

stephanie budin

gods and heroes of the ancient world



artemis

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ARTEMIS

Artemis is a literary, iconographic and archaeological study of the ancient Greek goddess of the hunt, who presided over the transitions and mediations between the wild and the civilized, youth and maturity, life and death. Beginning with a study of the early origins of Artemis and her cult in the Bronze and Archaic Ages, Budin explores the goddess' persona and her role in the lives of her worshippers.

This volume examines her birth and childhood, her place in the divine family, her virginity and her associations with those places where the wilds become the 'cities of just men'. The focus then turns to Artemis' role in the lives of children and women, particularly how she helps them navigate the transition to adulthood and, perhaps too often, death. Budin goes on to reconsider some of the more harrowing aspects of Artemis' mythology, such as plague and bloodshed, while also examining some of her kinder, oft overlooked associations. Finally, the role of Artemis in the Renaissance and modern society is addressed, from the ongoing fascination with the 'breasts' on the statue of Artemis of Ephesos to the Artemisian aspects of Katniss Everdeen, from the *Hunger Games* trilogy.

Written in an accessible style, *Artemis* is a crucial resource not only for students of Greek myth, religion, and cult, but also for those seeking to understand the lives and roles of girls and women in ancient Greece, as this goddess presided over all their significant milestones, from maiden to wife to mother.

Stephanie Lynn Budin is an ancient historian who focuses on ancient Greece and the Near East. Her published works include *Images of Woman and Child from the Bronze Age* (2011), *The Ancient Greeks: An Introduction* (2009), *The Myth of Sacred Prostitution in Antiquity* (2008) and *The Origin of Aphrodite* (2003), as well as numerous articles on ancient religion and iconography.

Gods and Heroes of the Ancient World

Series editor Susan Deacy
Roehampton University

Routledge is pleased to present an exciting new series, Gods and Heroes of the Ancient World. These figures from antiquity are embedded in our culture, many functioning as the source of creative inspiration for poets, novelists, artists, composers and filmmakers. Concerned with their multifaceted aspects within the world of ancient paganism and how and why these figures continue to fascinate, the books provide a route into understanding Greek and Roman polytheism in the 21st century.

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 **ARTEMIS** 

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To Jean MacIntosh Turfa
φίλιστη πότνια θηρών



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SERIES FOREWORD

It is proper for a person who is beginning any serious discourse and task to begin first with the gods.

(Demosthenes, *Epistula* 1.1)

WHY GODS AND HEROES?

The gods and heroes of classical antiquity are part of our culture. Many function as sources of creative inspiration for poets, novelists, artists, composers, film makers and designers. Greek tragedy's enduring appeal has ensured an ongoing familiarity with its protagonists' experiences and sufferings, while the choice of Minerva as the logo of one of the newest British universities, the University of Lincoln, demonstrates the ancient gods' continued emblematic potential. Even the world of management has used them as representatives of different styles: Zeus and the "club" culture for example, and Apollo and the "role" culture (see C. Handy, *The Gods of Management: Who they are, how they work and why they fail*, London, 1978).

This series is concerned with how and why these figures continue to fascinate and intrigue. But it has another aim too, namely to explore their strangeness. The familiarity of the gods and heroes risks obscuring a vital difference between modern meanings and ancient functions and purpose. With certain exceptions, people today do not worship them, yet to the Greeks and Romans they were real beings in a system comprising literally hundreds of divine powers. These range from the major gods, each of whom was worshipped in many guises via their epithets or "surnames," to the heroes – deceased individuals associated with local communities – to other figures such as daemons and nymphs. The landscape was dotted with sanctuaries, while natural features such as mountains, trees and rivers were thought to be inhabited by religious beings. Studying ancient paganism involves finding strategies to comprehend a world where everything was, in the often quoted words of Thales, "full of gods."

