

Demeter: Myth and Cult

Historical Sanctuaries

- [8] When the fighting was now taking place by sanctuaries and houses, and in the narrow lanes, between detached bodies in different parts of the town, Pyrrhus left by himself was wounded in the head. **It is said that his death was caused by a blow from a tile thrown by a woman. The Argives however declare that it was not a woman who killed him but Demeter in the likeness of a woman.** This is what the Argives themselves relate about his end, and Lyceas, the guide for the neighborhood, has written a poem which confirms the story. They have a sanctuary of Demeter, built at the command of the oracle, on the spot where Pyrrhus died, and in it Pyrrhus is buried. Paus. 1.13.8
- [4] The building of white marble in just about the middle of the marketplace is not, as the Argives declare, a trophy in honor of a victory over Pyrrhus of Epeirus, but it can be shown that his body was burnt here, and that this is his monument, on which are carved in relief the elephants and his other instruments of warfare. This building then was set up where the pyre stood, but the bones of Pyrrhus lie in the sanctuary of Demeter, beside which, as I have shown in my account of Attica, his death occurred. At the entrance to this sanctuary of Demeter you can see a bronze shield of Pyrrhus hanging dedicated over the door. Paus. 2.21.4

Local temples in Attika

- The small parishes of Attica, which were founded severally as chance would have it, presented the following noteworthy features. At Alimus is a sanctuary of Demeter Lawgiver and of the Maid, and at Zoster (Girdle) on the coast is an altar to Athena, as well as to Apollo, to Artemis and to Leto. The story is that Leto did not give birth to her children here, but loosened her girdle with a view to her delivery, and the place received its name from this incident. Prospalta has also a sanctuary of the Maid and Demeter, and Anagyrus a sanctuary of the Mother of the gods. At Cephale the chief cult is that of the Dioscuri, for the inhabitants call them the Great gods. Paus. 1.31.1

Local sanctuaries (Megara)

- [3] When you have gone down to the port, which to the present day is called Nisaea, you see a sanctuary of Demeter Malophorus (Sheep-bearer or Apple-bearer) . One of the accounts given of the surname is that those who first reared sheep in the land named Demeter Malophorus. The roof of the temple one might conclude has fallen in through age. There is a citadel here, which also is called Nisaea. Below the citadel near the sea is the tomb of Lelex, who they say arrived from Egypt and became king, being the son of Poseidon and of Libya, daughter of Epheus. Parallel to Nisaea lies the small island of Minoa, where in the war against Nisus anchored the fleet of the Cretans. Paus. 1.44.3



Temples and the journey of Demeter

- A little beyond the Rams—this is the name they give to the tomb of Thyestes—there is on the left a place called Mysia and a **sanctuary of Mysian Demeter, so named from a man Mysius who, say the Argives, was one of those who entertained Demeter.** Now this sanctuary has no roof, but in it is another temple, built of burnt brick, and wooden images of the Maid, Pluto and Demeter. Farther on is a river called Inachus, and on the other side of it an altar of Helius (the Sun) . After this you will come to a gate named after the sanctuary near it. This sanctuary belongs to Eileithyia. Paus. 2.18.3

Local Cult (Hermione)



- The object most worthy of mention is a sanctuary of Demeter on Pron. This sanctuary is said by the Hermionians to have been founded by Clymenus, son of Phoroneus, and Chthonia, sister of Clymenus. But the Argive account is that when Demeter came to Argolis, while Atheras and Mysius afforded hospitality to the goddess, Colontas neither received her into his home nor paid her any other mark of respect. His daughter Chthoia disapproved of this conduct. They say that Colontas was punished by being burnt up along with his house, while Chthonia was brought to Hermion by Demeter, and made the sanctuary for the Hermionians. [5] At any rate, the goddess herself is called Chthonia, and Chthonia is the name of the festival they hold in the summer of every year. The manner of it is this. The procession is headed by the priests of the gods and by all those who hold the annual magistracies; these are followed by both men and women. It is now a custom that some who are still children should honor the goddess in the procession. These are dressed in white, and wear wreaths upon their heads. Their wreaths are woven of the flower called by the natives cosmosandalon, which, from its size and color, seems to me to be an iris; it even has inscribed upon it the same letters of mourning. [6] Those who form the procession are followed by men leading from the herd a full-grown cow, fastened with ropes, and still untamed and frisky. Having driven the cow to the temple, some loose her from the ropes that she may rush into the sanctuary, others, who hitherto have been holding the doors open, when they see the cow within the temple, close the doors. [7] Four old women, left behind inside, are they who dispatch the cow. Whichever gets the chance cuts the throat of the cow with a sickle. Afterwards the doors are opened, and those who are appointed drive up a second cow, and a third after that, and yet a fourth. All are dispatched in the same way by the old women, and the sacrifice has yet another strange feature. On whichever of her sides the first cow falls, all the others must fall on the same. [8] Such is the manner in which the sacrifice is performed by the Hermionians. Before the temple stand a few statues of the women who have served Demeter as her priestess, and on passing inside you see seats on which the old women wait for the cows to be driven in one by one, and images, of no great age, of Athena and Demeter. But the thing itself that they worship more than all else, I never saw, nor yet has any other man, whether stranger or Hermionian. The old women may keep their knowledge of its nature to themselves. Paus. 2.35.4-8



