

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Critical Survey of Mythology and Folklore: Gods & Goddesses, by Salem Press, examines the major and minor deities from a broad range of regions and cultures throughout the world. It is the fourth part of the Critical Survey of Mythology series, which also includes *World Mythology*, *Heroes & Heroines*, and *Love, Sexuality & Desire*. This set is distinguished by contemporary perspectives on the cultural contexts from which mythology and folklore originate. Each of the ten sections in the set examine the culture or civilization in which these gods and goddesses were important by reviewing the religious practices, literature, mythology, and culture prevalent in each region. The gods and goddesses are discussed in detail to paint a picture of the powers and significance they held. A section that provides further richness and depth explores sacred sites, such as temples, groves, or caves; important figures; and sacred books and other writings. The sections conclude with essays that examine selected stories related to creation or the explanation of how humans acquired music, fire, or other gifts from the gods.

Readers will note common subjects in tales from widely divergent regions in the world. Creation, love and loss, adventure and bravery, and cultural heroes are important motifs in tales across cultures and periods. Even today, these same stories are at the heart of contemporary story-telling in novels, poems, music, and films.

The aim of this collection is to further the study of the divine creatures who enlivened the daily lives, culture, and literature of the world, from the dawn of civilization up to the present. Designed for advanced high school and college students, essays emphasize the major approaches to analyzing mythology and folklore, including such commonly studied topics as gender, cross-cultural meaning, and religion, among other areas of contemporary interest.

The collection includes 524 entries, organized into ten world regions—Greece, Rome, Norse, Celtic & European, The Americas; Near East; Far East; India; Egypt; Africa; and The Pacific. There are 26 overview essays devoted to setting the stage for understanding how the gods and goddesses of the region influenced daily life. The set includes 140 essays devoted to individual gods and goddesses with details regarding their symbols, the

country or culture in which they were most significant, their parentage, siblings, spouses, and children, as well as the specific role they played in the overall mythology of a region. In 196 articles, important poems and books; the holy men and women devoted to the gods and goddesses; sacred spots like lakes, wells, springs, groves, temples, and pyramids; and the practices or cults that surrounded the gods and goddesses are detailed. Essays provide plot summaries and analyses of 101 selected stories, including 38 creation stories, about the gods and goddesses featured in this set.

Maps & Mythological Figures, found in the front matter, presents twelve maps and charts detailing the cultural or geographic placement of many of the deities, authors, and tales included in the set. The Indexes in Volume 2 include the following:

- Civilizations, Cultures & Sacred Places
- Creation Stories
- Gods & Goddesses by Region
- Practices & Cults by Region
- Sacred & Important Figures by Region
- Chronological List of Stories & Sacred Texts
- Bibliography by Region
- Mythology in the Classroom, which explains major approaches to studying mythology and fairy tales.
- Sample Lesson Plan, devoted to creation stories, accompanies the essay on teaching mythology in the classroom. The aim is to provide one model for comparative analysis.
- Subject Index

CONTRIBUTORS

Salem Press would like to extend its appreciation to all involved in the development and production of this work. The essays are written and signed by scholars and writers in a variety of disciplines in the humanities. Without these expert contributions, a project of this nature would not be possible. A full list of contributor's names and affiliations appears in the front matter of this volume.