In order to get to grips with this world, it is necessary to set aside our preconceptions of the divine, shaped as they are in large part by Christianised notions of a transcendent, omnipotent God who is morally good. The Greeks and Romans worshipped numerous beings, both male and female, who looked, behaved and suffered like humans, but who, as immortals, were not bound by the human condition. Far from

being omnipotent, each had limited powers: even the sovereign, Zeus/Jupiter, shared control of the universe with his brothers Poseidon/Neptune (the sea) and Hades/Pluto (the underworld). Lacking a creed or anything like an organised church, ancient paganism was open to continual reinterpretation, with the result that we should not expect to find figures with a uniform essence. It is common to begin accounts of the pantheon with a list of the major gods and their function(s) (Hephaistos/Vulcan: craft, Aphrodite/Venus: love, and Artemis/Diana: the hunt and so on), but few are this straightforward. Aphrodite, for example, is much more than the goddess of love, vital though that function is. Her epithets include *hetaira* (“courtesan”) and *porne* (“prostitute”), but also attest roles as varied as patron of the citizen body (*pandemos*: “of all the people”) and protectress of seafaring (*Euploia*, *Pontia*, *Limenia*).

Recognising this diversity, the series consists not of biographies of each god or hero (though such have been attempted in the past), but of investigations into their multifaceted aspects within the complex world of ancient paganism. Its approach has been shaped partly in response to two distinctive patterns in previous research. Until the middle of the twentieth century, scholarship largely took the form of studies of individual gods and heroes. Many works presented a detailed appraisal of such issues as each figure’s origins, myth and cult; these include L.R. Farnell’s examination of major deities in his *Cults of the Greek States* (five volumes, Oxford, 1896–1909) and A.B. Cook’s huge three-volume *Zeus* (Cambridge, 1914–1940). Others applied theoretical developments to the study of gods and heroes, notably (and in the closest existing works to a uniform series), K. Kerényi in his investigations of gods as Jungian archetypes, including *Prometheus: Archetypal image of human existence* (English trans. London 1963) and *Dionysos: Archetypal image of indestructible life* (English trans. London 1976).

In contrast, under the influence of French structuralism, the later part of the century saw a deliberate shift away from research into particular gods and heroes towards an investigation of the system of which they were part. Fuelled by a conviction that the study of isolated gods could not do justice to the dynamics of ancient religion, the pantheon came to be represented as a logical and coherent network in which the various powers were systematically opposed to one another. In a classic study by J.-P. Vernant for example, the Greek concept of space was shown to be consecrated through the opposition between Hestia (goddess of the hearth – fixed space) and Hermes (messenger and traveller god – moveable space: Vernant, *Myth and Thought among the Greeks* London, 1983, 127–75). The gods as individual entities were far from neglected however, as may be exemplified by the works by Vernant, and his colleague M. Detienne, on particular deities, including Artemis, Dionysos and Apollo: see, most recently, Detienne’s *Apollon, le couteau en main: une approche expérimentale du polythéisme grec* (Paris, 1998).

In a sense, this series is seeking a middle ground. While approaching its subjects as unique (if diverse) individuals, it pays attention to their significance as powers within the collectivity of religious beings. *Gods and Heroes of the Ancient World* sheds new light on many of the most important religious beings of classical antiquity; it also provides a route into understanding Greek and Roman polytheism in the twenty-first century.

The series is intended to interest the general reader as well as being geared to the needs of students in a wide range of fields from Greek and Roman religion and

mythology, classical literature and anthropology, to Renaissance literature and cultural studies. Each book presents an authoritative, accessible and refreshing account of its subject via three main sections. The introduction brings out what it is about the god or hero that merits particular attention. This is followed by a central section which introduces key themes and ideas, including (to varying degrees) origins, myth, cult, and representations in literature and art. Recognising that the heritage of myth is a crucial factor in its continued appeal, the reception of each figure since antiquity forms the subject of the third part of the book. The books include illustrations of each god/hero and, where appropriate, time charts, family trees and maps. An annotated bibliography synthesises past research and indicates useful follow-up reading.

For convenience, the masculine terms “gods” and “heroes” have been selected for the series title, although (and with an apology for the male-dominated language), the choice partly reflects ancient usage in that the Greek *theos* (“god”) is used of goddesses too. For convenience and consistency, Greek spellings are used for ancient names, except for famous Latinised exceptions, and BC/AD has been selected rather than BCE/CE.

