

Η ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ

He Epistole



Issue #26 – Spring 2012



The Neokoroi* are a group of Hellenic polytheists who feel called to a path of service and devotion to the gods. We support mysticism, hard polytheism, and tend to favor reconstructionism as an approach to developing Hellenismos, while also recognizing the importance of personal experience and local cultus. We are especially dedicated to fostering communities, festivals, and public shrines, and providing guidance and information on religious matters – all to ensure the strength and longevity of the worship of the Greek gods.

He Epistole (a “message” or “letter”) is published four times a year. We offer articles, hymns, prayers, poetry, reviews, information, rituals, community notices, fiction, recipes, and anything else of interest to the Hellenic polytheist community. We welcome feedback, and submissions from guest writers. He Epistole is a free publication and can be found in many locations nationwide. Please contact us if you would like to distribute copies in your area – in return you receive the issues in electronic format for free. Back issues can also be downloaded in PDF form from the website for free.

To contact the editor, email: heepistolesubmissions@gmail.com - or visit the Neokoroi website: neokoroi.org. (We have even more articles online, as well as information on the gods, photos, links and more!)

*The word **neokoros** is derived from the Greek words naos (temple) and koreo (to sweep) and originally meant “the one who sweeps the temple” or “the temple keeper.” It was a humble position, but an important one, for it was the neokoros’ responsibility to make sure that the temple was kept clean and free of any pollution, and also to tend to the daily service of the god in whose temple he or she served.

©2012 All submissions published by arrangement with the author(s). All rights reserved. Neokoroi reserves the right to edit submissions for space and content as deemed appropriate. All materials published are protected by international copyright law, and any unauthorized reproduction is prohibited. Clip-art and photographs courtesy FCIT (<http://etc.usf.edu/clipart>) and Wikipedia Commons (<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki>). Unless notated, images are in the public domain.

THE HE EPISTOLE TEAM

Editor: Kharis Theocritos

Art Director/Graphic Designer: Khryseis Astra (K.S. Roy)

Web Manager/Technical Support: Miguel Oliveira

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ART

Asklepios..... 7

Amanda Sioux Blake

Hephaistos8

Amanda Sioux Blake

Kore...Persephone 15

K.S. Roy

ESSAYS & RITUALS

Athletics in Ancient Greek Religion4

Athallia

Greater Aresia.....9

Pete Helms

SHORT STORY

Of Coercion and the Cosmos 13

Suz Thackston

POETRY & HYMNS

The True Gift of Prometheus.....3

Amanda Sioux Blake

To Prometheus.....3

Amanda Sioux Blake

MISCELLANEOUS

Community Bulletin Board 12

K.S. Roy

THE TRUE GIFT OF PROMETHEUS

By Amanda Sioux Blake

O Glorious Titan Prometheus
Who rebelled against the rule of Zeus
And suffered for the sake of man, I sing to You.
Many poets have told the story
Of Your sacrifices, of Your daily pain.
I will not repeat it here.
I honor You for Your gift to mankind, Thief of Heaven,
And instead of Your pain, I will focus on Your teachings
On what You gave to us, the grail of Fire
That flickering flame which sprang from a smoldering fennel stalks
Changed the fate of my race
No longer did we cower in fear of wild creatures
Shivering in the cold black of night
But greater still was the fire You awoke in our minds

TO PROMETHEUS

By Amanda Sioux Blake

O great Muses who poets doth revere
Lend me Your voices
And attend my songs.
I sing first a hymn of Prometheus, the wise Titan,
First trickster, martyr for man
Who crafted our mortal flesh
From the clay of the River Styx,
Life, from the River of Death.
Before Prometheus intervened on our behalf
We lived as animals do
In caves, huddling together for warmth
And in fear of the larger animals
Naked, eating our meat raw.
Then kindly Prometheus took pity on us,
For He saw our potential.
Cunning Prometheus who process fore-sight
Taught us the ways of the land
To tell the future from the stars
To hunt, to make warm clothes from fur and skin
And to build houses made of brick.
But still we mortals huddled together
In the cold of night.
Only fire could cure our ills,
Fire, meant only for the Gods.
O Prometheus, You Who tells the future,
You knew the the price You would have to pay.
Still You stole the Divine Fire for our benefit
And arranged the institution

A curiosity about the world, a drive to learn, to create
And you did indeed teach us, O Prometheus
You taught us brickwork, metallurgy, star-gazing, the marks
of written language,
All that civilized and cultured our primitive ancestors.
When You left us to face Your punishment alone,
We continued in the path You started us on.
Since that time, we have advanced to dominate the planet
We have charted the genetic code and traveled to the moon.
And no one knows what wonders we may yet discover.
O Great Titan Prometheus, it was YOU who catalyzed our
growth,
And in Your Honor, I give You a new title:
The Instigator of Evolution.



Of sacrifices to the Immortal Gods.
For Your trickery, Zeus sentenced You to a most awful fate
Chained to a great stone
To have Your immortal liver, the seat of feeling
Eaten by an eagle. Every night it grew back
And every day it was eaten again.
And still, You never regretted Your actions.
Eventually, many ages passed,
And lion-hearted Hercules freed You from Your chains.
Friend of man, Who suffered for our sake,
If any of the Immortal Gods deserve to be called Our Father
Surely it is You, O wise Prometheus
Who taught us many useful things
Who gave divine fire to mankind
Who deemed us worthy of the sacrifice.
Kindly Prometheus, Wise teacher,
Grant that I may live up to your esteem
And I will remember You in another song.

