**Origin**

Zeus is the sky and thunder god in ancient Greek religion, who rules as king of the gods of Mount Olympus. His name is cognate with the first element of his Roman equivalent Jupiter. His mythology and powers are similar, though not identical, to those of Indo-European deities such as Jupiter, Perkūnas, Perun, Indra, Dyaus and Thor.

Zeus is the child of Cronus and Rhea, the youngest of his siblings to be born, though sometimes reckoned the eldest as the others required disgorging from Cronus's stomach. In most traditions, he is married to Hera, by whom he is usually said to have fathered Ares, Hebe, and Hephaestus. At the oracle of Dodona, his consort was said to be Dione, by whom the Iliad states that he fathered Aphrodite. Zeus was also infamous for his erotic escapades. These resulted in many divine and heroic offspring, including Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Hermes, Persephone, Dionysus, Perseus, Heracles, Helen of Troy, Minos, and the Muses.

The god's name in the nominative is Ζεύς (Zeús). It is inflected as follows: vocative: Ζεῦ (Zeû); accusative: Δία (Día); genitive: Διός (Diós); dative: Διί (Dií). Diogenes Laërtius quotes Pherecydes of Syros as spelling the name Ζάς.

Zeus is the Greek continuation of \*Di̯ēus, the name of the Proto-Indo-European god of the daytime sky, also called \*Dyeus ph2tēr ("Sky Father"). The god is known under this name in the Rigveda (Vedic Sanskrit Dyaus/Dyaus Pita), Latin (compare Jupiter, from Iuppiter, deriving from the Proto-Indo-European vocative \*dyeu-ph2tēr), deriving from the root \*dyeu- ("to shine", and in its many derivatives, "sky, heaven, god"). Zeus is the only deity in the Olympic pantheon whose name has such a transparent Indo-European etymology.

Diodorus Siculus wrote that Zeus was also called Zen, because the humans believed that he was the cause of life (zen). While Lactantius wrote that he was called Zeus and Zen, not because he is the giver of life, but because he was the first who lived of the children of Cronus.

He was respected as an allfather who was chief of the gods and assigned roles to the others: "Even the gods who are not his natural children address him as Father, and all the gods rise in his presence." He was equated with many foreign weather gods, permitting Pausanias to observe "That Zeus is king in heaven is a saying common to all men". Zeus' symbols are the thunderbolt, eagle, bull, and oak. In addition to his Indo-European inheritance, the classical "cloud-gatherer" also derives certain iconographic traits from the cultures of the ancient Near East, such as the scepter. Zeus is frequently depicted by Greek artists in one of two poses: standing, striding forward with a thunderbolt leveled in his raised right hand, or seated in majesty.

**childhood**

Zeus was born of Titans Cronus and Rhea. Cronus was notorious for being a very jealous and greedy deity. Fearing that one of his children would take the throne away from him, Cronus devoured every child Rhea gave birth to.

However, when Rhea gave birth to her last child, Zeus, she managed to outwit Cronus with the help of the Titans Uranus and Gaea. She gave her husband a stone to swallow in diapers as a substitute for her child, and sent Zeus away to the Greek island of Crete. Special demons called "Curetes" made noise by beating on their shields so that Cronus would not hear the baby's cries.

Zeus was secretly raised by the nymphs and fed honey and milk with the help of the broken horn of the mother goat Amaltheia.

**War for Supremacy**

Soon the day came when Zeus was mature enough to usurp world domination and he began a battle against his father and the Titans. Led by him – and helped by the one-eyed Cyclopes and the hundred-handed Hecatoncheires (Zeus freed all of them from Cronus’ imprisonment) – the siblings overthrew Cronus and the Titans during a decade-long war called the Titanomachy.

Then, with the help of his siblings, Zeus overthrew the Titans in the depths of the underworld, Tartarus. After overthrowing his father Cronus, Zeus was confronted by the giants and also the monster Typhon, both of which he successfully defeated. The time had come for the kingdom of the world to be in the hands of Zeus and his siblings!

Zeus and his brothers drew lots to share the world between them. Poseidon got the sea, Hades the underworld, and Zeus the sky. Finally, Zeus was crowned to be the Ruler of all Gods and Men, referred to universally as Father.

