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A NOTE ON THE RITUAL NORMS OF PURIFICATION AFTER HOMICIDE AT SELINOUS AND CYRENE*

Abstract

Hanno a lungo attirato l’attenzione degli studiosi per la loro complessità: questo articolo intende contribuire alla comprensione di alcuni passi di due iscrizioni note come la lex sacra di Selinunte e la lex cathartica di Cirene. Per il primo testo, si ritorna sulla spiegazione delle espressioni Melichios en Mysko e Melichios en Euthydamo, sui Tritopatores come destinatari delle pratiche catartiche, sull’omicida della colonna B, e, più in generale, sulla funzione rituale e sociale della lamina. Per il testo cirenaico, ci si concentra sugli ultimi paragrafi riferiti a tre ‘supplici’, qui interpretati tutti e tre come essere umani. Queste iscrizioni erano utilizzate come prontuari sulle norme rituali da rispettare in diverse circostanze. L’obiettivo dell’articolo è tentare di definire gli elementi offerti da questi documenti per la ricostruzione del rituale di purificazione di una persona colpevole di omicidio involontario.

The lex sacra of Selinous and the lex cathartica of Cyrene have long attracted the attention of scholars for their complexity: this article aims to contribute to the understanding of some passages of these two inscriptions. In terms of the first text, it refocuses on the explanation of the expressions Melichios en Mysko and Melichios en Euthydamo, on the Tritopatores as addressees of the cathartic rites, on the homicide of column B, and, more in general, on the ritual and social functions of the tablet. In regard to the Cyrenaic text, it concentrates on the last paragraphs which are addressed to three suppliants; here all three are interpreted as human beings. These inscriptions were used as reference texts on the ritual norms to be followed in different circumstances. The objective of this study is to attempt a definition of the elements that these documents offer to the reconstruction of the rite of purification for a subject guilty of involuntary manslaughter.

Two extremely precious and enigmatic epigraphical documents, the lex sacra o Selinous and the lex cathartica of Cyrene, allow us to

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glimpse the concrete procedure for the implementation of purification rituals after homicide. This *incipit* is intended solely to present the texts that will be discussed in the present study. Indeed, it is difficult to synthesise the complexity of these two inscriptions, and every new contribution must remain only on the level of hypothesis, leaving the debate open to other viewpoints. In what follows, I intend to reconsider the ritual uses of these documents and their social functions.

The first thorny problem concerns the very definition of the documentary typology of these texts. I have referred to them as they are scholarly known. However, there is now a widely shared uneasiness about the denomination *leges sacrae* /“sacred laws,” since it is misleading and it does not fully represent the documents themselves.¹ It is a modern, rather than an ancient, category, and it also includes other kinds of inscriptions which are quite different: laws approved by the popular assembly about priesthoods, sanctuaries, festivals, and public sacrifices; cult calendars; funerary regulations; and ritual purity requirements, to mention only the most common topics. After almost ten years of deconstruction inflicted on the category of “sacred laws,” a *pars construens* is finally emerging. Recently, Jan-Mathieu Carbon and Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge have proposed moving beyond Greek “sacred laws” and adopting the concept of “norm.” They are working on the online publication of a Collection of Greek Ritual Norms (*CGRN*). Starting from the work of van Prott and Ziehen, Sokolowski, and Lupu, this new collection will gather inscriptions that codify ritual norms on sacrifice and purification matters. Contrary to previous *corpora*, it will include texts on the cults of living or dead individuals, in particular those of the Hellenistic rulers. The *fil rouge* of the collection will be the “normative character” of the chosen inscriptions pertaining ritual performance and practice. The rituals prescribed should also be performed regularly.⁴

This new perspective will be crucial for a better understanding of this class of inscriptions. Perhaps the only criticism that could be made is that “ritual norm” identifies more the contents of the documents rather than their form, their documentary typology. This observation comes from the modern necessity to catalogue ancient texts in different rubrics. A Collection of Greek Rituals Norms will always leave open the problem of how to refer to this group of texts, heterogeneous as it is. Perhaps we should instead use a periphrasis such as “texts concerning ritual norms” or “ritual normative inscriptions.” In any case, although the nuances of the concept of “norm” are no less problematic than that of “law,” the adjectival specification “ritual”

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¹. See Parker (2004), (2005b); Lupu (2005); Carbon (2005); Chaniotis (2009); Georgoudi (2010); Gagarin (2011); Carbon–Pirenne-Delforge (2012).

². See Carbon–Pirenne-Delforge (2012), 164–171 for a critical assessment of the recent contributions to the discussion about the designation “sacred laws.”

³. See Carbon–Pirenne-Delforge (2012). The online format will allow the collection to be kept updated, and will increase the number of the included texts. Some inscriptions will be presented with new or revised editions, while most of them will be in their standard edition.
guarantees a clear identification of the normative facts covered by these texts. The “ritual norms” in the title of this study intends to explicitly acknowledge their new path of inquiry that seems to respect the status of the ancient evidence to a greater extent.

Indeed, the two documents here analysed are perfectly representative of texts inherent to prescriptive norms on sacrifice and purification. It is appropriate to ask in primis whether we can study these two texts in comparison. It has been noted that they have only a few terms in common, and perhaps we associate them with each other because we know so little about the topic they explore. Since they present unique problems of interpretation, it is necessary to first examine them separately. I will then compare them at the end.

The Selinuntine text is by now the most famous inscription from Greek Sicily, the longest of the siceliot epigraphy before the Hellenistic period, and the largest inscribed lead tablet we know so far. Its

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6. SEG XLIII 630:
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interpretation has triggered a lively debate starting with the arrangement of the writing, which consists of two inverted columns which are oriented in opposite directions so that when one column appears right–side up, the other appears upside down. Although there is no

Column A: leaving behind... but let the homosepouoi perform the consecration. Traces in a rasura. (ll. 7ff.) ... the hiara, the sacrifices are to be performed before (the festival of) the Kotydia and (before) the truce, in the fifth year, in which the Olympiad also occurs. To Zeus Eumenes [and] the Eumenides sacrifice a full-grown (sheep), and to Zeus Melichios in the (plot) of Mykos a full-grown (sheep). (Sacrifice) to the Tritopatores, the impure, as (one sacrifices) to the heroes, having poured a libation of wine down through the roof, and of the ninth parts burn one. Let those to whom it is permitted perform sacrifice and consecrate, and having performed aspersion let them perform the anointing, and afterwards let them sacrifice a full-grown (sheep) to the pure (Tritopatores). Pouring down a libation of honey mixture, (let him set out) both a table and a couch, and let him put on (them) a pure cloth and crowns of olive and honey mixture in new cups and cakes and meat; and having made offerings let them burn (them), and let them perform the anointing having put the cups in. Let them perform the ancestral sacrifices as to the gods. To (Zeus) Melichios in the (plot) of Euthydamos let them sacrifice a ram. And let it also be possible to sacrifice after a year. Let him take out the public hiara and put out a table before (them), and burn a thigh and the offerings from the table and put out a table before (them), and let him put on (them) a pure cloth and crowns of olive and honey mixture in new cups and cakes and meat; and having made offerings let them burn (them), and let them perform the anointing having put the cups in. Let them perform the ancestral sacrifices as to the gods. To (Zeus) Melichios in the (plot) of Euthydamos let them sacrifice a ram. And let it also be possible to sacrifice after a year, at home. Let them slaughter... statues... Let them sacrifice whatever sacrifice the ancestral customs permit... in the third year.... Column B: If a... man [wishes] to be purified from elasteroi, having (the host) made a proclamation from wherever he wishes and whenever in the year he wishes and in whatever [month] he wishes and on whatever day he wishes, having made the proclamation whithersoever he wishes, let (the killer) be purified. [And on] receiving (him, i.e. the killer), let him give (water) to wash himself with and a breakfast and salt to this same one, and having sacrificed a piglet to Zeus, let him go out from it, and let him turn around; and let him be addressed, and take food for himself and sleep wherever he wishes. If anyone wishes to purify himself, with respect to a foreign or native one (sc. elasteros), either one that has been heard or one that has been seen, or anyone at all, let him purify himself in the same way as the homicide does after he has been purified of an elasteros. Having sacrificed a full-grown (sheep) on the public altar, let him be pure. Having marked a boundary sprinkling seawater from a golden (vessel), let him go away. Whenever one needs to sacrifice to the elasteros, sacrifice as to the immortals. But let him slaughter (the victim so that the blood flows) into the earth. Trans. from JJK, 15, 17, slightly modified.

general agreement on specific details, the text, at least according to the reading that has gained most ground, was intended to regulate cathartic measures. The first editors thought that column A prescribed rites of purification after a contamination brought about by a bloody event or a sacrilegious murder, perhaps crimes committed during a stasis, while column B dealt with the purification of a killer.  

