

6. The development of supplication

Homeric supplication

In Homer is reflected a relatively simple, insecure society, one where kinship and commonality of household were the adhesives that held society together. Loyalty and obedience were owed to the κύριος of the household, but to no other. The individuals within the household enjoyed certain rights while they owed these obligations, and in return they gained protection. These rights and responsibilities, however, were bounded by the οἶκος. There was no organisation above that of the household. Nor was there any understanding of the concept of human rights: the only rights anyone had, even the right to exist, were gained through relationship to the οἶκος. Anyone not of that household was a stranger, and automatically a potential threat. Communities were divided from each other: if they were not at war, they were likely to be in a state of armed neutrality. At times, individuals were forced to seek shelter apart from the household of their origin, from their community, whether through warfare, internal strife, or some other cause. In the absence of any organisation formally linking independent communities, and being unable to survive alone, those individuals were forced to seek integration into another οἶκος. First, however, they had to overcome the perception that they were a potential enemy. This could be achieved through the medium of supplication.

Gould advances the interesting speculation that supplication at the hearth may have been the original form of the ritual.¹ When Odysseus supplicates Arete on Skheria, he sits on the hearth (Odyssey 7.153-54). This is apparently his own embellishment of Nausikaa's detailed instructions

¹ Gould, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-4 n. 100a

(ibid., 6.310-11). Perhaps, however, the details of the instructions themselves were the embellishment; perhaps the ritual of supplication within the οἶκος demanded that the suppliant sit on the hearth. Themistokles, too, may be using the oldest (and therefore strongest?) form of the ritual in his supplication at Admetos' hearth (Thucydides 1.136.3). Andokides leaps to the hearth when he is about to be arrested (Andokides, On his Return 15). In an emergency, such as that which Andokides faced, it is likely the suppliant would cling to the nearest holy site. The use of another holy place for supplication, the altar, may have been a secondary development, according to Gould. The origin of this, he suggests, may have been the idea of the public hearth or altar as a symbol of the community being separated from the notion of the domestic hearth as symbolic of the leader's οἶκος. To sit at the leader's hearth was to appeal to that leader; to sit at the community's hearth, or altar, was to appeal to that community. Battlefield supplications were, he argues, "crisis extensions" of an existing ritual, and not the earliest form.² This suggestion is, of course, speculative; nevertheless, it does seem to accord with the evidence, and while it cannot be proven, it is difficult to disprove it.

Supplication, of course, appealed to the one institution that all Greeks shared - their religion. Suppliants were sacred to Zeus ἱκέσιος, and as such could claim protection from all who worshipped him, from all Greeks. George Calhoun observes that divine sanctions are invoked against any who transgress certain moral codes whenever secular justice has been found to be inadequate.³ Secular justice certainly was inadequate: there was, in fact, no secular justice binding on all communities. Therefore, the only protection that people outside their own territory could claim was that

² Ibid.

³ George M. Calhoun, "Polity and society", in Alan J.B. Wace and Frank H. Stubbings (edd.), A Companion to Homer (London: Macmillan, 1963), p. 450

of the suppliant and often, subsequently, guest-friend, under the usually implicit threat of divine displeasure if the supplication were rejected. In each case, suppliants attempted to create a personal bond between themselves and the individuals supplicated. Odysseus, in his guise as a Cretan, tells Eumaios how he successfully supplicated the king of the Egyptians, when his companions were either killed in battle or captured. Though the stranger was clearly an enemy of his people, the Egyptian king honoured the suppliant, and even protected him against the Egyptian army. In this way the king became the substitute kinsman of the suppliant, valuing him even over his own slain people (*Odyssey* 14.278-84). In such a situation a man would certainly need protection. Among the Phaiekans Odysseus needs just such protection, as well as assistance. Cast up on a Phaiekan beach, Odysseus is alone, destitute: he is particularly vulnerable to the hostility of any he might meet. Hostile the Phaiekans are, according to Athene (*ibid.*, 7.32-33). To overcome this, Odysseus performs an elaborate ritual of supplication, clasping the queen's knees, speaking pleadingly to her, then sitting by the hearth (*ibid.*, 7.142-54). This (eventually) has the effect of binding Alkinoos and Arete to him as his protectors. The suppliant, declares Alkinoos, is to a civilised man like a brother (*ibid.*, 8.546-47). "Brother" is not only a term of affection (perhaps not a term of affection at all), but an acceptance that the suppliant may claim the same right to protection and vengeance as may a kinsman. This status as near-kinsman is achieved in two stages: first, Odysseus supplicates Arete (and, by implication, Alkinoos). After Alkinoos raises the suppliant, Odysseus is accepted as a guest-friend, and seated next to the king in an honoured position (*ibid.*, 7.168-71). This relationship is between the two men only: their interchanges are guardedly courteous, but one of the Phaiekans is emboldened to insult Odysseus when the stranger indicates reluctance to compete in an athletic display (*ibid.*, 8.159-64). Despite Alkinoos'

responsibility for Odysseus' safety, the Phaiakan is not rebuked for his insolence by the king.

The relationship between Akhilleus and his suppliant Priamos is just as personal. Even before the supplication, Hermes, in Akhaian disguise, refuses a gift from Priamos, saying that to accept it would be against the wishes of Akhilleus (*Iliad* 24.433-36). Though Akhilleus, in response to divine instructions, raises the suppliant Priamos and bids him seat himself, the relationship is fragile: when Priamos seems about to break from the ritual pattern, Akhilleus warns him that his life may be in danger despite his supplication, and the implicit divine protection (*ibid.*, 24.513-16, 553-54, 568-70). The Trojan king's only defence is Akhilleus; if the hero were to forget his obligation, he would be vulnerable indeed. Akhilleus, in having a bed made up for his suppliant, is careful to keep his presence in the camp a secret from Agamemnon (*ibid.*, 24.650-55), for the Mykenaian king would be under no obligation to Priamos. The relationship, fragile though it is, exists only between the two participants in the supplication ritual. Akhilleus can guarantee him safety from Akhilleus' own followers, but from no-one else among the host. Indeed, Priamos makes a precipitate departure fearing that others in the camp may capture him and demand a ransom for him (*ibid.*, 24.683-88). In a later age, Akhilleus, in dealing favourably with an avowed enemy, would be guilty of treason. So too would Glaukos and Diomedes, who, despite being on opposing sides, and in the midst of battle, exchange first genealogies then armour, in token of their formal friendship (*ibid.*, 6.224-36). Their loyalty to each other, sealed by and inherited from their ancestors, is greater than that to their comrades.

Post-Homeric supplication

This was effective while communities were focussed on one powerful individual, where loyalty was owed to one man, who was free to form relationships with strangers outside, and without regard for, the community. When cities developed their own laws and definitions of justice, people could depend on human laws, rather than relying to such an extent on divine sanctions.⁴ In return for this security, the new political unit demanded total loyalty from its citizens. Many, however, tried to live by the old aristocratic codes of behaviour, with personal alliances outside the city overriding the interests of the city itself. This was not tolerated. Pausanias' intrigues with his city's enemies caused him to be condemned to death, despite his seeking supplication in a temple. Notwithstanding the fact that his actions constituted treachery, two of the ephors were sufficiently sympathetic to him to signal a warning (Thucydides 1.134.1-3). Perhaps it may be inferred that these two still saw their friendship with the accused as being more important than civic duty, than the strict observance of the law. Pausanias himself put his own ambition above allegiance to his city. However, the city demanded different loyalties;⁵ those who seemed to betray those loyalties could expect no mercy, despite supplicatory gestures. Individuals who were threatened with punishment (either justly or unjustly) were aware of this: by clinging to an altar, they were attempting to use the implicit threat of divine disapproval to avoid that punishment.

Generosity to suppliants was an aristocratic virtue, one which the heroes of legend could practice without posing any danger to themselves. While the suppliant remained weak and dependent, there could be no

⁴ Nilsson, *op. cit.*, p. 77

⁵ Gabriel Herman, *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 2

threat; indeed, there must accrue positive value in the forging of a personal alliance, one which may serve as a safeguard for the host in times of strife. The involvement of more citizens in the affairs of the community, however, complicated people's reaction to supplicatory gestures. The concept, however, persisted; efforts were therefore made to fit this ancient virtue into the modern context. Aiskhylos, in his Suppliants, clearly demonstrates this attempt to reconcile past but still revered values with present political realities. The Danaids, fleeing from what they perceive as insupportable persecution, seek refuge at an altar in Argos which is common to a group of gods. When they make their formal appeal for succour to Pelasgos, king of Argos, they use the second person singular, that is, they direct their appeal to him as an individual, not to the larger group of which he is a representative (Aiskhylos, Suppliants 324). Pelasgos, though he notes the assent of the gods to the Danaids' appeal (ibid., 354-55), is not persuaded; he refuses to behave as a hero of old by ignoring the interests of the citizens of Argos. He declares his firm intention to consult them before he will raise the suppliants from their refuge. In an interestingly anachronistic argument, he explains his scruples by pointing out that it is not at his private house that they sought refuge, but at the city's altars. The suppliants themselves have therefore involved the populace; the people too have been supplicated, and their opinions should be heeded (ibid., 365-69). Despite the pleas of the suppliants that Pelasgos is identified with the state, subject to no judge, and that his whim is law, he is unmoved: he will still consult the people (ibid., 370-75, 398-99). He is, however, afraid of the pollution that will be his if he refuses to grant the Danaids the aid they demand, but equally he considers he cannot ignore the rights of the people to be consulted in a matter that would touch them nearly. As Cairns observes, his choices have become war with the Aigyptids or pollution for refusing the suppliants: in either eventuality, the people would inevitably

be involved as inextricably as their king.⁶ The anachronism lies in his consideration of the people.