I am indebted to Catherine Bousfield, the editorial assistant until 2004, who (literally) dreamt up the series and whose thoroughness and motivation brought it close to its launch. The hard work and efficiency of her successor, Matthew Gibbons, has overseen its progress to publication, and the former classics publisher of Routledge, Richard Stoneman, has provided support and expertise throughout. The anonymous readers for each proposal gave frank and helpful advice, while the authors’ commitments to advancing scholarship while producing accessible accounts of their designated subjects has made it a pleasure to work with them.

Susan Deacy, Roehampton University, June 2005



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ABBREVIATIONS

The following conventional abbreviations are used to cite certain standard works. Ancient authors and their works are given in full in the text. Works by modern scholars are referred to by author-date in notes with full publication details in the Bibliography.

- AO* *The Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta*. R.M. Dawkins (ed.) Macmillan and Co, Ltd. London. 1929
- BCH* *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*
- CMS* *Corpus der Minoischen und Mykenischen Siegel*. I. Pini (ed.). Gebr. Mann Verlag. Berlin
- FrGrHist* Jacoby, F. (1923–58) *Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker*, Leiden. This collection of fragments of Greek historical writing has recently been made a great deal more accessible to students via the online project *Brill's New Jacoby* (ed. I. Worthington, Leiden 2006–), available via university libraries which have an institutional site licence. Each fragment is provided with an English translation as well as the Greek text, a commentary and Bibliography
- GA* *Greek Anthology*
- IG* *Inscriptiones Graecae*
- LIMC* *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, Zurich and Munich 1981–99
- LSCG* Sokolowski, F. (1969) *Lois sacrées des cités grecques*, Paris
- SEG* *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, Leiden 1923–



INTRODUCING ARTEMIS

Artemis was one of the most important deities in the ancient Greek pantheon, with cults that stretched from Bactria (modern-day Afghanistan) in the east to Iberia in the west. Her range of honors and functions in daily Greek life were just as impressive. Most commonly known as the goddess of the hunt and wilderness, Artemis was also responsible for helping women in childbirth (when she was not killing them), turning children into adults, marking boundaries between political territories and between periods of war and peace, bringing and curing plague, bringing light, and manumitting slaves, especially female slaves. At some time in the early centuries of our era an Orphic poet gave a fine summary of Artemis in a hymn:

Of Artemis (frankincense powder incense)

Hear me, O Queen, many-named daughter of Zeus
Titanic, sounding, glorious, archer, reverend,
All-shining, torch-bearing Goddess, Diktyнна,¹ Lokheia,²
Aid to those in childbirth and untouched by childbirth,
Lysizonê,³ frenzy-loving huntress, who drives away cares,
Swift, arrow-pouring, wilds-loving, night-roaming,
Fame-bringing, gracious deliverer, tomboy,
Ortheia,⁴ giver of swift birth, divine kourotrophos of mortals,
Immortal, earthy, beast-killing, of blessed good fortune,
You who dwell in the mountain dells, deer-shooter, reverend,
Lady, all-royal, fair sprout forever,
Sylvan puppy, Kydonian⁵ of changing form,
Come, dear Goddess, Savior! To all initiates
Gracious, bringer of fine fruits from the land
And lovely peace and fair-tressed health.
You lead to the mountain peaks illnesses and pain.

The range presented in the literature is matched by the variety seen in the goddess's votive dedications. Consider, for example, the items offered to Artemis at the Scala Graeca sanctuary of ancient Syracuse in Sicily. Here we find terracotta votives of Artemis carrying a boat, and thus as protector of sailors; Artemis as Potnia Therôn ("Mistress of Animals") resting her hands on the heads of lions and panthers; Artemis snuggling young deer against her chest as the goddess who loves the young of wild animals; while the goddess holding adult deer by the tail or hind legs reveals

2 INTRODUCING ARTEMIS

Artemis Elaphebolos—“Deer-Shooter.” Artemis with her bow is the huntress, while Artemis with plants or palm trees is a more protective goddess of nature and fertility. Dedications of horse figures may refer to a cult of Artemis Hippikê, the goddess who, according to Pindar (*Pyth.* 2) helped Hieron of Syracuse tame his horses and thus win a Pythian chariot race.⁶ At other sanctuaries, Artemis the goddess of women is more prominent, as at Brauron in Attika, where were found statuettes of standing and crouching children; terracotta figurines of seated, mortal kourotrophoi; and Classical votive reliefs showing families with babies coming to sacrifice at her altar.⁷