Local cult = local instantiation (Thelpusa)

- [2] Thelpusa is some forty stades distant from this sanctuary. It is said that it was named after Thelpusa, a nymph, and that she was a daughter of Ladon. The Ladon rises in springs within the territory of Cleitor, as my account has already set forth. It flows first beside a place Leucasium and Mesoboa, through Nasi to Oryx, also called Halus, and from Halus it descends to Thaliades and a sanctuary of Eleusinian Demeter. [3] This sanctuary is on the borders of Thelpusa. In it are images, each no less than seven feet high, of Demeter, her daughter, and Dionysus, all alike of stone. After the sanctuary of the Eleusinian goddess the Ladon flows by the city Thelpusa on the left, situated on a high hill, in modern times so deserted that the market-place, which is at the extremity of it, was originally, they say, right in the very middle of it. Thelpusa has a temple of Asclepius and a sanctuary of the twelve gods; the greater part of this, I found, lay level with the ground. [4] After Thelpusa the Ladon descends to the sanctuary of Demeter in Onceium. The Thelpusians call the goddess Fury, and with them agrees Antimachus also, who wrote a poem about the expedition of the Argives against Thebes. His verse runs thus:—"There, they say, is the seat of Demeter Fury. Now Oncius was, according to tradition, a son of Apollo, and held sway in Thelpusian territory around the place Oncium; the goddess has the surname Fury for the following reason. [5] When Demeter was wandering in search of her daughter, she was followed, it is said, by Poseidon, who lusted after her. So she turned, the story runs, into a mare, and grazed with the mares of Oncius; realizing that he was outwitted, Poseidon too changed into a stallion and enjoyed Demeter. [6] At first, they say, Demeter was angry at what had happened, but later on she laid aside her wrath and wished to bathe in the Ladon. So the goddess has obtained two surnames, Fury because of her avenging anger, because the Arcadians call being wrathful "being furious," and Bather (Lusia) because she bathed in the Ladon. The images in the temple are of wood, but their faces, hands and feet are of Parian marble. [7] The image of Fury holds what is called the chest, and in her right hand a torch; her height I conjecture to be nine feet. Lusia seemed to be six feet high. Those who think the image to be Themis and not Demeter Lusia are, I would have them know, mistaken in their opinion. Demeter, they say, had by Poseidon a daughter, whose name they are not wont to divulge to the uninitiated, and a horse called Areion. For this reason they say that they were the first Arcadians to call Poseidon Horse. Paus. 8.25. 2-7

Local instantiations (Corinth)

- [7] This Apis reached such a height of power before Pelops came to Olympia that all the territory south of the Isthmus was called after him Apia. Apis begat Thelxion, Thelxion Aegyros, the Thurimachus, and Thurimachus Leucippus. Leucippus had no male issue, only a daughter Calchinia. There is a story that this Calchinia mated with Poseidon; her child was reared by Leucippus, who at his death handed over to him the kingdom. His name was Peratus. 8] What is reported of Plemnaeus, the son of Peratus, seemed to me very wonderful. All the children borne to him by his wife died the very first time they wailed. At last Demeter took pity on Plemnaeus, came to Aegialeia in the guise of a strange woman, and reared for Plemnaeus his son Orthopolis. Orthopolis had a daughter Chrysorthe, who is thought to have borne a son named Coronus to Apollo. Coronus had two sons, Corax and a younger one Lamedon. Paus. 2.5.7-8



Local instantiations (Pylos)

