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Atlas (mythology)

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In Greek mythology, **Atlas** (/ˈætləs/; Ancient Greek: Ἄτλας) was the primordial Titan who held up the celestial spheres. He is also the titan of astronomy and navigation. Although associated with various places, he became commonly identified with the Atlas Mountains in northwest Africa (Modern-day Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia).^[1] Atlas was the son of the Titan Iapetus and the Oceanid Asia^[2] or Clymene.^[3]

In contexts where a Titan and a Titaness are assigned each of the seven planetary powers, Atlas is paired with Phoebe and governs the moon.^[4]

Hyginus emphasises the primordial nature of Atlas by making him the son of Aether and Gaia.^[5]

The first part of the term *Atlantic Ocean* refers to "Sea of Atlas", the term *Atlantis* refers to "island of Atlas".

Contents

- 1 Etymology
- 2 Punishment
 - 2.1 Variations
- 3 Encounter with Heracles
- 4 Etruscan Aril
- 5 Children
- 6 Cultural influence
- 7 See also
- 8 Notes
- 9 References
- 10 External links

Etymology

The etymology of the name *Atlas* is uncertain. Virgil took pleasure in translating etymologies of Greek names by combining them with adjectives that explained them: for Atlas his adjective is *durus*, "hard, enduring",^[6]

Atlas



Titan of Astronomy

Abode	Western edge of Gaia (<i>the Earth</i>)
Symbol	Globe
Parents	Iapetus and Asia or Clymene
Children	Hesperides, Hyades, Hyas, Pleiades, Calypso, Dione and Maera
Roman equivalent	Atlas

which suggested to George Doig^[7] that Virgil was aware of the Greek τλῆναι "to endure"; Doig offers the further possibility that Virgil was aware of Strabo's remark that the native North African name for this mountain was *Douris*. Since the Atlas mountains rise in the region inhabited by Berbers, it has been suggested that the name might be taken from one of the Berber, specifically *ádrār* 'mountain'.^[8]

Traditionally historical linguists etymologize the Ancient Greek word Ἄτλας (genitive: Ἄτλαντος) as comprised from copulative α- and the Proto-Indo-European root **telh₂-* 'to uphold, support' (whence also τλῆναι), and which was later reshaped to an nt-stem.^[9] However, Robert Beekes argues that it cannot be expected that this ancient Titan carries an Indo-European name, and that we're rather dealing with the word of Pre-Greek origin which often end in *-ant*.^[9]

Punishment

Atlas and his brother Menoetius sided with the Titans in their war against the Olympians, the Titanomachy. When the Titans were defeated, many of them (including Menoetius) were confined to Tartarus, but Zeus condemned Atlas to stand at the western edge of Gaia (the Earth) and hold up Uranus on his shoulders, to prevent the two from resuming their primordial embrace. Thus, he was *Atlas Telamon*, "enduring Atlas," and became a doublet of Coeus, the embodiment of the celestial axis around which the heavens revolve.^[10]

A common misconception today is that Atlas was forced to hold the Earth on his shoulders, but Classical art shows Atlas holding the celestial spheres, not a globe; the solidity of the marble globe born by the renowned Farnese Atlas may have aided the conflation, reinforced in the 16th century by the developing usage of *atlas* to describe a corpus of terrestrial maps.

Variations

In a late story,^[11] a giant named Atlas tried to drive a wandering Perseus from the place where the Atlas mountains now stand. In Ovid's telling,^[12] Perseus revealed Medusa's head, turning Atlas to stone (those very mountains) when he tried to drive him away, as a prophecy said that a son of Zeus would steal the golden apples. As is not uncommon in myth, this account cannot be reconciled with the far more common stories of Atlas' dealings with Heracles, who was Perseus' great-grandson.

According to Plato, the first king of Atlantis was also named Atlas, but that Atlas was a son of Poseidon and the mortal woman

Cleito.^[13] A euhemerist origin for Atlas was as a legendary Atlas, king of Mauretania, an expert astronomer.

Encounter with Heracles



Sculpture of Atlas, Praza do Toural, Santiago de Compostela.



Greco-Buddhist (1-200 BC) Atlas, supporting a Buddhist monument, Hadda, Afghanistan.

One of the Twelve Labors of the hero Heracles was to fetch some of the golden apples which grow in Hera's garden, tended by Atlas' daughters, the Hesperides, and guarded by the dragon Ladon. Heracles went to Atlas and offered to hold up the heavens while Atlas got the apples from his daughters.

Upon his return with the apples, however, Atlas attempted to trick Heracles into carrying the sky permanently by offering to deliver the apples himself, as anyone who purposely took the burden must carry it forever, or until someone else took it away. Heracles, suspecting Atlas did not intend to return, pretended to agree to Atlas' offer, asking only that Atlas take the sky again for a few minutes so Heracles could rearrange his cloak as padding on his shoulders. When Atlas set down the apples and took the heavens upon his shoulders again, Heracles took the apples and ran away.

