[Template:About](/wiki/Template:About" \o "Template:About) [Template:Infobox deity](/wiki/Template:Infobox_deity) [Template:Special characters](/wiki/Template:Special_characters) [Template:Ancient Greek religion](/wiki/Template:Ancient_Greek_religion)

In [Greek mythology](/wiki/Greek_mythology), **Persephone** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en), [Template:Respell](/wiki/Template:Respell); [Template:Lang-gr](/wiki/Template:Lang-gr)), also called **Kore** or **Cora** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en); "the maiden"),[Template:Refn](/wiki/Template:Refn) is the daughter of [Zeus](/wiki/Zeus) and the harvest goddess [Demeter](/wiki/Demeter), and is the queen of the [underworld](/wiki/Greek_underworld). [Homer](/wiki/Homer) describes her as the formidable, venerable majestic princess of the underworld, who carries into effect the curses of men upon the souls of the dead. Persephone was married to [Hades](/wiki/Hades), the god-king of the underworld.<ref name=Nilsson462>Martin Nilsson (1967). *Die Geschichte der Griechische Religion* Vol I pp 462–463, 479–480</ref> The myth of her abduction represents her function as the [personification](/wiki/Personification) of [vegetation](/wiki/Vegetation), which shoots forth in [spring](/wiki/Spring_(season)) and withdraws into the earth after harvest; hence, she is also associated with spring as well as the fertility of vegetation. Similar myths appear in the [Orient](/wiki/Orient), in the cults of male gods like [Attis](/wiki/Attis), [Adonis](/wiki/Adonis) and [Osiris](/wiki/Osiris),[[1]](#cite_note-1) and in [Minoan](/wiki/Minoan_civilization) [Crete](/wiki/Crete).

Persephone as a [vegetation goddess](/wiki/Vegetation_deity) and her mother Demeter were the central figures of the [Eleusinian mysteries](/wiki/Eleusinian_mysteries) that predated the [Olympian pantheon](/wiki/Olympian_pantheon) and promised the initiated a more enjoyable prospect after death. Persephone is further said to have become by [Zeus](/wiki/Zeus) the mother of [Dionysus](/wiki/Dionysus), [Iacchus](/wiki/Iacchus), or [Zagreus](/wiki/Zagreus), usually in [orphic](/wiki/Orphic) tradition.[[2]](#cite_note-2) The origins of her cult are uncertain, but it was based on very old agrarian cults of agricultural communities.

Persephone was commonly worshipped along with Demeter and with the same mysteries. To her alone were dedicated the mysteries celebrated at Athens in the month of [Anthesterion](/wiki/Anthesterion). In [Classical Greek art](/wiki/Art_in_ancient_Greece), Persephone is invariably portrayed robed, often carrying a [sheaf](/wiki/Wikt:sheaf) of grain. She may appear as a mystical divinity with a sceptre and a little box, but she was mostly represented in the act of being carried off by [Hades](/wiki/Hades_(mythology)).

In [Roman mythology](/wiki/Roman_mythology), she is called [Proserpina](/wiki/Proserpina), and her mother, [Ceres](/wiki/Ceres_(Roman_mythology)).

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## Name[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

### Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

[thumb|left|Persephone or "the deceased woman" holding a](/wiki/File:DSC00426_-_Statua_cineraria_etrusca_-_Proserpina-defunta_con_melagrana-_Foto_G._Dall'Orto.jpg) [pomegranate](/wiki/Pomegranate). Etruscan terracotta cinerary statue. National archaeological museum in [Palermo](/wiki/Palermo), Italy In a [Linear B](/wiki/Linear_B) ([Mycenean Greek](/wiki/Mycenean_Greek)) inscription on a tablet found at [Pylos](/wiki/Pylos) dated 1400–1200 BC, [John Chadwick](/wiki/John_Chadwick) reconstructed[Template:Refn](/wiki/Template:Refn) the name of a goddess *\*Preswa* who could be identified with [Persa](/wiki/Oceanid), daughter of [Oceanus](/wiki/Oceanus) and found speculative the further identification with the first element of Persephone.[[3]](#cite_note-3) *Persephonē* ([Greek](/wiki/Greek_language): [Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang)) is her name in the [Ionic Greek](/wiki/Ionic_Greek) of [epic](/wiki/Epic_poetry) literature. The Homeric form of her name is *Persephoneia* (Περσεφονεία,[[4]](#cite_note-4) *Persephoneia*). In other dialects she was known under variant names: *Persephassa* ([Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang)), *Persephatta* ([Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang)), or simply *Korē* ([Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang), "girl, maiden").[[5]](#cite_note-5) [Plato](/wiki/Plato) calls her *Pherepapha* ([Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang)) in his [*Cratylus*](/wiki/Cratylus_(dialogue)), "because she is wise and touches that which is in motion". There are also the forms *Periphona* (Πηριφόνα) and *Phersephassa* ([Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang)). The existence of so many different forms shows how difficult it was for the Greeks to pronounce the word in their own language and suggests that the name may have a [Pre-Greek](/wiki/Pre-Greek) origin.[[6]](#cite_note-6) *Persephatta* ([Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang)) is considered to mean "female thresher of grain," going by "perso-" relating to Sanskrit "parsa", "sheaf of grain" and the second constituent of the name originating in Proto-Indo European [Template:PIE](/wiki/Template:PIE), from the root [Template:PIE](/wiki/Template:PIE) "to strike".[[7]](#cite_note-7) An alternative etymology is from [Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang), *pherein phonon*, "to bring (or cause) death".<ref name=SmithPersephone>Smith, ["Perse'phone"](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0104:entry=persephone-bio-1)</ref>

In Homer's [*Odyssey*](/wiki/Odyssey),[[8]](#cite_note-8) Persephone is daughter of [Minyas](/wiki/Minyas_(mythology)) and mother of *Chloris*.<ref name=SmithPersephone>Smith, ["Perse'phone"](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0104:entry=persephone-bio-1)</ref> In that regard the myth of the abduction of the vegetation goddess from [Hades](/wiki/Hades) and her return,[[9]](#cite_note-9) representing the dying and regeneration of nature which is mentioned by [Hesiod](/wiki/Hesiod) and appears in many ancient agricultural societies can be related with the [Minyans](/wiki/Minyans), the first inhabitants of Boeotia.

[John Chadwick](/wiki/John_Chadwick) speculatively relates the name of Persephone with the name of [Perse](/wiki/Oceanid), daughter of [Oceanus](/wiki/Oceanus).[[10]](#cite_note-10)

### The Roman Proserpina[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

[thumb|Cinerary altar with tabula representing the rape of](/wiki/File:Proserpina_kidnapped_Kircheriano_Terme.jpg) [Proserpina](/wiki/Proserpina). White marble, Antonine Era, 2nd century CE. [Rome](/wiki/Rome), Baths of Diocletian [thumb|Statue of Isis-Persephone with a](/wiki/File:AMI_-_Isis-Persephone.jpg) [sistrum](/wiki/Sistrum). [Heraklion](/wiki/Heraklion) Archaeological Museum, [Crete](/wiki/Crete)

The [Romans](/wiki/Ancient_Rome) first heard of her from the [Aeolian](/wiki/Aeolians) and [Dorian](/wiki/Dorians) cities of [Magna Graecia](/wiki/Magna_Graecia), who used the dialectal variant *Proserpinē* ([Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang)). Hence, in [Roman mythology](/wiki/Roman_mythology) she was called [Proserpina](/wiki/Proserpina), a name erroneously derived by the Romans from *proserpere*, "to shoot forth"[[11]](#cite_note-11) and as such became an emblematic figure of the [Renaissance](/wiki/Renaissance).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

At [Locri](/wiki/Locri), perhaps uniquely, Persephone was the protector of marriage, a role usually assumed by [Hera](/wiki/Hera); in the iconography of [votive plaques](/wiki/Pinax) at Locri, her abduction and marriage to Hades served as an emblem of the marital state, children at Locri were dedicated to Proserpina, and maidens about to be wed brought their [*peplos*](/wiki/Peplos) to be blessed.[[12]](#cite_note-12)

### Nestis[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

In a Classical period text ascribed to [Empedocles](/wiki/Empedocles), c. 490 – 430 BC,[Template:Refn](/wiki/Template:Refn) describing a correspondence among four deities and the [classical elements](/wiki/Classical_element), the name *Nestis* for water apparently refers to Persephone: "Now hear the fourfold roots of everything: enlivening Hera, Hades, shining Zeus. And Nestis, moistening mortal springs with tears."[[13]](#cite_note-13) Of the four deities of Empedocles' elements, it is the name of Persephone alone that is [taboo](/wiki/Taboo)—Nestis is a euphemistic cult title[Template:Refn](/wiki/Template:Refn)—for she was also the terrible Queen of the Dead, whose name was not safe to speak aloud, who was [euphemistically](/wiki/Euphemism) named simply as Kore or "the Maiden", a vestige of her archaic role as the deity ruling the underworld.

