



Η ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ

a quarterly newsletter for Hellenic polytheists

written and distributed by the Neokoroi

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Who are the Neokoroi?

by Sannion

The word *neokoros* is derived from the Greek words *naos* (temple) and *koreo* (to sweep) and originally meant "the one who swept the temple" or "the temple keeper". It was a humble position, but an important one, for it was the Neokoros' responsibility to make sure that the temple was kept clean and free of any pollution, for only in a pure place could one meet the Pure Gods. It wasn't just the Neokoros' job to take care of the temple grounds, but also to tend to the daily service of the God in whose temple they served.

Over time, the word Neokoros came to mean "priest" and "devoted servant" and was highly honorific. It was the title for those in the Imperial Cult, and was also given to certain cities that were uniquely linked with a specific divinity, such as Ephesos which was famous for its great temple of Artemis. Unlike with

most priesthoods in the Greco-Roman world, which tended to be more civic, like the position of alderman is today, and could even be purchased or inherited, there was always an element of special devotion with Neokoroi. In time, the word came to mean "believer" or "faithful" - which is how it's used in Flavius Josephus of the Jews, and in Acts 19:35.

Today, the Neokoroi are a group of Hellenic Polytheists who feel called to a path of service. We feel it's our job to sweep away the dust, disuse, and misrepresentation of Hellenismos, and to help rebuild and maintain the temples of the Gods. Until Hellênismos has temples and a thriving real world community, this great religion will not have seen its true renaissance.

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The Neokoroi are a group of Hellenic hard polytheists working to foster communities, festivals, and temples, to provide guidance and information on religious matters, and to ensure the strength and longevity of the worship of the Greek gods.

'Η Επιστολή is published four times a year. We offer articles, hymns, prayers, poetry, reviews, information, community notices, fiction, recipes, and anything else of interest to the Hellenic pagan community. We welcome feedback and submissions from guest writers.

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Who Are the Neokoroi? (continued from page one)

To accomplish this goal, we seek to:

- Provide a storehouse of information for curious seekers
- Provide practical guidance in religious matters
- Foster the growth of worship communities
- Foster the growth of large public festivals
- Help build and maintain shrines, temples, and other sacred places
- And ensure that the worship of the Gods will flourish and remain forever

What Neokoroi is not about:

- Eclecticism; combining ancient Greek religious practices with those from other cultures or magico-religious systems. There is nothing wrong with this approach, per se. It just isn't who we are.
- Attacking other religions and philosophies, or proselytizing. Each of us has our own way of worshipping the Gods; what matters is that we worship.
- Philosophy without practice. For us, this is a religion, not a debating society. While we have a great respect for philosophy, discussion, and the academic process, and believe this to be a very important part of our religion, it can only ever be a part of it or else stagnation will set in. In the end, we feel it matters more what you've done than what you've said.

To Athene

by Michael (guest writer)

An arrow, a clear-cut stream
Of steel through wind,
Of owl through night,
Of the Father's favourite child
The effortless heft of the weapons of war
About her shoulders, the thunder of her shield.
The lantern that dapples the nightly musings
Of a scribe, hunched over an inviolate body
Sideways glance of a great tawny eye,
Before she takes flight in the flow of ink from pen.
Dark shadow on the warrior's heel,

The edge in a battlefield cry, here in victory,
Here in death, here in cunning.
The stormfront of the advance. A tempest,
Of silence, dark glory.

This is Why I Like My Gods

by Autonoe (guest writer)

I say like rather than love for a Very Good Reason.

See, I actually *like* my Gods. I think They're pretty cool and if I could, I'd hang with Them. I mean, some of Them I love and some of Them I loathe, but all of Them I like. Some of Them I'd rather not hang with for too long, because They're just not my kind, but They exist, and when I need a good kick in the arse, They're happy to provide it.

My Gods are not omnipotent, omnipresent, omni-anything. And They don't pretend to be. They don't need to carve out a part of Themselves and send that odd part to Earth to supposedly learn what it's like to be human. Because They already know what it's like to hurt, to fuck, to get pissed, to love beyond existence, to laugh, to learn. My Gods Get. It.

They are part of this Universe, and more particularly, this World, just like I am. They abide by the laws of the Universe just like I do. They don't need a Shadowman to make excuses for the things They do.

