

Károly Kerényi (1897-1973) was born in Timisoara, then in Hungarian territory, in 1897. After acquiring a classical education at the University of Budapest and during several study sojourns in Germany, he became a professor of Greek and Latin Philology and Ancient History in Pécs and taught as a freelance lecturer in the Hungarian capital, but radical opposition to Nazism hampered his academic activities. After residing in Canton Ticino during the war, he decided to settle in Switzerland, leaving communist Hungary. Carl Gustav Jung introduced him to the Eranos Conferences, of which he became one of the points of reference during the 1940s, and, after moving to the Helvetic Confederation, invited him several times to teach in Zurich, establishing with him a fruitful relationship of friendship and collaboration. Kerényi combined rigorous philological expertise with a desire to identify the deep meaning of ancient religious experience, the core of which he grasped, through an innovative rereading of some of Leo Frobenius' and Walter Otto's themes, in the *Ergriffenheit*, being grasped by the divine, theorized within the framework of a profoundly humanistic vision. The original approach to the religions of the classical world – and especially to the subject of myth – expressed in an impressive scholarly output makes Kerényi a leading figure in the intellectual debate of his time. This is demonstrated, among other things, by the intense correspondence exchanges he had with Thomas Mann and Hermann Hesse and the fruitful dialogue he established with the philosophers of religion of the time. Kerényi died in Zurich in 1973.

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THE MYSTERIES OF THE KABEIROI

KÁROLY KERÉNYI



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INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF ANCIENT MYSTERIES

APPENDIX: CASTELLO DI TEGNA.
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARALLEL
TO A SANCTUARY IN THE AREA OF THEBES

Edited by Natale Spineto



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The essay *The Mysteries of the Kabeiroi*. Introduction to the Study of Ancient Mysteries, first presented as the opening paper at the Eranos Conference in August 1944 devoted to "The Mysteries," constitutes a model of Károly Kerényi's way of proceeding, which is based on a very broad and very deep knowledge of the testimonies of the classical world – literary as well as figurative – read and made to interact with a strict respect for philology and at the same time with an exceptional interpretive acuity. In it, certain peculiarities of mythology and cults relating to the Kabeiroi are explained within the framework of an original conception of the Greek mysteries, whose construction unravels throughout Kerényi's work but whose features are here synthesized and expounded with a particular thoroughness and effectiveness. The background is a particular view of ancient religion, which takes up in a new way certain ideas of Leo Frobenius and Walter F. Otto and for the description of which the mystery rituals constitute a privileged point of departure. In this edition, as in the first one, published in the 1944 *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, the study on the Kabeiroi is followed by a proposal for an original interpretation of the excavations of the Roman ruins of the Castle of Tegna, which had been started a few years ago at the time, and currently one of the most significant archaeological sites in Canton Ticino located north of the village of Tegna, a hamlet of the Swiss municipality of Terre di Pedemonte.