Artemis' importance in cult is belied by her comparatively rare appearances in literature. She has a single scene in Homer's *Iliad*—a quite embarrassing one, really, where she literally gets bitch-slapped by her step-mother Hera. Although alluded to in the *Odyssey*, she makes no personal appearance. Hesiod is thorough enough to mention her once, and she appears in only one of the extant Athenian tragedies—*Hippolytos*. The goddess is more prominent in the more “personal” genres of literature: lyric poetry and dedicatory epigrams. But even in the former she is not as popular as Aphrodite, perhaps because a virgin huntress does not fit in as well as a seductress at the drinking parties at which lyric songs were sung.

This lack of literary presence is an important consideration in the study of Greek religion. Because so many students approach Greek religion through a class in Classical mythology, the importance of Greek deities tends to be correlated with their prominence in the written sources. Athena is clearly a powerful, important deity, as is Zeus. Hestia, by contrast, appears to be irrelevant, and Hera is just some jealous bitch. It is only by considering the non-literary evidence that one gets an appreciation of such deities' true importance in Greek religion. For example, as the goddess of the hearth, Hestia is the core of the household, the core of the polis, the goddess who admits new members to both, who extends her reach to bind daughter colonies to mother cities, and in whose domain all burnt sacrifices and most libations must take place. Her Homeric hymn (29) does not exaggerate:

Hestia, who in the high halls of all the immortal
Deities and of earth-dwelling men too
Has an everlasting seat and foremost honor;
She has a fair prize and right. For without you
Mortals cannot revel—where does one not begin the libations
Of sweet wine, first and last, to Hestia?

The study of Artemis allows one a golden (perhaps silver?) opportunity to look at Greek religion from a multiplicity of sources, and so come to appreciate the importance of a goddess who has only a marginal presence in the standard mythological stories.

In addition to her geographic reach, Artemis also had one of the longest enduring cults in the ancient Mediterranean. She is attested iconographically in Bronze Age Crete and Greece and in the Linear B documents from Pylos, and her cult at Ephesos in Anatolia endured long and well enough to give the early Christians apoplexy.

Although demonstrating a broad range of aspects and functions, Artemis has at the core of her persona the role of goddess of transitions. As noted above, it is she who helps children to metamorphose into adults. But her role goes far beyond

this. As the goddess of the hunt, she is the deity who mediates between the savage world of wild animals and the tool-using (and just as savage) world of humans. As a goddess of the wilds, her cult marks transitions between the wild and the civilized, and between political domains. She helps girls to become women and, more importantly, mothers, just as she is present to help slaves become free. In most of her functions, to one extent or another, Artemis is the goddess who presides over changes of states of being.

Because of her range in time, space, and functions, Artemis had a very high potential for syncretizing with other goddesses. As such, Artemis provides an ideal case study for the examination of syncretism in ancient religion. This fact is going to come up repeatedly in this book, so it is worthwhile here to give the reader a basic introduction to the concept of syncretism.

SYNCRETISM

At its simplest, “syncretism” is the process by which deities merge identities. This typically occurs when peoples with different pantheons come into contact with each other and, consciously or unconsciously, try to get their religious systems to mesh.

The word has come to have a rather wide span of related meanings over the past two centuries, ranging from a general notion of “relationship” to an equation of deities equivalent to henotheism. The various nuances or subdivisions of the notion of syncretism were established by P. Lévêque in his 1975 article “Essai de typologie des syncrétismes,” (“Essay on the Typology of Syncretisms”) and reconsidered by A. Motte and V. Pirenne-Delforge in their 1994 article “Du ‘bon usage’ de la notion de syncrétisme” (“On the ‘Proper Use’ of the Notion of Syncretism”). In this latter work “syncretism” is separated out from the related notions of “influence” and “borrowing.” Then, in proper Platonic fashion, it is studied in its various manifestations. An *interpretatio*-type syncretism, for example, is “that tendency . . . to baptize foreign divinities by the name of one’s own deities.”⁸ Thus the Greeks recognize the Phoenician goddess Astarte as simply a foreign version of their own goddess Aphrodite, just as Etruscan Fufluns is Dionysos, and Gaulish Epona is Athena. The “amalgam” type of syncretism occurs when a mixing of two or more deities, possibly from different pantheons, creates a new divinity.⁹ Thus, in Hellenistic Egypt, the Greeks combined the Egyptian deities Apis (a bull) and Osiris (God of the Dead) to create the new deity Serapis. By contrast, with “syncrétisme-hénothéisme” (henotheism) several deities of the same gender in one or more pantheons are seen as being the same god or goddess.¹⁰ Thus, Greek Aphrodite = Phoenician Astarte = Egyptian Hathor.