That's why I like Them.

My favourite sculpture of Hermes, who is my God, is a Roman sculpture currently in Naples, IIRC. I have a photograph. He is resting, slumping on an available rock, in the middle of taking news to someone. He is puffed and full of joy from the exhaustion that physical exercise brings. Everyone who walks or runs or exercises at all knows that high, that great feeling that comes from Doing Something. That kind of joy is indescribable and inexplicable - but everyone knows it. It's doing five cartwheels and falling down laughing. It's swimming as many laps as you can before slapping the edge of the pool with your hand. It's running as fast as you possibly can and then dropping.

My Gods know what that's like, and that is why I love and worship Them. And it's also why I like Them. My Gods don't claim perfection and They don't claim to know Everything That Has Ever Happened And Ever Will. My Gods are wise because They've learned, just like I have.



What the Hymn to Demeter Means to Me

By Michael (guest writer)

*A*s a child, I was very much in love with Athene. My grandmother gave me the Iliad and Odyssey for my eighth birthday, and it sucked me right in. I must have read it ten or twelve times, and Athene, she just rocked my little world. She is a figure of such stark independence and efficacy, utterly self-contained, needing nobody, consummately capable. I was taken by her, her unique grace, and spent years drawing pictures of her, writing stories, making believe. I suppose she was my invisible friend! "The virgin Goddess of wisdom and war," I kept repeating to my parents in wonder.

In the intervening years before I began to seriously consider Hellenism as a living faith, many things happened, and my spiritual needs changed. Just as Athene had captivated me once, as an adult I was aware that the myth of Demeter and Kore was the most affecting and potent spiritual text that I had ever read. It is unlike anything else in the Hellenic 'canon', because it's not just a narrative, but a blueprint - a map that points towards greater understanding, where grief, loss and anger were not marginalized, but celebrated as key turning points in

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What the Hymn to Demeter Means to Me *(continued from page three)*

an ecstatic, transformative process that is the context of our lives.

Kore and Demeter speak of a redeeming power that I understand - a move from completeness, to loss, to a new and better whole. My childhood and teen years were, frankly, pretty appalling. In that sense, I intimately understand the creation of Persephone through Kore. My early years were like a crucible, a long, dark time, but when I emerged through it all, I found myself exponentially stronger. That has allowed me to reach down and pull up a few people who were struggling themselves, people who remain to this day my dearest friends. Like Kore, the knowledge gained through trial and hardship has proffered not only new strengths, but new responsibilities.

The myth has another, perhaps deeper, layer of symbolism for me. From a very young age, I bore witness to the sexual abuse of my sisters, one of whom is my twin, over a period of years. It was eventually stopped, the abuser confronted, and both my sisters have received extensive counseling and support. I'm happy to say that they are doing very well for themselves! But there was a long time in

which my sisters were 'lost' to me, and I couldn't do anything about it. Much has been said about the similarities between Demeter and Kore, that the two are so close they are almost one Goddess. I spent nine months in seminal darkness with my sister, we were born and raised in undifferentiated intimacy with one another. With all the assurance of childhood, I believed that I could protect her from anything. Demeter and I, we were both wrong. So the myth is a parallel journey for me. In the body of Kore, I remember the loss of my childhood, and the new, stronger self that was forged for me in the process. And I have a profound empathy for Demeter, for the sort of love that provokes such loyalty, such grief, such rage. The chance to celebrate that ordeal brings me to tears, to recognize the totality of it, not only the terror, but the way that it has bound me to my sisters, to my friends, to my mother. The love of Hekate and Persephone, the intercession of Rhea, the famine of Black Demeter - all these things are true to me, in the unique and confrontational reality of mythology.

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Ritual for Honoring the Passing of a Non-Hellenic Person

by Via Baker

Notes on the ritual:

In modern times, it is likely that a Hellenic polytheist will have friends of significantly different religions for whom a Hellenic funeral or memorial would not be appropriate. This ritual is intended to allow a Hellenic to use the tradition of prayer to an "unknown god" to communicate across religious boundaries without dishonoring their own religion or that of the deceased.

