



Ambivalence in Herodotus' Supplication Narratives

Cynthia Bruhn*

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE RITUAL OF *HIKETEIA*

The ancient Greek ritual of *hiketeia* (supplication) was a religious practice that helpless individuals or groups performed to receive protection, asylum, or other forms of support.¹ One could make use of the personal form of *hiketeia* and pose the request to another individual, deploying certain gestures such as clasping the addressee's knees and touching the latter's chin or hand. The other way of carrying out the ritual was fleeing to a sacred place and sitting down there.² In both forms, physical contact was the central element.³ As long as it was established, any violent treatment against the suppliant, who stood under the protection of Zeus Hikesios, was likely to provoke divine anger.⁴ The person deciding on the request could accept it and raise the suppliant from the inferior position, thereby restoring the latter's honor.⁵ A refusal could be made verbally or by gestures such as turning

* Universität Zürich, IAKA | Institut für Archäologie, Klassische Philologie und Altertumswissenschaften, Rämistrasse 68 (RAG) CH-8001 Zürich, cynthia.bruhn@gmail.com.

1 For their comments on this paper, I would like to thank Markus Asper and, especially, Susanne Gödde, as well as participants of the workshop on "Questioning Norms," Ljubljana 2023. See the works of Gould, "*Hiketeia*," and Naiden, *Ancient Supplication*.

2 However, also in this case, the final response and, where applicable, the fulfilling of the suppliant's claims was the responsibility of a human authority such as the priests or political authorities, see Gödde, *Drama der Hikesie*, 31; Naiden, *Ancient Supplication*, 7–8.

3 For an insightful discussion of the "Kontaktmagie" and the chances and difficulties of applying this term to *hiketeia*, see Gödde, "Kontaktmagie," 33–37.

4 See Gould, "*Hiketeia*," 78.

5 See Gould, "*Hiketeia*," 79.

away from the suppliant.⁶ While this reaction seems to have been an accepted response,⁷ applying violence or surrendering a suppliant to his persecutors was considered a sacrilege, as the text analysis will show.

Despite their weak and inferior status, suppliants often displayed aggressive traits, rendering their position ambivalent.⁸ Claspingsomeone's knees brought the suppliants into a lower position than the addressees, mirroring their "self-abasement."⁹ At the same time, they could prevent their counterparts from leaving and force them to listen. Further, suppliants were allowed to enter places that were not readily accessible under normal circumstances.¹⁰ It points to the ambivalent nature of the ritual that suppliants had no rights and depended on the benevolence of the deciding parties, but, at the same time, had possibilities which they would have been denied in a non-ritual setting. This observation already illustrates the notion of ambivalence, which will be briefly outlined below.

1.2 POINTS OF CONTACT BETWEEN AMBIVALENCE AND *HIKETEIA*

The term 'ambivalence' is derived from Latin *ambo* ("both") and *valentia* ("strength"). It denotes "the co-existence of contradictory feelings or impulses toward the same object"¹¹ and was initially found in the field of clinical psychology.¹² In terms of content, the discipline in which this term was embedded initially and the context in which it is used here are distant from each other. Nevertheless, the mode of thinking underlying the idea of ambivalence helps understand supplication scenes. For the simultaneity of conflicting forces will be discernible here as well. As already mentioned, this applies to the

6 See Naiden, *Ancient Supplication*, 130ff.

7 With this view, I follow Naiden, *Ancient Supplication*, 11f., who stressed that a positive outcome did not automatically result from the suppliant's abiding by the ritual rules, but depended largely on the reflection and decision of the addressee.

8 In interpreting *hiketeia* as an ambivalent ritual, I follow Gould, "*Hiketeia*," 100. For a different view, see Pötscher, "Strukturen der Hikesie," 53–54, classifying the submissive and the aggressive supplication as two different forms.

9 Gould, "*Hiketeia*," 94; see also Onians, *The Origins of European Thought about the Body*, 185.

10 Gould, "*Hiketeia*," 90, particularly focuses on *Oedipus at Colonus* in which the old and blind man, due to his status as a suppliant, is allowed to enter a shrine that is otherwise not to be touched (see Soph. *OC* 39: ἄθικτος).

