



Ritual for the Pyanepsia

7 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

- ◆ **Incense – frankincense**
- ◆ **Invocation to Apollon: Khaire Apollon, healer, teacher, averter of evil . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymns 21 To Apollon**

To Apollon

Phoebus, of you even the swan sings with clear voice to the beating of his wings,
 as he alights upon the bank by the eddying river Peneus; and of you the sweet-tongued
 minstrel, holding his high-pitched lyre, always sings both first and last.

And so hail to you, lord! I seek your favor with my song.

Translation by Hugh G. Evelyn White

- ◆ **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.

Translated by A. W. Mair

*The Pyanepsia festival derives its name from a stew of boiled beans (pyanon epsein = to boil pulses). In this case, “beans” means members of the pea family, chick peas, lentils, and fava beans as beans are from the New World. A “pyanion” is a mixture of various kinds of pulse boiled in a pot (khytros) and offered to Phoebos Apollon and shared by the celebrants. It is **not** a typical Greek panspermia (all-seeds) as this dish is of legumes only. According to legend this was the votive offering Theseus and his crew made to Apollon on the day when they returned to Athens from Crete after rescuing the young men and maidens from the Labyrinth at Knossos, for it was all that was left of their provisions. It is a thank offering for the bounty of the season and prayers for a bountiful year to come.*



- ◆ **Incense: frankincense**
- ◆ **Recounting of the first Pyanepsia with prayers to Theseus and to Apollon for success and bounty during the coming year: In memory of the votive offering Theseus and his crew made to Apollon when they returned to Greece on this day, for it was all that was left of their provisions, we offer this mixture of boiled pulses**

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Offering of pyanion with prayers that the sacrifice be acceptable followed by ululation.**
- ◆ **Passing the new eiresione over the sacrificial flames with prayers and ululation as an offering to Apollon to be placed on the door.**

At that feast they also carry the so-called “eiresione,” which is a bough of olive wreathed with wool, such as Theseus used at the time of his supplication, and laden with all sorts of fruit-offerings, to signify that scarcity was at an end, and as they go they sing:

*“Eiresione for us brings figs and bread of the richest,
and honey in pots and oil to rub off from the body,
and strong wine too in a cup, that one may go to bed mellow.”*

From Plutarch’s Lives – *Theseus*, XXII.4&5

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Burning of the old eiresione in the sacrificial fire with prayers of thanks for Apollon’s blessings during the past year, followed by ululation.**
- ◆ **Prayers: for blessings, protection, family, community, Elaion, YSEE, Labrys, and all who honor the Gods of Hellas, and those in need . . .**

- ◆ **Incense: myrrh**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Invocation to Zeus: Khaire Zeu, Councilor, fulfiller, Savior, to you King of all who rules with Hera Queen of heaven . . .**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 23 To Zeus**

To Zeus

Of Zeus, best and greatest of the gods, I will sing, the wide-sounding ruler,
the one that brings to fulfillment, who consults closely with Themis as she sits leaning
against him.

Be favorable, wide-sounding son of Kronos, greatest and most glorious.

Translation by Martin L. West

He does not sit upon his throne by mandate of another and hold his dominion beneath a
mightier. No one sits above him whose power he holds in awe. He speaks, and it is done
– he hastens to execute whatever his counseling mind conceives.

From Aeschylus – Suppliant Maidens, Chorus

- ◆ **Prayers: for blessings, protection, family, and those in need, etc.**

“But may Zeus grant that it go well with us. For Zeus' desire is hard to trace: it shines everywhere, even in gloom, together with fortune obscure to mortal men.”

Aeschylus – Suppliant Maidens, Chorus

- ◆ **Libation of Honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Prayer to the Agathos Daimon**

O Zeus, O Agathos Daimon

May I have every grace,
all accomplishment,
for with Thee is the bringer of good,
the messenger standing by the side of Tyche.

Magic Papyri – Poimandres

- ◆ **Incense: frankincense**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Invocation to Hera Teleia: Khaire Hera, Goddess of beginnings, Goddess of marriages, Goddess of light, most holy and puissant Goddess Queen of Heaven . . .**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 12 To Hera**

To Hera

Of Hera I sing, the golden-throned, whom Rhea bore to be
queen of the immortals, of supreme beauty, sister and wife
of Zeus the loud-booming; glorious one, whom all of the
blessed ones on long Olympus revere and honor no less
than Zeus whose sport is the thunderbolt.

Translation by Martin L. West

- ◆ **Prayers: for blessings, protection, family, and those in need, etc.**

- ◆ **Incense: frankincense**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Invocation to Helios: Khaire Helios . . .**
- ◆ **From Homeric Hymn 31 to Helios**

To Helios

Of Helios again begin your song, daughter of Zeus, Muse Calliope: the shining one,
whom mild-eyed Euryphaessa bore to the son of Earth and starry Heaven. For Hyperion
married the famed Euryphaessa, his own sister, who bore him fine children: rose-armed
Eos, lovely-tressed Selene, and tireless Helios, who is in the gods' likeness. He shines
for mortals and immortals, mounted on his chariot; his eyes gaze fearsomely out of his
golden-helm, the bright rays from him gleam brilliant, and from beside his temples the
bright hair of his head encloses his beautiful face that beams afar, while about his body
glows his fail garment, fine woven by the blowing winds. Below him his stallions speed
on till they reach the very mid-point of heaven; there he halts his horses and gold-yoked
car, . . . until at evening he guides them through the sky towards Ocean's stream.

I salute you, lord: be favorable, and grant comfortable livelihood. . . .

Translation by Martin L. West

- ◆ **Incense: aromatic herbs**
- ◆ **Libation of pure water**

◆ **Orphic Hymn 43 to the Horai**

To the Horai

Horai, daughters of Themis and of Lord Zeus –
Eunomie and Dike and thrice-blessed Eirene –
pure spirits of spring and of the blossoming meadow,
you are found in every color and in all scents wafted by the breezes.
Ever-blooming, revolving and sweet-faced, O Horai,
you cloak yourselves with the dew of luxuriant flowers.
You are holy Persephone's companions at play, when the Fates
and the Graces, in circling dances come forth to light,
pleasing Zeus and their fruit-giving mother.
Come . . . and bring seasons perfect for the growth of goodly fruit.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis

◆ **Prayers: for beautiful seasons and abundant crops . . .**

◆ **Invocation and ritual sowing of a portion of the pulse *pyanon epsein* with prayers for future bounty.**

◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

“Then 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**