

A white egg is centered against a dark background. The egg has some faint brown spots. Overlaid on the egg is the text 'Cracking A Mystery' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. Below this, the text 'From Ancient Hekate's Suppers To Easter Eggs' is written in a white, cursive script font.

Cracking A Mystery

*From Ancient Hekate's
Suppers
To
Easter Eggs*

Hail Hekate,

*She who stands at the threshold
Between the worlds.*

*I bring you a fine meal
Knowing that you intend it for the animals
And the downtrodden.*

They, like me, are yours.

*I feel the restless dead and the haggard spirits
Gathered in this place.*

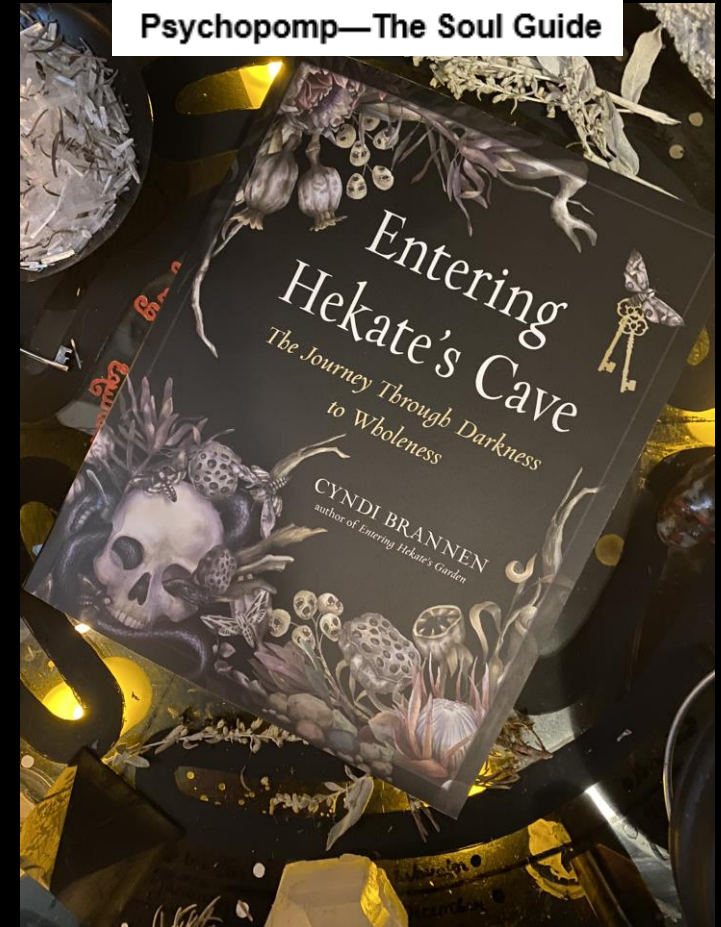
They, like me, are yours.

*I am embraced by the darkest night,
For the moon has covered her face out of respect for you.*

They, like me, are yours.

Chapter 12

Psychopomp—The Soul Guide



One of the most sacred pharmakoi, garlic should always be included in the evening meal, whether as simple cloves or in more elaborate creations like garlic jam. Ancient Hekate's suppers always included garlic, eggs, fish, bread, and cheese. The ancient use of garlic to ward against evil was undoubtedly why it was included in the meal, since Hekate was seen as both household protector and imminent threat if she wasn't honored each month on the Dark Moon.

Entering Hekate's Garden

The Magick, Medicine & Mystery of Plant Spirit Witchcraft

In ancient times, households in certain parts of Greece took a meal to Hekate at the crossroads on nights when the moon was dark. Modern Hekateans often observe this practice, known as the *Deipnon*. The meal offering was left after a purification ritual, perhaps similar to the khernips ritual, was performed. Once the miasma was removed from the home, the protection of Hekate was sought by leaving her a lovely meal. Any offerings left at a crossroads should be considerate of those who frequent the location, especially animals.



A website dedicated to advancing the writings of Lucian of Samosata

Lucian of Samosata (c. 120 AD - c. 200 AD) was the author of more than 70 known dialogues & treatises and is considered the supreme Ancient Greek satirist. Throughout his writings, Lucian interconnects the stories of gods and men, rich and poor, philosopher and skeptic, tyrant and subject, all with an eye for entertainment and humor. Lucian, an Assyrian by birth, held a strong command over the Greek language and his style harkens back to dialogues by Plato, writings by Attic writers in the Classical Age, and cynical satire by Menippus. With a keen eye to the follies of man and commentary on the universal aspects of human behavior, Lucian left us a treasure trove (Thesaurus) of delightful writings that will challenge and amuse his readers for centuries to come.

Diogenes of Sinope | Lucian, Dialogues of the Dead

purificatory [See definition of purificatory on](#)

adj. **purgative**

SYNONYMS FOR purificatory ⓘ

aperient	emetic	laxative	lustrative
aperitive	expiatory	lustral	physic

Diog . Pollux, I have a commission for you; next time you go up - and I think it is your turn for earth tomorrow - if you come across Menippus the Cynic - you will find him about the Craneum at Corinth, or in the Lyceum, laughing at the philosophers' disputes - well, give him this message:- Menippus, **Diogenes** advises you, if mortal subjects for laughter begin to pall, to come down below, and find much richer material; where you are now, there is always a dash of uncertainty in it; the question will always intrude - who can be quite sure about the hereafter? Here, you can have your laugh out in security, like me; it is the best of sport to see millionaires, governors, despots, now mean and insignificant; you can only tell them by their lamentations, and the spiritless despondency which is the legacy of better days. Tell him this, and mention that he had better stuff his wallet with plenty of lupines, and any unconsidered trifles he can snap up in the way of pauper doles [Footnote: In the Greek, 'a **Hecate**'s repast lying at a street corner.' 'Rich men used to make offerings to **Hecate** on the 30th of every month as Goddess of roads at street corners; and these offerings were at once pounced upon by the poor, or, as here, the Cynics.' Jacobitz .] or lustral eggs. [Footnote: 'Eggs were often used as purificatory offerings and set out in front of the house purified.' Id .]

