



προπύλαια

PROPYLAIÁ

At The Gate



Her placement at the gates of cities can be understood as part of her broader role in Caria as a city goddess, for it implies that she will protect her city by preventing anything dangerous from entering.<sup>19</sup> Although she never became a full-fledged city goddess in other parts of the Greek world (probably because this role was already being played by Athena, Hera, and others), her duty as a guardian of entrances spread widely there. According to Plutarch, in fact, it was so common to set up images of Hecate (*hekataia*) at important city entrances that one general could ridicule another who had set up a military trophy at such an entrance by suggesting that he would have done better to have erected a *hekataion*—that is, a statue to protect the entrance. In Rhodes, she was worshipped as Propylaia alongside Hermes Propylaios and Apollo Apotropaios. In Thasos, she was worshipped at three different city entrances: the Maritime Gate, the Gate of Silenus, and the Gates of Hermes. In Athens, she probably had a shrine on the west road leading out of the city, just outside of the Sacred Gate. She also guarded the entrances of important areas within or near cities. Most famously, Hecate Epipyrgidia stood at the entrance to the Athenian Acropolis, the “city within the city” that represented Athens’ religious heart. In Selinus, a fifth-

A Hekation, a trihedron in the form of a tripod, Between each leg is an incurving face with an Archaistic relief of Hekate Triformis. She wears a tall polos and a himation over a long chiton. Late Hellenistic period. Found near the temple of Athena Polias on the ancient acropolis of Rhodes.

Rhodes Archaeological Museum.

The Cambridge Companion to

# ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN RELIGIONS

Edited by BARBETTE STANLEY SPAETH



CAMBRIDGE COMPANIONS TO RELIGION

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tion of entrails from sacrificial animals, to the casting of lots.<sup>16</sup>

The ritual practices of Greek religion were carried out within prescribed spatial and temporal boundaries. Sacred space was defined primarily through the sanctuary or *temenos*, a parcel of land set aside and marked with boundary stones or walls. Those entering a sanctuary were expected to be ritually pure (as defined by general observance and any local rules) and to follow a set of behavioral taboos intended to maintain the sanctity of the space (e.g., those who had recently come in contact with the dead or engaged in sexual intercourse were normally excluded). Entry was restricted to one well-defined gate equipped with water basins for purification, which helped to emphasize that the worshiper was passing into a sacred space. Within the sanctuary, access to certain spaces might be restricted in ways that advertised their sacredness. The cella of a temple, with its precious cult image, was often opened only on festival days, while other rooms might be completely off-limits except to the priest or priestess.



*As a gate goddess, Hecate was not only venerated at the stairway to the Athens Acropolis, but also in other Greek cities. In Selinunte, Hecate was also on watch from a propylon by the sanctuary of Demeter. In Eleusis, Hecate owned a temple at the gates of the sanctuary. On Rhodes, Hecate was worshiped as Propylaia together with Hermes Propylaios and Apollon Apotropaios. In Lagina, where the main place of worship was located, a statue of Hecate was erected when a new city gate was being built. In addition, there was an annual procession in Lagina in honor of Hecate, where a female led the Procession of Keys. A similar festival was held in Meletus.*

Seiffert 2006: A. Seiffert, Der sakrale Schutz von Grenzen im antiken Griechenland – Formen und Ikonographie, unpublished dissertation, Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg 2006.



*Keeping Her Keys*

For even now, whenever any human on the earth seeks propitiation by performing fine sacrifices according to custom, he invokes Hecate; and much honor very easily stays with that man whose prayers the goddess accepts with gladness, and she bestows happiness upon him, for this power she certainly has.

Hesiod, *Theogony*, 8<sup>th</sup> C  
BCE

In Caria, Hecate enjoyed much of the dignity and political importance accorded her by Hesiod. She was the protectress of Stratonicea, together with Zeus Panamaros, and enjoyed cult-unions with various deities, including Gaia.<sup>7</sup> Her other eastern cults, particularly the orgiastic mysteries on Aegina and Samothrace, involved features, such as the offering of dogs, more in keeping with the later Hecate.<sup>8</sup>

The earliest inscriptional evidence for the cult of Hecate is sixth century and occurs on an altar in the temple of Apollo Delphinus at Miletus, where Hecate appeared with Apollo as the protectress of entrances.<sup>9</sup> She retained this role in the West and a triple statue of her as Hecate-Epipurgidia stood in the fifth century near the entrance to the Athenian Acropolis on the site of the later temple of Nike (Paus. 2.30.2).<sup>10</sup> The earliest known representation of Hecate, however, depicts the goddess in single

#### A Portrait of Hecate

Author(s): Patricia A. Marquardt

Source: *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 102, No. 3

#### Other works by Alkamenes mentioned by Pausanias:

A triple-bodied Hecate (known as Hecate Triformis), said to be the first of this type, which stood next to the **Temple of Athena Nike** on the Athens Acropolis.

