

(Greek mythology) Dyonisus דיִוְנִיִּסוֹס

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דיונוסוס

دیونیسوس - ویکی‌پدیا، دانشنامه آزاد

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Dionysos Louvre Ma87 n2.jpg. دیونیسوس. یونانی: Διόνυσος. عنوان: خدای ... زنان پرستنده

... **دیونیسوس**، ماینداس نامیده می‌شدند. مراسم آن‌ها با می‌گساری و رقص و نواختن ...

۴ منابع - ۳ نگارخانه - ۲ آیین پرستش - ۱ زایش و تبار

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Dionysus, Διόνυσος, Διόνυσοσ, Bacchus, Dioniso, **Dionysos**, Dioniso, **Dionysos** ...

Διόνυσος, Diyōnīsōs, دیونیسوس, Diyūnīsūs, **دیونیسوس**, Dyonusos, **Dionysus**.

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دیونوسوس - خودشناس

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با کهن الگو، آرکایب یا آرکی تایپ **دیونیسوس** آشنا شوید.

داریوش ثمر - نخستین صحنه های تئاتر در یونان باستان

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با آن که تئاترهای دیگری نیز در یونان وجود داشتند، مورخان تنها به تئاتر «**دیونیسوس**» (**Dionysus**) توجه نشان

داده اند، چرا که کلیه ی نمایش نامه های موجود یونانی در آنجا ...

خدایان یونان - داستانهای مشترک جهان

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آتنا (Athena) - خدای فرزاتگی و آموزش یوسیدون (Poseidon) - خدای دریا **دیونیسوس** (**Dionysus**) - خدای شراب ،

جشن و خوشگذرانی دیمتر (Demeter) - خدای زمین و کشاورزی

آمازون‌ها - فرهنگ ایران باستان 1

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دیونیسوس (**Dionysus**) نیز در لشکرکشی شرقی اش بر آمازون‌ها چیره شد، که البته ادعا شده، این روایت شکل

دیگری از داستان‌های اسکندر است. اهمیت ویژه‌ی آمازون‌ها، با شهرت ...

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یوسیدون (Poseidon) - خدای دریا. **دیونیسوس** (**Dionysus**) - خدای شراب ، جشن و خوشگذرانی. - Jan 6, 2010

دیمتر (Demeter) - خدای زمین و کشاورزی. آرتمیس (Artemis) - خدای ...

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ایزد خون، شراب، باروری، سرمستی؛ در روم **دیونیسوس** (**DIONYSUS**) تبدیل به بابکوس میشود. این هیجان میتواند

اثر سادی و یا اثر خم باشد که در تراز دیها وجود دارد.

天使ディオニョス

LArc-en-ciel1791 ミスチルの膨張顔が破裂寸前><;

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Jun 29, 2008 - フランスの岩の: インドシナ、電話、[天使、ディオニュソス](#)、Pleymo、Superbus、Saez、... そして、国際的に: Chemical Brothers、Oasis、Blink-182、ローラ Pausini(中で生きているParis'05)、Burning Spear、Cleans(パリ)、Simple Minds(...

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ديونيسوس

٣ وصلات خارجية

Theoi Project, Dionysos myths from original sources, cult, classical art

٤ مصادر

[1] In Greek "both votary and god are called Bacchus." Burkert, *Greek Religion* 1985:162, noting, for the initiate, Euripides, *Bacchantes* 491, for the god, who alone is *Dionysus*, Sophocles *Oedipus the King* 211 and Euripides *Hippolytus* 560.

[2] http://www.wordinfo.info/words/index/info/view_unit/272/?letter=B&spage=1



ديونيسوس متكئا، التمثال كان في البارثينون الشرقي.

في كومنز صور وملفات عن: ديونيسوس

بوابة ميثولوجيا

ديونيسوس أو باكوس أو باخوس في الميثولوجيا الإغريقية (وباللغة اليونانية: Διονύσος or βακχος) هو إله الخمر عند الإغريق القدماء وملهم طقوس الابتهاج والنشوة، ومن أشهر رموز الميثولوجيا الإغريقية. وتم إلحاقه بالأولمبيين الاثني عشر. أصوله غير محددة لليونانيين القدماء، إلا أنه يعتقد أنه من أصول "غير إغريقية" كما هو حال الآلهة آنذاك. كان يعرف أيضا باسم باكوس أو باخوس. [1][2]

١ ولادته ووفاته

في أسطورة ولادته تطلب سيملي من زوجها زيوس أن يظهر لها بهيئته الأصلية كإله الصواعق والبرق، وعندما يفعل ذلك تموت سيملي هلعاً من المنظر المخيف وهبطت إلى العالم السفلي وهي حامل بديونيسوس.

يستطيع زيوس إنقاذ الجنين من بطن أمه ولكن قبل اكتمال نموه، ثم يعمد زيوس إلى شق نخذه ويودع الجنين هناك ويخطط الشق عليه. يكمل الجنين ماتبقى له من شهور الحمل، ثم يخرج إلى الحياة في ولادة ثانية بعد أن أمضى قسماً من أشهر حملة في رحم أمه وقسماً آخر في نخذه أبيه.

توفي ديونيسوس بعد أن قامت التيتان بتزريقه وهو على هيئة ثور، حول نفسه إليه هرباً منهم.

٢ عبادته

كان لإله الخمر طقوس سكر ومتع تقام لأجله في المعبد، وكان لإله الخمر حاشية ويسمون بعفاريت الغابة ولهم أبواق ينفخون فيها. وكان يقام له احتفال في أثينا يدعى ديونيسيا كان عبارة عن احتفالين يقامان سنوياً.

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Text ١.٥

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Dionysus

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Dionysus (/daɪ.əˈnaɪsəs/; Greek: Διόνυσος, *Dionysos*) is the god of the grape harvest, winemaking and wine, of ritual madness, fertility,^{[2][3]} theatre and religious ecstasy in Greek mythology. His name, thought to be a theonym in Linear B tablets as *di-wo-nu-so* (KH Gq 5 inscription),^[4] shows that he may have been worshipped as early as c. 1500–1100 BC by Mycenaean Greeks; other traces of the Dionysian-type cult have been found in ancient Minoan Crete.^[5] His origins are uncertain, and his cults took many forms; some are described by ancient sources as Thracian, others as Greek.^{[6][7][8]} In some cults, he arrives from the east, as an Asiatic foreigner; in others, from Ethiopia in the South. He is a god of epiphany, "the god that comes", and his "foreignness" as an arriving outsider-god may be inherent and essential to his cults. He is a major, popular figure of Greek mythology and religion, and is included in some lists of the twelve Olympians. Dionysus was the last god to be accepted into Mt. Olympus. He was the youngest and the only one to have a mortal mother.^[9] His festivals were the driving force behind the development of Greek theatre. He is an example of a dying god.^{[10][11]}

The earliest cult images of Dionysus show a mature male, bearded and robed. He holds a fennel staff, tipped with a pine-cone and known as a *thyrsus*. Later images show him as a beardless, sensuous, naked or half-naked androgynous youth: the literature describes him as womanly or "man-womanish".^[12] In its fully developed form, his central cult imagery shows his triumphant, disorderly arrival or return, as if from some place beyond the borders of the known and civilized. His procession (*thiasus*) is made up of wild female followers (maenads) and bearded satyrs with erect penises. Some are armed with the *thyrsus*, some dance or play music. The god himself is drawn in a chariot, usually by exotic beasts such as lions or tigers, and is sometimes attended by a bearded, drunken Silenus. This procession is presumed to be the cult model for the human followers of his Dionysian Mysteries. In his Thracian mysteries, he wears the *bassaris* or fox-skin, symbolizing a new life. Dionysus is represented by city religions as the protector of those who do not belong to conventional society and thus symbolizes everything which is chaotic, dangerous and unexpected, everything which escapes human reason and which can only be attributed to the unforeseeable action of the gods.^[13]

He was also known as **Bacchus** (/ˈbækəs/ or /ˈbɑːkəs/; Greek: Βάκχος, *Bakkhos*), the name adopted by the Romans^[14] and the frenzy he induces, *bakkheia*. His *thyrsus* is sometimes wound with ivy and dripping with honey. It is a beneficent wand but also a weapon, and can be used to destroy those who oppose his cult and the freedoms he represents. He is also called **Eleutherios** ("the liberator"), whose wine, music and ecstatic dance frees his followers from self-conscious fear and care, and subverts the oppressive restraints of the powerful. Those who partake of his mysteries are possessed and empowered by the god himself.^[15] His cult is also a "cult of the souls"; his maenads feed the dead through blood-offerings, and he acts as a divine communicant between the living and the dead.^[16]

In Greek mythology, he is presented as a son of Zeus and the mortal Semele, thus semi-divine or heroic: and as son of Zeus and Persephone or Demeter, thus both fully divine, part-chthonic and possibly identical with Iacchus of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Some scholars believe that Dionysus is a syncretism of a local Greek nature deity and a more powerful god from Thrace or Phrygia such as Sabazios^[17] or Zalmoxis.^[18]

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Dionysus

God of the Grape Harvest, Winemaking, Wine, Ritual Madness, Religious Ecstasy, Fertility and Theatre.



