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Dictionary of Gods



A SMALL DICTIONARY OF GODS AND GODDESSES

by D.W. Owens

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FOREWORD

Some time ago, for no particular reason, I started spending odd moments in the public library browsing through reference works about ancient religion. I started taking notes, more or less at random, about the gods and gradually accumulated information about some 330 pagan gods and goddesses. Not wanting all that work to go to waste, and not knowing what else to do with the information, I decided to make a small dictionary and place it on several bulletin board systems, in hopes that others will find this little work interesting and useful.

There is no pretense of original or exhaustive research here. The information is drawn from popular books and standard reference works such as can be found in any library. There have been many thousands of pagan deities, of course, and a truly complete listing of them is probably impossible. This little listing of only a few hundred gods does not pretend to be any more than a random sampling of the riches of the pagan religious genius. Many will disagree with my choices -- why this god and not that one? Why was this pantheon ignored altogether? The answer is that the choices are almost completely arbitrary, being those gods I thought important or interesting enough to make a note of. I remind the reader that this is a little piece done in spare moments, and not a major scholarly work.

One caveat. Sources sometimes disagree with each other, and the pagan pantheons were quite fluid, changing all the time. One god would split into several, or several gods would merge into one, and often one god was considered an aspect or form of another god. The pagans borrowed deities from each other quite freely, and the various cults went in and out of fashion much the same way that rock groups go in and out of fashion in our own day. With that explanation (or excuse), I accept all blame for any truly glaring errors.

Blessed be.

AFRICA

ANANASI (Various tribes) The spider. A trickster. A creator god. Something of a scoundrel, but quite well liked. Many amusing and fanciful stories are told of him.

ANYIEWO (Ewe) The Great Serpent who comes out to graze after the rain. The rainbow is his reflection.

BUKU (Various West African peoples) A sky god sometimes worshipped as a goddess. Buku created everything, even the other gods.

DANH also **DAN AYIDO HWEDO (Dahomey)** Snake god. The Haitians know him as Dan Petro. The Rainbow Snake who encircles the world, Danh is often portrayed with his tail in his mouth as a symbol of unity and wholeness.

DXUI (Bushman; to the Hottentots, **TSUI**; to the Xhosa and Ponda, **THIXO**) A creator god. In the beginning, Dxui took the form of a different flower or plant every day, becoming himself at night, until he had created all the plants and flowers that exist.

ESHU (Yoruba) A trickster. A shape-shifter, Eshu can change his form at will, and can even seem to be both huge and small at the same time. Eshu confuses men and drives them to madness. But Eshu also knows all human tongues and acts as a go-between for mortals and the gods.

GUNAB (Hottentot) The enemy of Tsui-Goab, Gunab lived under a pile of stones. Gunab kept overpowering Tsui-Goab, but the god grew stronger after each battle. Because he killed so many, Gunab is sometimes identified with death. Creator of the rainbow.

GUA (Ga tribe of West Africa) God of thunder, blacksmiths and farmers. Gua's temples are often found at blacksmith's forges.

KIBUKA (Baganda) A war god sent to save the Baganda people. The king of the Baganda asked heaven for assistance in war, and Kibuka was sent to aid them. Warned not to have anything to do with the enemy's women, Kibuka nevertheless made love to a woman prisoner. Unwisely, Kibuka confided in her, and after escaping she told the enemy how Kibuka could be killed, by firing arrows into the cloud where he was hiding. Kibuka flew off to a tall tree to die, and a temple was built at the place where his body was found.

LEZA (Central Africa) "The One Who Besets." Known to a number of peoples, Leza is the Supreme God who rules the sky and send wind and rain. Leza sits on the backs of all people, and no one ever breaks free of him. Leza is said to be growing old and so does not hear prayers as well as he once did.

MAWU-LISA (Ewe) The great god and goddess of the sun and moon. Lisa is the sun and Mawu is the moon.

MULUNGU (East Africa) God, the Supreme Being.

The concept of a supreme being and creator is nearly universal in Africa, although there are few temples to him. The titles which Africans have given God are wondrous in their variety. A few of these are: Creator, Moulder, Giver of Rain and Sunshine, he Who Brings the Seasons, He Who Thunders, Ancient of Days, the First, the Limitless, the One Who Bends Even Kings, the One You Meet Everywhere, the Firelighter, Great Mother, Greatest of Friends, the Kindly One, the Providence Who Watches All Like the Sun, the Great Pool Contemporary of Everything, the Great Spider, the One Beyond All Thanks, the Bow in the Sky, the Angry One, the Inexplicable.

NANAN-BOUCLOU (Ewe) The original god of the Ewe tribe, both male and female, Nanan-Bouclou is much too remote for worship. In Haiti Nanan-Bouclou is remembered as the god of herbs and medicines.

'NGAI (Masai) Creator god. At birth, 'Ngai gives each man a guardian spirit to ward off danger and carry him away at the moment of death. The evil are carried off to a desert, while the good go to a land of rich pastures and many cattle.

NYAME (Ashanti) Supreme God of Heaven, both the sun god and the moon goddess. Nyame created the three realms, the sky, the earth and the underworld. Before being born, souls are taken to Nyame and washed in a golden bath, Nyame gives the soul its destiny and places some of the water of life in the soul's mouth. The soul is then fit to be born.

NYASAYE (Maragoli, Kenya) Chief god of the Maragoli. Spirits aid Maragoli's work, and they are represented by round stones circling a pole which represents the god.

NZAME (Fan people of the Congo) A vague and shadowy god whose likeness can't be captured in wood, stone or metal. Nzame lived on earth with his three sons, Whiteman, Blackman and Gorilla. Blackman, Gorilla and all their kinfolk sinned against Nzame, and so Nzame took all his wealth and went to live with his son Whiteman in the west. Gorilla and his kin went to live in the jungle. Without the wealth, power and knowledge of Nzame, Blackman and his kin live a hard life of poverty and ignorance, ever dreaming of the western land where dwells Nzame and his favored son, Whiteman.

SAGBATA (Dahomey; to the Yoruba, SHAGPONA) God of smallpox. Sagbata's shrines were painted with a design of small spots. Sagbata's priests fought small pox with both prayers and medical knowledge, and wielded great power over the people because they had learned how to use dried scabs both to immunize themselves against the disease and to spread it. Smallpox was considered a great disgrace and its victims were ostracized.