Lustral Eggs



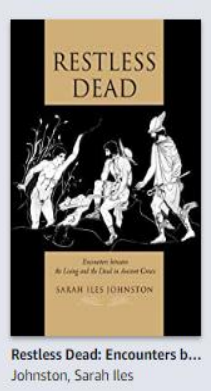
[http://lucianofsamosata.info/wiki/doku.php?id=diogenes_of_sinope:lucian_dialogues_of_the_dead_excerpts&s\[\]=hecate](http://lucianofsamosata.info/wiki/doku.php?id=diogenes_of_sinope:lucian_dialogues_of_the_dead_excerpts&s[]=hecate)



Offerings were made at the grave at the time of the funeral. These always included *choai*, libations made of honey, milk, water, wine, or oil mixed in varying amounts.¹² There was also a “supper” (*deipnon* or *dais*) of various foods; the dead who partook of these sometimes were described as *eudeipnoi*, which we best can translate, perhaps, as “those who are content with their meal.” The word, a euphemism, seems to reflect the hope that, once nourished, the dead would realize that they had nothing to complain about.¹³ There is some evidence that water was also given to the dead person so that he could wash, just a host would give a living guest water in which to wash before a meal.¹⁴ Offerings to the dead might also include jewelry, flowers, and small objects used in everyday life such as swords, strigils, toys, and mirrors (although gifts, like lamentation, were sometimes restricted

Hekataion with three dancing female figures. Greek work, 1st century AD. Marble

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hekataion,_dancing_figures,_Greek,_1_c_AD,_Marble,_NG_Prague,_from_Jind%C5%99ich%C5%AFv_Hradec,_VP_753,_152153.jpg



Broadly, the aversion rites in both the Selinuntine and the Cyrenean text align with the funerary practice of feeding the dead and making them comfortable in other ways, but more specifically, they are also similar to another ad hoc method of appeasing and averting the dead: the **suppers** (*deipna*) that could be sent to crossroads at the time of the new moon. Several ancient sources tell us that these were left by the statues or shrines of Hecate (*hekataia*) that stood at crossroads, and were dedicated both to the goddess and to “those who must be averted” (*hoi apotropaioi*).⁷² As Hecate was a goddess credited with the power either to hold back the unhappy dead or to drive them on against an unlucky individual, *hoi apotropaioi* surely refers here to the dangerous ghosts of the dead. Offering these suppers to both the dead and their mistress guaranteed not only that the dead would be fed and appeased but also that Hecate would help to keep them under control.⁷³ The timing reflects a belief that souls were especially likely to be abroad on the night of the new moon; if one wanted to do something to appease them, this was the easiest—and also the most necessary—time to make contact.



Hecate votive relief statue from ancient Thera. Museum of Athens.

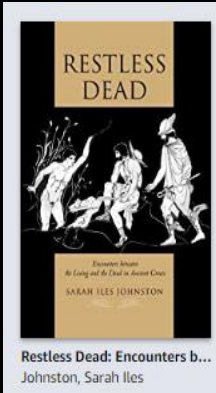
apotropaic [ap-uh-truh-pey-ik]

adjective

1 intended to ward off evil.

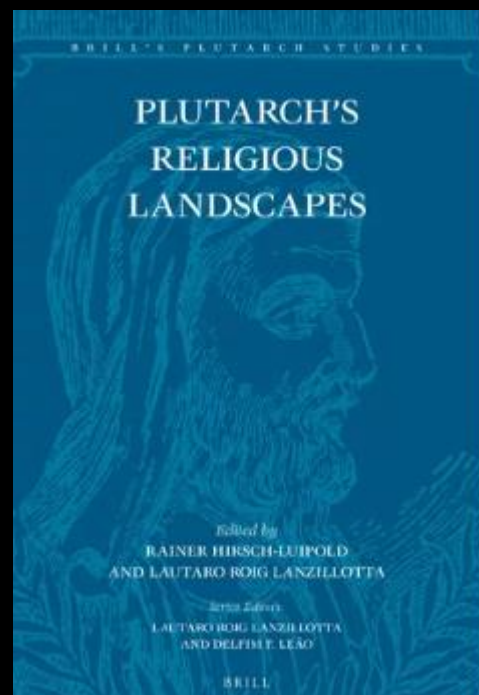


Hecate Enodia with horse from Macedonia



Restless Dead: Encounters b...
Johnston, Sarah Iles

It has sometimes been assumed that these suppers were taken to the crossroads *every* month, as a prophylaxis against such ever-present and abundant sources of potential danger as the souls of those who had died young (*aōroi*). But like the Selinuntine rite for the Tritopatores, it is also possible that the suppers were offered only as the need arose—when some terrible occurrence signaled that the dead were angry. The monthly suppers are not mentioned in any festal calendars, which would tend to support the latter idea, although the omission may also mean only that they were taken to the crossroads by individuals on their own behalf, not by representatives of the state or any other body. In either case, their regular offering does not seem to have been understood as so crucial to the health of the polis as a whole that state sanction and control were necessary.



Chapter 14 The Conception of the Goddess Hecate in Plutarch

Author: Nerea López Carrasco

Pages: 256–285

Now, I suppose, the first obligation of one who is invited and himself asks others is to be careful not to ask too many. He must not seek provisions for everyone about him, as though they were an army living off enemy country, nor, like a prayer seizing squares in a game of pettoi, always be squeezing out his host's men with his own friends, or driving them all from the board. This would put the host in the position of people setting out suppers for Hecate³⁴ and the apotropaic spirits:³⁵ they never get a taste themselves but smoke and tumult.

Quaestiones convivales 708F–709A³⁶

At the *hekataia* travelers made offerings called *deîpna* (δείπνα)³⁷ 'suppers' for Hecate. During classical period, Hecate's *deîpna* consisted of real food³⁸ placed at the crossroads.³⁹ It must not to be burnt or consumed,⁴⁰ unlike the sacred meals for Olympic gods. From fifth century B.C., this ritual for Hecate was associated with the sacrifice of little dogs.⁴¹

In the text, Plutarch jokingly compares the symposiac episode, where people "never get a taste themselves,"⁴² with the *deîpna*, consecrated to Hecate or to any other apotropaic spirits. If Plutarch was not being strictly ironic, then this text contains a key detail that points to a substantial difference between the way of executing the ritual before and after Plutarch. That is, the fact that someone ate the sacred meals for Hecate. Maybe Plutarch just meant to compare the gluttony guests with poor people who ate the ritual food⁴³ "even before it had been offered to the divinity."⁴⁴ Or maybe Plutarch means that Hecate was thought to eat her own offerings.⁴⁵

From the fifth century BC, Hecate is present at crossroads and there her cult has a double dimension. On one hand, she is a favorable divinity, keeping away the evil and assuring a safe trip. On the other hand, she is the leader of spirits. This constitutes her scariest profile. Therefore, modern scholars⁴⁶ conceived of Hecate at the crossroads from two different points of view: as a threatening or as a protector goddess, or as simultaneously a philanthropic and dangerous divinity.⁴⁷ However, in this text, it seems to me that Plutarch highlights the philanthropic side of Hecate, because the offerings are consecrated to other apotropaic spirits as well. Johnston asserts that Hecate's *deîpna* "secured protection and success for the individual traversing dissociated, uncertain liminal point or embarking there a new enterprise."⁴⁸ Hecate was supposed to protect travelers from the ghosts dwelling at liminal spaces like crossroads. That is why Plutarch linked her with the apotropaic gods that prevent evil.