2nd-century Roman statue of Dionysus, after a Hellenistic model (ex-coll. Cardinal Richelieu, Louvre)^[1]

Abode	Mount Olympus
Symbol	Thyrsus, grapevine, leopard skin, panther, cheetah
Consort	Ariadne
Parents	Zeus and Semele
Siblings	Ares, Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Aphrodite, Hebe, Hermes, Heracles, Helen of Troy, Hephaestus, Perseus, Minos, the Muses, the Graces
Roman equivalent	Bacchus, Liber

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Names

Etymology

The *dio-* element has been associated since antiquity with *Zeus* (genitive *Dios*). The earliest attested form of the name is Mycenaean Greek 𐀀𐀃𐀆𐀗𐀆𐀓, *di-wo-nu-so*, written in Linear B syllabic script, presumably for /Diwo(h)nūsoio/. This is attested on two tablets that had been found at Mycenaean Pylos and dated to the 12th or 13th century BC, but at the time, there could be no certainty on whether this was indeed a theonym.^{[19][20]} But the 1989–90 Greek-Swedish Excavations at Kastelli Hill, Chania, unearthed, inter alia, four artefacts bearing Linear B inscriptions; among them, the inscription on item KH Gq 5 is thought to confirm Dionysus's early worship.^[4]

Later variants include *Dionūsos* and *Diōnūsos* in Boeotia; *Dien(n)ūsos* in Thessaly; *Deonūsos* and *Deunūsos* in Ionia; and *Dinnūsos* in Aeolia, besides other variants. A *Dio-* prefix is found in other names, such as that of the Dioscures, and may derive from *Dios*, the genitive of the name of Zeus.^[21]

The second element *-nūsos* is associated with Mount Nysa, the birthplace of the god in Greek mythology, where he was nursed by nymphs (the Nysiads),^[22] but according to Pherecydes of Syros, *nūsa* was an archaic word for "tree."^[23]

R. S. P. Beekes has suggested a Pre-Greek origin of the name.^[24]

The cult of Dionysus was closely associated with trees, specifically the fig tree, and some of his bynames exhibit this, such as *Endendros* "he in the tree" or *Dendritēs*, "he of the tree." Peters suggests the original meaning as "he who runs among the trees," or that of a "runner in the woods." Janda (2010) accepts the etymology but proposes the more cosmological interpretation of "he who impels the (world-)tree." This interpretation explains how *Nysa* could have been re-interpreted from a meaning of "tree" to the name of a mountain: the axis mundi of Indo-European mythology is represented both as a world-tree and as a world-mountain.^[25]

Epithets

Dionysus was variably known with the following epithets:

Acratophorus, ("giver of unmixed wine"), at Phigaleia in Arcadia.^[26]

Acroreites at Sicyon.^[27]

Adoneus ("ruler") in his Latinised, Bacchic cult.^[28]



Marble sarcophagus with the Triumph of Dionysos and the Seasons. Roman ca. AD 260–270

Aegobolus ("goat killer") at Potniae, in Boeotia.^[29]

Aesymnetes ("ruler" or "lord") at Aroë and Patrae in Achaea.

Agrios ("wild"), in Macedonia.

Briseus ("he who prevails") in Smyrna.^{[30][31]}

Bromios ("Roaring" as of the wind, primarily relating to the central death/resurrection element of the myth,^[32] but also to the god's famous transformations into lion and bull.^[33] Also refers to the "boisterousness" of those who imbibe spirits, and is cognate with the "roar of thunder", although this aspect is corollary in that it is a reference to the god's parentage, not his innate qualities.)

Dendrites ("he of the trees"), as a fertility god.

Dithyrambos, form of address used at his festivals, referring to his premature birth.

Eleutherios ("the liberator"), an epithet for both Dionysus and Eros.

Endendros ("he in the tree").^[34]

Enorches ("with balls,"^[35] with reference to his fertility, or "in the testicles" in reference to Zeus' sewing the baby Dionysus into his thigh, i.e., his testicles).^[36] used in Samos and Lesbos.

Erikryptos ("completely hidden"), in Macedonia.

Euius (Euios), in Euripides' play, *The Bacchae*.

Iacchus, possibly an epithet of Dionysus and associated with the Eleusinian Mysteries. In Eleusis, he is known as a son of Zeus and Demeter. The name "Iacchus" may come from the *Ἰακχος* (*Iakchos*), a hymn sung in honor of Dionysus.

Liknites ("he of the winnowing fan"), as a fertility god connected with the mystery religions. A winnowing fan was used to separate the chaff from the grain.

Lyaeus (Lyaïos) ("he who unties") or releases from care and anxiety.

Melanaigis ("of the black goatskin") at the Apaturia festival.

Oeneus, as god of the wine press.

Pseudanor ("false man"), in Macedonia.

In the Greek pantheon, Dionysus (along with Zeus) absorbs the role of Sabazios, a Thracian/Phrygian deity. In the Roman pantheon, Sabazius became an alternate name for Bacchus.^[37]

Mythology

Birth (and infant death and rebirth)

Dionysus had a strange birth that evokes the difficulty in fitting him into the Olympian pantheon. His mother was a mortal woman, Semele, the daughter of king Cadmus of Thebes, and his father was Zeus, the king of the gods. Zeus' wife, Hera, discovered the affair while Semele was pregnant. Appearing as an old crone (in other stories a nurse), Hera befriended Semele, who confided in her that Zeus was the actual father of the baby in her womb. Hera pretended not to believe her, and planted seeds of doubt in Semele's mind. Curious, Semele demanded of Zeus that he reveal himself in all his glory as proof of his godhood.

Though Zeus begged her not to ask this, she persisted and he agreed. Therefore he came to her wreathed in bolts of lightning; mortals, however, could not look upon an undisguised god without dying, and she perished in the ensuing blaze. Zeus rescued the unborn Dionysus by sewing him into his thigh. A few months later, Dionysus was born on Mount Pramnos in the island of Ikaria, where Zeus went to release the now-fully-grown baby from his thigh. In this version, Dionysus is born by two "mothers" (Semele and Zeus) before his birth, hence the epithet *dimētōr* (of two mothers) associated with his being "twice-born."

In the Cretan version of the same story, which Diodorus Siculus follows,^[39] Dionysus was the son of Zeus and Persephone, the queen of the Greek underworld. Diodorus' sources equivocally identified the mother as Demeter.^[40] A jealous Hera again attempted to kill the child, this time by sending Titans to rip Dionysus to pieces after luring the baby with toys. It is said that he was mocked by the Titans who gave him a thyrsus (a fennel stalk) in place of his rightful sceptre.^[41] Zeus turned the Titans into dust with his thunderbolts, but only after the Titans ate everything but the heart, which was



Birth of Dionysus, on a small sarcophagus that may have been made for a child (Walters Art Museum)^[38]

saved, variously, by Athena, Rhea, or Demeter. Zeus used the heart to recreate him in his thigh, hence he was again "the twice-born." Other versions claim that Zeus recreated him in the womb of Semele, or gave Semele the heart to eat to impregnate her.

The rebirth in both versions of the story is the primary reason why Dionysus was worshipped in mystery religions, as his death and rebirth were events of mystical reverence. This narrative was apparently used in several Greek and Roman cults, and variants of it are found in Callimachus and Nonnus, who refer to this Dionysus with the title Zagreus, and also in several fragmentary poems attributed to Orpheus.

The myth of the dismemberment of Dionysus by the Titans, is alluded to by Plato in his *Phaedo* (69d) in which Socrates claims that the initiations of the Dionysian Mysteries are similar to those of the philosophic path. Late Neo-Platonists such as Damascius explore the implications of this at length.^[42]

Infancy at Mount Nysa

According to the myth, Zeus gave the infant Dionysus to the care of Hermes. One version of the story is that Hermes took the boy to King Athamas and his wife Ino, Dionysus' aunt. Hermes bade the couple to raise the boy as a girl, to hide him from Hera's wrath.^[43] Another version is that Dionysus was taken to the rain-nymphs of Nysa, who nourished his infancy and childhood, and for their care Zeus rewarded them by placing them as the Hyades among the stars (see Hyades star cluster). Other versions have Zeus giving him to Rhea, or to Persephone to raise in the Underworld, away from Hera. Alternatively, he was raised by Maro.