TANO (Ashanti) The second oldest son of God, and god of the river of the same name. The gods of the other rivers and families in the same region are all his family. Long ago Tano lost a singing match with Death. Tano and Death sang defiance to each other for over a month, but neither could win so they had to compromise. When someone is injured or falls ill, whichever god arrives first will claim him. If Tano arrives first, the person will live, but if Death arrives first the patient is lost.

TSUI' GOAB (Hottentots) "Wounded Knee," "Father of Our Fathers." A rain god who lives in the clouds, a great chief and magician. Tsui' Goab made the first man and woman from rocks. Several times Tsui' Goab died and rose again, to great joy and feasting. Men invoke Tsui' Goab with the first rays of dawn and give oaths in his name.

UNKULUNKULU (Zulu) "Old, Old One." Unkulunkulu was both the first man and the creator, a god of the earth who had no traffic with the heavens. Unkulunkulu showed men how to live together and gave them knowledge of the world in which they lived.

YO (Dahomey) A trickster, neither god nor human. Yo's greed constantly gets him in trouble. Mawu created him for no good reason. Yo is everywhere. You can't kill him, you can't eat him, you can't get rid of him at all. Yo is the only one of his kind. One is enough.

AZTEC

CHALCHIHUITLCUE Lady Precious Green, wife of Tlaloc. Goddess of storms and water. Personification of youthful beauty, vitality and violence. In some illustrations she is shown holding the head of Tlazolteotl, the goddess of the witches, between her legs. Chalchihuitlcue is the whirlpool, the wind on the waters, all young and growing things, the beginning of life and creation.

COATLICUE Earth monster. In the darkness and chaos before the Creation, the female Earth Monster swam in the waters of the earth devouring all that she saw. When the gods Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca decided to impose form upon the Earth, they changed themselves into serpents and struggled with the Earth Monster until they broke her in two. Coatlicue's lower part then rose to form the heavens and her upper part descended to form the earth. Coatlicue has an endless, ravenous appetite for human hearts and will not bear fruit unless given human blood.

CINTEOTL The corn god, the giver of food, god of fertility and regeneration. Cinteotl is protected by the rain gods Tlaloc and Chalchihuitlcue.

EUEUCOYOTL The Old, Old Coyote. Associated with gaiety and sex. A god of spontaneity, of ostentatious ornament, of unexpected pleasure and sorrow. A trickster and troublemaker. Considered unlucky.

HUITZILOPOCHTLI God of war, son of Coatlicue. Principal god of the Aztecs. When Coatlicue became pregnant with Huitzilopochtli, her daughter Coyolxauhqui incited her brothers, the Centzon Huitznahua (the Four Hundred Stars) to destroy Coatlicue, because her pregnancy brought disgrace on the family. Still in the womb, Huitzilopochtli swore to defend his mother and immediately on being born put on battle armor and war paint. After defeating the Four Hundred Stars, Huitzilopochtli slew his sister and cast her down the hill at Templo Mayor where her body broke to pieces on striking the bottom. Priests at Templo Mayor killed prisoners in the same way, these sacrifices being replicas of mythical events designed to keep the daily battle between day and night and the birth of the God of War ever in the minds of the people. Often considered synonymous with QUETZALCOATL.

ITZCOLIUHQUI The Twisted Obsidian One, the God of the Curved Obsidian Blade. God of darkness and destruction. Blinded and cast down from the heavens, Itzcolihqui strikes out randomly at his victims.

ITZPAPALOTL Obsidian Butterfly. Beautiful, demonic, armed with the claws of a jaguar. The female counterpart of Itzcolihqui.

MICTLAN Below the world of living men there are nine underworlds, the lowest of which is Mictlan, the Land of the Dead ruled by Mictlantechupi and his consort Mictlancihuntl. Souls who win no merit in life come here after death, but they do not suffer as in the Christian hell. Instead they merely endure a rather drab and colorless existence before passing again into the world of the living. As a man disappears into the West, the direction of the dead, the seeds of his rebirth are sown.

OMETEOTL "God of the Near and Close," "He Who Is at the Center," the god above all, the being both male and female who created all life and existence. Ometeotl is dualistic,

embodying both male and female, light and dark, positive and negative, yes and no. Omotoetol occupies Omeyocan, the highest of the Aztecs' thirteen heavens, and the four heavens immediately below Omeyocan are a mystery about which no one knows very much. Below the five highest heavens is a region of strife and tempest, where Ometeotl breaks into his many facets or aspects.

QUETZALCOATL The Feathered Serpent. The Precious Twin who lifts the sun out of darkness, god of the winds and the breath of life, First Lord of the Toltecs. Lawgiver, civilizer, creator of the calendar. Demons tempted Quetzalcoatl constantly to commit murder and human sacrifice, but his love was too great for him to succumb. To atone for great sins, Quetzcoatl threw himself on into a funeral pyre, where his ashes rose to the heavens as a flock of birds carrying his heart to the star Venus. A frieze in the palace at Teotihuacan shows his first entry into the world in the shape of a chrysalis, from which he struggles to emerge as a butterfly, the symbol of perfection. Quetzalcoatl is by far the most compassionate of the Aztec gods -- he only demands one human sacrifice a year. Often considered synonymous with HUITZILOPOTCHLI.

TEZCATLIPOCA The Prince of This World, the Mirror that Smokes, the One Always at the Shoulder, the Shadow. A trickster, revered particularly by soldiers and magicians. The name refers to the black obsidian mirrors used by magicians which become cloudy when scrying. A god of wealth and power, Tezcatlopoça's favors can only be won by those willing to face his terrors. Ruler over the early years of a man's life.

TLALOC Lord of all sources of water, clouds, rain, lightning, mountain springs, and weather.

TLALOCAN Kingdom of Tlaloc, a heaven of sensual delights, of rainbows, butterflies and flowers, of simple-minded and shallow pleasures. Souls spend only four years here before returning to the land of the living. Unless it strives for higher and nobler things while living, a soul is destined for this endless round of mortal life and Tlalocan. When a life had been particularly evil, a soul might journey instead to Mictlan.

