

# (Διόνυσος; Diónysos)—from Brill's New Pauly online encyclopedia

## I. Religion

### A. Special features and genealogy

Dionysos is amongst the oldest of the Greek gods. Of all the Greek gods, his cult is the most widespread and his image is depicted most frequently; today, he is still the most fascinating and the most attractive from a modern point of view [1]. At the same time he is mythically one of the most untypical of the Greek gods.

Amongst the untypical factors are: his double birth; the fact that he was regarded from birth as a deity, despite his mortal mother; his second, divine, mother; his death, and the opportunity for those initiated into his Mysteries to become divine beings or to be reincarnated.

According to Homer (Il. 14,325), Dionysos is the last of Zeus' sons mentioned by name, by Semele, a mortal (cf. Hes. Theog. 940f.). Records of Persephone as Dionysos's mother are part of the knowledge of the Mysteries and therefore only appear at a later date (e.g. Diod. Sic. 5,75,4, according to Cretan tradition); veiled references to this can possibly already be found in the works of Pindar and Euripides [2. 318f.].

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### B. Tradition

#### 1. Written records

The earliest reference to the name of Dionysos (*di-wo-nu-so*) is found in the Bronze Age, on three fragmentary Linear B tablets from Pylos and Chania on Crete (c.1250 BC). One of the Pylos tablets possibly refers to him in association with wine, as on the reverse the tablet lists women from a town named after wine (*wo-no-wa-ti-si*). The tablet from Chania provides evidence of a joint cult of Zeus and Dionysos with honey libations [3. 76-79]. Dionysos worship in an even older Cycladic cult shrine in Ayia Irini on Ceos [4. 39-42] remains unproven, as does the interpretation of the name *di-wi-jeu* on other Pylos tablets as 'son of Zeus' (= D.). Further to the linguistic explanation of the name Dionysos as *nýsos* (in the sense of son) of Zeus, it has

been suggested that the name derives from Nysa, a location (mountain or plain) connected with Dionysos since the time of Homer (Il. 6,133). There are references to Dionysos in every type of literature ranging from Homer to Nonnus' *Dionysiaka*, with Attic drama containing the most references. Dionysos's marginal role in the Homeric epics (only mentioned on two occasions in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*) corresponds to that of Demeter and has become even more puzzling following the discovery of Minoan-Mycenean Dionysos worship. Written records of the cult (constantly being added to through new finds) document lively worship of Dionysos over a period of 2,000 years, but only seldom provide generalizations or insights into specific ritual details.

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## 2. Imagery and attributes

The earliest images, supported by addition of the name, are found in Attic black-figured vase painting dating from the 6th cent. BC and show Dionysos as the god of wine (demonstrated by the attributes of a grape-bearing branch or an amphora). It is possible that he is depicted on a Cycladic ceremonial vessel dating from the 7th cent., together with a woman in bridal apparel [5. 55-58, fig. 10], possibly also evidenced by the depiction of an attribute later used as a specific reference to D., a *kantharos*, a drinking vessel mainly used in cults worshipping heroes and the dead seen already in geometric Mycenean-influenced art [6. 45]. From the time of the first appearance of the god in pictorial art, Dionysos, his attributes (such as wine vessels, creeping ivy and later also vine foliage) and figures associated with him were widely represented into the period of Late Antiquity on all varieties of items bearing images, although initially the images appeared primarily on ceramics used by aristocratic citizens at symposia or during cult worship of the dead. The images also appeared in increasing numbers on sarcophagi. The most important of the figures associated with him are the half-beast and often ithyphallic silenes and satyrs, with donkey, horse or ram attributes, and women (either grouped together with them or shown separately), who (dating in particular from the era of red-figured vase painting) are depicted as Maenads, shown by the use of specific clothing (animal skins), hair worn loose and ecstatic dance movements, snakes are also pictured with them and also the deer they have ripped to pieces. Beasts of prey (lions, leopards and panthers) are prominent amongst the animals depicted with Dionysos and his associates. The *thyrsos*, a stem of narthex or giant fennel with a pine cone on the end, is also often used as an attribute linking Dionysos with his retinue. In general it can be stated that in (ceramic) pictorial art there is no area connected with myths, cults or 'everyday' issues that cannot be associated with Dionysos and his sphere of

influence. Even the 'ornamental' use of ivy leaves can denote that a picture has connections with Dionysian omens.

