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VIEWS ON THE SYMBOLIC USE OF TWO RARE BONE FINGER DISTAFFS WITH DOG REPRESENTATION FROM HALUK PERK MUSEUM IN ISTANBUL

Abstract: There are various interpretations on the functions of bone finger distaffs, which are among the important artifacts produced in the ancient world. Some scholars argue that finger distaffs were a symbol of fidelity and virtue and presented to women as wedding gifts, while others claim that in addition to their purely symbolic value, they were used by women in the house to spin the wool yarn needed for weaving besides their symbolic meaning. The Haluk Perk Museum has a rich collection of figured and non-figured finger distaffs of different materials from the Roman and Byzantine periods. There are two bone finger distaffs in the collection that attract attention with their representation of dogs depicted in different forms. In the ancient world, the dog represented loyalty, fertility, healing and purification. Remarkably, the dog was also one of the symbols of the Goddess Hecate, who is associated with witchcraft, which means that one of the other qualities attributed to the dog figure was that it bestowed protective and healing powers against evil.

It is believed that the two bone finger distaffs featuring a depiction of a dog as a representation of loyalty were given to women as wedding gifts. In late antiquity, young women who had arrived at the age of marriage were expected, as part of the social roles imposed on them by society, to preserve the unity of the family and be virtuous and good wives and mothers. The finger distaffs prepared to be given to young women as wedding gifts symbolized their status as loyal wife and mother in society. On account of this symbolic value, wives kept finger distaffs for the entirety of their lives, and they were placed in their graves after their death. It is further believed that the finger distaffs featuring a dog depiction were symbols of devotion and loyalty to the spouse, as well as a symbol of fertility for women. Beyond these symbolic functions, the finger distaffs with dog depictions may also have been kept by wives to protect and heal the household from evil and diseases. Based on the depiction of the dog on two bone finger distaffs, this study focuses on dog symbolism and the relationship between the goddess Hecate and the dog in ancient times and discusses the possible symbolic functions of the finger distaffs with dog representations in the life and death of women.

Keywords: *bone, distaff, dog, Hecate, Haluk Perk Museum.*

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SPINNING ACTIVITIES AND FINGER DISTAFFS IN THE LATE ANTIQUITY

Spinning, the starting stage of all types of weaving, was one of the most important daily domestic activities for women in ancient times, and it was not a task restricted to ordinary women exclusively. Queens

and goddess, who held prominent and respected positions in ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Anatolian civilizations, are depicted in the act of spinning or with spinning equipment¹. In ancient Greek and Roman civilizations too, women engaged in the act of spinning are frequently depicted on art objects, further indicating the key role of this activity in the women's world². Goddesses in the pagan belief system are variously depicted as either practitioners of yarn spinning and as the protector and patroness of the women engaged in this activity. There are numerous stories about women and spinning in the mythological and literary epics of the Ancient Age³. The primary reason this activity occupied such a prominent place in the lives of women of all social strata was the symbolic meanings attributed to spinning. As C. G. Taylor briefly stated, spinning is seen as a symbol of virtue, creation, wisdom, devotion, and order⁴.

For women of the ancient world, spinning and weaving held important roles in a number of traditions and systems of belief, as well as in the social status of women throughout the course of their lives, from birth to death. A woman's relationship with spinning began with her birth. The birth of a girl was announced to the community with the hanging of a wool ribbon on the door of the house⁵. Spinning and weaving were taught to girls at home as part of their education, and it is known that spinning equipment was among the main elements of the marriage ceremony of a young girl who had reached the age of marriage. As part of this ceremony, known as *deductio* in the early Roman period, the bride would go to her future husband's house carrying a distaff and spindle and be accompanied by three children⁶. In

the marriage ceremony of virgins⁷, it was tradition to present the bride with a piece of thread along with a distaff and spindle as tokens to the young woman of the responsibilities she would have in her family life and of the role assigned to her for the survival of the society. When the woman died, these spinning tools, along with other personal belongings, were buried in her grave beside her body⁸. According to D. Cottica, the ceremonial meaning of placing spinning tools in graves was that these objects symbolized the life cycle of the human beings, which begins with birth, proceeds in life, and ends with death. In this context, women were regarded as representatives of this process, just like the Fate Goddesses Moirai, who ruled human destiny by spinning thread⁹. In other words, a metaphorical relationship was established between the woman's presentation of life by giving birth and the wool being spun as a thread. A woman whose grave included a distaff was remembered as a mother who had given birth to a child and was revered as a life-giver¹⁰. The depictions on some of the tombstones of females in antiquity indicate that spinning tools, along with personal objects, such as mirrors, perfume bottles, and combs, were not only placed in graves but also on tombstones for use in the afterlife¹¹. Generally depicted as a trio of distaffs, spindles and wool baskets, the spinning tools uncovered in the grave finds provide valuable information on the form and use of these objects. Finger distaffs in particular are frequently seen in these depictions on tombstones and among grave finds. These objects have a thin, long rod-shaped appearance, with a ring on one end allowing for a finger to pass through it (Fig. 1). The person using the distaff would pass their little finger through this ring, fix the distaff rod in her palm from the lower side, and then begin spinning. The upper part of the knitting rod was used for winding the wool in the form of a fleece, as clearly shown in the figures. Finger distaffs, which could be made of bone, metal, wood or glass, were often preferred because of their symbolic meaning and ease of carrying¹².

¹ Goddess Uttu in Ancient Mesopotamia and Goddess Tayet in Ancient Egypt were associated with spinning and weaving. Goddess Uttu was also a patron goddess of fertility, creation, and everything related to women (TAYLOR 2018, 26). According to C. G. Taylor, Goddess Tayet was a reflection of other goddesses in the Eastern Mediterranean world. She was also the patron goddess of craft and was particularly associated with the linen bands used in mummification and the curtain fabric covering the ceremonial area where embalming was performed (TAYLOR 2014, 403; 2018, 27). In the Hittite civilization, *Ištuštaya* and *Papaya*, who were revered as goddesses of fate, are depicted carrying a distaff and spindle in their hands (COTTICA 2004, 186). In ancient times, the Goddess Athena was the patron goddess of all handicrafts and depicted as teaching young girls how to spin and weave. In addition, the Moirai/Parcae, the ancient Roman and Greek goddesses of fate who spun the thread of human life, measured it and cut it, are among the most important figures associated with this activity (TAYLOR 2018, 27-28).

² There are numerous works from ancient times depicting women in different stages of spinning and weaving. The drawings depicted on ceramic works are particularly striking in this context (KUTBAY 2002, 26). S. Bunderick states that scenes of textile production in Greek ceramic works increased between 6-5 BC, a finding attributed to the exemplary role weaving had in the spread of democracy to social life (BUNDERICK 2008, 285).

³ In addition to the goddesses associated with weaving in the ancient world, such as the Moirai, Athena and Aphrodite, female heroes in the Iliad and Odyssey epics are also mentioned as being associated with wool spinning and weaving activities. Lucretia, who Titus Livius refers to in his work, stands out as a figure highlighting the importance of the status that spinning and weaving gave to women. For more detailed information on the subject, see: TAYLOR 2018, 39-45; LARSSON LOVÉN 2007, 229-236.

⁴ TAYLOR 2018, 27.

⁵ KISSEL 1918, 236. In the ancient city of Attica, when a baby boy was born, a wreath of olive branches was placed on the door of the home of the baby boy, while when a baby girl was born, a piece of cotton wool, to represent spinning, was placed on the door of the home of the baby girl in Attica. This was how the sex of the baby was announced (BÍRÓ 1994, 212).

