**[title]Representations of Zeus/Jupiter in the Small-Scale Bronze Sculptures of Albania**

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**[A-head]Abstract**

[abstract]

Zeus and Jupiter were venerated gods in ancient Albania we can see from numerous attestations in inscriptions, coins, and marble sculpture. The presence of four bronze statuettes depicting Zeus/Jupiter is added evidence for his cult in this territory, which was situated on an important crossroads of the Mediterranean. The bronze statuettes representing Zeus with a Thunderbolt follow the canons of the Greek world and find many similarities with other statuettes that were used as votive offerings in various temples. The two Roman examples depicting Jupiter follow models widely used in the Roman Empire, mostly reproductions of the sculpture of the fourth century BC.

These bronze statuettes attest not only to the cult of Zeus/Jupiter in the territory of ancient Albania, but also to influences of style and bronze working techniques, and to similarities in religion shared with the rest of the Mediterranean world.

[main text]

Zeus/Jupiter was one of the most venerated gods in ancient Albania, a country situated on one of the crossroads of the Mediterranean. The area was heavily influenced culturally by the Graeco-Roman world. The eclectic religious life of this Graeco-Roman civilization ensured that the indigenous Illyrian pantheon was very similar to the Greek, and that most of the Olympian gods were venerated, as were Roman deities in a later era. Zeus/Jupiter, one of the most important gods, is represented in the small-scale bronze sculpture found in Albania, and in particular by the four examples discussed here. These have been previously published only in a descriptive manner, mostly in exhibition catalog formats.

**[A-head]Zeus with a Thunderbolt**

This statuette of Zeus **(fig. 20.1)**, which originates from Apollonia, is shown in full heroic nudity. His left arm and foot are thrust dynamically forward in the direction of his foes, while his right leg is straight; the arm is raised and slightly bent, implying movement. His weight falls on his left forward leg, but the figure is balanced and poised. His left arm is held straight before his body. He may have held an eagle on his missing left hand, while his right arm is bent at a right angle to throw the thunderbolt, which is also missing.

This statuette, which is meant to be seen in profile, demonstrates a high quality execution of anatomy, as can be seen through the intense expression on the face and the variegated transitions between the muscles. The statuette seems to be in motion.

In the Archaic and Early Classical periods, numerous bronze statuettes of the thunderbolt-wielding Zeus Keraunios appear at Olympia, Dodona, and elsewhere in Greece and other territories.[[1]](#endnote-1) The early examples of Zeus from the Archaic period are static and not represented in motion, however, while later examples of the transitional period seem to be in a vigorous stride, like certain examples from Dodona.[[2]](#endnote-2) The same can also be said for the statuette from Apollonia. These statuettes belong to two main types that have a wide distribution: the first represents Zeus throwing a thunderbolt and holding an eagle on his extended left hand, while the second group lacks the eagle.[[3]](#endnote-3) This type of Zeus was used for military votive offerings at Olympia, and the god’s attributes, such as the thunderbolt and spear, were interchangeable. The statuette from Apollonia finds its closest analogies with the Zeus from Dodona. The same stature of the body and the anatomy can be noted; the facial expression and the arrangement of the hair (both heads have a similar roll of hair) also present closed similarities. The Zeus of Dodona has no eagle in the left hand, while for the Zeus of Apollonia it is difficult to determine whether it once held one in the outstretched left hand. However, the presence of a hole at the end of the forearm might suggest that an eagle was standing there.

The findspot, the Greek colony of Apollonia of Illyria, suggests it was an import from around the beginning of fifth century BC, representing one of the finest examples of this series.

**[A-head]Zeus with a Thunderbolt or Poseidon?**

The statuette (**fig. 20.2**) is represented nude; his left arm and foot move forward, while his right leg is straight and his arm is raised and bent. The weight falls on the forward leg. The anatomy of the body is schematic and poorly designed with the main concern being the portrayal of a strong figure of the god. The head rests on a very short neck. The features are of poor quality due to a neglected full cast but also the lack of cold work.

