

## GREEK GODS BEFORE HOMER:

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We know very little about the early Greek beliefs concerning the gods in the pre-Homeric period. In Mycenae, Knossos, and Pylos, several fragmentary tablets written in Linear B list offerings for various gods at temples or lists of shrines found at various cities. Usually, gift-lists contain the gods' names in dative form and shrine-lists provide the gods' names in genitive form. I reproduce these below from a variety of sources summarized in Walter Burkett's *Greek Religion*, normalizing them in nominative form for easier comparison:

- Mistress of At(h)ana
- Enyalios
- Paiaon
- Poseidaon
- Posidaeja
- Amnisos
- Eleuthia (Ereutija)
- Zeus Diktaois (Zeus the Keeper of the Tenth Month)
- the Daidaleion
- Erinys
- the "Priestess of the Winds"
- the Mistress in Pakijane
- Manasa
- Trisheros Dopota
- Ipemedēja
- Diwija
- Emaa
- Areja
- Hermas Areias
- Hera
- Drimios the Son of Zeus
- Sitopotinjia ("the Grain-Mistress")
- Dionysos

We can see some familiar names here such as *Zeus*, *Hera*, and *Poseidon*. *Atana* or *Athana* might be an early form of *Athena*, and the singular *Erinys* name is probably related to the *Demeter Erinys* in Arcadia rather than the three avenging furies. The early appearance of *Dionysos* is particularly shocking to scholars, since Greek literary sources had long implied that Dionysus was a late addition to the pantheon imported from the east. We also see some names that *might* be familiar to us--*Hermas* is perhaps an early form of *Hermes*, and *Areias* perhaps an early form of *Ares*. However, the source oddly lists these as a single god--*Hermas Areias* or *Hermes-Ares*. Other names are strikingly unfamiliar--such as *Manasa* and *Drimios the Son of Zeus*.

From the various tablets, we also see the Pantheon worshipped at Knossos does not appear identical to the Pantheon worshipped at Pylos. They only share the deities *Zeus* and *Poseidon* and the general title *Potnia* (mistress) given to various goddesses. The Pylosian Hera shares a sanctuary with Zeus and she is already his wife, while a mysterious son (Drimios) appears in their family. The non-Pylosian tablets do not list Hera in association with Zeus. At Pylos, we find a "*Diwija*" sanctuary. *Diwija* is a feminine word equivalent to the older *Diwijos*--an archaic form of *Zeus*. The name *Zeus* is cognate with the Greek word *theos* and Latin *deus* (both meaning "god"). These three terms ultimately trace their etymology to an ancient Proto-Indo-European male sky-god, so *Diwija* linguistically seems to be a feminine equivalent to the masculine *Zeus*, i.e., we have a goddess of clouds and sky here; is she a wife or sister to the male sky-god? Likewise, *Posidaeja* appears to be a female version of *Poseidon* implying a wife or sister who is a feminine sea-god. Likewise, *Areja* looks like a feminine form of *Ares*, the god of war.

What doesn't appear is equally striking. We have no references to either *Apollo* or *Aphrodite* before Homeric days. Some archeological evidence suggests that Apollo may be an import from Cyprus, where cultists worshipped a bow-wielding God *Amyklai*, which can be traced back to *MLK-Amuklos*, a Hittite deity worshipped in Palestine. Likewise, the goddess Aphrodite in myth is the "Cytherean," i.e., the one who washed ashore on the beaches of Cyprus. The use of frankincense in her rituals (and the name *frankincense* itself, a Semitic loan-word in Greek) suggests the Greeks borrowed her from the Hittite pantheon. See Walter Burkett, *Greek Religion*, pp. 40-52, translated John Raffan, Harvard University Press, 1995.