11 Buchanan, *Critical Theory*, 15.

12 For the term and its conceptualization, see the foundational work of Bleuler, "Schizophrener Negativismus."

role of the suppliant. Furthermore, the ritual settings themselves often reveal the divergent and incompatible interests of the suppliant and the supplicated, making it difficult to reach a decision quickly. Besides, there is no guarantee that the request will be granted, even if the ritual rules are followed. Every act of supplication carries the possibility of acceptance or rejection and therefore permits different, and often mutually exclusive, outcomes. In the supplication scenes of Herodotus' *Histories*, the actors involved are aware of this moment of indeterminacy – one could even say, they provoke it: In situations that have been decided already, the ritual of supplication can generate a moment of pause and indecision and thus a second chance.

While all these aspects concerned the concrete ritual action, ambivalence can also be found in the retrospective evaluation of a supplication, especially if violence was applied. As we will see, individuals or groups that violently reject suppliants – e.g., because of a conflict of interest – later display a different attitude towards their action and try to compensate for it. Interestingly, Herodotus does not explicitly mention divine punishment in all these cases, which inevitably raises the question of whom the historian considers responsible for dealing with the ritual and for sanctioning its disregard.

This paper aims to shed light on the openness created by the ritual. It asks how the actors involved embody ambivalence and how they perceive it. How important is the fact that *hiketeia* does not necessarily lead to a predetermined outcome but can offer different alternative endings? How do actors use this quality of the ritual to their advantage? And where are its limits?

2 CASE STUDIES

2.1 AMBIVALENCE WITHIN THE SUPPLICATORY ACT

In the first text, the person performing *hiketeia* appears ambivalent due to the characteristics of the ritual itself. Furthermore, the situation created by *hiketeia* will appear as not quite unequivocal and, therefore, shapeable.

Hdt. 5.51: The request of Aristagoras

The setting is the Spartan king Cleomenes' court. Aristagoras, the tyrant of Milet, came to ask the king for military support of the revolt of the Ionian cities against the Persians. The tyrant presents a long plea to try to convince Cleomenes. The latter requests three days to think about the matter, "and thinking about it he clearly is:

Susa clearly has a lot of attractions, hence his question of how long the march would take.¹³ However, when he and Aristagoras meet again after three days, the latter, according to Herodotus, makes a fatal mistake by telling Cleomenes the truth that the journey to the Persian king will take three months. Now Cleomenes has heard enough: Never will the Lacedaemonians consent to such a long journey.¹⁴ While for him the matter is settled, Aristagoras senses one last chance (Hdt. 5.51):¹⁵

Ὁ μὲν δὴ Κλεομένης ταῦτα εἶπας ἦε ἐς τὰ οἰκία, ὁ δὲ Ἀρισταγόρης λαβὼν ἰκετηρίην ἦε ἐς τοῦ Κλεομένεος, ἐσελθὼν δὲ ἔσω ἅτε ἰκετεῦων ἐπακοῦσαι ἐκέλευε τὸν Κλεομένεα, ἀποπέμψαντα τὸ παιδίον· προσεστήκει γὰρ δὴ τῷ Κλεομένει ἡ θυγάτηρ, τῇ οὖνομα ἦν Γοργώ· [...] Κλεομένης δὲ λέγειν μιν ἐκέλευε τὰ βούλεται μηδὲ ἐπισχεῖν τοῦ παιδίου εἴνεκα. 2 ἐνθαῦτα δὴ ὁ Ἀρισταγόρης ἄρχετο ἐκ δέκα ταλάντων ὑπισχνόμενος, ἦν οἱ ἐπιτελέσει τῶν ἐδέετο. ἀνανεύοντος δὲ τοῦ Κλεομένεος προέβαινε τοῖσι χρήμασι ὑπερβάλλων ὁ Ἀρισταγόρης, ἐς οὐ πενήκοντά τε τάλαντα ὑποδέδεκτο καὶ τὸ παιδίον ἠυδάξατο· Πάτερ, διαφθερέει σε ὁ ξείνος, ἦν μὴ ἀποστάς ἴης. 3 ὃ τε δὴ Κλεομένης ἦσθεις τοῦ παιδίου τῇ παραινέσει ἦε ἐς ἕτερον οἶκημα καὶ ὁ Ἀρισταγόρης ἀπαλλάσσετο τὸ παράπαν ἐκ τῆς Σπάρτης, οὐδέ οἱ ἐξεγένετο ἐπὶ πλέον ἔτι σημήναι περὶ τῆς ἀνόδου τῆς παρὰ βασιλεία.