TLILLAN-TLAPALLAN The land of the fleshless. The Land of the Black and Red, the colors signifying wisdom. A paradise for those who successfully follow the teachings of Quetzalcoatl. Those souls who come to Tlillan-Tlapallan have learned to live without fleshly bodies, a state greatly to be desired.

TLAZOLTEOTL Eater of filth, devourer of sins, goddess of witches and witchcraft. Tlazolteotl has power over all forms of unclean behavior, usually sexual. Confessing sins to Tlazolteotl, one is cleansed. The goddess has four forms or aspects, corresponding to the phases of the moon: a young and carefree temptress, the lover of Quetzalcoatl; the Goddess of gambling and uncertainty; the Great Priestess who consumes and destroys the sins of mankind; and frightful old crone, persecutor and destroyer of youth.

TONATIUH God of the Sun. Poor and ill, Tonatiuh cast himself into the flames, and being burnt up, was resurrected. Daily Tonatiuh repeats his passage across the heavens, down into darkness, and back again into the sky. With him Tonatiuh carries all brave warriors who have died in battle and all brave women who have died in childbirth. The greatest heroes Tonatiuh carries with him to the greatest heights. In Tonatiuhican, the House of the Sun, dwell those who have won even greater enlightenment than those who dwell in Tlillan-Tlapallan.

XIPE TOTEC Lord of the Spring, god of newly planted seed and of penitential torture. A pockmarked saviour who tears out his eyes and flays himself in penance to the gods, thus persuading the gods to give maize to men. Giving up his pockmarked skin, Xipe Totec is then clad in robes of gold.

XIUHTECUHTLI Lord of fire, Lord of the Pole Star, pivot of the universe, one of the forms of the Supreme Deity. The lord of every flame, from those which burn in the temples to those which burn in the lowliest huts.

XOLOTL The god with backward feet who brought Man as well as Fire from the underworlds. Bringer of misfortune. The evil aspect of the star Venus. Quetzalcoatl's deformed twin.

CELTIC

ANGUS OF THE BRUGH Also **OENGUS OF THE BRUIG** God of youth, son of the Dagda. In Ireland, Angus is the counterpart of Cupid. Angus' kisses turn into singing birds, and the music he plays irresistibly draws all who hear.

ARIANRHOD "Silver Wheel," "High Fruitful Mother." One of the Three Virgins of Britain, her palace is *Caer Arianrhod*, the Celtic name for the *Aurora Borealis*.

BADB A goddess of war. One of a triad of war goddesses known collectively as the *Morrigan*. Bird shaped and crimson mouthed, *Badb* uses her magic to decide battles. *Badb* lusts after men and is often seen at fords washing the armor and weapons of men about to die in combat.

BRIGHID also **BRIGIT**. Goddess of healing and craftsmanship, especially metalwork. Also a patron of learning and poetry. In Wales she is *Caridwen*, who possesses the cauldron of knowledge and inspiration. The Celts so loved *Brighid* that they could not abandon her even when they became Christians, and so made *Brighid* a Christian saint.

CARIDWEN also **HEN WEN**; in Wales, **BRIGHID** "White Grain," "Old White One." Corn goddess. Mother of *Taliesen*, greatest and wisest of all the bards, and therefore a patron of poets. The "white goddess" of Robert Graves. *Caridwen* lives among the stars in the land of *Caer Sidi*. *Caridwen* is connected with wolves, and some claim her cult dates to the neolithic era.

CERNUNNOS Horned god of virility. *Cernunnos* wears the torc (neck-ring) and is ever in the company of a ram-headed serpent and a stag. Extremely popular among the Celts, the Druids encouraged the worship of *Cernunnos*, attempting to replace the plethora of local deities and spirits with a national religion. The Celts were so enamored of *Cernunnos* that his cult was a serious obstacle to the spread of Christianity.

DAGDA Earth and father god. *Dagda* possesses a bottomless cauldron of plenty and rules the seasons with the music of his harp. With his mighty club *Dagda* can slay nine men with a single blow, and with its small end he can bring them back to life. On the day of the New Year, *Dagda* mates with the raven goddess of the *Morrigan* who while making love straddles a river with one foot on each bank. A slightly comical figure.

DANU Mother goddess, an aspect of the Great Mother. Another of a triad of war goddesses known collectively as the Morrigan. Connected with the moon goddess Aine of Knockaine, who protects crops and cattle. Most importantly, the mother of the Tuatha de' Danann, the tribe of the gods.

DIAN CECHT A healer. At the second battle of Moytura, Dian Cecht murdered his own son whose skill in healing endangered his father's reputation. The Judgments of Dian Cecht, an ancient Irish legal tract, lays down the obligations to the ill and injured. An aggressor must pay for curing anyone he has injured, and the severity of any wound, even the smallest, is measured in grains of corn.

DIS PATER Originally a god of death and the underworld, later the chief god of the Gauls. The Gauls believed, as their Druids taught, that Dis Pater is the ancestor of all the Gauls.

DONN Irish counterpart to Dis Pater. Donn sends storms and wrecks ships, but he protects crops and cattle as well. Donn's descendents come to his island after death.

EPONA Horse goddess. Usually portrayed as riding a mare, sometimes with a foal. Roman legionnaires, deeply impressed with Celtic horsemanship, took up the worship of Epona themselves and eventually imported her cult to Rome itself.

ESUS A god of the Gauls "whose shrines make men shudder," according to a Roman poet. Human sacrifices to Esus were hanged and run through with a sword. For unknown reasons, Esus is usually portrayed as a woodcutter.

GOVANNON The smith god. The weapons Govannon makes are unfailing in their aim and deadliness, the armor unfailing in its protection. Also a healer. Those who attend the feast of Govannon and drink of the god's sacred cup need no longer fear old age and infirmity.

LUG also **LUGH**, **LLEU** A sun god and a hero god, young, strong, radiant with hair of gold, master of all arts, skills and crafts. One day Lug arrived at the court of the Dagda and demanded to be admitted to the company of the gods. The gatekeeper asked him what he could do. For every skill or art Lug named, the gatekeeper replied that there was already one among the company who had mastered it. Lug at last pointed out that they had no one who had mastered them all, and so gained a place among the deities, eventually leading them to victory in the second battle of Moytura against the Formorian invaders. (The Formorians were a race of monsters who challenged the gods for supremacy in the first and second battles of Moytura.) The Romans identified Lug with Mercury. The most popular and widely worshipped of the Celtic gods, Lug's name in its various forms was taken by the cities of Lyons, Loudun, Laon, Leon, Lieden, Leignitz, Carlisle and Vienna.

