronul, “Spear-Bearer”), Herfjötur (Herfjötter, “Panic-Terror”), Hlökk (Hlok, “Shrieker”), Rangild (Randgríðr, “Shield-Bearer”), Rathgild (Ráðgðr, “Plan-Destroyer”); Reginleif (“Companion of Gods”), and Skögul (“Raging One”). Two more, Hrist (“Shaker”) and Mist (“Torpor”), bore the mead to Odin, who lived solely upon it.

**Hervor** and **Hilde** both appear in saga literature as warrior women with powers over the world of death. Skuld, otherwise known as one of the **Norns**, is also sometimes named as a member of the Valkyries. **Brynhild** (also called **Sigrdrífa**) is the most famous of the Valkyries, appearing as she does in literature, art, and music, surrounded by a flaming circle, asleep in her armor because she opposed Odin’s will.

Kara, called a Valkyrie although apparently mortal, accompanied her lover Helgi to battle, swooping above him in swan plumage and singing such a sweet song that his enemies laid down their arms to listen admiringly. But one day Helgi raised his sword too high too abruptly and stabbed Kara to death, then lived in misery and guilt until he died. Finally, Sváva appears in a romantic tale of the warrior Helgi. She was reborn as the human woman Sigrún and wed a later incarnation of Helgi. (*Anglo-Saxon and Norse Poems*; Davidson 1964, 1969; Ellis; Enright 1990; Jochens; *Poetic Edda II*)

**Vár** This Scandinavian love goddess dealt only with promises lovers made to each other outside wedlock, called *várar*, after her, and took vengeance on anyone who broke such vows. An aspect of the all-knowing earth, Vár saw and heard everything that happened. Nothing could be hidden from her, so when a lover complained of wrongdoing by a love partner, Vár knew instantly if the accusation were correct. (Sturluson)

**Voluspa** Born before this world began, according to the poem called *Voluspa*, a seeress was asked to tell the history of the world. Once begun, she did not stop, even though the gods did not wish to hear of their own deaths at Ragnarök. Other women seers were Heith, whose witchcraft including casting spells; and Oddibjod, who traveled about telling stories and fortunes. Some sources give Voluspa as the name of the seeress, while others describe the word as the name of the poem itself. (Hollander; Jochens; McKinnell; *Poetic Edda II*)

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# SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

Since prehistory, a number of cultures have made southeastern Europe their home. Archaeology has unearthed many early artifacts that appear to depict goddesses in this region, which stretches from the Caucasus Mountains to the Caspian and Black seas. But little narrative explains the sculptures, bas-reliefs, and jewelry found there. Scanty information comes from Greeks like Herodotus, who visited in the 5th century BCE, but such writings may be distorted versions of actual religious traditions or invented images of a frightening enemy.

Transcription of oral stories has therefore been important in reconstruction of the region's early religion. Until a century ago, scholars assumed that oral literature was less reliable than written, until Milman Parry showed how storytellers could memorize epic-length poems. It is now established that the oral tradition was accurate in conveying lengthy narratives and that such narratives were the basis for later written work.

Southeastern Europe has seen millennia of migration and invasion, making it difficult to know the genesis of a figure or a story. Celtic influence has been detected from 279 BCE, through the establishment of the kingdom of Galatia. The Roman Empire extended to Thrace, whose religion influenced Rome as well as receiving its influence. After the fall of Rome, parts of the region fell under Persian and Turkish control. With the arrival of Christianity and Islam, goddess worship was suppressed or disguised. Thus, in addition to indigenous beliefs, one can find a multiplicity of imported religious ideas, symbols, and figures.

Of the region's many cultures, the Indo-European Thracian may have been the richest. Of obscure origin, renowned for beautiful goldwork, Thrace occupied northern Greece, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Albania, and parts of Turkey. Even after the area came under Greek rule, the inhabitants held to their ancient ways, some mythic figures becoming incorporated into the conqueror's religion. Thracian imagery and mythic narrative may also have influenced Slavic mythology.



**Cybele.** *One of the greatest goddesses of the ancient Mediterranean was Cybele, who was honored in Southeastern Europe, Greece (as Meter) and Rome (as Magna Mater). She was typically shown seated regally, often flanked by her heraldic beasts. This image comes from the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples.*

From 7000 to 200 BCE, while Thrace was thriving, nomadic Scythians and Samaritans lived on the Russian steppes. Although patrilineal, the Scythians had a tradition of divine ancestral mothers. The Sauromatians claimed they were the descendents of Scythians and Amazon women. Little remains of Sauromatian culture, although some legends may be based upon their myths.

Finally, in Caucasian Georgia lies a culture in which archaic material has been sustained to the present. Although patriarchal and hierarchical, the culture features vivid female divinities that suggest the feminine was once valued highly. Incestuous brother/sister divinities are a special feature of the Georgian culture, a pairing that elsewhere indicates a primeval creation.

From this area, once known as Phrygia, come the impressive sagas of the Narts. Although the region is Islamic today, it sustained pagan beliefs through its bardic tradition. Both men and women sang long sagas about the heroic Narts, 99 descendents of a single miraculous woman. These tales, only recently

available in English, reveal powerful feminine characters, some of whom have been connected to the religion of the Scythians and Sauromatians.

## SOUTHEASTERN EUROPEAN PANTHEON

Adgos. *See* **Cybele**

**Adif**

Agde/istis. *See* **Cybele**

Agdo/us. *See* **Cybele**

Almass. *See* **Dali**

Amazan. *See* **Sana**

Amra *Caucasian; sun.*

**Apia**

**Bendis**

Byarambukh. *See* **Setenaya**

**Conkijgharuna**

Cottyto/us. *See* **Kotys**

Cotys. *See* **Kotys**

**Cybele**

Dæl. *See* **Dali**

**Dali**

Dela. *See Dali*

**Falvara**

Furunzsina *Macedonian; lost love.*

**Gundra**

Gwasha. *See Qaydukh*

Idaea. *See Cybele*

Kebebe. *See Cybele*

Kezarayana Haabzewede. *See Psatina*

**Kotys**

Kubeleia. *See Cybele*

Kybele. *See Cybele*

**Meghazash**

**Mezytkha**

Mezytkha *Hunting.*

**Mitra**

Nana. *See Cybele*

**Psatina**

Psethe Gase. *See Meghazash*

**Qaydukh**

Sætanaë. *See Setenaya*

**Samdzimari**

**Sana**

Satana. *See Setenaya*

Setenay. *See Setenaya*

**Setenaya**

Syriava. *See Setenaya*

**Tabiti**

**Tamar**

Tkashi-mapa. *See Dali.*

**Adif** The Nart heroine Adif lived in a tower surrounded by darkness. When she opened its windows and revealed her beautiful elbow, night was dispelled. Her home was above a gorge over which she built a bridge of handwoven linen. Every morning, her husband, Psapeta, drove stolen horses across the bridge to plunder the countryside.

One morning, Psapeta spoke harshly to Adif. The next time he attempted to cross the linen bridge, Adif pulled her elbow inside the tower. In the darkness, he fell to his death. Although she had been angry at his disrespect, Adif mourned the loss of her husband in the approved fashion. She sat by his grave and cut herself until she bled, staining the rocks red.

After a year, the hero Sawseruquo saw Adif mourning in the rain. Opening his cloak, he begged her to take shelter and warmed her cold bleeding hands with his breath. Adif pulled away and went to Psapeta's grave, where she began to dig, intending to pull her husband's corpse out and to feed wild animals. After three shovelfuls, Sawseruquo begged her not to hold onto miserable memories. The couple left the unhappy home and lived happily together thereafter. In some versions of this story, the woman in question is **Setenaya**. See also **Qaydukh**. (Colarusso)

**Apia** According to Herodotus, this Scythian earth goddess was the wife of Papaeus or "great father," a storm or sky god. No images were made of her, and no altars were built to Apia. Herodotus also mentions the the hearth goddess Tabiti as well as Argimpassa, whom he calls the Scythian version of "heavenly **Aphrodite**" (See Greek). (Herodotus)

**Bendis** A Thracian goddess whose worship traveled to Greece, Bendis was depicted holding a twig that granted passage to the underworld. Her name ("to bind") indicated her oversight over marriage, although she was worshiped in orgiastic rituals. A midnight horse race, with riders bearing torches, was part of the Bendideia; a spring month

was named for her, Bendideios. The distinction between Bendis and **Kotys** is not clearly established. (Hoddinott; Macurdy; Planeaux; Smith 1870)

**Conkiajgharuna** The Georgian **Cinderella** (see Scandinavia) was a mistreated orphan called Conkiajgharuna (“ragamuffin”). Her stepsister always got whatever she wanted, but Conkiajgharuna got nothing but chores. One task was tending the cow, which the girl did carefully, though weeping from loneliness and hunger. One day, the cow told Conkiajgharuna that one of her horns was made of honey, the other of butter. After that, Conkiajgharuna was always well fed, to the baffled anger of her stepmother.

When the cow wandered onto the sod roof of a buried house, Conkiajgharuna scrambled up behind her. The girl dropped her spindle, which fell down the chimney. Inside, Conkiajgharuna met an old woman whose head was crawling with worms. Although disgusted, the girl flattered the old woman with comments about her admirable cleanliness. In return, the old woman told Conkiajgharuna of a magical spring that would turn her hair golden. Following the hag’s directions, the girl came to a stream where, when she washed her hair, it turned a lustrous gold. When Conkiajgharuna returned home, her stepmother grew enraged. She refused to let Conkiajgharuna tend the cow after that, sending her own daughter instead.

That girl did exactly as Conkiajgharuna had done, except when she met the worm-eaten old woman, she could not control her disgust. The old woman told her of a special stream with magical powers. When the girl followed the old woman’s directions, she bathed and turned entirely black. After that, persecution of Conkiajgharuna grew worse, until she thought she could endure no more. Then the cow died, whispering a promise to be always available.

The stepmother gave Conkiajgharuna even more work. But whenever the stepmother went away, the cow provided Conkiajgharuna with splendid robes and a beautiful horse on which to ride. In that garb, she dropped a silver slipper, which was found by the king, who demanded to find its owner. He went from house to house without success, finally coming to Conkiajgharuna’s. There the stepsister was seated on a throne-like chair, while Conkiajgharuna was hidden beneath a basket. When the king sat on the basket, Conkiajgharuna poked him with a needle until he leaped up and pulled the basket away, revealing the girl. She claimed the slipper, which fit her perfectly, and she and the king lived happily ever after. (Wardrop)

**Cybele** This important goddess may have descended from Anatolian **Kubaba** (see Eastern Mediterranean), who was associated with mountains and wildcats. A similar goddess, known in Crete as **Rhea**, was associated with Cybele in classical times, as was **Meter** and **Niobe** (see Greece). In Rome, this goddess became known as **Magna Mater**.

Both Greeks and Romans claimed that self-castration was part of Cybele’s worship, yet there is no evidence of the ritual in Cybele’s homeland until Roman times. Cybele’s reputation as a goddess of emotional excess is also not upheld by her early form. She was depicted as a stout, strong woman of indeterminate age and great

serenity. She received the reverence of animals as she strode through the woods. Trees showered down fruit, and beneath her feet, the earth blossomed. Rivers ran free and clear, and birds whirled about her head.

When Cybele appeared as a boulder, she was called Adgos. The Greek Zeus attempted to rape her, but, unable to penetrate the rock, ejaculated on the ground. Because the soil was Cybele, she conceived a child, the violent, dual-sexed Agdistis. Dionysus drugged him with alcohol and tied him to a tree so that, on awakening, he pulled off his testicles. Agdistis died of the wound, and from his blood sprang up a beautiful almond tree.

From this tree, the **Nymph** (see Greece) Nana picked a fruit that impregnated her with a son, Attis. When he grew into a young man, Attis aroused Cybele's passion. She took him as her lover, bearing him through the world in her lion-drawn chariot. The goddess's love was not enough for Attis, who turned his attentions to another woman. So Cybele drove him mad. Attis castrated himself and bled to death beneath a pine tree.

A variant story says Cybele was exposed in infancy but nursed by wild animals. In adulthood, she fell in love with Attis. Reunited with her parents, Cybele went mad with grief when they murdered Attis, wandering until both lovers were deified. Another variant says that Agdistis fell in love with Attis, tearing off his genitals to seduce the young man. Yet another source calls Attis a priest of Cybele, who expanded her cult before being killed by a wild boar.

Similar confusion arises from the name Agdistis, sometimes used of a separate character in Cybele's story and sometimes of Cybele herself. Agdistis may have been another goddess who was absorbed into Cybele; or the name, derived from Mount Adgos, may have been a title of Cybele's. (Borgeaud; Crowfoot; Meyer; Munn; Näsström; Roller; Showerman; Tacheva-Hitova; Vassileva; Vermaseren)

**Dali** The Ossetians had two hunting divinities, Æfsati and his sister Dali. When Æfsati was on duty, hunters made easy kills, but Dali protected the wild herds, especially horned beasts such as sheep, deer, and chamois. If humans came near, she disguised herself as an animal with some unusual feature: a golden horn, a dazzlingly white hide, a huge or tiny size. Hunters made offerings to Dali before a hunt and afterwards when successful.

Sometimes Dali appeared as a captivating woman with solid gold braids. When a man became Dali's lover, she gave him an arrow-tip or ring that brought spectacular hunting luck. But the price of Dali's affection was high, for her chosen hunter could never sleep with a human woman again.

One such mate bedded down with a girl. The next night, he saw a huge white deer that led him into high peaks. When he found himself balanced on a rock outcropping above an abyss, the rock crumbled beneath him. He fell but, at the last moment, his foot caught on a branch. There he hung for days. Every time someone tried to rescue him, the mountain grew taller. Finally, realizing he had wronged the goddess, the hunter let himself drop to his death. Some versions of the tale say that the hunter's sister was **Tamar**, who let him go off to hunt without ritual purification. (Charachidze; Chaudhri; Davidson and Chaudhri)

**Falvara** The Osset people honored this “saint,” whose name combines the names of Flora and Laura—patrons, respectively, of vegetation and of sheep—thus creating a figure of prosperity who was loved for her kindness and patience. As the Ossets considered themselves distant descendents of the Scythians, Falvara may encompass their ancient fertility goddess. Her feast day was in August, when each family offered Falvara a sheep. During the rest of the year, she was content with a paste of flour, butter, and milk. (Charachidze)

**Gundra** This Nart woman refused any man unable to win a wrestling match with her; those who lost had their ears cut off and were branded with a hot iron. She had bested 99 young men when Khozhorpas arrived. Because he was breathtakingly handsome, Gundra tried to discourage him from fighting, but he was eager to test himself against her. The earth shook with their strength. After a long match, Khozhorpas slammed Gundra onto the ground. At that, **Setenaya** rejoiced, for her only daughter had found a husband worthy of her strength. (Colarusso)

**Kotys** The Greeks claimed that the Thracians revered a goddess whom they called “patron of debauchery.” Kotys’s servants celebrated secret festivals called “Kotyttia” in her honor. Kotys has been associated with the best-known goddess of the region, **Cybele**, because of the reputed licentiousness of her festivals. She has also been compared to **Bendis** and **Tabiti**. (Smith 1870)

**Meghazash** Daughter of the Nart ocean goddess Psethe Gase, Meghazash flew each night with her two sisters to a golden tree. The tree bore half-red, half-white fruit. A woman who bit into the white side bore a daughter, while those who bit the red side had sons. But every time a fruit ripened, Meghazash and her sisters stole it, so that the Narts were in danger of dying out. Finally, the brave Pizighash shot Meghazash. He followed her to the ocean’s edge, where her trail disappeared. So he entered the water, finding himself in the banquet hall of the deep, where Meghazash lay bleeding. She could be cured only by some of her own shed blood, which Pizighash had caught on a handkerchief. He cured her, so she married him. She bore three sons and three daughters.

Many years later, dying, she made a prophecy. In seven months, a man would arrive in the night for the first daughter; after three months, another horseman would come for the second daughter; finally another man would come for the third. The children agreed to follow their mother’s wishes.

When the time came, only the youngest son, Warzameg, was willing to let his sisters go away with strangers. The older sons made life miserable for Warzameg, especially after he announced that he would marry the most beautiful Nart, **Psatina**. For the rest of the tale, see Psatina. (Colarusso)

**Mezytkha** The Circassian people of the Caucasus saw this divinity sometimes as male, sometimes as female. A hunting goddess, she also controlled the fecundity of humans; women prayed to her when they were unable to conceive. (Chaudhri)

**Mitra** Herodotus mentions a sky goddess with this name, which seems to be a feminine form of Mithras, the name of a more familiar Persian divinity. In that language, *mih*r meant sun, so Mitra may have been an ancient sun goddess who was the twin or double of Mithras, or the goddess may have undergone a redefinition into a male god. Herodotus connected this goddess with the Greek **Aphrodite** and the Arabic **Al-Lat** (see Eastern Mediterranean). (Herodotus)

**Psatina** Part of **Meghazash's** legacy to Warzameg was a horse on which he rode out to find a bride. He soon encountered his oldest sister, whom he had helped find a husband by following his mother's peculiar instructions. Her marriage was happy, but her husband was away, attending the wedding of the maiden Psatina. He returned with the shocking news that a mysterious rider had abducted the bride. Warzameg rescued Psatina from captivity by a giant, who wounded Warzameg. Psatina married him and bore hero sons. The heroine bears a name that reveals her early identity as a goddess of abundance, for she is "life-giving-mother." One of her "sisters" was **Setenaya**; Psatina may be a title of that goddess, as both are described as Warzameg's spouse. (Colarusso)

**Qaydukh** Qaydukh lived with her husband Psabida, a cattle-rustler. Every day he crossed a linen bridge across a deep river, rolling up the bridge as he crossed. Every night, in order to return, he relied upon Qaydukh to put her diamond ring out the window to lighten the sky.

One day they argued, and he claimed he could find his way without her help. That night he set out, riding Qaydukh's horse on a saddle that Qaydukh had made, wearing clothing that Qaydukh had sewn. The horse, knowing that Psabida had argued with Qaydukh, went the wrong way. Soon Psabida was in a cold land from which Qaydukh's cloak offered no protection. He rode until he reached some unprotected cattle. Rounding them up, he ran for home, lashing Qaydukh's horse until it bled.

It was late when he returned, but because Qaydukh had second-sight, she knew he was coming. She put her finger out the window. But when he was halfway across, she remembered his arrogance and withdrew her finger. Psabida fell to his death in the darkness. Qaydukh buried and mourned him as required. But the hero Sosruquo saw her grief and swam the river on his horse to offer his sympathy.

Qaydukh was amazed, for her husband could not have swum the river. After Sosruquo rode away, Qaydukh prayed to Gwasha, goddess of waters, to bring a storm. Sosruquo returned and soon became her husband. See also **Adif**. (Colarusso)

**Samdzimari** Sister of the heroic Giorgi, the Georgian heroine Samdzimari was held captive by evil blacksmiths called Kadzhi. Giorgi, sewn into the skin of a dead horse, was smuggled into their hideout, where he killed them. Then he freed Samdzimari and captured anvils, a cow with one horn, and the secret Kadzhi tools. The metal objects became sacred. The cow's horn became the official measure of a glass of beer, and Samdzimari was promoted to a goddess. But later, she became demonized as a force of wild sexuality. She took the forms of other women to make love to their mates, transforming herself into a demon when semen was released. Or she disappeared as the

man climaxed, leaving terrified sexual partners about whom she sang derisive ballads. Samdzimari was the goddess of marriage, which she invented in order to keep her hero-brother close to her. She also cared for women in childbed and animals as they bore their young. (Charachidze)

**Sana** The beautiful Nart lady Sana was a warrior when women's hearts were full of war and love. She loved a beautiful boy, but killed him in battle. When she realized what she had done, she killed herself with the same weapon. Their blood flowed together until they became the healing spring Nart Sana, which brought strength and courage to any who drank from it. Lady Sana also went by the name of Amazon; she may be a form of **Setenaya**. (Colarusso)

**Setenaya** The primary Nart goddess Setenaya lived in a labyrinthine city until Warzameg came to court her. But Warzameg was old and ugly, while Setenaya was young and fair. When she refused him, he raised an army to abduct her. His strongest, ugliest soldier was the swineherd Argwana, who held Setenaya captive while Warzameg taunted her that he would give her away as war booty. Desperate, Setenaya agreed to marry Warzameg. But while she was preparing for the wedding, Argwana raped her. Setenaya said nothing. But that night, her husband saw her bruises and pledged to protect her. He sent two men to Argwana's home. After eight nights of fighting, they killed the rapist and brought his head to Setenaya.

When her husband was away, Setenaya gave birth to the son conceived of rape and gave it to the hunter Shebatin's wife. When Warzameg returned, she made sure that he saw her in the yard digging. In response to his questions, she said that the child had been stillborn. But she knew that the child would live to save her husband when, late in life, he was threatened with poisoning at his own court.

Setenaya bore many children. Once, she attracted the lust of a herdsman, who saw her bathing and ejaculated in excitement. His semen shot like an arrow over the water, but missed Setenaya and struck a rock, impregnating it. She picked it up, swaddled it, and took it home. She kept it on her stove for nine months, then took it to a blacksmith, who broke open the stone and revealed the baby within.

Setenaya took many lovers. Once, a man seduced her by crafting two small daggers that could transform themselves into slaves. Desiring the knives, Setenaya slept with their creator. But her husband came home unexpectedly and Setenaya escaped, dressed as a man. Still disguised, she met her husband and showed him the little knives, which he immediately coveted. She offered them in exchange for a woman. He replied he would gladly sleep with her, were he a woman. She revealed her identity then, showing her husband that they were equally likely to be unfaithful.

Setenaya domesticated the rose tree and invented intoxicating beverages; she made the sun stand still in the sky so that she could finish a weaving; and she foresaw the future of newborn children. She had an apple tree with which she healed the sick and old. But when an evil spirit came disguised as a cripple in need of healing, she saw the truth and refused him an apple. In anger, he cut the tree down, so that people now age and die. Setenaya appears in various Nart legends, sometimes as an old woman who lusts after men, sometimes as a single woman who gives birth, sometimes

as the Amazonian warrior maiden **Sana**. She is an ancestral figure, almost unquestionably a folkloric memory of a major goddess. (Colarusso)

**Tabiti** The primary Scythian goddess ruled fire and animals. She may have been worshiped in southern Russia before the Scythians, for pottery statues found there show an upright goddess bearing a child. The Scythians showed her as half serpent, often seated between a raven and a dog. She may have been the same as the otherwise-unnamed “Mistress of the Woodlands,” ancestral mother of the Scythians. (Herodotus; Hubbs; Jettmar)

**Tamar** The Georgian Tamar rode through the air on a golden-bridled serpent. In her mountain palace, built by storks and nightingales, Tamar kept as a slave the morning star, master of winter. Whenever he escaped, snow fell, but when she captured him again, summer came to the land. While a virgin, Tamar was impregnated by a beam of light that penetrated her castle’s thick walls. After a year, she bore a son; but she abandoned him in the woods, where he was raised by deer and became an angel. A sky goddess who ruled the weather and the seasons, Tamar also controlled the sea by covering it with straw or by setting it alight. (Charachidze)

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# THE SLAVIC PEOPLES

Slavic Europe reaches from the Baltic to the Aegean, from the eastern steppes across the Carpathian Mountains. Archaeology shows that a Neolithic agricultural people dominated the region in approximately 5500–3500 BCE. Numerous sites attest to the high level of this culture, whose substantial villages often centered on areas where copper was mined and worked.

Then the region saw an influx of Indo-European speakers, with both Celtic and Germanic tribes attested by 1000 BCE. The Slavs themselves came into written history in the 2nd century CE, then disappeared to reemerge in the 6th century. These scanty records suggest that speakers of a proto-Slavic tongue settled in central Europe sometime in the early part of the common era. Proto-Slavs left their unknown homelands, driven by invasions of central Asian people including the Huns and Magyars. Within a few hundred years, these migrants had divided into west Slavs (Polish, Czech, Slovak, and Wendish); southern Slavs (Slovenian, Serbo-Croatian, Macedonian, and Bulgarian); and east Slavs (Russian and Ukrainian).

It is not known who the proto-Slavs were, for “Slavic” describes a linguistic identity. Speakers of Slavic languages may be ethnically Slav, mixed, or not of Slavic descent, for Turks and others intermarried with ethnic Slavs and began to employ their language. Similarly, Slavic mythology absorbed figures, narratives, and themes from non-Slavic religions. Goddesses of the new arrivals were accorded a high status denied to indigenous goddesses, who were demoted to “spirits” or even “demons.” Some mythic figures were adopted into Christianity as “saints,” maintaining symbols, rites, seasonal holidays, and sacred sites. Others continued to exist as officially unacknowledged powers, so that some Slavs have a “double faith” (*duoeveri*) in which conflicting worldviews are simultaneously held.

Written sources are meager compared to the richness of Slavic oral lore. In Russia, professional storytellers kept alive mythic tales. After the 18th century, the practice



**Cucuteni Statuette.** *From ancient times, people in Slavic lands honored goddesses, often representing the earth and forces of vegetation. This terracotta statuette from the Late Mesolithic (5000 BCE) was found near Cucuteni, Romania, and is now in the Romanian National Historical Museum, Bucharest.*

ceased to be supported by the wealthy, but peasants still sustained ancient traditions. Among the renowned storytellers were women who preserved important goddess myths and folklore. Then, in the 19th century, a folkloric revival led to the recording and publication of many tales. This movement intersected with Slavophilism, which embraced folklore as a means of promoting ethnic identity.

Finally, mythic material was conveyed in crafts and in ritual. Embroidery is especially important to Slavic goddess studies, for goddess images are still worked on household items and apparel. Slavic rituals included honoring natural places such as mountains, rivers, and boulders. Trees were especially important, whether in the form of significant isolated oaks, elders, and walnuts, or as sacred forests to which entry was forbidden.

For nearly a century, Slavic research was rarely published outside the Soviet Union. That, plus active discouragement of religion in the secular Soviet state, meant that some ancient practices were lost or suppressed. However, with the dissolution of the USSR, reclamation of religious heritage has emerged. This has led to political tensions in some areas, but also a greater openness to alternative religious viewpoints. Interest in Slavic paganism has led to establishment of the Slaviantso movement, predominantly outside the region, which promotes a religious worldview centered on the feminine earth. Some contemporary practitioners propound a form of revived Slavic religion that posits the “earth” not as the planet, but as a homeland for the Slavic people, which can be construed in nationalistic, even totalitarian, terms.

## SLAVIC PANTHEON

Alconest. *See* **Sirin**

Apia

**Avdotyia**

Baba Keslagubaia *Russian; weaving.*

**Baba Yaga**

Beregina. *See* **Berehinia**

**Berehinia**

Beryhynia. *See* **Berehinia**

Bílí Paní. *See* **Vodni Panny**

**Boginka**

**Bogoroditsa**

Chors. *See* **Pizamar**

Chuma. *See Mora*

**Colleda**

Dekle. *See Dziwozony*

Dido. *See Lada*

Divi-te Ženi. *See Dziwozony*

Divja Davojkie. *See Dziwozony*

Divozenky. *See Dziwozony*

Dod(ol)a *Serbian; rain.*

Dolia. *See Dolya*

**Dolya**

Dyevitsa. *See Avdotya*

Dziewona. *See Dziwozony*

Džiwe Z,ony. *See Dziwozony*

**Dziwozony**

**Elena**

Glouheya. *See Treska*

**Grozdanka**

Jitnaya Baba. *See Baba Yaga*

Judy. *See Vila*

**Kamennye Baby**

Kikimora. *See Mora*

Koleda. *See Colleda*

Koliada. *See Colleda*

Kostroma. *See Kupala*

**Kostrubonko**

**Kupala**

**Lada**

Lado. *See Lada*

Ledeya. *See Treska*

Lesovikha. *See Lisunki*

Licho. *See Dolya*

**Lisunki**

Majky. *See Navky*

Mara. *See Mora*

Marena. *See Maslenitsa*

Mařena. *See Maslenitsa*

Marukhi. *See Mora*

Marzana. *See Maslenitsa*

**Maslenitsa**

Mati Syra Zemlja. *See Zemyna*

Maui. *See Mora*

Mavky. *See Navky*

Mitiyevna. *See Avdotya*

Moko/u/ysha. *See Mokosh*

Mokoř. *See Mokosh*

**Mokosh**

**Mora**

Morava. *See Mora*

Morena. *See Maslenitsa*

Mother Friday. *See Paraskeva*

Myesyats *Slavic; moon.*

Narechnitsi. *See Orisnitsi*

Narucnici *Sudice.*

Nastasya. *See Avdotya*

Navŷ'e. *See Navky*

Navjaci. *See Navky*

Navje. *See Navky*

**Navky**

Nedoli/ya. *See Dolya*

Nejky. *See Navky*

Nochnitsa. *See Pizamar*

Obida. *See Avdotya*

Ogneya. *See Treska*

**Orisnitsi**

Owsiana Matka. *See Pszeniczna Matka.*

Paludnitsa. *See Poldunica*

**Paraskeva**

**Percunatele**

Perehinia. *See Berehinia*

Piatnitsa. *See Paraskeva*

**Pizamar**

Podaga. *See Pizamar*

**Poldunica**

Polednica. *See Poldunica*

Poludniowka. *See Poldunica*

Poludnitsa. *See Poldunica*

Prezpolnica. *See Poldunica*

Pripelaga. *See Mokosh.*

Připoldnia. *See Poldunica*

Pripolnica. *See Poldunica*

Przypoludnica. *See Poldunica*

**Pszeniczna Matka**

Rodienitsa. *See Rozanica*

Rodjenice. *See Rozanica*

Rojenice. *See Sudice*

**Rozanica**

Rozanica/y. *See Rozanica*

Rořanice. *See Rozanica*

Rozhanitsy. *See Rozanica*

Rozhanitza. *See Rozanica*

Rozhedinitsa. *See Rozanica*

Rozhenitsa. *See Rozanica*

Rusálka. *See Rusálki*

**Rusálki**

Rusalky. *See Rusálki*

Samodiva. *See Vila*

SamoVila. *See Vila*

Shishimora. *See Mora*

**Sirin**

Smert. *See Mora*

**Snegurochka**

Sojenice. *See Sudice*

**Solntse**

Solntse *Sun.*

**Sreca**

Stepova-Baba *Ukrainian; earth.*

Sudbina. *See Sudice*

**Sudice**

Sudicky. *See Sudice*

Sudjenica. *See Sudice*

Sudzenici. *See Sudice*

Sudženici. *See Sudice*

Sujenice. *See Sudice*

**Treska**

Udělnicy. *See Sudice*

Urisníci. *See Sudice*

**Vasilisa**

Vechernyaya Zvezda *Slavic; star.*

**Ved'ma**

Veshtitze *Slavic; shape-shifter.*

**Vesna**

**Vila**

Vodianikha. *See Vodni Panny*

**Vodni Panny**

Wili. *See Vila*

Yagá Bába. *See Baba Yaga*

Yelena. *See Elena*

**Yevdokia**

Zaria. *See Zorya*

Zarya. *See Zorya*

Zemina. *See Zemyna*

Zemlia. *See Zemyna*

Zemlya. *See Zemyna*

**Zemyna** *Slavic; earth.*

Zemyne. *See Zemyna*

Zhiva. *See Vesna*

Zima

**Zorya**

Zvezda Dennitsa. *See Zorya*

Żytnia Matka. *See Pszeniczna Matka*

**Avdotya** One of the few Slavic goddesses referenced by classical authors, who named her after the Greek **Artemis**, Avodtya also appears in Russian heroic songs and epics. She had a somewhat treacherous character, perhaps reflecting her origin as a fierce guardian of the woodland animals. Her legend tells how she was sought by a prince, Ivan Godinovich, although she was only the daughter of a merchant. But she was beautiful and exotic, with a swan-like white complexion and beautiful white swan wings. After becoming engaged to Ivan, Avodtya conspired with his rival, despite which Ivan was victorious in battle against him. In retaliation, Ivan cut off Avdotya's arms, lips, and feet, claiming that they had led her astray from her duty. Then, excited by his power, he cut off her head.

