



Ritual for the Theseia

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 prophetic 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

*Cimon, in command of the new Athenian fleet and commanded by a Delphic oracle to find and remove Theseus' bones to Athens, captured the pirate stronghold of Scyros as legend had told of Theseus' death on the island. He found Theseus' bones which were ceremonially brought to Athens and placed in a shrine in the center of the city. A major sacred area was laid out with suitable buildings and the Theseia was instituted in 475 BCE as a chief state festival with sacrifice and athletic competitions. The feast included a special porridge of milk called **athara**. Over time, the Theseia became a popular festival where there were prizes for heralds and trumpeters and there were military teams and three classes of torch races in teams.*

- ◆ **Incense: myrrh**
- ◆ **Invocation to Poseidon: Lord of the depth of the sea, holder of the earth, and father of Theseus, mighty hero, who accomplished valiant deeds, killed the Minotaur, rescued the youths and maidens, and brought reforms and prosperity . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Homeric Hymn 22 To Poseidon**

To Poseidon

I begin to sing about Poseidon, the great god, mover of the earth and fruitless sea, god of the deep who is also lord of Helicon and wide Aegae. A two-fold office the gods allotted you, O Shaker of the Earth, to be a tamer of horses and a saviour of ships!

Hail, Poseidon, Holder of the Earth, dark-haired lord! O blessed one, be kindly in heart and help those who voyage in ships!

Translation by Hugh G. Evelyn White

- ◆ **Libation of honeysweet wine**
- ◆ **Offering**
- ◆ **Prayers: for His blessings, protection of Theseus, of seafarers and highly honored by the people of Troizen where Theseus grew to manhood . . .**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 17 To Poseidon**

To Poseidon

Hearken, dark-maned Poseidon, holder of the earth,
equestrian, carved in bronze is the trident in your hand,
and you dwell in the foundations of the full-bosomed sea.
Deep roaring ruler of the sea and shaker of the earth,
your blossoms are waves, O gracious one, as you urge horses and chariot on,
rushing on the sea and splashing through the rippling brine.
To your lot fell the third portion, the unfathomable sea,
and you delight in waves and in their wild dwellers, O spirit of the deep.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis

“Dark-haired Poseidon, Lord of the depth of the sea, and holder of the earth, O Poseidon Pater, we give you thanks.”

◆ **From Plutarch’s Parallel Lives: Theseus**

Aethra kept his true birth concealed from Theseus, and a report was spread abroad by Pittheus that he was begotten by Poseidon. For Poseidon is highly honoured by the people of Troezen, and he is the patron god of their city; to him they offer first fruits in sacrifice, and they have his trident as an emblem on their coinage. But when, in his young manhood, Theseus displayed, along with his vigour of body, prowess also, and a firm spirit united with intelligence and sagacity, then Aethra brought him to the rock, told him the truth about his birth, and bade him take away his father’s tokens and go by sea to Athens. Theseus put his shoulder to the rock and easily raised it up, but he refused to make his journey by sea, although safety lay in that course, and his grandfather and his mother begged him to take it. For it was difficult to make the journey to Athens by land, since no part of it was clear nor yet without peril from robbers and miscreants.

Translated by Bernadotte Perrin

- ◆ **Incense: frankincense**
- ◆ **Invocation to Theseus: Great hero of magnificent deeds, leader, king, beloved by all . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine poured into the ground**
- ◆ **Offering**
- ◆ **From Plutarch’s Parallel Lives: Theseus**

For Medea, who had fled thither from Corinth, and promised by her sorceries to relieve Aegeus of his childlessness, was living with him. She learned about Theseus in advance, and since Aegeus was ignorant of him, and was well on in years and afraid of everything because of the faction in the city, she persuaded him to entertain Theseus as a stranger guest, and take him off by poison. Theseus, accordingly, on coming to the banquet, thought best not to tell in advance who he was, but wishing to give his father a clue to the discovery, when the meats were served, he drew his sword, as if minded to carve with this, and brought it to the notice of his father. Aegeus speedily perceived it, dashed down the proffered cup of poison, and after questioning his son, embraced him, and formally recognized him before an assembly of the citizens, who received him gladly because of his manly valour.

Translated by Bernadotte Perrin

◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

“May we be mindful of Theseus, his valor and many contributions to the good of all. May blessings go with us, and 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**