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## C. Areas of influence

### 1. Ritual ecstasy

The first mention of Dionysos in literature (Hom. Il. 6,132) identifies him using the epithet *mainómenos* as the 'ecstatic' god. However, Dionysos does not appear here or anywhere else in Homer as the god of wine. In respect of one special trait of his divinity – the transfer of his specific attributes to his worshippers – it is characteristic that ritual ecstasy, 'divine madness' (*theía manía*), plays a central role in his worship, both in terms of myth and the cult. Although other gods can also induce *ekstasis* (coming out of oneself; Ecstasy) and *enthousiasmos* (inspiration – possession of a human by a god), ecstasy does not count as one of their identifying characteristics as it does in the case of Dionysos. In addition, the term (not verified in inscriptions before the advent of the Hellenistic age) *mainás*, literally 'frenzied woman', first appears in Homer (Il. 22,460), whilst women's ritual ecstasy seems to be an implicit prerequisite of Dionysos worship. The cult's technical term for this is *bákchē*. Ritual ecstasy, *bakcheúein*, is often accentuated with (literary and cult-related) epithets and epicleses common to Dionysos, such as Bakchios, Bakcheios and Bakcheus. Analogous with the deity, a male worshipper may also be called *bákchos* (particularly in initiations into the Mysteries).

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### 2. Women

The pre-eminence of women in Dionysos's circle is shown to advantage in the first Homeric reference to the god. There, the frenzied god is (Il. 6,132-134) in Nysa, surrounded by his wet-nurses, bearing *thýsthla* (thyrsi?). Like Dionysos, other Greek gods could also be worshipped by both sexes, however in cults it was often the case that women had a preference for female deities and men opted for male deities. But Dionysos was predominantly worshipped by women. This would later seem to account for the physical effeminization of Dionysos (of which there is literary and pictorial evidence dating from the Classical era and more thereafter). During ritual ecstasy (a state never stimulated by wine-drinking), married women apparently had access to more cult privileges (higher levels of initiation?) than young girls, and closer communion with the deity (cf. Diod. Sic. 4,3,3).

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### 3. Wine

In Hesiod, Dionysos is explicitly associated with wine production as a masculine sphere of influence (Op. 614). In addition, Dionysos's characterization as a 'joy to mortals' (according to Hom. Il. 14,325), has its origins, according to Hesiod, in the gift of wine. This gift is seen, however, as a 'mixed blessing', linked with toil or trials (Hes. Sc. 400; fr. 239, 1MW). Wine has appeared in lyric poetry as a source of poetic inspiration since the time of Archilochus (fr. 120 West). The danger of (undiluted) wine as a madness-inducing drug, or *phármakon*, was well known; it was therefore generally diluted with water. Viewing wine as a manifestation of D. (and therefore usable as a metonym) is known from the time of Eur. Bacch. 284 (cf. Eur. El. 497) onwards. The gift of wine is Dionysos's crucial cultural deed, reducing suffering; it makes life bearable and is a welcome complement to Demeter's gift of bread (cf. Eur. Bacch. 274-283). Images on vases generally show the god holding a drinking vessel (ancient drinking horn type: rhyton or cantharus). There are no images of a drunken Dionysos before the Hellenistic Era. The images in Attic vase painting show wine production as a preserve of male beings, particularly satyrs, whilst the ladling and pouring of the wine is predominantly carried out by women in connection with Dionysos worship. Except for aulos players and hetaera, women were excluded from the symposium – the principle point of which was the consumption of wine (from drinking vessels with Dionysian connotations). There are no pictures of women drinking wine (with the exception of drunken old women) and they are derided in Attic comedy (cf. Sappho fr. 2,16 Page on women's wine consumption on Lesbos in connection with the worship of Aphrodite). Drunkenness in men was also frowned upon, except on the occasion of specific organized feasts from which women were excluded.