Eventually, he is favourably inclined to the suppliants. In order to manipulate the reactions of the people, he instructs Danaos to deck other altars with supplicatory branches as a sign of his daughters' purpose (*ibid.*, 480-84). One infers that the people, lacking the king's aristocratic background, may not necessarily be inclined to succour the women, as there is no clear benefit likely to accrue to them. Pelasgos points out that the people may be more inclined to acquiesce in their assistance because the suppliants, being female, are weak, and are being threatened by men (*ibid.*, 486-89); pity may thus decide the issue, not reverence for the gods or thought of benefit to Argos. Also, there is an emphasis on the subjection of every individual to law, especially the laws of their own land. Pelasgos warns the Danaids that they must make their plea on the basis of the laws of the land they have just left, not those of Argos (*ibid.*, 387-91). That is, suppliants have no automatic rights because they are suppliants; they must still be judged according to the law. This is a momentous change from heroic times.⁷ Then, there was no question of whether a suppliant was guilty or innocent, worthy or unworthy of succour; the Cretan that Odysseus pretended to be was certainly guilty, at least by association, of attacking the Egyptians, but because of his supplication he was saved by the king of the very people who had suffered.

⁶ Cairns, *op. cit.*, p. 190

⁷ Cairns notes that this is most likely an attempt by Pelasgos to evade the issue, by persuading the suppliants to leave their sanctuary, and relinquish their demands on him. This would mean he would no longer be subject to the threat of Zeus' anger or of pollution (*op. cit.*, pp. 190-91 n. 39). Clearly he wants the problem to go away (Aiskhylos, *Suppliants* 397).

Euripides, in an argument as anachronistic as that of Aiskhylos, attempts to reconcile the values associated with supplication with the modern state of his audience in his play, Suppliants. The tension is personalised in the discussion between Aithra and Theseus. She argues vehemently that he is bound by his very fame to assist the suppliants, to force the Thebans to allow the burial of their dead sons. She threatens that if he does not comply with this duty, he will become known as a coward (Euripides, Suppliants 304-19). He is therefore compelled by his reputation as a hero to act in a heroic manner. He, however, is aware that he does not live in heroic times. He promises to reclaim the dead, if he can do it by words alone; if force is needed, he needs the consent of the Athenian people to employ it (ibid., 346-49). In a supremely anachronistic argument, he develops the theme that his Athens is a free state, with an equal vote for all citizens (ibid., 352-53). The people therefore may not be committed to any course of action without their free and informed consent. Anachronistic certainly; but it was very reassuring, even flattering, to a city which had already suffered several years of war.

In the heroic age, even in these two plays, it was clear to whom suppliants should appeal. This was not the case in the more complex situations of insurrection and civil unrest in historical times. To what individual could a person under threat appeal? Generally, power was less centralised, authority was no longer entrusted to one person. During times of civil strife, formal power structures were shattered, and the situation must have seemed anarchic. Given the resultant heightened tension, could such an appeal succeed? Suppliants must have hoped that by taking refuge at an altar they were allowing time for anger to dissipate, and their lives would be spared when reason again prevailed. If so, they frequently miscalculated. However, given the circumstances, this probably provided

their best hope of survival. Even when the structures of government remained intact, many appeals were effectively refused. The Kylonians, who had threatened the existing government, were killed, despite supplicating the goddess (Thucydides 1.126.8-11).

Even more vivid is the fate of the Kerkyraian suppliants in 427. Caught on the losing side in a civil uprising, about four hundred Kerkyraians took refuge as suppliants in the temple of Hera. The democrats persuaded them to rise, and they were taken, with provisions, to an island in front of the temple (*ibid.*, 3.75.5). Here, Thucydides uses the familiar language of supplication - ἰκέται, ἀνίστημι - suggesting that their lives have now been saved. This is not the case. When the Peloponnesian fleet arrived off Kerkyra, and inflicted a defeat on the Athenian and Kerkyraian fleet, the democrats inside the city feared that the Spartans might free their sympathisers on the island, so they brought the suppliants back to the temple of Hera, where the Spartans would have found the task of rescuing them more difficult (*ibid.*, 3.79.1). However, the Spartan fleet left. Seeing this, the Kerkyraian democrats killed all of their enemies that they could find. They persuaded about fifty of the suppliants at the temple of Hera to submit to a trial, and condemned all to death (*ibid.*, 3.81.2). Most of the remaining suppliants, realising that there was no hope of succour, killed each other in the temple (*ibid.*, 3.81.3). The very pollution that the Danaids had threatened against Pelasgos, one which he sees as μαστικτῆρα καρδίας (a lash against [his] heart - Aiskhylos. *Suppliants* 466), had eventuated. This pollution does not, however, halt the murder of citizens. The killing continued, with some even dragged from the temples or killed at the altars; some were even walled up inside the temple of Dionysos and so starved to death (Thucydides 3.81.5), a fate identical to Pausanias'. This indeed is anarchy: the rights of suppliants in this situation are ignored. The case of

the Kerkyraian suppliants demonstrates how values honoured in literature from the time of Homer are sacrificed, especially in the heat of the moment, to political expediency.

Freyburger sees changes in the use of supplication during the Peloponnesian War. He states that, at the commencement of hostilities, supplication had an important role to play in relation between the combatants.⁸ He goes on to point out that subsequently the ritual seems to play a diminished role. He is here referring to the supplication in 435 of the Kerkyraians by the pro-Athenian faction of Epidamnus (*ibid.*, 1.24). The Kerkyraians, however, refuse to accede to the suppliants. That the Epidamnians would attempt to use moral pressure to acquire assistance is predictable; what is revealing is the refusal to grant that assistance. It seems that political realities dictated the results of supplication, now as later during the war. It is at Kerkyra that, eight years later, many suppliants are slaughtered, their pleas for succour refused, without regard for religious scruples. One may see divine retribution in this; it is difficult, however, to see from these two events any change during the period in the reaction to political supplication, whether the dispute giving rise to the supplication was intra- or inter-city.

Such events as those of 427 must have been profoundly shocking to those of the Athenian people who still believed in the ancestral values. Certainly Thucydides and Euripides demonstrate their horror at the fate of the suppliants, at the violation of the old ideals.⁹ Supplication continued, however, to be employed *in extremis*. Andokides, on finding that his gesture in supplying oar-spars at cost price to the fleet in Samos earned him not

⁸ Freyburger, *op. cit.*, p. 510

⁹ See above, pp. 77-85.

praise but condemnation by the Four Hundred, sprang to the hearth in the Council, taking hold of sacred objects (Andokides, On his return 13-15). This action, he was convinced, saved his life; however, he did not escape punishment. He was imprisoned, and later brought to trial. This supplication was a means of gaining time, so that he could plead later.

The changing meaning of ἵκετεύω

Earlier, when Andokides and others were imprisoned on suspicion of having been involved in the mutilation of the Herms, a cousin pleaded with him to reveal what he knew and so save himself and his relatives. Other fellow prisoners then supplicated him, in an unspecified manner (Andokides, On the mysteries 49-51). Here, supplication appears to have been used as an intensification of pleading. Likewise, Andokides himself uses it at the end of the speech, when he assures the jurors εἰς ὑμᾶς καταφεύγω καὶ ἀντιβολῶ καὶ ἵκετεύω (to you I flee for protection, and [you] I entreat and supplicate - ibid., 149). He is clearly using ἵκετεύω as a synonym for ἀντιβολῶ, almost as a formula. This would become common in orations of the fourth century, which lie outside the scope of this thesis. By contrast, Antiphon, writing somewhat earlier than Andokides (he died in 411), does not use ἵκετεύω at all; to plead with the jury, he uses the weaker δέομαι (Antiphon, First tetralogy ii.13; Second tetralogy ii.2; On the murder of Herodes 96).¹⁰ It could, of course, be argued that Antiphon was not pleading for himself, that two of these speeches were not written to be delivered, and the third was written for someone else. Therefore they lack the immediacy and urgency of the personal entreaty. This is certainly true, and may have influenced his choice of words. However, it is tempting to see

¹⁰ There is preserved in a fragment a use by Antiphon of the noun ἵκετεία: ἐγὼ δάκρυσι καὶ ἵκετείαις πειρῶμαι ὑμᾶς ἀναπεῖθειν (I may attempt to persuade you by tears and supplications - fr. 1c Gagarin). Even bereft of its context, it appears that it must be a weak use of the noun.

in the writing of the two orators the beginning of the weakening of the meaning of ἵκετεύω.

This is not to say that, by the end of the fifth century, the gesture of supplication had lost its moral force. Lysias, in his oration On the murder of Eratosthenes, describes how the female slave of the defendant Euphiletos threw herself at his knees when she was threatened with severe punishment for her supposed complicity in the adultery of his wife. She saved herself, though not without assisting him in verifying the guilt of his wife and her lover (Lysias, On the murder of Eratosthenes 19, 21). He is emphatic that Eratosthenes, guilty of the seduction of Euphiletos' wife, did not take refuge at the hearth when he was discovered *in flagrante delicto*, as was claimed by Eratosthenes' relatives (*ibid.*, 27). This would have made the killing of Eratosthenes not a justified punishment but a sacrilegious act, for Eratosthenes would thus have been a suppliant, and therefore under the protection of Zeus. He argues that it is the gesture which is important. Euphiletos concedes that Eratosthenes did supplicate him, even using ἵκετεύω to describe his desperate utterance (*ibid.*, 25), but in words only. The suppliant was unable to complete the ritual because his hands had been tied behind his back, a point Lysias is careful to have Euphiletos emphasise. Here one may take issue with Parker, who argues that "to dispatch a malefactor who has clutched (the) knees does not present a moral problem".¹¹ Lysias would appear to have seen the matter differently, and stressed the detail of the bound hands accordingly. A comparison with Odysseus' similarly incomplete supplication of Nausikaa is instructive. Odysseus' supplication is successful; Eratosthenes' is not. Granted, Nausikaa had no reason to seek her suppliant's death; Euphiletos was not so indifferent to the fate of his suppliant. However, Lysias appears to be

¹¹ Parker, *op. cit.*, p. 182

implying that the words by themselves have little or no force; it was lawful that Eratosthenes should be killed, with the words of supplication on his lips. If he had been killed while (perhaps) clutching Euphiletos' knees, or at the hearth (as his relatives apparently claimed), that would indeed have been impious. One should remember, however, that this speech is part of the defence in a murder trial; it is in the interests of the defendant to proclaim that only the ritual gestures constitute formal supplication, that words alone, even ἵκετεύω, cannot suffice.