In some versions,^[14] Heracles instead built the two great Pillars of Hercules to hold the sky away from the earth, liberating Atlas much as he liberated Prometheus.

Etruscan Aril

The identifying name *Aril* is inscribed on two 5th-century Etruscan bronze items, a mirror from Vulci and a ring from an unknown site.^[15] Both objects depict the encounter with Atlas of Hercle, the Etruscan Heracles, identified by the inscription; they represent rare instances where a figure from Greek mythology is imported into Etruscan mythology, but the name is not. The Etruscan name *aril* is etymologically independent.

Children

Sources describe Atlas as the father, by different goddesses, of numerous children, mostly daughters. Some of these are assigned conflicting or overlapping identities or parentage in different sources.

- By Hesperius:
 - the Hesperides^[16]
- By Pleione (or Aethra^[17]):
 - the Hyades^[18]
 - a son, Hyas^[18]
 - the Pleiades^[19]
- By one or more unspecified goddesses:
 - Calypso^[20]
 - Dione^[21]
 - Maera^[22]

Cultural influence

Atlas' best-known cultural association is in cartography. The first publisher to associate the Titan Atlas with a group of maps was the print-seller Antonio Lafreri, on the engraved title-page he applied to his *ad hoc* assemblages of maps, *Tavole Moderne Di Geografia De La Maggior Parte Del Mondo Di Diversi Autori* (1572);^[24] however, he did not use the word "atlas" in the title of his work, an innovation of Gerardus Mercator,



Lee Lawrie's colossal bronze *Atlas*, Rockefeller Center, New York.

who dedicated his "atlas" specifically "to honour the Titan, Atlas, King of Mauretania, a learned philosopher, mathematician, and astronomer"; he actually depicted the astronomer king.

See also

- Atlas (architecture)
- Farnese Atlas
- Upelluri

Notes

- ↑ Smith. "Atlas" (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0104%3Aalphabetic+letter%3DA%3Aentry+group%3D53%3Aentry%3Datlas-bio-1>). Retrieved February 26, 2013.
- ↑ Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* i.2.3.
- ↑ Hesiod (*Theogony* 359 [as a daughter of Tethys], 507) gives her name as Clymene but the *Bibliotheca* (1.8) gives instead the name *Asia*, as does Lycophron (1411). It is possible that the name *Asia* became preferred over Hesiod's *Clymene* to avoid confusion with what must be a different Oceanid named Clymene, who was mother of Phaethon by Helios in some accounts.
- ↑ Classical sources: Homer, *Iliad* v.898; Apollonius Rhodius ii. 1232; *Bibliotheca* i.1.3; Hesiod, *Theogony* 113; Stephanus of Byzantium, under "Adana"; Aristophanes *Birds* 692ff; Clement of Rome *Homilies* vi.4.72.
- ↑ Hyginus, Preface to *Fabulae*.
- ↑ *Aeneid* iv.247: "Atlantis duri" and other instances; see Robert W. Cruttwell, "Virgil, Aeneid, iv. 247: 'Atlantis Duri'" *The Classical Review* **59**.1 (May 1945), p. 11.
- ↑ George Doig, "Vergil's Art and the Greek Language" *The Classical Journal* **64**.1 (October 1968, pp. 1-6) p. 2.
- ↑ Strabo, 17.3;
- ↑ ^{*a b*} Beekes, Robert; van Beek, Lucien (2010). *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* **1**. Brill. p. 163 {{inconsistent citations}}



Atlas supports the terrestrial globe on a building in Collins Street, Melbourne, Australia.



Nautilus Cup. This drinking vessel, for court feasts, depicts Atlas holding the shell on his back.^[23] The Walters Art Museum.

