Athena (goddess of wisdom, war and handicraft)



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Athena

This article is about the Greek goddess. For other uses, see Athena (disambiguation).

"Athene", "Athina", and "Pallas Athena" redirect here. For other uses, see Athene (disambiguation), Athina (disambiguation), and Pallas Athena (disambiguation).

In Greek religion and mythology, **Athena** or **Athene** (/əˈθiːnə/ or /əˈθiːniː/; Attic: Ἀθηνᾶ, *Athēnā* or Ἀθηναία, *Athēnaia*; Epic: Ἀθηναίη, *Athēnaiē*; Ionic: Ἀθήνη, *Athēnē*; Doric: Ἀθάνα, *Athānā*), also referred to as **Pallas Athena/Athene** (/ˈpæləs/; Παλλὰς Ἀθηνᾶ; Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη), is the goddess of wisdom, courage, inspiration, civilization, law and justice, strategic warfare, mathematics, strength, strategy, the arts, crafts, and skill. Minerva is the Roman goddess identified with Athena.^[2]

Athena is portrayed as a shrewd companion of heroes and is the patron goddess of heroic endeavour. She is the virgin patroness of Athens. The Athenians founded the Parthenon on the Acropolis of her namesake city, Athens (Athena Parthenos), in her honour.^[2]

Veneration of Athena was so persistent that archaic myths about her were recast to adapt to cultural changes. In her role as a protector of the city (polis), many people throughout the Greek world worshiped Athena as Athena Polias (Ἀθηνᾶ Πολιάς "Athena of the city"). The city of Athens and the goddess Athena essentially bear the same name (Athena the Goddess, Athenai the city) while it is not known which of the two words is derived from the other. [3]

1 Etymology of the name and origins of the cult

Athena is associated with Athens, a plural name, because it was the place where she presided over her sisterhood, the *Athenai*, in earliest times. Mycenae was the city where the Goddess was called Mykene, and Mycenae is named in the plural for the sisterhood of females who tended her there. At Thebes she was called Thebe, and the city again a plural, Thebae (or Thebes, where the 's' is the plural formation). Similarly, at Athens she was called Athena, and the city Athenae (or Athens, again a plural).^[4]

Athena had a special relationship with Athens, as is shown by the etymological connection of the names of the goddess and the city. According to mythical lore, she competed with Poseidon and she won by creating the olive tree; the Athenians would accept her gift and name the city after her. In history, the citizens of Athens built a statue of Athena as a temple to the goddess, which had piercing eyes, a helmet on her head, attired with an aegis or cuirass, and an extremely long spear. It also had a crystal shield with the head of the Gorgon on it. A large snake accompanied her and she held Nike, the goddess of victory, in her hand.



Image from the temple of Athena at Mycenae, c. 625 BC (National Archaeological Museum of Athens)

In a Mycenean fresco, there is a composition of two women extending their hands towards a central figure who is covered by an enormous figure-eight shield and could also depict the war-goddess with her palladium, or her palladium in an aniconic representation. Therefore Mylonas believes that Athena was a Mycenaean creation. [5] On the other hand, Nilsson claims that she was the goddess of the palace who protected the king, and that the origin of Athena was the Minoan domestic snakegoddess. [6] In the so-called Procession-fresco in Knossos which was reconstructed by the Mycenaeans, two rows of figures carrying vessels, seem to meet in front of a central figure, which is probably the Minoan palace goddess "Atano". [7]

2 CULT AND PATRONAGES

In Mycenaean Greek, at Knossos a single inscription 2222222 A-ta-na po-ti-ni-ja /Athana potniya/ appears in the Linear B tablets from the Late Minoan IIera "Room of the Chariot Tablets extquotedbl; these comprise the earliest Linear B archive anywhere. [8][9] Although Athana potniya often is translated Mistress Athena, it literally means "the Potnia of At(h)ana", which perhaps, means the Lady of Athens; [10] any connection to the city of Athens in the Knossos inscription is uncertain.[11] We also find A-ta-no-dju-wa-ja (KO Za 1 inscription, line 1), in Linear A Minoan; the final part being regarded as the Linear A Minoan equivalent of the Linear B Mycenaean di-u-ja or di-wi-ja (Diwia, "divine"). Divine Athena also was a weaver and the deity of crafts (see dyeus).[12] Whether her name is attested in Eteocretan or not will have to wait for decipherment of Linear A.

Apart from these Creto-Greek attributions, Günther Neumann has suggested that Athena's name is possibly of Lydian origin;^[13] it may be a compound word derived in part from Tyrrhenian *ati*, meaning *mother* and the name of the Hurrian goddess Hannahannah shortened in various places to *Ana*.

In his dialogue *Cratylus*, the Greek philosopher Plato (428–347 BC), gives the etymology of Athena's name, based on the views of the ancient Athenians and his own etymological speculations:

That is a graver matter, and there, my friend, the modern interpreters of Homer may, I think, assist in explaining the view of the ancients. For most of these in their explanations of the poet, assert that he meant by Athena "mind" [nous] and "intelligence" [dianoia], and the maker of names appears to have had a singular notion about her; and indeed calls her by a still higher title, "divine intelligence" [θεοῦ νόησις - theou noesis], as though he would say: This is she who has the mind of God (a theonoa – $\dot{\alpha}$ $\theta \epsilon o v \dot{\alpha}$). Perhaps, however, the name Theonoe may mean "she who knows divine things" (ta theia $noousa - \tau \dot{\alpha} \theta \tilde{\epsilon} \tilde{\iota} \alpha voo \tilde{v} \sigma \alpha$) better than others. Nor shall we be far wrong in supposing that the author of it wished to identify this Goddess with moral intelligence (en ethei noesin), and therefore gave her the name Etheonoe; which, however, either he or his successors have altered into what they thought a nicer form, and called her Athena.