⁶ COTTICA 2004, 190, 192, Fig. 6.

⁷ Resources on the ancient world describe in detail how a bride was taken to the groom's house in a bridal procession after the marriage ceremony. During this ceremony, the bride's girlfriends or virgin girls accompanying her placed a distaff and a spindle in her hand. When the bride stepped through the door to enter the groom's house, she was greeted with a sheepskin, and she began to spin the wool into yarn with the weaving spindle whorls and distaff she had brought with her (BÍRÓ 1994, 212). With this ceremony, attention was called to the responsibility the bride would take as the wife of the house and served to symbolize the continuity of the household with her production and fertility. The presence of symbols representing fertility, such as birds, pigeons and the like, on the distaff the bride carried in her hands reinforced this meaning (BÍRÓ 1994, 212). Studies note that distaffs bearing depictions of Aphrodite, a symbol of fertility in the Late Antiquity period, were given to young women as a wedding gift and were put in their graves when they died (BÍRÓ 1994, 215). E. Trinkl argued the same, stating that the grave finds in Ephesus indicate that the distaff was likely presented as a wedding gift to Roman women, and that virtuous women may have been buried in their graves with these wedding gifts (TRINKL 2004, 302).

⁸ BÍRÓ 2010, 199-200.

⁹ COTTICA 2004, 202.

¹⁰ STEMBERGER 2014, 76.

¹¹ For examples of tombstones among the Anatolian finds where spinning materials are depicted, see: ADAK-ŞAHİN, 2005, 141-142, 147, 149-151, 153, 64, cat. no. 7-8, 4, 16, 18-19, 21, and 34; UZUNOĞLU, 2019, 378-380, Fig. 1-2; ÇEKİLMEZ, 2015, 98, C.3 (Pl. III).

¹² It has been established that finger distaffs, which were widely produced from antiquity to the early centuries of the Byzantine Empire, had a symbolic meaning in addition to their functional purpose. The fact that there were no signs of wear on the surface of the finger distaffs is accepted

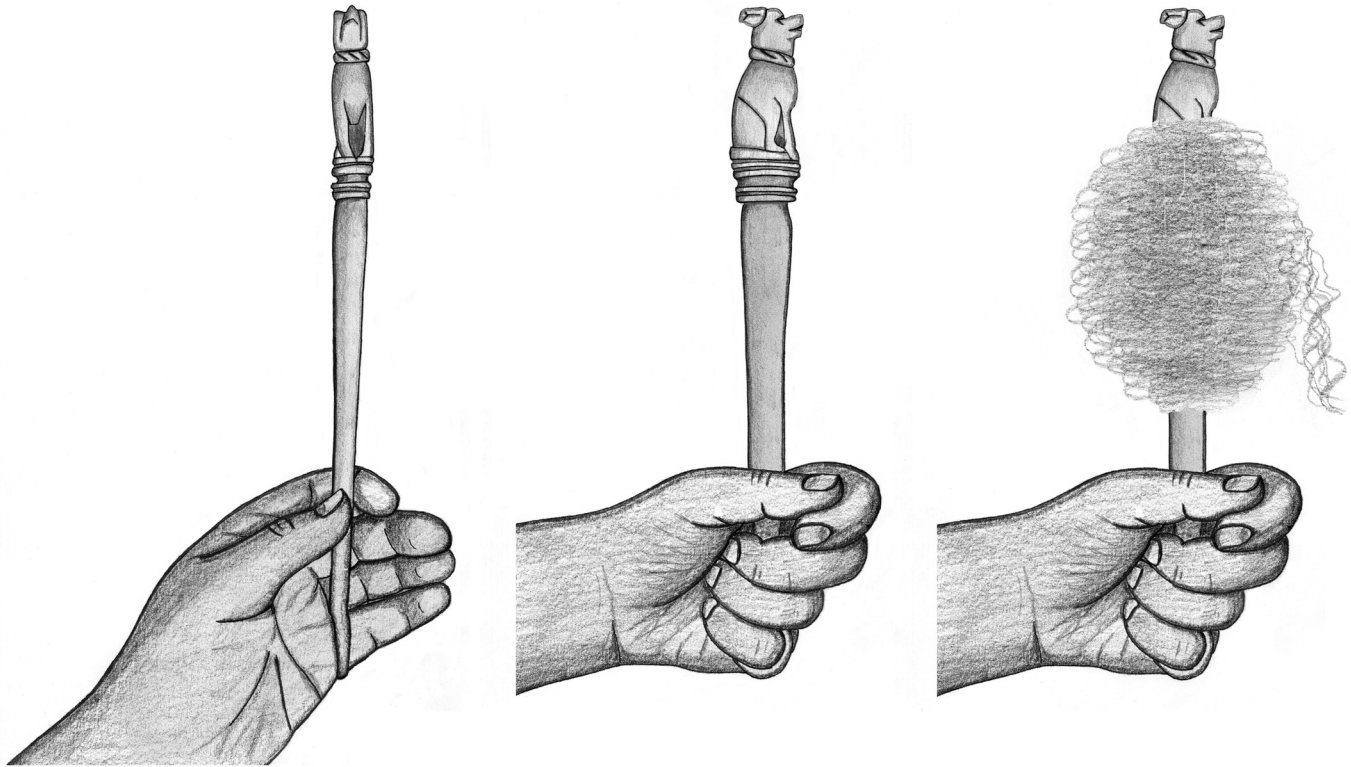


Figure 1 Use of finger distaff (Drawn by. Z. Çakmakçı).

In the ancient world, spinning was associated with fertility and was regarded as a metaphor representing the survival of human beings¹³. In this metaphorical sense, the act of spinning refers to women's role in weaving life, family and society¹⁴. Moreover, in a more practical sense, spinning and weaving was one of the main responsibilities' women had in domestic life, starting from childhood. Finger distaffs, as symbolic and functional tools, express the virtue of the woman as a wife, her commitment and loyalty to her family, her fertility, her role in the management of the household, and her responsibility of raising children. In addition to serving as a reminder to women of their duty as virtuous, devoted wives and good mothers, finger distaffs were valuable wedding gifts, with strong spiritual qualities that protected women from evil over their lifetime.

FINGER DISTAFF WITH DOG REPRESENTATION FROM THE HALUK PERK MUSEUM COLLECTION

Haluk Perk Museum in Istanbul has a rich collection of artifacts from the Late Antiquity and Byzantine periods that provide important information on spinning and weaving activities. The collection includes numerous spinning tools, such as spindles, spindle whorls, needles made of different materials, and 47 finger distaffs made of bone, glass and bronze¹⁵. Context archeological finds similar to other bone

as evidence that they were not produced for functional purposes. For such examples, see: Trinkl 2007. On the other hand, the wear marks on the finger distaffs found in recent archaeological excavations suggest that they were not only produced for symbolic meanings but also for use in daily life. For an example of a finger distaff believed to have been used for functional purposes, see: Ratiu 2016.

¹³ COTTICA 2004, 185.

¹⁴ STEMBERGER 2014, 74.

¹⁵ Both bone finger distaffs are Anatolian origin. These two rare specimens

finger distaffs recovered from archaeological sites generally date to between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD¹⁶. Yet, at some archeological sites, there are finger distaffs that date up to the 7th century, depending on the depictions presented on the finger distaff¹⁷. The finger distaffs addressed in this study are not context finds, but they are believed to belong to between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD due to the similarities in their construction and decorative elements, as well as in the iconography of the examples of context find distaffs. This study first introduces from the collection two finger distaffs decorated with a dog depiction, and then discusses the possible reasons for the use of the dog depiction on these objects.