10. ^ The usage in Virgil's *maximum Atlas axem umero torquet stellis ardentibus aptum* (*Aeneid*, iv.481f , cf vi.796f), combining poetic and parascientific images, is discussed in P. R. Hardie, "Atlas and Axis" *The Classical Quarterly* N.S. **33**.1 (1983:220-228).
11. ^ Polyeidus, Fragment 837; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.627
12. ^ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, IV.617ff (on-line English translation at TheoiProject (<http://www.theoi.com/Heros/Perseus.html#Atlas>)).
13. ^ Plato, *Critias*
14. ^ A lost passage of Pindar quoted by Strabo (3.5.5) was the earliest reference in this context: "the pillars which Pindar calls the 'gates of Gades' when he asserts that they are the farthestmost limits reached by Heracles"; the passage in Pindar has not been traced.
15. ^ Paolo Martini, *Il nome etrusco di Atlante*, (Rome:Università di Roma) 1987 investigates the etymology of *aril*, rejecting a link to the verbal morpheme *ar-* ("support") in favor of a Phoenician etymon in an unattested possible form **'arrab(a)*, signifying "guarantor in a commercial transaction" with the connotation of "mediator", related to the Latin borrowing *arillator*, "middleman". This section and note depend on Rex Wallace's review of Martini in *Language* **65**.1 (March 1989:187-188).
16. ^ Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History* 4.26.2
17. ^ Hyginus, *Astronomica* 2.21; Ovid, *Fasti* 5.164
18. ^ ^a ^b Hyginus, *Fabulae* 192
19. ^ Hesiod, *Works and Days* 383; *Bibliotheca* 3.110; Ovid, *Fasti* 5.79
20. ^ Homer, *Odyssey* 1.52; Apollodorus, E7.23
21. ^ Hyginus, *Fabulae* 82, 83
22. ^ Pausanias, *Guide to Greece* 8.12.7, 8.48.6
23. ^ "Nautilus Cup" (<http://art.thewalters.org/detail/16751>). The Walters Art Museum.
24. ^ Ashley Baynton-Williams. "The 'Lafreri school' of Italian mapmakers" (<http://www.mapforum.com/03/lafrscho.htm>). Retrieved February 26, 2013.

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- Smith, William; *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, London (1873). "Atlas" (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0104%3Aalphabetic+letter%3DA%3Aentry+group%3D53%3Aentry%3Datlas-bio-1>)

External links

- Warburg Institute Iconographic Database (http://warburg.sas.ac.uk/vpc/VPC_search/subcats.php?cat_1=5&cat_2=168) (ca 140 images of Atlas)



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Titan (mythology)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

In Greek mythology, the **Titans** (Greek: Τῑτάν *Títán*; plural: Τῑτᾶνες *Títânes*) were a primeval race of powerful deities, descendants of Gaia (Earth) and Uranus (Heaven), that ruled during the legendary Golden Age. They were giants of incredible strength and were also the first pantheon of Greek gods and goddesses.

In the first generation of twelve Titans, the males were Oceanus, Hyperion, Coeus, Cronus, Crius, and Iapetus and the females—the Titanesses or Titanides—were Mnemosyne, Tethys, Theia, Phoebe, Rhea, and Themis. The second generation of Titans consisted of Hyperion's children Helios, Selene and Eos; Coeus' children Lelantos, Leto and Asteria; Iapetus' sons Atlas, Prometheus, Epimetheus, and Menoetius; Oceanus' daughter Metis; and Crius' sons Astraeus, Pallas, and Perses.

The Titans were overthrown by a race of younger gods, the Olympians, in the Titanomachy ("War of the Titans"). The Greeks may have borrowed this mytheme from the Ancient Near East.^[1]

Contents

- 1 Titanomachy
- 2 In Orphic sources
- 3 Modern interpretations
- 4 In popular culture
- 5 Notes
- 6 References
- 7 External links

Titanomachy

Greeks of the classical age knew of several poems about the war between the Olympians and Titans. The dominant one, and the only one that has survived, was in the *Theogony* attributed to Hesiod. A lost epic, *Titanomachia*—attributed to the legendary blind Thracian bard Thamyris—was mentioned in passing in an essay *On Music* that was once attributed to Plutarch. The Titans also played a prominent role in the poems attributed to Orpheus. Although only scraps of the Orphic narratives survive, they show interesting differences with the Hesiodic tradition.

The Greek myths of the Titanomachy fall into a class of similar myths throughout Europe and the Near East concerning a war in heaven, where one generation or group of gods largely opposes the dominant one. Sometimes the elders are supplanted, and sometimes the rebels lose and are either cast out of power entirely or incorporated into the pantheon. Other examples might include the wars of the Æsir with the Vanir and Jotuns in Scandinavian mythology, the Babylonian epic Enuma Elish, the Hittite "Kingship in Heaven" narrative, the obscure generational conflict in Ugaritic fragments, Virabhadra's conquest of the early Vedic Gods, and the rebellion of Lucifer in Christianity. The Titanomachy lasted for ten years.

In Orphic sources

Hesiod does not have the last word on the Titans. Surviving fragments of poetry ascribed to Orpheus preserve some variations on the myth. In such text, Zeus does not simply set upon his father violently. Instead, Rhea spreads out a banquet for Cronus so that he becomes drunk upon fermented honey. Rather than being consigned to Tartarus, Cronus is dragged—still drunk—to the cave of Nyx (Night), where he continues to dream throughout eternity.