Recently, Dimartino proposed considering the two columns as two phases of the same cathartic ceremony: first, there was the purification of the one who committed the homicide and then the purification of his kin group. The ritual prescriptions of the two columns were thus addressing the same crime. The text should be read starting from column B, as the order of transcription needs not necessarily correspond to the order of reading and performance of rituals. This hypothesis is interesting and, as she writes, “the most economical one.” It would, however, make our text even more unique, since, as far as I know, in other epigraphical or literary evidence the purification from blood pollution is limited to the culprit, and do not involve a further ritual for his family group. Moreover, in column A the possibility for performing the sacrifices in the following year, and perhaps even in the third year, seems unusual for a purification of a murderer’s family, since purification from blood pollution is effective and sufficient when performed only once. Lastly, this interpretation prompts us to ask why the text – if it dealt with one ritual ceremony – wasn’t inscribed without interruption. The writing field was enough wide to inscribe the text on two columns one after the other, without leaving empty space under column B (the first section according to her reading) or writing column A beyond the guidelines. In other words, the way the text has been inscribed seems to indicate that the two columns were dealing with two different ritual ceremonies.

1. Selinous: A Few Thoughts on Column A

The ritual prescriptions and the cultual protagonists of our inscription are by now well-known in the scholarly literature. I will not examine every passage in detail; I intend to focus only on some

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8. JJK 59f. and passim. Other scholars do not believe that there was a bloodshed at the origin of the pollution (North (1996) 299–301), or that the text regulated purificatory rituals, and some propose that it concerned agrarian cults, see Clinton (1996) 160–163; Giuliani (1998); Lupu (2005) 368; Graf (2007) 102 n. 4; Robertson (2010) 85–212.


10. Ead. 334, 345f.

11. Ead. 345.
The second sacrifice mentioned in the text was dedicated to Zeus Meilichios, a cult widely attested at Selinous, but difficult to understand in the articulation of the “lex sacra.” There are, in fact, both a Zeus Meilichios en Mysko (A 9) and a Zeus Meilichios en Euthydamo (A 18). These obscure specifications have been explained in various ways. The funerary stele of a man named Myskos has influenced the debate; it has been thought that Myskos or Euthydamos was co-founder of Selinous together with Pammilos, the eust to the literary sources; they established gentilical groups that were linked to the cult of Zeus Meilichios or to the prescribed rituals. Other scholars have suggested that the two were ancestors risen to tutelary heroes, or forefathers of two patriai involved in the pollution, or delegates of the two gene that hold the priesthood of the god and were responsible for the cathartic rites. These various interpretations converge in acknowledging their role as important personalities. Following a different interpretative path, Robertson suggested that Myskos and Euthydamos were the names of the city districts where the rites took place.

An idea that seems to be more feasible explains these expressions as references to two stones of Zeus Meilichios set up in the “campo di stele” and marked by a formula preserved only by the Selinuntine tablet: next to these stones the rites prescribed in our text were performed. The dissimilar ritual experiences justify the different
formulae in the tablet and in the inscriptions of the “campo di stele.” As noted by Grotta, the sacrifices prescribed in the tablet should not be interpreted as periodical cultual practices like those carried out by the gentilicial groups in order to worship their god, since they were both extraordinary and uncommon—just as extraordinary and uncommon as the pollution that requires these cathartic measures.  

Myskos and Euthydamos, then, might have been cited in the “lex sacra” for more pragmatic reasons than hierarchical or cultual rank. It is possible that there was more space available around their “stones” for the performance of sacrificial rites which were different from the usual worship of the Melichios. Otherwise, they were placed in a way that the officiant of the rite was oriented towards the East: in fact, purificatory rites were generally performed facing the Orient. Of course, practical reasons do not exclude a relevant social and historical role for the two families. An important gentilicial group might have enjoyed the benefit of a larger ritual space. Nevertheless, it is hard to state the identity and the function of Myskos and Euthydamos with certainty.

The third addressees of the rites were the impure Tritopatores (A 9–10). Between human forebears (πρόγονοι) and ancestral gods (πατριοί), they were figures “d’instances surnaturelles.” Their cult was connected to the protection of the family and the reproductive line. In the tablet, after a few lines they were defined as pure (A 13). The impure Tritopatores were receiving a libation of wine and a “moirocaust.” The sacrifice to them had to be performed “as (though it were) to the heroes,” and could be managed only by those “to whom it was permitted.” After a circular aspersion and an anointing of the

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23. See Lacam (2010) 221, who compares the case of Myskos and Euthydamos with the preeminent place given in sanctuarial spaces to the family of Kluvatiium at Capua and to the gens Petrunia at Gubbio.
25. On the etymology, the evidence, and the nature of these deified ancestors, see Bourriot (1976) 1135–1179; JJK 107–114; Taillardt (1995); Georgoudi (2001); Parker (2005a) 31f. An inscription now also attests their worship in Beotia, see its re-edition in Kalliontzis–Papazarkadas (2013).
26. For a detailed commentary on this section, see JJK 29–35, 63–67, 70–73; Clinton (1996) 171; Henrichs (2005), Scullion (2000) – especially for the chthonic/olympic sacrificial methods, and for a definition of “moirocaust”; Bergquist (2005) – on the division of the animal victim in nine parts; Parker (2005c) and (2011) 149f. – on the expression “as (though it were) to the heroes” and the verb enagizein; Dubois (2008) 48–50 – on the phonetic and lexical peculiarities.
altar, the pure Tritopatores received a θυσία, a libation of milk and honey, and a theoxenia. The sacrifice had to be performed “as (though it were) to the gods.”

The reading of this passage is crucial for the overall interpretation of column A to establish whether the prescribed rituals had a purificatory function. The sole elements that might induce one to think that column A ruled cathartic rites are the adjectives μιαρός and καθαρός referred to the Tritopatores. There are no verbs such as καθαίρω or ἀποκαθαίρω, or the locution καθαρὸς ἔστω as in column B. According to the first editors, the rites performed for the impure caused their purification: the same entity changed its condition from impurity to purity. Other scholars, instead, are more inclined toward the identification of two distinct categories, since there is no clear phraseology for the alteration of one type of Tritopatores; without the mention of the name of a specific gentilicial group, the Tritopatores were worshipped by the polis. They represented a collective entity venerated by a civic cult, and could be conceived of as both impure and pure.

The variance of ritual times and sacrificial procedures was aimed at demarcating the two aspects of impurity and purity; moreover, the anointing of the altar cannot be understood as a purificatory rite.

The text is undoubtedly elliptical, and there can be no certainty in terms of its understanding. Nevertheless, it is possible to emphasise that in the tablet every new prescription starts with an asyndeton, or two ritual actions are linked by a καί. On line A 13 the adverb κῆπεται seems to establish the relationship between the impure and pure Tritopatores. The adverb is meant to mark the difference and the opposition between what comes before and what comes after it. Furthermore, the sharing of the same altar between two distinct entities, which should not have any contact whatsoever, could provoke the risk of mingling the pure with the impure. The shared altar would be conceivable if the ancestral spirits were one and the same entity. Their condition of impurity/purity, then, should be subject to change, and their mutated state might be implied by the adverb ἐπείτα.

The addressees of a hypothetical cathartic process, therefore, were the Tritopatores, not the officiants of the rites. The root cause

27. Lacam (2010) thinks that the anointing concerns the argoi lithoi, the stelai typical of the worship of the Meilichios, as in the Iguvine tablets (TE IIa.38) the Obelisk is anointed. See Id. on the parallel between the Greek stelai in Sicily, the iuvilas (inscriptions on stelae) in Campania, and the Obelisks (cippi) at Gubbio.