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### 4. Eroticism

It was not a given in Greek tradition that eroticism and wine were linked together. The realization that excessive wine consumption has a deleterious effect on male potency is not a modern discovery. The Greeks primarily attributed the ecstasy associated with eroticism to the area of influence governed by Aphrodite and Eros. In black-figured vase painting, however, promiscuous sexuality and even erotic violence are more often associated with Dionysos's sphere of influence, although never with the actual figure of the deity and only infrequently with wine-drinking. According to the *Homeric Hymn of Aphrodite* (Hom. h. 5,263), the silenoi enjoyed romantic trysts with nymphs in dark corners of caves. D. himself could be worshipped using the epithet χοιροψάλας (from χοῖρος, 'piglet', 'female genitals'; *choîros*: as a name for Maenads it has also been found on vase paintings

[7. 176f.] (in Sicyon [8. 208 No. 172]). In Euripides' 'Bacchae', the Theban king Pentheus wrongfully accuses the women of his city acting as Maenads of engaging in wild sexual union with men (Bacch. 217-225), however the Lydian Bacchae in the chorus know that during their ceremonies Dionysos will lead them to places inhabited by Aphrodite, the Charites and Pothos, the god of yearning (Bacch. 402-416). It is impossible to judge whether the emphasis of Dionysian legitimized sexual promiscuity outside the limits of both the city and of marriage is male wishful thinking dating from antiquity, or whether its rejection touches on the undoubtedly greater repression on the part of modern male scholars [9]. It is assumed both by Euripides and other authors writing in antiquity that the bacchic women (and men?) were connected by a visionary erotic dynamic in their close contact with D. during ecstatic dances. This can also be inferred from the images seen in art. The important role of eroticism in Dionysos worship is reflected in the pictorial, cultural and literary association of the god with Aphrodite and in the Phallophoria specific to his cult.  
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## 5. Music and dance

Dancing and music formed an integral part of the festive worship of all Greek deities. Chorus dancing, *choreúein*, was even regarded as synonymous with religious practice [10]. However, the most widely known dances were performed as the preparation to and part of dramatic performances connected to Dionysos as god of the theatre. Drama is supposed to have evolved from the cult song specific to Dionysos, the *dithyrambus* [11] (Aristot. Poet. 1449a10-12). The connection between this cult song and the initiation into the Dionysian Mysteries could possibly be traced back to Archil. fr. 120 West [12]. The predominance of wind and percussion instruments (*aulós*, *týmpanon*, *kýmbala*, *krótala*) in performances and worship associated with Dionysos is evidenced in particular by vase paintings. The use of string instruments was also permitted. The particular affinity of *aulós* music (both on stage and in cult settings) with cathartic orgies and Dionysian initiation ceremonies or *bakcheía*, was emphasized by Aristotle (Pol. 1341a21-25, 1341b32-1342b18), who therefore regarded this type of music as unsuitable for young boys.  
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## 6. Theatre

Dionysos reigned supreme in this area. This is particularly well documented in the case of Athens, the home of the great Attic tragedians and comic writers of the Classical era. Of the five most important Attic festivals dedicated to Dionysos, three (the rural Dionysia, the Lenaia, the Great Dionysia) were heavily influenced by the

theatre. In antiquity, the theatre buildings themselves often belonged to Dionysos sanctuaries (e.g. in Athens). All stage productions were assigned to Dionysos in the festival calendars of the Greek motherland, Asia Minor and the Italian and Pontic colonies. The festival preparations included sacrifices, processions and musical performances in his honour. As a statue he was present as a spectator at the performances. Of the three types of drama, Dionysos's links with the satyr plays are the most obvious (on account of the chorus of satyrs). In Attic comedy the divine patron of the theatre was, however, often used in a variety of ways for the communication of comic and politically critical intentions. The notion that plots of Attic tragedies had 'nothing to do with Dionysos' has been abandoned as recent scholarship has increasingly highlighted the fact that the plays were actually determined by Dionysos and Dionysian themes, his cult characteristics, areas of influence and functions [13; 14; 15].

