



The Kharisteria

6 Boedromion

(Commemorating the Battle of Marathon)

- ◆ **Ritual washing**
- ◆ **Ritual washing with invocation to Okeanos**

Okeanos whose nature ever flows, from whom at first both Gods and men arose;
sire incorruptible, whose waves surround, and earth's all-terminating circle bound: hence
every river, hence the spreading sea, and earth's pure bubbling fountains spring from thee.
Hear, mighty sire, for boundless bliss is thine, greatest cathartic of the powers divine:
earth's friendly limit, fountain of the pole, whose waves wide spreading and circumfluent
roll. Approach benevolent, with placid mind, and be forever to thy mystics kind.

- ◆ **Purification – khernips (holy water) sprinkled from a bay branch – “Be gone all corruption and evil” (three times).**

“Blessed Okeanos, may your bright waters purify this space, and prepare both me, and it,
for the rites that are about to unfold.”

- ◆ **Euphemia sto, euphemia sto, eukhomai tois Theois pasi kai pasais.**
(Let there be words of good omen, Let there be words of good omen, pray to the Gods
and Goddesses.)
- ◆ **Who is present? Those attending answer: All good people!**
- ◆ **Lighting of the lamp for Hestia with invocation: Daughter of Kronos, You whose eternal
flame illumines all our worship, come to this oikos with blessings . . .**
- ◆ **Lighting of the sacrificial fire**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 24 to Hestia**

To Hestia

Hestia, you that tend the far-shooting lord Apollo's sacred
house at holy Pytho, from your locks the oozing oil ever
drips down. Come to this house in kindly (?) heart, together
with Zeus the resourceful, and bestow beauty on my singing.

Translated by Martin L. West

- ◆ **Strewing of barley groats around the altar (circling clockwise three times)**
- ◆ **To Gaia**

First of all, in my prayers, before all other Gods, I call upon the foremost prophetess Gaia.

Aeschylus – Eumenides (opening lines)

- ◆ **Invocation to Gaia: Gaia, to you who nurtures us into being, who nurtures us through life, and who accepts us once again unto Thee, blessed Kourotrophos, I honor you with khernips**
- ◆ **Offering of khernips poured out**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 26 To Earth**

Ges

[Gaia Thea/], mother of men and of the blessed Gods,
 you nourish all, you give all, you bring all to fruition, and you destroy all.
 When the season is fair you are heavy with fruit and growing blossoms;
 and, O multiform maiden, you are the seat of the immortal cosmos,
 and in the pains of labor you bring forth fruit of all kinds.
 Eternal, reverend, deep-bosomed, and blessed,
 you delight in the sweet breath of grass, O Goddess bedecked with flowers.
 Yours is the joy of the rain, and round you the intricate realm of the stars
 revolves in endless and awesome flow.
 But, O blessed Goddess, may you multiply the gladsome fruits
 and, together with the beautiful seasons, grant me favor.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis

- ◆ **Invocations and prayers to Themis: To you who sits leaning against Zeus, who consults closely with Zeus, and who are the just order of all things**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

Leap for goodly Themis

From the Hymn of the Kouretes

The Kharisteria commemorates the battle of Marathon which took place c. 550-489 BCE. During the battle of Marathon, around 10,000 Hellenes fought against a Persian force between 30,000 and 100,000 men. In the battle, 192 Hellenes died as opposed to 6,400 Persians.

In preparation to meet the barbarians, the Athenians vowed their victory to Artemis Agrotera. The lines were drawn up and the sacrifices had been favorable; so the Athenians were permitted to charge, and they advanced on the Persians at a run. There was not less than eight stades in the no man's land between the two armies. The Persians, seeing them coming at a run believed that the Athenians were possessed by some very desperate madness, seeing their small numbers and their running to meet their enemies without support of cavalry or archers.

When the Athenians came to hand-to-hand fighting, they fought worthily. They were the first Greeks we know of to charge their enemy at a run and the first to face the sight of the Median dress and the men who wore it. For till then the Greeks were terrified even to hear the names of the Medes.

The fight at Marathon went on for a long time and in the center the barbarians won and broke the Greeks, and pursued them inland. But on each wing the Athenians and the Plataeans and the slaves who fought by the side of their masters were victorious, and as they conquered they let flee the part of the barbarian army they had routed and joining their two wings together they fought the

Persians who had broken their center. Then the Athenians won the day. As the Persians fled, the Greeks followed them until they came to the sea. Then the Greeks called for fire and laid hold of the ships.

In the battle of Marathon there died about six thousand four hundred men of the barbarians and one hundred and ninety-two of the Athenians. At the end of the battle of Marathon an Athenian messenger ran the twenty-six miles from the plain of Marathon to the city of Athens to report the victory and warn the people in the city to guard against a naval attack by the Persian fleet. When the Persians ended up sailing home without taking Athens, the Athenians rejoiced, the Persians whom they had feared as invincible, had retreated. For decades afterwards, the greatest honor an Athenian man could claim was to say he had been a “Marathon fighter”.