By Athallia

As yet another modern Olympic year approaches the interest in ancient Greek “sports” resurfaces and like Shelley we start to think “we are all Greeks.” However, in mainstream society we are expected to separate our religion from our athletics the same way we try to separate religion from the public aspects of our lives. “Tebowing” being newsworthy because of its’ rarity. This is in sharp contrast with how the ancient Greeks did things in the Archaic and Classical periods. To them there was no part of their lives that was not under the care of one or more deities and this of course included athletic competitions.

Like in the modern world, the ancient Greeks participated in athletic activity for recreation, physical education and of course in an effort to improve their health and beauty. The Greeks realized that very few could win first place at competitions, but the wise recognized the athletic training and preparation as the source of, “complete human happiness, including individual freedom and political independence, wealth and repute, enjoyment of our ancient ritual, security of our dear ones, and all the choicest boons a man might ask of Heaven.” Of course, it was only to be expected that an activity that gave so much to its’ participants, spectators and to the polis in general would be seen as coming from the gods and used in their worship.

The use of athletic competitions in a religious setting is likely to have first appeared during funerals of great leaders. It was probably expected that the spirit of the dead would be entertained by the same things it was entertained by while it was alive, in this case athletic competitions. By the time of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, funeral games in honor of heroes and kings were the norm. It is in the *Iliad* that we find the earliest literary example of funeral games. After the burial of Patroklos’ bones, as the people are about to leave Achilles holds them back and brings out rich prizes from his ships to give to the winners of the chariot competition to be held in honor of Patroklos. During these funeral games the gods take a very active role in helping their favorite hero. It is Athena’s interference on behalf of Diomedes that determines his victory. Eumelos, who did not pray to any of the gods not only finished last, but Athena smashed his chariot yoke which caused his horses to run away and he suffered many cuts and scratches all over his body.

It seems likely that the popularity of Homer’s epics were instrumental in the establishment of athletic games during religious festivals as a way to emulate the heroes of that earlier age. Another explanation is that by anthropomorphizing the gods, whatever pleased the living and the spirit of the

departed kings was expected to please the gods as well.

The Homeric Hymn to Apollo credits the gods’ delight in watching the competitions in their honor to explain how the athletic contest became such a standard event at religious festivals. Their popularity as votive offerings to the gods gave rise to the great Panhellenic games at Olympia, Delphi, the Isthmus in Corinth and at Nemea. Besides these great Panhellenic festivals Pindar lists over twenty games in his epinician odes and more games continued to be added well into the Roman period. Other popular games held within the context of religious festivals included Athena’s Panathenaia, Asclepius’ Asclepieia and the Heraia in honor of Hera. The games maintained their religious character by including religious processions, sacrifices to the gods and were conducted at the local shrine for the deity in whose honor they were founded.

The Olympic Games, in honor of Zeus were said to be founded by either Herakles or by Pelops. Pindar claims Herakles founded the games in Olympia near Pelops’ tomb as in honor of Zeus as thanks for helping him defeat King Augeas. The other Olympic founding legend has Pelops as the founder of the games as thanks offering to Zeus for his victory over Oenomaus, and his winning of Hippodameia’s hand in marriage. Archeological as well as literary evidence support the story of Pelops as founder of the games and during historical times his myth, cult worship, and sanctuary are very much a part of the Olympic experience. Like Zeus, Pelops received offerings in his sanctuary from the athletes. Besides their role as religious offerings, it is likely that athletic competitions played a central role in coming of age rituals.

Athletics in Coming of Age Rites

Rites of passage and coming of age rituals are an important feature of all tribal peoples modern and past, including the ancient Greeks. However, the spread of the Athenian education system and state-sponsored paideia since the fifth century, led to their decline in the Greek world. Many festivals centered on the young like the Oschophoria, the Spartan Karneia and others preserved some of their earlier initiatory aspects, but over time their meaning was lost or conflated with other themes. Because of the importance of physical education to the overall education of young men, not just in Sparta but also in Athens, Thebes and possibly elsewhere in the Greek world; it is especially difficult to discern which festivals with an athletic component were remnants of initiation rites, purely celebratory or instituted with the goal of furthering the boys’ athletic training.

However, because athletics was an almost exclusively male domain, except in Sparta, the religious festivals which included female athletics stood out. As physical education was not important component of girls' education, festivals with an athletic component (usually a footrace) like that in honor of Dionysus Kolonatas in Sparta, the Arkteia in honor of Artemis Brauronia in Attica, the Heraia in Olympia maintained their initiatory character. Since marriage marked a woman's transition from girlhood to adulthood, the rituals held at the aforementioned festivals marked a girl's readiness for marriage or possibly prepared her for it.

Girls Race at the Heraia

The Heraia was a festival in honor of Hera held every fourth year at Olympia. Legend attributes Hippodameia as the founder of the games in honor of Hera as thanks for her marriage to Pelops. The festival was celebrated with a race in which only unmarried girls participated. The girls raced in three groups based on their age. What each group was is unknown, but probably resembled the three age groups Plato suggested unmarried girls be divided in during foot-races; an under 13 group and two groups of over 13 but under 20. According to Pausanias the girls ran with their hair down, wearing a short tunic that left the right shoulder, right breast and the legs below the knee exposed. The winners received an olive crown, a portion of the cow sacrificed to Hera and the privilege of dedicating statues with their names inscribed on them.