1. Bone Finger Distaff with Dog Representation

(Figs. 2, 3, 6)

Description: There is a calcareous layer on the surface of the distaff due to the ambient conditions of the environment where it had been before being brought to the museum. A large portion of the distaff's ring, designed to

are only classified in the catalogue of the book which is published in 2021 (ÇAKMAKÇI/ÜNAL 2021, pp. 34-35, cat. nos. 4-5). These two bone finger distaffs are firstly discussed in this paper with their possible attribution to the Hecate cult. The relation of the Hecate cult with bone finger distaffs with dog representation from the Haluk Perk Museum has never been discussed before. For a detailed study on finger distaffs in the Haluk Perk Museum collection, see: ÇAKMAKÇI/ÜNAL 2021.

¹⁶ For some examples in Turkey, see: TRINKL 2004, 282-283, Abb. 1a-b/ (Ephesos, 270 AD), 286, Abb. 10 (3rd century AD); KASAPOĞLU, 2012, 172, Fig. 221, TM1 (Parion, 2nd century AD); KARACA, 2017, 314, Fig.11.e, f, and g (Alliano, 2nd-6th centuries AD); TALLOEN, 2019, 464, cat.no. 220, (Sagalossos, 2nd century AD)

¹⁷ Germany Münster University Archaeological Museum inventory. no.2197 (AD 560-650) <https://westfalen.museum-digital.de/index.php?t=serie&serges=4> (accessed on: 17.03.2021).



Figure 2 Finger distaff with dog representation 1, probably 1st-3rd centuries, Haluk Perk Museum inv. no. 3120. –(photo Merve Toy).

be worn on the finger, is broken off and missing, as is the point connecting the finger attachment ring on the lower part of the distaff to the stick. The part that remains reveals that the ring was round with a wide edge. The body of the distaff rising upwards from the ring is flat and oval, with a smooth, undecorated surface. The point at which the body is attached to the ring is slightly thickened before narrowing again in the middle. The decorative element at the top of the finger distaff features a realistic image of a dog sitting on its hind legs. The dog is seen in profile on both sides of the distaff. The front and back legs of the dog figure are set in proportional form, and its facial features, such as its chin, mouth, nose, eyes and ears, are depicted in great detail and in proper ratio. It is noteworthy that the dog was made to look natural. One of the dog's ears is folded back on one side of the distaff's body, while the other is set forward on the other side. The dog has a thick leash around its neck that has grooves running transversely, giving it the look of a rope. The dog sits atop a rectangular platform designed with horizontal grooves around it in an obedient stance, waiting for command on its hind legs. This stance, along with the feature of the leash, represent the dog's loyalty and devotion to its owner and also indicate that the figure of the dog symbolized protection from evil.

1. Museum Inventory No: HPM 3120, height 15.25 cm, thickness 0.8-1.15 cm, head width 1.6 cm, head height 4.3 cm.

2. Bone Finger Distaff with Dog Representation (Figs. 4, 5, 7)

Description: Nearly half of the bone distaff ring part, through which the finger is placed, is broken off and missing. Yet, it is understood from the remaining part that the ring is drop-shaped. On both sides of the upper portion of the ring there are two symmetrically aligned decorative protrusions. A V-shape marks the transition from the ring part to the body. There are two distinct parts of approximately equal size on the body of the finger distaff. The lower part, starting from the ring and rising to the decorative element in the middle of the body is oval and flat with no decorative features. The transition to the upper part is marked by two rectangular protuberances set off from one another on top and bottom by a small concave section before introducing an elliptical-shaped opening. The long rectangular sides encasing this hole are decorated with thin grooves of diagonal lines. There is a ball-shaped motif with a small protrusion at one end inside the oval-shaped cavity. A single row of parallel grooves was carved on the bottom and top of the rectangular decoration in the middle of the rod. On the upper part of the rectangular decoration with the elliptical shaped opening is a short section carved with a concave arc on both sides and a small round hole in the middle. The top end of the distaff features a depiction of an animal in profile. The animal's wide mouth, upright ears, and raised tail suggests that the figure is a depiction of a dog. The contours of the body indicate that it was rendered in a realistic style. The dog figure stands on a rectangular platform whose corners are curved slightly upwards.

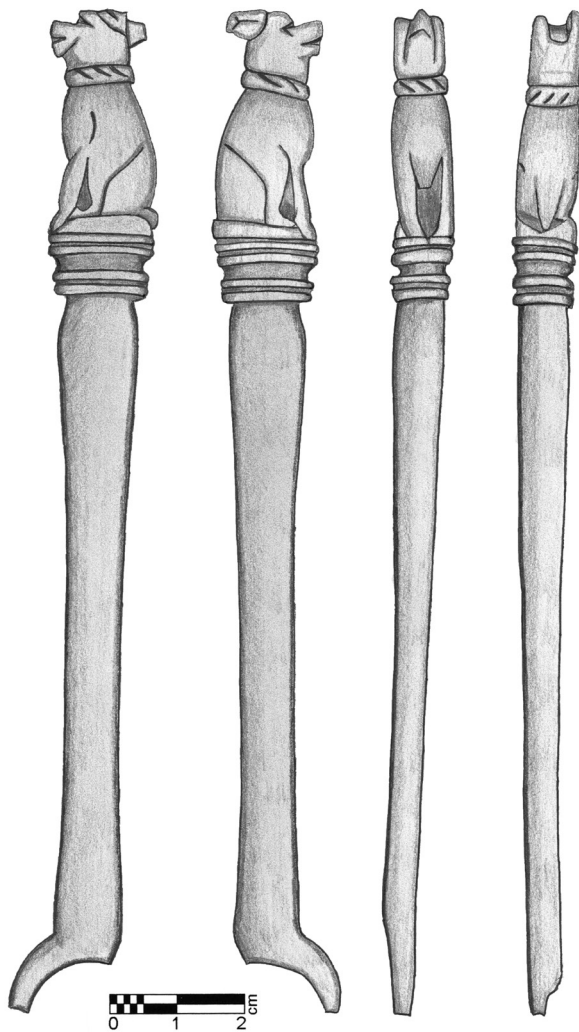


Figure 3 Drawing of finger distaff with dog representation 1. – (Drawn by. Z. Çakmakçı).

2. Museum Inventory No: HPM 9213, height 13.3 cm, rod thickness 0.6 cm, ring diameter outer/inner 2.7/1.8 cm, head height 2.6 cm, head width 2.5 cm.

THE DOG IN ANTIQUITY AND ITS PLACE IN PAGAN BELIEF

The dog, a loyal friend and protector of human beings, has had different symbolic meanings throughout the ages. Cultures have alternately viewed the dog as the guardian of the dead, the mediator between the dead and the living, or the guide of the spirits¹⁸. In ancient Greek and Roman sources, dogs are predominantly related to death. According to pagan beliefs, the dog was regarded as one of the symbols of death in its role of accompanying the god of the underworld, Hades/Pluton, and was among the animals sacrificed to gods and goddesses associated with death. It was also believed that the dog gained supernatural powers by assuming the role of bearer of the souls of the dead. In their earthly role, the dog's howl was believed to be a harbinger of evils and disasters¹⁹.

¹⁸ BECKER 1994, 84-85.

¹⁹ SERGIS 2010, 65.