- ◆ **Incense: frankincense**
- ◆ **Invocation to Artemis Agrotera: Blessed Goddess, Huntress, profuse with arrows, Savior of the army**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 36 To Artemis**

To Artemis

Hear me, O queen, Zeus' daughter of many names,
Titanic and Bacchic, reverend, renowned archer,
torch-bearing goddess bringing light to all, Diktynna, helper at childbirth.
you help women in labor, though you know not what labor is.
O frenzy-loving huntress, you loosen girdles and drive distress away;
swift arrow-pouring goddess of the outdoors, you roam in the night.
Fame bringing and affable, redeeming and masculine in appearance,
Orthia, goddess of swift birth, you are a nurturer of mortal youths,
immortal and yet of this earth, you slay wild beasts, O blessed one,
your realm is in the mountain forests, you hunt deer.
O revered and mighty queen of all, fair blossomed, eternal,
sylvan, dog-loving, many-shaped lady of Kydonia,
come, dear goddess, as savior to all the initiates,
accessible to all, bringing forth the beautiful fruit of the earth,
lovely peace and fair-tressed health.
May you dispatch disease and pain to the peaks of the mountains.

translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
 - ◆ **Offering to Artemis Agrotera**
 - ◆ **Prayers for Her deliverance in times of peril**
-
- ◆ **Incense: frankincense**
 - ◆ **Invocation to Ares: Savior of the City, leader of righteous men, savior of the army**
 - ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
 - ◆ **Orphic Hymn 65 to Ares**

To Ares

Unbreakable, strong-spirited, mighty, powerful *daimon*,
delighting in arms, indomitable, man-slaying, wall-battering,
lord Ares, yours is the din of arms. Ever bespattered with blood,
you find joy in killing, in the fray of battle, O horrid one,
your desire is for the rude clash of swords and spears.
Stay the rage, stay the strife, relax pain's grip on my soul,
yield to the wish of Kypris, yield to the revels of Lyaaios,
exchange the might of arms for the works of Deo,
yearning for youth-nurturing peace, bliss-bringing peace.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

◆ Homeric Hymn 8 To Ares

To Ares

Ares, exceeding in strength, chariot-rider, golden-helmed, doughty in heart,
shield-bearer, Saviour of cities, harnessed in bronze, strong of arm, unwearying,
mighty with the spear, O defense of Olympus, father of warlike Victory,
ally of Themis, stern governor of the rebellious, leader of righteous men,
sceptred King of manliness, who whirl your fiery sphere among the planets
in their sevenfold courses through the aether wherein your blazing steeds
ever bear you above the third firmament of heaven; hear me, helper of men,
giver of dauntless youth! Shed down a kindly ray from above upon my life,
and strength of war, that I may be able to drive away bitter cowardice from my head
and crush down the deceitful impulses of my soul. Restrain also the keen
fury of my heart which provokes me to tread the ways of blood-curdling strife.
Rather, O blessed one, give you me boldness to abide within the harmless laws of peace,
avoiding strife and hatred and the violent fiends of death.

Translated by Hugh G. Evelyn White

- ◆ **Incense: frankincense**
- ◆ **Invocation to Nike: You who judged the deeds of the army and gave the prize, you who brought glory**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 33 to Nike**

To Nike

I call upon mighty Nike, beloved of mortals,
she alone frees man from the eagerness of contest,
from dissent, when men face each other in battle.
In war you are the judge of deeds deserving prizes;
sweet is the boast you grant after the onslaught.
Nike, mistress of all, on your good name depends noble glory,
glory that comes from the strife and teems with festivities.
O blessed and beloved one, come with joy in your eyes,

come for works of renown, bring me noble glory.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **Libations of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Prayers for sweet and deserved victory**

For those who fell in battle

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Prayers of appreciation and thanks**
- ◆ **Unmixed honey sweet wine poured on the ground (do not taste)**

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

“May blessings go with us, may we be mindful of the sacrifices for freedom, and may the Theoi watch benevolently over us and guide us with favorable fortunes!”

Adapted from Aeschylus – Libation Bearers – Chorus

- ◆ **Invocation to Hestia: Daughter of Kronos, You whose eternal flame illumines all our worship, we have honored You in first place with a libation of honey sweet wine and will honor you in last place with a libation of honey sweet wine:**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 29 to Hestia**

To Hestia

Hestia, you that in the high dwellings of all, both immortal gods and men who walk on earth, have been assigned an everlasting seat as the privilege of seniority, and enjoy a fine honor and privilege, for mortals have no feasts without you where the libation-pourer does not begin by offering honey-sweet wine to Hestia in first place and last: and you, Argus-slayer, son of Zeus and Maia, messenger of the blessed ones, gold-wand, giver of blessings, be favorable and assist together with Hestia whom you love and revere. For both of you dwell in the fine houses of men on earth, in friendship towards each other, fine supports (of the house), and you attend intelligence and youth.

I salute you, daughter of Kronos, and you too, gold-wand Hermes. And I will take heed both for you and for other singing.

Translated by Martin L. West

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine to Hestia**

“Blessed Hestia, Goddess of home and hearth, to you we offer last of all a libation of honey sweet wine, as pious mortals should. Tend to those whom we love and guard the houses of the pious. As

the Gods will it, so shall it be!”

◆ **Extinguishing of the lamp**