- Near Pylus, towards the east, is a mountain named after Minthe, who, according to myth, became the concubine of Hades, was trampled under foot by Core, and was transformed into garden-mint, the plant which some call Hedyosmos. Furthermore, near the mountain is a precinct sacred to Hades, which is revered by the Macistians too, and also a grove sacred to Demeter, which is situated above the Pylian plain. This plain is fertile; it borders on the sea and stretches along the whole distance between Samicum and the River Neda. But the shore of the sea is narrow and sandy, so that one could not refuse to believe that Pylus got its epithet "emathöeis" therefrom. [15] Towards the north, on the borders of Pylus, were two little Triphylian cities, Hypana and Tympaneae; the former of these was incorporated into Elis, whereas the latter remained as it was. And further, two rivers flow near these places, the Dalion and the Acheron, both of them emptying into the Alpheius. The Acheron has been so named by virtue of its close relation to Hades; for, as we know, not only the temples of Demeter and Core have been held in very high honor there, but also those of Hades, perhaps because of "the contrariness of the soil," to use the phrase of Demetrius of Scepsis. For while Triphylia brings forth good fruit, it breeds red-rust and produces rush; and therefore in this region it is often the case that instead of a large crop there is no crop at all. Strabo 8.3.14-5

Local instantiations (Sparta)

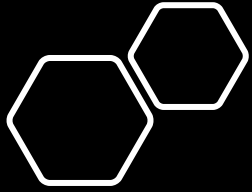
- The cult of Demeter Chthonia (of the Lower World) the Lacedaemonians say was handed on to them by Orpheus, but in my opinion it was because of the sanctuary in Hermione that the Lacedaemonians also began to worship Demeter Chthonia. The Spartans have also a sanctuary of Serapis, the newest sanctuary in the city, and one of Zeus surnamed Olympian. Paus. 3.14.5

Stories in the landscape (Megara)

- [2] In the Town-hall are buried, they say, Euippus the son of Megareus and Ischepolis the son of Alcathous. Near the Town-hall is a rock. They name it Anaclethris (Recall) , because Demeter (if the story be credible) here too called her daughter back when she was wandering in search of her. Even in our day the Megarian women hold a performance that is a mimic representation of the legend. Paus. 1.43.2

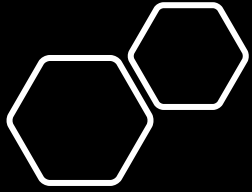
Stories in the landscape (Lerna)

- [7] On returning to the straight road, you will cross the Erasinus and reach the river Cheimarrus (Winter-torrent) . Near it is a circuit of stones, and they say that Pluto, after carrying off, according to the story, Core, the daughter of Demeter, descended here to his fabled kingdom underground. Lerna is, I have already stated, by the sea, and here they celebrate mysteries in honor of Lernaean Demeter. Paus. 2.36.7



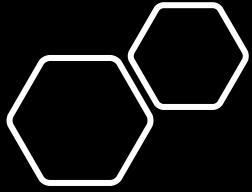
Local Mysteries

- Celeae is some five stades distant from the city, and here they celebrate the mysteries in honor of Demeter, not every year but every fourth year. The initiating priest is not appointed for life, but at each celebration they elect a fresh one, who takes, if he cares to do so, a wife. In this respect their custom differs from that at Eleusis, but the actual celebration is modelled on the Eleusinian rites. **The Phliasians themselves admit that they copy the “performance” at Eleusis. [2] They say that it was Dysaules, the brother of Celeus, who came to their land and established the mysteries, and that he had been expelled from Eleusis by Ion, when Ion, the son of Xuthus, was chosen by the Athenians to be commander-in-chief in the Eleusinian war.** Now I cannot possibly agree with the Phliasians in supposing that an Eleusinian was conquered in battle and driven away into exile, for the war terminated in a treaty before it was fought out, and Eumolpus himself remained at Eleusis. [3] But it is possible that Dysaules came to Phlius for some other reason than that given by the Phliasians. I do not believe either that he was related to Celeus, or that he was in any way distinguished at Eleusis, otherwise Homer would never have passed him by in his poems. For Homer is one of those who have written in honor of Demeter, and when he is making a list of those to whom the goddess taught the mysteries he knows nothing of an Eleusinian named Dysaules. These are the verses:—“She to Triptolemus taught, and to Diocles, driver of horses, Also to mighty Eumolpus, to Celeus, leader of peoples, Cult of the holy rites, to them all her mystery telling. ”HH Dem. 474-476 [4] At all events, this Dysaules, according to the Phliasians, established the mysteries here, and he it was who gave to the place the name Celeae. I have already said that the tomb of Dysaules is here. So the grave of Aras was made earlier, for according to the account of the Phliasians Dysaules did not arrive in the reign of Aras, but later. For Aras, they say, was a contemporary of Prometheus, the son of Iapetus, and three generations of men older than Pelasgus the son of Arcas and those called at Athens aborigines. On the roof of what is called the Anactorium they say is dedicated the chariot of Pelops. Paus. 2.14



