

Greeks and Romans

Logic manifested itself, according to Greek Mythology,

As Zeus...

And a mixture of religious concepts from several
cultural sources. The feminine aspect of this logos is represented by

Hera, the Queen of Heaven.

Greek mythology is extremely old: The Great Mother was worshipped in the land known as Greece as early as 2000 BCE. Early travelers, traders, warriors, from Aeolia and Ionia (Asia Minor) brought with them an early form of Indo-European language and culture of the Aryan Sky-Gods. They settled peacefully in Thessaly and central Greece and intermarried with natives of the land.

Next came the more destructive and aggressive waves of what Homer called the Achaeans and Dorians, Tribes from the north. These were more aggressive and warlike people, and in Sparta they enslaved the entire native population. The Achaeans called these slaves Helots. The Achaeans spoke an ancient dialect of Greek and used a simplistic pictographic writing now called Linear B.

While barbaric Tribes inhabited Greece, there was already a flourishing and more advanced civilization on the island of Crete. Crete lies just south of Greece and had a long-standing commercial relationship with Egypt and those further east. Crete reached the height of its civilization about 1600 BCE and as the mainland Greeks came into contact with them they became known as the Minoans. Minoan culture collapsed about 1400 BCE for an

unknown reason, possibly a natural catastrophe, and the Greeks took over control of Crete and adapted Cretan mythology.

There are many adaptations of the legends within the Greek renditions, such as Zeus' upbringing occurring on the Island of Crete, Europa, the Bull and the Minotaur who was vanquished by Theseus, etc. etc. However, the ancient divinities gradually took on the aspects of the invaders of Greece, so much so in fact, that much of what is known about the ancient Aegeans amounts to very little.

The Greek myths came from all over ancient Hellas: Thrace, Boeotia, Attica, the Peloponnesus, Argos, Mycenae, and many islands and other lands including Asia Minor, Sumer, Egypt and beyond. The Iliad by Homer, which could be a collection of several authors between 1000-800 BCE, is considered the "Supreme Source" and "Triple Fountain" and remains to be the best source of mythology, and was thought to be from Troy, Thebes, and Mycenae.

According to the Hebrew Bible, the Greeks are the descendents of Javen, son of Japheth, son of Noah. It is conceivable that Javen or "Jove" is the one who is referred to as Zeus.

Rome, which became one of the world's largest and most successful empires, famous for upholding law and order, and mass-producing material and cultural achievements, was a small, pastoral community when Greece was at its height.

The Roman forebears, called the Latiums, were simple folk, living in close knit clans, trading and intermarrying with only other nearby clans. For centuries the area had been overrun by outsiders. First, the Ligurians who came from the north and settled around the land which is today still called Liguria, near Genoa. Later came the Terramara, people who lived in stilt houses and brought with them the art of making bronze artifacts and weaponry, which ensured their military supremacy. By the eleventh century BCE the Villanovans came into the scene, and even more civilized than them were the Etruscans who arrived early in the first millennium BCE.

They brought with them the art of writing and were very skilled in metal working, sculpture, and painting. No one knows for certain where the Etruscans came from, possibly Asia Minor, but it is certain they had a close connection to the Greeks.

The forging of Roman identity began in the midst of the first millennium BCE. Historians note that the early Roman mentality was sophisticated enough to adopt only useful cultural influences. They eagerly embraced the idea of building Temples to deities and they also accepted the idea of divination. The Romans were a superstitious yet cynical people, and this made for a balance that would allow for a blend of cross-cultural acceptance and harmony. The idea that the future could be influenced by magic rituals, including sacrifices and casting spells, fit very well with their natural shrewdness and practicality. From the point of view of mythology, perhaps the most important factor was the introduction of the Etruscan pantheon, a pantheon including twelve deities, whom the Romans came to identify as the Twelve Olympians of Greece.

The Romans, like everyone else, had their own deities like Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus and many other “household” gods, such as Terminus and Cloacina. But the Romans were practical people, they did not fantasize about the lives of their gods. They very seldom even gave them names. Instead they paid homage to their gods in which they expected protection, prosperity, fertility, well being, so on and so on, in return.