Dionysus in Greek mythology is a god of foreign origin, and while Mount Nysa is a mythological location, it is invariably set far away to the east or to the south. The Homeric hymn to Dionysus places it "far from Phoenicia, near to the Egyptian stream." Others placed it in Anatolia, or in Libya ("away in the west beside a great ocean"), in Ethiopia (Herodotus), or Arabia (Diodorus Siculus).

According to Herodotus:

As it is, the Greek story has it that no sooner was Dionysus born than Zeus sewed him up in his thigh and carried him away to Nysa in Ethiopia beyond Egypt; and as for Pan, the Greeks do not know what became of him after his birth. It is therefore plain to me that the Greeks learned the names of these two gods later than the names of all the others, and trace the birth of both to the time when they gained the knowledge.

—Herodotus, *Histories* 2.146

The *Bibliotheca* seems to be following Pherecydes, who relates how the infant Dionysus, god of the grapevine, was nursed by the rain-nymphs, the Hyades at Nysa.

Childhood



Kylix (6th century BC) depicting Dionysus among the sailors transformed to dolphins after attempting to kidnap him

When Dionysus grew up, he discovered the culture of the vine and the mode of extracting its precious juice; but Hera struck him with madness, and drove him forth a wanderer through various parts of the earth. In Phrygia the goddess Cybele, better known to the Greeks as Rhea, cured him and taught him her religious rites, and he set out on a progress through Asia teaching the people the cultivation of the vine. The most famous part of his wanderings is his expedition to India, which is said to have lasted several years. According to a legend, when Alexander the Great reached a city called Nysa near the Indus river, the locals said that their city was founded by Dionysus in the distant past and their city was dedicated to the god Dionysus.^[44] Returning in triumph he undertook to introduce his worship into Greece, but was opposed by some princes who dreaded its introduction on account of the disorders and madness it brought with it (e.g. Pentheus or Lycurgus).

Dionysus was exceptionally attractive. One of the Homeric hymns recounts how, while disguised as a mortal sitting beside the seashore, a few sailors spotted him, believing he was a prince. They attempted to kidnap him and sail him far away to sell for ransom or into slavery. They tried to bind him with ropes, but no type of rope could hold him. Dionysus turned into a

fierce lion and unleashed a bear on board, killing those he came into contact with. Those who jumped off the ship were mercifully turned into dolphins. The only survivor was the helmsman, Acoetes, who recognized the god and tried to stop his sailors from the start.^[45]

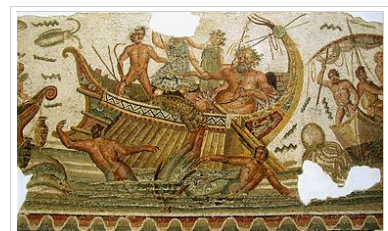
In a similar story, Dionysus desired to sail from Icaria to Naxos. He then hired a Tyrrhenian pirate ship. However, when the god was on board, they sailed not to Naxos but to Asia, intending to sell him as a slave. So Dionysus turned the mast and oars into snakes, and filled the vessel with ivy and the sound of flutes so that the sailors went mad and, leaping into the sea, were turned into dolphins.

Other stories

Midas



Hermes and the Infant Dionysus by Praxiteles, (Archaeological Museum of Olympia).



North African Roman mosaic: Panther-Dionysus scatters the pirates, who are changed to dolphins, except for Acoetes, the helmsman. (Bardo National Museum)

Once, Dionysus found his old school master and foster father, Silenus, missing. The old man had been drinking, and had wandered away drunk, and was found by some peasants, who carried him to their king (alternatively, he passed out in Midas' rose garden). Midas recognized him, and treated him hospitably, entertaining him for ten days and nights with politeness, while Silenus entertained Midas and his friends with stories and songs. On the eleventh day, he brought Silenus back to Dionysus. Dionysus offered Midas his choice of whatever reward he wanted.

Midas asked that whatever he might touch should be changed into gold. Dionysus consented, though was sorry that he had not made a better choice. Midas rejoiced in his new power, which he hastened to put to the test. He touched and turned to gold an oak twig and a stone. Overjoyed, as soon as he got home, he ordered the servants to set a feast on the table. Then he found that his bread, meat, daughter and wine turned to gold.

Upset, Midas strove to divest himself of his power (the Midas Touch); he hated the gift he had coveted. He prayed to Dionysus, begging to be delivered from starvation. Dionysus heard and consented; he told Midas to wash in the river Pactolus. He did so, and when he touched the waters the power passed into them, and the river sands changed into gold. This was an etiological myth that explained why the sands of the Pactolus were rich in gold.

Pentheus

In the play, *The Bacchae*, written by Euripides, Dionysus returns to his birthplace, Thebes, which is ruled by his cousin Pentheus. Dionysus wants to exact revenge on Pentheus and the women of Thebes (his aunts Agave, Ino and Autonoe) for not believing his mother Semele's claims of being impregnated by Zeus, and for denying Dionysus's divinity (and therefore not worshipping him).

Dionysus slowly drives Pentheus mad, lures him to the woods of Mount Cithaeron, and then convinces him to spy/peek on the Maenads (female worshippers of Dionysus, who often experienced divine ecstasy). The Maenads are in an insane frenzy when Pentheus sees them (earlier in the play they had ripped apart a herd of cattle), and they catch him but mistake him for a wild animal. Pentheus is torn to shreds, and his mother (Agave, one of the Maenads), not recognizing her own son because of her madness, brutally tears his limbs off as he begs for his life.

As a result of their acts the women are banished from Thebes, ensuring Dionysus's revenge.

Lycurgus

When King Lycurgus of Thrace heard that Dionysus was in his kingdom, he imprisoned Dionysus' followers, the Maenads. Dionysus fled and took refuge with Thetis, and sent a drought which stirred the people into revolt. Dionysus then drove King Lycurgus insane and had him slice his own son into pieces with an axe in the belief that he was a patch of ivy, a plant holy to Dionysus. An oracle then claimed that the land would stay dry and barren as long as Lycurgus was alive. His people had him drawn and quartered. Following the death of the king, Dionysus lifted the curse. This story was told in Homer's epic, *Iliad* 6.136-7. In an alternative version, sometimes shown in art, Lycurgus tries to kill Ambrosia, a follower of Dionysus, who was transformed into a vine that twined around the enraged king and restrained him, eventually killing him.^[46]

Prosymnus

A better-known story is that of his descent to Hades to rescue his mother Semele, whom he placed among the stars.^[47] Dionysus feared for his mother, whom he had not seen since birth. He bypassed the god of death, known as Thanatos, thus successfully returning Semele to Mount Olympus. Out of the twelve Olympians, he was of the few that could restore the deceased from the underworld back to life.^[48] He made the descent from a reputedly bottomless pool on the coast of the Argolid near the prehistoric site of Lerna. He was guided by Prosymnus or Polymnus, who requested, as his reward, to be Dionysus' lover. Prosymnus died before Dionysus could honor his pledge, so in order to satisfy Prosymnus' shade, Dionysus fashioned a phallus from an olive branch and sat on it at Prosymnus' tomb.^[49] This story survives in full only in Christian sources whose aim was to discredit pagan mythology. It appears to have served as an explanation of the secret objects that were revealed in the Dionysian Mysteries.^[50]

Ampelos

Another myth according to Nonnus involves Ampelos, a satyr, who was loved by Dionysus.^[51] Foreseen by Dionysus, the youth was killed in an accident riding a bull maddened by the sting of an Ate's gadfly. The Fates granted Ampelos a second life as a vine, from which Dionysus squeezed the first wine.^[52]

Chiron

Young Dionysus was also said to have been one of the many famous pupils of the centaur Chiron. According to Ptolemy Chennus in the Library of Photius, "Dionysus was loved by Chiron, from whom he learned chants and dances, the bacchic rites and initiations."^[53]

Secondary myths

When Hephaestus bound Hera to a magical chair, Dionysus got him drunk and brought him back to Olympus after he passed out.

A third descent by Dionysus to Hades is invented by Aristophanes in his comedy *The Frogs*. Dionysus, as patron of the Athenian dramatic festival, the



Pentheus torn apart by Agave and Ino. Attic red-figure *lekanis* (cosmetics bowl) lid, c. 450-425 BCE (Louvre)

Dionysia, wants to bring back to life one of the great tragedians. After a competition Aeschylus is chosen in preference to Euripides.

When Theseus abandoned Ariadne sleeping on Naxos, Dionysus found and married her. She bore him a son named Oenopion, but he committed suicide or was killed by Perseus. In some variants, he had her crown put into the heavens as the constellation Corona; in others, he descended into Hades to restore her to the gods on Olympus. Another different account claims Dionysus ordered Theseus to abandon Ariadne on the island of Naxos for he had seen her as Theseus carried her onto the ship and had decided to marry her.