That the earlier ritual meaning of the word ἵκετεύω had become weakened may be inferred by its use elsewhere by Lysias. Unlike Antiphon, he does not hesitate to use it in pleas, generally accompanied by and as a synonym for ἀντιβολῶ, and perhaps δέομαι as well. Near the end of his speech On a charge of taking bribes, Lysias makes a plea to the jury: ἐγὼ δ' ὑμῶν δέομαι καὶ ἵκετεύω καὶ ἀντιβολῶ μὴ καταγνῶναι δωροδοκίαν ἐμου (as for myself, I beg and I supplicate and I entreat you not to condemn me for the taking of bribes - Lysias, On a charge of taking bribes 21). He uses the same formula at the conclusion of another speech (Lysias, On the confiscation of the property of the brother of Nikias 27); once again it is used as a final plea for a favourable verdict. He is also willing to warn the jury to ignore just such supplications from the opposing side. He labels as αἰσχρὸν a supplicatory plea from a magistrate that a verdict be given in his favour (Lysias, Against Alkibiades: for refusal of military service 3). In the conclusion of his speech Against Andokides: for impiety, he warns the jury not to pity the defendant, though he would beseech and supplicate them (Lysias, Against Andokides 55). Clearly he wants the jury to regard Andokides' use of ἵκετεύω as a mere formula, with no ethical overtones. Its repeated use in this manner would certainly have modified its meaning, so one may suppose that, by the end of the fifth century (or at least early in the

fourth), the force of ἵκετεύω, at least in general use, was considerably weaker than it had been a century or so earlier.

Aristophanes, too, contributes to (or reflects?) the modification of the meaning of ἵκετεύω by his use of the word in contexts that bear little or no resemblance to suppliant ritual. In a burlesque of the court scenes for which Andokides and Lysias wrote, Philokleon describes how defendants supplicate him so that they may gain favourable verdicts (Aristophanes, Wasps 555). Strepsiades uses ἵκετεύω to beg Sokrates to allow him to lie on the bare ground rather than an infested bed (Aristophanes, Clouds 696). Trygaios is unmoved by the supplication of Hierokles that he be given a share of the sacrifice to Peace, despite the suppliant pleading πρὸς τῶν γονάτων (Aristophanes, Peace 1113). Dionysos and Xanthias use ἵκετεύω as a mere request, without obvious urgency or intensity (Aristophanes, Frogs 11, 167, 299), even almost as a simple question (ibid., 745). A young man employs the word to entreat his lover to come to him (Aristophanes, Ekklesiazousai 970). Only once does Aristophanes use ἵκετεύω in its ritual sense. This is when he refers to the Spartan request for Athenian assistance in the war with the Messenians (Aristophanes, Lysistrata 1139). This supplication is a detail not found elsewhere. Thucydides twice refers to this incident (Thucydides 1.102.1, 3.54.5), but nowhere claims the Spartans did other than request Athenian aid. Plutarch too avoids Aristophanes' claim of the supplication, stating merely that the Spartans sent Perikleidas to the Athenians δεόμενοι βοήθειν (requesting assistance - Plutarch, Kimon 16.8). Similar vocabulary is used by Diodoros when he describes the incident: he claims that the Spartans, καταφυγόντες ἐπὶ τὴν παρὰ τῶν Ἀθηναίων βοήθειαν (on appealing for aid from the Athenians), were granted an army (Diodoros XI.64.2). It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, once again,

Aristophanes is playfully exaggerating a request (albeit, in all probability, a fairly desperate one) into an entreaty.

A figurative, or non-ritual, use of ἵκετεύω and its derivatives is, however, by no means unattested before the late fifth century. As early as the seventh century, Alkman, in a fragment of an amorous poem, declares that

ἄσ]σον [ἰο]ῖσ' ἀπαλάς χηρὸς λάβοι.

αἰψά κ' [ἐγὼν ἵ]κέτις κήνας γενοίμαν·

(if) coming nearer she would take my soft hand,

I would speedily become her suppliant (Alkman, fr. 2 col. ii, vv. 80-81).

In the extant literature, this use of ἵκέτης is without parallel for a further two centuries. Of course, very little of this genre survives, and that in a fragmentary form; one may speculate that other examples of such a figurative use of terms more properly indicating solemn ritual may have existed. In Homer, too, may be preserved a use of ἵκετεύω in a non-ritual sense. Odysseus relates to the shade of Akhilleus that Neoptolemos pleaded to be granted the honour of being the first to climb out of the wooden horse. The verb used is ἵκετεύω (*Odyssey* 11.530). Odysseus may have meant ritual supplication: the context suggests strong entreaty. Certainly the themes and purposes of such writers as Homer, Aiskhylos and Thucydides would preclude a flippant use of ἵκετεύω. Aristophanes is the first writer whose themes would support frivolous references to the ritual of supplication and whose work survives in any quantity.

Conclusion

In the period depicted by Homer, the οἶκος was the focus of the community. There was no authority overriding that of the κύριος; anyone

from a different community was a stranger, and potentially dangerous. Supplication was a means by which a stranger could seek integration into another community. The ritual appealed to the unifying thread in Greek societies, their religion. Suppliants were said to be sacred to Zeus *hikesios*, and protected by him. Religious sanctions are used most frequently when secular justice is weak; in this society, there was for the stranger no other protection. If the supplication was successful, the relationship was between the suppliant and supplicated only. The suppliant was totally dependent on the other for safety. This is why the status of the suppliant as a near-kinsman was emphasised.

Supplication at the hearth of the κύριος was perhaps the earliest form of the ritual. Supplication at altars may have evolved from this as communities became more complex, and battlefield supplication (typically, at the knees) could have developed in crisis situations.

As societies became more complex, and the community was no longer ruled by a κύριος, so supplication changed. No longer was it always clear to whom one should address supplication, as a result, supplication commonly took place in temples and at altars. This was no guarantee of safety, particularly where there was civil unrest. Also, civil laws overrode the absolute rights of the suppliant. The mere fact of supplication did not remove the need for a trial. In literature, there are some attempts to reconcile traditional values with contemporary reality, with mythological figures being tried after supplication.

It was inevitable that, over the centuries, the meaning of ἵκετεύω should undergo some modification. In forensic speeches, there appears to be a tendency for the word to be used as an intensification of pleading, as a

synonym for ἀντιβολῶ and perhaps δέομαι as well. In his use of the word, Aristophanes too appears to intend a weaker meaning than the ritual would demand. However, this is not unprecedented. As early as the seventh century, Alkman uses the word in a non-ritual sense. One can only surmise that there may have been other such uses in poetry which has not survived. Maybe there were always some cases where ἵκετεύω was used in a figurative sense.

When ritual supplication was successful, the supplicated accepted some responsibility toward the suppliant. One would expect that there was a reciprocal responsibility, an understanding that the suppliant now owed a debt.

7. Supplication and reciprocity

A. Obligations of the suppliant

When suppliants were granted their requests there was conferred on them both a privilege and an obligation. This was apparently considered so obvious that our sources usually only emphasise this obligation when it is not observed. This is based on an assumption which is fundamental to Greek culture: the assumption of reciprocity, the necessity to repay a good (or evil) deed with another.¹

Mutual obligations

The very act of supplication imposed an obligation. If the supplicated is a god, the obligation is no less real. Suppliants gave themselves to the god supplicated, as the property of that god. Such a gift (though unsolicited) demanded a response in kind, a reciprocal gift. The gift demanded, of course, was the subject of the supplication. There was no choice in the matter: the only one to exercise free will was the suppliant, who chose to supplicate the god. The god was bound to return the gift, and immediately.² This is the force behind the threat levelled at Zeus by the Danaids, when they consider the consequences of their supplication being unsuccessful (Aiskhylos, Suppliants 168-75). The honour of Zeus is again threatened when his suppliants, the family of Herakles, are about to be forcibly dragged away (Euripides, Children of Herakles 72). Kreousa gives herself to Apollon, and obliges him to save her (Euripides, Ion 1285). Of course, the

¹ Even the repayment of a significant gift or favour need not be accompanied by any friendly emotion - all that mattered was the action, according to A.W.H. Adkins, "'Friendship' and 'self-sufficiency' in Homer and Aristotle", Classical Quarterly XIII (ns - 1963), p. 36.

² As astutely pointed out by Vickers, op. cit., p. 446.

god's obligation in this instance is not solely on account of the supplication, though this is the overt meaning of Kreousa's utterance. Apollon does save her life: for it is Apollon's priestess whose intervention leads to the disclosure of the relationship that mollifies the vengeful Ion (*ibid.*, 1337ff). Demeter too is under an obligation to exact revenge for a slight to her honour. The men of Aigina who violated her sanctuary by forcibly removing her suppliant (Herodotus 6.91.2) she places under a curse, which according to Herodotus is only expiated when they are driven from the island (*ibid.*, 6.91.1). The suppliant had placed her under an obligation, which she has been prevented from fulfilling by the impious actions of these men. She is therefore obliged to exact retribution, not only on behalf of her suppliant but also for her own sake.

It is not only gods who may be compelled to action. Menelaos, with his life forfeit if Theonoe sends word of his arrival to her Greek-hating brother and king, undertakes to kill both Helen and himself over the tomb of Theonoe's father Proteus, where he and his wife are both suppliants. This, he claims, would be a reproach to the dead king to whose protection they had entrusted themselves (Euripides, *Helen* 986). Theonoe's response, that she will not dishonour her father by allowing this pollution to take place, is precisely the outcome Menelaos wanted, the decision he had obliged Theonoe, as a dutiful daughter of Proteus, to take. The desired reciprocal action has been exacted.