Jupiter was of humble origin, in fact, he started out his mythological life as a lump of stone, Jupiter Lapis. The worship of stones dates back to even neolithic times, when knives and ax-heads were made from flint stones. The stone, or mountain, represented firmness and solidarity with order and stability. An oath was made on the stone to remain firm in the course of social integrity and is similar to the yearly Spring Festival from Sumer. Even through the Bronze age Jupiter continued to be worshipped as a terrifyingly strong “Flint” figure.

Mars was assimilated from the Greek god Ares, the God of War. In early societies agriculture and war went hand in hand, and Mars was the god of both war and agriculture. The

time for war was between Fall and Spring, after the crops had been harvested and the next year's growth did not yet need tending. In the temperate northern hemisphere, March (named after Mars) was the ideal month for war.

Quirinus, the third of the Roman [Triad](#), was also a god of war and possibly of Sabine origin. He has almost no mythology and later was assimilated with Mars. The Capitoline [Triad](#) dominated the course of Rome and consisted of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva.

As for the minor Roman gods and goddesses there was one for almost every situation, including Claocina who resided over sewers; Febris brought fever; Robigus was the god of rust and mildew. There were also household gods that presided over the hearth and pantry, but these godlings didn't enter into mythology any more than did the elves and goblins of other folklore.

As the Romans became a contender on the world stage they developed a Pantheon of gods to rival that of the Greeks, and being the practical type that they were, they shrewdly assimilated the Greek Pantheon. As mythologist Stewart Perowne [w](#) says, "it was Julius Caesar (102-44 BCE) who realized that what the fledgling Roman nation needed was pedigree. The Romans had plenty of gods but no mythology. Their godlings, for example, were nobodies. But once assimilated with the divine Aphrodite Venus became a goddess worth having." [@](#)

Greek gods, however, were different from Roman gods. Greek gods were more human like, only bigger, better, and more beautiful. Roman gods were often inhuman creatures, such as Vulcan, who was feared and reconciled to be the God of Fire. There was no mythology for Vulcan, he was simply a craftsman and nothing more. As he became assimilated with the Greek god Hephaestus as "the Divine Artificer" he was endowed with a wife and various attributes culled from Greek mythology.

Jupiter took on the glory of Zeus and was worshipped in Rome as Optimus Maximus. Temples and statues were erected to Jupiter and his consorts, Juno and Minerva. Juno was originally a very ancient moon-goddess and was assimilated with Hera, and Minerva became

Athene. Though no Roman counterpart was found for Apollo, so he retained the same name in both Greek and Roman mythologies. Thus the Roman Empire became a mirror image and replica of the Hellenes/Greek culture which has shaped the Western Christian culture.

Greek God	Roman God	Greek Goddess	Roman Goddess
Zeus	Jupiter	Hera	Juno
Poseidon	Neptune	Athene	Minerva
Ares	Mars	Artemis	Dianna
Apollo	Apollo	Aphrodite	Venus
Hephaestus	Vulcan	Hestia	Vesta
Hermes	Mercury	Demeter	Ceres

A note on the signs of the times (2007):

Peoples of the (Pre-Christian) Roman Empire compared to us today: Aside from the slavery and the public enjoyment of savage death in the arena (replaced instead with economic slavery and technology), the Romans had a very familiar feel. They too had their estate agents and property developers, their lawyers and accountants, their pampered performers and famous sports stars, their urban poor, small traders, craftsmen, petite bourgeoisie, their pompous professionals and wealthy landed gentry, their petty criminals and corrupt politicians. Even the Roman attitude toward its official religion was not so different from the traditional conservative British view of the Church of England: a unifying force to which lip-service ought to be paid but which should not be taken over seriously. The deification of an emperor like Claudius was treated by many as little more than a joke. (see Claudius, Gaius [Caligula] for time frame). As traditional religion declined new spirit filled faiths crept in, ie. our 'new age' beliefs compare- in those days it was Dionysus from Asia Minor, Isis from Egypt, or Christ from Palestine (which prevailed? why?) and the cult of Mithras from Iran.

In Search of Zarathustra @ Paul Kriwaczek