## Titles and functions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

The epithets of Persephone reveal her double function as [chthonic](/wiki/Chthonic) and vegetation goddess. The surnames given to her by the poets refer to her character as Queen of the lower world and the dead, or her symbolic meaning of the power that shoots forth and withdraws into the earth. Her common name as a vegetation goddess is Kore and in [Arcadia](/wiki/Arcadia) she was worshipped under the title [Despoina](/wiki/Despoina) "the mistress", a very old chthonic divinity. [Plutarch](/wiki/Plutarch) identifies her with spring and [Cicero](/wiki/Cicero) calls her the seed of the fruits of the fields. In the [Eleusinian](/wiki/Eleusinian) mysteries her return is the symbol of immortality and hence she was frequently represented on sarcophagi.<ref name=SmithPersephone/>

In the mystical theories of the [Orphics](/wiki/Orphism_(religion)) and the [Platonists](/wiki/Plato), Kore is described as the all-pervading goddess of nature[[14]](#cite_note-14) who both produces and destroys everything and she is therefore mentioned along or identified with other mystic divinities such as [Isis](/wiki/Isis), [Rhea](/wiki/Rhea_(mythology)), [Ge](/wiki/Gaia_(mythology)), [Hestia](/wiki/Hestia), [Pandora](/wiki/Pandora), [Artemis](/wiki/Artemis), and [Hecate](/wiki/Hecate).[[15]](#cite_note-15) The Orphic Persephone is further said to have become by [Zeus](/wiki/Zeus) the mother of [Dionysus](/wiki/Dionysus), [Iacchus](/wiki/Iacchus), [Zagreus](/wiki/Zagreus),<ref name=SmithPersephone/> and the little-attested [Melinoe](/wiki/Melinoe).[[16]](#cite_note-16)

### Epithets[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

As a goddess of the underworld, Persephone was given [euphemistically](/wiki/Euphemistically) friendly names.<ref name=Rhode206>Rhode (1961), *Psyche* I, pp. 206–210</ref> However it is possible that some of them were the names of original goddesses:

* [**Despoina**](/wiki/Despoina) (*dems-potnia*) "the mistress" (literally "the mistress of the house") in [Arcadia](/wiki/Arcadia).
* **Hagne**, "pure", originally a goddess of the springs in [Messenia](/wiki/Messenia).<ref name=Nilsson478>Nilsson(1967) Vol I, pp. 478–480</ref>
* **Melindia** or **Melinoia** (meli, "honey"), as the consort of [Hades](/wiki/Hades), in Hermione. (Compare [Hecate](/wiki/Hecate), [Melinoe](/wiki/Melinoe))<ref name=Rhode206/>
* **Melivia**<ref name=Rhode206/>
* **Melitodes**<ref name=Rhode206/>
* **Aristi cthonia**, "the best [chthonic](/wiki/Chthonic)".<ref name=Rhode206/>
* [**Praxidike**](/wiki/Praxidike), the [Orphic](/wiki/Orphic) Hymn to Persephone identifies Praxidike as an [epithet](/wiki/Epithet) of Persephone: "Praxidike, subterranean queen. The [Eumenides'](/wiki/Erinyes) source [mother], fair-haired, whose frame proceeds from Zeus' ineffable and secret seeds."[[17]](#cite_note-17)[[18]](#cite_note-18)

As a vegetation goddess she was called:<ref name=Nilsson478/><ref name=Nilsson463>Nilsson (1967) Vol I, pp. 463–466</ref>

* **Kore**, "the maiden".
* **Kore Soteira**, "the savior maiden" in [Megalopolis](/wiki/Megalopolis,_Greece).
* **Neotera**, "the younger " in [Eleusis](/wiki/Eleusis).
* **Kore of Demeter Hagne**, in the [Homeric hymn](/wiki/Homeric_hymn).
* **Kore memagmeni**, "the mixed daughter" (bread).

[Demeter](/wiki/Demeter) and her daughter **Persephone** were usually called:<ref name=Nilsson478/><ref name=Nilsson463/>

* **The goddesses**, often distinguished as "the older" and "the younger" in [Eleusis](/wiki/Eleusis).
* **Demeters**, in [Rhodes](/wiki/Rhodes) and [Sparta](/wiki/Sparta)
* **The thesmophoroi**, "the legislators" in the [Thesmophoria](/wiki/Thesmophoria).
* **The Great Goddesses**, in [Arcadia](/wiki/Arcadia).
* **The mistresses** in [Arcadia](/wiki/Arcadia).<ref name=Pausanias515>[Pausanias](/wiki/Pausanias_(geographer)).*Description of Greece* 5.15.4, 5, 6</ref>
* **Karpophoroi**, "the bringers of fruit", in [Tegea](/wiki/Tegea) of Arcadia.

## Origins of the cult[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[thumb|left|Gold ring from Isopata tomb, near](/wiki/File:P1010629_crop.png) [Knossos](/wiki/Knossos), [Crete](/wiki/Crete), 1400–1500 BC. Depicted are female figures dancing among blossoming vegetation; [Heraklion Archaeological Museum](/wiki/Heraklion_Archaeological_Museum)

The myth of the [abduction of the vegetation goddess](/wiki/Rape_of_Persephone) is Pre-Greek as evident in the Syro-Mesopotamian mythology of the abduction of the goddess of fertility and harvest, Ishtar (also Ashtar, Astarte and Inanna). The place of the abduction is different in each local cult. The [*Homeric Hymn to Demeter*](/wiki/Homeric_Hymns) mentions the "plain of Nysa".[[19]](#cite_note-19) The locations of this probably mythical place may simply be conventions to show that a magically distant [chthonic](/wiki/Chthonic) land of myth was intended in the remote past.<ref name=Nilsson463>Nilsson (1967), Vol I, p. 463</ref><ref name=Sherwood217>"In Greek mythology [Nysa](/wiki/Nysa_(mythology)) is a mythical mountain with unknown location, the birthplace of the god [Dionysos](/wiki/Dionysos).": Fox, William Sherwood (1916), [*The Mythology of All Races*](/wiki/The_Mythology_of_All_Races), v.1, *Greek and Roman*, General editor, Louis Herbert Gray, p.217</ref> [Demeter](/wiki/Demeter) found and met her daughter in [Eleusis](/wiki/Eleusis), and this is the mythical disguise of what happened in the mysteries.<ref name=Burkert285>Burkert (1985), pp. 285–290.</ref>

Persephone is an old [chthonic](/wiki/Chthonic) deity of the agricultural communities, who received the souls of the dead into the earth, and acquired powers over the fertility of the soil, over which she reigned. The earliest depiction of a goddess who may be identified with Persephone growing out of the ground, is on a plate from the Old-Palace period in [Phaistos](/wiki/Phaistos). The goddess has a vegetable-like appearance, and she is surrounded by dancing girls between blossoming flowers.<ref name=Burkert42>Burkert (1985) p. 42</ref><ref name=Burkert4045>Burkert (1985) pp. 40–45</ref> A similar representation, where the goddess appears to come down from the sky, is depicted on the [Minoan](/wiki/Minoan_civilization) ring of Isopata.

[thumb|](/wiki/File:Persephone_krater_Antikensammlung_Berlin_1984.40.jpg)[Rape of Persephone](/wiki/Rape_of_Persephone). [Hades](/wiki/Hades) with his horses and **Persephone** (down). An Apulian red-figure volute krater, c. 340 BC. [Antikensammlung Berlin](/wiki/Antikensammlung_Berlin)

In some forms [Hades](/wiki/Hades) appears with his [chthonic](/wiki/Chthonic) horses. The myth of the rape of Kore was derived from the idea that [Hades](/wiki/Hades) catches the souls of the dead like his booty, and then carries them with his horses into his kingdom. This idea is vague in [Homer](/wiki/Homer), but appears in later Greek depictions, and in Greek folklore. "Charos" appears with his horse and carries the dead into the underworld.[[20]](#cite_note-20)<ref name=Charon>[Charon](/wiki/Charon_(mythology)), "glad", probably euphemistically "death". Liddell and Scott, [*A Greek-English Lexicon*](/wiki/A_Greek-English_Lexicon) (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1843, 1985 printing), entries on [Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang) and [Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang), pp. 1980–1981; *Brill's New Pauly* (Leiden and Boston 2003), vol. 3, entry on "Charon", pp. 202–203.</ref>

The cults of Persephone and [Demeter](/wiki/Demeter) in the [Eleusinian mysteries](/wiki/Eleusinian_mysteries) and in the [Thesmophoria](/wiki/Thesmophoria) were based on very old agrarian cults. An earlier agrarian procession led by a priest, is depicted on a [Minoan](/wiki/Minoan_civilization) vase from the end of the New Palace Period.<ref name=Sakellar64>J.Sakellarakis (1987). Herakleion Museum. Illustrated guide to the Museum. Ekdotike Athenon, p. 64 (Gallery VIII case No. 184)</ref> Ancient cults like age-old cults of the dead, with worship of animal-headed gods and rituals for the new crop, had their position in Greek religion because they were connected with daily or seasonal tasks and consecrated by immemorial practices. The powers of animal nature fostered a belief in [nymphs](/wiki/Nymphs), and in gods with human forms and the heads or tails of animals. In the [Arcadian](/wiki/Arcadia) cults, it seems that [Demeter](/wiki/Demeter) and Persephone were the first of a series of [daemons](/wiki/Daemon_(mythology)) with the same nature.