When exactly the festival was founded is up to debate, with some dating it as early as the eighth century, but certainly well established by the 580's BCE. It was at this time that a group of sixteen Elian women were chosen to enact a peace between Pisa and Elis and to be in charge of the girls' footraces as well as the choral dances. It was also around this time (ca. 600 BCE) that the first temple of Hera was constructed and the number of votives to the goddess increased, hinting that the games in her honor had already been instituted by this time.

The race which was open only to parthenoi, is believed to have served as a prenuptial ritual of initiation. The uniqueness of the Heraia dress, with the right shoulder and breast exposed, provides one of the clues to the initiatory component of the festival. Two statues survive which depict females wearing the sort of dress described by Pausanias, both have their hair down and both appear to be running. The older of the statues is the so called British Museum statuette, dating from about 560 BCE. The Heraia was well-established by then and the statuette matches both the description of what the girls wore and how they wore their hair, as well as the practice of leaving statuettes of their likeness as votives. The unique dress has been thought to be derived from what



Artemis, Atalanta or the Amazons wore, yet neither Atalanta nor Artemis were depicted with a dress that exposed the right shoulder and breast as that worn by the Heraian runners. The Amazons were originally depicted as wearing a number of other outfits, including armor and Oriental style dress. Eventually, the Amazons were depicted with a dress with the right shoulder and breast exposed, but not until 460 BCE, making it impossible to have been the inspiration for Heraian dress, rather it might have been the other way around. The only dress that antedates the Heraia and matches the iconography is that worn by males during strenuous activities, the exomis, or 'off-the-shoulder' garment.

The fact that the girls were dressed as men matches the common initiatory practice of ritual cross-dressing. Also, had the dress not had any ritual significance it would have undergone some changes over time, if only for comfort or fashion reasons. Yet the dress remains the same and when worn by girls only associated with this race hinting at religious reasons for its preservation. Other initiatory themes found in the Heraia are the initiates' separation from the mother and being under the care of a guardian of the same sex. In the Heraia, these initiatory components are fulfilled by the Olympic stadium which confines the runners from outside contact and by the sixteen married women in charge of the festival respectively. That the festival is in honor of the goddess of marriage and legend connects its founding to the marriage of Hippodameia are also very apropos for a prenuptial initiation rite.

Whether athletics or even team sports will play such a central role in modern Hellenism is too soon to tell, as our numbers are still too small. But if we are wise we too shall try to obtain “all the choicest boons a man might ask of Heaven” as we seek to establish a relationship of joy and grace with the Theoi.

Sources

Adkins, Lesley, and Roy A. Adkins. *Handbook to Life in Ancient Greece*. New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1997.

Barringer, Judith M. “The Temple of Zeus at Olympia, Heroes, and Athletes.” *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, Vol. 74, No 2 (2005): 211- 241.

Burkert, Walter. *Greek Religion*. Translated by John Raffan. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985.

Charachidze, Georges. “The Cult of Helen and the Tribal Initiation of Women in Greece,” *Greek and Egyptian Mythologies*. Edited by Yves Bonnefoy. Translated by Wendy Doniger. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, (1992): 174 – 178.

Connelly, Joan Breton. *Portrait of a Priestess: Women and Ritual in Ancient Greece*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Fairbanks, Arthur. *A Handbook of Greek Religion*. New York: American Book Company, 1910.

Garland, Robert. *The Greek Way of Life*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990.

Homer. *The Homeric Hymns*. Translated by Apostolos N. Athanassakis. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

Homer. *The Iliad of Homer*. Translated by Richmond Lattimore. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Homer. *The Odyssey*. Translated by Robert Fagles. New York: Viking Penguin, 1996.

Johnston, Sarah Iles. “Myth, Festival, and Poet: The Homeric Hymn to Hermes and Its Performative Context.” *Classical Philology*, Vol. 97, No 2 (2002): 109 – 132.

Lucian. *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*. Translated by H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1905.