29. JJK 29f., 53.


32. Ead. 160.
of their pollution should not be sought in a present event, but in the past. It seems unlikely that the Tritopatres were polluted by their descendants who were guilty of a crime.\textsuperscript{33} The pollution provoked by a human transgression could spread out and trouble not only those directly responsible but also their offsprings, future generations, and their civic community; however, the \textit{miasma} could not reascend towards the past, it was not retroactive, did not pollute the ancestors.\textsuperscript{34} Indeed, it seems more plausible that the pollution of the forefathers fell on their posterity.\textsuperscript{35} Theseus deplores his calamities, and thinks that he is suffering because of the sins of his ancestors.\textsuperscript{36} Herodotus explains the banishment of the Aiginetan oligarchs in 431 BCE as a consequence of polluting and sacrilegious murders committed around 480 BCE.\textsuperscript{37}

The belief in a pollution or a curse attached to a family dating back generations is well attested in Greek mentality. The stain of a crime was transmitted over time. From Attic tragedies, the vicissitudes of the race of the Atrids and that of the Labdacides are very famous,\textsuperscript{38} and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{33} Ead. 161.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Johnston (1999) 53–58; she effectively compares the Selinuntine text with Plat. Resp. 2.364b–365a, see in part. 364b–c: ἀγύρται δὲ καὶ μάντεις ἐπὶ πλουσίων θύρας ιόντες πείθουσιν ὡς ἐστὶ παρὰ σφίσι δύναμις ἐκ θεῶν ποριζόμενη θυσίας τε καὶ ἐπιφανείας, ἐίτε τι [364ξ] ἀδίκιμα τοῦ γέγονεν αὐτοῦ ἢ προγόνων, ἀκείσθαι μεθ’ ἱδρόν τε καὶ ἱεροῖν, ἐὰν τὸ τειχὸν ἐξόρκημα ἐθέλη, μετὰ σμικρῶν δαναπάρον ὁμοίως δίκαιον ἄδικον βλάψει ἐπαγωγαίς τισιν καὶ καταδέσμοις, τοὺς θεοὺς, ὡς φασιν, πείθουν σφισιν ὑπηρετεῖν.κτλ. And begging priests and soothsayers go to rich men’s doors and make them believe that they by means of sacrifices and incantations have accumulated a treasure of power from the gods that can expiate and cure with pleasurable festivals any misdeed of a man or his ancestors, and that if a man wishes to harm an enemy, at slight cost he will be enabled to injure just and unjust alike, since they are masters of spells and enchantments that constrain the gods to serve their end; and 364ε–365α: βίβλων δὲ παρέχονται Μουσαίου καὶ Ὀρφέως, ἑσπερὶς τε καὶ Μούσαι παρέχονται, ὡς φασιν, καθ’ ἃς ἀπολούσαν, ἐντολὴν ἱεροῖν ἐστὶ μὲν ἐτι ξώσιν, εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ τελευτήσασιν, ἢς δὴ τελευτᾶς καλοῦσιν, ἢ τὸν ἀκάκον ἀπολούσιν Ἴμᾶς, μὴ θύσαντας δὲ δεινὰ περιμένει. And they produce a bushel of books of Musaeus and Orpheus, the offspring of the Moon and of the Muses, as they affirm, and these books they use in their ritual, and make not only ordinary men but states believe that there really are remissions of sins and purifications for deeds of injustice, by means of sacrifice and pleasant sport for the living, and that there are also special rites for the defunct, which they call functions, that deliver us from evils in that other world, while terrible things await those who have neglected to sacrifice. Trans. from Shorey 1953.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Eur. Hipp. 830–833.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Herod. 6.90–91, see on this passage Parker (1983) 184, 191, 277; Figueira (1991) 104–113; Nenci (1998) 247.
\item \textsuperscript{38} In Attic tragedy, the inherited guilt is linked to the problem of the hero’s free will and decision-making power; on this vexed issue, see with further bibliography Gantz (1982); Föllinger (2003); Sewell-Rutter (2007).\end{itemize}
in Athenian history the burden of the agos of the Alcmeonids emerged more than once.\(^{39}\) The belief in the agos was not something abstract, but it manifested itself in real mishaps. The effects of a curse as well as those of a pollution were calamities, misfortunes, and famine. As a small but clear example, we might remember that the oracle of Zeus at Dodona received a question about the link between bad weather and pollution: a single person could harm an entire city.\(^ {40}\)

At Selinous as well, a member of the oikos could have interpreted the recurrence of calamities and misfortunes as expression of an inherited pollution.\(^ {41}\) The hypothesis that the rites of column A were prescribed for a miasma generated not by the current members of the family, but by their ancestors, would be reinforced by the prominent position given to Zeus Eumenes and to the Eumenides in the sacrificial sequence.\(^ {42}\) Although there is no direct influence,\(^ {43}\) it is worth recalling that in Aeschylus’ Oresteia the institution of the cult of the Semnai Theai sealed the end of the curse of Atreus’ house,\(^ {44}\) of the τὸν τριπάχυντον δαίμονα,\(^ {45}\) that had fed on blood for generations. Eumenides’ cult was linked to fertility, as hinted by the sacrifice of pregnant sheep offered to them near Sikyon.\(^ {46}\) No home could flourish without their favour.\(^ {47}\)

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39. See, notoriously, Herod. 1.61.1 (Peisistratus wished no children with his new bride, daughter of the Alcmeonid Megacles); Herod. 5.72.1 and Arist. Ath. Pol. 20.1–4 (in 508/7 BCE, Cleomenes I, king of Sparta, ordered the exile of Cleisthenes and other seven hundred supporting families); Thuc. 1.127 (during the Peloponnesian war, in 432 BCE, the Spartans ordered to drive out the agos of the Alcmeonids from Athens; apparently in reverence of the gods, but primarily because Pericles was connected with them on his mother’s side: Athenians could start having a prejudice against him and feeling that his misfortune had contributed in causing the war).


41. Johnston (1999) 56 thinks in particular of infertility: “A group suffering from impaired fertility might come to suspect, therefore, that one or more of their Tritopatori was miaros. This would be the signal to perform the rituals described in the lex sacra. If improvement in the form of pregnancies and births did not follow, then another ritual would be performed a year later.”

42. See Cusumano (1997–1998) 779: even if attention has been paid, above all, to Meilichios, who is already amply documented at Selinous, it seems useful to point out that in column A the Zeus Meilichios occupies only a position of thirdmost importance, behind Eumenes and the Euminides, and that it is clearly specified that it concerns the Meilichios ἐν Μύσῳ.


45. Aesch. Ag. 1476–1479.

46. Paus. 2.11.4, see Henrichs (1994) 42; Johnston (1999) 273; Bremmer (2005). If identified with the Erinyes, they could have been invoked because of their link to blood pollution within the kin group, see Johnston (1999) 57.

47. Aesch. Eum. 895.
Once the polluted race achieved purification by complex rituals, and once the changes produced in the world of the deceased were completed, the rites of column A became more accessible, and acquired a greater flexibility. In the following year it was possible to use the public hiarà, and other people could be invited; after two years, it was permitted to perform the sacrifice at one’s own house, and perhaps the rites could have also been repeated in the third year. This public dimension of the rites can be interpreted as a confirmation of the successful purification of the ancestors. The end of the pollution had to be made known to all.

The dialogue between the private and public spheres in this ritual process is significant. The lack of a gentilicial name in the worship of the Tritopatores induced one to think that the rites were of civic and public nature. However, if anyone who incurred pollution could have celebrated the rites, the Tritopatores should not have been linked to a particular family. Furthermore, a polluted race was a risk for the whole city, as exemplified by the mythical and historical stories of the Labdacides and the Alcmeonids. The purification of someone’s polluted ancestors benefited, then, the whole civic community.