A lot of ancient beliefs were based on initiation into jealously-guarded [mysteries](/wiki/Mystery_religions) (secret rites) because they offered prospects after death more enjoyable than the final end at the gloomy space of the Greek [Hades](/wiki/Hades). It seems that such religious practices were introduced from [Minoan](/wiki/Minoan_civilization) [Crete](/wiki/Crete),<ref name=Kerenyi24>Kerenyi (1976), *Dionysos, archetypal image of indestructible life.Princeton University Press. p. 24</ref><ref name=Kerenyi31>*[*Karl Kerenyi*](/wiki/Karl_Kerenyi) *(1967).* Eleusis. Archetypal image of mother and daughter*. Princeton University Press. p. 31f</ref> Similar practices appear also in the* [*Near East*](/wiki/Near_East)*. However, the idea of immortality which appears in the syncretistic religions of the* [*Near East*](/wiki/Near_East) *did not exist in the Eleusinian mysteries at the very beginning.*[*[21]*](#cite_note-21)[*[22]*](#cite_note-22)

### Near East - Minoan Crete[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

[thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Lady_of_Auxerre_Louvre_Ma3098_n2.jpg)[Lady of Auxerre](/wiki/Lady_of_Auxerre) [Louvre](/wiki/Louvre)-An Archaic (640 BC) image from [Crete](/wiki/Crete). A version of a Minoan Goddess who may be identified with Kore In the [Near eastern](/wiki/Near_East) myth of the primitive agricultural societies, every year the fertility goddess bore the "god of the new year", who then became her lover, and died immediately in order to be reborn and face the same destiny. Some findings from [Catal Huyuk](/wiki/Catal_Huyuk) since the Neolithic age, indicate the worship of the Great Goddess accompanied by a boyish consort, who symbolizes the annual decay and return of vegetation.[[23]](#cite_note-23) Similar cults of resurrected gods appear in the Near East and [Egypt](/wiki/Egypt) in the cults of [Attis](/wiki/Attis), [Adonis](/wiki/Adonis) and [Osiris](/wiki/Osiris),[[24]](#cite_note-24) In [Minoan](/wiki/Minoan_civilization) [Crete](/wiki/Crete), the "divine child" was related to the female vegetation divinity [Ariadne](/wiki/Ariadne) who died every year.<ref name=Schacherm141>F.Schachermeyer (1972), Die Minoische Kultur des alten Kreta, W.Kohlhammer Stuttgart, pp. 141, 308</ref> The [Minoan](/wiki/Minoan_civilization) religion had its own characteristics. The cult was [aniconic](/wiki/Aniconic), the principal deities were female, and they appeared in epiphany called chiefly by ecstatic sacral dances, by tree–shaking and by [baetylic](/wiki/Baetylic) rites.[[25]](#cite_note-25) The [daemons](/wiki/Daemon_(mythology)) were a part of the religious system. They were considered divine, and they were connected with gods or goddesses of hunting. In the Minoan seals or jewellery, are depicted animal-headed daemons[[26]](#cite_note-26) or hybrid creatures. Some of these depictions seem similar to Near Eastern depictions, especially with the well known [Babylonian](/wiki/Babylon) daemons. A young [Minotaur](/wiki/Minotaur) is depicted on a seal from [Knossos](/wiki/Knossos).[[27]](#cite_note-27) Depictions of daemons between lions, of men between daemons, and processions of daemons, appear also on [Mycenean](/wiki/Mycenea) seals and jewellery, and in [Phigalia](/wiki/Phigalia) of [Arcadia](/wiki/Arcadia).[[28]](#cite_note-28) [thumb|The "Harvesters vase" from](/wiki/File:Harvester_Rhyton.jpg) [Agia Triada](/wiki/Hagia_triada) (1600-1500 BC). [Heraklion Archaeological Museum](/wiki/Heraklion_Archaeological_Museum)

The most peculiar feature of the Minoan belief in the divine, is the appearance of the goddess from above in the dance. Dance floors have been discovered in addition to "vaulted tombs", and it seems that the dance was ecstatic. [Homer](/wiki/Homer) memorializes the dance floor which [Daedalus](/wiki/Daedalus) built for [Ariadne](/wiki/Ariadne) in the remote past.<ref name=Burkert34>Burkert (1985) pp. 34-40</ref> On the gold ring from Isopata, four women in festal attire are performing a dance between blossoming flowers. Above a figure apparently floating in the air seems to be the goddess herself, appearing amid the whirling dance.<ref name=Burkert40>Burkert (1985) p. 40</ref> An image plate from the first palace of [Phaistos](/wiki/Phaistos), seems to be very close to the mythical image of the *Anodos* (ascent) of Persephone. Two girls dance between blossoming flowers, on each side of a similar but armless and legless figure which seems to grow out of the ground. The goddess is bordered by snake lines which give her a vegetable like appearance and also recall the arrangement of snake tubes which have been found in [Minoan](/wiki/Minoan_civilization) and [Mycenean](/wiki/Mycenea) sanctuaries. She has a large stylized flower turned over her head, and the resemblance with the flower-picking Persephone and her companions is compelling.<ref name=Burkert42/> The depiction of the goddess is similar to later images of "Anodos of Pherephata". On the Dresden vase, Persephone is growing out of the ground, and she is surrounded by the animal-tailed agricultural gods [Silenoi](/wiki/Seilenos).[[29]](#cite_note-29) It seems that in [Crete](/wiki/Crete) there were festivals designated in a way corresponding to the later Greek types of festival names.<ref name=Burkert42/> An agrarian procession is depicted on the "Harvesters Vase" or "Vase of the Winnowers" from the last phase of the New Palace Period ([LM](/wiki/Late_Minoan) II), which was found in [Hagia Triada](/wiki/Hagia_Triada). Men are walking two by two with their tool-rods on their shoulders. The leader is probably a priest with long hair carrying a stick, and dressed in a priestly robe with a fringe. A group of musicians participate singing, and one of them holds an [Egyptian](/wiki/Ancient_Egypt) [sistrum](/wiki/Sistrum).[[30]](#cite_note-30) [thumb|left|The so-called "Ring of Minos" from Knossos. (1500-1400 BC). A male and two female figures, in the "cult of the tree".](/wiki/File:AMI_-_Ring_des_Minos2.jpg) [Heraklion Archaeological Museum](/wiki/Heraklion_Archaeological_Museum) The Minoan vegetation goddess [Ariadne](/wiki/Ariadne) was closely connected with the cult of the divine child, and with the "cult of the tree". This was an ecstatic and orgiastic cult, which seems to be similar to its relative in the [Syrian](/wiki/Syria) cult of [Adonis](/wiki/Adonis),.[[31]](#cite_note-31) [Kerenyi](/wiki/Karl_Kerenyi) suggests that the name [Ariadne](/wiki/Ariadne) (derived from [Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang), *hagne*, "pure"), was an [euphemistical](/wiki/Euphemistical) name given by the Greeks to the nameless "Mistress of the [labyrinth](/wiki/Labyrinth)" who appears in a [Mycenean Greek](/wiki/Mycenean_Greece) inscription from [Knossos](/wiki/Knossos) in [Crete](/wiki/Crete). The Greeks used to give friendly names to the deities of the underworld. [Cthonic Zeus](/wiki/Zeus) was called [Eubuleus](/wiki/Eubuleus), "the good counselor", and the ferryman of the river of the underworld [Charon](/wiki/Charon_(mythology)), "glad".<ref name=Charon/> [Despoina](/wiki/Despoina) and "Hagne" were probably euphemistic surnames of Persephone, therefore he theorizes that the cult of Persephone was the continuation of the worship of a [Minoan](/wiki/Minoan_civilization) Great goddess. The [labyrinth](/wiki/Labyrinth) was both a winding dance-ground and, in the Greek view, a prison with the dreaded [Minotaur](/wiki/Minotaur) at its centre.[[32]](#cite_note-32)[[33]](#cite_note-33) It is possible that some religious practices, especially the [mysteries](/wiki/Mystery_religions), were transferred from a [Cretan](/wiki/Crete) priesthood to [Eleusis](/wiki/Eleusis), where [Demeter](/wiki/Demeter) brought the [poppy](/wiki/Poppy) from [Crete](/wiki/Crete).[[34]](#cite_note-34) Besides these similarities, [Burkert](/wiki/Walter_Burkert) explains that up to now it is not known to what extent one can and must differentiate between [Minoan](/wiki/Minoan_civilization) and [Mycenean](/wiki/Mycenea) religion.[[35]](#cite_note-35) It seems that the Minoan vegetation goddess [Ariadne](/wiki/Ariadne) was absorbed by more powerful divinities.[[36]](#cite_note-36) She survived in Greek folklore as the consort of [Dionysos](/wiki/Dionysos), with whom she was worshiped in some local cults. In the [Anthesteria](/wiki/Anthesteria) Dionysos is the "divine child".