It is to the principle of reciprocity that Phoinix appeals when he attempts to claim from Akhilleus a debt of service. Unable to father children himself, he cared for Akhilleus as would a parent (an example of this loving solicitude is provided, in almost nauseating detail - *Iliad* 9.485-91). His motives in so doing were not altruistic: he states that his intention was that

Achilleus would care for him in his old age, as any child would for a parent (*ibid.*, 9.492-5). In this way he attempts to exact a service from the hero, his substitute son, in the same way Menelaos exacts the desired response from the daughter of Proteus.

Repayment for betrayal

It is that same principle of reciprocity that Hekabe is attempting to uphold when she supplicates Agamemnon for his assistance in the punishment of Polymestor. Priamos had entrusted his aptly-named son Polydoros, with much gold, to his *xenos* Polymestor. This child Polymestor killed, for the sake of the gold (Euripides, *Hekabe* 768-76). Desperately Hekabe supplicates Agamemnon

Ἀγάμεμνον, ἵκετεύω σε τῶνδε γούνατων
καὶ σοῦ γενείου δεξιᾶς τ' εὐδαίμωνος

Agamemnon, I supplicate you by your knees,

and your chin and your fortunate right hand (*ibid.*, 752-53),

begging that he avenge this betrayal of the obligations of guest-friendship (*ibid.*, 786-92). With all the resolution one may expect of a man who had failed to protect Polyxene (*ibid.*, 120-29), Agamemnon, though sympathetic, does not want to be seen to be taking her side against the Thracian king, his ally (*ibid.*, 855-60). Hekabe then requests, and receives, his tacit complicity in her own efforts at revenge (*ibid.*, 870-75, 898). The principle of reciprocity demanded that Polymestor pay for his deed: he pays in kind, with the death of his sons as well as with his own blindness (*ibid.*, 1045-46). Agamemnon enunciates the charge against him: it was not for the sake of the Akhaians that he murdered Polydoros, but for the Trojan gold. Self-righteously, he declares

τάχ' οὖν παρ' ὑμῖν ῥάδιον ξενοκτονεῖν·
ἡμῖν δέ γ' αἰσχροὺς τοῖσιν Ἕλλησιν τόδε.

Perhaps then you think little of murdering guest-friends;
but to us Greeks it is reprehensible (*ibid.*, 1247-48).

With these words, Agamemnon condemns Odysseus by implication, as he had repaid Hekabe's protection of him during his excursion into Troy with the death of Hekabe's daughter (*ibid.*, 239-50, 301-05). Hekabe explicitly links the deaths of her two children in her quest for vengeance: in this one act, she seeks to avenge her two children (*ibid.*, 749-50). She cannot have Odysseus punished for his refusal to honour the responsibility to repay her for her succour of him when he was a suppliant; she can, however, avenge the death of Polydoros.

It is for this betrayal of his implicit obligations that Hekabe reproaches Odysseus after the fall of Troy. She reminds him that when he had come into the city as a spy and had been recognised by Helen, he had clung to Hekabe's knees in supplication, desperate to escape certain death. Now he repays her with his compliance in (or active advocacy of - *ibid.*, 130-40) the plan to sacrifice her daughter (*ibid.*, 239-53). Later, she in her turn supplicates him, touching his hand and beard, calling herself a suppliant, and requesting that he pay his debt to her (*ibid.*, 272-76). To no avail: Odysseus refuses her plea, but grants her what she had not requested - her own life. This, he argues, is requital for her having saved his life (*ibid.* 301-05). Well may Hekabe call his argument *σόφισμα* (chicanery - *ibid.*, 258). Vellacott is right: Odysseus insults Hekabe with his facile arguments, ones that he could not believe, nor could he expect Hekabe to accept. Still, he needs to present a reason, however flimsy.³ He represents as inevitable that which he himself has designed: Polyxene's death. His indignant retort to Hekabe

πῶς; οὐ γὰρ οἶδα δεσπότης κεκτημένος.

³ Vellacott, *op. cit.*, p. 162

In what way? For I did not know I had acquired a master (*ibid.*, 397) makes clear that the origin of this ἀνάγκη is the whim of the conqueror.⁴ Odysseus' comment, μηδὲ τόνδ' ὀφείλομεν (would that we did not owe this - *ibid.*, 395) is a masterpiece of hypocrisy.

With less specious reasoning (until the debt is called), Adrastus declares that he and the chorus of suppliant women to whom Theseus has granted their wish owe the king a debt (Euripides, *Suppliants* 1178-79). Medeia, thrown aside by Iason, laments her right hand and her knees which Iason used to clasp (Euripides, *Medeia* 497-98). It is not stated that he clasped them in supplication; however, the use of the same imagery as in supplication is surely not mere coincidence.⁵ The audience must be expected to associate the gestures with supplication, and note the manner of Iason's repayment of the implicit debt. To Medeia the debt is clear: she gave up her family and her land for him (*ibid.*, 166-67, 484-86), but when he is faced with the opportunity to increase his power through a new alliance, he refuses to sacrifice the chance for self-aggrandisement for her sake, but repudiates her and her self-abnegation.⁶ This is the principle of reciprocity denied.

The suppliant as bearer of gifts

The suppliant Oidipous does not come to Kolonos empty-handed. He is hardly a typical suppliant: though he names himself ὁ ἰκέτης (Sophokles,

⁴ Gregory, *op. cit.*, p. 91. As Stanton observes, he has chosen to increase his popularity with the Akhaian army rather than to honour his obligations to a *xenos* ("Aristocratic obligations in Euripides' *Hekabe*", *Mnemosyne* XLVIII [1995], pp. 21-22).

⁵ Page, in his commentary on the text, certainly agrees. His gloss on v. 497 explains that Medeia is here declaring that though Iason was once her suppliant, it has been of no avail to her (Euripides, *Medea. The Text Edited with Introduction and Commentary* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938], p. 109 on v. 497).

⁶ As argued persuasively by Blaiklock, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

Oidipous at Kolonos 44) and speaks with meekness, he is not self-effacing. He asks that Theseus be sent for, and when asked the reason why Theseus should come at the bidding of a stranger, promises

ὥς ἂν προσαρκῶν σμικρὰ κερδάνῃ μέγα.

that a little help may (mean) great advantage (ibid., 72).

That a blind beggar should feel empowered to promise unspecified aid to a king is piquant, and puzzling to the intended messenger (ibid., 73). There is certainly a paradox, as yet unknown to the messenger, that in Oidipous there is a disabled beggar, apparently helpless, who may pose a danger to the community through pollution.⁷ When that messenger has been persuaded to depart for Athens, Oidipous discloses to Antigone the favour he is able to confer on Theseus: Apollon has told him he will prove a blessing to the land which shelters his dead body (ibid., 91-92). This then is the reciprocal favour he intends bestowing on Theseus in return for the acceptance of his supplication: his own death. He intends revealing the favour to Theseus alone, not the chorus, so in reference to this gift he makes a cryptic remark, which the audience, however, with its knowledge of what has been said in the chorus' absence, is able to decipher (ibid., 309). Being about to confer on Theseus a gift potentially even greater than that which he asks of the king, he does not speak to Theseus as a suppliant, abasing himself; he and the king of Athens speak as equals.⁸ Oidipous promises to grant a benefit to Athens, in return for Athens' hospitality (though this will be brief). He intends denying the same benefit to Thebes, in repayment of another debt. Thebes ejected him (ibid., 646), and the resultant determination to repay disfavour with disfavour is the root of his rejection of the pleas of Kreon (ibid., 761-99) and of the supplication of Polyneikes

⁷ Segal, op. cit., p. 365

⁸ Peter Burian, "Suppliant and saviour: Oedipus at Colonus", Phoenix XXVIII (1974), p. 415

(*ibid.*, 1354-59). The powers he now demonstrates in his rejection of both these pleas, and his reluctance even to listen to his son (despite the pleadings of Theseus - *ibid.*, 1179-80), are not new:⁹ though he does not bear himself assertively, Oidipous refuses to leave the shrine of the Eumenides at the bidding of the stranger (*ibid.*, 36-37, 44-45). Again, in his interaction with the chorus at the beginning of the play he shows strong determination, winning his point while propitiating them and the gods of the place, without yielding to their initial and repeated demand that he leave (*ibid.*, 227, 229-36, 256-57). Assertiveness would be inappropriate, even counterproductive, for until he has spoken with Theseus he is vulnerable. However, this does not stop him displaying strength, and the power consequent upon it. His strength springs from his knowledge that he has a kind of patronage in his gift, both a benefit and a curse to bestow (*ibid.*, 86-93). Kreon is aware of the benefit of burying Oidipous on the borders of his land (at least, so Oidipous accuses him - *ibid.*, 784-86). Polyneikes also recognises that his father's support will bring victory in his coming conflict with his brother (*ibid.*, 1331-32). Oidipous' uncle/brother-in-law and his brother/son are his suppliants, suing for his favour (though Kreon conceals his request behind an apparent concern for Oidipous, nicely blending arrogance and mendacious compassion). Theseus it is who is to be the beneficiary, though he is not initially aware of this and therefore does not importune the fallen king. The relationship between them is certainly that of suppliant and supplicated, but who is the benefactor? Though it is Oidipous who makes the formal supplication, it is Theseus who gains the benefit from that act, the benefit that both Kreon and Polyneikes want so desperately and for which they supplicate Oidipous. The result therefore is the same as if it were Theseus who had made the supplication. Thus it is that Oidipous does not bear himself towards Theseus as a typical suppliant, but treats with

⁹ Despite Burian - "Oedipus", p. 425.

him as an equal: it is he who is bestowing the greater favour (*ibid.*, 592, 649-51, 1475-76, 1520-32).