In antiquity, the dog was associated with various goddesses, including Artemis, Hecate, Genetyllis and Eileithyia, the goddess of birth, and gods, including Ares and Asclepius²⁰. Dogs were believed to have healing powers for people suffering from various diseases. For example, the dogs in the temples of Asclepius were believed to be able to heal blindness by licking the eyes, and boils and abscesses, by licking the wound²¹. Moreover, dogs were used in the diagnosis of certain diseases with unknown origin in the Asclepius cult²². In these cases, the dog would contract the disease by being brought to the sick person in order to identify the course of the disease and arrive at a diagnosis and proper treatment. In addition, in Greek society, it was believed that eating dog meat or drinking soup made with dog blood would cure certain diseases²³.

Similar beliefs about the dog were held in ancient Mesopotamian cultures, where the animal is associated with certain goddesses of healing. In the healing cult of ancient Mesopotamia, dog figurines figured prominently in the temples of the famous gods and goddesses as protectors against evil²⁴. Overall, in antiquity, the dog, which has been a companion to humans since its domestication, was believed to hold protective and healing powers and be capable of even destroying evil²⁵.

Dogs are reported to have been sacrificed in the Ares/Enyalios cult in Sparta, as they were considered to have purifying value²⁶. Dogs also played an active role in ritual cleansing of weapon wounds sustained during war and hunting²⁷. In some parts of the Hellenistic world, they were sacrificed to purify the entire army²⁸.

²⁰ Hecate's creative attribution appears in Asclepius' birth legend. Although there are different versions, according to the legend of Epidaurios, Koronis, who slept with Apollo, leaves the baby boy on Mount Titthion, famous for its herbs, to protect him from his father's anger. A shepherd, who was on the mountain at that time, noticed that his dog had stopped guarding the herd and was breastfeeding a baby (GRAVES 2010, 222). This female dog that was breastfeeding Asclepius was thought to be Hecate or Hecabe (GRAVES 2010, 225). In this legend, Hecate, appearing in the form of a female dog, exhibits one of the roles she assumes in stories involving death and life. The physician goddess played a very important role in the birth of Asclepius. In addition to breastfeeding the baby Asclepius, the female dog also protected the vulnerable baby. This legend of Hecate alongside Asclepius, who would come to be associated with healing and curing diseases, represents one of the powers bestowed on Hecate by Zeus. According to this legend, Asclepius's identification with healing can be attributed to the healing power of Hecate.

²¹ PRESTON DAY 1984, 28; COLLINS 1990, 216. The use of dogs as a source of healing is also seen in Hittite and Ancient Mesopotamian societies. For detailed information, see: DUYMUŞ FLORIOTI 2014, 53-55.

²² In the treatment of unknown, mysterious diseases, the dog was brought into contact with the infected person and then killed so it could be examined, as it was thought that the dog absorbed the disease. See: PRESTON DAY 1984, 28.

²³ STRELAN 2003, 150.

²⁴ Plutarch states that almost all Greek society practiced sacrifice of dogs in purification ceremonies. He says that puppies, the symbol of Hecate, would be brought to the ritual area for a ceremony of purification and sacrificed (STRELAN 2003, 150).

²⁵ DUYMUŞ FLORIOTI 2014, 45, 53-56.

²⁶ Puppies, being seen as strong and brave, were sacrificed to Apollo and Ares in ancient Sparta before war. See: SERGIS 2010, 71.

²⁷ PRESTON DAY 1984, 27.

²⁸ Historical sources report that in Macedonia and Boeotia, a dog would be killed and divided into two as a purifying ritual, where the whole army would walk between these two parts of the dog. Similar rituals were also practiced among the Hittites and possibly the Persians. See: PRESTON DAY 1984, 27, n. 28; SERGIS 2010, 70-71.

In addition to all these qualities attributed to dogs through various gods and goddesses of antiquity, the main feature of the dog that has remained since ancient times is its symbolic association with devotion, loyalty and patience and its role as the guardian of animal herds, houses and hunting²⁹. While there are many gods and goddesses associated with dogs in antiquity, the goddess Hecate holds a special and privileged position among them. Before discussing the dog figure depicted on finger distaffs, it is necessary to take a closer look at the Hecate cult in antiquity and the figure of the dog as one of its symbols.

THE HECATE CULT, ITS SYMBOLS AND THE ROLE OF THE DOG IN ANTIQUITY

Hecate, a key figure in Ancient Greek Mythology, was the goddess of the moon, the night, the underworld, light, witchcraft, and necromancy. Hecate, who represented opposite concepts, such as death and life, though not included among the gods and goddesses in the Olympus Pantheon, draws attention with her powers and qualities³⁰. Despite not having powers comparable to the Greek gods and goddesses of the pantheon, Hecate was nonetheless granted special powers by Zeus. Many of the considerable powers she held over the life of human beings were not restricted by Zeus. The oldest source about Hecate that has survived to today is the work produced by Hesiod titled *Theogony*³¹. In this work, Hesiod mentions that Zeus favored Hecate and that she played a role on land, sea and even in the sky³². He adds that in addition to these privileges that Zeus granted to Hecate, Zeus made her the elixir of youth, and that other immortals showed great respect to the goddess³³. Hesiod further highlights in the *Theogony* that Hecate, who was highly respected by gods and goddesses, had the powers bestowed on her despite never having met with Zeus face-to-face³⁴.

E. Akyürek Şahin states that the earliest dated information about Hecate came from Hesiod in the 7th century BC and from information based on sources belonging to the 5th century BC³⁵. In later centuries, Hecate was associated with spirits and sorcerers³⁶. According to the *Theogony*, Hecate managed wars and supported good rulers, and furthermore, was the patroness of husbandry, one of the primary life-sustaining fields of work for human beings. The work also mentions that Hecate, who was highly respected by the mortals, was offered sacrifices³⁷.

²⁹ SERGIS 2010, 65.

³⁰ STRELAN 2003, 152.

³¹ The section on Hecate in the *Theogony* is so detailed that it has been called the Hecate hymn.

³² HESIODOS 2014, 76-78; GRAVES 2010, 150.

³³ HESIODOS 2014, 76-78.

³⁴ HESIODOS 2014, 77.

³⁵ Numerous national and international studies on the Hecate cult point to its strong presence in Anatolia. In Turkey, the works of E. Akyürek Şahin stand out among recent national studies, see: AKYÜREK ŞAHİN 2006, 59-66; AKYÜREK ŞAHİN 2007, 59-115; AKYÜREK ŞAHİN 2011, 237-257; AKYÜREK ŞAHİN 2016, 1-48. E. Akyürek Şahin states that the Hecate cult was common in the Phrygia and Caria regions, and that Lydia, being between these two regions, also adopted the Hecate cult (AKYÜREK ŞAHİN 2016, 4-5).

³⁶ AKYÜREK ŞAHİN 2016, 4, n. 16.

³⁷ HESIODOS 2014, 77.



Figure 4 Finger distaff with dog representation 2, probably 1st- 3rd centuries, Haluk Perk Museum inv. no. 9213. – (photo Merve Toy).

In the *Theogony*, Hesiod shares that the goddess granted the wishes of those she admired³⁸ and took the side of the good in the struggles between people³⁹. In this sense, the portrait of Hecate painted by Hesiod points to a divine being who always stands by the good and the right. Those who wanted help either on earth or at sea applied to Hecate.

³⁸ Hecate is the patron goddess of the farmer, fisherman and especially young people. Over time, magic and sorcery were among the powers attributed to Hecate.