In another legend, Avodtya appears as a resplendent white swan with golden skin who floated on the water wearing a pearl-and-gold crown. Despite her beauty, the hunter Mikailo aimed to kill her, until she threatened him with limitless bad luck. Then she turned into a lovely woman, with whom Mikailo fell in love. The couple vowed that, if one were to die before they wed, the other would go to the Otherworld and stay there for three months. Avodtya (here called Marya) died, and Mikailo went to the

Otherworld to find her. Once on the earth again, the girl ran off with the tsar and, when Mikailo caught up with his escaped bride, he beheaded her.

Behind the violence of the folktales, scholars have detected a lost bird goddess of the region, perhaps originally called Obida (“insult”) or Dyevitsa (“maiden”), who lives on the waters of the mighty River Don. She may be related to the Tatar swan-maiden Tjektschäkäi, who could only be killed if an enemy found her external soul and destroyed it. She may have been absorbed into Greek mythology as **Iphigenia**. (Manning)

**Baba Yaga** This powerful Russian seasonal goddess survived as a folkloric witch who flies through the air in a mortar, rowing with a pestle, sweeping the air with a broom. A shape-shifter, Baba Yaga appeared as a snake, a bird, or a pincushion, but most typically as a bony, big-toothed, iron-nosed, blue-skinned hag. She lived in the last sheaf of grain, which concentrated the force of fertility; the woman who bound it bore a child that winter.

Except during harvest, Baba Yaga lived in the forest, in a rotating hut mounted on chicken’s legs. The hut was hidden behind a fence of bones whose gates were legs bolted with arms. She liked to scare people to death, then make a meal out of them. When she lay on her cottage floor, she stretched from one end to the other, her nose sticking through the ceiling. When she went out, the winds roared and the earth shook.

Baba Yaga gave her name to “woman’s summer” or Bab’e Lyeto, when spiderwebs predict the winter’s length. In the Carpathian Mountains, the season is called Bab’in Moroz, or “woman’s frost,” because of a legend that winter’s sudden arrival left a witch exposed on the road, where she froze into stone. (Alexander; Gimbutas 1989; Hubbs; Ivanits; Johns; Matossian; Simonov; Ralson; Warner)

**Berehinia** Each spring, a girl dressed in red scarves and crowned with flowers represented this Russian goddess who awakened seeds with gentle moisture; the girl walked about accompanied by singing attendants. Berehinia’s name may derive from a term for “protection.” It may also mean “riverbank,” for Berehinia is often depicted as a mermaid, in which form she was sometimes conflated with the **Rusálki**. Rituals to her involved hanging distaffs or spindles in trees near rivers, which pleased Berehinia because she was an excellent spinner.

Berehinia was also a goddess of air. Embroideries show her accompanied by the magical Firebird, which sheltered her beneath its wings. Other embroideries depict Berehinia holding birds, perhaps indicating a ritual in which girls offered dough bird sculptures to the sun. Both in her solar and her watery manifestations, Berehinia produced healthy crops. She may have descended from an early goddess of abundance. (Ivanits; Kelly 1984, 1989; Welters)

**Boginka** The Polish water nymph appeared in many forms: as an old woman with long breasts that she threw over her shoulder; as a naked laundress with pigs’ teeth; and as a beautiful woman who lured away pregnant women, then stole their babies. The Boginka was usually cruel, although at times she could appear as a collective of kindly fate goddesses who brought good luck to the newborn. (Kmeietowicz)

**Bogoroditsa** This term, meaning “Mother of God,” was used of the virgin **Mary** (see Eastern Mediterranean). This apparently orthodox devotion hides the traditional reverence that Slavic people felt for the fruitful earth (see **Mokosh, Zemyna**). Such icons as the Black Madonna of Czestochawa derive from ancient images of the goddess, whose black skin represented the moist earth of spring. Reverence for Mary far outstrips that offered to her son in Slavic lands, suggesting the continuing influence of the ancient divine mother. (Ivanits)

**Colleda** The Serbian goddess of the winter solstice was honored with the ceremonial log burned as sunlight drained away. When daylight was reborn, sweet cakes were served to children who begged favors in the name of the “sweet maiden goddess,” who promised the revival of growth. In northern Russia, this goddess appears as Koliada, a woman who recreated the world each winter solstice by embroidering a new one. In Slavic parts of the former Yugoslavia, the goddess of time was Koleda, in whose honor groups of young people sang songs on New Year’s Day. (Ivanits; Mihanovich)

**Dolya** The Russian fate goddess lived behind the stove. When she was in a fine mood, she was Dolya, the little old lady who brought good luck. When annoyed, she was Nedolya or Licho, the hag of bad fortune who did nothing but dream up misfortunes. Occasionally she appeared as a young woman; she presided over birth, when her prophetic powers were invoked. She controlled one’s health and wealth, but not one’s inner happiness. (Dexter; Gimbutas 2003; Machal)

**Dziwozony** Throughout the Slavic lands, legends abound of wild women who lived in the woodlands and who knew nature’s secrets, especially those of herbal medicine. They were always of unusual appearance, although the details differed according to region. In Poland, the Dziwozony had large heads, long fingers, chicken feet, and red bodies; they lived in underground burrows and emerged to tend their productive farms. The Dziwozony made excellent, hardworking, and sensual wives with a passion for motherhood; but if one grew bored with a human husband, she tickled him to death. The Bulgarian Divi-te Ženi was notable for her poor pronunciation and the size of her breasts. She lived on licorice root and stolen corn, and when she baked bread, the forest smelled of it. She could be wooed, but she disappeared if she heard the words “wild woman.” (Gimbutas 2003; Machal)

**Elena** A Russian folktale begins when a young man was ordered to find a magical Firebird. A friendly wolf helped him find the bird, but the owner awakened during the theft and demanded a magnificent horse in recompense. The young man found the horse, but the owner awakened as he was stealing it and demanded the beautiful Elena. When the hero met Elena, he fell in love with her. The wolf, a shape-shifter, stood in for the horse and then the Firebird. This allowed the youth to return home with Elena, mounted on the real horse and carrying the real Firebird. But his brothers set upon him and killed him, stealing Elena and the other treasures. The wolf magically

revived him in time to prevent Elena's marriage to one of the murderous brothers. (Yovino-Young)

**Grozdanka** A Bulgarian story tells how the sun fell in love with this young woman. Her mother called her Grozdanka, "ill-featured," in hopes the sun would never notice her. But one summer day, the sun dropped a golden swing from the sky. Everyone crowded around eagerly. When Grozdanka took her turn, she swung until she reached the sky, where the sun won her heart. (Georgieva; Ralson)

**Kamennye Baby** "Stone Woman" took the form of a rough-hewn stone whose base was sunk into the ground and whose upper section showed a featureless woman. No myths describe the statues, which appear to be very early goddess figures. (Kmeietowicz)

**Kostrubonko** This Russian goddess was impersonated each spring by a young woman who would lie on the earth as though dead. People of her village would form a ring around the girl, singing mournfully that "Kostrubonko is dead, our loved one is dead." Then the girl leapt up, accompanied by the joyful songs of her friends and family, who rejoiced that "Come to life has our Kostrubonko!" This figure may be related to the similar one of **Kupala**, despite the difference in seasons. (Frazer)

**Kupala** The Slavic goddess of the summer solstice took her name from a word that means "to bathe," for her worshipers bathed in rivers and in dew gathered on June mornings. Water healed as well as purifying; to gain relief from illness, one tossed bread into a stream while praying for health. The name is also given to the squatting goddess found on Slavic embroideries.

In Russia and the Ukraine, Kupala was honored in a summer ritual in which young men and women leaped over a bonfire, dragging a straw maiden. The next day, everyone bathed the figure, which was released to drift downstream, removing evil from the village. Such images were also constructed in Serbia and other Slavic countries. Dressed in a fine gown and decked with floral garlands, the Kupala image was hung from a tree in which all but the upper branches were trimmed, so that the tree formed a green-haired woman. Only women performed these rituals. Men could not touch the tree or the hanging figure.

Kupala ruled herbs. Purple loosestrife was her favorite; its roots had the power to banish demons if gathered at dawn on summer solstice. The flowering fern granted its possessor the power to understand the language of trees, which, on the night before solstice, wandered rootless through the world.

This divinity has been described as a god named Ivan Kupalo, a derivation that appears to come from association of the goddess's feast with that of St. John (Ivan) the Baptist on June 24. (Hubbs)

**Lada** A beautiful daughter of the sea, Lada drew the attention of the sun god while she was rowing a golden boat with silver oars. He wanted to marry Lada, but her oceanic father refused. So the sun spread gorgeous clothes along the riverbanks to attract

Lada's attention, then kidnapped her. Her father raised storms, to no avail. Lada became the sun's wife and the mother of the god of springtime, Iarilo. Like him, she represented the forces of emerging vegetation. She was honored with tinsel-decked clay larks, smeared with honey, and carried in procession by singing celebrants. (Dexter; Ralson; Simonov)

**Lisunki** The Lisunki was a hairy, big-breasted woman who lived in the woods. Folklore tells of naked babies left behind by their forgetful Lisunki mothers. If the passerby covered the infant with a cloth until the errant mother returned, the Lisunki offered a generous reward. Similarly, if a traveler found a hairy woman giving birth in the woods, he should cover the child as it emerged, being careful not to pray or make other Christian gestures. (Ivanits; Ralson)

**Maslenitsa** As spring approached, Russian people dressed a straw maiden in rags, carried her out to the fields, and burned her with much singing and dancing. Round pancakes were prepared, representing the strengthening sun. Eating and drinking in excess at this festival was believed to encourage the earth to produce abundantly. This figure may be connected to a winter goddess, Marena, and the burning may represent the banishing of winter from the land. In Poland, Marzana, "Old Woman Winter," was embodied in an effigy carried through town and destroyed to represent the end of winter's hunger. (Alexander; Hatto; Ivanits)

**Mokosh** When the Rus emperor Vladimir I erected statues of the Slavic pantheon in 980 CE, only one goddess was honored. She was Mokosh, "moistness," the earth mother. Although Vladimir soon converted to Christianity and destroyed the idols, this did not deter his subjects from continuing to offer reverence to Mokosh. As late as the 16th century, Christian chronicles complained that Slavic women still "went to Mokosh," for she was preeminently a woman's divinity. Her image remains strong in Slavic lands, now disguised as the Christian **Mary** (see Eastern Mediterranean) or as **Paraskeva**. Because Mokosh was a spinner, ceremonial cloths bore her embroidered image: a woman with a large head, bearing a spindle. Her worshipers envisioned her spinning the threads of life each night. But she was also the ruler of death, as the dark earth into which the dead are placed.

Although little is known of her worship, Mokosh has been interpreted as a force of fertility. In addition to being envisioned as a strong matron, she was represented by stones, particularly breast-shaped boulders. To these Mokosh-stones, people prayed for health and prosperity. The stones had power over the land as well as its people. In the 19th century, archaeologists in the Ukraine moved some Mokosh stones and, when a drought ensued, were blamed for it. The stones were restored, and fertility returned to the area.

Rain was Mokosh's milk, so the Czech people invoked her in times of drought. This connection of earth and water was emphasized in myths that connected Mokosh with the flowering spring, when she was discovered sleeping in a cave by the spring god Iarilo (see **Lada**), with whom she conceived the fruits of the earth. Another myth tells

how, in the first springtime, she conceived a child by a human man. The boy became Mokosh's first priest and offered her sacrifices of sheep, which she rewarded with dreams of how to shear and weave. He established the format of sacrifice, with the first offering made to Mokosh and the fertility goddess Pripelaga.

The source of this goddess has not been established. Some argue that she was originally Finno-Ugric (see **Jumala**). Others believe that Mokosh was an aboriginal goddess from the area where she was first recorded, in the region of Kiev. The difference between her and the other Russian earth goddess, **Zemyna**, is not clearly established. (Gimbutas 1971; Hubbs; Ivanits; Simonov; Warner; Znayenko)

**Mora** In Serbian belief, stray pieces of straw were Mora in disguise. The Polish version of her name, Mara ("demon"), lives on in our language as "nightmare," for she was the night-riding witch who strangled victims and sucked their blood. Although some legends say that Mora had power only during the time of the winter solstice, most myths show her to be active throughout the year.

The Russians called her Kikimora, a tiny woman who lived behind the stove. The family knew she was present in the case of danger or threat, when she would make strange thumping sounds. Otherwise, she was an invisible pest who tormented women by snarling their yarn if they did not pray before laying down the spindle.

Mora could turn herself into a butterfly and hang over the lips of sleeping people, bringing bad dreams. She could become a hank of horsehair or a horse. A Serbian folk-tale tells of a man who kept running from a frightening Mora. Finally, almost dead from exhaustion, he collapsed in the home of a man who, awakened by his guest's calls, found a horse's tail suffocating the sleeper. The host cut the tail, and the next day the two found the corpse of the white horse on which the traveler had arrived—the Mora in disguise.

Behind this folkloric witch figure is a fate goddess; the thread she used to strangle her victims was the thread of life, which she had earlier spun and cut. Anyone who saw Mora took it as an omen of death. It is unclear whether the goddess Smert, who has many of the same attributes, was a separate goddess. (Dexter; Gimbutas 1989; Ivanits; Machal; Ralson)

**Navky** In Slavic lands, children who drowned or babies who died in infancy haunted their parents for seven years. Then they were transformed into lovely, water-dwelling women who called out to passing travelers. When the passerby approached, the Navky leaped on him and tickled him to death. (Machal)

**Orisnitsi** The Bulgarian fate goddesses, often considered sisters, appeared as three white-cloaked women ranging from 20 to 35 years old. They lived at the end of the world, but every time a child was born, they appeared to predict its fate, which no one could gainsay. Once, a king, learning that his daughter would be killed by a snake-bite, had her confined to a tower where no snakes could reach her. After she was married, her husband brought her grapes, hidden among which was the snake that killed her. (Georgieva)

**Paraskeva** After Christianization, **Mokosh** was transformed into Saint Paraskeva, a Roman virgin put to death during the reign of the emperor Diocletian. Because her name means “Friday” in Greek, she became “Mother Friday” in eastern Slavic lands where her rituals and feasts were identical to those of Mokosh. Because Paraskeva was a spinner, she demanded that no one spin, weave, or mend on her feast day, October 28. Offenders were blinded by dust or had itchy hemp thrown into their eyes. Tales abound of punishments she meted out to those who refused to honor her: a woman was turned into a frog, another’s fingers became blistered, and yet another’s eyes failed.

Just as women were the main worshipers of Mokosh, so Paraskeva was a women’s saint. Her feast day coincided with the beginning of the marriage season in Russia. Thus, despite being a virgin, she was invoked as the patron of fertile marriages. Paraskeva was honored at wells and springs, where miracle-working icons appeared spontaneously. In addition to her feast day, Paraskeva was invoked during times of agricultural stress, such as drought and insect invasions. (Hubbs; Ivanits; Matossian)

**Percunatele** This Polish figure probably derives from the thunder goddess of the neighboring Balts (see **Saulė**). The name was adopted as an epithet of the virgin **Mary** (see Eastern Mediterranean), who was called Maria Percunatele. Because so many Slavic goddesses were conflated with the Christian madonna, it can be difficult to distinguish the goddesses she absorbed. (Ralson)

**Pizamar** This Slavic goddess was originally a woman beloved of the god Svarozhich. Because the gods had ruled against marriage between gods and mortals, their love was doomed. She attempted suicide, walking to a cliff every night intending to throw herself off. But the fairy Nochnitsa put her to sleep every night, so that she was never able to take her life. The goddesses Chors and **Lada** took pity on Pizamar and decided to steal the mead of immortality from Podaga, its guardian goddess. Feeding it to Pizamar as she slept, the goddesses made her into a divinity who entertained the other gods so joyously with music and dance that she became goddess of all the arts. (Hudec)

**Poldunica** In eastern Europe, the goddess of midday was a white lady who floated about the fields on gusts of wind, killing people with a touch of her hand. Each region offered slight variations in her legend. In Moravia, she was a white-gowned old woman with horse hoofs, staring eyes, and wild hair, although sometimes she appeared as a 12-year-old girl who carried a whip and killed anyone she encountered. In Poland, the extraordinarily tall Poldunica carried a sickle, asking riddles of those abroad at midday, then reaping those who could not answer. In Russia, she was very beautiful, something her victims noticed just before she twisted their heads, bringing intense pain or death. In Serbia, she guarded crops, staying in the fields while everyone else went to lunch; if one went out to find out what she was doing, she talked relentlessly and, if the visitor turned away, killed him instantly. She descends from an ancient protective spirit of vegetation. (Gimbutas 2003; Ivanits; Machal; Ralson)

**Pszeniczna Matka** The “wheat mother” of Poland was a vegetation goddess who also appeared as Owsiana Matka (“oat mother”) and Żytnia Matka (“rye mother”),

depending on the grain in which she was embodied. She was honored with a wreath made out of the last harvested stalks, worn by a maiden during harvest season and thereafter kept safe until spring, when the wreath was crumbled and used for planting. In the area of Gdansk, the person who cut the last sheaf made it into a doll that was kept in a place of honor through the year. An alternative name for this figure was Baba (“old woman”), a term used in Czechoslovakia as well as Poland. (Kmeietowicz)

**Rozanica** Early Slavic Christian texts warn against offering bread, mead, and cottage cheese to Rozanica and her consort, Rod. The pair represented the forces of human incarnation: Rod, the generic power of life and sexual reproduction; Rozanica, the individualization of that power. In the singular, Rozanica was an ancestral mother, her name meaning “mother,” “heritage,” and “destiny.” In the plural, she becomes Rozanicy, all deified ancestral mothers. Two feasts celebrated her: the winter solstice, and the day of an infant’s birth. Some researchers believe this figure to be identical to **Sudice**.

Russian researchers propose the name Rozhanitza for the Paleolithic divinity of the steppes, a goddess of deer and the hunt, a horned goddess of successful childbirth. Her image appears in Russian folk art as a woman with spread legs in what is called the “**Kupala** position,” after the midsummer goddess. Some depictions show daughters hiding in Rozhanitza’s skirt or between her legs. Others show the goddess giving birth to deer as she reaches upward, her body forming an “x” shape. (Gimbutas 2003; Hubbs; Ivanits; Kelly 1989; Machal; Rybakov)

**Rusálki** These Russian water spirits began their existence as women who drowned or committed suicide. Thereafter, they haunted the land, rising from streams each spring naked and wild-haired to beg bits of white linen. After cleaning the land, the Rusálki performed magical dances, wearing long white tunics or robes of green leaves, their green-haired heads decked with crowns. A man could lose his soul by witnessing the dances of the Rusálki, or she might tickle him to death.

The Rusálki had the power to grant or withhold fertility, for they poured spring rains from their magical horns. Water was important to a Rusálki, for if her hair dried out, she died. After the end of June, the Rusálki were dangerous, for if one trod on their linens then, death or illness resulted. When summer was over, the Rusálki retreated to feather nests, where they hibernated.

On Rusal’naia Week in early summer, rural Russians decked their houses with garlands and left offerings of omelets. Young girls threw garlands into rivers to detect their future husbands’ identities. Then, straw figures in the form of Rusálki were ceremonially dismembered. Such rituals indicate the power the Rusálki once had, as does the probability that their name gave rise to the name of their land, Russia. (Agapkina; Hubbs; Ivanits; Kelly 1989; Machal; Netting; Ralson; Rybakov; Sokolov; Warner; Welters)

**Sirin** This minor goddess was shown in Russian embroideries with the tail and body of a bird, but the breasts and head of a woman. Often confused with the **Vila**, she was

associated with good luck as the “Bird of Joy.” A similar figure, Alconest, was the “Bird of Sorrow.” (Kelly 1989)

**Snegurochka** The heroine of a Russian fairy tale often known as “The Snow Maiden,” Snegurochka was a little girl who was found one winter by a childless couple. The child made the couple’s lives full of happiness and warmth. But human warmth was the only kind the girl could tolerate, for when spring came, she melted away. Behind this folkloric figure hides an ancient winter goddess who changed form with the passing of her season (see **Maslenitsa**). Seasonal celebrations ritually reenacted the struggle between winter and spring, with associations of a struggle between death and life. (Hatto)

**Solntse** The Slavic sun goddess lived with the moon in a little three-bedroom house in the sky. One room was hers, one was the moon’s, and the children—all the stars in the sky—bunked together in the last. (Dexter)

**Sreca** In Serbia, the fate goddess Sreca appeared as a lovely maiden spinning golden thread; this vision meant good fortune. Nesreca, the same goddess appearing as a sleepy old woman with bloodshot eyes, brought bad luck. Sreca is probably the same divinity found in Russia as **Dolya**. (Machal)

**Sudice** The goddesses of fate were beautiful old women with white skin and white clothes, who wore white kerchiefs and necklaces of gold and silver. They glistened as they walked, sometimes decking themselves with garlands of flowers or carrying lit candles. Sudice, who could appear as a single or multiple goddess, was most active at birth, when a newborn’s destiny was sealed. For that reason, gifts of candles, bread, and salt filled the table in the birthing room. Sometimes there are said to be three sisters named Sudice, each of whom spoke a fortune as the child was born. The oldest spoke last, and her words could never be countermanded. (Machal)

**Treska** The Bulgarians saw disease, especially fever, as a feminine force with this name. Ogneya (“fiery”), Ledeya (“icy cold), and Glouheya (“deaf”) were sisters who rose from the depths of the sea at time’s beginning, intent upon wreaking havoc on humankind. They tormented women in childbed, for newborns could be easily killed, but they also afflicted those who neglected seasonal rituals. (Georgieva)

**Vasilisa** Vasilisa was born to a loving mother who died when the girl was eight. On her deathbed, the mother gave Vasilisa a doll, warning her to keep it secret. If the girl were in trouble, her mother whispered, she should ask the doll for advice. After her mother’s death, Vasilisa’s father married a widow with two children who tormented Vasilisa, so she turned often to the doll for advice.

One day, the stepmother sent Vasilisa to get a candle from the fierce **Baba Yaga**. When Vasilisa consulted her doll, she was told to obey her stepmother, but to take the doll with her. The girl walked all night, passing a rider dressed in white riding a white horse, at the moment dawn broke; then she passed a red-dressed rider riding a

red-saddled horse, as the sun rose; and finally she passed a rider on a black horse who brought night. Baba Yaga's home was frightening, bolted with skeleton arms and locked with a skull. But Baba Yaga took pity on the girl and offered to help, if Vasilisa would become a servant for a few days.

Then Baba Yaga gave impossible orders. Vasilisa consulted her doll, which told her to go to sleep. The girl obeyed and, when she awoke the next morning, all the assigned work was completed. The same thing happened for several nights, until Baba Yaga grew suspicious and, giving her a flaming skull, sent Vasilisa away.

When she returned home, Vasilisa gave the stepmother the candle. But the skull flamed up, killing the stepmother and her children. Then Vasilisa found a new home with a woman who sewed shirts for the king. The king fell in love with Vasilisa, and she spent the rest of her life in the palace, her doll with her. This Russian figure may be a goddess who survived in folkloric form. (Alexander; Haney; Hubbs; Ralson; Warner)

**Ved'ma** The term "Vyed'ma" formerly described a prophet whose image degenerated into that of a scary witch who rode a rake through the sky after sprinkling herself with magical water. A shape-shifter, Ved'ma could appear very young and beautiful, or old and fierce. In either form, she was said to know all the healing properties of plants, which she would share with those who pleased her. (Ralson)

**Vesna** Every spring, Vesna seduced the lightning god, Perun, and their mating brought an end to winter. Her twin sister was Morena, the winter goddess who was barren except for one son, Triglav, god of war, whose father was the dark Chernobog. The final Slavic seasonal goddess was Zhiva, the summer goddess who ruled over the crops. There was no goddess of autumn, for the one who would have become its ruler, the unnamed daughter of the moon goddess Chors, was bewitched at birth and disappeared. Vensa and Morena compete for control of the autumn weather. (Hudec)

**Vila** This woodland spirit was a fair-skinned, winged woman with golden hair that fell to her feet. She lived deep in the woods, where she guarded animals and plants; she also cleaned streams of rubble and assured sufficient rainfall. Hunters had to be wary of a beautiful woman who spoke the languages of animals, for the Vila was fiercely possessive of her wild herds. Should an animal be injured or killed, the Vila mutilated the offender or danced him to death. Alternatively, the Vila might bury him in rocks by starting an avalanche or cause him to keel over with a heart attack.

There were three categories of Vila: cloud, mountain, and water. Most legendary was the cloud Vila. Born on a day of misty rain, she knew the secrets of healing and herb craft. Should a human wish to learn her skills, the applicant appeared in the woods before sunrise on a Sunday of the full moon. Drawing a circle with a birch twig, she placed several horsehairs, a hoof, and some manure inside the circle, then stood with her right foot on the hoof calling the Vila. Should the spirit be greeted as a sister, the Vila would grant any wish.

Mountain Vile assisted with the care of orphans and other needy children. Water Vile, who had power over free-flowing streams, could make water sweet or poisonous

at will. Some legends say that the Vile were originally human, and either died tragically or were punished in the afterlife for bad behavior. But more likely, the Vile were always powers of nature in feminine form. (Agapkina; Barber; Dexter; Georgieva; Gimbutas 1971, 2003; Hubbs; Machal; Pocs)

**Vodni Panny** These Slavic water goddesses were beautiful, sad, huge-breasted women dressed in green translucent robes. They lived under the rivers in crystal castles surrounded by silver paths; they may be **Rusálki**. (Machal)

**Yevdokia** The Russian spirit of spring, this figure was especially connected with the date of March 14, called the feast of Yevdokia the whistler because marmots waken from hibernation at that time and begin to emit whistling sounds. The day was considering the first day of spring, when ritual pastries called larks were made with cranberries pressed into sweet dough to represent the birds' eyes to mark the return of migrating birds. Women would dress in their best clothes but tuck in their hems, to represent holding all the grief of the winter. Then they would walk from the house to the gate, where they would open their hems and shake out their troubles. Charms were placed on the front door to avert gossip and envy; women desirous of children went to the hillsides and placed garlands of grasses there, praying for offspring. (Rozhnova)

**Zemyna** It was a grave sin to strike the earth with iron implements before March 25, for the earth was pregnant, and one does not strike a pregnant woman. Her name was Mati Syra Zemyna (“moist Mother Earth”), and she was the source of power and strength to her people. When they swore oaths, they did so by eating soil or placing lumps of dirt on their heads; when they married, each party swallowed a bit of earth.

The Russians also cared for the earth's honor by demanding that anyone who spit on her apologize. They acknowledged Zemyna's prophetic powers; to know how the harvest would turn out, one dug a hole in the ground and placed an ear to it. The sound of a full sleigh meant a good harvest; the tinkling of an empty one meant trouble.

Zemyna's greatest festival was held at summer solstice, when families bathed together in streams in celebration of the moisture that had fructified the earth. Zemyna was also invoked when poor weather threatened the harvest. The celebrant turned in the four directions and poured libations on the earth, then prayed to be purified by earth's flames, to be protected from bad weather, and to be shielded against unseasonable cold. Singing Zemyna's praises, one poured oil on the earth, then smashed the oil container.

Zemyna appeared as an ancestral mother in the story of a farmer who, hearing a snake hiss, tried to kill it. But the snake's skin fell off like a multicolored dress, revealing a beautiful naked woman named Zemyna. She lived with him and bore his children. But then Zemyna found the dress that the farmer had hidden. Putting it on, she bit her husband and children to death, then escaped back into the wild. This goddess may be the same as the Baltic goddess with an identical name, **Žemyna**, as the territories of the goddesses are nearby; the distinction between Žemyna and the other Slavic earth goddess, **Mokosh**, is also not clear. (Gimbutas 1989; Hubbs; Robbins; Simonov)

**Zorya** There were three Slavic dawn goddess: Zorya (“light”) Utrennyaya, the morning star; Zorya Vechernyaya, the evening star; and the midnight Zorya. All had the same job: to guard a chained dog that tried to eat the constellation Ursa Minor. If the chain broke and the dog got loose, the universe would end. The Zoryas also guarded warriors, appearing as maidens with long veils who shielded their favorites in battle. When described as a single goddess, Zorya lived on a paradise island just east of sunrise. In Serbia, as Zvezda Dennitsa, she was the moon’s wife and the morning star. (Ralson)

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# NORTH AMERICA

North America's eight ecological regions serve as useful divisions in discussing more than 500 Native American cultures. This section covers myths from people of the northeastern woodlands, the southeast's forested mountains, the forests and savannahs of the Great Lakes, the buffalo-rich Great Plains, the southwestern deserts, the mountainous central west, coastal California, and the northwestern Pacific coast.

The continent's northern portion was covered by glaciers until approximately 14,000 BCE, and a landmass connected it to Asia. Humans may have traveled from Asia prior to glaciation, to populate Central and South America. The evidence is far from clear, but scholars agree that as glaciers melted, people in Alaska and Canada migrated southward. When Christopher Columbus arrived in 1492 CE, tens of millions of people occupied the continent. Little is known of these prehistoric people's languages, myths, or customs, although historical cultures probably inherited from them.

Each region's environmental and geographical features impacted the myths of its people. Corn-raising southeastern farmers envisioned different goddesses than salmon-fishers in the Pacific Northwest. In addition, social and familial structures varied widely, from matrilineal clans in the northwest to patriarchal groups on the Plains, with attendant mythic differences. Even within regions, there was as much diversity as commonality, so each nation's myths should be examined individually.

In the northeastern woodlands, which extended from Québec to coastal Virginia, were agriculturalists of two major language groups. The first, the Algonquian of New England and Canada, was the language of the Micmac, Passamaquoddy, Penobscott, Malecites, Mohicans, and Delaware. The second, the Iroquoian group, included the five nations that formed the Haudenosaunee Confederacy: the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk. Later, the Tuscarora, driven north by British settlement, joined the Confederacy, as did the Susquehanna. These cultures are of special interest because each matrilineally organized clan had its own longhouse, owned by women



**Nootka Mask.** *Throughout the American continent, members of the 500 nations honored innumerable goddesses. This Tshimshian female image, located in the Portland Art Museum, is a mask to be worn on ritual occasions.*

and shared by related families. The culture's mythology, with its prominent creatrix, reflects the high social status of women.

Another significant area for the study of goddess mythology stretches from the Atlantic to the Mississippi River, and from the Ohio River valley to the Gulf of Mexico. The fertile region was inhabited by important cultures, including the Mississippian, whose ancient monuments still stand; the matrilineal Natchez appear to descend from them. The region's rich land attracted Europeans, resulting in early destruction of some groups while others maintained control of their traditional lands until the 1800s. Among the latter were the "Five Civilized Tribes" (Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole), whose confederacy promoted shared interests. They attempted to assimilate to European culture while retaining Native

values, but were finally driven westward in the infamous "Trail of Tears."

To the north, a different scenario played out along the Great Lakes, whose nations were pressured by migrants fleeing the European invasion. Oneida from New York moved into the territory of the Wisconsin Ho-Chunk, while Plains Sioux were driven northward into regions previously inhabited by the Objjway/Anishinaubae. Although some of these nations had come into contact with French priests and voyageurs early in the 17th century, only in the early 1800s did large numbers of European settlers move in.

