

Brill's new Pauly entry for Persephone, Kore (Sourvinou Inwood, Christine (Oxford))

(Περσεφόνη/*Persephónē*, Κόρη/*Kórē*).

I. Genealogy and Myth

The Greek goddess P./K. is the daughter of [Zeus](#) and [Demeter](#). The Greek Κόρη/*Kórē* (Doric Κόρα/*Kóra*, Ionic Κούρη/*Koúirē*) emphasises her role as the 'daughter' of Demeter, whilst the name Περσεφόνη/*Persephónē* (H. Hom. 2,56; Hes. Theog. 913; also Φερσεφόνη/*Phersephónē*; epic Περσεφονείη/*Persephoneíē*; Attic Φερρέφαττα/*Pherréphatta* etc.) stresses her role as the wife of [Hades](#). The defining myth about P. is first told in the Homeric hymn to Demeter (H. Hom., middle of 7th cent. BC?; for the Latin versions see [Proserpina](#)): as P. is picking flowers in a meadow (which is located in different places in the various versions), she is abducted by Hades/[Pluto](#) and taken to the Underworld. After her marriage to him she becomes queen of the [Underworld](#). Demeter's unsuccessful search for her daughter reaches its crisis in [Eleusis](#) [1], where she has retreated without attending to her normal tasks, with the consequence that the cereal crops fail completely. Only the intervention of Zeus prevents mankind from starving: he eventually sends [Hermes](#) to Hades in order to convince the latter to set P. free, which Hades does, after he has given her some pomegranate seeds to eat. This makes that P. cannot leave Hades for good. She lives there for part of the year, and in spring she returns to the world above and spends the other part of the year with her mother.

II. Cult

A. Kore and Demeter

K. is often worshipped together with Demeter. The myth of the search for Demeter's daughter has its counterpart in ritual. In [Megara](#) [2] there was a rock called *Anaklēthrís*, because Demeter *anekálesen* ('called back') her daughter K. when she passed it by in her search; the women of Megara staged a re-enactment of the myth (Paus. 1,43,2). In the Eleusinian [Mysteries](#) the initiates re-enacted the search for K. at night by torchlight (cf. Lactant. Div. inst. epit. 23); when the goddess was found, the ritual ended with mutual congratulations and torch throwing. The ceremonial invocation to K., during which the hierophant sounded a gong (Apollodoros FGrH 244 F 110b), probably took place towards the end of the search and just before she was found again.

B. Thesmophoria

The [Thesmophoria](#), celebrated by women all over the Greek world, was the festival held in honour of Demeter (who also bore the title *Thesmophóros*) and Kore. In Athens (we know most about the Athenian Thesmophoria [1]), many of the rites within a sequence lasting several days refer to Demeter's sorrow after K.'s abduction and to her adventures when searching for her daughter. One of these was the ritual in which the decomposed remains of piglets were brought up from underground where they had been left to rot for some time (schol. Lucian. p. 275,23 Rabe). This rite was related to the mytheme in which the pigs of the swineherd [Eubuleus](#) had disappeared into a gaping chasm with K. when she was abducted.

C. Kore and Hades

Sometimes, K. and Hades were worshipped together. The myth of her abduction was i.a. interpreted as a polarised representation of many views concerning marriage from the perspective of a girl. In many places, especially in [Locri \[2\] Epizephyrii](#), her cult emphasised this aspect [3. 203-206]. Her marriage was significant here in cult and myth; the goddess was worshipped as the protector of marriage and of the female domain, including the protection of children. Demeter appears not to have played a prominent role in the Locrian cult, which was linked to the sanctuary of the Persephoneion, in which Persephone was closely connected to Hades. Demeter did have her own shrine in Locri and will have been linked to her daughter in the cult of the Thesmophoria (in Locri, Demeter bore the epithet *Thesmophóros*) [3. 206-208]. Persephone's 'marriage' (*anakalyptéria*) and the flower picking which preceded her abduction were also celebrated in other places, e.g. in Sicily (*Persephónēs anakalyptéria*: schol. rec. Pind. Ol. 6,160; cf. Diod. Sic. 5,2,3) and in the Locrian colony of Hipponion (Str. 6,1,5).