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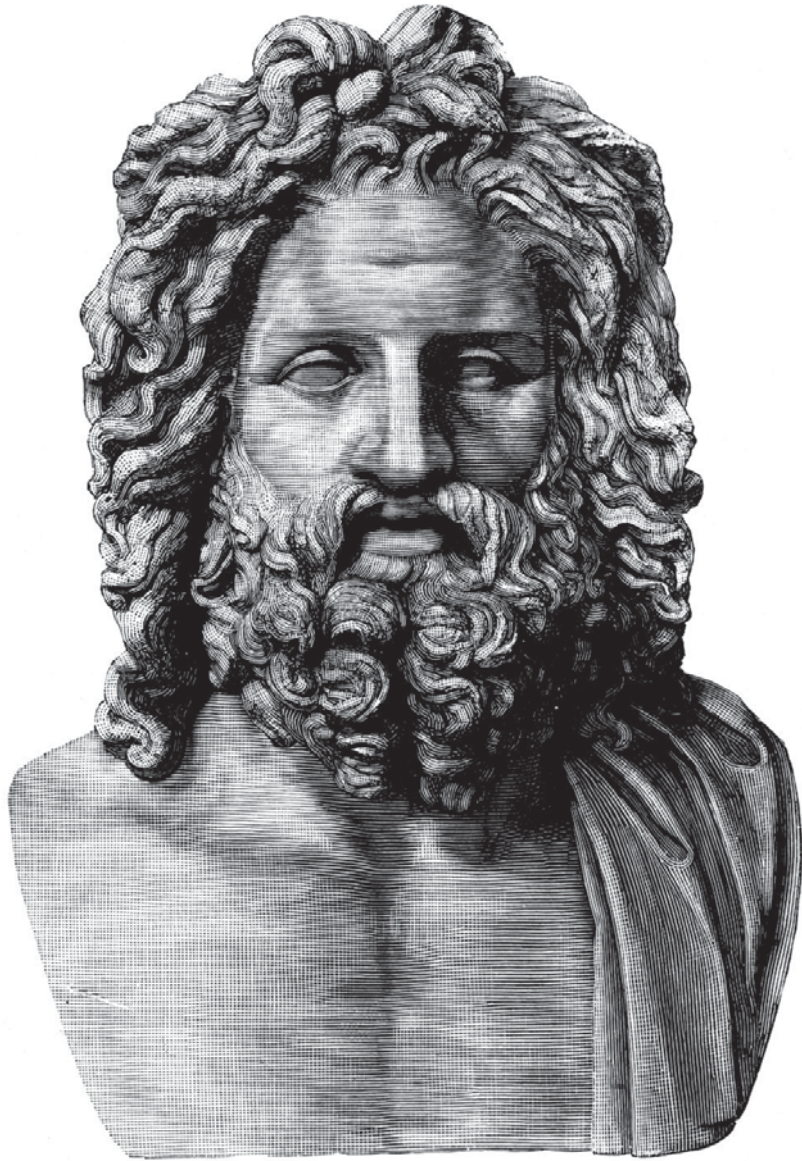
GREECE

OVERVIEWS

GODS & GODDESSES

SACRED FIGURES, PLACES, PRACTICES & TEXTS

SELECTED STORIES



OVERVIEWS



◆ Religion & Mythology

The civilization of Ancient Greece refers to a period that began during the Greek Dark Ages (c. 1200-800 BCE) and lasted until the Roman conquest of Greece in 146 BCE. The ancient Greeks were known for their mythology—the myths and legends of their twelve major gods and heroes that formed one aspect of their religion. Though not all religious principles were universal among all Greek peoples, many of their myths and beliefs were commonly shared. Prior to the Hellenistic Age, one of the four main periods of ancient Greece—about the fourth century BCE—no recorded collection of Greek myths existed that could be compared to the religious writings of other civilizations, such as the *Vedas* or the Bible. Instead, the religion and mythology of Greece survived through the oral tradition, such as mothers teaching the stories to their children.

BACKGROUND & HISTORY

Archaeological evidence from caves near the modern city of Delphi suggests that as early as 4000 BCE, the ancient inhabitants of Greece were worshipping a mother goddess, Gaia, who personified Earth. A female deity

was certainly worshipped in Minoan culture, around 2000 BCE. The male god Apollo, the Sun god, replaced this cult around the eighth century BCE. When the Mycenaeans, who were of Indo-European background, invaded the Greek mainland around 2000 BCE, they brought not only advanced weapons and chariots with horses, but also their own myths and gods, such as Zeus, the god of sky and thunder, and the king of all other Greek gods. Discovered tablets reveal a familiar list of the ancient Greek deities.

MYTHOLOGY

Much of our knowledge of pre-classical Greek mythology comes from the writings of Homer and Hesiod, among other lesser-known poets. Homer, who may have been a grouping of poets rather than a single individual, offers a great deal of information pertaining to Greek mythology in his epic poems, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Hesiod's *Theogony*, particularly his creation story, is another pertinent source that describes the origins of Greek deities. Other ancient texts that provide insight into ancient Greek mythology include the Homeric Hymns, a collection of Greek hymns that celebrate gods and goddesses.