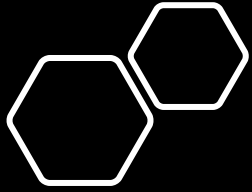
Local Mysteries (Messenia)

- [5] The first rulers then in this country were Polycaon, the son of Lelex, and Messene his wife. It was to her that Caucon, the son of Celaenus, son of Phlyus, brought the rites of the Great Goddesses from Eleusis. Phlyus himself is said by the Athenians to have been the son of Earth, and the hymn of Musaeus to Demeter made for the Lycomidae agrees. [6] But the mysteries of the Great Goddesses were raised to greater honor many years later than Caucon by Lycus, the son of Pandion, an oak-wood, where he purified the celebrants, being still called Lycus' wood. That there is a wood in this land so called is stated by Rhianus the Cretan:—“By rugged Elaeum above Lycus' wood. [7] That this Lycus was the son of Pandion is made clear by the lines on the statue of Methapus, who made certain improvements in the mysteries. Methapus was an Athenian by birth, an expert in the mysteries and founder of all kinds of rites. It was he who established the mysteries of the Cabiri at Thebes, and dedicated in the hut of the Lycomidae a statue with an inscription that amongst other things helps to confirm my account:— [8] “I sanctified houses of Hermes and paths of holy Demeter and Kore her firstborn, where they say that Messene established the feast of the Great Goddesses, taught by Caucon, sprung from Phlyus' noble son. And I wondered that Lycus, son of Pandion, brought all the Attic rite to wise Andania.” This inscription shows that Caucon who came to Messene was a descendant of Phlyus, and proves my other statements with regard to Lycus, and that the mysteries were originally at Andania. And it seems natural to me that Messene should have established the mysteries where she and Polycaon lived, not anywhere else. Paus. 4.1.5-9



Local Mysteries (Oichalia)

- When these are crossed, there is a plain called the plain of Stenyclerus. Stenyclerus was a hero, it is said. Facing the plain is a site anciently called Oechalia, in our time the Carnasian grove, thickly grown with cypresses. There are statues of the gods Apollo Carneius <and Hagne>, also Hermes carrying a ram. Hagne (the holy one) is a title of Kore the daughter of Demeter. Water rises from a spring close to the statue. [5] I may not reveal the rites of the Great Goddesses, for it is their mysteries which they celebrate in the Carnasian grove, and I regard them as second only to the Eleusinian in sanctity. But my dream did not prevent me from making known to all that the brazen urn, discovered by the Argive general, and the bones of Eurytus the son of Melaneus were kept here. A river Charadrus flows past the grove; [6] about eight stades along the road to the left are the ruins of Andania. The guides agree that the city got its name from a woman Andania, but I can say nothing as to her parents or her husband. On the road from Andania towards Cyparissiae is Polichne, as it is called, and the streams of Electra and Coeus. The names perhaps are to be connected with Electra the daughter of Atlas and Coeus the father of Leto, or Electra and Coeus may be two local heroes.4.33.4-6



Local Mysteries (Pheneus)

- The people of Pheneus have also a sanctuary of Demeter, surnamed Eleusinian, and they perform a ritual to the goddess, saying that the ceremonies at Eleusis are the same as those established among themselves. For Naus, they assert, came to them because of an oracle from Delphi, being a grandson of Eumolpus. Beside the sanctuary of the Eleusinian has been set up Petroma, as it is called, consisting of two large stones fitted one to the other. [2] When every other year they celebrate what they call the Greater Rites, they open these stones. They take from out them writings that refer to the rites, read them in the hearing of the initiated, and return them on the same night. Most Pheneatians, too, I know, take an oath by the Petroma in the most important affairs. [3] On the top is a sphere, with a mask inside of Demeter Cidaria. This mask is put on by the priest at the Greater Rites, who for some reason or other beats with rods the Folk Underground. The Pheneatians have a story that even before Naus arrived the wanderings of Demeter brought her to their city also. To those Pheneatians who received her with hospitality into their homes the goddess gave all sorts of pulse save the bean only. [4] There is a sacred story to explain why the bean in their eyes is an impure kind of pulse. Those who, the Pheneatians say, gave the goddess a welcome, Trisaules and Damithales, had a temple of Demeter Thesmia (Law-goddess) built under Mount Cyllene, and they established for her rites also, which they celebrate even to this day. This temple of the goddess Thesmia is just about fifteen stades away from the city. Paus. 8.15.1-4