

*The Socio-Religious Aspects of Oath-Taking in Early to
Classical Greece*

Robert Nigel Bostock

B.A.(Hons.) Melb.

A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts with Honours of the University of
New England

June 2002

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.

Signature

Contents

Acknowledgements	p.iii
Abbreviations and Editions	p.iv
Introduction	p.1
Chapter 1: The Religious Background of Oath-Taking	p.9
1.1: The Oath and the Trial by Ordeal	p.9
1.2: Types of Oaths	p.15
1.3: Invocation of the Gods	p.18
1.4: The Curse in Oaths	p.30
1.5: The Rituals of Oath-Taking	p.38
1.6: Conclusion	p.47
Chapter 2: The Oath in Society	p.49
2.1: The Psychological Basis of Oath-Taking	p.49
2.2: Public Oaths as Rites of Passage	p.53
2.3: Oaths of Groups Within Society	p.60
2.4: The Oaths in Decrees of the Athenian Empire	p.63
2.4.1: Erythrae	p.66
2.4.2: Colophon	p.68
2.4.3: Chalcis	p.70
2.4.4: Samos	p.73
2.5: Conclusion	p.77
Chapter 3: Perjury and the Punishment for Oath-Breaking	p.79
3.1: Perjury	p.79
3.2: The Punishment for Perjury	p.88
3.3: Perjury and the Afterlife in Homer and Hesiod	p.94

3.4: Perjury and the Afterlife in Later Sources	p.111
3.5: Conclusion	p.117
Conclusion	p.119
Index Locorum	p.123
Bibliography	p.127

Acknowledgements.

I am chiefly indebted to my supervisor, Assoc. Professor G.R. Stanton, whose patience and encouragement have been a great support, while his eye for detail has improved the thesis in countless places. Professor G.H.R. Horsley read over the penultimate draft of the thesis and drew attention to several places where the argument needed revision, as well as offering much stylistic advice. Dr. D. Burton generously spared the time to look over part of Ch. 3 and made some very useful suggestions, and in addition alerted me to several modern works. Dr. A. Treloar kindly verified some of the linguistic content of the thesis, while his Sanskrit classes have influenced my understanding of antiquity in general. Ms. F. Johns proof-read the final draft with astounding accuracy, and so greatly improved both the presentation and consistency of the thesis. Despite all this help errors are sure to remain, and the responsibility for them is solely my own. Finally I must thank Lesley McLean, who has had the strength of character to put up with me for the past two years.

Abbreviations and Editions

Abbreviations for ancient authors follow the practice of LSJ or *OLD*, except where this is ambiguous, in which case those listed in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*³ (edd. Hornblower, S. & Spawforth, A.) are used. Other abbreviations in the thesis are:

- ATL* *The Athenian Tribute Lists* (edd. Meritt, B., Wade-Gery, H. & McGregor, M.), 4 vols., Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass. (vol. 1), 1939; American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Princeton (vols. 2-4), 1949-53
- DK* *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*⁶ (edd. Diels, H. & Kranz, W.), vol. 1, Weidmann, Berlin, 1952
- GHI* *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions* (ed. Tod, M.), vol. 2, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1948
- GVI* *Griechische Vers-Inschriften* (ed. Peek, W.), Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 1955 (reprinted by Ares Publishers, 1988)
- IG I³* *Inscriptiones Graecae*, vol. 1³ (ed. Lewis, D.), Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 1981-90
- IG II²* *Inscriptiones Graecae*, vol. 2² (ed. Kirchner, J.), Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 1913-40
- Leg Gort.* *The Law Code of Gortyn* (ed. Willetts, R.), Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 1967
- LSJ* *Greek-English Lexicon*⁹ (edd. Liddell, H., Scott, R., Jones, H. & MacKenzie, R.), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1940 (reprinted with revised supplement 1996)
- ML* *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century BC* (edd. Meiggs, R. & Lewis, D.), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1969
- OLD* *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (ed. Glare, P.), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1968-82 (reprinted with corrections 1996)
- PMG* *Poetae Melici Graeci* (ed. Page, D.L.), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1962
- RE* *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (edd. Wissowa, G., Kroll, W., Mittelhaus, K. & Ziegler, K.), Metzlehrsche Verlagsbuchhandlung/Druckenmüller, Stuttgart, 1893-1978
- SIG* *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*⁴ (ed. Dittenberger, W.), vol. 1, S.Hirzel, Leipzig, 1915 (reprinted by Georg Olms, Hildesheim, 1960)
- Staatsverträge* *Die Staatsverträge des Altertums* (ed. Bengtson, H. & Werner, R.), vol. 2, C.H.Beck, Munich, 1975