Within this background, the temporal limits of the Kotytia and of the Olympic truce appear more reasonable. The difficulty in understanding these limits consists in reconciling an annual festival with a quadrennial event. It has been suggested that the Olympic truce should be considered as the main temporal indicator, and perhaps the rites were performed only in the Olympic year. Otherwise, both dates were important, and the community had to be completely pure when taking part in these events. Along this last path of thought, it is plausible to imagine that the festival of the Kotytia and the Olympic truce have been chosen as termini ante quem in virtue of a functional link with the ritual prescriptions: the pollution envisaged in column A had to be removed before the Kotytia and the Olympic truce. If the source of the pollution was a curse landing on a whole race, it would have been transferred from generation to generation. It could render every effort ineffectual. Before propitiating new births and reproduction at the festival of the Kotytia, an annual rite of fertility, it was necessary to set the house free from its agos. Similarly, taking part in the Olympic

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52. JJK 27.

53. See Johnston (1999) 58: “(...) Behind this picture of the Kotytia as a fecundity festival we may glimpse why it was important to make sure that all the spirits responsible for facilitating reproduction during the succeeding year
games would have been more profitable without the negative influence of pollution.\textsuperscript{54}

The rites of column A were aimed, then, towards purifying a pollution that had not been originated by a present crime, but by a transgression perpetrated by the ancestors, whose effects fell on their descendants. This reading allows to explain the rites using only the elements in the text, without imagining other possible polluting causes, such as a murder, a sacrilegious act, or crimes committed during a \textit{stasis}, famine, or plague, to which there is no reference in column A.

2. Selinous: A Few Thoughts on Column B

Different but not easier problems are raised by the text of column B. Two key terms are attested here for the first time: \textit{ἱνωτορέκτας} and \textit{ἐλάστερος}. Their meaning, however, can be restored. \textit{Αὐτορ(ρ)έκτας} stems from \textit{ῥέζω}, “do, act,”\textsuperscript{55} and it has been translated as “homicide,”\textsuperscript{56} given the parallel with other synonyms such as \textit{αὐτοφόνος},\textsuperscript{57} \textit{αὐτόχειρ},\textsuperscript{58} \textit{αὐθέντης},\textsuperscript{59} \textit{αὐτουργός}.

\textit{Ἐλάστερος} was already attested as epithet of Zeus in some inscriptions of Paros,\textsuperscript{61} and it has been equated with (including the Tritopatores) were in good working order before the Kotyttia began.”

\textsuperscript{54} The continuity of family enterprises in athletic contexts was always glorified, see, for example, Pind. \textit{Isthm.} 6.3: \textit{εὐάθλος γενεά}; Paus. 6.7.1: at Olympia, the statue of the famous boxer Diagoras of Rhodes was placed between those of his sons and grandsons. See Pomeroy (1997) 86: “Family traditions of excellence in athletics were significant in the creation and commemoration of athletes.” Equally interesting is Pind. \textit{Pyth.} 7, dedicated to the Alcmeonid Megacles IV, ostracized in 486 BCE, just before his athletic victory. The epinicion, perhaps, was performed during a symposium at Delphis; he could not have been welcomed and celebrated in his hometown. The glorification of the family is accompanied with gnomic thoughts on the alternate circumstances of human beings, see Mingarelli (2001).


\textsuperscript{57} See \textit{e.g.} Aesch. Ag. 1091; Rhodes–Osborne no. 97.132.

\textsuperscript{58} See \textit{e.g.} Soph. \textit{OT} 231; Dem. 21.116.

\textsuperscript{59} See \textit{e.g.} Herod. 1.117; Eur. \textit{HF} 1359; Antiph. 3.3.4. See for a lexical analysis Gernet (1955) 29–50.

\textsuperscript{60} Cf. Aesch. \textit{Eum.} 336.

\textsuperscript{61} Sixth century BCE: \textit{IG XII} (5) 1027; \textit{IG XII Suppl.} 208; \textit{BE} 1999 no. 419.
Zeus Alastoros known from two inscriptions from the Thesmophorion of Thasos,\(^62\) and with the noun ἀλάστωρ.\(^63\) The elasteroi have been identified by the first editors with the avenging spirits that hunt the homicide on behalf of the victim.\(^64\) JJK compared the ritual management of the Selinuntine elasteros with the rites prescribed for the ἱκέσιος ἐπακτός in the lex cathartica of Cyrene.\(^65\) Furthermore, the ritual of hospitality of the spirit recalls Assyrian rituals for the banishing of evil and polluting spirits.\(^66\) This parallel with Cyrene depends on the interpretation of the lines B 3–4. The editors think that the subject of the participle ἑυποδεκόμενος is the homicide, active agent of all the ritual prescriptions in lines B 1–6, and that the object is the elasteros: the spirit, then, was received and hosted like at Cyrene.\(^67\) The salt was a symbol of hospitality, and had the function of establishing a strong tie with the guest.\(^68\) However, there are some troubling points in this hypothesis.\(^69\) It is especially hard to accept the need to entertain an elasteros. At Cyrene, the offering of a meal served to attract the spirit and subjugate it.\(^70\) At Selinous, there is no reference to objects that could represent the elasteros, nothing analogous to the Cyrenaic kolossoi, which must be carried out, far away from the city, together with the food offerings.\(^71\) Furthermore, it seems strange to give water for washing to a spirit: the verb ἀπονίπτω means in the medium diathesis “to wash one’s body.”\(^72\) The washing with water seems to be better understood as part of the purification process.\(^74\)

\(^{62}\) End fifth/beginning fourth century BCE, Rolley (1965) nos. 1, 4.


\(^{64}\) Comparing the elasteroi to the Erinyes, Clinton (1996) 179 cites Eur. IT 970f. (ὠσεὶ δ’ Ἐρινύων ὡς ἐπείσθησαν νόμῳ, δρόμοις ἀνιδρύτοις ἣλάστρουν μ’ αἰεί).

\(^{65}\) JJK 116–120, see Rhodes–Osborne no. 97.111–121 and infra.

\(^{66}\) JJK 41, 55, 59.


\(^{68}\) See Dem. 19.191; Lycoph. Alex. 134f. with Schol. ad loc. See also JJK 42.

\(^{69}\) Clinton (1996) 175.

\(^{70}\) On the discussion about this section cf. infra.

\(^{71}\) Maffi (2001) 211. Cf. Dubois (1995a) 141, who thinks that we can presume that small images were used also at Selinous; the presence of an object representing the spirit is suggested by the expressions τοί αὐτοὶ and ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἰτο.

\(^{72}\) See also Jordan (1996) 328: at Cyrene there is no offering of salt or water to the ἱκέσιος ἐπακτός.

\(^{73}\) See Hom. Od. 18.172, 179.

\(^{74}\) See Lupu (2005) 383: “Here water for washing is obviously provided for purification purposes.”
In light of these considerations, I would rather exclude the interpretation that the elasteros was the object of the participle ἡποδεκόμενος. The subject of the participle is the person that managed the rite of purification and received the polluted homicide. The presence of a second figure in the accomplishment of the rite of purification from blood pollution is consistent with other literary and epigraphical evidence. The Cyrenaica law would be a valid comparison for the section on the αὐτοφόνος. Certainly, this reading requires an abrupt change of subjects between lines B 3 and B 4, and between lines B 4 and B 5. However, it has been noted that in archaic laws it is often problematic to identify the subject of every provision. This change of subject would be less unusual than the continuous alternation between the third plural and the third singular person of the verbs in column A. Although this alternation could not be fortuitous, and it can be explained with a single individual performing the rites together with his group, it cannot be denied that most of the times the verbs do not have an explicit subject, and that the subjects can be implied by the plural or the singular form. In column B, it is harder to identify the protagonists of the prescribed actions, because there are two persons who are both subjects of verbs at the third person singular form.

The second person should probably be identified with the closest relative of the victim, who could be the same person responsible of the proclamation. Granting pardon to the one guilty of homicide, the family of the victim made known the time and the place of the purification of the culprit, indicating in this way the day from which he was not anymore a danger for the civic community. The individual guilty

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78. JJK 56 n. 2; Dimartino (2003) 324 n. 73.

79. Maffi (2001) 210; Dubois (2003) 121, who thinks in particular at the Gortyanian laws. Cf. also IG V (2) 262: there is a sudden change of subject at lines 14–15. To avoid the abrupt change of subject, the participle ἡποδεκόμενος could have a passive meaning, “after having been received,” but parallels are scant and late (Cass. Dio. 55.10; POxy 1894.14, sixth century CE). Otherwise, it could be restored on B 3f. – ἀποδεκόμενος, “accepting” (what one gives to him).