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## **7. Masks**

There is also evidence of the use of masks in the cult worship of other (particularly female) deities (Artemis, Demeter), however in the case of Dionysos the mask represents a manifestation of the god himself. Only he is 'the Mask God'. The Lenaea vases document the worship of the god in the form of his mask (or double mask) hung on a tree, a pillar or a column. The worshippers are women 'serving wine' or circle dancing (also dancing with satyrs) [16. 212-214; 17]. In a wide variety of ways, vase painting conveyed to the symposiasts the simultaneous presence and absence of Dionysos through frontality, not least in, black-figured eye cups. Art and drama exploited the ecstatically effective qualities (simultaneous distance and proximity, deathly rigidity and suggestive liveliness) of the frontal aspect of the mask under the sign of Dionysos. Masks were inextricably linked to theatrical performances in antiquity (initially only to distinguish the age and genders of the players and not to identify their roles [18. 85-98]). The mask enabled the 'transforming union' and 'unifying transformation', which is characteristic of acting in antiquity (performed by male players only) and which qualifies the mask, also in a cult context, as an 'instrument of mystery' [19].

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## **8. Initiations and hopes for the afterlife**

Together with Demeter, Dionysos must be regarded as the most important Greek deity of the Mysteries. Plato (Phdr. 265b4) even identifies Dionysos's characteristic *manía* as *telestiké* ('integral to the initiations'). However, the verb *bakcheúein*, which has its origins in cult language, covers the entire spectrum of ecstatic Dionysian

rituals and is not used solely for the Mysteries. In contrast to those of Demeter, Dionysos Mysteries were not limited in terms of location and were organized by private cult associations (in private houses?). They were clearly outside the areas governed by the polis societies. There is no definite evidence in the case of Attica. Cult documents were uncovered by burial site finds of small gold tablets in the 19th cent. (from Greek Southern Italy, Thessaly and Crete) but only more recent discoveries have enabled the interpretation of the former as evidence of Bacchic Mysteries [20]. The documents (e.g. Hdt. 4,79) show that it is probable that the cult was practiced (by men and women) at least since the 5th cent. BC [21. 27f.]; it is even possible that details in archaic lyric poetry dating from the 7th cent. could be interpreted in this sense [12; 22]. Dionysian initiation cults were practiced into Late Antiquity [23]. The Bacchic Mysteries did not only convey the hope of a blissful afterlife, but promised rebirth, even deification. Death by lightning, animal metamorphosis and wine can be determined as central elements of the experience of the Mysteries. These obviously also included all the specific qualities that Aristotle (without reference to the Mysteries) listed in the characterization of Attic tragedy (*páthos, éleos* and *phóbos, hedoné, peripéteia, anagnórisis, metabolé, mímēsis, kátharsis*). Shared qualities of and differences between D. Mysteries and tragedy lead to many as yet unanswered questions [24]. This is also true of the supposed connection between Orphicism and the Dionysos epiclesis Zagreus (as yet unproven in cult documentation).  
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## **9. Polis society**

Dionysos was one of the most important deities for the Greek city-states. Like Artemis, he was a god 'outside' as well as 'inside' the polis, even (as in Athens) at its centre [25]. More than all other deities, he accentuates all the ways in which boundaries may be crossed, including the boundaries between the city and the countryside or wilderness. During the reign of the Peisistratids in Athens, or at the latest during the reforms introduced by Cleisthenes, he became the most important city god after Athena. The main festival in his honour, the City (or Great) Dionysia, which in the Classical era also included the staging of the most important drama agones (contests), specifically integrates the whole polis regardless of phratria membership, including metics and any guests, particularly those from the colonies. The power (by no means limited to Athens) of Dionysos worship to politically integrate encompassed men, women and children of all strata in society, with the result that Dionysos was far from being just a 'rustic' or 'aristocratic' deity.  
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## D. Cults

### 1. Sacrifices

As was the case with other polis deities, Dionysos was worshipped with sacrifices and food offerings. The 'classic' sacrifices of cattle were (as was always the case) reserved for special festive occasions, whilst sacrifices of pigs, sheep and goats were more usual occurrences [26]. He was also brought non-meat sacrifices and gifts such as cakes. In addition, his presence in the wine libations which accompanied the sacrificial proceedings as a matter of course, were a constitutive element of the worship of almost all other deities.