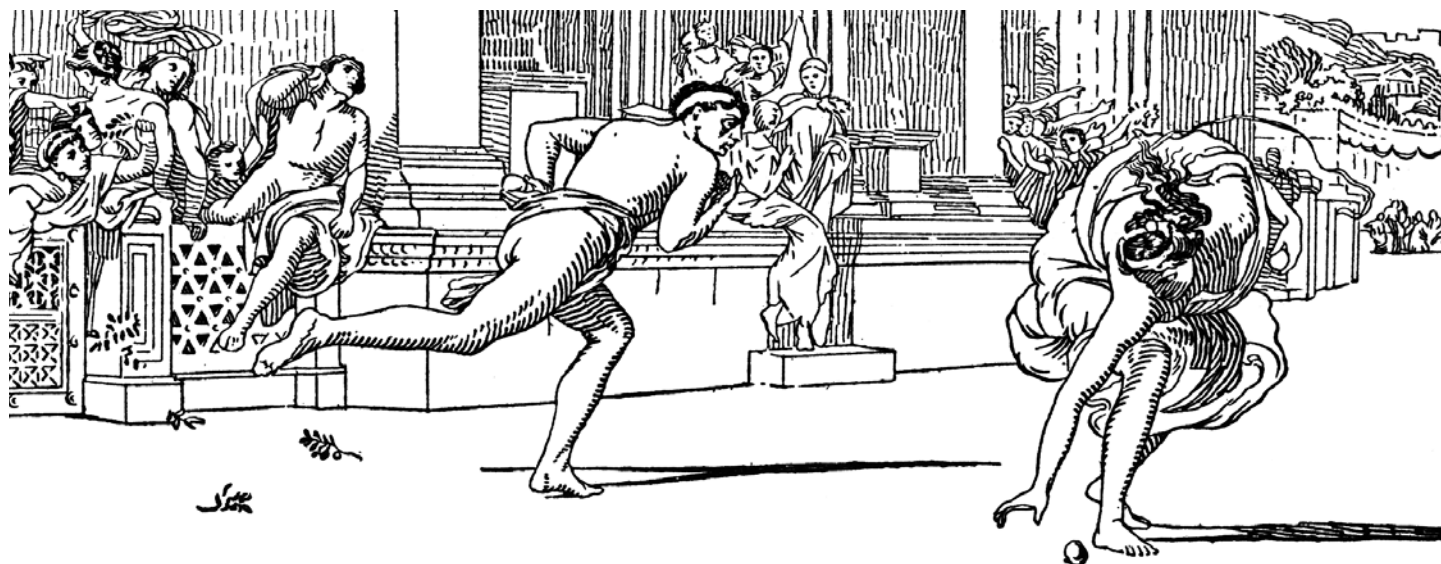
Pindar. *The Odes and Selected Fragments*. Translated by G. S. Conway and Richard Stoneman. London: Everyman, 1997.

Scanlon, Thomas F. *Eros & Greek Athletics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Scullion, Scott. “Festivals.” Pages 190 – 203 in *A Companion to Greek Religion*. Edited by Daniel Ogden. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2010.

Serwint, Nancy. “The Female Athletic Costume at the Heraia and Prenuptial Initiation Rites”, *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 97, No. 3 (1993): 403 – 422.

Thucydides. *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Translated by Rex Warner. New York: Penguin Books, 1972.



ASKLEPIOS

By Amanda Sioux Blake



HEPHAISTOS

By Amanda Sioux Blake



By Pete Helms

Purpose:

Many have asked about why one may choose to reconstruct the worship of Ares, even within modern Hellenismos. You too may even have similar concerns about reviving his worship. Ares was, and still is, seen as a negative force in the world by some; however, in His modern cult as well as the ancient, people have called on the god for protection, prosperity, and hope. The context in which I write this ritual is similar to that found in the region this festival originated in, Syedra, in what is now southern Turkey. Like Syedra, many of us in the West face physical threats from foreign lands and economic insecurity due to predatory financial systems and the pressures of conflict. The ancient Syedrians, as we, searched for a solution to these issues and were proscribed a festival meant to ensure the favor of Ares, who might otherwise turn against them.

Today we face even greater challenges, such as international terrorism, riotous populations and political instability, and economic woes bordering on financial depression. In reconstructing this festival, we may hope to re-establish the reciprocal relationship with Ares that was shared in centuries past, and perhaps even share in the peace and prosperity the god promises to ensure. For those who may have qualms about worshipping Ares, this festival serves as a tangible reminder that the poets of great fame, such as Homer, and the often misunderstood nature of the myths are not the end all be all of Hellenic Religion. Rather, Ares' role in the pantheon, in our daily lives, is about more than violence and calamity. In addition, I hope this ritual fills the needs of the scattered peoples who still do pour libations and offer sacrifices to Ares and helps fill the wide gap in available liturgical material within Ares' modern cult.

Historical Background and Synopsis:

One feature of Ares' cult in ancient Greece, and Asia Minor in particular, was an annual festival of binding Ares in chains; even where no festival is held, depictions of Ares in chains were common throughout the Greek world. The strongest evidence we have of this cult festival is an inscription of an oracular statement, attributed by Lewis Robert to the oracle of Apollon at Klaros, though Matthew Gonzales, author of "Cults and Sanctuaries of Ares and Enyalios," believes it more appropriately came from the oracle of Ares at Termessos. Syedra, the city which the oracle addresses, was at the time under constant threat of pirates and brigands.

Here is the text as translated by Robert:



Pamphylians of Syedra, who inhabit a rich land of mixed men in Shared fields, plant a statue of bloody, man-slaying Ares in the Middle of the city and beside (him) perform sacrifices as you Bind him with the iron bonds of Hermes, and on the other side Let Justice administer the law and judge him; let him resemble a Suppliant. Thus will he become a peaceful deity for you, once he Has driven the enemy horde far from your country, and he will Give rise to prosperity much prayed for. And you, at the same Time, take great pain, either chasing them or placing them in unbreakable Bonds, and do not, out of fear of the pirates, pay their Terrible penalty. For thus will you escape from all degradation.

Theological and Mythological Notes and Ritual Themes:

I want to explain, briefly, the theological ideas at play within the ritual, the roles of Ares, Dike, and Hermes in the process, and mythological allusions and how it relates here. Some may view the chaining of a god as blasphemous or impious. While the imagery is certainly provocative, binding cult images was common in ancient Greece, and cannot necessarily be said to be hubris. Remember, the statues are only images, not the gods themselves.