In historical times the Minoan "cult of the tree", was almost forgotten. It existed in some local cults like the cult of the vegetation goddess *Helena* [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang) (*dendron*, "tree") in [Rhodes](/wiki/Rhodes), and a cult of [Artemis](/wiki/Artemis) in the [Peloponnese](/wiki/Peloponnese). In this cult, Artemis is hanged from a tree, just like [Ariadne](/wiki/Ariadne) in Greek mythology, who was hanged from a tree when she was abandoned by [Theseus](/wiki/Theseus).[[37]](#cite_note-37)

### Mycenean Greece[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[thumb|left|Two women or goddesses on a chariot. Fresco from](/wiki/File:Tiryns_chariot_fresco.jpg) [Tiryns](/wiki/Tiryns), 1200 BC. National Archaeological Museum of [Athens](/wiki/Athens) [thumb|left|Procession of women with animal-masks, or of hybrid creatures. Detail from the marble veil of](/wiki/Image:Lycosoura-veil.jpg) [Despoina](/wiki/Despoina) at [Lycosura](/wiki/Lycosura) It seems that the Greek deities began their career as powers of nature, but then they were given other functions and attributes by their worshippers.[[36]](#cite_note-36) The powers of animal nature fostered a belief in [nymphs](/wiki/Nymphs), whose existence was bound to the trees or the waters which they haunted, and in gods with human forms and the heads or tails of animals. The ancient gods with tails of animals who stood for primitive bodily instincts, were considered to protect the flocks and herds, and some of them survived in the cult of [Dionysos](/wiki/Dionysos) ([Satyrs](/wiki/Satyr) and [Seilinoi](/wiki/Seilenos)) and [Pan](/wiki/Pan_(god)) (the goat-god). Such figures were believed to give help to men who watched over crops and herds, and later they were below the Olympians.[[38]](#cite_note-38) There is evidence of a cult in [Eleusis](/wiki/Eleusis) from the Mycenean period,[[39]](#cite_note-39) however, there are not sacral finds from this period. The cult was private and there is no information about it. As well as the names of some Greek gods in the [Mycenean Greek](/wiki/Mycenean_Greece) inscriptions, also appear names of goddesses, like "the divine Mother" (the mother of the gods) or "the Goddess (or priestess) of the winds", who don't have Mycenean origin.<ref name=Burkert285>Burkert(1985), pp. 285–290</ref> In historical times [Demeter](/wiki/Demeter) and Kore were usually referred to as "the goddesses" or "the mistresses" ([Arcadia](/wiki/Arcadia)) in the mysteries.<ref name=Nilsson463>Nilsson (1967), pp. 463–465</ref> In the [Mycenean Greek](/wiki/Mycenaean_Greece) tablets dated 1400–1200 BC, the "two mistresses ([potniai](/wiki/Potnia)) and the king" are mentioned. [John Chadwick](/wiki/John_Chadwick) believes that these were the precursor divinities of [Demeter](/wiki/Demeter), Persephone and [Poseidon](/wiki/Poseidon).[[40]](#cite_note-40) Persephone was conflated with [Despoina](/wiki/Despoina), "the mistress", a [chthonic](/wiki/Chthonic) divinity in West-[Arcadia](/wiki/Arcadia).[[41]](#cite_note-41) The [megaron](/wiki/Megaron) of Eleusis, is quite similar with the "megaron" of Despoina at [Lycosura](/wiki/Lycosura).<ref name=Burkert285/> The names [Demeter](/wiki/Demeter) and *Kore* are Greek, and this probably indicates that the Greeks adopted these divinities during their wandering, and that they were later fused with local divinities in the ancient cults.[[42]](#cite_note-42) The Arcadian cults come from a more primitive religion, and evidently the religious beliefs of the first Greek-speaking people who entered the region, were mixed with the beliefs of the [indigenous](/wiki/Indigenous_peoples) population. Most of the temples were built near springs, and in some of them there is evidence of the existence of a fire, which was always burning. At [Lycosura](/wiki/Lycosura), a fire was burning in front of the temple of [Pan](/wiki/Pan_(mythology)) (the goat-god).<ref name=Nilsson478/> In [Eleusis](/wiki/Eleusis), in a ritual, one child ("pais") was initiated from the hearth. The name *pais* (the divine child) appears in the Mycenean inscriptions.,<ref name=Burkert285/> and the ritual indicates the transition from the old funerary practices to the [Greek](/wiki/Greece) cremation.[[43]](#cite_note-43) [thumb|Perspective reconstruction of the temple of](/wiki/File:Lycosoura-2.jpg) [Despoina](/wiki/Despoina) at [Lycosura](/wiki/Lycosura): The acrolithic statues of [Demeter](/wiki/Demeter) (L) and [Despoina](/wiki/Despoina) (R) are visible at the scale in the cella The two goddesses, were closely related with the springs and the animals. At [Lycosura](/wiki/Lycosura) on a marble relief on the veil of [Despoina](/wiki/Despoina) appear figures with the heads of different animals obviously in a ritual dance, and some of them hold a flute. These could be hybrid creatures or a procession of women with animal-masks.[[44]](#cite_note-44) Similar processions of [daemons](/wiki/Daemon_(mythology)), or human figures with animal-masks appear on [Mycenean](/wiki/Mycenean_Greece) frescoes and gold rings.[[45]](#cite_note-45)[[46]](#cite_note-46) It seems that Demeter and Kore, were the first of a series of [daemons](/wiki/Daemon_(mythology)) with the same nature, just as [Artemis](/wiki/Artemis) was the first of the [nymphs](/wiki/Nymph).<ref name=Nilsson478/>

[Demeter](/wiki/Demeter) and Persephone, were the two Great Goddesses of the [Arcadian](/wiki/Arcadia) [mysteries](/wiki/Sacred_mysteries). [Despoine](/wiki/Despoina) was one of her surnames just as the surname of Persephone *Kore*.[[47]](#cite_note-47) Her name was not allowed to be revealed to the uninitiated, and she was daughter of Demeter, who was united with the god of the storms and rivers [Poseidon Hippios](/wiki/Poseidon) (horse).[[48]](#cite_note-48) In [northern](/wiki/North) [European](/wiki/Europe) folklore, the river spirit of the underworld appears frequently as a horse. The union of the fertility goddess with the beast which represents the masculine fertility, is an old [Near Eastern](/wiki/Near_East) myth, which appears in many primitive agricultural societies. The [ritual copulation](/wiki/Hieros_gamos) in [Minoan](/wiki/Minoan_civilization) [Crete](/wiki/Crete) was related to moon-goddesses like [Europa](/wiki/Europa_(mythology)) and [Pasiphae](/wiki/Pasiphae), but this cult was almost forgotten by the Greeks. It survived in the myths of the hybrid creature [Minotaur](/wiki/Minotaur), and of the abduction of the [Phoenician](/wiki/Phoenicia) princess [Europa](/wiki/Europa_(mythology)) by the white bull ([Zeus](/wiki/Zeus)).<ref name=Schacherm141/> The animal-headed gods were depicted in the local cults of isolated Arcadia, or in [Crete](/wiki/Crete) in the depiction of the dog-headed [Hecate](/wiki/Hecate).[[49]](#cite_note-49) The animal masks were substituted by masks representing human faces, as it appears in the temple of [Artemis Orthia](/wiki/Artemis_Orthia) at [Sparta](/wiki/Sparta). Dancing girls used these masks during the annual "vegetation ritual ".[[50]](#cite_note-50) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Triptolemos_Louvre_G187.jpg)[Triptolemus](/wiki/Triptolemus), [Demeter](/wiki/Demeter), and Persephone by the [Triptolemos Painter](/wiki/Triptolemos_Painter), c. 470 BC The Minoan "cult of the tree" appears also in [Mycenean](/wiki/Mycenae) seals and jewellery, however, it is not known if this cult in Greece was similar with the Minoan. Later the cult of [Dionysos](/wiki/Dionysos) was closely associated with trees, specifically the [fig tree](/wiki/Fig_tree), and some of his bynames exhibit this, such as [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang) or [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang) (*dendron*, "tree").[[51]](#cite_note-51) According to [Pherecydes of Syros](/wiki/Pherecydes_of_Syros), the second element of his name is derived from [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang), an archaic word for "tree".[[52]](#cite_note-52) It is possible that the meaning of tree was re-interpreted to the name of the mountain [Nysa](/wiki/Nysa_(mythology)), the birthplace of Dionysos, according to the [axis mundi](/wiki/Axis_mundi) of [Indo-European mythology](/wiki/Indo-European_mythology) .[[53]](#cite_note-53) In Greek mythology Nysa is a mythical mountain with an unknown location.<ref name=Sherwood217/> *Nysion* (or Mysion), the place of the abduction of Persephone was also probably a mythical place which did not exist on the map, a magically distant [chthonic](/wiki/Chthonic) land of myth which was intended in the remote past.<ref name=Nilsson463/> An image plate from the first palace of [Phaistos](/wiki/Phaistos), seems to be very close to the mythical image of the *Anodos* (ascent) of Persephone. Two girls dance on each side of a similar but armless and legless figure which seems to grow out of the ground. She has a large stylized flower turned over her head.<ref name=Burkert42/> The depiction of the goddess is similar with later images of "Anodos of Pherephata". On the Dresden vase Persephone is growing out of the ground, and she is surrounded by the animal-tailed agricultural gods [Silenoi](/wiki/Seilenos).[[29]](#cite_note-29) It seems that in [Crete](/wiki/Crete) there were festivals designated in a way corresponding to the later Greek types of festival names.<ref name=Burkert42/> An agrarian procession is depicted on the "Harvesters Vase" or "Vase of the Winnowers" from the last phase of the New Palace Period (LM II), which was found in [Hagia Triada](/wiki/Hagia_Triada). Men are walking two by two with their tool-rods on their shoulders. The leader is probably a priest with long hair carrying a stick, and dressed in a priestly robe with a fringe. A group of musicians participate singing, and one of them holds an [Egyptian](/wiki/Ancient_Egypt) [sistrum](/wiki/Sistrum).[[30]](#cite_note-30)