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### 2. Epicleses

In the case of Dionysos, as with all other Greek deities, the cults and cult epicleses were strongly differentiated in terms of topography and heortology. In Etruria from the 5th, perhaps even from as early as the 7th cent. BC, he was identified with Fufluns [27], in Rome he was worshipped as Liber pater and known in literature by the epiclesis Bacchus, which had its origins in the cult. The image of the deity in the cult is influenced mainly by material determined by Athens, which is only applicable to a limited extent for other regions. Dionysos had a number of cults outside Attica under a variety of epicleses (the most obvious: Dionysos Mystes, in Arcadian Tegea). Amongst the most important epicleses, with evidence found at several sites (aside from the more generally widespread epicleses, those emphasizing the *bakcheúein* and those often connected with ecstatic cults) are Lysios (Corinth, Sicyon) or Lyaïos (Mantineia), the 'liberator', and Phleus (only in Ionia: Chios, Ephesus, Erythrae), 'he who swells'. In addition, numerous other epithets emphasize the god's close relationship to flourishing nature, both animal and botanical, to wine, to certain landscapes and also to the organization of the polis (e.g. Dionysos Polites: Heraea in Arcadia). The Dionysos who 'feeds on raw flesh' Omestes (Lesbos) and Omadios (Chios) were seen of particular importance in the history of the religion by means of their assumed links to the ecstatic shredding of flesh and Dionysian *ōmophageín* – brought to particular mythic prominence by Euripides' 'Bacchae' – (cf. LSAM 48); there is, however, no historical evidence of human sacrifices. A more likely assumption is that (as at the Agrionia festival in Boeotia) antagonism between the sexes was acted out in ritual form in the cult [28].

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### 3. Festivals and cult sites

In addition to the festivals celebrated annually, Dionysos worship also included a rule (there is also evidence that this was sometimes also the case for other gods such as Athena, Zeus and Poseidon) that certain festivals could only be celebrated after an interval of two years, i.e. every third year. In the case of Dionysos, there is evidence of this triennial festival system for example in Delphi, Thebes, Camirus, Rhodus, Miletus and Pergamon (cf. also his epiclesis *Trieterikos* on Melos). In principle, Dionysos is distinguished in particular by his temporary absence. However, this does not mean that Dionysos was the 'foreign' god, the 'coming' god, on account of his historically late adoption from non-Greek regions, as per the influential claims made by Rohde and Dodds. Rather, the welcome 'coming' of the god reflected to a great extent his striking powers of liberation, which could also be politically effective (in Eretria: LSCG, Suppl. 46 [29]). He is welcomed as a guest, *xénos*, in the polis, fed and entertained, and this to a particularly impressive extent during the City or Great Dionysia in Athens (in the month of Elaphebolion). In addition to this main festival and the two other festivals mainly dedicated to drama, there are two other significant festivals for D. in Athens: the Anthesteria (preceding the Great Dionysia in the festival calendar), the 'oldest Dionysia' (Thuc. 2,15,4), predating the Ionic Migration, and the Oschophoria after the conclusion of the grape harvest in Pyanopsion, the month following the Eleusinian Mysteries. In regions other than Attica, the significance of the god in the festival calendar is emphasized by references to Dionysos contained in the names of the months, such as *Bakchiôn* (Mykonos and Ceos). Despite the presence of Dionysos Lenaios in Athens and his festival the Lenaea (derived from *lênai*, 'frenzied women'), Bacchic frenzies were forbidden to women in Attica; they were only permitted to go to Delphi to attend joint Bacchic ceremonies and dances as *thyiádes* (meaning the same as *lênai* and *bákchai*) together with the Delphic women in Parnassus [30]. The propagation of the Bacchic women's cult from Delphi is documented by an oracle of the Hellenistic era, I. Magn. 215(a), according to which three Theban *mainádes* are dispatched to establish the Bacchic *órgia* (cult rituals) and *thíasoi* of Dionysos Bacchus in Magnesia on the Maeander [31].