MACHA "Crow." The third of the triad of war goddesses known as the Morrigan, Macha feeds on the heads of slain enemies. Macha often dominates her male lovers through cunning or simple brute strength.

MEDB "Drunk Woman." A goddess of war, not one of the Morrigan. Where the Morrigan use magic, Medb wields a weapon herself. The sight of Medb blinds enemies, and she runs faster than the fastest horse. A bawdy girl, Medb needs thirty men a day to satisfy her sexual appetite.

MORRIGAN, THE also **MORRIGU MORRIGAN** A war goddess, forerunner of the Arthurian Morgan La Fey. Like Odin, fickle and unfaithful, not to be trusted. A hag with a demonic laugh, the Morrigan appears as a grotesque apparition to men about to die in battle. Her name is also used for a triad of war goddesses, who are often thought of as different aspects of the Morrigan.

NEMAIN "Panic." A war goddess.

NUADHU also **NUD, NODENS, LUD.** "Nuadhu of the silver arm." God of healing and water; his name suggests "wealth-bringer" and "cloud-maker." At the first battle of Moytura, Nuadhu lost an arm, and Dian Cecht replaced it with a new one made out of silver. Because of this, Nuadhu was obliged to turn leadership of the Tuatha de' Danann over to Lug. People came to be healed at Nuadhu's temple at Lydney, and small votive limbs made of silver have been found there.

OGMIOS also **OGMA** "Sun Face." A hero god like Hercules, a god of eloquence, language, genius. Generally portrayed as an old man dressed in a lion skin. From his tongue hang fine gold chains attached to the ears of his eager followers.

SUCELLUS Guardian of forests, patron of agriculture. His consort is Nantosvelta, whose name suggests brooks and streams. Sometimes considered synonymous with Cernunnos or Daghdha.

TUATHA DE' DANANN The divine tribes and people descended from the goddess Danu. Skilled in druidry and magic, the Tuatha de' Danann possess four talismans of great power: the stone of Fal which shrieked under the true heir to the throne; the spear of Lug which made victory certain; the sword of Nuadhu which slays all enemies; and the ever full cauldron of Daghdha from which no man ever goes away hungry.

CHINA

AO The Four Dragon Kings Ao Chi'in, Ao Kuang, Ao Jun, and Ao Shun, gods of rain and the sea. Subjects of the Jade Emperor.

CH'ENG-HUANG God of moats and walls. Every village and town had its own Ch'eng-Huang, most often a local dignitary or important person who had died and been promoted to godhood. His divine status was revealed in dreams, though the gods made the actual decision. Ch'eng-Huang not only protects the community from attack but sees to it that the King of the Dead does not take any soul from his jurisdiction without proper authority. Ch'eng-Huang also exposes evil-doers in the community itself, usually through dreams. His assistants are Mr. Ba Lao-ye and Mr. Hei Lao-ye -- Mr. Daywatchman and Mr. Nightwatchman.

CHU JUNG God of fire. Chu Jung punishes those who break the laws of heaven.

KUAN TI God of war. The Great Judge who protects the people from injustice and evil spirits. A red faced god dressed always in green. An oracle. Kuan Ti was an actual historical figure, a general of the Han dynasty renowned for his skill as a warrior and his justness as a ruler. There were more than 1600 temples dedicated to Kuan Ti.

KWAN YIN also KWANNON Goddess of mercy and compassion. A lady dressed in white seated on a lotus and holding an infant. Murdered by her father, she recited the holy books when she arrived in Hell, and the ruler of the underworld could not make the dead souls suffer. The disgruntled god sent her back to the world of the living, where Kwan Yin attained great spiritual insight and was rewarded with immortality by the Buddha. A popular goddess, Kwan Yin's temple at the Mount of the Wondrous Peak was ever filled with a throng of pilgrims shaking rattles and setting off firecrackers to get her attention.

LEI KUNG God of thunder. Lei Kung has the head of a bird, wings, claws and blue skin, and his chariot is drawn by six boys. Lei Kung makes thunder with his hammer, and his wife makes lightening with her mirrors. Lei Kung chases away evil spirits and punishes criminals whose crimes have gone undetected.

PA HSIEN The Eight Immortals of the Taoist tradition. Ordinary mortals who, through good works and good lives, were rewarded by the Queen Mother Wang by giving them the peaches of everlasting life to eat. They are:

LI TIEH-KUAI Li of the Iron Crutch. A healer, Li sits as a beggar in the market place selling wondrous drugs, some of which can revive the dead.

CHUNG-LI CH'UAN A smiling old man always beaming with joy, he was rewarded with immortality for his ascetic life in the mountains.

LAN TS'AI-HO A young flute-player and wandering minstrel who carries a basket laden with fruit. His soul-searching songs caused a stork to snatch him away to the heavens.

LU TUNG-PIN A hero of early Chinese literature. Renouncing riches and the world, he punished the wicked and rewarded the good, and slew dragons with a magic sword.

CHANG-KUO LAO An aged hermit with miraculous abilities. Chang owned a donkey which could travel at incredible speed. The personification of the primordial vapor which is the source of all life.

HAN HSIANG-TZU A scholar who chose to study magic rather than prepare for the civil service. When his uncle chastised him for studying magic, Han Hsiang-Tzu materialized two flowers with poems written on the leaves.

TS'AO KUO-CHIU Ts'ao Kuo-Chiu tried to reform his brother, a corrupt emperor, by reminding him that the laws of heaven are inescapable.

HO HSIEN-KU "Immortal Maiden Ho." A Cantonese girl who dreamed that she could become immortal by eating a powder made of mother-of-pearl. She appears only to men of great virtue.

P'AN-CHIN-LIEN Goddess of prostitutes. As a mortal, she was a widow who was much too liberal and inventive with her favors, and her father-in-law killed her. In death she was honored by her more professional associates and eventually became the goddess of whores.

