

Hymns to Artemis



Homeric Hymns to Artemis (trans. Evelyn-White)

Mousa, sing of Artemis, sister of Hekatos (the far-shooter), Parthenos Iokheaira (the virgin who delights in arrows), who was fostered with Apollon. She waters her horses from Meles deep in reeds [a river in Lydia], and swift drives her all-golden chariot through Smyrna to vine-clad Klaros where Apollon Argyrotoxos (god of the silver bow), sits waiting for Hekatebolon Iokheaira (far-shooting delighter in arrows). And so hail to you, Artemis, in my song and to all goddesses as well. Of you first I sing and with you I begin; now that I have begun with you, I will turn to another song.



I sing of Artemis Khryselakatos (with shafts are of gold), Keladeine (strong-voiced), Parthenon Aidoine (the revered virgin), Elaphebolos (dear-shooting), Iokheaira (delighter in arrows), own sister to Apollon Khrysaor (of the golden sword). Over the shadowy hills and windy peaks she draws her golden bow, rejoicing in the chase, and sends out grievous shafts. The tops of the high mountains tremble and the tangled wood echoes awesomely with the outcry of beasts: earth quakes and the sea also where fishes shoal. But the goddess with a bold heart turns every way destroying the race of wild beasts: and when she is satisfied and has cheered her heart, then Theroskopos Iokheaira (the huntress who delights in arrows) slackens her supple bow and goes to the great house of her dear brother Phoibos Apollon, to the rich land of Delphoi, there to order the lovely dance of the Mousai (Muses) and Kharites (Graces). There she hangs up her curved bow and her arrows, and heads and leads the dances, gracefully arrayed, while all they utter their

heavenly voice, singing how neat-ankled Leto bare children supreme among the immortals both in thought and deed. Hail to you, children of Zeus and rich-haired Leto! And now I will remember you and another song also.



Artemis Khryselakatos (with shafts of gold) loves archery and the slaying of wild beasts in the mountains, the lyre also and dancing and strong-voiced song and shady woods and the cities of upright men.

Callimachus, Hymn 3 to Artemis (trans. Mair) (Greek c. 3rd B.C.E.)

Of Artemis we hymn--no light thing is it for singers to forget her - whose study is the bow and the shooting of hares and the spacious dance and sport upon the mountains. [The story of her birth and childhood follow, see [The Childhood of Artemis](#) for this part of the hymn.] . . .

The fourth time [Artemis shot her bow]--not long was it ere thou didst shoot at the city of unjust me, those who to one another and those who towards strangers wrought many deeds of sin, forward men, on whom thou wilt impress thy grievous wrath. On their cattle plague feeds, on their tilth feeds frost, and the old men cut their hair in mourning over their sons, and their wives either are smitten or die in childbirth, or, if they escape, bear birds whereof none stands on upright ankle.

But on whomsoever thou lookest smiling and gracious, for them the tilth bears the corn-ear abundantly, and abundantly prospers the four-footed breed, and abundant waxes their prosperity: neither do they go to the tomb, save when they carry thither the aged. Nor does faction wound their race--faction which ravages even the well-established houses: but brother's wife and husband's sister set their chairs around one board . . .

Lady, of that number be whosoever is a true friend of mine, and of that number may I be myself, O Queen. And may song be my study forever. In that song shall be the Marriage of Leto; therein thy name shall often-times be sung; therein shall Apollon be and therein all thy labours, and therein thy hounds and thy bow and thy chariot, which lightly carry thee in thy splendour, when thou drivest to the house of Zeus . . .

But when the Nymphai encircle thee in the dance, near the springs of Aigyptian Inopos [on the island of Delos] or Pitane [in Aiolia or Lakedaimonia]--for Pitane too is thine--or in Limnai [in Lakedaimonia] or where, goddess, thou camest from Skythia to dwell, in Alai Araphenides [i.e.

Brauron in Attika], renouncing the rites of the Tauroi [of Skythia], then may not my kine cleave a four-acred fallow field for a wage at the hand of an alien ploughman; else surely lame and weary of neck would they come to the byre, yea even were they of Stymphaian breed, nine years of age, drawing by the horns; which kine are far the best for cleaving a deep furrow; for the god Helios never passes by that beauteous dance, but stays his car to gaze upon the sight, and the lights of day are lengthened.

Which now of islands, what hill finds most favour with thee? What haven? What city? Which of the Nymphai dost thou love above the rest, and what heroines hast thou taken for thy companions? Say, goddess, thou to me, and I will sing thy saying to others. Of islands, Dolikhe [Ikaria] hath found favour with thee, of cities Perge [in Pamphylia], of hills Taygetos [in Lakedaimonia], the havens of Euripos [Euboia].

And beyond others thou lovest the Nympe of Gortyn, Britomartis, slayer of stags, the goodly archer . . . Yea and Kyrene thou madest thy comrade, to whom on a time thyself didst give two hunting dogs, with whom the maiden daughter of Hypseus beside the Iolkian tomb won the prize. And the fair-haired [Prokris] wife of Kephalos, son of Deioneus, O Lady, thou madest thy fellow in the chase and fair Antikleia [mother of Odysseus], they say, thou didst love even as thine own eyes. These were the first who wore the gallant bow and arrow-holding quivers on their shoulders; their right shoulders bore the quiver strap, and always the right breast showed bare. Further thou didst greatly commend swift-footed Atalanta, the slayer of boards, daughter of Arkadian Iasios, and taught her hunting with dogs and good archery . . .