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#### **4. Joint cults**

Some of the oldest cult comrades of Dionysos are Zeus (in Bronze Age Crete), Hera (Lesbos; cf. Heraea in Arcadia) and Demeter and Core (Eleusis, Sicyon and Thelpusa). There is also evidence of joint cults with numerous other deities (in particular Aphrodite, Apollo, Artemis and Hermes), with Semele, his Theban mother, and also with Hercules.

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## 5. Cult colleges

The spread of Dionysian associations was particularly pronounced during the Hellenistic and Roman eras (e.g. the *Iobakchoi* in Athens in the 2nd cent. AD, with strictly regulated drinking practices). Amongst those cult colleges connected to the Bacchic Dionysos (although specific Dionysos worship is not always documented) are the *Bakchi(a)stai* (Cos and Thera) and the *Bakcheastai* (Dionysopolis). The relationship of the aristocratic family of the Bacchiadae, who ruled Corinth from the 8th to the 7th cent. BC, to D. is uncertain.

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## 6. Ruler cult

In Hellenism, Dionysos was awarded a central role in the ruler cult (e.g. Ptolemy IV as the 'New D.'). The autocratic Dionysos of Euripides' 'Bacchae' is the precursor of these rulers and the corresponding Hellenistic deities [32. 204f.].

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## E. Myths

The few details about Dionysos in the works of Homer already include key elements of the mythic image (and probably also of the cult variant) in poetic form. These include the ecstatic experience of the switch from one extreme to the other and, in particular, the pursuit of Dionysian women by a man. In Homer, it is Lycurgus (Il. 6,130), who is identified as an Edonian king in the later tradition and whose hostile role is represented, for instance, in Thebes by King Pentheus, in Argus by Perseus, and in Thrace by Orpheus. His punishment corresponds to the law of myth, as with any other *theomáchos*. Non-Homeric tradition also includes groups of women rebelling against the god: the daughters of Minyas from Orchomenus in Boeotia, the daughters of Proetus from Argus and, in particular, the Theban daughters of Cadmus, sisters of Dionysos's mother Semele (the best dramatic representation is in Euripides' Bacchae). The pinnacle of the women's punishment is when Dionysos uses the ritual ecstasy which distinguished his worship to drive the women to kill their own sons. In later versions, both women named by Homer as having an intimate connection with Dionysos, his mother Semele and his lover Ariadne, remain examples to which his female followers aspire. Thebes becomes a Bacchic *mētrópolis* on account of Semele (Soph. Ant. 1122). Ariadne, daughter of Minos, who, according to Homer is the lover of Dionysos and is killed by Artemis, (Od. 11,321-325) and is then, according to Hesiod, made immortal by Dionysos (Theog. 947-949), serves as a model for later

