

Hecate and Her Dogs

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What's it all about?

- The Greek goddess **Hecate**
- Three existing etymologies
 - Pre-Greek (Carian) origin
 - Abbreviated form of epithet *ἐκατηβόλος* 'shooting from afar' or 'striking with hundreds'
 - 'She who works her will' with *ἔκ-* < PIE **u₂ek* 'wish'
- A new etymology based on her appearance with dogs
 - < PIE **su₂é-k₂u₂nt-eh₂-* 'possessing her own dog(s)'



Richard Cosway (1742–1821): Statuette of Triple-bodied Hecate. Pen, ink and light brown and grey wash. British Museum

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Existing etymologies

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Existing etymologies

- Pre-Greek (Carian) origin
 - References: Beekes (2010: 396-398), Kraus (1960: 41-54) and Nilsson (1961: 78)
 - Based on Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1931: 325): Anatolian origin and subsequent adoption by the Greeks to the known Apollonian epithets *ἐκατηβόλος* or *ἐκηβόλος*
 - E.g. Hom.II. 1.370: *ἐκατηβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος* 'of Apollo who strikes from afar'
- Abbreviated form of epithet *ἐκατηβόλος* 'shooting from afar' or 'striking with hundreds'
 - References: Chantraine (2009: 313)
 - Starting point in the ancient etymology: 'shooting from afar' (to *ἐκάς* 'afar, far off') or 'striking with hundreds' (to *ἐκατόν* 'hundred', cf. also Wackernagel 1927: 316-321)
 - Abbreviated to *ἐκηβόλος* and *ἔκατος* (with *Ἐκάτη* as feminine)

Existing etymologies

- 'She who works her will' with $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa$ - < PIE * $\acute{u}ek$ 'wish'
 - References: Prellwitz (1905: 133), Liddell & Scott (1940: 500)
 - Also mentioned by Beekes (2010: 398) and Boisacq (1950: 236-237)
 - Further reference to $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\alpha\tau\eta\beta\acute{o}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ as 'hitting the mark at will' and $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\eta\beta\acute{o}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ 'striking at will' (Boeotian variant: $\phi\epsilon\kappa\alpha\beta\acute{o}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$)
 - Massetti (2019: 216-218): Ved. $váṣṭi prá tád aśnoti dhánvanā$ "mit seinem Bogen trifft (Br̥hmanaspati) dahin, wohin er will"
 - Gr.: $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\beta\acute{o}\lambda\omega\upsilon\upsilon$ Μοισᾶν ἀπὸ τόξων "vom Bogen der ferntreffenden Musen"
- Modification of etymology 2 or 3
 - References: Frisk (1960: 473-474)
 - Epithets $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$ and $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\acute{\alpha}\tau\eta$ seen as abbreviations of $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\eta\beta\acute{o}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ – and $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\alpha\tau\eta\beta\acute{o}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ as a secondary hybrid of these.

Hecate: Origin, relations and attributes

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Hecate: Origin, relations and attributes

- Place of worship and origin (von Rudloff 1992: 45-55)
- Indications of a Carian or general Anatolian origin (e.g. Kraus 1960: 41-54 and Nilsson 1961: 78)
 - Theophoric personal names from *hekat-* (e.g. *Hekataios* the geographer or *Hekatomnus*, who gave his name to the dynasty of Maussolus) primarily in Caria during the 5th and 4th c. BC
 - Temple of Hecate at Lagina in Caria
 - Absence from Homeric epics
 - Typically "Carian" attributes in the Theogony (cf. Berg 1974: 129)
 - Possible explanation: Cult introduced to the Greek mainland from Asia Minor in the archaic period
 - Contamination with witches and demons eroded and infernalised her Olympian stature, transforming her finally into the Hecate known from later traditions



Hecate: Origin, relations and attributes

- Place of worship and origin (von Rudloff 1992: 45-55)
 - Indications against a Carian or general Anatolian origin (e.g. Berg 1974 or von Rudloff 1992: 54-55)
 - Numerous monuments to Hecate in Phrygia and Caria, but of a late date (1st century BC, Roman era)
 - Theophoric personal names from *hekat-* maybe to Apollonian epithet
 - Fully independent deity at Aigina and in Athens (Kraus 1960: 53)
 - Aristophanes: A Hekataion stood before every house in Athens
 - Numerous references to Hecate in Attic drama (Kraus 1960: 84-94)
 - Berg (1974: 139): Maybe Myc. *Ipemedēja* designates Hecate



Triangular shrine of Hecate in Athens (7th c. BC, a crossroad at the junction of three ways coming from Pnyx, Acropolis and Agora)

