



Ritual for the Oschophoria

8 Pyanepsion

- ◆ **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.

Translated by Martin L. West

- ◆ **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

*The **Oschophoria** derives its name from the two **oschophoroi**, carriers of the **oschoi** (branches of grapes) who led the procession from the sanctuary of Dionysos in Athens to the shrine of Athena Skiras in Phaleron where sacrifice was given followed by a banquet. The **oschophoroi** were two youths who were of outstanding birth and wealth and dressed as girls and followed by a choir singing **Oschophoria** hymns. They were followed by **deipnophoroi** (dinner carriers) who were women carrying the food for the banquet. Victims for the sacrifice were also led in the procession. The herald did not wear his garland but put it over his herald's staff. At the conclusion, they all shouted "**Eleleu, Iou, Iou!**" Legends, likely of Theseus, were told at the banquet.*

*It was said that the youths dressed as girls represented the two youths dressed as girls Theseus took with him as the tribute of seven youths and seven girls to Knossos in Crete to kill the Minotaur as he need the help of the two extra youths. The two youths bore **oschoi** in gratitude to Dionysos and Ariadne for their help. The **deipnophoroi** represented the women who brought food to their sons and daughters who were sent off to Crete as tribute. The herald did not wear his garland as in legend when the herald reached Athens and announced the safe return of Theseus, the people made a garland for him to wear in gratitude for the good news but he would not wear it as Theseus has forgotten to hoist the white sail to signal his safe return and his father King Aegeus seeing the black sail from the Acropolis in his grief thinking Theseus was killed threw himself to his death. So he placed the garland over his herald's staff and took the sad*

news of King Aegeus' death back to Theseus. The shout "Eleu, Iou, Iou!" was unusual as it represents triumph and confusion, the triumph of Theseus' safe return, and the confusion of the sail causing King Aegeus' death.

- ◆ **Incense: frankincense**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Invocation to Dionysos: Khaire Dionysos, God of abundant clusters, bringer of the vine, it is time to harvest and press the vintage**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymns 26 To Dionysos**

To Dionysos

I begin to sing of ivy-crowned Dionysus, the loud-crying god, splendid son of Zeus and glorious Semele. The rich-haired Nymphs received him in their bosoms from the lord his father and fostered and nurtured him carefully in the dells of Nysa, where by the will of his father he grew up in a sweet-smelling cave, being reckoned among the immortals. But when the goddesses had brought him up, a god oft hymned, then began he to wander continually through the woody coombes, thickly wreathed with ivy and laurel. And the Nymphs followed in his train with him for their leader; and the boundless forest was filled with their outcry. And so hail to you, Dionysus, god of abundant clusters! Grant that we may come again rejoicing to this season, and from that season onwards for many a year.

Translation by Hugh G. Evelyn-White

- ◆ **Recounting: Dionysos who fell in love with Ariadne who Theseus had abandoned on the island of Naxos and married her, the young Ariadne, daughter of Minos and Pasiphae who was a daughter of Helios. Ariadne saved Theseus and, when Minos had relented, she left home and sailed away with him. When Ariadne wed Dionysos, all the gods gave her wedding gifts as His immortal bride.**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Offering to Dionysos**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymns 46 To Liknites**

To Liknites

I summon to these prayers Dionysos Liknites,
born at Nysa, blossoming, beloved and kindly Bacchos,
nursling of the Nymphs and of fair-wreathed Aphrodite.
The forest once felt your feet quiver in the dance
as frenzy drove you and the graceful Nymphs on and on.
The counsels of Zeus brought you to noble Persephone,
who reared you to be loved by the deathless gods.
Kindheartedly come, O blessed one, accept the gift of this sacrifice.

Translated by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **Prayers: for abundance of food, wine, and celebrating the joys of life and nature**
- ◆ **Incense: frankincense**

- ◆ **Invocation to Athena Skiras – To you blessed Skiras who came from Salamis, blessed Athena Skiras who protects and leads us in wisdom and strength, you who saw the youths and maidens sail off from Phaleron as tribute to Minos**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 28 to Athena**

To Athena

I begin to sing of Pallas Athena, the glorious goddess, bright-eyed, inventive, unbending of heart, pure virgin, savior of cities, courageous, Tritogeneia. Wise Zeus himself bare her from his awful head, arrayed in warlike arms of flashing gold, and awe seized all the gods as they gazed. But Athena sprang quickly from the immortal head and stood before Zeus who holds the aegis, shaking a sharp spear: great Olympus began to reel horribly at the might of the bright-eyed goddess, and earth round about cried fearfully, and the sea was moved and tossed with dark waves, while foam burst forth suddenly: the bright Son of Hyperion stopped his swift-footed horses a long while, until the maiden Pallas Athena had stripped the heavenly armor from her immortal shoulders. And wise Zeus was glad.

And so hail to you, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis! Now I will remember you and another song as well.

Translation by Hugh G. Evelyn-White

- ◆ **Incense: frankincense**
- ◆ **Invocation to Apollon: Khaire Apollon, healer, teacher, averter of evil . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine to Apollon**
- ◆ **From Callimachus Hymn II To Apollon**

To Apollon

How the laurel branch of Apollo trembles! How trembles all the shrine! Away, away, he that is sinful! Now surely Phoebus knocketh at the door with his beautiful foot. See'st thou not? the Delian palm nods pleasantly of a sudden and the swan in the air sings sweetly. Of yourselves now ye bolts be pushed back, pushed back of yourselves, ye bars! The god is no longer far away. And ye, young men, prepare ye for song and for the dance.

Not unto everyone doth Apollo appear, but unto him that is good. Whoso hath seen Apollo, he is great; whoso hath not seen him, he is of low estate. We shall see thee, O Archer, and we shall never be lowly. Let not the youths keep silent lyre or noiseless step, when Apollo visits his shrine, if they think to accomplish marriage and to cut the locks of age, and if the wall is to stand upon its old foundations. Well done the youths, for that the shell is no longer idle.

Be hushed, ye that hear, at the song to Apollo; yea, hushed is even the sea when the minstrels celebrate the lyre or the bow, the weapons of Lycoreian Phoebus. Neither doth Thetis his mother wail her dirge for Achilles, when she hears Hië Paeëon, Hië Paeëon.

Hië, Hië, Paeëon, we hear—since this refrain did the Delphian folk first invent, what time thou didst display the archery of thy golden bow. As thou wert going down to Pytho, there met thee a beast unearthly, a dread snake. And him thou didst slay, shooting swift arrows one upon the other; and the folk cried “Hië, Hië, Paeëon, shoot an arrow!” A helper from the first thy mother bare thee, and ever since that is thy praise.

- ◆ **Recounting: To the mothers who brought food for their sons and daughters who were sent to Minos as tribute and in joyful thanks for the safe return of Theseus and the crew of youths and maidens, two youths dressed as maidens, we now celebrate the Oschosphoria with two youths dressed as maidens carrying the oschoi, the vintage of holy Dionysos**
- ◆ **Ululation: Eleleu, Iou, Iou!**

Eleleu, Iou, Iou!

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

“May we learn the legends and give due honor! May blessings go with us, and may the Theoi watch benevolently over us and our children and guard 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**