D. Festivals of arrival

P./K. belongs to the deities whose arrival was celebrated at 'festivals of arrival'. For instance, an important Sicilian festival in honour of P was the festival of arrival known as *Kórēs katagōgē*. According to Diodorus (Diod. Sic. 5,4,5f.), 'the return of P./K.' from the Underworld was celebrated when the grain in the ears of corn reached maturity, in May or thereabouts. This doubtlessly was the festival in honour of K. at the spring of [Cyane](#) in the territory of Syracuse, which Diodorus had described shortly before (Diod. Sic. 5,4,2): [Pluto](#) abducted K. close to Syracuse and after he had split open the earth, descended with her into Hades; the spring of Cyane rose up there; every year the Syracusians celebrated a festival here during which private individuals sacrificed smaller animals, whilst bulls were immersed as public sacrifices in the pool (a kind of sacrifice which [Heracles \[1\]](#) is said to have shown the Syracusians when he was in Sicily, after he had driven away the cattle of [Geryoneus](#)). As the spring of Cyane was a passage way between this world and Hades, this ritual was linked to P.'s/K.'s journeys between both worlds.

Another festival celebrating P./K.'s arrival was the *Korágia* in [Mantineia](#) (IG V 2,265; cf. IG V 2,266), during which a procession and sacrifice took place. P.K.'s statue was removed from its usual place in the temple and carried back to the house of the priest or priestess until it was returned to the temple, which on this day was accessible to all participants in the cult. The festival comprised a part called *mystiká ta árrhēta*, as well as *árrhēta mystéria* ([Mysteries C I](#)) and the presentation of a new garment (*pēplos*). A society of *koragoí* was responsible for the festival, and the rite was understood as a reception and entertainment of the deity. In [Cyzicus](#), P. bore the epithet *Sōteira* ('saviour', [Sōtér](#)) and her festival was called *Pherepháttia* or *Kóreia* or *Sōteira*. In Arcadia Demeter and Kore were called the 'the Great Goddesses' and Kore was called Soteira by the Arcadians (Paus. 8,31,1; cf. 4,1,5-9; [2]).

E. Various cultic centres

The cult of P./K. and Demeter was widespread in Southern Italy ([Magna Graecia](#)) and in Sicily (for details, see [3]). Before the middle of the 6th cent. BC, we find few sanctuaries dedicated to both goddesses, but after that time in many places of Southern Italy and Sicily were temples erected for them. Their cult flourished in the succeeding centuries; only from the end of the 3rd cent. BC does it seem to become less important in Southern Italy. Of the

recently excavated (or published) sanctuaries of Demeter and K. in other areas, those most worthy of note are in Corinth (on the slopes of the Acrocorinth) with its earliest archaeologically attested phase dating from the 7th cent. BC [4; 5; 6], and the sanctuary in [Cyrene](#), in the Wādī ʿl-Gadīr, lying outside the city and founded c. 600 BC [7; 8].

F. Iconography

In pictorial depictions P./K. appears as a young woman, often with additional features, with torches, ears of corn and sceptres being widespread, whilst others, such as the cock in Locri Epizephyrii, are tied to the iconography of specific local cults [9].

G. Underworld

As Queen or Mistress (*Déspoina*) of the Underworld, P. possessed an awe-inspiring, fearsome aspect; in the end, everyone entered her domain. For this reason she was linked to cults which were to guarantee a better life after death. These include the Eleusinian [Mysteries](#), a part of the Athenian *polis* religion, with which Demeter was also linked. The initiation into these mysteries was to guarantee a blissful existence in the afterlife (e.g. H. Hom. 2,479-482). P. also played an important role in sect-like cults which hoped to ensure a blissful life after death. A sign of this is her role in the texts engraved on gold leafs which were interred with persons initiated in [Orphism](#) ([Orphicae Lamellae](#); [10]). In the Orphic theogonies, P. is the daughter of an incestuous union of Zeus and his mother [Rhea](#)-Demeter as well as the mother - by her father Zeus - of the Orphic child [Dionysus](#) who was killed and dismembered by the [Titans](#). This mortal divine son of P., Chthonios Dionysus, was identified with [Zagreus](#) (a polymorphic figure, difficult to grasp, who, in Aesch. TrGF 3 F 228 is the son of Hades and P.) and finally became Dionysus-Zagreus, son of Zeus and P. (e.g. Hsch. s.v. Ζαγρεύς; Suda s.v. Ζαγρεύς; cf. schol. Pind. Isthm.7,3).

[Demeter](#); [Mysteries](#); [Persephone](#); [Thesmophoria](#)

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