Dionysian women (other mortal lovers of Dionysos: Althaea, Carya, Physcoa, perhaps also Erigone; sons: e.g. Oenopion). The identification of anonymous brides of Dionysos in vase paintings as Ariadne (or Aphrodite) remains unverified, particularly in the case of early antiquity. The exemplary image of Dionysian women (as of Dionysos himself), probably also a cult prerequisite, is also applied to his mother, Semele, whom according to later records he also made immortal (Iophon fr. 22 F 3 TGF). According to the myth, when she died following being struck by Zeus' thunderbolt, Dionysos was born prematurely and then born a second time from Zeus' thigh. Even the mythical hints of Dionysos's particular proximity to the cult of the dead are already apparent in Homer, when the god gives Achilles' mother Thetis a golden vessel (also used for wine) (*amphiphoreús*, Od. 24,74) in which to gather the mortal remains of her dead son. The sea goddess Thetis (later analogous with Persephone), with whom D. finds a safe haven when he is pursued by Lycurgus (Hom. Il. 6,136), also has a fairly prominent position in early Dionysian art, as the god appears at her wedding with Peleus (even shown on the François Vase with an amphora as a gift). In D.'s arrival myths, the sea represents the origin of his epiphany and scene of his miracles (specifically: wine miracles, the god's metamorphosis into a lion and the metamorphosis of the hostile sailors into dolphins, Hom. h. 7,35-53). Miracles involving fluids also distinguish the power of the mythical Dionysos in other areas (e.g. springs of water, wine, milk and honey, Eur. Bacch. 704-711; the maenads also suckle the young of wild animals, *ibid.* 699f.). Dionysos's own experience of a violent death, as demonstrated in the cult, probably particularly in the Mysteries (god's grave in Delphi: Callim. fr. 643), is reflected in the ways that both Semele and Ariadne die, as well as in the figures of his male antagonists, who are mythically aligned with him (cf. also the Titans in the myth of Dionysos Zagreus). In the myths, the overcoming of death is demonstrated by the women closely associated with him. He masters death and can even be equated with Hades (Heracl. fr. 15 D.-K.). Mythically, Dionysos actually appears as the 'most terrible and the most lenient' of all gods (*deinótatos, ēpiótatos*: Eur. Bacch. 861).

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## **F. Later reception**

Even after the end of pagan cult practice, Dionysos continued to pose a challenge to artists and academics both in representation and significance (the first instances date from the Renaissance and the later mainly from the 19th cent.). The Dionysos of antiquity cannot merely be reduced to the lighthearted 'wine, women and song', but must be regarded both culturally and mythically as a polyvalent god and a blend of divine and mortal, female and male, animal and human, pain and desire,

sacrificial object and subject – this is all contained in the current interpretational consensus with its critical roots in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*. In recent times, efforts to understand the myths, in particular those concerning *sparagmós* and the omophagy practiced by maenads as an accurate reflection of common cult practice, have been abandoned. The complexity of the relationships between Dionysian myths and cults does, however, still encompass many problems to which a satisfactory solution has not yet been found. W. F. Otto's view of Dionysos as a deity revealed is now superseded by the concept of D. as the representation of complete 'Otherness' (Vernant). Many of the god's polarities, empathetically defined by Otto, found expression in the emphasis of either his embodiment of the 'indestructibility of life' (Kerényi) or his quality of being intoxicated by death (Detienne). Anthropological comparisons shed more light on 'the Dionysian'. However, the Dionysos of antiquity remains 'different' and 'elusive' (Henrichs). Schlesier, Renate (Paderborn)

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## II. Iconography

Early representations of Dionysos on a Melian amphora dating from the 7th cent. BC (Athens; British School; in front of woman wearing chiton and himation), and in Attic vase painting from the early 6th cent. BC (Dinos of Sophilos, London, BM, c. 580 BC: marriage of Peleus and Thetis; in the same scene and in the return of Hephaestus to Olympus on the François Vase, Florence, c. 570 BC; Siana cups by the Heidelberg and Amasis Painters, 575/555 BC). Vase paintings of D. and his retinue, in particular from the 6th cent. BC. Frequently the scenes with Ariadne (in addition to Attic vase paintings, see also bronze craters from Derveni, Thessalonica, c. 330 BC). Dionysos appears in the scene of the battle with the giants in the northern frieze of the Siphnian treasury at Delphi (c. 525 BC), on the Pergamon altar (western frieze, southern projection, 180/160 BC: see also D. Kathegemon as patron god of the Attalids). There are few depictions of Dionysos's sea journey, such as on an eye cup by Execias (Munich, SA, c. 530 BC) or on an amphora in Tarquinia (end of 6th cent. BC).