80. Lupu (2005) 381 n. 98. See also Jordan (1996) 328: “Since the document’s Greek is not particularly distinguished, as the bad orthography also suggests, abrupt changes of subject may not be entirely unexpected.”


83. Maffi (2001) 213, who compares the role of the family of the victim at Selinous and at Athens: at Selinous the proclamation acted as a counterbalance of the Athenian πρόρρησις, that excluded the culprit from public places.
of homicide probably being in exile, it is unclear how he could have carried out the proclamation.\textsuperscript{84}

If the one to be received was the one responsible for the homicide, and not the \textit{elasteros}, the order of the ritual actions appears more plausible. On B 4 \textit{ἄλς} was perhaps indicating the seawater, as probably in B 11.\textsuperscript{85} Salt and seawater had cathartic properties, and were used as agents of purification.\textsuperscript{86} It can be understood that the purification of the homicide was conveyed in receiving him and washing him with seawater (B 3–4). The elliptical Selinuntine text does not allow to find an unquestionable solution: the cathartic process has not been made explicit. But the presence of water as a cathartic element in other sources gives at least a slight amount of support to this reading.\textsuperscript{87}

After the washing, the man or woman guilty of homicide would be able to perform a sacrifice to Zeus. It has been questioned whether the sacrifice of a piglet in B 5 was a normal offering to Zeus or a \textit{καθάρσιον},\textsuperscript{88} since iconographical and literary sources indicate that the piglet’s blood was sprinkled over the killer’s hands.\textsuperscript{89} It is important to remember here that Georgoudi has stressed the importance of distinguishing, when possible, the “sacrifice” from the “purification.” She drew attention to the impropriety of a general use of the expression “cathartic sacrifice”: often the sacrifice was made after the purification, and it was aimed to thank the gods or to mark the reintegration in the civic community.\textsuperscript{90} At Selinous, the agent of the sacr-
rifice was the committer of homicide himself, and the piglet’s blood seems not to be used for an actual sprinkling over his hands done by someone else. Most probably, then, the piglet was an offering testifying his new state of purity. His return to everyday life was additionally denoted by the recovered freedom to talk, eat, and sleep wherever he preferred.91

A killer seeking purification at home after his exile was responsible for manslaughter.92 A different interpretation of the elasteros would confirm this legal aspect: the spirit was not an avenging one, but it was the evil genius that solicited the culprit to commit the crime.93 The Selinuntine rituals were prescribed for someone that killed involuntary without malice aforethought, since a demon induced him to act: the culprit was only an intermediary.94 The elasteros, then, was the cause, not the effect, of the crime.95

Although incisive parallels in literary sources support this reading,96 it has been rightly noted that it raises another problem: cathartic rites were aimed to remove the effects, not the cause, of a polluting transgression.97 In regards to this, it is worth to explore the nature of this blood pollution. The power of the elasteros could have worked in the same way as the agos: the culprit was the symbol and the incarnation


92. Dem. 23.72–73; Plat. Leg. 9.865c–d, 872e.


94. Ead. 345. She recalls the “religious criminality” of Gernet (1917, 20012) 305–346; see also L. Gernet in Di Donato (2008) 923–925. It should be noted that this durkheimian idea was considered a characteristic of a pre-legal society before the ‘birth’ of the polis. On the “religious criminality” of tragic heroes, see J.-P. Vernant in Vernant-Vidal-Naquet (1972) 28–31, 37–40, 43–74, and especially Id. p. 55: “Dans le contexte de cette pensée religieuse où l’acte criminel se présente, dans l’univers, comme une force démonique de souillure et, au-dedans de l’homme, comme un égarement de l’esprit, c’est toute la catégorie de l’action qui apparaît autrement organisée que chez nous. L’erreur, sentie comme une atteinte à l’ordre religieux, recèle une puissance néfaste qui déborde de beaucoup l’agent humain. L’individu qui la commet (ou, plus exactement, qui en est la victime) se trouve pris lui-même dans la force sinistre qu’il a déclenchée (ou qui s’exerce à travers lui)”.


of the committed crime, and he was subdued by a supernatural agency. In the Selinuntine text, the cause of an unlawful act could have been treated because the pollution was of demonic nature. To be prey to a demon was the same as to be impure. Purification was reached by setting the person free from the demon. Demonic possession was overcome thanks to cathartic rituals that functioned as a therapy.

On lines B 7–8 other kinds of elasteroi are mentioned: foreign or local demons, manifesting themselves by auditive or visual hallucinations, or instigator demons of any other type. These demons would have solicited someone to commit less serious crimes or transgressions. For the purification from them, one had to perform only the rituals in lines B 10–11: conceivably, the cathartic measures were diversified according to the degree of pollution. If for every kind of elasteroi the purificatory rite was the same, the provision of lines B 7–9 would have been inscribed after – not before – lines B 10–11, when the person was deemed completely pure.

The rite of purification from the various elasteroi and the conclusion of the purification of the homicide are described at the lines B 10–13.


99. Cf. the distinction between a physical and a demonic pollution among the Sherpa, Tibetan Buddhists living in East Nepal: the cathartic ceremony, tu, functions in case of a physical pollution as birth and death, while the sang ceremony is celebrated against demonic assaults. The demons manifest themselves in the aggressive and violent instincts of men or in the cosmic forces of chaos and anarchy. See Ortner (1973), (1978).

100. On purification as a therapy see the figure of Melampus, μάντις ὢν καὶ τὴν διὰ φαρμάκων καὶ καθαρμῶν θεραπείαν πρῶτος εὑρηκώς (Apollod. Bibl. 2.27.5–6). See Hoessly (2001); Sorensen (2002) 95–117.

101. In B 7, πατρόιον, “ancestral,” should mean “national, local” rather than “of the family,” cf. A 17 τὰ πατρόια, the ancestral rites of the civic community. See also Jordan (1996) 328: “foreign or native.”

102. Other interpretations: different victims (stranger or host/kinsman) or vengeful spirits manifested in various forms (heard/seen), JJK 44; Clinton (1996) 178; Johnston (1999) 52; Dubois (1995a) 141f., (2003) 121f., (2008) 61f.; Lupu (2005) 385. Robertson (2010) 220–222 refers the four adjectives to the type of ritual (rite of hospitality/customary rite) and to the ways in which the ritual was apprehended (heard/seen).

The purification would consist in the sacrifice performed on the public altar,\textsuperscript{104} the marking of a boundary sprinkling seawater from a golden vessel, and the draining of the animal’s blood into the earth. This time, contrary to the animal sacrifice of line B 5, the θυσία could be interpreted as a “cathartic sacrifice,” as seems to be suggested by the participle θύσας followed by the expression καθαρὸς ἔστο.

3. Uses and Functions of the Selinuntine Tablet

The Selinuntine text must now be evaluated in its entirety. The interwoven relationship between the private and public spheres of the rites induces to think that a civic body promulgated the document, although leaving to private citizens and families the freedom to perform the rites when needed.\textsuperscript{105} From the careful details and poetic expressions such as ἀθανάτοισι,\textsuperscript{106} it can be deduced that religious experts, local or foreign, contributed to its drafting.

According to the interpretation here followed, the use of tablet concerned pollution and purification. Other functions have been suggested, and the text has been associated with agrarian cults.\textsuperscript{107} Festivals for the harvest or good weather could appear more reasonable when every provision is considered by itself, unrelated to the others and linked to a particular cult. The rituals were performed in different times of the year.\textsuperscript{108} On the other hand, reading each entire column as pertaining to a whole ceremony, purification seems the most likely purpose, although the interpretation of the root cause of the miasma remains at a hypothetical level.

Accepting the thematic unity around the categories of pollution and purity, the text would be organised in two sections, each one dealing with a specific case of pollution. The first section sorted out the pollution of ancestors, a stain that could be manifested in the form of calamities, misfortunes, infertility, ineffectualness of actions, and ruinous projects. The second one concerned the pollution of a homicide and the demonic possession. It seems that the civic authorities


\textsuperscript{106}. Col. B 13. See JJK 45, 58f.