Theseus grants him whatever he requires, without hearing details of the promised reward (*ibid.*, 565-66). He knows only the little that Oidipous had disclosed to his messenger. What is Theseus' motivation? The fallen king's capacity to repay a debt, certainly with the usual type of gift, is under his present circumstances somewhat limited; indeed Theseus' actions may lead to a conflict with Thebes (he is informed by Oidipous that war will come - *ibid.*, 616-20). Theseus cannot then hope for enrichment or alliance. Possibly he states his motive quite accurately: sympathy for a fellow sufferer (*ibid.*, 567-68). He is, however, quick to explore the nature of the blessing Oidipous has promised (*ibid.*, 579-81). Also, he explicitly associates the idea of supplication with a reciprocal favour, the payment of tribute (*ibid.*, 635). The question of what is meant by the tribute arises. Does it refer to the manner in which Oidipous honoured Theseus and the Athenians by trusting them with his presence? or does Theseus have κέρδος in mind? It is likely that Theseus is referring to the promised boon.¹⁰

By the time Theseus enters, Oidipous has a clear understanding of the κέρδος in his gift. At the beginning of the play, though he is aware that benefits will accrue to the land which shelters him (*ibid.*, 92-93), and this awareness gives him the strength to resist the chorus' determination to force him well away from their land, he cannot understand how this prophecy will come to pass. He places his trust in Apollon, whose promise he quotes. He is enlightened by Ismene, who has sought him in order to

¹⁰ So Kamerbeek assumes - J.C. Kamerbeek, *The Plays of Sophocles. Commentaries. Part VII. The Oedipus Coloneus.* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), p. 101 on vv. 634-35.

For a discussion of the meaning of δάσμοζ in this context, see above, pp. 92-93 n. 7.

disclose recent oracles touching his plight. Now he learns that his tomb will be a blessing to the land in which it lies (*ibid.*, 389-90, 392, 399-400, 402). This implies that Oidipous may choose which land should enjoy that blessing; yet earlier he made it plain that Apollon had destined him to come to Athens, to this very place, the grove of the Eumenides, to die (*ibid.*, 87-88). That Oidipous may choose who may benefit from his death is obviously inferred by both Kreon and Polyneikes: each seeks to persuade him to return whence he came. Oidipous too seems to assume that he has this choice. In his answers to his uncle/brother-in-law and to his brother/son, he dwells at length on their treatment of him after his fall as the reason for his denial of their pleas (*ibid.*, 761-99, 1354-82). He cites the words of Apollon to Kreon, but only at the end of his argument, not as the centre of it (*ibid.*, 792-93). Indeed, to Polyneikes he takes on the role of Apollon, prophesying a shameful death and disaster for Polyneikes' cause. This prophecy he makes in his own name, not that of any god (*ibid.*, 1383-96). Thus, as Bushnell points out, Oidipous is appropriating the role and the power of the prophet, in contrast with his defiance of it in Oidipous the King.¹¹ Immediately

¹¹ Rebecca W. Bushnell, Prophecy and Tragedy: Sign and Voice in Sophocles' Theban Plays. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 87. She later states that it is the absence of any concern with the fate of Oidipous' sons in Apollon's prophecy that allows Oidipous to utter his curse (*ibid.*, 96). Oidipous curses Polyneikes with a power that is equivalent to a prophecy, and is indeed called this by Antigone (Sophokles, Oidipous at Kolonos 1424-25), while Polyneikes himself utters no doubt of its accuracy (*ibid.*, 1399-1401, 1432-38). Granted, what Oidipous says does not contradict Apollon, but that lack of contradiction does not usually confer on any mortal the right to prophesy as does the god. Certainly, this scene does establish "the independence of Oedipus' voice from Apollon's authority" (Bushnell, loc. cit.), but this is an independence asserted by Oidipous, not mandated by Apollon. However, he is no ordinary mortal: he has been up to this point the voice of Apollon, speaking in the god's name (*ibid.*, p. 96), but here he speaks as a god himself, being "on the boundary between the world of the living and the world of the dead" (*ibid.*, 101). A man the presence of whose tomb can be the salvation of a city surely enjoys extraordinary powers when on the boundary of a change in the nature of his existence.

following the exit of Polyneikes, with the doom foretold by his father hanging over him, a thunderstorm begins, and Oidipous recognises a sign that his own death is near. Apollon had promised that when that time had come, there would be

ἢ σεισμὸν ἢ βροντὴν τιν' ἢ Διὸς σέλας

earthquake or thunder or a flash of Zeus' lightning (Sophokles, Oidipous at Kolonos 95).

Now, from having just appropriated Apollon's powers of prophecy (the rightness of which appropriation, it must be noted, is not questioned by any present), Oidipous again trusts the word of Apollon and becomes the god's to direct (ibid., 1457-58, 1460-61). In this way Athens (personified for dramatic purposes by Theseus) is repaid for its acceptance of the suppliant Oidipous; Oidipous has discharged his obligation.

The suppliant as debtor

But did this obligation require only one act of requital, or was it ongoing? The words of Apollon suggest that the relationship between the two actors was expected to be long-term. The god explains that he sent Orestes as a suppliant to the temple of Athene so that he would be her ally, and a trusted friend for all time; this obligation would even be binding on his descendants (Aiskhylos, Eumenides 669-73). Klytaimestra, begging for the life of her daughter, reminds Agamemnon that he had come as a suppliant to Klytaimestra's father Tyndareos, and had been granted his life, as well as Klytaimestra for his wife (Euripides, Iphigeneia at Aulis 1150-56). The clear implication is that she has inherited the debt owed to her father, that she can claim a favour in return for that granted by her father. Agamemnon does not respond to this argument, indeed to any of his wife's arguments, but avers compulsion (ibid., 1258-75). In an interestingly convoluted argument, Orestes claims that inheritance more explicitly: his

father Agamemnon, he reminds Menelaos, did wrong for Menelaos' sake; now Menelaos owes a wrong to Agamemnon's son (Euripides, Orestes 646-47). As Blaiklock points out,¹² this argument, based as it is on cold reason, on sophistry, is somewhat ironic in tone. Through emotional pleas, Orestes has attempted to enlist the support of Menelaos, and failed; he has attempted to appease Tyndareos, and failed. Now, almost without hope of success, he uses a logical perversion of the concept of reciprocity in order to win a promise of assistance from his uncle - and fails again.

Elsewhere, Orestes abuses the obligations of reciprocity in his quest for revenge. He is advised to stand in such a position that Aigisthos, seeing him, will be prompted to invite him to share the sacrifice he is making (Euripides, Elektra 635, 637). This he does; it is as the *xenos* of Aigisthos that he joins in the sacrifice, and kills his host (ibid., 783-85; 819-43). His immediate reaction to this deed is exaltation (ibid., 893-99). Later, however, when Klytimestra too is dead, Orestes experiences remorse not only for the death of his mother, but for the killing of Aigisthos as well (ibid., 1176-80). Though he is to be pursued by the Erinyes for the death of his mother only (ibid., 1250-53), the two deaths are linked in his mind. This remorse is his repayment for the violation of his reciprocal obligations to his *xenos* Aigisthos.

Interestingly, Aiskhylos too preserves a tradition of Orestes manipulating ritual for his own ends. His Orestes, in order to gain access to the royal residence, will assume the role of a *xenos*. If he is not admitted in this guise, he will sit as a suppliant outside the gates, so as to shame Aigisthos into welcoming him (Aiskhylos, Libation Bearers 560-70). His purpose, of course, is murder: he seeks the deaths of the man and woman

¹² Blaiklock, op. cit., p. 186

who are to be manipulated into accepting him either as a guest-friend or a suppliant. His

τί γὰρ

ξένου ξένοισίν ἐστιν εὐμενέστερον;

For what

is more well-intentioned than a host to his guest (or, "a guest to his host" - Aiskhylos, Libation Bearers: 702-03)

is savagely ironic, given his intentions, and the likely intentions of his host, were she to know the real identity of her guest.

A suppliant, then, incurs a debt through being granted sanctuary. The involuntary host is bound to protect the stranger; however, this protection obliged the suppliant, and on occasion the suppliant's descendants, to repay that debt. This ongoing obligation between two parties is suggestive of another formal relationship between strangers: guest-friendship.

B. The suppliant and guest-friendship

ἀντὶ κασιγνήτου ξείνος θ' ἰκέτης τε τέτυκται

ἀνέρι

a guest-friend and suppliant is as good as a brother

for a man (Odyssey 8.546-47).

In certain cases, such as the occasion on which Alkinoos displayed this understanding of the similarities between the suppliant and the guest-friend, the relationship between the suppliant and the individual supplicated developed into guest-friendship. This was a formal relationship entailing ongoing mutual obligations, morally binding on each party. It

involved not states, but individuals,¹³ and was generally contracted between those not related by birth or native land (hence the dual meaning of *xenos* - "guest-friend" and "stranger"), providing an individual with a substitute for kinsmen in a foreign land. The guest was dependent on his host for his very survival; he was among strangers, potential enemies, and has no relationship with any other individual except his *xenos*.¹⁴ It was indeed "'foreign policy' in its tribal form".¹⁵ Generally it begins with an expression of mutual trust.¹⁶ There follows an exchange of gifts, of approximately equal value.¹⁷ This has an obvious parallel in the supplicatory gesture itself, and in the reciprocal gesture of raising the suppliant to (almost!) his/her earlier status.

Though the similarities between the two institutions are manifest, there were many differences as well. The function of the ritual actions in each case remain distinct. They remained distinct social constructs, used for different purposes. Supplication was used to gain succour in a time of distress. Guest-friendship, on the other hand, was used to forge a link where none had existed, perhaps with a view to a later time of necessity, but not at the time when one party was in desperate need. Their similarity was emphasised by the identity of the divine protector of each: for Zeus *hikesios* and Zeus *xenios* were, after all, different faces of one and the same deity.¹⁸ Lloyd-Jones speculates that the two epithets may be practically

¹³ As observed by M. I. Finley, *op. cit.*, p. 100

¹⁴ Adkins, "Friendship", pp. 34-35

¹⁵ A neat description from Walter Donlan, "Reciprocities in Homer", *Classical Weekly* LXXV (1981), p. 149.