P. Pakkanen, in her 1996 work *Interpreting Early Hellenistic Religion*, took the study of syncretism a step farther, arguing that syncretism is in fact a process, rather than merely a state of being. Thus, the various terms as defined above are actually steps within the overarching process of syncretism. Local societies with their own pantheons and cults come into contact with new peoples and new religious ideologies and deities. First, an *interpretatio*, or parallelism, process takes place, whereby one group

(or both) identifies one or more of the “foreign” deities with members of their own pantheon. Long-term parallelism may eventually cause amalgamation to occur, so that a new deity, or a new conception of the old deities, comes into existence. This may either occur naturally, as the iconographic merging of Demeter and Isis in the Hellenistic period, or artificially, as the creation of that Helleno-Egyptian Serapis mentioned above. With this new deity in place, the process may then repeat.¹¹

In the study of Artemis, these processes of syncretism need to be understood in at least two categories. In the earlier Greek history there were the local syncretisms, when the Olympian goddess Artemis came into contact and merged with similar Greek or pre-Greek goddesses. As we shall see in Chapter 1, such a syncretism took place in Sparta with an indigenous goddess called Worthasia, such that the original goddess came to be eclipsed by the Greek goddess henceforth known as Artemis Ortheia (“Ortheia” derives from the original name Worthasia).

In Chapter 5, we shall see that Artemis merged identities with the age-old goddess of childbirth Eileithyia. How these goddesses syncretized wholly depended on where they were in ancient Greece. In Crete and the Peloponnese, Artemis and Eileithyia remained individual deities (not surprising considering Eileithyia’s long-standing cult in Crete since the Bronze Age). In Attika, however, the goddesses began to merge identities; both might be worshipped individually, but Artemis also came to be known as Artemis-Eileithyia, and she took on Eileithyia’s role as goddess of childbirth. Farther north, in Boiotia, Eileithyia had no independent identity; she only existed as an aspect of Artemis. A similar process seems to have occurred between Artemis and a local goddess of central Greece called Iphimedê/Iphianassa/Iphigeneia, as discussed in Chapter 6. Here, the original goddess continued to exist, but was demoted to “heroine” status and recognized in the literature as a priestess of the goddess who displaced her.

In the second category, Artemis syncretizes with foreign deities. Some occurred earlier in Greek history, as the syncretism between Artemis and Anatolian Hekatê, as discussed in Chapter 6. As with Eileithyia, these two goddesses were worshipped both independently and linked to each other. Other syncretisms occurred later, with goddesses farther afield, and whose syncretized identities had little impact on Greek religion at home. It is also important to note that deities did not necessarily have to be similar in character or attributes to be syncretized. Often merely a single detail was sufficient for the Greeks (and others) to identify their deities with those of others, and it was frequently the case that individual deities could be syncretized with more than one foreign divinity.

Such oddities come across well in the case of the Mesopotamian goddess Nanaya, who was syncretized with Artemis in the Hellenistic period and whose combined cult endured into the Roman period. In Mesopotamia Nanaya was a goddess of sex. In the Sumerian BALBALE hymns of the second millennium, the goddess is often addressed as “sister” (a common term for a “beloved,” but in no way referring to incest!). Her most titillating hymn—in dialogue format—is, due to its fragmentary nature, perhaps appropriately, quite a tease:

Worthy of An, unsurpassed in ladyship, a throne a man in the house, a throne a woman in the shrine, a gold ornament on the dress, a pin the niĝlam garment.

