



# Ritual for the Asklepieia

8 Elaphebolion

- ◆ **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

- ◆ **Lighting of the incense burner with frankincense**
- ◆ **Invocation to Asklepios: Healer, guide to all in the medical profession, father of Hygieia . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymns 16 To Asklepios**

**To Asklepios**

I begin to sing of Asklepios, son of Apollon and healer of sicknesses.  
 In the Dotian plain fair Koronis, daughter of King Phlegyas, bare him,  
 a great joy to men, a soother of cruel pangs. And so hail to you, lord:  
 in my song I make my prayer to thee!

Translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White

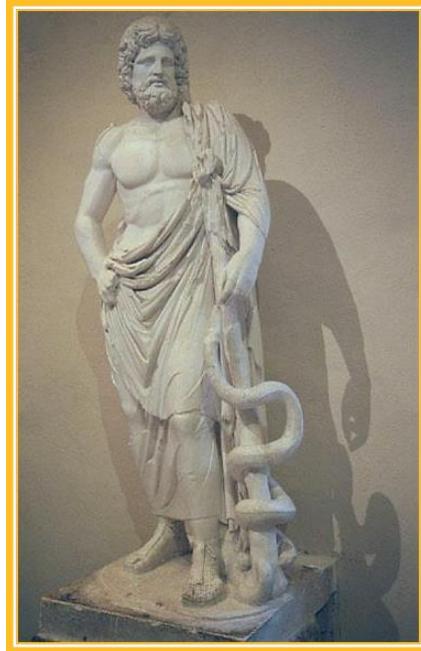
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Offering**
- ◆ **Prayers (for blessings, protection, family, and those in need, etc.)**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 67 To Asklepios**

**To Asklepios**

Asklepios, lord Paean, healer of all,

you charm away the pains of men who suffer.  
Come, mighty and soothing, bring health,  
put an end to sickness, then to the harsh fate of death.  
O blessed spirit of joyful growth, O helper, you ward evil off,  
honored and mighty son of Phoibos Apollon.  
Enemy of disease, consort is Hygieia the blameless,  
come as savior, O blessed one, bring life to a good end.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)



- ◆ **Invocation to Asklepios: Healer, guide to all in the medical profession, father of Hygieia . . .**

#### **Paeon of Erythrae**

**(380-360 B.C.E. - P.M.G. 934)**

Sing youths, of Paeon, skill-famed, Leto's son,  
Far-shooter –  
ië Paean! –  
who fathered a great joy for mortals  
when he mingled in love with Koronis  
in the land of the Phlegyae –  
ië Paean! –  
Asclepios, the most famous god –  
ië Paean!

By him were fathered Machaon and Podalirios  
and Iaso –  
ië Paean! –

and fair-eyed Aegle and Panacea, children of  
Epione, along with Hygieia, all-glorious,  
undefiled;  
ië Paean! –  
Asclepios, the most famous god –  
ië Paean!

Greetings I give you: graciously visit our  
wide-spaced city –  
ië Paean! –  
and grant that we look on the sun's light in joy,  
approved with the help of Hygieia, all-glorious,  
undefiled;  
ië Paean! –  
Asclepios, the most famous god –  
ië Paean!

"If anyone after sleeping in the temple or making a vow is offering due sacrifice to Asclepius and Apollo, when he puts on the altar the sacred portion he must first sing this paean three times around Apollo's altar."

Translated by David A. Campbell (Loeb - Greek Lyric, Vol. V)

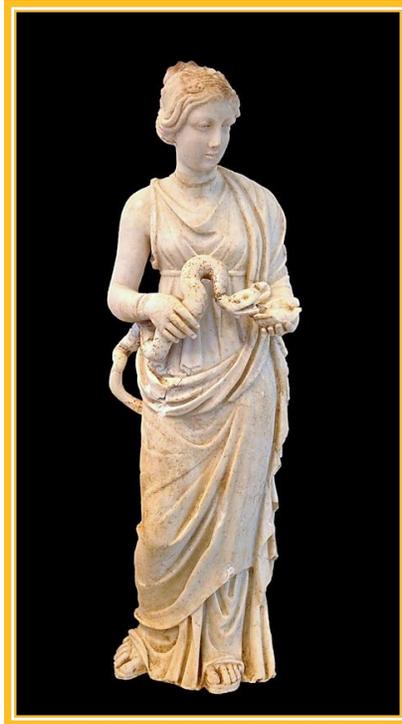
- ◆ **Lighting of the incense burner with frankincense**
- ◆ **Invocation to Hygieia: Blessed Hygieia, may we dwell with you and may you keep company with us . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 68 To Hygieia**

#### **To Hygieia**

Charming queen of all, lovely and blooming,  
blessed Hygeia, mother of all, bringer of bliss, hear me.  
Through you vanish the illnesses that afflict man,  
through you every house blossoms to the fullness of joy.  
The arts thrive when the world desires you, O queen,  
loathed by Hades, the destroyer of souls.  
Apart from you all is without profit for men:  
wealth, the sweet giver of abundance for those who feast, fails,  
and man never reaches the many pains of old age.  
Goddess, come, ever-helpful to the initiates,  
keep away the evil distress of unbearable disease.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Offering**
- ◆ **Paeon to Hygieia**



**Paeon to Hygieia**  
**(by Ariphron of Sicyon)**

Hygieia, most revered of the blessed ones among mortals,  
may I dwell with you for what is left of my life,  
and may you graciously keep company with me:  
for any joy in wealth or in children or in a king's  
godlike rule over men or in the desires which we  
hunt with the hidden nets of Aphrodite, any other  
delight or respite from toils that has been revealed  
by the gods to men, with you, blessed Hygieia, it  
flourishes and shines in the converse of the Graces;  
and without you no man is happy.

*The paeon is preserved on an Athenian stone dated c. 200 C.E.  
(now in Kassel) and on a very fragmentary stone from the  
Asclepieum at Epidaurus. Lucian calls it 'very well known,  
On everyone's lips', and Maximus of Tyre shows that it was  
Still sung in their day; see also Licymnius 769.*

From Greek Lyric, Volume V, edited and translated by David A. Campbell (Harvard University Press 1993).

◆ **Prayers of purification and cleansing**

“Blessed Hygieia, daughter of healing Asklepios. You who brings us purity and cleanliness. Lay your soft hand on me and lift all that weights me down. Your hand on my forehead to sooth my mind, Your hand on my heart to sooth my aches. Lift all uncleanliness from me and prepare me for the rite to come.”

E.T.

“Blessed Hygieia, may we be free of all illness and may you accept us to dwell with Thee for the rest of our lives. May you keep company with us that we may serve Thee and all the Gods well and do acts of kindness.”

R.C.

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Prayers (for blessings, protection, family, and those in need, etc.)**

“May blessings go with us, may Asklepios heal our illnesses, and may we dwell with Hygieia! May the Theoi 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**