³⁹ HESIODOS 2014, 77.

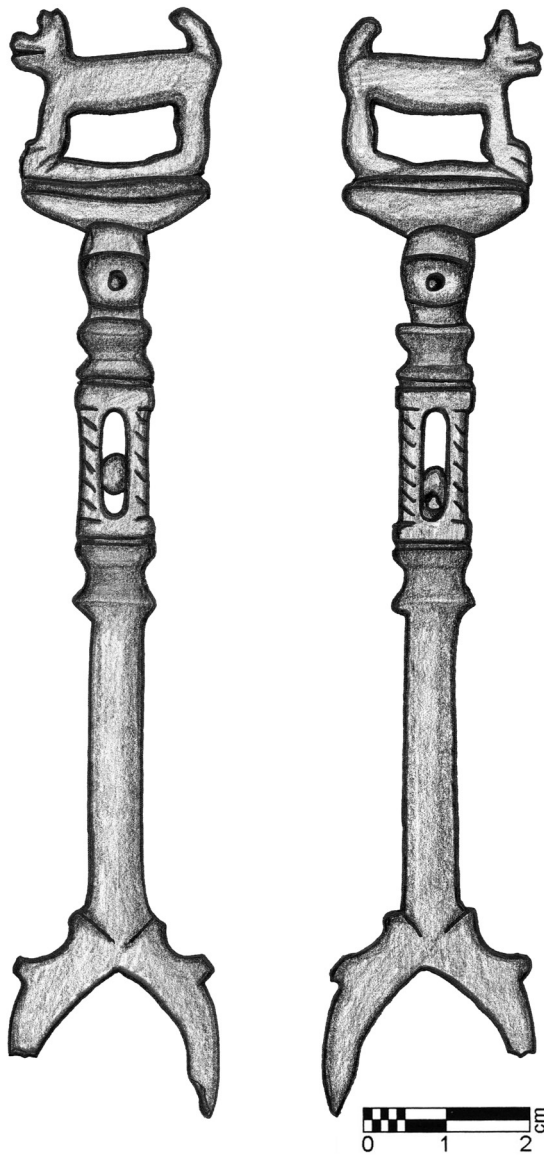


Figure 5 Drawing of finger distaff with dog representation 2. – (Drawn by. Z. Çakmakçı).

The goddess would also help hunters at her own discretion, which is one of the elements showing her association with the hunting goddess Artemis.

There are widespread opinions about the origin of the goddess Hecate, and the matter still under discussion⁴⁰. Some researchers argue that Hecate was a goddess of Anatolian origin, while others base her cult in the Thrace region⁴¹. While outside of the stories shared by Hesiod, there are no known legends about Hecate, who was similar to Artemis⁴². Claims to her Anatolian origin can be made based on her descent from the god Apollo and the goddess Artemis⁴³. Ancient sources report that Hecate was loved

⁴⁰ It is mentioned in the sources that Leto, one of the two daughters of Koios and Phoibe, who were descended from Titan, copulated with Zeus and gave birth to Artemis and Apollo, and that the other daughter Asterie was the mother of Hecate (GRIMAL 2012, 28; ERHAT 2013:125, JOHNSTON 2011, 123-126). See also; BERG 1974, 128-140.

⁴¹ LAFLI 2015, 22; SOURLAS 2017, 167.

⁴² GRIMAL 2012, 228.

⁴³ There are depictions from the battle of the gods and goddesses of

and respected by the Titan nobles, and that Zeus gave the goddess the sovereignty over the underworld, as well as the earth and the sky. There is no mention of any objection to this divine power given by Zeus, which suggests that Hecate was accepted and respected by the gods and goddesses.

Hecate's symbols were paired torches, keys and dogs. The key was attributed to the entrance to the realm of the dead, where Hades reigned⁴⁴. Hecate Propylaia had keys that opened the entrance to the realm of the dead⁴⁵. The key and key lock found in the grave areas in the necropolises in the cities of Ancient Period are related to the Hecate cult; they must have been placed on the grave of the deceased in order to open the door to the land of the dead. The goddess Hecate had a commanding role in the system of belief in life after death that existed in ancient times. Opening the door of the land of the dead depended on Hecate, which means that the reverence in which she was held by the people of antiquity was not only related to daily life. Moreover, in Hecate's relationship with the realm of the dead, she was sometimes associated with Demeter and sometimes with Persephone⁴⁶. When examined in more detail, it can be argued that the Hecate cult developed in direct connection with the goddess of fertility, Demeter, as well as with the cult of the mother goddess, Kybele.

When the goddess Hecate, who dominated in three domains, the sky, the earth and Tartarus, the Land of the Dead, first appeared in the ancient world, people primarily

Olympus with the giants in the Great Altar/Altar of Zeus exhibited at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. In one of these scenes, Hecate and Artemis, who is depicted with three bodies and multiple arms, are fighting the giants (EDMONDS 2011, 164, Fig. 8.6). Thus, it is clear that Hecate took an active role in one of the most important mythological struggles of the ancient period.

⁴⁴ DAŞBACAK 2008, 145.

⁴⁵ In Greek mythology, the three-headed Kerberos was the guardian of the underworld realm of the dead, where Hades ruled. From this, there is a clear relationship between Hecate, who carried the key to the realm of the Dead, and the canine figure of Kerberos. The dog-headed god Anubis in ancient Egypt has been equated to the three-headed dog, Kerberos, in Greek mythology.

⁴⁶ EDMONDS 2011, 84. The earliest surviving source that mentions the story of Persephone and Demeter is Homer's Demeter Hymn (DOWDEN 2011, 284). The legend tells that Demeter's daughter, Persephone/Kore, was kidnapped by Hades and taken underground; Demeter discovered the location of her daughter and made a deal with Hades that would force Persephone to spend three months of the year in the underworld and nine months of the year with her. Hecate was also included in this agreement, serving as the mediator to ensure that neither party broke the agreement (GRAVES 2010, 108-111; EDMONDS 2011, 83-84; DOWDEN 2011, 284). Kore/Persephone, who was not admitted to Olympus, was under the supervision of Hecate during her time with Demeter. As soon as her time expired, she returned to Tartarus, that is, the underworld, to be with Hades as the queen of the realm of the dead (GRAVES 2010, 135). Hecate played a role in every part of the legend, from the kidnapping of Demeter's daughter to the final decision. As the legend was related to fertility and the seasonal cycle, she was also associated with these two features of nature in her capacity as their patron goddess. It is understood from this legend that in addition to controlling the entrance of the realm of the dead, Hecate was given the power to control everything in the sea and on land, and in this sense was the patron goddess of wheat and agricultural abundance, both of which are important in the life of human beings. Hecate's connection with the seasonal cycle required for wheat to grow demonstrates her link to the lives of mortals. This link continues even into death, as she holds the key to the entrance of the realm of the dead. In other words, it is clear that Hecate had important divine influence over life and death. The seasons of spring, summer and winter in antiquity were symbolically related to the dog, mare and wolf, which were the symbols of Hecate.

identified her in terms of her destructive nature, but later, she came to be more recognized for her creative powers. There are sculptures depicting Hecate with three bodies placed at the intersection of three roads. These roads served as the places where secret magic rituals were performed in that period⁴⁷. People who wanted to be protected from Hecate and from those who served her would put the three-body Hecate figurines, known as Hecateion, either in front of their homes, at the gate, or at the intersections of the road routes⁴⁸.