Cleomenes then, having said these words, went to his palace. Aristagoras, however, grabbed an olive branch and went inside Cleomenes' palace, and entering it, he asked Cleomenes to listen to him, since¹⁶ he was a suppliant, after having sent away the child; for near Cleomenes stood his daughter, whose name was Gorgo [...]. But Cleomenes told him to say what he wants and not to hold back because of her. At that moment, Aristagoras began promising him money, initially ten talents, if he granted his request. When Cleomenes threw back his head to signal his refusal, Aristagoras went on to offer a greater sum of money each time,¹⁷ until he had promised 50 talents, and the child

13 Pelling, "Aristagoras," 190.

14 For the whole interaction between both men, see Hdt. 5.49–50.

15 The Greek text follows the edition of Wilson 2015. All translations are my own, unless noted otherwise.

16 The translation of ἅτε is based on the understanding of Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, 463.

17 Translation of προέβαινε τοῖσι χρήμασι ὑπερβάλλων from the dictionary of Montanari.

shouted: "Father, the stranger will destroy you if you don't withdraw from him and go." Cleomenes, glad about the child's exhortation, went to another room, and Aristagoras left Sparta for good, and it was not even possible for him to give any further explanations about the journey to the king.

Although Cleomenes had already ended the conversation by physically distancing himself from Aristagoras, the Milesian does not accept this as a final response. Instead, he equips himself with an olive branch.¹⁸ It is this feature which, by marking him unequivocally as a suppliant,¹⁹ distinguishes him from a regular stranger and therefore allows him to enter the house of another person:

The question of demarcation of roles between stranger and suppliant is one which must arise for the 'arrival' [...]: the choice lies between waiting at the porch to be acknowledged and conducted within or crossing the threshold and adopting the ritual of *ικετεία*.²⁰

Therefore, Aristagoras' entry into the palace without permission is not considered a grave offense, as he presents himself as a suppliant. However, he displays aggressive behavior as well, since he crosses the threshold to the house of Cleomenes and, therefore, intrudes into his private sphere. Herodotus stresses how easily Aristagoras enters the palace by the parallel syntactical construction of the movement of both men, Cleomenes and the suppliant (Ὁ μὲν δὴ Κλεομένης [...] ἦι ἐς τὰ οἰκία, ὁ δὲ Ἀρισταγόρης [...] ἦι ἐς τοῦ Κλεομένεος: Cleomenes then [...] went to his palace, Aristagoras, however [...] went inside Cleomenes' palace). Furthermore, it becomes clear in Herodotus' depiction of Aristagoras as commanding (ἐκέλευε) rather than begging Cleomenes to listen to him that the suppliant takes quite an active part in this scene and can hardly be seen as a victim. He gives himself a second chance through *hiketeia* and

18 According to the LSJ, the feminine *ικετηρία*, ion. *ικετηρή* (deriving from *ικετήριος* ["of or fit for suppliants"]), is often used without the substantive ἡ *ράβδος* (rod, wand), but still denotes the olive branch held by the suppliant "as a symbol of his condition."

19 See Götde, *Drama der Hikesie*, 183, who, referring to the case of the Danaids, stresses the importance of the olive branch as elementary hallmark which the addressee recognizes from afar.

20 Gould, "*Hiketeia*," 92, n. 94a.

obtains a position from which he can force the king to listen to him one last time.

However, the ritual also reveals the conflict of interest between the suppliant and the addressee: Aristagoras does not lose sight of his goal, i.e., support of the Ionians. Cleomenes, in his response preceding the supplication, already pointed out the impossibility of convincing the citizens of Sparta to go on this expedition. In the ritual setting, however, it is Gorgo, Cleomenes' young daughter, who must remind her father of the moral integrity he is about to lose. This comes to the fore in the verb διαφθείρειν (destroy), which can be understood as the act of distorting one's ability to judge things correctly.²¹ Further, Cleomenes seems to have a weakness regarding bribery.²² Although Aristagoras' plea ultimately fails, his case confirms the Herodotean picture of personal supplication. It shows how actors deploy *hiketeia* in circumstances that have already been decided. Through the ritual framework, they can reopen their situation and gain scope of action to influence their addressee and thereby guide developments in the desired direction.²³

However, in the case of Aristagoras, the framework proves advantageous to him as well. The situation itself appears ambivalent, in that both alternatives – that Cleomenes will grant the request and send an army to Susa, or that he will reject it – are present throughout, even if they are not explicitly stated. Cleomenes does not reject the request right away. The extra time for consideration, as Christopher Pelling argued, seems to be of profound importance to the king. Furthermore, his indecisiveness is manifest in the ritual interaction: Cleomenes does throw back his head as a sign of rejection. However, this gesture is not sufficiently resolute to constitute an unequivocal response to the suppliant's request. Instead, Gorgo's intervention is necessary to bring Aristagoras' persistent efforts to an end.

