



Ritual for the Lenaia

Dionysos § Liknites § Zeus § Semele

12 – 15 Gamelion

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- ◆ **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 Lenaios: “Son of Semele, Iacchos, giver of wealth” ...**
- ◆ **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 Martin L. West

- ◆ **Prayers (for abundance in food, wine, and freedom, for reveling, and for the joys of life)**

At the Theatre of Dionysos, the *ithyphalloi* enter the portal and reach the center of the orchestra and turn to the audience:

‘Give way, give way! Make room for the God! For the God wishes to march through your midst, uplifted to the point of bursting.’

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!**

**Shout aloud to Him! We shall sing to Dionysos on these holy days: He has been
absent for twelve months, but now the springtime is here and all the flowers**

From a dithyramb, *Greek Lyric*

Enjoy the poetry competitions, plays three and four abreast, and copious wine.

- ◆ **Incense: storax**
- ◆ **Women: may you revel in torchlight at midnight with wine and dancing in honor of Liknites**
- ◆ **Invocation to Liknites: Blessed God of the liknon filled with barley, we celebrate abundance with feasting, wine, and dance**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Offering of barley groats**
- ◆ **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)

- ◆ **Incense: myrrh**
- ◆ **Invocation to Zeus: Khaire Zeus, King of all, who rules with Hera Queen of heaven, we thank you for your blessed son of the vine**
- ◆ **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

- ◆ **Prayers (for blessings, family, abundance, and reveling in the joys of life, etc.)**

- ◆ **Incense: storax**
- ◆ **Invocation to Semele: Khaire fair-faced and glorious Semele, Mother of Dionysos of the vine...**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Orphic Hymn 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 Kronian 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.

Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (revised edition)

- ◆ **Prayers: We give You thanks for your blessed Son, for the joys of His presence, etc.**

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

“May blessings go with us, 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**