



## The God of Thunder and Lightning

Meteorologists will never fail to tell us why lightning always comes before thunder, and why the saying “lightning never strikes twice in the same place” is not true. In many cultures, people believe that their weather gods, particularly the gods of thunder and lightning, know the answers too. Zeus, the Greek god of the sky, thunder and lightning, is a good example.



Zeus' name comes from the Greek word *dios*, meaning “bright”. In Greek mythology, he had control of all the heavens. The winds were at his service; day and night took their turns, and the seasons came and went, at his command. With the thunderbolt as his distinguishing mark, Zeus also controlled thunder and lightning. In Homer's *Iliad*, he did not hesitate to call forth thunderstorms against his enemies.

Hesiod once described Zeus as “the lord of justice”. As the supreme ruler of Mount Olympus, Zeus watched over the administration of law and justice in the world of mortals. He rewarded those who were honest, faithful and kind-hearted; and punished those who were deceitful, faithless or cruel.

In art, Zeus is often depicted as bearded and middle-aged, but with a youthful figure. His image is awe-inspiring, as his pose suggests that he is about to throw his bolt of lightning — that is, to mete out punishment to any wrongdoer.

## 雷公電母

雷電警世懲惡、替天行道的形象，深入人心。世人常言道：死於雷擊電殛者，必是壞人無疑。人們指天起誓，也常矢言，假如言而無信，必遭天打雷劈。雷電威力之大，可以想見。

中國社會對大自然神祇的崇拜，<sup>1</sup> 始於上古。雷、電、風、雨，無不成為膜拜對象。在古代神話中，雷公和電母是一對天神，司掌天庭雷電。雷公又稱雷神，電母又名閃電之神、閃電娘娘、金光聖母。雷公之名始見於《楚辭》，古時以雷為天庭陽氣，故稱“公”。閃電之職，最初由雷公兼司，至漢代有電父之稱，而電母之說則始於唐宋。唐崔致遠《桂苑筆耕集》曰：“使電母雷公，鑿外域朝天之路”；宋蘇軾《次韻章傳道喜雨》也有“麾駕雷公訶電母”的詩句。

歷來祈求雨雪的儀式，不少都以雷公和電母作為主要啓請的神明。規模較大的道觀和廟宇，通常都會供奉雷公和電母。《山海經》多處提及雷神，稱其為“龍身而人頭，鼓其腹”。雷公神像大都狀若力士，袒胸露腹，背插雙翅，額具三目，臉赤如猴，足如鷹爪；左手執鍬，右手持鎚，作欲擊狀；自頂至旁，環懸連鼓五個，左足盤躡一鼓，擊鼓即為轟雷。電母之像則容貌端雅，兩手執鏡，目光犀利。

雷公和電母能辨人間善惡，維護公義。相傳雷公視力欠佳，黑白難辨，電母寸步不離，捧鏡為其探照，明辨是非後，雷公才行雷，兩者可謂合作無間。

<sup>1</sup> “祇” 粵音“祈”。

There is nothing more universally commended than a fine day;  
the reason is, that people can commend it without envy.

William Shenstone



## 五黃六月 七月流火

《西遊記》講述唐三藏師徒四人往西天取經途中，甫踏足火燄山，頓覺熱氣蒸人。該處“有八百里火燄，四周圍寸草不生”，“無春無秋，四季皆熱”，讀之已覺熱浪逼人。

形容天氣炎熱，我們會說火傘高張，典出韓愈《遊青龍寺·贈崔大補闕》一詩：“赫赫炎官張火傘”，比喻烈日炎氛四射。又如流金鑠石，或鑠石流金，鑠解作“熔化”，意謂天氣酷熱，簡直能使金子、石頭熔化。這個成語出自《楚辭·招魂》：“十日代出，流金鑠石”。近義的成語有焦金流石，金屬燒焦，石頭熔化，形容陽光酷烈。焦沙爛石則指猛烈的陽光連沙也燒焦，石也燒爛。晉朝傅玄《雜詩》“炎景時鬱蒸，海沸沙石融”，謂天熱得連海水也煮沸，沙石熔化，同樣以誇張的手法形容酷熱。

中國以農立國，天氣好壞直接影響五穀收成，五黃六月即源出農事。五黃意謂夏曆五月麥子熟黃了，泛指夏天、大熱天。諺語“六月六，曬得雞蛋熟”同樣以六月天喻

指盛夏。北方一到夏曆七月便可望炎夏將盡，故有七月流火之說。流火，星座名，每年夏曆六月出現於正南方，位置最高，七月以後便漸漸偏西向下沉落，所以叫流火，預示夏去秋來，寒天將至，《詩經·七月》便有“七月流火，九月授衣”之句。不過，香港位處亞熱帶，夏曆五月間天氣轉熱，要到九月、十月始有涼意。

除了成語諺語，漢語裏頭形容天熱的詞組不少，如暑氣蒸騰、蒸籠一般，形象生動。談到暑熱，我們會說燠熱、溽熱、悶熱、苦熱，甚至毒熱，還會用疊字加重語氣：熱呼呼、熱烘烘、熱辣辣、火辣辣、熱騰騰、熱浪滾滾、火燙火燙。酷暑盛夏，熱得難受，自然要歸咎於頭頂上的太陽，烈日當空、熾熱的太陽似乎還不足以表達心情的煩躁，於是有通紅的火球、歹毒的陽光、毒花花的太陽。夏日陽光的威力，直如烈燄，炙人、燙人、灼人、烤人，不可小覷。