- Plato, Cratylus, 407b

Thus for Plato her name was to be derived from Greek Άθεονόα, *Atheonóa* — which the later Greeks rationalised as from the deity's (θεός *theos*) mind (νοῦς *nous*).

Plato also noted that the citizens of Sais in Egypt wor-

shipped a goddess whose Egyptian name was Neith, [14] and which was identified with Athena. [15] Neith was the war goddess and huntress deity of the Egyptians since the ancient Pre-Dynastic period, who was also identified with weaving. In addition, als ancient Greek myths reported that Athena had visited many mythological places such as Libya's Triton River in North Africa and the Phlegraean plain. [16] Scholar Martin Bernal created the controversial [17] Black Athena theory to explain this associated origin by claiming that the conception of Neith was brought to Greece from Egypt, along with "an enormous number of features of civilization and culture in the third and second millennia". [18] The connection with Neith was later rejected by other scholars in view of formal difficulties. [19]

R. S. P. Beekes has suggested a Pre-Greek origin of the name.^[20]

Some authors believe that, in early times, Athena was either an owl herself or a bird goddess in general: In the third Book of the *Odyssey*, she takes the form of a seaeagle. These authors argue that she dropped her prophylactic owl-mask before she lost her wings. "Athena, by the time she appears in art," Jane Ellen Harrison had remarked, "has completely shed her animal form, has reduced the shapes she once wore of snake and bird to attributes, but occasionally in black-figure vase-paintings she still appears with wings."[21]

Some Greek authors have derived natural symbols from the etymological roots of Athena's names to be aether, air, earth, and moon. This was one of the primary developments of scholarly exploration in the ancient world. [22]

2 Cult and patronages



Athenian tetradrachm representing the goddess Athena.

Athena as the goddess of philosophy became an aspect of the cult in Classical Greece during the late fifth century BC. [23] She is the patroness of various crafts, especially of weaving, as *Athena Ergane*, and was honored as such at festivals such as Chalceia. The metalwork of weapons also fell under her patronage. She led battles (*Athena Promachos* or the warrior maiden *Athena Parthenos*)^[24] as the disciplined, strategic side of war, in contrast to her brother Ares, the patron of violence, bloodlust and



A new peplos was woven for Athena and ceremonially brought to dress her cult image (British Museum).

slaughter— extquotedblthe raw force of war". [25] Athena is the goddess of knowledge, purity, arts, crafts, learning, justice and wisdom. She represents intelligence, humility, consciousness, cosmic knowledge, creativity, education, enlightenment, the arts, eloquence and power. She stands for Truth, Justice, and Moral values. She plays a tough, clever and independent role. Not only was this version of Athena the opposite of Ares in combat, it was also the polar opposite of the serene earth goddess version of the deity, *Athena Polias*. [24]

Athena appears in Greek mythology as the patron and helper of many heroes, including Odysseus, Jason, and Heracles. In Classical Greek myths, she never consorts with a lover, nor does she ever marry, [26] earning the title *Athena Parthenos* (Athena the Virgin). A remnant of archaic myth depicts her as the adoptive mother of Erechtheus/Erichthonius through the foiled rape by Hephaestus. [27] Other variants relate that Erichthonius, the serpent that accompanied Athena, was born to Gaia: when the rape failed, the semen landed on Gaia and impregnated her. After Erechthonius was born, Gaia gave him to Athena.

Though Athena is a goddess of war strategy, she disliked fighting without purpose and preferred to use wisdom to settle predicaments. The goddess only encouraged fighting for a reasonable cause or to resolve conflict. She emphasises everyone to use intuitive wisdom rather than anger or violence. As patron of Athens she fought in the Trojan war on the side of the Achaeans.

3 Attributes and epithets

Athena's epithets include Άτρυτώνη, **Atrytone** (= the unwearying), Παρθένος, **Parthénos** (= virgin), and Πρόμαχος, **Promachos** (the First Fighter, i.e. *she who fights in front*).

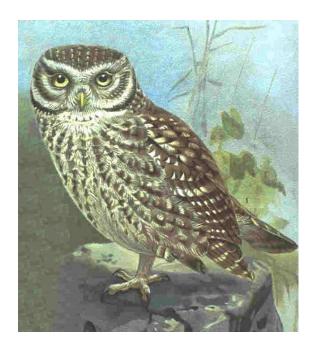
In poetry from Homer, an oral tradition of the eighth or seventh century BC, onward, Athena's most common epithet is **Glaukopis** (γλαυκῶπις), which usually



Marble Greek copy signed "Antiokhos", a first-century BC variant of Phidias' fifth-century Athena Promachos that stood on the Acropolis.



Bust of the "Velletri Pallas" type, copy after a votive statue of Kresilas in Athens (c. 425 BC)



A little Owl, sacred bird of the Goddess (Owl of Athena).

is translated as, *bright-eyed* or *with gleaming eyes*. ^[29] The word is a combination of *glaukos* (γλαυκός, meaning *gleaming, silvery*, and later, *bluish-green* or *gray*) ^[30] and *ops* (ὄψ, *eye*, or sometimes, *face*). ^[31] It is interesting to note that *glaux* (γλαύξ, ^[32] "little owl") ^[33] is from the same root, presumably according to some, because of the bird's own distinctive eyes. The bird which sees well in the night is closely associated with the goddess of wisdom: in archaic images, Athena is frequently depicted with an owl (or "owl of Athena" and later under the Roman Empire, "owl of Minerva extquotedbl) perched on her hand. This pairing evolved in tandem so that even in present day the owl is upheld as a symbol of perspicacity and erudition. ^[2]

Unsurprisingly, the owl became a sort of Athenian mascot. The olive tree is likewise sacred to her. In earlier times, Athena may well have been a bird goddess, similar to the unknown goddess depicted with owls, wings, and bird talons on the Burney relief, a Mesopotamian terracotta relief of the early second millennium BC.