Traditional offerings to the dead include wreaths; food offerings such as pomegranates, celery, and honey-cakes; tainiai (broad flat ribbons, each in a

single intense color); and khoai (drink offerings). It is important to note that the mourners do not share in the khoai as they do with spondai; the entire offering should be poured out. Appropriate liquids for khoai are milk mixed with honey, sweet unwatered wine, and pure water. If only one type of khoe will be offered, it should be wine. If more than one, the milk should be offered first, followed by wine and then water. Khoai should be poured directly onto the earth; one may also anoint the grave marker, if any, with a mixture of honey and oil.

This ritual may be performed by a single mourner or a group; a group should choose one person to

Speak the prayers as chief mourner (changing all verbs and pronouns as necessary), but all should bring an offering of some kind. It may also be adapted by changing the word "friend" to the appropriate relationship (sister, father, partner, etc).

This ritual is not strictly reconstructionist. It is a modern creation inspired by the Odyssey, the Libation Bearers, and Old Stones, New Temples.

(The mourner approaches the grave either in reverent silence or singing a song of mourning, bearing khoai and other offerings.)

Mourner: Hermes Psukhopompos, guide and guard of those who move between the world above and the world below, carry my prayers to the halls of the unknown god who has received my dear friend, [Full name].

[Name], you have taken your place among those who have gone before us. May your seat be one of honor in those halls!

Know that your friend [mourner's name] has not let your memory fade, nor will [she] ever neglect [her] duty! May these offerings strengthen you and bring you gladness, as you brought strength and gladness to my life.

(Specific prayers for guidance or aid from the deceased may be offered here.)

(The khoai are poured with the following words. Any food offerings should be placed on the grave at this time as well.)

Gaia, great mother from whom we come and to whom we all return, take these offerings and carry them to my friend [name].

(At this time it is appropriate to sing some hymn, either a song composed in praise of the deceased or one that they particularly liked. It is also appropriate to anoint the grave marker and to decorate it with tainiai or a wreath)

[Name], do not forget those of us who walk under the sun, but bring the givers gift to match!

Swift Hermes, carry these words to my friend and bring me an omen!

(The mourner should keep watch for an omen, which may come immediately or at a later time.)

Here may follow a meal, either a picnic at the graveside or a more elaborate feast at home. An empty place should be set for the deceased. Games or contests would also be appropriate, but are not necessary.

Delphic Maxims

Know yourself. Nothing in excess. Aid friends.

Control anger. Shun unjust acts. Acknowledge sacred things.

Hold on to learning. Praise virtue. Avoid enemies.

Cultivate kinsmen. Pity supplicants. Accomplish your limit.

Accept old age. When you err, repent. Consider the time.

Worship the divine.

The Agathos Daimon

by Oenochoe

What I would really like to see in Hellenismos as we grow and develop is a greater focus on personalizing our religion. Building on a strong foundation of Reconstructionism, I think Hellenismos can become relevant to each of us individually, present in our everyday lives, and can inspire passionate bonds with divinities. On that last note, I'd like to discuss the convention of the Agathos Daimon, and what it can mean for our personal spiritual lives.

“Agathos daimon” (also called agathodaimon) translates roughly as “good spirit.” It is part of an ancient Greek belief in *daimones* - a word with many definitions - usually referring to a type of spiritual being a little less powerful and wide-reaching than a god. Over the years, it gained an entirely negative connotation (later morphing into our word demon), but it was originally a more neutral term. The Agathos Daimon is a spirit of fortune and good luck. It can belong to and protect an entire household, and as such it receives libations of (usually unmixed) wine after meals. It can sometimes be seen around the house in the form of a snake.

Originally an androgynous being, in Hellenistic times the Agathos Daimon became decidedly male, and was even said to be the consort of Agathe Tyche, the goddess of fortune. It was portrayed as a young man holding a cornucopia. Yet it still retained its serpentine form, for when a huge snake appeared to Alexander at the future site of Alexandria and then was killed, he erected a hero shrine for it as the Agathos Daimon.

However, the tradition seems to exist more on an individual level than those rites of the gods or even heroes. There were no large festivals for this spirit, no hymns that I know of. In Boeotia, the opening of new wine jars was dedicated to the Agathos Daimon, but that is the only reference to it in the realm of public festival. While the second day of each month was set aside for worship of the Agathos Daimon, in the ancient Athenian calendar, it seems that was a more

private affair, the actions of a household or individual rather than a community.