This statuette is represented in an attitude very similar to the Zeus of Apollonia (see fig. 20.1), but with a notably less quality of execution. All the details that are exceptionally well executed in the statuette from Apollonia are quite neglected here. The coiffure is poorly designed, almost schematic, as is the anatomy of the body, with few close parallels.[[4]](#endnote-4)

Two hypotheses for the identification of this statuette have been suggested: the first recognizes it as a representation of Zeus on account of the similarities with the exemplar from Apollonia,[[5]](#endnote-5) while the second identifies it as Poseidon, mainly because of its findspot. The statuette was found in Salaria (southern Albania), in the vicinity of an inscription mentioning Poseidon, and some researchers believe that this archaeological evidence might suggest the presence of a sanctuary of Poseidon in this area.[[6]](#endnote-6)

However, the pose, the attitude, and the resemblance to other statuettes in this category impel us to recognize it as a representation of Zeus, modeled on the famous Zeus Keraunios, but of poorer quality. Hence we are probably dealing with a local product dated to the same time as or possibly a little bit more recent than the Classical examples and the bronze statuette of Zeus from Apollonia.

**[A-head]Jupiter**

Jupiter is represented by two bronze statuettes of a very good quality found in the region of Korça in southeast Albania. In the first statuette, Jupiter is portrayed naked (**fig. 20.3**). In the right hand he would have held a thunderbolt, an eagle, or a patera; the left hand extends upward, most probably to hold a scepter. This statuette is largely intact, missing only his feet and forearms. In addition, it has a youthful body, as can be noticed by the slender legs and semi-muscular body. He looks very regal, with a haughty expression under his beautifully sculpted beard and laurel crown.

The other statuette of Jupiter is wearing only a *chlamys* draped over his neck and left shoulder (**fig. 20.4**). The statuette has exceptional facial features and hair, and a very muscular body. The bearded Jupiter is seen looking away to his right, and his weight is on his right leg.

In these two similar poses, the figure can be recognized as Jupiter the Thunderer of the Capitoline, the preserver and supporter of the Roman state, which imitated the famous sculpture of Zeus by the Athenian sculptor Leochares.

These statuettes are represented in a very Classical schema: nude, with or without the *chlamys,* and with a contrapposto of the body. The body’s incline and the head turned three-quarters to the right are characteristic of the Polykleitan style, which is visible also in the position of the legs, which is adjusted to the stature of the body, providing coherence to the establishment of the figure in space. The type was a creation of Leochares, who was commissioned by the Arcadian League to create a sculpture of Zeus Soter in Megapolis. The model was recognized as the expression of a new type of deity[[7]](#endnote-7) and was widely imitated in sculpture, presenting an important development in the image of Zeus and other paternal deities. In the late first century BC, Leochares’ statue was taken to Rome and installed in the temple of Jupiter Tonans on the Capitoline, according to Pliny (*Natural History* 39.79). A similar typology of Jupiter can also be seen in the grave markers and the coins of that period.[[8]](#endnote-8)

This model was used widely for the production of bronze statuettes, the best example of which is probably the Zeus of Paramythia.[[9]](#endnote-9) This series is characterized by a developed musculature, beard, and leonine hairstyle. It changes considerably from the Hellenistic examples, which were characterized by slenderer, less muscular physiques and a less pronounced coiffure. To this series belong examples of varying quality, which sometimes show reversed positions of the hands and the legs.[[10]](#endnote-10)

The statuettes from Albania are noted for the realistic modeling of the body and the position of the arms, which would once have held the attributes of Jupiter the Thunderer: the thunderbolt and the scepter or patera*,* which was the chief vessel used for libations.[[11]](#endnote-11) In most cases the thunderbolt was embellished with two small flames (depicted as two torches linked with decorated leaves); this was one of the most commonly represented attributes of the Jupiter during the Roman period.[[12]](#endnote-12) In addition to these attributes, Jupiter often wears a wreath composed of oak leaves, which represents the god’s sacred tree.[[13]](#endnote-13)

The counterparts of the statuette of naked Jupiter (see fig. 20.3) are numerous and widespread throughout the Roman Empire.[[14]](#endnote-14) This statuette, although of a good quality, is not among the best of the series. The anatomy looks a bit neglected, and the coiffure, though following Roman style, is not thoroughly worked in its details. It finds its closest parallel in a bronze statuette found in Germany.[[15]](#endnote-15)

The other statuette, wearing a *chlamys* “en sautoir” (see fig. 20.4), finds numerous analogies in a series of bronze statuettes of the same type. It differs from the first statuette in the depiction of the body in a very muscular manner and with a more leonine style of the beard and hair. Similar statuettes are seen holding an eagle in the outstretched right hand, in the act of throwing a thunderbolt with raised left arm or holding a scepter.[[16]](#endnote-16) This type is also derived from the Zeus of Leochares, but it is dated to the Roman period based on its coiffure and the contrapposto of the body.[[17]](#endnote-17)