Other epithets include: **Aethyia** under which she was worshiped in Megara.^[34] The word *aethyia* (αἴθυια) signifies a *diver*, and figuratively, a *ship*, so the name must reference Athena teaching the art of shipbuilding or navigation.^{[35][36]} In a temple at Phrixa in Elis, which was reportedly built by Clymenus, she was known as **Cydonia**.^[37]

The various Athena subgroups, or cults, all branching from the central goddess herself often proctored various initiation rites of Grecian youth, for example, the passage into citizenship by young men and for women the elevation to the status of citizen wife. Her various cults were portals of a uniform socialization, even beyond mainland Greece. [38]

In the *Iliad* (4.514), the Homeric Hymns, and in Hesiod's *Theogony*, Athena is given the curious epithet **Tritogeneia**. The meaning of this term is unclear; it could mean various things, including extquotedblTriton-born", perhaps indicating that the sea-deity was her parent according to some early myths. [39][40] In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Athena is occasionally referred to as "Tritonia".

Another possible meaning may be *triple-born* or *third-born*, which may refer to a triad or to her status as the third daughter of Zeus or the fact she was born from Metis, Zeus, and herself; various legends list her as being the first child after Artemis and Apollo, though other legends identify her as Zeus' first child. The latter would have to be drawn from Classical myths, however, rather than earlier ones.

In her role as judge at Orestes' trial on the murder of his mother, Clytemnestra (which he won), Athena won the epithet **Areia**. Other epithets were Ageleia and Itonia.



Cult statue of Athena with the face of the Carpegna type (late first century BC to early first century CE), from the Piazza dell'Emporio, Rome.

Athena was given many other cult titles. She has the epithet **Ergane** as the patron of craftsmen and arti-

sans. With the epithet *Parthenos* ("virgin") she was especially worshipped in the festivals of the Panathenaea and Pamboeotia where both militaristic and athletic displays took place.^[41] With the epithet *Promachos* she led in battle (see Promachos). With the epithet **Polias** ("of the city"), Athena was the protector of not only Athens but also of many other cities, including Argos, Sparta, Gortyn, Lindos, and Larisa.

She was given the epithet **Hippeia** ("of the horses", "equestrian"), as the inventor of the chariot, and was worshiped under this title at Athens, Tegea and Olympia. As Athena Hippeia she was given an alternative parentage: Poseidon and Polyphe, daughter of Oceanus.^{[42][43]} In each of these cities her temple frequently was the major temple on the acropolis.^[44]

Athena often was equated with Aphaea, a local goddess of the island of Aegina, located near Athens, once Aegina was under Athenian's power. The Greek historian Plutarch (46–120 AD) also refers to an instance during the Parthenon's construction of her being called **Athena Hygieia** ("healer", *health personified*):

A strange accident happened in the course of building, which showed that the goddess was not averse to the work, but was aiding and cooperating to bring it to perfection. One of the artificers, the quickest and the handiest workman among them all, with a slip of his foot fell down from a great height, and lay in a miserable condition, the physicians having no hope of his recovery. When Pericles was in distress about this, the goddess [Athena] appeared to him at night in a dream, and ordered a course of treatment, which he applied, and in a short time and with great ease cured the man. And upon this occasion it was that he set up a brass statue of Athena Hygeia, in the citadel near the altar, which they say was there before. But it was Phidias who wrought the goddess's image in gold, and he has his name inscribed on the pedestal as the workman of it.^[45]

In classical times the Plynteria, or "Feast of Adorning", was observed every May, it was a festival lasting five days. During this period the Priestesses of Athena, or "Plyntrides", performed a cleansing ritual within "the Erecththeum", the personal sanctuary of the goddess. Here Athena's statue was undressed, her clothes washed, and body purified.

In Arcadia, she was assimilated with the ancient goddess Alea and worshiped as Athena Alea.

4 Mythology

4.1 Birth

4.1.1 Olympian version



After he swallowed her pregnant mother, Metis, Athena is "born" from Zeus' forehead as he grasps the clothing of Eileithyia on the right; black-figured amphora, 550–525 BC, Louvre.

Although Athena appears before Zeus at Knossos — in Linear B, as [20202020], *a-ta-na po-ti-ni-ja*, "Mistress Athena" — in the Classical Olympian pantheon, Athena was remade as the favorite daughter of Zeus, born fully armed from his forehead. [47] The story of her birth comes in several versions. In the one most commonly cited, Zeus lay with Metis, the goddess of crafty thought and wisdom, but he immediately feared the consequences. It had been prophesied that Metis would bear children more powerful than the sire, [48] even Zeus himself. In order to forestall these dire consequences, after lying with Metis, Zeus "put her away inside his own belly"; he "swallowed her down all of a sudden". [49] He was too late: Metis had already conceived.

Eventually Zeus experienced an enormous headache; Prometheus, Hephaestus, Hermes, Ares, or Palaemon (depending on the sources examined) cleaved Zeus' head with the double-headed Minoan axe, the *labrys*. Athena leaped from Zeus' head, fully grown and armed, with a shout — "and pealed to the broad sky her clarion cry of war. And Ouranos trembled to hear, and Mother Gaia..." (Pindar, *Seventh Olympian Ode*). Plato, in the *Laws*, attributes the cult of Athena to the culture of Crete, introduced, he thought, from Libya during the dawn of Greek culture. Classical myths thereafter note that Hera was so annoyed at Zeus for having produced a child that she conceived and bore Hephaestus by herself.