Curiously, the dog also acts as a totemic and sacrificial animal for Hecate. One of the reasons to consider Hecate an intruder in the Hellenic pantheon⁶³ is the oriental origin⁶⁴ of these sacrificial practices. Dogs are sacred to foreign divinities like Enyalios, Enodia or the Egyptian cynocephalus⁶⁵ Anubis but also to the Roman childbirth goddess Genita Mana (see below).

44 Φησὶ γὰρ αὕτη [Hecate] τοὺς μὲν ἔχοντας καὶ πλουτοῦντας δεῖπνον κατὰ μὴν' ἀποπέμπειν, τοὺς δὲ πένητας τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀρπάζειν πρὶν καταθεῖναι (Ar., *Pl.* 595–597; Call., *Hymn* 6.13). Only poverty and necessity could justify such an act of impiety. Scholars on this passage have also proposed that maybe it was the goddess herself who ate everything, see Serafini, *La dea Ecate*, 122 note 2 for bibliography.

PLUTARCH'S
RELIGIOUS
LANDSCAPES

Edited by
RAINER HIRSCHLUPOLD
AND LAUTARO RING LANZILLOTTA

With essays
by LAUTARO RING LANZILLOTTA
AND BEATRICE LEAO

BRILL

Finally, a last remark regarding the “the other materials for purification” (μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων καθαρσιῶν) for Hecate. The καθάρσια or καθάρματα were the household refuse that remains after a domestic ritual of purification.⁷⁶ Amongst them, Plutarch might refer to the ὄξυθύμια⁷⁷ or contaminating remains, sometimes confused with proper Hecate’s *deîpna*.

Plutarch may have spread this confusion, because he associated the suppers for Hecate with *katharsia*. The confusion between these terms must have been as early as in the first century B.C.,⁷⁸ since Harpocration⁷⁹ completely identifies Hecate’s offerings with domestic refuse and claims to have consulted Didymus Chalcenterus’ commentary on Hyperides’ *kata Demadou*. The principal reason for this mistake seems to be the location and execution of both rituals at the crossroads. That is, a wrong identification between the two different types of rituals (protective and exploited) taking place at the “meeting-ways.”⁸⁰ The consecration of *hekataia* constitutes a protective practice, while depositing household waste (ὄξυθύμια) was aimed to purify the house (birth or death pollution) and it was not part of Hecate’s suppers.



THE
MET

Marble hekataion

Roman
2nd century CE

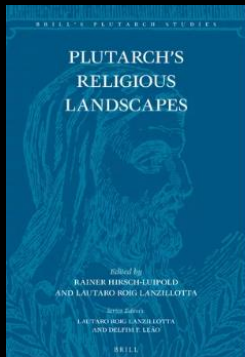
Regarding Hecate, one may think of the epithet 'child nurturer' *kourotrophos* (κουροτρόφος)⁸³ that Hesiod once attributed to her⁸⁴ and also of her close relation with Artemis.⁸⁵ Then, why does Plutarch not use this epithet? A reason might be that, from the Hellenistic period on, Hecate is considered a transitional divinity rather than properly *κουροτρόφος*. Her liminal character explains her influence in birth and death pollution. In the text, Plutarch equates both of Hecate's possible prerogatives.

Birth and death are modes of transition, so new-borns and the deceased both inhabit a transitional condition between two worlds.⁸⁶ Hecate guides and takes the souls under control, especially in liminal places like crossroads. In

Birth and death are modes of transition, so new-borns and the deceased both inhabit a transitional condition between two worlds.⁸⁶ Hecate guides and takes the souls under control, especially in liminal places like crossroads. In

fact, crossroads are directly related with birth- and death pollution.⁸⁷ Crossroads are suitable places for purification. For example, pregnant women should wear an amulet filled with plants growing up inside a sieve and thrown onto a crossroad.⁸⁸

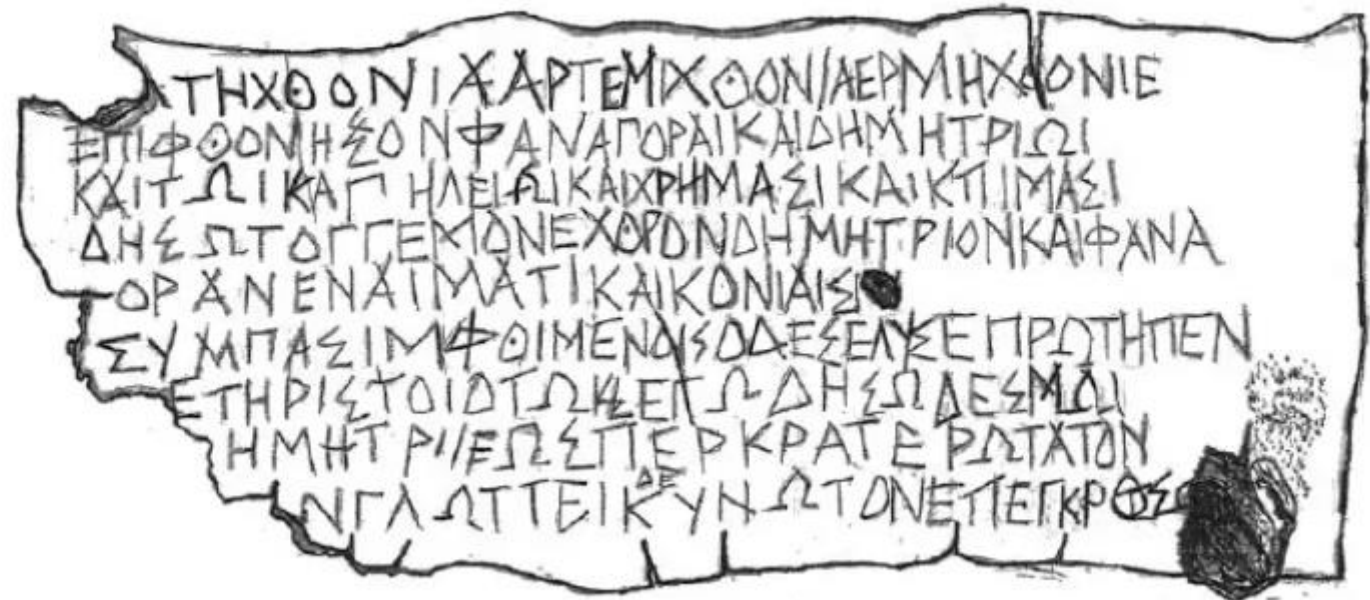
Thus, in this passage Hecate intervenes with birth pollution rather than propitiation of childbirth. Household performances for purification consist of sweeping and smoking the house; then the refuse was carried away in a potsherd and finally thrown away into a crossroad. The bearer is never to look back.⁸⁹ Plutarch refers to a specific practice within the *oxythymia*: the sacrifice of a dog as a 'votive offering' (*κάθαρμα*) for Hecate aiming to purify the house after the childbirth.



