



Erkhian Ritual for Semele & Dionysos

16 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

- ◆ **Incense: storax**
- ◆ **Invocation Semele: Blessed Semele of the lovely tresses and full bosom, mother of Dionysos, Dithyrambos, Bacchoss, and Bromios . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymns 44 To Semele**

To Semele

I call upon the daughter of Kadmos, queen of all,
 fair Semele of the lovely tresses, of the full bosom,
 mother of thyrsus-bearing, joyous Dionysos.
 She was driven to great pain by the blazing thunderbolt,
 which, through the counsels of Kronion Zeus, the immortal god, burned her.
 Noble Persephone granted her honors
 among mortal men, honors given every third year.
 For all mortal men reenact your travail for your son Bacchos:
 the sacred ritual of the table, the ritual of the holy mysteries.
 Now you, goddess, do I beseech, daughter of Kadmos, queen,
 Always to be gentle-minded towards the initiates.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **Incense: storax**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Offering**
- ◆ **Prayers: *Glorious Semele, mother of Dionysos of the abundant clusters, we give joyous thanks as we celebrate you and your splendid son***

- ◆ **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 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.

Translated by Hugh G. Evelyn White

- ◆ **Incense: frankincense**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Offering**
- ◆ **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 of food and wine, for the burgeoning of life, fragrant flowers, the coming of spring, and for 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

- ◆ **Incense: myrrh**
- ◆ **Invocation to Zeus the Thunderbolt: Mighty Zeus, father of Dionysos whose thunderbolt burned Semele, we give you thanks for Semele and Dionysos . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **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.

Translated by Martin L. West

- ◆ **Incense: storax**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 19 Zeus the Thunderbolt**

To Zeus the Thunderbolt

Father Zeus, sublime in the course of the blazing cosmos you drive on,
ethereal and lofty the flash of your lightning
as you shake the seat of the gods with the god’s thunderbolts.
The fire of your lightening emblazons the rain clouds,
you bring storms and hurricanes, you bring mighty gales,
you hurl roaring thunder, a shower of arrows.
Horrific might and strength sets all aflame,
dreadful missile makes hearts pound and hair bristle.
Holy and invincible, it comes with a sudden crash,
an endless spiral of noise, omnivorous in its drive,
unbreakable and threatening, ineluctable, too, the gale’s
sharp and smoke-filled shafts swoop down
with a flash dreaded by land and sea.
Wild beasts cringe when they hear the noise,
faces reflect the brilliance of thunder roaring
in the celestial hollows. You tear the robe
that cloaks heaven, you hurl the fiery thunderbolt.
O blessed one . . . the anger of sea waves,

the anger of the mountain peaks – we all know your power.
Enjoy this libation and give all things pleasing to the heart:
a life of prosperity, queenly health,
divine peace that nurtures youth, crowned with honors,
a life of ever blooming with cheerful thoughts.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **Prayers: *Blessed and almighty Zeus, we thank you for joyous and splendid ivy-crowned Dionysos . . .***

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

“May Dionysos 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**