



# Ritual for the Anthesteria – The *Pithoigia*

## 11 Anthesterion

- ◆ **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: storax**
- ◆ **Invocation to Dionysos: Euanthes ‘Of fair Flowers’, Dithyrambos, Baccheutes, and Bromios . . . .**

*Euanthes (blooming, downy, rich in flowers, flowered, gay, bright, fresh, goodly) and Dithyrambos (a name for Dionysos as well as a hymn for Dionysos)*

Cry out to him:  
 We shall sing Dionysos  
 On the holy days,  
 Him who was twelve months absent.  
 Now the time has come, now the flowers are here.

From *Dionysos: Archetypal Image of Indestructible Life* by Carl Kerényi, Princeton University Press 1976, p. 198.

- ◆ **Libation of wine to Dionysos before tasting it along with prayers that it should prove harmless**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn No. 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.

Translated by Hugh G. Evelyn White

“On this day, we open the new wine, mix it with water, and offer the first libation to Dionysos before drinking of it.”

- ◆ **Opening of new wine and offering a libation to Dionysos before tasting it along with prayers that it should prove harmless**
- ◆ **Dedication of the offering of new wine and barley cake**
- ◆ **Prayers (for renewal, His blessings, etc.)**
- ◆ **Incense: storax**
- ◆ **Prayers (for renewal, His blessings, etc.)**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 30 To Dionysos**

#### **To Dionysos**

I call upon loud-roaring, reveling Dionysos,  
primeval, two-natured, thrice-born Bacchic lord,  
savage, ineffable, secretive, two-horned and two-shaped,  
ivy-cover, bull-faced, warlike, howling, pure.  
You take raw flesh in triennial feasts, wrapped in foliage, decked with grape clusters,  
resourceful Eubouleus, immortal god sired by Zeus  
when he mated with Persephone in unspeakable union.  
Hearken to my voice, O blessed one, you and your fair-girdled nurses,  
breathe on me in a spirit of perfect kindness.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 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 in food, wine, the burgeoning of life, fragrant flowers, the coming of spring, and reveling in the joys of nature . . . )

The *phallophoroi* march in and recite:

**‘To Thee, Bacchos, we raise this glorifying song, pouring forth a simple measure in varied melody – a song new and virginal, in no wise used in earlier lays; no, undefiled is the hymn we consecrate.’**

From Athenaeus’ *The Deipnosophists*

**‘Come, hero Dionysos, to the holy temple of the Eleans along with the Graces, to the temple, raging with your ox foot. Worthy bull, worthy bull!’**

From Plutarch *Moralia*, The Greek Questions, 299, Translated by Frank Cole Babbitt, Loeb Classical Library, 1936, pages 218-219

- ◆ Libation of honey sweet wine

“May Dionysos ensure the benefits of the new wine, bring renewed life, fragrant flowers, joy, and fulfillment and may the Gods watch benevolently over us and 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**



## Ritual for the Anthesteria – The *Khoes* 12 Anthesterion

- ◆ **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: storax**
- ◆ **Invocation to Dionysos: Euanthes ‘Of fair Flowers’, Dithyrambos, Baccheutes, and Bromios**

[Euanthes (*blooming, downy, rich in flowers, flowered, gay, bright, fresh, goodly*) and Dithyrambos (*a name for Dionysos as well as a hymn for Dionysos*)]

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn No. 7 To Dionysos**

### To Dionysos

I will tell of Dionysus, the son of glorious Semele, how he appeared on a jutting headland by the shore of the fruitless sea, seeming like a stripling in the first flush of manhood: his rich, dark hair was waving about him, and on his strong shoulders he wore a purple robe. Presently there came swiftly over the sparkling sea Tyrsenian pirates on a well-decked ship—a miserable doom led them on. When they saw him they made signs to one another and sprang out quickly, and seizing him straightway put him on board their ship exultingly; for they thought him the son of heaven-nurtured kings. They sought to bind him with rude bonds, but the bonds would not hold him, and the withes fell far away from his hands and feet: and he sat with a smile in his dark eyes. Then the helmsman understood all and cried out at once to his fellows and said:

“Madmen! What god is this whom you have taken and bind, strong that he is? Not even the well-built ship can carry him. Surely this is either Zeus or Apollo who has the silver bow, or Poseidon, for he looks not like mortal men but like the gods who dwell on Olympus. Come, then, let us set him free upon the dark shore at once: do not lay hands on him, lest he grow angry and stir up dangerous winds and heavy squalls.”

So said he: but the master chid him with taunting words: “Madman, mark the wind and help hoist sail on the ship: catch all the sheets. As for this fellow we men will see to him: I reckon he is bound for Egypt or for Cyprus or to the Hyperboreans or further still. But in the end he will speak out and tell us his friends and all his wealth and his brothers, now that providence has thrown him in our way.”