1 Hekate Chthonia, Artemis Chthonia, Hermes Chthonios:
 2 cast your hate upon Phanagora and Demetrios,
 3 and their tavern and their property and their possessions.
 4 I will bind my enemy Demetrios, and Phana-
 5 gora, in blood and in ashes,
 6 with all the dead. Nor will the next four-year cycle release you.
 7 I will bind you in such a bind,
 8 Demetrios, as strong as is possible,
 9 and I will smite down a *kynotas* on [your] tongue

Beyond the epithet, there is other historical evidence linking Hekate with waste. Notably, household waste and ritual leftovers from sacrifices made to her were offered as part of a **supper** on the night when the moon was dark. She thus had the power to dispose of waste and excrement, as well as the power to throw it at our fears and enemies. James Hillman, in *The*

A New Commercial Curse Tablet from Classical Athens



Most powerful among these rites of absorptive purification was that by blood sacrifice, practised for healing by the purifiers of epilepsy and also, according to a south Italian vase of the fourth century, by Melampus.¹³⁴ The symbolism of this ritual is considered elsewhere.¹³⁵ It had a variant form, '(purifying) around by puppy', in which the most despised of animals was used to receive the candidate's impurity.¹³⁶ The commonest substance into which evil was transferred, by a process that is nowhere made explicit, was the **egg**.¹³⁷ It was perhaps because the egg was a common offering to the dead, and thus 'food for corpses', that it was suitable for this use.¹³⁸ In murder purifications, and perhaps in other contexts, the candidate placed his foot on a woollen fleece which absorbed his impurity.¹³⁹ Symbolically even more direct was the technique of 'wiping off' the evil through smearing with a clinging substance

Robert Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion*, (1996, Clarendon Press)

templation of unadulterated reality. Purification becomes the separation of the soul from the body, and, in place of water, **eggs**, and the blood of pigs, its agents are self-restraint, justice, courage, and intellectual activity itself.⁴ The doctrine that Plato has subjected to this idiosyncratic transposition seems to be more specific than the normal requirement of every Greek temple that the worshipper should approach the gods in a state of purity. Plato is not referring to a temporary preparation for ritual activity but to a way of life whose aim is purification.⁵ This purity is sought as a way of salvation; what matters is a pure death, for which a pure life is only a preparation. Through Plato we detect cults or doctrines that attributed to *katharmos* a definite eschatological importance.



These various techniques, which have had to be separated in description, tended to be freely combined in actual use. Diphilus' Melampus employs torch, squill, pitch, sulphur, and sea-water all together, and other texts show a similar profusion. The rites were accompanied by incantations which probably comprised formulas of transference – 'may the evil pass into this **egg**' – and analogy – 'as I wash off this mud, so may . . .' – as well as more mysterious matters.¹⁵² Expressions sometimes occur which suggest that an incantation could be a 'purification' in itself.¹⁵³

¹³⁷ See p. 30 n. 65; also *Ant. n. Chr.* 6 (1940–50), 57–60. Stengel, 162 speaks of 'wiping off' with **egg**-yolks, but it is clear from Clem. *Al. Strom.* 7.4.26.3, and Lucian, cited p. 30 n. 65, that after use the cathartic eggs were still edible.

¹³⁸ Nilsson, *Op. Sel.* i, 3–20.

¹³⁹ See Appendix 6.

eschatological

[es-kuh-tl-øj-i-kuhl, e-skāt-l-] [SHOW IPA](#)  

High School Level

adjective

- ¹ *Theology.* having to do with **eschatology**, a system of doctrines concerning final matters, such as death, the Judgment, the afterlife, etc.:

This scenario stems from a perception of the world as morally imperfect, and a desire for its eschatological redemption.

Robert Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion*, (1996, Clarendon Press)

The prime mode of Orphic salvation was the Orphic life. Its attested components are vegetarianism, abstinence from beans and eggs, and burial in linen;¹⁰⁸ we should perhaps add avoidance of natural pollutions¹⁰⁹ and, for the reasons just noted, some degree of sexual renunciation. Orphism, however, involved ritual as well as a way of life. Ecstatic Dionysiac initiation, in particular, seems to have been adopted and given an eschatological meaning that was originally alien to it.¹¹⁰ It was chosen partly, perhaps, because it had always been a 'purification', though in a different sense, but more importantly because it was a socially and psychologically abnormal form of religious action, well suited to serve as the vehicle of a new message, and the introduction to an exotic way of life.

¹⁰⁸ *Pharmaka* buried in agora at Sicyon: *Bulletin Epigraphique* 69 (1906), 110, 72 (1909), 157. *Katharmata* thrown into Anigrus marsh: Paus. 5.5.10; thrown into fountain at Lousoi – whence all who drink from it hate wine – Ov. *Met.* 15.322–8; *Heldensage*, 247 n. 4.

¹⁰⁹ Aesch. *Cho.* 98, cf. Aelian, *VH* 14.7 *ἐξηλαίνετο τῆς Σπάρτης ὡς τὰ τῶν νοσοῦντων καθάρσια*, and the 'sending away' of evils, by a merely verbal act, to distant regions in *apopompē* (cf. Soph. *OT* 194–7, *Hymn. Orph.* 11.23, 14.14, 36.16, 71.11; the many studies of O. Weinreich on *apopompē* are listed by H. Herter, *Dämonen*, 47 n. 12).

¹¹⁰ Aesch. *Cho.* 98, Eur. *Andr.* 293 f.; Rohde, 325 n. 104; A. S. Pease on Cic. *Div.* 1.49; Gow on Theocr. 24.96; Bömer on Ov. *Fast.* 5. 439.

¹¹¹ The Canicattini crater: see most recently *Antike Kunst* 13 (1970), 67, Fig. 1, with references to other portrayals. The *en passant* interpretation of the Canicattini crater by E. Langlotz, *Die Kunst der Westgriechen*, Munich, 1963, 25, as an initiation scene fails to explain the unmistakable Artemis image.

¹¹² Appendix 6.

¹¹³ Theophr. *Char.* 16.14, Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 68, 280b–c; ?cf. Sophron in Page, *GLP*, p. 330.