The relationship between Ares, Dike, and Hermes is well attested in ancient myth and literature. When Ares is captured by the Aloadae Giants, He is freed by Hermes. When Ares is to come before the gods on the Areopagus, it is most likely Hermes who led Him there. When bringing the mythical criminal Sisypheus to justice (Dike) for capturing Thanatos (Death), Hermes and Ares work in tandem.

In the plays of Aeschylus, Ares is the agent of Dike, bringing retribution upon murderers and the breakers of oaths. He is even depicted on a shield within the Seven Against Thebes, where he is led by Dike; it is there that the characters learn what fate befalls them. The themes of this festival and its rites concern protection, prosperity, and justice. By propitiating Ares, we hope to invoke His favor and protection on our community. Hermes is not only worshipped here as a liberator from oppression and unjust violence, but He helps us approach Ares in a diplomatic and respectful manner.

Dike is approached not only in Her own right as a hater of injustice and falsehood, but the agent by which Ares is led to be peaceful and ensures prosperity.

Please note that this ritual is being written for at least three participants, in the hope that as our numbers grow, we can worship together as we were always meant to. With that in mind, I will leave enough flexibility to adapt the rites for solitary use. Always feel free to do what you feel is most appropriate; this script is a guideline, not a dictate of divine law.

A Note on Timing:

Within the period of researching this festival, no date was given for holding the festival day. After consulting with more knowledgeable and experienced polytheists, I have made the decision to place this festival on 5 Pyanepsion. I came to this decision based on the following criteria:

- Being late in the Gregorian month of September to early October, the military campaign season is ending. Now that the time for war is over, and Ares has “driven the enemy hoard far from your country”, Ares can return from battle

to the polis.

- Due to the intention of providing for the prosperity of the polis, I wanted to place this festival before the agricultural rituals that follow in the days after, so as to strengthen that connection between Ares and abundance, prosperity, and communal self-assurance.

Supplies:

I suggest a number of supplies for use in this ritual. Some objects are tied in general to the cults of Ares, while others are more generic. Feel free to modify the list as you see fit to conform to your style, budget, and resources.

1. Images of Ares, Dike, and Hermes. I suggest using three separate images, because the ritual is written with the assumption that they will be separate and later bound together. I also prefer to use statues, as they are not only more suited to being bound with chain, they also conform to the mandate of the oracle. If statues are not in your budget, feel free to improvise. You may use paintings, clay figures, or even human actors, if there are enough participants.

2. A small chain. I suggest a small chain such as those used for jewelry. You may choose to use a plain necklace, or you can buy prefabricated links at many craft stores and make your own chain. Ensure that the length is sufficient to bind the images together, and that it flexible enough to easily wrap around whatever image you use. I have found a chain approximately 20 inches is sufficient.

3. Khernips and Barley. Both of these substances are used for purification purposes at the start of the ritual. Considering the gravity of the festival, ritual purity from miasma is important and will be emphasized within the actual rites.

4. Offerings. While wine and incense are standard, you may wish to dedicate other offerings as well. My favorite wine is a Greek variety from Nemea called Kouros, though you can of course use any variety (or none) you wish. For incense, I suggest following the Orphic standard for Ares, frankincense. One alternative is sweet myrrh, but any incense should do. I do think one should avoid dragon's blood, to avoid invoking the wrath of the god, but this is my own UPG and should not be taken as law.

5. Miscellaneous Supplies. Make sure you have a safe container for incense, any candles or lamps, or any other heat source. If using candles, as I do, red is a striking color and is associated with Ares. You may also wish to have pitchers and glasses for wine and other liquid offerings, and baskets to hold other offerings.

Preparation:

The setup of this ritual is rather simple. Construct an altar as you see fit, but put aside the image of Ares and the chain for now; these will be part of the procession.

Coins from the area the festival was celebrated depict Hermes on the right of Ares and Dike on the left, and so I arrange my altar this way. For this ritual, I chose to leave Ares off the altar initially, to be led “resembling a suppliant” as part of the procession as an echo of cathartic practices from the *Odyssey* and *Argonautica*. Purify and dedicate the altar as you see fit, and light any candles, lamps, or charcoal for incense then prepare for the procession. One item you may wish to include on your altar is a miniature flag representing your group, region, or country, as this is essentially a protective rite meant to ward the entire polis.

Pomp:

This procession is intended, unlike at some other festivals, to be somber and silent, again reflective of Ares being led as a suppliant. The first person in the procession should carry the image of Ares, and place it upon the altar when arriving at the ritual space. The second person in the procession is the chain-bearer, who will do the actual binding of Ares. It is important that this person be deemed the purest of the group. While each group may use its own criteria to qualify the chain-bearer, some potential criteria may include a short period of sexual abstinence or fasting prior to the festival, in addition to normal purification rites. The third, and any subsequent members of the procession, shall act as basket-bearers, water-bearers, etc. who carry offerings and other materials to the ritual space. If you are working alone, or with only a second person, place any offerings at the edge of the ritual space before the procession. However, the separation and reintegration of Ares to the altar remains integral to the mood of the ritual, so I still suggest conducting the procession by leading Ares to the altar.