The most widespread Great Lakes culture in historic times was the Algonquin. A large and linguistically related group, the Algonquins of the Great Plains include the Anishinaubae, Algonquin, Menominee, and Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) nations. Prairie Algonquins include the Kickapoo and Shawnee. These people lived in houses built by women, supporting themselves through a mixture of hunting (typically men's work) and agriculture (typically women's work). Many "traditional American" foods were discovered and refined by Algonquin women, including hominy, maple syrup, and the "three sisters" of corn, beans, and squash.

Southward ranged the Great Plains people who followed the buffalo, carrying teepees on travois behind sturdy Indian ponies. Of the region's many nations, the best known is the Sioux, who struggled to preserve their lands under such leaders as Sitting Bull. Similarly well known because of their fierce defense of their lands were the Apache and the Comanche. Other Plains groups include the Arikara, Mandan, Pawnee, Blackfoot, Cree, Crow, and Kiowa. In these societies, women made buffalo-skin covers for the teepees in which the people lived, meticulously joining between three and

30 hides to make a single home. In religion, women's contributions are emphasized in myths of the goddess who brought culture and religion.

To the southwest, goddess scholars find a wealth of important myths. Although dry and rugged, the region has been home to nations that cultivated corn, introduced from Mexico, as well as beans and squash. The low rainfall in the area required the use of irrigation, ingeniously designed to take advantage of recurrent floods. Around 1400 CE, the Anasazi ("ancient ones" in Navaho), a highly refined urban culture, became the dominant force. Then, possibly because of drought, their place was taken by modern groups, including the Hopi, Zuñi, Yavapai, and Mojave. Athabascan people moved from the north to settle in the region; these include Navahos and Mescalero (Apache). Together, these people are known as "pueblo Indians" after the region's cliff dwellings.

West of the pueblos stretched the culturally dense region of California, where over 100 nations lived when Europeans first made contact. Some estimate that 15 percent of all Native Americans lived in California, despite the fact that it makes up only 5 percent of the continent's landmass. Most central Californian groups descend from people who moved to the area in approximately 5000 BCE, creating various cultures: Karok and Shasta in east-central California; Miwok, Maidu, Yokut, and Wintun near the Pacific Coast; and the "mission Indians" (so-called by Spanish missionaries) to the south, including the Cahuila, Luiseno, and Serrano. Although religion varied widely in the area, a common experience among women was seclusion during the menses, a time of power and danger.

North and east of California, the continent opens out into broad river valleys surrounded by high mountains. In the arid Great Basin, centered around the Great Salt Lake, lived Shoshone, Northern Paiute, and Ute. To the north, between the Rocky Mountains and the Cascades, great rivers brought shoals of salmon inland, providing a strong economic base. Elk and moose ranged the forests, and vegetable foods were plentiful. Nations of the region include the Penutians (Klamath, Modoc) and the Salish (Kalispel, Spokane, Coeur d'Alene). Because these people did not encounter Europeans until late in the 18th century, their traditions were sustained until relatively recent times. Women held prestige as leaders, as can be seen from the lives of Sacajawea, the Shoshone woman who guided the Lewis and Clark expedition (1804–6), and Sarah Winnemucca, a Paiute and the first Native American woman author.

A land of even greater abundance was the Pacific Northwest, home to many groups whose cultures still flourish. In villages surrounded by forests of huge cedar, many nations lived, including the Haida, Tlingit, Chinook, Tsimshian, Bella Coola, Bella Bella, and Kwakiutl. Some nations organized themselves matrilineally; most had clear gender roles, with women's economic importance evident and recognized.

A complete listing of the female powers and divinities of native North America would be longer than what follows, which is limited due to two historical factors. The first is that many of the cultures were exterminated or suppressed by warfare intended to take their lands. In addition, researchers often failed to record names of goddesses. Many sources refer to female figures by status names like "Old Mother" or "Young Girl," or by translations of Indian names, such as "Slender Reed." This section includes only figures whose original names are recorded.

Native American religion is still practiced, sometimes combined into a syncretic religion with Christianity, sometimes kept as a separate spiritual path by people who are otherwise Christianized, sometimes serving as an individual's primary or sole religion. Some Indian people actively discourage interest in Native American religions by non-Natives, connecting participation (especially unauthorized or uninvited) of non-Natives in Native ceremonials with spiritual colonialism. Pseudo-Native "traditions" have been propounded by non-Native authors, some claiming to honor indigenous goddesses. Occasional Native or part-Native individuals offer allegedly traditional knowledge for a fee, a practice controversial among Native people. Given the diversity of Native traditions in the Americas, it is impossible to make categorical statements about them all. However, it is generally true that traditional Native Americans do not see spiritual knowledge as a commercial product.

## NORTH AMERICAN PANTHEON

Aag:hu Gu:gu. *See Unelanahi*

Aetaentsic. *See Ataensic*

Agawela. *See Sélu*

### **Agischanak**

Ahsonnutli. *See Estsánatlehi*

AiaLilā'axa. *See Snútsma'na*

### **Ailsie**

### **Aliquipiso**

Anayicoyondi *Pericu*; *sky*.

Anelanuhi. *See Unelanuhi*

Angwushahai'í. *See Kachinas*

Angwusnasomtaqa. *See Kachinas*

Anitsutsa *Cherokee*; *Pleiades*.

Anog Ite. *See Hanwi*

Anukite. *See Hanwi*

### **Atsintma**

### **Ataensic**

Ataesic. *See Ataensic*

Atairam Tunueich *Karok*; *Pleiades*.

### **Atatalia**

Atavish *Luisseño*; *primordial mother*.

Atiná. *See Atira*

### **Atira**

Atíra. *See Atira*

### **Atse Etsan**

### **Awasiúkiu**

Awe(n)ha'i'. *See Ataensic*

Awen'hāi. *See Ataensic*

Awenhai. *See Ataensic*

A'witelin 'Si'ta. *See Awitelin Tsita*

### **Awitelin Tsita**

Ba'áadii. *See Náhookoz Ba'áadii*

### **Baachini**

### **Baculbotet**

Bastepomas. *See Norwan*

Betukulkhatra *Pomo*; *bear*.

Bowutset. *See Utset*

Bulbininskha *Pomo*; *quail*.

### **Ca-the-ña**

### **Cenakatla'x**

### **C-ga**

Chakwena. *See Pohaha*

Changing Woman. *See Estsánatlehi*

### **Chehiayam**

### **Chietsum**

Chihlas. *See Waslaag*

Chir Pokaila *Wintun*; *foreseeing*.

Chóchmingwu *Hopi*; *corn mother*.

### **Clem**

Cloque. *See Chietsum*

Coashellequaa. *See Weshellequa*

### **Cowgan**

### **Dagwanoe<sup>n</sup>yent**

Dah-Ko-Bed. *See Tacoma*

Dah-ko-beed. *See Tacoma*

### **Dayunisi**

### **Deohako**

De-o-há-ko. *See Deohako*

**Djigonasee**Djilákons. *See Dzelarhons*Djilákons. *See Dzelarhons*Djila'quons. *See Dzelarhons*Djilaquans. *See Dzelarhons***Djīyī'n**Dji Sisnaxitl. *See Qamā'its***Djū****Duskeah**Duwe da. *See Xa'a da***Dzelarhons**Dzelarhons. *See Dzelarhons*Eataentsic. *See Ataensic*Ee-eh-ch-chó-ri-ch'áhm-nin. *See P'áh-  
hlee-oh*Eithinoha. *See Nokomis*Eku!yak'imtōls'īl. *See Qamā'its***E'lg'Eldokwila****Enamtues**Enedeka Dakwa. *See Ataensic*En-kla-loi'-killa. *See Snûtsma'na*Estéasun. *See Estsánatlehi***Estsánatlehi**Estsánatlehi. *See Estsánatlehi*Gandewitha. *See Gendenwitha***Gâus! tukoba'nî****Gawaunduk****Geezhigo-Quae**Gendeñwith'ha. *See Gendenwitha***Gendenwitha****Genetaska**Geyaguga. *See Unelanuhi***Glispa****Godasiyo**Gogyeng Soutuhti. *See Kókyangwúti***Gonoñk'goes****Gyhldeptis**Hahai Wuhti. *See Kókyangwúti*Hahai'i Angwucnasomtaka. *See**Kachinas*Hahai'i Wuhti. *See Kachinas***Haka Lasi**Hanhepi Wi. *See Hanwi***Hanwi**Hard Surfaces Woman. *See Huruing  
Wuhti*

Hastseoltoi Navaho; hunting.

Hatai Wugti. *See Kókyangwúti***Hawelakok****Hé-é-e**Héhewúti. *See Kachinas***Hekoolas**

Heloha Choctaw; female thunderbird.

Henes Seneca; panther.

Hi. *See Hekoolas*Hiema. *See Hekoolas*Hintaku. *See Hekoolas*Hlkyukustan. *See Dzelarhons*Hluyuk Tikimit. *See Norwan*Hulluk. *See Hulluk Miyumko***Hulluk Miyumko**

Hunku Lakota; primordial mother.

H'uraru. *See Atira*H'Uraru. *See Atira***Huruing Wuhti**

Huti Watsi Ya Huron; Pleiades.

Hutsipamamau Chemehuevis; creation.

Huzruiwuhti. *See Huruing Wuhti*Ia'tik. *See Utset*Icsts'ity. *See Utset*Inu-msi-ila-fe-wanu. *See Weshellequa***Ioi****'Isánáklésh**Ite. *See Hanwi*

Iyatiku Navajo; ancestral mother.

Izá'a padimi. *See Kusi'tawa'qari*Jigonsahseh. *See Djigonasee*

Ka'a mata Pomo; sun.

**Kachinas**Kama'its. *See Qamā'its*Kanane'ski Amai'yehi. *See Kanene Ski**Amai Yehi***Kanene Ski Amai Yehi**

Katchina Mana Hopi; sprouting maize.

Kerwan Hopi; sprouting maize.

Ketq Skwayne. *See Ataensic*Kind-a-wuss. *See Rhpisunt*Klah Klahnee. *See Pahto*Kohkang Wuhti. *See Kókyangwúti*

Kohkomhðena. *See Weshellequa*  
Kohkomhthena *Pawnee; creation.*

Ko-ko-mik'e *Blackfoot; moon.*

Kokomikeis *Blackfoot; moon.*

**Kókyangwúti**

Kokyangwuti. *See Kókyangwúti*

Komwidapokuwia *Yavapai; creation,*  
*shamanism.*

**Kotchpih'lah**

**Kuchininako**

**Kusi'tawa'qari**

**Ḳutsæbukwi oyikaga**

**Kuwánlelenta**

**Ku'yapalitsa**

**Látkakáwas**

**Lê'nAXA, AĪ'dAq**

Lla-djat. *See Djū*

**Loha**

**Lok Snedwéjas**

**Loo-Wit**

**Luhdee**

Mah-oh-rah. *See Mahohrah*

**Mahohrah**

Mah-pah-róo. *See P'áh-hlee-oh*

**Máidikdak**

**Maka**

Maka-akan. *See Maka*

Masâkamek'okiu. *See Nokomis*

Maskíkcwsu. *See Skwákowtemus*

Mat'citiniu. *See Awasîukiu*

Mayochina *Acoma; summer.*

Mem Hlosmulmit. *See Mem Loimis*

**Mem Loimis**

**Menil**

Mictabeeockwe'o *Montagnais;*  
*cannibal.*

Micux *Natchez; daughter of cannibal*  
*spirit.*

Mikimatt *Klallam; sun, creation*

**Moasäm Beps**

Mom *Hopi; honeybee.*

**Momoy**

Moninkwessos *Penobscott; grandmother*  
*woodchuck.*

**Mooinaarkw**

Mortyama *Acoma; spring.*

**Muzzu-Kummik-Quae**

Naatsis'aan *Navaho; mountain.*

**Nahkeeta**

**Náhookoz Ba'áadii**

**Nalq**

Nanoska *Tshimshian; heavenly nurse.*

Naotsete. *See Utset*

Nao'tsiti. *See Utset*

Nau'ts'ity. *See Utset*

Nayunu'wi. *See U'thuVta*

Nebaunaubaequae *Ojibway; mermaid.*

Nee-gar-oose. *See Nokomis*

Neegyauks. *See Dzelarhons*

**Ne Hwas**

Neknekatah. *See Nahkeeta*

**Nemissa**

**Netami-gho**

**Netche'nsta**

Nok-a-mi. *See Nokomis*

**Nokomis**

**Nomhewena Pokaila**

Nom Toposloni Pokaila *Wintun; fir tree.*

**Nonō'osqua**

Noogumee *Micmac; whale.*

Noomeegal *Oochigeaskw'.*

Noomeegal. *See Oochigeaskw'*

**Norwan**

Nowutset. *See Utset*

Nuñda. *See Unelanuhi*

**Nunnehi**

Nunta. *See Unelanuhi*

**Núwakanda**

Nyohaiva. *See Warharmi*

Ohoyo Osh Chishba. *See Sélu*

**Omamama**

Onatah *Oniata.*

Onatha *Iroquois; food.*

O-ne-ha-tah. *See Oo-kwa-we*

**Öng Wuhti**

Oniata. *See Nokomis*

**Oochigeaskw'**

**Oo-kwa-we**

Oweé *Yegonhdji Huron; swan.*

Owini-gaho. *See Netami-gho*

Oyika. *See Panyoka*

Paapoodðkwaki. *See Weshellequa*

**Pahalali**

**P'áh-hlee-oh**

Pahtkiyou. *See Pahto*

**Pahto**

Painted Woman. *See Estsánatlehi*

**Pakchuso Pokaila**

Panes *Acagchemen*; bird.

**Panyoka**

Pautiwa *Hopi*; sun.

**Pavinmana**

Peesunt. *See Rhpisunt*

**Pêp'ákijisê**

Pethinalasan Win. *See Wohpe*

Pikâkamik'okiu. *See Nokomis*

Plash-Plash. *See Pahto*

**Pohaha**

Poktcinskwes. *See Pook-jin-skwess*

Pom Norwanen Pitchen. *See Norwan*

Pom Pokaila. *See Nomhewena Pokaila*

**Pook-jin-skwess**

Psawk-tankapic *Passamaquoddy*;  
*lightning*.

Pskégdemus. *See Skwákwotemus*

Ptehincala Cannunpa Win. *See Wohpe*

Ptehincallasanwin. *See Wohpe*

Ptesan-Wi. *See Wohpe*

**Puchi Yushubah**

Pukdji'neskwessus. *See Pook-jin-skwess*

Pukdjínskwe'su. *See Pook-jin-skwess*

Pukjinskwes. *See Pook-jin-skwess*

**Qamá'its**

Qamait. *See Qamá'its*

**Qeuxu**

Qua-kuiña-haha. *See Ca-the-ña*

Ragno *Hopi*; *ancestral mother*.

**Rhpisunt**

Rukko *Mandan*; creator.

Salt Woman. *See Öng Wuhti*

Sanihas *Wintun*; sun, light.

**Sanyu.xáv**

**Scomalt**

**Selmayi**

**Sélu**

Selu. *See Sélu*

Sgwelkai'len *Coeur d'Alene*; stars.

Shakak *Acoma*; winter.

Shiwanokia *Zuñi*; creatrix.

Shiwoka *Shiwanokia*.

Shooh'-ta-ah *Wyandot*; *ancestral mother*.

Shro-tu-na-ko. *See S'ts'tsi'naku*

**Sintesepela win**

Sississtinaku. *See S'ts'tsi'naku*

**Sit! tu kohan'nî**

Skomeltem. *See Scomalt*

**Skwákwotemus**

Snanaik. *See Snēnē'ik*

**Snēnē'ik**

Sneneik. *See Snēnē'ik*

**Snítsma'na**

Snutqtxals *Bella Coola*; death.

**Soi'ka Gäa'kwa**

Somagalags *Bella Coola*; mountain.

Spear-Finger. *See U'thuVta*

Spider Grandmother. *See Kókyangwúti*

Spider Woman. *See Kókyangwúti*

Sp'ix.p'ik.nE'm *Bella Coola*; cedarbark  
*crafts*.

Sruisthia *Acoma*; autumn.

Stich-tche-na-ko. *See S'ts'tsi'naku*

**S'ts'tsi'naku**

Surut *Womulmit*. *See Mem Loimis*

Sus'sistanako. *See S'ts'tsi'naku*

Sutalidihi. *See Unelanahi*

Tabiya *Yokuto, Mono*; *ancestral mother*.

Tacobud. *See Tacoma*

Tacoma *Salish, Yakima*; earth.

**Tacoma**

Tacoman. *See Tacoma*

**Tahc-i**

Takkobad. *See Tacoma*

Talatumsi *Hopi*; dawn.

Tatlashea. *See Chietsum*

T-cho. *See Tso*

**Tetogolee**

Tíkuiwúti *Hopi*; *animal spirit mother*.

T'koma. *See Tacoma*

**Tlitcaplitana**

**Tomaiyovit****Totolmatha****Tsagigla'lal**

Tse-che-nako. *See S'ts'tsi'naku*

Tsects. *See Rhpisunt*

Tseet. *See Rhpisunt*

Tsichtinako. *See S'ts'tsi'naku*

Tsi sisnāaxīl. *See Qamā'its*

Ts'its'naku. *See S'ts'tsi'naku*

Ts'its'tsc'i'nak'o. *See S'ts'tsi'naku*

Tsi'ty'icots'a. *See Öng Wuhti*

**Tsihooskwallaa**

Tsitctinako. *See S'ts'tsi'naku*

Tso *Yucchi*; *sun*.

**Tso**

Tsō. *See Tso*

Tsore Jowa. *See Haka Lasi*

**Tukwishhemish**

Tune-ha-kwe. *See Deohako*

Tuwabontums *Hopi*; *ancestral mother*.

Tuwu'boñtumsi. *See Huruing Wuhti*

Uktena. *See Uncegila*

U'tlun'ta. *See U'thuVta*

**Uncegila****Unelanuhi****Unk**

Unktehi. *See Uncegila*

Uretset. *See Utset*

**U'thuVta****Uti Hiata****Utset and Nowutset**

Uwa shil. *See Wah Sil*

**Wah-Kah-Nee**

Wahkshum. *See Pahto*

**Wah Sil****Wäh-trōhn-yō-nōh'-nēh**

Wakanka. *See Hanwi*

**Warharmi****Waslaag****Weshellequa**

White Buffalo Calf Woman. *See Wohpe*

Winona. *See Winonah*

**Winonah**

Winyan Nunpapika. *See Sintesepela win*

**Witsduk****Wohpe****Xa'a da**

Xa'a uia xo. *See Xa'a da*

**Xa txaná**

Yaonan *Zuñi*; *moon*.

Yatahéntshi. *See Ataensic*

**Yaulilik**

Yebaad *Navaho*; *ancestral mother*.

Yegowanah. *See Djigonasee*

**Yeselbc**

Yo'o Sea Hamut. *See Yomumuli*

Yoholmit Pokaila. *See Mem Loimis*

Yolaikaiason. *See Yolkai Estsan*

**Yolkai Estsan**

Yolkaiestsan. *See Yolkai Estsan*

**Yomumuli****Yonot**

Yushubah. *See Puchi Yushubah*

**Agischanak** Among the Tlingit, this mountain goddess holds the pillar that supports the earth. It could collapse, but Agischanak holds fast because people honor her with fires. Once a year, her brother brings greetings of thunder, his eyes darting like lightning. Another visitor is Raven, who tries to trick Agischanak into abandoning her post. She refuses, so he shoves her, which causes earthquakes.

The nearby Chilkat say that a dog tricked Agischanak's mother into mating, which resulted in the birth of seven boys and Agischanak. The mother was happy, but her rejecting family left mother and infants to starve. Convincing the children to take off their fur coats, Agischanak's mother made them human. When the youngest boy fell in love with Agischanak, he transformed himself into a thunderbird, while she became a deep crevice. (Krause)

**Ailsie** This Cherokee heroine was a tall woman beloved of both the crane and the hummingbird. Her father wished her to marry the powerful crane, but she preferred the swift-flying hummingbird. So Ailsie set her suitors a challenge: the one who could fly fastest would win her. She trusted in the hummingbird's speed, but after five circuits around the racecourse, the hummingbird tired, and the crane won. Furious at her loss, Ailsie vowed never to marry rather than wed an ugly crane. But her father, happy at the outcome, pledged to kill her unless she married. Ailsie asked for a reprieve of seven days. During that time, she wept so much that she turned into a deep pool in the Etowah River. (Kilpatrick and Kilpatrick)

**Aliquipiso** The Oneida of the northern woodlands tell of this warrior girl who endured great torments to save her people. The Oneida were besieged by their enemies, the Mingoes (Iroquois who had moved to Pennsylvania and Ohio). Trapped on a rock plateau, the Oneida would have starved but for the bravery of Aliquipiso, whose dream led them out of their dangerous predicament. In her dream, the girl saw a space below where the Mingoes could be killed by rocks thrown down upon them. She convinced the chiefs to let her lead the Mingoes into a trap.

Aliquipiso went to the Mingo camp and pretended to be lost. Captured, she endured torture but refused to reveal her people's hiding place. Finally, appearing to give in under the pain, she led the Mingoes to the designated spot. There, she called out for the attack to begin, dying at her enemies' hands just before they themselves were killed. From her hair sprang the plant called woodbine, a form of honeysuckle that twines itself around supports with hair-like tendrils. From her body sprang shrubby honeysuckle, which her people called by a term that means "blood of brave women." (Long)

**Atsintma** Canadian Athabascans say that Atsintma opened her eyes to an empty world. Building a loom, she wove fireweed-blossom cloth that she spread across the land, anchoring it with sacred mountains. Then she began to sing. Soon the earth gave birth to animals. As each was born, Atsintma lifted them from beneath earth's blanket. Some stories say Atsintma herself gave birth to the animals, beginning with the mouse and continuing to ever-larger offspring until the moose was born. Then Atsintma stretched a blanket between mountains and bounced her children on it, throwing each into a suitable habitat. Afterwards, Atsintma punished hunters who did not perform rituals to honor animals they killed.

The neighboring Tahlian said Raven wanted to see how fast animals could run. He convinced Atsintma to call them, then watched as they raced to her. He noticed they were all too fast for humans to catch, so he convinced Atsintma to let him make changes. On the caribou, Raven placed extra lower-leg flesh, slowing them down; he shortened the bears' legs. The animals could still get home to Atsintma, but sometimes people could catch them for food. (Teit 1919)

**Ataensic** The Iroquoian ancestral mother lived when there was no land, only a vast blue lake filled with water birds, otters, and turtles. Above in heaven, Ataensic was pregnant with a daughter, Enedeka Dakwa, when she was thrown down to the earth

lake. Waterbirds saw Ataensic falling. To save her, the birds and animals built land from the lake mud. Many animals tried until Ketq Skwayne (Grandmother Toad) dove deep and returned with dirt that, landing on the turtle's back, began to grow. By the time Ataensic reached the water, there was enough land for her to give birth.

Enedeka Dakwa became pregnant by the West Wind with twins, Good Mind and Flint, the latter of whom burst from her side, killing her. The grieving Ataensic fashioned the sun and the moon from Enedeka Dakwa's body. She blamed Flint for her daughter's death, so she always sided with his brother Good Mind. (In some variants, Ataensic herself gave birth to the twins.)

Only once did Ataensic agree with Flint. She had placed her daughter's head in the sky, and Good Mind wanted it to shine. Flint objected, because he did not want sunlight to nurture plant growth. To settle their dispute, Good Mind and Ataensic played a game. Good Mind won, so his mother's face began to shine as the sun. Furious at losing, Ataensic hid Enedeka Dakwa's head. For three days, the earth was plunged into darkness. Traveling with animal friends, Good Mind stole back the sun. Throwing it back and forth like a ball, they brought back the sun, and the earth bloomed. (C. Barbeau 1915; Beauchamp 1922; Bruchac 1989; Converse; Elm and Antone; Hale; Hewitt; Leland; Parker)

**Atatalia** The giant cannibal woman of the Wasco, who lived along the salmon-rich Columbia River, captured a boy and a girl for dinner. But when the clever girl told Atatalia that her children were burning, the cannibal ran home, dropping her prey. Discovering that she had been tricked, Atatalia returned to find her prisoners fleeing. She set out after them, chasing them until they reached the river. There, the children leaped into a canoe and raced away, calling to the fish and the rocks to help them escape. The giant waded into the water, but was attacked by nibbling fish and falling rocks. (Lowenstein)

**Atira** To the Pawnee, the omniscient earth fed the living and embraced the dead. She brought both food and culture through her daughter, **Uti Hiata**, who taught the people how to raise food and make tools. A ceremony called Hako called on the goddess to sustain human life. Symbols used in the ceremony included white feathers, representing sky, and an ear of corn, representing earth. (Dorsey 1997; Grinnell)

**Atse Estsan** The primal woman of Navaho religion was born in the darkness of the First World and gradually rose to the surface of our Fifth World. To do so, she joined the first man and the trickster Coyote as they passed through the Second World, where a man assaulted her. Coyote called together the other dwellers in the Second World, and all decided to climb to the safer Third World.

There, in a lake-filled mountain land, they met a water monster whose children Coyote stole. The monster began to raise the water's level. The people piled the world's four mountains up so that they almost reached the sky. Still, the waters rose until they reached the feet of the people who, climbing up a water weed that punctured the sky, gained the Fourth World.

There, an argument arose between men and women. The women claimed social precedence because they were the fire makers, the child-bearers, and the planters. The men contended that because they hunted and danced, they were more important. The alienated sexes went their separate ways. But within four years, weary of their isolation, they reunited.

The water monster's lake seeped into their land, turning soil to mud. Finally, the lake rose about them again. Piercing the sky with a long reed, everyone climbed to the Fifth World. But, instead of peace and safety, they found themselves on the bottom of another lake, with the monster in hot pursuit. Discovering that Coyote had hidden the monster babies in his pack, the people forced him to toss them back, and the underworld waters retreated. Then Atse Estsan and her people built this earth.

But the humans grew selfish, so Atse Estsan created more monsters to plague them. When they had been punished enough, she brought forth **Estsánatlehi** and retreated to the eastern sky. (Levy; Matthews; Moon)

**Awasiûkiu** The Menominee bear woman attracted a young man with whom she had a child. Like his mother, the child looked human. Her man noticed that, although Awasiûkiu never cooked, food appeared. He did not know that sacrifices from Indian people to the bear people provided their meals. When the husband's relatives visited, they saw Awasiûkiu as a bear and tried to kill her. She escaped, badly wounded. Afterwards, Awasiûkiu decided to remain constantly disguised. She and her husband moved in with his family. Not long after, Awasiûkiu appeared naked to the waist, a scar running across her shoulders. When the brothers who had wounded her expressed disgust, she revealed the truth. After that, she was called Mat'citiniu ("scar-shoulder woman"), and the Menominee realized that animals could take human shape and live among them. (Skinner and Satterlee)

**Awitelin Tsita** The Zuñi earth mother lay in intercourse with the sky until her four wombs were filled with his seed. She gave birth to the human race, then made mountains so that the land's divisions would be clear, and clouds filled with rain, so that the earth's surface might bloom. (Thompson; Wherry)

**Baachini** Two Navaho star goddesses bear this name, thought to indicate two stars in the constellation now called the Hyades, near the Pleiades. They are said to be identical twins called Hard Flint Women, daughters of a bitterly arguing couple, Dilyéhé (the Pleiades) and Coyote Man. Or, the daughters themselves are argumentative, always pulling each other's hair and fighting over who won the latest gambling match. (Miller)

**Baculbotet** The grain goddess Baculbotet provided all that the Pomo people needed. When a monster threatened to destroy this abundance, Baculbotet wove a basket, covered with images of food that changed with the seasons. Through this artistry, Baculbotet restored earth's abundance. But the monster still threatened. Using her hair and sticks painted with her blood, Baculbotet wove a snare and caught the monster, so people could again gather food. But while they feasted, the monster crushed

Baculbotet with a snap of his tail. She turned into a white fawn and escaped, never to be seen again in human form. (Berlo; Clark and Williams)

**Ca-the-ña** The Mojave describe Ca-the-ña as ruler of the sky, although whether she is embodied in the sky itself, or one of the luminaries, is unclear. The first woman, she invented sexual intercourse by inviting all animals to make love to her. The last was the gopher, who lived far away. By the time he arrived she was menstruating, so their twin sons were born spotted. The boys grew into handsome hunters, for whom their mother invented the reed flute so that they could lure women. No sooner had the boys found sisters to wed than Ca-the-ña grew jealous. She moved the men around while they were sleeping, so that the women unwittingly had intercourse with both. When her sons were killed, the goddess disappeared into the west. (Bourke)

**Cenakatla'x** Cenakatla'x lived near a stream filled annually with spawning salmon that provided all the food her people needed. But once, when Cenakatla'x was hungry, her parents gave her a moldy piece of fish. Soon after, she disappeared. She found her way to the salmon people, who showed her their ways, including swimming upstream to Cenakatla'x's village. There, Cenakatla'x, seeing her people armed with spears, grew frightened. The salmon chief told her that, when she was speared, she should pull her soul into her tail. The salmon people did this every year, being reborn as other salmon.

Cenakatla'x's father speared her, and her mother decided to cook the little fish for dinner. As she was cleaning it, she discovered the dentalia necklace that Cenakatla'x had been wearing when she disappeared. Knowing this was their daughter, her parents wrapped the fish in feathers and fasted beside it. For eight days, nothing happened, but on the ninth day, the fish turned back into Cenakatla'x. She told her parents to honor the salmon, which provided food for the people. (Teit 1921)

**C-ga** The Ho-Chunk people of the upper Midwest say that C-ga was born with shiny white hair. When she reached puberty, she was sought after by men fascinated by her exotic hair. She grew vain and refused all suitors, preferring instead to sit near a pond rubbing her skin with flowers. When an especially homely man came in hopes of gaining her hand, she rudely laughed at him. But he was no man but the trickster Turtle, who changed her into the first skunk as punishment for her self-absorption. (Smith)

**Chehiyam** The Luiseño people of California describe the spring-rising stars, the Pleiades, as seven sisters called the Chehiyam, who climbed up into the sky in hopes of escaping death. Coyote, the trickster divinity, tried to follow them up, but they cut the rope after him so that he fell to earth. (Miller)

**Chietsum** According to the Chehalis in the Pacific Northwest, this young woman was the daughter of the wisest chief, Seloyum. She was a happy girl who loved gathering berries and digging root vegetables. But she was always in danger of capture by the witch Tatlashea, who wandered the forests looking for children to eat. One day, lured

from the village by a chipmunk, Chietsum was snared by the cannibal woman, who shoved her into a basket and tied on its lid to keep her prisoner.

As she traveled, Tatlashea captured another child, the boy Pauk, who whispered to Chietsum who their captor was. Chietsum called out to her guardian spirit, the eagle. He came, shoving a stone knife through the basket canes so that Chietsum could cut the ropes that held them captive. But, once they escaped, the children found themselves confronted by the Skookumchuck River. On its banks, a lovely supernatural woman named Cloque sat carving a new canoe. Begging her for help, Chietsum softened Cloque's heart, and she took the children to safety even though she knew Tatlashea would soon be at the river's other shore.