Psalacantha, a nymph, failed at winning the love of Dionysus as his main love interest at the moment was Ariadne, and ended up being changed into a plant.

Callirrhoe was a Calydonian woman who scorned Coresus, a priest of Dionysus, who threatened to afflict all the women of Calydon with insanity (see Maenad). The priest was ordered to sacrifice Callirrhoe but he killed himself instead. Callirrhoe threw herself into a well which was later named after her.

Acis, a Sicilian youth, was sometimes said to be Dionysus' son.



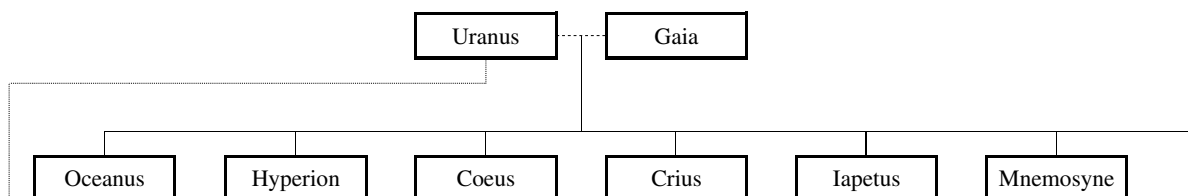
Bacchus and Ariadne by Titian, at the National Gallery in London.

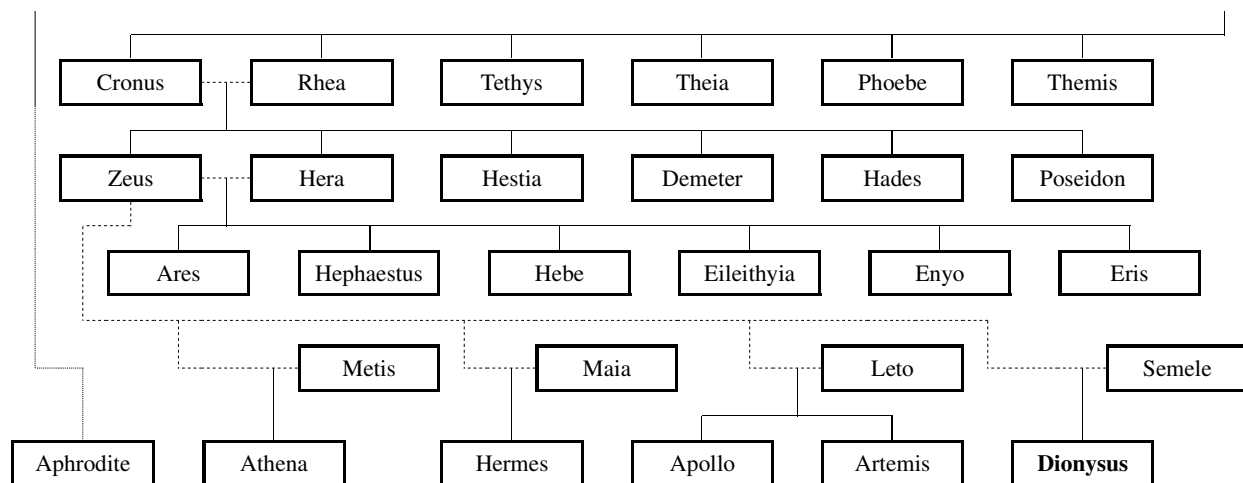
Consorts and children

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. Aphrodite | 5. Circe |
| 1. Charites (Graces) | 1. Comus |
| 1. Pasithea | 6. Aura |
| 2. Euphrosyne | 1. Iacchus |
| 3. Thalia | 2. twin of Iacchus, killed by Aura instantly upon birth |
| 2. Priapus | 7. Nicaea |
| 3. Hymenaios | 1. Telete |
| 2. Ariadne | 8. Araethyrea or Chthonophyle (or again Ariadne) |
| 1. Oenopion | 1. Phlias |
| 2. Staphylus | 9. Physcoa |
| 3. Thoas | 1. Narcaeus |
| 4. Peparethus | 10. Pallene |
| 5. Phanus | 11. Carya |
| 6. Eurymedon | 12. Percote |
| 7. Euanthes | 1. Priapus (possibly) ^[54] |
| 8. Latramys | 13. Chione, Naiad nymph |
| 9. Tauropolis | 1. Priapus (possibly) ^[55] |
| 10. Ceramus | 14. Alexirrhoe |
| 11. Maron | 1. Carmanor |
| 12. Enyeus | 15. Alpheisiboea |
| 3. Nyx | 1. Medus |
| 1. Phthonus | 16. unnamed |
| 4. Althaea | 1. Thyssa ^[56] |
| 1. Deianeira | |

Genealogy of the Olympians in Greek mythology

Genealogy of the Olympians in Greek mythology





Parallels with Christianity

The earliest discussions of mythological parallels between Dionysus and the figure of the Christ in Christian theology can be traced to Friedrich Hölderlin, whose identification of Dionysus with Christ is most explicit in *Brod und Wein* (1800–1801) and *Der Einzige* (1801–1803).^[57]

Theories regarding such parallels were popular in the 19th century but were later on mostly rejected by contemporary scholarship. A few modern scholars such as Martin Hengel, Barry Powell, Robert M. Price, and Peter Wick, among others, argue that Dionysian religion and Christianity have notable parallels. They point to the symbolism of wine and the importance it held in the mythology surrounding both Dionysus and Jesus Christ;^{[58][59]} though, Wick argues that the use of wine symbolism in the Gospel of John, including the story of the Marriage at Cana at which Jesus turns water into wine, was intended to show Jesus as superior to Dionysus.^[60]

A few scholars of comparative mythology identify both Dionysus and Jesus with the dying-and-returning god mythological archetype.^[11] However this identification is often seen as superficial as most dying-and-returning god deities had a cyclical nature, as they died and were reborn each year, representing the cycle of nature, while the resurrection of Christ was a single event placed in a specific historical and geographical context. On the other hand, Dionysus life-death-rebirth cycle was strongly tied to the grape harvest. Moreover it has been noted that the details of Dionysus death and rebirth are starkly different both in content and symbolism from Jesus, with Dionysus being (in the most common myth) torn to pieces and eaten by the titans and "eventually restored to a new life" from the heart that was left over.^{[61][62]} Other elements, such as the celebration by a ritual meal of bread and wine, also have parallels.^[63] Powell, in particular, argues precursors to the Catholic notion of transubstantiation can be found in Dionysian religion.^[63] However such claims are strongly disputed as the rituals of Dyonisus did not involve the transformation of the substance of bread and wine in the god himself. Rather the myth stated that Dionysius became the wine of libation, which was not drunk or consumed in any way, hence having a very different symbolism.

Another parallel can be seen in *The Bacchae* where Dionysus appears before King Pentheus on charges of claiming divinity which is compared to the New Testament scene of Jesus being interrogated by Pontius Pilate.^{[60][63][64]} However several scholar dispute this parallel, since while Jesus during the trial before Pilate did not affirm openly he was a god nor asked for any honor, Dionysus was arrested by Pentheus after making the women of Thebes mad and complaining about the fact that the city of Thebes, and its king, have refused to honor him. Moreover, the confrontation of Dionysus and Pentheus also ends with Pentheus dying torn into pieces by the mad women, including his mother. The details of the story, including its resolution make Dionysus story radically different than the one from Jesus, except for the parallel of the arrest, which is a detail that appears in many biographies as well.^[65]

Most modern biblical scholars and historians, both conservative and liberal, today reject most of the parallelomania between the cult of Dionysus and Christ, asserting that the similarities are superficial at best, most often vaguely general and universal parallels find in many stories both historical and mythical, and that the symbolism represented by the similar themes are radically different.^{[62][66][67][68]}

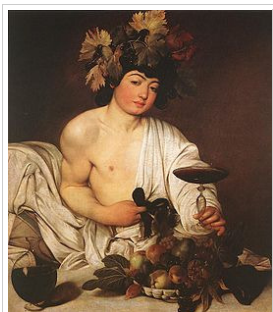
Symbolism

The bull, serpent, ivy, and wine are characteristic of Dionysian atmosphere. Dionysus is also strongly associated with satyrs, centaurs, and sileni. He is often shown riding a leopard, wearing a leopard skin, or in a chariot drawn by panthers, and may also be recognized by the thyrsus he carries. Besides the grapevine and its wild barren alter-ego, the toxic ivy plant, both sacred to him, the fig was also his symbol. The pinecone that tipped his thyrsus linked him to Cybele. Dionysus had two extreme natures to his personality. For instance, he could shift from bringing bliss and relaxation, which then often transitioned into bitterness and fury. Dionysus personified the nature of wine. When used reasonably it can be pleasant, however, if misused it can provoke negative effects.^[69] The Dionysia and Lenaia festivals in Athens were dedicated to Dionysus. Initiates worshipped him in the Dionysian Mysteries, which were comparable to and linked with the Orphic Mysteries, and may have influenced Gnosticism. Orpheus was said to have invented the Mysteries of Dionysus.^[70]