GODS & GODDESSES



◆ Aphrodite

Symbols: Dove; pomegranate; swan; scallop shell

Culture: Greek

Mother: None or Dione

Father: Uranus or Zeus

Siblings: Ares; Athena; Apollo; Artemis; Hermes

Children: Eros; Phobos; Deimos; Harmonia; Hermaphroditos; Aeneas

OVERVIEW

Aphrodite was one of the principal goddesses in Greek mythology; in Roman mythology, she is known as Venus. Aphrodite is primarily known as the goddess of love, beauty, and desire. The events of Aphrodite's birth have been the subject of much debate, but two main versions of the story are accepted. One version comes from Book V in *Iliad*, Homer's epic. In this telling of the story, the Greek poet states that Aphrodite was the daughter of Zeus and Dione, who was one of Zeus's ancient wives. The most well-known story of Aphrodite's birth, however, is detailed by the Greek poet Hesiod in his epic poem *Theogony*. In this version, Aphrodite is born from the sea. According to this myth, the Titan Cronus

castrates his father Uranus and throws the severed parts into the sea, where they begin to produce foam. Aphrodite emerges out of this sea spray as a naked adult, and she floats to shore in a large scallop shell. The Greek word *aphros*, meaning "foam," is the goddess's namesake. Due to the manner in which Aphrodite was born, she is sometimes considered to be a goddess of the sea, although this was not her primary role in mythology.

IN MYTHOLOGY

As the Greek goddess of love and beauty, Aphrodite was heavily involved in the affairs of both immortals and mortals. Due to her enrapturing beauty, she possessed a great deal of power that she often used to her own benefit. Knowing that Aphrodite's irresistible nature and beauty could pose problems—or even a war—among the gods, Zeus decided that he would marry her to Hephaestus, the blacksmith god, Zeus believed that Hephaestus was the perfect choice to hold off any conflict between the gods because he was deformed and unattractive. Although Hephaestus was quite pleased with his luck at marrying the beautiful Aphrodite, the goddess herself was certainly not happy with the arrangement. Hephaestus was so thrilled with the marriage that



Aphrodite of the Syracuse type. Parian marble, Roman copy of the 2nd century CE after a Greek original of the 4th century BCE; neck, head and left arm are restorations by Antonio Canova. Found at Baiae, Southern Italy.

he crafted many beautiful gifts and jewels for his new bride, including an ornate golden girdle, or *cestus*, that was woven with magic. When Aphrodite wore this girdle, no one, man or god, could resist her—an especially dangerous gift considering her innate irresistibility. Unfortunately for Hephaestus, when the opportunity presented itself, Aphrodite took advantage of her husband's distraction to seek out a lover. Ares, god of war, became this lover. Ares and Aphrodite's affair continued for a long time and resulted in the birth of three children: Harmonia, Phobos, and Deimos.

Aphrodite had many other lovers, both mortal and immortal, but perhaps her most well-known affair was with Adonis. Aphrodite cursed the mother of Adonis, Myrrha, out of jealousy that she could be even more beautiful than the most beautiful goddess. Out of jealousy, therefore, she turned Adonis's mother into a myrrh tree. Adonis was born from this tree, and once found by Aphrodite, he was taken to Persephone in the underworld for safekeeping. When Aphrodite returned many years later and found that Adonis has grown into a strikingly gorgeous man, she became determined to take him from Persephone. The two quarrelled, but Adonis ultimately chose Aphrodite, and the two remained together until a boar killed him during a hunt. To mark the sorrow resulting from his death, women celebrated Adonis, Aphrodite, and their love during the festival of Adonia.

According to myth, Aphrodite was also involved in instigating the legendary romance between Paris and Helen. Prince Paris of Troy was selected to judge a competition between the three most beautiful goddesses of Olympus—Aphrodite, Hera, and Athena. Burdened with the task of choosing which of the three was the most beautiful, Paris was bribed by each goddess. For her bribe, Aphrodite promised that he would have the love and affection of the most beautiful mortal woman, Helen of Sparta. This competition led to the love affair of Paris and Helen—and subsequently, the Trojan War.