In accordance with this mythological tradition, Plato, in *Cratylus* (407B), gave the etymology of her name as signifying "the mind of god", *theou noesis*. The Christian apologist of the second century Justin Martyr takes issue with those pagans who erect at springs images of Kore, whom he interprets as Athena:

"They said that Athena was the daughter of

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Zeus not from intercourse, but when the god had in mind the making of a world through a word (*logos*) his first thought was Athena."[50]



Atena farnese, Roman copy of a Greek original from Phidias' circle, c. 430 AD, Museo Archeologico, Naples

4.1.2 Other tales

Some origin stories tell of Athena having been born outside of Olympus and raised by the god Triton. Fragments attributed by the Christian Eusebius of Caesarea to the semi-legendary Phoenician historian Sanchuniathon, which Eusebius thought had been written before the Trojan war, make Athena instead the daughter of Cronus, a king of Byblos who visited 'the inhabitable world' and bequeathed Attica to Athena.^[51] Sanchuniathon's account would make Athena the sister of Zeus and Hera, not Zeus' daughter.

4.2 Pallas Athena

The major competing tradition regarding Athena's parentage involves some of her more mysterious epithets:

Pallas, as in the ancient-Greek Παλλάς Ἀθήνη (also Pallantias) and Tritogeneia (also Trito, Tritonis, Tritoneia, Tritogenes). A distant archaic separate entity named Pallas is invoked as Athena's father, sister, foster sister, companion, or opponent in battle. One of these is Pallas a daughter of Triton (a sea god), and a childhood friend of Athena. [52]

In every case, Athena kills Pallas, accidentally, and thereby gains the name for herself. In one telling, they practice the arts of war together until one day they have a falling out. As Pallas is about to strike Athena, Zeus intervenes. With Pallas stunned by a blow from Zeus, Athena takes advantage and kills her. Distraught over what she has done, Athena takes the name Pallas for herself.

When Pallas is Athena's father the events, including her birth, are located near a body of water named Triton or Tritonis. When Pallas is Athena's sister or foster-sister, Athena's father or foster-father is Triton, the son and herald of Poseidon. But Athena may be called the daughter of Poseidon and a nymph named Tritonis, without involving Pallas. Likewise, Pallas may be Athena's father or opponent, without involving Triton. [53] On this topic, Walter Burkert says "she is the Pallas of Athens, *Pallas Athenaie*, just as Hera of Argos is *Here Argeie*. [54] For the Athenians, Burkert notes, Athena was simply "the Goddess", $h\bar{e}$ theós ($\hat{\eta}$ θ eó ς), certainly an ancient title.



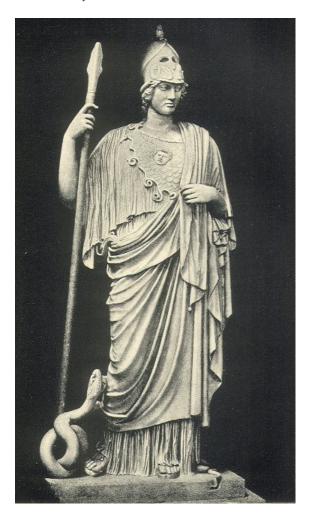
The Parthenon, Temple of Athena Parthenos

4.3 Athena Parthenos: Virgin Athena

Athena never had a consort or lover and is thus known as *Athena Parthenos*, "Virgin Athena". Her most famous temple, the Parthenon, on the Acropolis in Athens takes its name from this title. It is not merely an observation of her virginity, but a recognition of her role as enforcer of rules of sexual modesty and ritual mystery. Even beyond recognition, the Athenians allotted the goddess value based on this pureness of virginity as it upheld a rudiment of female behavior in the patriarchal society. Kerenyi's study and theory of Athena accredits her virginal epithet to be a result of the relationship to her father

Zeus and a vital, cohesive piece of her character throughout the ages. [55]

This role is expressed in a number of stories about Athena. Marinus of Neapolis reports that when Christians removed the statue of the Goddess from the Parthenon, a beautiful woman appeared in a dream to Proclus, a devotee of Athena, and announced that the "Athenian Lady" wished to dwell with him.^[56]



The Athena Giustiniani, a Roman copy of a Greek statue of Pallas Athena with her serpent, Erichthonius

4.3.1 Erichthonius

Hephaestus attempted to rape Athena, but she eluded him. His semen fell to the earth and impregnated the soil, and Erichthonius was born from the Earth, Gaia. Athena then raised the baby as a foster mother.^[57]

Athena puts the infant Erichthonius into a small box (*cista*) which she entrusts to the care of three sisters, Herse, Pandrosus, and Aglaulus of Athens. The goddess does not tell them what the box contains, but warns them not to open it until she returns. One or two sisters opens the *cista* to reveal Erichthonius, in the form (or embrace) of a serpent. The serpent, or insanity induced by the sight,

drives Herse and Aglaulus to throw themselves off the Acropolis.^[58] Jane Harrison (*Prolegomena*) finds this to be a simple cautionary tale directed at young girls carrying the *cista* in the Thesmophoria rituals, to discourage them from opening it outside the proper context.

Another version of the myth of the Athenian maidens is told in *Metamorphoses* by the Roman poet Ovid (43 BC – 17 AD); in this late variant Hermes falls in love with Herse. Herse, Aglaulus, and Pandrosus go to the temple to offer sacrifices to Athena. Hermes demands help from Aglaulus to seduce Herse. Aglaulus demands money in exchange. Hermes gives her the money the sisters have already offered to Athena. As punishment for Aglaulus's greed, Athena asks the goddess Envy to make Aglaulus jealous of Herse. When Hermes arrives to seduce Herse, Aglaulus stands in his way instead of helping him as she had agreed. He turns her to stone. [59]

With this mythic origin, Erichthonius became the founder-king of Athens, and many beneficial changes to Athenian culture were ascribed to him. During this time, Athena frequently protected him.