Dionysus was another god of resurrection who was strongly linked to the bull. In a cult hymn from Olympia, at a festival for Hera, Dionysus is invited to come as a bull; "with bull-foot raging." Walter Burkert relates, "Quite frequently [Dionysus] is portrayed with bull horns, and in Kyzikos he has a

tautomorphic image," and refers also to an archaic myth in which Dionysus is slaughtered as a bull calf and impiously eaten by the Titans.^[11] In the Classical period of Greece, the bull and other animals identified with deities were separated from them as their *agalma*, a kind of heraldic show-piece that concretely signified their numinous presence.^[11]

Bacchus and the Bacchanalia



Bacchus by Caravaggio

A mystery cult to Bacchus was brought to Rome from the Greek culture of southern Italy or by way of Greek-influenced Etruria. It was established c.200 BC in the Aventine grove of Stimula by a priestess from Campania, near the temple where Liber Pater ("The Free Father") had a State-sanctioned, popular cult. Liber was a native Roman god of wine, fertility, and prophecy, patron of Rome's plebeians (citizen-commoners) and a close equivalent to Bacchus-Dionysus *Eleutherios*.

In Livy's account, the new Bacchic mysteries were originally restricted to women and held only three times a year; but were corrupted by the Etruscan-Greek version, and thereafter drunken men and women of all ages and social classes cavorted in a sexual free-for-all five times a month. Livy relates their various outrages against Rome's civil and religious laws and morality; a secretive, subversive and potentially revolutionary counter-culture. The cult was

suppressed by the State with great ferocity; of the 7,000 arrested, most were executed. Modern scholarship treats much of Livy's account with skepticism; more certainly, a Senatorial edict, the *Senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus* was distributed throughout Roman and allied Italy. It banned the former Bacchic cult organisations. Each meeting must seek prior senatorial approval through a praetor. No more than three women and two men were allowed at any one meeting. Those who defied the edict risked the death penalty.

Bacchus was conscripted into the official Roman pantheon as an aspect of Liber, and his festival was inserted into the Liberalia. In Roman culture, Liber, Bacchus and Dionysus became virtually interchangeable equivalents.

Bacchus was euhemerised as a wandering hero, conqueror and founder of cities. He was a patron deity and founding hero at Leptis Magna, birthplace of the emperor Septimius Severus, who promoted his cult. In some Roman sources, the ritual procession of Bacchus in a tiger-drawn chariot, surrounded by maenads, satyrs and drunks, commemorates the god's triumphant return from the conquest of India, the historical prototype for the Roman Triumph. Bacchus was attended by men and women accomplished in the arts of rural industry; wherever he came he taught husbandry and vine cultivation; being received everywhere with festivity and welcome. Lycurgus king of Thrace and Pentheus king of Thebes opposed importing the sciences of the east. To punish them Bacchus caused lycurgus to be torn to pieces by wild horses and spread delusion among the family of Pentheus so they thought him a wild boar and inflicted a thousand wounds.^[72]

In art

Classical

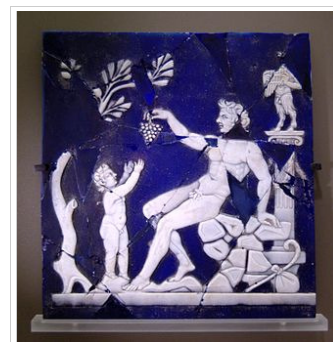
The god appeared on many kraters and other wine vessels from classical Greece. His iconography became more complex in the Hellenistic period, between severe archaizing or Neo Attic types such as the Dionysus Sardanapalus and types showing him as an indolent and androgynous young man and often shown nude (see the Dionysus and Eros, Naples Archeological Museum). The 4th-century Lycurgus Cup in the British Museum is a spectacular cage cup which changes colour when light comes through the glass; it shows the bound King Lycurgus being taunted by the god and attacked by a satyr.

Elizabeth Kessler has theorized that a mosaic appearing on the triclinium floor of the House of Aion in Nea Paphos, Cyprus, details a monotheistic worship of Dionysus.^[73] In the mosaic, other gods appear but may only be lesser representations of the centrally imposed Dionysus.

Modern views

Dionysus has remained an inspiration to artists, philosophers and writers into the modern era. In *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche contrasted Dionysus with the god Apollo as a symbol of the fundamental, unrestrained aesthetic principle of force, music, and intoxication versus the principle of form, beauty, and sight represented by the latter. Nietzsche also claimed that the oldest forms of Greek Tragedy were entirely based on suffering of Dionysus. Nietzsche continued to contemplate the character of Dionysus, which he revisited in the final pages of his 1886 work *Beyond Good and Evil*. This reconceived Nietzschean Dionysus was invoked as an embodiment of the central will to power concept in Nietzsche's later works *The Twilight of the Idols*, *The Antichrist* and *Ecce Homo*.

Károly Kerényi, a scholar in classical philology and one of the founders of modern studies in Greek mythology characterized Dionysus as representative of the psychological life force (Zoê).^[74] Other scholars proposing psychological interpretations have placed Dionysus' emotionality in the foreground by focusing on the joy, terror or hysteria associated with the god.^{[75][76][77][78][79]}



Satyr giving a grapevine to Bacchus as a child; cameo glass, first half of the 1st century AD; from Italy



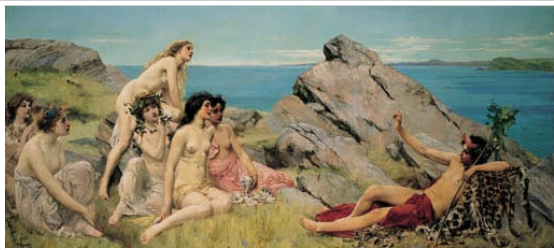
Bronze head of Dionysus, 50 BC -50 AD, in the British Museum^[71]



"Bacchus" by Michelangelo (1497)

The Russian poet and philosopher Vyacheslav Ivanov elaborated the theory of Dionysianism, which traces the roots of literary art in general and the art of tragedy in particular to ancient Dionysian mysteries. His views were expressed in the treatises *The Hellenic Religion of the Suffering God* (1904), and *Dionysus and Early Dionysianism* (1921).

Inspired by James Frazer, some have labeled Dionysus a life-death-rebirth deity. The mythographer Karl Kerényi devoted much energy to Dionysus over his long career; he summed up his thoughts in *Dionysos: Archetypal Image of Indestructible Life* (Bollingen, Princeton, 1976).



Bacchus and the Choir of Nymphs (1888)
by John Reinhard Weguelin

Dionysus is the main character of Aristophanes' play *The Frogs*, later updated to a modern version by Burt Shevelove (libretto) and Stephen Sondheim (music and lyrics) ("The time is the present. The place is ancient Greece. ..."). In the play, Dionysus and his slave Xanthius venture to Hades to bring a famed writer back from the dead, with the hopes that the writer's presence in the world will fix all nature of earthly problems. In Aristophanes' play, Euripides competes against Aeschylus to be recovered from the underworld; In Sondheim and Shevelove's, George Bernard Shaw faces William Shakespeare.

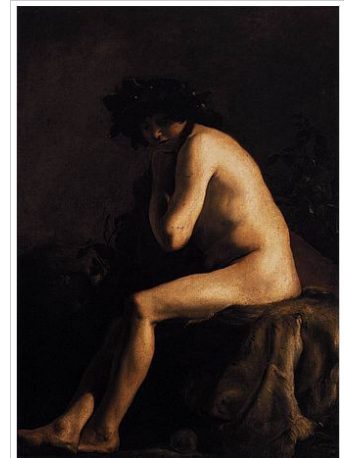
Dionysus is one of the central myths explored in the 2011 Weaponized anthology *The Immanence of Myth*.^[80]

Walt Disney has depicted the character on a number of occasions. The first such portrayal of Silenus or Dionysus as the Roman Bacchus, was in the "Pastoral" segment of Walt Disney's third classic *Fantasia*. In keeping with the more fun-loving Roman god, he is portrayed as an overweight, happily drunk man wearing a tunic and cloak, grape leaves on his head, carrying a goblet of wine, and riding a drunken donkey named Jacchus ("jackass"). He is friends with the fauns and centaurs, and is shown celebrating a harvest festival. He was depicted as an overweight drunkard as opposed to his youthful descriptions in myths. He has bright pink skin and rosy red cheeks hinting at his drunkenness. He always carries either a bottle or glass of wine in his hand, and like in the myths, wears a wreath of grape leaves upon his head.