Let me on your – Nanaya, its is good. Let me (?) on your breast – Nanaya, its flour is sweet. Let me put on your navel -- Nanaya, Come with me, my lady, come with me, come with me from the entrance to the shrine. May for you. Come my beloved sister, let my heart rejoice.

Your hand is womanly, your foot is womanly. Your conversing with a man is womanly. Your looking at a man is womanly. Your a hand towards a man is womanly. Your a foot is womanly. Your forearm makes my heart rejoice. Your a foot brings me pleasure. As you rest against the wall, your patient heart pleases. As you bend over, your hips are particularly pleasing.

My resting against the wall is one lamb. My bending over is one and a half giĝ. Do not dig a canal, let me be your canal. Do not plough a field, let me be your field. Farmer, do not search for a wet place, my precious sweet, let this be your wet place., let this be your furrow., let this be your desire! Caring for, I come I come with bread and wine.

You come to me with bread and wine. Come, my beloved sister, let me this heart. Nanaya, let me kiss you.¹²

So far, this deity has remarkably little in common with virgin huntress Artemis. Nevertheless, in the first millennium developments occur in Nanaya's cult and persona that bring her more "in line" with Artemis. For example, in the list of monthly festivals in the city of Uruk, Nanaya was revered with a feast on the first of the month of Dumuzi. The texts record that a quiver was placed in the hands of one of the statues before being paraded around the temple.¹³ Likewise, already in the late second millennium Nanaya came to be seen as the consort of the scribal god Nabû, and together they were the chief deities of the city of Borsippa. In later years, the Greeks identified Nabû as Apollo, just as they equated Nanaya with Artemis, and we read in Strabo (16.1.7) that Artemis and Apollo were the primary deities of the city in his day. Artemis-Nanaya was also worshipped in Dura-Europos. In her study of Nanaya, Joan Goodnick Westenholz noted some of the difficulties in understanding how these goddesses came to be identified with each other, but also highlighted their closely shared iconographies:

[T]his was during a period of syncretism so that when Strabo identifies Nanaya as Artemis and we find representations of Nanaya with bow and arrows or with moon crescents, it is difficult to discern if the appellation or the depiction is secondary—whether she was depicted with bow and arrows because she was called Artemis, or whether she was called Artemis because she was depicted with bow and arrows. In Susa, on the coins of the Parthian period issued in 110 B.C., she is depicted as a sun/moon goddess with her head surrounded by rays . . . Her dress is adorned with crescents in the offering scene on the pithos from Assur, while her head is crowned with a crescent and a sun . . . Nanaya appears on several tesserae from Palmyra and was also represented there with bow and arrows.¹⁴

In addition to their syncretism with each other, it is clear that both goddesses were influenced by the Roman Age conflation of Artemis with Diana, such that all three goddesses came to take on lunar (and even solar) imagery.

The late syncretism of Artemis with Nanaya is an extreme case—it had no influence on how Artemis was perceived or worshipped in Greece—but it is not wholly atypical

of the “Age of Syncretism” that prevailed in the Hellenistic and Roman eras. Perhaps more typical and relevant for the study of Greek Artemis was her syncretism with the goddess of Ephesos, whose cult spread from the coasts of Anatolia to *la côte d’azur* in southern France (more on this in the next chapter).

The notion of syncretism, then, has a rich variety of meanings. At its simplest level, there is the *interpretatio* syncretism, whereby two or more deities are seen as the same. The degree of initial distance and the degree of identification can vary, with the example of Artemis and Worthasia being an example of extreme closeness and merging. Often, syncretisms emerged between deities of different pantheons. If the merging of identities were sufficient to create a new deity, amalgam is said to take place. In this instance, it is possible for one or more of the original, pre-amalgamated deities to continue in existence and cult beside the new deity. If, however, the merging of identities causes one of the “creator” deities to cease to exist, then we might say that an “eclipse” type of syncretism has occurred, as with Iphigeneia. When there is no limit on *interpretatio* syncretisms within a cosmopolitan social system, henotheism begins to emerge. Here, an ever-growing and complex system of parallelisms can lead to the notion that, in fact, *all* gods are one, or all goddesses. Here we might call to mind a passage from Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* (aka *The Golden Ass*) wherein the goddess Isis says to Lucius (11.5):

