



Ritual for Plataea

3 Boedromion

(Commemorating the Battle of Plataea)

- ◆ **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

Oath of the Athenians and all Greeks before they were about to fight the barbarians Plataea:

*“I will fight as long as I live, and I will not consider of more importance living or being free,
 and I will not abandon the platoon commander nor the enomotarch either living or dead,
 and I will not go away unless the leaders order retreat, and I will do what the generals command,
 and I will bury those of my allies who have died and I will leave none unburied.
 If victorious, in fighting the barbarians, I will tithe the city of Thebes,
 and I will not cause revolution in Athens, nor Sparta, nor Plataea, nor any of the other allied
 cities,
 nor will I overlook famine in the workers, nor keep from water in the streams,
 among those who are friends and not enemies.
 And if I violate any of the terms written in the oath, my city may drive me out, or, if not, kill me.
 And it may carry me, and if not, let it be unburdened. And may women bear children like their
 parents,
 or, if not, may they bear monsters; and let my cattle bear offsprings like their parents,
 and, if not, monsters.”*

*“Swearing these things, and covering the sacrificial entrails with shields, they made the oath
 beneath the sound of the trumpet, that if they should violate anything of the things sworn, and not
 fulfill them, what is written in the oath, there should be a curse on those who have sworn.”*

From Stele from Acharnae (The text is that of Daux 1953, 2: 777-778)

Battle

The battle of Plataea which was the final land battle during the second Persian invasion of Hellas took place in 479 BC near the city of Plataea in Boeotia and was fought between an alliance of the Greek city-states, including Sparta, Athens, Corinth and Megara, and the Persian Empire of Xerxes I. Some 38,700 Hellenes stood their ground against 300,000 Persians. The Hellenes including Athenians, Lacedaemonians, Spartans, Tegeans, Corinthians, some from Potidaea in Pallene, Arcadians of Orchomenus, Sicyonians, Epidaurians, Troezenians, Lepreats, Mycenaean, Tirynthians, Phliasians, Hermionians, Eretrians, Styreans, Chalcideans, Ambraciots, Leucadians, Anactorians, Paleans of Cephallenia, Eginetans, Megarians, Thespians, and the Plataeans marched out of the Peloponnesus and took a post on the Asopos. The Persians retreated to Boeotia and built a fortified camp near Plataea. The Hellenes surrounded the camp, but refused to enter the bare terrain surrounding the camp.

The two armies proceeded on the next day to offer sacrifice. They waited eleven days and the victims continued unpropitious; until at last Pausanias, lifting up his eyes to the temple of Hera of Plataia, cried aloud, "O Goddess, disappoint not the hopes of the Greeks." As he prayed, the men of Tegea ran forward, and the Spartans—for at last the signs favored them—advanced also. The Persians left shooting and came to meet them.

- ◆ **Incense: frankincense**
- ◆ **Invocation to Hera Teleia: Blessed Goddess, Queen of Heaven who rules with Almighty Zeus, who brings to fulfillment**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 12 To Hera**

To Hera

Of Hera I sing, the golden-throned, whom Rhea bore to be queen of the immortals, of supreme beauty, sister and wife of Zeus the loud-booming; glorious one, whom all of the blessed ones on long Olympus revere and honor no less than Zeus whose sport is the thunderbolt.

Translated by Martin L. West

- ◆ **Libations of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Sacrificial offering to Hera**
- ◆ **Prayers for Her deliverance in times of peril**

- ◆ **Verses of Bacis which spoke of this battle:**

By Thermodon's stream, and the grass-clad hanks of Asopos,
See where gather the Grecians, and hark to the foreigners' war-shout-
There in death shall lie, ere fate or Lachesis doomed him,
Many a bow-bearing Mede, when the day of calamity cometh.