In music Dionysus (together with Demeter) was used as an archetype for the character Tori by contemporary artist Tori Amos in her 2007 album *American Doll Posse*, and the Canadian rock band Rush refer to a confrontation and hatred between Dionysus and Apollo in the Cygnus X-1 duology.

Versions of Dionysus has also appeared in modern fiction. The Romanised equivalent of Dionysus was referenced in the 1852 plantation literature novel *Aunt Phillis's Cabin*, which featured a character named Uncle Bacchus, who was so-named due to his excessive alcoholism. Comics writers Eddie Campbell and Grant Morrison have both utilised the character. Morrison claims that the myth of Dionysus provides the inspiration for his violent and explicit graphic novel *Kill Your Boyfriend*, whilst Campbell used the character in his *Deadface* series to explore both the conventions of super-hero comic books and artistic endeavour. Dionysus along with Lilith are central characters in James Curcio's 2011 novel *Fallen Nation: Party At The World's End*. A version of Bacchus appears in C. S. Lewis' Prince Caspian, part of *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

Lewis depicts him as dangerous-looking, androgynous young boy who helps Aslan awaken the spirits of the Narnian trees and rivers. He does not appear in the 2008 film version. Rick Riordan's series of books *Percy Jackson & The Olympians* presents Dionysus as an uncaring, childish and spoiled god who, as a punishment for chasing a nymph, has to work in Camp Half-Blood and stay off alcohol (The film adaptation *Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters* expands on this in that Dionysus can pour himself wine, but it automatically turns into water in his glass).



Bacchus by Paulus Bor .



A Bacchus themed table. The top was made in Florence (c.1736) and the gilded wood base in Britain or Ireland, c.1736-1740.

In Fred Saberhagen's 2001 novel, *God of the Golden Fleece*, a young man in a post-apocalyptic world picks up an ancient piece of technology shaped in the likeness of the Dionysus. Here, Dionysus is depicted as a relatively weak god, albeit a subversive one whose powers are able to undermine the authority of tyrants.

In 2009 the poet Stephen Howarth and veteran theatre producer Andrew Hobbs collaborated on a play entitled *Bacchus in Rehab* with Dionysus as the central character. The authors describe the piece as "combining highbrow concept and lowbrow humour."^[81]

The second season of the TV series *True Blood* involves a plot line wherein a maenad, Maryann, causes mayhem in the Louisiana town of Bon Temps in attempt to summon Dionysus.

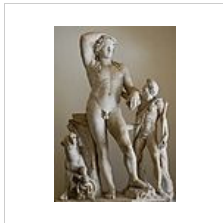
Dionysus, going by his Roman name "Bacchus," is a character in the 2011 video game *Rock of Ages*. Bacchus is a playable character in the multiplayer online battle arena *Smite*. He is a melee tank and is nicknamed "God of Wine".^[82]

Names originating from *Dionysus*

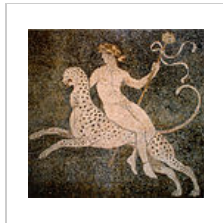
- Dion (also spelled Deion, Deon and Dionne)
- Denise (also spelled Denice, Daniesa, Denese, and Denisse)
- Dennis, Denis or Denys (including the derivative surnames Denison and Dennison), Denny, Dennie
- Denis (Croatian), Dionis, Dionisie (Romanian)

- Dénes (Hungarian)
- Dionisio/Dyonisio (Spanish), Dionigi (Italian)
- Διονύσιος, Διονύσης, Νιόνιος (Dionysios, Dionysis, Nionios Modern Greek)
- Deniska (diminutive of Russian Denis, itself a derivative of the Greek)
- Dionísio (Portuguese)
- Dionizy (Polish)
- Deniz (Turkish)

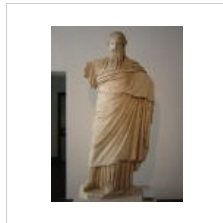
Gallery



The *Ludovisi Dionysus* with panther, satyr and grapes on a vine (Palazzo Altemps, Rome)



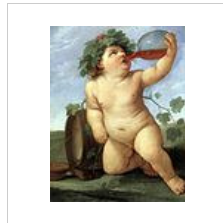
Dionysos riding a cheetah, 4th-century BC mosaic from Pella



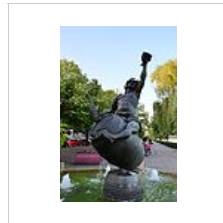
Statue of Dionysus (Sardanapalus) (Museo Palazzo Massimo Alle Terme, Rome)



Dionysus extending a drinking cup (*kantharos*), late 6th century BC



Drinking Bacchus (1623) Guido Reni



thumb|Statue of Dionysus in Remich Luxembourg

See also

- Apollonian and Dionysian
- Ascolia
- Bacchanalia
- Bacchic art
- Dionysian Mysteries
- Orgia
- Theatre of Dionysus

Notes

- ↑ Another variant, from the Spanish royal collection, is at the Museo del Prado, Madrid: illustration.
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- ↑ James, Edwin Oliver. *The Tree of Life: An Archaeological Study*. Brill Publications. 1966. page 234. ISBN 9789004016125
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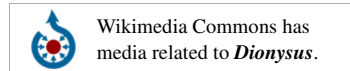
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- Ca 2000 images of Bacchus at the Warburg Institute's Iconographic Database (http://warburg.sas.ac.uk/vpc/VPC_search/subcats.php?cat_1=5&cat_2=89)
- Iconographic Themes in Art: Bacchus | Dionysos (<http://www.xs4all.nl/~schuffel/english/bacchus/>)
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- Dionysos Links and Booklist (<http://www.baubo5.com/dionysos.html>) (A huge list of links.)
- Mosaic of Dionysus at Ephesus Terrace Home-2 (<http://www.panoramio.com/photo/4731362>)
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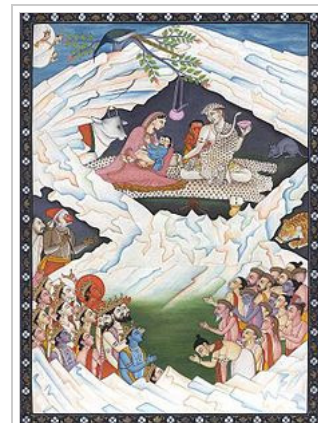
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Axis mundi

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **axis mundi** (also *cosmic axis*, *world axis*, *world pillar*, *columna cerului*, *center of the world*, *world tree*), in religion or mythology, is the world center or the connection between Heaven and Earth. As the celestial pole and geographic pole, it expresses a point of connection between sky and earth where the four compass directions meet. At this point travel and correspondence is made between higher and lower realms.^[1] Communication from lower realms may ascend to higher ones and blessings from higher realms may descend to lower ones and be disseminated to all.^[2] The spot functions as the *omphalos* (navel), the world's point of beginning.^{[3][4]}

The image is mostly viewed as feminine, as it relates to the center of the earth (perhaps like an umbilical providing nourishment). It may have the form of a natural object (a mountain, a tree, a vine, a stalk, a column of smoke or fire) or a product of human manufacture (a staff, a tower, a ladder, a staircase, a maypole, a cross, a steeple, a rope, a totem pole, a pillar, a spire). Its proximity to heaven may carry implications that are chiefly religious (pagoda, temple mount, minaret, church) or secular (obelisk, lighthouse, rocket, skyscraper). The image appears in religious and secular contexts.^[5] The *axis mundi* symbol may be found in cultures utilizing shamanic practices or animist belief systems, in major world religions, and in technologically advanced "urban centers". In Mircea Eliade's opinion, "Every Microcosm, every inhabited region, has a Centre; that is to say, a place that is sacred above all."^[6] The axis mundi is often associated with mandalas.