SHI-TIEN YEN-WANG The Lords of Death, the ten rulers of the underworld. They dress alike in royal robes and only the wisest can tell them apart. Each ruler presides over one court of law. In the first court a soul is judged according to his sins in life and sentenced to

one of the eight courts of punishment. Punishment is fitted to the offense. Misers are made to drink molten gold, liars' tongues are cut out. In the second court are incompetent doctors and dishonest agents; in the third, forgers, liars, gossips, and corrupt government officials; in the fifth, murderers, sex offenders and atheists; in the sixth, the sacreligious and blasphemers; in the eighth, those guilty of filial disrespect; in the ninth, arsonists and accident victims. In the tenth is the Wheel of Transmigration where souls are released to be reincarnated again after their punishment is completed. Before souls are released, they are given a brew of oblivion, which makes them forget their former lives.

TI-TSANG WANG God of mercy. Wandering in the caverns of Hell, a lost soul might encounter a smiling monk whose path is illuminated by a shining pearl and whose staff is decorated with metal rings which chime like bells. This is Ti-Tsang Wang, who will do all he can to help the soul escape hell and even to put an end to his eternal round of death and rebirth. Long ago, Ti-Tsang Wang renounced Nirvana so that he could search the dark regions of Hell for souls to save from the kings of the ten hells. Once a priest of Brahma, he converted to Buddhism and himself became a Buddha with special authority over the souls of the dead.

T'SHAI-SHEN God of wealth who presides over a vast bureaucracy with many minor deities under his authority. A majestic figure robed in exquisite silks. T'shai-Shen is quite a popular god; even atheists worship him.

TSAO WANG God of the hearth. Every household has its own Tsao Wang. Every year the hearth god reports on the family to the Jade Emperor, and the family has good or bad luck during the coming year according to his report. The hearth god's wife records every word spoken by every member of the family. A paper image represents the hearth god and his wife, and incense is burned to them daily. When the time came to make his report to the Jade Emperor, sweetmeats were placed in his mouth, the paper was burned, and firecrackers were lit to speed him on his way.

TU-TI Local gods. Minor gods of towns, villages and even streets and households. Though far from the most important gods in the divine scheme, they were quite popular. Usually portrayed as kindly, respectable old men, they see to it that the domains under their protection run smoothly.

YENG-WANG-YEH "Lord Yama King." Greatest of the Lords of Death. Yeng-Wang-Yeh judges all souls newly arrived to the land of the dead and decides whether to send them to a special court for punishment or put them back on the Wheel of Transmigration.

YU-HUANG-SHANG-TI "Father Heaven." The August Supreme Emperor of Jade, whose court is in the highest level of heaven, originally a sky god. The Jade Emperor made men, fashioning them from clay. His heavenly court resembles the earthly court in all ways, having an army, a bureaucracy, a royal family and parasitical courtiers. The Jade Emperor's rule is orderly and without caprice. The seasons come and go as they should, yin is balanced with yang, good is rewarded and evil is punished. As time went on, the Jade Emperor became more and more remote to men, and it became customary to approach him through his doorkeeper, the Transcendental Dignitary. The Jade Emperor sees and hears everything; even the softest whisper is as loud as thunder to the Jade Emperor.

EGYPT

AMMON Also AMON; AMUN; AMEN "Hidden." King of the gods of Egypt. Patron of the Pharaohs. Originally a god of fertility, a local deity of Memphis. Ammon became linked with the sun god Ra through the royal family, becoming Ammon-Ra.

ANUBIS The jackal-headed god. Anubis can foresee a mortal's destiny and is associated with magic and divination. Anubis supervises the weighing of the soul when the departed are brought to the hall of the dead.

ASTARTE The Assyro-Babylonian goddess Ishtar, inducted into the Egyptian pantheon and made a daughter of Ammon-Ra. Sometimes identified (or confused, which is the same thing) with Isis.

ATUM The first of the gods, the self-created. By sheer will, Atum formed himself out of the stagnant waters of Nun. Atum was bisexual and was sometimes called "the great He-She." The Egyptians had two cosmogonies, one taught by the priests at Heliopolis and the other by the priests at Memphis. The priests at Memphis taught that Nun and Atum, together with Atum's children Shu and Tefnut, were aspects or forms of Ptah.

BAST Also BASTET. The cat-headed goddess, a local deity of the delta. The kindly goddess of joy, music and dancing. Cats were sacred to Bast as a symbol of animal passion. Bast's devotees celebrated their lady with processions of flower-laden barges and orgiastic ceremonies. Her festivals were licentious and quite popular.

HATHOR A sky goddess, sometimes represented as a woman with cow's horns between which hangs a solar disc, sometimes portrayed as a cow. Hathor concerns herself with beauty, love and marriage, and watches over women giving birth. Mother and wife of Ra. Hathor is also a goddess of death and offers comfort to the newly dead as they pass into the afterworld.

HORUS The falcon-headed god. A complex deity with many aspects. Some of them are: Horus the Elder, a sky god whose eyes are the sun and the moon, continually at war with Set, the god of evil; Horus of the Horizon, symbolized by the rising and setting sun; Horus the Child, whose frequent depictions as a baby at the breast of his mother Isis influenced Christian images of the Madonna and the Christ child; Horus, son of Isis, avenger of Osiris. There were many others.

ISIS Wife and sister of Osiris (the ancients had nothing against a little divine incest). The ideal wife and mother. Generally a goddess of the home and person rather than of the temple and the priest. After the twenty sixth dynasty, Isis is increasingly portrayed as a nursing mother, and her cult eventually spread throughout the Roman empire.

MAAT Goddess of truth and justice. Her symbol is the feather.

MIN A god of fertility and sexual potency. An ancient god of pre-dynastic origins. His symbol is the thunderbolt. As orgiastic festivals were held in his honor, Min was quite a popular god.

NUN God of the primal waters. Nun was a mass of stagnant water which filled all the universe.

OSIRIS At first the god of corn; later the god of the dead. Osiris brought civilization to the Egyptians, teaching them the uses of corn and wine, weaving, sculpture, religion, music and law. Set slew Osiris and dismembered th body; but Osiris' consort, Isis, reassembled the body and brought Osiris back to life. Osiris then retired to the underworld. Osiris is the god of the Nile which rises and falls every year; the god of corn and the vine, which flourish, die, and flourish once more; and the god of the rising and setting sun.

PTAH The artificer. The creator god. According to the priests of Memphis, the fount of all creation. God of artisans and artists, designers, builders, architects, masons, metal workers. Ptah's consort is Sekhmut, goddess of war.