ORIGINS & CULTS

Many scholars of ancient Greek mythology believe that the goddess Aphrodite had early origins in East Asian culture, and many of her attributes and inspiration came to the Western world via Cyprus and Cythera. Many believed Aphrodite's birth occurred near these islands, as well, because her other names, Cytherea and Cypris, appear to be derived from these island names. Eventually, philosophers began to see Greek mythology's Aphrodite as a combination of two distinct versions of her origin

story. According to this view, the two versions of her birth story relate to two separate figures. One of these distinct figures was referred to as *Aphrodite Ourania* (“heavenly Aphrodite”), and this Aphrodite was born from the sea and represented spiritual love. The other figure, *Aphrodite Pandemos* (“common Aphrodite”), who was the daughter of Zeus and Dione, was the goddess of desire, or physical love.

Aphrodite was primarily worshipped at Paphos, on the island of Cyprus, and at Amathus, on the island of Cythera, sites closest to the goddess’s birth. However, she also had temples throughout the Greek mainland, most notably at Corinth and Athens. The common public worshipped Aphrodite; so too did prostitutes and courtesans, who considered the goddess their patron. Performing intercourse with the priestesses located at the temples of Aphrodite was considered an act of worship. Aphrodite was celebrated with several festivals throughout the year, including the festivals of Aphrodisia and Adonia. In addition to intercourse as a display of worship, followers of Aphrodite brought ceremonial offerings to her temples, which included fruit and flowers (a symbol of fertility), as well as incense and sweet wine.

IN POPULAR CULTURE

Aphrodite is often depicted in sculpture and painting as nude, either standing or sitting. The goddess was the inspiration and model for one of the most famous sculptures, the *Venus de Milo*, which was sculpted around 100 BCE. Additionally, the famous Botticelli Renaissance painting, *The Birth of Venus*, which depicts the goddess emerging from the sea in a scallop shell, represents Aphrodite’s birth scene.

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—Mia Minichiello

◆ Apollo

Symbols: bow & arrow, lyre

Culture: Greco-Roman

Mother: Leto

Father: Zeus

Siblings: Artemis

Children: Many, most notably Asclepius

OVERVIEW

Apollo was a figure of central importance and great complexity in Greek and Roman mythology. In various times and places, Apollo was recognized as the god of the sun, the god of prophecy and divination, the god of music and poetry, and the god of both disease and healing. Apollo was the patron god of the Oracle at Delphi on Mount Parnassus, where priests and priestesses would seek knowledge of the future through trances and visions that he was believed to inspire. Apollo was the inventor of the lyre and the greatest lute player. He was a strong supporter of Troy in Homer’s account of the Trojan War and its aftermath.

Apollo’s father was Zeus, the greatest of the twelve Olympian gods. Apollo’s mother was the goddess Leto, who also gave birth to Apollo’s twin sister Artemis, the goddess of wild animals and hunting. Leto was a Titan who belonged to the generation of gods before Zeus and the Olympians.

The origin of the name Apollo is uncertain and subject to scholarly dispute. A possible ancient Greek origin would link it to words for *sheepfold* or *assembly*. An alternate possibility links the name to the Middle Eastern god Aplu, the god of plague, who later became associated with the Babylonian god of the sun. Identifying



Apollo, God of Light, Eloquence, Poetry and the Fine Arts with Urania, Muse of Astronomy, Charles Meynier.

Apollo as god of the sun (he is sometimes known as Phoebus) is probably a later historical development, perhaps as late as the third century BCE.

IN MYTHOLOGY

The Homeric Hymns, a very early source that predates the poet Homer by several centuries, identify the island of Delos as the birthplace of Apollo. Zeus's wife Hera, enraged that her husband had impregnated Leto, decreed that Leto could give birth nowhere that was on solid earth. Hera was jealous and angry and felt threatened by Leto's stature and liaison with Zeus.

Leto wandered until she found the island of Delos. Because many thought it was not a true island but instead floated on the waters of the Aegean Sea, it thus appeared to be a place not truly of the earth. So here she could give birth without violating Hera's decree. But the inhabitants of Delos feared the wrath of Hera if they allowed Leto's children to be born here, so Leto promised that her son would always favor them. She said, "If you have the temple of far-shooting Apollo, all men will bring you hecatombs [large, public sacrifices] and gather here, and incessant savor of rich sacrifice will always arise, and you will feed those who dwell in you."