Purification and First Offering:

While participants should be expected to have performed purification rites appropriate for the festival prior to arriving, a short rite of purification using khernips is appropriate and will abolish any incidental miasma. Sprinkle the altar with the khernips and say a blessing as appropriate; some groups like to say, “Let all profane ones depart!” which is acceptable as it is short and simple. Each member of the rite should then wash their hands and face to cleanse themselves. Participants may then give the initial offering of barley to the gods.

Hymnodia:

You may begin the ritual with hymns to Ares, Hermes, and Dike as you feel appropriate. I enjoy the Homeric hymns over the Orphic, but that is a matter of personal preference. Below are prayers tailored to the ritual, and you may choose to use these as well. Begin by offering libations and thanks to Dike and Hermes for their assistance in the matter at hand, using these words or others. They can be spoken as a group,

or different individuals can each address a different god.

To Hermes:

*Dear Hermes, cunning lord of boundaries
Hear our prayer and be with us this day
To you, Pyschopompos, who leads the blessed and liberates
The righteous from bondage, Come, we pray
Lead before you the Man Slayer, the Companion of Dike
Bring Him before the altar in our time of need
Accept this offering, Swift son of Thundering Zeus
*pour libation or give other offering**

To Dike:

*Dike, sweet Dike, Righteous daughter of Most High Zeus
Hear our prayer and be present
Most Just supporter of Cities, Enemy of Falsehoods
Attend to us, sweet Justice, and call forth the Brazen One
Call him to stand before us and defend the Righteous
Accept this offering that we may be judged worthy
*pour a libation or give another offering**

Now, the group addresses Ares. This address is designed to be a little more flexible, as I mean for it to address the ills current to the group or individual. This first hymn will be a bit vague, but I encourage you to make it more specific to add to the gravity of the festival.

*Obrimos, Avenging Protector, hear our plea
Take heed of Kind Hermes and Just Dike, follow Their call
Come to this place and avenge us our suffering,
succoror of Themis
Ares, son of Merciful Zeus and Hera the Queen
Accept our offerings and withhold from us Strife
and Injustice*

Binding and Sacrifices:

After the initial hymns and invocations have been recited, the person acting as chief priest shall instruct the chain-bearer to come forward. At the appropriate cues during the rite (marked by asterisks [*]) the chain-bearer will first bind Ares in the chain, then leads one end to Hermes and another to Dike, for a total of three actions. I find that wrapping the chain first around Ares' shoulders, then His arms works best, using the center of the chain. From each arm, lead an end to be lightly fastened to the arm of Dike or Hermes at the appropriate part of the rite, again by winding the chain along the statue or other image. Use these or similar words:

*We come before you, mighty Gods, as suppliants
In our hour of need for your aid
We are as a mixed people with enemies at our gates
Eris waits at our door, and Hunger, Fear,
and Death are near
Ares, Lord of War and Abundant Father,
Would you not be bound to protect your people?
Pray we that you may be yoked to us**

*Ensure the prosperity of our land and protect us from peril,
Strong Ares
Be committed in bonds to Hermes, the Giver of Joy*
Let him lead you in justice as he has led you to us
Walk behind stern Dike, your sister and companion
Let her lead you to the house of Themis and be just*
Accept from us these offerings, dear Ares
Allow us to dance with Harmony as you have danced
Allow us recompense from our enemies and from thieves*

At this point, each person who has prepared an offering should leave it at the altar. Some ideas for offerings may be tokens symbolic of one's commitment or accomplishments serving the community, art or hymns depicting Ares as a protector of the people, or votive offerings in recompense for previous pledges now fulfilled. One activity you may choose to do, if worshipping in a group, is to acknowledge each other's accomplishments and raise a toast to members who have gone above and beyond in serving others.

Closing:

With the ritual now complete, you may wish to say a few prayers of thanksgiving for the attention of the gods, and pour further libations. An example of closing hymns may be similar to this:

*Rejoice, oh men, that the Gods have come
Strong Ares, Swift Hermes, and Stern Dike
Our gifts are offered as thanks to You
Who nourish us, oh Gods, with mercy just
Thank you, Brazen God, that we may know the cover of
your great Armor
Thank you, Liberator, for freeing us from the tyranny of
uncertainty
Thank you, Enemy of Falsehoods, for banishing the unjust
and ensuring peace*

If part of a group, a feast following the conclusion of the rites can definitely occur. The mood of the festival should swing from somber and muted at the beginning to more jovial and relaxed towards the end. Having (hopefully) ensured Ares' graces will benefit the community; focus should shift from negative, looming problems to positive, hopeful optimism.

Some activities to follow the ritual and feast can occur to help the group come together further. Perhaps you can have a symposium, discussing the issues facing you immediate community and brainstorming possible solutions. For the athletically minded, you can have a wrestling match. You could also write and act out a short play referencing Ares' bondage at the hands of the Aloada, or read from *The Seven Against Thebes*, which details in drama Ares' relationship with Dike.