I am the parent of nature, mistress of all elements, first-born of the ages, supreme authority, queen of the dead, first in heaven, the singular manifestation of gods and goddesses . . . whose sole divinity is multiform, of varied rites, worshipped by many names throughout the whole world. Amongst the first-born Phrygians I am Pessinuntia, divine mother; here the autochthonous Athenians call me Cecropian Minerva, there the wave-tossed Cyprians call me Paphian Venus; arrow-bearing Cretans call me Diana Dictynna. The trilingual Sicilians call me Stygian Proserpina, the Eleusinians the ancient goddess Ceres, others Juno, others Bellona, these Hecate, those Rhamnusia; and the Ethiopians, first lit by the rays of the sun, and the Egyptians strong in ancient doctrines, honor me with my own rites, and call me by my true name: Queen Isis.

SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The reader will notice that this book contains a lot of primary sources. This is deliberate. From a very personal perspective, I have always found it terribly annoying to have statements made in books with the evidence buried in an endnote somewhere that references a primary source that I then had to go look up myself. I have tried to avoid the need for you to do this by having the source right on the page next to the assertion. For any university students beginning on the road to ancient studies, I hope this helps to show how the process of ancient studies is done, how one goes from the primary sources to the conclusions. For those of you who are more advanced, I wanted to be very explicit in how I went about this process myself, because, as you will see, many of the conclusions I came to are not what are regarded as standard understandings of Artemis. Or, to put it another way, Artemis led me on a wild, nocturnal hunt in the writing of this book, and now I am going to make you share in the experience.

There is an embarrassment of riches when it comes to studying Artemis, in spite of her relative paucity in the literary accounts. In addition to her brief appearances in Homer, Hesiod, and the Athenian playwrights, she appears in some of the lyric poetry, has two Homeric Hymns as well as an exceptionally long hymn by Kallimakhos and the Orphic Hymn given above. The cults of Artemis appear in Herodotos and Xenophon as well as in the works of Plutarch, Pausanias, and Strabo, and she is mentioned in various contexts by Plato. There are many, many dedicatory epigrams to the goddess, and her cults feature prominently in the epigraphic inscriptions from throughout Greece. Many of her sanctuaries have been thoroughly excavated *and* published, providing evidence on where she was worshipped, when, and even to a certain extent how. The site reports also detail the votives offered to the goddess (as with Scala Graeca above), giving further evidence as to how the people envisioned both the goddess and their relationship to her. Artemis appears in visual arts of Greece—vase painting, sculpture, reliefs—and these are also sources of data about the goddess and her cults.

This study focuses mainly on Artemis from the Archaic and Classical periods (800–323 BCE). As such, I have always privileged data coming from those eras in preference to the later—if copious—data from authors such as Plutarch and Pausanias. Their works are used, of course. However, if a statement about something that occurred in the fifth century made by, say, Plutarch is contradicted by a statement made by Herodotos, then Herodotos' account is considered to be the more trustworthy. Furthermore, if a statement made by one of the later authors has no correlating data in earlier Greek history, then these data are considered slightly suspect, possibly only reflecting a later aspect of Artemis' cults, possibly once she was already conflated with Roman Diana. This is going to have some serious consequences for some of the conclusions reached in this book, so it is important to understand my methodology up front.

OVERVIEW

Artemis was a highly versatile goddess worshipped over a large swathe of the ancient world, from Iberia to Afghanistan to Egypt. Although a goddess of the wilds, her various roles made her very present in the lives of the ancient Greeks, literally from birth through the attainment of adulthood and beyond. More than anything, she was the goddess of transitions, marking those places both physical and conceptual between different states of being—wild and civilized, human and animal, child and adult, maiden and mother, slave and free. Often she helped her worshippers to cross those boundaries, sometimes she forced them, and those who tried to resist quickly learned much about the anger of the goddess.

NOTES

- 1 A cult epithet used in Crete.
- 2 Of childbirth.
- 3 Belt-loosener: pertaining both to first intercourse and childbirth.

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