



Ritual for Akhelous, Alokhos, Nymphs, Hermes, and Ge

Akhelooi § Alokhoi § Nymphais § Ermei § Gei

27 Boedromion

- ◆ **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.

- ◆ **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

- ◆ **Incense: aromatic herbs**
- ◆ **Invocation to Achelous: O Mighty River God, who rages in the spring and fructifies the fields, from your horn, the cornucopia, flows abundant harvest and fruits.**
- ◆ **Libation of khernips to Achelous**
- ◆ **From Philostratus the Younger (describing a painting)**

Heracles and Achelous

So much by way of prelude; but now see how the contestants have already joined battle, and you must imagine for yourself all that has transpired in the first bouts of the struggle between god and irresistible hero. Finally, however, the river, assuming the form of a horned bull, rushes at Heracles, but he, grasping the right horn with his left hand, uproots the other horn from its forehead with the aid of his club; thereupon the river-god, now emitting streams of blood instead of water, gives up the struggle, while Heracles, full of joy at his deed, looks at Deianeira, and throwing his club on the ground holds out to her the horn of Acheloüs as his nuptial gift.

◆ **From Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IX. 85-102 where Achelous explains the loss of his horn in the fight with Hercules to Theseus and his comrades:**

“Nor was this enough: holding my tough horn in his pitiless right hand, he broke it off and tore it from my forehead, mutilating me. This horn the naiads took, filled it with fruit and fragrant flowers, and hallowed it. And now the goddess of glad Abundance is enriched with my horn.”

So spoke the river-god; and lo, a Nymph girt like Diana, one of the attendants with locks flowing free, appeared and served them from her bounteous horn with all autumn’s harvest, and delicious fruit for the second course. The dawn came on, and, as the first rays of the sun smote the mountain-tops, the youths took their departure; for they did not wait until the river should flow in peaceful current and all the flood-waters should subside. And Acheloüs hid his rustic features and his head, scarred from the wrenched-off horn, beneath his waves.

Still his only sorrow was the loss of his beauteous horn, which had been taken from him, though scathless in all else, a loss which he could hide with willow boughs and reeds entwined about his head.

- ◆ **Sacrificial Offering of pancarpia (mixture of dried fruits) to Achelous**
- ◆ **Prayers: May your horn always provide the abundance of harvest and fruits and all mighty waters fructify the earth and bring plenty as the bounty of Ge flows from your horn . . .**

- ◆ **Incense: aromatic herbs**
- ◆ **Invocation to Alochos (Wife): O Blessed One, who represents the hopes and anxieties felt by many virgins and wives . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **From Sophocles, *Trachiniaiæ* – Scene: *Trachis in front of the palace of Heracles and Deianeira***

Deianeira

My suitor was the river Achelóüs,
who took three forms to ask me of my father:
a rambling bull once - then a writhing snake
of gleaming colors - then again a man
with ox-like face: and from his beard's dark shadows
stream upon stream of water tumbled down.
Such was my suitor.

But later on, to my great joy, the glorious
child of Alcmena, son of Zeus, arrived,
and joined in combat with the river god,
and freed me.

Then Zeus the warrior-king brought forth good issue -
if it **was** good . . . for though I am the wife
of Heracles I nourish fear on fear
in my concern for him, since each night brings
a sorrow which the next night steals away.

- ◆ **Sacrificial Offering of pancarpia (mixture of dried fruits) to Alochos**
- ◆ **Prayers: May You bring blessings, support, and inspiration to all wives . . .**

- ◆ **Incense: aromatic herbs**
- ◆ **Invocation to the Nymphs: Khaire spirits of place; beautiful, alluring, and nurturing . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of milk and honey**
- ◆ **Lighting of the incense burner with aromatic herbs or frankincense**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 51 To the Nymphs**