**Challenges as a ruler**

Zeus was identified with the Roman god Jupiter and associated in the syncretic classical imagination (see interpretatio graeca) with various other deities, such as the Egyptian Ammon and the Etruscan Tinia. He, along with Dionysus, absorbed the role of the chief Phrygian god Sabazios in the syncretic deity known in Rome as Sabazius. The Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes erected a statue of Zeus Olympios in the Judean Temple in Jerusalem.[136] Hellenizing Jews referred to this statue as Baal Shamen (in English, Lord of Heaven).[137] Zeus is also identified with the Hindu deity Indra. Not only they are the king of gods, but their weapon - thunder is similar.

As a young ruler, Zeus was apparently too prideful and petulant. So, Hera, Poseidon and Apollo – and, maybe, everyone else but Hestia – decided to teach him a lesson. While he was sleeping, they stole his thunderbolt and bound him with hundred-knotted cords. Zeus was powerless, but the Nereid Thetis acted quickly and called Briareus, the Hecatoncheir, who used his hundred arms to untie him in a second. Zeus brutally punished the three leaders of the rebellion (especially Hera), and they swore to never challenge him again.

Prometheus, however, did – first by stealing the divine fire and giving it to the mortals, and then by keeping away from Zeus the identity of a mortal woman whose future son was prophesized to become greater than his father. Zeus chained Prometheus to a rock and tormented him for ages, but Prometheus stubbornly refused to reveal to him the secret. In the end, for reasons we don’t know (because a large part of the play where this story is told is lost), the Titan did tell Zeus that the woman in question is Thetis, so the god stopped pursuing her and gave her to Peleus. The son born out of this marriage became a celebrated Greek hero - in fact, possibly the greatest among them all: Achilles.

Cults of zeus

**Panhellenic cults**

The major center where all Greeks converged to pay honor to their chief god was Olympia. Their quadrennial festival featured the famous Games. There was also an altar to Zeus made not of stone, but of ash, from the accumulated remains of many centuries' worth of animals sacrificed there.

Outside of the major inter-polis sanctuaries, there were no modes of worshipping Zeus precisely shared across the Greek world. Most of the titles listed below, for instance, could be found at any number of Greek temples from Asia Minor to Sicily. Certain modes of ritual were held in common as well: sacrificing a white animal over a raised altar, for instance.

#### **Zeus Velchanos**

With one exception, Greeks were unanimous in recognizing the birthplace of Zeus as Crete. Minoan culture contributed many essentials of ancient Greek religion: "by a hundred channels the old civilization emptied itself into the new", Will Durant observed,[116] and Cretan Zeus retained his youthful Minoan features. The local child of the Great Mother, "a small and inferior deity who took the roles of son and consort",[117] whose Minoan name the Greeks Hellenized as Velchanos, was in time assumed as an epithet by Zeus, as transpired at many other sites, and he came to be venerated in Crete as Zeus Velchanos ("boy-Zeus"), often simply the Kouros.

In Crete, Zeus was worshipped at a number of caves at Knossos, Ida and Palaikastro. In the Hellenistic period a small sanctuary dedicated to Zeus Velchanos was founded at the Hagia Triada site of a long-ruined Minoan palace. Broadly contemporary coins from Phaistos show the form under which he was worshiped: a youth sits among the branches of a tree, with a cockerel on his knees.[118] On other Cretan coins Velchanos is represented as an eagle and in association with a goddess celebrating a mystic marriage.[119] Inscriptions at Gortyn and Lyttos record a Velchania festival, showing that Velchanios was still widely venerated in Hellenistic Crete.[120]

The stories of Minos and Epimenides suggest that these caves were once used for incubatory divination by kings and priests. The dramatic setting of Plato's Laws is along the pilgrimage-route to one such site, emphasizing archaic Cretan knowledge. On Crete, Zeus was represented in art as a long-haired youth rather than a mature adult and hymned as ho megas kouros, "the great youth". Ivory statuettes of the "Divine Boy" were unearthed near the Labyrinth at Knossos by Sir Arthur Evans.[121] With the Kouretes, a band of ecstatic armed dancers, he presided over the rigorous military-athletic training and secret rites of the Cretan paideia.