¹⁶ Herman, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30, 46

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39

¹⁸ Adkins ("Homeric gods and the values of Homeric society", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* XCII [1972], p. 11) proposes that once this (or these?) protection god/s may have been independent deities, with the function of protection only. However, eventually this function

identical in origin.¹⁹ Perhaps; but maybe the equating of both *xenoi* and *hiketai* with kin (Hesiod, Works and Days 327-34, Homer, Odyssey 8.546-47) suggests why it is Zeus who is given responsibility for these two groups. In an interesting argument, Donlan proposes that, since Zeus bore some responsibility for kin, he also acquired the function of looking after the needs of these near-kin.²⁰

Xenia and the giving of gifts

Tradition did demand a reciprocal gift, the giving of which may, in certain cases, be delayed to a later time. One may infer that the value of the gift implies a statement of the relative status of the giver and recipient. Indeed, there appears to be a competitive element implicit in the giving of gifts for the purpose of cementing a relationship. Just so may the exchange of armour between Glaukos and Diomedes be understood. After a protracted outline of genealogies, they conclude that there exists between them a relationship of guest-friendship, dating from several generations ago (Iliad 6.119-215). Diomedes lists the guest-gifts exchanged by the founders of the relationship (ibid., 6.218-21 - the importance of the initial relationship is attested by his precise memory of the gifts), and proposes they too make an exchange - that they give each other their armour, in order to proclaim their link to all Akhaians and Trojans (ibid., 6.230-31). This is not an equal trade; Homer explains that Glaukos emerged the worse off, having exchanged gold armour, worth one hundred oxen, for bronze worth a mere nine oxen. The inequality is emphasised by the poet's care to attach an economic value to

became assimilated with Zeus. Such a suggestion is interesting, but, in the absence of further evidence, cannot ultimately be more than merely speculative.

¹⁹ Hugh Lloyd-Jones, The Justice of Zeus (Berkeley, L.A.: University of California Press, 1971), p. 5

²⁰ Donlan, op. cit., p. 150

the gifts.²¹ This disparity would have been seen by Homer's audience as so extraordinary that the poet attributes it to Zeus' having robbed the wits of the Trojan (*ibid.*, 6.234-36). The Trojan did not lose in battle; instead, he was the loser in the competition of the *xenia* ritual. Diomedes, from the beginning of the encounter, has dominated; he issues the initial threat, he recognises the relationship and decides on their action, he describes the initial gifts exchanged, thereby putting Glaukos under an obligation to equal his ancestor's gift of gold. The exchange establishes Diomedes' domination over his enemy: he does not defeat him in battle, but in subtlety.²² The enmity between the foes, and the superiority of the Akhaian, is made apparent not by their words but by the relative value of the objects exchanged.²³ This is *xenia*, but it is a relationship uncomplicated by mutual affection.

Even under conditions of warfare, and the unstated enmity between the two foes, there is an insistence upon their (immediate) mutual safety. Helen, by her own account a strangely insistent host, does not seem to share this concern with the safety of her *xenos*. Indeed, her gifts to her guest are of questionable worth. Homer has Helen claim that when Odysseus came into Troy as a spy, she alone recognised him, but did not identify him (*Odyssey* 4.250-55). Far from being her suppliant, he sought to avoid her (*ibid.*, 4.249-51);²⁴ she, however, insisted and (by unspecified means)

²¹ As noted by Lynette Mitchell, *Greeks Bearing Gifts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997/98), p. 24, although her assertion that Homer makes a joke of the disparity is questionable.

²² Walter Donlan makes this astute observation: "The unequal exchange between Glaucus and Diomedes in the light of the Homeric gift-economy", *Phoenix* XLIII (1989), pp. 12-13.

²³ As incisively observed by Sitta von Reden, *Exchange in Ancient Greece* (London: Duckworth, 1995), p. 26.

²⁴ One is, of course, at liberty to assume that, on Helen's repeated assertion that she recognised Odysseus through his disguise, he would have supplicated her to ensure her

constrained him to accept her hospitality. Indeed, her diligence in treating the supposed slave as an honoured if unwilling guest, bathing him, anointing him with oil, and giving him clothes (*ibid.*, 4.252-53), must have had the effect of destroying his disguise.²⁵ That he is not discovered by a Trojan, one infers, was probably due to good fortune rather than to Helen's assistance. Helen, however, clearly sees her behaviour (or wants her behaviour to be seen) as irreproachable, appropriate for the *xenia*-relationship she considers it to be: she sees to her guest's physical comfort and his safety (though in this context the two are mutually incompatible). Still, in relating this she is attempting to demonstrate to Menelaos and Telemakhos her piety, her Greek sympathies. Her gifts to Odysseus, and through him to Telemakhos, were her attention to him, and her silence. She claims a reciprocal gift: she wants Odysseus' son and her artfully flattered husband (*Odyssey* 4.263-64) to believe in her change of heart, and her support of the Akhaian cause. Just as her gift was of dubious value, so is her reward: she receives courtesy from her husband, but also a rebuttal of her protestations of Greek sympathies. Menelaos describes how she attempted to trick the Greeks hidden inside the wooden horse into revealing themselves (*ibid.*, 4.274-89). To this she offers only silent acquiescence.²⁶ The poet does not insist, as he did in the case of Glaukos, on the failure of Helen's essay in *xenia*; however, his attitude is plain from Menelaos' unchallenged recollections of Helen's actions near the wooden horse.

Just as Helen attempts to use the rights and obligations of *xenia* to manipulate attitudes and events, so too does Medeia. Her gift to Iason's new

complicity through silence. Perhaps; certainly in her relation of the incident she would be understandably anxious to demonstrate that her actions were not motivated merely by piety but by a sincere wish to see the Greeks succeed.

²⁵ As pointed out by S. Douglas Olson, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

²⁶ Doherty, *op. cit.*, p. 86

wife may be seen as a means of increasing the obligation of the receiver, and may have been intended to be so interpreted by Iason. The children are to supplicate the bride, and give her rich gifts in order to persuade her to grant their request (Euripides, Medeia 970-72, 1156-57). Perhaps she may not have been persuaded by the supplication alone, but acceptance of the gifts meant that she was obliged to rescind (or at least attempt to have rescinded) the threat of exile. This embryonic relationship between the two wives of Iason is not, and probably should not be, equated with *xenia*; however, the new wife not only accepts the children as suppliants, but she also implies a transition to a new relationship by her acceptance of the gifts from their hands. Of course, in this case it was the acceptance of the initial gift, and not the repayment of the debt that implied, which was the means to the result desired by Medeia. The reciprocal "gift" Medeia wanted was not the stated object, and could not be granted willingly by the recipient of her gifts. What Medeia sought was not mitigation of the sentence imposed on her, but the death of her enemies. She thus manipulates an established tradition, inverting its function, for her own vengeful purposes.

The exchange of gifts may occur in a distorted form, betraying the depravity of one of the participants in the perverted ritual. One of Penelope's suitors, Ktesippos, throws an ox hoof at the disguised Odysseus, present as the guest of Telemakhos, and mockingly calls it a guest-gift (Odyssey 20.296-300). Later, he himself is killed at the massacre of the suitors; his death is said to be a guest-gift in exchange for the one he insultingly gave to Odysseus (ibid., 22.290-91). The man who deals the death blow is Philoitios, a cowherd; immediately prior to Ktesippos' taunting gift of the ox hoof, the cowherd had welcomed Odysseus, almost as would a host (ibid., 20.199-203). This gift exchange is a perverted reciprocity, with one who asserts himself as a host giving a near-blow as the

initial gift, only to have that gift reciprocated by another surrogate host, in the form of a fatal blow.

Normally, of course, the initial gift exchange carried no sinister undercurrent. Nor was this the only exchange of gifts; later in a relationship, gift-giving may perhaps recur in a different form. Thus, when Admetos insists on entertaining his *xenos* Herakles, despite his grief at having just lost his wife (Euripides, *Alkestis* 538-41), Herakles considers himself in his host's debt. When he discovers the truth of the situation, he repays Admetos' piety by bringing Alkestis back from the underworld (*ibid.*, 1128, 1147-48).²⁷ Each subsequent gift may be in the form of a service, rather than an object of value.²⁸

From *hiketes* to *xenos*

Obviously, at this point in their relationship at least, Herakles is not a suppliant of Admetos. If he had been, of course, the same compulsion to repay succour with a gift or service would have operated. It is clear that the preference in heroic times is for treasure rather than service.²⁹ However, in the matter of the giving of treasure as an immediate and reciprocal gift, some suppliants, by virtue of their circumstances, find themselves under a certain constraint. Thus Odysseus proposes to give his name and story, hitherto concealed, to Alkinoos and the Phaiakans there present, so that henceforth he may be ὑμῖν ξεῖνος (*Odyssey* 9.18). Clearly it is in his interest to make the transition from suppliant to guest-friend. Indeed, even up to this point Odysseus has been treated as an honoured guest, having shared Alkinoos' table, after he had drawn himself to the attention of the king as a

²⁷ He is, of course, in the process of becoming a φίλος to Admetos: G.R. Stanton, "Φιλία and ξενία in Euripides' 'Alkestis'", *Hermes* CXVIII (1990), p. 46.

²⁸ As noted by M.I. Finley, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

²⁹ M.I. Finley points out this preference: *ibid.*, p. 122.

suppliant (*ibid.*, 7.167ff). Alkinoos, by granting Odysseus a gift of high value (i.e. succour in time of great need), has conferred on Odysseus an obligation to give a reciprocal gift. He has in fact granted the stranger the unasked-for status of *xenos*, with all its rights and responsibilities. Odysseus, destitute after having been cast onto the shores of the Phaiekans' land, is unable to comply with this implied obligation by giving goods; all he can do is accede to the direct request for his name and history. To such an isolated community (though not so isolated that they have not heard of the fame of Odysseus), a story such as Odysseus has to tell must have been of great value. Von Reden observes the correlation between the gifts Odysseus is given and his self-revelation.³⁰ It is because of his awareness of the value of his story as a gift that he breaks off, pleading fatigue (*ibid.*, 11.330-32). After he has been promised many new gifts, he obliges the gathering with more detail (*ibid.*, 11.335-53; 378-84). He has already been loaded with guest-gifts (*ibid.*, 8.438-41); however, as he himself acknowledges,

κεν πολὺ κέρδιον εἶη,
 πλειότερη σὺν χειρὶ φίλην ἐς πατρίδ' ἰκέσθαι·
 καί κ' αἰδοιότερος καὶ φίλτερος ἀνδράσιν εἶην
 πᾶσιν, ὅσοι μ' Ἰθάκηνδε ἰδοίαιτο νοστήσαντα.

it would be much more profitable,
 to arrive in my dear country with a fuller hand;
 [in this way] I would be more respected and more loved
 by everyone, who saw me returning to Ithake (*ibid.*, 11.358-61).