4.3.2 Medusa and Tiresias

In a late myth, Medusa, unlike her sister Gorgons, came to be viewed by the Greeks of the 5th century as a beautiful mortal that served as priestess in Athena's temple. Poseidon liked Medusa, and decided to rape her in the temple of Athena, refusing to allow her vow of chastity to stand in his way. [60] Upon discovering the desecration of her temple, Athena changed Medusa's form to match that of her sister Gorgons as punishment. Medusa's hair turned into snakes, her lower body was transformed also, and meeting her gaze would turn any living man to stone. In the earliest myths, there is only one Gorgon, but there are two snakes that form a belt around her waist.

In one version of the Tiresias myth, Tiresias stumbled upon Athena bathing, and he was struck blind by her to ensure he would never again see what man was not intended to see. But having lost his eyesight, he was given a special gift—to be able to understand the language of the birds (and thus to foretell the future).

4.4 Lady of Athens

Athena competed with Poseidon to be the patron deity of Athens, which was yet unnamed, in a version of one founding myth. They agreed that each would give the Athenians one gift and that the Athenians would choose the gift they preferred. Poseidon struck the ground with his trident and a salt water spring sprang up; this gave them a means of trade and water—Athens at its height was a significant sea power, defeating the Persian fleet at the Battle of Salamis—but the water was salty and not very good for drinking. [61]

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Athena depicted on a coin of Attalus I, ruler of Pergamon; c. 200 BC.

Athena, however, offered them the first domesticated olive tree. The Athenians (or their king, Cecrops) accepted the olive tree and with it the patronage of Athena, for the olive tree brought wood, oil, and food. Robert Graves was of the opinion that "Poseidon's attempts to take possession of certain cities are political myths" which reflect the conflict between matriarchal and patriarchal religions.^[61]

4.4.1 Other sites of cult

Athena also was the patron goddess of several other Greek cities, notably Sparta, where the archaic cult of Athena Alea had its sanctuaries in the surrounding villages of Mantineia and, notably, Tegea. In Sparta itself, the temple of Athena *Khalkíoikos* (Athena "of the Brazen House", often latinized as *Chalcioecus*) was the grandest and located on the Spartan acropolis; presumably it had a roof of bronze. The forecourt of the Brazen House was the place where the most solemn religious functions in

Sparta took place.

Tegea was an important religious center of ancient Greece, [62] containing the Temple of Athena Alea. The *temenos* was founded by Aleus, Pausanias was informed. [63] Votive bronzes at the site from the Geometric and Archaic periods take the forms of horses and deer; there are sealstone and fibulae. In the Archaic period the nine villages that underlie Tegea banded together in a synoecism to form one city. [64] Tegea was listed in Homer's Catalogue of Ships as one of the cities that contributed ships and men for the Achaean assault on Troy.

4.5 Counselor



Athena and Heracles on an Attic red-figure kylix, 480-470 BC.

Later myths of the Classical Greeks relate that Athena guided Perseus in his quest to behead Medusa. She instructed Heracles to skin the Nemean Lion by using its own claws to cut through its thick hide. She also helped Heracles to defeat the Stymphalian Birds, and to navigate the underworld so as to capture Cerberus.

In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus' cunning and shrewd nature quickly won Athena's favour. In the realistic epic mode, however, she largely is confined to aiding him only from *afar*, as by implanting thoughts in his head during his journey home from Troy. Her guiding actions reinforce her role as the "protectress of heroes" or as mythologian Walter Friedrich Otto dubbed her the "goddess of nearness" due to her mentoring and motherly probing. [65] It is not until he washes up on the shore of an island where Nausicaa is washing her clothes that Athena arrives personally to provide more tangible assistance. She appears in Nausicaa's dreams to ensure that the princess rescues Odysseus and plays a role in his eventual escort to Ithaca.

Athena appears in disguise to Odysseus upon his arrival, initially lying and telling him that Penelope, his wife, has remarried and that he is believed to be dead; but Odysseus

lies back to her, employing skillful prevarications to protect himself. [66] Impressed by his resolve and shrewdness, she reveals herself and tells him what he needs to know in order to win back his kingdom. She disguises him as an elderly man or beggar so that he cannot be noticed by the suitors or Penelope, and helps him to defeat the suitors.

She also plays a role in ending the resultant feud against the suitors' relatives. She instructs Laertes to throw his spear and to kill the father of Antinous, Eupeithes.

4.6 Judgment of Paris

Main article: Judgement of Paris

In one myth, all the gods and goddesses as well as various mortals were invited to the marriage of Peleus and Thetis (the eventual parents of Achilles). Only Eris, goddess of discord, was not invited. She was annoyed at this, so she arrived with a golden apple inscribed with the word $\kappa\alpha\lambda\lambda\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\eta$ (kallistēi, "for the fairest"), which she threw among the goddesses. Aphrodite, Hera, and Athena all claimed to be the fairest, and thus the rightful owner of the apple.



Paris is awarding the apple to Aphrodite Urteil des Paris by Anton Raphael Mengs, ca. 1857

The goddesses chose to place the matter before Zeus, who, not wanting to favor one of the goddesses, put the choice into the hands of Paris, a Trojan prince. After bathing in the spring of Mount Ida where Troy was situated, the goddesses appeared before Paris for his decision. The goddesses undressed before him to be evaluated, either at his request or by their own choice.

Still, Paris could not decide, as all three were ideally beautiful, so they resorted to bribes. Hera tried to bribe Paris with control over all Asia and Europe, while Athena offered wisdom, fame and glory in battle, but Aphrodite came forth and whispered to Paris that if he were to choose her as the fairest he would have the most beautiful mortal woman in the world as a wife, and he accordingly chose her. This woman was Helen, who was, unfor-

tunately for Paris, already married to King Menelaus of Sparta. The other two goddesses were enraged by this and through Helen's abduction by Paris they brought about the Trojan War.



The apple is being given to Paris in alternative interpretations -Cornelis van Haarlem, 1628

Another interpretation is that the apple was being given to the man by the three goddesses, instead of to one of the goddesses. This is the interpretation mythologists and writers delving into more ancient Greek myths that date from before the classical period. The later interpretation is considered a variant interpretation of icons of great antiquity, to conform to the changes in the evolution of the Greek pantheon in myths.