As soon as Cloque returned, Tatlashea approached and demanded a ride across the river, claiming that her own children were there. Cloque knew better. She convinced Tatlashea that the boat was unsteady and that, to stabilize it, the cannibal would have to tie rocks into her long hair. Tatlashea did so, but no sooner had they reached the center of the river than Cloque upended the boat, tossing Tatlashea into the waves. Even today, there are rapids that result from Tatlashea trying to rise from the depths. Back in the village, Chietsum's father sponsored a potlatch to celebrate not only his daughter's return from the wilderness, but the end of Tatlashea, a scourge to his people. (Griffin)

**Clem** Among the people of Thomson River, this woman ("pelican") lived in an area overrun with rushes. One of these plants became human and made love with Clem, who gave birth to the original people of the land. (Boas 2002)

**Cowgan** The Haida said the forests are filled with Cowgans, transformed mice who look like lovely women. The Cowgans could be helpful if a person showed kindness; but they could also be spiteful, seducing men and turning them into dead stumps. (Deans 1892)

**Dagwanoe<sup>n</sup>yent** "Whirlwind-old woman" lived in the forest, say the Seneca people, with her two grandchildren, a boy and a girl. When Dagwanoe<sup>n</sup>yent went out to dig roots, a frost woman named Geno<sup>n</sup>skwa came into the cabin and ate the girl, then kidnapped the boy. Dragged along behind his captor, the boy began to cry. His grandmother heard him and followed, turning into a whirlwind. Geno<sup>n</sup>skwa hid the boy in a hole in the ground, but his grandmother heard and rescued him. Then she began to burn tobacco and make medicine to reclaim her granddaughter. But the girl did not come forth from the frost woman's belly, so Dagwanoe<sup>n</sup>yent called all her relatives and they, too, made offerings of tobacco while calling out for the girl's return. The girl emerged from the body of the frost woman. When the frostpeople appeared to avenge the death, Dagwanoe<sup>n</sup>yent and her relatives successfully fought them off. (Curtin 1923)

**Dayunisi** To the Cherokee, the tiny water beetle is the beaver's granddaughter. She helped create the world as it is today, for at the beginning, the animals all lived in

the sky, which became too crowded for them all. They went prospecting for a new place, and when the council of beings was held, it was Dayunisi whose voice was heard, for she spoke of a land below the great sea. Convinced that she saw the best homeland for them, the animals approved of her descent into the waters. From below, she drew up mud, a bit at a time, until it formed the earth. (Caduto)

**Deohako** The Iroquoian people told of three sisters who thrived when they were together but wilted when separated. The oldest towered over the others in her long green shawl, her yellow hair blowing in the breeze. The second wore a yellow dress and loved running in the sunshine. The youngest sister wore green and crawled after the others. The sisters were never separated until a young man met them in a forest clearing in late summer. Shortly after, the youngest sister disappeared. The young man returned, and the second sister also disappeared. The oldest made sorrowful sounds until the young man came back. He carried her to his parents' home, where she found her younger sisters living happily. The "sisters" were corn, beans, and squash, the primary foods of several American peoples. (Beauchamp 1898; Hardin)

**Djigonasee** A heroine of the northern woodlands, Djigonasee, the "mother of nations," was a lineal descendent of the first woman and leader of her people. Her longhouse stood directly between warring groups. But Djigonasee's son would change all that, for he was the peace-bringer Deganiwada, who united the Six Nations (Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk, and Tuscarora) into the Iroquois.

Like many mothers of heroes, Djigonasee was a virgin when her son was born. A herald from beyond this world announced that he would be born to bring peace, and Djigonasee accepted his announcement. Whether this theme was influenced by the Christian story of the annunciation of the angel to the virgin **Mary** (see Eastern Mediterranean) is unclear. When Djigonasee's son was grown, she conveyed messages and treaties among the nations. In this role, she began the important woodland traditions whereby leaders were chosen by wise women, who also removed from power leaders who acted selfishly or foolishly. (Bruchac 1989)

**Djīyī'n** This Tlingit orphan lived in an impoverished village. When the villagers moved to find food, Djīyī'n was left behind. But she found a boat filled with food, on which she lived while she underwent a transformation into a shaman. When her people returned, they found Djīyī'n living happily with wood ducks. Thereafter, she served as a powerful healer. (Swanton 1909)

**Djū** When the Haida ruler of the northeast wind raised her dress, fair winds blew softly, but when she brought it up to her knees, the winds grew strong. (Swanton 1905)

**Duskeah** Like many North Americans, the Quileute, a Chimakuan-speaking people of western Washington, envision the wilderness as the home of a cannibal woman. Duskeah liked to feast on children, whom she kept in captivity until she had enough to make stew. She covered their eyes with gum so they could not see while she built a fire to roast them. One young girl, feeling heat, figured out what was about to happen. She

held her hands close enough to the fire to get them very warm, then used the warmth to melt the gum from her eyes. When Duskeah, dancing around the flames, grew near, the girl leaped forward and pushed the cannibal into her own fire, freeing the other children. (Farrand and Mayer; Mayer)

**Dzelarhons** Once, the volcano goddess Dzelarhons was a mortal woman who migrated into Haida country with her uncle, Gitrhawn. Her people came in six canoes from across the western sea, seeking a warmer climate and a richer land. Dzelarhons fell in love with a Haida man and had her uncle arrange a marriage. Decked in sea-otter furs and shell-trimmed leather, Dzelarhons was escorted to the village of her chosen mate. Splendid ceremonies marked the wedding, but Dzelarhons soon found she had mistaken her husband's character. He demanded she spend their first night holding a lighted torch above his head. As the torch shrank, the woman protected her arms with her garments, which were singed, then burned.

The next morning the Haida, shocked at the young man's behavior, warned him about Gitrhawn's vengeance. But the bridegroom continued to demand that Dzelarhons hold his torch until her garments were burned away and she was naked. Gitrhawn's people came to her rescue. They burned the Haida village but did not find Dzelarhons, only a stone statue holding a burning staff topped by a copper frog, between whose legs a stream flowed.

Thereafter Dzelarhons was a powerful divinity who judged people's actions towards animals. In one village, people grew accustomed to the wealth the sea provided and began to kill animals needlessly. They caught spawning salmon, slit their backs, and inserted pitch-soaked branches; then lit the torches and laughed as the fish, crazed with pain, swam about lighting the sea. Soon the people heard terrible rumblings. Fright ran through the guilty village; but it was too late for repentance, as Dzelarhons poured forth her fiery wrath. Few escaped, for even the rivers ran hot with the goddess's fury. (M. Barbeau 1953; Bierhorst 1985; Wherry)

**E'lg'Eldokwila** The Kwakiutl of the Pacific Coast call medicinal plants by this name, which means "Long-Life-Maker Woman." The goddess of the same name was the special guardian of berry bushes, which were burned regularly by the Kwakiutl in order to make them bear more heavily. When they did so, they prayed to E'lg'Eldokwila to forgive them, explaining that the tradition dated to ancestral times. They also prayed in gratitude to this goddess when gathering food. (Boas 1966)

**Enamtues** On the Washington-Canadian border stood a human-sized boulder at which the Okanogon people stopped to make wishes for good fortune. It became sacred when a girl, Enamtues, became infatuated with the reputation of a young man in a neighboring village. Traveling to see if what she had heard was correct, she stopped on a mountain summit to twine flowers into her hair. The lad and his brothers, hearing that a girl was coming to visit, started up the mountain. When they met Enamtues, her intended and his brothers began to fight over her, for all three brothers found her irresistibly beautiful. The trickster Coyote, annoyed at the noise, cast a spell on Enamtues so that her lower body turned to stone, while the young men turned into mountains. Seeing

that her lover was no longer in human form, Enamtues raised her own power and turned herself entirely into stone so that she could forever look at him. This sacred stone was smashed to bits by a white man whose Indian neighbors had warned him of its powers. Within a year, he was dead, dragged to death by his own horses. (Clark 1953)

**Estsánatlehi** The Navaho sky goddess, wife of the sun, lived in a turquoise palace at the western horizon. The sister of **Yolkai Estsan**, Estsánatlehi was called Changing Woman because when her age began to show, she walked east until she met herself walking westward. She kept walking until her young self merged with her aging self and then, renewed, returned home.

**Atse Estsan**, discovering Estsánatlehi beneath a mountain, reared her to be the savior of earth's people. When she was grown, Estsánatlehi met a young man with whom she went into the woods to make love. When her parents looked on the ground and saw only one set of footprints, they knew their daughter had taken the sun as a lover. Delighted at the honor, they were delighted again when Estsánatlehi gave birth to twins. The twins grew so fast that eight days after birth, they were men and ready to seek their father. They won magical weapons from him, which they used to clear the earth of monsters. Then the twins built Estsánatlehi a magnificent home at the sky's end, so that the sun could visit her again.

Because the twins' wars with the monsters had depopulated the earth, Estsánatlehi brushed dust from her breasts. White flour fell from her right breast and yellow meal from her left. From that, she made a paste, from which she molded a man and a woman. Placing them beneath a blanket, Estsánatlehi left them. The next morning, they were alive and breathing; their children became the four great Navaho clans.

But the creative urge of Estsánatlehi was not fulfilled. She made four more groups of people, this time from the dust of her nipples, for which reason the women of these clans were famous for their nipples. Estsánatlehi continued to bestow blessings: seasons, plants and food, and the tender sprouts of spring. Only four monsters survived: age, winter, poverty, and famine, which she allowed to live so that her people would treasure her gifts. (Allen 1991; Bierhorst 1985; Levy; Matthews; Newcomb; Reichard; Stephen 1930; Wherry)

**Gâus! tukoba'nî** The "fair girls of the sky" are among many Tlingit feminine sky spirits. The moon was inhabited by two girls, who were out walking when one looked up and said, uncourteously, "that moon looks just like my grandmother's labret (mouth ornament)." Whereupon, they were both transported to the moon, the speaker being crushed against it, the other visible still holding her berry-bucket. When a lunar eclipse occurs, the Tlingit people blow towards the moon, to drive away sickness from the girls. (Swanton 1908)

**Gawaunduk** "The Guardianess," heroine of an Anishinaubae (Ojibway or Chippewa) legend, was a young woman given in marriage to a distinguished elder. She went obediently but without joy, feeling that her life would be more satisfying if she had a love-mate her own age. Yet, as the years passed and she bore children to the old

man, her heart softened. When, in his 85th year, he grew sick, Gawaunduk was frantic for his survival. He recovered and lived another 15 years. Then, a full century old, he died quietly in his sleep. She mourned so wildly at his grave that she died of grief, and they were buried together. Mists in spruce forests are her tears as she mourns for her beloved. (Johnston)

**Geezhigo-Quae** To the Anishinaubae, Geezhigo-Quae dwelt in the heavens and watched over her people. She created the bountiful earth, descending into the primal soup to find soil under the waves. She brought it forth and fashioned it into hills and mountain ranges. (Johnston)

**Gendenwitha** The great hunter Sosondowah, stalking a supernatural elk, wandered too close to heaven and was captured by the jealous dawn, who used Sosondowah as her doorkeeper. But on earth, he saw Gendenwitha and left his duties to court her. While dawn colored the sky, the hunter sang to his beloved: in spring as a bluebird; in summer, he sang as a blackbird; in autumn, he sang as a hawk. As a hawk, he tried to carry Gendenwitha to heaven. But dawn, angry at his disappearance, turned the woman into a star and set Gendenwitha out of reach of her hunter-lover. There is evidence that Gendenwitha was once widely revered, but her worship died away in historic times. (Converse; Parker)

**Genetaska** The “maiden peace queen” of the Iroquois was a woman so wise that lawsuits were brought to her for settlement. She lived alone in the forest, far from any village, and spent her days in tranquil contemplation. Genetaska was renowned for her impartiality, but she once found that balance hard to achieve.

Two arguing men came to her door with a problem. They both claimed the carcass of a deer, for both had shot it, although only one’s arrow was fatal. She suggested that each take half of the meat. One man refused, offending Genetaska with suggestive comments. The other respectfully asked the Peace Queen to marry him. She refused both, but she found she could not forget the quiet young man who had offered to share his lodge and his life with her. When he returned that winter to repeat his offer, she left her post and went with him. After her abdication, the Five Nations abolished the office of Peace Queen, with resulting warfare. (Beauchamp 1922; Spence)

**Glispa** The Navaho heroine who brought the healing beauty chant to her people may have been a form of **Estsánatlehi**. With her sister, she was lured away from their village by young men. But when dawn came, the men were withered and old. Although her sister was too terrified to escape, Glispa fought her way to freedom. At the center of the world, Glispa stopped to drink. Snake people lifted the water so that Glispa could travel beneath it. There, she met her lover, again firm and handsome, who told Glispa he was a shaman of the snake people and taught her healing chants and rituals. They settled down happily together. After many years, Glispa grew homesick, and the snake husband taught her how to return. On earth, she taught the healing chant to her brother, then returned to her home below the waters. (Allen 1991)

**Godasiyo** The Tuscarora said that, when people all spoke the same language, Godasiyo was the leader of the biggest human village. One day, Godasiyo's favorite dog gave birth to puppies, one completely white with little dark markings over each eye. It was so sweet that everyone wanted to pet it. People began to fight over possession of the darling dog. Frightened, Godasiyo tried to keep the warring parties apart, but the threats continued. So Godasiyo decided to established a new village where everyone could live in peace with the adorable puppy.

She loaded her people into canoes. But arguments began about which canoe the puppy would ride in. Godasiyo invented an outrigger so she could ride between several canoes, but even this was not good enough. The migrating people reached a fork in the river and began to argue about which way to go. During the argument, the leader and her dog were thrown into the water and drowned. Immediately they were reborn, she as a sturgeon, the puppy as a whitefish. When the people tried to comment on this miracle, they found they could no longer understand each other, and thus human languages were born. (Bruchac 1989)

**Gonoñk'goes** "The Big Breast," the Seneca say, was a giant woman with enormous pillow-like breasts who roamed about searching for sweethearts who were inappropriately intimate. If she found such miscreants, she used her huge breasts to suffocate them. Then she tossed them off a cliff and went off looking for other secretive lovers. (Parker)

**Gyhlddeptis** Gyhlddeptis was a kindly forest spirit of the Tlingit and Haida, who envisioned her in hanging mossy branches of great cedars. A protective spirit, Gyhlddeptis was disturbed by a whirlpool that devoured ships. To break its power, Gyhlddeptis invited ice, forest fire, wind, and other powers to a feast in her underwater home, where she convinced them that human beings needed protection from the whirlpool. The powers rearranged the coast, smoothing the whirlpool into a gentle river. (M. Barbeau 1953)

**Haka Lasi** The California Yana tell of this young woman who fell in love with her brother Hitchinna. She lived with her father Juka and many siblings, including her sister Tsore Jowa. One day, after dreaming of Hitchinna, Haka Lasi dressed as a bride and demanded a husband. One after another of the brothers was sent to her, but she turned all away until Hitchinna came to her. Together, they ran away.

That night, they slept together; but he, growing frightened, left a piece of wood in her arms as he stole away to return home. Haka Lasi woke enraged. Returning home, she set the house on fire and killed everyone except Tsore Jowa and Juka, who managed to escape. She burned the bodies and made a necklace out of the burned-up hearts. But Tsore Jowa killed her, took her heart out, and made magic with all the hearts, bringing back all her siblings to life—even Haka Lasi, whose heart was pure when she had passed through death and regeneration. (Curtin 2004)

**Hanwi** The moon goddess of the Ogalala and Lakota lived with Wi the sun god, with whom she had one daughter, **Wohpe**. Coming late to a banquet, Hanwi saw another

woman, Ite, sitting in her place. Ite's mother Wakanka had tried to raise her daughter's status by arranging an assignation between Ite and the sun god, even though Ite was already married to the wind. Because the sun god had allowed this substitution, Hanwi left Wi's residence. To compensate for her humiliation, she was given rulership over dawn and twilight, but always hid her face when near the sun.

In punishment for her actions, the high god gave Ite two faces, for which she was thereafter known as Anukite ("two-faced Ite"). The offspring of Ite and the sun was the destructive tornado. But some good came of the deceit. Bored with life after her affair, Ite convinced the trickster spider to bring fire and human settlement to earth. When human women dreamed of Anukite, they became very seductive to men. (Bierhorst 1985; Dooling; Powers; Sullivan; Walker)

**Hawelakok** According to the Wishram people, the huge female swan named Hawelakok lived in a vast lake that once stretched beneath the Cascade Mountains in the Pacific Northwest. She hated humans. Whenever they came near, she drowned them, making water rise up around them faster than they could run away. But people continued to try, because the lake's water made those who bathed in it long-lived and wealthy. Once, a young woman risked the swan's wrath by diving into the lake. When she feared that the swan would find her, she climbed onto the limbs of a huge spreading tree. She did not know that she was crawling onto the antlers of a huge elk, who bore her away and impregnated her. When the half-elk child was born, the girl killed it. In retaliation, the elk people withdrew from the lake, and the lake itself dried up, so that now it is only a marsh. (Clark 1953)

**Hé-é-e** This Hopi woman was in the midst of having her hair done by her mother, in the traditional double-whorled fashion that showed she was of marriageable age. When her mother had half-finished, the pair heard the sound of enemies sneaking into the village. Hé-é-e grabbed a bow and arrows and ran outdoors. Rushing into the face of the enemy, she led her people to victory in defense of their village. She has thereafter been depicted as a **Kachina**, with her hair whorled on one side, loose on the other. (Neithammer)

**Hekoolas** The body of this Miwok sun goddess was covered with shining abalone shells. In primeval times, she lived on the other side of the sky, so the earth was dark and cold. Coyote sent men to invite the sun closer, but she refused. Then Coyote sent men to tie her up and drag her to this side of the sky, where she lit the earth.

In another Miwok tale, the sun woman Heima shut herself up in her stone house. The sky grew dark, and Hawk Chief demanded that Coyote bring back daylight. Coyote went to the doves who knew the way to the sun's house. When they got there, they sat down and waited. Nothing happened, so they decided to shoot stones. The younger dove's stone went through the wall of the sun's house. The frightened sun rose from her smokehole, but when she found everything undamaged, she went back in. The older dove whirled the slingshot round. When he let the stone fly, it sailed through the air so fast that it smashed into the sun's house, right in the center. The sun rose

straight up into the air and stood overhead, returning light to earth. (Gifford and Block; Merriam)

**Hulluk Miyumko** The Miwok star chiefs were beautiful women who lived beneath a whistling elderberry tree, which kept them awake so they could work all the time. (Merriam)

**Huruing Wuhti** This goddess of rock and clay was, to the Hopi, the primordial being. Around her circular underwater home, the universe slowly accumulated, thus she was called Hard Surfaces Woman. She was connected with jewels and shells, coral and stone.

Far to the west lived her twin, also named Huruing Wuhti. The sisters shared a husband, the sun, who wore the eastern goddess's colored fox skins as he traveled across the sky, and then sounded the western sister's rattle as he set. Noticing that the earth lacked creatures, the two goddesses created birds, then animals, and finally people. The first woman was Tuwu'boñtumsi (Sand Altar Woman or Childbirth Water Woman, although the latter is sometimes a separate goddess called Tih'kuyi), mother of the **Kachinas** and ruler of human fecundity.

In another part of the world, **Kókyangwúti** was inspired by the twin goddesses' activity to create humans herself. Because she was less talented, she sometimes left people without mates or in poorly designed pairs. Thus people made by the twin sisters are happy in marriage, while those made by Kókyangwúti are not. (Erdoes and Ortiz; Tyler)

**Ioi** The Chinook people of the northwest coast tell how the Ghost-people stole Ioi from her village. She had begged her brother Blue Jay to take a wife from Ghost-land to help her with housework. Blue Jay found a chief's daughter, recently dead, and married her. Then, through trickery, he restored her to life. When her relatives came to ask for the now-living girl's bride-price, Blue Jay changed into his bird form and attacked them. His new wife died from the fright, and this time could not be revived.

In retaliation, the Ghost-people stole Ioi. Blue Jay went to find her in Ghost-land. There, she was living among heaps of bones she believed were her relatives by marriage. He teased the bones and made fun of them, but very soon Blue Jay himself died and became a heap of bones. Even in that condition, he was mischievous and teased his sister, but she loved him enough that she went with him to play tricks on the world's animals. (Spence)

**'Isánáklésh** The Mescalero Apache goddess of creation appeared as a woman with her face half-painted with white clay and her body yellow with cattail pollen. She emerged from primal water when the land was still beneath the waves. At first she was not visible, but Holy People sang to her as she slowly revealed herself. Songs offered today in ceremonies of 'Isánáklésh recreate those songs. (Sullivan)

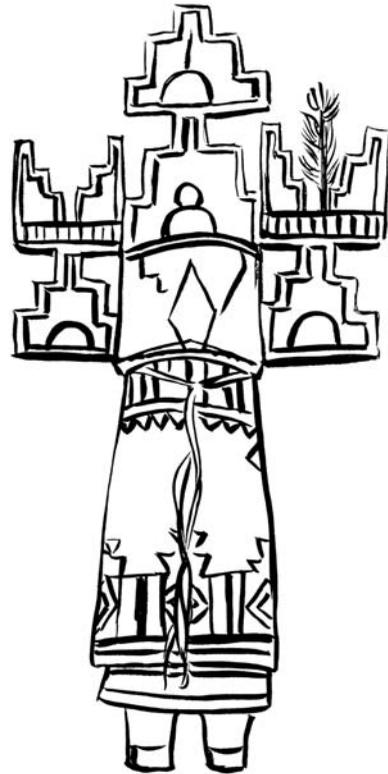
**Kachinas** Appearing in dances, embodied in human followers or in carved representations, the Kachinas are powerful spirits of plants and planets, animals and ancestors,

and even stars whose light cannot be seen by the naked eye. There are between 220 and 335 Kachinas, among whom are many important female figures. There is old Warrior Mother Héhwéwúti, who appears half-dressed and with messy hair, in memory of the time she helped defend her people against a dawn attack without pausing to dress fully. There is Whipper Mother Angwushahai'í, who whips boys and girls with yucca strips in initiation ceremonies; and the Butterfly Maidens, who represent spring's fertile energy. Beautiful Crow Mother Angwúsnasom-taqa dresses in bridal attire and a magnificent crow headdress, in honor of the time when she left her wedding to aid her Hopi children. Dolls representing Kachinas are sacred objects, not playthings. (Capps; Neithammer; Waters; Wherry)

**Kanene Ski Amai Yehi** The Cherokee primal being, Grandmother Water-Spider, brought the sun to our world. Trying to light the sky, Possum burned off his tail and Buzzard, his claw-feathers. So Kanene Ski Amai Yehi wove herself a little basket and, spinning out a web, traveled across the world. Then she reached out her arms and grabbed the sun. Popping it into her basket, she fled back across the waiting web to light the world. (Davis; Hudson)

**Kókyangwúti** The Hopi and Zuñi earth goddess possessed a sacred hoop that allowed passage to the Otherworld. The Hopi say that Kókyangwúti came to earth early in creation, sent by the sun to lead people up from the First World. She led them to the Second World, where they fought among themselves. So Kókyangwúti led them into the Third World, where she taught them to live harmoniously and to express themselves through weaving and pottery. Because the world was cold, she and a hummingbird taught people how to make fire. After that, people could cook their food, and life seemed good.

But there were still challenges. Evil ones caused people to grow greedy, so the earth began to withhold its gifts. Starvation threatened, but Kókyangwúti planted a tree that grew high enough to puncture the sky. Then, drawing a line over which the evil ones could not cross, she led the people up to the Upper World, where humans live today. (Erdoes and Ortiz; Hausman; Leeming and Page; Matthews; Moon; Mullett; Stephen 1929, 1930; Tyler; Waters; Wherry)



**Kachina.** During elaborate ceremonies marking the year's turning, Hopi people of the American Southwest celebrate the Kachinas who represent invisible forces that sustain life. Among the more than 300 Kachinas, many are female. Dolls representing the Kachinas have been made as ritual objects and mnemonic devices for centuries.

**Kotchpih'lah** Once, say the Yokut, six sisters were out gathering seeds for food. They decided that they were too cold to work and would try to get closer to the sun. So they made tea from hallucinogenic datura and soon were flying around like condors. But they still could not reach the sun, so they invoked the whirlwind and managed to fly there. Back on earth, the women's husbands tried to find them and, following their footsteps, discovered the remainder of their drug. They took it and flew to the sun, where they joined their wives as the Pleiades, Kotchpih'lah. When they try to return to earth every spring, their wings bring thunder and rain. (Miller)

**Kuchininako** At the pueblo of Laguna in New Mexico, this girl lived alone with no brothers to hunt for her. So Kuchininako ("Yellow Woman") went out to hunt for herself. She did well, catching two rabbits and building a fire to cook them. But the dangerous wild woman Shkuyo smelled the cooking meat and came up to Kuchininako's campfire. There, she demanded one rabbit, then the other, then Kuchininako's head-dress, then her moccasins and finally her dress. The frightened girl gave up each thing asked of her in turn, until finally Shkuyo said she would eat Kuchininako.

At this, Kuchininako began to scream, drawing the attention of two young men who were hunting nearby. They arrived just in time to save Kuchininako and then cut open the cannibal and took out Kuchininako's clothing so that she no longer stood naked before them. Kuchininako returned home, while the dismembered parts of the cannibal woman became features of the landscape about which tales were told thereafter. (Parsons 1931)

**Kusi'tawa'qari** A widespread North American myth says that the sky in primeval time was empty of stars. When Coyote, the trickster, tried to force his daughters to have intercourse with him, the girls ran away to the sky and became stars, called Izá'apadimi, "Coyote's Daughters," by the Paiute. Most often, these stars were the spring-rising Pleiades that in many lands are seen as "seven sisters" (see **Pleiades**, in Greece). Among the Shoshonean people of the great basin, the same stars were called Kusi'tawa'qari, "women fighting," and were said to have been sisters who fought with each other over an attractive man and were transferred to the sky, still fighting. (Miller)

**Ḳutsæbukwi oyikaga** According to the Tewa pueblo people, "ice mother" or "winter mother" is one of the primal beings from the time before the emergence of humanity. She was born in a lake where her people lived underwater. Accompanied by other female beings who became the Corn Mothers of the people—most prominent among them was her twin, the Summer Mother—she helped them into the upper world. As the people emerged, Ḳutsæbukwi oyikaga was given the eastern hills, where she can always be seen; while the summer goddess was given the western hills, where she is always accompanied by the cloud people. (Parsons 1994)

**Kuwánlelenta** "To Make Beautiful Surroundings" is the meaning of this Hopi goddess's name. As guardian of the sunflower plant, she was ancestral mother to the sunflower clan. In Owaqlt ("melons on vine" or "rocks in the field"), a women's ceremony, Kuwánlelenta appears in double form, represented by two girls whose faces

are painted with ground sunflower petals. Like all plants, sunflowers are seen as living beings and thus worthy of respect and honor. The Owaq'it, a harvest ceremony, is based in the redistribution of food by the Hopi women. (Waters)

**Ku'yapalitsa** The Zuñi and Hopi goddess of childbirth and the hunt is a virgin warrior woman. Her virginity expresses her desire to keep everything to herself, including the game animals she controls. She is called "Yellow Woman" by the Keres and is said to have been tricked into marriage and into releasing animals to be hunted. (Tyler)

**Látkakáwas** The Modoc primal woman looked like an old woman, but she had only to shake herself to become bright blue and beautiful. She lived with her five brothers on Klamath Lake, where she gathered food while they hunted. People nearby noticed that Látkakáwas was sometimes young and sometimes old. Some men set out to capture her, to torment her for her odd ways, but they could not move fast enough. One young man did not make fun of her, so she grew fond of him.

Her brothers decided to take her away from the cruel people, but the young man followed them as a salmon. To her horror, one of her brothers speared the fish. When they learned it was Látkakáwas's lover, the brothers held a funeral ceremony. As soon as the young man's body was consumed by flame, it turned into a metal disc that Látkakáwas took to the magician Kumash. Although Kumash could revive the dead, he found Látkakáwas attractive and so did not perform his magic but, instead, burned the disc. But Látkakáwas leaped into the fire and was burned with her lover. (Curtin 1971)

**Lê'nAXAĀĪ'dAq** The Tlingit wilderness spirit was a curly-haired woman with long fingernails, who ran through the woods carrying a baby on her back. Lê'nAXAĀĪ'dAq could bring wealth, but first she had to be caught, so that she could scratch the pursuer with her long fingernails. As the scratches healed, the scabs brought good luck. Bits of scab could be shared with friends, providing wealth. (Swanton 1908)

**Loha** The beautiful daughter of a Klamath leader, Loha had the misfortune of attracting the lust of the chief of the underworld, who lived under one of the volcanoes near Mount Shasta. When she refused to become his bride, he erupted in flames. Lava and ash descended upon the people, who were nearly destroyed. But the rage of the underworld chief caused his mountain to collapse upon him, locking him beneath the earth. The lake that fills the cavern where he once came forth is known as Crater Lake. (Clark 1953)

**Lok Snedwéjas** This Modoc woman was a bear every night but transformed herself into a beautiful woman in the daylight. She lived in wealth and comfort on a mountain, but she was lonely until she saw a handsome young hunter. She made herself visible so that he fell in love with her; but at night, he discovered that she turned into a bear. Fearful of being rejected, she suggested that he return to his human family; but he refused, saying that they had been abusive to him. So they lived together until their son was born, at which point the man felt he should visit his family and introduce the child. Lok Snedwéjas warned him that he should never leave the child with other children.

But Lok Snewédjas's husband failed to notice his son turning into a bear while playing with other children. Terrified, they killed the boy.

Away on her mountain, Lok Snewédjas knew her child had died and came roaring into the village. Hunters brought her down, whereupon she turned back into a beautiful woman. Her husband was distraught with grief, but a young girl who understood magic revived Lok Snewédjas and her son. The family then returned to the mountain and were never seen by humans again, although sometimes their voices are heard on the wind. (Curtin 1971)

**Loo-Wit** The Multnomah and Klickitat said that the goddess of Mount Saint Helens was an old woman who, because of her generosity, was granted a boon by the sky spirit. She wished for eternal youth and beauty. The sky father told Loo-Wit to build a fire on the bridge that separated the Multnomah and the Klickitat, whose greed had set them at odds. When the beautiful Loo-Wit appeared on the bridge, they made peace.

But trouble soon started. Chiefs of both people courted Loo-Wit, and she could not choose between them. The men started a war, breaking the bridge in the battle. The sky father intervened, turning the chiefs into Mount Hood and Mount Adams (the latter sometimes said to be **Pahto**) and Loo-Wit into Mount Saint Helens. Afterward, the chiefs continued to make war, shooting fire at each other and spilling rocks (the Columbia Cascades) into the space where the bridge once stood. (Clark 1953)

**Luhdee** The Pomo panther goddess came from the east at the beginning of time, bearing the laws of right living: do not kill any fellow being; do not be dishonest or deceitful; be courteous to all, even to enemies, and especially to elders; and be loyal and kind to your marriage partner. She is the symbol of everything connected with women. (Clark and Williams)

**Mahohrah** At the age of eight, this Huron girl showed that she was both wise and beloved of all creatures, for snakes came when she called them, trees bowed their heads so that she could talk to their leaves, and fish splashed up from the water when she passed. But she became inexplicably ill and could not be cured, and so his father traveled to the great goddess **Ataensic** to beg for his daughter's life. But it was too late, for he saw Mahohrah passing along the skyway of death, bearing torches in her hands. Overcome with grief, the father flew into the sky to try to turn her back. But she did not alter her course. Out of sympathy for the father's loss, Ataensic turned Mahohrah and her father into the stars that form the belt of the constellation Orion. (C. Barbeau 1915)

**Máidikdak** When the two daughters of the Modoc snowbird woman were to be married, they set off to meet the sons of a nearby chief. Their mother Máidikdak warned them not to take a path that would take them past the home of the fox, Wus. But the headstrong older daughter thought that way was shorter, so despite the younger daughter's objections, the girls embarked upon the dangerous route.

As predicted, they encountered Wus, who attempted to get them to stay with him. When they refused, he turned them into old women dressed in rags, who disappointed

the chief's sons when they arrived at their destination. But the youngest son followed them at night, when they turned back into lovely young women, and when the girls went home, he followed them and married them both. (Curtin 1971)

**Maka** The Lakota earth mother Maka could not see herself in the primal darkness, so the sky god created light. Disturbed by how bare she seemed, Maka divided up the waters into rivers and streams, braiding them into fanciful designs. Because she was cold, the sky god made the sun to warm her. Then Maka created beings to live on her surface. (Dooling; Powers)

**Mem Loimis** Among the Wintun, this underworld goddess controlled the earth's water. When the world caught fire, Mem Loimis doused the flames, but her waters reached the heavens, where the frog woman Yoholmit Pokaila lived. She got into a floating basket, but the water continued to rise. So the gods drove Mem Loimis back to a hole in the earth, and the waters receded with her.

