



Historically Speaking

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Artemis-Diana-Bastet

The interaction between societies resulted in shared deistic entities. One such goddess was the Greek goddess Artemis. She was identified by the Romans as Diana and the Egyptians associated her with Bastet.

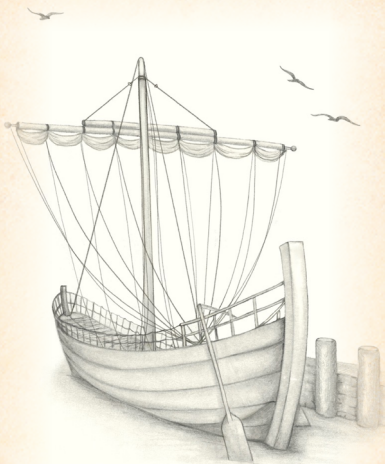
Artemis was the goddess of wild animals, the hunt, vegetation, chastity and childbirth. She was the huntress for the gods, a traditionally male role ascribed to a female deity. Artemis was the twin sister of Apollo. Their parents were Olympian Zeus and Leto, a Titan goddess. She presents much dichotomy in her character, being both a huntress and the protector of wild animals, especially the young, and the juxtaposition of chastity and childbirth. She is represented as a virgin goddess which could taken literally or simply as an indication of virtue.

Artemis is the goddess of the moon, as her brother represents the sun, or at least the light of the sun. The Greeks associated the moon with insanity, and this is reflected in the nature of Artemis, as she seems very unstable at times. For example, her favorite mortal was the hunter, Actaeon. Once, as he was hunting, he stepped into a clearing where he saw Artemis and her attendant nymphs bathing in a stream. Furious at being seen by him, she turned him into a stag and let his own hunting dogs tear him apart.

She was known to the Greeks by several other names including Cynthia, Luna, and Phoebe. Each name represented a different facet of the goddess. Her sacred animals were deer, bears and hunting dogs. The tree sacred to her was the cypress.



Artemis statue, the Louvre, Paris, France.



What's happening?

I will be presenting my books, especially '...to teach' on July 3 to the Local Authors Book Club sponsored by Auntie's Book Store. It will be a virtual meeting. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss my books and the writing process whenever I get the chance to do so. I believe this to be true for most authors. The writing process itself is primarily a solitary endeavor. When we get a chance to share our journey with those who are interested in it, that is one of the rewards for the effort.

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Diana, in Roman religion, goddess of wild animals and the hunt, identified with the Greek goddess Artemis. Like her Greek counterpart, she was also a goddess of animals. As a fertility deity she was invoked by women to aid conception and delivery. Though perhaps originally an indigenous woodland goddess, Diana early became identified with Artemis. There was probably no original connection between Diana and the moon, but she later absorbed Artemis's identification with both Selene (Luna) and Hecate, a chthonic (infernal) deity.

The most famous place of worship for the goddess was the grove of Diana Nemorensis ("Diana of the Wood") on the shores of Lake Nemi at Aricia (modern Ariccia), near Rome. This was a shrine common to the cities of the Latin League. Associated with Diana at Aricia were Egeria, the spirit of a nearby stream who shared with Diana the guardianship of childbirth, and the hero Virbius (the Roman counterpart of

Hippolytus), who was said to have been the first priest of Diana's cult at Aricia. A unique and peculiar custom dictated that this priest be a runaway slave and that he slay his predecessor in combat.

...Adapted from Britannica

Diana as Huntress.
Marble by Bernardino Cametti, 1720.
Pedestal by Pascal Latour, 1754. Bode Museum, Berlin.



Bastet was the Egyptian goddess most aligned with Artemis. Bastet was worshipped in Bubastis in Lower Egypt, originally as a lioness goddess, a role shared by other deities such as Sekhmet. Eventually Bastet and Sekhmet were characterized as two aspects of the same goddess, with Sekhmet representing the powerful warrior and protector aspect, and Bastet, who increasingly was depicted as a cat, representing a gentler aspect.

As protector of Lower Egypt, she was seen as defender of the king, and consequently of the sun god, Ra. Along with other deities such as Hathor, Sekhmet, and Isis, Bastet was associated with the Eye of Ra. She has been depicted as fighting the evil snake named Apep, an enemy of Ra. In addition to her solar connections, she was also related to Wadjet, one of the oldest Egyptian goddesses from the Southern Delta who was dubbed "eye of the moon".

Bastet was also a goddess of pregnancy and childbirth, possibly because of the fertility of the domestic cat.

Cats in ancient Egypt were highly revered, partly due to their ability to combat vermin such as mice, rats (which threatened key food supplies), and snakes—especially cobras. Cats of royalty were, in some instances, known to be dressed in golden jewelry and were allowed to eat from the plates of their owners. Dennis C. Turner and Patrick Bateson estimate that

during the Twenty-second Dynasty (c. 945–715 BC), Bastet worship changed from being a lioness deity into being predominantly a major cat deity. Because domestic cats tend to be tender and protective of their offspring, Bastet was also regarded as a good mother and sometimes was depicted with numerous kittens.

Bronze figure of Bastet, British Museum

