

Diogenia

The Diogenia is a modern celebration of the Birthday of Zeus. It draws on activities from Ancient Crete and Arcadia. Crete and Macedonia named their first month after Zeus and on Crete, during this first month was the celebration of His birth and childhood. According to Cretian legend, the God was born inside a sacred cave, which would light up on the morning of His birth. It is believed that inside the cave lived a hive of bees, and that the sunlight would reflect off of the honey they made, causing the cave to light up.

Regardless of the scientific reason for the cave's lighting up, this legend gives us an aspect of Zeus as a light bringer, which allows for this celebration to be celebrated at two different times (depending on one's interpretation). The first is sometime in January, as this is the time where the days begin getting longer (and when—at least in the North Eastern US, there are the most winter storms). This is also the first month of our modern calendar, which continues the traditions of both Crete and Macedonia. Another tradition of Crete was a war-dance which involved the clashing of swords, which was supposed to keep the infant Zeus' cries from being heard by Kronos—who according to myth believed Him dead.

The Main Rite

Preparations:

The altar is adorned with a red cloth lined in gold, a symbol of royalty (gold or white are also appropriate colors for this festival). There is also a small enclosure (symbolizing the cave on Crete) in the center of the altar or shrine of Zeus. The image of Zeus is of Him enthroned although if an image of Him as an infant can be found, this is also appropriate for the procession of lights. Candles are white or blue, representing the clouds and the sky.

For this ritual, all lights are turned off in the temenos. After gathering all the materials, each participant is given a tea-light lit from the main hearth fire and a honey cake (symbolic of the honey inside the sacred cave).

Procession and Purification:

The group (or single person) processes to the sacred space. Once the temenos is reached, the candles and honey cakes can be placed upon a small table while each person washes their hands in khernips. The participants then form a semi-circle around the altar.

Hymns and Prayers:

The priest relays the story of Zeus' birth (the hymn to Zeus by Callimachus is appropriate here). Hymns and prayers are then recited to Rhea, Gaia, Pan and the Nymphs (according to Arcadian myth, His companions during childhood). Individuals then offer their own prayers to Zeus, placing their candle inside the enclosure. Each person is handed some barley to consecrate the altar.

Offering the Honey Cakes:

Each person offers their honey cake upon the altar. These cakes will later be brought outside and placed by His sacred tree.

Theoxenia

Following the main rite, a theoxenia is prepared for Zeus. The priest prepares a special plate, which is placed upon the shrine. The other participants then prepare their own plates. Zeus is invited to join in

the feasting, and then all feast in the company of Zeus.

The Oracle of Zeus

One of Zeus' biggest cult centers was the Oracle of Dodona. As such it is appropriate at this time for priests of Zeus to give oracular consultations (through whatever medium they are familiar with). Some ideas are lot oracles, or the traditional method used at Dodona (interpretation of the wind through the sacred Oak tree).

Other Festivities

Games appropriate for the festival are Risk, Stratego, Chess, Backgammon, Five Crowns, Castle Keep, or Rook. A movie that would be appropriate is Alexander, Dune, or anything to do with politics. If there are enough people, there can be a dance with the clashing of swords—even a fencing contest could be appropriate if possible. Before and after each event, a libation is poured in Zeus' honor.

Priesthood Vows

This celebration is an excellent time for priests of Zeus to either be consecrated or to renew their vows. This is a ritual that is designed individually and it is customary for the priest to be alone in the temenos with Zeus. Ancient tradition has it that kings used to go “between the worlds” to discuss their kingship with Zeus—who would tell them what was expected of them in the coming years (usually 9).