¹¹⁴ See p. 30 n. 65; also *Ant. u. Chr.* 6 (1940–50), 57–60. Stengel, 162 speaks of 'wiping off' with egg-yolks, but it is clear from Clem. Al. *Strom.* 7.4.26.3, and Lucian, cited p. 30 n. 65, that after use the cathartic eggs were still edible.

by devotees of particular cults there is no trace. We know only of a few, not very rigorous, limitations imposed on priests.⁸ Temporary abstinence, however, in preparation for specific ceremonies does seem to be occasionally attested for early Greece, just as actual fasting is. Late sources tell of a proclamation that was made to Eleusinian initiates to abstain from certain foods, and something similar is recorded about another festival of Demeter, the Halooa. Combination of these sources gives as the forbidden foods: house-birds, beans, pomegranates, apples, eggs, 'egg-laying animals', the meat of animals that died naturally, and various kinds of fish.⁹ The attestation is late, but the Attidographer Melanthius, writing at some date between 350 and 270 BC, mentioned one of the forbidden fishes, the red mullet, in a work on the Eleusinian Mysteries, and it is hard to see why, unless in connection with the ban.¹⁰ Restrictions almost certainly existed, therefore, before the Roman period, although the list may well have been extended. For a different cult, we have similar evidence, again

offence. Even on the more restricted interpretation of Pythagoras' teaching, by which he banned 'womb', 'heart', and 'brain', the association of these parts with vitality seems significant; to eat them is life-destroying. (The same can perhaps be said of the Orphic ban on eating eggs.³⁵) The possibility of consuming a restricted set of sacri-

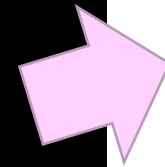
Hecate The Witches' Goddess



By Gary R. Varner
Member American Folklore Society

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Breaking misinformation



As goddess of the dark moon, Hecate was the ruler of the dead. In fact she was married to Hades. She was also known as the controller of ghostly swarms that scavenged the streets and crossroads. She was arbiter of souls and bringer of death. Evening meals were often dedicated to her and any leftovers were left outside as an offering to her. Ritually prepared meals, called Hecate **Suppers**, were left at the intersection of crossroads as well to, as James notes, “placate her if and when she appeared with her hounds of hell.”¹⁵

Hecate – The Witches' Goddess

Hecate had a dual nature—as do most gods, goddesses and symbols of humankind. She destroyed life but also restored life. She was certainly respected in the ancient past as statues of her carrying swords or torches were erected outside of homes to protect them and images of her were also erected at the crossroads where people would perform certain rituals of appeasement to her. Offerings of honey cakes, chicken hearts, onions, **eggs** and fish were left at the crossroads on the last day of the month along with more grisly sacrifices of black puppies and, according to some, infant girls and she-lambs.

Over time sorcerers gathered at these locations to not only pay homage to Hecate, but also to other supernatural beings such as a hobgoblin called Empusa, a poltergeist and a ghoul by the name of Mormo.¹³ It should be noted, however, that Hecate was not only worshipped by sorcerers but also by those who sought her protection against evil.

An early invocation to Hecate recorded in a 3rd century manuscript called *Philosophumena* reads:

“Come infernal, terrestrial, and celestial Bombo, goddess of the cross-roads, guiding light, queen of the night, enemy of the sun, and friend and companion of the darkness; you who rejoice to hear the barking of dogs and to see blood flow; you who wander among the tombs in the hours of darkness, thirsty for blood, and the terror of

In the Classic world the serpent was the creator of the universe, it laid the Cosmic Egg and split it asunder to form the heavens and the earth. As Hans Leisgang wrote, “This serpent, which coiled round the heavens, biting its tail, was the cause of solar and lunar eclipses. In the Hellenistic cosmology, this serpent is assigned to the ninth, starless spheres of the planets and the zodiac. This sphere goes round the heavens and the earth and also under the earth, and governs the winds.”⁹⁷ “In Christian theology,” Leisegang continues, “this serpent became the prince of the world, the adversary of the transcendental God, the dragon of the outer darkness, who has barred off this world from above, so that it can be redeemed only by being annihilated.”⁹⁸

This creator-serpent, the Great Serpent, was symbolic of the sun, not evil but “the good spirit of light” as Leisegang so aptly describes it. It is this Great Serpent that is cause and ruler of the four seasons, the four winds and the four quarters of the cosmos.

uncoiling.¹⁶¹ This unusual earthwork shows the serpent with an egg, perhaps the Cosmic Egg, in its mouth. The culture that created the Great Serpent Mound is unknown since no manmade artifact has been found in connection with the site, although Adena artifacts consisting of copper breastplates, stone points and axes, and grooved sandstone have been found within 400 feet of the mound.



South West American Indian petroglyph of the snake with the cosmic egg.

MODERN GREEK FOLKLORE AND ANCIENT GREEK RELIGION

BY
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Cambridge:
at the University Press
1910

But while the modern Artemis is the leader of her nymphs in mischief and even in cruelty, it must not be thought that she is always a foe to man. In Aetolia 'the lady Beautiful' is quick to avenge a slight or an intrusion; but for those who pay her due reverence she is a ready helper and a giver of good gifts. Health and wealth lie in her hand, to bestow or to withhold, as in the hands of the Nereids. Hence even he whom her sudden anger has once smitten may regain her favour by offerings of honey and other sweetmeats on the scene of his calamity. And probably peace-offerings with less definite intent have been or still are in vogue; for it is reported that presents used to be brought to the cross-roads in Zacynthos at midday or midnight simply to appease 'the great lady' and her train^[433], a survival surely of the ancient banquets of **Hecate** surnamed Τριοδίτις, 'Goddess of the Cross-roads.'

Lent: Abstention from eggs

The Lenten fast was drawing to a close when I arrived. For the first week it is strictly observed, meat, fish, **eggs**, milk, cheese, and even olive-oil being prohibited, so that the ordinary diet is reduced to bread and water, to which is sometimes added a nauseous soup made from dried cuttle-fish or octopus; for these along with shellfish are not reckoned to be animal food, as being bloodless. During the next four weeks some relaxation is allowed; but no one with any pretensions to piety would even then partake of fish, meat, or **eggs**; the last-mentioned are stored up until Easter and then, being dyed red, are either eaten or—more wisely—offered to visitors. Then comes 'the Great Week' (ἡ μεγάλη ἑβδομάδα), and with it the same strict regulations come into force as during the first week of Lent. It was not hard to perceive that for most of the villagers the fast had been a real and painful abstinence. Work had almost ceased; for there was little energy left. Leisure was not enjoyed; for there was little spirit even for chatting. Everywhere white, sharp-featured faces told of real hunger; and the silence was most often broken by an outburst of irritability. In a few days time I could understand it; for I too perforce fasted; and I must own that a daily diet of dry bread for *déjeuner* and of dry bread and octopus soup for dinner soon changed my outlook upon life. Little wonder then if these folk after six weeks of such treatment were nervous and excitable.