RA God of the sun; sometimes identified or considered synonomous with Atum. Ra created man from his tears. At one time Ra became so digusted with men that he orderd Hathor to kill them all. This Hathor did with such zeal that Ra took pity on men and ordered Hathor to stop. Crazyed with blood, Hathor ignored the order, and Ra resorted to chicanery to save humankind. Ra mixed beer with pomegranate juice and left pots of the concoction about the battlefield. Thinking the mixture was blood, Hathor drank it greedily and got too swacked to carry out her mission.

SEKHMUT Goddess of war and battles, consort of Ptah. Hathor took Sekhmut's shape when she made war on men. Sekhmut is usually portrayed as a woman with the head of a lionness, sometimes brandishing a knife in an upraised hand.

SET Red of hair and eyes, pale of skin, Set is the god of evil, of drought, of destruction, thunder and storm. Set tore himself from his mother's womb in his hurry to be born. Every month Set attacks and devours the moon, the sanctuary of Osiris and the gathering place of the souls of the recently dead.

THOTH "Thrice Greatest." God of wisdom, music, magic, medicine, astronomy, geometry, surveying, art and and writing. Historian, scribe and judge. Thoth's priests claimed Thoth was the Demi-Urge who created everything from sound. It was said that Thoth wrote books in which he set forth a fabulous knowldege of magic and incantation, and then concealed them in a crypt.

GREECE

(See also the section on Roman gods in Part 5)

ADONIS Beloved of Aphrodite, the central figure of a widespread fertility cult, god of vegetation and re-birth. Adonis seems clearly linked with Tammuz, the Assyro-Babylonion god who dies and rises again. Adonis is the Greek version of the Phoenician term Adon, which means "Lord."

APHRODITE Goddess of fertility, love and beauty. When Zeus killed his father, Uranus, he cut off his father's genitals and cast them into the sea. The sea foamed and boiled and Aphrodite arose from the waters. As Aphrodite stepped from the ocean, flowers grew wherever her feet touched. Paphos, the place where Aphrodite supposedly rose from the waters, was her most important place of worship, and at Corinth she was worshipped with sacred whores. Aphrodite is clearly related to Ishtar and Astarte and very much loves the company of the male gods. While married to Hephaestus, she also dallied with Ares,

Poseidon, Adonis, and Dionysius. Aphrodite is a complex, many faceted deity. Among her many names are Melaina (the Black One), Androphonos (Killer of Men), Epitymbidia (She Upon the Graves), Anadyomene (Rising from the Sea), Urania (Sky Borne), and Pandemos (Goddess of All the People).

APOLLO God of light, god of prophecy and music, god of medicine, god of flocks and herds, the divine archer, a pastoral god. Wise, beautiful, all-knowing, ever just, ever young. Apollo urges forgiveness to all offenses, even the blackest of crimes, so long as the offender was truly penitent. After Zeus and Athene, the greatest of the Gods. Apollo's most important place of worship was the famous temple at Delphi, where oracles prophesied in his name. The Sybil at Cumae in southern Italy also foretold the future in his honor. Paintings and statuary show him with his bow and lyre, which were a gift from the infant Hermes. Apollo loved young men and young women alike, though his affairs usually ended unhappily. Artemis is his twin sister, and Horus is his counterpart in the Egyptian pantheon.

ARES; to the Romans, MARS God of war. The Greeks detested Ares. Quarrelsome, spiteful, unfaithful, Ares loves only hatred, strife and bloodshed. Ares was the first god to be placed on trial for murder, and the place in Athens where he was supposed to have been tried was called the Aeropagus, the Hill of Ares. By custom trials for murder were held at the Aeropagus. The Romans believed Ares to be the father of Romulus and Remus.

ARTEMIS Also **PARTHENOS** Fertility goddess, patron of maidens, goddess of childbirth. Identified with the moon, as her brother Apollo is identified with the sun. The Virgin Huntress, Mistress of Beasts, Lady of All Wild Things, A Lion unto Women. Usually benevolent, but stern and demanding, dangerous to cross. Artemis lived in Arcadia with a band of nymphs subject to her strict discipline; those who dallied with men, as did Callisto, might be shot down with an arrow or otherwise punished. No man or god ever gained the love of Artemis. Artemis is virtually unbeatable in combat. The only one of the immortals who ever bested her was Hera, who defeated Artemis on the battlefield at Troy, whipped her with her own bow, and sent her fleeing in tears.

ASCLEPIUS God of medicine and healing, son of Apollo. Originally a mortal. So great was Asclepius' skill that he could revive the dead. Zeus killed Asclepius after Hades complained that he was being cheated of his lawful due, but Asclepius' virtues and good deeds won him a place among the gods. Those who wished a cure of Asclepius would sleep in his temple, where he would appear to them in a dream and advise them. Snakes are his symbol and were allowed to wander freely in his temple at Epidaurus.

ATHENE; to the Romans, MINERVA Goddess of wisdom, of architects and sculptors, of weavers, of oxen and horses. A goddess of war. Like Artemis, an eternal virgin. Often associated with birds, particularly the owl. Athene taught men to tame horses and invented the potter's wheel. Her city is Athens, which she won in a contest with Poseidon.

CHARON The ferryman who carries dead souls across the river Styx to Hades. His fee is one obol, which was placed in the mouth of the dead man before he was buried.

CRONUS The chief of the Titans, the race of giants who preceded the Olympian gods. In very ancient times, Cronus was probably a corn god. Told that he would be overthrown by one of his own sons, Cronus devoured them all as they were born until his wife Rhea deceived him to save Zeus. Wrapping a stone in swaddling clothes, Rhea gave the stone to Cronus and spirited Zeus away to a hiding place. After defeating Cronus, Zeus

imprisoned him and the rest of the Titans, thus beginning the age of the Olympian gods.

DEMETER; to the Romans, **CERES** Goddess of grain and the fruitful earth. An earth mother who was certainly one of, if not the oldest of the gods. Demeter's immensely popular festivals, held twice a year at Eleusis, were so highly revered that no initiate was ever known to break the vow of secrecy. Demeter gave the gift of grain to men and instituted the Eleusinian Mysteries. The nature of these Mysteries has been lost to us, though we know that the mystery cults celebrated the Lesser Mysteries in February of every year and the Greater Mysteries in September of every fifth year. Most likely the rites included processions, ritual cleansing and religious dramas.