Sources

- Alexander, Timothy Jay. *Hellenismos Today*. Raleigh, NC: Lulu, 2007. Print. 43-54.
- Burkert, Walter. *Greek Religion*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985. Print. 99-108.
- Campbell, Drew. *Biblion Demos: A Manual for the Hellenion Demos*. V 1.0. Hellenion.org, Hellenion. 16 Oct, 2001. Web. 10 Feb, 2012.
- Gonzales, Matthew Paul. *Cults and Sanctuaries of Ares and Enyalios: A Survey of the Literary, Epigraphic, and Archeological Evidence*. Diss. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004. Print. 36-60.
- The Oracle and Cult of Ares in Asia Minor*. Manchester, NH: St Anselm College, 2005. Print.

COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

By K.S. Roy

News gathered from the wider Polytheist community

• Calls for Submissions from Bibliotheca Alexandrina:

We are currently seeking poetry, short fiction, scholarly essays, rituals, recipes, meditations, artwork and other submissions for several other devotional projects.

<http://neosalexandria.org/bibliotheca-alexandrina/>

• **Shield of Wisdom: A Devotional Anthology in Honor of Athena** [edited by **Jason Ross Inczauskis**].

Submissions will open in **September 2011** and close on **31 February 2012**. Projected release date of **April 2012**. Submissions can be sent to athenadevotional@gmail.com; please place devotional title in the subject line.

Deadline Extended - See Website for Current Info!

• **The Shining Cities: An Anthology of Pagan Science Fiction** [edited by **Rebecca Buchanan**]. Submissions will open in **January 2012** and close on **30 June 2012**. Projected release date of **August 2012**. Submissions can be sent to baeditor@gmail.com; please place devotional title in the subject line.

• Community Bulletin Board is a regular feature. If there is something you would like to be posted here, please email me at Kadynastar78@yahoo.com

OF COERCION AND THE COSMOS

By Suz Thackston

"But why do you put up with it?" I asked. "You don't have to take that sort of treatment. You're so powerful and beautiful and wise. Don't be a victim! You know what you have to do, why don't you do it?"

She sighed. "You think you understand, but there are complexities in our relationship beyond your comprehension. The rules you play by are valid and correct for you, but they just don't apply to my marriage."

"Everybody says that!" I flung back heatedly. "Everyone thinks that their situation is unique and that no one understands. But I know what's right and what isn't. What about arete? You just can't be all squishy with bottom-line ethics. You have to take a stand!"

She smiled, brightening the candlelit room for an instant like a passing ray of sun. "That's one of the things I love about you. You're so passionate, all sizzling with righteous indignation, ready to change the world and save me. You're just so right."

"You're mocking me. I'm not a teenager. I'm a crone, and yeah, I've learned a few things along the way and one of them is when to haul out my sword and draw a line in the sand. Some things are not acceptable. Infidelity is not acceptable. Rape is not acceptable. Any form of violence is abhorrent in a consensual relationship. How can it be consensual otherwise?"

She was quiet for a few moments, dark lashes lowered, long fingers playing with a white jewel that dangled on a golden chain between her deep breasts. "Okay. Let me try and put this into terms that will make sense to you. Look into the fire, please."

We turned from each other on our couch and gazed into the smoldering flames of the banked fire. She whispered something I couldn't quite hear, the flames leapt up, roaring and crackling fiercely, then went abruptly dark, and I was Somewhere Else, watching as a woman hurried into a cluttered room.....

The tense look she threw over her shoulder was warranted when the man strode in after her. She whirled to face him, hands raised, palms forward in front of her, not defensively but in an attitude of warding. He paid no heed, reaching her in two long strides, big arms sliding possessively around her, pulling her hard into his body.

"No..." she gasped. "Wait....." But her voice was muffled by his lips at her throat. As his mouth came down on hers,

her body melted into his for a moment, yielding longingly. Instantly he swept her up in his arms, his mouth never leaving hers, impatiently kicked aside a chair laden with boxes, sending it flying across the room. They fell together in a tangle of limbs onto the faded, lumpy couch.

But "Wait," she gasped again, turning her face away from him and trying fruitlessly to push him off. He laughed a little, breathlessly, his arms and legs capturing her and pinning her more securely underneath him.

"Listen to me!" she insisted. But he wasn't looking at her face; his eyes were intent on her body as he began to pull at her clothing, fingers rough with urgency. When he pulled back a little to free her blouse, she seized the opportunity, wriggling out from under him like a snake. She fell to the floor, but before he could grab her again she twisted to her feet and was across the room in an instant, putting the heaped dining room table between them.

He was on his feet and after her like a panther, breathing quickly, eyes aflame, his bare feet sliding on the worn throw rug. As she dodged around the table his brows snapped together.

"What the hell are you doing?"

She was panting, her hands fluttering in front of her. "You just you have to listen to me. Just- wait. I need you to wait for me to say yes."

His jaw dropped. He stood stock still for an interminably long moment. There was honest bafflement in his eyes. "Wait- for you to say yes to what?"

Her eyes pleaded with him. "You just grab me and go. Why can't you ever- ask me? What if I don't want to?"

He let out an incredulous bark of laughter. "Don't want to? When the hell does that ever happen?"

"How would you know," she flared back. "You never bother to find out if I'm in the mood or not."

The brows came together again, slowly, ominously. "Mood? What does mood have to do with anything?" When she started to answer he cut her off with an impatient chopping gesture. "You hot little bitch. Don't pretend to be all virginal. You want it as badly as I do. Worse! Hell, woman, you half kill me sometimes."