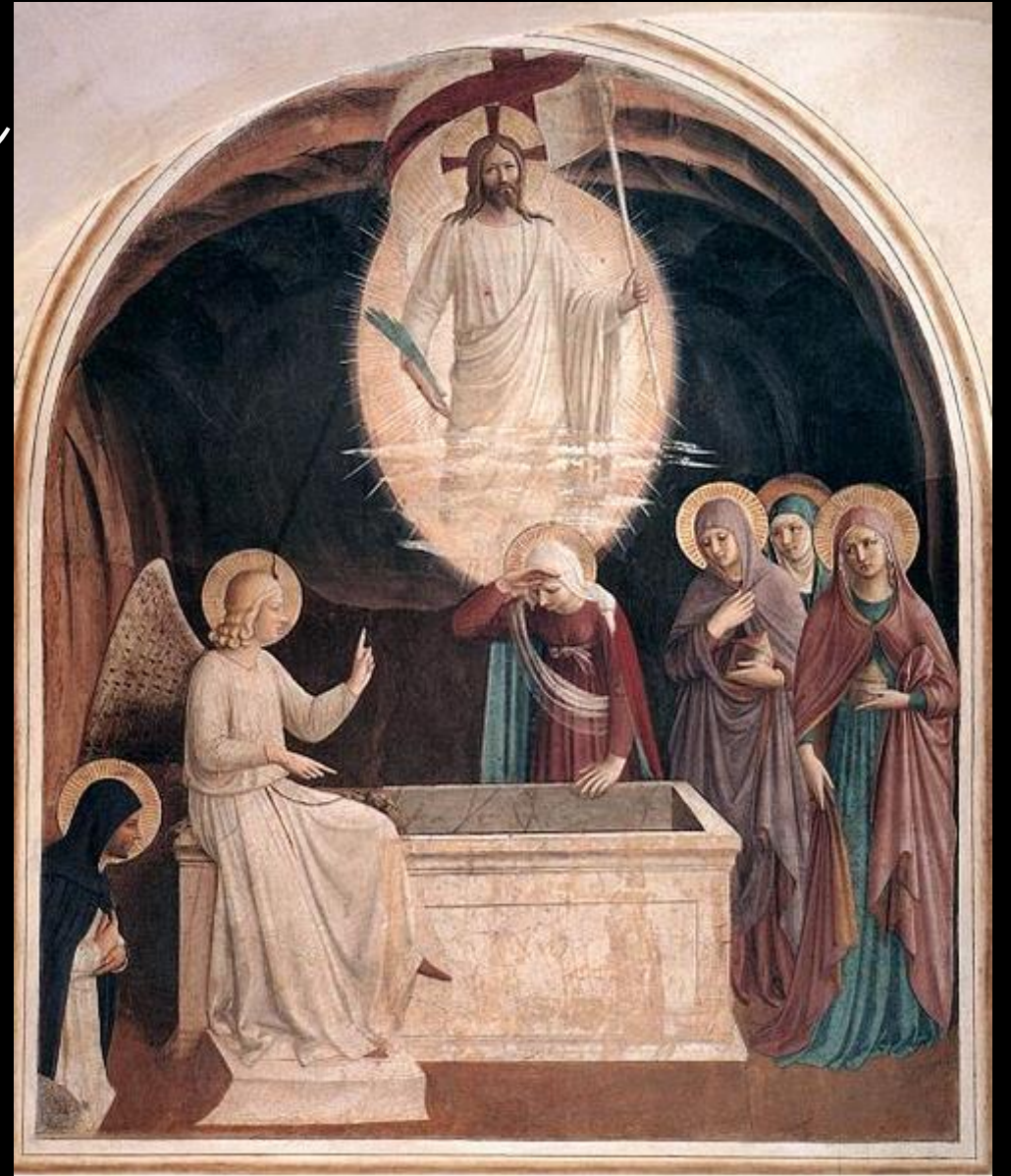
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Hekataion (Hecate) - Vatican Museums 3rd. CE