The myth of the death of Cretan Zeus, localised in numerous mountain sites though only mentioned in a comparatively late source, Callimachus,[122] together with the assertion of Antoninus Liberalis that a fire shone forth annually from the birth-cave the infant shared with a mythic swarm of bees, suggests that Velchanos had been an annual vegetative spirit.[123] The Hellenistic writer Euhemerus apparently proposed a theory that Zeus had actually been a great king of Crete and that posthumously, his glory had slowly turned him into a deity. The works of Euhemerus himself have not survived, but Christian patristic writers took up the suggestion.

#### **Zeus Lykaios**

The epithet Zeus Lykaios ("wolf-Zeus") is assumed by Zeus only in connection with the archaic festival of the Lykaia on the slopes of Mount Lykaion ("Wolf Mountain"), the tallest peak in rustic Arcadia; Zeus had only a formal connection[124] with the rituals and myths of this primitive rite of passage with an ancient threat of cannibalism and the possibility of a werewolf transformation for the ephebes who were the participants.[125] Near the ancient ash-heap where the sacrifices took place[126] was a forbidden precinct in which, allegedly, no shadows were ever cast.[127]

According to Plato,[128] a particular clan would gather on the mountain to make a sacrifice every nine years to Zeus Lykaios, and a single morsel of human entrails would be intermingled with the animal's. Whoever ate the human flesh was said to turn into a wolf, and could only regain human form if he did not eat again of human flesh until the next nine-year cycle had ended. There were games associated with the Lykaia, removed in the fourth century to the first urbanization of Arcadia, Megalopolis; there the major temple was dedicated to Zeus Lykaios.

There is, however, the crucial detail that Lykaios or Lykeios (epithets of Zeus and Apollo) may derive from Proto-Greek \*λύκη, "light", a noun still attested in compounds such as ἀμφιλύκη, "twilight", λυκάβας, "year" (lit. "light's course") etc. This, Cook argues, brings indeed much new 'light' to the matter as Achaeus, the contemporary tragedian of Sophocles, spoke of Zeus Lykaios as "starry-eyed", and this Zeus Lykaios may just be the Arcadian Zeus, son of Aether, described by Cicero. Again under this new signification may be seen Pausanias' descriptions of Lykosoura being 'the first city that ever the sun beheld', and of the altar of Zeus, at the summit of Mount Lykaion, before which stood two columns bearing gilded eagles and 'facing the sun-rise'. Further Cook sees only the tale of Zeus' sacred precinct at Mount Lykaion allowing no shadows referring to Zeus as 'god of light' (Lykaios).[129]

**Oracles of Zeus**

Although most oracle sites were usually dedicated to Apollo, the heroes, or various goddesses like Themis, a few oracular sites were dedicated to Zeus. In addition, some foreign oracles, such as Baʿal's at Heliopolis, were associated with Zeus in Greek or Jupiter in Latin.

The Oracle at Dodona

The cult of Zeus at Dodona in Epirus, where there is evidence of religious activity from the second millennium BC onward, centered on a sacred oak. When the Odyssey was composed (circa 750 BC), divination was done there by barefoot priests called Selloi, who lay on the ground and observed the rustling of the leaves and branches.[133] By the time Herodotus wrote about Dodona, female priestesses called peleiades ("doves") had replaced the male priests.

Zeus' consort at Dodona was not Hera, but the goddess Dione — whose name is a feminine form of "Zeus". Her status as a titaness suggests to some that she may have been a more powerful pre-Hellenic deity, and perhaps the original occupant of the oracle.

The Oracle at Siwa

The oracle of Ammon at the Siwa Oasis in the Western Desert of Egypt did not lie within the bounds of the Greek world before Alexander's day, but it already loomed large in the Greek mind during the archaic era: Herodotus mentions consultations with Zeus Ammon in his account of the Persian War. Zeus Ammon was especially favored at Sparta, where a temple to him existed by the time of the Peloponnesian War.[134]

After Alexander made a trek into the desert to consult the oracle at Siwa, the figure arose in the Hellenistic imagination of a Libyan Sibyl.