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- **TRITON** (Τρίτων): Greek name derived from the word *tritos*, meaning "of the third." In mythology, this is the name of a son of <u>Poseidï¿½n</u>, a sea god and messenger of the deep.

http://www.20000-names.com/male_greek_names_05.htm

Triton (mythology)

Triton (/ˈtraɪtən/; Greek: Τρίτων *Tritōn*) is a mythological Greek god, the messenger of the sea. He is the son of Poseidon and Amphitrite, god and goddess of the sea respectively, and is herald for his father. He is usually represented as a merman, having the upper body of a human and the tail of a fish, "sea-hued", according to Ovid[1] "his shoulders barnacled with sea-shells".

Like his father, Poseidon, he carried a trident. However, Triton's special attribute was a twisted conch shell, on which he blew like a trumpet to calm or raise the waves. Its sound was such a cacophony, that when loudly blown, it put the giants to flight, who imagined it to be the roar of a dark wild beast.[2]

According to Hesiod's *Theogony*,[3] Triton dwelt with his parents in a golden palace in the depths of the sea; Homer places his seat in the waters off Aegae.[4] The story of the Argonauts places his home on the coast of Libya. When the Argo was driven ashore in the Gulf of Syrtes Minor, the crew carried the vessel to the "Tritonian Lake", Lake Tritonis, whence Triton, the local deity euhemeristically rationalized by Diodorus Siculus as "then ruler over Libya",[5] welcomed them with a guest-gift of a clod of earth and guided them through the lake's marshy outlet back to the Mediterranean.[6] When the Argonauts were lost in the desert, he guided them to find the passage from the river back to the sea.

Triton was the father of Pallas and foster parent to the goddess Athena.[7] Pallas was killed by Athena during a fight between the two goddesses.[8] Triton is also sometimes cited as the father of Scylla by Lamia. Triton can sometimes be multiplied into a host of **Tritones**, *daimones* of the sea.

In the Virgil's *Aeneid*, book 6, it is told that Triton killed Misenus, son of Aeolus, by drowning him after he challenged the gods to play as well as he did.[9]

1 Tritons

Over time, Triton's class and image came to be associated with a class of mermaid-like creatures, the Tritons (Τρίτωνες), which could be male or female, and usually formed the escort of marine divinities. Tritons were a race of sea gods and goddesses born from Triton. Triton lived with his parents, Poseidon and Amphitrite, who was also known as Celaeno, in a golden palace on the bottom of the sea. According to Homer it was called Aegae. Unlike their ancestor Poseidon who is always fully anthro-

Gold armband with Triton holding a putto, Greek, 200 BCE (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

pomorphic in ancient art (this has only changed in modern popular culture), Tritons' lower half is that of a fish, while the top half is presented in a human figure. This is debated often because their appearance is described differently throughout history. Ordinary Tritons were described in detail by the traveller Pausanias (ix. 21).[10][11]

> "The Tritons have the following appearance. On their heads they grow hair like that of marsh frogs not only in color, but also in the impossibility of separating one hair from another. The rest of their body is rough with fine scales just as is the shark. Under their ears they have gills and a man's nose; but the mouth is broader and the teeth are those of a beast. Their eyes seem to me blue, and they have hands, fingers, and nails like the shells of the murex. Under the breast and belly is a tail like a dolphin's instead of feet."

They are often compared to other Merman/Mermaid like beings, such as Merrows, Selkies, and Sirens. They are

The Triton Fountain, by Gianlorenzo Bernini, Rome

Triton and Nymphe *fountain by Viktor Tilgner in the Volksgarten (Vienna)*

also thought of as the aquatic versions of Satyrs. Another description of Tritons is that of the Centaur-Tritons, also known as Ichthyocentaurs who are depicted with two horse's feet in place of arms.

When Pausanias visited the city of Triteia in the second century CE, he was told that the name of the city was derived from an eponymous **Triteia**, a daughter of Triton, and that it claimed to have been founded by her son (with Ares), one among several mythic heroes named Melanippus ("Black Horse").[12]

Tritons were the trumpeters of the sea, using trumpets made out of a great shell, mostly known as a conch. They would blow this shell throughout the sea to calm the waves, or stir them up, all at the command of Poseidon.

2 University, college, and high school mascot

There are numerous universities, colleges, and high schools that use Triton as their mascot. These include the following:

- University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, California
- Eckerd College, St. Petersburg, Florida
- Edmonds Community College, Lynnwood, Washington
- Iowa Central Community College, Fort Dodge, Iowa
- Mariner High School, Cape Coral, Florida
- Notre Dame Academy, Green Bay, Wisconsin
- San Clemente High School (San Clemente, California)
- University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam
- University of Missouri–St. Louis

Many club sports teams, such as junior football leagues and numerous swimming leagues, also use the symbol of Triton.

An example of other uses include Wilfrid Laurier University's orientation week in 2014 that had a colour team named the Green Tritons as part of the weeks events.

3 Triton since the Renaissance

The largest moon of the planet Neptune has been given the name Triton, as Neptune is the Roman equivalent of Poseidon.

In Wordsworth's sonnet "The World Is Too Much with Us" (ca 1802, published 1807), the poet regrets the prosaic humdrum modern world, yearning for

glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

In Jacob Jordaens' 'The Family of the Artist', now in the Prado, Madrid, a Triton is depicted gripping, perhaps crushing, a child with its snake-like tail, a scene watched over by an exotic parrot. The significance of this motif in the context of a painting of domestic happiness is unclear, but it may involve a transfer of functions in that that the child appears to be blowing on the conch shell

(referred to above) in order to frighten away those forces that threaten family peace.

A family of large sea snails, the shells of some of which have been used as trumpets since antiquity, are commonly known as "tritons", see Triton (gastropod).

The name Triton is associated in modern industry with tough hard-wearing machines such as the Ford Triton engine and Mitsubishi Triton pickup truck.

King Triton is also depicted in the Disney's *The Little Mermaid* as an undersea king, the father of the title character.

4 References

[1] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I.332 ff.

[2] Pseudo-Hyginus, *Poetical astronomy* ii. 23

[3] *Theogony* 930.

[4] *Iliad* xiii. 20.

[5] Diodorus iv.56.6.

[6] Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, iv. 1552ff

[7] Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheke* 3. 144.

[8] *Bibliotheca*, 3.12.3

[9] Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.164 ff..

[10] "Pausanias, "Description of Greece" 9.21.2". Perseus.tufts.edu. Retrieved 2012-06-18.

[11] Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology

[12] Pausanias, *Description of Greece* vii.22.8.

5 External links

- Media related to Tritons at Wikimedia Commons

- Nereid and Triton Mosaic from Ephesus Terrace Home −2

- 3D stereoview of Nereid and Triton relief from Apollon Temple in Didim

- TheoiProject: Triton Classical references to Triton in English translation

- Warburg Institute Iconographic Database (ca 600 images of Tritons and other sea deities)

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