Lady of many shrines, of many cities, hail! Khitone (Goddess of the Tunic), sojourner in Miletos; for thee did Neleus [i.e. the founder of Miletos] make his Guide, when he put off with his ships from the land of Kekrops [i.e. Attika].

Khesias (Lady of Khesion) and Imbrasia (Lady of Imbrasos), throned in the highest, to thee in thy shrine did Agamemnon dedicate the rudder of his ship, a charm against ill weather, when thou didst bind the winds for him, what time the Akhaian ships sailed to vex the cities of the Teukroi [i.e. the Trojans], wroth for Rhamnusian Helene.



For thee surely Proitos established two shrines, one of Artemis Kore (Maidenhood) for that thou didst gather for him his maiden daughters, when they were wandering over the Azanian hills; the other he founded in Lousa to Artemis Hemere (the Gentle), because thou tookest from his daughters the spirit of wildness.

For thee, too, the Amazones, whose mind is set on war, in Ephesos beside the sea established an image beneath an oak trunk, and Hippo [an Amazon queen] performed a holy rite for thee, and they themselves, O Oupis Queen, around the image danced a war-dance--first in shields and armour, and again in a circle arraying a spacious choir. And the loud pipes thereto piped shrill accompaniment, that they might foot the dance together (for not yet did they pierce the bones of the fawn [to create flutes], Athene's handiwork, a bane to the deer). And the echo reached unto Sardis and to the Berekyinthian range [in Phrygia]. And they with their feet beat loudly and therewith their quivers rattled. And afterwards around that image was raised a shrine of broad foundations. That it shall dawn behold nothing more divine, naught richer. Easily would it outdo Pytho [Delphoi]

Wherefore in this madness insolent Lygdamis threatened that he would lay it waste, and brought against it a host of Kimmerians which milk mares, in number as the sand; who have their homes hard by the Straights of the cow, daughter of Inakhos. Ah! Foolish among kings, how greatly he sinned! For not destined to return again to Skythia was either he or any other of those whose wagons stood in the Kaytrian plain [of Lydia]; for thy shafts are ever more set as a defense before Ephesos. O Mounikhia (Lady of Mounykhia), Limenoskope (Watcher of Harbours), hail, Pheraia (Lady of Pherai)!

Let none disparage Artemis. For Oineus dishonoured her altar and no pleasant struggles came upon his city.

Nor let any contend with her in shooting of stags or in archery. For the son of Atreus [Agamemnon] vaunted him not that he suffered small requital. Neither let any woo the Maiden; for not Otos, nor Orion wooed her to their own good. Nor let any shun the yearly dance; for not tearless to Hippo [an Amazon queen] was her refusal to dance around the altar. Hail, great queen, and graciously greet my song.

THE ORPHIC HYMNS

Orphic Hymn 2 to Prothyraea (trans. Taylor) (c.3rd BCE to 2nd CE)

To Prothyraia [Artemis], Fumigation from Storax. O venerable Goddess, hear my prayer, for labour pains are thy peculiar care. In thee, when stretched upon the bed of grief, the sex, as in a mirror, view relief. Guard of the race, endued with gentle mind, to helpless youth benevolent and kind; benignant nourisher; great nature's key belongs to no divinity but thee. Thou dwellest with all immanifest to sight, and solemn festivals are thy delight. Thine is the task to loose the virgin's zone and thou in every work art seen and known. With births you sympathise, though pleased to see the numerous offspring of fertility. When racked with labour pangs, and sore distressed the sex invoke thee, as the soul's sure rest; for thou Eileithyia alone canst give relief to pain, which art attempts to ease, but tries in vain. Artemis Eileithyia, venerable power, who bringest relief in labour's dreadful hour; hear, Prothyraia and make the infant race thy constant care.

Orphic Hymn 36 to Artemis

To Artemis, Fumigation from Manna. Hear me, Zeus' daughter, celebrated queen, Bromia and Titanis, of a noble mien: in darts rejoicing, and on all to shine, torch-bearing Goddess, Diktynna divine. Over births presiding, and thyself a maid, to labour pangs imparting ready aid: dissolver of the zone, and wrinkled care, fierce huntress, glorying in the sylvan war: swift in the course, in dreadful arrows skilled, wandering by night, rejoicing in the field : of manly form, erect, of bounteous mind, illustrious Daimon, nurse of humankind : immortal, earthly, bane of monsters fell, 'tis thine, blest maid, on woody mounts to dwell: foe of the stag, whom woods and dogs delight, in endless youth you flourish fair and bright. O universal queen, august, divine, a various form, Kydonian power, is thine. Dread guardian Goddess, with benignant mind, auspicious come, to mystic rites inclined; give earth a store of beauteous fruits to bear, send gentle peace, and health with lovely hair, and to the mountains drive disease and care.