One could almost call the Agathos Daimon a sort of guardian angel, sent to a person at birth to protect and guide him or her throughout life. It also affects an individual's luck. Socrates said that his told him when to stop or keep quiet. It was thought that one needed to appease one's Agathos Daimon so that it would respond favorably. Pindar writes, “The daimon active about me I will always consciously put to rights with me by cultivating him according to my means.”

The daimones stand between gods and men, they are as Plato said the “interpreters and ferrymen”. Much in the way Vodounists believe in the Christian God but prefer to have interactions with the loa, the daimones are in some ways closer, more accessible than the gods. A relationship with a daimon (including spirits like the nymphs) can be very personal and intimate. It is also a bridge to relationships with the gods. As Pindar said, “The great mind of Zeus steers the daimon of the men whom he loves.”

The Agathos Daimon is part of a widespread history of personal spirits in polytheistic religions around the world. The Romans called it a Genius, and in Slavic folklore it was a Dola (a personal fate and protective spirit). It is very similar to the fylgja of Norse tradition. And in shamanistic religions, personal relationships with spirits play a crucial role. And yet, most of us who are reconstructing ancient pagan religions largely ignore daimones in general, and few acknowledge their own Agathos Daimon. I think adopting this ancient tradition will add something to our religion. I think it will encourage the possibility of intimate spiritual relationships with divine entities. I think it will even bring us closer to the gods. I also see it as an opportunity to integrate our practice with the world in which we live. The actual spirit who belongs to you (and to whom you belong) will probably be tied to your family, or the land around you, and relating

to it in the context of Greek religious practice brings our religion fully into the present time and place.

I have been interacting with a personal spirit for years now, but only recently understood how to fit that relationship into the context of Hellenismos, by viewing him as my Agathos Daimon. Now I have been saving out the second day of the month for him, leaving him libations, and relating to him as my luck, my fortune, my guardian angel. It has enriched my relationship with my Daimon, as well as my religious life as a whole. It has allowed me an invaluable spirit

teacher, guide, protector, and even lover. Yes, I think that the tradition of Agathos Daimon even encompasses a romantic and sexual way of relating to the spirit. After all, we see that in the devotion of certain nympholepts, the feelings of some worshippers towards their patrons, and the relations of other pagans to similar spirits such as fylgja. My Agathos Daimon is such an important part of my life, and I would love to see more people seek out this kind of spiritual bond within the practice of Hellenismos.

"Sweet melodies of flute mingled with the clash of castanets, and the maidens sang a sacred song, and there came to the sky a heavenly echo, and everywhere along the road were mixing bowls and drinking cups, and frankincense and cassia and myrrh mingled together, and the old women raised a cry, and the men gave a lovely shrill shout and called on Paion, the Far-shooter, who has the lovely lyre." - Sappho, *Fragment 44*

Sannion Reviews Three Books on Greek Magic

Arcana Mundi - Georg Luck *John Hopkins* ISBN 0-8018-2548-2 The best thing about this book is the large passages on magic from original sources. You have everything from pastoral poets writing about love charms to Cicero's exhaustive commentary on divination. Curse tablets and Greek astrological texts. Accounts of Pagan miracle stories and the procedure for raising *daimons*. Each chapter is opened with a wonderful essay that gives an overview of the subject, and explores certain aspects in great detail. Then we are given a buffet of original source material. It really is a great introduction to magic and the uncanny in antiquity.

Hermetic Magic - Stephen Edred Flowers *Weiser* ISBN 0-87728-828-3 I recently recommended this book to a friend who knows far more about Kaballah and the 19th century Hermetic tradition than I probably ever will, and he was quite disappointed with it. His points were valid - the author tends to lump diverse traditions together, and skims over some of the most important material, and has a most peculiar understanding of what "postmodernism" entails - but the basic reason why I recommended the

book, and why I continue to do so, holds fast. First, it gives a nice introduction to the magical and philosophical world of Hellenistic Egypt in the first to fourth centuries. It presents the basic concepts, and practices, and deities in a way that is easy to understand, and it does show how much of the material is related, even if it goes too far in this direction, by suggesting it was part of some unified - though numinous - tradition. The second half of the book is the best part, in my opinion, because it takes the material from the Greek Magical Papyri - an eclectic collection of texts, procedures, and spells collected from random parts of Egypt and Greece - and shapes it into a workable tradition.