The observation that actors can direct the openness of *hiketeia* to their purposes and act in ways that must be assessed from more than one perspective does not apply exclusively to the supplicating side, but also to the one being supplicated. In two scenes, Herodotus describes

21 See Harvey, "Dona Ferentes," 86–87.

22 See Hdt. 6.50.2, 66.2, 82.1. Hodkinson, *Property and Wealth*, 20, takes up the popular view that Spartan kings were particularly corruptible. For him, this impression rather results from Herodotus' literary preference to narrate stories of the kings of Sparta than from an actually higher degree of corruption there (compared to other cities).

23 For comparable examples regarding the function of *hiketeia*, see Hdt. 1.112, 4.165, 9.76.

how the persons who decide the fate of the suppliants act ambivalently. Initially, one could conclude from their behavior that they accept the supplication. In 5.71, after a failed attempt to seize power, Cylon and his supporters seek refuge at the statue of Athena. Their guards raise them from their inferior position²⁴ and pretend to accept their plea. They promise not to kill them – a promise that they ultimately break. Another scene takes place after a battle between Spartans and Argives, in which the latter are defeated (6.78–80). The Spartan king Cleomenes promises the Argive soldiers who fled to a sacred grove that they will be released in exchange for a ransom. However, after they have left the sanctuary, encouraged by the king's words, they are executed (6.79). It became clear that the deciders over the supplication use ritual or military conventions to deceive the suppliants and then put them to death. The interruption of contact with the sanctuary leaves them without scruples, since they no longer consider the suppliants to be under divine protection. However, Herodotus' narrative does not suggest that they are free from guilt. Instead, the decision to kill or surrender suppliants likewise influences the fate of the wrongdoers, as doing violence to someone seeking protection is usually considered to have consequences. However, as will be shown in the next section, Herodotus' text does not always make it clear how the perception and assessment of this deed work as sacrilege, nor which forces drive the guilty person to compensate.

2.2 AMBIVALENT FEELINGS IN RETROSPECT

After focusing on ambivalent elements in the ritual itself, we will now turn to ambivalent feelings that arise afterwards, i.e., when the person who decides on the request later evaluates the behavior towards the suppliant differently than during the action itself.

Hdt. 1.160: Pactyes and the Chians

The following case, centering on the fate of the Lydian Pactyes, is part of a passage that, being considered exemplary for Herodotean supplication scenes,²⁵ also served as a helpful general illustration of the difficulties that can arise from *hiketeia*.²⁶ Since the events in Cyme

24 As mentioned in the introduction, raising a suppliant is a sign of accepting the request.

25 See Nesselrath, "Xenoi und Hiketai," 96–98.

26 See Gould, "*Hiketeia*," 83–84, discussing this passage as an example for the "crises of indecision" arising for the addressee. Kazanskaya, "Le rituel de

(Hdt. 1.157–59) have already been widely discussed, I will paraphrase this passage for context, while my focus will be on 1.160.

In 1.154–56, Herodotus reports how Pactyes initiated the Lydians' apostasy from the Persians under Cyrus. Having failed, he had to flee from the king's forces (1.157). During his flight, he reaches Cyme, where he seeks refuge. The Cymeans are well aware of the dilemma of either saving him and provoking a fight with his pursuers or surrendering him and betraying sacred norms. They consult the oracle, which twice orders them to hand over the suppliant to his enemies. However, later, a voice from within the oracle reveals that this response was a trap meant to bring peril upon the Cymeans for even considering the sacrilege. The citizens decide to transfer the suppliant to Mytilene, thereby trying to maneuver their way out of the situation. When the Mytileneans agree to surrender Pactyes in exchange for money, the Cymeans transfer him to Chios. However, he will not face a better fate there either (Hdt. 1.160.3–5):