- Col(l). and l(l). are used when referring to column and line numbers of articles in *RE*
- 'supp.' after *IG* references stands for *supplevit/-erunt*
- Single inverted commas (' ') are used when a word is being glossed, quotation marks (" ") are used when the actual words of an author (ancient or modern) are being quoted.

Editions

Oxford Classical Texts

Aeschylus (ed. Page, D.L.); Aristophanes (edd. Hall, F. & Geldart, W.); Aristotle (ed. Ross, D.); Cicero (ed. Wilkins, A.); Demosthenes (edd. Butcher, S. & Rennie, W.); Euripides (ed. Diggle, J.); Herodotus (ed. Hude, C.); Homer (edd. Allen, T.W. & Munro, D.B.); Lysias (ed. Hude, C.); Plato (ed. Burnet, J.); Sallust (ed. Reynolds, L.D.); Sophocles (edd. Lloyd-Jones, H. & Wilson, N.G.); Thucydides (ed. Stuart-Jones, H.); Xenophon (ed. Marchant, E.)

Loeb Classical Library

Achilles Tatius (ed. Gaselee, S.); Aelian (ed. Wilson, N.G.); Diodorus Siculus (edd. Oldfather, C., Sherman, C. & Geer, R.); Diogenes Laertius (ed. Hicks, R.); Hippocrates (ed. Jones, W.); Josephus (ed. Thackeray, H.); Livy (edd. Sage, E. & Schlesinger, A.); Lycurgus (ed. Burrt, J.); Palatine Anthology (ed. Paton, W.); Philostratus (ed. Conybeare, F.); Sextus Empiricus (ed. Bury, R.)

Teubner

Aeschines (ed. Dilts, M.); [Aristotle], *Athenaiôn Politeia* (ed. Chambers, M.); Dictys Cretensis (ed. Eisenhut, W.); Festus (ed. Lindsay, W.); Heliodorus (ed. Bekker, E.); Pausanias (ed. Spiro, F.); Pindar (edd. Snell, B. & Maehler, H.); Plutarch (edd. Ziegler, K., Pohlenz, M. & Westman, K.)

Other

Andocides: *On the Mysteries* (ed. MacDowell, D.); Antiphon (ed. Gagarin, M.); Arrian (edd. Phillips, A. & Willcock, M.); Callimachus (ed. Pfeiffer, R.); Hesiod (ed. West, M.L.); Polybius (edd. Pédech, P., Foulon, E. & Weil, R.)

Fragments

Aeschylus (ed. Mette, H.); Ariphron (*PMG*); Empedocles (DK); Epic Fragments (ed. Bernabé, A.); Pindar (edd. Snell, B. & Maehler, H.); Sophocles (ed. Lloyd-Jones, H.)

All dates in the thesis are B.C., unless indicated to the contrary. All translations of the Greek are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

Greek names and terms have generally been given their Latinised form, for two reasons: firstly, I think for most people the Latinised forms are more familiar; secondly, it avoids aberrations such as Aischylos — indeed, even with more correct forms like Thoukydides scholars refrain from replacing 'y' with the more correct 'u' (or rather 'ü').¹ However, where

¹ Upsilon was not pronounced [i] until the fourth century A.D (W.S. Allen, *Vox Graeca*², Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1974, p.65).

the Latin transliteration might cause confusion, I have given a literal transliteration. The inconsistency will, I hope, be an aid, and not a hindrance, to the reader.