Light in Extension - David Godwin *Llewellyn* ISBN 0-87542-285-3 I was skeptical when I first saw this book. Llewellyn usually equals fluffy revisionist sap, and I expected this book to be no different. In fact, I picked it up so that I could rant about it. And there are a couple sections, which I don't really agree with - namely the stuff on matriarchy and the pre-Dorian Pelasgians which relies too heavily on Graves and his crap. But the rest of the book is pretty decent, and accomplishes

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Three Books on Greek Magic *(continued from page seven)*

what it sets out to do - provide an overview of "Greek magic from Homer to modern times." The author is very knowledgeable about the Qaballah, and I found the correspondences he drew between Greek philosophy - particularly the early Ionians, Stoics, and the NeoPlatonists - enlightening. It really helped me to grasp the Qaballah better, since I was already

familiar with the Greek concepts. He also includes some great rituals at the end of the chapters, and I enjoyed the sections on Renaissance Occultism. My favorite chapter, however, was on the Eleusinian Mysteries, which he discussed very sympathetically, without trying to probe the secrets, something he explains would be impossible.



To Poseidon

by Calixto M. Lopez

Oh Great Poseidon!
When the Three Brothers, Zeus, Hades and Thee
Drew lots to divide the Kosmos
You won the wine-dark sea
and all its treasures.
Oh Great Poseidon!
Those who go down to the sea in ships
Pray unto you for safety.
For when you grow wroth
the froth rises upon the waves
as waves and wind lash at the ships of men
sending them to the bottom
or the earth shakes
bringing cities down into ruin.
Cities that have angered you
Oh dark-haired Earth Shaker!

But when you are contented
In your palace beneath the waves
Encrusted in coral and pearls and the other beauties
of the deep
Surrounded by your Nereids
Men find calms seas and steady breezes send them
safely to their ports of call.
And the horse
Your spirited animal, so alike unto you
toils peacefully for man, drawing his carts, and
wagons and ploughs.

Oh Great Poseidon!
When, long ago, we sailed our small craft
in the seas off Honolulu
I felt your power as our boat, driven by the winds
Tilted down the great swells of the sea
Giving me a glimpse, through the clear Hawaiian waters
of the sea-bed, and creatures of your realm!
I could feel your power,
and I could feel your call
to the sea which many of my ancestors
sailed long ago...
calling me to your realm.

Oh Great Poseidon!
When, in Miami, I called your name at night by the
seashore
as the pale moon reflected off the waves
I felt your power as the calm sea turned rough
and waves pounded the breakwater,
drenching me in your salty spray
and the calm air picked up in the gusts
and the waves came closer and closer up the shore
towards me
that I could feel your mighty touch.
and the powerful draw unto your waters
which I wished I could sail once more
The call of your sea, the call of my mariner blood
coming in a heady mix, Oh Great Poseidon!

"The earth is rude, silent, incomprehensible at first, / nature is incomprehensible at first, /
Be not discouraged, keep on, / there are divine things well envelop'd, / I swear to you
there are divine beings / more beautiful than words can tell." – Walt Whitman

A “Newbie’s” First Year

by Adam Browne

I came to Hellenism in a rather in-direct way. For years I knew that I didn’t fit in with mainstream religion. Something didn’t quite sit right there. I had tried Buddhism, Daoism, Orthodox Judaism, Christianity, and Wicca. I was sure that I was some sort of pagan, but couldn’t quite find where I belonged. It was through a comic book lying around at a friend’s house that really started me thinking. It was a Wonder Woman comic book (hey don’t laugh!) and there was some scene or another where Wonder Woman’s praying to Athena for help. I wondered if there was any group out there that still worshipped the Olympians. Greek religion had always seemed majestic and exotic. I loved the stories told about the Greek Gods as a child.

That encounter prompted me to go out and look for the Gods. I was a fan of Xena (actually I loved her friend Gabrielle more, but that’s another essay) and the Greek Gods on that show were always portrayed as being pests who got in the way. Not to be honored, not to be really dealt with at all. The character of Xena would say over and over again how humanity didn’t need the Gods. Well, I remember thinking otherwise. The Greeks wouldn’t have built the temples that they did and honored the Gods the way they did if there wasn’t *something* there.