## Greek mythology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

### Abduction myth<!--Part of this section is linked from [[The High Priestess]] -->[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Sarcophagus_with_the_Abduction_of_Persephone_by_Hades_(detail).JPG)[Sarcophagus](/wiki/Sarcophagus) with the abduction of **Persephone**. Walters Art Museum. [Baltimore](/wiki/Baltimore), [Maryland](/wiki/Maryland) Persephone used to live far away from the other gods, a goddess within Nature herself before the days of planting seeds and nurturing plants. In the Olympian telling, the gods [Hermes](/wiki/Hermes) and [Apollo](/wiki/Apollo) had wooed Persephone; but Demeter rejected all their gifts and hid her daughter away from the company of the Olympian gods.[[54]](#cite_note-54) The story of her abduction by [Hades](/wiki/Hades) against her will is traditionally referred to as the [Rape of Persephone](/wiki/Rape_of_Persephone). It is mentioned briefly in [Hesiod's](/wiki/Hesiod) [Theogony](/wiki/Theogony),<ref name=HesTh914>Hesiod, *Theogony* [914](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Hes.%20Th.%20914&lang=original&highlight=Persephone).</ref> and told in considerable detail in the [*Homeric Hymn to Demeter*](/wiki/Homeric_Hymns). [Zeus](/wiki/Zeus), it is said, permitted [Hades](/wiki/Hades), who was in love with the beautiful Persephone, to carry her off as her mother [Demeter](/wiki/Demeter) was not likely to allow her daughter to go down to Hades. Persephone was gathering flowers with the [Oceanids](/wiki/Oceanid) along with [Artemis](/wiki/Artemis) and [Athena](/wiki/Athena)—the *Homeric Hymn* says—in a field when [Hades](/wiki/Hades) came to abduct her, bursting through a cleft in the earth.[[55]](#cite_note-55) [Demeter](/wiki/Demeter), when she found her daughter had disappeared, searched for her all over the earth with Hecate's torches. In most versions she forbids the earth to produce, or she neglects the earth and in the depth of her despair she causes nothing to grow. [Helios](/wiki/Helios), the sun, who sees everything, eventually told Demeter what had happened and at length she discovered the place of her abode. Finally, Zeus, pressed by the cries of the hungry people and by the other deities who also heard their anguish, forced [Hades](/wiki/Hades) to return Persephone.[[56]](#cite_note-56)[thumb|Oil painting of Hades abducting Persephone. Oil on wood with gilt background. 18th century. Property of Missing Link Antiques.](/wiki/File:Hates_abduction.jpg) [Hades](/wiki/Hades_(mythology)) indeed complied with the request, but first he tricked her, giving her some [pomegranate](/wiki/Pomegranate) seeds to eat. Persephone was released by [Hermes](/wiki/Hermes), who had been sent to retrieve her, but because she had tasted food in the underworld, she was obliged to spend a third of each year (the winter months) there, and the remaining part of the year with the gods above.[[57]](#cite_note-57) With the later writers Ovid and Hyginus, Persephone's time in the underworld becomes half the year.[[58]](#cite_note-58) Various local traditions place Persephone's abduction in a different location. The [Sicilians](/wiki/Sicily), among whom her worship was probably introduced by the Corinthian and Megarian colonists, believed that Hades found her in the meadows near [Enna](/wiki/Enna), and that a well arose on the spot where he descended with her into the lower world. The [Cretans](/wiki/Crete) thought that their own island had been the scene of the rape, and the [Eleusinians](/wiki/Eleusis) mentioned the Nysian plain in Boeotia, and said that Persephone had descended with Hades into the lower world at the entrance of the western [Oceanus](/wiki/Oceanus). Later accounts place the rape in [Attica](/wiki/Attica), near [Athens](/wiki/Athens), or near [Eleusis](/wiki/Eleusis).[[56]](#cite_note-56) [thumb|left|*The return of Persephone*, by](/wiki/File:FredericLeighton-TheReturnofPerspephone(1891).jpg) [Frederic Leighton](/wiki/Frederic_Leighton) (1891) The [Homeric](/wiki/Homeric) hymn mentions the *Nysion* (or Mysion) which was probably a mythical place. The location of this mythical place may simply be a convention to show that a magically distant [chthonic](/wiki/Chthonic) land of myth was intended in the remote past.<ref name=Nilsson463/> Before Persephone was abducted by Hades, the shepherd Eumolpus and the swineherd [Eubuleus](/wiki/Eubuleus) saw a girl in a black chariot driven by an invisible driver being carried off into the earth which had violently opened up. Eubuleus was feeding his pigs at the opening to the underworld when Persephone was abducted by Plouton. His swine were swallowed by the earth along with her, and the myth is an etiology for the relation of pigs with the ancient rites in [Thesmophoria](/wiki/Thesmophoria),[[59]](#cite_note-59) and in [Eleusis](/wiki/Eleusis).

In the hymn, Persephone returns and she is reunited with her mother near [Eleusis](/wiki/Eleusis). Demeter as she has been promised established her mysteries (orgies) when the Eleusinians built for her a temple near the spring of Callichorus. These were awful mysteries which were not allowed to be uttered. The uninitiated would spend a miserable existence in the gloomy space of [Hades](/wiki/Hades) after death.[Template:Refn](/wiki/Template:Refn)

In some versions, [Ascalaphus](/wiki/Ascalaphus) informed the other deities that Persephone had eaten the pomegranate seeds. When Demeter and her daughter were reunited, the Earth flourished with vegetation and color, but for some months each year, when Persephone returned to the underworld, the earth once again became a barren realm. This is an [origin story](/wiki/Origin_myth) to explain the seasons.

In an earlier version, [Hecate](/wiki/Hecate) rescued Persephone. On an Attic [red-figured](/wiki/Red-figure_pottery) [bell krater](/wiki/Krater) of c. 440 BC in the [Metropolitan Museum of Art](/wiki/Metropolitan_Museum_of_Art), Persephone is rising as if up stairs from a cleft in the earth, while Hermes stands aside; Hecate, holding two torches, looks back as she leads her to the enthroned Demeter.[[60]](#cite_note-60) The 10th-century [Byzantine](/wiki/Byzantine_Empire) encyclopedia [*Suda*](/wiki/Suda) introduces a goddess of a blessed [afterlife](/wiki/Afterlife) assured to [Orphic mystery](/wiki/Orphism_(religion)) initiates. This [Macaria](/wiki/Macaria) is asserted to be the daughter of Hades, but no mother is mentioned.[[61]](#cite_note-61)

### Interpretation of the myth[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

[thumb|Pinax of Persephone and Hades from Locri.](/wiki/File:Locri_Pinax_Of_Persephone_And_Hades.jpg) [Reggio Calabria](/wiki/Reggio_Calabria), National Museum of Magna Graecia. In the myth [Pluto](/wiki/Pluto_(mythology)) abducts Persephone to be his wife and the queen of his realm.<ref name=Hansen>William Hansen (2005) *Classical Mythology: A Guide to the Mythical World of the Greeks and Romans* (Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 180–182.</ref> [Pluto](/wiki/Pluto_(mythology)) (Πλούτων, *Ploutōn*) was a name for the ruler of [the underworld](/wiki/Greek_underworld); the god was also known as [Hades](/wiki/Hades), a name for the underworld itself. The name *Pluton* was conflated with that of [Ploutos](/wiki/Ploutos) (Πλούτος *Ploutos*, "wealth"), a god of wealth, because mineral wealth was found underground, and because [Pluto](/wiki/Pluto_(mythology)) as a [chthonic](/wiki/Chthonic) god ruled the deep earth that contained the seeds necessary for a bountiful harvest.<ref name=Hansen>Hansen, *Classical Mythology*, p. 182.</ref> *Plouton* is lord of the dead, but as Persephone's husband he has serious claims to the powers of fertility.<ref name=Athanas56>Ap. Athanassakis (2004), *Hesiod. Theogony, Works and Days, Shield* ,Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 56.</ref>

In the [Theogony](/wiki/Theogony) of [Hesiod](/wiki/Hesiod), [Demeter](/wiki/Demeter) was united with the hero [Iasion](/wiki/Iasion) in [Crete](/wiki/Crete) and she bore [Ploutos](/wiki/Ploutos).<ref name=HesTh914/> This union seems to be a reference to a [hieros gamos](/wiki/Hieros_gamos) (ritual copulation) to ensure the earth's fertility.<ref name=Athanas56/> This ritual copulation appears in [Minoan](/wiki/Minoan_civilization) [Crete](/wiki/Crete), in many [Near Eastern](/wiki/Near_East) agricultural societies, and also in the [Anthesteria](/wiki/Anthesteria).[Template:Refn](/wiki/Template:Refn)