It is suspected that the icons relate to a religious ritual in which a "king" was selected who would serve for a year (or a specified period) before being sacrificed and that the cycle would be renewed upon his death. Robert Graves was a strong proponent of this theory and it is written about in many of his publications, such as *The Greek Myths* and *The White Goddess*. This also was suggested in the early versions of an extensive analysis of Greek mythology, *The Golden Bough* by James George Frazer. In a later editions Frazer completely revised the book and left out his research and discussion of these rituals in the abbreviated edition that is known by that title today.

These interpretations relate to a concept of a *Great Goddess*, a *Mother Goddess*, and the religious worship of such a deity in very ancient Greek culture. It took a triad form, one phase being Athena along with Hera and Aphrodite and others in her matrilineal line (grandmother, mother, etc.) such as (Gaia, Rhea, Hera, Metis), and myths that arose through interpretations (or misinterpretations) of icons from earlier cultural periods. The apple would have been given to the "king" the three goddesses selected.

4.7 Roman fable of Arachne

The fable of Arachne is a late Roman addition to Classical Greek mythology^[67] but does not appear in the myth repertoire of the Attic vase-painters. Arachne's name

5 CLASSICAL ART

means *spider*.^[68] Arachne was the daughter of a famous dyer in Tyrian purple in Hypaipa of Lydia, and a weaving student of Athena. She became so conceited of her skill as a weaver that she began claiming that her skill was greater than that of Athena herself.

Athena gave Arachne a chance to redeem herself by assuming the form of an old woman and warning Arachne not to offend the deities. Arachne scoffed and wished for a weaving contest, so she could prove her skill.

Athena wove the scene of her victory over Poseidon that had inspired her patronage of Athens. According to Ovid's Latin narrative, Arachne's tapestry featured twenty-one episodes of the infidelity of the deities, including Zeus being unfaithful with Leda, with Europa, and with Danaë. Athena admitted that Arachne's work was flawless, but was outraged at Arachne's offensive choice of subjects that displayed the failings and transgressions of the deities. Finally, losing her temper, Athena destroyed Arachne's tapestry and loom, striking it with her shuttle.

Athena then struck Arachne with her staff, which changed her into a spider. In some versions, the destruction of her loom leads Arachne to hang herself in despair; Athena takes pity on her, and transforms her into a spider. In the aforementioned version, Arachne weaved scenes of joy while Athena weaved scenes of horror.

The fable suggests that the origin of weaving lay in imitation of spiders and that it was considered to have been perfected first in Asia Minor.

4.8 A changed status in classical mythology?

In classical Greek mythology the role of Athena changed as the pantheon became organized under the leadership of Zeus. In earlier mythology she is identified as a parthenogenic daughter of a goddess, but the classical myths fashion for her a peculiar "birth from the head of Zeus" that assigns a father for Athena and eliminates a mother for her, identifying the father as a deity who at one time was portrayed as her brother. Athens may have fallen in 404 B.C. but the cult of Athena was so dominant in the culture that it survived the transitions seen in the mythic roles of other goddesses, albeit with a juggling of "family" relationships.

J.J. Bachofen advocated that Athena was originally a maternal figure stable in her security and poise but was caught up and perverted by a patriarchal society; this was especially the case in Athens. The goddess adapted but could very easily be seen as a god. He viewed it as "motherless paternity in the place of fatherless maternity" where once altered, Athena's character was to be crystallized as that of a patriarch.^[69]

Whereas Bachofen saw the switch to paternity on Athena's behalf as an increase of power, Freud on the contrary perceived Athena as an "original mother goddess divested of her power". In this interpretation, Athena was demoted to be only Zeus's daughter, never allowed the expression of motherhood. Still more different from Bachofen's perspective is the lack of role permanency in Freud's view: Freud held that time and differing cultures would mold Athena to stand for what was necessary to them.^[70]

Some modern authors classify the changes as an "androgynous compromise" that allowed her traits and what she stood for to be attributed to male and female rulers alike over the course of history (such as Marie de' Medici, Anne of Austria, Christina of Sweden, and Catherine the Great).^[71]

5 Classical art



Restitution of the polychrome decoration of the Athena statue from the Aphaea temple at Aegina, c. 490 BC (from the exposition "Bunte Götter" by the Munich Glyptothek)

Classically, Athena is portrayed wearing a full-length chiton, and sometimes in armor, with her helmet raised high on the forehead to reveal the image of Nike. Her shield bears at its centre the aegis with the head of the gorgon (gorgoneion) in the center and snakes around the edge. It is in this standing posture that she was depicted in Phidias's famous lost gold and ivory statue of her, 36 m tall, the *Athena Parthenos* in the Parthenon. Athena also often is depicted with an owl sitting on one of her shoulders.^[72]



Classical Mosaic from a villa at Tusculum, now at Museo Pio-Clementino, Vatican



Mythological scene with Athena (left) and Herakles (right), on a stone palette of the Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhara, India

The *Mourning Athena* is a relief sculpture that dates around 460 BC and portrays a weary Athena resting on a staff. In earlier, archaic portraits of Athena in Blackfigure pottery, the goddess retains some of her Minoan-Mycenaean character, such as great bird wings although this is not true of archaic sculpture such as those of Aphaean Athena, where Athena has subsumed an earlier, invisibly numinous—*Aphaea*—goddess with Cretan connections in her *mythos*.

Other commonly received and repeated types of Athena in sculpture may be found in this list.

Apart from her attributes, there seems to be a relative consensus in late sculpture from the Classical period, the 5th century onward, as to what Athena looked like. Most noticeable in the face is perhaps the full round strong, chin with a high nose that has a high bridge as a natural extension of the forehead. The eyes typically are somewhat deeply set. The unsmiling lips are usually full, but the mouth is depicted fairly narrow, usually just slightly wider than the nose. The neck is somewhat long. The net result is a serene, serious, somewhat aloof, and very classical beauty.