3 ἐνθεῦτεν δὲ ἐξ ἱεροῦ Ἀθηναίης πολιούχου ἀποσπασθεὶς ὑπὸ Χίων ἐξεδόθη. 4 ἐξέδοσαν δὲ οἱ Χῖοι ἐπὶ τῷ Ἀταρνεί μισθῷ [...] 5 ἦν δὲ χρόνος οὗτος οὐκ ὀλίγος γενόμενος, ὅτε Χίων οὐδεὶς ἐκ τοῦ Ἀταρνέος τούτου οὔτε οὐλὰς κριθέων πρόχυσιν ἐποιέετο θεῶν οὐδενὶ οὔτε πέμματα ἐπέσσετο καρποῦ τοῦ ἐνθεῦτεν, ἀπέργετό τε τῶν πάντων ἱρῶν πάντα τὰ ἐκ τῆς χώρας ταύτης γινόμενα.

From there, he was dragged away from the sanctuary of Athena, protectress of the city, and surrendered by the Chians. The Chians surrendered him in exchange for Atarneus [...]. But for quite a while, no one of the Chians poured²⁷ out the barleycorns from Atarneus for any of the gods, nor did he bake any cakes from the crops from there, and one kept away from all sacred procedures everything coming from this land.

As Herodotus narrates, Pactyes is handed over to his Persian pursuers because the Chians put material gain over respect for sacred norms. As in the first supplication scene, a conflict of interest leads

Ἰκετεία,” focusing on supplication in Herodotus' *Histories*, identifies a general conscience on part of the historian regarding the possible problems resulting from *hiketeia*. See also the important remarks of Peels, *Hosios*, 116–24, who, referring to Chaniotis, “Conflicting Authorities,” recognizes as relevant factor the tension between the fear of the gods (and their anger) and questions of practicability that the addressee of a suppliant faced.

27 Montanari “πρόχυσιν”: τὶ πρόχυσιν ποιέεσθαι = τὶ προχέειν.

to a rejection of the suppliant. However, the reaction of the Chians is much more severe than Cleomenes' or, more precisely, Gorgo's response towards Aristagoras, for they violently drag Pactyes away from the sanctuary of Athena, thus directly offending the goddess. According to Herodotus, the wrongdoers soon develop mixed feelings about their newly acquired land, Atarneus. Although it is said to be fertile,²⁸ they do not use its crops for religious procedures. By remarking that they did not pour out the barleycorns of this land, the historian seems to allude to the rites that precede animal sacrifice. Also, the comment that the Chians refrain from baking cakes made from the crops of this land evokes religious associations, since this kind of food was prepared for sacred festivals as well.²⁹ It thus seems that the citizens of Chios feel a certain uneasiness about their past behavior towards Pactyes. Although Herodotus does not mention a sanctioning deity, e.g., Athena, he does imply that the Chians feel guilty towards the gods. Therefore, they avoid any provocation by not using polluted crops for rituals intended to interact with and maintain a good relationship with the supernatural forces. Whereas in the case of the Cymeans and the oracle, the view of divine punishment or, at least, divine anger, would have worked, it is remarkable how vague the historian's phrasing is in his description of the events on Chios.

Hdt. 3.147/149: Otanes on Samos

This vagueness in evaluation can also be seen in an instance in which a murderer of suppliants suffers certain events afterwards and re-evaluates his deed. In 3.144, Herodotus reports that the Persian commander Otanes, accompanied by a military force, arrives on Samos. Darius has charged him with restoring the island, currently ruled by Maeandrius, to Syloson, the brother of the murdered king Polycrates. When Syloson asked Darius to fulfil this request, he explicitly expressed the wish that the island should be handed over without any cases of murder or enslavement, and Darius forwarded these words to Otanes.³⁰ However, when Maeandrius and his brother betray the commander and his men despite a mutual agreement, the situation escalates (Hdt. 3.147/149):

28 See Hdt. 6.28.

29 For the role of cakes and of unground barley in animal sacrifices, see Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 68.