[Nilsson](/wiki/Martin_P._Nilsson) believes that the original cult of [Ploutos](/wiki/Ploutos) (or [Pluto](/wiki/Pluto_(mythology))) in [Eleusis](/wiki/Eleusis) was similar with the [Minoan](/wiki/Minoan_civilization) cult of the "divine child", who died in order to be reborn. The child was abandoned by his mother and then it was brought up by the powers of nature. Similar myths appear in the cults of [Hyakinthos](/wiki/Hyakinthos) ([Amyklai](/wiki/Amyklai)), [Erichthonios](/wiki/Erichthonios) ([Athens](/wiki/Athens)), and later in the cult of [Dionysos](/wiki/Dionysos).[[62]](#cite_note-62) The Greek version of the abduction myth is related to grain – important and rare in the Greek environment – and the return (ascent) of Persephone was celebrated at the autumn sowing. [Pluto](/wiki/Pluto_(mythology)) ([Ploutos](/wiki/Ploutos)) represents the wealth of the grain that was stored in underground silos or ceramic jars (*pithoi*), during summer months. Similar subterranean *pithoi* were used in ancient times for burials and [Pluto](/wiki/Pluto_(mythology)) is fused with [Hades](/wiki/Hades), the King of the realm of the dead. During summer months, the Greek *grain-Maiden* (Kore) is lying in the grain of the underground silos, in the realm of Hades and she is fused with Persephone, the Queen of the underworld. At the beginning of the autumn, when the seeds of the old crop are laid on the fields, she ascends and is reunited with her mother [Demeter](/wiki/Demeter), for at that time the old crop and the new meet each other. For the initiated, this union was the symbol of the eternity of human life that flows from the generations which spring from each other.<ref name=Nilssonpopular51>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>[[63]](#cite_note-63)

### The Arcadian myths[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[thumb|left|From L-R, Artemis, Demeter, Veil of Despoina, Anytus, Tritoness from the throne of](/wiki/File:Lycosoura-group.jpg) [Despoina](/wiki/Despoina) at [Lycosura](/wiki/Lycosura). [National Archaeological Museum of Athens](/wiki/National_Archaeological_Museum_of_Athens)

The primitive myths of isolated [Arcadia](/wiki/Arcadia) seem to be related to the first Greek-speaking people who came from the north-east during the [bronze age](/wiki/Bronze_age). [Despoina](/wiki/Despoina) (the mistress), the goddess of the Arcadian mysteries, is the daughter of Demeter and [Poseidon](/wiki/Poseidon) *Hippios* (horse), who represents the river spirit of the underworld that appears as a horse as often happens in northern-European folklore. He pursues the mare-Demeter and from the union she bears the horse [Arion](/wiki/Arion_(mythology)) and a daughter who originally had the form or the shape of a mare. The two goddesses were not clearly separated and they were closely connected with the springs and the animals. They were related with the god of rivers and springs; Poseidon and especially with [Artemis](/wiki/Artemis), the [Mistress of the Animals](/wiki/Mistress_of_the_Animals) who was the first [nymph](/wiki/Nymph).<ref name=Nilsson462/> According to the Greek tradition a hunt-goddess preceded the harvest goddess.[[64]](#cite_note-64) In Arcadia, [Demeter](/wiki/Demeter) and Persephone were often called *Despoinai* (Δέσποιναι, "the mistresses") in historical times. They are the two Great Goddesses of the [Arcadian](/wiki/Arcadia) cults, and evidently they come from a more primitive religion.<ref name=Nilsson463/> The Greek god [Poseidon](/wiki/Poseidon) probably substituted the companion (*Paredros*, Πάρεδρος) of the [Minoan](/wiki/Minoan_civilization) [Great goddess](/wiki/Mother_goddess)[[65]](#cite_note-65)in the Arcadian mysteries.

[thumb|upright|left|Seated goddess, probably Persephone on her throne in the underworld,](/wiki/File:Throning_goddess_(Persephone)_480-460_BC_(Sk_1761)_1.JPG) [Severe style](/wiki/Severe_style) *ca* 480–60, found at [Tarentum](/wiki/Taranto), [Magna Graecia](/wiki/Magna_Graecia) ([Pergamon Museum](/wiki/Pergamon_Museum), Berlin)

### Queen of the Underworld[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

Persephone held an ancient role as the dread queen of the Underworld, within which tradition it was forbidden to speak her name. This tradition comes from her conflation with the very old [chthonic](/wiki/Chthonic) divinity [Despoina](/wiki/Despoina) (the mistress), whose real name could not be revealed to anyone except those initiated to her mysteries.[[48]](#cite_note-48) As goddess of death she was also called a daughter of [Zeus](/wiki/Zeus) and [Styx](/wiki/Styx),[[66]](#cite_note-66) the river that formed the boundary between [Earth](/wiki/Earth) and the underworld. [Homer](/wiki/Homer) describes her as the formidable, venerable majestic queen of the shades, who carries into effect the curses of men upon the souls of the dead, along with her husband Hades.[[67]](#cite_note-67) In the reformulation of Greek mythology expressed in the [*Orphic Hymns*](/wiki/Orphic_Hymns), Dionysus and Melinoe are separately called children of Zeus and Persephone.[[68]](#cite_note-68) Groves sacred to her stood at the western extremity of the earth on the frontiers of the lower world, which itself was called "house of Persephone".[[69]](#cite_note-69) Her central myth served as the context for the secret rites of regeneration at [Eleusis](/wiki/Eleusinian_Mysteries),[[70]](#cite_note-70) which promised immortality to initiates.

## Cult of Persephone[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

Persephone was worshipped along with her mother [Demeter](/wiki/Demeter) and in the same mysteries. Her cults included agrarian magic, dancing, and rituals. The priests used special vessels and holy symbols, and the people participated with rhymes. In [Eleusis](/wiki/Eleusis) there is evidence of sacred laws and other inscriptions.<ref name= Burkert285>Burkert (1985), pp. 285–289</ref>

The Cult of Demeter and the Maiden is found at [Attica](/wiki/Attica), in the main festivals [Thesmophoria](/wiki/Thesmophoria) and [Eleusinian mysteries](/wiki/Eleusinian_mysteries) and in a lot of local cults. These festivals were almost always celebrated at the autumn sowing, and at full-moon according to the Greek tradition. In some local cults the feasts were dedicated to Demeter.

### Thesmophoria[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|left|*Kore*, daughter of Demeter, celebrated with her mother by the](/wiki/File:Kore55.jpg) [Thesmophoriazusae](/wiki/Thesmophoriazusae) (women of the festival). [Acropolis Museum](/wiki/Acropolis_Museum), Athens [Thesmophoria](/wiki/Thesmophoria), were celebrated in [Athens](/wiki/Athens), and the festival was widely spread in Greece. This was a festival of secret women-only rituals connected with marriage customs and commemorated the third of the year, in the month [Pyanepsion](/wiki/Attic_calendar), when Kore was abducted and Demeter abstained from her role as goddess of harvest and growth. The ceremony involved sinking sacrifices into the earth by night and retrieving the decaying remains of pigs that had been placed in the *megara* of Demeter (trenches and pits or natural clefts in rock), the previous year. These were placed on altars, mixed with seeds, then planted.<ref name=Burkert240>Burkert (1985), pp. 240–243</ref> Pits rich in organic matter at Eleusis have been taken as evidence that the Thesmophoria was held there as well as in other [demes](/wiki/Deme) of [Attica](/wiki/Attica).[[71]](#cite_note-71) This agrarian magic was also used in the cult of the earth-goddesses [potniai](/wiki/Potnia) (mistresses) in the [Cabeirian](/wiki/Cabeiri), and in [Knidos](/wiki/Knidos).<ref name=Nilsson151>Potniai: *Pelarge* daughter of *Potnieus* is connected with the cult of Demeter in the Cabeirian : Pausanias 9.25,8, Nilsson (1967) Vol I pp. 151, 463</ref>

The festival was celebrated over three days. The first was the "way up" to the sacred space, the second, the day of feasting when they ate [pomegranate](/wiki/Pomegranate) seeds and the third was a meat feast in celebration of [Kalligeneia](/wiki/Kalligeneia) a goddess of beautiful birth. [Zeus](/wiki/Zeus) penetrated the mysteries as [Zeus](/wiki/Zeus)- [Eubuleus](/wiki/Eubuleus)<ref name=Burkert240/> which is an [euphemistical](/wiki/Euphemistically) name of [Hades](/wiki/Hades) ([Chthonios](/wiki/Chthonic) [Zeus](/wiki/Zeus)).[[72]](#cite_note-72) In the original myth which is an etiology for the ancient rites, Eubuleus was a swineherd who was feeding his pigs at the opening to the underworld when Persephone was abducted by Plouton. His swine were swallowed by the earth along with her.[[59]](#cite_note-59)

