

Origins and History of the Greek Goddess of the Moo

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Synopsis

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Artemis had one of the most widespread cults in the Greek world, perhaps due to her connection to nature, which can be a ubiquitous antagonist or boon-giver. Her association with nature may also explain why she was one of the oldest deities in the Greek pantheon, although her appearance in the Mycenaean Linear B script (the earliest form of Greek that has been deciphered, dating to as early as 1450 BCE) is still contested. Etymology often gives modern readers a better idea of the earliest form of a deity, but Artemis's is confusing. Of course, that didn't stop many writers, both ancient and modern, from making attempts at it, either associating her with mythic qualities and/or giving her non-Greek origins. The latter is as unsurprising as the former, since Artemis had a large following throughout Greece and across Asia Minor, where her most famous temple -- one of the Seven Wonders of the World -- resided. It was in the Near East that Artemis embraced some of the wilder and more formidable characteristics many of the later Greek mythographers only hinted at.

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