Mount Kailash, depicting the holy family: of Shiva and Parvati cradling Skanda with Ganesha by Shiva's side

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Background

The symbol originates in a natural and universal psychological perception: that the spot one occupies stands at "the center of the world". This space serves as a microcosm of order because it is known and settled. Outside the boundaries of the microcosm lie foreign realms that, because they are unfamiliar or not ordered, represent chaos, death or night.^[7] From the center one may still venture in any of the four cardinal directions, make discoveries, and establish new centers as new realms become known and settled. The modern name of China "中国" (pinyin: Zhōngguó), meaning "Middle Kingdom", is often interpreted as an expression of an ancient perception that the Chinese polity (or group of polities) occupied the center of the world, with other lands lying in various directions relative to it.^[5]



Mount Fuji, Japan

Within the central known universe a specific locale-often a mountain or other elevated place, a spot where earth and sky come closest gains status as center of the center, the **axis mundi**. High mountains are typically regarded as sacred by peoples living near them. Shrines are often erected at the summit or base.^[8] Japan's highest mountain, Mount Fuji, has long symbolized the world axis in Japanese culture. Mount Kun-Lun fills a similar role in China.^[9] For the ancient Hebrews Mount Zion expressed the symbol. Sioux beliefs take the Black Hills as the axis mundi. Mount Kailash is holy to Hinduism and several religions in Tibet. The Pitjantjatjara people in central Australia consider Uluru to be central to both their world and culture. In ancient Mesopotamia the cultures of ancient Sumer and Babylon erected artificial mountains, or ziggurats, on the flat river plain. These supported staircases leading to temples at the top. The Hindu temples in India are often situated on high mountains. E.g. Amarnath, Tirupati, Vaishno Devi etc. The pre-Columbian residents of Teotihuacán in Mexico erected huge pyramids featuring staircases leading to heaven. Jacob's Ladder is an axis mundi image, as is the Temple Mount. For Christians the Cross on Mount Calvary expresses the symbol.^[10] The Middle Kingdom, China, had a central mountain, Kun-Lun, known in Taoist literature as "the mountain at the middle of the world." To "go into the mountains" meant to dedicate oneself to a spiritual life.^[11] Monasteries of all faiths tend, like shrines, to be placed at elevated spots. Wise religious teachers are typically depicted in literature and art as bringing their revelations at world centers: mountains, trees, temples.

Because the axis mundi is an idea that unites a number of concrete images, no contradiction exists in regarding multiple spots as "the center of the world". The symbol can operate in a number of locales at once.^[6] Mount Hermon was regarded as the axis mundi in Caananite tradition, from where the sons of God are introduced descending in 1 Enoch (1En6:6).^[12] The ancient Greeks regarded several sites as places of earth's *omphalos* (navel) stone, notably the oracle at Delphi, while still maintaining a belief in a cosmic world tree and in Mount Olympus as the abode of the gods. Judaism has the Temple Mount and Mount Sinai, Christianity has the Mount of Olives and Calvary, Islam has Ka'aba, said to be the first building on earth, and the Temple Mount (Dome of the Rock). In Hinduism, Mount Kailash is identified with the mythical Mount Meru and regarded as the home of Shiva; in Vajrayana Buddhism, Mount Kailash is recognized as the most sacred place where all the dragon currents converge and is regarded as the gateway to Shambhala. In Shinto, the Ise Shrine is the omphalos. In

addition to the Kun Lun Mountains, where it is believed the peach tree of immortality is located, the Chinese folk religion recognizes four other specific mountains as pillars of the world. In Mormonism, the omphalos is the Temple Lot in Independence, Missouri, United States.^[13]

Sacred places constitute world centers (omphalos) with the altar or place of prayer as the axis. Altars, incense sticks, candles and torches form the axis by sending a column of smoke, and prayer, toward heaven. The architecture of sacred places often reflects this role. "Every temple or palace--and by extension, every sacred city or royal residence--is a Sacred Mountain, thus becoming a Centre."^[14] The stupa of Hinduism, and later Buddhism, reflects Mount Meru. Cathedrals are laid out in the form of a cross, with the vertical bar representing the union of earth and heaven as the horizontal bars represent union of people to one another, with the altar at the intersection. Pagoda structures in Asian temples take the form of a stairway linking earth and heaven. A steeple in a church or a minaret in a mosque also serve as connections of earth and heaven. Structures such as the maypole, derived from the Saxons' Irminsul, and the totem pole among indigenous peoples of the Americas also represent world axes. The calumet, or sacred pipe, represents a column of smoke (the soul) rising from a world center.^[15] A mandala creates a world center within the boundaries of its two-dimensional space analogous to that created in three-dimensional space by a shrine.^[16]



Yggdrasil, the World Ash (Norse)

Plants

Plants often serve as images of the axis mundi. The image of the Cosmic Tree provides an axis symbol that unites three planes: sky (branches), earth (trunk) and underworld (roots).^[17] In some Pacific island cultures the banyan tree, of which the Bodhi tree is of the Sacred Fig variety, is the abode of ancestor spirits. In Hindu religion, the banyan tree is considered sacred and is called "Ashwath Vriksha" ("I am Banyan tree among trees" - Bhagavad Gita). It represents eternal life because of its seemingly ever-expanding branches. The Bodhi Tree is also the name given to the tree under which Gautama Siddhartha, the historical Buddha, sat on the night he attained enlightenment. The Yggdrasil, or World Ash, functions in much the same way in Norse mythology; it is the site where Odin found enlightenment. Other examples include Jievaras in Lithuanian mythology and Thor's Oak in the myths of the pre-Christian Germanic peoples. The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of

Good and Evil in Genesis present two aspects of the same image. Each is said to stand at the center of the Paradise garden from which four rivers flow to nourish the whole world. Each tree confers a boon. Bamboo, the plant from which Asian calligraphy pens are made, represents knowledge and is regularly found on Asian college campuses. The Christmas tree, which can be traced in its origins back to pre-Christian European beliefs, represents an axis mundi.^[18] Entheogens (psychoactive substances) are often regarded as world axes, such as the Fly Agaric mushroom among the Evenks of Russia. In China, traditional cosmography sometimes depicts the world center marked with the Jian tree 建木. Two more trees are placed at the East and West, corresponding to the points of sunrise and sunset (Huainanzi). The Mesoamerican world tree connects the planes of the Underworld and the sky with that of the terrestrial realm.^[19]

Human figure

The human body can express the symbol of world axis.^[20] Some of the more abstract Tree of Life representations, such as the *Sefirot* in Kabbalism and in the *Chakra* system recognized by Hinduism and Buddhism, merge with the concept of the human body as a pillar between heaven and earth. Disciplines such as Yoga and Tai Chi begin from the premise of the human body as axis mundi. The Buddha represents a world centre in human form.^[21] Large statues of a meditating figure unite the human figure with the symbolism of

temple and tower. Astrology in all its forms assumes a connection between human health and affairs and the orientation of these with celestial bodies. World religions regard the body itself as a temple and prayer as a column uniting earth to heaven. The ancient Colossus of Rhodes combined the role of human figure with those of portal and skyscraper. The image of a human being suspended on a tree or a cross locates the figure at the axis where heaven and earth meet. The Renaissance image known as the Vitruvian Man represented a symbolic and mathematical exploration of the human form as world axis.^[18]

Homes

Homes can represent world centers. The symbolism for their residents is the same as for inhabitants of palaces and other sacred mountains.^[14] The hearth participates in the symbolism of the altar and a central garden participates in the symbolism of primordial paradise. In Asian cultures houses were traditionally laid out in the form of a square oriented toward the four compass directions. A traditional Asian home was oriented toward the sky through Feng shui, a system of geomancy, just as a palace would be. Traditional Arab houses are also laid out as a square surrounding a central fountain that evokes a primordial garden paradise. Mircea Eliade noted that "the symbolism of the pillar in [European] peasant houses likewise derives from the 'symbolic field' of the *axis mundi*. In many archaic dwellings the central pillar does in fact serve as a means of communication with the heavens, with the sky."^[22] The nomadic peoples of Mongolia and the Americas more often lived in circular structures. The central pole of the tent still operated as an axis but a fixed reference to the four compass points was avoided.^[23]

Shamanic function

A common shamanic concept, and a universally told story, is that of the healer traversing the axis mundi to bring back knowledge from the other world. It may be seen in the stories from Odin and the World Ash Tree to the Garden of Eden and Jacob's Ladder to Jack and the Beanstalk and Rapunzel. It is the essence of the journey described in *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri. The epic poem relates its hero's descent and ascent through a series of spiral structures that take him from through the core of the earth, from the depths of Hell to celestial Paradise. It is also a central tenet in the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex.^[24]



The Caduceus

Anyone or anything suspended on the axis between heaven and earth becomes a repository of potential knowledge. A special status accrues to the thing suspended: a serpent, a victim of crucifixion or hanging, a rod, a fruit, mistletoe. Derivations of this idea find form in the Rod of Asclepius, an emblem of the medical profession, and in the caduceus, an emblem of correspondence and commercial professions. The staff in these emblems represents the axis mundi while the serpents act as guardians of, or guides to, knowledge.^[25]

Traditional expressions

Asia

- Wuji
- Bodhi tree, especially where Gautama Buddha found Enlightenment
- Pagoda
- Stupa (Buddhism, Hinduism)

- Mount Meru in Hinduism
- Mount Kailash regarded by Hinduism and several religions in Tibet, e.g. Bön
- Jambudvīpa in Hinduism and Jainism which is regarded as the actual navel of the universe (which is human in form)
- Kailasa (India), the abode of Shiva
- Mandara (India)
- Shiva Lingam (India)
- Kunlun Mountain (China), residence of the Immortals and the site of a peach tree offering immortality
- Human figure (yoga, tai chi, Buddha in meditation, sacred images)
- Ise Shrine (Shinto)
- Central courtyard in traditional home
- Bamboo stalk, associated with knowledge and learning

