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Short Write Three

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Athena, the Grecian goddess of wisdom and war tactics, was highly revered in the ancient Greek world. Callimachus’s hymns to Athena, in Barry Powell’s *Greek Poems to the Gods*,and *The Essentials of Homer*, translated and edited by Stanley Lombardo, highlight Athena’s power as a warrior and as a protector. Both texts have ritual supplication. Callimachus’s hymn is a ritual prayer to Athena while Homer’s Iliad describes a ritual reformed by Hecuba for the goddess.

Although Athena was a great goddess, she was no exception to the ancient Greek arete (being the best) system of fame (kleos), honor (time), and excellence (aristeia). All aspects of this system are interconnected and often related to battle prowess and material wealth. An excellent fighter gets rewarded with treasure from the battle which then becomes a physical representation of their honor. As the story of their deeds and wealth spreads, it brings them fame and sometimes even worshippers and opportunities to prove their strength.

Callimachus describes Athena as considerate; she takes care of her horses and equipment before she takes care of herself, a rather rare trait for a deity. Another rare trait for Athena is that she is a female gods described as manly. She bathes like male athletes, with olive oil, and does not use perfume or ornate mirror like other goddesses. “No, not myrrh for Pallas, /nor perfume jars…” (Powell 39). Athena is always beautiful and some of her beauty comes from her physical power. The Iliad describes Athena through what she stands for rather than her physical traits. She is shown as a protecter and tactic goddess. Hector chooses to pray to her and quell her anger instead of Ares, who is also fighting against the Trojans. It is worth noting the Callimachus’s hymns were written after the Homeric epics so some of the traits that Callimachus describes were influenced by Homer’s depiction of Athena in the Iliad and the Odyssey.

Athena is a famous protector goddess in the ancient Greek world. Her fame spreads from the stories of the heroes and places she protects. One of her most famous heroes, mentioned in the Iliad and Callimachus, is the hero Diomedes. “O Athena, the shield of Diomedes” (Powell 40). Diomedes becomes famous for being a valiant warrior during the Trojan War. He is famous for rampaging and killing a lot of people without dying, which he did with Athena’s help. He contributes to Athena’s fame when he spreads his story on Mount Kreion.

Honor comes from material things, and while a goddess does not necessarily need material things, they are nice to have. When Hecuba needs to pray to Athena in the Iliad, she presents the goddess with a robe. The robe that Hecuba presents Athena with is a representation of Hector’s honor that he “Brought from Phoenicia when he sailed the sea” (Homer 75). By giving this item to Athena, Hecuba gives her some of Hector’s honor.

Athena’s aristeia is everything she stands for as a deity. She excels at being a protector, a war strategist, and just being generally intelligent. Hector tells Hecuba to pray to Athena rather than Ares because Troy needs her expertise not just brutality and physical strength. They need Athena’s defense and intellect to defeat the Greeks. He also recognizes that Diomedes’s rampage is assisted by Athena because he targets the weak areas of the Trojan troops.

Aspects of fame, honor, and excellence are all interconnected and base ideas of how the Greek world, and more specifically battle prowess, worked. Athena’s fame, honor, and excellence are connected to her based functions as a goddess of protection and intelligence. Athena represents many famous warriors and civilizations in the ancient Greek world. In both works, a statue represents Athena as a physical thing to supplicate too.

Rituals usually involve a trade between the deity and humans, humans give the god one aspect of arete in return for another aspect. When gods are given items or sacrifices, they are given the honor associated with that item. Therefore, rituals not only spread the story and fame of gods and goddesses but also give them honor. Rituals and the system of being the best (arete) were a large part of the ancient Greek militaristic world.

Works Cited

Homer, et al. *The Essentials of Homer: Selections from the Iliad and the Odyssey.* Indianapolis, Hackett, 2000, pp 74-75,

Powell, Barry B. *Greek Poems to the Gods,* Univ of California Press, 9 Aug. 2022, pp 38-41

Artificial Intelligence Disclaimer

*I did not use artificial intelligence in creating this paper.*