6 Post-classical culture

A brief summary of Athena's evolution of myriad motifs after her dominance in Greece may be seen as follows: The rise of Christianity in Greece largely ended the worship of Greek deities and polytheism in general, but she resurfaced in the Middle Ages as a defender of sagacity and virtue so that her warrior status was still intact. (She may be found on some family crests of nobility.) During the Renaissance she donned the mantle of patron of the arts and human endeavor and finally although not ultimately, Athena personified the miracles of freedom and republic during the French Revolution. (A statue of the goddess was centered on the Place de la Revolution in Paris.)^[2]

For over a century a full-scale replica of the Parthenon has stood in Nashville, Tennessee, which is known as *the Athens of the South*. In 1990, a gilded 41 feet (12.5 m) tall replica of Phidias' statue of Athena Parthenos was added. The state seal of California features an image of Athena (or Minerva) kneeling next to a brown grizzly bear.^[73]



1986 Greek stamp

Athena is a natural patron of universities: she is the symbol of the Darmstadt University of Technology, in Germany, and the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil. Her image can be found in the shields of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters and the Faculty of Sciences of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, where her owl is the symbol of the Faculty of Chemistry. Her helmet appears upon the shield of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York. At Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania a statue of Athena (a replica of the original bronze one in the arts and archaeology library) resides in the Great Hall. It is traditional at exam time for students to leave offerings to the goddess with a note asking for good luck, or to repent for accidentally breaking any of the college's numerous other traditions. Athena's owl also serves as the mascot of the college, and one of the college hymns is "Pallas Athena". Pallas Athena is the tutelary goddess of the international social frater12 9 FOOTNOTES



Euro coin commemorating 60 Years of the Second Republic of Austria, featuring Athena Promachos

nity Phi Delta Theta. [74] Her owl is also a symbol of the fraternity. [74]

Jean Boucher's statue of the seated skeptical thinker Ernest Renan caused great controversy when it was installed in Tréguier, Brittany in 1902. Renan's 1862 biography of Jesus had denied his divinity, and he had written the extquotedblPrayer on the Acropolis extquotedbl addressed to the goddess Athena. The statue was placed in the square fronted by the cathedral. Renan's head was turned away from the building, while Athena, beside him, was depicted raising her arm, which was interpreted as indicating a challenge to the church during an anti-clerical phase in French official culture. The installation was accompanied by a mass protest from local Roman Catholics and a religious service against the growth of skepticism and secularism. [75]

Athena has been used numerous times as a symbol of a republic by different countries and appears on currency as she did on the ancient drachma of Athens. Athena (Minerva) is the subject of the \$50 1915-S Panama-Pacific commemorative coin. At 2.5 troy oz (78 g) gold, this is the largest (by weight) coin ever produced by the U.S. Mint. This was the first \$50 coin issued by the U.S. Mint and no higher was produced until the production of the \$100 platinum coins in 1997. Of course, in terms of facevalue in adjusted dollars, the 1915 is the highest denomination ever issued by the U.S. Mint.

French car maker Citroën named the top line of its DS models (pronounced Déesse in French, for Goddess) Pallas. It was voted the most beautiful car of all time by *Classic & Sports Car* magazine.^[76]

7 Genealogy of the Olympians in classical Greek mythology

8 See also

- Athenaeum (disambiguation)
- Palladium (mythology)

9 Footnotes

- [1] According to Hesiod's Theogony, Metis was Athena's mother, but, according to Homer's Iliad, after Zeus swallowed Metis because she was pregnant with Athene (to prevent the birth), Athene sprang forth from the head of Zeus nonetheless and later it was declared that she "had no mother"
- [2] Deacy, Susan, and Alexandra Villing. Athena in the Classical World. Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2001. Print.
- [3] "Whether the goddess was named after the city or the city after the goddess is an ancient dispute" (Burkert 1985:139)
- [4] Ruck and Staples 1994:24.
- [5] G. Mylonas, Mycenae and the Mycenaean world, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1965, p. 159.
- [6] Also the later Greek Athena was closely related with the snakes and the birds: M. Nilsson, Die Geschichte der griechischen Religion, C.F.Beck Verlag, München 1967, pp. 347, 433.
- [7] A. Fururmark, "The Thera catastrophe-Consequences for the European civilization", p. 672. In: *Thera and the Aegean world I*, London 1978.
- [8] KN V 52 (text 208 in Ventris and Chadwick).
- [9] "Palaeolexicon, Word study tool of ancient languages". Palaeolexicon.com. Retrieved 2010-08-25.
- [10] Palaima, p. 444.
- [11] Burkert, p. 44.
- [12] Ventris and Chadwick [page missing]
- [13] Günther Neumann, "Der lydische Name der Athena. Neulesung der lydischen Inschrift Nr. 40". In: *Kadmos* 6 (1967).
- [14] "The citizens have a deity for their foundress; she is called in the Egyptian tongue Neith, and is asserted by them to be the same whom the Hellenes call Athena; they are great lovers of the Athenians, and say that they are in some way related to them." (*Timaeus* 21e)
- [15] Besides *Timaeus* 21e, cf. also Herodotus, *Histories* 2:170–175