He appears to be measuring out his tale, in proportion to the largesse promised him. His story is the only currency he has; he must use it cautiously, calculating its value against what he is given.

³⁰ von Reden, *op. cit.*, p. 35

It would seem that both Alkinoos and Odysseus saw the stranger's supplication as the first step in the process of cementing guest-friendship. Typically, that step could be undertaken under pressure from an unanticipated situation. This is just such an involuntary commencement to *xenia*. It is, after all, entirely against his will that Odysseus is shipwrecked and forced to seek Alkinoos' assistance through supplication. He and Alkinoos do not meet on equal terms; he does not have any gifts of treasure for the king, in return for the hospitality which he enjoys. This, however, does not prevent the formation of the bond of *xenia*, or a similar relationship, since mutual goodwill is created without the presence of such a gift. However, it is not Odysseus but Alkinoos who has the right to propose that the relationship be changed to the closer and more equal one of *xenia*. The suppliant, being the weaker party, cannot insist on an equality which clearly does not exist.

More calculated is Odysseus' attempt to form a bond of guest-friendship with Polyphemos. He visits the Kyklops' cave, when there was no pressing need to do so and against the entreaties of his followers, carrying his gift of wine. He then declares himself to be a suppliant to Polyphemos, and offers a valuable gift³¹ as a token of guest-friendship, requesting a gift in return. He points out that friendship is the suppliant's due (*ibid.*, 9.266-68). Blundell points out that the religious obligation on the host to succour the guest was even stronger when that guest was a suppliant.³² While the audience knew that Odysseus was in no real danger, the Kyklops did not - the Ithakan had mendaciously presented himself and his crew members as

³¹ The value is emphasised by Odysseus' description of the fineness of the wine (*Odyssey* 9.204-05, 208-11), and that the Kyklopes are unable to import wine from elsewhere, having no ships (*ibid.*, 9.125-27).

³² Mary Whitlock Blundell, *Helping Friends and Harming Enemies: a Study in Sophocles and Greek Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 49

shipwrecked and destitute (*ibid.*, 9.283-86). That no such alliance is forged is because Odysseus' desire for *xenia* is not matched by his involuntary host; moreover, in contrast with his experience on Skheria, it is Odysseus, ostensibly the weaker party to the proposed relationship, who claims equal status. It hardly needs a primitive such as the Kyklops to perceive the incongruity of this. Polyphemos, however, summarily rejects both relationships. His natural hostility is not appeased by a claim of supplication which hardly rings with the sincerity of desperation (although he does not explicitly doubt the stranger's word): Odysseus is using supplication when he was in no need of immediate assistance, but frankly as a prelude to *xenia*. This is a distortion of the need for the partners in the *xenia*-relationship to establish mutual trust. Contrary to his evident expectations, it does become a *xenic*-relationship, but one flawed by dissonances. Polyphemos claims that he and his like do not live in awe of Zeus; however, he does display some familiarity with the ritual governing guest-friendship. When his taste for the wine the Ithakans had brought has been established, he demands, in exchange for a guest-gift, more wine and the identity of the stranger (*ibid.*, 9.355-56). Clearly, the giving of the gift is contingent on Odysseus' providing him with what he wants.³³ The guest-gift Polyphemos grants is as perverted as the name Odysseus gives is false. Thus is set up what Goldhill neatly calls a "reciprocity of transgression".³⁴ Equally dissonant are references to the gift of wine which Odysseus has brought from his ships. This wine, a θεῖον ποτόν (divine drink - *ibid.*, 9.205), was given to Odysseus by a priest of Apollon. Odysseus informs the Kyklops that he had brought it as a libation for his host (*ibid.*, 9.349), an offering always given by a human to a god. Polyphemos also sounds a discord when

³³ As Goldhill notes: Simon Goldhill, *The Poet's Voice. Essays on Poetics and Greek Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 31.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32

he describes the same wine as ἀμβροσίας καὶ νέκταρός ... ἀπορρώξ (a distillation of ambrosia and nectar - *ibid.*, 9. 359), that is, the food of gods.³⁵ The link of guest-friendship that Odysseus seeks with Polyphemos is indeed forged, but in such a distorted form that its values are inverted. The blinding of the Kyklops (*ibid.*, 9.382-83) is the final violent act in a misshapen ritual, an ironic wrenching of the traditions and values of both *hiketeia* and *xenia*.

Finley sees the confrontation between Odysseus and Polyphemos as a reflection of a view of social evolution.³⁶ On the island of the Kyklopes is the situation of primitive societies, where no individual could rely on another, where strangers are likely to be killed for no other reason than their status as strangers. The intervention of the gods (one notes the reference to Zeus as the guest-god, and Polyphemos' vehement denial of his power over the Kyklopes - *ibid.*, 9.270-71, 275-78) brought about greater safety for individuals, through the concept of guest-friendship, and the conferring on kings and other leaders of an obligation of hospitality. One may add the notion of supplication to his incisive analysis.

Later Odysseus, claiming mendaciously to be a Cretan returning from Troy, describes how, after he supplicated the Egyptian king, he was, on the initiative of the king, effectively treated as an honoured friend (*ibid.*, 14.278-84). Though a suppliant, and one moreover who had caused death among the king's followers, he is protected out of respect for Zeus *Xenios*, not Zeus *Hikesios*. Though he is prevented by his position as a suppliant from initiating the transfer to the status of a *xenos*, Odysseus is able, through this fairy-tale, to provide a model for Eumaios' future treatment of

³⁵ von Reden, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34

³⁶ M.I. Finley, *op. cit.*, p. 101

his suppliant. Though he is not present at this exhortative mendacity, Telemakhos follows the guidelines laid down by his father. When told the disguised Odysseus is a suppliant, the youth is concerned that he is unable to entertain a stranger in his house, as he cannot guarantee his safety (*ibid.*, 16.67-72). The physical safety of one's *xenos* was, after all, a primary concern.

Just as one may move from being a suppliant to a guest-friend, the reverse was also possible (in theory at least), if the *xenia* relationship was not recognised by the individual of whom the favour is being requested. This change in status would be initiated by the aggrieved, the would-be suppliant. It would be a calculated insult to the other party in the relationship, a public statement that the supposed guest-friend had not met his obligations. It is just such a transition Orestes plans, in his discussion of how he will gain entrance to the house in order to kill Aigisthos and Klytaimestra. He will seek admittance as a stranger, adopting the speech of a Phokian, as a ξένος τε καὶ δορύξενος (guest-friend and spear-friend - Aiskhylos, Libation Bearers 560-64). Later, in a speech to Klytaimestra, he states that he is the messenger of Strophios (*ibid.*, 677-79). In her greeting to Agamemnon, Klytaimestra reveals that she had sent the young Orestes to Strophios the Phokian, whom she describes as a εὖμενῆς δορύξενος (well-disposed spear-friend, firm friend - Aiskhylos, Agamemnon 880-81). Therefore, for Orestes to pretend to be a Phokian is to suggest that for Klytaimestra to regard him as a *xenos* is appropriate because of his implied relationship with Strophios. If the welcome he would expect from a *xenos* is not granted, he says, he will wait in such a position (and pose? the text is unclear) that it will be obvious to passers-by that he is a suppliant (Aiskhylos, Libation Bearers 567-70). So, if he cannot persuade the θυρωρός (door-keeper) to accept him as a guest-friend, then he will become a

suppliant, making the reverse transition to the one that Odysseus intended. Certainly, his claim to guest-friendship is false; and in the event, he does not even have to make it. However, the implication of his stated intention is that there is a great similarity (if not, in certain circumstances, identity) between a *xenos* and a *hiketes*, in the rights they may claim.

Supplication may even forge a relationship similar, if not identical, to *xenia* between two people previously antagonistic. Thus, one infers, Themistokles and Admetos, through Themistokles' supplication, begin a relationship which may have been mutually beneficial. In the short term, it was certainly of benefit to Themistokles; for the future, Admetos had every reason, given the energy and ingenuity of his uninvited guest, to expect no slight reward for his hospitality. A close friend, an indebted friend, in Athens in a position of power must be to the advantage of the king (and surely it was not out of the question even at that point that Themistokles may regain the regard of the Athenians). On the other hand, Admetos must have reasoned, if Themistokles were to win his way to Artaxerxes he must have gained the ear of the Persian king, and would thus be able to repay his debt handsomely. There seem to have been rumours that the supplication was staged in order to absolve Admetos from his vow to take revenge on the Athenian. Thucydides reports without equivocation that it was Phthia, the wife of Admetos, who planned the piece of theatre (Thucydides 1.136.3); Plutarch relates this version, and adds another which claims that it was Admetos himself who instructed Themistokles (Plutarch, Themistokles 24.5). If either Admetos or Phthia conspired with Themistokles to stage the supplication, in order to release Admetos from his now-regretted vow, there is a strong implication that the Molossian king intended to reap some benefit from his generosity. Of course, Themistokles apparently did not repay the debt. Though he did gain the favour of Artaxerxes, and lived for

some time (duration unspecified) on the king's bounty, it is not recorded that he repaid, or even attempted to repay, Admetos' succour to him in that time of extreme need.

Hiketes and xenos

The rights of the suppliant and the stranger were parallel; Hesiod claims that those who offend against either attract the same sanctions as those who wrong their own kin (Hesiod, Works and Days 327-34). They serve a similar function: to integrate an outsider into a social group. However, they remain distinct institutions, with different rituals, purposes and responsibilities. The main difference is in the relative status of the protagonists. In *xenia*, the two participants are of roughly equal status. Ideally, the relationship is between two individuals of equal social status, and the giving of gifts of equal value underscores the importance of maintaining this equality.³⁷ The *xenos* is in a position to incur an obligation; a *hiketes*, because of the emergency which prompts the supplication, would be unable to proffer a gift in exchange for one from the host³⁸ (except, of course, in the remote and putative future).