DIONYSIUS God of religious ecstasy and wine, accompanied always by satyrs and nymphs. The force of life in all growing things. Dionysius is the Greek form of Thracian and Phrygian deities of vegetation and fertility, who followers worked themselves into a frenzy and ritually tore apart their god in the form of a goat, a bull or a man. The cult survived the introduction of the Olympian gods and proved so popular that it finally had to be accepted by the Dorian Greeks. In the dark age which followed the decline of the Mycenaeans, the cult of Dionysius spread rapidly, especially among women. His followers were known as maenads (mad women) and it was best not to be near when their frenzy came upon them. Animals, and sometimes people, were torn apart and sometimes eaten in the belief that they were devouring the god himself. Drunk, lawless and noisy, not terribly impressed by authority or convention, the followers of Dionysius were often unwelcome. His worshippers danced wildly, and his rites were designed to cleanse men of lowly irrational emotions and desires.

ERIS The dark sister of Eros. Goddess of chaos and discord, Eris loves confusion and conflict. It was Eris who gave the goddesses the golden apple inscribed "To the Fairest," which set in motion the chain of events that led to the Trojan War.

EROS God of love both heterosexual and homosexual, though his domain is not limited solely to sexual love and includes love in all its broadest senses. One of the oldest of the gods, the center of his worship was at Thespieae. The ancient Greeks feared Eros. Eros can cause havoc, and there is an air of maliciousness about him. Eros can drive men and women to noble self-sacrifice, but he can also torture them to madness and drive them to self-destruction. Lacking wisdom, moderns have made Eros contemptibly cute and sweet, and somewhat prankish.

GAIA "Mother of all things." The Earth itself, mother of the Titans, the old gods. Usually represented as a giant woman. Before anything else existed, there was only Chaos (the Void, the Nothingness, the Emptiness) and the Earth. Gaia nurses the ill and watches over marriages. Gaia is an oracle as well, and the temple at Delphi was hers before it was Apollo's. The Greeks had no tales about Gaia, because she belonged to the distant past.

HADES Also **PLUTO** "The Unseen," "the Rich." God of wealth and the underworld. Hades is stern but perfectly just, and rejects all pleas for mercy, but he is in no sense evil or destructive. His realm is not a place of flames and torment, as is the Christian hell. Most dead souls dwell on the plain of Asphodel, where they wander aimlessly as mere shadows of their earthly selves. The blessed go to the Elysian Fields, a place of great joy and beauty, while the abominably wicked go to the dismal plain of Tartarus. You're born, you live, you die, you go to Hades. End of story.

HEBE Goddess of youth and beauty. An eternally young girl, Hebe helps the gods wash and dress themselves, though her main duty is to serve nectar and ambrosia at their

feasts. A minor but charming deity.

HECATE Goddess of black magic and evil ghosts. Often portrayed with three faces: maiden, mother and crone. The poor and down trodden often turned to Hecate for protection or vengeance. Hecate defends children and appears with her dogs at crossroads and tombs.

HELIOS God of the sun, the charioteer who drives the sun across the sky. From his great height, Helios sees everything and was often called upon to witness contracts and oaths. From the fifth century onward, Helios was considered identical with Apollo.

HEPHAESTUS; to the Romans, **VULCAN** The lame blacksmith god, patron of craftsman and metalworkers, god of fire. The centers of his cult could be found wherever metalworkers congregated and near volcanos. Hephaestus was so ugly that his mother Hera kept him out of sight, and the other gods laughed at his lame gait. In revenge, Hephaestus tricked the gods into giving him Aphrodite for his wife, though he never succeeded in keeping her faithful. Some scholars say Hephaestus' lameness was a reflection of an actual practice. A skillful smith was a rare and valuable man, and tribes or villages would often cripple a good smith to keep him from leaving or running away.

HERA; to the Romans, **JUNO**. Wife of Zeus, queen of the gods. Zeus is quite a randy god, and Hera's domestic life with him is always stormy. Zeus and Hera were on opposite sides during the Trojan War, and they squabble all the way through the Iliad. At first a sky goddess, Hera later became the embodiment of womanliness. Like Dionysius, Hera is a pre-Olympian deity whose cult was so strong that it had to be adopted by the Dorian Greeks. Hera was worshipped in high places, and her temples were built on mountain peaks. Her festival, held at Argos and called the Heraia, involved athletic contests.

HERMES; to the Romans, **MERCURY** The messenger of the gods, the god of eloquence, the god of luck. God of travelers, merchants and athletes. Originally a pastoral and fertility god in Arcadia, in his oldest monuments Hermes is represented simply as a phallus. Easygoing, kind and obliging, Hermes is quite helpful to both gods and men, though he appears in some stories as a trickster. Hermes invented the lyre, which he gave to Apollo to get out of a mess he'd made by stealing Apollo's cattle. Hermes' image was often found at crossroads and junctions, and he is shown with winged sandals and a winged helmet. Hermes was quite popular.

HYPNOS God of sleep. Brother of Thanatos (Death). Hypnos has power even over the gods.

IRIS Goddess of the rainbow. Like Hermes, a messenger for the gods. The center of her cult was at Delos, and the proper offerings to her were dried figs and honeycakes.

MOROS God of destiny. Dark, unknowable, all powerful. Even the gods are subject to Moros.

MORPHEUS God of dreams. His name is the root word of "morphine."

NEMESIS Also **ADRASTEIA** Goddess of destiny and inevitability, the repayment of sin and crime.

NIKE; to the Romans, **VICTORIA** Goddess of victory. Generally portrayed as a winged

maiden holding high a wreath of bay leaves, the victor's laurel. Her most famous temple was in Athens.

OCEANUS Ancient god of the oceans, eventually displaced by Poseidon. With his sister, Tethys, he had six thousand children, half of them sea spirits, the other half river spirits.

PAN "The Pasturer," "the Feeder of Flocks." God of herds, fertility and male sexuality. Pan has the horns and legs of a goat and plays a syrinx, a pipe with seven reeds. An ancient god, he has no moral or social aspect whatsoever, and is simply the embodiment of pure, basic instinct. Some said that Pan taught Apollo the art of prophecy. Pan especially loves mountains and wild country. Pan has a dark aspect as well, causing men and animals to go suddenly mad with terror in distant, lonely places. His name is therefore the root word of "panic."