### Eleusinian mysteries[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|upright|The](/wiki/File:Eleusis2.jpg) [Eleusinian trio](/wiki/Eleusinian_mysteries): Persephone, [Triptolemus](/wiki/Triptolemus) and [Demeter](/wiki/Demeter) on a marble bas-relief from [Eleusis](/wiki/Eleusis), 440-430 BC. [National Archaeological Museum of Athens](/wiki/National_Archaeological_Museum_of_Athens) The [Eleusinian mysteries](/wiki/Eleusinian_mysteries) was a festival celebrated at the autumn sowing in the city of [Eleusis](/wiki/Eleusis). Inscriptions refer to "the Goddesses" accompanied by the agricultural god [Triptolemos](/wiki/Triptolemos) (probably son of [Ge](/wiki/Gaia_(mythology)) and [Oceanus](/wiki/Oceanus)),[[73]](#cite_note-73) and "the God and the Goddess" (Persephone and Plouton) accompanied by [Eubuleus](/wiki/Eubuleus) who probably led the way back from the underworld.[[74]](#cite_note-74) The myth was represented in a cycle with three phases: the "descent", the "search", and the "ascent", with contrasted emotions from sorrow to joy which roused the mystae to exultation. The main theme was the ascent of Persephone and the reunion with her mother Demeter.<ref name=Nilssonpopular51/> The festival activities included dancing, probably across the Rharian field, where according to the myth the first grain grew.

At the beginning of the feast, the priests filled two special vessels and poured them out, the one towards the west, and the other towards the east. The people looking both to the sky and the earth shouted in a magical rhyme "rain and conceive". In a ritual, a child was initiated from the hearth (the divine fire). It was the ritual of the "divine child" who originally was [Ploutos](/wiki/Ploutos). In the Homeric hymn the ritual is connected with the myth of the agricultural god [Triptolemos](/wiki/Triptolemos)[[43]](#cite_note-43) The high point of the celebration was "an ear of grain cut in silence", which represented the force of the new life. The idea of immortality didn't exist in the mysteries at the beginning, but the initiated believed that they would have a better fate in the underworld. Death remained a reality, but at the same time a new beginning like the plant which grows from the buried seed.<ref name=Burkert285/> In the earliest depictions Persephone is an armless and legless deity, who grows out of the ground.[[75]](#cite_note-75)

### Local cults[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

Local cults of Demeter and Kore existed in Greece, [Asia Minor](/wiki/Asia_Minor), [Sicily](/wiki/Sicily), [Magna Graecia](/wiki/Magna_Graecia), and [Libya](/wiki/Libya).

* **Attica**:<ref name=Nilsson463>Nilsson (1967) Vol I, pp. 463–465</ref>
  + [Athens](/wiki/Athens), in the [mysteries](/wiki/Mystery_religions) of [Agrae](/wiki/Agrae). This was a local cult near the river [Ilissos](/wiki/Ilissos). They were celebrated during spring in the month [Anthesterion](/wiki/Attic_calendar). Later they became an obligation for the participants of the “greater” [Eleusinian mysteries](/wiki/Eleusinian_mysteries). There was a temple of Demeter and Kore, and an image of [Triptolemos](/wiki/Triptolemos).[[76]](#cite_note-76)[thumb|Demeter drives her horse-drawn chariot containing her daughter Persephone at](/wiki/File:Demeter_in_horse_chariot_w_daughter_kore_83d40m_wikiC_Tempio_Y_di_Selinunte_sec_VIa.JPG) [Selinunte](/wiki/Selinunte), [Sicily](/wiki/Sicily) 6th century BC
  + [Piraeus](/wiki/Piraeus): The *Skirophoria*, a festival related to the [Thesmophoria](/wiki/Thesmophoria).
  + [Megara](/wiki/Megara): Cult of Demeter *thesmophoros* and Kore. The city was named after its *megara* .[[77]](#cite_note-77)\*\* [Aegina](/wiki/Aegina): Cult of Demeter *thesmophoros* and Kore.
  + [Phlya](/wiki/Phlya), near Koropi, in the [mysteries](/wiki/Mystery_religions) of Phlya: These have very old roots, and were probably originally dedicated to Demeter [Anesidora](/wiki/Pandora), Kore, and [Zeus](/wiki/Zeus)- Ktesios, who was the god of the underground stored grain. Pausanias mentions a temple of Demeter-Anesidora, Kore [Protogone](/wiki/Greek_primordial_deities), and Zeus Ktesios. The surname Protogonos, indicates a later [Orphic](/wiki/Orphic) influence. It seems that the mysteries were related to the mysteries of [Andania](/wiki/Andania) in [Messene](/wiki/Messene).<ref name=Nilsson668>Nilsson (1967), *Vol I*, pp. 668–670</ref>
* **Boeotia**:
  + [Thebes](/wiki/Ancient_Thebes_(Boeotia)), which Zeus is said to have given to her as an acknowledgement for a favour she had bestowed upon him.[[78]](#cite_note-78) [Pausanias](/wiki/Pausanias_(geographer)) records a grove of [Cabeirian](/wiki/Cabeiri) Demeter and the Maid, three miles outside the gates of Thebes, where a ritual was performed, so-called on the grounds that Demeter gave it to the [Cabeiri](/wiki/Cabeiri), who established it at Thebes. The Thebans told Pausanias that some inhabitants of [Naupactus](/wiki/Naupactus) had performed the same rituals there, and had met with divine vengeance.[[79]](#cite_note-79) The Cabeirian mysteries were introduced from [Asia Minor](/wiki/Asia_Minor) at the end of the archaic period. Nothing is known of the older cult, and it seems that the Cabeiri were originally wine-[daemons](/wiki/Daemon_(mythology)). Inscriptions from the temple in Thebes mention the old one as Cabir, and the new one as son (pais), who are different.<ref name=Nilsson668/> According to Pausanias, Pelarge, the daughter of Potnieus, was connected with the cult of Demeter in the Cabeirian ([potniai](/wiki/Potnia)).<ref name=Nilsson151/>
  + A feast in Boeotia, in the month *Demetrios* ([Pyanepsion](/wiki/Attic_calendar)), probably similar with the [Thesmophoria](/wiki/Thesmophoria).
  + [Thebes](/wiki/Ancient_Thebes_(Boeotia)): Cult of Demeter and Kore in a feast named [Thesmophoria](/wiki/Thesmophoria) but probably different. It was celebrated in the summer month *Bukatios*.<ref name=Nilsson463/><ref name=Diodor>[Diodorus Siculus](/wiki/Diodorus_Siculus) (v.4.7) :"At [Thebes](/wiki/Thebes_(Greece)) or [Delos](/wiki/Delos) the festival occurred two months earlier, so any seed-sowing connection was not intrinsic."</ref>
* **Peloponnese** (except Arcadia)<ref name=Nilsson463/>
  + **Hermione**: An old cult of Demeter [Chthonia](/wiki/Chthonic), Kore, and *Klymenos* ([Hades](/wiki/Hades)). Cows were pushed into the temple, and then they were killed by four women. It is possible that Hermione was a mythical name, the place of the souls.<ref name=Rhode206/>
  + [Asine](/wiki/Asine): Cult of Demeter [Chthonia](/wiki/Chthonic). The cult seems to be related to the original cult of Demeter in Hermione.<ref name=Rhode206/>
  + [Lakonia](/wiki/Lakonia): Temple of Demeter *Eleusinia* near [Taygetos](/wiki/Taygetos). The feast was named *Eleuhinia*, and the name was given before the relation of Demeter with the cult of [Eleusis](/wiki/Eleusis).
  + [Lakonia](/wiki/Lakonia) at Aigila: Dedicated to Demeter. Men were excluded.
  + near [Sparta](/wiki/Sparta): Cult of Demeter and Kore, the Demeters (Δαμάτερες, "Damaters"). According to Hesychius, the feast lasted three days (Thesmophoria).
  + [Corinth](/wiki/Corinth): Cult of Demeter, Kore and Pluton.<ref name=Rhode206/>
  + [Triphylia](/wiki/Triphylia) in [Elis](/wiki/Elis): Cult of Demeter, Kore and Hades.<ref name=Rhode206/>
  + [Pellene](/wiki/Pellene): Dedicated to the *Mysian* Demeter. Men were excluded. The next day, men and women became naked.
  + [Andania](/wiki/Andania) in [Messenia](/wiki/Messenia) (near the borders of Arcadia): Cult of the Great goddesses, Demeter and *Hagne*. Hagne, a goddess of the spring, was the original deity before Demeter. The temple was built near a spring.
* **Arcadia**<ref name=Nilsson478>Nilsson, pp. 477–480 :"The Arcadian Great goddesses"</ref>
  + [Pheneos](/wiki/Pheneos) : Mysteries of Demeter *Thesmia* and Demeter *Eleusinia*. The Eleusinian cult was introduced later. The priest took the *holy book* from a natural cleft. He used the mask of Demeter *Kidaria*, and he hit his stick on the earth, in a kind of agrarian magic. An Arcadian dance was named kidaris.
  + **Pallantion** near [Tripoli](/wiki/Tripoli,_Greece): Cult of Demeter and Kore.
  + [Karyai](/wiki/Karyai_(ancient_city)): Cult of Kore and Pluton.<ref name=Rhode206/>
  + [Tegea](/wiki/Tegea): Cult of Demeter and Kore, the *Karpophoroi*, "Fruit givers".
  + [Megalopolis](/wiki/Megalopolis,_Greece): Cult of the Great goddesses, Demeter and *Kore Sotira*, "the savior ".
  + [Mantineia](/wiki/Mantineia): Cult of Demeter and Kore in the fest *Koragia*.[[80]](#cite_note-80)\*\* [Trapezus](/wiki/Trapezus,_Arcadia): Mysteries of the Great goddesses, Demeter and Kore. The temple was built near a spring, and a fire was burning out of the earth.
  + near [Thelpusa](/wiki/Thelpusa) in Onkeion: Temple of Demeter Erinys (vengeful) and Demeter Lusia (bathing). In the myth Demeter was united with [Poseidon Hippios](/wiki/Poseidon) (horse) and bore the horse [Arion](/wiki/Arion_(mythology)) and the unnamed. The name [Despoina](/wiki/Despoina) was given in West Arcadia.
  + [Phigalia](/wiki/Phigalia): Cult of the mare-headed Demeter (black), and [Despoina](/wiki/Despoina). Demeter was depicted in her archaic form, a Medusa type with a horse's head with snaky hair, holding a dove and a dolphin.[[81]](#cite_note-81) The temple was built near a spring.
  + [Lycosura](/wiki/Lycosura),[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Cult of Demeter and [Despoina](/wiki/Despoina). In the portico of the temple of Despoina there was a tablet with the inscriptions of the mysteries. In front of the temple there was an altar to Demeter and another to Despoine, after which was one of the Great Mother. By the sides stood [Artemis](/wiki/Artemis) and [Anytos](/wiki/Anytos), the Titan who brought up Despoine. Besides the temple, there was also a hall where the Arcadians celebrated the mysteries[[82]](#cite_note-82)[[83]](#cite_note-83) A fire was always burning in front of the temple of [Pan](/wiki/Pan_(mythology)) (the goat-god), the god of the wild, shepherds and flocks. In a relief appear dancing animal-headed women (or with animal-masks) in a procession. Near the temple have been found terracotta figures with human bodies, and heads of animals.<ref name=Nilsson478/>
* **Islands**
  + [Paros](/wiki/Paros): Cult of Demeter, Kore and Zeus-Eubuleus.<ref name=Rhode206/>
  + [Amorgos](/wiki/Amorgos): Cult of Demeter, Kore and Zeus-Eubuleus.<ref name=Rhode206/>
  + [Delos](/wiki/Delos): Cult of Demeter, Kore, and Zeus-Eubuleus. Probably a different feast with the name [Thesmophoria](/wiki/Thesmophoria), celebrated in a summer month (the same month in Thebes). Two big loaves of bread were oferred to the two goddesses. Another feast was named *Megalartia*.<ref name=Nilsson463/><ref name=Diodor/>
  + [Mykonos](/wiki/Mykonos): Cult of Demeter, Kore and [Zeus](/wiki/Zeus)-Buleus.
  + [Crete](/wiki/Crete) : Cult of Demeter and Kore, in the month Thesmophorios.
  + [Rhodes](/wiki/Rhodes): Cult of Demeter and Kore, in the month Thesmophorios. The two goddesses are the Damaters in an inscription from [Lindos](/wiki/Lindos)
* [Asia Minor](/wiki/Asia_Minor)
  + [Knidos](/wiki/Knidos): Cult of Demeter, Kore and Pluton.<ref name=Rhode206/> Agrarian magic similar to the one used in [Thesmophoria](/wiki/Thesmophoria) and in the cult of the [potniai](/wiki/Potnia) ([Cabeirian](/wiki/Cabeiri)).<ref name=Nilsson463/>
  + [Ephesos](/wiki/Ephesos) : Cult of Demeter and Kore, celebrated at night-time.[[84]](#cite_note-84)\*\* [Priene](/wiki/Priene): Cult of Demeter and Kore, similar to the Thesmophoria.<ref name=Nilsson463/>
* [Sicily](/wiki/Sicily)
  + [Syracuse](/wiki/Syracuse,_Sicily): There was a harvest festival of Demeter and Persephone at Syracuse when the grain was ripe (about May).[[85]](#cite_note-85)\*\* A fest *Koris katagogi*, the descent of Persephone into the underworld.<ref name=Nilsson463/>
* [Magna Graecia](/wiki/Magna_Graecia)
  + [Epizephyrian Locri](/wiki/Epizephyrian_Locri): A temple associated with childbirth; its treasure was looted by [Pyrrhus](/wiki/Pyrrhus_of_Epirus).[[86]](#cite_note-86)\*\* Archaeological finds suggest that worship of Demeter and Persephone was widespread in Sicily and Greek Italy.
* [Libya](/wiki/Libya)
  + [Cyrene](/wiki/Cyrene,_Libya): Temple of Demeter and Kore<ref name=Nilsson463/>