As a gay man, I was a little worried about Hellenism. I had found tons of prejudice in other circles and I was afraid I would get my heart stepped on again. I joined an e-group and was amazed at the debates. These people really knew their stuff. My reading list expanded infinitely during this time. No sooner had I started to proclaim myself a newbie-Hellenist, when homophobia reared its ugly head. I stumbled onto a website proclaiming that Hellenism didn’t accept these practices and considered them immoral. “Well,” I thought, “it’s back to generic old paganism!” But

the Moirai had something else in store for me. I wrote to a new friend about my dilemma (Dave of the Den of Kerberos) and he had written an article about his run in with these people. He calmed my fears and gave me hope again.

I did want to mention one of the first things that made an impression on me that the Gods are really there for us. One of my patrons is Apollon and when I first started on my path, I dreamt of him. Being part skeptic, I really think it was just my subconscious making use of the images I’d been studying at that time. But...I was at Disney’s California Adventure with my boyfriend. We stopped by this water shooting gallery game, the

The Moirai

“Oh from the summit of Olympus high,
The three extremest heights of Heaven,
Where dwell the Dealers-out of Destinies,
Oh may my own Fate hear me,
And, hearing, come unto me!”

-Greek folk song

kind from carnivals. The prizes were all these different-sized dolphins. Now anyone who really knows me, knows I love dolphins. When I had read that in Jewish mythology the ancient mystics considered them “brothers” of man and placed them higher than any in the animal kingdom I was

elated. We both decided to compete, and just before the start buzzer rang I said a quick prayer to Apollon for help. Let’s just say I went home with a really LARGE dolphin that day. The thought entered my mind that these Olympians aren’t archetypes (to me anyway)...they *just might be* Gods.

I’ve been lucky enough to find two patrons and I honor them daily. I’ve set up my little altar, but it seems I am constantly checking in *Old Stones, New Temples* to see that I’m doing it right. I’m also educating the local Wiccan shop on what it means to be a Hellenist. I’m not in the intellectual elite by any means, but I love to read and maybe I’ll catch up someday. Right now living with the Gods is good enough for me.

The Mysteries and Dionysos

by Jennifer

*F*rom the beginnings of time itself, man has dreamed of seeking the answers to Mysteries - mysteries of birth, life, magic, and death. It's easy to understand why so many ancient civilizations established cults to honor the mysteries, or why they were held in such high esteem. The definition of Mystery can be argued. One 14th century definition states: "A religious truth that one can know only by revelation and yet still, cannot fully understand." Ah, such is life and death! Living Myth and Mystery! Dionysos Teletarches, (lord of the initiations) was no stranger to being associated with Mystery cults. To understand what was taught in the Mysteries, we can rely on a great deal of evidence, spanning both modern and ancient eras, through literature and archeology. Yet the best source of knowledge is personal experience itself. The Mysteries were often marked confidential, and restricted, and the only way to truly know the answers to this mystery and/or the mystery of what was happening at the rituals, was to become an initiate yourself. Many references, such as the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, stress this point. The main focus at the rites of the mysteries was hope for an after life. No one wanted to be blind, and hopeless when facing death. To say that there is nothing but

eternal gloom and woe, gives little meaning to life. To be initiated gave promise, for with death, there is rebirth. Dionysos, being the God of growing things, himself half human, at one point experienced death and resurrection himself. Who better to represent life after death than he? Dionysos, the God who saves his faithful initiates, with a promise of hope! Celebrations of Life are easily assumed within the Mysteries. From the frenzied dance of the Maenads, to the procession of the sacred phallus, the public festivals of the community already, and the private sacred rituals of the mysteries themselves - there were many ways to honor Dionysos. Some note a certain modern Shamanistic quality to the rites of Dionysos. This is evidenced through the altered states caused by wine or other substances, dramatic portrayals of the myths, even the occasional orgy. These paradoxical celebrations of life are very much still valid, and ways to attain Initiation into the Mysteries of the God are still possible in our modern world today.