Hecate: Origin, relations and attributes

- Relation to other deities (von Rudloff 1992: 56-85)
 - Early evidence: Association with Demeter and Persephone
 - Attendant of Persephone
 - Altars and sanctuaries just outside the entrance to sanctuaries of Demeter and Persephone
 - Confusion (or identification?) with Artemis
 - Name also used for Artemis (and a male variant for Apollo)
 - Aischylos: Artemis-Hecate protector of women in labour
 - Farnell (1909: II.501): Hecate as a guardian aspect of Artemis
 - Nilsson (1961: 79): Hecate represented the "dark" chthonic side of Artemis, cf. that *ἐκατηβόλος* was often added to Artemis name to indicate her belligerent and destructive roles
 - Hellenistic times: Great level of confusion between the two goddesses
 - Problem: Rarely a guardian figure at entrances to sanctuaries and temples of Artemis + Never seen with a bow (von Rudloff 1992: 69)
 - Consequence: The association of Hecate's name to the epithets *ἐκατηβόλος* and *ἐκηβόλος*, both involving 'shooting', not as straightforward as often claimed

Hecate: Origin, relations and attributes

- Relation to other deities (von Rudloff 1992: 56-85)
 - Association with Apollo
 - Earliest archaeological material found at Apollos sanctuary at Miletos
 - Apollo (and Artemis!) as archers and bringers of sudden disease and death
 - The role commonly described as that of guardian (various titles: *Apotropaios* 'avertter of evil', *Agyieus* 'of the road', *Thyraios* 'at the door', *Propylaios* 'before the gate' etc.)
 - Other relations: Helios, Hermes and Kybele and, less strongly, Athena, Eileithyia, Poseidon and Zeus
 - von Rudloff (1992: 82-83): Hecate's roles subservient to other, more prominent deities (irrespective of who those deities are)
 - In particular: Entranceway figure and attendant

Hecate: Origin, relations and attributes

- Functions (von Rudloff 1992: 86-128)
 - *Propylaia*: Entranceway guardian, averting evil
 - Apparent from the archaeological record of the Archaic period
 - *Kourotrophos*: Child nurturer
 - Pre-Roman references to Hecate as a birth goddess rare
 - Also common names for Gaia, Demeter, Eileithyia, Iphigeneia and Artemis
 - Torches and dogs common attributes for birth goddesses and *kourotrophoi*
 - Torches explained by common association of fire with childbirth, likely for reasons of hygiene and purification
 - Further suggestion: Torches as symbol of a sacred immortalising bath with dogs (the connection may have been through purification rituals in which the animals were the agent by which the uncleanness associated with birth was removed)
 - *Propolos*: Attendant, guide and companion
 - *Phosphoros*: Light bringer
 - Torches: As a deity of child-birth, of the moon, of the morning and evening "stars", and as a guide in mysteries

Hecate: Origin, relations and attributes

- Functions (von Rudloff 1992: 86-128)
 - *Chthonia*: Of the earth/underworld
 - From second half of the 5th c.: Association with restless spirits and phantasms
 - Purification ceremonies involving the killing of dogs and offerings of food left at crossroads at every new moon
 - Crossroads, specifically three-way intersections
 - Three-formed (though not in earliest times): Maybe goddess of the moon as Selene (the moon in heaven), Artemis (the huntress on earth) and Persephone (the destroyer in the underworld and queen of hell), cf. Wedeck (1994: 203)
 - Dogs: Classical references only in fragments of Euripides and Aristophanes, but later references as sacrificial offerings or ghostly apparitions (sacrificed in purification rituals to chthonic deities)
 - Dogs also strongly associated with Artemis, specifically in the role of hunting companions → Dogs served two distinct roles: As companion (Artemis) and as an impure animal suitable for purification ceremonies (Hecate)
 - Snakes
 - Ghosts and the dead
 - Magic and sorcery (e.g. association with Medeia)

Towards a new etymology

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Towards a new etymology

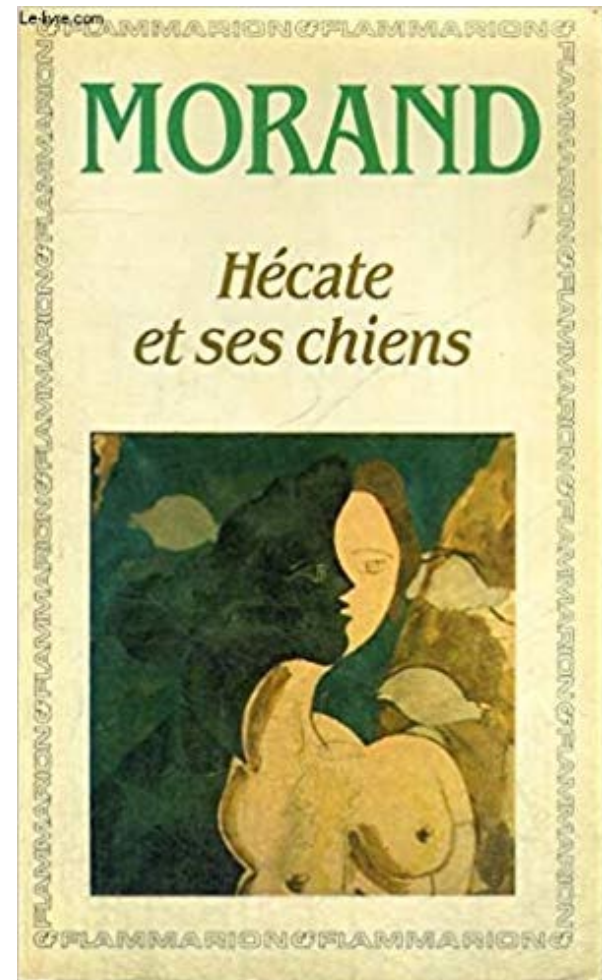
- Starting points
 - Maybe not Anatolian, but Greek origin
 - Not necessarily identical or related to the Apollonian and Artemisian epithets *ἑκατος*, *ἑκάτη*, *ἑκατηβόλος* and *ἑκηβόλος*
 - She had **DOG(S)**!