Later, she returned to marry the creator god Olelbis, by whom she had two sons. Then she left him for another man. Because Mem Loimis was the essence of water, Olelbis and his sons became very thirsty. A shaman danced for five nights, but was unable to discern where Mem Loimis had gone. He danced for five nights more and still could not perceive her location.

So Olelbis sent for a stronger shaman. After 60 pipes of tobacco, he could not gain a vision of Mem Loimis, so he danced for 60 nights. Finally, he saw Mem Loimis far to the east. Her sons set off to plead for water. Mem Loimis held a basket to her breast and filled it. Carrying it back, the boys let some fall. Everywhere the drops fell, water became abundant. Elsewhere, the land remained a desert. (Curtin 2004)

**Menil** This beloved moon goddess was the culture heroine of the Cahuilla people. Because the primal universe was dark, twin gods created Menil to light the sky. One twin did not like the beings made by the other, who created women with breasts both front and back, men with webbed toes, and other monsters. The twins also disagreed about how to launch the seasons, how to create plants, and virtually everything else. To settle matters, Menil got to work, establishing rules of culture and human interaction. She divided humans up into clans and designed religious rituals. She invented singing so that people could entertain their children while teaching them. As long as she lived among the people, everyone was happy. Women were especially happy, because they were free.

Then one of the twin gods invented death. He helped Menil invent bows and arrows, then told her to teach people how to make sharp-pointed arrowheads. Finally, he asked her to have people hit each other with the arrows, assuring Menil that no one would be hurt. But people fell down dead. The remaining people went into mourning, alleviated only by the presence of the beautiful moon. But the twin god drove her up into the sky, and life has never been as pleasant as when Menil lived on earth. (Williamson and Farrar)

**Moasäm Beps** When people starved during a cold winter, this Modoc southwind spirit brought minnows and pine nuts to sustain them. She married a human chief, telling him she would protect him as long as he wore the moccasins she made. He did so, until a long hunting trip when he got wet. Forgetting his promise, he took off the shoes and perished in sudden snow. (Curtin 1971)

**Momoy** The Chumash said datura could be made into a hallucinogenic drug. The essence of the plant was Momoy, who washed her hands in a basin of water, impregnating it with visionary power. Momoy's daughter became pregnant by a bear, who disguised himself as human and then ate the girl. Momoy found a bit of her daughter's blood on an alder leaf. She did magic until the blood congealed into a fetus, which she nurtured until it became a hero. Guided by his grandmother's visionary ability, the boy rid the land of monsters and made it fit for human habitation. (Bierhorst 1985; Blackburn)

**Mooinaarkw** "Mama Bear" or "Grandmother Bear" of the Algonquin people, Mooinaarkw was tormented by a trickster named Lox, the wolverine, who blinded her by kicking ashes from her fire. Unable to hunt or fish, and thus reliant upon the poor meals her family could provide, Mooinaarkw decided to cut holes into her head that would serve as eyes. The experiment worked, but she discovered that her family had been feasting lavishly while offering her only bones and gristle. She waited until she had been presented with a plateful of bones before remarking on the juicy meat on the others' plates. Shamed, the others switched plates, claiming they had always served her the best because she was blind. After that, Mooinaarkw always kept her eyes open, even if the others did not realize she could see. (Leland)

**Muzzu-Kummik-Quae** Once, the Anishinaubae hero Nana'b'oozo found himself floating on a raft in a flood. Wild creatures swam around him, calling for help. Nana'b'oozo remembered an earlier flood, when **Geezhigo-Quae** dived to the bottom of the sea and brought back mud from which she created the world. Animals attempted the feat, descending but always coming back with nothing. Finally, the muskrat brought back a bit of soil into which Nana'b'oozo breathed in imitation of Geezhigo-Quae. The soil grew until it became the earth.

Muzzu-Kummi-Quae appeared to a group of hunters who were unable to find water or food. When they came upon her, disguised as an old woman, they stopped to help her. To reward them, Muzzu-Kummi-Quae gave them medicine bundles, warning them not to open the package until they got home, then to make tea from it. The young men did so, and soon died. From their graves grew wonders: from the first, a pine tree whose seeds grew into forests, where deer and moose appeared. From the second grew a birch, from which canoes could be made. From the third, flint grew so that people could make cooking fires. The last grave offered the sacred plant, tobacco. (Johnston)

**Nahkeeta** The goddess of Lake Sutherland in the Olympic Mountains was originally a delicate maiden, gentle as a water bird. She was beloved by her people, and she herself

loved the dense forests where they lived. One day, while Nahkeeta was gathering wild plants, she lost her way in the thick rainforest. As the light dimmed beneath the great trees, she wandered until exhausted, then fell asleep beside a fallen tree. There, the next day, her family found her bloodied body, marked with the claws of a wild beast. They had loved her so much that their sorrow was unceasing—until the day that she reincarnated herself in a soft blue lake, a lake filled with water birds and the slow sound of wind, like a voice, on her surface. (Clark 1953)

**Náhookoz Ba'áadii** To the Navaho, the constellation Cassiopeia is Náhookoz Ba'áadii, “whirling woman” or “She Who Carries the Fire in Her Basket.” She may have been the ancestral first mother of the Navaho people; she was envisioned as married to the Big Dipper, with whom she forms an idealized couple in the sky. (Miller)

**Nalq** The Tshimshian ancestral mother was the only human left after the sky divinity, irritated by how noisy people were, sent down a beautiful magic plume that, when touched, stuck like glue. One after another the people were captured and carried away, but Nalq was indoors giving birth to many children, whom she warned against the magic plume. But Nalq's children were magical, and when the plume presented itself, they grabbed hold and were taken to the heavens, where they intermarried with spirits, tamed the winds, then settled on earth. (Lévi-Strauss)

**Ne Hwas** A Passamaquoddy family lived by the side of a blue lake, about which the mother always warned her daughters. But they snuck away from her to swim there, until one day, they did not come home. Their father found them unable to leave the water, for their lower extremities had become snakes. But their torsos and faces had grown incomparably beautiful, and they sang most melodically. The girls had become Ne Hwas, mermaids, and remained thereafter in the lake. (Leland)

**Nemissa** The Algonikan people of Lake Huron tell of the star maiden Nemissa, who descended to earth to seduce Cloud-carrier, a handsome hunter. Carrying him to her heavenly home, Nemissa showed him their magnificent lodge. However, when she heard her brother coming home, she demanded that Cloud-carrier hide under a pile of her clothes. But the brother smelled the presence of human blood in the lodge. Although she had been forbidden to speak with the people of earth, Nemissa's family agreed to let Cloud-carrier remain with them. But Nemissa's lover grew homesick. Once on earth, heaven seemed like only a dream, so he settled down and married an earthly woman. But she died immediately. He married again, and the same thing happened. Undeterred, he married a third time, and a third woman died. After that Nemissa came to get Cloud-carrier, who disappeared from his village and was never seen again. (Spence)

**Netami-gho** The primal mother of the Lenni Lenape (Delaware) created the turtles, beasts, and birds that inhabit the earth, while monsters and snakes were created by a bad spirit who also made flies and mosquitoes. (McCutchen)

**Netche'nsta** The Tahlian said this goddess was like a post, and that the soil was like a tent. When Netche'nsta grew tired and shifted, earthquakes shook the land. The goddess grew slowly weaker, so that someday, the earth would disappear beneath heavenly waters. Netche'nsta was the mother of all beings, both human and animal, for whom she provided food. (Teit 1919)

**Nokomis** Nokomis is the Algonquin name for the goddess called Eithinoha by the Iroquois. She ruled the earth and its produce, and she created the food for the people and animals. She had a daughter, Oniata, the corn maiden. When Oniata was wandering through the land, looking for dew, an evil spirit abducted her and held her under the earth; but the sun found her and led her back to the surface. Another legend says that men, attracted by Oniata's loveliness, fought over her. When the Iroquois women complained, Oniata explained that she never wished for the men's attentions. To ensure that the men would return to their families, she left the earth, leaving behind only spring wildflowers.

The Menominee described Nokomis, also known as Masâkamek'okiu, as grandmother of the trickster rabbit Mánabus. A number of variants of her story were told, with the daughter typically dying while birthing twins or triplets, only one of whom survived. Overwhelmed by grief, Nokomis put the surviving baby under a bowl, later finding a rabbit that she raised as her grandchild. In one story, Nokomis's daughter became pregnant by the wind while gathering wild potatoes, after which she gave birth to Mánabus, a wolf named Múhwase, and a sharp flint stone that cut the girl in two. Nokomis punished the flint by throwing it away, but raised the other children. Another version said the goddess found under her food dish a daughter, Pikâkamik'okiu, who grew into a woman instantly. Impregnated by four invisible beings, Pikâkamik'okiu died, ripped apart by delivery. Nokomis found no solace from her grief until she laid down her food dish, from which the trickster rabbit was born.

Among the Penobscot, Nok-a-mi was the primal woman, who appeared at time's beginning, already bowed with age. The next woman to appear was Nee-gar-oose, who brought love and color to the universe and who became the mother of all people. After a time, she became downcast because her children were hungry. So she asked her husband to kill her and bury her with a certain ritual. The man did as he was told. Seven days later, he returned to find that, from his wife's body, the first corn and tobacco had sprung up. (Bierhorst 1976; Converse; Johnston; Judson 2000; Nicoliar; Skinner and Satterlee)

**Nomhewena Pokaila** A California Wintun myth begins in the home of this old woman who lived by digging roots, which were her only food. After 10 years, she had used up all the root vegetables in her area, except for one small portion that, when she started to dig it, began crying like a child. She dug deeper until she found a baby, whom she brought home. There, she raised the child, who grew astonishingly fast. Within a few weeks, he was old enough to talk and to run around, so she warned him that he must never approach the east. He was curious but obeyed. A few weeks later, when he was fully grown, Nomhewena Pokaila told him that her people had all been devoured by

a cannibal who lived in the direction of sunrise. The boy, Tulchuherris, determined to kill the cannibal. Although Nomhewena Pokaila feared for her child, she sent along her own wisdom in the form of a dwarfish being who hid in Tulchuherris's hair and warned him against difficulties. With that help, the boy tricked the old cannibal so that he split in half and was thrown up into the sky, becoming the sun and moon. (Curtin 2004)

**Nonō'osqua** The Bella Coola “mother of flowers” lives in the House of Myths, from which she brings forth all the plants every spring, when two old women call forth her power in ritual. (Boas 1898)

**Norwan** This Wintun goddess brought food to earth. The daughter of earth and sun, Norwan danced above growing plants each day until sunset. Bearing a flowering staff and with flowers in her hair, she rubbed acorns between her hands, creating forests. Feathers from behind her ears formed flocks of birds.

She had many suitors, but she rejected them: this one smelled bad, that one had a crooked mouth, another had a hot temper. Then came Norbis Kiemila, a wild-looking man whose hair stood out in all directions. Despite his peculiar appearance, Norwan could not keep her eyes off him. The next night, he slept with her, but slipped away before daybreak.

Norwan created a magical outfit of flowers and went off to a dance attended by all beings, including divinities of light and beauty. Two of them, twin brothers, seduced Norwan with erotic dancing. Although she had created a bond with Norbis Kiemila, he was not there, and Norwan was unable to resist the twins, with whom she left the dance.

At this moment, Norbis Kiemila arrived, beautifully attired. He sought Norwan, but she could not be found. He roused a group of fighters to go with him to reclaim Norwan, but the twins refused to give her up. So the world's first war was launched. While it went on, the twins kept Norwan tied up. Escaping, she regretted her attraction to the twins, although she also regretted meeting Norbis Kiemila, whom she liked less than the twins. To her horror, the wars continued, with allies gathering warriors and many more battles ensuing. To end it all, Norwan's brother Ollelbis turned people into animals. No longer able to recognize their enemies, they ceased their warfare. (Curtin 2004)

**Nunnehi** Gourd-headed, hairless, and tall, these Cherokee spirits liked to attend funerals, for they knew dancing would follow. Enamored men followed them home, only to see the Nunnehi walk into a lake or through a rock. Benevolent nature spirits, they worried about the difficulties that Cherokee people face. Once, they tried to move all the Cherokee to their own world, so that the people would be free of suffering and pain. They visited each village in turn, telling its residents to fast for seven days and seven nights. That was too much for many people, who ate morsels of food during the preparatory week. When the Nunnehi led the people through a mountain, those who had kept faith disappeared, while the rest remained. (Uguwiyuak)

**Núwakanda** This was the name taken after her transformation into a spirit woman by an Iowa girl originally named Thiógrita'mi. Her original name meant “born from a foot,” because the youngest of her brothers got a splinter in his foot that, when removed, turned into a baby girl with magical powers. When her four brothers were killed by a cannibal spirit, the girl heroically went after the cannibal’s brothers, killing them all and carrying their heads around until the cannibal found her. Then she challenged the cannibal, infuriating the spirit sufficiently that it threw the heads of her brothers at the girl. She then did magic over them, so that they reformed into living beings and awoke, believing that they had only slept a long time. She then told them that she was transforming herself into a spirit and disappeared from sight. (Skinner)

**Omamama** The Cree ancestral goddess, beautiful and old as the earth, was loving to her children, the spirits, and the divinities. Her firstborn was the thunderbird; her second, the sorcerer frog; her third, the hero Weesakayjac; and finally, the wolf and beaver. Rocks and plants fell from her womb until the earth was populated. (Waters)

**Öng Wuhti** Öng Wuhti appears in the mythology of the Hopi, Zuñi, Keres, and Acoma as a divinity connected with the earth. To encourage abundance and fertility, a ritual simulated intercourse, after which the participants offered each other bowls of seeds and of salt. The Zuñi said that Öng Wuhti originally lived in the ocean; but feeling crowded by people living on the shores, she moved to the mountains, turning interior pools and basins salty when she sat beside them. In Zuñi territory, she met the god of turquoise, with whom she lived until people discovered her home, whereupon she hid within the mountains. Her lover followed, leaving footprints of blue stone. (Hardin; Tyler)

**Oochigeaskw'** This Micmac girl was regularly tormented by her two older sisters, who burned her with coals until she was covered with scars (hence her name, “rough-faced girl”) and claimed that she caused her own injuries by playing with fire. But she found a way to escape. In the village, an invisible man walked out each night, accompanied by his sister. Any girl who could see him would become his wife, but none managed to see the invisible one. Because no one would give her decent attire, Oochigeaskw' made her own from rags and birchbark and went to the home of the invisible one. There, she was welcomed kindly by the sister, who asked if she could see the man. And indeed, she could. The sister magically transformed Oochigeaskw' into a beautiful, well-dressed bride, and she married the invisible man and moved to his lodge.

Another version of the story has more supernatural overtones, with the main character being Noomeegal, the rain woman who arrived with her brother, the invisible thunder man, at a Micmac village. There, she set up her camp and announced that any girl who could see her brother would become his wife. Because Noomeegal had plenty of fresh meat, it was clear that her brother was an excellent hunter and therefore a great catch as a husband. They did not want to let his invisibility put them off, so they began to lie to Noomeegal when she asked the girls, one at a time, to describe her brother’s appearance. Each time, it was clear that they could not see him.

Among the girls was Oojeegwee-esgay, “covered with scars,” a girl beaten regularly by her older sisters, hence her unfortunate name. Both of the sisters had tried and failed to gain Noomeegal’s brother, but dreams introduced Oojeegwee-esgay to the young man, so that when she went to try her luck, she was able to describe accurately the hunter-brother to Noomeegal. But when she gained a husband, Oojeegwee-esgay began to weep, afraid that her scarred face would make her unlovable. Noomeegal turned the girl’s skin smooth and unmarked, then gave her fabulous bridal garments to wear. After she had dressed herself, a handsome young man appeared and begged her to become his wife. When Oojeegwee-esgay shyly agreed, Noomeegal caused a heavy rain to fall, which erased any sign of the camp she shared with her brother. None were ever seen in human form again. The story may be a local version of the famous story of **Cinderella** (see Scandinavia), brought to the area by French settlers. (Leland; Melançon)

**Oo-kwa-we** O-ne-ha-tah, primal mother of the Onondaga, gave birth to three children: bear, wolf, and deer. When a lost human baby came upon the trio, all offered to care for him, but O-ne-ha-tah pointed out that the wolf would find the baby a tempting morsel, and the deer would run away. So she gave the baby to bear-mother Oo-kwa-we. The boy grew up as a bear, eating berries and salmon and hibernating in a den. His human scent scared other bears away, so Oo-kwa-we’s family always had the best pickings in the berry patches.

But one day, Oo-kwa-we had a dream and warned her children that they were about to die. She packed sacred bundles for the bears, but gave nothing to her human son. One at a time, the bears walked up to the humans and were shot, but the boy could see that their spirits escaped on the contents of their sacred bundles. When his bear family was dead, the boy discovered that the hunter was his lost father. Brought back to humanity, the boy never forgot his animal relatives. (Beauchamp 1893)

**Pahalali** This little girl cried so much, said the Serrano Indians of California’s San Bernadino County, that her mother threw her away. But a rock-spirit adopted her. When the girl grew up enough to ask questions, she asked a gopher who lived with them whether the spirit was her mother. The gopher told Pahalali that she had a human mother in the nearby village. With the gopher’s help, Pahalali escaped from the rock cave and returned to her human home, where her mother was relieved and delighted to see her. But all did not end well, because the rock-spirit came after his adopted daughter and, although she used courage and trickery to try to save the village, the spirit and the villagers all died, fighting over the rejected daughter. (Gifford and Block)

**P’áh-hlee-oh** The Tigua say that the moon woman P’áh-hlee-oh gave birth to plants, animals, and people. There was no darkness, for when the moon rose, the earth was as bright as during the day. Slowly, everyone on earth grew exhausted, so P’áh-hlee-oh voluntarily gave up one of her eyes. Her light diminished, and the earth rested.

Despite being blind in one eye, P’áh-hlee-oh made her husband, the dawn, supremely happy. But two sisters (the Yellow Corn Maidens, Ee-eh-ch-chó-ri-ch’áhm-nin) who envied P’áh-hlee-oh lured her into a trap and drowned her. Her

husband withdrew, plunging the world into darkness. No one could locate the missing P'áh-hlee-oh. Finally, a turkey buzzard came back with the news that he had found a mound of extraordinarily beautiful white flowers. The dawn man found it and revived P'áh-hlee-oh. Once home, she cast a spell on her rivals, who turned into rattlesnakes. (Erdoes and Ortiz)

**Pahto** A mountain goddess of the Yakima and Klickitat, she was embodied in Mount Adams. Once, she was a wife of the sun. But he had four other mountain-wives, and two of them stood in the way of the sun's rays each morning. Splash-Plash and Wakhshum received sunshine long before the god even noticed Pahto. So Pahto killed the other wives. She exploded and dashed off their heads so that she could feel the sun's first rays.

Then she grew greedy. She stole berries and trees and salmon and trout from other mountains. Klah Klahnee demanded that the gods do something. First, a truce was proposed, with return of only half the stolen goods. When Pahto refused, her head was blown off, leaving a pile of rocks. What had been stolen was returned, leaving only a few berry bushes and some elk and fish. The sky spirit, seeing how Pahto had been humbled, offered her a new head: a cap of snow that shone in the sunlight. (Clark 1953)

**Pakchuso Pokaila** The Wintuns said that the creator god Ollebis lived with two women who both had this name and who were his grandmothers. They lived in the world before our world. People lived there too, different from today's humans. When those people set the world afire, the grandmothers built a new world. They instructed Ollebis to provide young white oak for the lodgepole, with black and western oak for the wall-supports. But there was no roof until one grandmother waved her hands, and a blooming plant grew from it. She wove it into a mat and gave it to her grandson to form the roof. The two then wove mats for walls from blooming plants they created. (Curtin 2004)

**Panyoka** The people of the Tewa pueblo in San Juan, New Mexico, were divided into halves, or moieties, that represented summer and winter. The goddess of summer was Panyoka, who was honored in the shape of a small stone figure, while the winter goddess was Oyika. Ceremonies in the appropriate season honored the two divinities. (Kurath)

**Pavinmana** From the Hopi settlement of Oraibi comes the story of "water girl," a heroine who went with her sister to draw water from the sacred well at Lenva ("flute spring") and saw an insect singing a **Kachina** song while skating on the water. She caught the cute bug and brought it home, providing it with water on which it skated and sang, delighting the people of Oraibi. But not long afterwards, Pavinmana's house was flooded by rain, and the insect was carried away out the door on the flood. Pavinmana ran after the singing insect as it was swept along until it reached land at Duwanasavi, another sacred place and the home of the god of seed germination.

There, she met a handsome young man. “I am looking for my pet,” she said, to which he responded, “I am your pet. My name is Hicanavaiya.” The young man explained that he had come to take Pavinmana home to his family, and she readily agreed to go. As they were traveling, she felt the need to urinate. When she stepped aside from their path to do so, she heard a voice beneath her buttocks asking her to hold her water. When she looked down, there was Spider Woman, **Kókyangwúti**, who told her that she had come to prepare Pavinmana for the challenges that lay before her.

After receiving six magical turkey feathers from Kókyangwúti, Pavinmana went back to her companion, who flew them away to the ice mountains. There she met Angwushahai’í, mother of the **Kachinas**, who put her into a bedroom of ice where she was warned she might freeze to death. But following Kókyangwúti’s instructions, Pavinmana put a magical turkey feather beneath her and another over her, and so she slept through the night comfortably. The next day Angwushahai’í was surprised to find Pavinmana alive and so set another test for her: to grind ice like corn. She left the girl alone, and Kókyangwúti appeared to help her out. Pavinmana ground the ice and, under Kókyangwúti’s instructions, treated all around her with kindness.

Because of this kindness, as well as her powers of survival, the Kachina mother decided that Pavinmana could become the bride of her nephew. So Angwushahai’í instructed the people to make a beautiful bridal costume for Pavinmana in preparation for her return to Oraibi. The girl and her new husband returned to discover that their happiness roused envy in the hearts of other men, and so Hicanavaiya again assumed the form of an insect and escaped, leaving behind Pavinmana but promising to watch over her from the ice mountains far away. A similar story tells of the girl Pasiyaunim, who was courted by the germination god Muyingwa; the tales may have originally been the same story. (Titiev)

**Pêp’ákijisê** “Panther Woman” appeared to the Midwestern Menominee as a powerful being who lived under the water, a theme that appears as well in the ancient effigy mounds of the “underwater panther” found in the region. She drew a young warrior to herself through her magical powers, even though he was already living with a powerful woman magician. But when he brought her from beneath the waves to witness a ball game, she saw the other team wearing the skins of her massacred panther-relatives. Distraught with grief, she begged to be taken away from the ball-ground, but her husband played another game and defeated the thunderbirds who had destroyed Pêp’ákijisê’s relations, thus avenging his wife. Such wars between the underwater people and the sky people are a common feature of Menominee mythology. (Skinner and Satterlee)

**Pohaha** This Tewa heroine refused to learn women’s skills, preferring to hunt and raid. Although she was mocked for this choice, the raillery ended when she became leader of the men’s war party. Lest anyone question that this redoubtable warrior was female, she raised her skirts as she approached enemies. She wore a mask with one side blue and the other yellow, in order to terrify her opponents. Named Chief Defender of the Clan, Pohaha held that title throughout her life. After her death, her mask became an

honored relic. A similar story is told of the girl warrior Chakwena, whose face turned into a mask while she was fighting. (Elledge; Neithammer; Parsons 1994)

**Pook-jin-skwess** This Algonquin witch was a shape-shifter who could appear as a woman, as a group of women, or as an old man. Her antagonist was the adventuring hero Gloosap. Once, he stuck her to a tree in the shape of an old man, but she found a hatchet and cut herself free. Wood stuck to her, for which she was relentlessly teased. In disgust, she ran away in the shape of a wolf, then turned into a mosquito to torment humans. Other versions of the story say that Pook-jin-skwess was a voluptuous woman who, when she was ready to die, transformed herself into a mosquito so that she might continue to enjoy the flesh of young men. (Elledge; Leland; Speck 1935)

**Puchi Yushubah** It is difficult to know what impact Christianization had upon the recorded “great flood” story of the Choctaws in which this mysterious bird woman appears. A prophet forecast doom: first impenetrable darkness, then a vast flood that swept away everyone but the prophet, who rested upon a raft of sassafras logs. As he drifted on the floodwaters, a black bird flew over, cawed, and disappeared. Not long after, a bluebird appeared who flew around the prophet’s head and into the west. This turned the prophet’s boat in that direction, and soon he came to an island filled with animals of all sorts—except mammoths, which had all been killed in the flood. There were, however, no women with whom he might repopulate the earth, until the bluebird came back and transformed herself into a woman, who became the mother of all people. She bore the name Puchi Yushuba (“lost pigeon” or “turtledove”) in memory of her original identity. (Swanton 2001)

**Qamā’its** Among the Bella Coola, Qamā’its was a warrior who lived in the east. Although she created the earth, she also brought death, famine, and disease. Better for all the people, the Bella Coola say, when Qamā’its stays in her sea home or in the treeless prairie behind the sky. Her myths say that the mountains were once much larger, but Qamā’its brought them down to their current size by breaking their noses. Researchers in the early part of the 20th century found evidence that she had once been the most important Bella Coola divinity. (Boas 1898; Judson 1917; Wherry)

**Qeuxu** This Snuqualmi ancestral mother brought food to this world. Qeuxu (“steel-head”) and her four sisters (each of whom represented a different kind of salmon) stole a baby and raised it to become their shared husband. By him they had so many children that, when he returned to humanity, he brought the abundant salmon with him. (Haeberlin and Boas)

**Rhpisunt** The Haida tell of Rhpisunt, daughter of the Wolf clan’s chief, who was insensitive to the feelings of bears, chatting with friends in the forest instead of singing to warn bears of her presence. This drew the attention of the bear people, who felt her behavior mocked them. One day, she stepped into droppings and cursed the bears. Then the strap on her pack broke, and while she was mending it, her friends left her.

Two handsome young men came out of the brush and spoke to her courteously, offering to help.

The men, wearing bear robes, led her to their village. He introduced Rhpisunt to the chief, his father, a huge fat man who sat in a log house lined with bearskin cloaks. Suddenly, at Rhpisunt's side, a little fat lady named Tsects appeared. She whispered to Rhpisunt that she should never relieve herself without breaking off a piece of copper and placing it on the ground above the buried excrement.

Rhpisunt did as she was told. Soon, she saw why: the Bear People, finding copper left behind after the woman's trip to the bushes, judged her complaints about the bear's leavings justifiable, as she herself passed shiny metal. Rhpisunt married the Bear Prince, and Tsects provided a huge feast.

But the woman's family had found her prints with those of bears. The Haida raged through the forest killing bears, and in the village of the Bear People, there was mourning for the loss of life. Finally, led by Rhpisunt's dog, one of the woman's brothers found her, together with her Bear Prince and their twin sons, in a cave. The visionary prince knew he would die, so he shared magical formulas with his wife before he was speared. Rhpisunt was brought back to the Haida village, where she grew to a great and revered age. Her sons, taking off their bear jackets while in human company, returned at her death to their father's people, but the Wolf clan always recognized bears as relatives.

Raven clan members tell a similar story about Bear Mother Kind-a-wuss. Because she loved a man of her own clan whom she could not marry, Kind-a-wuss refused to marry anyone. She and her lover eloped and lived for a time in happiness. When he wished to go home, Kind-a-wuss refused, saying that she did not wish to face the inevitable derision. When the young man returned, he could not find Kind-a-wuss, who had been stolen by a bear. Many years later, the man consulted a shaman who revealed that Kind-a-wuss could be found in a huge cedar, from the top of which a ladder hung. Once at home, she pined for her half-bear children, whom her lover kidnapped. In consideration of the years they had lost, the families of the lovers agreed to let them marry. (M. Barbeau 1946, 1953; Bierhorst 1985; Deans 1889; Erdoes and Ortiz; Krause)

**Sanyu.xáv** Among the Yuma people of California (also known as the Quechan or Kwtsaan), Sanyu.xáv was a mythic figure, possibly the sun, because her name means "to set in the west." The mother of twins, Sanyu.xáv conceived miraculously by making two flutes from willow that grew in water where she was swimming. Despite being already past menopause, she gave birth to two boys who could become birds or lizards at will. She tried to bring them up well, but they were forever changing into another form and escaping from her watchful eye. But finally, the boys settled down into human form and grew into handsome lads.

When they were grown, the sons picked up the flutes that Sanyu.xáv had made and began to play them to attract women. It worked: soon twin girls arrived, perfect mates for the young men. Although Sanyu.xáv set up magical barriers against the girls, they found their way to the boys. Sanyu.xáv was furious but wily. She announced a wedding dance and, while the girls were enjoying themselves, bewitched one so that she fell

over dead. Out of sorrow, her intended mate died, too. Sanyu.xáv was not done: she turned the other girl into a buzzard. But the people, angry at Sanyu.xáv's abuse of her magical power, drove her from their village and banished her. (Swann)

**Scomalt** The Okanogan and Salish say that Scomalt ruled a primordial titanic race. Her people, the white giants, lived on an island in mid-ocean, where they were constantly at war. Scomalt separated the most warlike and set them adrift, where they died of exposure except for one man and one woman. This couple discovered a rich land where they settled. Although they had once been white giants, their time at sea had burned them brown and shrunk them, so their children were all bronze and the size of humans today. If the rivers begin to grow, the continents will shrink to islands and the end of the world will be near. (Allen 1991; Clark 1953, 1966)

**Selmayi** "Peyote Woman" of the Kiowa makes her presence known when one eats a female peyote button, which permits the worshiper to hear her high-pitched voice as she sings with the leader who holds the rattle and staff. (LaBarre)

**Sélu** The Cherokee vegetation goddess Sélu lived alone, an old woman full of wisdom but set in her ways. One day, she saw blood on the ground and covered it with a jar. A few days later, she picked up the jar and found an infant boy, whom she raised to be a hunter. But Sélu taught him nothing of plants, for she provided all the maize and beans they could eat. But she cautioned him never to look at her when she was making dinner.

The boy became curious. One day, peering into Sélu's window, he saw her disrobe and scratch herself over a pot. Cornmeal and beans ran into the pot, for she herself was food. When he refused dinner, Sélu knew he had spied upon her. She sent him away with instructions that he should set fire to her house. He did so, and followed her dying instructions by seeking a wife from a distant group. When he brought his bride back to Sélu's land, he found enough food growing to feed their descendants. (Allen 1991; Awaikta; Kilpatrick and Kilpatrick; Leeming and Page; Mooney 1888; Swanton 1931, 1929.)

**Sintesepela win** This Lakota enchantress lured men into sexual relationships when they were hunting, causing them to become mute or to die. Sometimes she appeared to women in dreams as Winyan Nunpapika ("double woman"); after their encounter endowed them with spiritual power, such women were alluring to men and took many lovers. They sometimes became doctors or renowned artists. Sintesepela win was sometimes conflated with Ite (see **Hanwi**). However, they appear to have originally been distinct figures. (Berlo)

**Sit! tu kohan'nî** The Tlingit "fair girls of the glaciers" lived on the moving rivers of ice and came to shamans to inspire them. When traversing glaciers, the Tlingit people talked to these spirit women, asking that they not sit on travelers, apparently a reference to the threat of avalanche. (Swanton 1908)

**Skwákowtemus** The Penobscot Skwákowtemus (or Pskégdemusaz) went half-naked, wearing only bits of moss. She haunted the woods, looking for children to kidnap. If one wandered out into the forest beyond the campfire, Skwákowtemus snatched him up. Even to think of her attracted her; men who thought about her found they could never marry human women.