Only four days after Apollo's birth, Hera sent a serpent, Python, to hunt down and kill Leto for the crime of having conceived and borne children with Hera's husband Zeus. The young Apollo cornered and killed Python with a bow and arrow at the cave in Delphi that became the site of the Oracle. For this incident, Apollo is sometimes known as Pythian Apollo, and the presiding priestess at the Oracle at any given time was called Pythia.

Bow and arrow figure prominently in other stories about Apollo. He and his sister Artemis slew with bow and arrow many of the children of

Niobe, who had boasted that her fertility exceeded that of Leto. Apollo is depicted at the beginning of Homer's *Iliad* in the act of raining down arrows infected with plague upon the Greek soldiers encamped before the walls of Troy. It was Apollo who guided the arrow, shot from the bow of Paris, that killed Achilles near the end of the *Iliad*.

Apollo's identification as a god of healing is the converse of his role as god of disease and plague. It was his wrath that brought plague and disease to mortals; but when appeased by those same mortals, he would provide them relief. Apollo's son Asclepius was even more closely identified as a god of healing; the staff of

Asclepius has become over time a symbol of the healing arts.

Several stories cast Apollo's musical abilities in the context of competition. In one such story, Apollo, playing his lyre, decisively defeated the god Pan, who was playing his pipes. The only listener who dissented was Midas, who protested the results of the contest. As punishment for marring his otherwise perfect victory, Apollo caused Midas's ears to become the ears of a donkey.

Revered for his physical beauty and masterful musicianship, Apollo was nevertheless unlucky in love. He gave the gift of prophecy to Cassandra, daughter of the Trojan king Priam. When she later rejected his advances, he cursed her, saying that no one would ever believe her prophecies. The nymph Sinope demanded that he grant her one favor before accepting his courtship; the favor turned out to be a promise that she could remain a virgin until her death. In other episodes, as well, Apollo was thwarted in love and often responded with vindictive rage.

ORIGINS & CULTS

Many scholars claim an eastern origin for the god Apollo, based upon linguistic evidence, including the possible derivation of his name from Aplu and his strong partisanship for the eastern land of Troy in the Trojan War. Though he was revered and worshipped throughout the ancient world, the two main cult centers for Apollo were Delos, marking his birthplace, and Delphi, where he slew Python and became the patron of the Oracle. Both of these sites were associated with Apollo from at least the eighth century BCE, as was an important temple in Thebes that is perhaps even older. Traditions of the Oracle at Delphi record hundreds of oracular statements, the most famous of these being "Know Thyself," which Plato cited as a central goal in the philosophy of Socrates.

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—Michael Joseph, D. Min.

◆ Ares

Symbols: Spear and helmet; shield; sword; or armor

Culture: Greco–Roman

Mother: Hera

Father: Zeus

Siblings: Hephaestus; Aphrodite; Hermes; Athena; Apollo; Artemis; Dionysus; Persephone; Eris

Children: Phobos; Deimos; Nike; Harmonia; Eros; Anteros; Enyalios

OVERVIEW

Ares was the Greek god of war. He is similar to the Roman god Mars, but Ares was never as popular as Mars. Ares represented boldness and strength, but only in combat. He loved conflict, death, and destruction, and it is sometimes said that he was more the god of horror and confusion than of war. The Greek playwright Aeschylus wrote that Ares was violent and respected no one. As a result, Ares was not liked by the majority of gods and goddesses. He is often contrasted with his sister, Athena, who was also a war maker. However, Athena had wisdom. She valued skill in battle, not just bloodshed, and she often protected people.

Though not liked, Ares had many followers. Some of these were lesser deities, such as his sister Eris, whose name means "strife." Ares was also often accompanied by his sons, Phobos and Deimos, whose names mean "fear" and "terror." The name of his daughter, Nike, means "victory." Cultures that valued combat worshipped Ares because they thought he could help them obtain victory in battle. Wars were common among the many small kingdoms in and around Greece. Believing Ares was on a kingdom's side would encourage those doing the fighting.

IN MYTHOLOGY

Ares was the son of Zeus, the king of the Greek gods. Zeus became king when he overthrew his father, Cronus.