30 See Hdt. 3.140.5.

Ότάνης δὲ ὁ στρατηγὸς ἰδὼν πάθος μέγα Πέρσας πεπονθότας, <τὰς μὲν> ἐντολὰς {τε} τὰς Δαρειῶς οἱ ἀποστέλλων ἐνετέλλετο, μήτε κτείνειν μηδένα Σαμίων μήτε ἀνδραποδίζεσθαι ἀπαθέα τε κακῶν ἀποδοῦναι τὴν νῆσον Συλοσῶντι, τουτέων μὲν τῶν ἐντολέων μεμνημένος ἐπελανθάνετο, ὁ δὲ παρήγγειλε τῇ στρατιῇ πάντα τὸν ἄν λάρβωσι, καὶ ἄνδρα καὶ παῖδα, ὁμοίως κτείνειν. 2 ἐνθαῦτα τῆς στρατιῆς οἱ μὲν τὴν ἀκρόπολιν ἐπολιόρκειον, οἱ δὲ ἔκτεινον πάντα τὸν ἐμποδῶν γινόμενον, ὁμοίως ἔν τε ἱρῶ καὶ ἔξω ἱροῦ. [...] 149 τὴν δὲ Σάμιον σαγηνεύσαντες οἱ Πέρσαι παρέδοσαν Συλοσῶντι ἔρημον ἐοῦσαν ἀνδρῶν. ὑστέρῳ μὲντοι χρόνῳ καὶ συγκατοίκισε αὐτὴν ὁ στρατηγὸς Ότάνης ἔκ τε ὄψιος ὄνειρου καὶ νοῦσου ἧ μιν κατέλαβε νοσῆσαι τὰ αἰδοῖα.

But when the commander Otanes saw that the Persians had suffered a great misfortune, the orders that Darius gave him when he sent him off, <which said> neither to kill any Samian nor to enslave him and to restore the island to Syloson free from any harm, these commands he thus neglected,³¹ although remembering them, but he ordered his army to kill everyone they could get hold of, man and child alike, without distinction. Thereupon, some of his soldiers besieged the citadel, but others killed everyone who crossed their path, without distinction, inside and outside the sanctuary. [...] After the Persians had swept Samos clear of men, they handed it over to Syloson devoid of any men. Later, however, the commander Otanes even helped populate it, by reason of a dream and a disease which afflicted his genitals.

In his rage, Otanes does not pay any regard to Darius' order, but he commands his soldiers to kill anyone they encounter. The repetition of the king's instructions, evident in Otanes' decision to ignore them, strongly suggests that he did not forget them, but made a conscious choice,³² and that he already knew he was acting against the rules. It has been argued that the Persian soldiers killed the Samians in the sanctuary and rendered the island deserted, and that Otanes, therefore, cannot be read as the guilty one in this story.³³ However, the linguistic

31 Literally: he forgot that he remembered them. I chose the translation "neglect," because I interpret the direct succession of μεμνημένος und ἐπελανθάνετο as a conscious act of forgetting. Van Groningen, *Herodotus' Historiën*, 269, suggests "opzettelijk vergeten" (to deliberately forget).

32 See Baragwanath, *Motivation and Narrative*, 104.

33 See Friedrich, "Tod des Tyrannen," 115.

similarity between Otanes' command and the soldiers' action³⁴ indicates that Herodotus may have intended to stress that the difference is not that great because Otanes, as a commander, represents his army. Correspondingly, one could pose the simple question of whether the bloodshed of the suppliants would have occurred had Otanes not given the initial command. (Furthermore, in this case, no one would have felt the necessity to perform supplication).

The mention of a dream and an illness can therefore be read as a suggestion of the text that he bears responsibility – hence his efforts to repopulate the island. Herodotus does not explicitly mention a potentially divine sender, but this passage has been interpreted that way.³⁵ One difficulty is that he remains vague about the origin of the vision and the disease. Furthermore, the fact that he does not even mention the content of the dream makes it hard to classify it as a divine omen unequivocally and to verify whether it actually comes true – a criterion that has been identified as indicating divinely sent dreams.³⁶ However, Christopher Pelling, referring to Thomas Harrison, convincingly stressed that although phenomena such as dreams may not automatically be categorized as sent by gods, the circumstances in which they occur are sometimes challenging to explain in human terms and could therefore point to gods as the cause.³⁷ This could also explain why Otanes perceives the dream and the illness as urgent enough to take action.