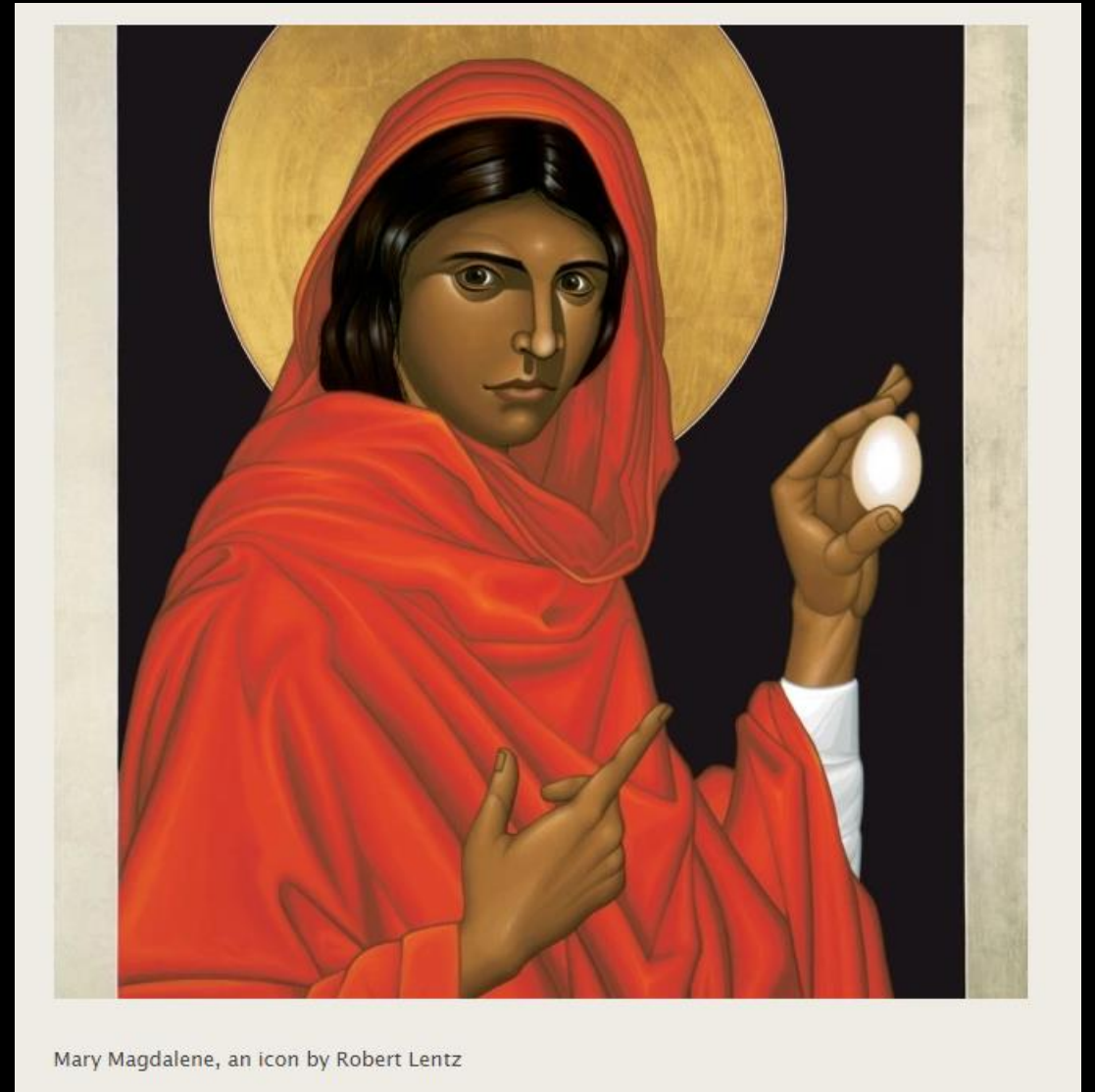
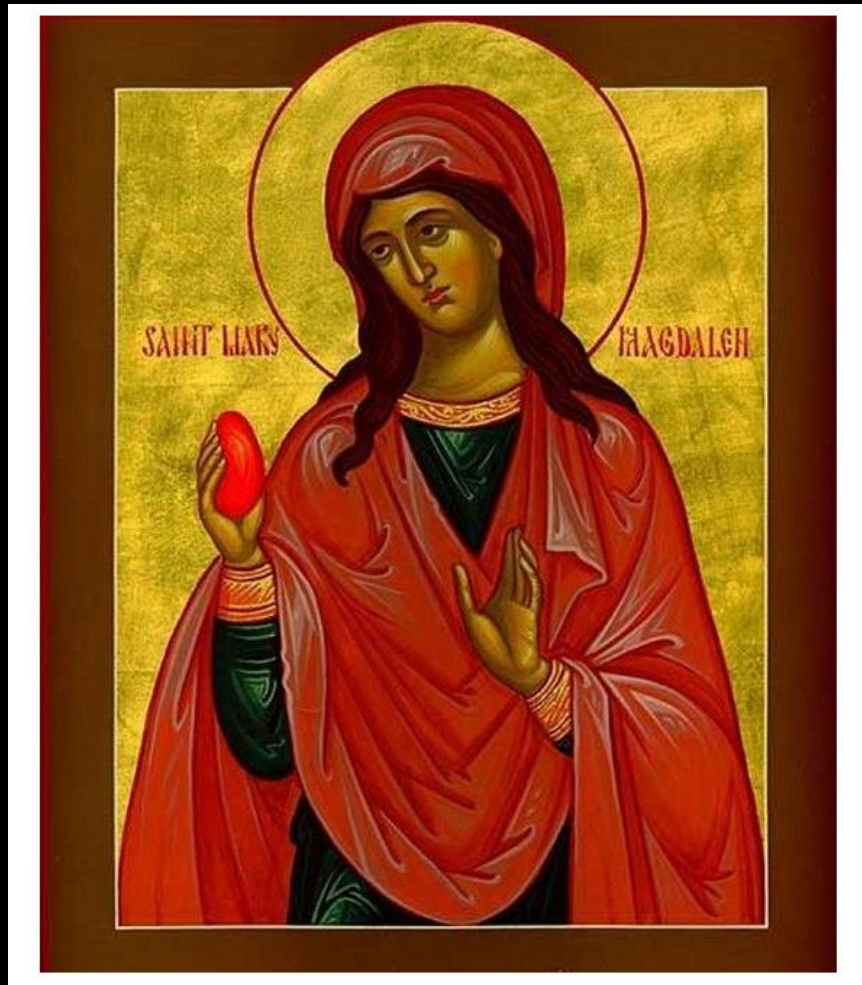
Eggs: From Offerings to the Dead To Symbols of Jesus' Resurrection

Difference between Greek/Roman view of death and the afterlife and Christianity's.



Women at the Empty Tomb Frescos by Fra Angelico in San Marco, Florence between 1439 and 1443;
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fra_Angelico_-_Resurrection_of_Christ_and_Women_at_the_Tomb_\(Cell_8\)_-_WGA00542.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fra_Angelico_-_Resurrection_of_Christ_and_Women_at_the_Tomb_(Cell_8)_-_WGA00542.jpg)

Mary Magdalene: Reformed Sinner and Apostle



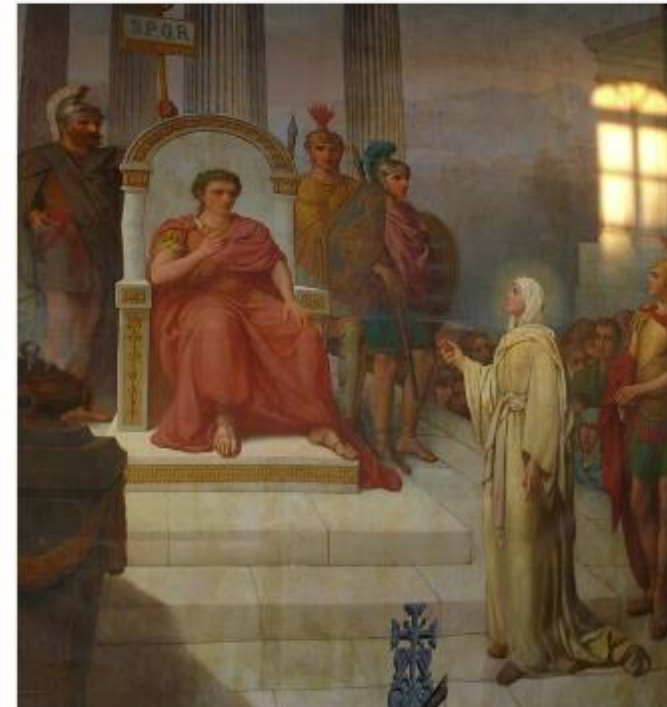
Mary Magdalene, an icon by Robert Lentz

<https://lavocedinewyork.com/en/arts/2022/04/09/celebrating-easter-in-church-art-and-at-the-table-with-cakes-and-religious-traditions/>

Thus, the Christian adaptation of decorating eggs can be traced to the early Christians of Mesopotamia, who stained eggs red in memory of the blood Christ shed at his crucifixion. Moreover, the egg's hard shell symbolized the sealed door of Christ's tomb and its cracking His resurrection from the dead. St. Augustine described Christ's Resurrection as a chick bursting from an egg.