Another important distinction lies in the initiation of the relationship. As Gould points out, at the commencement of *xenia* the individual inside the group extends his protection to the outsider. Honour is equally divided between them; the outsider does not surrender his claim to honour at any stage in the ritual. Conversely, the suppliant, by the nature of the emergency, demands the attention of the insider by the performance of the ritual. The initiative is that of the suppliant, who abandons any claim to

³⁷ Mitchell, op. cit., p. 16; Paul Cartledge, The Greeks: a Portrait of Self and Others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 47

³⁸ Gould, op. cit., p. 92 n. 94a

honour.³⁹ For *hiketeia* to be converted to *xenia*, the person supplicated must raise the status of the suppliant. The latter cannot initiate the change in status; this is the first anomaly in the Odysseus-Polyphemos encounter.

Conclusion

Both guest-friends and suppliants incur an obligation towards the host. This obligation to reciprocate the gift/service is generally ongoing, and usually inherited. The initial reciprocation may take place immediately (typically in the case of *xenia*), or it may bind the beneficiary until a future time, when circumstances permit its fulfilment. Non-fulfilment of the obligation was regarded as reprehensible, and almost universally condemned.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 93-94

Conclusion

Greek society was held together by a network of social ties, based on kinship and cohabitation in a particular area. Individuals enjoyed certain rights, and were bound by certain obligations. These were more or less universally recognised, but only within the immediate group. This operated to protect individuals within that group. At times, this neat arrangement of independent groups comprising interdependent individuals broke down, whether through warfare, the dislocation of whole communities or segments thereof, or civil strife. Societies lacked any organisation whose authority overrode that of individual communities, an authority that would work to reintegrate individuals into a community. It was therefore potentially beneficial to individuals who had been, or could have been, marginalised for any reason that it was more or less universally recognised that each individual possessed the right to protection from oppression, under certain circumstances; that protection was frequently provided by Zeus ἰκέσιος. Such protection was claimed through the act of supplication.

Supplication was signified by certain ritual actions. The suppliant may seek refuge at a holy place, a temple, altar or hearth. Some even found sanctuary at the tomb of a hero. Alternatively, a suppliant could cling to the knees of the supplicated, while clasping the chin or perhaps the hand. Physical contact had to be maintained; the suppliant was considered to have surrendered any claim to sanctuary if it was broken. As well, the suppliant may carry olive branches decked with wool, suppliant branches. These were usually carried by suppliants to a temple or an altar, and brandished prominently while they were there; this suggests some premeditation. Generally, suppliants also made eloquent pleas for assistance. These appear

to have been an important part of the ritual; certainly, it is difficult to imagine a desperate suppliant remaining silent when there was an opportunity to plead for succour.

Suppliants were aware that, although the physical safety of suppliants was supposed to be guaranteed, success was by no means certain. They attempted to maximise the chances of success: along with the surrender of their own dignity, an unavoidable component of supplication, they frequently made efforts to emphasise the honour of the supplicated. Some succeeded - they were raised from their lower position, and granted the succour they requested.

Not all were so fortunate. The suppliant was supposed to be under the protection of the gods, particularly Zeus *hikesios*. They were the self-given property of the god at whose altar they sheltered, so any who harmed them damaged the god's property and incurred blood-guilt. The fear of the displeasure of the gods, however, was not enough to protect them in every case. Some suppliants died, despite this supposed immunity. In such cases, the supplicated frequently attempted to avoid the pollution consequent upon the repudiation of a suppliant. Efforts were made to coerce the suppliant from sanctuary; any pressure, any trick served, as long as physical force was not used. The physical contact between the suppliant and the holy place or object, or the knees of the supplicated, must be broken. The suppliant then could be said to have abandoned the refuge, and any claim to safety. While deception could be used to achieve this end, it was at times regarded as the source of ritual pollution, and expiation was demanded of whole communities as a result.

An individual faced with an immediate threat to survival had no choice but to supplicate. The immediate appeal might be to the gods, but it was people that had to grant safety. The hope was that the presumed wishes of the gods might be taken into account, and awe for divinities might influence those people towards succouring the unfortunate. Yet in certain situations the prospective saviours may be the same people that threatened the lives of the suppliants. In such cases, the chances of success were slim. Nevertheless, many suppliants had nothing to lose by making the attempt; even a slim chance is better than none at all. Suppliants were unlikely to succeed if the situation were particularly volatile, such as in a civil uprising. If the suppliants had been plotting against the very authorities which were now their only chance of salvation, failure was almost a certainty. To allow such suppliants to go free would have been thought to be a greater threat to the stability of the state than the threat (possibly remote) of divine displeasure. Still, there were instances, mentioned by Herodotus and Thucydides, where it was believed that the abandonment of responsibilities towards suppliants brought about disasters sent by the gods as punishment.

Succour was easier to obtain if there was no relationship between the two protagonists at all. If there was a prior relationship, then something in the past may prejudice the outcome; an anticipated future relationship may exert the same influence. It was thought to cost much less to assist a total stranger than it may to grant aid to someone with whom there would be, in all probability, the necessity to deal frequently in the future. So Odysseus cannot accede to his slave, however royally born; on the other hand, Pausanias could expect never to see the daughter of Hegetorides again, so it cost him nothing to grant her requests.

The vulnerability of suppliants was obvious. However, they were able to pose a threat to the persons they supplicated. That threat could be implicit, though easily understood by all. The supplicated was set the problem of responding to the situation in an appropriate manner. If the response was not favourable, then the reputation of the supplicated was damaged, especially if the supplication was made in public. As well, the seizing of the suppliant from a shrine or other holy place attracted the displeasure of the gods, even ritual pollution.

That threat could be made explicit. The suppliant could make an overt threat to pollute the shrine, most aggressively through a threat to commit suicide on holy ground. In literature this is greeted with horror; in history, suicide within a temple does not always halt violence. The impending displeasure of the gods should the rights of the suppliant be contravened is sometimes pointed out explicitly. Even gods may be threatened: a few suppliants (in plays) point out that the honour of certain gods may be damaged if those gods do not succour their suppliants. Interestingly, other characters do not deny the power of the suppliant to harm the gods.

Supplication at the knees has been seen by some writers as a direct threat against the life force, even the regenerative force, of the supplicated. The bend of the knee, it has been argued, is a point of weakness, and is vulnerable to the threat posed by the grip of a suppliant. Suppliants came to the knees, it has been reasoned, because the knees were regarded as being as holy as temples. Since the evidence for all these theories is slight, they must be regarded as unproven, even speculative; any Greek testimony on the sanctity of knees is wanting.

Strong motivation was needed to undertake such a ritual. Many suppliants were in fear of their lives; in desperation, they supplicated at the nearest temple, altar or knees of someone able to grant clemency. Others feared for the lives of others, and attempted to have loved ones saved. Some suppliants wanted revenge, and supplicated others in order to attain it. One suppliant even acts as protector of the supplicated, symbolically converting his father's corpse into the tomb of a hero.

All suppliants sought to manipulate the response of others: manipulation is an inseparable part of supplication. Some, however, made deceitful supplications in order to attain desired ends. Neither Ephialtes nor Pausanias' intended messenger was in need of succour when he made supplication. Others used the ritual to coerce the supplicated into acting against their own interests. Medeia makes a dishonest supplication to Kreon, so that she may avenge herself on him and on his daughter. With similar deception, Orestes plans to supplicate Aigisthos. Through the means of supplication Odysseus coerces Alkinoos into taking action which would doom his people.

Those who were accused of criminal activity did not escape judicial proceedings through supplication. Andokides still had to face a trial; the Kylonians, and some of the suppliants at the temple of Hera on Kerkyra, are induced to leave their sanctuary and stand trial. This apparently did not seem unusual to the suppliants. For such as Andokides, supplication at a temple or hearth at least saved them from lynching, and allowed them to plead their cases.

As with any ritual, changes took place over time. There was pressure towards conservatism: the forms of supplication described in Homer

persisted, and the ritual was still regarded as a moral imperative, though this could be ignored in the heat of the moment. One change did take place: no longer could the suppliant expect or even hope to be released from any accusation that had been made. Instead, suppliants could be expected to stand trial. Another apparent change may be illusory. There seems to be a modification, a weakening of the meaning of ἵκετεύω into a non-ritual usage. However, a fragment of Alkman's verse suggests that the word could be used figuratively as early as the seventh century. If more examples of verse from the pre-classical period had survived, perhaps we would have seen further instances of just such a use of ἵκετεύω. Of course, it must be remembered that any weakening of the meaning of the word does not necessarily imply a weakening of the ritual or its moral force.

Successful suppliants were indebted to their benefactors; they owed them a reciprocal favour or gift. Our sources consider this so obvious that this debt is only mentioned when it is not honoured. This obligation is generally ongoing, and sometimes inherited. In the granting of the suppliant's requests there was, as a result, often a certain calculation - the likelihood of future services or gifts from the suppliant was of greater importance than disinterested philanthropy.

Another institution with reciprocal and ongoing mutual obligations was guest-friendship. The suppliant and the guest-friend had much in common; the rights of each were under the protection of Zeus, and each carried out certain rituals which integrated them into another community, giving them substitute kin there. On the initiative of the supplicated, a suppliant could even become a guest-friend.

Supplication was a formal ritual, with certain actions prescribed for each participant (or group of participants). These actions, while prescribed, were not always fully carried out by both parties; generally, however, some care was taken to preserve appearances. When the rights of the suppliant, supposedly protected by Zeus, were ignored, there was general condemnation, at least after the event. Successful suppliants incurred a debt, sometimes forging a formal relationship of guest-friendship between the protagonists. *Hiketeia* depended on mutual trust; sometimes, however, that trust was abused, by either one of the participants. Despite this, it remained a valued institution, used by people in desperate need, until and beyond the end of the fifth century.