3 CONCLUSION

The passages discussed demonstrate that Herodotus' mode of presenting supplication emphasizes the ambivalence of human actors in the actual ritual context and in the addressees' retrospective evaluation of their behavior towards the suppliants. In the *Histories*, *hiketeia* appears as a ritual practice with an open outcome – an advantage obviously exploited by the ones who pose the request and who, by

34 Otanes' command: παρήγγειλε [...] πάντα [...], καὶ ἄνδρα καὶ παῖδα, ὁμοίως κτείνειν; the soldiers' deeds: ἐκτείνον πάντα [...], ὁμοίως ἐν τε ἱρῶ καὶ ἔξω ἱροῦ (Otanes: he ordered [...] to kill everyone [...] man and child alike, without distinction; soldiers: they killed everyone [...], without distinction, inside and outside the sanctuary).

35 See Frisch, *Träume bei Herodot*, 37. Yet, the case of Otanes differs from, e.g., Hdt. 2.139.2 and 1.174.4, where the historian explicitly mentions a divine force as sender of the sign.

36 See Pelling, *Herodotus and the Question Why*, 154.

37 See *ibid.*, 281, n. 45; Harrison, *Divinity and History*, 92–100.

means of the ritual, transgress boundaries. Additionally, the instances that answer it use the indecisiveness inherent to *hiketeia* to their own ends. As the paraphrased passages show, ritual language can be deployed to deceive, which renders some actions and functions of the involved actors ambivalent. However, it seems that the openness of *hiketeia* is marked by certain limits, i.e., when violence breaks ritual rules. As the examples of the Chians and of Otanes suggested, people's motives for acting in a certain way within the supplication ritual do not necessarily align with their subsequent view and can even conflict with it.

These remarks lead to the conclusion that Herodotus, whether stressing ambivalence in the ritual act or in the later reflection on it, focuses on the importance of human action and decision-making.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baragwanath, Emily. *Motivation and Narrative in Herodotus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Bleuler, Eugen. "Zur Theorie des schizophrenen Negativismus." *Psychiatrisch-Neurologische Wochenschrift* 12 (1910): 469–74.
- Buchanan, Ian. *Oxford Dictionary of Critical Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Burkert, Walter. *Greek Religion*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985.
- Chaniotis, Angelos. "Conflicting Authorities: Asyilia Between Secular and Divine Law in the Classical and Hellenistic Poleis." *Kernos* 9 (1996): 65–86.
- Friedrich, Wolf Hartmut. "Der Tod des Tyrannen: Die poetische Gerechtigkeit der alten Geschichtsschreiber – und Herodot." *Antike und Abendland* 18, no. 1 (1973): 97–129.
- Frisch, Peter. *Die Träume bei Herodot*. Meisenheim am Glan: Hain, 1968.
- Gödde, Susanne. "Kontaktmagie: Zur Inszenierung der rituellen Berührung in der griechischen Tragödie." In *Tangieren: Szenen des Berührens*, edited by Sandra Fluhrer and Alexander Waszynski, 21–43. Baden-Baden: Rombach Wissenschaft/Nomos-Verlag, 2020.
- . *Das Drama der Hikesie: Ritual und Rhetorik in Aischylos' Hiketiden*. Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2000.
- Gould, John. "Hiketeia." *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 93 (1973): 74–103.
- Harrison, Thomas. *Divinity and History: The Religion of Herodotus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

- Harvey, F. David. "Dona Ferentes: Some Aspects of Bribery in Greek Politics." *History of Political Thought* 6, no. 1 (1985): 76–117.
- Hodkinson, Stephen. *Property and Wealth in Classical Sparta*. London: Duckworth, 2000.
- Kazanskaya, Maria. "Le rituel de l'ἱκετεία chez Hérodote." *Came-nulae* 9 (2013): 1–17.
- Naiden, Fred S. *Ancient Supplication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Nesselrath, Heinz-Günther. "Xenoi und Hiketai bei Herodot." In *Xenophobia - Philoxenie: Vom Umgang mit Fremden in der Antike*, edited by Ulrike Riemer and Peter Riemer, 91–101. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005.
- Onians, Richard Broxton. *The Origins of European Thought about the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time, and Fate*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951.
- Peels, Saskia. *Hosios: A Semantic Study of Greek Piety*. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- Pelling, Christopher. *Herodotus and the Question Why*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2019.
- . "Aristagoras (5.49–55, 97)." In *Reading Herodotus: A Study of the Logoi in Book 5 of Herodotus' Histories*, edited by Elizabeth Irwin and Emily Greenwood, 179–201. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Pötscher, Walter. "Die Strukturen der Hikesie." *Wiener Studien* 107/8 (1994/5): 51–75.
- Smyth, Herbert Weir. *A Greek Grammar for Colleges*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984 (17. impr. of rev. ed. 1956).
- Van Groningen, Bernard Abraham. *Herodotus' Historiën 1: Met inleiding en commentaar*. Leiden: Brill, 1959.
- Wilson, Nigel, ed. *Herodoti Historiae*, vol. 1–2. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