*T16.5 Hecate (or Artemis)
(Tübingen S101518)*

Towards a new etymology

- Morand, Paul. 1954. *Hécate et ses chiens*. Éditions Flammarion.
- *La triple Hécate, reine de la nuit, se nourrit de chiens : pareille à l'affreuse déesse, Clotilde dévore des chiots, ces enfants dont elle fait sa pâture.* "The triple Hecate, queen of the night, nourishes from dogs: similar to the horrible goddess, Clotilde devours puppets, her children, from which she makes her food." (p. 140)



Towards a new etymology

- An etymology based on her appearance with dogs...
- $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\acute{\alpha}\tau\eta$ < PIE $*s\acute{u}\acute{e}-k\acute{u}\eta\eta\text{-}eh_2$ 'possessing her own dog(s)'
 - $\acute{\epsilon}\text{-}$ < PIE $*s\acute{u}\acute{e}\text{-}$
 - $\text{-}\kappa\acute{\alpha}\tau\text{-}$ < $*\text{-}k\acute{u}\eta\eta\text{-}$
 - $\text{-}\eta$ < PIE $*\text{-}eh_2$

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Towards a new etymology

- Problem 1: Normal reflex of PIE $*-k̑u-$ = Gr. $-ππ-$
 - Example: ἵππος 'horse' < PIE $*h_1ék̑u-$
 - βουκόλος rule (Beekes 1995: 62, Fortson 2004: 64, Sihler 1995: 156 etc.): A labiovelar stop ($*k^w$, $*g^w$, $*g^{wh}$) dissimilates to an ordinary velar stop ($*k$, $*g$, $*g^h$) next to the vowel $*u$ or its corresponding glide $*u̯$
 - Gr. βουκόλος 'tending kine' (Myc. $qo-u-ko-ro$), Welsh *bugail* 'shepherd, pastor' < PIE $*g^wou̯-kolh_1os$ < $*g^wou̯-k^wolph_1os$
 - Without dissimilation: Gr. $*βουπόλος$ (Myc. $*qo-u-qo-ro$)
 - Distant dissimilation similar (but not identical) to the βουκόλος rule: $*suk̑-ék̑nt-eh_2-$ > $*suk̑-k̑nt-eh_2-$ (almost paralleled by $*g^wou̯-k^wolph_1-o-$ > $*g^wou̯-kolph_1-o-$ > βουκόλος 'tending kine')

Towards a new etymology

- Problem 2: The presence of **t* in 'dog'
 - Normally reconstructed as PIE nom.sg. **k̑(u)u̯-ó̑n*, gen.sg. **k̑u-n-ó̑s* 'dog', cf. Wodtko & al. (2008: 436-437) or Mallory & Adams (1997: 168)
 - Olsen (2001: 74-76, 2004: 222-227): PIE **nt* and **n* originally conditioned variants of the same derivational suffix
 - Consequences: PIE **t* expected in **k̑u̯nt-*
 - Also in PGmc. **hunda-* 'dog' and Latv. *sùntene, sùntana* 'large dog' (both < PIE **k̑unt-*), cf. Olsen (2004: 222)... but *t*-derivative in Wodtko & al. (2008: 437)
 - New problem: Expected development **CRntV-* > **CRtV-* (e.g. PIE **k̑^wr-nt-ó̑-* > **k̑^wrtó̑-*), cf. Olsen (2004: 224)
 - Consequence: Expected form ***k̑u-t-eh₂* rather than **k̑u̯nt-eh₂*
 - Solution: Revocalisation of **k̑unteh₂* (expected development **VntV-* > **VntV-*, cf. Olsen 2004: 224) as **k̑u̯nteh₂* in accordance with standard PIE syllabification rules?

Summary and questions

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Summary and questions

- Previous etymologies
 - Carian/Anatolian origin
 - Some type of connection to the Apollonian and Artemisian epithets *ἑκατηβόλος* 'shooting from afar' etc.
- Problems and observations
 - Not necessarily Carian
 - Never(?) depicted with a bow + Rarely a guardian figure at entrances to sanctuaries and temples of Artemis
 - She has dogs!
- New etymology
 - PIE **sué-kuṅt-eh₂* 'possessing her own dog(s)'
 - Two problems: No PIE **-ku-* > *-ππ-* + Presence of PIE **-t-* in 'dog', but cf. the *βουκόλος* rule and the *n/nt* complex

Summary and questions



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Literature

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