"It was Alkamenes, in my opinion, who first made three images of Hecate attached to one another, a figure called by the Athenians Epipurgidia [Ἐπιπυργῖδια, on the Tower]; it stands beside the temple of the Wingless Victory."

Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, Book 2, chapter 30, section 2. At Perseus Digital Library.

Due to the opinion stated by Pausanias, several extant depictions of triple Hecate (see photo, above right) are believed to have been inspired by an original work by Alkamenes.

Marble statuette of Hecate Triformis, perhaps inspired by a work of Alkamenes (see details below).

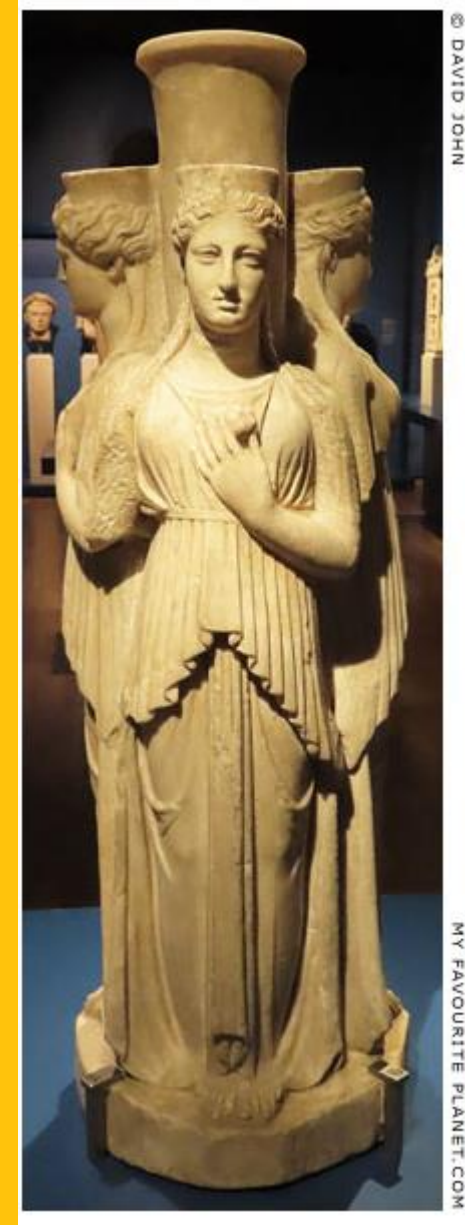
Roman period, 50-100 AD, "after an original by Alcamenes, 430-420 BC". From Italy. Height 75.5 cm, diameter 24.5 cm.

Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden, Netherlands. Inv. No. Pb 136.

From the collection of Peter Paul Rubens; bequest of Gerard van Papenbroek (1673-1743).

Three Archaistic female figures, shown frontally, stand around an irregularly shaped plinth, leaning their backs on a simple column in the centre. Each wears a polos and a peplos, girdled above the waist, over a long chiton. Two figures hold a pomegranate in the left hand, placed on the breast. The third held a torch.

It is not known how or when Rubens acquired the work. A self-portrait, now in the Hermitage, Saint Petersburg, shows him with his son and the statuette in the background.



## PROCLUS' HYMN TO HEKATE AND JANUS

Hail, many-named Mother of the Gods, whose children are fair

Hail, mighty Hekate of the Threshold

And hail to you also Forefather Janus,

Imperishable Zeus

Hail to you Zeus most high.

Shape the course of my life with luminous Light

And make it laden with good things,

Drive sickness and evil from my limbs.

And when my soul rages about worldly things,

Deliver me purified by your soul-stirring rituals.

Yes, lend me your hand I pray

And reveal to me the pathways of divine guidance that I long for, Then

shall I gaze upon that precious Light

Whence I can flee the evil of our dark origin.

Yes, lend me your hand I pray,

And when I am weary bring me to the haven of piety with your winds.