Even nastier was the smelly, seductive Maskíkcwsu, who wore strips of bark and a mossy headdress as she rambled about the forest looking for men. She was a bereaved human mother killed by a man because her attentions to his child made him anxious. Afterwards, she took revenge on humanity by stealing both men and children. (Speck 1935)

**Snēnē'ik** This Bella Coola cannibal woman stole children and robbed graves, throwing bodies into a woven basket. She owned a home where she offered visitors food that paralyzed them. She had many children, all wolves. In this world, she appeared as a black-faced hag with sleepy eyes who emitted low whistles. Despite her fearsome appearance and threatening demeanor, Snēnē'ik was also the bestower of copper and food. (Boas 1898, 2002; Wherry)

**Snítsma'na** With her sister AiaLilā'axa, this Bella Coola goddess helped humans wake from sleep. A protector, Snítsma'na assisted anyone threatened with sickness or death. AiaLilā'axa protected the moon goddess En-kla-loi'-killa, washing her dirty face after eclipses and restoring her each month at the full moon. (Boas 1898)

**Soi'ka Gäa'kwa** The Seneca moon goddess is called “our grandmother,” but she represents all stages of woman's life. Each stage of her own lunar cycle has a different name, and each moon within the year has a name of its own. No celestial body had more power, for this goddess brought luck in hunting. (Parker)

**S'ts'tsi'naku** Among the Keres, S'ts'tsi'naku created the earth by thinking. Whatever she visualized came to be, including the sacred beings who helped her create. By singing, she made the sacred sisters **Utset and Nowutset** from her medicine pouch. Her name means “Thought Woman,” but she is also called Spider Woman or Grandmother Spider; she is a form of the great spider-creator found in other pueblo cultures under the name **Kókyangwúti**. Her sister was Shro-tu-na-ko, “Memory Woman.”

Among the Acoma pueblo people, a similar goddess named Tsitctinako helped the sacred sisters create the world. Once they arrived in the surface world, she taught them how to prepare corn, how to make mountains by throwing stones from their baskets, and how to create all living things, including humans. When the girls became envious of each other and fought, Tsitctinako was banished from this world. (Allen 1991; Erdoes and Ortiz; Leeming and Page; Tyler; Weigle 1987, 1989)

**Tacoma** The earth goddess of the Salish, Nisqualli, Puyallup, and Yakima was embodied in the snowy peak of Mount Rainier. Tacoma, protector of fresh waters and spawning salmon, was a hugely fat woman who shared a man with two other wives. The man, angered at their constant quarreling, set two on one side of Puget Sound, and

Tacoma on the opposite shore. But this did not deter her from shooting insults at her co-wives. One legend says her husband and co-wife kept Tacoma constantly on the move until, exhausted, she refused to go further. But she continued to hate the other wife, at whose head she threw hot coals, so that Mount Constance today is bald.

Another story says that when Tacoma was a young mountain, she married a mountain prince. Though not yet fully grown, she soon outstripped her husband in size. To make room for her husband and his people, she moved across Puget Sound, taking berries and salmon with her. Tacoma grew so huge that she ate anything that set foot on her slopes—people as well as animals. Finally, a god dared Tacoma to swallow him, after he had pinned himself to another mountain. Tacoma engorged vast quantities of rock and water, but the god could not be moved. She burst open and died, and today's mountain is her corpse. (Clark 1953)

**Tahc-i** The kingfisher courted the Tunica sun goddess in human disguise. He took Tahc-i home in the dark, telling her that he lived in an upstairs room. When the girl woke up, she was out on the limb of a hackberry tree. She was perplexed and ashamed. She was also hungry and was not satisfied when the kingfisher brought her minnows for breakfast. She began to sing mournfully and rose into the sky, radiating light. (Haas)

**Tetogolee** A geographical story told by the Loucheaux, a people from near the Mackenzie River in Canada, begins at the start of time, when the world was filled with giants. A widow named Tetogolee lived with her three sons. She was a sorcerer, and when game grew scarce one year, she made magic and sent her sons off to hunt. She told them, however, that they should be careful never to look back once they had started home. All went well until they were nearly home, when one of the boys looked over his shoulder to see how long it was until sunset. At that moment, he and his brothers were turned to stone and his mother into a sandstone bluff, which bears her name. (Carnsell and Barbeau)

**Tlitcaplitana** The Bella Coola heavenly woman descended from her home to heal the sick, granting them secret knowledge and chants. Sometimes, contact with her power killed the patient. But that was not because of any ill will on the Tlitcaplitana's part, for she was the most generous of heavenly spirits, though ugly in the extreme, with a big snout and ropelike breasts. Her singing was as beautiful as she was not. (McIlwraith)

**Tomaiyovit** The Luiseño people said that Tomaiyovit gave birth to the landscape by copulating with her brother, the sky god Tukmit. But she made the sun too bright, so that the earth was scorched. Tomaiyovit took the sun away until the earth recovered, then brought it back out again. The people raised it high into the sky so that it did not burn them anymore. (Gifford and Block; Leeming and Page)

**Totolmatha** The morning star goddess of the Pomo people lived on Clear Lake, where she sang every morning in a beautiful high voice, so high that people could barely hear

her. Every morning, she swam in the lake while her hawk husband flew above her. But one morning, they were playing together in the lake when the sky began to brighten. When she returned to the village, she was teased by those who had seen her at play. This made her sad and angry, especially when she realized that she would never be happy among people because she was from the sky land, from which the eagle god Gilluk descended to prey upon them. So Totolmatha decided to do something about Gilluk.

Tata, her husband, wanted to go along. When the pair got to the heavens, they found pools of blood and mountains of bleached bones, the work of Gulluk. Shrinking Tata into a speck and hiding him, Totolmatha hid herself in Gulluk's house and, as soon as he returned sated with eating human flesh, cut him so deeply with her fingernail that he bled to death. Packing all the riches and bead money she could carry, Totolmatha set fire to Gulluk's house and ran from the flames down the long path to the earth. Behind them, the flames filled the sky, lighting their way to home and a victory celebration. (Clark and Williams)

**Tsagigla'lal** On the Columbia River, this Wishram woman was a culture heroine and chief. When Coyote decreed that women could no longer be chiefs, she refused to give up responsibility for her people. Instead, she turned herself into stone so that she could forever protect them. A petroglyph depicts her watchful eyes. (Clark 1953)

**Tsihooskwallaa** The most brilliant weaver of her people, the Chilkat heroine Tsihooskwallaa lived as a recluse near the mountains, where she gathered wild sheep's wool for her intricately patterned blankets. She had no interest in marrying but made her solitary home in the woods beside a great river. There, the salmon people noticed her and, despite her request that they keep her whereabouts secret, gossiped about her and revealed her location. This attracted the attention of a man named Num-Kilslas, who traveled upriver to find her and proposed that she marry his son, Gunnuckets. She agreed but soon regretted it, for these were not people but animals—a raven and a martin, respectively—who stole all her beautiful blankets and left her cold and destitute. In despair, she wandered about the woods until she died of exposure. The blankets became the treasures of the Chilkat people, who brought them out for ceremonies and who learned the craft of weaving by studying them. (Taylor)

**Tso** The Yucchi creation myth begins with a water-covered earth, a few creatures, and the sun goddess Tso. The creatures decided to find earth on which to live, by diving under the water. Beaver and otter were defeated, but crawfish managed to bring back a clawful of soil. From it, the animals and birds built the earth. But the earth was not fertile, for the sun lived on it, making it too hot. Out of love for the other creatures, she leaped into the sky. From that height, she dropped blood as she was menstruating. Where it fell, a baby grew. Tso raised him and made a warrior out of him. From him all the Yucchi descended, and because of his relationship to Tso, they considered themselves descendents of the sun. (Speck 1909 vol. 11; Swanton 1929)

**Tukwishhemish** Once, there were three little girls named Moki, Kopi, and Tewe, say the Cahuilla people of southern California. They were plain-looking children, but they

were charming because they laughed often. In their village lived a very beautiful woman named Tukwishhemish, who giggled sometimes but never laughed, because she would not open her mouth very wide. This made the girls curious, so they began trying to make Tukwishhemish laugh. When they succeeded, they understood her secret: she had two rows of teeth in her upper jaw. Humiliated at having her deformity revealed, Tukwishhemish rose into the sky to become the North Star. The girls, ashamed for having tormented her, rose into the sky where they became three of the Pleiades, the other four being formed from the ornaments the girls were wearing when they were transformed. The Cahuilla call this constellation Chehaum (see also **Chehiayam**, above). (Gifford and Block)

**Uncegila** Southwestern and lower Midwestern people say that this earthshaking serpent was a transformed witch. Her body was covered with mica, her head crowned with a red crystal. She was always ravenously hungry. She was so terrifying that looking at her blinded onlookers, who went mad and died. The red heart of Uncegila gave the power to see into the future, but only the medicine-arrows of a magical old woman could kill the monster.

Two boys, one of them blind, went to find that old woman. When she demanded that a boy sleep with her to gain the medicine arrows, the blind one volunteered. As soon as he touched her, the old woman turned into a beautiful maiden who gave the boys not only the powerful arrows, but the secret ways to kill the Uncegila. When the boys returned, they found nothing but a rock face where the crone's cave-home had been.

The Lakota described the similar Unktehi as the enemy of Thunderbird, one of their culture heroes. She lived in the Missouri River, which she filled with her snaky body; her children were streams running into the great river. Because she disdained humanity, she decided to flood the land. Thunderbird came to the rescue, launching a battle against Unktehi and her children. When the storms subsided, the skeleton of Unktehi stretched across the land, forming the Badlands. (Erdoes and Ortiz; Swann; Walker)

**Unelanuhi** Early in creation, the Cherokee sun goddess lived on the other side of the world. At a council of the animals, the fox announced where light could be found. The possum tried to bring it to this side, but burned off his tail. The buzzard tried, but burned off the feathers on his claws. Then Grandmother Spider, **Kanene Ski Amai Yehi**, spun a web on which she traveled across the sky. She grabbed the sun, roped it into her basket, and brought it to our world.

But the new sun sat too low in the sky. People were dying from its heat. So, handbreadth by handbreadth, the animal elders moved the sun upwards. At seven hands high, the sun was just right, and there she has stayed to this day.

Unelanuhi slept with a young man once a month who refused to tell his name. So she dipped her hands in ashes and rubbed his face in the dark. When daylight came, her brother met her at breakfast with ash on his face. He ran away in shame and stayed as far away in the sky as he could. Once a month, however, he could not resist visiting her in the new moon's darkness.

Unelanuhi had a daughter, whom she visited every day in her house on the point of noon. Every day, she saw people squint up at her. This made her think them ugly, so

she decided to kill them with heat. The spirit people told their human kin that, to survive, they would have to kill the sun. They transformed two people into a copperhead and a spreading adder, who traveled to heaven and awaited Unelanahi.

As she stopped, the sun's brilliance blinded the adder, so he spit yellow slime, and the snakes slunk off in disgrace. The spirits transformed two more people into a rattlesnake and the monstrous Uktena, who traveled to the sky. But the rattlesnake rushed at the sun's daughter rather than wait for the sun. He killed her, then ran away with Uktena back to earth.

The sun mother shut herself up in grief. Darkness descended, and people began to freeze. The spirits told the humans to bring back the sun's daughter. Seven men were outfitted with a box for carrying the sun daughter's soul. In the land of ghosts, the travelers trapped her in the box, which they had been warned to keep tightly closed. But the girl pleaded to be let out. Her captors took pity and pushed back the lid. Something flew past. Then a cardinal called out. When they returned to the land of life, the box was empty, for the bird was the sun's daughter. Since then, no one can come back from the land of ghosts.

The sun's tears threatened to flood the world. Young people tried to help by dancing and singing, but the sun never glanced up. When the drummer changed the beat, Unelanuhi looked up in surprise and smiled. Thus her light returned to earth. (Allen 1991; Davis; Erdoes and Ortiz; Hardin; Hudson; Mooney 1900; Payne Manuscripts; Thompson; Uguwiyuak)

**Unk** She was created by the earth mother **Maka**, say the Lakota people of the plains, to be the most beautiful woman on earth and to be the earth woman's companion. But Unk was so beautiful that Maka became jealous of her. They quarreled, and Maka threw Unk into the water and remained alone thereafter.

Unk, desiring revenge, took the waters as her domain and mated with a male god to conceive Iya the whirlwind, who frightened everyone but his mother. She took him as her lover and conceived the spirit of deceit and flattery, the trickster Gnaski. Then she grew aroused by the ugliness of a reptile named Unhcegi, whom she took as her mate and produced the monster race called the Unktehi (see Uncegila) as well as the germ-like beings called Mini Watu. Finally she gave birth to Keya, the turtle, who became her servant. Angry that the other divinities would not offer her partner a place among them, she withdrew to cause trouble for people and gods alike. (Dooling)

**U'thu Uta** This Cherokee giantess could change her shape at will. But her natural form was an old, rock-skinned woman with a bony forefinger. She could lift boulders and cement rocks together by touching them and build mountains from pebbles. Always hungry, she lured children from their play and stole their livers. She caused no pain and left no wound, but the afflicted died. Anyone who met an old woman singing about eating livers ran quickly away.

A council determined that a trap would be the best way to rid the earth of U'thuVta, so a pit was dug and a bonfire lit. Soon she came down the path, looking like an ordinary woman. She was not shot immediately, because the men felt kinship with her. But when she fell into the hole and turned into a monster, they lost sympathy.

The hunters emptied their quivers. But nothing could penetrate U'thuVta's skin. She was immensely strong, and it seemed as though she would climb out and kill them. A titmouse sang "un, un, un," which the hunters thought meant "unahu," or heart. So they shot at U'thuVta's heart, but the arrows glanced off. Then the chickadee bravely landed on U'thuVta's right hand. The hunters shot there, and the old woman fell down dead, for her heart was hidden in her wrist. Thereafter, the chickadee was honored for bravery, and the earth was freed from U'thuVta. (Mooney 2006)

**Uti Hiata** "Mother Corn" was a significant Pawnee and Arikara divinity, born in primeval times after ducks brought up silt from the bottom of the cosmic lake to build prairies and foothills. The sky father, seeing giants populating the earth, sent a flood to destroy them. After he replanted the earth with maize seeds that sprouted into human beings, he sent Uti Hiata to assist at their birth.

Finding no one on earth, Uti Hiata walked about. Suddenly, thunder kidnapped her and hid her beneath the earth. There, she was helped by a mole, a mouse, and a badger to dig through the ground. As she emerged, so did people, to whom she taught secrets of life, methods of agriculture, and religious rituals. (Dorsey 1997)

**Utset and Nowutset** The first mothers of humanity are, to the pueblo dwellers of the southwest, two sisters created by **Kókyangwúti**. They were sung into being, then they created earth, sky, people, plants, language, and gods through song.

The Acoma say that these goddesses, born in the underworld, grew impatient to move, but a spirit counseled them to wait. Eons passed, and baskets appeared, full of seeds to plant. The land above was soon filled with life. Finally, a tree pulled them along towards the surface. With the help of a badger, they reached the upper world.

The sisters lived in peace until a rivalry began. Some stories said they started a riddle contest, and that Nowutset, the duller sister, lost to Utset, who killed her. Another narrative says the sisters argued and decided that whoever the sun touched first in the morning would be the winner. Nowutset was taller, but Utset cheated and won. The contest was restaged, and a fight began. The sisters, unable to live with each other, separated. Utset became the mother of pueblo-dwelling people, and Nowutset, of all others. (Allen 1991; Erdoes and Ortiz; Tyler; Weigle 1989)

**Wah-Kah-Nee** The Chinook were struck with an endless winter. The ice never moved, and people begin to fear for their survival. A council was called, and the elders recalled that such winters resulted from murdering birds. Each person was asked about such a crime. The children pointed to Wah-Kah-Nee, who confessed that she had struck a bird with a stone, and it had died.

The Chinook dressed the girl in fine garments and exposed her on a block of ice. Instantly, the ice crashed from the river, and summer came like a flood. A year later, when the ice again was moving, they saw a block of ice containing the girl's body and fetched it to shore. The girl revived and lived among them a sacred being, able to walk unprotected through the winter and to communicate with its spirits. (Clark 1953)

**Wah Sil** This sun goddess was the ancestor of all chiefs, for the matrilineal Natchez traced descent through the mother, and the chief was of the sun's family. In Wah Sil's honor, the Natchez kept a perpetual fire burning on the hearth of the solar temple, with three logs alight. (Berthoud; Swanton 1929)

**Wäh-trōhn-yō-nōh'-nēh** According to the Wyandots, relatives of the Huron who in historical times moved to Kansas, this name ("keeper of the heavens") was borne by Little Turtle Woman, also called "Grandmother." She lived at the dawn of time, when there was no sun, no moon, and no stars. Little Turtle was carried on a river of darkness, until she grabbed lightning and set a flame in the sky. But that first attempt baked the earth, so the council of beings told the mud turtle to fix the problem. She made a hole in the sky where the sun went every night, but that left the earth utterly dark again. So Little Turtle made the moon, who married the sun, and they had all the stars for children. When the sun grew jealous of his moon-wife, he maimed her by taking some of her heat and then imprisoned her. Little Turtle cured the moon woman so that she grew back to her earlier size, but she grew sick with longing for her husband, shrinking back to a shadow. Women of the Wyandot were named in her honor. (Connelley)

**Warharmi** The Yuma said the creator sent the ambiguously-gendered Warharmi to bring seeds and the techniques of agriculture. Warharmi also brought the tradition of painting one's face and body for war, because she arrived war-painted, frightening the people. The nearby Mohave honored a similar goddess, the primal woman warrior Nyohaiva, who brought war paint and feathers to earth. (Roscoe)

**Waslaag** This heroine of the Klamath people of the Pacific Northwest was a chipmunk who, with her companion Chihlas, was kidnapped, both to become wives of stars. Above the earth, Waslaag found her husband, a stellar rabbit, likeable; but the husband of Chihlas would not let her see his face. When, encouraged by Waslaag, she managed to do so, Chihlas was horrified to discover he was all bloody. So the two girls plotted to escape. Although they were watched carefully, they managed to plait ropes out of weeds and to lower themselves down from the heavens. But the husbands saw them and pursued. The quick-thinking Waslaag bit the rope of descent and the girls fell safely back to earth, where they lived their lives happily. (Stern)

**Weshellequa** The primary Shawnee divinity was called "our grandmother" (Koh-komhdena), although she also had a personal name, possibly Weshellequa ("great spirit") or Paapoodōkwaki ("cloud"). Her name may be in a non-Shawnee language thought to have been spoken only by children. Weshellequa was huge and had gray hair and bad teeth. She lived in a bark house, where she wove and cooked like any other woman. No dish she cooked could ever be emptied, except by Weshellequa herself. Some myths suggest that her home was in the sky, where the dead went after passing over. Weshellequa gave them a sweat bath, then brought them to their final abode. Their activities depended upon their earthly lives. Warriors spent eternity dancing, while others had less exciting afterlives.

This goddess controlled all earthly elements. She specifically instructed the winds not to blow women's clothing about immodestly. Women who wished to bring the sun on a cloudy day lifted their skirts to their waists, thus frightening the winds, who would blow the clouds away. Weshellequa set standards for human behavior and threatened doom if those standards were not upheld. Although turned into a male god in historical times, evidence is clear that the Shawnee supreme deity was originally female. (Schutz; Voegelin)

**Winonah** In Anishinaubae mythology, Winonah was a virgin mother raped four times, over many generations, by the same spirit. She was in the forest picking berries and, overtaken with a need to urinate, forgot the warning that women should never face west while making water. When the spirit saw her vagina, he had intercourse with her immediately. Through this spirit-union, she not only acquired magical powers of fertility and longevity, but four heroic sons. (Hardin; Johnston)

**Witsduk** The family members of the California Modoc nature spirit Witsduk were made of light snow that drifts easily. They terrified the people until the shaman woman Tcutûk told them that she would trap and destroy them. But Tcutûk was frightened that she would meet the wily fox, Wus, while trying to destroy Witsduk and her family, so the people promised they would travel with her and protect her. Fright got the better of them, however, and they ran away when Tcutûk was climbing a mountain, intent upon burying Witsduk and her family under a rock there. Sure enough, Tcutûk encountered Wus, who tore the bag from her that held the Witsduks. They all flew about and, although Wus could eat anything, he could not devour enough of them to save the people, who got eaten by the Witsduks. Tcutûk turned into a squirrel, and Witsduk herself still haunts the place where the shaman woman tried to bury her. (Curtin 1971)

**Wohpe** This sacred woman brought secret knowledge to the Lakota and Ogallala. She appeared to two young men as a white-clad woman whose clothing was lavishly embroidered with porcupine quills. One young man was overtaken by lust, but the second recognized that she was no earthly woman. The first could not contain himself. He rushed open-armed toward the woman. Wohpe smiled, and a cloud descended to cover their embrace.

When it passed, the woman stood alone with a skeleton at her feet. She told the second man to return to his village and build a sacred tent. When she entered the village, the people were enraptured. Walking seven times around the central fire, she gave them a bag containing a sacred pipe and taught them ceremonies. Then she reminded them of the mysteries of their mother, the earth. Urging them always to honor her, she disappeared as a white buffalo.

Wohpe, the force of order and goddess of birds, appears as the source of all flowers, for she blew upon dust at the dawn of time until her breath enlivened it into bloom. She was the pattern of beauty for the divinities who made Hunku, the first woman and ancestor of all people who followed the buffalo. Wohpe offered the rules of culture to people as they emerged. (Bierhorst 1985; Dooling; Erdoes and Ortiz; Powers; Steltenkamp; Sullivan; Vecsey; Walker)

**Xa'a da** The California Pomo described the morning star as “Day Woman” (or “morning eye fire”), whose younger sister was Duwe da (“Night Woman”). Xa'a da lived originally on earth, where she saw that people committed incest and other objectionable acts. So she fled to the sky, where she became the star of morning. Ya'a da traveled beyond the earth to kill a monstrous eagle that was threatening humankind, for which she and her hawk husband were honored daily by the Pomo. (Miller)

**Xa txaná** At the beginning of time, said the Tshimshian, everything was flat, both the land and the weather. Because the endless sunlight was tiring, the animals decided to go through the sky. Once above the earth, the animals found the sky stretched tight as a drumskin. It took the sharp teeth of ermines to gnaw a hole big enough for the animals to crawl through to a green and fertile land. There lived the solitary Xa txaná, in a house filled with pillows that contained the winds and snow. She told them to open up the pillows, which they did, bringing seasons and growth to the earth. (Boas 1896)

**Yaulilik** The Modoc woman named “snow-bird” had two daughters and a son, but she was old and poor, with no hunter to help provide for the children. So she sent her two daughters to look for the man whose singing they had heard, for she believed he would be a good hunter. She warned them, however, only to enter a house where fresh deer meat was hanging outside, for old men could masquerade as young hunters, dressed in finery and playing music. That is what happened. When they found the home of Isis, the great hunter, his father Kumash was sitting outdoors, playing a pipe. The older sister believed that Kumash was a good hunter, but the younger sister was not fooled. Nonetheless, she agreed to accompany her sister indoors. When Isis came home and found his father entertaining two nubile women, he was angry and sent them all outdoors, where the girls scratched Kumash to death in annoyance. They ran away, but Isis found them and beheaded them.

Their heads and bodies floated back down the river to their mother's home, where their brother snared them in a net. Yaulilik magically restored them to life, then sent them to pick seeds for their food. While they were harvesting, the younger sister found the skeleton of Isis, which she restored to life. In gratitude, Isis married both sisters and impregnated them. But when the younger sister wandered off to gather food, leaving her son to die from a fall, Isis turned the girls and their mother into snowbirds while he departed from the world for good. (Curtin 1971)

**Yeselbc** The Snuqualmi tell of this woman who, with her elder sister Tapaltx, complained that there were no men nearby. One day, they were seen overhead by star men who became the girls' husbands. The sisters soon tired of living in the sky, so when a stranger told them that they could dig down to earth, they made a hole. Yeselbc was pregnant, and the girls did not want to be trapped in the sky with a baby, so they dropped back to earth on a rope. On earth's surface, they surprised their family and friends, who began using the rope ladder as a swing. Gulches were formed wherever people dragged their feet as they swung. (Haeblerlin and Boas)

**Yolkai Estsan** Sister of **Estsánatlehi**, called “white shell woman” because she was made from abalone, Yolkai Estsan ruled the dawn and the ocean. She also created fire and maize and taught women’s crafts including weaving and grinding corn.

Some legends said she was an aspect of Estsánatlehi rather than her sister. When her sister mated with the sun’s light, Yolkai Estsan sat with her legs open over a waterfall, so that she could conceive. After four days, she felt movement in her belly. Four days later, the child was born, and with Estsánatlehi’s son, he soon set out to eliminate humanity’s problems. When they had killed everything but old age, cold, poverty, and hunger, Estsánatlehi told him to stop, for without old age, life would lose its savor; without cold, the sun would scorch the earth to death; without poverty, people would not work hard; and without hunger, there would be no reason to cook and eat together. (Allen 1991; Leeming and Page; Matthews; Moon; Neithammer; Wherry)

**Yomumuli** “Enchanted bee” is a culture heroine of the Pascua Yacqui of the southwestern American desert. She was a wild woman who lived with an old woman named Yo’o Sea Hamut (Elder Flower Woman) far from other humans. Yomumuli hunted for their food, but she also understood the languages of all beings. So when the Yacqui, who at that time were only two feet tall, found a tree that seemed to be singing, they asked Yomumuli to interpret. She listened carefully to the tree, then revealed that the tree knew that change was coming in the form of tall people from another land who would bring fire-shooting metal snakes. She said the people could disappear into earth or sea, or they could grow larger and interact with the newcomers, hoping to salvage what they could of the true ways. Some people leapt into the sea, where they can still be heard by those with the gift to hear them; others descended into the earth and became ants, which to this day understand the Yacqui language. Those who chose to become big people asked the deer to sacrifice himself for them so that they could keep their land when the invaders came. The deer agreed, and a great purple flower bloomed from the dying breath of the deer. Then the Yacqui danced the first Deer Dance. As it concluded, red roses (sacred to deer) suddenly burst out in blooms around the talking tree. (Giddings; Royals)

**Yonot** The Wintu said that, in primeval time, this goddess always stayed indoors with her son Pohila (“fire child”). But after her husband helped steal flint from her brother, Yonot brought her son into the village center, where he started fires whenever anything flammable came near him. Everything would have burned up, had not Yonot brought her child back indoors. The world continued to blaze, requiring **Mem Loimis** to drench it until the fires were out. (Curtin 2004)

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# MESOAMERICA

Mesoamerica's rich mythology has drawn relatively little attention from scholars of women's spirituality. A possible reason is the human sacrifice offered to goddesses as well as gods, a practice that runs counter to essentialist gender presumptions. This was not the predominant form of worship in the region but was practiced in centralized, urban cultures. Elsewhere, decentralized cultures survived until modern times despite colonization, first by more powerful regional cultures, then later by European invaders. Myths of interest to scholars of women's spirituality can be found in these cultures as well as among the better-known Maya and Aztec. Mesoamerican religion presents multiplicity rather than uniformity throughout its development.

The centralized and literate cultures of central Mexico are unquestionably the best known. The first group to be considered in this chapter, the Mayan, thrived for hundreds of years, then declined, possibly because of drought. Much of what is known of Mayan religion derives from a significant document called the *Popol Vuh*, in which the Maya described the world as moving through various stages ("suns"), each ending with a cataclysmic event, hence the Mayan attention to recording eclipses, comets, and other celestial events over hundreds or sometimes thousands of years.

In the 12th century CE, the Huastec were dominant in central Mexico. The names of a few of their goddesses remain today, usually due to conflation with later divinities. Then came the Aztecs, who were flourishing when the Spanish arrived in the early 16th century. In 1299, the Aztecs had settled in Toltec territory; but in 1323, when the Aztecs sacrificed the Toltec king's daughter, the group was expelled. They set about draining swamps to create their city of Tenochtitlan. In 1426, the Aztec empire began, controlling much of Mexico for a century until Hernán Cortés arrived. Two generations of war lead to the control by Spain of the region.

Epidemics of diseases such as smallpox or typhus, brought by the conquerors and previously unknown in Mesoamerica, killed as much as 50 percent of the population. Some survivors adapted to the new regime and left invaluable records. In addition,

Christian missionaries recorded information about Aztec religion, although generally with the aim of destroying rather than preserving it.

Beyond the literate centralized societies, ethnographers and anthropologists have recorded myths from oral sources, which represent but a fraction of what were undoubtedly rich traditions. Indigenous religious revivals have not been widespread in Central America, in part because some traditional religious ways were absorbed into Catholic rituals, and in part because of the extirpation of tribal people. North Americans' interest in the region often focuses on shamanic aspects of religion, an interest not entirely welcomed by native Central Americans. Revival of ritualized goddess religion has not been prominent in this area, although feminists have recently worked to claim the image of Guadalupe as a symbol of indigenous feminine power.

## MESOAMERICAN PANTHEON

Ahkushtal *Yucatan Maya; childbirth.*

Ahquetztimani *Nahuatl; earth.*

Akna *Maya; birth.*

Alaghom Naom *Mayan; mind.*

Alom. *See Omecíhuatl*

Aui *Camine Nahuatl; metamorphosis.*

### **Chalchihuitlicue**

Calchihucueyeh. *See Chalchihuitlicue*

Chalchiuhtlicue. *See Chalchihuitlicue*

Chicomecoatl. *See Chicomecóatl*

### **Chicomecóatl**

Chicomotlotzin. *See Chicomecóatl*

Chihuacoatl. *See Cihuacóatl*

### **Cihuacóatl**

Cihuapipiltin. *See Cihuateteo*

Cihuatetaeo. *See Cihuateteo*

### **Cihuateteo**

Cinquimil *Guatamala; primary goddess.*

Cipactli. *See Cipactónal*

### **Cipactónal**

Citlalinicue. *See Omecihuatl*

Ciuacoatl. *See Cihuacóatl*

Ciuapipiltin. *See Cihuateteo*

Coatl Icue. *See Coatlicue*

### **Coatlicue**

### **Coyolxauhqui**

Doña María Matlacoya. *See*

*Chalchihuitlicue*

Guadalupe. *See Tonan*

Guerauaperi *Purepecha; blood.*

Huixtocihuatl. *See Huixtocihuatl*

Huixtohcihuatl. *See Huixtocihuatl*

### **Huixtocihuatl**

Hun-Ahpu-Mtye *Guatamala; moon.*

Hunahpu-Vuch *Maya; dawn, fox.*

Ilamatecuhtli. *See Tonan*

Itóki *Ituúna.*

Ituúna *Panama; scorpion.*

Itzam Cab *Mayan; earth.*

### **Itzpapalotl**

Ix Azal Uok. *See Ix Chel*

Ix Chebel Yax. *See Omecíhuatl*

### **Ix Chel**

Ixcuina *Huastec; spinning, moon.*

Ix Kanan *Guatamala; bean.*

Ix U Sihnal. *See Ix Chel*

Ixtab *Maya; suicide.*

Iztaccihuatl *Aztec; snow, mountain.*

### **Kacíwali**

Kasipoluin *Guadjiro; rainbow.*

Keamukáme *Huichol; caves.*

La Llorona. *See Cihuateteo*

Masaya *Nicaragua; volcanoes, earthquakes.*

Matlalcueitl *Aztec; mountain.*

Mayahuel. *See Mayaueul*

### **Mayaueul**

Metztli. *See Coyolxauhqui*

### **Mictecacíhuatl**

Mictecacihuatl. *See Mictecacihuatl*

Morena. *See Tonan*  
 Morenita. *See Tonan*  
 Mu Olokukurtilisop *Cuna; creatrix.*  
**Nakawé**  
 Ome Cithuatl. *See Omecíhauatl*  
**Omecíhauatl**  
 Omecihuatl. *See Omecíhauatl*  
 Quauhciuatl. *See Cihuateteo,*  
*Cihuacóatl*  
 Rapauwiemi *Huichol; rain.*  
 Tecciztecatl *Aztec; moon.*  
 Tecciztli *Aztec; moon, sexuality.*  
 Teicu. *See Tlazoltéotl*  
 Temazcalteci. *See Toci*  
 Teoyaominqui. *See Chicomecóatl*  
 Teteo Innan. *See Toci*  
 Teteoinnan. *See Toci*  
 Tiacapan. *See Tlazoltéotl*  
 Tlaco. *See Tlazoltéotl*  
 Tlaçolteotl. *See Tlazoltéotl*  
 Tlaelquani. *See Tlazoltéotl*

Tlakatelilis. *See Tonan*  
 Tlalli iyollo. *See Toci*  
 Tlaltecuhitli. *See Cipactónal*  
 Tlalteotl. *See Cipactónal*  
**Tlazoltéotl**  
**Toci**  
 Tocitzin. *See Toci*  
 Tonacaciuatl. *See Omecíhauatl*  
**Tonan**  
 Tonantzin. *See Tonan*  
 Tzapotlan Tenan *Aztec; healing.*  
 Tzitziminciuatl. *See Cihuacóatl,*  
*Cihuateteo*  
 Tzitzimitl. *See Mayaedul*  
 Xilonen *Aztec; ear of corn.*  
 Xmucane. *See Omecíhauatl*  
**Xochiquetzal**  
 Xocutxin. *See Tlazoltéotl*  
 Xtmana *Guatamala; primordial mother.*  
 Yoaciuatl. *See Cihuacóatl, Cihuateteo*  
 Zipaltonal *Nicaragua; creator.*

**Chalchihuitlicue** This jade-skirted goddess ruled streams and rain. Lake waters were also under her command, for her people lived in easily flooded areas. Chalchihuitlicue ruled salt water as well, controlling the sea and those who traveled on it. In her honor, the Aztecs called the Gulf of Mexico Chalchiuhcueyécat, “water of Chalchihuitlicue.”