Large sculptural representations date from somewhat later: torso of a seated statue from Icaria (Athens, NM, c. 520 BC, identified via Cantharus); the cult image of D. 9,20,4 by Calamis in Tanagra (475/450 BC) as recorded by Paus. 9,20,4 has not been preserved. The image of the bearded Dionysos in a long robe, known as Sardanapal (Athens, NM, 360-330 BC; unverified attribution to Cephisodotus the Elder and Praxiteles) is taken from the D. Theatre in Athens. The column masks, common in the 6th-5th cents. BC, also showed a bearded image; these masks were the method by which Dionysos 'appeared' at cult festivities (marble mask from Icaria, Athens, NM, 2nd half of the 6th cent. BC). From the 5th cent. BC: D. is shown as a youthful god, clean-shaven and athletic (in the eastern frieze in the Parthenon,

442-438 BC; cf. lying figure of Dionysos in the eastern pediment of the Parthenon, 438-432 BC).

Dionysos's attributes are ivy wreaths, vine branches, the thyrsus, the cantharus, the nebris and panther skin; Dionysos often appears accompanied by wild animals; his retinue consists of maenads, satyrs and silenoi. As is the case with very few other gods, Dionysos is shown in the form of a child: statue groups with Hermes (Praxiteles, Olympia, c. 330 BC) and with Silenus (Munich, GL; Paris, LV, Roman copies of Early Hellenistic originals.).

There are numerous Roman images of Dionysos/Bacchus to be found in murals (Dionysos and Ariadne: Villa dei Misteri, Pompeii, c. 60 BC), and also in mosaics: drunk Dionysos leaning on a satyr (Dionysos mosaic in Cologne, c. AD 225), the dispatch of Icarus (Nea Paphos/Cyprus, end of 3rd cent. AD), triumph of Dionysos (Sousse/Tunisia, from Hadrumetum, beginning of the 3rd cent. AD.; Tunis, Bardo Museum, from Acholla, beginning of the 2nd cent. AD). There are also many images in relief: stucco relief from the Villa Farnesina (Rome, MN, c. 20 BC), stucco relief on the tomb of the Pancratii (Rome, AD 165/170) and the sarcophagi dating from the 2nd-3rd cents. AD. Amongst the statues which have been preserved are the Dionysos/Bacchus portrayed as a hunter in a belted chiton and boots, with thyrsus and panther (Copenhagen, NCG, 2nd cent. AD), the bronze Dionysos from the Tiber (Rome, TM, beginning of the 1st cent. AD). There are also images of Dionysos following the tradition of Apollo Lykeios with his arm bent over his head: the Bacchus of Versailles, with nebris (formerly Paris, LV, Hadrianic) and Dionysos/Bacchus in the Villa Albani in Rome, with the himation around his hips (Hadrianic).  
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## Komos

(κῶμος; *kōmos*, verb κωμάζειν; *kōmázein*) is the term for the ritualized, exuberant Greek procession to the music of the cithara or, especially, the flute (Ath. 14,9,618c). In its earliest occurrences, the word is not connected with Dionysus, but describes rites with musical accompaniment, probably also with singing and dancing. (In H. Hom. Merc. 481, Hermes gives Apollo the lyre for *kōmoi*; in Ps.-Hes. Aspis 281, *kōmázusi* young men in a marriage procession dance rapturously to the sound of the flute; Pind. Pyth. 5,22 calls the performance of his song a *kōmos* of men). Until the Imperial period, the *kōmos*, as an exuberant-ecstatic procession with corresponding musical instruments, was not limited to the cult of Dionysus (marital *kōmoi* Philostr. Imag. 1,2). But from the 6th cent. BC at the latest, Dionysus is very closely linked with the *kōmos* (cf. also Pl. Leg. 1,637a), as vase paintings prove. Also the *kōmos* is an established part of the urban Dionysia. Symptomatic is the ancient - false - derivation of comedy as being a Dionysian ritual of *kōmos* (protestation in Aristot. Poet. 3,1448a 37), as well as the use of the word *kōmos* as the name of a satyr.

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