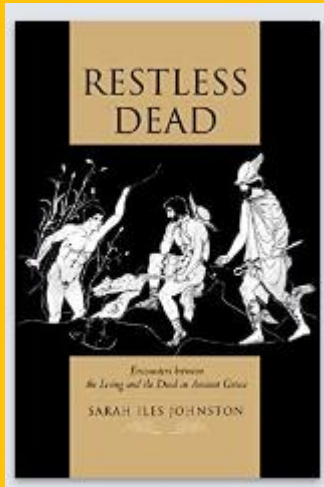
Hail, many-named mother of the Gods, whose children are fair

Hail, mighty Hekate of the Threshold

And hail to you also Forefather Janus, Imperishable Zeus,

Hail to you Zeus most high.

It was probably her role as guardian of entrances that led to Hecate's identification by the mid fifth century with Enodia, a Thessalian goddess.<sup>23</sup> Enodia's very name ("In-the-Road") suggests that she watched over entrances, for it expresses both the possibility that she stood on the main road into a city, keeping an eye on all who entered, and in the road in front of private houses, protecting their inhabitants.



## HECATE AND GIRLS' TRANSITIONS

I mentioned above that one of Hecate's earliest roles in Greek literature and art was that of a wedding attendant. In this she was similar to Artemis, who also was expected to bless weddings with her presence, ensuring the bride's safe transition from maiden to wife. As is well known, this was but one aspect of Artemis's general guardianship of the female's passage from girl to mother, which also manifested itself in her presence when women gave birth, her protection of children after birth, and, even earlier in the process, her sponsorship of a variety of rituals in which girls symbolically made the transition from virgin to marriageable woman.<sup>30</sup>



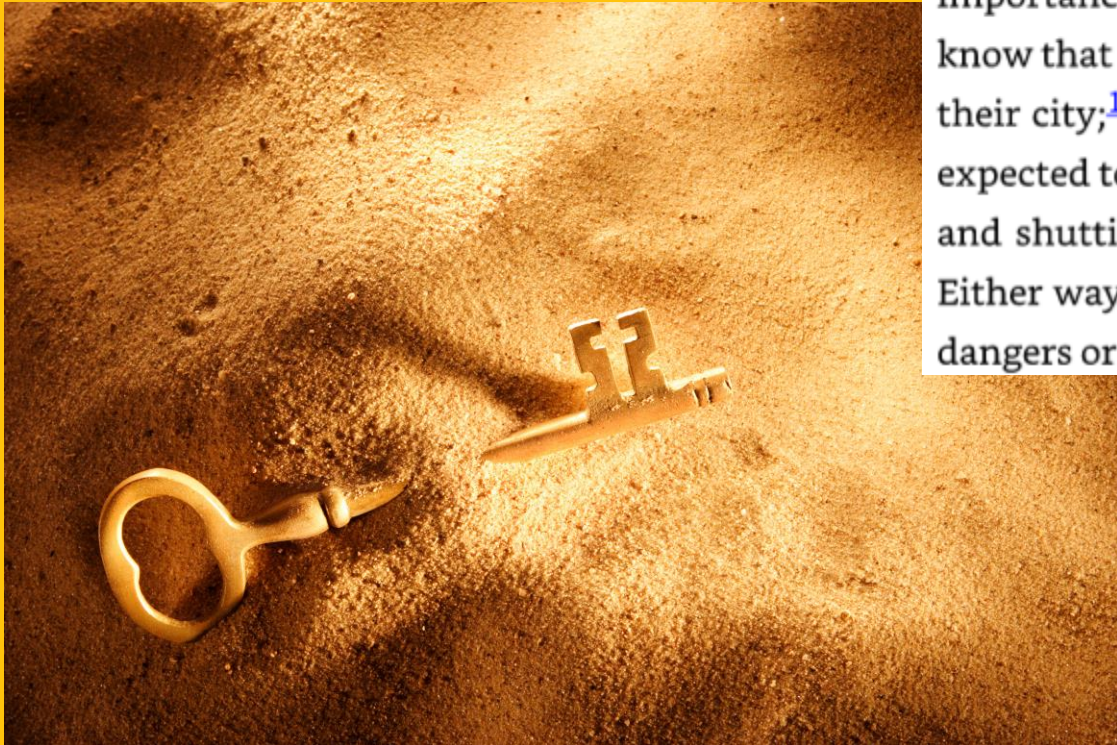


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Rhodes Archaeological Museum.