Chalchihuitlicue was depicted wearing a jade necklace, turquoise earrings, a crown of iridescent blue feathers, and a skirt trimmed with water lilies. Her headdress featured large tassels that hung down on each side of her face. She may have been honored at Teotihuacán in the cave under the Pyramid of the Sun, where a gigantic statue of her was found. After Christianization, Chalchihuitlicue appeared as the folkloric figure Doña María Matlacoya, invoked in prayers for rain. (Alarcón; Caso; Clendinnen; Durán; Heyden; Kellogg; Nash 1978, 1997; Sahagún vol. 1; Schwerin; Weigle)

**Chicomecóatl** “Seven Serpent,” an important Aztec agricultural goddess who promoted human as well as vegetative reproduction, had many forms: a maiden decked with water flowers, a young woman whose embrace brought death, a mother carrying the sun as a shield. Chicomecóatl had several important festivals. On April 5, homes were decorated with herbs sprinkled with blood. Everyone marched to the fields, where they offered corn sprouts decked with flowers as well as bundles of the previous year’s harvest, with petitions for abundance. Every family then offered a basket of



**Chicomecóatl.** *One of the great divinities of the Aztec culture, the goddess of corn Chicomecóatl was the force that provided the necessary vegetative flourishing that brought sufficient food to support the Mexican population. This figure, from the 15th to early 16th century, stands in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.*

food, topped with a cooked frog to remind the goddess of her need to work together with **Chalchihuitlicue** to produce a good crop.

Another festival lasted from late June to mid-July, when wind pollinated the corn. Women wore their hair loose to encourage the corn silk to gather pollen. Corn pudding was eaten, and people made merry. In the goddess's temple, a slave danced, adorned with red and yellow face paint. On the final night of the festival, the woman danced all night, meeting her death at daybreak when she was sacrificed with a flint knife. It was important that her heart be beating when it was offered to Chicomecóatl with prayers for an abundant harvest. (Caso; Clendinnen; Durán; León-Portilla; Sahagún vol. 1; Weigle)

**Cihuacóatl** The Aztec goddess of life's trials has been considered a form of **Coatlícue**. Her alternative names include Quauhciuatl ("eagle woman"), Yoaciuatl ("warrior woman"), and Tzitziminciuatl ("devil woman"), perhaps each a separate aspect of the goddess.

Cihuacóatl wandered about decked in jewels, moaning about coming disasters. In Tenochtitlan, she had a cave-like temple before which a perpetual fire burned. Within it, effigies of captured gods were imprisoned. She was depicted with an open mouth, eager for victims, wearing obsidian earplugs but otherwise dressed in white. More human sacrifices were offered to her than any other divinity.

In her pre-Aztec identity, she was a goddess of wilderness, but by Aztec times she was a feared divinity of war and sacrifice. Yet, she retained her identity as a goddess of creation, for she received the bones of the dead and ground them

into a paste from which she created humans. She was served by the **Cihuateteo**. (Brundage; Clendinnen; Durán; Josserand and Dakin; Sahagún vol. 1; Weigle)

**Cihuateteo** Women who died in childbirth were envisioned by the Aztecs as roaming the world at night, weeping. They haunted crossroads, where they captured children. The Cihuateteo ("goddess women") were also called Ciupipiltin ("honored women") because the deaths of women in childbirth equaled heroic deaths in war.

The innumerable Cihuateteo lived in a western paradise called Cincalco, “house of corn.” When they appeared on earth every 52 days, they stood out from living women by golden eyebrows and stark white complexions. Sometimes they were fearsome, with claws for hands and a skull instead of a head. Temples at crossroads were erected to them, and butterfly-shaped cakes were offered to keep them from stealing children.

In contemporary folklore, this figure has been transformed into La Llorona, who carries a dead child through the streets. This “weeping woman” appears as a seducer of men who die violently, as a kidnapper of children, or as a grieving mother. New Mexican legend claims she was never heard weeping until Cortéz invaded Mexico, after which she drowned her children and began to roam the moonlit streets. She has been identified as Cortéz’s interpreter, La Malinche, described as a traitor for collaborating with the invader and cursed to wander after death. (Barakat; Caso; Sahagún vol. 1; Weigle; Weigle and White)

**Cipactónal** Before earth’s creation, the Aztec goddess Cipactónal was a monstrous alligator who contained all potential life, which appeared as eyes all over her body. But this life could not be freed until Cipactónal offered her body. Two gods tore her apart. Her lower body formed the earth, while her upper body formed the heavens. Her scaly coat became the mountains; her eyes and mouth turned into caves; grasses and flowers came from her skin.

Another legend, in which the goddess was called Tlaltecuhli or Tlalteotl, says that this goddess was a beautiful woman with eyes and teeth at every joint so that she could look everywhere and protect herself. But she could not avoid the gods who tore her in half, whereupon her body formed the world. (Bierhorst 1976, 1992; Carrasco; Graulich; Léon-Portilla; Weigle)

**Coatlicue** The earth was a fivefold goddess to the Aztecs, who counted four directions and a central point, which extended both up and down, on their compasses. The earth goddess therefore sometimes appeared to them as a woman with four sisters who gathered together to work magic. (Some apparently Christianized texts say the sisters prayed together.)

Coatlicue gathered white feathers to adorn her breasts. Becoming pregnant, she gave birth to Huitzilopochtli, who was born fully armed to defend his mother against her earlier children, who planned to kill her (see **Coyolxauhqui**). In other legends, she was impregnated by emeralds and gave birth to the god Quetzalcóatl.

Coatlicue was a creatrix who floated for eons in a misty world. Even the sun and his magicians did not realize her potential. Once they did, they brought her love charms, causing her to flower. But when she was not tended, the earth turned into wilderness, as the emperor Montezuma discovered when he sent a delegation to the land of his ancestors. There, they found a deformed old woman, surrounded by thistles and cacti, who revealed herself as Coatlicue, sorrowing for her abandonment.

Coatlicue’s most famous images show her garlanded with hearts and hands, wearing a skirt of swinging serpents, hung with skulls, vested in a flayed human skin. The distinction between Coatlicue and the important goddesses **Tonan** and **Toci** is unclear.

Similarly, Coatlicue has been connected with both **Cihuacóatl** and **Tlazoltéotl**. (Alarcón; Brundage; Caso; Clendinnen; Elzey; Gingerich; Kelly; Nash 1997; Weigle)

**Coyolxauhqui** The Aztec moon goddess named “golden bells” was among **Coatlicue**’s children who tried to kill their mother rather than let her bear rivals to them. Coyolxauhqui tried to warn her mother, so her siblings decapitated her and threw her head into the sky. A grieving Coatlicue placed Coyolxauhqui’s shining head in the night sky. Coyolxauhqui may have descended from the older moon goddess Metztli, who had two phases: one that promoted growth, another that discouraged it. She was associated with midwives and sweatbaths. (Brundage; Caso; Clendinnen; Elzey; Gingerich; Josserand and Dakin; Weigle)

**Huixtocíhuatl** One day, the sister of the Aztec rain gods quarreled with them and left home to live in the ocean, where she became ruler of the salty depths. Her 10-day June festival celebrated the invention of salt extraction by Huixtocíhuatl, who exposed ocean water in pans; the patron of salt makers, she was depicted wearing a fishnet skirt. The woman who embodied Huixtocíhuatl during her festival was sacrificed at the end of the ritual. (Alarcón; Caso; Driver and Massey)

**Itzpapalotl** Once, Itzpapalotl, the Aztec goddess of the soul, came to earth to pick roses. Pricking her finger, she became angry. Ever afterward, she made sure that humanity paid well for its pleasures, as she had to pay for her rose with blood. In human form, Itzpapalotl (“obsidian butterfly”) was a beautiful woman with jaguar claws, whose face was tattooed with the symbols for death. Itzpapalotl derived from the Chichimec, indigenous peoples subjugated by the Aztec. (Bierhorst 1992; Brundage; Gingerich; Josserand and Dakin; Léon-Portilla; Weigle)

**Ix Chel** Among the Yucatan Maya, Ix Chel was the snake goddess of water and the moon, of childbirth and weaving; she may also have controlled the most important food crop, maize. She took the sun as her lover, but her grandfather jealously killed her with lightning. Grieving dragonflies sang over Ix Chel for 13 days, at the end of which time she emerged and followed her lover to his palace. But the sun also grew jealous, accusing Ix Chel of loving his brother, the morning star. The sun threw Ix Chel from heaven, and she found sanctuary with the vulture divinity. But the sun pursued her and lured her home, immediately growing jealous again. A weary Ix Chel left the sun’s bed, making herself invisible whenever he came near. Hiding in the rainbow, she nursed women through pregnancy and labor, taking special care of those who visited her sacred island of Cozumel. In the Yucatan into historical times, healers used stone images of Ix Chel. She has been connected with Ix Azal Uok, goddess of weaving. She has also been identified as Ix U Sihnal, “lady moon-birth.” (Brady and Prufer; Paxton)

**Kacíwali** Born of the sea, the Huichol corn goddess Kacíwali was carried to a mountain lake, where she lived underwater as a snake. An ant man asked if his people could live on the shore. Finding them hardworking, Kacíwali agreed. So the ant people

moved in around Kacíwali's lake. They planted, the corn grew, the ant people prospered. But when harvest came, things became difficult. Because the singer chosen to offer songs of gratitude could barely carry a melody, the gods never heard their prayers. Neglecting to invite Kacíwalis, the ants drank up the corn beer and started dancing.

Kacíwali dressed in rags and went to the party, but she was turned away because of her poverty. So Kacíwali went to her mother **Nakawé**, who agreed to punish the ant people. The next time they planted, rain fell when they needed sun; the sky was cloudless when rain was needed. Only when the ant people held ceremonials to the goddesses did rain fall at the necessary times and the corn revive. (Zingg)

**Mayauel** This 400-breasted Aztec goddess ruled earth and sky, hallucinations, and drunkenness. She nursed the stars, who were fish in the oceanic heaven; her children were Centzon Totochtin, the 400 gods of drunkenness. In sculpture, Mayauel sat naked on a throne of tortoises and snakes, offering a dish of pulque to her worshippers.

One legend says that Mayauel, a peasant woman, passed a mouse who danced about under her gaze. Mayauel noticed that the rodent had been nibbling maguey plant, so she caught some of the sap in a pot. Thus, she discovered the basis of intoxication, which she introduced to the gods. Her gift was so popular that they welcomed her as one of them, and her earthly husband as the god of gambling and of flowers. (Caso; Clendinnen; Weigle)

**Mictēcacíhuatl** This Aztec goddess ruled the nine rivers of the afterlife to which evil souls were condemned. There, they suffered boredom and monotony, while better souls enjoyed heaven's colorful existence. She was depicted with no face, only the bones of a skull. (Carrasco; Caso)

**Nakawé** When, at the beginning of time, the earth was threatened by the fire god, the Huichol prayed to the rain goddess Nakawé to save them. By loosening her hairnet, she created rain that fell for five days and five nights, dowsing the fire god and leaving only a small amount of his strength in the form of an oven fire. Later, she showed people how to create rituals to encourage conception.

At creation, when serpents attacked people trying to draw water, Nakawé called to the stars, who fell upon them. But Nakawé spared a pregnant snake, mother of the gods. At first, only female snake-divinities were born, but later Nakawé permitted some male divinities. Nakawé was identified with the Virgin of Guadalupe (see **Tonan**). (Zingg)

**Omećíhuatl** This Aztec goddess was the female half of the androgynous divinity Ometéotl. One day, she gave birth to an obsidian knife, which she threw down on the empty earth; it shattered into 1,600 heroes. The heroes could have become gods and rejoined their mother in heaven. But, both lazy and ambitious, they wished to remain on earth and be served.

There were, however, no humans in existence. Turning to Omećíhuatl, "Lady of Duality," they asked her to create some. She suggested they seek eternal reunion with her. Instead, the heroes sent to the underworld for ashes and bones, which they formed

into the bodies of the first man and woman. This goddess has been identified with **Tonan** and with **Chalchihuitlicue**. Among the Maya of the Yucatan peninsula, she was known as Ix Chebel Yax. In the Popol Vu, she was called Alom and Xmucane. (Alarcón; Brundage; Caso; Christenson; Haly; Graulich; Léon-Portilla; Weigle)

**Tlazoltéotl** “Dirty lady” was Aztec goddess of the moon and of sexuality, who ruled gambling and black magic. She was also the source of purification, for only her priests could hear confessions of guilt. Depictions of Tlazoltéotl show her wearing the flayed skin of a sacrificial victim, her head decked with spindles, her hands carrying a broom. Because of her power over childbirth, she was a goddess of divination, an art in which her priests were skilled. (Boone; Klein; Sahagún vol. 1)

**Toci** Goddess of healers and midwives, “Our Grandmother” was also the goddess of abortionists and fortune-tellers. In her shrine, a straw image showed the goddess holding spinner’s equipment, revealing her control over life and death. For this reason, she has been associated with **Tlazoltéotl**, who controlled divination by midwives.

Toci’s late summer festival was one of the most important in the ritual year. During Ochpaniztli, a mature woman representing the goddess was feted for days. A priest accompanied her at the ritual’s end and, taking the goddess’s mask from the woman, flayed her and placed her bleeding skin on priests who represented her son and the goddess herself. A battle then ensued among the partisans of the two deities, after which vegetable seeds were distributed for planting.

Toci, under the name Teteo Innan, appears as “Mother of the Gods,” companion of the primary god. She is associated with the obscure goddesses Tlalli iyollo and Temazcalteci. (Clendinnen; Couch; Durán; Gingerich; Léon-Portilla; Nash 1997; Sahagún vol. 1; Weigle)

**Tonan** This Aztec goddess, who watched over birthing mothers, was honored in a winter solstice festival at which a woman dressed in white and covered with shells and eagle feathers danced through the crowds. The next day, men struck women with little bags full of paper, to which older women responded with catcalls while younger women endured the abuse, weeping.

At Tonan’s shrine, the Virgin of Guadalupe manifested herself. On December 9, 1531, Cuautlatóhuac (Juan Diego) was climbing the hill of Tepeyacac, sacred to Tonan, where he met a beautiful dark-skinned woman. Speaking Nahuatl, she commanded him to build a church where the shrine to Tonan had stood. Juan Diego went to the Spanish bishop of the area, who refused to honor the lady’s command. Juan returned to the spot, and the woman told him to gather roses for the bishop. Not only did the roses, which do not normally bloom in December, convince the bishop, but the image of the lady herself appeared on Juan Diego’s cloak.

The bishop said she was the virgin **Mary** (see Eastern Mediterranean) and provided the Spanish place-name of Guadalupe. Soon Guadalupe was recognized as a female power who interceded for the Mexican people, as she did during the Mexican War of Independence, when her image was a revolutionary symbol. Her image is the national symbol of Mexico, and pilgrimages to Tepeyacac honor her.

Tonan herself is honored in a feast between December 20 and 24 that includes music and the placement of marigold garlands on statues of the goddess or of her substitute Guadalupe. The titles “Morena” (dark one) or “Morenita” (little dark one) recall her origin as a goddess of the soil. (Brundage; Castillo; Harrington; Sahagún; Taylor; Weigle; Wolf)

**Xochiquetzal** The goddess of flowers, this Aztec divinity was also a deity of sexual license. Her name means “Precious Feather Flower,” and she brought menstruation into the world when, after a bat bit her vulva, she bled flowers. At that moment, orgasm was created.

Marigolds were her favorite blooms, but she loved every plant and every creature. In some legends, she was the only female survivor of the flood that destroyed the world (see **Chalchihuitlicue**). With a man, she escaped the torrent in a small boat. Faced with the prospect of repopulating the world, they set to work. But all of their children were born without speech. Finally a pigeon endowed them with language, but every child received a different tongue so that each was unable to communicate with the others.

As goddess of femininity, Xochiquetzal ruled the arts, including music, textile crafts, and dance; she was also the goddess of prostitutes. Women who made their living as embroiderers celebrated her feast day. She also was connected to anyone who loved flowers, including the Xochimilcans, who created the floating gardens still seen in Mexico today. Much loved by Aztec women, she was honored with little pottery figurines that showed her with feathers in her hair. (Caso; Clendinnen; Durán; Graulich; Josserand and Dakin; Pohl; Tedlock; Weigle)

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# SOUTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Europeans, imagining South America controlled by women, named its major river after mythic Greek warrior-women. But far from being an Amazonian paradise, South America is home to myths describing the destruction of woman-centered religion. Whether those myths recall actual social change or express tension between the sexes is impossible to know, but native South American mythology bears consideration by those interested in women's religious status.

South America has been settled for some 30,000 years, although the southern tip was settled only about 7,000 years ago. The continent's written history began in the 15th century CE, when South America supported between 8 million and 30 million people. More than 3 million were under the rule of the Inca Empire, while smaller societies spread through the lush Amazon basin, the wide valleys of the Andes, and the dry southern plateaus. Such diverse geography encouraged the development of some 3,000 cultures, ranging from small village groups to fairly large states. This plethora of cultures provides a rich canvas for discussion.

The earliest known South American civilization was the Chavin of coastal Peru (900–200 BCE). Because the culture ended in prehistory, the names of its divinities are unknown, although some later figures may descend from them. Following the Chavin, the Chibcha (400–300 BCE) developed a corn-based economy, with salt and emerald mining providing goods for trade. Later, Arawak- and Carib-speaking people forced the Chibcha from their fertile valleys. Descendants of the Chibcha still occupy parts of Colombia; Bogata was one of their ancient strongholds. As with many South American cultures, the Chibcha declined after assault by Spanish *conquistadores*.

Much literature about South American religion centers on the Inca, whose wealthy civilization held sway from 1438 to 1533. Patriarchal theocrats, the Inca oppressed the region's tribal people, including the Quichua-Aymara who domesticated the llama and alpaca. The Inca are of relatively little interest to goddess scholars, having few known female divinities.



**Moche Corn Goddess.** *In northern coastal Peru, this corn goddess was honored in prehistoric times. Divinities representing the earth's abundance, which sustains human life, are common in many cultures. This figure is from the collection of the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin.*

Beyond the Andes, the people of the tropical forests were agriculturalists whose religion centered on a shamanic worldview. Hundreds of cultures existed (some of which still exist) in the watersheds of the Amazon and Orinoco, where myths have been recorded. Elsewhere, southern Andean people relied upon river trade and agriculture, although they also were pastoralists with large herds of llamas. Religion was shamanic, and belief in witchcraft was common. Finally, those in economically marginal areas relied upon shamanic practices to sustain their hunting economy.

After the arrival of the Spanish *conquistadores*, the region's history was written from a European perspective. In terms of religion, with the exception of documents describing indigenous divinities as devilish, the region was generally ignored. Many cultures were destroyed or assimilated, leaving no record of their goddesses. In the late 19th century, anthropologists began recording surviving myths and legends. Although the collection of myths and folklore continues today, most collec-

tors are men, who often pay greater attention to male than to female mythic motifs.

South America attracts both scholarly and popular interest because of its continuing shamanic cultures. Although South American shamans were typically male, the role was also open to women, and men often wore female ritual clothing. Some legends suggest that shamanism was originally a women's role, later taken over by men.

Central to most South American cultures was a feminine divinity, most often an earth goddess or ancestral mother. Several myths suggest an ancient cultural primacy of women. These myths tell how men claimed power by killing all women and girls, keeping female infants only to reproduce the tribe. Despite this, concern for the earth as a maternal being who, in turn, must be cared for by her children, was widespread in South America.

After the European invasion, a Christian veneer covered some native traditions. In addition, the arrival of enslaved Africans led to the development of syncretic religions: Macumba in Brazil, Santería in Puerto Rico, and Voodoo in Haiti. As in other areas where literacy and Christianity arrived together, written documents that describe pre-contact South American and Caribbean religion are of questionable reliability. Most South American and Caribbean cultures relied upon oral transmission of myths and history, so massacres and persecution destroyed some mythologies when the culture-

bearers were killed, as was the case in Uruguay, where no native cultures survive. Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Caribbean religions are considered in Volume I.

In the last 50 years, the establishment of coffee plantations and cattle ranches has significantly endangered the survival of ethnic cultures in Amazonia. In other parts of South America, natural resources similarly put other indigenous cultures at risk. Recently, spiritual tourism has flourished, with self-described pilgrims traveling to famous sites such as Machu Picchu. As most of the visitors are from wealthy countries, and many indigenous people live in poverty, concern has been raised about the ethics of such exchanges. Although some tourism opportunities are offered under government sponsorship, and many purveyors of spiritual tourism are of indigenous origin, some Native South Americans object to the commodification of their spirituality and resist sharing it with outsiders.

## SOUTH AMERICAN PANTHEON

### **Abé mangó**

Acsumama *Peru; potato-mother.*

Ahéwa. *See Akewa*

### **Aiakélem**

### **Akewa**

### **Alamigi**

### **Amao**

Amara. *See Pachamama*

### **Amáru**

Amchimalghen. *See Anchimaluen*

### **Amusha**

### **Anchimaluen**

Antu kushe *Mapuche; sun.*

### **Anuanaitu**

### **Anuntero**

Apito. *See Atabei*

### **Atabei**

Attabeira. *See Atabei*

### **Aturuaródo**

### **Bachúe**

Boiuna *Amazonian; snake, pregnancy.*

### **Ceiuci**

Ceucy. *See Ceiuci*

Chagra Mama. *See Pachamama*

### **Chaupi Ñamca**

Chia. *See Huitaca*

Chie. *See Huitaca*

### **Chuquillanto**

### **Cíki**

Cilawáiakipa. *See Yoálox-tárnuxipa*

### **Coadidop**

Coatrischie. *See Atabei*

### **Cocomama**

Cori Ocello. *See Mama Ocllo*

Emisiwaddo *Arawak; earth.*

Fura-chogue. *See Bachúe*

### **Gasogonaga**

### **Gaulchováng**

### **Gauteovan**

Guabancex. *See Atabei*

Guacarapita. *See Atabei*

Guantuava. *See Atabei*

Guimazoa. *See Atabei*

### **Hálpén**

Hanuxéakuxipa. *See Húanaxu*

### **Húanaxu**

### **Huitaca**

Huytaca. *See Huitaca*

Iella. *See Atabei*

Iermaoguar. *See Atabei*

India Rosa. *See Kuma*

### **Itiba Cahubaba**

Itsanitsegí *Kalapalo; first mother.*

Jubchas-guaya. *See Huitaca*

### **Kasoronara?**

Kibero. *See Kuma*

Kimoa *Yamana; goose.*

### **Kopecho**

**Korobōna**Korobonáko. *See Korobōna*Kualchink *Yamano*; *trees*.Kulimina. *See Korobōna***Kuma**Kururumany. *See Korobōna***Léxuwa**Léxuwakipa. *See Léxuwa*Maisö *Paressi*; *ancestral mother*.Mákuxipa. *See Yoálox-tárnuxipa***Mama Cocha** *Peru*; *sea*.Mama-coca. *See Cocomama*.Mama Coya. *See Mama Oclo*Mama Dukuji. *See Nugkui*Mama Huaco. *See Mama Oclo*Mama Kilya. *See Mama Quilla***Mama Oclo****Mama Quilla**Mama Rahua. *See Mama Oclo*Mama Wako. *See Mama Oclo*Mamacota. *See Mama Cocha*Mamapacha. *See Pachamama*Mama-Qoca. *See Mama Cocha*Maneca *Tolú*; *ancestral mother*.Mero *Bakairi*; *ancestral mother*.Momona. *See Atabei*Nanyobo. *See Usi-diu*Nenchen *Araucanian*; *bisexual primordial mother*.**Nugkui**Nungüi. *See Nugkui*Nunkwi. *See Nugkui*Nunuí. *See Nugkui*Onkoy *Chavin*; *cat/snake*.**Orchu****Pachamama**Pachcamamam. *See Pachamama*Perimbó. *See Petá***Petá****Pulówi**Qolqa *Inca*; *Pleiades*.Quinuamama *Peru*; *quinoa-mother*.Sagku. *See Nugkui*Saramama *Peru*; *maize-mother*.Sibilaneuman. *See Gaulchováng***Sicasica**Tabaminarro *Achaquas*, *West Indies*; *twilight*.**Táita**Táix *Seknam*; *swallow*.**Takasa****Tamparawa**Tanu. *See Hálpén*Tánuwa. *See Hálpén*Taparimarru *Arawak*; *ancestral mother*.Téšurkipa. *See Húanaxu*Topa Huaco. *See Mama Oclo***Tséhmataki****Tsugki**Tuju. *See Nugkui*Turachoque. *See Bachúe*Uaraiulu *Paressi*; *stone*.**Uretane**Urpay Huachac *Urp-huahac*.Urp-huahac *Huarochiri*; *water*.Usi-diu. *See Usirumani***Usirumani**Vaí-bogó *Tukano*; *mother of fish*.Wauta. *See Wowntā*Wazeparkwu *Sherente*; *eclipse*.**Wekátanaxipa**Wémarkipa *Yamana*; *seagull*.Wesána *Yamana*; *rat*.Wípatux *Yamana*; *duck*.Wíyen *Yamana*; *sea duck*.**Wowntā**Wurekaddo *Arawak*; *darkness*.Xálpén. *See Hálpén*Xubchasgagua. *See Huitaca*.**Yampan****Yamuricumá****Yanyonböri**Yma Sumac. *See Curi-Coyllur***Yoálox-tárnuxipa**Zuimaco. *See Atabei*

**Abé mangó** The sun's daughter among the Amazonian Tukano peoples, Abé mangó taught humanity weaving, cooking, pottery, and herbal medicine. Raped by her father before she descended to live among humans, she taught women to wear clothing to avoid men's lustful gaze. When the first death occurred, Abé mangó invented funeral rites. (Reichel-Dolmantoff)

**Aiakélem** The Yamana people of Tierra del Fuego, on the southern tip of South America, describe Aiakélem as a whale woman. When her husband's village did not provide her with sufficient food, she returned to her own for supplies. There, she met a man with extremely long fingers. On her first night home, he sat next to her, putting his fingers into her vagina so deeply that she grew faint. Aiakélem returned briefly to her husband, but only to retrieve her children, then moved in with the man with the pleasingly long fingers. (Wilbert 1977)

**Akewa** The solar myth of the matrilineal Toba of Argentina described a primeval land in the sky filled with beautiful sun women, while earth was full of hairy men. One day, the sun women descended by rope to the surface, leaving Akewa behind. On earth, the sun maidens were trapped when the hairy men ate their rope ladder. After that, the sun women's descendents lived among men, looking up at Akewa, a fat, smiling woman who walked the sky. She grew older as the year aged, walking more slowly and lengthening the days in summer, but she grew younger in winter, and her speedy stride made the days shorter. (Karsten; Metraux)

**Alamigi** In central Brazil, the Kalapalo people live in the national park of Xingu, where they support themselves in traditional fashion from their fields of manioc. They tell the cautionary story of the girl Alamigi, one of the Dawn People who lived on the primordial earth. Every night, Alamigi teased the gray birds called nightjars for their ugly song. But the birds, angry at her disrespect, punished Alamigi.

First, they sent a bird, disguised as a human, into Alamigi's house while the girl was away and tricked a woman into revealing the insulting girl's name. Then they put a spell on the whole village, so that everyone fell into a profound sleep. The birds slipped into Alamigi's house and tied the girl up in her hammock. By the time she woke up, she was in the middle of a lake.

Frightened, she called for help. A bird, the banded tinamous, called loud enough to guide Alamigi from the lake. But then the bird flew away, leaving Alamigi frightened and alone. Then she heard the sound of a tiger heron, and by following its call, got lost in the forest. The bird took pity on the girl and, after extracting a promise from her that she would never deride birds again, led her home. (Basso)

**Amao** A fish impregnated this Amazonian ancestral mother by entering her vulva, but her infant died. She wept desperately until the child awakened and revealed that he had been frightened to death by animals. In grief, she turned the animals to stones near her child's grave, then invented the arts of civilization that she taught to her people before disappearing. (Lévi-Strauss)

**Amáru** The ancestral mother of the Amazonian Baniwa and Wakuén was one of three beings breathed into existence at the beginning of time. The all-powerful Amáru made herself pregnant with a little hairy child born without a mouth. Another primal being blew tobacco smoke on the boy, who began eating people until he was killed; his body grew into a poisonous plant from which the first mosquitoes and snakes were born. But the plant had its uses, for it formed the first flutes, which Amáru claimed on behalf of all women.

The men denied the women's claim to the instruments, so they suggested a race to settle the question. But Amáru stole back the flutes and ran away with them, inventing music as she ran. Her brother then killed all women with a thunderbolt except for Amáru. Afterwards, the men used the flutes in magical ceremonies. (Bierhorst 1988)

**Amusha** According to the Yupa of Venezuela, this baby girl grew up to be a deer. She never was happy indoors, crying incessantly until her exhausted mother left her alone in the house. When she returned, Amusha was gone, but she was soon found nestled in the roots of a huge old tree. After that point, the girl would eat nothing but leaves. White spots and fur began to appear on her body. Finally, she ran on four legs into the woods, where she was transformed into a deer. (Wilbert 1974)

**Anchimaluen** This kindly moon goddess was a primary divinity of the Araucanians of Chile. Auchimalgen was a seer, foretelling great events by changing the color of her face. Her servants were nymphs called Amchimalghen. (Alexander)

**Anuanaitu** Just after creation, said the Caribbean peoples, men were ugly, and women were magnificently beautiful. But there was one handsome man, Maconaura, who lived with his mother in the peaceful jungle of primordial time, when there was no evil and no fear.