ABSTRACT

Hiketeia, the ancient Greek ritual of supplication, was performed by individuals seeking asylum or other forms of help. According to John Gould, *hiketeia* is ambivalent: although the suppliant is considered inferior towards the person he addresses, the gestures of supplication reveal a certain aggressiveness on a symbolical level. By embracing someone's knees, for example, or sitting down at the hearth of his house, the suppliant touches "what must be kept inviolate." The means of ritual, therefore, allow the suppliant to transgress boundaries – an act which would be considered an affront in non-ritual circumstances.

However, ambivalence concerns not only the person seeking help: often, the supplicated individuals are not sure how to respond, since someone's request for help creates a conflict of interest. On the one hand, suppliants are considered protégés of Zeus Hikesios and can demand respect from their addressees. On the other hand, accepting their plea can pose a safety issue for the rescuer: protecting someone in flight carries the risk of confrontation with his pursuers. In his *Histories*, Herodotus discusses this dilemma (1.157 ff.) and shows how persons who have violated the norms of supplication later try to "correct" their deed (1.160; 3.149). Finally, the behavior of the addressees in the ritual context can be interpreted as ambivalent, for example, when they use gestures and conventions whose meaning is culturally agreed upon for other purposes, thereby deceiving those seeking protection.

This paper aims to show how ambivalence characterizes supplication scenes in Herodotus and how the historian deals with the openness of *hiketeia* to shape his narrative.

KEYWORDS: *hiketeia*, ritual, Greek religion, crisis, ambivalence, divine anger

Ambivalentnost v Herodotovih pripovedih o priprošnjah

IZVLEČEK

Starogrški ritual priprošnje ali suplikacije, imenovan *hiketeia*, so izvajali posamezniki, ki so iskali azil ali druge oblike pomoči. Po mnenju Johna Goulda je *hiketeia* ambivalentna: čeprav je prosilec v primerjavi z osebo, na katero se obrača, v podrejenem položaju, pa geste priprošnje na simbolni ravni razkrivajo določeno agresivnost. Ko denimo prosilec osebo objame okrog kolen ali sede k ognjišču v hiši, se dotakne »tistega, kar mora ostati nedotakljivo«. Izrazne možnosti rituala torej priprošnjikom omogočajo, da prekoračijo meje – to dejanje bi v neritualnih okoliščinah veljalo za žalitev.

Vendar ambivalentnost ne zadeva le osebe, ki prosi za pomoč: pogosto zaproseni niso prepričani, kako naj se odzovejo, saj prošnja za pomoč povzroča navzkrižje interesov. Po eni strani so prosilci varovanci Priprošnjega Zevsa (*Zeus Hikesios*) in lahko od naslovnikov terjajo spoštovanje. Po drugi strani pa sprejetje njihove priprošnje lahko predstavlja varnostno tveganje za rešitelja: zaščita begunca lahko pomeni tveganje za soočenje z njegovimi zasledovalci. Herodot v svoji *Zgodovini* obravnava to dilemo (1.157 in nasl.) in pokaže, kako osebe, ki kršijo normo suplikacije, kasneje poskušajo »popraviti« svoje dejanje (1.160; 3.149). Nazadnje je mogoče vedenje naslovnikov v ritualnem kontekstu razlagati kot ambivalentno, kadar na primer uporabljajo geste in konvencije, katerih pomen je kulturno dogovorjen, za druge namene, s čimer zavajajo tiste, ki iščejo zaščito.

Članek pokaže, kako ambivalentnost zaznamuje prizore suplikacije pri Herodotu in kako zgodovinar uporabi odprtost rituala priprošnje, da oblikuje svojo pripoved.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: *hiketeia*, ritual, grška religija, stiska, ambivalentnost, božja jeza