Traces of the Hecate cult are found in the legends of Aphrodite, Artemis, Hera, Kore/Persephone, and Demeter. Of the many legends associated with Hecate in mythology, one of the most interesting ones is the mythological story about the rescue of Hesione by Heracles. In this story, King Laomedon, who did not keep his promise to Poseidon and Apollo, was punished by the gods, who forced him to dedicate his daughter Hesione to the sea monster sent to his country. Different versions of Hesione's rescue by Heracles have been passed down to us. In one version, to save his daughter Hesione from being exposed to the sea monster, the King declares that the notables of the region should also sacrifice one of their daughters, otherwise he would not offer his daughter, and the monster would remain in the region (this all took place before Heracles would go on to rescue his daughter Hesione). Laomedon even goes so far as to kill Phoinodamas, who refuses to give any of his three daughters, and sells his daughters to Sicilian merchants who are looking for sacrifices in wild animal shows. The girls brought to Sicily are saved by the goddess Aphrodite. Aigesta, the eldest of the three daughters, copulated with the river god Krimissos, who had disguised himself as a dog, and had a son⁴⁹. R. Graves reports that the three daughters of Phoinodamas actually represented the triple moon goddess, who dominated the island of Sicily⁵⁰. The author explains that the dog, which is sacred to Artemis, Aphrodite and Hecate, is also sacred to the moon goddess⁵¹. The triple⁵² moon goddess symbolizes the phases of the moon – the waxing, full, and waning moon. Interpreting this trio within the matriarchal context, it is believed that it refers to the seasons, with spring symbolizing a virgin, summer symbolizing a woman who is at the age of marriage, and winter symbolizing an old woman⁵³. Over time, this triad became identified with Mother Earth, but changed later, resulting in a much different trinity, where Selene represented a virgin in the sky, Aphrodite, a woman at the age of marriage on earth/in sea, and Hecate, an old woman in the underworld. Based on this understanding, the number three was considered sacred⁵⁴.

⁴⁷ R. Graves describes the fact that Hecate's effective control and authority over mortals was granted by Zeus is regarded as a compliment to the fearful Thessalian wizards of the time (GRAVES 2010, 153).

⁴⁸ AKYÜREK ŞAHİN 2016, 4, N. 18-19; STRELAN 2003, 151.

⁴⁹ GRAVES 2010, 703-705.

⁵⁰ GRAVES 2010, 709.

⁵¹ GRAVES 2010, 709.

⁵² R. Graves states that the sea goddesses, Thetis, Amphitrite and Nereis, were local and different forms of the Triple Moon Goddess (GRAVES 2010, 73). He highlights Amphitrite's story of revenge on Skylla, where he argues that Skylla represents the negative side of the Goddess and in this respect is associated with the concept of Hecate, the dog-headed Goddess of Death, who dominated the sea and land (GRAVES 2010, 74).

⁵³ GRAVES 2010, 16.

⁵⁴ GRAVES 2010, 16.

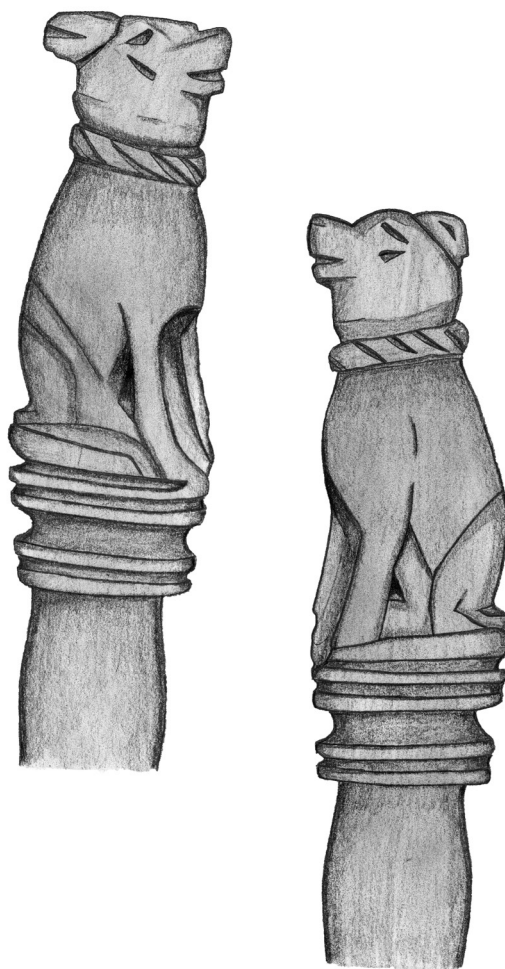


Figure 6 Finger distaff with dog representation 1 (detailed). – (Drawn by. Z. Çakmakçı).

R. Graves expands on this interpretation by referring to the legend of Appu, which belonged to the Hittites, a much older culture. He argues that the trilogy of virgin, woman at the age of marriage, and old woman actually referred to the fertility of women in matriarchal society. In the Hittite legend, the female leader of the community chose a man with whom she would spend a year and have children, and at the end of this one-year period, the woman, who would be disguised as a male dog, lion, pig, or mare, was cut into pieces by religious officials and eaten raw⁵⁵. The dog symbol associated with Selene, Artemis, Aphrodite and Hecate actually stems from legends belonging to a much older period and culture, where there was a matriarchal order.

The dog, one of the symbols of the goddess Hecate, was connected with the land of the dead, or the underworld, and with the mother goddess belief seen in various cultures that existed in different centuries in Anatolia. It was believed that the dog always remained with its owner and served as his/her protector, even in life after death. The bone fragments of dogs buried alongside their owner that have been uncovered in excavations of grave sites provide evidence of this belief.

⁵⁵ GRAVES 2010, 16

The dog figure is also included in purification rituals as one of the symbols of the Hecate cult⁵⁶. The Hecate figurines found at crossroads, at city entrances, and in front of gates of residences further indicate that the goddess's cult involved purification rituals. As one of the symbols of Hecate and her cult, the dog is associated with the plants and herbs used in magic to invoke death and the realm of the dead. Chthonic Hecate is symbolized by the dog to represent the underworld and death. In Christian teaching, the relationship between purification and the image of the dog has a different meaning. It is stated in the Book of Revelations that the blessed will wash their clothes, be purified of their sins, and thereby enter Paradise, while the dogs will remain outside⁵⁷. The dogs mentioned in the book of Revelations represent all the elements that have traces of the pagan beliefs in Anatolia. The negative connotations that the image of the dog takes on within the Christian system of believe can be attributed to the rejection of the Hecate cult and its connection with the afterlife in the pagan beliefs of the Greek and Roman cultures. In Christianity, the dog emerged as a metaphor symbolizing sin and sinners and was used in reference to heretics. In this regard, the role and status of the dog in pagan rituals was important. The dog is associated with the cults of Artemis in Greek mythology and the cults of Diana in Rome, and while dog symbolism was forbidden in the temples of some of the ancient cults, the dog was still revered as a sacred animal associated with certain divine beings. Dog bone remains were found on the altar of the Artemis temple in Ephesus, one of the most important ancient cities of Western Anatolia⁵⁸. Dogs were sacrificed in the name of the goddess, especially in the Hecate cult of the Caria region⁵⁹. Dog bone remains have not only been found in temples but also beside the bones of their owners in the excavation of ancient grave sites,⁶⁰ a testament to the enduring companion role dogs have had with humankind and the belief that the dog accompanied its owner in the afterlife. It is also possible that the dog was placed in the grave for reasons similar to the sacrifice of a dog in purification rituals. Was the dog sacrificed and buried with the owner as part of a purification process that would allow the dog entrance to the afterlife? Dog statues, as well as burial inscriptions referencing dogs, have been found in burial areas from the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Moreover, tombstones featuring dog depictions and engravings of dogs have also been found in excavations of grave areas⁶¹. Dogs were considered sacred for Hecate in antiquity, and puppies were sacrificed in honor of the goddess. The association of Hecate with birth as well as death gives new meaning to other symbolic meanings attributed to the dog. Under the epithet *Kourotrophos*, Hecate is described as the mother of everything who fed living things and as the assistant of birth⁶². Eileithyia, who, like Hecate, is associated with birth,