When he had said this, he had mast and sail hoisted on the ship, and the wind filled the sail and the crew hauled taut the sheets on either side. But soon strange things were seen among them. First of all sweet, fragrant wine ran streaming throughout all the black ship and a heavenly smell arose, so that all the seamen were seized with amazement when they saw it. And all at once a vine spread out both ways along the top of the sail with many clusters hanging down from it, and a dark ivy-plant twined about the mast, blossoming with flowers, and with rich berries growing on it; and all the thole-pins were covered with garlands. When the pirates saw all this, then at last they bade the helmsman to put the ship to land. But the god changed into a dreadful lion there on the ship, in the bows, and roared loudly: amidships also he showed his wonders and created a shaggy bear which stood up ravening, while on the forepeak was the lion glaring fiercely with scowling brows. And so the sailors fled into the stern and crowded bemused about the right-minded helmsman, until suddenly the lion sprang upon the master and seized him; and when the sailors saw it they leapt out overboard one and all into the bright sea, escaping from a miserable fate, and were changed into dolphins. But on the helmsman Dionysus had mercy and held him back and made him altogether happy, saying to him:

“Take courage, good...; you have found favour with my heart. I am loud-crying Dionysus whom Cadmus' daughter Semele bare of union with Zeus.”

Hail, child of fair-faced Semele! He who forgets you can in no wise order sweet song.

Translated by Hugh G. Evelyn White

“On this day, we drink the new wine with feasting and merriment.”

- ◆ **Incense: storax (all incense except frankincense)**
- ◆ **Libation of milk**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 53 To the God of the Annual Feast**

#### **To the God of the Annual Feast**

I call upon Bacchos, the god we worship annually, chthonic Dionysos,  
together with the fair-tressed Nymphs he is roused.

In the sacred halls of Persephone he slumbers and puts to sleep  
pure Bacchic time every third year.

When he himself stirs up the triennial revel again,  
he sings a hymn together with his fair-girdled nurses.

As the seasons revolve, he puts to sleep and wakes up the years.

O blessed and fruit-giving Bacchos, O horned spirit of the unripe fruit,  
come to this most sacred rite with a glow of joy on your face,  
come teaming with fruit that is holy and perfect.



Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

“Drink a goodly measure of mixed honey sweet wine in silence.  
May Dionysos bring the joy of new wine, renewed life, fragrant flowers, and fulfillment  
and may the Gods watch benevolently over us and 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**

*Offer your ivy garlands to Dionysos*



# Ritual for the Anthesteria – The *Khytroi*

13 Anthesterion

- ◆ **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.

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*“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)

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- ◆ **Offering of khernips poured out**
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### Ges

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 and, O multiform maiden, you are the seat of the immortal cosmos,  
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- ◆ **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

“On this day, we remember Icarus who was slain by those he offered the new wine to and collapsed, and when his dog led his daughter Erigone to the tree beneath which her father lay she hanged herself in grief.

We honor the spirits of the departed that have been present at the Anthesteria.”

- ◆ **Incense: storax**
- ◆ **Invocation to Hermes Chthonios: Guide of souls, who brings sleep, and renewal . . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of pure water**
- ◆ **Dedication of the offering of *panspermia***
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 57 To Chthonic Hermes**

### To Chthonic Hermes

You dwell on the road all must take, the road of no return, by the Kokytos,  
 you guide the souls of mortals to the nether gloom.  
 Hermes, offspring of Dionysos who revels in the dance,  
 and of Aphrodite, the Paphian maiden of the fluttering eyelids,  
 you haunt the sacred house of Persephone as guide throughout the earth of ill-fated souls,  
 the souls you bring to their destined harbor when their time has come;  
 you charm them with your sacred wand, you give them sleep

from which you rouse them again. It is to you indeed  
that Persephone gave the high office throughout wide Tartaros  
to lead the way for the everlasting souls of men.  
O blessed one, grant a good end for the labors of the initiates.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

◆ **Strewing the offering of *panspermia***

“May the shades of the souls rest in peace  
and may their spirits of abundant goodness  
be with us that their resolve and courage  
shall strengthen us in our resolve.

May this *panspermia* be reaped as a *pankarpia*.

**OUT YOU KERES, THE ANTHESTERIA ARE OVER!”**

Note: Jane Ellen Harrison writes:

“. . . The Keres are figured as what the Greeks called *eidola*, little images, shrunken men, only winged. They represent the shadow soul, strengthless and vain; but the *thymos* of the man, his strength, his life, his *menos*, his mana, has passed into the daimon of life and reincarnation, the snake. An *eidolon*, an image, informed by *thymos* makes up something approximately not unlike that complex, psychological conception, our modern 'immortal soul.'”

◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

“May the *panspermia* we sow bring a *pankaropia*, a renewal of life, fragrant flowers, joy, and fulfillment and may the Gods watch benevolently over us and 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:**

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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**