- [16] Aeschylus. Eumenides v.292–293. Cf. the tradition that she was the daughter of Neilos: see, e.g. Clement of Alexandria Protr. 2.28.2; Cicero, De Natura Deorum. 3.59.
- [17] Jacques Berlinerblau, Heresy in the University: The Black Athena Controversy and the Responsibilities of American Intellectuals, Rutgers University Press, 1999, p. 93ff.
- [18] M. Bernal, Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), pp. 21, 51–53.
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- [20] R. S. P. Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, Brill, 2009, p. 29.
- [21] Harrison 1922:306. (Harrison 1922:307, fig. 84: Detail of a cup in the Faina collection).
- [22] Gerhard Johrens (1981), Athenahymnus, pp. 438–452.
- [23] Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* 1985:VII "Philosophical Religion" treats these transformations.
- [24] C.J. Herrington, *Athena Parthenos and Athena Polias*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1955
- [25] Darmon. extquotedblAthena and Ares". Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- [26] S. Goldhill. Reading Greek Tragedy (Aesch.Eum.737). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- [27] Pseudo-Apollodorus, Bibliotheke 3.14.6.
- [28] Loewen, Nancy. Athena. ISBN 0-7368-0048-4.
- [29] γλαυκῶπις in Liddell and Scott.
- [30] γλαυκός in Liddell and Scott.
- [31] ὤψ in Liddell and Scott.
- [32] Thompson, D'Arcy Wentworth. *A glossary of Greek birds*. Oxford, Clarendon Press 1895, pp 45-46.
- [33] γλαύξ in Liddell and Scott.
- [34] Pausanias, i. 5. § 3; 41. § 6
- [35] John Tzetzes, ad Lycophr., l.c.
- [36] Schmitz, Leonhard (1867). "Aethyta". In Smith, William. Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology 1. Boston, MA. p. 51.
- [37] Smith, Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology.
- [38] P.Schmitt, extquotedblAthena Apatouria et la ceinture: Les aspects féminins des apatouries à Athènes" in Annales:Economies, Societies, Civilisations (1059-1073). London: Thames and Hudson, 2000.

- [39] Karl Kerenyi suggests that "Tritogeneia did not mean that she came into the world on any particular river or lake, but that she was born of the water itself; for the name Triton seems to be associated with water generally." (Kerenyi, p. 128).
- [40] Τριτογένεια in Liddell and Scott.
- [41] Robertson, Noel. Festivals and Legends: The Formation of Greek Cities in the Light of Public Ritual. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992.
- [42] "POLYPHE: Oceanid nymph of Rhodes in the Aegean; Greek mythology". Theoi.com. Retrieved 2010-08-25.
- [43] "TITLES OF ATHENA: Ancient Greek religion". Theoi.com. Retrieved 2010-08-25.
- [44] Burkert, p. 140.
- [45] Plutarch, Life of Pericles, 13.8
- [46] Knossos tablet V 52 (John Chadwick, *The Mycenaean World*, [Cambridge] 1976:88, fig 37.) *Athana Potnia* does not appear at Mycenaean Pylos, where the mistress goddess is *ma-te-re te-i-ja*, *Mater Theia*, literally "Mother Goddess".
- [47] Jane Ellen Harrison's famous characterization of this myth-element as, "a desperate theological expedient to rid an earth-born Kore of her matriarchal conditions" (Harrison 1922:302) has never been refuted nor confirmed.
- [48] Compare the prophecy concerning Thetis.
- [49] Hesiod, Theogony 890ff and 924ff.
- [50] Justin, Apology 64.5, quoted in Robert McQueen Grant, Gods and the One God, vol. 1:155, who observes that it is Porphyry "who similarly identifies Athena with 'fore-thought".
- [51] extquotedbl"Sacred Texts: Ancient Fragments", ed. and trans. I. P. Cory, 1832: "The Theology of the Phœnicians from Sanchoniatho extquotedbl extquotedbl. Sacredtexts.com. Archived from the original on 5 September 2010. Retrieved 2010-08-25.
- [52] "Pallas". Theoi.com. Retrieved 2011-07-24.
- [53] Graves, Robert, The Greek Myths I, "The Birth of Athena", 8.a., p. 51. The story comes from Libyan (modern Berbers) where the Greek Athena and the Egyptian Neith blend into one deity. The story is not often referenced because some of the details are contradicted by other, better-documented theories. Frazer, vol. 2 p.41
- [54] Burkert, p. 139.
- [55] K.Kerenyi, Die Jungfrau und Mutter der griechischen Religion. Eine Studie über Pallas Athene. Zurich: Rhein Verlag, 1952.
- [56] Marinus of Samaria, "The Life of Proclus or Concerning Happiness", Translated by Kenneth S. Guthrie (1925), pp.15–55:30, retrieved 21 May 2007. Marinus, Life of Proclus
- [57] Pseudo-Apollodorus, Bibliotheke 3.14.6.

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- [58] Graves, Robert, *The Greek Myths I*, "The Nature and Deeds of Athena" 25.d.
- [59] Ovid, Metamorphoses, X. Aglaura, Book II, 708–751; XI. The Envy, Book II, 752–832.
- [60] "Medusa in Myth and Literary History". Archived from the original on 23 January 2010. Retrieved 2010-01-06.
- [61] Graves 1960:16.3p 62.
- [62] "This sanctuary had been respected from early days by all the Peloponnesians, and afforded peculiar safety to its suppliants" (Pausanias, Description of Greece iii.5.6)
- [63] Pausanias, Description of Greece viii.4.8.
- [64] Compare the origin of Sparta.
- [65] W.F.Otto, Die Gotter Griechenlands (55-77). Bonn: F.Cohen, 1929
- [66] Trahman in Phoenix, p. 35.
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- [68] ἀράχνη, ἀράχνης. Liddell, Henry George; Scott, Robert; A Greek–English Lexicon at the Perseus Project.
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- [70] Shearer, Athene, 224-235.
- [71] F.Zeitlin, extquotedblThe Dynamics of Misogyny:Myth and Mythmaking in the Oresteia", Arethusa 15 (1978), 182.
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11 External links

- Theoi.com Cult of Athena —Extracts of classical texts
- Roy George, "Athena: The sculptures of the goddess" —A repertory of Greek and Roman types
- Temples of Athena

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12.1 Text

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