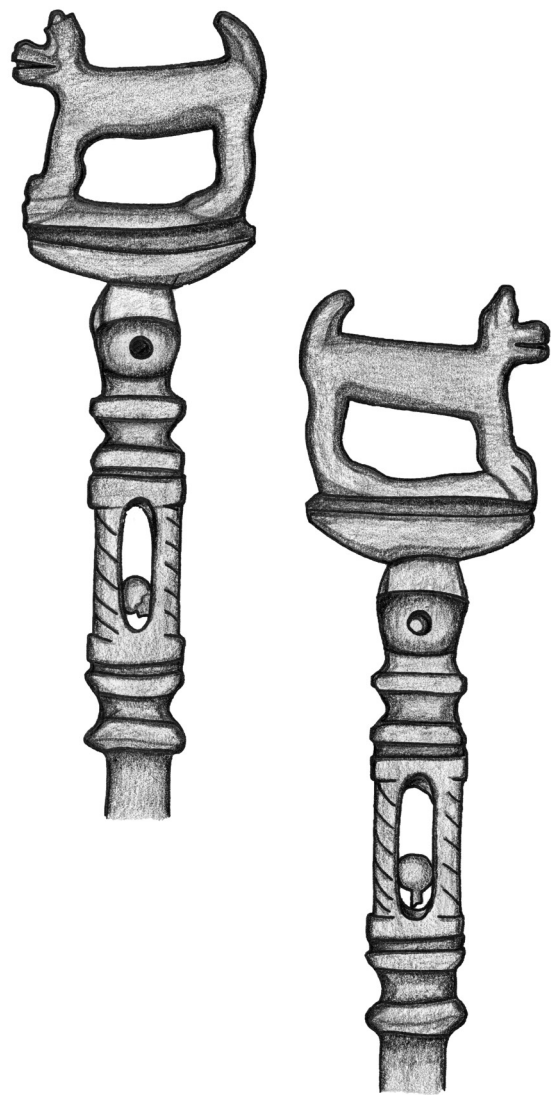


Figure 7 Drawing of finger distaff with dog representation 2 (detailed). – (Drawn by. Z. Çakmakçı).

is one of the goddesses to whom the dog was sacrificed in her honor. These sacrifices, which were probably made for both goddesses, were also carried out under the belief that it helped women to give birth more easily.

M. T. Bíró asserts that Aphrodite was regarded as not only the oldest Moirai but also as Hecate⁶³. The best explanation for this is the practice of offering dogs to Aphrodite Zerynthia that took place along the coastal region of Thrace⁶⁴. Otherworldly attributes of Aphrodite Zerynthia included *Androphoros*, who brought death, *Tymboryklos*, who buried graves, and *Epithymbidia*, who gave gifts to the grave⁶⁵. In ancient sources, in addition to goddesses like

⁵⁶ PRESTON DAY 1984, 29.

⁵⁷ Revelation, 22: 14-15.

⁵⁸ STRELAN 2003, 149.

⁵⁹ STRELAN 2003, 150.

⁶⁰ There are such grave finds in Sardis.

⁶¹ PRESTON DAY 1984, 31.

⁶² For information and views on Hecate's *Kourotrophos* aspect, see: WEST 1966, 289; HADZISTELIOU PRICE 1978, 192; CLAY 1984, 35-36; ÇELEBI 2017, 23, 31.

⁶³ Hecate, an ancient goddess whose most famous depiction is the triad form, attracted great attention in Athens.

⁶⁴ Archaeological findings have revealed that dog sacrifice ceremonies to the goddess were organized in the region known as the Zerynthion Cave or the Thracian Cave (SERGIS 2010, 69). Rituals in which a dog was sacrificed for purification from evil and sins are not an ancient tradition belonging to only the Thracian region. Pausanias, an author in antiquity, notes that puppies were also sacrificed in the city of Colophon (STRELAN 2003, 150, 154).

⁶⁵ In this respect, Aphrodite, known as the "goddess of love", is also

Demeter, Aphrodite, Leto and Artemis, who were associated with the underworld, other female characters in Greek mythology, like Iphigeneia, were accompanied by dogs⁶⁶. After presenting all this information, M. T. Bíró explains that the different attributes ascribed to Aphrodite, like love, birth, and death, also described the character of Hecate⁶⁷. In short, in antiquity, a woman was characterized as one who falls in love, gets married, gives birth to children for the continuation of the generation, and sustains the unity of the household. While Aphrodite was a cult figure in the life of women, Hecate was a patron goddess of the work women do throughout their life⁶⁸.

It was believed that Hecate, who also became a symbol of witchcraft based on her connection with the realm of the dead, appeared to wizards with a torch in both hands or in the form of a mare, a dog or a wolf. The wizard goddess Hecate is depicted as a divine being with three bodies and three heads, one a lion, one a dog, and one a mare⁶⁹. Some ancient sources even describe Hecate as the mother of the witch Kirke⁷⁰. Sculptures of the magical aspect of Hecate, in the form of a three-bodied or three-headed woman, were placed at the intersections of roads. Statues or attributes of Hecate, the patron goddess of witchcraft and healing power, were also placed in private homes. In excavations, magic rings and amulets with the name or description of Hecate have been found⁷¹. Studies conducted on pharmacology in the ancient world discuss the healing properties of plants for different diseases. The healing herb mandrake is mentioned as being sacred to Hecate⁷². Growing in the mysterious and magical garden of Hecate, the mandrake, just like the dog, represents the powers of the goddess in witchcraft and healing and her sovereignty over death and the realm of the dead.

THE DOG FIGURE AND FINGER DISTAFFS

The upper parts of finger distaffs, which were one of the main tools used in spinning throughout antiquity, were decorated with various depictions emphasizing their symbolic meaning. The most characteristic of these are female figures depicted standing alone or nursing her child, and depictions of Shy Aphrodite, known as *Venus Pudica* in Roman mythology. This iconography also included bird figures, such as doves and roosters. Dog depictions are even more rarely seen. It is quite natural to see depictions of women on finger distaffs, as they were used by women, either being kept hidden or serving as part of the rituals associated with them. These depictions mainly draw attention to the

fertility, loyalty and virtue of women. On distaffs where women are not depicted, animals or different metaphorical meanings attributed to them were depicted in their stead. The dove adorned some distaffs as a representation of one of the attributes of Venus. Images of a rooster, which was believed to provide protection with its apotropaic powers and was also associated with the land of the dead, as it accompanied the goddess Persephone to the underworld, were also placed on finger distaffs.⁷³ The depiction of a rooster on distaffs therefore served dual purposes, protecting the homes of women while they were living and accompanying them in their graves after they died.