Middle East

- Garden of Eden with four rivers
- Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil
- Mt. Ararat landing place of Noah's ark and court of the Armenian gods
- Ziggurat, or Tower of Babel
- Jacob's Ladder
- Jerusalem, specifically, the Holy Temple; focus of Jewish prayer where Abraham bound Isaac
- Cross of the Crucifixion
- Steeple
- Ka'aba in Mecca; focus of Muslim prayer and the first building built by Adam
- Dome of the Rock where Muhammad ascended to heaven
- Minaret
- Dilmun
- Garizim (Samaria)
- Hara Berezaiti (Persia)
- Zaphon

Africa

- Meskel bonfire
- Stelae of the Aksumite Empire
- Pyramids of Egypt
- Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove of Nigeria
- Jebel Barkal of Sudan

- Idufe Rock of prehispanic La Palma
- Mt Kenya of Kenya
- Mount Kilimanjaro

Europe

- Yggdrasil (the world ash-tree in Norse cosmology)
- Irminsul (the great pillar in Germanic paganism)
- Mount Olympus in Greece, court of the gods (Greek mythology)
- Sampo or Sammas (Baltic-Finnic mythology)
- Delphi, home of the Oracle of Delphi (Greek mythology)
- Colossus of Rhodes (Greek mythology)
- Maypole (East Europe and Germanic paganism)
- Jack's Beanstalk (English fairy tale)
- Rapunzel's Tower (German fairy tale)
- Hearth
- Central pillar of peasant homes
- Altar
- Vitruvian Man
- Hagia Sophia
- St. Peter's Basilica
- Umbilicus urbis Romae, a structure in the Roman Forum from where all the Roman roads parted.

The Americas

- Teotihuacán Pyramids
- Totem Pole
- Tent
- Black Hills (Sioux)
- Calumet (sacred pipe)
- Sipapu (Hopi)
- Southeastern Ceremonial Complex
- Medicine wheels of the northern Great Plains
- Temple Lot (Mormonism)
- Cuzco (Incas), meaning "navel" in Quechua
- Chakana
- Mesoamerican world tree
- Lanzon

Australia

- Uluru
- Rainbow Snake

Modern expressions

Axis mundi symbolism continues to be evoked in modern societies. The idea has proven especially consequential in the realm of architecture. Capitol buildings, as the direct descendents of palaces, fill this role, as do commemorative structures such as the Washington Monument in the United States. A skyscraper, as the term itself suggests, suggests the connection of earth and sky, as do spire structures of all sorts. Such buildings come to be regarded as "centers" of an inhabited area, or even the world, and serve as icons of its ideals.^[26] The first skyscraper of modern times, the Eiffel Tower, exemplifies this role. The structure was erected in 1889 in Paris, France, to serve as the centerpiece for the Exposition Universelle, making it a symbolic world center from the planning stages. It has served as an iconic image for the city and the nation ever since.^[27] Landmark skyscrapers often take names that clearly identify them as centers.^[28]

Designers of skyscrapers today routinely evoke the axis mundi symbolism inherent in ancient precedents. Taipei 101 in Taiwan, completed in 2004, evokes the staircase, bamboo stalk, pagoda, pillar and torch. The design of the Burj Khalifa (United Arab Emirates) evokes both desert plants and traditional Arab spires. William F. Smith, one of the designers, states that "the goal of the Burj Dubai [subsequently renamed Burj Khalifa] is not simply to be the world's tallest building--it is to embody the world's highest aspirations."^[29] Twin towers, such as the Petronas Towers (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) and the former World Trade Center (Manhattan), maintain the axis symbolism even as they more obviously assume the role of pillars. Some structures pierce the sky, implying movement or flight (Chicago Spire, CN Tower in Toronto, the Space Needle in Seattle). Some structures highlight the more lateral elements of the symbol in implying portals (Tuntex Sky Tower in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, The Gateway Arch in St. Louis).^{[30][31]}

The places with economic importance and where skyscrapers are founded are recognised as Financial centres. Examples of financial centres are London, New York City, Rome, Paris, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Chicago, Seoul, Shanghai, Toronto, Montreal, São Paulo, Frankfurt, and Amsterdam.

A geodesic place is another modern symbolism. Brasília, capital of Brazil, is known as a Geodesic place, where it is positioned at the middle of the country, on a drainage divide.

Ancient traditions continue in modern structures. The Peace Pagodas built since the 1947 unite religious and secular purposes in one symbol drawn from Buddhism. The influence of the pagoda tradition may be seen in modern Asian skyscrapers (Taipei 101, Petronas Towers). The ancient ziggurat has likewise reappeared in modern form, including the headquarters of the National Geographic Society in Washington, DC and The Ziggurat housing the California Department of General Services. Architect Frank Lloyd Wright conceived the Guggenheim Museum in New York as an inverted ziggurat. The Washington Monument is a modern obelisk.^[32]

Artistic representations of the world axis abound. Prominent among these is the *Colonne sans fin* (*The Endless*



Taipei 101 (Taiwan)

Column, 1938) an abstract sculpture by Romanian Constantin Brâncuși. The column takes the form of a "sky pillar" (*columna cerului*) upholding the heavens even as its rhythmically repeating segments invite climb and suggest the possibility of ascension.^[33]

The association of the cosmic pillar with knowledge gives it a prominent role in the world of scholarship. University campuses typically assign a prominent axis role to a campus structure, such as a clock tower, library tower or bell tower. The building serves as the symbolic center of the settlement represented by the campus and serves as an emblem of its ideals. This symbolism of the center is closely tied to the widespread symbolism of the world axis.^[34] The image of the "ivory tower", a colloquial metaphor for academia, sustains the metaphor.^[31]

The image still takes natural forms as well, as in the American tradition of the Liberty Tree located at town centers. Individual homes continue to act as world axes, especially where Feng shui and other geomantic practices continue to be observed.

The corner of Haight and Ashbury Streets in San Francisco, California is regarded as the axis mundi in the hippie subculture. Christopher Street in Manhattan in New York City is the axis mundi in the gay subculture. Folsom Street, also in San Francisco, is the axis mundi in the leather subculture.

Axis mundi symbolism may be seen in much of the romance surrounding space travel. A rocket on the pad takes on all the symbolism of a tower and the astronaut enacts a mythic story.^[35] Each embarks on a perilous journey into the heavens and, if successful, returns with a boon for dissemination. The Apollo 13 insignia stated it succinctly: *Ex luna scientia* ("From the Moon, knowledge").^[36]

Modern Storytelling

The axis mundi continues to appear in fiction as well as in real-world structures. Appearances of the ancient image in the tales and myths of more recent times include these:

- The ash tree growing in Hunding's living room, a Norse legend that figures prominently in Act 1 of *Die Walküre* (The Valkyrie), is one of many appearances of the image in the operas of Richard Wagner. Hunding's tree recalls the World Ash visited by Wotan, a central character in the *Ring* cycle of which this opera forms a part (1848–74).
- The Emerald City in the land of Oz, depicted in the popular book by L. Frank Baum (1900) and the subsequent MGM film (1939), stands at the center of the four compass directions.
- In *The Dark Tower* series by Stephen King, the eponymous Dark Tower serves as the axis of all the universes.
- In *Supernatural*, the Axis Mundi was a road (or tunnel, or river — depended on the person's perspective) that lead through heaven to its center ('heaven's garden').
- Filmmakers have placed axis mundi symbols in Bob Kane and Bill Finger's Gotham City. In Christopher Nolan's *Batman Begins* (2005) the city's symbolic centre is a skyscraper built by Bruce Wayne's father. The same role is filled by a fantastic cathedral in an earlier film by Tim Burton (1989). Burton's cathedral unites the images of steeple, skyscraper, staircase, ladder and rope.
- The maypole and related images appear in a number of popular songs. "The Wheel and the Maypole" by

XTC explicitly riffs on the axis mundi idea.

- The Island in the ABC drama *Lost* is revealed in its sixth season to function as a sort of axis mundi.
- In *God of War: Chains of Olympus* the axis mundi appears in a literal way as it separates Earth from Hades. It is destroyed in Persephone's scheme to destroy all life, and after its destruction Atlas is punished by replacing the pillar.
- In *World of Warcraft: Cataclysm*, The world pillar appears in a literal form, having been broken Azeroth and Deepholme threaten to collapse on one another, leaving Thrall and the Earthen ring to hold the worlds apart while players try to help repair it.

See also

- Alchemy
- Celestial sphere
- Crucifix
- Fleur de lis
- Herma
- Hyperborea
- North pole
- Optical axis
- Palmette
- Phurba
- Taiji (philosophy)
- Vorticism

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