According to tradition, St. Mary Magdalene, depicted in art through the ages with various identities—patrician, sinner, saint, courtesan, penitent, intellectual and apostle—at an audience in Rome with the Emperor Tiberius denounced Pontius Pilate for his scandalous handling of Jesus' trial and told the Emperor "Christ has risen". Unmoved, the Emperor scathingly pointed to an egg on his table and announced: "Christ has no more risen than that this egg is red." Instantaneously the emperor's egg turned crimson.

Instead, a Polish legend recounts that when Mary Magdalene went to Jesus' tomb to anoint his body for burial, she was bringing cooked eggs to share with the other women there. She uncovered the basket and, when the risen Christ appeared to her, her eggs miraculously turned red. Still today eggs dyed red, especially in Eastern Europe, often accompany other traditional Easter foods.



A fresco of St. Mary Magdalene with Tiberius in her namesake church in Jerusalem. Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.



Buonsegna's painting of St. Mary Magdalene holding a red egg in Munich's Alte Pinacothek.
Photo credit: it.m.wikipedia.org.

To return to Easter traditions, *The Roman Ritual*, the first edition of which was published in 1610 but which contains texts of much older date, has among the “Easter Blessings of Food”—along with those for lamb, bread and new produce—the following blessings for eggs, which were forbidden food during Lent as were meat and dairy products:

“Lord, let the grace of your blessing come upon these eggs, that they be healthful food for your faithful who eat them in thanksgiving for the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, who lives and reigns with you forever and ever.”



The Curious History Of Easter Eggs From Birth To Burial

Kristina Killgrove Former Contributor @
Archaeologist, Writer, Scientist

Mar 26, 2016, 08:32a

But it's not clear that the Persians had much of an influence on early Christianity. To see the beginnings of the egg as a Christian symbol, then, we have to look at the Roman world. In pagan times, eggs were part of the Bacchic or Dinosian mysteries, possibly a symbol of the underworld; they could be used to cast spells and, conversely, to offer protection. A fortified castle built in the 15th century in the Bay of Naples has a connection to this ancient Roman practice, as legend has it the poet Vergil (1st c BC) buried an egg on the site for protection, hence the modern name of the structure: [Castel dell'Ovo](#).


The symbolic uses of the egg varied in the Roman world, but the link between eggs and birth is fairly straightforward. The Romans had plenty of species of birds, and most people probably would have observed chickens, pigeons, or other fowl laying eggs out of which new life hatched. Roman medicine was greatly influenced by the Hippocratic treatises (c. 400 BC), which sometimes used egg-hatching as a kind of analogy for human birth: a human baby breaking out of the confines of the womb is described like a chick breaking out of its shell.



Decorated eggs using beeswax and red dye are pictured on April 13, 2012, in Niculesti village

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/kristinakilgrove/2016/03/26/the-curious-history-of-easter-eggs-from-birth-to-burial/?sh=3467291e16af>

At the site of Castellaccio Europarco, whose skeletons I studied for my dissertation, Tomb 31 was the burial of a 3- to 4-year-old child, dating to roughly 50-175 AD. The archaeologists note that: "under the left hand of the deceased is a chicken egg, which in a funeral context is probably not only a material offering of food, but perhaps also an allusion to eschatological renaissance (rebirth). Besides the presence of the egg, the method of disposition of the child is interesting: s/he presents on his/her stomach. This position is very rare in the context of Roman cemeteries." And in the Vatican necropolis under the via Triumphalis, a child a little less than a year old was found buried with an egg. This burial dates to about 50-150 AD, although this child was buried facing up and had additional grave goods. Excavators write that the egg is most likely "a symbol of rebirth, a new life balancing the injustice of a premature end."



It is possible that these two children represent early Christian burials, as the egg has been strongly wedded to the idea of rebirth since the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The egg, Swedish philologist M.P. Nilsson wrote in his 1907 book on eggs in ancient times, "is an apparently animate and inert substance which carries within itself a potent principle of life, and that which has a special vital power must perforce awake or enhance the vital powers of those to whom it is offered." This could explain the association: the dormant egg, like the tomb of Jesus, contains new life within it. The eggshell is the rock that sealed the tomb of Christ.

Archaeologists Crack the Case of 1,700-Year-Old Roman Eggs

Two of the eggs broke open during excavation, but one remains intact

Jason Daley



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY

This egg was cast into a watery pit, possibly as part of a Roman funeral rite

Speaking with the *Times*' Mark Bridge, archaeologist Edward Biddulph says the eggs and a bread basket found in the pit may represent food offerings tossed into the well as part of a funeral procession or religious ceremony.

"Passers-by would have perhaps stopped to throw in offerings to make a wish for the gods of the underworld to fulfill," he adds. "The Romans associated eggs with rebirth and fertility, for obvious reasons."

According to Biddulph, archaeologists have found chicken bones and broken eggshells in Roman graves before, but the Berryfields find is the first complete specimen of its kind unearthed in Britain to date.

"The eggs may have been carried within a funerary procession," says Biddulph. "The procession stopped at the pit, where a religious ceremony took place and the food offerings were cast into the pit for the spirits of the underworld or in the hope of rebirth."



What
I
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Easter

<https://www.dianekochilas.com/eggs-in-ancient-greece/>

In ancient religions, eggs (but not necessarily hen's eggs) played an important role in the fertility rites held during the spring Equinox at the end of March. Eggs were used symbolically in the orgiastic worship rituals held in honor of Dionysus, as well as in the rituals surrounding the worship of the ancient fertility goddess Kyveli. Many ancient tombs have been found containing the remains of eggs, symbolic of rebirth.

Hen's eggs, however, were slow to enter the human diet, especially the Western diet. The chicken is the last addition to the poultry yards of ancient Greece and Rome, and there is considerable disagreement over the date of its arrival. Some sources point to the fifth century B.C., others go further back, arguing that chickens first appeared in Central Europe around 1500 B.C. and reached Greece some 400 years later. Homer doesn't mention chickens.

When the hen's egg finally did enter the larder of the ancient Greeks, it wasn't very well esteemed. There are very few mentions of recipes with hen's eggs in ancient Greek texts, although there is ample mention of the delicate peacock's egg, which was considered far superior:

Egg cookery really took off with the Romans. Eggs are mentioned frequently in the *Ars Magirica*, by the great Roman chef Apicius, who is said to have invented baked custard—milk, honey and eggs beaten and baked in an earthenware dish at low heat. Beaten eggs were used as a thickening agent to bind sauces and stews, and hardboiled eggs were an ingredient in many ancient Roman dishes.