discussed below) suggest that she played somewhat the same roles for Caria as Cybele played for Phrygia: city goddess, mother goddess, and all-around benefactress.<sup>11</sup> Laginetan Hecate was closely associated with the Zeus of nearby Panamara, which would support the idea that she was the leading goddess of her own city.<sup>12</sup> The “procession of the key” (*kleidos agōgē*) held annually in Lagina in her honor must have been important, considering the frequency with which inscriptions refer to its officers.<sup>13</sup> None of our sources explain what it was supposed to accomplish, but if it took its name from a key that was carried, then that key must have been of central importance—it must have been used to lock or unlock something significant. We know that the Laginetans erected a statue of Hecate when they built new gates behind their city;<sup>14</sup> the key may have been for these or other city gates over which she was expected to watch. Perhaps the procession of the key culminated in an actual opening and shutting of the gates, or perhaps these acts were only symbolically performed. Either way, the key would have signified Hecate’s ability to “close” the city against all dangers or “open” it to benign influences.



# Hekate as the Source

..She sends forth the channels  
of corporeal life, and contains  
within herself the center of  
the procession of all beings.

Fragment 189, The Chaldean Oracles

## Fr. 189

1. ἀμφιφανής: Here, descriptive of Hecate who, as Kroll notes (p. 27, n. 2), traditionally held torches in either hand. For the later Neoplatonists, however, this expression has become a metaphysical term. Cf., in this regard, ἀμφιφανούς, fr. 1; ἀμφιφάνοντα, fr. 158. See, also, Damascius, I, 315, 20; II, 152, 23; ἀμφιφανής Ἐκάτη.

ἀμφιπρόσωπος: This term is also descriptive of Hecate who, as the mediating World Soul, has a "double" aspect, viz. she looks both towards the intelligible and sensible orders. Traditionally, statues of Hecate were depicted with three or four heads and known as τριπρόσωπος or τετραπρόσωπος. See Lewy, pp. 93 and n. 111; 355 and notes 164-166, who notes that ἀμφιπρόσωπος was a term also used by Plutarch (e.g., *Num.* 19) to describe Janus Bifrons. In this regard, note that Proclus addresses *Hymn VI* in common to Hecate and Janus. See, also, Festugière, *Tim.*, III, p. 170, n. 1.

κόλποις: Common to the *Oracles*. Cf. esp., Ἐκάτης κόλπον, fr. 32; κρηστηροδόχοι κόλποι... Ἐκάτης, fr. 35; Πείη... κόλποισιν ἀφράστοις... δεξαμένη, fr. 56.

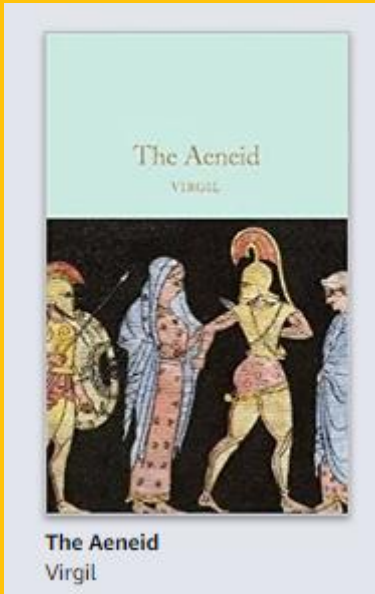
2. ὄχετούς: Cf. frr. 2, 65, 66, 110.

3. τὸ κέντρον: Cf., esp., Ἐκάτης κέντρον, fr. 50; κέντρον, fr. 167 and notes.