\textsuperscript{108}. Robertson (2010).
deemed it necessary to regulate widespread emotions with collective norms.\(^{109}\) A social, legal, and religious answer was needed for the fear of polluted ancestors, the fear of the *elasteroi*, and the fear of the effects of these pollutions in the everyday life. The city asserted its ability in controlling the world of the deceased and of demons, containing the negative consequences of illicit acts.\(^{110}\) Gentilicial groups or single individuals celebrated the cathartic ceremonies, but in either case rituals benefited the whole civic community. To this day, the cult of Zeus *Eumenes* is attested only here.\(^{111}\) It cannot be established with certainty whether this uniqueness depends on the state of our evidence, or whether the cult was set up by this document, so as to uphold new resolutions on sensitive matters.

### 4. Hikesioi at Cyrene

The second document I intend to consider here is the *lex cathartica* of Cyrene. As is well known, it prescribes ritual norms of purity for different circumstances, for instance plague, use of a sacred wood, sex and birth, funerary rites and heroic cults, animal sacrifice, marriage, as well as pregnancy and miscarriage.\(^{112}\) The last three paragraphs of the text are of interest because of a parallel with Selinous.\(^{113}\) This

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109. On ritual norms and emotions in sacred regulations, see Chaniotis (2010).

110. Cf. Johnston (1999) 61: “The dead could indeed cause citywide problems. However, the very fact that the Selinuntine *lex sacra* and the Cyrenean inscription were public documents indicates that cities wanted to ensure that ghostly problems suffered by individuals could be cleared up quickly and correctly.” Cf. also JJK 131 and Eck (2012) 273f. on the manipulation of evil spirits in the “*lex sacra*” and in the *defixiones*.

111. One should not consider the royal cult of Zeus *Eumenes*, worshipped at Pergamum, see JJK 77; Robertson (2010) 87f. The cult of the Eumenides was already attested at Selinous, as testified by the theophoric anthroponym Εὐμενίδοτος (*IGDS* 50, funerary stele, sixth century BCE), and at Entella, where there was the month Εὐμενιδεῖος (*IGDS* 204, 205, 207, bronze tablets, third century BCE).


113. Rhodes–Osborne no. 97.110–141:

110 ἰκέσίων

_ἰκέσίου ἐπακτός· αἰ ἐπιπεμφθή εἰπὶ τῶν ὁικίων, αἱ μέγ κα ἃστοι ἀφ ὀνύμαξαι, ὁνυματί τῶν προειπῶν τρίς ἁμέρας· αἰ δ[ὲ] κα τεθνάκη ἔγγαιος ἢ ἄλλῃ παλύῳ ἠ; αἰ μέγ κα ἴσαι τὸ ὄνυμα, ὀνυμαστὶ προερεῖ, αἰ δὲ κα μὴ ἃστοι, “ὦ ἄνθρωπε, αἴτε ἀνὴρ αἴτε γυνὴ ἐσσι”, κολοσὸς ποιήσαντα ἔρσενα καὶ θήλεια[ν] ἢ καλίνος ἢ γαίνος ὑποδεξάμενον παρτιθ̣[έ] -

115 καὶ ἡ καὶ τὸ ὄνυμα, ὀνυμαστὶ προερεῖ, αἰ δὲ κα μὴ ἃστοι, “ὦ ἄνθρωπε, αἴτε ἀνὴρ αἴτε γυνὴ ἐσσι”, κολοσὸς ποιήσαντα ἐρσενα καὶ θήλεια[ν] ἢ καλίνος ἢ γαίνος ὑποδεξάμενον παρτιθ[έ] -

120 μεν τὸ μέρος πάντων ἔπει δὲ κα ποιήσεις πάρτιθ[έ] -

_ἰκέσίος ἄτερος, τετελεσμένος ἢ ἄτελής, ἱσ matchmaking. . .
section has a title of its own: ἱκεσίων has been engraved with larger and spaced out letters on a whole line.\textsuperscript{114} Rituals concern three different types of ἱκέσιοι. Ἦκεσιος is attested in Athenian tragedies as an adjective, and as an epithet of Zeus, protector of suppliants;\textsuperscript{115} as a noun it has been considered a synonym of ἱκέτης.\textsuperscript{116} The interpretation of the nature of these ἱκέσιοι has been controversial. In current scholarship, there are mainly three readings: (i) all the three are de-

\begin{verbatim}
σάμενος ἐπὶ τοῖς δαμοσίοις ἱαρόις· αἱ μέγα καὶ προ[φέ]-
ρηται, ὑπόσσοι καὶ προφέρουσαι, οὔτως τελίσκ[ε]-
125 σθαι· αἱ δὲ καὶ μὴ προφέρουσαι, γὰς καρπὸν θ[ύ]-
νεω δὶς τὸσσα· αἱ δὲ καὶ διαλίσθη τέκκνον ἐπὶ[λα]-
θόμενον καὶ οἱ προφέρουσαι, ὧ τι καὶ οἱ μαντε[υ]-
ομένωι ἀναιρεθῆς, τοῦτο ἀποτεισεῖ τοῖς θεοῖς κ[αί]
130 θυσεῖ, αἱ μέγα καὶ ἵσαι, ἐπὶ τοῖς πατρῶιοι· αἱ δὲ μὴ, [χρῆ]-
σοσθαι.

ἱκέσιος τρίτος, αὐτοφόνος· ἀφικετεύει ἐς πολίαν καὶ τριϕυλίαν· ὡς δὲ καταγγήλε[ι] ἱκέ-
135 ῶν καὶ χρῖσει καὶ ἐξίμεν ἐς τὰν δαμοσί[αν]

(110) Of Suppliants. (111ff.) Imposed suppliants. If a suppliant is sent to the house, if (the householder) knows from whom he came, he shall make a proclamation and name him for three days. And if he has died in the land or has perished somewhere else, if he knows his name, he is to call out by name, but if he does not know (he is to proclaim): ’O person, whether you are a man or a woman’. He is to make figurines, a male and a female, either from wood or from clay, and give them hospitality, offering them a portion of everything. When you have performed the customary rites, carry the figurines and the portions to an unworked wood and deposit them. (122ff.) Second suppliant, paying taxes or free from tributes, who has sat down at the public sanctuary. If there is a pronouncement, for however much is pronounced, offer consequently. If there is no pronouncement, let there be a sacrifice of the fruit of the earth and a libation annually for ever. But if he omits it, then twice as much. If a child forgets and omits and there is a pronouncement to him, whatever is told him when he consults the oracle, he is to pay this to the god and make sacrifice at his ancestral tomb, if he knows where this is, and if not to ask the oracle. (132ff.) Third suppliant, murderer. He is to present the suppliant to the --- office and the three tribes. When he announces that he has come, having set him down on the threshold on a white fleece, wash and anoint him and go out to the public road, and all to be silent while they are outside, obeys the announcer. The one presented as a suppliant is to go -- -- and those who follow --- sacrifices ---. Trans. from Rhodes–Osborne (2003) 499–501, slightly modified.

monic spirits; \(^{117}\) (ii) the first is a spirit, while the other two are men, suppliants; \(^{118}\) (iii) all the three are human suppliants. \(^{119}\)

The publication of the “*lex sacra*” of Selinous, and the parallel made by its first editors between the ἐλάστερος of column B and the ἱκέσιος ἐπακτός, reinforced the idea that both documents referred to a spirit to host and to drive off. \(^{120}\) This interpretative line has been criticised by those scholars who think that the ἱκέσιος is not a spirit, but a suppliant man: the equivalence ἐλάστερος-ἱκέσιος ἐπακτός is not legitimate. \(^{121}\)

Indeed, it seems to me more plausible that the three paragraphs all concerned the same entity. Although the same term might indicate different beings, \(^{122}\) the consequential numbering of the ἱκέσιοι (ἄτερος, τρίτος) induces one rather to hypothesise a homogeneous nature. \(^{123}\) The most harmonizing reading seems to identify three suppliants of human nature, although the first case remains odd. \(^{124}\) In this first paragraph, the repetition of compounds in ἐπι- (ἐπακτός, ἐπιπέμπω) seems to suggest that the action was an aggressive one. \(^{125}\) Ἐπακτός denotes something hostile: \(^{126}\) there is a reference to someone or something opposed to the house. It is tempting to speculate, though impossible to prove, that there was a deviation from the norm: a foreign suppliant was received, and then he turned himself out against the home. The text, in a brachillogical expression, omitted that the suppliant had been thrown out of the house. Rejected suppliants should not have been

\(^{117}\) Stukey (1937) 36; Burkert (1984) 68–73.