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Winter Festivals

by Sannion

*T*he Rural Dionysia falls within the latter part of the Athenian month of Poseidon. (November-December) During this festival dramatic performances were held, put on by traveling bands of actors. Hollywood has seen fit to continue this tradition by releasing many of its blockbuster films during this time. Taking in a holiday movie with the family is a great way to honor Dionysos, God of the dramatic arts.

5th Poseidon (November 28/29) Plerosia, a festival in honor of Zeus. Little is known about this festival

other than it's name. Perform your regular sacrifices in honor of Zeus.

8th Poseidon (December 1) Poseidea, a festival in honor of Poseidon Phytalmios (moisture and vegetation). Contemplate the importance of water in your life: eat sea-food this day: make libations of salt-water.

19th Poseidon (December 12/13) A sacrifice to the Anemoi or Wind-Gods was held on this day. Offer fragrant incenses to them out-doors.

26th Poseidon (December 19/20) Haloa, originally a 'threshing floor' festival, it came to be a festival of fertility, honoring Dionysos and Demeter. Cakes modeled in the shape of genitals can be eaten, and ribald songs and jokes shared.

This year has a second Poseidon. It's uncertain whether special festivals were held during this extra-calendrical month, whether those of Poseidon I were repeated, or some other situation prevailed. For more information on this, see Oenochoe's article on Poseidon II below.

12-14th Gamelion (February 2-5) Lenaea, one of the oldest festivals of Dionysos, gave it's name to the

month Lanaeon among Ionian Greeks. Comedic plays were premiered during this festival, and there were lavish processions through the city. Take in a funny movie or play.

27th Gamelion (February 17/18) Theogamia, the celebration of Zeus and Hera's wedding was one of the most important festivals for the Greeks. Weddings and love affairs were considered especially auspicious during this month. This is a good time to reaffirm your vows. Throw a feast in honor of the happy couple, with lots of pretty flowers: read the scene in the Iliad where Hera seduces Zeus on Mount Ida, or the wedding song of Sappho.



The Second Month of Poseideon

by Oenochoe

Every three years, in order to keep the ancient Greek lunar calendar of twelve months consistent, we must repeat a month, and traditionally it was the winter month of Poseideon. This has given rise to the question – what do we do with this extra month? Are the same festivals repeated again? Are there no festivals whatsoever? To my knowledge, we do not know how the ancients resolved this dilemma. So I have a suggestion.

Recently, the Thiasos Dionysos has been working on creating a full Dionysian festival calendar, incorporating ancient celebrations but adding many new ones of our own design, to honor all the aspects of our god. It occurred to me that the whole second month of Poseideon – when it occurs – could be seen as a Dionysian holiday. After all, traditionally in many cultures intercalendary days were given over to partying, role-reversal, and general madness, all Dionysian specialties. Furthermore, one of the major

festivals of Dionysos – the Rural Dionysia – already falls during Poseideon.

I think this could be expanded to include not only Dionysian worship, but a general atmosphere of revelry and folly. And it's the perfect time for it – just look at when the second Poseideon falls this year, right at the end of December, around the same time as the Roman Saturnalia (a similar type of festival) and even encompassing our modern New Year's Eve, which is in many places celebrated with much zeal. And certainly a month of celebration is much preferable to a month barren of festivals. So this year, when the month of Poseideon repeats, let it inspire us to cross boundaries, shake loose from our bonds, and drink up life itself!

For more information on the Thiasos Dionysos festival calendar –

<http://www.winterscapes.com/thiasos/calendar.htm>

"It is not the abundance of wine or the feasting of meat that makes the joy of festivals, but the good hope and the belief that the God is present in his kindness and graciously accepts what is offered." - Plutarch, *Table Talks*



Colouring Book by Laren - <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/2962/>

Our next issue will be coming out in March '04. The deadline for submissions is the first week of February. Possible essay topics include – rituals for upcoming festivals; recipes for sacred foods; reviews of books, websites, and other resources; an interview with a community member; relevant events in the news; discussion of a particular god or myth; or anything else you can think up! See page two for contact information if you'd like to contribute a piece of writing, subscribe for a full year of issues, distribute the newsletter in your area, or for any comments or questions.

And be sure to check out the Neokoroi website at <http://www.winterscapes.com/neokoroi/> ~ we have even more articles online, as well as information on the gods, photos, links and more!