Another myth concerning the Titans that is not in Hesiod revolves around Dionysus. At some point in his reign, Zeus decides to give up the throne in favor of the infant Dionysus, who like the infant Zeus is guarded by the Kouretes. The Titans decide to slay the child and claim the throne for themselves; they paint their faces white with gypsum, distract Dionysus with toys, then dismember him and boil and roast his limbs. Zeus, enraged, slays the Titans with his thunderbolt; Athena preserves the heart in a gypsum doll, out of which a new Dionysus is made. This story is told by the poets Callimachus and Nonnus, who call this Dionysus "Zagreus", and in a number of Orphic texts, which do not.



Rhea, Cronus' wife, one of the Titans

One iteration of this story, that of the Late Antique Neoplatonist philosopher Olympiodorus, recounted in his commentary of Plato's *Phaedrus*,^[2] affirms that humanity sprang up out of the fatty smoke of the burning Titan corpses. Pindar, Plato and Oppian refer offhandedly to man's "Titanic nature". According to them, the body is the titanic part, while soul is the divine part of man. Other early writers imply that humanity was born out of the malevolent blood shed by the Titans in their war against Zeus. Some scholars consider that Olympiodorus' report, the only surviving explicit expression of this mythic connection, embodied a tradition that dated to the Bronze Age, while Radcliffe Edmonds has suggested an element of innovative allegorized improvisation to suit Olympiodorus' purpose.^[3]

Modern interpretations

Some 19th- and 20th-century scholars, including Jane Ellen Harrison, have argued that an initiatory or shamanic ritual underlies the myth of Dionysus' dismemberment and cannibalism by the Titans. She also asserts that the word "Titan" comes from the Greek *τίτανος*, signifying white "earth, clay or gypsum," and that the Titans were "white clay men", or men covered by white clay or gypsum dust in their rituals. Martin Litchfield West also asserts this in relation to shamanistic initiatory rites of early Greek religious practices.^[4]

According to Paul Faure, the name "Titan" can be found on Linear A written as "Tan" or "Ttan", which represents a single deity rather than a group.^[5] Other scholars believe the word is related to the Greek verb *τείνω* (to stretch), a view Hesiod himself appears to share: "But their father Ouranos, who himself begot them, bitterly gave to them to those others, his sons, the name of Titans, the Stretchers, for they stretched out their power outrageously."^[6]

In popular culture

Out of conflation with the Gigantes, various large things have been named after the Titans, for their "titanic" size, for example the RMS *Titanic* or the giant predatory bird *Titanis walleri*. The familiar name and large size

of the Titans have made them dramatic figures suited to market-oriented popular culture. Something titanic is usually considered bigger than something gigantic.

The element titanium is named after the Titans, additionally, many of Saturn's moons are named after various Titans.

Many professional and amateur sports teams use a titan as their mascot. Most notably, the National Football League's Tennessee Titans, the New York Jets were originally known as the New York Titans, California State University, Fullerton and Ohio State University, Newark Campus's athletic teams are known as the Titans, and the Australian professional rugby league team Gold Coast is also known as the Titans.

The Titans have appeared as antagonists in the Disney film *Hercules* and the *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* series and as both protagonists and antagonists in the *God of War* video game series and the *Clash of the Titans* movies; though the original and the 2010 remake do not actually feature any Titans, the 2012 sequel features Cronus as the main antagonist.

Monsters that are called Titans but are not actually the mythic beings themselves appear in the anime *Attack on Titan*.



Cronus armed with sickle; after a carved gem (Aubin-Louis Millin de Grandmaison, *Galerie mythologique*, 1811).

Notes

- [^] Burkert, pp. 94f, 125–27 (<http://books.google.com/books?id=cIiUL7dWqNIC&pg=PA94#v=twopage&q&f=false>).
- [^] Olympiodorus, *In Plat. Phaededr.* I.3–6.
- [^] West; Albert Bernabé, "La toile de Pénélope: a-t-il existé un mythe orphique sur Dionysos et les Titans?", *Revue de l'histoire des religions* (2002:401–33), noted by Radcliffe G. Edmonds III, "A Curious concoction: tradition and innovation in Olympiodorus' creation of mankind" (<http://www.apaclassics.org/AnnualMeeting/06mtg/abstracts/EDMONDS.pdf>).
- [^] West.
- [^] "The Minoan Deities Named: An Archaeologist Gleans Goddesses and Gods from Linear A" (<http://www.widdershins.org/vol11iss5/01.htm>). Retrieved January 8, 2012.
- [^] Hesiod, *Theogony*, 207–210.

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(<http://www.ancientlibrary.com/smith-bio/3489.html>), article on "Titan"

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External links

- Theoi Project, Titans (<http://www.theoi.com/Titan/Titanes.html>) references to Titans in classical literature, in translation
- Greek Mythology Link, Titans (<http://www.maicar.com/GML/TITANS.html>) summary of the Titans myth



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