\(^{119}\) Ferri (1927); De Sanctis (1927); Radermacher (1927); von Wilamowitz Möllendorff (1927); Latte (1928); Vogliano (1928); Oliverio (1933); Luzzatto (1936) 92–100; Servais (1960) 121–129; Dobias-Lalou (1997) 268; Kontorini (1987); Kontorini (1989) 17–29; Cassella (1997). Robertson (2010) 357–369 offered a completely new interpretation: ἱκέσιος is an adjective used substantively with the noun καθαρμός understood, “of suppliant (purifications).”


\(^{122}\) See Lupu (2005) 283: “A modern code would not group under the same heading a supernatural visitant and a human suppliant. But this does not mean that the promulgators of this code (ascribed to Apollo in the heading) would not have done so. They seem to have applied the word hikesios to different yet semantically related phenomena.”

\(^{123}\) See also Giuliani (1998) 73 n. 21.


\(^{125}\) Parker (1983) 348.

The rejected person could have violated hospitality rules, or he could himself turn out to be an enemy or someone imposed by an enemy. There are some famous cases of violation of hospitality. Paris abducted the wife of his guest Menelaos; Eolos sent Odysseus away from his palace, because he was hated by the gods; Aristogoras, tyrant of Miletus, went into Cleomenes’ house as a suppliant, and then tried to corrupt him. To refuse a request for reception was not a law-breaking wrong. After a rejection, the suppliant could leave or stay, and the host could ignore him or banish him out violently. The last option was the most dangerous, and one could incur the wrath of the gods. There are several cases of suppliants forced to leave their shelter, an altar or a sanctuary, and then killed. There is no exact parallel with our hypothetical circumstance at Cyrene, a suppliant welcomed in a private house and then driven off. However, the consequences of a comparable action would be consistent with the topic of the other provisions of the law, which is to say with the topic of pollution. When the herald of Eurystheus pulled Heracles’ sons away from the altar of Zeus Agoraios, Iolaus deplored the violence and the defiling of the suppliants wreaths, “a disgrace to the city.” It can be imagined that at Cyrene it was deemed necessary to regulate a case of a violation of the ἱκετεία. If the suppliant was alive, a public proclamation was ordered, while if he was dead, the ritual with the kolossoi should be performed. Because of the involvement of the Underworld, the ritual was complex. The kolossoi rite symbolically represented the refused hospitality: the banquet was re-enacted and at the same time exorcised. That the kolossos stood in for a human being, rather than an evil spirit, seems to be confirmed by the parallel with the famous Founders’ stele from Cyrene, in which the kolossos was used to ritually replace those breaking the oath, that is, the real persons. Furthermore, the uncertainty about the knowledge of the name seems to be more logical if it referred to a person rather than to a ghost. The lex cathartica regulated, then, the ritual reparation for having violated the norms of supplication. When the kolossos and ta mere were brought in the wood, the householder was finally set free from the hostile suppliant, perhaps imposed by an enemy. This reading is merely hypothetical, but it is coherent with the other sections of the

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127. See Naiden (2006) 129: “Ordinary though rejection is, scholars seldom acknowledge it.” For a philosophical analysis on the hospes who turns out to be an hostis, see Montandon (2004).
129. Hom. Od. 10.73–75.
130. Herod. 5.51.
133. Cf. Traulsen (2004) 192: the ceremony with the kolossoi was performed in any case.
134. SEG IX 3.44–49 = Meiggs-Lewis, GHI no. 5. For a definition of kolossos, see Vernant (1965); Dickie (1996); Dobias-Lalou (2000) 272f.
text, in particular with those about a defilement provoked by an error, carelessness or a transgression.\textsuperscript{135}

The understanding of the second category of suppliants is no less difficult. The suppliant was sheltered in a sanctuary. This ικέσιος was τετελεσμένος ἢ ἀτελής, a specification that is obscure. Without surveying all the interpretations,\textsuperscript{136} here the possibility will be considered that the ικέσιος was a suppliant of human nature, and τετελεσμένος and ἀτελής meant respectively “taxpaying” and “exempt from tax.”\textsuperscript{137} Perhaps, when someone was requesting to be accepted as a suppliant at the public sanctuary, probably that of Apollo,\textsuperscript{138} he had to pay a tribute irrespective of his fiscal condition. As far as I know, there is no precise parallel for an economic tie between the suppliant and the sanctuary. However, a believer or a pilgrim had to pay a fee, for example, for gaining access to a sanctuary for the first time, for performing sacrifices, for the consultation of oracles, or for the practice of healing treatments.\textsuperscript{139}

At Cyrene, there was an injunction, the received suppliant had to pay the price set by the oracle, also if the person had a tax-free status (ἀτέλεια). Without an explicit injunction, he had to offer fruits and libations every year for his entire life. Defaults in the payments were sanctioned. In this highly hypothetical picture, the defilement was provoked by the non-fulfillment of the payment.\textsuperscript{140} To shelter suppliants was an onerous task for the sanctuary, and involved a great organising effort: a request for a compensation would not be completely unexpected.\textsuperscript{141}

\textsuperscript{135} Cf. in the cathartic lex the ll. 26–29 on the sacrifice of a victim μὴ νόμος. Similarly, in the bronze tables of Gubbio, an extraordinary document for the religious history of pre-Roman Italy, purification was performed in case there was an omission, error, delinquency or transgression in the sacrifices to Jupiter Grabovius (Prosdocimi (1984) 197–200, 204f., tablet VIa.29–55, VIb.30–32 propitiatory offerings for a purification made by Tefer Jovius. These tablets were engraved between the third and the second century BCE, but preserve older liturgical texts).


\textsuperscript{137} Cf. Robertson (2010) 362: “As a translation ‘paid or not taxed’ would be accurate, but ‘paid or not paid’ is better because it reproduces the assonance.” He thinks that the oracle prescribed a payment for its consultation.

\textsuperscript{138} Servais (1960) 133.

\textsuperscript{139} See the rules and the rates of the Amphiareion of Oropos in the fourth century BCE: LSGC 69.20–24 (payment of nine obols), ll. 25–36 (sacrificial rules), ll. 39–43 (payment and registration of persons staying overnight); NGSL 9; LSGC 74 (fourth century BCE), tax for the consultation of the oracle of Trophonius at Lebadea. Further examples in Lupu (2003) 335–339; see Melfi (2007) 41, 464, 485, for the preliminary payments in the Asklepieia. For the expenses of a pilgrim, see also Dillon (1997).

\textsuperscript{140} See Servais (1960) 138: “il est normal d’offrir un sacrifice expiatoire pour apaiser celui dont on n’a pas respecté l’engagement.” For the pollution caused by a missing payment for a sacrifice, see LSGC Suppl. 72.3–5 (Thasos, first century BCE): τῶι δὲ μὴ ἀπαρξαμένων καθότι προγέγραπται ἐνθυμιστὸν εἶναι.

\textsuperscript{141} On the concrete problems around the hiketeia, as for example the board and lodging for several people, see Sinn (1993) 94–97.
Finally, the last paragraph is about a third ἱκέσιος, most probably a man, one who had committed homicide and who needs to be purified. This suppliant is designated as αὐτοφόνος: “kin-killer”, “slaying with one’s own hand.” A less restrictive “killer” seems the most appropriate meaning for the context. This section would be extremely interesting for the analysis of purificatory rituals after homicide, but unfortunately the last lines of the inscription are fragmentary.

