



# Erkhian Ritual for the Kourotrophoi

## Kourotrophos § Artemis § Hekate

16 Metageitnion

- ◆ **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: aromatic herbs**
- ◆ **Invocation to Kourotrophos: Blessed child nurturer who provides for and guides our children, who nurtures us through life . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of pure water (khernips)**
- ◆ **Offering**
- ◆ **Prayers for our children and their wellbeing . . .**
  
- ◆ **Lighting of the incense burner with frankincense or myrrh**
- ◆ **Invocation to Artemis: Blessed kourtrophos, protector of women and children, protector of childbirth, and protector of the young in nature . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Kallimachus Hymn III To Artemis (selections)**

### To Artemis

Artemis we hymn – no light thing is it for singers to forget her – whose study is the bow and the shooting of hares and the spacious dance and sport upon the mountains; beginning with the time when sitting on her father’s knees – still a little maid – she spake these words to her sire: “Give me to keep my maidenhood, Father, forever: and give me to be of many names, that Phoebus may not vie with me . . . And give me sixty daughters of Oceanus for my choir – all nine years old, all maidens yet ungirdled; and give me for

handmaidens twenty nymphs of Amnisus who shall tend well my buskins, and, when I shoot no more at lynx or stag, shall tend my swift hounds.... On the mountains will I dwell and the cities of men I will visit only when women vexed by the sharp pang of childbirth call me to their aid even in the hour when I was born the Fates ordained that I should be their helper, forasmuch as my mother suffered no pain either when she gave me birth or when she carried me in her womb, but without travail put me from her body." So spake the child and would have touched her father's beard, but many a hand did she reach forth in vain, that she might touch it.

And the maiden fared unto the white mountain of Crete leafy with woods; thence unto Oceanus; and she chose many nymphs all nine years old, all maidens yet ungirdled. And the river Caraetus was glad exceedingly, and glad was Tethys that they were sending their daughters to be handmaidens to the daughter of Leto.

Translated by A. W. Mair

◆ **Homeric Hymn 9 To Artemis**

**To Artemis**

Sing, Muse, of Artemis, sister of the Far-shooter, the virgin profuse of arrows, fellow nursling of Apollo; who after watering her horses at the reedy Meles drives her chariot all of gold swiftly through Smyrna to vine-terraced Claros, where silver bow Apollo sits waiting the far-shooting one, the profuse of arrows.

So I salute you, and all goddesses, in my song; of you and from you first I sing.

Translated by Martin L. West

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Offering**
- ◆ **Prayers for protection of women and children and nurturing of children . . .**

"Blessed Artemis whose shafts are of gold, strong-voiced, the revered virgin, dear-shooting, delighter in arrows, own sister to Apollon of the golden sword. Kourotrophos, protectress of children, to whom women pray when labor pains overcome them, and to whom young girls pray when their adulthood is upon them: watch over my children/the children of those I love, as you watch over the children of all who sacrifice to you. May your arrows forever guard them from harm, and may Your strength ever flow unto our sons and daughters alike."

- ◆ **Incense: frankincense**
- ◆ **Invocation to Hekate: Blessed kourotrophos, protector of women, children, and the oikos, protector of travelers, blessed kourotrophos, nurse of the young . . .**
- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Reading from Hesiod's Theogony**

[Phoebe] bore Asteria of happy name, whom Perses once led to his great house to be called his dear wife. And she conceived and bore Hecate whom Zeus the son of Cronos honored above all. He gave her splendid gifts, to have a share of the earth and the unfruitful sea. She received honor also in starry heaven, and is honored exceedingly by the deathless gods. For to this day, whenever anyone of men on earth offers rich sacrifices and prays for favor according to custom, he calls upon Hecate. Great honor comes full

easily to him whose prayers the goddess receives favorably, and she bestows wealth upon him; for the power surely is with her. For as many as were born of Earth and Ocean amongst all these she has her due portion. The son of Cronos did her no wrong nor took anything away of all that was her portion among the former Titan gods: but she holds, as the division was at the first from the beginning, privilege both in earth, and in heaven, and in sea. . . . Whom she will she greatly aids and advances: . . . And the son of Cronos made her a nurse of the young who after that day saw with their eyes the light of all-seeing Dawn. So from the beginning she is a nurse of the young, and these are her honors.

Translated by Hugh G. Evelyn White

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**
- ◆ **Dedication and placing of offerings**
- ◆ **A Prayer:**

“Blessed Hekate, lovely dame, of earthly, wat’ry, and celestial frame, Sepulchral, in a saffron veil array’d. Goddess of the night, companion and protectress to Persephone, the Queen of the Underworld. You, key bearer of this world. Accept my offering of honey sweet wine, and watch over my children/the children of those I love, as you watch over the children of all who sacrifice to you. As the Gods will it, so shall it be.”

- ◆ **Libation of honey sweet wine**

“May blessings go with us, and may Kourotophos, Artemis, and Hekate protect our women and children and guide and nurture our children to adulthood. May They guide us in all our care of children 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**