**[A-head]The Zeus Cult in Ancient Albania**

The cult of Zeus in Albania is well attested from other types of archaeological evidence in addition to the bronze statuettes. It is worth mentioning here the presence of inscriptions in various media dedicated to Zeus, which highlight the importance of his cult in the territory of ancient Albania.[[18]](#endnote-18) Especially the cult of Zeus of Dodona, which was depicted in a manner similar to the bronze statuette from Apollonia, was widespread from Dodona across Ambracia, Apollonia, Olympia, Amantia,[[19]](#endnote-19) and especially northern Epirus.[[20]](#endnote-20)

Ancient coinage also presents various representations of Zeus, but the most frequently represented, radiating especially from Amantia, is the cult of Zeus of Dodona.[[21]](#endnote-21) Other typologies of Zeus are also well represented on coins found in the territory of modern Albania.[[22]](#endnote-22) In contrast, representations of Zeus in sculpture in the round and on reliefs are rare, though they are not unknown.[[23]](#endnote-23) The presence of these two bronze statuettes depicting Zeus is additional evidence for his cult in the territory of southern Illyria and northern Epirus.

**[A-head]The Jupiter Cult in Ancient Albania**

These two bronze statuettes of Jupiter (see figs. 20.3–4) attest to the presence of the cult of Jupiter Capitolinus in southern Illyria. However, the cult of Jupiter is attested by just a few rare documents in Albania, indicating that his cult was not widespread in the country. Only two inscriptions are known: the first from Byllis, where Jupiter is addressed with the epithet *Sabazios,*[[24]](#endnote-24)and the other from the environs of Dyrrachium.[[25]](#endnote-25) His cult can also be documented by the presence of Roman coins on which he is depicted with the leonine head.[[26]](#endnote-26)

In the meantime his cult was more popular in other Illyrian territories, such as Dalmatia, where he was known as Maximus, Dolicheus*,* or Capitolinus*,* and in Dardania, where inscriptions regarding this god are seen throughout the territory, for example in Dërsnik[[27]](#endnote-27) and Pejë,[[28]](#endnote-28) and on two altars from the area of Suhareka.[[29]](#endnote-29) The popularity of his cult in these territories is probably due to the presence of the Roman army.

In sum, the two bronze statuettes depicting Jupiter, characteristic products of the first centuries AD, are evidence for his cult in the territory of ancient Albania, adding to the scant evidence from other types of documents.

[A-head]Conclusion

Zeus/Jupiter was one of the most venerated gods in ancient Illyria and northern Epirus as attested in many documents, such as inscriptions, coins, marble sculpture, and small bronze sculpture.

The bronze statuettes examined here follow the canons of the Greek world for the two Classical examples, which find most of their parallels at Olympia, Dodona, and elsewhere. The Roman examples follow the same canons as in the rest of the Roman Empire, mostly Greek reproductions of the sculpture of the fourth century BC. These reproductions were very widespread; based in the rarity of finds in Albania and the good quality of these pieces, we are inclined to believe that we are dealing with imported Roman objects.

These bronze statuettes bear close similarities with their counterparts in large-scale bronze sculpture of the Greek and Roman periods, testifying to influences of styles and bronze-working methods, and also similarities in religion across the Mediterranean world.

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2. Elderkin 1940, 225. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Mylonas 1944, 149–51, with extensive bibliography. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
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21. Ceka 2001–2002, 6; Gjongecaj 2011, 50: coins of Epirote *koinon*, Zeus/Thunderbolt. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Ceka 2001–2002, 6: Zeus/Nike in Dyrrhachium; Gjongecaj 2011, 42: coins from Dyrrhachium, Zeus/tripods; 46: coins from Scodra (modern Shkodër) and Lissos, Zeus/galley; 50: coins from the Epirote *koinon*, Zeus/thunderbolt. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
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24. Anamali, Ceka, and Deniaux 2009, 151, fig. 194. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Mommsen 1873, 184, fig. 603. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Ceka 2001–2002, 5: coin from Scodra, Jupiter/ship; Gjongecaj 2009, plate IV: coin with Jupiter’s leonine head. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Perzhita and Peja 2009, 244: inscription about Jupiter dated to the second–third centuries AD. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Shpuza 2015, 119. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Dobruna-Salihu 2003–2004, 305. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)