The verb ἀφικετεύειν opens the ritual sequence. It is also attested in a document from Lindos concerning suppliants, where it indicates the figure that plead for the suppliant and received him. The element of receiving the person to purify recalls also the Selinuntine tablet. At Cyrene, the host had to plead for the suppliant with two offices that are hard to explain. The τριφυλία is attested only here: it seems to be a representing body of three tribes. To present the suppliant to the political delegates guaranteed the official and public character of the rituals. For restoring the lacunose name of the second body, πολία, several ideas of comparable validity have been proposed: τριπολία, ἐπιπολία, ἀρχεπολία, δικασπολία, θυηπολία, μεταπολία, ἵαροπολία. The only firm point is that it is an abstract form of a compound of -πολος, indicating a public office. It is unclear whether the civic bodies were merely validating the performance of the rite, or were deciding whether to accept or reject the request of the suppliant.

142. See LSJ s.v. αὐτοφόνος.
146. Lines B 3-4: ὑποδεκόμενος.
150. Oliverio (1933): civic center of the city.
151. Sokolowski (1962): lawcourt whose members were elected by three phylai.
156. See Naiden (2006) 186 with n. 68.
The herald, as in Lindos, was announcing the arrival of the suppliant, who was being seated on a threshold on a white fleece, and who was washed and anointed. Then, the little procession went out into the public road, probably directed towards the place for the concluding sacrifices. On the road, the herald ordered the participants in the rite to stay in silence. The imposition of silence had several functions. Because of the polluting presence of the homicide it was dangerous to communicate. This silence reveals the temporary suspension of the social order, creating a distance from a “dislocated figure.” Similarly, at Selinous, after the purification the killer gained the permission of talking again, a fundamental symbol of his reintegration and of the end of his marginality. At Cyrene, the silence imposed on the killer was met with a similar silence imposed on the bystanders. It is realistic to imagine that the silence of the bystanders was likely not certain: the killer might have attracted the insults and abusive shouts of other citizens, perhaps opposed to his readmittance. The invectives of Jason against Medea perfectly exemplify the kind of language a killer could expect. The requested silence, then, could also show a concern for the public order.

157. SEG XXXIX 729.5, 7: τοὶ κάρυκες.
158. The restoration by Ferri (1927), ἱκεσθαί, has been widely accepted, and it seems preferable to δέκεσθαι suggested by Robertson (2010), “when he has announced that he [receives].”
159. On the identification of this building in the Cyrenaic topography, see Laronde (1987) 178. On the seated posture as symbol of submission and mortification, see Montiglio (2000) 19f.
162. JJK 8 6.
165. Contra: Montiglio (2000) 22: “the silence that receives this murderer is not dictated by a mere concern for civic discipline.”
ing a funeral cortege,\footnote{166} although the contexts and the functions of silence are rather different. The killer could have provoked feelings of frustration and revenge, while the rite of purification was aimed to overcome negative states and to reconcile both sides involved in the crime.

5. Conclusions

It is now time to answer the initial question about a reasonable comparison of these two documents. It has been suggested that the cultural analogies can be ascribed to a koinè of Doric origin that reached Cyrene through Thera and Selinous through Megara.\footnote{167} However, it is not necessary to postulate a common origin. At least in regard to the purification of the individual guilty of homicide, the rituals norms seem to have had a Panhellenic character. Every “law” had a narrow local range, but similar provisions appear in different, and distant, geographic places. The comparison between these ritual normative inscriptions of Selinous and Cyrene can be practicable under two aspects: 1) the general outline of the documents, and 2) their contents, and the problems addressed.

Firstly, the Selinuntine text was supposedly dealing with a pollution caused by the ancestors, with a polluted homicide, and with the pollution provoked by tormenting spirits. It amounted to a sort of vademecum of cathartic practices to perform in various situations. The first case required more complex rituals since it envisaged interactions with and changes in the Underworld. The tablet, then, falls perfectly within the documentary typology of other cathartic “laws”: a series of ritual norms to be followed in case of different pollutions. Similarly, a logic of records structures the lex cathartica of Cyrene: every kind of pollution provides for a precise cathartic procedure. At Cleonai, a very fragmentary inscription seems to be organised in clauses, and every clause seems to decree when there was a risk of incurring pollution and when it was necessary to perform purificatory rites; it was perhaps related to bloodshed and different ways of killing.\footnote{168} The same outline can be found in a long cultual regulation from Cos, which offers the most appropriate solution for several cases of pollution, purificatory acts, and purity requirements as necessary conditions for the practice of the priesthood to Demeter Olym-

\footnote{166. See LSCG 77 C 13–15, Delphis, fourth century BCE (there is another copy at Panopeus, sixth century BCE, see McK. Camp (2003) 184f.): τὸν δὲ νεκρὸν κεκαλυμμένον φερέτω σιγᾶι. On the emotions involved in funerary rituals and the sacred regulations, see Chaniotis (2010) 220–223.}

\footnote{167. Lazzarini (1998), with an analysis of the cult of Zeus Melichios and the Eumenides at Selinous and at Cyrene (see the inscriptions from the rocky sanctuary of Ain-El-Hofra, SEG IX 325, 327, 330, 336, fourth century BCE; on this sanctuary, see Fabbricotti (2007), in part. 95f. on the dedications to the Eumenides).}

\footnote{168. IG IV 1607 = LSCG 56 = Koerner, Gesetzestexte no. 32 = Nomima II.79, first half of the sixth century BCE.
Another inscription, from Latos, seems to grant a pure state to the person who involuntarily killed in particular circumstances. A similar organization of thought, a purity norm for every occasion, is characteristic of the inscriptions regulating the purity requested before accessing a sanctuary, although they are more schematic.

Secondly, the subject matter of the Selinuntine and the Cyrenaic inscriptions analysed here seems to concern the pollution perhaps caused by bloodshed. Selinous preserves a detailed, though puzzling, description of the performative process of the purificatory rites. The miasma of the killer could be of demonic nature. Polluted ancestors could negatively influence the life of their descendants. These were considered urgent problems to tackle through an official document. Also at Cyrene, the purification of the homicide was believed a question to be institutionally faced. The necessity to regulate blood pollution can be found in other inscriptions. At Mantinea, a murder in the sanctuary of Alea obliged the civic authorities to deliberate the banishment of the culprits and their reprobation from the goddess. At Dikaia, after a civil war, the popular assembly decreed that the return to civic peace was to be confirmed by the performance of purificatory rites: every citizen was purifying his fellow citizen and being purified by him. At Thasos, a washing and a libation to Zeus Katharsios were perhaps prescribed in case of blood pollution, but the inscription is too fragmentary to venture any conjecture.

The social weight of blood pollution should not be overestimated. However, the belief in the blood pollution and in an effective rite of purification offered pre-established rules of interaction in a situation of crisis. They allowed to understand why it was required to behave in a certain way. Channeling the negative emotions around the homicide, the rites of purification contributed to limiting social tensions and clashes between fellow citizens. Without the need of postulating an evolution from blood feud and religious sanctions to a

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169. *LSCG* 154, first half of the third century BCE.

170. *ICret.* 1.16.6 = *LSCG Suppl.* 112, second century BCE.


173. Voutiras–Sismanidis (2007), second quarter of the fourth century BCE; see Salvo (2012b) with previous bibliography. For other *staseis* that provoked a miasma or an agos see Paus. 2.20.1–2 (Argos, offering of an agalma to Zeus Meilichios); Arist. *Pol.* 1303a 28–31, Heracl. Pont. fr. 49 Wehrli *apud* Athen. 12.521f. (Sybaris: as consequence of a sacrilegious pollution the city was completely destroyed, see on this Ampolo (1993) 218f.).

174. *LSCG Suppl.* 65, beginning fourth century BCE. See Chaniotis (1988) 16 on this inscription and on its possible link with other inscriptions concerning the life of the athlet Theogenes.
legal management of the crime, the belief in the pollution cooperated with the laws to control the public order and to overcome any feeling of victimization and injustice. The rites, following the norms prescribed by official documents, were working automatically and immediately, and their authority was recognised by everyone in the civic community. It is within this picture that the formal propositions for ritual actions from Selinous and Cyrene could be imagined to have operated.

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175. For a critique of the evolutionary paradigm in the history of Greek homicide law, see Salvo (2011).

176. On automatism and moral distinctions in the concept of Greek purity, see Chaniotis (1997), (2012).
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