## Ancient literary references[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

* [Homer](/wiki/Homer):
  + **Iliad**:
    - "the gods fulfilled his curse, even Zeus of the nether world and dread Persephone." (9, line 457; A. T. Murray, trans)
    - "[Althea](/wiki/Althea) prayed instantly to the gods, being grieved for her brother's slaying; and furthermore instantly beat with her hands upon the all-nurturing earth, calling upon Hades and dread Persephone" (9, 569)
  + **Odyssey**:
    - "And come to the house of Hades and dread Persephoneia to seek sooth saying of the spirit of Theban Teiresias. To him even in death Persephoneia has granted reason that ..." (book 10, card 473)
* [Hymns to](/wiki/Hymn) [Demeter](/wiki/Demeter)<ref name=perseus>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>
  + **Hymn 2**:
    - "Mistress Demeter goddess of heaven, which God or mortal man has rapt away Persephone and pierced with sorrow your dear heart?*(hymn 2, card 40)*
  + **Hymn 13**:
    - "I start to sing for Demeter the lovely-faced goddess, for her and her daughter the most beautiful Persephoneia. Hail goddess keep this city safe!" (hymn 13, card 1)
* [Pindar](/wiki/Pindar)<ref name=perseus/>
  + **Olympian**:
    - "Now go Echo, to the dark-walled home of Phersephona."(book O, poem 14)
  + **Isthmean**:
    - "Aecus showed them the way to the house of Phersephona and nymphs, one of them carrying a ball."(book 1, poem 8)
  + **Nemean**:
    - "Island which Zeus, the lord of Olympus gave to Phersephona;he nodded descent with his flowers hair."(book N, poem 1)
  + **Pythian**:
    - "You splendor-loving city, most beautiful on earth, home of Phersephona. You who inhabit the hill of well-built dwellings."(book P, poem 12)
* [Aeschylus](/wiki/Aeschylus)<ref name=perseus/>
  + **Libation bearers**:
    - Electra:"O Phersephassa, grant us indeed a glorious victory!" (card 479)
* [Aristophanes](/wiki/Aristophanes)<ref name=perseus/>
  + **Thesmophoriazusae**:
    - Mnesilochos:"Thou Mistress Demeter, the most valuable friend and thou Pherephatta, grant that I may be able to offer you!" (card 266)
* [Euripides](/wiki/Euripides)<ref name=perseus/>
  + **Alcestis**:
    - "O you brave and best hail, sitting as attendand Beside's Hades bride Phersephone!" (card 741)
  + **Hecuba**:
    - "It is said that any of the dead that stand beside Phersephone, that the Danaids have left the plains to Troy." (card 130)
* [Bacchylides](/wiki/Bacchylides)<ref name=perseus/>
  + **Epinicians**:
    - "Flashing thunderbolt went down to the halls of slender-ankled Phersephona to bring up into the light of Hades." (book Ep. poem 5)
* [Vergil](/wiki/Vergil)[[87]](#cite_note-87)\*\* **The Aeneid**:
  + - "For since she had not died through fate, or by a well-earned death, but wretchedly, before her time, inflamed with sudden madness, Proserpine had not yet taken a lock of golden hair from her head, or condemned her soul to Stygian Orcus." (IV.696-99)

## Gallery[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

<gallery> File:Hades abducting Persephone.jpg|[Hades](/wiki/Hades) abducting **Persephone**, wall painting in the small royal tomb at [Vergina](/wiki/Vergina). [Macedonia](/wiki/Macedonia_(Greece)), Greece File:S03 06 01 020 image 2524.jpg|Italy. Renaissance relief, Rape of Persephone. Brooklyn Museum Archives, Goodyear Archival Collection </gallery>

## Modern reception[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

In 1934, [Igor Stravinsky](/wiki/Igor_Stravinsky) based his [melodrama](/wiki/Melodrama) [*Perséphone*](/wiki/Perséphone_(Stravinsky)) on Persephone's story. In 1961, Frederick Ashton of the Royal Ballet appropriated Stravinsky's score, to choreograph a ballet starring Svetlana Beriosova as Persephone.

Persephone also appears many times in popular culture. Featured in a variety of young adult novels such as "Persephone"[[88]](#cite_note-88)