PERSEPHONE Also **KORE** "Maiden." Daughter of Demeter, wife of Hades. Hades kidnapped Persephone and took her to the underworld to be his queen. When Demeter heard, she wandered the earth in mourning, abandoning her responsibilities, and the earth grew gray and barren. The growing famine forced Zeus to demand that Hades return Persephone to the surface world. But Persephone had eaten part of a pomegranate, and eating of the food of the dead bound her to their world. Zeus and Hades struck a bargain - Persephone would spend seven months a year in the world of the living and five in the world of the dead. When Persephone is in the world, her mother Demeter is content, and the world blooms and lives. When she is in the underworld, Demeter mourns, the world languishes, and we have winter.

POSEIDON God of the sea and earthquakes. Horses and bulls are sacred to him. Originally the god of earth tremors, of vegetation and fecundity, Poseidon fought for the Olympians against the Titans, and his reward after the victory was dominion over the seas, lakes and rivers. Poseidon's fits of rage manifest as storms, and seamen dread his anger. Bulls were thrown into the sea as sacrifices to Poseidon. His amorous adventures played an important role in Greek mythology, and he loved men no less than women.

THANATOS God of death. Sometimes portrayed as a winged spirit, at other times as a man robed in black armed with a sword. Thanatos is not evil or hateful. He is just doing his job.

URANUS Heaven personified. The son born to Gaia when she first emerged from Chaos. Uranus' rain made Gaia fruitful, and she brought forth the Titans. Jealous of his children, Uranus confined them to the earth, and Gaia conspired with Cronus, the boldest of her children, to overthrow him. Cronus castrated Uranus with a sickle, only to be overthrown by Zeus in his turn.

ZEUS; to the Romans, **JUPITER**. "Cloud Gatherer." The ruler of the Olympian gods, god of the sky, thunder, and lightning, the upholder of custom and tradition. Zeus had many names. As Soter, he is known as the father and saviour of mankind; as Herkeios, guardian of the home; as Xenios, keeper of the rules of hospitality; as Ktesios, protector of property; as Gamelios, god of marriage; as Zeus Chronios, god of the earth and fertility; as Zeus Eluetherios, protector of freedom; and as Zeus Polieus, god of the civic virtues. Despite all these duties, Zeus still had plenty of time to romp with young girls and boys. His wife Hera persecuted his lovers, both mortal and divine.

JAPAN

AJI-SUKI-TAKA-HI-KONE One of several thunder gods. Born noisy, he grew up even noisier, and so they carry him up and down a ladder to quiet him. That is why you can hear him receding and approaching.

AMA-NO-UZUME Fertility goddess. A companion of Ninigi, she performed a bawdy dance hoping to entice the sun out of hiding. This dance symbolizes the planting of seed which waits for the sun come after winter.

AMATERASU Sun goddess, ruler of the heavens. When her great enemy, the storm god Susa-No-Wo, destroyed her fine palace, Amaterasu went to hide in a cave. The other gods used all their magical tricks to get her to come out, to no avail. In her absence, darkness and demons ruled the earth until Ama-No-Uzume lured Amaterasu out of the cave with a trick. With a comical and obscene dance, he made the gods gathered at the mouth of the cave laugh. When Amaterasu asked what was going on, Ama-No-Uzume replied that they had found another and better sun goddess. Amaterasu peeped out of her cave and saw her own reflection in a mirror which Ama-No-Uzume had hung on a nearby tree. Fascinated, Amaterasu drew a little closer for a better look, and the gods grabbed her and hauled her out.

AMATSU MIKABOSHI "August Star of Heaven." God of evil.

BENZAITEN Goddess of love, one of the gods of happiness. Benzaiten rides a dragon while playing a stringed instrument.

BISHAMON God of happiness and war, a strange combination. Bishamon protects men from disease and demons. Bishamon was often portrayed wearing a wheel of fire like a halo, which some see as the Wheel of Fate.

CHIMATA-NO-KAMI God of crossroads, highways and footpaths. Originally a phallic god, his phallic symbol was placed at crossroads.

HO-MASUBI Fire god. His birth killed the creator goddess Izanami, and his father, the creator god Izanagi, was so enraged with grief that he killed the baby. From his blood came eight gods, and from the body came eight mountain gods.

IZANAGI and IZANAMI Creator god and goddess sent down from heaven to build the earth. The other gods and goddesses are their descendents, but when the god of fire was born he burned his mother to death. Descending to the underworld, Izanami became old and ugly. Izanagi followed her to bring her back, but she forbade him to look at her. Izanagi looked anyway and Izanami tried to imprison him in the underworld. Pursued by Izanami's furies, Izanagi escaped and sealed up the entrance to the underworld with a boulder. Enraged, Izanami vowed to kill a thousand of Izanami's subjects a day, and Izanami vowed to create fifteen hundred a day. So it was that Izanami became the goddess of death and Izanagi became the lord of life.

KAWA-NO-KAMI God of rivers. Larger rivers have their own gods, but all waterways are under Kawa-No-Kami's authority. When rivers flooded, the gods were sometimes appeased with human sacrifices.

NAI-NO-KAMI God of earthquakes. A late addition to the Japanese pantheon, Nai-No-Kami was inducted in the seventh century A.D.

NINIGI Grandson of Amaterasu, sent to rule the earth, the ancestor of all the Japanese emperors.

O-KUNI-NUSHI God of sorcery and medicine. Originally the ruler of the province of Izumo, he was replaced by Ninigi, but in compensation he was made ruler of the unseen world of spirits and magic.

SENGEN-SAMA Goddess of the sacred mountain of Fujiyama. At her shrine at the top of the mountain, worshippers greet the rising sun.

SHINE-TSU-HIKO God of the wind. Shine-Tsu-Hiko fills up the empty space between earth and heaven, and with his wife Shina-To-Be, he holds up the earth.

SUSA-NO-WO God of storms, snakes and farming. Amaterasu's brother and greatest enemy. From the moment he was born, he was a troublemaker. After Amaterasu was finally taken out of her cave, Susa-No-Wo was punished. The other gods shaved his beard and moustache, pulled out his fingernails, and banished him to live as a mortal on the earth.