There is much debate over why the dog figures seen in the two finger distaff specimens in the Haluk Perk Museum were placed on the finger distaffs and what or whom they symbolized. This issue needs to be studied in great detail considering that the dog was associated with many gods and goddesses in antiquity and evoked many symbolic meanings. Moreover, within this context, it is also important to consider the relationship between finger distaffs and the death ritual, since they were found in women's graves and depicted on tombstones. The dog has a close connection with the cult of death and the realm of the dead because it is associated with various underground gods and goddesses. In this sense, the dog is seen as a guard protecting the soul and grave of the deceased woman and as a loyal companion accompanying her on her death journey. To gain a better understanding of the canine iconography seen on finger distaffs it is important to also examine how they were depicted. On one of the finger distaffs in the Haluk Perk Museum, the dog is shown seated on its hind legs and with a collar around its neck (figs. 2, 3, 6). This obedient and submissive stance symbolize the dog's loyalty and commitment to its owner. In the other figure of the dog on the distaff, it is depicted as standing, with its ears and tail raised (figs. 4, 5, 7). The idea of protection is emphasized with this stance, symbolizing the dog's vigilance against possible dangers. Loyalty and protection, two of the most characteristic features of the dog, are also closely related to the symbolic meanings expressed by the finger distaffs. A metaphorical relationship is asserted between the woman and the dog by depicting or placing the dog figure on the finger distaffs, which served to symbolize the virtue belonging to women. With these finger distaffs, the loyalty of the dog and the protection it gives to its owner, the woman's commitment to her husband and children, and the maternal instinct of protection are underlined.

In antiquity, finger distaffs represented the fertility of women and naturally, the perception of fertility. The dog, on the other hand, as an animal that gives birth to many puppies, is known for its fertility, among other features, and is therefore associated with birth goddesses. The ritual of sacrificing dogs to ease women's birth process was common in antiquity. Therefore, another reason for the presence of the dog depiction on distaffs was that it referred to fertility and bounty, two of the most important virtues of women, and glorified them in the eyes of society in antiquity. The

identified with Venus Libitina, the goddess of death, with these attributes (BÍRÓ 1994, 217).

⁶⁶ Some narratives report that Artemis immortalized Iphigeneia by identifying her with Hecate, which would explain why the dog, one of Hecate's attributes, accompanied Iphigeneia (GRIMAL 2012, 329).

⁶⁷ Aphrodite, who is not mentioned among the gods and goddesses of Olympus, was popular not only in the Greek culture, but was also known and respected over a very wide geographical area.

⁶⁸ BÍRÓ 1994, 1994.

⁶⁹ WEST 1966, 276; Hesiod: Theogony 411-52; GRAVES 2010, 150; TORLAK 2019, 337.

⁷⁰ GRIMAL 2012, 228, 376.

⁷¹ STRELAN 2003, 155; ENDREFFY/NAGY 2020, 178; SUÁREZ DE LA TORRE 2019, 211-232.

⁷² STRELAN 2003, 155.

⁷³ For views and evaluations about the rooster depicted on distaffs, see: "Fingerkunkel mit figürlicher Bekrönung in Form eines Hahns" (Distaff with Rooster Depiction), <https://westfalen.museum-digital.de/index.php?t=objekt&oges=256> (accessed on: 03.08.2020).

dog-depicted distaff that a woman brought to her new home as part of the marriage ceremony served as a symbol of guarantee of her loyalty to the family, her guardianship, and the continuation of the generation through her fertility.

The belief that dogs provided purification and healing against diseases in the cult of various gods and goddesses also adds a new meaning to the dog depiction on the distaffs. In ancient times, dogs were sacrificed or involved in healing and purification rituals through traditions based on ⁷⁴ Hittite and Ancient Mesopotamian ⁷⁵ medicine. These beliefs and practices might have contributed to the use of dog symbolism on finger distaffs in antiquity, insofar as these depictions of dogs served as a symbol of reminder of the healing power of dogs. In addition to the facilitating role of the dog during the birth process, dogs may have been depicted on distaffs as a symbolic figure that protected the mother and the baby and ensured that they would live in well-being and good health throughout their lives.

Finger distaffs are often associated with the Aphrodite cult because of the depictions of *Venus Pudica* commonly seen on the upper parts, or the pigeon depictions that symbolize the goddess. However, the presence of the dog depiction on the distaffs raises the question of whether the goddess Hecate, one of whose symbols is the dog, played a role in the tradition of spinning and the beliefs related to it in antiquity. Hecate was associated with the underworld and death, as she was given the task of opening and closing the gates of the underworld, as well as of protecting it. In addition to having the key that opened the gate to the realm of the dead, the goddess Hecate also had a very strong relationship with the dog on account of the three-headed dog Kerberos, who guarded this gate and became identified with it. ⁷⁶ This relationship should be kept in mind when discussing whether Hecate had an influence on placing finger distaffs in women's graves and depicting them on tombstones. It is possible that the lady of the house was buried together with the dog-depicted distaff she had kept at home so that she could readily enter the realm of the dead, which was dominated by Hecate. Other qualities attributed to Hecate, besides those associated with life after death, could have had an impact on women and spinning. The belief that the goddess had protective and healing powers against evil offers a possible alternative meaning to the dog depictions on the finger distaffs. The fact that the goddess is mentioned together with witchcraft, healing, and purification raises the possibility that the dog-depicted finger distaffs were concealed as a source of magical power or as an amulet by the woman of the house so that she could be under the protection of Hecate, both in life and in death. Hecate's *Kourotrophos* aspect, under which she is seen as the mother of everything that feeds living beings and as the assistant of childbirth, strengthens the relationship between Hecate

and women. In this context, it is possible to assume that the dog evokes or replaces Hecate as an animal that has strong fertility, is sacrificed to enable pregnant women to give birth easily and accompanies the birth goddesses.

In summary, the dog-depicted finger distaffs are believed to have been placed in the graves of dead women to serve as a guard protecting the deceased woman's soul and grave, where the dog in this sense served as a faithful and obedient companion to accompany her in the realm of the dead. For women who were still alive, these objects with dog depictions represented the woman's feelings of loyalty and protection, which are metaphorically connected with the dog and refer to the abundance that she will bring to her home. The depiction of distaffs, alongside other personal items, such as mirrors, combs, and perfume bottles, on gravestones highlights the status of women in society while they were alive, serving to indicate that the tomb belonged to a virtuous wife and a good mother. In addition, considering the various meanings attributed to dog symbolism in antiquity, these objects probably functioned as a kind of protective amulet that safeguarded mothers and their babies during pregnancy and birth and shielded their families and homes from all kinds of evil in daily life, enabling them to live in well-being and good health. In this context, special attention should be given to the goddess Hecate, whose stories and symbols were highly popular in the ancient world. The placement of finger distaffs with depictions of dogs in the graves of women can be attributed to the belief that Hecate eased the transition to life after death for women. This interpretation is supported by the coincidence of mostly depictions of finger distaffs on ancient woman's tombstones in Anatolia and the acceptance of Hecate as one of the goddesses of Anatolian origin.

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⁷⁴ For more information on the use of puppies for purification and healing in the Hittite civilization, see: COLLINS 1990, 211-226.

⁷⁵ The dog is associated with various healing gods and goddesses in ancient Mesopotamian societies, and dogs were included in healing rituals and treatments. For more detailed information on this, see: DUYMUŞ FLORIOTI 2014, 45-60.

⁷⁶ Similar to the three-headed Kerberos, the three-headed depiction of Hecate symbolizes the trio of Heaven, Earth and Hell (ZMARZLINSKI 2020, 59).

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