- ◆ Incense – frankincense
- ◆ 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 Lyaiois,
 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)

Meanwhile Pausanias had sent a horseman to the Athenians, at the time when the cavalry first fell upon him, with this message: "Men of Athens! Now that the great struggle has come, which is to decide the freedom or the slavery of Hellas, we twain, Lacedaemonians and Athenians, are deserted by all the other allies, who have fled away from us during the past night. Nevertheless, we are resolved what to do - we must endeavor, as best we may, to defend ourselves and to succor one another. Now, had the horse fallen upon you first, we ourselves with the Tegeans (who remain faithful to the Greek cause) would have been bound to render your assistance against them. As, however, the entire body has advanced upon us, 'tis your place to come to our aid, sore pressed as we are by the enemy. Should you yourselves be so straitened that you cannot come, at least send us your archers, and be sure you will earn our gratitude. We acknowledge that throughout this whole war there has been no zeal to be compared to yours, we therefore doubt not that you will do us this service."

When Mardonius had fallen and his companions with him, the rest of the Persians fled before the Greeks, for their equipment, being without armor, was a grievous hindrance to them. And indeed they were light-armed men, fighting with heavy-armed.

Thus did Mardonius and his host pay due penalty for the death of Leonidas, and Pausanias won a victory more glorious than any man had ever won before. As for Mardonius himself, he was slain by one Aeimnestus, that perished afterward, he and three hundred Spartans with him, fighting against the whole host of the Messenians.

The Persians, being now put to flight by the Spartans, fled without any order to their camp, to the defense of trees which they had made.

For none of the Greeks fought in this battle of Plataea save the Spartans and the Athenians and the men of Tegea only. But after the coming of the Athenians the wall was attacked yet more fiercely than before. These after a while prevailed, climbing to the top of the wall, and making a breach, so that the Greeks could enter in. And of all the Greeks the first to enter were the men of Tegea. These spoiled the tent of Mardonius and the barbarians held out no longer, but were slaughtered as sheep, so that of the whole host there were left three thousand only.

- ◆ **Incense – frankincense**
- ◆ **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 (from Plutarch):**

“The Athenians and Lacedaemonians, having suffered something straightway at that time, requested a little for them to come to them for the erection of the trophy. The Greeks who dallied and ran away they did not expel from the ceremony of valor but they inscribed on the trophy those who had shared the spoils. Finally, writing this epigram for the altar, they inscribed it as follows:

This once the Greeks by force of Nike, work of Ares, obedient to the daring reputation of their spirit, having driven out the Persians, for free Greece in common, established an altar of Zeus of Freedom.”

Two epitaphs by Simonides for the Athenians who died at Plataea:

If a noble death is the greatest part of virtue,
 Tyche (fortune) has granted this to us above all others.
 For we, who hastened to bestow freedom upon Hellas,
 lie here enjoying praise that will never grow old.

These men bestowed unquenchable glory upon their dear country,
 taking upon themselves the dark mist of death.
 They have died, but are not dead, since their valor
 glorifies them and brings them up from the house of Hades.

From Palatine Anthology 7:253 & 7:251

- ◆ **Prayers of appreciation and thanks**
- ◆ **Honey sweet wine poured on the ground**

- ◆ **Incense: myrrh**
- ◆ **Invocation to Zeus: Almighty Zeus, King of All, who brings to fulfillment, who frees us from oppression . . .**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 15 To Zeus:**

To Zeus

Much-honored Zeus, great god, indestructible Zeus,
 we lay before you in prayer redeeming testimony.
 O king, you have brought to light divine works –
 earth, goddess and mother, the hills swept by the shrill winds,
 the sea, and the host of the stars, marshaled by the sky.
 Kronian Zeus, strong-spirited god, the thunderbolt is your scepter,
 father of all, beginning and end of all,
 earth-shaker, increaser and purifier, all-shaker,
 god of thunder and lightning, Zeus the sower.
 Hear me, god of many faces, grant me unblemished health,
 please grant me divine peace and riches, please grant me glory without blame.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised)

- ◆ **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**