"I know. I know. I'm not saying I want to stop. I'm saying that I want you stop railroading me. I mean, I should at least

have the option to say no, shouldn't I?" She straightened, facing him squarely. "This is about respect. I love you and I know you love me. But you don't ever consider my feelings. It's all about what you want, when you want it."

Fury flashed electric blue in his eyes. Then it subsided. "So. You want me to- what? Say please before we have sex? Where is this coming from?"

She sighed. "I don't know. I guess I just want some reciprocity. I want to feel as if I'm an equal in this partnership. To have a say."

His eyes narrowed, glinting. "Reciprocity. So, are you going to ask me pretty-please when you're wanting my... services?"

Her chin went up. "If you like."

His laugh had an undertone of brutality. "So, now it's hearts and flowers, is it? Romance and roses? Long walks in the moonlight, and gazing into each other's eyes? We should start pretending that you're some simpering fluttery maiden, and I'm your preux chevalier? Listen, Lady. I deal in what is, and I know what we are. We don't need some adolescent illusion of courtship, and you can't refuse me any more than I can refuse you. When I want you, I must have you. And you don't want it any other way. Do you?"

Her eyes dropped, wavering, but then her jaw set. "I'm not suggesting some elaborate set of rules or that we play games. I just want to know that if I ever did- if I ever DO say no, that you will respect that."

Their eyes met, his hard, hers defiant. He said slowly, "Can you ever- realistically- think of an occasion where you would say no to me and mean it?" His gaze bored into her skull. "Be honest."

She looked at him. And looked at him. A small sound escaped her. "No."

Heat rose in his eyes. Abruptly he lunged towards her. In a second she had dodged behind the table, its box-strewn surface separating her from him. He looked at her incredulously. She was breathing hard, eyes brilliant, poised on her toes. His head lowered, a bull about to charge. Then he spun and stalked from the room. The door slammed.

She stood still for a moment, then let out a long, shaky breath. Her gaze softened, became pensive. Her teeth caught her soft lower lip, and she moved toward a dusty mirror. Humming, she ran her fingers through her hair, then deftly caught it up in a file of purple wool, tendrils curling around her face. She looked thoughtfully at the door. She undid the top button of her blouse. She hurried out.

She turned back to me. "Do you see?"

I pondered. "I think I see more. But I still don't really get why there can't be- I dunno- more softness. More give. Why is it so wrong to strive for equality?"

She was silent for a moment. Then she gestured with a graceful white arm, and I found myself Somewhere Else, watching a tsunami. The water sucked back, retreating impossibly, unfathomably away from the shore. My mouth gaped as the wall of water rose, and rose, rushing toward me faster than horses can gallop, terrifying and unstoppable. It smashed into the land, kept rolling, broke apart, and now all I could see was water, and devastation.

I heard her voice, soft by my ear. "Did the Dark-Maned One ask politely? Did the rolling fields by the shore consider, and then give permission?"

A volcano erupted before us, spewing lava and ash high into the sky. Forest and field were choked for miles and miles around. Not one living thing remained.

"Is that consensual?"

A galaxy unfolded before my dazzled eyes, with darkness at its heart. Stars whirled around it, an immense and stately dance, stretched, streaked and fled into the chasm.

"Think, little one. What are you watching? Whom do you see? Is there a victim?"

I was silent a while, colors with no names pouring across my face. Finally I said, unable to look away, "I won't call you 'misunderstood' any more."

A beautiful forefinger brushed my cheek. "Your human customs," she mused. "How we love you for them. It's so unique, this fierce, quixotic, misguided quest for 'equality.' Outside your little reality there is balance, but 'fairness' just isn't a factor. And yet how magnificent you are as a species for pushing yourselves to foist it upon each other. What you keep forgetting, though, is that your rules and conventions don't apply to us. Gnothi seauton, dearest. It's not a warning, or a threat, or even an admonition. It's just a statement of Truth."

I looked up at her. "But are you happy?"

Her fingers slid along my face, cupping my chin. "You are a good child, little crone," she said. "I approve of your frantic flailing for understanding. I am, after all, Binah to his Chokmah."

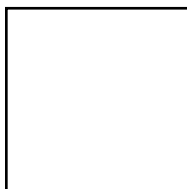
The wide dark eyes held mine. And then she smiled. I was transfixed. I stopped breathing. I think my heart may have stopped beating. When I returned to myself I was alone. There remained only the lingering scent of apples, and a single peacock feather.

KORE... PERSEPHONE

By K.S. Roy (Photograph of Persephone Votive Statue by Suz Thackston, used with permission)



Κόρη... Περσεφόνη



NEOKOROI
The Temple Keepers
The He Epistole Team
neokoroi.org
HeEpistoleSubmissions@gmail.com

HE EPISTOLE

Issue #26
Spring
2012



**Athletics in
Ancient Greek
Religion**



**Greater
Aresia**



**Featured Artist:
Amanda Sioux
Blake**



**Poetry
& More!**

HE EPISTOLE – CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS!

HE EPISTOLE (a "message" or "letter") is published twice a year. We offer articles, artwork, hymns, prayers, poetry, reviews, information, community notices, fiction, recipes, and anything else of interest to the Hellenic polytheist community.

We're currently seeking submissions from guest writers.

For more information, please visit our website at: Neokoroi.org
Submissions may be sent to: He_Epistole@yahoo.com