One day, Maconaura found that someone had been raiding his fishnet. To make matters worse, the thief had ripped the nets. Maconaura set a woodpecker to guard the nets and soon heard the bird's cry. Running back to the pond, the young man saw a water monster and shot it. Then he discovered on the shore a young girl, Anuanaitu, whom he took home for his mother to raise.

When she grew up, Anuanaitu was Maconaura's first choice for a wife. She demurred at first, for she could not marry without her parents' consent, and she refused to reveal their identity. But finally, she gave way and married Maconaura. The pair decided it would be best to travel to the woman's village and seek the blessing of her parents. Anuanaitu's mother quickly agreed to the match, but her father subjected Maconaura to near-impossible tests of skill and courage on which the young man performed well, earning the right to remain as Anuanaitu's husband.

One day, Maconaura decided to visit his own family. On his return to Anuanaitu's village, her father shot him dead with an arrow. War broke out between the two families, with Anuanaitu's kin destroyed in the magical battles. She lived but became entranced with the spirits of the dead. Traveling in rattlesnake form to her husband's village, she determined to take revenge. The human woman who had raised her

appealed to her gentler instincts, and for a moment, Anuanaitu hesitated. But then she struck a poisonous blow, revealing that the water monster slain by Maconaura had been her brother.

Then Anuanaitu ran through the world, which turned dark and fearsome as she crossed it, until she reached the ocean. There, she threw herself into the water and drowned in a place where today a dangerous whirlpool sucks. There she was reunited with her lover, and she reigns there now as the soul of the ocean. (Bierhorst 1988)

**Anuntero** The Tapirapé people, who once inhabited the lands along the Brazilian river that bears their name, have almost disappeared. They considered themselves aboriginal to the area, for when their culture hero Apuwenonu descended from the sky, he took a wife from the Tapirapé. She was Anuntero, the first woman to learn to make useful objects (such as hammocks and body ornaments) from cotton. Anuntero never died, but was transformed into a dolphin. (Wagley)

**Atabei** The primary being of the pre-Hispanic people of the Antilles was called by many names: Attabeira, Momona, Guabancex, Guacarapita, Iella, Guimazoa, Iermaoguar, Apito, and Zuimaco. Little is known of her rites, although she was recognized as an earth goddess by the Antillean people, whose language included a special vocabulary known only to women. Atabei was served by a messenger goddess, Guatauva, and by the hurricane goddess Coatrischie. Some sources suggest that the Haitian Guabancex was a separate spirit, made of stone and able to raise storms when angry. (Alexander; Roth)

**Aturuaródo** The Bororo Indians of Bolivia describe this woman, who helped domesticate plants, as the unwitting mother of a monster child. When a hero avenged the death of his mother by killing a snaky monster, he brought pieces of his prey back to the village, where the women celebrated a victory dance. One woman, Aturuaródo, failed to cover herself with leaves to protect herself from the monster's dripping blood and soon found herself pregnant. Stricken with the usual food cravings of pregnancy, she found herself staring at some ripe fruit and, to her surprise, heard a voice from her belly. It was her unborn son, who climbed out and got the fruit for his mother. Aturuaródo was distressed to see that the child was a monster like his father. She told the other villages, and they returned to the tree with her and saw for themselves how the unborn child emerged. So they killed it, to Aturuaródo's relief and grief. Later, when she returned to where they had burned the body of her son, she found his ashes had turned into the seeds of useful plants. (Wilbert and Simoneau 1983)

**Bachúe** The ancestor goddess of Colombia's Chibcha, Bachúe lived beneath lake waters but, deciding to live on land, rose from the waves with her young son. When he had grown to manhood, Bachúe mated with him to produce the human race. Teaching her offspring suitable religious rites, Bachúe transformed herself and her son-husband into snakes and to their original home. Thereafter, Bachúe served humankind as a protector of the fields and crops. (Alexander; Bierhorst 1988; Osbourne)

**Ceiuci** One of the stars of the Pleiades lived on earth as Ceiuci, said the Amazonian Anambé. One day, the shadow of a young man fell across the pond where she was fishing. Ceiuci ordered him to dive into the pool. The young man refused, but when the goddess sent stinging red ants, he obeyed.

Once she had him in the water, Ceiuci snagged the man with her fishing line and put him in her creel. At home, while the goddess was gathering wood to cook her catch, Ceiuci's daughter hid him. When Ceiuci demanded her prey, the girl and the boy ran away, dropping palm branches as they went. These became animals, which Ceiuci gobbled up. Even when all species had been created, Ceiuci pursued the runaways. Finally, the girl stopped, but the young man continued until he reached his home.

In other tales, this same goddess appears as a star woman who dances in the Pleiades. A similarly named goddess, Ceucy, was believed by the Tupi to have been impregnated by tree sap; she gave birth to a boy who stole women's religious powers and forbade them to witness rituals. When Ceucy tried to attend one, her son put her to death. (Bierhorst 1976; Jones)

**Chaupi Ñamca** Born before time began, the Inca's principal goddess Chaupi Ñamca created women, while her consort created men. She loved sex and turned herself into a human woman in order to seduce men. But after she met a man named Rucancota, she turned herself to stone to remain with him forever. She was honored at the winter solstice, when her priests performed erotic dances, wearing only jewelry. Her five-armed stone image was hidden when the Spanish invaders arrived, and her festival was converted to the Christian one of Corpus Christi. (Steele)

**Chuquillanto** An Inca romance begins with Chuquillanto, daughter of the sun, falling in love with a llama herder who wore a silver locket that showed a heart being eaten by lice. In the same fashion, Chuquillanto felt her heart eaten away after meeting the young man Acoynapa. She returned to the palace where she lived with the other sun women, who, like the virgins of **Vesta** (see Rome), were pledged to a life without men and who tended four fountains named pebble (northwest), frog (southwest), water weed (northeast), and algae (southeast). There, she dreamed of a little bird who listened to her tale of thwarted love and advised her to sit at the center of the four fountains and sing of her love. When the fountains sang back to her, she knew that she had to follow her heart.

But she was pledged to her duties as priestess of the sun, so she did not know how she might find her way to Acoynapa's bed. His mother, however, dreamed of her son and, climbing the mountains to him, found him almost sick with love of Chuquillanto. Employing women's magic, she turned him into a carved stick, which, when Chuquillanto came to visit, she gave to the maiden. Thus was Chuquillanto able to bring her lover right into the sun palace and to sleep with him there. But one day, when she took the staff out to a mountain ravine and Acoynapa emerged from it, they were observed by palace guards who had followed them. As they tried to escape, the pair of lovers were turned to stone, which can still be seen today as the crags of Pituiray. (Bierhorst 1976)

**Cĭki** This helpful child of the vegetation goddess **Nugkui** could simply say “let there be manioc,” and the house would be filled with manioc. Bullying children demanded Cĭki produce various foods, which she obligingly did. But when the children demanded demons, and Cĭki brought them forth, the children beat her. Cĭki disappeared. When the parents came home and found the magical child missing, they were angry and searched everywhere. When they found her, her powers were gone. (Harner)

**Coadidop** Among the Amazonian Jauareté, the creatrix Coadidop grew bored with her solitude and invented smoking. Using two of her own bones to create a cigar holder, she squeezed tobacco from her body. Then she created and smoked the coca plant. She began to see beings that materialized as she envisioned them. In claps of thunder and bursts of lightning, men came into being, but then disappeared. It took Coadidop three tries before she created a man who remained in existence. Then she set about creating women. Her son made three brothers, while Coadidop made two sisters. She measured her head with a cord and laid the cord in a circle, then squeezed her breast. Milk filled the circle and formed the earth, which she gave to the women. But the men wrested away control, refusing women access to religious rituals. (Bierhorst 1988)

**Cocomama** The coca goddess was cut in half by jealous lovers. Her dismembered body grew into the first coca bush, whose leaves men could not chew until they had satisfied a woman’s sexual needs. Since Inca times, coca leaves were used in ceremonies honoring **Pachamama**, who demanded it in exchange for good crops. (Alexander; Arriaga; Osbourne)

**Gasogonaga** This Toba weather goddess appeared to shamans in visions induced by psychotropic plants. The Toba’s nomadic existence ended with Spanish colonization; they now live as agriculturalists, their traditional religion mostly lost to Pentecostal Christianity. Nonetheless, some practitioners still encounter Gasogonaga, who looks like a vast, multicolored animal from whose mouth comes lightning. (Langdon and Baer)

**Gaulchováng** “Song Woman” was the primary divinity of the Kogi of Colombia. A beautiful, fat, black-haired woman who sat on a stone in the lowest of nine worlds, she gave birth to all beings and actions, including singing and dancing. Gaulchováng pulled from herself maleness and created a child, then a jaguar. She created humans, then ancestors and culture-heroes. Finally, Gaulchováng gave birth to nine daughters, each of them a different kind of soil (Black Earth, Red Earth, and so forth). She swallowed half the ocean, so that land appeared.

At this point, Sintána, one of the ancestors, demanded a wife, so Gaulchováng offered him the eight less powerful daughters, trying to keep Black Earth for herself. But Sintána stole the maiden and ran across the earth with her; wherever Black Earth set foot, she left soil good for raising crops. Gaulchováng sent lizards in pursuit of the eloping couple, but Sintána and Black Earth evaded them to become ancestors of the Kogi people. (Bierhorst 1988)

**Gauteovan** The ancestral mother of the people of the Sierra Nevada in Colombia created the sun, which glows red at dawn and dusk, from her menstrual blood. She created both the visible and the invisible worlds, including the demons that cause illness. She was the region's most significant deity. (Steward vol. 2)

**Hálpen** This powerful goddess of the Argentinian Selknam and Alacaluf lived in the sky, from which she descended to eat humans. Although lazy, she moved quickly when hungry, so humans tried not to draw her attention. Her sister was Tanu, who lived inside the earth. Looking for Tanu, women dug holes, forming lakes and mountains. When they could not find her, they impersonated her in rituals. When religious power was taken from the women, the men continued to invoke Hálpen and Tanu. (Bierhorst 1988; Koppers)

**Húanaxu** An important myth of the Yamana of Tierra del Fuego concerned this spirit of the moon. At a time when women ruled, she brought her people from the east to a land called Yáiaasaága, where the men did housework and raised children. A few talented male hunters provided the women with meat, while the women concentrated on ritual.

The men felt oppressed by their work, but the powerful spirits that the women invoked frightened them. Then Húanaxu's brother-in-law overheard two girls discussing impersonating spirits. In punishment for their carelessness, the girls were transformed into quacking ducks. The men plotted to grab power, which Téšurkipa learned. She tried to warn her sisters. Furious at being tricked, the men broke into the ritual area and killed all the women except the very old and the very young. After that, the men took over the rituals and made the women do housework and tend babies. If the women were ever to find out the secret of their lost power, the power would pass again to them.

Húanaxu survived the massacre and rose into the sky, causing a flood that wiped out many of the Yamana people. She still bears the scars from the great battle of men against women, all of which are visible on the moon's face. The few who escaped were transformed into animals. (Wilbert 1977)

**Huitaca** The Chibcha moon goddess of intoxication, Huitaca was the rival of a male preacher, Bochica, who taught useful crafts along with a puritanical attitude toward life. Continually undoing his efforts was the owl-woman Huitaca, sometimes said to be his wife. Once, Huitaca became so angry at Bochica that she raised a flood, drowning Bochica's followers. So her husband threw her to the sky, where she became the moon. (Osbourne; Steward vol. 2)

**Itiba Cahubaba** Among the Taíno, a pre-Hispanic people of Cuba and other Caribbean islands, this woman ("Bloodied Mother-Hag") was the great ancestor. She died while attempting to bear quadruplet sons, so the boys were torn from her corpse. The creator god had killed his only son, a rebellious boy, and put his bones in a gourd hung in the rafters. The bones turned to fish, on which the god lived. But the newborn boys

wanted to eat, too, so they climbed up and knocked the gourd down. It fell and broke, and its water created the oceans. (Arrom)

**Kasoronara'** The Toba goddess of lightning disliked spirits, so she threw herself down on their homes whenever a rainstorm gave her the chance. Once on the surface, she hid, calling out to passersby to help her build a fire. Those who answered her request gained the ability to call forth rain when needed. On the smoke of the fires, Kasoronara' wafted back into the sky. (Metraux)

**Kopecho** The Yupa said that two suns once parched the earth. So Kopecho invited both suns to a feast, where she danced suggestively. One sun grasped at her and fell into a pit of coals. He was accustomed to heat, so nothing happened except that his light dimmed, turning him into the moon. He threw Kopecho into water, where she was transformed into the first frog. (Wilbert 1974)

**Korobōna** With her sister Korobonáko, this Warrau divinity lived beside a lake that the girls were forbidden to enter. The rebellious Korobōna went swimming and accidentally released a captive divinity who had intercourse with her. Korobōna gave birth to a human child, then visited the water deity again, returning pregnant with a half-serpent baby that her brothers killed. When Korobōna offered the dead babe her breasts, it revived. Korobōna's brothers discovered the baby and dismembered it. The grieving mother gathered the pieces, planted them in the earth, and watched as a Carib warrior sprang forth and drove the brothers away. Scholars believe that Korobōna was a local name for the creator goddess Kururumany, sometimes described as a god who created men, while a goddess, Kulimina, created women. (Alexander; Bierhorst 1976; Brett; Jones)

**Kuma** Among the Yaruro people of western Venezuela, the creator goddess Kuma dressed as a shaman with beautiful gold jewelry. She was the first living being on earth, for which reason the people said, "Everybody sprang from Kuma." She created land and then, desiring to become pregnant, asked the god Puana to have intercourse with her thumb; but instead, he impregnated her womb. After Kuma gave birth to the sun, moon, snake, and jaguar, she sent her children looking for people, which were found in a hole in the ground. Kuma gave the gods a rope and hook, with which they pulled up human life.

In the cold, dark world to which they had been brought, the people shivered. But a divine toad woman, Kibero, held fire in her breast and gave it to the people. Kuma taught the women pottery skills and basket weaving, then created society. She remained accessible to shamans, who painted her on their drums, arms outstretched. (Bierhorst 1988; Lyon)

**Léxuwa** The sensitive ibis woman lived in the Yamana primeval time, when women controlled everything. She grew angry because, when she brought springtime, people screamed with delight, hurting her sensitive ears, so she dropped unseasonable snow on them. To avoid late snows, people were silent when they saw an ibis fly in spring.

Once, Léxuwa brought a huge storm. Snow fell until glaciers covered the earth. When the glaciers began to melt, the seas rose. Some peoples ran for five tall mountains and survived, but most people died. Léxuwa intended to kill humanity, because men were warring against women for control of ritual and religion. But after the flood, the men remained in control. (Wilbert 1977)

**Mama Cocha** The eldest Peruvian divinity was “Mother Sea,” worshiped along South America’s Pacific Coast. As fish provider and whale goddess, Mama Cocha was the source of food. She also ruled fresh water as goddess of rain. Her image was shaped in blue-green stone and stood on the shore of Lake Titicaca, where the Peruvians believed that creation occurred. (Arriaga; Steward vol. 2)

**Mama Ocllo** When the Spanish invaded South America, they found many names for the foremothers of the Inca: Mama Ocllo or Mama Ocllo Huaca (fat woman), Mama Huaco/Wako (great grandmother, tooth woman), Mama Coya/Cura (aunt, daughter-in-law), and Mama Rahua (burning woman). Alternatively, the names of the quartet of goddesses were Topa Huaco, Mama Coya, Cori Ocllo, and Ipa Huaco.

Mama Ocllo, the most intelligent sister, found habitable land. She killed a Poque Indian, cut his chest open, and removed his lungs. Carrying the bloody organs in her mouth, Mama Ocllo entered the towns, where residents fled in terror, leaving the region to the people of Mama Ocllo. (This may be a folk memory of Inca massacres of indigenous people.)

Mama Coya was the daughter of the sun and sister-wife of the original Inca leader. Born from the waters of Lake Titicaca, the pair traveled to Cuzco, stopping along the way to puncture the earth with a golden spike. Where it entered the ground easily, they stopped and began to gather people. Mama Coya and her brother founded cities and ruled over them; she ruled over the women, he over the men. The same story is told of Mama Ocllo, so the distinction between the ancestral mothers was not sharp. (Bandelier; Bierhorst 1976; Lamadrid; Osbourne; Steele)

**Mama Quilla** Among the Inca, this was “Mother Moon,” honored at calendar-fixed rituals and during eclipses, when it was believed that a supernatural jaguar attempted to devour her. The Incans made noise with weapons to threaten off the intruder, a custom that has not died out in Cuzco. (Arriaga; Steward vol. 2)

**Nugkui** At the beginning of time, the Aguaruna people lived on mashed balsa wood cooked in their armpits. A woman saw peeled manioc floating downstream and followed the trail upriver to Nugkui, who was washing her dinner in the river while a pot steamed behind her. The woman begged Nugkui to go with her, but Nugkui sent her daughter **Ci’ki** to the human village to teach cooking and gardening. Although Ci’ki was mistreated by human children and returned to her mother, Nugkui decided to help the humans. She came into a woman’s dreams and taught her where to find seeds of good-tasting plants. She taught her how to make pottery, and how to bake it in the sun.

Nugkui lived in good garden soil, where she nurtured plants. She also could be found in caves, from which she sent forth animals for hunters. Her companions were goddesses of plants found in association with the important food plant, manioc: Chiki (arrowroot), who provides water to Nugkui; Sagku (cocoyam), a big-leaved plant that also brings water; and Tuju (ahicra), a plant with twisted leaves that grows with manioc. Nugkui may be the same figure as Mama Dukuji, who lived in the biggest manioc plant in the garden; she was never to be looked at directly, or she would defecate weeds.

Among the Jívaro of Eastern Ecuador, the goddess Nunuí provided food by pushing plants up through the soil. Attracting Nunuí required the placing of three jasper rocks around the garden and leaving enough open space so that the fat Nunuí could dance there. Dressed in black, she would come out at night and spin along among the plants, dancing with each one in turn.

Letting weeds grow among the manioc plants drove Nunuí from the garden, for if she felt crowded, she retreated underground, taking the manioc with her. Heat also caused Nunuí to move underground, which is why women gathered crops early in the day. (Bierhorst 1988; Brown; Brown and Van Bolt; Harner; Paper; Von Hagen)

**Orchu** This divine woman brought the gourd to humankind, said the Arawá'k. Orchu rose from a stream bearing a small branch, which bore the first gourds. Then she taught humanity how to put stones in the dried gourds to make rattles, as well as how to use the instruments in ritual. (Brett)

**Pachamama** Among the Chibcha of Colombia, the earth was a dragon who lived beneath the mountains. Occasionally, she quivered, causing earthquakes. All beings on earth were children of the voluptuous Pachamama, the preeminent deity of agriculture. During planting and harvest, women talked softly to Pachamama, sometimes pouring a thanks-offering of cornmeal on her surface. As agricultural rituals were the domain of women, Pachamama was especially important to them; she was honored at weddings to encourage the fertility of the couple.

Other South Americans honored this goddess at all their ceremonies. Coca and beer were offered to her, as well as balls of grease decorated with silver paper. Kissing the earth honored Pachamama. Among the Tacana, Pachamama survives as the old woman of the forest who taught humans the art of making beer and who created night and day. This earth mother is distinguished from the fat dwarf mother of vegetation, called Chagra Mama by the neighboring Canelos Quechua. (Arriaga; Bierhorst 1988; Lyon; Salles-Reese; Steward vol. 2)

**Petá** To the Yanomamö people of Brazil and Venezuela, this was the name of the first woman, born from the leg of a small bird. She married four brothers, with whom she lived happily. But trouble arose when the men argued over which one of them should have sex with Petá. So she tied their penises up while they slept, attaching them with strings to their waistbands. Only when she untied them could they have intercourse with her.

Because women had stronger children if they had intercourse with many men during pregnancy, Petá enjoyed all four husbands while carrying her son, who shot an arrow at the moon that caused an eclipse, which in turn caused the earth to be flooded with blood. From this blood, the Yanomamö were born, and Petá remained their chief.

One night, while the village slept, a jaguar dragged Petá away into his cave-den, where she found two jaguar cubs beside their dead mother. She offered her breasts to the cubs, which grew overnight into full sized jaguars. At that moment, Petá's husbands arrived to save her. Miraculously, the jaguar mother recovered and came between the men and the jaguars. Thanking Petá for saving her children, she turned into a woman, Perimbó, and the cubs turned into her daughters. The girls returned home with Petá, while the jaguar disappeared. (Becher; Wilbert and Simoneau)

**Pulówi** The Guajiro honored the underworld mother Pulówi. She resented hunters, so she seduced lucky hunters to keep animals safe from them. One hunter wounded a white doe and, following her, found himself under the earth, where only women lived. Pulówi appeared, wearing golden bands around her ankles and wrists. The man spat on the ground, turning the women into animals. Impressed with his power, Pulówi entreated him to remove his arrow from the white doe. He did so and found himself on the surface world again. Shortly afterward, he and his family disappeared. (Bierhorst 1988)

**Sicasica** A mountain goddess of the Aymara of Bolivia, Sicasica seduced young men by luring them into glaciers. Anyone found dead on the mountain was believed to have refused to honor Sicasica. (Osbourne)

**Táita** This Selknan woman controlled the world's water, which she selfishly covered with fur. Desperate people tried to steal water, but Táita killed them. So the hero Táiyin killed her, then began throwing stones around, forming the mountains. (Wilbert 1975)

**Takasa** To the Yamana, the animals and birds on which they depended each had a special divinity. Takasa and her associate Wémarkipa were spirits of the seagull; other similar feminine spirits included Wíyen (sea duck), Kimoa (goose), Wípatux (duck), Cilawáiakip (fox), and Wesána (rat). (Wilbert 1977)

**Tamparawa** Among the Amazonian Tapirapé people, this moon goddess was ancestor of all people. Assaulted by her brother, the sun, who slapped her and caused the marks on the moon's face, Tamparawa married a man of the Tapirapé. But he found it difficult to have intercourse because he feared that her strong vagina would cut off his penis. So she bathed in fish poison and had intercourse with a piranha, making her husband safe. (Wagley)

**Tséhmataki** The Chorote people believed in a cannibal woman with a long, red tail who hunted people, knocking down houses to get to them. She controlled the earth, which shook at the sound of her voice. The ground turned soggy when she wished to

capture humans, who found themselves trapped in quicksand. But a shaman killed her with an arrow to the eye. He burned her body, from which emerged vampire bats, owls, and cuckoos. Other beings came forth from her body, including monkeys and other helpers of shamans. Finally, a plant grew where she had fallen: tobacco. (Bierhorst 1988)

**Tsugki** The Central Andean spirit Tsugki lived in the bottom of a whirlpool, above which she appeared as a rainbow. Once, she noticed a handsome man and lured him home. But an anaconda lived with her, and the man could not abide the serpent's presence. So the couple moved on land, but the man's mother saw Tsugki in her snake-shape and drove her from the human's village. Insulted, Tsugki caused a flood and attacked with an army of dolphins and anacondas, killing everyone except her husband. She became the first shaman and was invoked for love-magic. (Bierhorst 1988; Brown)

**Uretane** This primeval woman knew that she was a man despite her woman's body. The more she wished it, the more she found her body changing. She grew breasts but also a penis, so she would not bathe with the other girls. One day, however, she noticed a woman she desired, so she asked the girl to bathe with her. The girl was delighted to discover that Uretane had both breasts and penis. There was no objection when she decided to marry Uretane, who did men's work while the girl performed women's duties. (Wilbert 1974)

**Usirumani** At the beginning of time, according to the Warao, there was only a colorless void. A divine male shaman owned darkness, but he kept it wrapped up in a basket. When another male shaman released it, the world grew so dark that people could not see to hunt or gather. To bring back light, the offending shaman carved a woman from plum-tree wood. But she had no vagina, so the woodpecker dug one, in the process staining his beak red. As the newly-created woman's blood flowed, other animals painted themselves; vultures are dark black, for they came late, when the blood had coagulated.

Among the nearby Warao, a similar story described Usi-Dui, whom a childless shaman created by carving her from plum wood. Usi-diu was incomplete, for she was missing a vagina. This was not obvious until Yar, the sun god, married her. A bird pecked out a vagina, and Usi-diu was soon pregnant. Abandoned by her husband, she got lost trying to find him. Wandering about, she found the home of Nayobo, the frog woman, who sheltered her in return for cleaning out the lice from her hair, warning her not to eat the insects. But the nervous Usi-diu forgot the rule and put the lice in her mouth. They poisoned her, and she fell over dead. Nanyobo cut out the twins Usi-diu was carrying and raised them as her own. When they were old enough to notice, they grew frightened because every night, Nanyobo made fire by vomiting. They killed the frog woman, and the fire in her body passed into wood. (Wilbert 1970)

**Wekatánaxipa** This Yamana fisherwoman invented the sinker, which made her very lucky at fishing. But she kept her catch for herself, feeding her grandson only tiny fish.

He was always half-starving and thought they were poor, until he discovered his grandmother's store of fish. Feeling rejected, he painted himself red and flew into the air, becoming a bird. The grandmother, overcome with tears of sorrow, became a cold stream. (Wilbert 1977)

**Wowtā** The frog goddess of the Warao could change her shape. She used this power when, enamored of the beautiful boy Aboré, she transformed herself into a nursemaid. She did magic, stretching him into an unrecognizable shape. When the family returned, they thought Aboré had disappeared. Wowtā intended to keep Aboré for her own until he was mature enough to marry. But he figured out her intention. He tried to kill Wowtā with a coconut dropped from a tree, but she escaped. Aboré tried to flee across the water, but Wowtā's powers extended to the wood of his canoe, which refused to carry him. So he fashioned a canoe out of wax, hoping it would be outside her magic. She almost caught up with him, but liked honey so much that she stopped to eat his boat, permitting his escape. She resumed her frog shape and can still be heard in spring, lamenting her loss. (Brett; Wilbert 1970)

**Yampan** This goddess of abundance produced magnificent gardens full of tasty foods, but no one seemed able to learn her magic, according to the Aguaruna. So she gave up on humanity and moved to the sky, where she lived with the sun. She taught her daughters the power of singing to the garden, and her direct descendents know secret garden-songs. Her songs were also helpful in brewing beer. (Brown)

**Yamuricumá** According to the Kamayurá, the Yamuricumá were women whose husbands were transformed into animals. Left without men, the Yamuricumá women dressed as warriors and began dancing. For days they danced, covering themselves with herbs that transformed them into powerful spirits. Then they found an old man, whom they turned into an armadillo and pressed into service as their herald. Thereafter, they wandered the world, calling women away from their homes to join them as warriors in the forest. (Bierhorst 1988)

**Yanyonböri** The Mundurucú of Brazil said that the sacred trumpet was once owned by women but was taken over by men. Three women, Yanyonböri and her companions Tuembirü and Parawarö, discovered a magic lake. Knowledge of the lake led the women to useful inventions, including nets for capturing fish. Once, three fish turned into three hollow cylinders, with which the women made music. The three women loved the music so much they forgot their housework. Upset at the mess in which they were forced to live, the men convinced Yanyonböri to bring the trumpets into the village.

Possession of the magical instruments gave the women power, which the men envied. The men had to cook, to tend babies, and to have sex with the women whenever the women wished. They had to hunt as well, because the trumpets demanded offerings of meat. The men went on strike, refusing to hunt until they were given the trumpets. Yanyonböri agreed that they would share. But the men took the trumpets

and refused to let the women have access to them. Women since that time have been forced to perform housework and have been refused access to spiritual secrets. (Murphy and Murphy)

**Yoálox-tárnuxipa** The most intelligent being of primeval time, said the Yamana, was this woman, sister to two men named Yoálox. She invented the harpoon so that they could kill sea animals, and she created human culture. Her brothers were lazy, but she was constantly at work.

When Yoálox-tárnuxipa's brothers wanted to marry, they were too lazy to figure out how. So she invited all the birds to find the best mates for them, and they came back with Mákuxipa, who was already married to a wren. Despite this, the boys settled down to share their wife. All went well for a while, until the older brother overheard Mákuxipa telling the younger brother that she preferred him sexually because his penis was large. In retaliation, the older brother raped Mákuxipa, who bled from her wounds in the first menstruation. After this, the older brother would have nothing to do with Mákuxipa, who bore a son to the younger brother. Unfortunately, the child was so noisy that the energy of his screams split him in two. Mákuxipa died, leaving her two identical sons with their father, who shortly afterwards took up with the fox woman, Cilwáiakipa. She dug up and ate Mákuxipa's body, and she yearned to eat the children too, but the boys discovered her intention, and their father killed his new wife. (Koppers; Wilbert 1977)

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

### *Texts and Libraries*

- Ancient Egyptian Texts*. Some with hieroglyphs: <http://reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/texts/index.html>
- Ancient Texts*. Greek and Roman: [www.csun.edu/~hcfl1004/textindx.html](http://www.csun.edu/~hcfl1004/textindx.html)
- Center for Preservation of Ancient Texts*. Primarily Eastern Mediterranean: <http://cpart.byu.edu>
- Etana*. Electronic Tools and Ancient Near Eastern Archives: [www.etana.org](http://www.etana.org)
- Hanover Historical*. Some sacred: <http://history.hanover.edu/project.html>
- Internet Classics Archive*. Mainly classical texts: <http://classics.mit.edu>
- Papyrus to Digital*. Ancient Greek: <http://www.lib.uci.edu/about/publications/exhibits/tlg/index.php>
- Perseus*. Digital library: [www.perseus.tufts.edu](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu)
- Sacred Texts*. Texts on women and religion: [www.sacred-texts.com](http://www.sacred-texts.com)
- Stav Academy Library*. European texts and tales: [www.stavacademy.co.uk/mimir](http://www.stavacademy.co.uk/mimir)
- The Ancient Library*. Classical texts: [www.ancientlibrary.com](http://www.ancientlibrary.com)

### *Academic and Peer-Reviewed Journals*

- Folklore*. European folklore: [www.folklore.ee/Folklore/ksisu.htm](http://www.folklore.ee/Folklore/ksisu.htm)
- Internet Journal of Religions*. With related journals: [web.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/](http://web.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/)
- Magistra*. Women's spirituality: [www.faculty.de.gcsu.edu/~dvest/magistra.htm](http://www.faculty.de.gcsu.edu/~dvest/magistra.htm)
- Ochre*. Women's spirituality: [www.ciis.edu/ochrejournal/](http://www.ciis.edu/ochrejournal/)
- Religious Studies Web Guide*. Multiple journals: [www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~lipton/journals.html](http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~lipton/journals.html)

### *Organizations*

- Association for Study of Women and Mythology*. Scholars and artists: [www.womenandmyth.org](http://www.womenandmyth.org)
- Diotima*. Women and gender in ancient world: [www.stoa.org/diotima](http://www.stoa.org/diotima)
- Divine Balance*. The feminine in Christianity: [www.divinebalance.org](http://www.divinebalance.org)

*Institute of Archeomythology*. Connecting archaeology and myth:

[www.archaeomythology.org](http://www.archaeomythology.org)

*Myth\*ing Links*. Thematically arranged: [www.mythinglinks.org](http://www.mythinglinks.org)

*Nature and Culture*. International society: [www.religionandnature.com](http://www.religionandnature.com)

*SIEF*. European folklore: [www.siefhome.org](http://www.siefhome.org)

*Traditional Cosmology Society*. Cross-cultural: [www.tradcos.co.uk/](http://www.tradcos.co.uk/)

### *Other Media Resources*

*Women and Spirituality* (films by Donna Read): *Goddess Remembered*, *The Burning Times*, *Full Circle*.

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