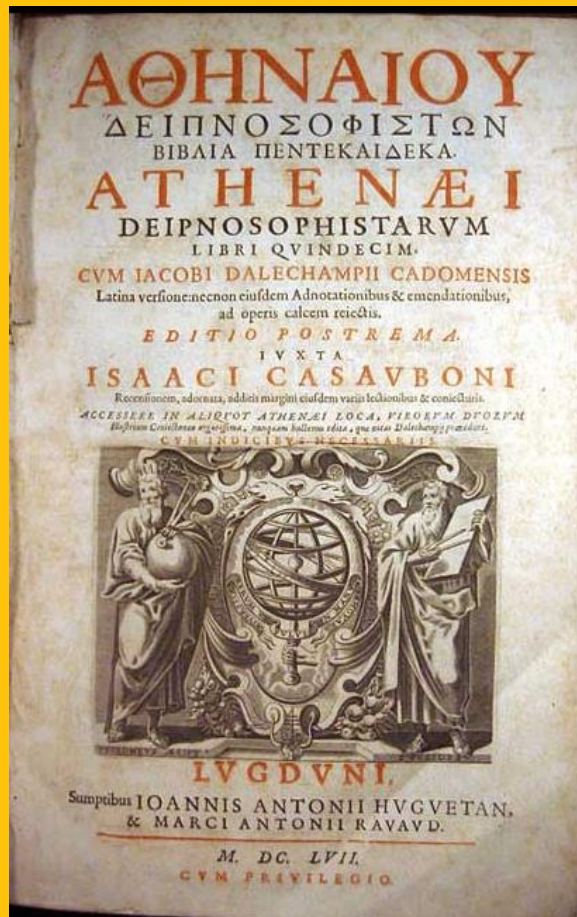
## Fr. 190

2. αὐτοψίαι: Cf. αὐτοπτον ἄγαλμα, fr. 101; αὐτόπτοις φάσμασιν, fr. 142.

3. 4. τὰς τιμαρτίαις ἀνάπτουσαι τοὺς ἀναγωγούς: Although these terms do not



And now (the sacred altars plac'd around)  
The priestess enters, with her hair unbound,  
And thrice invokes the pow'rs below the ground.  
Night, Erebus, and Chaos she proclaims,  
And threefold Hecate, with her hundred names,  
And three Dianas: next, she sprinkles round  
With feign'd Avernian drops the hallow'd ground;  
Culls hoary simples, found by Phoebe's light,  
With brazen sickles reap'd at noon of night;  
Then mixes baleful juices in the bowl,  
And cuts the forehead of a newborn foal,  
Robbing the mother's love. The destin'd queen  
Observes, assisting at the rites obscene;  
A leaven'd cake in her devoted hands  
She holds, and next the highest altar stands:  
One tender foot was shod, her other bare;  
Girt was her gather'd gown, and loose her hair.  
Thus dress'd, she summon'd, with her dying breath,  
The heav'ns and planets conscious of her death,  
And ev'ry pow'r, if any rules above,  
Who minds, or who revenges, injur'd love.



"There is another cake, which is called by the Romans *catillus ornatus*, and which is made thus:—Wash some lettuces and scrape them; then put some wine into a mortar and pound the lettuces in it; then, squeezing out the juice, mix up some flour from spring wheat in it, and allowing it to settle, after a little while pound it again, adding a little pig's fat and pepper; then pound it again, draw it out into a cake, smoothe it, and cut it again, and cut it into shape, and boil it in hot oil, putting all the fragments which you have cut off into a strainer.

"Other kinds of cheesecakes are the following:—the *ostracites*, the *attanites*, the *amylum*, the *tyrocoscinnm*. Make this last thus:—Pound some cheese (*τύρον*) carefully, and put it into a vessel; then place above it a brazen sieve (*κόσκινον*) and strain the cheese through it. And when you are going to serve it up, then put in above it a sufficient quantity of honey. The cheesecakes called *ὑποτυρίδες* are made thus:—Put some honey into some milk, pound them, and put them into a vessel, and let them coagulate; then, if you have some little sieves at hand, put what is in the vessel into them, and let the whey run off; and when it appears to you to have coagulated thoroughly, then take up the vessel in which it is, and transfer it to a silver dish, and the coat, or crust, will be uppermost. But if you have no such sieves; then use some new fans, such as those which are used to blow the fire; for they will serve the same purpose. Then there is the *coptoplacous*. And also," says he, "in Crete they make a kind of cheesecake which they call *gastris*. And it is made thus:— Take some Thasian and Pontic nuts and some almonds, and also a poppy. Roast this last with great care, and then take the seed and pound it in a clean mortar; then, adding the fruits which I have mentioned above, beat them up with boiled honey, putting in plenty of pepper, and make the whole into a soft mass, (but it will be of a black colour because of the poppy;) flatten it and make it into a square [p. 1036] shape; then, having pounded some white sesame, soften that too with boiled honey, and draw it out into two cakes, placing one beneath and the other above, so as to have the black surface in the middle, and make it into a neat shape." These are the recipes of that clever writer on confectionary, Chrysippus.