To the Nymphs

O Nymphs, daughters of great-hearted Okeanos,
 you dwell inside the earth's damp caves;
 you are as secret as your paths, O joyous, O chthonic nurses of Bacchos.
 You nurture fruits, you haunt meadows, O sprightly and pure
 travelers of the winding roads, who delight in caves and grottoes.
 Swift, light-footed, and clothed in dew, you frequent springs,
 visible and invisible, in ravines and among flowers
 you shout and frisk with Pan upon mountainsides,
 gliding down on rocks, you hum with clear voice,
 O mountain-haunting maidens of the fields, of gushing springs and of woodlands,
 sweet-smelling virgins, clothed in white, fresh as the breeze,
 herds of goats, pastures, splendid fruit, you protect; wild animals love you.
 Though you are tender, cold delights you; you feed many, you help them grow,
 Hamadryad maidens, playful, water-loving.
 Spring is your joy, O Nysian and frenzied, O healing ones,
 in the company of Bacchos and Deo, you bring grace to mortals.
 Come to this blessed sacrifice with joyful heart,
 pour streams of pure rain during the grain-giving seasons.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **Sacrificial Offering of pancarpia (mixture of dried fruits)**
- ◆ **Prayers to the Nymph: O Blessed Ones, protect, grace, and bring joy and beauty to the places you haunt**

- ◆ **Incense: frankincense**
- ◆ **Invocation to Hermes: Gold wand bearer, bringer of blessings, messenger of the Blessed Ones**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 28 to Hermes**

To Hermes

Hear me, Hermes, messenger of Zeus, son of Maia,
 almighty in heart, lord of the deceased, judge of contests,
 gentle and clever, O Argeiphontes, you are the guide
 of the flying sandals, a man-loving prophet to mortals.

A vigorous god, you delight in exercise and in deceit.
Interpreter of all you are and a profiteer who frees us of cares,
who holds in his hands the blameless tool of peace.
Lord of Korykos, blessed, helpful, and skilled in words,
you assist in work and you are a friend of mortals in need.
You wield the dreaded, the respected weapon of speech.
Hear my prayer and grant a good end to a life of industry,
gracious talk, and mindfulness.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **Sacrificial Offering of pancarpia (mixture of dried fruits) to Hermes**
- ◆ **Prayers: Hail, Hermes, giver of grace, guide, and giver of all good things, may you be with us and gently guide us through our lives**

- ◆ **Incense: grain and aromatic herbs**
- ◆ **Invocation to Ge: To you who nurtures us into being, nurtures us through life, and accepts us unto Thee again**
- ◆ **Libation of khernips**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 30 To Earth Mother of All**

To Earth Mother of All

I will sing of well-founded Earth, mother of all, eldest of all beings. She feeds all creatures that are in the world, all that go upon the goodly land, and all that are in the paths of the seas, and all that fly: all these are fed of her store. Through you, O queen, men are blessed in their children and blessed in their harvests, and to you it belongs to give means of life to mortal men and to take it away. Happy is the man whom you delight to honour! He has all things abundantly: his fruitful land is laden with corn, his pastures are covered with cattle, and his house is filled with good things. Such men rule orderly in their cities of fair women: great riches and wealth follow them: their sons exult with everfresh delight, and their daughters with flower laden hands play and skip merrily over the soft flowers of the field. Thus it is with those whom you honour O holy goddess, bountiful spirit.

Hail, Mother of the gods, wife of starry Heaven; freely bestow upon me for this my song substance that cheers the heart! And now I will remember you and another song also.

Translation by Hugh G. Evans-White

- ◆ **Sacrificial Offering of pancarpia (mixture of dried fruits) to Ge (not burnt but placed in the ground)**
- ◆ **Prayers: May you provide us with your bounty and with nourishment. May we be ever mindful of Thy blessings and serve Thee well**

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

“May blessings go with us, and may we be mindful of the bounty and blessings rivers bring, the blessings and support of wives, the presence and protection of the Nymphs, spirits of place, the guidance of Hermes, bringer of good things, and the bounty of Earth, Mother of All! May we be ever mindful stewards and may the Theoi 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**